

AGE OF TREASON

- THE IRON SIMULACRUM -



AGE OF TREASON

CORE RULEBOOK

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THE TASKAN EMPIRE

Welcome to the greatest empire in the world. A place where everyone can count themselves as being free. Slavery is no more. Aristocratic privilege is abolished. A citizen of the Taskan Empire can hold his head up high wherever he may go, knowing that anyone intent on doing them harm must reckon with the swift and terrible retribution of the Emperor. This Empire spans a territory 600 miles east to west, nearly 400 miles north to south and encompasses some six million souls. The Empire's subject allies and protectorates add another half as many people and almost as much territory again.

Taskan merchants know that the Emperor's guarantee makes their coin the most desirable in the world and the power of the Empire opens the door to every market they could wish to be in. Taskan scholars know that their literature and their histories are fast overtaking those of the Korantine civilisation, which once was the gold standard for high culture. The Empire's principal language (albeit not the Emperor's mother tongue) is now the lingua franca of intellectual pursuits. Taskan soldiers are confident that they are the best equipped, best trained, most bravely led and, above all, the most numerous military force anywhere in the world.

And yet treason is an ever-present danger. The lure of foreign gods, the lust for power, nostalgia for the old ways, all tempt the unwary citizen into errors that threaten the peace and stability of the Empire. Constant vigilance and a thought for all the dangers that the Empire keeps at bay; these are the best protection against disaster and strife.

A BRIEF HISTORY

This realm was built from scratch by Zygas Taga, an outcast in his own land who first made himself a bandit king, then a powerful warlord, before he carved himself an empire and became a god. He was born 252 years ago, the illegitimate son of a Jekkarene priestess. She fled into the badlands to have her child in order to escape punishment for her indiscretions and Zygas Taga was born to her in a shanty-town that also served as an outlaw stronghold. He grew up to become a chieftain of these outlaws and due to his remarkable successes the numbers of his band swelled to thousands. In time the fruits of his plunder allowed him to equip his followers to match any standing army of the day. His fame was such that kings and chieftains would send emissaries to him bringing tribute, offers of friendship and requests for military assistance. One day Zygas Taga accepted an invitation from the Tarsenian city of Zarina to aid them in their war against the powerful neighbouring state of Taskay. En route from the Jekkarid to Tarsenia, he briefly invested

the city of Sorandib in order to have its spoils and supplies – but was bought off by its king with promises of arcane secrets through which he would fulfil a glorious destiny: the first human in 500 years to achieve godhood.

Zygas Taga's apotheosis came one year later when, after entering the city of Taskay at the head of his army, the conquered inhabitants begged for his protection and offered sacrifice to his name. Zygas Taga acceded to their wishes and in the following days his deification was made official at a ritual held in the precincts of Thesh, the patron god of Taskay. The year in standard reckoning was 1003 and Zygas Taga was approaching his 40th birthday.

Over the next 17 years Zygas Taga campaigned continuously until he had brought the remaining Tarsenian city-states under his rule. Once this was achieved he retired from public life and shut himself up in his immense palace at Taskay. He left in his place a magical creature fashioned in his likeness by the artificers of Sorandib from pure white marble, in the idealised image of Zygas Taga – taken when he was young and in the prime of life, of course. This statue was animated with a fragment of his own soul, just as a sorcerer creates a familiar, and was sent out to be the unchanging, ever-beautiful and indestructible instrument of the Emperor's will, to lead his armies and hear petitions from his subjects. For more than a century this proved an effective means of control. The 'Marble Simulacrum' sent Taskan armies to the conquest of Yegusai and oversaw the settlement of Ralmyra and the creation of Further Tarsenia on the north side of the Gulf of Taskay. During its regency Korantis was swallowed by the ocean and the new 'Taskan' Empire became the world's paramount power. Hence in 1057, during the chaotic period ushered in by the loss of Korantis and the subsequent fracturing of the Korantine Empire, Zygas Taga was declared consort to the Jekkarene moon-goddess, an event through which the Jekkarenes won the protection of the Taskan army without submitting to direct Taskan rule.

However the Marble Simulacrum desired a genuine claim to the military glory that is such a vital credential for any ruler and insisted on personally achieving a conquest of his own devising. Zygas Taga, approving of the ambition to earn some laurels, indulged his factotum's desire. The expedition was a disaster. The Simulacrum was destroyed as the Taskans attempted to invade Djesmirket via the Korazoon desert. Led astray by treacherous guides, and driven on by a creature with no humanity through which to understand the suffering of its troops, an exhausted Taskan army was eventually pounced upon near the oasis of Araxa by the combined forces of Djesmir, Harran and the Soribisi and

suffered the first crushing defeat in its history. The Simulacrum was lost, his army routed, his bodyguard slaughtered, his pristine marble flesh broken into pieces and shared out among the victors for trophies. Even worse, the reputation of the Empire lay in ruins and widespread revolts broke out, even in the heartlands. A small cadre of generals held things together while everyone awaited the return of the divine Emperor to public life that never came. Within three years Zygas Taga presented the Empire with a second regent, this one made of iron.

The generals who had stayed loyal were made the Iron Simulacrum's chief lieutenants. These generals, now termed 'counts', formed a final college of Emperor-cult priests known as the 'Iron Companions' whose authority would trump all others. The Iron Simulacrum would be even more militarily aggressive than its predecessor.

The Age of the Iron Simulacrum has now lasted for nearly 80 years, during which time the Taskan Empire has conquered the Eskar horse-people and the Thennalt land of Camtri; seized Timolay and made the king of the Marangians, who resided there, an imperial subject; forced Morkesh into a one-sided alliance; and built its first ocean-going naval flotilla based at the Jekkarene port of Lyortha. Only one great reverse has been suffered during this regency: barbarians invaded Further Tarsenia and burnt the city of Ralmyra to the ground. Thousands of the Emperor's citizens were killed or carried off as slaves. Revenge was swift and terrible, yet perhaps not complete. The army found that the enemy's core war-chiefs had largely dispersed and could not pursue them into the distant and rugged lands where many former citizens now languish as slaves to barbarian masters. Ralmyra was rebuilt and new settlers found to replace those whom the imperial army had come too late to rescue.

The Empire is now at a turning point; its expansion has brought it ever more distant and longer borders in need of defence, yet it is still vigorous and capable of further expansion. There is still

no direct access to the Inner Ocean and however much Taskan merchants have the run of ports such as Lyortha in the Jekkarid and Largil in Morkesh, it is not the same as having your own merchant fleet to hunt down the riches of the fabled occident. Many now think that conflict is inevitable with the city-states of Korantia, which have without exception rejected demands for tribute. With the blessing of their ineffectual emperor, the Korantine city-states have formed a league that threatens war on any state that falters in its rejection of Taskan hegemony. The closest Korantine territory to Taskan lands is the city at Hilanistra, founded as the refuge for their Emperor and his regalia after the cataclysmic loss of the ancient capital.

THE EMPEROR

At over 250 years old and with over four million worshippers, Zygas Taga is possessed of both immense arcane knowledge and the power to use it. Yet all of this has taken its toll. He became aware that all was not well a few years after his apotheosis. He had begun to show signs that the divine power contained within was too much for his mortal frame, as he experienced lesions, eruptions, violent fits and involuntary, and sometimes, explosive emissions. A favourite concubine was hideously burned by his divine 'presence'.

It became increasingly difficult for the new Emperor to hide the side-effects. After a particularly ugly convulsion in which his limbs seemed temporarily turned inside out and his hair spontaneously combusted, Zygas Taga realised he must retire from public view before his loyal followers came to the conclusion that he was some sort of monster. All of this had come as a surprise to him; the chance for immortality handed to him by the old king of Sorandib came with a health warning but no clear instructions as to what to expect, other than the fact that becoming a god was only the first step on the way to finding a permanent place in the heavens. To actually cast aside any physical form for good, escaping the gravitational pull of the flesh – and do so without risk of being dragged down to the Many Hells – means accumulating significant power.



Of course there is no point being a god if no one worships you when you are gone and if all the other gods despise you for being weak. So Zygas Taga hurried along work to build a massive palace at Taskay, surrounded by the sea except for a narrow neck of land that connected it to the rest of the city. He contrived that it would also hold some 2,000 'body-slaves' – a term that persists still, despite the abolition of slavery within the Empire – all of whom would be constrained to stay there with him for life and never breathe a word to the outside world of the terrible, tortured and twisted abomination that he had become. A small elite group of acolytes would act as intermediaries between the palace and the city. Every year the people of Taskay volunteer their children to enter into this closed world and a selection is made from them to replenish the stock of imperial body slaves.

Zygas Taga continues to amass the power that he needs for his final ascent to heaven. Every new worshipper, whether born as a citizen of the Empire or brought into citizenship through conquest, provides another small increase in his power. While utterly self-absorbed in his ambitions, Zygas Taga has always known that the maintenance and increase of his following requires considerable work and self-sacrifice and the application of tyranny in small, populist doses. The rules of his cult are there to instil behaviours in his representatives and followers that put civic values and concern for the good of the people at the heart of their endeavours.

At some point he will, at last, take his leave of his people but, despite the wretched state of his existence, he must not rush things. Zygas Taga knows that he is playing for eternity and will delay the day until he is convinced there is not even the remotest chance of error. He can afford no mistakes, either in the transformation that must take place in himself, or in the creation of an enduring Empire to provide a stable pool of adherents to his worship for as long as any mortal society can be expected to.

TASKAN EMPEROR WORSHIP

Zygas Taga is worshipped at temples in every major city of the Empire. Every city and province has its own college of priests who not only see to the proper observance of rites and festivals honouring the deified Emperor but also form the local government administration. Each college is chaired by a chief priest, usually an accomplished sorcerer, who controls the magical means of communicating directly with the Emperor. The patriarch of the cult is the Iron Simulacrum. In attendance upon him are a college of priests who general the Taskan army and are known as the Iron Companions. The College of the Iron Companions has as its province the Taskan army and its members take precedence over those of all other colleges. The cult hierarchy is also responsible for ensuring that the traditional gods receive their proper worship by seeing that the major festivals are properly observed and temples maintained – and many Emperor-cult priests are also devotees of these other gods. The priests are chosen for expertise and skills that are considered useful for good government.

The rites of emperor worship unite the Empire and all who participate are counted among its citizens, deserving of the Emperor's protection, whatever their race or nationality.

Since the Emperor became husband of the Jekkarene goddess there has been a separate cult of Zygas Taga in the Jekkarid, which stresses his personal feats as a hero, warrior and ruler of men. The devotees of this sub-cult are a military caste of aristocrats, for whom virtue lies in emulation of Zygas' life before his apotheosis.

INITIATION (CITIZENSHIP)

All those born of citizen parents are expected to undergo initiation as soon as they come of age. As for outsiders, although individuals often join, most new adherents come via the submission of whole communities to Taskan rule; the alternatives for a conquered people are often undesirable. There is technically no slavery in the Taskan Empire, so if a slave arrives from abroad, either as a fugitive or accompanying his owner, and takes sanctuary at a Zygas Taga

temple, he can secure his freedom by asking for citizenship. Taskan law will uphold the former slave's claim to freedom against the slave's former master.

To become an initiate requires only that the candidate be freely 'willing' to make the required dedication of one point of POW. The examining priest will most likely exact a tribute of about 10 Taskeens in money or kind, or as much as he thinks the supplicant can afford to cover the paperwork involved in enrolling a new citizen. Some familiarity with the Tarsenian language is usually expected but this is frequently waived in the case of a mass initiation of conquered foreigners.

BENEFITS

The worshipper's benefits are the privileges of citizenship and his responsibilities are the obligations of a citizen. The ordinary citizen-initiate receives the Emperor's protection and full rights, whatever his social station, under the Taskan legal system. However he receives no blessings (Zygas Taga is not yet capable of conferring a supernatural Blessing) and does not gain access to Divine Magic; there is no benefit from dedicating more than the obligatory one point of POW, other than increasing the citizen's Pact score. No special skills are taught by the cult and none are proscribed. Citizens are not taught any magic by the cult but may learn any magic from other sources, so long as they are not discovered using it for ends that could be considered dangerous or treasonous.

OBLIGATIONS

A citizen must never act against the interests of the Empire and should always report any threats to the state to his priests. He can be called upon at any time to undertake some service to the state, in keeping with his abilities. The most usual service that is called for is enrolment in the militia but sometimes the government needs to conscript citizens for corvee labour.

Public worship is only ever held in the vicinity of consecrated temples and during the Emperor Days, two intercalated days that end one year and begin the next. At these events new citizens are enrolled and the citizenry are expected to put their Magic Points at the Emperor's disposal. Only the Iron Simulacrum leads public worship ceremonies outside of this sacred time, having both a portable consecrated temple and, in his own person, a direct channel to the Emperor.

ACOLYTES

Acolytes of the Emperor-cult are devoted citizens who have entered into a special relationship with the Emperor that will last even beyond death; instead of passing to one of the traditional hells they will enter a state of limbo in which they will remain until the Emperor ascends to heaven, at which point they will become the first colonists and leading citizens of whatever afterlife he manages to provide for his followers. In the meantime they provide cult spirits, serving the Emperor and the Empire even in death. Acolytes, identified by a gold ring bearing the Emperor's seal, are 'super-citizens' who exist outside the normal cult hierarchy and can, if seized for a crime, demand trial in front of the Simulacrum himself. They may count themselves as natives of any city of the Empire and participate in its public life, irrespective

of their place of birth. An Acolyte is effectively always on duty, expected to undertake any mission emanating from the Emperor or his regent at any time and carry out their orders with the utmost diligence and determination. To be chosen as an Acolyte usually requires that the candidate has completed a minimum of five years loyal service to the state in either military or civilian capacity and distinguished himself through some special service or deed. The Emperor does not like a large number of Acolytes to be in existence at any one time – there are a few dozen at most.

Those who are considered worthy for this special role in the Emperor's service will be sent together with prospective priests for instruction in the mysteries of the Emperor's journey to godhood, gaining the Cult Lore (Emperor-cult Theology) skill that they will use to cast Divine Magic. Once they have done so they may allocate their existing dedicated POW to Divine Magic as well as dedicating further POW for the purpose.

Acolytes are entitled to join the priesthood in communing with the Emperor in the inner sanctum of a Zygas Taga temple, enabling them to increase their Pact and POW dedications and gain access to Divine Magic and Gifts. This can take place at any time the local college of priests desires (usually on a fixed monthly basis with additional sessions by arrangement), except during the Emperor Days when the entire cult hierarchy is too busy dealing with public matters.

Acolytes maintain their own, very exclusive, funeral club. When one of their number dies they are cremated as is normal in Tarsenian custom but their ashes are interred within the Zygas Taga temple precincts rather than outside city limits in the communal necropolis. The Acolyte's spirit is bound to their cinerary urn with the condition that only a priest can command it and that it will be released upon the Emperor's ascension.

Acolytes sometimes retire from service. Their Pact remains and Gifts are retained but they can no longer learn or renew Divine Magic or accept further Gifts. In the unlikely circumstances that an Acolyte abandons Emperor-worship altogether or is excommunicated, Divine Magic is lost and Gifts withdrawn while the POW dedicated for them is lost permanently.

Being chosen as an Acolyte brings with it an automatic +10% Influence when within the borders of the Empire, or in any dealings with Taskan citizens. Acolytes are allied to, rather than subject to, the priests of the cult, receiving their orders from the Simulacrum and sometimes even from the Emperor himself. The responsibilities of priesthood – carrying with it the duties of public office – are usually too onerous to combine the roles; however a lapsed or resigned Acolyte may find themselves in the priesthood if they retain the Emperor's good favour.

Acolytes can be Inquisitors, Agents or Companions (soldiers). Their Pact with the Emperor gives them the tools they need to better serve him.

DIVINE MAGIC

Acolytes can acquire the following Divine Magic through their Pact: Absorption, Command Human, Command Salamander, Excommunication*, Extension, Find Citizen, Find Enemy, Shield,

True (Weapon).

*Excommunication is only available to Acolytes acting in the capacity of Inquisitor.

GIFTS

Acolytes may also use the POW they dedicate to the Emperor to acquire certain Gifts:

Mastery: For 1 POW the Acolyte can increase a skill in which they already have an ability of 50% or more to 90%, or by 25%, whichever is greater.

Enhancement: In return for a dedication of 2 POW the Acolyte receives a Gift of an increase of 1D3 in a chosen Characteristic.

In normal circumstances only one of each type of Gift will be granted; however in exceptional circumstances, or in preparation for exceptionally difficult or dangerous missions, additional Gifts may be permitted.

INQUISITORS

An Inquisitor is an Acolyte who has been detailed to undertake an Inquisition – that is, to investigate a suspected case of Treason. This horrible crime can take many forms from plotting against the Empire or the Emperor, to indulging in forbidden magics to do with divination or immortality. An Inquisitor is usually appointed for the purpose of a specific investigation or problem and is entitled to access the Excommunication spell – not least because it has the effect of stripping an individual of their citizenship and rendering them open to forms of interrogation and punishment to which citizens are immune. An Inquisitor has significant powers to requisition the resources he needs to pursue his investigation with the upmost vigour and usually is supported by a small posse of clerks, guards and experts.

AGENTS

An Agent is an Acolyte tasked with furthering the interests of the Empire in the border regions and provinces. While installed as administrators or diplomats, their main purpose is to warn of, or prevent, any possible incursion or threat. They usually have access to significant funds in order to build networks of informers or simply to buy off potentially hostile tribes. An Agent is looked to for the last word in political advice on matters of security in their area. Agents usually have some military experience and many of them raise small units of local followers to act as a body guard. Excellent command of local languages in their area of operations and understanding of local cultures are essential to their effectiveness.

COMPANIONS

A Companion is a military member of Acolyte rank – one of the Emperor's chosen men. These individuals are entrusted with the most dangerous missions and form small cadres of between four and six warriors willing to undertake daring ambushes, infiltrate enemy lines or assassinate enemy leaders. Older members usually take command of an army regiment (a 'Thousand') and if necessary will lead their men into battle from the front or stand by

them at the last ditch. These Acolytes aspire to join the ranks of the Iron Companions one day, should they survive long enough to retire into such a comparatively sedentary life.

PRIESTHOOD

The priests of the Emperor-cult are the administrators and governors of the Empire. In each province or district the priests are organised into a college, which forms an executive council that encompasses both civil and military administration. The high priest of a college is chosen personally by the Emperor, whose preference is usually for the most powerful sorcerer in the college. For a new priest to be appointed, there must be a vacancy in the collegiate caused by the death or retirement of a current member or the expansion of its number. A candidate should have previous experience of serving in some public capacity, for example as a judge, priest of a public cult or as an elected magistrate; and must have at least 75% in Influence and 50% in Education and Orate, as well as 100% or more in some field of expertise useful to the government. Individual colleges have their own preferences. In the capital high rank in the local cult of Thesh is a definite advantage, as is some connection to a family with old aristocratic pedigree even though such people were removed from the automatic right to rule by Zygas Taga himself; while in Pryjarna devotees of the god Basat are in the majority. If a candidate is to become a member of the Iron Companions an exemplary military record and experience of high command (with a Command skill in excess of 75%) is vital.

A Priest of the Emperor-cult gains an immediate and permanent increase in their SOC Characteristic to 16, or +1 if their SOC is already 16 or higher. Their Influence increases by 25% or up to their maximum. Membership of the College of Iron Companions, or becoming high priest of any college, brings a permanent increase to SOC 18 (or +1) and an additional gain in Influence of 25%.

SKILLS

A prospective priest will be given instruction in Cult Lore in preparation for their investiture. Subsequently they have all the resources of state at their disposal, so should they wish to have access to learning of any kind they have the means to acquire it; however priests of the Emperor-cult are very busy people and have precious little time to go to night school.

DIVINE MAGIC

In addition to those spells available to Acolytes, Zygas Taga's priests can access the following Divine spells:

Consecrate, **Contact Emperor**, Excommunication, **Power Sharing**.

CONTACT EMPEROR

Duration 15, Touch, Rank Priest

This is the only spell that can be cast through a temple's sacred mirror, which is hung in the inner sanctum of every Emperor-cult temple.

A casting of this spell through the mirror gives the user a percentage chance, of attracting the Emperor's attention, equal to the caster's Pact score, so that direct communication can take place. Contact Emperor is the Zygas Taga cult equivalent of Call (Deity), since Zygas Taga himself is still on the physical plane.

POWER SHARING

Area Special, Duration special, Rank High Priest

This rite is designed to allow members of a college to pool Magic Points, and even POW, in order to cast spells or create enchantments of great power and duration. The spell is cast within the inner sanctum of a Zygas Taga temple and can affect anyone within that space. The caster can co-opt one person present into his Power Sharing circle for every 10% of his Pact score. Unwilling participants (assuming they cannot flee the area of effect) can attempt to Resist the spell. The circle leader may draw on one point of POW from each participant subject to a second Resistance roll by any unwilling members and any number of personal (but not stored) Magic Points. The caster's Sorcery Manipulation skill is raised by the combined critical score of all the members.

The Power Sharing circle remains in place until cancelled by the leader or the circle is broken.

While the spell is active all of the participants are slaves to the leader and cannot perform independent actions. If the circle is forcibly broken in any way or if any spell casting or enchanting rolls are fumbled, all the participants must succeed in a Persistence test or be befuddled for 1D20 Combat Actions and all are reduced to 1 personal Magic Point.

CULT GRIMOIRES

The Emperor-cult makes many Sorcery Grimoires available to its Acolytes and Priests. The libraries of the Empire have a vast collection of magical literature including many rare and unique spells and once you reach the upper echelons of the Emperor-cult you have ready access to them. There is however a standard text that Emperor-cult priests are supposed to be familiar with.

The Blue Book is the standard Zygas Taga Priest's Grimoire and a copy typically contains the following spells:

Banish; Damage Resistance; Dominate Citizen; Enhance CHA; Intuition; Mystic Vision; Neutralise Magic; Protective Ward; Spell Resistance; Spirit Resistance; Worship Zygas Taga

The Black Book is the standard Inquisitor's Grimoire. It usually contains the following Sorcery spells:

Abjure Mercy; Dominate Citizen; Holdfast; Intuition; Mystic Vision; Neutralise Magic; Project Hearing; Project Vision; Treat Wounds; Wrack (burning)

The Red Book is the standard spell grimoire for Agents. It typically contains the following Sorcery spells:

Damage Resistance; Enhance CHA; Intuition; Sense (Assassin); Spell Resistance; Spirit Resistance

The Yellow Book is the standard spell grimoire made available to Companions and typically contains the following spells:

Abjure Rest; Damage Enhancement; Damage Resistance; Enhance CON; Enhance DEX; Enhance STR; Neutralise Magic; Treat Wounds

HISTORICAL TIMELINE

Year	Event
1	The Sun and Sky cults of Methalea go through a messy divorce. The Sun-King leaves Methalea with his followers and establishes a capital at Korantis. Those left behind become a matriarchal society – the Jekkarenes.
228	The King of Korantis declares himself Emperor of the Korantines.
465	Apotheosis of Tarsen, founder-hero of the Tarsenian race.
716	Korantine Empire reported to have planted colonies in Jandekot and Kipsiperan, across the Inner Ocean.
882	Foundation of the cult of Basat at Pryjarna.
964	Birth of Zygas Taga.
987	Outbreak of the Unification Wars in Tarsenia which rage on and off for the next 30 years.
1002	Zygas Taga makes a pact with the Muttine dynasty of Sorandib, guaranteeing their independence for as long as they hold the crown.
1003	Fall of Taskay; Zygas Taga declared a god.
1019	Fall of Zarina; Unification of Tarsenia completed.
1020	Zygas Taga retires behind the walls of his palace and is never seen again. Appearance of the Marble Simulacrum.
1055	The Inundation of Korantis. The Korantine capital is completely destroyed, however the court escapes to the mainland and lives in exile in Himela.
1057	Marriage of Zygas Taga to the Moon-Goddess Jekkara.
1086	Hilanistra founded by the Korantine Emperor as his new capital.
1120	Settlement of 'Further Tarsenia' and the foundation of the city of Ralmyra.
1122	Submission of Yegusai. Its people are granted partial independence in return for an unequal alliance in perpetuity.
1134	Marble Simulacrum destroyed at the Battle of Araxa.
1134	Burning of Haran by loyalist army under General Sharfang, which is later resettled by Tarsenian colonists.
1137	Appearance of the Iron Simulacrum.
1170	Conquest of Camtri, whose people take citizenship en masse.
1195	Further Tarsenia invaded by the Sheng and their allies, Ralmyra sacked.
1200	Capture of Bandaknar and submission of the Eskars.
1202	Relics of the Marble Simulacrum recovered.
1207	Submission of the Marangian king at Timolay.
1209	Korantine hero Kalacho of Agissene conquers Valos; foundation of the Korantine League at Bosippa.
1213	Morkesh acknowledges Taskan primacy and grants Taskan merchants favoured nations access to its ports.
1216	Current date.

ADVENTURER CREATION

In this chapter, detailed rules and guidance are provided for creating Adventurers who are born and bred in the Taskan Empire. Unless explicitly stated otherwise *Age of Treason* Adventurers are generated in accordance with the rules presented in the *Legend Core Rulebook*. The principal variations are:

- The addition of a Social Status (SOC) Characteristic to help describe an Adventurer's place in the society to which they belong, plus the addition or amendment of certain skills in which SOC plays a part.
- A cap applies to skills, limiting how far a skill can be progressed without magical or divine help. This cap is five times an Adventurer's Basic Percentage and is referred to as his *Aptitude*.
- Customised tables for Previous Experience are provided to reflect the opportunities available to Adventurers of various social classes and the specific nature of the setting.
- The Common Skills, Swim and Ride, are Advanced Skills in the *Age of Treason* setting. A new Common Skill, Rites (Own) is added to the list.
- Talents are introduced, through which Adventurers demonstrate a particular gift for a specific skill irrespective of the Characteristic scores that contribute to their Basic Percentage.
- Fewer Free Skill Points are awarded during Adventurer Creation. In general, skill ranges are lower than may be common in other settings. Skills in excess of 100% are rare and highly prized.

A GM is free to dispense with these setting-specific modifications if that is what suits his group; however the statistics of the NPCs and monsters detailed in *Age of Treason* should be adapted accordingly.

SOCIAL STATUS

Social Status (SOC) is a new Characteristic for use in the *Age of Treason* setting, generated on 3D6. On a practical level it sets an Adventurer's starting money and the professions available to them. It is also a Characteristic that it is possible to increase or decrease through play. Social Status is more than a matter of wealth and represents a whole range of things that define where an Adventurer sits within the society from which they come. An Adventurer from lowly origins who makes a name for himself may decide to try to

spend their winnings on a small business or farm – and in doing so they will raise their SOC score because these are highly respectable things to do. Sometimes the inability to escape the limitations of a low Social Status or the costs and responsibilities of a high status will be just the thing that drives an Adventurer to set out on the adventurous path. On the other hand if an Adventurer of good family abandons his Community connections and adopts the life of a wandering sell-sword, his SOC will very likely decrease. At Adventurer Creation, an Adventurer's SOC is that of the family from which they come and it is up to them to maintain and improve on it.

WHAT SOC MEANS

SOC 0–2

An Adventurer with a SOC lower than 3 is considered 'socially dead' and no-one respectable will have anything to do with him. Often this means that they are literally outlawed and anyone can do anything they like to them (including murder), without fear of intervention or retribution by the authorities. In the Taskan Empire this includes people who have been Excommunicated from the Emperor-cult because they are considered to be irredeemably Treasonous.

SOC 3–6

Anyone with SOC 3 or higher is regarded as a member of society, is entitled to seek citizenship and can count on whatever protection the legal system offers. If you are murdered, your killer can be brought to trial for the crime; if someone steals what little you have, you can seek redress.

The Taskan Empire is unusual in that it has effectively eliminated chattel slavery by making citizenship open to all and outlawing the subjection of one citizen by another. The poorest classes of citizens fill the vacuum in the labour force created by the absence of slaves, but of course prospective employers have no need or obligation to maintain them any longer than absolutely required. The Emperor needs worshippers and does not care how rich or poor they are, so he extends his support to these people and provides them with paid employment by commissioning public works that need their labour or by drafting them into the army. Sometimes, albeit irregularly and city-by-city, a charitable distribution of food or money will be made from state funds. In all other respects people at the bottom of the social scale still lead a very precarious existence and by their wits alone. They have little but the strength of their bodies to offer an employer or benefactor, work can be hard to find and seasonal; debt, destitution and starvation are always

just around the corner and many can find themselves reduced to begging in the streets or falling into crime.

SOC 7–9

An Adventurer with SOC 7 or greater can be deemed to have some sort of station in life because they are in regular employment. They may have a profession that is regarded as low status such as being in service. If they are farmers they are either tenants or have too little land to survive on without also selling their labour to a larger land holder; if artisans they have no business of their own but take a wage from someone else. At least in the Taskan Empire they are all free citizens – in many other places a high proportion of those filling such roles in society are slaves.

SOC 10–12

The largest section of Taskan society is made up of people who are still poor by most standards but have an independent livelihood – people with their own small businesses, land or livestock. In a reasonable year they will generate enough money to subsist on plus, perhaps, a little surplus to put by for a difficult year or allow some small extravagance such as paying out for a family wedding. They have to labour hard for their living of course, usually aided only by immediate family members and possibly casual labour in key seasons. At the upper end of this group they may be successful enough to have one or two full time employees.

In any society this social class is politically very important indeed. Whether they consider themselves downtrodden and poor and align themselves with those who are even worse off, or are happy and secure and align themselves with their social superiors, can be the making or breaking of a state.

In many foreign lands SOC 10 is the minimum social status at which an individual can claim any legal and political obligations and rights.

SOC 13–14

An Adventurer with SOC 13 or greater can be expected to have people outside their immediate family who depend on them for a living – servants, indentured workers and perhaps less fortunate members of their extended family. The most respected or sought-after professions such as doctors and priests exist in this category, as well as the local big shot who owns the biggest farm in the village. This is a key melting pot where those on their way up meet those on their way down and there may be some interesting conflicts between status and wealth. Nevertheless the chances are that people in this category still work for a living rather than live entirely off the labour of others, so they can be regarded as affluent but not rich.

SOC 15–16

From SOC 15 an Adventurer enjoys an income derived from the labour of others. They can be expected to have significant

land, livestock and business assets from which they draw income without actively working it themselves. In most cultures this is the minimum requirement for being regarded as a nobleman, given that to practice and hone the skills expected of someone of noble status – whether field sports, government, war, sorcery, literature or law – demands a significant amount of leisure time.

A family that has achieved or inherited this status usually expends considerable energy to maintain its status, including taking steps to avoid the division or erosion of their estates in passing them on to the next generation – which can result in lower ranked siblings being pushed towards some career in which they might build a new fortune for themselves.

An Adventurer born into this background often has real choices available to them – leisure to practise the aesthetic, magical or military arts, to travel and see the world.

SOC 17–18

An Adventurer with SOC 17 or greater is immensely privileged with serious resources at their disposal. The extent to which he makes a point of showing this off to their fellow citizens will depend on the social mores and political balance of their community – but they have the money and leisure time to make themselves arbiters of fashion or the clout to play a significant role in government of the state. A member of this group is likely to have a large number of non-family dependents and be looked to by an even larger number of people – villages in their home territory, inhabitants of their city district and so forth – as their natural leader even if he has no technical authority over them. Hence such an Adventurer or his family can easily form the core of a Faction.

SOC 19+

Above SOC 18 are those people who are the very apex of society, ranging from Kings (SOC 19) to Emperors (SOC 21). Few in number, they cannot be created through normal Adventurer Creation processes and if an Adventurer is ever to achieve such heights it will be through play. 21 is the maximum score for a human Adventurer and a SOC score higher than that is reserved for gods.

STARTING MONEY

Social status rather than culture or profession is used to determine how much money an Adventurer starts play with. In some cases they may even start in debt. Money is stated in Taskeens, the basic currency of the Taskan Empire, and one Taskeen is equivalent to one *Legend Silver Piece*.

A GM may allow that an Adventurer can gain access to the choice of previous experience professions in the category above their own by sacrificing one of their starting Hero Points and creating a credible back story.

SOC Score	Category	Available Professions	Starting Money
0	Anathema; public enemy/bugbear, accursed, assumed dead	N/A	N/A
1–2	Apostate; condemned prisoner, outlaw, excommunicated citizen	N/A	N/A
3	Debt prisoner, Destitute	Beggar	1D10 Taskeens, or pick any Profession and roll starting money as starting debt.
4–6	Itinerant and unskilled labour, debt bondsman, indentured labour, land-tied peasants, urban poor	Acrobat, Enforcer, Day Labourer, Deck Hand, Fence, Infantryman, Labourer, Marine, Prostitute, Robber, Rower, Sell-Sword, Skirmisher, Sneak Thief, Swindler	1D6 x 10 Taskeens
7–9	Skilled labour in regular employment, tenant farmers; cooks and valets and others in service, peddlers and other low status professions such as professional soldiers and sailors	Actor, Barkeep, Artillerist/Engineer, Courtesan, Farmer, Herdsman, Infantryman, Mercenary, Musician, Prostitute, Quack, Sailor, Sell-Sword, Skirmisher,	1D6 x 50 Taskeens
10–12	Farmers with their own land or flocks, self employed artisans	Apothecary, Artist, Artillerist/Engineer, Blacksmith, Caravan Master, Carpenter, Cavalryman, Commercial Agent, Courtesan, Craftsman, Cavalryman, Farmer, Herdsman, Hunter, Scribe, Sea Captain, Spell-Slave, Surgeon, Trader	1D6 x 100 Taskeens
13–14	Landowning farmers with hired workers or tenants, business owners, rentiers, elite artisans (goldsmiths, doctors, scribes and so on), traders, priests, professional soldiers (officers and elites), merchants	Apothecary, Artist, Builder, Commercial Agent, Courtesan, Craftsman, Doctor, Farmer, Navigator, Priest, Producer, Scribe, Sea Captain, Shipper, Trader	3D6 x 100 Taskeens
15–16	Minor or local nobility/gentry, senior priests, wealthy merchants, magistrates, local officials	Alchemist, Army Officer, Lawyer, Poet, Politician, Priest, Producer, Scholar, Wastrel	3D6 x 250 Taskeens
17–18	High ranking nobility, senior magistrates/officers of state, chief priests	Army Officer, Lawyer, Poet, Politician, Priest, Scholar, Wastrel	3D6 x 1000 Taskeens
19	Elected chief of state, Minor King, Prince	NA	N/A
20	Monarch	N/A	N/A
21	Emperor	N/A	N/A

IMPROVING YOUR SOC

The GM may allow Improvement Rolls to be spent to increase the SOC Characteristic but only if the Adventurer is also able to take appropriate action to improve their status – such as acquiring property, promotion in their military unit, cult or guild, or gaining fame and notoriety. Hence while the normal rules apply for Characteristic increases improvement to SOC should almost always be role-played through, even if in an abbreviated ‘metagame’. Unlike other Characteristics SOC cannot normally be affected by spells or disease; however it can be reduced by the choices an Adventurer makes.

PRETENDING TO BE SOMETHING YOU ARE NOT

Any Adventurer can try to pass themselves off as higher or lower status than they are. Depending on the situation, the GM should call for a Culture (Own) Skill Test to work out what is needed to

carry off the deception and Art (Acting), Disguise, Fast Talk or Influence Skill Tests to succeed in the deception, opposed by the Insight skill of those who are being deceived. If the Adventurer is trying to infiltrate a social category more than one step removed from their own background, a difficult (–20%) modifier should be applied, if two steps –40%, three steps –60%.

SOC IN A FOREIGN LAND

Social Status is culturally specific – once an Adventurer moves into a foreign environment they will be accorded a status based on how that specific foreign culture rates foreigners. An Adventurer who is washed up on a desert island and meets a native tribe with little or no contact with the outside world may find themselves promoted to high status and honoured with feasting, or demoted to food. If a foreign culture is familiar with an Adventurer’s own, they are likely to respect the status that the Adventurer has at home.

Diplomatic relations here play an important role and formal treaties between peoples will usually attempt to ensure that Social Status is observed across borders – for example that nobles are treated with due deference and that escaped slaves and outlaws are taken into custody and sent back to where they belong in chains.

SOC-BASED SKILLS

An Adventurer's SOC is an important component in certain skills. The most significant modification to the *Legend* rules is that 'Influence' is based on CHA+SOC. A new Education skill – which is a Cultural Background skill for Adventurers coming from a civilised culture, is based on INT+SOC. These skills are fully described in the next chapter.

CHARACTERISTICS

Standard Characteristics are generated through any of the methods detailed in the *Legend Core Rulebook* at the GM's preference. If the Assign method is used, GMs may prefer SOC to be rolled randomly up front, providing the first indication of what the Adventurer might be and then remaining Characteristics to be assigned as normal.

If using a points build method SOC should still be rolled randomly or the GM should determine the Adventurer's SOC in discussions with the players about what sort of party of Adventurers is desired.

CALCULATING ATTRIBUTES

Attributes are calculated in accordance with the *Legend Core Rulebook*.

COMMON SKILLS

There are some setting-specific changes to the Common Skills list. In *Age of Treason*, Ride and Swim are Advanced Skills. A Rites (Own) skill is added to reflect an Adventurer's familiarity with the native religion and rituals of their culture; sometimes this might be referred to as Piety. Unarmed is replaced by Brawl, a Combat Style to include use of impromptu weapons and knives as well as truly unarmed combat. The *Age of Treason* Common Skills are found on the table opposite.

TALENTS

A Talent is an innate ability to do certain things better than other people can, even if they have the same physical and mental strengths. Talent comes from the very particular way you are wired – or as a gift from the gods. While the gods may have it in them to bless anyone with a talent for anything, nature seems to limit itself to those skills rooted in an Adventurer's personality. Any Advanced or Common Skill for which INT, POW or CHA are one of the Characteristics used to determine the Basic Percentage can be the subject of a Talent. If an Adventurer has a Talent his Basic Percentage is immediately raised by 2D6. This increase also affects the maximum skill percentage that the Adventurer can achieve.

Athletics	STR+DEX
Brawl	STR+DEX
Brawn	STR+SIZ
Culture (Own)	INT x2
Dance	DEX+CHA
Drive	DEX+POW
Evade	DEX x2
Evaluate	INT+CHA
First Aid	INT+DEX
Influence	CHA+SOC
Insight	INT+POW
Lore (Regional)	INTx2
Perception	INT+POW
Persistence	POWx2
Resilience	CON x2
Rites (Own)	INT+CHA
Sing	CHA+POW
Sleight	DEX+CHA
Stealth	DEX+INT

DISCOVERING A TALENT

- A player may elect to trade one of the Adventurer's starting Hero Points for a Talent in a Common Skill.
- A player may trade a Hero Point at any time when their Adventurer first learns an Advanced Skill to take that Advanced Skill as a Talent.
- An Adventurer can acquire a Talent during play through a Divine Gift.
- An Adventurer can acquire a Talent through covert possession by certain spirits.

The maximum number of talents an Adventurer may have is equal to their CHA/5 (rounded up). An Adventurer can take Magical skills as a Talent but not the Pact skill.

GENIUS

An extreme talent is called Genius. An Adventurer can be deemed to be touched by genius when they have taken the same skill as a talent twice. Genius is represented by an increase of 1D6 to the Adventurer's Critical score in the skill in addition to the increase of 2D6 to their Basic Percentage. A skill in which an Adventurer shows Genius is counted as two of their total talents towards the maximum number.

APTITUDES

In the *Age of Treason* setting, skill increases are limited to a cap, which is referred to as the Adventurer's Aptitude. Their Aptitude is five times their Basic Percentage. While the Skill Competencies table in the *Legend Core Rulebook* provides a guide for what can be achieved at certain skill levels, an Adventurer's level of *technical* knowledge can be determined by their progress towards their

Aptitude. A teacher or mentor can continue to impart knowledge to students so long as they know less than he does – even if they can perform better in practice when using the skill concerned. Hence a teacher with an Aptitude of 100% and a skill of 75% can teach a student with an Aptitude of 160% and a skill of 100%.

An Adventurer cannot escape his limitations – except through magical enhancements and supernatural support.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

CULTURAL BACKGROUND

In this book the Taskan Empire is dealt with in some detail and so detailed Adventurer Creation information is provided for Taskan Adventurers and it is assumed that to begin with all Adventurers will hail from within its borders. The Cultural Background table provides standard skill bonuses for those coming from Tarsenia – the heartland of the Empire. Most Taskan Adventurers will be from this civilised culture shared by the major city states and for many people Taskan and Tarsenian are interchangeable terms.

PROFESSIONS

A wide selection of previous experience professions are detailed here for players to choose from. The Social Status table provides guidance for the careers that are available according to an Adventurer's SOC, however certain professions are entirely recruited on the basis of talent or commitment with no reference to an Adventurer's SOC because they simply demand a very high Aptitude – such as Sorcerer's Apprentice.

BEGGARS, THIEVES AND ROGUES

People who are full time criminals are few and far between, compared to those for whom crime is a side line. It is not bad training for being an Adventurer and like many Adventurers they are, in reality, people with no prospect of, or liking for, respectable paid employment. There is no minimum SOC requirement to be a

criminal; however anyone with a SOC of less than 3 is being actively sought by the authorities and anyone of SOC 7 or higher is only a part-time participant in the underworld and would take their Previous Experience skill bonuses from their legitimate day job.

BEGGAR

The very bottom of the social heap (SOC 3), beggars are a mix between citizens who are too unfit and unwell to take advantage of the work offered by the state and are trying to scrape by in between food handouts, and foreigners who are ineligible for state support who have washed up on the streets because they have failed to secure any sort of living.

ENFORCER

This Adventurer is someone else's hired muscle (typically SIZ 14+ and STR 12+) used to threaten and intimidate, punish with beatings and mutilations and ultimately to kill. An Enforcer leads a brutal existence. If he wants an easy life in which he does not have to exert himself too much, he needs to build up a tally of reputation-making violent acts. This encourages people to avoid a visit in the first place and his mere appearance on the scene is enough to make people cough up the information or money that he is there to collect.

FENCE

This is the man who a thief goes to in order to turn the goods he has stolen into cash. The fence will likely pay him a fraction of an item's true value, since he can only sell it on via specialist channels through which it may eventually re-emerge into the legitimate market. There is no law concerning receiving or dealing in stolen property in the Taskan Empire, however someone in possession of stolen goods is likely to be brought before the courts charged with their actual theft and any additional crimes (such as assault or murder) committed in the process.

ROBBER

The robber specialises in muggings, house-breaking and highway robbery, usually operating as part of a gang. They have to either hide their identities with great care or be prepared to kill their victims to prevent later identification. Robbers are regarded as

Common Skill Bonuses	Combat Styles	Advanced Skills	Starting Money
All Taskan Adventurers gain the following bonuses: +30% to <i>Culture (Taskan)</i> and <i>Lore (Tarsenia)</i> +20% to <i>Evaluate</i> +10% to <i>Persistence and Rites (Taskan)</i>	Taskan Adventurers choose one Combat Style from the following, and gain a +10% bonus: SOC 03–07: <i>Brawl, Knife Fighting, Sling</i> SOC 08–14: <i>Archery, Sidearm, Spear</i> SOC 15+: <i>Archery; Cloak and Dagger, Swordsmanship (Tarsenian School)</i>	Taskan Adventurers gain the following Advanced Skills: <i>Education</i> <i>Language (Taskan)</i> +50% <i>Pact (Zygag Taga)</i> , cost 1 POW In addition, civilised Adventurers choose two Advanced Skills from the following: <i>Art (any), Craft (any), Language (any), Lore (any), Mechanisms, Play Instrument, Ride, Streetwise, Swim</i>	Refer to the SOC table.

	Common Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	Magic
Beggar	Insight+10%, Resilience +10%, Sleight +10%	Fast Talk Streetwise	—
Enforcer	Brawl +10% Brawn +15%, Stealth +5%	Streetwise	—
Fence	Sidearm +10% or Knife Fighting +10% Culture (Own) +5%, Evaluate +15%,	Commerce, Fast Talk, Streetwise	—
Robber	Brawl +5%, Brawn +5%, Perception +5% Sleight +5%, Stealth +10%	Streetwise	—
Smuggler	Sidearm +10% Evaluate +10%, Lore (Regional) +15%, Sidearm +5%	Commerce Choose One: Boating, Lore (Regional, Other) Culture (Other), Fast Talk, Streetwise, Survival,	—
Sneak Thief	Evaluate +10%, Sleight +10%, Stealth +10%	Streetwise Choose One: Acrobatics, Disguise, Mechanisms	—
Swindler	Culture (Own) +5%, Evaluate +5% Sleight +10%	Fast Talk, Streetwise Choose One: Disguise, Gambling	—

one of the grave threats to law-abiding citizens and receive the choicest punishments at the hands of the executioner if caught. Adventurers are often taken for robbers, sometimes with good reason, and have to take care not to be rounded up and subjected to summary and brutal justice. In rural parts robbers are usually termed bandits – the player may want to substitute Streetwise for a +10% increase in Lore (Regional).

SMUGGLER

A merchant of sorts, a smuggler specialises in moving goods that are either restricted, banned completely or subject to taxation, avoiding the notice of government authorities. While classic smuggling involves restricted substances such as Fengoweed, the vast majority is simply an exercise in evasion of import duties and market levies.

SNEAK THIEF

The classic burglar, thief or cutpurse, who is intent on accomplishing their work through stealth and is long gone from the scene of the crime before the victim realises something is amiss. This sort of thief is likely to escape with mutilation or a heavy fine if caught so long as he manages not to hurt anyone.

SWINDLER

The swindler is an expert in parting a fool from his money whether by rigging a game of chance, selling a faulty or even non-existent product, coin clipping, passing counterfeit money or setting up an elaborate scam. A good swindler should have a CHA of at least 11.

SOLDIERS

Enlisting as a soldier is a way for prospective Adventurers to gather some very useful skills and experience. Most people who do so are from the lower classes and indeed the point of a professional army is not just to fight wars but also to provide employment for the lower classes and create a large pool of people whose primary loyalty is to the army and its leaders – ultimately the Emperor himself.

Every citizen has the chance to earn some military skills in the militia. But there are opportunities to learn soldiering, or something like it, in the private sector including going abroad to fight as a mercenary or hiring out as a private guard.

CAVALRYMAN

The elite of the army, trained to fight from horseback with both melee and ranged weapons. A more respectable trade than that of an infantryman, suitable for those with a SOC score of 9 to 12 plus the occasional ‘gentleman ranker’ from higher social classes. While this is the biggest demographic to recruit from, it is also one in which soldiering is an unlikely occupation. The key skills that have to be learned are how to fight and control the horse at the same time, and are typically only learned in the army.

ENGINEER/ARTILLERYMAN

The technical specialists in the Taskan army are drawn from the urban artisan class (SOC 9–12) and generally better paid than many of their comrades. Artillerists who get to take the Gunnery skill, used for black powder artillery, must also be initiates in

	Common Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	Magic
Cavalryman	Athletics +5%, Pick one of the following Combat Styles at +10% and one at +5%: Sidearm, Shield and Light Spear, Archery	Lore (Tactics and Drill), Mounted Combat, Ride	—
Engineer/Artilleryman	Brawn +5%, Sidearm +5%	Education, Engineering, Mechanisms Pick one Combat Style: Torsion Artillery, Gunnery	—
Infantryman	Athletics +5%, Brawn +5%, Resilience +5% Ashkorian Pike +15%, Archery + 5%, Sidearm +5%	Lore (Tactics and Drill)	—
Marine	Athletics +5%, Evade +5% Resilience +5%, Archery +10%, Sidearm and Shield +5%	Boating, Lore (Tactics and Drill)	—
Mercenary	Athletics +5%, Brawn +5%, Evade +5%, Resilience +5% Pick any two combat styles receiving both at +10%	Lore (Tactics and Drill) or Culture (Other)	—
Military Magician	First Aid +10%, Persistence +5%, Rites (Own) +10% Sidearm + 5%	—	Military Grimoire, Sorcery Manipulation
Militiaman	First Aid +5%, Perception +5%, Persistence +5%, Resilience +5% Combat Styles: Spear and Shield +15%, and Sidearm +5% or Archery +5%	Lore (Tactics and Drill)	—
Sell-Sword	Athletics +5%, Brawn +5%, Evade +5%, Sleight +5% Brawl +5% Pick one Combat Style from the following at +10% and another one at +5%: Maul, Sidearm, Swordsmanship (Tarsenian School), Crossbow	Pick one : Culture (Other), Lore (Regional), Streetwise	—
Skirmisher	Athletics +10%, Evade +10% Pick two Combat Styles and gain 10% in each from: Targeteer, Sidearm and Shield, Spear and Shield, Archery	Lore (Tactics and Drill)	—

the cult of Thesh and members of The Unconquerable Heroes of Taskay.

INFANTRYMAN

The regular professional foot-soldier, who in the Taskan army is armed with a long-handled, long-bladed spear known as the Ashkorian Pike. There are always men detailed to provide missile fire to cover the unit, so a familiarity with archery is also part of the training. These troops tend to be well armoured and dispense with the shield other than a small fixed shield attached to the arm that provides some cover when in formation. Those who sign on as professional soldiers usually have nowhere else to go and are generally from the poorer classes with a SOC between 4 and 9.

MILITIAMAN

Every citizen of the Taskan Empire must be prepared to do militia service between the ages of 16 and 40. In normal circumstances each village, town or city ward should, when called upon to do so, furnish a fixed number of men, and sometimes women, who are ready to serve outside the borders of their home city. While the normal call-up is for two years, an Adventurer who takes Militiaman as previous experience is someone who has volunteered for additional service as a junior officer (NCO).

MARINE

A small number of soldiers in the professional army are designated to serve with the fleet and have some specialised skills. Their job is to fight ship-to-ship at sea, or, if the fleet has landed somewhere and the sailors have been put ashore to serve as light infantry, as is common, the marines will provide the front-line fighters. Marines tend to come from slightly poorer backgrounds than regular line infantry, SOC 4–7 is normal.

MERCENARY

The mercenaries in government service are basically foreigners recruited as much for providing some variety to the arms, equipment and capabilities as to bolster manpower. A Taskan who has served as a mercenary has probably done so in a foreign place. Taskans who follow the mercenary path are not exactly respectable but they have to be sufficiently well off (SOC 7–9) to provide their own basic kit, at least to start with.

MILITARY MAGICIAN

These men are trained to support their unit with sorcery enhancements and sometimes with magical healing. They are trained in both the relevant Military Grimoire and Spell Manipulation. They can come from any social class, as the most important criteria for recruitment are high INT and POW scores and the army does not care who has them. Given the number of men the army has to choose from, a combined INT and POW of 30 is usually the threshold for acceptance.

A typical Military Grimoire contains 1D6+3 spells such as: Abjure Food, Abjure Rest, Abjure Water; Damage Enhancement, Damage Resistance, Form/Set Metal, Form/Set Leather, Form/Set Wood, Spell Resistance, Treat Wounds. A beginning Adventurer would have learned 1D4 spells.

SELL-SWORD

These are the private bodyguards and henchmen of those who need such things. They are not used to military discipline or tactics but they are much more at home than your average soldier around civilians and tend to have Streetwise. They also tend to be low class, considered by many to be little better than thieves. SOC 6–8.



SKIRMISHER

Often regarded as elite troops, skirmishers are light infantry who exchange missiles with the enemy, sometimes dash in to hand-to-hand combat and are often tasked with ambushes, scouting and other special missions. Their mode of fighting gives them the best chance of their individual prowess on the field being noted by their commander. Regular soldiers tend to be recruited from the lower end of the social scale, with a SOC no higher than 9. Nevertheless the recruiters do expect candidates to be in good physical condition.

BREAKING THE MILITARY OATH

Those who enlist in the regular army do so for a very long time. The only way out before your 20-year contract is up is to get a Major Wound and be invalided out, buy yourself out, earn a dishonourable discharge or get yourself killed. If a player wishes their Adventurer to have previous experience from a regular army unit (Cavalryman, Engineer/Artilleryman, Infantryman, Marine, Military Magician, Skirmisher) then the manner in which they left the army before their 20 years were up needs to be agreed with the Game Master. Some suggestions:

- The Adventurer has bought themselves out of their army contract, at the cost of all their starting money and possibly a significant loan that they need to find the means to repay.
- The Adventurer has been terribly injured in combat and invalided out. The effect of the injury is for agreement between Game Master and player with an eye for good role playing opportunities but it should include a penalty to a specific skill or reduction of an attribute.
- The Adventurer has been able to leave early, thanks to surviving five years in a Machank battalion, winning a military award or striking it lucky with booty. The Adventurer exits the army without penalty for 1 Hero Point, or with an additional 2D6 x 100 Taskeens in loot for 2 Hero Points.

THE TASKAN CITIZEN MILITIA

An annual levy is conducted in the spring at the chief city of each region or province. All those who have served their time in the ranks of the militia, but have nevertheless volunteered for duty, are invited to serve as corporals and sergeants on bonus pay with camp privileges. They will help to train and lead the raw recruits.

Militia units serve right across the Empire, often on garrison duty but also to bolster the field army when it is operating in the same region. Once called up, militiamen serve for two years and after that time remain liable for compulsory mobilisation in times of emergency and by special decree. If called to form for battle without the presence of regular army units, the militia are usually very short on cavalry and their magical defences are entirely ad hoc.

Communities outfit their militia along traditional lines, which in the heartland means with spear and a shield that provides excellent protection from missiles. Usually one man in eight is equipped with a bow – a rather lower ratio than in the regular army – except in Ralmyra where bows are the norm; in Zarina where citizens of a certain property qualification must equip themselves with a horse; and in Tarsang where the poorest citizens regularly serve but equip themselves with no more than a sling.

SAILORS AND SEAMEN

The Taskan Empire's sailors have limited horizons – the sea they sail is essentially a Taskan lake and so their trade does not take them to exotic foreign lands or peoples – just between Taskan cities. A Taskan sailor or sea-captain's Shiphandling skill is immediately penalised if he tries his luck on the open Ocean, by –20%, until he has spent two Improvement Rolls learning to cope with the very different conditions.

DECK HAND OR ROWER

A suitable employment for men of the lowest classes (SOC 6 or lower), unskilled labour bringing their brawn to handle cargos and pull at the oars.

NAVIGATOR

The most heavily qualified member of a ship's crew (SOC12+) and while this would be an essential role if on open ocean, most Taskan ships go without on the assumption that they are simply

plying the same course between two ports over and over again, or the ship-owners will pay for a navigator to prepare instructions to the captain in advance of the voyage if otherwise. A Navigator knows how to prepare, read and plot a position on a chart rather than just look out for known landmarks and can read the skies at night.

SAILOR

A skilled worker (SOC 7–9), who knows how to handle the ship for routine procedures.

SEA CAPTAIN

A professional man with a highly responsible job. A sea captain is usually from the artisanal classes (SOC 10–14) and he should be able to read (Education 25% or higher). Those who are employed as ship's captain, even in an apprentice capacity, are usually hand selected by the ship's owner. Very few captains own their own ship and the majority are employed by individual merchants who own a vessel or by one of the shipping corporations based in Tarsang.

	Common Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	Magic
Deck Hand or Rower	Athletics +10%, Brawn +10%, Resilience +10%	Boating, Swim	—
Navigator	Lore (Regional) +20%	Art (Cartography), Education, Lore (Navigation)	—
Sailor	Athletics +10%, Brawn +5%, Resilience +5%	Boating, Shiphandling <i>or</i> Craft (Carpenter), Swim	—
Sea Captain	Influence +5%, Lore (Regional) +5%	Boating, Shiphandling x2 (gain Shiphandling at Basic Percentage +10%), Swim	—

RUSTICS

The majority of the population lives out in the countryside in villages and small towns. Most of these people will be involved in agriculture in some way, as even craftsmen will likely have a small plot of land or lend a hand at harvest time.

BLACKSMITH

The village blacksmith is one of the essential amenities for a civilised community – without him there is no ready access to metal tools, ploughshares and the like. It is therefore a high status (SOC 10–12) profession and invariably runs in the family.

CARPENTER

Just like the blacksmith, the carpenter is a very necessary member of a rural community. Similarly a SOC 10–12 profession.

DAY LABOURER

In a society where slavery is outlawed for citizens there is a great deal of need for casual labour on the estates of wealthy landowners and a great many people who need the work. Day labourers (SOC 3–6) may in fact be in almost full time employment but most are forced to travel from village-to-village looking for work and somewhere to pitch their tent or build a hut.

FARMER

The backbone of Tarsenian society is the farmer, someone who owns or rents their own plot of land and grows enough food to

sustain their family and still have a surplus to take to market. Most Taskan farmers (SOC 10–12) would love to have a little arable, a little orchard, a vegetable garden and some grazing for a few goats, a cow or some sheep. That is the idealised version – the reality is that despite the redistribution of land that took place in the early years of the Empire, many work for Producers (see under Merchants) who own extensive estates and generate large quantities of produce as a business. These farmers (SOC 7–9) essentially trade their labour on the estate for tenancy of the land on which their family subsists.

HERDSMAN

Whether tending the army's horse herds on the Little Kitan or shepherding flocks of sheep between the seasonal pastures, herdsman live rugged outdoor lives and it is their way of life, rather than that of sedentary farmers, whom the upper classes of Tarsenia like to romanticise. Herdsmen may have their own substantial flock or herd of animals (SOC 10–12) or they may mix a few of their own animals with the large flock they manage for some wealthy individual or estate.

HUNTER

Long ago the Emperor decreed that any citizen may hunt wild animals on any land within the Empire, putting an end to generations of aristocratic monopoly over certain hunting grounds or quarry. Hunting is a well regarded profession (SOC 10–12). A full time hunter trades meat and pelts for the necessities of life but as an unintended consequence of the Emperor's decree sometimes must travel significant distances to find abundant sources of game.

	Common Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	Magic
Blacksmith	Brawn +10%, Evaluate +5%, Influence +5%, Resilience +10%	Craft (Blacksmith) Select One Craft (Other), Mechanisms	—
Carpenter	Drive +10% Evaluate +10%, Influence +5%, Persistence +5%,	Craft (Carpenter) Select One Craft (Other) Engineering	—
Day Labourer	Athletics +10%, Brawn +15%, Drive +10%, Lore (Regional) +5%, Resilience +10%		—
Farmer	Brawn +5%, Lore (Regional) +10%, Persistence +5% Resilience +10%	Lore (Agriculture), Lore (Animal)	—
Herdsman	Lore (Regional) +10%, Perception +5%, Resilience +5%	Craft (Butchery), Lore (Animal)	—
	Sling +10%		
Hunter	Athletics +5%, Lore (Regional) +15%, Stealth +10%	Craft (Butchery)	—

Choose **one** Combat Style for +10%:
Archery, Light Spear, Sling

ESSENTIAL SERVICES

In the cities of the Taskan Empire you can find people from all sorts of specialist trades that rustics might encounter only on their occasional visits or perhaps when city folk come out to the countryside for a big market or festival. Most of these roles are considered low status because they depend on being employed by others to even exist, let alone earn a living. Nevertheless without such people the city would be a very different place – the following selection of Adventurer careers provide some flavour of what a struggling Adventurer from the lower classes may have been doing.

ACROBAT

Every acrobat needs a trademark trick and these are secrets closely guarded to ensure there is no direct competition on the same circuit (at least on a city level). Most performances are simply in the street like modern buskers, with a coin collection after each performance but, from time-to-time a wealthy patron might engage performers to entertain his guests at home.

ACTOR

Actors exist in the same category as regular street performers (SOC 7–9), the only thing that sets them apart is usually the ability to read and write (Education 25%+), which is important when you have lines to learn or when some wealthy patron is checking you are word perfect when reciting his favourite literature. Tarsenia does not have much of a theatrical tradition, and aside from being

hired to perform a fixed routine as part of a religious festival, Actors mostly make their living by reciting poetry and if they cannot get that sort of work, as clowns.

BARKEEP

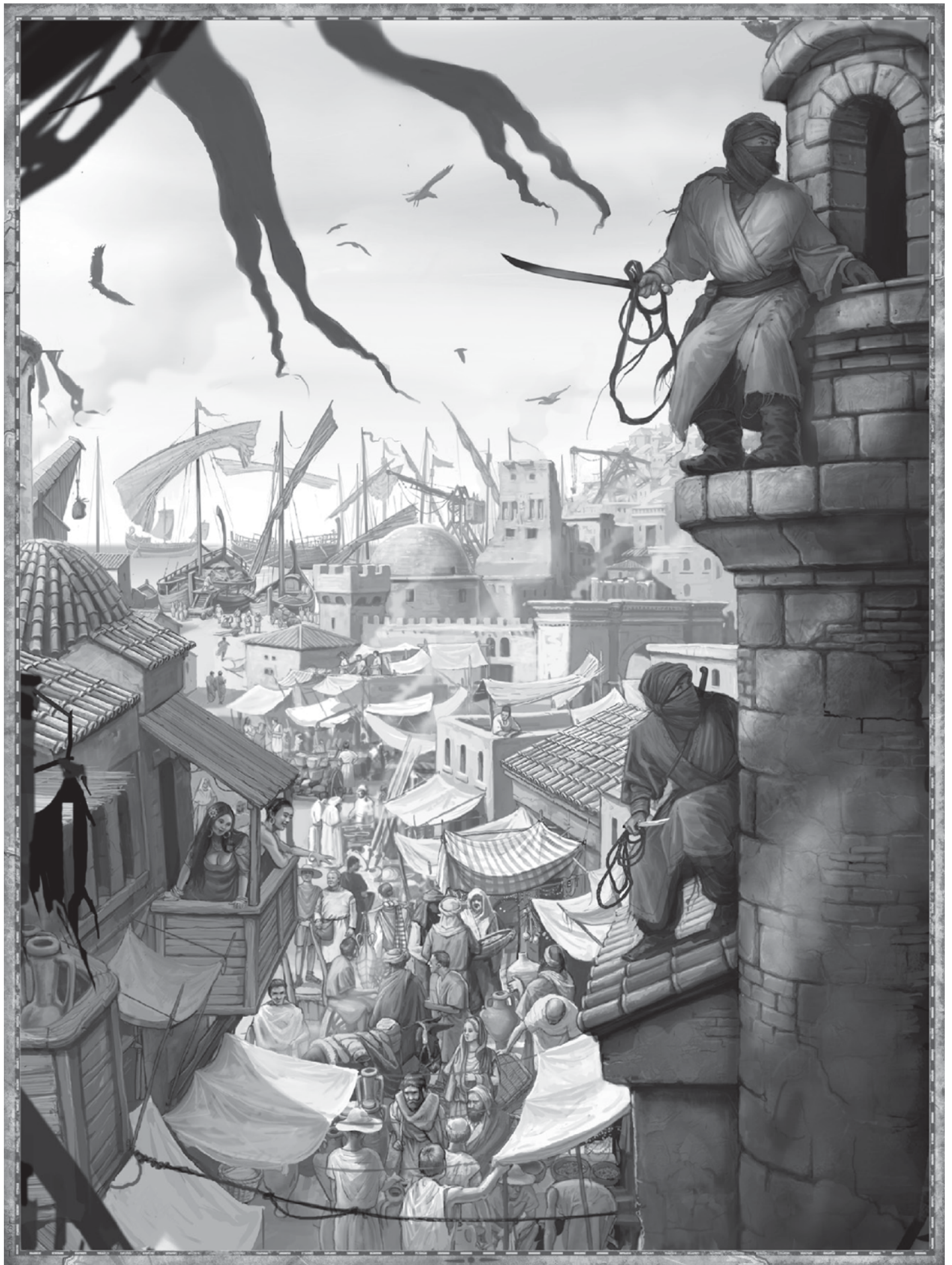
Keeping a bar is a fairly low-life profession (SOC 7–9), certainly down the rankings from someone who manages an inn or can claim to be a restaurateur.

COURTESAN

A courtesan is a form of prostitute who is paid or maintained as a regular companion and with whom their patron is often all too willing to be seen in public. Bedroom skills are not enough for a courtesan, who also needs to be proficient in wider social intercourse. Courtesans may be male or female, however the male variety generally have to observe a much tighter range of social rules about who they consort with, where and when. A courtesan usually comes from the same class as a common prostitute (SOC 4–9), however with a minimum CHA of 13 and the sacrifice of one of their starting Hero Points, is deemed to have got lucky and secured a single patron. Roll 1D6 and add it to the Adventurer's SOC and assume that his or her patron has a SOC 3 points higher. The additional points are lost if the courtesan loses her patron.

A Courtesan always has a bonus to their Influence skill of the patron's critical Influence score.

	Common Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	Magic
Acrobat	Athletics +10%, Brawn +10%, Dance +10%	Acrobatics x2	—
Actor	Influence +10%, Insight +10%	Art (Acting) Choose two : Disguise, Education, Fast Talk	—
Barkeep	Culture (own) +10%, Evaluate +10%, Insight +10%	Commerce, Streetwise	—
Courtesan	Culture (Own) +10%, Dance +10%, Influence +10%, Insight +10%,	Seduction	—
Cultist/Praise Singer	Influence +5%, Sing +10%, Rites (Own) +25%	—	Pact (Specific Deity)
Labourer/Porter	Brawn +25%, Drive +10%, Resilience +15%,	—	—
Musician	Dance <i>or</i> Sing +10%, Persistence +10%	Lore (Music), Play (Instrument) x2	—
Prostitute	Dance +10%, Influence +5%, Insight +10%, Persistence +5%, Resilience +10%	Seduction	—
Quack	Evaluate +10%,	Commerce, Fast Talk Choose two Lore (Poisons), Lore (Remedies), Streetwise	—
Spell Slave	First Aid +5%, Persistence +5%	Craft (Any), Education	Family Grimoire, Sorcery Manipulation



CULTIST/PRAISE SINGER

This Adventurer actually works as an employee of a cult and probably helps to look after cult property – such as a shrine – or serves as an attendant to the cult priests and officials. A cultist can come from any social background, since it tends to be personal motivation rather than economic need that drives them to take full time work on behalf of the cult.

LABOURER/PORTER

Work in the cities for the unskilled (SOC 4–6) is chiefly to do with labouring on public works – cleaning and repairing sewers, shifting building materials, clearing rubble, digging holes; in short providing the necessary muscle power that other cultures use slaves for. When there is not a public project on the go – and such things are specifically designed to employ the unemployed – they will hang around wherever they think they may be able to pick up portering work.

MUSICIAN

Professional musicians (i.e. people who actually accept pay for their time and effort) are regarded as fairly low down the social hierarchy (SOC 7–9) compared to those who do it as a pass-time. Professionals spurn the zither and pipes often carried by ordinary folk as a diversion and take up lyres and flutes, drums and horns.

PROSTITUTES

At the start of their career, prostitutes are as likely to be boys as girls – however trade for male prostitutes dries up as they get into their 20s whereas their female counterparts can carry on regardless. Prostitutes come from social classes who depend on others for their employment (SOC 3–9), however those with a CHA of 13 or more may eventually get to call themselves Courtesans.

QUACK

A Quack is someone who sells prophylactic medicines, remedies and cures over the counter. Effectively he is a peddler with extremely limited medical knowledge, who services clients who have probably diagnosed themselves. In most circumstances a quack, if useful at all, can only provide some relief from the conditions a client suffers from, not deal with their cause. A wise individual will treat anything they buy from a quack as suspect. Quacks are specialist Traders. A Quack cannot have a SOC below 5 or over 11.

SPELL SLAVE

Not actually a slave in the Taskan Empire but the name sticks because the practice of having a servant on hand in a wealthy household to cast useful spells comes from Assabia, where such people definitely are slaves. A Spell Slave is usually someone with a minimum INT 14, POW 12 and SOC 7. They are well paid and highly sought after servants. However as a Spell Slave is in 'service', the same as a valet or children's tutor, it is not a suitable profession for those of SOC 10 or higher. A Spell Slave may be a failed sorcerer's apprentice or trained up within the wealthy household

they serve. It is highly unusual for a Spell-Slave to be permitted further instruction in Sorcery Manipulation if their skill reaches 50% as this is regarded as the realm of genuine sorcerers.

ARTISANS

APOTHECARY

An Apothecary is someone who can make up remedies and cures to order; he generally receives instructions from a doctor as to what a patient's ailments are and what sort of salve, lotion or medicine is needed. Apothecaries are respectable tradesman, with a SOC between 10 and 15.

ARTIST

While literary arts are largely a pass-time for the upper classes, anything involving hands-on creativity – painting, sculpture, architecture for example – is regarded as a job for a technician, so that is artisan work. Most artists are expected to be competent in more than one medium or discipline. They are firmly in the artisanal class, SOC 10–12 with those who show real talent being able to promote themselves to SOC 13–15.

BUILDER

In the countryside, people tend to put up their own houses and patch them up when they fall down again. In the cities there are many regulations and by-laws created in the wake of generations of fires and building collapses that have left thousands of citizens dead. Hence the necessity of a professional builder (SOC 13–15) who is as much as anything a project manager, drawing on the resources of labourers and craftsmen for the job in hand.

CRAFTSMAN

The backbone of the artisanal class, people who run manufactories, shops and processing businesses such as fullers and dyers. A craftsman who is employed by someone else and does not have their own workshop will have a SOC of 7–9. Most Craftsmen generally fit into the middle ground (SOC 10–12), unless they work in high prestige areas such as gem-cutting or gold-smithing, in which case they will have a SOC of 13–15.

DOCTOR

A Doctor's purpose is to use his Lore (Medicine) to tell you what is wrong with you and make some useful suggestions as to what you might do about it. He may actually try to treat you but this is not necessarily his job and may not be his best skill.

A Doctor can also be a Healer (someone who can access Divine Magic to heal others) but it is not necessarily so. It is quite possible that he will know a few Sorcery spells relevant to his trade – in a world in which magical healing exists and many diseases and injuries have magical causes, it does not pay to be too strict about what approaches and techniques one is prepared to try. Doctors are well up the social scale, with a SOC of 13 to 15.

	Common Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	Magic
Apothecary	Evaluate + 5%, Influence +5%	Craft (Apothecary), Education, Lore (Poisons), Lore (Remedies)	—
Artist	Influence +10%, Insight +10%,	Art (Any) x 2, Craft (Any)	—
Builder	Brawn +10%, Evaluate +10%	Craft (Masonry), Craft (Other) x2	—
Craftsman	Evaluate +15%, Persistence +5%	Commerce, Craft (Any) x 2	—
Doctor	First Aid +10%, Insight +5%, Perception +5%	Lore (Medicine)	—
		Select Two Craft (Surgery), Education, Healing, Lore (Remedies)	
Healer	Influence +5%, Insight +5%, Persistence +10%, Rites (Own) +10%	Healing	Pact (Cult or God)
Priest	Culture (Own) +10%, Influence +10%, Insight +5%, Persistence +5%, Rites (Own) +10%	—	Sorcery (Priest's Grimoire)
Scribe	Culture (Own) +10%, Evaluate +10%, Influence +10%	Education	—
		Choose One Education (Other), Language (Other), Lore (Any)	
Sorcerer's Apprentice	Persistence +10%	Education	Apprentice's Grimoire, Sorcery Manipulation
		Choose One Craft (Alchemy), Craft (Enchanting), Language (Any), Lore (Any)	
Surgeon	Evaluate + 5%, First Aid +15%	Craft (Surgery)	—
		Choose Two Education, Healing, Lore (Medicine)	

HEALER

A Healer is someone who tries to do something about what is wrong with you. The best of them can channel divine power to provide treatments and cures for their fellow human beings. Unfortunately such people are few and far between and their attitude can be unpredictable – they may regard it as their religious duty to try to help everyone they can, or they might charge a significant fee for those who want to partake of a God's help. On the whole people go to a Healer when the cheap options offered by the quack are not helping or they cannot find or afford a doctor with the necessary skills, rather than the other way around.

Healers can come from any social background but must take the Healing skill as a Talent at the cost of one of their starting Hero Points.

PRIEST

A Priest is likely to be a member of a guild (or order) and is basically available for hire to preside at religious ceremonies in honour of any of the pantheon of Tarsenian deities. Some priests are also cultists and only conduct services for the cult they belong

to. Given that priesthood is a respectable profession even for the sons and daughters of the wealthy, a SOC of between 13 and 15 is normally required to train as a priest and even those of SOC 17–18 might do so if it is to serve as a priest within a respected Public Cult.

SCRIBE

Scribes are professional readers, writers and book-keepers, tasked with committing instructions to writing, transcribing and copying books and literature and otherwise maintaining records including accounts and tax returns. Most scribes are of the urban artisanal class (SOC 10–12) but those with specialist skills may rank somewhat higher, to a maximum of SOC 15.

SORCERER'S APPRENTICE

A powerful sorcerer may have many apprentices and sometimes things do not work out, in which case one of those apprentices may find themselves on the street looking for a job – or for adventure. An apprentice can come from any social background, so long as their Basic Percentage in Education is no less than 25% and in Sorcery is no less than 30%. An Apprentice will start play

HEALING AND SURGERY IN AGE OF TREASON

Any physician who knows Healing can attempt some minor surgical repairs, however to wield the surgical knives and perform an operation that actually injures the patient in order to cure him - such as cutting out a barbed arrowhead, amputating a limb or removing skin - requires a Skill Test of the Adventurer's Craft (Surgery) skill. A successful roll accomplishes the purpose of the operation while inflicting a Serious Wound and reduces the location to 0 HP in the process. A failure inflicts a Serious Wound and yet fails in its purpose. If the surgeon fumbles he automatically inflicts a Major wound.

Whether successful or not, in every case the Surgeon or an assistant must succeed in a Healing roll to properly stitch up the wound, tie off arteries and so forth.

with a number of spells equal to 1D4 plus their Improvement modifier, from a Grimoire that contains 1D6 further spells that they may learn later.

SURGEON

A surgeon is a physician who deals with physical injuries and abnormalities, specialising in cutting the human body, removing foreign objects or damaged tissue and sewing it up again in a way that will limit bleeding and allow the body to heal. Ultimately his job is to cut, saw, bore and stitch without doing additional harm - some surgeons also find themselves employed as torturers. Surgeons are effectively low ranking doctors, with a SOC of between 10 and 12. Those who have fallen on hard times and accept work as a torturer can expect to have their SOC reduced by 1D3 points as such people are never respected for their art.

A Surgeon's primary skill is Craft (Surgery), however he will also have knowledge of Healing and First Aid.

MERCHANTS

How do you make an honest fortune in the Taskan Empire? From the lowliest pedlar doing the rounds of rural villages to the richest merchant supplying tons of foodstuffs to the army, there are thousands of people making a living simply through the buying and selling of goods. Very simply they break down into

three types: Agents, Producers and Traders. Merchants cannot thrive without the services of Caravan Masters and Shippers who, thanks to the peace and security provided by the Emperor, can move goods between cities and regions in relative safety, creating a single economic area across the Empire.

CARAVAN MASTER

Goods have to be moved from producers to buyers and that is where the Shippers and Caravan Masters come in. Their job is logistics and they are masters at calculating the most cost efficient way of moving things from one place to another. The land-based caravan masters are slightly lower rent than their shipping counterparts (SOC 10-12).

COMMERCIAL AGENT

An Agent acts on behalf of a Producer, finds him a market and negotiates the deal. An agent does not have to invest in either producing goods or in buying stock. His capital is in his contacts and his skill in drumming up business, to the extent that buyers and sellers rely on him and deem the cut he takes on the deal as being worthwhile. The involvement of an agent typically adds 10% or more to the cost of a deal. Whether the seller or buyer absorbs that cost depends on the balance of power in the negotiation and the skill of the agent.

	Common Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	Magic
Caravan Master	Drive +10%, Evaluate +10% Resilience +10%	Commerce	—
		Choose One: Culture (Other), Language (Other), Lore (Regional), Ride	
Commercial Agent	Evaluate +5%, Influence +10%, Insight +5%,	Commerce, Education, Fast Talk	—
Producer	Evaluate +10%, Influence +10%,	Commerce	—
		Choose Two: Craft (Any), Lore (Any)	
Shipper	Influence +10%	Commerce, Education, Language (Other), Lore (Logistics)	—
Trader	Evaluate +10%, Insight +5%, Persistence +5%	Commerce, Fast Talk	—
		Choose One Culture (Other), Streetwise	

An Agent needs some knowledge in the Craft or Lore relevant to the market in which he specialises, however his primary skills are Commerce, Evaluate and Influence. An Agent should have a SOC of at least 10 and a CHA of at least 12 to be accepted as a trainee.

PRODUCERS

A Producer owns the means of production and generates his own products as a business with the specific intention of selling them at market rather than, for example, just bartering with his neighbours. A producer may be a very small business or the owner of a factory or substantial estates who has hundreds of people producing goods that he can sell. A producer must recover the cost of his raw materials, tools and equipment and time; he must also make a profit out of which he supports himself and his family.

Buying direct from a producer should be the cheapest way to obtain goods as there is no one else adding to the 'value chain' that would require a cut.

A Producer Adventurer should have a SOC of at least 12 but for those who may control a substantial manufacturing business, or with extensive farming estates, SOC can be as high as 18. Producers need to understand their trade and their highest skill is typically one or more Craft or Lore skills. They need some business skills such as Commerce and Evaluate but these generally take second place.

SHIPPER

A cut above their land-based counterparts with a SOC of 13–15, the Shippers generally work within Corporations that can stand the heavy insurance cost that goes with waterborne transport and the capital outlay of building and maintaining sea-going ships.

TRADER

A Trader is someone who buys stock from a producer and resells it, hopefully, at a profit. Traders deal in goods that are being sold some distance from where they are produced. Like an agent, a Trader has his contacts and business skills and hopefully a clutch of regular customers as well as reliable suppliers. A Trader has his money locked up in stock and cannot afford to have it sitting around for too long. Goods deteriorate and storage costs money. Sometimes he will have to sell at a loss in order to get his hands on ready cash to buy more stock that he can make a profit on.

A Trader cannot have SOC higher than 14, as buying and selling goods is regarded as a grubby business and engaging in it pretty much prevents social advancement.

GENTLEMEN AND SCHOLARS

At the upper end of the social spectrum are those with the means to live off the work of others, opening up a whole new set of career options.

ARMY OFFICER

Someone with a SOC of 13 or more would not expect to serve in the professional army unless in an elite unit or as an officer. Adventurers with SOC 15 or more can also find a respectable trade as an officer in the militia, which is a common way of passing the years before inheriting the family estates. These men will have administrative and leadership skills as well as basic soldiering skills.

ELITE WARRIOR

The elite are traditionally expected to fight as armoured cavalry. Once the main offensive arm of Tarsenian armies, these units are now rarely called upon or are superseded by professional forces recruited from suitably skilled barbarian tribes and equipped at state expense.

LAWYER

The law is a highly respected profession for those with a SOC of 15 or higher. Court cases are a very personality-led business and the outcome is as much judged on a lawyer's reputation and performance as on whatever proofs can be found in the matter.

POET

Poetry, as a profession, is reserved for the extremely talented who can find a wealthy patron to feed them or for those rich enough (SOC15+) to be able to pursue their literary yearnings on their own time and money. Poetry is the premier form of literature in the Taskan Empire and those who excel are widely celebrated but are few and far between.

POLITICIAN

Politicians are usually from the social elite (SOC 15–18) where it is regarded less as a profession than as a suitable pass-time for a gentleman who wants to contribute to society. While one can get started in politics running for a wardenship of some city district or country town, the top political jobs all require the achievement of high rank in the Emperor-cult and that provides opportunities for 'nobodies' who have won favour with the Emperor to get ahead of their social superiors. The GM can decide whether in his world CHA 13 is a floor or ceiling for an Adventurer who has earned previous experience as a politician.

SCHOLAR

With some exceptions in imperial service, scholars do not get paid for being scholars but must have significant means (SOC 15+) that provide the leisure time to devote themselves to intellectual pursuits – or be dependent on the kindness of others.

WASTREL

Here are those of perfectly good family and comfortable means who utterly fail to make anything but a nuisance of themselves. The likely outcome of their devotion to leisure and pleasure is scandal, disownment, disinheritance or perhaps some ignominious end in a tavern brawl. An Adventurer whose previous experience is

	Common Skill Bonuses	Advanced Skills	Magic
Army Officer	Athletics +5%, Influence +5%, Resilience +5%	Command, Lore (Tactics and Drill)	—
	Pick any one appropriate Combat Style and gain +5%	Pick One: Education, Orate, Ride	
Elite Warrior	Athletics +5%	Lore (Tactics and Drill), Mounted	—
	Archery +10%	Combat, Ride	
	Pick One and gain +5%: Sidearm, Swordsmanship, Light Spear		
Lawyer	Influence +10%, Insight +10%	Education, Lore (Law), Orate	—
Poet	Influence +5%, Sing +15%	Art (Poetry), Education	—
		Pick One: Language (any), Lore (any), Play Instrument (Lyre)	
Politician	Culture (Own) +5%, Influence +20%, Insight +5%	Education, Orate	—
Scholar	Culture (Own) +10%, Lore (Regional) +5%, Persistence +5%	Education, 2x Lore (Any)	—
Wastrel	Dance +10%, Lore (Regional) +5%, Resilience +5%	Gambling, Seduction, Streetwise	—

as a wastrel may have built up some frighteningly large debts with some rather bad people, or simply want to turn over a new leaf and prove to a disgruntled parent that they are indeed worth both the family name and their potential inheritance.

STARTING MAGIC

Taskans have no knowledge of Common Magic, however if they are educated they may have access to a handful of sorcery spells. There are public inscriptions that anyone is free to study, set up by magnanimous citizens. The spells contained therein are known as Common Sorcery. Any Adventurer with an Education of 26% or more can spend Free Skill Points to begin play with 1D3 Common Sorcery spells under a single Grimoire (local) skill. The available spells are to be determined by the GM but it is extremely unlikely that they are offensive in nature. Many will be Worship (Specific Deity) spells and others may in fact be downright quirky due to the idiosyncracies of their publishers, such as the spell inscription set up in Felsang so that the people should have the wherewithal to make the streets smell of rosewater.

A high status family may have a little Grimoire of its own. If an Adventurer has a SOC of 15 or greater he may be allowed to spend Free Skill Points on Grimoire (Family), which may in fact have some quite useful spells that have been accumulated over the years.

Sorcery Manipulation is generally taught only to professional spell-casters. If a player wants their Adventurer to gain this skill as

part of their previous experience using Free Skill Points this should be agreed with the GM and a plausible story created.

BLESSINGS

Every Adventurer begins play with a 1D3 Blessings (to a maximum of CHA/5). These can be called on to provide +10% modifiers to Skill Tests if successfully invoked by a Rites (Own) test and are described more fully in the Religion and Divine Magic chapter. The Adventurer's player should specify which god(s) have provided these blessings and enter them on the Adventurer sheet.

DIVINE MAGIC

All Adventurers should have a Pact (Zygas Taga) skill if they are Taskan citizens, however Divine Magic is not generally available from the Emperor-cult at this stage and the single point of dedicated POW required for citizenship is unallocated. Free Skill Points may be used to purchase additional Pacts if the necessary POW dedications are made and in most cases these Pacts will allow Divine Magic spells to be taken.

FREE SKILL POINTS

Age of Treason has a harsher limit on starting Adventurers; unless the GM is specifically granting a higher tally of Free Skill Points to enable new Adventurers to fit into a developed campaign, a player should have no more than 150 Free Skill Points to spend in

Adventurer creation. The cap of 30 points allocation to any one skill still applies. Note that in the introductory scenario in this book, Adventurer generation continues during play and further skill improvements are quickly granted.

COMMUNITY

Feel free to use the family and community tables set out in the *Legend Core Rulebook*. The scenario in this book for starting level Adventurers incorporates a simplified table aimed at providing each Adventurer with one or two unique take-outs from their previous history. For Taskan Adventurers there is an important alternative to family connections available – membership of a Funeral Club. While the original purpose of these clubs is to see to it that its members get a proper burial and a post-mortem mention in the annual Day of Ghosts festivities, they have evolved into important social networks, insurance brokers, banks and often foster new cults.

EQUIPPING YOUR ADVENTURER

The standard equipment presented in the *Legend Core Rulebook* can be used. If you are using the introductory campaign presented in

this book it is advisable to begin to play through the introduction section first before parting with all an Adventurer's starting money, as a significant amount of equipment will be issued to the Adventurers on loan.

ADVENTURERS FROM OTHER BACKGROUNDS

The Empire now embraces people who could be considered to be barbarians. These folk may in fact be highly cultured, even literate, and the barbarian world includes several settlements that qualify as cities. However literacy is generally restricted to a narrow elite and indigenous writing systems are of limited utility. Players who want to generate a Taskan Adventurer from a barbarian background can use the Cultural Background tables for Sheng or Thennalts in the appendix, substituting 10% of their Culture (Own) for a starting percentage in Culture (Taskan) as an additional Advanced Skill and likewise taking Language (Taskan) as one of their chosen Advanced Skills. They may follow one of the previous experience professions given in this chapter if appropriate, or choose a profession from the *Legend Core Rulebook* appropriate to their barbarian heritage.

ADVENTURER SKILLS

In *Age of Treason* there are a number of new skills available for GMs and players to make use of and some tweaks to how existing skills are used to suit the setting. Some of these modifications derive from the addition of the SOC (Social Status) Characteristic whilst others reflect the emphasis on intrigue and conspiracy or the gritty and often un-heroic character of the setting.

COMMON SKILLS

BRAWL (STR+DEX)

Brawl replaces Unarmed as a Common Skill. Brawling can be a rough and ready way of fighting, both unarmed and with knife, cosh, knuckleduster or claw, any impromptu weapon that comes to hand such as a bar stool or broken bottle, or even just a weapon with which the Adventurer has no familiarity. In the end, this is the sum of an Adventurer's handiness in a fight whatever the circumstances and the skill an Adventurer can fall back on in almost any situation.

IMPROMPTU AND STREET WEAPONS

The use of any solid object as a weapon changes the D3 damage of an unarmed attack to D3+1 but may also add Combat Manoeuvres such as:

Broken Bottle, Claw: Bleed, Slash
 Cosh, Chair Leg: Stun Location
 Knife: Bleed, Impale
 Knuckleduster (Cestus): Bash Opponent, Stun Location

USING THE BRAWL SKILL IN ARMED COMBAT

An Adventurer using a long weapon who finds himself at a disadvantage because an enemy has closed inside his reach can revert to Brawl to attempt to defend himself.

An Adventurer can use his Brawl skill as a substitute for any close Combat Style with the following restrictions:

- Rather than use the weapon's stated damage, the Adventurer will inflict their Brawl damage (1D3+1 for a Small weapon, 1D3+2 for a Medium weapon and 1D3+3 for a Large or Huge weapon).
- The Brawling Adventurer cannot use special features of the weapon (such as Entangle), however they will suffer any penalties, such as parrying with a Dirk at -10%.
- If the Adventurer scores a Combat Manoeuvre, they can use it to inflict the weapon's normal damage at its regular Size instead of brawling damage.

DRIVE (DEX+POW)

Drive is a Common Skill in *Age of Treason* that covers any situation involving managing animals for draught, transport and burden. This could be a massive supply wagon drawn by 20 oxen, a light, fast carriage drawn by horses or a heavily laden donkey on the way to market whose master adds to the burden by perching on top of his produce. Even someone who cannot ride can still sit on the back of a horse, donkey or similar as an alternative to walking and save themselves some fatigue. If a Skill Test is needed to deal with simple problems a Drive rather than Ride test is sufficient. As with wheeled transport its primary use is on roads and tracks – if going off road or through difficult terrain it is normal to dismount and lead the animals.

A Skill Test is usually called for when an Adventurer is trying to push his animals beyond their normal range of endurance, or to get them to do their job in difficult circumstances. Hence a successful roll will enable an Adventurer to get a few precious extra miles progress on a day's journey, to navigate a treacherous mountain path, or to keep his animals calm in a violent storm or

COMBAT MANOEUVRE: SLASH

In street fights it is as good to leave your opponent with a permanent reminder of the confrontation as to send him to the undertakers. The *Slash* Combat Manoeuvre is available if an Adventurer wins a two level advantage with his Brawl skill, and is typically combined with *Bleed* or *Choose Location*. Slash opens up the opponent's skin in the most frightful way, and guarantees a nasty, ragged scar. The wound will not begin to heal naturally until a successful application of the Healing skill, or use of magic, to knit the flesh together. The scar can be seriously disfiguring and if inflicted on the head results in a permanent penalty of -10% to all communication skills aimed at creating a positive reaction (e.g. Influence, Orate, Seduction) and a loss of one point of CHA. However the victim can turn this to their advantage, and gain a positive modifier when attempting to intimidate someone.

in the face of a violent encounter. If the test is failed no progress is made, while in the event of a fumble an animal is lamed, takes fright and bolts, sheds its load or overturns its cart.

INFLUENCE (SOC+CHA)

In the *Age of Treason* setting the essential Common Skill for getting what you want out of other people is Influence. Influence is derived from SOC+CHA. Influence represents getting someone to do what you want them to do or simply getting their acquiescence by using personal presence, well chosen words and tone of voice, status, contacts and connections. An Adventurer's Influence skill can be used to many different ends: for example to stride confidently past the doorman at a private club and not get stopped; to sidestep bureaucracy or even to 'put a word in' on someone else's behalf. If actually trying to change someone's cherished beliefs or strongly held opinions a single Skill Test is not enough and an attempt at using Influence must be treated as an Extended Task.

A successful Influence test wins compliance or agreement from the target with whatever the Adventurer is trying to do or the point he is trying to make.

A critical Influence success means that the Adventurer has created a lasting good impression and should get a bonus next time they attempt to put pressure on the same people to similar ends.

A fumbled Influence test results in a lasting bad impression – something about the Adventurer's attitude has left a bad taste and the target will take pleasure in preventing the Adventurer from getting what they want, preferably in petty and annoying ways.

Influence requires an understanding of the local culture and the ability to converse, so you must speak the target's language or vice versa. If attempting to use the skill on foreigners the target may well be assumed to have negative Sympathies.

USING INFLUENCE AS A BONUS TO OTHER SKILLS

An Adventurer can, with the GM's approval, use his critical Influence score to modify any test for a communication skill such as Commerce or Diplomacy.

rites (OWN) (INT+CHA)

The Rites (Own) skill represents an Adventurer's familiarity with the religious ways of his homeland. The skill covers many of the actions and ritual operations through which the covenants between gods and men are managed. The Rites skill is actually several separate skills, each dealing with a specific culture's pantheon of gods or religious traditions. If an Adventurer wants to have a relationship with foreign gods or use exotic magic they encounter in distant lands they will have to acquire the relevant Rites skill to do so as an Advanced skill.

A successful Rites Skill Test allows an Adventurer to trigger a spell or effect that he has access to thanks to the relations he maintains with his culture's supernatural supporters. Depending

on the specific magical and religious practices of the culture concerned, it may be used for invoking a Blessing received during an act of worship, to cast Common Magic, to trigger a Divine Magic spell or to command a spirit already under an Adventurer's control. Critical successes and Fumbles have the same effect as for the skills in the *Legend Core Rulebook* that the Rites skill is substituting for.

Tarsenians think of this skill as an expression of piety and consider the practice of piety to be a virtue in itself. This is not about hair-shirted moralist religiosity and asceticism – but simply knowing what needs doing to behave properly and with due respect towards the gods. The gods deserve such respect because they are powerful and can help or harm you, just like a powerful human being. They of course outrank any powerful mortal and by virtue of being supernatural are somewhat more distant and mysterious, hence proper care in your dealings with them is even more important.

Rites (Taskan) is not of any use when dealing with the Divine Emperor, except to properly participate in the annual public festival days. The Emperor's journey to godhood has not yet reached the point where he sits alongside the other gods of the Tarsenian Pantheon and as a result those who reach the status of Acolyte are required to gain some knowledge of the Lore (Emperor-cult Theology) skill in order to activate the Divine Magic available through their Pact with Zygas Taga.

ADVANCED SKILLS

COMMAND (POW+CHA)

The Command skill is used to get a group of men to successfully perform a manoeuvre or task that they undertake as a body – its primary use is for manoeuvres on the field of battle. Command may be used to steer a unit to an advantageous position, which then applies the officer's critical Command score to their attack, defence, discipline or morale tests. The difficulty of the task is set by the level of training of the unit under the Adventurer's command.

Average Lore (Tactics and Drill)

of the Men	Difficulty Modifier
76%+	Easy (+40)
51-75%	Simple (+20)
26-50%	Routine (+0)
00-25%	Difficult (-20)

The skill may also be applied to individual Skill Tests, for example when a group of Adventurers serving as soldiers are given effective instructions and intelligence when detailed a mission by their commanding officer. The GM may then specify certain key Skill Tests in the course of the scenario to which the command bonus will apply.

An officer can use this skill to directly control a formed body of men up to their CHAx5 in number, or to issue orders to a number of direct subordinates up to their CHA/3, without penalty. If the officer exceeds these limitations, a difficulty modifier should be applied to the Skill Test. A successful roll means that the officer's

instructions are communicated clearly and effectively, and his men can be relied upon to carry out the manoeuvre required of them in the optimum time and in good order.

A failure may result in the timetable of a plan going wrong, a missed opportunity, or an opening created for the enemy. Depending on the circumstances, it may mean no orders are effectively communicated and the target does nothing, or they are slow to respond, or some confusion occurs when it finds itself in the wrong place.

A fumble can result not only in the target unit turning or marching the wrong way, but in getting onto serious danger in the process – perhaps exposing a flank to the enemy, or simply marching down the wrong road and finding themselves in enemy territory without realising it. Junior officers further down the chain can still save the day, they will just face a more difficult task interpreting the orders they have (or have not) received.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

A Chain of Command through layers of subordinate officers enables a commander to have his orders carried out by large numbers of men without the need for extreme difficulty modifiers. Success passes down the chain of command and for every layer through which orders have been successfully transmitted that officer's Critical score is added to the next. The average training of the troops will also play a part but only for the final, and usually most junior, officer in the chain who has to implement the orders.

EDUCATION (SPECIFIC CULTURE) (INT+SOC)

Education is an Advanced Skill for *Age of Treason* that represents an Adventurer's exposure to formal learning. Education represents their key differentiator between civilised cultures and the rest. Every Adventurer brought up in a civilised culture will acquire this skill at its base percentage. Other people who really want to acquire the trappings of civilisation will seek to gain an education from a visiting scholar or by sending their offspring to school in a civilised city.

An Adventurer with an Education of 20% or more can be presumed to be able to count, to recognise letters and do very basic arithmetic; at a score of 25% an Adventurer can be expected to have basic literacy in their native language. At a score of 50% an Adventurer will be fluently literate, have a broad vocabulary to draw on and be capable of arithmetical tasks such as simple calculations. At 75% and greater one can expect an Adventurer to be familiar with different styles of literature, conversant with the rules of poetry and comfortable with archaic versions of their native language. Adventurers with Education skills in excess of 100% are capable of not only recognising and understanding the many nuances of the language but delivering detailed literary criticism and convincingly adopting the manner and style of their choice in composition. They will also be able to use the knowledge of their own language to help them understand or decipher one unknown to them.

The most common use of this skill for an Adventurer is to discover important information from a text such as an ancient scroll, a set of data such as a merchant's accounts or a repository of learning and information such as a library. A successful Education Skill Test means that an Adventurer has correctly deduced whatever information or answers are required. If searching for a single piece of information somewhere, a successful test will reveal it.

A critical success means that the Adventurer has achieved significant precision or insight in assessing the data in front of them, or if this is not relevant to the situation, that they have happened upon the correct answer in a fraction of the time expected.

While a failed Skill Test just leaves an Adventurer puzzled, the effect of a fumble is to reach a conclusion that seems satisfying and incontrovertible – and yet is completely wrong.

Education also represents an Adventurer's exposure to different ways of thinking about and describing the world. The Adventurer's critical Education score can be used to modify Skill Tests in many Lore skills, at the GM's discretion. If an educated Adventurer has a reference library to hand he can use his Education skill to substitute for Lore skills. A Great Library, such as that at Zarina, will make it possible to substitute for almost any Lore skill, while a private library is more likely to be focussed around a specific area of learning.

USING EDUCATION TO ACQUIRE NEW LORE SKILLS

Education liberates the mind – combined with an appropriate library resource it makes it possible for an Adventurer to self-study and acquire Lore as an Advanced Skill without the intervention of a teacher or mentor. The Adventurer must have access to a library that is stocked with books and scrolls relevant to the Lore being studied in a language he can understand.

EDUCATION AND EXTENDED TASKS

Acquiring a new Lore or Culture (Other) skill using Education is an Extended Task taking place across up to four study sessions, each of which is a *Task Round*. Using the Extended Task rules a scholar can also attempt any kind of research or study project. Typical extended tasks include translation of a text written in an unknown language or the decipherment of a code or unknown alphabet, as well as attempting to gain a new Advanced skill.

Each Task Round is an opportunity to test the



Adventurer's Education skill and each successful roll gives him 25% progress towards his goal (or 50% if the roll was a critical success). If the Adventurer undertaking the study successfully accumulates 100% progress in four Task Rounds or less, the object of his study successfully achieved. If he fails to reach the target he has failed to grasp the subject properly and will remain baffled unless he finds a teacher or mentor to help him. The length of time required for each Task Round (the *Task Round Unit*) depends on the nature of the project. Some examples are provided on the Sample Extended Tasks table. Each Task Round Unit can be extended using the "taking time" rules in the *Legend Core Rulebook* in order to increase the chance of a successful outcome.

SAMPLE EXTENDED TASKS

Task	Task Round Unit
Translating several pages of an archaic text.	1 Day
Researching the history of a location, family or artefact.	1 Day
Decipher an unknown script or cipher in a known language.*	5 Days
Acquiring a new Lore or Culture skill.	5 Days
Decipher an unknown language in a known script.	1 Month
Decipher a long text in an unknown language and unknown script.	1 Year

*An attempt at deciphering a code is opposed by the skill of whoever created it.

SITUATIONAL MODIFIERS

The GM should provide a bonus if the study resources available are particularly good. Anyone attempting to study at the Great Library at Zarina, the best the Taskan Empire has to offer, will get a +20% bonus or, in those subjects in which the library is particularly well furnished, +40%. Aside from some highly specialised collections in private hands, this is as good as it gets.

EXCEEDING 100% PROGRESS IN AN EXTENDED TASK

Just as is the case with the Crafting rules in *Arms of Legend*, in *Age of Treason* it is possible to 'enhance' intellectual projects if there is a final product at the end of the process that can be shared with others. When conducting a research, study or translation project it is possible to reach 100% progress with one or two Task Rounds remaining. The student has the option to continue his work. In each remaining Task Round a further successful Education Skill Test will yield an Enhancement.

EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Education is culturally specific, even between civilised peoples. Not only differences in language and script, but even number and counting systems and deep philosophical differences in the way people think about and describe the world, mean that Education may be penalised when applied to foreign data and resources. An Adventurer can benefit from a foreign Education, by spending

Enhancement	Effect
Accuracy	The work is so well researched that it provides a +5% bonus to anyone using it in pursuit of their own researches.
Clarity	The work is clearly written and easily digested and bestows an Improvement Roll on anyone who studies it in a relevant Lore, Language or Culture skill.
Excellence	The work is regarded as exemplary in style and enhances the author's reputation, conferring +10% Influence among scholars in the field.
Value	The work is regarded as authoritative and able to be sold on to other scholars or deposited at a library, providing credit or payment to the author.

time with a tutor or in a foreign school. This is a great way to access both contemporary and ancient traditions of another culture and will always provide a bonus to their Culture (Other) skill.

FAST TALK (INT+CHA)

Fast Talk is an Advanced Skill used mostly by the streetwise and dishonest – or anyone cursed with a low SOC Characteristic and hence a low aptitude for the Influence skill. This skill allows the user to confound, confuse, misdirect or mislead the target by sheer wit and charm rather than rely on their social status. Fast Talk is often opposed by the target's Insight skill rather than their Persistence. Its effects are short lived and the victim should be allowed another chance to see through the deception every 21-INT Combat Rounds.

A failed Fast Talk test might provoke immediate suspicion, while a fumbled test will result in the Fast Talker being caught red handed in their dishonesty.

LORE (FORENSIC RHETORIC) (INTx2)

Forensic Rhetoric is the specialised art of constructing an argument to prove the guilt or innocence of an individual. This skill is a Korantine invention that is finding its way into Taskan courtrooms as fashionable lawyers attempt to demonstrate their familiarity with the latest oratorical techniques. Forensic Rhetoric is claimed to be an art that helps find the truth through the application of pure reason (with limited references to actual evidence) but is not unjustifiably regarded by many as a new fangled and dangerous way of perverting minds from the course of real justice.

A successful Lore (Forensic Rhetoric) Skill Test in preparing a case will provide the advocate with a +20% modifier (or +40% if they get a critical success) to the advocate's Oratory tests when presenting their case. In an opposed contest, the advocate's Lore (Forensic Rhetoric) bonus is added to their dice roll in order to increase their chances of gaining the higher roll, without changing the class of success.

A failed Skill Test means that the lawyer failed to come up with a convincing argument while a fumble results in such an obvious

attempt to twist the truth with weasel words that the judges are in fact 20% more likely to find against the lawyer's client.

COMBAT SKILLS

A full list of the standard *Age of Treason* Combat Styles used in the setting is provided here. Most allow for a range of weapons to be included under a single style, however sometimes an Adventurer is required to spend extra improvement points to add a new weapon to their repertoire.

SHIELDS

If a Combat Style was gained through military previous experience of some sort, it can be assumed to have included proper training in the use of shields. Someone who has not been properly trained in this way can make use of a shield as part of any Combat Style they possess, however until they have been properly trained they cannot gain a bonus Combat Action when doing so, nor benefit from any special features a shield possesses, such as the +15% to parry missiles for a Hoplite (Large) shield, while any negative modifiers still apply.

Shields are added to the repertoire of a Combat Style for the cost of 2 Improvement Rolls (or 10 Free Skill Points at Adventurer Creation).

A **Buckler (Small Shield)** provides less overall protection but can be carried when using a 2-handed weapon style and while it does not provide the additional CA when used this way it does increase the options of how to parry.

A **Target (Medium) Shield** is usually used in combination with a category style, such as Spear, Sidearm, Swordsmanship or an individual specialist Combat Style such as Ball and Chain.

While a medium shield provides a good defence it limits the user's freedom of movement - any attacks with a weapon (other than the shield itself) of short (S) or touch (T) reach are at a -10% penalty.

A medium shield typically adds two to an Adventurer's armour penalty for the purpose of calculating movement, hence is usually one of the first things discarded if a warrior runs from a fight.

A **Hoplite (Large) Shield**, such as those famously carried by some of the toughest Korantine Patriotic Bands, is particularly used to fend off missile attacks, for which it provides a + 15% bonus. In melee it limits the user's range of movement with the weapon arm and only a spear can readily be used with it. Any other weapons used in combination with a large shield suffer a -15% penalty unless a specialist Combat Style is devised to negate the penalty.

A large shield typically adds four to an Adventurer's armour penalty for the purpose of calculating movement.

TAKING COVER BEHIND A SHIELD

An Adventurer equipped with a medium or large shield can spend a Combat Action to take cover behind it. In this defensive posture they can parry all subsequent missile attacks without spending any further Combat Actions so long as they come from the front and the Adventurer takes no action other than movement at walking



pace. Two or more men bearing large shields can provide effective shield cover for a third.

MOUNTED COMBAT

Ride is an Advanced Skill in *Age of Treason*. Anyone from a 'horse culture' like the Sheng will automatically gain Ride as one of the Advanced skills from their Cultural Background, for others it may be optional or acquired through a profession. Ride (Flying Beast) or Ride (Aquatic Beast) are separate skills.

If you do not have the Ride skill, fighting from horseback is impossible. An Adventurer can take no actions other than using Drive or Athletics to either stay on their beasts or quickly dismount, or perhaps use their Drive skill to attempt to move their beast out of the combat.

An Adventurer who has the Ride skill can fight while mounted, with certain restrictions:

- They have one less Combat Action than normal, to reflect controlling the mount.
- They cannot benefit from any bonus Combat Actions due to having a second weapon or a shield in the off hand.
- They cannot wield a two-handed weapon, including a bow, without bringing the mount to a halt first.
- They cannot gain any additional Combat Actions from having a mount trained to attack.
- Their Ride skill acts as a cap on the Combat Style they are using, and on their Evade skill.
- They cannot use their mount's damage bonus when charging.
- A Ride Skill Test is required to control their mount if it is injured in combat, at the cost of one Combat Action.

MOUNTED COMBAT (DEX x2)

An Adventurer who already has Ride as a skill can acquire the Advanced Skill of Mounted Combat. An Adventurer with this skill is able to fight from the saddle without sacrificing a Combat Action to control the horse. In addition, the Adventurer is capable of controlling their mount while using two hands to fight and can use any two-handed Combat Style from the saddle, up to the lower of their ability in that Combat Style or in Mounted Combat. However no bonus Combat Action is gained for having a secondary weapon or shield in the off hand.

In all other circumstances the Adventurer's Combat Style is limited by the higher of his Ride or Mounted Combat skill.

An Adventurer mounted on a battle-trained horse or other creature capable of attack can get their mount to attack once per round at the expense of one of the rider's Combat Actions.

An Adventurer skilled in Mounted Combat can, if charging into close combat, gain an improved damage bonus by two steps instead of one, as they understand how to coordinate the swing of the weapon with the motion of the moving horse. Braced lances are a very uncommon device in the *Age of Treason* setting and most spears used from horseback are treated as a normal melee

weapon, hence the rider's damage bonus is applied rather than their mount's.

COMBAT STYLES

The following Combat Styles are commonly used in the *Age of Treason* setting. The list is not exhaustive but provides the main Combat Styles under which a range of weapons can be used with a single skill.

CATEGORY COMBAT STYLES

These Combat Styles encompass a category of weapons allowing an Adventurer to switch between closely related weapons. If an Adventurer develops a Combat Style such as Sidearm or Swordsmanship he can spend two Improvement Rolls and a few practice hours at any time to learn to use a shield as part of the style.

ARCHERY

This Combat Style covers the use of any kind of bow, apart from crossbows. Different arrowheads can be used to produce special effects via Combat Manoeuvres, for example:

- Hunting Head: Bleed, Impale.
- Bodkin/Armour Piercing Head: Pierce, Impale.
- Barbed Head: Impale; Requires a Healing or Craft (Surgery) roll to remove or it will inflict its original damage + 1 during extraction.

Note that the basic bows such as short bow and flat bow do not have enough draw strength for the archer to apply a positive Damage Modifier, if any, although a negative modifier will still apply.

BLACK POWDER WEAPONS

This covers the use of firearms. These novel devices were invented in Sorandib and found their way into the hands of the Unconquerable Heroes of Taskay, an elite regiment in the Taskan army constituted by the military wing of the cult of the Tarsenian fire-god, Thesh. Pistols are rare and most of those who are equipped with a black powder weapon carry a muzzle-loading arquebus. The use of the

unloaded weapon as a club (1D6 damage) is also included in the Combat Style.

A soldier in the Unconquerable Heroes of Taskay has no need of the mechanical wheel lock except as a back-up; they are fire cultists and can instantly spark off the explosion in the barrel at no Magic Point cost. A belt of pre-prepared charges is slung across the body, with anything up to a dozen ammunition loads. A trained arquebusier can maintain a fire rate of around four shots per minute.

Damage: Beyond the stated range black powder weapons lose one of their damage dice as the projectile rapidly loses velocity.

Range: Black Powder weapons are capable of dealing damage up to three times the stated range, however at up to twice range the roll to hit is Difficult (-20) and at up to three times range the roll to hit is Hard (-40).

Load: If using a conventional firing mechanism such as a wheel-lock or match-lock, add one Combat Action to load time to prime the pan. If using loose ammunition rather than pre-prepared cartridges, increase load time by two Combat Actions.

Combat Manoeuvres: Black Powder weapons can Impale, or Pierce. The Arquebus gains the Sunder Manoeuvre, but this is only applicable within the stated range.

CROSSBOWS

This Combat Style is a rare one in the Taskan Empire and applies to crossbows of any type (including stonebows). Such weapons are sometimes acquired from master bowyers in Assabia but regarded by Taskans as unmanly for use in battle and usually only employed for hunting.

SPEAR

The use of a short or one handed spear, either as a hand to hand weapon, usually in combination with a shield, or as a thrown weapon – including most types of javelin. The spear and javelin combination is a common style for huntsmen but also for those who fight as skirmishers. Military training is usually in use of spear and shield. Spears of the type used by Taskan militiamen are not balanced for throwing as a javelin, have a range of 10 metres and a penalty of -20% to use as a missile weapon.

Weapon	Combat Style	Damage	Range	Load	STR/DEX	Enc	AP/HP
Arquebus	Black Powder	2D8/1D8	30m	5	10/9	2	5/4
Pistol	Black Powder	2D4/1D4	10m	4	9/9	1	4/3

COMBAT MANOEUVRE: PIERCE

Pierce is a Combat Manoeuvre available through using weapons specifically designed to punch through armour. This includes bodkin arrow-heads, military picks and weighted javelins. If an Adventurer gains a Combat Manoeuvre with such a weapon they can attempt to negate the defence of their opponent's armour by rolling the base damage for the weapon twice. The first roll gives how much of the target's armour is punched through, the second roll plus Damage Bonus, if any, is used for actual damage, applied first to any remaining Armour Points, then to the target.

COMBAT MANOEUVRE: UNHORSE

Pikemen are trained to **Unhorse** enemy riders as a Combat Manoeuvre applicable both to attacks and parries. The enemy horseman must oppose the pikeman's original attack roll with a Ride or Mounted Combat roll of their own to avoid being levered out of their saddle.

MAUL

A single Combat Style covering two-handed hafted weapons, including Great Axe, Great Club, Great Hammer, Heavy Mace, War Hammer and War Maul, all of which are typically ENC 3 and Size L or H. These weapons are uncommon, more likely to be seen in the hands of foreign barbarous warriors.

POLEARM/POLEAXE

A single Combat Style that covers two handed hafted and bladed weapons capable of cutting and impaling, as often seen among the royal units of Assabia or among some Thennalt warrior societies. The use of a two handed spear is included when learning this style.

SIDEARM

The use of any basic one-handed weapon without specialist functions or techniques is covered by the Sidearm Combat Style. This skill can be used for any ENC 1 Battleaxe (1H), Club, Falchion, Hatchet, Light Mace or Shortsword. Sidearm training is not widely available – it is sometimes provided in a military context but most civilians generally have to work on improving their technique through practice. Sidearms are usually regarded as secondary weapons but remain distinct from weapons such as a dagger or dirk, which are regarded as last ditch 'hold out' weapons.

SWORDSMANSHIP (TARSENIAN SCHOOL)

The sword remains one of the most versatile weapons ever devised and in Tarsenia is traditionally carried and used by men of high status in the form of a Bastard Sword or Long Sword. Master Swordsmen still run schools in which the art of swordsmanship is taught and there are written treatises on the subject that can be consulted in the libraries. Other schools of swordsmanship exist, dealing in archaic weapons such as the Rapier, foreign weapons such as the Scimitar and Tulwar, or specialist weapons such as the Sabre used from horseback. A swordsman can add these weapons to their repertoire at a cost of two Improvement rolls each, plus a little time taken to familiarise oneself with their idiosyncracies.

SPECIALIST COMBAT STYLES

These Combat Styles include some unique features or uses that mean that they are learned or trained up as specialist skills and do not allow the Adventurer to tap a range of different weapons under a single style.

ASHKORIAN PIKE (2H SPEAR)

The use of a two-handed spear some 3 meters long, sporting a long spearhead with cutting edges as well as a point. The spear is typically used with a small shield fixed to the left arm that cannot be used to parry but provides an additional three Armour Points of protection from incoming missiles to the left arm and,

when in the combat stance used in pike formation with the spear held at shoulder height, to the chest and head also. When in pike formation the hedge of spears and the shields provide some protection to the soldiers who can neither actively parry nor evade incoming missiles. The average Lore: Tactics and Drill skill of the unit is always used to oppose incoming missile attacks (roll once for the defending pikemen as a unit) in order to prevent automatic awards of Combat Manoeuvres to enemy shooters.

ASHKORIAN PIKE

Damage	STR/			Combat		AP/	
Dice	DEX	Size	Reach	Manoeuvres	ENC	HP	Cost
1D8+1	7/7	L	L	Impale, Stand 3	6/12	30T	
				Fast, Unhorse			

CLOAK AND DAGGER

In days of old, Tarsenian noblemen were taught how to fight each other in the street armed with a dagger or the traditional Tarsenian Dirk and a cloak or tunic wrapped around the left arm to provide a parrying device.

This form of fighting is still practised and no longer just by noblemen. The parrying cloak can be just about any large piece of heavy cloth or soft leather, providing a bonus Combat Action as if using a shield and able to deflect damage as a Small sized weapon. Depending on what it is made of it will also provide an additional 1-3 Armour Points to the left arm but bears the obvious risk that if an opponent chooses the 'Damage Weapon' Combat Manoeuvre the weapon in question is the fighter's arm, not the cloak.

TARSENIAN DIRK

This is an oversized, long bladed dagger with very short quillions or a lozenge shaped hilt, the best examples being ivory handled with a richly decorated sheath. The Tarsenian Dirk is the biggest weapon that is considered acceptable to wear in civilian environments – and as a result its decoration is to add status to the wearer and to distract attention from its essentially violent purpose.

The Tarsenian Dirk is a thrusting weapon only. Attempts to parry with this weapon are at a -10% penalty.

Damage	STR/			Combat			
Dice	DEX	Size	Reach	Manoeuvres	ENC	AP/HP	Cost
1D3+2	—/—	S	S	Impale	—	4/8	50T

KNIFE FIGHTING

While this Combat Style is rarely taught outside illegal fight clubs, it is something those who inhabit the darker recesses of the big cities find themselves developing as a skill. Knife Fighting makes use of a Claw, Knife, Dagger or Dirk, along with very fast footwork. The knife fighter needs to be nimble enough to get out of the way of a big

weapon that he cannot hope to parry with a small blade and be ready to get a quick stab or slash back at the attacker. This Combat Style can be used to completely dodge incoming blows, however rather than be placed at a disadvantage as when using Evade, the knife-fighter can use a Riposte or Change Range manoeuvre if he gains an advantage and attack on their next Combat Action as normal.

SLING

Although this Combat Style does not give access to a whole range of weapons, it is on the other hand one of the most widely practised forms of ranged combat and the necessary equipment is dirt cheap and easy to acquire. Pebbles of the right size and shape will deal 1D8 damage and a properly cast lead slingshot is capable of 1D8+1 damage; but even a lump of soft clay when that is all there is on hand to make use of might inflict 1D4 and 1D6 if baked hard. Staff slings are not known in the Eastern continents.

COMBINATION COMBAT STYLES

These Combat Styles tend to be produced through specialist training, often available from the military. Two examples are given here.

SHORTSWORD AND LARGE SHIELD

A Korantine Combat Style in which a soldier is taught to effectively use a short cut and thrust sword in combination with a large shield. As a result no 15% penalty applies to the use of the short sword in close combat when combined with a large shield.

TARGETEER

A combination of a light (small or medium) shield used to ward off enemy missiles, a light spear and thrown weapons such as

javelins and darts. This is one of the classic weapon combinations of the Taskan regular army as used by the Imperial Light Infantry (also known as the Emperor's Brigands).

Targeteer is also used as the main Combat Style of some cavalry units.

SUMMARY OF COMBAT STYLES

The Combat Styles listed provide an overview of what weapons are in regular use in and around the Taskan Empire. Any weapon not listed here may be regarded as uncommon and will need to be learned as a separate Combat Style in its own right.



Combat Style	Permitted Weapons	Additional Weapons (2 Improvement Rolls Each)
Archery	Flat Bow, Short Bow,	Recurve Bow
Ashkorian Pike	Longspear, Halberd	—
Black Powder Weapons	Arquebus	Pistol
Crossbows	Light Crossbow, Heavy Crossbow, Stonebow	—
Maul	Great Club, Great Hammer, Heavy Mace, War Hammer, War Maul	Great Axe
Polearm	Halberd, Longspear, Poleaxe	Great Axe
Sidearm	Battleaxe (1H), Club, Hatchet, Light Mace	Cutlass, Falchion, Sabre, Shield, Shortsword
Spear	Shortspear	Javelin, Shield
Swordsmanship (Tarsenian)	Bastard Sword, Dagger, Dirk, Long Sword	Broadsword, Rapier, Sabre, Scimitar, Shield, Tulwar
Swordsmanship (Assabian)	Scimitar, Tulwar	Long Sword, Main Gauche, Rapier, Shield
Ashkorian Pike	Longspear	Halberd
Cloak And Dagger	Claw, Dagger, Dirk, Knife, Cloak	Net, Rapier
Knife Fighting	Claw, Dagger, Dirk, Knife	Claw
Sling	Sling	—
Shortsword and Large Shield	Shield, Shortsword,	—
Targeteer	Shield, Shortsword, Dart, Javelin	—

THE ART OF PERSUASION

In an *Age of Treason* game there should be plenty of opportunities to make use of subtlety and persuasion to get what you want from people – even if it is simply to manoeuvre an opponent into a dark room so that you can kill them. The rules presented in this section provide a range of options for getting more use and more fun out of using these skills in *Legend*, as well as offering some new skills to increase the tools at an Adventurer's disposal.

PERSUASION AND EXTENDED CONTESTS

If an Adventurer tries to use their Seduction or Influence skills to actually win hearts and change minds, the Skill Test becomes an Extended Contest in which the Adventurer attempts to win the argument over the course of several rounds of debate, discussion or flirtation. When trying to talk someone into betraying their closest ally, or even just trying to seduce the most beautiful woman in Tarsang, what is needed is to develop a relationship with the target, earn their trust over time and then choose the right moment to 'close'. These are potentially key events in the drama of a role playing game just as much as slaying a deadly adversary in a fight to the death.

TASK ROUNDS

The extended contest is conducted across a number of Encounters (Task Rounds), each of which is an occasion where the Adventurer gets to meet, observe and usually converse with the target. Engineering an encounter can itself be difficult, or there may simply be significant time lapse between each opportunity.

In each encounter, the Adventurer tries to advance their cause. They do this by attempting an Influence, Seduction or Commerce Skill Test opposed by the target's Persistence. Each successful opposed test is an opportunity to progress the argument by 25%, or 50% if accompanied by a critical success. Once an Adventurer has gained a total of +100% progress, the debate is won. A maximum of four Task Rounds can be used in each attempt; if the Adventurer has not hit the 100% mark after four Task Rounds, the target remains unconvinced and they have to start from scratch.

EXAMPLE

Farsha Kitarang is trying to persuade her commanding officer to abandon a hopeless position defending an isolated fort. She is making a reasonable point, however Tarasin has a keen sense of personal honour and regards such a move without orders to be a dereliction of duty. Farsha prepares the way by using his obvious fondness for her to get his ear. She succeeds in a Seduction Skill Test and the GM agrees that Farsha can now make her way to Tarasin's quarters each night and take the opportunity to use her Influence skill. He also awards a bonus of 20% to the task to reflect his affections for her. Over the following nights (each a Task Round) she questions her commander's resolve in an extended contest. Her Influence is 37%, modified to 57% thanks to her Seduction, his Persistence is 58%. The first night she loses the contest (94% to his 44%) and makes no impression on Tarasin. The second night she wins the contest with a roll of 05 – a critical success – and gains +50% towards completing her task. The third night she gets a 03 and again wins the contest with a critical success. This gains her another 50% towards changing his mind; Tarasin is now persuaded. The next morning Tarasin gives orders to evacuate the fort and withdraw up the supply line towards Pryjarna.

MODIFIERS TO PERSUASION SKILL TESTS

There are many ways that an Adventurer's attempts at persuasion might attract a modifier due to the context of the Skill Test, the attitude of the target, the other skills they can bring to bear or the preparation they have put in place.

INSIGHT

Both in order to size up the target and pick the right tactics and to spot someone who is trying to play you, the Insight skill comes in very handy. In many situations where a social skill is being used the GM can call for an Insight Skill Test to give an Adventurer the opportunity to boost their chance of success.

Insight Level of Success	Fast Talk Bonus	Influence Bonus	Oratory Bonus	Seduction Bonus
Critical	+20%	+10%	+10%	+20%
Success	+10%	+05%	+05%	+10%
Failure	0	0	0	0
Fumble	-20%	-10%	-10%	-20%

SEDUCTION

In many situations if a target is first seduced (through a successful Seduction Skill Test) their guard will be down. The GM may award a +20% modifier to subsequent persuasion attempts on the same target, particularly Fast Talk and Influence.

SOCIAL DIVISIONS

Difference in Social Status and CHA can play a significant part in the outcome of a Seduction attempt. Use the following modifiers:

Seduction Modifiers

For each point by which the Seducer's SOC is greater than the target	+5%
For each point by which the Seducer's CHA is greater than the target	+10%
For each point by which the Seducer's SOC is lower than the target	-10%
For each point by which the Seducer's CHA is lower than the target	-5%

ATTITUDES

The Attitudes Table provides a guide to what a seducer or salesman might have to contend with and the effect on their skill rolls. Individuals can have Attitudes but so can groups of people – including army units, theatre audiences and angry, pitch-fork wielding peasant mobs. In some situations the modifier may be reversed – for example, if an Adventurer is trying to provoke someone into a fight, a target in a *cheerful* Mood is unlikely to play along whereas someone already in an *angry* Mood may be much easier to goad.

Mood indicates the target's emotional state, which affects the type of action an individual will be willing to engage in and their willingness to talk. Mood is the most fickle and changeable element among Adventurer Attitudes and can change even within the course of an encounter.

Resolve measures stubbornness, confidence and determination to stick to a purpose or resist persuasion. In an opposed contest the target's resolve is usually assumed to be measured by their Persistence skill; however there may still be some cases where a target's Attitude is so critical to the story that a Resolve modifier is still applied. Where a persuasion attempt is unopposed the modifiers given should be applied to the persuasion test.

Sympathies indicates whether a target has existing opinions and prejudices that affect their willingness to accept what an Adventurer has to say. These Sympathies are often a constant in an individual's view of the world and only change thanks to some key moment of drama in which they learn to look at things differently. Cultural antipathies may apply. For example a Jekkarene can be assumed to be at least *Prejudiced* against all Korantines, if not outright *Hostile*.

Attitudes are not a factor in all situations. The GM should decide if the target of a persuasion attempt has one or more relevant Attitudes to be taken into account; for example they may be pre-disposed to favour the Adventurer because of Community Connections, or have very strong views about the particular issue at hand. A Contact (see *Legend Core Rulebook*) may be considered automatically *Supportive* (+10%), an Ally *Partisan* (+20%), while the reverse modifiers apply for Rivals and Enemies.

ATTITUDE TABLE

Random (D20)	Mood	Resolve	Sympathies	Modifier
1	Violent	Indomitable	Implacable	-40%
2-3	Angry	Determined	Hostile	-20%
4-6	Sullen	Confident	Prejudiced	-10%
7-14	Content	Indifferent	Impartial	0
15-17	Happy	Uncertain	Supportive	+10%
18-19	Cheerful	Wavering	Partisan	+20%
20	Ecstatic	Shaken	Fervent	+40%

CHANGING ATTITUDES

It is possible to change an individual's Attitude using the Influence skill, or the Attitude of a crowd of people using the Oratory skill. In special circumstances other skills may be substituted. For example Play (Instrument) can change the mood at a feast through the power of music and an actor declaiming poetry can employ his Art (Acting) skill in a way that evokes an emotional response from his audience.

An attempt to change an individual's Attitude is opposed by the target's Persistence. No modifier is applied due to the particular Attitude being addressed but other Attitudes may have an effect.

An attempt to change the Attitude of a crowd of people, or group, is usually unopposed, unless someone else is orchestrating resistance.

A successful Skill Test or winning an Opposed Contest will shift one Attitude one level in the direction chosen by the player, or two levels if the Adventurer's roll was a critical success or the opposed roll was a fumble.

If the Adventurer loses the contest and fumbles, the opposite effect to that desired will be achieved.

The effect of a successful Skill Test will usually last for CHA minutes if influencing Mood, CHA hours if influencing Resolve and CHA days if influencing Sympathies. Any attempt to permanently change an individual target's Sympathies is treated as an Extended Task.

OTHER SKILL MODIFIERS

There are plenty of other skills that might be deployed to provide a +10% or greater bonus to a persuasion Skill Test. A seducer may want to try to impress his target with a display of his Dance skills at a party and if successful could add 10% to his Seduction skill. A salesman might use a Lore skill to demonstrate to the prospective client that he really knows his market. The Games Master and the player can have some fun working out set-ups under which the Adventurer can earn another opportunity for a Skill Test bonus.

EXAMPLE:

Shamsay of Bosabra confronts an angry mob of townspeople who seem intent on murdering the town's plague-ridden Taskan residents who are helpless in their sick beds. Shamsay attempts to switch their mood from Violent to Angry, because he does not want to interrupt their purpose just to have an angry mob focussed on him. Shamsay has a skill of 68% and, given these are supposedly 'his' people, he has a +10% bonus because they should be expected to at least be supportive of him. Shamsay rolls a 53. It is enough to succeed and the mob momentarily climbs down from their murderous intent. Shamsay has bought CHA minutes (12) to resolve the problem by taking the mob leaders to one side and attempting to dissuade them from their purpose.

THE ORATOR'S ART

An orator usually steers the emotions of his audience to a purpose. For example an orator who brings a crowd onside at an election can use the Mood, Resolve or Sympathies of the crowd to affect the outcome of the subsequent vote.

SPECIFIC USES FOR ORATORY

There are some recognised types of oratorical speech that correspond to the Attitude that the orator is trying to stoke up or suppress with their words.

RABBLE ROUSING (MOOD)

This is all about whipping up – or calming down – a mob of people. Rabble Rousing manipulates the Mood of the crowd. The orator needs to have an issue, a person, a product or a situation about which he intends to make the crowd feel happy or angry. The resulting mood of a crowd can provide a modifier to any attempts to get its members to behave the way you want them to – whether you are recruiting for a cult or a military unit, selling tickets to a freak show or trying to get the mob to show enthusiasm for a political candidate or even an entertainment. An agent provocateur can of course deliberately try to turn the mood nasty.

Violent mobs must be given a target for their violence or will turn on whatever is conveniently close to hand – smashing and looting local shops, picking on foreigners or anyone else they have a reason to dislike and beating them up or worse. So long as their mood is deliberately steered by the orator and is not the result of a fumble, the orator can control such a mob for a maximum number of minutes equal to his CHA, after which they will start to lose direction or find their own.

HARANGUE (RESOLVE)

Typically a short and simple speech designed to encourage or admonish a crowd of followers, a harangue is very much a required performance for generals about to lead their men to battle, or for a priest who wants to instil the fear of the gods in his flock. The orator's critical Influence score is used as a modifier. The effect of a Harangue lasts for a number of hours equal to the Orator's CHA.

A cult leader who successfully depresses the Resolve of his followers ensures that any Persistence rolls they might make to resist his

persuasion or his spells will be at a negative modifier. A General who successfully harangues his troops increases the Resolve with which they go into battle, providing a positive modifier to their morale.

RHETORIC (SYMPATHIES)

Rhetoric usually belongs in political assemblies and in the courtroom. Rhetoric is the art of making a case before a group of people that has a formal procedure for deliberation and decision. This use of Oratory perhaps relies more on reason than others but in fact is also highly emotionally charged and effort is placed into winning hearts in order to change minds.

A successful Oratory Skill Test results in a shift of the audience's Sympathies in respect of the subject of the orator's speech in the direction desired by the orator. The resulting Attitude of the audience will be used as a modifier when decisions are made so long as that decision is made within a number of hours equal to the orator's CHA.

A critical success will result in a *permanent* change in the audience's sympathies, or a short term change by two levels rather than one, at the orator's discretion.

ORATORY IN THE COURTROOM

In *Age of Treason* it is quite possible that Adventurers will find themselves seeking justice through the courts or indeed brought to trial for a real or invented wrongdoing. Sometimes people take a dispute to court as a form of arbitration. Just as often an accuser goes to court because they desire some sort of restitution or compensation from the other party, whether they have a genuine grievance or are acting out of malice.

An Adventurer who finds himself in court can make his own case if his Oratory skill is good enough, or hire a professional advocate – such people can be found advertising their skills and experience outside whatever building or space is traditionally used as a courtroom. For the destitute a 'free' trainee advocate is provided by the court, whose skills are somewhat limited (perhaps even at Basic Percentage) but such people may at least have some sympathy from the judges.

A Taskan court case is an Opposed Contest heard by a panel of three judges – or five judges if it is a capital case. No judge is allowed to abstain, so that the final verdict is a matter of straight majority vote. While a quick resolution could be made on a single opposed role, if an Adventurer's life or reputation is truly at stake, the following rules can be applied:

ACTIONS

Each side in the case has one Action per judge. These are normally spent on an opposed role that will determine the decision of each of the judges in turn (the GM should make hidden rolls for the other side so the Adventurer only knows what his fate will be at the end when the verdict is pronounced). If the Adventurer's player comes up with some brilliant line of argument, then a bonus should be applied to one or more of their Oratory tests. However a suitably prepared case may provide the Adventurer with some bonus rolls.

PREPARING THE CASE

If the Adventurer can afford it he should hire a legal expert to prepare his case using the Lore (Taskan Law) skill. A successful test will give the Adventurer an additional Action in court and a critical success will gain two. Additional Actions may be used to address the public gallery before the main contest in the hope of winning some sympathy that the judges will take into account; or to make an unopposed Oratory test after the main opposed roles are done to change the mind or change the Attitude of one judge that the Adventurer suspects may not be onside. The opposition can of course oppose the appeal to the public gallery or have their own free 'attack' if they also have a well prepared case.

RESOLVING THE CASE

If there are judges on the panel who have not been persuaded either way - i.e. neither advocate succeeded in their Oratory test during the opposed contest – they will decide in accordance with any existing Sympathies they have in respect of the defendant. If they are *impartial*, they will follow the Sympathies of the public gallery; and if the public gallery is similarly *impartial*, they will find in favour of the defendant.

BRIBERY

INFLUENCE AND BRIBERY

Influence is often augmented by a bribe. The Bribery Table provides a few examples of suitable bribes for a variety of

situations. In practice the cost of a bribe is dependent on the status of the person you are trying to bribe, how much they need the money, the likelihood of them getting found out, the consequences to themselves if they are and the trouble they need to go to. When Bribery is attempted the Games Master should decide or randomly determine whether the target's Resolve will play a part in modifying the Skill Test.

BRIBERY PROCEDURE

The GM should allow the Adventurer attempting a bribe an Insight Skill Test to gauge whether the individual they are dealing with is likely to be corruptible or not and how greedy they might be. A successful role may avoid embarrassing mistakes and provide a bonus to the Adventurer's Influence Skill Test.

An appropriate Commerce, Evaluate or Streetwise Skill Test may be required to work out what the right size bribe should be. Some guideline bribery costs are given on the Bribery Table as well as guidelines as to the typical difficulty modifier that should be applied.

BRIBERY TABLE

Bribery Objective	Typical Influence Difficulty	Base Cost of Bribe (Taskeens)
Getting past the doorman and into an exclusive establishment.	Simple	5t
Getting an official or guard to look the other way.	Routine	10t
Getting an official to effect a meeting or audience with an important person.	Difficult	50t
Influencing a judge in a minor court case.	Hard	100t
Asking an official to lose, alter or generate an official document.	Very Hard	150t
Corrupting a judge to avoid a conviction on a capital punishment charge.	Formidable	1,000t
Securing the desertion of a mercenary captain with his 100 men.	Formidable	5,000t

INQUISITIONS

A parallel inquisitorial system covers those cases where a crime or offense is 'discovered' by the authorities rather than a case brought by a private citizen. Any crime investigated or punishment meted out in the Inquisitorial Courts falls under the general category of Treason. For mild transgressions some form of penance or re-education may be demanded – essentially something that will increase the perpetrator's Pact (Zygas Taga) skill. For more serious offences punishments ranging from banishment to slow and agonising death are available.

EXAMPLE:

Inquisitor Darush is pressuring crime boss Varshang Kaban to reveal what he knows about an illicit trade in magical texts being conducted by dishonest librarians at the Great Library. The Games Master informs Darush's player that persuading Zarina's top underworld boss to inform on a major criminal operation is going to require an Extended Contest. Darush knows that it is against Varshang's principles to talk but even more so to refuse large amounts of money – so a bribe is likely to be very helpful. He calculates that 1,000 Taskeens might have an effect, however he does not want to risk a refusal and gets authorisation to go up to 4,000 Taskeens. By doubling the size of the required bribe twice, Darush can select two additional bribery effects: he plays for an instant Skill Test with no opposed roll and a +20% modifier. With a modified Influence skill of 87%, Darush can hardly fail. He succeeds with a roll of 70. Varshang takes the money and assures Darush that he will be getting a tip-off that will allow him to catch some of the perpetrators red handed.

BRIBERY EFFECTS

Offering the right bribe can do a number of things according to the circumstances:

- It can remove Resistance – what might otherwise be an opposed contest in which an Adventurer matches his Influence against a target's Persistence becomes an unopposed Skill Test.
- It can short-cut what would otherwise be an Extended Contest. Rather than having to gently persuade or subvert the target over a period of time, a single opposed roll is made.
- It adds +20% modifier to an Adventurer's Influence skill, or more if the bribe is bigger than would be expected.

The Adventurer attempting the bribe nominates the tactic and chooses which effect they are seeking; these bribe effects are stackable including the addition of further +20% modifiers, however each additional advantage after the first doubles the cost.

BRIBERY RESULTS

A failed Influence test supported by a bribe has no effect – the bribe is declined and the Adventurer keeps his money. It can be retried if time and circumstance permit and the base cost of the bribe is doubled.

A critical success means that the target will not only take the bribe and do what is asked but will provide additional help and make very clear that they are open for further business in future, perhaps even an ongoing retainer. Rarely the target may have an attack of conscience and do what is asked but decline the money.

A fumbled bribe results in the target swiping the money and not even trying to deliver; they may also be grossly insulted, they may just laugh in the Adventurer's face at their stupidity, they may seek

to earn some credit with their superiors by immediately reporting the attempt – either way such things can end badly, maybe even in bloodshed.

BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION

Attitudes to bribery are cultural – so if not in his home territory an Adventurer should take care to consult with those who know, or make a Culture Skill Test to be clear whether it is likely to be an appropriate way of doing business. In some foreign places such as Djesmirket, bribery is blatantly deployed in almost every interaction with officialdom and even has set routines for doing it – there is no opposing roll to contend with and an Adventurer can even use his Commerce skill instead of Influence for the purpose. In the Taskan Empire attempts to bribe a state official amount to Treason, so must be conducted with great caution.

A Taskan state official who accepts a Bribe suffers an immediate loss to their Pact (Zygas Taga) proportionate to the enormity of their actions. For minor infringements only one Skill Point will be lost, however a judge who accepts a significant bribe to change the outcome of an important court case stands to lose up to 2D6 Pact. An official who rigs an election count or an army officer who assists the enemy by neglecting their duty could lose 3D6 Pact and very likely be severely punished for their treasonous behaviour.

USING BRIBERY WITH OTHER SKILLS

Occasionally a player might come up with a plausible reason why Bribery can be used to augment other Skill Tests than Influence. Any persuasive process – Commerce, Fast Talk, Oratory or Seduction may provide opportunities to use Bribery to get what you want, especially if it is likely to add to the fun of roleplaying the situation.

THE WORLD

The Taskan Empire only occupies a fraction of the surface of the earth. It does not even reach to the shores of the Inner Ocean and it is well known that across that sea lie vast lands of exotic wonders and terrifying barbarians. It is said that in ancient times the Korantines had colonies and outposts in every land – but for now the merchant-princes of Sharranket hold the key to the treasures of the occident in their fleet of immense and unsinkable ocean-going merchantmen. For most Taskans, the lands across the oceans exist only in travellers' tales and fables.

OVERVIEW

The world is disc-shaped, with the major land masses encircling an Inner Ocean, which are in turn surrounded by the Outer Ocean. Beyond the Outer Ocean is the Edge of the World and it is variously reported that crossing over is impossible, is certain death, or offers transport to other worlds or dimensions. Above the world is the realm of sky, which stretches all around at least as far the Edge of the World and above that is the vault of heaven, which so far as is known is solid and impenetrable. The distance from one side of the world to the other is about 7,000 miles. It is not known how high is the vault of heaven but it is assumed to be dome-shaped and at least 1,000 miles high at its centre. Some scholars suspect that the vault of heaven is in fact the upper part of a sphere within which sits the earth, with the vast majority of the sphere's volume being beneath the earth's surface, which is where the Many Hells are to be found.

GEOGRAPHY

It is possible to walk overland from one end of the world to the other – there is only a single break in the encircling land masses that separate the Inner from the Outer Ocean. Here the currents that flow between the two are so powerful that no one would attempt to cross the straits by boat.

THE OUTER OCEAN

Lashed by epic storms, whipped up by divine powers and stirred by magical tides and currents, the Outer Ocean is unfathomably deep and makes for unbelievably dangerous sailing. Having said that, it is not such a broad ocean – the Edge of the World is disconcertingly close if you can survive the crossing.

THE INNER OCEAN

The principle route of communication between human cultures, the Inner Ocean is generally kind to shipping along its coasts and its

shores support the greatest concentrations of population. Its broad expanse is easiest crossed by island-hopping along an archipelago running from the Northwest Corner towards the Southeast until at a point more or less at the centre of the world it branches right and left towards Jandekot in the West and the peninsula of Methalea in the East. The Ocean has its own geography of underwater volcanoes, treacherous shallows and deep sea trenches, endless doldrums and stormy capes. It is at its most violent and hazardous in the South where it meets the Outer Ocean.

THE CONTINENTS

Reading clockwise, the continents are:

Uxmal – A southern land comprised of a vast and cool central plateau pierced by rivers and surrounded by hot tropical lowlands and forested mountains.

Jandekot – A hot, humid land, much of its interior covered by a vast tract of rainforest and home to the greatest concentration and diversity of life

Kasperan – Sparse vegetation and a near barren interior, which is dominated by a chain of fierce volcanoes.

Thurina – Framed by tall mountain ranges to east and west, at its centre is a forest of massive pines surrounded by broad plains. Thick glaciers spread across its North-eastern reaches.

Tagun – Temperate lands of rolling plains, hills and forests, give way to hot subtropical lands in the South. Considered the most amenable to settled life and home to perhaps two thirds of humanity. At its heart is Lake Tagun, the largest body of fresh water in the world.

Rasputana – This hot desert interior is thought to be the driest place in the world but the southern tip is home to lush forests.

THE SKY

Every day the Sun follows a path from East to West across the sky, passing just south of the centre of the world and meandering slightly on its way. Depending on from where in the world you view the sun's orb, it has a subtly different hue. Once the sun has set you can see that the night sky contains both stars – that do not move – and planets, that look like stars but do move, which is how you can tell the difference. Some planets move around the sky in set patterns,



Many Hells faces many dangers, not least of which is the bleak prospect of an eternity of misery and mindless boredom. Fortunately the newly deceased should carry with them the help and protection of the Gods they worshipped in life and perhaps even find for themselves a special place reserved for the Gods' favourites. Alternatively they may find themselves enslaved and put to eternal servitude on the estates of some demon lord. The Many Hells is in many ways a mirror image of the world above. Here the spirit world that separates the two like a great river or ocean is the dominant dimension, and physical beings, while they can travel here, usually appear like shadows.

HUMAN RACES

Human beings are to be found on every continent, from the teeming cities of the East to the sparsely inhabited wildernesses and jungles of the West. Both physical and magical environments have influenced inherited traits of physiognomy and psychology so that the differences between two populations, even in quite close proximity to one another, can be extreme – so much so that they do not consider each other to be human at all, which usually results in fear, loathing and conflict. The further you travel west, the more outlandish examples of the human species you are likely to find. However you will not come across 'humanoid' peoples such

as elves, dwarfs and trolls, for these do not exist except in folklore. Just like in our world, the most dangerous monster you are ever likely to encounter is human. Yet unlike in our world the already vast human potential for monstrous behaviour is magnified by the presence of supernatural forces.

THE MANY HELLS

Beneath the surface of the earth, in a vast subterranean world that dwarfs the upper world of the living, are the Many Hells. These are the lands of the dead, with their own complex geography and their own kingdoms and empires. A soul that descends to the

others stay static but change their aspect or appearance as they turn on their axes. Planets are agreed to be living entities and for many people they are gods. The stars are mostly thought to be there for decoration, each star or constellation set in its place to serve as a memento of some legendary event, or as the heraldic badge of a god rather than the god itself. The moon is stationary and as the world is flat and nothing is ever over the horizon, it is always visible on a clear day unless blotted out by the sun's glare. It does however look rather small if you are on the other side of the world from the point above which it is anchored. The moon has phases but this is the result of changes in the glowing light emanating from within as it rotates, marking out the months of the year.

EASTERN PEOPLES

The populations of the Eastern continents are relatively homogenous. Nearly everyone you meet will fall within a range of racial types that would not look out of place in our own world. Skin tones range from white to nut brown, darker hair and eyes predominate but not exclusively. Overall, the range is equivalent to a slice of humanity taken from Eastern Europe down through to modern Turkey, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. The most numerous peoples are the Korantines, Tarsenians, Sheng, Thennalts and Assabians, this last term covering not only the people of Djesmirket itself but also the closely related peoples of Morkesh and Sharranket. While some Eastern peoples and

tribes may tend towards slighter or bigger build due to dietary and environmental factors and certain physical traits may be common within a particular tribe or nation, the range of variability is not great enough to alter the standard basis for generating Characteristics.

Culture Type: Barbarian; Civilised; Nomad.

Magic: Common, Divine, Sorcery, Spirit.

OCEANIC PEOPLES

The islands that are to be found scattered across the Inner Ocean are inhabited by several distinct human populations, some of them indigenous to the archipelago, others colonists from the surrounding continents. The dominant culture is simply known as Archipelagan and is comprised of the three seafaring tribes, the Kapolans, Guyuntars and Dagomils. These peoples have a fair bit of Korantine blood in them and their largest settlement at Kipsipsindra is more or less Korantine in character.

Culture Type: Barbarian; Civilised.

Magic: Common, Divine.

DAGOMILS

The Dagomils are racially quite distinct and have some characteristics that hark back to ancient pacts between their ancestors and the gods of the sea. For a Dagomil, Swim is gained as an Advanced skill at no cost and automatically comes as a Natural Talent (+2D6 to basic). Dagomils move at six metres per Combat Round instead of the normal four metres when swimming.

ALBIRS

The other well-known Oceanic culture, occupying the southernmost reaches of the island chain, is that of the Albirs. These black-skinned people are famed for their stature and physical prowess. Some of them find their way to the cities of the East, because they are regularly hired as mercenaries by the great merchant houses of Shranket and some inevitably decide never to return home. To generate Characteristics for an Albir Adventurer, roll STR on 4D6 and SIZ on 3D6+6 and drop the lowest scoring die in each case.

ORCS

The tribes of Kasperan are another group displaying characteristics affected by ancient pacts. Orcs come in several strains often reflected in significant physical variations and operate a caste system both within tribes and between them. Skin colour ranges from chalky white to slate grey. Orcs tend to be disliked by most others; they propitiate rather aggressive and dangerous Gods and regard anyone who does not as being fair game. They are not all bad but it has to be admitted that their biggest city of Nishimbakoi is the scene of human sacrifice on an almost industrial scale. Orcs fuel their pacts with their deities through sacrificing others – and power magical enchantments the same way. So if they are prolific

manufacturers of magic items so long as they have a ready supply of captives for sacrifice, Orc artefacts are spurned (at least in public) by most other people as 'blood magic'.

Orcs have successfully taken to the sea and are very much feared, for whilst their ships sometimes come for peaceful trade, just as often they are looking to fill their holds with captives to be taken home for sacrifice to their angry gods. They have also colonised islands across the Inner Ocean but this has been a haphazard and sometimes accidental venture, resulting in a scattering of settlements, some of which have not had contact with other human beings for decades. Orc Characteristics are normally generated according to the standard rules for human Adventurers, however high caste Orcs usually sport increased STR, DEX and POW as god-given gifts received in return for the human sacrifices that take place when they are born. Such Adventurers can be expected to have +1D6 in each of 1D3 Characteristics (excluding INT).

Culture Type: Barbarian.

Magic: Divine, Sorcery.

TRIBES OF JANDEKOT

On arrival in the West in the great and largely wilderness continent of Jandekot you will find more extreme environments, greater concentrations of magical effects and more isolated populations. Physical types range from pygmies to giants and skin colours include mottled green, red and hues of blue. The slightly-built (SIZ 2D6+4), brown-skinned Warong are the most numerous population group but they share the jungle with some bizarre neighbours – from red-skinned Mandigo (STR 4D6, SIZ 3D6+6) to shy and reclusive tribes of pygmies (STR 2D6+2, SIZ 1D6+6). The forest folk have a close relationship to the spirits that share their environment with them, providing advantages that go a long way to make up for their primitive technologies.

Culture Type: Primitive.

Magic: Spirit.

UXMALI

These folk are sometimes considered non-human but only because of their bizarre appearance and inhuman customs. The Uxmali sport sharp-filed teeth and extreme personal adornments and mutilations. Their cannibalistic lifestyle and necromantic magic does not endear them to others either. Uxmali come in Greater and Lesser varieties and one exploits and (literally) feeds off the other. These folk are only rarely encountered outside of their own lands, as their sailing technology is primitive and any voyage greater than a short coastal hop is a heroic venture. Due to the long term effects of weeding out the weak among the Greater Uxmali and removing the strong among the Lesser Uxmali, Greater Uxmali characters are generated by rolling all Characteristics except CON and CHA on 2D6+6, while Lesser Uxmali Adventurers are generated by rolling all Characteristics including SIZ and INT on 3D6.

Culture Type: Barbarian.

Magic: Divine, Spirit.

CREATURES

There are some terrifying creatures to be found that you might call monsters but, given the human tendencies to exterminate anything in their nearby environment that could be considered a threat, they are rare outside of wilderness regions. However humankind shares the world with a variety of intelligent life, sometimes friendly, sometimes dangerous and sometimes terrifyingly alien. Such creatures are mostly driven into inaccessible places, their very existence often forgotten. Natural animals, both domestic and wild, are similar to those of our own world but with unfamiliar breeds and subspecies and some of them have branched off into wildly exotic specimens. Travellers returned from lands across the sea have reported giant insects, colossal sea-creatures big enough to take on a ship and hawks big enough to carry a man on their back or a carry off sheep in their talons.

The following creatures from the *Legend Core Rulebook* can be found in the *Age of Treason* setting:

Bear; Elemental; Griffin; Horse; Lion; Skeleton; Wolf; Wyrms; Zombie.

If you have *Monsters of Legend*, the following creatures can be used in the *Age of Treason* setting:

Arachnids and Insects: *Ant, Giant; Bee, Giant (use similar stats for Wasp, Giant); Centipede, Giant; Grampus; Insect Swarm; Leech, Giant; Praying Mantis, Giant; Scorpion, Giant; Spider, Giant.*

These creatures are mostly to be found on some of the islands of the Inner Ocean and on the continents of Uxmal and Jandekot.

Dinosaurs and Reptiles: With the exception of the Bolo Lizard, any of these creatures could be found in the *Age of Treason* setting. Crocodiles are known in the East but their dinosaur cousins are restricted to one or two islands in the Inner Ocean, the volcanic continent of Kasperan and northern parts of Jandekot.

Creatures of Legend: *Basilisk; Behemoth; Centaur; Gargoyle; Ghoul; Gorgon; Griffin; Harpy; Hippogriff; Lamia; Manticore; Minotaur; Mummy; Roc; Satyr; Skeleton; Werewolf; Wyrms; Wyvern; Zombie.* While giant creatures such as the Behemoth and Roc are to be found in the exotic West, many of the other creatures in this class are created or conjured by sorcery, so can be found in or around the lands where powerful sorcerers are, or were once, at work.

Mammals: *Baboon; Bear, Brown; Bear, Polar; Boar; Cattle; Crab, Giant; Deer; Dog; Elephant; Hawk; Horse; Lion; Mammoth; Panther; Rhinoceros; Shark; Tiger; Tiger, Sabre Tooth, Wolf.* These creatures can be found in many lands. Elephants are native to Jandekot, Mammoths to Uxmal.

BEAST-MEN

There are several types of half-man, half-beast monstrosity, all of them the result of old and forgotten magic (or science) and descended from experiments that got loose and succeeded in breeding. The Beast Men only survive in the wilderness, are never found in great numbers and despite their near-human nature are effectively feral and lacking in the trappings of human culture. They have every reason to hate and fear human beings because humans make a sport of tracking them down and killing them. Those which survive are often under the protection of local spirits and nature daemons in their wilderness homes. Beast Men are known to include Centaurs, Harpies, Minotaurs, Satyrs and Scorpion-Men but this list is probably not exhaustive. The Beast Men are to be found in the Eastern continent of Tagun but share a legend of a refuge in the wild lands of Thurina where they can live away from the fear of humankind. Whether some such hidden civilisation exists in reality is unknown.

LYCANTHROPES

Often included among the Beast Men proper, but with different origins, are the lycanthropes – those who shape-shift between predatory beast and man. Lycanthropes are a sort of royalty among the Beast Men, capable of hiding themselves among ordinary humans but nevertheless staying on the periphery of society for they are regarded as being monstrous, and if their true nature is discovered they will usually be hunted down and killed whether they pose a real threat or not. Lycanthropes are created by divine curses rather than sorcerous tinkering. The most famous are the werewolves to be found in the badlands of Eastern Methalea.

VAMPIRES

Vampires have appeared amongst the humans of Tarsenia during the last 100 years. A Vampire is someone who has devoted themselves to a demon named Vyako in return for a form of immortality. Vampirism is regarded as anti-social and treasonous. Vampires have significantly increased Characteristics over normal humans. They have no POW of their own, so need to feed on other sentient life (and humans are the only viable supply) to generate Magic Points. This is not only, or even usually, through the medium of a blood-draining bite but a Trait that mimics the sorcery spell Tap (Characteristic). There are thought to be a small number of Vampire Lords who are significantly more powerful than the statistics provided here. These Vampire Lords are each the chief of a community of vampires and act as a channel to the demon that the vampires worship.

Vampires may know sorcery and as in other areas their extended life-spans can result in the development of considerable skills. However they must stuff their spells with Magic Points to achieve significant effects – for every point of Manipulation applied to Magnitude, Range, Duration, Targets and Combine, a Vampire must spend an extra Magic Point.



TARSENIAN VAMPIRE

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	5D6	17-18	1-3	Right Leg	-/7
CON	5D6	17-18	4-6	Left Leg	-/7
SIZ	2D6+6	13	7-9	Abdomen	-/8
INT	2D6+6	13	10-12	Chest	-/9
POW	—	—	13-15	Right Arm	-/6
DEX	5D6	17-18	16-18	Left Arm	-/6
CHA	5D6	17-18	19-20	Head	-/7
SOC	2D6+6	13			

Combat Actions	3
Damage Modifier	+1D4
Magic Points	3D6
Movement	8m
Strike Rank	16

Typical Armour: None Natural; Any Worn (as for human)

Traits: Life Drain; Life Sense; Night Sight

Magic: Sorcery (Vampire Grimoire) 104%, Manipulation 65%: Abjure Darkness, Dominate Human, Palsy, Regenerate, Shapechange Vampire to (species)

Pact (Vyako) 70%: A Vampire is an acolyte of the demon Vyako and has not only dedicated but sacrificed all of their POW to the Pact as part of becoming a Vampire. Divine Magic (Cult Lore 75%): Fangs (this is the only Divine Magic spell available and every Vampire must know it.)

Skills: Athletics 105%, Evade 72%, Influence 62%, Insight 39%, Lore (Tarsenian) 78%, Persistence 65%, Persuade 90%, Piety 35%, Resilience 105%, Seduction 75%

WEAPONS

Type	Size	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Dagger	S	S	1D4+1+1D4	6/8
Cloak	S	S	N/A	4/2

Combat Style: Brawl 80%, Cloak and Dagger 70%, any other from life, typically 60-90%.

Vampires take damage when exposed to sunlight unless using the Abjure Darkness Sorcery spell, which allows them to move freely in daylight for its Duration. If not so protected a Vampire must make a Resilience test every round in bright or direct sunlight, or every minute in overcast weather or shadow. Failure results in 1D3 damage to a random location. Suitable clothing that keeps off the sun can provide up to two points of protection against this damage.

SPECIAL VAMPIRE TRAIT: LIFE DRAIN

Vampires have the Life Drain trait. This operates exactly like the Tap spell, with the Vampire's Cult Lore skill setting the maximum of a Characteristic that can be Tapped. Each Vampire drains one specific Characteristic and Vampires able to drain more than one are extremely rare. A nest of Vampires may include individuals that drain different Characteristics and can all sustain themselves on a single unfortunate victim at the same time.

To effect the Life Drain the Vampire must be in skin-to-skin contact, requiring a helpless or willing target or else successful Grip manoeuvre and if necessary use of Bypass Armour. A resisting victim must be subdued by the Initiate, who will suck out their breath (CON), feed on their blood (STR) or have them pour out an incoherent babble (CHA) or suffer convulsive fits (DEX)

to affect the drain. It is an unpleasant business that inflicts real physical or mental pain and suffering and for this reason the cult tends to be proficient in drugging victims. The Vampire can drain one Characteristic Point per Combat Round. If contact is broken he can try again the following round. Vampires can hold on to the Magic Points they have tapped until expended. There is no upper limit to how many Magic Points they may accumulate.

THE VAMPIRE'S BITE

Vampires only bite a victim when under the influence of the Fangs Divine Magic spell. The bite creates a ragged, bloody open wound from which the Vampire feeds and its purpose is actually to drain POW and channel it to their god. Most such feeding is actually upon a willing victim, as this is the means by which POW is dedicated to Vyako by his devotees.

SPIRITS AND DAEMONS

Supernatural beings are all those that do not normally manifest as a physical presence, although many can if they so choose. They can be further divided into: Spirits, who have no physical form unless bound into an object or creature; Daemons, who can choose

whether to manifest as a physical entity or not. Many of the gods are essentially very powerful daemons that people worship.

Possession by one of these creatures is quite common and sometimes benign. You can often detect the presence of a spirit or daemon possession without the help of magic, because when it takes over a body or is bound within an object it can produce physical effects that range from the subtle (e.g. someone possessed by a fire-daemon may be slightly warm to the touch) to the downright obvious (e.g. they may in fact be sprouting flame from every orifice).

SPIRITS

Spirits generally have only INT, POW and CHA, along with powers or traits that reflect the life they once lived, may one day live, or the gods and powers to whom they are aligned. They miss physical existence and do tend to like hanging around people, places and events that make them feel connected to the physical world and different types of spirit will gravitate to different things. They are not usually dangerous unless directed by another power, or disturbed by meddling mortals.

Some spirits are capable of appearing to living beings in the physical world, and may even engage an Adventurer in Spectral Combat without disincorporating him first. More information on Spirit Manifestation can be found in the Spirit Magic chapter.

DAEMONS

Daemons are creatures that tend to have agendas to pursue, however limited. 'Daemons' include all creatures that can exist both as physical and spirit entities – elementals and nymphs as well as classically horned and barb-tailed evildoers. They are not necessarily evil but there is no reason to expect them to act in a friendly fashion unless it suits them and some of them simply have toxic natures or unpleasant personalities. Daemons are rarely unique creatures and each generally belongs to a type or species, however Daemons can have very individual and idiosyncratic characters just like people. Lesser Daemons are those who do not have a complete set of Characteristics – such as elementals – and are susceptible to both summoning and binding. Other sorts of Daemons, possessed of all Characteristics, can be summoned but often require more power or skill to control. They are not easily bound, so many sorcerers resort to doing deals with them instead. A deal may include the formation of a Pact, in which the Sorcerer gifts the Daemon with POW or something else it desires, in return for a favour or service. Daemons are nearer to the Gods than humans are and many of them pursue the ambition to attract worshippers and become a god.

COMMON DAEMON TYPES

Elementals: These creatures lack a full set of Characteristics and are of the lower order of Daemon, no matter how big and dangerous they are. Elementals are the most easily bound of all Daemons. Alongside the expected Water, Air, Fire and Earth elementals are to be found the bizarre but very useful Flesh elementals.

Nymphs: Ranging from minor nature Daemons to goddesses in their own right, nymphs can be found in almost any place of natural power. A good relationship with the local nymph is often essential to successful efforts at hunting, gathering and agriculture.

Imps: A class of Daemon that can be found in many shapes and sizes, usually serving as henchmen and followers to more powerful Daemons. Clever and magical, Imps are very useful to the sorcerer who knows how to summon and control them. They are known to accept agreements to serve a sorcerer for up to a year and a day (based on the Duration applied to the summoning ritual), assisting him in his work and studies. The cost of their services is something rare and almost impossible to obtain – or something very dear to the sorcerer that is almost impossible to give up. While Imps make excellent henchmen, if the sorcerer fails to fulfil their half of the bargain an Imp will usually attempt to carry off his soul or the soul of someone very dear to him, as an alternative. Using the Soul Stealer trait, the Imp gets three attempts to take a soul and can make one attempt per month. Each time he must match his POW x 5 against the target's Persistence in an opposed test. If he fails three times he is frustrated for good and the victim is safe.

Plague Demons (SIZ <1, INT 1D6+6, POW 5D6, CHA 1D6):

The most hated sort of daemon, one that can infect a human being with a deadly illness without even possessing them, then move on to afflict another. Sickness Spirits are often created from the souls of their victims - a Plague Demon is actually following a natural instinct to procreate. Although a Plague Demon has a material form, it is in reality a miasma that can only really be seen with use of magic, however the Lore (Medicine) skill can detect its presence. Due to its lack of substance to attack, the demon is immune to almost all physical damage, increasing the terror with which it is regarded. Most victims never even know they are under attack.

A Plague Demon can attack any victim within its CHA in metres for a cost of 1 Magic Point. It matches its Virulence (POWx5) against the target's Resilience. If successful the demon infects its victim with whatever disease it carries; if it fails the victim is immune to that particular demon. Either way, the Plague Demon is ready to go off in search of its next victim. Plague Demons cannot move independently but can ride on air currents or in liquids, or can hitch a ride on the victim or another creature that has come into direct contact with it.

A plague demon's victim is contagious and anyone who comes into contact with him in ways likely to allow infection is attacked with a virulence equal to the Plague Demon's POWx4; if they are infected they are also contagious, with a virulence of POWx3 and so on.

A Plague Demon cannot regenerate Magic Points, and when these are reduced to zero its force is spent and it disappears whence it came.

Wraiths: Wraiths are fearsome and malevolent ghosts caught between physical and spiritual worlds. Wraiths are connected to

IMP

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	3D6	10–11	1–3	Right Leg	–/4
CON	3D6	10–11	4–6	Left Leg	–/4
SIZ	2D6	7	7–9	Abdomen	–/5
INT	2D6+9	16	10–12	Chest	–/6
POW	3D6+6	16–17	13–15	Right Arm	–/3
DEX	3D6	10–11	16–18	Left Arm	–/3
CHA	3D6	10–11	19–20	Head	–/4

Combat Actions	3
Damage Modifier	–1D2
Magic Points	16
Movement	8m
Strike Rank	11

Typical Armour: None

Traits: Magic Sense; Soul Stealer; Talent for Magic

Magic: Sorcery (Imp Grimoire) 78%, Manipulation 84%: Animate (Air, Water, Fire, Stone or Flesh), Castback, Damage Boosting, Damage Enhancement, Diminish (Characteristic), Enchanting Ritual, Enhance (Characteristic), Spell Resistance

Skills: Craft (Alchemist) 104%, Craft (Enchanter) 104%, Dance 66%, Education 88%, Evaluate 68%, Language (Any) 64%, Lore (Elixirs) 96%, Lore (Potions) 104%, Perception 96%, Persistence 64%, Resilience 33%, Sleight 44%, Stealth 53%

WEAPONS

Type	Size	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Knife	S	S	1D3+1–1D2	5/4

Combat Style: Brawl 42%

WRAITH

	Dice	Average	1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	3D6	10–11	1–20	Body	–/11
CON	—	—			
SIZ	3D6	10–11			
INT	2D6	7			
POW	3D6	10–11			
DEX	3D6	10–11			
CHA	3D6	10–11			

Combat Actions	2
Damage Modifier	—
Magic Points	11
Movement	10m
Strike Rank	9

Typical Armour: N/A

Traits: Dark Sight; Immune to Normal Attacks: Only magical damage affects the Wraith's body; Life Sense; Physical Manifestation

Magic: Wraiths are too single minded to remember any magic that they knew in life.

Skills: Manifest 60%, Evade 30%, Perception 50%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 50%, Stealth 53%

WEAPONS

Type	Size	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Smother	L	T	Suffocation	—/—
Spectral Claw	—	T	1D6	—/—

Combat Style: Smother 55%, Spectral Combat 55%.

the environment in which they met their end – the most famous types are the howling dust devils of the Korazoon Desert and the Sea-Wraiths to be found in the Doldrums of Hiolanta. Different types of wraith form a physical body out of different materials – ice, water, dust, fire, vegetation and even darkness. They can appear to be roughly human in form but on close inspections are a swirling seething mass of whatever it is they take their form from. However Wraiths can be at their most dangerous in Spectral Combat. If one gains an advantage in Spectral Combat it can deploy a Combat Manoeuvre that robs the victim of either a Characteristic point or 1D20% of a skill, depending on the type of Wraith. Some wraiths drain DEX and DEX-based skills, others STR and STR-based skills and so on. If a wraith reduces a foe to zero Magic Points, they continue to drain the victim on each subsequent combat action until driven away, or the victim dies, or the victim has nothing left they can steal. Whether or not they succeed in engaging the victim in Spectral Combat, a wraith can physically attack their unfortunate victims by smothering them, forcing themselves into their victim's body through the nose and mouth and choking them to death. A victim who fails to Evade the smother attack immediately starts asphyxiation.

GODS

While most gods are supernatural beings, not all of them started out that way. Any entity that becomes the object of worship and can provide some benefits for its worshippers in return is entitled to be termed a god and history records several human beings who have achieved this status in their lifetimes. Gods cannot be compelled to appear by summoning but they can be called – through a divine spell provided to their worshippers for the purpose. A god that answers the call makes an 'epiphany' and is present in a real sense, however all the more powerful ones manifest a version or aspect of themselves rather than reveal their full glory, which can be disturbing to mere mortals. Gods cannot be compelled to do anything but must be bargained with and this is the root of the Divine Magic Pact.

Gods come in many shapes and sizes. The greatest are the Titans, those that you will know about even if you do not worship them – they have been fixtures in the make-up of the world since it began. In fact the Titans may be so high and mighty that in many cultures they attract a rather exclusive following or none at all, because they are so beyond the human condition that people cannot relate to them. Nor can any single human culture grasp the entirety of their natures, so it is normal that the way in which they are worshipped in one place bears little relation to how they are worshipped in other lands. Mother Earth, Emperor Sun, Father Ocean and Queen of Heaven are examples of Titans. Lesser Titans are of the same generation but of more limited power and aspect. The Moon, the Planets and the key Natures – Fire, Water, Flesh, Air and Stone lead this group. The Titans are more or less immutable and can afford a measure of indifference about their popularity as objects of worship.

The remaining arrays of gods are very specific – they are attached to a particular place or field of activity but they may, through their heritage, combine powers and natures inherited or borrowed from the Titans. They have a more precarious existence and are motivated

to recruit worshippers in order to maintain and grow their power. They fit themselves closely to the needs and social structures of human beings, because this is what wins them followers and followers bring them POW dedications that keep them strong and enhances their status amongst other gods. Likewise there are the demigods, ancestors and heroes, formerly mortal creatures who have ascended to a state of godhood thanks to their actions in their mortal lives, who despite their junior ranking among deities are often the most enthusiastically worshipped because they are closer to humanity. Gods are gathered into pantheons, which simply means an array of gods who are receptive to the same Rites (specific culture) skill. Some gods may happily belong to more than one pantheon but perhaps show a different side of themselves to worshippers in each one. There are gods who do not belong to a pantheon, or who currently have no worshippers and this includes a huge number of minor deities, demigods and demons.

The gods do not all live in one place but are scattered about the physical world, spirit world and the Many Hells – it is almost a definition of a god that it is a being that exists in more than once reality at once. However many gods are still geographically fixed and while able to move freely along the axis between types of existence, cannot range beyond a specific locale in any one of them, or are limited to a specific pathway or element. Most gods are described in terms of gender, however this can be quite confused and of course not always a relevant term of reference for so complex an entity as a deity.

GOOD AND EVIL

There is no easy way to define good and evil in *Age of Treason*. In the absence of the warping and dangerous power of Chaos and with no Dark Lord or Devil to marshal the forces of destruction just because it is the wrong thing to do, an Adventurer will have to make his own mind up about what is good and what is bad and choose his friends and foes accordingly. It is a hard and dangerous world that can easily breed hard and dangerous people; belonging to some form of community where you can experience empathy and kindness is, for most, a necessary moral compass. While it is common to refer to *chaos* as an evil, it is not regarded as something that exists as an actual force or entity but to describe a state of affairs in which the normal order of things – and social order in particular – has collapsed and left the door open to revolution, famine, invasion and magical or natural catastrophe.

Most people accept that fortune affects their lives on a daily basis and besides seeking the help of the gods they can do nothing about it. Wars, for example, are not in themselves evil but they are clearly unfortunate because they breed a state of chaos, people will suffer and many innocent people will die. However if the victims can identify a guiding intelligence behind such events they have a right to consider that intelligence to be evil whether it is human or divine. Very often the same old culprits are to blame – relativism has its limits. There are deities, demons and plenty of people in the world that have very unpleasant natures and absolute indifference to the suffering of any other creature that their actions may cause.

Mankind needs a functioning society to keep him safe in such a world. Hence those who threaten to compromise its integrity or

even to tear down society from within or without can be regarded as evil, because their actions will surely result in untold suffering and distress to ordinary folk as chaos takes hold.

Humanity is dominant and its expansion has frequently been at the expense of other species, driven to extinction or forced into the badlands. The survivors of these species, some of which are sentient and capable of bearing a grudge, would have good reason to consider humanity as an evil force in the world. Of course, anything that threatens its own existence is bad so far as humanity is concerned but humans really need only fear the gods – and each other. Some human societies are distasteful to outsiders. The Orcs of Kasperan with their holocausts of human sacrifices and the Uxmali with their taste for human flesh are likely to be considered baddies by most. However they do not do what they do in order to be evil and spiteful but because their societies have developed that way and their customs seem to them to be reasonable and right – or at least necessary.

TECHNOLOGY

There are no universal physical laws as in our world but for the most part nature behaves in a predictable fashion and in accordance with rules that can be discerned through observation. Due to the presence of supernatural forces these rules are provisional, which means that it is difficult to be precise about how the world behaves and scientific enquiry is a pretty speculative discipline. Those who pursue it, like the Materialist Movement philosophers in the Sultanate of Perlak, are mostly after a better understanding of magic, which is a catch-all term for forces, powers and effects that run contrary to the 'normal' rules.

Given the obstacles to reaching a reliable scientific view of the world and the fact that magic absorbs a significant proportion of the energies of intellectuals, technological development tends to be very slow. Magic is a more obvious and showy way to respond to the needs of society so there is no particular demand for technological innovation to drive economic benefits. New developments often take the form of a marriage of a magical process with the application of high-end craftsmanship and as a result the tendency is to create unique artefacts that are very hard to reproduce and do not lead down a path of continuous innovation upon previous inventions.

The world leaders in technology are the Artificers of Sorandib, who attempt to school their apprentices in both craft skills – architecture, surgery, metalworking and so forth – and magical arts. Despite all their centuries of research and development there are few outputs from Sorandib that ever lead to mass manufacture. The only objects that become commonplace are the most basic, quickly made and replicated, with the least potential for going wrong. Monoculars that help the user see spirits or magical auras have been a popular example, as have black powder weapons with a spell-trigger or enchanted ammunition.

Humanity is still very much dependent on the sweat of the labouring classes to provide for its needs. A few small but important inventions, such as the wheelbarrow, help matters along but the rhythm of the agricultural year and the availability of manpower

for construction projects provide the limiting factor on human endeavours. Four-legged help is usually on hand, from donkeys and mules to horses and camels but as no one has invented the horse collar yet heavy loads have to be pulled by slow-footed oxen.

The quickest form of long distance travel is by sea or along rivers so far as they are navigable. Single-mast square rigged vessels, sometimes supplemented by oars, are the standard maritime technology and without magical assistance they are entirely at the mercy of prevailing winds and currents to set their speed of progress. However the trading nation of Sharranket has, in the last century or so, set upon a golden age of sailing, with massive ocean-going ships sporting several masts and lateen rigged sails taking their adventurous merchants to far distant lands – and returning laden with rare and exotic plunder.

The key metals in regular use all occur naturally and do not need alloying. Bronze is a yellow metal found all over but particularly used in the West and by the Oceanic races. It is favoured by some because it does not readily corrode (hence the popularity for seafaring people) and is very showy when polished up to a shine. In the East the grey metal iron is more common for everyday purposes but if it has similar practical qualities to bronze, it is particularly prone to corrosion if not well looked after. On the plus side it can be turned into steel, in which case it is more durable and can hold a better edge. Some people get by with little access to metals. In Uxmal metals are considered rare and exotic but they substitute with knives of magically hardened bone, or blades and clubs fashioned from the wood of specially cultivated 'weapon trees'. In Jandekot various stones are used that can be knapped to an edge, or again just useful wood and bone, while the Orcs of Kasperan, who spend a lot of time around volcanoes, make extensive use of obsidian, which comes in a variety of colours (not just black), each colour thought to possess different spiritual and magical properties.

MAGIC

Magic is caused by the existence of a supernatural dimension that overlays and intertwines with the physical world. It is in effect the energy generated through the interaction of these two dimensions. Harnessing this energy may come easily to otherworld entities that can move between forms of existence but for human beings it is quite a feat. Getting the help of the gods is the most efficient and often the most efficacious way of doing so. Working independently is much more difficult – sorcerers and shamans spend lifetimes learning to master their professions.

Magic can replace violence as the means through which people strive against one another – and it can both curb and enhance destructive forces. Like any other resource it is usually more readily accessible to those with wealth and status and so in some societies access to it serves to deepen class divisions. There are even whole cultures who are magic-poor, because they have few resources and no infrastructure to develop the magical potential of their people.

One of the principle things people want to use magic for in *Age of Treason* is to escape the limitations placed on them by their own humanity – whether that is to give them extraordinary mental or physical

capabilities, immunity from diseases or eternal life. The fact that using magic holds out such hopes is not only one of the chief reasons for its ubiquity but also for the inevitable pursuit of magical enhancements even when society frowns upon them. Spells, enchantments, potions, divine gifts and spirit possession all have a part to play in the search to be more than nature alone would allow. Eventually those who augment themselves to extremes enter territory where they perhaps have passed beyond being human and become something else. That 'something' may be as wonderful as achieving godhood or as terrible as becoming some cursed abomination such as a Vampire.

RUNES

The *Age of Treason* setting does not have a fixed set of Runes that have an objective reality or that are universally recognised across the world. There are magical systems that make significant use of magical symbols but these symbols only have such power and meaning as is invested in them by their creators and vary greatly from one culture to another. As a result an Adventurer cannot attune himself to a rune, although similar effects may result from the relationships that a character forms with the supernatural in other ways.

TYPES OF MAGIC

The choice of magic available to any individual depends very much on tradition and history. While it is possible to generalise that Sorcery is a civilised man's game and Spirit Magic is the preserve of primitives and barbarians, this is not at all an absolute rule. There are highly civilised and literate cultures such as Yegusai and Zagre that practice Spirit Magic, where the priestly class is made up of powerful shamans. There are also more or less barbarous societies that have a sorcery tradition, their lack of literacy being no obstacle when they have an incredibly rich store of magical poetry through which they can memorise and share the most complex ideas and information without need for the written word.

COMMON MAGIC

Common Magic is not universal and is not a discrete category of magic in the lands that are the focus of this book. Where it is found it is in the form of low-powered magical charms, cantrips and blessings that are in the grain of a culture or tradition and that provide some resource for those starved of the more potent forms of magic. It is rare for anyone to know a Common Magic spell of more than Magnitude 2. Some Common Magic spells may be specific to particular religious or cultural traditions but in general is not a magic system in its own right nor does it have a coherent philosophy behind it. There are cultures in the exotic West where Common Magic is more widely practiced and to a higher level of efficacy.

Common Magic might be cast using a number of skills depending on where and how it is learned, rather than with a separate Common Magic skill but otherwise behaves as per the rules in the *Legend Core Rulebook*.

DIVINE MAGIC

Divine Magic is the most effective way to channel magical energy from beyond the physical world, because there are supernatural

entities on the other end of it that define the effects of the spells and ensure that they work. The cosmos is littered with deities big and small who can offer Divine Magic and anyone can search out a relationship with one of these gods without necessarily having to join a cult to do so.

Divine Magic is usually cast using an Adventurer's Rites (Own) skill, assuming the deity belongs to the pantheon of gods worshipped in their native land. Those who wish to worship foreign gods may learn a foreign ritual tradition or acquire a Lore (Theology) skill specific to the deity in question with which to cast Divine Magic.

SPIRIT MAGIC

Spirit magicians are intent on the interactions and pathways between the material and spirit worlds. Their traditions sometimes involve or include the worship of gods but just as often provides their followers with an alternative way to access the supernatural and come to terms with it. Each tradition has certain types of spirits to which it is allied – lower ranking followers given such a spirit to control can do so using their Rites (Spirit Tradition) rather than Spirit Binding.

Those who follow Spirit Magic traditions may be taught Spirit Binding, however Spirit Walking is not a readily accessible ability and is usually unlocked through a Heroic Ability, Divine Magic, a rare talent or powerful drugs.

SORCERY

Sorcery is the major magic system for several important cultures, including the Taskan Empire. Knowledge of a few spells from a widely distributed grimoire may be quite common, however to be considered a professional sorcerer requires not only that you know a handful of spells but also that you are adept at manipulating them. The Manipulate skill is generally only taught to those serving as apprentices to a sorcerer, or through an order or guild. Sorcery is not entirely divorced from religion and even among those cultures that use Divine Magic it can provide a basic toolkit for everyday religious practices.

ALTERNATIVE MAGICAL SYSTEMS

In *Age of Treason* magic is used through a variety of arts that operate according to a variety of principals - but they are all simply alternative techniques for accessing and manipulating the same forces and are not exhaustive. It is quite possible for new approaches to magic to be discovered, encountered or invented. Like great artistic movements, schools of sorcery may flourish then disappear, spawn some avant-garde and revolutionary new approach, or find themselves the subject of a revivalist movement long after their original aims and purpose have been forgotten. They may dominate a whole culture, or be the product of a single insane genius. A GM should feel completely free to borrow alternative systems of magic that are compatible with the *Legend* system, or invent new ones, if it adds colour and excitement to their interpretation of the setting.

RELIGION AND DIVINE MAGIC

As long as you worship the divine Emperor Zygag Taga, you can call yourself a Taskan; nevertheless most citizens are also involved in other religious or magical activities and have a selection of favourite deities and demons with whose help they hope to weather the trials of life. Those who worship these gods do so for two reasons – firstly, so that they can access some support to help them get by in a hard and unforgiving world; and secondly, because nearly everyone is mortal and mortals who have irrefutable proof of life after death are very much concerned about what sort of eternity is in store for them. The Emperor offers plenty of practical assistance but no concrete promise of support and protection in the afterlife, so if that is what you want – and most people do – you have to look elsewhere.

An Adventurer's relationship with his favourite deities can be an entirely private affair. He may in fact maintain a devotion (Divine Magic Pact) to a particular god but drift in and out of different cults that worship it in different ways or in particular places and attend services of worship to many other gods besides. Most Taskan religious practice is conducted via sorcery, at rituals attended by people coming together as a family, group of friends, neighbours, co-workers or cultists. The Divine Emperor has a single cult that monopolises all access to him, as does Basat, whose cult is centred on the city of Pryjarna but spreads across much of the known world. All the other gods seem quite happy to allow rampant plurality and recognise as many different cults as humankind cares to flatter them with, and also happily receive acts of devotion from individuals.

Almost all religious activity is *transactional* - the worshipper seeks a benefit or favour from a god who is capable of providing what they need, and offers payment by way of magic points, POW dedications and service. Each culture has its own array of gods and demigods who they deal with through a common ritual system, even if some of those divinities have been gathered together from diverse sources. In *Age of Treason* a pantheon of gods is assembled not by the existence of specific families or types of gods but by a selective process on the part of a particular society or culture. Some gods may refuse to accept certain rites, others may be deliberately excluded from them or even forced to participate. An Adventurer can use their Rites (Taskan) skill to interact with any god who is part of the Tarsenian pantheon, whether participating

in a ceremony of worship or calling upon a divine favour they have received such as a blessing or Divine Magic spell.

THE TARSENIAN PANTHEON

Tarsenians do not, as a rule, bother worshipping the impersonal forces of nature or indeed those gods who are so powerful or abstract that they are difficult to relate to on a personal level. Their gods are nearer to man, each with an interest in some specific aspect of the human condition. The vast majority of people will have as many on their side as they can muster and maybe a clutch of more obscure or purely local deities as well. The inhabitants of the great cosmopolitan cities, or those such as merchants and adventurers who travel in foreign lands, may get the opportunity also to dabble with 'foreign' gods.

Foreigners sometimes scoff at the 'little gods' of Tarsenia. However the Tarsenians are no less proud of their gods than anyone else and hold them in great affection. The accusation that 'Your gods would be nothing were it not for your Empire' is traditionally countered, 'And you would be nothing were it not for your Gods'.

TARSEN

Tarsen is the legendary father of the Tarsenian people and the last human being known to have become a god before the Emperor Zygag Taga. He is regarded as the founder of civilisation and credited with the giving of laws and the invention of trade through which men learn how to live together and get what they need for survival without resorting to violence. Tarsen is the patron of merchants, shopkeepers and scribes. There is usually a statue to him in a city's most important meeting places.

THESH

The Tarsenian fire god and patron of the crafts which fire makes possible. He is also a death god since the Tarsenians almost without exception cremate their dead. He can therefore be called to preside over the last rites of a corpse before a dead man's spirit is sent on its way to the Many Hells. Thesh is the tutelary god of many guilds of craftsmen, chiefly metalworkers, armourers and blacksmiths. He is the patron god of Taskay, where the aristocracy also worship him

and a regiment of warriors made up of devotees in his cult form the Taskan equivalent of the Praetorian Guard.

HOONVEL

Hoonvel is credited with persuading the earth goddess Samanse to part with her daughter Kait, a grain goddess, for two thirds of the year to be his wife. Thus the ancestors learned to till the soil and harvest crops for food. Hoonvel is patron god of farmers as well as labourers, represented as a cheerful and bawdy fellow whose rites are usually drunken, riotous affairs. Hoonvel has no civic temples but is worshipped at rustic altars.

SAMANSE

This is the Tarsenian version of the eastern earth goddess Tolat. She is one of the few divinities of the Tarsenian pantheon to whom permanently staffed temples are erected. The women of a city elect honoured matrons from among their number to administer the temple, who preside over many of the important festivals in the life of the community and its citizens. There is always an altar to Kait within the precincts of her temple.

KAIT

Kait is the barley-goddess of the Tarsenians. She is most commonly represented in the persons of the young virgins who attend upon Samanse's priestesses and, at the appropriate festivals, of brides-to-be and expectant mothers. In ritual and myth she is closely tied to the farmer-god Hoonvel.

MACHANK

Machank is the favourite Tarsenian war-god. He gifts his devotees with great strength, courage and skill-at-arms. Only those who are willing to risk mortal danger should devote themselves to him, as he blesses his followers with a divine madness that compels them to seek out the point of maximum danger on the battlefield and never to flee before the enemy while there is still some goal to be achieved. Machank's military devotees always receive extra pay, along with an extra share of any captured booty and can count five years service for every one they complete. Those that survive more than a year or two in his service usually feel they have earned their renown and retire from active participation in his cult.

JARMOST

Jarmost is the patron of seafarers, travellers and astrologers. He taught men how to navigate by the stars and how to use a compass when the stars are not visible. He is also credited with the invention of the wheel, the first boat and the yoke – which he first used to pull a cart but later showed it to his brother Hoonvel who used it to draw a plough. Jarmost is also credited with the invention of numbers, which he placed upon a wheel to measure distance. 'Jarmost's Wheels' refers to an astrological device, which demonstrates the movements of the heavenly bodies and is a useful tool in navigation.

SUMIS

Sumis is a goddess of forest, mountain and other wild places of hunting and survival. Her worshippers are often those who wish

to explore their primal instincts and understand their place in nature's grand scheme. Some are hunters and woodsmen by trade. She has no permanently staffed temples but many Sacred Sites inhabited by unpredictable spirit guardians. Sumis can save those whom she loves from the dangers of the wild, or she can unleash those same dangers upon those she despises.

JEZRI

An imported Jekkarene goddess, whose initiates are young virgins dedicated to serve in the temples of Zygas Taga and his consort Jekkara. These girls perform ritual dances at the major festivals and live in strict seclusion overseen by a priestess. Jezri is manifest as the evening star, which accompanies the moon in the night sky.

JEKKARA

Temples to the night goddess are associated with those of Zygas Taga. Only Jekkarene women of noble birth may serve her and outside the cult's homeland its only role is to add extra pomp and mythic importance to the rites of Emperor worship. The Goddess is the fount of women's wisdom and is the patron of secret knowledge and the power that it brings. Jekkara's Divine Magic operates at only half Magnitude between dawn and dusk.

MERAI

Merai is the patron god of the creative arts – music, poetry, drama and dance – and also of the art of healing. He is the tutelary god of the city of Merat, which is the only place Major Rites are celebrated in his honour. Merai is usually represented as an adolescent with girlish features. His male devotees often disguise themselves as women and the women as men. Merai can gift his devotees with creative talents.

TETHIS

This goddess is the Tarsenian personification of love. She has a famous temple in Zarina, where the temple servants prostitute themselves in its courts. Her devotees are often wealthy urbanites who seek diversion through their sexual liaisons and build up complex social networks through which they indulge their passions.

BASAT

Basat is the Tarsenians' god of light, healing and selfless devotion. He is the arch enemy of the death-demon Gomorg, whose underworld minions only dare invade the world of men at night when Basat is at rest. In folklore Basat has courted Tethis with the help of Merai's poetry and song, and fought for her hand against her cruel husband Machank. He has also pursued his sister Sumis for love and rescued Kait from the underworld to restore her to his friend Hoonvel. Basat is a popular cult among soldiers. His great festival is held at the city of Pryjarna.

GOMORG

Gomorg has first claim to the souls of Tarsenians when they die. While his minions guide a departed soul to whatever destiny awaits them in the Many Hells, Gomorg can collect and dispose of those who have made no proper provision for the afterlife in

whatever way he sees fit. Gomorg is a god who is very possessive of his rights and privileges, among which is entitlement to lost souls. Gomorg's devotees are often undertakers by trade but he can also count amongst them necromancers and murderers, and condemned criminals are executed under his auspices. The Necropoleis in which the Tarsenians inter their dead usually have a small temple in his name at their heart.

HAMATH

Hamath is the champion of the poor but because the Empire supports its citizens who have fallen upon hard times Hamath is left with the care of the rootless, the oppressed, the enslaved and the outlawed. Hence he is also a god of thieves. The 'self help' groups which form under his patronage are notorious for helping themselves to other peoples' property. Hamath appears either male or female, usually as a fat wealthy character in the act of giving out donations.

WORSHIP

Religious observances take place all year round, in public and in private. Most of them are simple ceremonies powered by sorcery. These acts of worship, known as Minor Rites, offer the opportunity to sacrifice Magic Points to the gods and in return receive divine *Blessings*, which are the most common form of magical support for ordinary people who have not studied sorcery nor dedicated themselves to a Pact with a particular deity.

BLESSINGS

Blessings are temporary and low-powered benefits, the Tarsenian equivalent of Common Magic. They are the only benefit routinely received by ordinary worshippers who have not dedicated POW to enter into a devotional Pact with a god. An Adventurer who receives a Blessing at a Worship ceremony may call upon it at any time. For most purposes, the Adventurer should elect for the Blessing to be applied as a +10% dice roll modifier to a Skill Test nominated by the player. This requires an Adventurer's player to state what the Blessing is being invoked for and to make a successful Rites (Taskan) roll, but does not require an Adventurer to spend a Combat Action – it takes place simultaneously with the action they want the god's assistance for.

Blessings last for as long as the task to which it applies takes to complete. Typically this is for a single skill test or extended task (however if the Blessing is called upon part way through an extended task it does not apply retrospectively to the task rounds already completed).

Each Blessing is one-use, although it is possible to store them up to a maximum of CHA/5 (round up) and to stack them to provide a more substantial bonus. Each god provides Blessings in keeping with their sphere of influence so this modifier can normally be applied to a limited list of skills reflecting the god's Province, however the GM may allow a player to apply to any skill test if the purpose of the action is still in keeping with the god's interests.

In combat a Blessing may be applied as suits the situation or the purpose for which it was invoked. If an Adventurer asks the god to make him brave in the face of wounds the blessing may apply to all Resilience rolls; or if it is to keep him safe from harm it may apply to all Parry or Evade rolls for the duration of a combat; or if he asks to be deadly to the foe, it will apply to their Attack rolls. If a player states they wish to use a blessing to defeat a single specific enemy, the GM might allow all their rolls (Attacks, Parries, Evade rolls and Resilience rolls), in respect of that enemy only, to benefit from the effect of the Blessing until the one-on-one combat is finished. In any event the effects of a Blessing used in combat should never last for more than 5 minutes (the duration of an equivalent Common Magic spell), unless the GM allows the use of Hero Points to extend this time limit.

MINOR RITES (SORCERY)

The necessary rituals to conduct basic acts of worship are contained within Grimoires just like any other Sorcery spells and are known as Minor Rites. The officiating priest, or a chosen member of the congregation, must first Sanctify the place of worship, then he must lead the Worship (Specific Deity) ritual, which gives a religious ceremony magical efficacy. These spells are rituals, so they take some time to cast, with casting time measured in minutes rather than Combat Actions. In reality the process takes considerably longer – this only refers to the time it takes a priest to accomplish the magical part of the process and even then it is customary to take plenty of extra time to get it absolutely right. When the congregation is a large one, there may be several officiating priests present to ensure the widest possible distribution of divine Blessings.

Sanctify

Autonomous, Ritual, Duration Special

This spell creates a ritually pure area in which religious rites can be properly conducted. The spellcaster marks out an area of up to three metres squared per 10% of his grimoire skill. This spell lasts for the full length of a Worship ritual so long as the Worship ritual is begun during the spell's Duration. A Sacred Site is considered to be permanently sanctified and this spell is not needed.

Worship (Specific Deity)

Concentration, Ritual

A Worship (Specific Deity) rite can only be cast in a Sanctified area. Separate Worship (Specific Deity) spells exist for each and every deity of the pantheon and some exist that combine two or more deities into a single rite. The spell can be used to provide magical potency to a number of different sorts of religious service, depending on whether the specific deity is an appropriate object of worship for the occasion. All members of the congregation are expected to offer up at least 50% of their available Magic Points at these ceremonies. These Magic Points are spent as if cast and recovered at the normal rate. Anyone within the sanctified area who does not make a Magic Point Offering cannot benefit and

their very presence penalises the chance of the ritual's success by -10%. A successful Worship ritual means that the god gathers in all the Magic Points offered during the service and in return provides his Blessing. Some examples of common types of service are given here, with those gods whose Worship spell can be used shown in brackets.

Praise (all): A routine service of worship, part of which involves imparting the god's Blessings to the congregation. The priest may provide the Blessing to one worshipper per 10% of his Grimoire skill. He can himself single out the beneficiaries or leave it to the god to choose whom he favours. Adventurers seeking to regain the use of Divine Magic spells can attempt a roll to do so at a Worship (Specific Deity) rite if they are Pacted to the deity in question and have Divine spells from that deity to regain. However Minor Rites do not provide the conditions for a worshipper to enter into a pact with a deity, nor to advance a Pact by dedicating additional POW. That can only be done at a Major Rite or by visiting a Sacred Site where there can be a direct communication between supplicant and deity.

If the priest has a critical in the Worship ritual, the receipt of a Blessing by the entire congregation is automatic, or the GM may decide to increase the value of each Blessing granted to +15% or +20%, or even provide a Hero Point instead. In addition all members of the congregation who have a Pact with the deity gain 1% to their Pact score.

A priest may Combine Worship spells for gods within the pantheon which is common practice. Those who benefit from Blessings can choose which god's Blessing they will take.

Funeral Rites (Thesh; Gomorg; Tarsen; Basat; Jekkara): A successful casting means that the deceased will be given a swift passage and guidance to the Many Hells. It does not guarantee a happy afterlife but it does guarantee that they will make the transition without getting lost or being snared in the physical world as a ghost. If the funeral is for multiple individuals the priest must Manipulate the spell to cover multiple targets. Most priests are not equipped to do so, and some deities can offer Divine Magic solutions to mass cremations as might happen during a plague or after a battle.

Marriage Rites (Hoonvel; Tarsen; Hamath; Samanse; Tethis; Kait; Jekkara): A successful casting may bless one target, usually the bride but can affect both bride and groom if an extra target is added through spell Manipulation. The target(s) will share one Blessing per 10% of the priest's Grimoire skill.

PRIESTS

While usually being paid as contractors to officiate at weddings, funerals and routine acts of worship, some priests secure permanent positions on a state-maintained board of priests or are attached to a particular cult, temple or sacred site. Taskan religion has no dogma to be inculcated and enforced. A priest's only purpose is to see to it that rituals are properly performed at the appropriate times.

Ordinary priests are not able to conduct Major Rites. For that one also needs to be a devotee or initiate who has a pact with the god, as the necessary magic is a Divine Magic spell. The need for people who are both closely allied to a deity and well versed in the necessary rituals to call on their help for the benefit of the whole community is one of the reasons why cults are formed and supported by the state.

PRIESTS' GRIMOIRES

The spells required to run a service of worship are easy enough to come by and many are in the public domain, inscribed on pillars in public places and etched into bronze sheets pinned up in temple precincts or simply recorded on scrolls in public libraries. However it is common for cults or private individuals to hire in professional priests who can be relied upon to get things right and to introduce a suitable degree of gravitas to the occasion. To make a decent living a professional priest needs a single Grimoire that covers a number of specific Worship (Specific Deity) rites. Such Grimoires are often closely guarded, held by families that have priesthood as a traditional calling, or by guilds and colleges of practitioners that act as trade bodies, offering professional training and viewing other colleges as competition for the available trade.

Priestly Grimoires usually also contain one or two useful spells such as Treat Wounds or Mystic Vision that allow a priest to provide a slightly more holistic service to their clients.

A typical priests' grimoire contains the following sorcery spells:

Sanctify; 1D6 x Worship (Specific Deity) spells;

1D4 other sorcery spells selected from:

Banish; Glow; Intuition; Mystic Vision; Restoration; Sense (specific supernatural entity); Spirit Resistance; Treat Wounds

MAJOR RITES (DIVINE MAGIC)

A Major Rite is a religious ceremony in which Pacts can be concluded between men and gods; worshippers dedicate POW in an act of Devotion and Divine Magic, Gifts or Miracles asked in return.

DEVOTION

To create a bond with a particular deity and access Divine Magic, as well as other benefits, an Adventurer makes a Pact with them through a process called *Devotion*. In the *Age of Treason* setting a worshipper frequently taps the god directly as a private bargain, without cult involvement. Some cults may indeed insist that a character has already devoted himself to their god before considering him for membership!

An Adventurer has to be in the presence of a deity to make an act of devotion. There are four ways this usually happens:

A Religious Festival: Using the Call (specific deity) Divine Magic spell, the deity is summoned to receive the prayers and devotions of anyone present who offers them. Each city hosts

a number of these festivals every year, one for each of the city or province's favourite gods. Festivals are public and open to all, usually including pilgrims from other cities. Participating in a festival is the equivalent to prayer at a Major Temple (see *Legend Core Rulebook*) for the purpose of acquiring and regaining Divine Magic.

A Sacred Site: A place where the God has regularly appeared in the past, leaving an accumulated residue that means in some numinous way that it is now always present. A few such places are open to anyone who wants to come and worship there but many are controlled by cults, who limit access to their own members or perhaps expect payment or tribute from strangers who seek to approach 'their' god. Many of the most venerable public temples have become Sacred Sites through years of use. Sacred Sites have variable potency and can range from equivalent of a Shrine right up to a Major Temple for the purpose of acquiring and regaining Divine Magic.

A Sacred Artefact: A portable version of a Sacred Site, this is an object that is touched by the god and has the power to channel the worshipper directly to him. Unless discovered in some ancient ruin, Artefacts are almost always under the control of a cult. A Sacred Artefact also acts in the same way as a Minor Temple in *Legend*, for the purpose of acquiring Divine Magic.

An Inspired Holy Person: Essentially someone whose Pact score is so high and his identification with the god so close, that he has become a channel to the god (a Heroic Ability). Almost always the leader or object of a cult, a Holy Person acts as a Shrine for the purpose of acquiring Divine Magic.

HOLY MAN (HEROIC ABILITY)

Requirements: Rites 70%+, Pact 100%+

Hero Points: 12

Duration: 1 Hour

This Heroic Ability allows an Adventurer to be 'inspired' and channel the god with whom they have a Pact. Using this ability also creates a Sanctified area around the Hero covering three square metres per Magic Point spent, within which a Worship ritual can be conducted. A successful casting of the Worship (Specific Deity) spell while this ability is active allows those participating in the ritual to enter into or increase a Pact by dedicating POW to the god and to learn Divine Magic spells, as if the god were present in person.

Procedure

The worshipper offers the god a dedication of one or more points of POW for a bargain in which the God harvests the Magic Points from the dedicated POW and in return provides the worshipper with his favour and access to his magics and gifts. The God naturally expects that his devotees will make efforts to further their Pact over time, offering up further POW dedications and Magic Point offerings to their benefit. Human beings are their clients in both the ancient and modern senses of the word.

Because there is not a cult acting as intermediary, the god will make a judgement of whether the supplicant is worthy of his favour. The specific test varies from deity-to-deity; however the most common measure of a supplicant's suitability is their Rites (Taskan) skill. A critical modifier from one relevant skill may also apply. If the Adventurer's act of Devotion is successful, they gain a Pact skill representing their bond with the god.

PACT (CHA+DEDICATED POW)

A Pact is a commitment to honour a bargain with a god through devoting one's soul through worship. The making of a Pact is represented by dedicating one or more points of POW to the god. The devotee still possesses the POW for calculating skills but it is the god who harvests the Magic Points from the dedicated POW. The Adventurer must dedicate a minimum of one point and a maximum of one quarter of his available POW. The dedicated POW then forms the basis of his Pact Skill.

An Adventurer may be devoted to more than one god and thus have several concurrent Pact skills. The Magic Points available to the Adventurer are limited to the amount of his undedicated POW. Thus, an Adventurer with a POW of 12 dedicating a total of seven points to his gods would have only five Magic Points available for use elsewhere. Once a point of POW has been dedicated to a god, it cannot be used for any other Pacts, until the Pact expires. A Pact cannot be renounced, however if a year and a day has passed and the Pact skill has not increased, the Pact lapses. If this should happen the related Pact skill is reduced to zero and the lapsed devotee is prevented from using any Divine Magic from that god, however some or all POW previously dedicated may return to the Adventurer. At the end of a year in which an Adventurer has made regular (at least monthly) religious observance at a Worship ceremony, their Pact with that deity, if they have one, will increase by one.

Dedicated POW forms the basis of a 'pool' of points used to power Divine Magic spells. For example, a devotee with 4 POW dedicated to his god has 4 POW to invest in Divine spells. Sometimes an Adventurer can dedicate POW for a specific Gift or Miracle from their god. This may be the acquisition of a Talent, an immediate cure or perhaps an increase in a skill or Characteristic. This POW adds to the Adventurer's Pact skill but is not available to spend on Divine Magic and if the Pact lapses, the Adventurer is Excommunicated or if they die, it is taken permanently by the god and the Adventurer's POW is permanently reduced.

There are gods – such as Thesh and Machank – who send one of their spirit minions to covertly possess the devotee in order to more directly affect the physical world through their worshipper. This is a 'free gift' (no additional POW dedication required) but sometimes has its drawbacks, as the host worshipper will have only limited control over the possessing spirit.

The starting value of the Pact skill is equal to CHA + Dedicated POW. Like any other skill it can be developed through the

spending of Improvement rolls, improving the CHA Characteristic or dedicating further POW. Pacts can also be increased in other ways, as the Pact Improvement table (see *Legend Core Rulebook*) demonstrates. The higher the Pact skill, the more dedicated the follower. It is not a measure of how much an Adventurer knows about the god.

DIVINE MAGIC

Divine Magic works in accordance with the *Legend Core Rulebook* with the following exceptions:

ACQUIRING DIVINE MAGIC

To acquire a Divine Magic Spell, a devotee must again access the god using the same criteria as for seeking out a Pact. A worshipper must access a Sacred Site, Artefact, Holy Person or attend a Festival to acquire Divine Magic. Certain spells are specified in the *Legend* rules as reserved for those of acolyte rank or higher; since much Divine Magic is acquired and cast without involvement with a cult, the GM may choose to impose a minimum Pact skill of 50% or 75% to acquire them.

