

*Texts from Colin CHAPMAN - Lay-out from Rafaël "Fianosther" VERBIESE
based on the Talislanta RPG from STEPHEN MICHAEL SECHI*

This unofficial supplement is a free contribution to the Tal-Fans Mailing-list.

The City-Guide to Talislanta

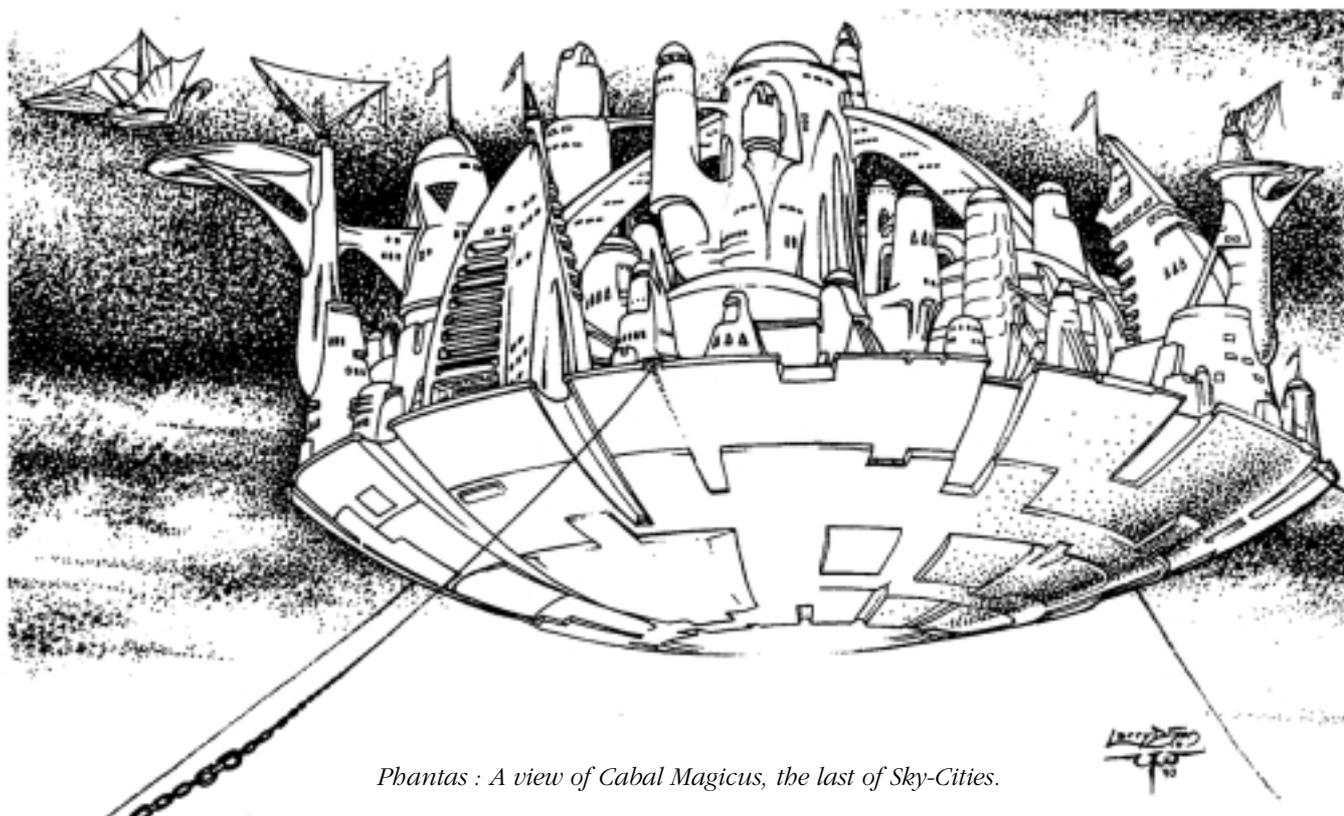
www.talislanta.com





The City Guide summary

1. Aamadh (Aaman)	03
2. Altan, the maze-city of the Ariane (Tamaranth)	11
3. Cabal Magicus, the last of the sky-cities (Phantas)	15
4. Caprica (Thaecia)	22
5. Cymril (The Kingdom of Cymril)	26
6. Dhar (Tamaranth)	38
7. Durne (The Kingdom of Durne)	41
8. Gao, the rogue city (Gao-Din)	45
9. Oceanus, the floating city (The Azure Ocean)	50
10. Rhin (L'Haan)	54
11. Shattra (Arim)	59
12. Tor (The Kingdom of Taz)	64
13. Vashay (The Kingdom of Vardune)	68
14. Zanth (Zandu)	74
15. Jacinth (The Quan Empire)	84
16. Kragan (Imria)	88



Phantas : A view of Cabal Magicus, the last of Sky-Cities.

TALISLANTA RPG is a copyright of Stephen Michael Sechi (SMS) and SHOOTING IRON. All the texts and pictures reproduced herein are with the express permission of Colin Chapman, the author and SMS. The present book is a free contribution to the game made by Rafaël "Fianostber" Verbiere to support a wonderful game ! Thanks SMS and thanks Colin ! All rights reserved to SMS, Colin Chapman and Shooting Iron.

© 2003



I. Aamahd

"I would sooner contract an incurable case of pubic lice than spend even a minute in the sanctimonious confines of Aamahd!"
- Amor, Bodorian Maestro.

A Visitor's Guide to Aamahd

The Populace

As of the 1st of Ardan, precisely 69,364 inhabitants dwell within Aamahd, for detailed records of the population are kept, and updated constantly with each new birth and death. Aamahd is an unwelcoming city, for although it trades with the Farad, Arimites, and Djaffir, it prefers to conduct such dealings outside its own borders, the better to avoid contaminating its populace by contact with infidels (i.e. anyone who is not a worshipper of Aa). Needless to say, foreign visitors are heavily policed and monitored, and segregated from the populace for the most part.

History

Following over four centuries of savage conflict between the Orthodoxists and Paradoxists during the Cult Wars, a truce was finally called after the bloody sea battle that would see the Phaedran Gulf renamed the Sea of Sorrow.

In 512 N.A. the rival factions that had ruined the Phaedran Empire, agreed to divide the nation in two, forming Aaman and Zandu. Work was begun on the Great Barrier Wall, as black stone was mined and hauled from the Onyx Mountains, with the aid of the Arimites.

In 519 N.A. the Great Barrier Wall was completed, neatly bisecting Phaedra, and running through the center of the one-time capitol, Badijan. The Aamanian half of Badijan became the focus of strenuous rebuilding atop the existing sewers, and the Holy City of Aamahd was the result.

Witches Work Through Idle Hands

The Orthodoxist cult firmly believe it is important that every adult Aamanian has some work to occupy themselves and provide a distraction from sinful thoughts (for such thoughts lead to actions according to the Omnival). As a result, all unemployed Aamanian adults are given work to perform, such as whitewashing buildings, scrubbing temples, sweeping pavements, and in return receive lodgings and a square meal every day. This also means that Aaman is totally free of beggars, has very little in the way of conventional crime, and is remarkably clean.

Visions of Aamahd

A View from Afar

A patchwork of rolling farmland surrounds the stern white walls of a large city. Stark against the surrounding fields, the great walls encompass stout, uniformly block-like structures, each rigidly organized and positioned. White clad pilgrims scatter across the city's black causeway, as wagons bearing produce trundle to and fro.

At the Gates

Worn slabs of ebony stone form the aged Phaedran causeway that leads to the imposing city walls, entering through a forbidding gatehouse of perfectly square construction. Two 20-foot rectangular gates of studded black iron, each bearing half of a vast embossed eye, stand closed within the gatehouse. Several units of Aamanian soldiers stand before the gates, vigorously checking all that enter or leave, only opening the gates to those that pass their scrutiny.

The City Streets

Arrow-straight roads of gray slate criss-cross the city between monotonous whitewashed buildings roofed with dull slate. A 10-foot pillar of white stone is set at every corner, topped with a carved Eye of Aa. Shaven-headed Aamanians solemnly and slowly walk the streets, clad in shapeless white garments, women walking behind their men. All is surprisingly quiet, and interactions are brief and formal.

The Walls Have Eyes

The All-Seeing Eye icons that are found everywhere throughout Aamahd (including those inside residential blocks), also serve a purpose beyond mere decoration: They constantly remind Aamanians that Aa is always watching, and more importantly that the Monitors might be as well, for an untold number of the icons are actually viewing devices of one kind or the other.

Aamahd at Night

The ghostly white streets of Aamahd are eerily silent at night, deserted save for the patrols of cult guards.



Curfew

Curfew is enforced throughout all of Aaman's settlements, and only those on sanctioned cult business (or assigned to patrol the city) are permitted to wander the streets between sundown and sunrise. This further controls the populace, and drastically reduces levels of crime.

The Typical Dwelling

An Exterior View

An uninspiring rectangular block, indistinguishable from its neighbors, stands near the road, 100-foot square, and 40-foot tall. Square windows gaze out of the white walls at routine intervals, and the slightly sloping roof is clad with gray Arimite slate. Three identical plain wooden doors permit entry on the ground, while an unrailed staircase zig-zags up each side, permitting entry to the upper dwellings.

The Interior

The wooden door opens into a spartan white interior with a 10-foot high ceiling. There is no ornamentation save for the cult-approved icons displayed proudly on the sills of the apartment's three windows. The floor and walls are bare cold stone, and illumination is provided by crude iron candleholders in each wall. The 30-foot square apartment is split into nine equal-sized, square rooms.

- **The Male Communal Room**

The main entrance opens into this room; one of the only three with a window. It is bare, except for a fireplace and handful of utilitarian wooden stools.

- **The Female Communal Room**

This room is identical to the Male Communal Room, save that the stools it contains are notably lower.

- **The Shrine**

Centermost of the apartment's nine rooms, the shrine bears a central pillar running from floor to ceiling, carved repeatedly with Aa's symbol.

- **The Male Parent's Bedroom**

A simple wooden cot with white linen sheets, wooden stool, and wooden wardrobe are all that distinguishes this room from the others.

- **The Female Parent's Bedroom**

Identical to the Male Parent's Bedroom, except that the mattress is placed on the floor rather than a cot.

- **The Male Children's Bedroom**

Identical to the Male Parent's Bedroom, but with several smaller, lower cots.

- **The Female Children's Bedroom**

Identical to the Female Parent's Bedroom, but with several smaller mattresses.

- **The Bathing Room**

Central to this room is a crude black-iron bathtub, wooden table bearing rough white linen towels and astringents, a wooden dressing screen, and a toilet of stone.

- **The Kitchen**

A black iron stove dominates this room, and iron utensils are hung on wall hooks. A wooden larder contains a cask of water, a batch of dried wafers, a sack of provender roots, and some tough salted durge meat.

Tax, Rent, and Waste Disposal

Tax within Aaman is high, although it is actually termed "Cult Donations", with all citizens paying a blanket 80% tax. Conversely, rent costs are low, with each individual paying a mere 1 s.p. per week for lodging (monies that again go directly into the cult's coffers, for they own all the property in Aaman). The same sewer that services Zanth (see p. 75) also runs beneath Aamahd.

Gender Segregation

Although Aamanian society is male-dominated - and women are not permitted to join the cult proper, with the exception of the Hospitaller Nuns - women are not treated as inferiors. However, gender segregation is practiced extensively, ostensibly to reduce carnal temptation on both sides. This is also why women are not permitted to enter the male-dominated clergy. No distraction from "oneness with Aa" is permitted. Women may, however, work in any common profession, although they always wear gloves, veils, and heavy, concealing white clothing when working in public.

Places of authority

Tower of the Hierophant

Looming over every structure in Aamahd, this square monolith bristles with black-iron spikes, and towers 250-foot in the air, capped by a huge Eye of Aa. Windows stud the tower at regular intervals, each shaped like an All-Seeing Eye. A wall covered with spikes and barbs encircles its grounds, enchanted Eye icons peering out in every direction from atop it.



Heart of the Tower

The Hierophant's Tower serves many cult-purposes, beyond its function as residence of the Orthodoxist Cult's leader. The top two levels serve as his personal dwelling, while several levels under that accommodate the vault of the Omnival, his bodyguards, attendants, and advisors respectively. The lower levels are devoted to a vast scriptorium and library, vaults containing precious (and dangerous) artifacts and treasures, and finally, his servant's and palace guard's quarters.

The Hierophant

Stern, wrathful, and vital, Omnus I, Hierophant of Aaman, is a powerful and intimidating giant of a man. Following his harsh directives, Aaman is making greater efforts to convert or cleanse infidels, and guard against the hated Paradoxists of Zandu.

Towers of the Monitors

These square, freestanding, 50-foot alabaster towers are each topped with a single large Eye of Aa, and serve as the abodes of Aamahd's Monitors. Each Monitor holds the position of prelate in his assigned district, and oversees the administration of aalms and caste levels for those citizens in his purview, as well as controlling those measures to monitor the citizenry.

Halls of Penance

Windowless, and ominous, this block-like structure squats amid its surroundings, standing a mere one-story high, with a vast Eye of Aa depicted in relief on each wall. Thick iron doors bear Eye icons, a multitude of locks, and spike-like studs. The single visible level contains the records of all of Aamahd's citizens and visitors, as well as those austere rooms that serve for the interview and indoctrination of new converts.

Many lower levels descend beneath the cold earth, and are filled with the sterile cells, and torture chambers, used to hold and "enlighten" the more intractable heathens and sinners.

Cleansing Fire of Aa

Newly depilated converts and individuals accused of impropriety are absolved of their sins in the Halls of Penance. The methods employed vary greatly, and include dunking (in deep wells), flogging, and beating with wooden staves. Those sinners of a more recalcitrant nature face more prolonged forms of absolution, and the Inquisitors assigned to the Halls of Penance are quite creative, particularly as regards the extraction of confessions from tight-lipped infidels and heretics.

Cult Law

Aamanian law is extremely harsh, and although regular crime is all but non-existent, crimes against the Orthodoxist cult (real or perceived) are more common. These include failure to show proper respect and deference to superiors, failure to show reverence worthy of Aa, and vulgar displays of public emotion. Punishment typically involves a brief visit to the Halls of Penance. Severe crimes of any variety, such as rape, violence, blasphemy, lewdity, and dancing, are punished by protracted torture and execution.

Keep of the Unredeemed

Surrounded by a sturdy white wall topped with iron-spikes and inward-looking watchtowers, the Keep of the Unredeemed serves as Aamahd's slave and concentration camp. Two barracks serve to house the slave-masters and guards, while spiked iron grates in the grounds lead down into three levels of dismal and unlit cells.

Deep Secrets

The life of an Aamanian slave is a short and wretched one; forced to toil mercilessly, kept barely alive with scraps, roughly shaved and scoured with astringents, and flogged for any perceived weakness or sin. Unredeemed sinners, unlucky infidels, and purchased slaves make up the bulk of the unfortunates, but, contrary to the Orthodoxy's claims, the slave pits do hold dozens of Gnomekin, enslaved for their mining skills.

Military bases

Mace of Aa Monastery

Brutal and utilitarian, this large citadel of ivory stone is the sequestered monastery and seminary of Aamahd's Warrior-Priest contingent.

Fist of Aa Monastery

This huge crenellated fortress of bleached stone is the barracks and training ground of the Aamahd's sizeable soldiery, and is simple and severe in construction.

Vengeance of Aa Monastery

This small sturdy hall adjacent to the Mace of Aa Monastery (see above) serves as the base of operations and abode of Aamahd's Witch Hunter contingent, each of whom receives martial training in the Mace of Aa Monastery, and Invocation training in the Gaze of Aa Monastery (see p. 6).



The Gatehouse Fortress

Surrounding the city's fearsome iron gates is a stout alabaster fortress that flanks and tops it. An interior portcullis is only lowered during troubled times. Two units of 20 soldiers, each lead by a warrior-priest, police all individuals wishing to enter or leave the city, while another two units are stationed in the fortress at all times.

The Great Barrier Wall

60-foot high and 30-foot thick, this awe-inspiring black structure looms above the city and stretches beyond, vanishing into the distance, running from the border of Arim to the Sea of Sorrow.

Towers of Aa's Watchfulness

Located every 1,000-foot along the Great Barrier Wall (closer in the city of Aamahd itself), these stark and angular towers of alabaster stand 70-foot high, each manned by a unit of 10 soldiers and 5 crossbowmen who have a barracks in the tower. They keep constant watch on the border with Zandu in shifts. A magical All-Seeing Eye orb in each tower is used to communicate directly with the Monitors in the event of an enemy assault.

Educational institutions

Halls of Faith

This extensive pillared hall is filled with rows of pews, and carved all over with Orthodoxist symbology inlaid with traceries of black enamel. Cult members gather here with their peers to meditate, discuss doctrine, and learn of the latest decrees of the Hierophant. Archimages are on hand to assist the faithful in committing to memory cherished phrases from the Omnival.

Gaze of Aa Monastery

This small walled complex of temple-like white halls and residential blocks serves as Aamahd's Archimage monastery, wherein aspiring clergy undergo their long and harsh tutelage in both ritual, doctrine, and invocation. Once a potential acolyte has entered these walls, they will not be permitted to leave them again until they either fail or leave as fully trained Archimages. Those Archimages who are unable to find a position in a temple or other cult-run establishment, are expected to travel and spread the creed of Aa.

Fist of Aa Monastery

(see Military Bases)

Mace of Aa Monastery

(see Military Bases)

Vengeance of Aa Monastery

(see Military Bases)

Benevolence of Aa Monastery

(see Miscellaneous)

Museums & libraries

Hall of Aa's Memory

Amongst the most ostentatious of Aamahd's constructions, this museum is roofed with a pyramid of white slate, its levels supported by white marble pillars, and interior walls graced with friezes depicting notable events in cult history. Orderly rows of glass cabinets display the bones and garments of great martyrs, weapons used by great cult heroes to slay heretics, early icons, and so forth. The top floor of the museum serves as a small monastery for Aamahd's Reliquarians. Admission costs 5 silver pieces.

Places of worship

Temples to Aa

Lower caste citizens are expected to attend whichever temple serves their local area, and at masses, proximity to the altar is regulated strictly according to caste. However, those of Aspirant caste or higher are permitted to attend whichever temple they wish, and as a result, the temples vie with each other to attract higher caste citizens, and the greater donations they bring.

Temple of Ascension unto Aa

This ivory-colored temple is built precisely 200-foot square, and 100-foot in height. Square stone pillars support the pyramidal roof of white slate, and tall rectangular windows provide light from without. Regular iron braziers light the interior of the great empty hall that forms the center of worship, at the end of which is a white marble altar overlooked by a large silver Eye of Aa. The impassive Archimage, Aagar, and his retinue of underpriests, acolytes, and devotees, maintain quarters behind the main hall.

Temple of Omnificent Aa

100-foot square, and 100-foot in height, the Temple of



Omnificent Aa is a study in perfection, with every white block made to the exact same dimensions, every perfectly square window, the exact same size, and mirrored on each wall. With four identical doors leading in from each exterior wall, the main hall is supported by four pillars, and a square altar stands in the middle, an eye of Aa on each face. The resident Archimage, Aaqa, is known for his soothing, almost seductive speeches, and great success in winning converts.

Temple of Aa's Omnipotence

Unique among Aamahd's temples, the Temple of Aa's Omnipotence has no walls, the roof being supported instead by two perfect rows of square columns. The local Aamanians attend here without fail, irrespective of weather, prepared to endure all for their faith in Aa. The painfully thin Archimage, Aahaus, cries the need for control, abstinence, and sacrifice in the name of Aa.

Temple of All-Knowing Aa

Raised on a square dias of ten steps, this temple is Aamahd's smallest, being a mere 50-foot square, and 50-foot high. Ten doorways lead into the white marble interior supported by ten square pillars. A simple podium stands at the end of the hall, over-looked by a silver Eye of Aa. Archimage Aapren leads the local faithful in repetitive mantras of cult slogans.

Temple of Aa's Omnipresence

This temple is simple, austere, and severe, with no decoration except for the single large "Eye of Aa" carved on its altar. The charismatic Archimage, Aazron, makes his stirring sermons here, emphasizing that Aaman must root out its own sins before it can concentrate on the infidel.

Temple of All-Seeing Aa

Every available foot of space in this temple has been decorated with a recurring "Eye of Aa" motif, making it appear slightly unnerving. The eyes gaze out, unblinking, from every wall, pillar, floor, and ceiling. Even the altar itself is carved to resemble a single great eye. Archimage Aaval raves with paranoia, his rants about constant vigilance drawing many of Aamahd's more fanatical worshippers.

Temple of Aa's Omniscience

Unadorned but for a single vast "Eye of Aa" on the interior of each of the temple's four walls, the Temple of Aa's Omniscience is notable in the fact that it lacks an altar. The studious Archimage, Aadan, stalks amid the worshippers at his temple, confronting them personally, and whispering Aa's creed in their ears.

Temple of All-Mighty Aa

Stern and bold in construction, the Temple of All-Mighty Aa stands alone, modeled after the fortress-like Mace of Aa Monastery (see p. 5). Its interior decorated with friezes depicting Aamanian warriors slaying infidels, the militant Archimage, Aacas, exhorts the faithful to crusade against the infidel.

Majestic Cathedral of Aa

Resembling a titanic temple, the Majestic Cathedral of Aa serves as the temple of Aamahd's high caste members on those holy days of especial significance, and services here are given by the Hierophant himself. The huge main hall contains a raised dais surrounded by a solid silver altar over which a great silver Eye of Aa levitates, inlaid with ebony and ivory, and bearing a crystal iris that glows with fierce white fire. The many pillars of white marble are inlaid with black enamel iconography, and an enchantment serves to project the speaker's voice throughout the hall.

Markets & Bazaars

Square of the Devoted

This square expanse of white paving serves as the public square, and it is here that outside traders may set up their stalls under the strict scrutiny of cult auditors who ensure that all produce meets cult regulations, and all costs are regulated. Several stone platforms and a deep well stand at the center of the square.

A Vicious Example

The stone platforms at the center of Aamahd's Square of the Devoted are used exclusively for public executions. Even the nearby well is used for public executions by drowning. Aamanian citizens watching such "events" are expected to stand in orderly lines, and watch without motion, sound, or joy, only briefly clapping at the end of the execution.

Traders, artisans & merchants

Bounty of Aa, Pilgrimage Supply

Located adjacent to the Pilgrim's Rest hostel (see p. 8), this immense stone warehouse - owned and administrated by the cult - offers all the cult-approved items that an indivi-



dual undertaking a pilgrimage or crusade could possibly desire: travelers' raiment, maps, wagons, burden beasts, rations, Orthodoxist icons, weapons, armor, slave bearers, etc. Costs are x2 standard. A trio of Archimages supervises the operation.

Mercantiler's District

This area is filled with row upon row of small, identical white-washed stores, each differentiated solely by the wrought iron sign that is displayed above the door. Many goods and services are available here, such as limners (selling white lacquers), alchemists (astringents, bleaches, and depilatory elixirs), clothiers (cult vestments only), tanners, millers, blacksmiths, masons, carpenters, potters, and so forth. None dare sell their wares unless the designs and materials have been approved by the cult, and all prices must be set by the cult.

Skin Complaints

Due to the widespread use of astringents to whiten the skin, and the occasional allergic reaction to depilatory elixir, skin complaints in Aaman are actually quite common, and the cult makes a tidy profit out of selling skin salves and unguents.

Inns, taverns & restaurants

Pilgrim's Rest

This cult hostel has been converted from two adjacent resident blocks, with the space that would have run between them, now featuring a basic stone stable. Each room bears a crude wooden cot, small table, and a large Eye of Aa carved in the ceiling. Costs for both food and board are somewhat above average.

Infidel's Rest

Walled off from the rest of the city, and heavily patrolled and monitored, this uninspiring complex contains a converted residential block, stable, and courtyard. Any non-Orthodoxists that wish to board in Aamahd are only permitted to stay at this cult-run establishment. All of Aamahd's laws apply here, and its drafty rooms, poor stabling, and monotonous comestibles are available at inflated prices (x3 standard).

Transportation

Docks

Orderly, clean, and well-maintained, stout wooden piers, and frameworks of block and tackle provide docking for up to a dozen vessels in Aamahd's dock. Aamanian military ships, and traders, primarily native, arrive and depart from this point, carrying slaves, articles of iron, and other cargo, which they trade internally, and with the merchants of Faradun, Arim, and Imria. The dock is reached via a straight man-made waterway that leads inland from the Sea of Sorrow, and enters the city through a great iron-gated archway in the south wall.

Aaman Canal

This 60-foot wide man-made waterway connects Aamahd's dock to the Sea of Sorrow, allowing vessels to sail inland to dock at the capital.

Miscellaneous

Cemetery of Aa's Effulgence

Resembling nothing so much as a mammoth block of white marble, 100-foot high, this mausoleum bears no windows or adornment of any kind, save for the open arches that regularly pierce its base, each topped with an Eye of Aa. The interior is filled with level upon level of shelves, each bearing the iron or silver placards that bear the names, castes, and aalm-totals of each of Aamahd's dead. Higher caste and rank guarantees that the individual's placard is located on a higher level. Recognized martyrs, including those who died during the Cult Wars, are commemorated on the top level.

Benevolence of Aa Monastery

Surrounded by a stout wall, this complex contains a large two-story vaulted hall topped with a steep roof of gray slate, and two smaller residential blocks, all with tall rectangular windows. The main vaulted hall contains four large hospital wards of curtained cots, and the offices of the Hospitaller Nuns who run this cult-provided medical establishment. The two smaller residential blocks serve as the accommodation for those of the Hospitaller Order, and the grounds are strictly patrolled.

Hall of Purity

This large and dull square structure is painted in blinding white, and permeates a strong astringent odor. Gender-segregated levels feature innumerable black-iron bathing tubs of depilatory elixir and astringent, as well as rack



upon rack of harsh towels, and rows of changing screens. All of Aamahd's residents are expected to avail themselves of this free cult-provided service, at the first sign of any hair growth anywhere on their bodies.

Uses of Hair

The hair that Aamahd regularly accumulates is used to stuff mattresses and pillows, or packed into blocks and used as fuel.

Naked Equus

Interestingly, those equus used in Aaman regularly have both their manes and tails shorn of hair, much to their chagrin.

Hall of Aa's Mercy

This dour orphanage is a converted residential block, with each of the two lower floors housing a single large dormitory of cots (one dormitory for each gender), and the top floor consisting of the residences and offices of those few Hospitaller Nuns who run the orphanage. Constant sermons and lectures, reinforced by harsh treatment, serve to control and indoctrinate the unfortunate children. Despite this harsh treatment, the orphans are clothed, sheltered, and well fed, many eventually moving into positions within the Orthodoxist cult itself.

Toll Gates

Supported on either side by solid black pillars of gargantuan proportion, three unadorned and monumental gates of copper, 30-foot in height, directly link Aamahd and Zanth through the Great Barrier Wall's only opening. Each gate is operated and overlooked by a gatehouse located within the great flanking pillars. Standing directly above the central of the three gates is a small stone platform: the site of the annual Clash of Champions.

Clash of Champions Platform

The annual Clash of Champions takes place on this large stone platform that stands directly over the central tollgate of The Great Barrier Wall. The stone platform is 20-foot in diameter, perfectly level, and has no safety barrier. Incautious combatants can be forced off the edge to plummet to injury or death. It is considered a particular coup to cause a vanquished foe to fall amongst their own supporters.

Selecting the Chosen of Aa

Aamahd's champion for the Clash of Champions, is rigorously selected from the ranks of the nation's military, with the best warriors in each barracks clashing

on a regular basis throughout the year, until one individual is recognized as their greatest. A successful champion can expect to earn upwards of 200 aalms, along with the requisite increase in rank. As a result, the competition can be fierce.

Stadia of Aa's Chosen

This white stadia is 100-foot square, with numerous rows of stone steps, providing seating for spectators at the annual Clash of Champions. Order of seating is arranged according to rank and aalm-levels; with higher ranks getting seating closer to the Platform. Only those of Aspirant caste or higher are afforded space in the stadia. Hawkers selling cult-approved paraphernalia stand at regular intervals amid the stands. It goes unused throughout the rest of the year.

Sample NPCs

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, rivals (friendly or otherwise), or encounters:

Aamalak - Wrathful Archimage

Heavy-framed and portly, Aamalak is an imposing figure, and his deep sonorous voice is inspiring. His fiery sermons at the Temple of All-Mighty Aa are extremely popular, and his hatred of infidels knows no bounds.

Aaskir - Rapturous Flagellant

Aaskir is visiting Aamahd as part of a pilgrimage, and finds the experience driving him into a frenzy of divine rapture. His heavy white robe is tattered and frayed, his bare feet are dirty, his eyes are wild, and he long ago branded an Eye of Aa into his forehead.

Aamostro - Curious Reliquarian and Curator

The mild-mannered Aamostro is an aged Reliquarian, and serves as curator of the Hall of Aa's Memory. Despite his growing infirmity, he often strikes out in search of artifacts, and his overly-curious nature may well spell the end of his career (and life), for rivals would be swift to accuse him of dabbling in the forbidden.

Aakrid - Bullying Servant at the Infidel's Rest

The sniveling little Aamanian known as Aakrid, is a member of the serving staff at the Infidel's Rest. He delights in threatening foreign infidels far more powerful than he is, and has been known to frame or blackmail those that displease him.

Aatril - Honorable Warrior-Priest

Powerful, charismatic, and handsome, Aatril is a dedicated and honorable warrior, who commands loyalty in all those he commands. However, his sense of honor is so deep that should he be called to choose between duty and honor, it is likely that honor might well prevail.



Aandan - Paranoid Monitor

Aandan is gripped by paranoia, despite his vaunted position, for he harbors deep feelings of lust that wrack him with guilt, and he fears one of his fellow Monitors might well discover his inner turmoil. Even more fearful to him is the fact that he might lose control some day. Because of his overriding fear, he performs his monitoring duties with zeal almost unmatched by his peers.

Aamon - Regretful Inquisitor

Aamon has served as a professional, skilled, and dedicated Inquisitor for the past two decades, but derives no pleasure from his craft. As of late, he has begun to experience pangs of regret over his chosen profession, and nightmares are starting to plague his sleep. Unbeknownst to him, his more callous colleagues are beginning to suspect that he lacks the required dedication to Aa.

Aash - Sly Witch Hunter

Friendly, open, relaxed: All are terms that any but the most astute might use to describe Aash, but such traits are merely a charade and lure, for few Aamanians are so calculating, ruthless, cruel, and utterly relentless. Pity the witch or sinner that falls into Aash's clutches.

Aamsha - Hospitaller Nun Acolyte

Stern, aloof, and painfully thin, the young Aamsha is currently undergoing her medical training in the Hall of Aa's Mercy. Despite her willingness to serve Aa, she is indifferent to the suffering of others, and she finds the more concerned approach displayed by other Hospitaller Nuns to be most displeasing.

Aamelia - Heterodoxist Conspirator

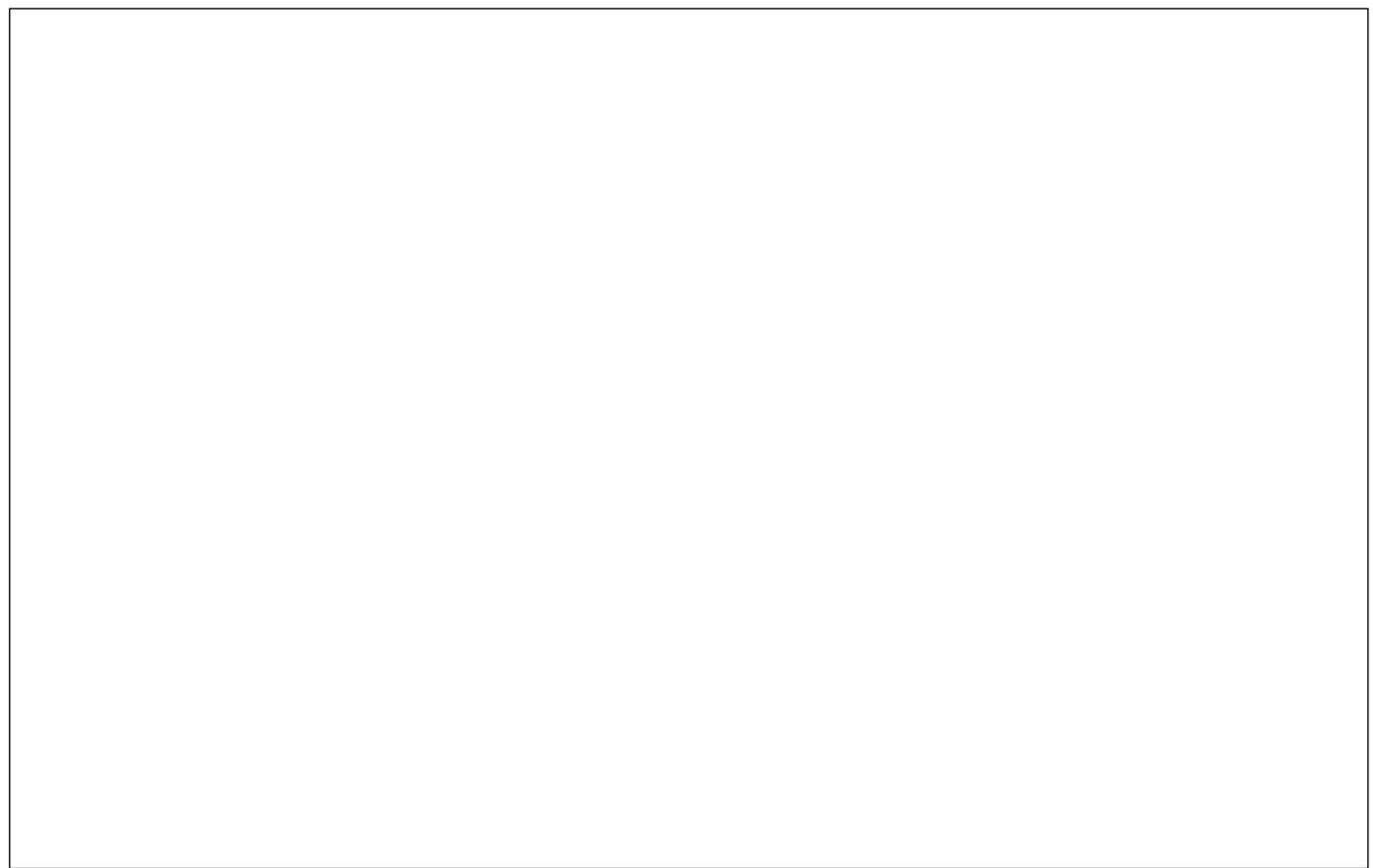
Aamelia is the young daughter of a low caste slater, but was recently recruited as part of a Heterodoxist cell, and her association with the Heterodoxists has opened her eyes to the injustices of her people. She is now patiently, and painstakingly, looking for other potential recruits.

Aamog - Brutish Slave Master

Peeling skin bleached white with astringents, the muscular and thuggish Aamog squints and leers at his charges, and demands that they recognize his superior intellect and attractiveness. He particularly hates Gnomekin, and finds their friendly manner and faith in Terra to be more than enough reason for him to flog them ceaselessly.

Aasara - Bitter Trader

A regular trader at the Square of the Devoted, Aasara spent much of her early life as an orphan, after her parents were killed on a pilgrimage, by unknown "infidels". Instilled with a hatred of outsiders, Aasara loves nothing better than to take foreigners for all they're worth, before subtly coaxing them into saying or doing something blasphemous, then informing the nearest Warrior-Priest.





II. Altan

"Altan is the only place in Talislanta where silence has a sound".

- Keeawk, Gryph Clan Warrior.

A Visitor's Guide to Altan

The Populace

The maze-like wonder known as Altan houses all but a small handful of the 1,000 Ariane that inhabit Talislanta, with only the Druas ("Seekers") extant elsewhere. Secluded and isolated, both by geography and the Ariane's reclusive nature, Altan sees few visitors, and only the Gryph clans with whom the Ariane trade, regularly bear witness to this miraculous city.

History

Even the earliest records in Talislanta mention the existence of the Maze-City, as do many ancient myths from across the continent. Altan was seemingly crafted over many centuries from a single mound of violet stone, and continues to be slowly modified to this day. As for timescales and dates of construction, the Ariane view time as abstract, so measurements of time mean little to them. It is said that the complete history of the Ariane people is recorded in the Tamar of Ages (see below). Someday, perhaps, the Ariane will consent to explain the origins of their people. Until that time, Talislantan scholars will continue to speculate upon what may have transpired in the long-forgotten past.

Visitors

Unaccompanied visitors may stay no more than seven nights, and while in the city they are forbidden to hunt, staying in a Druas' vacant home. Visitors who arrive with a Druas may stay as long as the Druas does, and share his or her home. The Ariane evince little interest in outsiders, except for the news they might bear. New arrivals are given a brief explanation of the various restrictions they face, and where to find food and drink, but are then left to their own devices.

Visions of Altan

A View from Afar

A resplendent vista of snow-capped violet mountains, blanketed with a swath of emerald trees, reaches for the

sky, tops wreathed in a sea of cloud. Nestled amid sweeping forest in a valley surrounded on three sides by the towering mounts, is a disk of purple stone, carved to resemble an intricate maze.

At the Gates

Sylvan forest of ancient, majestic trees gives way to a narrow trail twisting down the valley. A perfectly smooth wall of amethyst stone stands 35-foot in height, seeming to meld with the ground at its base. A single, small elegant archway beckons inward.

Altan's Defenses

Ariane mounted on silvermanes, and armed with blunt maces, bows, and blunt arrows, patrol the trail leading to Altan, and drive off or report the presence of any hostile entities, with the aid of Gryph aerial patrols and scouts. Although the entrances that lead into Altan contain no gates, hostile or malicious persons trying to enter the Maze-City will find that the archways dwindle and disappear before them.

Spinifax

The Ariane collect the soft flax of the thistledown, and use it to weave spinifax: one of the most luxurious fabrics on the continent. Spinifax is brilliant white in color, as soft as baby Erd's sbag, as light as silk, and as durable as soft leather. The Ariane wear it undyed, weaving their tunics, breeches, cloaks and boots out of it. What excess they produce is given to the Gryph clans to trade or use as they see fit, in exchange for news of the outside world.

The City Streets

Broad paths of purple stone twist and turn sharply between violet walls scattered with irregular archways and windows, and festooned with flowering vines bearing succulent fruits, and luminous scented blooms. Crystal clear streams meander along and across paths and under walls, terminating in fountains and pools, as paths end in walls or open onto glades of flowers, trees and grass.

Altan at Night

At night, the luminous blossoms of hanging lantern plants emit a soft luminescence, bathing the Maze-City in their



violet glow. Life continues at the same sedate pace, though a deeper calm settles over the labyrinth.

At One with Nature

Many inoffensive and non-predatory animals and avir fly and roam in and around Altan, including the streets of the city itself. Even the small herd of silvermanes that serve as mounts for the Ariane have free roam of the environs. The Ariane are fully aware that some Equus can speak, and are some of the only people Equus ever feel inclined to converse with.

The Typical Dwelling

All Ariane dwelling rooms are shaped and decorated uniquely, with shapes reminiscent of the interior of a spiral shell, pyramid, faceted walls, and many other bizarre and unusual forms. However, the following describes what one might expect to find within the very walls of the maze itself.

An Exterior View

A smooth oval archway stands open in the violet wall, bordered by flowering vines in every color of the spectrum. A little further along the wall are two open windows, one round, set half-way up the wall, and the other, pear-shaped, set near the top.

The Hallway

Inside the archway, a curving hallway branches off left and right, following the ley of the wall, ascending in a spiral to the left and opening into a room on the right. Flowering vines on the interior walls feature delicate hanging blooms that glow softly.

A Typical Room

The spherical shape of the room lends it an organic, almost womb-like feel, and the warm light filtering through the two odd-shaped windows lends it a soft lilac incandescence. Vines grow up one side of the room and across the ceiling, covering it with a cloak of green leaves and colorful flowers, while a small stream trickles across the floor, entering under one wall and exiting under the other. The vines near the floor seem to grow, twist and merge together, forming several low platforms of living vegetation, used as seating or tables as desired.

