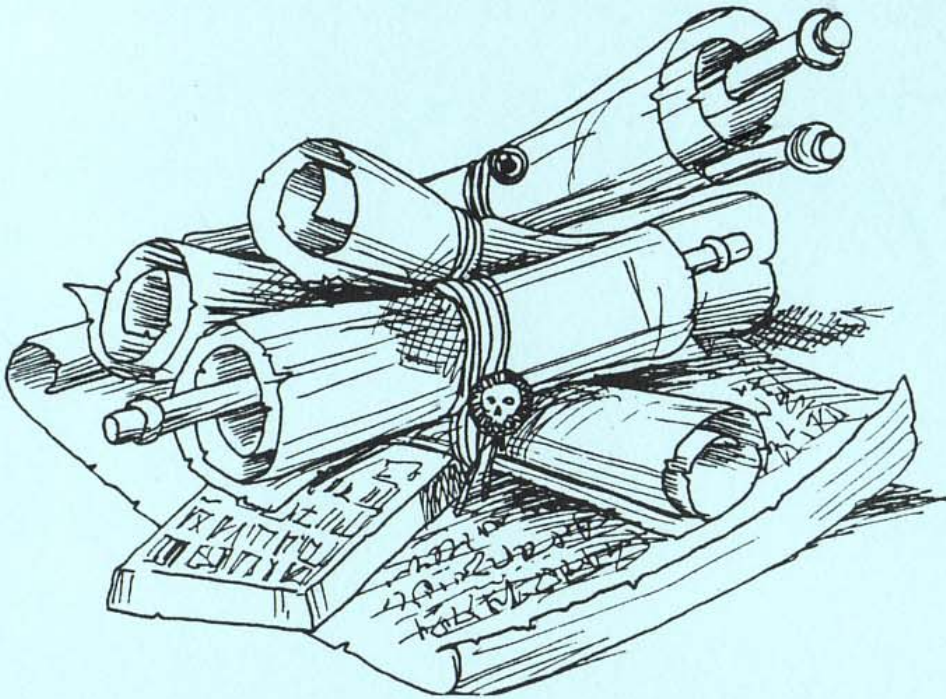


The Four Scrolls of Revelation

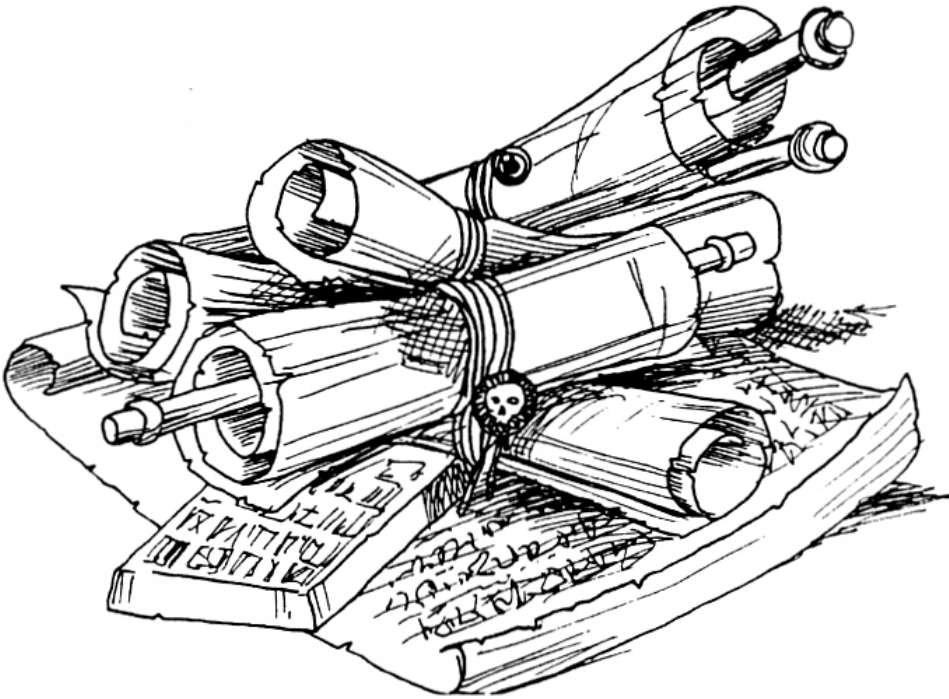


Convulsions C02
2002



THE UNSPOKEN WORD

The Four Scrolls of Revelation



**Convulsions C02
2002**



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THE UNSPOKEN WORD

The Four Scrolls of Revelation

There are four, their bindings straining with portent and power, their rolled parchment steeped in lore. In the blood of a thousand unborn and forgotten heroes are written secrets and mysteries. And maybe, there may even be a fourth, in which the unwary reader can even learn about worlds and times beyond Glorantha...

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In Memory of

Shaun Appelby

Author, Illustrator, Gamer

Died 4 July 2002

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The Sun Dome Templars

By Michael 'MOB' O'Brien

Invaluable assistance from Nick Brooke, Peter Metcalfe, Ian Thomson & Jane Williams

"Out of every young militiaman a Templar will emerge."

-- Narokoris the Wise, Count of the Sun Dome (1458-1498)

The current military structure of Sun County dates from the reign of Narokoris the Wise (1458-1498), immortalised in the Sun Dome Light List as the count "who trained all his people once again to the drill of spear and shield, and made his land peaceful". Narokoris's dynamic reign was the culmination of several generations of desperate struggle against the Praxian nomads.¹ While it was his immediate predecessor Skindilli Longlegs (1439-1458) who died in the heroic struggle to expel the last of the Bison khan overlords who held sway over the southern parts of the county, Narokoris was the count who devised a system to protect the Sun Dome's borders for ever onwards.

Narokoris's Reforms

Narokoris dispensed with many outmoded aspects of the old military establishment, which had its origins in the mercenary army that had come out to Prax with Arinsor Clearmind. But by Count Narokoris's day, it was no longer tenable for the Sun Dome to pretend it could field a classical Dara Happan army. Many of the traditional elements and tactics were hopelessly obsolete and clearly ineffective against their foes in this new land, the Animal Nomads and the trolls. Only the First Square could be maintained at full strength, and some units – for example, the chariot squadron – had completely ceased to exist.

The Sun Dome Militia

It its place Narokoris created a new structure which more accurately reflected the county's current manpower resources (poor) and strategic situation (perilous). The highly organised Sun Dome militia [see *Sun County*, p42] dates from this period, and its border patrols have warned of

nomad incursions ever since. The militia also serve as a superior citizen levy, with the best militiamen joining the ranks of the Templars. On the battlefield, the militia serve as archers in a defensive position behind the Templars.

Exploring its early secrets. Narokoris created a new rank in the cult for the militia leader, called the Guardian of Sun County. Kirstan the Good Killer was the first Guardian, later succeeding Narokoris (1498-1509); many Templars have followed this path to lead the Sun Dome.

The Sun Dome Templars

The Sun Dome Templars are the standing army of the Sun Dome. Narokoris reorganised the Templars into 10 Squares of 64 men each, plus a number of special squares and the Golden Guard, the First Square, who guard the Sun Dome. All up, the fighting strength of the Templars is approximately 800, superbly disciplined, and well-equipped with excellent weapons (including pikes), hoplite shields, heavy armour, and magical support. In a time of crisis Sun County could call upon nearly 4000 men, nearly the entire adult male population, though realistically the count might be able to must a force of 1000 militia to support the Templars.

Square I: The Golden Guard (128 hoplites)

The First Square, also known as the Golden Guard, are an elite brotherhood who on cult holy days literally turn their backs on the ceremonies to protect the Sun Dome.



¹ The Light List – that revered document which all Sun County children learn by rote – helps maintain the fiction that the Sun Domers have remained tenaciously independent ever since the land was settled in the Second Age. The Light List speaks blandly of various "outlander" counts during the Solitude of Testing (1200-1575). Yet the truth is that during this terrible period – between the Fall of Pavis and the arrival of Duke Dorasor – there were many dark times when some or all the people of Sun were in the thrall of the Animal Nomads, treated no better than any other of the Oasis folk. Yet the claims of independence are almost true, for the great Sun Dome temple itself was never sundered, and despite having foreign rulers at times, the line of High Priests remains pure and unsullied by outlander blood.

Answerable to Feshoaa, the ultimate magical defender of the temple [see *Sun County*, p39], they are led by the Guardians of the Four Directions, the four magical protectors of the Sun Dome, and are something of a law unto themselves. Always the elite fighting force in Sun County since their creation, the Golden Guard did not feature in Narokoris's reforms.

By tradition, in times of war the Golden Guard marches at the forefront of battle, and has the honour of being the last to withdraw. They are never hired out as mercenaries to fight other people's battles, and are only used for the defence of the Sun Dome lands. Lord Barthomet, Captain of the Golden Guard, cited this rule when he refused to march the First Square out to Moonbroth in 1610. Count Varthanis II was enraged by Barthomet's refusal and his inability to censure the Golden Guard certainly helped lead to his downfall shortly after. [For more information about the Golden Guard, see *Tales of the Reaching Moon #20*]

Squares II – VI & VIII (64 hoplites)

The men in these squares are the archetypal hoplites the Sun Dome is famous for.

Square VII – Showers of Gold (64 archers)

Officers and senior initiates in this square receive the gift of polygamy.

Square IX – Golden Shafts (64 javelin throwers)

The Golden Shafts take their place in the shield wall, but all have prodigious talent with the javelin.

Square X – The Perfect Square (64 hoplites)

All captains have served in this square, whose hand-picked hoplites are the best of the Sun Dome ("the best of the rest" sniff the Golden Guard). The Lieutenant of Sun County (currently Lord Belvani) commands this square, but delegates its day to day running to the senior file leader.

The Perfect Square is exempt from serving a tour out at the Count's salt mines at Pentridge, as are the Golden Guard.

Square XI – The Elevens (approximately 100 specialists)

Square XI is an eclectic mixture of combat and non-combatant specialists, anything that can't be safely shoehorned into any of the other Squares. For example, the dancer Promidious (see *The Garhound Contest*) belongs to the Elevens, even though he spends most of his time these days at the side of Count Solanthos. The Count's ceremonial chariot train also comes from this group.

The Captain of the XIth Square is the handsome and dashing Lord Blair Steeleye. Despite losing an eye in troll-fighting, his penchant for romantic poetry² and courtly manners makes him the County's most eligible bachelor.

Square XII – Dad's Square

This is a reserve square, and consists of the 64 "fittest retired veterans". These templars might look a little comical, straining to fit into their old armour, with grey beards and red faces under their helmets, but all have a lifetime's experience behind them protecting the Sun Dome against troll and nomad. While the Dads are exempt from patrolling, every year their most important – and most eagerly anticipated – duty is assembling together the Cupbearers Square so new templar recruits can be selected.

Square XIII – The Men with the Golden Gun

Better known as the "Cackhandlers", the Unlucky XIII is a specialised unit for templars whose collection of geases renders them incapable of joining the line of battle. These misfits guard the famous giant spear-throwing weapon that sits high on the bluffs at Harpoon, and are responsible for loading and priming the harpoon when it goes into use. With the full square manning the winches to prime the weapon and using a block and tackle to load the next missile into place, the harpoon can fire three shots in about 10 minutes.

The Cack-handers perform the manual tasks, but the actual aiming of the device is done by the *toxophilites*, hereditary priests from the town of Harpoon whose gifts from Yelmadio give them prodigious aim.

Square XIV – The Cupbearers

Nicknamed the "Young Pikes", this is a training square which only comes into existence for a short period each year (following the harvest) to select new recruits from the best of the Militia. It rarely reaches full strength, as the veteran templars clamour to pluck rookies with the most spunk to be chums in their own Squares.

The Battle of Moonbroth

Although the Sun Dome Templars have a well-earned reputation for repelling undesirable outsiders – and implacably hunting down and punishing nomad and troll raiders – their last major military action was the

² A sample of his work:

*"Every lass in the County looks at me,
but my brown eye is only for you, P.
You know just how to please,
To bring a grown man to his knees.
You turn me round in every way,
And shower me with gold each day.
Though we're apart for days and weeks
I long to stroke and kiss your cheeks."*

The envious maidens of the Sun Dome all agree that – whoever this mysterious "P" is – she certainly is lucky to have captured the heart of Lord Blair. [Poem adapted from *The Funky Squad Annual*, Viking Australia 1995]

Battle of Moonbroth in 1610. Their Pavic allies counted on the Sun Dome to join in the alliance with the Animal Nomads against the common enemy. At first Sun County professed neutrality, but then surprised everyone by marching out and joining the ranks of the invading Lunars.

The campaign began inauspiciously when Lord Barthomet, Captain of the 1st Square, refused to march out to battle, citing the ancient law that the Golden Guard were only to be used in the defence of the Sun Dome lands. Count Varthanis II sent the army on and stayed behind to argue with Barthomet about his "sacred duty". Neither earned any credit from this acrimonious division; Barthomet would not budge, and the count eventually arrived at the battlefield late.

The Light Captain of Sun County, Lord Rogar, was obliged to watch the battle from Lunar General Sor Eel's command tent. Invictus, the Captain of the Xth, was incapacitated by a shaman's sendings before the battle proper began. In the end, effective command in the field fell to Belvani, his senior file leader.

Belvani executed Rogar's orders to the letter, but for one crucial difference which to this day has perplexed military historians. Where Rogar commanded the Templars to form up on the right wing – the more honourable side, graciously permitted by the Lunar General as a courtesy to their new allies – Belvani assembled the Templars on the *extreme left* by the Dragonewts, and in fact carried out manoeuvres in an *exact mirror image* of what they ought to have been. This exposed the Templars to full onslaught of nomad fury, but they won the grudging admiration of the Lunars by standing firm. Countless nomads were skewered on Sun Dome pikes that day.³

Siding with the Lunars proved to be a shrewd decision. While Count Varthanis did lose his palace in Pavis – and ultimately his reign – it did preserve a measure of independence for Sun County that Varthanis's successor Solanthos has adroitly exploited. The Sun Domers only need to look downriver to see what the alternative would have been if they had joined the losing side: an army of occupation, zealous missionaries, crippling taxes, lewd and perverted behaviour, and so on.

Sun Domers on Horseback

Long ago, the Sun Domers raised horses, with mounted archers and even charioteers joining the line of battle. But their fabled chariot regiment the

Golden Axles never returned from Dragon Pass, where the Invincible Golden Horde was annihilated by dragon magic (1100), and the last Sun Cavalry perished at the Battle of Alavan Algary (1250), when the Animal Nomads drove the Horse People from the plains forever.

During the dark years of the Solitude of Testing, keeping the herds was untenable and horses became but a distant, but revered memory. Though their place was still preserved in the cult's many rituals, the Sun Domers had no choice but to adapt to their fate on foot. But at times Yelmario still chooses to bestow his horsegifts on uncomprehending templars, and the counts retain their ceremonial chariot.

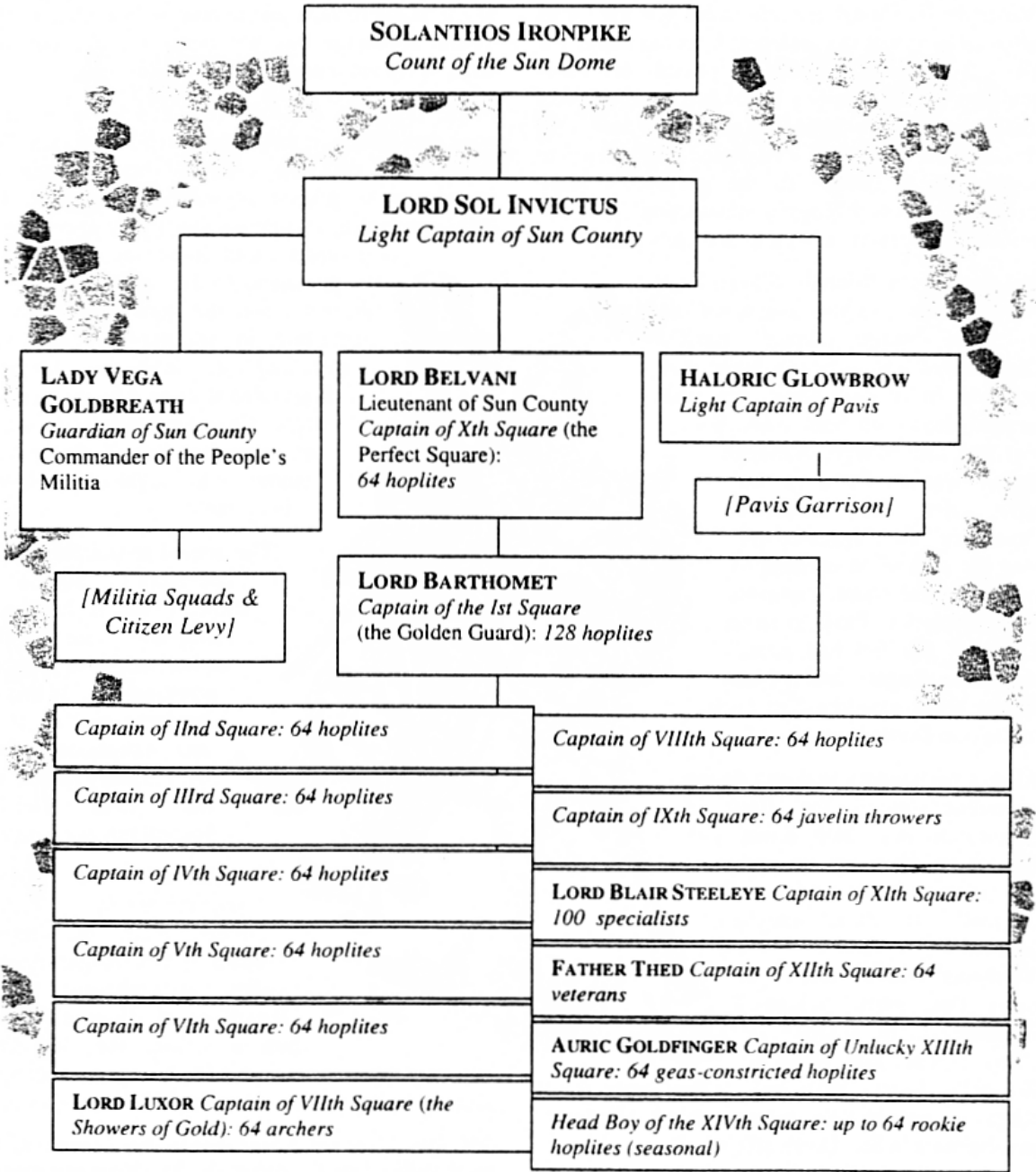
The Sun Domers played their part when the Lunars crushed the nomads at Moonbroth and in the relative peace this has brought, they are making their first tentative steps towards reintroducing horses. The rune lord Rogar – once Light Captain of the County, but blinded and banished to a retirement tower shortly after Moonbroth – lately received in a dream the command from Kuschile the Rider to reform the Horse Cavalry. His enemies condemn this vision as indecently ambitious, but after much debate the Light Guide Laertes Coatilon convinced the count to permit Rogar's unorthodox return from exile.

Thus far "Rogar's Riders" are little more than a militia squad on borrowed mounts from Lunar stables, but the Count is disturbed by the loyal following the blind rune lord has gathered around him and is beginning to rue the decision. As yet, the young horsemen have not been tested in combat, but in demonstrations have already shown off horse archery skills to rival any nomad.

³ Were it not for the glorious victory, Belvani probably would have lost his eyes and been forced to drink molten gold: as it was, this inconvenient war hero found himself promoted and sent back to Tarsh as an Ambassador.



Command Structure of the Sun County Sun Dome Templars



Notes:

- Each square is divided into 4 files of 16 men, commanded by a File Leader.
- Each file is further divided into two half-files of 8 men, commanded by a Half File Leader.
- Each Square also has its own chaplain – the Golden Guard has 4 – acolytes on permanent attachment from the Sun Dome Temple. This is a recent innovation of the Light Guide, Laertes Coatilon [Coatilon got the inspiration from the Lunar tribunes. Solanthos well remembers how he rose to the top, and the chaplains serve as his eyes and ears in the ranks, as a way of ensuring loyalty and discipline.



The Story of Rogar the Rider

Rogar's Fall

General Rogar, who as Light Captain presided over the glorious victory at Moonbroth, was less than a year later forcibly retired by Count Varthanis II. Though the Sun Dome saw the Lunar alliance as one of convenience, from the outset Sor Eel, the Lunar Governor, placed enormous pressure on the county's leadership to forge ever-closer political, religious and economic links with the conquerors. While it appeared Varthanis was ever-ready to accede to the governor's latest demands, General Rogar's obstructing influence remained a constant irritant to Sor Eel's plans.⁴

Finally, after a "friendly" Shield Push match between a Lunar contingent and a local militia squad rapidly degenerated into a vicious brawl that resulted in a destructive riot and several deaths on both sides, Sor Eel had had enough. Although Rogar was in Pavis at the time, Sor Eel produced "evidence" that suggested this was the start of an uprising to overthrow the count. Varthanis sent templars to Pavis to arrest him, but Sor Eel had already detained Rogar and Lunar troops were escorting him back to the Sun Dome in chains.

After a perfunctory trial and despite a public outcry the Hero of Moonbroth was held down and blinded before being immured in a retirement tower. Sor Eel returned to Pavis satisfied. Ironically, shortly after Varthanis himself suffered the same fate when Solanthos Ironpike, Light Captain of Pavis, deposed him. Much to Sor Eel's chagrin, Solanthos – a firm supporter of Rogar – immediately began cutting off Lunar involvement in Sun Dome affairs.

Rogar's Return

The story of Lord Rogar's return is a certainly a fantastic and strange one. His followers implicitly believe it to be true, and that Rogar should be restored to a position of rank and honour in Sun County. So far, Count Solanthos has not done so, but nor has he ordered his old master back to the towers.

Rogar says that although banished he never gave up hope that Yelmalio would restore him to grace. Finally, many years after his eyes had been burned to dry sockets as he prayed skyward, he began to hear a strange neighing outside his tower, day after day. As he searched his soul, imploring the Fiery Father for guidance, Rogar says he received his answer when the door to his tower was smashed to splinters by the animal. Reaching out with his fingers, he discovered it to be a huge, magnificent horse. He immediately rode it back to an astonished Sun Dome, picking up some of his loyal old followers in his wake.

The annual muster of the XIVth "Cupbearers" Square was taking place as he made his triumphant return. If the authorities were considering arresting him at this point, the large number of young and impressionable cadets who quickly rallied around the blind Hero of Moonbroth put paid to that.

Although the customary punishment for an authorised return from banishment is death by fire, Rogar claims that when he embraced the beast Kuschile the Rider himself gave him a vision: the Sun Domers reigning supreme over the Plains again; and mission: accomplishing this by reforming the Horse Cavalry.

GM Note: Word has passed around that Rogar's mysterious black stallion closely matches the description of a magnificent colt missing presumed stolen from the famous horse-racing stables at Old Regret, located on the banks of the Snowy River in the Tarsh Uplands. There is said to be a reward of a thousand pounds of silver for its return.



⁴ Some say the resentment goes deeper than that. As leader of the Sun Dome forces, General Rogar was with Sor Eel in his command tent at Moonbroth. It is said he earned the Lunar commander's lasting enmity by pointing out a number of elementary tactical errors Sor Eel had made in the deployment of his forces, which if not corrected, could have been disastrous given the unusual nature of the terrain and the type of enemy faced.

The Imperial Economy

By Kerith Joreph, Monetary Realist Prime of Glamour University

Transcribed by Martin Laurie, with Mark Galeotti

Lunar Concepts

Although it seems contradictory to the goals of the Empire, there is in the Lunar faith an overriding concern for the well being of the community which calls for an economy of plenty. After all, in pure Lunar fiscal philosophy, the Empire is considered merely a means to promote the ideology of the Goddess in all her forms and ultimately manifest her as her Rashoran self.

The overarching economic activities of the Empire are thus not governed by mere fiscal need, but by the value system of the Goddess herself. The Lunar worldview is based on oneness of this world and the hereafter, since human life is conceived as one harmonious whole orientated towards union with the ultimate.

However, this philosophical underpinning is faced with some harsh realities when attempts are made to put it into practice on an Empire wide level. Significant friction occurs between the Lunar concept and the history and traditions of economic activity and interaction amid the heterogeneous and at times turbulent component cultures and nations within the Empire.

Economic Influences

The Role of the Emperor

The Red Emperor is not a figurehead; he is in all aspects of Imperial rule the lynchpin, the centre, the core. Without him there is division and the same centrifugal forces that have broken up any previous Pelorian Empires into their constituent parts, quickly, and often violently. It is his role as ultimate immortal sovereign of all the peoples of the Empire, his ability to be ruler in both religious and secular circles, of all internal cultures simultaneously that defines his method of rule and the form of the Lunar Empire. Fiscally, the Emperor unifies several diverse and often contradictory economic systems into a functioning whole. Only his inclusive Lunar nature allows this to occur, all previous empires have attempted to force their own systems on those they conquered, a flawed concept that led to their ultimate demise.

Dara Happa

The heartland of the Empire is the incredibly rich hinterlands of the Oslir River, or Dara Happa. Though Dara Happa is no longer a political

Currencies of the Empire

The *Daran* is the standard Dara Happa measure of Imperial level wealth. *Daran* means literally 'Riches' (Dara Happa is the 'Rich Lands') and has been quantified to equal 1000 gold wheels or 20,000 Imperials. All measurements of Satrapal-level wealth are in Darans while only the richest of citizens can measure their personal wealth at this level.

The *Wheel* is minted by the Lokarnos cult and is the only Dara Happa coin. No true Dara Happa would use anything else, but very few of them ever get to see one.

The silver *Imperial* is the primary Lunar coin, so associated with Lunar fiscal policy is it that it is often simply called the "Lunar". Imperials are minted by the Etyries cult and have been valued deliberately as the value of an average peasant's work or the pay of one average soldier for one week.

The *Navar* is the copper coin of the Empire. Mined from the copper reserves of Navaria and Doblian, it is minted by the ancient rites of the Naveria cult and was used by the affluent pottery industry of the region to pay for clay, tools and other goods made in Dara Happa. The nobles of Dara Happa would hoard the coin and pay for expensive Naverian pottery with it, which they valued far more than the trade goods made by their peasants. Since those days it has become widely used, especially with the introduction of the Imperial, which is worth 10 Navars.

division within the Empire, it is nevertheless the highly durable bedrock of Imperial wealth. Unlike many parts of the Empire, Dara Happa has never developed a tradition of trade at a mercantile level; rather it has operated through a controlled economy based on its hierarchical social structure. The Emperor, and below him, the Yelmic nobility, control all aspects of production and wealth. Control of the wealth of the land descends the hierarchy while the wealth and productivity of the lowliest Lodrili ascends to enrich his betters as directed by their Yelm given wisdom and centuries of tradition.

The concept of mercantile enrichment is simply ludicrous and quite possibly offensive to a traditional Dara Happa who understands that one is born in one's place and that mere wealth is not a substitute for Yelm-given nobility. The only trade deity to speak of in the Yelm Pantheon is Lokarnos and he is the Mover rather than the trader, used to transport goods as directed by the Yelmic nobility.

The lowest levels of economic activity are therefore barter between the peasantry or city folk. Their taxes are paid not in coin, but in kind and through labour. Above them is a system of traditional positions that accrue specified levels of state-assigned wealth as defined by the Fiscal Scrutineers of the Buserian priesthood. Only at the higher sub-overseer levels is coinage actually used. The measure of coinage used is always the gold Daran. Silver and copper coins are anathema and other cultures' use of them is looked down upon as the basest expression of their savagery and boorishness.

The gold Daran stockpiles of the Emperor were frequently used to fund war efforts, pay off foreign governments or tribes or institute massive public works with foreign specialists (Dara Happan labour is usually provided by obligation rather than payment) rather than to foster trade. Often, though, Imperial assistance takes the form not of a specific grant of funds or resources but simply a lifting of taxation burdens in the future. One of the incentives driving the campaign to resettle the Redlands, for example, is the promise that for every peasant family settled for at least a year, the Association or other body which facilitated their migration receives a one-off tax exemption for that year. Sadly, this generosity has been abused in some cases, as patrons encourage large families to settle in the Redlands, but in several homesteads, allowing them to be counted as many families for the tax break.

The Lunar Empire has made some changes to the traditional Dara Happan economic order with the implementation of an effective form of silver specie, the ubiquitous Imperial. While the peasantry has yet to see or use significant quantities of the Imperial, the coin has created a boom in the potential avenues of trade for the would-be entrepreneurs of the Rich Land, especially in the cities along the Oslir. This in turn has created severe social friction, as there is no place defined in Yelm's hierarchy for such an unruly and demanding social class. Inevitably these often-talented people have been driven to the freedom of the Lunar cults as an outlet for their talents. Etyries awaits them with open arms.

The Satrapies

The Satraps are viceroys for the Emperor; their jurisdiction embraces both civil and military spheres, and they are responsible for maintaining the payments of annual tribute to the Emperor as well as supplying recruits for the Imperial army or strategic labour projects.

Due to the needs of ensuring political control, the Satrapies are Imperial organisations that usually define areas with many cultural or political

groupings within their boundaries. Therefore it is common to have a Satrapy with many different structures of finance. Following the Emperor's model, the Satraps control these diverse elements of fiscal revenue by becoming titular leader for the sub-cultures within their domain. For example, the Satrap of Darjiin is also the High Manimati of Darjiin. The Satrap of Sylila is also High King of Dara-Ni, Lakrene and the Uplands. The Satrap of Kostaddi is Overseer of west Esvuthil, Oil Lord of Karasal and Bright Face of Darsen. These are subordinate roles that are considered too minor for the Emperor to undertake and as such he delegates these authorities to them. However, in return for this considerable power – as in effect they are autonomous rulers within their domains as long as they follow overarching Imperial policy – the Satraps must provide annual tribute to the Emperor as assessed by the Imperial Buserians.

The River Cults

Due to the great size of the three core rivers of the Empire, they serve as the primary arteries of trade in the Empire, so much so that the road system has been consciously undeveloped due to the carrying capacity of the many rivers of Peloria. The Oslir, Arcos and Poralistor cults dominate trade on these rivers, as is their ancient right. However the Lunar Empire broke their effective trade monopoly in the early decades of rebellion when Imperial interests and Riverine political views collided. Rightly and inevitably the Empire triumphed over such parochial concerns and consolidated their rights of trade and traffic along the river.

Since those days, the River cults have the right to charge tolls on any non-official traffic along the river. The toll is regarded as a religious due, but is mandated by the Emperor and carries the backing of Imperial law. It is set by the Etyries cult in consultation with the river cults every 10 years on the Breaching of the Rivers. This marks the anniversary of the Imperial triumph, when the surrender of the river gods is re-enacted, and is usually an auspicious day for trade. In return for this consideration, the Emperor has the right to call upon the river folk to move his forces and provide auxiliaries to the Imperial Navy. The river cults have the right, in return, to call on the Imperial Navy to protect them against piracy and foreign threats. Once the request is made formally, a year is allowed in which time the navy must have dealt with the threat. If the peril continues, then the river cult for that area can raise tolls to any level it requires to allow it to meet the menace to its rights.

Darsen and the Great Sister

Although it is within the Satrapy of Karasal, Darsen, the land of Women, is independent of the Satrap's fiscal systems. The Great Sister is honorary leader of the Darsen Council and receives a tribute from the Sisterhoods in return for her patronage in the

Ordanestyum and her unceasing efforts for all women in the Empire. Much of the revenue generated by the clay workers, cottage looms, wood workers and other traditional Darseni industries ends up arming and paying for the Sister's Army. The large city of Graclodont is the personal fief of the Great Sister and she alone collects revenues from the lucrative Poralistor river trade from the Sweet Sea to the White Sea. The loss of these revenues has made Karasal one of the poorest of the Satrapies and infuriates the Satrap, so much so that the sight of the Great Sister sends him into apoplectic furies severe enough to threaten his life.

The Provincial Government

The Provinces provide yearly tribute to the Provincial Overseer in Mirin's Cross and he forwards a tribute to the Emperor as agreed in the Ordanestyum. However, this revenue rarely physically leaves the Provinces. Typically it is held by Imperial agents and used to finance Imperial efforts in the Provinces, either military or civil. For example, the task of supplying and paying of most of the troops in Dragon Pass has been delegated to Imperial Associations that receive the revenue from the Provincial Government and see to it that the logistics of the operations there are properly funded. In return for their efforts they receive a reasonable profit.

Each Kingdom in the Provinces collects revenues according to their time-honoured traditions. For example, in Tarsh, the King still relies heavily on the King's Share, annual tribute from each tribal chieftain collected through clan chiefs. By contrast, in Holay this kind of community-based taxation has increasingly been supplemented and in some cases supplanted by specific direct taxes on industries and activities, from the Red Corner (the crown is due one-seventh of all red pottery) through to the Kernel Levy millers much charge in the Queen's name whenever he grinds a peasant's corn). The amount that each Kingdom is obliged to provide the Provincial Overseer is determined every 7 years based on the Provincial Census that gathers all wealth information in the *Five Books of the Kingdoms*. Most of the revenue provided goes to funding the Provincial Government, its military forces and its religious and civil programmes. The constituent Kingdoms have a military obligation as a form of taxation and they often gain tribute relief if their forces have been heavily used. Due to the constant action in Dragon Pass, Tarsh has taken a disproportionate load in the Imperial war effort there. As a result, the other Provinces have had to pay a special tax to fund Tarshite forces, much to their chagrin as they believe that Tarsh has provoked and lobbied for Imperial involvement in

the Pass simply as part of its ceaseless campaign of self-aggrandisement.

Trade in the Provinces is strong as Issaries and Etyries temples and leagues compete and open up new avenues of trade within the Empire and beyond. Since the creation of the Provincial Government and the regulation of trade within its boundaries as well as the creation of a



peaceful dispute resolution system, incomes from cross-regional trade have soared. This prosperity has allowed for some impressive revenues to be created that have in turn allowed a profusion of building projects, such as the Gargantuan of Thernen to celebrate Provincial splendour, or social programmes such as the Provincial Church Grand Orphanage of Filichet.

The Lunar Synod

The Lunar Church has had a profound effect on the economic interactions of the Empire. Due to its widespread network of temples and worshippers, the Lunar Church has representatives across the Empire. The one-seventh tithes – 'scythes' – that the Church brings in filter through this vast network until they end up in the two great Lunar cult centres of Glamour and Torang. The Etyries cult is the mainstay of the vast religious fiscal apparatus that supports the Lunar citizen and the cult structures wherever they may be. The Lunar Synod has several subcommittees whose task it is to ensure the continued prosperity of the Lunar Church, as this is vital to its ongoing proselytising efforts and the spiritual health of the Empire. The orphanages, communes, temples and pilgrimages are all supported by the wealth of the Church.

Increasing land donations have allowed the Church to become wealthy, independent of its tithes, and these revenues are used to further its power and efforts across the Empire every year. Due to its widespread presence, the Lunar Church has adopted a banking role previously only seen in the Vanchite Magnates or Syllilan Cartels. A note taken from one diocese can be reclaimed in another and thus Synod Bonds as they are officially known are increasingly being used as a form of currency, freeing the user from the odious task of carrying around dozens of Dara in specie.

The Financial Houses

Due to the religious impossibility of a Dara Happan indulging in the barbarous practice of usury, the centuries before the Lunar Empire saw the development of several foreign (in other words, non-Dara Happan) methods of gathering significant amounts of money quickly, in return for future revenues in excess of the amount originally obtained. While the Emperors of Dara Happa would wear black and live in a sewer before admitting to borrowing money from foreigners, it was nevertheless a fact of pre-Lunar history that this was done on many occasions. Typically, war caused such a demand for immediate revenues and often those wars were of a civil disposition. Three distinct groups came to be known for their ability to fund such enterprises.

The first, oldest and still most successful are the Vanchites, or 'the Thieves' as Dara Happans ungratefully call them. Emperor Elmexdros allowed Vanchites into his lands to provide funding for his endless wars in return for guaranteed revenues from various cities and Imperial monopolies. As a sign of their usurious stigma, the Vanchites were required to wear their racoon-styled paint while about in public, a tradition that continues to this day. The Vanchite Magnates have strong trade connections all along the Oslir and gather funds from many different sources as facilitators of trade. They excel in negotiations and own significant areas of revenue creation in Dara Happa.

The Sylilan Cartels grew to oppose Vanchite domination of the lucrative loans market. First a collection of riverine traders who borrowed money on the strength of their future wool profits to finance the wars against Carmania, they have since grown in prominence as the primary source of extra funding for the Sylilan Satrap during the Seleran Wars. They are particularly strong in the provinces and are linked with several powerful Imperial Associations.

The Sweet Sea League once operated on all sides of the Sweet Sea until the ban and served as a potent lending institution to the Shahs of Carmania, having links along the Janube as far as Sog and being able to summon massive funds from them for short term borrowing. With the Ban and the rise in Lunar power, the League lost a lot of its strength, particularly as they opposed the Empire after the Blood Kings War. Now however, they have rebounded with strong links to the Great Sister and the River cults, they also supply fiscal services to many Carmanian Houses.

These great finance conglomerates have increasingly faced competition from the Imperial Associations as they rise in power and numbers.

The Emperor has financed several short-term projects with their aid and in return has granted great titles and rewards that have left the Financial Houses seething at the lost opportunities.

Associations

Originally a Dara Happan concept, the Association forms the economic foundation of most activity in the Empire. Almost everyone belongs to one league or another that is tied in with a large Association, which in turn has links to even larger or more political Associations.

In the modern Empire, some of these Associations are huge, rivalling small countries in their economic power and sometimes in their military strength. There are two main types, those sanctioned by a Satrap, operating within a limited local area defined by the Satrapal boundaries and those that are Imperial, given the option of operating across the Empire.

The Emperor alone has the right to issue an Imperial charter to a would-be Imperial Association and it can only be removed by express order of the Emperor once given. Imperial Associations are usually Empire-spanning or beyond and have many different remits and philosophies but all are powerful, have links to many different regions and often significant assets at hand.

The Satrapal Association is chartered by the Satrap but may only operate within his area of control and as such they tend to be smaller groups (though many have huge memberships and a wide range of assets) and are often associated with a wider Imperial Association.

Imperial Associations are taxed according to their profits, which are audited every year by the Buseri. Satrapal Associations are checked less often and usually perform a tax farming role for the Satrap. They are given responsibility for a source of revenue and provide the Satrap with the specified revenue, only taking a profit if they have been able to collect more than they had to pay the Satrap, and actually taking a loss if not.

Glamour

The Imperial capital is a personal fief of the Emperor and creates and costs thousands of Daran each year. Feeding the teeming city takes a significant percentage of Imperial revenue as part of the Glamour Grain Grant, but as a centre of trade and pilgrimage it provides tolls and tithes to the treasury. Glamour is also the most specie-centred city in the Empire; more Imperials are circulated in Glamour daily than would be seen in the entire yearly economy of Aggar. The effect of this fiscal activity cannot be underestimated. The compounding impact of having many of Glorantha's best artificers and entrepreneurs in one place is evident in the increasing trade in finished goods, the profusion of mercantile ventures originating in Glamour and the ever-growing quest for luxury goods, a sign of a

wealthy people, or at least a proportion of people with the surplus income to devote to consumption.

Carmania

Carmania holds an unusual position in the Imperial economy. Due to its nature as a Kingdom ruled by the Shah, it is accepted that Carmania is actually a personal holding of the Emperor, or Padishah of Peloria. As such, the revenue generated in Carmania goes directly to the Emperor himself from the tribute given by the Satraps. Part of that revenue is usually donated by the Emperor to the Imperial treasury, but most of it remains as his to employ. The Emperor's Janissaries and personal properties in Carmania are maintained with this revenue.

Imperial Customs and Duties

To deal with the ever-growing trade in luxury goods and Provincial imports, Emperor Robustus created his Customs & Duties branch of the Hunter Corps. Their job is to safeguard the economic interests of the Heartlands. To that end, the Imperial Customs inspectors have been emplaced around the borders of the Heartlands in strategic travel spots and roving patrols to ensure that the duties on all goods being imported are paid. This has become a very important source of revenue to the Emperor and has saved the Heartlands from unfair competition from Provincials and foreigners that capitalise on cheap labour costs. In particular the grain importations from Tarsh to Glamour have recently felt the weight of new Imperial duties to protect Heartlands farms that were lying fallow, their peasants and nobles bereft of their incomes while greedy barbarians grew rich on Imperial silver.

Luxury goods are also heavily taxed and this has created a smuggling problem for the Customs inspectors to deal with. Often the smugglers are heavily armed, mounted or aboard ship and are prepared to fight for the great profits they can reap. To counter this threat, the inspectors are themselves well armed and able to call on their brothers in the Imperial Hunter Corps to bolster their limited numbers when facing a potent smuggling cartel.

Kralorela

Since the opening of the Pentan wastes to trade, Kralorela has become one of the Empire's greatest trading partners – to our increasing cost. Luxury silks, pottery, teas and spices from Kralorela have become staggeringly popular with the affluent of the Empire, so much so that caravans cross the wastes every week in great numbers. Unfortunately the Kralori seem to desire few Imperial goods and so we have had to trade gold for their products. This drain on specie has had a damaging effect on

Sources of income		Daran
<i>Satrapy Tribute</i>		
Silver Shadow		800
Kostaddi		1180
Oraya		500
Oronin		950
Doblian		970
Karasal		650
First Blessed		1400
Sylila		1120
Darjiin		1320
Imperial Association Taxes		1700
Provincial Government Tribute		1880
Imperial Monopolies		2450
Imperial Customs & Duties		1300
<i>Imperial Domains</i>		
Glamour		610
Carmania		900
Emperor's land		750
The Imperial Cult		220
Total		18700
Expenditures		Daran
60% Armed forces		
Imperial Guard		1683
Cavalry Corps		2805
Heartland Corps		3366
College of Magic		1683
Garrison Army		2805
Total		11220
14% Apparatus of state		
Internal Security		655
Bureaucracy		1571
Tax collection		393
Total		2618
12% Public works		
Buildings		449
Transportation		898
Temples		449
Irrigation & Dams		449
Total		2244
6% Religious events		1122
4% Glamour Grain Grant		748
4% Reserve		738

the money supply, so much so that the Emperor ordered an increase in Hazia and other moon-grown herbs that have an addictive quality to the Kralori in an attempt to create a market that will offset our fiscal losses. Unfortunately the Kralori have become aware of the social unrest such addiction can cause, something that their oppressed peoples grasp onto eagerly, and have instituted a blockade of some Imperial factors. A trade war is brewing and smuggling is on the increase.

Imperial Monopolies

The Emperor claims monopoly ownership of the Seven Staple products or minerals: Silver, Glass, Gold, Gin, Iron, Moonrock and Slaves. All of these staples within the Empire are property of the Emperor and the rights to trade, mine or gather these items in a specific region where no competition is allowed on Imperial edict is given out in a Monopoly Charter by the Emperor's Office of Monopolies in return for an initial fee and yearly fixed incomes. These have to be paid regardless of the profit the monopoly makes the speculator and such hard fiscal realities have seen many great houses broken, their lands taken and their people enslaved for want of payment to the Office of Monopolies. On the other hand, a sound monopoly purchased at the right time and handled well can assure significant profits for eternity and many houses high in the Emperor's favour own one or more such monopolies in their region.

Conclusions

Though the Lunar fiscal philosophy cannot reach the perfection of the ideal, it is clear that the Lunar faith, the glory of the Emperor and the inclusivity of the Goddess have had a profound effect on the peoples of the Empire. The decades of peace since the debacle of the Seleran Wars have shown the durability of the Pelorian economy and our potential. With the final defeat of the rebel gods, it seems only a matter of time before most of Genertela joins us in our quest for fiscal perfection.



The Giant Uz

By James Frusetta

"Listen, whatever it is, it's huge – oh Goddess above, the wall is gone, it broke the wall – no, it can't be, it's too big, it can't be, they can't get that big, Nooooo-"

Last thoughts of Syntagmatarch Ekhresion of the Cold Line, transmitted to the College of Magic

Explorers on the fringes of Valind's Glacier have long told stories of the great, mysterious shapes that sometimes can be seen lumbering on the glacier. Many explanations of their nature have been given: hollri, great mammoths or bears, spirits of the glacier. The reality is far worse. The uztor, the Giant Uz, still live.

Only a few uztor escaped to Komor in the Exodus, and they died one by one in the wars against Komor's inhabitants and against chaos. Humans and uz alike thought they had died out on the surface before Time began. But the uztor of Betakang's Land prospered: hidden from enemies, well-equipped to deal with the cold of the glacier, and untroubled by the problems that beset their uzko cousins, the uztor slowly gained in strength and their tribe in Betakang's Land grew in strength and size.

As the Hero Wars approach, they seek vengeance, along with their uzhim brethren of the glacier, as the uz of Betakang's Land plot to twist the Hero Wars to their own desires. The lands south of the Glacier – and the Cold Line of the Kalikos Icebreaker cult. They will erupt forth in the Winterbringer Horde, and all Glorantha will tremble before their wrath.

Typical Uztor

Innate Abilities: Acute Darksense 15, Eat Anything 14, Endure Cold 5W, Hungry 15, Large 10W, Resist Poison 15, Strong 10W, Tough 18

Typical Abilities: Close Combat (Stomp, Giant Maul) 1W, Find Prey in Snowstorm 1W, Know Glacier 17, Kyger Litor Tradition Knowledge or Himile Tradition Knowledge 13, Run Down Prey 3W, Uztor Customs 13

Typical Weapons and Armour: Giant Maul 1W^5, Stomp 1W^4, Thick Skin and Furs ^3

Secrets of the Moon Bear

The Cyclical Ursine

By Mark Galeotti

This article is drawn from background work carried out for Issaries, Inc.'s *Imperial Lunar Handbook* series, and an abbreviated version appears in the first book. However, as with all such work, there is always scope for refinement and redevelopment. It appears with the permission of Issaries, Inc., but the final version may differ.

