

# Dark Zandir: Part 1

From: Matthew Webber <helot@hotmail.com>  
To: talislanta-1@mars.galstar.com <talislanta-1@mars.galstar.com>  
Subject: talislanta-1] Re: Dark Zandir  
Date: Sunday, January 18, 1998 8:59 AM

>Hmm, thanks, but what I really meant was 'I'd like some of your ideas'. Share your  
>thoughts with me on it, and if they're cool, I'll include them. You never know, you  
>might think of something I hadn't considered.

Okay you asked.

A few quick thoughts....

- Alcohol/drugs and drug-use are likely not illegal. They could be taxed though, leading to a thriving smuggling and "moons-shine" business.
- Child prostitution is rampant, especially amongst the Forsaken ... and probably controlled by the other Serparians (did I get that right? I meant the other Beggar factions)
- There is a plethora of thieves, thugs and bandits on the roads outside Zandir, all trying to cash in on the "romantic" view that most Zandir have of the flamboyant Highwayman.
- Never cross a beggar, they have a better union than the city watch.
- The city watch rarely gets involved unless excessive violence occurs, leading to a lot of bloody vigilante action against thieves who are caught by the offended shopkeeper. Traditionally thieves dealt with in this manner are found (well parts of them anyway) on the gates above the marketplace the next morning.
- Aamanians have learned to always walk in groups. If you walk alone you tend not to make it home
- The prostitution business, despite the laws against slavery, is thriving, deviant and incredibly varied. No matter what the fetish, there is likely an establishment somewhere in the city to suit your tastes (including a small wine shop that is rumoured to service high ranking Monitors of the Orthodox Church) (hehehe... Monad dominatrix)
- The city watch is small, underfunded and lackluster. Few things are technically illegal, and half of what is, is tolerated. Murders and other assumed slights are usually taken resolved by duels of honour. They do little besides patrol the city at night, accept the occasional bribe, and figure out how they are going to get the moons-shine from the stills behind the stable to the policeman's ball next "Night of Fools". (a night off)

Anyway... these are all fairly generic and obvious. I'll give it a little more thought to come up with some Tal specific ideas.

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'I think,' he said slowly, 'that the only reason people think you can't kill a vampire by shoving its head up its own arse is because nobody's ever actually tried it.

What do you think, guys?'

(Tom Holt, "My Hero")

Matthew Webber

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## Dark Zandir: Part 2

From: Benjamin Lyngfelt <Benjamin.Lyngfelt@svenska.gu.se>  
To: The talislanta-I mailing list <talislanta-I@mars.galstar.com>  
Subject: talislanta-I] Re: Slavery in Zandu  
Date: Monday, January 19, 1998 5:06 AM

HANGFIRE:

>>Where is it where it says that slavery is illegal in Zandu? I have ALWAYS operated  
>>under the assumption that slavery is not only legal, but common in Zandu.

And Matt:

>I have no idea if it is ever mentioned in the game material, but I always operated under  
>the assumption that the Zandir would see slavery as an infringement on personal  
>freedoms, and hence contrary to the tenets of Paradoxy

Perhaps contrary, but that would be a nice paradox then. My books aren't here, but I'm pretty sure that I've read several passages which relate slavery to Zandu. The most likely sections are Faradun, where I believe Zandu is mentioned as a market for certain kinds of slaves, and the map of Zanth, where there may be slave pens listed somewhere. I may be wrong about these places, but since I've had trouble matching Zandiran slavery business with the close friendly relations between Zandir and the Sarista and the 7K, I must have gotten the idea from somewhere! It's certainly not mine.

While we're at it, I'd like to tell you about Tullir Fenck, a Zandir swordsmage in my campaign. (You'll see the connection in a while) He's always determined to fit the picture of the romantic hero; and he usually succeeds when it comes to heroic deeds, but not when it comes to winning the favor of the opposite sex, though he really tries hard. This is the great tragedy of his life (a Zandir with a negative CHA!), and has provided for a lot of fun in the game.

However, he once succeeded in winning the charms of a Batrean. This was at the time of the Imrian invasion of Batre. The PCs, really on a treasure hunt, spotted some Batrean boat-refugees off the coast of Mog and saved them from their Imrian pursuers. For various reasons, most of the PCs didn't perform at their best that day, but Tullir and Arana (a Sarista girl who hates slavery more than anything else) showed what heroic ballads are made from.

On the journey from there to Cymril, most PCs were in a terrible mood. Arana, used to have the males' full attention, was more or less being ignored, since her companions only had eyes for the pitiful creatures she had saved. The male PCs (except Tullir), who were used to be admired as the handsome and dashing adventurers they are, had no success with the ladies, after their cowardly and incompetent behaviour at the beach. The only one happy, except the saved Batreans, was Tullir. He, who takes any chance to court a

pretty girl only to see her take of with one of his friends, had by his heroic deeds won the favor of a Batrean concubine this time.

However, he soon got into trouble at that front (yes, I'm mean). He bought her a nice apartment in Cymril, hired her a maid, got her a job, but she didn't approve that we was away on dangerous missions so much, that he didn't pay her enough attention and so on. What really got to her was when a romantic dinner got interrupted by a neighbouring wizard's summoning experiments gone awry. Not only did Tullir rush away to save the city from Phantasms, he just had to drag her alone too. She got hurt, and he never heard the end of it.

Now, to the slavery part: Tullir decided to get rid of the girl, and for some strange reason he didn't just break up in an orderly fashion. He brought her on a "holiday" to Zandu, where he intended to sell her as a slave. Of course when she found out about it, she used her powers and forced him to part with her on quite different terms (he still hasn't recovered financially). She now runs a successful business in Zanth, and Tullir takes pains to avoid the place.

One final amusing point: When she spread the word to discredit him, few people in Cymril believed the story. He had built up a reputation of saving slaves (usually just trying to impress Arana) so it seemed impossible that he would be able to do such a thing.

This got kinda long, and I don't even know what it says about slavery business in Zandu. Sorry.

Ben

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## Dark Zandir: Part 3

From: Monk <jdmccart@ouray.cudenver.edu>  
To: The talislanta-I mailing list <talislanta-I@mars.galstar.com>  
Subject: talislanta-I] Re: Dark Zandir  
Date: Monday, January 19, 1998 4:00 PM

I really like the idea of Dark Zandir. Here are some thoughts:

1.) I picture that Paradoxism has a definite dark side to it. A healthy bit like voodoo.

Remember that the Charlatans are actually taken seriously in Zanth. Here they would actually hold sway over people. Charlatans would perform rituals for people, such as coming of age, infant "baptism", marriages, middle age ceremonies and all sorts of blessings. Conversely, some Charlatans may curse and otherwise try to hold sway over people. Incidents like these are well documented, from African witch doctors to Navajo skinwalkers. Just the belief that these people have power seems to affect people greatly. Uttering a curse may well bring misfortune to those who believe such people have power. (I know there are those on this list that think that magic is real in our world and people can actually curse others. You may believe what you will, it matters little to game mechanics.

Paradoxists may easily form "mystery cults", around gods that are either obviously malevolent or even seemingly harmless. These cults could be quite dangerous, as their members would seem like ordinary people. Furthermore they could hold powerful positions in the government or business sectors. Members, of course, are obligated to always help each other.

2.) I see many illicit activities codified by the legal system. Prostitution would require licensure, which comes in degrees. The more expensive your license, the better neighborhoods you could work. Licensure's supposed purpose is to control venereal diseases. Child prostitution is still illegal.