Tall, slender, organic-looking sculptures of abstract form, crafted from polished wood and stone intertwine bizarrely in the corner. A latticework of tiny windows in the ceiling/roof dapples the room in a patchwork of light.

Simplicity in All Things

The Ariane do not have separate rooms for such things as bathing, eating, sleeping, or resting, nor do their rooms feature such things as doors, locks, traps or wards, such is their great respect for each other. Instead, each Ariane has a single room of their own within the walls of the maze, in which they rest, sleep, or meditate as they see fit. They bathe in the large pools located in the city's glades, and do not cook their food; simply plucking ripe fruits from the city's walls when hungry and drinking from its many stream when thirsty.

Places of authority

The Tamar of Ages

This great standing stone looms 140-foot high, and is 70-foot in diameter, formed from the same single violet stone as the city itself, its base surrounded by a dozen smooth boulders upon which any may sit.

The Tamar of Ages

The obelisk known as the Tamar of Ages actually is a vast and ancient tamar that has served as a repository for the experiences of the Ariane people for many centuries. It serves as the meeting place of the "Elders" of Ariane society (those Ariane who have experienced seven or more previous incarnations, regardless of their current mortal age), and it is from here that important decisions affecting the populace are discussed, meditated upon, and relayed. However, while the Tamar of Ages holds the combined experiences of centuries, it is seldom "read" by any member of the populace who is seeking the answers to a question, least of all the Elders. The Ariane firmly believe that the only true wisdom is that which the individual discovers for themselves.

Ironwood Grove

In a quiet corner of the maze, surrounded by solid lilac walls, is a small copse of ironwood trees atop a small grass-covered mound. Each tree has been grown to form a living cage of ironwood, shaded by its leafy boughs above, with vines of fruit growing within the cells themselves.

Ironwood Bars

Those few individuals who commit crimes within Altan (always visitors, as the Ariane do not commit crimes), and who are not banished immediately, are secured in an ironwood cell until the Elders decide what to do



with them. The ironwood cells interfere with magic, making them effective prisons for troublesome spellcasters, as well as more mundane entities. While the abstract concept of time that the Ariane hold tends to add to the duration any malcontent may spend imprisoned, the ironwood trees themselves provide enough fruit and water to keep the prisoner alive indefinitely.

Wards

Located in the wall just inside each of Altan's entrances is a large oval room equipped with several mattress-sized platforms of vegetation, and a table topped with stone jars bearing herbal unguents, poultices, and lotions. A highly skilled Ariane healer dwells in a room nearby, ever ready to administer aid to any patrol that returns with extensive injuries they haven't been able to treat themselves (a rare event).

Parks

The Meadow

A large circular meadow stands at the heart of the city, carpeted by soft moss and grass. Small copses of trees provide cool shade over smooth lavender boulders surrounded by wildflowers in a cornucopia of colors. Brooks sparkle in the sunlight, and a great obelisk of mauve stone (see the Tamar of Ages) stands alone at the center.

Glades of Tranquility

These large, open pockets of quietude are located throughout the city, holding trees, boulders, pliant grass verges, and silvery pools, bedecked in wild growing garlands. Bubbling fountains pour forth a wellspring of cool, crystal-clear mineral waters that are said to soothe, relax, and heal.

Grotto of Darkness

The walls of the maze seem to crowd together here, gradually forming a tunnel that leads into a dark grotto. Here, in complete darkness, the sensation of touch is explored, for the walls of the grotto are sculpted in many varying textures, shapes, and forms.

Grotto of Light

The walls of this grotto resemble the cut and polished facets of a gemstone, and amplify the ambient light, which reflects in a prismatic spray off the pool at its center.

Miscellaneous

The Aether Gate

Standing in a small, secluded grotto, this artifact resembles a simple archway of polished purple stone, grown over with vines. When approached by anyone intending to walk through the archway, the gate bursts into life, the opening filling with a silvery haze. The Ariane are able to use this gate to access any dimension they desire, but rarely use it, and are loathe to let outsiders do so.

Sample NPCs

The following NPCs may be used as player contacts or encounters (*Note: the Ariane do not possess names, and as such, none are listed*):

The Aged Druas

The Druas men called "Shadowmoon", has wandered the continent of Talislanta for many, many decades, and witnessed many marvels. Despite his advanced physical age, he is still considered "young", having only experienced four previous lives. He has retired from his travels, and now spends his time instructing new Druas.

The Wood Crafter

Slender and willowy, this young male Ariane often wanders the forests around Altan, gathering fallen limbs and branches of ivory-colored Whitewood. From this pale timber he crafts staves, and sculptures, of rare beauty, following what he calls "the whim of the wood". He often accompanies his partner, the Healer, as she gathers herbs.

The Ancient Child

Having experienced twelve prior incarnations, this female Ariane is considered wise and venerable, despite having the physical age of a young child. Her eyes are deep with wisdom, and many pay heed to her thoughts.

The Healer

Although all Ariane possess some prowess with healing, either using Mysticism or herbalism, this young-looking female Ariane has made the study of the healing arts a specialty throughout her seven incarnations. She is devoted to the Wood Crafter, and they have been together through three incarnations.

The Bowyer/Fletcher

This middle-aged female Ariane creates slender and graceful bows and arrows from Whitewood given to her by the Wood Crafter. She acquires spinifax string from the Weaver, and asks passing avir to donate a feather or two for the flights of her arrows.



The Silent One

This Ariane of indeterminable age has spent the last decade in near constant meditation in a single glade, only occasionally pausing to eat a fruit or sup from the brook nearby. His eyes are always distant and filled with sorrow. He has only ever uttered a single word: "Atlantis".

The Weaver

Truly ancient in aspect, this female Ariane has been weaving spinifax for most of her considerable lifespan. Although extremely skilled, her vision is starting to fade, and her fingers beginning to slow, and she knows that the time of her next, and second, incarnation, is fast approaching.

The Mason

Stout and short for an Ariane, this adult male has an uncanny knack for locating loose amethyst stones of just the right size and shape for any given purpose. He gives small pebbles to the Bowyer to tip her arrows, and receives Whitewood mace handles from the Wood Crafter to which he attaches the purple stone heads. Following the dictates of the elementals that inhabit the stones he collects, he painstakingly fashions stone utensils or sculptures that please the inhabiting entity.

The Gardener

A mere teenager experiencing her first incarnation, this Ariane wanders the city, gently persuading the plants to grow in attractive patterns, to bloom, and produce fruit. She performs her task with obvious delight.

The Guard

Preparing to take up the mantle of Druas, this youthful male Ariane is a member of one of Altan's patrols. Gregarious by Ariane standards, he enjoys patrolling the valley with his comrades, and excitable silvermane companion, Silverstream.

The City Sculptor

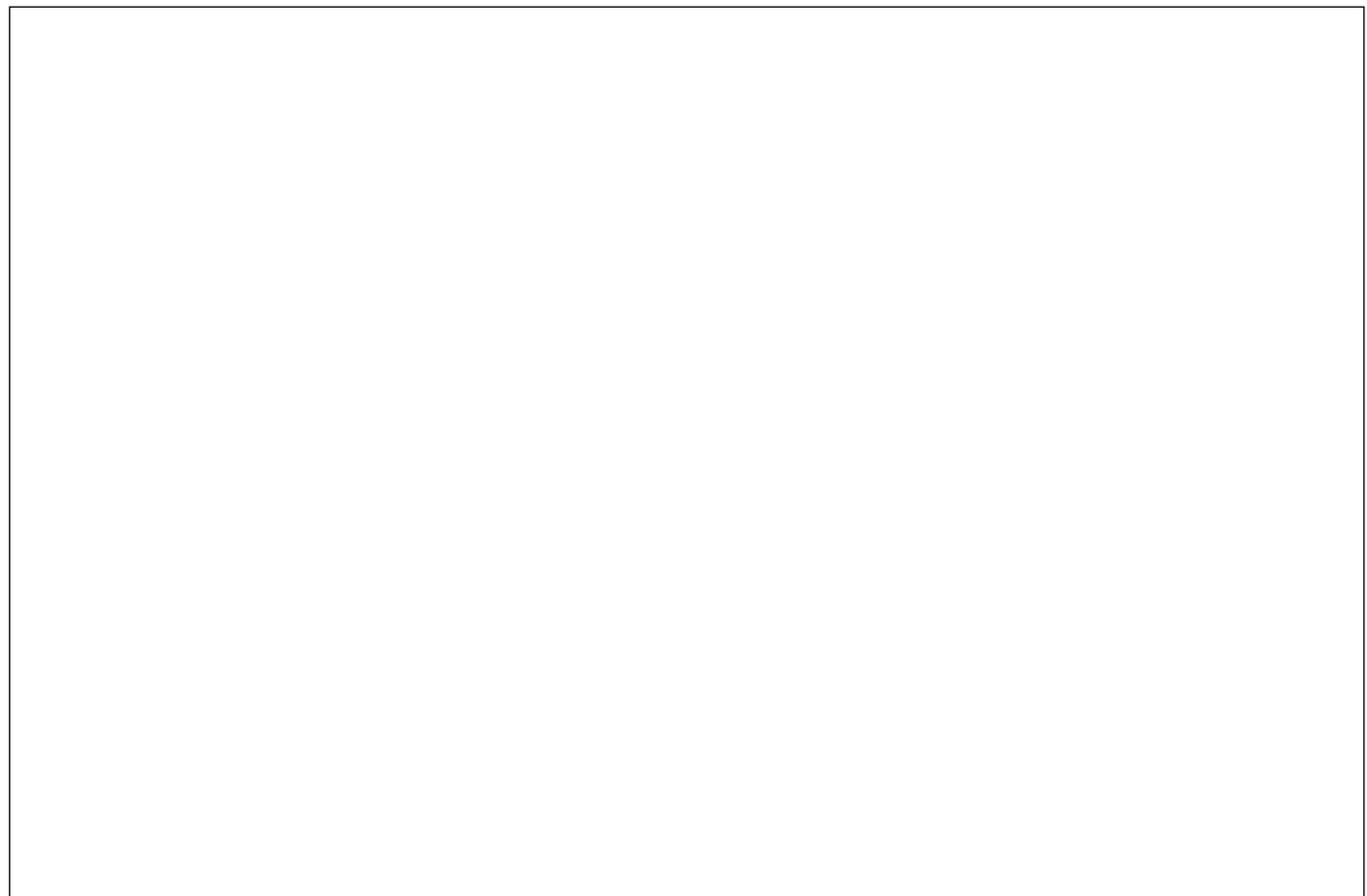
Calm, placid, and ultimately patient, this female Ariane continues the process of gently sculpting the Maze-City, communing with the elementals of the purple stone and coaxing them to change over decades, with the aid of the elementals of wind and rain.

Keeawk - Gryph Clan Warrior

Keeawk is a proud hunter and scout of her people, and often visits Altan to ask for useful herbs and excess spinifax, which she takes to her clan. In exchange, she tells the Ariane of all her keen eyes have witnessed, and the news of events in and around her native realm.

Windswift - Silvermane Stallion

Leader of the herd that inhabits Altan, Windswift is proud of his position and family, and enjoys sharing tales of his "adventures" with those individuals he deigns to talk to.





III. Cabal Magicus

*"Cabal Magicus is a shining example of how mighty the Archaens once were, and how far their descendants have fallen."
- Callistro, Callidian Cryptomancer.*

A Visitor's Guide to Cabal Magicus

The Populace

Once a fabulous symbol of magical prowess from a halcyon era, Cabal Magicus is slowly falling into ruination, and with it the hopes, dreams, and pride of the Phantasians who dwell there. Originally home to over 30,000 citizens, the population of the sky-city has dwindled over time to a mere 14,000, as fewer resources has meant fewer births, and increasing numbers of Phantasians are forced abroad to earn enough money to live and maintain the failing structure. Cabal Magicus has few visitors, due to the obvious requirement of aerial transport, and as a result, only Farad negotiators, and Cymrilian diplomats and scholars visit the sky-city with any regularity.

History

According to the detailed records kept by the Phantasians' ancestors, the Elandar, Cabal Magicus was constructed 248 years before the dawn of the New Age. During the chaos of the Great Disaster, the sky-city Elande lost altitude, and began to descend rapidly. In a panic, the Elandar fled south in their windships, but were attacked by the Baratus fleet, and all but one of their vessels destroyed, along with many of their greatest minds, and artifacts.

The sole surviving ship reached the isle of Phantas, and there constructed Cabal Magicus, using what little they had left in the way of knowledge and resources. Sadly, when those survivors died out, most of their knowledge died with them. Now named after the isle over which they hover, the Phantasians, descendants of the Elandar, struggle to keep the sky-city aloft.

Visions of Cabal Magicus

A View from Afar

A fortress of towers hangs suspended in the firmament, shimmering like a silver mirror in the reflected light of the twin suns. It seems to skim on the wisps of clouds, four

fragile lines connecting it to the tiny speck of greenery far below amid an ocean of blue. Several windships glide about the structure like delicate butterflies.

On Approach

Gargantuan silver chains connect the colossal argent disk that forms the base of this mile-wide city, to the chalk-cliffed isle far below. Elegant multi-tiered and domed towers cluster the top of the disk, interconnected with graceful sheltered walkways, colors of alabaster, chrome, and gold. A deceptively slender tower looms ahead, bearing a windship platform and dock.

The Streets of Cabal Magicus

All of the sky-city's streets, parks, etc. are actually located indoors, as the city is effectively a vast, self-contained arcology. No one sets foot outside, on the foundation disk itself, except when essential repairs need to be made.

Ghost City

Given the sky-city's reduced population, a large number of apartments are unoccupied or derelict, and streets that were once a bustle of activity see little traffic, making the city feel somewhat empty and deserted. Farad overtures to convert the largely empty sky-city into a resort for wealthy foreigners, have been met with disgust and prideful scorn.

The City Interior

Wide promenades of gold-veined marble are flanked by twin rows of small, intricately carved pillars, each surmounted by an exquisite statuette bearing a glow globe. Here and there, darker areas of passage draw attention to missing or damaged globes. A great vaulted tunnel of stained glass covers the promenade, casting multi-hued light from the sides and above.

The air tastes sterile, and certain areas are chilly where heating mechanisms have ceased to function. Hovering benches stand at regular intervals, though many show signs of wear. Levitational disks are used to gain rapid access to upper or lower floors in the arcology, though some have lost their enchantment, forcing lengthy detours.



Cabal Magicus at Night

The great silver sky-city stands above a slowly roiling sea of cloud, the sky a blanket of darkness, dusted with stars. The disk and towers glitter in the moonlight, scattered with the pinpricks of light from windows all over, and surrounded by the mournful howl of the wind.

The Typical Dwelling

An Exterior View

A 20-story tower of silver and ivory tapers up from the great silver disk, studded with windows, many of which are dark and unlit. A rounded dome of gold caps the construct, a huge ornate skylight at its center. A golden disk-shaped landing platform thrusts from the tower beneath the observation dome, permitting up to two windships to dock.

The Tower Interior

The core of the tower consists of a great hollow shaft, at the base of which is a hydroponic garden. Light shines down from the huge latticework skylight far above. Each story features a ring-shaped balcony that overlooks the open shaft, and two circular doors that lead to that level's two apartments. Two pairs of levitational disks, each set within an etched crystal tube, stand on either side of the central vault, permitting access to any level. All too often, one or two of these disks are inoperative.

The Apartment

A circular doorway dilates open, surmounted by a flickering, aged glow globe. The apartment is shaped like a half-ring, and separated into two separate rooms.

• The Recreational Room

Occupying two-thirds of the available space, this room is a combined lounge and bedroom, featuring a full-length window through which the endless sky may be viewed. Glow globes are set into the walls themselves at regular intervals, and books line a curving shelf of rich hardwood that runs under the window. Several well-padded chairs hang on twisted chains from the ceiling, and a chipped levitating disk of polished marble serves as a table that can be easily raised, lowered, or moved. A twisting crystal cabinet, lit from within, stands to one side, once bearing exotic intoxicants, but now holding only the cheapest of wines. Threadbare silks cover the worn-looking oval mattress in the corner, shelves beneath it providing room for clothes and belongings. A single door leads into the bathroom.

Citizenship

Citizenship is only open to those of pure Phantasian descent, and even foreigners who might have been born and raised in the sky-city, will never be acknowledged as citizens.

The Highest Nobility

Although all Phantasians consider themselves elite, ten families are actually regarded as nobility among the Phantasians. These families, each descended from the members of the cabal that once governed the Elandar, are as follows: Bandaric, Tellorian, Dachantes, Shardrose, Weirthorn, Mordredir, Kassilmar, Raemir, Xavios, Sirdrake.

Tax

All citizens of Cabal Magicus pay a blanket tax of 50% on all their earnings, the proceeds of which are used to pay for the upkeep, maintenance, governance, and protection of the sky city, and free daily nutritive elixirs that each Phantasian is entitled to.

Public and Private Ownership

Approximately 70% of the properties in Cabal Magicus are publicly owned. The rest is owned by those Phantasians who are members of the city's ten most prominent families, the only individuals that are permitted to actually purchase and own property in Cabal Magicus. Needless to say, even these families no longer possess the financial power necessary to purchase more property.

Essence Abuse

Although the sales of Dream Essence are falling, because few can afford such a costly luxury, the abuse of the substance is becoming increasingly common among the jaded and depressed Phantasians.

Lucid Dreaming

Many Phantasians, especially those involved in the dream trade, learn to control the content of their dreams, as this skill allows them to tailor dreams somewhat for the distillation process, as well as enabling them to better make use of Dream Essence.

• The Bathroom

This small room features mirrored walls and ceiling, and contains a bath, toilet, and shower cubicle of marbled alabaster, all supplied with water from the arcology's waste recycling and vaporization plant.



The Fade of Opulence

As the fortunes of the Phantasians have diminished, they have found that they can no longer afford the extravagance to which they were once accustomed. Costly imported foodstuffs have given way to a near total reliance on hydroponics, so many of the once beautiful tower gardens have now been converted to the growth of foodstuffs, such as provender. Some poorer Phantasians have even had to start drinking the sterile water that the arcology recycles.

Places of authority

Cabal Gatherum

Located in the resplendent stained glass dome that caps Cabal Magicus' most ornate tower, this elegant circular hall contains a large circular table of colored marble, inlaid with a mosaic of Talislanta, and surrounded by deep velvet levitating chairs. It is in this hall that the members of the Phantasian Cabal, the sky-city's ruling body of the foremost seven magicians, convene to discuss matters concerning the city. Meetings are traditionally held every High Day, and are always presided over by the Magister, the elected head of the Cabal.

The Magister

The current Magister of Cabal Magicus is the Astromancer Excelsior, Tarashades, a descendent of the great Laslovian, and a powerful magician in his own right. Although the Phantasian Cabal is actually divided on the issue of permitting the Farad to set up a resort on the sky-city, Tarashades is staunchly against the idea.

Incarceration Vault

Serving as the city's gaol, this collection of cells in the city's foundation, features enchanted sourceless lighting, and "open" doors that keep malcontents in by means of walls of magical force, dispelled and reinitiated by means of the guards' ancestral wands. Magic-inhibiting glyphs are carved over every surface, including the ceiling and floor, effectively prohibiting the use of any spells or magical items.

Dream Stealing

According to Phantasian law, it is forbidden for any individual to distil the dreams of another without their prior consent, and those that break this restriction are regarded as dishonest and shiftless individuals. Those that knowingly distil and sell the illegal essence of nightmares, are subject to incarceration, and stiff fines and punishments.

Military bases

Wind Tower

Towering above all the other structures in Cabal Magicus, this austere tower is the Guardian order's duty barracks and headquarters, the Guardian Excelsior, Quaesatori, residing therein, and overseeing all Guardian duties. The top of the tower is a mirrored dome, containing many enchanted viewing devices and telescopes, permitting the Guardians inside to observe the skies for hundreds of miles around.

Guardian Towers

Evenly spaced about the sky-city's perimeter, these small and unobtrusive towers serve as defense posts for the city's force of Guardians. The polished silver domes that top each of these towers, are actually one-way mirrors covering observation telescopes, and a powerful incendiary sphere hurler. In case of attack, each dome's cap unfurls like the petals of a flower, allowing the incendiary sphere hurler to be used on invading forces. Unfortunately, the petal mechanism is none too reliable, and the antique sphere hurlers have been known to malfunction.

The Guardians

Membership in the Guardians, Cabal Magicus' traditional military force, is largely hereditary, with former Guardians training their most promising grandchild, before retiring when the potential new Guardian is ready to assume the role. The cherished antique armor and sword is handed down through the generations, and only slightly modified for fit each time. Given the diminished population in Cabal Magicus, it has become necessary for some Guardians to break with tradition, and accept apprentices from outside their family, although many are reluctant to do so.

Military Docks

Located around the base of the foundation disk itself, great silver iris portals lead into the city's military windship docks, which occupy an entire level of the disk, and include a huge, round, windship repair facility.

A Proud Fleet...

Once the pride of the skyways, Cabal Magicus' fleet of windships has fallen into a sorry state of repair, many vessels grounded, and the majority rendered obsolete by the superior arcanology of Cymril. A mere 19 windships of war now patrol the skies around the city, plated



with magical quicksilver, and armed with rams and incendiary sphere hurlers, but markedly slow and lumbering when compared with Cymril's fine vessels. Besides its mediocre military fleet, Cabal Magicus also hosts perhaps 25 merchant windships, of which no more than 20 are operational at any given time, and around 50 operational windskiffs and windriggers, several of which are used by repair crews operating on the outside of the sky city itself.

Observation Gondola

Operated by a winch mechanism that allows it to be lowered up to 150-foot below the base of the foundation disk itself, the observation gondola is spherical in shape, plated with the same magical quicksilver as the disk itself. Numerous round windows cover the gondola, and several powerful telescopes are affixed to technomantic armatures inside. Four Guardians take regular shifts watching the surrounding skies for any signs of trouble. In case of attack, the gondola is raised within the belly of the foundation.

Museums & libraries

Libram Gathered

Occupying an entire small tower near the center of Cabal Magicus, the Libram Gathered is one of Talislanta's most valuable, if not particularly useful, libraries. Each of its multiple levels is filled with row upon row of ring-shaped shelves bearing dusty antique tomes. Unfortunately, the bulk of the collection is composed of the lofty and arrogant observations of the Elande, concerning other cultures, races, and lifeforms, although there are obscure texts on windship arcanology, the creation of sky-cities, the arts of Dream Essence distillation, and copies of Laslovian's "Compendium of Dreams". The rarest archives are stored in a basement vault, and may only be viewed with permission of the Antiquarian Excelsior; a crotchety old woman called Filistrae, who is also a long-standing member of the Phantasian Cabal.

Vault Arcane

Formed from a spiral of levels inside a gilt tower, the Vault Arcane is Cabal Magicus' museum - an adjunct of the Libram Gathered, also governed by the Antiquarian Excelsior. Much like a residential tower, the center of the Vault Arcane is a single hollow leading from floor to skylight, around which the museum's various levels, ascend. The hollow itself is filled with enchanted models of windship designs through the ages, flying and circling continuously. The railed ascending levels display cases of preserved flora and fauna, and sundry ancient artifacts and memorabilia.

Apprenticeships

Phantasians teach their own children, but uphold the time-honored Elande tradition of training by apprenticeship. Those seeking to study a trade or skill with a master, must approach the potential tutor as a supplicant, and attempt to prove themselves and win favor. Needless to say, this can be a very time and patience-consuming process.

Pride Before a Fall...

Descended as they are from the magically elite Elandar, the Phantasians have long considered themselves intellectually, culturally, and magically superior, adopting a somewhat arrogant and snobbish outlook and bearing. The vast majority regard common and menial tasks and professions as beneath them, and have traditionally hired foreigners to perform all such duties. During their wealthier days, this arrangement worked well for the Phantasians, but times have changed, even if the Phantasians themselves haven't. Few Phantasians can afford to employ outsiders anymore, and most of the foreigners that once worked in the city have long since left for greener pastures. Sadly, few Phantasians will swallow their pride in order to perform the onerous or menial chores that kept Cabal Magicus clean, tidy, and well-maintained, exasperating the sky-city's current plight.

Traders, artisans & merchants

Closing Shop

Cabal Magicus once boasted many shops and artisans, selling all manner of wondrous goods, but given their current sorry state of affairs, all but a handful of the primarily foreign-run outlets have long since ceased trading, leaving many shops empty and disused.

The Glory of Flight

Located on what was once one of Cabal Magicus' busiest promenades, this small semi-circular store now seems worn with time, and dust. The magically illuminated windows display flying scale models of various windships, and the interior is a small workshop, wherein a tired old Cymrilian makes enchanted toy windships, that no one can afford to buy anymore. Only the mysterious donations from an unknown benefactor prevent him from ruin.

Ward Forge

This ancient establishment has served the sky-city since time immemorial, created enchanted and decorative wea-



pons and armor for the Guardians, as well as for export. Once highly regarded and honored, its fortunes have seen been steadily dwindling, as even foreign markets seem unprepared to pay the high costs the ancestral Phantasian arcane-smiths demand.

Fral's Wholesale Comestibles

Run by a slick and lecherous Farad, Fral's is perhaps the only trade outlet in Cabal Magicus that actually makes a steady profit. Established in the empty halls of what was once a small complex selling garments of high fashion, Fral's stocks foodstuffs from across the continent, purchased in bulk, and sold with absolutely no frills or presentation. As loathe as many Phantasians are to shop in such a common establishment, the sheer monotony of their elixir diet, combined with their diminishing purchasing power, means that increasing numbers buy food from Fral's, albeit with obvious discomfort.

Parks

Hub Plaza

Standing at the very heart of the sky-city's surface, Hub Plaza is a vast park of grass verges, crystal clear streams, groves of crafted whitewood, sorcerer trees, and willow-wood, standing around rock gardens of crystal filled with scented moss and blossoms. A monumental dome of etched crystal covers the entirety, and semicircular benches of variegated wood provide ample seating. Once a popular relaxation and meeting spot, painstakingly landscaped and tended, the park has begun to grow wild as few individuals can afford the time or money required to maintain it.

Hydroponic Gardens

Located at the center of each habitation tower, these large circular gardens through which paths of etched tiles twist, were once full of rare blooms, exotic trees, and verges of grass. These beautiful plants have now been replaced with monotonous rows of provender plant, and the occasional grove of fruit trees, such as red hairy blum fruit. These plants are harvested, pasted, and blended in the Nutrition Facility (see pp. XX) to form the bland nutritive elixirs that most Phantasians now consume.

Inns, taverns & restaurants

The Decanter

Formed from a single small dome of crystal that seems to flow like animate water, The Decanter contains a central

circular bar, and many tables and comfortable seats, each standing on small artificial islets of clear glass, set atop ponds of water containing exotic fish. The Decanter is the sole tavern and restaurant of any great esteem still operating in Cabal Magicus, and its exclusive clientele is composed of those few Phantasians that are still wealthy enough to dine there.

The Golden Batranc

Roundly avoided by all but a handful of Phantasians, the Golden Batranc is a simple tavern of cut marble, and solidified cloudstuff, frequented by those foreigners who still work in the sky-city, such as the Yassan. The food is basic, but wholesome, and the alcohol served is average, but the atmosphere is relaxed and trouble free.

Transportation

Public Wind-docks

Every residential tower in Cabal Magicus features an internal, or external wind-dock, large enough for up to two windships, and a handful of riggers and skiffs. Sadly, few Phantasians can afford to repair and operate wind vessels any longer, and as a result, many docks are unused, or littered with derelict vessels.

Miscellaneous

The Foundation Disk

Actually a concave disk, flat-side up, the foundation of Cabal Magicus is hollow, formed from solidified cloudstuff plated with magical quicksilver 9-foot thick, rendering it virtually impregnable. The interior of the foundation contains a huge spherical chamber at its heart, containing the Arcanomantic Gyroscope (see p. 20); a level containing the now largely disused military wind-dock and repair facility; the city's great levitationals; huge storage vats; the waste recycling and vaporization plant; and the nutrition facility. Gangways of solidified cloudstuff, and levitational disks, riddle the foundation's infrastructure.

The Chains

Four awesome chains of silver adamant anchor Cabal Magicus to the tropical isle of Phantas far below, and prevent it from drifting. Each link is a stunning 25-foot in length, and weighs several tons. Monolithic wind-powered winch mechanisms permit the sky-city to ascend or descend the chains at a rate of one foot per second, between



altitudes of 500 and 2,000 feet. The chains are deeply rooted into the bedrock of Phantas, and ground the entire structure, providing protection from electrical storms.

Arcanomantic Gyroscope

Right at the gravitational center of the sky-city's foundation, this titanic spherical vault holds an intricate and arcane gyroscope of staggering proportions. Spinning on a constant basis, emitting bursts of magical energy, this stunning amalgam of magical and technomantic prowess, serves to keep Cabal Magicus on an even and steady level, irrespective of any storm effects.

A dedicated team of Yassan engineers, led by a Phantasian magician, has been employed to keep the device in working order, following two nearly catastrophic breakdowns.

Stabilizing Fins

These gargantuan quicksilver-plated fins are set regularly about the circumference of Cabal Magicus, and usually sit flush with the sky-city's foundation. In particularly strong winds, one or more are winched out, and adjusted to the prevailing winds, helping to maintain the structure's stability, along with the Arcanomantic Gyroscope.

Windship Production Facility

This short, broad tower is topped with an intricate framework of lift platforms, each large enough for a full-sized windship, and contains several large warehouses designed for the production and assembly of wind vessels. Given the Phantasians' collapse of fortunes, no new wind vessels have been constructed here since 592 N.A., and the facility has been shut down and abandoned as a result.

Wind Funnels

Located all over Cabal Magicus, these large enchanted mechanisms are employed to harness the natural power of the winds, which the Phantasians capture and fashion into storm crystals. These crystals are then utilized to power the sky-city's Arcanomantic Gyroscope, and levitationals. Water vapor derived from this process is condensed and stored in the city's reservoirs (see right column).

Waste Recycling Plant

Located in the foundation disk, this facility resembles nothing so much as the experiment of a colossal alchemist, vast and twisting glass tubes carrying bubbling wastes into massive tarnished vats of copper and glass.

Here, the organic wastes of the sky-city are treated, providing the gasses that heat the city, distilling the water used

for hydroponics and common plumbing, and providing a useful fertilizer for the city's hydroponic gardens. Water is also provided by wind funnels (see left column). Nearby, an enchanted furnace serves to recycle scrap metals, and glass is also melted down and reused.

Centuries of Waste

Although Cabal Magicus manages to recycle most of its waste, there is always some waste that can't be recycled, be it hazardous alchemicals, simple trash, etc. Said wastes are simply dumped via windship on the isle of Phantas far below, and have served to further mutate and harm the unfortunate fauna, and flora, of the tropical isle. While the offspring of many Elande-created abominations continue to inhabit the isle, others are still being created through this casual disregard.

Nutrition Facility

Consisting of a number of large antique vats, the sky-city's foodstuffs are gathered and taken here, blended into the bland nutritive elixirs that all Phantasians consume when unable to afford anything else. One glass phial of elixir (just enough sustenance to live on) is provided to each citizen, per day, free of charge.

Storage Vats and Reservoirs

Directly connected to the Nutrition Facility and Waste Recycling Plant, these massive amberglass vats are used to store Cabal Magicus' water and nutritive elixir reserves.

Sample NPCs

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, encounters, or rivals (friendly or otherwise):

Sirr of the House Kalavas - Farad Negotiator

The saturnine Sirr is one of several competing Farad negotiators attempting to convince the Phantasians to grant them permit to set up a resort on Cabal Magicus. Although she is finding the Phantasians more resistant than anticipated, Sirr is nothing if not patient, persistent, and persuasive.

Sharcanthus - Cymrilian Scholar

Every inch the bumbling scholar, the unkempt Sharcanthus is among Cymril's Lyceum Arcanum's most adept researchers. Despite crumpled and unfashionable puce robes, and a shock of unruly green hair, he manages to mumble and muddle his way through life, and has currently been sent to Cabal Magicus to conduct research on windship design, with the aid of the Antiquarian Excelsior.

**Mio - Yassan Engineer**

Among the small number of skilled Yassan employed on Cabal Magicus, Mio is one of the crew assigned to maintain the Arcanomantic Gyroscope, and performs her job with diligence, and skill commensurate with the high wages she demands. She has a wicked sense of humor out of all character for a Yassan.

Xashill - Phantasian Astromancer

The pragmatic Xashill is very down-to-earth for a Phantasian, and is not afraid to get his hands dirty repairing a ship's levitationals or wind funnel. His robes are often worn and dirty, but he carries his tools everywhere, and is always willing to muck in and lend a hand.

Raishata - Phantasian Guardian

With a long goatee, but no moustache, the experienced Guardian, Raishata, certainly makes an impression. Antique armor polished to perfection, he demands a great deal of less experienced, lower-ranking Guardians, and is disgusted by the recent moves to apprentice from outside the families.

Imoricos - Phantasian Dream Merchant

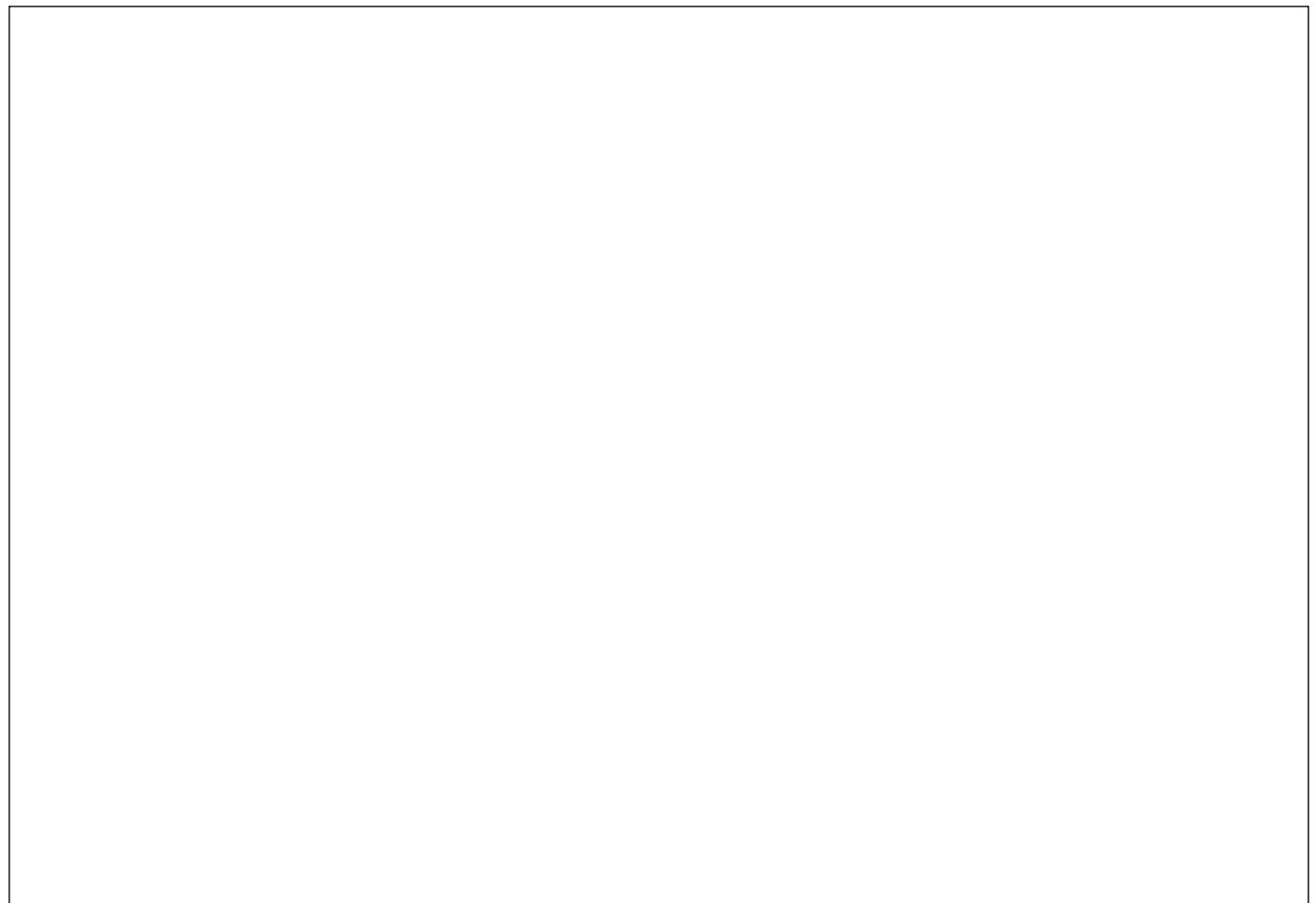
The sleepy-eyed Imoricus is one of Cabal Magicus' most successful Dream Merchants, and has several wealthy clients in Hadjistan and Zanth. Unfortunately, his profits would be higher, were he not addicted to Dream Essence himself.

Khatelyna - Famed Phantasian Model

Perhaps the most famous of Phantasians, Khatelyna has made her name and fortune by modeling clothes and makeovers for such famed individuals as Darual the Morphosite, Serazzio of Cymril, and Finesse in Zanth. Standing at 7'3" in height, with long slender legs, and an elegant natural beauty, she is almost constantly courted and dated by wealthy and influential men from across the continent.

Tik - Ferran Vagrant

Having discovered that stowing away aboard windships was a rapid way to travel the continent, the opportunistic Tik found herself on Cabal Magicus, and set about exploring and exploiting the largely deserted sky-city, cunningly avoiding the notice of the Phantasians. She now departs and returns, stowed away on various windships, and has considered bringing some family members along for a "holiday".





IV. Caprica

"Having visited Caprica, one can begin to truly appreciate the meaning of 'Paradise', and ultimately, just how quickly it becomes dull and unexciting".

- Red Rymora, Gao Captain.

A Visitor's Guide to Caprica

The Populace

With a population that usually hovers around 300, Caprica is merely a large Thaecian settlement (few of which exceed 100 members). The settlement sees a small, constant trickle of traders and tourists from Cabal Magicus, Gao, Cymril, Zandu, and the isle of Eros, but can swell to as much as quadruple on each annual Festival of the Bizarre.

History

The residents of Caprica, and the rest of Thaecia for that matter, have never kept detailed historical records, nor have they enough interest in anything beyond the here and now, to investigate their past. For all they care, Thaecia may have existed since time immemorial, or since yesterday, although it is most likely they established themselves sometime after the Great Disaster.

Thiasian legend states that both they, and the Thaecians, were created by the Enchantress of the Shoals, "sometime, long ago", and that sketchy legend serves the Thaecians satisfactorily, given their lack of interest in such matters.

Visions of Caprica

A View from Afar

Azure waves roll gently over a beach of burnished sands. A sea of green grass overlooks a shallow, glittering lagoon fed by a tremendous waterfall cascading over rocks. The dark mouths of caves yawn open over the beach, topped with a copse of swaying trees.

Atop the bank of grass, innumerable pavilions billow gently in the warm, sea breezes: panoply of color amid fields of scented flowers.

The Island Interior

Inland Thaecia is blanketed by copses of trees, elegant pools and meadows, and smaller settlements.

The City Streets

Soft, lush grass carpets the ground that winds sinuously amid the colorful pavilions. The soft breeze sweetly and delicately scented by the flowers of rose, lilac, azure, amber, and lemon that proliferate everywhere.

Caprica at Night

The gathering of pavilions glow softly in many brilliant shades, lit from within, their walls billowing gently in the warm sea breeze. Graceful residents move amid the settlement, and the gentle lapping of the waves serves to lull and soothe.

Magical Defenses

Although far from being a martial race, and possessing no combative skills whatsoever, the Thaecians are far from defenseless, as the Imrians found to their discomfort. Thaecians can be remarkably single-minded in defense of their right to live a relaxed and carefree life, and their natural aptitude for, and widespread use of magic and enchantment, provide them with ample means of defending themselves. They prefer less aggressive magics, instead using magical entrapment, illusions, subtle commands, etc. to defeat invaders, rather than actively injuring them.