The High Bear pantheon is a form of Orlanthi worship strong in Sylila and northern Aggar, in which Odayla the Bear, also known as the Star Bear, is revered above Orlanth himself. With the arrival of the Empire and Lunar worship, the High Bear pantheon has managed largely to adapt itself well, and the Red Goddess is often portrayed as riding the great Star Bear. Lunarised Sylilans interpret this to mean that Sedenya is Mistress of the Star Bear, while traditionalists simply say that he is lending his strength to her cause.

However, a new bear cult has arisen which seems to unite elements of the new and the old – what remains to be seen is who will benefit the most. In 5/34 (1497), Hwarin's Well began to send clouds of red smoke into the skies, while the Gyndan seeresses who tended this oracular site tried vainly to understand the portents. For seven days and nights it burned, the smoke darkening and lightening with the phases of Rufelza. On the seventh night the smoke took the form of a great red ringed bear, terrifying, inspiring and majestic, which ascended to the moon.

For the next fifty years, debate raged as to whether this was the manifestation of some new or unknown deity, a symbol of Odayla's marriage to Rufelza or a curse or blessing on Sylila. It led to the infamous Twenty-Seven Disputations, which left half of Kerikor a smoking ruin and the other half festooned with pamphlets. It sundered the marriage of Satrap Anadras and his Aggari wife Bheronwydd. It prompted Blind Fekeh, the 'Bard of Lakrene', to write 'Star and Moon', arguably his greatest play.

The Moon Bear's existence and divinity was gradually accepted, first through the minor and major miracles he wrought and then by his dramatic appearance at the Black Night Burning a century ago. An entropic discharge at the Jillaro Temple of the Reaching Moon led to a so-called 'meltup' as raw essences boiled into the night sky just as the Glowline failed. Rufelza's face was blotted from view and dark creatures of otherworldly hunger – later identified as the Tokari Void Locusts – began to congeal from the clouds



of unresolved possibility. Suddenly the Moon Bear roared through the sky in all his terrible glory, his fur streaming sparks of moonglow, his fangs glittering as he roared a challenge. He was blotted from view as the Locusts swarmed around him, then he blazed with power and the void parasites boiled away.

Since then, his cult has become recognised by all and embraced by many. Indeed, the Moon Bear and his various aspects have become the dominant cult in the satrapy. He has seven forms, each associated with one of the moon's phases and also the cycles of life in Sylila, the most popular being The Sleeper, BendraYoo Stand-Up and CandarYoo the Forager. However, the Moon Bear's origins and motivations are still unclear and in many ways discovering and defining this will be crucial to shaping Sylila's future. On the one hand, there are aspects of the Moon Bear's worship – and

especially the Red Moon Burning subcult – which make it a credible candidate to replace or absorb Odayla the Star Bear, marking the definitive incorporation of the High Bear pantheon into the Lunar Way, just as Sylila was brought into the Empire. There is even talk of mating the Star Bear with Red Moon Burning to produce a new Lunar divine dynasty for Sylila. However, there are also traditionalists who look at Sylila's history in another way. They insist that the presence of this new deity shows that even the Red Moon can be brought into the High Bear pantheon – they too favour a divine mating, just as Dalthippa and Ingkot's union brought new power and prosperity to Sylila. Whether the Moon Bear will allow Sylila to use the moon's powers for their own glory or instead finally bind the 'Barbarian Satrapy' to the Empire is one of the unresolved questions which will be answered in the Hero Wars...

Entry Requirements: None.

Mundane Abilities: Bear Lore, Mythology of the Moon Bear.

Affinities:

Bear (Bear's Hide, Bear's Strength, Identify Scent, Ignore Pain, Terrify Prey)

Otherworld (Bite Away Magic, Bite Away Sorcery, Bite Away Spirits, Communicate with Otherworldly Beings, Sense Otherworldly Presence)

Worshippers: A growing number of Sylilans from every walk of life, who see the Moon Bear as combining the best of both Lunar and High Bear faiths.

Other Side: The Moon Bear roams the skies near Rufelza, and burrows in her skyplains lead to the surface of the moon.

Holy Days: The high holy day is Red Smoke Night (Full-Half/31 or Gods/Illusion/Dark), celebrating the night smoke first began to pour from Hwarin's Well. This initiates a week of varied festivities, with the appropriate day devoted to each form, culminating in Red Moon Burning's increasingly regal ceremonies.

Other Connections: The different subcults all represent aspects of the Moon Bear, and they are closely linked. The High Bear pantheon is ambivalent about the Moon Bear.

Disadvantages: Subject to the Lunar Cycle

Aspects of Moon Bear

Moon-Gazer (Crescent-Go)

The most enigmatic of Moon Bear's forms, Moon-Gazer is the cub who watches the night sky for signs and portents with a natural wisdom that is neither taught nor affected. She is as often the heartening presence who assures the community of good harvests and safe returns as the howling prophet of terror and woe. As such, her followers are respected and always protected, but rarely fully accepted into

their communities.

Mundane Abilities: Arresting Presence, Carrying Voice, Understand Omen.

Virtues: Mercurial, Quiet.

Affinities:

Moon-Gazing (See at Night, See Far, See What's There)

Otherworld extra feat: See Otherworld

Secret: **Signs and Portents** (At the Narrator's discretion, the devotee will receive prophetic visions when gazing at the moon – these may be clear and helpful but will more often be cryptic, disturbing, ambiguous or all three.)

UrruYoo (Dying)

UrruYoo is the hunter, who brings down the reincarnating moondeer and mundane prey alike for his community. He is especially popular amongst the highland tribes. He uses not ranged weapons but stealth and speed to get close enough to his prey for a kill, and also knows the secrets of claw-fishing in the cold highland streams and the snarl that robs his prey of the will to flee.

Mundane Abilities: Fishing, Hunting, Remain Motionless, Sprint, Stealth.

Virtues: Fierce, Patient.

Affinities:

Hunter (Attract Prey Animal, Burst of Speed, Endure Cold, Hide Scent, Quick Slash, Stunning Smash)

Bear extra feat: Startling Roar

Secret: **The Great Snarl** (The hunter's bellowing snarl freezes prey animals within earshot with terror. Only trained, magical or otherwise special animals may resist; no multiple target penalties apply. Timorous sentient beings such as trollkin and cowards may also be affected, at the Narrator's discretion.)

The Sleeper (Black)

The Sleeper brings her people the daily respite of healing sleep and the deeper comfort of the Great Sleep from which they will eventually awake reborn. She is the representation of winter and hibernation, healing and time.

Mundane Abilities: Calming Presence, Sing Lullaby.

Virtues: Caring, Gentle, Unhurried

Affinities:

Healing Sleep (Bring Sleep, Cleanse Dreams, Hibernate, Sleep Safely in Cold, Sleep That Casts Out Spirits, Sleep That Heals Minds, Sleep That Heals Wounds)

Otherworld extra feat: Lay Dead to Final Rest ritual.

Secret: **Sleep Back to Life** (As *Storm Tribe*, p151, except that a devotee may also sacrifice her own life to cast this on another worshipper of the Moon Bear instead.)

CandarYoo the Forager (Crescent-Come)

After hibernation comes hope and hunger. CandarYoo shows his worshippers that there is opportunity and sustenance in even the most unusual places, whether taking the honeycombs from bee's hives or digging

truffles from the ground. He is also the cheerful, no-nonsense midhusband who helps women bear their cubs safely.

Mundane Ability: Evaluate Food Quality, Forage, Identify Edible Plants, Know Way Home, Midwife.

Virtues: Cheerful, Curious, Hard-Working, Optimistic.

Affinities:

Feed Family (Appease Bee ritual, Dig, Ease Birth ritual, Find Potable Water, Make Little Food Go Round, Preserve Food ritual, Smell Food)

Bear additional feat: Smell Danger

Otherworld additional feat: Smell Magical Contamination

Secret: Survive Anywhere (As *Thunder Rebels*, p229.)

Nest-Builder (Empty-Half)

Nest-Builder puts a sheltering roof above her family and protective walls around them. Whether a shack or a marble villa, homes are her responsibility, as are the families and communities which grow within them.

Mundane Abilities: Assess Possible Mate, Build Shelter, Make Minor Repairs.

Virtues: Caring, Gentle, Protective.

Affinities:

Nest-Builder (Bless Conception ritual, Bless Home ritual, Calm Dispute, Warm Home)

Otherworld extra feat: Exorcise Home ritual.

Secret: Awaken Home (The devotee can use this ritual to awaken the natural daimon soul of any dwelling – the resistance depends on the size of the home and the bond with the worshipper. A small house in which she lives would have a resistance of 14, a large house owned by a close friend, perhaps 5W, while awakening the daimon of a palace owned by a stranger would require defeating a resistance of 1W3. The daimon remains present for the next 7 days and has a might equal to the secret's ability level, which it uses to avert mishaps such as fires and burglaries.)

Red Moon Burning (Full)

Red Moon Burning's full powers have only begun to be recognised since the Black Night Burning. She is a figure of power and mystery, a leader and a knower of secrets. As such, her temples have become viewed by some as candidates for challenging the established cults of Hwarin Dalhippa and Ingkot for spiritual rulership of the Sylilan nation.

Entry Requirements: Must be Sylilan born or adopted.

Mundane Abilities: Natural Authority, Perceive Motivations, Sylilan History.

Virtues: Commanding, Self-Confident, Strong-Willed.

Affinities:

Majestic Radiance (Assert Authority, Blaze Through Darkness, Burn Away Cold, Burn With Moonlight, Get Everyone's Attention, Resist Magical Compulsion, Snarl Down Opposition)

Bear extra feat: Command Bear

Secret: I'm In Charge Here (Allows the devotee to ignore multiple target penalties when asserting her authority or using her Majestic Radiance affinity. It can also be used to augment any such actions.)

BendraYoo Stand-Up (Full-Half)

BendraYoo is the warrior form of the Moon Bear, the fierce defender of his community who fights with relentless and savage skill. The temple of BendraYoo is a passionate advocate of Sylilan interests within the Empire as well as Imperial expansion. It sponsors and supports the Jillaro Cutters, a Heartland Corps regiment of heavy infantrymen whose roots go back to Ingkot's own Bearskin Housecarls and yet who are beginning to turn to the Moon Bear's ways.

Mundane Abilities: Close Combat (Wrestling: any claw-like or edged weapon), Stand Tall.

Virtues: Fierce, Protective.

Affinities:

Bearclaw Fighter (Bowl Over Foe, Claw Missile Out of Air, Crushing Hug, Gutting Slash, Smash Away Shield, Smash Away Weapon)

Otherworld extra feat: Rip Otherworld Entity

Secret: Fight On! (The devotee can continue to fight until brought to -40 AP, without penalties. Win or lose, at the end of the combat then the effects of any damage will be applied, before any post-contest healing can be applied.)

Voices of Loskalm

By Jamie 'Trotsky' Revell

THE DRILL SERGEANT

"What's all this guff about whether the Heortlings are better warriors than the Lunars or not? Hah! The answer is obvious: put 'em up against a proper army like we have in Loskalm and we'd kick both their arses! Oh yes, can't see a bunch of pagan blue-painted nudists lasting long against the flower of Loskalmi chivalry...

STAY IN STEP WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK THIS IS A PICNIC?!

"And those Lunars aren't much better. Infantry's a wonderful thing, served in it myself, but those legions they're so proud of will shatter before a proper cavalry charge, let me tell you. Antelope lancers? Don't talk to me about antelope lancers, what bloody use is an antelope against a horse? And those ones riding the giant chickens are just bloody ridic...

LEFT RIGHT LEFT RIGHT WHAT DID I TELL YOU AND HOLD THAT SPEAR PROPERLY PERKINS ITS NOT A BLOODY PITCHFORK!!

"No, those cossacks are just undisciplined yobs. Run away soon as they're properly threatened, you mark my words. Now, militia we were talking about weren't we? No, I don't care if they do call it a fyrd, they should learn to speak proper Loskalmi like what we do! Bloody foreigners. We've got proper militia here, gives the farmers a chance to show off their patriotism, you see. Do what's right by king and country.

MILITIA COMPANY HALT! ATTENTION!

"That's where I come in, training this bunch how to defend their country if it comes to it. All properly organised by the squire and his lordship the mayor. That's what you foreign pagan types don't understand you see. Proper organisation. No the Lunars are *not* organised. Different kit and regulations in each bloody regiment. What good's that going to do you I ask? No sense of unity, these foreigners, that's their problem.

ALRIGHT MEN STAND AT EASE NOT THAT MUCH AT EASE PERKINS DO IT PROPERLY!!

"Makes the heart proud seeing a proper squad of infantry parading. I'll turn this bloody shower into a proper unit yet, you'll see. Even if they do go home to their cabbages for the rest of the week. Dedication and patriotism, see? And they know that they can get promotion if they do their job

well, not like those Lunars who bribe their way to the top. And the Heortlings don't even have a bloody rank system far as I can see, how's that going to inspire people? No they didn't select me as a knight, that's why I pensioned out as... well, they said I didn't have the right attitude if you must know. Shouted too much, they said. Can't imagine where they got...

SILENCE IN THE RANKS STOP THAT BLOODY SNIGGERING OR I'LL HAVE YOUR GUTS FOR GARTERS!!

"Er, anyway, the point is, that's why we Malkioni always win against the likes of... no the Lunars defeating the Carmanians does *not* count. They're heretics and just don't do it properly. And, well, yes, alright but they cheated. There are proper rules in war, you know. Oh, but we'll know better than to do that next time, yes, sir. Magic? Hah! They just use some pagan mumbo-jumbo not proper sorcery like our wizards. Ever seen a bunch of grand knights charging forward with all their magic readied? You won't see anything like that among your foreign types, and that's a fact.

DON'T PICK YOUR NOSE ON PARADE YOU 'ORRIBLE LITTLE MAN IF ALL THE OTHERS CAN DO IT PROPERLY WHY CAN'T YOU?!

"Yes, but they're *other* Malkioni. We Loskalmi are God's chosen people. Says so right here in the book. Can't argue with that. Only stands to reason. You'll see what happens when we face the Kingdom of War. They'll be singing a different tune then, you mark my words. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have work to be getting back to...

RIGHT LETS DO IT AGAIN AND WE'LL KEEP ON DOING IT UNTIL WE CAN ALL GET IT RIGHT MILITIA COMPANY BY THE RIGHT...

THE YOUNG FARMER

"I'm going to be a knight one day. You'll see. It can't be as hard as they say, and anyone has the chance if only they try. Widow Nireen, across the way from us, the Mayor gave her one of those knight's sons to help her with the farm. He's about the same age as me, only I don't think he's as strong as I am, or as fit. It doesn't look like he's done much hard work at all, not before he came here, and strength, that's one of the things you're going to need as a knight isn't it?

"I mean, really, what makes him so suitable to follow his father and get knighted? When he first came here, it was just before ploughing, and you'd think he'd never seen a cow before, the way he acted. He didn't know

one end of a plough from the other – and they test you on that, you know, before they let you join the army. He got himself covered in muck, and he'd have to stay up until after dark, just to get the work done. You'd almost feel sorry for him, except it was all his own fault.

"Widow Nireen complained to the squire, said he just wasn't up to it, but she was told it was him or nothing. Of course, that meant he had to stay, since she's getting on a bit, and couldn't possibly do everything by herself. So, now that its harvest time, my family are helping her out, being neighbourly like the good book says we should. Only he's not much use – he keeps complaining about the hard work, this being the busiest time of the year and all. Oh, he talks fine and all that, and they say he can even read a little, but what good will that be when he's got to defend his country? You should see the way he looks at my sister, too, when she's got her skirts hitched up to work in the fields. He doesn't mind being on the farm then, I can tell you.

"So, I figure, if he can be a knight, so can I. Got to be a good farmer before they let you join up, and I'm that already, while he's got to learn. He's no better than I am, I can see that, yet everyone knows most of these knight's boys go on to follow their fathers – you don't see many of them staying on

the farm, now do you?

"Yes, sir,
I'm going
to sign up
as soon
as



"I'll be a knight some day"

I'm old enough. I know its dangerous and all, but its right to fight for your country, and our wizards are better than anyone else's, so they'll protect us if it comes to it. I wouldn't like it if I were in one of those foreign countries, where everyone has to stay doing what they've always done. I can go out and see the world, do well in the army and get myself promoted. Get a good horse – and I bet I know how to look after one better than *he* does – a fine suit of armour and an iron sword. They give you one when you get knighted, you know, and that's something else that no foreign country does, not straight up like that.

"I'm going to have my own coat of arms, and take part in all those tournaments, like the one up at Pelmor last year. And marry a knight's daughter, or maybe a wizard's. Sure, they may not know nothing about farming, what with staying with their mothers and all, in those big houses, but they don't need to, do they? And they look ever so pretty in their long frocks and coloured bonnets. When I'm a knight I guess I'll meeting plenty more of them up close, if you get my drift.

"Oh, yes. I'll be a knight some day. You mark my words."

THE HEALER

"It'd good to see you, Sis. Its been a long time, and I'm sorry I haven't been able to come see you and Mama, but I've been kept very busy by the Army... No, they don't really let you have free time for that, we're really an important part of the military, and we're needed a lot."

"My dress? Yes, I suppose so, now that you mention it. It's just, well, you know, battlefields are rather dirty, and if I wore anything better it wouldn't last, you see? I haven't really thought much about how fashionable it is, because I... well, that's very kind of you. Thank you."

"No, the food isn't quite the same as here. We have to make it at the camp, you see... No, we have to make it, we don't have servants... Well, we do those sorts of things ourselves. I've learnt to sew, and repair riding tack... No, not fine needlecraft, although I'm sure yours is very impressive, and you must show me it some time. I mean for work-clothes and blankets and things like that. And people, obviously, but you probably don't want to hear about that.

"Yes, I get to ride, although I don't have my own horse; I have to borrow one from the stables. Mostly I just drive a cart, though, to carry the injured... driving a cart? No, it's not very exciting really, I'm not sure I'd describe it as adventurous... no, it's a *cart*, not a carriage."

"Men? Yes, obviously I see a lot of them... oh, yes, I'm looking forward to the tournament... Well, not so much for that reason. I see men every day; most of these knights are people I know, remember. Yes, but

you probably haven't seen any men for weeks, except for Scroggins the Butler, and he's over sixty... True, some of them are rather good looking, but they don't look quite so grand when they're covered in mud, and you should hear some of the language they use when they forget there are women around... no, actually, you probably shouldn't, come to think of it, and of course they'll be on their best behaviour at court: its just being at camp that brings out the worst in them.

"Yes, it can get dangerous at times. But that's part of what makes it worthwhile. I know that what I'm doing is important for Loskalm, and I'm really doing something. I've been on quests with some of the knights; fighting off pagan spirits, quelling bandits and scouting against the elves. I've even been to a dwarven trading post, and taken part in a hunt for a chaos-wolf... Well, now you mention it, I suppose *maybe* it doesn't sound quite as exciting as a ball at the count's palace... or the latest fashion in hats, either... but this way I do have a chance at becoming a knight, through my own effort... I suppose marrying an existing knight is easier, yes, but I prefer it this way...

"Obviously, I won't be that sort of knight, no... Oh, but I *can* use a sword; I'm a Kyrian, not a Xemelan. Not to kill people, of course, that would be wrong for a healer. I know how to parry, mostly. And they'll give me an iron shield if I do get knighted... Charging onto the battlefield to rescue the wounded, mainly. And, of course, if I'm a knight, I can take part in the tournaments, because they don't involve killing people."

"Don't look so shocked. This is the land of opportunity. Anyone can get to do anything."

THE SORCERESS

"Loskalm? Oh, they'll tell you it's the perfect kingdom. They'll say that everyone's happy there, that their social system is the most advanced in the world, their rulers the most enlightened, their magic the strongest, their people the most unified. But they don't tell you what happens to those who don't conform.

"Hrestolism is the state religion, and everyone's supposed to follow it. But do you think it's always been that way? Of course not, and there are those of us who can still see the flaws in its logic, even today, with all the propaganda they feed us all with. It's a crime not to go to church every week in Loskalm, did you know that? Oh, it doesn't apply to foreigners like you, but anyone who lives here for more than a year is subject to it. The punishment is usually to work for the state, repairing roads, cleaning streets, tilling the fields, doing whatever they can think of that will place you among people who want you to conform to their ideals, to support their government.

"What they really can't stand is people thinking for themselves. Anything outside of their approved path to their so-called God is not to be tolerated. We're all supposed to be happy, because we're not supposed to know any better.

"There's an Inquisition here, just like in Seshnela, but it keeps itself much quieter. Sure, it doesn't torture people or burn them at the stake like they do down south, but that's because they're cleverer than that. They use subtle mind-altering magics on you, try to twist the truth with sophist arguments, until you don't know what you really think. People who spend a long time with the inquisitors come back *changed*. They may not be physically harmed, but their minds are different; they can't think independently any more, can't do anything but say how wonderful the state is. Very few have the strength to resist it.

"And they use social pressure, too. Who wants to be the odd one out, the loner, the outcast? When everyone acts the same, the pressure to conform is too great for most mavericks to resist for long. People don't go to church because the law makes them, but because all their neighbours do, and they've been taught from childhood that everyone has to be a good neighbour.

"Don't think for yourself. Don't act out of the ordinary. Don't question those in power. Conform, conform. And if you don't already think like the nobles, you'll never get anywhere, never rise above the farmer class to have any influence yourself. Loskalm doesn't perpetuate itself through the hereditary system as happens in Seshnela, but through the careful selection of those who think and act in the approved manner.

"But there are those of us who know differently. Those of us who can see there is no God – at least not the kind of loving, active, personal God that they believe in. We can see the truth that they are blind to. See through the lies that they propagate to keep the farmers where they belong. They are subtle and clever, but ultimately they're no different from rulers elsewhere. Indeed, their very subtlety makes them more dangerous. But we wait in the shadows, and we can see how even their own ideals are breaking down before the onslaught of the Kingdom of War. Things are already changing, as they are forced to face the unpleasant truths the Kingdom shows them. It will only get worse in the coming years, and then we may just have our chance. We don't want to hurt anyone, but we do want to make things better – for everyone, not just the sheep.

"Hush! I can say no more. Pretend we're talking about the weather. It isn't safe..."

Maran's Mirror

By Bryan Thexton

Summary

A vision sends the heroes to confront an evil from ages past. Unfortunately the signposts have changed over the ages, so the heroes will have to puzzle out the ancient clues before finding the spirit. Unbeknownst to the heroes, the spirit has gathered new followers, who intend to use the heroes to finish freeing it. Unbeknownst to the spirit's followers, one of their number has had second thoughts and will ultimately help the heroes.

As written, the scenario can be used as part of 'These Women Need Help' from *Barbarian Adventures*. However only minimal changes are needed to adapt it to other situations.

Backstory

Hraxis was the great spirit of a people who were wiped out in the Great Darkness. They worshipped Hraxis both as the male fire-bringer and female crafter who showed them how to craft tools of bone and wood. When the Storm Tribe encroached, Hraxis's people were driven out of their best hunting grounds. His greatest shamans sacrificed themselves to draw forth Hraxis's third face then, the bone burner who could blister the very flesh off of a god's bone. He fashioned the spirits of the shamans into his tools, the spirits that attack warriors, the spirits that attack blade bearers, and the greatest, the spirits that cooked god-bone directly.

Gbaji's Bright Empire used many tools to accomplish its ends. One was Hraxis. His most infamous ability was to burn the very flesh off of a god's bones, but this had been useless in the face of chaos, and Hraxis had fled and his people had died. The Bright Empire found Hraxis, and used him, sparingly at first as one of their methods of softening up peoples they wished to absorb, then more heavily later on to stop the advance of Arkat's dark army. However Mingratha, a great priestess of Ernalda the Queen in Dragon Pass called Hraxis to her, and bound him to the mortal world, thus ending his power.

Mingratha's cult guarded Hraxis in their holy place for many generations, until they were destroyed in the Dragonkill. Hraxis has been sitting in the ancient and secluded shrine, waiting for someone to come close enough to hear his call. Hraxis was referred to as female by Mingratha, but the bright

empire knew him through his male faces. The male form is used in most places here, but there are a number of specific references to Hraxis as female!

A few years ago Shufoya, a devotee of Irippi Ontor, uncovered ancient references to Hraxis, and started to search for him. She was driven in part by curiosity, and in part by lust for the fame and power that re-claiming him for the Empire would bring. She found Mingratha's shrine, and using her magic was able to communicate with him somewhat. She learned enough to adopt him as a wyter. She proceeded to learn what would be required to free him.

The ritual requires representatives of air, water, darkness and earth to be ritually severed by opposing theist warriors. Shufoya freed a trio of windchildren destined for imperial games, saved a quartet of newtling bachelors, and fed some hungry trollkin. Her own body servant worships Ernalda (with the Tarshite rites), so all that is needed now are the attackers. She has planned a careful campaign of increasing disruption that will eventually draw an investigation. Coupled with that she has very carefully performed rituals to draw her enemies to her.

However, Shufoya has talked too much, and her servant has figured out that she will die in the rites, something she is not willing to do. She has appealed to Ernalda, and the merciful goddess has made sure that the heroes have a chance to stop the plot.

Setting

The climax occurs in a hidden valley atop a high hill or low mountain. The default setting is in the Quivin Mountains, but any mountains near the campaign setting could be used. If the action occurs in Dark Season or early Storm Season, harsh weather in the mountains may have to be taken into account. The earlier parts of the scenario happen in clan lands near the mountains, but the details are up to the narrator to improvise.

Benchmark

Written for Orlanthi heroes, but can be easily adapted to almost any theistic culture. A little more work will be required to convert to animist or liturgical settings. Power level assumes best ability in the 10W range, and just as importantly key relationships and social skills approaching the one mastery level. Challenge levels can be easily adjusted for other skill levels, however heroes who have neglected relationships and social skills should not be given too easy a time of it.

The Vision

Harenalda receives a vision. If you are not using the healers from *Barbarian Adventures*, replace her by any other Kev the Visionary worshipper, or if none is available a god-talker or devotee of Ernalda.

A woodcut being shown by a trader triggers the vision. The woodcut is of the sort kept in many shrines and hearths, in this case showing a woman in simple clothes, but bearing marks of Ernalda the Queen, flanked by two warriors, one a naked woman bearing an axe marked with Maran Gor's sign, the other a naked man, covered with woad markings, holding a simple club.

Harenalda stares long and hard at the wood cut, then intones in a voice little like her own:

"Hraxis starts to roam,
Mingratha call him home,
else bronze will burn
and bright lash return."

After she'll come back to herself, certain that the woodcut shows Mingratha flanked by her supporters, and that the earth will be ravaged, bereft of protectors, if Mingratha's deeds aren't repeated.

Unfortunately, nobody present is apt to know of Mingratha. The trader knows only that the wood cut is a copy of one that has long sat in a chapel in Whitewall, known only as "The Healer at Dawn." He bought this copy from a craftsman at a local market, who admitted he had carved it from a distant memory that had suddenly come back to him in a dream, but had offered assurances that it was accurate

Understanding the Prophecy

Although not at all straightforward, the prophecy does contain several clues. Each is listed below, along with possible abilities, difficulty, and results. A couple of the clues will yield different information depending on who you get information from. Basic information for minor and critical successes is offered, but the narrator is encouraged to add colour to the findings, and to extrapolate appropriately for marginal or critical successes. It is also left up to the narrator to deal with critical failures.

Note that the target numbers for the two key elements are quite high. The heroes are unlikely to succeed in these tests themselves, but they can go to more knowledgeable folk. See *Barbarian Adventures* for likely information resources. If the heroes provide information from one source to another, each marginal failure will add +3 with following sources, and each success of any level will provide +10. This represents "jogging the

memory," avoiding going down the same dead ends, etc.

"Who is Hraxis?" 10W2

Mythology of Ernalda -10. Knowledge of the Gbaji wars, Lankhor My library:

Minor Success: Hraxis is a great spirit harnessed by the bright empire to incapacitate warriors.

Major Success: She was bound by Mingratha, and long guarded by her cult.

"What does 'starts to roam' mean?" (no difficulty)

This isn't something that has any special meaning to the Heortlings...it simply means what it sounds like. However feel free to have the heroes contacts come up with their own theories. If the heroes don't figure out that Hraxis can't be tracked by his actions, have one of their contacts suggest it.

"Who is Mingratha?" 1W2

Mythology of Ernalda, Knowledge of the Gbaji wars, Earth Temple, Lankhor My library -10

Minor success: Mingratha was an Ernaldan heroine who fought a mighty spirit serving Gbaji's bright empire. She had a hero cult once, but no longer.

Major Success: Mingratha's hero cult was based near Maran's Mirror.

Maran Gor mythology:

Minor Success: She was an Ernaldan hero, not a warrior.

Major Success: Her holy place was near a holy place of Maran Gor.

"What does 'Call him home' mean?" 17

Any Heortling mythology skill:

Minor Success: This probably means a summoning of some sort.

Major Success: This could be used to describe a "Summons of Evil," where you summon your enemy to you.

"What does 'Bronze will burn' mean?" 10W

Knowledge of the Gbaji wars, Heortling culture -15, Arkat mythology -5, Humakt mythology -10, Lankhor My library.

Minor Success: When the Bright Empire was beginning to collapse, one of the horrific abilities it showed was the ability to burn warriors' hands.

Major Success: This was caused by Hraxis Peacebringer.

Ernalda mythology -5, Earth Witch tradition -10, Maran Gor mythology -15

Minor Success: The Bright Empire knew how to burn the fighting men in a special way, the fighting women were all that saved Arkat's army once.

Major Success: A hero of Ernalda defeated the being that caused the burning.

"What does 'bright lash return' mean?" 10W

Knowledge of the Gbaji wars, Arkat mythology, Heortling culture -10, Lankhor My temple.

Minor Success: "Bright Lash" was a common heortling idiom for the rule of the Bright Empire.

Major Success: The term was specifically used by the Heortling tribes who were conquered, but who never fully gave up the fight.

“What does the woodcut picture mean?” 10W

Heartling culture, mythology of Ernalda, mythology of Orlanth. Automatic minor success for any god talker.

Minor success: Mingratha is obviously not equipped to fight. Her supporters are clearly warriors, and there must be ritual reasons that they are equipped like they are. The sign on the axe suggests that it is, like Maran’s axe made out of copper. The twists in the club show that it is made out of a simple tree branch.

Major Success: There is nothing shown in the picture that could possibly be made of bronze, this must have been an important fact.

It is possible that the heroes won’t decipher any of the initial clues, and this is OK. They should start looking for knowledgeable people who might understand. If they don’t think of this themselves the recipient of the vision will suggest it. The heroes can easily spend days and even weeks searching out information. However, although it is useful later on to know that Hraxis somehow attacked warriors and that Mingratha defeated her it isn’t actually essential.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Even if the heroes quickly decipher the vision, it doesn’t tell them much right off. There are a number of ways that they can find their way to where they need to be.

Try and find out more about Mingratha or Hraxis. See the details below for this.

Look for signs of trouble in the area. This won’t be hard, since Shufoya is having her followers deliberately cause a stir, in hopes of luring a small band of would be heroes to her. See “Tracking the Trouble” for this.

Seek divine guidance. Use the rules in *Thunder Rebels* for this. It is up to the narrator to provide just enough information to keep things moving.

It is hard to predict exactly what direction the heroes might investigate. Below are some likely ones, and what happens:

Finding more information about Hraxis will lead to Mingratha. Not much else is known about Hraxis anymore.

The trader has told all he knows, but can direct the heroes to the carver. If questioned carefully he admits that when he first saw the carving he was entranced by it and eager to buy.

The carver who made the woodcut doesn’t know anything about the scene beyond what the trader passes on. However he admits that he’d long forgotten the image, until it came back to him recently in an intense dream. The next day he sat down to carve it, and was just finishing it the next evening in the clan hall where the trader was

receiving hospitality.

A number of cults recall the bright empire’s ability to strike down its foes with various illnesses, and descriptions of these may also be found in some Lhankor Mhy libraries. “Burning bronze” isn’t a phrase that any of the old tales use, but references can be found to warriors being struck down by blisters, burns, and fevers. If the heroes look for details, use a difficulty of 10W to find hints that one plague seemed mostly to strike those using swords.

Mingratha is but poorly recalled, but any decent resource for Second Age geography (difficulty of 18) will find reference to Mingratha’s Vale, high up in the mountains, near Maran’s Mirror. However no map to either the vale or Maran’s Mirror can be found.

No historical references to Maran’s Mirror will be found, but after any amount of searching anywhere but a Lhankor Mhy library, a woman will recall an old skipping rhyme, or the heroes will overhear some young girls singing it as they play:

“The other side of Maran’s Mirror;
Priestess fights cause warriors fear her.
Round with darkness round with earth,
Then with water and air fourth.
Round and round, and round she’ll go,
Not too fast and not too slow.”

Preserved in childhood rhyme is roughly the story of Mingratha’s binding of Hraxis, and it may provide valuable clues to the heroes.

Maran Gor contacts might be hard to come by. However any of the Earth Shaker’s cultist can tell you that they don’t recall any dawn age heroes from around here, however there is a minor holy site up in the hills, which they call Trembling Wall. Heroes asking about Maran Gor sites can use Dragon Pass Geography or similar skills with a difficulty of 18.

Trembling Wall is seldom visited, but well enough known that getting a description and rough directions isn’t hard. It is described as a cliff, rising out of a small lake up in the hills.

The cliff itself doesn’t shake, but its reflection in the water—even on perfectly calm days—always appears to be swaying. It marks the place where forces of water tried to drown Maran Gor during the darkness, but even buried under water she was the Earthshaker, and shook the ground so hard it flung her foes off her.



Tracking Trouble

Any god-talkers of Ernalda involved in trying to understand the vision will get a sense of urgency, and

are almost willing to start tracking around the wilderness themselves in search of clues. Hopefully this will prod the heroes to start looking for physical clues themselves without too much delay. This sense of urgency is part of Shufoya's summons. Once the heroes agree that they will try and help stop Hraxis, they too will feel a sense of urgency that doesn't let them concentrate well on any task not related to this mission (a general -3 penalty to anything that requires concentration).

Shufoya wants to provoke the minimum possible response. Therefore she has her followers start off with minor harassment of the nearby clans, and gradually escalates until she gets a response. At the time of the visions nothing much out of the ordinary can be reported: a hunter saw trollkin tracks, a ram went missing from one of the flocks.

A week or so later word will come that merchant and his bodyguard were attacked by a trio of wind children, and that a cow was attacked while having a drink from a local pond, near dusk, and was dragged into the water and drowned. Over the next few weeks Shufoya gets more brazen: a herder reports trollkin attacked, and when he went to drive them off, his hands erupted in blisters so he couldn't hold his spear. Then a group of warriors on patrol is challenged, and crippled with burning welts and blisters. Finally, a girl, just shy of her first initiation, is kidnapped. If the heroes don't react by then, someone else will. Shufoya times each provocation for two or three days before the red moon is full, so that most likely any response will arrive while her magic is at high ebb.

Once the heroes actively start trying to trace the source of the trouble, it won't prove hard. They'll catch glimpses of flying wind children and see trollkin tracks. Following either will eventually lead them to Maran's Mirror/Trembling Wall. The narrator may either just talk through this part, or else give the heroes a +10 on abilities related to tracking the trouble, again an effect of Shufoya's magic.

Actually getting to the valley can be as easy or challenging as the narrator chooses. Complications could include lunar patrols, crossing enemy tulas, inclement weather, or getting lost in the mountains.

The Other Side of Maran's Mirror

A rough track leads up to Maran's Mirror. It is mostly used by hunters, but at some point in the past somebody left white marker stones along the way, so it is easily followed. The path brings the heroes out on a rocky point sticking out into a roughly square lake. Three of the sides have fairly steep banks, the fourth has a near cliff. As suggested, the reflection of the cliff in the water appears to shake.

The lake is small enough that a strong swimmer could stroke across it, however it is easier to walk around it. The cliff along the one side of the lake is part of a long ridge. It is lightly covered with hardy trees and bushes, but has many patches of bare rock. It is everywhere at least the height of ten men to the top of the ridge. Although the ridge is challenging, the heroes can find a route up without too much difficulty.

The heroes are apt to be spotted as they go across or around the lake. The wind children fly periodic patrols, mostly from quite high (difficulty 1W to spot them, if anybody is watching the skies). There are underwater tunnels connecting this lake with the one on the other side of the cliff, and the newtlings use them to pass back and forth, so there may be a newtling peering out from under a fallen tree along the water's edge (difficulty 10W to spot). If there are no other sentries out, there will be one of Shufoya's guards watching from the top of the cliff, peering out from a hunter's blind (difficulty 5W2 to spot). The heroes will be noticed if they take no special precautions to hide. The watchers get a +3 per member beyond the first to spot stealthy parties. The largely bare cliff gives the sentries a +10 to spot the heroes once they start climbing it, so they are apt to be spotted then if not before.

If any heroes have flying, they will be allowed to fly to the ridge top without opposition. If they try to chase after the windchildren, they will use their superior aerobatics to flee to the other side of the ridge.

The top of the ridge is not more than 10 paces wide. On the other side it falls off just as steeply, again into a small lake or pool. This one forms most of a circle, with a quarter arc cut off by the cliff. Looking from the top of the ridge, on the right where the cliff leaves the lake there is a rough path of boulders running a bowshot out in the lake. There is water between the boulders in places, but it appears possible to leap from one to the other. They lead to a small island, no larger than about sixteen paces wide and three times that long. The island boasts a dozen spruce trees, and a stone building occupying much of the middle of the island. The cliff on the far side also provides ledges and gullies and bushes and trees that will enable heroes to clamber down without too much difficulty.

Breaking the Bonds

From here on, the heroes are pulled into Shufoya's plans. As they defeat each layer of opposition, it will weaken the bonds around Hraxis, allowing him to provide new powers to his followers inside that bond (for example, when the first opponents, the wind children, are defeated, all of Hraxis's followers except the wind children get the warrior fever ability). If they defeat all four layers, Hraxis will be freed, with unpleasant consequences.

Shufoya, of course, isn't completely counting on the heroes to do her dirty work, and she has plans to finish off the final bond if the heroes disappoint her.

The First Bond: Air

The Windchildren

The heroes' first foes are the three wind children. They were captured by heortling hunters, and the rest of their band was killed. The hunters sold them to lunar merchants who planned to ship them north to appear in menageries or possibly to fight in an arena. The three are a mother, whose children were killed, and her niece and nephew, who also lost their families. They now have a powerful hate for 'walkers' in general, and Heortlings in particular. This hate has overridden many of their natural instincts. In the unlikely case that the heroes ever get to talk to them and learn their story, they might be able to show the wind children that their hate is taking them down the path of the unholy trio, and thereby convince them to abandon in favor of embracing life again.

The older Wind Child, Three Winds Dancer, is more experienced, but less agile than Cloud Diver and Hawk Catcher. Like other members of the band, they wield non-metal weapons, in this case sharpened wooden swordsticks.

Three Winds Dancer

Relevant abilities: ranged combat 5W (sling^1), close combat 18 (swordstick^2), dodge missile 1W, dodge blow 18, aerobatics 18, hate walkers 5W, hurt at range 16, speak heortling 18, speak trade talk 13, acute vision 1W, claustrophobic 18, ally with kolati 20.

Magic: burn bronze 5W, sense bronze 18, resist bite of bronze 18, integrated North Wind Spirit, might 19 (no current fetishes)

Cloud Diver and Hawk Catcher:

Relevant abilities: ranged combat 1W (sling^1), close combat 16 (swordstick^2), dodge missile 3W, dodge blow 18, aerobatics 5W, hate walkers 1W, hurt at range 15, acute vision 1W, claustrophobic, ally with kolati 18

Magic: burn god bone (bronze) 5W, sense bronze 18, resist bite of bronze 18 (no current fetishes)

Wind Children Tactics

As soon as the heroes are truly on their way down the cliff, they will be attacked by the three wind children. The wind children will drop from the sky, or fly up from the island. If they've had sufficient warning they will have augmented their ranged combat with their "hate walkers" ability. They'll fly in broad circles, with the nearest part coming within the maximum effective range of their slings (50 yards), at which point they'll launch a sling stone at the heroes.

The heroes may not be well positioned to deal with the attacks, since most will presumably be busy clambering down the cliff. Each hero can attempt to find a ledge or other better place to fight from as

an unrelated action (difficulty 10). Otherwise they take a -5 penalty on all abilities using one hand, and a -10 penalty on all abilities using two hands. With four unrelated actions they can make it to the narrow beach between the cliff and the path of boulders.

If any of the heroes appears to be dangerous with ranged weapons, the wind children will take time to augment their dodge missile skill with their aerobatics skill. If their slings don't seem effective, Three Winds Dancer may use her North Wind Spirit and attempt to blow one or more of the heroes off of the cliff.

The wind children don't know Hraxis' true nature, but they have found the powers they gain from him to be unpleasant. Therefore they are not apt to use them unless there are very obviously vulnerable targets, such as anyone wearing bronze armor or holding onto a sword. In such a case the chance to cause hurt will overcome their reluctance to use the magic.

Shufoya has instructed the wind children to attack enough to provoke a response, then to break off as soon as one of them is wounded. However their hatred will drive them to attack to cause real harm. Once one of them takes a wound or is driven below OAP the other two will help protect the injured one, and if she is still able Three Winds Dancer will use her north wind to buffet the heroes while the wind children escape out of range.

Outcome

Once the heroes have broken the bond of air, the other members of the group will gain the "warrior fever" ability at 5W. However, the ability takes a -5 penalty for each of the following: target isn't male, target isn't girded for war (naked or only wearing light, soft, clothes), target isn't carrying a sharp or metal weapon, target's best ability isn't a combat skill. If the heroes followed the style of the wood cut, they should be mostly immune to this power. The effect manifests as a burning fever and a mental haze that makes decisions difficult.

If possible, the wind children will aid their most hurt member, then will perch on trees atop the cliff and await Shufoya's signal.

The Second Bond: Water

The Newtlings

These four cousins are all bachelors, from a nest hidden in the Kitori wilds. Six of them left their nest together three years ago, but two have fallen to heortlings. The survivors are veterans of fighting the "shore walkers" who try to kill them in their pools and streams. They have no great love or trust for Shufoya, but she's given them magic that gives them a better chance of survival, so they'll stick with her for now. They left their names when they left their nest, and refer to each other by number. Their abilities are all the same.

Newtlings One, Two, Three and Four:

Relevant abilities: close combat (spear², hooked pole, wrestle in water) 17 (19 with augments), ranged combat (net, thrown spear²) 1W (2W with augments), small 10, hide in water 5W, dodge attack 1W, attack from water to land 18, walk on land 19, swim fast 1W, swim silently 15, hate killers 18.

Magic: burn bronze 5W, sense bronze 18, resist bite of bronze 18, warrior fever 18. One and Three each still have a fetish with a strength 17 Crashing Wave spirit (3 use/day).

Newtling Tactics

The newtlings really don't want to die, however Shufoya has assured them that all they need to do is weaken the attacking party, and that they only need to fight until one of them is hurt. They'll hide in the water on each side of the path of boulders, about half way from the shore, with two net wielders in the deep water on the cliff side of the causeway, and two hooked-pole wielders on the other side. They'll use their hide in water to augment their attack from water to land, and then use that to augment their close combat and use hate killers to augment their ranged combat. The net wielders will use their initial attack to try and catch obvious warriors. If they do, in subsequent actions they'll try to pull them into the water using their close combat ability. Abilities used to resist being pulled into the water will take a -5 penalty because of the precarious footing. Once in the water the newtlings will use close combat to try and drown the heroes.

Once the heroes' party is engaged with the net wielders, the hooked-pole wielders will surface and, hopefully with the advantage of surprise, push or pull more heroes into the water. They'll target anyone who isn't netted who seems to be doing something.

Once the nets have either pulled someone in, or proved ineffective, the newtlings will spend an unrelated action to dive to the bottom of the pool and come back with spears (made out of wood with a fire hardened point). If no heroes have been pulled into the water, One and Three will use their Crashing Wave fetishes to try and wash the heroes off of the path.

If the heroes try to simply make it back to shore or out to the island, it will take five unrelated actions to jump from boulder to boulder from where the newtlings launch their attack. Certain movement magics may reduce this. The newtlings are not at all shy about using their new magical abilities versus the heroes.

As with the wind children, once one newtling has taken a wound or knocked below OAP the others will aide the injured party and pull back from

combat by diving deeply.

Outcome

Once the heroes have broken the bond of water, the remaining members of the band gain "blister blade wielder 1W" Those holding swords and knives can be targeted at full effect, those using hafted weapons with blades parts, like axes or spears, can be targeted with a -3 penalty. The effect manifests as a blistering of the hand holding the blade.

The newtlings will surface near the far shore of the pool, and await Shufoyas's signal.

The Third Bond: Darkness

The Trollkin



There are a dozen trollkin left (the stronger have eaten some of the weaker ones). So far Shufoya hasn't hurt them much, hasn't eaten any of them, and has provided them with food, so they are completely devoted to her. None is very skilled or brave, but Shufoya has promised that the bravest will be given command over the others, and they understand that all they have to do is attack the weakest members of the invaders party until one or more of them is hurt. They are all willing to let another of the trollkin be the one to get hurt, but they also all want to be the one put in charge.