Drugs would be similar, taxed heavily but permissible. Making the drug smuggling trade akin to running cigarettes over state lines, tax evasion more than anything else.

Gambling is rampant, and controlled by unscrupulous characters as gambling always is.

All crimes may be taxable. If someone commits a crime, they must pay a tax or face additional punishment or slavery. It sound's odd, but makes fiscal sense. Here in Colorado, there's a marijuana tax in the form of a stamp people buy to put on a bag of marijuana. If your caught possessing marijuana (already illegal) without a stamp, you are fined extra for the lack. (I know this from reading the paper, really). Of course, all illegal income is taxable too. I picture criminals in Zanth actually paying these taxes regularly.

3.) All petty crime is controlled by the beggars. If it's a mugging or a con, it's their show. Failure to pay your due may quickly end your life. The beggars are not highly organized, but are especially effective and have a definite structured culture of their own.

All organized crime (and some not-crime) is controlled by mob-like entities. These organizations vie to control prostitution, racketeering, hijacking, high stakes robbery, assassination and so on. I'm picturing many "families" fighting for constant control of their territory. Rarely are they united, and shifts in power bases are common.

4.) Finally, I see law enforcement split into small precincts that are run by entrepreneurs as businesses. Local residents and merchants within a precinct pay a fee for such legal protection services. Similar to the way it used to be done in San Francisco. These, of course, are open to all sorts of corruption and protection rackets, although some are perfectly honest. A player inheriting a precinct that used to be corrupt would be a good hook. Even if they try to run a crooked show, mob bosses telling them what to do would cause any party I know to fight back.

Just a few odd thoughts. Good luck

Deus tibi adsit,

Monk ("")  
 {+\_+}  
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 | |  
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## Dark Zandir: Part 4

From: Tim Bloemeke <ratboy@zedat.fu-berlin.de>  
To: The talislanta-I mailing list <talislanta-I@mars.galstar.com>  
Subject: talislanta-I] Re: Dark Zandir (group cohesiveness)  
Date: Monday, January 26, 1998 3:26 PM

On Sat, 24 Jan 1998, Matthew Webber wrote:

> Philos  
>  
>> You know, I feel compelled to point out that the Zandir fought a FOUR-HUNDRED-  
>> YEAR war against the Aamanians, and held them to a standstill.  
>> I don't see how they could have done that unless they were capable of  
>> \*some\* consistent organization in their armed forces, unless the rigidly-organized  
>> Aamanians were also completely incompetent. The Zandir can embrace individuality  
>> and "Paradox" but still be capable of working together for extended periods of time --  
>> hey, that'd be a paradox after all, wouldn't it?  
>  
> I can hardly disagree. =) For all the apparent chaos of the Paradox system, somewhere  
> inside the Zandir mind it all comes together.  
>  
> It seems to me a Zandir/Aaman conflict would be like watching a battering ram trying  
> to fight smoke.

If it were like this, Paradoxism would be an underground movement INSIDE an Orthodoxist state. There would be an Orthodoxist ruling class with a large number of the populace as its faithful followers and Paradoxism as the political/religious/social antithesis inside the same society. It may very well have started like this, but it isn't like that any more. Zandir is not a subculture inside Aaman; it's a state of its own. The spatial separation of Orthodoxists and Paradoxists was the only way to keep them both alive as systems. Prolonged conflict, in my opinion, would have resulted either in the victory of one over the other (although it is likely that remnants of the ideas of the loser would have survived for quite a long time inside the society of the winner); i.e. either a monotheistic sect inside a paradoxist state, or a throwback of Paradoxism to its beginnings; a subculture within a monotheistically dominated state. It's very hard to kill ideas; they can only be rendered oblivious by the advance of society as a whole (like what happened to feudalism (which bound peasants to their soil) when a clearly superior mode of production (industrial) required masses of urban population as workers).

What are the conflicting interests within both societies?

The hierarchical structure of Aaman leaves a large number of people who can support themselves only marginally; they have neither economic nor political power. They must be pacified somehow, or they will be very receptive to Paradoxist ideas. I trust that preaching can't supplant nutrition for a very long time.

Also, there is a merchant class in Aaman that wields a certain kind of economic power; combined with contact to foreigners (and their ways of living, their ideas, despite all attempts on part of the Theocracy to control the influence of both) this could, in time, lead to their gaining power to the point of overthrowing the Hierophant. Orthodoxist belief inhibits free trade; but less principled merchants are bound to have greater economic success than those who strictly adhere to Orthodoxist doctrine. A group that has great economic power will demand political power sooner or later (or wield it in fact already; look at the Ispasians in the "Quan" empire), weakening the theocracy.

On the other hand, Paradoxism, if it is to survive, needs a certain amount of organization, which is certainly contradictory to the "do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law"-approach of paradoxist philosophy. (Then again, contradictions are what Paradoxism is all about; but I think the point still remains.) Since there are no laws that inhibit reckless behavior of all kinds in Zandu, there will be a very large number of very poor people, like in the beginnings of capitalism. Either, they need to be appeased somehow, or Zandu would be a constant theater of social revolutions. Another possibility would emerge if there were no private property in Zandu and people would live along the principle of "everyone to their needs, everyone to their abilities," but I have found nothing in the literature that suggests such. I trust that charlatanry can't supplant nutrition for a long time. :)

What are the implications of this for the Cult Conflict? Orthodoxism can't be superior to Paradoxism, because Paradoxism wouldn't have survived the cult wars. So, either Paradoxism will eventually win over Orthodoxism, or they both kill each other off and something new comes into existence (what about those Heterodoxists; are they the emissaries of a new age?), or the conflict continues, which would eventually weaken both states to the point of being taken over by neighboring, superior civilizations. As I see it, both societies already share some elements of the other (trade in Aaman, organizational hierarchy in Zandu), which suggests that they eventually have to merge into something different. Only history will show what it will look like.

Take care,  
Ratboy.

"Freesom is insight into necessity." F. Engels (I think he's wrong about that one, but never mind)

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## Dark Zandir: Part 5

From: Matthew Webber <helot@hotmail.com>  
To: talislanta-1@mars.galstar.com <talislanta-1@mars.galstar.com>  
Subject: talislanta-1] Battering Rams and smooke  
Date: Tuesday, January 27, 1998 2:08 AM

Hi Tim

First my rather vague comment.

>> It seems to me a Zandir/Aaman conflict would be like watching a battering ram  
>> trying to fight smoke.

By that I meant their battlefield tactics, not necessarily their social makeup.

Heavily armored cavalry and infantry vs. smaller, more mobile but less heavily armed squads. Neither seems to be an effective tactic against the other on a large open battlefield, and this inability to comprehend or properly deal with each others tactics may be a factor in the length of animosity between the two peoples.

/snip/

>The spatial separation of Orthodoxists and Paradoxists was the only way to keep them  
>both alive as systems.

This brings up a thought. Could either cult exist without the other? The arguments you bring up below are valid, and illustrate a point about how important the idea of the enemy is in maintaining either culture. ("Things may be bad here, but at least its better then being a mindless/hedonistic pagan.")

After all it is the need for an enemy that has kept the American people together for a hundred years. (The only other time they didn't have anyone else to fight they started a little hoe-down called the Civil War)

>Prolonged conflict, in my opinion, would have resulted either in the victory of one over  
>the other (although it is likely that remnants of the ideas of the loser would have  
>survived for quite a long time inside the society of the winner); i.e., either a  
>monotheistic sect inside a paradoxist state, or a throwback of Paradoxism to its  
>beginnings; a subculture within a monotheistically dominated state.