The Typical Dwelling

An Exterior View

The light of the twin suns glows diffusely through the translucent fabric of an elaborate pavilion of amethyst gossamer. The fabric stretches lazily over a sweeping framework of braided ropes attached to four central poles, shaping the gossamer into an enclosed, roofed semi-circle. A triangle of fabric is fastened back, providing entry.

The Interior

Four slender central poles of polished, intricately carved wood, support braided ropes of gold gossamer that form the tent's framework. The suns' light bathes everything in a lilac halo through the amethyst gossamer of the lightly undula-



ting walls and ceiling. Pliant grass still carpets the floor, and a large, thin, circular mattress of gossamer filled with down occupies the center, covered with small, many-hued gossamer pillows. Hanging from the ceiling is an intricate net filled with a dozen small Thaecian orbs, each a different color, and enchanted to glow at night, providing a rainbow of illumination. An open pouch lies next to the mattress, a scattering of artist's materials and tools spilling from it.

Shifting Streets

The Thaecians often move their pavilions at whim, and all their belongings and furnishings are easily packed and moved. This seemingly random relocation occurs as they move their pavilions closer to their current love interest, and also serves to ensure that the grass upon which they camp does not suffer or die due to prolonged lack of exposure to the suns. However, this does mean that the layout and "streets" of each settlement change with astounding regularity, and individuals often move between the various communities. Only during the Festival of the Bizarre are the various pavilions positioned with any thought, forming a rough circle with a large open space at the center.

An Eclectic Education

Thaecians have no formal schooling, as they find any such routines and strictures painfully dull and uninteresting. Instead, each young Thaecian learns whatever their parents, and the other adults of the community, are prepared to teach them, as and when they can, and feel like it. As a result, Thaecian education is quite sporadic, and many years pass before the youngster has any appreciable skills, save for seduction and the magical arts, both of which are favored and enjoyable pastimes.

Traders, artisans & merchants

All Thaecians practice at least one art or craft, and there are no trade stalls or stores to be found anywhere. In addition, the constant changing locations of the inhabitants' many pavilions means that an individual's location cannot be rendered on a map (as it rapidly becomes incorrect). For these reasons, examples of the various artisans and craftsmen found in Caprica are located in the NPC section (see p. 24).

Thaecian Trade and Produce

As communes, Thaecian settlements do not use currency among themselves, or indulge in such "civilized pursuits" as taxation. Instead, they each barter what arts, crafts, magics, and services they produce among each

other as they see fit. Foreign merchants who desire Thaecian produce must deal with each Thaecian on an individual basis. Gossamer, Thaecian orbs, Thaecian nectar, vivid inks, rare fragrances, and certain alchemical ingredients and mixtures are all available at 50% or less of their value elsewhere, with greater discounts given to those merchants who barter (especially interesting luxury goods) rather than use coinage.

Transportation

Windship Dock

Towering over the gathered pavilions of the Thaecian populace, Caprica's windship dock is considered something of necessary evil, permitting traders and tourists from Cymril, and Phantas to dock, but detracting from the natural beauty of the surroundings. Some 60-foot in height, attempts have been made to make it more attractive, including extensive carving of the wood used in its construction, and the cultivation of flowering garlands in and around it.

(Sidebar) Thaecian Windriggers

The Thaecians of Caprica actually own two archaic windriggers, purchased from an old Phantasian, though they are slow and unmaneuverable. Only a handful of Thaecians know how to pilot them, and these individuals are given the onerous task of visiting the nearby isle of Nearwan on a daily basis, to check on those incarcerated there. The upside is that these Thaecians often make lazy airborne sight-seeing tours over Thaecia and the surrounding waters, much to the delight of friends and admirers.

(Sidebar) Seaborne Visitors

Seaborne visitors are expected to weigh anchor offshore, and make their way to own way to shore, typically via rowboat, as the Thaecians refuse to ruin their attractive shoreline by building a docking facility.

Miscellaneous

Sapphire Shallows

This large, shallow pool is filled with warm waters abundant with colorful fish and freshwater rainbow corals, and a bed of rainbow lotus undulates on the freshwaters beneath the Cascading Veil (see p. 24). Scattered, smooth boulders, veined with sparkling colored quartz provide opportune seating for those Thaecians who enjoy paddling.



Thaecian Cuisine

Thaecian nectar forms the mainstay of the Thaecian diet, distilled from the rainbow lotus, which grows commonly in the numerous fresh-water pools across the isle. This exhilarating drink is high in sugar-content and provides the Thaecians with plenty of energy with which to pursue their various hobbies. In addition, the Thaecians eat the petals of certain flowers and herbs, a few varieties of seaweed, and the occasional fish (marinated in nectar) they catch using stationary baskets in the Sapphire Shallows. They do not hunt (a task they consider far too strenuous and vulgar).

Cascading Veil

This 60-foot waterfall of clear, freshwater, cascades gently over glittering rocks into the Sapphire Shallows. Many Thaecians gather their drinking water at the falls, or come to bathe, wash, or enjoy themselves in the warm, bubbling waters. A small cave is located behind the waterfall itself, leading via a carved stairway to the Caverns of Final Slumber (see below).

Caverns of Final Slumber

This dark network of caves is lit throughout by the dim light of Thaecian orbs in numerous carved wall brackets, the light glittering off numerous veins of quartz in the rock. Opening in the cave mouths over-looking the main beach, and the cave entrance behind the Cascading Veil, it is in these vaulted caverns that the dead of Caprica are interred in glass sarcophagi.

The Vanishings

The bodies of some of the interred dead have started to vanish recently, and the Thaecians are just becoming aware of this fact. Unknown to them, a pair of Ghosts were accidentally summoned when a spellcasting went awry, and now inhabit the vast cavern complex, stealing and eating the freshest cadavers. In addition, several community members who others assumed merely departed for one of the other settlements, have fallen prey to these ghastly residents. It may not be very long until the Thaecians notice that the unannounced departures are becoming entirely too regular.

Dancers' Grove

This ring-shaped copse of elegant trees stands atop the caverns that overlook the beach. According to local myth, the trees are actually the ensorcelled forms of a circle of arrogant dancers that irritated the Enchantress of the Shoals, who transformed them into trees for their temerity.

It is said that the trees dance when there is no-one looking. For their part, the Thaecians enjoy the trees as a place of shade, and often hang their freshly-dyed gossamer on the boughs to dry.

Crime, Punishment, and Nearwan

Although crime of any kind is extremely rare in Caprica, it is regarded with abject horror and abhorrence when it does occur. Those accused of crimes are tried by popular vote, and those found guilty are taken via windrigger, to the nearby isle of Nearwan, where they are imprisoned in a dome-like web of perdurable force, 100-foot in diameter, created by the joint efforts of three of Caprica's most powerful spellcasters.

Minor offenses are punished by such incarceration for a period determined by popular vote, while those found guilty of such heinous acts as rape or violence, are imprisoned indefinitely. Imprisoned criminals may grow their own food within their segment of the tropical, but the Thaecians take no other hand in their fate, save the daily windrigger patrol to ensure all are still imprisoned, or to release those who are deemed to have served their time.

Sample NPCs

The following NPCs are useful as player contacts, encounters, and rivals (friendly or otherwise):

Threnya - Thaecian Carver and Musician

As graceful as a willow, Threnya is a wood carver of surpassing talent, and her exceptionally detailed pavilion poles and flutes are extremely popular. Her nimble fingers and delicate lips can draw forth the sweetest melody from a flute. She dwells in a bright glaucous pavilion.

Thaelo - Thaecian Enchantress

Thaelo is a skilled Enchantress, but she has earned greater renown for her skills as an engraver. The Thaecian orbs she produces are often desired more for their delicate engraving than their magical effects. Her pavilion is florid carmine in color.

Thomeyo - Thaecian Dye Maker

Considered the most adept dye maker in Caprica, Thomeyo mixes dyes of rare brilliance from the petals of flowers and powdered corals, which are in demand both in Caprica and abroad. His pavilion is dyed a marbled mixture of plum and cobalt, stippled with gold.

Thas - Thiasian Performer

Thas is one of Caprica's most exuberant inhabitants, having elected to leave his troupe and stay in Caprica until such a time as he gets bored. An accomplished troubadour and



lover, these factors, combined with his exotic appearance, have made him popular in the local community. He shares a tent with his current lover.

Thaeia - Thaecian Child

Thaeia is wide-eyed, innocent and sincere, investigating everything with rapt curiosity. She will confide in any character that she likes, telling them that she has a hidden "treasure horde" (actually her collection of beautiful seashells), making them solemnly swear "not to tell". She lives in a saffron pavilion with her older sister, Thallia.

Thallia - Thaecian Adolescent Romantic

Increasingly distracted by her growing physical awareness, Thallia harbors romantic dreams about the dashing Gao swashbucklers, and while she dearly loves and cares for Thaeia, she is likely to develop a desperate, heart-breaking crush on any character she regards as handsome and dashing.

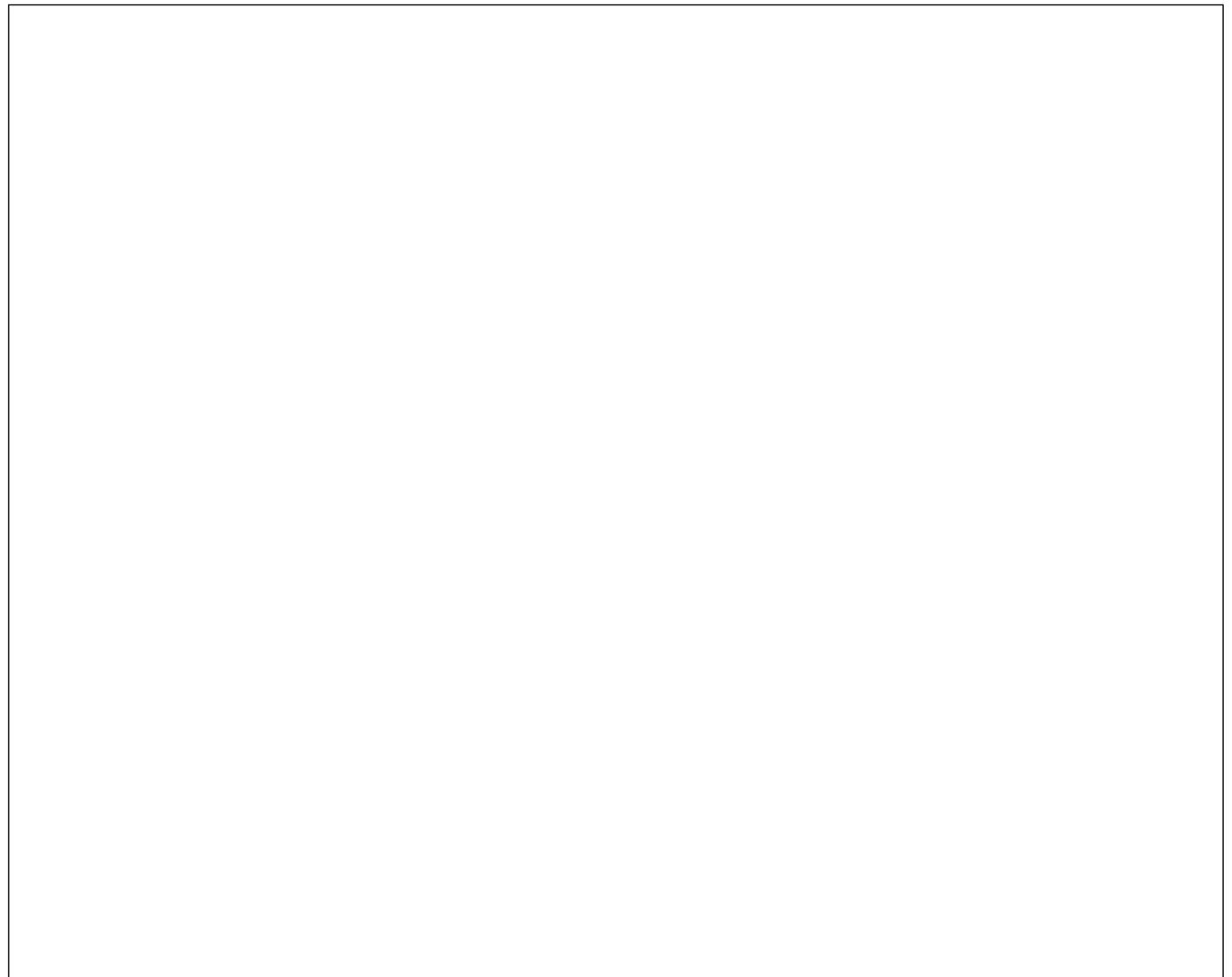
Theris - Thaecian Gossamer Weaver

Theris produces gossamer of astounding quality and durability that many windship captains, both Cymrilian and Phantasian, are prepared to pay far in excess of normal

costs for. However, Theris is capricious and stubborn, refusing to accept commissions, working at his own, infuriatingly leisurely pace, and selling to whomever he likes on a whim, regardless of the higher prices others might offer. He dwells in a pavilion of lily-white gossamer.

Thirion - Thaecian Alchemist

The affable and slightly eccentric Thirion produces numerous philters, potions and balms from local ingredients, and is constantly experimenting with new (often bizarre) mixtures which he tests on volunteers from among Caprica's most jaded and bored members. He refuses to create in bulk, but does sell substantial quantities of fragrances that ensure pleasant, restful dreams, potent aphrodisiacs, perfumes, and birth-control unguents. His pavilion is a deep orange in color.





V. Cymril

"Cymril is open, diverse, and enamored of arcane lore. It is damned of course."

- Aaslan, Aamanian Witch-Hunter.

A Visitor's Guide to Cymril

The Populace

Approximately 49,000 people inhabit this great metropolis on a permanent basis, though the number can swell by several thousand due to the massive influx of foreign traders, diplomats, travelers and refugees.

Beings from around the entire continent may be found in this cosmopolitan hub, engaged in business, trade, or simply sightseeing. While the vast majority of the stable populace is Cymrilian, there is a substantial minority group of Thralls, Aeriad, Gnomekin, Muses, Kashmirans, and Sindarans who live and work in Cymril. Mixed with a healthy dose of foreigners from beyond the confederation, this makes Cymril and its inhabitants among the most open-minded and accepting on the continent.

History

The Phandre, magicians exiled from the city-state of Phaedra in 148 n.a., during the Cult Wars, established the free state of Cymril, settling where the city itself now stands. After 300 years of settlement, Cymril was prospering as a city-state, and the Seven Roads (actually six, the seventh being the section of the Underground Highway that links Cymril with Durne) were finally constructed in 451 n.a.

Ruled during much of its history by the arch-conservative Tanasians, Cymril's only permitted colors, both in construction and apparel, were green and yellow, and laws were stifling. As corruption became apparent among the Tanasians, the populace elected the liberal Azradamus as Wizard-King in 601 n.a. Seeking to reassert their influence in 603 n.a. a trio of the Tanasian's most powerful magicians attempted to instigate a coup, failing when the Lyceum Arcanum came out in support of Azradamus (the Lyceum's one-time Chief Administrator). The Lyceum's secret archives were opened, bringing to light many age-old scandals regarding the Tanasians. A popular uprising, supported by the Wizard-King, swept the Tanasians and their supporters from power, imprisoning many, and forcing others to flee to foreign lands. Of the three Tanasian magicians who led the attempted coup, Nymande was convicted of treason, placed in stasis and imprisoned in an impermeable orb, Ebonarde fled to parts unknown, and Naryx of the Gloved Hand disappeared.

Since the Tanasians were ousted, many of the old traditions and proscriptions have fallen out of vogue. The obsession with the color green has given way to an avid appreciation of multichromaticism, and Cymril has been rapidly rebuilt to embrace this fact. Unfortunately, while Cymril is enjoying something of a rebirth, many of the exiled Tanasians continue to plot against the liberal Azradamus and his supporters, and sporadic Tanasian terrorism provides a threat against which Cymril is most vigilant.

Visions of Cymril

A View from Afar

A great hexagon of variegated crystal, Cymril is set amid sweeping hills of grass. Many elaborate spires, archways, promenades and domes of iridescent glass fill the area encompassed by the city's mighty walls. The surrounding land is a patchwork of picturesque farms, vineyards and country estates, gradually falling away to woodland and forest. Six roads connect Cymril to the other kingdoms, bustling with trade and travelers from across the continent as a windship takes flight, bound for locations unknown.

At The Gates

Vast twin gates tower 30-foot above the broad road, forged from single pieces of black iron. Impressive walls of pitted yellow-green porphyry extend to the distance, 50-foot high and half as thick. Figures move atop this massive barrier, manning heavy ballista emplacements, or standing ready to dump toxic alchemicals on foolish invaders.

The City Streets

The streets are vibrant with activity, the inhabitants a riot of color and fashions. Ornate equus-drawn carriages, transport those that need to cover large distances, or those that find walking tedious. Many-hued hexagonal slabs of stone interlock to provide walkways bordering a central street of dirt, while a myriad of skyways, balconies, overlapping terraces, and bridges of crystal twist amid the towers above. Every hue and shade of color can be seen on tower, inn, archway or habitation, a chaotic clutter surrounding side streets and the arrow-straight track that heads towards the heart of the city.



Cymril at Night

Cymril's crystalline architecture glows with the light from within, diffuse radiance softly displaying all the colors of the rainbow. Like a majestic, but abstract, stained glass window when viewed from afar, Cymril is a bustle of activity even at night, as those who can afford to do so, make their way amid the city's innumerable nightspots.

People in Glass Houses...

Since Cymril is made largely of crystal, throwing stones and other objects is illegal within city limits.

No Slaves

Slavery is prohibited in Cymril, and largely considered abhorrent. Any slaves taken into Cymril must be freed from any constraints, magical or mundane, immediately, or the slaver will face a hefty fine (upwards of 500 g.l.), a period of several days detainment, and the loss of the slave if discovered (a strong possibility in Cymril). Even without slaves, those members of races infamous for their slavery, such as Imrians, may find themselves the subjects of prejudice concealed beneath a polite veneer.

Watch Your Spell-Casting.

Visiting spell-casters would do best to understand the magical laws of Cymril. While low-key and frivolous spellcasting is acceptable, and even encouraged (to make life easier, provide entertainment, etc.), the unregistered use of offensive spells, the Dark Arts (such as Demonology, Diabolism, etc.), and any unpermitted or unregistered summonings are strictly prohibited. Permission should always be sought at the Lyceum Arcanum and done through official channels. Furthermore, necromancers must get a license to practice from the Lyceum Arcanum (a procedure that costs 500 g.l., and requires an extensive and rigorous interview process during which the individual must state clear and good reasons why they should be granted the license, and what they intend to do with it). Magical crimes are regarded as among the most heinous, and are punished severely. Only the most extenuating of circumstances are acceptable, and then, only if no other option was adequate. Those who seriously break these laws can easily find themselves banished to a none-too-pleasant dimension. Despite these strict prohibitions, Cymril has no specialized procedure for detecting unauthorized magic use, relying instead on investigation, witnesses, etc. as it does with all other crimes.

No Farad

Farad are banned from the city altogether, after allegedly selling Cymrilian windsbip arcanology to the Rajan nation. Farad found within the nation have all their property confiscated and are banished.

Durnian Crystal

Cymril no longer imports its crystal from the Sea of Glass following its severing of trade ties with Faradun. Instead, it now relies on Durne to provide its supplies of crystal.

The Typical Dwelling

An Exterior View

A broad circular tower of multichromatic opaque crystal reaches for the sky, studded with circular windows. It adjoins a broader spiral tower of clashing colors with triangular windows, and an elevated walkway of almost transparent crystal winds its way around them both. An ornately carved double archway opens into the tower of apartments.

The Tower Interior

The first floor is a shaded circular garden, with flowers and a small artificial pond enclosed by colored marble tiles. A central staircase spirals upwards.

The Apartment

The doorway opens into a circular apartment some 30-foot in diameter, separated into four equal rooms with 7-foot high ceilings. A circular crystal window opens into each room, draped with colorful silks. The walls are heated, providing a comfortable temperature all year round, and several scintilla stand in elaborate holders, providing adequate illumination.

Security

Keys are the standard method of entry in to such apartments; although wealthier inhabitants invest in Kasmiran locks (often trapped), and pay to have magical wards emplaced.

• The Living Room

A curving lounge of padded land-lizard leather is covered with scatter cushions. A low table of polished and colored crystal occupies the center of the room, flanked by several soft, high-backed armchairs. The floor is composed of opaque crystal, covered with one or two woven rugs.

• The Bathroom

A carved crystal bathtub occupies this room, filling with warm water on command, using alchemical heating agents from a small reservoir at its base, and drawing moisture



from the air outside the tower. A crystal toilet stands to one side, using alchemical sprays to break down wastes, remove unsavory odors, and clean the posterior.

• **The Kitchen**

An alchemically-fuelled crystal stove stands against the wall, flanked by cupboards of opaque crystal carved directly into the walls of the tower itself. A coolbox of crystal stands to the side, containing foods flash-frozen with a cheap Blue Havoc derivative. A simple moisture condenser provides all the inhabitant's water.

• **Bedroom**

A semicircular feather bed follows with carved crystal posts and scatter-cushions occupies half of the room. A crystal wardrobe carved into the tower itself features a full-length mirror. A small make-up table stands to one side.

While this represents the typical abode of the average citizen or couple, you can expect such apartments to feature numerous personal touches and affectations that reflect the aesthetic interests and occupations of the inhabitants. Families get larger apartments with one or two extra bedrooms. Wealthier individuals, most notably wizards, add many esoteric decorations and ornaments, shelves of books, and bizarre artifacts, typically composed of rarer and more expensive materials.

Waste Disposal and Civil Repair

Due to the fact that very few apartments are actually owned by the inhabitants (95% are rented from the Cymrilian government), the city council provides waste disposal services; collecting the used alchemical containers every week (leaving a clean container), and taking them to the Sanitation Center (see p. 36) where they are emptied into a warded entrance to the Void, cleansed, and refilled. Any incidental damage to rented buildings or apartments is repaired at no charge by the council repair services. However, in such cases where a resident or outsider is responsible for damage, they are expected to pay all costs themselves.

Rent Costs

The above apartment costs 6 g.l. per week, with a minimum 3 month contract. The cheapest rented accommodation is a dormitory of crystal bunks, with only basic heating, a wash-basin, locker, shared toilet, and a basic meal once per day, costing a mere 6 s.p. per week, with a minimum 1 month contract. This is usually the accommodation used by unskilled laborers. The most expensive apartments can cost up to 60 g.l. per week, and feature enchanted utilities.

Tax

Cymril collects extensive tax revenues, enabling them to keep the city clean, provide their repair and sanitation services, maintain their institutions, field and train their troops, watchmen and windships, etc. Tax is

based on the individual's or company's average monthly earnings, and is collected every month by skilled Kasmirans (accompanied by Thrall guards).

Earnings per month % Tax:

- *up to 15 g.l. 10%*
- *up to 30 g.l. 15%*
- *up to 60 g.l. 20%*
- *up to 120 g.l. 25%*
- *up to 240 g.l. 30%*
- *up to 480 g.l. 35%*
- *beyond 480 g.l. 40%*

Places of authority

City Jail

One of the city's few stone buildings, this squat, unadorned building is a block, two-stories high, containing no windows, and a mere 48 holding cells. Each cell contains two sturdy cots and little else, and a full eight of the cells feature extensive counter-magic glyphs, wards and force-barriers to accommodate spellcasters. The cells are well guarded, but primarily serve to hold unruly citizens overnight while they cool off and sober up.

Punishment

Punishment in Cymril mainly consists of service to the public or fines. Minor offenses may be consequenced by days or weeks of street sweeping, shining the surface of government buildings, and so on. More serious offenses may end in a tour of duty in a Wilderlands outpost, working on a repair crew on the Seven Roads, or swabbing the decks of a windship. For crimes against the state, exile (sometimes to nefarious dimensions) is the most common. Cymril has no penitentiaries and no death penalty.

Consulate

This large, austere, two-story structure of marbled turquoise crystal is luxuriously appointed with quarters and offices for ambassadors from each of the Seven Kingdoms, and also boasts separate facilities for visiting dignitaries and their entourages, including private grounds of tree-shaded promenades and grassy glades. Security is extremely strict.

The Ambassadors

The current Seven Kingdoms ambassadors are:

- *Lylythe (Astar) - A female Muse who is seldom, if ever, present.*



- *Corolian (Cymril) - A grizzled and well-traveled merchant-mage, who has been ambassador for nearly 25 years*
- *Eo Deo (Durne) - A modest but experienced crystalomancer who always finds time for others in her busy schedule.*
- *Sbassir il Muran (Kasmir) - A young female trapsmage, widely regarded as cunning and shrewish.*
- *Dal Marrad (Sindar) - A female alchemist, collector of alchemical apparatus, and highly respected trivarian player.*
- *Tar (Taz) - A veteran Thrall war-medic (in)famous for his rudimentary sense of humor.*
- *Ki-Kya (Vardune) - A Green Aeriad, and senior member of the Great Council of Vardune with 40 years experience.*

Council of Kings

This building serves as the forum for the monthly meeting of the Seven Kingdom's various rulers, and consists of a white seven-sided hall, surrounded by seven adjoining accommodation buildings. Each of the seven adjoining structures is the color of the nation whose king and entourage it houses, and is tailored to appeal to members of that specific culture. The current ruler of Cymril is Azradamus, a powerful magician who is purported to be 200 years old due to a regular ingestion of seven secret essences.

The Halls of Justice

This simple seven-sided building of opaque indigo crystal is two-stories high. The lower floor consists of seven courts that deal with civil and criminal cases. The upper floor is a single large court, presided over by seven judges (one from each kingdom) that handle disputes arising between the member nations.

Hall of Records

This tall, spiral tower complex of dark polychromatic crystal consists of 8-stories of offices, housing Cymril's civil servants and records, including tax collectors, assessors, litigators, and all records pertaining to tariffs, trade duties, real estate holdings, legal registrations, and so on.

Palace of the Wizard King

This palace is composed of a 250-foot high central building, with delicately carved arches, surmounted with slender and elegant towers, and surrounded by seven adjoining smaller buildings, each of which is surmounted by seven spires. Canopied terraces lead into the surrounding grounds, and scalloped balconies adorn every window. The entire pala-

ce looks as if it has been hewn from a single huge piece of emerald crystal, carved with delicate filigree, and lightly marbled. The grounds feature many fountains, statues and footpaths, the entirety of which is surrounded by a great wall, massive wrought-iron gate, and extensive patrols by veteran swordsmages in ceremonial armor.

Military bases

The Citadel

This 50-foot high single-tower fortress of green stone adjoins directly to the SE wall's sentinel tower. Full barracks, training grounds and stabling facilities are located at its base, providing facilities for over two thousand Thrall, Blue Aeriad and Cymrilian mercenaries. It also serves as the headquarters for the City Watch. Two walls, forming triangular grounds, enclose the entire complex.

Sentinel Towers

These three-story round towers, each 50-foot high, are constructed of the same stone as the city's outer walls. Each houses a pair of Arimite fire-thrower siege weapons, 20 artilleryists, and 30 thrall heavy cavalry, who often patrol the outlying roads. Mangonel lizards are stabled in underground bunkers at the tower's base.

Watch Stations

Each of Cymril's six sectors has one of these two-story outposts, housing that sector's Watch contingent. The stout towers are constructed of thick, dark opaque crystal, and provide offices for the Watch captains and investigators.

Law Enforcement

The City Watch is a well-trained and professional body, with a good reputation for handling trouble in an expedient manner. The Watch Commander (who is also the City Legion's Commander) resides in the Citadel, but has little to do with the routine of law enforcement. Each Station is governed by a single Watch Captain who reports directly to the Watch Commander. Each Watch Captain commands 12 Sergeants, each of whom leads a squad of five men. There are always four patrols on duty at any one time in each sector. The Watch is comprised of Thralls and Cymrilian Swordsmages, although each Station also employs the services of three Sindaran investigators.



Educational institutions

College of Law

Located adjacent to the Halls of Justice (see p. 29) the College of Law resembles a scaled down version its neighbor, standing a mere one story high, and is only half the length and width. It serves as a university and guildhouse for arbitrators and legislators, many of which are available for hire at costs of 50 g.l. per day or more. A mere 40 students are enrolled here each year for a legal course that takes two years, and costs 400 g.l.

Lyceum Arcanum

This famed institution consists entirely of verdant crystal and stands 40-foot high, with a clashing array of pillars around its circumference. Two great iron portals allow entrance, although they are extensively warded and guarded. Talislanta's premier institute of arcane studies, the Lyceum Arcanum contains numerous classrooms and laboratories, workshops, archives and vaults, as well as lecturer accommodation. Three upper levels house the accommodation, classrooms and lecture halls, while two subterranean levels house laboratories and vaults. The Lyceum offers classes in every known magical field except for Diabolism or Demonology Invocations, as well as classes on esoteric lore, and performs research and experimentation at the behest of Cymril's government. Tuition costs 500 g.l. per septemester (seven weeks), or 50 g.l. for Cymrilian citizens. Entrance requirements are strict.

Museums & libraries

Museum of Antiquities

This structure of jade crystal stands 36-foot high and is one of the oldest in the city. Vast carved pillars surround the entire building, and large double doors permit entrance. The interior consists of three-levels containing exhibition halls filled with countless cases displaying antique artifacts, many of which date back to the Forgotten Age, including items from the ancient civilizations of Elande, Pompados, Sharna, Phandril, Xambria and Quaran. Needless to say, all the exhibits are heavily warded and extensively guarded. Several subterranean levels house artifacts that are being repaired, identified, or are too fragile or dangerous to display.

The Library of Cymril

An adjunct of the Lyceum Arcanum, this 60-foot high, 60-foot diameter circular tower of lime crystal consists of nine

floors, three of which are located below ground. Each level is reached by a central spiral staircase, and lined with row upon row of high shelves, with thousands of tablets, scrolls, and books, covering nearly every conceivable subject. While all the items are extensively catalogued, it can still take many days to track down a specific tome. Dangerous tomes are kept in a warded vault, and permission must be given by the Lyceum Arcanum to access them. Research materials may not be removed from the library without special permission.

A Continuing Search

Younger members of the Lyceum Arcanum have been searching the library and museum for numerous years for "Macrathri's Lewd and Erotic Tales", "Seh'chi's Tools of Exquisite Pleasure", and "Koblyn's Sexual Congress" with no success.

Places of worship

Praise Be

There are few places of worship in Cymril, a city of non-religious bent. Aside from the impressive Cathedral of the Magister, which can house an impressive 777 worshippers, only the Repose of the Ten Thousand sees a steady stream of "enlightened" individuals.

Cathedral of the Magister

Soft colored lights glow within the green crystal walls of this imposing temple. Standing 35-foot in height, and built like a seven-pointed star, each point is a hall of pews spaced evenly around a large central hall containing a circular rostrum and pulpit. Carved runes of magical significance adorn every surface.

Repose of the Ten Thousand

See DENS OF INIQUITY (see p. 35)

Terra's Grotto

A gentle slope of rich, dark soil descends into a womb-like cavern. A scattering of natural crystals glow in the shade, providing warm illumination. A small sinuous tunnel links this cavern to the Gnomekin Market (see p. 31).

The Righteous Tower of Aa

A small fortress-like tower of bleached white stone topped with a great carved eye. Harsh angles predominate, and



the interior is spartan, save for a large unblinking eye carved into the wall opposite the entrance.

Sectarian Conflict

*City Watch patrols are heavy and frequent around the **Rest of the Ten Thousand** and **The Righteous Tower of Aa**, as trouble often erupts when intoxicated Zandir decide to "stab a finger in Aa's eye" by vandalizing the **Aamanian temple**.*

Markets & bazaars

The Bazaar

The Bazaar is a huge open-air market frequented by traders from all over the Seven Kingdoms and beyond, and is open from sun-up to sundown every day of the year. Stalls bearing every conceivable product (and more than a few that aren't) can be found here. Haggling is lively, and many citizens spend at least a few hours here every week purchasing various groceries and knick-knacks. Watch patrols are commonplace around the market, but it still pays to be wary of the inevitable pickpockets and charlatans.

The Magical Fair

*The Bazaar also serves as the site of Cymril's annual **Magical Fair**: a two week long pageant starting on the **1st of Phandir**, celebrating the founding of the free kingdom of Cymril.*

Cymrilian Produce

Magical items and the materials to make them are cheaper in Cymril. Plant and animal ingredients are up to 20% less than in other areas; gemstones used in alchemy are sometimes 5-10% less. Potions, powders and elixirs can, with haggling, be brought down 10% or more. Many magical items that would be available nowhere else on the continent will be available in Cymril, although prices remain stable due to demand. Magical trinkets are always available at fair prices. Many narcotics are legal in Cymril but heavily taxed. Prices will be 20% to 30% more: the more severe the drug the higher the tax. Any glass item will be up to 30% less than elsewhere. Due to a high variety in demand, any one garment in Cymril may cost significantly more or less depending on how fashionable the item is or recently was. Although yesterday's fashions are cheap, they might get one ridiculed.

Gnomekin Market

Located directly under the Bazaar (see above), the Gnomekin Market is a large cavern complex, lit with

numerous glowing crystals, and dealing exclusively in Gnomekin produce. Vast tunnels lead off along the Underground Highway. Prices here are always fair. As such, it is considered offensive to try and haggle with the Gnomekin merchants. A single small tunnel connects directly with Terra's Grotto (see p. 30).

Traders, artisans & merchants

Amberglass Bounty

An adjunct of the Lyceum Arcanum, this unadorned, warehouse-like structure of vibrant orange crystal deals in all sorts of magical and alchemical supplies, which it purchases in bulk. Animal, vegetable and mineral ingredients abound, as do common magical and alchemical mixtures, parchments, writing paraphernalia, alchemical apparatuses, and various crystal containers. Prices remain average despite the bulk purchasing, due to high demand.

Blade Haven Armory

This shop features a sign consisting of two swords, welded together on an iron shield. This shop and forge deals in weapons and armor of all varieties, and is run by a Thrall Smith, and Cymrilian Swordsmage. Common weapons and armor of good quality are plentiful. Items can be forged of black, red or blue iron. In addition, items can be decorated with scrollwork, filigree or enamel for a reasonable fee (50% plus of the item's value, depending on detail, size, and materials involved).

Cartographica

Located right next to the wind-docks, Cartographica is the best archive of maps on the continent. Hundreds of maps are piled on row upon row of dusty shelves in no discernible order. The owner is a Sindaran with a passion for maps and has been dealing in them for decades.

Gears and Mechanisms

This shop is composed of blue rutilated crystal, and a small clockwork automaton above the door, proclaims "Gears and Mechanisms!" every 30 seconds in a tinny voice. This workshop contains an automated forge run by a pair of Yassan technomancers, and numerous mechanical marvels are proudly displayed, including clockwork children's toys, useful tools and gadgets, and even basic prosthetic limbs. Costs are high, and custom pieces can be made on demand given sufficient notice.



The Hookah

This small, hole-in-the-wall shop features a large hookah above the doorway, which billows scented, colored fumes on a continuous basis. It specializes in selling soft recreational drugs - the most popular of which is Draiva's Dreamy Smoking Tobacco (see sidebar) - and alchemical enhancements such as pigment or glitter powder.

Draiva's Dreamy Smoking Tobacco

This tobacco, used in pipes, is famous for changing color and making shapes reflecting the smoker's state of mind. Students at the Arcanum are famous for getting together and trying to outdo each other making mental smoke sculptures. 1 g.l. per ounce.

Kolmirana's

This small, turquoise crystal pawnshop specializes in magical items and trinkets. Kolmirana is an obese female Cymrilian with silver skin, turquoise eyes and long gold hair, usually dressed in bejewelled satin robes. It is rumored that she is a fence, and the head of a city-wide underworld ring.

Lock and Key

This stout windowless structure of thick, opaque purple crystal, features a massive iron padlock set above a sturdy iron door which is literally riddled with keyholes. Housed within sturdy, locked and trapped display cases are numerous fiendish traps and locks, all for sale. In addition, keys, traps and locks can be made to order by the Kasmiran owner, who also offers a lock-opening service for those individuals who lose their keys (25 g.l.).

Metamorphosis

This salon consists of a small, faintly glowing twisted, two-story tower of marbled black crystal. Run by the famed Darual the Morphosite (who constantly alters his entire appearance and even gender, in bizarre ways), this establishment employs the latest magical enhancements to change skin and hair color, mold facial features, lacquer and shape hair, disguise gender and age, etc. It is currently in vogue to allow Darual to "do his own thing" with a makeover, and the results are often astounding. Wealthy clients from Cymril, Hadjistan and Zandu make frequent visits. Costs range from 100 - 1,000 g.l.

Mortar and Pestle

This reputable establishment offers powders, potions and other alchemical mixtures of good quality at reasonable

rates, and also offers to analyze unknown mixtures at a cost of 10 g.l. The exterior of the shop has been coated with a glittering umber alchemical, and the interior is draped with orange silk, as appeals to the Sindaran proprietor.

Myrmidian's Messages

This establishment is one of many that provides a messaging service unique to Cymril. A message written on origami parchment (see sidebar) is placed within a magical sphere, the size of two fists, and then told a name and address within Cymril. The ball will roll to that address, and then repeat the name of the person in a high-pitched voice until someone acknowledges they are that person. The service costs 3 g.l. per message, plus the cost of origami parchment if necessary.

Origami Parchment

Cymrilians are fond of this enchanted parchment, which folds up into the shapes of animals or items after a message is written on it. Traditionally used with Message Balls. Cost: 1 g.l. per page.

Serazzio's

This slender, tapering three-story tower is composed of rose crystal, shot through with swirls of various colors. It is the best tailoring facility in the Seven Kingdoms, dealing in all manner of exotic costumes, both antique and modern, and will custom-make clothing to order. Every cloth known across the continent can be found here.

Sigil

Sigil is a curiosity shop of the highest order, its ramshackle shelves literally brimming with odd knick-knacks, strange paraphernalia, and weird artifacts. It is widely rumored that nearly anything can be found here if someone spends enough time digging through the uncatalogued mess, from Khazad sarcophagi to old stuffed dolls, from pickled body parts to magical artifacts of unusual power or unknown purpose. Sigils are carved in bas-relief on every available surface, both inside and out.

Tazian Tattoos

This small parlor displays a hanging sign of a colorful thrall, and features boards displaying innumerable artistic designs, any of which can be tattooed. While an aged thrall does work here, the parlor's best tattoo artist is a female Sarista, whose works are said to be truly breathtaking and vivid. Prices range from 1 g.l. for a small, simple, monochrome tattoo, to several hundred g.l. for large, vivid, colorful tattoos that use magical pigments.



Wilderlands Expeditionary

This immense warehouse and stable complex offers mounts, dray beasts, wagons, and equipment such as ropes, tents, foul-weather clothing, and even small skiffs, at reasonable prices for average to good quality.

Parks

A Stroll in the Park

Cymril's many parks are favored places of relaxation on fine days, and are especially popular among homesick ex-patriots. Needless to say, they are also popular with courting couples... and individuals of a voyeuristic nature.

Cymril Park

Green crystal tile paths weave amid a rainbow of colors - the flowers, bushes and trees perfectly sculpted from multi-hued glass. An inspiring statue occupies the center of the park, cut from emerald glass, celebrating Pharos, the first Wizard King of Cymril.

Durne Park

Shadowed cavern mouths lead into a network of grottoes and tunnels. Clusters of mushrooms glow with soft purple phosphorescence, reflecting in the sweeping gardens of amber crystal formations. A life-size statute of warm amber depicts Sabo Orabio, the Gnome-King who lead his people to victory over the Darkling hordes of Urag.

Astar Park

Lush fields of grass cloaked with rainbow-hued wildflowers border a crystal-clear pond, recreating Lake Zephyr on a smaller scale. Copses of supple willow line the banks, dipping their leaves into the waters. A statue of a beautiful, but long forgotten, male Muse stands in the middle of the pond, carved from lavender-blue stone and entwined with flowers.

(Sidebar) Mystery Muse

While the Muses have forgotten who the statue in Astar Park represents, records in the Library of Cymril clearly state that the statue is of Twysk: a great artisan renowned for his fine harpwood lutes. His works are eagerly sought by musicians everywhere, fetching vast sums when they appear for sale.