Trollkin

Relevant abilities: Hungry 17, close combat (club¹) 14, ranged combat (throw rock) 14, dodge blow 16, nimble 17, small 9, coward 18, adore Shufoya 18, squeeze through small places 1W, hide 18, fear sunlight 17.

Magic: burn bronze 5W, sense bronze 18, resist bite of bronze 18, warrior fever 5W, blister blade wielder 1W.

The Building

The building is about eight paces long by only four

wide on the inside. The walls are fairly thick fieldstone carefully stacked without the use of mortar. In a few paces stones have fallen out, leaving gaps in the wall. The doorway is a narrow slit that a burly warrior would have to turn sideways to fit through. The peaked roof is covered with slate tiles, and extends a couple of feet beyond the walls on each side. The inside is very gloomy, and those without some sort of enhanced vision in the dark will take a -5 penalty to perception and combat skills.

Trollkin Tactics

The Trollkin are all covering inside the building, out of the sun (assuming it is day time). They will throw rocks or use their magic through the doorway, or out of the narrow gaps in the walls. If the heroes charge the building aggressively the trollkin will all initially fall back to the altar, then remember that they are supposed to attack. If the heroes approach more slowly a couple of the trollkin will get coaxed by the rest to try and hold the door. Protected by the narrow door they have a +5 on their ability to dodge blows.

Once the heroes are inside the trollkin will try to swarm them from every direction, focusing on those who don't look like fighters. They will also try to prevent the heroes from reaching the altar. However as soon as either they've disabled a member of the party and one or two of the trollkin are down or half the trollkin are down, the remainder will flee, squeezing through the door and the gaps in the walls as best they can, then they'll hide in holes in the ground under the shade of the spruce trees.

Outcome

Once the heroes have broken the bond of darkness, the remaining members of the band (just Shufoya, her non-combatant servants, and Isradelda) gain "shiver apart god" 10W. It works at full strength against disciples, at -5 against devotee, -10 against initiates, and -20 against communal worshippers. Further it suffers another -5 when the target isn't using any of their magic (in other words, not using any feats, no current augments, etc). It manifests as the user emitting a very loud yell that shakes theists to their very bones. It can also be used to shatter god bone (bronze) with a -5 penalty.

The Fourth Bond: Earth

Isradelda

Tied to stakes in a pile of dried earth is Shufoya's servant, Isradelda. Isradelda tried to escape recently, so Shufoya had her guards tie the girl down. She also painted Isradelda in wild colors and intricate runes, placed a wooden mask over her face a headdress of feathers on her head, tied two

fake arms and two fake legs to her shoulders and hips, dribbled trollkin blood over her hands, in effort to make her look exotic and fearful. To make it harder for Isradelda to ruin the impression, she is gagged under the mask.

In the dim light of the building the heroes' first impression is that something inhuman is crouched over the altar, issuing echoing, moaning cries.

Isradelda

Relevant Abilities: initiate of Ernalda (Vorelda the Animal Healer) 17, mythology of Ernalda 18, mythology of Hraxis 12, know Shufoya 17, first aid 17

Magic: heal animals 17, heal people 17, heal relationships 15, burn bronze 5W, sense bronze 18, resist bite of bronze 18, warrior fever 5W, blister blade wielder 1W, shiver apart god 10W

Dealing with Isradelda

It is possible that the heroes will attack Isradelda before understanding who she is. She is completely helpless to fight back, blinded by the mask, gagged, bound, and utterly terrified. If they wound her, it will free Hraxis (see the outcome section).

If they look more carefully, or listen, they will realize that she is a human, with poor imitation extra limbs attached, and they will recognize sobs and moans as the sounds they hear. Once they do they are apt to ungag her eventually, at which point her first words will be "HELP ME!" Her next words are "Hurting me will free Hraxis!"

Outcome

If the heroes don't harm Isradelda, Shufoya will realize within about a minute that her ploy has failed, and she will implement her back up plan (see below). In the meantime the heroes could be doing any number of things. Amongst other possibilities, Isradelda is willing to use her healing powers to help them. Further, she knows what needs to be done to worship Mingratha, and is confident that Mingratha can give the power to bind Hraxis.

If the heroes harm Isradelda, thereby freeing Hraxis, a number of dramatic events will follow. The earthen altar will explode apart (killing Isradelda fully in the process). The members of the Hraxis hero band will lose all of their powers, as Hraxis breaks free from his bindings. A great burning feeling sweeps through the building accompanied by a wild howling. This will continue long enough for the heroes to take two actions each.

Then Hraxis Will Strike...

Hraxis can wield all the powers that his followers gained, however at two masteries greater power (he is still weakened from his ordeal), dropped back down by one mastery from being in the alien environment of the mortal world. (net effect, increase all abilities by one mastery.) If the heroes are lucky, in the lull between his

departure and return they will have either fled or dropped all bronze and cancelled all magic.

Hraxis will loose an incredible howl, using his shiver apart god (10W2). He can ignore multiple defender abilities. Then he will use one of his other powers on anyone in the building who looks like a likely target (dressed as a warrior, holding a blade, etc). Then he'll no longer be able to hold himself in the mortal world, and with a dizzying blast of heat will return to the spirit world.

Shufoya, the wind children, and the newtlings will all scatter, and all carry word of this new spirit. If Shufoya can manage it, she will kill off the others before they manage to spread the word, but most likely at least some will escape. Eventually lunar, wind children, and newtling shamans will make contact with him, and start using his powers against their enemies. With worshippers again, Hraxis's power will go up by another mastery or two, and he may exhibit new powers and spirits that he can provide. However, if the heroes bear their tale back to Ernalda priestesses, they will find mighty questers who will attempt to re-enact Mingratha's deeds. This will be an opportunity for the heroes to help set the world right again.

But Where is Shufoya?

Crafty Shufoya has been hiding all this time. Near the boulder causeway is a crevice back into the cliff side, which Shufoya and her guards have camouflaged. She has improved this disguise by draping the Mundane Scarf (see her description) across the entrance.

If she concludes that the heroes aren't going to strike Isradelda, she and her guards will leave the crevice (leaving three servants cowering in its back reaches), she'll blow a horn, summoning her inhuman followers to her aid, and attack.

Shufoya is still a fairly young woman, dressed in fine wool and silk robes. She comes from a good family in the Heartland, but her cheekbones and ears don't have the requisite shape for her to be considered a beauty in Dara Happa (although most other men would see nothing wrong in her shape or face at all). Brilliant, curious, ambitious, and never willing to settle, she devoted herself to Irrippi Ontor, and left home.

She has been tracking Hraxis for four years, and wants to free him as much for personal satisfaction as she does for love of the empire. She equipped her party free from bronze and blade before this expedition started (including arming them with mock dragonewt klanths made in Tarsh, normally sold to lunar collectors of primitive artifacts).

Shufoya

Relevant Abilities: Mythology of Hraxis 19, history of the Gbaji wars 5W2, speak Heortling (with a Tarshite accent) 5W, ambitious 19, curious 19, scheming 5W, clever 19, conceited 15, close combat 17 (klanth and shield), run 17, climb 17, hide 17, wilderness survival 17, attractive 16, wealthy 10W.

Magic: burn bronze 5W, sense bronze 18, resist bite of bronze 18, warrior fever 5W, blister blade wielder 1W, shiver apart god 10W, Identification 10W (read foreign writing, see item's history, see and hear historical events), literacy 5W (memorise document, read Lhankor Mhy text), otherworld 8W (blast spirit, blast enemy's mind, divert spell, enchant silver, identify runic powers)

Items: Mundane Scarf ("nothing strange here" 1W), Gazelle's Boots (flee 5W, leap 1W), Robe of Five Virtues (awakened robe with might 10W. It resists damage, warns of approach, stays clean, keeps warm, and looks good, all at its might. This gives Shufoya a ^3 defensive edge)

Shufoya's Guards

These default to two guards, but can be more if needed to provide sufficient threat to the heroes. Shufoya hired them in Tarsh. Use the Tarshite warrior from *Barbarian Adventures* (most relevant abilities, with augments added in, are close combat 2W (klanth ^2), ranged combat 8W (spear ^2), brave 1W, loyal to Shufoya 17). They are armed with klanth and simple wooden spears. The guards are not members of the Hraxis band, but have been denied bronze anyway. They do have simple leather armour and wooden shields, however (classifying them firmly as warriors).

Shufoya's Servants

Shufoya's other three servants are loyal to her, but terrified by what is going on. They were made members of the band, but will basically cower and hide unless they feel directly threatened, or they see Shufoya in danger. In which case they will use their Hraxis abilities. They have no other relevant skills, although they are all skilled in their own professions.

Shufoya's Tactics

The newtlings and wind children will try to secure the island end of the boulder causeway, allowing Shufoya and her guards to cross safely. Once they are across, their goal is for the guards to kill Isradelda—now that she is actively opposing Shufoya, they can attack her under Shufoya's order and complete the ritual. None of those bound to Hraxis can perform the deed, however. If necessary, to buy time, Shufoya will use the Mundane Scarf to creep up close to the building, then use her Blast Enemy Mind feat to try and disrupt the worship ceremonies going on inside.

The Big Production Number

There will be a number of things going on at once, and it is up to the narrator to speed up or slow down different parts to keep things dramatic.

First of all, Isradelda (and any helpers from the heroes party) perform a ceremony to worship Mingratha (difficulty 1W, mythology of Ernalda – 10, mythology of Mingratha, +20 bonus for being at Mingratha's shrine), then once that is done they use her feat of bind spirit to re-bind Hraxis (bind spirit feat starts at 12, +20 for being in Mingratha's shrine). Hraxis needs to be rebound one layer at a time, resisting each effort with the power his followers were granted when it was broken (bonds of darkness will be resisted with his shiver apart god, emitting loud moans from deep within Mingratha's altar [power 10W], etc). Heroes may find various ways of augmenting this ceremony.

Secondly, Shufoya's forces will invade the building. Trollkin will come crawling in through gaps in the wall and attack any easy looking targets (they'll avoid the dangerous looking ones) or else use their magic while hiding in the shadows. The wind children will land on the roof, and spend three actions tearing off slate roofing stones, then peer down and use some combination of magic and slings to try and decimate the defenders. The newtlings will be reluctant attackers, but fear of Shufoya's guards will drive them finally to make an awkward waddling attack on the door to the building. When the guards think they can rush the doors successfully they will so, then will try to strike down Isradelda.

Finally, Shufoya will be trying to use her Blast Enemy's Mind to disrupt the ceremonies inside the building. Her power level will likely overwhelm the worshippers, so most likely at least one hero will have to get outside the building to confront her directly. In this situation she will use her either blast enemy's mind or her Hraxis powers to defend herself. If she feels that her life is threatened she will flee quickly (thanks to her boots), abandoning everyone behind her. Once she flees, her forces will try to save themselves. The Tarshite warriors will surrender or beat a fighting retreat depending on the situation, the wind children will fly away, the newtlings will go into the water, then use the secret tunnels between lakes to escape. The trollkin will run and hide as best they can.

If Isradelda is not needed in the worship ceremony (there are other Ernalda worshippers who can better perform it, for example), she will use her Hraxis powers against the guards if they attack.

One thing that Shufoya hasn't figured out is that the mental state of defeat is as important as physical damage for breaking the bonds. Once Isradelda is freed and has a chance to fight back, a

single wound won't break the bonds of earth. Instead, Isradelda needs to be killed or knocked unconscious.

Wrap Up

If Hraxis is freed, eventually someone will repeat Mingratha's deed and re-bind him, but it is hard to say how much damage his followers will deal first.

If Hraxis is re-bound, the shrine needs to be guarded. If the heroes talk to a Ernalda priestesses they will be eager to reclaim the site, and the hero cult. In addition, after some months they will figure out how to add bonds of fire to the binding, which will cut Hraxis off from his hero band, removing their powers entirely.

Shufoya is likely to escape, but her ambition and curiosity are apt to lead her to new adventures in the future, nor is she apt to forget the fools her ruined her plans.

Hero Point awards should be in line with your campaign. However it is suggested that if Hraxis is kept bound and the cult of Ernalda is given the site, four directed hero points be given, for starting a relation with the hero cult of Mingratha, improving relations with a priestess, a temple, etc. In addition, heroes who were particularly clever at deciphering clues should be given a bonus for doing so.

De-Bugging

The heroes may well realise part way through their invasion that they are strengthening Hraxis. They may seek to bypass some of the obstacles without physically harming anyone. If they can manage to do so, more power to them—they have a substantial safety net versus releasing Hraxis, and their opponents will be weakened.

It is possible that cautious heroes will manage to find Shufoya's hidden crevice in the cliff. If so, her guards will try to hold the entrance, while Shufoya uses her blast enemy mind. She'll also sound her horn, summoning her inhuman followers to attack the heroes from behind. In this situation she'll seek merely to drive them off.

Heroes may find many other ways of disrupting Shufoya's plan. Let them! But remember that Shufoya will always be plotting and scheming and trying to get things back on track.

The Man who Walked with Pavis

By Ian Thomson

Fragment from the Journals of Morgun Mewl, EWF Trader and Entrepreneur - dated c. 950 ST. (Transferred from Jonstown Library to New Pavis Knowledge Temple, as part of an exchange of documents, in 1618 ST.)

... and in those years the nomad raids had begun to grow more fierce and determined. Despite such problems, and the internal unrest within the Empire of Dragon Pass, most citizens of Pavis' fair city still hoped for a bright future for themselves and their descendants. It was still almost unthinkable that nomads could unify to seriously threaten the city, which sadly as we all know is exactly what later occurred.

At this time the Arrowsmith Dynasty still held true, and the grand old dame of the city, Queen Fehala, ruled wisely from her seclusion within the Zebra Palace. Her consort, the noble King Kyrem, had passed away quite some years before, him being the last living person who had known Pavis during the years before the founding of the city. Or so I thought.

One morning I was working at my stall in the marketplace, when a man of great age slowly approached me, leaning heavily on a stick. He seemed to be more made of wrinkled leather than flesh and blood, but despite his advanced age his head was covered in a great mop of silvery white hair, which fell also about his face. This gentleman was seeking to buy one of the enchanted lanterns that had once been so common in the city, and I charged a pretty price for such things. However, he clearly had little money and instead offered to sell me a story in fair exchange. Being a kind-hearted soul I agreed to at least consider his tale, thinking I might give him some less expensive luminative device if the telling was well done.

"I walked with Pavis the length and breadth of Dragon Pass before he even began to think about building a city," he began. The sparkle in his eyes as he spoke seemed to me to hold nothing of deceit, only an aura of fond recollection. Before he had uttered another word I had closed the shop and taken him aside to one of the quieter eating establishments on the edge of the great square.

Once we were seated, the old man accepted my offer of a mug of soup. I favoured one of the spiced bison patties, and called the serving boy over to take our order. As part of the exchange the old man gave only one condition - that I listen to his tale without questions. I wished fervently that I had never agreed to this, but perhaps he never would have spoken at all if I had declined. He

began quietly and I had to lean across the table in order to catch his words. Nonetheless, his story is etched upon my memory as if it was only yesterday that I met him, rather than almost three decades ago.

"I was but a boy of fourteen summers when I saw Pavis speak for the first time. He and his followers arrived in our town and assembled at the public podium. Those were still the years of leisure, and many citizens gathered to listen, and some to scoff too. Peacemakers were far from unknown amongst those who claimed to have discovered the way of right living in those times, and proponents of all kinds of religions, schools, and mystic disciplines were commonplace. We regarded them as entertainment more than enlightenment.

My parents came with me that first time, although they did not fall under the spell of this eloquent half-elf as I did. Pavis spoke to the crowd of the lost bounty of the Green Age. He described how all beings had their part to play in the unfolding future of Glorantha, and how old foes might become new friends. A woman in the crowd accused him of being a friend of Chaos. Pavis spoke firmly against such a notion, describing how chaos is the antithesis of life and learning, and yet how its very existence is essential to allow our world to exist at all. Heady stuff, I think you will agree."

Our order was delivered and the old man began to slowly consume the soup as if he had not tasted such fine fare for many years. It was hard to keep my patience, but I did so. As soon as I felt it polite, I urged him to continue.

"The following year, Pavis and his friends returned. I had been unable to stop thinking of the questions that had arisen in my mind since his first visit. I listened again, and at the end of his speech I was as captivated as ever. Some say that pacifism is a luxury only the civilised can afford, and yet I knew of war and fear and hatred well enough from my lessons, and I knew I wanted no part of it. Pavis said that each person had the right to choose their own destiny, and on that day I chose mine - offering myself as one of his followers."

The old man indicated that his soup mug was empty, and I hastily ordered him some more of the thick broth. He smiled at my generosity, and went on.

"Since I was not yet a man, I needed the permission of my parents. At first they were set against my wishes, but I argued with them throughout the night, feeling inspired by my recollections of Pavis and his mastery of

words. In the early hours of the morning I had convinced them of which way my destiny lay, and that day they proffered their formal agreement to the district council, so that it could be noted in the records.

“For three years I walked with Pavis and his band of Harmonists, learning about peace-making and the myths of the age of unity. Yet, I was still the youngest of all and had no access to the inner ceremonies, or the meetings that my master held with the great figures of the day. Still, I had ample opportunity to mingle with many great thinkers, as well as seeing the wonders of the Empire for myself. Though our regime of mental discipline was challenging, Pavis himself spoke often of the importance of taking enjoyment from the world around us, and recognising its wonder just as much as we acknowledged its illusions. In fact our leader had already been married once, and had a daughter who often travelled with us. I recall her well, riding upon his shoulders and chuckling with glee.

Not everyone appreciated Pavis’ growing popularity, and those who sought personal power and security through military force grew restless at his agitations for peace and understanding. In the city of Jisteel an assassin came for Pavis – a man known through his actions all across the Empire, a man that some claimed worked for some the leaders of our own Empire. What happened that night is unclear; Pavis took a grievous wound that took weeks to heal, but the assassin joined our ranks, and rose to be one of the wisest of us all. He came with us to found the city, but I do not wish to sully his memory through mentioning his name.

The days grew darker as those who would eventually found the Third Council rose in power. I was learning to conquer my fears through the disciplines of the School of Harmonists, but nonetheless sometimes our audiences contained those who wished us physical harm, and even sought for our deaths. Pavis now often left us to continue the work without him, disappearing for weeks or even an entire season or more. I later learned that he often travelled great distances during these times, and it was on one of these journeys that he explored the ruins of Robcradle, and chose it as the site for his city.

From then on we served as ambassadors for the cause, more than as wandering speakers of the way. We had allies in the strangest quarters, most surprisingly of all from a group of dwarves who were formerly under the protection of Chark the Liberator. These odd creatures mingled freely amongst us, and seemed eager to learn the manner of human speech and thought – though we in turn could fathom little of their own reasoning. Their leader, Hardeye, was strangest of all, speaking only in the language of the mostali, which few of

us other than Pavis could understand without magical aid.”

By now the old man was tiring, and asked if he had told me sufficient of his tale to be worthy of receiving the luminator in exchange. I thought it likely that he had, but I was eager to hear more, and so indicated that I was impressed but yet unsure. He took this with good humour, and continued. I had the feeling that he was amused to have such an eager audience for his story.

“Having greatly advanced in my understanding of the way, it came to pass that I was often trusted by Pavis to carry messages, and even included in his personal entourage from time to time. Of course he had often spoken with me before - he was very much a man of his people – but I had not been given access to the secrets of his ambitious plans. At last I rose to that place of privilege, and was even there for the memorable meeting with Joraz Kyrem of the Pure Horse, when we achieved the goal of a strong cavalry support.

Now that this was guaranteed, we were free to call upon our supporters to join us in the great march. We knew it would be dangerous, and that some of us would surely die, but we also knew that the risks were worth it for the sake of the glorious objectives that would one day come to fruition. From all over Dragon Pass our allies came, joining us at a place on the borders of north-west Prax. These allies included dragon mystics, sorcerers, the eager dwarves, a small group of hybrid animals, sword-sages, a great many followers of the Storm, the Pure Horse cavalry, and of course the various leaders of the Harmonists and their followers.

All of these people were fiercely loyal to Pavis, and to his magnificent plans to found a city based on the principles of harmony. However, it always seemed as if nobody other than Pavis, except perhaps for Hardeye the Mostali, knew exactly what was going on. It was a surprise to most when instead of marching directly into Prax we headed north into Dagori Inkarth. I am sure that few amongst us were aware that our goal was the Faceless Statue of Shadows Dance, nor the fierce opposition we would face from the trolls of that region. Fortunately the fire powers of the Pure Horse folk kept these unexpected enemies at bay.

Being a man of peace I took no part in the actual combat; giving my support indirectly to the warriors. Pavis himself never slew an Uz except in self-defence, but revealed many great powers for the first time during that march. He brought the earth down upon our foes, turned different groups of Uz upon each other, and led us to a meeting with a huge warband of aldryami, who joined with us as if they had been part of our group all along. Pavis raised the Faceless Statue from its throne, as I’m sure you have heard so many times, and was lifted up onto its shoulder. From here, he led us across the chaparral and into the pages of the history books.”

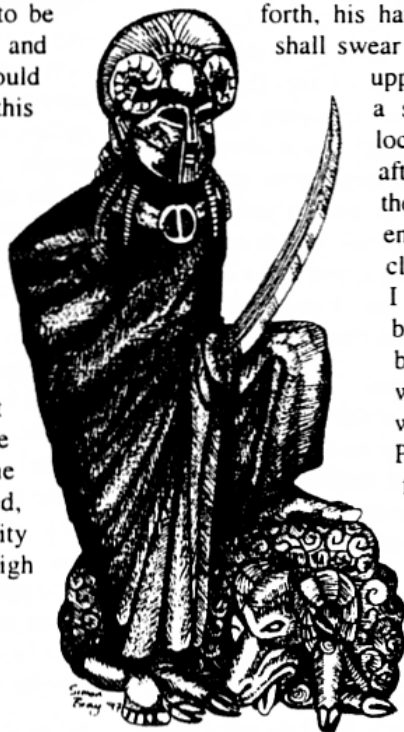
The old man was tiring now, and was having difficulty getting his breath. I reluctantly admitted that the

luminator was his, and when he was at the stall I tried to convince him of the value of the various other trinkets I thought might convince him to return another day and continue his tale. I was of course envisaging the money I could make from having his memoirs scribed and made available to the public, but also genuinely fascinated by his recollections. However, the man was tired, and the only thing I recall clearly about those last moments was his obvious pleasure at obtaining the luminator. He found with great delight some marking upon the base, which I had taken to be nothing other than a series of scratches, and nodded and smiled as if he had known it would be there. But when I questioned him about this he only said that he had once owned such a device a long time ago, in fact the first one ever made had been his.

Over the next few days I asked around about this old man, and was most surprised that none of my contacts had ever heard of him or even seen him. Some went so far as to suggest I had in fact had an experience with a ghost. I scoffed at such things, but it left me wondering nonetheless. Perhaps the fellow had been more important in the founding of the city than he had mentioned, possibly even a close confidant of the city founder. For several weeks I sought him high and low without success.

Despite my best efforts I saw the old man only once more, and that was the following year. I caught a glimpse of him at the edge of the marketplace, and abandoned my stall to race in unseemly haste in pursuit. Charging round the new-built statue to the Lunar war god, past the end of Tinsmith Alley I saw a movement, and hauled myself to a halt. There was the old man, no longer stooped, but standing straight and strong. He glanced once in my direction, and I noticed that he appeared quite melancholy; then he strode through a doorway. In that briefest of moments as he stepped forth, his hair swung to the side, and I

shall swear until my dying day that the upper part of his ear angled into a sharp point. The door was locked when I reached it, and after running frantically around the block I discovered that it entered only the back of a low class tenement. Later that year I felt it prudent to relocate back into Dragon Pass, as business was poor. It was with a heavy heart that I watched the great walls of Pavis dwindle out of sight from my seat upon the wagon.



Kogag's Lost Fleet

By James Frusetta

*"Uz ships sail on seas and oceans, in all the waters of Komor,
Someday there will come our sisters, black fleet from under oceans' floor."*

-- Uz sailors' ditty of Esrolia



When the Butcher Sun invaded Wonderhome, many uz joined Kogag's Fleet and sailed the river Styx, seeking to escape, even as Komosha boiled it. Many uz perished on the journey from the terrors of the river, and many more lost their way before Kogag led the survivors forth to Komor. Over the centuries, many sailors have claimed to spot strange uz galleys far from any uz port. The Waetagi expedition to Hell fought these galleys in the underworld, in the black seas never touched by light. The Middle Sea Empire captured one once, although it was later lost. Dormal was said to have spotted one on his voyages. The uz say that these are part of Kogag's Lost Fleet; the missing ships of the Exodus, which have remained in the underworld seeking a way to Komor to rejoin their missing kin. Crewed by a mixture of ancient heroes, uz and monsters of the underworld, uz sailors from throughout Glorantha rejoice when they hear of the sighting of one of the Black Fleet. Someday, these sailors hope, the great fleet will sail forth and destroy the enemies of darkness.

An Earth Mystery

By Charles Corrigan



A godi of Eralda AllMother asks you to guard her on her journey to a special cave. "Once we start, I may not speak until I leave the cave to make our way home. On the paths we will tread, I am called Earth Woman. Enemies will try to stop me

reaching the cave and you must prevent them succeeding. Remember that the challenges are not all that they seem. Violence is always an option, but there may be another way. While I am in the cave, you may not enter, as there are things in there that you must not see. Walk with me to the Loom House now." You get there and she says, "I will enter by this door. You must go around and meet me at the back. I can speak no more."

You walk around the hall and, as you walk, the world changes. It is something like the holy days when you fly to Orlanth's hall. But instead of becoming airy and flying, you feel that you become massive and ponderous and full of potential for...something.

Mechanics

This heroquest is suitable for a male Orlanthi worshipper of any level. The character plays a bit part in the quest but it should be useful to teach the player about some Orlanthi and Eralda mythology.

At each station, there are 1 or more skill categories that may be used to meet the challenge. The opposition/resistance in most contests will be relative to the ability rating used. The narrator should feel free to apply improvisation modifiers to the character's ability rating for inappropriate choices of ability even in a "good" category. No community support or followers are available to the character on this quest - all has gone to support the Earth Woman. The consequences of success and failure are applied to the skill used unless stated otherwise.

Traditional enemy

You meet a traditional enemy of the clan and are challenged for the right to pass.

If you have not worked out clan statistics for the character, a Troll is always good for a laugh. This should be run as a simple contest with no enhancements.

Once the challenge is complete, the enemy will fade away. If the character is successful, Earth Woman will provide +5 in the Burden contest

Option	Relative Resistance	Consequences of success	Consequences of failure
Personality, Virtue or Mental (Boasting)	-10	+1 for Marginal to +4 for Complete	None
Community	+0	None	-1 for Marginal, Minor or -2 for Major or Complete
Combat Physical	or +20	+1 on Hate <Enemy>	Flaw of Fear <Enemy> 15

Chaos

A pool of gorp blocks your way.

This should be run as a simple contest with no enhancements.

Once the challenge is complete, the gorp will fade away. If the character is successful, Earth Woman will provide +5 (cumulative) in the Burden contest

Option	Relative Resistance	Consequences of success	Consequences of failure
Combat	-15	+1 for Marginal to +4 for Complete	-1 for Marginal to -4 for Complete
Avoid	-5	+1 for Marginal, Minor or +2 for Major or Complete	-1 for Marginal, Minor or -2 for Major or Complete

The Cave

You arrive at the cave. Earth Woman leaves you and enters the cave. Shortly afterwards, you realise that you are having a vision.

The narrator should describe in loose, woolly and soft-focus terms some significant long-term challenge or enemy that she expects the character will tangle with.

Some noise draws you back from the vision. Screams of pain, anguish and terror emerge from the cave. Some of them sound like Earth Woman. What do you do?

If the character decides to enter the cave, give him the chance to roll against Heortling Mythology. If he makes the roll, tell him that he knows that he should not enter the cave. If he still decides to go in...

You see the Earth Woman and the Goddess and you

Option	Fixed Resistance	Consequences of Choice	Consequences of Failure
Heortling Mythology Other Mental or personality skills Worship, Initiate or Devotee	15W2	+10 difficulty in any subsequent negotiation with any Heortling woman or group of women, as he cannot follow orders and the mark is upon him	Flaw of Terrifying Dreams 15W

She hands you a stone. "This holds great hope for the clan for the coming year. Carry it home for us all." At first, the stone feels light but, as you walk the path home, it feels heavier and heavier.

cannot tell which is which. They are manifesting the Virgin, Mother and Crone in both their Light and Dark aspects, all jumbled up and superimposed upon one another to an unprotected man's mind.

This should be run as an extended contest. Enhancement is allowed.

Burden

Earth Woman emerges from the cave with a satisfied look on her face.

Whether or not the character enters the cave, Earth Woman will emerge successful. If he did not enter the cave she will embrace him before speaking.

extended contest. Earth Woman will add 0, +5 or +10 to the character's skill, depending on the success of the first two stations.

The stone will have double its ability rating in APs. A single enhancement is allowed before the contest starts - Strong, Tough, Determined etc would be good choices to enhance with.

If the character chooses a poor skill to start the contest, Earth Woman will say "*There is always another way*" and the narrator should ask the character if they want to make another choice. If the character wins the contest, he has carried the stone all the way back to the Loom House. If the character fails, he has carried it some of the way.

The Earth Woman takes the stone from you and carries it inside the Loom House.

Aftermath

If the character succeeded in the Burden station, remind him of the pride he should feel for his contribution each time that anything goes well for the clan during the following year.

If the character failed in the Burden station, make him feel guilty each time something bad happens to the clan during the year.

But what was the stone? What was Earth Woman doing in the cave...?

Option	Relative Resistance	Consequences of Success	Consequences of Failure
Clan relationship	+10	+1 for Marginal to +4 for Complete	-1 for Marginal, Minor or -2 for Major or Complete
Other skill	+30	+1 for Marginal, Minor or +2 for Major or Complete	-1 for Marginal to -4 for Complete

Melib

The Teardrop of Teshnos

By Martin Hawley

Melib is an island nation lying off the coast of Teshnos in south-eastern Genertela. It was part of the ancient region of Sechkaul in the land of Abzered. This included modern Melib, Teshnos, and Trowjang, and the waters between them. It was a province of Teshnos until becoming a Godlearner colony in the Second Age and during the Closing had many colourful rulers. It is an island of contrasts, with tropical rainforests and hills in the interior and rice terraces and towns on the coast. Melib has a population of some four hundred and ten thousand with a mix of dusky skinned Teshnans and Kralori inhabitants. They pay homage to Solar deities together with a host of minor sprites and gods.

A Teshnan priest, Harstar of the Sea, has lately occupied it and declared himself prince in the mould of those of the past. He is a man of aspirations with many grandiose schemes to fulfil. Harstar hopes to emerge as a significant figure of the region during the Hero Wars.

Overview

Melib is hot, humid and rainy most of the year. During Sea season onshore winds produce pleasantly mild weather. During Fire Season, the climate is still and sticky with the Doldrums reaching the island late in the season. Fogs creeping out of the Kahar Sea are commonplace in early morning and late afternoon. During Earth and Dark Seasons, the winds come from the west or north-west. During Storm season there are typhoons, occasionally lasting several days.

Lush tropical rainforests occupy most of the interior, reaching the coast in the north. Fruit trees and many spectacular plants used in traditional medicine grow here. Orang-utans, gibbons, elegant Sun bears, forest elephants, tigers and black leopards dwell in these forests. The hill region is of damp grasslands and stunted trees and glorious flowers which erupt with blooms of iridescent beauty after passing showers. A most spectacular scene is the seasonal migration of bird-winged butterflies, when tradition has it that they fly towards Butterfly Peak. Purple faced Leaf monkeys jump and dance in the morning sunlight as they attempt to catch these tasty morsels.

The Sshorg, Sedlazam, and Sedeni seas encircling the island are warm and rich with life, from numerous vividly coloured fish to Ludoch merfolk

and Murthoi. They are also the abode of many demons. Some offshore islands, smaller remnants of the sunken land of Sechkaul, rest close to the north-eastern coast; include Laamu with its Bat-Hsunchen inhabitants and Tooki, where the kite-flying monster dwells. His abode is made of human bones and his playthings are the flayed skins of his victims.

The people are of a half-caste Kralori appearance and have interbred with Teshnans, Zaranistangi ancestors and Wareran westerners. Embyli and Yellow Runners dwell in the northern jungle while Zuzimi Tiger and Chropti Bat-Hsunchen dwell in the interior forests. The Melibites even believe there are surviving Zaranistangi somewhere in the depths of the island.

Mythology and History

Pre-Dawn

At the Dawn Sechkaul was covered by the Warm Wood, while to the north lay the Kingdom of Splendour. In Sechkaul during the time when Gods walked with men the great hero, Hisgoranstor of Gach bravely performed many marvellous deeds. He tamed the White Bull Elephant, visited The Floating Sky Palace to gain the wisdom of Zitro-Argon, and taught men the song that turns enemies into butterflies.

Knocked from the sky, Churanpur the Demon Island fell causing a huge tsunami and subsequently sending out fleets to raid and conquer the peoples of Abzered. Terrible demons came forth led by the Demon King Bandan. He made the Terrible Sacrifice to make Sedsaru come and obey him. During this time Sedlazam, the son of Sshorg, god of Sechkaul shamed Solf of Teshnos, The Lord of Volcanoes. Sedlazam quenched the fiery essence of Solf with his warm waters, leaving Solf as the Lord of Decadence, Indolence, and Gluttony resulting in the languor that continues to pervade Teshnos to the present day.

The Dawning (The First Age)

During the First Age, societies slowly developed in the land of Sechkaul. The most advanced groups lived along the coast and in lower river valleys and delta regions, where they cultivated irrigated rice and kept domesticated animals. These people may have been Kralori in origin and related to the ancestors of the groups who now inhabit Teshnos, insular Kralorela, and many of the Sofali islands of the Sedlazam and Sedeni seas. They worked metals and possessed restricted nautical expertise. The Zaranistangi people, who

Harstar..." a man of aspirations with many grandiose schemes to fulfil."

arrived from Pamaltela later, intermarried with them.



When Sshorg battered the Loper people, seeking to drown them all, King Dengbalu set aside the old ways. He and his people sacrificed for help to Tolat, plunging the god's own sword into the ground, and Tolat reached down and wrenched the sword aloft. It did not abandon the earth where it was stuck; instead, Tolat raised Sechkaul above the raging waters. Afterwards everyone continued to sacrifice to Tolat, and the seas were driven back. Afterwards, the Zaranistangi worshipped other deities too, like Emilla. Later, King Bradoszaran of the Zaranistangi lost the sword to the Seshnegi, who triumphantly bore it on their subsequent conquests.

When Turvenost was king he tried to eradicate all sacrifices to gods and goddesses, upon the advice of his seer, named Hesurenv. The actions of King Turvenost and Hesurenv began a great war of northerners against southerners. When Sshorg came blustering northward a second time, the people of Turvenost were defeated, for without the Sacred Sword they could not withstand his assault. Turvenost was betrayed and Sshorg drowned him and his lands. Sshorg stayed, leaving his sons to live there in the waters. The tsunami desolated Melib and the demons of Churanpur occupied the land. Although, even without the sword, Tolat's temples saved the island of Melib and the land has ever since continued to rise above the sea. Later, Churanpur was lost when the other lands of Avanapdur were lost.

The liberation of the island came when an army and navy invaded from Teshnos. They battled the demons of Churanpur and settled on the island. It became a province of Teshnos until Ordanal (Ordval) of Jrustela seized it for the God Learners. He brought the Divine Sword of Tolat back to Melib with him and placed it again in its ancient place. Consequently, he was acclaimed King and conquered the island and its peoples. Though he wished otherwise, he could not remove the divine sword from the temple where King Dengbalu had first stuck it. He later joined the Middle Sea Empire.

In this time many Granddaughters of The Sun and Daughters of The Stars departed Melib, dissatisfied with the menfolk. They gave themselves to Tolat and in turn, he gave them the island of Trowjang. They became the ancestors of the Marazi Amazons.

The Time of Empires (The Second Age)

During the Second Age, King Svalak of Seshnela sponsored the formation of migration companies. In 768, adventurers seized control of Kralorela. The people of Melib learned that the Divine Sword was in the hands of a Seshnegi knight. They tried to steal it, failed, and consequently brought awareness to the Westerners. By 770, Seshnegi explorers seeking riches in the East discovered the Zaranistangi blues living in the jungles of Melib. In 772, the port city of Svalakswal was established on Melib, with a war fleet and a fleet to trade with Teshnos. By 775, it became the new capital of Melib. Seshnegi religion, political thought, literature, mythology, and artistic motifs became integrated into local culture. The true Malkioni caste system never developed, but the rule of the Empire of the Middle Sea stimulated the rise of a highly organised, centralised state. Soon other cities dotted the coast, forming part of the area known as the Colony of Eest.

During this period, the population was concentrated in villages along the coast and river estuaries. Traffic and communications were mostly water borne on the rivers and their delta tributaries. The area was a natural region for the development of an economy based on fishing and rice cultivation. It depended on rice surpluses produced by an extensive inland irrigation system. Maritime trade also played an extremely important role in the development of Eest. Increasing contact with the West through the travels of merchants, diplomats, and learned missionaries fostered increasing Seshnegi influence.

In the late ninth century, civil wars and dynastic strife undermined Eest's stability, making it relatively easy prey to incursions by hostile neighbours. The influence of the Godlearners diminished as they focused their efforts upon maintaining their control over Kralorela.

The Closing began in Melib around 950. This began the golden age of Melibite civilisation. The Godlearners continued to rule the island, using local kings as their puppets. The first of these was King Taruhija; he built the great temple cities as a lasting monument to his vain greatness. Possibly to put distance between himself and the coast-hugging Teshnans, Taruhija settled in the south of the island. King Nolaozurman, The Leper King gained nominal autocracy from his Godlearner masters. He ordered the construction of a huge reservoir north of the capital to provide irrigation for wet rice cultivation.

In a last frantic attempt at maintaining control over Melib, the Godlearners furnished valuable troops and magics to King Balzarcho (1003–1009), but he was a poor ruler and was deposed by a junta of warlords, who carved up the island into their own independent territories. The whole island underwent a gradual decline as public works went unrepaired and pirates regularly raided the coastal villages, even daring to declare themselves as rulers of some coastal towns. The fall of the Godlearners accelerated this decline, in 1051

the Dragon's Awakening Shudder struck Kralorela, the Suam Chow began sinking, and the peasant revolt overthrew the Godlearners. The Teshnans capitalised on this instability launching an invasion of Melib, using monkeys and birds to carry fire over the defenders and by 1057, the kingdom of Teshnos reduced Melib to a vassal state. They subjugated central and upper Melib, annexed portions of the other nearby islands, and brought what are now the Sofali islands under their immediate control. After a short and bloody war, their re-conquest of Melib was complete by 1060.

The Third Age

The people of Teshnos established control over Eest, embarking on a course of conquest that continued for three centuries. The royal families of Teshnos intermarried with their Eestese counterparts and generally preserved the earlier political and social institutions of Eest. This period of glory did not last, as factional disputes at the Teshnos court resulted in the splitting of the kingdom into rival northern Mainland (or Upper) Teshnos and southern Water (or Lower) Teshnos, including Melib. Land Teshnos maintained a relatively stable existence, but Water Teshnos underwent a period of constant turbulence.

Heshomir declared himself Rajah of Water Teshnos in 1072. His thwarted attempt at being recognised as King of Melib failed early on when many of the native priests refused to back him. He died performing the Occasion of the Four Elephants with a Kralori whore. The eventual inauguration of King Anjaunikstar (circa. 1110) marked the liberation of the Melibites from Teshnan control and the beginning of a unified nation. Anjaunikstar recalled settlers from coastal Teshnos, as what had been Water Teshnos reverted to its constituent parts. He married his own sister naming her Queen, later he married his two sisters-in-law and aunt. On the birth of his first daughter, he announced he intended to marry her when she reached adulthood. He fulfilled his intentions, subsequently marrying two more daughters of his sister-in-law and a foreign courtesan. After Anjaunikstar died whilst participating in an orgy, his son Saradevana ascended the throne. He lost the throne to Rhikan, a Teshnan Warlord who declared himself Rajah Protector of Melib and attempted to revive the links of the past with his homeland, but the heavy taxes he levied aroused the anger of the Melibites. They rose up and restored Saradevana, who became one of the greatest monarchs, expanding his territory at the expense of the smaller polities as far west as the Wirraddy River. He raided the southern coast of Teshnos and reduced to vassalage the peoples who had migrated into Melib from the southern region of Kralorela.

King Jayaranka's reign (1191-1230) marked the apogee of Melib's power. During his reign, the Kebolwa giant was defeated, and forced to become a slave to Jayaranka, building many stone structures. Jayaranka was a fervent patron of the Solar pantheon. Casting himself as an avatar of Shomash, he embarked on a frenzy of building activity, including a remarkable temple whose stone towers depict the faces of gods and kings. He also built over two hundred rest houses and hospitals throughout his kingdom. Like the Western rulers of old, he maintained a system of roads between his capital and provincial towns. Due to his popularity, his councillors pestered him into assumption of the title, Emperor of Melib. But he died without heirs, leaving instability and feuding in his wake.

The beneficiary of the instability was a Marazi who announced herself protector and finally queen amidst deceit and treachery. Queen Javere (1230-1237) ruled from her substitute palace, as she was unable to perform, or did not know, the correct rites of monarchy. Consequently, Javere was a titular monarch and only directly ruled a small part of the south. The majority of the island reverted to the control of the numerous warlords and petty kings. They prospered during her reign, as she cared little for the concerns of people outside her limited realm. Javere adopted a salacious and decadent lifestyle, and was addicted to the pleasures of the Night Growing Mushroom. In an act of divine irony, a Sword of Tolat assassinated her during the annual coupling with her deity.

Javere was succeeded by King Rajendra (1237-1298) the grandson of Jayaranka. He came to the throne at the age of just four. Intrigue and scandal beset much of his early reign. His widowed mother attempted to maintain her position as regent against the dangerous and vengeful warlords of the western part of the island. She sought aid from Kralorela and the wise rulers of this land gifted her with money and troops, proving again that to the people of Melib, east is good, west is bad. Rajendra ascended to glory on his eighteenth birthday and ruled over a reign of peace and plenty.

Prince Kushrini (1358-1367) was the first in a line of warrior princes to rule the island throughout the late 1300s and early 1400s. Kushrini arose from among the multitude of warlords. He rejected the title of King, in favour of the title Warrior Prince. He wielded the Star Metal Sword, ruling from his aerial pavilion above the palace. Kushrini took a woman of The Dancing Conflagration for his bride and befriended a Magnus Magisaur, and together they travelled to the gates of Dawn. Little knowledge remains of the time after his reign as record keeping was poor and struggles for power were brief and bloody. The deterioration of the irrigation system hastened Melib's decline during this period. Attacks by Teshnans and other foreigners and the internal discord caused by dynastic rivalries diverted human resources from the system's upkeep and it gradually fell into disrepair.

Queen Gerishini (1487–1539) was the first recognised monarch for over one hundred and twenty years. She claimed descent from Javere and this did much to gain favour from among her supporters. This favour bordered on adoration, when she signed several trading agreements with Kralorela and personally led a peace mission to Trowjang. She returned with promises of friendship and, most notably, a bodyguard of Marazi Tiger Warriors. Her period of grace did not last, as Gerishini showed her true colours as a cruel and ruthless dictator. Rigorous enforcement of her edicts at the point of a sword and by the exotic magics of the Tiger Warriors followed. Her death occurred in mysterious circumstances during a hunting excursion in the north of the island. A mere handful of her vicious Tiger Warriors emerged from the deep jungle, raving about giant killer bats, and more ominously strange blue people that could appear and disappear at will. From 1539 onwards the island lapsed back to the fractured state of the previous century with innumerable inconsequential kings, warlords and self proclaimed Rajahs, many of which were cruel and some undoubtedly mad.

The Opening reached Melib in 1586 when one of Dormal's sub-fleets reached the island and stopped over to replenish provisions before sailing Eastwards into the Kahar Sea and onwards to Kralorela. In 1589 Harstar sailed from Gio to land his band of privateers and re-conquer the island in the name of Hisgoranstor of Gach. He met little co-ordinated resistance and soon controlled much of the island. In 1601, Harstar declared himself Rajah of Melib.

Events of the Early Hero Wars, 1621-1630

In 1621, a ship arrives carrying representatives of the Dancers in the Day and Seapolis emissaries. They bring news of the disappearance of the Pharaoh and fresh offers of a continued trade alliance with the new ruler of Seapolis, the High Admiral of the Boats. The emissaries hardly recognise their fellow countrymen, or vessels, both of which have undergone dramatic changes in the so-called 'Wilderness Years'. Those boats that remain lie at anchor in the sheltered waters of Dosakayo's natural harbour. Their skeleton crews have adopted many native Melibite ways and have taken local girls as their brides, while the biremes have been painted in local colours and rigged with crab-claw or Haragalan-style sails.

The demands of King Pubnashap grow ever more malignant as he attempts to bring Harstar to heel. In turn, Harstar raids shipping along the coast of Teshnos. Terkan Barahinstins raises his forces in the west and tries unsuccessfully to seize the throne although he does capture Niaomi. This

leads to a daring rescue attempt by Chiokan and the Tolat warriors and ends in a naval engagement between the fleets of Harstar and King Pubnashap, who supports Terkan. Harstar is victorious and Terkan dies.

