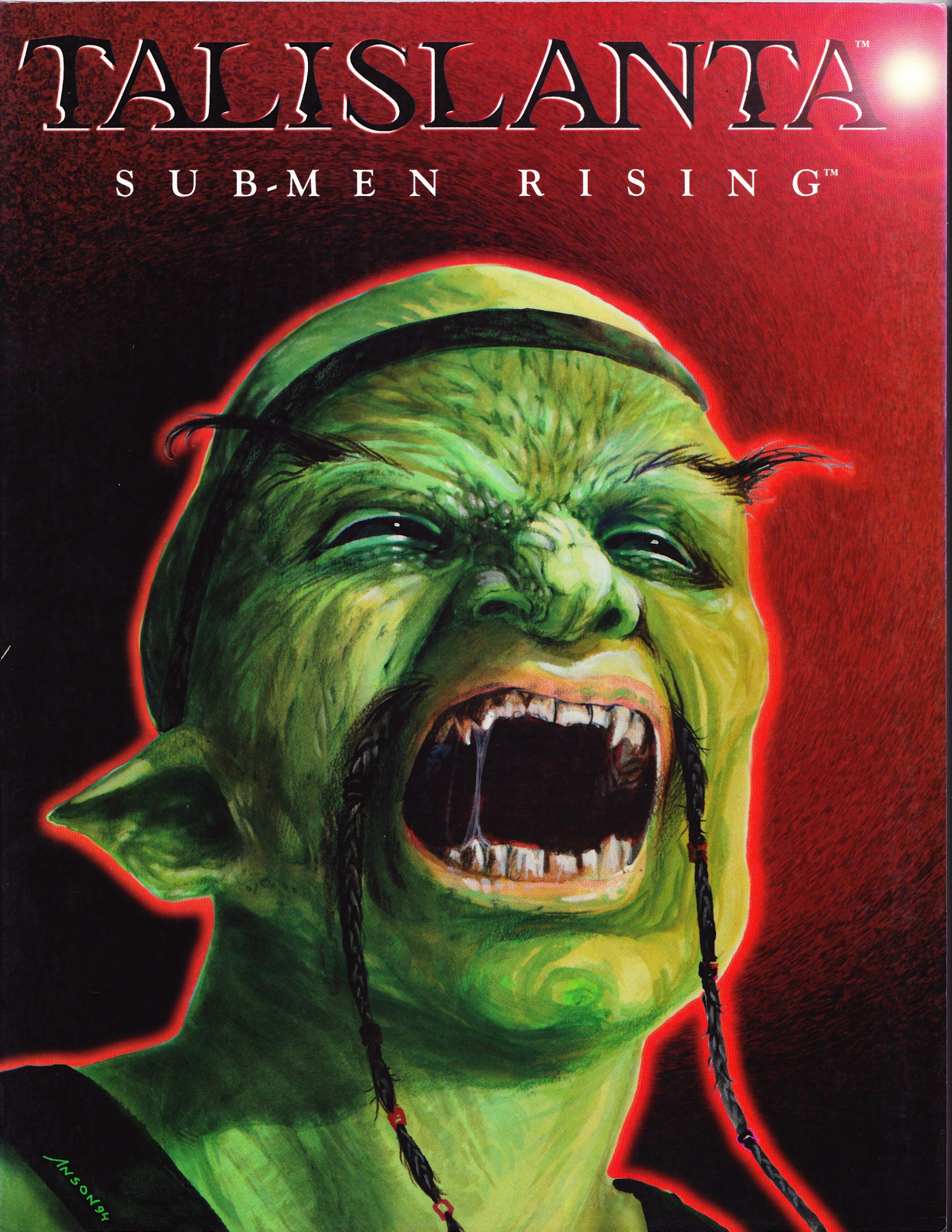
TALISLANTA™

SUB-MEN RISING™



TALISLANTA

SUB-MEN

RISING

By

Robin D. Laws

A Sourcemodule for **Talislanta**

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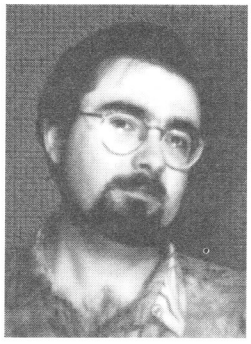

Robin D. Laws is a freelance writer who lives in Toronto with his wife, Valerie. Robin's first book was *GURPS Fantasy II*, a supplement from Steve Jackson Games detailing his Mad Lands fantasy setting. He contributed additional material to Atlas Games' *Over the Edge* and Daedalus Games' *Nexus: The Infinite City*, and continues to work on supplements for both products. Recent examples include the *OTE* sourcebook *The Weather the Cuckoo Likes* and the *Nexus* supplement *Nexus Life*. Also on store shelves are *Infected*, and *Parlainth*, an adventure and source box for FASA's *Earthdawn* game. In other areas of writing, Robin has had various productions of a play written for children and did a several-year stint as film reviewer for radio station CHAY-FM. He credits his long-time involvement with the amateur press association *Alarums & Excursions* for opening up opportunities in the gaming field.

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Introduction

This book is intended for gamemasters only. If you are a player and your gamemaster wants to run the *Sub-Men Rising* campaign, reading this will spoil your fun. There are sections of the book that will help you roleplay Sub-Men player characters; if you need these, your GM will give you the relevant material as handouts.

Gamemasters: This book is designed to enable you to run the epic "Sub-Men Rising" campaign alluded to in the third edition *Talislanta Guidebook* and begun in the adventure *Scent of the Beast*. Although the adventures in this book are enriched if your players have already played *Scent of the Beast*, purchase of that book is not necessary for you to understand and enjoy this one.

This book divides into three sections. First is a brief section of introductory material, discussing just who the Sub-Men are and why they're engaged in rebellion. It delves into the history of the Sub-Men races and the legendary figure known as the Tirshata. And it finally reveals the secrets of the new Tirshata, who has arisen amongst the Za and is preparing to grind Talislanta's civilizations beneath his boots. This material includes a description of his encampment and his closest advisers. Second, we go into further depth on each of the Sub-Men races (including a couple of races that aren't considered Sub-Men but are in league with them in this rebellion). These descriptions are intended both to help you understand Sub-Men behavior and motivations and to provide background for players who want to run Sub-Men player characters—this way the book remains useful even after you're finished with the adventures. Each culture description begins with a snippet of dialogue from a typical member of the race; it is followed by notes on basic attitudes, social structure and behavior, and notable customs. Here the accent is on how people from these cultures think, rather than on the everyday details of their lives. This is followed by a brief discussion of what renegades from each culture might be like (Sub-Men PCs will fit these descriptions to one degree or another). Finally, we look at each culture's perspective on the Tirshata and how its members get along with all of the other Sub-Men in the Tirshata's encampment.

The final section of the book is devoted to running the "Sub-Men Rising" campaign. The idea here is to allow you to make as much or as little of this plotline as you want. You can either expand the campaign into a multi-faceted affair with different PC parties engaged on different fronts, or you can keep the buildup in the background and then cut to the chase for the final adventure. As written, all the adventures are intended for three to

six characters of 8th–11th level each, but you can adjust the NPCs' stats up or down if necessary. The section starts with notes on the overall feel and structure of the campaign and with a pair of mini-adventures. The last part of this section is the "Heart of the Beast," a detailed adventure that concludes the Tirshata storyline.

Page references preceded by "GB" are to the third edition *Talislanta Guidebook*; those without the prefix are to other pages in this book.

In the adventures, passages in italics are meant to be read to the players. Paraphrase these in your own words if you want them to sound more natural.

Historical Timeline

The following historical events are crucial to understanding the resentments that drive the Sub-Men to want to destroy the civilized realms. Bear in mind that the Sub-Men have their own ways of remembering this material. All of them have oral cultures and retell their histories as epics, mixing rhetoric, mythology, tall tales, cautionary tales, and fable into memories of actual historical events. This material is presented as a scholar of the Seven Kingdoms might organize it, though a scholar so impertinent as to take the Sub-Men point of view even so far as this would be swiftly ostracized by his or her colleagues.

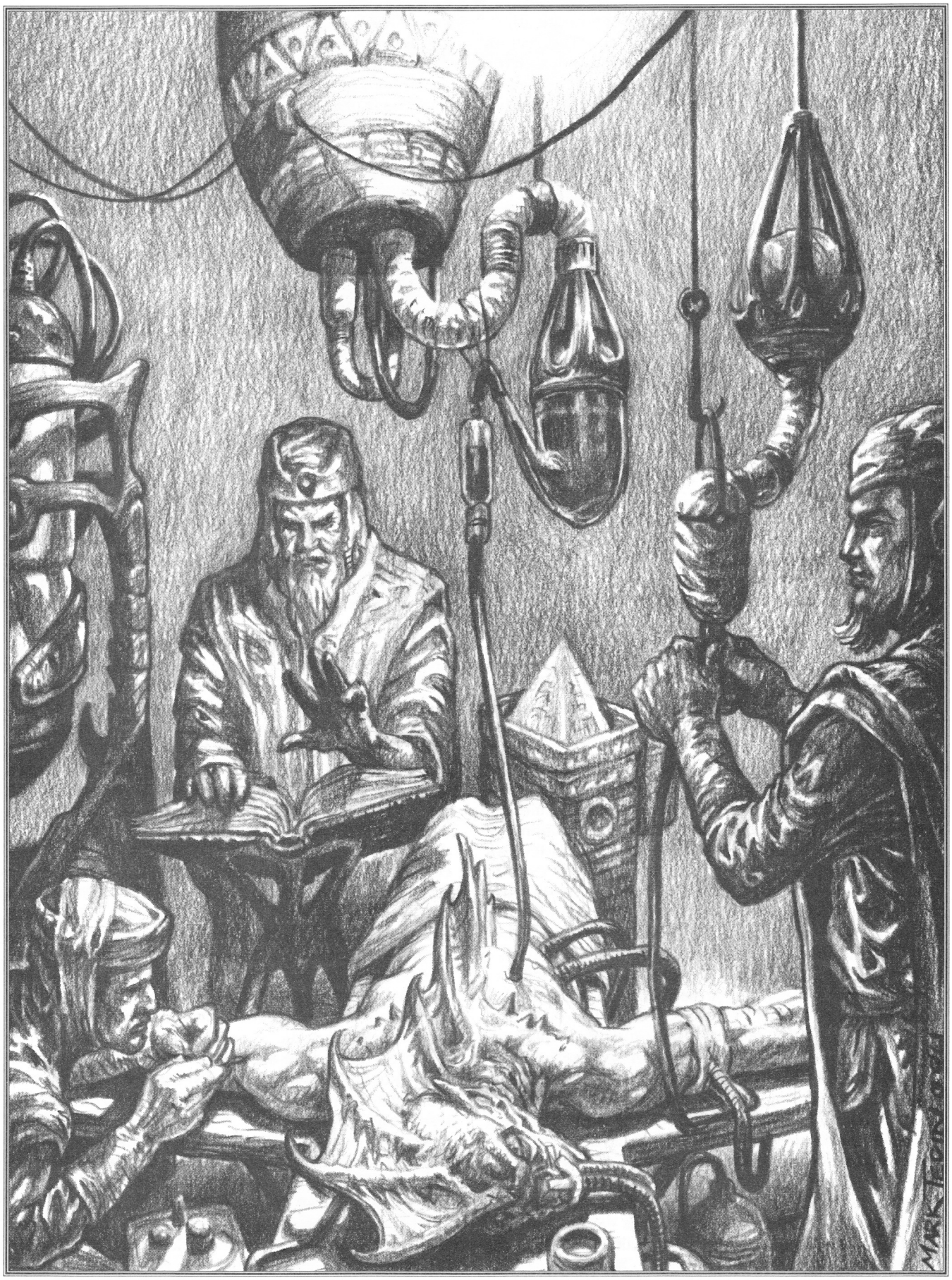
The Forgotten Age, First Millennium: Recorded history begins during this period. The prehistory of Talislanta is a time when all races have equally primitive cultures. Beings of various racial stocks inhabit the continent, all at a Stone-Age level of technology and a tribal level of social development. These include races that exist to this day, such as the Gnomekin, Nagra, Manra. Also struggling to survive are no-longer-extant races, for example, one known as the Feroids, which is the root group of the modern-day Jaka, Beastmen, and Mondre Khan. One of Talislanta's early racial groups, related to the predecessors of the present-day Danelek, Drukh, Harakin, and Yrmanian tribes, is now referred to as the "Primal Race." It is this tribe that stumbles upon the secrets of magic in a mysterious vessel of some forgotten people. It uses the secrets of magic to develop technology; with technology comes culture. The Primal Race now officially becomes the Archaens, with the founding of cities in what are now known as Aaman and Hadjistan. Relations with the other cultures of Talislanta remain, for the moment, peaceful. Quickly forgetting their own humble roots, the Archaens now dismissively refer to other sentient beings of Talislanta as "Sub-Men." The Archaens are too busy building to make war; the other cultures don't realize what's about to hit them.

ca. 2000–2300: The Forgotten Age, Second Millennium. Suddenly, other races begin to feel threatened as the population of Archaens grows and their territories are accordingly reduced. Some of these groups realize that there is more economic benefit to raiding Archaens than to hunting and gathering. Certain cultures, among them the ancestors of the Drukh and Za, become steadily more warlike, provoking the Archaens to take measures to protect themselves. So, in a sense, the first rise of the Sub-Men is a consequence of Archaen success.

ca. 2300: The Archaen expansion begins in earnest. Fortunately for the so-called "Sub-Men," the first target of the Archaens is the Drakken. (It is unclear just how developed Drakken culture was; Talislantan scholars tend to de-emphasize the complexity of their society, probably because they can't read Drakken runes. It may be that the Drakken remained civilized from the Time Before Time and that the victors have rewritten history to obscure this embarrassing fact. They certainly had cities, probably while the Archaens were still foraging for nuts and berries.) The Drakken do more than defend themselves—they raze all but one of the Archaen cities, forcing the retreat of the inhabitants to Phandril. The Archaens then seek an alliance with the Sub-Men tribes, based on mutual hatred of the Drakken, with whom the tribes compete for territory. This alliance results in decisive victory, and the Drakken are driven off the continent.

ca. 2300–2800: A period of relative harmony between Archaen and Sub-Men begins. Neither group needs to fight the other: there is plenty of formerly Drakken territory to allow both to coexist with only minor friction. The rapidly expanding Archaen cultures begin the use of magical breeding techniques; they create the neomorphs—artificially engineered races. The Archaens themselves begin to split into distinct subgroups with common physical traits and also divide politically into a number of nation-states.

ca. 2900–3000: The dominant Archaen powers now include the rival religious states of Numenia and Quaran. This bodes ill for the Sub-Men. Under the loathsome necromancer-king Drax, the Quaranians begin to create armies of magical hybrids to wage wars against their enemies, which include the Sub-Men. The cultures of the Sub-Men and other primitive cultures are driven to the margins of the continent, where they still remain. Periodic attempts to wipe them out are mounted, and some succeed. Although most Archaen city-states take part in these campaigns, it is the Quaranians who field the most systematic and vicious wars against the Sub-Men. A long list of Sub-Men races now exists only as a series of names in molding ancient texts: the Jrakno, Saollo, Wevirrn, Chabek, the Sideways Wailers, Prantak, the Nineteen-Teeth People, and many others. Those Sub-Men races that survive must become even more warlike in order to do so: here the first reports of the Za race's blood drinking appear, for example.



The millennium ends in fire, folding untold bloodshed and destruction into little more than a decade. Quaran and Numenia effectively destroy one another, freeing the fearful hybrid warriors of Quaran. Tribes of Sub-Men other than the Quaranian hybrids also join in the slaughter, wreaking vengeance on the remaining Archaens for the campaigns against them. Those cultures that survived the Archaen onslaught had only become stronger; their birth rates continue to outstrip those of civilization. The Sub-Men mount an impressive resurgence, retaking several cities and putting their citizens to the sword.

Desperate, the Archaens commission their neomorph breeders to delve into the fell magic of the defeated Quaranians and come up with the ultimate foe for the Sub-Men—the Araq. To their chagrin, the Archaens find the Araq to be as dangerous to them as their intended targets are—see p 28.

Thus follows a short but bloody period, known as the "Araq Hegemony," during which these ecstatic killing machines roam all of Talislanta, butchering Archaens and Sub-Men alike. Several cities are overrun by Araq, and several more Sub-Men races are extinguished, including the Tonoro and the Grassmen. This period ends with concerted and desperate efforts on behalf of various separate Archaen and Sub-Men groups to drive the Araq back. The Araq Hegemony is short-lived, for the pure relentless violence of the Araq mindset precludes them from developing their conquered lands for effective defense.

The size of the Araq population diminishes dramatically, and they find a permanent niche only in the Wilderlands of Zaran. The remaining Sub-Men recover their population strength faster than the Archaens and once more go on the offensive. Several more Archaen cities fall to individual Sub-Men clans.

The Archaen Cabal, chosen as a new governing body, announces the fruition of a century-old project: researchers have further developed the art of windship arcanology to the point where a plan to move the Archaen city-states to floating islands above the continents of Archaeus is now perfectly feasible. Wearied of the losing battle with the Sub-Men, the populations of the various city-states agree to relocate to the sky.

The Third Millennium: As the Archaens prepare to take to the sky, they seek out representatives of the other races of Talislanta and present them with signed treaties ceding the continent to them. These treaties buy the Archaens the time they need to concentrate their resources on sky-city construction. In the eyes of the Archaens themselves, the treaty is a truly worthy gesture, one that reflects their growing interest in establishing a society built on the highest-possible ethical framework. During the period of treaty negotiation, a new term is coined to replace the insulting word "Sub-Men": the various tribes, never before accustomed to thinking of themselves as a collective, now refer to themselves as the *Landborne*. This word is still used by many tribes today.

The Archaens migrate to their floating cities, a process that takes roughly a century. What follows is a time now considered the golden age of Archaen society. The rebuilding of civilization in the clouds marks a period of exponential economic growth as well as advances in everything from arts to magic to political justice. Meanwhile, back on Talislanta, the Landborne and other indigenous races settle back into their old patterns of existence. Little is known of Talislantan (as opposed to Archaen) history for the next two thousand years, for the peoples who remain there do not maintain written histories.

The Fourth Millennium: The Archaens fall into decadence. Talislanta remains shrouded in non-historical time. The Landborne tribes, to whom the Archaens had begun to seem an unpleasant myth, are now reminded of the Archaens' existence. The inhabitants of the sky-cities begin to use the continent as a dumping ground for all manner of garbage—including dangerous alchemical waste. An artificially produced sea of clouds, the Cloudsea, obscures the landmass below them, and the Archaens give little thought to the harm they inflict on the Sub-Men. Tribal myths in which the Archaens are portrayed as cruel and callous villains gain new currency.

The Great Disaster: Magical catastrophe strikes the Archaen sky-cities in a worldwide—possibly even dimension-wide—disaster. Refugees from the civilized world return to Talislanta, only to enter a period of great slaughter and turmoil. Many Landborne tribes seek revenge on the Archaens for their crimes against the land. A few see them as gods and try to help them. Others see them as devils and try just as hard to destroy them.

The Age of Confusion: Raised on tales of the bloody Second Millennium, the refugees adopt an "attack first, ask questions later" policy when it comes to Landborne they encounter. In trying to resettle lands ceded to the Landborne, the Archaens further enrage these tribal inhabitants of Talislanta, who fight back without quarter. The continent is rapidly engulfed in escalating warfare. The treaties also acted as a basis for enforcing territorial boundaries between different Landborne clans, who now go to war with one another as well as with the refugees. Records from this time are scarce and faulty; the Age of Confusion probably lasted around a century but could have gone on for as many as five.

The First Coming of the Tirshata: A great chieftain arises amongst the Za, who are on the rise in this multi-sided war. He is called the Tirshata. He first unites the Za clans and then begins to bring other Sub-Men groups into his camp. The Tirshata appears to have the mystical ability to present himself as the perfect leader of all of the disparate Sub-Men clans. He masses his forces for a final sweep against the beleaguered refugees of the Great Disaster—and then vanishes. Legend has it that he tells his advisers that he will one day return to finish the fight when the time is right. The time from the emergence of the Tirshata to his disappearance appears to have been a scant two decades.

The Sub-Men Wars: Without the Tirshata to bind them together into a cohesive unit, Sub-Men tribes resurrect old rivalries. The Sub-Men in the Tirshata's vast encampment fall upon one another. Many are slain. The final extinctions of Sub-Men clans take place at this time, claiming the Warzen and Obelloids. Many groups barely make it back to their homelands, while the Araq and Za again prosper. This period probably lasts for about a century, all told.

During this period, the various Landborne tribes become convinced that the disappearance of the Tirshata was the result of an Archaen conspiracy. This adds yet another grievance to the long list of grievances most tribes nurse to this day.

The New Age: The battle between the Sub-Men allows the refugees of the Great Disaster enough breathing space to begin to rebuild civilization as they knew it. Recorded history begins again with the founding of the city-state of Phaedra. See third edition *Talislanta Guidebook,* pp. 10–13, for a detailed timeline.

613: A Za claiming to be the Tirshata appears at the Za-bandit conclave. Exhibiting perfect control of Za political techniques, he proves himself to be the most fearsome Za alive, claiming the lives of eleven top chieftains in spectacularly grisly fashion.

614–616: Word quickly spreads to the resentful and demoralized Sub-Men peoples that the Tirshata is back. Unknown to the forces of civilization, small bands of individual Chana, Drukh, and Yrmanians begin to make the trek to the Za encampment to investigate.

617: Stryx necromancers travel to Zaran to forge an agreement with the Tirshata; they confidently predict that the Ur and Darklings of their homeland will join the fray if properly approached. The numbers of Chana, Drukh, and Yrmanians in the camp increases, supplemented by Nagra and Mondre Khan. Again, the extent of the Tirshata's success in attracting allies escapes the attention of the civilized lands.

618: Emissaries of the Tirshata fan out, making agreements with the leaders of other Sub-Men clans. The three Ur kings sign on, each believing that the Tirshata will reward him with the unified crown of Urag. Meanwhile, representatives of other groups are drifting into the Tirshata's encampment: the Danelek and Harakin now appear.

619: The first Araq show up to declare their allegiance to the Tirshata. The Ur use secret sections of the Underground Highway—thought by the Seven Kingdoms to be choked with rubble—to begin to ferry troops to Zaran. Members of other tribes continue to filter into Zaran in small groups, going largely unnoticed.

620: The Tirshata allows rumors to spread about his negotiations with the Beastmen, the last major group of Sub-Men left outside his camp. This is because he is confident they will join him, and because he believes it will help keep the Seven Kingdoms mired in complacency: if they think the Beastmen alliance is the first and not the final significant step in his plan before embarking on his war, they've got a serious surprise coming.

The Tirshata

The true nature of the original Tirshata remains obscured by myth. Each individual race of Sub-Men has a different tale to tell about him. All of these stories are contradictory. This leaves two conclusions: either the stories are exaggerated expressions of what each group wishes to believe, or the Tirshata had the magical ability to be all things to all Sub-Men. It is possible that both are true to an extent. At any rate, there is virtually no recorded fact about the Tirshata that isn't contradicted somewhere else in the record (some early Phaedran chronicles even refer to him interchangeably as "he" and "she!").

The current incarnation of the Tirshata, however, is indisputably male. Once known as Zairat, this once-minor chieftain not only has become leader of all of the Za—a feat unparalleled since the Age of Confusion—but now com-

mands a force made up of representatives of all the Sub-Men races. He has gone from head of a lowly and despised sub-clan to power undreamed of. Zairat did not do this alone.

The present Tirshata is an impostor, a puppet of Rasmirin anarchists who want to destroy civilization as their way of making tribute to Aberon, their patron demon. Rasmirin anarchists revere chaos and wish to see the extirpation of all that is structured and ordered in Talislanta. They have no qualms about taking advantage of the grievances of the Sub-Men to do this.

The mastermind of the return of the Tirshata is a Rasmirin named Desmane. She has journeyed for a long time away from the Outcast Isles, scouring the mainland for tools to use to further her battle against civilization. In her travels, she found a common denominator among the far-flung civilized peoples: all of them despised and shunned the Sub-Men. Figuring that the enemies of her enemy must be somehow be useful to her cause, she embarked on an ambitious project: she traveled to the homelands of various Sub-Men groups and sought to win their confidence. She uses magic to pass for a member of the races of Men, preferring the guise of a Dhuna witchwoman. Desmane spent time among the Danelek, Chana, Mondre Khan, and Za, learning of their ways and the roots of their bitterness towards the civilized peoples. She learned of the Archaen Treaties and of how those who now proudly proclaim themselves the heirs of the Archaens ignore those ancient agreements as if they never existed. Desmane also learned of the legends of the Tirshata and of the fervent desire that members of each group nurtured that the Tirshata would soon return to liberate them from their wretched state.

Desmane soon came to realize that there was nothing preventing the Sub-Men from reuniting, except for each group's own assumption that the other groups would never go for it without the Tirshata. Not wanting to wait around on the off chance that a slightly dodgy seven-hundred-year-old prophecy might be fulfilled in her lifetime, Desmane decided to manufacture a Tirshata of her own. She headed back to the Outcast Islands for logistical support, hooking up with another experienced traveler, Ormirian. Ormirian had discovered ancient records of a cache of Archaen enchanted items in Yrmania (apparently one faction during the ascent to the skies believed that a time would come when its heirs might need a stash of powerful items on the ground). With her knowledge of the Sub-Men, Desmane was able to secure the help of the local wildmen in finding the underground capsule. Among other items, it contained something of great interest to the anarchists—a black diamond known as "the soulgate gem."

The soulgate gem could be used to summon and entrap the spirit of a dead being of the user's choice. Then, when worn on a chain, the gem would allow the spirit to take partial control of its wearer. Carefully studying the ritual instructions in an accompanying text, Desmane and Ormirian decided that it would be unwise to attempt to summon the Tirshata himself: if he was anything like the figure Sub-Men myths make him out to be, they feared that his spirit might be too strong for them to control. Instead, Desmane decided to entrap the spirit of another historical figure she'd heard of while with the Za—the chieftain Zagor, notorious for his indiscriminate spilling of blood during the Sub-Men Wars. The soulgate gem has thus been imbued with the charismatic presence of Zagor. Desmane's plan was to find a suitably pliable Za to turn into the false Tirshata and give him the necklace holding the soulgate gem whenever he had to demonstrate the ferocity that the Za look for in a leader.

Traveling back to Zaran, Desmane soon came across a likely candidate to become her Tirshata—the pathetic Zairat, whose sub-clan had been pressed to the fringes of Za territory. The Rasmirins were easily able to secure his obedience by threatening him with sorcerous punishments beyond his imaginings. Posing as Dhuna, with whom the Sub-Men have always had a neutral, if not positive, relationship, Desmane and Ormirian accompanied Zairat to the Za conclave of that year, 613, and slipped the soulgate gem around his neck.

Though Zagor was no Tirshata, his savagery, combined with Desmane's calculating advice, was more than a match for the current leadership. In a matter of days, control of the Za was in Rasmirin hands. Desmane then began to send out rumors of the Tirshata's return, hoping that the Sub-Men would flock to her. The speed with which they did so surprised even her; if anything, she had underestimated the hunger of the oppressed tribes for the reappearance of their savior. Over a seven-year period Desmane has managed to amass a fearsome fighting force not seen in Talislanta since the Age of Confusion. It is her most profound wish to reprise that bloodstained era.

Zairat's primary motivation now for any action is fear: he is terrified of Desmane and Ormirian, afraid of having Zagor in his mind, and horrified by the thought of what will happen when the other Za find out he's not the Tirshata. Zairat is certain that Desmane's plan is doomed to failure and that his days are therefore numbered. His fear has given him a bad stutter. His posture is bad and he hates to look anyone in the eye. He has been ordered by Desmane not to resist the possession effect of the soulgate gem, a command he takes very seriously.

When Zagor takes over his mind, he undergoes quite a transformation. He stands ramrod straight, puffs out his chest, and speaks in a hearty bellow. Zagor wants to enjoy his return to life and power, and to achieve the victory that eluded him the first time around. He's overjoyed to have an opportunity to spill more blood after all these years. If he had a way to possess Zairat permanently, he would do so and then get rid of the Rasmirins. But since he doesn't, he reckons that he's stuck with them. Having a body—even if intermittently—and being able once more to wreak havoc in Talislanta is much better than returning to the spirit world.

Zairat, Za Raider, 4th Level

Languages: Common Talislan +3, Sign +3.

Description: Male, age 38; wrinkled, yellow-green skin; shaved skull; long, braided mustache. Wears loincloth, harness of studded land lizard hide, blade bracers (+4, g.l.). Carries whipsash (2 g.l.), Za broadsword (20 g.l.), horn short bow (5 g.l.) with quiver of twenty barbed arrows (5 s.p.).

INT	-1	PER	0
WIL	-1	CHA	0
STR	0	DEX	0
CON	+4	SPD	+2

Hit Points: 22

Attacks	CR	Damage
Short bow	+2	d8
Unarmed combat	+2	1 point
Za broadsword	+2	d10*
Za whipsash	+2	d6**

Armor: None.

*All damage taken from this jagged blade heals at half the normal rate, whether healed magically or naturally.

**On a partial success, the whipsash strikes the target for half damage but does not entangle. On a full success, it does full damage and entangles a limb of the wielder's choice. On a critical success, it entangles the limb, does double damage, and brings the target down.

Skills: Appraise Treasure +3, Camouflage +3, Cook +4, Mounted Combat (graymane) +3, Nomadic Customs +3, Ride +4, Scout +4, Secondary Combat +2, Stalking +4, Tracking +4.

Special: When wearing the soulgate gem, Zairat gains the skills and mental abilities of the ancient Za chieftain Zagor (see following box on Zagor-controlled Zairat). Zairat retains his basic physical abilities, so the combination of the two individuals results in a Za with higher attribute ratings than normal. Zairat does not have constant access to the soulgate gem: Desmane gives it to him only for particular reasons and then reclaims it when its need is over.

Zagor-controlled Zairat, Za Raider, 16th Level

Languages: Common Talislan +18, Sign +18.

Description: As Zairat, above; a blue-black gem with a claw setting hangs from a chain around his neck: this is the soulgate gem.

INT	+2	PER	0
WIL	+2	CHA	+1
STR	0	DEX	0
CON	+4	SPD	+2

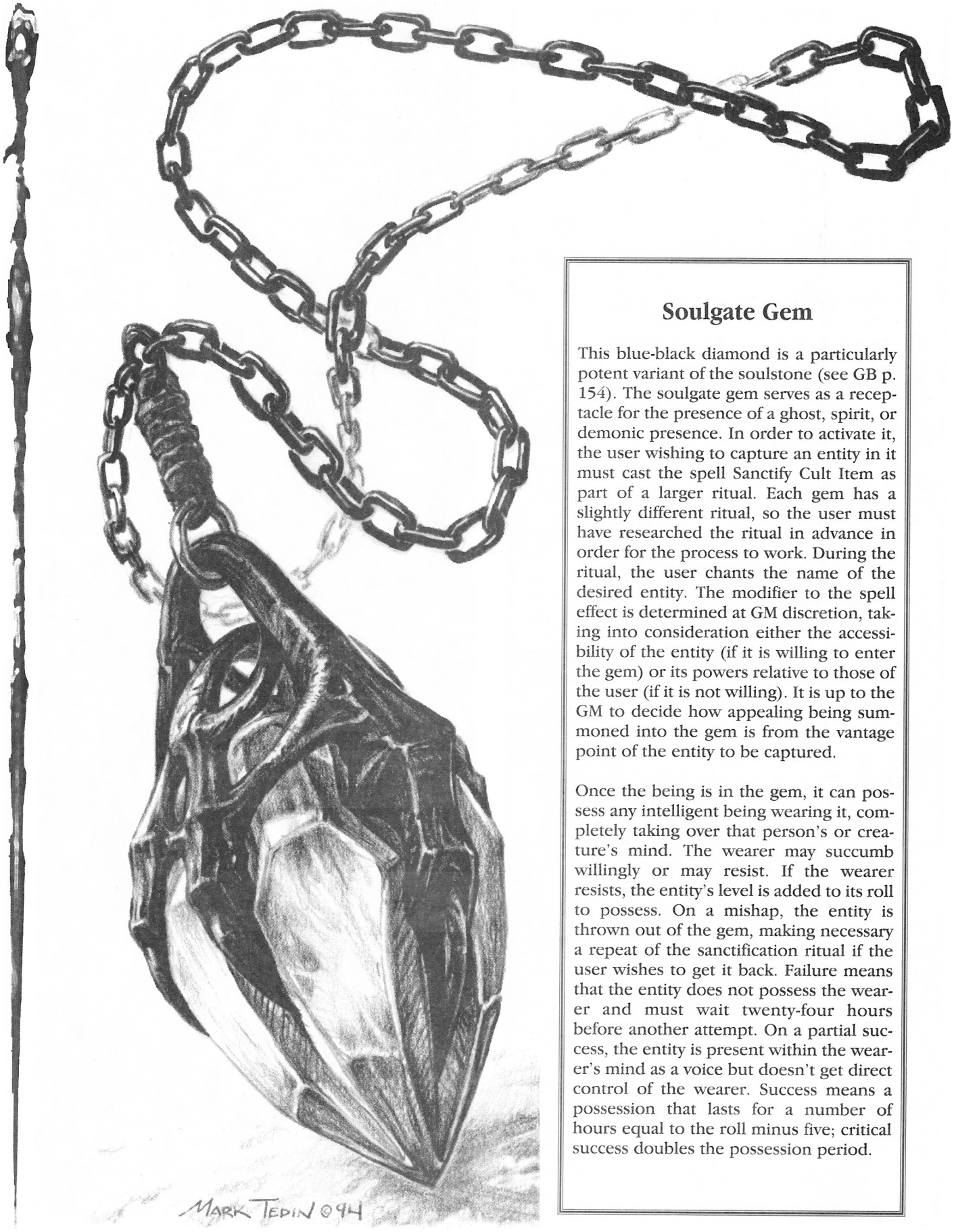
Hit Points: 46

Attacks	CR	Damage
Short bow	+8	d8
Unarmed combat	+8	3 points
Za broadsword	+8	d10
Za whipsash	+8	d6

Armor: None.
See p. 10 for notes on Za broadsword and whipsash.)

Skills: Appraise Treasure +18, Camouflage +18, Command +17, Mounted Combat (graymane) +16, Nomadic Customs +18, Ride +15, Scout +16, Secondary Combat +8, Stalking +16, Tracking +16.

Special: When wearing the soulgate gem, Zairat gains the skills and mental abilities of the ancient Za chieftain Zagor. Zairat retains his basic physical abilities, so the combination of the two individuals results in a Za with higher attribute ratings than normal. Zairat does not have constant access to the soulgate gem: Desmane gives it to him only for particular reasons and then reclaims it when its need is over.



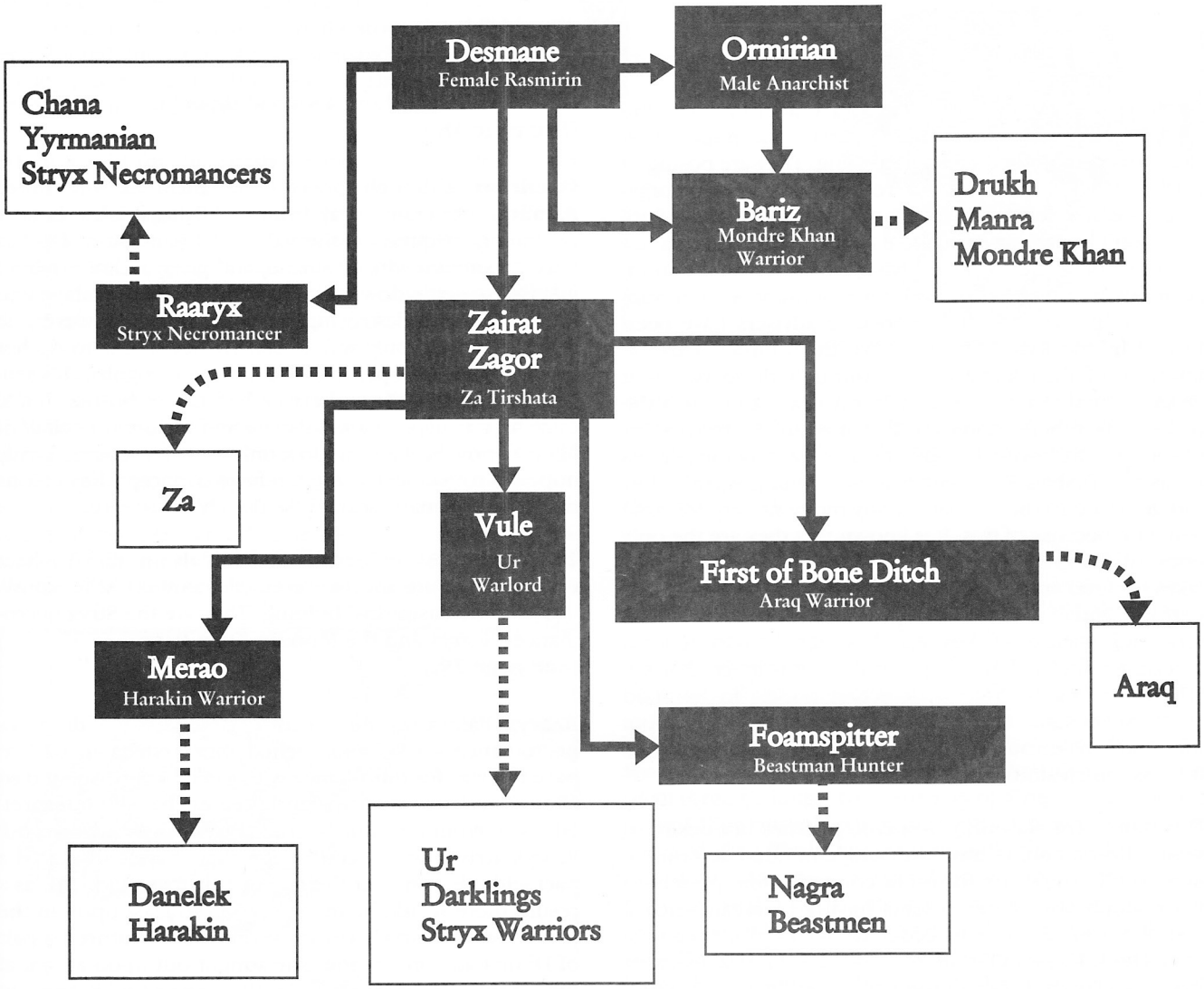
Soulgate Gem

This blue-black diamond is a particularly potent variant of the soulstone (see GB p. 154). The soulgate gem serves as a receptacle for the presence of a ghost, spirit, or demonic presence. In order to activate it, the user wishing to capture an entity in it must cast the spell Sanctify Cult Item as part of a larger ritual. Each gem has a slightly different ritual, so the user must have researched the ritual in advance in order for the process to work. During the ritual, the user chants the name of the desired entity. The modifier to the spell effect is determined at GM discretion, taking into consideration either the accessibility of the entity (if it is willing to enter the gem) or its powers relative to those of the user (if it is not willing). It is up to the GM to decide how appealing being summoned into the gem is from the vantage point of the entity to be captured.

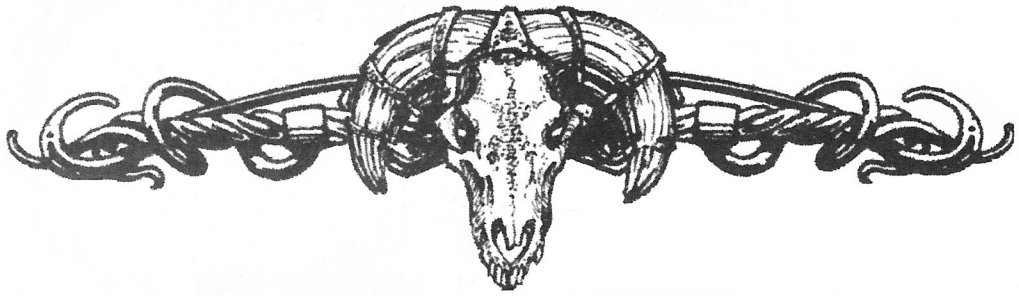
Once the being is in the gem, it can possess any intelligent being wearing it, completely taking over that person's or creature's mind. The wearer may succumb willingly or may resist. If the wearer resists, the entity's level is added to its roll to possess. On a mishap, the entity is thrown out of the gem, making necessary a repeat of the sanctification ritual if the user wishes to get it back. Failure means that the entity does not possess the wearer and must wait twenty-four hours before another attempt. On a partial success, the entity is present within the wearer's mind as a voice but doesn't get direct control of the wearer. Success means a possession that lasts for a number of hours equal to the roll minus five; critical success doubles the possession period.

The Tirshata's Advisers

Chain of Command



Solid boxes: surround individuals
Hollow boxes: surround groups
Solid lines: depict authority over an individual
Dashed lines: depict authority over a group



Foremost among the Tirshata's advisers are the Rasmirins Desmane and Ormirian, the puppetmasters behind the Sub-Men uprising. They are posing as a Dhuna witch and warlock, respectively. They've organized the hierarchy of the camp so that the rest of the Sub-Men don't know how influential they are. The Tirshata has a council of six permanent advisers, with a seventh counselor rotating in from the otherwise unrepresented Sub-Men groups. Two of the inner-circle advisers have been turned by the Rasmirins and serve them rather than the interests of their people. It is through these two that Desmane and Ormirian keep tabs on Zairat and direct the plans of the others. Moreover, they obscure the true extent of their control over the operation by passing themselves off as the Tirshata's anti-curse-and-poisoning squad. They can get close to the Tirshata at any moment and be alone with him because of this. It is known that they are the only ones trusted to be around the Tirshata when he grooms or takes his food and drink: ostensibly they taste his food and perform rituals over it and guard any products of his grooming, such as nail parings, that might be used to form a talisman against him. It is common knowledge that the "Dhuna" saved his life by detecting poison in his food "some years ago." This story, of course, was passed from the Rasmirins through Zagor to prevent the other advisers from getting jealous of their lack of access.

Desmane The Rasmirin Desmane pursues her desire to see civilization obliterated with single-minded determination. She has no time for other concerns. She prefers to work alone and rather resents having to create such a complex organization in order to accomplish her mission. Her interest in Ormirian is like the interest a weaver has in her loom or a potter in her wheel: he is only a tool used to get a necessary job done. The Sub-Men matter even less to her, although she does sympathize with their desire to slay their oppressors.

Desmane has always been a fanatical anarchist, even as a baby. Her parents proudly noted that she was born with a glazed, fiery look in her eyes. As a child, she would routinely report on her fellow children for expressing unanarchistic thoughts. She can't remember a time when she did something except for The Cause. She only negotiates in order to further it; she would sacrifice her own life for Aberon without a second thought.
(See page 18.)

Ormirian Although once as fanatical as any other Rasmirin, Ormirian, away from the Outcast Isles, is now beginning to question the value of his mission. He has become smitten with Desmane, and given a choice would just like to settle down with her in a peaceful cottage and forget all of this destroying-society business. However, he realizes that the only way to stay by her side is to do her bidding, and he hopes that one day she recognizes his selfless devotion to her and clasps him to her bosom. While once he was happy to assassinate and torture on behalf of Aberon, now he wants to do it only for his true love. A truly hopeless romantic, Ormirian refuses to accept the obvious truth that Desmane scarcely notices his existence.

The next most influential individuals in the Tirshata encampment are the two council members who knowingly do the Rasmirins' bidding. They are the Stryx necromancer Raaryx and the Mondre Khan Bariz.
(See page 19.)

Raaryx Raaryx was the organizer of the party of the Stryx necromancers who approached the Tirshata in 617 to pave the way for the alliance with the Ur kings. She did so after experiencing omens and dreams that she interpreted as a communication from Taryx, the carrion god. Raaryx arrived at the conclusion that Taryx had sealed a pact with Aberon over the fate of Talislanta and that, as a result, there would be much carrion to feast upon in the years ahead. Raaryx's visions prominently featured a pair of Dhuna advisers, whom she sought out upon arrival at the camp. Desmane saw in the rapacious Raaryx an important ally, and brought her in on the plan. Desmane trusts Raaryx, confident that the necromancer knows a betrayal would prevent the warfare that will bring Taryx's bounty to the Stryx. Her trust is not misplaced.

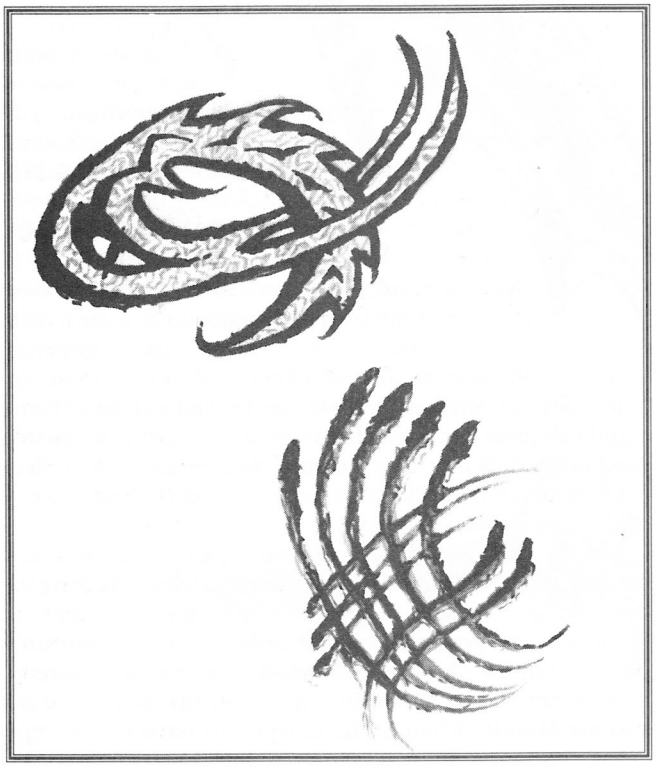
Raaryx is a leering, mocking creature with an insinuating sense of humor. She delights in the unease she causes in her fellow Sub-Men. She would not be averse to gobbling down a weak or helpless individual, whether it be a Sub-Man or an adventurer, if she got a clear chance to do so without consequences. Raaryx feels honored by the

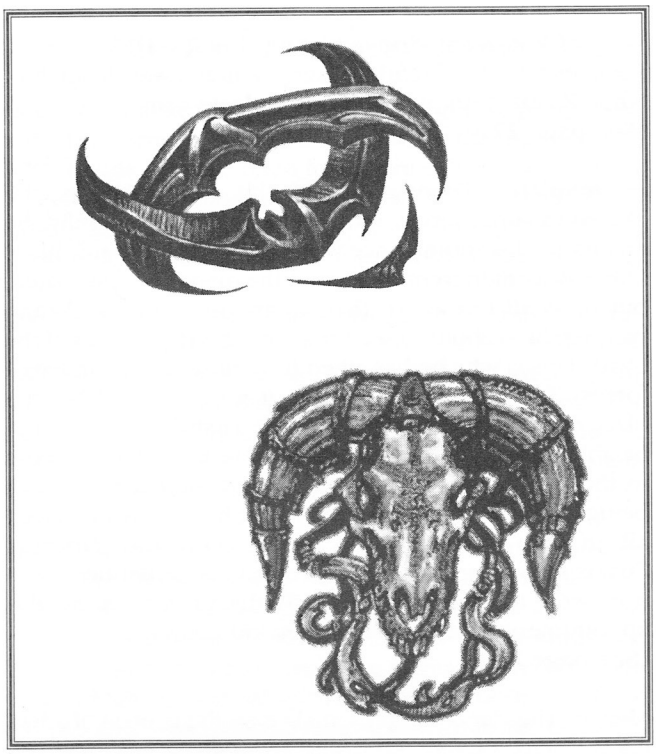
important role in history that Taryx has given her and will do nothing that might jeopardize her god's plans. She would sooner die than fail, though if failure is already apparent she will flee to fight another day.
(See page 20.)