CASTING DIVINE SPELLS

Most deities in the Tarsenian pantheon provide Divine Magic that is cast using a Rites (Taskan) skill common to all of them, instead of individual Lore (Specific Theology) skills. For devotees of those gods who are only accessed via a cult or for initiates of Mystery Cults who insist their members only do things according to their own house rules, a Lore (Specific Theology) skill is still used. For example, Zygag Taga priests and acolytes use the Lore (Emperorcult Theology) skill and all Basat worshippers use the Lore (Basati Theology) skill.

REGAINING DIVINE SPELLS

For Devotees with access to Divine Magic spells, the *Legend* rules for initiates apply. However the requirement to head to a temple to pray is also satisfied by attending any properly constituted act of Worship in a sanctified place, or by private prayer in a Sacred Site or in the presence of a Sacred Artefact or inspired Holy Person. Acolyte and Priest ranks must do the same if they fail their Pact rolls to regain a used spell.

The table on the following page provides a summary of the Divine Magic on offer from each of the gods, as well as special requirements and limitations where they apply.

SPELL DESCRIPTIONS

Call (Specific Deity)

Duration Special, Rank Acolyte

For each of the Tarsenian gods there is a special Divine Magic spell, Call (specific deity), which is usually only used on the God's annual High Holy Day in each city or province. Call (specific deity) brings forth an epiphany of the God, who will inhabit a cult statue, relic or even a worshipper for the Duration of the spell and be paraded before the masses. The spell is cast in a sanctified area but the purpose is to make the god available to the people

as a whole, so it should take place in a big open public space, or summon the god to possess a person or thing that can be paraded around the city.

This spell is only ever made available to someone with a Pact skill of no less than 75%; the local authorities in each city or province will be keen to make sure that the local cults can furnish an individual able and willing to access the spell in order to properly observe the god's annual festival. As a result, there is usually at least one cult honouring each important local deity that has official recognition and support and is expected to nurture individuals within their ranks who meet this requirement. The Duration of the spell is 15 minutes per 10% of the caster's Pact skill and the actual epiphany is the centrepiece of religious observances that can last for several days.

Any state-level magics cast in the God's presence will take their proper effect and everyone else who actively participates and offers up at least 50% of their Magic Points for the day and succeeds in a Rites (own) roll, will benefit from the god's Blessing.

Such major rites usually take place within the local capital at the god's public temple, however sometimes there is a more important Sacred Site or temple outside of the city and everyone goes there instead. Cults may acquire (through their members) the Call (specific deity) Divine spell and conduct Major Rites in private – calling the God forth without state sanction or public access. This is regarded as bad form, probably treasonous and is a politically dangerous thing to do.

Blast Crops

Duration Special, Touch

This spell has the opposite effect to the standard spell Bless Crops. It affects a number of square kilometres equal to the Magnitude of the spell. The target area will be infested with creatures that root out seed corn from the ground and the field itself will be choked with weeds that force out all crops planted by man. Blast Crops and Bless Crops cancel each other out. Each instance of this spell known by a worshipper can be used once per year.

Bless Barley

Duration Special, Touch

This spell is cast on barley after it has been harvested. Each point of Magnitude blesses one large sack (10 ENC) of barley so that it has premium qualities; Blessed Barley is more highly prized and nutritious than wheat and the well-to-do insist that both bread and beer are made from it. Blessed Barley is sold at no less than three times the going rate for regular barley.

Calculate

Duration 15, Concentration

The caster of this spell is able to mentally calculate complex sums, equations and formulae with astonishing rapidity and accuracy. The spell is mostly used for navigation, generating architectural and

NAME	PROVINCES	BLESSINGS	DIVINE MAGIC
Basat	Brotherhood, Healing, Life,	Athletics, First Aid, Healing, Resilience	Daybright , Excommunication, Restore Corpse, Resurrect, Shield, Spirit Block, Truespeak; Turn Undead
Gomorg	Afterlife, Burial, Death	Craft (Undertaker), Disguise, Grimoire (necromantic only), Persistence	Call Gomorg, Dismiss Ghost , Sever Spirit, Soul Sight, Spirit Block, Summon Spirit
Hamath	Generosity, Liberty, Thievery	Gambling, Influence, Orate, Sleight, Streetwise; Luck: Adventurer's player may request the GM to adjust a roll in his Adventurer's favour.	Alter Target, Behold, Call Hamath , Reflection
Hoonvel	Agriculture, Husbandry, Labour	Brawn, Craft (Farming; Animal, Brewer; Butcher, Carpentry), Lore (Regional), Resilience Son: An Adventurer can use Hoonvel's blessing to shift the probability that a child conceived will be male by +10.	Call Hoonvel , Channel Strength, Dismiss Gnome, Laughter, Rain, Summon Gnome
Jarmost	Crafts, Invention, Navigation	Craft (Cartographer, Jeweller, Mason, Shipbuilder), Mechanisms, Navigation, Shiphandling, Teaching Ideas: Adventurer's player may use Jarmost's Blessing for any INT roll (e.g. if GM calls for INTx3 Idea roll).	Calculate, Call Jarmost , Clear Skies, Ebb and Flow
Jekkara	Intuition, Magic, Night	Grimoire, Influence, Insight, Meditation, Persistence Magician: Adventurer may use Jekkara's Blessing to add +10% to Manipulation for the purpose of casting one spell.	Absorption, Call Jekkara , Disarm, Eclipse, Gleam, Heal Body, Moonbright , Reflection
Jezri	Dance, Obedience, Virginity	Acrobatics, Athletics, Dance, Persistence	Call Jezri, Synchronise
Kait	Barley, Brewing, Crops	Craft (Farming), Lore (Regional), Persistence Daughter: An Adventurer can use Kait's blessing to shift the probability that a child conceived will be female by +10.	Bless Barley , Call Kait, Evergreen
Machank	Battle, Conflict, Killing	Brawl, Brawn, Evade, Resilience, Weapon Attack Damage: Adventurer may substitute +2 damage for +10 to attack.	Berserk, Call Machank , Fear, Seal Wound , Shield, Summon Warspite, True Weapon
Merai	Arts, Music, Performance	Art (any), Dance, Persistence, Play Instrument, Sing	Aphrodisiac, Call Merai , Channel Strength
Samanse	Crafts, Family, Motherhood	Craft (cook, potter, tailor, weaver), Healing, Influence, Persistence, Rites (Taskan)	Block Sickness Spirit, Call Samanse , Cure Poison, Disarm, Dismiss Gnome, Donate , Heal Wound, Soul Sight, Summon Gnome
Sumis	Hunting, Nature, Wild Animals	Lore (Regional), Ranged Attack, Stealth, Survival, Track Good hunting: Adventurer's player may request the GM to adjust an encounter roll in the Adventurer's favour to produce a result of a suitable quarry.	Beast Form, Blast Crops, Call Sumis , Evergreen, Fear, Fog, Madness, Regenerate Limb, Sureshot
Tarsen	Civilisation, Law, Literacy	Commerce, Culture (any), Education, Evaluate, Influence, Language (any), Lore (Law), Orate,	Call Tarsen, Covenant , Mindlink, Sanctuary, Tongues
Tethis	Fertility, Love, Prostitution	Craft (sex), Insight, Persistence, Resilience, Seduction	Aphrodisiac, Call Tethis , Fertility
Thesh	Fire, Metallurgy, War	Athletics, Command, Craft (Armourer), Craft (Smith), Engineering, Lore (Tactics), Mounted Combat, Resilience	Summon Salamander, Dismiss Salamander, Incinerate , Shield, Call Thesh

Spell names shown in bold are described in this book.

engineering plans and for quickly assessing logistical requirements (for example the food and water requirements of a military expedition). The recipient of the spell will be able to answer the most difficult questions that might normally take several days work within the Duration of the spell. The GM should allow one Skill Test in relevant Lore skills or Education per point of Magnitude for each casting.

Covenant

Duration Special, Enchantment

A Covenant spell is used to stake your life on a promise made – or more usually, to force someone else to do so. The target of the spell is the individual making the pledge, who must be a willing participant in the process, however begrudgingly. The covenant can be any oath or promise agreed between caster and target. The target speaks or reads aloud the oath that this spell will enforce and the caster provides the spell, or spells, that will afflict the target should he break his promise. These spells can be of any kind and are fuelled by dedicated POW provided by the target, 1 POW for each Magic Point required to cast a sorcery spell and 1 POW for each equivalent rank (Initiate, Acolyte, Priest) required to acquire the Divine Magic spells enforcing the oath. The target must agree to the number of POW points he has to allocate as part of his willing submission to the spell. The caster may have a ‘witness’ present to provide the spells if he desires. Popular examples of spells used to punish oath-breakers are Wrack, Sever Spirit and Tap. The caster or his witness may manipulate any sorcery spells he applies when the covenant is established within his normal limitations. No Resistance roll, nor any form of Countermagic or Spell Resistance, can defend against the punishment meted out by a broken Covenant.

The Covenant lasts until any limiting conditions placed upon it are met or the penalty is triggered, but in any event expires after a year and a day. This spell cannot be regained until the covenant has expired or been broken. The only way to extricate oneself from a Covenant spell is through expiry, Divine Intervention or satisfaction of its terms and conditions. If the oath expires naturally the spell target recovers the POW they dedicated to it. If the spell expires due to Divine Intervention or triggering the punishment, the dedicated POW is lost permanently.

Daybright

Duration Special, Touch

Daybright is similar to the Extension spell but affects any form of magic except Divine Magic. The caster can extend the Duration of any non-instant spells of his own casting, or any Blessings, up to a combined Magnitude of 1 per 10% of his Pact skill. The spell can only be cast between sunrise and sunset. The extension lasts until sunset the same day and no longer. If the spell being extended is an offensive spell, the target gets to resist that spell a second time at the expiry of its original Duration.

Dismiss Ghost

Instant, Ranged

Dismiss Ghost banishes the spirits of the dead infesting the physical world to the Many Hells where they belong. Each point of Magnitude affects up to 6 POW of spirits – multiple targets can be affected. A ghost gets no Resistance roll, as long as the Magnitude of the spell is great enough to overcome them.

Donate

Instant, Touch

The caster uses this spell to transfer some or all of the Blessings they have received to someone else. A typical usage is to pass on a Blessing that can be used to boost the recipients Resilience for the purpose of combating disease. There is no cap on the number of Blessings the target can receive through donation

Incinerate

Instant, Ranged, Resist (Evade)

Incinerate instantly raises the target to extreme temperatures. If the target is a combustible material it is reduced to ashes, if it is organic it takes severe damage from burning. The caster can affect 3 SIZ of combustible material per point of Magnitude or affect a Hit Location of a living creature inflicting 1D3 Hit Points of damage per point of Magnitude; if the damage inflicted exceeds twice the location's Hit Points, it is destroyed utterly. Incinerate can also be used to simply heat 3 ENC of metal per point of Magnitude to the point of malleability.

Moonbright

Duration Special, Touch

Moonbright is used as an extension spell, affecting any form of magic except Divine Magic. The caster can extend the Duration of any non-instant spells of his own casting, or any Blessings, up to a combined Magnitude of 1 per 10% of his Pact skill. The spell can only be cast between sunset and sunrise. The extension lasts until sunrise the same night and no longer. If the spell being extended is an offensive spell, the target gets to resist that spell a second time at the expiry of its original Duration.

Sanctuary

Duration 15, Concentration, Resist (Persistence)

This spell creates a protected area in a 10 metre radius around the caster and a number of others up to the Magnitude of the spell, the purpose of which is to render the caster, and those with him, immune to attacks. Anyone attempting to harm them in any way – with magical, spiritual or physical attacks, or even attempting to enter the area with the intent, must first make a Persistence test. If the Persistence test is failed, they lose that Combat Action. Even if it succeeds their attacks are all treated as Difficult (-20%). If the caster or anyone else under his protection uses a Combat Action to attack someone, the spell is broken.

Seal Wound

Duration 15, Touch

The devotee casts this spell on a weapon. For the Duration of the spell, the weapon inflicts damage that cannot be healed by Sorcery or Common Magic.

Synchronise

Duration 15, Concentration, Resist (Persistence)

With this spell originally devised to precisely synchronise the movements of a troop of dancers, the caster forces one target per point of Magnitude to exactly copy their movements. An unwilling target gets the chance to resist and if the target is forced to behave in a way likely to result in death or serious injury, they get another chance to break the spell (assuming they can see the danger).

Tongues

Duration 15, Touch

The spell recipient can be understood by others as if he were speaking their native language. For each point of Magnitude the caster can nominate one language in which listeners will be able to understand the recipient's speech. An unwilling recipient may resist the spell using Persistence.

Truespeak

Duration 15, Touch, Resist (Persistence)

Truespeak renders the target of the spell unable to tell a lie. The target can of course say nothing at all, or carefully choose their words. Taskan citizens may not, by law, be subjected to this spell for the purpose of giving evidence in court except under the auspices of an Inquisitor.

Turn Undead

Instant, Ranged, Resist (Persistence)

Turn Undead sends out a blast of energy in an arc of 90° in front of the caster that destroys the creations of necromancy. It affects undead creatures in front of the caster in the order in which the blast hits them – That is closest targets first. The Magnitude of the spell is equal to 10% of the caster's Pact skill. To destroy a skeleton costs 1 Magnitude, a zombie 2, a wraith or ghoul 3, a vampire 5. Each creature attacked reduces the Magnitude by this amount, whether or not it is destroyed. Magnitude in excess of this amount passes on to the next target in line.

MIRACLES

DIVINE INTERVENTION

Taskan religion allows for Divine Intervention just like any other – with the exception of the Divine Emperor. Still living solely on the physical plane, the Emperor can only intervene on behalf of his worshippers through exercising his temporal power. So if you want the cavalry to come and rescue you but have no means of letting them know that you are in trouble, a roll against the

Adventurer's Pact (Zygas Taga) skill can be made. If the Emperor hears you, help may still be a long time coming.

MINOR MIRACLES

Tarsenian gods, along with many demons who do not qualify as deities, frequently have a specific miracle they can offer. This miracle is a one-off favour, requested through the Adventurer's Pact and requires a successful Pact roll for the god to grant the request. The dedicated POW is set aside and not available for use in acquiring Divine Magic spells. If the Adventurer ever leaves their Pact this dedicated POW is lost permanently. The devotee must confront the god directly, in the same way as if they were seeking to acquire Divine Magic. A typical instance is a worshipper who goes on pilgrimage to a shrine where they are told the god provides cures for a life-threatening illness. The major gods are sufficiently powerful enough to alter their standard miracles or create new ones and the miracle offered may vary from city-to-city. Sometimes a god makes a bespoke miracle available for a specific cult, providing a reason why that cult should grow and prosper.

SAMPLE MINOR MIRACLES

Minor Miracle	Effect	Dedicated POW cost
Restore Health	Adventurer regains all lost points in one Characteristic (not POW).	1 per Characteristic
Exorcism	Frees the Adventurer from any possession, covert or dominant, by any entity of less than god status.	1 per 12 POW of entity possessing the Adventurer
Oracle (Potentially Treasonous)	Answers one question posed by the Adventurer truthfully, if sometimes in an obscure fashion.	1 per question
Love Charm (Counts as a magical assault and can be punished by law)	A named person will fall in love with the Adventurer. The target gets a resistance after each passing month.	1 per target, plus 1 per difficulty level applied to the target's Resistance rolls.
Resurrection	Restores life to a friend or loved one of the supplicants. Body must be whole and fresh or the miracle may be short lived or come with unpleasant side effects.	1 per 3 POW of the deceased

GIFTS

A Gift is a trait granted to a devotee in return for POW dedication. The dedicated POW is put at the Gods disposal but is not available for acquiring Divine Magic. If the Adventurer's Pact with the god lapses the POW is permanently lost, however the Gift becomes dormant and can be reawakened if the Adventurer should ever renew the lapsed Pact.

Talents and Genius are awakened in an Adventurer in respect of skills that feature in the god's list of potential Blessings. Characteristic boosts should be limited to those Characteristics that contribute to the basic chance for one of those skills. Only Hamath can offer an increase to SOC and then only to supplicants whose SOC is less than 7 to begin with. Suggestions for other Gifts are provided but should be used with caution – not all spell effects are equal when being converted to permanent traits and the GM should only allow what he thinks he will be a manageable within the game or that makes sense from a roleplaying perspective.

Another source of suitable Gifts could be Nature Spirit effects, in which case a cost of 1 POW per Intensity would be appropriate; the Rune Touched effects in the *Legend Core Rulebook* can provide further ideas for creating unique divine gifts.

TYPICAL GIFTS

Gift	Effect	Dedicated POW cost
Talented	+2D6 to Adventurer's Basic Percentage in a chosen skill (also raises Adventurer's skill cap).	1 POW
Touched by Genius	As previous PLUS +1D6 to a Adventurer's Critical Score in a chosen skill.	2 POW
Characteristic Boost	+1D3 per Characteristic (except POW), up to species maximum.	If Characteristic is at or below average: 1 POW If Characteristic is above average: 2 POW If Characteristic is 18+: 3 POW
Common Magic Effect	Bestows the Adventurer with a permanent effect taken from the Common Magic section of the <i>Legend Core Rulebook</i> .	1 POW per Magnitude
Divine Magic Effect	Bestows the Adventurer with a permanent effect taken from the Divine Magic section of the <i>Legend Core Rulebook</i>	3 POW (effect is governed by the receiver's Pact skill)

COMPULSIONS

Gifts are not normally provided with Compulsions attached - however it is quite possible the God will ask for something in addition to the required POW dedication, perhaps a special service or errand of some kind.

PLACES OF WORSHIP

Any place can be used for worship if it is sanctified for the purpose. However there are plenty of purpose built shrines and temples to be found, some of them set up at public expense.

SHRINES

Apart from the great festivals, most worship takes place in private. A private place of worship is termed a shrine, which could be a niche by the fire in the home used by the family, a room hired for the day at a local inn or a permanent and dedicated structure to which the owner invites friends or fellow cultists to come and worship with him. A cult may meet at a member's home or may own property in its own right and have dedicated places of worship incorporating a shrine as well as banqueting facilities and even accommodation.

TEMPLES

Temples are public buildings. Temples are not essential to Taskan religious practices, being no more than the focal point for the public festival of the gods to whom they are dedicated. Depending on the funds available some have caretaker-priests, others great numbers of attendants who are organised into elaborate hierarchies. The buildings themselves are often funded by wealthy individuals who wish to demonstrate their piety or by cult organisations which have raised the necessary funds between them. The various local cults of the god to whom a temple is dedicated may look after it and contribute to its embellishment. In order to do this they might club together or work on a rota. Many temples are permanently sanctified, either by virtue of having become Sacred Sites or because there are priests whose job it is to keep renewing the necessary spells.

PILGRIMAGE

Pilgrimage is the act of attending a festival or visiting a Sacred Site dedicated to your god beyond the territory of your home town. It is a popular and widespread practice. So much so, in fact, that it is at least equal to trade and military transport as a driver of traffic to the roads and waterways of the Empire. Adventurers may well find themselves travelling with pilgrims, who gather in numbers to travel in safety. There is always the chance to get work protecting or serving wealthy pilgrims.

A pilgrimage may be an excuse for a holiday but usually has a specific objective in mind, for example to make an act of devotion by dedicating POW to the god or increasing an Adventurer's Pact score. An Adventurer who is already Pacted to the deity to whom the pilgrimage is made will gain +D2 up to +D6 Pact improvement depending on the distance travelled, in addition to any improvement accruing for specific acts and demonstrations of piety along the way.

SACRED SITES

A Sacred Site is a spot at which some part of a god's essence is thought to be permanently present. A Sacred Site is in effect permanently sanctified by a special connection to a specific god – sometimes to more than one. There are quite a few of these but they tend to be the focus of organised cults who jealously guard access and make a handsome living out of pilgrims. Sacred Sites are sometimes under public control like a temple, or at least under some sort of supervision so local communities and cultists do not develop too keen a sense of ownership to the detriment of would-be pilgrims. If you can get those in charge to let you in, or

perhaps you stumble across an unknown site in the wilderness – you can attempt to contact the god without need of cults, priests and rituals.

CREATING A SACRED SITE

The regular appearance at the same spot of a particular god leaves a residue, detectable by Second Sight and Mystic Vision, which attracts spirits in the service of that god to the area. All in all the magical effect of the place serves to give a bonus to Skill Tests for rituals and spell-casting when the god to whom the temple or shrine is dedicated is honoured. The exact amount is variable with the age and prestige of the place of worship. A location gains an increase in Sanctity of 1D6% any time the Call Deity spell is cast and the casting devotee criticals their Lore (Specific Theology) or Rites (Taskan) in doing so; by 1% every time a Minor Miracle is performed there and by 1D6% every time Divine Intervention is granted there.

A site also loses 1% per year if rites cease as its aura begins to fade; and loses D6% if a Worship roll is fumbled and D20% if a Call (Deity) is fumbled. So long as the value is +25% or more, the spot is considered a Sacred Site with the magical efficacy for the purpose of acquiring and regaining Divine Magic, equivalent to a Shrine in *Legend*. If the value is 50% or higher, the site is considered a Minor Temple and at 75% or more, a Major Temple. Any Divine Magic cast or sorcery rite conducted will gain a bonus to the relevant casting roll; the task becomes Simple, Easy and Very Easy at each respective level. A GM should penalise those attempting to cast magic not related to the god by the same amounts.

A temple used for an annual festival at which the God reliably appears should achieve Sacred Site status between 100 and 150 years after its foundation, if there have been no fumbled rites.

DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE

Tarsenians generally cremate their dead. The ashes are gathered up and placed in a pottery urn or stone casket, which is itself then interred in a mortuary house belonging to a family, guild, regiment, cult or funeral club. The mortuary houses are grouped together into Necropoleis. Only the god Basat has Resurrection magic and his initiates are interred intact without cremation, as a symbol that even those not immediately restored to life are spared permanent incarceration in the realm of the death god Gomorg and will one day be resurrected. There are cults that offer the promise of immortality but they are without exception considered treasonous.

A funeral is an important rite that ensures the deceased will find his way to an appropriate part of the Many Hells and will not be left wandering as a

spirit, probably to fall prey to the god of death himself, or trapped in some physical place as a ghost. The deceased also needs the opportunity to draw on their divine Pacts one last time – and ask the various gods with whom they have a connection to extend their favours in the next world too. Tarsenians, like most people, go to great lengths to make sure this is done properly. Their solution to the problem, the creation of Funeral Clubs, has become one of the fundamental forms of social network in their society.

ATHEISM

In a world where the gods are demonstrably real, it may be surprising that not everyone practices religion. The fact is that because the gods are knowable and neither omnipotent nor omniscient, many people take against religion for the same reason we might take against politics – it is essentially a corrupt business of mutual back-scratching, toadying and power-mongering. These dissenters, with the exception of a few madmen and fanatics, still need some access to magic or protection from the supernatural and so they might still indulge heavily in the pseudo-science of sorcery, which ultimately holds out the promise of commanding the gods to do the bidding of mankind rather than the reverse. Needless to say the ‘atheists’ are outnumbered by those who consider them to be dangerous meddlers and revolutionaries. In the Taskan Empire, atheism is regarded as treasonous, on the grounds that it is a philosophy that undermines the proper order of things, not least the relationship between citizen and Divine Emperor. Every so often the ruling priests of a city or province will decide to have a purge, invite in the Inquisitors and make sure that suspected atheists either demonstrate their conformity to traditional ways, or put them on trial. Hardened Atheists in fear of persecution generally flee to the south as atheists are fully tolerated in many of the cities of Djesmirket.



SORCERY

Sorcerers stand out from other kinds of magic user through the importance of the written word through which their knowledge is recorded, compiled and passed on. Spell books, glyphs, runes, grimoires, arcane signs and lost languages – these are all the stock in the trade of a sorcerer, hence you usually only find sorcerers in literate societies. Nevertheless it is also the favoured magic system of the barbarian Orcs of Kasperan, who have only a syllabic script that is not up to the job of communicating the complexities of spell casting and whose grimoires are epic songs running into thousands of lines that the sorcerer needs to commit to memory.

SORCERERS IN AGE OF TREASON

Sorcerers are those who handle magic as their day-to-day business. While sorcery is quite commonly used by ordinary citizens and provides many of the tools used by priests to power their ceremonies, the ability to manipulate a spell tends to be restricted to professionals; hence if you want people to think of you as a sorcerer a decent Manipulation skill is essential.

In the Taskan Empire sorcerers are exotic characters, admired, feared or despised according to your individual tastes. They do not usually form Cults or Guilds but pass their trade down from master to apprentice. The Emperor-cult is keen to push those with magical skills into its inner circles and most of its colleges are chaired by a high priest who is in fact an accomplished sorcerer. There is a school of sorcery in Felsang that enjoys state support; its principle purpose is to turn out journeyman spell-casters for the army but many find employment in some civic function or for a wealthy family. Such people are not given a great deal of respect and are often referred to as ‘Spell Slaves’, a derogatory term properly used of servile sorcerers in Assabia, where young boys or girls identified for their mental abilities might be sold into the trade by their parents; traditionally those destined to be made Sight Projection or Mystic Vision specialists are blinded once they have been taught their art, as it is thought the deprivation of sight enhances their magical senses. Taskan spell-slaves are often respectable, if lowly, professionals. A few of them will one day make it as a proper sorcerer. Most will not.

A sorcerer who gets consumed by his trade, and goes about it in ways that puts them beyond the pale of regular society, is referred to as wizard. He may be forced to retreat to some lawless border region such as the Badlands of Methalea where a wizard can continue his work without intrusions in some lonely and likely enchanted stronghold.

SORCERY TRADES

Sorcerers do not limit themselves to spell-casting. Enchanting is a vibrant and diverse art, summoning otherworld entities is regarded by many as an essential discipline and the sciences of alchemy and artifice are deeply intertwined with general magical practices. Sorcery is such a diverse field that there are many specialists around, who might call themselves Enchanters, Conjurers, Alchemists, Artificers or Illusionists. They are not necessarily practising a discreet category of magic such as sets Divine and Spirit Magic apart but rather have a clear focus to their skills through which they differentiate themselves from the competition. After all, sorcery is an expensive business, sorcerers have to support themselves through the significant time devoted to study and magical operations, hence they have to make a business of their magic.

SORCERY SPELL DURATIONS

Age of Treason uses an amended Duration table for Manipulated Sorcery spells, allowing sorcerers to cast some very long duration magics if they have the necessary skills levels. There are two reasons for this; first that the setting itself assumes the existence of long term ‘always on’ spells available to those with enough magical power or those wealthy enough to pay someone else who has. It is very common for spoilt rich kids to have a servant whose first job every morning is to cast a Damage Resistance spell that will protect them for the whole day and also for a military unit to have a designated spellcaster to provide enhancements to weapons, defences and Characteristics of the men. The second is that in the setting the Duration of spells is harmonised to the natural divisions of time in the game world. The GM is free to use the precise but abstract time calculation, however the Game World Time noted in the table is what an Adventurer in the setting would have in mind.

Game World Time	Abstract	Points of Manipulation
10 Minutes	POW Minutes	0
20 Minutes	POW x2 Minutes	1
1 Hour	POW x 5 Minutes	2
2 Hours	POW x 10 Minutes	3
Until Sunset	POW x 1 Hours	4
1 Day (24 hours)	POW x 2 Hours	5
10 Days	POW x 1 Days	6
1 Month	POW x 3 Days	7
2 Months	POW x 5 Days	8
1 Season	POW x 10 Days	9
1 Year and a Day	POW x 1 Months	10



LIMITS ON SPELL DURATION AND MAGIC POINT RECOVERY

No spell Duration can exceed 'a year and a day'. Only enchantments can have effects that last indefinitely. A sorcerer capable of these long term spells has a balance to strike – they cannot begin to regain the Magic Points spent casting a spell until such time as they cancel it or it expires.

AUTONOMOUS SPELLS

A sorcerer or a paying client typically enjoys the facility of long Duration spells for defensive magic such as Damage Resistance, Spell Resistance and Spirit Resistance. However spells such as Form/Set (Substance), Holdfast, Haste and Phantom (Sense) may also be set up as long Duration spells for more creative purposes – such as to protect or decorate a sorcerer's mansion. A typical apprentice sorcerer's duty and part of his training is to light the lamps in his master's house each dusk by casting one or more multiple-target Glow spells with a Duration of two hours or longer.

CONCENTRATION SPELLS

With a long Duration within which the Sorcerer can choose to let a Concentration spell fall idle and then resume concentration at a moment of his choosing, spells such as Wrack become effective curses and tools with which to force a prisoner or minion to obedience – after all the sorcerer may be in a position to kill the spell's target at any time for up to a year. Many other spells such as Fly, Intuition or Mystic Vision may be maintained in constant readiness to be activated, depending on whether the sorcerer considers the advantage of not having to make a Skill Test or spend more than the single Combat Action necessary to focus concentration on them worth the Magic Points being set aside and not released for recovery.

Given the long durations, *Smother* is treated as a Concentration spell in *Age of Treason*. Other spells, such as Palsy, may have variants with the Concentration trait, allowing the sorcerer to turn on and off at will.

ALCHEMY

The skill to create such things as gunpowder, to create or refine poisons and poison antidotes, process healing plants and even create a chemical matrix in which a spell can be preserved is the realm of the Alchemist. In *Age of Treason* Alchemy is a craft and is neither underpinned by any kind of philosophy nor do its practitioners trouble themselves with chasing mystical goals. However the results of alchemy can be very powerful indeed and this area of science is at the very forefront of technology as well as the crucial intersection between technology and magic. Its principle limitations are the significant investment in equipment and facilities and a requirement for ingredients that can test the resources of even the rich and powerful.

LORE (ALCHEMY DISCIPLINE) INTX2

This set of skills represents an Alchemist's level of theoretical knowledge of his craft. Three separate disciplines can normally be learned – Poisons, Potions and Elixirs. A Lore (Poisons) skill sets the maximum potency and type of poison or antidote that the Alchemist can make. Lore (Potions) sets the maximum strength of a magic potion. Lore (Elixirs) defines both the type of healing or regenerative potion that can be created as well as its efficacy.

This skill also reflects the Alchemist's chance of identifying an unknown substance. It does not enable an Alchemist to make anything – for that he learns a separate skill, Craft (Alchemist).

FORMULAE

For each Lore (Alchemy Discipline) he knows, the Alchemist assembles a collection of formulae, which are the precise ingredients and instructions that should be followed to achieve a specific effect. The Alchemist will automatically gain 1D4 Formulae to work with when he first acquires a Lore (Alchemy Discipline) skill and he can acquire more in the course of his research and studies.

Alchemists with a Lore (Alchemy Discipline) in excess of 100% can work out a formula without having a reference guide to do so, using the skill in excess of 100% as the base chance, modified by dedicating additional time to research. The research project is an extended task, each Task Round Unit being a minimum of one month.

Formulae are usually written down for reference, some of them perhaps a page long and some occupying a whole book.

Each formula has the following details:

Time: This is the Duration of a Task Round Unit. This is how much time the Alchemist must take before making each of the four Craft Skill Tests required to succeed in an Extended Task, assuming the Alchemist is working full time only pausing to take necessary eating and rest breaks.

Cost: The base cost of the ingredients for the formula; this does not include either the Alchemist's own living costs or the cost of any assistants, laboratory equipment and so forth.

Difficulty: Each entry also indicates the difficulty modifier to be applied to the Alchemist's Craft (Alchemist) Skill Tests. If no difficulty is indicated, the tests is Routine.

THE ALCHEMIST'S MANUAL

A Manual is a collection of formulae, together with notes and commentaries and other information that is useful to an Alchemist. A Manual will have a Lore (Alchemy Discipline) skill that reflects the level of knowledge and expertise with which it is written and so long as the Alchemist has constant access to the book he can use the book's skill level if it is higher than his own.

A Manual typically contains one or more formulae and incidentally may provide one or more Improvement Rolls to the Alchemist's relevant Lore (Alchemy Discipline) skill should they wish to spend time improving their knowledge. Eventually an Alchemist's Lore (Alchemy Discipline) skill may exceed the skill level of the Manuals he has at his disposal. In that case he will still need to keep the book in order to have ready access to the formulae it contains, but is capable of reconstructing the process if the Manual is lost or not readily accessible. This will require the same process as researching a new Formula from scratch but the Alchemist can use their full Lore (Alchemy Discipline) skill to do so.

While an Alchemist's Lore skills set the parameters for a project, it is his Craft (Alchemy) skill that is used to determine whether the Alchemist successfully completes it – hence an Alchemy Manual is of limited value to someone who does not have the necessary skills to put it to use.

CRAFT (ALCHEMIST) DEX+INT

With this craft skill an Alchemist can manufacture the potion, poison, or elixir he has in mind according to the formulae and principles provided by his relevant Lore skill. Alchemy is a Craft and uses the Extended Task rules. Therefore to complete an alchemical process requires four separate skill tests, with each successful test resulting in 25% progress towards the end goal, and each critical success resulting in 50% progress. An alchemical process can take days, weeks or even years to complete and it is usually possible for the Alchemist to interrupt the work with regular and sometimes extended breaks except at critical moments in the process.

A successfully conducted alchemical process produces a single dose of a potion or substance that has a shelf life of one month.

A failed process produces nothing of use if the Alchemist has only achieved 50% or less progress in the four skill tests (Task Rounds) available, although the Alchemist may be able to salvage enough of the ingredients to reduce costs of a further attempt. If 75% progress has been made the Game Master may allow that the Alchemist has made a product that is partially effective or wholly effective with some nasty side effects.

A fumble during the process may be spectacular, such as a laboratory explosion, or else it will be unknown – only when the product is used will its (ill) effects be revealed.

ALCHEMICAL MANIPULATIONS

The Craft (Alchemist) skill can be used like the Sorcery Manipulation skill to vary the concentration, shelf life or dosage of the product, or combine effects or more than one formula – for example creating a perfume that is also a poison. The same manipulations can be applied to some natural or supernaturally occurring substances.

One point of Alchemical Manipulation is possible for every 10% that the Alchemist has in this skill. Each *type* of Alchemical Manipulation applied increases the Difficulty of the task by one

level. For example, while manufacturing a spell potion for a Sorcery spell is normally *difficult* to begin with, creating one with a five year shelf life is a *hard* Skill Test.

Alchemical manipulation increases costs; add the base cost again for each manipulation applied except for Doses, which acts as a multiplier.

Example: Hylian of Merat is planning to make a Spell Preserving matrix to store a sorcery spell casting. The base cost of materials is 200Taskeen; Hylian adds two Manipulations, one is a Preservation to make sure the matrix has a shelf life of three years, the other a condition that only he can use it. This raises the cost to 600Taskeen; if he chooses to make four doses, the total cost will be 2,400Taskeen.

Concentration: The size of a dose of a potion or concoction varies from formula-to-formula – some poisons for example can kill with a single drop but others require the victim to ingest a litre or more before they have an effect. In most cases assume that the normal volume of a substance is some 100 millilitres or 100 grams. Each point of Concentration halves the volume of the potion or substance required to administer a dose. This can be particularly useful if you need to deliver a poison unobtrusively or need to create a potion that is easily carried or concealed.

Shelf Life: To prolong the length of time that the potion remains fresh and useable. The basic preservation time for a potion is one month. Each point of Alchemical Manipulation increases this time as per the Shelf Life table:

Manipulation	Shelf Life
0	1 month
1	1 year
2	2 years
3	3 years
4	5 years
5	7 years
6	11 years
7	13 Years
8	17 Years
9	19 Years
10	23 Years

Doses: To replicate the potion creating more than one dose of the potion. Each point of Alchemical Manipulation adds one dose; however the cost is multiplied by the total number of doses produced.

Conditions: To add rules about who the potion will and will not work for, usually limited to a broad category defined as a species, gender or age group; or when it will work – e.g. only at night or only in the summer. The Alchemist can add one such Condition per point of Alchemical Manipulation applied.

Blend: To add or incorporate the effects of two or more formulae at once. The two effects must belong to the same discipline;

otherwise the Alchemist must accomplish two separate processes, then a third to combine the two into a single product.

SAMPLE ALCHEMICAL FORMULAE

POTIONS

Spell Potion (Time 2 days, Cost 200 Taskeen Routine-Hard)

This formula produces a potion capable of retaining one spell until the potion is ingested or applied, at which point the spell is triggered with whoever used the potion as the target. The spell itself will have its normal effects, including any manipulations applied. Even an unsuspecting drinker of the potion may resist the spell normally. If the effects are resisted the lower of the caster's Grimoire, Pact or Common Magic skill and the Alchemist's Lore (Potions) skill is used for the opposed roll.

Only one casting of the spell may be preserved per dose and the spell must be successfully cast during manufacture. Whoever charges the potion with a spell must succeed in the relevant casting Skill Test, spend the necessary Magic Points, and potentially burn the use of a Divine Magic spell as normal. If the Alchemist creates multiple doses of the potion the caster must provide enough magic points to fuel all of them at the time of manufacture as if each dose were an additional casting, or burn a requisite number of uses of Divine Magic, as appropriate - unless the Alchemist has alternative means of fuelling the potion.

Creating a Spell matrix for a Common Magic Spell requires a Routine Skill Test, to do so for a Sorcery spell is Difficult and to do so for a Divine Magic spell is Hard. One of the most common uses of this process is the creation of healing potions, however potions for flight, shape-changing and Characteristic enhancements are also common.

Spell Preserving Matrix (Time 2 days, Cost 100-300 Taskeen Difficult)

This formula produces a potion which can store a casting of a spell until the potion is ingested, at which point the user is able to cast the spell even if not normally able to do so. A separate recipe is needed for each type of magic, so a potion made to preserve a Sorcery casting cannot be used to preserve a Divine Magic spell. The magnitude of spell that a spell matrix can store is governed by the Alchemist's Lore (Potions) skill. A spell matrix can store a Common Magic spell of up to 1 Magnitude for each 10% of the Alchemist's Lore skill; it can store a Divine Magic spell cast with a Pact skill no greater than the Alchemist's Lore (Potions) skill; and the effect of a sorcery spell is limited to the lower of the Alchemist's Lore (Potions) skill and the Grimoire skill of whoever provided the spell.

The matrix can be made in advance of being charged with a spell, so long as it is used before its shelf life expires. The base cost of the potion is 100SP for Common Magic, 200 SP for Sorcery and 300SP for Divine Magic.

Whoever charges the potion with a spell must succeed in the relevant casting Skill Test, spend the relevant Magic Points and potentially burn the use of a Divine Magic spell as normal.

The potion's user does not have to make any kind of casting roll. The user must trigger the spell within POW minutes of taking the potion, using a single Combat Action to do so. Unless the potion is combined with a Magic Point storage potion, the recipient of the spell provides the Magic Points and if unable to provide all of the Magic Points required for the casting when they use the potion, the spell fails and is lost. If the effects are resisted the lower of the Grimoire, Pact or Common Magic skill and the Alchemist's Lore (Potions) skill is used for the opposed roll. If the spell has the Concentration trait, the potion's user must provide the concentration.

(Specific) Spirit Binding Matrix (Time 3 days, Cost 200 Taskeen per Characteristic, Difficult)

The Alchemist creates a potion or substance capable of trapping and storing a specific type of spirit. Once again this matrix may be prepared in advance waiting for the right moment when the Alchemist encounters the right sort of spirit. The entity to be trapped in the potion must somehow be commanded or forced into the binding. The Alchemist can create a Binding Matrix that holds a spirit or demon with up to six Characteristic Points for every 10% of his Lore (Potions) skill.

Magic Point Storage Matrix (Time 1 Day, Cost 100Taskeen)

Often the first thing an Alchemist learns is the creation of a substance or liquid that stores Magic Points until ingested by the user. For every 10% of the Alchemist's Lore (Potions) skill he can create a potion that stores 1 MP. This potion can only be used to replace used Magic Points; it cannot take the user's Magic Points above their normal maximum. It also releases all stored Magic Points at once - if the potion has more Magic Points to offer than the user has need of, the extra points are lost.

ELIXIRS

Healing Salve (time 1 Day, cost 50 Taskeen Routine)

A simple process of refining Fengo leaves and incorporating them into a greasy base that facilitates smearing onto the affected area. The Salve has a potency equal to the Alchemist's Lore (Elixirs) skill and can be made by anyone with a Lore (Elixirs) skill of 21% or more, or who has a manual to refer to. Once applied to an injured location, the potency of the salve is added to the patient's Resilience for the purposes of determining the rate of Natural Healing. A healing Salve typically lasts for the user's CON in hours before it needs to be re-applied.

Energising Elixir (time 1 Day, cost 25 Taskeen Difficult)

An elixir that helps to ward off the effects of fatigue. The potency of the Energising Elixir (which like all elixirs can equally be a biscuit or other medium as a drink) is added to the user's Athletics skill for the purposes of checking for fatigue.

Restorative Elixir (time 1day, cost 20 Taskeen, Routine)

An elixir that provides the user with an immediate Resilience test modified by the potency of the Elixir to reverse the most recent effects of fatigue. If the test succeeds, the user regains one level of Fatigue.

Healing Elixir (time 2 days, cost 100 Taskeen Hard)

An alternative to a potion that carries a spell matrix for Treat Wounds, this is a classic healing potion that restores up to 1HP per 10% of the Alchemist's Lore (Elixirs) skill. If the recipient has multiple wounds the elixir provides one point of healing to each location in turn in order of seriousness until its potency is spent.

Constitutional Elixir (time 3 days, cost 150 Taskeen Difficult)

This elixir fortifies the user's system. The potency is added to all Resilience rolls for the purpose of resisting disease. The effect lasts for the user's natural CON in days.

Anagathic Elixir (time 7 days, base cost 1,000 Taskeen; Very Hard)

This elixir wards off the effects of ageing, adding its potency to the user's Resilience roll to stave off physical ageing. One dose has an effect that lasts for CON months. There is no known Anagathic remedy for mental ageing. Penalties for the Adventurer's actual age and life experiences still apply, so this elixir will not work forever. If it did, it would be treasonous.

ENCHANTING

For some sorcerers in the *Age of Treason* setting, enchanting is not just an adjunct to their traditional spell-casting skills but a whole field of magical study in its own right. *Age of Treason* Enchanters specialise in permanently changing the nature of a person, creature or thing through magical operations. Enchantment invests its object with new qualities, referred to as Virtues. Enchantment can render a dumb creature intelligent, or bring a piece of furniture to life. The *piece de resistance* for many is the creation of a Golem Servant, a magically animated statue to act as a servant and guard. In Sorandib, the Artificers make use of Enchanting rituals to give motion and sometimes purpose to their mechanisms and engines. The only way to make a permanent change to the world through magic is to sacrifice something of your own being in the effort; *Age of Treason* enchantments involve the *permanent*, and usually irreversible, transfer of a sorcerer's Characteristic Points.

BASIC ENCHANTMENT RITUALS

Some enchantments are sufficiently standardised that they can be accomplished with spells that can be found within regular sorcery Grimoires, and do not require the sorcerer to know the Craft (Enchanter) skill found in the Advanced Enchanting section, as all the necessary processes are packaged up within the rituals.

Each Characteristic Point sacrificed bestows a variable number of points of the same Characteristic on the enchantment. The Sorcerer's Grimoire skill determines how many Characteristic points may be invested and how many are generated in the enchantment for each point sacrificed to it.

Grimoire Skill	Maximum investment per Characteristic	Characteristic Points yielded per point invested
01–25	1 Characteristic Point	1D2
26–50	1/4 Characteristic	1D4
51–75	1/2 Characteristic	1D6
76–100	3/4 Characteristic	1D8
101–150	Unlimited	1D10
151+	Unlimited	1D12

The Characteristic Points invested cannot be recovered through magic such as Restore Health but can be raised again through improvement rolls as normal.

Sometimes the investment of Characteristic Points will have a direct impact on a Sorcerer's Aptitude in the key skills of his trade (INT and POW in particular). Characteristic Points invested are gone – not dedicated as in a Divine Magic Pact. A Sorcerer also cannot normally reduce any of his Characteristics below the species minimum – to do so would result in incapacitation. However it is known for a dying sorcerer to allocate all Characteristic Points that he is not going to need in the afterlife (i.e. not INT, POW or CHA) to his final creation, something that will ring down the ages as a wondrous artefact. The very powerful items created in this way are known as Deathbed Enchantments or The Sorcerer's Last Will and Testament.

The Enchanting Ritual takes one hour per Characteristic Point being invested, however the entire enchanting process of preparing the target object or creature may take much longer.

Create Familiar (Ritual Enchantment)

The Create Familiar enchantment is one that is often available to more junior sorcerers. The sorcerer sacrifices a minimum of 1 INT and 1 CHA to an incomplete natural creature with fixed INT and converts it to a complete creature. Any animal the sorcerer chooses can be used as a familiar, however the creature's total of Characteristic Points when the process begins can be no greater than the caster's Grimoire skill. The creature will automatically resist the Enchanting Ritual spell with its Persistence.

The Creature's INT is raised and becomes variable INT and the creature gains a CHA score. With its new-found INT the creature becomes capable of rational thought and with its new CHA the creature becomes capable of meaningful interaction with other rational creatures.

Familiar and Sorcerer are in permanent Mindlink. The familiar completely empathises with its master, is able to communicate telepathically with him and is capable of learning skills including magical skills in its own right. If the sorcerer dies, or if the familiar is dismissed by the sorcerer, the skills that the familiar has learned during its service and all its memories are retained.

Creating exotic familiars using spirits, demons or inanimate objects, or granting exotic capabilities such as the power to speak, requires a different approach and a much broader range

of enchanting skills, such as can be found in the Advanced Enchanting section.

Write Grimoire (Ritual Enchantment)

A sorcerer can use this enchantment to create a new Grimoire, in which he collates the knowledge of spells that he selects from those he has learned through existing Grimoires. The Sorcerer invests INT in the creation of the master copy, which can contain an equivalent number of sorcery spells. The Grimoire's INT is now an extension of the sorcerer's memory and can be used to store knowledge of these spells that he can access as required via a form of Mindlink.

All the necessary instructions for the casting must be inscribed on whatever is being used as a spell book either by the sorcerer himself or by an associate, with a successful Skill Test in Education or whatever other skill is being used to do so, usually as an Extended Task. Each spell can still be used by the sorcerer with the skill relating to the Grimoire he has copied them from; however once the new Grimoire has been created the Sorcerer gains a new Grimoire skill, applicable to all the spells within it. If the Grimoire subsequently falls into the wrong hands or copies are made, it can become the basis of a Grimoire skill for others too. It is not necessary to inscribe all the desired spells at once, however as new spells are added to the master copy the sorcerer should succeed in an Education Skill Test to make sure the details are correctly copied and transferred. Those who acquire secondary copies of the Grimoire prior to these spells being added do not get the opportunity to learn them.

As with any Grimoire the sorcerer does not need to have the book on his person to cast spells from it; the only reason sorcerers sometimes do is so that they can be sure it is kept safe. However a Grimoire need not be a book; there are sorcerers who think the safest thing is to inscribe their spells on their bodies rather than in an inanimate object – their tattooed skin becomes the spell book. The reason for this concern about security is that the destruction of the master copy immediately inflicts damage on the creator and can be fatal. 1D6 damage is inflicted directly to the sorcerer's head per point of INT invested in the book; he will temporarily lose INT equal to the INT of the book (Persistence test for half damage but if this roll is fumbled the loss is permanent), regained at a rate of one point per successful Resilience roll, test once per day of complete rest.

A sorcerer who creates a Grimoire usually wins significant respect among his peers; it is a requirement for any sorcerer who wishes to become the founder of a new magical philosophy or school.

Create Magic Source (Ritual Enchantment)

The Sorcerer sacrifices one or more POW to an object in order to create a source of Magic Points that he can draw on. When the object's Magic Points are drawn upon by the object's owner they will be replenished at a normal MP recovery rate. In order to access the Magic Points from the enchantment the sorcerer must be grasping or wearing the object.

Usually no-one but the Sorcerer can use the enchantment, however if the Source is lost, stolen or looted from a dead sorcerer's body the new owner can attempt to attune it to themselves or to someone else by succeeding in an Enchanting Ritual (Grimoire) test opposed by the item's POWx5%. This process takes a minimum one hour per POW of the Source and if failed cannot be retried by the same person – if fumbled the enchantment is broken. This enchantment is a very useful tool for a sorcerer who has need of extra Magic Points to keep long term spells running.

ADVANCED ENCHANTING

A professional Enchanter elevates enchantment to a whole new level and is capable of creating unique and powerful artefacts. This ability is covered under the Craft (Enchanter) skill, while a generic Enchanting Ritual then affects the transfer of Characteristic Points that powers the magical device.

ENCHANTING RITUAL (SORCERY SPELL)

This is a Sorcery spell that can be found in a Grimoire like any other spell – however it is usually the sole content of a Grimoire, or is accompanied only by spells that are there to support the enchanter's art. There is more than one version, or school, of enchanting but the basic version practised in the East is covered here. The simple task of the ritual is to affect the proper transfer of some part of the sorcerer's own being into the object or creature being enchanted. The invested Characteristics reflect what type of magical effects or *Virtues* the item can be imbued with.

A sorcerer can sacrifice points from more than one Characteristic at the same time. He can also return to an enchantment and enhance it but only to invest it with a Characteristic, and associated Virtues, that it did not previously possess. Casting time for the ritual is one hour per Characteristic point being sacrificed, but once again the actual enchanting process usually takes significantly longer.

Alternative Sources of Characteristic Points

A sorcerer may conduct the enchanting ritual for someone else – and for those who are professional enchanters this is the usual practice; however the 'client' who provides the Characteristic Points must be a willing participant present for the entire casting time.

It is possible to maliciously steal Characteristic Points for an enchantment through the simple use of the Tap (Characteristic) spell. If combined with the Enchanting Ritual the Characteristic points stolen are directly transferred to the enchantment on a one for one basis. The normal limitations to the sorcerer's Tap spell apply, including the limit placed on how many stolen Characteristic Points can be put to use by the sorcerer's own maximum Magic Points. The stolen points are directly transferred to the enchantment and do not each generate a variable number of Characteristic Points in the object. Only an entity with CHA can be tapped. Tappists are, of course, considered beyond the pale in the Taskan Empire; however there are plenty of unscrupulous slave-owning enchanters in Assabia who regard tapping as a mundane aspect of their work.

CRAFT (ENCHANTER) POW+DEX

This skill is used to perform the physical and magical operations necessary to create a unique enchantment of the Sorcerer's devising and determines the number of effects (Virtues) with which he can imbue an enchanted item and the conditions applied to its use. Usually the Enchanter will inscribe the target with arcane symbols and words, incorporate special ingredients or components or put it through procedures such as immersion in alchemical fluids or heating in magical fires. These are temporary stages and once the whole procedure is done the object will look just like any mundane one unless the Enchanter has determined that it should be otherwise.

Enchantment Limits

All Virtues and Conditions applied to an enchantment have an *Intensity* cost. The maximum Intensity that an Enchanter can apply to any one enchantment is equal to one tenth of his Craft (Enchanter) skill.

ENCHANTING PROCEDURE

Preparation and Declaration

The Enchanter's player must state at the beginning of the process what he proposes to enchant, which Characteristic Points are to be invested and how many; and what the desired Conditions and Virtues are that he is attempting to work into the enchantment. If the Enchanter requires a unique example of whatever object or creature he intends to enchant this alone may take a lot of time and expense.

Task Round Units

The Enchanter then has to undertake an Extended Task; completing all the magical operations he needs for his project across up to four Task Rounds. Each Task Round Unit takes a number of hours equal to the number of Virtues and Conditions being applied multiplied by the total intensity of the enchantment.

Example: Shiamak is planning to enchant a small ivory statuette into which he will invest 1 CON, 1 INT and 2 CHA. Shiamak has a Craft (Enchanter) skill of 65%. This allows him to create an enchanted device with 7 Intensity of Virtues and Conditions. He can only select Virtues from the list that are related to CON, INT and CHA

Shiamak intends to place a total of four separate virtues and conditions in the statuette, so each Task Round Unit will be $7 \times 4 = 28$ hours. He can take a break at any point and if he does not want fatigue to get in the way of his chance of success he certainly should.

A successful Craft (Enchanter) Skill Test in each Task Round signifies the Enchanter has made 25% progress and if a critical result is obtained, 50%. If, at the end of the four Task Rounds, the Enchanter does not reach 100% progress he may end up with a product that could fail embarrassingly. If, thanks to a critical success or two, he has exceeded the 100% target, he may add enhancements either in the in the form of a boost to the Intensity of the Virtues he has selected, gaining one Intensity of Virtue per

additional 25%. Alternatively the GM may choose to adjust the difficulty of the Grimoire Skill Test for the Enchanting Ritual part of the process.

Activation

At the end of the process the Sorcerer must make his Grimoire Skill Test for the Enchanting Ritual. If he succeeds, the enchantment is successfully created. If he fails the Characteristic Points he would have invested are only temporarily lost and eventually restored to him if he takes suitable rest and recuperation. He may, however, try the Enchanting Ritual again, without repeating the whole crafting process. If he fumbles the Characteristic Points are lost permanently for no benefit, or the craft that went into the process is wasted.

VIRTUES

A Virtue is a magical enhancement that an object and sometimes an individual, creature or supernatural entity acquires through the Enchantment process. Most Virtues are tied to a specific Characteristic that the target must be given through the Enchanting Ritual. Any that do not – such as general Conditions – only require that a minimum of one Characteristic Point of any type is transferred to the enchantment to be activated.

Virtues that increase a user's skill by the enchanted item's Characteristic score (Variable Intensity Skill Boost) are stackable up to a maximum of 5 Intensity. Where a number of skills are capable of enhancement by a single Virtue, the benefit must be separately purchased for each one.

Virtues that provide an enchanted object the ability to use the Characteristics it has been given in its own right, rather than provide a magical benefit to its user, are known as Golem Virtues.

Some Virtues are also de facto Conditions upon who can use the enchanted item and how. Nevertheless the enchanter can always apply further Conditions irrespective of which Characteristics have been invested:

Conditioning (Variable intensity condition): Each point of intensity allows the enchanter to place one Condition upon the item's use. These Conditions can dictate who can use it, where they can use it and when they can use it.

STR VIRTUES

Armouring (Intensity 3 boost Armour Points): Used when enchanting a single item of armour or clothing covering a single Hit Location, the item benefits the wearer for an additional 1 AP for every 3 STR it possesses at no extra penalty to Strike Rank. An item of armour or clothing that covers more than one location requires an additional point of Intensity per location after the first, or the additional Armour Points will be divided evenly between the locations.

Force of Arms (Intensity 3 boost damage bonus): A virtue usually imbued to a weapon; the item's Characteristic STR is added to the user's STR for the benefit of calculating damage bonus.

Golem STR (Intensity 2 Trait): The object is capable of autonomously exerting its STR as a force to perform some task or function. A basic STR Golem may be a simple machine such as a wheel or piston. The item can automatically overcome its own inertia; however it may require a minimum STR to do so. The Golem gains a Brawn skill equal to its STRx5%.

Handiness (Intensity 1 condition): If applied to a weapon or tool, the weapon's own Characteristic STR is deducted from the minimum STR requirement to wield it in the hands of the right user, but if someone barred by the terms of this condition attempts to use the weapon they will experience the reverse effect.

Manly Strength (Variable intensity skill boost): Usually applied to an item of clothing such as gloves, gauntlets, boots, sash, loincloth or girdle; the item's STR x Intensity allocated to this Virtue is added to either the wearer's Athletics, Brawl or Brawn skill, to a maximum Intensity 5.

Resistance (Intensity 2 warding): The item has at least partial immunity to one specific type of damage whether natural or magical in origin, e.g. Fire, Acid, Lightning, Blunt force, Sharp force, Piercing. Each 3 STR possessed by the item negates 1D6 or equivalent of damage of the specified type.

Unbreakable (Intensity 3 boost AP): Typically useful on walls, doors and strongboxes but also applied to objects such as shields or weapons, its STR is converted to additional Armour Points. If applied to something that is subsequently Articulated to possess multiple Hit Locations, the benefit is then divided evenly between the total number of Hit Locations.

CON VIRTUES

Endurance (Intensity 1 boost Characteristic): Add item's CON to that of the wearer/user when determining how long they can last before checking for gain of a fatigue level.

Golem CON (Intensity 2 trait): The item is 'alive' and if made of organic material will not rot or decay. The Golem gains a Resilience skill equal to its CONx5%. It can heal or repair itself at the rate provided in the *Legend Core Rulebook* and will continue to regenerate until the enchantment itself is destroyed.

Life Supporting (Intensity 1 boost Characteristic): A favourite of the Artificers for certain of their devices, usually incorporated into some sort of helmet or mask. Add item's CON to wearer/user's when resolving effects of *either* asphyxiation and drowning or starvation and thirst.

Rude Health (Variable intensity skill boost): The item acts as an antidote to poisons. For each level of Intensity its CON is added to the user's Resilience for the purpose of resisting disease, poison or ageing.

Stamina (Variable Intensity skill boost): Item adds its CON to the wearer's Athletics for resisting Fatigue and to Resilience for resisting the effects of wounds for each level of Intensity applied, to maximum of Intensity 5.

Toughening (Intensity 3 boost HP): Applied to any inanimate object, the item's Hit Points are increased by its CON. Toughening can be applied to Golems, but is not compatible with Golem CON.

INT VIRTUES

Anticipation (Intensity 2 boost Combat Actions): Item provides the user or wearer with an additional Combat Action that can be used for Parry or Riposte.

Golem INT (Intensity 2 trait): The item is sentient and can both perceive the world and apply a restricted (Fixed) INT of its own to what it experiences. This may allow it to compute basic tasks or pursue whatever purpose it has been given or to understand simple instructions much as would a trained animal. The enchanter can specify how the Golem perceives the world – for example, through Sound and Vision, or Taste and Touch, or through some exotic trait such as Dark Sense. The Golem gains a Perception skill restricted to its means of perception equal to its INTx5%.

Intellect (Variable Intensity skill boost): Often applied to a 'thinking cap' but also to the desk or tools the scholar, an item with this virtue increases the user's Education skill by its INT for each point of Intensity applied to a maximum of Intensity 5.

Memory (Intensity 1 trait): Item acts as a 'spell book' and can hold one spell in mind per point of INT on behalf of the user. The spells do not have to be inscribed and the user can change the list of spells he is using the enchantment to memorise.

Obedience (Intensity 1 condition): Item will respond to orders from its creator or nominated master only. It can retain a set of standing orders of 10 words or less per point of INT.

Sapience (Intensity 3 Trait): This Virtue is used when donating a point of INT to a fixed INT creature and converts its INT to Variable INT. When stacked with the Empathy Virtue, it converts the Fixed INT creature into the Enchanter's Familiar.

Subtlety (Variable Intensity skill boost): Item adds its INT to either the user's Disguise, Sleight or Stealth for each point of Intensity applied, to a maximum of Intensity 5. Typically used in enchantments to clothing such as boots, cloak or mask.

POW VIRTUES

Golem POW (Intensity 2 Trait): The item gains autonomous use of its POW Characteristic and has Magic Points to fuel spells and resist magical attacks. The item gains a Persistence skill equal to its POWx5%.

Magic Boosting (Intensity 3 magic boosting): Any spell cast by the user through, on or while grasping the item has its Magnitude boosted by one for each 3 POW the item possesses for the purpose of overcoming defensive magic.

Magic Breaking (Intensity 3 magic boosting): A weapon with this Virtue will ignore one Magnitude of protective magic for each 3 POW possessed by the enchantment.

Magic Damage (Intensity 3 Trait): Applied to a weapon, this virtue ensures that the weapon's damage, to a maximum of its POW, is counted as magical.

Magic Resistant (Variable intensity skill boost): The item protects the wearer from magical attacks; for each point of Intensity applied his Persistence is increased by the item's POW when attacked by a spell, to a maximum of Intensity 5.

Permanence (Intensity 5 spell extension): A Sorcery spell cast on the item acquire a permanent Duration. If the spell is also manipulated (e.g. to increase its Magnitude) it requires an additional point of Intensity per point of manipulation. An item with this Virtue almost always requires conditions to be applied in order to dictate when the spell effects are switched on or off (autonomous), or who is authorised to activate the enchantment (Concentration spells). The permanent spell affects the item not the user. So an enchanter could make a flying carpet this way but a Resist Damage applied to a gold ring protects the ring and not the wearer.

Power Source (Intensity 3 Magic Point boost): The item's POW provides a reserve of Magic Points available to the user (or by the item itself if specified by the enchanter) for the purpose of fuelling spells. These Magic Points are not available for other purposes - the user cannot use them to absorb damage in Spectral Combat, but he can use them to cast spells without compromising his spiritual defences.

Soul Vessel (Intensity 3 trait): If a spirit is forced into the item it will not just be imprisoned within but actually fuses with the item to form a new living creature.

Spell-Charged (Intensity 5 Trait): The item can hold a casting of a Sorcery spell ready for use on demand as a single Combat Action. The user must provide the Magic Points for the casting, unless the item has been given its own reservoir. The item can hold a number of spells ready for use with a total Magic Point cost equal to its own POW. Once a spell is cast it does not regenerate but the item can be reloaded with new spells.

Spirit Resistant (Intensity 3 Trait): The item's POW provides an equivalent number of false Magic Points that are used to soak up damage in Spectral Combat before the user's own Magic Points are affected.

Spirit Shadow (Intensity 5 trait): The item accompanies its wearer or user when disincorporate. A weapon with this virtue increases the user's Spectral Combat damage by +1 per 3 POW, or if the item is armour it reduces damage taken in Spectral Combat by 1 per 3POW.

Wand (Variable Intensity Sorcery Boosting): The item boosts the user's Sorcery spells by one level of manipulation in either Magnitude, Range, Duration, Targets or Combine for each level of Intensity applied. The wand's capabilities must be specified at creation (for example, an Intensity 5 Wand that provides +3 Magnitude and +2 Range). To use this Virtue the sorcerer must be

holding the wand and he must fuel its effects with 1MP per level of boost either from the wand's Magic Points (if any) or his own.

DEX VIRTUES

Agility (Variable Intensity skill boost): Usually applied to a suitable garment, the item provides a modifier equal to its DEX per point of Intensity to *either* Acrobatics, Athletics, Drive, Ride or Swim to a maximum of Intensity 5.

Golem DEX (Intensity 2 Trait): The item gains the ability to use its DEX autonomously and is animated. An item with this virtue is able to bend and flex and move to perform its purpose, subject only to the constraints of its form - a humanoid statue might be able to move more or less as a human would, a magic ring might be able to roll itself along a table. An item with this Virtue gains the Evade skill at its DEXx5%.

Blur (Variable Intensity trait): A weapon enchanted with this virtue appears to shimmer and blur to its victim. For each point of Intensity applied deduct the weapon's DEX from an opponent's chance to Evade or Parry, to a maximum of Intensity 5.

Handiness (Intensity 1 condition): If applied to a weapon or tool, the minimum DEX required to use it is reduced or increased by the item's own DEX depending on whether someone is permitted to use it under the terms of the condition.

Haste (Intensity 3 Movement boost): Usually applied to boots, horseshoes and the like, this Virtue increases the user's Movement Rate by one for every 3 DEX.

Reflexes (Variable Intensity skill boost): When imbued into a weapon or shield, the item adds its DEX to the user's Combat Style for each level of Intensity when used for parrying or Evading, to a maximum of Intensity 5.

Speed (Intensity 3 boost SR): Used for a weapon or armour enchantment, this Virtue adds the item's DEX to that of the wearer/wielder for the purpose of determining SR.

CHA VIRTUES

Charming (Variable Intensity skill boost): The item is a thing of beauty that provides its wearer with a bonus to their Seduction skill of its CHA for each point of Intensity to a maximum of Intensity 5.

Compulsion (Intensity 2 condition): The item has the ability to inspire compulsive desire and demand for it and will only work for someone whom it has successfully beguiled. Anyone handling or examining the item should resist an attack by the item's CHAx5% with their Persistence or be hooked.

Empathy (Intensity 3 trait): This Virtue creates a permanent Mindlink between the enchanter and the enchantment. When stacked with Sapience it provides the necessary basis to create a familiar.

Domination (Variable Intensity trait): The item can be used to dominate and command one specific species. Three points of Intensity are required to nominate a species to be affected, with each additional point of Intensity increasing the number of creatures of that species that can be controlled simultaneously by one. A single item can be imbued with this virtue more than once but can have no more species that it controls than its CHA/3. If the target species possesses variable INT, the base cost of the Virtue is 5.

Fetish (Intensity 3 Spirit Binding): For every 3 CHA possessed by the item one spirit can be bound into it.

Golem CHA (Intensity 2 Trait): The item or creature gains the ability to communicate with and relate to other sapient creatures, in one language, at its CHAx5%. The Enchanter must specify how the item communicates – e.g. audible voice, telepathy, writing that appears on its polished surface. Each additional point of Intensity will provide it with the facility to communicate in an additional language, or through additional means. If able to use more than one language, it can be used as a translator. If it has no INT it can only be used to recite lines with which it has been programmed or process words it is given.

Impressive (Variable Intensity skill boost): The item adds real gravitas to its owner, for each point of Intensity add the item's CHA to the user's Influence or Oratory, to a maximum of Intensity 5.

ENCHANTING A LIVING CREATURE

A living creature can be enchanted, however the following restrictions apply:

INCOMPLETE CREATURES

An incomplete creature can also be enchanted by giving it a Characteristic it lacks, usually CHA. The creature becomes attached to the enchanter as his loyal companion and will stand out as being unusually at home with human behaviour but is still an instinct-driven animal.

A fixed INT creature can become a variable INT creature if the Enchanter gives it a single point of INT and applies the Sapience Virtue. The creature will automatically resist the Enchanting Ritual spell with its Persistence. However so long as it has also, or is given, the Empathy virtue and a CHA Characteristic it becomes the Enchanter's familiar, in Mindlink with the enchanter and subject to his control. Creating a familiar requires 6 Intensity of enchantment virtues (Sapience and Empathy). If the Enchanter has the capacity to apply more he can, thus creating a more interesting or powerful familiar – for example one that can talk, or see into the spirit world – than simply using the Create Familiar Enchantment.

Creating a familiar is an exception to the rule that you cannot enchant the same Characteristic into an item twice; by creating a Fixed INT creature through enchanting an inanimate object, a new thing has been created that can itself be enchanted.

COMPLETE CREATURES

A 'complete creature' possessed of all characteristics and variable INT cannot benefit from the transfer of Characteristic Points by traditional enchanting.

SPIRITS

A spirit is more or less impossible to enchant because it has no physical substance to which enchantments can be applied; however it is common to use enchantment to create an enchanted object that a spirit will be bound to, either to give it sentience and become one with it – or trapped as in a prison.

DAEMONS

A daemon that has crossed into the mundane world can be trapped there by giving it SIZ, which permanently incorporates the entity and prevents it ever returning to its own dimension. This almost never happens with the entity's willing participation, so the daemon should be somehow bargained with, bound or beaten into submission first. The entity becomes the enchanter's slave, as only he can free it to return to its own plane by undoing the enchantment.

BREAKING ENCHANTMENTS

If an enchanted item is destroyed or broken by any means other than the original creator dismantling it, the Characteristic Points invested are lost permanently. If the sorcerer decides to break his own enchantment, he can do so – but he needs possession of the item. He unravels the magic, making one Craft (Enchanter) Skill Test for each Characteristic from which he has dedicated points. If he succeeds he can regain the points. A failure in each case means the enchantment is broken but the Characteristic Points are not regained. A fumble means that the enchantment cannot be undone, or is destroyed - whichever is the most inconvenient.

An Enchanter can use his Craft (Enchanter) skill to attempt to remove part, but not all, of an enchantment – usually the Conditions. This process requires that he succeed in a Skill Test opposed by the skill of the item's creator. An Enchanter can only attempt this once. A fumble results in the destruction of the item.

SAMPLE ENCHANTMENTS

SERVANT GOLEM

The enchanter first makes or procures a statue, often of a cheap material such as clay but sometimes far more exotic and expensive. It may be in any form that suits the enchanter's purpose, however it usually is roughly humanoid. Even a corpse is a potential basis for a Golem, favoured by some as already being of perfect form, however any organic material used requires Golem CON if it is to function as living tissue.

The Enchanter then provides the statue with Characteristic points, for which STR and DEX are a minimum requirement, plus at least a point of INT. The Golem STR, Golem DEX and Golem INT virtues are applied. Rather than spend too many Characteristic Points, the Enchanter might later make liberal use of Enhance Characteristics Sorcery spells.

The resulting basic Golem will have Brawn and Evade and a Perception skill, and is able to perceive its environment and follow instructions. A condition may well be applied so that the Golem knows its master.

The SIZ of the Golem is a matter of choice but if made of particularly solid matter it will require a STR commensurate with its density. If the Golem's STR falls below this level a -5% penalty is applied to all physical tasks (including combat) per point of STR below the requirement.

GOLEM ATTRIBUTES, ARMOUR POINTS AND HIT POINTS

A Golem's attributes are calculated as normal, however it has Armour Points that derive from the substance from which it is made. A Golem is a simple construct that effectively has a single Hit Location and Hit Points equal to its SIZ modified by its composition. An Articulated Golem is a complex construct that has Hit Locations. Its Hit Points per location are determined by using modified SIZ+CON, or if it has no CON, its modified SIZx2. An Articulated golem also loses the penalties to Movement and Strike Rank resulting from its composition.

GOLEM SKILLS

A Golem may be given additional skills by the application of Virtues known as Instincts, one of which exists for each skill.

Golem Instinct (Variable Intensity Trait): This virtue imbues a Golem with a specific skill. The Golem must possess both the Characteristics from which the Basic Percentage is generated. The skill level depends on the Intensity with which it is imbued. At Intensity 1 the Golem's skill is equal to its Basic Percentage

x3%. Additional intensity can be applied – at Intensity 2 the skill is equal to its Basic Percentage x4%, and at Intensity 3 (the maximum allowed) to its Basic Percentage x5%.

A Golem is not capable of learning and improving skills, unless it is subsequently given Sapience, or the Soul Vessel virtue is applied and a spirit forced in – in which case it is, technically, no longer a Golem but an independent being.



Composition	Movement Rate (humanoid)	Armour Points	Strike Rank Modifier	SIZ Modifier	Minimum STR
Old Bone, Twigs	8	0	0	-50%	1 per 6 SIZ
Flesh, Fresh Bone	8	0	0	0	1 per 3 SIZ
Wood, Ivory	7	2	-2	+25%	1 per 2 SIZ
Clay	6	6	-4	+50%	1 per SIZ
Bronze or Iron (hollow)	6	8	-6	+50%	1.5 per 1 SIZ
Stone	4	10	-8	+100%	3 per 1 SIZ
Bronze or Iron (solid)	4	12	-10	+150%	3 per 1 SIZ

**Flesh Golem, Zombie Warrior, Intensity
9 Enchantment**

	Basic	Average		Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	3D8	13	1D20	Body	-/13
CON	-	-	1-20		
SIZ	13	13			
INT	1D8	5 (fixed)	Armour:		
POW	-	-	As given, none natural		
DEX	2D8	9			
CHA	-	-			
Combat Actions	2		Traits:		
Damage Modifier	+1D2		Golem STR, Golem INT, Golem DEX, Instinct of Combat (Brawl), Instinct of Combat (Maul), Obedience.		
Magic Points	-				
Movement	8m		Unliving - Immune to poisons, asphyxiation, and also to the combat Manoeuvres		
Strike Rank	7		Bleed, Bypass Armour, Impale and Stun.		
			Skills:		
			Brawn 65%, Evade 45%, Perception 25%, Brawl 66%, Maul 66%		

A classic Zombie warrior. This is a very expensive way to create a zombie when an Animate Corpse spell might do - but on the other hand this one can be relied upon to stay on guard at a sorcerer's house or tomb forever. And what's more, if a fresh corpse is used, he can pass for a rather taciturn human.

Flesh Golem Intensity 12 Enchantment

	Basic	Average		Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	2D10	11	1D20	Body	-/13
CON	2D10	11	1-20		
SIZ	13	13			
INT	1D10	6 (fixed)	Armour:		
POW	-	-	As given, none natural		
DEX	2D10	11			
CHA	2D10	11			
Combat Actions	2		Traits:		
Damage Modifier	+0		Golem STR, Golem CON, Golem INT, Golem DEX, Golem CHA, Instinct of Seduction, Obedience.		
Magic Points	-				
Movement	8m		Unliving - Immune to poisons, asphyxiation, and also to the combat Manoeuvres		
Strike Rank	9		Bleed, Bypass Armour, Impale and Stun.		
			Skills:		
			Brawn 55%, Evade 55%, Language (Djesmiri) 55%, Perception 30%; Resilience 55%, Seduction 51%		

This version of a flesh golem is a wizard's desperate attempt to keep his dead lover at his side day and night, by using enchantment to bring him or her to life. The enchantment has the added cost of providing the golem with some CHA (which will no doubt be enhanced through spells) so the sorcerer can have conversations with it and the Instinct of Seduction, so he can have his creation act out a macabre seduction routine with convincing realism.

Clay Golem, Guardian or Labourer, Intensity 8 Enchantment

	Basic	Average		Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	3D8	14	1D20	Body	6/20
CON	–	–	1–20		
SIZ	14	14			
INT	1D8	5 (fixed)	Armour:		
POW	–	–	As given, none natural		
DEX	2D8	9			
CHA	–	–			
Combat Actions	2		Traits:		
Damage Modifier	+1D2		Golem STR, Golem INT, Golem DEX, Instinct of Combat (Brawl), Obedience		
Magic Points	–		Formidable Natural Weapons		
Movement	6m				
Strike Rank	3		Unliving - Immune to poisons, asphyxiation, and also to the combat Manoeuvres Bleed, Bypass Armour, Impale and Stun		
			Skills:		
			Brawn 70%, Evade 45%, Perception 25%, Brawl 69%		

This is a classic Golem produced at a more moderate cost and capable of both menial labouring tasks and beating a human victim to a pulp if required. A simple and functional slave and an ideal platform for enhancement with suitable spells.

ARTIFICERS

The name of Artificers usually refers to the technologically minded sorcerers of Sorandib, who attempt to find ways to use technology and craft to bestow Characteristics on their enchantments rather than sacrifice their own. They generate an exotic range of artefacts some of them magical, some of them non-magical and some of them hard to tell whether magical or not. Their output, at least in low-powered items, is quite phenomenal, enough to help equip some of the elite soldiers of the Taskan army.

The Artificers have some unique virtues that they can generate with their arts. One of the most important for those interested in the creation of constructs is *Articulation*.

Articulation (Variable Intensity trait): An item with this virtue is broken down into Hit Locations through the use of complex joints, cogs and/or gears, and is capable of whatever range of movements is normal for its basic form (humanoid, quadruped and so forth). One point of Intensity is required for each additional Hit Location the item acquires. If the item has been previously enchanted, certain Virtues may now apply to every Hit Location. Articulation can have the effect of removing the Strike Rank penalty applied to golems.

Once an item is Articulated new enchantments must be specified to be applied to specific locations.

CONJURING

A Conjurer usually begins his trade in pursuit of spirits that he can summon and bind (see the *Spirit Magic* chapter in this book). However some otherworld entities are much more difficult to find or call upon and conjuring them up is the job of a professional. A Sorcerer who learns the Summoning Ritual is on the threshold of contacting an almost infinite variety of beings but had best be wary, as a terrible price can be paid for mistakes. The hazards of conjuring up otherworld demons can also make a sorcerer very unpopular – even in magic-rich lands like Assabia. In the city of Perlak, for example, the practice is strictly outlawed on pain of death and the sultan has Spell Slaves on watch day and night armed with long-duration Sense Demon spells with sufficient range to cover the whole city.

SUMMONING (INT+CHA) RITUAL SORCERY

Summoning is a specialist Grimoire (ritual) skill required by Conjurers to call forth an otherworld entity that takes on a physical form – anything that has a SIZ Characteristic once it appears. When a Conjurer first acquires this Grimoire skill he will have 1D4 Summon (Specific Entity) spells available to him. However he can continue to add additional summoning spells as his career progresses, from whatever source he can find them – even from other Summoners' Grimoires. He can also add to the Grimoire



THE IRON SIMULACRUM

The Simulacrum is the apogee of the enchanter's art, constructed through both artifice and magic. He is brought to life with a little fragment of the Emperor's soul that makes him Zygag Taga's familiar, as well as his factotum, and entitled to call himself 'Son of the Divine Emperor'.

The Simulacrum stands almost eight feet high. His iron skin is dotted with rivets and traced by seams where the metal has been joined in a crazy patchwork of plates to render the human form as closely as can be. His face is a grim and hollow mask – a far cry from the serene, beautiful and beneficent image with which its predecessor, the Marble Simulacrum, was carved.

The Simulacrum is a sentient creature and therefore is capable of learning and improving its knowledge and skills – and now being over 80 years old it is quite an accomplished individual. It is a little known fact that the Simulacrum actually has a personal name – only known to and used by the Iron Companions and the Emperor himself.

The Simulacrum's body was made in Sorandib, as an articulated golem with toughened iron shell and from this are derived his Characteristic STR, CON and DEX. Shipped to Ashkor, the cadre of generals who would become the Iron Companions saw to the enchanting of this golem with its INT and POW. This 'incomplete' creature was then finally presented to the Emperor at Taskay who made it his familiar by investing it with INT and CHA and imbuing it with Sapience and Empathy. Now a fully aware complete creature, the Simulacrum dedicated half its POW to his master and in addition to accessing Divine Magic spells took Gifts in exchange: an increase of 2D3 each in STR and CHA at a cost of 4 POW.

Every year during the Emperor Days festivities, Maresh Martek, arch priest of Thesh and high priest of the Emperor-cult at Taskay, leads the spell casting ritual that renews the Simulacrum's magical enhancements and defences. These include: Enhance STR, Spirit Resistance effective over entities with a POW of up to 39 and Spell Resistance proof against spells up to a Magnitude of 13. With the help of the Power Sharing divine spell enabling Maresh to draw on assistance to enhance even his immense arcane skills, these spells are each cast with 10 points of Duration and a Magnitude of 6.

So long as the Simulacrum's spells are up, he suffers only a -5% penalty to physical skills (already factored into his stats) due to his massive weight, however should the Enhance STR spell fail or be dispelled, the Simulacrum is almost helpless with a -75% penalty to any skill involving STR or DEX.

The Simulacrum has weaknesses – not least his dependence on the spells furnished by Maresh Martek each year. His Insight skill is already at its maximum, due to a fundamental alienation from the human condition that is as much because he is his father's son, created when the Emperor's mind had long since forgotten what it is to be a frail mortal, as because he is an artificial construct. He strives to understand his subjects but will never quite get there; the Simulacrum's *Aptitude* for this skill is restricted to his Basic Percentage x 2. He nevertheless is jealous of the human condition and nurtures an ambition to one day be truly human. He has no sense of touch, smell and taste. These are things that irk him, as he is curious to experience things as a natural creature does.

The Simulacrum's effective SIZ, due to his iron composition, is half again his apparent SIZ. This affects Hit Point calculation but also any attempt to affect him with magic that uses SIZ as a measure must be sufficient to affect a SIZ of 29. Hence the Simulacrum cannot actually use his Teleport spell on himself.

The Iron Simulacrum

	Basic	Enhanced		Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	14	28	1D20		
CON	13		1-3	Right Leg	8/11
SIZ	19	29	4-6	Left Leg	8/11
INT	17		7-9	Abdomen	8/12
POW	20		10-12	Chest	8/13
DEX	22		13-15	Right Arm	8/10
CHA	16		16-18	Left Arm	8/10
SOC	20		19-20	Head	8/11

Combat Actions	4
Damage Modifier	+1D12
Magic Points	10
Movement	8m
Strike Rank	20

Armour: 8 Point iron shell

Traits:

+2 HP/location (Toughening Enchantment),

Unliving - Immune to poisons, asphyxiation, and also to the combat Manoeuvres Bleed, Bypass Armour, Impale and Stun

Formidable Natural Weapons

Skills: Athletics 67%, Brawn 124%, Culture (Own) 115%, Education (Taskan) 95%, Evade 39%, Diplomacy 110%, Influence 125%, Insight 70%, Orate 96%, Perception 66%, Persistence 117%, Piety 98%, Resilience 80%

Magic:

Sorcery Manipulation 99%. Grimoires:

On the Power of Kings (87%)

Bone Wrack, Dominate Human, Form/Set Iron, Teleport

On Duty (96%)

Intuition, Regenerate, Restoration, Telepathy, Worship Zygag Taga

The Blue Book (74%)

Banish; Damage Resistance; Dominate Citizen; Enhance CHA; Intuition; Mystic Vision; Neutralise Magic; Protective Ward; Spell Resistance; Spirit Resistance; Treat Wounds; Worship Zygag Taga

Pact (Zygag Taga) 100%: Dedicated POW 10 of which 6 points allocated to Divine Magic and 4 points are allocated to Gifts

Divine Magic: Lore (Zygag Taga) 95%: Command Human, Command Salamander, Consecrate, Excommunication, Extension, Melding

Languages: Tarsenian 89%, Jekkarene 55%

Heroic Ability: Holy Man

Combat Styles: Brawl 67%, Sidearm 103%

WEAPONS

Type	Size	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Huge Falchion	H	L	D6+2+D12	10/12

himself by researching the necessary lore to help him identify further types of spirit or daemon and the necessary procedures to summon them. This could be achieved as an Extended Task using his Education skill and a library that contains the necessary information. A Summoner's Grimoire can also contain useful Dominate (otherworld entity) spells to go with the summons spell, however any other spells need to be found in standard sorcery (INTx2) grimoires.

A Summoning Ritual requires significant expenditure of Magic Points in order to enable the entity to generate a form, in addition to those spent on the casting itself. Some daemonic entities that are closely attached to the physical world and can generate a form without a Conjuror's help, are the easiest to summon. Entities such as Nymphs can only be summoned at the specific geographical site to which they are tied and can resist (Persistence) to refuse to show themselves but they only cost one Magic Point to conjure. Elementals typically cost one Magic Point per cubic metre to conjure but do not resist unless the Conjuror has some reason to be seen as a foe.

Demons generally live in the outer reaches of the Spirit World, where it touches upon the Many Hells, and need to form a body more or less out of thin air. This fact means that Demon summonings are very Magic Point intensive, requiring a minimum of one Magic Point for every 3 SIZ that the demon requires in order to form a material body plus one Magic Point for every other Characteristic possessed by the demon. Hence even a small demon, such as an Imp, typically requires 9 Magic Points to summon and the bigger varieties of demons present a significant challenge. Demons also come with a difficulty rating that modifies the Conjuror's Summoning Skill Test and all demons are at least Difficult, ranging all the way up to Formidable for those that fall into the category of minor deity.

SUMMONING PROCEDURE

A summoning usually takes one hour per Magic Point invested in the process, although much of this time is spent preparing the environment, then body and mind – the final stage of the summoning, when the Magic Points are actually spent and the Skill Test made, takes one Combat Round per Magic Point to complete.

A successful Summoning Skill Test conjures up the desired creature who will remain in the physical world for a period of time equal to

the Duration of the spell (Conjuror's POWx1 unless Manipulation is applied), however a Dominate (Species) spell is usually required to tell it what to do, unless the Conjuror is confident in his ability to converse with and strike a bargain with the entity. The GM can decide on the Attitude of the summoned creature, or roll on the Attitudes table in the Skills chapter. Naturally any entity will regard an attempt to cast a Dominate spell as an assault and respond accordingly.

A critical success indicates that the creature appears and is immediately well disposed towards the Conjuror and will comply willingly with any requests or commands that do not put it in obvious danger or contradict its nature.

A failed Summoning Skill Test results in a lot of wasted time and energy, while a fumble can result in a failure but at the cost of all the Magic Points that would be used in a successful summoning. At the Games Master's discretion a fumbled summoning roll will have disastrous effects.

SUMMONING FUMBLES TABLE

D20	Fumble Effect
01–03	Conjuror is sucked into another dimension and never seen again.
04–07	Conjuror is momentarily sucked into another dimension and comes back 'different'.
08–10	The required demonic entity appears and immediately attacks the Conjuror, automatically resisting any attempt to control it.
11–13	The required demonic entity appears but is not alone and he and his friends immediately attempt to eat the Conjuror.
14–17	An extremely powerful version of the required demon appears, or a whole crowd of them; with overwhelming force the Conjuror faces certain annihilation unless he sacrifices something very precious (POW, CHA, manhood, magical artefacts, a loved one) on the spot.
18–20	A hugely powerful creature or minor god appears instead of the summoned entity intent on making a slave of the Conjuror.

SPIRIT MAGIC

In the *Age of Treason* setting there are many spirits who can manifest in the material world and interact with its inhabitants and this is where most communications – and even spectral combat – between mortals and spirits take place. Spirits are a significant danger and people will pay good money for the protective magic and charms. There are sorcerers who specialise in handling spirits – Conjurers and Necromancers – however the real experts are those who follow Spirit Magic Traditions. Spirit Magic is not practised by Taskans and is the preserve of foreign cultures, often considered the hallmark of a barbarian. You can find such barbarians in the Empire's cities, selling their services to anyone with a need for their specialist skills or simply a love of exotic rites.

SPIRIT TRADITIONS

Those who are brought up in a culture where Spirit Magic is at the heart of religious observances may use their Rites (Own) to allow them to interact with spirits with which their tradition has a relationship, referred to as Traditional Spirits. This acts the same way as other people might use Rites (Own) to deal with the pantheon of gods worshipped in their culture, except that it applies to types of spirits as well as individual entities. They can use this skill to cast any Common Magic or Divine Magic spells their tradition provides, to sense the presence of traditional spirits and also to command traditional spirits under their control.

An Adventurer from such a background may also learn Spirit Binding. This enables him to summon and coerce a traditional spirit to perform a single deed in return for some sort of mutually acceptable service. It also fortifies him in spectral combat, for just as in the *Legend Core Rulebook* this skill can be used in Spectral Combat when disincorporate in the spirit world and also allows the Adventurer to bind any defeated spirit to a fetish.

SPIRIT WALKING

Entering the spirit world is, for a living person, an extremely difficult feat. There is no known way to do this through sorcery and those who are able to Spirit Walk usually do so using a Divine Magic spell or using a Heroic Ability or divine gift that is achievable by the most committed spirit worshippers.

SPIRIT WALKING (HEROIC ABILITY)

Requirements: POW 15+; Spirit Binding 70% or higher *or* Rites (Spirit Tradition) 90% or higher

Hero Points: 10

Duration: Several Hours

Your immersion in the ways of the spirits has opened your eyes to the other world and you are on the path to being able to

disincorporate at will and walk among the spirits. You gain Spirit Walking as an Advanced Skill at your basic percentage and can advance the skill through study and Improvement Rolls up to your Aptitude without membership of a cult or acquiring a fetch.

SPIRITS

Spirits are usually invisible unless detected using spells such as Mystic Vision, Second Sight or Soul Sight. However many possess the Spirit Manifestation trait, which allows them to make themselves visible to and otherwise interact with the material world. Most spirits who possess this trait can only use it under certain conditions; or it may be that they can only manifest to a person or creature with whom they have a natural affinity – for example an Ancestor Spirit who can only appear to a descendent or a member of the clan to which it is an ancestor.

The most dangerous spirits possess the Disincorporate trait, which allows them to drag the soul of a physical being into the spirit world and attack it in Spectral Combat at a significant advantage, leaving the victim's body utterly lifeless and helpless until they can break free of the spirit's grip. Thankfully this trait is rare. A disincorporate Adventurer who lacks the Spirit Binding skill is restricted to using Persistence at half value in spectral combat as per the normal *Legend* rules.

SPIRIT MANIFESTATION (POW+CHA)

This is the skill used by spirits to intrude into the physical world, much the same way as Spirit Walking is how a physical creature can intrude on the spirit world. To have this skill a spirit must possess the Manifestation Trait. If it does, its Spirit Manifestation skill is usually equal to its Basic Percentage x its Intensity. Spirit manifestations may involve all the classic signs of a haunting, but can include attacks on physical creatures through Spectral Combat. Each type of spirit has to obey different rules about how, when and to whom it can manifest itself – it is unusual for any spirit to be able to manifest at will to living, physical beings. Spirits make themselves known in a variety of ways – some of them appear as spectres, some as ghostly voices, others as a rush of air or change of temperature. The greater the spirit's Manifestation skill, the more extreme the effect. Those with Spirit Manifestation skills in excess of 100% might appear so 'real' that they can pass themselves off as a physical being and an Insight test is required to see through the illusion.

MANIFESTATION AND SPECTRAL COMBAT

To force a victim into Spectral Combat, the spirit must have a Manifestation skill of at least 26% and meet the conditions imposed

by the rules governing when and how it is allowed to interact with the material world. It must then match its Manifestation skill against the Adventurer's Persistence in an Opposed Test.

When attacked in the physical world by a manifested spirit a victim has their normal number of Combat Actions and is able to perform other actions, including spell casting and physical combat but does have to split their available Combat Actions to do so. A physical entity attacked by a manifested spirit always gets to fight back using their Persistence at full value, or their Spirit Binding skill, whichever is higher.

While a spirit's capability in Spectral Combat is determined by its Spectral Combat skill, its Spirit Manifestation is also important as it affects what a spirit can hope to achieve in spectral combat with a physical being. Spirits with a Manifestation skill of 01-25% can usually not attack a physical entity in Spectral Combat. Those with a skill of 26-75% may not usually destroy their victim in Spectral Combat and will most likely possess a defeated Adventurer instead.. Only a spirit with a Manifestation skill at 76% or higher can actually kill a corporeal victim in Spectral Combat without limitations by severing their soul from their body.

DEFENDING AGAINST SPIRITS: SPIRIT BLOCK

Given that there are many types of spirit able to attack people in the material world, some sort of defence is called for. There are sorcery spells capable of preventing a spirit attacking you; so far as Divine Magic is concerned, a generic Spirit Block spell is also available from some deities that defends against all types of attacking spirit but only provides protection from spirits of up to 3 POW per point of Magnitude. A few gods offer Block (Specific Spirit) spells that block spirits of up to 6 POW per point of Magnitude. These spells apply to a category of spirit – e.g. Curse Spirits or Sickness Spirits and can be useful against any variety of that spirit type.

COMMON SPIRIT TYPES

Apparition (INT 3, POW 1D6+6, CHA 1D6) Intensity 1 spirit Manifestation 13%, Persistence 40%, Spectral Combat 50%; Recurring

An apparition is a fractured spirit – in fact nothing more than an imprint on the material world left by some past person or event. It has the ability to Manifest in order to reveal itself to an observer – but insufficient to force a physical being into spectral combat. Apparitions commonly play out some brief moment in the past responsible for their creation, perhaps the moment of death or some moment in the life of the individual that the spectre represents that was highly charged with emotion. Very rarely they may in fact foreshadow an event yet to occur. Some apparitions preserve a meaning that can be discerned by the astute observer, perhaps with an appropriate Insight Skill Test. Others may confer a curse (an automatic failure or even fumble on the next skill test) or a blessing (as additional Hero Point or an improved success at their next Skill Test) on the observer.

Ghost (INT 2D6+6, POW 3D6, CHA 3D6) Intensity 2 spirit, Manifestation 48%, Persistence 44%, Spectral Combat 55%

Ghosts are the souls of those who fail to make the crossing over to the spirit world because something has happened that causes them to be 'bound' to the material world, haunting a specific place, person or object. Ghosts typically are capable only of the weakest or 'spectral' forms of Manifestation – eerie lights and sounds, moving small objects; the more powerful include poltergeists capable of throwing furniture around a room – and some can engage in Spectral Combat if the target fulfils certain conditions that lay them open to attack, often to do with transgression or desecration. When a Ghost does attack it will take dominant possession of the victim if it wins, but this is usually only so as to be able to force the victim to do something they would never do of their own free will, such as commit suicide or attack a friend or loved one - or perhaps just to perform some action required to free the Ghost from its haunting.

GHOSTLY TRAITS

A Ghost often has a trait that it can activate through its Manifestation skill. Where the trait is in effect a magical attack the Ghost can use it against someone within a range of their POW in metres, or who is within the boundaries of the area to which the Ghost is bound. It can usually deploy a trait once per day for every five CHA it possesses. Some examples:

Trait	Effects
Spook	The ghost has the power to terrify; once per day it can deliver a Fear attack (as the Divine Magic spell) with a Magnitude of 1 per 10% of its Manifestation skill.
Poltergeist	The ghost is capable of moving objects around a room with a STR of 1 per 10% of the Ghost's Manifestation skill, and even hurling small items with intent to harm with an accuracy equal to its Manifestation skill. It can also attempt to prevent an Adventurer from lifting an object, opening a door or similar by using its Manifestation Skill in an opposed Brawn test.
Sprite	The ghost has the power of Illusion (as the Divine Magic Spell) with a Magnitude of 1 per 10% of the Ghost's Manifestation skill.
Fury	The ghost has the power of Madness (as the Divine Magic Spell) with a Magnitude of 1 per 10% of the Ghost's Manifestation skill.
Revenant	The ghost has the power to cast Sever Spirit (as the Divine Magic Spell) with a Magnitude of 1 per 10% of the Ghost's Manifestation skill. It can only use this ability against an individual whose doom is the whole purpose of their haunting.

Ghosts sometimes have the ability to use their Manifestation skill to replicate a skill or ability that reflects the profession they pursued in life, a talent or genius they possessed, or just the thing that obsesses them most. Sometimes the ghost can be persuaded or forced to channel this skill in ways that allow a mortal to make use of it. These ghosts operate similarly to an Ancestor Spirit as described in the *Legend Core Rulebook*.

Bane Spirits (INT 1D6, POW 3D6+6, CHA 1D6) Intensity 3 spirit. Discorporate 63%, Persistence 68%, Spectral Combat 85%

These spirits exist to pursue and destroy ghosts and other spirits who refuse to enter the Many Hells when their time comes, who get lost after death because they fail to find the proper path to the Many Hells, or who linger in the material world when they should not. Bane Spirits typically only use their Discorporate ability to drag other spirits back to the spirit world – those which have manifested there, or are in covert or dominant possession of a mortal creature.

Ancestor Spirits: (INT 2D6+6, POW 1D6+18, CHA 3D6) Intensity 3 spirit

These are highly important across a number of cultures from primitive peoples of Jandekot to the barbarous Sheng and civilised Beshor Valley People. Ancestors belong in whichever of the Many Hells serves as a land of the dead for their culture and do not have the ability to Manifest in the material world except to one of their descendants. An Ancestor's Manifestation skill is equal to its Basic Percentage x Intensity (99%), however for every generation that has passed and every step removed from direct descent between Ancestor and descendant the link becomes more remote and the Manifestation skill is penalised by -10%. To call upon an Ancestor's spirit and make use of its skills or abilities, once the request has been made, requires a successful Manifestation Skill Test on the part of the Ancestor modified by the appellant's critical Spirit Binding score. This may be attempted once per round, however if the test is fumbled the link is broken and the promised assistance lost.

Nature Spirits (INT 1D4+2, POW 1D6+ 6 per Intensity, CHA 1D4+2) variable Intensity spirits

These spirits are among the most numerous and diverse of all spirit types and tend to be found clustered into communities of spirits tied or attracted to similar environments or creatures. Nature spirits can usually only manifest to the creatures they relate to, or to a follower of a spirit tradition with which they have an affinity.

Healing Spirits (INT 2D6, POW Upwards of 1D6+6, CHA 2D6) variable Intensity spirits

These spirits cannot manifest on their own and usually need to be captured and bound in the spirit world. An Intensity 1 healing spirit is capable of restoring one Hit Location suffering a minor wound to full Hit Points; an Intensity 2 spirit (POW 1D6+12) is capable of healing a serious wound and an Intensity 3 spirit (POW 1D6+18) is capable of healing a major wound, including reattaching a severed limb or fixing broken bones, while an Intensity 4 spirit (POW 1D6+24) can restore an entire body back to full health so long as there is some small sign of life remaining. Healing spirits are usually one-shot devices that are negotiated with to provide their services once. If forced into a binding a healing spirit may be reused however each use of its power costs the spirit 1MP per Hit Point it heals and the spirit will need time to recover between uses.

Sickness Spirits (Miasma) (INT 2D6, POW upwards of 1D6+6, CHA 2D6) variable Intensity spirits; recurring

Less dangerous than the Plague Demons that often are responsible for spawning them, nevertheless these creatures are one of the great

causes of misery to humankind. Sickness Spirits are usually found attached to an object (the corpse of their last victim, a dish, a well, a creature, a place) and can manifest to anyone touching that object. The spirit will try to force its victim into Spectral Combat by matching their Spirit Manifestation trait against the victim's Resilience and if successful the victim is now polluted and cannot escape the spirit except by defeating it in Spectral Combat. If the spirit wins it covertly possesses the victim who is thus infected with whatever disease it carries. Someone who defeats a Sickness Spirit in Spectral Combat becomes immune to it.

Passion Spirits (INT 2D6, POW 2D6+6, CHA 2D6) Intensity 2 Spirit; Manifestation 40%, Persistence 52%, Spectral Combat 65%

Found in the entourages of greater daemons and gods, passion spirits range from those that instil fierce feelings of love or fear and depression, to those that drive a warrior into an irresistible battle fury. Most Passion Spirits have the ability to manifest themselves to a victim who is already prone to whatever emotional state they are peddling. Winning Spectral Combat results in covert possession. Whenever a suitable situation arises for the Passion Spirit's particular emotion to assert itself, it will try to match its Manifestation skill against the host's Persistence and if successful the victim's actions will be completely driven by their emotional state.

Elemental Spirits: (INT 1 per Intensity, POW upwards of 1D6+6, CHA 1 Per Intensity) variable Intensity spirit

The lowest in the pecking order of elemental creatures, Elemental Spirits can offer their host unique abilities to use or interact with their element of origin. An Elemental Spirit can also be released to form an elemental of one cubic metre per point of Intensity, if sufficient quantities of their element are on hand to do so.

SPIRIT WORSHIPPING TRADITIONS

THE WITCHES OF QOM

Qom is a land of desolate and lonely hills, sparsely populated and visited only because it straddles the important road from Yegusan to Djesmir. It is famous for one thing and that is its witches, who are the source of tales used to scare small children in far distant places. The leading practitioners of their tradition specialise in hunting down spirits and capturing them for their magic cauldrons.

The Witches of Qom are a tradition whose members make use of *pharmaka* – that is, potions and poisons created from roots, plants and berries, for all manner of purposes both good and ill. This expertise is captured under the Lore (Witchcraft) skill:

LORE (WITCHCRAFT) INTx2

This Lore skill represents a witch's knowledge of a range of elixirs, potions and poisons as well as a handful of spells and incantations under a single body of knowledge handed down from generation to generation. Unlike the separate Lore skills studied by Alchemists there are no written formulae to study and refer to, and the range

of products a Witch is capable of is limited – except in the realm of poisons, in which they are considered leading authorities. The knowledge is put into use with the Craft (Herbalist) skill, which in all other respects is used like the Craft (Alchemist) skill.