Harstar travels to Trowjang to court the Queen of the Marazi. In the annual coupling he becomes Tolat while she becomes Emilla. Harstar takes her as his second bride and unites the peoples of the two islands under his rule.

Harstar's sailors report Firebergs floating northward on the Sshorg current, then a searing current of water flowing up the coast from Togaro. Admiral Zaragiki requests aid from Harstar in saving Haragala. Harstar is alarmed and seeks a way to prevent the destruction of his friend's island. Some suggest petitioning Sedeni or even Sedsaru. Harstar uses the ancient powers of Hisgoranstor to send the current rebounding away, squirming southwards.

Life

On the coast, there is rice cultivation on flooded rice terraces with two or three crops per year. Fields of dry crops supplement these with corn as the predominant grain. The soils are rich alluvials they are easily turned and the dwarf water buffalo pulls the wooden ploughs. The terraces trip down the hillsides in shades of gold, brown and green, fringed by tracts of reeds, tall grass and thinly wooded areas. In the south many spices are grown, particularly pepper, cardamom, ginger, and cinnamon. In the interior slash and burn farming predominates with beans, ginger, and sweet potatoes as the crops. There is the collection of fruits and the tapping of rubber trees for local use. Villagers keep half-wild hunting dogs and the Babirusa deer pigs, with great curving tusks, as partially domesticated beasts. Sugar palms make wine, vinegar, and buildings. Villagers use small forest-elephants to push over trees and move the felled timber.

Despite the abundant marine life there is only a small fishing fleet, operating mostly in the shallow coastal waters under the watchful eyes of the Malasp. The horse is a highly prestigious and extremely rare animal; those that struggle to flourish are the Dariti introduced from Seshnela in the Second Age and the eastern small head Vuanso imported from Kralorela.

Rice is the principal staple; most dishes are cooked and served in a large metal bowl, accompanied by copious amounts of rice noodles. At the end of meals diners chew a small bundle of spices and betel nut producing a mildly euphoric sensation. These can contain opium or aphrodisiacs and overuse produces a distinctive red-black staining of the teeth with bright scarlet tongue and spittle.

Officially, the growing of the Soma plant used during the religious ceremonies of Shomash is only under the jurisdiction or permission of the cult's priesthood. The best and most potent Soma is fertilised with bat guano,

which produces particularly revealing visions for its users, who either smoke it or ingest the plant in a sticky mash.

The Melibite people pride themselves in the production of excellent fabrics and the painting of silk in delicate patterns. Other crafts encompass jewellery with superb cut gemstones and the woodcarving of ancestor totems, fertility poles and grotesque masks. The firing of unglazed pottery adorned with blue flowers and basket working with the use of cowry shells and glass beads in the weave are widespread.

The craftsmen are excellent redsmiths, second only to the bizarre smiths of the Third Eye Blue people. They produce exquisite twisting latticework handles or pommels for swords and daggers, as well as metal bowls, drinking vessels and ornaments. They make manifold glass objects, although the craftsmanship is inferior to the items produced by their continental neighbours in Teshnos.

Dress and Decoration

Women wear long silk sarongs, held in place with a scarf trimmed with brightly coloured stripes. More formal attire includes the Seladong waist scarf, of yellow or saffron orange. Women are normally naked to the waist, sometimes wearing short sleeved silk blouses that are mostly halterneck and cut to expose the midriff. They wear much jewellery, especially gold ornaments. Men wear full-length silk sarongs or flowing robes with wide waist scarves, or loose fitting shirts, and baggy pantaloons, all in garish colours.

Wealthy inhabitants display their status by adorning themselves with light cloaks of bright butterfly wings and parakeet feathers. Both sexes wear headscarves, turbans, or wide brimmed floppy straw hats. Both sexes use cosmetics. Chief among them is Lac coloured sandalwood paste. Women decorate their hands, upper torso and feet with this and henna in elaborate swirling, or flame designs.

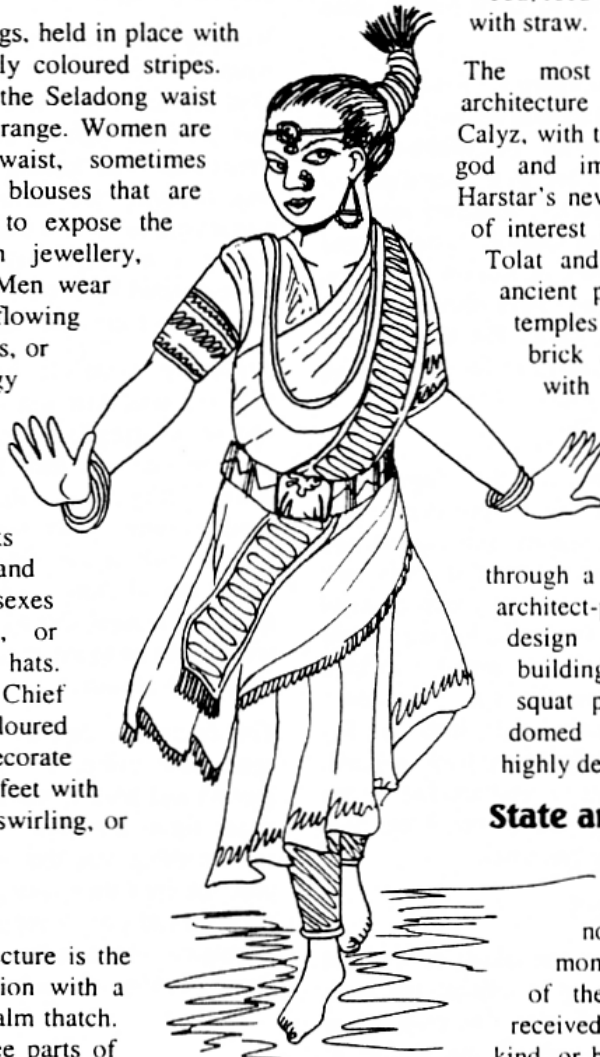
Towns and Cities

The basic element of architecture is the rectangular open-sided pavilion with a steeply pitched hip roof of palm thatch. All buildings reflect the three parts of the Melib view of the cosmos: the world of the Gods, the human realm and the world of the dead. They likewise represent the three parts of the

human form: the head, the body, and the legs. These are the units of measurement for buildings and based on the anatomical dimensions of the household head, ensuring harmony between the dwelling and those that dwell within.

Villages generally follow a similar pattern. Most houses are single storey bungalows on stilts with open verandas and surrounded by thatched roof rice barns. In the centre is an open meeting space, with the huge single community house raised on piles and topped with an elaborate carved roof. These have high gable ends painted and adorned with scenes of daily and sacred life. Meetings, debates, music practice and the like take place within. Each village also has a warning drum tower and a house, where the rice planters meet.

Typical town houses are of three storeys with barrel vaulted roofs, gable ends, and ornate finials. Roofs are both thatched and tiled. Larger houses have flat roofs with overhanging eaves and raised terraces. The whitewashed walls have decorations of painted pictures and ornamentation, both flat and stucco relief. Poorer folk live in single floored, single roomed huts made of wood, reed or mud brick, and thatched with straw.



The most outstanding piece of architecture is the large temple to Calyz, with the ithyphallic statue of the god and imposing golden form of Harstar's new statue and pagoda. Also of interest are the Sword Temple of Tolat and overgrown ruins of the ancient port of Svalakswal. Other temples contain a number of clay brick shrines heavily decorated with carving. The entrance to

temples is via a sculpted tower split down the centre and the entrance to the inner courtyard is through a wooden tower door. The architect-priests of Zitro-Argon design these and other formal buildings. Many of these have squat pillars, round towers and domed roofs. They are always highly decorated with carving.

State and Government

In the past, each village had a headman, who was normally hereditary, as the monarch's representative. One of the wealthier peasants, he received tax-free land, dues in kind, or both. In the larger villages, he is still a very important functionary, with a small staff of village officials. In the past, some headmen

were oppressive tyrants, and villagers had to appeal to the king for protection. Usually the headmen were and continue to be champions of the villagers; many villages erect hero-stones in remembrance of outstanding past headmen.

Before the coming of Harstar, the natives governed themselves with a blend of local, personal government with social and minor religious customs. On his coronation, Harstar instituted the formalisation of law using his own interpretation of the theocratic courts of Teshnos. Punishments range from isolation or whipping for minor crimes up to exile or death by immolation for more serious ones. Harstar has appointed tax collectors and new village chiefs, predominantly initiates of Shomash. He has introduced a rigid hierarchy of rank, similar to Teshnan castes, and including the ancestry of native Melibites, although he has retained the local hereditary feudal-kings, petty warlords, and Rajahs. Harstar has begun a programme of dam building, improvement of agriculture, and extensive renovation and erection of new buildings. He is considering the introduction of a state levy of money or the institution of *corvée* labour to assist him in these grand works.

Harstar owns *The Wandering Albatross*, a Haragalan tallship, equipped with its own sunscope and crewed by a mixture of Melibite and Haragalan sailors. Aboard and in the main port of Lavika he maintains a band of mercenary marines, armed mostly with leaf-shaped, single-edged swords, wavy-shaped blades, or Kralori weaponry. They wear coats of mail and have shields of bent cane covered in gleaming metal. The formation of a paramilitary youth organisation for the training and education of elite youth is the second of Harstar's new pillars of society.

The Wandering Albatross is the flagship of Harstar's highly effective fleet of privateers. This is a rag-tag mixture of Teshnan merchant vessels and Kralori Junks, crewed by dissidents and refugees. Harstar also has a small group of loyal Tolat warriors, who have sworn the Puputan (fight to the death) oath to guard him, armed with long two handed slashing swords and pole axes. Chiokan, a Dragon Warrior, heads them. He has recently nursed an injured Spearbird back to health and has grandiose schemes to steal another, in the hope of using the mating pair to breed his own flight of the magical flying creatures.

Society and Conduct

Initiation for boys involves the taking of a sacred thread of Calyz; entwining it around the right shoulder and under the left arm. The removal or defilement of this thread reduces the wearer to great humiliation and ritual impurity; rigorous

penance is the only way to expunge this.

There is much pageantry in courting, except during special ceremonies of weddings, feasts and the unusual fish catching festivals there is segregation of teenagers. On these occasions, they are allowed to mingle with each other freely. However, if a girl publicly accepts a gift from a boy at one of these occasions she is committed to marry him. Harvest time is another opportunity for such flirting and marriage proposals. There are eight forms of marriage, ranging from the Official (conducted by a priest of Shomash, with a duly dowered girl) through to the Capture Marriage, popular among the warlords of the west and those from neighbouring lands who seek an exotic bride.

From the point of the sacred law of Shomash, a marriage is indissoluble once consummated. It can never be annulled, let alone end in divorce. An errant wife loses her rights and her husband is still responsible for her upkeep. In the case of adultery, a wife can be torn apart by dogs if she has wilful intercourse with a man of a lower caste. If with one of a high station, she undergoes a starvation diet, sleeps on the floor and wears rags. Monogamy is the norm, although nobles practice polygamy.

Running the house is the women's task. In the morning women sweep and put out offerings for the gods at the God-throne. While the women attend to these tasks, the men tend the fighting cocks or other pets, like dogs. Preparation and trading of food is again a woman's task. In agriculture, there is division of labour, although all turn out to harvest the rice, the planting of the rice is purely a male activity. Leisure activities are also differentiated by gender. Both men and women dance, yet only men are musicians.

According to the old laws, when a person gets white hair and sees their son's sons, they should leave their spouse. Retiring to the edge of the village they become a hermit, or take their spouse and live in the forest. There, living in a squalid hut on the alms of locals or food collected from the wilds, they should perform regular rites at the village fire and raise their being above mortal things. Adding to ones hardships during this time is usual. Sitting in the heavy rains and leaving wet clothes on to steam in the humid heat of midday are especially popular.

The cremation ceremony is an amazing, noisy and spectacular event. The body is carried to the burial ground and here is burnt in a high tower of bamboo, paper, tinsel, silk, cloth, glass mirrors, flowers, ribbons and anything else that is colourful. On the third day after the cremation they gather up the charred bones of the dead and store them in an urn. For ten days after the cremation, the mourners light fires for the dead and make offerings of rice-balls and honey.

Religion

Solar deities dominate religious life. A majority of the inhabitants worship Calyz, The Fire of Men. The worship of Solf, Lord of Decadence, is under pressure, as Harstar deems it unsuitable for his diligent followers. Nobles and warlords worship Shomash, The Golden God of the Sun. His Flame Puppeteers travel the island with their unique form of showmanship. They light bonfires in huge rectangular pits and from these, they cause images to arise and perform dances and act out folktales and popular myths. For children this is pure theatre, for many adults it is unwitting propaganda and indoctrination.



Zitro-Argon the Shining One is most Holy Lord of the Sky. He is only accessible to his Holy Monks who can see beyond normal understanding. His Firewalkers are strange men indeed; they are in a constant state of ecstasy and readily undergo the trial of

walking across burning coals for the ultimate oneness they achieve with Zitro-Argon. Furalor, the Cleansing Fire is the Goddess of Death. The wife of Shomash is The Mistress of Compassion and Ourivati is The Infinite Sky Queen, Mother of the Star Children. Her progeny include Skankeya, The Six-headed Star Daughter, and Thella the Dawn Goddess. Some locals persist in their worship of Osdero, the Sun Phoenix while the local Trickster is Folomi and there is worship of Tolat in the Sword Temples of the island and small temples to Dormal in Lavika and Dosakayo.

Sailors and villagers of the coast also worship Turvenost as a protective deity. This sea demon of the northern Sshorg haunts the Sedlazam, preying upon sea gods and mermen. Another demon, Sedeni, who with his brother Seluro killed Osdero, haunts the sea to the east of Melib. Acanthu, Fish Prince son of Golad and Ermanthver, Eastern Queen of the Waters, coupled with Sedlazam to spawn the Purple Sailfin of the waters around Melib and Trowjang and the fishermen of the eastern coast offer him worship and sacrifices.

The Earth Mother is Shakalakar, the farmers of the coast venerate her and her daughters the grain goddesses Melba, The Rice Mother and Dursha, The Corn Queen. The natives of the interior worship Jama Mapun, destroyer and renewer, the deity of slash and burn agriculture. Aranyana is the Lady of the Forest, propitiated by farmers who fell her children and venerated by hunters who traverse her dark and steamy interior. Samal the Knowing God, is the conduit to the ancestors and Helaya is the Lord of Rain while the Embyli follow Embyldrya and Halamalao.

Harstar has allowed the Mystics of Vithelan knowledge and the followers of the Parloth to worship in his realm. He and others form the core of a small, although, flourishing number of adherents of the Hero-cult of Hisgoranstor. Additionally there are some holders of the secrets of Bara Shal, Goddess of What, and other Zolathic Mysteries. Kralorelan religions have influence in Melib with the followers of Metsyla, The Light of Enlightenment, Darudism, the Naked Sages of NiangMao with their muslin covered mouths and flaxen whisks, and some adherents of the Path of Immanent Mystery. Enemy deities include Atyana the Darklight, Krashtura the Hungry Maw, Sedsaru, who demands the Terrible Sacrifice and vile Urani the Bad Rain, enslaver of Nayru the daughter of Zitro-Argon.

Music, Language and Literature

Music is an accompaniment to rituals or religious performances; the most widely known is the wedding Areak. The number of metal instruments is overwhelming, including bronze kettles, suspended gongs, and small hanging cymbals. Monkey-hide shake drums, flutes, and the ever-present wailing vocals dominate percussion instruments. Romantic and sentimental love songs are extremely popular.

The people of Melib predominantly speak Melibic, or Low Teshnan with a smattering of Trowjangi. Whilst many of the higher castes prefer the language of the priests, High Teshnan. The Zuzimi and Chropti Hsunchen speak their own primitive dialects, while the Embyli have a melodic, almost singing tongue.

For hundreds of years, the secrets of writing and reading remained the knowledge of the monasteries of the island. These texts were compiled by monks and contained the stories of local deities. The colonisation by Seshnela produced many fine illuminated works of medicine, star texts and religious doctrine. Although, most of these were lost or burnt in the eleventh century.

Places of Interest

Buldalla Caves: Like Giraya, Buldalla is a vast isolated rock mass and it was here that King Dengbalu took refuge from Sshorg. He later turned the caves into a rock temple.

Dosakayo: Political capital under Harstar – a sordid den of corruption and iniquity.

Eliya: The air here is cool and fresh - a serene retreat from hustle and bustle. Eliya sits amidst the Nuwara Plains, Melib's highest and most isolated plateau. Narrow paths lead to the precipice known as World's End.

Giraya: This rock fortress, on the very brink of the precipice, built by King Saradevana as a royal citadel. In a sheltered pocket, approached by a spiral stairway, are fantastical frescoes. Visitors can experience all the delights of the Shadow Hyacinth World within its precincts.

Hintal Hills: The hills are dotted with shrines and rock dwellings. A grand stairway of granite steps lead to the summit with its splendid view of the surrounding countryside. Nearby are the sacred tree of Jetavaya, the dagabas of Parama and Hayagiri, and the sanctuary of Brazen Kokuna.

Jayaswal: Melib's hill capital, stronghold of the Western Warlords, is a most beautiful town. The focal point is, without doubt, the golden roofed temple where the Sacred White Elephant Tusk Relic is enshrined. The highlight of the year is when it is taken in procession accompanied by exotically costumed dancers, drummers and elephants during ten glittering nights. There are many shrines and temples in and around the town, with rare paintings, frescoes, wood and stone carvings.

Lanaya: Situated beneath sprawling trees and amongst rocks and boulders, Lanaya brings tranquillity to the tired eyes, ears, limbs and minds. It combines a multitude of theatres and Fire Puppet arenas inside its courtyards.

Lavika: The primary town of the island where Harstar first landed. It his capital and site of his royal council chamber, citadel and pavilion. Within the walls are the lavish Vatada Relic House with moonstones, guardstones and sculptured railing, Kiri Vehera dagaba; and Kumaragal sculptures.

Marata: The 'City of Gems' and the centre of the jewellery craft.

Notable Personalities

Harstar of the Sea: Harstar, a Teshnan priest of Calyz is the current prince of Melib. He refuses to pay tribute or heed to King Pubnashap, The Vessel of Light. This is surely leading to a direct political confrontation with the Emperor of Teshnos and possibly to a naval engagement. For this reason, Harstar is busily building alliances with the naval powers of Kethaela and Haragala.

Niaomi: Whenever Harstar in public he is in the company of Niaomi, his Haragalan bride. A vision of beauty, with a graceful form, long legs and tiny feet nestled in raspberry red slippers. Niaomi has large full lips and soft almond eyes, her dark hair cascades over her dusky skinned shoulders. Locals know her as the 'Cat Princess' for her love of Teshnan Blue Caracals. Niaomi is the daughter of Zaragiki of Red Swordfish a powerful Captain of the Silver faction of her native island. She enthusiastically adopts Mokatan fashions, having silks and pearls especially brought to Melib by one of her father's trading vessels.

Chiokan: Although Chiokan is not a follower of Tolat, he heads the warrior bodyguard of Harstar. Chiokan is a Dragon Warrior who follows the way of the Path of Immanent Mastery. As of yet, he is not able to transform himself into a dragon, although, he has attained the knowledge of Perfection of Viscera. At his waist, he wears a long handled sword and dagger, in the Vormain style. Few have ever seen his face as Chiokan wears a bright jade green mask of lascertine features.

Warlord Terkan Barahinstins: Terkan is the most vociferous of the local hereditary kings and petty feudal warlords of the island. He has aspirations of power and deluded dreams of overcoming Harstar, who he considers to be a Teshnan usurper, and place himself on the throne of Melib. Terkan rules his domain from the hill city of Jayaswal. He has far less power since the arrival of Harstar, although still maintaining his own small force of Tiger Warriors. Although Terkan considers himself a valorous soul, he is no reckless fool. He publicly bows the knee before Harstar, paying him full tribute and sometimes offering extravagant gifts. Privately he marshals his resources for the time when he knows he will be powerful enough to overthrow Harstar.

Thanos' Treasure

By **Simon Bray**

With thanks to Mark 'Eorkan' Galeotti, Chris 'Cutrid' Geddes and Mark 'Zzipflop, Borin' Rowe.

Narrator Information.

What follows is a story of romance and lust, of fear and hatred, of adolescence and rites of passage. The episode is set in the lands of King Thanos of the Lismelder tribe and chieftain of the Goodsword clan. The story revolves around Salyn the daughter of king Thanos, who is about to come of age and be initiated into the ways of womanhood. As part of an old agreement with the Enhyli clan of the Colymar Tribe, Salyn has been promised in marriage to Enderin, son of Colwyn, Chieftain of the Enhyli. This union will strengthen the friendship between the two clans and their respective tribes. Allies are of great importance in this time of conquest and oppression. The elder women have sensed that the time for Salyn's womanhood to flower is near and have called upon her betrothed to be present for his part in the initiation and subsequent marriage.

Moreover, what does Salyn think about all this?

Salyn is a headstrong and single-minded girl, who has grown up in a closeted world, protected by her warrior-king father and politically cunning mother. Her encounters with men have only been with the stern Indrodari worshippers of Humakt, ageing Saronil, her tutor, or with fawning diplomats. Never has she run in the fields with the boys or played the games that would prepare her for womanhood and her wedding day. Salyn has resolved never to marry any man, as they are all cold and heartless creatures. She has tried to make her protest clear to her parents, but they have foolishly ignored her and told her about duty, tradition and how the world will change when she becomes an adult.

In recent seasons Salyn has taken to riding in the southern extremes of the clan tula. An excellent rider, she often manages to lose her escort, Cutrid the Maul. It was on one of these rides that Salyn was ambushed by a gang of outlaws, who were intent on taking her for ransom. Stunned and at their mercy, Salyn was surrounded by five leering vagabonds, intent upon broo-like actions. Suddenly there was a mighty screaming and a group of women charged into the clearing, swinging mighty axes and singing grim dirges. Salyn's attackers were slain or driven off. The women were devotees of Babeester Gor, warrior women protectors of the earth. Salyn was immediately beguiled by their

personal strength and power; she vowed that she would seek them out when she became a woman and join the cult of avengers. She quickly befriended Arda Womb-Guard, the leader of the warriors, and plotted to flee her home the day before her initiation and join with the band. This action suited Arda well for she had an old enmity with the new King of the Colymar, and to weaken his alliances was to weaken him. Arda and Salyn have met many times since, with Arda divulging the true horrors that men perpetrate upon women, especially upon their wedding night.

Naïve, Salyn listens intently to the man hating warriorress, her expectant eyes absorbing the strength of the woman, her young mind absorbing the philosophy of brutal Babeester Gor. When they are unable to be together, perhaps because Salyn's guardian has managed to keep at her side upon the ride, or her father has refused to allow her to ride, Arda leaves secret messages inscribed in the ancient tongue of the earth. Salyn secretes these beneath her bed, to read when the King is snoring.

Every narrator has his or her own style. This scenario can either have the mystery component emphasised or the Dungeon Crawl at the end, it is up to the individual. To alter the emphasis of the Scenario, the Narrator can use the NPC Eorkan Goose-Feather to either hold up the proceedings and throw in a few red herrings or have him direct players to clues that they would otherwise miss. The GM can also shorten the number of events within Scene 1 to increase the game tempo. However, if the narrator does this then the 'carryover' result should be modified accordingly.

A note regarding royalty.

Throughout this scenario, the term Prince and Princess are used to describe Enderin and Salyn. This is an incorrect use of the words, as they are only noble by virtue of their parents' elected status. However, this term is used because typing the words 'Clan Chieftain's Son' and 'Tribal King's Daughter' was a little tedious.

Premise

The episode begins with the arrival of the players within Swordvale Fort, the largest village in the Lismelder Lands and heart of the Goodsword clan. After the traditional greetings are performed, Thanos invites his guests into his hall and provides a feast and entertainment. During the feast, the players encounter some of the locals, and some of the clan's intrigues, including several *major* clues as to Salyn's intentions,

and some *even bigger* red herrings. The players will have their first contact with Salyn, enhancing Prince Enerin's amour even further. When the festivities turn into drunken slumber, Salyn reads her final letter and makes good her escape. The next morning, the clan is in disarray, their greatest treasure has been lost. Thanos sends out the weaponthanes, the hunters and scouts to search for his daughter, and expects her suitor to follow their example. The players will receive several opportunities to find clues as to her whereabouts, perhaps using rational thought instead of grieving passions. Eventually, the hunt will lead to Borin Blackpaw's stead, and then onto the hidden shrine of Babeester Gor, where the players may try to confront the Axe Maidens and save the princess. However, it is the WAY that things are done in this game that will affect the outcome of the story.

Relationships

King Thanos – Loves his daughter Salyn fanatically, but takes little notice of her wishes. He listens closely to the counsel of his wife, Queen Casiandra, and rarely disagrees with her. Thanos is loved by his own clan, and respected by the majority of the Lismelder tribe, except for the Poss Clan who see him weakening. Thanos is highly respected by the Indrodar Humakt cult, who has their temple within Thanos' fort. Thanos gets on well with the majority of the Colymar, especially the Enhyli.

Queen Casiandra – Loves Salyn, but is often cold and distant to her. Casiandra is the High Priestess of Ernalda in Lismelder Lands. She is well loved. Casiandra is welcoming to allies, diplomatic with neutrals and vengeful to her tribe's enemies.

Salyn – Loves her parents, but cannot make them hear her. She is becoming obsessional about Arda Womb-Guard, worshipping the ground she walks on. Salyn hates the 'idea' of Prince Enerin. Salyn is nervous around Saronil her tutor, in a teacher/pupil way. Salyn avoids eye contact with Borin Blackpaw, whom she sees as the epitome of male machismo. She mocks and scorns Cutrid the Maul, for his warrior ways, slow wits and ugliness.

Arda Womb-Guard – Hates men. Hates Colymar men more. Hates Blackmor most. Arda will do anything to get revenge on Blackmor, even if it means lying to Salyn. Arda sees Salyn as a pawn in her game, but a pawn she would be VERY angry to lose.

Borin Blackpaw – Loves Women! No, he really loves women! No, he REALLY loves women! In fact as a devotee of Yinkin and an initiate of Niskis the Lover, he is a pure gigolo. He is well loved by his many 'Bed-Wives', but is disliked by many of the clan's men. He is always in some form of trouble.

Prince Enerin – Loves the 'idea' of Salyn, has become obsessive about her. Is nervous around Thanos, who is a powerful man. Enerin is loyal to his clan, but not a lover of Blackmor and his politics. He is devoted to his father, and will heed his every command. **In tournament play, Prince Enerin was a player-hero.**

Secret

Unbeknownst to Salyn, her secret meetings with Arda Womb-Guard have been spied upon by Borin Blackpaw, godi of Yinkin. Borin's stead lies at the foot of Tree Hill and the hidden shrine to Babeester Gor lies within the wild woods that comprise Borin's hunting grounds. Borin's cunning and shape-shifting abilities have allowed him to observe unnoticed. Borin has recently been at the centre of several clan controversies, including suspected adultery, a political incident with an Esrolian ambassador in Boldhome and the unproven theft of a fertility symbol from the Ernalda temple. He knows that his position in the clan is tenuous, and that he faces outlawry. Borin has decided to wait until Salyn's departure and then 'rescue' her from a fate worse than death, thus redeeming his position within the clan. He does not know exactly when Salyn plans to run, but he knows what signals to look for, and so he has watched her incessantly for the last two weeks, leading many clan folk to suspect his motives towards Salyn.

Scene 1

The Enhyli clansmen arrive at Swordvale Fort, where they are greeted by King Thanos and invited to a feast in their honour. The Goodsword call upon the Enhyli to display their talents and worthiness. Prince Enerin meets Salyn for the first time. The Enhyli hear the local gossip. Borin is spied within the rafters.

Setting

One cold crisp morning in late Earth season. The Enhyli arrive at the gates of Swordvale Fort. A great Orlanthi hill fort, with huge earthen ramparts, mounted by grey stone towers from which dour faced warriors stare down. The gates are swung open to reveal the painted longhouses of the Goodsword folk. A few feet from the gate stands a great wooden image of Indrodar, who looks out over the small, brightly coloured market. The fort's interior is dominated by three temples: on the central hill sits a shrine to Orlanth, with Ernalda's loom house at the hill's base while over the whole community the temple of Indrodar, a fortified bastion keeps watch. The King's Compound is clearly visible, with its great hall dominating the centre.

A reception committee has gathered within the hall, with warriors jostling with farmers and their wives to get a good look at the man who shall marry their precious Salyn. The crowd then parts and a well-fed and broadly smiling man steps forward and introduces himself as Eorkan Goose-Feather, Herald of King

Eorkan Goose-Feather – The Narrator’s Friend



Eorkan is a worshipper of Issaries, who serves as the King’s Herald. He is also responsible for co-ordinating the Tribal and Clan markets. Eorkan is originally from Alda Chur, he is an exiled member of the Kolatiri clan, who through friendship and oratory has found himself a place within Thanos’ Hall. Eorkan lives in a small house near the market, with his gaggle of honking geese, and maintains a shrine to Grohonka the Goose. He is also Dragon Pass’s chief dealer in Esrolian phallic symbols. Eorkan is immediately friendly to the Enhyli, he will help them in any way that he can, and if the players find they are having difficulty finding a clue, or answering a question the Narrator can use Eorkan to help them along, using him as much or as little as possible. Eorkan’s only failing is that he hates the clan’s lawspeaker Salokin with a vengeance; the cause for this is as yet unknown, but he will blame the ageing sage for anything that cannot be explained by other means. For example, if the players are looking for a scapegoat for the ‘kidnap’ then Eorkan will point out how Salyn was always running away from the sage, and couldn’t stand him being around – any form of quick investigation will soon reveal that Eorkan is mistaken.

Keywords – Heortling Merchant 15W, Issaries Devotee 17W, Initiate of Grohonka the Goose 20

Significant Abilities – Know Gossip 20W, Know Trivia 18W, Orate 15W, Haggle 13W, Clever 20, Lie 5W, Relationship to Goodsword Clan 10W, Relationship King Thanos 20.

Magic – Issaries - Communication 13W, Trade 5W, Travel 5W, Grohonka – Goose Affinity 20

Virtues – Friendly to Strangers 10W, Honest Face 20.

Flaws – Exiled from Kolatiri Clan 17, Hates Salokin 20.

Eorkan will not aid the Enhyli in any fights, but may aid them by mustering a few Fyrd to aid them.

Thanos. He greets the Enhyli warmly and then beckons them to follow him to the King’s Hall.

The King’s Hall is filled with all manner of Lismelder dignitaries; representatives from the Greydog, Marshedge, Lonisi, Goodweaver, Hillhaven and Bostrop clans are all present, (the Poss are notable for their absence). Sat on his high backed throne sits King Thanos, he is an ageing but potent-looking man. Behind him hangs Indrodar’s Sword, the Goodsword from which the clan derives its name. At King Thanos’ side sits Queen Casiandra. Much younger than Thanos, she glows with a radiant beauty and is dressed in all her finery.

Besides the royal couple sits young Salyn. A beautiful young girl who has many of her mother’s charms, she wears the sap green overskirt of a Voria cultist. The King and Queen look expectantly into the eyes of the Enhyli, although Salyn only glances and then looks back down at her platter of food. Behind Salyn stand the fearsome Cutrid the Maul, a powerful warrior of Destor and her guardian. Likewise, Thanos is guarded by an dour Indrodari and the Queen by Asti the Red, a noteworthy Vingan.

Action

Proper Greetings. There is an expectation that the Enhyli should greet King Thanos formally, using the Orlanthi greeting and the presentation of appropriate gifts.

‘Halt Stranger, who comes to this place that is not open to everyone. Do you come as friend or foe?’

Make Orlanthi Greeting (12)

Heortling Custom, Orlanthi Mythology – Players may augment their appropriate skill using the rating of the Gifts that they provide.

Complete Success - The Player is given the Salt Blessing and can sit at the King’s Table.

Minor/Major Success – The Player is given the Meat Blessing and is treated as a kinsman and given great honours.

Failure – The Player is given the Blanket Blessing and is welcome to stay, but receives only leftovers to eat.

Fumble – The Player has insulted the Goodsword and is offered ‘Water as a feast’ and is seen as less than a beggar.

Once the greeting is completed, the Enhyli are invited to join in the banquet. After a couple of hours of feasting, drinking and roaring laughter (throughout which Salyn appears uncomfortable), King Thanos stands to his feet. He turns to the Prince and says, ‘so you have come from far away to woo my daughter, come now and woo her.’ He turns to Queen Casiandra and smiles, which she returns. Salyn scowls at the table, and then glares at the Enhyli. The Queen whispers in Salyn’s ear and the young girl then feigns a smile, ‘Yes, do come, charming lord, and woo me.’

Wooing Salyn. The Prince himself must commence the wooing, although any of his followers may aid his course. For example, a Skald may play a gentle love ballet in the background, a friend may offer a gift, or

compose a poem of the girl's beauty. However, the wooer cannot directly touch or approach Salyn until she is initiated into womanhood.

Make Salyn smile (10●)

Oratory, Sing Ballad, Comedy (-10), Bawdy Humour (-15), Flattery (-10), Lie (-15)

If the players achieve a Complete Victory, Salyn will beam a smile and blush at the Enhyli, she may even speak pleasantly, but formally to them. If they gain any other success, she will smile for a moment, then suddenly sadden again. A fail results in Salyn glaring and muttering something under her breath. A fumble results in an inconsolable Salyn running to the Royal chamber, pursued by the Queen, and angry glares from Thanos.

Showing off. Whatever Salyn's reaction it becomes immediately apparent to the Goodsword, that something is amiss. Thanos' promise and oath of hospitality could be broken by Salyn's reactions, which could lead to ill feelings between the two peoples. In an attempt to break the atmosphere, Eorkan Goose-Feather calls for music to be played, ale to be poured and entertainment to be provided. Within moments, the hall is filled with laughter again, although Thanos has turned to his cups and the council of Salokin, his Lawspeaker. Soon games of friendly rivalry begin throughout the hall, these include dancing games, riddling, wrestling matches and boasting contests, the Enhyli have an opportunity to prove their mettle against the Goodsword, perhaps winning favour with the king and his daughter.

Beating Jondo Quick-Step in the Sword Dance (20)

Dancing, Agility or Quickness Skills (-5), Close Combat (-15). (Risk of injury)

Riddling with Torvin Auld-Fella (5W)

Riddling, Clever, Heortling Custom (-10), Fast



Talk (-10).

Wrestling with Asti the Red, Vingan Wrestling Champion (20W)

Wrestling, Brawling (-5), Close Combat (-5)

Boasting against Cutrid the Maul, Braggart and Big Mouth (10W)

Boast, Fast Talk (-5), Heortling Custom (-10)

If Salyn is still present, she will look unimpressed by any of the Enhyli victories, but smiles if they fumble. Each Fumble earns the Enhyli +1 to Salyn's Choice Carryover (see Denouement). Perception skills may notice this change in mood. It is their failure that is making Salyn realise that the Enhyli are just human, and thus harder for her to hate.

Talking to the locals. As the evening rolls on and everybody has had plenty to drink, the characters can mingle and talk with the locals. It is up to the narrator to answer questions as best he can. However, asking why Salyn is so sad will get certain answers.

Asking about Salyn (Resistance varies depending on who is asked)

Gossip, Smooth Talk, Fast Talk (-3), Relationship Goodsword (-3). T is True and F is False.

Gossiping clanswomen (10) - Salyn is nervous about becoming a woman, as all women are, but Salyn is especially worried as her womanhood has come so late in life. (T)

Proud Warriors (15) - Salyn is so proud of her clan that she does not want to leave and wishes she could marry one of us. (F)

Maeva the Asrelia Hag (15) - Salyn has many decisions to make, and her mind is confused. She will soon make her mind up for better or worse. (T)

Eorkan (10) - Salyn lives in fear of Salokin her tutor; he is a hard taskmaster and is always upsetting her. (F)

Cutrid the Maul, Salyn's Guardian (5W) - I cannot be sure, but she keeps running away from me and disappears for hours at a time. (T)

Meeting Borin.

At some point in the evening the players can make perception based checks, a maximum of three of these checks can be made by the group.

See Borin lurking in the rafters (20)

Spot Hidden, Clear Sighted, Sense Presence, Acute Hearing (-10).

If spied, Borin will be seen sitting cross-legged high above the rafters, he has at his side a skin of ale, several raw chickens and a sack. He is watching Salyn intently; his eyes are yellow and catlike. If anybody calls to him, tries to approach him or asks about

him, then Borin will leap to the floor, landing on his feet despite the twenty-foot drop. He will then smile, revealing his fangs. If there are any women near to him when he lands he will give them, a pinch on the bottom or stroke their cheek – cannot help himself. He will then leap towards the doors of the hall and bolt off into the night.

The players may try to stop Borin, but this is exceptionally difficult, and if successful a couple of the clanswomen will verbally attack the players for harming their kin, forcing them to let him go. If captured and held, Borin will begin to use his charms on any women in the party, forcing them to resist his magical seduction. If he is successful, they will let him go. If this fails, Salokin the Lawspeaker reminds the players of the laws of Hospitality, and forces them to let him free. Pursuing Borin is fruitless, he will have immediately disappeared into the night, and anyway he is guilty of nothing.

Stopping Borin's Magical Cat's Leap (10W2)

Wrestling (-5), Lasso, Close Combat (-10), Movement Affinity (-5), Hunting Affinity (-5), Wind Affinity (-5).

Resist Borin's Magical Seduction (17W2)

Chastity, Hate Men, Love Spouse (-5), Stubbornness (-6)

Asking the Locals About Borin (Resistance varies)

Gossip, Smooth Talk, Fast Talk (-3), Relationship Goodsword (-3). T is True and F is False.

Gossiping Clanswomen (10)– Borin is a Yinkini, and much loved by all the clanswomen, his cats keep the pantries free of mice, his magic aids our hunters fill our pantries (and his presence keeps us warm when we have no husbands) (T)

Proud Clansmen (10)– Borin is the Yinkini Godi, he is good for aiding the hunt and lives in the wilds like an animal. However, when he visits your stead, it is the women he hunts not mice. (T)

Cutrid the Maul (20) – Borin and I go back a long way; we built our first stead together. He is a wild one for sure, but his heart is good. I always said that it was the animal in him that got him into trouble. He has got himself into bother lately for seducing the wrong man's wife and stealing some chickens, but he means no harm. (T)

Eorkan (15) – Borin is a troublesome nuisance, he is always getting into trouble and I should know, we used to be travelling companions until the incident with the Esrolian Ambassador and the Goose dinner, but I refuse to talk about it any more (T)

Salokin (20) – Borin is a necessary part of the clan, his functions serves many. However, as a person he is a lecherous oaf, who should know better than to leer at my students. For the past three weeks, I have caught him staring at Salyn with that strangely hungry look in his eyes. (T)

Borin Black-Paw.

Borin is a wild and lusty man, a renowned hunter of the clan and the Lismelder tribe's Godi of Yinkin. He runs a small stead in the south of the Goodsword Tula, with several other hunters. Borin was once favoured by the King and Queen, and slept before their hearth, but his lecherous nature, drunken antics and petty thievery have caused him to fall from favour. Borin has many lovers amongst the women of Swordvale Fort and is still very popular with the ladies, who see him as a dashing rogue, however he is almost universally envied by the men folk of the clan. At present Borin is seeking to regain his status with the clan (see Secret). Borin is dark, lean and handsome, he knows the secret transformation of Yinkin, and often slinks around in cat form. He is a competent fighter, and has heroquested several times to improve the clan's hunting. In all aspects, he behaves like a hedonistic tomcat.

Keywords – Heortling Godi 20W. Yinkin Devotee 5W2

Significant Abilities – Hunting 20W, Sneak 15W, Claw and Bite Fighting 20W, Hunting Bow 15W, Animal Magnetism 10W, Handsome 5W, Climb 20W, Run 15W, Set Snares 16W, Slink in Shadows 11W, Track Prey 17W, Forest Ways 10W, Yinkin Mythology 12W, Dodge Blows 20, Flirt 1W2, Avoid thrown weapons 5W

Magic – All Yinkin Feats at 5W2 + Special Feats of Thwart Animal Senses 20, Confuse Dogs 19 and Call Cats 20. Has Niskis Seduction Affinity 20. Has Yinkin Secret (Become Alynx) 20.

Virtues – Loved by Goodsword women 5W. Owns Yinkin's Milk Tooth 20

Flaws – Cannot resist a pretty face 20, Cannot Swim 20, Envied by Goodsword Men 17, Lecherous 20, Hedonistic 17.

Armour and Weapons – No Armour. Claw and Bite (Yinkin's Milk Tooth) ^4, Bow ^3

Tactics – If Borin senses foes approaching he will *Slink in Shadows* (augmented by *Sneak*) and then shoot with his *Hunting Bow*, using *Forest Ways* or *Hunting* to augment. He will loose off a couple of volleys and then *Run*, preferably into forest so that he can augment with *Forest Ways*. If cornered, he will use his *Claw and Bite Fighting*, augmented by *Yinkin's Milk Tooth*, *Dodge Blows* and his *Grow Claws* feat. If being beaten he will change tactics and *Run*, and either *Slink in Shadows* or *Climb* the nearest tree. If unable to flee, Borin will surrender and then try to use his *Animal Magnetism*, *Handsome* and *Seduce* feat to talk his way out of trouble. Borin does not like to fight and will not seek confrontation.

Notes – Borin has two followers with him at all times – Thom the Cat and Sylvester All-Fours. They are both Heortling Yinkini Hunters 20. If Borin is in his own stead or Swordvale Fort, he can use his *Call Cats* ability to gain an alynx ally for the duration of any combat – each additional Alynx summoned increases the initial difficulty of 10 by 5 points (so 1 cat = 10 difficulty, 3 = 20 difficulty). The cats are all Alynx 12.

Scene 2

The King's Hall settles down to sleep. Salyn makes her escape. Borin makes his move. The alarm goes up.

Setting

It is late at night and the festivities have turned into sleep or drunken stupor, outside a hail storm crashes noisily against the roof of the King's Hall. Thanos, the Queen and Salyn have retired to their quarters, behind a screen at the far end of the hall. Despite the attempts to create a festive atmosphere, there is still a troubled storm brewing in the minds of the Enhyli and the Goodsword. Tomorrow is the start of Salyn's initiation ritual, which will culminate in the wedding of Salyn and Enerin. Salyn, still unimpressed by her future husband, has decided to flee with Arda, tonight.

Action

A disturbed night. Although everyone is either asleep or drunk, Salyn is a little clumsy and makes several noises during her flight, the Enhyli, troubled by Salyn's strange mood and uncomfortable sleeping in a strange hall may hear her leave.

Salyn's noisy escape (15)

Light Sleeper (-3), Acute Hearing (-5), Nervous Temperament (-5).

If the players awake, they will hear a single loud bang, a scraping and a rustle, all coming from the roof. This is Salyn climbing up the rafters, pushing aside a smoke-hole cover and slipping down the thatch. They will then hear a horse neigh and then gallop away. Unbeknown to the hall's occupants, Borin is either still lurking in the rafters or has returned. When Salyn flees, he follows. Very perceptive characters may spot him leap through the smoke-hole.

Spot Borin Leaving (20)

Spot Hidden, Clear Vision, See in Dark (-5).

Any investigation by the players will cause guards and clansfolk to awaken. Within a moment, a scream will be raised from the royal quarters. 'Salyn is gone, my precious treasure stolen!' It is the voice of Queen Casiandra. If the players do not awake the hall, call the alarm or even hear Salyn leaving, then Eorkan will, and he will awake the whole village with his Goose Honk feat.

Within a moment the hall is in anarchy, women are sobbing, warriors are shouting and running for the doors, Thanos has Cutrid the Maul by the throat and is screaming at him while Casiandra kneels over her daughter's bed and weeps. Several clansmen look at the Enhyli suspiciously but say nothing.



Scene 3

The hunt for Salyn. The Enhyli are aided by the clansfolk to find the clues to Salyn's whereabouts.

Setting

Swordvale Fort and environs.

Action

In the anarchy that ensues the players have the opportunity to do some detective work. They are allowed free rein of the Hall, although to enter the Royal Quarters they will have to bypass Cutrid the Maul. There are four places to find clues within Swordvale Fort: the Royal Quarters, the Rafters, the Stable and the Fort's Gatehouse. If the players look in other areas not listed then tell them that there are already many people gathered in these areas, and they do not seem to have found anything. The narrator needs to describe how the whole community is up in arms searching for the missing Salyn, women are calling her name, horns are being blown, weaponthanes are riding out of the gates, Thanos is bellowing orders to anyone within earshot. Queen Casiandra is inconsolable.

Searching for clues

Entering the Royal Quarters

Getting past Cutrid the Maul (20)

Fast Talk, Orate (-5), Wealth (-5), Relationship Goodsword (-5).

If the players have already questioned Cutrid about Salyn then his resistance is dropped to 5, as he realises the potentially damning information the players hold. Salyn's room is divided from the main hall by a thick tapestry, depicting the myth of 'Ernalda sleeps in the Great Darkness'. The room beyond is small, a cot sits in one corner, with its blankets and sheets scattered across the floor. Beside them sits a small stool, a chest, which is thrown open and its contents scattered (clothes). The walls are covered in symbols of Salyn's

childish status: corn dolls, dried daisy chains, a hoop, flowers bound with coloured ribbons and similar knick-knacks.

Searching Salyn's Room (20)

Search, Spot Hidden, Observant, Keen Sighted, Clever (-2), Inquisitive (-5).

Minor Success – Player finds the clay tablet beneath Salyn's mattress.

Major Success – Players find the tablet and finds Salyn's concealed route to the rafters.