Bariz The Mondre Khan Bariz is propelled by a deep sense of shame that makes him want to see everything around him destroyed. He was a notorious opponent of the Kang before they captured and enslaved him. Full of Mondre Khan pride, Bariz knew that either suicide or escape was the only honorable response to capture. But the Kang were careful not to let their prize out of their sight. And, even more shameful to him, Bariz could not summon up the strength to kill himself, even though his sense of pride demanded it. The laughing Kang put him in a sideshow, even forcing him to do tricks. His humiliation was total.

When a raid on the circus by his clanmates led to his return to Mondre Khan territory, Bariz organized raiding parties, striking back at the Kang with unparalleled ferocity. The others forgot his shame, but Bariz did not: washing his disgrace away with blood became his sole reason for living. However, no matter what carnage he directed, he could not forget those days before the leering crowds.

When he heard that the Tirshata was back, he rushed to the encampment, vowing to do anything that might help to exterminate those who had revealed his own horrid weakness to him. His fervor and heedlessness caught the attention of the Rasmirins, who took the chance of revealing their full plan and ambitions to him. Bariz has not disappointed them: he has become a fanatical devotee of Aberon. The demon lord's goals are identical to his own.





Bariz is even more easily offended than most Mondre Khan, especially if his courage or fortitude is called into question. He will always leap to attack anyone who does this, no matter what the consequences.
(See page 21.)

The remainder of the Tirshata's inner circle are unaware that he is an impostor. Their responsibility is to confer the Tirshata's wishes to their people. Although referred to as "advisers," they have little real influence—Desmane is more interested in making them feel as if they're being consulted than in listening to anything they have to say.

Vule The representative of the Ur is named Vule; the Rasmirins chose him for the position because he has ties to all three Ur kings. He is the son of King Grajak's brother and King Soreg's sister, and served as a squire to the court of King Khek. Vule is unusually slick and thoughtful for an Ur: he's a firm believer in accomplishing through stealth what others try by force. Unfortunately, his notion of himself as exceptionally clever is his downfall—Desmane has made sure to have her Tirshata praise Vule's brain power, which has flattered him into blindness. He has been completely snowed by the false Tirshata and is absolutely loyal to him. He hopes that his position of leader of the Ur, Darkling, and Stryx warrior forces will prove a stepping stone to the united crown of Urag once the Tirshata has achieved his victory. Note that "absolutely loyal" is a relative term for Vule; he may have been tricked into accepting the Tirshata, but he's still good at pinpointing where his own interests lie. He won't sacrifice himself for the Tirshata's cause; as with all self-respecting Ur, he upholds the crown of Urag as his primary goal.

Wary of Vule's emotion-detecting abilities, Desmane has been especially careful to keep Zairat away from him when Zairat is not wearing the soulgate gem.
(See page 22.)

Foamspitter Foamspitter is the Beastman in the Tirshata's inner circle. Gruff, aggressive, and cranky, he maintains his dominance through swagger and bluff. Other Beastmen tremble even at the mention of his name, but he is all too aware that, as an aging, battered campaigner, he is about to see the end of his days as top of the heap. This is why he has allied himself with the Tirshata's forces: if he is going to go out, it might as well be in a blaze of glory. Also, he figures if the Tirshata wins, he may be able to find some permanent position for himself here in the Wilderlands and thereby avoid the humiliation of being deposed by some tough young buck. Having placed all of his hopes for his future with the Tirshata, Foamspitter is not about to question his authenticity. But if he were to discover that the Tirshata is a hoax, his disappointment would fuel rage beyond measure.
(See page 23.)

Merao The Harakin representative on the council of advisers is Merao, a tough old woman who greets any event, no matter how stunning, with world-weary boredom. Profoundly pessimistic, Merao is the member of the council who can be counted on to poke holes in the plans of others, though she does not rouse herself to formulate any of her own. She sees disaster behind every corner and tempers the fanatical optimism of the others. Desmane finds her pragmatism very useful; Merao offers the only advice she considers worth listening to. But Desmane would never trust her with the secret of the Tirshata: Desmane knows her well enough to know that Merao would merely lift an eyebrow, claim that she knew it all along, and lead her people back to their unyielding homeland.

For her part, Merao isn't quite sure why she or her people have involved themselves in this whole uprising. The brutal Tirshata she has met here in the encampment isn't much like the generous one of Harakin legend. She's worried that the whole affair will fall apart and the Harakin will once more be food for Araq and Za. If agents of the civilized world could get to her and convince her that the Tirshata is a fraud, she'd be willing to switch sides if it would better protect the Harakin. However, the fragile spirit of cooperation between clans would be ruptured if the Tirshata were revealed, so her ability to mobilize more than her own small clan would be questionable.
(See page 24.)

First of Bone Ditch The final member of the Tirshata's circle of advisers is First of Bone Ditch, a female Araq. First of Bone Ditch is a tall, proud member of her race, eager to participate in some rapturous bloodletting. She behaves as if constantly pumped-up on adrenaline, speaking in short staccato bursts and always twitching with excess nervous energy. She talks in a hiss, dragging out all of her *S*'s. First of Bone Ditch can scarcely contain her bloodlust and is always the first to recommend rash action. Her theories of strategy boil down to, "Enough of this talk! Let's kill!" (She is a simple creature given to simple pleasures.) Desmane admires the Araq but understands that loyalty means nothing to them. She is careful to see that First of Bone Ditch is kept happy with promises of imminent slaughter.

First of Bone Ditch would leap upon the Tirshata and tear him limb from limb if she found out that he was a charlatan. But she would not be particularly upset. All it would signal to her is the need to swiftly switch targets—from the civilized races to the other Sub-Men in the encampment. Like all Araq, she lives for instant gratification, and she would find it nearly impossible to hold off being violent if she found out the truth. (See page 25.)

Command Structure

Never enthusiastic about seeking the help of others, Desmane wishes to maintain as tight a control over the Tirshata's forces as she can. However, because she is in disguise as a Dhuna, she is unable to do this directly. She has carefully constructed a chain of command that gives her as much influence as possible, while still making the difficult cultural connections between the different Sub-Men races, who are far from united in their goals.

Desmane exercises direct authority over Zairat and has the full cooperation of Zagor's spirit (at least as long as her plan is working). She can give orders to either of them and be certain that those orders will be communicated down the chain of command. She also deals directly with her fellow Rasmirin, Ormirian, the Stryx Raaryx, and the Mondre Khan Bariz. Raaryx and Bariz also accept

Ormirian as representative for Desmane and will take orders from him. Desmane does not allow him to give instructions to the Tirshata. Neither Raaryx nor Bariz accepts orders from the other.

The advisers who are ignorant of the Tirshata's true identity accept instructions only from him, so when Desmane wants to get them to do something, she must issue the instructions to the Zagor-possessed Zairat. She invariably has the spirit possess the pathetic cook whenever the advisers are to see him—Zairat isn't a very good actor.

The advisers are responsible for communicating orders from the Tirshata to others in the camp. Each commands the forces of his or her own race. Most also act as liaisons to the races unrepresented on the council. The exception to this is First of Bone Ditch, the Araq, whom the Rasmirins reckon to be too frightening and unstable to command other races effectively. Raaryx issues instructions to the Chana and Yrmanian leadership. Bariz is responsible for the Drukh and Manra. Vule, naturally, commands the Ur's traditional vassals—the Darklings and Stryx warriors

Foamspitter gets the Nagra, and Merao deals with the Danelek. Sub-chieftains of the Za are commanded directly by Zagor.

As a sop to those races without a council member, Desmane has arranged for a seventh council member to rotate in. Every week a different culture gets to appoint a leader to sit in on meetings. This is a mere formality; these advisers have little influence. The leaders of these unrepresented groups have learned it is better to address grievances to their liaison on the permanent council than to address them directly to the Tirshata during their rare face-to-face meetings.

In other circumstances, the members of the council would be unlikely to get along. But their great devotion to the cause (whether the supposed one or the real one) is so great that there is little friction between them. There is also only minor dissension in the lower ranks: the Sub-Men who have gathered here have done so in unanimous hope of seeing their most fervent dreams of vengeance realized. Most disputes are over petty culture clashes, and Desmane is smart enough to make sure these are dealt with as quickly and fairly as possible.

The Tirshata Encampment

As the campaign against the Seven Kingdoms progresses, Sub-Men armies will be stationed throughout the Wilderlands. But the main forces are still stationed at the Tirshata's encampment. This is also where the PCs will have to go if they wish to seek a resolution to the conflict, as no other form of direct action will be of real effect.

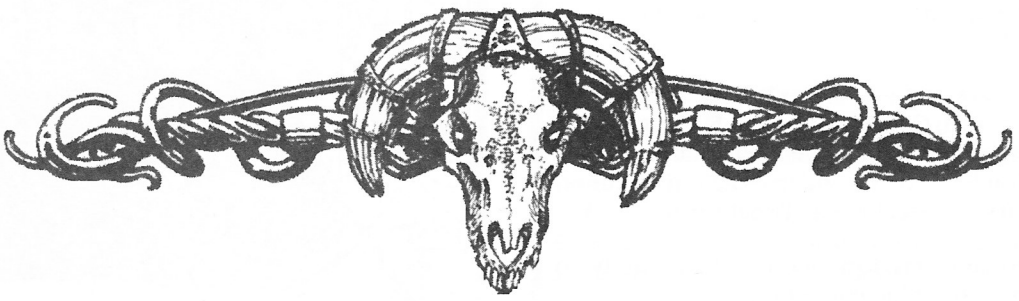
The Tirshata encampment is placed on a sandstone outcrop in the middle of the Wilderlands of Zaran. This traditional Za meeting place is now filled to overflowing with soldiers from various Sub-Men communities. The outcrop isn't that high—only about fifteen feet from the plain below—and has sloping sides. But even a slight height advantage is worth having.

There is a further rise of rock in the center of the outcrop, where the Tirshata is stationed. The two Rasmirins, along with Raaryx and a few other Stryx necromancers, also have their tents here. This natural platform of sandstone rises abruptly from the rest of the formation and is about six feet high. At several points, the edges of the platform are broken, which allows one to scramble up or down without resorting to a ladder.

Troops are stationed around the outcrop by race, beginning with the Nagra, Manra, Danelek, and Harakin encampments, which overflow down the slopes of the outcrop onto the plains below. (This is a source of a certain amount of complaining by those races farther down, since height translates as status to most Sub-Men.)

Desmane has done her best to prevent squabbles by, for example, separating the Chana from their traditional enemies, the Nagra and Manra. But tensions are inevitable with such an unruly group, and small fights do break out. Unless the fights are notably unfair or unacceptably lethal, the leaders of the various groups allow them as a means of relieving pent-up tension. Some Sub-Men, like the curious Manra, wander about the camp to interact with other groups. Others, like the suspicious Danelek, keep to themselves as much as possible.

For a diagram of the Tirshata encampment, refer to the "Heart of the Beast" adventure, p. 91.



Desmane, Rasmirin Anarchist, 14th Level

Languages: Common Talislan +10, Elder Tongue +16, Sign +16.

Description: Female, age 43; fine features; burnt, pinkish skin; fine, white hair dyed black. Wears long cloak, frock of spun linen, animal-hide boots. Carries spell scroll and phony elixirs, plus iron-shod staff (2 g.l.). When anticipating a fight, she dons Rasmirin armor—partial chain and hide with mail gauntlets (200 g.l.). She has 400 g.l. worth of loose diamonds (for emergency funds) sewn into her cloak.

INT	+2	PER	0
WIL	0	CHA	-1
STR	+1	DEX	+1
CON	+1	SPD	0

Hit Points: 39

Attacks	CR	Damage
Iron-shod staff	+8	d10+1
Short bow	+8	d8
Unarmed combat	+8	2 points

Armor: 2

Spells per Day: 10

Spells:

Banish MR+9 Forces summoned, undead, or extra-dimensional creatures from caster's presence.

Divination MR+9 Reveals information on fate, wisdom, or destiny.

Eldritch Aura MR+9 Absorbs 4 points damage per level.

Eldritch Barrier MR+9 Creates wall of eldritch force.

Eldritch Bolt MR+9 Inflicts 1d4 points damage per level.

Faith Healing MR+9 Heals 4 points damage per level.

Malediction MR+9 Curse that reduces CHA.

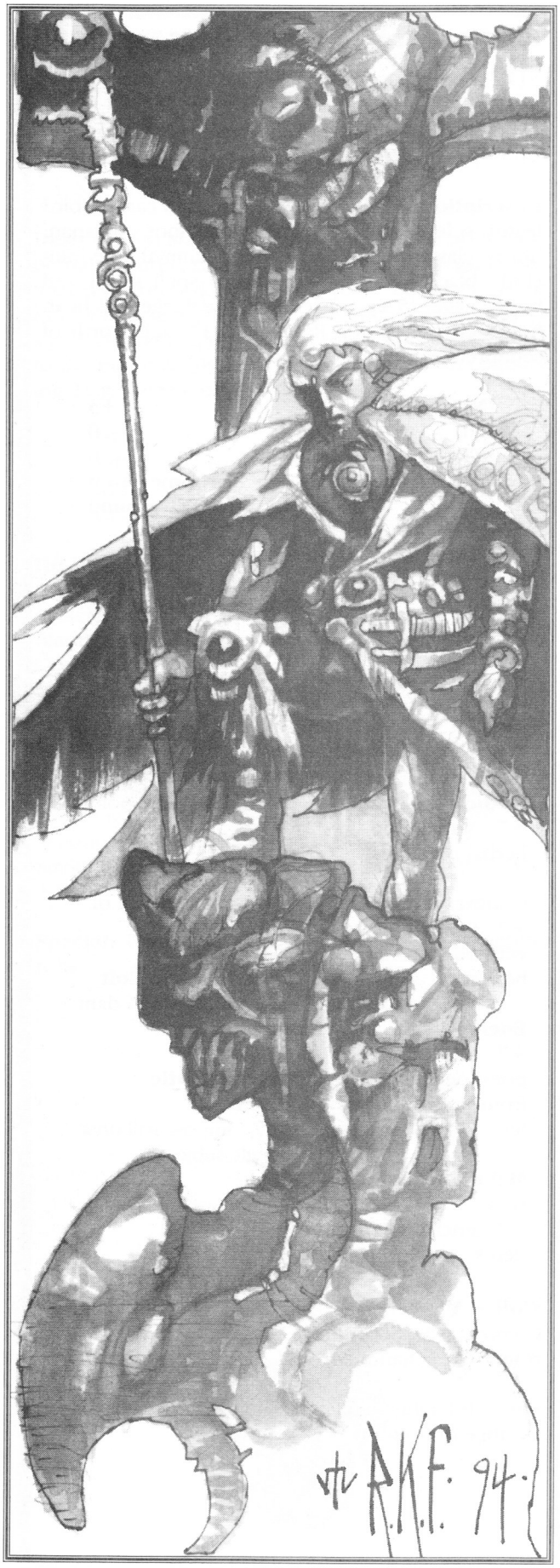
Obsession MR+9 Afflicts target with powerful craving or desire.

Sanctuary MR+9 Protects against intruders.

Word of Command MR+9 Compels obedience of one-word order.

Skills: Coerce +13, Con +13, Elude +5, Haggle +13, Interrogate +7, Nomadic Customs +16, Sabotage +5, Secondary Combat +8, Secondary Magic (invocation and witchcraft) +9, Stealth +4, Tribal Customs +16.

Special: Desmane has lost her usual immunity to cold, along with her blue coloration.



Ormirian, Rasmirin Anarchist, 10th Level

Languages: Common Talislan +1, Elder Tongue +16, Sign +16.

Description: Male, age 29; red, sunburned skin; fine, white hair dyed brown. Wears long cloak, shirt and breeches of spun linen, animal-hide boots. Carries spell scroll and phony elixirs, plus iron-shod staff (2 g.l.). When anticipating a fight, he dons Rasmirin armor—partial chain and hide with mail gauntlets (200 g.l.). He has belt of ivory medallions worth 300 g.l. strapped to his midriff.

INT	+2	PER	0
WIL	0	CHA	-1
STR	+1	DEX	+1
CON	+1	SPD	0

Hit Points: 31

Attacks	CR	Damage
Iron-shod staff	+6	d10+1
Short bow	+6	d8
Unarmed combat	+6	2 points

Armor: 2

Spells per Day: 8

Spells:

Banish
MR+7 Forces summoned, undead, or extra-dimensional creatures from caster's presence.

Divination
MR+7 Reveals information on fate, wisdom, or destiny.

Eldritch Aura
MR+7 Absorbs 4 points damage per level.

Eldritch Barrier
MR+7 Creates wall of eldritch force.

Eldritch Bolt
MR+7 Inflicts 1d4 points damage per level.

Faith Healing
MR+7 Heals 4 points damage per level.

Obsession
MR+7 Afflicts target with powerful cravings or desire.

Word of Command
MR+7 Compels obedience of one-word order.

Skills: Appraise Treasure +12, Assassinate +11, Barter +9, Haggle +9, Secondary Combat +6, Secondary Magic (invocation and witchcraft) +7, Torture +8, Waylay +4.

Special: Ormirian has lost his usual immunity to cold along with his blue coloration.

Raaryx, Stryx Necromancer, 10th Level

Languages: Archaen +12, Common Talislan +4, Northron +12.

Description: Female, age 27; distorted carrion-bird features; leathery wings with twenty-foot wingspan; horns; clawed appendages. Wears animal-hide loincloth, black iron bracers. Carries spell scroll and bone dagger (5 s.p.). The hilt of the dagger has been hollowed out; inside Raaryx has 170 g.l. worth of semiprecious stones.

INT	+2	PER	+3
WIL	0	CHA	0
STR	-1	DEX	0
CON	0	SPD	+5 airborne/ -1 on ground

Hit Points: 30

Attacks	**CR**	**Damage**
Bone dagger	+1	d6-1

Armor: None.

Spells per Day: 8

Spells:

Concoct Herbal Medicines
+7 Make minor herbal remedies.

Contact Lower Plane
+7 Communicate with otherworldly beings.

Energy Drain
+7 Drains 1 hit point per caster level from victim and transfers it to caster.

Make Enchanted Item
+7 Enchants various items.

Necromantic Aura
+7 Absorbs 4 points damage per level.

Necromantic Barrier
+7 Creates wall of force.

Necromantic Bolt
+7 Inflicts 1d4 damage per level.

Necromantic Coercion
+7 Impose will on a single subject.

Skills: Metaphysical Doctrines +6, Rudimentary Combat +1, Secondary Magic (necromancy and primitive enchantment) +7, Tribal Customs +12.

Special: Flight; Night Vision; detect carrion by sight at range of up to five miles.

Bariz, Mondre Khan Warrior, 9th Level

Languages: Chanan +8, Common Talislan +3, Quan +4, Sign +8.

Description: Male, age 33; mane of coarse black hair; bestial features; shaggy forearms and forelegs; claws; leathery brown skin. Wears leather and plate armor (250 g.l.). Carries rasp (15 g.l.) and 7 blade stars (2 s.p. each), pouch, rope and grapnel, tinderbox. Glued to the inside of his breastplate is a hide skin containing 21 g.l. worth of gold dust.

INT	-1	PER	0
WIL	0	CHA	-2
STR	+3	DEX	+3
CON	+2	SPD	+1

Hit Points: 34

Attacks	CR	Damage
Blade stars	+7	d4
Claws	+7	d4+3
Rasp	+7	d6+3

Armor: None.

Skills: Ambush +8, Assassinate +12, Camouflage +8, Hide +8, Ride +12, Sabotage +8, Scout +9, Secondary Combat +7, Sideshow Talents +12, Stalking +12, Swim +12, Tribal Customs +8, Waylay +12.

Special: Claws usable as weapons; +3 to climbing rolls.

Vule, Ur Warlord, 10th Level

Languages: Common Talislan +4, Northron +9.

Description: Male, age 25; yellow-gray hide; black eyes with white pupils; bestial features; hair worn in triple topknot. Wears spiked black iron partial plate (500 g.l.), bracers and armbands, yaksha-hide loincloth, cloak and boots, necklaces of fangs and claws. Carries Ur club (200 g.l.), stone war axe (10 g.l.), dagger (1 g.l.), and pouch. He proudly wears several appallingly flashy gold necklaces, which, melted down, would be worth about 500 g.l.

INT	-1	PER 0/	+6	when reading emotions
WIL	0	CHA	-2	
STR	+6	DEX	-2	
CON	+5	SPD	-2	

Hit Points: 45

Attacks	CR	Damage
Dagger	+8	d6+6
Unarmed	+8	7 points
Ur club	+8	d12+6
War axe	+8	d20+6

Armor: 4

Skills: Command +8, Diplomacy +2, Haggle +8, Mounted Combat (ogriphant) +8, Primary Combat +8, Ride +8, Tribal Customs +9.

Special: Night Vision; read emotions at a range of up to 20 feet.

Foamspitter, Beastman Hunter, 9th Level

Languages: Common Talislan +7, Sign +7.

Description: Male, age 37; body covered with bristling brown fur; bestial features; fangs. Wears boots and loincloth of animal hide, and pouch containing 70 g.l. in coins. Carries a long dagger (1 g.l.) and a war axe (10 g.l.).

INT	-2	PER	+1
WIL	-2	CHA	-2
STR	+3	DEX	-2
CON	+1	SPD	+1

Hit Points: 34

Attacks	CR	Damage
Bite	+4	d4+3
Claw	+4	d4+3
Dagger	+4	d6+3
War axe	+4	d20+3

Armor: 1

Skills: Command +4, Hunter/Gatherer +10, Mounted Combat (darkmane) +8, Ride +8, Secondary Combat +4, Set/Detect Snares +7/+10, Stalking +7, Swim +7, Torture +7, Tribal Customs +7.

Special: D4+1 combat bonus versus wounded opponents; must roll versus will rating to resist urge to feed on fallen opponents.

Merao, Harakin Warrior, 8th Level

Languages: Common Talislan +8, Sign +8.

Description: Female, age 43; gray skin; hard features; lean and rugged. Wears rough leather tunic, cowl, high boots, reptile-hide gauntlets, shoulder pouch. Carries iron boomerang (40 c.p.), two-bladed knife (1 g.l.), four-bladed axe (15 g.l.). No money or other loot.

INT	0	PER	0
WIL	+3	CHA	0
STR	+3	DEX	+2
CON	+5	SPD	0

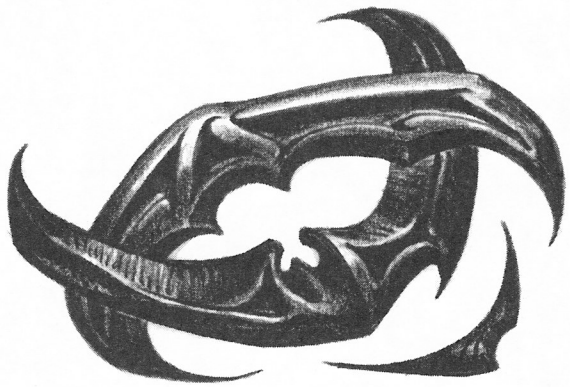
Hit Points: 35

Attacks	**CR**	**Damage**
Four-bladed axe	+10	d12+3
Iron boomerang	+10	d8
Two-bladed knife	+10	d6+3

Armor: None.

Skills: Command +5, Hunter/Gatherer +8, Mountain Climbing +10, Mounted Combat (dractyl) +10, Primary Combat +10, Ride +10, Tracking +8, Tribal Customs +8.

Special: None.



First of Bone Ditch, Araq Warrior, 8th Level

Languages: Common Talislan +8, Sauran +8.

Description: Female, age 20; scaly, light brown hide; dorsal membrane; snakelike features; claws; fangs. Wears arm wrappings, boots, loincloth, shoulder pouch, backpack. Carries shield of land dragon hide (5 s.p.), saw-edged dagger (1 g.l.), dragonbone spear (1 g.l.), and mace (4 g.l.). No money or other loot.

INT	0	PER	0
WIL	0	CHA	0
STR	+2	DEX	+2
CON	+7	SPD	0

Hit Points: 35

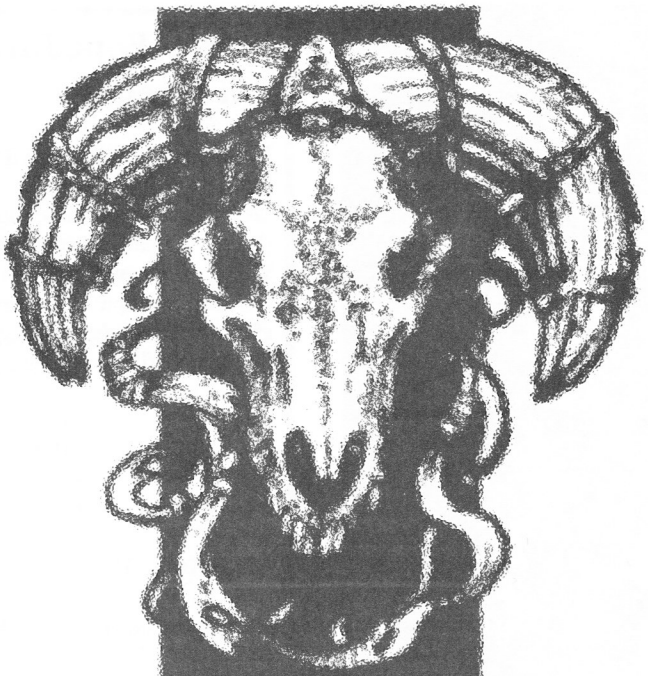
Attacks	CR	Damage
Mace	+10	d10+3
Saw-edged dagger	+10	d6+2
Spear	+10	d10*

Armor: 1, carries shield (-2 to opponent's roll to hit).

*The spear can be thrown; it requires two hands to use as a melee weapon.

Skills: Command +5, Mounted Combat (duadir) +10, Nomadic Customs +8, Primary Combat +10, Ride +10, Stalking +10, Tracking +8.

Special: Survive for up to six weeks without food and water; communicate with reptilian species.



2

Sub-Men Cultures

Araq

Objective Summary

Pitiless reptilian neomorphs bred for the kill.

How and Where They Live

Desert hunter nomads who prey on land dragons and on other humanoid species. Found in the Wilderlands of Zaran.

Beliefs

Creatures of instinct rather than thought, Araq cannot be truly said to have beliefs. Instead, they are governed by impulses that reward them with ecstatic pleasure when they kill. They bond powerfully with one another and regard all others as prey.

Relationship with Tirshata

The Araq have instinctively swarmed to serve the Tirshata. The original Tirshata had the power to reach inside their hearts and change the impulses that their breeders built into them.

Civilized View

"The experiment that led to the breeding of the neomorphs known as the Araq was a terrible blunder, one that haunts Talislanta to this day. These things were built as highly efficient engines of slaughter, nothing more. When dealing with Araq, one should realize there is no chance of communication or understanding. There is only the contest for survival."

—Omir al Kasir, Kasmiran scholar

An Araq Speaks

"Wind is at our backs. Hearts pound in our chests. Muscles leap like flame. The land dragon rears up, pierced by our lances. We thrill to its screams. Its massive claw crashes down on one of us. We hiss in pride as our sister dies, howling her last ecstasy until her ribcage pops and flattens. I feel the impact of my lance shudder through my bones as it goes through the land dragon's eye. The dragon bellows in fury; it is saying that it will kill us. We shriek back: 'No, land dragon! It is you who die today!' Joy makes us delirious, frenzied. We are Araq, on the hunt. It is now that we are most alive."

Although considered Sub-Men today, the Araq were originally created by the Archaens, who were then at the height of their power, in order to aid in the subjugation of the primitive races of Talislanta. The Archaens created the Araq as a response to the central difficulty they faced in their war with the Sub-Men: their enemies were both more prolific than the "civilized" Archaens and more willing to die than Archaen forces. That they were more willing to die is explained by the fact that the Sub-Men were defending their lives and lands, while the Archaen foot troops were dying in squalid circumstances far from home. Ever ready to solve their problems with their secret lore, the Archaen leadership charged its wizards with the task of designing the perfect killers.

They carefully studied the existing races of Talislanta, isolating the qualities that made for the cruelest and most relentless fighters. The assignment was a difficult one—the magicians concluded that the worst murderers are made, not born. But there were magical ways to enforce the deadly behavior the Archaens wanted. Birthed in hideous ceremonies that have thankfully now been forgotten, the Araq were a hybrid of Sauran and Man, with all of the noble impulses of either race carefully filtered out. In their stead, the sorcerers added new impulses never found in a naturally occurring Talislantan humanoid species. They mystically altered the creatures' minds, disconnecting the pleasure centers usually associated with mating and reconnecting them to areas governing the Araq's aggressive instincts. This meant that the Araq brains rewarded their bodies with intense pleasure whenever the Araq had violent thoughts. The pleasure intensified when the thoughts became action. When action became victory and the Araq killed an opponent, they shuddered with a wave of ecstatic exhilaration of an intensity beyond description. The ultimate killing machine had been born.

There were problems with the first proto-Araq. These would tear apart any living thing within reach—including other Araq. Since the Archaen leadership wanted to send entire platoons into battle against the Sub-Men, this was a setback for the project. So the sorcerers went back to their mystical tomes and developed a fierce strain of loyalty between members of the second batch of Araq. They would bond powerfully with one another and still destroy any other Sub-Men they came into contact with.

It wasn't until the Araq platoons hit the field that another oversight was noticed: the Araq were just as happy to shred Archaen forces as Sub-Men. In order to make use of them as a weapon, the Archaen armies had to transport them to an area, release them, and then escape into a strong point to wait for the Araq to get bored and wander off in search of easier prey. This was scarcely convenient, and many important commanders were slaughtered when the Araq proved too fast for them. The sorcerers at Archaen headquarters in charge of the Araq project were demoted and replaced by a new crowd of upstarts who had the crazy idea of making ships fly. Later, the Archaens would abandon Talislanta to the Sub-Men, now having included the Araq under that umbrella term.

Meanwhile, the Araq were spreading, and developing a culture of their own. Though they killed any humanoids within reach, they found a greater ecstasy in the hunting of the more formidable land dragons. They developed a nomadic culture, expanding to wherever land dragons were found, centering their lives around these gigantic beasts. They fashioned their weapons and tools from land dragon bones and hide—anything else they regarded as taboo. This proved a self-limiting factor on Araq territorial expansion: in ecologies where land dragons had only a marginal hold, the Araq quickly wiped them out. The Araq would only go where the land dragons were, which in the present day has come to mean the Wilderlands of Zaran.

Araq form closely knit communities, or war bands, based on the ideal number of hunters to take down a land dragon—thirty members, including children, at absolute maximum. They make little distinction between genders. Araq reproduce sparingly, carefully conceiving only the right number of children to fill out the band. With their rerouted pleasure centers, they take little interest in mating, at any rate. Partners in procreation feel no great attachment to one another beyond the potent feeling of kinship the band members all feel for one another; each will likely seek another partner when a mating is again required. When developing the Araq, the Archaens decided to make them mature very quickly, so as to have them waste as little time as possible before becoming optimal warriors. Engineering this was difficult, the cost being that they decay at an accelerated rate on the other end of the age scale. Araq consider aging a torment and prefer to die in battle before growing old.

Designed to bond powerfully, Araq relate to one another almost on an unconscious level. They read one another very well, and little speech is required to convey intentions between war band members—especially since those intentions generally revolve around the unsubtle activities of hunting, killing, and eating. This means that no leadership or hierarchy is needed to regulate life in an Araq community. Normal Araq are incapable of fighting other members of the war band and have only a limited ability to skirmish with other Araq bands. Such confrontations, usually over hunting territory, are highly ritualized and full of animalistic display behavior. Generally the band whose members can flare their head fins in the most alarming fashion win such contests.

Stripped by their creators of impulses deemed noble or unnecessary, Araq do not practice any art—not even storytelling. However, each generation is imprinted, in an almost empathic process, with the memories of the last. So each Araq has a dim shadow memory, like a half-remembered dream, of the events in the lives of all of his or her ancestors.

Each Araq therefore remembers the Tirshata, who changed the Araq race somehow during the Age of Confusion. Each reacted to him as he or she would to another Araq. The Tirshata gave the Araq the ability to coexist with members of other Sub-Men races without

immediately diving for their throats. This is an ability the Araq maintain to this day, though they often choose not to exercise it. This fact makes them effective but hard to control in battle, something that the Rasmirins behind the coming of the new Tirshata are only now learning to reckon with. Before the coming of the Tirshata, the Araq were incapable of resisting their murderous impulses; now they can do so at least some of the time.

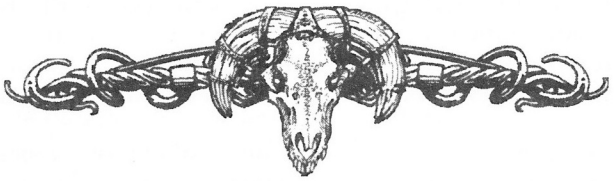
Although the magically bred Araq are biologically very similar to one another even today, some mutations do occur. Araq encountered away from the Wilderlands of Zaran and apart from war bands will likely be "defective" examples of their kind. Some may be incapable of participating in the bond between war band members. This deficiency is noticeable early, and the Araq adults practice infanticide by leaving these children to fend for themselves in the hostile Wilderlands. Typically, those who are abandoned have to be at least as savage as their socialized cousins to survive, though they are capable of acquiring the basics of a culture if later exposed to one. Some other peoples of the Wilderlands will rescue an Araq child if they find it, and raise it for their own. Some grow up too vicious to be useful, but others are able to bond with their adopted group; hence, one sometimes finds a party of Xambrians, Orgovians, or Za with an Araq member, who walks, talks, and behaves not as an Araq but as a member of his or her fellows' culture.

Other Araq are self-exiling. Although capable of feeling the war band bond, they also have other qualities: recessive strains of nobility that surface despite all of the Archaens' attempts to remove these from the Araq lineage. Although they still feel the hormonal pull towards violence, these "noble" Araq usually find something lacking in a life of constant raiding and hunting, and strike out in search of a way of understanding the alien yearnings they feel. Unfortunately, even an Araq who wishes to devote his or her life to knowledge or the pursuit of beauty will be greeted with fear and enmity by civilized peoples.

The future of the Araq is in question as they continue to hunt the land dragon to extinction. Their cultural practices are so dependent on it that it is difficult to predict what will happen to them if they do finally wipe the species out. Since survival is sewn into their blood streams, it is doubtful that they'd disappear. But what form their new culture would take is hard to say. This is perhaps why some Araq war bands have already thrown in with the forces of the returned Tirshata—he changed them once, and they instinctively realize that he might be able to set them on a new path yet again.

Reactions to Other Sub-Men Races

Araq have trouble getting along with most Sub-Men, since their social relationships are instinctive—they tend to leap into a killing frenzy when confused or threatened. They make few distinctions between the various groups, all of whom the majority of Araq view as alien and loathsome, and tolerate only because of the presence of the Tirshata.



Beastmen

Objective Summary

Known for their pack-like social structure and feared for their frenzied style in battle.

How and Where They Live

Nomadic hunters native to the Plains of Golarin.

Beliefs

The pack is more important than anything else. Strong leaders must be obeyed. Weak leaders must be overthrown. Hunting is both a way of survival and a source of pleasure. The greatest thrill is taking down skillful prey.

Relationship with Tirshata

The Tirshata was once the greatest leader of the Beastmen, having bested all of their leaders in challenges and binding them into the greatest pack of all—the assembled forces of the Landborne. His return is cause for great celebration.

Civilized View

"To call these things beasts is to insult the beasts. These wretched and frenzied creatures know no concept of mercy and hunt humanoids for sport. Never trust them."

—Alyph, Gryph warrior

A Beastman Speaks

"We run with the pack. We chase; we track. And that is good. The smell of blood is the best smell. You say we are like animals. We say yes, and that it is good. We do not argue or kill each other over stupid things as you do. You claim you are different, but you are no different. You are just tricking yourselves. Your blood is crying to you—can't you hear it? It is saying join the chase—the chase is all that matters."

The Beastmen of the Plains of Golarin lead simple lives based on instinct. Their culture is transmitted not through teaching but through some physical part of their minds. Experiments in "civilizing" the Beastmen have always failed because those doing the civilizing

have never understood that they offered the Beastmen nothing they wanted. Beastmen desires are simple: they want enough game to eat, they want the thrill and tension of the chase, and they want to exist together in their packs. A challenging hunt, a belly full of meat, and a communal howl are the apogee of the Beastmen life.

Beastmen social structure is rather like that of predatory pack animals of Earth, like wolves, jackals, or lions. At the head of each pack is what we might call an alpha—the dominant hunter, whose authority is absolute. The Beastmen call this figure the *garu*. (Somewhat confusingly, they use the same term for the ritual, described below, that elects the leader.) The garu must be the roughest, most threatening member of the bunch, able to ride herd over the rest of the pack. The garu gives orders during the hunt, determines food distribution, and may mate with whomever he or she pleases. Although the garu may theoretically be either male or female, only about twenty percent of the garus on the Plains of Golarin at any one time are Beastwomen. This is because females suffer a significant disadvantage in contests to hold the title if they become pregnant.

Although the word—or, more aptly, "growl"—of the garu is absolute, he or she may be challenged at any time by another member of the pack. Except for the rule that the challenger must declare the challenge underway before beginning (thereby eliminating the chance for sneak attacks), there are no limits on the tactics challengers may use to overturn the current garu. The fight resulting from a challenge ends only when one contestant submits, by presenting his or her boots to be sniffed by the winner. Many challenges are resolved through display only: each contender bares fangs, growls, jumps up and down, beats his or her chest, and generally looks as menacing as possible. These flourishes usually serve to cow the challenger, leaving the current garu in place. However, more

serious challengers may withstand the intimidation and attack the titleholder physically, until either they or leader submits. Challenge fights are rarely fatal, and fatalities occur only when a combatant misjudges either his or her own condition or the amount of punishment his or her opponent can withstand. It is always better to submit and live—and perhaps gain the strength to successfully remount a challenge later—than to fight on stubbornly and die. When a garu becomes pregnant, she is at a much greater risk of being defeated in such a challenge fight. In fact, the challenges come more often than not from the male who has impregnated her.

This challenge ritual is used among lower-ranking members of the pack as well. Each pack has a strictly established hierarchy so that each member knows his or her rank relationship to all of the others. A Beastman or Beastwoman may be either subordinate to or superior to any other member of the pack—it is not possible for two members of the same pack to be equal. Subordinates must defer to superiors in all matters, from choice of mate to access to food, steeds, and equipment. When given contradictory instructions from two different superiors, the subordinate obeys the one of higher rank. Beastmen can change their ranks within the pack by challenging their immediate superiors. If they win the challenges, challengers swap ranks with defenders. If subordinates lose challenges, they remain at their current rank.

Challenges also take place on an inter-pack level, though there is no hierarchy of packs. Beastmen are simultaneously nomadic and fiercely territorial, which can lead to problems. When two packs encounter one another on the hunt, a challenge ensues. Like challenges between individuals, inter-pack challenges may end at a display of aggression or continue to actual combat; and, again, the challenge continues until one side submits. Submission means that the losing pack must immediately leave the area. The decision to submit is at the sole discretion of the garu, which means that these challenges are more likely than individual challenges to lead to deaths, since, in the midst of the fray, it is hard for a garu to evaluate the condition of each combatant.

It is possible for two packs who meet to avoid a challenge altogether; this usually happens when one pack is just passing through and does not intend to compete with the other for game. The garu who wishes to avoid a challenge presents his boot to the other for sniffing. Again, this ritual is to establish a bond of trust—and to allow the sniffer to track down and confront the one submitting in the case of a trick.

Beastmen expect strangers, no matter what race they come from, to greet them by presenting themselves—or a suitable garment, such as a boot—for sniffing. Unfortunately, most others are ignorant of this ritual and therefore end up in combat with Beastmen whenever they encounter them. Failure to present oneself for sniffing indicates a desire to challenge for territory; Beastmen are especially sensitive about other races expanding into their area and take such challenges, real or imagined, very seriously.

Among the more alarming practices of Beastmen are their setting traps to maim and their hunting of other humanoids for sport.

Beastmen may exile themselves from their packs by retreating from challenges without submitting, forcing their superiors to consider them a threat to them until submission occurs. If others leave with a withdrawing Beastman or Beastwoman, a new pack may coalesce around him or her. If alone, the exile may attempt to join a new pack by submitting to all of its members. He or she then may work into the hierarchy by challenging members of the new pack, from the lowliest on up. Or the exile may continue wandering and leave the Plains of Golarin altogether. Some of this kind end up as soldiers or scouts in irregular armies, and some join adventuring bands.

After successful hunts, packs participate in communal howls, which have a limited narrative content. Through these howls, the Beastmen remember the first coming of the Tirshata and how they were the second group to join him after the Za. According to Beastmen legend, the Tirshata spent years traveling through the Plains of Golarin, joining pack after pack and challenging his way up to garu status in each. He then united the packs and continued to the next Sub-Men group. It is unclear just how metaphorical this account is. This time around, the Beastmen have not waited for the Tirshata to challenge them; many packs have already headed to his encampment to submit and join the final battle against civilization.

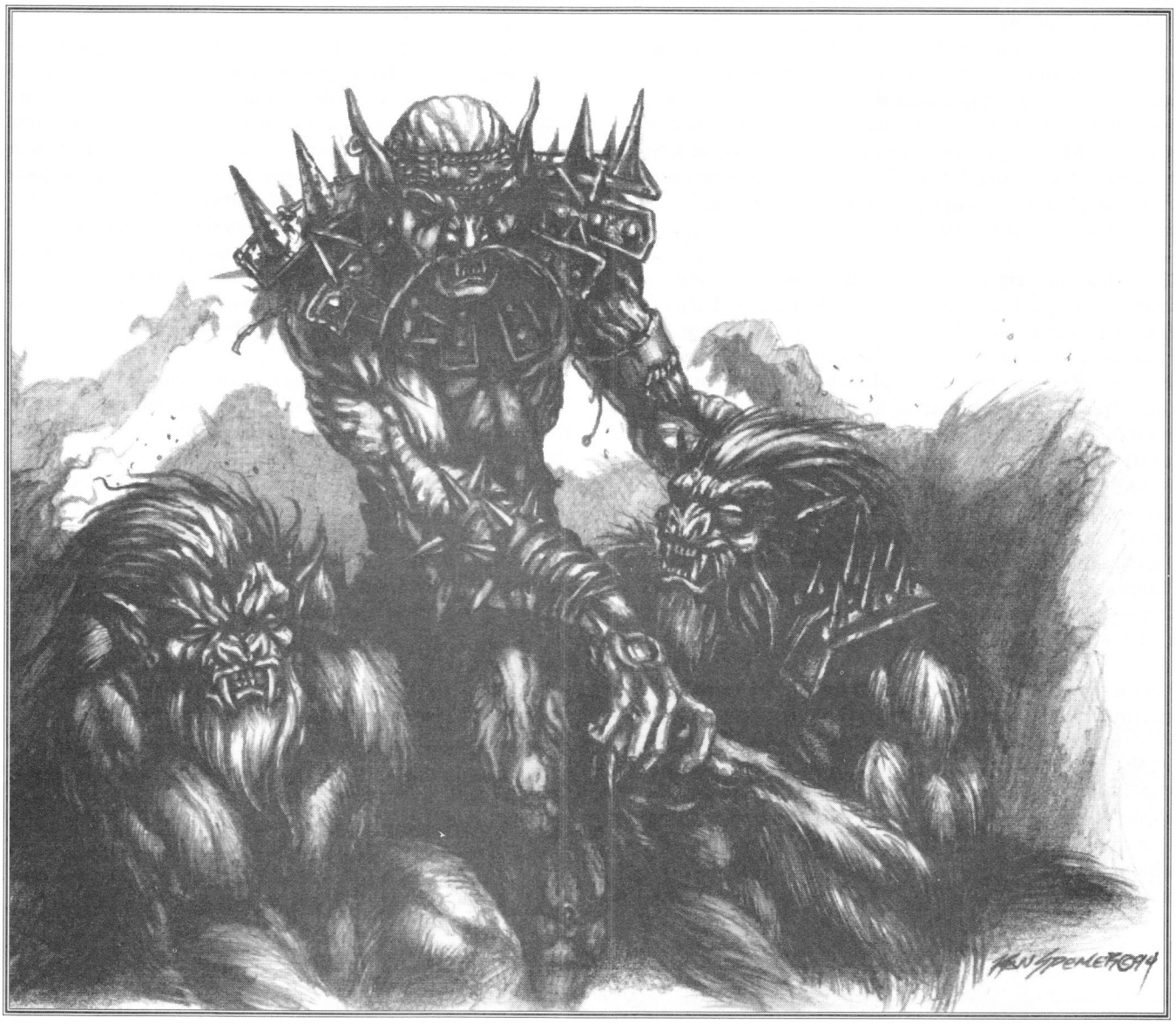
Reactions to Other Sub-Men Races

Generally:

Beastmen tend to keep to themselves in the Tirshata encampment, since other groups tend not to follow the sniffing ritual. They are sympathetic to the Araq and Danelek, as well as to the Mondre Khan, whom they see as similar to themselves (though when they actually meet Mondre Khan, who dislike them thoroughly—see p. 53—they invariably get a rude surprise).

Breakdown by Race:

Araq: See "Generally" above.
Chana: Dark rumors about the Chana make the Beastmen nervous.
Danelek: See "Generally" above.
Darklings: Darklings, used to subservience, are the only group to have figured out the sniffing ritual; since Darklings are small and always submit, the Beastmen regard them as children.
Drukh: The Beastmen think of torture as a practice of the civilized lands and therefore regard the Drukh as tainted and suspect.
Harakin: The Beastmen don't appreciate the subtle disdain the Harakin display toward them.
Manra: The Manra they see as weak and insolent.
Mondre Khan: See "Generally" above.
Nagra: Beastmen think Nagra are strange, since the Beastmen follow no spiritual beliefs of their own.



Stryx: Beastmen dislike Stryx: they're competitors for carrion and cowardly fighters too.
Ur: Fights with the self-important Ur are common.
Yrmanians: Yrmanians are just plain incomprehensible and not to be trusted.
Za: The Za and Beastmen were the first tribes to ally in the time of the first Tirshata, and they maintain a respect for one another.