Kasmir Park

A windowless stone tower stands surrounded by undulating dunes of golden sand. Stout and strong, it contains the great gold statue of Abn Kadan, the wealthiest merchant in Kasmiran history. Few have ever seen it, for it is under lock and key, warded by devious trap mechanisms. The key is held by the senior Kasmiran councillor.

Hollow Eyes

It is widely rumored that a daring thief has already defeated Kasmir Park's Tower defenses, and that the audacious criminal removed the statue's golden eyes, some 10 years ago. The Kasmirans vehemently deny these scurrilous rumors.

Sindar Park

Dusty paths wind sinuously between 15-foot high mesas and rugged spires of sandstone and basalt. A 14-foot statue of dark basalt represents Nadir Salu, master collector and inventor of Trivarian.

Taz Park

A tall, thick wall of clear toughened glass surrounds Taz Park, serving to prevent any of the dangerous fauna from escaping into the city. A single entrance with a double gate of iron is warded to prevent unintelligent beasts passing it, and guarded by a pair of veteran Thralls. At the heart of this miniature jungle is a lacquered iron statue of Mace, legendary Thrall commander and hero of the Beast Wars.

Dangerous Game

Given Taz Park's dangerous flora and fauna, it is widely avoided by all but the brave and foolhardy, and as such only Thralls frequent it with any regularity. However, a small group of jaded thrill-seekers have also been known to frequent the park, although a number have never returned.

Vardune Park

Greenery is in abundance across terraced gardens, and grassy embankments smothered in flowers. Copses of trees form shaded archways over the elevated walkways of woven vines that connect above the central garden. A huge viridia tree stands there in perpetual bloom, carefully tended over centuries to resemble the great Botanomancer, Viridian.



Inns, taverns & restaurants

Victual Violence

Cymril's various inns, taverns and restaurants are said to be among the most diverse on the continent, although the risk of attack by a magically animated meal is vastly overstated.

The Eyrie

As tall as a four-story building, this inn is actually a single large hall of sky-blue crystal, the interior of which features numerous hanging hammocks, platforms, tables, and elevated walkways of woven living vines, at various levels. Catering exclusively to Aeriad, the cuisine, décor and communal accommodation seldom appeal to other visitors.

Four-Winds Tavern

Located adjacent to the wind-docks, the Four-Winds tavern and inn is actually the converted shell of an old windship, complete with a mast sporting a billowing sail of silver silk. The lower-hold has been converted into a large, well-appointed bar, the upper hold into a number of small, moderately furnished rooms, and the upper deck is used as a terrace. The clientele is composed almost entirely of dockworkers and windship crews.

The Greatsword

A blunt greatsword hangs from chains above the double doors that enter this spartan, militaristic tavern and inn that caters to professional warriors of all sorts, especially Thralls. The décor is tough and utilitarian, the food is hearty, and the drink is strong. Ample stable facilities are provided, and the rooms are comfortable, if sparsely furnished.

The Iridescent Pentacle

This five-sided inn and tavern is constructed from blocks of enchanted crystal that shimmer with every color imaginable. Catering primarily to magicians and other spellcasters, this establishment features large glyph-covered pillars that prohibit all but minor spells. Private booths, a large common room, and rooftop terrace provide substantial seating, and the accommodation, service, food and drink are first-class in all regards.

The Nook

Located in the Gnomekin Market (see p. 31), the Nook is a subterranean tavern and inn, furnished in true Gnomekin

style. Rough-hewn caves lined with spongy moss and lit with softly-glowing crystals serve as accommodation, and a large central cavern serves as a common room and bar, providing Gnomekin fare. While crafted at larger than Gnomekin dimensions, most humans find it slightly cramped, although the prices are fair.

The Shifting Sands

This sprawling tent complex serves as an inn and tavern catering primarily to travelers from the desert kingdoms of Kasmir, Djaffa and Carantheum. Rooms feature scatter cushions of fine silks, and exotic dancers form the entertainment. Mocha is the drink of choice, and honeyed dates are a speciality. Hot tubs are provided for a modest fee, and there is extensive stabling for mounts, wagons and drays.

The Pacific Pavilion for Conjecture and Conviviality

Commonly known as the Sindar Pavilion, this inn and tavern is frequented by scholars, antiquarians and curio-dealers of all varieties, including Sindarans. A large complex of wooden platforms, and an intricate framework of wooden poles, support orange and sienna colored cloth walls of alchemically treated fabrics. Furnishings are of smoothly polished woods, and the cuisine and entertainment (including trivarian) are decidedly Sindaran.

The Wretched Urthrax

This dimly lit tavern is filled with the haze of smoke, and stench of cheap beer. By far the most dangerous establishment in Cymril, it is frequented by ne'er-do-wells of every stripe, from hard-bitten mercenaries, to thieves and other assorted riff-raff. Needless to say, the City Watch take a keen interest in the patrons, although only the desperate take any interest in the cuisine.

Dens of iniquity

Amorosa

A lavish, almost palatial structure, Amorosa is decorated with many tasteful erotic friezes carved into its walls, both inside and out. The furnishings and rooms are on the decadent side of opulent, and this establishment offers all manner of erotic diversions for males and females of many races, albeit at near extortionate prices.

Amorosa or the Temple...

Prostitution is only permitted in sanctioned brothels, such as Amorosa, and the Repose of the Ten Thousand.



Chances

This subdued establishment is easily overlooked, save for the large, glowing crystal pentadrille piece that hangs above the doorway. The interior of this casino is tastefully decorated, and security is strict. Various sums are wagered on games of pentadrille, quatrillion, trivarian, and zodar, with in-house spellcasters and observers ensuring that any cheating, magical or otherwise, is minimized.

Chicanery

A radiant magical hologram floats in the air above the twin, carved circular portals of this emporium, proclaiming "Chicanery". This establishment offers the experience of superbly crafted illusory realities of whatever the client desires, from highly unlikely sexual encounters, to virtual battlegrounds, or travel through bizarre or non-existent landscapes. Prices range from 50 g.l., to well in excess of 10,000 g.l. depending on complexity and duration.

Eidolon

This unremarkable building bears no signs or decoration, and the stout door remains closed at all times. A private club providing a comfortable, social atmosphere for its members, Eidolon offers numerous drugs to its clientele, although it deals primarily in euphorica. Only those who are on the registered list of members are allowed entrance, and security, both in the form of traps, guards, and magical wards, is excessive. Membership is by invite only.

Alchemical High

Most drugs are legal in Cymril, but heavily taxed and the most dangerous drugs, such as k'tallah, are still illegal. Magically tailored drugs, made locally and sold without taxation, are a problem for the City Watch.

Magique

The most popular of Cymril's nightspots, Magique is a large, six-story club, topped with a spiral-carved dome. Carved all over with intricate runes, the hues of color within the club's walls shift continuously. The clientele are generally young, affluent and fashion-conscious. Numerous musicians of various nationalities provide entertainment throughout the building, accompanied by illusory light shows. Scattered tables and seats surround each story's dance floor, and intoxicants of all varieties, from alcohol to mild drugs, are available at the bars. Admission is 10 g.l. and any trouble is swiftly dealt with by the veteran Thrall bouncers.

Repose of the Ten Thousand

This building consists of a cluster of narrow towers, each linked to the other and topped with a pointed dome. Innumerable life-size figures of Zandu's Ten Thousand saints are carved in bas-relief on the outside walls. This temple offers the "enlightenments of Zandir Paradoxy", primarily in the form of excessive intoxicants, sexual dalliances, spicy food, dance, and musical entertainment.

Zephyr

A large lilac dome covers this nympharium, the interior of which is a sylvan glade, complete with trees, pools, and flower-covered carpets of grass. While the dome is opaque from the exterior, the roof is completely clear from the interior. Visitors are immersed in Muse culture, engaging in various sensual pursuits with the male and female Muses, enjoying telepathic projection shows, musical performances, and partaking of the subtle and delicate Muse cuisine. Admittance costs 30 g.l.

Transportation

Wind-Docks

The government-controlled wind-docks consist of four large construction and repair warehouses, a seven-story office tower of opaque green, and the wind-dock itself: a 250-foot high tower of rutilated rainbow crystal. The wind-dock sprouts branch-like docking platforms at regular intervals throughout its height and circumference, lending it the appearance of a bizarre tree when numerous windships and windriggers are docked. Six large magical disks at the heart of the tower serve to raise and lower cargo, crew and passengers as they arrive or disembark.

Government Control

The Wind-Docks were originally owned by the Four Winds Trade and Travel Company, but they were brought out by the Cymrilian government following the Farad-Rajan incident. The Cymrilian government has assumed control of all windship production and docking facilities, thereby maintaining tighter control over the arcanology and its secrets.

Windship Travel

Cymril's windships are the quickest, but most expensive way to traverse the continent. Common port-of-call include Zanth, Dracarta, Hadj, Hadran, Danuvia, Nankar, Vashay, Tor and Kashmir. Less frequent trips include Aamahd, Al Asbad, Tarun and Caprica; most other places will require a chartered ship to go to. Cymrilian windships never go to some places for



varying reasons. These include mountainous Arim; the weather of L'Haan is too severe; the airspace of the Kang Empire beyond Hadran is forbidden and Rajan is a hostile nation. Traveling on a windship is a rough experience. Quarters are cramped, food is poor, the weather is often harsh, and sickness is common; much like a seagoing vessel. Attacks from aerial creatures such as wind demons and ravengers and the occasional bout of aberrant weather also pose a danger.

Ruby Lightning Coaches

Cymril's most famous coach company, Ruby Lightning Coaches are recognizable by their luxuriant decor. Rich, colorful hardwoods are beautifully carved in the likeness of nymphs, and embellished with artful paints, and the interior of each equus-drawn coach is covered with lush, crimson velvet. They have several dozen coaches running at all times of the day and night, waiting at all of Cymril's major nightspots and tourist attractions. A single journey to any location in Cymril, costs 5 s.p. per person, and each coach can accommodate 4 passengers. The company is run by a committee of coach drivers, and a few equus representatives.

Miscellaneous

Arcanum Society

This simple and austere three-story pyramid in classic emerald houses the Arcanum Society: a private club that includes many lecturers at the Lyceum Arcanum, as well as esteemed wizards and archimages of various nations and nationalities. Admission and membership are by invite and majority vote only, following a strict interview process. The club is open to either gender, and maintains a comfortable common room, superb observatory, and excellent library of magical writings.

Cymril Mausoleum

This 250-foot edifice of glaucous crystal is the final resting-place of many Cymrilians. Those who can afford it are encased in glass, and displayed in one of the mausoleum's many cubicles. This costs at least 2,000 g.l. ranging up to 20,000 g.l. depending on the quality, color, and opacity of the crystal used. The majority of Cymril's deceased are thrown into the Void at the Sanitation Center following a brief ceremony.

Sanitation Center

This large oval building of opaque white crystal houses the city's waste disposal and cleansing services. A large central hall contains a heavily warded portal to the Void through

which all Cymril's waste produce and garbage is disposed. In addition, numerous secluded funerary rooms are located adjacent to this, performing the necessary rites for Cymril's departed, before the body is lowered into the Void.

Tazian Arena

This enclosed 50-foot diameter arena of crimson crystal features three tiers of benches, and can hold several hundred spectators. The weapons used are blunted or padded, reducing the chance of mortal injuries by a significant degree. Bouts are fought every evening, and admission is 1 g.l. Wagering is brisk.

The Vault

This windowless stone tower serves as a moneylender's and bank, run by several Kasmiran associates. Security is perhaps the strictest in all of Cymril, with many hidden traps, spy-tubes, and numerous iron doors. Foreign currency can be exchanged here for a 10% surcharge, and loans can be applied for with a minimum 30% interest rate. In addition, money and valuables can be deposited for safe-keeping for a fee of 5% per month.

Sample NPCs

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, encounters, or rivals (friendly or otherwise):

Casselle - Acolyte of the Magister

Casselle is fashionable and gregarious; she is also a devoted acolyte of the Magister (Cymril's concept of the Creator). A skilled magician, she affects a white and damask marbled semblance.

Abo Enabia - Daughter of Terra and Inn Keep

Priestess of Terra's Grotto (see p. 30), proprietor of The Nook (see p. 34), and mother of 12, this beautiful, middle-aged Gnomekin always has time for those in need, regardless of race or creed.

Dragonnade - Rogue Cymrilian Pyromancer

Affecting a vaguely reptilian appearance, with green scales, red eyes, and red hair shaped into a crest, Dragonnade is also a thief and professional assassin, specializing in arson. He is by turns hot-tempered and cold-blooded.

Siddig Fadeel - Sindaran Watch Investigator

This agreeable Watch Investigator also creates healing elixirs in his spare time, and collects medical paraphernalia. He secretly admires those criminals audacious enough to try and outwit him.

Aaslan - Aamanian Witch-Hunter

Dour, mysterious and imposing, Aaslan is in charge of



security at The Righteous Tower of Aa (see p. 30). He has a somewhat sinister and nefarious reputation among Cymril's citizenry.

Davallia - Muse Entertainer

This lilac-winged and beautiful, if absent-minded, Muse works in the Zephyr nympharium, and is guarded by a wood whisp named Migg who fancies himself a great warrior, and states he is "a giant among wood whisps!"

Talis - Lecturer at the Lyceum Arcanum

Talis is Department Head of Natural Magical Studies at the Lyceum, and is approaching 40 years of age. He affects a semblance reminiscent of earth, with grass-like hair. He is often found meditating in any of Cymril's parks.

Ka-Ree - Blue Aeriad Scout

Ka-Ree is a young, highly-strung member of Cymril's legion. She is often reprimanded for leaping off public buildings, and spends her off-hours in The Eyrie (see p. 34). She fights with a dart-thrower in each hand.

Tempestus - Veteran Marine

Tempestus is a veteran Swordmage and aeromancer, more at home aboard a windship than on the ground. This gruff and friendly marine has ashen hair, silver skin, a sword that glows like lightning, and clothes that roil with dark clouds.

The Awesome Axe - Thrall Gladiator

This heavily scarred, peg-legged Thrall is the current champion of the Tazian Arena (see p. 36). A specialist in Tazian combat and wrestling, he was forced to leave the military when he lost his left leg below the knee.

Azi al Din - Kasmir Trapsmage and aspiring burglar

This young, highly adept Kasmir runs the highly successful Lock & Key establishment (see p. 32). Sociable and excitable for a member of her culture, she has romantic dreams about becoming a notorious burglar.

Jaelistian - Hellacious Cymrilian Student

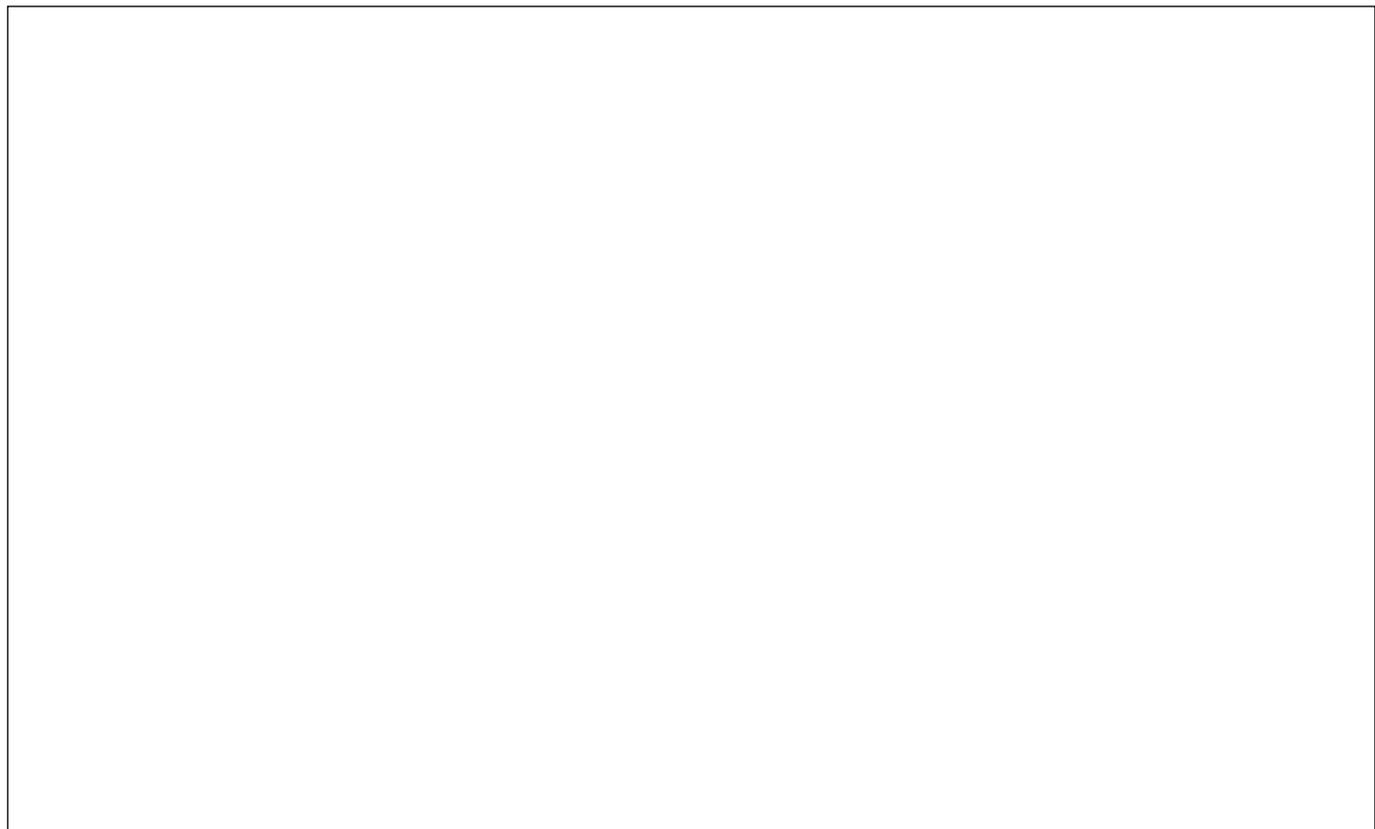
Jaelistian (Jael to his friends) is a student at the Lyceum, studying wizardry with a strong emphasis on illusion-craft. He is also a notorious practical joker and rogue. His appearance is angelic, with gold skin, sapphire eyes, glowing white hair and robes.

Savrille - Pharesian Peddler

Savrille is approaching his fiftieth year of life, and has seen more of Talislanta than most could hope to see in a lifetime. World-weary and wise, he is semi-retired, often spending his evenings spinning tales in various taverns.

Maralico - Associate of the Arcanum Society

One of the Society's youngest members, Maralico is the daughter of a Cymrilian Swordmage and Zandir Duelist. Born and raised in Cymril, this softly-spoken Aeromancer is one of the continent's acknowledged experts on avian fauna.





VI. Dhar

"The Gryphs have barely elevated their lifestyle above that of the common avir, as the construction of Dhar demonstrates, and you expect me to regard them as anything more than "noble savages?" - Jharpur, incredulous Cymrilian Naturalist.

A Visitor's Guide to Dhar

The Populace

Dhar is the greatest of the Gryph communities, containing 90 communal eyries, with a total populace of 700 residents. Although any civilized visitor would consider Dhar little more than a large village, it is of great significance to the Gryph people, for it is home to the Great Council Eyrie, the solemn lodge where all the clan chieftains meet to discuss matters that are of importance to the Gryphs as a whole. Few outsiders ever visit Dhar, save for the occasional Ariane Druas or Orgovian trader, and in truth the Gryphs prefer to be left in solitude.

History

The Great Council Eyrie was established in the harsh winter of 121 N.A. following a bloody and protracted skirmish with a sizeable force of Ur raiders. Recognizing the need for greater cooperation, should the Ur ever attack en masse, the chieftains of each clan hammered out the agreement that led to the formation of the Great Council Eyrie, and greater unity among the Gryph clans. One other notable event in Dhar's history occurred in 245 N.A. The Gryphs, suffering from a plague of gange, were cured by the Ariane, and vowed to remain always the protectors of the Ariane race.

Dealing with the Ground Dwellers

The Gryphs use the hides, horns, and bones of their prey to form many of their tools, and weapons, and trade these commodities and materials with other clans, and certain Orgovian bands. In addition, the Orgovians often trade for large quantities of fallen span oak timber, giving the Gryphs metal tools and weapons in return. The Ariane that visit provide the Gryphs with healing salves and philters, though the Gryphs are expected to provide them with the necessary herbs.

Visions of Dhar

Note: As Dhar is effectively obscured from above and around by a dense canopy of leaves, it can only be viewed from the ground beneath it.

On Approach

Centuries of life's natural cycle have left the forest floor covered with a deep rich loam, and many bushes and ferns bask in the few pools of sunlight that penetrate the dense emerald canopy far above. Mosses and lichens cling to boulders embedded in the rich soil. The trunks of span oak trees form broad pillars of rich hardwood everywhere, and many fallen branches litter the ground, forming an intricate, multi-layered maze of moss-encrusted wood. Large vines seem to twist and twine around everything in sight. High up above, many vast nests seem woven amid the broad boughs.

Dhar at Night

Dhar is plunged into shadowy darkness with the coming of night, the dense canopy permitting little light to filter down, save for the occasional shaft of moonlight.

The Typical Dwelling

An Exterior View

A large nest-like construct, 20-foot in diameter, nestles close to the broad trunk of the tree, formed from densely packed vines and branches, woven around the very limbs of the tree itself. A dome of verdant leaves forms a roof over the eyrie, rusting lightly in the wind.

Dhar's Clans

Unlike other Gryph settlements, each of which is home to a single clan, Dhar is home to two clans: The Kree and the Eechah. Both clans live on amicable terms, and are roughly equal in power and influence, their dwellings intermingled throughout the settlement. However, clan members remain fiercely proud of their own clan heritage and history, even though the history of both clans has become intertwined considerably.

The Eyrie Interior

Little light penetrates the inside of the large woven nest, leaving it dim. There are no adornments, and no furnishings, the barely cured hides of wild beasts that line the



nest serving as the only comfort, providing warmth, and keeping out chills. A single thick skin is secured just inside the entrance, easily fastened to ward against cold winds and rain.

Places of authority

Great Council Eyrie

Majestic amid the fingers of Creator's Talons (see right column), this eyrie is three times larger than any other, and almost spherical in shape, making it seem as if the Creator's talons are clutching a large egg made from skillfully woven vines and leaves. It is here that the chieftains of all the Gryph clans come to meet each year, during the first week of Jhang, and discuss decisions that impact the Gryphs as a people.

Military bases

Watch Perches

Cunningly camouflaged about Dhar's perimeter, these simple wooden platforms serve as observation and resting posts for those Gryphs patrolling the surrounding forest.

Educational institutions

Market Eyrie

(see next paragraph).

Markets & bazaars

Market Eyrie

Supported by the interlocking branches of trees, and a woven platform of vines, the Market Eyrie is a large, oval, hall-like construct supported between and around a cluster of three span oaks. This empty structure provides an area for clan members and outsiders wishing to meet or barter (rope ladders are provided for ground-dwellers). In addition, the local fledgelings are gathered here each High Day, where they are taught the oral history of their people and tribe by the Elders of the settlement.

Miscellaneous

Creator's Talons

Standing deep at the heart of the forest, and center of Dhar, this most ancient of span oaks stands, greatly resembling a five-fingered hand thrust skywards, its palm parallel to the ground, and its five mighty limbs forming fingers that curve out and upwards, grasping the egg-shaped form of the Great Council Eyrie (see left column). Smaller branches grow off in all directions, forming a canopy of leaves that does little to hide the shape of the tree.

A Terrible Punishment

Those rare few Gryphs who transgress against tribal laws, or act in a cowardly, unnecessarily cruel, or dishonorable manner, are imprisoned in a stout wooden cage, hung low over the forest, at the center of the settlement, there to consider their folly for a few days or weeks. Repeat offenders, and those that commit such atrocities as murder, are slain out of hand, and their bodies thrown to the ground.

Final Roost

Outside the settlement, a single slender span oak towers above those that surround it, and the vegetation at its base is thick and deep, to the point of impenetrability. The stark white of many bones cover the dark soil beneath it, and almost obscured by the canopy of leaves, woven funerary bowers can just be seen laid atop the tallest branches.

Sample NPCs

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, encounters, or even the inspiration for a player character concept.

Ka Chakk - Grizzled Gryph Kree Chieftain

Active despite his advancing age, Ka Chakk has seen many hunts, as his many scars attest. An aggressive and curmudgeonly member of the Great Eyrie Council, he brooks no foolishness.

Kra Chi Chi - Shy Fledgling Gryph

Still slightly ungainly, but maturing rapidly, Kra Chi Chi is actually quite shy and cautious, traits only matched by his insatiable curiosity. His parents hope that his un-Gryphlike behavior is merely a phase, and are unaware that Kra Chi Chi is considering following Spiral Walker in her travels.



Skree Ak - Aggressive Gryph Chick

Skree Ak is barely a two years out of her egg, and still bears patchy tufts of pink down amid her growing pale orange plumage. She is still unable to fly, and her walking attempts are almost comical, but she is quite fearless, and constantly hungry.

Keerawk - Solitary Gryph Sentinel

With visual acuity astounding even for a Gryph, Keerawk often finds herself assigned to patrol Dhar's bounds on a vigil for intruders and dangerous predators. She performs such duties with pride and relish, and in truth, prefers her own company.

Ee Rakk - Gryph Weaponer

Ee Rakk is a skilled weaponer, his nest marked as a craftsman's by the window it bears. Although he trades for the forged iron duar and bolts heads provided by the Oj Orgovians, it is his skill that crafts the sturdy, perfectly straight, and surprisingly light poles to which the heads are attached, and the well-balanced crossbows that fire the bolts. Those considering crossing this stoic Gryph, should best consider his skill with his weapons, first.

Chee Ah - Gryph Healer

Sight dulled by advanced age, and feathers pale and patchy, Chee Ah is not long for this world. No longer a capable hunter, her claws are dulled, but her usefulness conti-

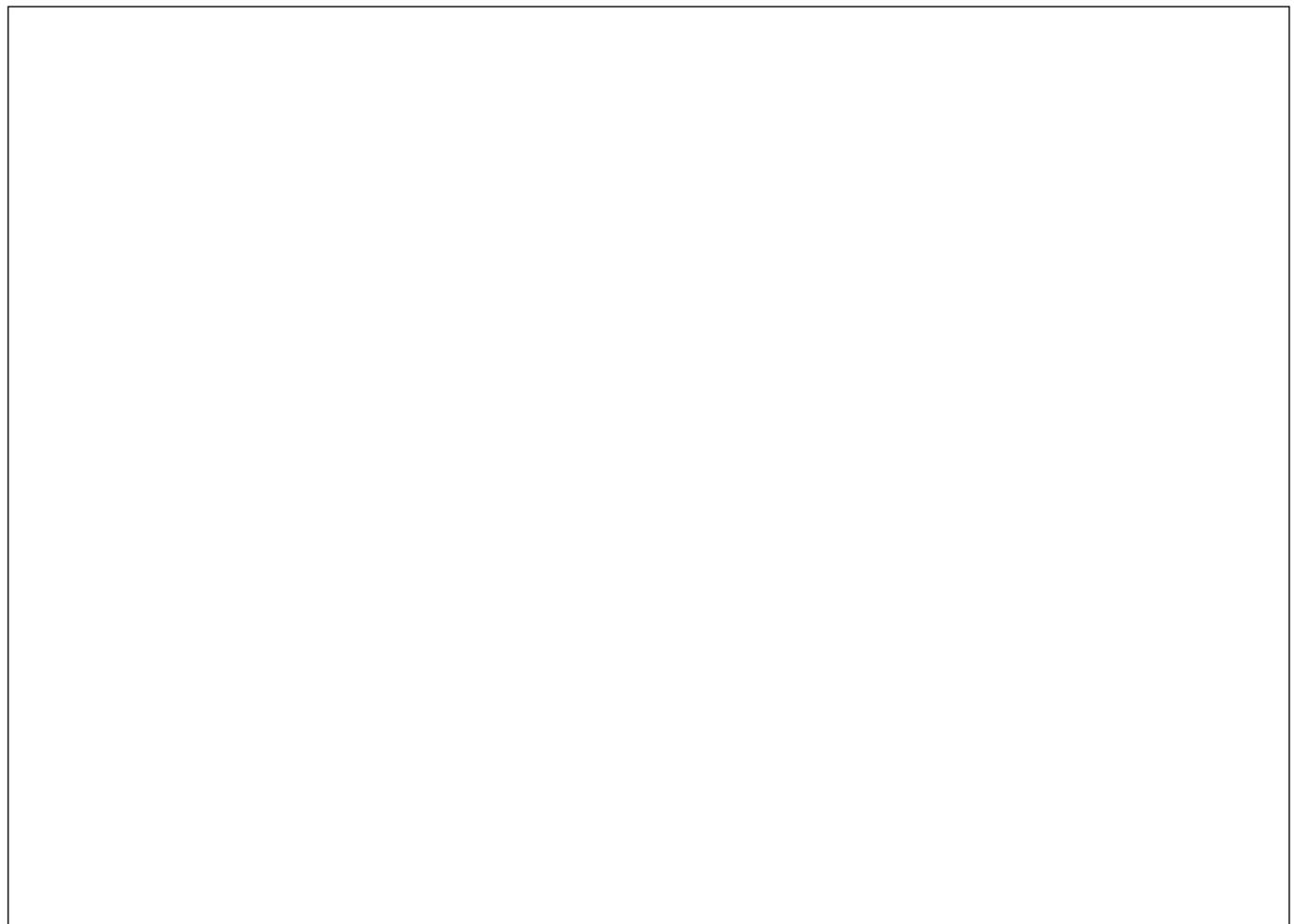
nues, for she has learnt the basic arts of healing and herbalism from the Ariane, and aids her fellow Gryphs when possible.

Orgon - Oj Orgovian Caravan Master

Orgon and his caravan make bi-monthly visits to Dhar, trading quantities of forged iron bolt-heads and duar-heads, in exchange for quantities of fallen span oak timber, bolts of spinifax, animal hides, and a few Gryph craft items. While he is certainly irascible and churlish, he holds a great deal of respect for his winged customers.

"Spiral Walker" - Experienced Ariane Druas

Named after the peculiar gnarled and twisted whitewood stave she bears, as well as her cryptic mannerisms, Spiral Walker is both aged in terms of physical life and incarnations. Her weather-beaten features always bear a faraway look, and her right leg is slightly lamed. She visits Dhar at least once every two years.





VII. Durne

"They live in caves and subsist on raw mushrooms and roots? How disgustingly primitive! Small wonder the little savages are so stunted."

- Her Bountiful Magnificence, Hasse-Jalour, Hadjin Diplomat.

A Visitor's Guide to Durne

The Populace

Durne is home to the entire Gnomekin populace, with the exception of those serving in the Seven Kingdom's military and a few ex-patriots. With a population of 263,000 calling it home, the Subterranean City of Durne is a vast, multi-layered warren of tunnels unnavigable by any save the Gnomekin themselves.

History

According to Gnomekin mythology, they have lived in the Subterranean City since Archaeus was formed, as the tunnel network was their first gift from Terra, following their birth as a race. Of the noteworthy events in Durne's history, perhaps the most notable was the One Day War of 67 n.a. when the Darkling hordes of Urag, fleeing the Ur clans, attempted to invade the Subterranean City, only to be soundly beaten and routed within a day of engagement.

Visions of Durne

As Durne is a sprawling network of tunnels and caves some 200-foot underground, it cannot be viewed in any conventional sense, nor can it be seen in its entirety. It must be viewed one location at a time.

The thousands of nooks inhabited by the Gnomekin extend up to a mile around, below, and even above Terra's Womb: a huge cavern at the heart of the city (see p. 43), creating an indecipherable maze, interconnected by tunnels. No map is provided here due to the 3D topography of the subterranean city. Instead, important and typical sites are detailed, along with a description of their location comparative to each other.

The Typical Dwelling

As the typical Gnomekin family usually exceeds 10 members, they share what living space they have available in a very communal, open way. As a result, there is little of the desire for privacy or sense of shame over such things as nakedness that typifies other cultures.

An Exterior View

Phosphorescent fungi cling to the tunnel walls in irregular patches, glowing wanly. A warm, inviting amber glow fills the end of the tunnel.

The Nook Interior

The tunnels that lead to Gnomekin nooks open directly into the Heart Room (see below). Nooks have no doors, though some families hang rugs of woven moss over their entrances. There is no typical number of rooms in a single nook, though there is never more than one Heart Room. Usually there is one bedroom for every three family members. Rooms might lie adjacent to, above, or below each other, but all connect directly to the Heart Room.

- **The Heart Room**

This 20-foot diameter, 5-foot high cave is the nook's communal room. Several beautifully sculpted clusters of crystal placed at the center of the cave give off a rich amber glow. A soft, thick carpet of moss covers the entire floor. Stalagmites of various sizes have been sliced off just above the floor, providing seats and tables.

- **Bedroom**

Thick moss covers the floor of this small cave, lit by a single cluster of fungi growing in a recessed alcove. Several shallow recesses in the floor are lined with extra thick moss, providing comfortable bedding.

- **Larder**

Unlit and bare, stone shelves are piled high in this tiny cave, displaying mushrooms, tubers, roots, fish and lichens. A crystal tub in the corner contains fermenting mushroom ale, and a small natural spring provides fresh water.

Fresh Finger Food

Gnomekin seldom cook their food, preferring to eat it fresh and raw "as Terra intended". They serve delicious mixtures of fungi, fresh fish and sliced tubers, seasoned with powdered lichen, and served on the large, plate-like caps of edible mushrooms (which are also eaten). They do not use cutlery.

- **Toilet and Washroom**

This tiny bare cave contains two covered crystal tubs. One is used as a toilet, while the other contains fresh water for washing with. Towels of woven moss are used to scrub and dry.



Never Waste Waste

Gnomekin take their full toilet tubs to their local mushroom or tuber farms, where the accumulated wastes are used as fertilizer.

Tax, Wage and Rent?

Gnomekin do not pay taxes, nor do they engage in common trade with each other. All members of the community give freely of what goods and services they can provide. By working selflessly together everyone is provided for. No Gnomekin receives a wage, and only those who trade with the surface dwellers accept or use coinage. Likewise, they would consider it an insult to Terra to charge each other for what She has provided all. They do not pay for accommodation, and the entire community helps to carve a new nook if such is needed. The "Wealth" any given Gnomekin character starts with consists of those saleable pieces they have accumulated themselves, and such "useful gifts" given to them by well wishers when they depart.

Places of authority

Servitor's Nook

Located at the end of a small, unremarkable tunnel connected to Terra's Womb (see p. 43) is Servitor's Nook: the dwelling of the King and Queen of Durne. It is no different than any other nook, such is the humble nature of Durne's rulers.

There are no guards at Servitor's Nook, as no Gnomekin would even consider bothering the King and Queen unless the need was dire. However, any nearby Protectors (and there is always a unit in Terra's Womb) will prevent non-Gnomekin from disturbing the King and Queen unescorted and without an extremely important reason.

Servants not Rulers

Servitor's Nook is so named because the King and Queen of Durne firmly believe they are but servants of Terra and Her people. The current King is Taro Orabio, a middle-aged, veteran Protector who lost his right arm during a skirmish with Satada. His wife, Queen Geo Orabio is a canny Crystalomancer who spent 30 years trading at Cymril. They live in Servitor's Nook with their 19 children.

Open Arms Nook

Up another small tunnel adjacent to Servitor's Nook (see above) is a nook specially enlarged and furnished to house

visiting dignitaries. Fitted with a carved wooden door, and civilized furnishings such as carpets and beds, it is almost ostentatious. Despite this attempt to make visiting VIPs comfortable, it is still a rare event that any choose to visit Durne.

Cave-Cells

Located at the center of a maze of tunnels down near The Deep Waters (see p. 43) are 10 small cave-cells. Each bare cave contains nothing but a layer of moss, and can hold two human-sized prisoners comfortably. Extremely thick stalactites and stalagmites form interlocking bars of stone. A large boulder wedged into place forms the door for each cell. Guards are posted when a criminal is incarcerated.

Military bases

Tunnelrock

The only normally visible sign of the Subterranean City, Tunnelrock is a 150-foot spur of rock on the surface of Durne. Riddled with small, Gnomekin-sized tunnels and passageways, it leads by tunnel directly to the city itself which is located some 50 miles to the southwest. Several veteran units guard Tunnelrock at all times, and many of the passageways are extensively trapped.

Sentinel Posts

Located in strategic positions throughout the city and surrounding tunnels are Sentinel Posts. Stone platforms are carved into the tunnel walls at various levels and padded with moss. A unit of six Protectors maintains vigil from these vantage points, aided by a Crystalomancer at the most dangerous posts.

Tactics and Defenses

A trained tunnel-runner is located at every Sentinel Post, and is dispatched at the first sign of serious danger, speeding off along tunnels to warn neighboring Sentinel Posts and nooks. These runners form a vital communication network for Durne's defenses.

Gnomekin Protectors are masters of guerilla-style combat, using hit-and-fade tactics to harry and pick off invading forces, as well as creating tunnel-traps and caving-in unimportant tunnels, crushing opponents and sealing off entrances. They are also extremely fierce and doughty fighters in face-to-face combat.



Places of worship

Terra's Womb

This enormous cavern, 70-foot high and 300-foot in diameter, sits at the very center of the Subterranean City. The cavern walls glisten with veins of precious metals, gemstones and crystals. Huge stalactites and stalagmites form a veritable forest of stone. A waterfall thunders down from the ceiling into a 30-foot diameter pool in the center of the cavern, surrounded by thick banks of moss and incandescent fungi.

Terra's Womb

Terra's Womb is held with great reverence by the Gnomekin. While they hold impromptu prayers to Her in any Crystal Grotto, they gather at Terra's Womb on the 30th of Drome to celebrate the Anniversary of the One Day War, and raise their voices in song.

Crystal Grottoes

These small natural caverns of varying size are found throughout Durne. Each glows softly with the rainbow light of hundreds of natural crystal formations, many of which are sculpted into delicate or fantastic shapes. Local Gnomekin often come to these Grottoes to contemplate life or sing to Terra.

Back to the Womb

When a Gnomekin dies she is buried in a Crystal Grotto where her friends and relatives gather to sing. A crystal cluster is then planted in the soil above the body, where it grows, tended and sculpted for many generations.

Crystal Theft

While no Gnomekin would dream of despoiling Terra's Womb or any of the Crystal Grottoes, the same cannot be said of outsiders. Anyone found attempting to steal any crystals or gemstones from such sites is immediately imprisoned in a cave-cell (see p. 42), soon to be expelled.

Parks

Grotto Parks

Laced with numerous small streams, pools and tiny waterfalls, Grotto Parks are used as places of rest and play by

local Gnomekin, and dozens can be found throughout the city. Floors and thick banks of moss provide soft footing, and copses of large luminescent fungi - some as large as trees - make wonderful playgrounds.

Education and History

Gnomekin do not keep written records, nor do they have schools or universities. They possess a rich oral tradition instead, telling and retelling old tales and events for enjoyment and relaxation. When a young Gnomekin wishes to pursue a career of craft, they apprentice themselves to a member of that profession. Only the Protectors and Tunnel-Runners receive training as a group taught by a single tutor.

Miscellaneous

Farms

Farms are found throughout Durne, and usually take the form of vast, wide caverns. Fields of whitecap mushrooms are planted and harvested here, while others grow various crops of edible tubers, all fertilized by the city's waste. Numerous other farms have been dedicated to the growth and cultivation of crystals of various hues and colors, the majority of which are exported to Cymril.

The Deep Waters

The largest cavern in the Subterranean City, the Deep Waters is fully a mile in diameter, and 100-foot in height, located at Durne's lowest level. Occupying most of the cavern is a fathomless, shadowy lake of cold freshwater. In the shallows are numerous hatcheries where the Gnomekin raise edible fish and mollusks.

Dangerous Calm

Despite The Deep Water's calm surface, it is home to many dangerous predators. Octomorphs and Renders both inhabit its cold depths, and sometimes rise to the surface, attempting to raid the hatcheries. For this reason, the Gnomekin fish-farmers are armed and several units of Protectors patrol the lake's banks.