PURPOSE OF THE CULT

A follower of this tradition enjoys knowing that they are privy to all manner of secrets and gossip, that her sisters are there for her in good times and bad and in particular that they have recourse to the secrets of the tradition to keep their family safe and healthy or to curse and kill those who would threaten them.

MEMBERSHIP

FOLLOWERS

The cult is rife among the womenfolk of the region and its adherents share their secrets with one another and operate an informal, but nevertheless deeply entrenched, hierarchy based on age, respect and fear. A follower can gain instruction in Lore (Witchcraft) and Craft (Herbalist) and may be able to learn some of the tradition's Common Magic.

WORSHIPPERS

Those who show promise and commitment may start to be admitted to circles in which they become acquainted with the inner workings of the cult and exposed to its magical traditions. To become a worshipper typically requires 30% each in Influence, Insight and Lore (Witchcraft).

A worshipper can learn any of the cult skills, and be allowed to observe when the witches are going about their business.

WITCHES

A Witch must have gained a skill of 50% in at least three of the five key cult skills. To gain membership of a coven and access to its inner secrets, a prospective Witch should succeed in capturing a spirit for the coven's cauldron.

A coven of witches can be of any size, with a minimum of three, but in this backwater country it is rare for more than a dozen witches to regularly meet together. There are no more than five covens operating across the region.

MAGIC: LORE (WITCHCRAFT)

Common Magic

Bearing Witness, Befuddle, Fate, Lucky, Second Sight, Visibility.

VISIBILITY (COMMON MAGIC SPELL)

Duration 5, Magnitude 1, Resist (Persistence)

This spell is used to force a spirit to manifest. The caster must be able to see the target (using Second Sight or Spirit Walking). Once affected by this spell the target spirit may be forced into spectral combat in the physical world, or bargained with. A spirit that lacks the Manifest trait cannot be affected by this spell.

Higher Magic

Lore (Witchcraft) allows a witch to create the following products:

Healing Salve, Constitutional Elixir, Energising Elixir; Any Poison or its Antidote with a natural source; Spell Cauldron Brew; Spirit Walking Potion.

SPELL CAULDRON BREW (HERBALIST POTION)

Time 9 days, Cost 20SP, Difficult

Unique to the Witches of Qom, and only passed down through their covens, this is a major undertaking that creates a cauldron in which spirits can be immersed and stripped of their INT, POW and CHA leaving just any spells known by the spirit or traits it possessed as dashes of glittering colour swirling around in the magical soup to be scooped out and used by the witches. It destroys the entities bound to it at a rate of one point from each Characteristic the entity possesses per Combat Round.

A Spell Cauldron contains a specialised version of the Spirit Binding Potion to hold the Spirit or Entity in place while it does its work. The initial recipe generates one litre of the brew per 10% of the lead witch's Craft (Herbalist) skill plus the critical score of each witch in the coven who assists. The brew can hold a total Magnitude of spells (counting Divine Magic at double its Magnitude) or Intensity of spirit traits equal to its volume in litres. Once ingested the knowledge or ability to cast a spell, or to use a spirit's trait, lasts for the user's POW in minutes. Spells are cast at the magnitude achievable by the defunct spirit but using the witch's Lore (Witchcraft) as chance. Traits behave just as if the witch were activating a controlled spirit.

Once a spell or trait is removed from the cauldron and consumed it is gone for good and another spirit must be found to replace it. To retain the full capacity of her cauldron the witch can 'top up' her brew, once created, using a single Craft (Herbalist) Skill Test to do so, one litre at a time. It is common for the witches in a coven to take turns at this task.

SPIRIT WALKING POTION (HERBALIST POTION)

Time 6 hours, Cost 5SP, Routine

This potion is used to replicate the effects of Spirit Walking. The potency of the potion determines the equivalent Spirit Walking skill level that applies. This stuff is easy to make if you know where to find the ingredients but it has potential side effects. The user should first resist (Resilience) the potion's poisonous effects or the brew will be lost in a fit of vomiting and 1D3-1 damage inflicted on the abdomen. The potion then takes effect, with a Duration equal to the user's POW in minutes, during which the Witch can benefit from its intended effects. Eventually witches become inured to the poisonous effects of the potion.

Traditional Spirits

Curse Spirits, Guardian Spirits, Healing Spirits. The Witches hunt other types of spirits – Nature Spirits in particular – for their cauldrons.

SKILLS

Craft (Herbalist), Influence, Insight, Lore (Witchcraft), Spirit Binding

When witches go Spirit Walking they cannot disincorporate others and transport them to the spirit plane, except for those who properly belong there – spirits manifest in the material world, including those covertly possessing or bound into a physical body or object.

When a witch defeats a spirit in Spectral Combat, she usually throws it to her cauldron, in which everything but its useful traits and abilities are boiled away. These traits are preserved in the cauldron's soup, allowing a Witch to scoop them out and use them herself.

BESHOR VALLEY ANCESTOR WORSHIP

The Kingdoms of Yegusai and Zagre are home to a priestly class of shamans whose job it is to manage the Beshor Valley folk's relations with their ancestors. They preside over all the key rituals of the community but no other task is so serious a responsibility as the proper administration over funerary practices. This includes the design, approval and excavation or construction of buildings and catacombs for use as ossuaries and the recruitment and command of a volunteer constabulary to stand watch over them.

Most people of the region have a Rites (Own) skill which they use to participate in the ritual life of the community, which can include the worship of gods who are to be found in the region. However the priestly caste is completely focussed on their relationship with the ancestors and their specialist knowledge is contained within the Lore (Genealogy) skill. A successful use of this skill allows a priest to identify by name a specific spirit who will provide the insights, skills or knowledge they need. If they have that individual's mortal remains to hand then a successful Spirit Binding test will summon it for discussion and negotiation.

Being the only shamans with which most Taskans are familiar, priests from Yegusai are highly sought after in the Imperial heartlands as exorcists and some immigrants to the cities of Tarsenia have even built up cults around themselves.

MEMBERSHIP

Priesthood in the two kingdoms of the Beshor Valley tends to be a hereditary trade and to become a Spirit Worshipper – effectively an apprentice to a priest – requires being either born or adopted into a priestly family.

FOLLOWER

Most of the population of the two kingdoms count as followers of the tradition. Common members may receive the ancestors' blessings at rites of worship but no access to the cult's Common or Divine Magic.

WORSHIPPER

Worshippers are few in number, usually drawn from a small number of families and generally serve as assistants and attendants to the shaman-priests. Worshippers must have 30% in each of

the cult skills. If not born into the priestly class it is possible to gain entry by adoption if an individual has an Aptitude (basic percentage x5%) for either Lore or Spirit Walking of 150% or greater. An adoptee will be trained up to ensure they qualify as a Spirit Worshipper by the age of 17.

SHAMAN (PRIEST)

A prospective Shaman must have 50% in the cult skills, and dedicate a minimum of 1POW to the Ancestors. He is expected to acquire the Disincorporate Divine Magic spell so that he can communicate with the ancestors on behalf of the people. A Shaman is expected to strive to achieve the Heroic Ability of Spirit Walking.

MAGIC: RITES (BESHOR VALLEY)

Common Magic

Detect Life; Second Sight, Visibility.

Higher Magic

Divine Magic: Consecrate Tomb, Disincorporate, Exorcism, Extension, Spirit Block, Summon Ancestor

Traditional Spirits

Ancestor Spirits, Guardian Spirits

DISCORPORATE (DIVINE MAGIC SPELL)

Duration 15, Rank Acolyte, Touch

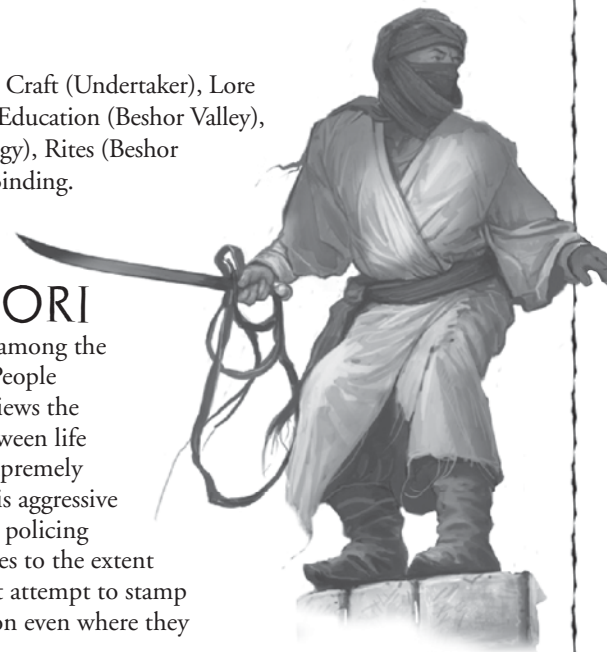
This spells causes the target (usually the magician himself) to disincorporate and project his soul into the spirit world, leaving a lifeless body behind him. Other than the fact that the user has no fetch to guard his physical body, the effect is the same as a Shaman's Spirit Walking skill as described in the *Legend Core Rulebook*. The caster can use the spell offensively in which case the target may resist using their Persistence. If the caster has access to multiple uses of the spell he can cast them simultaneously to have others accompany him on his journey.

SKILLS

Craft (Builder), Craft (Undertaker), Lore (Architecture), Education (Beshor Valley), Lore (Genealogy), Rites (Beshor Valley), Spirit Binding.

THE HRADORI

There is a cult among the Beshor Valley People that not only views the boundaries between life and death as supremely sacrosanct but is aggressive and militant in policing those boundaries to the extent that they might attempt to stamp out transgression even where they



hear of it in foreign lands. Still little more than a rumour outside their homeland, the cult of the Hradori (Threshold-Keepers) seeks out vampires, ghosts and other signs of undeath – but can be equally implacable in pursuit of any mortal who has gone too far in their efforts to cheat death by attempting to become immortal. Followers of this cult are sent out into the world equipped with whatever skills, spirits and magic their fellow cultists can provide them, to assassinate anyone the cult suspects of necromancy. The Hradori cult is identical to normal Beshor Valley ancestor worship, however the cult arranges teaching for range of skills and Common Magic that will be useful to its members in the field and has the Divine Magic spell of Turn Undead in place of the Discorporate spell. The Hradori can also gain access to Guardian Spirits and Bane Spirits within their tradition,

MAGIC: RITES (BESHOR VALLEY)

Common Magic

Detect Life; Detect Undead; Second Sight, Visibility.

Higher Magic

Divine Magic: Exorcism, Extension, Spirit Block, Turn Undead

Traditional Spirits

Guardian Spirits, Bane Spirits

SKILLS

Combat Style (any), Influence, Language (any), Spirit Binding, Streetwise or Regional Lore (any)

THE NEW KORAZOON MOVEMENT

The New Korazoon Movement is a spiritual brotherhood with an overtly political agenda. Its spiritual leader, Haljaf, is a powerful shaman who has passed on his arts to the movement's members. The warlord Nergesh of Ankwar has harnessed the movement to his aims of creating a new domain that encompasses the Korazoon region and rejects foreign influence. Haljaf and Nergesh are united by a common dislike – verging on hatred – for the Taskans.

PURPOSE OF THE CULT

The stated aim of the cult is to forge a new covenant between land and people that embraces the whole Korazoon. Haljaf teaches that the Korazoon is a broken land, still suffering from the calamity of being reduced to desert many generations ago. Its remaining native people – the Khazeri and the Soribisi in particular – are rootless tribes, orphaned from their spiritual homes. He claims he has found the mother spirit of the Korazoon on his Spirit Walking ventures and made a bargain with her and that he will heal the land, show its people how to master the spirits that inhabit it and create a new afterlife where the cult's leaders will reside as the first of a new cadre of Ancestors.

MAGIC: RITES (CULT LORE)

The cult offers no Common or Divine Magic but teaches instead how to master spirits – some of which may provide spells or spell-like effects.

Traditional Spirits

Dust Devils, Nature Spirits (relating to any creature or plant native to the Korazoon), Nymphs (any native to a spring in the Korazoon region).

CULT SKILLS

The following instruction is available:

Cult Lore, Regional Lore, Spirit Binding, (desert) Survival, Tracking.

MEMBERSHIP

Haljaf searches the Korazoon for those who have the natural gift to become shamans. For the rest, there are three levels of membership:

SPIRIT WARRIORS (COMMON MEMBERS)

These are the young bloods who have joined the movement, usually breaking in some way with their family or clan to do so. Warriors must have a minimum Regional Lore (Korazoon) skill of 50%. Warriors must pledge themselves to the service of the movement, are taught the basics of NKM theology (Cult Lore) and given a nature spirit, typically of Intensity 1 or 2, native to the Korazoon to control. They often revel in their status and show off their spirits by keeping them 'always on', even though this can result in them having bizarre appearance as spirits frequently manifest in visible ways. Cult Lore rather than Spirit Binding is used to activate and command spirits a worshipper has been given by the cult. The usual cap applies to whoever is binding the spirit in the first place.

PATHFINDERS (PIOUS MEMBERS)

These more seasoned warriors and close companions of the movement's leaders are taught the art of Spirit Binding, so they can more readily engage spirits in spectral combat and capture those they defeat for themselves or one of their followers. A Pathfinder usually has up to three traditional spirits (CHA/4) at his command. A Pathfinder is in fact expected to go out into the landscape and commune with or invite attack from spirits that will manifest so he may wrestle them into a binding. He may also be given the chance to learn some Common Magic. If a spirit cannot be found to provide some, he may be sent to receive instruction from the Qomite witches, who are friendly to Haljaf.

ANCESTORS-IN-WAITING (ACOLYTES)

At present this status is restricted to Nergesh and his sons, who have been offered the chance to rule their followers in the new afterlife and to continue to commune with the movement's leaders when they die. An Ancestor-in-Waiting may have up to CHA/2 spirits at his command.

SHAMAN

There are currently only three members of the cult capable of Spirit Walking in addition to Haljaf himself. One of those is Ancestor-in-Waiting and son of Nergesh, Shibad the Snake. Those few whom Haljaf the Inconsolable selects for a future as a shaman are encouraged to do whatever it takes to acquire the Spirit Walking Heroic Ability. The cult has no access to Divine Magic

to enable those who lack this innate ability to go Spirit Walking, but occasionally Haljaf may arrange for his followers to access the drugs used by the Witches of Qom to induce the necessary trance.

SPIRITS AND SORCERY

The civilised world also has its sorcery practitioners who are expert at dealing with spirits. A Conjuror is a sorcerer specialising in summoning spirits and daemons to the material world in order to extract some sort of value out of the process. Since these entities reside in different places, different approaches are required to conjure them. Conjurors differ from Shamans in that rather than learn to disincorporate themselves through feats such as Spirit Walking and roaming the Spirit World, the Conjuror pulls otherworld entities into the material world and deals with them here. Depending on the kind of spirit they target, these Conjurors may be regarded as necromancers.

BASIC CONJURING

These are conjuring spells that have found their way into general sorcery practise and might be found in a grimoire amongst other spells or grouped together as the handbook of a specialist Conjuror. Basic Conjuring spells are routine processes, hammered out through centuries of trial and error into a standard form and do not require any additional specialist knowledge. Conjuring Rituals of this kind take one hour to perform per Magic Point used.

Manifest Spirit (Autonomous, Resist (Persistence))

A spirit that lacks the Manifestation trait, or is unhelpfully not using it, needs to be made manifest for the sorcerer to interact with it. In order to target this spell the sorcerer needs to be running Mystic Vision or have some other way of spotting the spirit it is aimed at. The spell wrenches the spirit from the Spirit World or from its physical binding, into the material world, just the opposite process to the Disincorporate trait, so long as the spirit's POW is no greater than three per 10% of the caster's Grimoire skill.

Spirits that are not already tied to the material world in some way can make a Persistence test to resist the effects of this spell. Those that are, such as bound spirits, ghosts, wraiths, disease spirits and others, are immediately revealed until they move out of range of the spell. Any spirit affected by the spell is able to attack, engaging in Spectral Combat without needing to disincorporate its opponent. Most clever Conjurors make sure they are fully protected by Spirit Resistance or Spirit Block and armed with the necessary Dominate (Species) spell to get what they want, which usually involves forcing a spirit into a binding.

Conjure the Dead (Necromantic Ritual, Autonomous, Resist, Persistence)

One of the favourite magical operations because it allows someone to question a dead spirit about something it witnessed or did in life. This is a very difficult process and is almost universally frowned upon. To call up a specific spirit, the Conjuror needs access to something that it was connected to – i.e. a corpse or part thereof. How much time has elapsed since the spirit departed the world is also an issue. Summoning back the spirit to a day-old corpse is

Routine difficulty, a month or less is Difficult, a season is Hard, a year Very Hard and a year and a day or more is a Formidable task. The Conjuror only gets one attempt and if that fails he will never be able to summon up this particular dead soul. If the corpse has been cremated in accordance with Tarsenian custom, or otherwise destroyed leaving scant remains to work with, it is immediately treated as if a year or more has passed.

With a successful casting of the spell the spirit of the deceased is immediately made manifest – it can be seen as a shadowy form and can converse. The spirit cannot leave the vicinity of its corpse and can move no further than POW metres from it. The dead will generally behave themselves and engage in conversation for the Duration of the spell if they are given something they want – anything from a few Magic Points to a POW dedication, depending on how powerful, important or greedy the spirit is. Otherwise they need to be commanded using a Dominate (Ghost) spell.

Spirit Trap (Ritual)

This spell needs to be cast in a place where the sorcerer thinks the type of spirit he wants to capture will likely be gathered. While some Shamans can travel the Spirit World until he finds what he is looking for, the Conjuror has to stalk his prey. The Conjuror creates an area with a radius of up to one metre for every point of Magnitude applied, which stands out like a beacon on the spirit plane, to which spirits are attracted. Once inside the area spirits who possess the Manifestation trait are automatically manifest on the material plane if they fail to resist the Conjuror's Grimoire skill with their Persistence, which means they can attack any individual in the area if they so choose without any limitations. For this reason many Conjurors make sure they are suitably protected by spirit blocking magic and have some livestock on hand so that angry spirits attack them instead – or simply stand outside of the spell's area of effect and cast spells in. The Conjuror must declare what sort of spirit he is after and assuming any spirit of that type that wanders into the spirit trap, it cannot leave the spell's radius again unless it succeeds in a Persistence test opposed by the Conjuror's Grimoire skill or the spell expires.

The Conjuror can meanwhile direct magical attacks on the spirit and attempt to bind it. To do this he needs to antagonise the spirit to attack him or use the relevant Command (Species) spell to force it into a prepared binding. Alternatively a spirit trap with some Duration applied is a handy way to artificially create a haunting.

Summon Elemental (Ritual)

The material components of this ritual are easily found (see the *Legend Core Rulebook*) but the sorcerer needs enough of it for the size of elemental that he wants to attract. For every Magic Point invested he can attract an Elemental of one cubic metre in size, to a maximum of one cubic metre per 10% of his Grimoire skill. So long as he uses the Targets manipulation, he can attract multiple smaller Elementals rather than one big one.

A summoned elemental is useless and potentially dangerous without the necessary Dominate (Species) spell to command it. However with a low INT, they can be controlled in this way by quite junior sorcerers and are an ideal first summoning.

CULTS, CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

An Adventurer's relationship with the gods may be a personal matter but nevertheless human beings usually get together with other like-minded people to make their religious observances and people in *Age of Treason* are no different. In the *Age of Treason* a cult is first and foremost an organisation or association formed for the purpose of practising religious rituals. Only a minority of cults encourage members to shape their lives to be more like their god or to follow a particular philosophy – the character of a cult is based more on the people who comprise it than their object of worship. A cult is usually focussed on the adoration of a single deity but this is not always the case – some gods, such as Hoonvel and Kait or Jekkara and Jezri are naturally worshipped together. With the exception of the Emperor-cult itself, cults are essentially private organisations, however the government does not like them to be secretive or clandestine – this smacks of Treason.

A cult is, above all, a social thing – they are no different, in many ways, from secular societies that frequently offer the same sort of benefits, including access to magic.

WHY JOIN A CULT?

Cults actively support their members in pursuing their religious goals and provide as many benefits as they can to make membership attractive and desirable. This may extend to providing access to financial support, skills training and sorcery grimoires as well as privileged access to Sacred Sites or Artefacts and support for members who want to go on pilgrimages. In some cases a cult monopolises access to a particular god or some aspect of it, so joining the cult might be the only way to meet the deity of your choice.

CHOOSING A CULT

Most cults exist to serve the religious needs of ordinary folk with ordinary problems rather than ambitious Adventurers. That does not prevent them from being useful – perhaps the first consideration is whether they provide Contacts and Allies (see the *Legend Core Rulebook*). Ultimately players will steer their Adventurers towards cults that provide practical help in confronting the perils of an adventure. One of the principal problems is that most cults are purely local. Adventurers who are members of the Emperor-cult or the cult of Basat will be able to find a welcome and place of worship in any major settlement in the Empire – however in most

other circumstances a worshipper has to return to wherever the cult is located to take advantage of any benefits that their membership offers. There are also obligations to fulfil. Some cults demand a tithe of the Adventurer's income or a significant dedication of time – and if the rules of the cult require regular attendance at rites of worship, an Adventurer may find that they cannot meet their cult obligations and have to resign from it.

STARTING A CULT

An alternative to seeking membership of an existing cult is to start your own. Just as anyone with the necessary arcane knowledge can set themselves up as a priest, anyone who has the resources to do so can set up a cult. All you need to perform 'Minor Rites' is a place to meet, someone who can lead the required rituals and a congregation. The smaller cults often have no-one who is well versed in the necessary rituals of worship, so they hire a professional priest in for the day to guide them through the process. For a cult to progress beyond the limited offering of Minor Rites, it needs to acquire control of something that allows the members to make devotions or increase their Pact through the cult. This means control or creation of a Sacred Site or Artefact, receiving the secret to some unique ritual or spell from the God or the intervention of a Holy Man.

TYPES OF CULT

Many cults are simply the religious aspect of a community that an Adventurer already belongs to, whether this is their family, military unit, guild or neighbourhood. In these cases membership is automatic, there is little or no hierarchy and the purpose of the cult is simply to come together for acts of worship. However others may be set up in order to make sure that a god's annual festival will be properly observed, or to maintain a Sacred Site or guard a sacred Artefact. Some of these cults have been in existence for many generations and have established rules and hierarchies involving elaborate initiations and cult ranks. In each city there can be dozens of separate cults worshipping the same divinity in different ways, only acting together on the public High Holy Day festival. In Zarina, for example, there are said to be eight different cults of Tethis, each with their own membership restrictions, rules and rituals. Only one of these cults is directly associated with the goddess' public temple. Each cult carries an epithet of the place or

the occupation of the worshippers – such as Zarinian Tethis, or Tethis of the Water Carriers.

FAMILY CULTS

Some families operate their own cult. This is a vestige of the old days when the aristocracy enjoyed significant privileges and a family and its dependents represented a community; now the practice is regarded as venerable tradition by some and terribly old fashioned or even mildly treasonous by others. Many of the old aristocratic families maintain a family Grimoire, which contains the basic rituals required to run services as well as a store of other useful magics handed down through the generations.

MEMBERSHIP

Family Cults are the domain of wealthy people who drag their extended family, their servants and other dependents into the congregation, sometimes split on gender lines depending on the object of worship. If the head of the family does not preside over the rites, they are responsible for making sure that another family member or professional priest is on hand who can. All members are Common (Lay) Members. There is no requirement for any member of a Family Cult to become a devotee of the gods who are the object of the cult. This remains a matter of personal choice and does not affect their cult rank.

OBJECTS OF WORSHIP

Family cults are often mini-religions in their own right, paying cult to 1D6 deities that the family is attached to at least once per month. Typical objects of worship for Family Cults are: Tarsen; Shamanse; Hoonvel; The Ancestors or City Founders; Thesh; Tethis.

WORSHIP

The cult members meet on the family property, sometimes at a purpose built shrine. The head of the family expects some of his 'followers' to join him in attending the major public festivals as well as occasional pilgrimages.

BENEFITS

Family Cults normally teach any special magic or skills to only the immediate members of the family and rarely extend this privilege to the wider membership. An old family Grimoire usually contains the necessary rituals (Sanctify, Worship (Specific Deity)) for worship plus D4+1 other spells, one of which is a spell with an offensive capability that is the traditional family curse upon its enemies.

COMMUNITY CULTS

These cults exist to serve a particular locality or an identifiable community who live in it, such as members of a particular profession or ethnic group. The community that a cult serves may be as small as a city block, a trade guild or rural hamlet, or as large as a city quarter or township. Community Cults constitute the greatest proportion of cults to be found within the Empire and often act as 'feeder cults' to more formal Public Cults that take overall responsibility for ensuring that the key deities are properly honoured.

MEMBERSHIP

Anyone who is a member of the specified community is welcome to participate. There is no separate initiation required. Worshippers will be expected to make small voluntary donations of money or time in keeping with their means. Often all members are Common (Lay) Members of the cult and the hierarchy is, like a Family Cult, simply taken from the community in which the cult maintains its roots. Community Cults do not push people towards becoming devotees but will usually support them in doing so. Devotees may look to take a very active role in the Community Cult from which they come, or seek 'promotion' to a related Public Cult. Some cults have a cadre of Fervent Members (Acolytes), drawn from those Common Members who are devotees of the god, who dedicate significant time to running the cult. Probably the only members who are dedicating more than spare time, they will, in return, be paid something out of cult funds.

OBJECTS OF WORSHIP

Community Cults can be in honour of any of the pantheon of Tarsenian gods. They often have a charitable purpose, acting to support worship conducted on a city or provincial level, doing their bit to contribute money and time to the annual festivals in honour of the God and providing support to those who intend to use the festival for an act of devotion. If there is no State Cult or festival in their home city, a Community Cult will provide its help to those who propose to go on pilgrimage.

WORSHIP

Community Cults contribute time or resources to the care of any local shrines or temples and typically meet for worship a minimum of once per season and sometimes as often as 2–3 times per month. Their places of worship may be an open air shrine in the street, someone's house or yard or a meeting hall hired for the occasion.

BENEFITS

Community Cults typically benefit their members by simply offering camaraderie and moral support. However this normally extends to providing funds or logistical help for a pilgrimage, or ensuring that they have the right ritual clothing and equipment to make their act of devotion at a festival. If an Adventurer wants to get the backing of his community for an act of religious devotion, an Influence roll should be made to persuade the cult leaders to provide help in money or kind.

A Community Cult is a common source of Contacts when creating an Adventurer.

Community Cults will try to help their members find instruction in Rites (Own) but do not normally offer any other training or magic, except in as much as they may be fully integrated into a professional association that does. Many communities have access to a public domain Grimoire containing the necessary Worship (Specific Deity) spell for their purposes and sometimes Sanctify. These spells are commonly inscribed in stone or bronze and set up in public spaces, or perhaps on the God's shrine itself.

PUBLIC CULTS

Public Cults are mostly specific to individual cities and provinces in the Empire and are those that the local Emperor-cult specifically supports and encourages. They are entrusted with proper performance of Major Rites when a deity is summoned to receive worship in person at his annual public festival. They may also be involved in casting and maintenance of magics that are to have an effect at the state level. The Public Cult has overall responsibility for the upkeep and management of a god's public temples. The most famous and powerful Public Cult is the cult of Thesh at Taskay, which not only provides the head priest of the local Emperor-cult but also maintains its own military wing that forms the elite nucleus of the Taskan army.

MEMBERSHIP

The only Common Members are cult employees who are also expected to turn up to religious services. Otherwise these cults tend to be entirely formed of Pious Members (Initiates) who have made their devotions (entered into a Pact with the deity) *before* they apply – it is a pre-requisite of membership. The basic criterion common to all is that a member must be a locally registered citizen with at least a couple of years' membership of a Community Cult. Public Cults often have dedicated priests rather than relying on freelancers, a requirement often made by the state so that someone is ensuring that the officiating priests are sufficiently well trained not to make a mess of the most important ritual of the year. The cult's leader must be someone of status who can manage the relationship with the Emperor-cult and manage the wider public image and influence of the cult. Very often this leader will be a priest of the local Emperor-cult anyway.

OBJECTS OF WORSHIP

There will be one (and rarely more than one) such cult in each city for every deity for whom a public festival is celebrated there. Every city has a handful of such festivals – no city holds festivals in honour of every deity of the pantheon. For example in Zarina there are public cults to Tethis, Gomorg, Hoonvel, Tarsen, Samanse and (at a Sacred Site some miles from the city), Sumis. Each of these Gods is expected to make a personal appearance at a state-sponsored public festival in the course of the year.

WORSHIP

The elite cadre of Initiates in a Public Cult meets for private worship at least once per month. They do not hold open rites of worship that anyone can attend except for the annual public festival. The whole existence of their cult is, however, geared towards the successful management of the annual festival, when the god is called to make an epiphany and taken out of the temple to move among the city crowds so that they can make their acts of devotion or seek the god's blessing.

BENEFITS

The majority of temples that take centre stage in public festivals also qualify as Sacred Sites. As a result the Public Cult has access to the means to dedicate further POW to their Pact and to learn or regain Divine Magic at any time rather than just during Major Rites. This is a resource that they can manipulate and use to make

membership a privilege and enforce the rules and behaviours on cult members.

Public Cults encourage their Initiates to build up their Pact scores and provide free instruction in Rites (Own) up to their maximum. They also encourage Initiates to learn Divine Magic and accept Gifts and spirit possession where appropriate but often impose rules on which member can access what. The god itself may be indifferent to these rules; they are simply designed to create a sense of order and ranks of privilege within the cult itself.

A Public Cult expects its Initiate members to be aware of the responsibilities of membership and allocate much of their free time to the organisation and certainly not to take on other cultic obligations if they might negatively impact on this one. The Initiate's Pact score should be kept higher than for any other deity.

PROPIVIATION CULTS

Some cults have a very specific, and sometimes short term, purpose: to tackle and contain a deity who is either hostile by nature or simply prepared to use its power to make life unpleasant for mortals to demand worship. The potential victims band together and promise the god they will guarantee a minimum amount of POW to be put at his disposal. This is known as propitiation. Rather than offer a set of benefits, the first thing a Propitiation Pact provides for is that the deity will do no harm. The usual intention is to avert disasters; the world is considered essentially a benign environment for human beings, so catastrophes are assumed to have some sort of supernatural agency behind them. This of course means that they can be averted if that supernatural intelligence is somehow persuaded to take a different course of action.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of a Propitiation Cult is usually obligatory, with a specific section of the community tasked with the burden of maintaining the cult. The community at risk will decide how best to ensure that the Pact is maintained and who among them must dedicate POW to it. Usually the choice of dedicators will be of a specific gender and age class, in order to make sure it is not a lifelong commitment and people must take their turn.

OBJECTS OF WORSHIP

The object of a Propitiation Cult is unlikely to be one of the deities of the Tarsenian pantheon that regularly receives worship – it is a hostile god or daemon that, given a free choice, people would rather have nothing to do with.

WORSHIP

A Propitiation Cult usually comes together once per year simply in order to renew the POW dedication demanded of it. The dedicated POW cost of a propitiatory rite on behalf of a community is variable depending on the scale and kind of disaster and inconvenience to be averted. However as a rule of thumb, divide the number of lives at stake by 10 and that provides the annual POW that the cult needs to ensure is dedicated to the Pact. For example:

Propitiatory Demand	Pledge (POW)
Keep blight from a village's fields	5
Prevent a major storm from wrecking the fishing fleet	40
Keep plague from a small city	250
Keep massive volcano dormant that threatens several towns	500

A Propitiation Pact is broken if the total POW dedicated to the deity falls below the agreed number because, for example, some local villagers have moved away, left their Pacts and not been replaced. Typically the god will provide warnings and a short period of forbearance while things are set right.

PROPITIATION AND TABOO

There could of course be other conditions to the Pact aside from POW dedications. A mountain god may, for example, agree not to obliterate an intrusive mining community so long as they observe a Taboo such as not hunting bears on the mountain because the mountain god is also Pacted with the Great Grey Bear Spirit.

MYSTERY CULTS

Mystery Cults are unusual in that they integrate a particular understanding of mythology into the way they worship their god. Step-by-step the Initiate gains a greater understanding of what the god's role is in the universe by the revelation of secret meaning in the stories told about it. Mystery Cults are usually created around a particular Sacred Site, Artefact or Holy Man and are often outside of state control. However the Cult of Basat with its headquarters in Pryarna is an example of a Mystery Cult that won recognition as an official Public Cult. Mystery Cults bear the closest resemblance to cults as described in the *Legend Core Rulebook* and the Games Master can make good use of the Mythic Resonance rules if that suits his group's play style.

MEMBERSHIP

Mystery Cults are usually open to people from outside the locality – even to foreigners. They often proselytise, both looking for converts and sending senior members out to found offshoots of the cult in distant places, however they almost always try to sell themselves by creating scarcity and stressing how difficult it is to be admitted as an Initiate. A Mystery Cult promises access to the God that is 'always on' rather than dependent on annual religious festivals or pilgrimages. Whenever a worshipper needs contact with the object of their devotion, it can be provided. The cult will nevertheless have a set of rules over who is allowed access and when. Common Members of a Mystery Cult are essentially preparing themselves for initiation and the cult will manage the worshippers' acts of devotion as part of their initiation rites. Because Mystery Cults tend to insist upon a specific approach to, and understanding of, their god worshippers who have entered into a Pact with the cult's deity prior to attempting to join may be denied membership if their Pact already exceeds the limitations of cult rank (See the *Legend Core Rulebook*).

OBJECTS OF WORSHIP

Mystery Cults can be created for any of the Tarsenian pantheon. They can also be set up to honour more obscure deities as well as foreign Gods such as Shomat, Haliset and Tolat.

WORSHIP

Mystery Cult Initiates are usually devotees armed with Divine Magic, so these cults usually have access to the Call (Specific Deity) spell. However Mystery Cults could find themselves censured by the authorities if they tried to use it – conjuring up a deity without proper approval can be considered treasonous and is usually done in secret. Otherwise worship ceremonies are centred on the Sacred Site, Artefact or Holy Person that acts as an object of veneration in place of the God's direct presence. Mystery Cults sometimes encourage pilgrimage, especially foreign cults that urge their members to go to visit their land of origin.

The possible sources of a Mystery Cult's power are:

A SACRED SITE

The cult has managed to gain control of a Sacred Site at which the God is deemed to be always present and at which Devotions (POW dedications) can be made and Divine Magic learned at any time.

A SACRED ARTEFACT

The cult has ownership of a Sacred Artefact that is somehow touched by the God and permits Devotions to be made at any time.

AN INSPIRED LEADER

An individual who has acquired the Holy Man Heroic Ability is a suitable focus for a Mystery Cult.

A UNIQUE RITE

Somehow the cult has been granted, or has discovered, a rite that is unique and brings a benefit in the form of a Divine Magic spell or a Gift unavailable to non-members.

BENEFITS

In order to enforce the message that this cult's way is the only good way, Adventurers who cast Divine Magic spells using their Rites (Own) skill will be expected to take on a new Lore (Specific Theology) that is unique to the cult and only use that skill to cast Divine Magic from this deity. Indeed, any new Divine spells taken through the cult's can only be cast this way. The Adventurer will be given instruction in this theology as part of their preparation for initiation and gain it as an Advanced Skill.

Mystery Cults offer a number of benefits to their members in addition to privileged access to Divine Magic. This sometimes includes access to a cult Grimoire and access to training in skills valued by the cult.

OBLIGATIONS AND COMPULSIONS

A cult may impose some strict rules upon its members that they should adhere to in day-to-day behaviour. These rules do not usually have magical rewards and punishments associated with them – they are devised and imposed by the cult hierarchy rather than by the God and influence the Initiate's standing within the cult and their chances of promotion.

CLANDESTINE MYSTERY CULTS

Mystery Cults may not have official state support and approval – but on the whole they are recognised as important and relevant

parts of the religious complexion of Tarsenian and Taskan society. There are exceptions – cults that have been caught calling up deities in private, entertaining dangerous ideas and agitating about them, or pursuing socially unhealthy goals in company with socially unacceptable daemons have often been proscribed. Proscription may not be effective however – sometimes the effect is to drive the cult underground. Persisting with worship the state disapproves of and in particular using the Call (Specific Deity) Divine spell in private, is definitely treasonous.

FUNERAL CLUBS

Funeral clubs are an important and pervasive feature of Tarsenian culture. These organisations can have anything from a handful of members to several hundreds. They are based on the simple pledge to ensure that each member gets a proper funeral in line with their expectations, a proper place for their ashes to be interred – usually in a communal plot or mausoleum maintained by the club – and continue to be commemorated in the future. A typical funeral club meets on a regular basis for purely social purposes and at least annually to ensure that a full remembrance ceremony is conducted for all deceased members. There is usually an associated general meeting at which officers of the club (if any) give an account of their actions and new candidates put themselves up for election. Given the purpose of the clubs, many of them have a legal function as guardians not only of their members' funeral requirements but also of their wills. It is quite common for officers of a deceased person's Funeral Club to be named as executors and even for the club to be the beneficiary of an estate if there are no loved ones left to pass it on to.

MEMBERSHIP

Funeral Clubs are often formed amongst co-workers, veterans' groups or extended families. If an Adventurer wishes to join a club and they fit the profile of its members and can pay their dues, acceptance should be more or less automatic. There is usually a small fee to join, which goes towards the club's running costs and the Adventurer must also provide a sum of money to be banked by the club to cover the cost of the funeral they have specified. Only in the case of those clubs with a selective membership should the GM call for an Influence test to gain entry, adjusting the roll in accordance with the club's exclusivity. A minimum SOC may also be applied in some cases, backed up with a requirement for higher fees to be paid and an assumption of funeral rites that are a cut above the norm. There is an upper limit – the Emperor has decreed a cap of 5,000 Taskeens on funeral expenditure. The minimum outlay for a traditional Tarsenian cremation ceremony is detailed on the table opposite.

Those who do not practise cremation – foreign residents and Basat cultists in particular – often have their own Funeral Clubs intended to ensure their particular non-standard funerary needs are properly respected. For example those of Sheng stock are often keen that their tattooed skin is properly preserved in order that their clan magics be available to them in death as in life. Basatis are simply concerned with ensuring that their body is not inadvertently cremated and their hope of resurrection in the flesh foiled. They tend to have separate cemeteries in order to

TARSENIAN FUNERAL COSTS

Expense	Cost (Taskeens)
Preparation of the Corpse	5t
Funeral bier, offerings etc	3t
Simple cremation urn	2t
Fuel for the pyre	2t
Professional mourners (each)	2t
Officiating Priest	10t
Feast for club members	20t
Total	44t

accommodate the intact inhumations that their tradition requires and these are usually situated a little way from the traditional necropolis.

RANSOMS AND INSURANCE

Some clubs go a little further than managing funeral arrangements. It is common to extend the mutual funeral obligations to other things such as ransoms. A ransom is a sum made available to secure the freedom of a member if he or she should fall into captivity. A member captured by a bandit, for example, can offer ransom in return for their release; captured soldiers can use it to ensure they are kept as prisoners of war for future exchange rather than immediately killed or enslaved. If the ransom offer is accepted, the association will arrange for the exchange. In these instances the captors have to go to the trouble of contacting the society and asking for the payment.

FIXING A RANSOM

An Adventurer's ransom value is based on what funds they can access as ready cash in times of need; however they need some mechanism through which a captor can demand money and an exchange be made and the Funeral Clubs often provide this service. Funeral Clubs often run a form of mutual insurance – since ransom situations are rare, those members who wish to be covered by a ransom policy will each entrust a sum to the club in line with what they can afford. The club's officers will, depending on their rules and policies and the availability of funds, honour ransom demands of up to five times the amount deposited and handle all the associated negotiations and administration. The rules of the club will dictate whether the club can decide to attempt rescue rather than ransom but this is really only an option where larger sums of money are involved and the cost of hiring and outfitting a posse is substantially less than the cost of paying ransom. Rescue attempts in foreign lands are particularly unusual.

BUYING FREEDOM

Other policies are available in the right clubs. For example, if the society becomes aware that a member has fallen into slavery in a foreign land, they may also seek out the unfortunate member and attempt to negotiate his or her release. The member's ransom value, less costs, is made available as funds with which to purchase their freedom, usually at a premium on market value.

SAMPLE CULTS

THE CULT OF BASAT (MYSTERY CULT)

Basat, a god of truth and life, is a peculiar phenomenon in Tarsenian religion. Although considered to be a domestic and not a 'foreign' deity, he is a relative newcomer and the origins of his worship seem to come out of the desert tribes or from Morkesh in the south where he is listed as a junior companion of Shomat, a local sun God. His cult, which is little more than 300 years old, very much cuts against the grain of normal Tarsenian traditions. Nevertheless it is the third most important and influential cult in the Empire – after only the Emperor-cult and the Cult of Thesh at Taskay.

Unusually for a Tarsenian deity Basat has only one cult and that has a monopoly on his worship, a universal hierarchy and a common set of rules that apply to all adherents wherever they may be. The chief priest of his temple in Pryjarna is recognised as Patriarch by the priests and congregations of all other temples. Basat is the exceptional character of the pantheon. He is the only god who can still effect general changes in the human condition, because he is the only god whose role is still unfolding through the lives and deeds of his followers. Only Basat's cult has a dualist doctrine of good and evil as two warring forces and in this its teaching is akin to that of some atheist philosophies. Nothing is certain anymore because of this god.

LEADERS

Jerent Hasandarin is patriarch of Basat's cult and also the chief priest of the Emperor-cult in Pryjarna. Originally from Ralmyra, he served his time as a soldier stationed in Pryjarna and during this time became a devotee of Basat. His family was killed when the Sheng sacked Ralmyra, so he decided to settle here and upon mustering out of the army he gave himself over to serving the god. Hasandarin is now 52 years old but still strong and quite handsome. He is a highly respected statesman and a popular leader.

MEMBERSHIP

Basat has many Common Members who seek his blessings – many are simply travellers passing through his home city but Pryjarna is a favourite destination for pilgrims too. Only someone who has attended services regularly for a year might be accepted to his following of devotees. Both men and women worship Basat, however the cult has a visible male bias and the theatrical rites involved with initiation tend to be restricted to men – women's initiations take place in private away from the public gaze. Initiation into his cult is no easy process and is the occasion for an elaborate ritual.

Common Members receive no benefits other than the chance to be blessed at a worship ceremony. Basat's Blessing can be invoked for Athletics, First Aid, Healing and Resilience tests.

INITIATION

In Pryjarna, the candidates for initiation take part in a foot-race that takes them on a circuit of the god's own city quarter, known as The Holy City of Basat, starting and ending at the temple. Along the way crowds of spectators pelt the runners with garbage, stones

and whatever other missiles come to hand and strike out at them with punches, kicks and even staves. Although there is a prize for the winner of the race, those who demonstrate selflessness in helping along injured fellow-runners are held in high esteem by the spectators as much as by the priests. Following the foot-race the competitors are feasted and those who excelled are given the attentions of prostitutes from Tethis' temple. The next morning begins the greater ordeal, in which the candidates are shut for three days within the temple of the death god Gomorg without food and water. During this time they might have many visions and receive visitations from the lands of the dead. At dawn on the third day, the priests break open the seal on the temple and welcome the new Initiates into the light. A great breakfast is held and the Initiates then receive individual instruction from the priests in the lore, traditions and taboos of the cult. The final POW dedication is made and the Initiates then participate in the procession, which marks the climax of Basat's five day festival, at the end of which those candidates for initiation who perished during the ordeals are restored to life by the priests. This elaborate initiation process tends to inculcate a very high Pact skill, starting at Dedicated POW + CHA + D10.

BENEFITS

The Initiate has the assurance that he will be spared an eternity in one of the Many Hells, for one day Basat will defeat death and all his worshippers will be resurrected. To this end it is important that the corpse of an Initiate is interred intact (in contravention of general Tarsenian custom, which is to cremate the dead). If burned or dismembered, resurrection in the flesh is made impossible. Initiates of the cult also receive the benefit of membership of a community, for devotees of Basat are accustomed to extending filial love, respect and hospitality to one another, even if they be strangers. Initiates are commonly asked to tithe 10% of their income to their local temple but in return their funerary needs will be taken care of by their local priest when the time comes.

MAGIC

To those Initiates who have a potential grimoire basic of 25% or more, the priests will provide the instruction and facilities for them to learn the following Sorcery spells, which populate what is known simply as the Living Grimoire:

Glow, Mystic Vision, Restoration, Sanctify, Spell Resistance, Spirit Resistance, Worship Basat.

Initiates may also take Divine Magic spells Daybright, Donate, Shield, Truespeak and Turn Undead.

SKILLS

The priests will teach the Sorcery Manipulation skill to basic entry level. Initiates may not learn the spell Tap. The cult also teaches the skills of Craft (Prepare Corpse) and Healing.

PRIESTHOOD

Priests of Basat are teachers, healers and morticians. The emphasis placed by the cult on resurrection in the flesh, in a culture in which cremation is the standard practice, means that the priests are entrusted with the management of an alternative system of

funerary and burial rites. Candidates for priesthood within Basat's cult must be Initiates of at least five years standing. The cult also expects the candidate to have a POW of 18 and at least 50% ability in the following skills: Craft (Prepare Corpse), First Aid; Lore (Basati Theology), Oratory, Pact (Basat), Rites (Taskan), Sorcery (Living Grimoire). There must also be a vacancy in the hierarchy of the local temple, or else the candidate must have sufficient means to provide a meeting place for a congregation of his own, such as a good-sized chamber within his house. The prospective priest must then sacrifice for the Divine spell Call Basat.

A priest of Basat is expected to know sorcery but should not spend his time on offensive or combat oriented magic. A priest may learn Basat's special spells, which gives him the power to restore life to the dead. This is not usually performed on Initiates and Priests of the cult, who know a physical resurrection is their eventual destiny anyway but serves as a potent demonstration of the god's power when used on outsiders.

Divine Magic available to the priests includes those available for Initiates plus: Excommunication, Restore Corpse, Resurrect, Summon Ghost.

ETERNAL BROTHERHOOD OF THE GLORIOUS DEAD (PUBLIC CULT AND FUNERAL CLUB)

The Glorious Dead are not the object of this cult but the members themselves, who have committed themselves to a lifestyle that is likely to be glorious...but short. Their God is Machank, Lord of Battles, who is a deity that no sane individual would choose to serve for their entire life. Devotion to him is usually a passing phase that signals that an individual cares little for his own life or rates taking the life of another above preserving their own. While most of his followers are warriors, a minority are individuals who, out of personal motives such as revenge, pledge themselves to him in the hope of receiving help in making a violent end of their enemies. In the old days of aristocratic rule, when feuding was common between the great families of Tarsenia, young nobles would dedicate themselves to him before fighting bloody duels.

His devotees within the Taskan army all meet together as a cult, The Glorious Dead. These men – and occasionally women – are formed into specially created units where their commitment to unfettered violence on the field of battle can be both controlled and exploited. Any army has a minority of natural born killers who can be expected to do the butcher's work effectively and without compunction, setting an example to their comrades. Machank's devotees swell this cadre of front line warriors, as they are imbued with a spirit that drives them to a fighting fury. They are either dispersed along the first ranks of the army to sharpen its cutting edge, or else brigaded together to use as shock troops sent forward to break the enemy line, storm a breach, or make a stubborn stand that allows the rest of the army to manoeuvre or escape the field.

LEADERS

The Glorious Dead is officered by a cadre of acolytes who are charged with calling the battle-god to fight on their side using the Call Machank Divine spell. The Major Rites are conducted just before battle is to be joined – for battle, any battle, is a Festival for

Machank. They also put up a warrior (often by drawing lots) who will fight a champion from the cult of Basat as part of the annual festival in honour of Tethis held in Zarina. One of these officers is elected by the others to be the cult's leader but can just as quickly be deposed if the membership does not like his style. The whole cult is under the command of the Iron Companions.

MEMBERSHIP

The Glorious Dead are exclusively comprised of devotees of Machank in the service of the Taskan army. If a serving soldier dedicates himself to the god, dedicating a minimum of one POW and receiving one of the god's aggressive spirits in return, membership is automatic with the briefest of initiation ceremonies. Not all those serving in the Machank battalions are recruited from the regular army; some are civilian volunteers, often escaping from the forces of law and order or perhaps some shameful episode in their past.

BENEFITS

The 20 year term for which the regular soldier enlists in the Taskan army is reduced by four years for every one year spent in the ranks of the Machank fanatics. A member also gets a bigger share of the spoils of war compared to other soldiers in the army. Each man counts for two shares and each man who dies in battle still receives his allocation which is then shared between his fellow Machankites (but not any family or inheritors back at home). The proportion that lives out their term to enjoy these spoils is often disappointingly low but the potential rewards are consequently quite high.

The cult acts as a funeral club for its members, serves as arbitrator in matters of pay and benefits due to its members and always ensures that enough is put aside from the booty and pay to cover a decent funeral for the casualties. It is extremely keen to ensure that the bodies of its fallen warriors are recovered for cremation. It will not pay ransoms for live members but it will for dead ones. The cult will often mount rescue missions whether the captured member is thought to be dead or alive.

A member will receive the support of his comrades in acquiring the best equipment, weapons and magics to improve his chances on the field of battle.

MAGIC

The cult does not go out of its way to provide magic or magical training to its members, who are free to dedicate as much POW to their Pact as they like in return for Divine Magic. Members of the cult are free to learn or use whatever magic they have a chance to acquire from sources outside the cult.

CULT SPIRITS

Warspite: Machank's subservient spirits
INT 2D6, POW 3D6+6, CHA 2D6; CA2, SR7+; Manifest 72%, Persistence 68% Spectral Blade 85% Spirit Damage 1D10

Anyone who wants to devote themselves to Machank is adopted by the God – once the required POW dedication is offered up he sends the supplicant one of his spirits, who will manifest to them and engage in Spirit Combat. Usually the spirit wins and covertly possesses the devotee.

A Warspite spirit blocks any magic that causes demoralisation or fear as if a Guardian Spirit. In any situation of stress, for example a Combat Round during melee or even a heated argument, the Warspite attempts to assert itself and drive the host into a state of violent aggression. The possessed Adventurer may resist, opposing the spirit's Manifestation skill with his Persistence, but the spirit can keep trying every round until such time as the Adventurer removes himself from the situation, or gains a critical success in the opposed test.

Once the Warspite has taken over the affected Adventurer will always choose fight over parlay or flight. His Damage Modifier is increased one step, he gains one Combat Action and can add the spirit's POW to his Combat Styles for the purpose of attacking. No fatigue tests are made until after the frenzy passes. The effects last until there are no visible enemies, combat is over and the Adventurer's player succeeds in another opposed Persistence test, which can be attempted once per round. Until this is made the Machank fanatic takes his aggression out on unarmed prisoners, civilians, livestock or the corpses of the dead. He will only attack friends if he fumbles the Persistence test. Once succeeded any delayed fatigue rolls are made immediately and all at once.

An acolyte can summon one of these spirits at any time if he has access to the necessary Divine Magic spell, however in this case the spirit's target may not be an entirely willing carrier. This is the only time it can manifest and attempt to possess a target who is not devoting themselves to the god. If it is successful in forcing the victim into Spectral Combat and wins it immediately asserts its nature. The unfortunate victim may find himself involuntarily committing murder or dashing into a combat that is certain death. Should the victim survive the ordeal the spirit will leave them again when battle is over and its job is done, or after its POW in minutes.

Machank is a greedy, demanding and devouring god. There is usually no shame within the cult in leaving his service unless the apostate has never participated in a battle. In most cases the apostate simply returns to their original unit. However Machank craves blood and many devotees find that the Warspite will not leave until they have shed some – making retirement to civilian life somewhat uncomfortable.

SKILLS

The brothers of the cult provide free training in Persistence, with the express purpose of helping the devotee to control the onset of battle fury sent by the god through his subservient spirits by which all devotees are possessed.

PRIESTHOOD

The cult of The Glorious Dead has his own priests drawn from its rank and file members, as his rites are dangerous and no-one who is not a devotee would care to take part in them. Devotees who learn the appropriate rites and spells can lead their comrades in worship and these priests become the de facto chaplains of their units. A Rites (Own) skill in excess of 50% is usually expected,

as well as sufficient literacy to learn the necessary rituals and the prospective priest is selected for their position by a vote among their comrades.

Machank has no fixed festival dates and his Major Rites are conducted upon the declaration of war or before a battle. When he manifests he possesses the summoner. It may be that both sides in a battle attempt to call the god. In this case opposed rolls determine on whose side the God appears but all devotees on the field go berserk, no matter which side they are on.

VYAKO (CLANDESTINE MYSTERY CULT)

The Vyakots are a secret cult made up of people with an unhealthy and treasonous desire to achieve immortality. Recruited by word of mouth and lured in to the inner workings of the cult step-by-step, those who commit themselves fully in pursuit of their goal realise there is a significant price to pay. This is a cult of vampires.

ORIGINS

The cult first appeared in the city of Tarsang, where a leading undertaker who dabbled with necromancy summoned up an unexpected guest to his funeral parlour. The guest was Vyako, a demon in the retinue of the Tarsenian death god Gomorg with an ambitious career agenda involving promotion to deity status. Rather than suffer a horrible fate at this demon's hands, the undertaker Thagrish Martigern pledged himself to his worship and received in turn the uncommon gift of immortality. While just as treasonous as any other form of immortality, this one had its unpleasant side effects. Thagrish was forced to give himself entirely to the demon dedicating all his POW to a Pact, leaving him with no Magic Points to call his own and the unpleasant fact that at his death there would be nothing of him to pass into the many hells and whatever afterlife he would meet there – he would simply cease to exist. The upside to this bargain, as Vyako explained, was that Thagrish should, if he took the right precautions, never die. Such precautions included two key steps: to make sure his natural body is never destroyed and to make sure he sustains his soul by feeding on the souls of others.

Thagrish Martigern set about finding ways to ensure that these two conditions should continue to be met. Lacking any Magic Points of his own to fuel magic, the Tap spell was of no use to him in stealing the energies of others, at least to start with. So Vyako provided him with a special gift – the ability to feed off others in a physical sense and sustain himself that way. Eventually Thagrish learned how to channel Vyako at will, enabling others to dedicate themselves to the demon and receive his gifts through his own good offices. At this point Thagrish left the lonely life of the Empire's Only Vampire behind him and became the founder of a cult – and of a secret tribe.

PURPOSE OF THE CULT

The cult exists to elevate the demon Vyako to godhood. It serves its members by providing them with the means to prolong life indefinitely if they adhere to the cult's purpose, by creating a system of mutual dependency on vampiric feeding.

Vyako's followers are to be found anywhere and everywhere. As a secret organisation that maintains walls of silence between its many chapters, perhaps only the highest ranking members have any idea of its true extent.

MEMBERSHIP

Vyako accepts to his worship but relies on the hierarchy of his cult to ensure that the right choices are made to maintain security while growing his worshipper numbers. So long as he continues to be fed with POW dedications, he supports the cult's decisions in managing recruitment. When a new chapter is established in a town or city quarter, the first job is to identify likely targets and attempt to win their trust. This can be supported by some subtle PR, little rumours planted here and there of a new cult that offers wonderful, if dangerous secrets. Once there is a pool of potential converts, they are carefully groomed and any that are thought to be a danger are either let go as unworthy of the mysteries on offer before they know too much or, if they might be trouble makers, they are quietly disposed of. The remainder are on their way to being initiated into Vyako's rites.

BENEFITS

Common members of the cult are invited to attend worship where they are offered the occasional blessing from Vyako, which can be used to help any persuasion Skill Test when telling a lie, or as a modifier for any skill improvement roll. Vyako's blessing can also be stored up and used to modify aging rolls.

Eventually a Common Member will be tested – asked to run an errand for one of the inner circle, or tempted to do something bad – perhaps lure an unsuspecting victim to a place where one of the Initiates will use their Life Drain on them. Those who show a real appetite to please their superiors are groomed for the next stage of the cult.

INITIATES (DEVOTEES)

To become an Initiate requires that a candidate enter into a Pact with Vyako through the medium of an Acolyte with access to the Fangs divine spell. Part of the ritual requires that the Initiate allow the vampire to feed on them, draining 1D3 STR in blood, which the Initiate will eventually recover and with it an equivalent amount of POW that is dedicated to the Pact. This first commitment of 1D3 POW given up in the process buys only one thing – the Life Drain ability to tap the Characteristics of another and convert them to Magic Points for their own use.

The Initiate may choose to sacrifice further POW in return for additional Gifts. Initiates are not yet immortal, although they are likely to regularly receive the God's blessing, allowing them to put off ageing almost indefinitely. However they do have the ability to greatly enhance their personal power through the use of the cult's Gifts. They are likely to have access to a Grimoire of spells held by their immediate chapter.

ACOLYTES (VAMPIRES)

Becoming an Acolyte is an extreme step and only those Initiates with a Pact score of 50% or higher will even be considered. Acolytes are those who have dedicated all of their remaining POW

to the cult, becoming reliant on the Magic Points that they can steal from others through feeding. This final dedication can only be made through a Vampire Lord, who will feed on the Initiate and drain from them their last POW. This of course means that the prospective vampire must first break or allow to lapse any other Pacts they have, in order to give himself completely to Vyako.

Acolytes have achieved true immortality at the expense of their souls and are utterly exterminated if their physical body is destroyed. Acolytes are technically undead in the way that Initiates are not, which means they can be affected by the Turn Undead Divine Magic spell. Acolytes are vampires and the process of becoming a vampire is so exacting as to alter the nature of the worshipper. The final POW dedication can be spent on increasing Characteristics further, up to the species maximum (21); it can also be used to acquire the divine spell Fangs.

MAGIC

Sorcery: A typical example of a cult Grimoire is the Book of Enduring Love, which contains:

Abjure Darkness; Attract Magic; Dominate Human; Fly; Intuition; Regenerate; Worship Vyako

Divine Magic (Acolytes and Vampire Lords only): Fangs

SPECIAL VYAKO CULT SPELL: FANGS

Duration 15, Target self only

This spell fills the caster's mouth with a mass of fangs and suckers capable of slashing and puncturing flesh and draining blood. If the victim resists the vampire must first grapple his victim and once he has a hold must make a successful bite attack (use Brawl) to inflict 1D3 damage and subsequently to drain 1D3 STR per Combat Round, which converts to an equivalent number of Magic Points for the Vampire. At the same time the victim must make a successful persistence test against the Vampire's Bite roll or the Vampire drains an equivalent amount of POW, which passes direct to the Vampire's demon lord and becomes Dedicated as if part of a Pact. The Vampire cannot drain POW that is already dedicated to another deity. The victim cannot be reduced to less than one undedicated point of POW unless they are a willing participant undergoing transformation to Vampire status. They can be killed through simple blood loss, when their STR is reduced to zero.

GIFTS

A Talent for Lying: For each point of dedicated POW allocated to this Gift, add 2D6% to the Adventurer's skill in either Diplomacy, Fast Talk, Influence or Seduction, increasing their Aptitude accordingly.

Life Drain: This ability is specific to a Characteristic, so while one Initiate may steal POW from his victims, another might drain STR or CON. SIZ and INT cannot be drained. It is possible to kill a victim this way but unless this will help prevent detection, it is unusual to do so. The feeding acts exactly like a Tap spell but is based on the Initiate's Pact score to determine Magnitude of effect.

Shape Shift: See under Vampire Lord.

Unnatural Charm: Increase the Adventurer's CHA by 1D6 at night (sunset to sunrise).

Unnatural Speed: Increase the Adventurer's DEX by 1D6 at night (sunset to sunrise).

Unnatural Strength: Increase the Adventurer's STR by 1D6 at night (sunset to sunrise).

Unnatural Vigour: Increase the Adventurer's CON by 1D6 at night (sunset to sunrise).

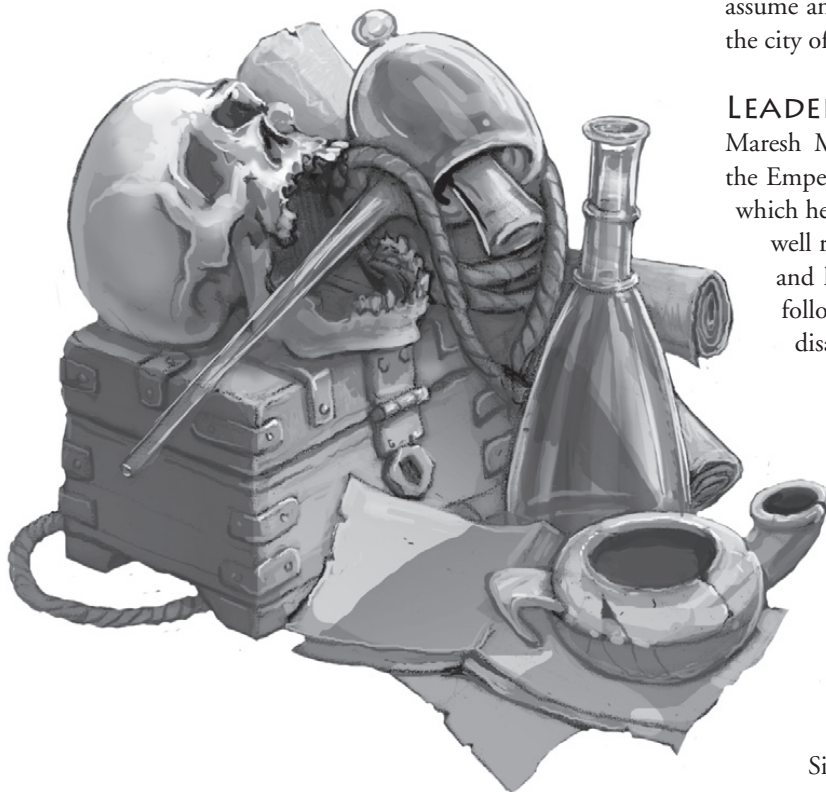
SKILLS

Disguise, Influence, Insight, Lore (Cult Theology), Seduction, Sorcery (Cult Grimoire); Sorcery Manipulation, Stealth.

PRIESTHOOD – VAMPIRE LORD

A Vampire Lord is a Vampire that has acquired the Holy Man Heroic Ability and can therefore channel Vyako at will (costs 1MP). These terrible creatures have advanced to the level of Thagrish Martigern himself, become leaders of the cult able to directly channel the god at any time and make their very presence a holy place for cult members. Each new Vampire Lord is sent off with one or two followers to found a new chapter and start the process all over again, although it sometimes happens that he simply attempts to destroy his creator and usurp their chapter.

In addition to the commonly available Gifts, they can choose Shape Shift at a cost of four points of their dedicated POW. This gift gives them the power to turn themselves into an animal, retaining their existing INT and Magic Points but redistributing their STR, CON, DEX and SIZ to form the Characteristics of their shape-shifted form. Each Characteristic can be raised or lowered by a maximum of five in this way.



A Vampire Lord can, if killed but his body left intact, attempt to bring himself back to life through Vyako's Divine Intervention on the following night. A roll against the Vampire's Pact is required to succeed and if successful the result of the dice roll is deducted from his Pact skill. Restored to life the Vampire starts with his Fatigue at Debilitated and needs serious rest before he can take action.

TASKAY THESH (PUBLIC CULT OF TASKAY)

There were once many cults honouring the god of fire, but in Taskay Thesh was always a special deity regarded as the city's main protector. His local cult served as an important prop to the ruling elite – landed aristocrats supported by the army and an urban middle class. Today its high priest also monopolises the role of chief priest of the local Emperor-cult. The city's cult extended its reach into other parts of Tarsenia and its influence is now such that all other cults honouring Thesh are encouraged to recognise the seniority or even make themselves subservient to this one. Any attempt to promote a rival cult will be confronted by the considerable influence of its leader, Maresh Martek. He is very keen to ensure that no other cult of Thesh rises to prominence within the Empire and all others look to the cult at Taskay for leadership.

The cult of Thesh is at the heart of the Empire and is intimately involved with its hierarchy and with the army in particular. However it represents a potential challenge to the status quo and usurper of Imperial power. Whereas the Emperor-cult is inclusive and welcomes people from newly conquered lands the cult of Thesh at Taskay is unapologetically Tarsenian and even within that community deeply entrenched in Taskay itself. It prepares for the day when the Emperor ascends to heaven and aspires to assume an even greater role at the heart of the Empire and make the city of Taskay a true imperial capital.

LEADERS

Maresh Martek is the most important person in Taskay after the Emperor himself. He is a crotchety and bilious old man, for which he might be forgiven given that he is 132 years of age and well remembers the time of the Marble Simulacrum. Maresh and his cult played a crucial role in the years of crisis that followed the Marble Simulacrum's destruction, and while disappointed to have to bow before the Iron Simulacrum when it appeared, he nevertheless secured a position of power at the heart of the imperial state. However his military experience is both limited and a very long time ago, hence he delegates command of the cult's military arm to professional officers.

The most senior officer of the cult's military wing – The Unconquerable Heroes of Taskay – is Count Farchang, Iron Companion. He is the Simulacrum's confidant and chief agent, entrusted with knowledge of the most secret plans, and often with their execution, and if not on active service is usually based with the Simulacrum at Ashkor.

Kepil Narmost commands the cult's troops garrisoned at Taskay. Kepil is a priest of the Emperor cult belonging to the Taskay College as well as being a priest of Thesh. His ambition is to succeed to command the regiment and thereby to gain a permanent place at the side of the Iron Simulacrum as one of the Iron Companions.

MEMBERSHIP

The Cult of Thesh at Taskay welcomes those who have already made their devotions to the God or are prepared to do so at the point of admission. Three types of candidate are actively sought after by the cult: Soldiers, Artisans and Sorcerers. Each category effectively forms a sub-cult. Only those registered as citizens in the city of Taskay itself need apply and a prospective Initiate must have a minimum Rites (Taskan) of 30%.

SOLDIERS

The military arm of the cult admits those from the lower ranks of society if they are fine military-looking specimens. Gaining access to the ranks of the Unconquerable Heroes of Taskay carries a minimum requirement of STR11, DEX 11, INT 12 and SIZ 13 and a minimum commitment of 20 years. The applicant must already be, or must become, a devotee of Thesh and accept covert possession by a cult spirit.

With a paper strength of just over 1,000 men, the 'Fire-Eaters' as they are popularly known, are the Praetorians of the Taskan Empire. While the main body is stationed at Taskay and has the defence of the capital and the Emperor's palace as its primary function, 300 of them form an honour guard for the Simulacrum and a further 80 form a specialist unit of engineers and artillerymen also based with the field army at Ashkor.

Skills: Engineering, Evade, Gunnery, Lore (Tactics and Drill), Perception, Resilience, Ride, Rites (Taskan), Torsion Artillery

Combat Styles: Ashkorian Pike, Black Powder Weapons, Sidearm, Swordsmanship

CULT SPIRITS

Flame of Thesh, Fire Spirit
INT 1D6, POW 1D6+6 and upwards, CHA 1D6. These Spirits can be found at up to Intensity 3. Each Flame of Thesh provides its host with the following abilities, activated by a successful Rites (Taskan) test:

Ignite (OMP): As per Common Magic spell of the same name but at no Magic Point cost.

Fire Shield: The host Initiate is immune to small flames (see candle and flaming brand on the fire damage table in the *Legend Core Rulebook*), and can negate damage from greater fires to his body, but not things worn or carried. The spirit negates 1D6 heat damage per point of Intensity of the flame spirit. Each use costs

1MP to activate and the effect lasts for a number of minutes equal to the Spirit's POW.

Burning Touch: The host is able to inflict pain and damage through the searing heat of his touch. Each successful attack costs 1 Magic Point and inflicts 1D3 damage per point of intensity of the spirit and requires a successful brawl attack if the target is resisting.

ARTISANS

The cult admits those who practice high-status crafts, particularly those requiring either an intellectual training or working in high value materials such as gold. Artisan admission to the cult is for those with a SOC of 12 or higher plus at least one Lore skill and one Craft skill relevant to their trade at no less than 50%. The Artisans represent the respectable civilian body of the cult.

Skills: Commerce, Craft (Any), Education, Influence, Lore (Any), Rites (Taskan)

SORCERERS

Following a practice in Taskay since ancient times, the cult recruits its sorcerers from the upper classes only. A SOC of 15 or more and an Education of 50% or more are absolute requirements, as well as 50% or more each in Sorcery Manipulation and a non-cult Sorcery Grimoire, or in Enchantment and Alchemy skills. The sorcerers represent the intellectual leadership of the cult.

Skills: Craft (Alchemist), Craft (Enchanter), Education, Influence, Insight, Lore (Any), Oratory, Persistence, Ride, Rites (Taskan), Sorcery (Any Grimoire), Sorcery Manipulation

ACOLYTE MEMBERSHIP

Officers and officials of this highly organised cult are also specific to each branch. Soldier-Acolytes form an officer class and while attached to the Unconquerable Heroes often have significant freedom to take extended leaves of absence. Artisan-Acolytes head up the leading guilds in Taskay – but all are effectively subservient to the Sorcerer-Acolytes. Acolytes are the principle agents of the cult. They must have a Rites (Taskan) skill of at least 50%, a Pact of no less than 50% and a minimum of three points of POW dedicated since they joined the cult.

Perhaps unexpectedly even the Sorcerer-Acolytes are expected to learn martial skills. They are the inheritors of an ancient aristocratic tradition dating back to when aristocrats were not bookish sorts but bloodthirsty warmongers competing to demonstrate their prowess with the horse and bow. Were it ever to come to it, they might appear fully armoured and mounted in front of the Taskay Militia, over which they claim leadership, with the Unconquerable Heroes as their men at arms. That at least is the romantic image attached to notions of an independent city of Taskay under the cult's guidance.

Combat Styles: Archery, Cloak and Dagger, Mounted Combat, Sidearm, Swordsmanship (Tarsenian School)

PRIESTHOOD

Priests in the cult of Thesh of Taskay are highly influential leading citizens of the city and can expect to be treated with respect wherever they travel in the Empire. Many of them will also be high up in the local Emperor-cult, which is after all chaired by their own high priest and some of those have also found a place on the staff of the Iron Simulacrum. So a priest of Taskan Thesh is indeed a force to be reckoned with.

A prospective priest should have Pact (Thesh) and Rites (Taskan) of no less than 75% each and have dedicated no less than six points of POW since joining the cult. A Priest is also expected to have three of his cult skills at 75%. A capable sorcerer – one with Sorcery Manipulation as one of these skills, will always be favoured and the High Priest has always been a Magus (a sorcerer with Sorcery Manipulation in excess of 100%).

MILITARY UNITS

The famous Unconquerable Heroes of Taskay are an elite unit but only number a thousand or so men in a professional army that never falls below 30,000 in number. The regular army is comprised of three main arms: the Light Infantry, the Pikes and the Cavalry.

THE IMPERIAL LIGHT INFANTRY (ILI), AKA THE BRIGANDS

Named in honour of their origin in Zygas Taga's original army that marched out of the Jekkarid, The Brigands are the Taskan army's force of 10,000 light infantry. Their place in battle is at the front – 'before the standards' – where they open most engagements with missile fire and sudden rushes to hand to hand combat – before retiring to the wings or the rear to let the heavies in to finish the job. The Brigands will lead the way in assaulting fortifications, and they will act as the main force in broken, steep or forested terrain. As a result they are best place to win promotions and awards for conspicuous bravery. ILI men often adorn themselves in bright coloured clothing and attach plumes and feathers to helmets and shields to make sure they stand out and are easily recognised on the field of battle.

The Brigands are formed in units of 80-120 men and are generally armed and armoured with little eye to uniformity. A typical soldier will have a leather or metal helm, lamellar corselet of leather scales or a simple leather jerkin, a padded coat and a round or oval shield. For weapons a pair of javelins and a sidearm such as a hatchet, sword or mace is common. Most will carry and be proficient with a sling and at least one in five will be equipped with a bow instead of javelins.

LEADERS

The Brigands are commanded by Count Arrak, Iron Companion. For historic reasons this is a higher prestige role than that of commanding the cavalry and Arrak is indeed from an old family of aristocratic lineage, although he has a down-to-earth manner that makes him popular with the troops.

MEMBERSHIP

The basic requisites for acceptance into the ILI are a minimum of 11 in STR and DEX and 13 in INT. Enlistment is for 20 years, however a soldier can buy himself out from 5 years service, at 1500 Taskeens less 75 Taskeens for every year served after the 5th.

COMBAT STYLES

Archery, Short Spear and Shield*, Sling

*Typically a light spear that can also be thrown as a javelin.

PIKES OF ASHKOR

The backbone of the regular army numbering some 15,000, these pikemen form dense infantry masses on the battlefield, relying on armour and magic to ward off enemy missiles while they wield stout two-handed spears. A Pike Square is made up of 250-300 men, equipped with metal helm often with leather or scale aventail, lamellar corselet of bronze, iron or sometimes of leather over a quilted coat, and splinted or lamellar greaves and vambraces (usually five points overall). The Ashkorian pike is about 10 feet long including a very large spearhead that can be used as a polearm. The pikemen usually carry swords as a sidearm, and they are also trained to use a compound bow. Most commanders like to keep the rear ranks at least – a quarter of the total – armed with missile weapons.

LEADERS

The commander of the Pikes is Count Narkot of Tarsang, a 40-year old general of the Iron Companions. Narkot is a lover of wealth and all the pleasures it can buy and spends what spare time he has drinking and feasting with his crowd of hangers-on and lavishing his considerable share of booty on new estates, fine clothes, works of art and personal adornment. This strutting peacock is nevertheless an efficient commander and a strict disciplinarian

MEMBERSHIP

The minimum requirements for acceptance into the Pikes of Ashkor are STR 11, SIZ 13. Enlistment is for 20 years, however a soldier can buy himself out after five years for 1,000 Taskeens less 50 Taskeens for every year served after the 5th.

COMBAT STYLES

Archery, Ashkorian Pike, Sidearm

TASKAN ARMOURS

The most common forms of armour worn in the Taskan Empire are quilted padding and lamellar. Padding can provide 1 or 2 points of protection depending on its thickness and quality. Lamellar armour may be made of leather, hardened leather and horn, or metal, and provides 2, 3 or 4 Armour Points accordingly. The wealthiest warriors may also have access to splinted metal greaves and vambraces, and perhaps to rigid armours ranging from 3 point hardened leather to 6 point metal cuirass. Helmets range from simple padded or leather caps at 1-2 points, to full metal helmets with cheek pieces, neck flange and aventail (5-6 points).

Taskan armours are commonly layered, with padding worn in addition to other armour and their values (and penalties) combined. Rigid armours cannot be layered over one another. A Bypass Armour Combat Manoeuvre will typically bypass the strongest layer of armour being worn, unless that armour is somehow concealed and only the layer visible to the attacker can be bypassed.

THE EMPEROR'S FURIES

A heavy cavalry regiment trained in warfare techniques learned from the Sheng – who also supply many of its recruits. Well armoured and equipped with bow, lance, sword or mace, buckler and dagger, the Furies are capable of a wide range of tasks on campaign and on the field of battle. The Furies also have their own dedicated Machank squadron. Even the rank and file are well armoured, with thick padding beneath – or sometimes over – metal lamellar and splinted armour reinforced at key points, for a total of 5-6 points overall. Horses are usually barded at least to the front with 4 points of armour in a single layer.

LEADERS

Count Maranis Askim is the Iron Companion who commands the cavalry. At 33 years of age he is the youngest of the Simulacrum's

generals and a handsome, dashing character to boot. He frequently puts himself at the head of his men in battle, wishing to set an example in coming to blows with the enemy. Maranis is from a wealthy family in Zarina and he returns there at the end of each campaigning season to winter with them.

MEMBERSHIP

The minimum requirements for acceptance into the Furies are STR11, DEX12, SIZ 12. Enlistment is for a minimum of 20 years, however a soldier can buy himself out after five years for 2,000 Taskeens less 100 Taskeens per year of service after the first five.

COMBAT STYLES

Archery; Light Spear; Sidearm; Mounted Combat

EXPLORING THE EMPIRE

TARSENIA: IMPERIAL HEARTLAND

The core of Zygas Taga's Empire is the land of Tarsenia. Made up of several city-states set around the Gulf of Taskay, it is a heavily cultivated and densely populated region blessed with, for the most part, a pleasant Mediterranean climate that turns hotter and drier the further south you travel from the Gulf – until you reach the Korazoon Desert. East Tarsenia is the largest part, containing the cities of Zarina, Taskay, Merat, Tarsang and Pryjarna; Western Tarsenia contains the cities of Sorandib, Felsang and Ashkor, while on the north side of the Gulf are to be found Further Tarsenia and the city of Ralmyra.

CITIES

Tarsenians are an urbanised people and at the heart of each district of Tarsenia is a city with its own institutions and traditions. Each of these cities has a distinctive character, in part inherited from the individualism of their independent past, in part derived from the special niche each has found within the conglomerate economy of the Empire. A typical Tarsenian city is divided into several quarters with their own administrators and public servants, who are responsible for regulating construction and demolition work, sanitation, water supply and local bye-laws. As officials who have experience of serving in this capacity may one day be co-opted to a priesthood within the Emperor-cult, these warden-ships are much sought-after. Every city has temples dedicated to Zygas Taga in

addition to temples for whichever gods of the Tarsenian pantheon are in local favour and colonnaded courts or plazas where public rites can be performed. At other times these public areas are used for civic activities such as trade fairs, courts and tribunals, electoral ballots or as places where schoolmasters and teachers gather their students for teaching and instruction. The most important open space is Emperor's Court, always adjacent to the Zygas Taga temple, the place where the Emperor-cult priests, who are the government executive, conduct their business in the open air, perhaps shielded from the elements by awnings and pavilions. Some cities also have a theatre, a rectangular arena with tiered seating where entertainments are provided for the populace by the Emperor-cult or by wealthy individuals on festal days. At other times it is available for hire by performing companies to use as a venue for their productions. Those cities lacking this facility generally put up temporary wooden seating in a convenient public space as and when required.

SOCIETY

High birth still has its advantages but the aristocracy has no particular privileges in Tarsenian society. Any good citizen who manages to win fame and fortune may elevate himself through his own efforts. The emperor cult is a great leveller – in the old days the aristocrats divided up government between themselves; now anyone who can raise the funds to put down a deposit can stand for election to a minor magistracy and begin a career that can result in wielding real power as a priest of the Emperor-cult. It is also common for people from all levels of society to join the same associations peculiar to Tarsenian city life. These associations may

be dining or drinking clubs, small cults, guilds, funerary associations, veterans groups and so forth and a citizen may belong to several such societies meeting anything from once per week to once per year. They reflect the Tarsenian passion for cooperative action and public life, for building up networks of information and influence and above all for rituals, however informal those rituals might be.

THE CAPITAL: TASKAY

For over 200 years Taskay has been the home of Zygas Taga, the man become God. The Emperor lives in a great palace surrounded by high walls of red stone, on a rock at the



end of a promontory that stretches out into the gulf of Taskay. When the Emperor shut himself within he did so in the company of many hundreds of soldiers, officials, servants and slaves, who were forbidden to leave the premises. Their descendants serve the Emperor still and while every year citizens offer up their children to enter the Emperor's service, no-one on the outside knows for sure how many there are and how they are organised. Supplies are brought to the palace gates in great quantities every day but no human being from the outside is allowed entry and the supplies are handed over to palace staff to be carried into the inner precincts.

Taskay's other famous features include the Great Market, a huge circular plaza where traders buy, sell and exchange goods from every corner of the Empire and the Temple of Thesh, which sits on a hill facing the palace across the harbour. Outside this temple is a great bronze dish supported by a tripod six metres high, in which flames of a dozen elementals leap and dance. Also well known are the Wall of Tears, which stretches eight kilometres across the width of the peninsula on which the city stands and is its only major defence-work; and the royal cranes, birds sacred to Thesh that inhabit a small island some 200 yards off the shore. Taga's Court is the paved and cloistered area at the foot of Temple Hill where Zygas Taga first held court upon capturing the city and where the first formal rites of Emperor-worship were performed. Here now stands an unprepossessing altar to the Emperor and it is here that the notables of enemy nations captured in war are brought to offer sacrifice to his name. It is also here that they die if they refuse the offer of mercy, pardon and citizenship.

Beyond the suburbs but still within the Wall of Tears there is pasture and parkland and several cemeteries where the city's dead are housed in family or communal mortuary structures, built to hold large numbers of funerary urns, some of which are impressive monuments several stories high. Abutting the Wall of Tears is the Fortress of the Unconquerable Heroes (popularly known as the Fire-Eaters), the barracks for a regiment of 1,100 men, devotees of Thesh, who form the Imperial Guard. At any one time about one third of the regiment's manpower is in barracks, while another third is on active duty with the Iron Simulacrum and the remainder are on courier duties or special missions.

Outside the wall is a ramshackle but extensive collection of fire-hazardous dwellings, where those who have not been granted a right to live within the walls are forced to stay. Here too are animal pens, unlicensed trading stalls and usually dozens of tents and temporary shelters for those travellers who cannot afford or find a bed in one of the city's inns.

THE METROPOLIS: ZARINA

Before Zygas Taga made Taskay his capital, Zarina was the most powerful city of the Tarsenians. It is still to this day the most populous, its inhabitants said to number more than 200,000. It is the seat of much of Tarsenian culture and learning and Zarinian society often sets the fashions which become accepted throughout the heartland.

Zarina is blessed by an excellent location, on the shores of the gulf of Taskay and close by the mouth of the Siskil River. There are a

total of 11 distinct suburbs, of which only four are encompassed within the walls. The remainder spill out onto the plain apart from the necropolis, which is built on a river island connected to the shore by a bridge. Each quarter and suburb is named after a celebrated hero from the city's past.

THE OLD CITY

Dimarnis is a residential quarter of Zarina-within-the-walls, or the 'Old City'. This is where the wealthy citizens live in a city that preserves its class distinctions from pre-imperial times. The inhabitants of this district no longer have legal privileges but they retain their ancient obligation to present themselves for militia service equipped with a horse and cuirass. Busatis is the administrative quarter of Zarina and the location of the Zygas Taga temple with its open court, where the priests sit in session. Close by is Nysim Quarter, which features many shops, the city's largest market and the Great Library, which is the most famous seat of learning in the Empire, said to hold more than 10,000 books in over 50 languages. The fourth quarter within the walls is the Sutermin or Temple Quarter, featuring the Great Temple of Tethis. The plaza surrounding this structure, the Court of Tethis, is the territory of prostitutes and entertainers and on Tethis' high holy day is the scene for a contest of arms between devotees of Basat and Machank in which participants are frequently killed.

THE SUBURBS

Outside of the city's northern gate is Gortyn Quarter, a district of inns and taverns clustered around the Theatre. Across Gortyn bridge is the island suburb of Sugartis, which consists in the main of the necropolis, built in streets radiating out from the Gomorg Temple at its centre. Timna and Jumatis Quarters are mostly residential, with a scattering of workshops and businesses, sporting tenement blocks of four, five or even six stories. The ground floors of these blocks are usually occupied by the landlord or let out to shopkeepers. Bordering Timna Quarter is Thumastin's Menagerie, a collection of exotic beasts from many different lands collected and put on display by the eccentric magus Thumastin Thumank. Raheb Quarter is a residential area containing many rich houses with impressive gardens and close by is the outskirt suburb of Keбал, which is mostly inhabited by agricultural workers, clustered around the impressive Temple of Samanse and Kait. Keбал hosts the city's main market for agricultural produce.

The last suburb is Samais Quarter, a sprawling jumble of buildings located the other side of the Siskil river and reached by a ferry, which runs once in the morning and once at night in each direction, carrying passengers and animals at a fixed rate. Wealthy patrons may hire it privately at other times of the day. Samais is the poorest district of the city, inhabited by all sorts of undesirables, excluded from the other side of the river by the militia. Besides these it also has a substantial population of agricultural labourers, who have no land of their own and can only find work at certain times of the year. Those who are citizens can at least expect handouts from the government to help them through hard times. Samais' most notable features are a large, secure inn called The Lock Inn, within which travellers failing to make the last ferry can find safe lodgings; and a government office which is at the same time a dole centre and hiring hall for the military.

HEART OF EMPIRE: ASHKOR

Ashkor is a soldiers' town, where the Taskan army is assembled, trained and outfitted. A constant traffic of young men and some women converges on the city, who have enrolled with recruiting sergeants in their home town and have been sent on their way with just enough money in their pockets to live off on the journey. Needless to say this pocket money is often squandered and would-be recruits end up stealing and robbing to provide for themselves, making the roads leading to the city dangerous routes to travel alone. In addition to the army recruits the regular round of delegations to the court of the Iron Simulacrum, whose palace is at Ashkor, a stream of tinkers, entertainers and other purveyors of goods and services to the troops and a constant to-ing and fro-ing of official couriers makes the Ashkor Road the most travelled in all the Empire.

Ashkor is an unwallled town, although it is overlooked by a strong fortress set atop a tall natural tumulus, the only high point for miles around, which commands views over both land and sea. This place is the palace of the Iron Simulacrum, a defence work of considerable size approached by a long, winding ramp, guarded by all manner of devices manufactured by the Guild of Artificers.

At the foot of the fortress is the town itself. On one side are the various camps of the regular and mercenary units, of which there are five permanent ones and many more during the winter months when there can be 30,000 troops based here. On the other is a long beach suitable for shallow-draughted warships and an artificial harbour, which can accommodate the merchantmen bringing supplies for the troops. During the campaigning season Ashkor is a fairly quiet place, where the people are a peaceable and law-abiding crowd involved in agriculture, crafts, shipping and services to the many official visitors who come here. During the winter months the bulk of the army is quartered here. The troops, camp-followers and hangers-on then outnumber the townspeople two to one. Foodstalls and wine-shops open up all over, the gaming houses open their doors, entertainers and showmen from all across the Empire bring new and exotic acts to town for the season and Ashkor becomes a very rough place indeed. So much so, in fact, that the wealthier inhabitants retire to the country for the duration and the army's Enforcer battalion takes over much of the responsibility for law and order.

The town's major features include a Temple of Machank, in which a proportion of the spoils of war are placed as trophies and at which a brave few dedicate themselves to the pursuit of death or glory before setting out on campaign. There is also an arms factory belonging to the Emperor's estate and employing 200 indentured workers in the manufacture of weapons for the army; similar enterprises on a smaller scale belonging to local landowners and businessmen produce shields, helmets, spears, armour, belts and other leatherwork, tools and mess equipment, rations and hardtack according to regulations laid down by statute.

Between the town and the village of Kispal, where the Samanse temple stands, are the two military training grounds. The first is the

Choosing Ground, which is used by the town's militia; the second, much larger, is the Field of Machank, where the professional army drills its men and trains new recruits. In one part of this field is an area roped off from the rest, where the portable temple that the army carries with it on campaign is erected during the winter.

OTHER CITIES OF TARSENIA

Tarsang – Burial place of Tarsen the founder hero of the Tarsenians. An important centre of trade and home to the Empire's major shipping corporations.

Merat – A small city famous as a centre for the arts and favoured playground and holiday spot for wealthy Tarsenians. The annual festival of Merai, the city's tutelary deity, is the most important gathering of artists and performers in the world.

Ralmyra – The newest city foundation, is the centre of Further Tarsenia. Ralmyra has undergone substantial rebuilding and resettlement after disastrous barbarian incursions 20 years ago.

Pryjarna – A city on the southern frontier famous as the Holy City of Basat, god of truth and life. Pryjarna is the gateway to the caravan routes to Djesmirket and Sharranket across the Korazoon desert; however major commercial traffic to the South tends to use the riverine routes via Morkar in the West and the Beshor Valley in the East.

Felsang – A small city famous for its schools of sorcery but mostly dependent on its craft industries. Felsang has developed in the shadow of Sorandib and increasingly is a refuge for craftsmen trained in Sorantine schools.

THE PROVINCES

In the provinces and dependencies of the Empire there are many important settlements and a couple of major cities. In reality the Provinces cover lands that are tied to the Empire through a variety of different means, ranging from a simple unequal alliance to being under direct military rule. The various categories can be summarised as follows:

Subject Nations: These people have submitted to the Empire following conquest and for some reason have been saddled with a punitive regime. Taskan citizenship is only granted to selected sections of society or those individuals who prove themselves loyal and worthy. A governing body is set over them, which operates under military jurisdiction, reporting to the Simulacrum. Subject status is expected to be an interim stage prior to creation of a Province.

Province: A territory that has accepted Taskan rule and with it a universal grant of citizenship and the replacement of their traditional leadership by a college of Emperor-cult priests in the Taskan style – albeit pretty much populated by people from the same ruling class as before.

Client States: These lands retain their ancestral traditions and constitutions but have no right to enter independently into foreign relations and must usually supply some sort of tribute, service or resource to the Empire, particularly specialist magical or military services.

Protectorates: Independent states whose constitutions and freedoms are guaranteed by the Taskan military. They enjoy a permanent state of military alliance and usually offer favoured nations terms of trade and exclusive access to certain products and resources in return. Unlike a client state the leaders of a protectorate are granted full honours and technical equality in inter-state relations.

Allies: Not technically part of the Empire but in fact independent states who have entered into an unequal alliance with the Taskans. This inequality is usually reflected in non-reciprocal guarantees of the treatment of Taskan citizens (in particular of merchants) and the Emperor's enemies under their legal codes.

NORTHERN TERRITORIES

While the lands now known as Further Tarsenia were effectively cleared of indigenous people and colonised by Tarsenians, the rest of the Northern territories are inhabited by people thought of as barbarians, who are now under Taskan rule. At its heart is the land of Camtri, shared by a number of related 'Thennal' peoples with a common cult centre at Torestal. Some of them were friendly with the Taskans from early on and frequently provided mercenary troops to the army – while others had traditional friendships with the Korantines. At one point the two civilisations found themselves on opposite sides of a civil war, the only time that Taskans and Korantines have ever come to blows in battle. In the end Camtri became united as a Taskan land, the first in which the conquered people were fully assimilated by adopting Taskan citizenship with their own college of Emperor-cult priests installed at Torestal. Beyond Camtri to the north is the city of Timolay, seat of a king who nominally rules over Marangia but who has been made a subject and now rules only a small territory around his capital with the support and counsel of Taskan agents. The people on its borders are largely hostile. A process of consolidation is under way through the settlement of military veterans and loyal Camtrians on land confiscated from rebels and exiles.

Camtri is a pleasant and fertile land but to get there from Western Tarsenia you have to cross the rather bleaker 'Little Kitan', a broad plain some 200 miles across, bisected by the swift-flowing Black River. The southern end provides excellent pasture for the Taskan army's livestock. The Eastern side is the homeland of the Eskars, a largely nomadic tribe who are now a subject nation and whose sprawling, one-story, wood-built city of Bandaknar is an important centre for trade between the Taskans and the Sheng nations to whom the Eskars belong. The hills that flank the Little Kitan to the East are cut by a pass known as the Tsengissian Gates, which is the most practical route up onto the Kitan plateau where the other Sheng Tribes have their homelands. Some high ranking Eskars have the citizenship already, as do any warriors who have served a five year term as an auxiliary in the Taskan army. Eskar

communities and their herds are allowed to cross the Black River with their livestock to access the grasslands that fall within their historic ranges but anything that resembles a war party is strictly forbidden and the army has first call on the best pastures.

WESTERN TERRITORIES

Part of Western Tarsenia is still, strictly speaking, independent of the Empire, albeit under the protection of the Taskan army. Just 40 miles West of the city of Felsang flows the Shol River and to the west of that the Taskan army only operates to keep the road between Felsang and Sorandib safe and clear of bandits. The old road further West, from Sorandib to Ramassa, is effectively cut off by the lawless state of the country through which it passes, as the king of Sorandib can barely exercise power within the walls of his capital, let alone beyond. North of Sorandib is Lake Barur, nestled among unforgiving yet metal-rich hills, choked with weeds which are a highly prized source of healing remedies and also the source of the Briga, a river that flows through three famous cities and acts as a vital trade route for the Empire.

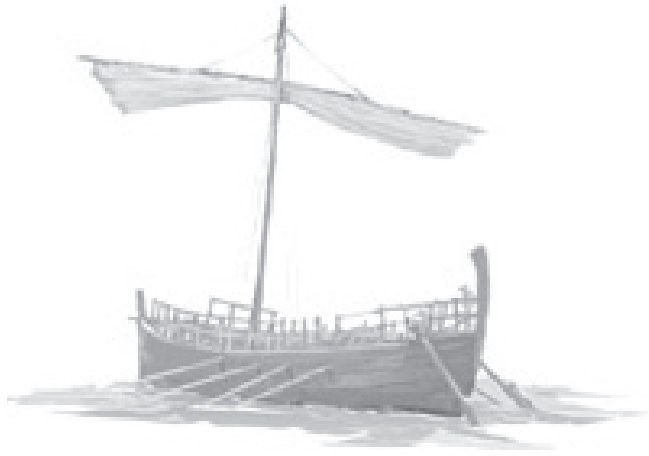
West of the Badlands around Sorandib is Ramassa, gateway to the Theocracy of the Jekkarenes, which occupies much of the great peninsula that is generally known as the Jekkarid but more properly referred to by scholars as Methalea. These people who are, like Sorandib, under Taskan protection, generally forbid foreigners from entering their lands and so maintain Ramassa in the East and the port city of Lyortha in the South as places where foreigners are welcome and business can be done.

EASTERN TERRITORIES

Tarsang is the most Easterly city that is truly Tarsenian. Beyond that is the land of Haran, formerly part of the Kingdom of Yegusai. When Yegusai submitted to Taskan hegemony Haran became the centre of rebellious conspiracies and eventually the city threw in its lot with an alliance of Djemir and the Soribisi, which handed the Taskans their first major military defeat at Araxa. As a result Haran was brutally sacked, purged of rebels and settled with Tarsenians to maintain a garrison colony. The city still has a subject population in servitude to a citizen minority. The remainder of the Kingdom of Yegusai is crowded into the valleys of the Beshor and its tributaries – outside of these valleys the country is rather dry and barren. Yegusai remains a client state of the Empire, one which sends magicians rather than soldiers to contribute to the army. Yegusaian 'sorcerers' – are very much in demand in the cities of the heartland because they come from a wholly alien tradition and have arts that are hard to replicate with regular sorcery or Divine Magic – it is said that they have more in common with the wild shamans of Kitan, even though they are a very ancient and literate civilisation. Yegusan itself is considered so exotic and ancient that it is a favourite tourist destination for Tarsenia's educated elite.

GETTING AROUND

Much of the travel between the cities of the heartland is by water across the Gulf of Taskay. With only a couple of exceptions the major cities are either directly on the coast or are less than a day's journey inland. The peculiar geography means that what is



rarely more than a day's journey by boat from Taskay to Ashkor, for example, is typically up to two weeks if travelling overland. The following rules are to help a GM manage his players quickly through a long distance journey to where the action is, taking into account the realities of the technology, physical environment and climate of Tarsenia. The GM can use these in conjunction with the travel rules on pages 190 and 191 of the *Legend Core Rulebook* to create a more involved travelling experience.

TAKING A SHIP

There is no such thing as a scheduled passenger service. Except for specialist military vessels, the main purpose of all ships travelling between ports is to transport a cargo. People who intend to travel by boat need to go to the docks and find out which vessels are sailing in the direction they want to go and see if they can negotiate passage. Of course those who have unlimited funds can charter a vessel for the journey and thereby dictate when it sails – but most people do not have that sort of money.

Passage on a ship is not necessarily very expensive. Assuming the passengers provide their own food and are prepared to sleep on deck – often the only option – assume a cost of five Taskeens per person per day. Large animals take up a lot of cargo space and care, so assume a cost of 15 Taskeens per horse per day.

Charters can be had from 30 Taskeens per day for a small vessel with a three man crew and can easily go up to 500 Taskeens per day for a larger vessel with an expert captain and a complement of 25 crew.

SHIPS AND GALLEYS

The biggest vessels afloat on the Gulf of Taskay are the merchantmen, of which the very largest are up to 50 metres long with a capacity of 1,000 tons. There are only three such monsters, most merchantmen are less than half that size. Typical merchant ships are between 15 and 30 metres long carrying cargos of 150–500 tons.

The Gulf of Taskay is ideal water for galleys (oared ships). Apart from some super-expensive private cruisers, the fastest galleys are almost all in the hands of the Taskan navy.

The full rowing crew is only ever on the benches when short bursts of speed are required but if conditions under sail are poor, an oared ship on which teams of rowers are working in shifts to keep a third of the oars constantly manned can keep a becalmed ship on the move. Galleys cannot risk going out onto the water on a 'no sailing' day any more than a sailing ship can. The disadvantage of a galley – in addition to paying all those rowers – is that they are crammed full of people. These vessels cannot carry much cargo nor sustain themselves at sea for very long and need to beach regularly to give the crew proper rest and space to prepare food and so forth. Ideally this happens every night. For each night without such a break, apply fatigue penalties to the crew based on a daily Athletics team test, using the average Athletics skill of the crew (or conduct a sorting test and determine whether the majority have succeeded or failed). If this is failed the resulting fatigue penalties afflicting the crew are passed on to the captain for his next shiphandling roll.

Merchant galleys, with a smaller rowing crew manning perhaps 10 oars to the side and cargo capacity for anything between 200 and 400 tons, are commonly used for shipping goods up and down the Beshor River Valley but are also used at sea. They are not capable of the sprint speeds that a war galley or sleek yacht can deliver but have the same advantages when making a voyage in calm weather.

MAGICAL ASSISTANCE

The highest class vessels may have bound sylphs to fill the sails or undines to drive the hull through the water. The enchantments required to contain the elementals and add their power to the vessel have to be crafted in such a way that the creature does not need to be released except in exceptional circumstances. Sylphs are bound into sails and undines usually to the keel. The captain gains a 3% bonus to his shiphandling roll for every cubic metre of undine or sylph bound to his vessel. Should he be in desperate straits, he can release them from their binding in which case he gains 1% bonus to his shiphandling roll for every point of STR possessed by the elementals and an increase in speed of one mile per hour per three cubic metres or fraction thereof. However, used this way they only serve for an hour before being permanently released and free to return to their own world (unless forced back to their binding with a Dominate spell), so they have limited impact on the overall voyage and just get you out of an immediate crisis.

SAILING TIMES

The following chart provides examples of optimum sailing times between key Tarsenian cities around the Gulf. To achieve these times requires that the sailing conditions are good and that the ship's captain makes a successful Shiphandling roll (one per voyage). The captain can add the helmsman's critical Navigation score to the roll. If the crew is completely green or the ship under-manned, the roll is difficult (–20%); if the crew is experienced the GM may allow a further bonus of the crew's average critical Shiphandling score (or Athletics for a rowing crew). Note that a particularly finely built or well designed ship does not alter the Sailing Time but provides bonuses to the Shiphandling roll (up to +20). The sailing time will be modified according to the sailing conditions.