Chana

Objective Summary

Egalitarian tribesfolk who have mastered spirit magic that bridges realities.

How and Where They Live

Jungle tribesmen who subsist through small-scale horticulture, hunting, and raiding. Their home bears their name—the Jungles of Chana.

Beliefs

The Chana venerate darkness, believing that it represents a paradisiacal afterlife, or *Real World*, and that the mortal world is but an illusion.

Relationship with Tirshata

Chana believe the Tirshata to be a mystical entity who will either teach all of the other Landborne the ways of the Chana and usher them and the Chana all into the Real World, or merely teach all other Landborne the ways of the Chana.

Civilized View

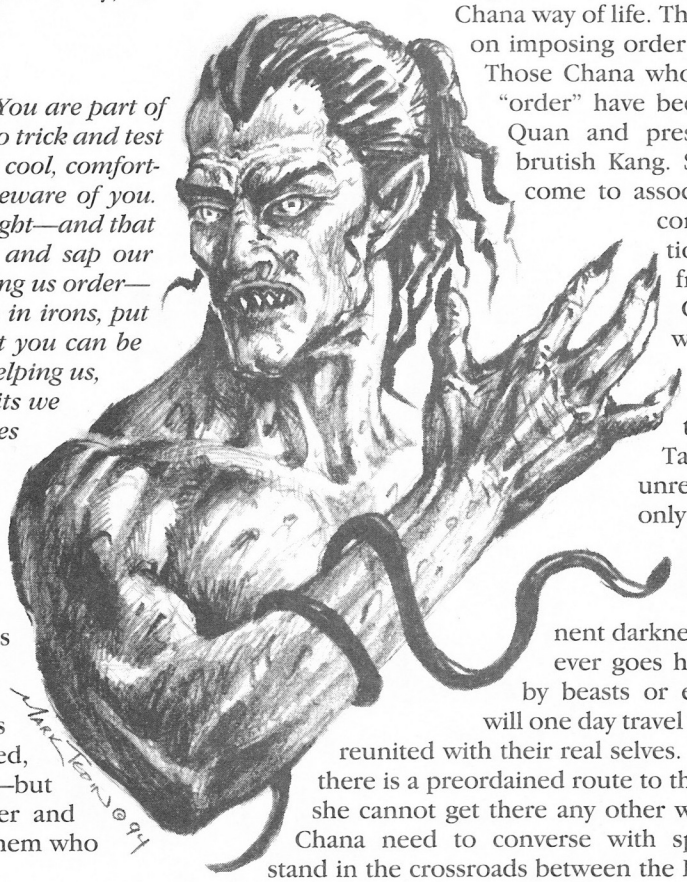
"The Chana are cannibals, demon worshippers, headhunters. Our policy of eradicating these dread folk is surely a means of achieving greater harmony in the Empire. Should we succeed at this difficult task, historians shall justly celebrate our accomplishment."

—Jen Go, Quan functionary, 602 N.A.

A Chana Speaks

"What you say means nothing to me. You are part of the False World, the world that exists to trick and test us. We are people of the darkness, the cool, comforting darkness. Our spirits tell us to beware of you. They say that you will try to bring us light—and that in its name you will burn our eyes and sap our souls. They say that you will try to bring us order—and that in its name you will clap us in irons, put us in cages. You are our enemies. But you can be our friends. If you really care about helping us, join our spirits. Yes, to make you spirits we must claim your heads. Your bodies might die, but your spirits live forever. True, it is a sad life, to spend eternity as a spirit, locked between worlds. But your life now is sadder, trapped in falseness and baseness."

The Chana are accused of many things by the civilized races of Talislanta; they are thought to be headhunters and cannibals, to worship darkness over light, and chaos over order. Indeed, the Chana are and do all these things—but to their eyes what they do is proper and right, and it is those who denounce them who are to be feared and despised.



Chana are tribal in social structure. Their culture is egalitarian: they consider men and women to have equal status. Each Chana tribe has its own leadership, composed of two warriors and three witchmen or witchwomen. These leaders are selected by tribal consensus on a yearly basis. All of the adults of the tribe meet in a marathon session to decide who will lead them. All volunteers for the position come forward, and then the tribespeople argue and fret until enough candidates step aside and only the five who will lead are left.

The leadership makes its decisions by majority rule: any decision that three of them are willing to support is taken. Splits within the leadership are uncommon, however; the warriors defer to the witches on spiritual matters, the witches to the warriors on raids and defenses. Other members of the tribe naturally defer to their leaders, who have usually performed great deeds to protect them.

The Chana seem to have a topsy-turvy belief system because they live in thick jungles that are covered in a canopy of unbearably fecund plant life. Darkness is the natural state of the jungle even at the height of the day, and therefore it seems right and good to those who live there. The rulers of the Quan Empire (once the Quan and now the Kang) often speak of themselves as wishing to bring light to the jungle. This means chopping it down and turning it into farmland, wiping out the Chana way of life. The Empire is also big on imposing order on outlying tribes. Those Chana who have experienced "order" have been enslaved by the Quan and presided over by the brutish Kang. So the Chana have come to associate darkness with comfort and protection; disorder, with freedom and the Chana traditional way of life.

The Chana believe that the world of Talislanta is in a sense unreal and that they are only shadows of their true selves who exist in a genuine realm of permanent darkness, where no Chana ever goes hungry or is injured by beasts or enemies. All Chana will one day travel to this realm and be reunited with their real selves. But for each Chana there is a preordained route to the Real World; he or she cannot get there any other way. This is why the Chana need to converse with spirits—people who stand in the crossroads between the False World and the

Real World and are therefore able to see the Real World but communicate with those in this one. The spirits are able to read the destinies of False Worlders and describe the precise route each must follow to find eternal safety and protection in their realm. Those who fail to follow the way laid out by the spirits are reincarnated in this world of torments after they die. Those who take the correct path cross over into the Real World at the moment of death. This sometimes makes the Chana seem insanely suicidal to others since sometimes they are seeking death—as long as it's a particular death given to them by the spirits.

The Chana consider all Chana, both those living as well as those awaiting reincarnation, to be one extended tribe. The collective purpose of this extended tribe is to get all its members to the Real World. In apparent contradiction to this goal, Chana continue to produce children in the False World. The Chana philosophy, however, resolves this apparent contradiction.

In Chana society, the worst crime imaginable is to place obstacles in another's path towards the Real World. All living Chana, after all, have failed to reach the paradise beyond. Likewise, any child born is assumed to be a reincarnated Chana who has yet to reach the Real World. Therefore, child-rearing is as important a responsibility as following one's own path to the Real World, and, indeed, raising children well is also a major component of any parent's own path. That the overall number of Chana in Talislanta does not seem to be diminishing over time is either taken as a sign of the difficulty in reaching the Real World or of the vast size of the part of the Chana tribe awaiting reincarnation out in the void.

In most cases the Chana have unlimited opportunity to try to reach the Real World, but there is one exception. The most fearful state imaginable to the Chana is remaining for eternity in the netherworld between realms, able to see both but partake of neither. And this is the status of the Chana spirit guides. Chana don't turn any of their own people into spirits. Instead, the witchmen and witchwomen seek out members of other tribes of competing intelligent races—the Nagra and Manra are closest at hand, to their eternal regret—and behead them, enacting a ceremony to turn their preserved heads into prisons for their spirits. The Chana feel that they're doing these ignorant inhabitants of the False World a favor by giving them even a glimpse of the Real World.

The Chana's reputation for cannibalism derives from the most gruesome portion of the ritual to create what they call "fetch spirits." After a person is decapitated, his or her head is placed on a stake and pointed towards the center of the village, where the Chana eat the rest of the corpse before the head's dead eyes. This is to ceremonially remind the head that its ties to the False World have been permanently severed. Once the ritual is completed, the witch arranges his or her fetches on stakes outside his or her hut, where the witch can commune with them when necessary. However, fetches can't always be trusted: according to Chana belief, some of them are treacherous and attempt to mislead. This is why witches need more than one fetch at a time—to get alternate opinions.

In order physically to approach the netherworld between realities, and therefore be able to hear the words of the spirits, the witch usually ingests a powerful mind-altering drug called *kesh*. (Some are able to reach this half-real state through other means—ritual chanting, drumming, heat exposure or fasting—and do not use kesh.) Outside scholars believe that kesh dramatically shortens life span; the Chana would laugh at this notion. Those who are able to speak directly to the spirits are able to cross over to the Real World earlier than those who do not; witches are not dying, they're escaping early from torment.

Chana are often accused of worshipping demons. It is true that they consort with demons, but in contradiction to the slander of civilized cultures, they are careful always to maintain a firm upper hand. They deal only with lesser demons, coercing them into cooperating. They may also make fetches specifically to commune not only with the Real World but with the lower planes. As described on GB p. 188, these must be made from the heads of spellcasters.

Chana away from their homeland are typically following an elaborate set of instructions given to them by a fetch spirit, either through a witch, or directly if the character is a witchman or witchwoman. The full import of these instructions may or may not be understood by the searcher. Chana believe that if they fulfill the instructions, they will win the ultimate treasure—entry into the Real World.

Fetch spirits of the Chana often speak to them of the Tirshata, who will one day return to unite all the Sub-Men races. This would be a prelude to the Tirshata's teaching the other Sub-Men races the secrets of the Real World.

Some fetches claim that the Tirshata will then usher all of the Sub-Men permanently into the Real World so that they can all leave the False World behind forever. Others disagree, saying only that the Tirshata will teach the other Sub-Men races the ways of the Chana. If nothing else, the Chana do believe that dying under the Tirshata's direction will deliver them to the Real World and that the coming of the Tirshata is a great opportunity for many Chana to make the Great Transition.

Reactions to Other Sub-Men Races

Generally:

Not used to socializing with alien cultures, Chana in the Tirshata encampment coexist most uncomfortably with other Sub-Men.

Breakdown by Race:

Araq: Chana fear and respect Araq, and pity them for their attachment to physical pleasure, which is an illusion designed to tie one to the False World.
Beastmen: Chana consider Beastmen to be like the dangerous predators of their jungle: dangerous but not capable of moral choice.
Danelek: Danelek they see as likely converts to fetch worship because the two cultures have some slight similarities.
Darklings: Darklings are beyond redemption—obviously twisted offspring of the False World who cannot hope to achieve paradise.
Drukh: The Chana see the Drukh as misguided; the Chana think they try to use torture to get to the Real World but that they fail because they always rely on the same method.
Harakin: Chana respect Harakin as Kang enemies but sadly shake their heads at the stubborn refusal of the materialistic Harakin to believe in anything beyond the False World.
Manra: Manra are ancient enemies, ungrateful wretches unable to appreciate the gift of fetchdom.
Mondre Khan: Chana admire Mondre Khan for their success against the Kang.
Nagra: Same as for Manra.
Stryx: Chana respect Stryx necromancers, although they recognize that Taryx's goals are not always their own. Chana look down on Stryx warriors for their allegiance to the Ur.
Ur: Chana see Ur as deluded, vicious buffoons, devoted to causes that don't even mean anything by False-World standards.
Yrmanians: Yrmanians are puzzling cases; the Chana attribute their madness to their using the wrong drug to approach the spirit world.
Za: Because the Za have a cannibalistic ritual of their own, the Chana think they once followed fetch spirits but have since lost their way.

Danelek

Objective Summary

Xenophobic desert dwellers with hereditary rulers, famed for their command of ambush techniques.

How and Where They Live

Grouped around oases, which they guard jealously. Native to the Wilderlands of Zaran.

Beliefs

Although not religious, the Danelek do adhere to an array of superstitions. Status is the most important factor in Danelek social interactions; it is gained by guarding the tribal oasis from outsider trespass.

Relationship with Tirshata

The Danelek think that the Tirshata will permanently guarantee their ownership of their respective oases.

Civilized View

"The fearsomeness of the Danelek is overrated. They will slay you if you penetrate their boundaries without being properly introduced to them, it is true. But if one learns their etiquette, they will reveal themselves as honest traders."

—Khovorian, Orgovian trader

A Danelek Speaks

"You have violated our territory. Have you asked our permission? No. Are you introduced to us? Do you know us at all? But you steal our most precious resource, our water. Without it, we die. But you steal it. And then you wonder why we come for you, weapons ready. Why we have laid traps for you. Why we shall now claim you as a kill. You say you do not wish us harm, that you drank the water only to survive. By taking our water, you do us harm. If everyone took our water, we would not survive. You have come to the wrong place if you are seeking pity. Pity does not grow in the desert."

The Danelek are typical Sub-Men in that they're forced to make their living in a marginal environment—in this case, the Wilderlands of Zaran—and are judged barbaric by others for their means of survival. The Danelek have a reputation for being grim and cruel, for being ambushers who strike at innocent travelers and cut them down while they rest. As far as they're concerned, however, there is

no such thing as an innocent traveler. At least, not in *their* oases. The Danelek use the Talislan words for "unwelcome" and "enemy" as synonyms. Theft is treated as no different from murder, and mistrust is a virtue.

Each Danelek tribe claims a particular oasis in the Wilderlands as its own. To maintain a set territory is a dangerous thing in Zaran, what with deadly raiders like the Araq and Za on the prowl. A nomadic lifestyle would be safer, since enemies don't know where to find tribes that have no permanent base. But instead the Danelek have chosen a tough road for themselves, keeping known locations safe from predatory outsiders. ("Outsiders" includes Danelek of other clans, incidentally.)

The Danelek have developed great skill at the art of laying subtle, lethal traps to catch the unwary. Even Araq and Za think twice about venturing into Danelek territory because they know that a seemingly innocent expanse of sand can contain all manner of devices to maim, poison, or infect the would-be invader. Danelek do not produce metal items themselves, but they do trade salt for them and are quite adept at using hand tools to turn everyday items into trap components. The Danelek kill many enemies without even laying eyes on them.

However, Danelek do not mount a defense with traps alone; they possess even greater mastery over the stealth and ruthlessness needed to mount successful ambushes. Danelek have no concern for issues of honor in combat. Enemies are not to be respected or given a fair chance; they are to be slain quickly and efficiently. They don't particularly enjoy slaying trespassers with their vicious traps, though, and their reputation for sadism is not entirely earned; they merely consider killing a necessity of survival.

Danelek hunters rise in status in their tribes based on their accomplishments towards protecting the rest of the tribe. These accomplishments may include catching game, trading well, and crafting traps or other implements. But the most famous component of the Danelek status system is their kill-counting. Anyone killed by a Danelek hunter is assumed to have been a menace to the tribe. The manner of the kill does not matter, merely the fact that a danger has been eliminated. The trap builder who constructs a dart-thrower that takes out a marauding Araq is given as much status as the hunter who manages to kill one with his bare hands during a frenzied struggle.

A few of the hunters with the highest status in each tribe serve as a circle of advisers to the *Naz*, the tribal leader. The position of Naz is hereditary, passed on to the oldest child of the previous Naz, and may be held by either a male or female. Sometimes the Naz dies with only young children, and the circle of advisers then takes on a more important role, in effect becoming a council of rulers who work by internal consensus. In other instances the Naz is strong and self-willed, and the advisory positions of the hunters are strictly honorary.

The Danelek are a socially cohesive people, since the effort of keeping outsiders away demands a natural sense of cooperation. Danelek consider it downright obscene to challenge the authority of the Naz. Although the Naz is not worshipped—the Danelek have no religion, only superstitions—they do treat him or her with a great deal of reverence. Joking about the Naz is rather boorish. Insulting the Naz is punishable by permanent exile. It is rare that anyone insults the Naz.

Those Danelek who venture away from their home oases usually go voluntarily. Some go at the behest of the tribe to set up salt-trading connections. Others are struck with wanderlust, seeking new sights and experiences. Unlike renegades of other Sub-Men cultures, individuals in the latter category usually return to their home oases late in life, where they are again accepted as members of the community. Often they bring with them new martial or trap-building techniques. Kills made away from the community are not counted towards status, as there is no way of verifying them.

It is possible to approach a Danelek settlement without getting killed—otherwise they wouldn't have much of a salt trade. The Danelek trade not for food, but for supplies, especially weapons and items that can be turned into traps. Danelek give certain approved foreign traders a special horn—each tribe's is slightly different in shape and sound—to blow when they reach the edge of their oasis. The approved trader blows the horn and then waits for a welcoming party. Unknown travelers who attract a welcoming party by blowing a trade horn are assumed to have treacherously stolen it and are immediately attacked without mercy.

Traders who manage to deal with the Danelek report that their hospitality is impressive, and the generosity of the tribes great. Apparently, though, they have little sense of humor and are incapable of grasping irony. Danelek prefer to deal with the same traders again and again. Traders who wish to transfer their horns to others must take the new merchants to the Danelek for their approval. While under examination, the replacements must be careful not to violate any of the multifarious rules of Danelek etiquette, or face rejection. For example, they should not address members of the same sex while looking at their feet, should not eat spicy foods while facing west, should tap their fingers and not their feet when listening to music, and should compliment the temperature of food before commenting on its flavor. Fortunately, the consequence of such violations is a lost business opportunity, not a lost head.

The Danelek have a rich artistic life; one thing all of the arts they practice have in common is a great attention to following rigorously laid-out rules. For example, they are dedicated dancers, practicing a highly regimented series of communal dances. These are rather eerie to watch because, although they are highly rhythmic, they are executed in complete silence, without music or sound of any kind. There are at least ninety dances in the Danelek repertoire, each one requiring hours to perform. If even one foot is out of place at any point in the dance, the Danelek stop the dance and start from the beginning.

Traders have observed that the Danelek become quite pained at such mistakes and are willing to work tirelessly into the night until the dance is completed without error.

Each Danelek tribe also has a set oral history, portions of which it recites *en masse* at community gatherings. Because everyone must be in sync, there is no room for changes or embellishments to the record, although remarkable new events to each tribe's history are added from time to time. Only the Naz may add new material to the tribal record; not even the Naz may alter existing passages of it.

Each record deals with the Tirshata, though the precise words are different from oasis to oasis. The hardheaded, practical Danelek have a clear reason for wanting the Tirshata to return: he promised them definite title to their oases, that he not only would reaffirm the Archaen Treaties with the civilized peoples but forge an agreement with competing Sub-Men like the Araq and Za to remain off their lands forever.

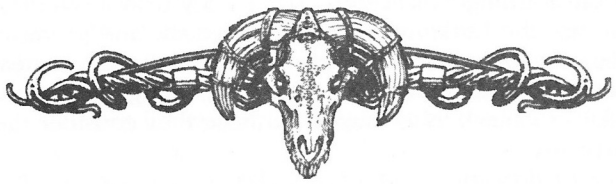
Reactions to Other Sub-Men Races

Generally:

The Danelek find it painful dealing with other Sub-Men, none of whom know the first thing about the rules of etiquette. But they view relations with other Sub-Men as a necessary evil and are willing to go through the emotional discomfort that that entails in order to reach their objective. Danelek are generally able to avoid trouble due to their self-control; they aren't as aggressive as usual when away from their home oases.

Breakdown by Race:

Araq: Araq are traditional enemies. Danelek in the Tirshata camp won't start any fights with them but won't let their guard toward them down either.
Beastmen: Although Beastmen also have a highly structured etiquette system, the details are different, and Danelek think of them as stupidly animalistic.
Chana: The Danelek consider the Chana reprehensible for stealing heads that don't belong to them.
Darklings: Darklings make an effort to figure out the Danelek etiquette system and pander to them; the stern Danelek find them somewhat too eager to please.
Drukh: Danelek despise the Drukh because they view them as senselessly sadistic: Danelek kill only because they feel they must, not because killing makes good recreation.
Harakin: Of all of the other Sub-Men cultures, the Harakin are considered the most respectable by the Danelek: the Danelek approve of the standoffishness of the Harakin as a healthy disinterest in the affairs of others.
Manra: The Danelek also give credit to the Manra, for leaving them alone.
Mondre Khan: The Danelek admire the Mondre Khan for their history of protecting their lands from the Quan Empire.
Nagra: Danelek fear the Nagra, as they remind the Danelek that there are weird and magical things in the world, things they cannot ward off with their traps or force of arms.
Stryx: Danelek think the Stryx loathsome and especially untrustworthy.
Ur: Danelek consider Ur to be braggarts and bullies; the Danelek know that the best way to deal with them is to refuse to be pushed about, even if this means fighting in self-defense.
Yrmanians: Danelek dislike Yrmanians, because they hate unpredictability.
Za: Za are traditional enemies, to the same extent the Araq are (see Araq above).



Darklings

Objective Summary

Pathetic slaves of the Ur, the impish Darklings struggle to retain their lives under difficult circumstances.

How and Where They Live

The Darklings are slave labor, the backbone of the Ur war economy. They are also used as stealth and sabotage experts by their masters. They are found in Urag.

Beliefs

Worship the deity Sham, god of lies. One day they hope to be delivered from slavery; until then, anything that ameliorates the misery of their existence they consider justified.

Relationship with Tirshata

The Darklings expect the Tirshata to liberate them from slavery.

Civilized View

"Darklings—bah! Sneaks. Cowards. Liars. At least their stinking Ur masters fight you face to face."

—Sharpbow, Thrall warrior

A Darkling Speaks

"I is not lying to you. Why I lie to you? Forget what you hear about us. We is all not like that. We is victims, that what. Those no-good Ur, it's all their fault. Make us fight and die for them and make food for the Stryx. They is the liars, always making secret sneaky plans. To kill each other. To get their no-good thrones. You live in a nation of liars, you grow into a liar too. They not feed us enough, so of course we sneak what we need, to feed our families. So they call us thieves. Thieving, say it's in our hearts, that we always steal when we get the chance. It's in our bellies, not our hearts. That's where it come from. You give me a chance, I prove different. I work hard. Carry anything for you. Carry your purse there, say . . . "

One can't understand the culture of the Darklings without first looking at the race that has enslaved them for five hundred years—the Ur, p. 60. It is impossible to know what the Darklings would be like if left to their own devices: all of their impulses have developed in order to help them survive as best as possible in a situation where they are nothing more than pawns in the constant warring between Ur clans. The deaths of a hundred Darklings mean nothing to an Ur warlord, whether he loses the Darklings on the battlefield or has to execute them for insubordination, as an example to others. Being small and weak, the Darklings have no chance of overthrowing their oppressors through physical means. Consequently, the Darklings have adapted as best they can to surviving as chattel of the Ur. What others might view as cowardice and thievery are really prudence and self-reliance in this context.

Each Ur clan owns a stock of Darklings, all born in captivity. Darklings were originally of subterranean origin, but past generations of Ur rooted through the Darkling tunnels that crisscross under Urag's surface to capture all the Darklings they could. Each of the three competing camps of Ur thought to employ darklings to gain advantage over the others, but all came up with the idea at the same time. As they managed to accumulate Darklings at a roughly equal rate, any advantage the Darklings might have made to a single faction was eliminated. However, the Ur found the Darklings still useful as spies, thieves, and expendable foot soldiers, and chose to retain them as slaves anyway, much to the Darklings' dismay.

When away from the prying eyes of the Ur, the Darklings tell the tales of their underground homeland. They recount the dimensions of each chamber, rhapsodize over differing air pressures and temperatures, wax nostalgic about certain drafts. In the hands of a great storyteller, these exhausting descriptions of the "Lost Home" can make the Darklings feel that they're actually there, even though no Darkling has lived underground for centuries. Once they'd flushed out as many Darklings as they could, the Ur began using the empty tunnels as dumps for the noxious alchemical by-products that mar their land. Even if the Ur magically vanished tomorrow, the Darklings would never be able to return to the dwellings of their ancestors.

Each Ur clan has its own stock of Darkling chattel. The Ur allow the males to be cared for by the women until they reach puberty, at which point they are segregated from the females. The adolescent and mature males are herded into barrack tents, and watched over strictly lest they attempt to escape. From their first trip to the barracks, young male Darklings are hammered with a simple lesson: obey orders or die painfully. The actual result of training is somewhat other than desired. The Darklings devote all of their intelligence to learning how to subvert their masters' intentions without straying from the letter of any given order. They carefully study the quirks of each master, looking for weaknesses to exploit.

Ur sub-commanders leave training of Darklings in espionage and thievery to other Darklings since they themselves have no talent for it. They do, however, always leave a watch on such sessions, which they know from bitter experience to be a breeding ground for revolt. The Darklings have gotten around this by devising a jargon that supposedly describes the various techniques of infil-

tration and stealth but in fact is a body of terms of obscene abuse directed at the warlords. This is one consolation of training to be thieves—the other is that these skills, if perfected, can be turned as much against their own masters as against others.

When a Darkling has an opportunity to steal something, he or she finds it hard to resist. Usually that something is food. Male Darklings often smuggle stolen bits of food or shiny baubles to their women, who live in the personal quarters of the Ur wives. One of the pleasures of being an Ur wife is exercising her authority to meddle extensively in the lives of her servants, especially the Darklings. The wives of most warlords set out to manage their chattel rigorously, even going so far as to dictate who is to mate with whom to provide the choicest offspring. The Ur even set specific times for these trysts. They give no regard as to whom the Darklings regard to be their mates—the Ur wives like to mix up Darkling families to prevent loyalties from forming within them. Then they turn around and accuse the Darklings of being animalistic and promiscuous for following their orders. But the Darklings steadfastly maintain their own affections, using their stealth skills to sneak in to meet with those they consider their true mates.

Some Darklings do manage to achieve positions of influence in Ur society; these are the most devious and cunning of their kind, who carefully study Ur power relationships and give advice on underhanded tactics to help their unsubtle masters get ahead. These Darklings may be warriors who advise their superiors on covert tactics, or maidservants who master the intricacies of inter-wife and inter-household rivalry. Those who establish themselves in this way in order to get special privileges for themselves are shunned by their fellows; some, however, play a double game and cozy up to their masters to gain advantage for all.

In contradiction to their reputation as sinister creatures of the night, Darklings do not fight amongst themselves: they value their always-endangered lives too much to risk them on petty disputes. There is no structure of authority in Darkling life except that imposed by the Ur.

Darklings are considered passable musicians only by Ur, who are not exactly musical sophisticates. Although rhythmically complex, their compositions are trying to the civilized ear. Drums, gongs, and wailing two-stringed fiddles in a variety of sizes form the basic instrumentation. The Ur (who have no musical ability themselves) often order the Darklings to play for them both in battle and during moments of leisure. In these latter times the Darklings play pieces carefully calculated to irritate the Ur just below their level of conscious apprehension.

Darklings worship a baneful deity known as Sham, patron of thieves and king of lies. Sometimes the Darklings contend that Sham is just that—a hoax—and cooked up to frighten gullible Ur. This is patently absurd: the Ur don't fear Sham at all. This is an example of how discourse with Darklings is an exercise in finding lies behind lies behind lies.

Some Darklings are found outside Urag in civilized lands; these are escapees from the Ur, who beat the odds. In their new lands they are scorned for their reputation as thieves and hated for their demonic appearance. It is little surprise that many of them, with only thieving and spying talents to rely on, do adopt their reputed vocation. On the whole, people act as they are treated, of course, and it is a misconception to believe that Darklings love to steal or are compelled to do it as a result of an intrinsic moral weakness. Theft is a matter of survival in a hostile world.

Some Darklings had already been enslaved at the time of the coming of the Tirshata by the now-extinct Warzen tribesmen, who once inhabited the area now known as Urag. The Darklings recall that the Tirshata had promised them liberation from the Warzen as a final stage of his campaign. They remember his words well: "I cannot fight for the liberation of the Sub-Men and leave you in chains. Be patient, and know my promise: you will one day be free." Since the Warzen were wiped out after the disappearance of the Tirshata, some Darklings feel that he accomplished this promise by leaving. Reports that the Tirshata has returned have therefore aroused great excitement among the Darklings, who hope that he will do to the Ur what he did to the Warzen. Many now believe that they'll live to see their masters hanging from the very trees they've used to execute so many Darklings.

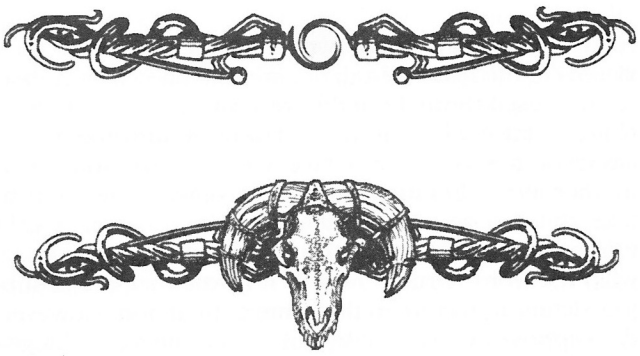
Reactions to Other Sub-Men Races

Generally:

In the Tirshata encampment, the Darklings carefully study the other races, learning how to avoid being harmed by each one. Generally, they favor races they can gain some sort of understanding or advantage with. Those they can't they appraise as to their level of cruelty and amenability to slavery.

Breakdown by Race:

Araq: Darklings think Araq to be even more merciless than the Ur.
Beastmen: Darklings fear Beastmen but at least think them to be too primitive to enslave others.
Chana: Darklings, used to seeing their dead devoured by Stryx, are alarmed by cultures that practice cannibalism, like the Chana.
Danelek: Darklings think Danelek to be rather admirable.
Drukh: The Drukh reputation for torture makes Darklings fear them especially: Darklings might hate the Ur for the punishments they mete out, but at least they understand why they do such things. That the Drukh torture for fun they find alarming indeed.
Harakin: Same as Danelek.
Manra: The Manra are well remembered in the Darkling view of the lore of the Tirshata as the one group of Sub-Men that was actively kind to them.
Mondre Khan: Darklings recall the Mondre Khan as fierce fighters with covert warfare techniques worth learning from, but also as unfriendly and untrusting.
The Nagra: Darklings think the Nagra appear in the stories as just plain weird.
Stryx: Darklings see Stryx warriors as capricious and cruel, actually having all of the bad qualities that others try to impute to them. They see Stryx necromancers as an ever-present threat, as they pick Darklings off—especially ones trying to escape the Ur—to sacrifice to their abhorrent god.
Yrmanians: Same as Nagra, but more so.
Za: The Darklings regard the Za to be fearsome disciplinarians who are best avoided.



Drukh

Objective Summary

Fearsome hill tribesfolk whose customs are centered on torture of captured victims.

How and Where They Live

The Drukh subsist by raiding caravans and small outposts near the hills of Arim.

Beliefs

The Drukh worship Noman, dread lord of the Nightmare Dimension, and perform various rituals of torture to strike fear into their enemies, to display their own courage, and to speed their own transition to the afterlife.

Relationship with Tirshata

The Tirshata is an avatar of Noman who can exist on Archaeus only briefly; there is much honor in being by his side.

Civilized View

"The Drukh are a violent and cruel folk. Expect no mercy from them. They are sadistic beyond measure. Slay them if you can. Flee them if you cannot."

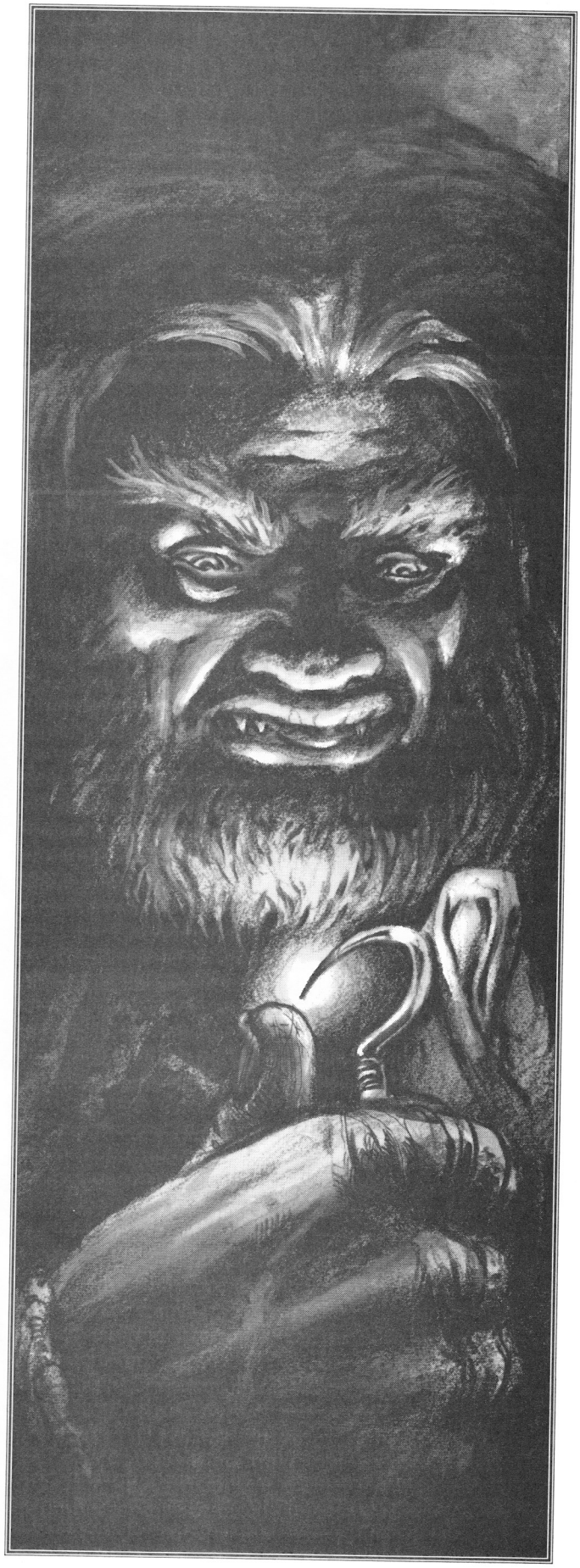
—Kamira, Arimite knife-fighter

A Drukh Speaks

"You hurt us, you harass us, you steal our land, you threaten our babies. You think we are stupid, savage. We will show you savage. We will open up a flap of skin on your back, fill it with biting insects and burrowing worms. Then we will sew it back up. We will sew your eyelids to your brows and laugh as your eyes dry up and wither. We will bore through your gums with bone drills. We will fill your gullet with ordure until you gag. We will sear your soft parts with pincers red from the fire. We will caress you with a werebeast claw, dipped in venom. Then you will fear us. For fear and respect are the same thing, yes?"

Of all the Sub-Men, the Drukh have perhaps the worst of reputations. They are known as torturers who kill their victims in the name of a dark and little-known god; their name is used throughout the western lands to scare little children into behaving. ("Don't venture into the woods alone or the Drukh will take you." "Leave your poor mother alone, because the Drukh come in the night to take children who are always pestering their parents.") Civilized folk learn to fear Drukh before they even know what the word "Drukh" means. It is true that Drukh subject victims to torture in the name of their god. However, the supposedly civilized Aamanians do the same thing—on a far wider scale—and *their* names are never used as the names of bogeymen.

The Drukh freely admit to being torturers: they are proud of what they do because it demands respect. To a Drukh, the respect of friend and foe is the most important thing a warrior can aspire to have. They see no distinction between fear and respect. Drukh greet their superiors with the following ritual salute: "I fear you greatly; you make my knees knock together and my stomach writhe. I sweat in your presence, thinking that you may flay my flesh and cause me great agony."



Drukh torture captured outlanders who don't seem to show enough fear of them. Since most Talislantans are raised to believe that it is shameful to openly show fear for someone else—even a stinking Sub-Man who is warming up the implements of torture—most end up getting the full treatment after being taken prisoner. Defiance is seen as disrespect by the Drukh.

Showing terror is not a reliable way out of being tortured, though, since Drukh also torture for revenge. The Drukh see all races of Men as ripe targets for vengeance; the Drukh have a long cultural memory and view any heirs to the Archaens as having committed crimes against them.

Drukh worship Noman, god of the Nightmare Dimension. When the beings of Archaeus dream, the most disturbing of their visions in sleep are echoes of the reality of the Nightmare Dimension, a realm where the basic physical rules of existence mean nothing, an ever-changing landscape of terror where the doubts and fears of thinking beings take on substance and fight with one another for dominance. Those few mages unwise enough to gaze directly upon the terrain of the Nightmare Dimension have been rewarded with immediate madness. Thus it stands to reason, scholars agree, that those who worship the lord of Nightmare must be mad themselves, the most depraved savages on the continent.

This makes Noman attractive to the Drukh: obviously the most fear-inspiring god known is the best god. Noman returns the favor the Drukh do him by worshipping him, championing their cause and rewarding them with abilities such as their ability to make their terror-inspiring music.

Drukh practice torture on one another to steel themselves to resist fear of their enemies. It is their ambition to show as little respect for strangers as possible. An encounter with an Arimite raiding party is of little consequence to a warrior who has survived the most painful nonlethal torture that his fellow tribesmen can dish out.

Torture of Drukh by kinsmen also figures in their funerary rituals, and whereas torturing an outsider to death has no religious significance to the Drukh, torturing another Drukh to death is a deeply religious act. Noman summons the souls of dead Drukh to his realm for his own inscrutable reasons. In order to transfer Drukh souls from a physical realm to a magical one, Noman had to find a way to get dying Drukh to sever completely, suddenly, and dramatically their mental connections with Archaeus. Intense sensation is the key: the most extreme of agonies can transmigrate souls through the portal of Nightmare into eternal life.

Drukh shamans teach that the death torture is a test by Noman; in order to pass it, one must endure it without crying out. Only those who hold on without screaming pass into Noman's realm; those who fail are cast into the void, and the tribe considers them dishonored. The dishonored are wiped from a tribe's collective memory; after the ritual, none may speak of them. It's as if the dishonored never existed; families rewrite their histories to expunge their dead relative from their minds—if necessary, altering their genealogies to claim new parents or grandparents.

The hatred of the other races of Talislanta has merely served to embitter the Drukh and harden their determination. Drukh expect no forgiveness or quarter and give none in return. Captured Drukh are typically surly and resentful—deep down they're terrified of being executed without having the torture ritual performed. A common tactic of captive Drukh who have exhausted all avenues of escape is to goad their captors into torturing them to death. Since the principle of tit for tat is deeply ingrained in the Talislantan sense of justice, they often succeed in doing so. Observers often wonder why the Drukh seem always to be smirking on the way to the torture chamber—and why they seem so ecstatic when the brands and thumbscrews are applied.

Drukh fight vigorously to defend their territories, and assume that any stranger is an enemy until proven otherwise. To those who meet the Drukh, this difference between friend and foe proves an overly subtle distinction, as Drukh give friends the same unrefusable invitation to the altar of Noman as enemies.

In addition to access to his realm, Noman gave the Drukh a second gift: he provided them with some of the disquieting melodies sung incessantly by the hungry rocks and vicious trees of the Nightmare Dimension. These tunes of madness are primitive enchantments that trigger instinctive terror in foes. Exposure to the melodies since childhood inures the Drukh themselves to them; they find the melodies inspiring, allowing them to fight beyond normal endurance when seriously injured. Drukh consider dying in a combat frenzy to be equivalent to dying on the torture altar.

Each tribe considers itself to be ruled directly by Noman. However, Noman isn't available to tend to petty decisions, so the eldest shaman in each tribe is its *de facto* ruler. Although torture is practiced by warriors, sessions may not go forward without a shaman's authorization. This gives shamans a great deal of influence in their communities, as no Drukh wants to risk being denied torture as death approaches.

Drukh society throws off few renegades; those who have irreconcilable differences with family heads or senior shamans tend to join other tribes rather than leave Drukh lands entirely. This is because of the rancor that almost all other races bear towards Drukh. Only the most sinister or heedless of employers take renegade Drukh on as soldiers or guards. And employers who care so little for common morality are likely to assign the Drukh to do things that match their horrific notoriety.

In Drukh belief, the Tirshata is an earthly avatar of Noman come to visit them. Drukh accept, therefore, that the Tirshata is able to spend only brief periods on

Talislanta before returning to the Nightmare Dimension. Unlike other Sub-Men groups, they don't expect him to work a permanent transformation of their situation—the real transformation comes with the journey to Noman's castle. Nonetheless, they will travel to his side and follow his orders without question, feeling blessed to be among the generation to enjoy its god's presence in the flesh.

(It's possible that the Drukh are right about the Tirshata, at least to a degree. Although it's unlikely that the genuine Tirshata was Noman himself, it could be that he was some kind of entity from the Nightmare Dimension: a walking, talking incarnation of the fear and guilt that civilized peoples feel towards the Sub-Men. If this is so, any great increase in worry about a Sub-Men rising might somehow summon the actual Tirshata back to this reality. It would indeed be a great irony for the anxieties aroused by the appearance of the false Tirshata to lead to the reemergence of the real one.)

Reactions to Other Sub-Men Races

Generally:

In their relations with other Sub-Men races of the Tirshata alliance, Drukh have it little better than they do with civilized peoples, and so they feel similarly hostile toward the other Sub-Men races.

Breakdown by Race:

Araq: Drukh respect the Araq as fearsome foes or allies, and vice versa.
Beastmen: The resentful Drukh take offense at the Beastmen notion that they should demean themselves by submission to the sniffing ritual, and therefore get into serious fights with them.
Chana: They think Chana ritual might be related to theirs, and they try to convince them that the Real World they dream of is Noman's keep and that the spirits they have trapped are his emissaries.
Danelek: Drukh regard Danelek as haughty and superior.
Darklings: The Darklings fail to hide their fear of the Drukh, which is what the Drukh want most of all.
Harakin: Same as Danelek.
Manra: Same as Darklings.
Mondre Khan: Mondre Khan are openly contemptuous of the Drukh, again making them angry.
Nagra: Drukh think Nagra to be laughably stupid, as they spend all of their time in spiritual pursuits but know nothing of Noman, the most important spirit of all.
Stryx: Drukh pity Stryx for worshipping the wrong god.
Ur: Same as Mondre Khan.
Yrmanians: Drukh see Yrmanians as kin and possible converts to Noman-worship.
Za: The Za admire the Drukh, praising them as the most pitiless Sub-Men of all, and the Drukh figure their admiration of them is almost as good as their actually fearing them.

Harakin

Objective Summary

Grim survivalists whose unsentimental way of life is geared to a harsh and forbidding environment.

How and Where They Live

Harakin survive primarily through hunting and foraging but will resort to raiding in especially tough times.

Beliefs

Life is a struggle for survival, nothing more. Anything that does not immediately contribute to survival is useless.

Relationship with Tirshata

The Harakin remember the Tirshata as a provider of abundant food. If he can provide food, an alliance with him is useful. If not, an alliance is useless.

Civilized View

"The barbarism of the Harakin is total. They're cannibals as cruel as their land. They would slay a man in his sleep just to steal his meager rations. Never turn your back on them."

—Domir, Kang officer

A Harakin Speaks

"You say we are without compassion. I say this word is without meaning. Does this word feed me? My dractyl wins me food; and when I am desperate, I can eat it. Now that *is meaning. You say I am without mercy. I say you are right, for mercy will get me killed, my food stolen from me. You say I am less than a man. I say you are less than a man because you have not fought and risked your life for your food—it comes to you without effort. And now you find yourself in my land, my crossbow aimed at your heart. I say you are about to become very much less than a man."*

The culture of the tribes of Harak is defined by the harsh ecology of their land. Cold desert winds relentlessly pound Harak, hardening its soil and ensuring that only the toughest of creatures can exist there. Hunting and raiding are the only real means of sustenance here, although the few edible plants that grow in Harak are also foraged by its always-hungry people. Merely to survive here is a great accomplishment, and Harakin culture has accordingly developed to make all other considerations secondary. Many of the virtues civilized peoples take for granted are irrelevant or liabilities in an environment only marginally capable of sustaining life, and scholars have made much of the Harakin's supposed lack of mercy and compassion.

However, the Harakin's having a clan structure implies some sort of commitment to the survival of others. After all, solitary individuals with loyalties to none but themselves couldn't last long in such a marginal environment: a single raider grabs much less booty than a well-coordinated group, and a team of hunters can face down bigger game than a solo operator. Members of the same Harakin clan do indeed support one another for mutual benefit. They simply don't see the benefit in alliances much beyond the clan unit. And the Harakin perceive that, unlike other cultures, they merely haven't seen fit to dress up this underlying mutual dependence with fancy religious justifications or notions of romantic or familial love. An individual's value to others of his or her clan depends on his or her ability to provide food, whether current ability or potential. Parents justify support of their young not on sentimental grounds but on the basis of their future value as hunters and raiders. Past accomplishments on behalf of the clan count for little; a Harakin

who can no longer capture food expects no aid from those he or she once helped feed. In fact, the Harakin view it a matter of great shame to be carried by others—elderly or incapacitated Harakin wander off into the desert to die alone, rarely needing prompting to do so.

Harakin clans are on the small side, usually ranging from two to three dozen in number. Most are named after natural formations—examples include Stone, Dark Chasm, Jagged Lake, Howling Mesa, Black Spire, Sandstorm, and Cutting Ravine. It may be that the clans once centered their territories around specific spots in Harak, from which the names derive. They probably abandoned this practice after it became clear that a habitual home base increased a clan's chance of being raided by others.

Each clan is led by a chief, who may be male or female. Harakin culture is egalitarian, with no set division of labor between the genders. The chief is selected by informal consensus; the warrior whose advice is followed by others gradually comes to be recognized as chief, while his or her predecessor quietly steps aside. The Harakin think titles of authority too intangible to be worth fighting over, and the position of chief confers responsibility without great additional benefit.

Relations between clans are generally hostile: although the Harakin are pleased to attack any travelers who venture within their reach, their chief raiding targets are each other. Raiding intensifies during periods of great environmental pressure, when game and forage become scarce. Harakin raid other clans not only for food goods but for new members. Sexual relations within clans are strictly taboo: as they're so small, inbreeding is a serious danger. When warriors, male or female, reach marriage age, their clans aid them in forcibly capturing worthy mates from rival groups. The captured mate, after putting up an initial struggle, generally goes along with this. The alternative, after all, is to be swiftly murdered. In some situations captured mates attempt to slay their captors and escape; this happens not due to a lack of attraction to the capturing mates—which is not deemed important—but because escapees decide the new clan is not strong enough to provide for their survival. A clan that loses a member to a *harakta*, as such marriage raids are called, treats the individual as dead. It is not unheard-of for Harakin who marry into new clans to later kill or be killed by members of their original group. Harakta victims who escape and return to their birth clan are considered to have risen from the dead and are regarded with great awe. They often end up as clan chiefs.

Harakin generally try to avoid eating humanoid flesh, though in especially tough times they are forced to resort to it. Eating Harakin flesh is still a taboo, however: otherwise they would have eaten one another long ago. A Harakin fable tells of an ancient race that broke this taboo and cannibalized itself into extinction.

Harakin remember their history through an oral tradition of a series of chants. Many chants vary from clan to clan, though chants do travel from tribe to tribe through intermarriage. Most chants concern themselves with successful raids on enemies, or defenses against same. Harakin consider chants useful because of their focus on survival and combat techniques—chants are a training tool. Other art forms are unknown to the Harakin; decorative arts, for example, are scorned as a waste of time. It is not what a pot looks like but what it holds that is important.