Complete Success – As above, but the players find Salyn's hidden cipher, to break the tablet's code.

Translating Clay Tablet (5W)

Read ancient Earth Speech, Read Earth Speech (-10), Communication Affinities (-20), Literacy Affinity (-12), Translate Written Language Feat.

These small red clay tablets are covered in strange cuneiform writing. Only three people within Swordvale Fort can read Ancient Earth Speech, Salyn is not available (doh!), Maeva the Asrelia Crone has a Read Ancient Earth Speech 12, Queen Casiandra has the skill at 5W, however to get her to read the tablets requires that the players get through her grief. If the players discover the Salyn's Cipher 10W, then they can use this as a skill to translate the tablets immediately.

Talk to hysterical Casiandra (20)

Orate, Smooth Talk, Calming Voice.

Salokin the Sage is also capable of using his Lhankor Mhy magic to Translate Written Language 5W2. However, Salokin is giving Thanos council now, and to interrupt the meeting would require that the player face Thanos' Wrath.

Thanos' Wrath (20)

Orate, Smooth Talk, Fast Talk, Calming Voice, Clever.

There is a risk on a fumble that Thanos may call his bodyguard Thugir Bladeborn – Heortling Bodyguard 12W2 to chase them away, followed by a rain of verbal insults, and possibly leading to greater political ramifications.

The tablets translate as follows.

"Within the earth's bloody arms, shall we embrace and drink the holy beer.

Come sister and dance beneath the blessed earth, beneath the ancient stones.

Come sister and be watchful while Ernalda sleeps, shielded in darkness.

Beware the son of Kero Fin's son he is watchful and wily.

Beware Yinkin's Stead, it is a place of men, and yellow eyes burn there.

Be embraced; find warmth in blood and safety in our bosom."

Anyone succeeding in a mythology, religion or custom role will recognise that this is NOT a piece of mythology, but a message, however the

meaning needs to be discovered. The message of course is from Arda, asking Salyn to join her at the hidden temple. Clever players may recognise the Babeester Gor references, both Maeva and Casiandra know of the ancient shrine and can give directions.

Following Maeva's Directions (5W)

Scouting, Tracking, Good Memory (-5), Map Making (-5), Clever (-5).

Following Casiandra's Directions (10)

As above. Players must once again Talk to hysterical Casiandra (20)

In both cases failure and fumbles result in getting lost: this is up to the GM to decide.

Anyone asking about Yinkin's Stead, will be told that this is most likely Borin's home, a stead that lies just off the Goodale Path, at the base of Tree Hill. Anyone can guide the players to the stead if asked.

Searching the rafters

Climbing to the rafters (15)

Climb, Agile (-5), Jump (-20), Acrobatics (-10).

Searching the rafters (10)

Spot Hidden, Eagle Eyed, Perceptive (-3), Clever (-5).

Noticing the moved smoke-hole cover (20)

As above.

Anyone who climbs into the rafters of Thanos' hall will soon discover that Borin has been spending a lot of time up here, there are scratch marks on the roof posts, scraps of food, mice tails, several beer horns and black fur. The vantage point that Borin used gives a good view of the King's Table and over the room dividers into Salyn's room. Further exploration reveals that once of the smoke-hole covers has been recently moved, and one of Salyn's ribbons is caught in the thatch. The smoke-hole cover leads onto the roof and from there onto the King's Stable roof.

Searching the Stables. Upon entering the stables, the players will encounter Arlest the groom fast asleep in the hay bier with a ginger alynx asleep on his stomach and a wine skin in his hands. The boy will not awaken immediately, but the cat will hiss and spit at anyone who approaches. If the boy is woken roughly or hurt in any way he will run away.

Questioning the groom (15)

Persuasion, Orate (-3), Intimidate (-10), Relationship Goodword Clan (-3) – there is a risk that Arlest will become frightened and run off to his mother.

Arlest will tell the players that he got drunk last night, after being given a wine skin of his own by Borin the Cat. He cannot remember much, but he says that he remembers a girl fitting Salyn's description entering the stable and taking a horse. But he also remembers Borin turning up in the stables as well, and that there was a lot of shouting. He then heard a horse racing to the Gatehouse. Wine has muddled Arlest's thinking, Salyn came first and took a horse, followed by Borin, and the shouting is the Hue and Cry since Salyn went missing.

Only one horse is missing from the stable. Borin does not ride. Borin got the boy drunk so that he would not see him following Salyn.

Questioning the Gatehouse guards. As the players approach the gatehouse, they can hear two men drunkenly singing whilst a third man screams and shouts abuse at them. The two men are Urin the Watchful and Leik the Lesser, last night's guardians. They are still clutching their ale skins and rocking to and fro singing 'The Minotaur has got two horns' (a popular ballad). Harmast Halberd, one of Thanos' thanes (below), is screaming them at. The players may approach and question Harmast or the guards.

Questioning Harmast (10)

Gossip, Persuasion, Fast Talk, Intimidate (-10).

Harmast will tell the players that someone in the King's Hall sent for these notorious drunkards to guard the fort gates; not only that but they sent them wine and ale as well, consequently the buffoons left the gates open all night.

Questioning Urin and Leik (20)

Persuasion, Orate (-5), Intimidate (-5), Relationship Goodsword Clan (-5). Players who offer the guards more drink get +5 to their skills, but earn the contempt of Harmast (-10 all relationship rolls).

The guards will drunkenly tell the players that they did not leave the gates open, but instead they were forced open by a huge talking cat and his army of Alynxes. They go on to say that the monster must have jumped over the walls and was chasing an aldryami princess, riding a white pony. The monster chased the faerie princess all the way to the Swordvale Bridge. When they tried to shut the gates they were jammed open. If players examine the gates they will

find that they are jammed open, with a dog's jawbone.



Following the clues.

They players should have enough information to either know that Salyn has fled to join the cult of Babeester Gor (the truth), or alternatively suspect Borin of kidnapping. The players may attempt divination, but will only be able to ascertain that Salyn is alive, well and underground. Vingans may use their Protection Affinity or Find Lost Child magic as soon as either conclusion has been thought of. The players may be floundering to find answers, or may be following dead ends, false leads etc. Use Eorkan Goose-Feather to advise, help or warn them. The players may go to Thanos for support to follow up any leads, but he is preoccupied and difficult to talk to. Most of his thanes, hunters and advisors are searching elsewhere, but he may loan them some of the Fyrd to act as followers for the duration of the scenario.

Ask for Thanos' Aid (10W)

Relationship Goodsword (-5), Fast Talk (-5), Orate (-5), Politics (-8).

A complete victory will result in each player gaining two fyrd men to aid them for the rest of the scenario (except in any situations detrimental to the Goodsword). A minor or major victory gives one fyrd man to follow them. Any other results give no aid at all: the Fyrd are all too busy looking to follow up any foolish notions. The fyrd men are Goodsword Fyrd 17

Whatever the consequences the players should either be heading to confront Borin at his stead or find the Babeester Gor shrine.

Scene 4

Confronting Borin at his Tula. The truth is divulged.

Setting

The Black Cat Stead. The stead sits two miles west of the Gooddale Path at the foot of Tree Hill; the land around the stead is wild, thick with bracken and gorse, and dotted with marshland and several crumbling ruins. Behind the stead rises Tree Hill, thickly covered in wild woodland, and dangerous outcrops of rocks. The stead itself consists of a rundown longhouse and outbuildings, above the gatepost hang several dog and wolf skulls. There are only a few milking sheep and a dozen cows visible around the farm, however there are alynxes everywhere. Borin, his followers, their spouses and a dozen children, many of who bear a strange resemblance to Borin, manage the stead.

Action

As the Enhyli arrive at the stead, whether it is by stealth or by introduction, they will encounter Borin and his followers preparing for some kind of battle. Borin is sharpening his claws against a post, while his followers either sharpen their spears or string their bows; there is a lot of frantic activity going on. Borin will not notice the Enhyli approach, instead he will probably run

straight into them. He will be angry that they are once again in his way, and will scream at them to move and mind their own business. He is fearful that the Enhyli may prevent him rescuing Salyn, and ruin his plans. If attacked, Borin will retreat into his stead to cast magic etc and will then attack them with his full force, until he can find a way to get past them and on with his mission. If prevented from leaving, Borin will become agitated, he will tell the characters a tall tale to try and get rid of them. If they press him he will either make a diversion and escape, or if really pressed he will attack. However, if the players accuse Borin of kidnapping Salyn he will become hysterical with laughter, and cannot resist but tell them the truth.

If Borin's stead is searched, either willingly or by force, the Enhyli will find Borin's Journal. This is a rolled piece of birch bark that gives an account of Borin's observations of Salyn's activities, Borin wrote this with the intention of using it in his defence should he get into any trouble. The journal also gives some details about the standing stone above the Babeester Gor shrine and a description of Arda's fighting style – this document can be used to augment in a fight against Arda or to pacify the Nakasas. Borin's Birchbark Journal 15.

Getting the truth out of Borin (20)

Orate (-5), Flattery (-2), Intimidate (-6), Flirting (+5),

Bribery (-3), Blackmail (-10).

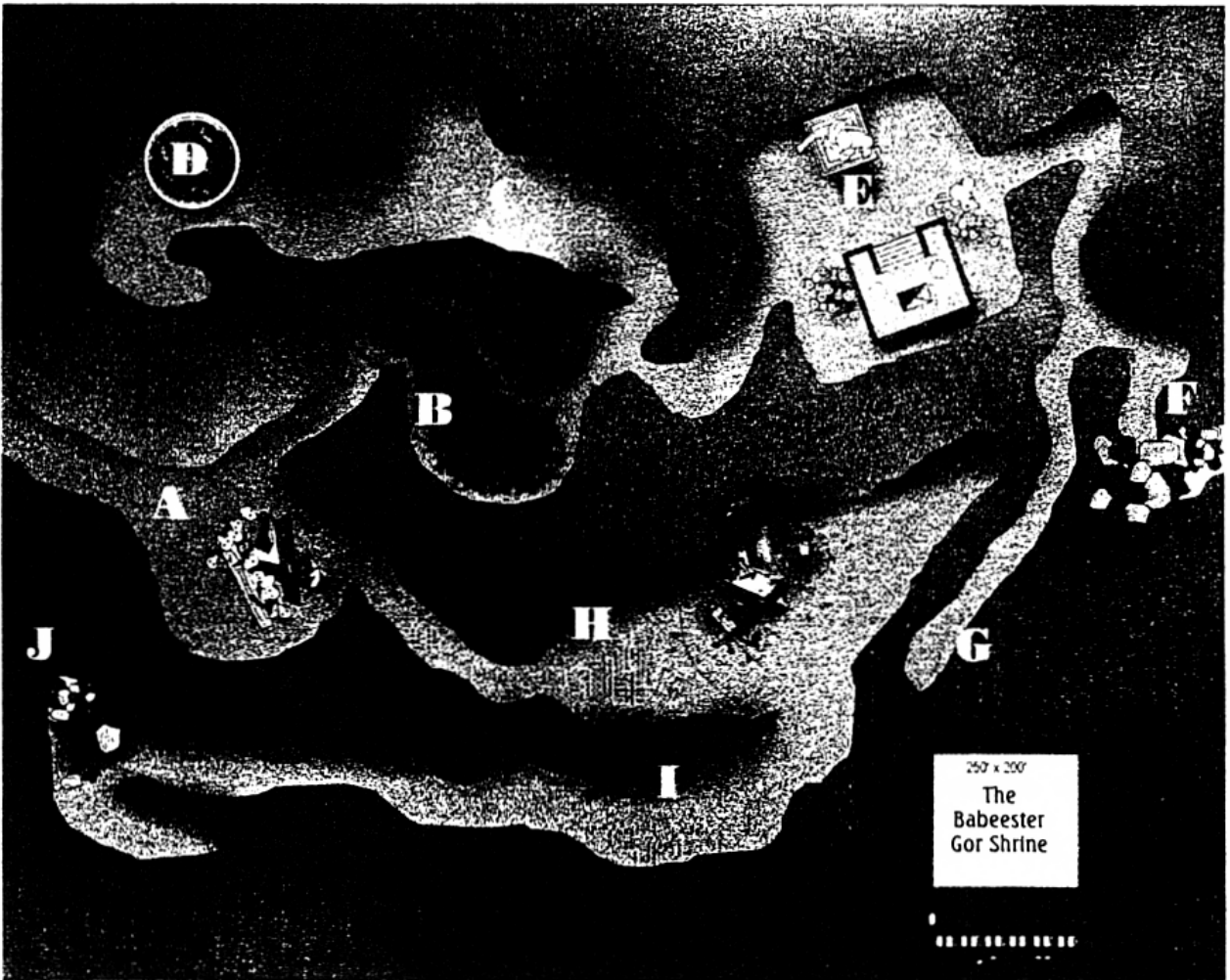
If the players get the truth out of Borin by peaceable means, he will ally with them and aid them in the fight. If he has been assaulted or brutalised in any way, he will follow the Enhyli, but attack them when they are weak. Either way Borin will give clear directions to the shrine, which are easily followed. If he accompanies the party, he will give the Prince (his new-found friend!) his journal. A failure to get the truth out of Borin will result in him and his followers attacking the party and driving them off into the hills. They are pursued by dozens of alynxes – Kind GMs may allow the players to run about the hills looking for cover from the horrid biting, scratching cats only to have them blunder into the Babeester Gor shrine anyway.

Scene 5

'Rescuing' Salyn from the Babeester Gor shrine. The players find the hidden shrine, fight their way passed the hideous guardians and save Salyn from the gory initiation planned for her by Arda.

Setting

The shrine is hidden high within the rough rocks that cover Tree Hill. The shrine was constructed during the early 1300s, but fell into disuse during Sartar's era. Several earth tremors have caused part of the temple to collapse, and falls of stones and dust are common.



The Babeester Gor Shrine.

The 'Gor' Stone. Amongst the rock and rubble that litter Tree Hill you spy a man-sized standing stone. The rock is covered in faint carvings of horrid monsters with reptilian heads and the bodies of dogs leaping from male corpses that lie scattered around the feet of a hard-faced Goddess. There is freshly smeared blood all over the base of the stone and nearby on the grass and bracken. To one side of the stone is a dark hole, which appears torn into the ground. There are signs that this route has been heavily used.

Examining the Gor Stone closely (5W)

Keen Sighted, Inquisitive (-3), Spot Hidden, Archaeology.

Anybody examining the stone will note that several of the monsters in the picture (Nakasas) are being attacked by warriors and have been slain by throwing a javelin so that it seals their great mouths shut. If the players do not have Borin's Birchbark Journal, then they can temporarily learn the Gor Monster Slaying skill at a rating of 12. This can be used to augment only against Nakasas: to retain the skill the player must burn a hero point at the end of the game.

Descending into the Hole (15)

Climb, Agile (-3), Small (-3). The player risks becoming stuck and/or injury. Any characters with the attribute Large may suffer penalties.

Bones and Bits. This large low room is filled with dozens of skeletons, both human and animal. They are scattered amongst broken weaponry, an ancient rotting cart and some smashed barrels. The walls of the room are covered with crude stick charcoal drawings of Babeester Gor, fighting, killing and eating a hoard of warriors. From the room lead two man-made tunnels; both are pitch black.

Searching the Rubble (20)

Keen Sighted, Inquisitive, Spot Hidden etc.

The cart was once ceremonial in function, used for the collection of tribute by the cult. Within the box seat of the cart can be found a bag of ancient copper coins (10 wealth).

Players who examine the north-eastern tunnel find that their path is blocked by a heavy drape of blood red cloth; beyond they are sure they can hear the sound of a young woman sobbing. There is a strong smell in the air, like cow dung. If they peep around the drape, they see only darkness (magical).

Players examining the south-eastern tunnel will find it cold and damp, and that the walls are covered in ancient carvings of the Dark Earth Goddesses; they will get a Forbidding Feeling 18.

The Womb of Night. As the drape is thrown back, a hideous stench hits your noses (Hideous Stench 12); beyond there is an unworldly darkness, which

resists the light from your torches (Unworldly Darkness 20). In the darkness, something is moving, scraping chains against stone. Somewhere in the distance a girl's voice can be heard screaming for pity.

The party will be rushed and attacked by one or more Nakasa (*Anaxial's Roster*, pp89-90). If the players have not dispelled the light then the monsters may augment their combat skills with their Night Vision, and the Unworldly Darkness and Hideous Stench act as flaws or resistances as the Narrator sees fit. If the players enter the room, they also get the added disadvantage of the faeces-covered floor, which is Slippery Floor 15.

The Nakasa were created by Babeester Gor to act as guardians of the earth. They are hideous monsters with a crocodilian head, a hyena-like body and a vicious array of deadly quills that sprout from their backs. Arda used a magical sacrificial ritual to summon three of these monsters from the Cauldron of Man. Three of these beasts guard the temple: one is chained in the Womb of Night, one is near the Cauldron of Man, and the last is in the Inner Sanctum.

Babeester's Slumber. Within a small square niche, several crude beds have been made from wolf and bear skins. From several wooden pegs hang wineskins, capes and quivers. This is the Babeester Gori sleeping chamber. Searching the bedding is fruitless, however, if the wineskins are examined they are discovered to be filled with a heady, foul smelling concoction which is used by the Babeester Gori as part of their Berserking magic. This is the famous Crazy Widebrew 20 – This drink can be used to augment combat, however the drinker becomes berserk and must use the Berserk magic rules for combat.

The Cauldron of Man. The walls of the cavern are splattered with blood, which oozes and spurts from a great copper cauldron standing in the centre of the room. The edge of the cauldron is decorated with a scene of Maran Gor and Babeester Gor indulging in an orgy of manslaying, surrounded by a strange coiling script. The air is cold and clammy, and there is something unnatural and horrifying about the room (Feeling of Fear 15). Suddenly a twisted, blood-drenched form leaps from the cauldron.

The cauldron is a Babeester Gor relic: any man who is exposed to the cauldron or its contents is immediately attacked by a Blood Poll, an evil otherworldly daemon that tries to kill him and drag his soul away to be fed to Babeester Gor. One daemon will appear for each male player character within the vicinity of the room. Any women will be unharmed. Females who attempt to read the script around the edge of the cauldron will realise that it is in Ancient Earth Speech, and can be translated using Salyn's cipher if they have it. Upon reading aloud the inscription, all the Blood Polls in the room will return to the cauldron. The cauldron is immensely valuable to earth cults, but impossible to move.

Blood Poll

These Otherworldly Daemons look like twisted, skinless human beings drenched in blood, with long fangs and hooked claws. If a Blood Poll kills or knocks a man unconscious it will drag him back to the cauldron. Once a body has entered the cauldron, the soul of the victim is lost, consumed by Babeester Gor herself.

Claw and Bite Fighting 5 ω , Strong 1 ω , Grotesque Appearance 20, Drag Corpse 20.

The Inner Sanctum. Several oily torches burning around a squat and ugly altar illuminate the strange cube shaped room beyond. Gathered around the altar, shadowed by a large stone statue of Babeester Gor, stand nine burly women, dressed in dark brown robes and gleaming copper armour and

wielding blood drenched axes. One of them is clearly a Godi, and she begins a dirge like prayer whilst lifting into the air what appears to be a handful of human entrails. Kneeling in the centre of the Babeester Gori is the sobbing form of Salyn. She is naked and her body is covered in blood and strange runes. In her hand she is weakly holding an axe, lying before her is the corpse of a man, naked and covered in runes, his abdomen sliced open and empty. The man was ritually slain by Arda and disembowelled by Follyr. It is now Salyn's duty to sever his head and cut out his heart, but her hands are faltering, she cannot face the rites of initiation, and is pleading with Arda to release her from her task.

No man may enter the Inner Sanctum of the temple without automatically alerting and being assaulted by the temple defences. A low sound, like a rumble of

Arda Womb-Guard

Arda is a twisted and hateful young woman. She was originally from the Colymar tribe, but was outlawed along with her elderly father and mother for allegedly insulting the honour of King Blackmor. It was an extremely harsh winter and the tribal ring begged for mercy, but Blackmor would not listen. Within a season, Arda was an orphan living off the land like a wild animal. As Arda's anger brewed and her hate for the Colymar festered, she felt the calling of Babeester Gor, and devoted herself to the worship of the bloody goddess. It is now three years since she was exiled and Arda has plotted to truly ruin the reputation of the Colymar. Believing that her rescue of Salyn was providence, Arda's plan is to develop animosity and hatred between the Lismelder and Colymar, eventually leading to tribal war. Arda has limited vision and is guided more by hatred and religious fanaticism than logical plotting. Arda is strong and charismatic, and easily sways the impressionable Salyn's mind.

Keywords – Heorling Warrior 20 ω , Devotee of Babeester Gor 17 ω .

Significant Abilities – Axe and shield fighting 20 ω , Great Axe Fighting 15 ω , Acute Hearing 10 ω , Hide in Cover 5 ω , Running 10 ω , Recognise Foe 20, Lead Gory Worship Ceremony 10 ω , Sing Grim Dirge 20, Preach of the 'Horrors of Men' 5 ω , Strong 20, Indomitable Will 5 ω , Hate Colymar 15 ω , Charismatic Leadership 20, Prepare Sacrifice 20, Religious Fanatic 20, Wilderness Survival 10 ω .

Magic – Combat 10 ω , Terror 5 ω , Vigilance 19

Virtues – Defender of the Weak 20, 'Never harm women unless they harm you' 10 ω

Flaws – Haunted by memories 17, Bitter 20.

Armour and Weapons – Scale Mail and Shield ^6, Axe (Man Stained) ^4, Iron Great Axe ^7.

Tactics – If approaching enemies are sensed, Arda will extinguish all light sources in the Shrine and she and her follows will use their 'See in Darkness' feat (or improvise from their *Vigilance*) to gain an advantage over opponents. In combat, Arda use her *Axe and Shield*, augmented by *Religious Fanatic*, *Strong*, *Slashing Blow* and *Shout of Pain*. If her shield is broken or the fight goes badly she will change to her *Great Axe* and augment with *Strong*, *Religious Fanatic*, *Scream of Fear* and *Axe Berserk* (See Berserk rules in HW). Arda can use her *Hate Colymar* to augment any skill used against them. If pressed to escape, she will use her *Running* augmented by *Wilderness Survival* to avoid opponents. Arda will not fight women unless they directly attack her; all Arda's magic is -10 vs. women.

Followers – Arda always has these four axe women in her company. Chokon Mans-Blood, Dhye Hard, Kielin Spree and Big Bertha – they are all Babeester Gor Axe Maiden 1•

Follyr Man-Carver

This monstrously obese woman is Arda's only true friend. She discovered the starving Arda near to her temple and took her in, nurturing her to health. As a godi of Babeester Gor, Follyr soon realised that Arda was touched by the goddess and that her mission against the Colymar was a just and righteous cause. Follyr, despite her strong religion and intimidating presence is quite simple and very easily lead.

Keywords – Heortling Godi 10 ω , Babeester Gor Devotee 12 ω

Significant Abilities – Large 19, Axe and Shield 5 ω , Lead Gory Ceremony 20 ω , Wailing Dirge 15 ω , Follow Arda's Commands 5 ω , Torture Men 5 ω , Throw Hatchet 5 ω , Babeester Gor Mythology 20 ω , Command Nakasa 19, Sense Gods Nearby 20, Sense Spirits Nearby 5 ω , Acute Hearing 19, First Aid 20

Magic – Combat 5 ω , Terror 10 ω , Vigilance 7 ω .

Flaws - Slow Witted 13, Follow Arda's Commands Blindly 20.

Armour and Weapons – Enchanted Copper Axe ^4, 5 Hatchets ^1, Enchanted Copper Scale Armour and Shield ^6

Tactics – Use *Large*, *Wailing Dirge* (-5 Improvisation modifier) and *Magic* in combat. Will *throw hatchets* first. Will fetch Nakasas for support if needs must. Will use first aid to help axe maidens in combat (AP loan)

Followers – Helga the Axe, Jendra the Ox and Kallyr the Bitter; all are Babeester Gor Axe Maidens 17.

thunder is heard and the earth suddenly begins to crack around the intruder's feet. They are immediately assaulted by a Talosi (*Anaxial's Roster*, p131). Salyn breaks away from the ritual and runs towards the heroes – the Babeester Gori scream and charge the party. The warrioresses are aided by magic from their unseen Wyter, who adds 10AP to Arda and Follyr while they fight in the shrine's inner sanctum. If the Babeester Gor are being badly beaten they will beg for mercy (although they would give none themselves) – the Enhyli may Show Mercy and let the warrioresses flee. If fallen warriors are butchered Salyn will howl for mercy.

Once the Babeester Gori are either slain or driven off, or the players have successfully escaped, then they are free to return to Thanos. However, it is important that the Narrator refers to the table in the Denouement during this confrontation, as it will be a final decider as to what decision Salyn makes regarding her future.

Babeester's Fist. This narrow passage was made even narrower by a recent rock fall. By the carvings and runes upon the wall, the tunnel must have at one time been the entrance to the temple. A close inspection of the rubble (Search Rubble 20) will reveal the crushed remains of an armoured warrior. Although the armour is crushed beyond recognition, the warrior still clutches a shield in his grasp, and his sword is sheathed at his side. The warrior requires excavating, which could take several hours (Excavate Rubble 20 – Danger of injury from further rock falls.) The warrior was Darvien Sheep-Chaser, a Poss clansman, who was part of the gang that attempted to rape Salyn. The Darvien's sword was forged for him by Thudrid Iron-breaker, a famed smith from Boldhome (Darvien's Sword ^4), it is highly recognisable: presenting the weapon to King Thanos in conjunction with Salyn's story would result in Thanos looking for retribution against the Poss.

Aftermath

If the players have successfully saved Salyn from the horrors of the Babeester Gor initiation then she will insist on returning to her father's hall. *Read the following to the players.*

Salyn's Return.

As the Enhyli approach Swordvale fort, they hear the watch post horns bellowing out a single booming note. At first, there is little reaction at the gates, then with a deafening cheer and ecstatic tears, the folk of the Goodsword clan pour forth. Grooms catch hold of horses' reins, smiling faces and strong arms help the saviours dismount, before anyone can speak King's Ale is being pushed into their hands and the whole group are hustled into the King's Hall. Once within the hall,

Casiandra rushes forward and embraces her daughter and her saviours, somewhere in the room a woman with an angelic voice begins to sing 'Voria's bounty returns anew'. Thanos himself is moved to tears and embraces each of the Enhyli before finally throwing his arms around Salyn and lifting her off the floor. Thanos calls for ale and bread to be served to everyone in the fort and calls for musicians to play. Thanos is just about to put his arm around Enderin's shoulder when Salyn loudly clears her throat. She levels her eyes at Thanos and Casiandra, 'Mother, Father, I need to speak to you alone'. Moreover, with that she hustles her parents into the King's Chambers.

Denouement/Conclusion

After an uncomfortably long time, Casiandra appears, and bids quiet within the hall. She explains that Salyn has begun the path of womanhood and has left the stead to remain within Ernalda's Loom-house, from whence she shall appear upon the next clay day, a woman and an initiate. She gives the Enhyli a queer look and then disappears.

For the next three days, the Goodsword undergo a variety of rituals, celebrations and religious activities, some of which include the Enhyli, others that strongly exclude them. Finally, the day of Salyn's initiation occurs, and she steps forth from the Loom-house dressed in the ritual attire of her chosen goddess. Narrators should refer to the table below, basing their scores on the behaviour of the Enhyli during their encounters with Salyn. **This presupposes that, as in the tournament, the player heroes are Enderin and his allies and retainers. It can also be used if Enderin or other Enhyli play an active role in Salyn's rescue.**

-12 or less Salyn becomes a Babeester Gor Axe Maiden

Salyn will be so appalled by the behaviour of the Enhyli that she will have decided to complete her initiation to Babeester Gor. Salyn comes out from the loom house dressed in blood-stained brown robes, her hair is wild and her face covered in soot, in her right hand she wields an evil axe. She condemns the Enhyli for their evil atrocities, bad manners and cruelty, and swears to gain justice for their actions. Immediately the atmosphere in the fort turns very nasty and the players realise that they should flee and forewarn Colwyn of the feud they have created.

-11 to +3 Salyn becomes a Vingan

Salyn will appear from the loom house with red dyed hair, dressed in armour and an overskirt and wielding a sword and shield. She turns to her father and clan and explains that she cannot marry 'yet' as there is adventure in the world and the Lunar enemy to fight. She will then turn to the Enhyli, apologise for her discourteous behaviour and then tell Enderin that she was born of a warrior into a war clan, and she cannot

Action	Complete Victory	Major Victory	Minor Victory	Marginal Victory	Tie	Marginal Failure	Minor Failure	Major Failure	Complete Failure
Proper Greetings	+4	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4
Making Salyn Smile	+4	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4
Showing Off (Each Event)	+2	+1	0	0	0	0	0	0	+1 (come dy value)
Defeat Arda and Cultists.	+4	+3	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4
Others (see below)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Additional Factors.

- Lewd or insulting behaviour to Salyn, her parents or the clan ring members -1 per occurrence.
- Harming clansfolk, kinsmen or friends of Salyn -2 per occurrence.
- Death of clansfolk, kinsmen or friends of Salyn - 8 per occurrence.
- Disruptive, destructive or dangerous behaviour -1 per occurrence.
- Kindness, hospitality or generosity displayed towards clansfolk +2 per occurrence
- Complementary comments made to Salyn or her kinsmen +1 per occurrence.
- Valiant, brave or chivalrous behaviour +2 per occurrence.
- Finding Darvien's Sword +2
- Killing Arda in cold blood - 4
- Killing Follyr in cold blood -2
- Displaying cruelty to fallen warriors -2 per occurrence

love him. Thanos and the Goodsword return the wedding gifts, shrug their shoulders, and walk back into their steads and halls.

+4 to +9 Salyn becomes a nag.

If the score is between 4 and 9 then Salyn will appear dressed in the robes of Ernalda. She smiles at her mother and father, who smile back, but when she looks at Enderin (below) there is coldness in her gaze. She agrees to marry him. After the big day ensues, and the two clans share their prosperity, wisdom and hospitality, Salyn and Enderin settle down to married life. Soon however Salyn becomes an insufferable nag, and drives Enderin to the edge of despair. He will never become a chieftain while living in such misery.

+10 or more, Salyn becomes Ernalda incarnate.

If the score is 10 or more then Salyn appears from the loom house dressed in the robes of Ernalda. She seems to have undergone a trans-

formation. Gone is the confused little girl, instead Salyn stands tall, proud and beautiful. She has all the virtues and strengths of her parents. The union of Enderin and Salyn becomes the stuff of legends and ballads. Together, they bring together the Enhyli and Goodsword. Enderin is soon elected to be clan chieftain and Salyn eventually becomes the best Matchmaker in Sartar.

What becomes of Borin?

If Borin survives the adventure then he makes a case claiming that he was the rescuer of Salyn, not the Enhyli. However the King soon forces him to tell the whole truth and threatens to outlaw him from the clan for endangering his daughter. The players may intercede, pleading Borin's innocence.

Pleading Borin's Innocence (20)

Clan Law, Relationship Goodsword (-5), Clan Politics (-3), Orate (-4).

A complete success paints Borin in an almost heroic light, but he was over zealous and foolish, and that in reality everyone involved had a part in Salyn's rash actions. This result gains the players Borin as an ally, at no hero point cost. Any other success gets Borin off the hook, but he skulks off and sulks for weeks. A failure gets Borin fined and beaten, while a complete failure has him outlawed and he becomes an enemy of the players at no hero points cost.



The Vivisection of a Ludoch

A Study of Cetanthropus Ludoch

By Simon Bray

At first glance, the unaccomplished scholar would say that the Ludoch are a hybrid of dolphin and human, possessing the lower parts of the former and the upper parts of the latter. Such conclusions are gravely mistaken and should be left to fish wives and fools. Although descended from mythical hybridisation, they are a well-adapted species holding no connection with man or dolphin in their makeup.

This document seeks to illustrate in moderate detail, the physiology of these species. For the purpose of this article three specimens were acquired. The first was a male of the species, with an appearance of thirty or so years. Obviously sickly when captured, he soon passed away when brought to the holding tanks. It is from this individual that we have acquired the most knowledge, through observation, dissection, and experimentation.

The second and third specimens came as a lucky trophy:¹ an adult female of approximately twenty years and a young cub of perhaps two or three.² The female was in excellent health, but was apparently suffering some form of undiagnosed mental illness as she refused to communicate in any way. She and the child were never seen or heard conversing with each other. I can only assume that although the child seemed well nourished, it was incapable of speech. It was certainly timid and clung to the female at all times. The female required some ten rings of fish each day. She also drank the tank water, which regularly required topping up, while the cub was incapable of taking solid food; even when thrust down its gullet it vomited it up moments later.

Autopsy Report

Subject: Male Ludoch approximate age thirty.

Reporting Vivisectionist: Platonus Humor of Jalanswal.

¹ The Female Ludoch and her child followed the ship carrying the adult male all the way into New Orphalsket harbour and were easily captured. This may be an indication of some form of family bond.

² Later information suggests that this infant may have been much younger, but in appearance was more advanced than a human child of comparative size and development, although these are gross approximations. The general lifespan of Ludoch is estimated as slighter greater than humans.

External Examination

The Ludoch Male was six canes in length³ from head to fluke; it weighed thirty one ingots and seven rings.⁴ The head and torso contributed 3/8ths of the body length, the remainder being made up of the long sinuous tail.

The whole body was tinged blue in colour ranging from an icy white head, arms and torso blending into a blue black tail and fluke. The hair was also blue-black in coloration, as were the irises of the eyes.⁵ The individual was surmised to be a warrior of his species, numerous cuts and scar were noticed all over the body, these were neither inflicted during capture nor apparently ritualistic in anyway. The fluke of the tail was particularly scarred with strange ring like marks, perhaps inflict by an Architeuthis. It was also noticed that the Ludoch's body was infested in several areas by sea lice and several spermatophores of some unknown species of squid were identified imbedded around the forearms, tail, and back.⁶ Beneath the skin is a layer of insulating blubber that ranges from 1/2-inch thickness on the face and hands to four inches on the tail. The skin was smooth, and hairless apart from the head, it appeared to need constant moisture to prevent it from drying out. No sweat glands were identified on the body.

The eyes of the Ludoch were slightly larger in proportion to the face than those of a human. The cornea is much thicker and durable, although parasites were also found in this area.⁷ Both an eyelid and a nictitating membrane protect the eyes. The Lacrimal sack appears much larger than that of human and produced thick transparent mucus instead of tears, this

³ Six canes.... Approximately three yards and three inches in length.

⁴ Thirty one ingots and six rings.... Approximately three hundred and ten pounds and twelve ounces.

⁵ A wide variety of coloration in skin colour and hair have been noted amongst the Ludoch, the female specimen was noted to have a kelp green hue to her skin and hair, with deep jade eyes. The cub was noted to have striking cerulean skin, pale silver hair and striking black eyes. I speculate that this coloration starts out fairly even, and that the patterns develop later on. The skin coloration of Ludoch extends from a pale sickly green through darker hues of bluish grey right up to deep ultramarine.

⁶ The sailors who captured the Ludoch claimed it had received his wounds fighting against intelligent, chaotic squid-men, although these absurd claims can be easily dismissed as drunken ramblings and proud boasts.

⁷ A later divination showed that this individual may have been an outcast from his society, and was subject to parasites because his pod had not groomed him. We can speculate that the female groomed him, although I can not confirm this.

seemed also to protect the eyes.

The canines were large and strong, incisor teeth sharp and conical, cheek teeth bulky with exaggerated cusps. This seemed to equate with a diet of fish, most likely eaten raw.⁸ Although, I speculate that they eat other foods, as I have heard tales of Ludoch being offered cooked foods.

The face was somewhat elongated, with softer features than that of a human. The nose was relatively flattened and appeared to have valves in the nostrils that permitted their closure. The auricles of the ears were small and poorly developed; again they appeared to have a protective membrane in the auditory canal. No facial hair was noted. The head hair was very soft, shoulder length with very strong roots. The face had a disturbingly human appearance, but with a distinct alien quality.

The finger of the hands were somewhat extended, with long fine fingers and a small web of skin and blubber extending to the first knuckle. The nails were hard and claw like and appeared pearlescent in sunlight. The palms of the hands were covered in many ridges that appeared to assist with grip.

From the elbows and waist of the Ludoch grew flaps of skin, muscle and blubber, these were small on the male, but it was noted that they were much more developed on the female. They appeared to be for the assistance of aquatic movement, although I can not see how, as they may well hinder movement as much as they aid it. Interestingly the infant had no sign of these growths. The tail of the Ludoch was long and powerful. A small dorsal fin protruded from the specimens back at exactly the midway between head and tail. The fluke was most muscular and flattened horizontally.

In general, it was noted that the whole Ludoch muscular skeletal structure had a greater flexibility

than that of a human. The head and neck were capable of rotating two hundred and ninety degrees on the horizontal plane, and the complex structure of the neck meant that the head moved through a much greater range of vertical degrees. It would seem that the normal position of the Ludoch head was to be raised so that it

faced forward in the direction of movement, it was noted that the female and child specimens were uncomfortable to remain in an upright position holding their head in a human like position (see Figure 1). The joints of the Ludoch were also possessed with great flexibility, and the long fluked tail had great mobility within the vertical plane, but less in the horizontal.

The musculature of the arms and shoulders was noted to be highly adapted to swim, although in the confines of the tank the female rarely used her arms except to balance and remain in one position. It has been noted by mariners that Ludoch moving at high speed streamline themselves by swimming with the arms flat against the sides of their bodies.

The genitals on both sexes were situated halfway along their length. The male's genitals were concealed within a muscular pouch of flesh, which seemed to aid with streamlining.⁹

Internal Examination

The brain of the Ludoch bore striking a resemblance to that of a human, however it appeared slightly smaller and denser. The cranial cavity has a plum sized

gland situated in the forepart, which was filled with and unusual oil, one of my colleagues said it may be and acoustic resonator used for echolocation, but this is as yet unproven and did not fit with the Ludoch's elemental heritage. I myself felt it was more to do with balance and direction awareness.

The tongue was unusual in that it had fifteen times as many taste buds upon it; this seems to tie in with Margelis Secundi's theory that element of water is associated with the sense of taste. My students readily accepted my theory that the Ludoch 'tasted the waters'

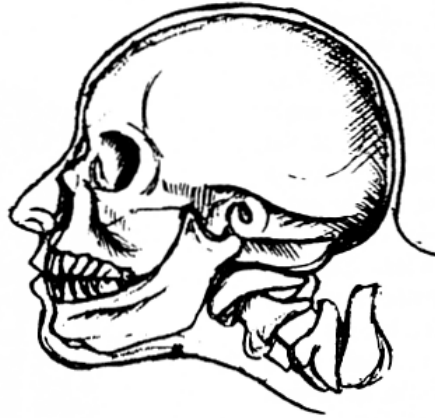


Figure 1



⁸ This was later confirmed, after the death of the female the Cub was eventually capable of eating raw pulped fish despite being offered other foods.

⁹ It is worth noting that the female's mammary glands were relatively small in comparison to her body size. The tissue of the breast appeared much firmer than that of humans. The young cub suckled for several hours a day.

to search for prey, and I whole-heartedly welcome their corroboration of this.

The thoracic cavity was surrounded by a large rib cage. There are twenty-four ribs, including eight true ribs, eight false ribs and eight floating ribs (see Figure 2). There was an extra set of protective bones over their abdomen, which appeared like ribs. I speculate that these assist in protecting any collapse of the lungs due to pressure when they dive more deeply. The thoracic cavity was much larger than in humans, while the lungs of the Ludoch were a marvel. They were twenty inches in length. They were incredibly dense and tinged a deep blue, the pleural lining was covered in numerous fleshy frills and nodules. Through magical examination it was estimated that they could hold five times as much air as a human lung, but extracted sylphulon¹⁰ twenty times more effectively. The answer to this miracle, lie within the magical inheritance of the species, just as their founder had wantonly embraced the spirits of the air and held them in her embrace, so did the Ludoch's lungs.

Through calculation it was observed that a Ludoch could routinely hold its breath for almost one hour.¹¹ On occasion, it even went without breathing for longer periods the apothecaries were exceptionally interested in these findings and believe they may be able to make magical compounds from the lungs of Ludoch. It was noted that the female and cub breathed every hour or so,¹² when they did they flipped onto their backs, exhaling loudly and then inhaling an average of twenty deep breaths. When the cub breathed the mother became very protective and watchful of her surroundings.¹³ The cub breathed more than twenty times during these surfacings.

The spine of the Ludoch is made from far more vertebrae than humans; it numbered some forty-seven vertebrae as compared to thirty-three in humans. The majority of the Ludoch vertebrae formed the tail. The bones of the Ludoch were noted to be extremely light and strong. I speculate that this is due to the high content of aluminium in them. I am told that the Malasp favour Ludoch bones in their weapons. Large well-developed clavicle and scapula bones supported the strong arms. The specimen had two bones in the upper

arms, which were obviously to give more support when

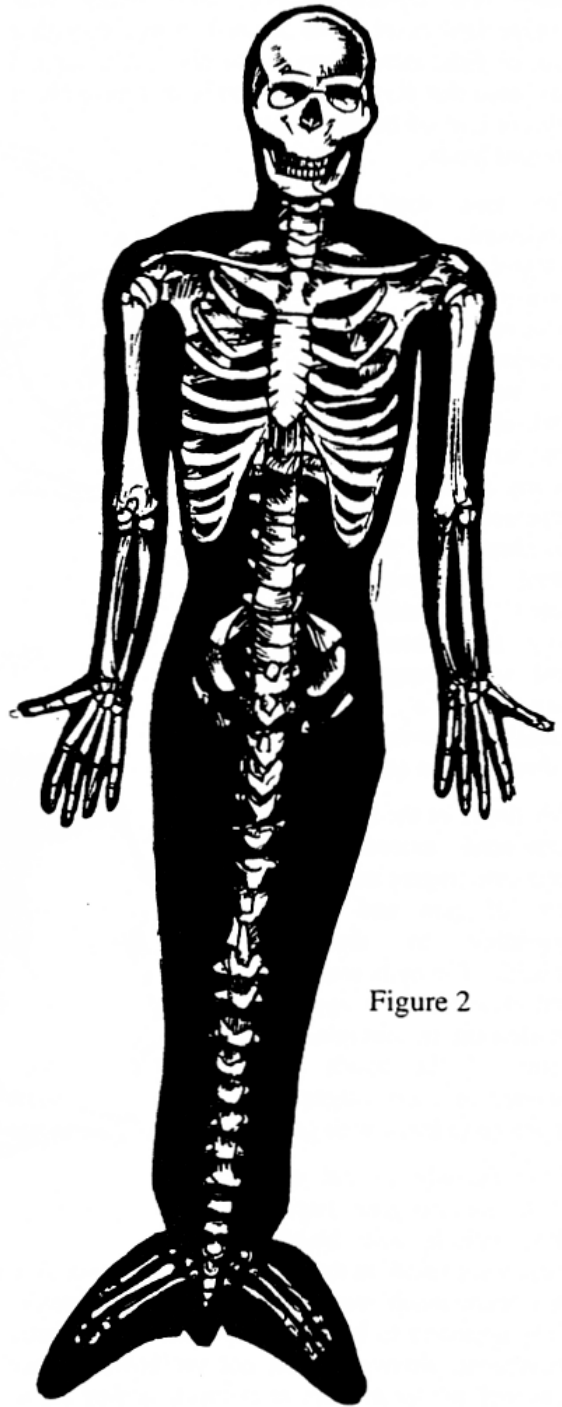


Figure 2

diving. It was also noted that small bones resembling a residual pelvis were found in the upper tail. The fluked tail was also filled thirty-eight pairs of small bones that gave it rigidity and strength.

The heart was slightly larger than that of a human and orange in colour, having six valves. The circulatory system was composed of numerous long strands of blood vessels, some of which were orange while others were a whitish blue, almost silver. I speculate that the specimen had significant amounts of aluminium in its blood. The abdominal cavity was filled with a pale green gelatinous substance, which completely masked

¹⁰ Sylphulon...A God Learner term for the portion of "air" imbued with life-supporting qualities.

¹¹ This would allow the Ludoch to easily dive to depths of seventy to eighty canes.

¹² I later assumed that most Ludoch would breathe more often if they had the opportunity.

¹³ This 'guarding' behaviour may explain one of the reasons that Ludoch travel in groups, protecting one another while in the prone breathing position.

the internal organs. Clearing this out gave access to the gullet and intestines of the subject, which contained small amounts of crab, fish, and kelp. This aided us in defining the diet for our female specimen. The anus was situated three inches below the genital pouch and had an additional membrane to keep out water. The liver was large, as were the kidneys which were elongated and totally unlike a human's, they also appeared to have undefined magical properties, as they seemed to produce very large quantities of urine. Our researches took samples of these organs for the purpose of magical examination.¹⁴

In conclusion it is an almost certain fact that the male Ludoch had been injured in some form of conflict before his death. There is also good cause to believe that he had been separated from his social group of pod for some time and had been near starvation.¹⁵ The mariners reported removing several hook like teeth from the creatures blubber, which may add support to the giant squid attack theory, but these items were lost or claimed as trophies by the sailors.

The fate of Platonus Humor of Jalanswal.

