

XAMBRIAN DISCUSSIONS

- [Post 1](#) - The original post by Matthew Webber. <6-03-97>
- [Post 2](#) - Monk's addition on physiology, culture, the Gatherum, and the past. <6-03-97>
- [Post 3](#) - John Harper's Xambrian Avenger archetype. <6-03-97>
- [Post 4](#) - Matthew Webber's reply to Post 2. <6-05-97>
- [Post 5](#) - Benjamin Lyngfelt's reply to post 4. <6-05-97>
- [Post 6](#) - A Xambrian's Tale, fiction by Psygoblin. <6-05-97>
- [Post 7](#) - Andrew Ross critiques Xambrian culture. <6-05-97>
- [Post 8](#) - Monk replies to post 4. <6-05-97>
- [Post 9](#) - Andrew Ross, further critiques of a dead culture. <6-05-97>
- [Post 10](#) - Siamak Naficy's long expose on the *real* Xambrians, plus conspiracies!. <6-05-97>
- [Post 11](#) - Andreas Oeltjen on dead culture. <6-06-97>
- [Post 12](#) - More Monk Musings on Myth. <6-06-97>
- [Post 13](#) - Andrew Ross replies. <6-6-97>
- [Post 14](#) - Rahastrans enter the fray. Darius. <6-6-97>
- [Post 15](#) - Runesword idea pops up. John Harper. <6-7-97>
- [Post 16](#) - Mike Hudak on Omen. <6-7-97>
- [Post 17](#) - Xambrians Fully Revealed by SMS! ;) <6-7-97>
- [Post 18](#) - More Monks and Runeswords. <6-7-97>
- [Post 19](#) - Matthew Webber replies to the Monk. <6-8-97>
- [Post 20](#) - Matthew Webber on Runeswords. <6-8-97>
- [Post 21](#) - Matthew Webber describes a Xambrian band/camp. <6-8-97>
- [Post 22](#) - Wade Durant pitches in his two cents. <6-8-97>
- [Post 23](#) - More notes on Xambrians from SMS himself. <6-8-97>
- [Post 24](#) - SMS on Spiritblades. <6-8-97>
- [Post 25](#) - John Harper on Spiritblades. <6-8-97>
- [Post 26](#) - John Harper on Omen. <6-8-97>
- [Post 27](#) - Fine tuning those Spiritblades. <6-8-97>
- [Post 28](#) - Aaron Sell on Spiritblades. <6-8-97>
- [Post 29](#) - Aaron Sell's Xambrian novel is mentioned. <6-8-97>
- [Post 30](#) - Rules for Spiritblades. John Harper <6-8-97>
- [Post 31](#) - Matthew Webber sees difficulties in killing Quararians. <6-9-97>
- [Post 32](#) - Warlock on Zahur (three-to-one odds). <6-9-97>
- [Post 33](#) - Teal Ashby raises some questions about Death. <6-9-97>
- [Post 34](#) - SMS clarifies Death (and cuts taxes). <6-9-97>
- [Post 35](#) - Matthew Webber throws in Xanadas, Trans-Ascendancy and the kitchen sink. <6-10-97>
- [Post 36](#) - Monk clarifies (?) points about Omen and the Gatherum. <6-11-97>
- [Post 37](#) - Wilson's notes on Spiritblades and auras. <6-11-97>
- [Post 38](#) - Mustafa and payback. <6-11-97>

[Post 39](#) - Xambrian Genetic Diversity (tm). Mustafa <6-11-97>
[Post 40](#) - Matthew Webber on culture, omen, and elders. <6-12-97>
[Post 41](#) - Monk on inbreeding (just read it, okay?). <6-18-97>
[Post 42](#) - Siamak on inbreeding and modern genetics. <6-18-97>
[Post 43](#) - Cultural evolution. Matthew Webber <6-19-97>
[Post 44](#) - Xambrians & Art. Benjamin Lyngfelt <6-19-97>
[Post 45](#) - Xambrians & Art by Aaron Johnson. <6-19-97>
[Post 46](#) - Xambrians & Gatherum. The Monk. <6-23-97>
[Post 47](#) - Matthew Webber keeps the Gatherum going... <6-24-97>
[Post 48](#) - Dennis Bumb salutes MW. <6-24-97>
[Post 49](#) - Xambrians & Batman. Stacy Stroud. <6-24-97>
[Post 50](#) - Dennis Bumb on Batman. <6-24-97>
[Post 51](#) - Matthew Webber expands on Omen. <6-26-97>
[Post 52](#) - Benjamin's concerns about Omen. <6-26-97>
[Post 53](#) - More Omens. Teal Ashby <6-26-97>
[Post 54](#) - Oath or Omen. The Monk. <6-26-97>
[Post 55](#) - Final short story. Teal Ashby. <6-25-97>

At this point the whole thing degenerated (?) into the infamous 'Magic is Science' debate, which will be forever remembered in tal-list history as something Not To Be Invoked Again. I guess some things *are* better left unanswered. And if anyone asks me to archive *that* particular thread...remember, it's only 100 gold lumens to hire a revenant to amputate your writing hand...

Cheers,
Mateusz 'Magnus' Krepicz

The Xambrian Discussion articles were originally posted to Mateusz Krepicz's archived Talislanta Central website. The above was taken directly from the Cultures section of the Talislanta Central website.

- Drohem (11/27/10)

Xambrian Discussions: Part 1

I always thought it unfortunate that more hasn't been written about Xambrians and their culture.

I'm looking for any ideas you guys might have about their social structure, family life, personal habits etc.

Specifically I'm looking for stuff about the Xambrian's relationship to the Omen. Benevolent early warning device against malevolent spirits returning to the mortal plane ... or collection of P.O.d and twisted spirits manipulating a dying race to extract revenge for crimes committed in antiquity? Any thoughts?

I've written down some ideas of my own, feel free to pick at them.

--XAMBRIANS--

A sense of profound sadness overlies everything about these noble people. Their tragic history has left them hard and unforgiving, but also with a strong sense of honor and justice.

They dislike relying on others, viewing charity as an ing a high priority on individuality. Large groups and crowds make them uneasy and they will go out of their way to avoid cities, only entering to trade for supplies or as part of ion. These traits have caused them to be labeled secretive and unpredictable by other peoples.

--FAMILY--

Xambrians tend to have children later in life, usually after many years spent roaming alone over the continent. The parents rarely stay together and break apart soon after the child is born - their ingrained sense of solitude preventing the formation of any lasting bond. The child is raised by a single parent, though the duties are often spread out over other adult members of the band. There is no difference in the treatment of the sexes, women are expected to be just as self-reliant as the men.

The children are taught few things directly. Instead they are encouraged to spend hours in private meditation (hence their Secondary Magic Field of Mysticism) or out in the Wilderlands working on their survival skills.

As they approach adulthood, the young Xambrians start to spend more and more time away from their bands, until one day they simply pack up their belongings and begin their journeys across the continent. There is no ceremony, they simply say their good-byes and depart. The bands have learned to save the celebrations for those who return.

--BANDS--

Made up of a number of family groups (2-10) and a few Xambrians who have made it into old age, these nomadic bands are found drifting over the Wilderlands, Desertlands and Plains of Golarin herding small bands of livestock.

They rarely go near cities or other heavily inhabited areas, preferring to trade with Orgovians, Djaffir or native tribes. Xambrian bred greymanes are famous for being superbly well trained and are a favorite among the Za and Danelek, allowing them to pass through the Banditlands and Barrens with little trouble.

Decisions are reached by general consensus. If the band is divided on an issue, it will simply split in two, the livestock being divided fairly. Hence bands commonly fade away and are replaced by new ones though a small number have been around for hundreds of years.

Justice is also reached by a band vote, the most common penalty being direct retribution to the offended party. In serious cases like murder or crimes involving violence the offender is put to death, as banishment isn't seen as much of a penalty.

"The acceptance of corporatism causes us to deny and undermine the legitimacy of the individual as citizen in a democracy."

Matthew Webber
<http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Cavern/2295/>

Xambrian Discussions: Part 2

I looove this. This is cool. Especially the bands. It answers a paradoxical question I've had for a while. Xambrians are a race of lonely wanderers, yet are completely defined and driven by their culture. Where does the culture come from? That's the question answered by the bands. This makes Xambrians a viable culture, since these units exist to support the young and old. Allowing culture to be disseminated to the next generation. I have some takes on Xambrians in general.

XAMBRIAN PHYSIOLOGY

According to some controversial scholarly texts, Xambrians used to be a shorter, more robust and darker skinned people. Theories are that the current tall, gaunt visage of Xambrians is the result of inbreeding amongst the small population.

A curious and horrific physiological note amongst Xambrians is childbirth. Xambrians always give birth to identical twins, one of which is invariably stillborn. There is no discernable, natural cause for this. According to legend, it is a curse placed on the Xambrians by the Quaran. Regardless, the dead twin is always given a name.

Madness is not uncommon for Xambrians. The mad usually wander the wilderness. Invariably, they neglect to fend for themselves and starve. Whether this is caused by inbreeding or consorting with spirits is uncertain.

XAMBRIAN CULTURE

As children, Xambrians are made to memorize their genealogy, which will go all the way back to time Xambria was still a land. Almost every night, part of the epic poem "The Lament" will be told, which details the total history of the Xambrians. At adolescence, all Xambrians are given a scroll of "The Lament" in Xambrian as well. Xambrians letters are all ideograms representing complete words, and the scope of Xambrian written vocabulary can be found in this work. Thanks to the ideograms, which are written very small, the entire poem can be fit onto one (albeit long) scroll.

Xambrians are consistently sullen, even amongst their own. They do speak to each other more frequently than to outsiders. According to Xambrian tradition, it is taboo to interrupt someone else speaking. Xambrians will wait patiently for others to speak their peace, then speak only if they have something to say. Xambrians have been known to extract painful retribution on those of other races who interrupt them, leading to the phrase "Listen like a Xambrian".

Xambrians begin learning combat and magic at an early age. There are numerous counterspells taught only to Xambrians via word of mouth, which are never repeated to outsiders, so little is known about them. Xambrians will freely exchange information with each other, but rarely will discuss anything with outsiders, for fear that any

information will hurt them. Modern tales of Xambrians are told, usually to illustrate good tactics.

Upon death in a band, the body will be decapitated and the skull removed, cleaned of any flesh. This is a skill that every Xambrian knows, but is done by the eldest member of the band. Carrion beetles, which clean flesh from bones, are often carried and used by Xambrian bands. Also the charge of the eldest member. If the bones of a Xambrian are found, these will be collected as well. Xambrians often seem to know when and where one of theirs is dead. They will go to great lengths to secure the remains.

The skulls and bones of dead Xambrians are brought to Omen during the Gatherum (see below). The bones are then added to the great heap.

THE GATHERUM

Once, at the end of the year, Xambrians gather at the foot of Omen for the Gatherum.

The first few days are spent telling elders their genealogies. Those who wait perform spiritual rites and return bones of the dead to Omen.

When the telling of genealogy is done, then the Xambrians begin a fast, during which they sit around the foot of Omen moaning and lamenting. Water is taken, but no food is eaten from sunrise to sunset. While this happens, the elders conference on which potential mates would be best. In this way the Xambrians try their best to defeat inbreeding. When the elders have reached a decision, they announce it. This ends the fasting and lamenting.

Individual Xambrians, invariably from different bands, are paired for breeding. This time of the year is when females are the most fertile. The breeding period usually lasts three days, females seem to have an instinct for when they are impregnated. Xambrians never seem to have sex for pleasure's sake. They do have a concept of love and romance, but this consists of themes of unrequited or frustrated love. A love that makes one happy is unknown to them.

Parents never stay together. The female and her band become responsible for raising the child. Fathers play no role in child rearing directly, but assist with children in their own band.

XAMBRIAN CODE OF VENGEANCE

Xambrian justice is dictated by the code of vengeance. The code is simple, "He who wrongs a Xambrian, he shall be punished no matter the price." Thus it is with amazing fervor and dedication that Xambrian's will extract revenge.

Amongst Xambrians, there is a tradition of Death Duels. Any Xambrian may call for a Death Duel with another Xambrian if they feel they have been wronged. The duel must be fought. Those who flee duels are chased down. No matter who loses the duel, which is to the death, the winner is killed afterward by the onlookers. If he tries to escape, he will be hunted down. Thus, if you are willing to sacrifice your own life, any wrong can be addressed in the Xambrian way of thinking.

XAMBRIA PAST

Xambrians are haunted by dreams of visions of their former land. The ancient Xambria they see is of a noble people who had peace in their hearts. They greeted each other in long blessings of bliss. They had little or no crime nor violence, for no one wanted for anything. They had no army to speak of and maintained peace with all neighboring nations. Xambrians were always twins. With their twin they shared a great intimacy and friendship. Twins never separated and if one died the other would soon follow out of grief.

The Xambrians were proud to be poets and artists. Everyone had some artistic hobby, no matter their profession. The Xambrian language was (and still is) beautiful to speak. Words and specialized vocabulary was designed to fully convey emotions.

All dreams and visions of Xambria end with the coming of the Torquar All modern Xambrians experience the horrid and heart rendering pain as thousands and millions die, along with their beautiful culture.

Deus tibi adsit,

Monk ("")
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Xambrian Discussions: Part 3

Here's a Xambrian Avenger archetype write up that I did a while back. This version didn't make it into Tal-10th (it's just *way* too tormented), but I still like it as an alternate way to see the race. Enjoy.

XAMBRIAN AVENGER

The world is unjust and without meaning. Any fool knows this. People and nations are born and thrive, only to be destroyed, senselessly. The stars and the moons are blind spheres in the sky. They do not look upon the tragedies of man. They do not care who lives or who dies. And neither do you. Your fate was decided centuries ago, when the Torquarans slaughtered your people. Now you roam the land always in mourning. Pitying a land and a people you never knew, whose only legacy is sorrow and madness. The voices in your head haunt your dreams and your waking life. They scream to you of injustice, of terror, of destruction at the hands of pure evil, but you don't care. You only want the frenzied shrieking to stop. But it does not stop. The voices drive you to the obscene mound of skulls in the east, cloaked in the choking red dust of the Volcanic Hills. These voices drive you to the heights of the mountain, where their tormented spirits enter your body and consume your will. You become obsessed with a burning rage. Your blood cries out for vengeance. You scarcely remember the ensuing days and nights of relentless tracking, of hunting the re-born necromancer's spirit, the Reincarnator. Only when you have plunged your runesword into the Torquaran's heart does the madness leave you. The voices fall silent for precious days or weeks. Until the next Reincarnator appears...

Xambrian Discussions: Part 4

On Raising Livestock:

>I think this is fine. Vengeance cannot be all that profitable. They have to make a living
>in some way. Raising well trained equus seems perfect. I like the idea a lot and gives
>them something to trade with the Orgovians and Djaffir that is valuable.

Which makes travelling through the Wilderlands that much safer. While the Xambrians probably fear little, they are probably immensely protective of their children. and if the bands are made up primarily of the young and old members they would be prime targets for Za, Danalek, Orgovian and even Djaffir raiders. Giving them something to trade makes them welcome into the territories. I can't image the excuse 'we were just passing through' would work that well with the Za.

On Gatherum:

>I considered the security risk of it, but thought that a gathering to serve as a cultural
>baseline was needed to maintain cultural identity. Also, the image of hundreds, even
>thousands of Xambrians moaning at the foot of Omen is pretty cool. I perceive that
>both Djaffir and Orgovians would be present, on the periphery. This lessens the
>security risk, as anyone targeting the Xambrians would be dealing with two larger races
>as well.

It is a cool image, but this still bothers me. Take for example the Tirshata and the SMR (which I don't have so if I get some of the details wrong let me know)- I don't know what part the Xambrians played in all of this, but I'm sure the Za at least approached the Xambrians with an offer to join. But if the Xambrians turned them down (which seems likely), then with the Za attitude of if you're not with us- you're against us, puts this the Xambrians in grave danger, especially if they know of the Gatherum.

Also, what about vengeful spirits? I'm sure that during the course of their adventures the Xambrians would have managed to stick their black booted feet into the business of pretty much every single major extra-dimensional entity out there. Having the Shaitan - who's son you've killed - knowing where to find you could be hazardous to your spiritual health.

On Mating Ritual:

>I think that Xambrians probably have a high infant mortality rate. A combination of
>nomadic lifestyle and high expectations for learning combat. Xambrians, as a rule, kick
>ass. This means they have some sort of rigorous training, which would increase infant
>mortality. Remember that children living for a change is a product of the industrial
>revolution.

I agree with the infant mortality rate (I'm not going to debate the consequences of the industrial revolution, but low infant mortality was never a direct result) but having extremely fit adults isn't going to produce that, in fact it would stimulate healthier children and easier childbirth - fit people have an easier time conserving and having children as their bodies are healthier and can take the strains easier.

A more likely cause could be their constant exposure to strange magics, other dimensional beings, and dangerous, possibly toxic environments, exposing them to strange radiations causing lethal mutations in their reproductive cells.

Also, if you decide not to use the Gatherum, and use random chance encounters in the wilderness, then you've got less children being born, adding to the tragic aspects of race.

On Death Duel:

>This is possible. I am going under the presumption that Xambrians really don't value >their miserable lives that much. This is what makes them so dangerous, they don't mind >dying. However, I had not considered the spirit angle. This idea could probably be >dropped. I like the code of assistance idea.

They may not value their own lives, but they probably value the survival of their race, at least until their enemies are finally wiped out. Which is difficult considered that no matter how often you kill them there's no guarantee that they won't be back in a few years.

On Elders:

>I think that elders wouldn't make all decisions, but would be major counsel. I'm not >sure that loner = exclusive individuality, Xambrians give up everything for their culture. >I feel the elders would be constants, since they are always with the bands, who would be >repositories of cultural knowledge.

Interesting distinction. I think you're right that Xambrians do suppress a great deal of their individuality in order to continue with their cultural mission. Their loner tendencies are an outgrowth of the cultural value placed on self-reliance. Ingrained so deeply that they become reluctant to spend much time with members of their own race.

While I'm sure that elders' advise is listened to (any Xambrian that makes it to old age has gotta know what he's doing), but what I don't think they would except is others telling them who and when to mate with. This seems almost an Aamanian thing to do.

As for the Mating Ritual, the elders would the ...

>best, consistent, stable person to know the genetic history of individuals and bands. >Thus, the best qualified to make that decision. All this relies on the presumption of >inbreeding, which I think would preclude random pairings. Any hint of incest would be

>extended to any near relative, even distant cousins. I think that arranged matings would
>definitely be the order of things.

As you said, Xambrians all have extensive knowledge of their ancestors. I included a step in their highly formalized mating ritual in which both parties state their ancestral history, which would allow them to make sure that they weren't closely related. But remember that earth history, most cultures aren't that picky about mating with close cousins.

You also brought up the fact that Xambrians look the way they do because they did suffer from interbreeding. How did they wind up like that if they're so careful about it?

On Love:

>Deep down, I think the Xambrians are passionate. But not cerebral, not sensual. The
>concept of romance would have nothing to do with procreation. More of a "Courtly
>Love" idea that love could exist between two souls, not bodies. Xambrians might fall in
>love with almost any race.

I think that deep down, Xambrians are a very emotional, passionate people. It is the constant suppression of these emotions that lead to the bouts of madness and extreme emotional outbursts that plague these people (and gives them such a low CHA rating). While this could very easily lead to the development of an unrequited 'courtly love' it could also erupt into passion, a passion that would quickly die as their emotional checks and loner tendencies reassert themselves.

>Torquar question:

>An SMS question. I read somewhere on a web page the plan to change the name of
>Quaran (which could offensively be taken as 'Koran') to making the name of the
>Necromancer class 'Torquar', which the Rajans copy in the modern day.

That makes sense. The Rajans are probably emulators of anything Quaran - which would not endear them to the Xambrians in any way - and may mistranslate the meaning of some words. All this begs yet another question. How would the Xambrians be involved in the Dracartan-Rajan war?

Matthew Webber
<http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Cavern/2295/>

Xambrian Discussions: Part 5

Hey, you're at your best now guys. Lots of great input on the Xambrian topic. I hope someone compiles the stuff on a webpage when the discussion is settled (Ed: Ask, and thou shalt receive). Here are my two yatmas:

>On Gatherum:

>Also, the image of hundreds, even thousands of Xambrians moaning at the foot of
>Omen is pretty cool. I perceive that both Djaffir and Orgovians would be present, on
>the periphery. This lessens the security risk, as anyone targeting the Xambrians would
>be dealing with two larger races as well.

Do the Xambrians really want Djaffir and Orgovians there? They surely wouldn't need them for protection. You'd need a regular army before you want to mess with hundreds of Xambrians.

>It is a cool image, but this still bothers me. Take for example the Tirshata and the SMR
>(which I don't have so if I get some of the details wrong let me know)- I don't know
>what part the Xambrians played in all of this, but I'm sure the Za at least approached the
>Xambrians with an offer to join. But if the Xambrians turned them down (which seems
>likely), then with the Za attitude of if you're not with us- you're against us, puts the
>Xambrians in grave danger, especially if they know of the Gatherum.

Ah, there's the army. I guess any ritual undertakings in the Wilderlands of Zaran (including Aamanian pilgrimages etc) would be disrupted during SMR. Even the Xambrians would prefer staying clear of the Wilderlands during this war (it'll be quite a journey when the spirits call you to Omen). It's not a regular situation, so regular cultural habits don't work the way they usually do. Normally, hundreds of Xambrians would be able to take care of themselves.

But perhaps you're right about them being paranoid enough to avoid this kind of regularly scheduled ritual.

>Also, what about vengeful spirits? I'm sure that during the course of their adventures
>the Xambrians would have managed to stick their black booted feet into the business of
>pretty much every single major extra-dimensional entity out there. Having the Shaitan -
>who's son you've killed - knowing where to find you could be hazardous to your
>spiritual health.

A Shaitan would know anyway - thankfully they're locked up in the City of Brass. But I agree with your general point, that Omen attracts other spirits than the Xambrian ancestors' and that all of them aren't benevolent (to the Xambrians). This might be the strongest argument against the Gatherum - but I still think the scene makes a cool image.

>On Death Duel:

>They may not value their own lives, but they probably value the survival of their race, at
>least until their enemies are finally wiped out. Which is difficult considered that no
>matter how often you kill them there's no guarantee that they won't be back in a few
>years.

I think the books say that there is one and only one way to guarantee that a Reincarnator won't return again: Death in Astral Combat at the hands of a Xambrian. I'm not sure how this kind of combat is supposed to be handled, though. Mysticism? I'd like WILL to be part of this, since 'Spirit Guidance' would make more sense then.

The Xambrians' low CHA is due to their, by most standards, dangerous and unpredictable behaviour. That kind of guy usually have no problem getting girlfriends (at least if he looks good, and the Xambrians look awesome). Girls of many races would probably feel attracted by the romantic notion of heroic avengers, but couldn't live with the lunatic in the long run.

>Torquar question:

>All this begs yet another question. How would the Xambrians be involved in the
>Dracartan-Rajan war?

I love your creative minds, guys. Always ready to find a new - and relevant - twist to any topic. On this one, I guess the Xambrians mostly would stay clear of the war - unless they have good reason to get involved, that is. There would be Reincarnators on both sides, I suppose, and a military conflict could make it easier to extract vengeance. It could also make it harder.

Keep the topic going!

Ben

Xambrian Discussions: Part 6

A Xambrian's Tale

All is chill around me, concealing all in pitch. I float in the void.

It has begun...

Distant screams echo as tortured white faces emerge from the shadow around me, mouthing silent torment. My soul is wrenched open...