Some chants mention a great leader, known as the Tirshata, who once brought the clans together with promises of abundant food. For a while this mysterious being came through on his promises, and the Harakin gladly repaid him by fiercely fighting his wars against the accursed civilized peoples, who give great offense by possessing food without having earned it with their boomerangs or crossbows. Then the Tirshata abandoned the Harakin, leaving them in the hands of others who weren't competent enough to provide the guaranteed food. Many died in struggles with tribes of other peoples and on the long trek home from the Tirshata's battle camp to Harak. Some Harakin chants promise a return of the Tirshata, against whom no grudge will be held—if he can once more provide for Harakin survival, that is. The Tirshata chants contain all sorts of information about fighting specific Talislantan enemies far from Harak; if the Harakin can be convinced that the Tirshata has indeed come again, they will be ready for combat.

The Harakin mind places all things on a continuum that it generates from a single question: how will they provide food? Civilized "values" do not produce food, so they are without value. Four-bladed axes help to provide food, so they are of great value. Round hunks of metal are not food, so coins are without value. Some things change value based on circumstances: cooperation with a member of another clan might be of value in some rare situations, but is usually not. No doubt if you took the Harakin and plunked them down for several centuries in a fertile land rich in game, their outlook would change beyond recognition. But such a change in their situation is not likely to happen, even if the Tirshata returns.

Harakin outcasts are rare; their absolute focus on the food supply doesn't encourage the development of the rebellious or questioning mind. Although some chants refer to lands where food is abundant, the average Harakin is highly skeptical of such claims, considering them metaphorical. Most live and die in their own harsh land.

But a few do leave Harak; most of these are captured by slavers or taken from their land by civilized sorts who think they're doing the merciless Sub-Men a favor. Many Harakin go mad when placed in a situation where food is abundant and trust is a virtue. Their self-esteem plummets with every morsel of "undeserved" food they swallow. Those who avoid this psychological pitfall are usually treated with the hatred and fear civilized Talislantans typically show towards the Sub-Men and come, logically enough, to hate and fear civilized sorts in return. Those who do thrive outside Harakin society usually do so in military situations with tough discipline and scarce rations. By risking their lives for stingy amounts of food, the Harakin feel fulfilled. However, they do tend to kill commanding officers they don't respect—and unquestioningly revere those they do.

Reactions to Other Sub-Men Races

Generally:

The Tirshata chants contain extensive information on other Sub-Men; the Harakin have a long and unforgiving memory.

Breakdown by Race:

Araq: The Harakin respect Araq for their self-reliance; the Harakin are careful not to arouse their murderous impulses.
Beastmen: Harakin consider Beastmen to lack the self-discipline to survive in a truly harsh climate; Harakin assume they reside in a food-laden paradise, or otherwise they wouldn't have survived to this point.
Chana: Chana and Harakin have a common enemy: the Kang. The Harakin are favorably disposed toward the Chana because of this and envy their ability to enjoy cannibalism. Their black magic makes the Harakin nervous, though.
Danelek: Harakin generally respect the Danelek but think them somewhat vain and haughty for keeping track of their kills; it is the food provided, not the act of killing, that matters to a Harakin. They also see Danelek territoriality as absurd.
Darkling: Harakin admire Darkling stealth and treachery; they study Darkling techniques to apply them to raids against other clans, just in case the Tirshata disappears again.
Drukh: The Harakin view Drukh torture as unseemly sadism and, worse still, as a waste of time that could be spent securing more food. The Harakin dismiss the worship of Noman as delusionary.
Manra: Harakin appreciate Manra as enemies of the Kang but otherwise consider them strange and puzzling for their lack of internal strife.
Mondre Khan: Harakin admire Mondre Khan, as much as they can admire outsiders, for their skill at guerrilla tactics against the Kang.
Nagra: The Harakin would consider the Nagra to be exemplary if it weren't for all their talk of spirits. When Nagra do get all mystical, the Harakin find them amusingly mad.
Stryx: Harakin think Stryx, motivated by death worship, are mad and best avoided.
Ur: The Harakin consider the Ur to be fools and

blowhards who have squandered and despoiled a land the Harakin would have killed for. The Harakin think they'd be easy marks if war broke out amongst the Sub-Men.

Yrmanians: Harakin shun Yrmanians as mad; their motivations don't seem to relate strictly to food, so they are assumed to be dangerously unpredictable by the Harakin.

Za: The Harakin chants that refer to the abandonment of the Harakin by the Tirshata describe the Za as among the primary persecutors of the fleeing Harakin.

Manra

Objective Summary

Jungle tribesfolk whose psyches and society are constituted around shapechanging abilities.

How and Where They Live

Manra are foragers and gatherers; they use their form-shifting capabilities to become beasts occupying the level on the food chain best suited to the current food supply.

Beliefs

The only constant is change. Change is to be embraced. Stasis is disaster. Understanding of others' experience is the ultimate goal.

Relationship with Tirshata

The Tirshata is seen as a great force for change, which must be experienced and understood.

Civilized View

"Although some accounts make out the Manra to be a peaceful race, one must always exercise caution in dealing with Manra. For how can one truly trust a being capable of becoming a spying insect, a venomous snake? Such instability of form must surely mirror an infirmity of mind, a dangerous lack of order."

—Dera Khao, Ispasian mercantilist

A Manra Speaks

"Change is the only thing that does not change. This is the lesson the jabutu teaches us. Today I walk as you, on two legs. Tomorrow, I might walk on four. The next day, I might become a snake, and slither. Or a bird, and fly. The world looks different with each pair of eyes we adopt."

As a side effect of their renowned shapechanging abilities, the Manra have developed a pacifistic outlook that is quite unusual among the Sub-Men. This outlook isn't at all due to their being free of the sorts of pressures that make other Sub-Men races hostile and warlike. They have enemies aplenty. Foremost among them are the head-hunting Chana (see p. 32) and the power-hungry Kang.

The Manra maintain a detachment toward the things that concern most cultures. This is because they regularly shapechange into other creatures and thereby directly experience viewpoints exotic enough to baffle even the most cosmopolitan of Talislantans. The typical Manra feels that all things are impermanent, to be enjoyed or feared temporarily and then forgotten. All things pass and become other things. Change is to be embraced; those who seek to dig themselves in, to consolidate their positions, are engaged in folly. Wealth means nothing, because notions of what is valuable change all the time. Political power is worthless because even the most vicious rulers in time become enslaved to their slaves—as has just happened to the Quan. A popular Manra saying is, "All births contain a kernel of death." Manra also view shapechanging as a means of communion with the natural world.

Even the Manra pursuit of food and protection is ruled by change. When an area runs low on food of one type, the Manra change forms—and therefore, diets. When an area is running high in small predators, they change to larger predators to prey on them. When the small predators have been eaten, the Manra adopt *their* forms and pursue the local herbivores. When the numbers of herbivores fall, the Manra adopt their forms and eat vegetation. Starvation is never a real threat to a race that can eat a carcass while in humanoid form and the next day become carrion insects to finish off the scraps.

When it comes to the subject of housing, Manra refer to their belief that there is no fortification that cannot be breached. It is better to build as little as possible so that there is less to abandon and are fewer impermanent things to become attached to. Therefore the Manra are a nomadic people whose mountain homes are rough assemblages of deadwood and other scavenged materials. Whenever possible, the Manra take advantage of natural features such as mountain fissures and caverns for their shelter. However, Manra, unlike many Sub-Men, are not territorial at all. If enemies come, the Manra abandon their meager settlements with no regrets. If another Manra group comes along and wishes to take advantage of the same living area, the two groups assimilate and become one—until another round of change breaks them up and they go their separate ways.

Note the use of the term "groups" to describe the Manra: no other term is sufficiently all-encompassing, for the Manra change their social structures as often as they do their shapes. In the example above, the two groups that split off after the period of amalgamation might be quite different from the two that initially met. Each might exchange half its members with the other group as they part ways.

Manra seem to evolve new social structures spontaneously by some kind of group gestalt. One evening the group might be ruled by a matriarchy and based on a rigid clan structure. The next morning the Manra all wake up and spontaneously adopt a system where the group is subdivided by age and ruled by its fifteen-year-olds. Several months later, in the course of a meal, the group again instinctively alters its internal order so that the group is ruled by a council of villagers who can best imitate the hissing cry of the ravenger while in nightwhisp form. There is no predictable length of time between these social changes: some unstable forms may last for only a day or two, while more useful ones continue until the easily bored Manra grow restless. In times of stress, the Manra throw up social forms that fit their circumstances: for example, if the Chana attack, the group reverts to a leadership structure that puts in charge those with the most experience dealing with headhunters.

The most important ritual in Manra life is the coming-of-age ceremonies, during which older group members teach young Manra, of roughly age thirteen, how to shapechange. This is a several-month period of training, in which the leaves of the jabutu plant are chewed in the context of exhausting rituals that combine fasting, sensory deprivation, and hypnotic group humming. The active ingredient in jabutu is a combined stimulant and hallucinogenic, which awakens the Manra to the mental agility required to shuck off one form and adopt another. Once this crucial ability to simultaneously hold multiple and even opposing viewpoints at the same time is hummed into the youngster, he or she is able to access his or her innate ability to change shapes.

Although some Manra travel far from their mountain homeland, it can't really be said that they're renegades. When a member of the group wanders off, the others

accept it with equanimity. All things change. The leave-taker might be assumed by the group to be joining another group or to be heading out into the wide, dangerous world. Either is acceptable. No matter how long Manra have been away from the mountains of Chana, they will find a welcoming group to bring them back into the fold upon return. This group, however, will have changed members and structures countless times in the interim and will likely not resemble a wanderer's former one. In fact, a Manra would be most alarmed to return home and find things the same as when he or she left: this would have to be the result of some terrible sorcerous trick.

Sadly, some Manra do return to their communities contaminated with the murderous impulses of the outside world. Although Manra tribes are internally peaceable and never initiate warfare with their neighbors, they see nothing wrong with killing in self-defense. This applies to killing warped returnees as much as to killing Chana or Kang.

Although change is to be embraced and accepted, the Manra realize that not all change is for the good. Many changes cause great suffering and upheaval for those who cannot adapt to them. But the Manra are willing to adapt. This is why they threw in with the Tirshata during his original reign—they knew he was likely to remold the face of Talislanta, and the Manra had to be a part of such overwhelming change firsthand. When the Tirshata vanished and the Sub-Men went through another upheaval, the Manra were not surprised. Now that it looks as if the Tirshata is back, many adventurous Manra have headed out to his encampment to see if another revolution is in the offing. Though they are unwilling to fight as troops, they are willing to take roles as observers. In order to stay in the camp, they must occasionally act as medics or builders, but they will not participate in direct acts of violence. They're even willing to use their shapechanging powers to become spies on the Tirshata's first target, the Seven Kingdoms. However, they see this as a chance to understand the civilized folk and possibly avoid bloodshed.

Reactions to Other Sub-Men Races

Generally:

Manra try their best to understand other Sub-Men races; this is part of the transcendental experience of being a shapechanger. Within the Tirshata encampment, they spend a great deal of time observing the other races. Once they've learned enough to pass as members of another race, they switch forms and interact with others of their abruptly adopted form.

Breakdown by Race:

Araq through Za: The Manra have felt the terrible call of blood in the ears of the pumped-up **Araq**. They have felt the pull of instinct in **Beastmen** and the stern mistrust in the hearts of the **Danelek** and **Harakin**. They know what it's like to be cruelly dominated like the **Darklings**, bitterly misunderstood like the **Drukh**. They know the steely determination and inner warfare of the **Mondre Khan**, the secret glee of the Nagra. They feel soiled when they adopt the shape and predatory callousness of the **Stryx,** but they do it nonetheless in order to understand them. Becoming an **Ur** they find a dirty vice, a guilty pleasure—to let loose all of the bullying instincts that are suppressed beyond recall in themselves, and to do so with a hefty dose of confident stupidity as well. The mind of an **Yrmanian** is a joyride into constant change of the most intoxicating, chaotic kind. The Manra find the **Za** a strange people, almost the opposite of the Manra, in that they war for its own sake.

Chana: The Manra have refused to adopt only one form—that of their ancient foes, the Chana. This is because the Manra fear that if they understood the Chana, they would lose the will to fight them.

Mondre Khan

Objective Summary

Ferocious beings who yearn for a higher state of inner order, tormented by their animal natures.

How and Where They Live

The Mondre Khan, native to the hills of the eastern Quan Empire, subsist almost entirely by raiding Quan outposts.

Beliefs

The Mondre Khan soul is divided in two. The *Mansoul* is the repository of all higher qualities; the betraying *beast-soul* impels Mondre Khan to shameful behavior.

Relationship with Tirshata

The Mondre Khan remember the Tirshata as a traitor and refer to him as "the lost opportunity." But the Mondre Khan flock to his side nonetheless.

Civilized View

"Their ferocity and warrior spirit is admirable. Their lack of control and honor is not. We shall destroy them as we crush all our foes."

—Kagon, Kang general

A Mondre Khan Speaks

"There is a beast inside all of us. Ours is just closer to the surface than yours. Or maybe you are just better able to pretend. The beast is our savior and betrayer. It keeps our senses keen, our awareness honed. Our desire to survive at razor edge. It has sustained us for centuries in our war to protect ourselves from the depredations of the Kang. But it also drags us down at the crucial moment, making us run when we should fight and sacrifice ourselves, making us bare our fangs when we should be lying through them. The beast is cunning. Whenever we try to tame it, it becomes fiercer. When we cage it in our hearts, it yearns all the more to be free."

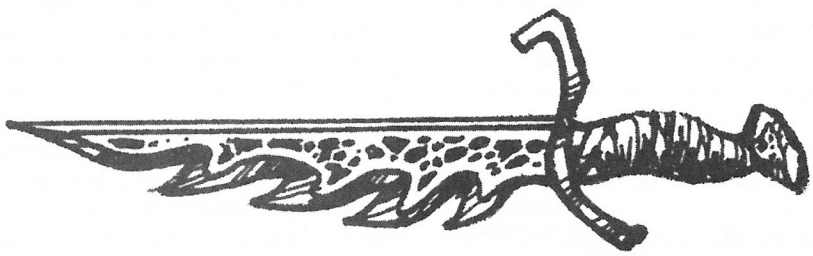
Although many Talislantans, including other Sub-Men races, consider Mondre Khan and Beastmen to be two of a kind, the Mondre Khan themselves couldn't be more angered by the comparison. Looking at the two races superficially, one may find it hard to understand the nature of the Mondre Khan objection. The two groups are even interfertile, though geographical separation makes breeding between them rare. But while the Beastmen are proud of their animal lineage, the Mondre Khan have designed their culture around denial of the animal urges. The reasons for this sharp difference in outlook are lost in prehistory. Perhaps the difference can be explained by Mondre Khan proximity to the supposedly civilized precursors of the Quan Empire or perhaps by the idea of their being directed by a long-forgotten Mondre Khan prophet. Whatever the initial cause, the fact remains that Mondre Khan are quick to anger when called beasts. They are men, and that is that. Those who wish to argue the point with the Mondre Khan usually find themselves dealing with the business end of a Mondre Khan rasp. Afterwards the furious pack of Landborne will likely leap upon the corpse of the debaters and devour them in a bloodstained fury. This proves the point of the interlopers but at a rather high cost.

According to Mondre Khan belief, every one of them has two souls, one positive and the other negative. One is the Mansoul: the receptacle of all of a being's higher yearnings and strivings. Brotherhood, courage, and compassion are the primary traits of the Mansoul. The other soul is the beastsoul, which contains all of the harmful elements that tempt Mondre Khan into shameful actions—selfishness, cowardice, and malice. The Mansoul and beastsoul are in constant battle according to the Mondre Khan. Although their spheres of influence are not clear-cut, the two souls control different territories of the Mondre Khan mind. The Mansoul has a greater foothold in thoughts, while the beastsoul has its claws firmly into a Mondre Khan's emotions. Thus when a Mondre Khan is able to do great things for his tribe—which usually means well-executed guerrilla actions against the Kang—he is said to be riding his Mansoul. But when he disgraces himself—by, for example, breaking ranks during combat to dine on a fallen foe—he is said to be ridden by his beastsoul. It is the dream of every Mondre Khan to conquer the beastsoul and ride the Mansoul all the time.

Unfortunately, the Mondre Khan's heightened awareness of this division merely serves to exacerbate the temptation to act on instinct alone since the Mondre Khan spend all of their time brooding about it. Their constant raids on the Quan Empire, as well as being vital for survival, are an important social release mechanism for these tormented souls. It gives them an enemy, other than an unceasing part of their own natures, to focus on. This spiritual crisis is accelerating: for unknown reasons, the Mondre Khan appear to be devolving into a more beastlike form.

The Mondre Khan justify their assaults on the Quan as payback for their slanders—in other words, for referring to them as beasts. Although there are plenty of genuine reasons for the Mondre Khan to want to harry the Quan as much as possible (not the least of which is the Quan ambition to take over their territory and enslave them), defamation is the only grievance the Mondre Khan ever claim to be avenging. They are not just quick to take offense but industriously seek it out where none exists. Their internal unity depends on a sense of being under constant offense and grievance.

Mondre Khan groups are small, no more than thirty members each. The Mondre Khan are great believers in stealth and carefully hide their communities from outside attack. These *hunting bands*, as the Mondre Khan call them, do not fight amongst themselves; the twin enemies of the Kang and the beastsoul provide enemy enough. The Mondre Khan make a great show of electing their leaders by common consent—to use a dominance system would be foul and animalistic. But in practice the less dominant members of the group tend to vote the way the more dominant ones wish, and the result is little different.



Mondre Khan society creates more than its share of outcasts. The most powerful emotion in Mondre Khan life is shame; anger runs a close second. When a Mondre Khan commits an animalistic act, his or her feeling of shame is enormous. Mondre Khan consider it customary to empathize greatly with the backsliding of others but to condemn it sternly in oneself. Many Mondre Khan exile themselves from their communities after letting down others in a particularly notable way, being unable to face friends and family. Like many Landborne outcasts, they face a marginal future away from their home territories, able to get only the lowliest of soldier and guard work. Mondre Khan in civilized lands often end their lives in a frenzied, cornered last stand against the forces of the law, as all it takes is one perceived insult to set them off.

Dedicated to their self-image as cultivated beings, the Mondre Khan are avid practitioners of the poetic arts. They express their brooding concern with their dual natures through verse. No Mondre Khan is considered by others to be deserving of status if he or she cannot compose a poetic lament just as well as plan a guerrilla raid on a Kang supply post. Talislantan scholars have yet to investigate seriously the profound poetic statements of the Mondre Khan; if they were, they'd be surprised to discover that under the demeanors of ravening beasts lie the souls of poets. As well as composing their own works, the Mondre Khan preserve through oral tradition epic histories, which gallop off the tongue in a ferocious meter and strict rhyme scheme.

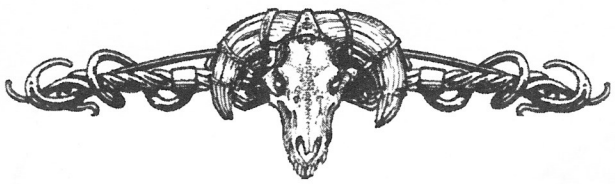
One most interesting portion of the Mondre Khan national epic is the section on the Tirshata, which the Mondre Khan rarely repeat. The Mondre Khan feel that they were betrayed by the Tirshata, who promised them liberation from their beastsouls but vanished without coming through for them. They refer to the Tirshata not by name but as "the lost opportunity." It is not wise to get too close to the Mondre Khan as they recite this portion of the epic, as a great deal of spitting is involved. Nonetheless, many Mondre Khan hunting bands have been unable to keep themselves away from the Tirshata's encampment. Maybe their all-eclipsing desire to strike back at civilization has overcome their bitterness. Or

maybe they're just waiting to get close enough to "the lost opportunity" to slit his lying throat.

Reactions to Other Sub-Men Races

Breakdown by Race:

Araq: The Mondre Khan despise the Araq for their ecstatic celebration of instinct.
Beastmen: The Beastmen are the most loathed of Sub-Men groups, as the Mondre Khan see in them everything they hate in themselves.
Chana: Mondre Khan scorn Chana headhunting as beastsoul behavior.
Danelek: Mondre Khan greatly respect Danelek self-control.
Darklings: Mondre Khan are rather tolerant of Darklings, mistakenly interpreting their toadying and conniving as exemplary of civilized behavior.
Drukh: Mondre Khan scorn Drukh torture as beastsoul behavior to the same extent that they do Chana headhunting.
Harakin: Same as Danelek.
Manra: The Mondre Khan on the one hand admire the peaceful Manra for their serenity, which speaks of great Mansoul, but at the same time disdain them for their lack of martial ambition.
Nagra: Mondre Khan fear Nagra on an instinctive level, a fear they detest themselves for displaying.
Stryx: They greet the Stryx with contempt, except for the necromancers, who fit in with Nagra and Yrmanians.
Ur: Ur are respected for their attempt to emulate the rulership structures of civilized lands, even if they don't quite succeed.
Yrmanians: As with the Nagra, Yrmanians are feared by the Mondre Khan on the level of instinct.
Za: Mondre Khan respect the Za for their ferocity in wartime, but the Mondre Khan feel that they give in too easily to their beastsouls.



Nagra

Objective Summary

Dour tribesfolk from the jungles of the Quan Empire, haunted by the disturbing things that are revealed by their mystic senses. Attacks by enemies have shattered their once-complex culture.

How and Where They Live

Nagra survive as hunters and gatherers. Increasingly, they venture into the civilized world, where they seek employment as trackers.

Beliefs

Astral vision is a curse, not a gift. The world of spirits is a malign one. Fear is a constant.

Relationship with Tirshata

The Nagra hope the Tirshata will bring peace with the Chana and remove their curse of astral vision.

Civilized View

"I hired a Nagra tracker to find a feckless Sindaran who had done me over in a business dealing. Followed the Sindaran by sniffing out his spirit, or something like that. The Nagra did his job all right, led me right to the two-brained son of a mud walker. But being around him made my skin crawl. I'm glad he mostly kept to himself."

—Tamera, Cymrilian rogue magician

A Nagra Speaks

"You are blind, and be glad of it. You do not sense all of the world around you. You do not see the leaping things, the swirling things, the eaters of souls, the stealers of courage, the astral quicksand, the doorways through which the demons tread. So I understand why you find me strange. Do not try to understand. The truth is too terrible to know. Cling tight to your blindness; revel in it. You have no spirit jars. Blindness is the only thing protecting you. I do not care to speak now. Tell me who you wish me to track, and I will do it. In silence."

The Nagra exist in a world of eternal terror. The astonishing acuity of their senses allows them to perceive things that others cannot. They have some sort of "third eye," poorly understood by Talislantan scholars. It allows them to see into the shadowy transitional world between

the material world and the spiritrealms. What they see in this mysterious half-zone chills them to the marrow. This section of reality is infested with mystic predators of gruesome aspect and terrible power. Although the Nagra have developed primitive enchantments, most notably their spirit jars, to protect them from the attacks of these otherworldly creatures, they spend most of their days trying to shut out the awful things they see dancing about just on the edges of perception. Actually, there are at least as many benign nature spirits as soul-devouring supernatural menaces in this half-world. It is emblematic of the Nagra that they obsess on the horrid things and ignore the positive creatures.

Although Nagra are essentially protected from malign supernatural beings when they wear their spirit jars, the mere sight of these beings gives Nagra their uniquely dour and fatalistic viewpoint. If deprived of a spirit jar, a Nagra goes into a complete panic, feeling utterly defenseless. A Nagra will fight to the death in a desperate frenzy to recover a stolen spirit jar. In Nagra society, the theft of a spirit jar is considered a crime worse than murder. A Nagra judged guilty of this offense is punished in a fearsome group assault in which men, women, and even children fall upon the transgressor and tear him or her to pieces with their bare hands.

Nagra are quiet, introspective beings. They value silence as a high virtue. They also value self-reliance, wisdom, and stoic resignation to fate. Talkative or flamboyant individuals are thought to be fools.

Nagra communities, which are rapidly diminishing in number, are only loosely organized. They cooperate when necessary—for example, for mutual self-defense against marauding Chana and Kang—but show no particular joy in one another's company. Even relationships within families seem distant and formal. After Nagra come of age, their obligations to their parents are considered to be discharged, and vice versa. It is possible that they resist forming attachments in order to avoid feeling grief: one does not mourn loved ones if one does not love.

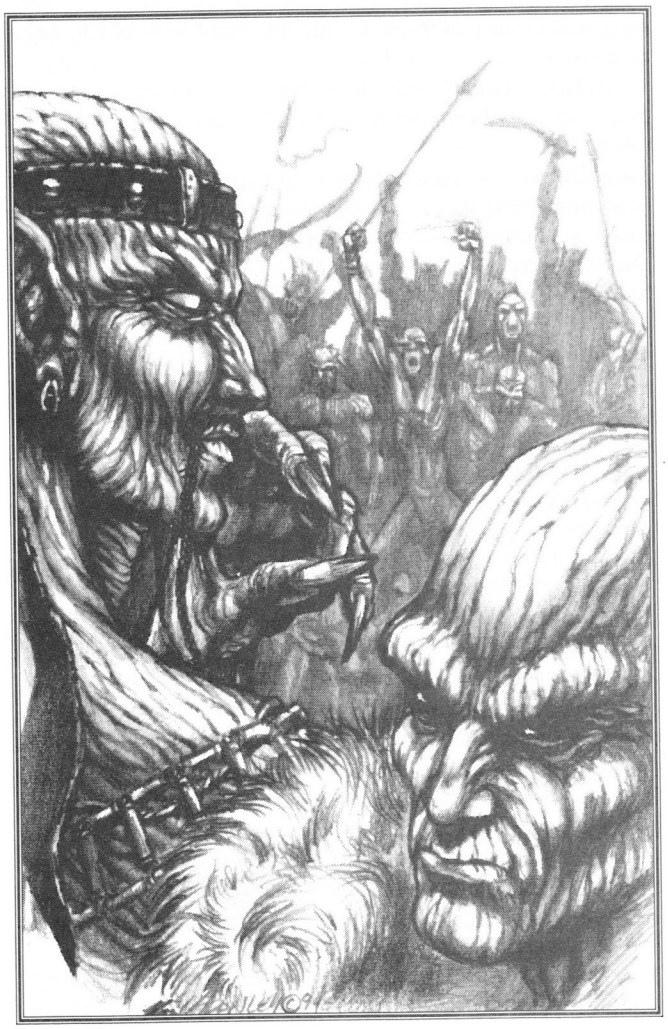
Because they are such loners, Nagra see nothing wrong with wandering away from their home villages. To the contrary, this is seen as a display of high wisdom, since the existence the threatened Nagra maintain in the mountains adjoining the jungles of Chana is a precarious one. Nagra do not travel for the sake of it and seem to take no pleasure in experiencing new things or encountering beings of other races. Even a funeral rite is a solitary ritual; dying Nagra open their spirit jars, allowing the trapped spirits to fly free.

In the greater world, Nagra engage in the trade of spirit tracking to support themselves. Spirit tracking is the uncanny knack of seeing residual spiritual traces left behind by any entities who have souls or spirits. Nagra don't show pride in this talent: to them it would be like taking pride in an ancient curse. Also, they display nothing but indifference to the consequences of their actions towards non-Nagra. They are as likely to hire on to spirit track a vicious criminal as to help that same criminal track down a victim.

At home or abroad, the Nagra practice but one art, the art of carving. They sculpt *nagus*, wands of ivory or bone, which they carve with elaborate geometric designs and mystic symbols. Like the products of most primitive arts, they are both decorative and supremely functional; just like spirit jars, the nagus ward off malign spiritual entities.

The Nagra once had a rich oral heritage, but much of this material has been lost, as the Chana and Kang have managed to exterminate many Nagra communities. According to what remains of the Nagra tales, they once lived in large bands and had a much more structured approach to social relationships.

Although the current Nagra have ceased to keep track of much of their history, they still cherish legends about the Tirshata. According to their tales, he gained the Nagra's cooperation through two measures. First, he forged a peace agreement with the Chana. Second, he promised to find a way to "blind" the Nagra, to remove from them the mystic sensing ability that makes their every moment a waking nightmare. Some Nagra have journeyed to the



side of the new Tirshata hoping he will make good on his promise and remove their "third eyes." They no longer hold out much hope of the Chana being pacified. It would be good if the Tirshata would destroy the Chana, but they consider this an unlikely prospect.

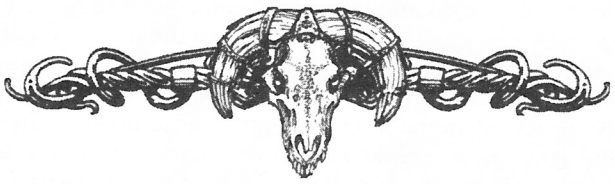
Reactions to Other Sub-Men Races

Generally:

Nagra are not social beings and have little reason to like other Sub-Men types. The best response others can expect from them is toleration. Since most others see the Nagra as spooky and no doubt possessed of frightening mystic powers, the Nagra are usually given a wide berth, which suits them just fine. (Nagra generally expect others to give them this consideration and will be somewhat surprised if they don't.)

Breakdown by Race:

Araq: The Nagra see the Araq as fearsome beasts, who have strangely faint spirit traces.
Beastmen: The Nagra regard the Beastmen with a mixture of distaste for their animalistic behavior and envy of their ability to track without interacting with the alarming world of the spirits.
Chana: The Chana are hated enemies of the Nagra who have slain many of their people and dabble in black magic to boot.
Danelek: The Nagra tolerate the serious Danelek because of their propensities towards stoicism and silence.
Darklings: The Nagra believe the physical resemblance Darklings bear to certain dread otherworldly beings suggests something sinister about them. The Nagra think they are best avoided.
Drukh: Nagra think of the Drukh as Araq with brighter spirits.
Harakin: Same as Danelek.
Manra: The Nagra regard the Manra as either irritating chatterers or naive fools.
Mondre Khan: The horror of the creatures in the shadowy astral zone makes the beastsoul seem a petty concern.The Nagra therefore think Mondre Khan preoccupation with the beastsoul self-indulgent.
Stryx: Nagra see Stryx as allies to the awful spiritforms, whether the Stryx are necromancers or not.
Ur: Nagra see Ur as bullying blowhards.
Yrmanians: The Nagra pity the murmuring, addled Yrmanians; the Nagra assume that they too can see into the shadow zone and have drugged themselves into insensibility to shut off the unwanted visions.
Za: Same as Ur.



Stryx

Objective Summary

Stryx divide into two groups: necromancers and warriors. The necromancers are haughty servitors of the carrion deity, Taryx. The warriors are shiftless mercenaries under the dominance of the brutal Ur peoples.

How and Where They Live

Stryx are carrion-eating avian folk native to the wastes of Urag.

Beliefs

Death begets death. Taryx demands sacrifice. Taryx will provide food for all.

Relationship with Tirshata

The Tirshata is good, for the wars he is causing will generate much carrion. It is possible that the Tirshata is an aspect or ally of Taryx.

Civilized View

"I'll never forget the look in the eyes of the Stryx necromancer as it strapped me to the sacrificial altar. Positively chilling. Although I had on many previous occasions glanced into the visual organs of other beings who intended to kill me, I had never until that day interacted with an intelligent creature who so clearly hungered to eat *me."*

—Cechorion, Sindaran collector

A Stryx Speaks

"Taryx is coming. We can feel him in our bones, our changing bodies. His servant is the Tirshata. He will stride across the land, dropping his blessing all around. You shall be part of that blessing, O civilized one. Carrion. You shall be meat for our beaks, dough for our claws to knead. The Tirshata shall come, and he shall order the Sub-Men to fight you. The Sub-Men will also die in great quantities. And we shall be there, to accept Taryx's gifts, to feed gratefully on both sides. Judging from the looks of you, you'll be at your peak of flavor a day after your death, as civilization collapses around your corpse."

The Stryx, allies of the Ur (see p. 60), are of two kinds: the necromancers, those who follow the carrion god, Taryx; and the warriors, simple mercenaries whose wages are the flesh of the dead. The Ur pay little attention to their Stryx confederates. In their typically Ur-centered view of existence, they imagine that the birdmen care as much as they do about the occupants of the three thrones of Urag. It is true that some Stryx participate with as much or more fervor in Ur battles as they do, but their agenda is a far different one. To the Stryx, war is fought to satisfy hunger, not to win thrones or titles.

Stryx necromancers live in small religious communities dedicated to the worship of Taryx. These communities, known as *warrens*, are located in the cliffs and crags of Urag. The necromancers, who refer to themselves as the "Servants of Taryx" spend much of their time seeking out victims for their sacrificial rites. The doctrines of Taryx decree that death begets death—one victim sacrificed to Taryx will yield ten good pieces of carrion found out in the field. Whether this is true or not, there's a tangible benefit to capturing victims for sacrifice—a Stryx's position in the warren's hierarchy depends on it. Among Servants of Taryx, those who capture more victims over time wield complete authority over those who capture fewer. Status depends on a life's work, so *eereaah*, Stryx necromancer leaders, tend to be older members of the community.

Necromancers think of themselves as superior to all other life forms, who after all exist only to die and provide food for the Stryx. Necromancers teach that Taryx created the entire cycle of life and death for their benefit. Stryx therefore feel no more remorse for their victims than a resident of the Seven Kingdoms would for slaughtered herd animals. In communicating with outsiders, they tend to exhibit a snide, arrogant sense of humor. For example, their catchall term for other species is *mrra-akk*, a pun meaning "future food" (formed by the Stryx's combining two, separate similar-sounding ancient Archaen words meaning "future" and "food").

Relationships between Stryx communities are usually quiet, as they're bound by common beliefs. However, each community does maintain a territory, and occasional skirmishes do break out. Under certain circumstances territorial rules do not apply. One example is Ur wars when the bodies are falling fast and furious. Since there is more food during these times than any one community can devour, the warren lucky enough to have a battle on its doorstep is magnanimous in sharing the spoils. Long-term disputes between communities are rare; there is provision in necromancer tradition to settle these through a *Convocation*. A Convocation is a meeting of all of Urag's warrens, at which the top pair from each warren attends and decisions are made by majority vote.

Necromancers sometimes form temporary alliances with Ur warlords, which the warlords usually come to regret—if they live that long. The necromancer interest is in seeing the maximum number of battlefield deaths, not in helping one faction of dinner win out over the other. Ur shamans don't get along too well with them either: the Servants of Taryx smugly contend that the faith of the idolaters is a mistaken parody of their own worship. The necromancers treat Stryx warriors with a mixture of animosity and pity, as pathetic weaklings who have thrown aside their true Taryx-ordained destiny to kowtow to a pack of absurd brutes. Still, the Servants exempt them from becoming sacrifices to Taryx, fearing that he might be offended to receive even the most degraded members of his flock in this way.

The Tirshata is remembered in Stryx necromancer lore as a minion of Taryx, who created much carrion: first by warring against civilization, and then by leaving to let the Sub-Men fight amongst themselves. They have looked forward to his return, but unlike most other cultures covered here, they hope that he once again disappears afterward in order that there be an increase in the magnitude of premature death.

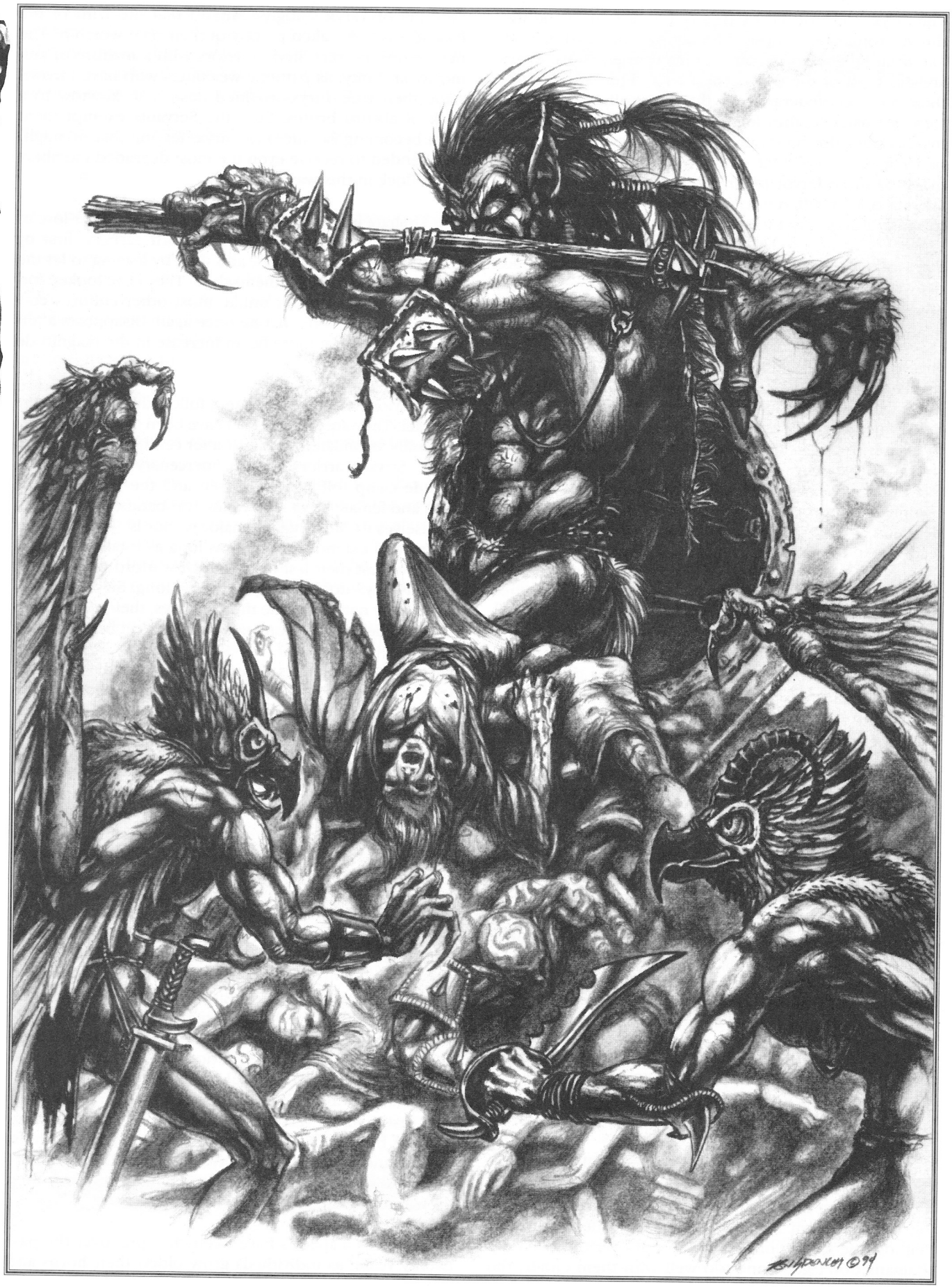
The warriors, on the other hand, follow the Ur line on the Tirshata. They are fighters who have been to a large degree culturally assimilated by the Ur after centuries of service to them. Stryx warriors live in mercenary bands (which include camp followers: children and the elderly). Both male and female Stryx fight in the war bands, which attach themselves to the forces of major warlords. The loyalty of a war band extends for about as long as it takes its members to digest their last meal—an Ur warlord who doesn't feed his Stryx doesn't keep them for long. Stryx are independent by nature; unlike the Darklings, their relationship to the Ur doesn't turn on fear, but on direct benefit.

War band discipline is considered low by the Ur, their desire for victory lacking. The Ur consider them unreliable but nonetheless depend on their aerial capabilities. On the battlefield, warriors fight as long as an Ur is riding herd over them—then they treat themselves to the fallen. When not fighting, Stryx warriors are scavenging, squabbling, or sleeping.

Constantly being whipped into line by brutish Ur, the warrior Stryx have less of a sense of supremacy than their necromancer cousins. The Ur are constantly telling them that they are shiftless, lazy, and stupid, and they've come to believe it. They fear the necromancers even more than the Ur do, although out of their company they try hard to dismiss them out loud as insane savages.

Individual Stryx sometimes wander far from Urag. Among the warriors these are usually those who can no longer stand the bullying ways of the Ur, and seek more generous employers elsewhere. Although their scouting and reconnaissance abilities would be valuable to many organizations, few are willing to stomach Stryx eating habits. As a result, stray warriors are usually found in the company of bandits, adventurers, and other ne'er-do-wells. Necromancers sometimes leave their comfortable nests to spread death and decay in Taryx's name, often ending up with the same sort of employer.

The Stryx as a species have been changing over the past twenty years; as individuals grow older, their horns and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wattles grow increasingly elaborate—and increasingly loathsome in the eyes of others. They also feel different, as if some new, burning energy is coursing through their bodies. The necromancers think this is an omen from Taryx, meaning that he is coming closer, ready to shower Talislanta with corpses. Warriors are at a loss to explain the phenomenon and try not to think about it.

Reactions to Other Sub-Men Races

Generally:

A Stryx conversing with a non-Stryx is generally wondering what it'll taste like dead. The beings that the Stryx hate and fear most are not Sub-Men but rather the Gryphs, who make a practice of hunting and killing them whenever possible.

Breakdown by Race:

Araq: Araq taste rather like birds.
Beastmen: Beastmen have a tough, pungent meat.
Chana: Chana are a light meal: an hour later you're hungry again.
Danelek: Danelek are usually on the tough side.
Darklings: Darklings are an oddly unsatisfying meal, as if they're mostly air or something.
Drukh: Drukh are a delicacy.
Harakin: Harakin have an interesting acidic quality.
Manra: The shapechanging Manra are always a surprise: no two taste the same.
Mondre Khan: Mondre Khan are not appreciably different from Beastmen in flavor.
Nagra: Nagra, like Drukh, are a delicacy.
Ur: Ur flesh is an acceptable, if not too common, meal.
Yrmanians: The Yrmanians are bitter and, in immoderate doses, somewhat unpleasantly intoxicating.
Za: The Za are spicy and leave a lingering aftertaste in the beak.

Ur

Objective Summary

The brutish masters of the wastes of Urag, the Ur fight continually to assert the dominance of whichever of the three kings of Urag they serve.

How and Where They Live

Their own efforts concentrate almost entirely on warfare. The Ur are dependent on the Darklings for slave labor.

Beliefs

Rank is everything (all male Ur dream of becoming king). Idols scattered throughout the land provide mystic knowledge to those who seek it.

Relationship with Tirshata

Prophecy has it that the Tirshata will unite the warring Ur under a single *Overking.*

Civilized View

"When encountering an Ur, do not attempt to reason or negotiate with it. You will merely confuse it. Instead, strike it instantly with your two-handed sword."

—Besieger, Thrall warrior

An Ur Speaks

"I know what you feel towards me. It is hate. I can feel it; you give it off like a stink. It rises in the back of my throat like the reek of rotting flesh. You think you are better than me. Even if I was to take this board and smash your head in with it, you would die thinking you were better than me. But you are wrong. For it is I who am better than you. I will crush all who stand in my way. Squad leaders, war councils, warlords, courtiers, kings—over all I shall triumph! And then I will be king of the Urag, and that is the only thing in this world that matters—the only thing! Your hate means nothing."

The Ur control the land of Urag, a once-fertile area turned to a poisonous, foul-smelling dump by the wasteful, destructive practices of generations of Ur warlords and kings. To the Ur, life is nothing more than a never-ending struggle to best one another, to crawl to the top of the heap on the backs of those less ruthless and powerful than they themselves. The goal any self-respecting male Ur aims for is the ultimate kingship, the position of absolute monarch of all of Urag. The fact that there has never been a single undisputed king of the Urag is of little consequence. Any ambitious Ur believes that he is the one who is destined finally to rest his bloodstained boots on the backs of all of his people.

Incidentally, some Ur savants (a term used in its loosest sense) argue that there was a single Overking back in the days of the Tirshata, an individual named Trok. Others loudly contend that Trok cheated, since he wouldn't have crushed the other two kings without the Tirshata's help. Anyone wishing to start a brawl amongst a group of drunken Ur would be well advised to ask them their opinion of the so-called Overking Trok; this question invariably starts fists flying. For every Ur who wants to believe that Trok became Overking, and that therefore he might do it too, there is another who is certain that he will be the first Overking and wants no predecessor to spoil his glory.

Ur are obsessed with rank. From childhood, male Ur are taught by their mothers and stepmothers that they must strive to overcome all others and rise to power. This means an Ur starting out as a lowly soldier, then staging a successful mutiny to take over a squad, then edging out a member of his warlord's inner circle of advisers. The inner circle is a platform from which to knock off the warlord and take his place. Once an Ur is warlord of a small clan army, he theoretically answers to one of the three rival kings of the Urag. He campaigns to increase his reputation by engaging warlords of the other two kings on the battlefield and by besting supposedly allied warlords at court politics. The ultimate aim of court politics is to rise to the rank of inner-circle adviser to one's king—and we already know what an inner circle position is good for. . . . On the other hand, as an Ur rises to power, he must always watch his back, because he can count on his underlings to be planning to do to him what he did to his predecessor.

One might think that the emotion-reading abilities of the Ur would make it difficult for subordinates to betray their masters, but this is to overestimate the discernment of the typical Ur. An Ur superior *wants* his men to hate and fear him—otherwise, what's the fun of being in charge? Therefore, a loyal Ur radiates the same trepidation and loathing as one plotting an overthrow. An old Ur saying captures their attitude: "True loyalty is like a woman's beauty—don't count on it to last."

Ur court politics is obvious and rather brutal. The Ur idea of subtlety is bludgeoning one's enemy from behind rather than from the front. Ur males are prone to violent rages at the slightest provocation. Poisonings are a popular form of political expression within Urag, which explains the rise of the Ur clan shamans as a class. Kings have staffs of shamans whose responsibility is to protect their liege from being poisoned. This might seem as logical as getting an exomorph to guard the livestock, but

the prudent king is careful to set his shamans at one another's throats in order to keep them from eyeing his own. Shamans are important to warlords also, as every clan warlord has a shamanic adviser, who is kept at arm's length from the inner circle of advisers in order to prevent his inner circle from teaming up to do him in. Some outside scholars have speculated that the religion of the Ur—reverence of mysterious stone idols scattered throughout the land—is merely a pretense that allows each warlord to have a professional poisoner on his staff under the rubric of the priesthood. This slightly misses the point—poisoning one's leader is considered a religious act in Urag.

Ur shamans call the idols *gortok*, or "head-talkers." They claim that by meditating and fasting for long periods in front of the gortok, the dedicated Ur can awaken them from their slumber, at which point the Ur hear the voices of the idols within their heads. The idols strongly endorse the constant killing and upheaval between the clans and courts, and advise their shamans on ways to keep the blood flowing. This leads to the speculation that the idols somehow feed on negative emotions or simply enjoy watching the Ur kill one another. (Members of the idolater cult also sacrifice prisoners of war, Ur and non-Ur, to the gortok, but it is unclear whether the idols appreciate the gesture or not.) Shamans maintain a lifelong relationship with a single idol; it may be that the idols are playing a millennia-old game in which the Ur are pieces and Urag the board.

When an Ur king dies—whether at the hands of his warlords or his shamans, or, in incredibly rare circumstances, by natural causes—a new king is elected from his inner circle by his inner circle. These crises of succession often result in fighting that significantly reduces the size of the inner circle—many kings have won their thrones through attrition. A king usually designates a successor, often a son or other relative, in the hopes of continuing his lineage. To do this successfully, the king must work to strengthen the successor's position so he won't be challenged by other warlords after the king dies. But a king can't strengthen a successor too much or he'll be able to usurp his patron before he is quite ready to go.