Route	Miles	Sailing Time (Days)	Frequency
Taskay to Ashkor	75	0.75	2/Day
Taskay to Ralmyra	150	1.5	1/5 Days
Taskay to Tarsang	200	2.5	1/Day
Zarina to Ashkor	130	1.25	1/3 Days
Ashkor to Merat	175	1.5	2/Month
Tarsang to Ashkor	225	2	1/2 Days

Miles is the approximate crow-flies distance between the two ports. The optimum speed of a Taskan sailing vessel is between four and six miles per hour, hence under near ideal conditions, a sailing ship should be able to manage 100 miles per day (24 hours). In more difficult conditions two–three miles per hour or even less is normal. The actual route taken must account for the currents and wind direction. Currents in the gulf normally run clockwise but are fairly gentle.

Sailing Time is the optimum travel time if all goes well. Every failed shiphandling roll made by the captain until a success is achieved adds 50% to the sailing time. Of course if characters aboard a ship are in a life and death race, the GM may want to calculate journeys precisely in hours and call for a number of shiphandling rolls for each voyage. The final modified time can be shaved by up to 25% at GM's discretion if the captain makes a critical shiphandling roll.

Frequency is a guide to how often there is a ship sailing the route and therefore how long an Adventurer is likely to have to wait to find a ship. This does not mean that he will be able to get a place on it, nor that the ship will sail as scheduled.

SAILING CONDITIONS

The GM can check for prevailing sailing conditions with a simple D20 roll.

Season	Conditions			
	Fair	Poor, Calm	Poor, adverse winds	No Sailing
Winter	01–04	05–06	07–12	13–20
Spring/Autumn	01–06	07–12	13–16	17–20
Summer	01–08	09–15	16–18	19–20

Fair: A following wind, ideal conditions. So long as the captain makes the shiphandling roll, the vessel will reach its destination within the specified Sailing Time.

Calm: Light winds that do not provide sufficient impetus for the sails. Double the Sailing Time prior to making the captain's

shiphandling roll, or if the vessel has magical assistance or is equipped with oars, increase Sailing Time by 50%.

Adverse Winds: A contrary wind that requires tacking. The journey will typically take twice as long as the listed Sailing Time. Double the Sailing Time prior to making the captain's shiphandling roll.

No Sailing: Conditions are dangerous, due to fierce gales, storms, poor visibility or other problems. No captain will take his ship out on that day unless forced to or provided with dependable magic or divine help. Vessels start stacking up in port waiting for better weather. Those that do venture out have to face a penalty to their Shiphandling skill. Apply a penalty of –20% in the Summer, –60% in Winter and –40% at other times and in the event of failure those on board should expect dangerous results.

Example: Arkin is captain of the Flower of Kait, taking his small sailing vessel across the Gulf from Taskay to Ralmyra. The GM determines that weather conditions are fair, so the ship should make the journey in one and a half days. Arkin's shiphandling skill is 48%, his helmsman has Lore (Navigation) at 50% which provides a 5% bonus and the Flower of Kait has two small undines bound to the keel which between them provide a further bonus of 6%, for a total score of 59%. However Arkin's player rolls 63%, a failure and the GM informs the players that the journey is now likely to take two and a quarter days as Arkin fails to make the best use of the winds and currents. Arkin still needs to succeed in a shiphandling roll to reach port but his second roll is 05, a critical. The GM rules that Arkin makes up some lost time and the Flower reaches port at Ralmyra about 6 hours later than originally planned.

HAZARDS

The Gulf of Taskay is generally a gentle sea – but this does not preclude the odd freak storm or unexpected fog that obscures landmarks from view or heavy clouds that deny a sailor sight of the stars for navigation at night. There are patches of dangerously rocky coastline and sandbars on which a ship can run aground. Potentially dangerous sea monsters were exterminated long ago, however, once in a generation something big and nasty enters the gulf from the Outer Ocean. The gulf is also safe from pirates – there is no hostile shipping to fear and with the Gulf being effectively a Taskan lake it is unlikely to materialise. On the other hand, there is always a chance that the ship on which your characters take passage is crewed by unscrupulous criminals, who think nothing of robbing their passengers and throwing them overboard – if they think they can get away with it.

THE IMPERIAL ROAD SYSTEM

Some, nevertheless, have reasons to travel by road and the city of Pryjarna is accessible no other way. Around the gulf the road networks are really designed for local use, connecting each city to its outlying towns and villages. Imperial engineers have selected which of these roads are capable of bearing heavy traffic and plotted routes between the major cities that are signposted as highways and provided with milestones. Purpose built trunk roads connect Pryjarna to Zarina (from where it branches off to the capital), then on to Felsang (from which it branches to Sorandib) then north to Ashkor. These are

the only routes which are properly engineered with surfacing and drainage and provided with waystations at approximately one day by ox cart distance (25–30 miles) from one another. From Ashkor there is a military route more or less following the Black River to Torestal but it is unmetalled for most of its length and simply marks out a broad path that avoids problem terrain or has been driven through it by the military engineers.

TRAVELLING BY ROAD

The following table provides some guidelines for overland travel, assuming reasonably favourable weather conditions:

Typical Overland Travel Distances (miles per day)

	Hiking	Ox Cart	Mounted	Courier
Open Country	20	10	25	30
Local roads	25	15	30	40
Highways	30	20	35	50
Trunk Roads	35	25	40	60

Hiking: Unencumbered travel on foot, including military units on the march without baggage, or mounted on slow animals such as a donkey.

Ox Cart: Encumbered foot, baggage carried on cart, donkey or similar.

Mounted: Unencumbered travel on horseback or in a carriage.

Courier: Unencumbered travel on horseback with reduced rest periods and access to remounts.

TRAVEL CONDITIONS

Note that by definition these travel times do not account for Inhospitable Terrain (see the *Legend Core Rulebook*), however Rough Terrain modifiers may apply for some stretches.

WEATHER

The climate of Tarsenia is generally favourable to overland travel; extended heavy rainfall that turns the ground to thick mud or washes away road surfaces and causes flash floods is fairly unusual. Adjust random rolls for cloud cover and precipitation on the Weather Table in the *Legend Core Rulebook* as follows:

Spring –20%; Summer –40%; Autumn –20%; Winter –10%.

For Further Tarsenia and the Little Kitan, adjust these modifiers by +10%, for Yegusai and territory around Pryjarna, adjust these modifiers by -10% instead.

EXCEEDING TYPICAL TRAVEL DISTANCES

This is a simple matter of expending fatigue to get you there quicker. The travel rates already incorporate the necessary rest time to start each new day or travel session Fresh. Once fatigue starts to

build up additional rest time must be taken and travelling hours cut to recover. Pushing the pace involves Adventurers making appropriate skill rolls. The GM should adjust the difficulty levels suggested if accounting for tougher than usual conditions.

The major logistical issue is how hard you can drive your mounts and draft animals without risk of them going lame – potentially a very expensive mistake. In general, typical travel times assume 5–10 hours per day on the road, therefore sufficient time out to set camp, eat and rest. By pushing a quicker pace or spending more hours on the road, an Adventurer can gain up to a third more distance for the day. However if with baggage animals or wheeled transport a Drive roll (simple, +20%) is required; if mounted or courier, a Ride roll (simple, +20%) is needed, or no extra distance can be gained. Fumbles in these rolls result in a lame animal, which needs to be properly treated or if the party needs to keep moving, cut loose. Either way, a sorting test is made by the GM for a simple (+20%) Athletics test. All Adventurers and creatures in the party who fail the roll begin the next day Winded and will not recover until additional rest time is taken. This can obviously continue over several days, with the gains from pushing the limits being lost in additional rest time or the party becoming increasingly exhausted. Should characters attempt to move even faster – up to 50% more than the normal travel rate will require a sorting test against Athletics at Routine (+0) and anything above that will incur a penalty.

INNS AND WAYSTATIONS

A waystation typically provides no more than a collection of stone corrals for animals, a guaranteed source of fresh water and some simple structures that provide enough shelter for travellers to protect themselves from sun, wind and rain. Most are unmanned except under special circumstances but it will be the responsibility of nearby communities to make sure that they are kept serviceable through the year. However on the plus side they are also planted with trees suitable for shade and sometimes the shade trees are interspersed with some fruit-bearing types and even some with healing properties. At busy points or times of year when more traffic is on the road, a waystation may also be populated by peddlers, food and drink stalls, entertainers, beggars and thieves, all of whom pitch their tents and ply their trade until such time as someone in authority decides they should be moved on. Inns are more widely dispersed, generally situated just outside of towns that are more or less a day apart by horse (35–50 miles) for a traveller unencumbered by baggage. Inns will usually have a high-walled courtyard, proper stabling, a mix of dormitory and private rooms and will be compelled to maintain suitable changes of horse for official couriers. The basic prices at these Inns are fixed by the government; however anything extra, including private room facilities, is up to the landlord to set his own price for. These inns are not taverns. There is no bar room, just the communal courtyard, some of which may have an awning to keep off the elements and travellers are welcome to prepare their own food here in the courtyard if they do not want to pay the innkeeper's rates for food. There are often massive establishments on the approaches to major cities or by an important trade route connection – for example where an interchange between road and river takes place. These 'super-inns' are known as Caravanserais and are capable of catering for big parties of several hundred people and animals. Some are fortified.

Basic tariffs per head per night are:

Room Type	Price (Taskeens)
Dormitory Room or camping space	1
Dormitory Room and half board	2
Stabling per horse plus fodder	2
Other large livestock barn plus fodder	1
Bath	2

ON THE ROAD

The main reasons people who are not Adventurers travel around the Empire are simple – military, commercial and religious. The following section provides some ideas about the kinds of people you will meet on the road; these are specifically transients, who stand apart from the locals that you might encounter as you pass through their territory.

MILITARY

Encounters with military personnel on the road are usually with a group en route to or from a posting and rarely with a unit on active service or patrol. Soldiers are most obviously identified by the fact they bear arms (except the new recruits) but they will not be wearing armour unless expecting a fight and most of them do not wear recognisable uniforms. To that extent they may be hard to distinguish from bandits (and their behaviour may add to that impression). An Insight role or a Culture (Taskan or Tarsenian) role may spot that the way they wear their weapons, or particular items or type of clothing or kit, suggest they are bona fide soldiers. They might still rob you, of course.

Typical military travellers:

- A party of 2D10 recruits being forwarded to Ashkor for training, 50% chance they are accompanied by a serving soldier or sergeant – apart from whom these men will be in civilian dress.
- D6+6 Militiamen on foot patrol. They are equipped with light armour and weapons. Patrols are largely uninterested in law-abiding citizens unless they have a mind to extort money but will assume that a band of weapons-toting adventurers are likely to be robbers unless convinced otherwise.
- A senior officer and entourage of 1D6 men, all mounted. If there are thought to be bandits around, a senior officer party like this will be out hunting them with a militia unit as outlined previously.
- 1D3 mounted couriers on a mission.
- A military unit of D4x100 men en route to its next posting, with one large ox cart per 100 men. Most likely a militia unit unless close to Ashkor but 10% of such encounters are with a regular or elite unit.
- A military supply train en route to a base or camp, comprising 2D4 wagons, D6x10 pack animals, with three men and one guard per wagon and per 10 pack animals.
- A party of D6 demobilised veterans on their way home. They are probably in good spirits, have plenty of ready cash and are a tough prospect to take down to relieve them of it.

COMMERCIAL

Commercial travellers might be plying a trade with a cartload of merchandise, travelling to or from a market, negotiators or businessmen on the way to or from a meeting, or driving a big shipment of goods in caravan. Much of the big scale traffic goes by sea or river, however huge caravans with more than 40 vehicles and 200–300 staff and co-travellers may be encountered, if rarely. Commercial travellers often accumulate hangers-on who want to travel with safety in numbers. Most times they are encountered they will actually be halted or in camp – a typical day's progress for an ox cart is not much more than five hours.

TYPICAL COMMERCIAL TRAVELLERS:

- A peddler on a local circuit, possibly with his family, or local craftsmen or farmer heading to market with his produce. 1D3 adults, 1D2 small wagons (one for goods one for personal effects).
- A large caravan shipping a commodity from one region to another. D4x5 massive ox-wagons each pulled by D10+10 oxen; three handlers and one armed guard per wagon, plus 1D4 merchants and a guard captain. Accompanied by 3D6 travellers.
- A private merchant with his small caravan of mixed goods. 2D4 goods wagons, a merchant and his assistants plus staff and hangers on as previous.
- An agent or courier travelling with documents for signature, contracts or hard cash. If the latter, assume 1 professional armed guard per 1,000 Taskeens. An agent may travel by horse-drawn carriage. Couriers will be mounted.
- A group of entertainers or travelling brothel moving to their next town. 1D3 ox-wagons or horse-drawn carriages, with D6+6 members of the troupe and their promoter.
- A wealthy citizen on a tour of his estates and properties. Accompanied by a secretary and 2D6 servants. The rich man (or woman) is probably mounted or in a horse drawn carriage, with servants on foot. Servants also act as bodyguards, typically armed with clubs and/or daggers.

PILGRIMS

Religious traffic is made up of people travelling to attend festivals, or on pilgrimage to Sacred Sites. Pilgrims are quite capable of posing a threat and otherwise behaving in ways they would not do at home. They are often not the best equipped or experienced travellers and, like anyone else, can find themselves in need of money or food so turn to robbery of fellow travellers or of homes and villages in their path. They are also quite easily wound up if their particular cult or religious society is belittled or insulted. The sight of rival cultists devoted to the same deity coming to blows over whose cult is better favoured by the God, or sports more prestigious membership, is not uncommon. There are dozens of religious festivals worth travelling to throughout the year but the most famous ones are:

SPRING:

The Festival of Tethis at Zarina, which incorporates bloody duels between devotees of Machank and Basat vying for the goddess' favour (11th day of Kamay).

MID SUMMER:

The Festival of Thesh at Taskay, which is the biggest religious festival held at the capital (9th Damais).

The Festival of Basat at Pryjarna, in which prospective devotees can be seen going through a gruelling four day test (15th–20th Damais).

LATE SUMMER:

The Festival of Music at Merat, famous across the Empire as a nine day celebration of the performing arts (11th–20th Brenai).

AUTUMN:

The Festival of Tarsen at Tarsang, an occasion surrounded by a major annual market and trade fairs (9th Jaroth).

TYPICAL PILGRIMS:

- A small party of D6+6 devoted fellow pilgrims heading for a Sacred Site on foot. They are respectable types and serious about their religion. At least one of their number is intent on making their first devotional pact. They may be embarrassingly deferential to anyone they meet who has serious religious credentials.
- A rich family on their way to a festival in a horse and carriage and probably with an additional cart for baggage. A husband and wife plus their 1D3 children, 2D6 servants and an armed guard. They are more or less on holiday.
- A small party of 2D4 pilgrims escorting a friend or relative who is sick, grievously injured or under a magical curse – en route to pledge devotion to a deity who they think can help.
- A whole community of 1D4 x 100 people on pilgrimage; men, women and children. They all come from the same village, town or city district or are perhaps a whole cult on the move and are making an important statement both of solidarity and of reliance on the future good will of the deity.
- Militaristic pilgrims – a band of D6+6 young yahoos looking for a fight, preferably with followers of the same god from a rival cult – in order to prove their superiority. Armed with clubs, fists and daggers, perhaps one real weapon among them, they are not intent on murder but violence can easily boil over with tragic consequences. Quite likely they are local boys looking to beat up co-religionists from out of the area.
- A solitary pilgrim, a devout wanderer who spends his entire life going from festival-to-festival and from one Sacred Site to another. Potentially young and troubled or old and worldly-wise, this character likely has some very high pact scores and a fistful of Divine Magic and blessings.

HAZARDS

The most common threat of violence and robbery when on the road is not from organised bands of heavily armed bandits issuing from a hidden stronghold in the mountains. Such folk do indeed exist but mostly on the fringes of the Empire, particularly those provinces that are not fully subdued and border onto hostile territory. As has been suggested in the descriptions of likely encounters when travelling by road, otherwise law-abiding citizens and soldiery are liable to use a dark night, lonely road and strength

in numbers to take advantage of their fellow citizens - particularly if they are hungry and have no money. Of course a well-armed gang of Adventurers has little to fear from such people but that can be its own problem. Even good-hearted honest folk are wary of strangers. Adventurers are not a common sight and can look very much like what everyone expects an evil brigand to look like. Armed to the teeth, decked out in armour and other hardware in a peaceful civilian area... it is enough for doors and windows to be bolted, shops closed and shuttered and to send many a villager scurrying off to get the militia. Adventurers may very easily find themselves ambushed at their camp by the local constabulary.

As for professional robbers and bandits anyone travelling West of the Shol River is in danger, particularly if leaving the road between Felsang and Sorandib, which is patrolled. Beyond Sorandib you can expect to have to fight or bribe your way through various robber bands on the little used road to Ramassa, since in this region only those who are capable of violent action have any chance of scraping a living. In the badlands around Haran there are plenty of escaped peasants at large who have taken up arms rather than serve a Taskan master; and in the Northern Provinces there is always the danger of 'barbarian' raiders issuing from the hill country or out of the Kitan Plateau. In the south Soribisi desert raiders continue to be a problem, however the Empire has adopted a strategy of 'forward' garrisons, which keep the conflict to the oasis towns and caravan routes across the desert rather than letting the raiders spill into Tarsenia itself.

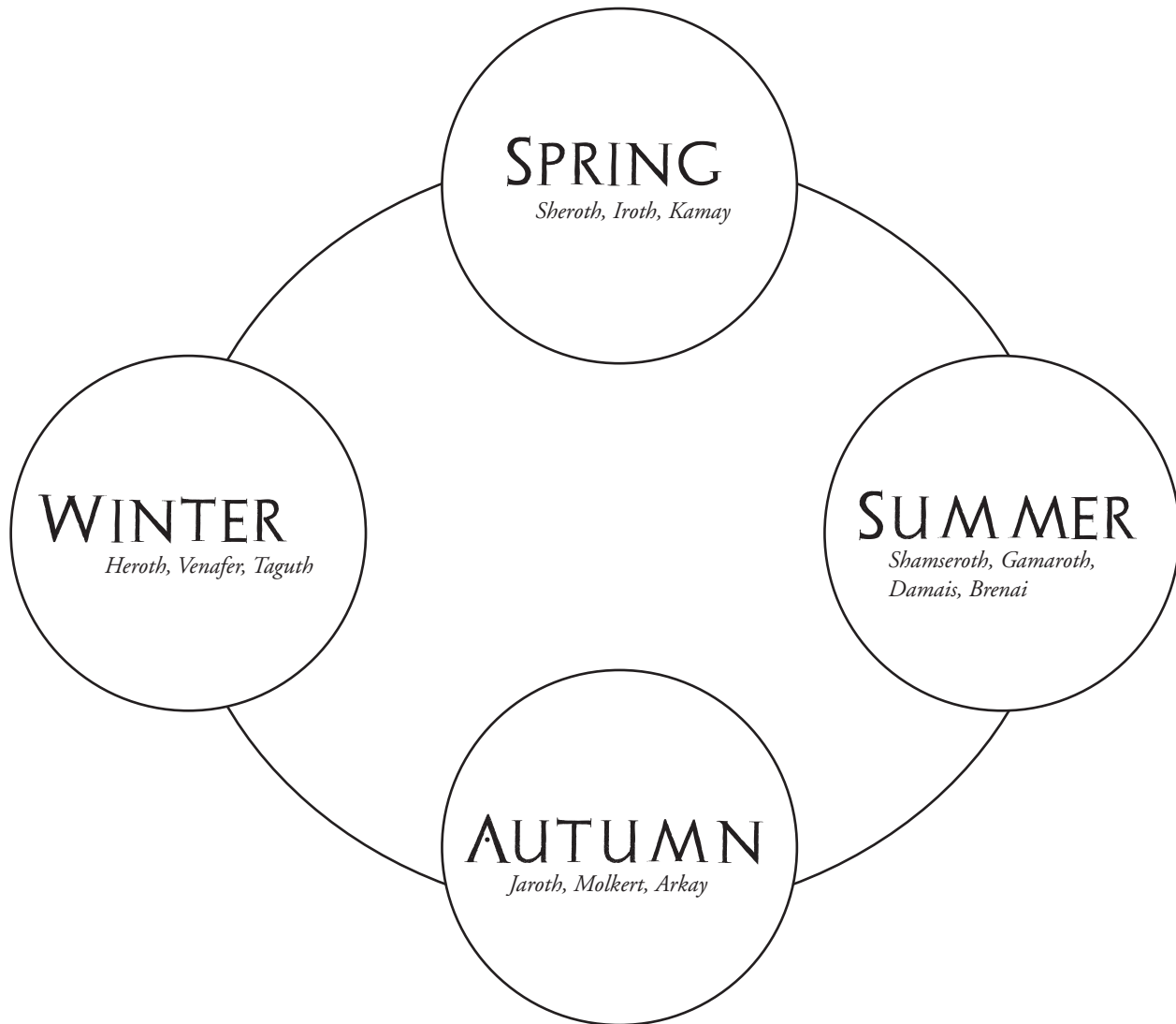
Travel itself can be difficult – weather can make roads impassable with flooding or landslides, wash away bridges, dry up watering holes and blast the traveller and his horse with dust storms. A minor landslide on a narrow road can cause a bottleneck. News of sickness in a town on the road ahead can cause everyone to stay where they are until it is declared safe, or else find a long detour. Inns can be overloaded, wagon wheels and cart axles busted. There are plenty of opportunities for the GM to spend some real narrative time on the road and use it as a context in which to trigger major plot devices and encounters.

THE RIVER ROUTES

While the sea and roadways are crucial to trade and travel around the Empire, external trade relies on two other important routes. The great river valleys of the Briga and its tributary, the Shol, in the West and the Beshor Valley in the East carry significant quantities of goods and provide the most efficient trade connections between the Empire and the Southern lands of Morkesh, Djesmirket and Sharranket – accounting for over half of external trade. Finally the overland routes to the South from Pryjarna consists of a network of trails across the Korazoon desert that have been traced out over centuries and in which little oasis towns form crucial connections. However these routes are difficult to police and increasingly open to attack from local tribes such as the Soribisi, who sometimes seek to profit from trade across their territories and other times to kill it off by attacking foreign merchants and travellers. The Korazoon remains famous for the massive camel caravans that travel east to west and back again between Yegusai and Morkar (between one and two months in each direction) as well as north to south but these are dwindling in frequency.

THE TASKAN CALENDAR

The Tarsenian year has 366 days, 13 lunar months and 2 intercalated days on which the Emperor-cult festival takes place. There are no weeks in the Taskan Calendar, although the idea is known as a foreign practice used by the Korantines. Instead the month is punctuated by market days, traditionally held on the 9th and 18th days of the month, a two day 'holiday' at the end of every month and the festival days of the various gods as celebrated in each city. The year begins with the spring, following the two-day festival of Zygus Taga.



The first month is called Sheroth, which sees the first of the spring shoots. The second month, the month of planting, is called Iroth. The third month, the month of lambing, is called Kamay. The fourth month, the month of first fruits, is called Shamseroth. This marks the start of Summer, the longest season. The fifth month, when farmers plant again, is called Gamaroth. The sixth month, when there is no rain, is called Damais. In this month falls the Festival of Gomorg, when the rites of execution are held. The seventh is Brenai, when you will find the Festival of Hoonvel and Samanse, when the crops are blessed and the farmers pray for the return of the rains. On the 28th day the festival of Kait is held across Tarsenia, after the harvest has been done. The eighth is Jaroth, the month of storing, pickling, milling and brewing. Jaroth is the first month of Autumn. The ninth month

is the month of Molkert, of bringing flocks down from the hills and leaving Sumis to reclaim her territory on behalf of the wild things. The tenth Month is Arkay, the month of slaughter, when meat animals are killed and their flesh cured for the winter. The eleventh month marks the onset of Winter and is called Heroth, the dark month. It sometimes (rarely) snows. On the 13th of the month is the Day of Ghosts, when offerings are made at the tombs and monuments of the dead. The twelfth is Venafer, when the days get longer again. The 18th of the month is No Gods Day, when Tarsenians go on a great eating and drinking binge. The thirteenth month is Taguth, the Emperor's month. At the end of it are two intercalated days are set aside for observance of the state cult honouring the Emperor. New citizens are made and the rebirth of the year is celebrated.

BEYOND THE FRONTIERS

Sooner or later a group of Adventurers from Taskan lands will find themselves straying into foreign territory. As soon as they do they will encounter unfamiliar customs and some potentially hostile attitudes.

TRAVELLING ABROAD

To head beyond the borders of your homeland is a major undertaking. Any traveller is warned to seek advice on the best route and to find out a little about what they might encounter on arrival. Leaning on your community connections can be very helpful and for some travellers this might result in a letter of introduction to someone at their destination who should give them a friendly reception, or at least some recommendations of places to stay and things to do. Travelling in numbers is always safest course and some sort of local guide (someone with a 50% or greater in the appropriate Culture and Regional Lore skills) or even an interpreter is often an absolute necessity. A traveller should always be armed to protect himself from robbers and wild beasts but be careful not to be so tooled up as to alarm those whom he meets along the way. The recommended routes may well be dull and sometimes not the shortest but they are by far the safest and there is a reason people use them!

TALKING TO THE LOCALS

In the Taskan Empire, people speak Taskan – which is the dialect of Tarsenian spoken in Taskay and taught in the provinces as the lingua franca of the Empire. This dialect is also the one applied to all official records, laws, edicts and communiqués issued by Imperial authorities. Even within the Empire Adventurers may encounter whole communities where Taskan is not the mother tongue – for example in the northern territories most people have either Thennalt or Shengen as their first language. So on arrival in a new land, the first thing Adventurers may have to deal with is the language barrier. An Adventurer can and should try to get some tuition in a language that will be helpful on their travels before their departure. This can be done in accordance with the normal rules for acquiring an Advanced Skill as provided in the *Legend Core Rulebook*. Receiving teaching or mentoring in a language is also an excellent way to make use of time in transit, so long as you can secure a native speaker to act as teacher or mentor as you go.

The Languages and Cultures Table shows what languages are commonly spoken in the territories bordering the Empire, as well

as in its provinces and client states. The Primary Language is the mother tongue of the majority of indigenous people. Where it is followed by (d) indicates that the region has its own variant (dialect) of the language and possibly more than one.

Dialects typically differ from one another by up to 10%, applied as a penalty to language Skill Tests. 20% is a more extreme variation, to be found between Thennalt dialects, which are extraordinarily widespread and have no universally recognised pure form. A 30% penalty due to dialect difference is effectively a different language and is the gap that separates the related Jekkarene and Korantine tongues. These differences may also be present in the written form of the language (which is true of Djesmiri) or else the written form may be ‘Classical’ and standardised, which is the case with Korantine. Where a classical form exists the upper classes probably also share a common standard form of the language and look down on those who do not.

Secondary Languages are the native tongue of large minority populations of the region, or those which many of the locals will speak as a second language.

THE LORE OF THE LAND

The Regional Lore column on the Languages and Cultures Table shows which Regional Lore is relevant. Where the region is particularly diverse there may be more than one. In these cases the Game Master and player should decide which one an Adventurer is most familiar with and apply a 10%, or greater, penalty to the others.

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH LOCAL CULTURE

Finally, the Culture column provides the specific culture that a native would acquire as a Culture (Own) skill, or that a foreigner will need to pick up as an Advanced Skill in order to get under the skin of the local community. Note that Sheng (Eskar) and Sheng (Independent Tribes) are the same Culture skill, however a character from the Eskar tribe of the Little Kitan region can choose to substitute 10% of his background skill bonus in Culture (Own) for a basic percentage in Culture (Taskan) so long as he also takes Language (Taskan) as one of his optional Advanced Skills. A Thennalt from Camtri can likewise substitute 10% of his Culture (Marangian) background skill bonus for a starting percentage in Culture (Taskan).



LANGUAGES AND CULTURES TABLE

Region	Primary Language	Secondary Languages	Regional Lore	Culture (specific)
Brotomagia	Thennalt (d)	Korantine	Brotomagia	Brotomagian
Camtri	Thennalt (d)	Taskan	Camtri	Marangian
Djesmirket	Djesmiri (d)	Soribish	Assabia	Djesmiri
Kingdom of Yegusai	Beshori	Taskan, Djesmiri	Beshor Valley	Beshor Valley People
Kitan	Shengen	—	Kitan	Sheng (Independent Tribes)
Korantia	Korantine (d)	Thennalt	Korantia; Aspalia; Kipsiperan	Korantine
Korazoon	Soribish	Djesmiri, Khazind, Taskan	Korazoon	Soribisi
Little Kitan	Shengen	Taskan	Camtri	Sheng (Eskar)
Marangia	Thennalt (d)	Korantine	Marangia	Marangian
Morkesh	Morkeshite	Taskan, Soribish	Assabia	Djesmiri
Methalea	Jekkarene	—	Jekkarid; Forest of Sard; Badlands	Jekkarene
Sharranket	Djesmiri (d)	—	Assabia	Djesmiri
Sorantia	Tarsenian (d)	—	Sorantia	Tarsenian

Many people make an effort to assimilate when they get to their destination, by immersing themselves in the local culture and doing their best to communicate with the locals through whatever means they can. An Adventurer can thus learn the basics of a foreign language and of the local Culture (Other) without a teacher or mentor by spending two Improvement Rolls on each, so long as they spend a minimum of one month immersed in the culture. This assumes they are interacting with friendly locals willing to indulge them, otherwise the Game Master should double the amount of time it takes or increase the Improvement Roll cost to three.

AND FINALLY...WHAT TO TAKE WITH YOU

As has already been mentioned, letters of introduction are a great help, if of course you can find the person they are addressed to. However in all other instances there is no substitute for ready cash to smooth your journey. In the regional descriptions that follow, guidance is provided as to whether the locals are likely to accept Taskeens in payment for goods and services. The Empire's currency can get you a long way but if people will not take your money and refuse even to exchange it, the best alternative is a quantity of bullion in handy small lumps to trade at their local value by weight or, failing that, some suitable goods for barter. Nobody welcomes foreigners who arrive armed to the teeth but with no visible means of financial support. It will be assumed that they are robbers and they will be run out of town or worse.

KORANTIA

Once the heart of a huge empire with footholds on both sides of the Inner Ocean, Korantia is now carved into a number of independent city states. Korantines live with the painful memory of a catastrophe that wrecked the empire when the island of Korantis, home to the imperial capital, sank beneath the ocean waves in a terrible earthquake. Despite the passage of over 200 years, so ingrained is this disaster in their collective memory that they can be a little obsessed with reliving the dreams of past glory

– and so they are a somewhat conservative people, often preserving archaic forms of dress and speech and preferring traditional conservative social arrangements over anything new. This does not, of course, prevent innovation. The fragmented nature of the Korantine world, with its large number of competing city states, acts as a catalyst to change. However change will as far as possible be dressed up as a step towards restoring or reviving an idealised past.

RELATIONS

A Taskan visitor to Korantia is unlikely to encounter outright hostility but he will be regarded by many of the locals as an untrustworthy foreigner. There is a substantial body of opinion that Taskan and Korantine will one day be at war and on both sides there are some people spoiling for a fight. However everyone knows that such a war could be immensely destructive and bring terrible tragedies in its wake. What was long regarded as a failing civilisation seems to be entering a new era of confidence thanks to the recent formation of the Korantine League. Taskan hegemony over Korantia no longer seems an inevitable future.

GETTING THERE

The most direct route is to set out from Ashkor heading west and skirting the Yellow hills, then turning Northwest and striking out for the Thoraso River. Following this river northward towards its source brings you to the Korantine Emperor's capital of Hilanistra, which is the gateway to the land of Korantia. A more dangerous route is to make for Timolay and from there head directly West, arriving in the territory of the twin Korantine cities of Tysil and Nysil – assuming you are not attacked by hostile Marangians on the way.

HILANISTRA

The 27 year old Emperor, Koibos 24th of the Korantines, has his capital at Hilanistra which was newly founded by his ancestors after Korantis was lost to the Ocean. The city-states all dutifully maintain embassies here in accordance with ancient tradition,

even though the new federal capital of the Korantine League is a more important place to do business these days. Hilanistra is on the Eastern flank of the Korantine heartlands, exposed to potential enemies but also an ideal place to act as a hub for trade and diplomacy between Korantia and its neighbours. So while the city-states of Korantia make great efforts to keep their Emperor out of their internal affairs, he is still seen as a very useful figurehead for relations with the rest of the world.

Koibos is chief priest of the Sun God, Lanis. He is surrounded by a devoted following of paladins, each of whom holds land and estates, allotted from temple property, to provide them with everything they need to maintain both themselves and a band of armed retainers in a permanent state of readiness to serve their emperor. Many of these estates surround Hilanistra, however a cadre of paladins are to be found in most Korantine city-states, answering to the emperor rather than the local authorities (and for this reason they are not a particularly welcome presence).

BOSIPPA

A new foundation on the island of Valos, Bosippa is the centre of the Korantine League, which is now the preferred forum for the various city-states to deal with one another. Only 15 years old, Bosippa has been colonised by settlers drawn from nearly every state in order to ensure that it feels truly cosmopolitan. The Korantine League meets annually at the time of the Great Festival of Orayna and attempts to resolve any issues and disputes between states that have caused or threatened inter-state conflict. It also attempts to set some common policies concerning matters such as trade, sanctuary and the pursuit of fugitives across borders.



New as it is, Bosippa's founders have every intention of making it a model of archaic living; scholars compete with one another to seek historical authority for each and every choice that has to be made about its governance and customs. Ancient buildings and monuments have been transported block-by-block from the mainland to ensure that Bosippa can claim ownership of some venerable structures. Its modernity, however, is ever visible in Bosippa's port of Nesterin, a substantial settlement in its own right and superbly equipped with all the best facilities for both civilian and naval vessels.

LEADING CITY STATES

Agissene – The most powerful of the Korantine states and has very much taken the lead in the key events of the last generation – the capture and resettlement of the Isle of Valos and foundation of the Korantine League by their general Kalacho.

Sarestra – Takes the largest share of the shipping trade between Korantia and the West; its sailors and shipping guilds are legendary.

Yaristra – The most populous of the Korantine cities and a centre for culture and learning. Well-to-do Korantines strive to send their sons and daughters there to be properly educated.

Tysil and Nysil – Twin cities with a symbiotic history; Tysil is an ancient Korantine city, Nysil a more recent foundation created to house a mass influx of settlers from barbarian lands as a separate community rather than merge populations.

Himela – Has the most vigorously democratic constitution. The old aristocracy of Himela keep notions of superiority to themselves or risk swift and eager retribution from the public assembly, which is only too happy to confiscate their estates and/or send them into exile.

Borissa – A southern city keen to assert its credentials as a military and maritime power. Rootless adventurers often make their way here to sign up for mercenary service. From time-to-time Borissa attempts to grab land from nearby peoples, or plant an overseas colony or enclave, of which Thyrtia, a coastal town right by the Forest of Sard, is a current example.

Mersin – A northern colony close to the territory of the powerful Thennalt king of Zathrum, to whom it pays tribute. It is the chief source for grain, timber and metalwork imported from 'barbarian' lands.

Keba – The chief among seven towns that have been planted on the Amphalian peninsula to the North, which nevertheless strive to maintain close contact with the heartland.

Kipsipsindra – Far away across the Ocean but remains a bastion of Korantine culture among the Oceanic peoples; the shipping link between Sarestia and Kipsipsindra is vital to the interests of both cities.

Zarendra – Even further away, is a colony planted long ago on the coast of Jandekot and now there is hardly anyone who has ever been there or met anyone who has. Nevertheless this is a thriving community sticking to the old ways and worthy of being considered a Korantine city.

SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT

A visitor from Tarsenia will quickly spot how the Korantines have very fixed views on the way things are done, are welcoming to foreigners but not to foreign ways and can be very conservative about things like gender roles. It is alright for a strange foreign woman to mix freely with men and pursue a male dominated career, as is common in Tarsenia – but they would not want their own womenfolk getting any such funny ideas. Slavery is very common but Korantine slaves are generally protected, by law, from serious mistreatment and are permitted some dignity as human beings. They are regarded as members of their owner's extended family, albeit ones who cannot fully participate in public life any more than children because they are under the legal authority of another.

The emperor of the Korantines has no actual power over any of the city states that recognise his leadership, a source of great

frustration to Koibos that he is powerless to do anything about. The city states are fully self-governing and each has its own unique constitution based on a standard model that is regarded as having the approval of the gods. According to this model every city-state has its magistrates overseeing a council, which is a select body that sits over the sovereign assembly of all citizens. On the other hand every state has different rules about the exact number, and powers, of the magistrates, how you get to be on the council, or what decisions can be directly made by the assembly. The only constitutional right vested in the citizen assembly that is absolute in every state is the decision to declare war.

RELIGION AND MAGIC

The Korantines worship a Celestial Court of gods, each of whom is responsible for an aspect of life relevant to the day-to-day workings of well-ordered society. If Lanis the Sun God is the head of state, his prime minister is Anayo, whose wife Orayna is Queen of Heaven and Mother of the Nations. They are assisted by Estrigel the court's herald and Kos, its guardian and enforcer. Around them are at least a dozen important deities and scores of lesser ones, each with its own part of human society and state for which they take responsibility.

Each part of the machinery of state and every section of the community is operated as a cult of its respective tutelary deity. It stands to reason that each such cult is state-specific and the rules of the cult of Himelan Orayna will, for example, differ from those of Orayna of Agissene. Every Korantine city takes great care to claim that their cults are the truest reflection of ancient customs and have all the trappings of venerable antiquity.

Korantine cults operate in accordance with the guidelines set out in the *Legend Core Rulebook*, except that membership of the cults relevant to your citizenship and profession is essentially obligatory.

Korantines practice Divine Magic and such Common Magic as is made available by their deities or associated spirits.

Sorcery is very much frowned upon and, even in those places where it is not strictly illegal, every so often there is a purge of anyone practising sorcery or anything that looks like sorcery. Atheism is considered treasonous on the grounds that it represents apostasy from society and state and its adherents are regarded with suspicion and often hounded out of town.

MILITARY

Most Korantine city states are on or near the sea and each one maintains a certain number of warships and transport vessels at the expense of the state, although usually only the key crew members are in permanent employment and the rest are levied when there is a need for action. The Korantine world has very little in the way of standing armies. The Emperor's paladins are full-time warriors but they are not especially numerous nor automatically at the state's disposal, except in the case of external threat – if such a warrior joins a fight against another Korantine city, they do so as a private individual.

There are also 'Patriotic Bands' of volunteers who are the first line of defence but their composition differs from state-to-state according to where the balance of power sits between the elite and the masses. In some cities these are aristocrats and their armed retainers, in others they are a mob of lightly armed peasants. In peaceful times Patriotic Bands can act as a constabulary or come together to form a posse. In an emergency they are the first called upon to take up arms to defend the state, before any kind of conscription or general levy is organised. Mercenary forces are quite common however; the merchant societies under the tutelage of Sabateus, the God of trade and travel, maintain their own standing force used to guard depots, caravans and shipping. Traditionally uniformed in green, these men can be hired from anywhere (as long as they speak Korantine fluently) and are well trained and equipped. Bodies of warriors from foreign parts may be hired also, especially if they have specialist skills to offer, such as archery or horsemanship. Finally, some of the Patriotic Bands can end up being permanently at arms and then strange things happen such as their participation as mercenaries (usually termed 'helpers' for appearance's sake) in conflicts between or within other states. In the end if the state is under serious threat it can summon a levy. It is a local matter how far down the economic scale the call to arms can reach. Those who have no role to play in the state, because they fall below whatever is the local property standard, are usually not called on to defend it either.

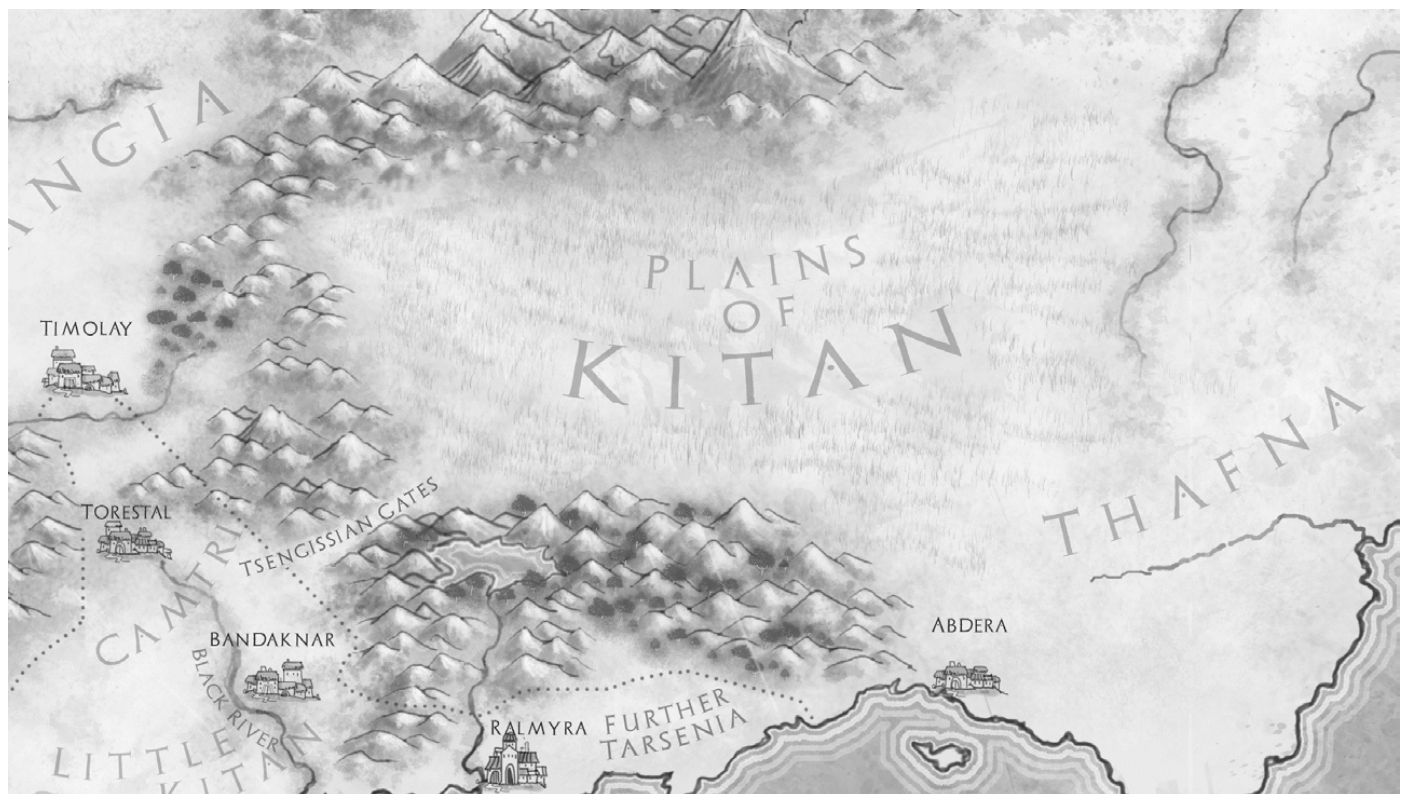
Korantines tend towards the use of leather, scale and plate armour. Plate has aristocratic connotations of course and is favoured by the paladins. Traditional weapons include shortsword, spear, a flat oval shield and a variety of missile weapons among which javelins are counted as the most 'manly'.

TRADE AND CURRENCY

Currency standards and interstate trade have long been a major issue between Korantine cities. Silver Pieces are minted by individual cities in varying degrees of purity and various denominations; historically the only currency accepted at equal value, wherever in the Korantine world you try to spend it, are the 'unofficial' (i.e. non-state) issues by the Sabatean cults who guarantee exchange value at any of their outlets in every city. Gold coins called Imperials or, simply Gold Pieces, are minted by the Emperor at Hilanistra. Gold Imperials minted before the Cataclysm and bearing the head of one of the 52 Emperors who ruled from Korantis are almost universally regarded as being of higher purity and of antiquarian interest; they are generally accepted as having up to twice the market value. Gold coins minted by individual cities are regarded as potentially substandard and can usually only be accepted at face value at its point of origin. Hence currency has become a hot political issue and a key question to be dealt with by the newly constituted Korantine League, which seeks a common currency system using Hilanistran Imperials and Sabatean Guilders as the standard. One Sabatean Guilder is the equivalent of a day's wages for a skilled worker (2 Taskeens) and one gold Imperial is the equivalent of 25 Guilders.

KITAN

North of the Taskan Empire lies the broad plain known as the Kitan, a great expanse of grassland and patches of desert hedged in by hills and mountains on three sides but to the east spilling into the wet green lowlands of Thafna. To the west a pass called the Tsengissian gates debouches into another plain known as the Little Kitan, which is part of the Taskan Empire and sports



the only settlement of any size in the region, at Bandaknar. The Little Kitan is well known to Taskan travellers, couriers, soldiers and merchants as it must be crossed in order to travel between Tarsenia and the Empire's northern possessions of Camtri and Timolay, or to head West towards Korantia and the Jekkarene trading town of Ramassa. Kitan is known to Taskans for all the wrong reasons; thousands of people were carried off there as slaves when its barbarous inhabitants sacked Ralmyra 20 years ago. Despite official efforts and a few intrepid private expeditions, very few have ever been repatriated and most have probably, by now, perished in that bleak and unforgiving country.

This untamed frontier is the haunt of the horse people, known as the Sheng; fierce folk whose monuments of cairns and standing stones to honour their ancestors and mark out their Sacred Sites punctuate an otherwise rather featureless landscape. The Sheng are made up of several tribes, of which the Eskars, Tsengirs, Dragomans and Kismeks are the biggest and most well known. While The Eskars who have their homeland in the Little Kitan are now tame subjects of the Taskan Empire, some of their cousins in the other tribes are the stuff of nightmares and their homeland is a place where a Taskan traveller must think very hard about how much he values his skin before venturing in – for it is quite likely to end up adorning the saddle of a Sheng warrior.

GETTING THERE

Most people who travel to this region are passing through the Little Kitan or travelling to Bandaknar. The closest they get to the high plains is Hamcha, a settlement on the Taskan side of the Tsengissian Gates. This pass provides access to the high plains of the Kitan proper and is therefore a place hotly contested by rival warlords. This is as far as most foreigners will go, for once beyond the protection of whatever warlord controls the Gates they are likely to be attacked by the natives. The quietest route onto the high plains is to take a boat to Ralmyra in Further Tarsenia, then spend several days picking your way through the hills – which are infested with dangerous creatures – to arrive on the southern flank of the Kitan. Finally, one can take a sea passage to Zagre and from there travel with Sharranketan traders across the straits to Abdera. That is a good place to negotiate safe passage up onto the plateau with a representative of the Dragoman tribe, who have a less evil reputation than some of their cousins.

RELATIONS

While a Taskan is safe enough in Eskar territory, the high plains are a no-go area to all except those with the most influential local connections, or who are able to put on a sufficient show of force to deter predatory tribesmen. For many people the memories of when the Sheng descended upon further Tarsenia is still very much an open wound. The imperial government has rescued or purchased the freedom of some 2,000 Tarsenian captives; however there are rumoured to still be anything up to another 4,000 Tarsenian-born slaves living in the Kitan and the bones of perhaps 5,000 more. There are hundreds of thousands of Taskeens' worth of rewards and ransoms on offer for repatriations, put up by wealthy individuals, cults and funeral clubs – even if just for the bones of the dead in order to provide them with a proper cremation. Nevertheless the

size of the task and the danger of the mission have proved too daunting for most. The Taskan Empire has learned that to attack the Sheng requires a formidable army or is to risk disaster; even then the chances are that the Sheng will simply retreat before them and refuse battle. There are always a number of Taskan agents at the Tsengissian Gates settlement of Hamcha whose purpose is to listen out for rumours of Ralmyran survivors and be ready to negotiate their purchase if the current owner is ready to sell.

BANDAKNAR

There is only one city of any size in which the majority of inhabitants come from nomad stock and that is Bandaknar, which serves as a meeting place and market between Sheng and Taskan lands. Bandaknar is situated on a natural ford across the Black River. It is a notoriously filthy town, the stinking rat-infested streets and lice-ridden inns are legendary and visitors are advised to only take or immerse themselves in the river water upstream of its suburbs. Bandaknar is a sprawl of wooden single-story buildings and only the stone-built Taskan temple and watch towers stand out above the crowd. Unsurprisingly it is the most important centre for trade in horses in the known world but this is in all ways a stockman's town, full of the stench from animal pens and enclosures, home to butchers, tanners, leatherworkers, dairymen, horse-breakers and slaughterers. Almost everyone in Bandaknar has some connection to the raising, consumption or processing of animals. Bandaknar is now the administrative capital of a Taskan province. As a result the vast majority of its inhabitants have been forced to submit to the Emperor and take citizenship. The city has its own militia, the only formed unit of footsoldiers amongst the Sheng and consequently much derided and despised.

HAMCHA

At the Tsengissian Gates is a permanent settlement of perhaps 2,000 souls called Hamcha. A Tsengir warlord by the name of Shimyagen of Blue Horse is its current ruler but can be expected to have been ousted and replaced within a couple of years if his rule is to conform to the usual pattern. Hamcha is surrounded by a ditch and palisade, with Shimyagen's warriors prowling around the surrounding countryside ready to intercept and exact tribute from anyone attempting to pass between the Little Kitan and the high plains.

TRIBAL CENTRES

Up on The Kitan proper there are a number of small permanent settlements located at religious and cultural sites. At fixed points of the year these can be swollen by an influx of people coming to make their annual religious observances and renew ties of kinship and fraternity with other nomadic groups. The most important are the Tribal Centres, each of which is the seat of power of the royal clan of one of the tribes. The tribal centre of the Eskars is Bandaknar.

TRIBES

Eskars – The most commonly encountered tribe. Most of them are Taskan citizens, many serve in the Taskan army far from their homeland. Eskars retain their tribal structure but now also have their own college of Emperor-Cult priests based at Bandaknar.

The independent tribes all have their spiritual home beyond the Tsengissian Gates. The main ones are:

Tsengirs – A big grouping of clans, after whom the main pass onto the high plains is named. Any warlord who wants to gather a force big enough for an expedition into foreign lands needs their support.

Dragomans – Found to the South and East, these are famous horse breeders who have a trading relationship with the Massalma merchant dynasty of Sharranket that operates a trading colony at Abdera. The Dragomans are wealthy but sometimes viewed by the other tribes as being effete and corrupted by foreign ways.

Kismeks – Famous as the fiercest of the tribes, the Kismeks are those who wear the most elaborate tattoos, as visibly as possible – often covering their faces. They are the source of the stories concerning brutal and barbarous customs and indeed make a point of continuing ancient traditions.

At least one tribe has vanished in recent history – the Hyamanek were wiped out in inter-tribal warfare. With no human being left with the power to allocate the tribal symbols to new people, they are left in stasis until some supernatural event might bring the tribe back into being.

SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT

The Sheng have an evil reputation as ruthless raiders. Behind this reputation is the fact that every generation or two, famine and desperation or some warlord's ambition results in a major Sheng incursion into settled lands that leaves significant devastation in its wake. Eventually the raiders will return home to their traditional burial grounds and Sacred Sites but it has been known for them to spend five years or more on the warpath. They are doubly feared for their cruelty, amplified by some barbarous customs including a penchant for flaying the skin of their adversaries. The origin of this practice lies in their habit of tattooing their skin with runes and enchantments, inviting the removal and preservation of same as a conspicuous battle trophy. In reality flaying a non-Sheng enemy who carries no tattoos is a pointless exercise and it is equally acceptable to scalp them or remove a head or other body part as a trophy instead.

Membership of each Sheng tribe is through common ancestry as a member of a clan that falls within its kinship network. These networks are quite far-reaching, so much so that little fellowship exists between members and other forms of social relationship can be just as important. Clans have an existence independent of their members and cannot be combined through intermarriage – the bride or groom crosses from one clan to another and both directions of travel are common. The relationships between families, clans and tribes is preserved through oral traditions and reference to a complex system of runic symbols that are used both as a form of heraldic identification and as a focus for access to magic. In each tribe the system is regulated by a tribal king, a Shaman who heads up the royal clan. These kings have rather limited temporal power and have to act through influence rather than edict. Their prime opportunity to exert influence and

remind everyone of their status is when clans and tribes gather for the important festivals when nomadic folk make an effort to rendezvous at specific spots and take the opportunity to celebrate weddings, births, funerals and remember their shared debt to the ancestors. There are usually at least two gatherings every year that a clansman would consider it his duty to turn up to, irrespective of where his day-to-day loyalties might lie.

Any proven leader, not just a tribal king, will attract followers who attach themselves to his or her retinue through oaths of loyalty, gift exchange and intermarriage. Clan members can find themselves on opposite sides of a dispute in support of rival warlords – however if the clan itself becomes a focus or feature of a conflict, the clan members will almost always break whatever allegiances they must in order to come together as a single force.

Sheng have a remarkable degree of gender equality – there are few activities outside of childbirth that are restricted to one gender or the other. Women regularly show themselves to be accomplished warriors, with men and women often sharing the responsibilities of raising a child. However as women grow old they are forced into more restrictive roles and the older women take on domestic duties, whereas the men of the clan continue to proclaim their potency and manly prowess even when they are well past their prime.

Unsurprisingly wealth and happiness is traditionally measured in possession of livestock, even if many Sheng like to display wealth through fine clothing, weapons and jewels. Status however is based on their following – the total number of human dependants from status warriors to concubines, slaves and supplicants.

MAGIC AND RELIGION

The Sheng revere their clan and tribal ancestors, among whom any individual who has successfully mastered a magic and brought its powers to his kinsmen is worshipped as a Hero. Each clan's runic symbols reflect the magic it has at its disposal and these same symbols, in simplified form, can be seen painted or stitched onto banners and clothing, branded onto livestock and etched or carved onto weapons and equipment.

An individual clan member wears his clan magic on his skin, in the form of elaborate and beautiful tattoos that are added to and embellished throughout his life to reflect his journey towards acquiring a complete grasp of the magical tradition of the clan. A clansman who is initiated into adult life gets his first tattoos but he must first enter into a Pact with his Ancestors and dedicate a minimum of 1 POW to activate them. Beginning with 1D3 Magnitude of Common Magic, every new spell or magical ability he learns will involve adding to his body art. A typical clan will have access to 1D6+6 Common Magic spells with a total Magnitude of 20, as well as, perhaps some special magics such as access to a particular Ancestor Spirit or a unique Heroic Ability.

Sheng do not practice sorcery because they are almost universally illiterate. However, there is generally nothing that prevents a clansman, who has managed to get an education in foreign lands,

from learning sorcery if he can. Divine Magic is sourced from a small number of spirit and daemon cults from which specialist Divine Magic spells can be gained.

TRADE AND CURRENCY

Sheng usually evaluate goods for trade in weight of silver or, if they are being very traditional about things, they might count in horses. These are then used as standards against which to work out barter deals, since horses and silver are simply not available for the majority of commercial transactions that take place. They only coinage issued is from the mint at Bandaknar but the coins issued there are mostly for prestige and propaganda value on the part of the local Emperor-cult and are treated as silver bullion by the Sheng, rather than as units of exchange. Professional merchants may make full use of currency and to this end Taskan coinage is increasingly in circulation, slowly ousting Korantine currency as the exchange of choice. Sheng merchants bring horses to market but also hides, treated and worked leather and some raw materials extracted from around the Kitan plateau by slave gangs – on which they have a monopoly since no foreign prospector is likely to be able to get to the plateau and set themselves up without tribal approval. The most significant transactions that take place – that Sheng warriors are willing to fight wars to be party to – are the provision of horse stock to the Taskan army and of horses and other commodities to the Sharranketan merchants who access the territory via Abdera.

MILITARY

Sheng men and women train in weapons and battle skills from a young age – to learn to defend their herds, to equip them for participation in raiding and to prepare themselves to win fame by defeating enemies in single combat. Most of their wars take place on a small scale between rival factions, clans and tribes, involving dozens, or perhaps hundreds, of participants on each side, rather than thousands. Gathering booty is the key measure of a successful campaign, however for an individual warrior, returning home with an enemy's skin still bearing his or her clan tattoos, or perhaps a hand or head, is the chief prize. Sometimes a highly successful leader will be able to gather the large force required to venture into foreign lands for a major expedition. Usually the objective is simply to plunder and take slaves, however revenge for real or imagined wrongs suffered, or the pursuit of glory, can be enough to motivate many to follow a war-leader's banner.

The Sheng fight almost exclusively on horseback, are skilled with the recurve bow and for sidearms favour battle axes, maces and the occasional sword if of high status. Armour is mostly leather, with wealthy warriors sporting a metal helm and lamellar armour made of metal or horn. Sometimes their horse is similarly accoutred. A small wooden shield with a double grip can be strapped to the arm when needed so that the left hand is free to hold the bowstave or reins – but most Sheng warriors of any skill can fight happily without the reins in hand.

SHENG HEROIC ABILITIES

Born to the Saddle is a common Heroic Ability for Sheng Adventurers. The following abilities are also available to them:

HORSEMASTER (Heroic Ability)

Requirements: Riding 100%

Hero Points: 8

Duration: 1 Combat Round

This Heroic Ability allows an Adventurer to make their horse perform a feat of prowess that is contrary to instinct and training; whether that is getting a horse, not trained for war, to attack an enemy (providing an additional Combat Action to the Adventurer), to brave a hedge of spears, leap a chasm or even play dead.

WARMASTER (Heroic Ability)

Requirements: Mounted Combat 75%

Hero Points: 8

Duration: CON Minutes

This Heroic Ability allows an Adventurer to fight with a two handed weapon, or with a weapon in both hands, while retaining absolute control of their mount using just their knees, voice and body movements. The Adventurer can gain an additional Combat Action for a trained war horse, so if armed with two weapons or a shield they may have a total of two additional Combat Actions.

METHALEA

Methalea is a huge peninsula dominated by what is considered to be the oldest civilisation still in existence, the Theocracy of the Jekkarenes. The Northern part is a wilderness region known as the Forest of Sard and the Eastern part of the peninsula is a rough, almost barren region known simply as the Methalean Badlands. The rest of the peninsula – and indeed sometimes by extension the whole peninsula – is known as The Jekkarid after the secretive and matriarchal society devoted to the night-goddess Jekkara. This goddess manifests as the Moon, usually visible by day but at night the biggest and brightest planet visible in the heavens. The Moon hangs stationary in the sky above the capital city, Parlasos.

As the birth-place of the divine emperor Zygus Taga, this land has an important place in Taskan tradition. However Methalea is also where the Sun God (Lanis) and Moon Goddess (Jekkara) reigned together over the first human civilisation, until a disastrous separation resulted in the departure of his followers to found a new and patriarchal society on Korantis. When Jekkara threw Lanis out (or was abandoned, depending on who is telling the story), she became a goddess whose full powers could only be manifest on the physical plane at night. This drama was played out not in the heavens but amongst their worshippers on earth; nevertheless it resulted in the diminishing of a goddess as well as the fracture of a society into two opposing factions. The Jekkarenes claim that their goddess was the motivating force that drove the Ocean to destroy Korantis as terrible revenge for the ancient insults she bore. Hence the history of Methalea touches upon all the civilisations of the East, not least that of the Korantines.

GETTING THERE

From the Taskan Empire the direct route is due West from Ashkor to Ramassa, with a significantly more dangerous alternative running West from Felsang via Sorandib. Alternatively a traveller might go



south into Morkesh and take a ship from Largil to Lyortha. These important towns provide no access to the interior unless you are equipped with a visa that allows passage across the interior of the Jekkarid, something that is rarely provided to anyone other than officials representing the Taskan Emperor. Obtaining such a pass requires the patronage of the powerful Baron Solfernoy of Lyortha or Baron Lankermost of Ramassa, the noblemen in charge of inbound traffic through these two points of entry to the country.

For unofficial and unauthorised visitors, the Northern border is fairly porous. There are ways to cross into the country secretly either from Brotomagia or from the Korantine territory of Thyrtia; however this is a land haunted by beast-men and also favoured hunting grounds for both Jekkarene and Brotomagian nobility. The whole Eastern coast of the peninsula is open but the impoverished communities of the Badlands are always on the lookout for ways to supplement their meagre existence with a little brigandage by both land and sea. Once you cross through the Badlands you reach the border with the Jekkarene Theocracy and here you are likely to run into one of the frequent patrols.

PARLASOS

The Jekkarenes' capital, and indeed the only city of any size, is Parlasos. The city is situated in an area known as the Vale of Moonshadow, because it is the centre of a shadow cast over Methalea as the sun passes above the moon in a daily eclipse. At its heart is a temple of breathtaking size that is the centre of worship, as well as the palace of Queen Semankore, chief priestess and ruler of the Jekkarene Theocracy. The city is surrounded by a rural hinterland where famous corn, known as silver barley, is cultivated, which can

draw its nourishment from the moon rather than the sun. Its grains are sought after by foreign alchemists but there is an outright ban on their export and only temple estates are allowed to cultivate the crop.

Very few foreigners ever go to Parlasos, as the Jekkarenes restrict the vast majority of their dealings with foreigners to the two cities created for the purpose. When they do they are given fine hospitality but it usually comes with close escort and surveillance.

LYORTHA

Lyortha is a port on one of the southern fingers of the peninsula that acts as an entrepot for trade arriving or leaving the Jekkarid. This is the only place where foreign vessels may land or load goods and all goods being transported further into Jekkarene territory may only be carried by Jekkarene shippers. The town is ruled over by the notorious Baron Solfernoy – albeit under the supervision of a trio of priestesses from the capital.

Solfernoy is not only a very rich man, as a result of the perquisites and bribes he takes along the way, but also an extremely influential one, with ambitions to exercise power as well as influence beyond the borders of the Theocracy.

One of the few places in the Jekkarid where foreigners are welcome, Lyortha is also home to a small flotilla of five warships built and maintained for the Taskan navy and in fact the only ocean-going navy they have. Above all, however, Lyortha is a trading town where the Jekkarenes attempt to gather in goods from the oceanic trade routes and export some of their own.

RAMASSA

Solfernoy's counterpart in the East of the country is Baron Lankermost, who controls the other entrepot, Ramassa. Most Taskans who enter the Jekkarid do so here. Lankermost is no maverick like Solfernoy, being instead a trusted and deeply conservative patrician who is the right man to handle the sensitive commercial, diplomatic and religious traffic between Taskay or Ashkor and Parlasos, all of which passes under his nose. Ramassa is situated near the sea and at a great river mouth but the waterways here are shallow, shifting and choked with silt; in fact Ramassa is useless as a port other than for flat-bottomed boats used in and around the delta.

THE BADLANDS

The whole Eastern side of the peninsula is a lawless region dotted with small communities attempting to scratch a living from the soil through a mixture of agriculture and pastoralism. Where possible banditry and piracy provides additional income. These

people are mostly of Jekkarene origin but they or their forbears have been cast out of society for some misdemeanour and are living in exile. Despite its generally grim reputation the area attracts some voluntary exiles as well as escaped slaves and the occasional religious or social apostate from further afield. One or two notorious wizards have made their homes here in order to practice their researches away from the eyes of civilisation. Famously Zygas Taga was born here and built his first army from the local bandits, a source of pride to many of the inhabitants. Even now a Taskan recruiting sergeant visits every spring and generally leaves again with 50 or more recruits for the Imperial Light Infantry. Less appealing is the fact that lycanthropy is rife. The Jekkarenes have long used lycanthropy as a traditional curse upon their outcasts as they are of the opinion that it will keep the exiles' attentions focussed on survival and fear of one another rather than getting organised and causing a nuisance.

THE FOREST OF SARD

This extensive wilderness region is in fact a mix of hills, valleys and wetlands some 150 miles from North to South and more than 300 miles East to West, of which 50% of the total area is forested. Through the middle runs the Quickwater River, in places cutting deep ravines, in others fanning out over a flooded landscape. South of the river is a favourite hunting ground for Jekkarene nobility. North of the river is a playground for the Thennalt lords of Brotomagia. Very few people actually live in the forest and those who do are mostly on the fringes. The Northwest of Sard is increasingly cut into by the Borissan colony at Thyrtia, so you might encounter Thyrtan prospectors there. Deeper into the wilderness there may be a few bands of outlaws and the occasional hermit but by and large the land is given over to nature and in the great expanse of the forest any number of exotic creatures may lay hidden.

SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT

When the sun-worshippers departed Methalea to found a new kingdom to the north, those who were left behind built a new social order in which the women who attended upon the goddess took over the reins of the country in support of their queen and began to appoint the remaining men of the aristocracy to positions of power under their control. When there were no such men of status left, new families were elevated to high rank. Those descended from the original loyalists still form the highest 'patrician' tier of nobility according to tradition but in reality lineages have merged, disappeared or been overshadowed by successful non-patrician families.

The ultimate rulers of the Jekkarenes are the colleges of priestesses who serve the night-goddess Jekkara. At their head is the queen, whose position is not hereditary but a life-long appointment. Every Jekkarene queen is chosen by a college of senior priestesses from a pool of more than 100 young women and girls, all carefully selected and removed from their parents when they were only five years old and subjected to intensive training for a role that, likely as not, they will never have the chance to fulfil.

The Jekkarene Theocracy is divided into eight provinces, each with a major temple at its core, with the capital at Parlasos and

its immediate territory effectively an additional province ruled directly by the queen. Ramassa and Lyortha are ruled by baronial appointments under the supervision of priestesses assigned from the royal household. The college of priestesses that administers each province has absolute authority to appoint all officials in their domain and as a result has at least a watching eye over all the local administrative, commercial and military functions of the state. Ordinary Jekkarenes are extremely parochial and deeply conservative; the world they inhabit is overwhelmingly agricultural in nature. They have almost no experience and little knowledge of the world outside and live their lives in the fixed patterns ordained by the priestesses in the goddess' name. Those who find themselves dreaming about something different may find themselves driven out of their homes and cast out of society, or worse. Apparently those who particularly upset the priestesses are first cursed with lycanthropy, as a mark of how they have rejected civilised society, before being forced across the border so they can sow terror among the exile communities of the badlands.

RELIGION AND MAGIC

The Jekkarenes are close to being monotheistic in nature – they worship a very small pantheon of gods and daemons, presided over by the night-goddess Jekkara herself. Jekkara is identified with the moon and the other planets are said to be subject to her because they are only visible at night. The men can only participate in her cult as common members, while women may become initiates, acolytes and priestesses. The cult is organised into age-classes. For girls not yet of age, the highest honour is to be selected as a temple dancer; as they reach the age of 17, the highest honour is to become a temple guardian; for those who reach their 32nd birthday, the highest honour is to be admitted as a priestess. Common Magic is widely known, even if the temples are keen to monitor which spells are in the public domain and regard it as their right to proscribe any they feel are injurious to the public good.

Since the Jekkarid became a protectorate of the Taskans, a cult of Zygas Taga has been established that is distinct from the cult of Emperor-worship practised within the Empire itself and exists as a path through which Jekkarene men of high status can pursue and demonstrate their prowess as warriors and leaders. This cult has to acknowledge that Zygas Taga is a junior partner in marriage to Jekkara but can nevertheless emphasise and celebrate the fact that the immortal Emperor of the world's most powerful Empire is a Jekkarene by birth – albeit illegitimate and an outcast. This cult yields the aristocratic warrior caste of the Jekkarenes, many of them trained up by the Taskan army while on secondment to it. Its highest ranking members are appointed as Barons, a class of nobility for those who are given significant positions of responsibility as a provincial or city governor or a military leader.

MILITARY

The Jekkarenes maintain limited military forces, however their soldiery is very professional and they do not relish calling up civilian populations as this might prove dangerously empowering. The Barons represent both an officer class and a cadre of high status mounted warriors who are each supported by a following of men at arms, some mounted, some on foot.

The state maintains a small number of professional soldiers camped near Parlasos, consisting of no more than 10,000 men even as its paper strength. Their main role is to keep the road between Parlasos and Ramassa safe, to patrol the Eastern borderlands and occasionally harass the exile settlements beyond and to act as a police force to keep the ordinary people of the Jekkarid under tight control. Most famously the goddess' cult maintains a regiment of 700 amazons called the Guardians. These female warriors are selected from the best of the temple dancers as they come of age, well schooled in fighting techniques and wonderfully equipped – but the unit is dispersed around the temples, has never fought a proper battle and is completely untested militarily. Their main purpose is as a sort of Praetorian Guard and they provide security for the temples and priestesses so that no man needs to be admitted to sacred areas; they also serve as a secret police.

The Jekkarenes offer no military contribution to the Taskan army and the main purpose of their military strength is to ensure the exile communities created by the state, just beyond its borders, do not become a threat. Having said that the northern border with Brotomagia is a scene of minor conflict with the Thennalt lords of that region and there is the ever present threat – perhaps entirely in the Jekkarene imagination – that the Emperor of Korantis will one day seek to take back his ancient lands.

TRADE AND CURRENCY

Jekkarenes are formally limited to a currency of iron bars, deliberately designed to be hard to use. Large transactions have to be conducted as a paper exercise through the medium of temple scribes and clerks, with external trade being conducted through approved agents dealing either in bullion or in Taskan currency. All foreign traders arriving in the two points of entry through which foreign goods are permitted need to be approved and authorised by the noblemen appointed to be gatekeepers to the Jekkarid's internal markets.

SORANDIB

Sooner or later every wandering Adventurer finds his way to Sorandib, whether the aim is to hide out from authority, find work as a sell-sword or simply to loot its treasures.

Sorandib is an ancient city of West Tarsenia in catastrophic decline. The surrounding country has been laid waste by years of banditry and civil strife; the city itself is rife with faction, lawlessness and social unrest. Large areas are effectively abandoned or under the control of the local gangs. There are city districts where civilisation and law and order hold sway and these are the places where most people live and do their business. However no single force exercises control over the whole city and outside its walls there is near anarchy to the West, while Taskan soldiers maintain some order in the East to keep the road to the imperial heartlands open. Since its foundation Sorandib has thrived or at least been kept alive by two things: its control over a key river trade route along which passes a drug harvested from the weeds that choke lake Barur to the North; and the creations of the Guild of Artificers, a centuries-old association of sorcerer-scientists who are famous for



their inventions, feats of engineering and practical devices – many of which are built into the very fabric of the city.

GETTING THERE

You only need to head west from Felsang and cross the Shol to find yourself in Sorantia, the territory of the city of Sorandib. Aside from the main road the countryside here is in a state of ruin, with a few villages and estates near the road still occupied but everything beyond is in the hands of brigands or left uncultivated. To the East of Sorandib and the Briga River things are even worse as not even the road is kept safe. So anyone crossing the Shol has one purpose; to make their way to Sorandib itself. The Taskan Empire takes an interest in anyone who is doing so and since Taskan soldiers maintain the only road through regular patrols, they will waylay travellers and ask lots of questions about their business. You can of course approach the city through open country but there is a very high chance that you will encounter bandits and robbers on the way or stray into the territory of some dangerous wizard.

RELATIONS

The Muttine dynasty enjoys a guarantee of independence from the Emperor himself. The current king Shadrian Muttine remains under the Empire's protection and only when the Muttine line fails – as now seems imminent – will the Taskans walk in and take over. When they do there will be opposition but this will probably be rather futile as the Taskans cannot afford to allow Sorandib to fall into the hands of anyone else. Sorandib provides firearms to the Taskan army as well as a host of other devices and specialist arcane skills and knowledge that find use in imperial service. The Emperor himself achieved immortality with the help of local sorcery and the Artificers created his latest familiar who now acts as imperial Regent, the Iron Simulacrum. All of these things suggest secrets of Taskan power, hidden in the city, that the Emperor has no desire to see revealed to anyone else.

THE ARTIFICERS

Everything that happens in Sorandib is in some way connected with the presence of the Artificers. In short, they are a college of sorcerers whose forbears took over the control of many key guilds or professional associations and caused new specialist crafts to flourish in the city under their guidance. The Artificers can call upon, or have direct control over, all the key artisans of Sorandib. They are always on the lookout for talented and intelligent individuals from the artisanal class who can be inducted into the

guild proper, given an education and trained in both magical arts and specialist arts and science – such as architecture, engineering, alchemy, technical drawing, harmonics, astronomy, daemonology – anything that might be a useful in the pursuit of making useful things that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. To this end there is an academy in Old City run by Arkas Arkin, a senior member of the order. The order itself is based in and beneath the palace and that is where the most secret workshops, laboratories and libraries can be found.

Head of the order is the Lord Artifex, Felster Halkin. The Halkin family has been a part of the order since the beginning and Felster claims an ancestor among its original founders. In total there are some 150 fully fledged members of the order, with about 1,000 artisans in the city whom they either regularly employ or can call on at short notice, many of whom bring apprentices and additional labour with them. They have considerable access to skilled craftsmen and a huge proportion of the city's populace looks to them for their livelihood. Even those that do not may be aware that with the large-scale failure of the agricultural economy in the kingdom the proceeds of trade between Sorandib and the Taskan Empire founded on the products of the Artificers is what keeps the city alive and holds back the threat of starvation.

SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT

Shadrian Muttine is of advanced years, poor health and is mostly confined to bed. The King's courtiers, led by Vizier Astermain, have a lot to lose when the king finally dies. If they can only locate some long lost royal with a viable claim to the throne and to the Emperor's protection under the ancient pact they might just manage to hang on to all their perks and privileges. With the authority of the ailing king's word, control of the Palace Guard, free run of the great echoing halls of the palace itself and above all, protection over and direct access to the Artificers' Guild, the Royals (as they are known) are still a force to be reckoned with. Despite having such resources and control of the most important parts of the city, the Royals suffer from a lack of direction and spend more time worrying about how to maintain the status quo than planning any positive moves. Around them is a shifting puzzle of faction and intrigue as local magnates such as the Taskan-friendly Quag Caleb, or popular movements such as Sosbander's Free Society, seek to grab whatever advantage they can out of the city's parlous state.

RELIGION AND MAGIC

Being culturally Tarsenian, the residents of Sorandib worship many of the same gods as Taskans do, with some interesting additions. The city is under the protection not only of the Taskan Empire but of its own resident fire demon, Sorantar, whom the cult of Thesh at Taskay hopes to one day subordinate to their god. A number of southern (Assabian) gods are popular here too, whose worship has travelled up the Briga River from Morkesh. Cults outlawed in the Empire often flee to Sorandib and set up shop here, sometimes openly, sometimes (as in the case of the vampire cult of Vyako) in secret. However most important is the highly specialised sorcery practised under the auspices of the Artificers, who have devised many new magics unknown elsewhere but,

equally as important, have devised clever ways of harnessing spells to new and interesting purposes.

MILITARY

Sorandib can only muster some 200 royal troops. All the other armed men of the city are in the service of one or another faction, or perhaps volunteers acting as nightwatchmen out of civic duty. It is unknown how many of these people would answer the king's summons to fight for him and their city if it came. The palace has a magnificent armoury, capable of furnishing arms and equipment to up to 5,000 men. How serviceable any of this war-gear may be is unknown.

TRADE AND CURRENCY

Sorandibians use the Taskeen as a handy source of currency, although the local mint continues to issue new coinage from time-to-time. Most trade of any great value is moving up and down the Briga River and the kingdom's key remaining natural resource is a weed known as Fengo, harvested from the edges of Lake Barur and transported first to Sorandib for processing then down to Morkar for distribution. An effective painkiller, Fengo also has a range of psychological effects that depend on how it has been processed and packaged and is in fact outlawed in the Empire in most forms.

ADVENTURER GENERATION

Sorandib is a place where many of the secrets of the campaign setting are waiting to be uncovered and where some events of enormous impact for all Taskans are likely to unfold. Hence it is not an appropriate place for players to choose for a background unless the GM specifically allows it. Adventurer Generation can use the same tables and professions as for Tarsenian-born Adventurers.

THE KORAZOON

This broad desert is certainly not a featureless waste but sports a variety of environments from oasis towns to shifting dunes to immense dried out river valleys and shimmering sun-blasted hills. Temperatures can reach over 40° Celsius in the height of summer and at night can plummet to near freezing. In very ancient times more of the Korazoon was cultivable and there are ruined towns in the middle of the desert to prove it. The region is dominated by the Soribisi, a nomadic tribe that moves their goats, camels and horses from place-to-place in pursuit of fodder and water. Soribisi chieftains fight over control of the few oasis towns and the trade routes that connect them. These towns and trade routes are generally populated by people of Assabian descent – from Djesmirket, Morkesh or Sharranket. Another people, the Khazeri, can be found dispersed across the region in small family groups, mostly clinging to the hill country, particularly the areas near the Tarsenian border.

GETTING THERE

The Taskan city of Pryjana is not far from the Korazoon and the troops who patrol the desert border are headquartered there. A Taskan traveller would be very unlikely to be heading into the

Korazoon for any other reason than to cross it and make use of the old trade routes to reach the lands of Assabia. This is an increasingly dangerous thing to do and the Taskan army has had to push its garrisons further and further down those trade routes to keep them functioning. Besides the potential to encounter hostile natives, the environment is extremely harsh and there are other horrors one might encounter like the Dust Devils, wraiths that haunt the desert and will attack anyone who looks remotely vulnerable.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The settled inhabitants of the region are a mix of Soribisi and Assabian stock, plus a few tribal groups who inhabit the fringes of the desert. The oasis towns play host to no more than a few hundred residents each and are usually subject to one or another Soribisi chieftain who takes payment from any goods produced in, or moving through, his domain in return for his protection.

The Soribisi themselves are a deeply divided people and this is one of the issues behind the instability of the region and the constant threat from bandits and raiders. The Soribisi maintain that they are a 'lost tribe' who came South from Kitan many generations ago on the warpath but never made it home. Whether this is true or not, they are now fully integrated into the cultural milieu of the Korazoon and the lands that border it. On one hand many Soribisi now live a settled life in one of the oasis towns. On the other there are an appreciable number of nomadic Soribisi, who have little fellow feeling with those who like to hide behind mud brick walls with a roof over their head. The other division is a religious one.

RELIGION AND MAGIC

The Korazoon's ancient religious traditions disappeared beneath the sands along with its ancient civilisations. Native peoples such as the Khazeris and Soribisi appear to have little tradition of their own to draw on and are regarded as magically weak. However in recent years a shaman who claims ancestry in Yegusai (and professes a burning hatred for everything Taskan), has offered those Soribisi who join his cause a revival of their 'lost' ancestral traditions rooted in Spirit Magic. This has struck a chord with many and the shaman, known as Haljaf the Inconsolable, now has quite a following through his chief adherent, a Sorib known as Nergesh of Ankwar.

It is nevertheless possible to find any sort of magic in the oasis towns of the Korazoon – sorcerers rub up against shamans and priests in the rather choice mix of cultural influences that you might expect on ancient trade routes. However out in the desert proper there is only the Soribisi way, and among them the teachings of Haljaf the Inconsolable are taking a firmer hold, to the extent that there is often bloody conflict between the 'new' creed and those who have no intention of abandoning the many gods worshipped in and around the desert region. These deities include Basat, whose holy city is at Pryjarna, the ubiquitous Assabian water god Haliset (in the Korazoon often represented in toad form), the earth goddess Tolat, Temnesh god of wealth and trade and many small local Gods who bless a specific place.

MILITARY

The only military forces in the region are the Taskan garrisons that are to be found in the northern parts of the desert and the warbands raised by individual chieftains. These warbands tend to number a couple of dozen warriors at most and it is rare that a leader emerges who can bring several such groups together under one banner. However Nergesh of Ankwar is proving to be just such a man and that is a dangerous situation for all those who are happy to make friends with the Taskans or simply benefit from a stable peace along the caravan routes.

TRADE AND CURRENCY

No-one in the Korazoon issues currency. Trade takes place through barter or makes use of the currency of neighbouring lands. Trade through the Korazoon is already under threat, since so much Taskan traffic is now diverted to the river route via Morkar and Largil to avoid the hardships and perils of the desert. Those who cling on to what little is left are deeply concerned that the current situation will worsen even further. However the desert passage remains the best way to move contraband. Many of the borders that follow the desert edge are not well patrolled or guarded so if one wants to move either prohibited goods or avoid paying duties, the Korazoon is an option – so long as the cost of protection money and hired swords is not prohibitive.

ASSABIA

To the south of the Taskan Empire is a distinct cultural zone known as Assabia that is, in the main, comprised of the lands of Djesmirket, Sharranket and Morkesh. This is a region sandwiched between desert and ocean and both are significant influences on the highly developed cultures to which it is home. Rich and varied magical traditions, access to the wider world across the Inner Ocean and a constantly shifting political landscape make Assabia a place where there are many adventures to be found.

GETTING THERE

Most Taskans reach Assabia through Morkesh, travelling down the Briga valley to Morkar and beyond. Alternative routes are via the ancient trade routes across the Korazoon and a further route runs South from Yegusan to Djesmir on a road cut through the Hills of Qom.

RELATIONS

A Taskan visitor is likely to get a mixed reception depending on who and where he visits. Mostly Taskans are treated with the indifference afforded to most foreigners, although the official reception in Morkesh is somewhat warmer as their ruler has a treaty with the Taskan Empire that includes 'favoured nations' terms for Taskan merchants. However there are places where people who bear a grudge against the Taskan Empire, and ill will towards its people, are very influential or even in control and it is best to make proper enquiries when planning an itinerary.

DJESMIRKET

Djesmir is a huge city that is regarded with a reverence in the region as home to the most ancient and important temples and of the most skilled and powerful sorcerers. In reality it is in a state of decadence and decline – Sharranketan merchants no longer consider the place to be the most prized market for their goods and the Taskan Empire has always been cool towards the Djesmiris since they participated in a war against the Taskans 80 years ago. Djesmirket was once synonymous with the whole region of Assabia but is now simply the territory directly to the South of the Korazoon including the cities of Djesmir, Ankwar, Perlak and Khorala. These cities are Sultanates, independent monarchies that share the same cultural traditions as one another and both recognise and uphold each others' rights of sovereignty. Sometimes Jelhai to the East is considered among their number, but the religious and magical ways of that place are regarded as particularly dangerous and unsavoury and its ruler is snubbed by his peers.



SHARRANKET

Sharranket is a small but very wealthy nation famous for its position as the hub of many of the world's most important trade routes and for being the only nation to have an economy almost exclusively based on trade. The territory consists of two off-shore islands and a small stretch of mainland bordered to the North by Djesmirket. Each of the islands has a city, one the capital of Homora, the other a smaller city named Ronispur, the third and smallest city Shimir being on the mainland. Formerly a sultanate, Sharranket is now ruled by a council drawn from five families of merchant princes who plant trading enclaves along the major trade routes they operate, which stretch right across the Ocean to distant Jandekot and are serviced by the most advanced fleet of ships in the world.

MORKESH

Sitting astride the Briga River, Morkesh is a powerful kingdom currently ruled by a feisty Queen, Tursiba the Lioness. Its inhabitants speak a dialect sufficiently different to the Djesmiri of their neighbours to be classed as a language in its own right. The royal dynasty that rules Morkesh was founded by a pirate from across the ocean called Tark the Reaver, and as usurpers they are rather indifferent to their neighbours' notions of sovereignty – for which reason Morkesh is usually referred to as a kingdom rather than a sultanate. The city of Largil in Morkesh is the biggest

and most important port for Oceanic trade and travel outside of Sharranket (whose ports are more or less closed to foreign shipping).

SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT

The teeming cities of this land are not for the faint hearted. Humanity in its all its glory and monstrosity is to be found on open display and nowhere else in the civilised world are such extremes of wealth and poverty to be experienced in such close proximity. This is a land where children are sold into slavery by their own parents; where slave owners enjoy complete discretion in how they treat their chattel and brutality is routine. Where the pampered wives of rich merchants, hidden from the eyes of men beneath swathes of cloth, are carried to the shops on litters past near naked prostitutes who ply their trade on the open street. Everything has a price and everyone dreams of one day making their fortune; if anyone should be lucky enough to rise from rags to riches they are sure to be celebrated in story and song no matter how it was done.

Traditionally most positions of power, below the rulers themselves, are in the hands of a senior rank of nobility termed Beys. These control the countryside and smaller towns through feudal relationships with a number of low ranking nobles, chieftains and appointees called Uprama. In Sharranket this system was overturned 80 years ago when the Sultan of Sharranket was ousted by his people and the feudal system was completely restructured around the small number of families who still rule the place today as an oligarchic council. Despite that it remains the case across the region that the poor have few opportunities in life unless they enter the patronage and protection of someone who can provide them with land, a job, a business or a handout. It is highly unusual to switch employers and allegiances once any such favours have been granted. The larger towns and the cities have a substantial artisanal class, however even they depend on the favour of their social superiors for their business to thrive and their interests to be protected – on the plus side they may have more mobility between patrons, or enjoy the favour of more than one.

MAGIC AND RELIGION

Many Assabians are atheists at heart and ironically the Holy City of Djesmir (as it is often called) is the spiritual home of the movement. Perhaps the reason for this is that the religious practices of the region are grossly venal, conducted in whatever way an individual feels will benefit them most. Many visitors would be shocked at the extent to which, in Djesmirket in particular, relations with the gods and Divine Magic Pacts are looked on as business transactions in which both parties negotiate a mutually beneficial deal. Djesmiris would say they simply call it as they see it while other people dress up their religion in unnecessary piety and ritualistic mummery. A thousand and more entities whose names and powers can be found in voluminous works of daemonology provide a long list of potential providers of spiritual support and magical services, from the loftiest divinity to the most grasping demon. Above all this is a land of sorcery and the home



of an approach to sorcery that steals whatever arcane knowledge from wherever it may be found. Magical theory and practice is a common topic of discussion even on the street, something in which ordinary folk seem to have endless fascination and about which they can endlessly express their opinions. Magical familiars, demonic companions, enchantments and above all spell-slaves do not raise many eyebrows in this part of the world. Alchemy is a pass-time enjoyed by wealthy dilettantes as well as professionals and the well-off members of society are wrapped in all manner of magical protections and enhancements provided by paid spell-casters or from artefacts they have collected.

Temples to well-known eastern gods such as Haliset, Tolat, Shomat, Basat and Thesh may also be found in all the major urban centres but only Haliset and Tolat are routinely worshipped in the countryside. In Sharranket most people are initiates of Shara Peshwan's Cult, an entirely local goddess whose priests are called Voices as they speak the will of the common people. In Morkesh a lively collection of foreign gods, including many from the Tarsenian pantheon, joins the traditional line-up.

MILITARY

The sultanates of Djemirket, the merchant princes of Sharranket and the Queen of Morkesh all maintain a small standing army reporting to the ruler but none of these muster more than a couple of thousand warriors, to be supplemented by mercenaries if need be. Otherwise the feudal system applies, under which each Bey should be able to summon 10–20 Uprama, each of whom should typically bring 3D6 armed footmen from their village or town with them. Cavalry is supplied by the Beys and their private retinues plus Soribisi mercenaries who will notoriously fight for whichever side is more quickly forthcoming with payment. Sharranket is famous for its navy, which although small is made up of huge merchant galleys assumed to be the largest seaworthy vessels in the world. These vessels, all privately owned, are designed for the safe transportation of bulk commodities across long distances. They are astonishingly expensive for the materials, expertise and magic that go into their construction and operation, and each vessel takes, on average, a generation to repay the capital outlay. However it is a rare and catastrophic event if one is ever lost at

sea. Each carries a contingent of well armed professional soldiers in addition to its sailors and rowers. It is generally agreed that a Sharranketan merchantman would present more than a match for even the biggest warships fielded by other nations.

TRADE AND CURRENCY

Across the region merchants are regarded as a high status profession; craftsmen and even farmers are brought up to value their business skills as highly as the skills of their trade. The merchants par excellence are the Sharranketans, who specialise in the bulk acquisition, transportation and sale of any resource or product for which there is broad and persistent demand and for which they can secure a reliable supply. Compared to the leading Sharranketan houses, other merchants are small-scale peddlers.

As usual the Silver Piece provides the standard currency. The common term for a silver piece is a Dinar, which has similar purchasing power to a Taskeen. In Djemirket the Sultans of each city mint their own coinage and the lack of trust between cities in financial matters is such that it is usually necessary to change your money whenever you reach a new city, or to simply deal in bullion. Sharranketan Dinars are in fact old fashioned pure silver bullion coins and traded as such rather than used as regular currency. Morkesh has its own currency, with guaranteed fees for conversion between Morkesian Dinars and Taskeens.

THE KINGDOM OF YEGUSAI

A client state of the Taskan Empire for nearly 100 years, the Kingdom of Yegusai is still regarded by most Taskans as a land full of mystery and ancient secrets. Its religion is regarded as exotic and Yegusan spirit-magicians are very much sought after by fashionable and wealthy patrons in the cities of the heartland. The Kingdom of Yegusai once had two great cities, Haran and Yegusan, however the people of Haran were foolhardy enough to raise a revolt against the Taskans during the interregnum between the Marble and Iron Simulacra, the result of which was the destruction of the city and its resettlement by Taskan colonists.

Haran is therefore no longer a part of the Kingdom of Yegusai and these days the indigenous population is subject to the settlers and are bonded peasants, explicitly excluded from membership of the Emperor-cult. Those who abscond may attempt to conceal themselves among the free population of Yegusai, or escape across the river into the Kingdom of Zagre. The pursuit and return of these fugitives is a constant source of friction.

Yegusai is a riverine culture, with the great majority of its population inhabiting a narrow cultivated zone on the banks of the Beshor River. A highly developed system of irrigation has stretched the available land to its limits. On the East bank of the river, Yegusai competes with the Kingdom of Zagre for control of land and farming population, a contest played out through small scale warfare between ruling elites and their henchmen, or through intrigue and skulduggery, that hardly impacts the ordinary people. Yegusai and Zagre are culturally identical; only a river, separate royal establishment and their relationship with the Taskans divides them. All the inhabitants of the region, from either kingdom, can be referred to as Beshor Valley People.

GETTING THERE

The route from Tarsenia is well beaten by traders and tourists alike. Most people take a ship to Haran and there transfer to a craft that will provide transport up the river, or more rarely, to an overland road along the Beshor river valley. There is a route into the country from the South via Djesmirket but the whole Western flank of the country gives onto the harshest parts of the Korazoon desert and only the Soribisi desert people have any prospect of entering the Kingdom from that direction.

RELATIONS

Taskans are welcome throughout Yegusai, as whether they are tourists, traders or diplomats they bring money into the local economy. Some visitors do antagonise and baffle the natives with their failure to understand or show proper sensitivity to centuries-old traditions but this rarely results in anything more serious than an embarrassing public altercation or a heavy fine for an attempt to smuggle a sacred artefact home as a souvenir.

SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT

The Kingdom of Yegusai is effectively defined by the territory under the control of the Royal House of Yegush, and as a result its actual borders are liable to change over time as the power of the Royal Ancestor Spirits 'breathe in and out'. The current king is the 54 year old Sishenk, who has been on the throne for nearly 20 years and has six grown sons as well as four daughters. Perhaps a half dozen families claim some kinship to the throne and the Royal House of Yegush has now been in the possession of one or another of these families for 300 years. These elite families also provide many of the local rulers whose allegiances determine the extent of the kingdom. Across the

entire region of Yegusai and Zagre there are 87 separate domains – wards, towns or territories each ruled by a noble, plus a further eight, which are currently vacant because the territory concerned is not currently habitable thanks to encroachment of the desert or failure of its wells. 58 of these domains are on the West bank and more or less fixed as Yegusan territory, the remainder are on the East bank and of these 17 are unfailingly loyal to the Royal House Of Zagrush while some 12 have a long history of changing loyalties between the two kingdoms in accordance with the whims of their rulers.

Below this ruling class is everyone else – of whom the vast majority are cultivators of one sort or another. Highest status among the common people are the priestly class, shamans whose main job is to ensure the Ancestors are properly taken care of and that society's relationship with the supernatural world is properly managed and any threats are kept in check. A large scribal class who are masters of the complex language and script used in the kingdom and occupy administrative and legal functions comes next, followed by other skilled craftsmen, free farmers and then general peasants and labourers. The institution of slavery is technically still legal in both the Kingdom of Yegusai and of Zagre, however in Yegusai where a slave can more readily put himself at the Taskan Emperor's mercy and take a grant of citizenship, slavery is very much on the decline. The only way that slaves can be retained is if they are



well enough looked after to prefer the certainties of life offered by their owners over a free but potentially destitute alternative. Women from the elite classes tend to observe fairly strict rules that demand they go veiled in public, or at least cover their heads and refrain from exposing legs above the ankle or arms above the wrist. However most ordinary Yegusan women not only have less pressure on them to conform to tradition in this way but are also living tough lives of agricultural labour alongside their husbands that make such delicacy a luxury.

People of Yegusai are welcome to present themselves to the Zygas Taga priests in the capital but not so many do so. The Empire more or less leaves the kingdom alone and makes few demands on this client state. By contrast, people of Yegusai know the Empire guarantees the security of their country and while they suffer the occasional Soribisi raid or perhaps a reverse in their struggles with the Kingdom of Zagre, the long term integrity of the kingdom is not in doubt.

MAGIC AND RELIGION

The people of Yegusai and their Zagreiot cousins devote almost all of their religious energies to ancestor worship and both the practice and the extent of shared ancestors draws them together as a single culture. The dead are very much still with them – in a physical sense too, as relatives are typically buried under the floor of the house and their skulls proudly displayed to callers. However in Yegusai anyone remotely connected to the royal dynasties is buried in one of the extensive crypts holding thousands of individuals to be found in, under and around the royal palace in Yegusan. Prior to burial, the deceased's body is exposed for exarnation and only when the bones are clean and bleached are they gathered up and stored away.

The shaman-priests are experts in all matters relating to the souls of the deceased and for this reason are also world leaders in performing exorcisms. Attempts to tinker with the proper passage of a soul to the afterlife are regarded with extreme horror, which can also extend to attempts to cheat death through life-prolonging magic. This last point has caused some concern given the Taskan Emperor's immortality, however it seems most people are content to accept that his current state of deification is a step on the way to an eventual ascension, which is enough to prevent any major embarrassment over the issue. Even so the revival of an ancient sect known as the Hradori, who take a very extreme position on matters of undeath and necromancy and have been known to murder anyone they suspect of indulging in it, could be a source of fiction in the future.

Alongside their traditional ancestor worship and the Taskan Emperor-cult, are a number of small cults worshipping local spirits and gods, or local versions of some of the deities worshipped in Djesmirket to the south such as Haliset and Tolat. In the capital of Yegusan one might find a few imported gods being worshipped, mostly from the Tarsenian pantheon.

MILITARY

The Kingdom of Yegusai is notoriously weak as a military power. The elite make a point of training in the art of war and using those arts on one another but they are small in number and other than a permanent royal guard numbering a few hundred men, and an

armed nobility, the only forces Yegusai can raise are lightly armed and poorly trained peasant levies. Locally the threats come from occasional raids into the Kingdom by Soribisi nomads appearing out of the desert. Conflict with the neighbouring Kingdom of Zagre is almost constant but fighting is traditionally confined to the ruling classes and their retainers, and more or less ritual in nature. Yegusai has little to offer the Taskan army in military contributions but it does provide some corvee labour, a small cadre of upper class cavalymen if asked for and the services of their shaman-priests who are excellent at dealing with some of the threats posed to an army by malevolent spirits sent by the enemy.

Noble warriors are likely to be equipped with scale armour, perhaps with plate greaves and vambraces and equipped with mace, sword and bow. Ordinary soldiers tend to have little armour, mostly of linen, and carry spear and mace or axe and a shield of hide stretched on a wooden frame with the poorest levies having nothing but linen leg wrappings, a leather cap and a shield made of reeds – perhaps a stiffened leather cloak for additional protection. The bow is a nobleman's weapon; foot soldiers may have javelins and slings for ranged combat.

TRADE AND CURRENCY

The Kingdom uses large rectangular silver coins internally, however all foreign transactions are conducted in Taskeens. The usual exchange rate between the two is five Taskeens to the Yegusan silver. Yegusai is a land where some basic commodities are processed to luxury goods – fine linens, perfumed oils, richly decorated pottery, coloured glass and decorated metalwork. A Sharranketan caravan route passes through the kingdom from the South en route to Zagre, where it transfers to the sea lane to Abdera. A whole variety of trade goods passes to the North on this track and horses and slaves travel back down it to the South.

THENNALTS

Widely considered as barbarians, the Thennalts in reality encompass a diverse set of cultures at various stages of development and with differing ideas about whether, and how, to embrace the opportunities presented by the civilised lands around them. Some of them are now dutiful citizens of the Empire, others implacable enemies, while an isolated tribe inhabiting the land of Brotomagia to the West are allies and loyal followers of the Korantine Emperor.

CAMTRI AND BROTMAGIA

The Southern Thennalts are relatively settled and civilised, having long lived in the orbit of either Korantine or Taskan Empires. Camtri is now embedded within the Taskan Empire, administered from Torestal and a key strategic territory for the Taskan army. Step-by-step Taskan culture and customs are taking over and those who do not embrace the process generally up sticks and look for hospitality in Korantia or go North to Marangia. Brotomagia remains independent. Famed for its beauty, the wooded hills and green valleys of Brotomagia are home to many a local chieftain who can sport a Korantine education, fluency in several languages and sophisticated tastes. However as Brotomagia is a buffer zone between the Jekkarenes, Taskans and Korantines, there is always a feeling that the good life may one day come to a disastrous end.

MARANGIA

The Marangians are famously warlike and considered even by other Thennalts to be venal and untrustworthy. Their seagoing cousins on the isle of Valos have recently been put down by the Korantine League and the surviving corsairs fled to the mainland where they have made their feelings about Korantine oppressors felt. The Marangians have a traditional king, based in Timolay, but this is now under Taskan control and the king made their puppet. So the Marangians generally feel rather put upon of late and harbour significant resentment of both the civilisations on their borders. With Timolay under foreign control an ancient cultic centre at Oster is now regarded as their capital.