... a mother screams as a twisted knife tears her children's flesh...a dark fist slams a pair of small skulls onto a shifting sea of bone...a man cr loved is flayed alive...a crack of bone as another skull is added to the hideous monument...

...all is silent darkness again and the only scream left is my own... I awaken, soaked in cold sweat, it trickles down my forehead, stinging my eyes with welcome reality. The bed is a mess, the sheets cling to me like a desperate lover as I lean trembling over the edge of the bed and weep.

Omen has called to me...

I have travelled relentlessly across harsh and desolate lands; lands long since lost to reason or history. I dread each night, yet welcome it like a fool, open arms to the nightmares of Omen. I crave the hollow blackness of rest, final rest. I crave death. Creator help me...

A cold wind blows across my soul as I stand in the shadow of Omen before the judging eyes of the dead. Thousands of fathomless orbs peer deep into my heart, and a fist of wrenching sorry drives me to my knees. Drives me to tears.

I drift into the void, the air rent with cries of rage, anguish and pain. The pallid faces regard me with twisted masks of hate, a seething, palpable wall of fury. It surrounds me and penetrates my every pore, exploding in my mind like a hammer of fire, tearing an anguished cry of painful exultation from my lips.

I stand trembling with wrath and joy. Cold, unrelenting hatred burns pounds in my heart as I follow the implacable pull of the damned, leading me inexorably towards the condemned. I will kill. I will murder. Creator help those who stand in my way. Creator help me...

I step purposefully over the broken corpse of the sentinel, as my quarry flees in blind panic, the guard is less than nothing. There can be no distraction. There can be no mercy. All barriers to the inevitable must be destroyed.

The souls in my head gnash their teeth and wail, driving me onwards. There can be no rest.

A door bars my way; another barrier. I gesture; the spirits blast the door into splinters.

Cold steel weighs heavy in my fist. The pitiful creature huddles in the corner, quivering, gibbering in terror, soiling itself, pleading for mercy. It tells me it is only a simple merchant, innocent of any wrong-doing. The souls sneer and hiss their derision...

I gaze into the creature's eyes and see the black stain of ancient evil behind them, and the creature begins to laugh. The souls rage... The laugh grows louder as I wrack the beast with energy, hurling it against the stone wall, breaking its mortal shell. It laughs bubbling blood as I bring my blade down, the souls shrieking with unholy delight.

Creator help me, what have I become?

I have become Vengeance...

Psychedelic Goblin

Xambrian Discussions: Part 7

On Thu, 5 Jun 1997, siamak x naficy wrote:

> John wrote:

>

>>I guess the main difference for me was the interpretation that the individual Xambrian
>>knew and cared little for the "once great" nation that was slaughtered. He or she more
>>likely feels used by the spirits of Omen to extract what is now a pointless revenge. In
>>this interpretation, most Xambrians would go mad long before slaying the Torquaran
>>spirits.

>>

> It's funny, but in my campaign, this was always the "average-Joe" Xambrian. I really
> can't see how a lot of Xambrians wouldn't feel at least a little victimized by their
> ancestors. It can be rightfully argued that modern Xambrians are also being robbed of
> their lives. I LOVED the write up, John. Too bad it didn't make the cut.

Agreed. The Xambrian stuff has been interesting but I think some goes a bit far trying to make the Xambrians a "regular" people with a culture, structure, etc. Recall, these are people driven by the very vocal spirits of the dead to kill. That's it. One of the Tal books (forget which) mentioned the theory that Xambrians emerge from Omen full-grown and ready to go whenever one dies, keeping their numbers constant. That's how it worked in my game. The spirits told the Xambrians everything they needed to know (mostly how to kill very efficiently), and I allowed for communing with the spirits as a chance to learn information. A Xambrian could care less if he ever saw another of his kind, he hunts, he kills, he hunts. That's about it, and that's why they're so scary, because even the Reincarnators know that if they manage to kill the one hunting them, another will shortly be along in his place until they finally nail the sucker.

Andrew Ross

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 8

Matthew Webber sez:

> On Gatherum:

> It is a cool image, but this still bothers me. Take for example the

> [snip]

> Also, what about vengeful spirits? I'm sure that during the course of their adventures
> the Xambrians would have managed to stick their black booted feet into the business of
> pretty much every single major extra-dimensional entity out their. Having the Shaitan -
> who's son you've killed - knowing where to find you could be hazardous to your
> spiritual health.

There are reasons why this could work.

A.) Omen is not without power. The spirits of Omen would want to protect their avengers. Other entities, both spiritual and physical, would have to contend with the awesome power of spirit collective.

B.) The Xambrians are a force to be contended with. Period.

C.) The Xambrians have magical training. If there is such a thing as collective, ceremonial magic, then there could be formidable protections put up.

D.) Only half the nation shows up, instead of all of it. People alternate years going to Omen. Thus, only half the race is at risk at any time. Even in the worst case scenario doesn't knock them out. This allows them more wandering time as well.

With these in consideration, any attempts on the Xambrian race fall into the category of interesting scenario and adventure material.

Matt on Elders:

>

> While I'm sure that elders' advise is listened to (any Xambrian that makes it to old age
> has gotta know what he's doing), but what I don't think they would except is others
> telling them who and when to mate with. This seems almost an Aamanian thing to do.

> As you said, Xambrians all have extensive knowledge of their ancestors. I included a step in their highly formalized mating ritual in which both parties state their ancestral history, which would allow them to make sure that they weren't closely related. But remember that earth history, most cultures aren't that picky about mating with close cousins.

>

> You also brought up the fact that Xambrians look the way they do because they did
> suffer from interbreeding. How did they wind up like that if they're so careful about it?

Arranged marriages are often the rule in cultures, even today. For a race preoccupied with their continuance, I don't think they would have a problem with it. It's the single most important element in the survival of their race. Nothing to be trifled with. Furthermore, given their rarity, random encounters would be few and far between, and then there's the good chance your potential mate is related to you. Furthermore, the mother would not have the support of a band during pregnancy. The random method leaves the woman holding the bag, completely.

Also, people who lived in bands would be likely to mate, which produces the inbreeding problem. As you have said, people aren't always that picky. However, the Xambrians need to be. If mating is a formal event, the problem is lessened.

As for the elders proscribing mating, by producing a large council pooling the knowledge of everyone's ancestry, they would be able to maximize genetic diversity. That's the whole idea. I'm presuming that this method didn't always exist, causing the inbreeding problem to begin with. Even the random encounter method would eventually lead to inbreeding, because the Xambrians would be limited to their range.

Matt On Love:

> I think that deep down, Xambrians are a very emotional, passionate people. It is the
> constant suppression of these emotions that lead to the bouts of madness and extreme
> emotional outbursts that plague these people (and gives them such a low CHA rating). >
> While this could very easily lead to the development of an unrequited 'courtly love' it >
> could also erupt into passion, a passion that would quickly die as their emotional >
> checks and loner tendencies reassert themselves.

This is a good take. I like this. Does give credence to the random encounter and allows for a romance storyline with a Xambrian.

Benjamin on Gatherum:

> Do the Xambrians really want Djaffir and Orgovians there? They surely wouldn't need
> them for protection. You'd need a regular army before you want to mess with hundreds
> of Xambrians.

Good point. The Orgovians and Djaffir would love the trade opportunity, but may not be able to stomach the proceedings. And the Xambrians may not deal with them anyway. Perhaps they would show up at the start then leave as things got underway.

Benjamin on Love:

> Yeah. The Xambrians' low CHA is due to their, by most standards, dangerous and
> unpredictable behaviour. That kind of guy usually have no problem getting girlfriends
> (at least if he looks good, and the Xambrians look awesome). Girls of many races

- > would probably feel attracted by the romantic notion of heroic avengers, but couldn't
- > live with the lunatic in the long run.

This is not exactly what I had in mind, it's better. I hadn't even considered that Xambrians are excellent parallels to rock stars. Allows for more romantic drama. I can see a Xambrian PC hounded by a Sawila but not interested. He just want to kill his Reincarnator and get outta town.

Andrew on All This Junk:

- > The Xambrian stuff has been interesting but I think some goes a bit far trying to make
- > the Xambrians a "regular" people with a culture, structure, etc. Recall, these are people
- > driven by the very vocal spirits of the dead to kill. That's it.

I don't really buy that. If that was the complete case, then they wouldn't really last beyond one generation. Of course, you have the solution to that below.

- > One of the Tal books (forget which) mentioned the theory that Xambrians emerge from
- > Omen full-grown and ready to go whenever one dies, keeping their numbers constant.
- > That's how it worked in my game. The spirits told the Xambrians everything they
- > needed to know (mostly how to kill very efficiently), and I allowed for communing
- > with the spirits as a chance to learn information. A Xambrian could care less if he ever
- > saw another of his kind, he hunts, he kills, he hunts. That's about it, and that's why
- > they're so scary, because even the Reincarnators know that if they manage to kill the
- > one hunting them, another will shortly be along in his place until they finally nail the
- > sucker.

This is doable on it's own. It sets up an eternal war scenario, which is cool. I don't like the simplicity of it, and it makes Xambrians not into people, but beings made from magic or a magic process. I sounds like a myth someone else would have about Xambrians. I would prefer my players to play a character that is part of a nation and culture. But these Xambrians are really just machines. This removes the tortured element which seems central to their character. The sadness of their culture dying is their prime motivator.

The Xambrian Avenger idea essentially turns the Xambrian from driven for revenge to harassed into revenge. It may play a part, but the former is more classically tragic. To it's merit, the spirits make a good player control, always a help to motivate adventures.

Also, the eternal war doesn't make for the best storytelling. The Xambrians eventually need a way out. Their story must end.

I do really like the idea of Xambrians consulting the spirits for information. It's playable.

On a final note. I like Goblin's story. Lots of ellipses usually make me wince, but this always kept direction and how can you not like a short read?

Deus tibi adsit,

Monk (")

{_+_}

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 9

On Thu, 5 Jun 1997, Monk wrote:

[my take on Xambrians as driven killing machines deleted]

>

> This is doable on it's own. It sets up an eternal war scenario, which is cool. I don't like
> the simplicity of it, and it makes Xambrians not into people, but beings made from
> magic or a magic process. I sounds like a myth someone else would have about
> Xambrians. I would prefer my players to play a character that is part of a nation and
> culture. But these Xambrians are really just machines. This removes the tortured
> element which seems central to their character. The sadness of their culture dying is
> their prime motivator.

I disagree. Their culture IS dead, not dying. They were wiped out and are now spirit-driven by the angry dead to seek eternal revenge. The tragedy is that the Xambrians (when they are not on full spirit override) are completely aware of this, and that's why they are such gloomy bastards. They KNOW that they keep living and dying and living, and will keep on doing it until they somehow break the cycle of Incarnator rebirth. That is the hook that drives the Xambrians in my game. They hunt the bastiches down, but in their "down time" they delve into the mystic arts and whatever else they can find to try to find a method of keeping the Incarnator's dead once and for all, because once the Incarnator's stop coming back, the Xambrians can finally rest.

> Also, the eternal war doesn't make for the best storytelling. The Xambrians eventually
> need a way out. Their story must end.

They do have an out, find a way to stop Incarnator reincarnation. Not easy, they haven't managed it yet, but that does not mean it isn't possible. Any hint of a clue as to this is enough spur any Xambrian into action like you would not believe.

I also think there is more than enough "tragedy" if you want to emphasize that. Actually, I think my take provides more. As a race/culture, the Xambrians are just another race, with their "hook" being that they seek revenge (just as the Zandiran hook is that they are nuts, etc.) In my game, there are only a few Xambrians (can't find my notes, but I think it was just over 100). When one dies, he is reborn (NOT reincarnated, reborn) at Omen after a certain period of time and sets off again. Most recall their prior lifetimes which makes them even more moody. Grim bastiches who know that they can't even die (for good) until the job is done, and they've been doing the job for centuries with no end in sight. BUT, they can't just lapse into apathy because the spirits of their ancestors give them a serious kick in the ass anytime they slow down or slack off.

> I do really like the idea of Xambrians consulting the spirits for information. It's
> playable.

Very much so, as long as you remember that the spirit's entire world view is killing Incarnators, so any information wanted has to be related to that purpose.

Andrew Ross

Xambrian Discussions: Part 10

Hey gang,

All this talk about Xambrians is causing me to salivate. You see, like most of you, I think, I count Xambrians among my all-time favorite Tal archetypes. At the same time, I really can't contribute anything of substance that's 'new' to the thread until my school ends next Friday. Still, I thought that some of you may enjoy the follow ch contains some words about Xambrians our beloved SMS, the ever-busy but hopefully still in lurk-mode Gazza, and yours truly, had to say about Xambrians around this same time last year. Funny that way. I certainly hope that they don't mind that I'm sending this stuff. And for those of you who are being subjected to some of this a second time around, I apologize. To others, remember, as with the reruns of your favorite TV shows this summer, it isn't a "rerun" if you haven't seen it before. So without further introductions...

I once wrote:

Recently I've been pondering the Xambrian-Torquaran connection and all its implications. I'd like to clarify the situation but haven't decided on all the details just yet. Here are some of my questions, thoughts, and notes:

How do Xambrians detect reincarnated Torquarans? The ancestral spirits of the Xambrians seem to have the ability to do this; exactly how, I'm not yet sure.

To which our beloved SMS wrote:

How do Torquarans avoid detection? Magical means probably. This would make evasion/detection a kind of cat-and-mouse game between Xambrian and Torquaran spiritforms.

Reincarnated Torquarans vs. Reincarnators. My impression is that the spiritforms of "average" Torquarans reincarnate in a pretty much random manner. Reincarnators are far more powerful, and seem to be able to choose the nature of their next incarnations (and perhaps also the specific identity of same).

This is some stuff Gazza and I knocked around that I compiled into a sort of Xambrian quilt! Sorry if it seems a bit scattered--read on! You may find it interesting!

A thought I've been having recently is if the black savants are diabolists, then they are going to be anti-Zahur and anti-demon, so they are definitely going to be anti-Quaranian (who consorted with both Zahur and demons), and so would 'help' the Xambrians to destroy reincarnating Torquar spirits if they could!? Could it be the black savant necromages who are controlling the ancestral spirits of the Xambrians, and manipulating them to hunt down the Torquarans? Just an idea...

The Black Savants were always my favorite race in Tal. The fact that not much is known about them, and they seemed to know more than they were telling, makes them a great tool for a GM. I wanted them to be pretty central in my campaign, and set about figuring out exactly what they DID know, and what their actions in the past were. Well, here is my 'history according to the Black Savants'. Remember this is their view of things, so is likely to be biased and not necessarily the whole truth....

You're right, the (Tor)Quaranians were diabolists, BUT Drax was the son of Zahur, the renegade and outcast shaitan, and they also consorted with demons, who the other shaitan absolutely hate. So its not very likely that any shaitan other than Zahur would aid the Torquar at all. In fact considering they are consorting with both Zahur (who is presumably the one that supplies all their diabolic power) AND demons, wouldn't the other shaitan actually work against them? And who work for the other shaitan....?

Now I have another question. Where did you get the info on Drax??? Also, what do you think of Xambrians with Invocation spells? Some of the spells could be of particular use to them, especially given the way you (and now me :)) are think of Xambrians these days... what do you think?

The info on Drax (and his understudy Narishna), is in both the Sorcerer's Guide and the Archaen codex, in the sections about mages of the forgotten age. In fact, it just so happens that I have a copy of the Sorcerer's Guide with me... It says this about Drax...

"Reputed to have been sired by the rebel shaitan, Zahur...formulated the basic principles of black magic, which Drax derived from the forbidden teachings of Zahur himself...The intervention of Diabolus himself...brought Drax's reign to an end"

and about Narishna it says...

"...the black wizard consorted with the rebel shaitan, Zahur...traditionalist Diabolists hold him in contempt for his dealings with Zahur...extremists...claim that Narishna's downfall.. was orchestrated by Diabolus himself."

There, that kinda supports what I said.

Since I don't have a copy of the Third Edition (and it seems to be out of print now!) I'm not really sure which spells are the Invocation ones!? Are they the ones that priests get, with the spells from the 2nd edition "cult rituals" skill (banish, absolution, bless, faith healing)? If so this doesn't seem appropriate for Xambrians since they don't really follow any religion (apart from Ancestor Worship, maybe), and those spells are meant to have some sponsoring deity??? Although having spells which affect extra-dimensional entities I guess would be pretty useful for them...

Exactly. I am directly referring to those spells which affect extra-dimensional entities such as banish and maybe divination (I always thought this spell needed some sort of extra-dimensional sponsor anyway). And about the Xambrian religion idea, why can't

Ancestor Worship be considered a religion, thus allowing for the spell "bless". Maybe I'm running away with myself here (I just woke up), but do you think that Necromantic spell "contact lower plane" is more appropriate?

Depends what you intend to use it for. The idea was that the Xambrians are being manipulated by the Shaitan (through the black savants) who are controlling the Ancestral Spirits, who in turn 'control' the Xambrians, although the Xambrians wouldn't be aware of this (and would presumably be than more than a bit upset if they found out)! I don't think the Xambrians would actively communicate with entities from the lower planes, unless you mean with their ancestors, which I guess is appropriate, although isn't it meant to be the Ancestors who get in touch with THEM? (Besides isn't Necromancy considered Black Magic, certainly against the Xambrian ethic?)

I think the divination spell (used by communicating with the Ancestors) is more appropriate. As for the other Invocation spells, isn't the power supposed to come from deific entities? Would the Ancestors be powerful enough to grant such powers? What spells do the Xambrians have access to in the 3rd ed. at the moment? Got a feeling its Mysticism spells?

And finally, to you great ones, who showed Xambrian fortitude by managing to read thus far, the following is a compilation of questions by me and Gazza and SMS's responses.

<< Any hints to why Zahur became an outcast in the first place? >>

SMS replied:

Greed, most likely. Like most all the Shaitan, Zahur covets anything he can't have (such as his freedom)...

<<Are we likely to find out anything more about the Savants? Like, just what ARE they up to? >>

SMS replied:

I hope the Savants get a bit more coverage in future books. They play an unusual part in the balance of power in Talislanta, and are not the "bad guys in black hats" that they seem to be. On the other hand, they're not exactly the "good guys in white hats" either...

And a final note for any Tal conspiracy buffs in the audience: Don't forget about Drax...

<<I certainly haven't. He's lurking on some extra-dimensional plane somewhere in my game, just waiting for the Torquar Reincarnators to become powerful enough to bring him back... >>

SMS replied:

Ahh, a Talislanta GM after my own heart...

<<So its not very likely that any shaitan other than Zahur would aid the Torquar at all. In fact considering they are consorting with both Zahur (who is presumably the one that supplies all their diabolic power) AND demons, wouldn't the other shaitan actually work against them? >>

SMS replied:

Correct. Zahur is an outcast, despised by his own kind. many of whom would like to see him punished (to put it mildly).

<< And who work for the other shaitan....? >>

SMS replied:

The Black Savants would seem to be likely suspects...

There - that's it. Hope you enjoyed it, and made it! =)

Siamak, aka, the "Black-wearin' Rasmirin"

Xambrian Discussions: Part 11

I'd like to say something about the Xambrians. I was always impressed by their history, by the tragic of their lives. I think they are probably the most difficult characters to play. I never played one since I'm making too much jokes in the game and these people are surely not up for jokes. They are horrible to play for one who can't shut up.

Anyway, Andrew wrote:

>Their culture IS dead, not dying. They were wiped out and are now spirit-driven by the
>angry dead to seek eternal revenge. The tragedy is that the Xambrians (when they are
>not on full spirit override) are completely aware of this, and that's why they are such
>gloomy bastards.

Well, I don't think that their culture is dead. Whenever the Xambrians spring to my mind, it's like something from Jim Henson's 'Dark Crystal'. The storyteller's voice enters my mind.

"They are a dying race, lead by a dying leader. And with failing strength they repeat the old rituals which they only barely remember.' (That's probably not exactly it, but I don't know the original English text). I rather tend to believe that the Xambrians cling to their culture, at least what's left of it.

An example how I picture the meeting of two Xambrians: When Xambrians meet they raise their hands, touch each others hand and silently nod. They share their meals at the fire, not talking. After they finished finish they start to chant, calling upon the spirits of their ancestors. (I don't mean a summoning, more something like a dance or so). Then they part before the sun rises.

Their rituals are what link them. Without them, they'd be only strangers under many. With them they are a race, united.

That's it for now.

Bye
Andreas

Xambrian Discussions: Part 12

On Thu, 5 Jun 1997, Andrew Ross wrote:

> I disagree. Their culture IS dead, not dying. They were wiped out and are now spirit-
> driven by the angry dead to seek eternal revenge. The tragedy is that the Xambrians
> (when they are not on full spirit override) are completely aware of this, and that's why
> they are such gloomy bastards. They KNOW that they keep living and dying and
> living, and will keep on doing it until they somehow break the cycle of Incarnator
> rebirth. That is the hook that drives the Xambrians in my game. They hunt the
> bastiches down, but in their "down time" they delve into the mystic arts and whatever
> else they can find to try to find a method of keeping the Incarnator's dead once and for
> all, because once the Incarnator's stop coming back, the Xambrians can finally rest.

Oh, well, that's cool. This works. The Xambrians have an out to their prime motivator. I am going to be presumptuous and lump this view with John Harper and Goblin's story. Unfortunately, there is no way to marry the two ideas, bands vs. eternal avengers, but either is viable on its own.

The difference between the two goes back to the question that started this all. Is Omen benevolent or malevolent? In the bands example, it's probably benevolent. In the eternal avenger version, they are horridly malevolent. The distinction could also be are the Xambrians cooperating or being coerced into vengeance. Another distinction is dying culture versus dead culture.

Here are some advantages of your Eternal Avenger model:

- 1.) Very mythical. Always a good thing and makes for good, straight forward story telling.
- 2.) Allows a good and interesting player control that the player cannot really resent, since they know what it is going into the deal.
- 3.) Player death has safety net. He will be reborn.
- 4.) An odd one. Looking at Rahastrans, notable similarities come up. Both races are obsessed wanderers. Any cultural strategies will be very similar between the two. By removing this element from the Xambrians differentiates the two nicely.

Here are some potential Problems and definite Questions. (Mind your P's & Q's)

Problems:

- 1.) Does the player retain experience when reborn in Omen? If so, this means there really are no low-level Xambrians. Good for background (all Xambrians kick ass), bad for role-playing (all Xambrians kick ass).

2.) Total dehumanization of Xambrians as characters. Xambrians have no concern for others or for themselves, causing potential party problems. But some people really thrive on this sort of thing. Xambrians have no defining culture.

3.) Also denies any other character based storyline other than revenge. Albeit revenge is a goodie.

Questions:

1.) How did all this come about? When did Xambrians stop being regular folks that are born, breed and die and become magical constructs born in Omen? This needs a detailed, story-like answer.

2.) Just how magical are Xambrians? Are they otherwise just regular folks? Do they eat, sleep, etc.

3.) What happens if a Xambrian dies of old age? Or do they age?

4.) Do the Reincarnators have a similar or dissimilar process? Why?

It's a usable idea, which warrants a less fractualized write-up then we've provided here. Please, give us more. Personally, I still like the bands, but all opinions are valid and useful. And the Golden Rule of Talislanta has always been, "Whatever goes in your campaign, goes".

Deus tibi adsit,

Monk ("")
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Xambrian Discussions: Part 13

On Fri, 6 Jun 1997, Monk wrote:

> On Thu, 5 Jun 1997, J. Dring wrote:

>

[my stuff on Xambrians as perpetually reincarnated hunters trying to break the cycle deleted]

> The difference between the two goes back to the question that started this all. Is Omen
> benevolent or malevolent? In the bands example, it's probably benevolent. In the
> eternal avenger version, they are horridly malevolent. The distinction could also be are
> the Xambrians cooperating or being coerced into vengeance. Another distinction is
> dying culture versus dead culture.