Sample NPCs

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, relatives or possible encounters.

Beo Omono - Protector Instructor

Beo is regarded as friendly and humble, even among



Gnomekin. A Protector of advancing years, his mane is starting to gray, but his eyes and wits remain keen. He is a well-loved Instructor.

Omi Domino - Child-like Crystalomancer's Apprentice

Playful in the extreme, Omi is still a child at heart, exuberant, wide-eyed and innocent, with far too much energy. She is just learning to harness magic and finds the sensation rather giddy.

Mono Nomino - Concerned Tunnel-Runner

Despite his important and dangerous profession, Mono is concerned for any Gnomekin who would want to leave the security of Durne. His brother, Abi, was killed while adventuring.

Bimi Monobo - Mushroom Farmer

Bimi has been mushroom farming for most of her life, and takes delight in producing some of the most aromatic mushrooms, such as purple puffballs. Although modest, she takes quiet pride in the fact that her skills feed Terra's people.

Oolo Bibino - Daughter of Terra

Compassionate and understanding, the gray-haired Oolo has been alive for longer than any Gnomekin can remember. She has acted as midwife for many hundreds of Gnomekin births.

Neo Molo - Crystalsmith

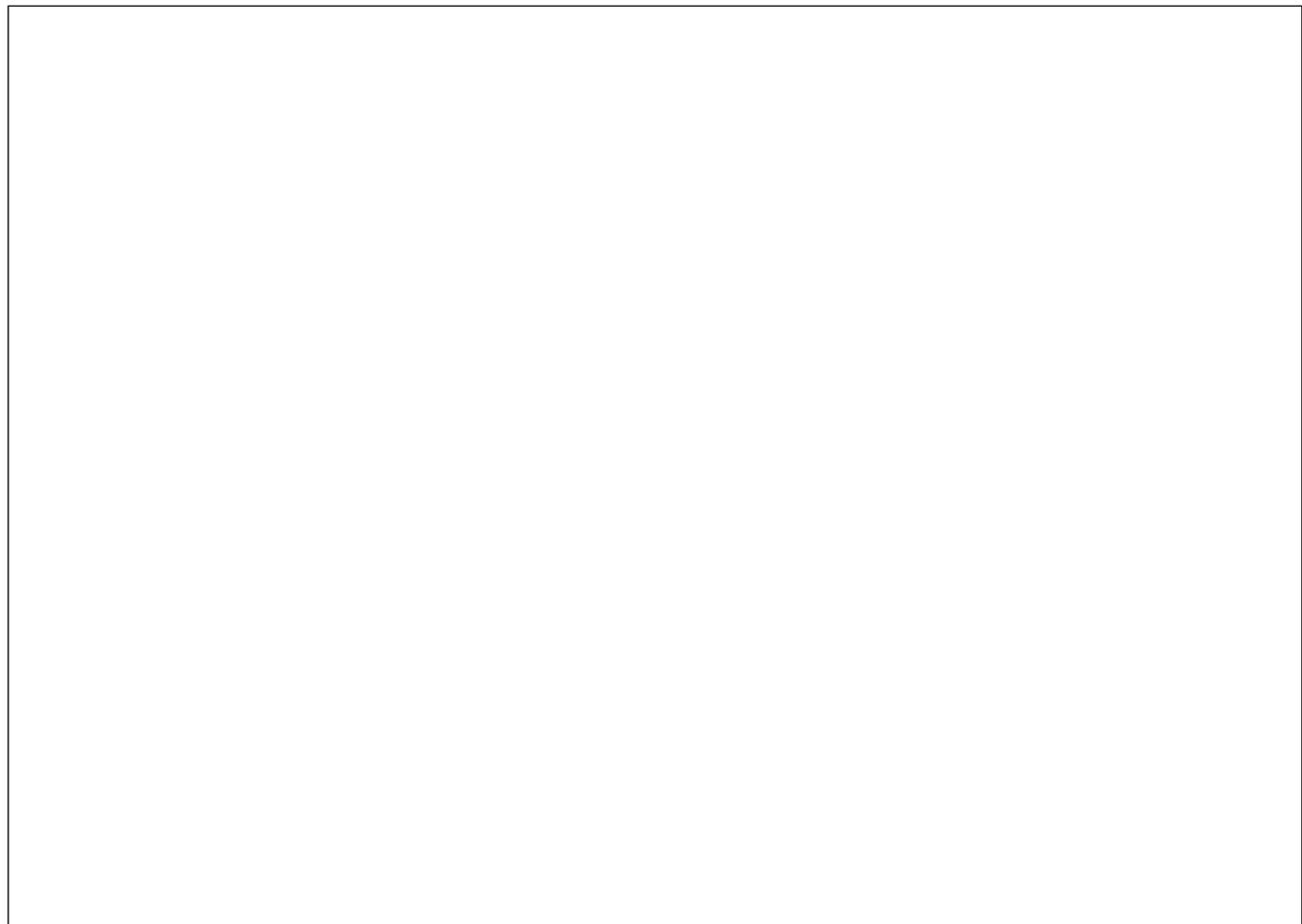
Neo is regarded as blessed by Terra, for his skill at crafting crystal, while making it look as if the crystal grew into whatever tool he is making, is exceptional. He is scrupulously honest and fair, and does not charge any more than normal, even though his goods are of superior quality.

Gomo Babino - Armorer

Notably overweight for a Gnomekin, Gomo isn't the sharpest tool in the box, but he is skilled, exuberant, friendly, and irrepressible. Crafting scale armor using the metallic scales of the Render, he always has a slight fishy aroma, even though he tries to keep as clean as possible.

Puk - Darkling Daredevil

Puk has an adventurous streak, and enjoys sneaking into Durne to steal pretty baubles. He even plays practical jokes on stationed Protectors, such as covering the hilts of their blades with sticky resin.





VIII. Gao

"I don't care if the fiend smiled and bowed most dramatically when he plundered my ship! A well-mannered pirate is still a pirate, you gibbering idiot!"

- Mar, Enraged Zann Sea Captain.

A Visitor's Guide to Gao

The Populace

The Rogue City of Gao is a lively and colorful place, the city's population of approximately 4,000 inhabitants formed from an eclectic and motley array of swashbucklers, criminals, scoundrels, renegades, and free slaves. While the majority (60%) are of obvious Phaedran descent to some degree (with the same copper skin and black hair as their Aamanian and Zandir cousins), they rub shoulders peacefully with renegade Mangar, free Batreans, escaped Thiasians, and such exotics as Sawila, in addition to a smattering of others. Cross-cultural marriages and relationships are also commonplace, producing numerous Gao of mixed or indeterminate heritage.

History

In 112 N.A., during the Cult Wars that toppled the Phaedran Empire, dissidents were incarcerated on the isolated penal colony of Gao-Din, a gaol from which it was rumored, there was no escape save death. Life in the colony was brutal and unforgiving, but salvation came in 133 N.A. when the forces maintaining the prison were withdrawn, abandoning the site and those incarcerated there, to fend for themselves or die. With this unexpected freedom, the inmates rapidly banded together to survive, and began exploiting the surrounding jungle, slowly establishing a safe-haven among the walls of their former prison. The Rogue City of Gao was born. Gradually salvaging the shell of a partially-sunk and abandoned Phaedran slave vessel, the Gao set themselves on their first tentative steps along the road of piracy that would become their livelihood. Perhaps the greatest show of Gao solidarity occurred in 267 N.A. when the Imrians attempted to sack Gao, only to be beaten by the island's defenses, swarmed with aqua demons, and subjected to a coordinated sea rogue attack when they tried to retreat. Few Imrians made it home that fateful day.

The Unchained Heart

All Gao vessels bear a flag called the Unchained Heart, which consists of a stylized red heart surrounded by broken chains, symbolizing the liberty of the original Gao, and the freedom and passion with which they live their lives. Each vessel has its own unique variation on

the theme. These flags are hoisted when the Gao make ready to attack, and give the target vessel chance to surrender (as well as ensuring they know their attackers are Gao). Unknown to all but the Gao themselves, these flags are also displayed as the Gao return home and sail into dock, as the aqua demons that live around the isle will not molest a Gao vessel (see sidebar, p. 47).

Visions of Gao

A View from Afar

Rising from the crashing azure waves is a small island of white beaches, with a single narrow inlet amid tall, treacherous rock outcrops of limestone. A thick, green mantle of mist-wreathed jungle swathes the isle. Visible above the bank of green are the limestone walls of the Rogue City itself, set atop a high plateau that thrusts up from the surrounding jungle.

At the Gates

Heavy walls of rough limestone, each 20-foot high, bear a large gate of heavy, ironbound timbers featuring a small, iron, sliding panel at eye-level. A stout lookout tower of stone and lashed timbers overlooks the gate, walls, jungle and ocean below, from just inside the gate itself. Cruder, makeshift walls, each a mere 12-foot high, are visible only a short walk away, adjoined to the original walls.

The City Streets

Streets of dirt weave amid a jostle of diverse huts and halls laid in no discernible pattern. Crafted from limestone, jungle timbers and salvaged driftwood, with roofs of thatched jungle vines and leaves, some are plain, while others have carved timbers, and painted walls. The buildings show the influence of varied cultures, including walls painted with Batrean pigments, wooden roofs with carved Mandalan eaves, and wooden beams carved to resemble Phaedran pillars. Children holding sticks play-fence gleefully amid the streets, while on-looking sailors laugh.

Gao at Night

Gao's nighttime streets are a riot of merriment, as sea-rogue crews spill out from the crowded inns into the



streets, and the city's many hearth fires lend the place a welcoming feel.

The Typical Dwelling

The following hut is typical of that inhabited by the single, average sea rogue. Captains tend to live a lot more opulently.

An Exterior View

A simple hut of chipped limestone is topped with a roof of thatched jungle leaves and vines, intricately interwoven to form a simple Thiasian pattern, its walls painted with natural Batrean colors in the abstract style currently favored in Cymril. A door of roughly polished wood stands inside a wooden doorframe carved with delicate images, and there is a single, wooden-shuttered window.

The Dwelling Interior

The hut consists of a single room. A hammock of fine leather hangs across one corner, attached to rough iron hooks in the limestone walls, a locked wooden seachest on the floor beneath it. Several old crates and barrels are being used as seating and a table, while a large open casket holds a mess of colorful clothing. Decorating another corner is a beautiful ship's figurehead of polished wood and enamels. A Sawila windchime of painted seashells hangs inside the doorway. The discarded top of a wooden barrel sits in the corner, covering a small, crudely dug hole that leads to the old penal colony's sewage outlet system.

A Life of Romance

Sweeping and romantic love affairs are quite rampant among the libertine and hot-blooded Go, and only a minority ever actually settle down for life, or share a dwelling for any length of time. Even those who enter long-term relationships (often polygamous) seldom share a home, preferring instead to retire to whichever of their abodes they feel like, as and when they want to.

Places of authority

Throne of Thieves

Originally the prison warden's dwelling, this two-story house is formed from smooth limestone blocks, with a roof of Arimite slate, a solid carved door, and windows clad with brass cross-hatching. The original rooms remain intact, including a large bedroom, bathroom, lounge, study, kitchen, and dinner hall, but the contents are radi-

cally different. Home to the current King or Queen of Thieves, all of the rooms are lavishly over-decorated with stolen booty. The monarch uses the large dinner hall to hold meetings with the local sea captains.

King of Thieves

The current King of Thieves is the infamous, irrepressible, and charismatic sea-rogue known as Orianos. Now retired after losing an arm and a leg to a voracious sea dragon, Orianos has gladly settled into his role governing his beloved city, and is the most popular Monarch of Thieves to date.

The "Guest" House

This large, solidly built limestone hut contains sixteen rooms - each partitioned with stone - and no windows. The door is of solid iron, and features a handful of sturdy locks. The "Guest" house is actually used to contain those individuals whom the Gao hope to ransom, as well as the occasional Gao awaiting his fate at Sea Demon Point (see below). Each room contains a simple wooden cot and chair, and prisoners are fed and treated with respect. Ransoms are blindfolded when they arrive, depart, and whenever they are taken anywhere, to prevent them gaining knowledge of Gao.

No Visitors

Outsiders are strictly forbidden from entering Gao unless they are to be ransomed, or have been invited to join the community. Those joining the community undergo intense interviews and magical scrutiny to ascertain their true loyalties and intentions: a long process during which the candidate is kept blindfolded. Gao is very insular, close-knit and secretive. Any prospective member who fails the tests is denied entrance and dropped off at the nearest center of civilization; anyone found to be a spy or threat is immediately fed to the aqua demons.

Aqua Demon Point

A long narrow path known as Deadman's Walk leads from the city proper to the edge of the isle, ending atop a small, high plateau of limestone that overlooks the ocean below. Those felons who break Gao's laws in a severe way are led here by procession. Upon arrival, a small gong is sounded alerting the aqua demons in the waters below that a meal is forthcoming. When the waters boil and churn with the excited thrashings of the aqua demons, the unfortunate individual is thrown over the edge.



Military bases

Defense Stations

Located around the great walls of Gao's harbor (see p. 48) and the inlet channel, the defense stations feature a diverse array of weapons, ranging from captured ballista, simple catapults that fire barrels of burning pitch, archery emplacements, and ready-made rockslides.

Hidden Defenses

Aside from Gao's obvious defense stations and fleet of ships, it also has hidden defenses that are possibly even more dangerous to potential invaders. Firstly, the inlet is only accessible by a hazardous route between towers of rock, and submerged rocks make it dangerous for anyone who doesn't know the safe route of passage. Worst of all, however, are the aqua demons who infest the waters around Gao, and who will swarm any ship that doesn't display the Unchained Heart flag (see sidebar, p. 45).

Watch Towers

Among the only constructs remaining of the original penal colony, these well-built stone platforms are located inside and along the perimeter of the colony's original wall. Topped with wooden frameworks and roofs, each provides a clear view of the entire island and the waters beyond.

Educational institutions

Training Ship

Actually the ancient hulk of a grounded and secured vessel, the training ship serves as a school for young sea rogues, where they are instructed in the arts of sailing, navigating, traversing rigging, furling and unfurling sails, and fighting aboard ship, by volunteers from among those sea rogues now too old or crippled to go to sea as part of a buccaneer crew. All other education is taught by the child's parents, although those seeking skills and tuition their parents can't provide, will often try and seek a willing tutor to whom they can apprentice themselves.

Markets & bazaars

The Square

Little more than an area of open ground at the center of Gao, the Square serves as a meeting place where citizens can barter any such plunder, goods, or services as they see fit. The Square is busiest whenever a ship returns with plunder, which its crew trades here after paying the monarch.

Public Law

All trials are public affairs held in the Square, with the current monarch acting as overall judge. Any witnesses and accused are allowed to make a statement. The monarch then passes judgement based upon the overall reactions and opinions of the viewing community. Gao has no individuals responsible for law enforcement. Instead, members of the community are expected to (and nearly always do) report any criminal activity, and, with the monarch's aid, gather locals to help apprehend the accused felon.

Traders, artisans & merchants

Damara's

Dwelling in a small hut with a flat stone roof, Damara is a superb seamstress and tailor, able to adjust existing clothing with ease, stitch stunning embroidery, or create flamboyant new garments out of whatever rags, old apparel, or scraps of cloth she can find. The daughter of a renegade Arimite and a Phaedran Gao, she has a wiry build, dark eyes, black hair, angular features, and dark copper skin. While she appears unarmed, she is unnervingly adept at throwing her sewing needles.

Flint's

The mason nicknamed "Flint" inhabits this large hut of intricately carved stone. Of mixed Cymrilian/Phaedran parentage, Flint has brown skin, dark green hair, hazel eyes, and an oiled goatee. He is also an accomplished geomancer: a magical field that proves immeasurably useful as an aid to his masonry skills.

Orimar's Forge

Enclosed by walls of woven vines stretched over a wooden framework, this basic forge is operated by Orimar, a powerfully built Zandir blacksmith with savagely cropped hair, and a big smile. Although taciturn when working, he is incredibly gregarious when relaxing, and enjoys a good bout of arm-wrestling. While he can create iron items of good quality, his main talent is in repairing existing items.



Quamaro's

With precisely cut wooden walls, door, and roof, sparingly, but elegantly carved, this large hut stands out as an example of fine carpentry, created by its inhabitant, Quamaro, a Phaedran Gao and carpenter who lives here with Treenya, a decorative wood carver whose skills complement his own. Quamaro makes a variety of wooden goods from old crates, barrels, driftwood, and the occasional piece of new timber, and is also skilled at making natural glues and resins. His work is durable and well made, but would appear monotonously boring if not for Treenya's artistic hand.

Shael's

This thatched hut is decorated with garlands of dyed and woven vines and leaves, and painted with a swirl of greens and blues. Shael, an escaped Batrean paramour dwells here, trading her considerable talents as a maker of natural dyes and paints, as well as a painter both of walls and people. She is nearly always plagued by suitors seeking her favor.

Inns, taverns & restaurants

Gambling

Although Gao doesn't have an establishment dedicated to gambling, nearly all Sea Rogues enjoy a few games of chance when they relax around the table of an inn.

The Capering Zaratan

Formed from the converted shell of Gao's original guard's mess, the Capering Zaratan is a long, vaulted hall of cut limestone blocks and mortar over a framework of stout beams. A great fireplace occupies most of the wall at one end of the hall, and there are numerous kegs, barrels, and crates for patrons to sit upon. A large open firepit is located at the other end of the hall, usually cooking a spit-roast. It is the favored hangout of Jalisha and her crew (see NPCs, p. 49).

The Ode

The Ode, Gao's finest eatery, is respected for producing some of the tastiest and most inventive dishes in Gao, giving them such colorful appellations as, "Screaming Skalanx Seafood Sausages", etc. Aamatla, the chief chef (a defrocked Aamanian priest) is one of Gao's most temperamental citizens, and is obsessed with spicy food.

Friendly Rivalry

Although the myriad members of Gao's populace get along with a minimum of friction, friendly rivalry is often intense between many of the sea captains (and their crews). However, aside from the occasional good-natured brawl or contest, they strive to outdo each other by reaping the richest spoils and boasting of their greatest feats of derring-do (usually with no small amount of "embellishment").

Dens of iniquity

Madame Malkin's

This long, broad limestone hall is topped with a roof of old wooden planks carved with lewd comments in Thaecian, but is otherwise unadorned. Despite its dull exterior, it is a combined tavern and brothel beloved of Gao's single sailors. The interior walls are painted with erotic, but tasteful, imagery and the entire hall is decorated with elaborate plunder. Half of the building comprises of a small stage, bar, tables and chairs, while the other half contains a dozen curtained booths where patrons may indulge themselves with a member of the establishment's female or male "service staff".

"Madame" Malkin

One of Gao's most eccentric and popular personages, "Madame" Malkin is actually a male Thaecian transvestite, fond of the most elaborate dresses and makeup he can muster. His outrageous wit and humor is the stuff of legends.

Transportation

Docks and Harbor

The natural harbor, features enough wooden docking platforms for 30 large, ocean-going vessels (although just as many vessels can anchor within the waters of the dock itself). The harbor is surrounded by a vast wall of limestone, some 60-foot in height, 20-foot thick, and topped with numerous defense stations (see p. 47). A winding path, wide enough for a single cart, leads up from the harbor to the gates of the rogue city itself.



The Gao Fleet

Despite its small population, Gao can boast an impressive fleet of vessels, including 9 Zandir men o' war, 7 zandir tradesmen, 11 Aamanian frigates, 22 Aamanian merchantmen, one Mangar carrack (taken from a crew that decided to ignore the boundary agreement), and even one Sun-ra-san dragon barque, found adrift with only one crew member (See Sur-Ram below).

Sample NPCs

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, rivals (friendly or otherwise), or encounters:

Red Rymora - Gao Sea Captain

Rymora is a Gao of obvious Phaedran descent, and refuses to wear any color except scarlet. Among Gao's most proficient swashbucklers, Rymora is handsome, charming, debonair, and entirely too easily swayed by a pretty face. He commands a Zandir man o' war called the "Scarlet Shaitan", and all of his crewmembers wear at least one article of red clothing. His rivalry with Jalisha is lively.

Jalisha - Batrean Sea Captain

Famed captain of the dragon barque, "Riven Scale", the stunning Jalisha is Gao born and bred. So renowned is her beauty that some Zandir captains have surrendered their vessels on sight of her ship, merely to catch a glimpse of her. However, she remains cool to all romantic advances, having found her soul-mate and lover in the female Sawila, Marakiyu.

Sur-Ram - Sun-ra-san First Mate

First mate on the "Riven Scale", Sur-Ram was the only Sun-ra-san found on the dragon barque when it was found adrift by Jalisha. Delirious for many days, he was nursed back to health by Marakiyu (Jalisha's lover) and claims to have no memory of events before he was rescued. Out of

gratitude to Jalisha and Marakiyu he now serves as first mate on the very ship he was found on.

Marakiyu - Sawila Healer and Songsmith

Marakiyu was rescued from Imrian slavers by Jalisha early in the latter's career, and the two fell in love at first sight. Marakiyu now stays in Gao-Din where she is admired for her skill as a healer and singer.

Old Man Kaww - The City Idiot

Kaww has been around as long as anyone in the Rogue City can remember, clad in scrappy rags and hides. He often leers and cackles at passersby, giggling to himself and muttering about "the sunken treasure of Simbar".

Mangral - Renegade Mangar Boat-Builder

Scarred, tattooed and sinewy, Mangral has mustaches that are so long that he tucks them into his waist-sash. Cantankerous but good natured, he is an expert at repairing damage to any sea vessel, and his skills are greatly admired. He turned his back on his native culture, stating that "he never really fit in".

Fillisturm the Chaotic - Sorcerer Supreme

Known for his eccentric, but flamboyant mannerisms, Fillisturm is a Phaedran Gao sea rogue and magician of considerable talent, and peculiar magics. Recognized by the multi-hued patchwork cloak he always wears, Fillisturm is a valued member of Red Rymora's crew.

Paelistro - Pint-sized Swashbuckler

Although merely five years of age, Paelistro is as reckless, daring, and flamboyant as any adult sea rogue, and fancies himself a great swordsman, unbeaten in his stick duels with the other Gao children. With a swagger that would put any bravo to shame, this disheveled and fearless ragamuffin will give anyone who annoys him to swift whack across the shins.





IX. Oceanus

"No monument quite so perfectly demonstrates the Archaen will to survive, adaptability, and occasional lunacy, as the floating city called Oceanus."
- Ratsbata, Phantasian Guardian.

A Visitor's Guide to Oceanus

The Populace

The floating city of Oceanus is home to approximately 3,000 inhabitants, spread fairly evenly among the settlement's nine clans (see sidebar, right column). Although the Oceanians reproduce at a rate only slightly lower than most other Archaen-descended cultures, they face daily perils, including dangerous water currents, attacks by sea dragons and sea scorpions, terrible storms too sudden or powerful to dissipate, and predatory attacks while diving.

As a result, their population growth is surprisingly slow, so the settlement only requires a small increase in size each year. Despite such hardships, the Oceanians are a hardy folk, used to such a harsh life. Although Oceanians have very seldom permitted outsiders to live in the floating city, Oceanus does see regular trade with Phantasians, Gao, Parthenians, Farad, and Zandir merchants, trading goods such as fish, urchins, ornate shells, decorative mats, scrimshaw, etc. for exotic goods and foodstuffs.

History

According to sea nomad legends, they originally took to the oceans of Talislanta "while fleeing the wrath of the capricious land spirits", a legend civilized scholars believe refers to the Great Disaster. In their haste to escape, the ancestors of the Oceanians supposedly left an ancient hag behind to perish, and the hag, a powerful black witch named Jezem, called out to her departing people in anger, and placed a murrain upon them, that should they ever set foot on the cursed dry land, they would suffer consequences of the most dire sort.

Since that time, no Oceanian has ever tested the curse, and indeed, attempting to do so was, and is, forbidden on pain of death, forcing the sea nomads ancestors to adapt to their watery environment. Originally travelling the waves in household clans, the sea nomads quickly learned to survive, although many did perish. Taking resources from the ocean itself, they eventually grew strong, forming the nine clans that today form the floating city. However, the Imrians began to predate increasingly on the sea nomads, and as strong as each clan was, they needed to be stronger. Previously never meeting save to trade, each of the

nine clans forged an alliance in 292 N.A., and after much deliberation, bound many of their boats together, forming the first foundation of what would eventually grow into the floating city of Oceanus.

The Nine Clans

Oceanus' nine clans are each named after a natural element, denizen of the deep, or some other aspect of their sea-based lives. Interclan rivalry does exist, but is rigorously constrained to attempts to outdo each other in every possible field. The nine clans are: Sea Scorpion, Sea Dragon, Zaratan, Tempest, Waves, Aqueor, Aqua Demon, Nar-Eel, and Urchin, with each claiming to possess certain favorable traits from their chosen symbol.

Visions of Oceanus

A View from Afar

A vast gathering of huts on stilts seems to stand amid the undulating azure waves, like a strange mirage set against a horizon of limitless sea and sky.

Sea Wood

Although Oceanus may seem to be largely composed of wood, the "wood" is actually the dried stems (akin in size to the trunks of trees) of giant yellow aqueor, a great kelp, causing the sea nomads to name the stems, "sea wood".

On Approach

Squat wooden towers stand around the perimeter of the floating city, massive ballista visible within each. Numerous colossal masts thrust skyward from between the huts, great sails furled against the sea winds, the entirety afloat atop a great foundation of woven kelp and wood. A pair of zaratan depart the city with powerful strokes of their flippers, Oceanian warriors sat proudly on their huge shells.

The City Streets

Woven domed buildings stand on stilts over the plank-like walkways criss-crossing the floating foundation of the city. The entire settlement undulates gently and continuously



atop the restless waves, and wooden hatches dot the streets here and there, many securely tied. At open hatches, Oceanians of all ages sit and fish, or dive down into the ocean below. The cool air bears the tang of salt.

Oceanus at Night

The cool night air gently ruffles the furled sails of the floating city, itself a silent silhouette, lit only by the firelights visible through windows, and the torches in the city's defense towers.

The Typical Dwelling

An Exterior View

A latticework of wood stilts supports an 8-foot tall domed hut of woven yellow-brown aqueur, wooden hatches covering several small windows, and an arch-shaped door set in a frame of carved sea dragon bone is reached by a rope ladder leading to the ground.

Family Life

Members of the same clan and family build their huts in close proximity, often in a ring, the central area of which is used for family gatherings.

An Interior View

The hut comprises a single room, at the center of which is a large ornate shell, secured to the floor with resinous glue, holding the timber and ashes of a fire. Woven mats cover the timber floor, and a number of baskets line the walls. A hammock hangs across one wall.

Ye Shall Not Pollute the Waters

Oceanus' wastes are barreled up, and taken by zaratán, far from the floating city, to be dumped on the nearest piece of dry land.

Love and Marriage

When Oceanians marry, the husband joins his wife's clan, but they do not share a hut for any reason, not even lovemaking; an activity they perform in the ocean waters, "closer to the blessings of the sea spirits". Each adult Oceanian has a hut of their own, and children are raised in the mother's hut.

Born to the Waters

Oceanians are born into the salt waters of the sea, their mothers giving birth partially submerged, attended by female family members and a clan midwife. The children seem perfectly at home in the water from the onset, and rapidly develop swimming skills under the tuition of their parents, who often set up partially submerged, netted areas for the local children to paddle and swim in.

Places of authority

Sacred Hall

This 30-foot diameter hut stands atop a large platform at the bow of the city-ship, and is not raised up on stilts. The interior bears many torches, and is lined with glittering sea dragon scales. Nine simple wooden thrones, decorated with carved ivory, and spaced evenly around the circumference of the hall, look toward the center. It is in this hall that the chieftains of each clan, the Council of Nine, meet to form a council moot, and discuss matters affecting the city as a whole.

Respect Your Elders

Oceanians are taught to respect their elders, and must behave in humble fashion when interacting with them. Speaking out of turn is considered disrespectful. Even chieftains pay elders their due, and the eldest Oceanian (known simply as "The Eldest") is always permitted to speak first in any situation, and all listen to and consider what they have to say.

Holding Pens

Partially submerged in the waves, these small but sturdy wooden cages are used to hold those miscreants who break local law, until such a time as the Council of Nine can convene at the Sacred Hall to hold court and try them.

Radiant Vault

Constructed of glued and interwoven layers of wood and bone, this large domed hut is heavily guarded, and contains Oceanus' store of sea dragon scales (Radiants).

The Oceanian Radiant

Although the majority of Oceanians use barter, they do have a "currency" of sorts, known as a Radiant, (actually the shimmering scale of a ancient sea dragon). All the scales from any sea dragon carcasses,



whether killed or salvaged, are considered the property of the city itself, and are stored in the Radiant Vault (see p. 51). Those working directly for the benefit of the city itself (such as the Towermen, and militia), or who otherwise do the city a service, are rewarded in Radiants, which all Oceanians must accept as payment, and then return to the Radiant Vault. As sea dragons are relatively rare, let alone ancient sea dragons, and the scales are only kept in circulation for as long as their luster remains, widespread use of this currency is impossible.

Military bases

Defense Towers

Scattered around the city's perimeter, these simple tower platforms are fortified with planks of wood, and topped with large sturdy huts that afford an all-round view. Within each hut is a massive ballista of sea dragon bone and horn, along with a pile of pitch-soaked javelins that are ignited prior to firing, and several huge harpoons for use against sea monsters.

Council of Warriors

Oceanus is defended by a militia of volunteers from all its clans, known as the Council of Warriors. Only those adults who have passed their rites of adulthood are permitted, and only the most exemplary are taught to operate the city's ballista and become Towermen.

Scale of Wage

Members of Oceanus' Council of Warriors are paid a salary of 2 Radiants per week, while Towermen are paid a salary of 3 Radiants per week, while members of Oceanus' caulking, repair, and construction crews are paid 1 Radiant per week.

Sky Cup

Located atop Oceanus' tallest, and central mast, this large wooden basket and platform can comfortably hold two Oceanian adults, and is used as a look-out post by the Council of Warriors, for the high vantage points gives an unparalleled view of the surrounding ocean.

Zaratan Pens

Reinforced by lashed timbers and sea dragon bones, this huge aquatic enclosure houses Oceanus' tame zaratan, although it does little to keep them in, instead providing them a broad area in which they can easily gather. The

runic inscription their owner carves into the front of their shell identifies individual zaratan. Only warriors and hunters are permitted to own zaratan.

Places of worship

Vault of Sea and Sky

The Vault of Sea and Sky is the home of Oceanus' small priesthood, and is constructed to resemble a spiral shell of painted wood and bone, topped by a large round platform from which the priests survey the sky and sea, and work their magics on the local environment.

Oceanus' Priesthood

Oceanus' priests, both male and female, revere the spirits of sky and sea, and serve their people by calming storms, providing healing services, spiritual guidance, and blessings. Potential acolytes are chosen from the populace at the discretion of all the current priests. They refuse to accept a salary for the aid they provide the floating city, but graciously accept the many donations given them by the populace.

Markets & bazaars

The Ring

Located at the bow of the city, this large ring-shaped platform surrounds the Sacred Hall (see pp. XX), and is used by members of all Oceanus' clans for the purpose of trade, both between clans, and with outsiders.

Family Trade

Members of the same clan do not trade with each other, as clan loyalty demands that they share what they have.

Oceanian Goods

Oceanus produces a staggering variety of goods, considering its total reliance on the sea. High quality sepia inks are drawn from several varieties of squid; urchins, fish, seaweed, and shellfish provide an abundance of foodstuffs; sea salt is a plentiful commodity; giant pearls, corals, intricate shells, sponges, and the ivory of sea dragons and nar-eels all provide beautiful substances that can be carved, sculpted, or otherwise worked into jewelry, decorative goods, etc. and even glues can be made from the boiled secretions of certain mollusks.



Transportation

Docks

Located chaotically around Oceanus' circumference are numerous floating wooden platforms of various size, permitting visiting vessels to dock.

Miscellaneous

Masts

Eight great masts, each 100-foot tall, save for the central mast, which is taller due to the sky cup (see pp. XX) at its summit, stand atop the floating city, seven forming a ring about the central mast. Connected by a network of intricate rigging, huge wing-like sails can be deployed, rendering the city-ship capable of movement, albeit imprecise and slow.

Rudder

Operated by a team of at least ten adult Oceanians, the city-ship's rudder is actually the shoulder-blade of an ancient sea dragon, found on the ocean's floor when the floating city was first being constructed.

Fish Pens

Formed of lashed timber enclosures, these submerged pens contain many fish by virtue of well-woven netting, and provide the floating city was an adequate supply of food during harder times.

Anchors

Large winches serve to raise and lower the great pieces of stone that serve as the floating city's anchors.

Following the Ways

Oceanians learn their professions by the time-honored method of apprenticeship, though they are only permitted to apprentice themselves to members of their own clan. The majority follow in their parent's footsteps, and learn their trade from one or the other parent.

Sample NPCs

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, rivals (friendly or otherwise), or encounters:

Ocas - Weaver

Ocas is weaver of average skill, making his living by caulking any damage to the city ship, as well as weaving bas-

kets and other goods, repairing huts, and cutting and drying aqueor. However, it is when weaving tales that this affable and imaginative young Oceanian is in his element.

Osalia - Accomplished Artist

Recently wed and pregnant, Osalia is radiant and friendly, and attracts great praise for her surpassing skill at carving delicate scenes into pearls, her detailed works being avidly sought by the members of all Oceanus' clans, as well as jewelers and collectors from across the continent.

Oasaro - Aged Priestess

Weathered with age, Oasaro is one of Oceanus' eldest priests, but despite the great respect granted her for her age and position, she is modest, almost humble, and has a talent for setting even the most rambunctious youth at ease. She prefers to spend time among the waves, for she says the spirits of the waters ease the aches of her aged bones.

Osarac - Sea Dragon Clan Chieftain

Muscular and covered with scars, and tattoos of sea dragons down his arms, Osarac is an accomplished warrior, and stern chieftain. Despite his firm and rigorous demeanor, and upright support of Oceanian law, the lure of the mysterious land has always been strong for Osarac, and it continues to grow daily.

Oecanne - Armorer

Oecanne is highly skilled at crafting armor out of sea dragon scales, or more unusually, the hide of the echinomorph. However, her greatest respect is due her skill at creating zaratan shell shields that are not only functional, but beautifully finished and polished.

Oas - Weaponer

Missing both his legs following an attack by a sea scorpion, Oas is bitter that he would never be able to become the warrior he always dreamed of being, and has contented himself instead by forging some of the best weapons on Oceanus. Although crippled, his ability with a flange-bow is nothing to be sneered at.

Osenci - Towerman

Wiry and astute, Osenci has served as a towerman for the last ten years, during which time she was responsible for personally slaying an attacking sea dragon with a single harpoon. She proudly carries a dagger, carved from a tooth of the great beast, at her waist.

Osacat - Warrior

Recently accepted as a warrior, the youthful Osacat is somewhat brash and foolhardy, eager to prove himself to his more experienced comrades, and earn the right to claim a zaratan of his own. Everyone thinks he has a lot to learn, except Osacat himself.

Oshea - Water Baby

Oshea is a mere five years of age, but already find herself extremely at home amid the waters of the ocean. Sneaking off-board even when told not to, she loves cavorting amid the waves, and chasing fish, although her parents worry at her lack of caution.



X. Rhin

"The sight of Rhin's glittering spires will take your breath away, assuming the frigid air doesn't do so first".

- Djama al Shen, Djaffir Merchant.

A Visitor's Guide to Rhin

The Populace

The Mirin are not a numerous people, and even Rhin, capital of L'haan and home to a full 35% of their population, only houses 10,000 inhabitants. The inhospitable nature of their frigid climate means they receive few visitors, save for the al Shen Djaffir, and Oj Orgovian tribes with whom they trade, and the occasional Ariane Druas for whom they harbor great respect.

History

According to Mirin legend, they were a people that had fallen to earth from Borean's embrace, to experience life. Led by the white witch Cerene, the Mirin began construction of Rhin and L'Lal in 21 N.A., following centuries of hardship as nomads in the frozen wastes. With Cerene's guidance, both cities were constructed in a matter of years, providing the Mirin with much needed protection, and a place to call home.

In 163 N.A. a Mirin expeditionary force into Narandu, stumbled across what seemed to be a great tower-like construct, leaning precariously, and half covered with ice and snow. Chipping their way inside, they came across many strange alchemical devices, and tomes of lore containing the secrets of adamant. Many dangers beset their return, but those few that survived bore extra knowledge of alchemy beyond that the Mirin already possessed, and the ability to forge blue adamant gave the Mirin a greater edge, although they never did find the ice-encased tower again.

In 176 N.A. a colossal force of Ice Giants attacked L'Haan, but armed with adamant and powerful alchemy, the Mirin were able to drive the invaders back. In 350 N.A. the Mirin came under attack once again, as they repelled an army of Harakin in a fierce battle that lasted three days and nights.

Visions of Rhin

A View from Afar

A mighty 25-foot wall of ice encircles the city in the shape of an eight-pointed snowflake. The wall merges with the

landscape like a natural growth. Light sparkles from the icy surface of many tapering, elegant towers of ice. Like a field of impossibly large stalagmites shaded in blues and whites, surrounded by a wall of ice, the city stands on the bank of a vast mirror-like expanse of frozen water, elegant ships skimming the surface on glittering blades.

At the Gates

A huge disk of lustrous blue metal rolls back into a slot within the wall, leaving a large circular gateway. Stalagmites, each 35-foot tall and carved with narrow windows stand at either side of the gate, and at regular intervals around the wall. A fortress-like dock of ice lies on the banks of the vast frozen lake nearby.

The City Streets

Crisp paths of snow lie between buildings of crystal-like ice; each sculpted like a stalagmite of various heights and widths, some standing alone, others in elaborate clusters connected by enclosed walkways of ice. Each is delicately carved to reflect light, shimmering like a diamond. A great palatial cluster of slender spires stands in the center of the city, towering a full half again the height of its tallest neighbor. Sculptures of heroic figures, magnificent beasts, and abstract design stand here and there as if by whim. The inhabitants walk with stately grace, bedecked in blue silks and white furs.

Rhin at Night

Darkness never truly engulfs Rhin, for the northern night sky is cloudless, and afire with stars. The polished ice of the city itself glitters and sparkles, and the haunting sound of the Soul of Borean (see below) fills the air.

Fire and Heat

Fire and heat, including the use of pyromancy, is expressly forbidden in any Mirin settlement as it could damage the architecture. Visitors are provided with ample furs, but are not permitted to create fires to warm themselves.

The Typical Dwelling



An Exterior View

An 80-foot high stalagmite, tapering gradually from a 35-foot base is carved with delicate trceries, and many windows of abstract shape. Willowy needles of ice extend and twist from the tower, seemingly for no other purpose than decoration. A carved oval doorway stands open at the base.

The Tower Interior

A staircase of polished ice ascends, while another descends, each featuring an elegant banister of ice.

The Apartment

A cluster of grotto-like rooms forms the apartment, each room connected to the other by a doorway covered with an elaborately stitched hanging of leather and fur.

• The Communal Room

This small room features a low table at its center, carved from the ice of the floor. Several thick fur rugs are scattered around it, providing comfortable seating low to the floor. A shelf is carved into the wall, following its curve, decorated with books, ivory statuettes and ice decanters. A cluster of stalactites hangs from the ceiling, orbs of amber-glow frozen into their tips.

Illumination

Each Mirin building is designed to reflect and channel light through precisely cut ice, providing interior lighting beyond that the windows provide. This system is so efficient that even starlight and moonlight provide more than adequate illumination. Orbs filled with amberglow - a luminescent fiery-orange alchemical - are trapped in the tips of ceiling stalactites, glowing softly during the hours of darkness, and are also used as nightlights and torches on those few nights when the stars and moons are obscured.

Doorways

Rather than the doors common to other cities, the Mirin have but a single thick bide on their front entrance that is fastened down from the inside.

• The Bedroom

An abstract-shaped window of clear ice sheds light into this room. A circular plinth of ice some 7-foot in diameter and 1-foot in height serves as a bed, its center hollowed out and filled with a mattress of soft snow covered with stitched furs and several tooled fur and leather blankets. Pegs and shelves of delicately carved ice serve to hang and bear clothing, and personal possessions.