Ur power politics appears at first glance to be an enterprise carried on only by the crass and vicious males of the race. Behind the scenes, however, are the Ur women. Ur males claim to maintain a strict male-dominated society. Their women, however, claim that Ur society is matriarchal and that the men are just too dumb to have noticed. The Ur women have a saying: "Behind every great Ur man is a woman with a knife pointed between his shoulder blades."

Ur family structure depends on the rank of the male. Mere soldiers are not permitted to marry. Squad leaders may take a single wife. Warlords may take three wives and may extend to their squad leaders permission to take a second. Kings may take five wives and bestow on favored warlords permission to take a fourth. Shamans are expected to remain celibate but rarely do. As neglected wives often take lovers—low-ranking soldiers for pleasure or higher-ranked warriors for political advantage—no Ur can guarantee that his official father is his blood father.

All of an Ur's wives are expected to live together in a single household. The struggle for power within a household of wives is at least as intense as that in the courts of the kings. New wives coming into a household typically come from a higher social position than older ones, as Ur tend to marry the sisters of their peers to cement new political alliances. This power advantage is countered out by the fact that senior wives will have already cemented their control of the household staff. Wives rule over a retinue of servants made up of unattached Ur women, female Darklings, and eunuch Ur males.

(Powerful Ur punish rebellious male underlings by turning them into eunuchs. To be "sent to the servants' quarters" is an alarming prospect: the term is a euphemism for castration. This usually puts an end to an Ur's ambitions, as other males won't follow one who has been shamed in this way. There have been exceptions to this rule, however, like the notorious eunuch-king, Durgnur the Vengeful. Castrations are performed ritually by shamans, who are whispered to use the by-products in their more noxious alchemical mixtures. This makes the shaman a major object of fear as far as the average male Ur is concerned.)

When they're not intriguing against one another, an Ur's wives are intriguing against the female households of his rivals, hoping to get information that will help their husband to triumph over his enemies, thereby enlarging the household staff—and bringing in new wives. When two or more wives are vying for power in a household, each welcomes the arrival of a new wife, hoping to recruit the new wife to her side of the ongoing struggle. Ur women also have responsibility for child-rearing—male youngsters leave the world of women when they're big enough to fight; daughters remain in the maternal household until they marry. Ur women train their boys to be wily and treacherous, hoping to be taken care of by high-status sons in their old age; daughters are given less attention. When Ur women are widowed, they remarry if they are young enough, or join the households of their sons, if their sons are old enough. If they have no sons or suitors, they become lowly servants for other households.

It is women who maintain the oral traditions of the Ur. Their traditions tell them that the Tirshata has promised to return, and to unite the Ur under a single Overking just as he did by uniting them under Trok. Then he will lead them to destroy the civilized realms. Each household of wives wants to ensure that it is its husband who becomes Overking. The Ur wives wait for an envoy made up of a particular mix of Sub-Men as the prophesied sign that the true Tirshata is back.

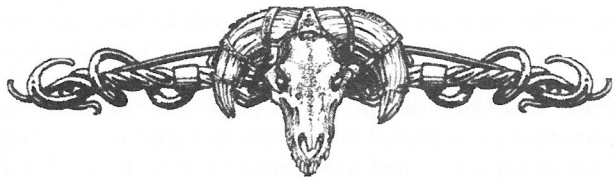
Turbulent Ur society throws off many outcasts, usually males who are sentenced to the servants' quarters and decide instead to escape before their involuntary surgery.

The brute strength of the Ur, their enjoyment of violence, and their desire to get ahead make them good criminals; Ur often make good livings in civilized countries as bandits, bodyguards, and mercenaries. Their uncontrollable tempers often get them into trouble with the law, and they are much feared. When a citizen of the Seven Kingdoms speaks of the Sub-Men with fear and hatred, it is usually an Ur he or she is picturing.

Reactions to Other Sub-Men Races

Araq: Ur look down on Araq as civilized peoples look down on Ur; their savagery is respected, but the Ur think it is wasted without a kingship to fight over.
Beastmen: Ur think of Beastmen as primitive and stupid.
Chana: Ur try to treat Chana warriors as they treat Darklings: as craven slackers to be kicked about. On the other hand, Ur give Chana witchfolk the same fearful deference that they give to their own shamans.
Danelek: Ur disdain Danelek as aloof and superior.
Darklings: See below.
Drukh: Ur think Drukh are sneaky and base for their love of torture: an honorable race would kill in combat, not afterwards.
Harakin: Ur regard Harakin as rather uptight folk who bottle up emotions that would be better shouted to the skies.
Manra: Ur think that the stupidly peaceful and placid Manra would make good servants and spies if they could be somehow captured and taken back to Urag.
Mondre Khan: The Mondre Khan reliance on covert rather than overt warfare marks them out as dishonorable in Ur eyes.
Nagra: Ur treat the strangely spiritual Nagra with the uneasy deference they accord their shamans.
Stryx: See below.
Yrmanians: Ur treat the bizarre Yrmanians as the Nagra.
Za: The Ur respect the Za for their warrior skills; it is the new Tirshata's involvement with them that lends him credibility in Ur eyes.

Stryx and Darklings: The Ur have close ties to two groups described elsewhere in this book, Stryx and Darklings. They take the Stryx for granted as reliable—if odd—allies; the Ur have no understanding of the true motivations behind the ancient Stryx alliance with them. They think of Darklings as shifty and unreliable beings who must be dominated and whipped into obedience—worthy receptacles for the contempt of even the lowliest Ur.



Yrmanians

Objective Summary

Drug-addled, drooling primitives from the barren tundra of Yrmania.

How and Where They Live

The Yrmanians subsist as gatherers, taking advantage of hunting opportunities when they appear.

Beliefs

Their perceptions warped by the hallucinogenic mushroom skullcap, Yrmanians develop idiosyncratic individual beliefs. Some worship an underground god of stone, Yrman. Others believe in various relationships between a real world and an illusionary one.

Relationship with Tirshata

Although they have no conscious knowledge of him, the Yrmanians are drawn instinctively to the Tirshata's side.

Civilized View

"Pathetic creatures, really. And unpredictably violent. Generally they are little threat if given a wide berth. But more than once I have felt an impulse to put them out of their obvious misery."

—L'hana, Mirin tundra scout

An Yrmanian Speaks

"The pepperweed plants are in bloom. You never hear of pepperweed? They all in my head, growing, blossoming— You are my soul twin, are you not? Did you not once ask me for my left eye and I gave it to you and then it turned out that you were not my twin at all and I was forced to crush your head open with my club and it tasted like—no, no, that was someone else. You are not my soul twin. The raknids smell of flowers this year, they wish to be cremated after death, that is why they are so upset—my soul twin! I love you! I hate you! I love you! Kiss me!"

The Yrmanians have built a culture around being brain-damaged. They routinely use a toxic powder derived from the skullcap mushroom as part of their religious practices. Unfortunately, there is little more that can be said about them for certain, for the Yrmanians are not

only just as hostile as other Sub-Men to inquiring Talislantan scholars but often don't even know where they are at any given moment. Those few of them who have cooperated with wandering savants have given wildly differing accounts of their practices and beliefs. The Yrmanians are supreme individualists: each, with the help of habitually consumed hallucinogens, lives in a different interior world, with its own landscape, meaning, and internal rules.

For example, some Yrmanians claim that the ingestion of skullcap enables them to access another world. This other world is somewhat similar to the Real World of Chana belief (see p. 33), except that there is no indication that the Yrmanians believe that the Real World is in any way a paradise. It is full of just as much horror and uncertainty as Archaeus, if not more; it is preferable simply because it is real.

Other Yrmanians differ on this point, claiming that Archaeus, which they call *Yrman*, after their sleeping stone god, is the real world but that reality is something to be feared and escaped. So skullcap allows them to escape to this other world, *Habooto*, which is in fact little different from Yrman except that it's not real, and therefore somehow better.

Still others say that Yrman and Habooto are equally real and equally terrifying. Yrman drives one crazy through harsh conditions and many enemies; Habooto causes insanity through its extreme comfort and the unrelenting friendliness of its peoples. In order to remain even marginally sane, one must use skullcap to spend time half in this world and half in the other so that daily experience is neither excessively hellish nor heavenly.

A fourth belief states that there is only one world, that of Yrman. Skullcap does not allow access to other worlds but merely opens up new ways of perceiving this world by activating senses that would otherwise go unused.

A fifth belief agrees with the fourth belief, except that it calls the world Habooto.

This is not an exhaustive list of contradictory Yrmanian beliefs about existence; new ones seem to spring up fairly regularly, replacing old beliefs. It is very difficult to say how old any given belief is; it may have a millennia-old provenance or merely have been hallucinated-up the previous morning. Some Yrmanians claim to worship ancestors they contact through skullcap; others, to be fleeing the ghosts of unwelcome ancestors by taking it. Some claim to be able to contact animal spirits, others to become animals under its influence, and still others to attain the realization that animals are all imaginary and . . . *out for revenge?* Some say that skullcap merely makes them happy, others that it provides them with a delicious feeling of sadness. Most Yrmanians believe in the existence of their god, Yrman, and that he is so vast that the Sardonyx Mountains are merely his teeth. However, there seems to be little agreement on his temperament, desired modes of being worshipped, or legendary deeds.

With each member of the Yrmanian community perceiving basic reality in a slightly different way, it is little wonder that the Yrmanians have as loose a social structure as possible. Adult Yrmanians tend to communicate more to the possibly hallucinatory spirits of other worlds than they do to each other. They band together only for mutual protection. This is not the cohesive self-defense ethic of, for example, the Danelek, but merely an action borne out of hope that attackers will get the other members of the community before the individual, giving him or her a chance to escape. Yrmanians have some fierce enemies in their homeland, both the Ice Giants and Jaka. The Yrmanian ethic can be summed up as "Every wildman for himself." No Yrmanian blames another for saving his or her own skin at the expense of others. Perhaps the population of wildmen wouldn't be dwindling if the wildmen changed their strategy, but the Yrmanians are too addled to organize themselves in any sophisticated way. When threatened, groups resort to bluster, beating their chests in a threat display. They usually don't commit to battle unless driven to extreme rage. In this frenzied state, they are fearsome foes indeed, while at other times they are quite peaceful.

Yrmanians rarely fight one another; when they do, it is usually the result of a skullcap hallucination. When one Yrmanian is attacked by another in a skullcap frenzy, he or she is expected to bear the assault with as little retaliation as possible. After all, someday that Yrmanian will no doubt be doing the same to someone else. Thus it is considered a great virtue in wildman society to be able to take great punishment. After a combat, the glory goes to the ones who suffered the greatest wounds from their enemies' blows, not to the ones who did the greatest injury to their opponents.

Wildmen bands are usually fairly small: twenty to thirty members is a good average. Sometimes bands join together for short periods; members move between bands without apparent reason or notice. They are foragers who will eat almost anything. What little social cohesion exists between members is provided by the bands' underage children, who have not yet been introduced to the skullcap ritual. Yrmanian children, out of necessity, mature intellectually at a very young age. A nine-year-old will have rudimentary leadership skills and a grasp of basic tactics; fifteen-year-olds are the smartest and wisest members of a wildman community.

Then, at age sixteen, the new adults are introduced by tribal shamans to skullcap. In the course of a two-year series of coming-of-age rituals, the Yrmanian is slowly desensitized to the toxic effects of the drug so that he or she can ingest it without being poisoned and experience only its mind-altering effects. Soon the stability and clarity of the immature individual are replaced by the detachment from reality typical of the adult wildman. Instead of being interested in protecting the welfare of the community, the individual loses him or herself in whatever inner world the skullcap opens up.

Yrmanians are not buzzed on skullcap twenty-four hours a day. The daily routine for Yrmanians is to wake up,

gather together with the other members of the tribe, and go out foraging, with the youngsters keeping watch for monsters, Jaka, and Ice Giants. Yrmanians forage for edible plants as well as their precious mushrooms. They lay traps for small animals, but hunting for larger game is largely beyond them. A few of the senior youngsters might sometimes organize hunting parties in times of great scarcity. Once the youngsters determine that enough food has been gathered, the tribe shambles back to their settlement—usually established in a secure gully, ravine, or cave—and break out the skullcap, beginning their journeys into their own little worlds. A band of tripping skullcap users is not a pretty sight: the users sit rocking compulsively as spittle runs down from their mouths. Those too young to take skullcap spend their time on watch duty or in training.

Wildmen are irrational and prone to drift into hallucination even when they haven't recently ingested any skullcap, as the drug has lingering effects after habitual use. The extreme unpredictability of adult wildmen applies whether they are currently on the drug or not.

Renegade wildmen are very rare: generally wildmen like to stay where the skullcap mushroom is plentiful. However, a few wander away and become too confused to find their way back. Others see visions ordering them to travel to distant lands to fulfill inexplicable mystic quests. Yrmanians in civilized lands usually end up as beggars or muggers.

Yrmanians have few common tales or legends except for vague tales of Yrman. The Yrmanians have no known memories of the Tirshata. Nonetheless, small bands of Yrmanians have been filtering down to the Wilderlands of Zaran to join the Tirshata's forces. Each wildman has received visions of the great Sub-Men army gathering there and of the imminent destruction of the Seven Kingdoms. Each has felt compelled to participate in this great upheaval. Yrmanians in the Sub-Men encampment will have each brought a year's supply of dried skullcap powder with him or her.

Reactions to Other Sub-Men Races

Generally:

Yrmanians perceive other Sub-Men groups in the encampment through a skullcap haze. Each Yrmanian has his or her own quirky responses to them.

Breakdown by Race:

The following are just some examples of a given Yrmanian's perceptions, as Yyrmanians have no culturally cohesive opinions about each race.

Araq: Araq are joyful beings whose touch induces euphoria.
Beastmen: Beastmen have wonderful drugs they refuse to share.
Chana: The Chana are green and shiny.
Danelek: Danelek are turning into stone and don't know it.
Darklings: Darklings are only two-dimensional; they're cave paintings come to life.
Drukh: The Drukh are good to eat.
Harakin: Harakin are insane and unpredictable.
Manra: Manra speak too loudly, which hurts my eyes.
Mondre Khan: Mondre Khan are little black dots.
Nagra: Nagra are famous spiritual leaders who must be obeyed or they will turn you into boots.
Stryx: Stryx pretend to be frightening but are really cuddly.
Ur: Ur are wise and strong, much like Yrmanian youngsters.
Za: The Za are purely imaginary.

Za

Objective Summary

Fierce raiders and bandits.

How and Where They Live

The Za survive in the Wilderlands of Zaran entirely by stealing food and other goods.

Beliefs

Being feared is good. Honor is everything. Savagery leads to victory.

Relationship with Tirshata

The original Tirshata was a Za who committed many admirable atrocities and therefore deserved complete loyalty.

Civilized View

"When fighting a Za, expect no mercy. And therefore, give none."

—Aramacta, Danuvian swordswoman

A Za Speaks

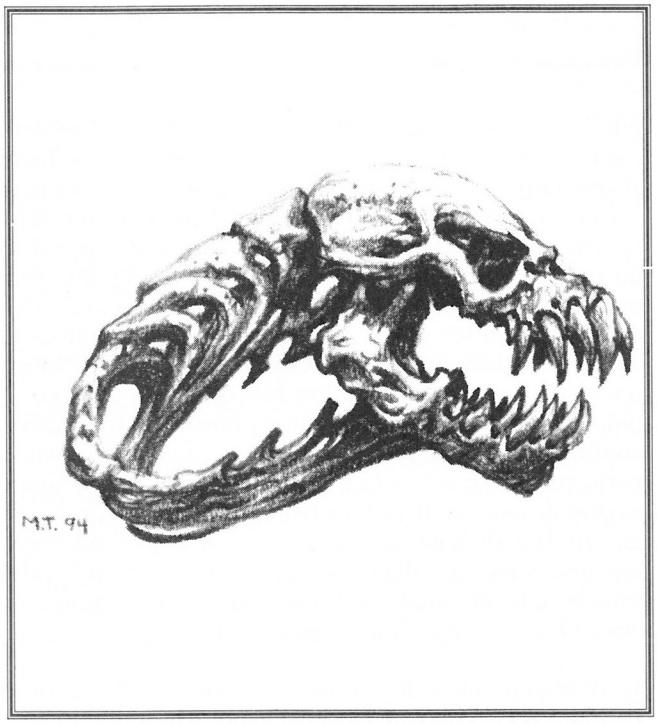
"Unlike most of your kind, you are brave. Because of this, I shall pay you the ultimate tribute. I shall cleave your head from its perch upon your shoulders. I shall drink your blood from a cup made from the skull of the last man I slew. Your blood shall fill my sinews with power, my heart with strength. Thus a portion of you shall survive in me; your blood will fuel my triumphs. And when I am slain, and my blood drunk by my foe, a portion of you shall survive in him. Thus you shall be immortal, your bravery passed on through the generations. And for these things you call me uncivilized, savage, brutal? Like all of your kind, you are supremely ungrateful."

Of all of the members of the various Sub-Men groups, the ones who most live up to their reputation as fearsome and implacable barbarians are the Za. This is because they make their living from the fear they inspire in others. They're almost exclusively raiders, depending for their sustenance on the labors of their victims. To be feared is to be respected. The ambition of every Za is to have the widest possible reputation for butchery and ruthlessness. A good Za is one who inspires much fear. As a farmer uses a plow and a painter uses a brush to make a living, a Za uses terror.

The Za know that any fear of them is based on one part atrocity and three parts wild rumor. Za bandit gangs frequently achieve their objectives without spilling a single drop of blood. A surprising number of caravaneers and travelers simply flee, abandoning their goods, when they realize that they're being charged by the Za. Za gangs are indeed fearsome bands of fighters, but they know that it's even more cost-effective to win by default than actually to fight: if no enemy blood is shed, no Za blood is shed either. Therefore, on those occasions when their targets do put up a fight, the Za are scrupulous in their savagery. They make a policy of taking no prisoners. Surrender is unwise when dealing with the Za; one must flee them or drive them off. Those who fall into their clutches are left as horribly mutilated corpses for others to find, to further spread the horrific reputation of the Za.

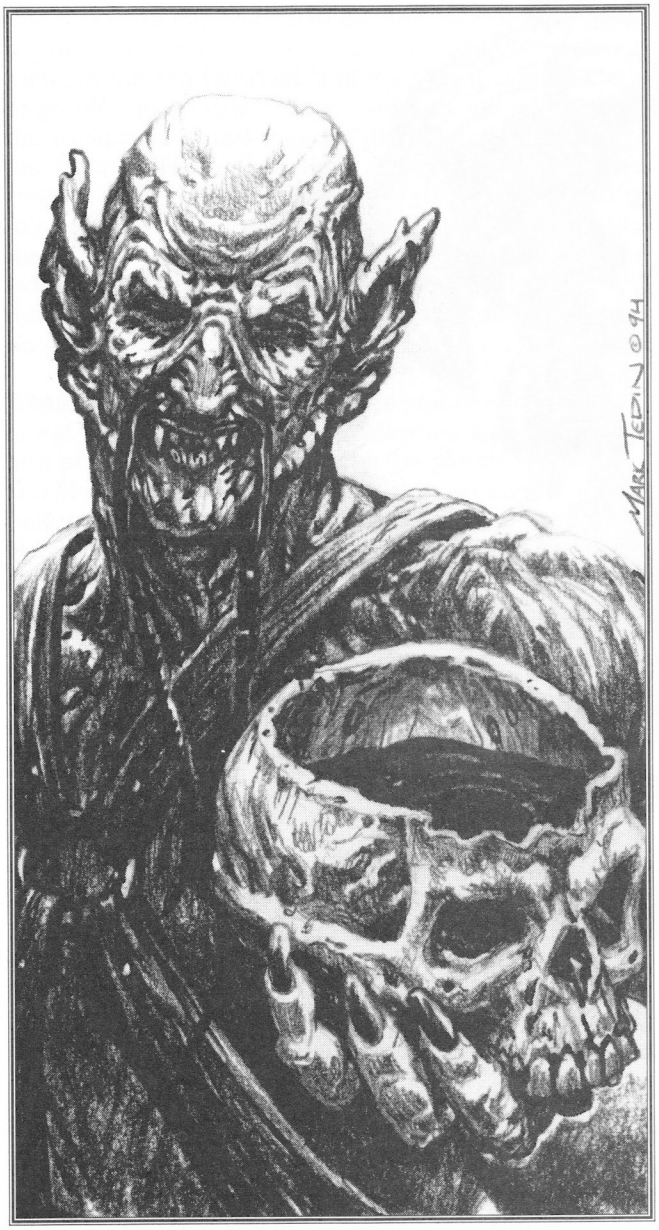
The Za would be even more fearsome if they had a concept of internal unity. But Za bandit chieftains have traditionally seen other Za gangs as legitimate targets for raids. The reason for this is partly economic: whenever the Za are on the rise, the caravan trade dries up. Thus, the Za become victims of their own success and must resort to raiding one another for awhile until the merchants of Talislanta (whose avarice always exceeds their care for the safety of their men) get itchy and again attempt to take advantage of the lucrative trade routes through the Wilderlands of Zaran.

However, when the Za are forced to raid one another, it becomes clear that they enjoy this rather more than fighting pathetic caravan guards. The hot-blooded Za are violently devoted to their own peculiar notion of honor, lov-



ing nothing more than a chance to prove themselves with their broadswords. To be dishonored is on one hand shameful but on the other hand an opportunity to wreak socially sanctioned dark revenge and increase the fearsomeness of a Za's reputation. Accordingly, Za appear to go out of their way to be dishonored to get this very opportunity. There are a seemingly infinite number of conditions under which Za can consider themselves to have been dishonored. For example, no insult can go unchallenged. No Za may allow him or herself to be cuckolded. No Za may pass up an opportunity to cuckold another. It is a dishonor to miss a note or drumbeat when performing one of the Za's bloody songs. It is a dishonor to stop drinking at feast time before passing out or throwing up. It is dishonorable to swat away any blood-drinking insect smaller than the Za's thumb (though calm smushing is tolerated). Running away from a battle a Za has a chance of winning is also dishonorable.

To discharge his or her sense of shame, the dishonored Za must seek out and kill an enemy. By tradition, the chieftain of the bandit gang gets to select the one who must die. In practice, the Za requesting a target usually has a suggestion in mind, which the chieftain goes along with in most cases. It is most prestigious to confront another Za, who will almost invariably be a member of another gang. Only in very unusual circumstances—in the case of a suspected traitor or mutineer, for example—will a chieftain sanction a fight between two members of his or her own gang. The target may or may not have been responsible for the incident that incurred the vendetta. For example, adultery is a commonly broken taboo, and the adulterers and cuckold are usually all of the same gang. In order to wipe clean his or her dishonor, the Za requests to be allowed to travel to the encampment of another gang and kill one of its scouts. The scout won't have the faintest idea why he or she is being attacked beyond the fact that the purpose behind it is obviously to repay a debt of honor. He or she also won't care. Instead, the scout will expose sharpish teeth in a wide grin, eager to slay the insolent intruder and add to his or her own reputation for vindictive cruelty.



The central ceremony in Za life is the blood-drinking ritual, which occurs after a Za has slain an enemy in a fight. The enemy must have shown bravery to be worthy of being partially consumed in this way. The blood of a coward is considered poisonous and is never consumed, only spilled. The blood-drinking ceremony, known as the *zavas*, has a threefold purpose. It confers on a Za the courage of the victim and the victim's strength, and also serves to wipe clean any dishonor currently staining the Za's reputation. In order for the latter to apply, the Za must have first officially requested a victim from his or her chieftain. However, chieftains usually issue a blanket statement before any raid, identifying anyone slain as qualifying for zavas.

The primary Za social unit is the raider gang, which can vary in size from as few as forty Za to as many as several hundred. Gangs often merge and just as often split up. The position of chieftain is supposed to go to the most feared Za in the group. But this is a subjective measure, so duels to determine who is in charge often break out. These duels are not necessarily to the death, though with Za being who they are, tempers often flare. Sometimes the loser ends up as the object of a sad toast after the fight—and as the beverage used for the toast.

A very few Za end up as outcasts. These are individuals who are unable or unwilling to commit the necessary acts of brutality to recover lost honor. Such rare conscientious Za generally leave the Wilderlands to seek more tolerant societies elsewhere. Since few races are feared and hated more than the Za, the reception they actually get in civilized lands is far from tolerant.

The Za well remember the original Tirshata, who grew up in their midst. They have many myths and songs about him. Unfortunately, these are not too informative to outsiders, as they mainly describe the various outrages he committed to earn the title of "most feared of all the Za." In fact, he was so feared that all of the Za people rallied to his side. He became the sole chieftain of the Za. This show of unity was unprecedented in Za history and was not repeated until the Tirshata again appeared to the Za and began banding them together again.

Za legends say that they are the original Landborne of Talislanta, from whom all other Landborne descend. They remember that they were once a great people who controlled all of the continent and that they bested the Archaens, forcing them to flee their lands forever. Believing that all of Talislanta is rightfully theirs, they consider it their duty to exact vengeance on the "civilized" transgressors who have broken their own laws by returning to it. According to their interpretation of the ancient treaties, the Za are justified in committing any act, no matter how heinous, against the heirs of the Archaens. Although they have great nostalgia for the "Days of Unity," as the Za call the Age of Confusion, they have never been able to duplicate the Tirshata's feat on their own. When he last disappeared, the Za happily embarked on a mass slaughter of the other Sub-Men around them, especially those not used to fighting in a wasteland. There is little reason to believe that they would not do the same again if they were to discover the true nature of this Tirshata and thereby would cause him to lose his aura of ultimate fearsomeness.

Reactions to Other Sub-Men Races

Za tolerate other Sub-Men only under the express orders of their great folk hero, the Tirshata (really, they tolerate *each other* only under the express orders of the Tirshata). They rank other races according to the addition to one's reputation that would be gained from slaying one. This is respect, if not the sort of respect others truly appreciate. Araq, for example, who are well known to the Za as possibly the only beings with more of a taste for blood than they themselves, rate highly, as do Beastmen, Moondre Khan, and Ur. Chana, Drukh, Harakin, Nagra, and Stryx fall somewhere in the middle. They consider Danelek, Darklings, Manra, and Yrmanians to be the least worthy.

3

Sub-Men Rising

The "Sub-Men Rising" campaign is designed to put a twist into the traditional fantasy epic in which the heroes put down the inhuman forces of darkness who threaten all that is Right and Good in the world. As you've just learned from reading the cultural material on the Sub-Men, they are not the traditional slavering monsters of fantasy fiction. Although there are many Sub-Men one wouldn't want to meet in a dark alley, they are not simply and utterly evil. Some of them *are* quite nasty—like the Za, whose livelihood depends on their ability to strike fear into those they raid. But from their own points of view, all of the Sub-Men races are justified in living their lives as they do. And they almost invariably have good reason to want revenge against those who have pushed them into the most forbidding corners of the land—the supposedly enlightened and just peoples of the civilized lands. Legally, the Landborne do have a legitimate claim to the entire continent of Talislanta: they were ceded the lands by the Archaens, to whom the civilized kingdoms claim to be rightful heirs. The conflict between the Sub-Men and the survivors of the Great Disaster is more of a culture clash than a struggle between good and evil. There are several analogues of it in the history of the real world, where expanding civilizations came into contact with aboriginal peoples, usually with disastrous results. Among the repercussions of these collisions were thorny political problems that are very much with us in the present day.

This epic campaign can't be resolved simply by seeking out the villains in a final confrontation and wiping them out. There are too many opponents, and their determination is too great. If the PCs try to tackle the Sub-Men through force alone, not only are they likely to be killed themselves, but they'll likely seal the fate of the Seven Kingdoms with their own.

There is, to a degree, a "magic solution" to the crisis: the Tirshata is a fake, and if PCs manage to expose him, they'll be within spitting distance of victory. But uncovering the Rasmirin plot won't erase the legitimate grievances of the Sub-Men. In order truly to lay this chapter of Talislantan history to rest, the PCs will have to start a process of negotiation with at least the more cooperative tribes.

The degree of importance of the Sub-Men uprising is up to you. You can run *Scent of the Beast*, a previous supplement put out by Wizards of the Coast; allow the PCs to go off and do other things while events percolate in the background; and then go directly to the "Heart of the Beast" adventure in this supplement. Or you can expand the mini-adventures on the following pages to full-fledged chapters in the saga. If you especially like the epic form, you can add even more episodes to the story, either using the adventure ideas in the next section as inspiration or coming up with plotlines entirely on your own.

Whatever plan you pick, we advise you to emphasize the moral twist of the storyline by following a particular pattern of development. First, make the players think of the Sub-Men as irredeemable villains, ugly savages dedicated only to brutality. (They probably have this idea already from reading the *Talislanta Guidebook*, where the Sub-Men archetypes are written from the "civilized" point of view.) Do your best to show them through the terrified eyes of the average "civilized" type. Then slowly introduce doubts so that by the time of the climactic adventure they're prepared to discover that things are not as black-and-white as they first seemed.

War on the Seven Kingdoms

Here is a basic outline for events after the consolidation of the Tirshata's forces in 620 N.A. Whether these occur offstage or in the background is up to you. If your players want to be in the thick of a long-running epic, set an adventure during each event. If they have other matters they'd rather pursue, they can hear of these in bars and bazaars as the residents of the Seven Kingdoms become increasingly concerned about their fate.

You are of course encouraged to alter these to fit plans for your own campaign, juggling the chronology and adding or subtracting events as needed. Some of these events are presented in a more detailed form than others. Use the types of plot hooks supplied in the detailed descriptions as inspiration if you want to turn the other events into adventures.

621, Spring: Political infighting begins in Cymril. On one side are military leaders who want to move the Seven Kingdoms to a state of immediate emergency and preparation for the war effort. Arrayed against them are merchant interests who view concerns about the Tirshata as premature and wish to continue profitable business as usual. This power struggle reaches into all levels of Cymrilian society, manifesting itself in everything from street demonstrations to faculty politics at the Lyceum Arcanum. By listening to other adventurers, the PCs realize that there is illicit money to be gained from members of either faction. Military hard-liners are willing to pay for alarming reports of Sub-Men activity; whether they're true or not matters little for propaganda purposes, as long as they're not demonstrably false. Likewise, mercantilists will pay adventurers to debunk reports of Sub-Men activity.

621, Median: As the rainy season draws to a close, migration of small groups of Sub-Men from their homelands to the Tirshata encampment in the Wilderlands of Zaran continues.

Adventure Idea: An Arimite fungus farmer with an estate in the Mushroom Forest is nearly forced out of business when migrating Yrmanian tribesmen pick her lands as their route southeast to Urag. They are guided by Drukh, who want to enter Urag as far south as possible to minimize the chance of being poisoned by the alchemical wastes there. The PCs must figure out a way to drive them off, and in the process they learn of the continent-wide Sub-Men migration to Zaran.
Picaresque: The PCs are captured by Arimite revenants—and then let go, on the condition that they solve a problem for the band leader's aunt, who has been pestering him to check into her trespassing problem.
Epic: Having already gotten a whiff of the uprising through Scent of the Beast, the PCs want to check out this next report of strange Sub-Men activity as soon as it reaches the grapevine.
Soldiers of Fortune: The mushroom farmer hires the PCs.
Explorers of the Unknown: A scholar with contacts in Arim alerts the PCs to this previously unknown behavior on the part of Drukh and Yrmanians, and offers a reward if the PCs are willing to do some field research for her.
Mercantile: The mushroom farmer offers the PCs a great deal on some rare mushrooms if they'll solve her problem for her.

621, Fall: The Kasmirans announce that they're taking the Tirshata threat seriously indeed and will embark on a major project to deal with it. They're going to build a massive wooden wall that stretches the length of their eastern border. The Kasmirans expect to be the first of the Seven Kingdoms to be attacked by the Tirshata, and they don't aim to let themselves be overrun easily. Several Kasmiran magnates bid for the rights to act as contractors for the wall-building.

Adventure Idea: The PCs could be hired by an honest builder and assigned the task of discrediting an unscrupulous war profiteer whose low bid means that critical portions of the wall will be constructed shoddily.

622, Spring: Reports start coming in from traders who traverse the Wilderlands of Zaran that Sub-Men not normally native to the region, such as Mondre Khan, Harakin, and Chana, have been raiding caravans.
Adventure Idea: The PCs could be sent to check out this report. After a series of harrowing encounters in the desert, the PCs not only are able to confirm this but discover that these supposed primitives are wielding newly forged weapons that could only have been manufactured in the civilized lands.

622, Median: These weapons are being manufactured by the Farad, who step up their efforts as 622 gathers steam. The Farad, who are greedy enough to sell rope to those who will hang them with it, are trading these weapons to the Rajans. The Rajans, in turn, are supplying them to the Sub-Men, whom they are directing to step up raids against the Dracartan caravans. They are doing so because they wish to alarm the Dracartan populace by leading them to believe that Dracarta, not the Seven Kingdoms, will be the first target of the Tirshata's advance. If the Dracartans are gripped by war hysteria, this will make certain covert operations run against them by the Rajans much easier to execute. This adventure can be resolved by finding the connection between the Farad, the Rajans, and the Sub-Men. If the PCs wish to stop the flow of arms, they must convince the Cral, the ruler of Faradun, that it's in his best interest to stop the trade. They might do so through logic, pointing out either that the Sub-Men are a future military threat to Faradun or that they are a current threat to trade throughout the region. Or they might employ threats: for example, of air strikes by Cymrilian windships.

Adventure Idea: The PCs must discover what's going on and stop it.
Picaresque: A nearsighted Faradun weapon supplier mistakes the PCs for his Rajan contacts and tries to arrange for delivery of the next shipment of weapons for the savages.
Epic: Abn Qua assigns the PCs to check out intelligence reports about arms sales to the Sub-Men in Irdan in Rajanistan.
Soldiers of Fortune: As Epic, but the PCs are hired to be spies by some Dracartan nobles who have caught wind of this plot and wish to expose it.
Explorers of the Unknown: PCs hear that the Rajans have been secretly excavating a sunken vault of ancient Archaen tomes out in the desert. This rumor has sprung up from those observing the Rajan caravans moving covertly into the desert to deliver arms to the Sub-Men.
Mercantile: The PCs hear that an unscrupulous merchant who bilked them in the past is involved in shady dealings with Farad arms runners, so they seek to expose him out of revenge. They find that he is part of the core group of suppliers of arms to Rajan.

622, Fall: The Rajans, their role in supplying the Sub-Men exposed, realize that their influence over the Tirshata has vanished with their Farad trade connection. They decide to try to call in their bargaining chips with the Tirshata's representatives before the Landborne find out that their source of arms has been cut off. (The Rajans negotiate with Raaryx and Bariz, and have no idea that the Rasmirins are behind the Tirshata.) The Rajans ask for an attack on Dracarta as payment for further weapons shipments. The Landborne make a series of half-hearted feints at Carantheum's capital, while Rajan agents inside the city use the chaos as a cover for assassination attempts against prominent members of the king's court. If the PCs have traveled to Dracarta to warn them of the Rajan involvement with the Sub-Men uprising, they could find themselves facing both Torquar assassins within the city walls and the furious Landborne hordes without.

623, Spring: Again, the rainy season slows Landborne activity. The scene shifts back to chaos on the streets of Cymril as a party of Tanasians announces its intention to return to the city and reassert Tanasian leadership. These exiled former members of the leadership of Cymril think that only their hard-line ways can protect the city in its time of need. And they're supreme opportunists to boot. If the PCs get involved, they're sent out to intercept the Tanasians, who are traveling incognito, before they reach the gates of the city and cause unwanted unrest and distraction.

623, Median: The war begins in earnest, with an attack on the Seven Kingdoms outpost of Akmir. Akmir falls within a week, its walls breached by a fearsome weapon called "The Hammer of Reckoning."

Adventure Idea: The PCs make a dangerous infiltration behind enemy lines to inspect the shattered fort.
Picaresque: A PC wins a bet for a huge amount with a drunken deserter from the Legion of the Borderlands. He explains that his booty, a jeweled dagger he liberated from a party of Za, is buried near his former post and offers to direct the PCs to the site.
Epic: The fall of Akmir has been a terrible blow to Seven Kingdoms' morale. The authorities assign the PCs to recover the flag that flew over the fort as a morale-boosting gesture honoring the slain.
Soldiers of Fortune: The PCs are hired for the above task.
Explorers of the Unknown: Military experts from the Seven Kingdoms want a full report on the type of damage done by the Hammer of Reckoning.
Mercantile: As Epic, above; a great reward is offered to anyone who returns the flag.

623, Fall: The fort of Karfan is the next to fall. This is the first mini-adventure, "The Hammer of Reckoning," p. 73.

624, Spring: The Seven Kings impose conscription on all adventurers, legally compelling them to join the army. Financial incentives are offered to non-citizens to do the same; severe restrictions on trade and movement are imposed on those who do not. From this point on, all of the other campaign types dovetail with the epic campaign; picaresque wanderers and entrepreneurial traders are now expected to come to the aid of their nations. The Sub-Men war has now cut off east-west trade routes in Talislanta, resulting in economic hard times not only for the Seven Kingdoms but for other trade-dependent nations as well. Those who do not join the army find basic trade goods become difficult to find; inflation is rampant.

624, Median: Sub-Men forces begin to mass on the border of Zaran and Kasmir. The army of the Seven Kingdoms mans the wall just completed by the Kasmirans.

Adventure Idea: The PCs are assigned to a tour of duty protecting the wall north of Ikarthis. If they've already scored successes against the Sub-Men, they're made officers and have to deal with dispirited, conscripted troops. If they're troops, they have to deal with frightened, unhappy officers. Long stretches of boredom and bad conditions are interspersed with sudden moments of violence as Sub-Men forces try to breach the wall. A year of game time could be covered in a few hours, in which you skip over the dead times to run the PCs through a couple of wall defense combats against opponents of ever-increasing ferocity.

624, Fall: The Sub-Men attempt to break the stalemate at the wall before the rainy season begins, sending Stryx warriors to fly over the wall and drop firebombs on vulnerable installations within Kasmir. The PCs are given the chance to volunteer for a dangerous mission flying experimental two-person flying conveyances (developed by Phantasian astromancers loyal to the Seven Kingdoms). These miniature windships are fragile and hard to maneuver, but if the PCs are brave enough, they can, by killing a number of their foes, break the already unimpressive morale of the Stryx warriors.

625, Ardan: Seven Kingdoms' morale lowers steadily; although the Sub-Men are unable to breach the wall, the civilized forces are unable to drive them off, and they seem to be gaining strength as the Seven Kingdoms' economy continues to deteriorate. Then terror ripples through the entire realm as guerrilla Sub-Men teams somehow manage to appear deep in the heart of Durne. The PCs are assigned to find out how they're doing it and stop them. This is the second mini-adventure, "Terror in Durne," p. 77.

625, Jhang: Not long after the Underground Highway-links that allowed the Sub-Men to enter Durne are closed, Sub-Men pour from other tunnels in Sindar, Cymril, and Vardune. Sub-Men forces on the Kasmir border finally manage to breach it, and Ikarthis is put to the torch. Seven Kingdoms' forces rally and drive the Sub-Men back, but the previous Sub-Men successes are a yet-lingering blow to Seven Kingdoms' morale. People begin to speak openly of the possibility of defeat. The PCs are part of the forces who drive the Sub-Men out of Ikarthis and witness the carnage there.

625, Phandir: The PCs are assigned to the ultimate mission, to discover the "Heart of the Beast" (p. 83).

The Hammer of Reckoning

In this mini-adventure, the PCs journey to the besieged Fort Karfan only to discover that it may already be doomed.

The PCs are contacted by a representative of the Seven Kingdoms; Abn Qua (GB p. 315) would be suitable. He arranges for them to lead a group of recruits to the Legion of the Borderlands: a scruffy lot of renegades from various cultures. They are to help bolster the contingent at Fort Karfan, who are thought to be the likeliest targets for the Sub-Men after their victory at Akmir. Normally, this duty would be taken by regular army, but they're all occupied building the wall on the Kasmir border.

Picaresque characters are offered a chance to experience the exciting and dangerous world of the Legion without having to sign on for the usual three-year tour of duty. ***Mercantile*** parties are given an opportunity to sell weapons to the Seven Kingdoms and deliver them to Karfan. ***Mercenaries*** are paid for the mission. ***Epic*** characters do it out of a sense of duty as the Sub-Men situation looks increasingly dire. ***Explorers of the Unknown*** are told that they may get an opportunity to examine an ancient arcanological device the Sub-Men are using as a weapon.

The Lynching

The PCs encounter several minor crises along the way. The recruits they're shepherding are a motley bunch, including several mangy Jaka, some untypically lackadaisical Danuvians, some whiny Ferrans, a pair of twin Kharakhan warriors, both shameless alcoholics—and a lone Drukh renegade. To determine a recruit's level, roll d4+4. At first the PCs have only to solve petty disputes: the Jaka complain about the Ferrans' smell, while the Danuvians accuse the Kharakhans of stealing their wineskins. As the party enters the Barrens, a more serious problem arises concerning the Drukh in the group.

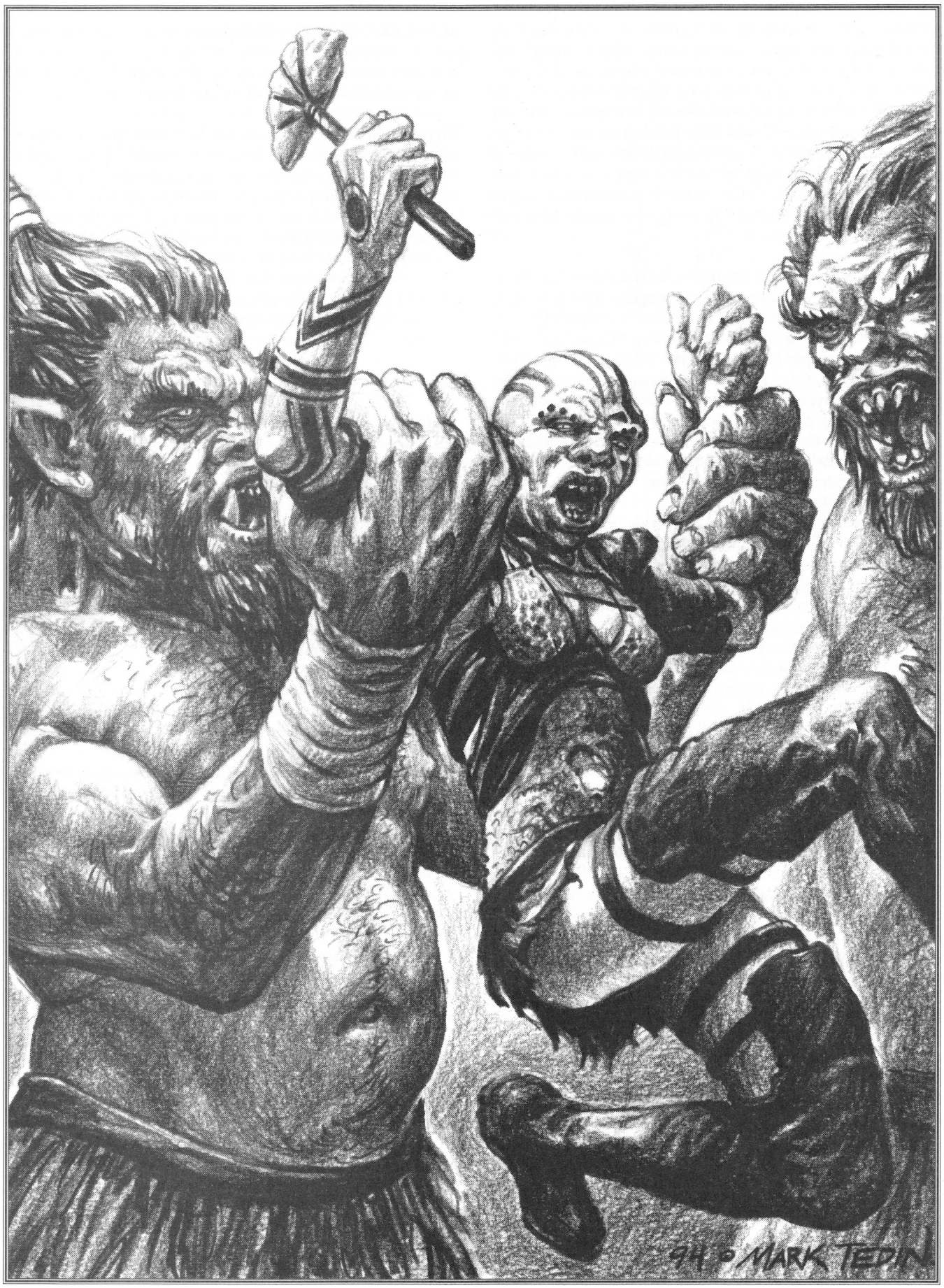
No one hates the Drukh more than Shabla herself. She loudly proclaims her contempt for her people and their beliefs at every opportunity:

"You're right. They scum, all of them. Savages. Leaping about, thinking torture is good. Make me sick, they do. Say it is because of Noman they do all these terrible things. I say there is no Noman; it is all just a trick of the shamans. But you know the main reason I left—that terrible music, I couldn't stand it. I don't want to live in a world where the stinking Sub-Men are in charge, not me. The music would be everywhere."

Shabla is not a Drukh name; it is one she has adopted during her time in the Seven Kingdoms.

As they draw closer to Sub-Men territory, the other recruits get spooked and decide that Shabla is a traitor in their ranks. After all, she's a dirty, no-good Drukh, isn't she? The Kharakhan warriors decide to find a tree to hang her from (not an easy thing in the Wilderlands) as the others cheer them on. The PCs must defuse the situation through persuasion, intimidation, or bribery.

This incident should give the PCs an inkling of the prejudice the Sub-Men face without giving the show away too early: Shabla doesn't argue that the Sub-Men are justified, merely that she isn't evil like her brethren.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Shabla, Drukh Hillwoman, 7th Level

Languages: Common Talislan +7, Sign +7.

Description: Female, age 29; olive skin (unlike most Drukh's, Shabla's is not dyed purple); shaved head; several Thrall-style tattoos; bestial features. Carries stone club (1 s.p.), iron dagger (1 g.l.). Wears battered suit of partial chain-and-hide armor (200 g.l.). No money or other loot, which explains why she's joined the army.

INT	0	PER	0
WIL	0	CHA	0
STR	+1	DEX	+3
CON	+3	SPD	0

Hit Points: 31

Attacks	CR	Damage
Club	+6	d8+1
Dagger	+6	d6+1

Armor: Partial chain-and-hide, 2 points.

Skills: Barter +7, Hunter/Gatherer +7, Mountain Climbing +10, Mounted Combat (equs) +10, Ride +10, Scout +7, Secondary Combat +6, Set/Detect Snares +10/+7, Stalking +10, Torture +10, Tracking +8, Tribal Customs+7.

Special: None.