ZATHRUM

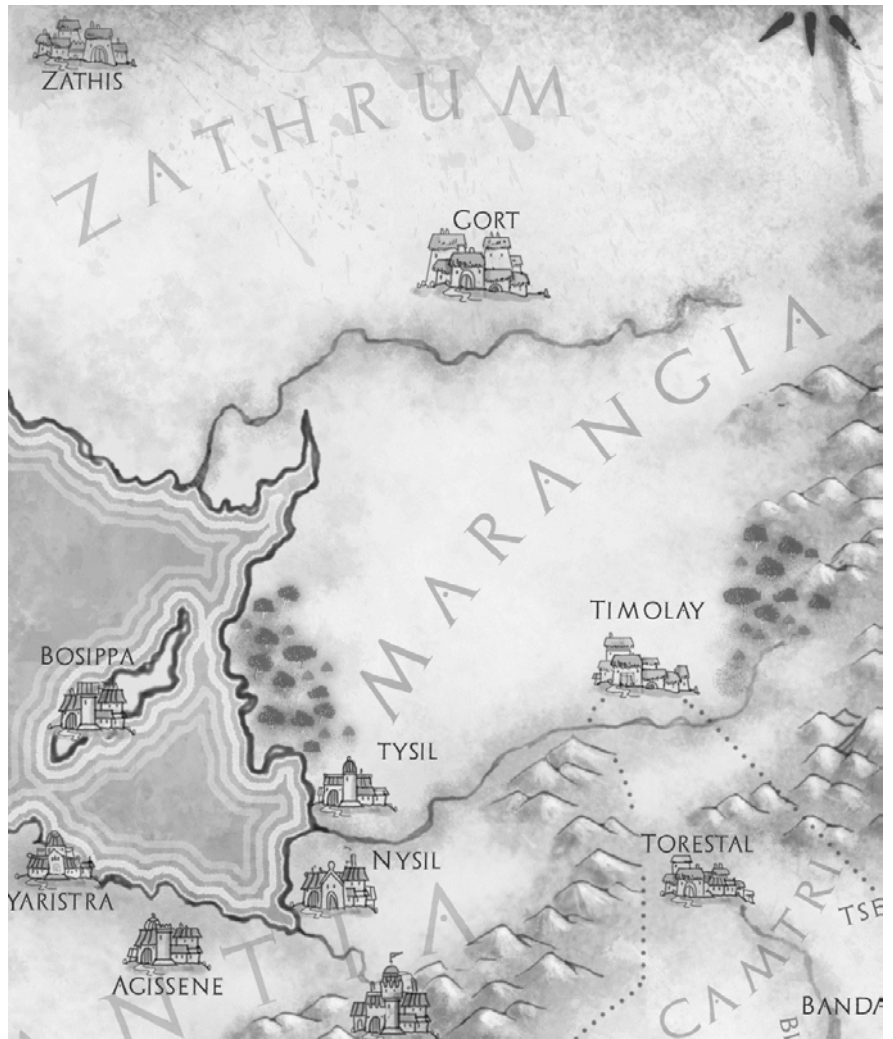
Beyond Marangia to the North is Zathrum, a land inhabited by folk regarded as either very old fashioned or in touch with their traditions, depending on your point of view. The most powerful ruler is the King of Zathis, as a result of inheriting a Korantine colony on his doorstep at Mersin – sited on lands granted by an ancestor in return for trade monopolies and a regular tribute. The King of Gort has control of much of the rest of the territory but has no such easy access to the outside world and prides himself as the great and manly upholder of ancient traditions, a posture appreciated by the wild mountain men of Gumathena to the East (considered barbaric even by Marangian standards) whom he can call on for support when he needs to.

GETTING THERE

Brotomagia is, for most Taskans, out of reach – no road goes there and very few people have got any business in that part of the world anyway. On the other hand Camtri is a land well within the orbit of the Empire, to get to its chief city of Torestal you need only follow the military road North from Ashkor via Bandaknar. If you are feeling brave you may progress onto Timolay, the chief city of the Marangians, which is under Taskan military occupation but surrounded by country that is still in the hands of hostile natives. Zathrum and Gort are beyond Marangia, so all but inaccessible to any but the most intrepid Taskan traders and Adventurers.

RELATIONS

Camtri is a territory that has now embraced Taskan rule and is beginning to embrace Taskan customs. There are a few people around who dream of independence or who resent that they are now drawn into the orbit of the Taskan Empire and have lost old ties with the Korantines as a result but such people increasingly find it convenient to keep their ideas to themselves. A visitor from the heartland will generally find nothing other than a friendly reception.



Any foreigner who finds themselves in Brotomagia will quickly realise they are something of a curiosity. So long as they are not suspected of being spies for the Jekkarenes, some sort of hospitality is likely to be on offer.

A visit to Timolay in Marangia is a very different experience. With a native king who has only recently been forced to submit to the emperor failing dismally to retain the loyalty of his people, who mostly live outside the area occupied by the Taskan army, this is a place where a Taskan traveller will be keenly aware that they are on a dangerous frontier. If caught outside the military zone without a substantial escort, one may have to hope that the natives are interested in ransom money rather than just cutting Taskan throats. The presence in the area of opportunistic Taskan grave robbers, drawn by rumours of fabulously wealthy tombs and cemeteries, increases tensions and makes life more dangerous for everyone. One consolation is that the hostiles tend to reserve their most intense animosity for those of their countrymen who willingly serve the Taskans.

SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT

The key cities of the Thennalts are to be found at Zathis, Oster, Gort, Timolay and Torestal. Nysil in Korantia is a Thennalt city

but its inhabitants have completely adopted Korantine customs to the point that most of them do not even speak the language of their ancestors. Torestal is now the seat of a college of Emperor-cult priests, all drawn from the noblest families of Camtri. Each of the other cities is the seat of a great chieftain or hereditary king and has a population numbered in the thousands and can boast at least some measure of cosmopolitanism. Here you will find fine and sometimes massively oversized stone walls and some monumental architecture but the buildings and houses within and around are mostly single story and rather basic.

There are no cities and no kings in Brotomagia. A scattering of chieftains lord it over no more than five or six villages each and, in the main, look to Hilanistra as their capital and the Korantine Emperor as their liege-lord. They are also, sometimes literally, wedded to powerful nature spirits that infest their country. The young Emperor Koibos is a keen sportsman and is very fond of his Brotomagian friends who inhabit some of the best hunting lands to be found anywhere.

Thennalts are mostly illiterate and the only writings in their language have been made using Korantine script, by those who have had the benefit of a Korantine education. It has been the case for generations that well-to-do Thennalts are sent off to Korantia to be educated – unless they are extremely well-to-do in which case a Korantine tutor may be summoned out to them. In recent times of course the Thennalts of Camtri have begun to swap a Korantine education for a Taskan one and despatch their youth to schools in Felsang.

Amongst Thennalts almost all dealings are face-to-face and individual relationships are extremely important, so on the whole a leader can only expect to gather as many followers as he knows by name. Of course those followers may bring their own retainers with them too. Thennalts can also be quite mobile and a bored young man stuck in an agricultural backwater in Zathrum may well go in search of fortune elsewhere and, for example, offer his services to a Marangian warlord if he thinks that will get him what he wants from life. Home is where you are born and where you hope to bring up your children and see your bones laid to rest, however at any other time going off to see the world is considered a manly virtue.

Gender roles among Thennalts are clearly defined and traditional but there is no particular dignity attached to one gender or the other. Slavery is common but slave trading is not; once a slave is acquired, usually as young as possible, the slave remains with his or her owner as a low-ranking member of the family and is inalienable. You can seize your neighbours' slaves but you cannot buy them.

MAGIC AND RELIGION

Thennalts worship all manner of gods and spirits but at the heart of their worship is a chthonic pantheon – a collection of gods and goddesses who live in or beneath the earth. Chief among them is Mother Earth, whom they call Theyna. Some of the impersonal forces that interact with the earth – Fire, Water, Wind for example – are the object of devotional cults, clubs and warrior societies

that young men attach themselves to in the years before they take up a settled existence. Temples are usually architectural extensions of natural features – such as a fissure in a rock, a spring or a cave.

Thennalts typically have access to Divine Magic and can sometimes get their hands on a little Common Magic too. In some parts, witches can be found who practice Spirit Magic.

MILITARY

Although low level conflicts are commonplace, in most cases they are fought between neighbouring communities and all over before the harvest. It is rare that one of the kings attempts to summon a large army into the field for some major purpose – perhaps once in a generation. A number of warrior societies exist in which young men from different parts band together for raiding, adventure or war, each dedicated to some aggressive aspect of nature and the elements. These cults are supposed to be a release and safety valve for the more restless elements in society, but can become a serious liability since they can all too easily get out of control, stir up trouble with the wrong people, or threaten the very communities they are supposed to champion.

Thennalts normally fight on foot. High status warriors of course bring their mounts or even a chariot with them to the battlefield but, with the exception of the Earls of Brotomagia who fight as armoured cavalry, will usually dismount for combat. A whole array of weapons can be found in use by Thennalt warriors, who take pride in working out their individual preferences and there is little or nothing by way of trained regular forces. Most warriors carry a sturdy metal rimmed and spike-bossed shield and a spear as basic armament. Swords are common but highly decorated and embellished swords with a story behind them are particularly prized. Great axes, war mauls and the like are carried by those who like to express their individualism through their weaponry. Missile weapons include weighted armour-piercing javelins, darts, slings and simple bows. Thennalt warriors are, on the whole, ignorant of large scale battlefield formations and tactics; such things have to be drummed into them by their leaders at the start of a campaign. They usually fight in loose order with the best equipped and armoured men holding the front line and providing cover to the rest while the lighter armed dash out and take shots at the enemy when the opportunity arises.

TRADE AND CURRENCY

Those kings or chieftains in control of one of the cities will generally issue coins with their name and device on. This is, by and large, a propaganda exercise and Thennalt money is generally traded at its bullion value, even broken up into smaller unofficial 'bits'. Otherwise foreign coinage is in widespread use and depending where you are either Korantine or Taskan currency is the preferred medium of exchange. Thennalt merchants are quite at home in Korantine trading networks into which they contribute many useful raw materials such as timber, wool, iron and hides, plus access to some of the rarer or more exotic resources of their lands. There is little trade between the Thennalt world (outside of Camtri) and Taskan Empire, as the routes have not yet been pioneered and the conflict in southern Marangia represents a block on safe passage between the two cultures.

ADVENTURES

This is a mini-campaign for beginner-level Adventurers, who start out as ordinary Taskan citizens from diverse backgrounds but all born and bred in Zarina, the Empire's biggest city. They are thrown together when called upon to do their militia service, which will take them to unfamiliar lands on the Empire's southern border. What should be a pretty uneventful tour of garrison duty turns into a desperate fight for survival – and the chance to be heroes – when relations with fierce border tribes erupt into violence.

BACK STORY

For some years a new religious cult has been on the rise on the Empire's southern frontier. Founded by a holy man from Haran, the New Korazoon Movement offers a new confidence to the people of the region through renegotiating their relationship with the land, constructing a new afterlife and asserting their independence in the face of the powerful civilised nations who surround the desert wastes. The Soribisi warlord, Nergesh of Ankwar, has used the cult to unite people behind his banner and to secure for himself, and his sons, a place of honour in the Many Hells as ancestors to a new nation. Those of the Soribisi who are still wanderers, excluded from settled life in one of the oasis towns, and in particular young men looking to carve out a new future, have answered his call with enthusiasm. The city of Ankwar in Djesmirket has fallen into his power and been made his capital. Nergesh is now a force to be reckoned with, capable of exerting influence all along the Korazoon caravan routes, sending out his warriors to intimidate and pillage, and harnessing the desert demons to terrify and destroy. Cult founder Haljaf the Inconsolable is not himself a Sorib but was born in the city of Haran where his people are a servile class in thrall to Taskan masters; he bears an unremitting hatred for the Taskan Empire. With Haljaf's encouragement Nergesh is starting to directly target Taskan interests and Taskan citizens in the border region.

SYNOPSIS

In the Introduction the Adventurers are drafted into the Zarinian militia and inducted to military life as part of a company of spearmen under the command of captain Timor Tarasin. They march south with a thousand comrades to the city of Pryjarna where they are to be headquartered, and from there the Adventurers' company is sent off to the frontier – actually a buffer zone that lies beyond the border of Tarsenia but over which the Taskan army keeps a close watch. From their operational base at Fort Severity the Adventurers find themselves sent out on errands, missions and

patrols through which they are sucked in to the dangerous conflict that is sputtering into life around them.

There are five key Episodes that can be played in this mini-campaign that should be played through over a maximum of two years of game time; there is also plenty of opportunity to allow the players to take time in between each episode to generate their own activities or be taken on side quests by the GM.

The GM can present the Adventurers' selection for each new task differently according to whether they have performed well or badly in the preceding adventure; either they have shown that they are just the right men to be picked for a special mission, or that they have inadvertently lined themselves up for the dirty and dangerous tasks because they have displeased their superiors. Although they start off as young, ordinary and inexperienced characters, the Adventurers soon enough stand out as being special – whether because of the situations they have found themselves in and the dangers they have survived, or the clever and courageous way they have handled themselves.

In Episode 1 the Adventurers are sent out from Fort Severity to inspect a Taskan watchtower that overlooks the oasis town of Sarotin, and from there pursue a side quest to investigate intelligence about a ruined city in the desert. They find the watchtower has an unwelcome intruder as well as an unwilling prisoner within, and while the tales of desert ruins turn out to be true, on their return to Sarotin they have a dangerous run-in with tribesmen loyal to Nergesh of Ankwar.

In Episode 2 the Adventurers have returned to Fort Severity, where news arrives that the largest town in the region under Taskan control has been the scene of a dreadful uprising. Fort Severity is cut off by hostile tribesmen and its garrison is in peril. A Soribisi war leader arrives at the fort and makes an offer of safe passage out of the territory for Captain Tarasin and his men, but his promises of good will are almost certainly a cover for sinister intentions.

In Episode 3 the Adventurers are posted to a new scratch unit as part of reorganisations by the generals to combat the growing threat from hostile tribes and insurgents. Their first missions takes them beyond the frontier to the oasis town at Bosabra, where a Taskan trading station appears to be under immediate threat from a mob of angry locals. The Adventurers find themselves in the middle of a conspiracy to turn local people against the Taskans and push them into siding with Nergesh of Ankwar.

In Episode 4 the Adventurers go in search of a witch who haunts the salt pans of Lake Kushal, an ally of Haljaf the Inconsolable and source of some of the charms being used to inflict harm on the Taskans. If they succeed in hunting her down and defeating her the enemy will be denied a powerful ally. The Witch of Kushal is a magical entity (a lamia) and even if killed she will eventually rise again, perhaps even more ill-disposed to the Taskans than before.

In Episode 5 the Adventurers enter the otherworld realm of Arxoon, the minor goddess of whom the Witch of Kushal is merely an avatar. There they can negotiate to establish a propitiation cult in her honour that will permanently bring her into the Taskan camp, or at least put a stop to the activities of the Witch. This episode can be treated as optional – it is very dangerous and any attempt to resolve it through violence is likely to end in disaster. However if the Adventurers are successful they will have found a short cut to recognition as heroes.

TIMELINE

It really is up to the Game Master whether to hurry the action along to the next major event or encourage plenty of off-duty role playing allowing the Adventurers to become familiar with local culture, customs and characters. Short spells of leave are possible but are likely to be spent locally, probably in Pryjarna or on private business on the frontier; Adventurers who perform some special deed or service well may be given the privilege of a month home leave to their native city of Zarina.

It will be many months from the point at which hostilities start in earnest before an imperial field force from the military capital at Ashkor is fully mobilised and led into the region by one of the Iron Companions; no earlier than the third quarter of the second year (1217). This force will not be the full field army – that would be overkill – but it will consist of up to 5,000 professional soldiers who will be supported by the militia and additional levies raised along the frontier. When the field force arrives the Adventurers are likely to be sucked in, unless they really are determined to exit the military life and return to Zarina with their skins intact or look for new adventure elsewhere.

In truth, Nergesh can cause bloodshed and chaos but he has no chance of raising a force that can directly threaten the Empire. Unlike when the Taskans were roundly defeated in the region 82 years ago, there is no appetite among the Sultanates of Djesmirket to answer a call to arms from the likes of this Soribisi warlord, and without such support he will never muster an army capable of fighting a major engagement in the open field. He can make the Korazoon a no-go area where his lightly armed forces can ambush and harass almost at will – however it is likely that he will eventually be crushed and his attempt to roll back Taskan encroachment on the desert regions will have backfired. In the meantime many people will be killed or suffer some serious loss or misfortune, and some will prove their worth in a time of crisis.

ADVENTURER CREATION

Players can take control of one of the pre-generated Adventurers provided in the Appendix or create their own. Their unit will

be a 'half file' of six militiamen led by Arakis Marank, who has already done two years militia service and has volunteered to serve a further tour as a corporal. This group will form the Adventuring party for the campaign.

The pregenerated Adventurers are each provided with a brief character sketch and can be found in the appendix. If the players prefer to create new Adventurers from scratch the Adventurers are all young (16+D4 years old), with 150 Free Skill Points to add to the skill bonuses derived from cultural and professional backgrounds. In this case the pre-generated characters can be used as handy replacements for losses, and assumed to come from the half-file under Goya Vartigern with which the Adventurer's unit is paired.

PLAYERS' INTRODUCTION: JOINING UP

Eventually, unless you are too weak, too simple or too influential to be trapped by the recruiters, your turn will come. A call up to the militia means two years away from home serving the Emperor, doing your bit as a citizen. The last lot have now come home with their beards and suntans and were cheered through the city gates, which means the call is going out to those communities whose turn it now is to put forward their young men (and women who volunteer) for the recruiters to choose from. Those of you yet to serve are once more ragged about how you have not grown up yet, cannot hold your heads up. But you may also have seen, or heard about the others...brought home in the back of a cart with some stinking infection or a broken limb. Of course everything in life comes with some risk attached and truth be told the biggest risk in the militia is usually spending months of boredom in some out of the way place for some reason known only to the generals. But there are opportunities too – if only to see and experience things you cannot get, or cannot get away with, at home...

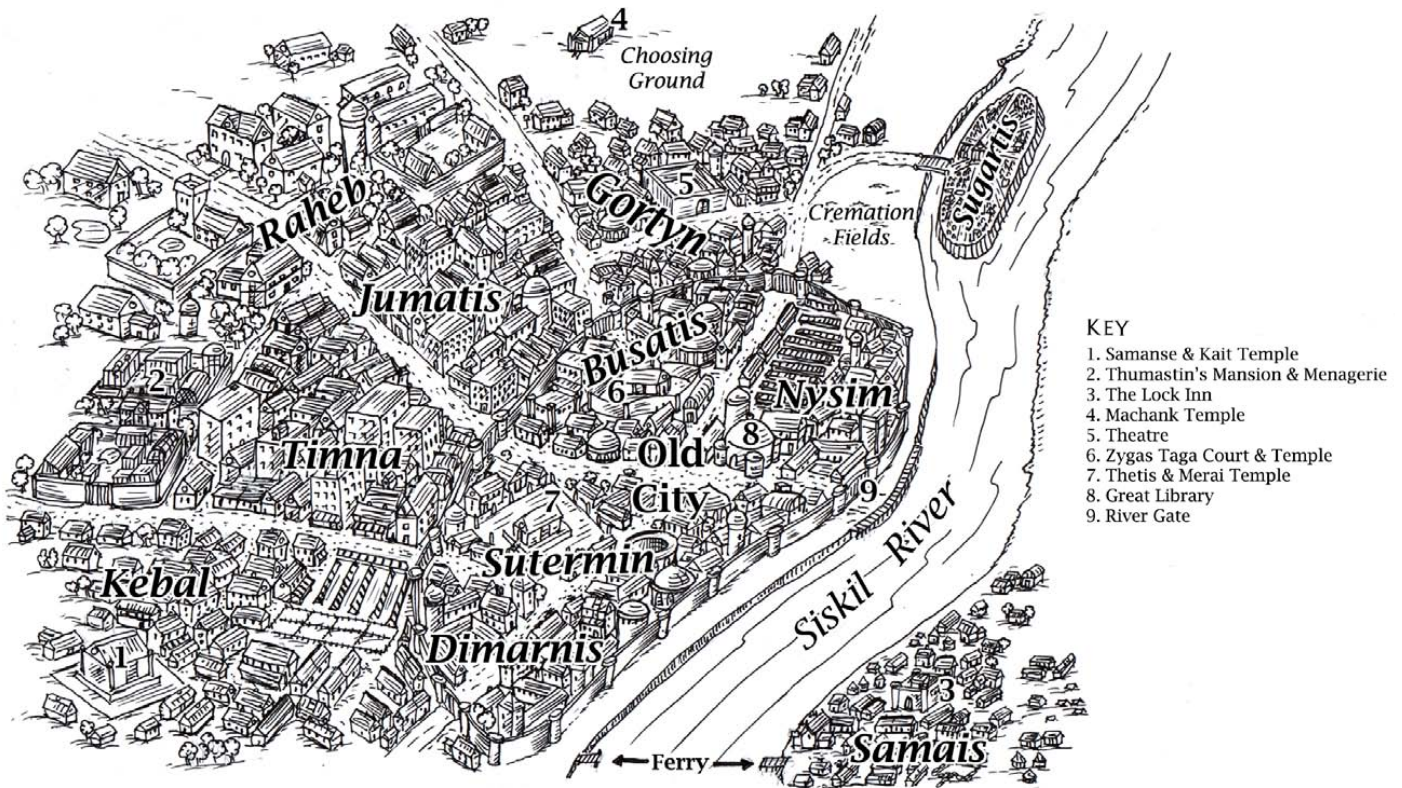
ARMY DAY

Two days after the veterans return from the Southern frontier they are paraded on the Choosing Ground, drawn up in their ranks for the last time. Alongside them in six ragged lines are the 1,866 youths who have received instructions to present themselves for enlistment, the Adventurers among them. Nine companies ('Hundreds') of foot and one of horse are to be raised to make up a 'Thousand', the standard tactical unit of the Taskan citizen militia. An additional double company will be raised and allocated to the city's nightwatch.

General Sharustang, commander-in-chief of Zarina's militia, presides over the assembly with his small staff of Emperor-cult Acolytes. A great crowd of spectators, peddlers and old soldiers surround the field to witness and participate in the day's events, as this is not only army enlistment day but also a public holiday and the day when reservists are supposed to report for a day's training.

Sharustang dismisses the veterans, who give a cheer and fall out to the quartermaster area where they scramble to return borrowed equipment and collect their chit for their final payout. As this goes

ZARINA



KEY

1. Samanse & Kait Temple
2. Thumastin's Mansion & Menagerie
3. The Lock Inn
4. Machank Temple
5. Theatre
6. Zygas Taga Court & Temple
7. Thetis & Merai Temple
8. Great Library
9. River Gate

on the captains pass among the prospective conscripts prodding flesh, inspecting teeth, asking a few questions and making their selections for their companies. The majority will pass muster, while some 600 or so are sent home as too weak in body or spirit to serve, probably to endure ridicule from their friends and neighbours.

The rest are gradually counted off the field by the company captains. Some of the rich boys are sent off to report for the cavalry. The others are all to be spearmen, who form the backbone of the militia force. Each Adventurer is hand picked by an upper class young officer by the name of Timor Tarasin, and told to report to his company clerk, sat a desk by a little post bearing the sign '3 Hundred (Timor Tarasin)'. The clerk then directs them in batches of five to a waiting corporal - and this is the first time the Adventurers meet each other.

ARAKIS MARANK

One of the pre-generated characters, Arakis Marank, has been given additional previous experience as a militia soldier and should be allocated to one of the players. As the corporal he is expected to lead by example and to familiarise his men with basics of military life. He has no right to coerce or punish his men as they are his fellow citizens, but he is expected to report any serious problems to those in authority who can.

Arakis is both the Adventurers' squad leader and the senior corporal of the 12-man file of militia spearmen. He is a man of stout rustic stock unfamiliar with big city ways, towards which he

affects an air of exasperated puzzlement. His counterpart in charge of the other half-file is Goya Vartigern, who is junior because he spent his previous two years service in Zarina as a city guardsman. For much of the next month these fellows will try and drill some basic grasp of military ways into their fledgling soldiers.

Arakis doesn't like Goya - thinks he's a bit sly and shifty (city watch is notoriously a duty for those on the take), but he wouldn't let his dislike show in front of the men. Goya is a bad character and someone who will find reasons to dislike, bully and take advantage of one or more of the Adventurers. In the story arc as presented in this book it is presumed at some point Goya Vartigern oversteps the mark and is sent off to punishment duties - where he is encountered again in Episode 3. The nature of his misdemeanour is up to the GM to determine but it should be just the kind of thing to create a grudge between him and the Adventurers.

EQUIPMENT

After selection, recruits are issued with their equipment. Arakis directs the recruits to where several wagons are standing piled high with big canvass and leather tents and instructs them to take one. He then takes them across the camp and shows how the tent is pitched, alongside Goya Vartigern and his five recruits.

Within a day or two the Adventurers will have their turn to collect their state-issued equipment. All the items of personal gear must be signed for, as any losses will be replaced out of the soldier's own pocket. Each Adventurer is issued the following items:

- A hard leather, or thin metal (bronze or iron), helmet. AP 3, ENC 2. Adventurers note it is common to customise the basic helmet by wrapping with a coloured turban.
- A thick coat of quilted and padded linen or wool, with sleeves and usually reaching below the knee. Dyed red, blue or yellow, covering all locations except head. AP 2 per location, ENC 5.
- A lozenge-shaped militia shield. Often not in best repair, it has 6AP and HP of 1D6+6 out of a maximum 12, ENC 3.
- A spear some 2 and a half metres long from bronze butt point to iron tip, ENC 2.
- One haversack containing a water flask, waterskin, handaxe or digging tool, cheap knife, tin cookware, a rough cloak/blanket, sleeping mat, hammer, smock, whetstone, total ENC 5.

The basic load amounts to ENC 17 and does not include carrying rations (ENC 1 for 10 days supply) or additional water, or any personal weapons. Once allowance is made for that, it is clear that a militiaman should have a minimum STR+SIZ of 20, just to be able to manage the load they carry on the march. Of course there is also communal equipment that has to be carried. A standard Taskan militia tent, big enough for six men, is a heavy piece of kit coming in at ENC 6. The unit cooking pot, normally a big kettle in iron or bronze, usually weighs in at ENC 4, and the half file's quern (grinding stone for grain) another 3 ENC. If no cart, mule or donkey is available decisions have to be made about how loads are distributed. It is the corporals' job to see to it that characters do not overload themselves with personal belongings to the detriment of the unit's efficiency.

PRIVATE PURCHASE

It is common practice to provide additional or better quality kit for yourself if you have the means, since anything issued by the

city authorities is in 'used' condition. Adventurers can use their starting money, however they might also be given useful items through their community connections (Contacts and Allies). This again is quite normal and there is an underlying assumption that the beneficiary will somehow reciprocate if they get the chance.

If an Adventurer has spare money he may think it is best used deposited with a Funeral Club. Death on service is common enough, not usually through combat since the militia spend most of their time on garrison duty, but often through disease and other natural causes. To die far from your native city is unfortunate, since despite military obligations to make proper arrangements it is highly possible the proper burial rites are not observed. In any event, many Funeral Clubs can keep deposits safe and can finance ransoms when necessary.

BASIC TRAINING

Before setting off on the March to Pryjarna, where they will be headquartered for the duration of their militia service, the recruits are given two weeks equivalent of basic training. While still in Zarina, specialist weapons teachers and old soldiers are available to lend a hand and take part in the instruction. Our Adventurers get the opportunity for a week's training in Spear and Shield and a second week in either Sidearm and Shield or Archery. In each case roll D6+2 to determine the critical range of their instructor's Teaching skill. If the Adventurers succeed in rolling over their current skill on D100+INT for their Improvement rolls this will be added to the increase of their INT/5.

After these preparations the Adventurers have 24 hours while the baggage train is assembled to bid farewell to their family and

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Each Adventurer should get a number of rolls on the table equal to their number of Contacts and Allies.

Dice Roll	Benefit
01-07	A fine patterned linen cloak made by the women of their village or district.
08-15	A hunting bow and 20 arrows, a gift from a friend or sibling.
16-23	A spare pair of military boots made by the men of their village or district.
24-30	A beast of burden – for an Adventurer with Soc of 13 or less, a donkey; 14 or more a pack horse or pony (if citizens provide their own beast the army provides fodder if and when available).
31-38	A helmet with cheek guards and neck flange worth 5 AP, handed down by an uncle or father.
39-48	A lamellar cuirass covering chest and abdomen, can be worn over padded coat (leather, hardened leather and horn, or metal – 1D3+1 AP) loaned by a relative or funeral club.
49-59	A fine sidearm – hatchet, shortsword, mace or battleaxe presented as a gift from an employer or business associate.
60-65	A fine Tarsenian dirk presented by an admirer or close friend
66-70	A bag of coins containing 1D10 x SOC Taskeens collected from the recruits community.
71-80	A letter of commendation from a cult or funeral club.
81-85	A letter of introduction to an influential person in Pryjarna from a patron or priest.
86-88	A letter of credit, which can be used for security of a loan of SOCx50 Taskeens from a local dignitary.
89-93	A pledge of ransom from a funeral club, community or cult for SOCx100 Taskeens.
94-96	A lucky charm bearing 1D3 Blessings from one Tarsenian deity, a gift from a friendly priest.
97-99	A Healing Salve, 1D3 applications, POT 30, good for 2 Seasons, a gift from a sister or mad aunt.
00	A Damage Resistance spell with 5 points of protection, duration 1 season, a gift from a local dignitary who keeps his own spell caster.

TALES FROM THE FRONTIER

Give each of the players one of these snippets of rumour or information:

A Warning From Your Father:

'I've heard that a lot of the natives from across the border are religious fanatics, out to kill everyone who doesn't follow their peculiar traditions. There are stories of merchant caravans being attacked and slaughtered and patrols being ambushed. I heard it all from a friend that knows a shipping agent who knows a caravan master running between Zarina and Perlak. Apparently these savages don't take prisoners, not even for ransom!'

Advice From Yanyul, An Older Brother:

'The frontier region is the most godforsaken place on the face of sweet mother Earth. Some of my friends were put on a charge for brawling and ended up posted to a tiny fort in the middle of nowhere. In six months they never even saw another human being. They were nearly killing each other for boredom. Luckily for me I was on duty the evening they were fitted up or I might have joined them!'

Jarin Tamur, a Well-Known Lowlife Tells You:

'The Kicking Horse Tavern – you want some action, you go tell the thug on the door that you're a friend of Jarin's and he'll show you to a back room where you can join the high rollers. Mind you, seeing as how they're all serious minded players at the 'Horse, don't bother if you can't put up at least 100 'keen. They don't give too good a welcome to amateurs.'

Mago the Baker Recalls:

'I found myself taking part in the Great Festival of Basat when I was there with the militia. Pryjarna is the seat of the Patriarch of the cult, so it is a splendid affair. The following year – it was just before I was demobilised – I ran the foot race and afterwards was initiated with about 30 others. Ever since then the Lord of Light has been my guide and protector. That is why when I die I will not be burned, but my body will be buried whole so that one day I may be raised back to life.'

An Old Soldier's Yarn:

'The Soribisi are the noblest race on earth – not the tame ones you see around camp mind you but the wild ones with their great desert horses. In my time there we spent many seasons chasing raiders into the wastes – we never caught up with any of them. One time I lost my way in a sandstorm, and would have died were it not for a friendly Sorib who found me, took me to his camp, fed me, gave me to drink and sent me on my way with a fresh horse. I later heard that same fellow was responsible for the destruction of a caravan out of Ankwar – 120 people killed or sold off as slaves. I believe the Sultan of Ankwar spent five years running the old boy to ground for that.'

friends before the whole column sets out for Pryjarna. Before they leave the camp they can visit the paymaster for their money to date, which after deductions for food comes to the princely sum of 14 Taskeens.

THE MARCH TO PRYJARNA

Pryjarna is a minimum of seven days marching away, going at an average pace of 40 kilometres per day on the Imperial Road. This march takes nine days, as there are two full rest days at waystations along the march – on day 4 and day 7. Most of the countryside along the way is cultivated and there is a fair amount of traffic sharing the road. The contingent's arrival at each waystation is well advertised, and a host of traders and tradesmen have shown up ahead of time ready to relieve the recruits of their pay. The second rest stop is at a place where the whole force refills its water supplies before heading into the more arid zone in which Pryjarna lies.

The Adventurers are in the middle of a long column of soldiers and baggage that stretches back for well over a kilometre. It is spring and the weather is pleasantly cool but still it is an arduous march for those not used to the rigours of military life and this is of course part of the training. After the first day there are blisters, chafing sores from armour and equipment and sheer exhaustion. They only seem to get worse over the next two days but after that the discomfort begins to feel normal.

Each player should make an Athletics test for his Adventurer(s). A critical or normal success indicates varying degrees of coping comfortably with the work. If the roll is failed the Adventurer develops a bad sore or blister (one point of damage) after 1D3 days on the march – roll location on arms chest or legs. The Adventurer or a colleague can try to treat it with magic or First Aid (allow one attempt per day). For every subsequent day of marching with an untreated sore another point of damage is taken if the Adventurer fails a Resilience test. Successful First Aid or a day at rest negates a failure and turns success into a recovery.

By the end of the march, many are suffering from worn and broken shoes and a soldier in the cavalry called Dramais who knows Form/Set Leather is doing a roaring trade.

One Improvement Roll is given to each Adventurer; those who made light of the march can use this roll to improve their Athletics and/or Resilience, while those who failed can use it to improve their Persistence as they fall back on mental reserves to keep going through the pain and fatigue.

ARRIVING AT PRYJARNA

Pryjarna is visible from far away, as its walls rise up from a flat plain surrounded by maize fields and orchards. The walls are irregular in height, here and there crowned with square towers

and some seemingly precariously balanced little guard-huts. As the Adventurers get nearer they can make out the ramparts of the army camp close by the walls and the clusters of small farm buildings dotted about the surrounding landscape. Finally a collection of tents are visible scattered around the outside of the camp and then a great throng of townspeople gathered at the roadside to welcome the newcomers to Pryjarna.

A party of officers shoulders its way through the crowd and advances up the road to meet the column. There is a brief discussion with Karistan, Sharustang's lieutenant, and the men are then instructed to smarten themselves up as best they can. The column is marched close by the city walls and into the palisaded camp where the men are drawn up before the generals' tents to receive a brief speech of welcome from Toramsor Tethais, Iron Companion and commander-in-chief of Taskan forces in the region. At his side is Samisdan Jamardin, commander of Pryjarna's own contingent, who says a few words about how the soldiers should conduct themselves in the host city, of which the key parts are as follows:

'The local Pryjarnan contingent is responsible for keeping the peace and seeing to it that local laws are observed. Soldiers caught causing damage to private or public property or being in some other way a public nuisance and so forth will be punished by fines, the sum set to be deducted from the perpetrator's wages...In the case of an assault, whether against a private citizen or another serving soldier, or some other circumstance which causes a law suit to be brought, the law of Pryjarna shall run its course as per usual, except that the soldier's commanding officer shall sit on the tribunal with the other jurors...In all other instances, and at any time when you are serving outside the borders of Pryjarnan Tarsenia, martial law will be the rule as laid down by the Iron Simulacrum in accordance with the will of our Divine Emperor.'

The column is now dismissed and the soldiers can let down their shields and packs and take some rest. There are a couple of hours of daylight left, but before darkness falls the Adventurers still have to find their plot, pitch tents and prepare some food. A number of men are already trading news from home with friends and acquaintances among the Senior Contingent – those on the second year of their service. Recruits from Tarsang and from Pryjarna itself wander the camp, curious to meet newcomers from other cities.

THE CITY

Pryjarna is at the southern limit of Tarsenia and for someone from Zarina has a distinctive and exotic feel to it. It is the second smallest (after Merat) of the city-states that constitute the heartlands of the Empire, having a population of 20,000 within an hour's walk of the centre. The city is built on a plain and surrounded by tall circuit walls. The surface water in the area is mostly seasonal and even the largest watercourses are reduced to a trickle in mid summer, but there is adequate water to be found beneath the ground for it to be used in irrigation and to supply the needs of the settled population.

Stationed at Pryjarna are 4,000 levies drawn from the cities of Pryjarna, Zarina and Tarsang, a mercenary detachment of 200 Eskars and some 30 Soribisi scouts, in addition to regular troops consisting of 100 cavalry and 50 Machank devouts, who are mostly here to act as a threat to any would-be troublemakers in

the region. While the regulars are kept concentrated at Pryjarna, most of the militia are rotated between the barracks here and a string of forts along the border.

The military forces of Pryjarna clearly have quite an effect on the town's economy. Leatherworkers, blacksmiths, armourers, victuallers, prostitutes, taverners and assorted other hangers-on make their living off the soldiery. Similarly the cult of Basat, which has its great temple here, gains many worshippers from among their ranks.

Pryjarna has a caravanserai outside the walls, embraced by a ditch and rampart. This has always been a key swap-over point where camel trains that ply the routes to Djesmirket, Sharranket and Morkesh in the south hand over to the wagon and mule trains that shuttle around Tarsenia, although in recent years there has been an overall decline in traffic. There is a small Sharranketan presence in the Caravanserai, agents for the merchant house of Mirdaza whose caravans sometimes pass through here en route to Tarsang.

There are five gates, of which two have not been opened in years. The largest gives on to the Caravanserai and is treated as the city's front door. Its gates are of wood studded with bronze and reinforced with bands of copper which are said to bear many enchantments of defensive magic, and are flanked by pilasters carved with immense images of Najoor and Bunais, the twin sons of Basat, representing truth and life.

The city has five suburbs within the walls. These are the Priests' Quarter, the Farmers' Quarter, the Artisans' Quarter, the Soldiers' Quarter and the Holy City of Basat.

A YEAR IN PRYJARNA

The major festivals celebrated in Pryjarna are those of Basat, Gomorg, Zygag Taga (the Emperor), Samanse and Hoonvel, Kait, Athronesh and Tarsen. In the Artisan's Quarter a festival of Thesh is celebrated, but this is more of a glorified market day and does not involve any kind of epiphany or visiting pilgrims.

The key festival dates are as follows:

On the 27th day of Sheroth is the Festival of Athronesh, when the farmers proceed through the city to make a dedication at the Fount.

On the 5th of the month of Damais is the Festival of Gomorg, when the bloody rites of execution are held in the Theatre. From the 15th to the 20th is the Festival of Basat, for which there are always many pilgrims in the city.

The Festival of Hoonvel and Samanse is held on the 2nd day of Brenai, when the crops are blessed and the farmers pray for the return of the rains. On the 28th day is held the festival of Kait, after the harvest has been done.

On the 15th of Jaroth the Festival of Tarsen is held, the people of Pryjarna assert their credentials as Tarsenians and the great annual market lasting four full days is convened. The city is awash with visitors from across Tarsenia as well as foreign lands.

On the 13th of Heroth is the Day of Ghosts, when offerings are made at the tombs and monuments of the dead.

SEROTH

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IROTH

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HEROTH

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VANAFER

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 **9** 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 **18** 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 **27 28**

TAGUTH

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 **9** 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 **18** 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 **27 28**

EMPEROR DAYS

1 2

The sample calendar provided is to help the GM keep track of the progress of time during the campaign shows market days and public holidays in bold.

The 18th day of Vanafer is No Gods Day, when the people of Pryjarna go on a great eating and drinking binge.

Following the end of Taguth there are two days set aside for observance of the state cult honouring the Emperor.

EXPLORING THE CITY

Here is what there is to do and what goes on when the Adventurers hit town in their off-duty hours.

THE ARTISANS' QUARTER

During the day most activity takes place in the Artisans' Quarter, which is the city's commercial centre. The available goods range from the mundane to the exotic. The standard *Legend* price list should be used although timber and wooden items are usually at a premium (x1.5 - x2 usual prices). There is a market place with its many stalls and streets of workshops leading away from it, narrow lanes full of potters, leatherworkers, metalworkers and the occasional small eatery or wine shop. Each of the workshops has finished goods piled up at the front of the shop, behind which you can see the craftsman at work and perhaps through to a living area or a storeroom out back. Often the owner's young son or daughter stands at the door inviting passers-by to come in and examine the quality of the workmanship, perhaps offering a cup of apple or lemon tea as an incentive. All the types of goods available here can be made to order, at a premium of about 20%.

At night-time the Artisans' Quarter is very quiet. The shops are all closed up at about eight o'clock. Some remain open as meeting places where the owner and his neighbours sit talking, drinking, eating and perhaps playing a game or two well into the night, usually under the gaze of some patron god of whom the shopkeeper has a statuette. The market-place is deserted and the only people in sight are rolling home from a tavern or thieves laying in wait for the drunks.

THE COPPER POT

A typical example of an Artisans' Quarter wine shop. A 10 foot shop space, rugs covering the walls and floor, copperware hung from the ceiling for sale. Standing room only. The owner, Arkat Niabis, keeps a selection of wine jars and a barrel of beer out back and serves customers from a narrow counter across the doorway. While you drink he tries to sell you some copper.

THE FARMERS' QUARTER

The Farmers' Quarter is the largest suburb, being a residential area many of whose inhabitants set out from the city each morning to tend to flocks and work the fields and orchards, so the quarter is quiet during the daytime. Most houses are above cool storerooms where the residents keep the produce with which they return from their fields and where they make their beer, wine and cheese. Many of the residents keep a roof garden or have a yard with a small vegetable patch or nut tree. The mistress of the house is responsible for looking after the storeroom when her husband is at work in the fields and she can often be seen on a stool just inside the cellar door, from which she conducts business with passers-by or businessman from the Artisans' quarter. There are several

bakeries and the quarter is fragrant with the aroma of fresh-baked bread day and night.

By night the Farmers' Quarter is very quiet. Those of the farmers who are not at home are probably drinking in the Artisans' or Soldiers' Quarter, or being hosted by a neighbour. The streets are almost deserted.

HOONVEL'S CELLAR

A typical example of a Farmers' Quarter establishment. In a converted storeroom under his house, Darjin Dorastin has put out crude stools and trestles so that his neighbours and passers-by can sample the produce of his wine vats at a nominal sum. The wine is made right there on the premises and Darjin will be sure to offer you a selection of fresh fruit and vegetables to accompany it. If you want hot food, ask his wife and she will rustle something up. Homely, basic and cheap. You want entertainment? *Get up and give us a song!*

THE SOLDIERS' QUARTER

The Soldiers' Quarter is so called because this is where soldiers pass their off-duty hours if they have any money to spend. It is a place of taverns, brothels and gambling dens. The most distinctive feature is the theatre, used for the competitions in athleticism, wrestling and marksmanship of which soldiers are very fond and also for entertainments by local or travelling players. On the high holy day of the death god Gomorg, the theatre is used for public executions of captured enemies and condemned criminals. Those of the condemned who are strong of limb may draw for the opportunity to take part in ritual combats. The priests of Basat have the right to intervene and reprieve those who put on a courageous display.

During the day there is a sleepy feel about this part of town. Apart from the regular patrols looking for drunken soldiers who have failed to report for duty after a night on the town, and street workers paid by the city administration to clean the place up, there are few people moving about. Prostitutes languish in open windows behind beaded curtains, taverners breakfast in the open air outside their wine-shops and delivery boys drearily make their rounds at first light with ox-carts laden with fresh food and drink. Small groups of men, and even a few women, sit about in the shade of the theatre comparing hangovers and discussing their night's adventures.

At night the quarter is a hive of activity. Gangs of men wander the streets looking for entertainment and a way of blowing their wages. The taverns are mostly full and noisy and entertainers set up at every street corner, in every tavern and compete for space with the prostitutes who by now have moved in to claim the sheltered alcoves around the theatre.

THE KICKING HORSE TAVERN

This is a large, rowdy tavern in Soldiers' Quarter. Prices are cheap, the ales and wine are of sound quality. The proprietor, Kishtal Marasin, runs a gambling den in a private room out back, by invitation only. Magluk, a boxer, keeps the peace in the tavern, which in recent times has been plagued by brawls.

PRYJARNA



KEY

1. Temple of Basat & Court of Lights
2. Basati Necropolis
3. Treasury of Basat
4. The Guest House
5. The Copper Pot
6. Hoonvel's Cellar
7. The Kicking Horse Tavern
8. The Marble Simulacrum
9. Goray Zareng's
10. The Topaz Palace
11. Market Plaza
12. Zygas Taga Temple
13. Theatre
14. Closed Gate
15. Basilica

GAMBLING (INT+POW)

An Adventurer who makes regular appearances at the Kicking Horse Tavern can learn Gambling as an Advanced Skill for the cost of two Improvement Rolls. A successful use of this skill is essential to spot a rigged game or just to come away from an evening at the tables without having lost any money. A failure means losing what cash you put up as a stake while a fumble results in leaving debts behind you as you resort to IOUs. Only a critical success results in coming away at the end of the night with some winnings. Multiply the amount staked on the evening by the actual dice roll.

Unless going head to head with another gambler using opposed Gambling Skill Tests, the outcomes of Gambling are usually determined for the whole evening rather than each bet on a game.

EVENTS

Adventurers need to get friendly with the landlord if they want to be invited to the gaming room. If one of the Adventurers takes the advice of Jarin Tamur (*Tales from the Frontier*, above) to go along to the Kicking Horse and give his name at the door in order to get into the game, they will find this is a trap. Tamur has in fact left Pryjarna with 150 Taskeens in gambling debts with the Kicking Horse crowd. This is his way of paying back in case someone's enforcer comes after him. Kishtal and the boys will attempt to get some Adventurers on their own and threaten them, rig the game or simply beat them up – whichever course of action is most appropriate. 'Well now Tamur's debt with us is clear, I guess he owes you money', says Magluk as he tosses the Adventurers out the door.

THE MARBLE SIMULACRUM

This small tavern in Soldiers' Quarter has recently become the hang-out for those soldiers who have devoted themselves to the

battle-god Machank. As a result most other people take their business elsewhere. These people have more pay to spend and less time to spend it (due to notoriously short life expectancy), so the owner, Nejar Sarenk, does brisk trade nonetheless. The Machankites keep themselves to themselves, have very fixed habits (a superstitious thing) and do not take kindly to strangers disrupting their routine.

EVENTS

The Adventurers enter while the tavern is still quite empty. They take the remaining table and sit. Nejar comes over to serve them and seems to be behaving curiously. The only other table is occupied by four haggard looking soldiers with a great collection of scars, missing fingers and ugly looks who are glaring menacingly at the Adventurers. 'That's Mojarin's table', says the barkeep, 'And if I were you I'd make sure it's vacant when he comes in to claim it'. About an hour later, another of the Machankites arrives, this one with a straggly beard and piercing blue eyes, his black hair tied behind him. Mojarin (for this is he) will ask very politely that the Adventurers vacate his table. He will be firm but insisting, even offering to buy them a drink for the inconvenience. But they must vacate his table. If the Adventurers comply he will thank them and subsequently ignore them. If not he will beg them not to rub him up the wrong way.

If the Adventurers fail to comply Mojarin becomes agitated, and has to face an opposed contest between the Warspite's Manifestation skill of 66% and his Persistence, else his inner demon takes control of him. However once he has given two further warnings (each inviting another attempt by the Warspite to take over if ignored) he will let himself go, allowing the spirit unopposed rolls (test once on each of its Combat Actions), and soon start breaking heads. His statistics are below, on the following page are his statistics when in a berserk rage.

Mojarin, Taskan Soldier and Machank Devotee

STR	12	CA	3	Taskan Rites 45%
CON	9	SR	13	
SIZ	12	DB	+0	Blessings
INT	14	Mv	8	Machank x1
POW	8	MP	5	

DEX	11	Devotions
CHA	12	Zygas Taga (1) Pact 25%
SOC	8	Machank (2) Pact 30%, Divine Magic: Fear, Truesword

Warspite: Covert Possession
INT 6, POW 19, CHA 3; Manifestation 66% Persistence 76%
Spectral Blade 95%; CA2, SR5 Spirit Damage 1D10

Weapon	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Knife	S	D3+1 Bleed, Impale, Slash	5/4
Chair leg	S	D3+1 Stun Location	3/4

Skills

Persistence 45% Resilience 60%

Combat Styles

Brawl 55%, Knife Fighting 45%

Location	AP/HP
01-03 R Leg	0/5
04-06 L Leg	0/5
07-09 Abdomen	1/6
10-12 Chest	1/7
13-15 R Arm	1/4
16-18 L Arm	1/4
19-20 Head	0/5

Armour

Leather jerkin and bracers

Items

Mojarin, Taskan Soldier and Machank Devotee, Berserk Rage

STR	12	CA	4	Taskan Rites 45%
CON	9	SR	13	
SIZ	12	DB	+1D2	Blessings
INT	14	Mv	8	Machank x1
POW	13	MP	10	
DEX	11			Devotions
CHA	12			Zygas Taga (1) Pact 25%
SOC	8			Machank (2) Pact 30%, Divine Magic: Fear, Truesword

Warspite: Covert Possession

INT 6, POW 19, CHA 3; Manifestation 66% Persistence 76%

Spectral Blade 95%; CA2, SR5 Spirit Damage 1D10

Location	AP/HP
01-03 R Leg	0/5
04-06 L Leg	0/5
07-09 Abdomen	1/6
10-12 Chest	1/7
13-15 R Arm	1/4
16-18 L Arm	1/4
19-20 Head	0/5

Armour

Leather jerkin and bracers

Weapon	Reach	Damage	AP/HP	Items
Knife	S	D3+D2+1 Bleed, Impale, Slash	5/4	
Chair leg	S	D3+D2+1 Stun Location	3/4	

Skills

Persistence 45% Resilience 60%

Combat Styles

Brawl 70%, Knife Fighting 60%

The other Machankites will not help, all knowing what Machank's 'gift' will make them do if they engage in combat. However if the Adventurers not only subdue Mojarin but also attempt to finish him off their self restraint may be put aside. Other patrons will make a run for the safety of the street, while the staff do what they can to prevent expensive damage.

If the Adventurers successfully subdue Mojarin without causing him gratuitous harm, the incident will be let lie. If they go out of their way or take risks to subdue him at minimal harm to himself or the establishment, they will earn some respect.

GORAY ZARENG'S

Goray's Place, as it is commonly known, is a Soldiers' Quarter tavern and brothel. The girls are cheap and so is the food and drink served downstairs, although the quality of both is often suspect. The atmosphere here is always lively and the place is played by a string of quite competent entertainers, so the tavern has a great reputation far in excess of the services it provides. There are famously never any fights in Goray's and the proprietor and his staff of three 'boys' and four 'wenches' are irritatingly chirpy, which helps to keep it that way. For the very reason that breaching the peace at Goray's is regarded as very poor form, it is a favourite neutral place to arrange meetings.

Goray's Happy Ghost (INT4, POW10, CHA8, CA2 SR10 HP 13, Spectral Damage 1D6 Manifest 36%, Persistence 40%, Spectral Hug 50%) haunts Goray's barroom. The Happy Ghost is a peculiar entity, in that he can only manifest to a drunk. If he manifests and defeats the victim in Spectral Combat, the Happy Ghost possesses the victim and drives its host to the heights of beer-sodden bonhomie while he continues to drink without, it seems, any adverse effects. Only when the victim goes home will the spirit leave him (as it is tied to this location), resulting in an instant downer and an excruciating hangover. Neither Goray himself, nor anyone else, has ever thought to have this spirit banished.

THE PRIESTS' QUARTER

The Priests' Quarter is the administrative centre of Pryjarna and its environs, where the Pryjarna College of the Emperor-cult is located. Its focus is the Zygas Taga temple and the open court attached to it where the priests sit in plenary session.

In the morning the streets of Priests' Quarter are busy with delivery boys, messengers, servants out shopping and citizens out making courtesy calls upon their patrons. There are a limited number of stall-keepers with licenses to sell their goods in this Quarter and a few shops, most of them specialists commanding high prices. At night the area is fairly quiet and there is a nightwatch based at the basilica (public building) which sends a couple of men to do a tour of the Quarter every half an hour or so. Every ninth day the Emperor-cult priests meet in the Court and sit in session from dawn very often until well into the night. The rest of the time the court is full of schoolchildren with their tutors, public speakers (who harangue passers by from the steps of the Temple) high-class entertainers doing impromptu recitals in the hope of attracting a wealthy patron, law court hearings and groups of citizens who use the place as a meeting spot. By the entrance to the court is the basilica where state officials conduct their business, and by that the Fount of Athronash, source of the city's water supply and also focus of a small cult honouring the (male) nymph of the spring. This is a meeting place too for those whose friends and relatives are in gaol awaiting trial, as prisoners are kept in the basement of the basilica and there are barred windows through which it is possible to communicate and pass letters and food.

THE GUEST HOUSE

This unimaginatively named establishment in the Priests' Quarter is a state-owned guest house where important visitors to the city are put up. Its food and drink, served in a small lounge-like area on the ground floor, are of passable quality and attract an additional clientele. The staff here are all public servants, the manager being a fellow by the name of Sareng Bunais, whose wife does the

cooking and whose son runs errands and serves the guests. Kamil Jarmostin, the Warden of Priests' Quarter, often uses this place as an office instead of the Basilica.

THE TOPAZ PALACE

Named after a legendary ruin in the Korazoon desert, the Topaz Palace is a Priests' Quarter establishment frequented by army officers. The food is good by Pryjarnan standards, the decoration is luxurious with an oriental feel, the better class working girls and catamites hang out here for business and prices are high. In order to keep out riff-raff a fat bald eunuch called Yezdigesh (a former slave from somewhere in the south) takes a gate fee of two Taskeens per head. Once paid he knocks three times on the door and a guard inside admits the guests. The Palace has two private meeting rooms, so this is an ideal venue for Adventurers to go to be briefed by their employers.

EVENTS

The proprietor of this establishment is Darmek Garmais, who claims to have travelled the caravan roads of the Korazoon in his younger days. He is always on the look-out for new 'delicacies' to offer his well paying guests and to this end would offer an Adventurer with the right looks and some relevant skills a good deal of money if he or she were to work in his establishment. He might even offer to put up the 500 Taskeens required to buy him out of the army.

THE HOLY CITY OF BASAT

The Holy City of Basat stands within its own walls. This area features the Temple of Basat and a network of plazas, as well as the city's famous necropolis and a small temple to the death god Gomorg, Basat's arch enemy. The great temple itself is the focus of rituals taking place every day at dawn, mid-day and dusk. The temple servants and priests are all dressed in bleached linen and some have shaven heads. Visitors can go to the Court of Lights, which surrounds the magnificent temple, and wonder at its dazzling red-veined marble facade. The court is awash with the smell of incense from a massive bronze incense burner suspended over the temple doors. The temple stands on a platform, around which is a portico plastered with dedications and votive inscriptions from grateful worshippers. On one side of the court is the Treasury of Basat, a building which houses the gifts and trophies dedicated to the God. Admission is by request with a caretaker, who will show tourists round for an entry fee of two Taskeens. It is full of helmets, weapons and shields left here by grateful soldiers – many with dedicatory inscriptions, war trophies, cult statuettes in wood, clay, bronze, silver, ivory and gold, household furniture and furnishings, along with all manner of ritual equipment.

A major part of the Holy City are the crypts and catacombs where Initiates of the cult are buried without cremation. People come from all across the Empire to die and be buried here. The Basat Necropolis is also open to visitors, who can marvel at the famous

folk interred there in crypts, in wall niches and in subterranean catacombs. A tour of the catacombs, available only by day, takes about half an hour, and costs one Taskeen. The guide does his level best to unnerve his charges in the torch-lit gloom of the passages as they go from ossuary to ossuary. The bones of thousands of people are stored there, all marked with the owner's name and occupation. The guide will tell how the cult could restore any one of the corpses to life but it is a pointless demonstration until the Lord of Light defeats Death once and for all so that the Tarsenian race once more becomes immortal.

At night the Holy City of Basat is quiet but there is always one group of temple servants keeping a vigil, on the temple steps in the glow of torches mounted by the doorway.

INTO THE KORAZOON

The Adventurers are to now get their taste of garrison duty on the frontier.

THE FRONTIER

The Taskans attempt to maintain control over a stretch of territory south of the actual border with Tarsenia that is some 40 miles wide and 500 miles long. The largest stretch of this is managed by the forces headquartered at Pryjarna and includes the traditional crossing points for caravans coming out of the south from the Sultanates of Khorala, Perlak and Ankwar, and takes in the salt pans of Lake Kushal and the White Hills which form a natural break between the semi-arid grasslands of Southern Tarsenia and the Korazoon desert. A number of small forts are positioned along the border, each the home base for some 100 men and the centre of a network of watch towers that define the area over which each fort is supposed to maintain patrols.

The Korazoon is thinly populated, with settlements concentrated along the trade routes and around the edges of the desert, including the frontier territory. The hill country is dotted with little villages set amongst the sheltered valleys or occupying hilltops that command the choicest pastures. A great proportion of its people are mobile, practising transhumance – moving herds and flocks around the country and in and out of the Taskan frontier, in pursuit of good water and grazing as the year turns. Many of the Soribisi are truly nomadic, shifting from place-to-place according to necessity or desire. Horses are highly prized in this part of the world and a sure sign of status, however there is a scarcity of good grazing and they can only be kept in small numbers. Those who have significant herds, such as the Taskan ally Rasheir the Jackal, usually have access to land beyond the desert region. The camel is the most ubiquitous form of transport among the Soribisi, while donkeys are common in the towns and among the Khazeri. Camels are not often used for meat until they are old and broken down as they are so much more useful alive – goats and sheep are the most frequently encountered source of animal protein.

THE DUTY ROSTER

While at Pryjarna the Adventurers have significant spare time – the army does not bother trying to keep its men usefully occupied. One day in every five they will be detailed to a duty, whether this is providing sentries, acting as a guard for the general, clearing the ditches round the camp of rubbish and undergrowth (often a grim task) or taking part in manoeuvres in which the company learns its place in the line and practices how it moves in relation to its fellows in a variety of situations.

Most settlements are extremely poor, consisting of one-room dwellings, of stone in the hills and of adobe or mud brick on a stone socle elsewhere. A common feature is a flat roof, and in some cases a second floor, accessed by a hatch and a ladder – that can be pulled up for security from robbers and bandits. Richer dwellings usually found in the oasis towns may have multiple rooms, verandas, balconies and walled gardens, built of dressed stone in the Assabian style – these stand out prominently among the hovels that most people are resigned to living in.

For more details on the inhabitants refer to the Korazoon section in the *Beyond the Frontiers* chapter in this book. Below is some additional information about key places, groups and important individuals that the Adventurers are likely to encounter in some way during their time in the region.

WHITE HILLS

These hills form the natural barrier between Tarsenia and the Korazoon. On the Tarsenian side the slopes are wooded with tall conifers that help bind together the sandy soil; on the Korazoon side desert winds have blasted away much of the soil exposing the rocky skeleton of the hills to the worst of the heat and sun. Nevertheless there are patches of upland pasture to be found and a scattering of springs support small pockets of greenery. Local people (Khazeri) have built villages here on defensible hill tops or even cut straight into the rock.

LAKE KUSHAL

Lake Kushal is in fact a series of salt pans that are rarely joined together into a single body of water. While this lake once spilled out into streams that stretched across the Korazoon and ran to the sea, those days are long gone and now they simply evaporate down over the summer months to a level of salinity that is impossible for all but the most hardy of grasses to survive. Of course it is a boon to salt traders and salt gathering activities take place at various points along its shores.

EASTERN DESERT

The Korazoon is broader and increasingly inhospitable the further east you travel. The greatest dunes are to be found here and the highest concentrations of evil spirits and demons. The Eastern desert is navigable for caravans by keeping to its northern reaches, picking up a trail that skirts Lake Kushal to the South. The hostile terrain makes it an ideal place to hide out for those who know how to survive there. For those who do not, and who lack sufficient water, the onset of chronic thirst is typically CONx2 hours, reduced to CONx1 in the height of summer and daytime.

WESTERN DESERT

Most of the best oases and the towns that grow up around them, and the caravan routes that linked these places together, are found in the Western desert, which is in places only 100 miles wide. This is the region where desert warlords compete for control over trade routes and settlements from which they can exact tribute and protection money. There are a few areas of scrub and pasture that can support domestic herds or even game such as antelope, especially in winter, but most surface water is seasonal. Settlements

cluster around a small number of oases, or wells that have been sunk where water is close enough to the surface to be accessed.

For those who lack adequate water supplies the onset of chronic thirst is typically CONx3 hours, reduced to CONx2 in the height of summer in daytime.

DEAD RIVER DRY

This broad valley is the ancient course of a now vanished river, stretching almost 250 miles from the shores of Lake Kushal to the plains of Khorala, that once carried Kushal's waters to the sea. Its course is dotted with the ruins of long-abandoned villages where there were once fertile fields to farm or waters to fish, and cut with little gulleys where tributary streams once ran. Dead River Dry now provides a route across the region used by the native peoples, but also marks an absolute limit between north and south. Even though the Taskans do not normally send patrols this far, it is the barrier between what may be considered within the Taskan sphere of influence and what is the wilderness where Soribisi warlords have the run of things with occasional interference from the Sultanates of Djesmirket.

ARAXA

Out in the Eastern desert and only a few days march from the Holy City of Djesmir lies Araxa, a small oasis where the surrounding country is still thickly strewn with the bones of a Taskan army that was annihilated there 80 years ago. Araxa is a cursed place where the greatest concentrations of unhappy and downright aggressive spirits are to be found. There has been more than one expedition there to gather up bones for repatriation but in truth only the very brave and those heavily protected against spirits venture there. The Qomite witches, on the other hand, find the place a great place to hunt for spirits they can capture to fuel their magic cauldrons.

The story of Araxa, and of the folly of the Marble Simulacrum who led his army across such inhospitable terrain to be ambushed and destroyed, is engraved in Taskan memory; no Taskan general of today would be easily led into danger in the same way. Prejudices rooted in those events still have force. The Taskans credit their greatest ever defeat to the cunning and warlike nature of the Soribisi even though they made up less than one third of the enemy army. The Soribisi's allies in that battle, from Djesmir and Haran, are regarded by Taskans unwarlike and treacherous by nature.

THE KHAZERI

These dirt-poor hill people are tough and resourceful as they are insular and ignorant. Their only fixed settlements tend to be little hilltop villages that are themselves rather off the beaten track and rarely see an outsider. Scattered across great tracts of land, and frequently on the move in small family groups heavily outnumbered by their goats, the Khazeri are actually quite numerous but to most people almost invisible as an ethnic group – they are frequently referred to by the Djesmiri term 'Gama', meaning peasant, or simpleton. Partly the Khazeri bring this on themselves; they rarely bother to learn anyone else's language (their own is unintelligible to pretty much everyone), and if they appear



KHORALA

PRYJARNA

EIVE STONES

FORT SEVERITY

FORT VIGILANCE

FORT INTOLERANCE

DJESMIK

KORAZOON

DESERT

WHITE HILLS

LAKE KUSHAL

THE FRONTIER

THE FRONTIER

DEAD RIVER

DRY RIVER

PERLAK

ANKWAR

JALORA

OLD PASHOOM

SAROTIN

DIWANA

FASHAD

ALANDRAS WATCH

AKRAGA

BOSABRA

JOLASIS ROCK

TWO TREES

IDAMBRA

SCALE 0 10 20 40



The Western Lands

The Eastern Frontier

in a town they often have no idea how to behave and usually come with no money of any kind. The Khazeri simply want nothing to do with anyone else and are deeply mistrustful of outsiders. They are not known for being hostile or aggressive, however if they find outsiders wandering uninvited in their hill-country they are quite likely to rob them if the opportunity arises.

The Khazeri also have no visible religion. They scrape by without getting involved in such things, which means that atheist philosophers in Assabia point to the Khazeri as symbols of mankind in its natural uncorrupted state, without ever having met one. In reality the Khazeri have a store of ancient knowledge that allows them to interact with some of the minor entities that can be found in their environment but this is part and parcel of their Culture, and uses their Culture (own) as the relevant skill. All else was lost many generations ago, when the desert swallowed up the fine civilisations of which their ancestors were a part.

The Taskans have managed to convert a few hundred families to citizenship and these people have settled in and around the border town of Akraga, where the men mostly get paid for serving as a garrison. These folks are deeply impressed by the local Taskan agent, Toruth Lorian, whom they regard as practically god-like; but they are more than matched for numbers by cousins who believe that the New Korazoon Movement has the potential to return their little corner of the world into a place that peculiar foreigners with their unnatural ways will cease to take an interest in.

CAMELS

Imported over two centuries ago from Rasputana, Camels have fitted in well to the Korazoon and now are an indispensable means of transport and burden. Camels significantly reduce penalties to movement due to inhospitable desert terrain. All the merchant caravans that cross the desert region rely on them completely and for some people they also provide a suitable mount for war. While horses remain an important status symbol there are few places in the Korazoon suitable for horse-raising. Camels are another matter and they get by very well even to the extent that there are perhaps 5,000 feral camels breeding in the wild.

So long as a camel has first had a chance to take in adequate supplies of water, it can survive for CONx5 hours even in the desert environment.

Camels can be single or double-saddled. The double saddle allows one Adventurer to drive the camel while the passenger can make use of weapons. This is a typical way to reduce penalties for mounted combat allowing the passenger to use both hands, for example to shoot a bow and not lose a Combat Action when doing so to controlling the mount (his Combat Style skill is still limited by the higher of his Drive or Ride skill).



It is also common for camels being used to carry loads to be fitted with panniers on either side and for people to ride in the panniers instead of goods on a long march.

An Adventurer who can ride a horse can learn to handle a camel at their normal Ride skill at the expense of a few days practice and one Improvement Roll.

Camel Statistics

Use the statistics for a horse (see the *Legend Core Rulebook*), add +3 to STR and +6 to SIZ, with a Movement of 12 metres and with the following skills:

Athletics 50%, Brawn 50%, Persistence 60%, Resilience 60%, Survival (Desert) 75%.

TRAVELLING ACROSS THE DESERT

The following table gives rough indications of daily travel distance in miles possible in the desert region. For all other areas use the guidelines in the Exploring the Empire chapter of this book. Generally a day's march starts well before dawn, perhaps just after midnight, and ends before the day is at its hottest; however in the interest of making it to the next source of drinkable water it is common to push on as long as is necessary.

	Hiking	Ox Cart	Camel	Other Mounted
Caravan Routes	20	10	30	25
Western Desert	10	5	20	15
Eastern Desert	5	N/A	15	10

HAZARDS

There are some hostile creatures in the desert and some nasty spirits and demons to be encountered on top of the frequent dust storms and occasional patches of quicksand. However the two most serious dangers are thirst and exposure. Getting caught without adequate water supplies is a death sentence, as is attempting to cross deserts carrying significant amounts of heavy equipment on your back.

Added to the hostile conditions are some very hostile natives. The Korazoon is mostly very poor and the opportunity to take advantage of inadequately protected travellers is rarely passed up. On the whole robbers will avoid prey who look able to put up a serious fight – so if a party of Adventurers is well armed and alert, they will likely be left alone unless they can be ambushed or the robbers outnumber them enough to expect a quick surrender.

When victim to a band of Soribisi or sometimes Khazeri raiders, a party of Adventurers may expect simply to be stripped of all valuables and left with just enough to make it to the next settlement, but they will usually be beaten in the process and sometimes they will be killed out of hand to prevent any pursuit or identification of their attackers. However if there is a ransom on offer the Soribisi at least will readily be deflected from murder. These parts are notorious for slave-raiding but that is usually

the fate of women and children whose menfolk have been killed by raiders in villages with no other portable wealth to offer. Adventurers rarely make good prospects for the slave market.

CARAVANSERAIS

The Korazoon is dotted with caravanserais set up at the key oasis towns and road junctions some of which date back to ancient times. They are typically the most impressive building in a settlement, usually square or rectangular with a single gate and consist of a large central courtyard surrounded by rooms and galleries used for stabling, accommodation or shops. A few are two stories high. When the Caravanserais were built they also operated as customs houses as well as inns and places a merchant caravan could rest and resupply with fodder and water. Now there is no centralised power in the region some are used as fortresses, others continue to be used for their original purpose but are in poor repair and suffer frequent change of control.

FORTIFICATIONS

The network of Taskan fortifications along the frontier was mostly put in place in a hurry 80 years ago during the dark days after the Marble Simulacrum and his army had been wiped out at Araxa and the Empire was in peril. As a result they are mostly of pretty simple form and construction, although well maintained and occasionally upgraded. The forts - with quaint names such as Revenge, Severity, Vigilance and Intolerance, born out of dark times - usually accommodate at most 100 soldiers plus staff, scouts, camp followers and livestock. The watch towers are usually manned by a half file (between six and eight men) but some of them are left ungarrisoned for long stretches and reliant on magical defences to keep out intruders.

CREATURE ENCOUNTERS

DUST DEVILS

These horrible creatures are a type of wraith that can be found in the desert, frequently hiding in the fury of a dust storm. They form their bodies from dust, sand and grit into a humanoid shape. Characteristics are as for Wraiths as described in the World chapter - Dust Devils frequently hunt in packs of up to four creatures. Their attacks affect DEX and DEX-based skills.

MIRAGE (CURSE SPIRIT)

A Mirage can only manifest and attack an Adventurer suffering from chronic thirst, exposure or starvation. Its purpose is to drive the victim to its death, at which point the Mirage feeds on its departing soul gaining 1 POW in the process. If it defeats its victim in Spectral Combat it then covertly possesses, and henceforth can, for the cost of 1 Magic Point and by succeeding in an opposed test between its Manifest skill and the host's Persistence, create hallucinatory illusions that mislead and misdirect its host for a duration of its POW in hours. Typically these illusions are used to ensure the host gets more deeply lost, wandering further from the track in search of an imaginary oasis or fleeing an imaginary enemy on the horizon. In combat or human interactions the Mirage can befuddle the host for POW minutes (as per the spell). It can also use the host to generate an illusion as per the Divine Spell with

a magnitude of 1 per 10% of its Manifestation skill - typically of a settlement, oasis or the dust cloud kicked up by people on the move - and visible to the whole party that lasts for a period of its POW in minutes; a successful Resistance roll (Persistence) made as a sorting test allows the viewers to disbelieve what they see.

SALT DEVILS

Similar in most ways to Dust Devils, these creatures haunt the salt pans of Lake Kushal - where they form their bodies from salt. Their attacks affect CON and CON-based skills.

OTHER CREATURES

The Korazoon is home to a range of natural but potentially dangerous animals. Members of the New Korazoon Movement are known for seeking nature spirits through which to control these creatures.

Lions

The lion of the Korazoon is a tawny-skinned solitary hunter akin to a Panther (see *Monsters of Legend* for statistics) that attacks prey weaker than itself from ambush and will only otherwise attack if it is somehow cornered. Anyone who finds themselves lost and alone in the wilderness is likely prey, especially if weakened by thirst and exposure. While actively hunted by the local human population both to protect flocks and to seek a trophy, the range of places to hide and the abundance of livestock around the settlements means these creatures still survive in some numbers.

Hawks

Among the Soribisi and others these are highly prized as status symbols and hunting birds. Most hawks are bred in captivity but there are still many to be found in the wild.

Manticore

These are the most exotic monster to be found in the region and are very few in number. The last one reported ended up being trapped and transported to Zarina where it now languishes in the menagerie of the great magus Thumastin Thumank.

Scorpions

Scorpions are common in the Korazoon and some very small ones can be quite dangerous. In the sandy areas, particularly in the Western Desert, lurks the occasional Giant Scorpion that spend much of their time buried under the sand waiting to ambush anything edible that happens by. Grampus can be found in the rocky hills, usually clinging to a shaded rock face.

Snakes

The region is home to several species of venomous snakes, in a variety of sizes and patterns. The only Constrictor Snake is the Necklace (sometimes known as the Assassin) Snake, a small thin creature that wraps itself around the neck of a sleeping or helpless victim and asphyxiates him (requires a Choose Location and possibly a Bypass Armour CM). No one knows why the necklace snake does this to larger creatures that it cannot subsequently eat.

Wolves

Wolves haunt the White Hills in some numbers and are a constant threat to the flocks tended by Khazeri shepherds and to unwary travellers. Professional hunters tend to go out in pursuit of wolf packs who wander into Tarsenia but those who stick to the hills are left to their own. Lone wolves may be encountered. A wolf pack typically contains 1D6+2 animals.

PERSONALITIES

RASHEIR THE JACKAL, AN ALLY AMONG THE SORIBISI

Rasheir is a friend of the Taskans and he and his men are paid by the Empire to act as scouts, guides and auxiliary cavalry. He is regarded as rich and famous by other Soribisi because he has many horses, mostly Taskan cavalry horses received in payment for his continued support and friendship, and these he keeps in pastures just inside the Tarsenian border. Rasheir's following is small – only 60 men, perhaps 200 souls in all – and he controls wells but no oasis towns. Rasheir's clan generally operates in an area between Akraga, Sarotin and Semlik Hill, which is all more or less Taskan-controlled.

Rasheir and most of his men have sacrificed to the Emperor and become citizens as a sign that there is no going back on their pledges of loyalty.

Notable Traits

Worldly – Rasheir thinks his comfortable, settled, life surrounded by the trappings of urban civilisation reward enough for his alliance with the Taskans. He has nothing but disdain for the harsh existence of his nomadic forbears, despite a feigned nostalgia for simpler times.

Loyal – (Toramsor Tethais) – Rasheir feels a debt of gratitude to the man who put an end to his former chieftain, Dashili the Horse, a bandit and murderer. The unwarlike Rasheir hated Dashili and was only too pleased to surrender himself to Toramsor when the opportunity arose. Toramsor made him chieftain of the survivors of Dashili's following when Dashili was finally captured, responsible for their future good behaviour.

YATHUT THE CROW, CARAVAN MASTER

Yathut is one of the few caravan masters still running a camel caravan east to west across the Korazoon between Yegusai and Morkar. This journey usually takes about two months each way, including a few extended stopovers, and Yathut makes the journey twice per year. His train usually consists of about 10 files of 15–20 camels each, one handler per file, plus cooks, a few extra hands who can double as guards – some 20 people and 180 beasts in all, plus fellow travellers who make a small contribution in cash or labour in order to travel with the caravan for safety. Yathut is a wealthy man and more than three quarters of the beasts in the caravan belong to him, with all their cargo. The remainder belong to his workers, who can engage in some private business in return for accepting laughably low fees for their gruelling work.

Every camel typically carries 1D6x100 SP in trade goods when fully laden.

Yathut cannot make his business work in times of conflict – if he had to hire a small army to guard his caravan it would be financially ruinous. So he must be accommodating to everyone he encounters or in seriously troubled times he must sit out the crisis in some place of safety. Nevertheless the caravan is no easy target. One or two of Yathut's men are experienced fighters and well equipped, and Yathut has a number of magics protecting his investment, including long-duration sorcery spells such as Sense Robber supplied in Morkesh, and spirit guardians supplied by a Qomite witch.

Yathut first arrives in the Western Korazoon late in the Taskan month of Iroth on his way West, then appears again during Kamay and Shamseroth on his way back again. Later in the year he makes his second trip and is likely to be seen during the month of Molkert and then again during Arkay and Heroth.

Notable Traits

Humane – While Yathut should not by any means be taken for a soft touch, he has seen enough sides to humanity to value it in his own right and does not like to see life taken cheaply.

Irreligious – Yathut sees religion for what it is, a business transaction between man and god in which each provides a service to the other. He sees no reason to treat the gods with reverential mummery, just the same respect due to a powerful mortal who has the capability to ruin your day.

Pragmatic – Yathut maintains friendships but few loyalties. Whatever it takes for him to survive and prosper is what is right in his eyes.

TORUTH LORIAN, OUR MAN ON THE FRONTIER

If an Adventurer calls upon the Emperor for Divine Intervention and is successful, or spends a couple of Hero Points and hopes for the best, help is likely to come in the form of Toruth Lorian, arriving on the scene in the nick of time to negotiate a truce, pay over a ransom or sway a fight that's going the wrong way. Toruth is 36 years old, dashing and handsome, highly regarded by the Taskan authorities and even loved and respected by most of the locals who have had dealings with him. After a brief spell as a Commercial Agent in Tarsang, Toruth threw himself into imperial service, doing postings in Yegusai and Morkesh before coming to realise he had a remarkable affinity for the people of the Korazoon and an obsession with the dreadful beauty of the desert. He is fluent in the local languages, as familiar as any foreigner can be with the terrain and deeply imbedded in the petty politics of the small towns and nomad clans. A consummate diplomat who is also handy in a fight, he has had to fight off would be assassins on more than one occasion. His character is one that burns brightly and cannot fail to impress all who meet him – yet his absolute determination and confidence that he can arrange the world in accordance with his own plans may well lead to his downfall in the end.

Notable Traits

Self-Assured – It does not occur to Toruth to question whether he is capable of achieving the impossible, he just goes right ahead and does it. So far this has generated an aura of invincibility about him, one day it might get him killed.

Treacherous Thoughts – Toruth is so enamoured of the frontier world that it is quite possible he will allow himself to be swallowed up by it, forget his origins and his loyalties, even his Pact with the Emperor. For now this is just a little shadow in the back of his mind while he remains convinced the Empire can bring huge advantages to the desert peoples, but if he sees the reverse to be true he could as easily turn against his own people as slink off home to a discontented retirement.

NERGESH OF ANKWAR

Nergesh is the leader of a spectacularly successful Soribisi band, whose power rests upon the support of a powerful shaman called Haljaf the Inconsolable. Haljaf is a foreigner – an exile from Haran – who has used his powers to create a new cult, known as the New Korazoon Movement, through which Nergesh hopes to unite the Soribisi under his leadership. In a bold stroke Nergesh has taken control of the city of Ankwar in Djesmirket, and since that time has laughed off all attempts by the ousted Sultan's allies at Khorala and Perlak to restore the situation. He pays a tribute to Tursiba the Lioness (Queen of Morkesh) which prevents her bringing the full armed strength of Morkesh into play. Nergesh allows caravans to pass through his territory but charges heavily for the privilege, and occasionally one of his sons plunders them anyway.

With Haljaf at his shoulder, and a famous city under his heel, he feels quite secure in his power despite the fact that this has made him some powerful enemies who are forced to have some sort of policy over what to do about him. Military weakness, internal politics and also a fear for the popularity and the power of Nergesh's mentor Haljaf, have prevented any determined efforts to eject Nergesh from Ankwar so far. He now plans to prevent the Taskans from extending their authority across the wastes, leaving the Korazoon open to his own ambitions by making communications and supply difficult, if not impossible, for their garrisons and merchants. Haljaf has promised him a victory against the Taskans as big as that won many generations ago against the Marble Simulacrum at Araxa, but Nergesh is well aware that this is a promise it would be unwise to put to the test.

Notable Traits

Brutal – While not cruel for the sake of it, Nergesh is quite happy to inflict savage punishments on those who cross him in order to set an example to others.

Ambitious – Nergesh has so far achieved more than might be expected, thanks to the weakness of those around him. This has done nothing but add fuel to the flames of his ambition and with Haljaf constantly whispering in his ear encouraging him to yet greater deeds, Nergesh is likely to continue to attempt one outrage or another until someone, such as the Taskans, finally clips his wings.

GETTING THERE

BRIEFING

The Adventurers' leader is summoned to the captain's tent to be part of a briefing attended by several other file leaders and a grizzled, toothless Soribisi scout who is introduced as Rasheir.

Captain Tarasin explains that the Zarinian contingent is taking its turn rotating men in and out of the frontier zone along a 300 mile stretch or border where four forts – Revenge, Severity, Vigilance and Intolerance – form the basis of a network of watchtowers covering miles of desert roads in which there are several small settlements and fortified caravanserais. Their task is to see to it that caravans and travellers can pass safely through the region, and prevent nomad raiders from using the same routes to slip into Tarsenia. The Zarinian contingent will be accompanied by some Soribisi scouts, Rasheir's men, as well as 20 Eskar mercenaries. Mounted support troops are essential given the distances involved and the nature of the terrain.

The posting is expected to last for six months. The Adventurers' unit is assigned to Severity, a small but '*ever so important*' little fort that is not on any of the big maps but is roughly '*there*' (says Tarasin, pointing to the South East of the territory to which the Zarinian contingent has been assigned). Each file will be assigned a mule – Tarasin recommends the file leaders each get introduced to theirs.

TIMOR TARASIN

To the Adventurers Tarasin will come across as a decent enough fellow, a bit older than they are, obviously upper crust, who looks good on a horse, sports a pretty smart looking sword and has a mummified hand on his work table as an ornament.

Tarasin is a young and idealistic army officer, from a high status family in which public service is regarded as a family duty. Tarasin has absorbed his family's honour code but has an imagination and sense of adventure that has taken him on extended trips to see the world – for example to retrace the Emperor's original campaigns of conquest on horseback, or to clamber over ancient ruins trying to deduce their original outline and purpose. Tarasin has become something of an antiquarian collector – in this respect he and some old friends back in Zarina have formed an association to share resources and funds in pursuit of their common interests. Right now their plan is to use Tarasin's presence on the frontier to explore the opportunities for uncovering ancient artefacts – all the better if magical ones – from the fabled lost cities of the Korazoon desert. Tarasin has lobbied hard to be assigned to Fort Severity so he has the opportunity to put his plan into action.

Tarasin knows a little sorcery but the family grimoire he was given to study in his youth is of little practical use and merely a tool for reinforcing family values and conducting acts of worship. He can of course act as a chaplain to his men if need be, so long as they are interested in attending a service of worship to one of the gods in honoured by the Tarasid family cult. However the one gem in there is the Restoration spell. His Sense Honour spell is perhaps

Timor Tarasin, Captain of the Third Hundred of the Men of Zarina

STR	11	CA	3	Taskan Rites 74%:	Location	AP/HP
CON	10	SR	14-6	Blessings: Tarsen x2, Jarmost x1	01-03 R Leg	4/5
SIZ	13	DB	+0	Divine Magic: Pact: Zygas Taga (1) 26%	04-06 L Leg	4/5
INT	15	Mv	8	Pact: Tarsen (3) 44% Covenant, Sanctuary, Tongues	07-09 Abdomen	6/6
POW	14	MP	10		10-12 Chest	6/7
DEX	12			Grimoire (Tarasid Family Grimoire) 42%: Abjure Grief,	13-15 R Arm	2/4
CHA	15			Abjure Love, Restoration, Sanctify, Sense Honour,	16-18 L Arm	2/4
SOC	16			Worship Thesh, Worship Samanse, Worship Tethis,	19-20 Head	5/5
				Worship Tarsen		
					Armour	
					Silk padded coat, lamellar	
					cuirass, splinted greaves, fine	
					bronze helmet	

Weapon	S	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Shortspear	M	L	1D8+1 Impale	4/5
Shield	L	S	D6	4/12
Enchanted Longsword	M/L	L	D8/D10+D4 Bleed, Impale, Sunder (2H)	14/12
Tarsenian Dirk	S	S	1D3+2 Impale -10% Parry	4/8

Skills

Athletics 50%, Brawn 34%, Command 55%, Education (Taskan) 70%, Evaluate 66%, Influence 67%, Insight 35%, Lore (Tactics and Drill), Orate 40%, Persistence 58%, Regional Lore (Tarsenia) 75%, Regional Lore (Korazoon) 35% Resilience 48% Ride 65%

Languages

Taskan 94%, Djesmiri 42%, Soribish 30%

Combat Styles

Brawl 35%, Light Spear+Shield 70%, Sidearm 40%, Swordsmanship (Tarsenian) +Shield 85%

not as useful as a Sense Dishonour spell would be, as the situations in which there is something to be successfully detected are perhaps rather rare, and a negative result is rather non-committal. It won't find out a liar or charleton unless the liar is pretending to false honour. Tarasin does not carry the family grimoire with him – that is kept locked up in the family home.

Notable Traits

Sense of Duty - Timor does his work as an officer to the best of his ability but is well aware his men only have to get through two years of what for many is an unwanted distraction from the rest of their lives. This does not change the fact that Tarasin would die with his men as a matter of duty and it would not cross his mind to abandon them on the field if things went badly.

Curiosity – Timor is endlessly curious about the mysteries of the past and for him collecting artefacts that put him in touch with that past is a way of connecting to lost worlds. His curiosity is such that he is willing to bend rules, within limits, and spend money – as much as he has and more – to satisfy his boyish imagination.

Tarasin keeps two enchanted items with him – Otek's Dead Hand, an interesting and very old device for solving mathematical problems he picked up on his travels; and a family heirloom, an

enchanted longsword that is his to carry so long as he is in the service of the state.

Otek's Dead Hand (Intensity 11 Enchanted Golem)

SIZ1 INT9 POW8 DEX11 CHA10; HP 2 CA2 SR10; Virtues: Golem DEX (2); Golem INT (2) Sound and Touch 45%; Golem CHA (2) Hemite Sign Language 50%, Instinct of Calculation (3) Lore (Mathematics) 90%, Instinct of Manipulation (1) Mechanisms 60%

Created by the Hemites, a sect of accountant-calligraphers active in the pre-imperial period, this powerful but rather limited device is exactly what is sounds like – a mummified hand set into silver fittings, including a base at the wrist that allows it to be set on a desk, fingers in the air, ready to do its work. When posed a problem to solve, Otek's Dead Hand swiftly calculates an answer and relays it in a sequence of complex finger movements and gestures. To the uninitiated this bygone sign language is completely unintelligible – it requires an extended Education task, with a task round unit of seven days, to learn it. The Hand has its uses outside the realms of simple calculation – its problem solving skills and manual dexterity can also be applied to gambling and picking locks.

Sword of the Tarasids (Intensity 8 Enchanted Longsword) STR8 DEX7; Blur (3) target's attempt to parry or evade this sword are reduced by 21%; Force of Arms (3) adds +8 to the user's STR for purpose of calculating Damage Bonus; Unbreakable (1) +8AP; Conditions (1) Only provides its benefits to a member of the Tarasid family, however the additional AP always apply.

SICKNESS IN THE RANKS

The Adventurers have four days in which to do whatever they please before marching out. However it is unfortunate that this is the week that the tail end of a plague spreads through the army camp. While the imperial authorities have recently identified and destroyed the plague demon responsible, its curse still dogs the rank and file of the army.

At the beginning of this period each Adventurer must check for Infection with a D100 roll. The infection table determines whether they have come into contact with a carrier of the disease and how many steps removed it is from the original source of infection.

D100	Exposure to Infection	Virulence
01–40	No contact	N/A
41–50	5th degree	22%
51–75	4th degree	44%
76–98	3rd degree	66%
99–00	2nd degree	88%

Each Adventurer who comes into contact with a carrier must successfully resist the Virulence of the disease with their Resilience in an opposed contest, and if successful he is immune.

For any Adventurer who is affected, after an Onset Time of 1D4 days comes an immediate loss of one level of Fatigue. Henceforward, and until the Adventurer makes a recovery, he is going to suffer from chronic fatigue. Light Activity is counted as Medium Activity and Medium as Heavy. If engaged in Heavy Activity, the Adventurer needs to make a fatigue roll *every round*. Fatigue loss cannot be recovered until the Adventurer fights off the sickness and of course the fatigue level that applies will reduce the Adventurer's chance of doing so.

Unless magical means of recovery are available only absolute rest will provide an Adventurer with the chance to beat the disease – for every day of complete inactivity and assuming ready access to food and water, the Adventurer can make a Resilience test to attempt to begin recovery. Once this has been achieved a further day of rest is required to recover each level of fatigue that has been suffered.

Anyone obviously sick is left behind to recover when the company leaves the frontier with orders to rejoin the unit at the earliest opportunity.

The little column will in any event set out in a depleted state – 106 men altogether with two ox-carts each pulled by eight oxen – moves out of camp on a blistering day. Novice muleteers get a lot of jibes from the other soldiers watching the column leave the

camp – mostly along the lines of, 'Are we going for a transfer to the cavalry?' and, 'Which one's the squad leader?'

The march is long and dry. Thankfully it is dangerous to push the oxen for more than five hours per day but nevertheless anyone still not completely recovered from the sickness may have a relapse, as they may now count as encumbered and their Resilience roll will as a consequence be lowered. If the column arrives at the next settlement (Akraga) with obviously sick men in the ranks, the locals may demand they sit outside town for a while to see if more fall sick or if anyone dies. They have no interest in allowing contagion into the town.

AKRAGA

The first destination is the fortress-town of Akraga, the centre for the defence of this part of the frontier. Akraga is a handsome fort of great age, with pinkish plastered walls. An outer circuit takes in a jumble of flat-roofed adobe dwellings and a small open space at the centre of which is a marble fountain. The town has one tavern and a guest house, which is a defensible structure forming part of the circuit walls.

Akraga is inhabited by 400 irregular troops recruited locally and granted citizenship but commanded by Tarsenian officers detached from the field army. Their families also live in the town, along with some 800 others either employed by the garrison or simply enjoying its protection. The main language here is Khazind but most people speak at least a little Tarsenian. The company is ordered to make camp outside the walls of the fort.

AN EVENING IN AKRAGA

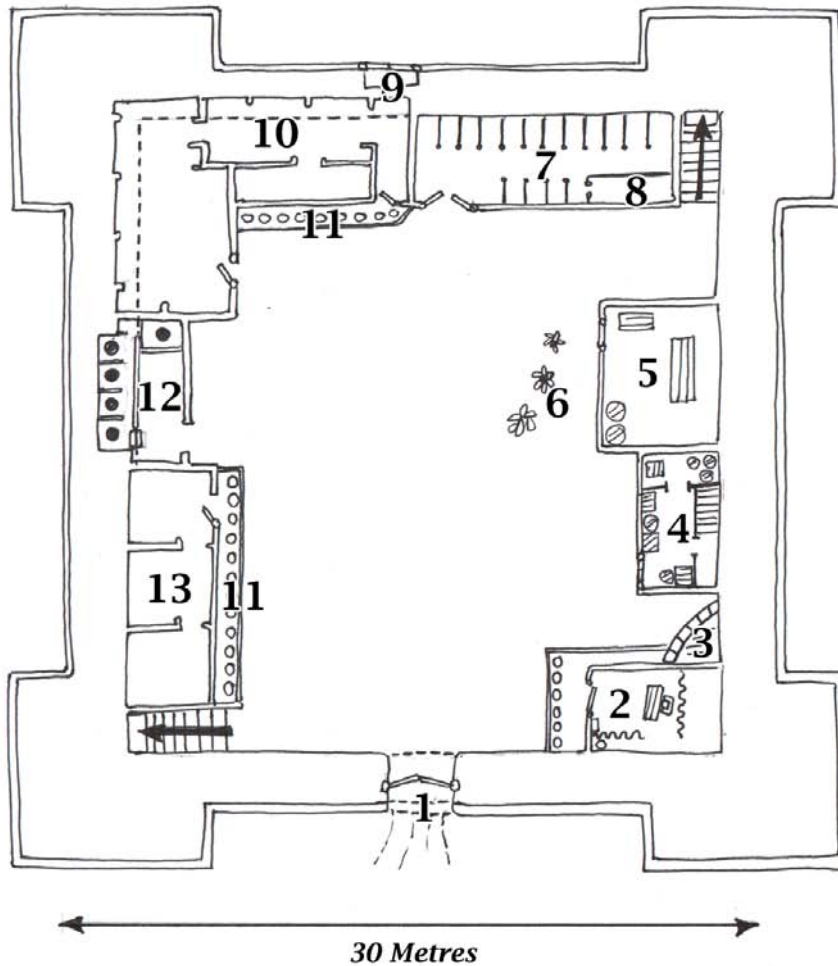
The atmosphere in the town is quite sleepy and there is little to do. As soon as the Adventurers set about setting up their camp local peddlers start passing among the tents offering tea from great copper urns, repairs and replacements to worn or broken equipment, titbits of food (most of it highly spiced lamb or goat) and tarot readings.

It will soon be apparent that there are only two prostitutes in the town and the local garrison jealously guard them. The brothel is a fine if dilapidated townhouse by the marketplace where the men of the garrison gather to dice, have a drink and talk amongst themselves, most evenings sitting outside the front door. Up to ten of them may be here at any time. They will chase away any outsiders who come calling and if a commotion starts up Nagria and Shmalla, the owners and key workers of the establishment, will appear at an upstairs window and add their voices to the goings on. Although outside the bounds of respectable Khazeri society, neither woman would stoop to sleeping with a Tarsenian unless the fellow was an officer. Attempts to prove otherwise will result in an ugly brawl with the local garrison, and heads will be broken before a couple of the garrison officers show up and restore order.

FORT SEVERITY

Any Adventurer who takes a stroll along the walls of Akraga before nightfall will be able to see how the desert stretches away to the South and West. Only a few thorny trees and patches of scrub punctuate the rocky, shimmering landscape. Before first light the

FORT SEVERITY



KEY

1. Main Gate
2. Tarasin's Office & Quarters
3. Well
4. Stores
5. Cook House
6. Cooking Area
7. Stables
8. Pen
9. Sally Port
10. Main Barracks
11. Veranda
12. Latrines
13. NCOs' Barracks

column moves out and arrives in the afternoon of the following day at Fort Severity, which is to be the company headquarters. It is a small, square, sandstone fort with a bastion at each corner. The gate is a pair of wooden doors shut by a simple bar that slots into the wall. The opening is just high enough to admit a man on horseback. The fort's only source of water is a well in one corner of the courtyard. There is stabling for up to 16 horses, not enough to accommodate those ridden by Tarasin and the Eskars and provide shelter for the mules.

The outgoing garrison is a unit from Tarsang, who all look ill-fed, ill clothed and unwashed. Timor Tarasin upbraids their officer for their condition, saying that it is a bad show to put on for his raw recruits. They have left their quarters clean and swept, however; the problem is one of space. The dormitory in the barracks only sleeps 50 men comfortably. The soldiers are told to make the best of it and sleep top to toe.

The Eskars have brought their own circular tents and set about erecting them outside the fort. They gather brush and thorns together and make a corral around the tents and bring their mounts inside. They will not stay here long - mostly these men

will conduct courier services as well as long range patrols, and will shuttle about between the forts and watch towers as required.

EPISODE 1: PATROL TO SAROTIN

After a couple of days, Captain Timor Tarasin sends for the Adventurers' squad leader. He has a map unfurled on his desk which he is studying intently.

The Captain presents the primary purpose of the mission on which the Adventurers are to be sent as a recce of the tower at Sarotin, an oasis settlement on the road to Khorala. The settlement is mostly Assabian, with some settled Soribisi and a handful of Khazeris. The watch tower at Sarotin has been left ungarrisoned for some months and it needs to be investigated to make sure all is still in order. The entrance to the tower is sealed by magic, but can be opened by any citizen of the Empire citing in Tarsenian (Taskan) 'A true son of Tarsenia bids you open'. When the fort is vacated, the door can be resealed with the phrase 'A true son of Tarsenia bids you shut'. Both commands cannot be used on the same day.

Tarasin also instructs the Adventurers to seek out a Djesmiri merchant by the name of Akrish, who has a small shop selling foreign luxuries to the locals and local artefacts to foreigners. This man will, for a heavy bribe, lead the party to a ruined city recently uncovered by the shifting sands. They should investigate this place, see what opportunity there might be for plunder and what resources and manpower would be required to retrieve and carry off objects of interest. The Adventurers are to carry a moneybox (containing 100 gold pieces) and a sealed scroll (signed by Tarasin and three of his fellow officers stating that they sponsor the bearer in his application for citizenship of the Taskan Empire) to give to Akrish in payment for his services.

The Adventurers are expected to be back at Fort Severity within a month.

THE LOST CITY

The existence of this place has always been part of local lore but its precise location is generally only guessed at. The entire Korazoon region was once more readily habitable than it is today and the legendary 'Kingdom of Tubisa' is a convenient and uncomplicated legend that captures dimly remembered facts about the cultures that spawned many towns, and even small cities, that are now lost to the desert. As it happens it would be possible to reconstruct a reasonably clear picture of the people and politics of the Korazoon in its earlier days if you had the time and inclination to root about in the libraries of Djesmirket searching for the scattered fragments of information that exist – but no-one has made any effort to do this so far. The ruins that have recently been revealed are genuine enough but eventually the Adventurers might discover they are by no means unique.

Tarasin is very interested in any intelligence he can pick up while posted here, as he wants to know if there is an opportunity to mount a (private) expedition to go and plunder the ruins for treasure. He may pick on the Adventurers because it is dangerous and he considers them expendable troublemakers, or, if better disposed, because he trusts them to do what is asked and keep quiet about it.

There will of course be a special bonus involved (which company commanders are entitled to pay their men out of their own resources). If pressed on how much this might be, Tarasin does not commit himself but suggests that the amount depends on results. His family is wealthy, he says, and the Adventurers (or at least their leader) can expect to take a tidy nest-egg home with them when they leave the army if they strike treasure.

PREPARATION

The party can take as many mules as they can make a case for, as mounts or pack animals. Raga, son of Rasheir, will guide the Adventurers as far as the pass which leads to Sarotin – beyond that point he may be a liability as Sarotin lies in territory where many of the local Soribisi are hostile to his clan.

Raga, Son of Rasheir

Raga is a jolly Sorib, son of the Rasheir who is well-known to the troops based in Pryjarna. He holds Taskan citizenship, which he feels puts him a touch above his fellow nomads. His Taskan is

excellent, even if his accent is a little comical. He knows much about the desert and its people but he counts himself a civilised chap these days and is not likely to pour out useful or useless information unless they specifically question him. He is a master of double and single-entendre and will make suggestive remarks to any females or attractive males in the party all the way to the dropping-off point.

THE ROAD TO SAROTIN

The journey to the pass will take two days, following Raga's lead. The road is little travelled and at times barely discernable. There is a strong wind blowing dust in the Adventurers' faces most of the way, making the journey particularly arduous. Although the route follows a known road, there is no one to be seen all the way. Raga explains that any danger might come from Soribisi, many of whom still live like bandits. Should the Adventurers press for more information they will learn of a Soribisi warlord called Nergesh, whose sons are notorious for exceeding the limits of what is regarded as acceptable banditry, which has served to discourage trade and caused quite some local friction. So far Nergesh is not known to be responsible for any hostile acts against the Empire, nor indeed is he thought to be active this far north – but his sons are doing a good job of discouraging traffic from the old trade routes through the Korazoon.

Raga is to leave the Adventurers at the entrance to the Sarotin Pass. The purplish-coloured hills are slightly less inhospitable – patches of greenery and some trees are visible from afar. The track here is easier to follow, and winds along defiles both broad and narrow towards the town of Sarotin. There are plenty of places on the road where ambush would be easy and nervous travellers could imagine a hidden enemy behind every rock.

ENCOUNTERS

The first encounter on the route is a shepherd boy and his flock. The boy is Khazeri, about 13 and speaks no Tarsenian. Raga can question the boy on the Adventurers' behalf - if so they may learn that Oshim the Scorpion's Claw, a son of Nergesh of Ankwar, has been active in the area in the last month.

The second encounter is a man on horseback – dressed in nomad fashion – who gallops up to within 50 metres of the Adventurers from the direction of Sarotin. In a highly animated fashion and wrestling to control an excited horse, he shouts out to the soldiers in his native tongue (probably completely unintelligible to them).

'Begone, you are not wanted here, go back whence you came! I, Pashut, command it! Be gone or perish, foreigners - you are not wanted here!'