I'm not sure it can be qualified like that. I see it as neutral, neither good nor evil, just dedicated to a specific task: revenge. The further complication in my game is that the ancestor spirits themselves do NOT want the cycle broken, because they LIKE making their ancient foes suffer death again and again. They think final death is too good for the Reincarantors, so they oppose the Xambrians efforts to end it once and for all.

> Problems:

>

> 1.) Does the player retain experience when reborn in Omen? If so, this means there
> really are no low-level Xambrians. Good for background (all Xambrians kick ass), bad
> for role-playing (all Xambrians kick ass).

Depends. It never came up in play, but I assumed that some kind of Will roll possibly would be required to see how much of his last life the Xambrian recalled. Given their solitary life and mission, I figured the "weakest" Xambrian had to be at least 8th level or so, which was okay for us since I was running a high-end game anyway.

> 2.) Total dehumanization of Xambrians as characters. Xambrians have no concern for
> others or for themselves, causing potential party problems. But some people really
> thrive on this sort of thing. Xambrians have no defining culture.

Au contraire. Xambrians care a LOT about themselves. Just because they know they will eventually come back does not make them suicide machines. Dying hurts, and they don't always remember everything when they come back (especially anything they've learned about how to break the cycle since the ancestor spirits tend to delete those memories before sending the Xambrian back). The Xambrian culture is the hunt.

> 3.) Also denies any other character based storyline other than revenge. Albeit revenge
> is a goodie.

Not true. Xambrians are detectives, trying to solve an ancient, mystical puzzle (how to stop Reincarnators from coming back). After all, when a Reincarnator is detected, it's the ancestor spirits who move in, take charge, and kick ass.

>

> Questions:

>

> 1.) How did all this come about? When did Xambrians stop being regular folks that are born, breed and die and become magical constructs born in Omen? This needs a detailed, story-like answer.

>

The Xambrians only think they are a race/descended from the originals. All of the original Xambrians perished at the hands of the Reincarnators. Their hatred, anger, and pain combined with the magical energies around them gave them the power to create their avengers.

> 2.) Just how magical are Xambrians? Are they otherwise just regular folks? Do they eat, sleep, etc.

They do because they think they do. I used this as GM fiat to allow the Xambrian the occasional unexplained ability or resistance. The spirits do not want the Xambrians to think they are not humans, so they cover it up as best they can.

> > 3.) What happens if a Xambrian dies of old age? Or do they age?

Nope. Given their lifestyles, it's not a problem, but there are rumors about Xambrians who have lived centuries (now THAT'S scary).

> 4.) Do the Reincarnators have a similar or dissimilar process? Why?

>

No. Reincarnators are born, live, and die as normal for the species they are born into. Now, since all are powerful mages, they tend to live prolonged lifetimes which are inevitably cut short by the nasty Xambrians.

I should add that my game was designed largely around the Xambrian character and his mission, which the other PCs went along with. In a "normal" game, I don't see the Xambrians as working well as PCs given their focus. They don't like groups, they work best alone, and EVERYTHING they do is devoted towards two goals (1) learn how to stop the Reincarnator cycle of rebirth and (2) find and kill Reincarnators. Going off to save the kingdom from sub-men really does not fit into that, unless the GM does a lot of work to make every adventure have a Xambrian hook in it.

Andrew Ross

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 14

Monk wrote re: Xambrians as Eternal Avengers:

>4.) An odd one. Looking at Rahastrans, notable similarities come up. Both races are >obsessed wanderers. Any cultural strategies will be very similar between the two. By >removing this element from the Xambrians diffentiates the two nicely.

Actually to my best knowledge we know even less about the Rahastrans than the Xambrians. According to the original sourcebook, the /Chronicles/, they "are the descendants of a race of wizards who once served the rulers of the ancient kingdom of Phandril"; they are "solitary and strange by nature" and "prefer to travel alone"; and because of the belief that they can use the Zodar to "divine the future, or to reveal one's deepest thoughts and desires," they "are regarded with mixed emotions by most other Talislantans," and so, they "seldom remain in one place for any great length of time." (Sorry for all the quoting, but might as well go to the source; and note, we have no more "official" info than that.)

So they're not "obsessed wanderers" in the same sense as the Xambrians; they wander because they have no home of their own, and aren't particularly welcome anywhere. I'd think Cymril would be more welcoming, but maybe the Cymrilians look down on the Rahastrans as inferior magicians (since up to now they certainly have been, in game terms!).

I'm enjoying this Xambrian discussion, but not agreeing with much of it, as I'd prefer to see them as a more well-rounded, "playable" culture, not avenging zombies. On the other hand it would be a typical Tal extremist "culture" if it can even be called a culture.

I'd also like to see some exploration of the Rahastrans, but at the moment I don't have anything to offer, except my personal theory that they may have come from one of "the Four Nations" city-states (along with the Orgovians?). But then, I forgot about the /Chronicles/ stating that they lived in Phandril.

Darius

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 15

Hiya gang-

Lots of great discussion on the Xambrians, lately. The Tal-10th team has been discussing them, too.

The Xambrians get a magic weapon, the ever-popular Xambrian Runesword. Until now, nothing has really been mentioned about these (not that I'm aware of, anyway... I am still missing a few Tal books).

Anyway, my idea was that these weapons are used to permanently destroy Reincarnator spirits. When a Xambrian is called to Omen, the forces of the ancestors transform a normal sword into the mystical Runesword, inscribing the blade with the names of those slain by the Torquaran the Avenger will hunt. By driving this magical blade into the heart of the Reincarnator, the Xambrian may destroy it utterly.

This is tricky. The blade must pierce the heart (-7 to hit precisely), and it must be the killing stroke. So, the Xambrians have a chance to ultimately defeat the Torquarans, but its a slim one.

What do ya think?

--- J

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 16

I find the current thread on Xambrians very interesting. But the question I have goes on a slightly different tangent.....

Am I to understand that Omen is an "Xambrian Artifact"? (For lack of a better term?) I thought Omen was a place where all races would go for a better location to commune with the dead. I forget which book it is off hand, but I seem to recall a picture of a woman holding up a skull head on top of Omen. From the look of her clothing (if that's what you'd call it), she looked like an Arimate knife fighter.

Also, is it only Xambrian bones piled on Omen? I thought there were more races than Xambrian "laid to rest" at Omen.

If I'm right about the picture, but wrong about Omen being an "open artifact", then would Omen be trying to influence ALL prophesizers coming to Omen? (Just being much more effective vs. Xambrians as they have a "hot line" to them? It might be interesting for a group of priests of Aa to pilgrimage to Omen as a testament of Talislantan folly, and how such things can be avoided if everyone would just follow Aa. (And the spirits of Omen trying to influence the pilgrims.)

Just my ramblings from the surface.

Mike H

A star thrower beats a successful Trivarian play.

(A smith and Wesson beats four aces).

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 17

Hey -

Just thought I'd drop in briefly and tell you all that (though I've been too busy editing and doing some of the art direction on Tal10thA to read every post), I've really been enjoying what I've seen of the Xambrian discussion - lots of very cool and interesting ideas here, folks...

One I particularly liked was Mark Craddock's comment on runeswords, which read:

<<Anyway, my idea was that these weapons are used to permanently destroy Reincarnator spirits. When a Xambrian is called to Omen, the forces of the ancestors transform a normal sword into the mystical Runesword, inscribing the blade with the names of those slain by the Torquaran the Avenger will hunt. By driving this magical blade into the heart of the Reincarnator, the Xambrian may destroy it utterly.>>

I like the idea that it is the spirits who "enchant" what would otherwise be a normal blade, turning it into a runesword - never was comfortable with the Elric connection, myself. In fact, instead of runesword maybe it should be called a soul-blade, spirit-blade, soulsword, or something like that. Any votes/suggestions?

The following notes should by no means be taken as some sort of "official" decree or anything so silly as that. It's just my own take on the Xambrian archetype.

The Xambrians are one of my favorite Tal races. The inspiration for these characters was Simon Weisenthal and his group of Nazi-hunters. I was moved by their tragic but noble story, and their selfless dedication in tracking down criminals who were responsible for the Holocaust and bringing them to justice.

Applying this idea to the fictional Talislanta setting, generated certain elements and downplayed others to come up with an archetype that I thought would be interesting for this milieu.

The Nazis killed millions of European Jews, but could not destroy their culture; there were (and still are) millions more Jews living in other countries who were beyond the reach of the Nazis. The ancient Xambrians all lived in one small country, and were easy prey for the Torquarans, who destroyed the Xambrian's country, their homes, their families, and their culture. For all intents and purposes, Xambria and the Xambrians were no more.

However, a handful of Xambrians managed to escape the Fire-Pits (another war-crime analogy), aided by some unknown benefactor(s) who hid them in a place where the Torquarans and their minions could not find them. Fear of being captured, sorrow at their terrible loss, and the guilt that victims often feel when they have survived while others died, prevented them from any thought of trying to rebuild their homes or their

lives. Instead, they swore an oath to bring to someday make the enemies of their people pay for their crimes.

In a milieu where magic is real, I felt that oaths of this nature would be as binding as any law of physics is in our reality. So it is that to the present day the Xambrians have never sought to return to make a new home for themselves, rebuild their lives or families, resurrect their ancient culture, or even get married and raise children. Instead they are obsessed with the fulfillment of their oath, which is to find "Justice, not vengeance."

Should the Xambrians ever succeed in tracking down every Torquaran Reincarnator, their ancient oath will have been fulfilled. At that point I can imagine the Xambrians actually settling down and maybe starting over.

That's my \$.02 -

I'll be posting a progress report on Tall0thA soon, an _____ date on the 2nd album of Talislanta Music.

Until then, take care -

SMS

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 18

Once again, SMS has managed to out-cool us all. I like the oath, it gives everything a focus. The fire-pits are a good visual. I'm picturing beds of coals glowing red filled with blackened skulls. It would make a good album cover.

Knowing the origins of the idea has already got me going. This and Andrew's campaign description makes me wonder if there are people who assist the Xambrians in their plight. Perhaps a secret society whose roots go back to the people who originally hid the last Xambrians. They would be secret to avoid the wrath of Reincarnators. Perhaps they even share in the Oath. This would help explain why Xambrians can be found anywhere, as they have support almost anywhere they go. Makes for lots of adventure hooks.

Also, another question. I remember one or two references to Xambrian coinage, which the Xambrians try to use often. It would make sense that this coinage would be around, if made of valuable metal it would still be acceptable (unlike the yatma). But where are the Xambrians getting it? Is there a cache somewhere? Would others want it?

As for the runesword and it's name. I don't like the simple bonus that makes it a little ordinary. I would prefer that it possibly had anti-magic capabilities. Or that the Xambrian wielding it could "charge" it with counter-magics, this would be valuable enough. If the Xambrian written language is made of ideograms, then there could be many names inscribed on the sword. I'm not picturing a neat row, but a haphazard coating that extends right up to the edge of the blade.

As for the name, the value of the word "runesword" is that it is very visual. But it already has other associations and Tal is always an original. Thus, I think Soulblade would be good, or another one. If the sword is coated with ideograms, then Runesword may not be so appropriate.

I liked Andrea's description of two Xambrians meeting. This is exactly how I'm seeing them. I don't think Xambrians talk unless they have something to say. Thus, they could go the entire evening without speaking. They certainly wouldn't talk during eating or any such time, when they speak they expect to be listened too. Not conversationalists.

Deus tibi adsit,

Monk ("")
 {+_}
 1 1
 1_1

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 19

Monk on Gatherum

>>A.) Omen is not without power. The spirits of Omen would want to protect their avengers. Other entities, both spiritual and physical, would have to contend with the awesome power of spirit collective.

Yes but the Omen doesn't contain only Xambrian skulls/spirits. There could easily be dozens of spirits trapped inside that want to get out. Perhaps gone mad trapped forever with these vengeful spirits whose passions keep all within trapped in the Material plane.

Over time these spirits may attempt to plot on their own, perhaps making a pact with other extra-dimensional forces in an effort to crush or drive out the spirits from Omen. Thereby allowing them to become free and drift away to their proper resting place. Or maybe they process a lone Xambrian and twist his already fragile psyche transforming him into destroyer of his own kind. (could you image the damage done if an Xambrian where to visit Omen, commune with what he thinks is his ancestors only to be told that everything he has been taught is wrong.)

>>B.) The Xambrians are a force to be contended with. Period.

What does this have to do with anything? So is everybody else in the Wilderlands ... and there are usually more of them. No matter how good they are, they are a small force, usually working alone (and three mounted Araq are gonna spoil ANYONE's day.) and also they are specialized to fight Magic Users. Their spells are normally counters and hence pretty useless when dealing with none mages (no good casting Anti-Magical Barrier if there's no barrier to begin with). Which puts them at a disadvantage when fighting bandits, wild creatures, and anyone who has devoted their lives to fighting. (Primary Combat) - in my campaigns they shun all combat that isn't directly related to what they're doing. This made sense as they are already small in number and wasting you're life in a tavern brawl would be utter wasteful

>>C.) The Xambrians have magical training. If there is such a thing as collective, ceremonial magic, then there could be formidable protections put up.

This might work. But isn't ceremonial magic supposed to be physically draining, and people intensive. Remember that you could potentially be dealing with some pretty heavy Extra-dimensional forces here and if you have half your force putting up magical barriers to stop random Spiritual forces, what do they do in case of an attack by a pack of omnivrax or Za bandits?

>>D.) Only half the nation shows up, instead of all of it. People alternate years going to Omen. Thus, only half the race is at risk at any time. Even in the worst case scenario doesn't knock them out. This allows them more wandering time as well.

Why not knock these down even more, having small bands and individuals stopping by throughout the year, each proceeding through the ancient rituals and ceremonies. Small bands might not attract the notice of more the more powerful spirit forces that could overcome Omen - and superstitions keeping away bandits and raiders - who might be convinced to overcome their fears for a larger prize.

Monk on Marriage

>>Arranged marriages are often the rule in cultures, even today. For a race preoccupied with their continuance, I don't think they would have a problem with it. It's the single most important element in the survival of their race. ifled with.

Furthermore, given their rarity, random encounters would be few and far between, and then there's the good chance your potential mate is related to you. Furthermore, the mother would not have the support of a band during pregnancy. The random method leaves the woman holding the bag, completely.

>>Also, people who lived in bands would be likely to mate, which produces the inbreeding problem. As you have said, people aren't always that picky. However, the Xambrians need to be. If mating is a formal event, the problem is lessened.

The bands are extremely flexible and in a constant change of flux as young Xambrians grow up and leave, mother arrive to bear and raise their children, older Xambrians coming together in order to share the knowledge and tell their stories. The groups are so ever changing that the same band might have a completely different set of Xambrians from year to year. The bands are small, (5-30 members), extremely mobile and primarily comprised of Older (old and venerable) and younger Xambrians (children to early adult). In other words, all those Xambrians who would have a hard time protecting themselves (crippled and handicapped as well - a lame Xambrian could still caste a spell).

When a woman gets pregnant she would join up with a band just long enough to have and raise her child (the younger mothers might even leave the child to be raised by the elders once it was weaned). Mating inside the bands is unlikely (old timers, kids and pregnant mother generally make poor sex partners)

The random method explains the low birth rate. Going along with this, a low birth rate means that you're actually unlikely to meet and mate with a relative - if you haven't got any brothers or sisters and blood cousins would be rare, not to mention that they're spread out all over the continent - make the chances of meeting with a relative with whom you might mate with unlikely.

>>As for the elders proscribing mating, by producing a large council pooling the knowledge of everyone's ancestry, they would be able to maximize genetic diversity. That's the whole idea. I'm presuming that this method didn't always exist, causing the inbreeding problem to begin with. Even the random encounter method would eventually lead to inbreeding, because the Xambrians would be limited to their range.

Such wide spread genetic mixing would eventually, within such a small population, produce a society in which everyone would become related, in some way, to everyone else. Random encounters are exactly that ... hit or miss opportunities that allow for proper genetic distribution. Sure there might be the occasional (how to put this delicately) misfire, but so what? It's not like it has never happen before.

Andrew & Monk on All This Junk:

>>t; The Xambrian stuff has been interesting but I think some goes a bit far trying to make the Xambrians a "regular" people with a culture, structure, etc. Recall, these are people driven by the very vocal spirits of the dead to kill. That's it.

>>I don't really buy that. If that was the complete case, then they wouldn't really last beyond one generation. Of course, you have the solution to that below.

Also leads to a pretty flat character and game play. They would quickly turn into mindless, spirit killing automations with only one goal. I love it as a generally held myth about their race thought.

>> One of the Tal books (forget which) mentioned the theory that Xambrians emerge from Omen full-grown and ready to go whenever one dies, keeping their numbers constant.

I can't find this reference in either the **WORLDBOOK**, **G EBOOK**, or **CYC III**. Could someone see if it's in the **CHRONICLES** or **SMR**?

Andreas

>>An example how I picture the meeting of two Xambrians. When Xambrians met they raise their hands, touch each others hand and silently nod.<snip>

This makes a great visual, but I think they might talk, if only to share a small piece of advise or news. "Don't travel through the Serpent Pass. Bandits have made an ambush near the north exit."

J.Dring on Omen

>>I'm not sure it can be qualified like that. I see it as neutral, neither good nor evil, just dedicated to a specific task: revenge. The further complication in my game is that the ancestor spirits themselves do NOT want the cycle broken, because they LIKE making their ancient foes suffer death again and again. They think final death is too good for the Reincarnators, so they oppose the Xambrians efforts to end it once and for all.

How can something be dedicated to revenge and remain neutral? Revenge motivated by what? Justice - vengeance - insanity? It cannot stand alone. Something is keeping those spirits on this plane, and whether good or evil it has enthralled the race of its ancestors to

accomplish its goals. What you've outlined here is an scenario for an EVIL Omen. If its likes seeing its foes suffer, over and over then it has become blinded by vengeance

>>[Immediate Reincarnation] Depends. It never game up in play, but I assumed that some kind of Will roll possibly would be required to see how much of his last life the Xambrian recalled. Given their solitary life and mission, I figured the "weakest" Xambrian had to be at least 8th level or so, which was okay for us since I was running a high-end game anyway.

But not for those of us who like low level campaigns. - this creates the kind of 'super-character' that in -- my opinion - completely ruins game play.

It removes any shred of humanity from the character, capable of killing anyone who stands between them and their mission and without any way to properly re-act with the outside world (no social skills what-so-ever). I think that in the long run, Xambrians of this type would eventually become unwelcome and forcibly driven out of in every civilized section of Talislanta.

>>Not true. Xambrians are detectives, trying to solve an ancient, mystical puzzle (how to stop Reincarnators from coming back). After all, when a Reincarnator is detected, its the ancestor spirits who move in, take charge, and kick ass.

You are given to much power to Omen. If they were indeed this powerful, they would have quickly wiped out all the Reincarnators (which btw you've made the Xambrians). I see Omen as fairly impotent, the only way it can re-act to the outside world is through its pawns.

"The acceptance of corporatism causes us to deny and undermine the legitimacy of the individual as citizen in a democracy."

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 20

John Harper

>>The Xambrians get a magic weapon, the ever-popular Xambrian Runesword. Until now, nothing has really been mentioned about these (not that I'm aware of, anyway... I am still missing a few Tal books). Anyway, my idea was that these weapons are used to permanently destroy Reincarnator spirits

In an early campaign I had created a powerful, ancient Numenian (Not Xambrian - Xambrians were pacifists and artists and at that time had no reason to create such a weapon) artifact called 'SoulShear' that not only killed the person but destroyed their soul as well. Nothing could ever grow in the patch where the body fell. Everyone wanted this sword, Rajans, Xambrians, the Lyceum the Xanadasians, the Ariane and the Mandalan. I had my players glancing over their shoulders as agents from a dozen different powers kept jumping out of the shadows.

I wholeheartedly, completely and without hesitation DO NOT recommend something like this to be given out to Players in their starting equipment or even make it a common artifact. There are a number of reasons for this:

1) After a few hundred years of bumping off Reincarnators, there wouldn't be any left. I have heard Xambrians described in these threads as Hunters... this is false. Xambrians aren't hunters. They are Exterminators. They want each and every Reincarnator destroyed. But they aren't perfect and may kill non-Reincarnators in the course of their quest. (see 2) In the hands of a few very powerful Xambrians the whole cultural quest could be over in a few years!

2) You're really going to piss off the Ariane, the Mandalan, the Xanadasians, and any other race that believes in reincarnation and likely any religion that believes in a soul. Think about it., you're destroying not only a life, but the very essence of life itself. This would be an abomination to any race that reveres life. The Ariane and the Xanadasians would likely make it a large part of their duties to see that these things were wiped off the face of the planet .. they would not take the chance that an accidental or over eager Xambrian might accidentally wipe out the next reincarnation of Hotan or Xanadas ... not to mention the hundreds of reincarnated souls of their race that have come back into new bodies.

I've always felt there was a connection between the Ariane and the Xambrians - some sort of mutual understanding that goes beyond themselves .. 'd really hate for them to become enemies. And lets face it, the Ariane would absolutely loathe these things.

3) Before anyone argues that these things could be tuned only to -annihilate- Reincarnators , first re-read 1) and then answer the question "What's the difference between a Reincarnator and an Incarnator?" Reincarnators generally are more powerful spirits that can immediately enter a new body after their death where Incarnators are

generally less powerful, often benign or harmless souls dragged into this plane by accident or magics. That's about it, either way they are the life essence of a once-living being - or soul. How are you going to differentiate between the good and the bad, the souls of common people, yours and mine?

"The acceptance of corporatism causes us to deny and undermine the legitimacy of the individual as citizen in a democracy."

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 21

Here are the paragraphs that started it all. I was writing a turn for my PBeM (hi Wade) and started think about what a Xambrian camp might look like.

"Shorty you smell wood smoke and hear the grunts of livestock. A small camp lies a few hundred meters way, a cluster of round, hide and bone tents around two large wagons.

An azorly sits feeding from an unidentifiable rotting corpse, nailed to a huge bleached-bone cross on top of one of the wagons.

A small collection of animals are milling around the tents; Land lizards, durge, greymanes, two woolly ogriphants and a towering megalodont- fifteen feet at the shoulder- lazing in the sun. On its back sits a small child with pale white skin and raven black hair. Barefoot and dressed only in a black slacks he sits playing a melancholy tune on a bone flute.

Suddenly the boy lets a sharp shrill note from the whistle. People begin to rush from the tents and wagons. A young woman tosses a quiver about her neck and rushes from the camp, an arrow cocked into a bow almost half again her height. She rushes out of the camp and stops two hundred paces away, the bow drawn and steady."

"The acceptance of corporatism causes us to deny and undermine the legitimacy of the individual as citizen in a democracy."

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 22

I'm loving the discussion on the Xambrians, who happen to be my favorite NPC characters in my games as well as one of my favorite player character types. Here's my 2 cents on a few issues:

> As for the runesword and its name. I don't like the idea of a simple bonus, that makes
> it a little ordinary. I would prefer that it possibly had anti-magic capabilities. Or that
> the Xambrian wielding it could "charge" it with counter-magics, this would be valuable
> enough.

In my game I give the Xambrians anti-magic abilities when on a "mission" to kill a Reincarnator, instead of giving those powers to a weapon I give them a natural magic resistance of 5% per level, a +3 to their will, +2 to perception, and a +3 that they can use once per day to any roll they want (Although they have to decide whether to add it or not BEFORE they make the roll) I do this because if you consider their attributes from the guidebook, they aren't that powerful, and if they are going around assassinating all these incredibly powerful evil wizards, well, they need a little edge to let them live up to their reputation. These powers are granted by the spirits of Omen, and only last until the Reincarnator is killed.