I'm not sure it started like this. I think they developed simultaneously out of a single religion. At least I think that is what is hinted at in the text.

>It's very hard to kill ideas; they can only be rendered oblivious by the advance of society  
>as a whole (like what happened to feudalism (which bound peasants to their soil) when  
>a clearly superior mode of production (industrial) required masses of urban population  
>as workers).

So instead of binding the workers to their soil, they were bound to their factories (and factory towns). But this is not the place to start an argument about the presence of feudalism in modern industry =>

>What are the conflicting interests within both societies?

>The hierarchical structure of Aaman leaves a large number of people who can support themselves only marginally; they have neither economic nor political power. They must be pacified somehow, or they will be very receptive to Paradoxist ideas. I trust that preaching can't supplant nutrition for a very long time.

You'd be surprised what faith can do for the poor. Just look at the popularity of Christianity in the black communities in the deep American south. In Aaman there is little in the way of real poverty. Everyone who wants to work can. Most people work in church run farms or are trained in the family business.

The church would not stand for homeless and the truly destitute are put to work as street cleaners and, gravediggers and dustmen. The insane are locked away and the drunks are 're-educated'. Its not a perfect system, but it works.

Orthodoxy has two things going for it that most people, whether they admit it or not, want as long as they get three meals a day and roof over their heads. One, other people, people in charge, make all the big decisions. Secondly, the status quo must be maintained. Everything looks the same today as it did yesterday.

If you don't think that this mindset exists, watch yourself or your parents' morning routine to getting to work. Now imagine what that would be like for someone who has taught since birth not to question, to act like everyone else, and not rock the boat.

>Also, there is a merchant class in Aaman that wields a certain kind of economic power; >combined with contact to foreigners (and their ways of living, their ideas, despite all >attempts on part of the Theocracy to control the influence of both) this could, in time, >lead to their gaining power to the point of overthrowing the Hierophant. Orthodoxist >belief inhibits free trade; but less principled merchants are bound to have greater >economic success than those who strictly adhere to Orthodoxist doctrine. A group that >has great economic power will demand political power sooner or later (or wield it in >fact already; look at the Ispasians in the "Quan" >empire), weakening the theocracy.

That merchant class likely exists, but are likely Monitors ... already part of the government. Success, in terms of profit, is not an issue as nearly all trade with outsiders is conducted by the government. The smaller merchants are strictly regulated and watched scrutinously by Adjudicators. I can't see the Aamanians being big on haggling.

>On the other hand, Paradoxism, if it is to survive, needs a certain amount of >organization, which is certainly contradictory to the "do what thou wilt shall be the

>whole of the law"-approach of paradoxist philosophy. (Then again, contradictions is  
>what Paradoxism is all about; but I think the point still remains.)

That is the big Paradox of Zandu. An (nearly) anarchist functioning state.

>Since there are no laws that inhibit reckless behavior of all kinds in Zandu, there will be  
>a very large number of very poor people, like in the beginnings of capitalism.

Not only in the beginning. Percentage wise, there are almost as many homeless on the streets today than during the Depression.

>Either, they need to be appeased somehow, or Zandu would be a constant theater of  
>social revolutions.

They have adopted the Zandir ideal of "taking care of yourself" by forming the Serparians. Its not Medicare but it does provide a means of protection.

Also for a revolt of the poor to work there has to be a significant % of the population (round 50%) who are willing to revolt. I don't think that Zandu has nearly that number. It functions similarly to capitalist countries, a few do slip through the cracks but most find a foothold and hang on.

>Another possibility would emerge if there were no private property in Zandu and people  
>would live along the principle of "everyone to their needs, everyone to their abilities,"  
>but I have found nothing in the literature that suggests such. I trust that charlatantry  
>can't supplant nutrition for a long time. :)

I think you have mixed your philosophies there. That is a communist (and hence closer to Orthodoxy) ideal. I don't think private property exists in Aaman, but it most certainly does in Zandu. The laws may be a little vague, but as long as you can produce the deed the place is legally yours.

---

'I think,' he said slowly, 'that the only reason people think you can't kill a vampire by shoving its head up its own arse is because nobody's ever actually tried it.

What do you think, guys?'

(Tom Holt, "My Hero")

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## Dark Zandir: Part 6

From: Tim Bloemeke <ratboy@zedat.fu-berlin.de>  
To: The talislanta-I mailing list <talislanta-I@mars.galstar.com>  
Subject: talislanta-I] Re: Battering Rams and smooke  
Date: Tuesday, January 27, 1998 1:08 PM

On Mon, 26 Jan 1998, Matthew Webber wrote:

> Hi Tim  
>  
> First my rather vague comment.  
> >> It seems to me a Zandir/Aaman conflict would be like watching a battering ram >  
>> trying to fight smoke.  
>  
> By that I meant their battlefield tactics, not necessarily their social makeup.

OK, I accept that. It's always hard to find a good, simple analogy for a complex issue, and it seems I carried yours farther than you had intended. Sorry.

> /snip/  
>  
> >The spatial separation of Orthodoxists and Paradoxists was the only way to keep them  
> >both alive as systems.  
>  
> This brings up a thought. Could either cult exist without the other? The arguments you  
> bring up below are valid, and illustrate a point about how important the idea of the  
> enemy is in maintaining either culture.

Good question.

I think that Orthodoxism could survive without Paradoxism. The world is full of pagans; it wouldn't be hard to find another enemy. There's the Dhuna (witches all!), Cymril (godless practitioners of magic for its own sake!) and others.

With Paradoxism, it would be a different issue. Without an external enemy, they will face serious problems holding themselves together, IMO. Especially since Paradoxism in more or less defined by Orthodoxism. ("Nothing is right, but we're sure the whitecoats are wrong.") Without Aaman, Zandu would have to change quite a bit, probably to the point of not being Zandu anymore.

> >Prolonged conflict, in my opinion, would have resulted either in the victory of one  
> >over the other (although it is likely that remnants of the ideas of the loser would have  
> >survived for quite a long time inside the society of the winner); i.e., either a  
> >monotheistic sect inside a paradoxist state, or a throwback of Paradoxism to its  
> >beginnings; a subculture within a monotheistically dominated state.  
>

> I'm not sure it started like this. I think they developed simultaneously out of a single  
> religion. At least I think that is what is hinted at in the text.

Maybe my imagination is running amok with me now, but if it is true that Paradoxism is the antithesis of Orthodoxy, Orthodoxy must've been there before. Of course it need not have been the religion in its current form (religious doctrine tends to change quite a bit during the course of history, or at least there are different aspects being stressed in different periods of time). The origins of both religions surely lie hidden in the time that followed the Great Disaster (TM), and are therefore not easily accessible to historians.

If you're interested in my version of the genesis of the Cult Complex, tell me, I'll gladly write about it.

>>It's very hard to kill ideas; they can only be rendered oblivious by the advance of  
>>society as a whole (like what happened to feudalism (which bound peasants to their  
>>soil) when a clearly superior mode of production (industrial) required masses of urban  
>>population as workers).

>

> So instead of binding the workers to their soil, they were bound to their factories (and  
> factory towns).

Yes, of course, I'm in no way arguing against that. It is just that the old system, with the idea of people being different by birth and separated into "Staende" (a German word, "classes" is not the appropriate translation but it comes close) didn't fit the requirements of industrial production and ended up in the trashcan of history, eventually. Feudal ideology pretty much vanished and was replaced by economic forces in raw form.