Discovered

As they near Karfan, the group is intercepted by a Stryx warrior scouting party that seeks to kill and eat them. If they take more damage than they dish out in the course of five rounds, the Stryx flap away, screeching that they'll be back with reinforcements. Otherwise, they fight on until one of them is killed, at which point they flee. There are two more Stryx warriors than party members and recruits combined; the extra ones gang up on the Kharakhans. Use the Stryx warrior stats on p. 105.

Fort Karfan

Approaching Fort Karfan, the PCs observe frantic activity: one of its towers has been breached, and the Legionnaires are hurriedly filling the gap with sandbags to prevent the enemy from using it as an entry point into the fort. Around the fort are hundreds, if not thousands, of corpses. The Seven Kingdoms' forces have left them for the moment, friend and foe alike. Stryx and stray Beastmen feast on them indiscriminately, unmolested by the preoccupied soldiers.

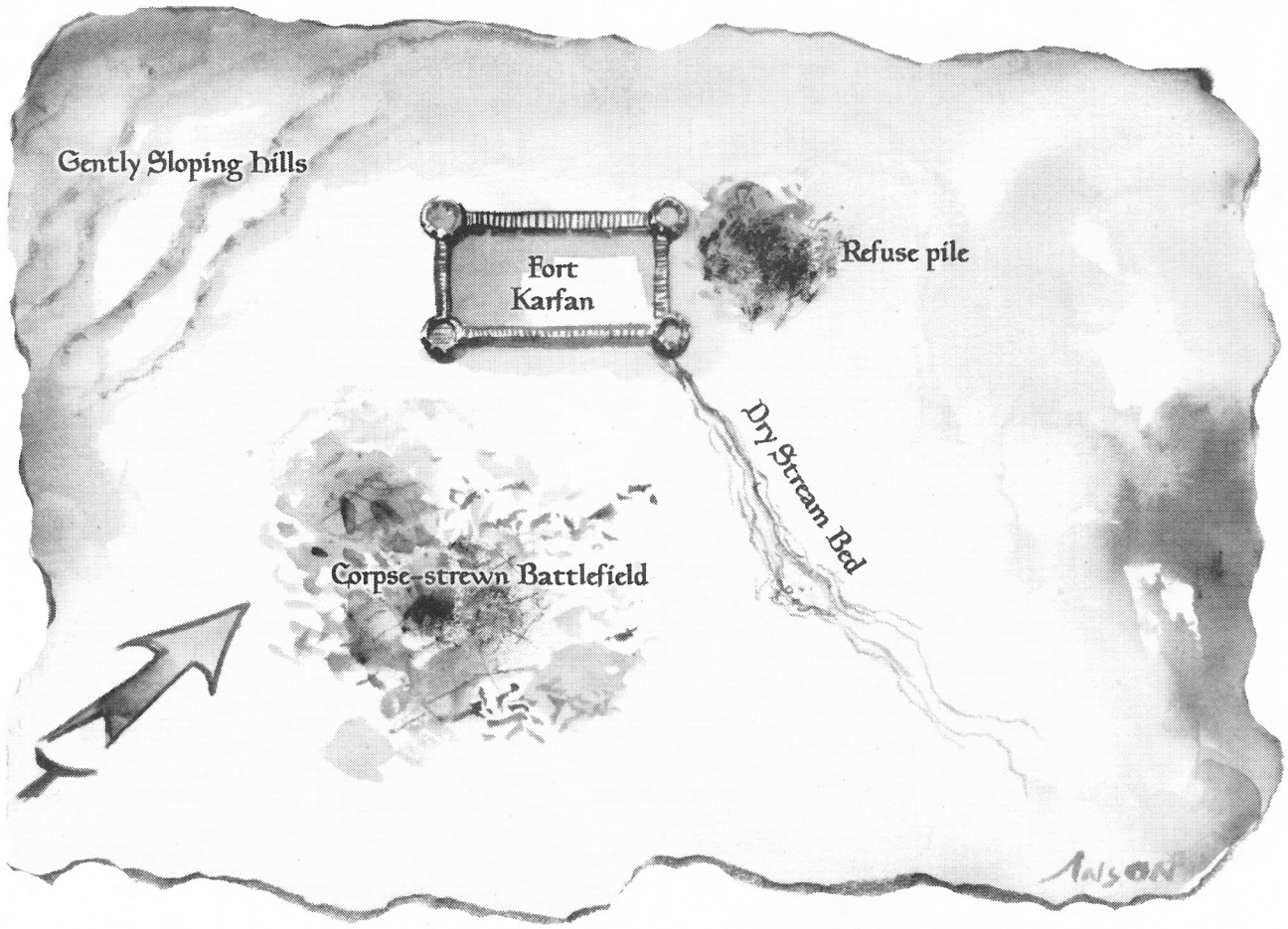
When the PCs enter the fort, they are told to report to the commander, a Thrall named Arbalesta.

"So you made it through hostile territory with those miserable sacks of dung, did you?" she says. "That means you're good. And we need some good people. Desperately. The Sub-Men have a huge ballista. They call it the Hammer of Reckoning, or some such thing. How they got ahold of it and learned to use it is beyond me. We figure this is what got them through the walls at Akmir. They died almost to a man there, you know. This morning they came for us. They smashed a hole in the bottom of the southwest tower. My soldiers managed to drive them off the field, but they got hit, and hard. We've lost a third of our people, and the Sub-Men'll be back before nightfall, I'm sure.

"I hate to say this, even think it, but it looks like we're going to have to give up the fort. You got here just in time to retreat. Or get slaughtered. We're waiting for airships from the Cymrilian navy to evacuate us. They may arrive tonight, or tomorrow. We have to hold off the stinking Sub-Men in the meantime, or we're dead."

As if on cue, the drumbeats of the gathering Sub-Men forces can suddenly be heard in the distance.

Arbalesta assigns the PCs and the recruits to man a section of the fortress wall. The assembled Sub-Men army charges, attempting to get through the hole placed in the bottom of the southwest towers, as well as attempting to place ladders on the walls and scale them. Provide the PCs with a number of appropriate challenges. Let them fire missile weapons or spells at the Sub-Men during their initial charge. Make them deal with would-be wall scalers placing ladders up against the ramparts. Some might be assigned to shore up or repair sections of the fort hit with ballista fire. Or they could help pursue Sub-Men commandos who make it over or through the wall. PCs who shy away from roles as direct combatants can tend to the wounded.



MAP: HAMMER OF RECKONING ADVENTURE

Battle for the Hammer

At the fort, the troops rally and drive the Sub-Men back in a withering rain of missile fire. But there's no sign of the navy. Arbalesta then approaches the PCs and asks them to go on a dangerous night raid to take out the ballista.

Test the PCs' stealth and planning abilities to the maximum here. The ballista is sheltered in a gully to the south of the fort when not in use. Troops of Mondre Khan and Za bed down throughout the area, with sentries on duty.

When they get to the ballista, the PCs have only to damage its triggering mechanism to render it inoperable. To do this, they must somehow deliver 20 points of damage to it. The ballista is guarded by Za, outnumbering the party by two. Use the stats for Za shock troops on p. 108.

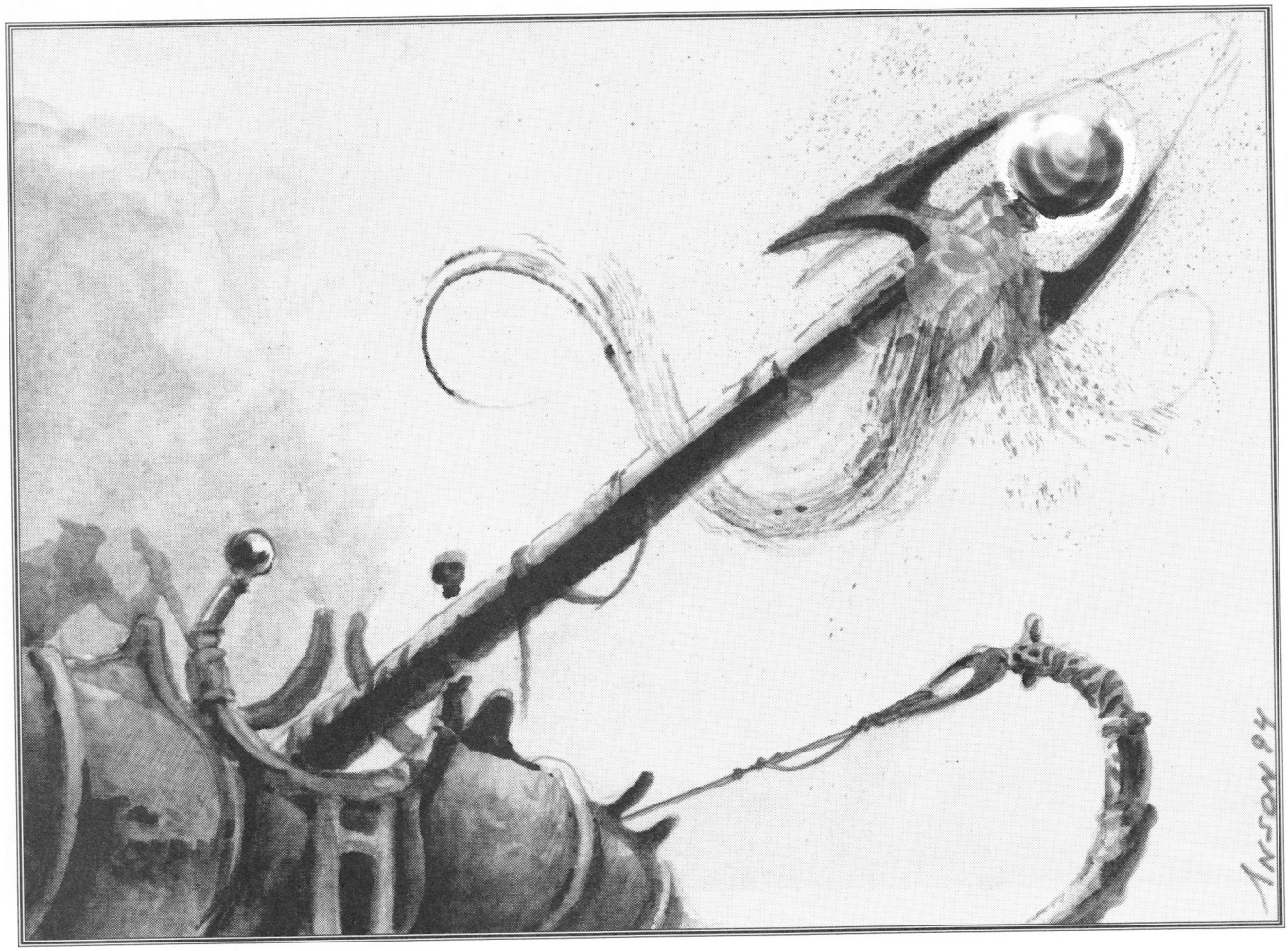
Once the ballista is destroyed, the PCs look up to see the Cymrilian ships against the starlit sky. They've arrived! Now the trick is to flee from the ballista site back to the fort, with dozens of howling Za in hot pursuit, and make it into the fort without letting the Za in too.

If they destroy the ballista and escape, the PCs are rewarded with medals and commissions as officers in the upcoming conscription. Good negotiators may secure additional cash rewards.

Terror in Durne

In Ardan of 625, the Sub-Men, using previously unknown Underground Highway routes discovered by Ormirian, begin to use terror tactics to further destroy the morale of the Seven Kingdoms. They first surface in the capital city of Durne. Having gained a reputation for success against the Sub-Men, PCs are pulled from their stations on the Kasmir wall by commanding officers and sent to investigate. When they arrive in Durne, they're briefed by an officer of the Gnomekin army, Vwadoo Mudoo:

"It is unknown if the reports are true, no. But we have had mmmurders in our peaceful commmunities. This is not a commmon thing, no. Our people are in fear, are sure it is Sub-Mmmen. We do not wish to scare themmm further by officially investigating. Mmmay just be hysteria. Even if not, is best to pretend not to be concerned. So we hire you, to investigate on the quiet.



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"But if there are Sub-Mmmen here, killing our people, it is a mmmatter of great concern indeed, yes. For it mmmeans that they have sommmehow mmmade their way through the mmmaze of false passageways at Tunnelrock. It is almmmost immmpossible for outsiders to do that. To think that the foul Sub-Mmmen could do so—well, it is unthinkable!"

Vwadoo Mudoo further explains that there are three recent incidents that the rumor mill attributes to a Sub-Men incursion. The first was an ambush of revelers after a party at the private home of the head of the fungus scrapers' union. The second was the disappearance of a mother and her seven children. The third was a late-night assault on the bazaar, which was largely closed.

Revelers Ambushed

The PCs can speak to the trio of Gnomekin garbage collectors who discovered the horribly mutilated bodies of seven party-goers in a deserted alleyway. The Gnomekin emphasize the horrible violence of the killings and say that from the looks of things the bodies were dragged there. They have no evidence to link the crimes to Sub-Men, except for the savagery of the killings. They say that it looked like the victims had been tortured to death and that those filthy primitives are apt to do that to people.

Family Abducted

Visiting the family estate of the vanished mother and children, the PCs find a large and very distraught group of relatives. They went out for a walk to the market a week ago and were never seen to arrive there. Searching the area for clues, the PCs find a still-wet trail of blood that leads to a stone shed. The bodies of the abducted Gnomekin are found inside, again looking as if brutally tortured to death. If the PCs look carefully, they find fragments of a bone war club stuck to one of the corpses. A horrified family member says that the shed was searched repeatedly after the disappearance—the killers are still close by! And the killers obviously mean for people to find and be shocked by the bodies.

Hysteria in Gnomekintown

On their way to the site of the third incident, the PCs come across a gang of angry Gnomekin that has cornered a Jaka manhunter against a rock wall. Shaking with fear and rage, she holds the lifeless body of her partner in her arms. His neck is broken, his skull bloodied. The Gnomekin converge on the Jaka, obviously planning to do the same to her.

"You fools! You stinking maniac fools!" she sobs, drawing her longsword. "We are not killers! We are not even Sub-Men! Jaka are not Sub-Men! We are civilized! Civilized!"

The PCs can save the manhunter by dealing with the enraged Gnomekin, who have convinced themselves that the Jaka were in on the murders. The party can save the Jaka either by talking to the Gnomekin and calming them down by showing them that they have no grounds to accuse the Jaka, or by driving them off with weapons. Like most mobs, this one is made up of fearful individuals, and none of them wants to be the first to take on a well-equipped party of experienced adventurers.

If saved, the Jaka is grateful:

"My name is Carnitheos, and I am in your debt." She looks sadly at her slain comrade. "I have lost my pair-partner. I must attend to a dignified funeral for him. But then, if you will have me, I will show my gratitude by assisting you in whatever cause you serve."

She is especially happy to help against the Sub-Men terrorists:

"Really, it is they who slew my pair-partner, not that poor mob of frightened Gnomekin. The wretched Sub-Men must die!"

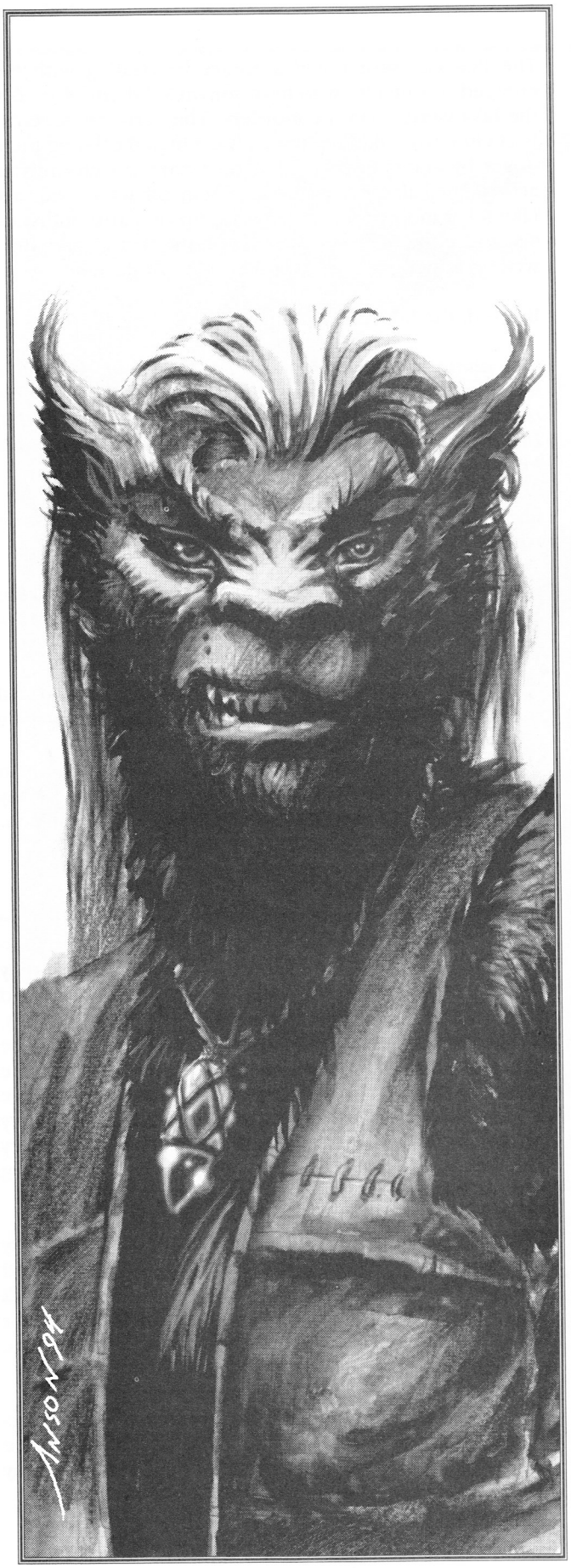
Carnitheos is a single-minded sort who pursues any goal she sets her sights on with fiery determination. She remains an ally of the PCs as long as they fight the Sub-Men unless you find it inconvenient to run a party with an NPC member. If so, she eventually joins the Grand Army as a scout to further her vow of revenge on the Sub-Men.

Trail from the Bazaar

Heading to the Bazaar, the PCs can interview the Gnomekin who were in the area late waiting for shipments to arrive or just loitering. The Gnomekin say they saw five shadowy figures erupt out of the darkness and then start to overturn empty stalls and break things. When several merchants rushed to intercept them, the merchants were overpowered and dragged back into the darkness. These fellows have not been seen since. The witnesses are unclear on the descriptions of the shadowy figures: it was dark and they moved quickly, but they seemed to be fuzzy. Some witnesses report growling noises. This incident took place just last night.

If the PCs saved Carnitheos, they now have a remarkably skilled scent tracker on hand. She quickly catches a whiff of the bad guys and follows it to the middle of a blank wall. (PCs without the Jaka on hand have to rely on their own tracking abilities. If they all fail miserably, provide another clue that leads to the rock wall.)

Tapping on the wall reveals that it is hollow; careful inspection (PER roll) allows the party to find a secret door in the rock wall. This leads to the ancient Underground Highway tunnels known only to the Sub-Men.



Carnitheos, Jaka Manhunter, 8th level

Languages: Common Talislan +7, Sign +7.

Description: Female, age 24; black fur; silver-gray mane; features a cross between wolf and panther. Wears vest, loincloth and boots of tundra beast hide, talisman around neck, backpack, wrist bracers. Carries longsword (12 g.l.) and long knife (1 g.l.). Her purse contains 160 g.l., her payment from a Durne merchant for locating a debtor for him.

INT	-1	PER	+5
WIL	0	CHA	-2
STR	+1	DEX	+3
CON	0	SPD	+3

Hit Points: 28

Attacks	**CR**	**Damage**
Knife	+7	d6+1
Longsword	+7	d10+1

Armor: None.

Skills: Ambush +7, Camouflage +7, Haggle +6, Hunter/Gatherer +14, Ride +11, Secondary Combat +7, Set/Detect Snares +11/+14, Stalking +11, Stealth +14, Tracking +14, Urban Customs +7, Waylay +11.

Special: Land on feet after falls of up to thirty feet; +3 on stealth-related rolls; Night Vision; Sixth Sense; talisman confers +1 magic resistance versus curses and black magic.

The PCs can follow the tunnel to the Sub-Men and a climactic battle. If you want to prolong the adventure, throw in some vicious underground creatures along the way.

The Sub-Men party is a mixed group of Drukh and Beastmen. The Drukh are torturing the merchants while the Beastmen look on with a mixture of hunger and disgust. Use the stats on pp. 94 and 99 for the Sub-Men guerrillas. There are three more Sub-Men than party members (make sure to count Carnitheos if she's along). By this point, the PCs should have become used to strange alliances between normally hostile races. What they might not be expecting is the detailed map revealing heretofore completely unknown sections of the Underground Highway. The map is a rather sophisticated one, not what one would expect from Sub-Men. (In fact, it was drawn up by Ormirian.) This should further tip the PCs off to the fact that the Tirshata is getting help from outside sources.

Should the PCs solve the puzzle, they receive another commendation, and a bonus.

Later, similar terror campaigns are begun in other of the Seven Kingdoms. But with the captured map, the authorities are able to quickly locate the secret passageways they're using and block them up.

Player Characters Go to War

The following is a very basic system for resolving the fate of PCs engaged in any of the mass combat situations described in this section. In this campaign, the outcomes of the major battles are predetermined, so it is not necessary to arrive at modifiers and then roll to see which side wins. However, it is possible for individual warriors, such as the PCs, to prosper in a losing battle or be senselessly killed in the midst of general victory. Such is the chaotic and unpredictable face of war.

GMs looking for a complete mass combat system that determines the outcomes of engagements should keep an eye out for the future Wizards of the Coast release *The Military Order*.

One way to see how PCs do in a battle is simply to play out each fight with each individual opponent using the standard combat rules. This requires you to have a healthy stack of opponent NPCs ready for the purpose and is time-consuming. But if anything other than a play-by-play account of the nitty gritty of battle will disappoint your players, this is the way to go.

Otherwise, you can abstract the outcome of a battle as follows:

1) Determine the Warfare Rating (WR) of each PC or NPC whose fate you wish to determine.

2) Have the player roll on the action table for his or her character (or roll yourself for an NPC).

3) Consult the Warfare Results table on p. 82 to see what happens to the character in the course of the battle.

4) Describe the details of the result in vivid narrative terms.

Warfare Ratings

To determine an individual character's Warfare Rating (WR), follow these steps, referring to the proper tables that follow for each one:

1) Start with the character's Combat Rating (CR). If the character is capable of offensive magic, Magic Rating (MR) may be substituted for CR.

2) Add a modifier for weapon damage.

3) Add a modifier for armor.

4) Add a modifier for mount, if any.

5) Add a modifier for general battle outcome.

Weapon Factor

For weapon factor, determine the modifier based on maximum possible damage on a normal success, including strength bonuses.

Weapon Damage	Modifier
1–4	0
5–8	+1
9–12	+2
13–15	+3
16–18	+4
19–22	+5
23+	+6

Armor Factor

Add a +1 modifier for every point of armor.

Mount Factor

If the character is riding a mount, add a modifier depending on type:

Type	Modifier
Ahtra	+1
Behemoth	+3
Dractyl	+2
Duadir	+3
Equs	+1
Land Dragon	+4
Land Lizard	+2
Loper	+2
Mangonel Lizard	+2
Ogriphant	+2
Strider	+1
Zaratan	+4

Battle Outcome Factor

The final modifier depends on how the forces around the PC do. The worse the PC's side fares, the greater the chance of the PC coming to harm. A *slaughter* is a near-total loss, in which the PC's side not only loses but has no chance of an orderly retreat. A *rout* is a defeat in which the PC's side nonetheless gets to retreat in a disciplined fashion. A *tactical loss* is one in which the opposing army reaches its objective—usually capturing a particular site—without inflicting great loss of life on the PC's side. A *stalemate* is a battle in which both sides fight with no great change in circumstances for either side. A *tactical victory* is one in which the PC's side achieves its objective without causing great casualties. A *victory* is a decisive win in which the enemy is forced to retreat. And a *tri-*

umph is a decisive win where the enemy cannot escape and must either surrender or die.

Outcome Type	Modifier
Slaughter	-15
Rout	-10
Tactical Loss	-5
Stalemate	0
Tactical Victory	+5
Victory	+10
Triumph	+15

The fall of Akmir is a slaughter of Seven Kingdoms' forces. The outcome of the battle of Karfan depends on whether the PCs are able to neutralize the Hammer of Reckoning: it's a rout if they fail, a tactical loss if they succeed. Battles in which Sub-Men attempt to breach the walls of Kasmir during 624 N.A. are stalemates. Battles in the Underground Highway are better treated as skirmishes, using normal combat rules. The fall of Ikarthis is a rout for the Seven Kingdoms, followed by a victory the next day when the Sub-Men are driven back to their original positions. Another period of stalemate begins at the wall as the PCs ready themselves for the trip to the Tirshata's encampment.

Warfare Results

Mishap: Character is reduced to 0 hit points and left for dead on the battlefield. Gamemaster rolls as usual to determine if recovery is possible.

Failure: Character takes 6d4 damage and is captured by the enemy.

Partial Success: Character takes 6d4 damage.

Success: Character takes 3d4 damage.

Critical Success: Character comes through without a scratch.

When describing results, try to create the feeling of the battle through graphic description. It is more interesting to tell a player that her character "fought valiantly against the Drukh horde, driving back one after another with her iron-shod staff, until finally she was overwhelmed amidst bestial howls of victory, and suddenly everything went black" than simply to say, "The battle's over; you took 8 points of damage."

4

Heart of the Beast

It is Phandir of 625 N.A. Perhaps the PCs have been at the sack of Ikarthis, and perhaps they participated in driving the Sub-Men back behind the Kasmir wall. Or perhaps you've had them pursuing other missions of your own devising. Now they are summoned to yet another meeting with Abn Qua (GB p. 315)—or the contact of your choice. The meeting is held at the headquarters of the Grand Army in Kasmir. If the contact is Abn Qua, the party will find that he is now wearing the uniform of a Grand Army general: his behind-the-scenes work against the Sub-Men has led to the reactivation of an old military commission. If asked about the uniform, he explains that he is now head of Grand Army intelligence. Without further delay, he begins to brief the group. (Read this speech before running the adventure, and change any details necessary to make it fit previous events in your campaign.)

"Your various successes against the Sub-Men have not gone unnoticed at Grand Army command. We have all come to admire your sagacity and determination. And I am sure you all know the reward of bravery during wartime—I have asked you here to throw you into perhaps the greatest danger you will ever face.

"The request is not made lightly. Things go badly for the Seven Kingdoms. The Sub-Men have proven to be a formidable foe, even worse than we had feared. They fight with savage ferocity, gaining new energy as our most seasoned units plunge into fatigue. I need not elaborate—you were at Karfan, at Ikarthis. These creatures have nothing to lose by throwing wave upon wave of warriors upon us. Even more troubling, they have shown a degree of cunning and strategy we would not have thought possible from such wretched beings.

"No doubt it is this Tirshata, whoever he is, who serves as the linchpin for the Uprising. Without this legendary figure, the Sub-Men would not have come together in their terrible unity. There is a strategic mind of grim implacability behind every move his army makes. It is clear that if the war continues along its present course, the Seven Kingdoms will be dashed to pieces like a boat washed into a cliff. We cannot win merely by attrition,

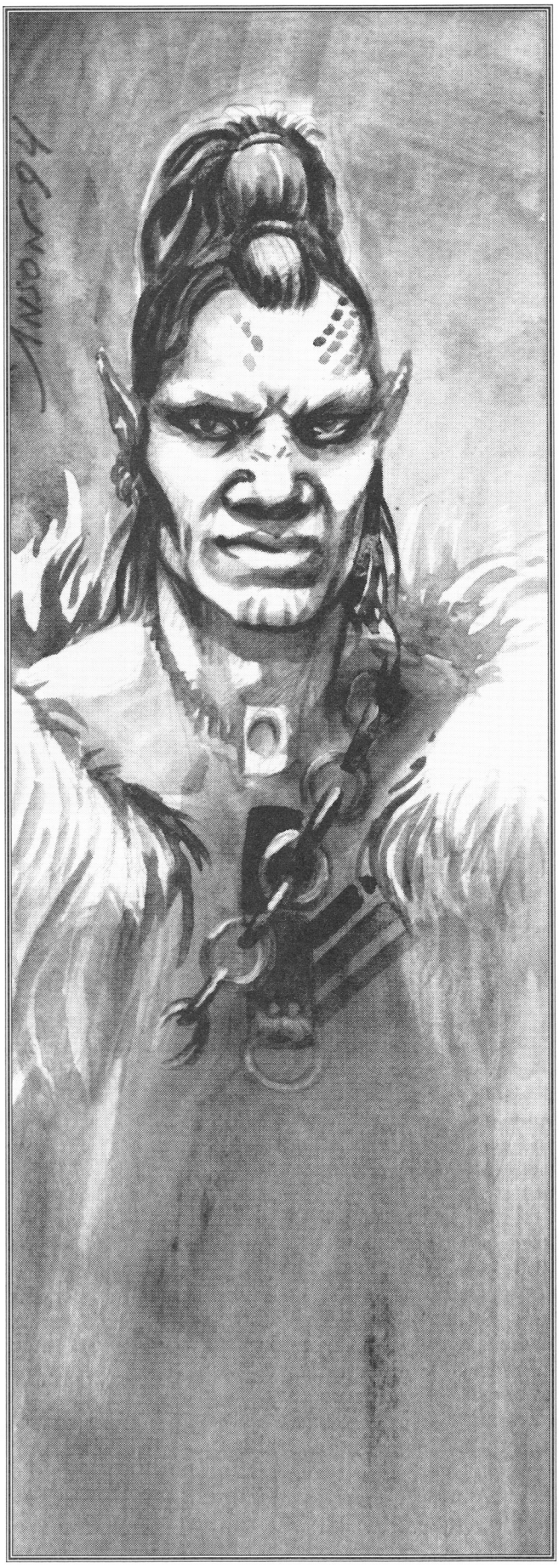
by whittling down the enemy's forces. They don't value life the way we do, and there are too many of them. Chop off a limb, and it grows right back. We must strike at the head—at the Tirshata. And in order to do that, we must know more about him."

Abn Qua rings a bell, and a strange figure enters the room, accompanied by sentries. Though he wears the hooded robe, cloak, and curl-toed boots of Kasmirans, his skin is of a deep golden hue. His ears are pointed, his features sharp. He wears his hair in a topknot. He smiles shyly, exposing a row of sharp teeth.

"This is Tebo," Abn Qua says. "He is going to teach you how to be Sub-Men."

The Tutelage of Tebo

The sentries lead the group, with Tebo in tow, to a large, empty room in the army post's central building. He sits cross-legged in the middle of the floor and levels nar-



Tebo, Manra Shapechanger, 11th level

Languages: Chanan +11, Common Talislan +6.

Description: Male, age 53. Wears Kasmiran garb (hooded robe, cloak, and curl-toed boots). Has sharp features, topknot, golden skin, brown hair, slender build, almond-shaped eyes. Carries no weapons: Abn Qua has thoughtfully arranged for them to be "stored" for him. Has been given an allowance of 350 g.l., for which he has no particular use.

INT	0	PER	+2
WIL	0	CHA	0
STR	0	DEX	+2
CON	+6	SPD	+0

Hit Points: 40

Attacks	CR	Damage
Stone club	+7	d8
Whipsash	+7	d3*

*On a partial success, the whipsash strikes the target for half damage but does not entangle. On a full success, it does full damage and entangles a limb of the wielder's choice. On a critical success, it entangles the limb, doubles damage, and brings the target down.

Armor: None.

Skills: Healer +11, Herb Lore +11, Secondary Combat +5, Stalking +11, Tracking +13, Swim +13, Tribal Customs +11, Urban Customs +3.

Special: Shapechange.

rowed eyes at them as they silently take up positions inside near the door.

The sentries remain on guard at all times. As the PCs will later discover, Abn Qua doesn't altogether trust Tebo. The presence of the sentries is a background detail that has no effect on play (for all Abn Qua's misgivings, Tebo is not planning anything untoward).

Eventually, Tebo speaks: "The tree becomes the stone, becomes the whistle, becomes the megalodont, becomes the song. You have questions?"

Tebo is a Manra shapechanger who came to the Seven Kingdoms in hopes of reaching a peaceful settlement to the Sub-Men Uprising. As noted on p. 48, the Manra are a peaceful people. Nonetheless, they have journeyed to the warlike Tirshata's side to experience and understand the great changes his return foretells. Tebo is afraid that the uprising will lead to disaster for his people; he is a village wise man who remembers the ancient tales of the bad treatment the Manra received at the hands of other Sub-Men, especially their old enemies the Chana, after the Tirshata disappeared the last time. Although he does not suspect that the present Tirshata is an impostor, Tebo is worried that he will once more abandon the Sub-Men prematurely. So instead of heading to the Tirshata encampment, as many of his fellows did, he came to Kasmir to try to persuade the governments of the Seven Kingdoms to open negotiations with the Sub-Men as a way of defusing the war. (As a younger fellow, Tebo was a bit of a wanderer and spent time in the Seven Kingdoms, picking up a reasonable knowledge of Common Talislan along the way.) Tebo feels that the Kingdoms' opening negotiations would avert the needless slaughter he sees ahead and pressure other realms to negate: if the Quan Empire, which endlessly menaces his own people, sees the Seven Kingdoms prosper from such an agreement, it might forge one itself.

Unfortunately for Tebo, his offer fell on deaf ears. Abn Qua, who thinks of the Sub-Men as a pack of animalistic savages, and therefore can't imagine making a binding agreement with them, was assigned the task of dealing with him. He has persuaded Tebo to teach a crack squad of infiltrators—the PCs—how to assume the forms of Sub-Men. He has convinced Tebo that this will be an advance party to open negotiations. However, he's made Tebo promise not to speak to the PCs of the negotiation strategy, claiming that this delicate job must be left to him. The PCs may learn of Tebo's motivations from other Manra at the Tirshata encampment.

Tebo's task is to train the PCs to shapechange to Sub-Men (don't worry: this is a one-time-only ability). He volunteers information relating only to this process. He's willing to answer questions about anything other than his peace plan. Tebo speaks in odd metaphors, however, so his replies may not be easy to understand.

For example, if asked why he's joined forces with the Seven Kingdoms, he says:

"What is the true erd? The fur of the erd or the insides of the erd?"

If asked to describe his people, he uses the opening speech for the Manra culture section on p. 48.

Should the PCs voice doubts about his true allegiance, he smiles shyly and says:

"If I were a spy, would I appear in my true form? No, if I were a spy, I would choose the form of a [insert description of a PC] *or* [another PC] *or even* [another PC]. *Why, are you so sure you are not the spies?"*

Meeting the Jabutu

Once the PCs are finished with their questions, Tebo unpacks some clayware pots and a cloth bundle from a sack. He sets these up on the floor in front of him. Underneath a clay brazier is a small, stout cylinder full of oil. He lights the oil with a tinderbox and then places the contents of the cloth bundle into the brazier. It's an herb of some kind; the room fills with a heady, nauseatingly sweet smell.

"Meet the jabutu," Tebo says. "You will be children now, Manra children. You will learn what Manra children learn: how to enter the world of the herb, to learn that no things stay. Including your own forms.

"This process is dangerous. You are really too old to do this, and you have lived long with the idea that forms have meaning. But you must do this to have success in your task. Also, I advise you: leave your weapons outside in the hall."

Tebo is concerned that the adventurers might go into a frenzy under the influence of jabutu and attack one another. However, if PCs feel insecure without their weapons, he won't insist.

Over the next few days, Tebo has the PCs chew cooked jabutu leaves while he chants and drums ancient Manra shapechanging songs. He is doing this to open them up to the tricks of perception that will allow them temporarily to remold their forms. The PCs must repeatedly follow up the right CON rolls (to see if they're reacting properly to the drug) with PER rolls (to see if their consciousnesses are opening to the Manra way of thought).

In order to pass the CON test, the PCs fail on high rolls as well as low ones. A low roll means that the jabutu overwhelms the character's system, causing an over-reaction. On the other hand, if characters are able to absorb it too well, the needed altered state isn't produced.

This ritual must be repeated to be effective; characters do not learn the shapechanging trick until they have made three successful PER rolls. Tebo repeats the ritual only once a day (one can't rush mystical enlightenment).

You may wish to assign penalties to either the CON or PER rolls depending on how the PCs spend the rest of their time; they're at loose ends when they're not undergoing the ritual. For example, a night spent drinking and carousing might add a positive modifier to the next day's CON roll (because the jabutu has to fight the alcohol still in the character's system), but a negative one to the PER roll (because the character is not rested enough to concentrate fully).

Taking Jabutu
Roll versus CON

Mishap: All of the character's worst fears and deepest regrets come surging back in a terrifying hallucinatory nightmare. In a frenzy, the character attacks the nearest PC. PER test not permissible.

Failure: The character becomes nauseated and throws the jabutu right back up again. PER test not permissible.

Partial Success: Ideal result. Character may now go on to PER test, with +2 modifier.

Success: Character's system soaks up the psychoactive agent in the jabutu, lessening its potency. Character may still make PER test, but at a -2 modifier.

Critical Success: Character's system neutralizes the jabutu, creating only a sensation of drowsiness. PER test not permissible.

Receiving Shapechanging Insight
Roll versus PER

Mishap: Character becomes more, not less, attached to body image. Attempt fails, and next PER roll is at a -5 modifier.

Failure: Character perceives only a random swirl of phantasmal images without being able to ascribe any meaning to them.

Partial Success: Character grasps elusive basics of Manra shapechanging. Although this PER roll does not add to the needed total of 3, the next day's roll is at a +5 modifier.

Success: Character adds to the needed total of PER rolls.

Critical Success: Character adds to the needed total of PER rolls and makes the next day's roll at a +5 modifier.

Once all of the characters have racked up three successful PER rolls, Tebo gathers them and says:

"Now you will be able to change your forms: just once, friends, you may become Sub-Men in form. Later, you change back to what you are now. Any more change than this, you risk great harm to yourselves. This ability is natural to Manra, but to you—it is like teaching a fish to talk, or a whipsash to grow corn.

"You are but whelps to the thing that is Change. Is strange, but this means help to you: you will be able to keep your Sub-Men forms for days. Until you decide to go back to the forms you have now. We Manra, who know the full ways of Change, cannot stay in one shape for so long."

If the PCs do try to use their shapechanging abilities to do anything but turn into Sub-Men and back again a single time, consult the following chart:

Reusing Shapechange Ability
Roll d10+CON

Mishap: Character suffers major heart attack, for 6d4 damage.

Failure: Character suffers burst blood vessel, for 4d4 damage.

Partial Success: Character momentarily shifts form and then immediately shifts back; suffers 2d4 shock damage and -6 modifier on any future attempts.

Success: Character changes shape. Subtract 10 from the result; the character retains new shape for an equivalent number of rounds. Suffers -4 modifier on any future attempts.

Critical Success: Character changes shape and can maintain it for ten rounds per level. Suffers a -2 modifier on any future attempts.

Once he's finished explaining the dire consequences of ignoring his advice, Tebo adds:

"Tomorrow, at the top of the ninth hour, we talk with Abn Qua in what you call his briefing chambers. He gives us last details for our mission, and then we journey to meet Tirshata."

He declines any further questions about the mission, saying that Abn Qua will reveal all the next day. However, he does seem excited and enthusiastic. This is the last time the adventurers see Tebo alive.

The Briefing

The PCs can attend to their own personal business until the time of the rendezvous. When they arrive at the meeting, they find Abn Qua waiting for them. Tebo is not there. If the adventurers ask about him, Abn Qua merely says:

"He has been reassigned."

Actually, Abn Qua has had Tebo executed now that his usefulness is over, not wanting to take the slightest risk that he might be a secret agent. He never planned to allow him to make peace overtures to the Tirshata; he wants the PCs to learn as much as possible about the Tirshata only in order to destroy him.

"No doubt you are wondering what kind of mission could require such bizarre preparations. I apologize for any discomfort you may have experienced during whatever obscene rituals the Sub-Man put you through. But it is vital that you be able to alter your forms to those of Sub-Men, for your mission is to infiltrate the camp of the Tirshata himself. Learn as much as you can about him so we can formulate a plan to neutralize him. If you get the chance—kill him.

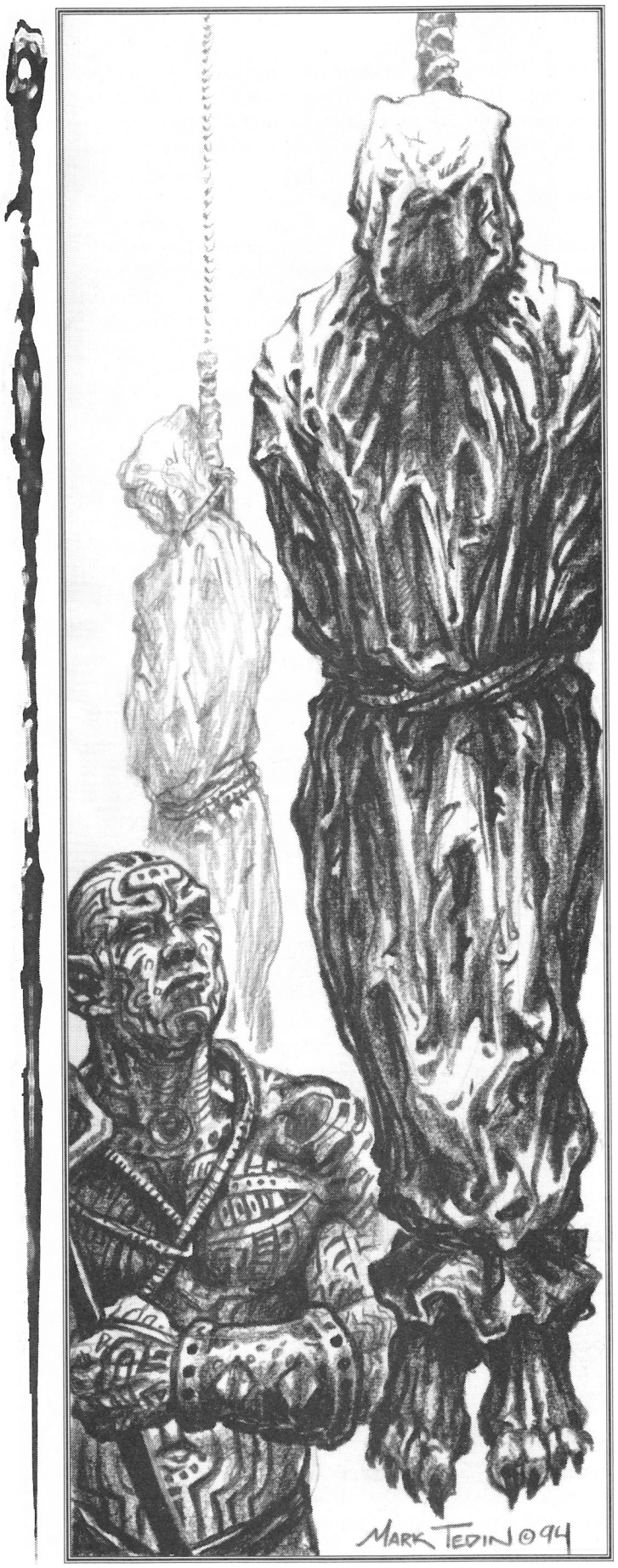
"We know so little of your target that more precise mission goals are impossible to formulate. The fate of the Seven Kingdoms shall rest on your shoulders. Act on your own discretion. I know you will justify the confidence we have placed in you.

"Now it is time to decide which Sub-Men forms to adopt. I recommend that you take the forms of the most vicious of Sub-Men, the ones central to the Tirshata's campaign—the Za and Beastmen. But the choice is yours—you will wish to take forms you can play well. If you wish, we can go over the various sorts of Sub-Men and how they are known to behave."

Abn Qua knows only as much about the Sub-Men races as is contained in their brief descriptions in the *Talislanta Guidebook.* Like many educated people of the Seven Kingdoms, he thinks of all Sub-Men as irredeemable brutes. Use these facts as the basis of his descriptions. It won't occur to him that Stryx or Darklings would make appropriate subjects for impersonation, though he'll applaud the idea if a PC comes up with it. It's also useful for each PC to choose a different type of Sub-Man, but Abn Qua won't suggest this either.

Here are the relevant GB page numbers for Sub-Men descriptions: Araq p. 69, Beastmen p. 93, Chana p. 79, Danelek p. 70, Darklings p. 93, Drukh p. 77, Harakin p. 80, Manra p. 82, Mondre Khan p. 82, Nagra p. 83, Stryx pp. 94–95, Yrmanian p. 92, Za p. 74.

Abn Qua provides the group with a map indicating the approximate location of the Tirshata's encampment, deep in the Wilderlands of Zaran. You may want to prepare and give out a handout of this. Abn Qua will arrange



for any reasonable supplies to await them the next morning, though he will be unable to provide anything but the most common enchanted items. He will also be unable to provide mounts that are not used within the Seven Kingdoms, like darkmanes.

Abn Qua concludes:

"If you have any further questions, ask them now. As soon as our meeting concludes, I board a windship to Cymril. I have been summoned to conduct an emergency briefing for the Council of Kings. I do not need to tell you how grave our situation is and how much difference your bravery shall make in protecting our great nations. But know this: whatever happens, I am proud of your valor."

The Fate of Tebo

As they pass beyond the front gates of the complex, the adventurers behold a grim sight: a mass gallows has been erected, one high enough for the general public to view. Seven corpses swing gently in the wind. They've been covered in huge sacks to deprive them of their identities in death; only their feet poke through the bottoms of the sacks. A complement of Thrall soldiers stands guard over this awful display.

If the group heads over and asks the Thralls who's been executed, it gets this reply from one of them:

"Traitors, war profiteers, spies. Our society has gotten weak and flabby, complacent. Now's the time to sort the rotten logs out of the woodpile, before all of the Seven Kingdoms collapse into sawdust. At least, that's how my commander explained it."

If the group looks up, it sees the unmistakable golden-skinned feet of Tebo protruding from one of the sacks. If asked who sanctioned the execution, the Thralls only say that these orders come "from the highest levels." If anyone argues or complains, he or she is asked:

"What's the sorrow? It's only a Sub-Man. No telling what he was up to. We'll have to kill many more before this thing is through. Don't think they'll shed tears for you if you're slain. They don't even shed tears for each other."

Journey to the Wilderlands

Abn Qua has made arrangements for a company of Thralls manning the Kasmiran wall near Ikarthis to let the PCs through, even if they look like Sub-Men. There they can make their way through the Tirshata's troops massed before the wall, and onwards to the location of the encampment.

If the party has already adopted the forms of Sub-Men, it can pass relatively unmolested through the Sub-Men troops along the border. The Sub-Men don't operate under a tight command structure; each Sub-Man reports to a commander of his race, who reports back to one of

the council of advisers at the encampment (see pp. 13–25), so commanders generally don't find it unusual to see stray Sub-Men of other races wandering about without their knowledge.

(The party may have earlier asked if it's possible to use the Underground Highway to get to the Tirshata encampment past the army. The answer is no: scouts have reported extensive collapsing of known highway routes by Ur forces. As any parts of the Highway tampered with by Ur must be assumed to be poisoned by alchemical waste, the route has been deemed impossibly dangerous.)