> As for the name, the value of the word "runesword" is that it is very visual. But it
> already has other associations and Tal is always an original. Thus, I think Soulblade
> would be good, or another one. If the sword is coated with ideograms, then Runesword
> may not be so appropriate.

I like the idea of a Soulblade. As a matter of fact my two NPC Xambrians have similar items; one uses a spear, the other a dagger. I never did explain where they got these items though. The idea of Omen enchanting them only for their quest is perfect. This whole idea is very similar to the morganti weapons from Steven Brust's Vlad Taltos series, which I'm sure all you Brust fans have realized. Anyone know how Morganti weapons were created in that series?

I don't like the idea that Xambrians are created at Omen fully grown, but it does make a great myth that would justify the mystery surrounding their past. I like to think that they do have a clan society similar to the Patryn in the Labyrinth, from the "Death Gate" series by Margaret Weiss & Tracy Hickman, when not wandering or on a quest, and that they long to rebuild their great cities and beautiful hanging gardens that were once the most exquisite of all Talislanta. In my campaign, one of my players has devoted his character to rebuilding Xambria, and is well on his way.

Makes for some great games, negotiating with the inhabitants of the Wilderlands, setting up trade, hiring an army to protect the city while under construction, etc.

Enough for now,
Wade Durant

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 23

I've been enjoying the many discussions going on here about Xambrians, and am very pleased to see that so many of you are interested in these characters. Lots of different viewpoints, which to me is very cool...

Here's a few more notes on Xambrians. Again, this stuff is not "official" in the dreaded old D&D sense of the word; it's just my POV. Hope you find something that can be used in your own campaigns...

1. The Tal10thA team (John Harper's snappy name for our little group of maniacs) is currently considering changing the name "runesword" to spiritblade or soulblade (still open to votes on this one, though the polls will be closing very soon). I really liked John's idea that the ancestral spirits invest the blade with force, and it looks like we're going to go with that.
2. Some years ago Ron Spencer and I began work on a Wizard Hunter graphic novel; a comic company snafu killed the project, but a script was finished and a few pages were sketched-out. Some of the art from this unfortunately aborted project will appear in Tal10thA. Just thought you'd like to know...
3. One of the things that came out of the graphic novel script was a refinement of the Xambrian ancestors' goal, which was stated as: "Justice, not Vengeance." For wizard hunters, the point is not so much to "kill" Reincarnators as it is to send them to their final judgment; this in turn allows the souls of their ancestors to find peace.
4. I see Reincarnators as spirit forms protected by a black magical "aura" or "ward" (for want of a better term) bestowed on them by Zahur. This aura/ward keeps Reincarnators from passing on to the next world and the final judgment that awaits them. Remove this aura and they revert to common spirit forms; hello Death, adios Reincarnator.
5. My original idea was that the only way to stop a Reincarnator from coming back time and time again was for a Xambrian to "kill" the Reincarnator, thereby sending it to its final judgment. Applying John's idea and the "aura" concept, I see it working more like this:
 - a) Only the Xambrian ancestors can invest a spiritblade with power;
 - b) Only a Xambrian can wield such a weapon;
 - c) The only thing that can dispel a Reincarnator's aura is a spiritblade.

This makes each Xambrian an instrument of his/her ancestors' desire to find peace/closure/release, which to me has a certain poetic justice.

That's how I'm looking at these characters at present. Your comments/opinions are welcome...

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 24

I forgot to mention in my last post:

In conclusion:

Wizard hunters do not actually "kill" Reincarnators; they destroy the black-magical protection that makes Reincarnators what they are. A spiritblade/soulblade does not "kill" souls (the "spirit/soul" part of the weapon's name is derived from the ancestral spirits that invest it with power when a Xambrian is on a spirit quest); instead, it is an anti-magical weapon, which I think fits in better with the Xambrian concept.

No special "kill shot" would be needed; every blow of a spirit/soulblade would weaken a Reincarnator's defenses. If reduced to "zero", the Reincarnator reverts to its natural, spirit form - and is in big, big trouble...

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 25

Matthew Webber wrote:

>> I wholeheartedly, completely and without hesitation DO NOT recommend something like this to be given out to Players in their starting equipment or even make it a common artifact. There are a number of reasons for this <<

I'll address each point separately.

>> 1) After a few hundred years of bumping off Reincarnators, there wouldn't be any left. [snip] In the hands of a few very powerful Xambrians the whole cultural quest could be over in a few years! <<

There are two reasons why I don't think this would happen.

A) Reincarnators are extremely dangerous opponents. They do not roll over and die when Hunters show up, regardless of the neat-o gear those Hunters are carrying. The Spiritblade gives the Hunters a *chance*, not certain victory.

B) Omen is not in a big freakin' hurry. The blade is only empowered to eliminate a single, specific Torquaran Reincarnator. It can't be used on everything in sight, not can it kill multiple Reincarnators in a single hunt (I'd really like to see the Xambrian that's capable of such a feat!).

>> 2) You're really going to piss off the Ariane, the Mandalan, and the Xanadasians, any other race that believes in reincarnation and likely any religion that believes in a soul. <<

I think SMS already cleared this up in his Spiritblade posts, but I'll touch on it again. The Spiritblade is empowered to effect a single, specific Reincarnator. It has no effect on souls not cloaked in Zahur's black-magics. The weapon does not destroy souls, rather it destroys the magics that allow Reincarnators to cheat Death in the Underworld.

>> 3) Before anyone argues that these things could be tuned only to -annihilate-Reincarnators, first re-read 1) and then answer the question "What's the difference between a Reincarnator and an Incarnator?" [snip] How are you going to differentiate between the good and the bad, the souls of common people, yours and mine? <<

Hmmm. Well, I could answer "How does the spiritblade differentiate between normal souls and Reincarnators?" in several ways.

"It's magical, and magic can do that kind of thing."

"Because Reincarnators are very unlike normal spirits in several ways, which make it easy to distinguish them. There are no "good" Reincarnators, so there's no need to worry."

"Because I made it up, and I say it can do that."

Anyway, I think SMS's clarification on what the magics of the blade actually do clears up this problem.

--- J

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 26

Aaron wrote:

>>> They are not always questing for Reincarnators, more than half the time they're just hunting down wizards for profit and to stay alive until Omen calls them. <<<

In my own personal game, it's much less than half the time. Xambrians in my game can expect to receive the call to Omen *maybe* three times in their life. Some Xambrians spend their entire existence hunting a single Reincarnator. Remember, Reincarnators are somewhat rare, there aren't hundreds of them on the material plane for legions of Xambrians to hunt. Omen need only empower a few hunters every year.

Also, Reincarnators occasionally kill the first few hunters sent out, and these hunters may have been "on the case" for years. Those Torquarans are no slouches, themselves.

Getting the call to Omen is a Big Deal to Xambrians, not a yearly or monthly event. And it's the waiting that gets to them. Most have the chance to establish a "normal" life (well, normal to a Xambrian, anyway), only to be called away to hunt a malign spirit force that will very likely kill them. Hooray.

--- J

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 27

First, just want to say that I agree with John Harper: Reincarnators are tough cookies, and are in no immediate danger of becoming extinct. They possess potent spell casting powers, and may have numerous and/or powerful allies. Plus, their ability to move from one body to another makes them very hard to track and "kill".

Here's a few more notes/musings on every Xambrian's favorite household appliance:

Spirit/soulblades don't necessarily have to be "tuned" to a specific Reincarnator in order to avoid making them too powerful in the context of a Tal campaign. As we are beginning to define them, these items are more like "anti-magic" or counter-magic weapons that have been invested with spirit-energy. They work especially well vs. the black magic that "cloaks" (good term, John) Reincarnators, but they do not destroy souls.

Other *possible* uses for spirit/soulblades (man, I'm getting tired of writing it like that - we need to decide on a name...):

1. vs. demons, devils, and similar creatures that a Reincarnator just might have on hand to protect him/her from quixotic Xambrians...
2. vs. other forms of enchantment. If the blade had a small amount of spirit force invested in it at all times it would be useful vs. spell casters of any sort - pretty handy, since many Xambrians are also bounty hunters who specialize in tracking down rogue wizards. As long as the weapon's power was limited for such "common" applications this might be a very desirable feature.

Just thinking out loud here...

SMS

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 28

SMS and everyone else,

I'd hesitate before you rule that only a Xambrian can destroy a Reincarnator. There has to be some other way for regular people. Admittedly, it should be much harder, but it should still be possible I think. I'm sure some really powerful creatures, Shaitan, black savants, maybe even a troupe of demons would be able to do it. Besides, what if the Reincarnators finally destroyed all the Xambrians, would they live forever? I don't like it, but I see what you're getting at. All I'm asking for is some other method such as necromantic counterspells. They're rare enough.

Aaron

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 29

Everyone,

I can't believe I forgot this, but now that I remembered I'll toss it in.

I wrote a novel a while ago (don't get excited, it kind of blows) about a Xambrian obsessed with Mordante, and his Xambrian lover, who doesn't want to hunt and kill anymore, she just wants to rebuild their kingdom and find peace again. (She also happens to be Mordante's wife, Melandre, who is really fed up with both sides killing each other, but you don't know that till the end). Anyway, in the book I had the spirits of Omen actually invade the Xambrian's eyes (not physiologically possible, but in myths the eyes really were the windows to the soul). So when a Xambrian was on a hunt his eyes would glow red with the spirits of Omen. The spirits gave him bonuses on will, etc, and when he found the Reincarnator the spirits would course through his body and end up in his clenched fists, finally firing out in the shape of a beaming sword.

Just thought you might like to know that,

Aaron

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 30

SMS spake:

>>Here's a few more notes/musings on every Xambrian's favorite household appliance:

Spirit/soulblades don't necessarily have to be "tuned" to a specific Reincarnator in order to avoid making them too powerful in the context of a Tal campaign. As we are beginning to define them, these items are more like "anti-magic" or counter-magic weapons that have been invested with spirit-energy. <<

That sounds good to me. As you say below, it makes the blade more user-friendly for the Xambrian's chosen profession, Wizard Hunting.

>> Other *possible* uses for spirit/soulblades (man, I'm getting tired of writing it like that - we need to decide on a name...) <<

I've already told SMS, but my vote is for Spiritblade.

>> 1. vs. demons, devils, and similar creatures that a Reincarnator just might have on hand to protect him/her from quixotic Xambrians...<<

Sounds good.

>> 2. vs. other forms of enchantment. If the blade had a small amount of spirit force invested in it at all times it would be useful vs. spell casters of any sort... <<

Gotcha. Switching into "rules mode" I get the following:

Xambrian Spiritblade

Longsword: DR 8.

+2 DR vs. extra-dimensional entities and spells of magical protection.

When the blade comes in contact with a magical field or aura, it permanently cancels a number of Spell Levels equal to its DR (8), + the Willpower of its wielder. Only Xambrians may wield these weapons.

So, if we decide that Zahur's "black magic" that keeps the Reincarnator coming back is a Level 100 Spell (about right, I think, considering it *is* cheating Death's power), the average Wizard Hunter needs to whack a Reincarnator about six or seven times with his Spiritblade to cancel the magic (Xambrians now have WIL +5 in Tal-10thA). Killing the host at that point is moot. In fact, skilled Xambrian Hunters can manage to get rid of the Reincarnator without harming the host too much (I did say *skilled*).

Of course, the problem is, while you're whacking this Reincarnator 7+ times, it's whacking you back. AND, it might decide to switch bodies at any moment (provided there's a body around... another reason why Xambrians often hunt alone).

In the new edition, Xambrians also have Anti-Magic powers that are not a part of their weapon, but having an empowered Spiritblade certainly makes them more effective.

--- J

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 31

On a general note, there are already Runeswords out there, see the Archaen Codex pg. 120 for -Archaen Runeswords.- "Spiritblades" is a better name anyway.

There are two reasons why I don't think this would happen. A) Reincarnators are extremely dangerous opponents. They do not roll over and die when Hunters show up, regardless of the neat-o gear those Hunters are carrying. The Spiritblade gives the Hunters a *chance*, not certain victory.

Something needs clarification here; How exactly do Reincarnators differ from normal spirits.. SMS stated that, "4. I see Reincarnators as spirit forms protected by a black magical "aura" or "ward" (for want of a better term) bestowed on them by Zahur. This aura/ward keeps Reincarnators from passing on to the next world and the final judgment that awaits them. Remove this aura and they revert to common spirit forms; hello Death, adios Reincarnator."

Where I was under the impression that Reincarnators were simply spirits invested with such power that they were able to break the "normal" routine of Death (be it reincarnation, an afterlife, whatever) and return as in a new body while still retaining their memories and abilities. Major spirits such as those of Hotan, Xanadas and those of the powerful Quaran Sorcerer Kings and to a lesser extent the whole Ariane, and Manadalan races could do this (basing these ideas on some pretty basic Buddhist dogma).

Killing the body wasn't enough to kill them as they would simply find the nearest 'new' body and move in. Only destroying the spirit in direct magical/spiritual combat could destroy (or weaken) it enough to be drawn into the realms of Death. (allowing other races a crack at them - I don't like the idea of only Xambrians being allowed to destroy Reincarnators) The 'spiritswords' attacked the spirit of a body directly, and could destroy it outright; no afterlife, no reincarnation - nothing except oblivion and non-existence. This is the way it has worked in my campaigns and will continue to work.

If this isn't the case, then how do spirits like Hotan differ from 'evil' Reincarnators?

>>B) Omen is not in a big freakin' hurry

this depends on your interpretation of Omen.

>>. The blade is only empowered to eliminate a single, specific Torquaran Reincarnator. It can't be used on everything in sight, not can it kill multiple Reincarnators in a single hunt (I'd really like to see the Xambrian that's capable of such a feat!).

This is the second thing that needs clarification. I thought Torquarans were a segment of the Rajan Nihilist Cult - what is their relation to the ancient Quarans? Besides

worship. Not every one can be a Reincarnator (though members of the upper echelons could be)

>>I think SMS already cleared this up in his Spiritblade posts, but I'll touch on it again. The Spiritblade is empowered to effect a single, specific Reincarnator. It has no effect on souls not cloaked in Zahur's black-magics. The weapon does not destroy souls, rather it destroys the magics that allow Reincarnators to cheat Death in the Underworld.

Makes them kind of dull for role play doesn't it? I still prefer the rare magical item approach where these items are difficult to get a hold of and even harder to hold on to.

>>Hmmm. Well, I could answer "How does the spiritblade differentiate between normal souls and Reincarnators?" in several ways.

>> It's magical, and magic can do that kind of thing

Run everyone! It's the old AD&D excuse!

>> Because Reincarnators are very unlike normal spirits in several ways, which make it easy to distinguish them. There are no "good" Reincarnators, so there's no need to worry.

Hotan, Xanadas, the Ariane mystics, the Mandalan Mystics, the Xanadasians, etc etc....

>> Because I made it up, and I say it can do that

I was only voicing an opinion. I dislike these swords for a number of reasons, none of which have been sufficiently cleared up for me to allow them into my campaigns, especially as starting equipment for my players. If you, or any one else chooses to do so then don't let me stop you.

"The acceptance of corporatism causes us to deny and undermine the legitimacy of the individual as citizen in a democracy."

Matthew Webber

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 32

SMS said:

- > 4. I see Reincarnators as spirit forms protected by a black magical "aura" or "ward"
- > (for want of a better term) bestowed on them by Zahur. This aura/ward keeps
- > Reincarnators from passing on to the next world and the final judgment that awaits
- > them. Remove this aura and they revert to common spirit forms; hello Death, adios
- > Reincarnator.

That's really good. I like that a lot. It's about time that a direct reference to Zahur was made for the Reincarnators power! Of course making a deal with Zahur means the Reincarnators would have to pay some sort of high price on their part... like eternally have to be doing Zahur's bidding/ obey his will... no 'good' behaviour... no reformed Reincarnator characters...always have to kill and destroy until they might be sick off it... but they have to keep doing his bidding because they can't afford to lose the 'aura' and meet Death...

- > a) only the Xambrian ancestors can invest a spiritblade with power;
- > b) only a Xambrian can wield such a weapon;
- > c) the only thing that can dispel a Reincarnator's aura is a spiritblade.

- > This makes each Xambrian an instrument of his/her ancestors' desire to find
- > peace/closure/release, which to me has a certain poetic justice.

Why the need of the blade? Why can't the spirits just possess/invest the power into the Xambrians themselves? The Xambrians themselves would then be cloaked in an 'aura' so that any weapon/method of attack they used would do the job of bringing down the Reincarnators aura. I don't see why the original idea of going to Omen and getting possessed themselves can't be incorporated to fit the idea of the Re-Incarnators aura without the need for creating 'possessed' weapons - they should be the 'weapon' themselves...

- > Spirit/soulblades don't necessarily have to be "tuned" to a specific Reincarnator in order
- > to avoid making them too powerful in the context of a Tal campaign. As we are
- > beginning to define them, these items are more like "anti-magic" or counter-magic
- > weapons that have been invested with spirit-energy. They work especially well vs. the
- > black magic that "cloaks" (good term, John) Reincarnators, but they do not destroy
- > souls.

I like this though/ I always thought that Xambrians should have anti-magic protection, especially after they had been to Omen...

- > 1. vs. demons, devils, and similar creatures that a Reincarnator just might have on hand
- > to protect him/her from quixotic Xambrians...

Also cool. I agree, they should also have stuff against these beasties...

- > 2. vs. other forms of enchantment. If the blade had a small amount of spirit force
- > invested in it at all times it would be useful vs. spell casters of any sort - pretty handy,
- > since many Xambrians are also bounty hunters who specialize in tracking down rogue
- > wizards. As long as the weapon's power was limited for such "common" applications
- > this might be a very desirable feature.

Yep. But again no need for a blade. Why not just a residual effect of having gone to Omen and been possessed/ invested by all those angry spirits?

JSH wrote:

- > I think the initial idea was that only Omen-empowered Xambrians could
- > *permanently* disincorporate a Reincarnator. Others can destroy them all they want,
- > they just keep coming back. But I do see what you mean. Still, I don't think even
- > especially powerful entities such as Shaitan or Demon-lords should be able to "beat" a
- > Reincarnator's magical protection. If Death (more powerful than all of them put
- > together) cannot.

I think some of the Shaitan would be able to destroy them if they set their mind to it since the magic is Zahurs.... Diabolus for instance. The magic would be more specific to not having Death be able to undo it... like a ward against Death... doesn't mean other just as powerful entities as Zahur wouldn't be able to counter that magic (if they were free to run around the material plane.... and since their not they might use their agents... e.g. Black Savants...).

MW wrote:

>> Because Reincarnators are very unlike normal spirits in several ways, which make it easy to distinguish them. There are no "good" Reincarnators, so there's no need to worry."

> Hotan, Xanadas, the Ariane mystics, the Mandalan Mystics, the Xanadasians, etc etc....

There is nothing to stop these guys having to face Death at the end of each life... but they are such good little boys and girls that Death would allow them to choose the form of their next life as reward rather than just the form/plane of existence being chosen for them in some Karmic sense – or rather they may live each life in a such a way that Death will judge them so that their next existence is the desired one. i.e. different way of reincarnating..

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 33

At 01:49 PM 6/8/97 -0700, you wrote:

> It has no effect on souls not cloaked in Zahur's black-magics. The weapon does not
> destroy souls, rather it destroys the magics that allow Reincarnators to cheat Death in
> the Underworld.

>

> "Because Reincarnators are very unlike normal spirits al ways, which make it
easy to distinguish them. There are no "good" Reincarnators, so there's no need to
worry."

> "Because I made it up, and I say it can do that."

May I point out a bit of difficulty in this whole process?

Death wants to claim Reincarnators. They are living against Death's powers. Torquar
are Rajans, and Rajans worship Death. If Reincarnators cheat Death, wouldn't Death
want the Rajan to do something about it? Or at least, wouldn't Death protect Rajan from
Reincarnators?

Unless... Death wants Reincarnators to be easy to find. (I think I'm reaching here.)

Anyway, does Death help out the Xambrian's? Is there some Presence of Death attendant
on any Xambrian's trying to kill/hunt a Reincarnator?

Bon Vie _
Teacup (_)]

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 34

Hey TeaCup -

<<Death wants to claim Reincarnators. >>

Not sure Death *wants* them, per se. But it is waiting for them, as it waits for all others. I see Death as pretty much neutral as regards most matters.

And also very patient...

<< Torquar are Rajans, and Rajans worship Death. If Reincarnators cheat Death, wouldn't Death want the Rajan to do something about it? Or at least, wouldn't Death protect Rajan from Reincarnators? >>

Interesting point. Rajans also revere the Torquaran Wizards (from whom Reincarnators were derived), whom they claim as their ancestors (though this is probably not true; more likely, Rajans were subjects/neomorphs of the Torquaran empire). One explanation: the Rajans believe the Torquaran-Zahur connection is just Xambrian propaganda; like modern-day Holocaust revisionists, they say that the Xambrians have made-up the whole story. That would allow them to believe that Reincarnators/Torquarans are servants or avatars of Death, or anything else they find convenient to their view of reality...

Good questions, Teal -

SMS

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 35

> Actually the problem is not the "excuse" but its overuse. IMO it is in fact a perfectly
> acceptable reason--part of the very POINT of magic is that it can do stuff that can't be
> explained rationally or in great detail. <snip>

IMO the problem is the excuse itself. It is a cop-out created by the hacks in order to explain poorly thought out fantasy worlds. Magic is a system, which is why the same spells work for different people. That's why specific ingredients are needed to create specific powders and potions. There are laws and rules that govern how magic works. Fantasy writers (at least the good ones) know this. Be it 'the will and the word' of David Eddings or the 'threads of elemental power' of Robert Jordan. There has to be some sort of cohesive system that governs the process or it becomes the unintelligible mess of AD&D.

Magic becomes and replaces science. By that I mean it becomes the study of the nature of the energies that guide, and the fundamental nature of, that universe. Now I don't expect authors to create an entirely new universe from the quarks up - but I do expect them to have a few basic points from which a consistent and believable (by that I mean an easy willing suspension of disbelief) platform can be based.

>> Xanadas is NOT a Reincarnator-- if he were, the Savants would not still be waiting for >> him to return from Death.

He might have been (see below)

>> I know Hotan developed Trans-Ascendancy, but I don't recall anything about him
>> living multiple lives (sorry, don't have time at the moment to look it up).

Hotan didn't create T-A he just learned it from the Ariane, he isn't even Ar But he did acquire the ability to reincarnate into the same form at will. There is some speculation as to whether Xanadas was a reincarnation. The Xanadasians (who refuse to comment on the Xanadas issue) say that Hotan is still around (from the Codex pg42)

>> I also don't recall anything about the Mandalans believing that they reincarnate. Sorry
>> I haven't time to verify this, but I did want to comment on Xanadas since I do know
>> that's the case.

You're right, this is from my campaign world where the Mandalans follow a nature/Buddhist philosophy. My mistake.

Let me see if I can pull this all Reincarnator mess together into a theory I'm happy with. Please note that everything written below is not intended to reflect or insult any modern religious theology.

One problem lies with the Ariane and transcendency. Now the Ariane and other followers of transcendency - reincarnate. They have almost their complete racial history recorded to prove this. Powerful Transcendental Mystics like Hotan are able to reincarnate at will.

Note that the Ariane are also widely regarded as the wisest of the Talislanta races and have survived not only the Great Disaster, but the destruction of their original world (Universe?)

Another problem lies with Disembodied Spirits, Incarnators and Shadow Wizards.