Several hours after completing this report and submitting it to the Diviners of Wisdom, they summoned him and allowed him to continue his studies. After several weeks of study, the college moved to further validate his findings by dissecting the cub since it was also male. When Platonus and his assistants attempted to remove the cub for dissection the female fought valiantly to protect her young, she leapt out of the tank and had to be attacked. While she was in the process of dying she magically attacked Platonus and he was killed. Later, an autopsy discovered his death occurred by drowning. She was killed by the magical onslaught, but her death left too much damage for her dissection to be of much use, especially since Platonus Humor was killed, and Carvus Stitch and Malcus Lobotus weren't skilled enough to do it themselves. Captive Malasps subsequently feasted on the Ludoch remains. The college moved to destroy the Ludoch child but the council overruled them and they moved the cub to the oceanic study facility in Slontos. The coroner reported that the death of Platonus was 'Death by misadventure' and ruled that no further live Ludoch were to be taken into captivity. A later revoking of this ruling occurred, much to the colleges regret.

¹⁴ I later speculated that these were some kind of special organs to aid in the processing and excretion of salt. I did recover a small fleshy object from within the gut that I assume is for the digestion of salt.

¹⁵ I speculate that if the female had not had to look after the cub that she would have hunted for him. Her inability to hunt due to the cub can be confirmed by how the female and cub also showed signs of malnutrition.

Letter from Hellwood

Transcribed by Ken Rolston

[The following letter was found on the body of a Lunar irregular discovered after spring thaws by adventurers exploring Foulvale, southwest of Dorasta Shrine.]

Letter from Opto Bollea Cidius to Prefect Reula Bigori, Endeel from beneath Seven Hills, Hellwood, Dorastor: Full Moon 1/Sacred Time, 49/7

I have had the honour to report to you everything of interest to the service, up to my departure from Hazard Fort.

In the company of agents Abran Insilli & Metal Kelnes, a half-file of scouts, & two native Evergreen Aldryami scouts, & on the very vague intelligence of a safe winter route following the course of the Hellwast during winter dormancy between the territories of the Hellwood & Poisonwood Elves, I proceeded thither at the direction of Insilli & Kelnes. Notwithstanding Insilli's command of the language & customs of the Aldryami, & Kelnes' knowledge of the Dorastor backcountry, I was in no easy state of mind, on account of the fractious & unreliable temperament of the Evergreen scouts.

We proceeded without delay, & initially had great success, travelling at night through Foulvale & following the Hellwast to the eaves of the Hellwood wilderness. We then met with misfortune, being stranded for three days in a fierce storm with little shelter on the river banks. Then, when the storm showed no sign of abating, at the urging of Insilli & the Evergreen scouts, we proceeded through heavy snowfall into Hellwood, following the course of the Hellwast, taking great care not to venture through the dense undergrowth & tall, bare trunks of the trees flanking the river basin.

Because of the weather, Kelnes delivered us to a ford of the Hellwast as night was falling. However, at the crossing, we found dead broos. The Evergreens were uneasy, & Insilli's sprite refused communication. By magical means we determined the presence of a single enemy nearby. In council we resolved that the single enemy was probably a solitary broo. Judging it dangerous to spend the night exposed to the elements, we determined to ford the Hellwast, deal with the broo, & take shelter in the eaves of the forest.

In the event, we were proved wrong. A wounded krjalk, not a broo, was the source of the disturbance. Lying prone, buried in a drift on the slope of the riverbank, the krjalk looked like a fallen tree. As we struggled from the frozen river up the embankment, we were completely surprised, & in desperate straits. The krjalk grappled Axmilltan & Rupanian by their throats, throttling them, & piercing them with finger-long spikes. They were both killed instantly. Sevso closed with the krjalk, was also grappled & mortally wounded, before Insilli & Kelnes Demoralised & Immobilised the creature. I accept full responsibility for their deaths. In our defence, I note only our extreme exhaustion, our suffering from exposure to wind, wet, & cold, & the obscuring snow & twilight.

To add to our predicament, during the confusion, the faithless Evergreens disappeared, abandoning us to our fate. After determining that nothing could be done for Axmilltan, Rupanian, & Sevso, we struggled into the forest with our captive & prepared a makeshift shelter. I ordered that the krjalk be destroyed, but Insilli insisted he be permitted to speak with the creature. To our surprise, on hearing from Insilli that we planned to seek the Valley of the Ageless Ice at the source of the Hellwast in the Rockwood Mountains, the krjalk, naming itself 'Rlyamin Stripespike', offered to guide us there.

Stripespike was large for a brown elf - four talents, & as tall as a man. It was naked, yet unaffected by the chill. Its skin was rough & bark-like, except for long, thin, bright-green, oozing fissures which appeared as stripes along his limbs & on his face. In a fighting rage it had proved powerful & dangerous, capable of assuming the appearance of a tree & able to produce long spines from any point on his body. I suspected a trap, & Insilli was also doubtful - the Hellwood krjalk are known to defend their woods to the death - but the loss of our Evergreen guides left us no choice but to accept Stripespike's aid if we were to have any chance of success.

And Stripespike had, as we suspected, planned to betray us by leading us into wandering patrols of the winterguard as we passed through the Bordertickets towards the mountains. However, as we travelled, Stripespike was impressed by Insilli's exceptional command of Aldryami & his 'almost Elven presence in the Allspirit', & by the special token of Insilli's embassy from the green elves - a piece of amber containing a Winterwood fir tree seed & the Sprout

spell. In the end, rather than delivering us to our destruction, the krjalk saved our lives, intervening & protecting us when we encountered a patrol of krjalki winterguards.

We were conducted to a council of the ranking elder winterguards beneath Seven Hills. According to Insilli, Stripespike had great status among the Hellwoods, & the bearing of the amber seed token earned Insilli credibility & status among Aldryami. After long deliberation, the winterguard agreed to conduct Insilli - & his companion, Kelnes - to the source of the Hellwast, on the condition that myself & the surviving scouts remain as hostages at Seven Hills as surety for Insilli & Kelnes' good behaviour. I agreed to remain myself as hostage, but insisted that the other scouts might return to Fort Hazard - this in the expectation that I might send this report with the scouts in case our expedition met with treachery or disaster. This demand apparently did not please the winterguards, but Stripespike argued in my favor, & in the end prevailed.

Insilli & Kelnes will therefore proceed with Stripespike & several winterguards to the source of the Hellwast, & if conditions permit, climb into the Valley of the Ageless Ice. I remain here as hostage, & Arano, Omayn, Rato, Canta, with Virbintus in command, will return to Hazard Fort & thence to you at Endeel with this letter.

It only remains to report what Insilli has learned from Stripespike & the winterguard concerning the Valley of the Ageless Ice. As expected, the ruin of a First Century Nysalor shrine lies in the valley, built on an ancient site sacred to an elemental spirit of ice & wind. The krjalk confirm the presence of the shrine, identifying it as a place of pilgrimage for the Hellwood aldryami rite of passage. The krjalk have also heard the legend that a piece of the Unbreakable Sword is buried in the Fountain of Fellowship at this shrine, but they claim no knowledge of any such fountain at the site, & they count us gullible fools for believing such a story. There is one final surprise. The krjalk assert that the Valley of the Ageless Ice is also the last refuge of the Kivitti Mammoth People - 'mammoth' not in the sense of 'giant', but in the sense of the tusked, long-trunked legendary 'elephant' of the East. According to Insilli, the krjalk refer to them as the 'Pigmy Mammoth People'. This sounds like a joke, but Insilli assures me that this is the literal translation.

I will remain here as a hostage of the krjalk at Seven Hills until Insilli & Kelnes return. Should the nature of my captivity destroy my hopes of reporting to you in person, I am confident that Virbintus & the other scouts will be able to give you the fullest details of this affair, & everything that my situation prevents me explaining to you. I beg of you, sir, to have regard for their zeal for the service, & their attachment to me.

I have the honour to remain respectfully, sir, Your most Humble and most Obedient servant.

Optio Bollea Cidius



The Skintakers

By Roderick Robertson

Nobody likes us anyway, we'll just take what we want

The Skintakers are an family of Ogres, stealing the skins and bodies of their enemies (or of innocents).

Common Names: Dirty, Stinking, Chaos Scum; The skins that walk like men.

Form: Family cult

Cultural Context: Ogre outlaws, following their own dark wishes with unholy magic.

Ideology: What they want, they take, either through their own prowess, or through the medium of their Walking Skins.

Look and Feel: In public, the members of the family are normal (if somewhat creepy) people. In private they wear the flayed skins of their victims

Purpose: Survival is the primary motivation for the family, but the darker passions rule their souls.

Headquarters: The wilds near their chosen victims.

Reactions: Horror, dread, the primal urge to destroy them root and branch.

Resources

Leader: Granny Onefang. The matriarch of the family, she has only one fang left to her, but it is a fetish for a powerful Eating spirit. She is a shaman of Fellfaran, the only one in the family.

Renowned Members: Cegaid Meat, the best fighter in the family. Afreda Smile, Granny's chosen successor. She has not yet gained a fetch, but is close.

Membership: About 20 members of the family from Granny Onefang, to Orlag, the seven-year old son of Cegaid

Other Contacts: Cacodemon cultists and other ogres have a certain respect and awe of the skintaking powers that this family commands. If the Praxian Cannibal Cult ever heard about them, they would attempt to eradicate them.

Organisation

The skintakers are a single family of ogres who can command the bodies of their kills. Occasionally, suitors are brought into the family and taught the secrets of the family, but they must already be ogres, or be willing to become cannibals.

Membership Keyword

Membership Requirements: Be born into the family, or be accepted as a member by Fellfaran. If a non-ogre were ever accepted as a

family member, he would have to become a cannibal.

Physical Abilities taught: Close Combat (Brawling, Skinning Knife), Skinning

Mental Abilities taught: Conceal contempt, Pass as human; Speak [local language]

Typical Personality Traits: Greed, Contempt for humans

Magic: The family worships **Fellfaran**, a tainted Spirit of Healing. Before its corruption by Chaos, Fellfaran was a spirit dedicated to the health of skin. Since then, however, Fellfaran has learned how to make skin move by itself, and how to allow a body to be skinned alive and still continue to live.

The Fellfaran tradition requires that adherents be cannibals, and kill one sentient being a month.

Skin Spirits (Armour Skin, Stop Bleeding, Change Skin Color)

Create Flensed One Ritual

Create Walking Skin Ritual

Guardian Being

Fellfaran itself is the Skintaker's guardian being.

Method: Manifest.

Form: An Walking Skin filled with the Spirit Fellfaran. Every year in Earth Season a new Walking Skin (created with a Complete Success in Skinning) is required to house Fellfaran.

Membership Requirements: Must be a cannibal, as the rites to Fellfaran consist in part of eating victims. The worshipper must wear the flayed and cured skin of the first victim he ever killed.

Awareness Function: Detect Mob 18

Blessing Function: Access to Fellfaran Magics

Defense Function: Fade into the Background 6W

Walking Skin

Ages: Darkness (rare), Historical (rare).

Distribution: Wherever worshippers of Fellfaran are found.

Habitat: Any.

Fellfaran's magic allows a worshipper to animate the flensed skin of a victim, filling it with a part of the victim's spirit under control of its slayer. Such Walking Skins can pass as their former self, for a time, though anyone can tell that "Elgan hasn't been himself lately". The deception only lasts for a few days, as the skin deteriorates rapidly. The skins are clumsy and weak, their speech is slightly slurred, and they have some gaps in their memory, but they can pass as their former self to those not expecting such magic. Walking Skins are used by the Skintakers to gather intelligence about a

community, to spread disinformation or terror, and to summon more victims to their rites.

To create an Walking Skin, the skintaker must get a Major or Complete success on Skinning. A minor or marginal success, while it flays the victim, doesn't allow the skin to be animated. A five-hour ritual raises the Walking Skin to walk the earth as detailed below.

Walking Skin

Strong 8, Coordination 15, Remember owner's past 18, Pass as Owner 5W

Detect Walking Skin

Appropriate Abilities: Relationship with [Individual], Relationship with [Family] -5.

Typical Modifiers: Someone who knows the individual well can augment the hero. Awareness of the existence of Walking Skins and how they act can raise the chance of spotting by +10 or so.

Resistance: The Walking Skin's Pass as Owner ability

Minor Success or Better: This is not the person it claims to be! What, exactly, it is isn't revealed unless Walking Skins are known. Physical examination (like poking a knife into it) can reveal what is going on.

Marginal Success: Something is definitely wrong with this person. Could be a spirit possession or mental illness.

Any Failure: Well, he's been acting strangely recently, but...

Flensed Ones

Ages: Darkness (rare), Historical (rare).

Distribution: Wherever worshippers of Fellfaran are found.

Habitat: Any.

Fellfaran's magic allows a body to live even after its skin has been removed. It also blanks out the personality of the victim while leaving his physical skills intact. Flensed Ones are made from the flayed bodies of their victims, and are used as bodyguards or terror troops by the Skintakers.

To create a Flensed One,

the skintaker must succeed at Skinning, completely removing the skin from the victim. A 1-day ritual then erases the victim's personality and puts the body under the control of the Skintaker. In addition to the physical skills possessed by the victim, the Flensed One gains the abilities:

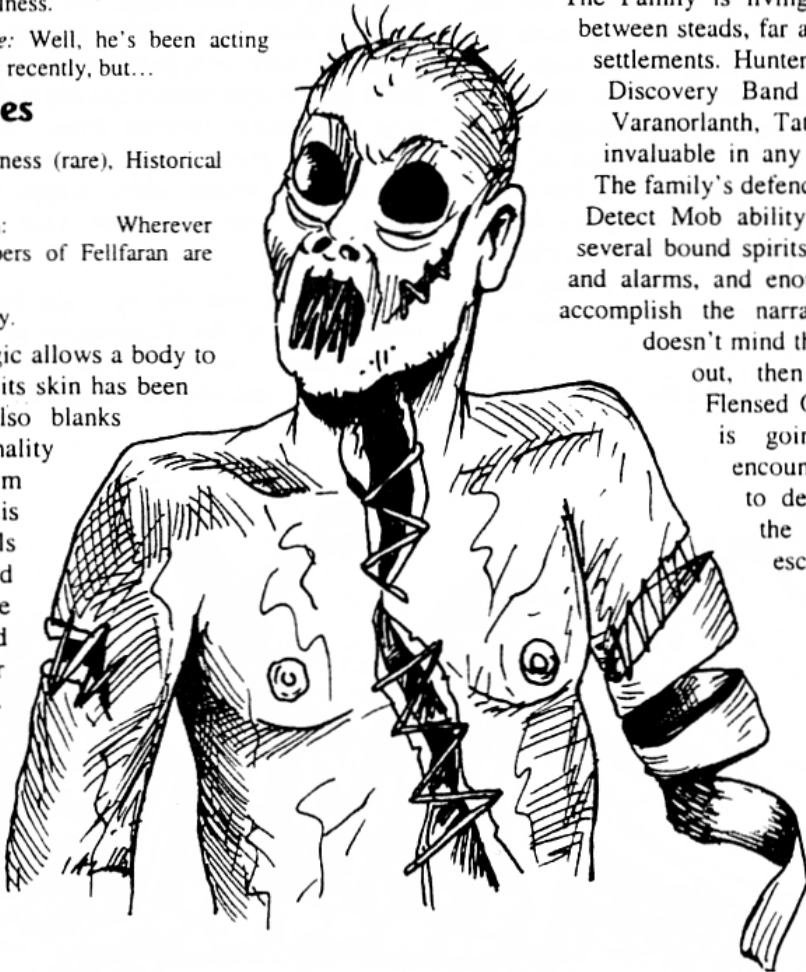
Terrifying Aspect 10W, Ignore Pain 10W, Strong 18 (unless the victim already had a higher Strength-related ability).

Scenario Seed

Garnath, one of the stead's herders, was lost for several days a week ago. Search parties found no trace of him but he came back to the stead a few days later, claiming to have fallen and sprained his ankle. He may have also hit his head, though he didn't mention it, because he occasionally has trouble remembering things.

The clan's wyter has been giving strange warnings to the chief of "Predark on the stead" but no-one has found any evidence of broos, gorp or other obvious chaos creatures. The truth is that Garnath was caught and skinned by the Skintaker family. His skin was sent back to the stead to spy out their defenses and the habits of the clansfolk. His flensed body is now one of the family's guards. The family is waiting for a time when only a few people are at the stead, or when a small party leaves the stead without much in the way of guards.

The Family is living in the rough lands between steads, far away from any known settlements. Hunters or followers of the Discovery Band (Destor, Ormalaya, Varanorlanth, Tatouth, others) will be invaluable in any punitive expeditions. The family's defences include Fellfaran's Detect Mob ability, their own abilities, several bound spirits who are set as traps and alarms, and enough Flensed Ones to accomplish the narrator's plans. (If she doesn't mind the family being wiped out, then only one or two Flensed One, but if the family is going to survive the encounter, enough Walkers to delay the heroes while the bulk of the family escapes).



The Ancient Urnfields of Pavis County

By Ian Thomson

At the heart of Pavis County lies a place of death, which locals refer to as the Urnfields. This region is around ten key-miles across, and all locals avoid crossing it for fear of the malevolent spirits the area contains. It is not only the Heortlings who wisely stay away, but the nomads have also been wary of this place for centuries. At several points tattered totems still adorn old nomad warning poles - these markers having been renewed some time over the last twenty years. To reinforce these totem sticks, the early Dorasings erected five or more cairns of earth and rocks along every key-mile of the boundary of the Urnfields. Therefore during daylight it is easy to see that something here is amiss - the death rune being emblazoned clearly upon each and every cairn.

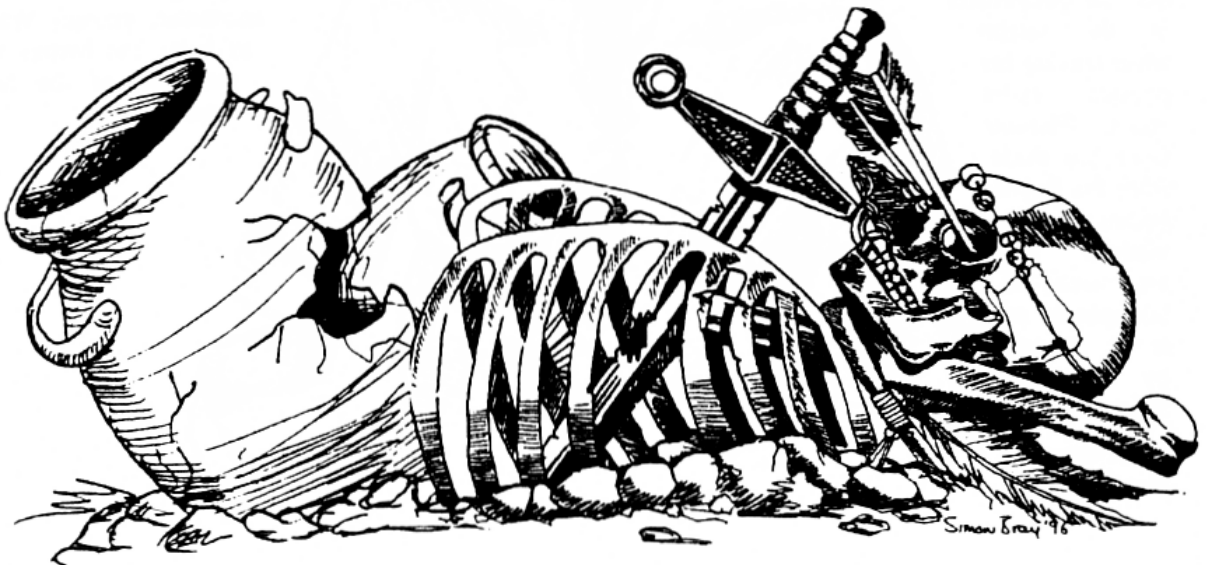
Some people from other parts of the world travel across Pavis County, and unfortunately not all will necessarily become alerted to this terrible danger. From time to time the foolish, unobservant, or merely unlucky, cross into the Urnfields and are still there when night falls. None who enter the depths of the Urnfields during night's grim vigil have ever emerged alive. In fact, it has become a sign of manhood amongst local Dorasings to see how far you will go into the Urnfields as dusk approaches. At least one young fool is lost to the world this way every year. Typically his friends lose sight of him as darkness falls, and as he has begun to become nervous and hurry back from several minutes walk away. Sometimes there is a scream, but more often simply silence.

Viewed from beyond the boundary, the Urnfields

seem at first glance to be a typical region of low rolling hills, decorated by unremarkable rocky outcrops and scattered boulders, and with the occasional distant stream glinting in the sunlight. However, this view is deceptive. As one gives greater attention to the landscape, it can be noted that many of the low hillocks are tumuli (burial mounds) - each marked with a small age-worn standing stone. Furthermore, most of the boulders are also marker stones of some kind. Each has been decorated with carvings that are now almost completely faded through the erosional forces of wind and rain, although it is still easy to see that these are not dragonewt devices - at least not like any other dragonewt rocks seen across Dragon Pass.

The Urnfield is the location from which the entire area gets its name, and is a depression at the center of this region (shown on the Pavis County map: www.glorantha.com/new/fan/maps.html). Scattered here are numerous small stone cairns, each containing an ancient bronze pot in which the ashes of some long-dead being have been sealed. At least, this is presumed to be the case. Back in 1553 a party of Lhankor Mhy sages and their bodyguard investigated the Urnfield. Three bronze urns were recovered and opened before a grey mist came swirling from the ground and a multitude of ghosts swarmed over the intruders. One sage and one warrior alone escaped from this terrible scene, and these two were each afflicted with a sickening curse.

Although this was the first and last major official investigation of the Urnfields region, thieves being thieves means that many 'unofficial expeditions' have attempted to uncover its treasures. Reports still filter



back to Pavis, and the county towns, of decimated groups of tomb robbers, ghastly undead warriors, and of course heaps of gold, gems, and precious items just waiting to be stuffed into sacks.

Providing one stays clear of the barrow mounds and the cairns within this place, it is safe enough to cross the Urnfields during daylight, though most locals prefer to make the long trek round if at all possible. Nonetheless, passing through this region of death is not a wholesome experience. Few animals or birds, save rats and crows, make themselves known here, and even in Fire Season the low-lying sections seem cool enough to chill the blood.

As night begins to fall, strange and confusing effects begin to manifest. First of all a gradual lassitude starts to overtake the traveller, then an almost imperceptible pessimism begins and gradually worsens. Finally, one may realise that they have become lost. A thin gray mist carpets the ground and obscures the weakening evening sun. And finally, unless you are extremely vigilant, group members become separated. Several stories are told around the Pavis County hearths of lucky individuals who managed to leave the Urnfields under such circumstances, only to hear the piteous cries of their comrades still wandering lost within its clutches. In these tales these comrades are never seen again.

Though the Uz claim that this place is not a region sacred to any of their deities or spirits, and no Uz have been sighted here, from time to time thick oily shadows creep across the low hills, sometimes settling atop groups of travellers. Again, such a thing rarely happens in full daylight – except in Darkness Season itself. However, occasionally at night travellers camped on hillsides just outside this place have noted one or more such entities drifting through the sky within the markers, blocking out the starlight from above.

Conflicting nomad legends describe this place. One tells that it holds the evil dead of the terrible chaos war; another that those who died fleeing the chaos hordes have been shamed into this ignominious fate because of their cowardice. Yet another mentions that many corrupt and forgotten petty gods and their followers died here fighting pointlessly amongst themselves over property and power. However, one of the

more disturbing possibilities is suggested by a nomad legend that claims this site did not exist prior to the Second Age. Since it was already here when Pavis and Flintnail founded their city perhaps it is some blasphemous relic of the God Learners of Robcradle?

Using the Urnfields in Your Game

Why in the name of Pavis would anyone enter the Urnfields?

1. Rebel Heroes, smugglers, or others trying to avoid the authorities. It is mid-evening and a Lunar Patrol is hot on your trail. Even the Lunars know better than to enter the Urnfields. Such a group would be terrorised by spectres and ghouls, and perhaps even by the odd vampire or exotic creature like a lamia. With luck they will be the first reported group ever to escape this place after darkness has fallen. Prior to that they may undergo various terrors – being separated and attacked by undead, needing to rescue one of their own from a terrifying underground barrow, being chased through the night by screaming spectres...

2. Tomb Robbers. Well, the place is safe enough during daylight isn't it? A quick trip in, an hour or so of shovel work, and an easy haul. Take along some good magic just in case. Disturbing the dead is not a smart idea around here. Some of the barrows lead to small underground tomb complexes, some of which even contain shrines to evil entities that have no existence except in this place. Even in daylight at noon, the gray mist can quickly pour down of the hillsides, isolating the thieves and muffling their screams for mercy.

3. Official Investigators. Those foolish Lhankor Mhy types just have to know everything, don't they! Divinations and other knowledge magics have failed to reveal what this place is truly about, and it is long in need of some serious professional analysis. A group of potent sages, with some heroes to guard them, would surely come to no harm. Or would they?

Note that despite the descriptions given here, few locals have any idea beyond rumor what the Urnfields really contain. Out in the county nobody the Heroes are likely to be able to speak to has any helpful opinions.

The Secret

The God Learners of Robcradle chose this site for the mythic equivalent of a nuclear test. It went horribly wrong, and what they had hoped would be the makings of a powerful destructive force to be used against their enemies backfired. The effect trapped the souls of the many experimenters and observers, along with their numerous hapless victims whose suffering had been intended to measure



the effects of the experiment. Nobody built the barrows or erected the piles of stones with the urns inside. These things somehow created themselves. Perhaps buried at the centre of the Urnfields is a forgotten God Learner shrine? If this is thoroughly desecrated maybe the horror of the Urnfields will be dispelled forever. Over time, other entities of death, disorder, and chaos have made their way to this region, but few survive here for very long, and unlike places such as Snakepipe Hollow or the Footprint, monstrosities do not emerge to terrorise local settlements. The Urnfields merely sit and brood, waiting for their next victims, a terrible symbol of human greed for conquest and supremacy.

Only one being can save stricken travellers here, and that is Ronance, an ancient god of these lands. The territory of the Urnfields encompasses a special holy site, where his peaceful hut still sends comforting spirals of hearth smoke up through the hole in its roof, and where the baskets of fruit and berries are always filled to overflowing. Even the echoes of the long-destroyed trees that once covered this land still sway and creak outside his wholesome home. Lucky indeed are those saved from the terrible hunger of these undead souls to be guided to Ronance's hut in his peaceful glade.

However, Ronance is weak in these times, and cannot himself fight more than one or two powerful undead without risk to himself. He rarely roams the Urnfields, and so encounters with him are infrequent. None have yet been documented, because his hut lies on the borders of the Green Age, and after the journey to and from this place one's memories of this time soon begin to fade. If they can recall his conversation, Ronance is the only being who might pass on some clue as to the true origin of the Urnfields. How this is phrased is up to the Narrator.



The Borklak Ghosts

By James Frusetta

"This is not over – you have not won."

The Borklak Inscription, carved on a rockface in the last area overrun

When Aldryami overran the last uz strongholds of Borklak, they destroyed the last few clans of uz that clung to the land. Many clans had fled, either north onto the glacier or into the otherworld. Many had perished by the arrows and spears of the merciless *kre uru*, which slew even the infants at their mothers' breasts.

Others were simply... gone.

No one has ever accounted for all the uz that disappeared. As the aldryami woods of Fronela spread to cover what was once Borklak, occasionally a remnant of old uz magics was encountered, or a curse. Few elves worried overly over this, since the power of the Aldryami had grown so.

Uz legends speak differently. The last refugees from Borklak tell of hideous magics that the uz defenders turned to; more and more sacrificed to Subere or the other terrors of the darkness. A few uz lends say that the last Borklak clans sacrificed themselves as a grand sacrifice to an unknown deity in an attempt to claim revenge against their enemies – a revenge that has not yet materialized. The uz refer to the strange uz magics that sometimes are seen in Fronela as the work of the Borklak Ghosts, and blame all manner of mysterious events on them.

The Transcendental Church of St Ebbesh

By Martin Hawley

History

The church first arrived in Pamaltela in the wake of the Second Migration of God Learners in 635, although at this time it was little more than a group of perverse sorcerers led by Ebbesh. He and his apprentices were in the service of the warped Seshnegi and were amongst the most studious of the attendees of the University of Yoranday, before its destruction in 901. Ebbesh dabbled in the study of the Psychic Zoo, and summoned many weird, often dangerous, otherworld entities. By 922 the Jrusteli/Seshnegi possessions of the Umathelan Coalition gained independence from the Northern Empire. Ebbesh and his loyal followers escaped by fleeing through the lands of the Kallima, taking a few of their twisted tomes and their dangerous ideas to resume their studies in Varburch.

The fall of the Lord of the World's Knowledge in 1020 caused much suffering. Ebbesh led his rag-tag band of followers and refugees east away from the Elven destruction. They travelled through Kormarkan Lands, where they were nearly betrayed to the Elves by the weak humans of the land. Ebbesh had a vision from the Creator, and he led his followers in a thirty four year trek, wandering through the highlands of Mondoro. In 1062 Ebbesh and his followers crossed the Temiss River and down into the fertile coastal plain, here he came across the city founded by Eccheikhos the Temptress. The people of her city welcomed the followers of Ebbesh and he declared her city to be the true home of his followers.

Over time the influence of Ebbesh grew as he brought wealth and pleasures to the people of the city, this power increased to such a level that in 1098 amidst rumours of bribes and sexual favours the ruling council of the city voted to change its name in his honour. Since that day the city was known as Ebbeshal and its ruler has been the leader of the church. On the seventeenth

anniversary of the naming ceremony, Ebbesh announced a great hedonistic orgy of food and lust should take place, with invitations going out to all the city rulers of Afadjann. Many attended, attempting to escape the depredations left in the wake of The Week of Squid of 1112. Great festivities were held, although after seventeen days of pleasure Ebbesh died during an act of carnal and culinary delight in the year 1115.

His followers did not notice his demise, for in their state of ecstasy, they continued to party for a further seventeen days and nights. Only upon the discovery of his putrefying, partially desiccated, corpse did they release the half-starved Kaddam girls from their restraining shackles and remove the goats, cooked and live from the apartments of Ebbesh. In reverence to his great acts of debauch holiness and entrance into Solace, his closest followers declared him a saint of Malkion and instituted the worship of Saint Ebbesh and the Creator through the Church Of Transcendental Pleasures. The first Ecclesiarch of Ebbesh, Istajeed

1st Law: There is only one true God, Malkion and Ebbesh are his great prophets.

2nd Law: Love that which God has created.

3rd Law: Do what you wish with what you love.

4th Law: The second virtue is loyalty: to the Creator, the Laws of Ebbesh, and your desires.

Snake-Tongue, was sanctified in 1117 and immediately declared that he would bring worldly pleasure to all within the lands of Garangordos.

The religious warriors (Ghazis) of the church were in the forefront of the army of Afadjann during the invasion of Vralos in 1290, consuming, impregnating and ensourceling the peoples of the Lands of the Silenced.

The Prophet, Little Morishdo, together with his loyal Ebbeshite Clamorers liberated the city stronghold of Emanus and ended the silence in 1313. With the invasion of Umathela by the Yranian Leapers in 1322-1331 the church experienced a period of expansion, this persisted despite of, and in many cases due to, the Season Wars of subsequent years.

The excesses of the followers of the Bishop of Tortrica-Vralos contributed to the rebellion of 1478. The Bishop was forced to take refuge in Vostels until the army of Afadjann was defeated. In disguise he returned to the city of Tortrica, and laid low until the troubles had past before once again preaching the wisdom of the church to his, now Umathelan, flock. In 1502 the Cardinals declared the first female Ecclesiarch of the church, Sherzia the Desirable. She immediately dispensed her

favours to all the cardinals subsequently killing the two female ones.

With the rise of the first Jann Alexahmed in 1527, the church suffered its first major set back. The Jann declared authority over all within his lands, including the church's activities. His restraint was short lived for on the enthronement of Tafumus, the glories of hedonism were recognised by all in Afadjann. The teachings of the church spread rapidly under Tafumus' first, short rule, encompassing Sarro and the fertile lands of the Gargos valley.

Upon his return in 1555, Tafumus sought out the wisdom of the Ecclesiarch, who advised the Jann in the perfect ways to satiate ones' desires. These teachings included providing the Jann with an endless stream of nubile playthings and the formation of The Brides of Saint Ebbesh. Finally the Jann exceeded even the great Ecclesiarch in his acts of lust and gluttony, by taking the immense Seki Pumra as his lover. By 1561 the wisdom of the church reached the lands of Kareeshtu and Laskal.

In 1567, Azmurad III sold the armed forces of Hombori Tondo to the leading Cardinal of Ebbeshal, Jalapkhan. He taught the officers the ways of the church, and promoted his own followers to positions of power within the army. Jalapkhan's teachings held so much sway with these warriors that they assaulted the Palace, killing the High Priest of Darleester the Noose, the Great Eunuch Dancer of Seven Bells, Azmurad's sister Kalamine and seventeen other high officials. Jalapkhan and his supporters gladly climbed the Tower of Submission, for they cared little for mortality, each was stripped of his seventeen layers of existence and then their bodies were hung from the Bridge of Seventeen Tears. Although, as all followers of Ebbesh know, they still entered Solace. The Ecclesiarch declared Jalapkhan a saint and immediately celebrated the canonisation with a week of indecency for all within Ebbeshal.

With the arrival of the Vadeli in 1585 the church experienced its greatest expansion infiltrating the court of the Shak of Kareeshtu, (this was too easy)! Spreading the good news of fulfilment to the rough peoples of Mondoro and Marana. The Jokotosites took readily to the teachings of saint Ebbesh, although they have never quite mastered the art of pleasure. The control of the seas by the Vadeli enabled the church to reach the Kumanku Islands in 1587, whose peoples hungered for the bounties of decadence and were willing and easy prey for the lusts of the Ebbeshites. When Istam ascended the Coral Throne in 1589 the church was instrumental in fulfilling his acts of wanton debauchery. In an attempt to carry favour the Ecclesiarch of Ebbeshal gladly gave his own

daughters to fulfil the perverse whims of the Jann, they in turn gave birth to the beauties, Sedna and Halhambra. Even after the Calari incident the church continued to hold sway over Istam, the church, despite rumours provided many of his seventeen concubines. The church was also the prime provider of his feathers. Through bribery, corruption and acts of lust the church acquired many positions of state and attempted to influence Istam's heir by providing Ovgormangis with exotic concubines.

In 1613, the church assisted in the escape of Prince Ovgormangis to Barueli. They also publicly denounced Istam and announced allegiance to Astamanyx, gifting him with seventeen beautiful women and holding a great feast in Hombori Tondo. In this way the church hopes to keep a foot in both camps, in case of any further changes in worldly rulers. Recently followers of the church have begun to infiltrate the church of the Sedalpists, their Bishop of Vostels was implicated in a sexual scandal and there has been an attempted assassination of the Patriarch of Nikosdros. The church has begun to manipulate the son of Astamanyx and ruler of Garguna to twist him to their ways and hopefully gain influence in the future.

Theology

This church is seen as so minor that it has not as although been labelled as a heresy by the mainstream Malkioni. The main opponents of the Ebbeshites are the Sedalplist Malki of Cerngoth. The doctrine of the Ebbeshites teaches that mundane life is without worth and that Solace can be entered by anyone, therefore any action is excusable. Only the church of Saint Ebbesh correctly interprets the Laws of Malkion, these are as follows:

1st Law: There is only one true God, Malkion and Ebbesh are his great prophets.

2nd Law: Love that which God has created.

3rd Law: Do what you wish with what you love.

4th Law: The second virtue is loyalty: to the Creator, the Laws of Ebbesh, and your desires.

Tapping: The Ebbeshites follow a distinct law of tapping, "Tap what and who you need to satisfy your needs". The church allows tapping of animals, and all slaves as these are little better than animals. Tapping of Masarin is less accepted, unless they are powerful and your enemy, then they deserve it! The tapping of pagan scum is positively encouraged, especially Blue-Skins and Umatelans. Sedalpists are a very special case, these warped pacifists should be tapped to the point of death on every available occasion. Tapping of your friends can be fun too!

Caste: The Ebbeshites believe there is no inter caste mobility. Each person is born into a caste, wallows in his caste and dies in his caste. Mundane life is pointless so every caste should do exactly what they want. A

Masarin lord places converts to Ebbeshite teaching in an appropriate caste. Their decision is final. The level of caste distinguishes the levels and intensity of pleasures and deviance's available to each person.

Women: Women are regarded, depending on their caste. All slaves are seen as inferior to men, as a result they are seen as playthings, whose only reason for life is that of satiating the desires of man. Masarin women are seen as equals in the hedonistic life style of the Ebbeshites. They often make the most willing partners in acts of extreme lusts and violence. They are very often more evil than their male counterparts and initiate worse acts of fulfilment, for they know that their entrance to Solace is assured. Male slaves are seen as the property of their mistresses and are treated as such.

Sin: The Ebbeshites have no concept of sin. To fulfil the second law of Malkion impure thought, theft, adultery, falsehood, drunkenness, gluttony, immortality spells, envy, slander, avarice, inane speech and gross indecency are all encouraged and their intensity increased with caste rank. Many of these conflict with the teachings of the Garangrapha, although the Ebbeshites claim they are still loyal to worldly authorities. Their behaviour would be hard to distinguish from many of the acts of the Afadjanni Masarin, except that the Ebbeshites practise the acts with more relish and less tact than mainstream people do.

Life after Death: Upon death, the entrance into Solace is guaranteed for all Ebbeshites. They enter the arms of the Creator and the perfect state of Solace and Joy, where they live perfect and immortal lives of true fulfilment. Others will enter Solace, although their places will not be as good and their immortality not as fulfilling. Individuals may purchase more preferential places from the church, while Pagans can secure their place in Solace with a fair sum.

Hierarchy

The Transcendental Church of Saint Ebbesh is mainly found in the regions of Afadjann, Kareeshtu and Mondoro. There are several minor city states in Laskal and Vralos that follow the faith, as well as an enclave in Quarash on the Kumanku Islands. These regions tolerate the worship of pagan gods amongst their people, after all everyone will enter Solace, it is just that they do not have as much fun in life! Differences in the worship of Malkion are tolerated, although declared heresies at every opportunity by the church; this is especially true in Vralos and Tortrica where the Sedalpists are denounced by the true church of Malkion and his one prophet Ebbesh.

The head of the church is the Ecclesiarch of

Ebbesh who is traditionally the Archbishop of Ebbeshal. His authority over the church is considered supreme. He administers this rule through his Sacred Council of Seventeen Cardinals, their presence is as much feared as the Yranian Leapers of history. Beyond the borders of Afadajann this is less true, for local bishops often declare allegiance to local city rulers. The Ebbeshite church is traditionally subservient to the secular authorities although, in several of the Bishoprics there is friction between state and church over ownership of people and land.

The church is divided into Bishoprics that cross national, political and physical boundaries deemed necessary because of the smaller numbers of followers and diversity of peoples within the church. The Holy Bishoprics of Fonrit are: Afadjann, Mondoro-Marana, Tortrica-Vralos, Kareeshtu-Kumanku, and finally Tarahorn-Banamba. The larger Bishoprics of Afadjann and Kareeshtu are subdivided into Chapters with senior priests of Ebbesh administering them.

Ebbeshite Society

Peasants (All Slaves): Every person not born as a Ras is included in this caste. They are condemned to a life of suffering, with very little respite in the forms of pleasure. Fortunate slaves are born into merchant or tradesmen families. Even more so if they are bought by rich and powerful Masarin families as Yad slaves. These individuals often have access to greater pleasures and the services of lower Kaddam.

All Ebbeshite castes know something of sorcery. Even slaves may venerate saints most suitable to their lifestyles. As sorcery is seen as an everyday part of life in Fonrit, many sorcerers learn distinct groups of spells and coalesce into streets of sorcerers providing their services like any other craftsman.

Knights (Ghazis): There are very few of this caste compared to mainstream Malkioni sects. Some of the professional warriors of the Afadjanni army are the exception, as are the Guard of Ebbeshal. They pride themselves in upholding the ideals of the church, looting, pillaging and raping at their discretion. A few of the richer Yad families of the Gargos valley consider themselves Ghazis, stewarding manors and Sowuks and desperately emulating their Masarin masters. They operate local militia, who deem to fulfil the religious duties of the church using the slaves of the Sowuks and local farms.

Wizards (Wazirs): the other Malkioni sects and the peoples of Fonrit think of the Wizard caste of the church as Sorcerers. They are evil incarnate, and increase their numbers by fathering children on local slave girls. Interning the male offspring of these unions in cells until they are old enough to enjoy the pleasures of life to the full.

Lords (Ras): To be considered a Lord by the church, one must prove Ras birth and a valid claim to lands. In

addition, the individual must attain permission from their local governor or city ruler. Some rulers detest the church and refuse to allow lords to rule lands within their realms, this causes considerable friction between city and countryside, each having their own laws, soldiers and religions. The Jann of Afadjann uses this caste to create stability and centralisation in his lands. He issues his consent to many individuals, who in their loyalty to him, set themselves up as local petty lords and administer his injustice far and wide.

The Book of Wanton Hedonism

The Book of Wanton Hedonism includes some of the blessings found in *The Abiding Book*, though not all of them, as well as some that are unique to the volume:

Ebbesh's Blessing:

Upon casting a spell, Ebbesh can be invoked to reduce the resistance by 5. Once a year, during Sacred Time, a supplicant can name a sorcerous art, which he then acquires.

Sanctification:

This mystical power can only be invoked by a consecrated Bishop. They designate a whip, rod or sceptre that becomes imbued with the power of the church. The Bishop can bind passion spirits within the chosen object., with Fear, Lust and Pain being popular. He dispenses the "Blessing" of the spirits to any he chooses. The holy objects can only be handled safely by the Bishop. They may designate another to do so, but they can withdraw their permission at any time or distance. Bishops use these holy symbols as proof of authority. Church members readily recognise these objects as they radiate a reddish glow and instil awe, respect and fear. Any unauthorised person who touches these symbols will have the flesh seared from their palms. They will also be subject to possession by one of the object's passion spirits

Indulgence

Commence Orgy

Invest Foreigner into the Church

Major saints

Saint Malkion was the first Prophet of the Creator. He visited Ebbesh in a vision and dictated corrections to *The Book of Malkion*. The Ebbeshites know that this new book is the true word of the Invisible God. The Book contains the tenets of the Ebbeshite faith and its early history.

Saint Eccheikhos Patron of the lustful, was a loyal follower of Garangordos. She travelled along the rivers of Fonrit after the murder of her lord on her *Boat of Splendour* bring-ing much needed relief to hard working Yad and pleasure

to Masarin. She was assassinated by Tortrican rebels, and lay forgotten until Ebbesh himself accidentally awakened her during an extreme act of fornication in her disused temple; she awoke and entered his lover. Ebbesh recognised her form and after satiating his desires with her, he re-instituted her worship. After experienceing the pleasure and opportunity brought about by the blessings of Eccheikhos the first Ecclesiarch declared her a True Saint of the church. Her adherents know Saint Eccheikhos as The Temptress.



Blessing of Lust: the supplicant takes on the appearance of the most perfect member of their sex. Their magical features and body mean their appearance is increased to the maximum possible level. In this form the supplicant will be the most sexually desirable being to any intended lover and it will be nigh on impossible for the victim to resist the lustful advances and suggestions of the supplicant.

Saint Jalapkhan was the finest Cardinal of Ebbeshal ever seen. Jalapkhan instituted the rebellion against the rule of Azmurad III. He is the patron Saint of the Ghazi warriors and of all armed conflict.

Loyal Warrior: the non-slave supplicant enters a state of ecstasy and fanaticism and becomes unaffected by fear, and other demoralising emotions. He can withstand mental anguish, resist torture, and is unaffected by grief. He becomes a killing machine.

attacking his opponents at double effectiveness.

Saint Dormal the sailor saint is the newest canonisation in the resplendent hall of Ebbeshite saints. He provides his blessing to any that ask, at his shrines situated in the port quarters of Ebbeshal, Hombori Tondo and Tolodeofeomoro as well the new cathedral in the Prayer Ghetto of Garguna. Many of his supplicants are servants of The Masters of the Poysida straits.

Church Institutions & Popular Movements

Many of the cities where the church has a significant presence have a monastery within their lands. These monasteries are colleges for training Wazirs and barracks for the church's Ghazis. The monasteries also act as wayhouses for travelling church members, providing all the delights of their home and the perverse delicacies of their sojourn. Most of these monasteries house a nunnery of The Brides of Saint Ebbesh.

The Order of the Holy Hedonists of Ebbesh: These individuals have devoted their lives so much to Ebbesh, that they never refuse an opportunity for hedonistic acts. They see it as their loyal duty to engage in such acts of licentiousness and gluttony. Some of the sect have even gone as far as gaining the pagan magic of the trickster, Catsup Slob, enabling them to perform greater acts of eating and the magic's of the Sorcerer Queen to further their acts of lust. The sect operates a non-stop orgy of hedonism in the city of Ebbeshal, requiring constant resupplies of unusual food and nubile slaves of all sexes and races. Sect members see as their duty to attend this orgy and that they stay as long as they can, some have even died engaging in acts of hedonistic and perverse pleasure.

The Order of the Divine Flagellants of the Saints: The warped followers of this sect believe that through pain and mutilation that life is fulfilled. As everyone will enter Solace, they believe that mortal life is worth nothing and constantly beat and scarify themselves to achieve Immara. They have access to the *Book of Pleasurable Pain and Suffering*, and further believe that it is their duty to visit the pain and suffering of life on others, favoured victims include Pagans and unwilling Kaddam women and men. The official church view is that these individuals should just be allowed to carry on with what they are doing, as long as it does not interfere with the pleasurable fulfilment of other church members.