> But this is not the place to start an argument about the presence of feudalism in modern  
> industry =)

Sorry, can't stop it sometimes. :)

> You'd be surprised what faith can do for the poor. Just look at the popularity of  
> Christianity in the black communities in the deep American south.

Yeah; I heard about Pentecostals from Miami poaching on Catholic hunting grounds in Brazil, extorting every yarma they can from the masses of the poor and uneducated. I trust this can't last forever, however. Hopefully, someday, people will know better than to trust those preachers. Right now it seems to look pretty bad, though. \*polemics off\*

/snip/

> Orthodoxy has two things going for it that most people, whether they admit it or not,  
> want as long as they get three meals a day and roof over their heads. One, other people,  
> people in charge, make all the big decisions. Secondly, the status quo must be  
> maintained. Everything looks the same today as it did yesterday.

... And exactly that is what eventually will bring about the downfall of Orthodoxy. Social stasis can last for a long time. Medieval Japan is a good example. But Aaman is not the only society in Talislanta, just as Japan, in spite of its isolation, eventually had to realize that it was not the only society on the planet. If the Zandir embrace everything that is new, eventually they will find a way to fight Aaman effectively, despite all the odd things they might find interesting in the meantime.

>>Also, there is a merchant class in Aaman that wields a certain kind of economic  
>>power; combined with contact to foreigners (and their ways of living, their ideas,  
>>despite all attempts on part of the Theocracy to contr           luence of both) this  
>>could, in time, lead to their gaining power to the point of overthrowing the  
>>Hierophant. Orthodoxist belief inhibits free trade; but less principled merchants are  
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> government. Success, in terms of profit, is not an issue as nearly all trade with  
> outsiders is conducted by the government. The smaller merchants are strictly regulated  
> and watched scrutinously by Adjudicators. I can't see the Aamanians being big on  
> haggling.

I think that your observations are right. But there must be corruption in the system, somewhere (in the lit there are several Aamanians portrayed as corrupt), and there are Heterodoxists who maneuver for power in Aaman. The adjudicators cannot keep complete control over every small merchant; it would be easier to conduct the trade themselves. They have to rely of the mix of faith and fear that pervades Aamanian society; somebody is bound to make a try. A corrupt adjudicator would turn a blind eye to some illicit dealings, in return for "favors", "gifts to the church", what-have-you. I don't believe that such an oppressive system can be waterproof; if you fear your superiors, you're bound to say the things they want to hear, cover up your mistakes for fear of punishment, and do all kinds of things that provide them with false or biased information. It can't work forever.

> That is the big Paradox of Zandu. An (nearly) anarchist functioning state.

Anarchist? Well, if you consider the absence of a working government anarchy, then Zandu is anarchist. But there are forces other than government that force people to do certain things; e.g., a landlord must exert force over the workers on his fields because if he didn't, they'd take over. Slavery (incompatible with anarchy, IMHO) is common, it is just that every slave owner must watch his slaves on his own; there is no official instance that will catch escaped slaves and put them to "justice".

Governmental functions in Zandu are merely privatized. I think that anarchy is the absence of rule, not the absence of state or government. Zandu may be "liberal" in the extreme, but not anarchist in the sense of the word used by anarchists.

- >> Since there are no laws that inhibit reckless behavior of all kinds in Zandu, there will
- >> be a very large number of very poor people, like in the beginnings of capitalism.
- >
- > Not only in the beginning. Percentage wise, there are almost as many homeless on the
- > streets today than during the Depression.

True, but the difference in standard of living between a homeless person and a worker has increased. In the beginnings of industrial production, the majority of working class families were living near the minimum. Now this isn't the case any more; capitalists have realized that it is necessary to keep a sufficient majority content.

- >> Either, they need to be appeased somehow, or Zandu would be a constant theater of
- >> social revolutions.
- >
- > They have adopted the Zandir ideal of "taking care of yourself" by forming the
- > Serparians. Its not Medicare but it does provide a means of protection.

Agreed. But this raises a thought (what a productive discussion, I love it!): Does Serparian organization have to limit itself to staying alive?

- > Also for a revolt of the poor to work there has to be a significant % of the population
- > (round 50%) who are willing to revolt. I don't think that Zandu has nearly that number.

Oops, mistake on my part. "Revolution" is the wrong word for what I meant. "Rising" would be a better word. For a rising, you only need a sufficient number of malcontents in one place and something to trigger their ire. A bad harvest and a nasty landlord could do. It doesn't have to result in the overthrow of the government, but it will definitely do a lot of damage.

- >> Another possibility would emerge if there were no private property in Zandu and
- >> people would live along the principle of "everyone to their needs, everyone to their
- >> abilities," but I have found nothing in the literature that suggests such. I trust that
- >> charlatanry can't supplant nutrition for a long time. :)
- >
- > I think you have mixed your philosophies there. That is a communist (and hence closer
- to > Orthodoxy) ideal.

I think you have mixed my philosophies here. Or confounding communism with Stalinism. Absence of private property is not the only thing communism is about. The state of Aaman is about as far from being communist as possible, since service of humans to higher beings is both anathema to communists and the one thing that Aaman is all about. Equality is both central to communism and incompatible with the idea of mana

levels that indicate the degree of holiness of a person, forcing lower level Aamanians to defer to those of higher level.

> I don't think private property exists in Aaman, but it most certainly does in Zandu. The  
> laws may be a little vague, but as long as you can produce the deed the place is legally  
> yours.

Yes, this could be true. But in Aaman, contrary to communist ideal, private property is not really abolished for the good of all; it is only technically abolished for the good of the theocratic elite - analogous to the technocratic elites in countries that were called socialist or communist.

Still, I think that my original point remains: In order to fight the war, both countries have to develop new methods of fighting, and they have to learn from each other. Both their founding philosophies will remain, but they will more and more prove to be a hindrance to conducting warfare effectively; Orthodoxy with its paranoid traditionalism, Paradoxy with its lack of organization. Both sides got good brains (or one side would've lost a long time ago). What will the changes look like? What are the Heterodoxists about? Are they the coming power? Do they consider it necessary to instigate another cult war? What are they waiting for?

Questions, and more questions... but contrary to Paradoxists (no pun intended), I'd like to get some answers, ideas, suggestions, preachings, polemics, criticism, what-have-you...

Kind regards,  
Tim.

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## Dark Zandir: Part 8

From: Monk <jdmccart@ouray.cudenver.edu>  
To: The talislanta-1 mailing list <talislanta-1@mars.galstar.com>  
Subject: talislanta-1] Dork Zandir  
Date: Tuesday, January 27, 1998 4:53 PM

Hello Matthew, it looks like we completely disagree again.

On the whole Zandir personal freedom/individual mindset:

I think the argument that Zandir are too individual to form groups is largely one of semantics. It makes sense on paper, but not in reality. People are individuals and members of groups all the time. In fact, it's inescapable. You really, really, have to try hard not to be a part of a group, like the Unabomber guy, (and he still had a family he expected loyalty from.)

Let's take your military example. Although military training and lifestyle consists of rigid conformity, one could argue that it produces a more pronounced individuality. Certainly ex-military on this list would agree that some of the most memorable and unique people they ever met were in the military. Certainly somebody like General Patton, who believed he was a reincarnation of a Grecian warrior, would make a good Zandir.

Two literary examples close to the heart of Zandu would be Cyrano de Bergerac and the Three Musketeers. Both are flamboyant, unique "swashbucklers" that were part of exceptionally rigid military organizations. They love their country, operate as members of a group and are still dashing individuals.