Comfort not Heat

As Mirin do not feel the cold, they do not need blankets. They only wrap themselves in fur blankets for reasons of comfort. Ice is cursedly hard. The soft snow is replenished each day.

• The Bathing Room

A large oval bath is sunken into the floor, filled with frigid water. An entire wall is highly polished acting as a mirror in front of which are several elaborate ice-shelves bearing cleansing alchemicals, musk perfume, and toiletries. A beautifully carved box-like toilet stands in the corner, the wastes sliding down a frozen chute into the sewer.

• Larder and Kitchen

This small room features a large wardrobe-like feature of ice containing frozen joints of meat, freeze-dried lichen, and wafers of snow lily bread. Plates and cutlery are contained on a wall-rack, along with vials of imported spices, and local alchemicals that flash-cook and cool the food ready to serve.

Accommodation Costs

All Mirin are provided free accommodation, the size of which depends on their marital status, and the size of their family. When new dwellings are needed, the entire community works together to create a new abode in record time. All that sets apart a wealthier Mirin's dwelling from her neighbor's is the intricacy of any ice carving, and greater content of other decorations and materials, such as blue-diamond, and works of art. Borean's clergy live among the people as ordinary citizens, although their dwellings tend to be the most modest of all, especially given their refusal to accept money for their services.

Tax

Taxes in L'haan are of low levels, the majority of which pays for the wages and equipment of the alchemists, army and navy. Higher taxes are unnecessary, as the community-minded Mirin often perform work for the community, even aiding in the upkeep of the local parks, and the tutelage of the young. They also keep their settlements clean, tidy and pristine. Due to these factors, the authorities have no real need to employ substantial numbers of civil servants. All Mirin pay a blanket tax of 25%, based on their weekly income, and they are honest enough that they even declare weeks when their earnings have been higher. The local clergy collect the taxes every month and take them to the Royal Ministry. They do so without armed escort.

Hospitality

Mirin hospitality is warm-hearted and welcoming. A Mirin family temporarily adopts each visitor. However, the Mirin will expect the visitor to be polite and courteous, as well as regaling them with tales of far-off places.



Places of authority

The Snow Queen's Palace

Elegant clusters of spires tower up to 120-foot in the air, composed of thousands of needle-thin ice splinters. Delicate tracteries cover every surface, and each spire is fluted, carved and faceted like a diamond. Sculptures stand in recessed alcoves around the entire base of the palace. A broad stair sweeps up to a great circular portal of blue adamant under a balcony supported by carved tapering pillars.

Seat of Government

The Snow Queen's Palace houses L'haan's governing body of Royal Ministers, along with the Vault of Records, the Crystalline Courts of Law, and the mysterious Snow Queen herself. Each Royal Minister lives in a well-appointed quarter of the palace's lower levels. The Royal Ministers act through six sub-ministers each (two in each of L'haan's three cities). All the records of births, marriages and deaths recorded by community clergy, as well as trade, tax and military records are collected monthly and stored in the Vault of Records beneath the palace.

The Snow Queen

Cerene, the leader of the Mirin people since their earliest history, continues to rule them even now, and is much beloved by her people. Even-banded, charismatic, and enigmatic, Cerene is a radiant beauty of indeterminate age, and surpassing magical prowess.

The Keeps of Solace

Housed under the base of each Vigil Tower (see pp. XX) are The Keeps of Solace: the city's prison cells. Each Keep is a single cell, large enough for one man, secured by bars of blue adamant. Each Vigil Tower has but one of these cells located beneath their stables. As a result, each city can only hold up to 25 criminals at any one time.

Crime and Punishment

Crime is literally unknown among the Mirin, with the result that the Keeps seldom hold more than one or two malcontents. Punishments vary according to the severity of a crime. If the crime is petty and non-violent, the criminal is forced to pay the aggrieved party recompense (usually double what they stole), suffers ostracism within the community for a short period, and must make pilgrimage to a shrine and pray for absolution. If the theft was substantial, or the criminal was violent in a brief, non-lethal manner, he is imprisoned in a Keep for a month before undergoing the same punishment as for a petty crime. Heinous crimes are grounds for immediate exile with nothing but a few supplies.

Military bases

The Vigil Towers

Each Vigil Tower houses two units of 10 tundra scouts who alternate shifts. It is typical for four scouts from each unit to patrol outside the city walls in pairs, while the other six remain on constant alert. As a result, the city has 32 pairs of tundra scouts out on patrol, 96 scouts on active alert, and 160 scouts off-duty at any one time. The first floor of each Vigil Tower is a well-equipped snow-mane stable, and also contains four war-sleds. In the ground beneath each Vigil Tower is a Keep of Solace (see next column).

Warrior Soul

Many members of the Mirin military forces have a strong sense of friendship and devotion to each other, often Melding to intensify these bonds. All tundra scouts are trained in the barracks-complex at L'lal, and the vast majority have seen action against the frequent Ice Giant incursions.

Educational institutions

The Cold Forge

Eight large halls of opaque ice radiate from a central hub that contains a lecture hall in which Rhin's alchemists are trained. Each of the eight halls consists of two levels: one above ground, and one subterranean. The upper level of each hall contains eight alchemical laboratories, while the lower level of each contains four blue adamant forges.

The Chosen Few

Alchemists are a decided minority in L'Haan, with Mir only housing 50, L'Lal, 150, and Rhin, 300. Only 30 new alchemy students are accepted for training in each Rhin every year. Training is free, but only the best applicants are selected after numerous tests of intellect and character: such is the responsibility of keeping blue adamant's forging process a secret.

Museums & libraries

Vault of the Wind-Borne

This vaulted subterranean hall of ice contains life-size ice



sculptures of L'haan's greatest heroes, and is entered via a sweeping staircase that lies at the base of the Soul of Borean above (see below). The finest warriors, artisans, alchemists are artists are represented here in a long hall, back-lit with glowing alchemicals. They serve as an inspiration to those that visit them, as well as a record of L'haan's history and development.

Places of worship

The Soul of Borean

This monument is a huge cluster of ice needles, ranging in size from a mere 3-foot to 50-foot in height, each delicately carved and pierced with holes. When the north wind blows through the monument the pipes whistle with a sound so haunting and beautiful it has moved many to tears. This reminds the Mirin that Borean is always near.

Markets & bazaars

The Frigid Heart

Occupying an expanse in front of the Snow Queen's Palace is the Frigid Heart: an open area of snow at the center of which is the Soul of Borean. Mirin gather at the Frigid Heart every day to trade for whatever goods and services they need. Located deep within the ice beneath the Frigid Heart is the Vault of the Wind-Borne (see pp. XX), the entrance to which is at the base of the Soul of Borean.

Common Goods

Any item made of carved ice, including furnishings, musical instruments, etc. can be purchased for a mere 25% of the cost of a similar good elsewhere. Needless to say, such goods melt outside L'haan or Narandu. Minor and beneficial alchemicals are also cheap: 30%-50% of their standard value. Hazardous alchemicals are strictly prohibited without a Royal Ministry permit. Blue diamonds only cost 50% of their normal value. Blue adamant is heavily restricted, only used for mining, shipbuilding, and the crafting of tools and weapons. Merchants who wish to trade for it must approach the Royal Ministry, and should expect to pay high costs for the few dozen ingots they "might" be offered.

Merchants, artisans & traders

The Merchant's Guild

Situated on the perimeter of the Frigid Heart (see left column), this structure resembles three residences melded together in a ring. Members of Rhin's small Merchant's Guild work here, and are responsible for all trade with outsiders, especially the restricted availability of adamant.

Parks

The Boundary Promenade

This park of crisp white snow encircles the Snow Queen's Palace (see p. 56) like an ivory band, covered by soaring archways of ice. Twinkling sculptures line the pathways, and delicate snow lilies grow on banks of snow. Tended ponds feature layers of glass-like ice under which fish swim lazily.

SnowFall Park

A huge dome of ice some 50-foot high covers this park, cut to resemble the facets of a diamond. Polished mirror-like ponds reflect the sky, and tables and benches are carved from the ground itself. Intricate frames, chutes and tunnels of ice provide hours of enjoyment for the city's young.

Recreational establishments

The Melding Halls

These large circular halls of ornately carved ice feature many friezes carved in bas-relief both inside and out. A single circular portal is covered with a thick layer of furs and leather, but is never secured, leaving the hall open at all times. Inside are countless low tables and fur rugs for seating. The Melding Hall is the heart of the surrounding community: the children spend 4 hours here each day attending classes run by local clergy and sages. Marriage and funerary services are also conducted in the local Melding Hall, as are the rare criminal trials and hearings.

Community Spirit

The Mirin do not have bars, inns, taverns or restaurants. Instead, they often gather during the evening at their local Melding Hall, along with family, friends and other community members. Everyone brings along as much food and drink as they can afford. This is then combined and made available to all in attendance. Entertainment takes the form of conversation, storytelling, performances of music or song, and games of LMbir, a game of strategy using carved miniatures of ice on a circular, multi-tiered board.



Transportation

The Ice Docks

A small 50-foot fortress of ice stands on the bank of the Sea of ice, just to the SW of Rhin. As well as serving as the docks for all of Rhin's ice vessel traffic, this fortress hosts a contingent of four scout units, and also features two large shipbuilding halls. Docking facilities are provided for 10 ice-schooners and 20 ice-skiffs.

Travel Costs

Two ice-schooners arrive and depart from Rhin's Ice Docks every day at noon; one bound for L'lal and one bound for Myr. Each one-way journey takes nearly two days (wind permitting), or at least five days for a return journey (unless you leave a city on a departing schooner as soon as you arrive). The cost is 2 g.l. each way, per person. Berth is not provided for mounts.

Skiff-Racing

Ice-skiff racing is a popular sport among the Mirin, with races held on the second High day of each month. Teams eagerly strip down their skiffs for greater speed, competing to win trophies of sculpted ice and blue diamond.

Sample NPCs

The following NPC descriptions can be used as player contacts, encounters, rivals (friendly or otherwise), or possibly even the inspiration for a PC:

Mirak - Veteran Tundra Scout Unit Leader

The upper right-hand side of Mirak's face is a mass of scar tissue, thanks to an Ice Giant's club, and his missing right eye has been replaced with a blue diamond. He has a drooping white mustache, casual gait and easy smile.

L'Tir - Ice Sailor and Skiff-Racing Champion

Roguish and flirtatious, L'Tir is deadly serious when it comes to racing. Lithe and sensuous, she wears form-fitting white leathers and has severely cropped hair. Numerous trophies adorn her dwelling.

Mirelsar - Well-known Ice Sculptor

This slightly portly, wild-haired Mirin is surly and gruff while working, but raucous when relaxing. He has done work for nearly everyone in the local community, and has the peculiar habit of always creating his sculptures in the nude, stating that he draws his inspiration from Borean's touch.

L'Kes - Troubadour (and undercover Rasmirin)

L'Kes is pleasant beyond belief, with deep eyes, a warm smile... and utter disdain for the "deluded Mirin fools". She is a master of the ice flute.

Mirol - Huntsman

Aged, quiet and serene, Mirol knows the tundra like the back of his hand. He deeply respects the animals he hunts, and enjoys playing with the community's children in SnowFall Park.

L'Mah - Priestess of Borean

Passionate and outspoken, L'Mah tries to instill a love of Borean into everyone she meets. She is often found perched precariously on top of tall buildings; arms open to embrace the North Wind.

L'Haal - Young Alchemist

Slightly arrogant, but utterly devoted to L'haan, L'Haal is especially talented at creating healing elixirs. She is completely hairless due to an alchemical accident, but is beautiful nonetheless.

Mirata - Merchant Guildsman

Mirata has served the Merchant's Guild faithfully for many years, and upholds his position with honor, dealing strictly but fairly with outsiders. His contact with foreigners has given him a somewhat larger perspective on life than many of his fellow Mirin, and he speaks several languages, including Talislan, fluently.





XI. Shattra

"Filthy, unattractive, and downright nasty - and that's just the inhabitants!"

- Romano, Sarista Gypsy.

A Visitor's Guide to Shattra

The Populace

Shattra is Arim's largest mining town and primary trading center. Over 20,000 Arimites live in Shattra, although the population fluctuates depending upon the availability of work and the number of recent fights and assassinations. Foreign traders visit the town to collect consignments of black iron and transport them along the Axis River to Aaman, the Seven Kingdoms, and beyond. The nighttime streets of Shattra are usually full of drunken miners spoiling for a fight, only too willing to draw steel (and blood).

History

The sprawling trading town of Shattra was built in 158 N.A., facilitated by Arim's lucrative supply of black iron and weapons to both factions in Phaedra's Cult Wars. Sited for its proximity to its principle customers, as well as the trade access the Axis River would provide, Shattra rapidly grew in size. It is now the largest, and roughest, of Arim's settlements.

Visions of Shattra

A View from Afar

A pall of filthy smoke hovers over the riverside town. Ramshackle stone and wood hovels, iron roofs streaked with rust, cluster inside the town's crudely-hewn stone walls. The earth in and around the town is charred and barren.

At the Gates

A broad road of dirty, rough-cut stone leads up to a rusting iron gate covered with heavy studs. The air reeks of ash. Black dust is kicked up with every footfall.

The City Interior

Filthy dirt paths wind between crude stone buildings and wooden huts. Small flecks of ash drift through the hot, foul air like black snowflakes.

Shattra at Night

Shattra's dark and filthy streets are unlit, the closely packed buildings casting deep pools of shadow, in which assailants could easily hide. Individuals abroad at night bear open weapons and flickering torches. Sporadic sounds of drunkenness and violence pierce the air.

The Typical Dwelling

An Exterior View

A large, single-room hut of rough, ash-blackened stone is topped with several layers of rusting, corrugated black iron. The door of rough-hewn timbers is bound with thick bands of riveted iron; the single window is securely shuttered with sheet iron.

The Interior

A stone-lined firepit occupies the center of the hovel, surrounded by a few greasy furs to serve as seating. A wooden chest contains iron plates and utensils, while a locked iron chest holds personal belongings securely. A crude wooden cot covered with dirty furs serves as bedding, a covered iron bed-pan located beneath it. A guttering torch is held in a simple wall-bracket. Two iron buckets are filled with water, for drinking and cleaning.

Grim and Grimy

Arimites seldom bathe, at most splashing a little water over themselves each day to remove the worst of the grime. Likewise, plates and cutlery are given but a cursory rinse, while clothing receives a brief scrub every few weeks. Surprisingly, male Arimites do shave daily, taking care to keep their moustache trimmed, and all Arimites take good care of their knives, cleaning, oiling and whetting them regularly.

Costs and Taxes

Because Arimites construct their own dwellings, they do not pay rent. However, all Arimites must pay 1 s.p. to the Exarch per week, which is collected by squads of well-paid knife-fighters. Those running mines or smelters must pay 100 g.l. per week. The Exarch does not bother with detailed accounts or ledgers. Failure to pay a first time will get the unfortunate individual beaten; a second failure will result in a public flogging; a third failure is terminal.



Places of authority

Chief Subaltern's Mansion

Standing on a small hillock overlooking Shattrra, this fortress-like mansion is home to the Chief Subaltern of Shattrra and his two Assistant Subalterns. The hillock is surrounded by many obvious defenses: a ring of sharp iron stakes, a deep moat, a high stone wall topped with iron spikes, and a secondary interior wall. In addition, all possible entrances to the mansion itself are heavily locked, trapped and warded. Furthermore, the Chief Subaltern employs 40 foreign mercenaries as his personal bodyguard. Security is paranoid, as is the Chief Subaltern, who rarely sets foot outside his mansion.

Toll Station

This stout stone office stands at the end of the Docks (see p. 62) and adjoins the Riverside Tower (see right column). River tolls (5 s.p. plus 1 s.p. per crew member) are collected here, then transported under heavy guard to the Chief Subaltern's mansion at the end of each day.

Military bases

Local Barracks

The local garrison of 100 knife-fighters is stationed here in five small, crude stone, iron-roofed barracks that are adjacent to the Riverside Tower (see below). At any one time 40 knife-fighters are on duty, patrolling the town in pairs, standing guard on the Watch Platforms (see below), and collecting tolls at the Riverside Tower.

Loyalty and Foolishness

The knife-fighters that serve to defend Shattrra, enforce the laws and carry out the Chief Subaltern's edicts are notorious for their ruthless brutality, their willingness to accept bribes, and their refusal to move against the Revenants.

Training Camp

Located on the outskirts of Shattrra, this rough wooden barracks is encircled with a palisade of wood and iron stakes. Local recruits for Arim's military are trained and housed here prior to their minimum seven year enlistment.

Riverside Tower

This stout, three-story tower of stone and iron overlooks the Axis River. Each story boasts a ballista that fires harpoons of burning pitch at each ship that refuses to stop and pay its passage toll.

Watch Platforms

These simple, skeletal structures of iron and wood serve as lookouts, where pairs of knife-fighters are stationed to watch the surrounding hills and roads for signs of danger.

Markets & bazaars

Town Square

This open area of dark earth is empty of permanent structures, but for a number of stout pillories (complete with chains). It is used as a market place every day, with Arimite hunters and farmers arriving to sell their produce. Local merchants sell shipments of iron ingots to foreign traders, and slavers make their wage in human misery. Beasts of burden are traded and sold, and pickpockets make their rounds. On some evenings the square is used as an impromptu arena, especially if rivals have decided to end their feud with a brutal duel.

Posts and Notices

Public floggings are always popular in Shattrra, but the pillories also serve another purpose: they are used as notice boards. Typical messages pinned to the pillories include notes from travelers, notes of possible employment, and the inevitable notes of hire for the Revenants. No one dares remove any of the notices, as those individuals who have done so in the past have later been found dead in the square, with the notes pinned to their flesh.

Produce in Shattrra

Black iron ingots, sackcloth, and slaves are all readily available in Shattrra. As a result, prices for these goods are often only half of what they might cost elsewhere; effective haggling and bulk purchasing can reduce their prices even further..

Commercial establishments

Hakuo's

This stone dwelling is carved all over with runes. It houses the caustic and mercenary Hakuo, a middle-aged Arimite



healer and wizard of modest talents. Despite her lack of great prowess, her skills are always in demand, such is the rarity of magic-using individuals and healers in Shattra.

The Locksmith

This small stone hovel is the store of Abdulla, a skilled locksmith (and, unbeknownst to the populace, a skilled Revenant) who specializes in creating chastity belts to ensure the faithfulness of concubines. The attractive Abdulla herself is anything but chaste, and several men have died vying for her attentions.

Mining Supplies

This complex consists of a small forge, two carpenter's huts, and two large warehouses. It produces and sells mining equipment, including shovels, picks, sledgehammers, lanterns and rope, as well as ore carts, wagons, and even breeds beasts of burden. Costs are average for all but bulk purchases.

Sackcloth Warehouse

This wooden warehouse is filled with the incessant noise of the several dozen sackcloth looms. It is poorly lit and stuffy. The wretched slaves are chained to their looms and beaten daily to encourage productivity.

The Tannery

The tannery consists of a ring of wooden huts surrounding a circular yard. It can be easily identified by the powerful stench of tannin and other chemicals emanating from the tanned skins pegged out to dry. A small stone hovel at the front of the yard has been converted into a shop front, selling tanned and cured hides, leather belts, knife sheaths and accessories, and leather armor, all of average quality.

Timber Yard

This large, open yard contains several large woodshops, all ankle-deep in sawdust and wood scraps. Several carpenters operate the yard, producing basic wooden furnishings, and repairing damaged boats and ships.

Yakir's Forge

One of three forges in Shattra, Yakir's is renowned for the quality of its blades, and its custom work to order. Patrons who might consider annoying Yakir in any way should also note that he is equally renowned for his ability to use his knives.

Inns, taverns & restaurants

Enter at Your Peril

Very few Arimite taverns make foreigners feel at all welcome. Even foreigners who pay in gold can at best expect grudging service - and that only while the gold flows freely. Given the surly dislike Arimites have for foreigners, and the reputation of standard Arimite fare (bitter chakos, oily roast avir, etc.), a visitor's chances of leaving a tavern unscathed seem remote.

Dead Fool's Regret

This Arimite tavern is typical of the dozens of taverns that litter the dirty streets of Shattra. A low, single-story hall of stone, it contains a bar, tables and chairs constructed of recycled chakos kegs. The atmosphere is usually tense, snapping with frequent brawls as drunken miners and knife-fighters abandon all caution after several mugs of chakos.

Revenants!

Revenant dens, including the headquarters of the entire cult, are secretly located throughout Shattra, with concealed entrances in several of the town's inns, taverns, and private huts. The Arimite garrison refuses to investigate the possible Revenant presence, and those few who start such inquiries are never seen alive again.

The Fortress

This large inn caters to foreigners, and is easily identified by the hanging wooden sign bearing the carved image of a crenellated tower. The thick stone walls are topped with a dome of hammered black iron, and the windows are iron-barred, shuttered slits. Rooms, stabling and food range from average to high quality, but prices are high (x2 standard).

The Kra

This split-level, ring-shaped inn of clay-plastered stone caters exclusively to Imrian slavers. It is built into a steep incline of the riverbank, and the lower level consists of 18 small triangular rooms flooded with river water. The upper level contains a bar that serves brine and such "delicacies" as live worms and slugs. Prices are x3 standard.

The Vengeful Blade

This small tavern has a reputation for bloody violence, even among the local Arimite populace. Only those



Arimites who believe they are among the best, most vicious knife-fighters will so much as set foot inside the door. Anyone who can visit the tavern several times- and stay alive- is accorded great respect and fear.

Dens of iniquity

The Wanton Woman

This sprawling brothel is built upon the converted remains of two adjacent (and rival) inns that were gutted by an "accidental" fire. Old timbers have been used to create partitions for 16 simple rooms in each building. The brothel is run by Laemira, an aged Batrean (see NPCs section). Prices are average, with well-behaved regulars receiving a small discount. No socializing is permitted: the patrons merely enter, select a prostitute, pay in advance, and retire with her to one of the small rooms.

The Weaker Sex?

With the Arimite desire for exotic concubines, it is hardly surprising that many are discarded or sold when their master's fortunes fall. While a lucky few escape to a better life, most others remain slaves or turn to prostitution. Facing rape, mutilation, and other brutalities at the hands of drunken Arimites, streetwalkers often band together, gradually saving enough to set up a brothel and hire Revenant protection. Arimites are starting to learn the hard way that hurting prostitutes can be fatal.

Transportation

The Docks

The sturdy wooden docks that run along the banks of the Axis River bustle with activity. Merchants, traders, and passengers embark and debark. Stevedores use simple block and tackle cranes to load and unload cargo. Squads of four veteran knife-fighters board arriving ships and collect tolls. Most respectable boat crews prefer to stay onboard their boat if staying at Shattra for any length of time.

Booking Passage

Travelers can often book passage with the various merchants and traders who travel the Axis River to and from Shattra, although prices (and risks) vary greatly depending on the merchant in question.

Miscellaneous

The "Cemetery"

This open area of desolate, unmarked earth is used as a convenient place to bury the dead. There are always a handful of open graves ready and waiting.

Iron Refineries and Smelters

Located adjacent to the Axis River, slightly downstream of the main town itself, are a handful of large refinery complexes, each composed of blackened stone and iron. The air is so fouled with ash and smoke here that anyone not wearing a gauze over his mouth will choke and cough severely. The air blisters with heat. Large chimneys belch forth heavy fumes, obscuring the suns and sky. Wastes are dumped directly into the waters of the Axis, creating a large polluted stretch of river where nothing lives.

Those Who Vanish

Given enough monetary incentive, Revenants will ensure that a target "disappears" completely, thrown into one of the refineries' furnaces, dead or alive...

The Pit

Little more than its name suggests, this arena is a 9-foot deep pit, its walls lined with rows of sharp iron spikes. Vicious gladiatorial fights are held here regularly, and attract many spectators and brisk wagering. Fights have been known to break out between rival fans.

Sample NPCs

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, rivals (rarely friendly), and encounters:

Laemira - Batrean Manager of "The Wanton Woman"

Laemira is an aged Batrean who spent many terrible years selling herself on the streets of Shattra. Hideously scarred by a vicious knife-fighter, she cares deeply for the prostitutes under her care, and brutal patrons will find her vengeful, cruel, and terribly creative in the punishments she employs the Revenants to deal out.

Yassa - Arimite Slave Overseer (former Knife-Fighter)

Foul of temper and foul of mien, this scrawny urthrax of a man wears twin bandoliers of knives and carries a barbed



whip. For a modest fee he will watch over a merchant's caged slaves, ensuring they don't escape or get stolen. He enjoys it when slaves try to escape...

Hamin - Arimite Revenant

Hamin is a middle-aged Revenant with many years of cold-blooded assassination to his credit. Unfortunately, he has a problem: he is starting to develop a conscience, and is finding it increasingly difficult to carry out his contracts. Should the Revenants realize this, Hamin's lifespan would be severely curtailed.

Arafa - Arimite Refinery Worker

With skin blistered, burned and cracked from years of toil in the local refineries, Arafa is not a pretty sight. Despite this, he is actually relaxed and easy-going (for an Arimite) and would be more willing than most to help someone in need.

Amed - Arimite Hunter

Amed is a regular at the local market, trading the hides of beasts he has slain for grain, vegetables, and other supplies. Living in the wilds, this rugged, rural Arimite is an excellent archer, and despises the city-dwellers.

Imurg - Brutish Imrian Slaver

Imurg is a huge brute of an Imrian, with cold, predatory eyes, and vastly-oversized, razor-sharp fangs. He likes nothing better than displaying the superiority of his race by brutally beating someone.





XII. Tor

"Thrall settlements are strong, practical and ultimately dull. Much like the Thralls themselves." - Orkim, Orgovian Trader.

A Visitor's Guide to Tor

The Populace

Home to just over 10,000 Thralls, Tor is the capital of Taz. It is largely typical of many Thrall settlements, save for the fact that it is several times larger, houses an inn and citadel, and is the seat of the Tazian monarch. It sees a surprising amount of traffic, primarily from traders within the Seven Kingdoms, but also from outside interests hoping to contract Thrall mercenaries and guards.

History

According to Thrall tattoos, which detail the events of great note in their clans' histories, Tor was founded "when the creators abandoned their Warriors in the wake of the Great Disaster, and, harried by the Land-Borne, the Warriors made their home in the inhospitable swamps, where only the brave would set foot". First, and most mighty of the Thrall settlements in Taz, Tor was also the first to offer its services as a mercenary supplier, and the first to send troops to the Borderlands. In 148 n.a., Tor became the focus of the Thrall nation, as representatives from Cymril and Durne visited the Warrior-King, Ramm, and proposed an alliance. Quick to see the strategic benefits in such an alliance, Ramm signed the Thrall nation to the confederation, and is now honored in the tattoos of all Thralls.

Trade

Thrall settlements are largely self-sufficient. Thrall Hunters stalk the surrounding jungles, and the jungle itself is a source of building materials, medicinal herbs, dyes, and the roots used to brew Fire-Ale. The Thralls waste nothing, and any excess provisioning is stored for emergencies or sold to traders. Using the funds generated by this, as well as the substantial monies generated by their mercenary work, they purchase substantial quantities of black iron, and some grain. They have no interest in luxury goods.

Visions of Tor

A View from Afar

Steaming walls of jungle crowd the road. A stout fortress of rough stone 20-foot high and covered with vines squats in a large clearing. A wide, deep trench filled with wooden stakes surrounds it, and square gates of solid black iron stand within the walls. The wooden stakes that fill the pit around Tor are soaked in pitch, and easily ignited with an incendiary arrow, forming a deadly wall of flame.

At the Gates

The gates stand 15-foot high with 8-foot thick walls. Through the gates is yet another wall the equal of the first, complete with a second set of gates. Towers cover the outer wall and Thralls patrol the wall tops.

The City Interior

A large area of dirt enclosed by the walls is covered with innumerable low, long barracks of stone, rough stables and foundries. A squat tower serves as a final redoubt. Thralls train on several large rectangles of dirt near the center of the settlement.

Tor at Night

Lit with flickering torchlight, Tor is plunged into darkness, the silence pierced with the cries of nocturnal jungle beasts. Even in the depths of the evening, the brooding fortress is a hive of activity, as vigilant Thralls patrol the walls, and others engage in night-time maneuvers.

The Typical Dwelling

An Exterior View

A long barracks of stone, 8-foot high, is roofed with sheets of corrugated iron. A broad door of thick, ironbound wood provides an entrance, and the few windows are shuttered, illumination provided by torches set in iron wall brackets.

Barracks Life

Thrall barracks are mixed gender, including mated pairs. Each barrack is home to a single regiment. Thralls



have little interest in, and derive no pleasure from sexual intercourse, but see mating as honorable in that it strengthens and replenishes the tribe's numbers.

The Barracks Interior

Four rows of plain cots line the hall on either side of a central walkway, providing bedding for 100 Thralls. A simple chest for personal belongings stands at the foot of each cot. Torch brackets line the walls.

• The Bathroom

Adjoining the main barracks is a bathroom separated with a wooden partition. Four large barrels of water, each capable of holding four adult Thralls, serve as baths.

• The Toilet

A small stone room just outside the barracks has several stone-lined holes in the floor, each of which connects to a rudimentary sewage system.

• The Mess

A large square hall at the end of the barracks contains several roasting pits, and numerous cut sections of log to serve as seating. Kegs of Fire-Ale are stacked in a corner.

Thrall Food

Thralls generally eat meat in preference to other foods. They have no culinary skills to speak of, and eat what is available without complaint. Their field rations consist of dried or salted meat, grains, fish, or whatever else the Thrall hunters and requisitioners can obtain. Needless to say, such provisions are typically bland and tasteless to other races, but thralls, who have next to no tastebuds anyway, have no problem eating most foods. Fire-Ale is one of the few flavors strong enough to actually appeal to them, but they do not drink to excess: it dulls the senses, and they never let their guard down completely.

Costs & Taxes

Thralls do not pay for their barracks, food, basic equipment or weaponry. The community is entirely self-sustaining. However, all Thralls employed outside Taz tithed 20% of their earnings to the nation itself, without complaint.

Places of authority

The Citadel

20-foot high and occupying 10% of the city's interior, the citadel is a stone tower fortress and redoubt. The Warrior King or Queen is barracked here in the top level of the

tower. Spartan quarters are also provided for visiting VIPs. Subterranean barracks and armories are provided for 3,000 Thrall warriors, should the outer walls ever be breached, and lower levels store the city's excess provisions.

Commander in Chief

The current ruler of Taz is the Warrior Queen Axa. A veteran of many conflicts, she is a powerful warrior and shrewd commander.

Crime and Punishment

Thralls instinctively and naturally act in a regimented military fashion. The crimes common to other cultures are entirely alien to Thralls. At most, a Thrall might question an order on tactical grounds. Due to this, there is no need for jails or prisons. Any Thrall who questions an order incorrectly is simply restricted to barracks for a short period, or demoted, according to the ruling of the Military Tribunal. Foreigners suspected of crime are "imprisoned" in a barrack of the Citadel, under heavy Thrall guard, until an Effectuator arrives from Sindar to ascertain their guilt or innocence. Those guilty of any crime, such as theft, murder, rape, etc, however minor, are summarily executed.

Military bases

Barracks

See "Typical Dwelling" (pp. XX)

Barracks Members

Each barracks of 100 Thralls consists of 15 units of four infantry; four units (two light, two heavy) of 5 cavalry; 10 scouts (hunters); five war-medics; and one captain. Several Thralls do the smithing for their barracks, while others are detailed to supply duties as needed. Each barracks also houses a single Rite-Master (although several infantry will be serving apprenticeships under him or her).

Rite-Masters

Rite-Masters are aged, veteran Thralls who act as the tribe's historians, storytellers, and tattoo-artists. They oversee the rites of Naming and Passage, as well as officially recognizing each Thrall's accomplishments, and ensuring the tribe's tattoos are up-to-date.

Barracks of the Unnamed

Identical to the other barracks, these buildings house the community's young. Young Thralls are trained by retired veterans.



Becoming an Adult

Thrall children are placed in barracks as soon as they are weaned. They have no tattoos or names until their 6-year period of training is over. Their Rite of Passage involves various team and individual events of a martial nature intended to demonstrate their prowess to the Rite-Masters. They are then presented with garde and a greatsword, and tell the assembled onlookers what they wish to be called. Over the following few weeks they are inscribed with tattoos reflecting their tribe, name and rank.

Training Fields

Little more than large areas of dirt, Thralls perform weapon drill, training and combat sports on these fields throughout the day, every day.

Thrall Instructors

Old veterans serve as the young thralls' trainers and drill instructors, allowing them to impart their experience and wisdom to the youngsters, giving the veterans a useful task when they retire from the field beyond serving as advisors and strategists.

Sentry Towers

Each of these slim towers stations four active Thralls at any one time. They feature many slots for crossbow fire, chutes to dump boiling oil on invaders, and a heavy ballista emplacement on top.

Stables

Simple long halls like the Thrall barracks, these house the nearby barracks' mounts, including graymanes, marsh-striiders, and mangonel lizards.

Markets & bazaars

The Square

The dirt square at the center of Tor serves as a market of sorts. It is here that trade goods are loaded and unloaded. Arimite merchants trade large quantities of black iron here, in exchange for excess provisioning, and Aeriad traders from nearby Vashay, sell grain and provender.

Inns, taverns & restaurants

En-Garde

This two-story inn is the only establishment of its kind in Tor. Of the same construction style as the Thrall barracks, it caters exclusively to non-VIP foreign visitors. It provides simple rooms, stabling and a basic bar. Costs are high (x2) for anything but roasted meat and Fire-Ale. Thralls do not frequent here.

En-Garde

A retired Zandir duelist called Zarathas runs En-Garde, paying 10% tax to the Thralls. He left Zandu following an unfortunate run in with a pair of Revenants.

Traders, artisans & merchants

Foundries

Each of these small foundries serves a particular barracks, forging their weapons, armor and tankards as need be.

Weaponry

Thralls attach no special significance to any individual weapon. If one is destroyed, they simply find another. Any good weapon will do, and if none is available, they improvise. They maintain their weapons and armor in top condition, and never decorate or name them.

Transportation

Windship Dock

Constructed of iron-bound timbers, this stout tower stands next to the Citadel, and permits up to two windships, or four smaller air vessels, to dock.

Miscellaneous

Wells

These simple stone wells provide the settlement's water needs.



Sample NPCs

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, rivals (friendly or otherwise) or encounters.

Taka - Ancient Thrall Rite-Master

This aged, stern individual has outlived many of her kin and seems to continue living out of sheer stubbornness. Although weakened by age, her mind is still keen, although her body is a mass of scars that aches terrible when the weather changes.

Kaz- Thrall Instructor of the Unnamed

Kaz has a strong reputation for being firm and fair, but often seems slightly morose. He survived to retirement unscathed, only to lose his left hand when a heavy crate fell and crushed it. Slightly embittered by this event, he has nonetheless gone on to become a respected instructor, and has affixed a wicked mace-head to the stump of his wrist.

Tir - Taciturn Thrall Light Cavalryman

A veteran of the Borderland's Legion, Tir is usually withdrawn and quiet, far more comfortable in the company of his graymane steed than with outsiders. He seldom speaks, but his war-cry is chilling when he gallops into battle.

Rama - Thrall Hunter and Marksman

As gregarious a Thrall as anyone is likely to meet, Rama's skill with a short bow is nothing short of astounding, and is celebrated in her tribes tattoos for the time she stood her ground before a charging behemoth, and felled it with a single arrow. Despite her love of company, she revels in the solitude and quiet that are required while out hunting.

Kash - Inexperienced Thrall War-Medic

Kash has only recently completed his training and faces the world with a little too much eagerness and desire for battle. Although experience may temper his outlook, his instructors consider him too brash, although they admit that his skills are needed.

Unnamed Thrall

Only a mere six years of age, this unnamed female Thrall is close to reaching full maturity, and absorbs her military lessons with all the innate talent and understanding that a Thrall is born with. Unadorned with tattoos, she is already stronger than most sentients, and her fighting skills would already put many non-Thralls to shame. She hopes to join the ranks of the heavy cavalry.

Raz - Thrall Blacksmith

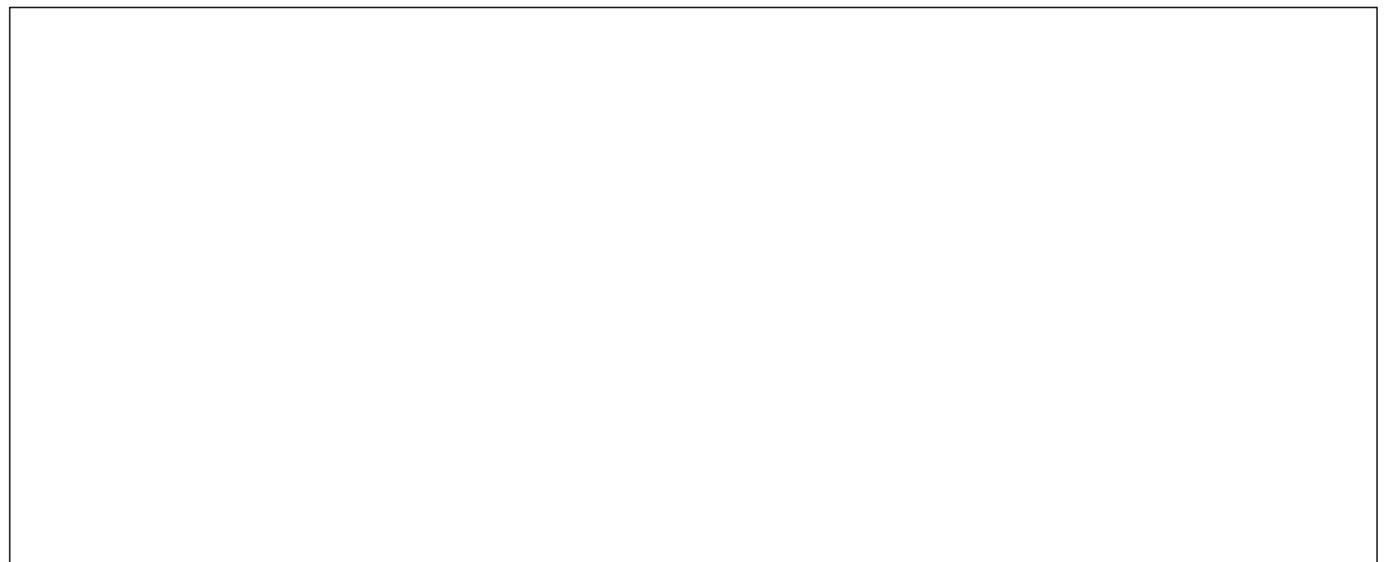
Mighty, even among the ranks of his Thrall kin, Raz works tirelessly, pounding the black iron in his forges, creating utilitarian, but well-crafted weapons of war, and suits of garde. In battle he wields a great warhammer with apparent ease, and demonstrates even more appreciation for Fire-Ale than do many Thralls.

Kata - Thrall Artillerist

Kata mans one of the great ballista that stands in Tor's tower, and does so with professional skill. Although she recognizes the necessity of her position, she feels more comfortable in the thick of melee, and more at peace wielding her greatsword than firing great bolts at distant targets.

Kor - Veteran Thrall Heavy Infantry

Clad in full garde of red iron, Kor is a veteran of the Borderlands, and leader of a unit of heavy infantry. Completely silent and calm, even in the heat of battle, Kor has the great respect of all those that serve under him, and has earned fame as a true exponent of Tazian combat.





XIII. Vashay

"The sylvan habitation of Vashay is a truly admirable and exemplary demonstration of how an enlightened civilization can coexist peacefully with the very forces of nature, without unduly disturbing the local environment and ecological balance, and thereby causing the ruination of same, but I would most assuredly refrain from recommending it to those sentients prone to uncontrolled perambulation during that unconscious state of rest and recuperation known as "sleep"."

- Taj Monas, Sindaran Collector.

A Visitor's Guide to Vashay

mit slave vessels to dock or provision at Vashay or Valanis. However, although the Aeriad patrol the Axis River in barge forts, they will not attack Imrian or Farad slave ships, unless said vessels attempt to moor on Vardune soil.