The Order of the Clamorers: Saint Morishdo was a Yad slave whom led his loyal slave army of Ebbeshite Clamorers to liberate the city stronghold of Emanus and end the enforced silence of the Wordless Prophet. It takes 2 Hero Points to gain him as a patron.

The Brides of Saint Ebbesh: This order brings Kaddam girls to be trained as Yad slaves of lust, servicing the needs of Wazirs, Ghazis and visitors. They mother innocent children to be twisted into trainee Wazirs or more likely used as slaves for the upkeep of church properties and members.

Heresies

Sedalpism

The Scrolls of the Seven Sedalpi define the backbone of the Sedalplist Faith, these are heretical texts. They suggest that sin exists and that killing people is always wrong. It was Saint Ebbesh that correctly interpreted their twisted visions into the true meaning. The seven Holymen of Fengwal, the original Sedalpi are so heretical that their names are only formally pronounced once a year by the cowering Umathelans and other heretic sects. The Ebbeshite church knows how to call upon these men and twist their thoughts and deeds to the will of the church, the church cares little of the names of the men, for all that matters is that their magic can be used.

Curse of Muteness: the victim is unable to speak one complete sentence intelligible to any human listener, whether or not the supplicant and the listener share a common language for one full day.

Curse of Weakness: until the next dawn, the victims "normal" attribute scores are reduced to three for all resistance rolls or other purposes.

Blessing of Protection: so long as the supplicant remains still and takes no actions, he is totally invisible and undetectable by all sensory means and spells to the Eight Peoples. These are: Doraddi, Cliaryz, Elves, Umathelans, Gorgers, Un-men, Slarges, and Trolls.

Blessing of Disguise: a single villain is disguised. If the disguised culprit attempts to physically harm any victim, then for the next full hour all spells cast by the villain cannot be resisted (though defensive magic may still block the effects).

Blessing of Lies: the supplicant states aloud a false agreement to be made with another individual. If the other individual violates the bargain, the violator immediately loses 1d6 HP.

Curse of Living Death: the victim falls into a deep sleep. While asleep, he does not age, starve, or otherwise suffer from the passage of time. If physically injured or shaken awake, or startled by an extremely large sound, he will awake. Until then he sleeps centuries may pass.

Curse of Unholiness: the next time the victim asks for Divine Intervention if he is from a Pagan cult, it automatically costs the victim 5 HP.

The Wordless Prophet

The Wordless Prophet arose from the dilapidated, rat-infested hovels of Varburch. The vile Cult of Silence

soon infiltrated beyond the lands of Cerngoth into Afadjann. The cult walled up texts, including the exotic, beautiful and artistic. (Notably the original copy of *The Exotica*) They excised tongues and minds to prevent communication, preventing people from asking for their pleasures to be fulfilled. While the rule of Elassi the Stifler promoted drug frenzies and fanatical devotees, attracting people to the cult and away from the ecstasy of the Transcendental Church. The so-called Holy Men of the Sedalpists claim to have rescued the Silent One to include his worship in their twisted Laws. The "Meditations on Silence" of the Wordless Prophet, are still read aloud in church every Windsday by the twisted sect in Umathela.

Attitudes to other Sects

Rokari: They have few, but powerful worshippers in the southern land. The Sedalpist fool of Nikosdros is always trying to incite them to holy war against the Ebbeshites of Tortrica.

Stygians: The Sedalpists cowards use these Northerners to fight against the valiant warriors of Tortrica. Many glorious Ghazi warriors have lost their lives to the Stygian mercenaries.

The Vadelis: Devious scum, with sinful ways envied by the Ebbeshites, as is their control of trade. The Church has spread its ethos to a wider flock under their reign of terror and control. They are useful allies and dangerous foes.

Sedalpists: Pitied individuals, for they do not even try to enjoy their short, mortal existence. They are cowards and vegetarians who refuse to enlighten their pitiful lives with the fulfilment of fighting, feasting and fornicating.

Prominent Personalities

His Magnificence : Banayim Meshaganis, Ecclesiarch of Ebbeshal

Exceptionally pale for an Afadjanni, with jet-black hair and pale grey eyes, cat-slit to reveal lavender pupils. He wrongly believes he has elven blood somewhere in his veins, and this adds to his hatred of the forest dwellers. Banayim never fails to encourage prurient behaviour among his flock. Banayim is never alone and always accompanied by his loyal eunuch bodyguards. One of these huge Agimori carries a gilded cage, inside is a large emerald green lizard. It is an extremely rare singing lizard from the Prosandara Islands. When Banayim plays the correct notes on a special whistle, the lizard unfurls its iridescent red collar fan and sings in a most melodious fashion. The lizard is, not surprisingly, a great treasure.

Sulkamera the Fat, Head of Holy Hedonists

Sulkamera is so fat that many claim him to be Seki Pumra incarnate. His immense flatulent ridden body is often half-draped in garishly coloured silks, brought at great expense from Kralorela and Vormain. He has sworn never to cut his slate grey hair piling it up inside his ridiculously large turban, while his beard is a tangled and matted mess of food encrusted tresses. Sulkamera has taken Saint Eccheikhos as his patron, devoting his mortal life to eating vast quantities of exotic foods and to fulfilling sexual pleasures that would make even the Demivierge of Rhigos blush!

One-Eyed Ispazia, Leader of the Divine Flagellants

Isapazia shows her devotion by scarring all of her upper body with elaborate swirling patterns. She has pierced her ears with numerous golden rings, her tongue with a stud of ruby and her navel with a disc of Amethyst. She has gouged out her own left eye in reverence to Ebbesh, and replaced it with a yellow agate. Isapazia delights in her suffering and that of others, flaying the skin of live Kaddam and whipping other flagellants until they are red and bleeding with welts. Isapazia is known to relish the suffering of animals and often bites the heads off live mice, she has used her position of power to further her wealth, although much of this is used to purchase white horses, which she uses for sacrifice.

Farusain the Insane, Head of the Ghazi warriors

Farusain likes all things erotic, exotic and extremely psychotic! He has dark burnished, blue skin with eyes of blackest night and masses of fine raven hair cascading about his wide muscular shoulders. Farusain rides a fine white Palangso wearing his pure white flowing robes. He maintains a harem of seventeen concubines, some of which are imports from Kralorela. Once he slashed the heads off all his slaves to impress a sultry vixen of Zalasfan, another time he battered the skulls of his workers until they split like ripe Junjip fruit. Farusain is a devoted follower of Saint Jalap Khan and wastes no opportunity to call upon the blessings of his patron.

The Tusk Riders

By Simon Bray

The Tusk Riders or Aramites are degenerate humanoids, descended from human stock. Some scholars call them half trolls, although this is an ancestry they strongly deny and will kill anyone who makes such a statement. They are a loathsome, bestial race, at best hated by everyone. They are as tall as a man, but stand stooped, their skin is tough and covered in rough bristles like pig hide. Their faces are tremendously ugly, supporting huge yellowing tusks, from which – along with the impressive and monstrous giant boars that they ride – they get their name.

The life of a Tusk Rider is inseparably tied to the Tusk Boar. When their mothers drop them onto the forest floor (usually as part of a multiple birth of six to ten children), the child is suckled by mother and sow alike, as are the piglets of the boars. Each species seems to offer more compassion to the other's child than they can their own. The Tusk Riders mature quickly within their harsh and violent world. If they avoid cannibalistic kin, raids from other Tusk Rider clans and the violent rituals of their gods then they will join the raiding bands and collect sacrifices for their bloody altars. Tusk Riders travel about in family warbands, which include both sexes. A Tusk Rider is an active raider by the age of eight. The warbands travel with their great herds of swine, dwelling in the forests, mountains and wastelands of Maniria, Peloria and Prax. In the forest, which is their favoured haunt, the mounted Tusk Rider can out ride any foe. The warband is led by the strongest warrior, as likely a female as a male, the leader's word is law, failure to comply is

to assure one's death. The leaders never retire from the post, instead they expect to die at a rival's hands. Tusk Riders are raiders, not warriors and rarely fight in melee, but are fearsome if cornered. If a Tusk Rider warband confronts a strong foe, then they flee, without shame, although they often return in greater numbers.

The Tusk Riders spend most of their time raiding, hunting and demanding tribute from their neighbours. They use violence, treachery and cruelty to gain what they want, showing nothing but hatred for every other race. When not partaking of these tasks then they are worshipping. All Tusk Rider worship the Bloody Tusk without fail; they are immensely religious, delighting in partaking of the cult's ceremonies, rituals and sacrifices. However, this is not surprising, as their religion is one of bloodshed, violence and destruction, the Tusk Riders' greatest love.

The history of the Tusk Riders is filled with lies, they proclaim that they once ruled the world under the leadership of their Emperor Aram-ya-Udrum, but there is no evidence of this. Instead it is better to understand their religion. This vile cult of human sacrifice and gory rites is practised wherever there are Tusk Riders, but there is no greater temple to their bloody gods than the Ivory Plinth, a great and crumbling complex, surrounded by the foetid pits and sties of the Tusk Riders and their swine. Rising above the slurry and filth stand the huge tusks of the god pig Gouger, torn from his jaw by Aram, a blessed altar of death and glory.

U The Cult of the Bloody Tusk U

Aram-Ya-Udrum was the founder, the father, and the creator. He was the greatest Hero of the Silver Age. First he bound the Black Demon, creature of the Long Night that saved his people. Then he taught his follower to sacrifice humans to the Earth Goddesses, but the weak willed Unity Council forbade this practice with dire consequences. The Pig Goddess sent the beloved Gouger, the Godchild Boar into the world to assault the complacent and belligerent tillers of the earth and made the world run red with her own sacrifices. The people pleaded with mighty Aram to aid them. With wily warrior tricks he lured it into the demon's embrace and bloodily sacrificed the God-Pig to the earth; tearing from the roots its great tusks and erecting them to form the Ivory Plinth. Thus was forged the womb of Aramite birth, a womb of pain and violence. From then onwards Aram



and his folk sacrificed humans at the altar he had made. With a new protector, Aram unshackled the Black Demon and sent it into the dark void. Then he summoned all the wild boars of the valley to his cause, and trained his kin to ride them and thus to rule the valley. All the tillers of the earth paid bloody tribute to his mighty altar, keeping the boars from ravaging their lands and so the Earth was placated and he became tyrant of the valley.

Even after his death the power of Aram and the Ivory Plinth mixed together with the blood, spittle and seed of Gouger and spread into Aram's kinsmen. They grew strong and powerful, and changed into the mighty Tusk Riders, the Aramites, Children of the Boar. They named Aram Lord of the Bloody Tusk and his legacy showed them many ways of inflicting pain upon the weak. Aram's final act was to follow his Black Demon into the Underworld, where amongst the pain and death he forged his children (both Aramite and Tusker) a suitable hell. His children still lead their brutal lifestyle, raiding the tillers of the earth, to remind them that they should not be complacent.

Entry Requirements: None for Tusk Riders. Outsiders must wrestle a huge tusk boar with their bare hands. This is almost always fatal. Prisoners are offered the opportunity to undergo this rite, for a laugh.

Mundane Abilities: Care for Tusker, Inflict Pain, Mythology of The Bloody Tusk, Forage for Food, Torture, Bully, Bind Captive.

Virtues: Blood Thirsty, Vicious.

Relationship: To The Ivory Plinth.

U Bloody Tusk (Lance of Agony, Crippling Torment, Appease Earth, Smash Bones)

Darkness (Unhealable Wound, Bind Foe with Darkness, Assume Monstrous Aspect, Demoralising Shadow)

Tusker (Tusks of Pain, Call Tuskers, Thick Skin, Gore Foe, Ground Shaking Charge)

Secret: Ritual of the Bloody Cut This bloody and brutal secret, also known as the Death Binding Enchantment allows a worshipper of the Bloody Tusk to bind the soul of its victim into its tail (or in the case of a humanoid its hand). The ability can only be used on a victim that has been rendered to zero or less AP, through the use of the worshippers Torture. The sacrificer must win over the victim's best magical ability (or 14 if it has no magical ability) in an Extended Contest using his Bloody Cut Secret. The result is that the bound soul can be used as AP to boost magical abilities. In the event of a complete victory the worshipper also gains access to the victim's highest magical ability at full skill level as a one use ability. If the creature has no magical ability they can only gain action point equal to a default 14. Once the one use ability has been used then it is lost, and the gory

artefact crumbles. To retain this ability the worshipper must cement it with a hero point.

Complete Victory: Sacrificer gains the victim's ability at victim's full score (or default 14 AP)

Major Victory: Sacrificer gains AP at the victim's ability -5.

Minor Victory: Sacrificer gains AP at the victim's ability -10.

Marginal Victory: Sacrificer gains AP at the victim's ability -15 (or default 12 in less than one).

Holy Days: Each Wild Day is a day of gory worship for the Tusk Brothers, with those in Death Weeks having the greatest significance. During their ceremonies the Tusk Riders raid, kidnap and torture as much as they can, bringing together their stolen booty and captives to destroy them with orgiastic ceremonies of destructive and bloody violence. In Earth Season the Tusk Riders return to the Ivory Plinth for the Blood Rut, a huge ceremony of death and torture followed by a huge sweating blood soaked orgy. In the Sea Season there is Gouger Day, where the Tusk Riders celebrate the birth of the new piglets by (surprise, surprise) rounding up enemies with their monstrous boars and goring them to death, then indulging in an drunken orgy. In Fire Season the Tuskers celebrate Aram's Night, during which they worship their founder with a silent vigil, followed (you guessed it) by bloody human sacrifices and an orgy. Dark Season the Tusk Brother's remember the hardships of the Long Night and make solemn sacrifices to the Darkness demon that preserved them.

Sacrifices – Human sacrifice is favoured, with bloody and painful rituals. However to appease the earth there are also sacrifices of food, which are given to the Tusk Boars, along with the remains of the human sacrifices to consume.

Other Side – The Hell of the Tusk Riders was forged by Aram within the bowels of the Earth Goddess, it is a place of violence, darkness and destruction. The Tusk Riders continue on in death as they did in life, but the raiding is easier and the bounty greater. When a Tusk Rider dies, his mount goes berserk and must be slain, such is the blood bond between them. The mount is then buried with its master so that they may ride through hell together.

Other Connections – Ana Gor the Goddess of Human Sacrifice, Ralta the Pig Goddess and the Hungry Earths are called upon during the rituals of the Tuskers, but they receive no individual worship.

Flaws – Everyone hates and fears the Bloody Tusk.

Raider

The mainstay of Tusk Rider society, they roam the land looking for trouble and easy booty. Picking upon the weak and helpless. Raiders are not warriors and they tend to flee if they encounter stronger foes.

Mundane Skills: Ride Tusker, Appear Menacing, Close Combat (Spear Fighting, Lance Fighting and Brawl),

Hear Acutely, Bloody Butchery, (Local) Area Knowledge, Intimidate, Foul Language, Repulsive Manners, Snatch Up Booty.

Personality: Boorish, Pig Headed, Aggressive.

Relationship: To Warband Leader, To Warband, To Tusk Boar

Magic: The Cult of the Bloody Tusk

Living Standard: Poor to Common. (Raiders tend to spend wealth as soon as they get it.)

Equipment: Tusk Boar (acts as Follower), Pig Hide Armour, Butchery Tools, Long Spear, Bag of Rotten Food.

Hunter

Hunters are rare amongst Tusk Riders, they tend to be loners, and so cannot use raiding tactics to gain food and booty. They have a strong affinity with their Tusk Boars and move with the herds through the forests. Tusk Rider hunters are not choosy about their quarry, eating anything that they can capture. Hunters return to the Ivory Plinth several times a year to participate in the bloody rites of their cult.

Mundane Skills: Ride Tusker, Sneak in Undergrowth, Set Traps and Snares, Bloody Butchery, Know Animal Ways, Track Prey, (Local) Area Knowledge, Hear Acutely, Close Combat (Spear Fighting), Ranged Combat (Javelin), Forest Survival.

Personality: Bad Tempered, Independent.

Relationship: To Tusk Boar.

Magic: To Bloody Tusk

Living Standard: Poor.

Equipment: Tusk Boar (acts as follower), Pig Skin Armour, Butchery Tools, Spear, Javelins, Snare and Traps.

Sacrificer

Sacrificers are the roaming priests of the Bloody Tusk, they derive great pleasure from their religious practices, spilling blood at any opportunity. Sacrificers always defer to the War Band leader in all matters. At the great blood letting rituals of the Ivory Plinth the sacrificers play a key role, and a good priest can sacrifice ten or more captives during the rituals.

Mundane Skills: Ride Tusker, Sense Gods and Spirits Nearby, Perform Bloody Sacrifice, Prepare Sacrifice, Close Combat (Spear Fighting and Dagger Fighting), Scream Prayers, Beat Home God's Message, Intimidate Worshipper, Perform War Dances, Lead Worship.

Personality: Over Zealous, Aggressive, Brutal.

Relationship: To War Band, To War Band Leader, To Tusk Boar.

Magic: Devotee of Bloody Tusk.

Living Standard: Common to Prosperous (Many Sacrificers steal valuable sacrificial gifts).

Equipment: Tusk Boar (Acts as Follower), Bloodied Pigskin Robes, Big Sacrificial Knife, Portable Altar, Boar Head Mask, Spear, Strange Ritual Paraphernalia.

Advanced Occupation

War Band Leader

Brutality and strength empower the War Leader, without these traits they are soon displaced by more aggressive and tough war band members. War Band leaders are the epitome of Tusk Rider culture, disgusting, vicious and bullying, their rule is absolute and is only questioned by those who are willing to be beaten into submission or vie for leadership.

Mundane Skills: Ride Tusker, Tough, Bully, Lead War Band, War Band Tactics, Strong, Set Ambush, Bark Orders, Command Respect, Close Combat (Spear Fighting, Lance Fighting, or Two other combat skills, Brawling).

Personality: Tyrannical, Overbearing, Violent.

Relationship: To War Band, To Tusk Boar.

Magic: Bloody Tusk.

Living Standard: Prosperous (War Band Leaders take the choice share of all booty and food.)

Equipment: Tusk Boar (acts as Follower), Chain mail armour, Metal Helm, Stout Spear, Tusk Rider Bodyguard (acts as Follower), Big Crude Tent, Stash of Booty.

Tusk Brothers

The chosen children of Aram, blessed spawn of Gouger, the power of the Bloody Tusk flows strongest amongst these individuals who have within them the power to transform into mighty Tusk Boars. Only a few rare individuals inherit this divine Lycanthropy, they are said to be Tusk Rider babes born of the mighty Tusk Boars, outsiders claim they are born of the blasphemous love of the Tusk Riders and their mounts. Anger, bloodshed and pain cause the change to begin, the transformation is wracked with ecstatic agony. Most Tusk Brothers live within the shadow of the Ivory Plinth, bloated and honoured by their kin, they gain access to the finest mates and swine.

Innate Abilities: Boorish 12, Smell Food 12, Cruel 16, Irritable 16, Know Tuskers 16, Strong 16, Tough 12

Innate Magical Abilities : Shapechange 2 Δ .

Notes: If a Tusk Brother smells a foe's blood or is injured he can try and transform into a Tusk Boar, with a default resistance of 20. Once a Tusk Brother changes they gain the following abilities, they cannot use their normal abilities, apart from Bloody Tusk Feats. To return back to a humanoid form they must roll again on their shapechange ability against a default resistance of 20, however this resistance increased by 2 for every hour they have remained a boar. Thus some Tusk Brothers never change back. The skills in Boar form can be increased normally.

Shape-changed Tusk Brother

Weapons and Armour: Gore 2 Δ ³, Thick Skin ².

Significant Abilities: Acute Smell 18, Cunning 15, Large 10W, Root for Food 2W, Run Fast 18, Scent Predator 15, Strong 10W, Tough 2W, Foul Tempered 2W, Recognise Friends 12.

Tactics: Tusk Brothers are highly aggressive, and will attack any humans they encounter. They charge forward and gore with their long tusks, trying to rip open their foe's belly and force them to the ground. Once the foe has fallen, the tusk brother will trample him (using their Large) and continue to rip with their tusks. Like tusk boars, Tusk Brothers are omnivorous, and always delight in eating the soft parts of a fallen foe.

What the War Leader told Us (before he ripped my ear off).

Who are you?

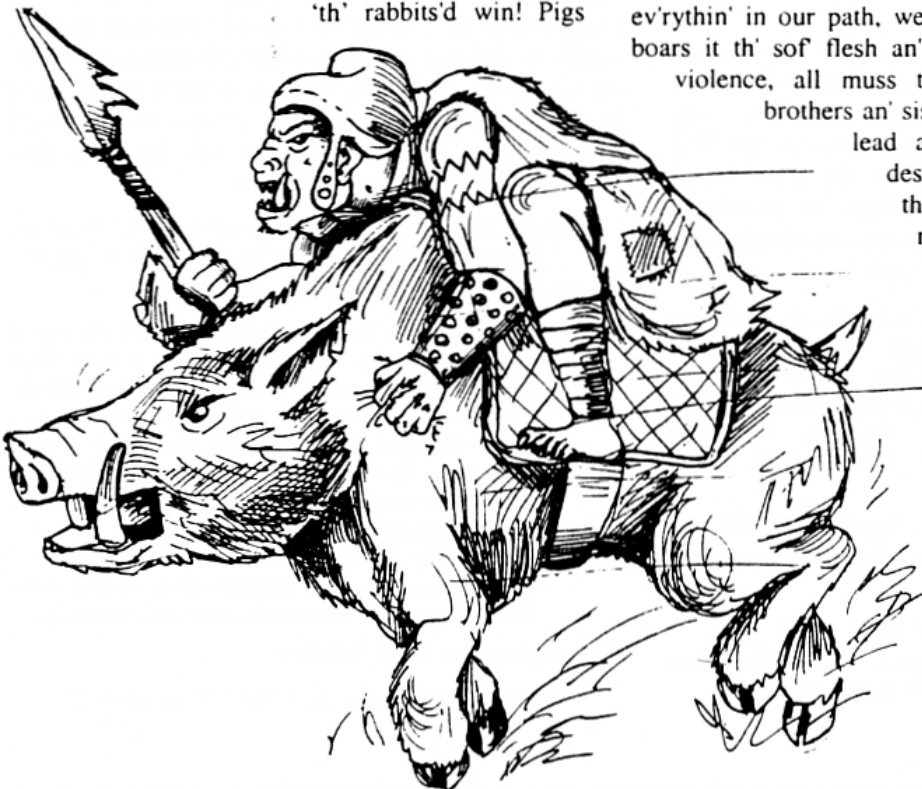
I'm Bignard Black Tusk. War Leader, Man Eater, Runt Buster an' Boar Lovah

Who are we?

Snort! Pig's hide boy! We're th' Black Tusk Bastards, the Most fearful war ban' in all th' Stinkin' Forest.

What makes us great?

'Grunt! Pigs hide!' I do! Without me you'd fall upon yourselves like starvin' boars. 'Growl' It's my cunning', without me you could not raid, yo' lot kin't even find yer way outta the forest let alone find easy prey in the Pass! 'Squeal!' It's my violence, eff'n it weren't for me you'd fight rabbits, and not warriors and you'd starve, on account o' th' rabbits'd win! Pigs



Hide! 'Snarl! It's My sacrifices, if I dinna git the best blood t'spill and the best victims t'scream then the Gouger'd rise from his grave an' eat us all like filthy earth tillers. 'Snarl!' It's my Boar, she is the greatest boar in all the Stinkin' Forest, her man gorin' tusks, her sweatin' hairy hide, her glorious foe stompin' trotters, he li'l piggy eyes an' her long muscular legs make her the dawgoned-est fearsome mount (an' comely lovah). 'Belch!' It's My Spear, eff'n it weren't for my spear, poke you to action and our enemies to death then the blood not be spilled, the earth not appeased and the world'd fall apart. 'Growl!' Without me yer nothin', so don't even reckon about tryin' t'challenge me when the Blood Rut comes, o' ah will tear out yer gizzard an' feed it the goddesses!

Where do we live?

Whar does we live? Yo' live were th' boars go, whar th' greatest booty is an' whar ah tell yo'. We hail fum th' Stinkin' Forest, but haf raided in th' lan' of th' Moon an' th' Pass of Dragon's. We haf marched acrost Prax t'raid an' stomped Troll haid in Dagori Inkarth. But it is th' dark paths of th' Stinkin' Forest, whar th' swine kin slumber in peace that we love the dawgoned-est.

How do we live?

How does we live? We live by mah rule an' by th' laws of th' Bloody Tusk. Shet mah mouth! We live by raidin', it is whut Aram th' Foun'er taught us, an' we prey upon th' weak an' foolish farmers an' earth tillers t'remind them of th' stren'th of th' earth. We punish them fo' they does not spill man's blood enny longer. We live in our hideouts, sleepin' wif th' boars, which is as brothers an' sisters t'us. When th' urgin' comes we haid t'th' Stinkin' Forest to partake in th' great blood ruts an' o'gies, renooin' our stren'th. We hate an' destroy ev'rythin' in our path, we ett th' hard flesh, while th' boars it th' sof' flesh an' ev'rythin' else. We live by

violence, all muss tess their tusks upon their

brothers an' sisters, eff'n they is to one day

lead a war ban'. We smash an'

destroy our inemies an' when

thar is no enemies t'fight we

muss smash our own haid

together, th' blood muss

nevah stop flowin'. We live

in th' saddle, no Tusk

Rider kin be wifout his

boar, no Tusk Boar

wifout its rider, this

hyar is th' bond thet

Aram an' Gouger made,

t'be wifout is t'become

mad, an' yo' muss be haf

yer throat slit t'come

together agin.

What is important in my life?

Me, yer Tusker, Blood an'

th' Bloody Tusk. Shet yo' mouth! Thet is th' order of th' world, cuss it all t' tarnation. Wifout me yer useless an' weak, wifout yer Tusker yer like an earth tiller an' muss die, wifout blood th' earth will turn aginst yo', wifout th' Bloody Tusk yo' haf no reason t'live an' sh'd die.

What is the difference between men and women?

Like th' Boar an' th' Sow, both is great, both haf tusks an' delight t'be drenched in blood, cuss it all t' tarnation. Do not unner estimate th' stren'th of eifer, fo' both kin gore yo' an' spill yer blood for th' Earth.

What makes someone great?

Stren'th an' blood, cuss it all t' tarnation. Yo' kinnot be great unless yo' fight an' kill yer brothers an' sisters, yo' muss rip through all yer kin, beat off yer betters an' crush th' skull of yer rivals. Only when ev'ryone who stan's aginst yo' is gone kin yo' be truly great. ah's great on account o' ah killed ev'ryone who dastd challenge me, ah tore out their innards an' ett them befo'e their eyes an' then feed their carcasses t'mah boar.

What is my lot in life?

Yer lot is t'sarve me, t'do as yer told, cuss it all t' tarnation. Yo' will be given th' chance t'fight fo' booty, fust aginst our inemies, then amongst younelves. Yo' will feel th' wind in yer face, th' boar between yer thighs an' hot blood on yer han's. Yo' will destroy our foes an' sacrifice their chillun t'th' Bloody Tusk. Shet mah mouth! One day yo' will die an' yo' will yer boar will hoof it mad an' will shall slice her throat an' yo' shall join Aram an' yo' shall raid agin. Thet is it, thet is yer lot.

How do we deal with others?

We fight them, we kill them, eff'n we does not kill them then we slices them up real slow then cast their bones t'th' boars. Eff'n we kinnot kill them, eff'n we kinnot cappare them then we run. Aram taught us this hyar trick. Shet mah mouth! But we does not helter-skelter far, instead we join wif other war ban's until we kin smash th' enemah, an' then we kill them an' slice them, dawgone it. When we meet t'other war ban', we call th' challenge, we bash haid's an' show that we is th' strongess an' they lick our beasts clean of sweat, an' cower befo'e us.

What is evil?

Thet which is not us is evil, it is tainted wif sof'ness, it does not knows th' true way of wo'ship an' does not unnerstan' th' nature of blood an' sacrifice. Th' wo'ld despises us fo' knowin' th' truth an' turns aginst us at ev'ry oppo'tunity. Trest no-one, trick ev'ryone an' slice them when they is not lookin'.

Who are our enemies?

Ev'ryone, th' Earth Goddesses filled th' wo'ld wif weak fools so thet we c'd smash them an' pour their blood on th' clay.

Who are our gods?

Aram-Ya-Udrum is th' Foun'er, th' greatess hero. He taught us th' way of sacrifice, th' way of cornflick an' th' right way t'live. Gouger is th' God-Pig, sent by th' Goddess t'wreak revenge upon th' fat an' happy farmers, when they fo'gotta sacrifice ther. Aram sacrificed him an' made th' Ivo'y Plinth our greatess temple an' wif his power, blood an' spittal made us strong an' mixed our blood wif thet of th' boars. Th' Dark Demon was Aram slave, who fought wif us durin' th' Long Night, he aided his master t'cappure Gouger, an' made th' wo'ld right. Aram then sent th' demon into th' Unnerwo'ld t'make a better place fo' when our flesh muss fed t'th' boars. Ralot an' th' Hungry Earths is th' Pig Mammy an' her bloody sisters, who call fo' sacrifice t'make th' wo'ld exist. Ana Go', is their gateway, an' th' guide fo' th' souls of them who die in our rituals. These gods is all blessed an' come together in th' Cult of th' Bloody Tusk, our one true religion, as enny fool kin plainly see.

I have heard of other powers. What can you tell me about...

Orlanth? Th' wind god, is an empty servant of th' Earth. He is th' Pappy of th' fat an' flaccid farmers thet waller in th' Valley of th' Dragons. It is they thet we raid most frequently, fo' it is thar leaders thet tried t'stop th' sacrifices an' nearly destroyed th' wo'ld, cuss it all t' tarnation.

Th' Red Goddess? A noo inemah, th' red goddess light up th' night wif her ruddy hue, but it is not th' colour of blood, so don't be fooled, she is not a part of th' Bloody Tusk an' so muss be hated, cuss it all t' tarnation. Howevah her soldiers brin' us sacrifices an' call upon us t'fight, so take their bounty an' blood, but keep yo' spear close t'han'.

Aldryami? Only th' Aldryami is wo'thy of respect, they is th' plant folk, they is part of th' goddess as much as th' trees of th' fo'est. Only th' Aldryami kin bess us in th' fo'ess an' sh'd be rightly feared fo' thet.

Uz? Th' Dark Men live wifin th' night, they is servants of Darkness Demons, like th' one thet Aram inslaved, but they is not like us, an' muss be hated, cuss it all t' tarnation. Do not believe th' sto'ies thet we is their kin; our blood runs wif Gougers seed, not thet of enny fat troll, ah reckon. Kill them like th' rest.

For more information on Tusk Riders and Tusk Boars see *Anaxial's Roster* by Issaries Inc.

The Arkati

By Peter Metcalfe

A spectre haunts Safelster, the spectre of the Arkati. This dark brotherhood dominates the cities through occult magics, intrigue and fear. Such is the power of the Arkati that Safelstran princes do their bidding while an Arkati can do almost anything without reprisal, even atrocities such as torture, murder or cannibalism. Despite all their power, the Arkati must hide themselves – if an Arkati shows himself or is unmasked, then he loses all power and is easily slain.

Yet the Arkati are not a gang of corrupt power-seekers but a spiritual elite dedicated to freeing humanity from Gbaji. No one may become an Arkati until he has demonstrated his zeal to destroy the Deceiver. Fewer than one in twenty Safelstrans are worthy of the privilege. The Arkati hegemony over Safelster has two purposes – to sustain the Arkati in their titanic conflicts with the Deceiver's minions and to protect the ordinary people from the Deceiver's lies. In return, the Safelstrans have supported the Arkati through the centuries, even hiding them at great peril during the Great Persecutions.

Despite their power, the Arkati are bitterly fragmented. The temporal division plaguing Safelster are a mirror to the spiritual divisions among the Arkati. Occult skirmishes occur daily as the Arkati manoeuvre for supremacy against each other.

Safelster's frequent wars are caused by Arkati factions seeking to undermine each other. The Seshnegi determination to destroy the Arkati has many war-weary supporters within Safelster itself.

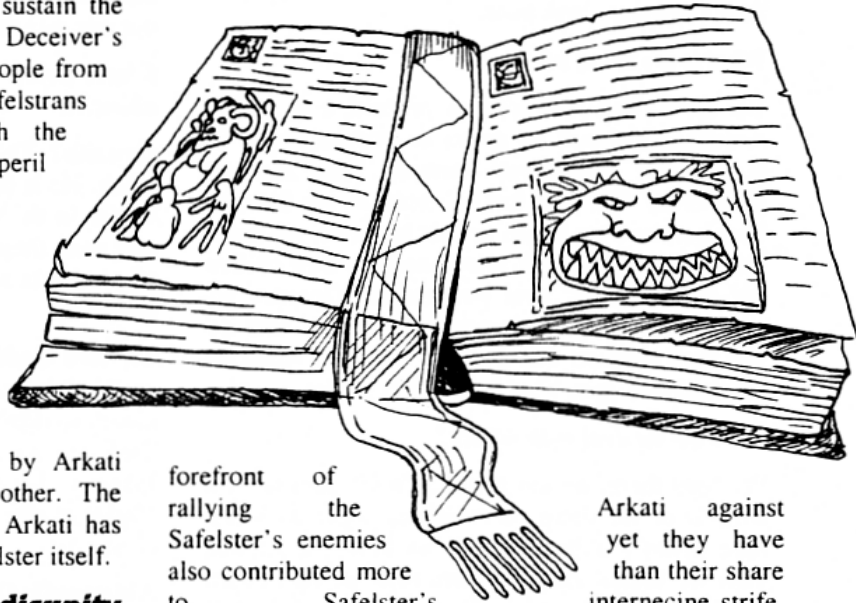
The Shattered Arcana – the disunity of the Arkati

The Autarchs ruled Safelster as heads of the Grand Arcana, a vigorous order that united all Arkati. The Grand Arcana is only a dim memory now for the God Learners destroyed it during their conquest. Attempts to revive it have failed dismally due to the lack of trust among the Arkati. Instead the Arkati are dispersed among many arcana, a deleterious arrangement that reinforces Safelster's disunity. Although joining an arcana is held to be a life-long commitment, Arkat can migrate to another for any number of reasons; how his old arcana remembers him depends on his reason for leaving.

Due to their ease in controlling the nobles, churches and guilds, the Arkati created the *cabal*

arcana to consolidate their hold over a region to make it safe for all Arkati. The cabals are so effective that they rule large parts of Safelster, making them prime targets of Seshnegi propaganda. A favourite tactic is to express outrage at the cabal's extensive use of Arkati to eliminate dissent. Not every Arkati within a cabal's territory is a cabalist for many have great differences with the leading cabalists. Such Arkati are monitored and if necessary, either forced into exile or assassinated.

The cabals are widely disliked for their sectarian bickering. Arkati that seek to unite Safelster join the *crypteia* to participate in complex web of fleeting alliances. When not damning the cabals, the Seshnegi spare no effort in describing how these arcanas insert themselves into enemy armies and cities to take them over from within. The *crypteia* are at the



forefront of rallying the Arkati against Safelster's enemies yet they have also contributed more than their share to Safelster's internecine strife. They pursue their goals with a fierce zeal, clashing frequently with arcanas standing in their way. The *crypteia* have many secular organisations to cover their activities, often irritating the cabals that want to control all within their territory. The *crypteia* can, and have, take over a secular government. Their regimes are more intolerant of dissenting Arkati and less effective in controlling the ordinary Safelstrans.

The *covens* shun secular authority to concentrate on fighting the Deceiver and his minions. Their dedication makes them nigh unbeatable – a single coven can best an entire army as the Seshnegi have found to their cost. The same dedication has made them uncompromising fanatics and they often wage war against other arcanas for their supposed friendship with the Deceiver. Arcanas in the vicinity of a coven take care to be on their good side. When covens clash, everybody lies low until one has been destroyed.

The Seshnegi also describe the Autarchic Churches as Arkati but these are not true arcanas nor are their worshippers Arkati. These churches are so popular that a city could easily have three magnificent temples, each honouring a different Arkat. The Arkati have ambivalent feelings about these churches. On one hand, their evangelicalism is useful in ensuring the popular support for the Arkati. On the other hand, the Arkati churches quarrel bitterly about the "True Arkat", with running street battles every summer.

Due to widespread nostalgia for the Autarchy, many aristocrats seek public support by actively using autarchic titles, such as Archon or Exarch. They are almost certainly not Arkati because they openly flaunt their association and live, which most Arkati cannot do. Ironically the Arkati are weaker in such places for their involvement in a regime that uses autarchic titles risks their status being revealed. This is the prime reason why the Seshnegi titles, such as Count or Duke, are still used in Safelster despite their association with the hated God Learners and their idiot-brood, the Seshnegi.

Within the Shadows – the secret life of the Arkati

Secrecy is crucial to the Arkati for it protects them against the Panoptic Curses, God Learner curses. These spells are now the strongest weapon of the Inquisitorial Orders against the Arkati. When cast, a Panoptic Curse roams the world for an Arkati that have revealed his status. Finding one, it marks the Arkati with a spectral taint known as the "Deceiver's kiss". The taint causes ordinary people to despise the marked Arkati. Time is of essence for the difficult task of removing the taint for Inquisitors and other Arkati-hunters can unerringly hunt down the tainted Arkati and dispatch him with ease. The Panoptic spells do not taint the congregations of the Arkati Churches or the pretenders to autarchic titles, clear evidence that such people are not Arkati.

Not all the Panoptic Curses survive. A particularly effective curse targeted travellers on the heroplanes. The God Learners ceased to use it when they started their explorations of the heroplanes and the Inquisitors rue its loss. The Arkati know several counterspells to protect against the Panoptic Curses. A few powerful Arkati have recently displayed their might by openly revealing their Arkati status – they are gathering armies in their quest for Arkat's Throne as the Grand Conjunction nears. But the best defence for most is concealing their status. When a faction meets, its Arkati disguise themselves by using secret names, cowls or even grotesque masks. Some factions dare not meet but use spells to communicate instead.

The need for secrecy affects the dealings of the Arkati with others. They do not take positions of worldly importance for fear that it invites scrutiny from the Panoptic Curses. Instead they prefer to control secular authorities through modest positions with great influence, such as a confessor or a private secretary.

Shadows of Shadows, All is Shadow – the War against the Deceiver.

Central to Arkati philosophy is the Deceiver. This supreme entity dwells at the centre of the world in a state of paradise. But the Deceiver's paradise is evil for he makes it by casting his shadows throughout the cosmos. These shadows appear as ways to his paradise but they are really lies that perpetuate cosmic woe. Arkat was the first to realise the true nature of these shadows and showed others how to become free of their grip. His successors continue Arkat's struggle against the Deceiver and his shadows for the deliverance of the cosmos.

Arkati philosophers classify all religions as shadows. Any sorcerous creed, theistic pantheon or animistic tradition is a shadow. The Arkati do not fight all shadows for they know it an exercise in futility – their true foe is not the shadows but their caster. To take the fight to the Deceiver, the Arkati know occult ways of seeing the Deceiver within a chosen shadow. By then warring against that shadow, they war against the Deceiver. That others fight different shadows is of no concern – all Arkati fight the Deceiver.

By restricting the fight to one shadow, the Arkati can follow other shadows without compromising his struggle. An Arkati that fights chaos will have no problem in using Rokari spells. However in doing so, he will become a target for any Arkati that have chosen to fight the shadows that he follows. To avoid needless infighting, the Arkati of a region limit the shadows that may be fought. But since the proscribed shadows vary from place to place, a shadow that is forbidden by one city can easily be tolerated in the next. Such differences contribute to Safelster's fragmentation.

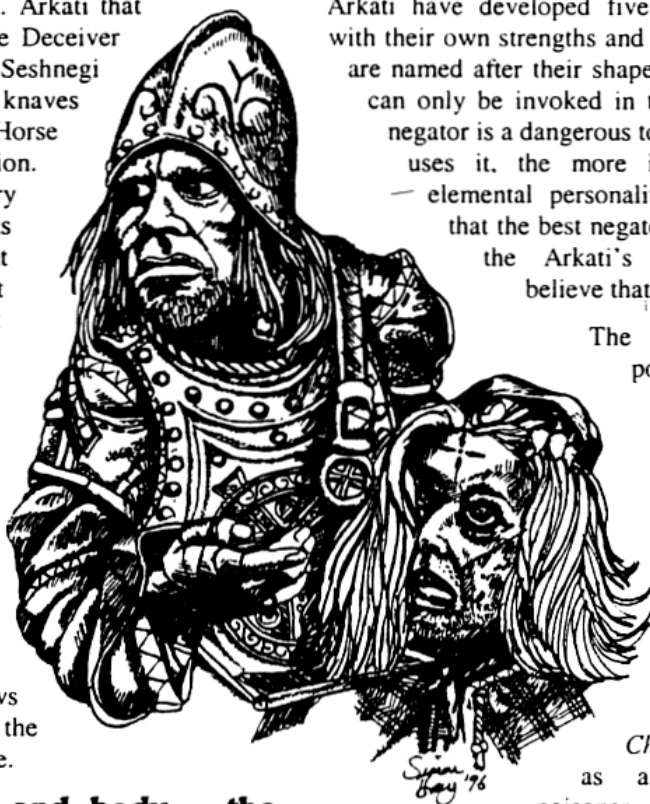
The nature of the Quest – the War against the Deceiver

The Quest is the central element of the Arkati War against the Deceiver. It is not the Experimental Questing of old that the God Learners stole and abused. Instead the Quest is simply hunting down the manifestations of the Deceiver in the past ages. Several Quest rituals are known, all borrowed from diverse myths. The nature of the Quest depends on which shadow one has chosen to fight and in which age. If the chosen shadow is the Storm Tribe, then the Storm Age Quest might be based on Humakt's execution of Orlanth.

The Quests are not taken without extensive preparation. The best method, the Arkati have found, is numerous

victories against the chosen shadow in the mortal world. By knowing how to defeat the Deceiver in the mortal world, the Arkati can defeat the Deceiver in the Quests. The mortal victories are only useful if the mortal shadow was close to the Deceiver – wanton massacres of simple worshippers are ineffectual.

The best measure of an Arkati is his victories against the Deceiver. The following system is so widely known that non-Arkati have misunderstood them as titles of nobility. Arkati that have not yet defeated the Deceiver are *Hipparchs*; the Seshnegi translate this word as knaves although Arkati of the Horse might be a better translation. That the Autarch's cavalry were hipparchs supports the Zzaburi assertion that the Arkati are corrupt knights. An Arkati that defeats the Deceiver in the Great Darkness becomes an *Exarch*, a title that the God Learners misused in Kralorela. Success over the Deceiver in the Storm Age marks one as an *Archon* while triumph in the Golden Age brings renown as an *Arcane*. Nobody knows how to vanquish the Deceiver in the Green Age.



With heart, mind and body – the Arkat's occult arsenal.

In fighting the Deceiver, the Arkati make use of three occult powers.

The occult power of the mind is *Sciomancy*, the divination of the Deceiver's intentions through the study of his shadows. The Arkati use sciomancy to track down the Deceiver in their quests. In the mortal world, sciomancy is useful for locating shadows of the Deceiver and determining their intentions. The greatest sciomancers can know what a shadow will do better than the shadow himself. The lore is dangerous for it creates a psychic hunger that can only be satiated with a shadow's death. If constantly unfulfilled, the hunger turns against the Arkati with dire consequences.

Several sciomantic arts exist, each effective against a category of shadows. Most Arkati only study the art needed to combat their chosen shadows. Extant grimoires describe sciomancy useful against Nysalor and the God Learners but they have been

little more than curios since those foes' demise. Arkati have developed sciomantic arts useful for understanding the Lunar Way, the Hrestoli and the Aldryami. But since those shadows pose little threat, the arts are considered intellectual distractions.

The occult power of the heart is *umbric negation*, the use of a psychic weapon to extinguish the shadows of the Deceiver. Killing a shadow by any other means is futile for the Deceiver is always able to reform it – only umbric negation is capable of wounding him. The Arkati have developed five different negators, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. The negators are named after their shapes on the Other Side; they can only be invoked in this world with magic. A negator is a dangerous tool, for the more an Arkati uses it, the more it infuses him with its – elemental personality. Many Arkati believe that the best negator is that which reinforces the Arkati's strengths while others believe that balance is better.

The *Brazen Spade* uses the power of Storm to smite shadows; the art is so old that the sword it was named after has not been used for a thousand years. The Dark Arkati swear that the mighty *Leaden Club* is the best but others deride them for their brute unsubtlety. To master the *Azure Chalice* is to become known as a subtle, unpredictable poisoner, while wielders of the

Oaken Staff are caricatured as dull and plodding. The *Golden Lance* is renowned for its far-reaching effect but the arrogance and aloofness of its proponents is legendary.

The occult power of the body is the *Arkatic Path*. As Arkat was the Deceiver's perfect foe, his life is the point of reference for Arkati to follow. Through their fidelity, the Arkati gain useful magics to aid their struggle. So useful are these paths that the Autarchic Churches teach non-Arkati how to walk them. Due to the complexity of Arkat's life, the follower has a choice of many paths. The Autarchic Churches are disturbed by this and seek the True Path – the Arkati are untroubled for they know that Arkat made all paths.

In his life, Arkat established five paths. The Grand Arcana in its prime discovered alternative ways of travelling these paths and allowed them to be followed alongside the old. In some cases, nobody now knows which was the original path although the Arkati agree that the Churches' obsession with this question is pointless. The magic conferred by these paths varies – many are sorcerous, others theistic while a few provide

spirits. In all cases, the magic gained from these paths is not as comprehensive as the Shadows and the Churches nor do the Arkati learn any mysteries from them.