I don't see a problem with this. I don't think that group behavior on the part of Zandir makes them any "less fun" to play. It does make them a little more 3-dimensional, which is what I like in a character. Someone can still be their own person and part of a military, government, guild or whatever. In fact, it's inevitable. Gamers love to say they are "loners". So much it reminds of the scene of Monty Python's Life of Brian, where Brian tells a crowd "You are all individuals" and they repeat "We are all individuals". Of course, a gamers favorite hobby is entirely social in nature. Go figure.

Granted, and as you have said, Talislanta is fictional and can break the rules and make extremes. But if there were a race of fierce individuals unable to form cohesive groups, Zandu would be a different place. There would be no central government, no economy past immediate bartering, no family structures, etc. Just because they have a lackadaisical government, little or no regulation and a general permissive attitude doesn't they can't form groups. Hell, the previous sentence pretty much describes Texas for most of its history.

Finally, whether people like it or not, humans are inherently social creatures. The list of universals between all cultures is quite extensive (if you wish, I could refer you to a couple of books). The Zandir are Men, presumably human, and follow the same rules. Even if they weren't human, they are the same stock as the Aamanians, who certainly are capable of group behavior.

As for the slave thing, it's obvious that you are making an unsupported argument and haven't checked the text. Your basis was that the Zandir sense of personal freedom would preclude slavery. This is not necessarily the case. Even in countries with well codified freedoms (such as, oh say, America), slavery and denial of rights can happen in the long term. In Zanth, freedom is likely only to apply to Zandir. Any non-Zandir or perhaps non-Paradoxist can be enslaved, although civilized allies (such as the races of 7K) are probably given a miss.

Legalized slavery does not lead to a slave state, there are many examples to the contrary. Such as Mexico under Spanish rule, where slaves were a higher social class than the common worker.

In the unstructured Zanth economy, as has been pointed out, there are probably lots of poor. This means that there is a sufficient labor base to exploit without slavery. A "wage slave", who is paid only enough to get by, is much cheaper than an actual slave. Contrary to popular belief, slavery does not provide cheap labor, it provides abundant and dedicated labor. Slaves in Zanth are likely to be specialized professions, such as courtesans, cooks, craftsmen and so on. Not heavy labor, there are serfs aplenty for that.

Enough for now. I've a few ideas on what I call Protodoxism, but that'll have to wait.

Deus tibi adsit,

Monk ("")  
  {+\_+}  
  | |  
  |\_|

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## Dark Zandir: Part 9

From: Matthew Webber <helot@hotmail.com>  
To: talislanta-1@mars.galstar.com <talislanta-1@mars.galstar.com>  
Subject: talislanta-1] Re: Dork Zandir  
Date: Wednesday, January 28, 1998 2:35 AM

Hi Monk.  
Dork Zandir? =) cute

>Hello Matthew, it looks like we completely disagree again.

So? =)

>On the whole Zandir personal freedom/individual mindset: I think the argument that  
>Zandir are too individual to form groups is largely one of semantics. It makes sense on  
>paper, but not in reality. People are individuals and members of groups all the time. In  
>fact, it's inescapable. You really, really, have to try hard not to be a part of a group,  
>like the Unabomber guy,(and he still had a family he expected loyalty from.)

I find the idea of dealing with 'reality' in this instance rather amusing. I think to much fiction, fantasy SF especially loose out on so much because they try and fit 'real world models'. Everything begins to look like medieval England (ala Tolkien) and Star Trek after a while. (Anyway...)

I learned my lesson last time(s) and I'll try to avoid trying to argue my POV point for point. However I will very happily indulge in a little intellectual intercourse. I really am interested in how you see Zandir society.

I am having trouble understanding your big picture. You have included slavery, some levels of society organizations (or at least more complex than I have in mind). Now how organized are they? Have you included Guilds... a bureaucratic government? How do you reconcile these things with the ideas of Paradox and individuality that are so prevalent in Zandir society? In a nutshell, how does it all work?

>Finally, whether people like it or not, humans are inherently social creatures. The list of  
>universals between all cultures is quite extensive (if you wish, I could refer you to a  
>couple of books).

An anthropology professor once told me (well, the class) that in preparing to study a new culture it was necessary to read everything and anything on culture, history, applicable psychology and social interaction, and then the minute you step into the field site .. Forget everything. It is the only way to spot and understand the unique attributes that are going to crop appear.

We are dealing with an undeniably unique situation here and all I am trying to do is apply a few unique characteristics. All cultures have paradox, but none seek them out and

embrace them so completely. Few cultures stress the individual, or the concept of "follow your bliss" so strongly. Their faith promises no answers, no true clarity or enlightenment, but embraces the unsolvable mysteries of existence. And yet mixed in with this accepting attitude is a longstanding hatred of their polar opposites. They formed a society to allow themselves freedom to express their ideas (yes even if you are an Orthodoxist .. in my version there is a temple to Aa in Zandu. It ain't popular and is the first target every Night of Fools, but it is there. It also acts as the Aamanian consulate).

To do so they have formed a society that, to an outsider, appears very loosely organized and poorly lead, and it is. What keeps it together is the need for its existence. The army quotas are overflowing every year with idealistic youngsters fueled by nationalistic pride, the desire to learn how to fight (due to the prevalence of duelling), and the sense of "what else is there to do?" A fairly common feeling in the fairly large percentage of youngsters without a family business to follow into, or apprenticeship waiting for them.

I have already described how I think the army would work.

Besides the Sultan and his immediate (a matter of some debate) family, there are no true 'nobles'. The elite class is made up of rich merchants and landowners who sometimes give themselves a title, even passing it on to their children, but it is not a necessity. The Sultan selects a handful of these elite to serve on his council. There is no set number to how many of the elite can serve and no set duration as to how long. The council oversees the daily running of the kingdom, taxes, foreign relations and the army.

These pseudo-nobles, through a complex web, own a variety of large businesses and enterprises employing a large segment of the urban populations. No one is forced to remain in their job and there is no stigma for leaving. However most remain in the same job for most of their adult lives simply to keep the perks of seniority and to avoid being the low man on the totem pole again.

Entrepreneurship and initiative are encouraged leading to a multitude of small craftsmen and shopkeepers are constantly popping up about the cities. They rarely last but the effort is admired.

That got a little more longwinded than I meant it too, but it helps me outline my ideas of the Zandir. I'll finish it later maybe.

This is my interpretation of Zandir society. It is clearly not free of kinks and that is why I get into these discussions, to hear what other people have to say.

>Let's take your military example. Although military training and lifestyle consists of  
>rigid conformity, one could argue that it produces a more pronounced individuality.  
>Certainly ex-military on this list would agree that some of the most memorable and  
>unique people they ever met where in the military. Certainly somebody like General

>Patton, who believed he was a reincarnation of a Grecian warrior, would make a good  
>Zandir.

No doubt, though he'd likely hate the lack of discipline. Now try and imagine a society of Patton's.

>As for the slave thing, it's obvious that you are making an unsupported argument and  
>haven't checked the text.

As are you. The fact that the text mentions that Zandir is a market for slaves and a casual mention of Farad Traders in the market does not mean that it is legal.

I am perfectly willing to accept the fact that there are slaves and a slave market in Zandir (as there are in any city, just drive down the a street in your local Red-Light district one night.) But I choose to think also think that in the Zandir law books (such as they are) slavery -- at least in terms of slave labour -- is illegal as it violates the personal freedoms of the individual. Something that Paradox and the Zandir mindset would, at least in my interpretation, would find to be utterly repugnant.