This diatribe is followed by a bizarre high pitched keening that sends a shiver down the spine and has, should anyone approach to within 12 (POW) metres, the effect of a Demoralise spell. Each use of this ability costs a Magic Point, and Pashut must succeed in a Cult Lore skill test opposed by each potential victim's Persistence for it to take effect. Pashut has already released the spirit, so none of this costs him a Combat Action - however he can only use the trait once per round.

Pashut, Soribisi Spirit Warrior

STR	11	CA	2	Cult Lore 45%:	Location	AP/HP
CON	11	SR	12-1	Howling Jackal (Intensity 2 Manifest Trait Jackal spirit) - INT5 POW	01-03 R Leg	-/5
SIZ	12	DB	+0	12 CHA 3, Spirit Damage 1D6 Persistence 48% Spectral Bite 60%	04-06 L Leg	-/5
INT	13	Mv	8		07-09 Abd	1/6
POW	12	MP	12	Spirit allows Pashut to Demoralise opponents within POW metres.	10-12 Chest	1/7
DEX	11				13-15 R Arm	1/4
CHA	11				16-18 L Arm	1/4
SOC	7				19-20 Head	-/5

Armour

Leather jerkin under clothing

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP	Items
Short Bow	L	80m	D6	4/4	Jackal skull fetich. 14 Ankwati Dinars. A valuable horse that probably isn't really his.
Sabre	M	M	D6+1 Bleed, Impale	6/8	

Skills

Persistence 45% Resilience 50% Ride 75%

Combat Styles

Archery 60% Sidearm 55

He repeats his challenge once or twice. For him his defiance is an act of bravado. He will block their path, daring them to push forward or turn back. If the Adventurers move towards him with intent, he will gallop away – but it would please him if he can demoralise one or two first. He does not tarry in Sarotin, but speeds off to take the news to his comrades that the Taskans are coming.

Pashut may be encountered again later as one member of a gang who fight for Oshim the Scorpion's Claw, unless of course the Adventurers somehow managed to kill or capture him.

OSHIM, THE SCORPION'S CLAW

Oshim is a son of Nergesh of Ankwat, he leads his own band of riders and regards Sarotin, despite its Taskan tower, as within the northern limits of his territory. Oshim extorts money from caravans passing through his territory and requisitions supplies from the townsfolk. The presence of a Taskan watchtower looming over Sarotin irks him greatly. The fact that even its caravanserai is currently in the hands of people who fail to show him proper respect (Salan Ishmal and Fashil, see below) upsets him also. Within a short time of the Adventurers' arrival he will get to hear of them, probably from Pashut, who has been on a mission into Sarotin to check on the status of another of Oshim's followers, a warrior named Shanjul (see under The Taskan Tower).

If Pashut fails to escape the Adventurers a gang of Oshim's men will soon turn up in Sarotin anyway - however it will be longer before they do and they will not be expecting the Adventurers presence. Oshim himself is unlikely to appear in person and for now it is important he can plausibly suggest that any violence between his men and the Taskans is the result of hotheads getting out of hand.

SAROTIN

Sarotin is a village of some 120 inhabitants. The main village is surrounded by a one and a half metre wall, which is not defensible but serves as a barrier to thieves and wild animals. In addition to the Taskan tower there is a caravanserai, also the only inn in town, and a number of shops and workshops. The town has a good well and a small shrine dedicated to a purely local fire spirit called Ashmit.

Khazeri tribesmen from the surrounding hills come here to trade and for the occasional festival, and it is a stopping place for merchant caravans travelling along the road. Sarotin has only one fixed market day per year, although the arrival of a caravan in town often results in an unscheduled market being held.

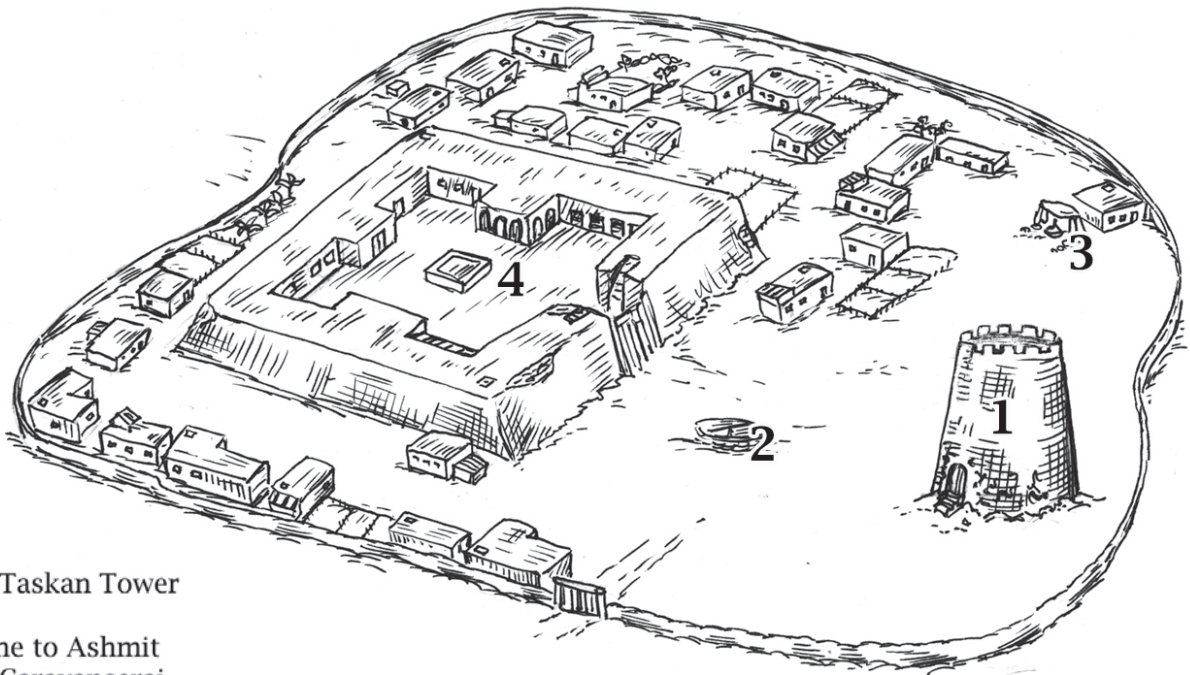
In recent times the volumes of traffic on the road have decreased. Some of the locals have turned to banditry to make ends meet, some, like the merchant Akrish, to specialised occupations like the plunder and sale of objets d'art and artefacts from the various ruins that may be found in the desert.

The inhabitants of the town are mostly theists with a few shamanist followers of the New Korazoon Movement, plus one practising atheist, who is just regarded as a sorcerer and therefore not interfered with.

THE TASKAN TOWER

This is a simple round tower tapering slightly towards the top, with a short flight of steps leading up to the door. The lower walls are daubed with graffiti and slogans (in Djesmiri script and a variety of languages), which generally say unpleasant things about the Taskans and their Emperor, and around it are scattered broken and discarded pots and plates. The door is stoutly made of wood bound and studded with iron. It is sealed with a *Holdfast* spell,

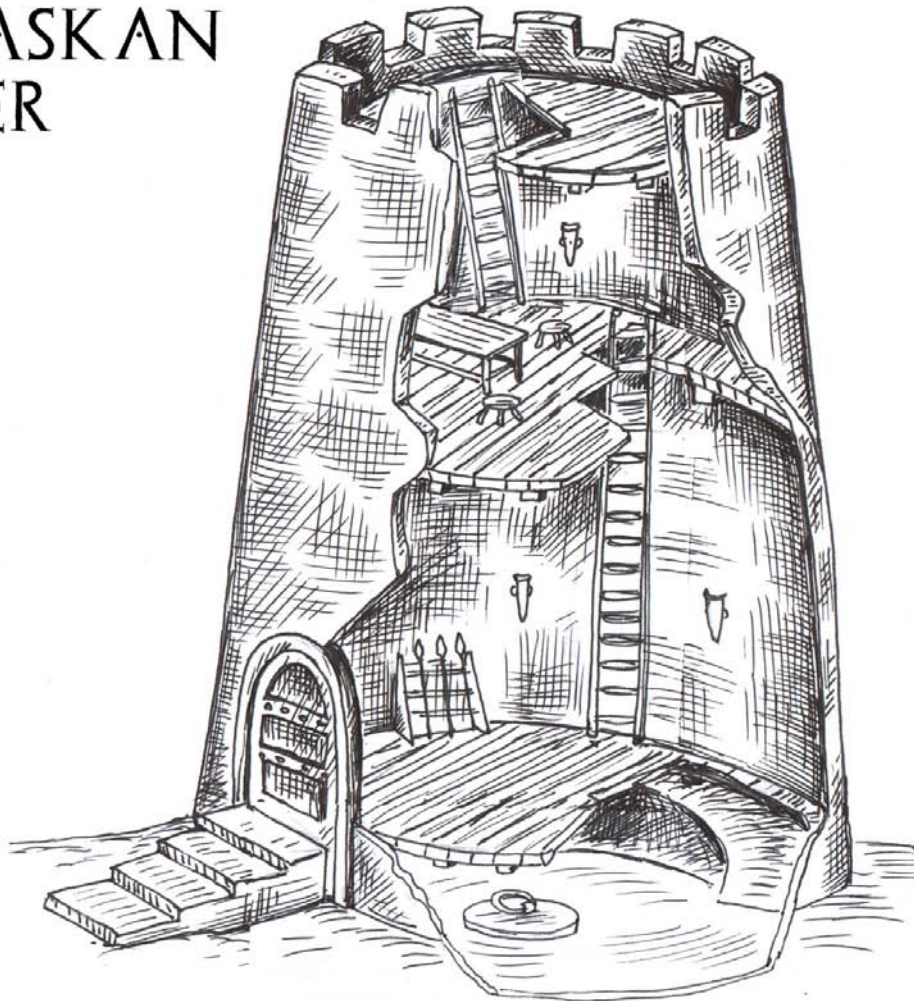
SAROTIN



KEY

- 1. The Taskan Tower
- 2. Well
- 3. Shrine to Ashmit
- 4. The Caravanserai

THE TASKAN TOWER



enchanted into the lintel and at Magnitude 5. There is a phrase which needs to be recited in order to release the Holdfast to open the door, and another to reseal it. In the absence of a garrison the tower is guarded by a spirit called Beruth, a former acolyte of the Emperor-cult who serves the Emperor in death but has been given a mission which is far from being to his taste. Beruth can operate the enchantment in the door and is free to roam within the tower.

Frustrated by the tower's sealed door, Oshim recently sent one of his men (bearer of a spider spirit) to scale the walls of the tower to break in and find a way to destroy the enchantments, then let his friends in to take possession of the tower. Unfortunately this individual, Shanju, was attacked by the guardian spirit and possessed.

BERUTH/SHANJU

Beruth is not used to looking after bodies – especially this new one – and all his physical skills are at Basic Percentage. Furthermore the possessed Soribisi is a horror to behold. His eyes are whitish and baleful, he foams at the mouth, and he mumbles to himself constantly. He is getting progressively worse mentally and physically.

Beruth likes having a body again but is effectively confined to the tower by both his binding and the frightened locals. He can no longer go out of the tower as the last time he did he was driven back by the townsfolk with blows and hurled rocks and in any event Beruth's binding means that he gets only ten metres from the door before being inexorably tugged back. Each morning the Soribisi of the town leave food offerings outside the door (running off as soon as they have done so), under instructions from Oshim, who wants to keep his friend alive until he can rid him of the possession.

Beruth's Evil Masterplan

Beruth has been bound here for 12 years and wants someone to break the enchantments that keep his spirit here; he cannot do it himself. This is of course a treasonous notion and the Adventurers should have no part in it; anyone who assists him in this will take an immediate loss of 1D6+1 to their Pact (*Zygas Taga*). He may attempt to persuade, annoy, trick or threaten the Adventurers into doing this for him. He might, if let alone with one of the Adventurers, attempt to use his Dominate Citizen sorcery spell to force him to do what is necessary. If need be he can even command the doors to shut, locking himself inside with an Adventurer he thinks he can control with his magic. However he will not actually use violence – or his *Wrack* spell - on a fellow Taskan. An Adventurer who makes a bargain with Beruth in which his enchantment is broken in return for some vital magical assistance that is to the Empire's advantage will only lose 1 point from their Pact skill. The enchantments that Beruth wants destroyed are engraved on a flagstone in the tower's basement and will require an appropriate tool, D10 Combat Rounds per attempt and a Brawn skill test to obliterate.

Once the binding is broken Beruth/Shanju will kill himself, possibly asking an Adventurer to do it for him.

If the Adventurers successfully sidestep Beruth's enthusiasm for release, he could be a useful ally as he has access to powerful magic. However he is unable to depart Shanju's body now he is in it – this will require exorcism, or simply killing Shanju (which will of course have consequences). In any event, if Shanju is killed Oshim will eventually hear about it and take a dim view of the matter. One more reason to show the Taskans who is lord of Sarotin.

Beruth/Shanju, Soribisi warrior dominantly possessed by spirit guardian

STR	12	CA	3	Cult Lore (<i>Zygas Taga</i>) 68%:	Location	AP/HP
CON	8	SR	13	Devotions: Pact: <i>Zygas Taga</i> (POW 4) 76%: Divine Magic:	01–03 R Leg	-/5
SIZ	11	DB	+0	Absorption, Command Human, Excommunication, Find Enemy	04–06 L Leg	-/5
INT	14	Mv	8		07–09 Abd	-/6
POW	19	MP	15	Sorcery Manipulation 57%:	10–12 Chest	-/7
DEX	12			Grimoire (<i>The Black Book</i>) 62%: Dominate Citizen; Holdfast;	13–15 R Arm	-/4
CHA	12			Intuition; Mystic Vision; Neutralise Magic; Project Hearing; Project	16–18 L Arm	-/4
SOC	7			Vision; Treat Wounds; <i>Wrack</i> (burning)	19–20 Head	-/5
					Armour	
					None	

Weapon

None

Skills

Brawn 23% Persistence 95% Resilience 16%

Combat Styles

Any at 24%

Items

None. Shanju's fine recurve bow is in the tower, together with a dozen arrows and a dagger

THE CARAVANSERAI

This consists of the Black Camel Inn and adjoining stables and storage space, as well as Akrish's shop and another store, Thabat's Emporium, which is devoted to general provisions but frequently closed due to lack of trade. While no one really claims ownership of the whole complex, Salan and Fashil who run the Black Camel Inn are de facto in charge of the little community therein.

THE BLACK CAMEL INN

The owner, Salan Ishmal, is a Djesmiri. He maintains a single armed guard to watch the premises, manage the day-to-day business and keep order in the tavern. Salan Ishmal is Oshim's chief opponent in the town. The guard, Fashil Kumar, is from Djesmir, an educated man and a good fighter. Salan and Fashil have no particular friends but are generally friendly (if a little reserved) towards most people. Except, that is, for Oshim and his henchmen. Salan and Fashil are potentially very important allies. While they will not go out of their way to announce themselves as such, their actions may make it clear enough. They may both provide useful skills and information.

The inn occupies a large vaulted gallery within the Caravanserai, and offers plenty of space in the main room or in (barely) more private alcoves and side chambers where travellers can doss

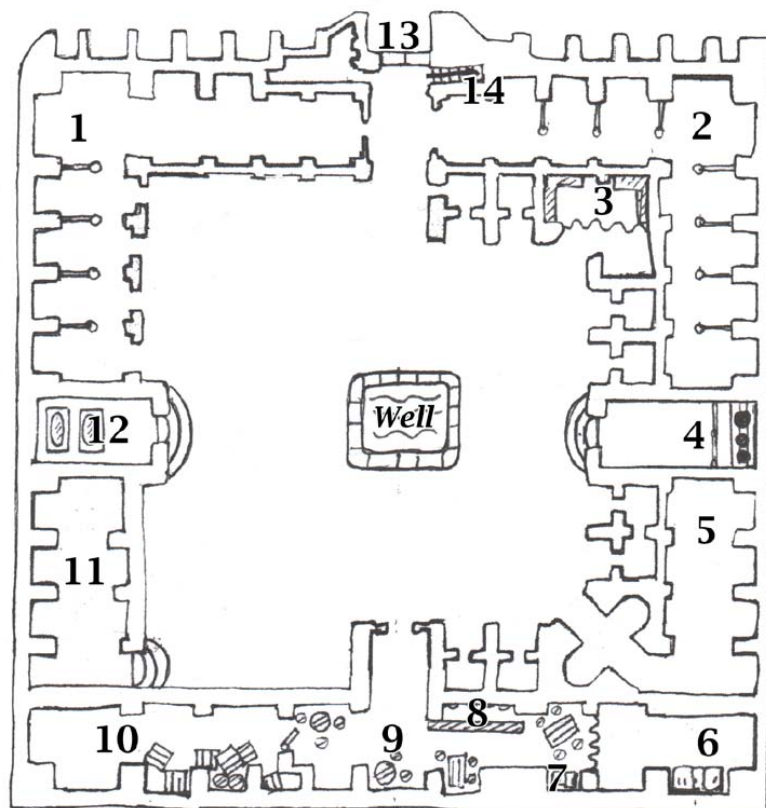
down for the night. A townswoman called Ithama whom Salan rescued from poverty cleans, sweeps, cooks and serves. Salan and Fashil help out when need be. The only problem the place has is supply. All goods made elsewhere are at a premium. There are a few wine jars in the stores but Salan charges a fortune for the stuff (five Taskeens or equivalent for a small pitcher) as it is very hard to come by. Mostly, guests are offered water, tea, goat's milk, fermented mare's milk and a simple selection of food.

Salan

Ten years ago Salan was forced into exile by a cadre of rival philosophers and wound up at Sarotin, where he purchased the Inn from a Tarsenian who had had enough of life in the desert regions. Salan is 42 years old, but looks 60, unmarried and childless. Salan dresses in simple but well made robes, is wrinkled before his time and his hair is thin, white and wispy.

He plans to pass on the Black Camel to Fashil, 12 years his junior, when he dies. He keeps his religion and past life a secret, on the assumption that his old rivals in Khorala may still have a price on his head. The locals suspect him of being a sorcerer, and as a result are a little afraid of him. This is of course true, he is quite accomplished and has two Grimoires, both of which (written in Djesmiri) can be found in his quarters, carelessly on open display.

THE CARAVANSERAI AT SAROTIN



KEY

1. Stables
2. Stables (disused)
3. Akrish's Shop
4. Toilets
5. Thabat's Emporium
6. Salan's Chamber
7. Fashil's Beç
8. Bar
9. Black Camel Inn
10. Stores
11. Dormitory Space
12. Bath House
13. Gates
14. Stairs to Roof

Salan Ishmal, Philosopher of Djesmir, Late of Khorala. Owner of the Black Camel Inn

STR	8	CA	3	Sorcery Manipulation 72%	Location	AP/HP
CON	13	SR	15	Grimoire (Book of Universal Abstractions) 74%: Castback,	01–03 R Leg	–/4
SIZ	12	DB	+0	Mystic Vision, Neutralise Magic	04–06 L Leg	–/4
INT	17	Mv	8	Grimoire (Book of Abjurations) 65%: Abjure Air, Abjure Food,	07–09 Abdomen	–/5
POW	14	MP	14	Abjure Pain, Abjure Water, Abjure Sleep	10–12 Chest	–/6
DEX	12				13–15 R Arm	–/3
CHA	12				16–18 L Arm	–/3
SOC	15				19–20 Head	–/4

Armour

None

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP
Staff	M	L	1D6 Stun Location	4/8

Skills

Education (Djesmiri) 115%, Healing 65%, Insight 75%, Lore (Assabian Philosophy 120%), Lore (Mathematics) 88%, Meditation 58%, Persistence 85%, Resilience 40

Languages

Djesmiri 90%, Soribish 40%, Taskan 35%

Combat Styles

Brawl 25% Staff 30%

Fashil

Fashil, at 30, is devoted to his leader. He has been at his side as a bodyguard for four years. He followed Salan here from Khorala, where Salan was a well-known teacher of Atheist philosophies. Fashil killed Armat the Goat, one of Oshim's favourites, in a duel last year. His reputation is now sufficient to prevent much trouble with the locals, although it is only a matter of time before one of Oshim's men challenges him again. Fashil keeps a cool head about him and will try and resolve most situations without violence. He is tall, rather lean and, for one of his race, quite fair. He wears a worn black leather jerkin and sash over a black tunic, and wears a scimitar at his side.

Fashil is unlikely to get the chance to regain his Shomat spells any time soon, so will not use them except in an absolute emergency.

AKRISH'S SHOP

Situated in a complex of rooms within the caravanserai including Akrish's private quarters, this is a shop crowded with bric-a-brac, trail gear, second hand goods, household ornaments, dusty scrolls, paintings and sculpture. Some of it is ancient, found at a desert ruin, some of it is modern tourist rubbish, some of it is broken or useless. It is all treasure to Akrish. He used to do a good trade in provisions for luxury goods with the caravans passing through here, but since their numbers declined he has taken to dealing in anything he can get his hands on with whoever will buy.

Akrish

Akrish thinks himself a very wily merchant, who would make a name for himself if he were not trapped in this godforsaken place. Even though Sarotin has declined it was never any great shakes but Akrish feels very hard done by. His plan is to sell the location of a desert ruin as yet unplundered to interested Taskans for citizenship and a cash sum – then he will pack up his belongings and head North.

Akrish's Story

Akrish has several contacts who bring him in odd finds from the desert. He is generally ignorant as to the true value, if any, of most of these items, yet knows he can sell them to educated travellers who pass through the town as curios, magical artefacts, rare works of art or whatever. He has never actually been to one of these places himself but pretends that he locates and plunders them in person. His activities came to the attention of a Tarsenian officer who was in town for a few days. This fellow questioned Akrish closely and was convinced the old man could lead him to a virgin site where there could be riches to plunder. Akrish told him a story of half truths and blatant lies about the cataclysmic destruction of an ancient civilisation, which Akrish called 'The Kingdom Of Tubisa'. Its towns and cities, he said, were swallowed up by the desert before any of the inhabitants could flee, and their riches were buried with them. King Tuba himself lies there buried alive in a wondrous palace of marble, roofed in gold, furnished in ivory and with topaz instead of glass in its windows. This same yarn will be repeated to the Adventurers if they question him about the desert ruins.

Fashil, Former Mercenary, Inn Keeper at the Black Camel Inn

STR	13	CA	3	Assabian Rites 55%:	Location	AP/HP
CON	12	SR	13-1	Blessings Haliset x2	01-03 R Leg	-/5
SIZ	13	DB	+1D2		04-06 L Leg	-/5
INT	14	Mv	8	Devotions Haliset -Toad (POW1): Pact 35%, Divine Magic:	07-09 Abd	1/6
POW	10	MP	7	Toadskin (as Shield)	10-12 Chest	1/7
DEX	12			Shomat (POW2): Pact 54%, Divine Magic: Truesword, Daybright	13-15 R Arm	-/4
CHA	11				16-18 L Arm	-/4
SOC	9				19-20 Head	-/5
Armour						
						Leather jerkin

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP	Items
Light Crossbow	L	100m	D8 Impale	4/5	Fashil usually carries 2D20 Dinars in cash
Scimitar	M	M	D8+D2 Bleed	6/10	

Skills

Commerce 55%, Evade 40%, Persistence 40% Resilience 70% Ride 75%

Languages

Djesmiri 80%, Soribish 35%, Taskan 28%

Combat Styles

Archery 60%, Brawl 65%, Crossbow 80% Swordsmanship 82%

The officer was scheduled to return to Pryjarna but shared the story with some of his funeral club drinking buddies, Timor Tarasin among them, who sent messengers to Sarotin and negotiated a deal with the merchant. Tarasin is charged with delivering the money and a letter of sponsorship for imperial citizenship and establishing the truth of his story.

Akrish has made a deal with one of his suppliers, a Soribisi called Zhemir, to lead the Tarsenians to a site in the wastes which has been only partly looted. Several people know of the site but Akrish claims it is only recently uncovered in a sandstorm.

Paying off Akrish

Akrish will of course insist on payment in advance – or the deal is off. He then says the Adventurers have to wait a day or two for his agent to arrive in town from the desert. Zhemir will arrive in 1D4 days, and agree to set out the following day once he has rested and re-provisioned. Zhemir is dressed in rags and rides an evil-smelling camel.

OLD PASHOOM

Pashoom is the ancient name of the ruins to which the Adventurers will be led. Zhemir does not speak any Tarsenian, which is just the way Akrish likes it. He can only demonstrate by grunts and gestures whatever he might try and tell the Adventurers.

The journey is just over 30 miles across country and will take three days unless the Adventurers take the trouble to acquire camels. There is no source of fresh water en route. The Adventurers will therefore have to buy waterskins and rations, in order to have sufficient supplies for at least seven days. If anyone has made

friends with Salan Ishmal there is opportunity to get him to cast Abjure Water on one or more of the Adventurers. He can cast a spell with a 10 day Duration and still have some room to increase the number of targets to a total of three. In the absence of such luxuries, water requirements are double what would be normal to the Adventurers thanks to the dry heat. The GM should ask the players to specify how the supplies are distributed, so that if an animal is lost the consequences can be calculated. If any of the Adventurers overload their beast, Zhemir will grunt and throw the excess onto the ground, making quite clear he considers the Adventurer responsible to be stupid and ignorant.

Each mule has a typical STR of 2D6+18 (25) and SIZ 2D6+12 (19), for a load capacity of 44 ENC. It also has a Brawn of 60%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 65% and Survival of 20%. If the Adventurers have brought any donkeys, these will have a STR of 2D6+12 (19) and SIZ D6+12 (14) for a load capacity of 33. Donkeys have a Brawn of 50%, otherwise similar skills as given for the mules. Anyone who decides they want to ride adds 2x their SIZ to the total load being carried by their unfortunate beast.

A typical load would be:

Item	ENC
Saddlebagsx2	4
Man per day of water x 7	7
Man per day rations x 7	2
Animal per day fodder x7	7
Animal per day water x 7	14
Spade	1
Rope	2
Total	37

On the second day of the journey there is a sandstorm. Zhemir runs around trying to show the Adventurers how to settle the mules and take shelter behind them, adding his critical Regional Lore score of 8% to the Adventurers' efforts. Once the storm hits it blinds the Adventurers and makes breathing difficult as dust and grit is forced up their noses and into their mouths every time they take a breath. If an Adventurer fails a Drive or Ride test his mount will try and bolt – if this happens the Adventurer who has hold of a rein or tether must succeed in a Brawn test opposed by the typical Brawn of their animal of 60% to gain control. If he loses the contest the mule will break free and be lost to the storm. If he wins he can try to calm the beast again. Adventurers who insist on trying to operate within the sand-storm must cover their nose and mouth, or they will be affected by choking sand as if drowning.

If the Adventurers have gone to the trouble of acquiring camels they should be allowed to get off lightly from this crisis. Even if an Adventurer loses his beast in the storm he will find it calmly awaiting them when the dust clears a few metres away.

THE RUINS

Old Pashoom lies only partly uncovered from the dust that has entombed it now for nearly five centuries. There are odd timbers and bits of wall jutting out of the sand and dirt visible from almost a mile away. Zhemir moves on excitedly, towards where part of a domed roof is visible in the sand, and beckons the Adventurers to follow.

OVERVIEW

While there may be some three acres of ruins on show, the entire site is actually some 20 acres in size, which Adventurers can determine by the simple expedient of walking the area and paying attention to the surface scatter of potsherds and other small debris. Most of it lies below ground, and while there are some air pockets below current ground level where a structure has resisted invasion by the elements, the vast majority can only be uncovered by digging – which would require significant labour resources (or magic of course). Here and there the Adventurers might come across evidence of previous visitors – maybe a pit or shaft dug in the hope of striking treasure but mostly small excavations made by passing nomads in pursuit of a fine block of stone or some old dry timber for use as firewood.

Their target is the most prominent feature in the ruins; a section of a domed roof, exposed by some storm having stripped away some of the sand and dust that had engulfed the place.

THE GRAVEYARD

There is a steep, wind-carved bank over to the East, where the remains of a cemetery have started to be exposed by erosion, revealing grave cuttings sliced through by the elements. Bone fragments, scraps of shroud cloth, desiccated pieces of wood from broken coffins and potsherds are scattered at the foot of the bank. It would not take long to dig further into the crumbly soil and uncover more graves. There is little to find here of any value however – indeed this area contains the main cemetery for the poorer folk of ancient Pashoom who went to the afterlife with little in the way of grave goods. High status burials are somewhere else

hidden beneath the sands. Adventurers who persist in the exercise should soon be given the message it is a thankless task. Whether combing the foot of the bank for finds or hacking further into the bank in the hope of exposing more burials, one Perception test could be made for every hour of close search or digging to discover:

D20	Finds
01–09	A near intact small piece of pottery, a drinking cup, oil lamp or small dish with moulded designs and perhaps a little glaze. Value 1D6 Taskeens to an antiquarian collector or relic hunter.
10–12	A large copper or small silver coin with unfamiliar designs around a highly stylised lion's head and some illegible script. Value 2D6 Taskeens to an antiquarian or collector. Someone who makes A Culture (Soribisi or Djesmiri) Skill Test would note that these coins are still circulating in the oasis towns, as tokens or as offerings for the dead.
13–14	A scrap of dried parchment or linen bearing a single word in the ancient script used in the Korazoon. In the unlikely event anyone can decipher it, the word reads: <i>Sigeba</i> . This is simply the name of the (male) god of the earth that was worshipped here and to whose care the people of Pashoom committed their dead. Someone who succeeds in a difficult (-20%) Education test may note the text is similar to old inscriptions at the Sarotin caravansera
15–18	A small metal trinket: a brooch, belt clasp, hair pin or key, cast in iron, copper or bronze but with some traces of gilding still remaining. No meaningful value.
19–20	A fine glass beaker, intact or with the slightest of chips or cracks. The glass shot through with streaks of colour and clearly a fine piece of craftsmanship. Value six Taskeens, perhaps five times that amount to an antiquarian.

If the paucity of finds are not enough to deter further investigation, eventually an Adventurer will cut into a grave whose occupant still haunts his crumbling bones.

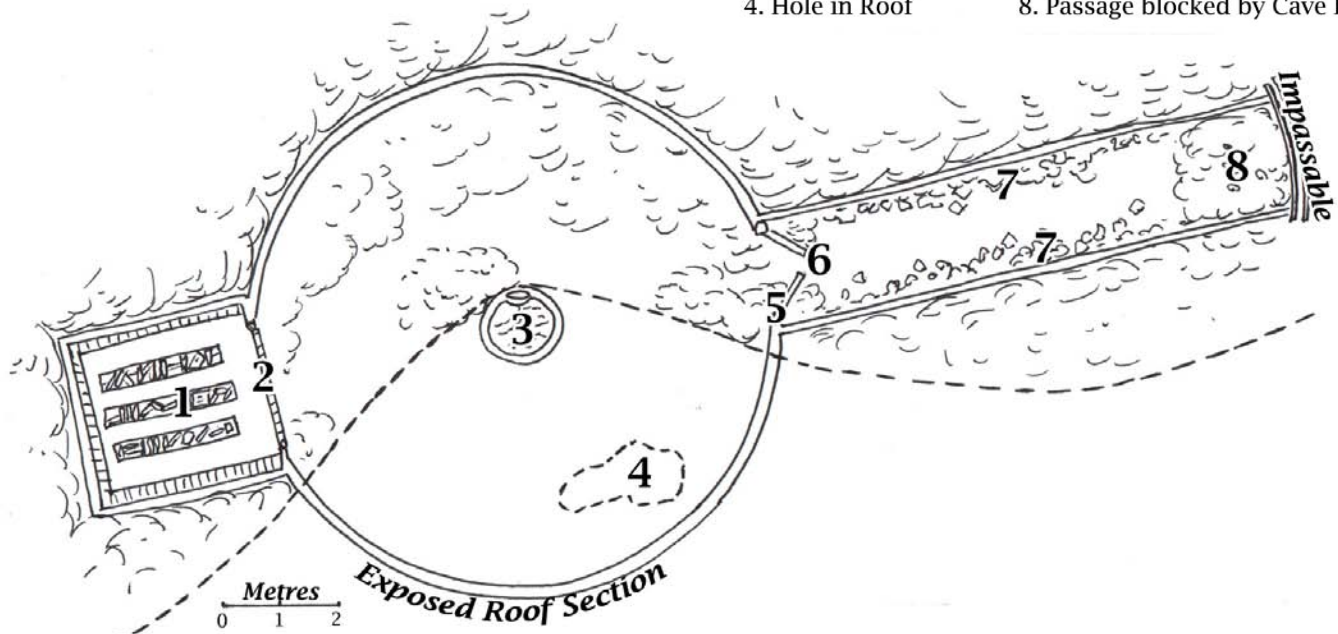
THE DOMED HALL

This place seems to be intact and only partially filled with sand. Someone – presumably Zhemir – has hacked a man size hole in the plaster and timber-work dome, which had thus far done a good job of protecting the hall. Four and a half metres below is the floor, mostly buried, in the centre of which is a half exposed ornamental fount, sadly long dry. A door of fine latticework is visible on one side of the room and on the opposite side is another, ordinary doorway which has been broken through. The walls all around are decorated with fine frescoes in green and golden hues, seemingly as bright as the day when they were first painted. The frescoes depict a procession of old men bearing scrolls and in animated conversation with one another, approaching a large female figure with mother-of-pearl eyes squatting on a cloud. Right in front of this clearly supernatural character is another old man, this one sitting cross-legged and writing on an open scroll on a low table set before him.

OLD PASHOOM THE DOMED BUILDING

KEY

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Library | 5. Broken Doors |
| 2. Latticework Screens | 6. Squeeze Point |
| 3. Dry Fountain | 7. Debris from Wall Plaster |
| 4. Hole in Roof | 8. Passage blocked by Cave In |



The fresco detects as magical.

If the Adventurers do not have a rope, Zhemir will kindly offer his. It could be anchored on a timber jutting out of the sand or tethered to someone's mount. Zhemir himself seems to have no interest in going down himself, volunteers to keep watch up top and care for the animals, and will only change his mind if threatened with violence.

The Library

The Lattice door is a sliding screen. It will take some time to clear enough sand to open it, but it can simply be broken through with little effort. The other side is a chamber – perhaps 3 metres square – where a great many scrolls, some in sealed tubes but the vast majority just lying loose, can be seen heaped up on wooden trestles, one of which has collapsed. There must be several hundred of them. On inspection some are beautifully illuminated, almost all are written in completely unintelligible scripts, perhaps a handful in something that could be recognised as an archaic form of Djesmiri. Some detect as magical.

Taking Scrolls

It should be readily apparent that these scrolls could perhaps be as valuable a treasure as a chest full of jewels. The scroll chamber has a magical guardian but it is only conjured up if certain scrolls are removed. For every 10 scrolls removed (or fraction thereof) there is a 5% chance of picking one that awakes the guardian. If only scrolls in tubes are selected, the chance is 10%. If scrolls are selected because they detect as magical, the chance is 25% per scroll. Each scroll weighs 1 ENC.

THE GUARDIAN OF THE LIBRARY

This guardian spirit is a wraith that steals knowledge skills. When awakened, all the figures in the fresco seem to move (or was it just a trick of the light?). Points of light appear at different places, drift away from the wall then suddenly shoot towards the library where they coalesce into a glowing, translucent figure of an old, wise-looking man. All at once from about him scraps and shreds of paper and parchment form themselves into a whirling cloud of debris. He approaches the first transgressor and attacks, wrestling his victim in spectral combat while forcing the matter that forms his body into their orifices in an effort to choke them to death.

Whenever the wraith gains a combat advantage in Spectral Combat it can steal 1D20% from a random Lore skill. This can drop below the basic and the loss is permanent – if a skill reaches zero, the victim can never again gain any increase in that skill. If it reduces its victim's magic points below zero it can continue to attack the helpless and unconscious victim, stealing a further 1D20% with each free attack. The enchantments for this wraith are to be found etched into the wall underneath the plaster of the fresco.

The Passageway

A man of Size 13 or less can easily squeeze through the broken doorway if crawling – to make it possible to walk through would require shifting a fair amount of sand, perhaps an hour's work for one man (up to two could go at it at once). The passageway is about eight metres long and two wide and, once through the doorway, not too clogged with sand. Its walls are stripped of their frescoes and pieces of painted plaster lie all over the floor, as if someone has deliberately defaced them. After eight metres the

The Guardian (Knowledge-Stealing Wraith)

		1D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR	10	1–20	Body	–/11
CON	—			
SIZ	11			
INT	12			
POW	14			
DEX	12			
CHA	7			
Combat Actions	2	Armour: N/A		
Damage Modifier	—			
Magic Points	14	Traits: Dark Sight; Immune to Normal Attacks: Only magical damage affects the Wraith's body; Life Sense; Physical Manifestation		
Movement	10m	Skills: Evade 30%, Manifest 63%, Perception 60%, Persistence 60%, Resilience 70%, Stealth 48% Combat Style: Smother 55%, Spectral Combat 55%		
Strike Rank	9			

Weapons

Type	Size	Reach	Damage	AP/HP
Smother	L	T	Suffocation	—/—
Spectral Claw	—	T	1D8	—/—

passage is blocked by a great pile of sand that seems to have poured in from above.

Clearing away the sand that covers the floor of the passageway reveals a fine surface made from different coloured marble, laid out in geometric patterns. Digging away at the sand at the end of the passageway reveals (after about an hour) a desiccated corpse of a man in desert dress. The corpse lies face down pointing towards the domed room. It is impossible to tell how long this corpse has been here but the man's clothing is of the sort still worn by Soribisi today. The corpse has a long knife in its sash and what appears to be a bundle of rags under one arm. In this bundle are: an onyx statuette of a lion (value 80 Taskeens), three rectangular golden coins (20 Taskeens in bullion value each) and an elaborate brass key. The passageway seems to continue on, completely blocked by sand and debris that would take several man days to dig out.

GM note: This unfortunate looter was overtaken by the collapse of a large chamber at the other end of the blocked passageway. This collapse may have been natural, or may be a result of unwittingly releasing an elemental bound to the room or something in it. Clearing the debris should be more than the Adventurers can hope to accomplish on this visit to the site – however the sure knowledge that there is much more of Old Pashoom to be discovered may bring them back another day. The key has no practical use in the scenario and it is up to the GM to decide if it may one day turn out to be vitally important or a trinket.

RETURN TO SAROTIN

If water is short, Adventurers should work out how much remains and how much can be carried. If necessary, the Adventurers may agree to go on short rations. In this case an Athletics test should be made each day to test for fatigue. There will be no chance

for recovery on the journey – each Adventurer must make three Athletics tests en route and their condition on arriving in Sarotin will be determined by how many of these they succeed in. If water is completely gone, the rules for Chronic Thirst on page 62 of the *Legend Core Rulebook* apply.

If for some reason the Adventurers have lost Zhemir, heading in the right direction without a guide is not so difficult – it is a flat earth and landmarks can be picked up from a long way off. Picking a way though the terrain while staying more or less on course is the tricky bit. The party's leader should succeed in some sort of test – Survival, Regional Lore or whatever else he can persuade the GM is appropriate, and he can gain critical modifiers from members of the party who come up with clever ideas for how they can contribute their skills. If he fails the journey will take an extra day, with potentially disastrous results for the Adventurers' health.

All this becomes important because when the Adventurers arrive back at Sarotin, there is a high probability that Oshim's men are waiting for them under the leadership of a notorious bandit named Thebad.

EVENTS AT SAROTIN

Thebad will have arrived in town while the Adventurers have been away, discovered the fate of his henchman Shanju, and discovered (via informers) who in Sarotin is behaving in a friendly a manner towards the hated Taskans. Perhaps Akrish suffers a beating and some mindless vandalism of his shop - perhaps he is narrowly saved from death by the intervention of Salan and Fashil. It is of course possible that the Adventurers have left some of their number at the watchtower while the rest made the expedition to Old Pashoom. In this case, these Adventurers may well find themselves in fear of leaving the tower once Thebad and his gang arrive - if they do they are very likely to be baited into a fight.

Thebad's Aims

Thebad might be happy with robbing the Adventurers or subjecting one or two of them to a severe beating - If Shanju or Pashut have been killed then Thebad will be looking forward to using his curse spirit (The Shriveller) on one of the Adventurers, who he of course holds responsible. Killing one Adventurer would be sufficient blood vengeance, killing two simply satisfying.

Most likely the Adventurers will arrive back in town as a single group to find things eerily quiet, with almost no-one out of doors. The townspeople sense trouble and in the best traditions of a western movie hustle to safety as a showdown unfolds.

THEBAD, GANG LEADER

Thebad is Oshim's right hand man. In situations where Oshim regards personal intervention as beneath his station, or likely to embroil the movement in unwanted trouble, he sends Thebad to do his dirty work. Thebad acts as gang leader to the Spirit Warriors detailed later. He ranks as a Pious Member (Pathfinder) and a cut above the Spirit Warriors. He is taught Spirit Binding by the cult in order to learn mastery over the spirits of the Korazoon, although he uses Cult Lore to activate the spirits he has under control.

Thebad's Common Magic has been learned from the Witches of Qom and is cast using his grasp of their Lore (Witchcraft).

Thebad's Spirits

Thebad usually has Skyshadow active and a hawk under his command to use in the hunt - whether for regular quarry or human enemies.

Skyshadow (Intensity 1 Dominate Species Hawk spirit) INT5 POW11 CHA 2, CA2 SR4 HP11 Spirit Damage +D6, Persistence 44% Spectral Talons 55%. Skyshadow provides control over a hawk that acts as an invaluable scout.

Spitball (Intensity 2 Manifest Trait Camel Spirit) INT2 POW 14 CHA1, CA2 SR 2 HP14 Spirit Damage +D8 Persistence 52% Spectral Kick 70%. Spitball doubles Thebad's CON for the purpose of determining how long he can withstand thirst and exposure.

The Shriveller (Curse Spirit) INT 6 POW 13 CHA7. CA2 SR7, Spirit Damage +1D8, Persistence 52% Manifest/Spectral Shrivelling 65%. If The Shriveller covertly possesses a victim, the victim immediately urinates, vomits and sweats out any stored water and begins to suffer the effects of Chronic Thirst that no amount of drinking water can cure. This spirit is given to him as a gift by the Witch of Kushal.

THE SPIRIT WARRIORS

These men who follow Oshim are all from the lower ranks of Soribisi society but enjoying enormously the elevation that joining Nergesh's cause has brought them. They revel in the fact that they have a direct relationship with one of Nergesh's five sons and feel this is enough to walk tall amongst their peers and bully those who do not have a gang to back them up. They very much respect Thebad, because he has Oshim's ear and of course because he is meaner and tougher than they are.

Spirits

Spirit Followers (called Warriors) in the cult have been awarded a nature spirit as a companion, each of which represents a species

Thebad, Leader of the Spirit Warriors

STR	11	CA	3	Qomite Witchcraft 35%:	
CON	10	SR	14-3	Spirit's Bane (1), Countermagic Shield (2)	
SIZ	13	DB	+0		
INT	14	Mv	8	Cult Lore 65%:	
POW	13	MP	13	See below for details of Thebad's spirits	
DEX	13				
CHA	12				
SOC	8				

Location	AP/HP
01-03 R Leg	-/5
04-06 L Leg	-/5
07-09 Abdomen	4/6
10-12 Chest	4/7
13-15 R Arm	1/4
16-18 L Arm	1/4
19-20 Head	3/5

Armour

Scale cuirass, leather bracers, reinforced leather helmet

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP	Items
Recurve Bow	H	175m	1D8 Impale	4/8	Camel's tail flywisk Fetish. 33 Ankwati Dinars.
Shield	L	S	D6	4/12	Fancy gilt horse brasses and fittings worth 125 taskeens
Mace	M	S	D8 Stun Location	6/6	
Knife	S	S	1D3+2 Impale -10% Parry	4/8	

Skills

Athletics 40%, Brawn 30%, Evade 35%, Mounted Combat 50%, Perception 35%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 55%, Ride 75%, Stealth 40%, (Desert) Survival 70%.

Combat Styles

Archery 85%, Brawl 45%, Sidearm+Shield 75%

from the animal kingdom native to the Korazoon. They have been taught the basic Cult Lore (New Korazoon Theology) and it is this that they use to trigger the effects of the spirits. Each Spirit Warrior in Thebad's gang has a Cult Lore skill of 45%. They usually keep their spirits constantly activated, so it is unlikely they can be surprised before they have a chance to trigger their spirit effects, however they are vulnerable to spirit blocking magic.

Skills

Spirit Warriors all have the following skills:

Athletics 30%, Brawn 30%, Desert Survival 45%, Evade 25%, Perception 35%, Persistence 45%, Resilience 50%, Ride 75%, Stealth 40%.

Mounts

Only Thebad, Pancha and Pashut have horses – the remaining warriors are mounted on two camels.

THE BATTLE

Thebad and his men are spoiling for a fight with the Adventurers. Nevertheless they will only pick a fight they think they can win, preferring a situation where the Adventurers are split up or ill prepared - and they will not attack or ambush the Adventurers without having some pretext for doing so. This must be some personal issue, not an attack against Taskans. Thebad and his gang will threaten, intimidate, express outrage that the Adventurers have trespassed, defiled sacred ruins, plotted with traitors – anything that might provoke the Adventurers to make the first move or at least allow Thebad to deny culpability if blood is spilled. If the Adventurers refuse to take the bait, then Thebad and his boys will perhaps escalate their bullying and intimidation of the locals, daring the Taskans to intervene.

The combat could be staged in the street or - better and more dramatically - within the confines of the caravanserai. However here Akrish, Fashil or Salan will be in a position to give warning of an ambush and even to help the Adventurers out. If the Adventurers gain the upper hand and Thebad and his gang can see

they are beaten, those who can will try and hightail it out of town rather than fight to the death. Oshim's claim on Sarotin will be exposed as tenuous, and he will not thank the Adventurers for it.

It is up to the Adventurers to escape in one piece back to Fort Severity, with or without their spoils and possibly escorting Akrish out of Sarotin clutching his sponsorship papers and his easily portable wealth. Akrish, who is a tough old bird at heart, will probably hang out in Sarotin a little longer hoping to dispose of his less portable assets before moving on.

RETURN TO FORT SEVERITY

It may not be so easy to gather supplies and make the journey back to the fort. If Adventurers have no animals left they may have to beg or borrow a donkey from Salan Ishmal, or perhaps get Fashil's horse. Depending on how things are left in Sarotin, there may be a pursuit.

Tarasin will be horrified if the Adventurers' 'patrol' has resulted in an embarrassing incident and left Sarotin a no-go area for the Taskans. However if they have been successful in the side quest to Old Pashoom he will still be as good as his word, and pay a healthy bonus. The leader gets 100 Taskeens and his men 50. In addition he will give them a reward for any booty they return with, and pay some compensation to anyone who has suffered permanent injury - or use his Restoration spell if that is any help. There is no way to evaluate the scrolls at this stage but Tarasin will effectively pay or promise to pay (depending on the total amount) 5 Taskeens for every scroll, 10 for any in particularly good condition (i.e. still in a scroll case) and 50 for any that are demonstrated to detect as magical. The Adventurers will have to decide amongst themselves how this money will be divided.

Should the Adventurers attempt to conceal any small finds from Tarasin, they may well get away with it, as he is a trusting soul. In any event he is likely to turn a blind eye to anything very petty. If the Adventurers ever manage to find some way to translate or learn the language of the scrolls they will discover that the magical

Shimay, Soribisi Spirit Warrior

STR	11	CA	3	Cult Lore 45%:	
CON	10	SR	13-1	ArrowSnake (Intensity 2 Boost SR Snake Spirit) INT5 POW13	
SIZ	12	DB	+0	CHA4, CA2 SR5 HP13 Spirit Damage +1D8, Persistence 52%,	
INT	12	Mv	8	Spectral Strike 65%.	
POW	9	MP	9		
DEX	13			Once per round Shimay can attack first irrespective of Strike Rank	
CHA	12				
SOC	7				

Location	AP/HP
01-03 R Leg	-/5
04-06 L Leg	-/5
07-09 Abd	1/6
10-12 Chest	1/7
13-15 R Arm	1/4
16-18 L Arm	1/4
19-20 Head	-/5

Armour

Padded jerkin

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP	Items
Short Bow	L	80m	D6 Impale	4/4	Ruby red sloughed snakeskin fetish. 18 Ankwati Dinars.
Scimitar	M	M	D8 Bleed	6/10	
Buckler	M	S	D3	6/8	

Combat Styles

Archery 60%, Swordsman (and buckler) 50%

Pancha, Soribisi Spirit Warrior

STR	13	CA	3	Cult Lore 45%:	Location	AP/HP
CON	8	SR	13-1	Blackbeak, (Intensity 2 Combat Manoeuvre Crow Spirit) INT3	01-03 R Leg	-/5
SIZ	13	DB	+D2	POW13 CHA3, CA2 SR3 HP13 Spirit Damage +D8, Persistence 52%,	04-06 L Leg	-/5
INT	13	Mv	8	Spectral Peck 65%.	07-09 Abd	1/6
POW	11	MP	11		10-12 Chest	1/7
DEX	13			Blackbeak provides +1 damage to melee attacks capable of impaling,	13-15 R Arm	1/4
CHA	9			and the Blind Enemy combat manoeuvre*	16-18 L Arm	1/4
SOC	7				19-20 Head	-/5

Armour

Leather jerkin under clothing

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP	Items
Short Bow	L	80m	D6 Impale	4/4	Crow Feather Fetish. 23 Ankwati Dinars.
Knife	S	S	D3+1 Bleed, Impale	5/4	
Shortspear	M	L	D8+1 Impale	4/5	

Combat Styles

Archery 60%, Brawl 55% Light Spear 55

*This is an alternative to the Impale CM – when striking the head in close combat, Pancha can elect to pluck out his opponent's eyeball, causing a Serious Wound irrespective of the amount of damage done. In future the victim suffers a 1D3-1 loss of CHA and a 20% penalty to all Perception tests involving use of eyesight. Of course if Pancha manages this trick twice, the victim is permanently blinded.

Ishod, Soribisi Spirit Warrior

STR	13	CA	3	Cult Lore 45%:	Location	AP/HP
CON	8	SR	13-1	Eaglewing (Intensity 2 manifest trait Eagle Spirit) INT4 POW15	01-03 R Leg	-/5
SIZ	13	DB	+D2	CHA4, CA2 SR4 HP15 Spirit Damage +D8, Persistence 60% Spectral	04-06 L Leg	-/5
INT	13	Mv	8	Talons 75%.	07-09 Abd	1/6
POW	11	MP	11		10-12 Chest	1/7
DEX	13			Spectral wing buffet increases the Size of Ishod's parry by one class	13-15 R Arm	1/4
CHA	9			Common Magic (Rites 40%)	16-18 L Arm	1/4
SOC	7			Healing 2, Ignite	19-20 Head	-/5

Armour

Leather jerkin under clothing

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP	Items
Short Bow	L	80m	D6 Impale	4/4	Eagle Skull Fetish. 15 Ankwati Dinars. A pretty silver ring,
Shield	L	S	D6+D2	4/12	10SP.
1H Battleaxe	M	L	D6+D2+1 Bleed	4/5	

Combat Styles

Archery 60%, Brawl 35%, Light Spear 45%, Sidearm 50%

Tothet, Soribisi Spirit Warrior

STR	15	CA	3	Cult Lore 45%:	Location	AP/HP
CON	12	SR	12-1	Leatherback, (Intensity 2 Manifest Trait Armadillo Spirit) INT3	01-03 R Leg	2/6
SIZ	16	DB	+D4	POW14 CHA3, CA2 SR3 HP14 Spirit Damage +D8, Persistence 55%,	04-06 L Leg	2/6
INT	12	Mv	8	Spectral Painful Nip 70%.	07-09 Abd	3/7
POW	10	MP	10		10-12 Chest	3/8
DEX	11			Provides Tothet with 2 AP all over of gnarled leathery skin with no	13-15 R Arm	3/5
CHA	10			penalty to SR	16-18 L Arm	3/5
SOC	7				19-20 Head	2/6

Armour

Leather jerkin under clothing

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP	Items
Short Bow	L	80m	D6	4/4	Dried armadillo foetus Fetish. 20 Ankwati Dinars.
Sabre	M	M	D6+1 Bleed, Impale	6/8	

Combat Styles

Archery 60%, Sidearm 55

scrolls may contain one or more sorcery spells or rituals, perhaps ones that are highly rare or exotic. Non-magical scrolls may include training manuals or simply treatises on obscure subjects but could shed light on the extent of the “Kingdom of Tubisa”.

Within a few days of the Adventurers return from Sarotin, Timor Tarasin has sent a message up the line calling for a detachment to be placed in charge of the tower there, at least until its magical defences have been restored. As a result, a twelve man unit is sent down from Akraga to take up residence in the town. These men pass by fort Severity en route to their posting, and they are all of Khazeri stock, distinctively unsoldier-like. Sarotin is also henceforth to be included in the circuit of mounted patrols made by the Eskar mercenaries.

IMPROVEMENT ROLLS

Each of the Adventurers will get two Improvement Rolls plus or minus their IR Modifier. Thanks to their recent experiences an Adventurer may elect to spend two Improvement Rolls to gain a new Advanced Skill in either Desert Survival or Regional Lore (Korazoon) without having to undergo instruction or training.

If they have performed well an additional Improvement Roll should be given to be spent on any skill that is relevant to their recent achievements; if the Adventurers have returned from Sarotin with additional mounts taken from Oshim’s men, Tarasin will allow them to spend two Improvement Rolls learning to ride under his supervision or that of one of the scouts.

EPISODE 2: ESCAPE FROM FORT SEVERITY

In this episode the violent tensions the Adventurers have already been confronted with boil over into open conflict.

THE PLOT

Nergesh has always hesitated from being anything more than an irritation to the Taskan Empire – yet his following has a momentum of its own stirred by his firebrand sons who are perhaps less calculating and cautious than he. While Nergesh clings to power in the city of Ankwar his sons are more or less off the leash. So it is that two of them – Pimay and Oshim – take it upon themselves to show everyone, even the Taskans, just who is master of the Korazoon. An outrage against a travelling merchant is one thing – but to plunder a town that the Taskans claim as their own is a far more glorious prospect.

Pimay is the elder and most senior of the two and the leader of their plans, however Oshim is an entirely enthusiastic lieutenant. And their plans unfold with spectacular success, they arrange that allies among the Khazeri hill men subvert their cousins who are serving in Akraga for Taskan pay. Akraga is only actually occupied for a night but bloody murder is done there and the message is clear that all Taskans should consider themselves under threat.

TASKAN MERCHANT KILLED BY BANDITS

The first news that something evil is afoot comes when the Adventurers hear of a Taskan merchant who has been waylaid and

killed by some Soribisi raiders. They may receive this information directly, or via fellow soldiers who have heard the story while out on patrol or on an errand. Most likely Kyajo of Idambra (who will be encountered again in episode 4) is the ultimate source.

The source [Kyajo] claims to have travelled with a Taskan trader, Karostin Sebezoth, when they ran into a war-band under the command of a nomad called Zyadu. They were maybe 40 in number he says, all mounted, many of them on horses. Zyadu had Karostin and the other Taskans in the caravan seized and beheaded, letting non-Taskans go but not before robbing them of all their goods – this was punishment for consorting with the invader, he said. When the trader said that he would complain of his treatment to Nergesh of Ankwar, Zyadu laughed and told him that if he sat beside the road for a while then shortly Pimay, Nergesh’s eldest son, would be along with many more men, and he could complain to him. But he had better watch out, said Muagir, for it was Pimay himself who sent him ahead to seize the belongings of the Taskans and their friends in order to provide for his loyal followers.

The Adventurers may be detailed to investigate further by travelling to the spot where this event is reported to have happened. If so, there are indeed some plundered packs and belongings scattered around. There is a shallow grave in which the headless corpses of Karostin and his two young accomplices may be found. The Adventurers should be rewarded if they go out of their way to secure proper cremation, repatriation and disposal of the bodies.

MASSACRE AT AKRAGA

Much more serious news arrives within the month. From the walls of fort Severity, a lone horseman approaches from the north, kicking up a great trail of dust in his wake. On arrival at the gates he throws back the scarf that covers his face and calls out in Taskan to be let in. It is Toruth Lorian and he brings terrible news, which he spills out to Tarasin and the assembled soldiers as they gather round to listen.

‘Akraga has been sacked! The whole country is up in arms and you had better look to your defences. Two nights ago, traitors in the garrison admitted a band of raiders – hill men like themselves – and then joined with them in hunting through the town and fort, rooting out any Taskans they could find. They dragged men, women and even children from their hiding places and cruelly slaughtered them on the spot. A few managed to lock themselves in a part of the fort with some loyal men where they spent the night in terror listening to the bloodthirsty cries of the attackers and the screams of their victims. When the survivors emerged the next morning the raiders had gone, their treacherous friends with them, and the town had been thoroughly ransacked. I have set the survivors on the road north to Pryjarna and soon enough reinforcements will be sent to reoccupy the town. But as for you fellows, you are cut off here and must look to your defences.’

Toruth does not plan to stay with the garrison – he suspects that the New Korazoon Movement is behind the massacre and that many of his contacts and friends may be about to suffer at its hands. Hence his objective is to simply warn the garrison, obtain a change of mount and some supplies, and strike out first for Sarotin thence to Diwana. Should the Adventurers have made

Toruth Lorian, Imperial Agent

STR	11	CA	3
CON	14	SR	15-1
SIZ	13	DB	+0
INT	17	Mv	8
POW	15	MP	10
DEX	12		
CHA	17		
SOC	15		

Devotions: Zygas Taga (5, of which 2 points allocated to Gifts) Pact 70% Lore (Zygas Taga) 65%, Divine Magic: Absorption, Extension, Shield

Sorcery Manipulation 65%:

Grimoire (*The Red Book*) 87%: Damage Resistance, Enhance CHA, Intuition, Sense Assassin, Spell Resistance, Spirit Resistance, Treat Wounds

Location	AP/HP
01-03 R Leg	-/6
04-06 L Leg	-/6
07-09 Abdomen	2/7
10-12 Chest	2/8
13-15 R Arm	-/5
16-18 L Arm	-/5
19-20 Head	1/6

Armour:

Reinforced jerkin under desert robes; thick turban.

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP
Sword	M	M	D8	6/10
Dagger	S	S	D4+1	6/8

Skills

Athletics 60%, Commerce 42%, Culture (Soribisi) 53%, Education (Taskan) 78%, Education (Djesmiri) 34%, Evaluate 64%, Diplomacy 59%, Influence 96%, Insight 115%, Orate 65%, Persistence 78%, Regional Lore (Korazoon) 55% Resilience 44%, Ride 78%, Rites (Assabian) 47%, Rites (Taskan) 65%. (Desert) Survival 40%

Languages

Beshori 35%, Djesmiri 48%, Morkeshite 37%, Soribish 62% Taskan 94%

Combat Styles

Brawl 56%, Cloak and Dagger 56%, Swordsmanship (Tarsenian) 74%

Notes

Toruth will cast combined *Enhance Charisma*, *Damage* and *Spirit Resistance* with magnitude of 5 at a cost of 4MP at first sign of trouble - and try and brazenly talk his way out of it with an effective CHA of 34 (+17% to all CHA-based skills).

friends with anyone in Sarotin they may ask Tarasin if they can provide him with an escort.

SAROTIN ABANDONED

Should the Adventurers travel with Toruth to Sarotin, they will discover that Oshim has been harassing anyone who is known to be particularly friendly to the Taskans. The tower's garrison (from Akraga) is ready to desert and will do so as soon as they hear of events at Akraga, presumably running away in fear of their lives. Once that happens, Oshim will quickly attempt to get the tower's spirit guardian removed. These are all events in which the Adventurers can become involved.

Akrish has already taken his cue to cut his losses and head north to claim his Taskan citizenship if he had not already done so. Now any other bitter-enders such as Salan and Fashil are warned by Toruth, who makes very clear their days are numbered if they do not seek protection somewhere beyond Oshim's reach. If they make it out of Sarotin they will head for the protection of another

Soribisi chieftain, Muaga the Hawk, who controls the towns of Diwana and Bosabra (see Episode 4). Toruth will accompany them, but he will order the Adventurers to get back to fort Severity as quickly as possible.

OSHIM ARRIVES AT FORT SEVERITY

The next move, which may happen within days of the massacre at Akraga but after the Adventurers return from escorting Toruth Lorian to Sarotin, is that Oshim appears outside the walls of fort Severity with a considerable following. He then sends word to the occupants in diplomatic tones, offering sympathies for the recent misfortunes that have beset their countrymen, and passage out of the Korazoon for their own safety. While even the rather impetuous Oshim is careful not to openly lay claim to the atrocities committed at Akraga, he makes it quite clear that the Taskans should credit him with the power to deliver or deny them survival. He may in fact beg the garrison to take advantage of his offer before he loses his struggle to keep the 'rebels and brigands' in check.

Oshim the Scorpion's Claw, Ancestor-In-Waiting

STR	13	CA	3	Cult Lore 75%
CON	12	SR	15-4	
SIZ	12	DB	+0	See below for Oshim's spirits
INT	14	Mv	8	
POW	15	MP	15	Qomite Witchcraft 45%
DEX	16			
CHA	12			Second Sight, Speedart 2
SOC	16			

Location	AP/HP
01-03 R Leg	2+1/5
04-06 L Leg	2+1/5
07-09 Abdomen	2+3/6
10-12 Chest	2+3/7
13-15 R Arm	2+2/4
16-18 L Arm	2+2/4
19-20 Head	2+4/5

Armour:

Lamellar Cuirass made of horn, leather vambraces, thick leather treads, helmet. 2 points of chitin armour that does not affect his SR.

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP
Recurve Bow	H	175m	D8, Impale	4/8
Mace	M	S	D8, Stun Location	6/6
Shield	L	S	D6	4/12

Skills

Athletics 50%, Education (Djesmiri) 35%, Evaluate 54%, Diplomacy 29%, Influence 56%, Insight 65%, Mounted Combat 50%, Orate 55%, Persistence 67%, Regional Lore (Korazon) 95%, Resilience 53%, Ride 95%, Rites (Assabian) 32%, (Desert) Survival 77%, Spirit Binding 55%

Languages

Djesmiri 50%, Morkeshite 29%, Soribish 90%

Combat Styles

Archery 75%, Brawl 60%, Sidearm and Shield 70%

OSHIM'S SPIRITS

Claw (Intensity 3 Combat Manoeuvre (grip) Grampus Spirit) INT1 POW19 CHA1, CA2 SR1 HP19, Spirit Damage 1D10, Persistence 76%, Spectral Claw 95%

Husk (Intensity 2 Boost AP Scorpion Spirit) INT1 POW12 CHA1 CA2 SR1 HP12, Spirit Damage, Persistence 48%, Spectral Claw 60%

The Stinger (Intensity 3 Combat Manoeuvre (stun location) Scorpion Spirit) INT1 POW17 CHA1, CA2 SR1 HP17, Spirit Damage 1D6, Persistence 68%, Spectral Stinger 85%

Magwak (Intensity 3 command species Grampus Spirit) INT1 POW16 CHA1, CA2 SR1 HP16, Spirit Damage 1D8, Persistence 64%, Spectral Acid Cloud 80%

Gentle Sister (Intensity 2 Healing Spirit) INT11 POW14 CHA16, CA3 SR13 HP16, Spirit Damage 1D8, Persistence 56%, Spectral Hug 70%

Oshim is still young at 25, and he is an inexperienced leader having never really been in charge of anything more than a warband numbering a dozen or so of his cronies. When he appears at Fort Severity accompanied by some 300 men he is brimming with confidence but may quickly become frustrated if things do not quickly go according to plan.

Notable Traits

Impetuous - Oshim pretends he can be clever and patient, but he cannot pretend for very long. If there is a stand-off lasting more than a few days he will attempt some action that forces the issue rather than starve the Taskans into submission. He is desperate to show he is as good - or better - than his older and more senior brother Pimay. Pimay is likely to arrive in D6+4 days, and Oshim is determined to have everything under control when he does or he risks being humiliated as Pimay takes over. Note that Oshim will always have at least a day's prior warning of Pimay's arrival.

Shameless Liar - Oshim will say anything to achieve the ends he wants. His word is not his bond unless you happen to be his father, of whom he is terrified. Oshim will compound his shamelessness with extravagant protestations of honour, good intentions, and deep hurt that anyone should think him anything other than a hero of unimpeachable honour. Tarasin's Sense Honour spell could actually find a use where Oshim is concerned - and it will sense none.

Oshim's impetuosity could be used to get him to agree to a single combat, or combat of champions, as a way of resolving diplomacy. These are not Soribisi customs so the Adventurers would have to suggest it - and of course Oshim's natural falsehood means he will happily try and fix the outcome.

TARASIN'S CHOICE

Tarasin realises that the fort's supply route is cut and there is a good chance that no relief can come for some time. Food supplies

INVOLVING THE ADVENTURERS

The Adventurers should come to their own conclusions about what to do and have the chance to persuade Tarasin to their preferred course of action. This is not insubordination – the Taskan militia is a citizen force and therefore it is normal for an officer to find out the mood and opinion in the ranks before making life or death decisions. However note that Tarasin's resolve in respect of anything that looks like surrender will provide a +40% modifier to his Persistence when resisting any proposals of that kind.

If the Players do not attempt to pursue a strategy but wait and see what the GM throws at them, the most appropriate course of events is for the Adventurers to take part in fending off an attack on the fort when Oshim decides to rush things to a successful conclusion before his older brother arrives on the scene. The attack will probably involve Grampus being used to assault the walls while Oshim's men use fire to bring down the gate. Make sure the Adventurers find themselves tackling a Grampus as a unit, or defending the gate while their comrades do. Soon after this attack the garrison learns - from a captured enemy - that even more enemies will be upon them as Pimay is expected any day. At this juncture Tarasin selects the Adventurers to make a break-out (see *Escape from Fort Severity*, below)

are insufficient to maintain the garrison for long and the fort is a patrol base, not a stronghold to withstand siege and assault. Tarasin assumes that Nergesh's sons would never be so bold as to openly attack a Taskan military post. Whatever the case, Tarasin's objectives are: to ensure the survival of his command, either by withdrawing from Fort Severity or by defending it; to secure the safe evacuation of the company's strongbox and correspondence; to deliver the findings of the Adventurers' expedition to Old Pashoom to his friends in Zarina.

OPTIONS

1) Retreat to Akraga

It does not require a Diplomacy test to realise that to accept Oshim's offer of safe conduct to Akraga is to accept a humiliation. While the Taskans would be shown to be impotent, hostile native leaders would be reaping the rewards of demonstrating they can outsmart and out-manoeuvre the Empire. In addition Oshim's promises are not entirely reliable. He will turn a blind eye to any 'enthusiastic' warriors harassing the retreating Taskans on the way, attempting to extort money or possessions from them, and generally humiliating them in any way possible.

An Adventurer with strong persuasion skills may volunteer to win concessions – for example to enable the garrison to march out with all their weapons and equipment, perhaps even a guarantee from Oshim (for what it is worth) not to occupy the fort once they have gone.

2) Stay put

For the time being the fort is fairly safe, since Oshim has no means immediately to hand of scaling or breaching its walls. If the Taskans do nothing, they will find themselves in just the same position as the days tick by and the supplies run out. Any patrols that are sent out will be attacked soon after they are out of sight of the fort. Oshim will send messages denying culpability, claiming he cannot keep his people under control and begging the Taskans to reconsider their position. Eventually Oshim will throw off any further pretence and devise some stratagem to break the gates before Pimay arrives.

Oshim can always use Magwak, his Grampus spirit, to command up to three of these formidable monsters to attack the fort and its occupants; however he will have to go out and find creatures to command - and this will take a successful Regional Lore and a successful Tracking for each one, trying once per day. A Grampus is a dangerous creature in close combat, but all the more so because it can scale the walls of Fort Severity with ease, or even use its Formidable Natural Weapons and its Acid Spray to weaken the gate.

Oshim has a favourite Grampus that is always the first that he searches out and controls with Magwak - it's a female, and currently carries a little crowd of 12 young clinging to her back or scuttling over her body. In close combat they are perhaps more of a nuisance than anything else, but each has 1AP and 3HP, and each can spray acid once per day inflicting 1 damage to the AP of whatever it strikes or to the HP of a single unprotected location. In any combat round 1D3 of the young will be in a position to spray a target attacking them or their mother in Close Combat.

Once Pimay arrives the beleaguered garrison is likely to face coordinated magical assaults, as the more astute older brother has his followers pool their magical resources and spirits for an attack that will finally break Taskan resistance.

3) Send For Help

If Tarasin sends a messenger through to call for help, relief arrives in 10+D10 days - which may be too late. However if Tarasin selects the Adventurers for this mission (or they volunteer) it may be their salvation.

The task is to sneak past the enemy and get to Akraga as quickly as possible, and this will not be easy. Once they reach friendly territory they will find plenty of military traffic on the road but nothing resembling a force capable of marching to the rescue of Fort Severity. They will have to get their despatches to Pryarna to report the plight of their unit, and it will still take time for a relief force to be assembled, hence if and when the Adventurers finally return they are likely to discover the worst. For this reason Tarasin will ask the volunteers to carry with them any special correspondence or items they can reasonably carry without encumbering themselves.

Refer to the Escape From Fort Severity section below.

4) Take the fight to the enemy.

Despite Oshim's diplomatic protestations that he is not the Taskans' enemy, it may well be decided to dispense with diplomatic fluff and take some sort of decisive action to change the game. At any time Tarasin could lead his men out in battle order and dare the natives to attack. A fighting retreat all the way to the border is not out of the question. However the natives are much more mobile, can harass, ambush and snipe at the Taskans almost with impunity and Oshim has some 300 men, almost a third of them mounted, in the vicinity. The likelihood is that there will be many casualties and as a prime target for the enemy's spirits and missiles, Tarasin is one of them. A sneak attack on the enemy camp is possible - in reality there are little clumps of tents and shelters scattered over a wide area, and while the enemy would take some time to concentrate their forces it is very difficult to, for example, reach Oshim's own camp without running into patrols or satellite camps first.

To actually drive Oshim and his force away requires either dealing with Oshim himself or inflicting a humiliating defeat by killing or capturing more than 10% of his men. This will have the effect of demoralising his following, and many will melt away leaving him with insufficient forces to maintain a serious threat.

ESCAPE FROM FORT SEVERITY

The GM can choose to script the outcome of the stand-off at Fort Severity or give the Adventurers a central role in how it plays out. The simplest approach is to ensure that the Adventurers are given the chance to escape as a group, probably under orders from Tarasin either to seek help from a relief force or simply to

prevent the company's treasure from falling into enemy hands - the equivalent of 'saving the colours'. If still with the company, Raga son of Rasheir will be detailed to act as a guide.

Whether holed up in Fort Severity or under harassing attack during a retreat, when the chips are down and it appears all could be lost Tarasin will at some point direct the Adventurers to attempt escape with the unit's documents and valuables. Tarasin's personal effects, including his maps and any key scrolls recovered from the desert ruins, the company's paperwork, including the wills and letters of the men and the company's cash reserve, are loaded onto two mules. More are designated to carry water and minimal rations. The Adventurers will be advised to try and make it to safe territory via Five Stones and Semlik Hill rather than the direct route via Akraga which is presumed to be interdicted by Oshim's men.

Just before the Adventurers set out, Tarasin hands one of them a letter of introduction to one of his friends in Zarina, a man called Markon Salamis. This is to be used in the event of his death.

PROBLEMS

If the Adventurers break away from the rest of the unit undetected, they will only have to contend with a group of D6+6 Khazeri mercenaries in Nergesh's service who are waiting outside Five Stones to waylay any Taskans attempting to use this route. Otherwise they will also be pursued by D4+2 mounted Soribisi (use stats as for Thebad's gang of Spirit Warriors and provide some alternative spirit effects) and without some sort of further plan are highly likely to be overhauled in the pursuit.

ARMIGEZD AND HIS RENEGADES

These men may be the self same who deserted their post at Sarotin. Originally Khazeris who had taken Taskan citizenship and served

Armigezd, Renegade Khazeri Mercenary Leader

STR	13	CA	3	Khazeri Lore 80%
CON	15	SR	13-2	
SIZ	12	DB	+0	Iapet, (Intensity 2 boost HP goat spirit) INT5 POW13
INT	13	Mv	8	CHA4, CA2 SR5 HP13 Spirit Damage +1D8, Persistence
POW	11	MP	11	52%, Spectral Nibble 65%. Iapet is 'always on' and Armigezd
DEX	12			has a suitable goatish appearance - while adding to Arigezd's
CHA	12			HP the spirit also provides him the ability to eat and digest
SOC	10			almost any vegetable matter no matter how unpalatable

Location	AP/HP
01-03 R Leg	-/6
04-06 L Leg	-/6
07-09 Abdomen	2/7
10-12 Chest	2/8
13-15 R Arm	-/5
16-18 L Arm	-/5
19-20 Head	4/6

Armour
Leather hauberk, metal helmet

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP
Khazer Knife	S	S	D4+1, Bleed, Impale	4/6
Battleaxe	M	M	D6+1, Bleed	4/8
Shield	M	S	D3	6/8

Items
120 Ankwati Dinars; 15
Taskeens

Skills

Athletics 40%, Persistence 50% Regional Lore 80%, Resilience 45%, Stealth 35%, Tracking 45%

Combat Styles

Brawl 45%, Sidearm and Shield 60%, Knife Fighting 50%

Typical Khazer Mercenary (slinger)

STR	11	CA	2	Khazeri Lore 70%
CON	12	SR	12-1	
SIZ	12	DB	+0	Heal 1, Speedart
INT	13	Mv	8	
POW	9	MP	9	
DEX	10			
CHA	10			
SOC	7			

Location	AP/HP
01-03 R Leg	-/5
04-06 L Leg	-/5
07-09 Abdomen	1/6
10-12 Chest	1/7
13-15 R Arm	-/4
16-18 L Arm	-/4
19-20 Head	1/5

Armour

Goatskin jerkin and cap

Items

1D6 Ankwati Dinars each

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP
Khazer Knife	S	S	D4+1, Bleed, Impale	4/6
Sling	L	200m	D8, Stun Location	1/2
Shield	M	S	D3	6/8

Skills

Athletics 40%, Persistence 30% Regional Lore 70%, Resilience 30%, Stealth 30%, Tracking 35%

Combat Styles

Sidearm and Shield 40%, Sling 55%

Typical Khazer Mercenary (javelineer)

STR	11	CA	2	Khazeri Lore 70%
CON	12	SR	12-1	
SIZ	12	DB	+0	Prot 1, Bladesharp 1
INT	13	Mv	8	
POW	9	MP	9	
DEX	10			
CHA	10			
SOC	7			

Location	AP/HP
01-03 R Leg	-/5
04-06 L Leg	-/5
07-09 Abdomen	1/6
10-12 Chest	1/7
13-15 R Arm	-/4
16-18 L Arm	-/4
19-20 Head	1/5

Armour

Goatskin jerkin and cap

Items

1D6 Ankwati Dinars each

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP
Hatchet	S	S	D6, Bleed	3/6
Javelin x3	H	30m	D8, Impale	3/8
Shield	M	S	D3	6/8

Skills

Athletics 40%, Persistence 30% Regional Lore 70%, Resilience 30%, Stealth 30%, Tracking 35%

Combat Styles

Sidearm and Shield 45%, Light Spear 50%

in the garrison at Akraga, they soon turned traitor when they learned that their kinsmen in Akraga had risen up and murdered the Taskans there. Now their pacts with Zygas Taga have lapsed and they fight for Nergesh. None of them are yet fully fledged members of the New Korazoon Movement. If any of these men are captured and handed over to Taskan justice, the inevitable penalty for their crimes is a grisly death in front of the theatre crowd.

FIVE STONES TOWER

Five Stones is a little hamlet that sports a Taskan watchtower identical to that at Sarotin. Five Stones' tower is abandoned, its door sealed (the same incantation opens the magical seal as at Sarotin). It too has a guardian spirit. There is a collection of seven small huts and a larger house with some empty animal

pens and a barn collected around the tower and a well which offers brackish water.

Five Stones is the sort of place with a shifting population, since it is a regular camp-spot for soldiery, nomads and traders passing through the territory. A Tarsenian, Irago Tugarin, ran a corral there where he would let travellers pen their horses and livestock and trade for fresh mounts. The house was his, which now lies open with the door broken in and the rooms thoroughly ransacked, including his storeroom from which he would provide travellers with refreshments.

Irago himself is to be found in his own back yard, suspended by the heels from a branch of his walnut tree, and clearly tortured

horribly before he died. The culprits are Armigezd and the Khazeri renegades stationed astride the road to intercept travellers. Irago's wife has been taken off to slavery. His four year old daughter Imeela is being concealed by a friendly villager, a woman named Jalsa, dressed in rags, her face covered in grime to conceal her pale complexion. Jalsa will press upon passing Adventurers to carry the child back to safety in its own land. The rest of the villagers are surly and frightened – they refuse to be seen fraternising with the Adventurers.

From Five Stones the journey is all cross country - which, unless the Adventurers are mounted or extend each day's journey at the cost of a fatigue check, will take four days.

SEMLIK HILL

Safety at last. The tower is a customs station manned by men of the Zarinian contingent from a company based at Fort Revenge to the West. They have ample supplies of fresh provisions and the locals are all friendly. Everyone is eager for news of what is going on to the East. There is even an inn, the Sweet Repose, from the first floor of which it is possible to see the plains of Southern Tarsenia and even a narrow watercourse that eventually merges with others to form the Siskil River that flows by Zarina itself. The customs post captain can arrange for news to be forwarded on to Pryjarna, or else to provide the Adventurers with transport to take it themselves.

REPORTING IN

The Taskan army is not well placed to get reinforcements to Fort Severity in time to prevent a massacre. Unless the Adventurers take the news of their company's plight direct to someone in high authority (Toramsor the Iron Companion, Jerenk the High Priest or perhaps Karistan the Zarinian contingent commander) and succeed in a persuasion attempt or invoke Divine Intervention through their Zygag Taga pact, the decision will be to leave Tarasin and his men at Fort Severity to their fate and reoccupy the ground at a future time of the generals' choosing. In that case there is little chance for anyone to escape, only a thin hope that the Soribisi blood-fury subsides enough for them to realise they can take captives to ransom or sell into slavery. Tarasin and many of the other Taskans will be butchered out of hand. There are almost always survivors to any massacre of course, and in this case it is possible that a handful men escape through Divine Intervention thanks to their devotions.

If the Adventurers successfully persuade the authorities to send a relief force they should be rewarded with at least one Hero Point.

IMPROVEMENT ROLLS

Each Adventurer should be awarded two Improvement Rolls if they have successfully escaped from Fort Severity with their unit's cash and documents – and of course with some of the findings from Old Pashoom. Any extraordinary efforts to actually save their comrades or stick by them to the last, or perhaps taking great care to see to Imeela's well being, should be rewarded with Hero Points.

ZARINA

It is possible the Adventurers will go straight to Zarina from the border. More likely they find themselves given home leave for a month when they have made their report at Pryjarna. The Adventurers carry a letter of introduction to a friend of Tarasin's called Markon Salamis, who lives in the wealthy Dimarnis district of Zarina. Markon was a soldier too, but now he is a wastrel who spends his time in taverns and eateries, talking over old times and dreaming of never-to-be-realised adventures in search of fame and fortune. He has a large private income from his father which enables him to live his indolent lifestyle. Markon is 32 years old, still fresh-faced but rather corpulent. He lives with two similarly decadent drinking companions, old friends from the land of Camtri called Bartis and Bogard. Though 'barbarian' in origin they are of similar age, dressed in expensive clothes sloppily worn and with a friendly if slightly patronising (towards 'ordinary' people) demeanour.

On receiving his guests and the items from Tarasin, Markon will offer condolences for lost comrades, sympathy and, for a day or two, hospitality. Markon of course cheerily offers a reward – 200 Taskeens apiece. Should there be only one or two Adventurers left, he will double this. He further offers employment, since the Adventurers have been to the lost city and if he and his friends are to set about exploring it, they will need the assistance of someone who knows the locale. Therefore he proposes that they meet again in the New Year to set about planning an expedition. Before taking his leave of the Adventurers, he suggests that until such time as they rejoin their unit, they stay in a certain city inn and tell Rykel the innkeeper to charge their expenses to his account.

WHAT ABOUT IMEELA?

Imeela has no known family. The Adventurers may choose to leave her with one of theirs, draw on their community contacts, or give her to the protection of a temple or cult. Who knows, perhaps one day they will return to look after her? The most likely options are:

Jezri: The Emperor-cult might agree to find the girl a place as an apprentice dancer for a fee of 100 Taskeens. She is unlikely in the long run to be accepted as a temple dancer as she is not of a 'known' family and would end up being poorly treated by those who are - but this would provide her with a home for a few years.

Samanse: The public cult overseeing the temple at Zarina will look after her out of charity, perhaps giving her to a childless couple for adoption as soon as they find one.

Tethis: Imeela would be very well cared for by the cult of Zarinian Tethis, but would be destined, if pretty enough, to become a temple prostitute as soon as she turns 12.

EPISODE 3: TROUBLE AT BOSABRA

The shock news of such violent outbreaks on the border sends a wave of panic through the people of Pryjarna and the excitement among the troops stationed there – whether stirred by fear or anger

– is palpable. However for the military commanders in the region, led by Toramsor Tethais, deciding what is the proper response and who it should be aimed at is far from easy.

TORAMSOR TETHAIS, IRON COMPANION

Toramsor Tethais has a situation to deal with. His lacklustre force of militia bolstered by a smattering of regular troops is neither equipped nor trained for a campaign in the field. Nevertheless he must attempt to prevent any further outrages or incursions and to stabilise the situation while he consults with colleagues in Ashkor and decides whether to summon a force of regulars.

In order to make the troops at his command fit for purpose he needs to make them mobile. First of all, Toramsor has sent messengers out into the surrounding countryside, calling for volunteers who have some military experience and can ride, to sign up for an unspecified period to meet the threat of the current crisis. More notices have been posted in Pryjarna itself and all militia captains have been briefed. A number of volunteers have come forward. Some horses have been acquired locally, including from Rasheir the Jackal, and a delegation has been sent to Bandaknar to purchase more – many volunteers will be unable to furnish a horse and must be loaned one by the army.

Toramsor is fully aware that the New Korazoon Movement is behind events so far; however he does not know, even from Toruth, who is really calling the shots in the enemy camp and to what extent a real war is in prospect. And until he receives a clear instruction from the Iron Simulacrum he does not know whether to use the situation as a pretext to seize proper control of the Korazoon and take up a border with the Sultanates of Djesmirket.

THE FRONTIER HORSE

The Adventurers are at this stage orphaned from their unit and have crucial but rare experience of frontier conditions, hence find themselves prime candidates for posting into one of Toramsor's new formations. This is a hastily assembled cavalry unit – some 50 men in all – called the Frontier Light Horse, a unit for which a new nickname will no doubt quickly be found. The Adventurers will be kept together, their numbers supplemented with new characters to make them up to at least six men, including an Eskar scout. Whoever has the most military experience, or a reputation for action, will be placed in charge. For the next two days the theatre is given over to the Frontier Horse, where they can practice individual skills and riding manoeuvres. The caravanserai is turned over to them as barracks and stables, making them the most envied corps in town. The caravanserai owner, Jezil Almaran, is welcoming – business has not been good lately – and he does everything possible to have his new guests spend all their income with him. The tavern area swiftly becomes their common room and very soon even the farm-boy volunteers are swaggering around glorying in a new-found 'elite' status.

When one of Toramsor's lieutenants comes looking for them, however, their first instructions are something of a let-down. The Adventurers are to play escort to a supply caravan heading to Fort

Vigilance, and once there are to put themselves at the disposal of the local commander, Kyalin Harn.

RETURN TO THE FRONTIER

Fort Vigilance is a mud-brick building atop the dry escarpment overlooking the Lake Kushal salt pans. The view is breathtaking, from the yellow and browns of the hills across to the broad flat plains shimmering with pink-tinted lakes. The approach is rocky, dusty and very arduous, winding its way up along a path only just wide enough for two men to proceed abreast. The sound of goat bells can be heard in the distance and a column of smoke is visible twisting up from inside the fort. At last the wooden gates come into view and at the order of a man on a walkway above they swing open. Inside it is just as dusty and uncomfortable. Here and there a makeshift lean-to of canvass or hide has been set against the mud-brick walls to provide extra shade and all those who can are taking advantage of it. During the height of summer this exposed spot must be unbearably hot.

At present there is company of men from Tarsang garrisoned at Fort Vigilance, who are delighted to see the supply caravan arrive.

At the fort, the garrison commander, Kaylin Harn, has received a message from the oasis town at Bosabra informing him of a sickness which has laid low the Taskans based at the trade mission there, while leaving the townspeople unharmed. The men seem to be suffering a variety of symptoms and some have apparently gone quite mad. Kaylin asks the Adventurers to escort one of his men who is an experienced healer to the town, however this is not the extent of their mission. Apart from Taskan citizens there are important commercial documents and goods held in the compound, and should there be any apparent threat to the place the Adventurers are to make every effort to repatriate as much as they can.

The trail leads down into the Kushal basin, then veers away from the salt pans towards a patch of fertile land around Bosabra. The journey should take up to two days. Bosabra is under the lordship of an important Soribisi Chieftain called Muaga the Hawk. This Muaga has permitted a Taskan trading post to be stationed there. His brother, Shamsay the Fatty Camel, is headman of the town. Muaga himself moves between Diwana and Bosabra, and Jopna near Perlak, where the Bey is a personal friend.

THE HEALER

This fellow goes by the name of Taras Zidan, an educated young man of 24 years who in civilian life is apprenticed to his father, a doctor. Since he arrived at Pryjarna he has become a devotee of Basat. Basat is worshipped via mystery cult, so Zidan's casting chance for Divine Magic acquired from Basat is governed by his Cult Lore skill rather than his Taskan Rites skill.

Zidan has a limited number of medical supplies and a few magical spells. He is provided with a mule for him to ride.

THE SITUATION IN BOSABRA

Muaga is hostile to Nergesh and the New Korazoon Movement. Furthermore, Muaga allows the Taskans to keep a small garrison

Taras Zidan, Taskan Militiaman and Healer

STR	8	CA	2
CON	12	SR	12-3
SIZ	13	DB	+0
INT	14	Mv	8
POW	12	MP	8
DEX	11		
CHA	13		
SOC	14		

Taskan Rites 55%

Blessings: Samanse x1

Devotions: Basat (3) Pact 42%, Cult Lore 34%, Divine Magic Donate, Truespeak, Turn Undead; Zygaz Taga (1) Pact 22%

Sorcery Manipulation 28%

(Living Grimoire 30%): Glow, Mystic Vision, Sanctify, Spirit Resistance, Restoration, Worship Basat.

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP
Shortspear	M	L	D8+1, Impale	4/5
Shield	L	S	D4	6/12
Dirk	S	S	D3+2, Impale	6/8

Location AP/HP

01-03 R Leg	-/5
04-06 L Leg	-/5
07-09 Abdomen	2/6
10-12 Chest	2/7
13-15 R Arm	2/4
16-18 L Arm	2/4
19-20 Head	4/5

Armour

Quilted coat; metal helmet with turban

Items

4 doses of Healing Salve Potency 41, shelf life 2 years; 3 doses potency 60 Constitutional Elixir, shelf life 1 year remaining

Skills

Brawn 25%, Craft (Apothecary) 36%, Education 55%, Evade 26%, Evaluate 50%, First Aid 60%, Healing 40%, Lore (Medicine) 47%, Persistence 42%, Resilience 38%

Combat Styles

Brawl 25%, Spear and Shield 45%, Sidearm 35%

at their Bosabra trade mission there, which as far as Nergesh is concerned is an invitation to a foreign invader and a betrayal of the people. Nergesh is making use of the powerful witch who lives on Lake Kushal, an ally of Haljaf's, to plague the Taskans at Bosabra with curses, thus alienating them from the local population. Some of these have brought sickness; others have driven men to madness and suicide. The townspeople suspect there is a Plague Demon at work and now avoid the trading post at all costs lest some taint be passed on. Shamsay has already quarantined the trade mission and is seriously considering ordering the Taskans to leave town. As it is, two men tried to escape confinement in the enclave and were stoned to death by the townspeople, who are in a state of panic.

Nergesh has an agent in Bosabra, by the name of Kyajo of Idambra, who is not known to be a member of the New Korazoon Movement and is therefore not under suspicion from Muaga's people. He has a room at the caravanserai. Kyajo holds a selection of Witching Stones, enchanted pebbles that attract spirits to them – in this case hostile ones – which he is in the process of planting on unsuspecting Taskans to bring misfortune on their heads. The point of the exercise is to convince the locals that the Taskans are accursed and should be shunned or worse.

THE WITCHING STONES

These are large, polished pebbles of various hues cut with a complex tracery of shallow grooves across the surface that clearly serve some arcane purpose. In the hands of a competent practitioner they are used as lures to attract spirits that are to be captured and bound. In the hands of anyone who is unaware of their purpose and function they are highly dangerous. A Witching Stone activated by the application of one or more Magic Points shines out in the spirit world like a beacon; whichever type of spirit a Witching Stone is attuned to will find itself irresistibly drawn to the stone's radiance. Some such spirits are harmless to mortals because they lack either the Manifest or the Discorporate traits that allow them to attack

– some stones however attract dangerous entities such as a Curse Spirit or Madness Spirit. A spirit bound to a Witching Stone can usually manifest to, and attack, someone who touches the stone; however some spirits (particularly Sickness Spirits) may be able to afflict someone up to POW metres from the stone.

ORIGIN

Witching Stones have divine origin, those currently in circulation are gifts from the Witch of Lake Kushal to her friend Haljaf the Inconsolable and are all of the dangerous sort. Haljaf has issued them to his followers with the idea that they use them to bring curses upon the heads of the Taskans, to whom he is somewhat ill-disposed.

FUNCTION

Each stone is attuned to a particular spirit type, has POW and CHA and a Spirit Binding skill of POW+CHA x3% or higher. To work, it must be invested with at least one Magic Point – each Magic Point put into the stone will activate it for its POW in hours and cannot be recovered until the full duration has passed. For every hour it is active a Witching Stone has a chance equal to its CHA x5 to attract a spirit's attention. Once the spirit comes into range (which may take 1D6 hours) it is snared by the Stone and must win an opposed test of its Persistence against the Stone's Spirit Binding skill or be trapped there, haunting the stone or whoever comes into contact with it until such time as it is banished or captured. In the physical world the trapped spirit can move or manifest itself no more than its POW in metres from the stone. A stone can have more than one spirit bound to it, to a maximum of one per 3 CHA it possesses.

ARRIVING IN BOSABRA

From a couple of miles out, with Bosabra and its small plots of cultivated land and palm trees in the distance, the Adventurers encounter a large herd of goats, tended by shepherd boys afoot

with a small knot of mounted warriors keeping watch from a nearby rise. One of them trots off towards the town; the remainder approach the party to find out who they are and what they want.

They are all men of the Kashel clan, loyal to Shamsay and through him to Muaga the Hawk. They are extremely wary as soon as they deduce that the new arrivals are Taskans. They will refuse to allow the Adventurers to move on until they have received further instructions from the town. In the meantime they are told to camp where they are and are brought food, water and fodder for their mounts. Should the Adventurers want to start a fight, the Kashels will not give them one but will gallop off and get all their friends, plus a number of hastily rounded up townsfolk who will be happy to oblige. It should be immediately apparent that violence won't work.

NEGOTIATING PASSAGE INTO BOSABRA

In the end, Shamsay himself will arrive the next morning accompanied by an armed retinue of 20 men. There is a great deal of ceremony as a large and decorative nomad tent is erected, floored with rugs and strewn with cushions in which Shamsay can receive a delegation from the Adventurers. Shamsay is accompanied by some of the leading men of the town, there to advise (if asked) but also just to see the fun. They will include Koorab the priest, Walim Turkal the rug merchant, and - if he has survived and made it here from Sarotin - Salan Ishmal. The Adventurers will have to negotiate the terms under which they will be admitted to the town. Shamsay will suggest that only the healer be admitted but that the Adventurers wait here and escort their sick comrades back to their own land. He even offers transport for this purpose. He is dreadfully worried that even if he were to let the Adventurers in they would be lynched (and so might he) by the townsfolk, and therefore any attempt to persuade him to an alternative course of action will be opposed by his Persistence.

The Adventurers' spokesperson can roleplay the debate, to get Shamsay to soften his position. If he succeeds in an Oratory roll perhaps there can be a compromise, through which the Adventurers can at least enter Bosabra. If the Orate roll is failed but the arguments are good, someone may intervene on their behalf - if Salan Ishmal is not there to whisper into Shamsay's ear, perhaps Toruth Lorian appears on the scene.

At the very least, it will be made very clear that once an Adventurer has entered the trading mission he shall be considered tainted and will not be allowed to leave again unless they can provide absolute assurance that there is no risk, or it is to quit town. Should any Adventurers fall ill anyway the curse upon the Tarsenians is confirmed and the Adventurers will have to make a decision to quit town or incarcerate themselves in the trade mission.

SHAMSAY THE FATTY CAMEL, RULER OF BOSABRA

Shamsay is a portly fellow of about 45 years old, a kinsman of the local chieftain Muaga the Hawk. He is finely dressed in white Morkeshite robes and a golden sash in which is thrust a jewelled

dagger. Both hands are weighed down by many rings. A slave is constantly at his side with a large fan. He does not allow the Taskans to come anywhere close to him.

Shamsay worships the old Assabian pantheon of gods whose worship is increasingly being supplanted or eroded by the New Korazoon Movement. The same pantheon of gods is worshipped in cities from Morkar in the West to Jelhai in the East and Sharranket in the South. Shamsay thinks his brother a mystic whose philosophy fails to bring sufficient benefit in the real world. It is not for him - Shamsay likes the good life and he likes the feel of age-old rituals and the promise of immediate divine aid from gods with smiling faces, not the ascetic regimes of prayer and fasting the Sanekites practise. Shamsay is unfortunately sterile and has been able to produce children only by Divine Intervention from the god Haliset - consequently he has a very low POW, but enormous gratitude to the god.

Notable Traits

Worldly - Shamsay has fully embraced settled life, he likes to live under a proper roof and sleep in a proper bed and have all the comforts of civilisation. He considers nomadism a proud but primitive tradition.

Self-Indulgent - The main benefit of the civilised life is never having to want for anything and Shamsay never does. He likes his wines and he likes his women. His brother despises this trait in him.

Cowardly - Shamsay will never put himself in a position of personal danger of he can at all help it.

Loyalty (Muaga) - Despite all their differences Shamsay both loves and respects his brother and will do his best to serve him well.

Love (Agrilla) - Agrilla is Shamsay's one year old daughter, to whom he is utterly devoted. Born only through Divine intervention, if anything ever happened to her he will go quite mad. Because of his fears for her well being he will keep his distance from any Taskan (perhaps resulting in some slightly ludicrous long-range conversations conducted by shouting) and will be absolutely strict in not allowing a possibly infectious Taskan near his home.

As far as Shamsay is concerned, while the Taskans are kept to their compound they can do no harm and the pestilences with which they have been afflicted will not spread to the local population. If he forces them out of town he risks being labelled as an enemy of the Taskans and besides none of his men would want to provide an escort and without one they would be easy prey for the desert raiders.

BOSABRA TOWN AND ITS INHABITANTS

Bosabra has some 300 or so permanent residents and a large number of transient nomads, pilgrims and merchants. The residents are a mixture of Djesmiri-speaking civilised folk such as you would find in Perlak, Ankwar and so on, and settled Soribisi.

The town is a collection of one and two storey flat-roofed dwellings made of mud-brick. The houses are mostly one or two-roomed affairs, the flat roofs providing extra living space. Some

Shamsay the Fatty Camel, Headman of Bosabra, Devotee of Haliset-Toad

STR	15	CA	2	Rites (Assabian) 86%	Location	AP/HP
CON	10	SR	12	Blessings: Temnit x 1, Haliset x2	01-03 R Leg	(5) -/5
SIZ	14	DB	+D2	Devotions: Haliset Toad (2) Pact 85%, Divine Magic:	04-06 L Leg	(5) -/5
INT	12	Mv	8	Aphrodisiac; Channel Strength	07-09 Abdomen	(5) 4/6
POW	6	MP	4		10-12 Chest	(5) 4/6
DEX	12			Spells	13-15 R Arm	(5) 3/4
CHA	11			Shamsay is protected by a Damage Resistance 5, Magnitude	16-18 L Arm	(5) 3/4
SOC	16			2 cast for him each month. There is a 20% chance at any time	19-20 Head	(5) 5/5
				that Shamsay is between spell renewals and unprotected.		

Armour

Usually none, however when prepared he wear bronze scale cuirass, bracers and fine helmet with aventail

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP
Recurve Bow	H		D8+D2	4/8
Sword	M	M	D8+D2	6/10

Items**Skills**

Athletics 35%, Commerce 35%, Culture (Own) 70%, Culture (Assabian) 60%, Education (Djesmiri) 40%, Evade 27%, Diplomacy 40%, Influence 55%, Insight 54%, Orate 68%, Perception 45%, Persistence 54%, Regional Lore (Korazoon) 60%, Resilience 50%, Ride 75%, (Desert) Survival 40%

Languages

Djesmiri 65%, Soribish 72%, Taskan 30%

Combat Styles

Brawl 53%, Swordsmanship 55%, Archery 76%

Eshim Xaro, butcher and mob leader

STR	14	CA	2	Assabian Rites 72%	Location	AP/HP
CON	10	SR	11		01-03 R Leg	-/5
SIZ	12	DB	+D2		04-06 L Leg	-/5
INT	13	Mv	8	Devotions: Haliset (2) Pact 35%, Divine Magic: Channel	07-09 Abdomen	-/6
POW	12	MP	10	Strength, Vigor	10-12 Chest	-/7
DEX	9				13-15 R Arm	-/4
CHA	13				16-18 L Arm	-/4
SOC	12				19-20 Head	-/5

Armour

None

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP	Items
Cleaver	M	S	D3+D4+2		

Skills

Commerce 40%, Craft (Butchery) 96%, Evade 20%, Evaluate 68%, Influence 70%, Insight 35%, Persistence 65%, Resilience 45%

Languages

Djesmiri 85%, Soribish 35%

Combat Styles

Brawl 40%

larger, stone-built, houses belong to the wealthier local artisans such as the butcher and the rug-merchant, who employs many of the local women. Many keep small gardens and orchards, or keep sheep and goats, even horses, in the surrounding country. Most will have an alternative trade as well to supplement their living.

The town is unwalled, although there are some walled enclosures; the Taskan trade post, the Caravanserai and The House of Muaga. Near the town, surrounded by irrigated fields and groves of palm trees, is a small Ziggurat, a shrine to Haliset and Tolat.

The most important public spaces are the caravanserai courtyard and the public well, where men and women respectively congregate.