The path of *Great Arkat* honoured Arkat as the ideal ruler. It has unfortunately been lost and the best known variation is the tragic path of *Paslac* the martyred Autarch. Every year, great weeping occurs on the anniversary of his death. Another variation is *Arkat the Saviour*; this path is not interested in rule but in liberating the masses from the Deceiver's lies.

The Path of the *Arkat the Destroyer* focuses on his destruction. Its followers believe that Arkat is returning to destroy the world and prepare to assist his destruction in various ways. A fearsome variation is *Zorakarkat*, a mask for the murderous troll god Zorak Zoran. Only regions with strong associations with Darkness or Trolls permit Zorakarkat's worship. Even more terrifying than Zorakarkat is *Arkat the Devil* whose followers identify Arkat's destruction as chaos. Followers of the Devil's path are slain almost anywhere (Tinaros being the best-known exception) but it is widely believed to be popular with Chaos Monks and Borists.

The Path of *Arkat the Knight* is the path of valorous combat. Followers of the Knightly path seek to free the land from inhumans and chaotics. To root out the Borist heresy, the Grand Arcana developed the *Chaosbane* path to war against Chaos in all its forms, covert or open.

In his life, *Arkat the Martyr* knew defeat many times. The Martyrs use these defeats to deepen their understanding of the shadows within silent, contemplative monasteries. This path has two variations: the grim *Humarkat*, and the grotesque *Arkat the Loser*. The path of Humarkat was discovered among the barbarians and concentrates on the final defeat, death. The Losers are flagellants, punishing themselves in a sacral frenzy so they may experience Arkat's loss. This path is popular among down-and-outs and other no-hopers.

Those seeking mastery over the shadows take the path of Arkat the Troll; it is shunned throughout Safelster for the follower transforms himself into a Troll. The Grand Arcana softened this into the path of *Arkat the Peacemaker*, which celebrates Arkat's friendship that he forged with elves, dwarves and trolls. The Peacemakers seek alliances with the Elder Races and encourage the worship of Inhuman Gods.

The Deceiver's Revenge – the Inquisitorial Orders

Among the neighbours of Safelster are many strange magical societies. These range from the Inquisitorial Orders of Seshnela, the Witch-hunters of Lankst and the Devil-smellers among the Hsunchen. All have strange and uncanny ways of hunting down the Arkati. All these societies have their own explanation of how they came to fight Arkat and his kin but the Zzaburi account is probably the most accurate: they are Arkati orders that have turned against their spiritual founder.



The Deep Tunnels

By James Frusetta

"The problem isn't the uz you see up here, it's the uz you can't see below here..."

Troll fighter's proverb

Humans know little that takes place beneath the surface of Genertela, although their stories speak of the deep dark earth that lies below, untouched by light. There are many strange terrors and mysteries that linger here; one are the deep tunnels. In the dark earth of Zugorteg, some uz clans chose to settle, and they soon found the tunnels and cracks that riddle Glorantha. Some of these were inhabited by enemies, and many wars were fought beyond the sight of light.

The uz soon conquered vast tunnels between the uz lands, where their comings and goings would pass unnoticed by the rest of Komor. No one knows what happens here, deep below the earth. There are legends of uz species extinct elsewhere, such as the blind trolls, that dwell in their own uzlands beneath. Those explorers who have penetrated have discovered dark defenders of the earth, jealous guardians of Zugorteg's secrets.

The uz have used the tunnels to their own advantage at time, both to connect the uz lands in times of difficulty (such as the Gbaji Wars), or to use the tunnels to surprise and attack their enemies. Human scholars of the uz have, at times, speculated that uz tunnels may be present in key places – an unpleasant surprise that awaits.

The Blue Moon Tradition

By Ian Cooper

Like other moon goddesses the Blue Moon has many aspects. She is known by many peoples and by many names. Among the trolls she is Annilla is the Blue Streak and Hidden Mover, Mahaquatta the bat of Death, and Quatanara the goddess of the Blue Moon Plateau. As befits the hidden goddess, none know her full mysteries or all her myriad names.

Annilla was the child of Nakala, the Primal Darkness, and Zaramaka, the Primal Waters. Dragons dismembered Zaramaka, He Who Moves, but Nakala bore him a child by devouring his corpse. The child had no soul until possessed by Annilla. Thus embodied, the trolls say, Annilla taught Kyger Litor the secrets of being Uz. Annilla was defeated in a contest of intellect by Yelm and Dayzatar; an unfair contest for Annilla was without mind. She fled to the Underworld but plotted her return. Annilla, the Blue Streak, summoned the Blue Dragon, whom the God Learners said was Lorion the Sky River, and rode him into the sky. When the Spike exploded Annilla leapt from hiding in the sky into the cosmic maelstrom. The waters followed her into the void and afterwards she rose on the outside of the Sky Dome and the waters followed her as the tide.

Mahaquatta, the bat, avenged the Blue Moon for she was the corpse shroud which Orlanth the Bandit used to blindfold Yelm when he slew him. She came out of Verithurus' Hall when the lights went out and, as a creature of shadow, was never seen by Yelm. She warred with Antirius and snuck her way onto the God's wall.

When Urkatol besieged Boztakang in the ruins of Mernita, Boztakang roused the feeble life that lay within a fragment of the dead goddess. The Blue Moon rose as Quatanara and flew straight at Urkatol and devoured him. Then she flew back, took Boztakang in her embrace and mated with him. Boztakang's descendants, the Tribe of Harvip Zeen have lived there ever since, preserving Quatanara's life force.

The trolls of the Blue Moon plateau are isolationist and secretive. Anything of mysterious origin that has occurred since then has been attributed to them and their legendary assassins, most famously the murder of those who knew Dragon secrets and the end of the Empire of the Wyrms' Friends.

Once per tidal cycle, Annilla plummets from the Pole Star through the air into Magasta's Pool. As she does so the oceans of the world follow her,

falling from high to low tide in a single day. Those who know where to look and have the right magic can see her at this time as a blue streak.

The most famous living troll worshipper of the Blue Moon is Bina Bang who heroquested to spit in Yelmalio's eye. She brought the trolls of the plateau into cooperation with the Empire and bore a son Pikat Yaraboom, a leading shaman of Dragon Pass to a darkness demon. Jakaleel the witch is said to have been a shaman of the Blue Moon.

Entry Requirements: A Blue Moon witch or shaman must initiate newcomers into the tradition. This is harder than it sounds because the tradition is exceptionally secretive, avoiding contact with outsiders except for extremely ritualised meetings.

Mundane Abilities: Acute Darksense, Blue Moon Tradition Knowledge, Craft Fetish, Draw Summoning Circle, Move in Shadows, Spirit Combat

Virtues: Mysterious, Secretive

Traditional Spirits: Blue Streaks, Dehori, Death Bats, and Selene

Fetch: **Selene** (moon spirit).

Shamanic Abilities: Shamanic Escape, Spirit Sight, Spirit World Travel

Fetishes: Each witch returns from the Spirit World the first time with her medicine bundle, which she uses to worship and call forth her fetch. Annilla shamans create their medicine bundles from the flotsam and jetsam of the Spirit World tied together with spider silk and wrapped in silver fur.

Core Practice: **Blue Moon Practice.**

Practice Secret: **Pass without Trace** (This secret allows the shaman to move invisibly. The shaman enters a blind spot in their enemy's vision or Darksense. An enemy who becomes aware of the shaman can try to 'see' them by shifting their head to move the blind spot. Although the blind spot moves too, there is a lag. This gives the possibility of catching a glimpse of the practitioner out of the corner of their eye. The shaman can use this skill defensively in combat as well as to sneak about)

Disadvantages: Annilla cannot give normal divinations in response to events. Annilla's divination rituals instead reveal a random secret from somewhere or somewhen. Most such information is thus worthless, though some say that the cult memorises all such facts in case they should ever become useful. Once in a worshipper's lifetime they may be lucky enough to receive a piece of information that is immediately useful.

Blue Moon Spirits

Blue Streak Spirits

Blue streak spirits are associated with invisible and hidden movement, reflecting both Annilla's rising

into the Sky World on the Blue Dragon and her plummeting to the Magasta's Pool. They also gain a connection with tidal powers through this. These spirits and their effects are hard to detect, but those who have the right magic or know where to look, may detect the *blue streak* of their passage. Flow and Jotsam spirits can be used to gather objects, individuals, or knowledge and secrets.

Fetish: Blue Streak Spirit fetishes are contained in debris and junk, which the practitioner comes across by luck. They usually provide such powers as **Ebb, Flow, Flotsam, Jetsam, Moon Streak, Plummet, and Sneak Back In.**

Dehori

There are actually many different types of Dehori spirits, all pieces of Dehore after he divided himself into many parts. Each Dehori thus has one of the abilities Dehore once had. Some are shades (dadami) others dark daimones (xenthi), but most are spirits.

Fetish: Fetishes are frequently lead objects or body ornamentation.

Mahaquata Spirits

These are bat spirits embody death and in Uz mythology are often the harbinger of death. They are creatures of the night, able and finding their way using Darksense. They are hunters tracking their prey unerringly and swooping for the kill. There is also a separate Mahaquata Tradition.

Fetish: Bats skulls or wings. Fetishes provide powers of death and murder: **Approach Unseen, Deadly Blow, Murder, Shroud Vision, Strike from Shadow**

Integration: Integrated, these spirits provide the practitioner with bat attributes including **Acute Darksense, Bat Wings, and Fangs.** These integrated spirits manifest as physical attributes. A practitioner with three integrated spirits can obtain the shapechanging ability as per the Hsunchen rules.

Selenes

Selenes are lunar elements tied to Quatanara an aspect of the Blue Moon; they are formed in the pools of blue light given off by Quatanara stones, the fragments of the broken moon that crashed to the earth from the sky. The stones are rare and difficult to obtain anywhere apart from the Blue Moon Plateau. Selenes are invisible apart

from to Spirit Sight, to which they appear as a loose misty structure

Resistance to Summoning: 10/yard³

Significant Abilities: Tides 5/yard³, Resist Damage 3/yard³

Selenes are embodiments of the Blue Moon's tidal forces. They move quicker than the eye can follow and they are visible only as a blue streak in the air. When commanded to attack they engulf their victim and attempt to pull him apart in their strong tidal forces. Attacks by an engulfed victim must contend with this constantly shifting push and pull and are at a penalty of a ¼ of the Selene's Tides ability.

Blue Moon Assassins

The Old world is dead and we are its funeral shroud.

The Blue Moon tradition is secretive, obscure and mysterious. Their mystery is nothing by comparison to the Blue Moon Assassins however. There is no definitive history of the Blue Moon Assassins known to outsiders. What little facts are known are the hidden among the fragments of knowledge temples across Genertela: the Assassins are descended from four clans of the Tribe of Harvip Zeen and live on the plateau that is a fragment of the Blue Moon. However, everyone *knows* that the Blue Moon Assassins were the murderers of the leaders of the Empire of the Wyrms' Friends. Still more people *know* that a Blue Moon Assassin lurks behind every unexplained death of an important figure in Glorantha.

Form: Band of holy assassins.

Cultural Context: Shadowy assassins working for great powers or their own ends

Look and Feel: Mysterious troll ninja.

Purpose: No one living from outside the Blue Moon plateau knows. Very few do within.

Headquarters: The Blue Moon Plateau.

Reactions: Everyone is afraid of these legendary assassins, even those who hire them.

Resources

Other Contacts: The cult has a close working relationship with the shamans of the Gorakiki practice, in particular the Moth-mother. Some assassins are members of the Moth-mother practice. The luna moth is large and beautiful, reaching 20-30cm across and glowing with phosphorescence. These Uz know the secrets of collecting the pheromones of female moths the 'essence of female'. Hundreds of females



must be killed to harvest a vial, but the result is worth it. Male moths are exceptionally sensitive to this smell and can detect it from hundreds of miles. If even a tiny drop is sprayed, injected, eaten or smeared on a person, he or she will attract male luna moths for the next few seasons. Since giant luna moths are only native to the Blue moon plateau anyone to whom the moths swarm away from the plateau was deliberately marked. Assassins use packs of male luna moths to sniff out their quarry.

Organisation

Clad in peculiar silvery furs and dark capes, the assassins of the Blue Moon cult are highly trained in the lore of secret murderer. Journeymen are only allowed into the world to execute the cult's acts in the company of cult masters, apprentices never, lest a tyro sully the band's reputation for deadliness.

Blue Moon Assassin

Membership Requirements: Entry is restricted to those trolls capable of passing gruelling tests set by the cult masters. Leaving the cult is impossible; those who seem to waver, or look likely to revealing cult secrets are marked for assassination.

Mundane Abilities taught: Acute Darksense, Brew Moth Essence, Close Combat (garrote, scimitar and dagger), Disguise, Hide, Ranged Combat (blowgun, essence bottle, thrown knife), Secret Murder, Sneak, Recognise Foe

Typical Personality Traits: Patient, Fearless, and Secretive

Living Standard: Common

Magic: Blue Moon tradition

Equipment: blowgun + 5 poisoned darts (lethal, debilitating, potency 20), dagger, female moth essence (3 doses), furs and cape, scimitar

Guardian Being

The Old Uz of the Mountain is one of the founders of the assassin clans of the Blue Moon plateau and he acts as a guardian being to his own clan's assassins. He delights in secrets and murder, but is also keen to maintain the mystique of the Blue Moon assassins and does not tolerate failure.

Method: Imminent: The Old Uz of the Mountain was skinned at death and his tanned hide still hangs in the clan's meeting hut. As long as the sacred skin is revered and kept safe, and the teachings of the founder honoured and kept secret then the clan's assassins gain access to his magic.

Form: Tattooed Uz skin.

Membership Requirements: Preserve and respect the murderous techniques of the Assassins. Never fail on a mission.

Awareness Function: Sense Guardian 15W

Blessing Function: Murderous Blow 5W

Defence Function: Escape Detection 10W



Lesser Uz Mysteries

By James Frusetta

There are many lesser mysteries of the uz, usually better known to humans. A few of the mysteries of Dagori Inkarth are spoken of in Sartar, and a few of the curious and brave have even attempted to solve them. The uz appreciate the entrees.

Shadows Dance – the peculiarities of the living shadows of Dagori Inkarth has been remarked on by humans living in Dragon Pass since the beginning of time. A mystery themselves, many lesser mysteries exist as well. Sometimes the shadows seem to spell out patterns or to make strange figures; many Lhankor Mhy have wasted careers attempting to decipher apparent meanings to these. Other suggest that the uzuz of the Castle of Lead control the shadows; or that the shadows are living entities that move for their own purposes.

The Castle of Bolgs – Begun by the eccentric uz merchant Gorshak Oblach in the eleventh century, the Castle of Bolgs is a huge palace in Laca built from uz bolgs. Vast numbers of bolgs have been used in its constructions, to show the wealth and power of the Argan Argar oligarchs. Many have wondered at its purpose: a mad whim, or a plot so subtle no one has seen its purpose?

Pointy Hill – This foothill of the Rockwood Mountains in the territory of the Korzant Tribe has, for centuries, been fortified by the uz. The Korzant tribe has embedded thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of stakes, spears, swords and other pointed objects onto the hill, many of them trophies from defeated foes. The Korzanti claim to be waiting for the day that something terrible will land on the hill, and hope to cripple it.

The Bodysnatching – Once every generation or so, the Zorak Zorani gangs of Dagori Inkarth engage in "the Bodysnatch" – taking the corpses of their enemies killed in battle, of their own, and even stealing corpses from others. The corpses are never seen again – they Zorak Zorani even refuse to return uz corpses, which causes great anger. No one knows what they do with the corpses, but many fearfully speak of the Dark Hater's Graveyard, where the Zorak Zoran cult has amassed bodies for centuries, preparing to create a huge army of undead. Other suggest the Zoraki are merely feasting.

Thog – When Thog was defeated and driven from Prax, many of his uz followers claimed he had merely removed himself for a time to gain strength and power, and would return someday. Where he may be, no uz knows, but many still worship him. Has he gone to the other world? Or is he waiting to return and play a part in the Hero Wars?

Children of the Hydra's Teeth

By Steve Hatherley

Dear Marcus,

It seems a bit clichéd to write this, but if you're reading this then something has happened to me. Something bad. I've left this with a friend who will put it in the post should I die or disappear or whatever. With luck it will never be sent. With luck. This is mostly your fault. If you hadn't asked me to find out about Nathan Pearce I wouldn't be where I am now. How did you encounter him, anyway? No, I don't want to know. And while I'm flattered that you turned to me, I wish you'd warned me of what I was getting myself in to.

You didn't give me much to go on: Nathan Pearce, about 50, works for the government, lemon-scented aftershave. Well, that's maybe 10% right - his real name isn't Nathan, he's older than 50, he only sort of works for the government and it isn't his aftershave that smells of lemons.

Easy bit first. I found out that there is a Nathan Pearce working for the government - he works in an obscure part of MI-5, called Section 17. (Don't ask how I found this out.) He's the head and-get this-reports directly to the Palace! I found out later that Section 17 can trace its history at least as far back as Matthew Hopkins, the Witchfinder General. These are powerful people you are dealing with. Apparently Nathan has been head of Section 17 for about 20 years. His predecessor disappeared under mysterious circumstances - I've got my own theories about that.

I couldn't find many people to talk to me about Pearce. He either scares people shitless or they genuinely don't know much about him. The only person I could get to tell me anything was "Pariah" Jackson - I think he was just

pleased to have someone to talk to. Anyway, it was Jackson who told me that Pearce's real name isn't Pearce. He doesn't even have a name - and this is where it starts getting a bit mythological. I'm not sure how much of this I believe either, but it's what I was told.

How's your knowledge of Greek mythology - and the journey of the Argos in particular? If you're anything like me it was probably limited to watching old movies. Well, it appears that the story of Jason and the Argonauts is less mythological than I had thought. Now, at the end of the story, Jason takes the Golden Fleece but before he can escape, the King of Kolkiss uses the hydra's teeth to create an army of invincible skeletons. Jason can't defeat the skeletons but escapes by leaping off a cliff and swimming to the Argos. The skeletons follow but, being just skeletons, they sink. And that's the end of the story - Jason (little more than a common thief) has the fleece and sails off into the sunset. But, and here's the thing, the skeletons survived. And Pearce is one of them. I'm sure he wasn't calling himself Pearce then (if nothing else, it doesn't sound very Greek) and he's obviously rather more than 50 years old. But what is he doing heading a small section of MI-5 that reports only to the Palace? I wish I knew.

Anyway, Jackson's story sounded just a little fantastic (even to me) so I did some further reading and managed to corroborate at least some of the story. There were apparently nine Children of the Hydra's Teeth - and I was able to place two others, apart from Nathan. Both have fared worse than Nathan. One was dismembered or dismantled or whatever it is you do to a skeleton. The skull was then plated with brass strips and was used in certain rituals. John Dee, the astrologer reputedly had access to it, and a "brass head" was sold in

Vienna in 1923 at auction to an unnamed bidder. The other one I found is now inactive (I'm not sure "dead" is the right term). It's actually stored in a dusty basement in Imperial College - I don't think they know what they have. I've seen it (touched it!) and it gives me the creeps.

But as for the other six, I have no idea. I'm pretty sure that Pearce doesn't use aftershave, and I've a feeling that the lemon scent is a side effect of whatever process he uses to appear human. I tracked down an interesting story that may be relevant. I found a reference on lemons.com about an old war hero's autobiography, so I bought a copy of the book and discovered that the author was still alive. The autobiography refers in several places to a Cpl Johnny Richards, the unluckiest man in the unit. Richards, interestingly, always smelled of lemons and was rumoured to have a secret supply of lemon soap. Richards was regarded as the unluckiest man in the unit because he had been sunk twice and shot down three times.

As I said, I found Brigadier Stewart (the author) in a retirement home in Eastbourne and went to visit him. Luckily I arrived on one of his lucid days and he was kind enough to tell me another story, which didn't make it into the book. During the war, Captain Stewart (as he was then) was in charge of a motley band of civilians and SOE troops. Their mission was to thwart Hitler's research into the occult - Stewart isn't a believer, but Hitler was and if Hitler wanted it, we wanted to stop it. (Incidentally, Stewart never mentions the occult in his autobiography - he just calls them "operations" without the details.) In early 1943, he received intelligence that the Germans were conducting secret occult experiments on the Holy Grail, so Cpl Johnny Richards and three other members of the detachment parachuted into Germany to recover the grail. Three days later, a

Lysander was to fly in at night, land in a specially marked field and extract the team. The mission was a success - the team stole the grail from the Germans and the plane picked them up. Unfortunately, as they crossed the channel the Lysander and its escorts ran into a pair of 110s on night patrol and the plane was shot down. Total loss of life. Or so Stewart thought. However, a week later, Cpl Johnny Richards presented himself for duty, claiming that he had been able to swim ashore. He had been unable to hold on to the grail, and it was somewhere at the bottom of the English Channel. On hearing this remarkable story, and knowing of Johnny Richards' reputation for getting sunk or shot down, Stewart light-heartedly asked if there was anything that would kill him. Richards apparently replied, very soberly, "I've not found anything yet, sir."

It is my belief (and I didn't mention this to Brigadier Stewart) that Richards' invulnerability had nothing to do with luck, and everything to do with the fact that he was one of the Children of the Hydra's Teeth, in human form.

I'm also becoming paranoid. Yesterday I noticed the sharp smell of lemons in the supermarket and turned around to see an Asian man with a bag of lemons in his basket. He ignored me, but I couldn't help but notice that he was about the same height as Pearce and Johnny Richards (about 6' 4" according to what I have discovered). Am I paranoid, or has Pearce changed form to keep an eye on me? Or, worse, is it another one? Perhaps I've been digging too deep, which is why I'm committing this to paper right now, before it's too late. I'm also going to arrange for some insurance - wish me luck.

If I make it through this, I've definitely paid off my dues to you. We're quits.

Watch your back,

Cassie

Someone, Somewhere, in Fire Season

Recorded by Lawrence Whittaker

As some of you might be aware, I frequently (though not regularly) receive the remarkable journal entries for Ranyart Finn. Finn is, or was, a resident of a place known as The Young Kingdoms, lands that may - or may not - have existed long before our own world came into being. The journal chronicles Finn's observations, experiences and anecdotes of these times, and provide a fascinating insight into a world unknown to all but a select few. Since my friend Una Persson first introduced me to Ranyart Finn (and it is she who continues to send me the journal entries, I presume, although I have not seen her for several years), I have made it my work to edit and compile Finn's missives for a 21st century public.

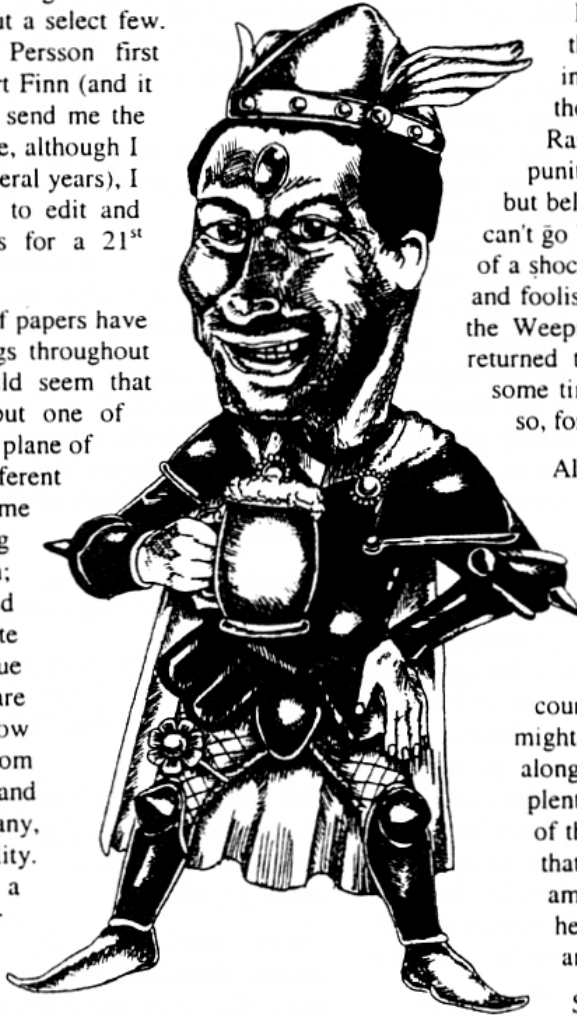
The most recent series of papers have told of Finn's wanderings throughout the 'multiverse'. It would seem that our own universe is but one of many, and each separate plane of existence obeys quite different rules to our own. In some planes, magic is strong and gods walk the earth; in others, science and technology predominate but in strange, baroque variations to those we are used to. It is not clear how Finn is able to wander from one parallel to another, and I believe he has little, if any, control over the ability. Fate, it would seem, has a strange agenda for Ranyart Finn, and even he finds it difficult to accept such an obscure and mutable destiny.

Some of you will no doubt think that Ranyart Finn is merely a fictional creation, and his journal entries a fanciful fraud. I can assure you this is not the case. If further proof is needed, I would refer you to Mr Greg Stafford, noted scholar of the esoteric and a man of the utmost integrity: "Ranyart Finn? Yeah, I met him once. Can't recall where exactly, but I remember it was one of the deepest trances I've ever had. Nice guy. Drinks too

much, though."

I think that the following extract from Finn's journal would *greatly* interest Mr Stafford...

Lawrence Whittaker, Stevenage, May 2000



Ever since I became a nomad of the time streams, I've fetched-up in some strange places. I never thought I'd be homesick for Raschil¹, with its stinking streets, punitive taxes and inflated aristocracy, but believe me I am. It's such a shame I can't go back there.² It came as something of a shock then, when I found myself *here* and foolishly believed I was somewhere in the Weeping Wastes³. Could I have been returned to my own world at a juncture some time before the final war? I hoped so, for all kinds of reasons.

Alas, it was not to be.

But, for a time, I thought I was in the good old Young Kingdoms. If I was in the Weeping Wastes, I thought I might reach Karlaak if I followed the setting sun. Of course, I had no idea how far Karlaak might be, or if I'd find food or water along the way; but there are - were - plenty of nomads in the Wastes, some of them friendly, and I dared to hope that I'd encounter some reasonably amicable wastelanders who might help me reach Karlaak's fabled inns and taverns.

So I headed west. As I walked, some oddities that suggested this wasn't the Weeping Waste began to manifest. First there was the heat and distinct lack of rain. It pisses down through leaking buckets in the Waste, but here were blue skies and the

¹ Finn's home city in the Young Kingdoms

² The YK was completely destroyed in some cataclysmic war between the forces of order and entropy. Finn somehow escaped unscathed.

³ A place in the northern continent of the YK

kinds of temperature that boil men in their boots. The next strange thing was the moon. Here it was blood-red and looming in the sky like a great, luminous blister. I could fool myself no longer. I was *not* in the Young Kingdoms.

Depressed and in need of a very cold drink (for once, water would do nicely), I trudged west, steadily baking. Towards the evening of the second day I spied a range of low hills directly in my path and, clustered beneath them, a settlement of some kind. My heart leapt, and I began to trot towards it. The baked ground gave way to croplands, and in the croplands were people. A group of them looked up as I called out a greeting, and, to my relief, they didn't run away screaming or suddenly produce weapons. Laughing like an idiot, I passed-out just as two or three of the crop tenders came towards me.

I came around in the confines of a cool hut. A small, primitive-looking oil-lamp provided a comforting yellow glow and an earthenware pitcher of water was beside the straw bedding. I drank greedily. The water was cool and sweet, but it could have been stagnant and full of dead flies for all I cared. I looked around; aside from the pitcher and the bedding, the hut was bare. A small opening in the roof served as a chimney, and I could see it was dark outside; but the night was warm and there was no need for a fire. To one side was a sheet of hide, which presumably served as a door. After taking some more water, I ventured through it, and discovered that I was a *prisoner*.

Two burly men guarded the doorway. They stood on either side of the hide flap, armed with spears. As I emerged they both turned and I was shoved back inside without any kind of explanation. I rubbed my chest where the haft of the spear had struck me and thought this through. If I was a prisoner, why wasn't I shackled or tied in some way? If I was a prisoner, why give me water? I decided that my captors probably hadn't decided if I was a threat or not, and, being reasonable people, had decided to err on the side of caution. If I proved to be a threat, I was one man, and no doubt they could easily deal with me if they so wished. Or so I hoped. I had no option but to wait until someone decided what to do with me.

I didn't wait for long. Within an hour or so, the flap was pulled aside and one of the guards beckoned for me to come out. I meekly obeyed, and followed him as he led me through the settlement, the other guard bringing up the rear. I kept silent and took in my surroundings.

The settlement was primitive. Wicker and mud huts of varying sizes, a communal well, and livestock - goats, and chickens mainly - wandered at will between the buildings. Dozens of eyes watched me from the huts, and I could hear the

whispers as we passed by. A couple of children came out of one of the huts and stared at me intently. I smiled, but they didn't return it. I can't say I blame them; I must have looked like a complete monster.

The guards led me to the largest of the huts, an impressive stone hall decorated with a series of runes and symbols carved into the stones. I was ushered inside and found myself in what must have been the communal meeting place for the settlement. A group of eight men and women were seated before me on low, curved stools, and a ninth, seated on a stone throne-like affair was positioned in the middle. He was stern-faced, but not unkindly, I thought. His hair was red, greying slightly at the temples, and worn to his shoulder. On one cheek was a tattoo in the shape of a spiral, and on the other cheek another design shaped like a cross. This was the chief, I decided, and I bowed politely. "Speak your name to the clan ring." The chief demanded. I cleared my throat and addressed myself to the rest of the group.

"I am Ranyart Finn, a stranger in these lands, and seek no more than water and a little food if you can spare it. I - "

"Silence! Answer the questions and no more. Declare your allegiance!" This stumped me. Allegiance to whom? I decided to hedge my bets.

"I have no master, but I am loyal to the King of Filkhar." The chief and his ring of advisers looked puzzled, and conferred briefly in a whisper. "We do not know of this king you name. Who do you worship?" Oh *great*. Religion. I *hate* religion. It always gets me into trouble.

"The Lords of Crimson." I said. Nice and obscure - surely they couldn't take offence? Oh yes they could.

"See!" Barked one of the women advisers, and pointed accusingly at me. "A Lunar! He dares to admit that he serves the Crimson Bat!" The chief turned to me with a stony glare.

"Do you admit the charge? Are you a worshipper of the Crimson Bat, that scourge of Chaos that brings terror to us?" This was serious, and I tried to control my mounting fear.

"In all candour, my lord, I have never heard of this dreadful beast, and I would never worship anything of chaos. Do I look like a priest of Pan Tang?" The clan ring remained grim-faced, clearly convinced that I was a messenger of this crimson bat-thing, and I could feel a very large hole in the earth beginning to yawn open. "Where I come from," I stammered, "the Crimson Lords are, er, allied with Lassa, the Lady of the Air. They are peaceful cloud deities who usher-in the sunset and..." The chieftain held up a hand for me to stop. I stopped. He turned to one of his advisers, a pasty-faced and pock-marked individual with a nose long enough to spear salmon.

"Verdris, do the Lore Speakers know of these 'crimson lords'? Are they mentioned in the scripts of Lhankor Mhy?" Verdris rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"There are tales of Orlanth taking on the guise of a woman, although I cannot be sure what name he might have adopted. Lassa seems plausible. As to these lords of the sunset, they could, I suppose, be the Light Bringers returning from their quest, bearing the body of Yelm upon the chariots of the clouds." At this, the clan advisers mumbled their agreement, nodded sagely, and began to regard me with a little less hatred. Quick-thinking on my part. It helps when your profession is a storyteller. The chieftain turned to me.

"Perhaps you speak truthfully. Perhaps you are not, after all, a Lunar spy or outcast. What allegiance, then, do you give to Orlanth?" I sensed that Orlanth was one of their revered gods, and probably some kind of nature spirit; this world's incarnation of Lassa, elemental ruler of the air.

"I pay my greatest respects to Orlanth. He is clearly a wise and benevolent lord because he has wise and benevolent people who are loyal to *him*." I greased. "If I seem ignorant of your ways and customs, it is only because I am foreign to these lands."

"So you say," the chieftain replied. "And where, exactly, are these lands you hail from?"

"I hail from Raschil, a great city of the southern continent." Again the chieftain turned to Verdris.

"Could he mean Pamaltela?"

Verdris shrugged. "Perhaps. I have never heard of this Raschil, but then Pamaltela is largely unknown to us. There are some Orlanthi there, but I hear they have strange customs and habits, and are dark of skin."

The chieftain grunted. "What you tell us seems to hold with what we know. I am satisfied you are not an enemy, but I am not truly satisfied you are a friend, either. Your ways and manner of speech are difficult for us to trust. We of the Black Mane clan have learned not to trust anyone hailing from outside the Colymar tribe. Lunars, especially, cannot be trusted."

"I don't blame you." I said, "they sound like a dreadful lot." More murmurings of agreement from the clan ring. "What I would like," I continued, "is to prove to you that I am, indeed, a friend of the Black Mane clan. I am, by trade, a teller of stories, and I have many tales from far-off lands. Perhaps I could entertain you, in exchange for your gracious hospitality?"

The clan ring conferred again. The woman who'd denounced me as the bat-fanatic didn't sound to

have shifted much in her views, but the others were warm to my idea. The chieftain listened to the debate, shooting me the odd suspicious glance, but eventually called a halt. "We have decided that you should be allowed to tell us some of your tales. We enjoy stories concerning the company of Orlanth and how he and the Storm Bull vanquished chaos. We like stories that have a happy ending, but we do not mind tragedy if it is properly conveyed."

"Naturally, my lord." I said. "I think your desires are most appropriate." Why can't all my audiences be so specific about their stories? I was already mentally adapting several of my usual tales to include this Orlanth. They all involved the defeat of chaos, and not one of them featured Orlanth dying. I needed to do a little more preparation if I was to be convincing, and so I was very relieved when the chieftain told me that I would do my storytelling the next evening, following the clan gathering.

I was led back to my hut, but this time the guards were much less threatening and didn't remain outside the door. Some fruit and nuts had been left by the bedding, and I ate them ravenously. They were a curious people, these Black Manes. Clearly they had an ingrained code of hospitality, but their distrust of foreigners was distinctly unnerving. I wondered what had happened to them in the past to have made them so suspicious; these Lunars perhaps? Were they the equivalent of Melniboné in this world; decadent, selfish and cruel, conquerors and slavers, torturers and sorcerers. If so, I could appreciate the Black Mane's wariness. And anyone that sides with a crimson bat *must* be a complete bastard, in my book.

I slept well, and awoke to the sound of children outside my door. Rubbing the rheum from my eyes, I poked my head outside and found a group of six or seven children, of varying ages, standing there. They were all naked, except for tanned leather loincloths, and most of them had the swirling symbol I'd seen the night before painted on their arms in what looked like dried mud. "Good morning," I said brightly. The children giggled and fidgeted. Then, the eldest, a girl of perhaps nine or ten, spoke.

"My father says you're a Lunar wizard." Some of the others giggled their agreement. "Show us some magic." She said.

"I'm afraid your father's mistaken," I said. "I'm not a Lunar and I'm not a wizard, either. I tell stories, and I come from far away." At this, the children oohed, and began to make some extremely vocal demands for a whole variety of unfamiliar tales. "Listen," I said, when they'd calmed a little. "I'll tell you all a very special story. But first, you have to tell me some things. Will you do that?"

And so, from the most truthful source there is, I learned a little about this world I'd found myself in. It is called Glorantha, and is shaped something like a Lormyrian

donut. It floats down the river of Time, and the sun is actually a god called Yelm, who was killed by Orlanth, the Storm God, but later brought back from the dead by Orlanth and some pals on what is called The Lightbringers' Quest. The particular region I was in was called Dragon Pass, and hundreds of years before, Dragons lived here and destroyed all the humans in a fearsome battle. These Lunars, it transpired, aren't that removed from Melniboné after all; cruel, and all conquering, they dominate much of the land west of Dragon Pass and do, indeed, worship Chaos as well as the red moon dominating their sky. The Black Manes, it seems, once occupied lands now held by the Lunars and had to flee or face persecution. The children told their clan's story with enthusiasm and eloquence - the kind of eloquence born of an oral tradition and a reverence for the telling of tales and the celebrating of deeds. I learned, in two short hours, more about this world of Glorantha than about any other place in a similar length of time.

As their reward, I told them the story of Miska and the Gatha⁴, bending it a little to include Orlanth and Humakt (another of their gods). Children love this story, and the Black Mane children were no different. By the time I'd finished, they were clamouring for more. "Tonight," I said, "there'll be lots more tonight."

I spent the rest of the day wandering around the settlement. People were courteous towards me, but somewhat cool. I did nothing that would unsettle or upset them, and I thanked them for their hospitality at what seemed like the most appropriate opportunity. The chieftain found me as I stood before the clan totem, a stone likeness of Orlanth, admiring its design. "Our Lore Speaker has consulted with Lhankor Mhy." He said bluntly. I now knew that Lhankor Mhy was their god of learning and knowledge, and I asked the chieftain what had been said. "That you can be trusted." I nodded. Careful omission of the word 'enemy'.

"But I think you'd decided that for yourself." I ventured. The chieftain smiled.

"I had. But I must always seek the clan ring's approval before I speak my mind. It is our way."

"And it's a good way. Where I come from, too many people speak their mind without taking good counsel first. It's caused a lot of trouble."

"Walk with me. Tell me of this place that is so far away."

So, we walked and talked. The chieftain was called Hegjordson, I learned, and he'd been chieftain for the past ten years. His father, the previous chieftain, had brought the Black Manes to Dragon

Pass when the Lunar Empire forced the Orlanthi tribes of Sartar to either pay homage to the Red Goddess or face extinction. A familiar tale I sympathised with. I told him about Filkhar and the Young Kingdoms, and a little about Melniboné; I stopped short of describing how the Young Kingdoms had ended though - it didn't seem right to share the destruction of my world with someone who had never actually been there.

I liked Hegjordson. He was blunt and stern, but there was a mischievous humour lurking within, and he seemed to have all the characteristics of a fine leader. Eventually, he asked me what my plans were. "I honestly don't know." I said. "I don't know how long I'll remain here before the time streams sweep me into the flow again. But while I *am* here, I'd like to stay amongst your clan and learn some of your ways. And, I'd like to learn your stories. I'd like, if I can, to spread the word of Orlanth - and that's best done through the legends and myths."

"Perform well tonight, Ranyart Finn, and you can remain here for as long as you wish. But if you disappoint us..." he gave a sly grin. "...we'll send Old Mad Berta to keep you company. I can guarantee that you'll want to leave rather than spend the night with Berta." And he pointed towards the fields where people were working at the crops. There, wielding a pair of flails like a demon shot straight from the Seven Darks, was *the* largest woman I'd ever seen. In a poor light she'd pass for a small range of hills; in a good light, she looked like someone had taken a particularly evil fart and rendered it into human form.

I decided that I'd better perform well. And that meant having a drink.

Glorantha beer is good. Certainly the stuff brewed by the Orlanthi (from grass, of all things) and, by the time it reached the evening's clan gathering, I was in a fine mood for tales. The main hall was filled to bursting. Young and old, men and women - every corner of the hall was filled. A space had been left for me in the centre, and a fire burned there, its smoke curling into the rafters and away to touch the night sky. I felt at home. An audience, a fire, and a belly full of good beer with more to hand.

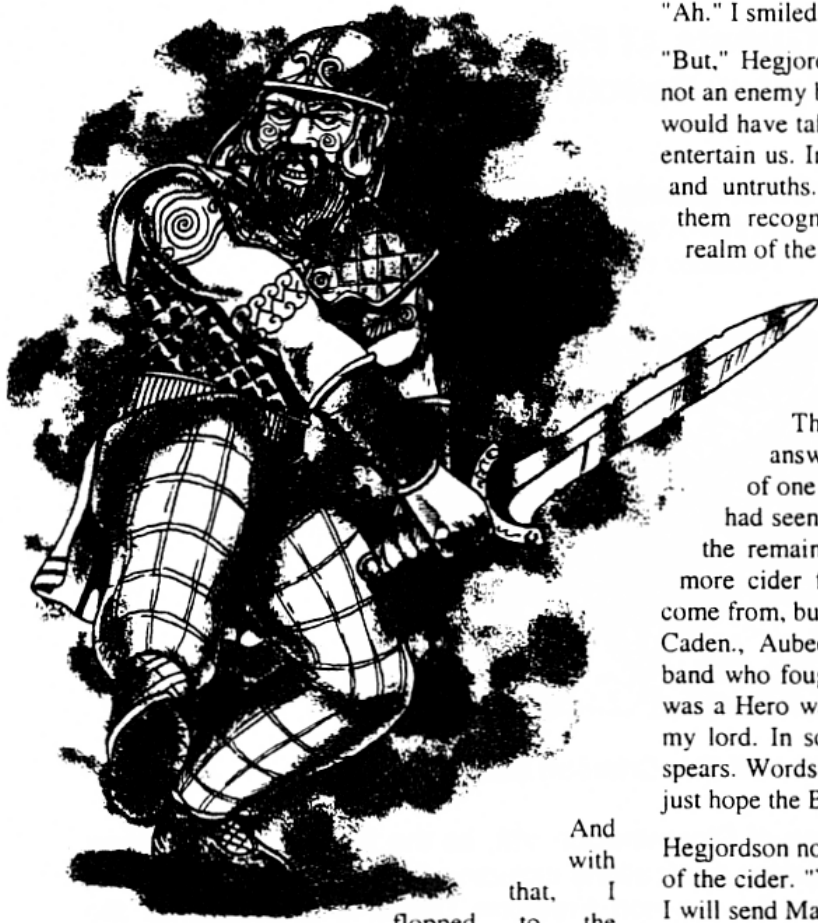
I launched.

I told the story of the Dragon and the Rainbow, substituting Caden with Jar-Eel. Before the cheers could subside I moved straight into Aubec's Shadow, with Aubec replaced with Orlanth himself and a guest appearance (as the villain, naturally) from Yelm. I managed, somehow, to dovetail that with a part of the Lightbringers' Quest, but I must confess I glossed over some of the story and mixed-up some characters. That was perhaps the least successful part of the evening. Undeterred (and well fuelled by Orlanthi mead), I began the epic I'd planned all afternoon: Yragael's Tragedy, using the Pharoah Belintar as the Emperor of Melniboné. And that clinched it. I had the Black Mane

⁴ Miska, the cat-king of Filkhar, and Gatha, a demon of Chaos

clan on their feet and banging swords, spears and spoons as I alliterated towards the climax.

"So at last came Orlanth to the altar and regarded there his son. Outside the Pharoah and his hordes of traitors waited to take his blood. Orlanth glanced upon his twisted son and raised the sword of the Storm. It was Humakt who staid his hand. 'No. It is not your place. This is a creature of the earth and must be given unto Ernalda for protection.' Orlanth wept tears of fire and struck his sword upon the altar so that lightning leapt high unto the night and rained down upon the armies of Belintar. Screams filled the temple and the skybowl rocked to their sound. 'None can kill the Pharoah,' Orlanth roared, 'for he is a god! But I am chief amongst them and I shall take my rule. Let the Hero Wars begin!'"



And with that, I flopped to the ground exhausted. The sounds of cheers and whoops and cries shook the ground as though Orlanth himself stamped outside. I smiled, nodded, and passed out.

I awoke the next morning in my simple hut. Fruits, a honeycomb, and several slices of dried pork were waiting for me. A pitcher of cider placed beside them to wash away the hangover. The flap rustled and Hegjordson appeared. "Good morning Finn. Head feeling fucked, I take it?" I managed a grin.

"I've suffered worse. Believe me, Filkharian gin is much tougher on the brain." The chieftain smiled and poured us both some cider. I drank a little, regretted it, and drank a lot more. I was beginning to feel better.

"We didn't send Mad Berta." Hegjordson said. I grinned and crunched on an apple.

"I noticed. Or rather, I probably wouldn't have, even if you *had*. But I take your word for it." The chief laughed and slapped my back rather too enthusiastically. "I hope you enjoyed the stories."

"Oh we did! Never have our legends been butchered so... entertainingly." His face became serious. I began to worry. "You have proved to us you know nothing of our ways, foreigner, or our gods. Fine words and actions cannot disguise falsehood, and last night you did your best to do exactly that."

"Ah." I smiled wanly. "Oh."

"But," Hegjordson continued, "we know now you are not an enemy but a friend. No Lunar or servant of Gbaji would have taken the time to learn our stories and then entertain us. Instead we would have heard slander, lies and untruths. Last night you took fables and made them recognisable to us, located them within the realm of the gods. Our stories tell of the coming Hero Wars - how they have taken so long to prepare and the pain that has gone with all of that. How do you know such things?"

This was a question I found difficult to answer. I wasn't sure I could. But I was sure of one thing: I liked these people. I liked what I had seen of Glorantha. I liked their gods. I tossed the remains of my apple to one side and poured more cider for us both. "There are heroes where I come from, but precious few of them. Elric, Moonglum, Caden., Aubec, Dark Sky, Tasis, Morgelt... a small band who fought against Chaos. They failed, but there was a Hero war and they fought it. Perhaps we all do, my lord. In some small way. It needn't be swords or spears. Words do just as well. I survived a Hero War. I just hope the Black Mane clan does too."

Hegjordson nodded thoughtfully and swallowed the last of the cider. "You may stay, traveller. As a friend. And I will send Mad Berta's sister instead. We call her Anjal the Golden, and not without reason." He winked and crept from the tent. I rolled over and thanked whoever it was who guided these people for the privilege and closed my eyes for a doze.

And that was the last I saw of Glorantha.



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