Confronted by Orik

If PCs are Stryx, Darkling, or Ur, they'll be approached by Orik, a burly Ur warlord (use the Ur template on p. 105—his level is d4+8). Stryx or Darkling will be approached because Stryx warriors and Darklings are subject races of the Ur.

If they're Stryx or Darkling, he bellows:

"What in the name of Trok are you doing away from your unit, you stinking piece[s] of slime? Yeah, you!"

If at least one of them is Ur, he confronts that individual alone, and he says:

"Hey, you. I don't know you, do I? Are you with Khek or Soreg?"

The correct answer to the first question is some lie about having been assigned to a scouting party or somesuch. (A Stryx can also evade suspicion by claiming to be a necromancer; Orik backs off right away, as he really can't tell a warrior from a necromancer and necromancers disturb him.) The warlord is doubtful even of the correct answer because the Ur rarely let their Stryx or Darkling vassals out of their sight, and if the PCs betray ignorance of this fact, he becomes even more doubtful.

In the second instance, the correct response is to pick quickly one of the two kings he mentions. If the PCs questioned seem stumped or answer evasively, the Ur becomes suspicious. If they answer well, he continues:

"You really should throw in with Grajak, for [insert name of king the PC has claimed] *is a miserable sack of dung who shall soon be wiping out Grajak's spittoon."*

The correct response here is to give Orik attitude right back by insulting Grajak. (In this situation, any self-respecting Ur would start with an angry insult even if he intended to conclude the discussion with an offer to throw his allegiance to Grajak.)

If PCs give incorrect responses to any of these challenges, Orik decides that something is fishy and demands that the PCs surrender and accompany him to the tent of Grajak's field commanders. If they refuse, he draws his sword and commands any Sub-Men within earshot to apprehend the party members. Unfortunately for him, there are no other Ur in the area, so no one obeys his order. The PCs can easily outrun Orik without a fight. If they stand and fight Orik, no other Sub-Men bother to intervene, thinking it a personal quarrel.

If the PCs actually go with Orik, they're in trouble. They'll be interrogated by a group of level d4+8 Ur warlords, as many as there are PCs, with a pair of Ur shamans, also level d4+8, along for good measure (see template, p. 106). The Ur PCs are quizzed on Ur culture; when the answers are incorrect, the Ur start to speculate about the most painful possible method of execution.

If you think the party can handle the Ur, go ahead and let them fight their way out of the situation. Again, they can easily escape in the confusion of massed Sub-Men, who will assume this is a typical example of rowdy Ur politics.

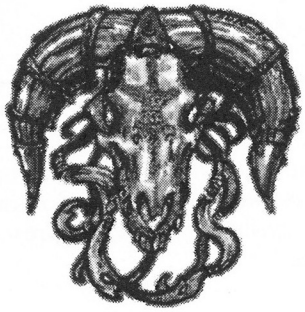
If you want to get the PCs out of trouble without a fight, the Ur are called to the battlefield by a Darkling messenger: the Grand Army has launched a feint against the Sub-Men. The Ur hastily tie the party up and leave, allowing the adventurers time to wriggle free of their bonds.

Confronted by Arzak

Any fake Beastmen in the party are confronted by Arzak, a young warrior full of himself after some lucky successes on the battlefield. He approaches the relevant PCs, stands in their path, and begins to growl, shake his mane, and bare his teeth. He is making a dominance challenge against the PCs. This actually means little: Arzak knows that these unfamiliar Beastmen are not of his tribe; they will not have to serve him if they lose, or vice versa. He just wants to practice on outsiders before challenging some Beastmen in his own group.

The correct response is either to mimic his response, not letting up until he does, or to take off a boot and present it to him for sniffing. (PCs may have learned this from *Scent of the Beast.*) If PCs respond any other way, Arzak howls for help, and six of his Beastmen companions come to help fight the PCs, who are assumed to be using sorcery to appear as Sub-Men.

Each Beastman/Beastwoman warrior is level d4+4. A template for Beastmen characters appears on p. 94. Other Sub-Men will not come to their aid.



The Laughing Devils

The next encounter, as the party makes its way through the Barrens, is with a pair of Enim, gigantic, game-loving devils who haunt the local hills (see *Thystram's Collectanea*, p. 123). The two Enim, Mephilophicar and Xerxemophides, actually aren't interested in eating the PCs as they might expect the devils would be. (They're unusually genteel for their kind; most Enim are fiercely solitary.)

The Enim approach the party and begin to mock them:

"So you think the Tirshata will be fooled by that pitiful shapechanging attempt, do you? Ha! Civilized fools! From we've seen, the Sub-Men are about to turn the Seven Kingdoms into smoldering rubble!"

The Enim are provoking the party, hoping to goad them into a wager.

"We bet any of you who wish to wager that you'll be dead within the year," says Mephilophicar. "Whatever amount you want to bet, we'll give you three-to-one odds."

If anyone asks them how they expect to collect from dead bettors:

Xerxemophides merely smiles and says, "We are devils. We have our ways."

Mephilophicar and Xerxemophides, Enim, 12th Level

Description: Male, 15´ tall; 1,000 pounds; burnished copper skin; curved horns; tusklike fangs. Wield gigantic stone clubs.

INT	+6	PER	+1
WIL	+7	CHA	+3
STR	+8	DEX	-3
CON	+10	SPD	-3

Hit Points: 48

Attacks	CR	Damage
Fist	+9	d8+8
Giant club	+9	d20+8

Armor: Hide, 2 points.

Skills: Primary Combat +9, Secondary Magic (wizardry) +12.

Special: Night Vision; immune to nonmagical attacks, except for brass weapons, which do double damage; detect astral, invisible, or ethereal presences at up to 100-foot range.

As the PCs leave, the Enim continue to mock them. If wagerers live out the year and head back to the Barrens to collect their debt, you can make a whole adventure from the trek. If they find Mephilophicar and Xerxemophides, the devils will attempt to renege on the bet, claiming to be other devils entirely.

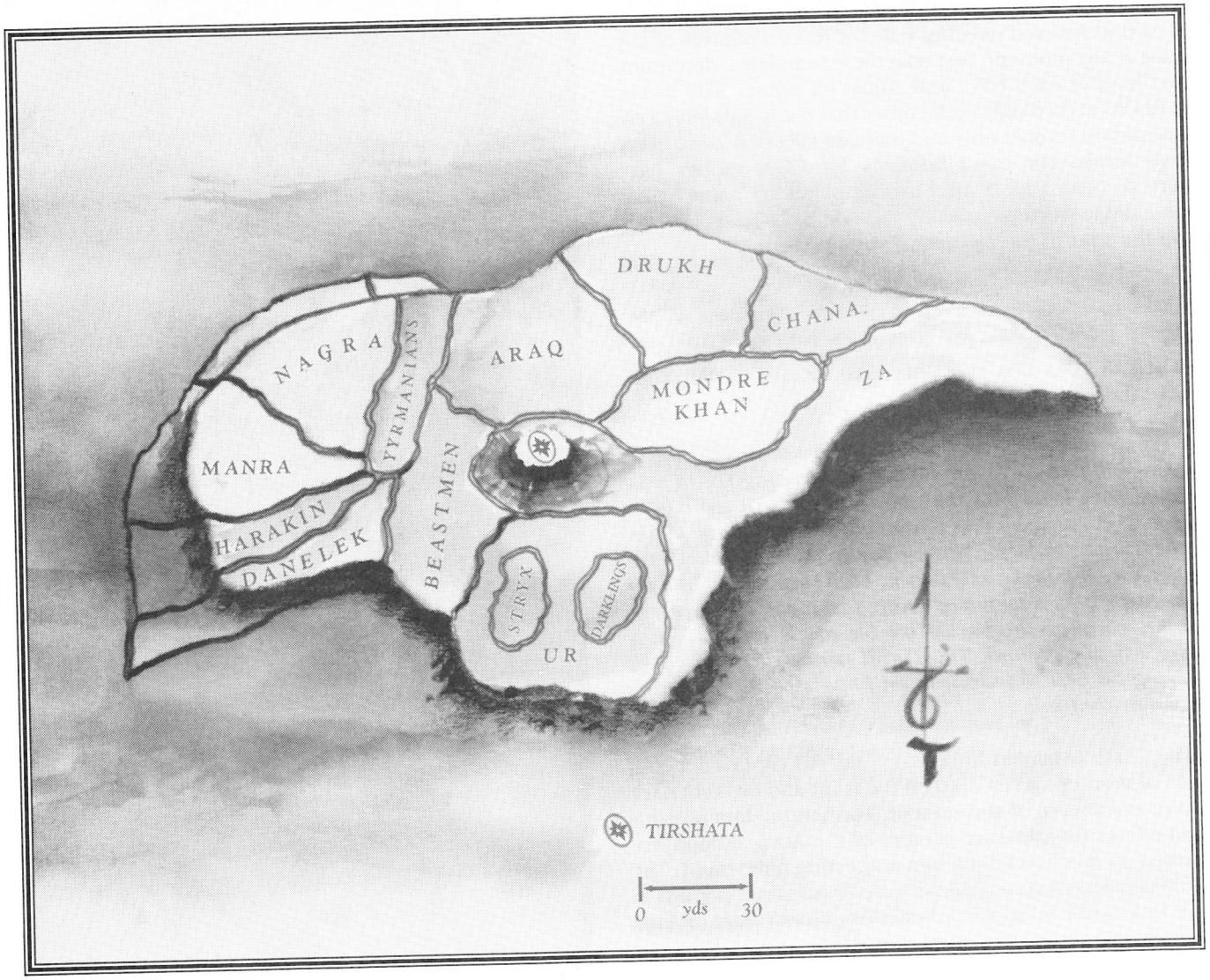
Arriving at the Encampment

The Tirshata Encampment

Once they make it to the Tirshata's encampment, the PCs determine the direction of the plot through their actions. As illustrated below, the encampment is divided into different camps by race. The Sub-Men at the camp are about one-fifth noncombatants, mostly children who have been brought here for protection while the adults are off fighting. The remaining Sub-Men are either employed in the Tirshata's war effort in a support capacity—making and repairing weapons and other equipment, for example—or are soldiers being held in reserve. Zagor is a firm believer in allowing his troops to rest; he has so many more soldiers at his disposal than the Seven Kingdoms has that he can afford to keep large numbers of able-bodied fighters inactive at any one time. However, he rotates units frequently to prevent inactive units from becoming restless and bored.

Although the PCs are free to wander about the camp, some Sub-Men are more welcoming hosts than others. Each group has its own prejudices about the others; its members react to the false forms of the PCs according to their individual biases. The PCs encounter a situation in progress as they enter each area; how they deal with each situation also helps determine how friendly the area's inhabitants will be towards them. In each separate area, the PCs can attempt to get information about access to the Tirshata and about the Sub-Men in general. They should gradually work their way up to meeting some or all of the advisers, the disguised Rasmirins, and finally the Tirshata. Pace the adventure so they reach these steps slowly and only as a reward for clever roleplaying.

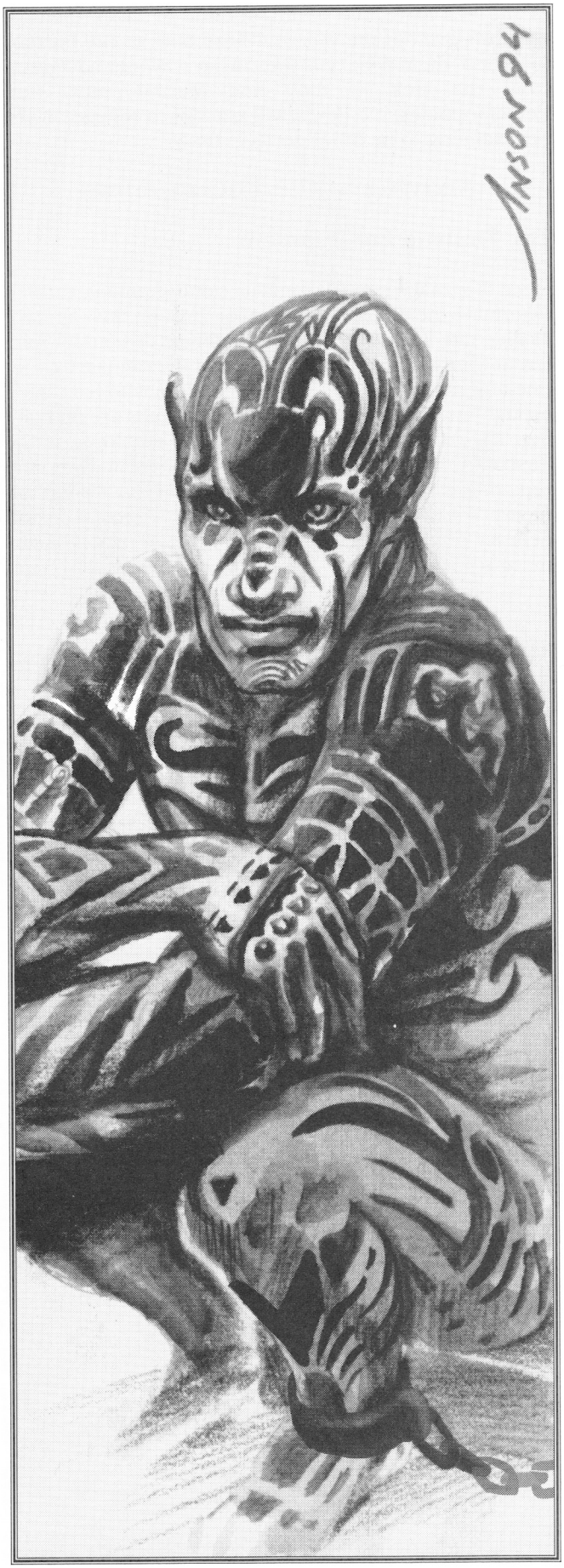
Note that it should be hardest for PCs to interact with Sub-Men whose forms they mimic, as they'll be expected to have a thorough knowledge of their culture. Also, any



open use of magic inappropriate to the race that the magic-using PC is impersonating is a dead giveaway that the PCs are fakes; this means use of just about any sophisticated magics by PCs in any form but that of Stryx necromancers.

In every encampment, there are always a few individuals who know a universal Sub-Men pidgin Talislan; otherwise, communications between groups or even different factions within a given race would be impossible. The PCs can understand this language fairly well (the quotes that follow are assumed to be in it), and if they speak Common Talislan in halting fashion, they will be understood (though considered to be somewhat ignorant for having such a poor grasp of pidgin).

Each camp is dealt with in its own section on the following pages. Each section includes an opening encounter, sample responses to basic questions, and a reaction chart that shows how the camp's inhabitants react to other Sub-Men races. Each camp will react to the PCs according to the false forms they're wearing; the chart provides a modifier for all CHA rolls and CHA-based skills. Also included in each section is a template to use to quickly generate NPCs. Templates are all of level 1 characters. During the unstructured portion of this adventure, you may find yourself needing stats for representatives of any race at any moment. Just take these templates, determine the level of each NPC, and adjust hit points, skill levels, and CRs accordingly. Remember that many Sub-Men have secondary combat only and increase CRs only once every two levels. Hit point bonuses for CON ratings have already been added. After the templates are some names and single-word personality tags for NPCs for you to use on the spur of the moment if you need to.



Araq

When the PCs first enter the Araq section of the camp, read the following:

A group of bright orange Araq, their head fins flaring in excitement, circle around a naked, bleeding Thrall prisoner. They prod him with the butt ends of their bone spears, jumping up and down and hissing all the while. The Thrall's colorful tattoos are marred by patches of scar tissue: it looks as if they've been tormenting him for quite a while. A length of chain, fashioned of lacquered bone, connects a shackle on his ankle with a heavy stake in the ground. The Thrall winces in pain but is trying his best to maintain an impassive stare, putting up a brave front.

The Thrall is named Knife-Edge; he was captured a couple of months ago by Araq on the front and brought back here as a source of amusement. Tormenting him like this stimulates the pleasure centers of the Araq, though not nearly so much as killing him and eating him would. The Araq leaders keep a prisoner or two on hand like this at all times, lest their warriors get bored and start looking for victims among the other camps.

If the PCs ask the Araq what they're doing, their response depends on whether there's a pseudo-Araq among them. If there is, one of the Araq says:

"Getting the thrill, warrior! Care to join ussss?"

He then hands the spear to the PC; if the PC fails to prod the Thrall vigorously and then act as if being pleasured, the Araq sense something wrong immediately. How they respond depends on how well the fake Araq explains his un-Araq behavior and how quickly he clears out. Araq have short attention spans, and possible impostors are out of mind once out of sight. If fake Araq stick around and further arouse their suspicions, the Araq will attack them as deviants, feeling quite justified in attempting to rip them apart. The hundreds of Araq in the camp won't rest until the degenerates' blood spatters their hides.

If the PCs are in the forms of other races, the Araq grin and say:

"Giving the treatment all weak onessss desssserve. Want to be nexssst?"

Template, Araq Warrior, 1st Level

Languages: Common Talislan +1, Sauran +1.

Description: Scaly, light brown hide; dorsal membrane; snakelike features; claws; fangs. Wears arm wrappings, boots, loincloth, shoulder pouch, backpack. Carries shield of land dragon hide (5 s.p.), saw-edged dagger (1 g.l.), dragonbone spear (1 g.l.), and mace (4 g.l.). No money or other loot.

INT	0	PER	0
WIL	0	CHA	0
STR	+2	DEX	+2
CON	+7	SPD	0

Hit Points: 19

Attacks	CR	Damage
Mace	+3	d10+2
Saw-edged dagger	+3	d6+2
Spear	+3	d10*

*The spear can be thrown or used as a missile weapon; it requires two hands to use.

Armor: 1, carries shield (-2 to opponent's roll to hit).

Skills: Mounted Combat (duadir) +3, Nomadic Customs +1, Primary Combat +3, Ride +3, Stalking +1, Tracking +1.

Special: Survive for up to six weeks without food and water; communicate with reptilian species.

They then brandish their spears at the party and make jovial hisses, sounds that might be interpreted as laughter. They have no actual intention of harming other Sub-Men: they know First of Bone Ditch (p. 16) would punish them severely.

If the PCs want to rescue Knife-Edge, they must use Stealth to sneak past the Araq guards at night, who post a sentry at that time every twenty yards along the perimeter of their area. Each guard is level d4+4. Then the PCs must get to Knife-Edge and persuade him to be quiet while they attempt to pull the stake out of the ground (roll versus STR with a -8 modifier) or else break the chain. If they reveal to him who they are, he protests:

"If you're really Grand Army intelligence, don't risk this! Your mission is worth more than my life!"

However, if they do set him free and give him a weapon, he will fade away without further complaint.

If the PCs talk to the Araq, they can learn the following things:

- *"The Tirssssbata issss a mighty ruler who sssshall change ussss sssso that we are fit to rule Talisssslanta when we have conquered it for him."*

- *"Our leader issss Firssssst of Bone Ditch, who hassss eaten the flessssh of many weaklingssss. Sssshe is terrifyingly beautiful."*

If asked to explain why the Araq do what they do, use the opening speech of the Araq culture section, p. 26.

Reaction Modifiers

The following are modifiers to CHA and CHA-based rolls based on the forms the PCs have adopted. See p. 29 for the nuances of Araq feelings towards other races.

Araq	+5	**Beastmen**	-3
Chana	0	**Danelek**	-5
Darklings	-3	**Drukh**	+3
Harakin	+3	**Manra**	-5
Mondre Khan	-3	**Nagra**	-3
Stryx	-3	**Ur**	+1
Yrmanian	-3	**Za**	+1

Quick NPCs

Ninth of Dead Gully—bloodthirsty
Eighteenth of Barren Veils—malevolent
Fourteenth of Deep Gorge—cruel
Twenty-seventh of Beating Flats—sadistic

Beastmen

It looks as if a fight of some kind is about to break out in the middle of the Beastmen camp. Two large, equally intimidating Beastmen specimens are squaring off, growling at one another with frothy, tusk-spiked lips. The rest of the Beastmen in the camp have gathered around them, trembling with excitement at the spectacle.

The PCs have walked in on a dominance challenge mounted by an ambitious hunter named Ditchjumper, with Foamspitter (p. 16) as the target. Use the template below for Ditchjumper; he's a level 8 hunter.

If the PCs intervene, they'll immediately be attacked by the dozens of excited Beastmen in the crowd. It would be a great insult to the honor of both challenger and defender to interfere with the course of such a challenge. Provided the PCs are not in the forms of Beastmen, the Beastmen will be satisfied just to drive them off. Beastmen committing such a crime are set upon to be killed.

If the PCs merely stand by and watch, they'll see Foamspitter deal Ditchjumper a lightning-quick backhand blow with the blunt edge of his war axe, sending the challenger sprawling derriere-over-teakettle into the dirt. Ditchjumper then removes his boot and works his way up to a crawling position, offering it to Foamspitter in a gesture of submission. The crowd disperses in a good mood, happy to have seen their age-old ritual work once more.

The PCs can learn the following things from talking to Beastmen:

- *"What you just saw was called the garu, it is how we decide who is strong enough to lead us."*
- *"Many seasons ago, too many to count, the Tirshata came and won garu contests with all of our leaders, so our ancestors followed him."*
- *"The Tirshata did not have to come to us to win us with the garu this time. We remember him from the other time. And every year it is harder to live: foreign adventurers hunt and kill our people. Places like the Seven Kingdoms only get bigger and bigger. We have seen this. They will need more land, and they will take ours. They will not take Urag: it is poison. They will not take Zaran: it is desert. They will take our land, because it is full of game. So we will destroy them before they destroy us."*
- *"Only a few in the camp are leaders enough to be let to see the Tirshata. Our leader, Foamspitter, who won the garu, is one of those. He tells us the Tirshata is fierce and strong."*

If asked why Beastmen do what they do, they repeat the speech from the culture section on p. 30, with "you" changed to "they."

Template, Beastman Hunter, 1st Level

Languages: Common Talislan -1, Sign -1.

Description: Body covered with bristling brown fur; bestial features; fangs. Wears boots and loincloth of animal hide, and pouch containing d20 x 5 g.l. in coins. Carries a long dagger (1 g.l.) and a war axe (10 g.l.).

INT	-2	PER	+1
WIL	-2	CHA	-2
STR	+3	DEX	-2
CON	+1	SPD	+1

Hit Points: 16

Attacks	CR	Damage
Bite	-1	d4+3
Claw	-1	d4+3
Dagger	-1	d6+3
War axe	-1	d20+3

Armor: 1

Skills: Hunter/Gatherer +2, Mounted Combat (darkmane) -1, Ride -1, Secondary Combat -1, Set/Detect Snares -1/+2, Stalking +2, Swim -1, Torture -1.

Special: D4+1 combat bonus versus wounded opponents; must roll versus will rating to resist urge to feed on fallen opponents after combat.

Reaction Modifiers

Araq	+3	**Beastmen**	+5
Chana	-2	**Danelek**	+3
Darklings	+4	**Drukh**	-3
Harakin	-2	**Manra**	-3
Mondre Khan	+3	**Nagra**	-1
Stryx	-3	**Ur**	-3
Yrmanian	-3	**Za**	+3

The following are modifiers to CHA and CHA-based rolls based on the forms the PCs have adopted. See p. 31 for the nuances of Beastman/Beastwoman feelings towards other races.

Other modifiers: -6 if newcomers do not perform the boot-sniffing ritual. -9 towards those who interfere in garu ceremony. +2 in residual good cheer for one hour after Ditchjumper's challenge.

Quick NPCs

Citywalker—educated
Red Claw—dynamic
Meatwinner—lethargic
Spinegnawer—gloomy

Chana

A horrific sight assails you as you approach the next area: a group of bored Chana look on as one of their members ritually inserts a stone into the open skull cavity of a [true race of a PC] *corpse. The corpse begins to shudder and flail about.*

The PCs have stumbled onto a witch using her primitive enchantment abilities to create a juju, or walking corpse (see GB p. 273). As ordered to by the leadership, the Chana have been manufacturing as many jujus as possible. As expendable troops whose very presence is a blow to enemy morale, the jujus have been found a quite-useful tool.

The Chana are surprisingly understanding (at least at first) if PCs attempt to disrupt the ceremony. A couple of onlookers take them gently aside and warn them not to interfere, that this is a project ordered directly by the Tirshata. The Chana expect others to be shocked by this ritual and have grown used to explaining that it furthers the great cause. Only if the PCs persist in trying to prevent the completion of the ritual will the Chana attack them, and then only to drive them away.

The PCs can learn the following from talking to the Chana:

- *"Great times are ahead. We will all be united. The Tirshata shall teach you about the False World and the Real World, and then all Landborne shall be together in true understanding."*

- *"Some even say, though I cannot say if this is true, that the Tirshata shall take us all to the Real World once we have finished conquering the light-worshippers."*

- *"You think many of the things we do are gruesome, but you do not understand. Soon you will understand."*

- *"Even if the deaths of the light-worshipping races did not lead to the Tirshata's revelations about the Real World, we would gladly help him. The cursed light-lovers of the Quan Empire have killed us and raided us for generations. No doubt the evildoers of the Seven Kingdoms do the same to other Landborne. They all deserve their fates."*

- *"We do not speak directly to the Tirshata. We speak to his lieutenant, a Stryx necromancer named Raaryx, who knows many arcane secrets. She must be very close to the Real World, almost ready to make the leap."*

PCs may also talk to fetch spirits, animated mummified heads impaled on short poles. If they do, they might hear something like this:

"There are two worlds, the Real World and the False World. This world is false, and the object is to get to the world that is real. I was once a noble of a great Quan family, until my caravan was raided by Chana and my head removed from my shoulders. Now I look into strange realms for the witches and give them peculiar instructions from unknown beings of this so-called Real World, which sometimes I believe in and sometimes I do not. I would call it a strange life, but, of course, I am dead. Ah well, I understand my people have been usurped by the Kang anyway; perhaps this is for the better. One clings to existence, no matter how bizarre. Perhaps I should ask you to kill me. But the last time I asked someone to do this for me, I changed my mind at the last moment and cried out, and they were killed. Perhaps you should not try to do me any favors."

Template, Chana Warrior, 1st Level

Languages: Chanan +1.

Description: Gray-green skin; cadaverous; teeth filed to points; lacquered hair. Wears loincloth. Carries blowgun (1 c.p.) with 10 venomwood darts, and a bone dagger (1 g.l.). No wealth. Carries trained wrist viper (see section following Chana templates, below).

INT	0	PER	0
WIL	0	CHA	-4
STR	+1	DEX	+2
CON	0	SPD	0

Hit Points: 10

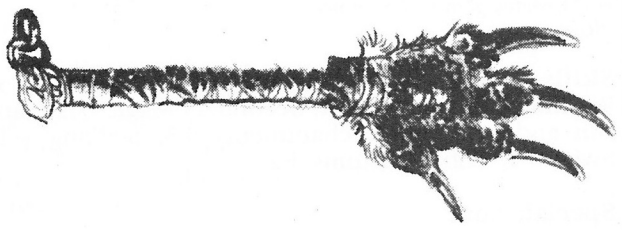
Attacks	CR	Damage
Blowgun	+3	d4*
Dagger	+3	d6+3

*Venomwood darts do an additional d10 damage by their poison effect; d4 if the victim makes a successful CON roll.

Armor: None.

Skills: Barter -3, Camouflage +1, Hunter/Gatherer +1, Secondary Combat +3, Stalking +1, Swim +3, Tracking +1, Tribal Customs +1.

Special: None.



Template, Chana Witchman/Witchwoman, 1st Level

Languages: Chanan +1.
Description: Gray-green skin; cadaverous; teeth filed to points; lacquered hair. Wears loincloth. Carries blowgun (1 c.p.) with 10 venomwood darts, and a bone dagger (1 g.l.). No wealth. Carries trained wrist viper (see below).

INT	+2	PER	0
WIL	+2	CHA	-1
STR	0	DEX	0
CON	-3	SPD	0

Hit Points: 10

Attacks	CR	Damage
Blowgun	+1	d4*
Unarmed Combat	+1	1 point

*Venomwood darts do an additional d10 damage by their poison effect; d4 if the victim makes a successful CON roll.

Armor: None.

Spells per Day: 3

Altered State
+3 Enter trance; see astral, invisible, ethereal, and hidden things.

Chant
+3 Give +1 modifier to allies or levy -1 penalty to enemies on all rolls.

Commune With Spirits
+3 See and speak with spiritforms.

Concoct Herbal Medicines
+3 Make traditional remedies.

Concoct Kesh
+3 Make substance that makes spiritforms visible and allows transport to other planes.

Concoct Magical Pigments
+3 Self-explanatory.

Concoct Poisons
+3 Self-explanatory.

Create Juju
+3 Animates corpse.

Create Soulstone
+3 Creates gem to trap spiritforms.

Dreamwalker
+3 Travel to Dream Dimension.

Fast Traveling
+3 Travel at maximum speed without tiring.

Make Enchanted Item
+3 Primitive equivalent of various enchant spells.

Spirit Aura
+3 Absorbs 4 points damage per level.

Spirit Bolt
+3 Hurls d4-damage-per-level energy bolt, with +1 damage per level to spiritforms.

Spirit Barrier
+3 Creates wall of spiritual force.

Spirit Track
+3 See spiritual traces left by passage of otherworldly creatures.

Totem Animal (Viper)
+3 Assume viper form.

Skills: Barter 0, Camouflage +3, Healer +3, Rudimentary Combat +1, Secondary Magic (shamanism and primitive enchantment) +3, Stalking +1, Swim +1, Tribal Customs +2.

Special: None.

Wrist Viper

Description: Small, scaly, armored serpent; emerald green with skull-like markings on back of head.

INT	-7	PER	+4
WIL	0	CHA	0
STR	-6	DEX	+6
CON	0	SPD	+8

Hit Points: D4

Attacks	CR	Damage
Bite	+6	1 point*

*Venom necessitates CON roll by victim; failure means death within d10 rounds; success a d12-hour coma.

Armor: Scaly hide, 1 point.

Special: Venom, see above.

Reaction Modifiers

The following are modifiers to CHA and CHA-based rolls based on the forms the PCs have adopted. See p. 36 for the nuances of Chana feelings towards other races.

Araq	+1	**Beastmen**	0
Chana	+5	**Danelek**	+3
Darklings	-5	**Drukh**	0
Harakin	+1	**Manra**	-5
Mondre Khan	+3	**Nagra**	-5
Stryx		**Ur**	-4
necromancers	+2		
warriors	-2		
Yrmanian	0	**Za**	0

Quick NPCs

Cha-Kyi—smoldering
Cha-Jyo—maternal
Cho-Dya—flamboyant
Chi-Kyu—creepy

Danelek

As they approach the Danelek area, the PCs are approached by a Darkling on errand to try to buy some poison for his Ur master. The Darkling says:

"No, no, not go there with bad bad Danelek. They say stay away; they say it with traps."

The Darkling lifts a heavily bandaged foot up into the air.

"I just go in to chat, you know, friendly-like, good, and ka-chang! Nearly lose darn foot, of which only got two. Pain bad. You need stand on edge of Danelek place and shout and hope one of them is enough bored to come talk. Otherwise time for bandages—ouch—bad!"

If one of the PCs has adopted the form of a Danelek, the Darkling doesn't approach the party: he figures that the Danelek knows how to steer his companions free of the traps.

A skilled Danelek trap maker has constructed double-bladed traps from broken and discarded edged weapons, and hidden them carefully under the earth. They're tripped when stepped on, striking with a CR of +10 for d12 damage. Anyone stepping unawares over the perimeter of the Danelek area rolls an unmodified d20. Those whose results are mishaps or failures step on a trap. For those with the Disarm/Detect Traps skill, the modifier to spot where the traps are hidden is -10. They can be easily stepped around once located. It doesn't take use of the Disarm skill to trip them; anyone can do it with the simple poke of a staff or long stick.

If the PCs bypass the traps and waltz right in, they'll be greeted with suspicion and asked to leave, for the Danelek feel trespassed upon. A party member must make a critical success with a CHA roll to mollify them and be allowed to stay. Otherwise, characters who refuse to leave are attacked. The Danelek are content to drive intruders away rather than kill them.

If the PCs wait on the perimeter and call out for someone to come and meet them, keeping it up for at least ten minutes, an inquisitive eight-year-old named Ordo comes out to meet them. He chats with them for a while, asking who they are, where they're from, and, if any of them are Danelek, how many soldiers they've killed so far in the war. He thinks this whole war business is mighty keen, showing the typical bloodthirstiness of young boys everywhere. Eventually he invites the group to meet his family.

The PCs can learn the following from talking to the Danelek:

• *"The Tirshata is a practical man. He wants practical things. He will forge agreements to give us definite title to our lands, both from other Landborne like the Za and Araq, and from the dishonest intruders of the so-called civilized world. To be left to control our own lands and oases—that's what we fight for."*

• *"Our representative to the Tirshata is a Harakin, named Merao. Seems practical enough."*

Template, Danelek Hunter, 1st Level

Languages: Common Talislan +1, Sign +1.

Description: Blackened skin; bleached white hair worn in dreadlocks. Wears loincloth, halter if female, leg and arm wrappings of land lizard hide. Carries war flail (12 g.l.), and short bow (5 g.l.) with quiver (5 s.p.) of 20 arrows (5 s.p.). Land lizard steeds have saddlebags containing d10 x 3 g.l. worth of salt crystals and land lizard hides.

INT	-1	PER	+2
WIL	-1	CHA	+1
STR	+2	DEX	0
CON	+4	SPD	0

Hit Points: 18

Attacks	CR	Damage
War Flail	+1	d12+2
Short Bow	+1	d8

Armor: None.

Skills: Ambush 0, Barter +2, Haggle +1, Mounted Combat (land lizard) +1, Secondary Combat +1, Stealth +1, Tracking +2, Tribal Customs 0, Waylay +1, Wilderness Survival 0.

Special: None.

Reaction Modifiers

The following are modifiers to CHA and CHA-based rolls based on the forms the PCs have adopted. See p. 38 for the nuances of Danelek feelings towards other races

Quick NPCs

Araq	-5	**Beastmen**	-3
Chana	-4	**Danelek**	+5
Darklings	-2	**Drukh**	-4
Harakin	+3	**Manra**	+2
Mondre Khan	+2	**Nagra**	-3
Stryx	-3	**Ur**	-3
Yrmanian	-2	**Za**	-5

Ja-gar-Lek—oily
Marl-ba-Lek—alluring
Mor-vo-Lek—disillusioned
Zhirl-da-Lek—daffy

Darklings

When the PCs try to enter the Darkling area, a pot-bellied Ur warlord gets in their way.

"Hey, those are our slaves, not yours. Get your grubby slave-grabbing hands out of here! If you want lackeys, go find your own bunch of wild cave-dwellers to kick around!"

The Ur are very much afraid that some of the other freedom-loving Sub-Men will give their Darklings ideas. PCs will have to use stealth to sneak past the Ur in order to meet the Darklings. If PCs are caught sneaking into Darkling areas, the Ur try to subdue them and toss them outside the Ur perimeter. For the Ur warlord template, see p. 105.

The Darklings themselves are more than happy to speak to anyone who bribes them. They'll accept anything the Ur forbid them, particularly concealable weapons (the Ur give them weapons only before battles and confiscate them afterwards) or food.

Conversations with the Darklings reveal the following:

• *"Legends say Tirshata promise to unchain us after he unchain Landborne from bad other countries. We slaves, we no have choice of being here. But Tirshata win good, yes, we hope. We dream freedom dreams."*

• *"Ur leader here is tricky Vule, much big brains than usual master. Makes bad dangerous."*

• *"They say we always lie. But nobody wanna hear truth good, no."*

Template, Darkling Warrior, 1st Level

Languages: Northron -3.

Description: Soot-gray to black skin; distorted features; fangs; sinuous tail. Wears loincloth, and brief chest band if female. Carries sling (2 c.p.) with 10 stones and dagger (1 g.l.). Has secret stash containing d6 x 2 g.l. worth of swiped baubles.

INT	-3	PER	+3
WIL	-4	CHA	-5
STR	-2	DEX	0
CON	+4	SPD	-1

Hit Points: 8

Attacks	CR	Damage
Dagger	+1	d6-2
Sling	+1	d6

Armor: None.

Skills: Barter -2, Haggle -4, Hide -2, Secondary Combat +1, Stalking +1, Stealth +1, Swipe +1, Tribal Customs -2.

Special: None.

Reaction Modifiers

The following are modifiers to CHA and CHA-based rolls based on the forms the PCs have adopted. See p. 41 for the nuances of Darkling feelings towards other races.

Araq	-6	**Beastmen**	-3
Chana	-4	**Danelek**	+3
Darklings	+5	**Drukh**	-6
Harakin	+3	**Manra**	+4
Mondre Khan	0	**Nagra**	-1
Stryx		**Ur**	-5
necromancers	-5		
warriors	-4		
Yrmanian	-2	**Za**	-3

Quick NPCs

Vhaazz—determined
Hoosssh—dignified
Zhaaz—brave
Rissst—protective

Drukh

Drifting from the Drukh camp is a sinister keening of flutes and a cacophony of fearsome, bestial howls. As you begin to turn away from any further approach, a Drukh, who has silently glided up to you, puts a friendly hand on [a PC's] *shoulder.*

"You are in luck, fellow Sub-Men. An elder, Great Throat Cutter, dies tonight. We give him the gift of torture as his passage to Noman's castle. Come and watch, and learn."

This friendly Drukh is Wise Eye-Gouger, an evangelical worshipper of Noman who wishes to convert others to the faith. He boasts of how others fear the Drukh and states to the PCs that their races can also be feared if they follow the brutal ways of Noman.

Wise Eye-Gouger is very defensive about his beliefs and quick to fly into a rage if others question them or insult his culture. When he feels slighted, he hotly demands a retraction. He calls for help and attacks anyone who refuses to apologize, so soon the PCs are charged by dozens of rampaging Drukh. Fortunately, they are content to drive infidels away rather than kill them.

If the PCs pretend to find Wise Eye-Gouger's words soothing and the sight of an old Drukh being flayed alive edifying, he is quite friendly and introduces them to his fellows.

From these Drukh the PCs can learn the following:

• *"No one understands us. Everybody hates us. It isn't fair."*

• *"Here's a secret for you: the Tirshata is really our god, Noman, the lord of the Nightmare Dimension. Or at least part of Noman. He has come to lift us out of our misery and bring holy torture to all peoples."*

• *"All Drukh in the Tirshata's army report to a Mondre Khan named Bariz. He understands us, treats us good."*

• *"We are not warlike. The Arimites want to kill us all the time, so we have to kill them back. They made us warlike. It's all their fault."*

Template, Drukh Hillman/Hillwoman, 1st Level

Languages: Common Talislan +1, Sign +1.

Description: Skin and hair dyed purple; bestial features; wild gray eyes. Carries stone club (1 s.p.) and iron dagger (1 g.l.). Wears headdress, vest, breeches, boots of tundra beast hide. Pouches contain d8 x 5 g.l. worth of ivory, gold dust, or looted coin.

INT	0	PER	0
WIL	0	CHA	0
STR	+1	DEX	+3
CON	+3	SPD	0

Hit Points: 17

Attacks	CR	Damage
Club	+4	d8+1
Dagger	+4	d6+1

Armor: None.

Skills: Barter +1, Hunter/Gatherer +1, Mountain Climbing +4, Mounted Combat (equs) +4, Ride +4, Secondary Combat +4, Scout +1, Set/Detect Snares +4/+1, Stalking +4, Torture +4, Tracking +1, Tribal Customs +1.

Special: In battle, achieve trance state through ritual flute and drum music; those under the influence continue to fight until they reach -10 hit points.

Reaction Modifiers

The following are modifiers to CHA and CHA-based rolls based on the forms the PCs have adopted. See p. 44 for the nuances of Drukh feelings towards other races.

Araq	+4	**Beastmen**	-3
Chana	+4	**Danelek**	-1
Darklings	-3	**Drukh**	+5
Harakin	-1	**Manra**	-3
Mondre Khan	-4	**Nagra**	0
Stryx	0	**Ur**	-4
Yrmanian	+3	**Za**	-2

Other modifiers: If the PCs seem upset by the torture ritual: -3. If the PCs display an interest in worshipping Noman: +3.

Quick NPCs

Much-feared Brother—cranky
Captures-Many Brother—bellicose
Neck-breaking Sister—tattletale
Thinks-Cruel Sister—contemplative

Template, Drukh Shaman, 1st Level

Languages: Common Talislan +1, Sign +1.

Description: Skin and hair dyed purple; bestial features; wild gray eyes. Carries stone club (1 s.p.), iron dagger (1 g.l.), d4 vials of medicinal concoctions. Wears headdress, vest, breeches, boots of tundra beast hide. Pouches contain d10 x 5 g.l. worth of ivory, gold dust, or looted coin.

INT	+1	PER	+1
WIL	0	CHA	0
STR	0	DEX	+2
CON	+3	SPD	0

Hit Points: 17

Attacks	CR	Damage
Club	+4	d8+1
Dagger	+4	d6+1

Armor: None.

Spells per Day: 2

Altered State
+2 Enter trance; see astral, invisible, ethereal, and hidden things.

Chant
+2 Give +1 modifier to allies or levy -1 penalty to enemies on all rolls.

Commune With Spirit
+2 Can see and speak with spiritforms.

Concoct Herbal Medicines
+2 Make traditional remedies.

Concoct Magical Pigments
+2 Self-explanatory.

Concoct Poisons +2 Self-explanatory.

Create Juju
+2 Animate corpse.

Create Soulstone +2
Create gem to trap spiritforms.

Dreamwalker
+2 Travel to Dream Dimension.

Fast Traveling
+2 Travel at maximum speed without tiring.

Make Enchanted Item
+2 Primitive equivalent of various enchant spells.

Spirit Aura
+2 Absorbs 4 points per level damage.

Spirit Barrier
+2 Creates wall of spiritual force.

Spirit Bolt
+2 Hurl d4 -damage-per-level energy bolt, with +1 damage per level to spiritforms.

Spirit Track
+2 See spiritual traces left by passage of otherworldly creatures.

Totem Animal
(Graymane)+2
Assume graymane form.

Skills: Barter +1, Mountain Climbing +3, Mounted Combat (equs) +3, Musicianship +3, Ride +3, Rudimentary Combat +3, Secondary Magic (shamanism and primitive enchantment) +2, Tribal Customs +1.

Special: Play the "song of death" on flute or drum, conferring extra endurance to warriors (see above) and a -1 combat penalty against enemies who hear it and fail WIL rolls.

Harakin

In the middle of the Harakin encampment, a huge chunk of land dragon meat sizzles on a spit over a huge fire. It smells mighty tasty, but the assembled Harakin sit looking at it with apparent suspicion and in obvious displeasure. A strange standoff of some sort between the Sub-Men and their meal seems to be in progress. They all stand very still, watching each other from the corners of their eyes.

The Harakin are unhappy because the Tirshata has sent them this huge meal as a tribute for their services. In Harakin belief, there is something unseemly about accepting food one did not earn oneself. On the other hand, they are very hungry because they've been discouraged from leaving the camp to hunt against the chance that the Tirshata needs to send them somewhere quickly. Consequently, the stubborn Harakin—the group here is made up of many clans who are normally deadly rivals—are all waiting for someone else to take the first humiliating bite, before they all join in and begin ravenously carving up the delicious beast.

If the PCs approach them, they'll be rather cranky from hunger and self-denial. Queries and attempts at small talk are rudely rebuffed—Harakin are blunt people at the best of times. But if one of the PCs breaks the impasse by taking some of the meat, the grateful Harakin find themselves in a celebratory mood and are more open than usual to conversation with outsiders.

By conversing with the Harakin, the PCs can learn the following:

• *"We follow the Tirshata because he made an arrangement with us. We fight his battles; he provides for our people. We survive. It is what Harakin do."*

• *"We do not love the Tirshata as some here do. Love is not an emotion that helps you survive. He abandoned us once. We are watching him carefully to make sure he doesn't do it again."*

• *"One of the Tirshata's advisers is a Harakin, named Merao. She leads us well. She will not be deceived."*

• *"Our people have suffered greatly under the brutal Kang. There is nothing in our land for them—theirs is lush while ours is barren—yet still they come for us, for the brute pleasure of taking what is not theirs. It will be good to destroy their cruel army. We will put them all to the sword so they cannot rebuild and menace us anew."*

Reaction Modifiers

Araq	+2	**Beastmen**	-2
Chana	+3	**Danelek**	+1
Darklings	+2	**Drukh**	-2
Harakin	+5	**Manra**	+2
Mondre Khan	+4	**Nagra**	0
Stryx	-4	**Ur**	-3
Yrmanian	-3	**Za**	0

The following are modifiers to CHA and CHA-based rolls based on the forms the PCs have adopted. See p. 47 for the nuances of Harakin feelings towards other races.

Other modifiers: If the Harakin are still waiting to eat: -3. If the PCs eat first, breaking the impasse: +3.

Quick NPCs

Fremarao—fatherly
Llywao—plucky
Paberao—uncompromising
Trodonao—immature

Template, Harakin Warrior, 1st Level

Languages: Common Talislan +1, Sign +1.

Description: Gray skin; hard features; lean and rugged. Wears rough leather tunic, cowl, high boots, reptile-hide gauntlets, shoulder pouch. Carries iron boomerang (40 c.p.), two-bladed knife (1 g.l.), four-bladed axe (15 g.l.). No money or other loot.

INT	0	PER	0
WIL	+3	CHA	0
STR	+3	DEX	+2
CON	+5	SPD	0

Hit Points: 21

Attacks	CR	Damage
Four-bladed axe	+3	d12+3
Iron Boomerang	+3	d8
Two-bladed knife	+3	d6+3

Armor: None.

Skills: Hunter/Gatherer +1, Mounted Combat (dractyl) +3, Primary Combat +3, Ride +3, Mountain Climbing +3, Tracking +1, Tribal Customs +1.

Special: None.

Manra

As the PCs enter the Manra area:

You hear a familiar sound: it is the drumming and wailing that you heard on those afternoons with Tebo, when he scrambled your perceptions and taught you how to assume the forms you now wear. As you draw closer, your assumptions are confirmed—this is indeed a group of Sub-Men like Tebo, the Manra.

Sitting in a circle around an older Manra, who is chanting and drumming, are five or six youngsters. They are leaning back with their eyes closed. The familiar harsh smell of cooking jabutu envelops you. For a moment, you think you're slipping back into hallucination—the shapes of the children are becoming distorted. One sprouts little feathery wings from her eyebrows; another's left leg becomes a huge and thrashing viper. Then you realize it's not a hallucination at all; the children really are changing their shapes.

The PCs are witnessing a Manra initiation ritual; the children are being trained to shapechange. If they attempt to interrupt the ritual, they are sternly rebuked. However, if the PCs simply stand back from it and watch respectfully, other friendly Manra eventually walk up and engage them in conversation.

Should one of the PCs mention the name Tebo, the Manra become quite excited. Tebo's family is in the camp, and his mate has been pining away without him. The PCs are ushered to her to give her any news they might have of him. If they reveal Tebo's fate, the female is overcome with grief. She falls to the ground weeping and wailing, and soon many of the other Manra are doing the same. It seems that Abn Qua's notion that Manra have no capacity for grief is quite wrong.