- The Thystram's Collectanea (written by SMS) states that Disembodied Spirits are the spirit (souls) of DESEASED CREATURES AND BEINGS (emphasis mine) that have "become lost or stranded en route to their next INCARNATION." (pg 106).
- Incarnators, (from CYC IV) are spirits that come back into the material plane, usually through Necromantic ritual. It does not state where they come back from but it is implied that they come back by choice. They have an ability usually attributed to Reincarnators in that they can steal bodies to inhabit. Though they prefer to take over fertilized eggs, and become reincarnated.
- Shadow Wizards are the spirit forms of diseased wizards that have retained their power after death.

Reincarnators are specifically the spirits of the necromancers of Quaran who have signed a pact with Zahur that they cannot be claimed by Death. Instead they return time and time again, retaining their knowledge and abilities through countless reincarnations.

Now,

All that exists in the universe has been present from creation, no new souls are created.

In a universe in which gods exist, there exists a competition (you cannot, by definition, own most of infinite) for souls. If this is not the case then holy wars or sacrifices would not occur.

The souls of the faithful and the sacrificed, after they pass into death, are collected and used by the specific deity as nourishment. Being drained of their experience and power until all that remains is a small nucleus of 'life'.

This small glimmer of life would be discarded and pass on into a new body where it could begin to grow, becoming reincarnated as a new being.

Disembodied Spirits are somehow missed being collected, perhaps the god needed a special (funeral) ritual in which to collect the soul, or they are not true believers, or they

are simply accidentally missed (whatever) and wind up wandering, trapped on the astral plane.

Now Incarnators could be two things (or both), first they could simply be Disembodied Spirits drawn out of the Astral Plane by magic ritual and take the opportunity to attempt a reincarnation, sometimes by force. OR perhaps the gods have stores of spirits (Soulgems come to mind), astral warehouses where the spirits wait until they are needed (an afterlife if you will, no one said that the place they are waiting couldn't be fun) and the Incarnators are drawn from there.

Some, powerful wizards and the like, have over the years tried to cheat death. Some like Reincarnators have made pacts with powerful extra-dimensional beings. But, like Drax, Zahur will claim what is his one day. Others like Shadow Wizards have found means through great personal power to retain a semblance of themselves after death (perhaps they signed a similar pact with Death).

-- I should stop for a minute to draw a difference between the entity of Death and event of death. Death is powerful deity and ruler of Underworld worshipped by the Rajans and the Quarans of old. Small 'd' death is merely the event at which life ends. The two are not mutually exclusive. --

Transcendental Mystics, because of their training and that they do not believe in a deity per say, pass relatively unscathed through the veil of death, retaining most of the memories of their past lives (at least unconsciously). Master Mystics have trained themselves to retain more of their memories and power.

..... well it's a theory anyway =)

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Matthew Webber

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 36

Just a little note on the "runesword" name and status. Does it have to be a sword. Someone suggested a spear and dagger. If any blade would do, then blade should be in the name. Either "Soulblade" or "Spiritblade". Soulblade sounds good to the ear.

I like the blade and not the person being possessed of magic powers, since this makes it (to use Champions terminology) an obvious, accessible focus. The sword can be taken away and even used against the character. This makes for more GM story control and allows a limit if the sword proves to be too powerful for any one adventure.

So, no one liked the secret society idea. Oh well.

Now onto the Gatherum/Elder debate, all those tired of this, please hit 'N' or 'Next message' or whatever:

On Sun, 8 Jun 1997, Matthew Webber wrote:

- > Yes but the Omen doesn't contain only Xambrian skulls/spirits. There could easily be
- > dozens of spirits trapped inside that want to get out. Perhaps gone mad trapped forever
- > with these vengeful spirits whose passions keep all within trapped in the Material
- > plane.

Although there may be odd mad spirits within Omen, this doesn't nullify its collective power. Furthermore, even foreign spirits would be motivated to bring justice to the Quarans that killed them. What could any minority of spirits do in the face of thousands or millions that compose Omen? And if one did possess a Xambrian, they would certainly be prepared to deal with that. This falls into the interesting scenario category.

- > No matter how good they are, they are a small force, usually working alone (and three
- > mounted Araq are gonna spoil ANYONE's day.) and also they are specialized to fight
- > Magic Users. Their spells are normally counters and hence pretty useless when dealing
- > with none mages (no good casting Anti-Magical Barrier if there's no barrier to begin
- > with). Which puts them at a disadvantage when fighting bandits, wild creatures and
- > anyone who has devoted their lives to fighting. (Primary Combat) - in my campaigns
- > they shun all combat that isn't directly related to what they're doing. This made sense
- > as they are already small in number and wasting you're life in a tavern brawl would be
- > utter wasteful

Anything along this line is a War scenario. Certainly the entire Xambrian race could handle three Araq. It is well possible that we are seeing different numbers here. I am assuming that the Xambrians are more than a thousand, since they are not qualified as "a few hundred" in the text like Kharakhans and Callidians. If you think the Xambrians are fewer than this, when then no wonder you think this is a bad idea.

You could take this argument to other races for perspective. Should the Cymrilians stop the Magical Fair because the Tanasians might attack? Should the Clash of Champions not be held because one side might attack the other? If they did, the outcome would be uncertain and falls under politics. Furthermore, the only people really motivated to attack them they are equipped to handle. Would the Za raid the most vengeful race on the planet for a few equus when they can trade? They might raid a band, but to disturb the Xambrians holy ceremony is another deal.

Also, Omen has the power of prophecy. Thus, the Xambrians would already know ahead of time if there was going to be a problem. How could anyone get around that? Remember the Xambrians are uniquely qualified to deal with any magical monkey wrenching.

(on separating force)

- > Why not knock these down even more, having small bands and individuals stopping by
- > throughout the year, each proceeding through the ancient rituals and ceremonies. Small
- > bands might not attract the notice of more the more powerful spirit forces that could
- > overcome Omen - and superstitions keeping away bandits and raiders - who might be
- > convinced to overcome their fears for a larger prize.

For the very reasons of security you have already brought up. The entire race plopping down all at once is pretty secure for force of numbers. If Omen was the place of regular visitations by small bands, then these small bands become a regular food source for various critters. Omen would be the equivalent of a watering hole and staked out for the chance of a meal. I don't see how the Gatherum would be considered a prize or likely target. Bandits tend to choose targets they are certain they can overcome with little difficulty. The Gatherum is certainly not that.

- > The bands are extremely flexible and in a constant change of flux as young Xambrians
- > grow up and leave, mother arrive to bear and raise their children, older Xambrians
- > coming together in order to share the knowledge and tell their stories. The groups are
- > so ever changing that the same band might have a completely different set of
- > Xambrians from year to year. The bands are small, (5-30 members), extremely mobile
- > and primarily comprised of Older (old and venerable) and younger Xambrians
- > (children to early adult). In other words, all those Xambrians who would have a hard
- > time protecting themselves (crippled and handicapped as well - a lame Xambrian could
- > still caste a spell).

>

- > When a woman gets pregnant she would join up with a band just long enough to have
- > and raise her child (the younger mothers might even leave the child raised by the
- > elders once it was weaned). Mating inside the bands is unlikely (old timers, kids and
- > pregnant mother generally make poor sex partners)

>

- > The random method explains the low birth rate. Going along with this, a low birth rate
- > means that you're actually unlikely to meet and mate with a relative - if you haven't got
- > any brothers or sisters and blood cousins would be rare, not to mention that they're

- > spread out all over the continent - make the chances of meeting with a relative with
- > whom you might mate with unlikely.

You are forgetting such considerations as range and work load. There would have to be a population of adults to care for the children and elderly in bands. You are also presuming enough range that every Xambrian has access to any other Xambrian and is not limited by distance or geography. Bands and individuals would fall into ranges they are familiar with. These ranges, overlapped, might spread over the continent. But the available population to breed without the Gatherum becomes limited. Wandering the breadth of the continent is a little much to ask of anyone. Low birth rate also means fewer people in the gene pool which means less genetic diversity which again means inbreeding. More on healthy gene pools below.

- > Such wide spread genetic mixing would eventually, within such a small population,
- > produce a society in which everyone would become related, in some way, to everyone
- > else. Random encounters are exactly that ... hit or miss opportunities that allow for
- > proper genetic distribution. Sure there might be the occasional (how to put this
- > delicately) misfire, but so what? It's not like it has never happen before.

Everyone being related at some level is not bad, as long as there are enough individuals to prevent recessive genes becoming the norm. You would be surprised to find out how closely related that guy in the urinal next to you is, no matter his race. If the gene pool is so small that recessive genes are a problem no matter what, then it doesn't matter, although arranged breeding gives them more time.

The random model, considering range, increased likelihood of inbreeding, fertility timing and general defense means a viable generation becomes a miracle. And then the impregnated female, a delicate condition even early (40% of pregnancies spontaneously abort, often without the woman knowing, it appears as a menstrual cycle), must wander for who knows how long to find a band. This seems outright wrong.

It could also be considered sexist. The male walks but the female raises the baby. I am presuming that adults spend some time in bands, and that men would share responsibility to raise children in their band. Not their own children, but in the overall scheme they are pulling their parental weight.

The point of the Gatherum is to maximize genetic diversity amongst a population smart enough to do so. They get 100% genetic efficiency this way. They are a fractalized population unable to enjoy things like genetic drift and other methods of genetic exchange between smaller populations. The Gatherum nips all the classic small, dispersed population problems in the bud.

In conclusion:

The Xambrians would follow the very basic rules of cultural adaptation and form social groups, maximize genetic diversity and have a hierarchical structure. This means some

mechanic to overcome their small and widespread population and someone who would make big decisions that others would follow for the good of all.

The Xambrians form into bands for protection of the aged and the young. These bands serve to educate the young of their culture.

The Gatherum is both for cultural exchange but mostly to make the most out of a limited gene pool.

The Elders make these decisions and perhaps many others. They are the best qualified to do so.

That's about it for now.

Monk

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 37

Hello People:

This is just a small comment about this whole discussion. I am going to quote Darius on this one because I lost the original posts.

Darius wrote:

>

> Sorry everyone, I was losing track of how we got into this discussion, so I'm going to
> re-quote some stuff, since I'm not sure my last post quite made the point I wanted it to.

>

>> John Harper wrote

>> Hmm. Well, I could answer "How does the spiritblade differentiate between normal
>> souls and Reincarnators?" in several ways.

>> It's magical, and magic can do that kind of thing

I thought that the spiritblade (I like that name better than soulblade) had some kind of enchantment (granted by the spirits of Omen, right?) which enable it with the ability to destroy magical auras, in this case, the protective aura of a Reincarnator. So, the spiritblade is not used against the spirit, rather it attacks the aura of the spirit. Therefore, if a "normal soul is around and it is attacked by a Xambrian with a spiritblade, no harm would be done because it does not have a protective aura.

Basically, a Xambrian would destroy the protective aura without even harming the Reincarnator. Now, without his aura, the Reincarnator would have to face his final death, or should I say DEATH? In this way, justice is served because those who had escaped the final judgment will finally meet justice, and the spirits of his victims would finally rest in peace.

By the way, I like the concept of this protective aura being more like a "cloak" (magical, of course) that renders invisible the protected being from the eyes of DEATH. If it is not too late (but I doubt it) can the "spiritblade" be named after it function as a weapon of justice? Like "justiceblade" or something...

WILSON

Roleplayers are made of imagination.

Rollplayers are made of luck.

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 38

The mighty blade came crashing down, severing the heads of the three Xambrians on the block. The heads were quickly picked up by faceless minions, and placed on brass trays. The Necromancer gestured over the heads, and spoke foul words of power. A black mist rose from the trays, engulfing the decapitated heads. The mist cleared, and the Necromancer looked into the opened, blinking eyes of the Xambrians. "Look, see your bodies burn. Know the power of the infernal flame!!" More minions threw the headless bodies into the fire-pits. Their mouths gaping, the heads screamed soundless cries of pain, as their bodies were turned to ash by the red and black flames. As the power flowed through his body, the Necromancer laughed, a hollow, evil sound. He gestured, and the mists rose again from the trays, this time leaving behind gleaming white bone.

Payback is a bitch...

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 39

Here's an interesting thought or four:

Why should the Xambrians be concerned with inbreeding at all? Perhaps their close contact with the world of Spirit is enough to "burn out" the bad, recessive traits inbreeding brings out so well. Or maybe in the good-old-days, there was some happy magical tinkering that eliminated the "bad" genetic code. Or perhaps the Xambrians want to interbreed, bringing the desirable qualities (necessary for stalking Reincarnators) to the fore, and not caring about the occasional mentally or physically crippled individual. Probably, these unfortunates are killed at birth, or at the onset of their "deformity." There are plenty of examples of this in fiction, and the Xambrians are supposed to be ruthless...

Another observation: The surviving Xambrians probably didn't number in the range necessary for species survival. So, there is something keeping them going. This leads to another possibility -- Xambrian blood runs true. They can mate with anyone, but the offspring is always Xambrian. (I seem to remember another instance of this, but I'm too lazy to look it up)

So, there are many different angles on this, not all of them as benevolent as we've seen so far. Also, remember, Xambrians would be watched closely by many different beings... some to help, some to hinder. The survival of the race this long indicates either a supernatural robustness, or magical meddling at some point.

Well, that's my two yatma's worth,

Vaya con Queso,

);, Mustafa

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 40

>> Although there may be odd mad spirits within Omen, this doesn't nullify its collective power. Furthermore, even foreign spirits would be motivated to bring justice to the Quarans that killed them. What could any minority of spirits do in the face of thousands or millions that compose Omen? And if one did possess a Xambrian, they would certainly be prepared to deal with that. This falls into the interesting scenario category.

The odd mad spirit? The whole mountain's looney (though this is a matter of opinion).

>> Anything along this line is a War scenario. Certainly the entire Xambrian race could handle three Araq. It is well possible that we are seeing different numbers here. I am assuming that the Xambrians are more than a thousand, since they are not qualified as "a few Hundred" in the text like Kharakhans and Callidians. If you think the Xambrians are fewer than this, when then no wonder you think this is a bad idea.

I didn't mean a small force of Xambrians, I meant that one lone Xambrians is as vulnerable to the dangers of the Wilderlands as a Cymrilian Warrior-Mage or Phantasian Guardian. Well ... sort of ... the Xambrians have a few things going for them 1) they know the Wilderlands, there not as likely as a Cymrilian to wander into a dangerous area. 2) the aura of danger and unpredictability that cloaks them. Other races avoid and fear them. But this doesn't mean that a hungry Araq or greedy Za wouldn't take a crack at one if they thought they stood a good chance of winning.

The matter of numbers is interesting, I pictured about fifty thousand which is probably at the upper end of the scale, but this also goes along with my idea that Omen is a little flakey and out-of-touch. A LOT less than fifty thousand escaped the fire-pits, but over the millenniums they've been slowly re-building, trying to forge a new place in the world. But Omen keeps them on this mission of vengeance that is actually holding back any cultural development and killing their children by the hundreds. No wonder they tend to be out of sorts.

Granted all this is my own campaign world, I'd like to hear how things work in others, especially those with fewer/more Xambrians.

>> You could take this argument to other races for perspective. Should the Cymrilians stop the Magical Fair because the Tanasians might attack? Should the Clash of Champions not be held because one side might attack the other? If they did, the outcome would be uncertain and falls under politics. Furthermore, the only people really motivated to attack them they are equipped to handle. Would the Za raid the most vengeful race on the planet for a few equus when they can trade? They might raid a band, but to disturb the Xambrians holy ceremony is another deal.

Granted, a Za tribe wouldn't likely try to attack an entire nation - but the SMR might, especially if they thought they might fight against them, or a Reincarnator could gather

up a small army and take a shot, or a Cabal of evil wizards, or a Shaitan,- Zahur army of devils, or a Void demon could accidentally come through at Omen (it is an area of fairly thin reality), or a freak storm, or a plague, or a stampede of megalodonts, or a swarm of chigs, or an attack by a bunny with big pointy sharp teeth.

My point is that besides being vengeful, there are also extremely paranoid. Any or all of those reasons would keep them from gathering at one place Gathering at one place is what almost got them wiped out all those millennium ago.

>> Also, Omen has the power of prophecy. Thus, the Xambrians would already know ahead of time if there was going to be a problem. How could anyone get around that? Remember the Xambrians are uniquely qualified to deal with any magical monkey wrenching.

Prophecy is far from an exact science, especially if a few hundred thousand, insane spirits of a dozen different races are only looking for what they wants to see.

>> For the very reasons of security you have already brought up. The entire race plopping down all at once is pretty secure for force of numbers. If Omen was the place of regular visitations by small bands, then these small bands become a regular food source for various critters. Omen would be the equivalent of a watering hole and staked out for the chance of a meal.

I don't see how the Gatherum would be considered a prize or likely target. Bandits tend to choose targets they are certain they can overcome with little difficulty. The Gatherum is certainly not that.

Teacup answered:

Do you eat in the heart of "Bad Magic" territory?

I don't think that any sane wild animals would go within miles of Omen, but there would be the occasional malavrax sure. Small time bandits wouldn't either, there is too much superstition wrapped up around Omen and Xambrians to convince a bunch of illiterate, not-to bright bandits to ride up to a mountain of skulls (with weird voices on the winds and in their minds) and go looking for a small group of chaotic, well trained wizard-killers who may or may not be around at the time. The treats are all LARGE scale, war-scenario type stuff that the Xambrians would be worried about. And if the occasional band of twenty gets wiped out by whatever, it's not nearly as damaging as if half the entire population went.

>> You are forgetting such considerations as range and work load. There would have to be a population of adults to care for the children and elderly in bands. You are also presuming enough range that every Xambrian has access to any other Xambrian and is not limited by distance or geography. Bands and individuals would fall into ranges they are familiar with. These ranges, overlapped, might spread over the continent. But the

available population to breed without the Gatherum becomes limited. Wandering the breath of the continent is a little much to ask of anyone.

Low birth rate also means fewer people in the gene pool which means less genetic diversity which again means inbreeding. More on healthy gene pools below.

Older Xambrians those entering into old-age, a few adults, and the older children would raise the young (were not talking about hundreds of children, at most ten between the ages of two and thirteen in a large band at one time)

The bands would follow familiar 'safe' paths through the continent, but most would stay within the Wilderlands, maybe venturing north and west slightly. They would know many secret safe paths that would avoid cities, areas of major population and known dangers. And most people, caravans and natives would leave them alone, Xambrians are FEARED and distrusted, throughout the continent.

But the band's ever changing membership might mean that one year they use one path to go south, the next they head west into Sindar, the year after into Golarin. Fairly random to avoid being pegged down or tracked.

>> Everyone being related at some level is not bad, as long as there are enough individuals to prevent recessive genes becoming the norm. You would be surprised to find out how closely related that guy in the urinal next to you is, no matter his race. If the gene pool is so small that recessive genes are a problem no matter what, then it doesn't matter, although arranged breeding gives them more time.

>> The point of the Gatherum is to maximize genetic diversity amongst a population smart enough to do so. They get 100% genetic efficiency this way. They are a fractalized population unable to enjoy things like genetic drift and other methods of genetic exchange between smaller populations. The Gatherum nips all the classic small, dispersed population problems in the bud.

This all depends on you're estimates of the number of Xambrians, I tend to favor the high end (no particular reason) so this is not so much of a problem. Yes certainly in smaller pop. scenarios genetic distribution would be a major obstacle. I'm not certain how that would be handled, I'll have to see if I can find any examples of 'human historically' cases.

>> The random model, considering range, increased likelihood of inbreeding, fertility timing and general defense means a viable generation becomes a miracle. And then the impregnated female, a delicate condition even early (4 weeks) aborts spontaneously, often without the woman knowing, it appears as a menstrual cycle), must wander for who knows how long to find a band. This seems outright wrong.

Only individuals wander the continent (few Wizard hunting jobs are going to be in the Wilderlands - they'd be more common in L'Haan, Cymril, Zandir, Farad, and other such places)

It's the bands that would be concentrated within the Wilderlands, it has the space and the freedom they need, and most importantly it's close to Omen. Despite being loners at heart, they often wander from band to band, spending a few days with every one they encounter; exchanging news and goods, meeting other Xambrians... this would be a prime meeting place for couples to meet. And after they spend a year alone together out in the wilds until she winds up pregnant. She follows a known path, then she would likely come across a band sooner or later. The father would accompany the woman at least until she found a band to stay with.

And I'm sure that in an emergency most 'civilized' races would take in a pregnant woman in distress, no matter what her race. The Maruk would do it because they'd think it was bad luck not to (especially with a upset pappy standing over them), the Danuvians would be sympathetic to any woman warrior, the Hadjin would do it if you paid them enough and the Dracartans would do it because it would be the right thing to do.

>> It could also be considered sexist. The male walks but the female raises the baby. I am presuming that adults spend some time in bands, and that men would share responsibility to raise children in their band. Not their own children, but in the overall scheme they are pulling their parental weight.

In my scenario the women, especially young ones walk too, leaving the baby to be raised by the band as soon as it's weaned. (who said life wasn't sexist anyway?)

The children are taught to be self-reliant and non-dependent and not having prominent parental figures would go a long way in developing this.

In conclusion:

>> The Xambrians would follow the very basic rules of cultural adaptation and form social groups, maximize genetic diversity and have a hierarchical structure. This means some mechanism to overcome their small and widespread population and someone who would make big decisions that others would follow for the good of all.

How is this rectified against their anti-social cultural make up? Xambrians, unlike humans, are not true social animals and so the basic rules go out the window. They do have genetic and basic survival factors pulling them together, but an entire history, upbringing, and life-time of being alone pulling them apart. Think tigers, not lions.

>> The Xambrians form into bands for protection of the aged and the young. These bands serve to educate the young of their culture.

I've always thought this

>> The Gatherum is both for cultural exchange but mostly to make the most out of a limited gene pool.

But goes against their anti-social and paranoid tendencies.

>> The Elders make these decisions and perhaps many others. They are the best qualified to do so.

This I really have problems with, the only authority I can see a Xambrians following is that of Omen. They give out their trust VERY rarely and I don't think they would respond well to having Xambrians they don't know telling them what to do. Elders guide and teach certainly. Lead? Never.

"The acceptance of corporatism causes us to deny and undermine the legitimacy of the individual as citizen in a democracy."

Matthew Webber
<http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Cavern/2295/>

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 41

WARNING! ANOTHER LONG POST!

Just when you thought the Xambrian discussion was over. I feel the need to explain why I've thought it is imperative that Xambrians have some sort of genetic control at some length since I feel I'm being misunderstood. There are also some misconceptions out there.

The Xambrians, according to the SMS model, come from a handful of survivors after the reign of the Quaran. This small, founding population is indicative of numerous genetic problems later on. I have already suggested that the Xambrians are tall and gaunt due to this small genetic diversity. They are inbred traits from that first small population.

Now, in the present, there are more Xambrians, all of whom date back to that first population. This can cause numerous problems. Case studies for our world include Soviet Jews, which have a serious problem with Tay-Sachs disease, a fatal genetic disease that comes from a recessive trait. Another example is an island with a Gaelic name I couldn't hope to spell, a colony founded by a small population of Scots. The island had to be evacuated due to geological instability. The island was depopulated during this process. It was found that almost half of the few hundred inhabitants had a recessive gene based eye disease that is extremely rare. Usually only one in every 100,000 have it.

These are two real world cases of the problem of a small founding population. Presuming that Xambrians cannot breed with other races, they are continually limited to their initial gene pool. Care must be taken to maximize gene flow and hybrid vigor. People (including Mustafa) may argue that they may not care, but in order to continue their mission, their race must survive. Furthermore, they cannot succeed if they are having to deal with genetic deformities. Finally, they need diversity in their genetics to protect against diseases that prey on certain genetic traits. The reason for the Irish Potato Famine was that all the potatoes of Ireland probably came from one ship (a crashed Spanish warship) which in turn probably came from one field in South America. The blight preyed easily on the genetically similar potatoes. The Xambrians need to be wary of the same trap.