Now unarguably this sets up a paradox in Zandir society.. but isn't that the point? =)

> Your basis was that the Zandir sense of personal freedom would preclude slavery. This  
> is not necessarily the case. Even in countries with well codified freedoms (such as, oh  
> say, America), slavery and denial of rights can happen in the long term. In Zanth,  
> freedom is likely only to apply to Zandir. Any non-Zandir or perhaps non-Paradoxist  
> can be enslaved, although civilized allies (such as the races of 7K) are probably given a  
> miss.

Now this is a valid model. Though I do have a few questions.

a) how do they know if you are a paradoxist or not?

b) does a paradoxist really want a convicted Heterodoxist terrorist or Orthodoxist zealot cleaning out their loo? (or cooking their food, taking care of their children etc etc.)

> Slaves in Zanth are likely to be specialized professions, such as courtesans, cooks,  
> craftsmen and so on. Not heavy labor, there are serfs aplenty for that.

c) the same goes for 'uncivilized' races.

[[ "Darling. Are you so sure the Araq nanny was such a good idea?" ]]

d) Under what conditions is someone made a slave? There is no pool of conquered people to draw upon. Is it in lieu of a jail term? Press gangs? Bad luck?

>Enough for now. I've a few ideas on what I call Protodoxism, but that'll have to wait.

Love to hear them.

---

'I think,' he said slowly, 'that the only reason people think you can't kill a vampire by shoving its head up its own arse is because nobody's ever actually tried it.

What do you think, guys?'

(Tom Holt, "My Hero")

Matthew Webber

helot@hotmail.com

The Sanctum Alcedon -A Talislanta Web Page-

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## Dark Zandir: Part 10

From: Angel of Salvation <uriel@total.net>  
To: The talislanta-I mailing list <talislanta-I@mars.galstar.com>  
Subject: talislanta-I] Re: Battering Rams and smooke  
Date: Wednesday, January 28, 1998 11:54 PM

>By that I meant their battlefield tactics, not necessarily their social makeup.  
>Heavily armored cavalry and infantry vs. smaller, more mobile but less heavily armed  
>squads. Neither seems to be an effective tactic against the other on a large open  
>battlefield, and this inability to comprehend or properly deal with each others tactics  
>may be a factor in the length of animosity between the two peoples.

It seems to me that the Zandir would do very well against the Aamanians. Lighter, more maneuverable troops generally win over heavily armed and slower troops. The Mongols proved that pretty effectively. And I think that the Zandir would do particularly well considering that they are daring, flamboyant, inventive, non-standard in their approach to problem solving (and therefore tactics), and both maneuverable and deadly with either a close ranged weapon (sabre) or long ranged weapons (magical bolts). They're immoral, so I could see them using the Aamanian sense of propriety and strict discipline against them.

I don't really see the Aamanians being particularly well equipped to deal with the Zandir, unless they are the ones being attacked, at which point I would expect their defenses to be quite formidable.

>This brings up a thought. Could either cult exist without the other? The arguments you  
>bring up below are valid, and illustrate a point about how important the idea of the  
>enemy is in maintaining either culture. ("Things may be bad here, but at least its better  
>then being a mindless/hedonistic pagan.")

While I don't think that either society would be the same were the other to be destroyed, I don't think that either would be crippled by it. Both are completely self-sufficient and there is a significant amount of cultural uniqueness that should keep them alive. As for an enemy, Aaman has enemies everywhere, and Zandu...well, Zandu is nothing if not resourceful, I'm sure they'd figure something out.

>The church would not stand for homeless and the truly destitute are put to work as  
>street cleaners and, gravediggers and dustmen. The insane are locked away and the  
>drunks are 're-educated'. Its not a perfect system, but it works.

It seems to me that the question is whether you prefer the idea of a strict, ordered dystopia, where everything works smoothly, even if it tramples peoples "rights", or whether you prefer a place where the only rights you have are the ones you can wrest for yourself (kind of a harsh way of describing Zandu, but I guess it's not THAT far off).

>>On the other hand, Paradoxism, if it is to survive, needs a certain amount of  
>>organization, which is certainly contradictory to the "do what thou wilt shall be the  
>>whole of the law"-approach of paradoxist philosophy. (Then again, contradictions is  
>>what Paradoxism is all about; but I think the point still remains.)

>

>That is the big Paradox of Zandu. An (nearly) anarchist functioning state.

I thought there was a group of rigid lawyer-types in Zandu who made sure that things actually got done on the day to day front while the rest of society did as they pleased.

My two L'Haan adamants...

...fly straight  
Uriel...

---

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# Dark Zandir: Part 11

From: Matthew Webber <helot@hotmail.com>  
To: talislanta-1@mars.galstar.com <talislanta-1@mars.galstar.com>  
Subject: talislanta-1] Battering Rams and smoke  
Date: Thursday, January 29, 1998 3:05 AM

Hi Tim

>Good question.

>I think that Orthodoxy could survive without Paradoxism. The world is full of  
>pagans; it wouldn't be hard to find another enemy. There's the Dhuna (witches all!),  
>Cymril (godless practitioners of magic for its own sake!) and others.  
>With Paradoxism, it would be a different issue. Without an external enemy, they will  
>face serious problems holding themselves together, IMO. Especially since Paradoxism  
>is more or less defined by Orthodoxy. ("Nothing is right, but we're sure the  
>whitecoats are wrong.") Without Aaman, Zandu would have to change quite a bit,  
>probably to the point of not being Zandu anymore.

I agree that Orthodoxy would have a better chance of surviving, but that might just be because that with the Aamanians we have similar historical models to work with. The Inquisition, any empire or military regime all possess elements of Orthodoxy. With the Zandir we are working without any historical net, there has never really been a historical parallel. On second thought you could make a case for the Restoration, but only very loosely.

Anyway.

I am going to draw a parallel, but again this will be highly flawed and is only going to briefly serve to illustrate a point: Zandu and the USA.

Both countries were created, and continued to exist due to the pressures from outside, a need for the fear of "them". Both were founded by religious pilgrims persecuted in their homeland and while the USA has changed who "they" are over the years (British, Indians, Germany, Japan, Russia, Lebanon, Iraq, Columbians) the Zandir have had the constant pressure of the Aamanians. The Americans, when presented with no outside 'enemy' to keep its people together tends to turn inwards to find enemies. Once the Indians had been slaughtered and shipped off to the reserves the Civil War was not far behind. And with the death of the Cold War and they are again showing the cracks in their external solidarity... Oklahoma City, Waco.

This need for an outside enemy (even the idea of one) isn't my theory, in fact it is common enough that at least two (and very funny) Hollywood movies have been made on the subject. 'Wag the Dog' (out now, see it!) And 'Canadian Bacon' (John Candy's other last film and much funnier than 'Wagon's East'. rent it!)

As Tim mentioned, Orthodoxy, if it ever won the war would likely begin to look slightly different (how exactly would depend on the circumstances) but it would, as a religion, likely survive. Zandu, if it ever won, would begin to fall internally without the coating of external glue the Aamanians provide. Unless presented with another immediate threat (Arim, is the only likely candidate) and left to run the entire (old Phaedran) empire by themselves they would quickly begin to splinter. They don't have a choice. The underlying dogma presented by Paradox could be interpreted as "everyman for himself." ("Just what kind of Buddhism is this Otto?" =)

I think the 2nd ed. sums it up. In the Section marked "Cults, Secret Societies and Magical Orders" The Orthodoxists are described as trying to exert their faith over "non-believers" and the extermination of "infidels". Not once are the Paradoxists names directly.