The Populace

Capitol of Vardune, and the largest Aeriad settlement, Vashay is located in Southwood, and is predominantly populated by Green Aeriad as a result. Nearly 150 great viridia trees make up the foundation of the city, occupied by close to 1,200 Green Aeriad, and perhaps 300 Blue Aeriad.

One of the continent's major agricultural centers, Vashay is the source of many food exports throughout the Seven Kingdoms and Western Lands, and also serves as a vital trade route to and from the Western Lands, via the Bridge of Vashay that spans the Axis River. Many travelers pass through Vashay, and many of the vessels that traverse the Axis River, to and from the Arimite port of Shattrra, often dock at Vashay for provisions.

History

Originally inhabiting the forestlands of what is now Aaman, the Aeriad were forcibly annexed in 77 n.a. as the Phaedrans consolidated their empire. The Aeriad were forced to flee eastwards over the Axis River, there to settle in what is now the nation of Vardune. Determined to prevent such an event occurring again, the Blue and Green Aeriad immediately began to establish permanent settlements, along with governing bodies, the Blues settling Northwood, and the Greens, Southwood.

Vashay was established, and grew slowly, the Bridge over the Axis River being constructed following the collapse of the hated Phaedran Empire in 110 n.a. In 222 n.a. representatives from both Vashay, and the Blue Aeriad settlement of Valanis, formed treaty and alliance with Cymril, Sindar, Kasmir, Astar, Durne, and Tor, thereby forming the Seven Kingdoms.

Slavers not Permitted

As with all the Seven Kingdom member nations, Vashay has a strict non-slavery policy, and will not per-

Visions of Vashay

A View from Afar

The glittering waters of the Axis River meander gently beneath a huge suspension bridge of worn timbers and artfully woven vines, hanging suspended from four mighty viridia trees, each towering above the river and bridge, bursting with foliage. Aeriad ply the waterway in barges of living viridia, and small, pod-like skiffs. Awesome barge forts, their tree-masts topped with lush foliage, patrol this watery border of the Aeriad nation. Wagons and travelers cross the bridge. The far bank dips to the waters, wooden docks lining its edge, a magnificent forest filling the horizon, a latticework of elevated walkways and dwellings just visible among the boughs, flocks of avir skimming the canopy.

On Approach

The timbers of the bridge are sturdy and broad, worn smooth by the passage of countless wheels and feet, and the air is filled with the burble of the river below, and the gentle cries of avir. The viridia trees supporting the bridge bear woven huts, like strange fruits in their branches, surrounded by many perches from which Blue Aeriad watch vigilantly. In the forest beyond, wooden ramps lead up from the earth to each great tree, several huts arrayed on each, walkways spiraling up around each trunk, and suspended walkways crossing the canopy like a vast web.

The City Streets

Narrow walkways of wood and living tendrils swing softly in the shade of the canopy overhead, the rich soil visibly far below. Wooden platforms secured to the trunks of the viridia trees support innumerable domed dwellings, as Green and Blue Aeriad walk the bridges, or glide gracefully from place to place.



Vashay at Night

Moonlight filtering in shafts through the dark canopy, Vashay is cast in shadow, the luminous blossoms of lantern plants providing points of wan radiance in a spectrum of colors, from within and without the many dwellings. Only the rustles and cries of nocturnal creatures contrast with the relaxing sound of the river.

Wild Wood

In keeping with their reverence of nature, the Aeriad have taken pains to ensure that those areas of Vashay not converted to the production of crops, maintain a natural and balanced ecology. This means that the regions of Vardune directly outside the Aeriad settlements and farms, are actually wild and natural woodland, complete with predators such as exomorphs, dangerous plants, such as stranglevine, and thornwood, as well as more beneficial and rare wild vegetation, such as prism plants, willowood, dryad bushes, and prophet trees. Needless to say, this can make ground-based travel throughout the forests of Vardune a potentially dangerous proposition, which is why most goods are transported up and down Vardune along the Axis River, in barges of living viridia.

The Typical Dwelling

An Exterior View

Soaring 100-foot into the air, the viridia tree's tough-barked trunk is affixed with wooden platforms at three stages, each supporting a simple dome-shaped huts of living vines, woven over a trellis, flowering with a rainbow of color and delicate fragrance. A sturdy wooden ramp leads from the forest floor to the lowest of the huts, while a spiral stairway, built around the tree's trunk, permits access to the upper two dwellings. The uppermost hut is connected to its closest neighboring trees by several elevated walkways. Each hut has a low archway for an entrance, and one or two circular openings that serve as windows.

Gender Differences

Given the Aeriad lack of gender-based mammalian features, many less informed Talislantans are hard pressed to determine the sex of any given Aeriad, which can lead to embarrassing situations, and serve to infuriate the highly-strung Blue Aeriad. Just like the avir to which they are related, gender differentiation between Aeriad is actually a matter of plumage. As male Aeriad are required to impress their potential mates, they have longer, more flamboyant, and sweeping headcrests, and plumage and a slightly deeper, more glistening hue.

The Interior

Decorated solely by garlands of flowers growing on the inside of its living walls, the hut would otherwise be simply and utilitarian. Four short perches thrust up from the floor, providing seating and bedding, while woven pouches suspended from the ceiling around the walls, hold the family's belongings. Gourds of vinesap and water stand in one corner, next to a basket of fresh fruit and nuts. A net hangs suspended from the ceiling, the scintilla within provided adequate light.

Sleep and Seating

Like avir, Aeriad prefer to sleep "standing up", gripping a branch or pole with their feet. They also prefer to sit in such a position, and although they can sit in the manner of most humanoids, are less comfortable doing so. They also avoid sleeping in a prone position if possible, not just for reasons of comfort, but because doing so often messes up their plumage, making it impossible to glide without grooming first.

Tax and Rent

Aeriad do not pay rent, as each family is entitled to own one or two viridia trees, and establish dwellings in them. Many of the settlement's trees have been owned by the same families for generations since Vashay was established. A handful of new trees are always grown, ready to accept new residents. However, the Aeriad do pay taxes, albeit at the incredibly low rate of 20% of their produce or wage, given their willingness to provide what aid they can for the settlement as a whole.

Waste

Aeriad bodily waste has reasonable fertilizing properties, and so is collected in gourds, which are then mixed with the settlement's organic wastes, forming large compost heaps that are used to help nourish the many crops and vineyards that form the basis of Vashay's economy.

The Evil of Fire

Given that Vashay is constructed entirely of wood and vine, fire of any kind is illegal within the city bounds. Only public feasts, where carefully guarded fires are used to boil giant water bugs, are permitted. As a result, Aeriad rely on many layers of fibrous down to keep their homes warm during cold spells, and never cook their food. Additionally, this lack of fire use, means that they do not have forges, which is why they import their metal goods, such as crescent blades.



Places of authority

The Green Council

Standing at the center of Vashay, the Green Council resembles a typical Aeriad dwelling in all respects save size, being four times larger. Of the three tiers of abodes on this viridia tree, the lowest and uppermost are guard quarters, where Blue Aeriad sentinels are stationed to prevent intrusions during council gatherings. The Green Council Chamber itself features nine perches set around a table of crafted living viridia wood. Southwood's nine Ministers meet here to govern development and issues affecting Southwood.

The Green Council

Each Green Council Minister, a respected and elected elder, governs a single of the following aspects of Southwood's society: Agriculture, Botanomancy, Law, Defense, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Religion, Trade, Wildlife.

Crime and Punishment

Although crime is quite rare in Aeriad society, it is not entirely absent, especially among the highly-strung Blue Aeriad. All accused criminals are tried by the Minister of Law, in public trial. Aeriad law tends to be firm but fair, although there are no established strictures; the Minister judges each case on an individual basis. In villages, malcontents are typically judged by the community as a whole. Punishments range from paying recompense to the aggrieved party, performing duties in the community, or in extreme cases, public caging, wing-clipping, or banishment.

Toll Trees

The two viridia trees that support the Bridge of Vashay, on Vardune's banks, are also toll and sentry stations, each sheltering five barrack huts, and numerous perches. 20 Blue Aeriad guards are stationed at each tree, to collect tolls and repel any hostile elements. The toll is 1 s.p. per sentient, and 5 s.p. per wagon.

Military bases

Ranger Barracks

Clustered like nuts around the trunks of four viridia trees stationed around the perimeter of Vashay, these barracks are actually comprised of a pair of huts on each tier of each

tree, making 24 huts in total, housing a full compliment of 96 Blue Aeriad Rangers. 32 Rangers are on patrol around Vashay's perimeter at any one time.

River Patrol Barracks

Built in the boughs of a pair of viridia trees that overlook the River Patrol Docks (see pp. XX), these inornate dwelling huts serve as barracks for the four twelve-strong crews of Blue Aeriad Boatmen stationed in Vashay.

River Patrol Docks

Located just upriver from Vashay's civilian docks, these large, ironwood wooden docks are replete with block and tackle winches used to transfer heavy loads. The dock is large enough to support Vashay's four barge forts, at least one of which is docked at any one time, while the other three patrol the Axis River along the edge of Southwood.

Sentinel Perches

Concealed at strategic points around Vashay, all of which offer clear visibility of paths into Southwood, these perches are used as watch points by the settlement's patrolling Rangers. Each is equipped with a living drum grown from the bark and wood of the tree itself, to be furiously beaten at the first sign of any trouble.

The Aeriad Arsenal

Beyond the crescent knives, tri-bows, and dart-throwers that are issued to all Aeriad Rangers, those on duty in Vashay and Valanis, are also issued with two Morphius Pods, the shells of palm-sized nuts that are filled with morphius powder, and sealed. These are thrown or slung at interlopers, and break upon impact, causing the victim to fall asleep, or at least suffer from severe grogginess. Another unusual weapon in the stationed arsenal is the Gall-Oak Blossom, which follows the same principle of construction as the Morphius Blossom, but contains gall-oak dye, which stains those it hits, marking them for easy recognition.

Educational institutions

Viridian Hall

Suspended between three viridia trees, Viridian Hall is Vashay's botanomantic institution, wherein prospective Botanomancers are taught their craft under the wise and strict guidance of established elders. Resembling nothing so much as a single huge dome dwelling with many doors and windows, the dome itself resembles the bud of a sin-



gle great flower, petals just starting to unfurl. This stunning creation hangs from three vast interwoven tendrils that grow from the base of the great flower and intertwine with the trees around it.

To Study Botanomancy

As Botanomancers serve Aeriad society, prospective students are schooled from of charge. However, the entrance requirements are strict, for the Aeriad consider the possession of this magical knowledge as both a great gift and responsibility. Only the most intelligent and dedicated candidates are chosen, and only then if they are deemed of good character after many grueling interviews. A mere 20 new Botanomancers are enlisted at Viridian Hall each year, a tiny fraction of the hopefuls that flock here every year.

Custom Vegetation

Given their unique talents, many Botanomancers can make additional monies through the production of unique plant hybrids. Bushes that produce delicious fruit year-round, sentinel plants with thorned, whip-like tendrils that attack those passing nearby, trees that grow in artistic ways, or produce several varieties of fruit, etc. are all possibly given skilled use of Botanomancy.

However, the strictures of Botanomancy require that all such custom vegetation created, is actually sterile, and may not propagate itself, thereby preventing any impact it might have on the local ecology, should it ever get free. Of course, this also means that those purchasing such vegetation cannot simply sell the seeds or cuttings for their own benefit, forcing them to return to the Botanomancers, should they require more plants.

In unusual cases, Botanomancers have been known to create custom plants capable of propagation, such as those capable of thriving in Sindar's barren soil, but these events are extremely rare, requiring an exceptional need, and a unanimous vote by the elders of Viridian Hall.

Follow thy Father's Flight

Aeriad chicks are raised and educated by both parents, and their extended family, but when they become fledglings at adolescence, they are expected to choose their future profession from one of those practiced by their parents. It is considered proper to follow the family's traditional profession or professions, and those Aeriad who do otherwise are heavily frowned upon, and regarded as irresponsible and disrespectful. Only those who enter the Viridian Halls are considered exempt from this sweeping generalization.

Museums & libraries

First Tree

Standing proud near the heart of Vashay, this solitary viridia tree stands at the center of a beautifully maintained clearing, filled with lush grass. The tree itself far exceeds all other viridia in size, having been tended by generations of Botanomancers, its limbs gradually coaxed to create a serene form. This was the first viridia tree grown in Vashay, and the entire history of the settlement is recorded in bark runes around its trunk.

Places of worship

Trees of Life

Scattered throughout Vashay, these great temples are located at the very tops of span-oak trees, obscured from below by dense foliage. Each is a large empty dome, its walls composed of entwined garlands of flowers, its roof open to the skies above. Aeriad Creativist ministers hold services in these structures, in which the assembled Aeriad raise their voices in song towards the sky.

Markets & bazaars

Canopy Fair

This monumental wooden platform is 200-foot in diameter, and stands low in the canopy, connected to six surrounding viridia trees. Winches surround the perimeter, allowing goods to be lifted or lowered, while wooden ramps and rope ladders lead to the ground below. The platform often teems with activity during the daylight hours as Aeriad merchants and farmers, both from Vashay and the surrounding villages, trade their wares with each other, and those traders who visit from the Western Lands and beyond.

Aeriad Artisans and Traders

The Aeriad do not have established shops or stores, instead taking their wares to, or doing their shopping at, the Canopy Fair. The sole exception to this is the River Supply establishment (see pp. XX), run by the Green Council, and dealing only in bulk sales and purchases. As few Aeriad visit the Canopy Fair more than once a week, it seldom overflows, but is always extremely hectic.



Because there are no Aeriad trade establishments, numerous examples of traders, merchants, and craftsmen are provided in the NPC section.

Aeriad Produce

The Aeriad produce many useful products, ranging from vine rope, fibrous down and linen, viridia pod roofing and skiffs, various timbers, both mundane and exotic, many fruits, nuts, crops, and root vegetables, useful herbs and spices, natural inks and dyes, animal fodder, flour, decorative or custom-made plants, vine-sap, and fruit liqueurs, wines, and cordials. All such goods are available in Vashay for a mere 50% of their cost elsewhere, and are traded for those products the Aeriad do not manufacture themselves, such as metal goods, scintilla, magical items, and other curiosities. In truth, Vashay is almost totally self-sufficient, so citizens live comfortable lives, by their standards.

Merchants, artisans & traders

River Supply

Nearly all of Southwood's tax goods are stored in these three gargantuan, interconnected timber and vine halls, overseen by employees of the Green Council. These goods, including great quantities of timber, foodstuffs, herbs, viridia pod craft, and much more, are traded in bulk with foreign merchants that visit Vashay. The resulting coin is used to purchase the iron dart, bolt, and ballista heads, and red iron armor, that are used to equip Vardune's Rangers and Boatmen, and the crescent blades used by practically all Aeriad, as well as pay the nation's military force and botanomancers.

Inns, taverns & restaurants

River Tavern

Also part of the Traders' Haven Complex, the River Tavern is operated by employees of the Green Council. It caters almost exclusively to visiting Aeriad from Northwood, and Southwood's surrounding villages. The inn consists of a single, large, cylindrical hut that forms a tube around the entire trunk of the viridia tree, the interior filled with a spiral walkway leading to numerous platforms of perches. Fresh seeds and vinesap are served here, and prices are average, though quality is good.

River Inn - Aeriad

Clusters of individual huts literally cover the trunks of these two, close-standing viridia trees, each containing a perch. and scintilla lighting. These huts are provided for visiting Aeriad, as part of the Traders' Haven Complex, and prices are low.

River Inn - Ground-Dwellers

Located in proximity to the civilian docks, this structure resembles a huge log cabin, four-stories tall, its timbers beautifully carved and covered with flowering vines. This inn offers comfortable rooms for foreign visitors, and is part of the Traders' Haven Complex.

Wooden cots topped with mattresses and pillows filled with fibrous down, along with fine linen sheets, and carved furniture, occupy each room. Prices are 50% higher than usual, but the accommodations are clean, dry, and comfortable. Food served in the first floor bar consists of garnished, fresh salads, vegetable and herb soups, fruit cordials and wines, all of good quality. Meat is not served, nor are any dishes cooked.

Transportation

Axis Docks

These basic docks are constructed of tough, ironwood timbers, and provide docking for up to 20 large vessels or barges.

Bridge of Vashay

This large suspension bridge is supported by four viridia trees, and is wide enough to permit two wagons to cross it simultaneously. It can be easily collapsed, should the need ever arise. The two suspension trees on Vashay's bank act as toll stations (see p. 70).

Miscellaneous

Crops and Orchards

There picturesque orchards and crop fields form the immediate surrounds of Vashay, growing provender plant, goa nuts, and spice trees. Fruits such as pepper melon, red hairy blum fruit, leme, and yim-yam, are found in abundance, as are viridia tree crops, harvested before they reach three years of age. Many of Vashay's Green Aeriad make their livelihoods tending these crops and orchards.



Bower of Final Flight

Located in the wild forests just beyond Vashay's farmland, this lone viridia tree is the final resting place of Vashay's dead. The deceased are covered in a shroud of vines, and laid to rest amid the branches of this tree, in a short, but moving ceremony of song, led by a Green Aeriad Creativist.

Sample NPCs

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, rivals (friendly or otherwise), or encounters:

Khi-Chik - Green Aeriad Farmer

Down-to-earth, forthright, and outspoken, Khi-Chik is a farmer, and proud owner of his family's yim-yam orchard. Although his plumage is just starting to show the yellow tinge of age, he is still hale and hearty, always willing to pull his weight, and take pride in his work.

Skri-Kik - Crippled Blue Aeriad Creativist

Born with a left arm that was twisted and gnarled like old wood, Skri-Kik would never know the joy of gliding, or pride of military service that typified his siblings. For many Blue Aeriad, that would have been a fate worse than death, but Skri-Kik was always calm, always willing to seek the good in any situation. To everyone's surprise, the local Green Aeriad Creativist, approached Skri-Kik, and took him as an apprentice. In the enfolding wings of the Creator, Skri-Kik has found his true calling.

Cree-Kree - Blue Aeriad Boatman

Cree-Kree is a proud pilot on one of Vashay's mighty barge forts, and takes her duties most seriously. Only recently assigned this duty, she feels herself drawn to the waters of the Axis, as much as the skies in which she can glide, and is ever alert for trouble on the waterway.

Kee-Rik - Green Aeriad Botanomancer

One of the elders of Viridian Hall, the ancient Kee-Rik is a highly skilled Botanomancer, and creates custom vegetation for sale to clients throughout the Seven Kingdoms and beyond. She willingly gives most of what she makes to the Green Council, for the benefit of Vashay, and also serves the community as one of its chief historians, recording notable events in bark runes on the First Tree.

Skri-Chak - Green Aeriad Weaponsmith

Of middling years, Skri-Chak is Vashay's foremost weaponsmith, and possibly the most famous weaponsmith in Vardune. Inventor of the tri-bow, this modest and slender Green Aeriad, is known to make dart-throwers, tri-bows, and crescent knives of surpassing quality, at prices only slightly higher than normal. Recently, his name has attracted even more attention, following the unveiling of his latest creation: The Repeating Crossbow.

Ki-Skwawk - Blue Aeriad Ranger

Ki-Skwawk is thoroughly disgusted with the current state of Green Aeriad devolution, and spends a great deal of his time taking out his irritation by acting in an aggressive, irritable, and insulting manner. A veteran who served for a time in Nankar, he shows open disdain for "dirt-dwellers", and abhors the thought that one day his once-proud race will be consigned to dwell as they do.

Chi-Chirrip - Green Aeriad Herbalist and Healer

Friendly, witty, and vivacious, Chi-Chirrip is an experienced woodsman, and spends many days wandering the wild, untamed forest that surrounds Vashay, gathering rare herbs and plant ingredients. Her skills as a herbalist and healer are unparalleled, as is her beauty, and many young male Aeriad strive for her affection.

Twit-Twee - Green Aeriad Florist

Shy and retiring, Twit-Twee is an adolescent Aeriad, but already has a firm grasp of her family's hereditary craft of flower-arranging. Her artful and attractive arrangements are highly sought at the Canopy Fair, and pay equal attention to color, texture, appearance, and scent.

Chik-Chik - Green Aeriad Weaver

The viridia linen cloth produced by Chik-Chik is fine and supple, and he dyes it with a variety of natural ingredients. His wife, Kii-Twil, is a skilled mattress and pillow maker, and uses many of Chik-Chik's fine linens to create her works. They are currently nesting an egg, and expect the chick to hatch any day now.

Kee-Kya - Green Aeriad Horticulturist

A specialist in the rearing of rare and unusual plants, Kee-Kya has a large botanical garden in the orchards surrounding Vashay. There he tends and rears such unusual plants as shrinking violet, morphius blossoms, prism plants, ever-blue starfire, purple narcissus, and whisper weed, among others. Those seeking such rarities, and their derivative substances, often pay him highly at the Canopy Fair.

Ree-Kwit - Green Aeriad Vinesap Brewer

Ree-Kwit's family has brewed vinesap for many generations, trading kegs of the liquid for the roots of harvested viridia, which are then tapped for their sap, and used to brew more of the viscous green liquid. The family's secret mix of herbs used to flavor their vinesap, is a matter of much conjecture among rival brewers, and one fact that she has no intention of revealing.

Yakkir - Arimite Iron Merchant

Slightly corpulent, with long hair slicked back with grease, Yakkir is one of Vashay's main suppliers of black iron, and iron goods, and runs a large smelter and foundry in Shattrra. His hands are bedecked with gaudy gold rings, and he always travels with a bodyguard of Thrall mercenaries. He conducts all trade in Vashay personally, not trusting any underlings to perform such work honestly.



XIV. Zanth

“Whoever said that, 'with great freedom c-comes great responsibility', had obviously never visited Zanth.”

- Chik Chik, Green Aeriad Creativist.

A Visitor's Guide to Zanth

The Populace

Although around 100,000 inhabitants cram the streets of Zanth at any one time, the actual population is incredibly difficult to ascertain. No official records are kept, and no one bothers to even consider the number of Serparians, Sarista gypsies, and other transients and unfortunates who fill the city's ghettos or live and die on the streets. As the most open and exotic city on the continent, Zanth sees a veritable armada of foreign traders and visitors arrive and depart, night and day, from around the continent (with the obvious exception of Aaman).

History

Like Aamahd, Zanth was established on the former Phaedran capitol of Badijan, although it retained much more of the original architecture, including the former Phaedran Sorcerer-King's Palace, now the palace of His Illustrious Primacy and Grand Potentate, the Sultan of Zandu.

The most notable recent event in Zanth's history was the Great Conflagration of 601 N.A. that engulfed and gutted a small district of residences near the city's docks. Allegedly started by Heterodoxist revolutionaries, the fire raged out of control for six days and nights. Before any reconstruction could begin, the city's Serparians quickly inhabited the ruined structures. Citing lack of funds and interest in reclaiming the site, Zanth's citizens simply named the area the Serparian Slum, and left the Serparians to live there.

Visions of Zanth

A View from Afar

Gentle moors of grass, scattered with banks of vibrant flowers, small pockets of elegant forest, and wind-worn outcrops of black stone, sweep around a great, walled city. The tops of elaborate and eclectic towers peer over the stone walls, sunlight glinting off their pointed domes of copper and brass. Carts, wagons, and a stream of people make their way to and from the city's great gates, dwarfed by the gatehouse towers that stand on either side of the causeway.

Romantic Crime?

Burglars and highwaymen have a romantic image in Zandu, and the greatest acquire near mythical status as folk heroes. While a few certainly promote and affect a suave, cool, and dashing image, dressing for effect and bearing such nom de plumes as The Nighthawk, Silver Saber, or CatDrac, most are simply brutal thugs who care less for appearing stylish than they do about the unfortunates they violently assault or rob.

At the Gates

The ancient Phaedran 60-foot wide causeway, is formed from an infinite number of thin black slabs, many cracked and worn with use. A gatehouse of ebony stone, built as an expansion of the city's 30-foot walls, looms over the roadway. Two 20-foot, rectangular gates of brass, elaborately etched, stand permanently open between the towers. The walls thicken slightly as they rise from their 10-foot thick base, making them slope outwards.

The City Streets

Lanes of dirt teem with a bustle of people in exotic, flamboyant, outrageous or negligible attire; waves of clashing colors, assailing the eye. Buildings of every description jostle for space, plain jet stone contrasting with painted walls, carved archways, and glinting domes of copper. Beggars dress in colorful scraps, and several children in threadbare rags watch the masses appraisingly.

Zanth at Night

The streets of Zanth still teem with activity as the veil of night descends, inebriated revelers staggering across the streets bearing torches and lanterns. Others swagger noisily with swords at their hips, while prostitutes croon from alleyways, beggars hunker in doorways, and ne'er-do-wells go about their nightly endeavors.

Appease the Beggars

The Zandir scatter handfuls of copper coins about when accosted by Serparians (beggars), both as a sign of generosity and to keep from being further harassed. Individuals who fail to adhere to this custom, whether through ignorance or miserliness, will be subjected to



public scorn and ridicule; the Zandir are fond of their beggars, and expect others to be equally open-minded.

The Typical Dwelling

An Exterior View

A broad, squarish building of worn black stone gradually broadens as it rises three-stories to a height of 25-foot where it flattens off. Atop the flat roof, two circular towers of black stone rise another 20-foot; each topped with a pointed copper dome. Stained glass windows dot the main building and tower at irregular intervals, some square, some arched, some round, others triangular. An oval archway, fitted with a stout door bound with copper and black iron, opens onto the main street. Long, narrow alleyways separate the building from its neighbors, littered with garbage and debris.

The Interior

The main entrance opens into a narrow hallway, leading to a small stairwell, and lined on either side with several apartment doors. Interlocking tiles line the floor, and the walls are painted with elaborate scenes illuminated by a few torches and a skylight far above.

The Apartment

A locked wooden door leads into an 18-foot, square apartment, separated diagonally into two triangular rooms. Only a single, large, oval window opens into the apartment, securely locked from the inside.

- **The Main Room**

Lit by the apartment's only window, this room contains an untidy bed, an ornate trunk strewn with clothing, a small closet, and a tiny, black iron stove in the corner. A sphere of amberglow hangs suspended from the ceiling by a chain, and an arched doorway leads through to the bathroom.

- **The Bathroom**

Constantly lit with the radiance of an amberglow sphere hanging from the ceiling, this room contains a simple washbasin, bathtub and toilet of black stone, along with a wooden cabinet and small mirror.

Waste Disposal

The ancient sewage network that serviced ancient Badijan runs under both Zanth and Aamahd, serving both cities. Infested with urthbrax, aramatus, and other vermin, it is believed that some individuals use the

sewers to go back and forth between the cities unseen. The Serparians know some of the only routes, and even inhabit certain safer and cleaner portions of the sewer. However, they will not enter many areas, whispering that "things from beyond" lurk in the darkness, and that terrible rituals are held there, dedicated to gods of fell aspect.

Rent Costs

The typical apartment listed above is normal for a single individual or couple, and costs, on average, 4 g.l. per month. Wealthier individuals have more elaborate, larger, and numerous rooms, and live in the upper stories of such apartment blocks, with the wealthiest living at the tops of the domed towers. Cheaper apartments are available, but decline rapidly in quality as they move down the scale, and most common laborers, etc. can expect to live in damp, cold, squalid, and cramped apartments.

Tax

All Zanth's citizens (except the Serparians) are charged a tax based on "40% of their worth", as assessed by an official appraiser. The tax is collected every septemester by groups of 10 swordsmen and an appraiser (who inevitably embezzles). Most of the tax collected is used to fund the nation's constant military standby; scant little goes towards civil repair or services (other than the upkeep of the city's walls).

Places of authority

The Oubliette

Archaic and ominous, this vast cuboid structure of windowless black rock stands a mere three-stories high, but extends seven-stories below ground. Riddled with foul, lightless cells, and torture chambers that Aamanian Inquisitors would envy, it is claimed that the lowest levels were sealed off centuries ago, and that unspeakable acts were performed therein. Few criminals incarcerated here ever live to see the light of day again.

Punishment

Zanth's gaolers and torture-artists are famed for their creative cruelty, and few individuals survive their ministrations for long. Those poor souls that do are often broken body and mind, their gibbering screams echoing along the Oubliette's dark corridors. Magicians who commit crimes are swiftly executed in public; a fate deemed preferable to incarceration.



Palace of His Illustrious Primacy and Grand Potentate

Commonly called "The Sultan's Palace", this fabulous structure sits in huge circular grounds, and consist of a vast rectangular building, topped with three magnificent towers, and with three great, stepped verandas, supported by twisted archways in the style of ancient Badijan. The entire structure is thinly layered with silver and gold, the grounds replete with canopied terraces, fountains, walkways, and topiary gardens. The interior boasts lavish aviaries, solariums, spiral stairways, superior works of art, and luxuriant furnishings.

His Illustrious Primacy and Grand Potentate, the Sultan of Zandu

The Sultan - it is forbidden to call him by his given name - is a man of mercurial moods and capricious passions. He is a slender, handsome man in his early forties, with a decided predilection for opiates, women, and revelry. His health is on the decline, and an entourage of viziers, astromantic advisors, servitors, and a personal corps of elite Certaments always surround him.

Palace of the Blessed Hourai

Located directly next to the Sultan's Palace, this smaller, but similar structure, thinly plated in silver and brass, is set within the same grounds, featuring a single veranda, and four smaller, slender towers. The Sultan's harem of 4,000 wives, plus half as many eunuchs, handmaidens, and servants dwell here. Around 600 of the Sultan's offspring are tended in a nursery therein.

Ward Towers

These three-story structures of basic black stone are all capped with copper domes, and house a contingent of 20 swordsmen who ostensibly patrol the surrounding area, keeping the peace and enforcing Zandu's (few) laws.

Law Enforcement and Justice

Zanth's law enforcement is lackluster, corrupt, and inept. The wardens are easy to bribe, and usually have "arrangements" with the local criminal element. Distinguished by their black attire (uniquely cut, embroidered, tailored, etc. for individuality), they make infrequent patrols in units of four. Their investigative abilities are negligible, but they are skilled fenceers. They only make any real attempts to enforce the law in the wealthier areas. As a result, mob justice and vigilante activity are quite common in Zanth, and the private hire of Certaments, and even Revenants, to punish transgressors, are frequent occurrences.

Military bases

The Chrome Citadel

This mighty fortress has walls 30-foot in height and 10-foot in width, thinly plated with silver chromium. The enclosed grounds include a three-story semicircular tower of shining silver, housing the commanders of Zandu's complete military, and a dozen black stone barracks and stables for Zanth's own military contingent of 1,000 swordsmen and graymane cavalry.

Flamboyant Soldierly

All members of Zandu's military must have acquired certification in swordsmanship from the Palaestra. While such documents are easy to forge, their unique, flamboyant fighting style is not.

Zandu's soldiers are allowed to design their own individual uniform, but must display their unit's crest prominently, usually on a cloak, tunic, or armband. They are permitted to question orders, and make suggestions to their superior officers. Rank distinctions and awards in Zandu's military are amazingly complex, with ranks indicated by the number of stars, crescents, and crossed blades (in copper, then silver, then gold) on the individual's left breast.

The Gatehouse

Flanking the city's great brass gates are twin towers of black stone, three-stories high; an extension of the city's ebony wall containing a secondary portcullis of black iron, overlooked by thick hollow walls containing murder holes. 20 swordsmen guard the entrance and collect tolls, while another 20 swordsmen and archers are stationed in each tower at all times. A toll of 1 s.p. per individual, beast, and cart, is charged on entry and exit (only Zandir are exempt from this toll).

The Great Barrier Wall

60-foot high and 30-foot thick, this awe-inspiring black structure looms above the city and stretches beyond, vanishing into the distance, running from the border of Arim to the Sea of Sorrow.

Towers of Eternal Vigilance

Located every 1,000-foot along the Great Barrier Wall (closer in the city of Zanth itself), these brutal towers of jet stand 70-foot high, each manned by a unit of five swordsmen and five archers who have a barracks in the tower.



They keep constant watch on the border with Aaman in shifts. A magical horn in each tower is to be sounded in the event of an enemy attack, and anyone attempting to scale the wall from either side will be used as target practice. Each tower is unique in shape: round, square, oval, triangular, trapezoid, hexagonal, and so on.

Educational institutions

Causidian Guildhall

This triangular hall is painted with abstract designs in every shade and hue of blue, and features a great door of copper inscribed repeatedly with Zandu's laws (such as they are). The interior is comfortable, if decidedly functional, with numerous small studies, and a single central hall with wooden pews and a speaker's rostrum.

Causidians

Causidians form a loosely organized guild and social club of litigators, diplomats, and scribes. They are recognized by their blue attire (although style, shade, fabric, and hue vary greatly, from plain sky-blue, to marbled indigo, or patchwork blues, etc.). Their services may be obtained for a price of 10 g.l. per day - more if the Causidian has garnered even the slightest reputation. Prospective Causidians must find an existing Causidian willing to take them as an apprentice for a year. The Causidian is free to negotiate their fee with their prospective student as they see fit, so the cost involved in obtaining the tuition varies greatly, and might also include menial work or sexual favors, instead of, or in addition to, any monetary charge.

Palaestra of the Blade

The most famed and prestigious school of swordsmanship in Zandu, the Palaestra is carved from black stone, with the figures of warriors carved in bas-relief on every surface, and features numerous small practice halls, and a single grand hall capped with a brass dome.

Extensive grounds, surrounding the main building, are used both for the practice of mounted swordsmanship, and combat on open ground. A single, large tower stands in the grounds, used for urban fighting practice. Tuition is available for all levels of skill, and costs 200 g.l. per semester (half for citizens of Zandu).

Zandir who wish to join their military do not have to pay, but must enlist for a one-year term of duty immediately following graduation. Rambunctious fencing students have an intense rivalry with the local Wardens.

Certaments and Dueling

Duels are perfectly legal in Zandu, but must follow certain established protocols. Firstly, a formal challenge must be made (though the exact nature of this varies), along with the nature of the duel (to the death, to first blood, to surrender). The challenged party then names the time and place for the duel (it can be anywhere both parties can access, at any time within two days of the challenge). Each party is permitted two weapons (such as a dagger and saber, or greatsword and garde), with magic counting as a single weapon. Magical weapons, etc. are permitted: if your opponent has them and you do not, that is merely your misfortune. Crowds always gather, and wagering can be swift. In fact, many Certaments make their living by challenging people and wagering on the outcome themselves. The challenged party may always refuse to duel, but must make a public apology to the challenger if they do so, and face mockery by any Zandir nearby.

Paradoxist Seminary

Crafted in the shape of a broad black tower, topped with a single stained-glass window shaped like an eight-pointed star, this establishment is Zandu's erstwhile center for the study of Paradox - in actuality a school for magicians, charlatans, and self-styled seers. A large, adjacent dome (heavily warded) is used for the practice of magic. Cult doctrine is taught, along with wizardry (primarily conjuring and illusion), and certain performing and thieving talents. However, the curriculum and faculty are so hopelessly disorganized that graduates may not have acquired any appreciable skills at all. Tuition is 100 g.l. per septemester (seven weeks); halved for Zandir citizens.

Charlatans

Despite their varied skills, magical talents, and admitted bafflement with the nature of reality, charlatans are taken seriously in Zanth, and are often asked to give blessings to new births, provide advice (always in the form of a conundrum), and perform wedding ceremonies and funerary rites. While they don't charge for these services, those asking for their services must make a "donation" to the charlatan in accordance with just how flamboyant her performance was. Unfortunately, some Charlatans are all too eager to exploit their official status, giving false advice (or advice that benefits them), and inspiring fear by threatening to curse those that displease them. A very rare few have even formed highly dubious cults for brief periods. Charlatans are recognized by their combination of brocade cloak and curl-toed boots, although the style, etc, of these, and all their other apparel, varies greatly.



Museums & libraries

Immemorium

Formed by seven completely different towers, each painted a color of the rainbow, and interconnected with arched walkways, the Immemorium is Zanth's museum. Contained within are great works of art, displays of cultural items from across the continent, and Paradoxist artifacts from the Cult Wars, as well as tomes by such Phaedran luminaries as Kabros, Thystram, and Sassan. Admission costs 5 s.p. each, and security is paranoid, including skilled guards, alarms, and traps, both magical and mundane.

Places of worship

Enigma Tabernacle

Zanth's only "temple", the Tabernacle is a large monument of veined quartz from the Crystal Mountains. Standing atop a circular plinth of 25 stone steps, the Tabernacle is 150-foot in diameter, and 100-foot high, with 500 slender pillars filling its entire area, topped with a gold-plated dome. No services are held here and no clergy are in attendance. Zandir come here as the mood takes them, to read the pillars, each of which is carved with countless unanswered questions. The monument is a favorite trysting place among lovers.

Markets & bazaars

Bizarre Bazaar

This open area of interlocking black paving is frequented by traders from many lands: Gnomekin crystal merchants, Aeriad horticulturists, Kasmiran trapmages, Cymrilian enchanters, Farad slave mongers, Sarista fortune-tellers and street performers, Jaka trappers, Zandir spice traders, Arimite ore-dealers, and many others. The stalls, ablaze with torchlight, are busy into the night, as are the numerous pickpockets and con men.

Produce of Zanth

Spices, exotic fragrances, narcotic herbs, fine wines, opals, and utensils of copper and brass can all be purchased in Zanth for prices up to 25% less than normal. Fine dueling swords can be bought in Zanth as well, although discounts are only given on bulk purchases. Hagglng is lively and flamboyant in Zanth.

Freedom in Chains

Despite Zandu's espousal of personal liberty and freedom, slavery and slave trading are legal, and regrettably common, in Zanth. While few but the wealthiest individuals own personal slaves, many unfortunate slaves (due to poor luck, circumstance, or criminality) are forced to labor in the nation's opal mines. Slavery in a nation whose creed is freedom? Yet another paradox say the Zandir.

Traders, artisans & merchants

Areola Imbrogio

This circular shop is painted in a patchwork of clashing colors, and surrounded by a dozen identical doors, only one of which is real. Dusty and dim, it is cluttered with magical paraphernalia, alchemical ingredients, and scattered copies of Paradoxist literature (including several editions of the cult manifesto, the Book of Mysteries). Prices for any of the eclectic shop's contents vary greatly.

Devils' Bane Brass

Completely covered in interlocking disks of copper and brass, this shop produces and sells common utensils of copper and brass, including plates, cutlery, tankards, belt buckles, lengths of chain, and even basic jewelry, such as bangles and torcs. Quality and price are typically low to average, but ordered pieces are of good quality, often with basic decoration, and are of 1.5 x standard price.

Essence of Life, Spice Emporium

This large, unadorned black building contains dozens of small, open casks filled to the brim with spices it buys in bulk. Entry costs 1 s.p., and customers are given several small paper bags (each capable of holding no more than 0.5lb of spice), and a scoop to select what spices they want. The bags are checked on exit, and the customer charged. Prices are low (x 0.6 average), but customers are watched constantly to ensure there is no theft.

Finesse

This small copper dome, ringed by 10 slender minarets, is Zanth's finest costumer. Specializing in masks, elaborate costumes, and other stylish apparel in the finest of materials, it also sells fine fragrances, and employs some of the most skilled body painters. Most apparel and fragrances are available at x2 standard prices, and made-to-order outfits can cost several times this. Body painting varies in cost according to detail and size (20-200 g.l.).



Grand Estates

Consisting of a single opulent office in a wealthier home, this establishment is owned by Samarr, a wealthy Zandir merchant who sells parcels of land, refurbished manses, and abandoned tower keeps. Most of these properties are situated along the northern border or ocean coast - not exactly preferred locations, though the low prices (5000 to 50,000 g.l.) are not unappealing.

Opulence

Its etched black walls polished to a smooth sheen, this shop sells jewelry of remarkable detail and unique design from any metal or gemstone. Prices are high (x2), and opals a specialty.

Robalo's

Scenic vineyards surround the hexagonal gardens of this elaborate mansion and distillery; one of the country's most respected wineries. Robalo's offers excellent vintage wines at reasonable cost. Weekly tours of the vineyards cost 1 s.p., and are a popular attraction, the free samples contributing to the general lack of sobriety in this area.