[Incidentally, this also means that Thralls need to be resistant to disease. Free of recessive genes, they would need this natural defense, to protect against their only genetic inequity. Perhaps a good reason why the disease carrying Tazian fly shows no interest in them]

One of the major problems of endangered species is that, even if you manage to increase the numbers, they still have a low gene flow. This alone may kill them. Some biologists argue that trying to preserve endangered species is futile for this very reason and we should concentrate our efforts elsewhere.

The need for hybrid vigor and gene flow is more to ask of random encounters than possible, due to the limited nature of the genetic diversity. Thus a pooled knowledge decision made by a council. The Xambrians are smart enough to do this, thus they would.

Matthew:

>> Xambrians, unlike humans, are not true social animals. Basic rules go out the window.

Not so fast cowboy. Xambrians are practicing cultural evolution just like people do. What you are saying is that they are exempt from some of the basic rules of game. I don't buy that. They need to follow all the rules to make it effective. Every nation or race of people does this. There is certainly a great diversity within human cultures. Some of which are more bizarre and antisocial than the Xambrians. The rules can and do accommodate the Xambrians and their lifestyle.

In other matters, you are presuming that Xambrians would be paranoid with each other. To be paranoid to meet together as a nation. There is no real reason for this paranoia, in fact, they would be likely to help each other whenever possible. John Harper, I believe, suggested that Xambrians are immune to Quaranian possession. Given this, there is no reason for them to be afraid of each other when they are the only people they can really trust.

Furthermore, the Xambrians are noble. Not to gather at Omen together would be a decision made out of fear. Sure, they might get attacked there. It could happen. This doesn't spell their certain doom and certainly would be a rare event, not a tradition. But they have a right to gather and honor their dead together. Let nothing stand in their way. A decision made of fear of reprisal or exploitation would rob them of their nobility.

As for the Elder question, you are seeing Xambrians as too independent to listen to anyone else telling them what to do. This, to be honest, makes them immature. They hold their culture above all. Of course they would listen to their elders. They are the ones who know their culture better than anyone. The Xambrians respect their culture and would, in turn, respect their elders. This is well modeled in the real world and NOT listening to elders is a modern thing.

Also, the elders give us another archetype. The Xambrian Elder would be less physically able, have Primary Magic and Combat Training/Rudimentary Combat. May be found abroad seeking information on the past, digging in ruins and rooting around in libraries.

Finally, the Gatherum model, including the seeking out of bones, the lamenting, the breeding process, all provide potential adventure hooks. A macabre Sindaran collector has a skeleton stolen, and hires the PCs to find it. After some red herrings, they find that it was a Xambrian skeleton, and is on its way to Omen. Or the PCs are directed to give a package to a particular Xambrian, who is currently attending the Lament at Omen. How

will the PCs find him? How will the Xambrians react to their presence? Or, a dying Xambrian elder gives the PCs an enigmatic clue. What does it mean? Who does it involve. To make matters worse, Xambrians are pursuing them, do they want the body of the elder, or something else?

Teacup:

>> This is a fallacy as has been pointed out by... I can't remember who. A small population that is Closed eventually weeds out the recessives precisely because they concentrate, and the individuals die or fail to reproduce. What is dangerous is a small population that receives a periodic influx of new genes, including new recessive liabilities.

Obviously, the population has to be big enough to survive the weeding out process, too.

You are challenging very real world examples of genetic inbreeding without listing a source, case study, context or time scale. Citing an unseen authority is a fallacy "I heard p is true therefore p is true" and so is "p is true in one example therefore p is true." Could you be more thorough please? A recessive gene does not automatically mean infertility. Though that is a possible problem. And I don't think the Xambrian population, initial or modern, is large enough to survive this "weeding out".

I've really enjoyed this Xambrian discussion. But it's taken away from time to write other things. I am working on a Demo game scenario using Xambrians. I'll post it when I'm done. That is, if you guys don't mind (Hardeharhar).

Deus tibi adsit,

Monk (")

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{_+_}  
| |  
| |
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Xambrian Discussions: Part 42

WARNING! POSTED AD HOC AND WHILE SUCCUMBING TO THE CHARMS OF SWEET NARCOLEPSY!

In a recent post, Monk, using evidence of earth human populations, contends that the present-day Xambrians, descended from a relatively small "founding stock", would be painfully vulnerable to the effects of a 'genetic bottleneck/founder's effect'.

In terse, I believe that there are a whole host of variables that could be significant in a situation like this that could help to make the Xambrian population less assailable to such predicaments.

For one thing, in order for harmful negative effects to show themselves, this would mean that there had to be such genes already present (or ok, mutated!) in the population (which granted, wouldn't be a stretch by any means) but we don't have to accept this. Maybe there wasn't.

For another, things like Tay-Sachs and Sickle-shaped red blood cells-- both of which are ok if heterozygous but lethal if homozygous-- are around because in their heterozygous forms, they offered some advantage to the folks that had them--e.g. sickle-shaped cells offered better resistance to most malaria strains. In order for a lethal gene to spread amongst the surviving Xambrians, it would have to either a.) be **STRONGLY** present in the original population and b.) offer some sort of advantage and/or show itself only after breeding age--when it would have already been passed onto the next generation.

Of course, Monk may not be thinking about lethal genes anyway, but other things like short-sightedness, which would be annoying, but probably wouldn't interfere with survival to breeding age and ultimately, procreation--unless we're talking **SEVERE** myopia.

Finally, one other variable that could help Xambrians would be the average degree of variation (polytheism & polymorphism) in the typical Xambrian. It's true that the physical descriptions of Xambrians doesn't make them sound very different from each other, but that is only an external description, and certainly isn't an index at the genomic level. True, it is suggestive, but its also one-dimensional. There may be a high rate of genetic differentiation amongst Xambrians while inversely, not a high variety of phenotypic expression. The point is this--some species are naturally more variable than others, both temperamentally and physically--not that its always correlated...there are theories as to why certain populations and species would be more variable, but I don't think I'll get into that. My point here is simply that if Xambrians had a high degree of variation to begin with, and especially if the rate of genetic recombination is high, then occasional inbreeding should not be that disastrous.

Yours in fealty to Talislanta,
Siamak, the Black-wearin' Rasmirin'

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 43

> Not so fast cowboy. Xambrians are practicing cultural evolution just like people do. What you are saying is that they are exempt from some of the basic rules of game. I don't buy that. They need to follow all the rules to make it effective. Every nation or race of people does this. There is certainly a great diversity within human cultures. Some of which are more bizarre and antisocial than the Xambrians. The rules can and do accommodate the Xambrians and their lifestyle.

Okay, maybe I should have said -some- of the rules go out the window, but we're into pure fantasy here (Xambrians aren't even 'men'), so we can make up the rules into anything we want.

I don't think that the Xambrians have undergone cultural evolution in many thousands of years. Why? Omen.

Omen would not want/allow Xambrians to evolve past their current point, it has spent a great deal of time honing them to a fine point of ruthlessness. It wouldn't want them reviving their social, musical and artistic roots, it would just detract from the current task. It would teach them about what they lost, but it wouldn't want them reviving it just yet. Of course this all depends on your take on Omen. But wouldn't a more benevolent Omen be teaching Xambrians some of the artistic skills they lost?

>

> In other matters, you are presuming that Xambrians would be paranoid with each other. To paranoid to meet together as a nation. There is not real reason for this paranoia, in fact, they would be likely to help each other whenever possible. John Harper, I believe, suggested that Xambrians are immune to Quaranian possession. Given this, there is no reason for them to be afraid of each other when they are the only people they can really trust.

I don't think its a matter of paranoia, just a overriding tendency towards the singular. They have been taught, and had driven into them since birth that the only person they can count on is themselves. They form no close family ties and self sufficiency is a cornerstone of their makeup. They spend years alone in the wilderness, totally focused on one goal. It would be hard for them to just drop this once a year and all come together with thousands of others and partake in what amounts to a purely social event. Smaller, more flexible groups would allow for racial/cultural interaction without exposing them to overwhelming cultural overload and the threat of outside risks. I'll agree that the only person they could ever truly trust would be another Xambrian, but I don't think they'd be willing to give their trust easily to ANYone.

> Furthermore, the Xambrians are noble. Not to gather at Omen together would be a decision made out of fear. Sure, they might get attacked there. It could happen. This doesn't spell their certain doom and certainly would be a rare event, not a tradition. But

they have a right to gather and honor their dead together. Let nothing stand in their way. A decision made of fear of reprisal or exploitation would rob them of their nobility.

This is a matter of interpretation but I don't remember coming across anything that said Xambrians are noble. "Chaotic and unpredictable" (Guidebook) and "grim and moody" (Worldbook) yes, but never noble. I would think them capable of killing innocents who got in the way of their final goal.

Try this scenario; A baby is born to a poor Maruk family. The baby and mother lie sleeping under the watchful eye of a goodhearted Medicant. Suddenly the door explodes into a million wooden shards, a black cloaked figure silhouetted in the shattered doorframe. The medicant rushes to protect his patients, and is flung backwards through the worm eaten walls and lies broken in the dust. The Xambrian pulls the wailing child from his mother's arms and carries it from the tiny shack. With a sickening crunch the wailing suddenly stops.

-The child was a Reincarnator, but we have a dead Maruk mother along the way.

The Xambrians, while far from cowardly, aren't stupid. Just the possibility of a disaster would keep them from gathering together. It was their togetherness and grouped population that allowed them to be so easily massacred by the Quaran, they'd not be willing to repeat the mistake.

> As for the Elder question, you are seeing Xambrians as too independent to listen to anyone else telling them what to do. This, to be honest, makes them immature. They hold their culture above all. Of course they would listen to their elders. They are the ones who know their culture better than anyone. The Xambrians respect their culture and would, in turn, respect their elders. This is well modeled in the real world and NOT listening to elders is a modern thing.

They would respect and listen to the advice of the elders, but I don't think they'd be willing to just arbitrarily follow the orders of an elder they didn't know. You are given them a complexity to their culture I don't think they possess.

While I'm at it... what culture? -Go-out-and-kill-the-bad guys- is the sole purpose and driving core of their existence. They no longer possess song, or dance, they discourage family ties (even in the Gatherum scenario) and promote a solitary existence focused on a single goal.

They have a -history- not a culture. They respect and study a dead culture, burned away long ago in the fire-pits. They are no longer artists and peaceful mystics. What they are doing now is attempting to avenge that death, not re-build what was lost.

> Also, the elders give us another archetype. The Xambrian Elder would be less physically able, have Primary Magic and Combat Training/Rudimentary Combat. May

be found abroad seeking information on the past, digging in ruins and rooting around in libraries.

A neat idea, but they wouldn't be 'Elders'. How about Researcher, or Antiquarian (whatever). Elders are literally that, the older members who have managed to live to old age. As long as they are removed from a position of authority I have no problem with this. I still think, that deep inside Xambrians are as a diverse a people as anyone else, you have ones that are more inclined towards academics than physical skill, or possibly this as a task for the physically lame members. They wouldn't be common, but I don't see any reason why they couldn't exist.

- getting back to an earlier point- I think that it is this underlying sense of self, forced against the oppressive forces of Omen is what causes the Xambrian's chaotic and tortured personality.

> Finally, the Gatherum model, including the seeking out of bones, the lamenting, the breeding process, all provide potential adventure hooks. A macabre Sindaran collector has a skeleton stolen, and hires the PCs to find it. After some red herrings, they find that it was a Xambrian skeleton, and is on it's way to Omen. Or the PCs are directed to give a package to a particular Xambrian, who is currently attending the Lament at Omen. How will the PCs find him? How will the Xambrians react to their presence? Or, a dying Xambrian elder gives the PCs an enigmatic clue.

> What does it mean? Who does it involve. To make matters worse, Xambrians are pursuing them, do they want the body of the elder, or something else?

I've always liked your idea of adding new skulls to Omen, what I'm not comfortable with is the Gatherum. All these (excellent) ideas could be done with the 'band worship only' scenario. Change 'attending the Lament at Omen' to 'worshipping [alone or with a small group of...] at Omen' and you have essentially the same plot.

BTW, are you going to post your Xambrian adventure on the List? looking forward to it.

"The acceptance of corporatism causes us to deny and undermine the legitimacy of the individual as citizen in a democracy."

Matthew Webber

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 44

Matt wrote:

- > Omen would not want/allow Xambrians to evolve past their current point, it has spent a
- > great deal of time honing them to a fine point of ruthlessness. It wouldn't want them
- > reviving their social, musical and artistic roots, it would just detract from the current
- > task.

/.../

- > While I'm at it... what culture? -Go-out-and-kill-the-bad guys- is the ole purpose and
- > driving core of their existence. They no longer possess song, or dance, they discourage
- > family ties (even in the Gatherum scenario) and promote a solitary existence focused on
- > a single goal. They have a -history- not a culture. They respect and study a dead
- > culture, burned away long ago in the fire-pits. They are no longer artists and peaceful
- > mystics. What they are doing now is attempting to avenge that death, not re-build what
- > was lost.

There's one point in all this that doesn't fit with my view of the Xambrians. I've always thought that they still have a strong artistic trait. Not like the Bodorians, Mandalans or Muses who devote themselves to it, but it's there all the same - because it's necessary to them.

Art, music, poetry etc is not all about exploring artistic possibilities and perfecting skills; it also has a lot to do with expressing things, sometimes even channeling an inner urge. You're not a good poet just because you can handle the rhymes and the meter, you also got to have something to say.

It's also no coincidence that art in different forms thrive in oppressed cultures, among misfortunate individuals etc. I'm not saying that an unhappy childhood is a prerequisite for artistic talents, but it builds strong emotions.

When you try to express such emotions - and if you're skilled enough – the result can go beyond a mere skilled performance. It moves people. I don't know who first said "all really good music is aimed at the groin" i.e. it affects more than the brain, but the phrase has some merit (at least it had before my lousy translation ruined it). You don't have to be unhappy of course; but if you really burn for something, that strength of emotion carries through in one way or another. It's not skill only that made Jimi Hendrix, W A Mozart, Jim Morrison, Kurt Cobain, Jaco Pastorius etc the legends they are.

So, what's all this got to do with Xambrians? They, if any, burn for something. And in their case, art's therapeutic function is very much relevant. A lot of their time in solitude is most likely spent trying to deal with their situation. They are tormented souls and would go crazy unless they had a chance to let it out sometimes. Given their artistic

traditions they are most likely to express their pain through poetry, music etc. Why wouldn't they make up a poem or two by the campfire?

This doesn't have to contradict what's been said on their social situation. There are lots of examples of great artists who led destructive lives. As for Omen's not encouraging this, I don't think he/she/it could stop it. I don't even think he/she/it would want to stop it, since it's essentially part of making the Xambrians efficient tools. If they can't handle their situation, they are ill equipped to go around fighting Reincarnators.

Sorry that it took me some length to express the simple opinion that Xambrians are still an artistic race. I can't find the precise words to express my thoughts briefly in English. Also, I'm very aware that my accounts of the nature of art is both simplified and in several ways unfair. I emphasized a side of it that's relevant to Xambrians, but in no way presume that it covers art in general.

Ben

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 45

On Thu, 19 Jun 1997, Matthew Webber wrote:

> Ben said:

>> There's one point in all this that doesn't fit with my view of the Xambrians. I've
>> always thought that they still have a strong artistic trait. Not like the Bodorians,
>> Mandalans or Muses who devote themselves to it, but it ll the same - because
>> it's necessary to them. etc. Why wouldn't they make up a poem or two by the
>> campfire?

> /snip/

>> So, what's all this got to do with Xambrians? They, if any, burn for something. And
>> in their case, art's therapeutic function is very much relevant. A lot of their time in
>> solitude is most likely spent trying to deal with their situation. They are tormented
>> souls and would go crazy unless they had a chance to let it out sometimes. Given
>> their artistic traditions they are most likely to express their pain through poetry,
>> music

>>

>> This doesn't have to contradict what's been said on their social situation. There are
>> lots of examples of great artists who led destructive lives. As for Omen's not
>> encouraging this, I don't think he/she/it could stop it. I don't even think he/she/it
>> would want to stop it, since it's essentially part of making the Xambrians efficient
>> tools. If they can't handle their situation, they are ill equipped to go around fighting
>> Reincarnators.

>

> Benjamin Lyngfelt you are absolutely right ... thinking back a bit I contradicted myself
> with this... I think I suggested in an earlier post that Xambrians DO play music and
> carve small artifacts ... something about strange, beautiful music drifting out from the
> Wilderlands.

>

> What I don't think this music/art does is unite them as a 'culture' ... the art is like their
> society - is just fragments, pieces of a memory.

If I may interject an opinion into this discussion, I have to agree with Mr. Lyngfelt. The Xambrians have a culture, but it's not a culture that many people can sympathize with. While most cultures are firmly and logically centered on the concepts of survival of the species (reproduction), personal happiness and betterment, and, to some extent, the betterment of the community as a whole, the Xambrians are only truly interested in one thing; revenge. They may consider it a duty to all Talislantans to prevent the Reincarnators from living again, but deep down inside, their dead ancestors that haunt the land around Omen want revenge, and they are driving the surviving Xambrians to do it.

Their culture, what there is of it, centers on this obsession. They live, eat, and sleep revenge. It haunts their dreams; it fills their long-term plans; it is always in their thoughts. This is not to say that a Xambrian cannot stop in his hunting for a while and rest, spend some time doing something purely self-oriented (like seeing a Bodorian

concert or some such), but this will be merely temporary respites. The culture will deal with the hunt above all things. A Xambrian will probably be expected to know which Reincarnators he has "slain," and which ones his family line has slain. The family line would not be traced through one or the other parent (as European heritage is traced through the male parent), since either could be taken by the ancestors and sent on the hunt at any time, leaving the other to raise the child. The lineage is probably from youth to teacher, whichever parent that happens to be. The "pecking order" of Xambrians would develop out of the age (indicating survivability) and the number and names of Reincarnators slain by the family line. Since lists such as these would get extensive after a while, poems and songs could be made out of them, providing mnemonic aids in remembering them (much like the oral tradition of the Ancient Greek epics). Other songs and poems would probably be reminiscent of the Scottish and Irish songs about "the Troubles," which curse their enemies and serve to remind the singers and listeners of the grudges held. These songs would keep the crimes of the ancient Reincarnators fresh in the minds of the younger Xambrians (Arimites might also have similar songs about the great blood feuds of their history).

Basically, while the Xambrians have a culture, it is a shallow and narrowly focused one. The original Xambrians had a rich culture, providing their descendants with a deep history, but with the steady pressure from the spirits of Omen, the Xambrian culture has degraded into one that perpetuates the obsession with revenge. This obsession probably makes them a bit of an enigma for many other peoples, since the Reincarnators are not common knowledge. Xambrians most likely, especially among the people of the Wilderlands and the Desert Kingdoms, have a reputation for being about as coherent as a pit bull in a spin dryer (or something). They are probably considered untrustworthy, unpredictable, and insane. Any city that a Xambrian wanders into will probably have guards watching him or her until he or she leaves. Certain cities or neighborhoods (Hadjanistan, for example) might force the Xambrian to move on, making things difficult if he or she happens to be on the hunt at the time. They should be a people feared by most, and pitied by those that do have an idea of what Xambrians are. And to the Xambrians, members of other races cannot truly understand them, and therefore, the cultural gulf between them prevents any but the rarest of interracial friendships or relationships.

Draco Draconis Ebenium	"Do not meddle in the affairs of
aka Ebony the Black Dragon,	Dragons, for you are chewy
known to humans as Aaron F. Johnson	and taste good dipped in
afj0001@jove.acs.unt.edu	chocolate."

I'm a Black Dragon, trapped in a White Man's Body. YARK!!!

"Surreality just got funky!" -- Scud, the Disposable Assassin

Nobody WANTS my opinions!

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 46

On Thu, 19 Jun 1997, Matthew Webber wrote:

> Okay, maybe I should have said -some- of the rules go out the window, but we're into >
> pure fantasy here (Xambrians aren't even 'men'), so we can make up the rules into >
> anything we want.

It's easy to break the rules to be creative, it's harder but more satisfying to see what you can do with them. As it stands, there are more bizarre societies than the Xambrians existing. We're talking basics, here. It's not a limitation, but a consideration. Something you have to account for, not dismiss.

> I don't think that the Xambrians have undergone cultural evolution in many thousands >
> of years.

And:

> While I'm at it... what culture? -Go-out-and-kill-the-bad guys- is the sole purpose and >
> driving core of their existence. They no longer possess song, or dance, they discourage >
> family ties (even in the Gatherum scenario) and promote a solitary existence focused on >
> a single goal.
> They have a -history- not a culture.

From this and other posts I think you are misunderstanding culture. Culture is not about loud opera, overpriced art and bad poetry. Those are merely parts of culture. Culture addresses basic needs and survival. It's how groups manage to survive. The Xambrians have basic needs, like anyone else. They have need of weaponry, clothing, food, shelter and reproduction. In order to meet these needs, they have to participate in culture. Even if they get them somewhere else, it's still culture. If this had stopped, the Xambrians would now be no more. Culture is always evolving, you can't just turn it off.

> I don't think it's a matter of paranoia, just an overriding tendency towards the singular.

Paranoia was your word. So I'm not sure what you're arguing anymore.

> They spend years alone in the wilderness, totally focused on one goal. It would be hard >
> for them to just drop this once a year and all come together with thousands of others >
> and partake in what amounts to a purely social event. Smaller, more flexible groups >
> would allow for racial/cultural interaction without exposing them to overwhelming >
> cultural overload and the threat of outside risks.

I'm going to try and put a different tack on this and approach it from an individual perspective. It's easy to lump people into extreme categories and never let them out. But this is a trap. All it creates is a reliable cartoon. People are more three-dimensional than that. Yes, the Xambrians spend most of their miserable lives in solitude. For balance, it

makes perfect sense that they would gather together in a "purely social event". This makes them more interesting and answers a lot of questions about their culture. This sort of dichotomy is ever present in people, as individuals and nations. People love to argue "Xambrians (or Thralls, Arduans, whatever) aren't people". But that's not the point. They ARE characters, and all characters should be three-dimensional.

I personally challenge you to find a case study of "overwhelming cultural overload". MTV doesn't count.

- > This is a matter of interpretation but I don't remember coming across anything that said
- > Xambrians are noble. "Chaotic and unpredictable" (Guidebook) and "grim and moody"
- > (Worldbook) yes, but never noble. I would think them capable of killing innocents
- > who got in the way of their final goal.

Nobility and murder are not exclusive. From Samurai, Medieval Knights, and Native Americans one can be noble and still slaughter innocents. In searching my material, I never found a noble reference either, although I thought I had (King Dingbat strikes again). I didn't find a paranoid reference either.

- > The Xambrians, while far from cowardly, aren't stupid. Just the possibility of a disaster
- > would keep them from gathering together. It was their togetherness and grouped
- > population that allowed them to be so easily massacred by the Quaran, they'd not be
- > willing to repeat the mistake.

We simply disagree on the danger level involved here. Let me use a modern example derived from the inspiration material. Israel was formed in the wake of the holocaust. It is quite vulnerable for many of the reasons you listed. The Hebrews could easily visit Jerusalem in small bands (it has been open to "People of the Book" throughout most of history). But the Jews claim what they feel is theirs, despite the consequences, and defend it through vigilance.