The Paradoxists entry, however is littered with direct references to the Orthodoxists and it notes that the Paradoxists have "no definable goals or objectives except as pertains to the Orthodoxists."

What happens when that goal has been met?

I think that if the Paradoxists were to ever win the war, that within about one hundred years Zandu as it exists now would not exist (possibly a member of the 8K?) And that any Paradoxists still running around would be scattered and unfocused.

It is possible that both governments sense this. They know that the status quo would disappear and disrupt their set little lives should one side ever gain a distinct advantage. As a result they constantly plan for the "future". A possible reason why that since the cult wars they have never committed to any large scale conflict. To destroy their enemy would be to, in a sense, destroy themselves.

>Maybe my imagination is running amok with me now, but if it is true that Paradoxism is  
>the antithesis of Orthodoxy, Orthodoxy must've been there before. Of course it  
>need not have been the religion in its current form (religious doctrine tends to change  
>quite a bit during the course of history, or at least there are different aspects being  
>stressed in different periods of time). The origins of both religions surely lie hidden in  
>the time that followed the Great Disaster (TM), and are therefore not easily accessible  
>to historians. If you're interested in my version of the genesis of the Cult >Complex,  
>tell me, I'll gladly write about it.

I think I'm beginning to agree with you. Orthodoxy seems much more self-sufficient as a religion than Paradox, which makes it unlikely to have arisen on its own. Though it was probably more of a give and take scenario. The Phaedran Empire began to grow more conservative leading to an uprising of the left. As the conservatives began to drift more into Orthodoxy the left would react by becoming more and more "liberal", forcing the conservatives to adopt a more Orthodox platform etc etc. And yes I want to hear your

views on Cults, if you can link it to Tal, post it to the list, and if not just email it to me directly.

/snip/

The not very Tal bits on feudalism in modern industry and discussion of the poor and religion

/snip/

>... and exactly that is what eventually will bring about the downfall of Orthodoxy.  
>Social stasis can last for a long time. Medieval Japan is a good example. But Aaman is  
>not the only society in Talislanta, just as Japan, in spite of its isolation, eventually had to  
>realize that it was not the only society on the planet. If the Zandir embrace everything  
>that is new, eventually they will find a way to fight Aaman effectively, despite all the  
>odd things they might find interesting in the meantime.

I don't think Japan is an apt parallel. The never fear indeed they are noted for their adaptability, they were and are masters of assimilating ideas and technology and giving them a distinctly "Japanese" flavour. That and the fact that they are an island nation helped them exist in relative isolation from prehistory to the Meji restoration (1868-1912) and even after their defeat in WWII it would be difficult to prove that the Japanese have lost one ounce of their racial pride or cultural identity.

But in theory you're right. If they tried everything then eventually they would find something that would defeat the Aamanians. The problem why they haven't is twofold.

- 1) The only way to stop a heavy cavalry charge is crossbows and pikes. Which, at least in my interpretation would require a coordinated effort somewhat beyond the Zandir.
- 2) They haven't had an open battle in a long time. They have settled into a "cold war" scenario, and the Aamanians, after all those years of backstabbing Monitors and temple politics are just as good at the old spy game as the Zandir. .

>I think that your observations are right. But there must be corruption in the system,  
>somewhere (in the lit there are several Aamanians portrayed as corrupt), and there are  
>Heterodoxists who maneuver for power in Aaman. The adjudicators cannot keep  
>complete control over every small merchant; it would be easier to conduct the trade  
>themselves. They have to rely of the mix of faith and fear that pervades Aamanian  
>society; somebody is bound to make a try. A corrupt adjudicator would turn a blind eye  
>to some illicit dealings, in return for "favours", "gifts to the church", what-have-you. I  
>don't believe that such an oppressive system can be waterproof; if you fear your  
>superiors, you're bound to say the things they want to hear, cover up your mistakes for  
>fear of punishment, do all kinds of things that provide them with false or biased  
>information. It can't work forever.

You're right of course. Corruption tends to seep into any system, especially the more oppressive ones. It depends on the balance of how much the Aamanians will tolerate. Which doesn't seem to be very much.

>Anarchist? Well, if you consider the absence of a working government anarchy, then  
>Zandu is anarchist. But there are forces other than government that force people to do  
>certain things; e.g., a landlord must exert force over the workers on his fields because if  
>he didn't, they'd take over. Slavery (incompatible with anarchy, IMHO) is common, it  
>is just that every slave owner must watch his slaves on his own; there is no official  
>instance that will catch escaped slaves and put them to "justice".  
>Governmental functions in Zandu are merely privatized. I think that anarchy is the  
>absence of rule, not the absence of state or government. Zandu may be "liberal" in the  
>extreme, but not anarchist in the sense of the word used by anarchists.

I'm beginning to see more along the idea of privatized functions for the government.  
(See my other longwinded "Dork Zandir" post yesterday). I still can't see my way to  
allowing labor slaves in my campaigns, there are plenty of young Zandir, Monads and  
other races around the city to take care of the grunt work. Zandu is probably a very  
popular for people looking for work. The system probably works very much like an  
advanced system of capitalism were enriched "nobles" hold control over widespread  
businesses, and have a voice in the government. The only problem being the control of  
the Sultan (probably a rich businessman, at least at first, in his own right) but without any  
clear departments, committees or public service.

While not a true anarchy, it would probably appear that way to outsiders. Could you  
imaging the Cymrilian ambassador trying to find someone to talk to about trade pacts?

>Agreed. But this raises a thought (what a productive discussion, I love it!): Does  
>Serparian organization have to limit itself to staying alive?

That is the prime driving force for the poor. The Serparians are not the Cosa Nostra.  
They are street kids, hookers, beggars and cutpurses. Their only power comes from their  
numbers and the illusion of their unity. If a Arimite slaver is kidnapping kids off the  
streets to sell to the Farad, or a band of young toughs is harassing beggars, then they band  
together long enough to deal with the problem, quickly and violently and then all crawl  
back into their separate holes. That combined with the figurehead of the Sultan of  
Beggars then they have a pretty effective way of protecting themselves.

Why? Have you got any other ideas?

>Oops, mistake on my part. "Revolution" is the wrong word for what I meant. "Rising"  
>would be a better word. For a rising, you only need a sufficient number of malcontents  
>in one place and something to trigger their ire. A bad harvest and a nasty landlord could  
>do. It doesn't have to result in the overthrow of the government, but it will definitely do  
>a lot of damage.

Or even the Night of Fools. I'm sure more than one grudge is settled that night. For a  
quick though, it is possible that the Night of Fools acts as a safety valve to prevent such  
problems from mounting. Once a year the poor and the trodden upon have free reign to

extract a little revenge. I'm sure in the weeks leading up to the Night of Fools the Landlords and city watch start being VERY nice to everybody, which in turn might help ease some of the pressure.

>Yes, this could be true. But in Aaman, contrary to communist ideal, private property is >not really abolished for the good of all; it is only technically abolished for the good of >the theocratic elite - analogous to the technocratic elites in countries that were called >socialist or communist.

Point taken.

Hope to hear more...

---

'I think,' he said slowly, 'that the only reason people think you can't kill a vampire by shoving its head up its own arse is because nobody's ever actually tr . What do you think, guys?'

(Tom Holt, "My Hero")

Matthew Webber

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## Dark Zandir: Part 12

From: Matthew Webber <helot@hotmail.com>  
To: talislanta-1@mars.galstar.com <talislanta-1@mars.galstar.com>  
Subject: talislanta-1] Dork Stuff: 1 last thing!  
Date: Sunday, February 01, 1998 6:40 AM

Eep! One last thing and then I'll try and shut up about all this.