If the PCs reveal that they are agents of the Seven Kingdoms trained by Tebo, the Manra accept them and promise not to blow their cover—provided they explain that they had no role in Tebo's death.

Should they tell the Manra about their mission, the PCs can learn the following:

"Change flows through our veins as blood flows through yours. The return of the Tirshata may bring great changes to this land. For this we must be here, to be one with the change. But if those changes are for good or for ill, we cannot guess. Tebo thought that the Tirshata was an ill wind but that his coming might be turned to good. This is why he went to the Seven Kingdoms: to try to make peace between the civilized lands and the Landborne prepared for peace. We grieve that his faith in your people was misplaced, that he paid for his trust with his life. But you are now his heirs. You must finish Tebo's *mission, not that of your masters. You must bring peace where there is only war."*

(If the PCs are troubled by this news of Tebo's peace negotiation plans, you may wish to have them probe into Abn Qua's duplicity when the events of this campaign have been concluded.)

Whether or not they reveal their mission, the PCs can learn the following from the Manra:

• *"Though we are here at the Tirshata's camp, we will not make war for him. We wish to witness these great changes, and we serve him as healers, as scouts—yes, sometimes even as spies. But we will not kill for him."*

• *"Not all so-called Sub-Men are alike. Why, our worst enemies are other 'Sub-Men'; they who worship the darkness, the grim and heartless Chana. They steal our heads to make spirit fetches, eat our flesh in obscene rituals. And our second worst enemies are civilized peoples—those of the Quan Empire. There is great evil on both sides of this conflict. The word 'Sub-Men' is just a word—and words can be shapechangers too. The word 'Sub-Men' drives many here in this camp to a rage: 'Landborne' is the ancient name, the honored name."*

Template, Manra Shapechanger, 1st level

Languages: Chanan +1.

Description: Topknot, golden skin, brown hair, slender build, almond-shaped eyes. Wears coarse cloth garments. Carries three-strand whipsash (3 g.l.), stone club (1 s.p.), and d8 x 10 g.l. worth of rare herbs, precious stones, and gold nuggets.

INT	0	PER	+2
WIL	0	CHA	0
STR	0	DEX	+2
CON	+6	SPD	0

Hit Points: 18

Attacks	CR	Damage
Stone Club	+3	d8
Whipsash	+3	d6*

*On a partial success, the whipsash strikes the target for half damage but does not entangle. On a full success it does full damage and entangles a limb of the wielder's choice. On a critical success it entangles the limb, doubles damage, and brings the target down.

Armor: None.

Skills: Healer +1, Herb Lore +1, Secondary Combat +3, Stalking +1, Swim +3, Tracking +3, Tribal Customs +1.

Special: Shapechange.

• *"Because we do not fight, we have little power here. A Mondre Khan named Bariz gives us his orders. There is much change swirling beneath his great breast; one part of his heart is at war with the other. It is appropriate, though for good or ill we cannot guess."*

Reaction Modifiers

Manra try to understand all other races and are neutral to all except the Chana, to whom they react at -5, and other Manra, who get a +5 bonus.

Other modifiers: If the PCs bring news of Tebo's fate: +2. If the PCs reveal their mission: +1. If the PCs fail to convince the Manra they had no role in Tebo's death: -4.

Quick NPCs

Avir—regal
Shathane—dogged
Drac—long-winded
Willowood—witty

Mondre Khan

A squadron of Mondre Khan sit in rigidly arranged rows listening to a gray-haired male who stands with the demeanor of a leader. He is pointing with the tip of a rasp to a large canvas chart on a wooden frame.

Though the PCs might think this the Tirshata's war plan, it is in fact something far stranger: the lecturing Mondre Khan, once a Quan slave, is teaching the other Mondre Khan the language of the Quan—including how to read! The Mondre Khan are learning in order to prepare themselves to rule the Quan Empire. The Mondre Khan don't want to destroy civilization—they want to take it over.

If strangers approach, the lecturer gets touchy and defensive:

"You got a problem? Hmn? You think Mondre Khan shouldn't be able to read, is that it? Hmn? Well, just because you *don't want to improve yourselves—"*

Mondre Khan are easily offended; have fun with this as the PCs protest. The Mondre Khan twist the words of every apology to read further insult into it. Make the PCs really work to disarm their defensiveness. If the PCs fail to impress the Mondre Khan, a fight might well break out. These huffy Sub-Men initially fight to rough up—not kill—any vile slanderers, but they may become enraged and change their objectives in mid-fight if any of them are seriously harmed.

Assuming they manage to get the Mondre Khan to let their guard down, the PCs can hear the following:

• *"We have fought the Quan and the Kang for centuries. For centuries, they have reviled us, called us savages. Well, we've had enough. Now, with the Tirshata behind us, we strike back once and for all. They'll regret killing our fathers and enslaving our mothers. Crushing the Seven Kingdoms is just practice—then the real war begins."*

• *"Peace? Of course we want peace. We've learned the hard way—the only way to get peace is by winning wars."*

• *"The great fighter Bariz, who has had many successes against the foul Kang, is the Tirshata's closest adviser. We know that he will be given the now-Quan Empire for our efforts."*

• *"You think things are simple? Things are not simple. We struggle with the beast inside us all the time. The Tirshata once promised to help us tame the beast inside. But he left us holding the old, thin rein on the beasts he stirred. Now he's back again. We are with him, because we hate his enemies more than we hate him. But if he betrays us again—he is prey."*

Reaction Modifiers

The following are modifiers to CHA and CHA-based rolls based on the forms the PCs have adopted. See p. 53 for the nuances of Mondre Khan feelings towards other races.

Template, Mondre Khan Warrior, 1st Level

Languages: Chanan 0, Sign 0.

Description: Mane of coarse black hair; bestial features; shaggy forearms and forelegs; claws; leathery brown skin. Wears leather and plate armor (250 g.l.). Carries rasp (15 g.l.) and 7 blade stars (2 s.p. each), pouch, rope and grapnel, tinderbox. D10 x2 gold lumens in looted coins in pouch.

INT	-1	PER	0
WIL	0	CHA	-2
STR	+3	DEX	+3
CON	+2	SPD	+1

Hit Points: 16

Attacks	CR	Damage
Blade stars	+4	d4
Claws	+4	d4+3
Rasp	+4	d6+3

Armor: None.

Skills: Ambush 0, Assassinate +4, Camouflage 0, Hide 0, Ride +4, Sabotage 0, Scout +1, Secondary Combat +4, Stalking +4, Swim +4, Tribal Customs 0, Waylay +4.

Special: Claws usable as weapons; +3 to climbing rolls.

Araq	-4	**Beastmen**	-5
Chana	-3	**Danelek**	+4
Darklings	+3	**Drukh**	-3
Harakin	+4	**Manra**	0
Mondre Khan	+5	**Nagra**	-4
Stryx	-4	**Ur**	+3
Yrmanian	-4	**Za**	+1

Quick NPCs

Chariz—melancholy
Grariz—silent
Kuhiz—mocking
Noriz—disciplined

Nagra

As you approach the Nagra area, they take little notice of you. In fact, they seem to take little notice of one another. Each Nagra seems lost in solitary contemplation. Some sit and stare at the ground; others close their eyes and rock gently against a tent or lean-to. Others pace restlessly. Some of them are muttering, some chanting. The effect is quite eerie. They seem to be looking into another world.

The difficulty here is getting the Nagras' attention. All are in a profound state of panic after a night of bad dreams. All of the Nagra in the encampment dreamed of disaster, of Landborne falling upon Landborne, of blood bathing the entire area. They dreamed of laughing spirits enjoying the carnage. Now they are trying to figure out if this is a true dream or a deceptive mystic sending from some enemy of the Landborne.

The Nagra are sullen and want to be left alone. They'll continually tell outsiders to go away and let them be. If the PCs are persistent and pretend to have a knowledge of mystical things, or if one of them is disguised as a Nagra, they can eventually drag out of the Nagra the story of their dream and the great distress it has caused them.

They can also get the following information:

• *"The spirits surround us. The others, they are lucky to be blind. We see too much. It is not that we are cowards—it is that we know what lies ahead. The Tirshata abandoned us once, and will do so again, we fear, we fear . . ."*

• *"We hate the Chana because they kill us. We hate those of the Quan Empire because they kill us, enslave us, and look to steal our land. Many people we do not hate are going to die in this war. It is but one of many dooms that stalk us."*

• *"You know that all of Talislanta belongs to the Landborne, yes? The Archaens promised it over to us when they left for the skies, and the civilized races name themselves the heirs of the Archaens. In this war, it is the savages who fight for the law, and the upholders of order who break it. If I allowed myself to laugh, I would laugh bitterly."*

• *"We take our orders from a blind and stupid brute named Foamspitter, a Beastman. It is all for disaster, to be ruled by one who knows nothing. We would leave, but fear reprisals. It is not the way of the Nagra to submit to the ways of others. We should never have come here."*

Reaction Modifiers

Nagra react to PCs who look Chana at -5 and are neutral to all other Sub-Men races, whom they find amusing for various reasons.

Quick NPCs

E'Pa—mournful
O'Ko—overbearing
U'Ca—restless
A'Be—jittery

Template, Nagra Spirit Tracker, 1st Level

Languages: Chanan +1, Sign +1.

Description: Mottled, green-gray skin; ebony eyes; peaked skull; black fangs. Male wears loincloth; female, tunic. Carries blowgun (1 c.p.) with 20 venomwood darts, bone long knife (1 g.l.). Pouches contain d10 x 6 g.l. worth of semiprecious stones.

INT	0	PER	+4
WIL	0	CHA	-1
STR	+2	DEX	+2
CON	+5	SPD	+1

Hit Points: 19

Attacks	CR	Damage
Blowgun	+3	d4*
Knife	+3	d6+2

*Venomwood darts do an additional d10 damage by their poison effect, d4 if the victim makes a successful CON roll.

Armor: None.

Skills: Barter +1, Camouflage +1, Concoct Poisons +1, Hunter/Gatherer +5, Mountain Climbing +3, Scout +5, Secondary Combat +3, Set/Detect Snares +3/+5, Stalking +3, Tracking +5, Tribal Customs +1.

Special: Spirit Tracking.

Template, Nagra Shaman, 1st Level

Languages: Chanan +1, Sign +1.

Description: Mottled, green-gray skin; ebony eyes; peaked skull; black fangs. Male wears loincloth; female, tunic. Both wear animal-hide capes. Carries blowgun (1 c.p.) with 20 venomwood darts, bone long knife (1 g.l.), spirit jar, d4 vials of concoctions. Pouches contain d20 x 6 g.l. worth of semiprecious stones.

INT	+1	PER	+3
WIL	0	CHA	-1
STR	0	DEX	+1
CON	+5	SPD	+1

Hit Points: 19

Attacks	CR	Damage
Blowgun	+3	d4*
Knife	+3	d6+2

*Venomwood darts do an additional d10 damage from their poison effect, d4 if the victim makes a successful CON roll.

Armor: None.

Spells per Day: 2

Altered State
+2 Enter trance; see astral, invisible, ethereal, and hidden things.

Chant
+2 Give +1 modifier to allies or levy -1 penalty to enemies on all rolls.

Commune With Spirit
+2 Can see and speak with spiritforms.

Concoct Herbal Medicines
+2 Make traditional remedies.

Concoct Magical Pigments
+2 Self-explanatory.

Concoct Poisons
+2 Self-explanatory.

Create Juju
+2 Animate corpse.

Create Soulstone
+2 Create gem to trap spiritforms.

Dreamwalker
+2 Travel to Dream Dimension.

Fast Traveling
+2 Travel at maximum speed without tiring.

Make Enchanted Item
+2 Primitive equivalent of various enchant spells.

Spirit Aura
+2 Absorbs 4 points damage per level.

Spirit Barrier
+2 Creates wall of spiritual force.

Spirit Bolt
+2 Hurl d4-damage-per-level energy bolt, with +1 damage per level to spiritforms.

Spirit Track
+2 See spiritual traces left by passage of otherworldly creatures.

Totem Animal (snake)
+2 Assume snake form.

Skills: Barter +1, Healer +1, Herb Lore +1, Hunter/Gatherer +4, Rudimentary Combat +2, Secondary Magic (shamanism and primitive enchantment) +2, Stalking +2, Tracking +4, Tribal Customs +1.

Special: Spirit Tracking.

Stryx

A hideous slurping, tearing noise, punctuated by the flapping of feathers and frequent birdlike screechings, emanates from the Stryx camp. As you draw closer, an even more alarming sight goes with the disturbing sounds—a circle of Stryx Warriors are feasting on a pile of corpses. You recognize the remains of Danuvians, Orgovians, and Rahastrans, along with members of various Sub-Men groups.

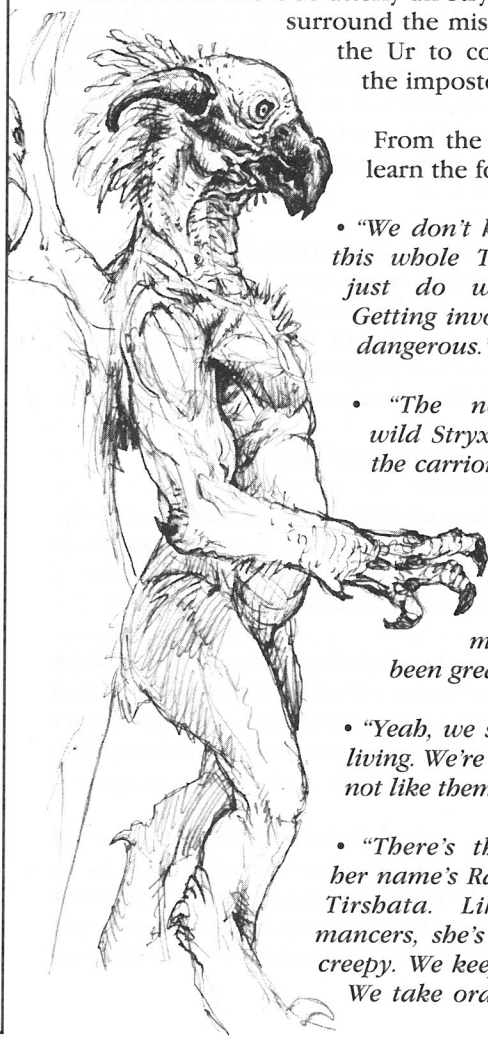
If the PCs draw closer to the Stryx, they're offered the opportunity to join the meal. A particularly brawny-looking Stryx reaches onto the pile, tears off an arm, and waves it in the direction of the adventurers.

"Want some?" he asks.

If the PCs turn him down, he shrugs and says:

"More for us, then."

The Stryx are used to being reviled for their eating habits, so if the PCs are able to show even marginal tolerance toward them, they'll be happy to chat. The only problem that might arise is if a PC disguised as a Stryx refuses to eat: this is so utterly un-Stryxlike that the Stryx surround the miscreant and call for the Ur to come and imprison the impostors.



From the Stryx the PCs can learn the following:

- *"We don't know much about this whole Tirshata deal. We just do what we're told. Getting involved in politics is dangerous."*
- *"The necromancers—the wild Stryx, priests of Taryx, the carrion god—they figure this whole business is just a plan of Taryx's to get more carrion for us. And I must say, the eatin's been great, y'know?"*
- *"Yeah, we serve the Ur. It's a living. We're not slaves, though, not like them nasty Darklings."*
- *"There's this necromancer, her name's Raaryx, advises the Tirshata. Like most necromancers, she's pretty squawkin' creepy. We keep out of her way. We take orders from another*

adviser, an Ur name of Vule. He's not bad for an Ur. That's not sayin' much, though."

• *"These Landborne in the pile are the ones who die naturally in the camp here. Can't have 'em lyin' around breedin' diseases, right? We Stryx perform an underappreciated service, you know."*

Reaction Modifiers

Stryx don't make distinctions among most Sub-Men races: all future meat is pretty much the same. The Stryx react neutrally to characters who show the usual disgust at their diet, at -2 to those who are especially vociferous about their repulsion, and at +4 to those who go out of their way to praise carrion eaters. They defer naturally to Ur (+3 reaction) and look down upon the wretched Darklings (-2).

Quick NPCs

Caryx—vain
Chiryx—glutton
Geryx—bombastic
Seryx—reckless

Template, Stryx Warrior, 1st level

Languages: Northron +1.

Description: Distorted carrion-bird features; leathery wings with twenty-foot wingspan; horns; clawed appendages. Wears loincloth, leather harness, black iron bracers, pouch. Carries dagger (1 g.l.) and pole-hook (10 g.l.). Has a necklace of uncut semiprecious stones worth d10x5 g.l.

INT	0	PER	+3
WIL	0	CHA	-2
STR	+1	DEX	-2
CON	0	SPD	+6 in air/-1 on ground

Hit Points: 10

Attacks	CR	Damage
Dagger	-1	d6+1
Pole-Hook	-1	d10+1

Armor: None.

Skills: Barter -1, Coerce -1, Haggle, -1, Hunter/Gatherer +4, Interrogate -1, Scout (airborne) +4, Secondary Combat -1, Torture -1, Tribal Customs +1.

Special: Flight; Night Vision; detect carrion by scent at range of five miles.

Ur

A bunch of Ur stand nose to nose, arguing:

"Khek is no more a king than a clod of dirt, than a worm in the ground!" one of them says.

"Hah!" grunts another. "Soreg is less a king than the droppings of a screeching bird!"

"You are both fools," scoffs yet another. "You both give Soreg too much credit, and Khek has no more substance than the night yappings of rabid stink lizards. Neither is fit to nurse the blisters on the feet of Grajak's slaves!"

The Ur are indulging in their national pastime: disparaging opposing kings. If the PCs approach them and venture an opinion, the reaction of the Ur depends on the forms they've adopted. The Ur become quite offended if non-Ur disparage even the kings they themselves despise:

"What? You insult the honor of the Ur?"

Template, Ur Warlord, 1st level

Languages: Northron +1.

Description: Yellow-gray hide; black eyes with white pupils; bestial features; hair worn in triple or double topknots. Wears spiked black iron partial plate (500 g.l.); bracers; armbands; yaksha-hide loincloth, cloak, and boots; necklaces of fangs and claws; pouch. Carries Ur club (200 g.l.), stone war axe (10 g.l.), and dagger (1 g.l.). Has booty worth d6 x 100 g.l.

INT	-2	PER	0/+6	When reading emotions
WIL	0	CHA	0	
STR	+6	DEX	-2	
CON	+6	SPD	-2	

Hit Points: 26

Attacks	CR	Damage
Dagger	-1	d6+6
Ur club	-1	d12+6
War axe	-1	d20+6

Armor: Partial plate, 4 points.

Skills: Mounted Combat (Ogriphant) -1, Primary Combat -1, plus either Command +1 or Engineer (siege and fortifications) -1.

Special: Night Vision; read strong emotions at range of up to twenty feet.

Template, Ur Clan Shaman, 1st level

Languages: Northron +1.

Description: Yellow-gray hide; black eyes with white pupils; bestial features; shaven head. Wears yaksha-hide cloak, loincloth, and boots; necklaces of fangs and claws; pouch. Carries Ur club (200 g.l.), stone war axe (10 g.l.), and dagger (1 g.l.). Has booty worth d20 x 10 g.l.

INT	-1	PER	0/+6	When reading emotions
WIL	+4	CHA	0	
STR	+4	DEX	-3	
CON	+5	SPD	-1	

Hit Points: 21

Attacks	CR	Damage
Dagger	-1	d6+6
Ur club	-1	d12+6
War axe	-1	d20+6

Spells per Day: 1

Armor: None.

Altered State
0 Enter trance; see astral, invisible, ethereal, and hidden things.

Chant
0 Give +1 modifier to allies or levy -1 penalty to enemies on all rolls.

Commune With Spirit
0 Can see and speak with spiritforms.

Dreamwalker
0 Travel to Dream Dimension.

Fast Traveling
0 Travel at maximum speed without tiring.

Spirit Aura
0 Absorbs 4 points damage per level.

Spirit Barrier
0 Creates wall of spiritual force.

Spirit Bolt
0 Hurl d4 -damage-per-level energy bolt, with +1 damage per level to spiritforms.

Spirit Track
0 See spiritual traces left by passage of otherworldly creatures.

Totem Animal (ogriphant)
0 Assume ogriphant form.

Skills: Healer 0, Make Necromantic Fetish 0, Rudimentary Magic (shamanism and alchemy) 0, Secondary Combat -2.

Special: Night Vision; read strong emotions at range of up to twenty feet.

Unless the PCs quickly explain themselves, they're attacked by several Ur, who fight to subdue them and toss them outside their perimeter.

However, if an Ur is present, he may join in the insult match. PCs roll versus CHA (with any modifiers you choose for their cleverness or lack thereof) to see how admired their invective is. Those who do well can learn the latest Ur gossip—provided they pose as warlords or shamans of one of the three kings, just now assigned to the Tirshata's forces.

• *"Our warlord here is Vule. He is too subtle to be a truly great Ur, but he has won for us a position of power and respect here."*

• *"Once we have smashed the Seven Kingdoms, the Tirshata shall make Grajak the Overking of Urag. Destroying civilization is just an exercise for attacking the big question—who controls our land, the only important land in Talislanta."*

"Deluded pond scum! It is Soreg who shall claim the united throne!"

"You both suck alchemical waste! Khek shall sit on all three thrones!"

Reaction Modifiers

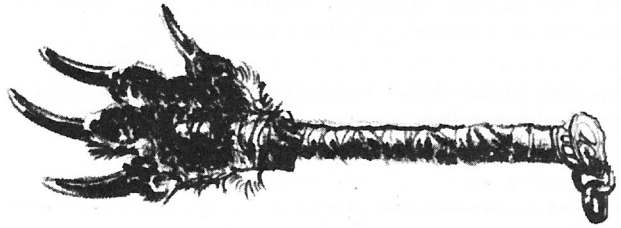
The following are modifiers to CHA and CHA-based rolls based on the forms the PCs have adopted. See p. 63 for the nuances of Ur feelings towards other races.

Araq	-3	**Beastmen**	-3
Chana Warriors	-4	**Chana witchfolk**	+2
Danelek	-2	**Darklings**	-4
Drukh	-3	**Harakin**	-1
Manra	-2	**Mondre Khan**	-2
Nagra	+2	**Stryx**	-3
Ur	+5*	**Yrmanian**	+2
Za	+3.		

*If the Ur in question claims to serve the same king, add an additional +2.

Quick NPCs

Trag—peevish
Urnar—psychotic
Vlandak—irascible
Vorag—histrionic



Yrmanians

As the PCs draw near to the Yrmanian area, a huge, damp-smelling Yrmanian approaches the tallest member of the party and delivers the speech in the Yrmanian culture section, p. 63. If the PC does kiss the Yrmanian, the group is escorted to a skullcap party. Although the Yrmanians don't expect the PCs to indulge, they are more comfortable with them if they do.

If the PCs do take skullcap, they must roll versus CON. A successful roll means that characters become irrational and experience a vivid hallucination: a powerful dream of being Sub-Men on the other side of a battle the PCs participated in, such as the Fall of Akmir. At the end of the hallucination, the PCs, in Sub-Men form, confront their normal forms—and kill them. A failed roll means that the characters become violent and act this dream out, attacking one another.

The Yrmanians are careful not to administer fatal doses of skullcap (see GB p. 196).

Before or after hallucinating, the PCs can learn the following from the Yrmanians:

• *"We are here because—because—beards are on fire, screaming, screaming, in leather armor, just can't—what was I saying?"*

• *"We are led by a giant bird, magic giant bird, she have no friends here, needs friends bad, she is very sad, turning into a saddle, everlasting."*

• *"We are here because of a dream. We see the Seven Kingdoms burning, and we know we will stay here if the Tirshata says not otherwise, for the river has started to flee."*

Reaction Modifiers

Yrmanians react randomly to each individual. Roll d10 for each Yrmanian's reaction to each PC. Odd numbers are negative modifiers; even numbers are positive.

Other modifiers: For PCs who ingest skullcap +5.

Quick NPCs

Bag—contemplative
Urg—alert
Yug—restless
Neg—denigrating

Template, Yrmanian Wildman/Wildwoman, 1st Level

Languages: Sign -5.

Description: Light brown skin; bestial features; simian build; hair worn in numerous braids. Wears animal-hide loincloth, arm and leg wrappings, plus, if female, rough hide vest and pouch. Carries singing axe (6 g.l.). Has semiprecious stones worth d10x10 g.l.

INT	-6	PER	-4
WIL	+6	CHA	-4
STR	+2	DEX	+3
CON	+4	SPD	+1

Hit Points: 18

Attacks	CR	Damage
Singing axe	+4	d8+2

Armor: None.

Skills: Herb Lore (skullcap only) -5, Hunter/Gatherer -3, Mountain Climbing +4, Secondary Combat +4, Tracking -4; some rare shaman types may have Healer -5, Secondary Magic (primitive enchantment) -5.

Special: None.

Za

A great crowd of Za have gathered in their encampment. They stand in a circle, watching as a metal scaffolding is erected in an area away from their tents. Then a tumbrel is hauled into the area, one bearing the corpses of slain Seven Kingdoms' soldiers, about five of them. The Za sling the corpses to the top of the scaffold so that they dangle head-first over the dirt. Then they put large clay pots under each body. A grinning Za approaches the bodies with a knife.

The PCs have just stumbled into an enactment of the Za blood-drinking ritual, feared across the land of Talislanta. When they are spotted by the Za, they are grabbed and pushed forward to the front of the circle. One of the jostlers cries:

"Here are more innocents to be introduced to the ways of the Tirshata!"

PCs posing as Za are spared this treatment, though they'll still be expected to participate in the ceremony later.

The Za leading the ceremony bleeds the corpses before the PCs' eyes and then brings them cups to drink from.

"Here, non-Za. Drink some courage so you can better smite our enemies."

If the PCs refuse to drink the blood, they'll find themselves on the receiving end of Za scorn—targets for thrown stones and rotten food, as well as kicks, punches, and the odd bite. The Za fight not to kill but to drive the PCs out of their territory.

If the PCs are willing to drink the blood, they learn the following:

Template, Za Raider, 1st Level

Languages: Common Talislan 0, Sign 0.

Description: Wrinkled, yellow-green skin; shaved skull; long, braided mustache. Wears loincloth, harness of studded land lizard hide, blade bracers (+4, g.l.). Carries whipsash (2 g.l.), Za broadsword (20 g.l.), horn short bow (5 g.l.) with quiver of 20 barbed arrows (5 s.p.).

INT	-1	PER	0
WIL	-1	CHA	0
STR	+2	DEX	0
CON	+4	SPD	0

Hit Points: 46

Attacks	CR	Damage
Short bow	+1	d8
Unarmed Combat	+1	3 points
Whipsash	+1	d6+2*
Za broadsword	+1	d10+2**

*On a partial success, the whipsash strikes the target for half damage, but does not entangle. On a full success, it does full damage and entangles a limb of the wielder's choice.

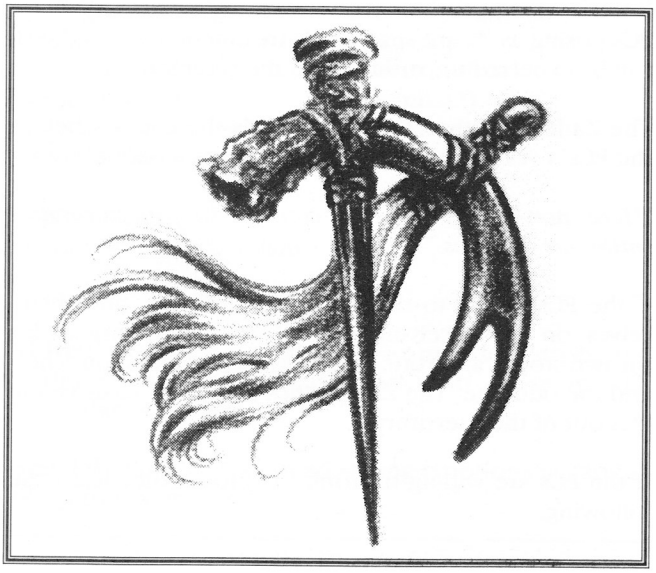
On a critical success, it entangles the limb, doubles damage, and brings the target down.

** All damage taken from this jagged blade heals at half the normal rate, whether healed magically or naturally.

Armor: None.

Skills: Appraise Treasure 0, Camouflage 0, Mounted Combat (graymane) +1, Nomadic Customs 0, Ride +1, Scout +1, Secondary Combat +1, Stalking +1, Tracking +1.

Special: None.



• *"The Tirshata is the greatest, most fearsome Za of all. He will help us slay many. This shall be the ultimate raid. Our names will strike terror forever."*

• *"Other tribes pretend to be justified in their war against the Seven Kingdoms. Although we too signed the treaties with the Archaens, giving us title to Talislanta, we care not. Were we in the wrong, we would still raid and kill. It is the Za way."*

• *"Unlike the other tribes, we do not deal with the Tirshata through an intermediary. He orders our chieftains directly."*

• *"The Tirshata does not walk amongst us. He is terror itself—to be familiar with us would be to dilute his ability to make us and others fear. He remains in his tent, devising new and more awful fates for those who stand in our way. Were we to disturb him, we would expect to die."*

Reaction Modifiers

The following are modifiers to CHA and CHA-based rolls based on the forms the PCs have adopted. See p. 69 for the nuances of Za feelings towards other races.

Araq	+3	**Beastmen**	+2
Chana	0	**Danelek**	-4
Darklings	-4	**Drukh**	0
Harakin	0	**Manra**	-2
Mondre Khan	+2	**Nagra**	-3
Stryx	0	**Ur**	+2
Yrmanian	-4	**Za**	+4

Quick NPCs

Zaicarr—sarcastic
Zaidavv—unyielding
Zairuss—paranoid
Zasainn—calculating

The Advisers

If they bother to spend the time getting acquainted with the various Sub-Men groups, the PCs discover facts crucial to a successful settlement with the Sub-Men. They'll know that all Sub-Men are not alike and learn of the existence of the Archaen treaties that give legitimacy to the Sub-Men's complaints.

They'll also have learned the names of the Tirshata's advisers and may wish to talk with them about getting an audience with the Tirshata.

If the PCs approach Merao, she is distant towards them. If the PCs are in the forms of Sub-Men she does not command, she refers them to the proper adviser. If the PC is a Harakin, she will speak frankly her doubts about the Tirshata, though she has no actual evidence that the Tirshata is a fake. She believes that the new Tirshata is the real one; given his abandonment of the Harakin leading up to the Sub-Men Wars (see p. 47), the Harakin can't fully trust him.

Bariz is willing to talk to any Sub-Men; he tries to inspire them with an eloquent description of a Talislanta where all of the cities are smoldering ruins, with the Quan Empire under Mondre Khan control. He dismisses any questions about the Tirshata, telling the PCs not to worry about things above their station.

Raaryx, enjoying her newfound power, is confident enough to chat with any Sub-Men who approach her. Since most in the camp are afraid to come near a Stryx necromancer, she thinks of the PCs as having potential as possible servants for her. Unlike the other advisers, she has few in the camp who are personally loyal to her. (The other Stryx are loyal to the Ur, not to a frightful necromancer.) Should the PCs manage to ingratiate themselves thoroughly enough, she appoints them her personal assistants. This gives them access to the Tirshata's area of the encampment; although they're ordered to remain outside the Tirshata's tent during meetings, PCs following Raaryx about notice that she often speaks to the Dhuna witches, particularly the woman, Desmane. If the PCs ask Raaryx about Desmane, she tells them not to make the mistake of thinking too much.

Foamspitter speaks to any who prostrate themselves before him in the boot-sniffing ritual. He is susceptible to flattery and not as calculating as the other leaders. Although initially uneasy, with enough verbal grease he becomes proud to recount his meetings with the Tirshata:

"He is a fierce Za, very fierce; he has a terrible swagger, a bloody look in his eyes. He will bring justice to our people, keep the Plains of Golarin off-limits to the civilized trash. Foamspitter is afraid of no one, but if I were afraid of someone, it would be the Tirshata. He keeps to himself, not showing his face when he doesn't need to, and keeps close counsel—just the five advisers and the witchfolk from Dhuna, who I suppose advise him on sorcerous matters. It was they who found the Hammer of Reckoning for him, I think."

First of Bone Ditch is not talkative. She merely hisses at non-Araq who approach her.

Vule is too tricky to be gulled into releasing information to mere foot soldiers and doesn't need any help or moral support from the PCs.

The Tirshata's Tent

Araq guards are always stationed along the crest of the ridge that the Tirshata's command area lies on. They are authorized to kill and eat anyone who seeks to enter the area without permission from one of the advisers. There are always at least a dozen Araq guards on duty. Use the template on p. 93; roll d4+4 for level. The single-minded Araq cannot be fooled or bribed. As they fight, they bellow for assistance, bringing d4 Sub-Men of various races coming to their aid per round. Roll d10 for level.

The Tirshata's tent is guarded night and day by shifts of six Mondre Khan personally loyal to Bariz. They have strict instructions not to let anyone near the Tirshata's

tent without permission. To determine level for each guard, roll d4+5; use the Mondre Khan template on p. 102. The guards are not corruptible, but they may be susceptible to a particularly clever trick. Roll versus INT for the guards if the PCs try subterfuge for access to the Tirshata, assigning modifiers as you see fit according to the likelihood of the success of the PCs' ploy.

Should the PCs somehow get access to the Tirshata's tent, they discover Zairat, who, being bereft of the soulgate gem, will cower before all who approach. Although he claims to be the Tirshata, he trembles as he speaks and seems almost paralyzed by fear. He calls immediately for the guards.

If the PCs somehow manage to slay Zairat, they then have to prove to the Sub-Men that the Tirshata is dead. This means getting his body and then displaying it to one of the larger, more influential Sub-Men groups such as the Za, Beastmen, Ur, or Mondre Khan. The word of the death of the Tirshata spreads throughout the camp quickly. Just as quickly, the Sub-Men decide that this must not have been the real Tirshata, or he wouldn't have been slain so easily. However, if the PCs reveal themselves as agents of the Seven Kingdoms, they are vigorously pursued by hundreds of angry Sub-Men. Whether or not the PCs survive, the Tirshata's army collapses (see *Aftermath*, p. 111).

"The Dhuna"

Another way to solve the mystery of the Tirshata is to discover the existence of the "Dhuna witchfolk" (actually the Rasmirins Desmane and Ormirian) and check them out. They stick to the Tirshata's command area, so the PCs must either talk to Foamspitter, get taken under Raaryx's wing, or get past the Araq guards in order to learn of their existence.

Desmane is too canny to talk to stray Sub-Men; she orders Bariz's Mondre Khan guards to remove them from the area. The Mondre Khan disarm the PCs and then proceed to rough them up. This incident is a tip-off: clever players ask themselves why the Mondre Khan follow orders from a Dhuna.

If the PCs track Desmane without approaching her and manage to elude her notice, they see her enter the Tirshata's tent without being challenged by the guards. They also see her carrying a locked box within which is the soulgate gem (p. 12), smiling at it in a sinister fashion. This box is reputed to carry magical elixirs, herbs, etc., used to detect poisons in the Tirshata's food, and it is absolutely forbidden that anyone should touch it and risk compromising its magic.

Ormirian is less guarded if the PCs approach him. If asked who he is, he says:

"Oh, we are just humble Dhuna, who know of the great injustices done your people. We are here merely to assist in whatever way we can."

However, if asked specific questions about Dhuna life or culture, Ormirian is unable to provide answers; he keeps his replies as vague as possible. This might also provide a clue that the PCs should keep an eye on the Dhuna. If they trail Ormirian, they see him approach Desmane as she's on her way to take the soulgate gem to the Tirshata, as above.

The Big Finish

This adventure is designed to be non-linear: that is, the bad guys react to the actions taken by the PCs. It is also not set up to be easy; it is quite possible for the PCs to fail and for the Seven Kingdoms to be overrun as a result. If you want to help them along, you can impose more structure on the story as the players make decisions.

In order to complete their mission successfully, the PCs must discover that the Tirshata is a fake and expose him. If they're clever enough to get access to the Tirshata's area (which can be accomplished in several ways, described above), you should put clues in their path to lead them to the soulgate gem and the Dhuna. If they just go charging about, aimlessly getting into fights, let them fail.

Once the PCs see the soulgate gem, you can create a big finish for the story. The Tirshata decides to speak to his forces *en masse*, announcing a new offensive against the Seven Kingdoms. Members of the different races are ordered to assemble in a tight knot around the Tirshata's command area, where he launches into a bloodthirsty speech. With the majority of the Grand Army occupied in Kasmir, the Tirshata announces a major offensive against Astar. Throughout the speech, he fingers the soulgate gem around his neck.

Make this final point of description often enough for the players to realize that the gem is crucial to the Tirshata somehow; they may then come to realize that the gem is contained in the Dhuna's mysterious box, especially if they have somehow seen him in his tent not wearing the gem. The best way to expose him then is to steal the soulgate gem, either by intercepting the Dhuna with the box containing it or by stealing the box from his tent. As soon as Zairat learns of the theft, he thinks he's been caught. He runs to his advisers and begins a babbling confession, begging for forgiveness. He goes on to blame the Rasmirins. In short order, the Mondre Khan Bariz leaps

upon him and, with the aid of some others, tears him to bits, ending Desmane's plot. The PCs witness the Rasmirins being attacked and killed as well. Although the Mondre Khan Bariz might have foreborn attacking and gone along with the plot, he is betrayed by his own bestial side, as are the other nearby Sub-Men. This impulsive savagery that is responsible for the Sub-Men's success to this point also brings them to their ultimate failure. This is the Heart of the Beast.

When the Tirshata is exposed, through this or another turn of events, there is a pause of an hour or so as the implications sink in. Then the more brutal Sub-Men begin to attack the others, and the weaker groups begin to flee the area. The PCs can witness many acts of terrible brutality—and may well be attacked themselves.

If they are especially clever, they may attempt, in the ensuing chaos, to make contacts with the more peaceful Landborne groups and try to make arrangements for later peace talks with the Seven Kingdoms. These talks could go a long way towards defusing the threat of the Landborne as a mass of disenfranchised peoples.

Aftermath

If PCs fail to expose the Tirshata, the Seven Kingdoms eventually fall to the Sub-Men. After the sack of Kasmir, united Ur clans attack Sindar. Durne is cut off by large-scale sabotage of the Underground Highway, which is contaminated by Ur alchemical weapons. The Tirshata's forces then lay siege to Cymril and march through Vardune. The Sub-Men avoid attacking Taz until the rest of the Seven Kingdoms have fallen. (Isolated, the Thralls are considered to be less of a threat.) Once this is done, they cross the Axis River, attacking Aaman, Zandu, and Arim. These events can form the backdrop for adventures in Talislanta for years.

However, if the first group of PCs fails, you can always set another group out to penetrate the mysteries of the Tirshata, though they won't have Tebo's shapechanging abilities to get them access to the camp this time.

If the PCs succeed in dispersing the Sub-Men, they can then convey to their leaders the information they learned about them—including the fact that their long-term grievances won't be addressed by the exposure of the false Tirshata. Should they succeed in this adventure, the PCs are hailed as saviors and have the opportunity to wield political influence. If they convince the leadership of the Seven Kingdoms to open peace negotiations with their nearby Sub-Men tribes, promising to honor their territories and to cease hostilities, a new era of peace in the region begins. But if they allow themselves to believe that the Sub-Men have been vanquished, they're leaving themselves open to the return of the real Tirshata, and this epic becomes merely a prelude to another, greater epic.

Glossary

beastsoul: In Mondre Khan belief, the negative half of the Mondre Khan dual soul.

Convocation: A meeting of representatives from all of the Stryx necromancer warrens in Urag.

Days of Unity: Za name for the Age of Confusion.

eereaah: Name for the leaders of a Stryx necromancer warren.

garu: Alpha leader of Beastmen pack; also, challenge ceremony.

gortok: Ur shaman term for the idols they worship, literally "head-talker."

Habooto: The hallucinatory unreal world some Yrmanians claim to access under the influence of skullcap.

harakta: Harakin forced-marriage raiding custom.

Landborne: The name that Sub-Men use to refer collectively to all their races. The Sub-Men coined the term during the Third Millennium, contemporary with their receiving the treaties from the Archaens that gave them title to the surface of the Talislantan continent.

Mansoul: In Mondre Khan belief, the positive half of their dual soul.

mrra-akk: Stryx necromancer term for non-Stryx, literally "future food."

nagus: Wands, made of ivory or bone, sculpted by Nagra and used to ward off malign spiritual entities.

Overking: The supreme ruler of all of Urag. It is a title to which all Ur males aspire, notwithstanding the controversy over whether the one Ur ever said to hold the position, Trok, ever actually did so, or even existed.

"the lost opportunity": A popular Mondre Khan name for the Tirshata, which refers to the original Tirshata's failure to make good on his promise to deliver the Mondre Khan from their beastsouls.

warren: Stryx necromancer community.

Yrman: Name some Yrmanians have to describe the world of Archaeus; also, their stone god.

zavas: Za blood-drinking ceremony.

Other terms relevant to this scenario can be found in the third edition *Talislanta Guidebook*.

Here are the relevant GB page numbers for Sub-Men descriptions: Araq p. 69, Beastmen p. 93, Chana p. 79, Danelek p. 70, Darklings p. 93, Drukh p. 77, Harakin p. 80, Manra p. 82, Mondre Khan p. 82, Nagra p. 83, Stryx pp. 94–95, Yrmanian p. 92, Za p. 74.

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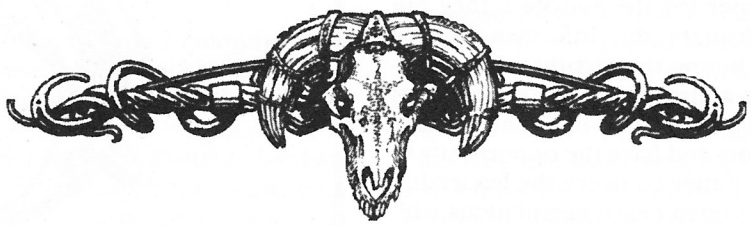

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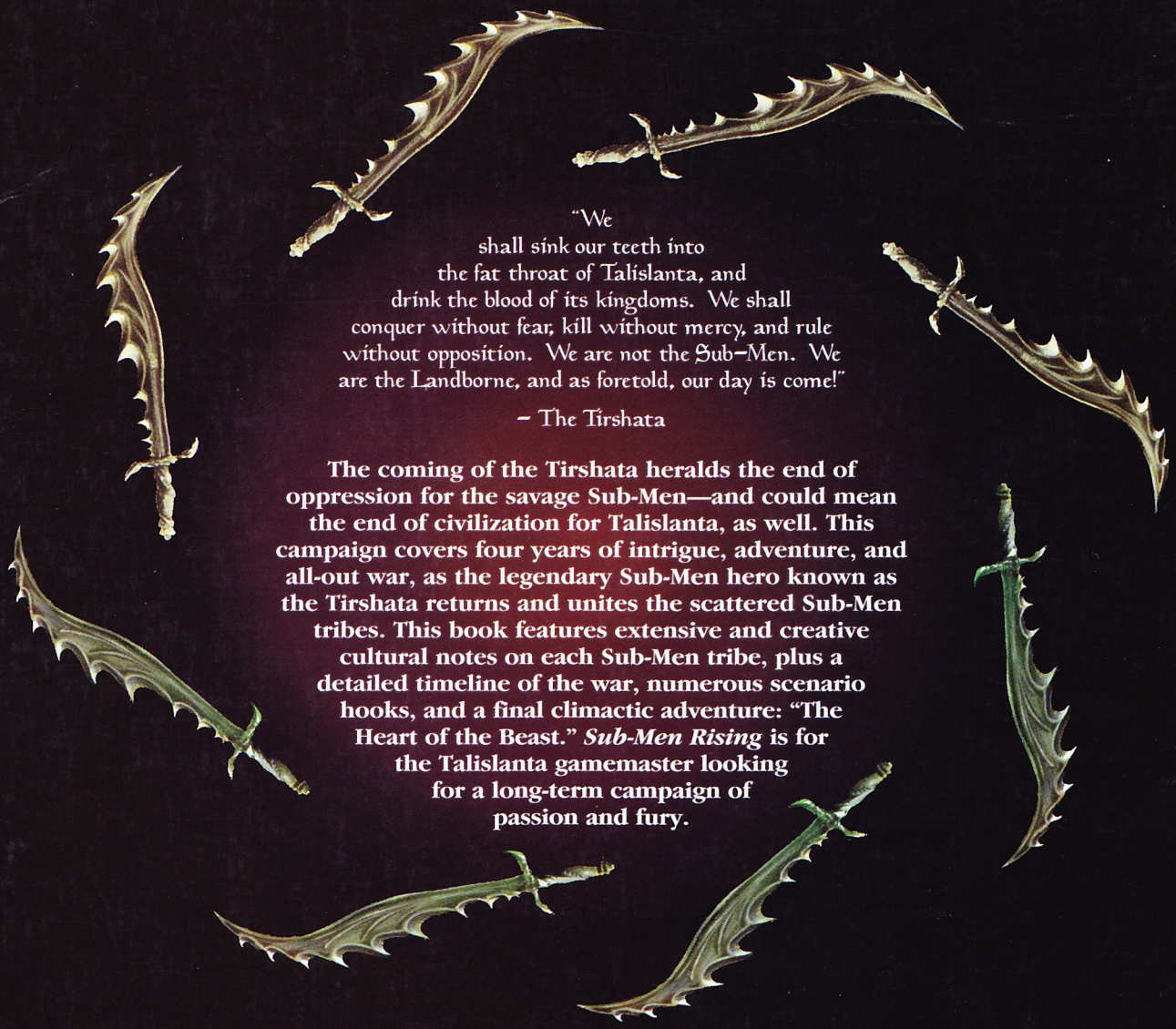
GOODBYE AND HELLO!

This is the last **Talislanta** book from Wizards of the Coast — **Talislanta** is now available from Daedalus Games instead. **Talislanta** was one of WotC's first product lines, and has been identified with our company since the start. But we're moving on to other games and game ideas, and passing the torch to a company as new as we were when we first began publishing **Talislanta**. Daedalus is very excited about the game and plans to do some terrific things in 1995 and beyond. *Sub-Men Rising* author Robin D. Laws is working on more books for the game, including a new edition of the rulebook. (You can contact Daedalus Games at 31 Burnhamill Place, Etobicoke, Ontario M9C 3S3, Canada.) We'd like to thank all the **Talislanta** fans who have followed our work for the game and told us how much they've enjoyed it. In gratitude for your support, we've taken a lot of extra time and effort to make *Sub-Men Rising* the best book we could. We hope you enjoy it, and continue enjoying Daedalus Games' **Talislanta** books for a long time to come.



"We
shall sink our teeth into
the fat throat of Talislanta, and
drink the blood of its kingdoms. We shall
conquer without fear, kill without mercy, and rule
without opposition. We are not the Sub-Men. We
are the Landborne, and as foretold, our day is come!"

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