Second Skin

Painted in bright emerald and scarlet, this hole-in-the-wall shop can only be entered via a dingy side alley. It sells furs, hides, and leathers of the best quality from nearly every kind of animal on the continent, and also makes surpassing custom clothing and fetish gear from such materials (at costs x3 standard). Their lapis lazuli suede boots, and serpis leather coats are very popular.

Zelado's

Zelado blades are considered the finest on the continent, and Zelado iron is always of excellent grade. This small, converted apartment block contains a dozen forges, and has been run by the Zelado family for many generations (the family inhabit the gilt-capped towers above the forges). Prices are x2 standard (x3 or higher for custom work), but the quality is beyond compare.

Zenith

This tiny shop is located in the top two floors of a single, slender tower that stands 40-foot high, the lower half of which contains nothing but an elaborate spiral staircase permitting access to the shop above. Lit by several dozen colored irregular windows, and topped with a twisting copper dome, this shop sells softer drugs and beautifully crafted water pipes, hookahs, and pipes at modest prices (x 0.8 standard).

Parks

The Marvelous Menagerie

Set atop a vast verge of grass, enclosed by a high iron fence, the Menagerie is a combination zoological garden and park. Paths of stone form a circuit that passes over a dozen enclosures, aviaries, aquariums and cages of intricate design, wrought in black iron and toughened glass. Exotic beasts from around the continent are kept here, cared for by Jaka beastmasters. Admission at the gates costs 1 s.p. per person.

Caged Attractions

By far the most popular enclosure houses an array of pitiful, grotesque abominations, some of which are intelligent. Cruel Zandir enjoy jeering and mocking the poor freaks. Another popular attraction is the exomorph enclosure, and some Zandir have been known to spend hours trying to catch a glimpse of the elusive beast.

Inns, taverns & restaurants

The Caged Skank

This popular bar is unremarkable, save for the small spherical cage that hangs just inside the entrance. The cage is inhabited much of the time by a skank called Grinch, who enjoys making lewd remarks, and telling tales of dubious veracity. His high pitched singing often accompanies the inn's musical entertainment. Prices and quality are average, but the atmosphere is relaxed and congenial.

Exquisitorium

This high-class, members-only restaurant, has numerous elegant towers capped in gold, interconnected with delicate, carved arches. The atmosphere and decor are rich, tasteful, and restrained, with Bodorian musicians providing musical accompaniment to the meals. Security is strict, as is the dress code (only the most expensive and fashionable garments are permitted), but many of the city's most influential citizens dine here. Costs are astronomic (x10 standard). How anyone becomes a member is a well-kept secret.

Flashing Blades

With its name, and the crossed sabers that hang above the doorway, it is easy to guess that the clientele of this inn comprise of swordsmen and Certaments. Furniture of



colorful hardwoods fills the bar, marred by the strikes of many duels. The place has a swaggering atmosphere, full of dedicated carousing, tall tales, and hot-tempered duels. Prices are 10% above average (to help offset property damage costs), quality is fair, and house wines abundant.

The Greater Sun

This middle-class tavern features a spherical sign of wrought iron and etched crystal, lit from within by a constantly burning fire. Quality is good, but prices are 1.5 x standard. Many of the city's artisans, merchants, magicians, and Causidians frequent here, dictating that much of the inn's gossip centers around current prices, the quality of imported materials, etc.

The Lesser Sun

Located directly across the street from The Greater Sun (see above), this basic, working-class tavern features a small spherical sign of wrought iron, lit from within by dozens of amberglow spheres. The prices and atmosphere are cheap, rude, and cheerful (x0.75 normal), and the customers are mainly lower class-laborers.

Conflict by Sunlight

Although the inns of the Greater Sun, and the Lesser Sun are owned by the same individual (a wealthy merchant called Maryb), the rivalry between the two establishments (and their customers) is often intense, sometimes erupting into petty violence and one-upmanship.

The Lucky Shaitan

With a sign depicting a Shaitan in ménage à trois with two naked women, it should come as no surprise to learn that this seedy bar includes a striptease platform and lap-dancers. However, the dancers are strict professionals, and will not involve themselves with patrons. Admittance costs 1 g.l. per person, though prices for food and drink are average.

Manse of the Sublime Mysteries

This splendid inn and tavern has been converted from an old Phaedran mansion of black stone, three-stories high, with numerous rooms and bars, decorated with colorful and diaphanous curtains, drapes, and velvet furnishings. All who enter must wear a mask of one sort or the other, adding a certain mystique to the atmosphere. Bodorian musicians, thespians, and acrobats, provide jocular entertainment. Quality is above average, as are the prices (x2 standard).

Quicksilver

This moderate, single-story building of black stone, topped with a copper minaret, features an open kitchen behind a bar, and dozens of stools, and is open 24 hours a day. It specializes in creating quick meals, served in paper baskets. A single serving of Zash - herby provender fries, with a spicy sauce filled with chunks of meat, mushrooms, or other vegetables - costs a mere 2 s.p. and is served hot within two minutes of ordering.

Werewood Tavern

With a wooden sign carved with a disturbing face, a truly diverse clientele frequents this inn and tavern: Arimite knife-fighters, Jaka manhunters, Zandir charlatans and thieves, with a few swordsmen thrown in. Fare is reasonable in price and quality. The large common room holds contests of strength, skill, and magical prowess. Private booths are available (1 g.l.) and frequently used by certain disreputable types for greater secrecy.

Dens of iniquity

Anaais

This luxurious pleasure palace is run by a Batrean paramour called Aleana (see Tal10, pp. 264). 55-foot in height, this trapezium-shaped establishment of delicately carved jet stone, contains six stories, and a variety of facilities, including an indoor pool, saunas, private jacuzzis, nymphariums, and a rooftop topiary garden enclosed with glass. All manner of tasteful, erotic entertainment is featured, along with the best wines and food, although prices are exorbitant (x10 normal).

Bliss

This oval building is topped with a ring of six brass-capped towers, and painted over every surface with whorls of color. Each of its many rooms is filled with silk cushions, and any drug is available here at costs only 20% higher than normal. The air is an intoxicating haze. Candies and spiced wines are offered to inebriated customers, who always seem willing to pay the high cost (x 2) for the proffered comestibles.

Chaotic Exotica

Located in a disused and sealed off section of Zanth's sewers, this establishment is only accessible via a small, nondescript tower above. Frequented only by the most jaded citizens, Exotica offers prostitutes and live-sex shows featuring (but not limited to) nearly every race, species or



animal on the continent. Every fetish is catered for, however outrageous or twisted... for a price (x2, rapidly rising higher as any requests become more outrageous). Admission alone costs 10 g.l.

Crimes of Copulation

Although even public sex is legal (and not entirely uncommon) in Zanth, the Zandir consider pedophilia and necrophilia to be among the worst of crimes. Unfortunately, child prostitution is entirely too common, as some starving young Serparians are forced to sell themselves merely to survive.

Lavations

This large, hexagonal building, topped with a wide dome of stained glass, contains an array of public and private baths, and massage parlors, offering rubs with scented oils and tonics, as well as other, more stimulating services. Admission costs 1 g.l. A public bath costs 1 g.l.; a private bath 5 g.l.; a massage, 3 g.l. Other services are arranged privately with the desired "masseuse".

Pandaemonicus

More commonly called "The Pit", this vile drug den is frequented by Zanth's most desperate and wretched drug addicts, such as heavy users of k'tallah. Located in the Serparian slum, it resembles a run-down, derelict tower, its dome long stripped of copper. Costs are average, and the managers will accept barter (including stolen goods). Rumor has it that the establishment is secretly run by a high-ranking Monitor in neighboring Aaman.

Phallus

This four-story tower is plated completely with brass, and topped with a shaped copper dome, which lends the establishment a form very suggestive of its nature as a brothel featuring male-only prostitutes. Popular with a good number of female patrons from Zanth and elsewhere, Phallus also has a substantial number of male clients. Only the most well-endowed (and skilled) male prostitutes are employed here. Costs are 1.5 x standard.

Risque

The city's premier casino, this elaborate black stone building is covered with copper filigree, and topped by a dozen copper minarets. Several huge halls contain many tables and comfortable chairs, and all games of chance are offered here. The decor is kitsch, and the attractive male and female service staff wear nothing but a flamboyant cape of translucent gossamer. Cheating is par for the course. Admission costs 5 g.l.

Transportation

Docks

Zanth's docks are a filthy clutter of stout wooden piers, frameworks of block and tackle, and disused packing crates, providing docking for up to a dozen vessels. Zandir free-traders arrive and depart from this point, carrying shipments of spices, copper and brass articles, and fine Zandir blades which they trade along the Southern Rim, in exchange for goods from the Thaecian Isles, Faradun, Cabal Magicus, Oceanus, and Jhangara. The dock is reached via a sinuous man-made waterway that leads inland from the Sea of Sorrow, and enters the city through a great iron-gated archway in the southwestern wall.

Zandu Canal

This 60-foot wide man-made waterway connects Zanth's dock to the Sea of Sorrow, allowing vessels to sail inland to dock at the capital.

Miscellaneous

Arena of Victory

This black circular arena is 100-foot in diameter, with stepped rows of seating surrounding a shallow pit, 20-foot in diameter. Weekly battles are hosted here; a process of elimination deciding who will represent Zanth at the annual Clash of Champions. The competition is open to warriors of any race, creed or nationality (except Aamanian), and each weekly victory is worth 1000 g.l. The overall champion is accorded status commensurate with a prince of the realm by the Sultan himself. Seats are available to spectators at costs of 1, 10, and 100 g.l. (depending on proximity to the center).

Clash of Champions Platform

The annual Clash of Champions takes place on this large stone platform that stands directly over the central tollgate of The Great Barrier Wall. The stone platform is 20-foot in diameter, perfectly level, and has no safety barrier. Incautious combatants can be forced off the edge to plummet to injury or death. It is considered a particular coup to cause a vanquished foe to fall amongst their own supporters.

Toll Gates

Supported on either side by solid black pillars of monolithic proportion, three unadorned and monumental gates of



copper, 30-foot in height, directly link Zanth and Aamahd through the Great Barrier Wall's only opening. Each gate is operated and overlooked by a gatehouse located within the great flanking pillars. Standing directly above the central of the three gates is a small stone platform: the site of the annual Clash of Champions.

Great Gates Toll

The country whose representative wins the annual Clash of Champions is awarded proprietorship of the wall for one year, including the right to collect toll revenues through the Toll Gates. By mutual agreement, the toll may not exceed 1 g.l. per person, animal, or conveyance.

Sarista Ghetto

Formerly a public park, this area is enclosed by a crumbling circular wall, the grassy interior segmented by arched black walls radiating from a central hub paved with black stone. Now taken over by Sarista gypsies, their colorful wagons, tents and campfires are scattered throughout the area. Many Zandir come here to have their fortunes told, buy gypsy charms, or watch them perform. The Sarista have affiliated themselves with the Serparians, and pay the usual due to the Sultan of Beggars.

Serparian Slum

Consisting of the fire-gutted, skeletal remains of 17 buildings overlooking an open area of barren ground, the Serparian Slum is strewn with refuse; crude lean-tos abutted to the buildings' walls. Zanth's Serparians (beggars) live here in abysmal squalor. According to popular belief, the Sultan of Beggars dwells at the secret heart of the slum, overseeing the allocation of prime begging territory, and the running of a citywide network of thugs, thieves, and information gatherers.

Serparians

Begging is considered an honest, if not estimable, profession in Zandu. The Serparians forms a loosely organized network of beggars, thieves, pickpockets, and cutthroats responsible for most of the petty crime in the city. They only have one real rule: "look out for each other", and always band together to deal with any threats in a swift, and often brutal, manner. Anyone seeking information or aid from the Serparians must deal with the Sultan of Beggars, the shadowy individual who makes all decisions concerning admission, expulsion, and punishment within Serparian ranks, and to whom all Serparians pay a 10% due.

Beggar Breeds

Serparians are separated into several distinct sub-groups:

- *Supplicants (the physically fit)*
- *Perjors (who fake physical disabilities)*
- *Misfortunates (the truly disabled and maimed)*
- *Forsaken (the young urchins)*

Silent Necropolis

50-foot high, with five levels and an underground crematorium, this huge black structure is shaped like a stretched oval, painstakingly etched, carved, and inlaid with copper depicting the luminaries of the Ten Thousand. Two vaulted open arches lead inside. Each level is filled with row upon row of black stone shelves bearing brass funerary urns; white marble slabs set into the walls inscribed with the names of Zanth's dead. The bottom floor is dedicated to the untold thousands of Paradoxists who died during the Cult Wars.

Stadia of Champions

These immense walled 40-foot structures contain 13 steps each, built to afford seating to spectators viewing the Clash of Champions. The top step is canopied, and reserved for individuals of importance and wealth from Zandu and beyond, each paying 100 g.l. for the privilege (spyglass included). Vendors hawking Zash, alcohol, and spyglasses (25 g.l. each) circulate freely during the annual event, as do pickpockets. The stadia go unused throughout the rest of the year.

Sample NPCs

The following NPCs can be used as player contacts, rivals (friendly or otherwise), or encounters:

Captain Zirago Vey - Zandir Sea Captain

When in port, Captain Vey is one of the more colorful figures in the dockyard. His brass arm, an enchanted relic of ancient origin, is adept at flinging knives and slapping barmaid's bottoms - Zirago says it has a mind of its own. His ship, the Fountain of Dust, regularly risks the voyage to the Dark Coast, returning with a variety of rare goods.

Cilia Aquatine - Batrean Paramour and Sultan's Wife

The Sultan's newest wife and current infatuation, Cilia affects an aquatic look, dressing entirely in seashells and braided seaweed, and having her green-dyed hair magically coifed so that it seems to be moving in a current. The Sultan has no idea that Cilia was once an Arimite's paramour, or that Revenant agents are seeking for her.



The Saffron-Masked Wizard - Zandir Charlatan and Burglar

The identity of the master of ceremonies at the Manse of Sublime Mysteries (see pp. XX) remains unknown, though speculation matches him with the Sultan of Zandu, several well-known mages, or even the Hierophant of Aaman on holiday! He is actually Nighthand, a Zandir charlatan who leads a number of 'other lives' - including one as a daring burglar.

Argot Trasmaniu - Zandir Oubliette Guard

Damaged by alchemical exhalations as a youth, the asocial Argot has a sinister rasping voice. He enjoys his work, and often talks to familiar stones and vermin that squirm underfoot. What few understand is that Argot actually can communicate with certain rocks and insects.

Joyila Orto - Zandir Causidian

This begemmed and necklaced older Causidian, pudgy with the rewards of a successful legal practice, now dedicates his time to serving the poor at minimal charges - in fact, he almost forces himself upon his clients. His obsession with fairness outweighs his loyalty to those he defends, as he has been known to "accidentally" betray convicting confidences.

Ustreyia - Famed Zandir Escort

Although notably overweight, Ustreyia is still attractive, and has gained fame as one of Zanth's most skilled escorts and prostitutes. It is said that she can pleasure a person like no other, and given her huge popularity among Zanth's wealthier citizens (both male and female), the rumor might well be true; it is certainly acknowledged that her charms are abundant. Despite her public profile, Ustreyia is a sensitive and warm-hearted individual.

Sarissimi - Sarista Rogue

This flirtatious and irascible gypsy spends every winter in the Zanth ghetto, working with the animals she performs with during her summer tour. The highlight of the act is a trained urhound, which bounds from the back of one ogriphant to another through a ring of fire. Her mascot is a sarcastic ravir named Octar.

Wyleth - Zandir Charlatan and Dean of Enticement

A young man of pallid complexion and weak constitution, Wyleth is the Paradoxist Seminary's Dean of Enticement. It is said that he can, for a price, manipulate the heart of the most aloof or remote person. Oddly enough, he is believed to live alone in a hilltop manse, and has no known romantic entanglements.

Kar Vlasi - Zandir Swordsman Unit Leader

Crude and lewd, Kar is entrusted with breaking in troops new to the Chrome Citadel. She constantly challenges her soldiers to new achievements in order to earn glory: stealing the pennant of another unit, clandestinely raiding into Aamahd, or patrolling the worst sections of Zanth after midnight. Her troops gave her the nickname "Old Mangonel" in reference to her looks.

Natromo - Zandir Serparian (Forsaken)

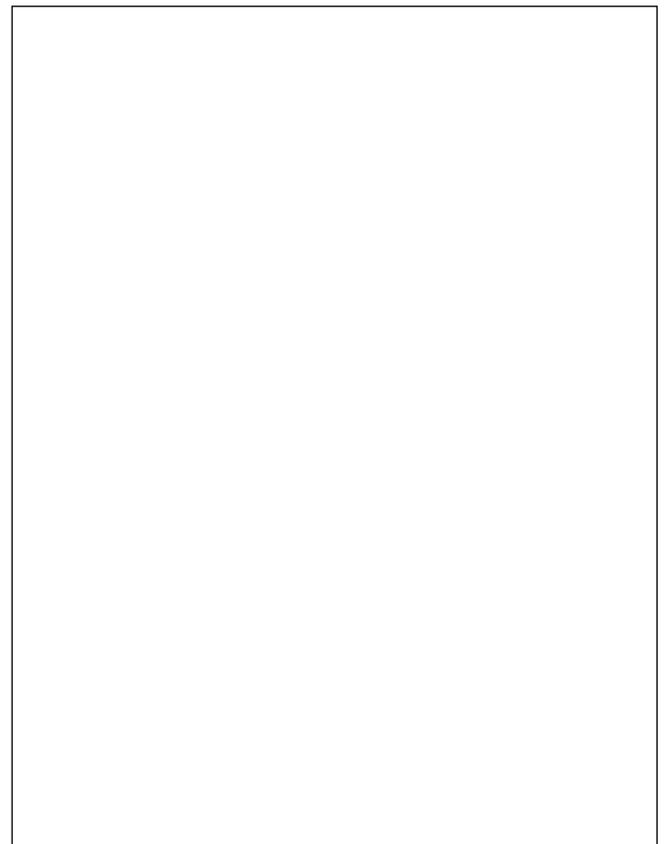
Although only 13 years of age, Natromo has lived his entire life on the streets of Zanth, having been abandoned by a mother he never knew. Savvy and mature beyond his years, he projects an extremely cynical but artful demeanor, hiding the fact that he deeply cares for those Forsaken younger than he. A truly skilled pickpocket, he considers himself fortunate that he hasn't had to sell himself to survive.

Quicksilver - Flamboyant Zandir Highwayman

Quicksilver is rapidly gaining fame as a highwaymen possessed of abundant charm, wit, daring, style, and panache. Formerly a Certament, his real name is Kamaris, and he cuts an impressive figure in his billowing black velvet cape, embroidered white silk shirt, and dashing hood and mask. He gets his name from the speed with which he wields his saber: a fine black iron blade engraved all over with inlay of silver.

Corissi Deklan - Zandir Certament Protagonist

Predatory and lithe, with seductive leathers, and a dangerous sensuality few men can resist, Corissi always causes a stir. Unfortunately, she makes her living by dueling lecherous fools who make crude advances at her, placing wagers on her own victory. All she needs is an excuse to make a challenge, and over-amorous Zandir men inevitably fall right into her hands.





XV. Jacinth

A Visitor's Guide to Jacinth

The Populace

Among the most scenic locations in Talislanta, the beautiful coastal habitation of Jacinth has been the heart of Mandalan culture since time immemorial. Approximately of the golden-skinned pacifists continue to live a calm, sedate life in the city, albeit one under the watchful eye of their Kang and Ispasian masters. A seat of learning, and center of the arts, Jacinth has become something of a resort, as Ispasians invite wealthy and important clients and dignitaries to conduct business on the pleasure barges anchored in Jacinth's harbor, and enjoy relaxing tours of the city itself.

History

Mandalan culture has existed essentially unchanged for millennia, having weathered and outlived all of the empires that have risen and crumbled in the east. Timeless Jacinth has also prevailed, and will continue long after the Kang Empire has also fallen.

Time means little to the infinitely patient Mandalan mindset, and their passive approach to life means they have been spared much of the anguish and destruction that other people's suffered when conquered. When Sunra vessels arrived in Jacinth harbor in 107 N.A., and Kang troops disembarked to take over the city under the command of their then Quan masters, the Mandalans offered no resistance, and therefore suffered little bloodshed.

Visions of Jacinth

A View from Afar

The azure waters of Jacinth harbor sparkle in the sunlight, gently lapping against a beach of pristine ivory sands. Simple docks of timeworn timbers lead to the settlement that overlooks the sands, elegant, multi-tiered pagodas in pastel shades, surrounded by sculpted gardens. Huge, ostentatious pleasure barges float in the harbor, the waters patrolled by Sunra dragon barques, scales glistening.

On Approach

Smooth paper, stretched over frames of exotic woods, and painted with deft and abstract illustrations, make up the tiered pagodas that line the wide sinuous streets. All are set about with trees and tended gardens, lending the city a feel of tranquility.

The City Streets

Delicately carved arches vault over promenades of grass and smooth river pebbles, Mandalans passing gracefully along them, while others practice meditation or arts in shaded arbors. Streams of crystal-clear water and colored pebbles line the earthen streets, crossed by slender bridges of carved wood. A few Kang patrols swagger along the restive streets, harsh colors of crimson and black, while Ispasians escort visitors from foreign locales around the tranquil setting.

Jacinth at Night

The paper pagodas of shadowed Jacinth glow softly with the warm orange and pink of illumination from within. Paper lanterns are hung from the arches that stretch delicately over the city's walkways, crystal moths fluttering about them, wings catching the light. Soft music fills the night air, as do the mournful cries of nocturnal avir.

The Typical Dwelling

An Exterior View

Encircled with tended shade trees, limbs coaxed over time to form intricate and subtle patterns, a two-story pagoda stands, topped with slender spires of carved wood. A lucid pool displays a rainbow of exotic fish swimming lazily beneath the simple wooden bridge that spans the waters, a cornucopia of flowers and rocks intermixing around the perimeter of the pool.

The delicately etched timbers of the pagoda display a variety of soft hues, supporting sliding walls of paper and timber painted with scenes of great beauty. A low, curving stair of river-worn pebbles leads up to a wooden patio, and the main entrance of the pagoda.



The Interior

Given the simple functionality of Mandalan housing, nearly all of their rooms are essentially identical, being used for rest, work, and artistic endeavors. Only a few rooms are notably different as a result of function. Thus, the "generic" Mandalan room is described, along with the notably different rooms.

The Interior

• **Generic Room**

Elegantly spartan, this moderately-sized room feels open and airy, the floor a mosaic of geometric wooden tiles, lacquered and colored. Sliding paper screens form the interior walls and doors, themselves breathtakingly painted with natural dyes. Little occupies the room, save for a few paper lanterns suspended from the beams of the ceiling, providing soft illumination, and the only furnishings are a low circular table, surrounded by woven mats, scrolls and artistic implements laid atop it. A sculpture of abstract yet flowing form stands in one corner. A utilitarian staircase leads to the next level of the pagoda.

Meditation and the Young

Only young Mandalans, those not yet accomplished at the art of meditation, sleep in the prone posture common among other humanoids, rolling out long mats to serve as bedding. Older and more accomplished Mandalans sleep in meditative position, sat atop a small padded silk mat.

• **The Bathroom**

Containing several large, barrel-like tubs, each capable of comfortably seating one or two people inside, this room serves as the bathroom of the pagoda. Each tub has a hollow base into which are placed stones that have been heated up with a fire, warming the water placed within. Cotton and silk-weave towels permit those just bathed to dry themselves, and a small table on the side of each tub holds several small vials of scented oils. In a small segregated room in the corner, a small lacquered box-like toilet stands, along with a box of paper wipes.

Nudity

Unlike many Talislantan cultures, Mandalans have no taboos about nudity, and communal bathing is commonplace and unremarkable.

• **The Kitchen**

With wooden walls, and a sliding panel that opens onto the back patio, this simple room features little decoration, save for simple carving. Wooden cabinets contain fresh and dried herbs, grains and vegetables, while a small stone stove is topped with a large clay pot of boiling water. The food is served on lacquered wooden plates, and eaten with

slender wooden tongs.

Places of authority

The People's Council

An unassuming, almost humble, structure located at the center of Jacinth's Public Square (see below), this single-story pagoda has unadorned walls, and plain, but polished timbers. Seven-sided, and consisting of a single room, a septagonal table of lacquered wood occupies its center, each side surrounded by a seating roll of undyed silk, seven paper lanterns hanging from the ceiling.

The Council

Given the greater autonomy granted the Mandalans by their new Kang masters, they rule themselves largely as they have always done, by popular democratic vote, seven elected council-members serving to represent the interests of the populace, decrees being called out to the assembled citizenry when they gather in the surrounding Public Square. However, any council ruling can be overturned by the Governor of Jacinth, the Kang Commander in charge of the local garrison. This seldom happens though, for the Kang have little interest in the Mandalan's politics, unless they directly impact on the Kang right to rule.

Military bases

The Ruby Garrison

Among Jacinth's only stone structures, this squat, ugly barracks and military base is made from rough-hewn granite covered with a cobweb of ivy. Hastily constructed by the Vajra following the original Quan conquest of Jacinth, the ostentatiously named Ruby Garrison was never updated or embellished, due to lack of interest. In stark contrast to the beauty of the surrounding city, this utilitarian, almost fortress-like building is adjacent to Jacinth's dock, and houses Kang soldiers.

Accursed Posting

Being posted to the Ruby Garrison is considered something of a curse among the Kang, due to the lack of potential conflict, the lack of opportunity to earn kbir, and the inexplicable rash of mishaps that occur there on a regular basis, including the scoffed at tales of shadows that come to life and are immune to weapons. Kang stationed at the Ruby Garrison quickly turn to infighting out of frustration and boredom.



Educational institutions

Mandalan Tuition

Mandalan schools teach their pupils a range of subjects, including the arts, mysticism, meditation, natural magic, and mandaquan, although each has a speciality for which it is renowned. Little rivalry exists between the various schools, each of which is usually attended by the same families and their descendants for centuries.

Such education is free, supported by such donations as those attending can afford, and starts at the age of 3.

Each school is a large, long, comparatively narrow, wooden hall surrounded by its own grounds.

School of Emptiness

The most spartan and simple of the schools, with large grounds containing little but a single tree overlooking a small pond and boulder, the School of Emptiness excels at the tuition of mysticism and meditation.

School of Fragrant Blossoms

Featuring the most beautiful gardens in all of Jacinth, with subtle fragrances filling the air, and colorful flowers and vines everywhere, around free-standing sculptures, this school provides superb tuition in the arts.

School of Harmony

Its large grounds merging seamlessly with the surrounding landscape, and left to grow naturally, this school stands foremost for tuition in the realm of natural magic.

School of the Willow

Named for the beautiful willow trees that surround its almost moat-like pool, as well as its philosophy of flexibility, this school is regarded as providing the best tuition in mandaquan.

Museums & libraries

Altar of Glorious Salvation

Gaudy and tasteless, this pagoda-like structure is decorated with overly-elaborate carvings and pillars plated with a

thin layer of gold leaf, its now wild grounds dominated by a swathe of statuary depicting "heroic" Quan, thankful Mandalans worshipping at their feet. Built at the direction of the Empire's former masters, to display their "glorious" history, its two large halls are filled with dust-covered tapestries, friezes, scrolls of commissioned poetry, and statues celebrating the Quan.

Following the Silent Insurrection, it is now disused, and untended, anything of real value stripped away by the Kang, and much of the rest defaced to some degree.

Halls of Jade

A complex consisting of a single triple-tiered pagoda, surrounded by seven single-story pagodas, the Halls of Jade serve as Jacinth's museum. Decorated in typical Mandalan style, its decorative carving and painting depicting historical events, it displays innumerable antique sculptures, paintings, musical instruments, scrolls of poetry, silkcloth weavings, etc. on simple plinths of carved wood, covered with fragile domes of jade so thinly carved as to be translucent.

Although no Mandalan would ever dream of stealing from the museum, it is guarded by a detail of Kang, as the treasures it contains are considered to be Imperial Property. Mandalans, and other Imperial citizens may enter the museum for free, but outsiders must pay a entry fee of 10 g.l., and are always accompanied by at least one Kang guard.

Halls of Stone

Built of polished river stone veined with sparkling quartz, and grown over with flowering vines, the Halls of Stone are a ring-shaped complex of connected pagodas around a beautiful garden filled with benches that runs inside and out. Shelf upon shelf of box-like apertures contain scrolls both new, old, and ancient, on many diverse subjects, fill the complex, organized according to date, subject and author, by the diligent Mandalans that work here. Jacinth's primary library, the Halls of Stone stand among the greatest libraries on the continent, and while access is free to any Imperial citizen, outsiders must pay an entry fee of 10 g.l. and will always be accompanied by a Kang guard. The scrolls may not be removed from the library complex.

Markets & bazaars

Public Square

Entirely paved with interlocking geometric stones, and surrounded by shade trees that form a ring of archways, the Public Square serves as Jacinth's market and meeting place, where locals come to barter their wares, perform their latest compositions, and display or sell their creations.



Busy for the morning hours of most days, the Public Square houses the People's Council at its heart.

Traders, merchants & artisans

Jacinth contains no stores, for its citizens barter among themselves at the Public Square. As a result, examples of those Mandalans that might barter goods and services are provided in the NPC section.

Parks

Groves of Serenity

Just beyond the city, the beautiful moss gardens, topiary mazes, and shaded arbors of the Groves of Serenity are the product of untold generations of Mandalan savants, who created these patiently-crafted settings for use as places of meditation. Until recently little-used due to the Quan prohibition against mystical meditative practices, the Groves now once again serve their intended purpose, following the Kang's more permissive rule.

Parks

Scattered throughout the Jacinth, the parks are carefully tended and arranged by volunteers, making them conducive to natural magics. Replete with crystal dendrons, fragrant mosses, crystal clear ponds of exotic fish, a cornucopia of rainbow-hued blossoms, delicate trees, rock gardens, and flat-topped boulders that serve as benches, these parks are favorite places for Mandalans to meet friends, and discuss philosophy.

Inns, taverns & restaurants

The Majestic

A lavishly appointed Quan pleasure barge, the Majestic is now an expensive Ispasian-owned hotel and restaurant, serving wealthy visitors to the city who do not necessarily have business dealings with the lemon-skinned mercantilists. Crewed by Sunra mariners, Mandalan servants, and Vajra porters, it is usually moored at the docks, but also takes short cruises around the bay. Costs are phenomenal, but the menu, service, and accommodations are superlative.

Transportation

Jacinth Docks

Little more than several simple wooden gangways of weathered timber, Jacinth's docks can only permit up to 4 dragon barques or pleasure barges to dock at any one time, and see little use by the Mandalans themselves, being erected after their conquest by the Quan.

Miscellaneous

Bridges

Simple, but intricately carved, and slender wooden bridges that lead over Jacinth's many streams and pools.

Sample NPCs

The following NPCs are useful as player contacts, encounters, and rivals (friendly or otherwise):

- **Silkcloth Weaver**
- **Antiquarian**
- **Philosopher**
- **Architect**
- **Green Wine Brewer**
- **Child**
- **Mandaquan Master**
- **Poet**
- **Musician**
- **Ispasian**
- **Instrument Maker**
- **Carpenter**
- **Painter/Calligrapher**
- **Sculptor**
- **Kang Garrison Captain**
- **Farmer**





XVI. Kragan

"The only thing 'superior' about the Imrians is their stench, and the only thing that makes me smile when I think of Kragan is its close proximity to an active volcano."

- Camaella, Escaped Batrean Paramour.

A Visitor's Guide to Kragan

The Populace

Although Imria dreams of conquest, the truth of the matter is that it is not a populous people. Around 7,000 Imrians inhabit the city of Kragan, 3,000 of which are the male crews of the several hundred slave coracles that ply the seaways. Of the remaining populace, only 540 males remain as guards, the rest composed of undeveloped "newts" (Imrian young), females, and the elderly. Besides the Imrians themselves, around 200 other slaves are kept in pens until they are shipped out for sale.

Visions of Kragan

A View from Afar

The calm waters of a vast lagoon reflect the image of the hundreds of small brown huts that occupy its center, standing at various heights above the water, each on stout stilts of wood. A flotilla of leathery boats and lashed to each other and several standing posts to one side of the huts. A thick wall of green jungle encircles the lagoon, insignificant in the shadow of a great volcano venting a pall of smoke into the sky.

The City Interior

Ladders of twisted vine hang from the mud huts that stand above the water, other huts standing partially submerged. Imrians swim from building to building as needed, tending submerged, net-enclosed pens of large newt-like creatures, or drugged kra, while others circle floating cages of miserable slaves.

The Typical Dwelling

An Exterior View

4 thick wooden poles support the hut, rising from the waters below, strengthened by small crossbeams lashed with woven vines. A crude square hut, its walls plastered with dry mud, squats atop the poles, its base reinforced by a platform of reeds, its roof a cone of thatched vines. A single shuttered window is visible, and a woven rope ladder leads up from the water to an open doorway.

The Hut Interior

The open doorway leads into a single large room, 14-foot square, dimly lit, damp, and humid. Latticeworks of reeds form the walls themselves, covered outside with a thick layer of insulating mud. A slick coating of mucous-like slime covers everything, including a mattress and basket of woven reeds. Standing above the inside of the doorway is a rolled up and tied leather tarpaulin, unrolled to close the doorway.

Crime and Security

Imrians seldom steal from each other, and therefore need little security. This is primarily because the only Imrians who have anything worth stealing are the most powerful and feared members of the community.

Rent, Tax, and Civil Repair

Imrians build their own homes, and must repair them themselves. However, they must all pay their King a monthly tribute equal to 80% of their earnings; anyone even suspected of skimping faces immediate execution (usually by being fed alive to the kra).

Waste Disposal

Imrians merely dump any bodily wastes into the lagoon, relying on time and tide to wash it all away. Unfortunately, this means that the waters directly around the huts often have a high sewage content.

Museums & libraries

Vault of Coral

Located 30-foot above the lagoon, this large "hut" is 28-foot wide, 56-foot long, and completely windowless. Arranged in rows on shelves of woven reeds, lit by scintilla, are a hun-



dred small tablets of pink and white coral, each inscribed with writings in a long dead tongue: the tablets which the Imrians state as "proof" that they are the fabled First Race. Five guards swim around the Vault constantly, only permitting access to those with the King's express permission.

No Foreigners

No foreigners are permitted to enter Kragan, except for the captured slaves that are taken there. The Imrians do all of their slave-trading in foreign ports, and as a result, no foreigner has yet seen the Coral Tablets, leading many to regard them as little more than fable, and question (with justified conviction) the Imrian's abilities to accurately and truthfully translate their contents.

Places of authority

Brass Mint

Located adjacent to The Majestic Domain, the Brass Mint is a single hall, 50-foot square and 35-foot above the lagoon, that encloses 4 forges that produce the brass rings that serve as Imrian currency. The brass is purchased from Shattra in Arim. 10 Imrian mud soldiers constantly guard the Mint.

The Majestic Domain

The tallest and largest hut in the city, this vast building stands a full 60-foot above the waters of the lagoon, and is 50-foot wide and 100-foot long. The Imrian King dwells here, the building separated into several rooms, including a throne room, audience chamber, private bedroom, and gallery (of great foreign works, now miserably encrusted with grime and slime).

The Majestic Harem Circle

Standing 50-foot high, 20 single huts encircle the Majestic Domain, each home to one of the King's chosen females (considered the most beautiful Imrian females in the city).

Imrian Females

Imrian females are regarded as useful only as sexual playmates, breeders, weavers, and newt-tenders. They may not go onboard a boat, bear a weapon, leave the city, or question anything their husband says. Bizarrely, they seem content with their lot, all too happy to submit themselves to the most eligible males (i.e. the most cunning, strong, and cruel), sharing a male with a harem of other females. However, they

have little loyalty, and will readily leave a male who gets bested by a rival.

Harem Circles

Imrian females who share a mate live in huts that encircle the male's, but are always a full level lower.

The Royal Guard Quarters

Encircling the Majestic Harem Circle are 40 huts, each 40-foot high, that each house a member of the Imrian Guard: those powerful trident-wielding warriors who serve as the King's bodyguard and captains.

Imrian Bachelors

The majority of Imrian males will live and die without ever having a mate, because the males outnumber the females 3:2, and also because the few successful males usually have harems of 3-6 females.

Military bases

The Great Barracks

Each of these 10 barracks is 50-foot square, and stands a mere 20-foot above the water, housing rows of reed mattresses for the 50 mud soldiers that dwell in each.

Traders, artisans & merchants

Aramatus Pens

Heavily penned with 20-foot walls of thick woven reeds, this large, partially submerged enclosure farms and grows aramatus which it feeds using the bodies of Imrian dead (it pays 1 s.p. per body), and the occasional slave who proved too much trouble to keep. Aramatus of varying size may be purchased here at a price of 1 s.p. per foot of length, cumulative.

Brine Cellars

Located half submerged, these 2 long, narrow mud halls contain several hundred fermenting brine kegs, the oldest of which have been fermenting for 50 years. The Cellars must provide the Great Barracks with a single keg each



week (usually their weakest batches), and give the King a single keg of vintage (10 year +) brine each week as well. Kegs are available for sale to other Imrians, at prices that vary from 1 s.p. - 5 g.l. for a single large flask of brine, or 100 times that for a full keg, depending on age.

The Great Forges

With walls blackened by intense heat, these 2 great halls stands 35-foot above the lagoon, and each is 50-foot square, with 5 forges. Imrian blacksmiths work here to produce the unique weapons used by the Imrian military and slavers. Imrian blacksmiths seldom live for any length of time, as the constant heat dries them up, causing them to blister and burn rapidly. Despite this, it is considered an honorable and well-regarded profession, with good pay, and the guaranteed favor of many Imrian females. The black iron that is used is purchased from Shattrra in Arim. Imrian slavers must purchase their own weapons here; only the military is provided them free.

Sludge Pits

Located on the banks of the lagoon, these penned areas of squishy mud are operated by a handful of Imrian merchants, who, for a cost of 5 c.p., will provide a simple shovel and allow the customer a short amount of time in which to dig up their own fresh worms and leeches, considered the tastiest in Imria.

The Tannery

Consisting of half a dozen large huts standing close together, each 30-foot above the lagoon, the Tannery produces high quantities of the Kra leather used for Imrian Guard armor (which they have to provide for free), and the huge sections of kra leather used to build coracles and sails. The tanners who work in these huts also produce basic leather goods that may be purchased by the populace (such as belts) for high prices (x 2 standard).

Miscellaneous

Kra Pens

Occupying nearly 10% of the lagoon, these huge thick pens are used to contain the kra that the Imrians use to pull their coracles, and kill for leather. The Kra are fed on the corpses of Imrians and slaves, each corpse of which is packed with soporific herbs beforehand, thereby keeping the Kra sedated and docile.

Newt Pens

These small aquatic pens contain dozens of the newt-like Imrian young, who are tended little different than fish in a fish farm. They are thrown fish and worms several times a day, which they fight for among themselves, and inevitably, it is only the strongest newts that survive the 8 years necessary to grow lungs and reach maturity. Upon reaching maturity, the newts immediately become members of the Imrian society, and learn a trade (or not) depending on their gender.

Slave Pens

Anchored to the bottom of the lagoon by lengths of sturdy chain, these 40 small cages of thick reeds are each a mere 6-foot square, each secured to a raft of logs that keeps it afloat. Each cage may house as many as 5-6 slaves, kept cramped, uncomfortable and cold, fed little more than raw fish, worms, and water. It is little blessing that few slaves are kept here for very long before being shipped off for sale. Simple iron padlocks are used to lock the pens. Only 4 Imrians guard the pens at any one time (they see little point in posting more. After all, where can an escaped slave go, especially as few can swim)?

Moorg-Wan Slave Pens

Identical to the standard slave pens (see above), these 10 small cages each house 2-3 Moorg-wan slaves, but are far more heavily guarded, with 1 Imrian guarding every 2 cages, primarily because the Moorg-wan are strong and capable swimmers. However, the Moorg-wan are permanent slaves, used as labor crews by their Imrian masters who treat them even more harshly than the slaves they intend to sell.