Zandir Slavery and the Night of Fools....the morning after

"And you are all claiming that your plantation boss just slipped on that old viridia peel, broke his head open in six places, and just happened to fall upon that pile of very sharp farming implements you had accidentally left at the bottom of the stairs?"

Chorus: "Yes officer!"

"And the drowning?"

After a moment of silence a quiet voice suggested. "Freak rain shower?"

The officer mumbled to himself as he tried to summon his patience.  
"Every Aa blessed year....."

---

If all laws are suspended then the Night of Fools becomes the great equalizer. Were I a slaver, slave owner or slave boss I would not want to be three hundred miles of the entire Kingdom that night.

The pimps and brothels might be able to keep their handful of girls down for one night (even making a profit maybe), but anyone with a large workforce of indentured or captured slave is in for a VERY bad night.

Keep in mind that it would be perfectly all right for the slaves to rebel, and without any threat of legal repercussion. If they can kill their boss, or destroy the papers that made them a slave, or at the very least escape, then they are off scot free.

Or they could burn the fields, or kill the animals, ransack the house, ruin the equipment or come up with a thousand other ways to ruin the entire farm/factory etc etc ... all without fear of repercussions from any authority other than their master. And what master would be dumb enough to clamp down, what with the next Night of Fools only one year less a day away?

Seems a whole lot easier just to pay the little buggers doesn't it? =)

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What do you think, guys?'

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## Dark Zandir: Part 13

From: Matthew Webber <helot@hotmail.com>  
To: talislanta-1@mars.galstar.com <talislanta-1@mars.galstar.com>  
Subject: talislanta-1] The Zandir Mindset (long)  
Date: Wednesday, January 21, 1998 2:35 AM

Please note that the following is my personal opinion only. How anyone chooses to run their own game is their own business.

In the following essay I drift from the Zandir Guilds to the Army to the Serparians (did I get that right? I meant the beggars) as I try and explore my ideas on how Zandir Society, or at least the underworld might work.

::::::Warning::::::It's a tad long =)

>3.) All petty crime is controlled by the beggars. If it's a mugging or a con, it's their >show. Failure to pay your due may quickly end your life. The beggars are not highly >organized, but are especially effective and have a definite structured culture of their >own.

>> Probably something akin to the traditional Thieves' Guild of D&D, with a Master/Journeyman/Apprentice structure. Freelancers are frowned upon.

... Or the Thieves Guild of Anhk-Morpork where it is necessary for a burglar to leave a receipt. =)

I hate to mention this, but wouldn't that be reason enough to avoid setting things up like this. I've read the AD&D/Leiber/Thieves World and don't get me wrong (for the most part) I enjoyed them. However, I started playing Tal to get away from these types of cookie cutter fantasy scenarios.

My problem with some of this is that much of the Dark Zandir material that I'm reading doesn't seem to mesh with the image of Zandu that I have within my own mind.

Personally I see Zandu as a city, with all the dangers that such a term implies, but it is a city based on the principles of individuality and personal expression.

Guilds, if they existed at all, would be nothing but glorified social clubs where members gather to tell tall tales and drink. That level of organization, indeed even the desire of the everyday Zandir person to join a large organization and become yet another faceless member in the crowd would seem to go against everything that they are taught to believe in from childhood. In their views, such large, conformity demanding groups with union dues and secret rituals and funny hats, would seem to more like part of the ultimate sin, Orthodoxy.



Take the example of the Army, in the real world, the best example of conformity behavior (my apologies to any members of the armed services on this list). Basic training is designed to break down existing personalities and replace them with a soldier's discipline, nerve and commitment to the unit. Hence the unifying haircuts, uniforms and elaborate rituals.

In Zandir it would not work like that. Individual soldiers are encouraged to design their own uniform (the only requirement that I use in my games is an arm band with unit crest), question orders, make suggestions to superior officers etc. What the Zandir army provides is basic combat training and a chance to serve their country/religion (perhaps the only true unifying force in the entire Kingdom) I see the ranks filled mostly with young men and women who signed on in a whim, simply because, at the time, they thought it might be fun.

Terms would have to be short (to prevent boredom), no longer than a year. The organization of the army is a complex system of ranks and awards.

"You are hereby promoted to Senior Corporal, Master Junior rank, Second Class, and awarded the Medal of the Spice Trees for your valiant efforts in helping to organize shelters for the recently homeless following last week's Night of Fools."

Now if the army cannot instill a lasting sense of conformity, what chance does a Guild have? This stretches into the realm of organized crime as we know it. Even in the modern world the term is something of an oxymoron and plays more upon our Romanized ideas of the gentleman gangster or powerful Yakuza boss than reality. Mostly they are just a bunch of uneducated thugs.

It wouldn't occur to a Zandir to try and organize anything like the Mafia, it requires too much of a group mindset. They are much more likely to try and become the best cat burglar or yet another romantic highwayman. However there is no reason why an outsider couldn't try and organize the underworld in Zandu, but the chances of such a venture lasting over the long term seem unlikely.

This Boss, coming in from outside would initially see his ranks swell as the Zandir criminals, enamored with all those ideas of the Romanized gangster would rush to join up. And then a few months later the same boss would see his organization shrink to almost nothing and attacked on all sides by independents as the Zandir members simply drift away as they get bored, become disillusioned with the process once they realize that they have to surrender a percentage of their take or find other things to occupy their interests.

The closest the Zandir have ever come to such an organization are the beggars and the Sultan of Beggars. Why?

The beggars, the street hookers and the homeless children, like in all societies, are seen as failures and the unwanted. Reminders that the system doesn't always work, and that the

Romanized idea that most Zandir have of the universe would be shattered is they saw a ten year old girl shivering in rags and trying to sell her body for enough money to feed her sick infant on a cold winter's night. When such illusions are shattered the newly awakened individual rarely reacts well and the unwanted would quickly find themselves ignored, neglected and persecuted.

So what the Serparians (I completely forget the actual term, so I'll just use 'Beggar's Guild') provide, at least to the general public is that sense of romance, the idea of a vast network of beggars and other charming street people that lies across the city like a spider web, listening to everything that goes on. Even the concept of the Sultan of Beggars acts a figurehead, a romantic figure in the center of the web, sitting on a pile of secrets and treasure stolen from the streets.

Armed with such a mindset the everyday Zandir citizen can drop a coin into the crippled beggar's bowl, not because they would be helping out a downtrodden individual, but because then they too could be taking their own small part in the romantic underworld.

How based in reality is that? Probably only barely.

Despite itself or its motives the Beggar's Guild probably succeeded on a few levels. It provides the illusion of protection (like an empty video camera in a convenience store) for beggars and hookers and street kids who might otherwise become prey for the truly twisted or desperate.

Now in this somewhat longwinded essay (my apologies, a in =) I might have come across as portraying the Zandir as flighty,(just count the number of times I use the term "romantic") and not behaving like otherwise normal human beings. But to me that is what Tal is all about, exploring the unknown and new concepts. Yes, no "real world" human would act like that, in most societies belonging to a 1. But that is why I enjoy Tal so much, for the "what ifs?".

What if there was a society that stressed the individual, not the group? One with a religious doctrine that promoted free thought and curiosity, not blind obedience to scripture and doctrine.

That is what I want to explore with the Zandir, and I would be truly upset to see it turned into yet another "Thieves World" clone.

But hey, that's just two yatmas... =)

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