The comparison of the Gatherum to the ancient state of Xambria seems erroneous. That would be like comparing the holocaust to someone's barmitzvah. (Spelling?)

As for a regular gathering, I've recently thought that Omen itself would call the Xambrians together at irregular intervals. In this model, the females become fertile, ironically, in the presence of a multitude. A throwback to old times in ancient Xambria.

- > They would respect and listen to the advice of the elders, but I don't think they'd be
- > willing to just arbitrarily follow the orders of an elder they didn't know. You are given
- > them a complexity to their culture I don't think they possess.

It's not all that complex. Hierarchy is a basic unit of any culture. Even simple hunter-gatherer cultures can display arranged marriages. It's still practiced in much of the world. In India, which is nearing a billion, there are classified advertising sons and daughters

for marriage everyday. If you think taking orders from an elder is bad, how about the near random pairings from the classifieds section that's a reality for 1/5 of the world?!

And we aren't even talking about something as life changing as marriage. We are talking arranged one-night stands. We might think that's terrible (well, not all of us), but it's not that big of a stretch.

> A neat idea, but they wouldn't be 'Elders'. How about Researcher, or Antiquarian
> (whatever).

This is semantics. Furthermore, you are arguing that they don't have a complex culture, yet that they have specializations like researcher or antiquarian.

> Elders are literally that, the older members who have managed to live to old age. As > long as they are removed from a position of authority I have no problem with this.

The idea that old people spend all their time sitting around just being old is a modern one. Old people are capable and have a place in a culture and society. My original logic was that the old we able to devote full time to research and study because they can no longer carry on missions. This would not be the only thing they do, making them a better balanced and versatile archetype than "Researcher".

Note that elders almost always have positions of prominence in nomadic band societies. I say "almost" only out of fear I've missed an exception. As "Most Experienced", they have a lot to offer and are valued accordingly. They are invariably invested with authority.

Well, that's all for now.

Deus tibi adsit,

Monk ("")
 {+_+}
 | |
 | |

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 47

- > It's easy to break the rules to be creative, it's harder but more satisfying to see what you
- > can do with them. As it stands, there are more bizarre societies than the Xambrians
- > existing. We're talking basics, here. It's not a limitation, but a consideration.
- > Something you have to account for, not dismiss.

As I said, -some- of the rules can go out the window. But hey, if I could think of a reasonable way to dismiss them all, then I'd do that too. As for more bizarre societies existing, you're probably right, but how many of them are being manipulated by a mountain of vindictive and insane spirits? Or how many have solitary individuals as the norm? Sounds like a few unique points right there that aren't covered by your basic Anthropology text to me.

It's easy to break the rules!?! Since when? How many authors/movies/TV shows have you seen where the aliens/races are so completely alien that they follow none of these 'cultural rules'?

- >> From this and other posts I think you are misunderstanding culture.
- > Culture is not about loud opera, overpriced art and bad poetry. Those are merely parts
- > of culture. Culture addresses basic needs and survival.

- > It's how groups manage to survive. The Xambrians have basic needs, like anyone else.
- > They have need of weaponry, clothing, food, shelter and reproduction. In order to meet
- > these needs, they have to participate in culture. Even if they get them somewhere else,
- > it's still culture. If this had stopped, the Xambrians would now be no more. Culture is
- > always evolving, you can't just turn it off.

I can't, you can't and no other human could either ... but maybe Omen could. Again I'm arguing this is a unique situation, Omen doesn't want them evolving, they will (at least in my campaign) eventually, the artist soul is too strong, but Omen is going to fight it every step of the way.

I'll stand corrected here. Xambrians do have a culture. But I'm going to summarize why I think it's so twisted at the end of this post.

- >> Paranoia was your word. So I'm not sure what you're arguing anymore.

Don't get me wrong, I still think they're paranoid,

- >> I'm going to try and put a different tack on this and approach it from an individual
- >> perspective. It's easy to lump people into extreme categories and never let them out.
- >> But this is a trap. All it creates is a reliable cartoon. People are more three-
- >> dimensional than that. Yes, the Xambrians spend most of their miserable lives in
- >> solitude. For balance, it makes perfect sense that they would gather together in a
- >> "purely social event". This makes them more interesting and answers a lot of

>> questions about their culture. This sort of dichotomy is ever present in people, as
>> individuals and nations.

-- You could argue that an individual exists only in reference to his allegiances, but that is a whole other thread, and not one suitable for this list. A nation of individuals has not and never will exist. The term could even be taken as an Oxymoron

> I personally challenge you to find a case study of "overwhelming cultural overload".
> MTV doesn't count.

Just one? It is such a common occurrence that there is even a term for it; Culture Shock.

People re-act badly to sudden shifts in their environment. No matter how trained the anthropologist, they will suffer some sort of 'culture shock' when immersed into a new culture. Now take an emotionally twisted individual who spends about seventy-five percent of his time alone, has never been surrounded by fifty people before in his life and throw him into a situation where they are surrounded by thousands with some old guy they don't know telling them what to do? I don't think they're going to re-act well.

This is also a reason why other people dislike Xambrians - They (Xambrians) only venture into cities when they have to. They are already paranoid and then tack on easily freaked out by the crowds and rules.

>> People love to argue "Xambrians (or Thralls, Arduans, whatever) aren't people". But
>> that's not the point. They ARE characters, and all characters should be three-
>> dimensional.

I think the fact that we're having this discussion, or the older discussions on Thralls and Parthenians proves that there is plenty of room for complexity in the races.

And I don't see the connection between 'not people' and flat characters. I've played many an interesting alien in my day, often from nothing more than a few lines in a manual. A flat character is the fault of the player, not how the race was set up.

I have not once said that Xambrians are one sided, in fact I can recall a number of instances where I tried to draw them as a complex people. They are a race of artists twisted by a malevolent entity into single minded killers. Plenty of room for contradiction and complexity.

> Nobility and murder are not exclusive. From Samurai, Medieval Knights, and Native
> Americans one can be noble and still slaughter innocents.
>
> In searching my material, I never found a noble reference either, although I thought I
> had (King Dingbat strikes again). I didn't find a paranoid reference either.

Oh a romantic! =) You're confusing Noble with Nobility. The two are rarely compatible. I for one have never thought slaughtering innocents a noble thing to do.

And you think other people don't like having them around because of their poor after dinner conversation? They have been taught to think of everyone of being a Reincarnator or a Reincarnator's agent, not to do so means getting a knife in the ribs. Sounds paranoid to me.

>> We simply disagree on the danger level involved here.

The level of actual danger is unimportant, its the level of possible danger. Something I don't think the Xambrians are going to take lightly. There's a remote chance for another genocide, for them, that is enough.

>> Let me use a modern example derived from the inspiration material. Israel was
>> formed in the wake of the holocaust. It is quite vulnerable for many of the reasons
>> you listed. The Hebrews could easily visit Jerusalem in small bands (it has been open
>> to "People of the Book" throughout most of history). But the Jews claim what they
>> feel is theirs, despite the consequences, and defend it through vigilance.

The Hebrews' strength has always come from their togetherness. A trait that seems lacking in the Xambrians. There is another key difference in your analogy, the Xambrians aren't fighting for land.

To use this argument, and if there is not a large threat - why don't the Xambrians just band together all the time? Why do they spend so much of their life alone? (Again, see the bottom note before answering)

>> And we aren't even talking about something as life changing as marriage. We are
>> talking arranged one-night stands. We might think that's terrible (well, not all of us),
>> but it's not that big of a stretch.

We've covered this, we both agree that Xambrians are far from the marrying kind.

> This is semantics. Furthermore, you are arguing that they don't have a complex culture,
> yet that they have specializations like researcher or antiquarian.

Semantics was my point, Elders is the wrong connotation.

As for the second bit you clipped the bit that explained why I agreed with this ... not all Xambrians are going to be born strong enough to lift a sword, or smart enough to cast a spell. Some are going to go about their 'mission' in different ways as befitting their individual strengths. This archetype (which I think should be used very rare allows for those on the far ends of the curve. You could even draw up an archetype for a Xambrian Warrior who relies on combat. Still think I'm drawing the Xambrians in one dimensional terms?

> The idea that old people spend all their time sitting around just being old is a modern
> one. Old people are capable and have a place in a culture and society. My original
> logic was that the old were able to devote full time to research and study because they
> can no longer carry on missions.

> This would not be the only thing they do, making them a better balanced and versatile
> archetype than "Researcher".

For an Xambrian to live to old age there are going to have to be very, VERY good at what they do. Physically feeble or not, they are going to be really high level mages by then, not a great starting point for a new archetype. I thought the archetype was for new, young characters.

Nor did I say the Elders just sat around, they teach and protect the young, herd and care for animals, you could even throw something in there about creating those silver gloves or (if you decide to use them) the Soulblades.

Matthew--

>> As long as they are removed from a position of authority I have no problem with this

Ohoh, I just contradicted myself.. Teachers are an authoritative position ... okay instead of authority, let's try leadership.

AND NOW THE MOMENT YOU'VE ALL BEEN WAITING FOR!! My Interpretation of Omen and its relationship to the Xambrians.

Through all of this, a question has been nagging in the back of my mind; why didn't the Xambrians form a cohesive solid culture?

To use the Jewish example, they were never stronger as a culture than the years following the holocaust. They used it as leverage to displace an entire people and establish a homeland on a claim that was over 2000 yrs old. AND they managed to conquer a good chunk of the surrounding real-estate as well. Now why didn't they Xambrians come together, it would be the sensible thing to do, think about it;

- It would allow the population to grow at a faster rate.
- It would give them a home city and a viable culture.
- If, as has been suggested, that Reincarnators are surrounded by an army of evil spirits, wouldn't it make sense to send in an army after them?
- They are not spread out in an attempt to find Reincarnators - Omen tells them where to look (paraphrased from the Guidebook- "here Omen will instill the knowledge of how to locate the enemy").
- Nor can the whole race (a few thousand at least) be looking for Reincarnators, there is just not that many of them out there. They take jobs as bounty hunters because of this.

- Now if they were to band together as an army, and if Omen can locate the enemy, just march the army up to his doorstep. Much quicker and much more efficient.

I couldn't think of one good reason why they a race of artists with strong cultural roots would suddenly flip-flop into a race of unstable killers. Why did they degenerate so completely? Usually survivors of genocide form tighter cultural bonds. Why didn't the Xambrians. Until I came up with:

-OMEN doesn't want them too.-

Xambrians are artists and mystics in spirit, left to their own devices, they would likely settle some forgotten plot of land and try to rebuild their culture/city. A small army of Wizard-Hunters to protect the city and hunt down any Reincarnators. But then they wouldn't need Omen anymore.

Omen knows this, and doesn't want it to happen. Blinded by hatred, sorrow and the horrors of the past, it keeps its children under its thumb to wage its war on an ancient and vanishing enemy*. So it keeps them apart, sending them on suicidal missions and squashing all resurgence of the artistic spirit.

This hatred and overwhelming desire for vengeance has imprinted onto the already sensitive Xambrians, it sits on their souls like oil on the ocean. For an artistic and gentle people to have these feelings, no wonder they've gone a little 'chaotic and unpredictable'.

* All this begs the question; just how many Reincarnators are there? A few thousand or so to start, and through the millenniums whittled down to maybe a few hundred? Its not as if they'd be that hard to find, just look for the six-year old child who has started conquering the neighbourhood.

Omen, as unstable as it is, is having a hard time coming to terms with this, once you've hated for so long its hard to give it up... so its started imagining enemies to fill the gaps... any Disembodied spirit or Incarnator or Spiritform is a possible target. With Xambrians being sent out to destroy innocent and (sometimes)peaceful spirits.

Comments, criticisms, flames?

"The acceptance of corporatism causes us to deny and undermine the legitimacy of the individual as citizen in a democracy."

Matthew Webber
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Xambrian Discussions: Part 48

Matthew has done the impossible -- developed a view of the Xambrians that actually makes them interesting to me.

I think I've always been somewhat turned off by the immense popularity of the Xambrians among role-players. For a race that is described as reclusive, solitary, and few in number, they seem to pop up very frequently in game situations. At least one person in every Tal game I've ever played wants a Xambrian character. They have become -- for me -- much like half-elves in the "other" game: a neat idea but so overused and misused that I got sick of them.

And, because they are so popular, gamers tend to gloss over the less-than-heroic parts of Xambrian nature. They are played as dedicated, intense, and noble avengers and are viewed as sympathetic characters, while the mistrustful, bizarre, and anti-social behavior that gives them such a low Charisma is downplayed. It's as if that low Charisma comes about because "society just doesn't understand them" rather than because they behave poorly around and toward other people.

A perfect example is when Monk says they are a noble people and Matt responds that he's never seen anything in the Tal books that describes them as noble. Gamers are sympathetic to the Xambrians and so it's easy to assume that they must be noble. I'm not suggesting that they are villains: I just think we need to be careful how big a halo we put around their heads.

But Matthew has developed a great viewpoint on the Xambrians and Omen: that they are actually a gentle and artistic people that have been twisted into their present form by a supernatural agency blinded by grief and a lust for vengeance. Perfect! Now we're talking something interesting. Now we're talking about the morality of revenge. While the heroic avenger is certainly a staple of the modern age (look at just about any Clint Eastwood movie, or any of a thousand comic books), there's something to be said for just moving on. Sometimes the more difficult and more heroic act is to let go of your hatred, let go of your grief, and build again. Thirsting for revenge is often the act of a lesser person.

So I salute Matt's view of the Xambrians as a people who should be decent and good but have become corrupt (to some extent) because of an entity trapped by its own sorrow. As long as we recognize that they HAVE become somewhat twisted and somewhat corrupt - - even a little villainous -- I may rethink my earlier dislike of the Xambrians. If we continue to view them as noble, heroic, and basically a swords-and-sorcery version of Batman then count me out.

DRB

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 49

At 11:37 AM 6/24/97 -0400, Dennis Bumb wrote (Re Xambrians):

> But Matthew has developed a great viewpoint on the Xambrians and Omen: that they
> are actually a gentle and artistic people that have been twisted into their present form
> by a supernatural agency blinded by grief and a lust for vengeance. Perfect! Now
> we're talking something interesting. Now we're talking about the morality of revenge.
> While the heroic avenger is certainly a staple of the modern age (look at just about any
> Clint Eastwood movie, or any of a thousand comic books), there's something to be said
> for just moving on. Sometimes the more difficult and more heroic act is to let go of
> your hatred, let go of your grief, and build again. Thirsting for revenge is often the act
> of a lesser person.

and:

> If we continue to view them as noble, heroic, and basically a swords-and-sorcery
> version of Batman then count me out.

I agree that one should not downplay the tragic and even morally questionable aspects of the Xambrians' obsession with revenge to the exclusion of rebuilding what they once had, but I wonder why you would use the Batman archetype as an example of what you *don't* want.

To me Batman would be the perfect inspiration for a Xambrian PC -- *and* would meet your expectations.

True, Batman is generally regarded as "heroic and noble." However, when all is said and done, a Xambrian *PC* -- or any PC -- probably should fit that description on some level. (That's a big IMHO, and I'm certain folks could offer examples of beloved PCs that don't fit that archetype.)

More importantly, though, the Batman archetype offers just what you describe -- someone who *just won't let go*, who is obsessed with his "holy mission" to the exclusion of living a normal life. Much has been made of that in the various media portrayals of the character, especially in recent years. And unlike some versions of the Xambrians I've seen suggested here (whose relentless quest is almost entirely the result of Omen's influence), Bruce Wayne's obsession is *internal*. It's pretty likely that his parents would *not* approve of what he has made of his life, a l in their memory. Even those who work with him (Alfred, Dick, Tim) are nowadays portrayed as finding the intensity of his dedication a little unsettling. There is a tragedy to the character, even as we admire him for being *willing* to set aside the life he could have had in order to insure that others can live normally.

Hey, now there's an unusual thought for a PC pair -- a Xambrian with a "Robin" (not necessarily another Xambrian). Or a Xambrian with an "Alfred," especially the currently popular quietly-put-upon-and-gently-sarcastic Alfred.

("Mad? You, sir? Perish the thought! Oh, by the way, I've pressed your tights and put away your gas bombs." -- quite possibly the best line from the *best* recent Batman movie, Mask of the Phantasm.)

Stacy Stroud
sstroud@uky.campus.mci.net

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 50

Stacy Stroud wonders why the Batman archetype is an example of what I *don't* want in a Xambrian, and suggests that he is the perfect inspiration for a Xambrian PC.

I think my problem is that, while you can question whether Batman is taking his obsession too far, for the most part he is still "noble and heroic," and the actions he takes in fighting crime are for the most part condoned (and cheered by audiences everywhere). I don't think the Xambrians (as a race) are noble and heroic, and I think their actions are very often things that wouldn't be condoned by the public at large. I think it's likely that the Xambrians, in their obsessive quest for revenge, are doing some pretty twisted, immoral things (slaughtering innocents, perhaps sacrificing boon companions for the good of their quest, etc, etc.) Batman would be a good archetype for my view of the typical Xambrian if he were willing to sacrifice Robin to further his fight against crime. Or kill an innocent woman because she's sheltering a vicious criminal.

Basically it's a matter of degree -- Batman just isn't obsessed enough and twisted enough to truly represent the Xambrians. In my reading of the Tal books, there IS an element of Batman in the Xambrians, but there's an equally strong element of the Spanish Inquisition.

Stacy makes the good point that a Xambrian PC -- or any PC -- probably should fit the noble and heroic description on some level, and I think she's right. A Xambrian PC should have a LOT more Batman than Inquisitor in him.

I know I like to play a lot of my PCs with a certain amount of sleaziness or "surface evil" in them, but I also like them all to be Deep Down Inside A Pretty Good Guy.

That's PCs though. For the race as a whole, I think we should be seeing a lot less Batman and a lot more Inquisitor than we would in a PC. While there would certainly be some heroic ones, I think the Xambrians would make really great villains in a scenario, and most of the race would fall into that kind of disturbing moral middle ground between the two. The influence of Omen might even make most of them tend toward "darker" and ignoble behavior.

A Xambrian with a "Robin" is a great idea. Elric and Moonglum might also provide some inspiration. It'd be a nice change -- I guess I'm just a little overloaded by all the Lone Wolf Xambrian Heroic Avenger PCs running around out there in role-playing land.

DRB

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 51

>> It is not just a heap of skulls though is it? It is there great (ad infinitum) grandparents
>> with millenniums of tradition backing them up to the point where this is now the order
>> of things.

>

> OK, but does that make them/it some sort of Raknid Queen?

I think I may have overstated Omen's direct influence. It rules mostly through tradition and culture, not direct dictatorial control.

There is another factor, the Xambrians don't like what they've become, and they try to avoid each other out of a sense of shame and loathing.

> Sure, the Xambrians get possessed, and such traumatic experiences can't leave them
> unaffected. But it's a matter of occasional possessions. Everyday life for Xambrians
> may centre around a wait for the Call, but it's not governed by Omen. (I know that's
> not exactly what you meant, but couldn't think of a better way to put it.)

I would think at most Xambrians would visit Omen maybe twice, three times in their lifetime. A main reason being the remote location, its just too dangerous and time consuming to get there every year. Once you've gone from Omen to Zanth, it would be time to turn around and head back to Omen.

Nor do I think all Xambrians get 'the call'. Only about 50% or so would be given the quest to kill a Reincarnator. But all Xambrians must go to Omen alone, at around the age of eighteen. The journey itself would be a test. And once there they would 'commune' with Omen, as it/they possessed them and shown, in exquisitely painful detail, their history. *** "THIS IS OUR PAIN. REMEMBER IT. KEEP IT LOCKED IN YOUR HEART. AVENGE US." *** Or something to that effect. And during all this Omen picks through the kid's head, to see if they have what it takes to complete the quest. Those chosen will be called again later if and when a quest appears.

Otherwise they come back only once or twice again to place new skulls at the mountain. I don't think they worship Omen, I think they fear and hate it.

Now then, why do they add new skulls? Good question. I'll have to think on this one. Any ideas?

> And what about the people acting as hosts for these spirits?

A preferred host is an unborn baby isn't it? (All sorts of issues being avoided here). And if the spirit will 'kill' a being for its body, it would generally fall into the evil-spirit category wouldn't it?

> It sure didn't come from me. The fact that they don't is a main reason why Omen
> should NOT decide how they spend the rest of their lives.

Then why are they so solitary? That is what I was attempting to clarify.

>> The people of Tal don't accept Xambrians because of their quest, they tolerate them
>> because they serve a purpose. Xambrians are THE people to call if you need a pesky
>> mage out of your hair.

>

> OK, I wasn't very clear. You're right about this. What I meant was that as long as the
> Xambrians' targets are "pesky mages", all you have to do is stay out of their way. If
> they start going after people at random, they're a threat to anyone - including yourself.
> You might decide to strike first.

If you have Incarnators and Disembodied spirits killing people for their bodies, which I
would think would be the popular perception - especially in the Wilderlands and
Desertlands - then this isn't going to bother anyone. But again, its an idea, nothing more.

> We have the Rasmirins and perhaps the Rajans pitted against mankind, but the former
> are too remote to (seemingly) matter and the latter are powerful enough to defend
> themselves. If the Xambrians get a similar reputation, they would rapidly be disposed
> of.

What about the Arimites, Aamanians, Drukh, Ur, Za, Araq, Danelek, Mondre-Khan etc?
There are bigger, more immediate threats out there. Most people will likely never
encounter a Xambrian. All most will hear is that my cousin told me that his neighbour
heard that a Xambrian killed that old, odd shopkeeper. You know, the one that used to
have those odd lights in his window at night?

> I'm actually not so much against your idea as it might seem. I wrote this post to clarify
> what I meant with the former, not to enforce it. Your main point, a basically gentle
> people whose nature has been twisted - and an ongoing internal struggle between these
> two sides, fits perfectly with my view.

Keep the comments coming. I'm trying to come to an understanding about Xambrian life.
Anything you (or anyone else) can help me fix is just going to be helpful.

How do the rest of you feel about all this? Good? Not what you would use? Go jump in
a lake?

"The acceptance of corporatism causes us to deny and undermine the legitimacy of the
individual as citizen in a democracy."

Matthew Webber
<http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Cavern/2295/>

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 52

Hey guys

So far I've concentrated on pinning down what's bothering me about Matt's interpretation of the Xambrian-Omen relation - despite the fact that I agree with most of it. It's about time I try to express my view in positive instead of negative terms.

Matt presented a lot of good reasons for the Xambrian culture to evolve to something else, and he came up with only one counter-argument strong enough to stop that evolution all these millennia: Omen. So far it's brilliant and I'm with him all the way. Our disagreement concerned the nature of Omen's influence.

> I think I may have overstated Omen's direct influence. It rules mostly through tradition > and culture, not direct dictatorial control.

It was something like this I was getting at, but tradition - even if it may be strong - isn't enough to counter all the good reasons for change you cited. I think Omen affects the Xambrians directly, but their culture indirectly.

The mass of vengeful spirits that inhabit Omen probably has no concept of the Xambrians' present social structure. Whether they built a city or remained wanderers would be of no consequence to Omen, as long as they answer the Call when it comes. Whether cultural changes eventually would lead to the Xambrians being able to resist it is beyond Omen's cognitive scope.

However, the Xambrians KNOW that they may be Called any time, and that should make them restless and probably reluctant to make efforts for settling down. And their direct contact with Omen can't really do their mental health any good. Being confronted with all that pain and hatred should create a need for solitude and might also lead to different kinds of behavioral disruptions (is that the right term?). On top of that, those who have already quested are even more tormented by a moral dilemma, and their behavior can't leave the rest unaffected either.

So, the direct contact with Omen is psychologically destructive, which affects behavior and consequently culture.

> There is another factor, the Xambrians don't like what they've become, they try to avoid > each other out of a sense of shame and loathing.

It seems we are reasoning along similar lines here.

> Nor do I think all Xambrians get 'the call'. Only about 50% or so would be given the > quest to kill a Reincarnator. But all Xambrians must go to Omen alone, at around the > age of eighteen. The journey itself would be a test. And once there they would > 'commune' with Omen, as it/they processed them and shown, in exquisitely painful

> detail, their history. *** "THIS IS OUR PAIN. REMEMBER IT. KEEP IT LOCKED
> IN YOUR HEART. AVENGE US." *** Or something to that effect. And during all
> this Omen picks through the kid's head, to see if they have what it takes to complete the
> quest. Those chosen will be called again later if and when a quest appears.
>
> Otherwise they come back only once or twice again to place new skulls at the
> mountain. I don't think they worship Omen, I think they fear and hate it.

This initiation rite by the onset of adulthood is a great idea, and your reasoning around it fits perfectly with my view. Omen doesn't intentionally mess with Xambrian social life (and probably isn't aware of such a thing), but after THAT experience those eighteen-year-olds aren't very likely to start building empires - or even a cozy family business.

> Now then, why do they add new skulls? Good question. I'll have to think on this one.
> Any ideas?

Not for now.

>> And what about the people acting as hosts for these spirits?

>
> A preferred host is an unborn baby isn't it? (All sorts of issues being avoided here).
And > if the spirit will 'kill' a being for its body, it would generally fall into the evil-spirit
> category wouldn't it?

This goes down to whether the spirits steal bodies or merely possess them.

> If you have Incarnators and Disembodied spirits killing people for their bodies, which I
> would think would be the popular perception – especially in the Wilderlands and
> Desertlands - then this isn't going to bother anyone.

Sure, granted that it's known that a person's body has been taken over - which I seriously doubt.

But it seems I interpreted your idea too strongly, since I started from the assumption that everyone has a spirit. I was afraid you meant that Omen's insanity blurred the distinction between spirits in their own bodies and spirits possessing others'. See further below.

> What about the Arimites, Aamanians, Drukh, Ur, Za, Araq, Danelek, Mondre-Khan
> etc? There are bigger, more immediate threats out there.

And good causes not to mess with them. If a lone Xambrian enters a village, perhaps the inhabitants decide not to wait and see which one of them the psycho is gonna kill first. But again, all this is assuming the Xambrians get a reputation for murdering anyone, which I feared was a consequence of your idea.

> Most people will likely never encounter a Xambrian. All most will hear is that my >
cousin told me that his neighbour heard that a Xambrian killed that old, odd shopkeeper. >
You know, the one that used to have those odd lights in his window at night?

Yeah, this is where it probably stays. My misunderstanding included worse rumours, of
the kind that grow for each telling.

So it seems we don't disagree that much. I'm almost disappointed.

Ben

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subject of HELP.

Xambrian Discussions: Part 53

At 03:31 PM 6/26/97 +0100, you wrote:

> Hey guys

> And their direct contact with Omen can't really do their mental health any good. Being
> confronted with all that pain and hatred should create a need for solitude and might also
> lead to different kinds of behavioral disruptions (is that the right term?).

Excellent!

Two things...one, you have brought into you all the pain, anger, and anguish of millions of people. That is a lot of negative feeling, and most Xambrians probably become paranoid and express those feelings they've inherited to the world around them.

Two, with a melange of millions of voices in your head all the time, even if it is a background noise, you might not want a bunch of embodied people adding their noise. Silence in the outer environment simplifies the task of dealing with all the chaos within.

Although, some Xambrians might try to handle it by becoming Very social.

Intuition tells me there might be collateral effects on their psychic senses, too. Perhaps they can feel the weight of other people's ancestors when they are around other people. Maybe sometimes they can hear, or see these other ancestors, as their receptivity becomes greater.

I might propose that those who've been in more direct contact with Omen (i.e. doing missions for Omen), might become gradually more attuned to the spirit world, or at least to the spirits of the Dead. Not all will allow this to happen, but it would be a great battle.

> So, the direct contact with Omen is psychologically destructive, which affects behavior
> and consequently culture.

>> Now then, why do they add new skulls? Good question. I'll have to think on this one.
>> Any ideas?

When a Xambrian dies, they join the spirits of the Dead. This is normal. What is not usual, is that they can then, somewhat, communicate with their living kin, still. So, when a Xambrian dies, another Xambrian must go find the body, perform the appropriate rites, and then carry the head back to omen.

I also think that Xambrians might do honor to long time allies to their race; specifically, the animals they were interactive with. In a show of sentimentality, they sometimes add the skull of a trusted animal companion. Or, if they can tell, the skull of a once companion who has been reborn and then died again.

Thus, there might be Equus skulls, but also the lone urthranx skull.

This brings up further ideas. How many of the Xambrians, when reborn, are born as Xambrians again? When one achieves peace, do they then move on to a new incarnation approach? (I.e. they stop being reborn as Xambrians.)

Do thousands of Spirits find peace when a Quaranian Spirit is made to return to the "Wheel". (Or are the Reincarnators removed from the Wheel?)

Will Omen eventually be reduced to being a simple pile of skulls, with a faint haunting sense about it?

Are Xambrian spirits ever desperate to escape where they are stuck? Does a Spirit ever get sent on, but feel the need to pursue things still (producing the Cymrilian Torquar Hunter, etc).

Do Reincarnators ever exist who want to redress the wrongs they have done in the past?

>> Most people will likely never encounter a Xambrian. All most will hear is that my
>> cousin told me that his neighbour heard that a Xambrian killed that old, odd
>> shopkeeper. You know, the one that used to have those odd lights in his window at
>> night?

I love this passage by the way, Matthew.

> So it seems we don't disagree that much. I'm almost disappointed.

>

> Ben

Bon Vie _
Teacup (_)]

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 54

On Tue, 24 Jun 1997, Matthew Webber wrote:

> As I said, -some- of the rules can go out the window. But hey, if I could think of a
> reasonable way to dismiss them all, then I'd do that too. As for more bizarre societies
> existing, you're probably right, but how many of them are being manipulated by a
> mountain of vindictive and insane spirits? Or how many have solitary individuals as
> the norm? Sounds like a few unique points right there that aren't covered by your basic
> Anthropology text to me.

I don't see how Omen differs from a Sumerian priest on a Ziggurat, a far-away Chinese emperor, or any other number of authorities. People still have to do what they say regardless of whether or not it's in their best interest. The leader's sanity has little impact on his potency.

Modern society has literally millions of people surviving unconnected of an extended family or other attachment structure, yet still live and contribute to a living culture.

All of this is in basic Anthropology texts.

But mostly, it's not necessary to break the basic rules. There is enough room and latitude to accommodate nearly anything.

> It's easy to break the rules!?! Since when? How many authors/movies/TV shows have
> you seen were the aliens/races are so completely alien that they follow none of these
> 'cultural rules?'

What's harder? Writing a free form poem well or a Elizabethan sonnet well? Who's more famous, E.E. Cummings or Shakespeare? Note that either style can produce bad poetry, and even then the sonnet will still sound better to the ear. I think the lack of "utterly alien" races in sci-fi rather proves my point. Star Trek is full of cool, diverse races that all fit the basic rules.

> I can't, you can't and no other human could either ... but maybe Omen could. Again I'm
> arguing this is a unique situation, Omen doesn't want them evolving, they will (at least
> in my campaign) eventually, the artist soul is too strong, but Omen is going to fight it
> every step of the way.

You are missing my point. Cultural evolution is inherent to culture as breathing is to us. It simply happens. Nothing, not Omen, God or George Washington can change that fact. Cultures are only static when they are dead. The Xambrians are still alive, and so is their culture. Not as it was, it changes with time, like all cultures do.

This allows the Xambrians to deal with survival and new situations, circumstances and environments. They can deal with newly encountered diseases, changes in weather,

changes in politics, new ideas, incorporate ideas from others, come up with new ideas and be able to give a new word to any of it. Without cultural evolution, the first change that occurs could wipe out the race because they cannot adapt to it. Say the Quan decide to kill all Xambrians due to an incident with a Reincarnator in a noble. Thanks to cultural evolution, the Xambrians know to attack or run away when they see a Kang patrol. Without evolution, they would simply be slaughtered. Don't run away, Omen only wants us to kill Reincarnators, nothing else is on the menu. Sound's rather silly, doesn't it? If this situation continued, then the Xambrians would logically develop a fight or flight tradition to the Kang and Quan would be taboo, both survival strategies.

Another example: A Wilderlands plant that pollinates through heavy clouds of pollen bursting from it's buds. The clouds travel, borne on winds along the surface. A mutation causes one plant to produce poisonous pollen clouds. Quickly, it pollinates other plants, making them poisonous as well. The Xambrian culture is in immediate danger. A.) They don't practice cultural evolution = Sure death for most the population. B.) They do practice cultural evolution, exchange only happening at random meetings and limited to region by simple geography = the effects are devastating, perhaps they will survive. C.) The Xambrians practice cultural evolution and meet at Gatherum = the day is saved. The Xambrians exchange information, somebody has a solution. They start to wear bandanas that cover the face and mouth to protect vs. the pollen. Fashion with function is a tried and true example of cultural evolution.

> -- you could argue that an individual exists only in reference to his allegiances, but that
> is a whole other thread, and not one suitable for this list. A nation of individuals has
> not and never will exist. The term could even be taken as an Oxymoron

Once again, you miss my point. Individuals are representatives of the culture that spawned them. Cultures will reflect individual needs. Nations are composed of individuals united by a common culture. I was making a case for the functional aspect of Xambrians as PCs and NPCs. We might like to pretend that we are not products of our culture, yet we still wear clothes, even alone (exceptions please remain unknown) and stop at stop signs when there's not a policeman around (Texas and California excepted). The Xambrians lead lonely lives, therefore they would balance this out by a grand social meeting. Elements that do not exist in a society will rear their head one way or another. We do not really have much in the way of an adolescent initiation rite. Thus, we have youth gangs form which fill this function. In nations with compulsory military service, such as Israel or the former USSR, youth gang activity is decreased drastically. The military serves for modern youth initiation rites.

> I think the fact that were having this discussion, or the older discussions on Thralls and
> Parthenians proves that there is plenty of room for complexity in the races.
>
> And I don't see the connection between 'not people' and flat characters. I've played
> many an interesting alien in my day, often from nothing more than a few lines in a
> manual. Flat characters is the fault of the player, not how the race was set up.

It is the job of any game to provide more than just a concept. It is possible to play from minimal text, but that speaks well of the player. The material should never be a handicap to play.

> Just one? It is such a common occurrence that there is even a term for it; Culture Shock.

>

> People re-act badly to sudden shifts in their environment. No matter how trained the anthropologist, they will suffer some sort of 'culture shock' when immersed into a new culture. Now take an emotionally twisted individual who spends about seventy-five percent of his time alone, has never been surrounded by more than fifty people before in his life and throw him into a situation where they are surrounded by thousands with some old guy they don't know telling them what to do? I don't think they're going to re-act well.

>

> This is also a reason why other people dislike Xambrians - They (Xambrians) only venture into cities when they have to. They are already paranoid and then tack on easily freaked out by the crowds and rules.

Culture shock, as you noted, occurs with encountering new cultures over time. The Gatherum, in your own words, is "a purely social event". After months alone in the wilderness without contact with anyone of their own kind, the crowd and welcome comfort of the figure of the Elder would be desirable. Sure, the Elders tell them what to do. Every day, millions of Catholics confess their very personal sins to men they don't now and never see and then do what they tell them too. It's no big deal.

If they are just wandering around all the time, then different subcultures would develop in different regions. This would lead to culture shock and other problems as Xambrians from different regions encountered one another. It creates a cultural disparity is solved by the Gatherum. As I've said before, the Gatherum provides a unifying element to the Xambrian nation and a cultural baseline.

> I have not once said that Xambrians are one sided, in fact I can recall a number of instances where I tried to draw them as a complex people. They are a race of artists twisted by a malevolent entity into single minded killers. Plenty of room for contradiction and complexity.

You didn't say they were one sided. You did say they weren't that complex and I said that led to them being one sided.

On nobility and killing innocents:

> Oh a romantic! => You're confusing Noble with Nobility. The two are rarely compatible. I for one have never thought slaughtering innocents a noble thing to do.

You're confusing Noble with Good. The key is perspective. A Samurai who kills himself when his master dies will be remembered as noble, despite the number of peasants he may have killed. Sitting Bull killed his adoptive son's family before the child's eyes. Does this make him a bad guy? I do not personally advocate the taking of a life, innocent or otherwise, ever. But murder does not disqualify a hero. That's a moral that exists in comic books. Amusingly, concerning the recent Batman analogy, Batman does not kill. It's his biggest personal rule.

This is largely a matter of perspective. Certainly, the amount of opinion we have about the nature of Xambrians will exist in Tal as well. Most would, as the text says, be suspicious of the Xambrians. They might kill you. The text often implies their beliefs could even be delusional. Many would believe it so. Others may be in the know, admiring the Xambrians and even helping them. I've already suggested an "Oathbound" secret society of people who share the Xambrians magic oath suggested by SMS. The Xambrians themselves would easily believe they are the far lesser of two evils. Killing anyone who stood in their way prevents countless others from the proven cruelty of the Reincarnators. Unfortunate, but necessary.

- > And you think other people don't like having them around because of their poor after
- > dinner conversation? They have been taught to think of everyone of being a
- > Reincarnator or a Reincarnator's agent, not to do so means getting a knife in the ribs.
- > Sounds paranoid to me.

Our argument is getting circular. The main point was that Xambrians would not be paranoid of each other. I believe you agreed to this. Any paranoia attributed to them still doesn't prevent the Gatherum. The word the text uses is "suspicious".

- > The level of actual danger is unimportant, its the level of possible danger. Something I
- > don't think the Xambrians are going to take lightly. There's a remote chance for
- > another genocide, for them, that is enough.

More semantics. Possible danger is danger. If you are in danger, you are in possible danger. When danger is realized, it stops being danger and starts being whatever the problem is. They already live in a state of "potential genocide", as everyone does. Force of numbers would seem to decrease that, logically. I am not convinced there is any threat they cannot handle. I certainly don't think they make any decision based of fear. The benefits outweigh any risks, which we do not agree on anyway. It seems more like alarmism than paranoia. Where else but the Gatherum would Xambrians feel safer? How does a force of thousands of Xambrian provide a better target than a small band of Xambrians. This seems illogical.

- > The Hebrews' strength has always come from their togetherness. A trait that seems
- > lacking in the Xambrians. There is another key difference in your analogy, the
- > Xambrians aren't fighting for land.

What is the basis of Israel? A common culture. Why meet at the Gaterum? A common culture. These are the primary motivations.

- > To use this argument, and if there is not a large threat - why don't the Xambrians just
- > band together all the time? Why do they spend so much of their life alone? (Again, see
- > the bottom note before answering)

They are few, and need to cover the whole continent. A Reincarnator could pop up anywhere. There is also the question of the Oath, see below. We both agree they have a nomadic lifestyle. Recent history suggests that nomadic people only settle and start agriculture when they are so successful that they remain stationary. A surplus population develops, so the technology changes to agriculture to account for it. The idea that our ancestors starved in caves and embraced agriculture may well be wrong. The Xambrians can live with their current structure, so no change has.

- > Semantics was my point, Elders is the wrong connotation.
- >
- > As for the second bit you clipped the bit that explained why I agreed with this ... not all
- > Xambrians are going to be born strong enough to lift a sword, or smart enough to cast a
- > spell. Some are going to go about their 'mission' in different ways as befitting their
- > individual strengths. This archetype (which I think should be used very rarely) allows
- > for those on the far ends of the curve. You could even draw up an archetype for a
- > Xambrian Warrior who relies on combat. Still think I'm drawing the Xambrians in one
- > dimensional terms?

Why make a rare archetype? I'm arguing for a common alternate archetype with a reason to be apart from the band structure. You're arguing to deny them this reason because the Xambrians may have a handful of gimps to do it for them. "Don't bother yourself granpa, the gimp will look that up for ya. GIMP! Go to the library and look something up for grandpa!" Elders seem more plausible and more like something I'd like to play.

- > For an Xambrian to live to old age there are going to have to be very, VERY good at
- > what they do. Physically feeble or not, they are going to be really high level mages by
- > then, not a great starting point for a new archetype. I thought the archetype was for
- > new, > young characters.
- >
- > Nor did I say the Elders just sat around, they teach and protect the young, herd and
- > care for animals, you could even throw something in there about creating those silver
- > gloves or (if you decide to use them) the Soulblades.

The elimination of the levels system in the new edition will help take care of the logistical problems of balance. They will have physical ailments holding them back, that's why they're Elders. The Warrior archetype wouldn't work, I think, since he would not have magical defenses necessary to carry out missions. Any mage could toast him easily.

> Through all of this, a question has been nagging in the back of my mind; Why didn't
> the Xambrians form a cohesive solid culture?

This is answered in the SMS inspiration material, which is not official, I know.

Qouth SMS:

> However, a handful of Xambrians managed to escape the Fire-Pits (another war-crime
> analogy), aided by some unknown benefactor(s) who hid them in a place where the
> Torquarans and their minions could not find them. Fear of being captured, sorrow at
> their terrible loss, and the guilt that victims often feel when they have survived while
> others died, prevented them from any thought of trying to rebuild their homes or their
> lives. Instead, they swore an oath to bring to someday make the enemies of their
> people pay for their crimes.

> In a milieu where magic is real, I felt that oaths of this nature would be as binding as
any law of physics is in our reality. So it is that to the present day the Xambrians have
never sought to return to make a new home for themselves, rebuild their lives or families,
resurrect their ancient culture, or even get married and raise children. Instead they are
obsessed with the fulfillment of their oath, which is to find "Justice, not vengeance."

The Xambrians are Oathbound so that they cannot begin to start a culture until they have
brought the Reincarnators to justice. Their current social structure is a direct cultural
evolution of their post-Torquar status. This does the job, so they don't try to do it better.
If it's not broke, don't fix it.

I don't think the Oath even needs to be magical to accomplish this. A documented case
of an Aborigine band shows the band had a stick they believed was of divine origin.
When they needed to know which way to go, they would stick the piece of wood in the
ground. Eventually, it would lean one way or another, and that was the way they would
go. In a fight with another band, the stick was broken. The band was struck, they prayed
and prayed for a new stick. One didn't come. So they sat down in a circle and starved to
death.

Cultures really are powerful things far beyond the objections of any individual. Also
note that relying on a stick is a bad cultural adaptation.

Sure, the Xambrians could ultimately do a better job if they settled down. But cultural
evolution is about trial and error, not foresight.

I think you're giving Omen a bigger role than it already has. Your portrait of Omen is
cool, but I think the Xambrians and Omen have the same goal in mind. I don't equal any
of Omen's madness to chaos though. The mad certainly have patterns to their behavior.
Ultimately, I think Omen has it together more than you're giving it credit for.

As for the status of Xambrians as good guys or bad guys. It's really a judgment call. The grey area I see the most is whether the Xambrians are really pursuing justice or vengeance? Note that they don't punish the Reincarnators, they simply kill them. Is punishment justice, or is killing them? I'm going to say killing them. I think that the Reincarnators are disincorporated forever, not allowed any afterlife or reincarnation the metaphysics of Tal might hold. A true death of the soul.

Perhaps, when the last Reincarnator is dead, the spirits of Omen will be free to go on. Just as the Xambrians could then rebuild their lives in the traditions of old.

Ultimately, I do see the Xambrians as good guys. Obviously, most of Tal would not.

> * all this begs the question; just how many Reincarnators are there? A few thousand or
> so to start, and through the millenniums whittled down to maybe a few hundred? Its
not > as if they'd be that hard to find, just look for the six-year old child who has started
> conquering the neighbourhood.

Good question.

The Torquar were once mighty, which implies many as well. The Xambrians could be hunting for some time. If the Reincarnators have allies, finding them may not be so simple. I've suggested a secret society of Oathbound Xambrian allies, the converse could also be true. A la "Rosemary's Baby". Creates the possibility of a shadow war.

You asked before and I must repeat it. What the devil are those chain gauntlets for? Can they parry with them? I don't think so.

Midterms approach quickly, and I must retire from this discussion. The last word belongs to someone else. It's been fun. Let the new topics begin.

Deus tibi adsit,

Monk ("")
 { _+_ }
 | |
 |_ |

PS

Qouth SMS:

> The Xambrians are one of my favorite Tal races. The inspiration for these characters
> was Simon Weisenthal and his group of Nazi-hunters. I was moved by their tragic but
> noble story, and their selfless dedication in tracking down criminals who were
> responsible for the Holocaust and bringing them to justice.

I knew I read "noble" somewhere.

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Xambrian Discussions: Part 55

Tsamos stood looking across the barren plain. This, his twenty-first trip to Omen, was the first time he had been summoned to the cleansing.

The Lonely Time had always been hard, but never had he felt it more. The voice of the spirits whirled about inside his head.

"I (I, I, I...) have waited for this time for a thousand ages!... Qual Masoch Is Dead. You will go and find Him. We will have peace.

The plain was lonely at night.

...

Three days into Rajanistan Tsamos spotted a patrol of aramut lancers riding to his southeast. They were to be avoided at all costs. Since the day in the tavern three weeks ago, he had been alert to the knowledge that Nagor'T konach, the Rajan Priest, knew he was being hunted. Rumor from among the people of the sorrow had whispered that the Rajan had devised some knew, insidious spell to scry those with Ka Shorin Blood, the people of Old East Xambria.

The Reincarnators were always clarifying their methods. This was going to be more difficult than it would have been two hundred years ago, the last time his Name Path walked this place.

Tsamos thoughts turned to the future for a few moments. When he returned to Omen, if he was still flesh, he would be allowed to join in the rite of K'ta, the bonding. This pleased him much. There was an attractive Ke Shee Jurna whom he wished to find.

She was above him, having three Deaths, but he had seen her giving him the eye. He hoped the studiers would validate the bonding. He thought their children would be strong, why wouldn't they? No matter, at the moment he needed to sense the weird tracks of the beasts from a Rajanistan caravan. This would lead him to the Dead One. Following weird tracks was one very handy trick he had picked up from his Nagra friend.

Too bad the other Ka Shorin had demanded he not associate with a spirit hunter. He understood their fear, too many of the people of sorrow had died to this frightening enemy. And one who had no loyalty to the Reincarnator cause, thus being hard to locate.

But what he knew of Shesh lead him to believe the Nag would be their best allies, if they could be made friends.

They will be our best allies, he thought, in years to come. The vision had said so.

A few hundred Farad deaths and some handfuls of Lumens would see to that. He would have to survive.

...

And now came the hardest part, penetrating the wizards citadel. He prepared to climb the outer wall, using only the skill he had learned in the mountains. No magic was to be used, until the wizard was in his sight. He began his ascent

Suddenly fire engulfed him! He burned with an orange flame that tormented his body as his soul screamed The Burning Fires! He tried briefly to hold onto the ledge.

Awakened momentarily in his pain, he was aware of Rajan voices moving frantically about him. There was the sensation of movement, maybe of his body, but he could barely tell through the haze of his pain. They would be trying to save him for the Torquar. This could not happen. Since he could not reach his Kesh supply, he had to focus on dying some other way. Lacking any great thought, he began to pray to the ancestors. The Voice of Omen became strong in his head, and through the delirium that was beginning to set in, he saw the way forward, called by the voices. He entered the crossing lands, the burning lands, to the vague noise in the background of a Rajan screaming in tormented frustration.

The Name Path of Tsamos waited to be reborn a thousand years from now.

Bon Vie _
Teacup (_)]

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