The people are mostly traditional in their religious practices but include one or two Sanekites (followers of an atheist tradition). If there are any spirit followers in town they keep their interests quiet for the moment.

LEADERS

Shamsay is the acknowledged head-man and his brother Muaga the town's lord. The 'mob' of some 40 adult males and some women and children look to Hezzil Jambra the Caravanserai owner, Eshim Xaro the Butcher, and Koorab the priest for leadership depending

on the situation or their mood. If the mob is angry and trouble is brewing, then it is most likely Eshim Xaro is egging them on.

The largest employer, Walim Turkal the Rug Merchant, is close to Samsay but not entirely liked in the town as he pays little to the women who work for him and is rich enough to be the target of much jealousy.

THE TOWNSFOLK IN DEFENCE

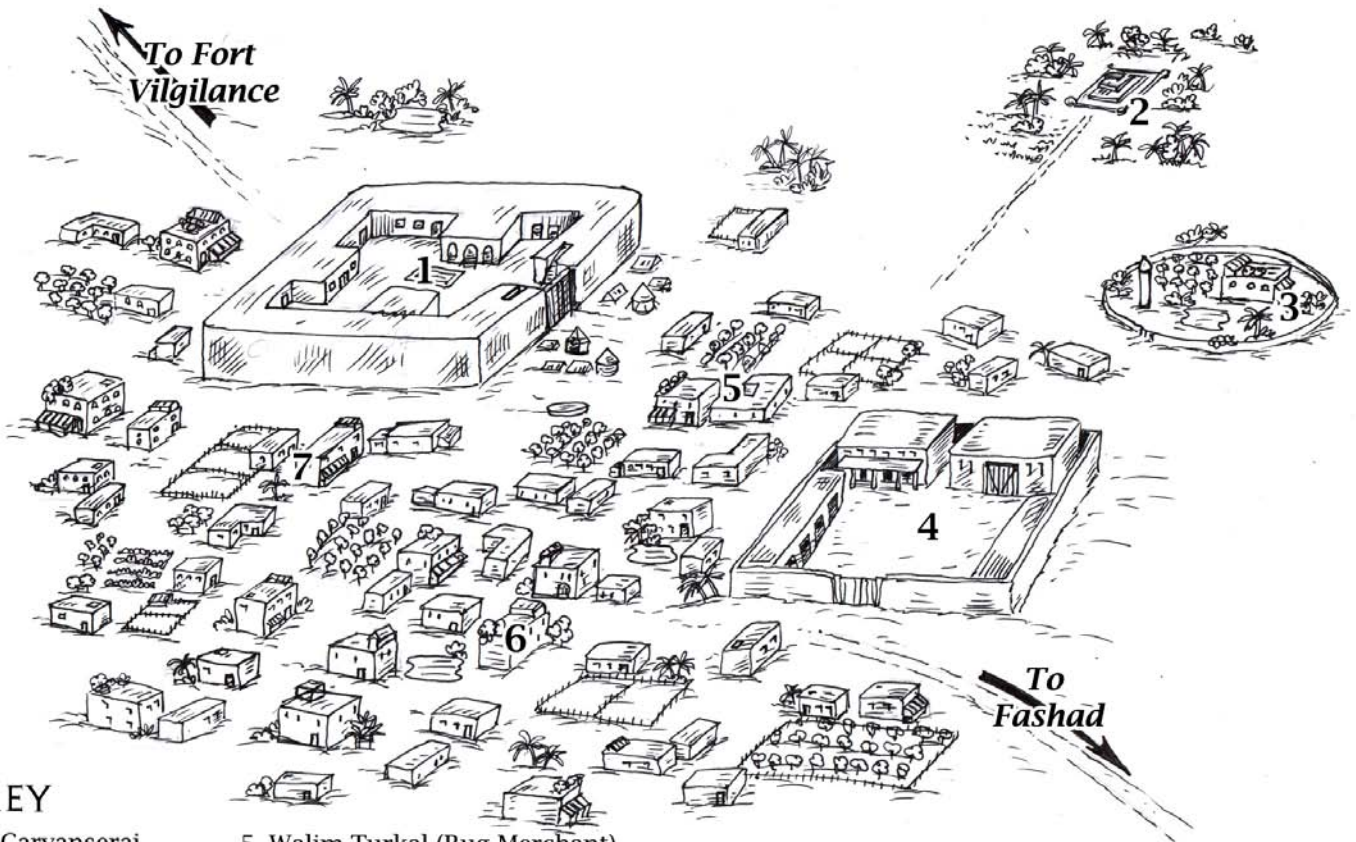
There are 30 armed men loyal to Muaga and Shamsay in Bosabra or tending herds in the surrounding area. With the region being in a state of unrest the caravanserai is full to bursting and around it are clustered a number of nomad and other tents, so that their occupants can get inside the compound at the first sign of trouble.

About 12 townsmen own proper arms but little armour. The remainder would, in the event of an attack, cram themselves into the Caravanserai with the women and children, or barricade themselves into their homes and perhaps take to the roofs where they can tear up bricks to throw at enemies in the street below.

THE TASKAN COMPOUND

This consists of a large warehouse, administrative office and store, with a dormitory barrack on one side and a stable on the other. The whole arrangement is surrounded by a three metre high wall,

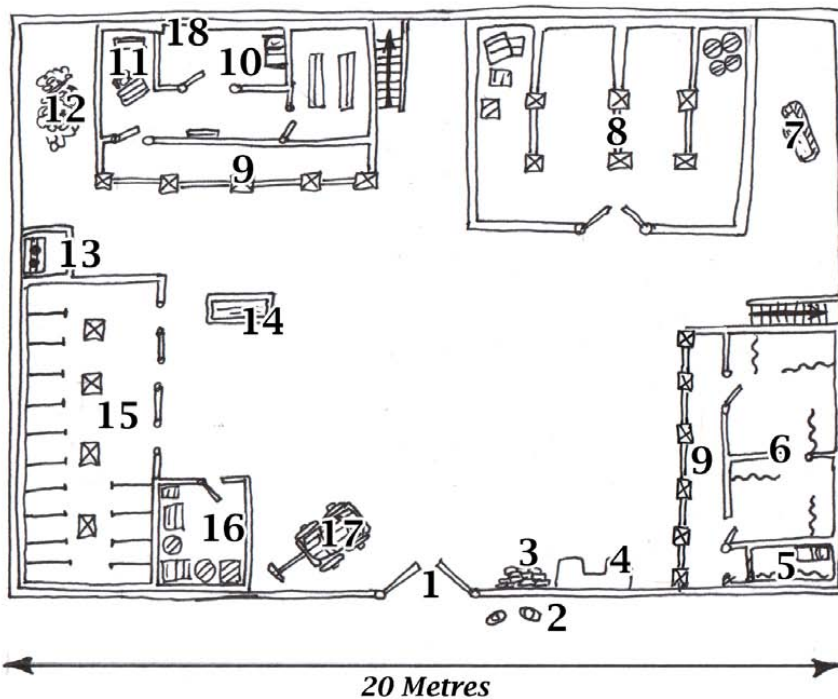
BOSABRA



KEY

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Carvanserai | 5. Walim Turkal (Rug Merchant) |
| 2. Ziggurat | 6. Koorab's House (Priest) |
| 3. House of Muaga | 7. Eshim Xarao (Butcher) |
| 4. Taskan Compound | |

TASKAN COMPOUND AT BOSABRA



KEY

- | | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Gate | 7. Cremation Pit | 13. Latrine Pit |
| 2. Guards | 8. Warehouse | 14. Water Trough |
| 3. Fuel | 9. Veranda | 15. Stables |
| 4. Oven | 10. Elias Garsang's Quarters | 16. Storage |
| 5. Symindra's Quarters | 11. Office | 17. Water Cart |
| 6. Dormitory | 12. Refuse | 18. Strongbox Niche |

which has a narrow step behind so it makes a serviceable defence-work. It is the last Taskan staging post on the road South from Pryjarna at which government bonds, receipts and currency are valid. Authorised parties can exchange mounts and pack animals, change money and obtain supplies at fixed rates and for authorised paper, rather than hard cash. The trading post is also there to monitor caravans and travellers passing into and out of Imperial territory and heading East-West along the border. It was set up by an important Tarsanian merchant, Elkot Visilian, and one of his factotums, by the name of Elias Garsang, manages it for him.

The gates are currently guarded from the outside by two of Shamsay's men, who are there as much for the protection of the occupants from the townspeople as to prevent them from getting out. The occupants always keep a watchman on the wall and another stationed atop the main building. The Adventurers, if admitted to the town, will be spotted by the lookout and by the time they draw near all the able-bodied occupants will be on the walls cheering and waving, assuming there might now be an end to their troubles.

THE OCCUPANTS

At present there are seven soldiers from various militia groups, all here on punishment duty, and a couple of minor officials, including a woman, Symindra, who is unassuming and unimpressive yet commercially astute and highly sensitive to the machinations around her (Commerce 55%, Evaluate 80%, Insight 70%). She will not push herself forward and is extremely wary of attracting Goya Vartigern's anger (see below) or even his notice, but she could offer useful advice and insight to the Adventurers if it is needed.

So far disease and misfortune have killed three of their former comrades. Two died from sickness caused by possession by sickness spirits. Elias Garsang, the official in charge, was possessed by a madness spirit and locked himself up in his quarters for three days. When he was no longer heard to gibber and groan, others forced an entry to find he had mutilated and strangled himself. The dead have all been cremated in a fire trench dig within the compound walls, and Symindra has gathered their ashes up into some empty oil jars.

In the 10 days since all this started, the Taskans have been kept quarantined by Shamsay in their compound, while he awaits a definitive answer from Muaga as to what to do with them. He has at least had fresh food and water delivered, placed in baskets lowered from the walls. He was

unable, however to prevent angry citizens from killing two men (civilians) who tried to slip out of the compound and escape North to Fort Vigilance.

Goya Vartigern

Goya Vartigern has so far bullied and conspired to make himself an emergency leader and has succeeded in bringing some sort of order to the situation (this is an opportunity to reintroduce an NPC with whom the Adventurers have previously had a run-in resulting in a grudge). This fellow is a bully, a thief and a liar, who has nevertheless taken control of the occupants of the trading post. In the aftermath of Elias Garsang's death he surreptitiously looted a quantity of valuable promissory notes (to a value of 1,500 Taskeens) from Elias's office, as well as a little cash (80 Taskeens) and the key to the strong box, and declared the office off limits. Included in his haul was the Witching Stone that caused Elias' death – Goya has no idea what it is but thinks it looks interesting and potentially valuable. These items are hidden in his personal kit and he has declared the office off-limits due to whatever 'curse' afflicted the merchant. If the Adventurers insist on accessing the

Goya Vartigern, Zarinian militia corporal

STR	13	CA	2	Taskan Rites 37%
CON	12	SR	12-3	Blessings: Hamath x1
SIZ	14	DB	+1D2	
INT	13	Mv	8	Devotions: Zygas Taga (1) Pact 25%
POW	9	MP	8	
DEX	11			
CHA	9			
SOC	7			

Location	AP/HP
01-03 R Leg	2/6
04-06 L Leg	2/6
07-09 Abdomen	2/7
10-12 Chest	2/8
13-15 R Arm	2/5
16-18 L Arm	2/5
19-20 Head	3/6

Armour

Quilted coat, thin metal helmet

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP	Items
Spear	M	L	D8+1 Impale	4/5	Blue Witching Stone (see accompanying text);
Shield	L	S	D4+D2	6/10	87 Taskeens in cash; 1,500 in convertible notes.
Club	M	S	D6+D2, Stun Location	4/4	
Dirk	S	S	D3+D2+2, Impale	6/8	

Skills

Athletics 35%, Brawn 40%, Education 20%, Evade 35%, Evaluate 55%, Fast Talk 56%, Insight 30%, Persistence 38%, Resilience 64%, Sleight 37%

Languages

Tarsenian 82%, Djesmiri 26%

Combat Styles

Brawl 45%, Spear and Shield 52%, Sidearm and Shield 48%

office he will attempt to intimidate and persuade them not to enter 'for their own good'. An Adventurer who succeeds in an Insight test will be able to see that Goya's attitude is because he has something to hide. With a critical success they will be convinced that Goya will desert as soon as he has a chance.

INVESTIGATIONS

Taras Zidan or an Adventurer with suitable skills and spells should scour the compound for evidence of a Plague Demon and will find none. The conclusion must be that sickness spirits were responsible for the deaths (a lesser evil), and that begs the question of who sent them. In the process one or more of the Witching Stones may turn up depending on how the search is conducted.

Searching the Office

Only someone capable of examining the books will be able to note the missing paperwork and cash, and this would take some hours to

establish. However Elias' journal, that Goya has not read (reading is not his strong suit), refers to the interesting stone he bought from Kyajo of Idambra, and this is of course nowhere to be found. The Adventurers will find the strong box but no key and Goya will maintain that Elias must have hidden it somewhere. The box contains 2,000 Taskeens of guaranteed notes, and a further 340 Taskeens in hard cash. Should the trading post need to be evacuated, this should of course all be taken and returned to the nearest Zygas Taga temple.

WITCHING STONES IN THE BOSABRA TRADING POST

There are two of these stones hidden in the compound, and both are presently inactive until someone puts Magic Points into them. If someone is looking in the right place they can be found through use of Sense Magic, Spirit Walking, Mystic Vision or Soul Sight as well as physical searching, but a Perception roll is still required unless a stone is active.

PROMISSORY NOTES

The Taskan Empire facilitates trade by issuing paper notes guaranteed by the state that can be used to transfer large sums of money without the use of large quantities of coin or bullion. Each merchant corporation or shipping company issues their own notes, to a value of credit they have with their local Emperor-cult. Notes are usually issued in denominations of between 100 and 1,000 Taskeens, however notes of 100,000 and rarely even 1,000,000 have been used. The notes can be redeemed for cash direct from the issuing merchants, or failing that from the underwriting city or provincial administration (there is usually a levy in this instance if redeeming in a city or province other than the one under whose jurisdiction they were originally issued). The use of these notes is made possible by the stability provided by the Empire – in times of trouble no-one would want to deal in them. Even in peace time they are sometimes regarded as being less valuable than real money.

THE STONE UNDER THE DORMITORY

This is a greyish colour marbled with veins of green, has a POW of 7 and a CHA of 6 and attracts Sickness spirits. This was simply activated by Kyajo on a visit to the compound and kicked under the raised wooden floor, and can be discovered and raked out with a stick or other device by anyone bothering to search (Perception test). It has already done its work and is now idle, its activation having expired.

GOYA VARTIGERN'S STONE

This stone is in the possession of Goya Vartigern at the Taskan compound, who took it from Elias Garsang's personal possessions after the trader was found dead. It has POW 5 and a CHA 4 and attracts Curse (madness) spirits. It is also currently idle. However when Goya thinks he can examine it in privacy without risk of discovery he is very likely to try putting a Magic Point or two into it – and that could be the end of him, or at least drive Goya into some bizarre course of action that puts everyone around him at risk.

THE WAREHOUSE

There are goods still stored in the warehouse at the compound – 1D6x100 ENC of goods, with an average value of 10 Taskeens per ENC – a mixture of textiles, grain and fodder, some metal goods, iron ingots, leather, hides, feathers and skins, raw wool and linen, some spice barrels. These goods could be left in the compound, entrusted to Shamsay's care, used for ransom or part-sold to acquire essentials such as transport to remove the remainder – however the Adventurers will at some point be held to account if their treatment of the goods is questionable. If Goya is left to decide what to do, he will try and use them to secure his own safety and certainly try to benefit personally from their disposal.

THE ZIGGURAT

This shrine to Haliset-Toad is a Sacred Site, hence it is treated as permanently Sanctified, and devotees can dedicate POW and acquire Divine Magic here as well as regain it once used. Haliset does not respond to Taskan Rites, so to approach him first requires instruction in Assabian Rites (probably from Koorab the priest).

The Little Ziggurat is no more than two and a half metres high, built many years ago of mud brick and occasionally restored as the years have taken their toll. Around it the grass is a little greener, the trees a little taller and fuller than anywhere else in the vicinity. It rises in four tiers, with a central flight of shallower steps leading up to a relief-carved block at the top. At each corner are identical statues, a metre high, each a toad with a wide-gaping open mouth and a lolling tongue.

Ceremonies involving the whole community are held here twice per year. Shamsay or some other local will explain that this monument honours Haliset and Tolat. Haliset is the toad, who is protected from the worst the desert elements can inflict in some dark, damp recess provided by the earth goddess Tolat. In return he fertilises the earth and fights off pests and infestations that threaten its fruits. The townsfolk leave offerings here regularly, to thank Haliset and Tolat for making this oasis. The local priest is a man called Koorab who can be called upon to officiate at

a Worship ritual at any time for a small fee. Although the local religion is foreign to Taskan visitors, the Assabian rites practised here are of a similar sort to their own and the Adventurers would be able to follow what is going on even though they cannot properly participate without instruction.

Around the ziggurat, growing amongst the trees and between the cultivated plots of the local gardeners, plants may be found that have use as medicines.

MUAGA'S HOUSE

Muaga has a house in town, where Shamsay resides with his wife and daughter. It is a fine house with many rooms and a decorative roof garden, with 10 servants living on the ground floor. It has a little carefully cultivated ground around it containing a tall, narrow tower and enclosed by a two metre wall. Muaga himself only ever uses the place to receive guests, as he never sleeps indoors if he can possibly avoid it – when he is in town he generally has a tent erected in the garden. His only vanity has been to have the tower built by craftsmen of Perlak, in which he can isolate himself for contemplation, with a view.

THE CARAVANSERAI

This is the most substantial building in the town and the place used by all the non-Taskan travellers and merchants passing through the town. It has Bosabra's only tavern. A large, rectangular fortified building with sandstone foundations, it has an open courtyard in the centre accessed by a heavy gate. The plan is similar to that of the caravanserai at Sarotin, and this place too is a relic of a bygone age.

The caravanserai is managed by a fellow named Hezzil Jambra, a jolly settled Sorib and crafty trader. He is assisted by Irgiza his wife, a son, four employees and two slaves. The establishment has an eatery/drinking hall, a store selling provisions, warehousing space, five private rooms and a dormitory. All are currently full.

In peaceful times local craftsmen and merchants passing through town sell their wares in a weekly market held in the courtyard. In times of trouble the caravanserai accommodates at least the town's women and children. Normally, 10 of Shamsay's men would get posted here while the others with the assembled men of Bosabra would try and defend the rest of the town.

When the Adventurers arrive, there are a number of tents pitched right by the caravanserai gates, belonging to travellers and refugees who could find no room at the Inn and want to be as close as possible to the protection it would offer if Nergesh's men attack Bosabra.

Kyajo of Idambra

Kyajo presents himself as a failed caravan master whose business dried up with the decline in traffic across the Korazoon. This, like all the best lies, is partly true. Kyajo was ruined when his last goods were seized and he was taken hostage in a caravan raid by Nergesh's son Pimay. He now hopes to use the patronage of his erstwhile captors to get re-established as a prosperous trader athwart a worthwhile trade route. He would be more than happy

Kyajo of Idambra

STR	11	CA	3
CON	6	SR	14
SIZ	13	DB	+0
INT	15	Mv	8
POW	11	MP	11
DEX	12		
CHA	7		
SOC	11		

Assabian Rites 52%

Blessing: Temmish x2

Qomite Witchcraft 34%

Common Magic: Glamour 2, Spirit Bane 2

Location

01-03 R Leg	-/4
04-06 L Leg	-/4
07-09 Abdomen	-/5
10-12 Chest	-/6
13-15 R Arm	-/3
16-18 L Arm	-/3
19-20 Head	-/4

Armour: None

Weapon

	S	R	Damage
Club	M	S	D6, Stun Location
Dagger	S	S	D4+1, Bleed, Impale

AP/HP

4/4
6/8

Items

Red Witching Stone (see accompanying text)

Skills

Commerce 65%, Culture (Own/Soribisi) 83%, Culture (Djesmiri) 55%, Culture (Taskan) 30%, Education (Dejsmiri) 35%, Evade 32%, Fast Talk 62%, Influence 55%, Insight 60%, Perception 35%, Persistence 38%, Resilience 40%, Ride 45%, Sleight 44%, (Desert) Survival 30%

Languages

Djesmiri 48%, Morkeshite 25%, Soribish 82%, Tarsenian 29%

Combat Styles

Brawl 36%, Sidearm 45%

to move in to the Taskan compound if it were to become vacant. Pimay has made no explicit promises but encouraged Kyajo to believe that when Bosabra comes under Nergesh's power, this will be his reward.

For now this man is a spy and agent provocateur for Nergesh of Ankwar. About 35 years old with a creased and rugged face and an unfortunately high pitch voice that is disguised at important moments by his Glamour spell. He dresses in the Assabian style but is of Soribisi blood. He has two purposes in Bosabra: one is to persuade Shamsay that his brother's dislike for those who follow the New Korazoon Movement is misplaced – and in the light of growing public anger towards the Taskans a dangerous case of being on the wrong side; the other is to discomfit the local Taskans by the use of the Witching Stones he has been given. By either hiding them on Taskan property or somehow putting them into the possession of an unsuspecting Taskan victim, they ensure that the Taskans are beset by a string of hostile spirits.

Kyajo still has possession of a shiny red stone flecked with black (POW 6 CHA 8), which attracts a Succubus or Incubus curse spirit that can manifest only to a sleeping victim. If it succeeds in covertly possessing its target it will give them 'interesting' dreams that result in a loss of fatigue for every night that the victim fails to resist the spirit's Manifestation skill with his Persistence in an opposed test.

Zurandish of Kiftain

Zurandish has a room at the Caravanserai, where he and his servant boy (in fact his spell-slave) Aftis are quartered. Zurandish

is some 28 years old, a proud and honest man but none too bright, with a streak of religious zeal. He is the Uprama (local squire) of Kiftain near Morkar, on a pilgrimage. At present he is dithering at Bosabra, considering whether his religious duties (and restless nature) might be best served by joining the fight against the New Korazoon Movement.

Zurandish has taken Taskan citizenship and will make a point of introducing himself to the Adventurers and assuring them of his good will and support. He is particularly keen to hear news as to whether his homeland might be called upon by the Taskans to send forces for a war, in which case he would be keen to make it home and round up some retainers with whom to join the party. Kyajo has shown Zurandish his remaining Witching Stone, tempting him to buy it as a clearly magical item of unknown purpose. Zurandish has had Aftis confirm it is magical using his Mystic Vision spell and is sorely tempted but Kyajo has demanded an obscenely high sum. What Kyajo really wants is for the dim but talkative Zurandish to either buy it himself (he is a known Taskan friend and fair game) or unwittingly help him sell the stone to a Taskan by enthusing about its beauty and mysterious power. Zurandish has a very fine horse in the stables at Bosabra and a fine red felt saddle with brass furnishings that is alone worth 250 Taskeens. He keeps circa 100 Morkeshite Dinars in his strongbox and a further 1D20 on his person and has gold and jewelled rings worth 60, 150 and 320 Taskeens.

Aftis

This boy is both servant and spell-slave to Zurandish. Instead of being detailed to cast spells on his master Aftis' key role, thanks to

Zurandish of Kiftain, Morkeshite Pilgrim/Adventurer

STR	12	CA	2	Assabian Rites 72%	Location	AP/HP
CON	14	SR	12-5	Blessings: Temmish x1 (can be applied to any Influence skill, or Evaluate)	01-03 R Leg	3/6
SIZ	13	DB	+0		04-06 L Leg	3/6
INT	11	Mv	8		07-09 Abdomen	4/7
POW	14	MP	9	Devotions:	10-12 Chest	4/8
DEX	12			Pact Temmish (2) 25%, Divine Magic Reflection, Gleam	13-15 R Arm	3/5
CHA	12				16-18 L Arm	3/5
SOC	16			Pact Basat (2) 35%, Cult Lore 32%, Divine Magic: Shield, Turn Undead	19-20 Head	5/6
					Armour	
				Pact Zygas Taga (1) 30%	Fine steel helmet, scale cuirass, splinted greaves and vambraces	

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP	Items
Scimitar	M	M	D8, Bleed	6/10	Usually protected by Spirit
Shield	L	S	D4	6/12	Resistance effective on spirits up to POW18.
Heavy Crossbow	H	150m	D10, Impale	4/8	

Skills

Education (Djesmiri) 55%, Evade 36%, Evaluate 58%, Influence 47%, Orate 35%, Persistence 30%, Resilience 40%, Ride 65%

Languages

Morkeshite 90%, Djesmiri 75%, Taskan 35%

Combat Styles

Brawl 42%, Crossbow 60%, Swordsmanship + Shield 65%

Aftis, Morkeshite Spell-Slave

STR	9	CA	3	Assabian Rites 35%	Location	AP/HP
CON	13	SR	12-	Blessings: Haliset x 2	01-03 R Leg	-/5
SIZ	11	DB	+0		04-06 L Leg	-/5
INT	16	Mv	8	Sorcery Manipulation 51%	07-09 Abdomen	-/6
POW	14	MP	15	Grimoire (Zurandin Family Grimoire) 45% Attract Harm (spirit) Attract Harm (spells), Mystic Vision, Neutralise Magic, Spirit Resistance	10-12 Chest	-/7
DEX	14				13-15 R Arm	-/4
CHA	13				16-18 L Arm	-/4
SOC	4				19-20 Head	-/5
					Armour: None	
Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP	Items	
Knife	S	S	D3+1, bleed, impale	5/4	Typically carrying Attract Harm (spirit) effective against spirits of up to POW 18, and Attract Harm (spells) up to magnitude 6	

Skills

Education (Djesmiri) 35%, Evade 40%, Evaluate 36%, Fast Talk 40%, Insight 53%, Persistence 58%, Resilience 67%, Ride 35%

Languages

Djesmiri 90%, Soribish 40%, Taskan 35%

Combat Styles

Brawl 25%

the Zurand family grimoire, is to cast Attract Harm upon himself to divert threats away from his master. This unfortunate soul remains remarkably sunny by disposition but given his master's penchant for adventure is nevertheless a prime candidate for putting himself at the mercy of the Taskans' Emperor-cult and taking citizenship in order to gain his freedom before the servitude is the death of him. Aftis generally has eight Magic Points, however he can be caught out at times when he has just renewed a spell and has not yet recovered all his magic points from the one that expired. Each spell is renewed twice per month.

Aftis is furnished with a mule to ride alongside his master. He also carries a significant amount of equipment for the road and everything a valet should have to groom both master and horse.

Salan Ishmal (if not killed in the course of earlier events)

If they have survived events at Sarotin, Salan and his companion Fashil have come here as refugees.

RESOLVING THE EPISODE

If the Adventurers do no more than reach the trade mission, evacuate all or some of its occupants and somehow secure the documents and valuables from Elias' office, they should get one Improvement Roll each (plus or minus their IR modifier). Rumbling Goya Vartigern's attempt to take advantage of the situation and preventing his thefts earns a second IR; if the Adventurers unmask Kyajo and discover the Witching Stones a third IR should be awarded.

In the event Kyajo's conspiracy is revealed, Shamsay (and ultimately Muaga himself) will be highly embarrassed that the Taskans have come under magical attack when effectively guests in their domain. Hence they will engage in tracing the causes of the attacks – Shamsay will call a meeting at The House of Muaga and Muaga himself will be called to attend. At this meeting the ultimate source of the Witching Stones will be revealed – the Witch of Lake Kushal.

MUAGA THE HAWK

Muaga has control of two important oasis towns at Diwana and Bosabra on the caravan routes from Djesmirket to Pryjarna. He soon learned that he could earn substantial revenues by taking tribute from the townspeople and the caravans passing through his territory by encouraging trade rather than resorting to violence. He is highly respected among the Soribisi and many chieftains consider it an honour to be counted as his friend. He has two sons, who could not be more unlike one another. Shamud is a glory-hunter, who roams and sometimes raids the western caravan routes with a band of 20 or so followers and companions. The younger son, Zamud, is a poet and a thinker, who Muaga is having educated in the city of Djesmir.

Muaga belongs to a school of philosophy known as Sanekitism. While not wholly Atheist in its outlook it is only interested in the greatest and most abstract – and incomprehensible – divine powers. Muaga regards the New Korazoon Movement among the Soribisi to be both dangerous and ignorant, and will not tolerate its members in his company; however he suspects his eldest son

may soon be riding with one of Nergesh's sons, just as many of the young hotheads are drawn to the prospect of war and glory. His other son Zamud is in fact a devout atheist.

Notable Traits

Merciful – He is not a man given to needless violence and will give those who offend him the opportunity to redeem themselves. Philosophical – Muaga likes to weigh every important question (and some unimportant ones), taking hours, and sometimes days, to arrive at the 'right' course of action or answer to a question and presenting his findings in a sententious way. It pleases him to be considered extremely wise, however he is often thought to be merely boring. The Adventurers may have to wait for two or three days for Muaga to deliver his opinion on the matters put before him.

AT THE HOUSE OF MUAGA

At a meeting with the important folk of the town and perhaps any friends and allies of their own they have made, the Adventurers discover, if they did not already know, the origin of the Witching Stones and can question local knowledge of the Witch of Lake Kushal, who also goes by the name of Arxoon. They can elicit the following information:

- Arxoon has long been known to receive delegations from the Qomite witches and to furnish them with spirits in return for tribute.
- It is said that Arxoon lives on a magical island which can only be found when the moon is full.
- It is said that Arxoon lives in the belly of an enormous fish that swims in the lake (if any of the Adventurers have actually visited Lake Kushal they will know that it dwindles to almost nothing in high summer, is devoid of fish and this is an unlikely tale).
- It is said she lives in a magic hut built on stilts which will walk around the lake at her command.
- It is said that Arxoon is many hundreds of years old. It is also said that she appears as a beautiful young woman who has lured many to their doom that have camped by the lake shore at night.
- It is said that the witch is guarded by a legion of men who she has tied to her service with her magic. Others have said that these men are already dead, their corpses animated by magic. Others still tell that her lair is guarded by the mad ghosts of her victims. Either way, she is said to have a penchant for young and handsome men.

There is a story among the people of the oasis towns of a young hero called Jolash who escaped the witch's clutches. He was to find a magic horse that she had in her service, which could gallop a hand's width above the ground and thereby cross sand, water and firm land all the same. In this story the young hero finds a safe trail to her island by following the path of light cast upon the waters of the lake by the full moon. The hero encounters the witch, who three times tries to seduce him. The hero knows that if he succumbs he will become her slave and firmly resists her advances. When her charms fail to overcome him, Arxoon bargains with him. Jolash demands the magic horse in return for his embraces. The witch agrees, intending the act of love to be fatal to the hero,

but Jolash is protected by enchantments and, furious, she has to accede to his demands.

EPISODE 4: THE WITCH OF LAKE KUSHAL

The Adventurers can either take the information they gather back to their superiors and leave it at that, or they can make themselves heroes by solving the problem themselves. Of course they may do the former and be ordered to continue the quest by their commanding officer. To successfully resolve matters themselves there are two possible routes:

- To find and kill the witch. This will put The Witch of Kushal out of action for a considerable time but she will eventually manage to materialise again. The Witch is no push-over and the Adventurers should seek any magical protections and enhancements they can to help them in their task.
- To enter the otherworld realms of Arxoon, a minor goddess of whom the Witch of Kushal is an emanation, and bargain with her to put a stop to the witch's support of the enemies of the Taskan Empire once and for all. Depending on how this goes the price to pay may be more or less palatable.

ARXOON

Arxoon is a powerful spirit (INT 16, POW 48, CHA 22), a godling, inhabiting a small corner of the spirit world (Arxoon the Nymph) but with a physical presence in the material world (the Witch of Kushal) and another in the Many Hells (Arxoon the Hag). Upon entering either of the 'otherworld' domains of this goddess, the Adventurers cannot return unless they negotiate permission to do so or kill her local manifestation.

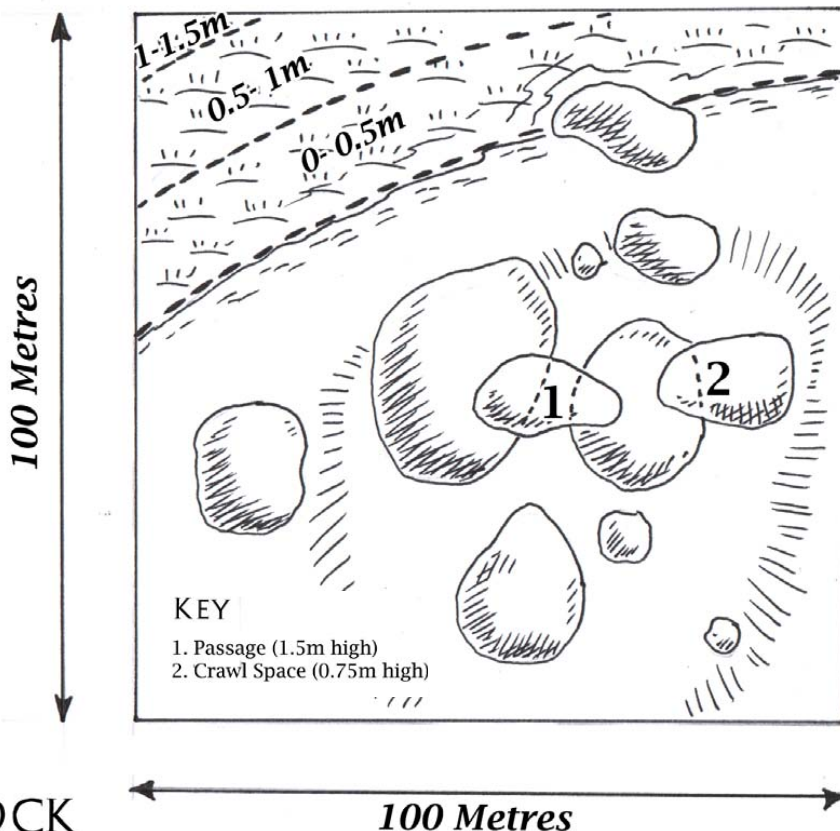
Her home 'coincides' with Lake Kushal; in different times or dimensions it may be alternatively a place of verdant, luscious growth, or a dry cracked bowl of red clay, or the dead, salt lake that the Adventurers know.

When parts of the Korazoon were green and pleasant, Arxoon's dominant presence was a limnead (nymph of the meadows) who, if rather unpredictable and capricious, was ultimately a benign power. When the deserts took over and the lake turned to salt this Arxoon was replaced by an evil manifestation, properly Arxoon the Eater, but universally known to the people of the region as the Witch of Kushal. This enchanting but deadly manifestation lives in a hut on stilts over the lake. The third sister in the trinity is a haggard old crone who haunts a desolate, barren landscape of salt flats and parched earth where nothing truly living can survive.

JOLASH'S ROCK

There is a place known as Jolash's Rock on the shores of the lake, a collection of massive boulders thrusting out of the earth in an otherwise rather featureless terrain - which is notorious both as a place where to look for spirits and about which many tales are told of unwary travellers disappearing in the night who are never seen again. If the Adventurers stay here for any extended period, checks should be made for Encounters, with a 10% chance by day and a 20% chance by night.

D20	Day Encounter	Night Encounter
01-05	NKM followers hunting for game or for traditional spirits	NKM followers hunting for the Adventurers
06-10	Khazeri herdsmen and livestock (40% chance they are enemy sympathisers)	Predatory animals - Wolf pack or Lion
11-12	Travellers gathering salt or seeking shelter	Predatory monster - Grampus or Manticore
13-15	Weather - a dust storm, freak rain shower	Weather - an electrical storm or cold snap
16-18	Hostile Spirit - Mirage or 1D3 Dust Devils	Hostile spirits - 1D3 Salt Devils
19	Predatory monster - Grampus or Manticore	The Witch of Kushal
20	Roll Twice	Roll Twice



JOLASH'S ROCK

Adventurers may try to track the witch down but this is no easy task. Her hut is mobile (in effect it is a wooden golem) and can at its mistress' command walk about the salt pans on its stilts, so she is well placed to avoid unwelcome visitors. On the other hand she gravitates towards two spots - one that forms a gate between her sisters' domains, and the other near Jolash's rock where she is usually willing to greet visitors from among the Witches of Qom, who travel here perhaps once or twice per year.

Luring the Witch

Hanging around Jolash's Rock for an extended period, looking (or in fact being) off guard may attract the witch's attention. The Witch of Kushal will generally only be attracted by potential victims with a CHA in excess of 13. She mostly hunts by night. If the Adventurers use a high CHA character as bait, on each night there is a 5% chance per point of CHA over 13 that the witch will come after him. However she has a very high Stealth skill, and with an additional bonus of at least 20% at night she may actually get to the bait before any sentries detect her approach. She always scouts the area first, and if she discovers or suspects a trap will not attack unless desperately hungry. In this case she may attempt to ambush and kill off sentries then look to use her seduction on the highest CHA Adventurer she can get to.

Hunting The Witch

It is possible to find a way to the point where the otherworld home of the goddess Arxoon coincides with the material world, and this is the place where the witch can most likely be found. The only sure way without magical assistance is by following a trail from Jolash's Rock across the Lake's salt marshes at full moon. The shallow parts of the lake are thick with marsh grasses, indicating where it may be possible to wade out but the footing is treacherous. In a full moon, or at other times using Mystic Vision, Second Sight or Soul Sight, it is possible to see a winding trail leading from Jolash's Rock towards a patch of dry land far out into the lake by which stands a ghostly archway. Now and again a luminescent form, like ball lightning, bursts from the archway and hurtles up into the sky and out across the desert.

This trail can be followed without ever being more than waist deep in the steaming salt water. Patches of mist drift this way and that but the shimmering trail is always visible.

GHOSTLY SOUND AND A GHOSTLY VISION

Adventurers hear a galloping of hooves, even though they are way out into the lake with no dry land around them for some distance. The hooves draw nearer and nearer, though nothing can be seen. Finally the sound seems to pass right through their ranks and beyond, accompanied by a swirling breeze, disappearing into the distance ahead of them.

Adventurers making a POWx1 roll glimpse a rider all clad in white on a beautiful bay horse, a young and handsome man with a sword at his side. His eyes are fixed ahead of him and he seems not to even notice the Adventurers. Anyone who does see the apparition gains a Hero Point which they can use (only) in their dealings with the Witch of Kushal or her sisters.

ARXOON'S ISLAND

This place is a small patch of ground some 50 metres across, which is always above the water level, whatever the season. It is eerie in every way; the litter of human and animal bones and the twisting mists do not help matters. An ancient stone altar is here, broken into several pieces. The carvings on the stone are age-worn and barely discernable, but the outline of flowers and vines can still be traced.

The magical archway is actually over the water some 10 metres away from the edge of the island. The archway is nothing more than a tracery of light, forming a high arc with an apex some six metres above the surface.

Whenever the Adventurers arrive here, or for every night spent here the chance of encounters is as follows:

D20	Encounter	
01-06	No encounter	The island is deserted.
07-11	Apparition	The Adventurers see an image of a beautiful woman embracing a young man - but as the misty figures twist and turn, they see she has a serpent tail (once this encounter has occurred treat any further rolls of 07-11 as No Encounter).
12-15	Salt Devils	1D3 of these wraiths are haunting the island and attack anyone they find there.
16-18	The Witch	Arxoon is hunting, and approaches the Adventurers out of the mists, attempting to take them by surprise or to beguile a lone watchman.
19-20	The Witch's Hut	Arxoon's hut is sighted close by the island and she is in it sleeping. If the Adventurers approach they can gain surprise. There is a 25% chance they find her Spirit Walking, and utterly defenceless except for her guardians.

Arxoon is unlikely to engage in a straight fight. Her preference will always be to beguile a victim before striking when he least suspects, or to use her minions. Unless cornered with nowhere to run she will make off rather than engage in combat with a dangerous enemy. She will unleash her spirits to attack intruders and if she feels in any danger will escape during the ensuing melee.

If subdued and in danger of being killed, the Witch of Kushal will promise to betray her alliance with Haljaf, to enter into a Pact on behalf of her sisters and to hand over a magical treasure as a mark of her good faith.

Arxoon, The Witch of Kushal (Lamia)

STR 11 CA 3+1 **Spirit Binding 115%**
 CON 7 SR 14
 SIZ 15 DB +1D2 **Heroic Abilities:**
 INT 17 Mv 8
 POW 15 MP 13 Spirit Walking (75%). Arxoon can disincorporate at will and operate in the spirit world, however this leaves her body highly vulnerable.
 DEX 11
 CHA 17
 SOC -

Location AP/HP
 01–06 Tail 4/5
 07–09 Abdomen 4/6
 10–12 Chest -/7
 13–15 R Arm -/4
 16–18 L Arm -/4
 19–20 Head -/6

Armour
 None. Serpent scales protect abdomen and tail

Items
 See below for the Witch's spirits and items

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP
Bite	S	T	D3+D2+DEX Drain	as head
Kiss	S	T	POW Drain	as head
Tail	L	L	D6+D2	as tail
Dirk	S	S	D3+D2+2 (-10% parry), Impale*	6/6

Skills

Athletics 40%, Craft (Enchanter) 86%, Craft (Herbalist) 112%, Evade 50%, Insight 65%, Lore (Regional) 150%, Lore (Witchcraft) 118%, Persistence 60%, Resilience 45%, Seduction 128%, Stealth 90%

Languages

Arxoon can communicate in any language of the region - including Tarsenian, albeit with a heavy and exotic accent

Combat Styles

Bite 50%, Kiss 50%, Tail 50%, Sidearm 35%

*Ignores the first 3 points of protective magic

THE WITCH OF KUSHAL

Arxoon the Witch of Kushal is a Lamia, however she does not automatically lose 1HP per location day so long as she is in her home territory (the salt pans), where she needs to make a simple (+20%) Resilience test each day to avoid the damage. Depending on whether the Adventurers are likely to need an advantage Arxoon may be encountered weak from lack of feeding, down 1D3 HP per location. Arxoon does not, incidentally, tend to keep victims of her seduction skills alive for long, so she does not have a following of devoted male warriors and must rely on her own wits and supernatural minions for her defence.

ARXOON'S SPIRITS

The ghosts

These three ghosts are the spirits of her former victims whom she torments further by binding them to her service. The first two are bound to her hut and will manifest if anyone attempts to climb onto it, enter it or otherwise interfere with it.

Bajul, Spook: INT 12 POW 11 CHA 15, CA 2 HP 11, Manifest 52%, Persistence 44%, Spectral Combat 55%, Spectral Damage 1D6. Bajul appears as a wrestler, stripped to the waist, can use Fear (as the Divine Spell) on intruders approaching the hut. He can also manifest to anyone in contact with Arxoon's hut to force them into Spectral Combat and will attack them to possess. If he wins, he will sit them down on the rug awaiting Arxoon's pleasure. He cannot remain in possession if the victim is somehow removed from the hut.

Tobi: INT 13 POW 11 CHA 13, CA 2 HP 11, Manifest 48%, Persistence 44%, Spectral Combat 55%, Spectral Damage 1D6. Art (Storytelling) 52%. Tobi is doomed to observe and relate, but not to act. With a successful Spirit Manifestation test he is capable of manifesting by triggering the alarm bells hanging by the door of the hut and by whispering in the minds of those who approach within his range (11 metres) or calling to his mistress. His job is to act as doorman but also to amuse his mistress and lull her to sleep with his stories.

Henbre: INT 12 POW 8 CHA 9, CA 2 HP 8, Manifest 34%, Persistence 32%, Spectral Combat 40%, Spectral Damage 1D4. Henbre is the weakest and most despised of Arxoon's ghosts, is bound to the dirk she carries as something of an experiment, and does nothing other than act as an enchantment that negates 3 points (or magnitude) of protective magic. An Adventurer could take and use this dirk, however they may find that some people are quite horrified that they make use of something to which an unwilling soul has been bound.

The Salt Devil

Arxoon always has at least one Salt Devil in her service. Usually it will be bound to the braids of her hair. She will use this to attack enemies she thinks could be a serious threat to her.

The Shrivellers

Arxoon typically has two of these curse spirits at her command at any one time but they are also her favourite for giving as gifts to faithful followers. If a Shriveller covertly possesses a victim, the



victim immediately urinates, vomits and sweats out any stored water and begins to suffer the effects of Chronic Thirst that no amount of drinking water can cure.

Shriveller 1 INT 7 POW 16 CHA 6, CA2 SR7 HP16, Spirit Damage +1D8, Manifest 66%, Persistence 64%, Spectral Shrivelling 80%

Shriveller 2 INT 6 POW 14 CHA 5, CA2 SR6 HP14, Spirit Damage +1D8, Manifest 57%, Persistence 56% Spectral Shrivelling 70%

Nature Spirits

The Lord of Kush (Intensity 3 manifest trait snake spirit) INT 8 POW 22 CHA 5, CA 3 SR 7 HP 22, Spirit Damage +2D6, Persistence 88%, Spectral Fangs 110%. The Lord of Kush allows Arxoon to regenerate once per season, sloughing her whole skin and any and all physical damage she has taken. The fetish for the Lord of Kush is a snakeskin belt tied around her hips.

ARXOON'S HUT

This hut is alive, protected by spirits and at its mistress' command, however if she dies it will immediately revert to being a regular, if oddly furnished, lake dwelling. Should the Adventurers kill the witch but leave it intact the hut will be there for the witch to command when she reforms herself in D6+7 months time.

The hut itself is round, two and a half metres across, made of withies stretched on a wooden framework and roofed in skins

(close inspection will reveal these to be human) with a ladder hanging from below the door sill. The hut is raised above the marsh on three long stilts. Its single room has a stone slab on which a fire can be made, smoke escaping through a hole in the roof. The hut is made comfortable with bundles of marsh grass, furs and some textiles.

Arxoon's hut is capable of moving across the lake using its stilts as legs, at a Move of 12 metres in the shallows, or six metres where the waters are deeper. When at the halt it can squat down, keeping a low profile.

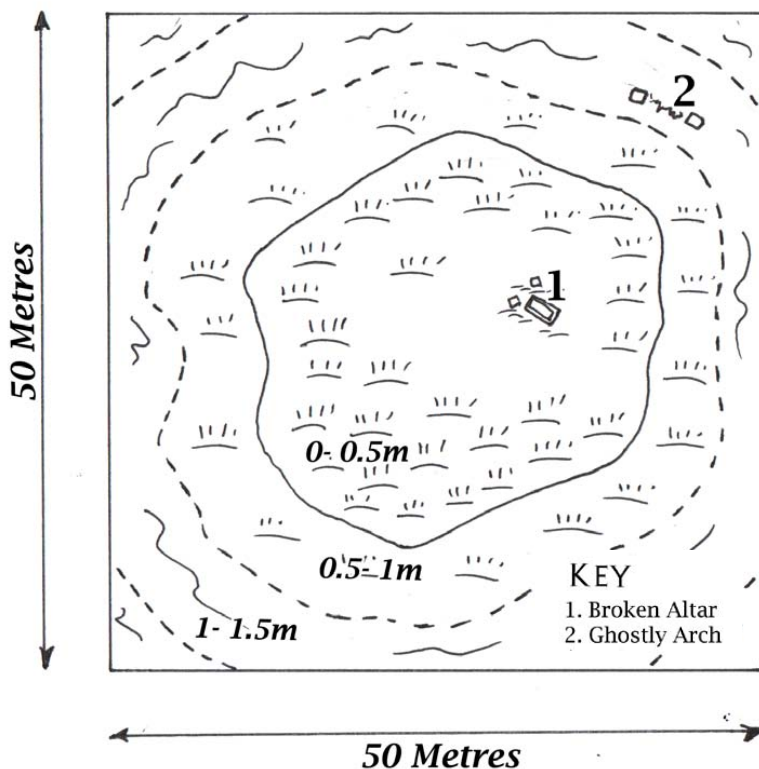
ARXOON'S ITEMS

Usually hidden in her hut, Arxoon has a small leather bag containing two more Witching Stones; these ones are more useful than those she has given to Haljaf, and one attracts Fire Elemental Spirits (POW11 CHA6), the other attracts Healing Spirits (POW8 CHA5).

A number of clay pots contain potions and poisons, including a POT 75 blade venom with six applications (each enough for five small weapons such as arrowheads); a potion containing the remains of a Healing Spirit that has been boiled away leaving its power to benefit the drinker – applying a Magnitude 4 Heal Body; three doses of Magic Point Storage potion, holding up to nine Magic Points each that will keep for a further 2 years; a small jar full of serpent venom (POT 65), easily enough for three doses, or as a basis from which an antivenom could be produced.

She also has a number of items of value taken from past victims, including jewellery, items of rich clothing, some weapons and equipment. Notable among the many pieces are: a fine amulet of carnelian set in gold worth 250 Taskeens; a beautiful conical helmet with moulded brows and hinged cheek pieces formed to resemble a beard, providing 5 AP and worth 750 Taskeens; and a fine scale cuirass of the kind popular in Assabia, with alternate scales gilded (+50% value) but for a slightly built (SIZ 10) individual – will fit an Adventurer between SIZ 9 and 12; a broad woollen sash of crimson, woven with signs in yellow, an enchanted item. When worn wrapped about the middle it provides its owner with a +20% boost to their Athletics when making fatigue tests and a +20% to Resilience when resisting the effects of Serious or Major Wounds. Finally, a reed basket holds a good collection of coins for which Arxoon has little use. These are from many places – Djesmirket, Sharranket, Morkesh, Tarsenia and the Beshor Valley, and amount to some 500 Taskeens in value.

ARXOON'S ISLAND



INVESTIGATING THE ARCH

If probing the archway with some kind of inanimate object such as a spear or sword, nothing happens. It is possible to walk around the arch but the water gets deep and the character will end up swimming to keep head above water. From the other side the swimmer can see the other Adventurers as if using a high powered Mystic Vision. If an Adventurer

places any part of him/herself into the space within the arch, he immediately feels like he is being pulled through to the other side. However if he places his head or torso into the arch will he be yanked unceremoniously through unless he can make a Brawn test to wrench himself back.

Passing through the arch is momentarily like moving through a wall of treacle but has no ill effects. As soon as an Adventurer ventures, or is pulled, into the archway, they find themselves blinking in broad daylight. The archway behind them is a tall arch of spiral columns turned to meet each other. There is lush grass underfoot. A warm and pleasant sun in a clear blue sky sheds light on a world of verdant growth, brilliantly coloured flowers, the buzz of insects and the chatter of birds, a distant trickle of water and a soft breeze. The Adventurers are in a beautiful, anarchic, wild garden. Ahead of them is a pathway through the trees and bushes, along which crocus flowers peek through the scattering of fallen leaves and petals.

EPISODE 5: OTHERWORLDS

ARXOON'S GARDEN

THE GARDEN WALL

Adventurers who explore the edges of the glade in which they have materialised find themselves up against an impenetrable wall of bushes, four metres high, of dark green shiny foliage that steers them back to their starting point. The only way out of this glade is along the path. The arch detects as magical but passing through it in any direction has no effect whatsoever.

Any attempt to hack through these bushes is futile – they seem to go on forever. If they persist in damaging the flora, a green fibrous arm darts out from the foliage and grasps their arms. A voice in the head (Mindspeech) cries, 'STOP!'

The hand has a STR of 16. Its grip is firm but not violent. It will hold tight for a few moments, then let go and withdraw into the leaves out of sight. If struck it has 2AP and 4HP, and bleeds a thin green sap-like blood. If the Adventurer starts getting angry and continues their efforts, the Gardeners will eventually materialise from the greenery and attack the ignorant intruders.

These Gardeners are ancient spirits of vegetation, forming humanoid bodies with the colour and texture of a flower-stem. They are short and wiry armed with fibrous whips like lengths of creeper and short clubs of dark wood. They are quick and dextrous, dodging attacks and striking to entangle with their whips. Their spells serve to make the very grass shoot up to grasp their opponents' feet, or tether a fallen enemy to the ground. Fallen Adventurers are quickly trussed up and dragged away. Seriously wounded Gardeners simply melt back into the undergrowth. Up to four may appear at once but for every one put down another will appear until half a dozen have been incapacitated, the Adventurers are all beaten or they make a run for it. If the Adventurers once more begin trying to destroy the environment, the same thing happens.

THE PATH

The pathway leads through a patch of woodland lit by shafts of light which pierce the canopy of trees. The whole place is full of life and has a happy, pleasant atmosphere. Adventurers who

Gardeners, servants of Arxoon the Nymph

STR	16	CA	2	Plant Rites 50%
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CON	15	SR	12
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SIZ	8	DB	+0
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INT	10	Mv	8
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POW	11	MP	11
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DEX	13		
-----	----	--	--

CHA	7		
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SOC	-		
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Tanglevine

Duration 5, Magnitude 2, Ranged, Resist (Evade)

This spell causes any vegetation with which the target is in contact to grasp hold of as if subject to a Grip Combat

Manoeuvre, or a Pin Weapon if applied to an object they are holding. The caster's Rites skill is used to oppose any attempt to

slip or break free.

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP
Whip	S	L	Entangle, Disarm	3/6
Club	M	S	1D6 Stun Location	4/4

Location	AP/HP
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01–03 R Leg	2/5
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04–06 L Leg	2/5
-------------	-----

07–09 Abdomen	2/6
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10–12 Chest	2/7
-------------	-----

13–15 R Arm	2/4
-------------	-----

16–18 L Arm	2/4
-------------	-----

19–20 Head	2/5
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Armour

2 point fibrous skin, no SR penalty

Skills

Athletics 60%, Brawn 80%, Evade 45%, Persistence 45%, Resilience 75%

Combat Styles

Whip 60%, Club 50%

leave the path to scout will become lost. A lost Adventurer will eventually be forced to rest – when he does he will fall asleep, be carried off and share the same fate as those who are captured by the Gardeners.

At the end of the path, after some half an hour walk, the wood gives way to a broad meadow basking in sunshine and adorned with wild flowers, cut through by a stony brook. The brook winds this way and that, and forms a moat around a small island, on which is a stand of trees, amid which is a stone tomb. The whole meadow – perhaps 1,500 metres across – is encompassed by woods. A strange music meets the Adventurers' ears – listen rolls detect that it comes from the island.

There is a party of men on the banks of the brook. A large black bear is seated among them. They are cooking a stag over a fire. They are dressed in a variety of different clothing styles. These are travellers who have reached the realm of Arxoon but have been forced to stay by her magic. They are immortal as long as they remain here, serving her willingly and devotedly and are her lovers. Most of their INT based skills and spells are long forgotten but they are all in finest physical condition.

VIRISH DYAB AND HIS GANG

Their putative leader is Virish Dyab. He is a man of Shorikoor in the Kingdom of Tubisa and has been here longer than all the others. In the Adventurers' world/time, his homeland has long since been covered by desert sands. He regards strangers as a threat but knows they can never leave this place without his mistresses' assent. Besides, they have all dedicated all of their POW to Arxoon, because they are so much in love with her.

Virish is dressed in outlandish garb, as far as the Adventurers are concerned. He wears a long shining robe of many colours, girded about with a sash of gold. About his neck is a collar of shining gold silk. His hair is carefully tonsured into a queue, in his hand is a hunting spear and, in his sash, a dagger.

He and his fellows – a Soribisi, a Tarsenian and a man who looks like an Assabian, rise on spotting the Adventurers entering the meadow, grab hand weapons and go to meet them, the bear lumbering alongside.

'Greetings strangers!' cries the Tarsenian upon drawing near. 'Who are you, why are you here?' His accent is very peculiar, a little like a man from Tarsang, his clothing in a very old style. The Tarsenian, Zosang, relates the Adventurers' replies back to the others in an unintelligible tongue. The bear listens intently to the proceedings.

If asked who they are, Zosang gives their names; they are servants of the lady Arxoon, he says.

If asked how to get out of here, they ask the Adventurers why they should want to leave – such an idea is completely alien to them.

If asked where they might find the lady Arxoon, they point to the little island and the tomb and say she is resting. She will come when she is ready (this should be pleasantly stated but suitably

menacing) and decide what is to be done with you. The men claim to know nothing of the magic Gate in Lake Kushal. Nor of Arxoon as a monster. 'Look around you', says Zosang, smiling. 'Is this the realm of an evil witch?'

The men will not allow the Adventurers to cross the stream to the island and will fight to the death to prevent violation of their mistress' resting place.

WAITING FOR ARXOON

Adventurers may choose to explore the meadow. The vegetation has an unnatural brilliance – the earth beneath is dark and rich. The butterflies are in rainbow hues and swarm up in great drifts when disturbed. Adventurers bothering to scratch or dig at this earth find perfectly smooth stone just an inch or two beneath the surface.

Healing plants may be found in abundance. Note that if anything happens to this incarnation of Arxoon, they lose their potency, wither and die. At the edge of the forest are ripe and lustrous fruits of all kinds, waiting to be picked. They are nourishing but oddly tasteless (Virish and his gang will however make a great point of disagreeing with that observation). Again, if Arxoon dies, they turn to poison in the system of any Adventurer who has eaten of them. The Adventurer must resist a poison with Potency 40%. If unsuccessful the Adventurer gets severe cramps and all actions suffer a –30% penalty until the poison is purged from the system.

If they make the effort to try and ingratiate themselves with Virish and his gang, they will likely find themselves challenged to sports and contests to pass the time. Virish's gang gets a *lot* of practice and are very good – but the chance to match themselves against new opposition is a rare treat. Their amusement will be appreciated by Arxoon - and cause her to be sympathetic towards the Adventurers.

Fighting With Virish and his Men

If the Adventurers want to make themselves really unpopular with Arxoon, then they may want to fight with these fellows and the bear, Dostig, who is her familiar. If Dostig is killed, she will seek the characters' deaths in the most hideous ways she can think of.

Approaching the Tomb

If the adventurers take on Arxoon's followers and win, they may then decide to wade across the brook and open the tomb on the island. If one of them does (Brawn -40% to heave off the lid, up to two characters may add their critical score to help), they will reveal the beautiful nymph Arxoon on a thick bed of flowers in a death-like sleep. Should they disturb or attack her in her sleep Arxoon is almost helpless. It will take her 1D4+1 combat actions to come to her senses, and even then she will suffer a -10 SR penalty.

MEETING ARXOON THE NYMPH

Arxoon will emerge from the grove at sun-down. She radiates a warm light, her hair flows about her head as if suspended in water. Points of light float around her body. She is unfathomably

Virish Dyab, the man from Shorikoor

STR	12	CA	3
CON	12	SR	13
SIZ	13	DB	+0
INT	12	Mv	8
POW	9	MP	0
DEX	14		
CHA	15		
SOC	16		

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP
Spear	M	L	D8+1, Impale	4/5
Spear, Thrown	H	30m	D8, Impale	4/5
Dagger	S	S	D4+1, Bleed, Impale	6/8

Skills

Athletics 104%, Brawn 50%, Evade 50%, Persistence 40%, Resilience 90%, Swim 60%

Combat Styles

Brawl 90%, Light Spear 85%, Sidearm 75%

Location	AP/HP
01-03 R Leg	-/5
04-06 L Leg	-/5
07-09 Abdomen	-/6
10-12 Chest	-/7
13-15 R Arm	-/4
16-18 L Arm	-/4
19-20 Head	-/5

Armour

None

Shakut, Soribisi

STR	9	CA	3+1
CON	14	SR	13
SIZ	13	DB	+D2
INT	13	Mv	8
POW	12	MP	0
DEX	12		
CHA	16		
SOC	9		

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP
Hatchet	S	S	D6+D2, Bleed	3/6
Dagger (LH)	S	S	D4+D2+2, Bleed, Impale	6/8

Skills

Athletics 82%, Brawn 40%, Evade 35%, Persistence 35%, Resilience 75%, Swim 30%

Combat Styles

Brawl 65% Sidearm and Dagger 70%

Location	AP/HP
01-03 R Leg	-/6
04-06 L Leg	-/6
07-09 Abdomen	-/7
10-12 Chest	-/8
13-15 R Arm	-/5
16-18 L Arm	-/5
19-20 Head	-/6

Armour

None

Zosang, a Tarsenian from pre-Imperial days

STR	15	CA	2
CON	12	SR	12
SIZ	13	DB	+D2
INT	14	Mv	8
POW	9	MP	0
DEX	10		
CHA	17		
SOC	11		

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP
Long Sword	L	L	D10+D2, Bleed, Impale, Sunder	6/12

Skills

Athletics 75%, Brawn 65%, Evade 40%, Persistence 50%, Resilience 75%, Swim 40%

Languages

Tarsenian 75%

Combat Styles

Brawl 45%, Swordsmanship 70%

Location	AP/HP
01-03 R Leg	-/5
04-06 L Leg	-/5
07-09 Abdomen	-/6
10-12 Chest	-/7
13-15 R Arm	-/4
16-18 L Arm	-/4
19-20 Head	-/5

Armour

None

Vimaza, Sharranketan

STR	10	CA	3
CON	13	SR	14
SIZ	13	DB	+0
INT	17	Mv	8
POW	11	MP	0
DEX	11		
CHA	15		
SOC	13		

Location	AP/HP
01-03 R Leg	-/6
04-06 L Leg	-/6
07-09 Abdomen	-/7
10-12 Chest	-/8
13-15 R Arm	-/5
16-18 L Arm	-/5
19-20 Head	-/6

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP
Scimitar	M	M	D8, Bleed	6/10

Armour
None

Skills

Athletics 63%, Brawn 35%, Evade 25%, Persistence 60%, Resilience 60%, Swim 25%

Combat Styles

Brawl 50%, Swordsmanship 55%

Dostig, a bear, Arxoon's Familiar

STR	28	CA	2
CON	14	SR	11
SIZ	26	DB	+D12
INT	11	Mv	24
POW	12	MP	12
DEX	10		
CHA	12		
SOC	-		

Location	AP/HP
01-03 RH Leg	3/8
04-06 LH Leg	3/8
07-09 Hindquarters	3/9
10-12 Forequarters	3/10
13-15 RF Leg	3/8
16-18 LF Leg	3/8
19-20 Head	3/8

Weapon	S	R	Damage	AP/HP
Bite	S	T	D8+D12	As head
Claw	M	S	D6+D12	As Leg

Armour
3 point fur

Skills

Athletics 60%, Perception 50%, Persistence 43%, Resilience 49%, Stealth 25%, Survival 60%, Swim 45%, Track 30%

Combat Styles

Bite 60%, Claw 50%

Dostig is a familiar and can make use of Arxoon's magic through his mindlink with her but only when she is awake and allows him to do so.

beautiful. She floats across the stream, greeting her followers with a kiss and laying her hand on the bear's head.

Arxoon speaks in a resonant melodic voice. Greeting the Adventurers, asking them their names, she inspects each in turn with a penetrating gaze. If the Adventurers have damaged her world, she will berate them for it in a motherly tone. If Adventurers have been lost or dragged away by the Gardeners, she assures the others they are safe. If any of her followers are killed, she calmly states that this is very unfortunate and that Adventurers must remain with her to make up the number. Any male Adventurer with a CHA in excess of 14 will be her first choice.

If asked about the trouble in Bosabra, Arxoon claims no knowledge. She says wearily that her sister's business is none of hers. They can find her sister in another time, another place (in fact she means the Adventurer's own time and place). But she is quite capable of deciding what is and is not done in her name and willing to negotiate.

FIGHTING ARXOON

It is possible to fight and kill Arxoon, but her men and Dostig will defend her to the death, while she employs her magic. Arxoon casts Shield on herself at magnitude 15, applying 7 magnitude to magical armour and 8 to magical protection. If she dies the

Arxoon the Nymph, a minor Goddess

STR	8	1D20	AP/HP
CON	12	01-03 R Leg	-/6
SIZ	14	04-06 L Leg	-/6
INT	14	07-09 Abdomen	-/7
POW	48	10-12 Chest	-/8
DEX	12	13-15 R Arm	-/5
CHA	20	16-18 L Arm	-/5
SOC	22	19-20 Head	-/6

Combat Actions 3 **Armour:** None

Damage Modifier +0 **Traits:**

Goddess - Arxoon can accept POW dedications and provide Divine Magic and Divine Gifts in return

Magic Points 99

Arxoon's personal magic points are supplemented by the dedicated POW of her lovers.

Divine Will - Arxoon can cast Divine Magic at a cost of one MP per magnitude to a maximum of a Magnitude of 15 (POWx3), while in her domain.

Movement 10m

Skills:

Acrobatics 72%, Athletics 40%, Dance 145%, Evade 48%, First Aid 78%, Healing 124%, Influence 126%, Insight 248%, Perception 186%, Persistence 192%, Resilience 72%, Seduction 170%, Sing 204%

Strike Rank 13

Combat Style:

Brawl 20%

Divine Magic (144%):

Alter Target; Aphrodisiac; Cure Disease/Poison; Disarm; Evergreen; Regenerate Limb; Shield; Soul Sight

whole place starts to become lifeless; flowers wilt, the lush green of the trees and grasses loses its sheen, the air blows cold. Thorn bushes start to thrust their way up from the ground in rapid time. A roll of thunder murmurs across the sky. Everything goes dark. The Adventurers have a falling sensation. A few seconds later, they hit the ground, unhurt but bruised. The lights go up. They are on a featureless plain of parched, cracked clay. Here and there great bones jut out of the ground. They have fallen into the lap of Arxoon the Hag.

NEGOTIATING WITH ARXOON THE NYMPH

By winning Arxoon's favour through good behaviour, she can be bargained with to resolve the Adventurers' quest. Her price is rather high, however if the Adventurers do not agree she will inform them that they can try their luck with her sister. The negotiation with Arxoon can be roleplayed straight, but should include a skill test or two. The Adventurers' actions may well have affected Arxoon's *Mood* (see the Skills chapter in this book), making her more or less easy to persuade. If they have had friendly dealings with Virish Dyab and his gang, that will help - if they have fought a battle or desecrated her tomb - that will not.

THE NYMPH'S PRICE

For the Adventurers to be allowed to leave Arxoon's realm and return to their own world, an attractive male from their number is to join her following (if noone has a CHA in excess of 11 she may drop this demand!). This involves a complete POW dedication, just as her other lovers have done, effectively sacrificing that Adventurer. Those overcome by her beauty might leap at the chance to take her up on initial offer and volunteer, however the Adventurers can and should negotiate. If one or more of her lovers has been killed she will not likely back down on the demand for a permanent replacement. Otherwise Arxoon may relent and agree to a year and a day after which the Adventurer's POW will be returned to him and he may depart. In reality the Adventurer who remains with Arxoon will have to succeed in a Persistence test opposed by Arxoon's Seduction skill to leave of his own free will when the time comes (and she knows it), so Arxoon may actually have to kick him out to keep her promise.

If Arxoon is to be made a friend of the Taskan Empire - or at least withhold her sisters' support for Haljaf - the Adventurers must promise to establish a Cult. The required POW dedications her

cult should maintain is open to negotiation, but Arxoon will be happy with anything over 48 POW and may be bargained down as low as 12 POW, plus ten times that amount in Magic Points per year in prayers. The Adventurers are expected to assume responsibility to establish this cult themselves, but this can be satisfied just as well by persuading the authorities at home that it is something the state should take in hand.

Arxoon expects a down-payment now, as a sign of good will, from the Adventurers themselves. The amount is negotiable, but the higher the POW and CHA of the Adventurer who is to remain with her for a year, the more flexible she may be. The Adventurers make their personal pledge for a year and a day, or until such time they have delivered on the promise, whichever is earlier. If by then the Adventurers have failed to establish her cult she will fail to let her hostage go and she will let her sister off the leash (even if killed The Witch of Kushal will eventually respawn D6+7 months later).

To enable them to establish her cult Arxoon will reveal to them the rudiments of her Cult Lore and provide the Call Deity spell to enable major rites of worship to be conducted at which new devotees can come to her. Arxoon's epiphanies are restricted to the shores of Lake Kushal, and when called Arxoon takes possession of the caster. The island where the gate to her otherworld realm is located can be treated as a Sacred Site.

Arxoon will also be able to provide Divine Magic to encourage her worship: Aphrodisiac, Cure Disease, Evergreen. She is also willing to grant the dedicant with the highest CHA her gift of Vigor – a permanent increase of 1D3 to his CON.

LEAVING ARXOON'S REALM

Arxoon summons a Gardener to guide the Adventurers through the woods to a place where there is a massive ancient tree trunk carved in situ with all manner of elaborate designs. In the side is a great split from the ground up to a height of three metres. The Gardener ushers the Adventurers in. If the Adventurers have come to an agreement with Arxoon and are being allowed to return home, they find themselves back in Lake Kushal. If not, on the other side is the blasted sun-baked plain where lives Arxoon the Hag.

THE CASTLE OF LOST SOULS

As the last place was a land of life, this is a place of the dead. Nothing grows here, nothing lives here, and the baking sun the dry wind and the salt earth drain the life from those that come here. Fatigue tests attract a -20% penalty. No healing can take place in this realm, as it is completely and utterly dead.

The plain on which they find themselves deposited is essentially limitless in extent in every direction the Adventurers look and almost completely flat; featureless apart from one or two skeletal, fossilised trees and here and there the whitened bones of some giant beast thrust up out of the ground. Whichever way the Adventurers walk is the same way, inexorably towards the centre of this world, the home of Arxoon the Hag. Whichever way you look, there, on the horizon, is a castle.

The castle is always directly ahead of the Adventurers, no matter which way they look and which way they travel. It takes two hours of perceived time to reach the vicinity. Before they reach the castle, however, they see a small column of nine men march out from its gates and jog across the plain towards them kicking up a great pall of dust as they go. An Insight Test detects their movement as strange and erratic. As they draw near, the grim truth is revealed; these men are grisly skeletons, decked out in tattered clothing and sporting ancient weapons and armour. They fan out to surround the Adventurers.

SKELETON WARRIORS

If the Adventurers attempt to fight, they will fight back. Statistics are as for Skeletons in the *Legend Core Rulebook*, however their leader is a 'living dead' skeleton with INT of 1D6+6 POW 3D6 and CHA of 1D6, 0 MP (all taken by Arxoon as dedicated POW), and a Persistence of 25%. Only the leader wears armour – scraps and an old rusty helmet for 2AP per location.

If the Adventurers do not immediately opt for battle, the leader beckons with his spear towards the castle. The skeletal warriors form up alongside to escort them in.

THE CASTLE

The Castle of Lost Souls is an abomination to most human religions, as those who are cursed to dwell here cannot reach their final resting place. Any Adventurer who is an initiate of Basat will feel extremely uncomfortable here, it offends that god's sensibilities more than any other. Should a Basat devotee at any time call upon his god for Divine Intervention the roll should be made on 1D20. The only effect of a successful miracle is for the Adventurer to find himself wading knee deep in the salt waters of lake Kushal.

Outside the castle the Adventurers see a bizarre sight, a skeletal ploughman driving skeletal oxen, which draw a plough of desiccated wood in a pathetic track across the hard unyielding earth. Behind him a smaller skeletal figure throws blackened rotting seed corn into the shallow grooves he has made.

The walls of the castle are a massive pile of millions upon millions of human bones. Assuming the Adventurers have not gotten into a fight and killed their escort, they will be admitted to the castle. Otherwise there could be quite a fight on, and unless the Adventurers come up with a stratagem or surrender, it will eventually be fatal to them and this is not a place you would want to die. The gateway is an open arch approached up a broad ramp of bones, yet intruder forcing their way in will be assaulted by Arxoon's many ravaging minions, jealous of those who have life. Those who have allowed themselves to be brought under guard, however, will be taken unmolested to meet Arxoon.

ARXOON'S PALACE

Rising up within the walls is a great shambling mansion, shaped like a three tier ziggurat made out of heaped bones, where Arxoon manifests as a hag. The entrance to the ziggurat is an ugly fissure that runs up one side, giving onto cave-like passages and halls with walls, floors and ceilings of dense-packed bone fragments that crumble and crack underfoot.

RESIDENTS OF THE CASTLE

The place is guarded by Arxoon's skeletal warriors, led by a small cadre of Living Dead, mortals who found their way here and never found a way out. Instead of dying, their flesh decayed away while their diminished spirits remained locked in their dry skeletons. They have forgotten their names, their origins and are now simple slaves to the hag. Adventurers who remain in this realm too long or are killed here will share the same fate. Arxoon the Hag has six of these lost souls in her entourage.

The skeleton warriors are formed by Arxoon from the very fabric of the castle when intruders enter. She can create one for every point of Magnitude (maximum 15) at a cost of 1MP per point of Magnitude used. Each summons costs one Combat Action to make but the skeletons take a round to assemble themselves and emerge from the walls.

ENCOUNTERS IN THE CASTLE OF LOST SOULS

The fissure gives on to a roughly oval chamber in which an irregular staircase follows the wall on one side to the upper levels, which are simply galleries with dismal views out over the barren world Arxoon the Hag inhabits. The chamber has no visible light source but it is possible to see as a gloomy half-light pervades. At the back of the chamber is a great open chasm. Arxoon the Hag skulks about in the shadows of this chamber - a bent, wizened, naked crone covered in dust and ashes. If the Adventurers have entered under escort, the skeletal warriors follow them in and then try and force them towards the edge of the pit, in which uncomfortable situation Arxoon may allow them to speak to her.

THE PIT OF SORROWS

At the lip of the chasm, the Pit of Sorrows, an Adventurer can hear maniacal laughter and gibbering from far below. Under Mystic Vision or a similar spell, the depths of the pit are incandescent with swirling distant forms. Arxoon can use her Spirit Binding to conjure spirits out of the pit at any time - usually ghosts, sickness spirits and curse spirits. If an Adventurer should fall in only Divine Intervention can save them before they crash-land in one of the Many Hells and are lost forever.

MEETING ARXOON THE HAG

If the Adventurers have ended up in the realm of Arxoon the Hag, they are either close to completing their quest through problem solving and negotiation or have taken a dangerously wrong turn somewhere along the line, which will almost certainly be fatal. An Adventurer who tries to fight his way through is faced with impossible odds and will eventually succumb. Nevertheless if by some miracle the Adventurers successfully slay the hag this world will collapse, the spirits trapped here will be released and the Adventurers will find themselves face down in the salt pans of Lake Kushal.

NEGOTIATING WITH ARXOON THE HAG

If simply trying to get back to their own world the most likely way out is to negotiate with the Hag and Arxoon's price will be

very high indeed. She is well aware that her expectations of POW dedications must be modest, as she has little to offer compared to her sister the nymph. To earn passage out of her realm at least one Adventurer must forfeit life *and* afterlife and remain with her here dedicating all his POW, gradually rotting away as he transforms into one of her skeletal warriors. As no sane person would volunteer such a thing unless they have some clever plan to make their escape once their fellows are freed the Adventurers may be asked to draw lots.

THE HAG'S PRICE

While the Hag demands a specific price of her own simply to allow the Adventurers to escape her realm, the termination of the goddess' support for the Empire's enemies requires a POW dedication sealing the propitiatory pact between Taskans and Arxoon. Depending on how successfully the Adventurers negotiate - and of course whether they have done anything that makes for an awkward conversation such as slaying one of Arxoon the Hag's sisters, the price is as follows:

Propitiation: That Arxoon withdraws her support for Haljaf, and desists from sending any further spirits to attack the Taskans. Arxoon demands that the Adventurers dedicate 12 POW between them (as a down payment), which must henceforth be maintained by the establishment of a cult, which will keep POW dedications to this level as a minimum and supplement it with ten times that amount in Magic Points annually offered up in prayer. For each of her sisters killed by the Adventurers, Arxoon will demand that her cult will offer an *additional* 12 POW. All contributors to the Pact will of course gain a Pact skill if they do not already have one as a result of meeting Arxoon the Nymph.

It will be up to the Adventurers to persuade the authorities at home to organise a cult that relieves them of the burden. Arxoon has no real understanding of the power of the Taskans; she regards humans as rather temporary creatures and has no idea that the Taskan Empire could arrange her destruction almost as easily as establishing her cult.

Arxoon will happily threaten the Adventurers with her ability to send curse spirits after them if they fail to keep the bargain.

If the Adventurers have done nothing to actually anger her, she will grant her *Bloodless* gift to one of their number making the POW dedication who must also take the Call Deity divine spell to enable her rites to be celebrated and cult established. She will reveal the basics of her Cult Lore and also allow one instance of her Divine Magic spell to be taken by another. No other benefits can be gained from POW dedicated to her until her Rites are properly celebrated. At that point she can also offer the Divine Magic spells Absorption, Animate Skeleton (Duration 15, Ranged, creates one skeleton warrior at the caster's command

Arxoon the Hag, a minor Goddess

		1D20	AP/HP
STR	8		
CON	12	01-03 R Leg	-/6
SIZ	14	04-06 L Leg	-/6
INT	14	07-09 Abdomen	-/7
POW	48	10-12 Chest	-/8
DEX	12	13-15 R Arm	-/5
CHA	3	16-18 L Arm	-/5
SOC	22	19-20 Head	-/6

Combat Actions 3 **Armour:** None

Damage Modifier +0 **Traits:**

Goddess - Arxoon can accept POW dedications and provide Divine Magic and Divine Gifts in return

Magic Points 108

Arxoon's personal magic points are supplemented by the dedicated POW of her Living Dead slaves.

Divine Will - Arxoon can cast Divine Magic at a cost of one MP per magnitude to a maximum of a Magnitude of 15 (POWx3), while in her domain.

Movement 10m

Skills:

Athletics 30%, Evade 48%, First Aid 78%, Healing 124%, Influence 75%, Insight 248%, Lore (any relevant) 112%, Perception 186%, Persistence 192%, Resilience 72%, Spirit Binding 128%

Strike Rank 13

Combat Style:

Brawl 40%

Divine Magic (144%):

Alter Target; Animate Skeleton, Necrosis, Shield, Soul Sight

per point of magnitude), Necrosis, Soul Sight and Summon Ghost (which will call a ghost to the Adventurer's service for the duration of the spell). Arxoon the Hag's spells are not for the faint hearted, but they have their uses.

loathing. Divine Intervention Miracles are the only likely cure for the damage caused by this spell, although if it affects a limb the limb could be amputated and then regrown using appropriate magic.

Bloodless (Trait)

The adventurer no longer bleeds when cut and is immune to the Bleed Combat Manoeuvre.

Necrosis (Divine Spell)

Duration Permanent, Touch, Resist (Persistence)

This spell has the effect of killing a random Hit Location if the target fails to resist. For every 10% of the caster's Pact skill the target will lose 1 HP to the location affected permanently as it withers and shrivels about the bone. The effects of the spell are visible for all to see and can be the cause of considerable fear and

GETTING HOME

If a deal is struck with Arxoon the Hag, the skeleton warriors will escort the Adventurers to another gateway. This one leads back to their own world, to the magical gateway on Lake Kushal. It is possible that the Witch of Kushal Arxoon (assuming she is alive) will greet them there, perhaps expressing her disappointment that she cannot devour them. If the Adventurers have made it this far, they have every right to be considered heroes, at least for now, and a Hero Point should be awarded to every Adventurer and two to anyone who has specifically put themselves or their POW into the bargain to seal a deal for the Empire with Arxoon, and all should have their Pact (Zygas Taga) raised by D8+2%.

APPENDICES

PRE-GENERATED ADVENTURERS

These Adventurers have had all their previous experience completed and have been provided with a some of money to acquire additional equipment once the players are aware of what the army will provide to their Adventurers from stores. In some cases the character outline provides some information about an Adventurer's family (note that Farsha is an only child and her mother is dead, while Anthul is estranged from his father and has no active family connections – but an important contact). Otherwise the Players should be free to determine family and community connections in the normal way.

All of these Adventurers have a story that allows for a significant change in direction as a result of their experiences in the army, so their background should provide story leads and some clues for roleplaying but not restrict the way a player wants to develop their Adventurer's future development.

Two of these pre-generated Adventurers have been given some additional experience – Arakis Marank is the leader of the Adventurers' squad in the militia, Goinar, an Eskar mercenary working for the Taskan army as a scout, is a character who can be attached to the Adventurers' unit as either a PC or NPC and brings some useful specialist skills. The most likely point to introduce Goinar is at the start of Episode 3.

ARAKIS MARANK (AGE 23, FARMER)

Arakis is a straight forward character from a solid but poor farming family. Essentially a good-natured young man who wants to do right by his charges – within his own, rather limited frame of reference. He likes army life, it has been good to him, kept him clothed, fed and paid for two years and he is keen to make good soldiers of the new recruits. Being new to the role he wants to see them stay out of trouble when in town, to get through their two years without coming to grief and come out of it feeling like they have been made men (just like he did). Arakis is a do-er not a thinker, a physical rather than a cerebral person. He enjoys barrack sports, especially wrestling. He is deferential towards people in authority and generally has confidence in their decisions – he has always assumed they must know what they are doing and is not experienced enough yet to have been disabused of this conviction. Arakis sports a beard to make him look older, wiser and more experienced than he is.

STR13 CON12 SIZ12 INT13 POW14 DEX8 CHA13 SOC7
DM+0 Mv8 CA2 MP13 HP2: Funds: 300 Taskeens

Common Skills

Athletics 41%, Brawl 31%, Brawn 30%, Culture (Taskan) 56%, Dance 21%, Drive 42%, Evade 26%, Evaluate 46%, First Aid 36%, Influence 30%, Insight 27%, Regional Lore (Tarsenia) 66%, Perception 32%, Persistence 48%, Resilience 49%, Rites (Taskan) 36%, Sing 27%, Sleight 21%, Stealth 21%

Advanced Skills

Craft (Brewing) 21%, Craft (Carpentry) 21%, Education 25%, Language (Taskan) 76%, Lore (Agriculture) 26%, Lore (Animals) 36%, Lore (Tactics and Drill) 46%.

Combat Style

Spear and Shield 56%
Sidearm and shield 41%

Devotions

Pact (Zygas Taga) 20%

Items

A Lamellar cuirass of horn and hardened leather providing 3 AP protection to chest and abdomen, over a thin quilted coat protecting arms, chest and abdomen for an additional 1 AP, a metal helm worth 3AP, -3 SR penalty. Arakis also owns a single handed battle axe, his choice of sidearm.

SETH ZARINSAN (AGE 21, HERDSMAN)

Seth comes from a village close to the city, where his family tends the sheep of an important landowner called Reshor Mahab. His formative years have been singularly uninteresting, since he spends every day in the broad green meadows lazing beside the Siskil river with the flock. It has taken four years for the shepherd boy to be picked out for service in the militia. This is partly because Seth has cultivated the dishevelled appearance and poor personal hygiene of someone that spends all their time with animals and when the officers looked him over he always tried to roll his eyes and stammer like a simpleton. This year Arakis pointed him out at the levy to Tarasin who selected him because he 'looked like the army would do him good'. This simple act of misguided philanthropy has turned Seth's world upside down. Seth lacks courage – at

least he has not found any yet – but is quick witted and has a flexible relationship with truth and honesty. Seth's experience in the militia could see him grow into someone who accepts his adult responsibilities and comes good, or simply bring out the shirker and rogue lurking within.

STR9 CON13 SIZ13 INT15 POW9 DEX11 CHA14 SOC8
DM+0 Mv 8 SR13+ CA3 MP6 HP2 Funds: 100 Taskeens

Common Skills

Athletics 20%, Brawl 20%, Brawn 22%, Culture (Taskan) 60%, Dance 25%, Drive 40%, Evade 22%, Evaluate 49%, First Aid 26%, Influence 22%, Insight 24%, Regional Lore (Tarsenia) 70%, Perception 49%, Persistence 28%, Resilience 31%, Rites (Taskan) 34%, Sing 23%, Sleight 40%, Stealth 41%

Advanced Skills

Craft (Butchery) 26%, Education 23%, Fast Talk 29%, Language (Taskan) 73%, Lore (Animal) 40% Play Zither 25%, Tracking 38%

Combat Style

Archery 46%
Sling 32%

Devotions

Pact: Zygas Taga (1) 19%
Pact: Hamath (2) 15%

Gifts

(Hamath) Boon of Lasting Night (permanent Common Magic effect, magnitude 2)

Items (counts as one roll on the Community Support Table in the Adventures Chapter)

A bow and quiver of 12 arrows

MAREK ALASIN (AGE 18, STUDENT)

An educated young man from the city from a well to do family who run a scriptorium. Marek cannot help feeling slightly superior to the average citizen thanks to his learning, but at the same time the family business bores him and he is looking forward to some time away from home making a man of himself. Marek has ambitions to do something 'important' with his life. For now he imagines that to be standing for some sort of political office as soon as he has enough years behind him to be taken seriously, perhaps eventually reaching a high position in the Emperor-cult. Since his older brother is likely to inherit the family business, his parents expect him to study the law and public speaking when he finishes his militia service, which would help in his ambitions. Failing that they would see him become a priest. Of course life may throw different opportunities into his path. He certainly has the brains to achieve but he needs to work on his charisma. Marek Alasin has substantial funds at his disposal, however he is expected (by his parents) to retain a minimum of 2,500 Taskeens in savings

to see him through his studies after he leaves the army and this is deposited with his Funeral Club where it also funds a ransom.

STR10 CON13 SIZ12 INT15 POW15 DEX12 CHA8 SOC14
DM+0 Mv8 SR14+ CA3 MP14 HP1 Funds: 3,500 Taskeens

Common Skills

Athletics 32%, Brawl 22%, Brawn 23%, Culture (Taskan) 72%, Dance 21%, Drive 21%, Evade 24%, Evaluate 55%, First Aid 28%, Influence 38%, Insight 28%, Regional Lore (Tarsenia) 62%, Perception 28%, Persistence 49%, Resilience 26%, Rites (Taskan) 45%, Sing 21%, Sleight 21%, Stealth 28%

Advanced Skills

Education 69%, Education (Djesmiri) 39%, Language (Djesmiri) 30%, Language (Taskan) 83%, Orate 33%, Ride 27%, Grimoire (*Enquiries of a Gentleman*) 40%

Combat Style

Archery 34%

Devotions

Pact (Zygas Taga) 11%

Talents

Talent for languages. Marek gains a bonus of +10% to his basic percentage in any Language skill he acquires.

Grimoire

Enquiries of a Gentleman. This book is he collected wisdom of a scribal society of which Marek and his family are members, that occasionally meets as a Community Cult. It includes the priestly rites *Sanctify* and *Worship Tarsen*, as well as *Abjure Sleep* (used when trying to stay awake at the lectern), *Glow, Sense Book* (used to find particular tomes in a library) and *Analyse*, a spell that reveals information about an object or artefact (Range Touch, Concentration, allow one question per 10% of the caster's Grimoire skill).

FARSHA KITARANG (AGE 20, BLACKSMITH)

Farsha is one of a very small number of women to enlist in the militia this year. Although for men military service is compulsory, for women it is voluntary and generally frowned upon. The fact is that since Farsha's mother died she has been brought up as a boy by her blacksmith father, Farshang. He is determined that his only child will inherit his business from him and his business is traditionally the province of men. Farsha must gain admittance to a small local cult under the tutelage of Thesh, the fire god, under the patronage of Arkot Melisan, who imports most of the iron that is worked in Zarina and owns a factory supplying the state with arms, armour and fittings. People who do not join this cult are often pushed out of business. Melisan's cronies make the rules and the rules say that those who wish to join must have proved themselves good citizens by service in the militia. For now Farsha

is focussed on doing right by her father than pursuing a destiny of her own but she may yet find a goal of her own that overrides her sense of obligation to her father. As it happens she is very bright but does not yet know it, so is intimidated by those with a proper education.

STR11 CON9 SIZ13 INT17 POW6 DEX13 CHA10 SOC10
DM+0 Mv8 SR15+ CA3 MP5 HP2 Funds: 500 Taskeens

Common Skills

Athletics 27%, Brawl 22%, Brawn 33%, Culture (Taskan) 56%, Dance 24%, Drive 26%, Evade 22%, Evaluate 51%, First Aid 56%, Influence 29%, Insight 48%, Regional Lore (Tarsenia) 56%, Perception 38%, Persistence 55%, Resilience 58%, Rites (Taskan) 36%, Sing 28%, Sleight 24%, Stealth 26%

Advanced Skills

Craft(Blacksmith) 59%, Education 27%, Language (Taskan) 77%, Mechanisms 34%, Ride 36%

Combat Style

Spear 37%

Devotions

Pact (Zygas Taga) 17%

ANTHUL SANZA (AGE 19, COURTESAN)

Anthul is not only supremely beautiful but is also blessed with both presence and grace. His father, Gunais, was an actor who would give recitals of classic texts to distinguished audiences. He would take young Anthul with him when he was performing and he had the boy taught a small repertoire of dances to further amuse the patrons. It was not long before Anthul was being requested for performances in his own right and when Anthul was 14 Gunais accepted a large sum from a wealthy client who wished for more intimate dances in his private chambers. It was made clear to the boy that his life and limb were at stake, so he submitted to the patron's wishes. It was the first of many such occasions, all with wealthy men – and even one or two of their wives. At the age of 17 he ceased to be under his father's legal control and ran away at once. He lived rough for some time but at length approached one of his former patrons, Sharustang Kemur, who had always been kind to him. Sharustang took Anthul in as a valet and when Gunais turned up at the house had him driven away with a beating. Anthul stayed there for two years but inevitably his master tired of him in the end and he was told that it was time he did his duty as a citizen and enlist for service in the militia (his name had previously been kept off the roll).

STR10 CON11 SIZ14 INT14 POW10 DEX15 CHA17 SOC7
DM+0 Mv8 SR15+ CA3 MP9 HP1 Funds: 50 Taskeens

Common Skills

Athletics 57%, Brawl 27%, Brawn 25%, Culture (Taskan) 68%, Dance 63%, Drive 30%, Evade 42%, Evaluate 51%, First Aid 30%, Influence 34%, Insight 57%, Regional Lore (Tarsenia) 58%, Perception 27%, Persistence 36%, Resilience 36%, Rites (Taskan) 41%, Sing 30%, Sleight 33%, Stealth 30%

Advanced Skills

Acrobatics 50%, Education 31%, Language (Taskan) 81%, Seduction 41%, Streetwise 27% Play (flute) 32%

Combat Style

Knife Fighting 37%

Devotions

Pact (Zygas Taga) 20%

Items (counts as two rolls on the Community Support Table in the Adventures Chapter)

Anthul has a good quality leather lamellar cuirass as a gift from Sharustang upon leaving his service to join the militia; also a letter of reference bearing Sharustang's seal, stating Anthul to be a trustworthy fellow of good character

YANEK SAMANSEE (AGE 18, FARMER)

A strapping farmboy from a village beyond the Siskil river, Yanek is bound to catch Arakis' eye as just the reliable rustic sort the army needs. Yanek is energetic, hard working and naturally helpful, and has little sympathy for shirkers and moaners. The problem is he equates intellectual pursuits with laziness and thinks anyone not up to shouldering a heavy load on a long walk to the next village is weak and pointless. Yanek imagines army life will suit him down to the ground. His idea of fighting is a brawl that ends up in a submission and an extra jug of beer for the winner – so real violence may come as a shock – and he may struggle to fathom the huge diversity of people who get thrown together in the militia. But he is thick-skinned enough not to let that be a problem for *him*.

STR16 CON11 SIZ15 INT12 POW9 DEX10 CHA12 SOC10
DM+1D4 Mv8 SR11 CA2 MP6 HP2 Funds: 400 Taskeens

Common Skills

Athletics 56%, Brawl 46%, Brawn 51%, Culture (Taskan) 54%, Dance 22%, Drive 39%, Evade 20%, Evaluate 44%, First Aid 22%, Influence 22%, Insight 21%, Regional Lore (Tarsenia) 64%, Perception 21%, Persistence 33%, Resilience 62%, Rites (Taskan) 34%, Sing 21%, Sleight 22%, Stealth 22%

Advanced Skills

Education 22%, Language (Taskan) 72%, Lore (Animals) 24%, Lore (Agriculture) 24%, Regional Lore (Korazoon) 35%, Ride 34%, Swim 26%

Combat Style

Sidearm 36%

Devotions

Pact: Zygas Taga (1) 13%

Pact: Hoonvel (2) 14% Divine Magic: Channel Strength, Laughter



GOINAR (AGE 23, ESKAR WARRIOR)

Goinar has been with the Taskan army on the Korazoon frontier for three years and has a good working knowledge of the region. The second son of a wealthy man from Bandaknar, he stands to inherit a herd of 30-40 horses when his father finally dies. Goinar speaks good Tarsenian and a little of the local languages.

Service with the Taskan Army has become something of a tradition and Goinar's older brother is with a squadron of heavy cavalry on the North West frontier. He and his brother never really got on and he intends to one day take his part of the family inheritance and set up in business as a horse trader somewhere in Tarsenia.

STR11 CON5 SIZ14 INT14 POW10 DEX14 CHA11 SOC15
DM+0 Mv8 SR14 CA3 MP8 HP2 Funds: 100 Taskeens

Common Skills

Athletics 35%, Brawl 25%, Brawn 25%, Culture (Sheng) 38%, Dance 25%, Drive 34%, Evade 38%, Evaluate 25%, First Aid 28%, Influence 26%, Insight 24%, Regional Lore (Camtri) 48%, Perception 34%, Persistence 40%, Resilience 40%, Rites (Sheng Tradition) 55%, Sing 21%, Sleight 25%, Stealth 38%

Advanced Skills

Culture (Taskan) 28%, Language (Sheng) 75%, Language (Taskan) 35%, Lore (Herd Animals) 28%, Mounted Combat 48%, Ride 54%, Survival 25%, Track 39%

Combat Style

Archery 58%
Sidearm and Shield 45%

Devotions

Zygas Taga (1) 14%
Clan Spirits (1) 23%

Common Magic (Sheng Tradition 55%)

Firearrow (1), Pierce (1). Goinar has clan tattoos over his right shoulder and onto his chest which act as a focus for his common magic.

Items

Recurve Bow, 20 arrows. A mace, target shield and dagger. A reinforced leather cap (2AP), thickly quilted jerkin (2AP), leather boots and leggings (1AP) and bracers (1AP).

CULTURAL BACKGROUND TABLES FOR NON-TASKAN ADVENTURERS AND NPCs

SHENG

Use this table for Adventurers and NPCs from the plains of Kitan, also for the Eskars who inhabit the Little Kitan within the borders of the Empire.

Common Skill Bonuses	Combat Styles	Advanced Skills	Starting Money
All Sheng Adventurers gain the following bonuses: +10% to Athletics, Perception, Resilience and Stealth +20% to <i>Culture (Sheng)*</i> and <i>Regional Lore (Kitan)**</i> +10% to <i>Drive or Rites (Sheng Tradition)</i>	Sheng Adventurers choose one Combat Style from the following, and gain a +10% bonus: SOC 03–07: <i>Brawl, Sling, Spear</i> SOC 08+: <i>Archery, Sidearm, Spear</i>	Sheng Adventurers gain the following Advanced Skills: <i>Language (Sheng) +50%</i> <i>Ride +10%</i> In addition, civilised Adventurers choose two Advanced Skills from the following: <i>Craft (any), Language (Taskan), Language (Thennalt), Mounted Combat, Pact :Clan Ancestors (cost 1 POW), Play Instrument, Swim</i>	SOC x10 in bullion or coin. If SOC is 11 or higher Adventurer has a riding horse, plus 1D6 additional animals for each point of SOC in excess of 13.

* Eskar Adventurers gain +10% in Culture (Sheng) and gain Culture (Taskan) as an additional Advanced Skill.

** Eskar Adventurers may take Regional Lore (Camtri) instead.

ASSABIAN

Use this table for Adventurers and NPCs from Morkesh, Djesmirket and Sharranket

Common Skill Bonuses	Combat Styles	Advanced Skills	Starting Money
All Assabian Adventurers gain the following bonuses: +30% to <i>Culture (Djesmiri)</i> +20 % to <i>Regional Lore (Assabia)</i> +30% to <i>Evaluate</i> +10% to <i>Persistence and Rites (Assabian)</i>	Assabian Adventurers choose one Combat Style from the following, and gain a +10% bonus: SOC 03–07: <i>Brawl, Knife Fighting, Sling</i> SOC 08–14: <i>Archery, Sidearm, Spear</i> SOC 15+: <i>Archery; Cloak and Dagger, Swordsmanship (Assabian School)</i>	Assabian Adventurers gain the following Advanced Skills: <i>Education (Own)</i> <i>Language (Own) +50%</i> In addition, civilised Adventurers choose two Advanced Skills from the following: <i>Art (any), Craft (any), Language (any), Lore (any), Mechanisms, Play Instrument, Ride; Streetwise</i>	Refer to the SOC table.

KORANTINE

Use the following table for Korantine Adventurers and NPCs from the Eastern shore of the Inner Ocean

Common Skill Bonuses	Combat Styles	Advanced Skills	Starting Money
All Korantine Adventurers gain the following bonuses: +30% to <i>Culture (Korantine) and Lore (Korantia)</i> +10% to <i>Evaluate</i> +20% to <i>Rites (Korantine)</i>	Korantine Adventurers choose one Combat Style from the following, and gain a +10% bonus: SOC 03–07: <i>Brawl, Knife Fighting, Sling</i> SOC 08–14: <i>Archery, Brawl, Spear and Shield</i> SOC 15+: <i>Sidearm, Swordsmanship (Korantine School)</i>	Korantine Adventurers gain the following Advanced Skills: <i>Education</i> <i>Language (Korantine) +50%</i> <i>Pact (Orayna), cost 1 POW</i> In addition, civilised Adventurers choose two Advanced Skills from the following: <i>Art (any), Craft (any), Language (any), Lore (any), Mechanisms, Play Instrument, Ride; Streetwise; Swim</i>	Refer to the SOC table.

THENNALT

Use the following table for Adventurers and NPCs from Brotomagia, Camtri and Marangia

Common Skill Bonuses	Combat Styles	Advanced Skills	Starting Money
All Thennalt Adventurers gain the following bonuses: +30% to <i>Culture (Own)* and Lore (Regional)**</i> +10% to <i>Athletics, Brawn, Resilience and Rites (Thennalt)</i>	Thennalt Adventurers choose two Combat Style from the following, and gain a +10% bonus: SOC 03–07: <i>Brawl, Sidearm, Sling</i> SOC 08–14: <i>Brawl, Sidearm, Spear and Shield</i> SOC 15+: <i>Maul, Spear and Javelin, Swordsmanship</i>	Thennalt Adventurers gain the following Advanced Skills: <i>Language (native dialect)** +50%</i> In addition, Thennalt Adventurers choose two Advanced Skills from the following: <i>Art (any), Craft (any), Education (Korantine or Taskan), Language (any), Lore (any), Play Instrument, Ride, Survival, Swim, Track</i>	Refer to the SOC table.

*Adventurers from Camtri gain +20% in Culture (Marangia) and gain Culture (Taskan) as an additional Advanced Skill.

** Refer to the Languages and Cultures table in Chapter 10, *Beyond the Frontiers*.

BESHOR VALLEY

Use these tables for Adventurers and NPCs from the Kingdoms of Yegusai and Zagre

Common Skill Bonuses	Combat Styles	Advanced Skills	Starting Money
All Beshor Valley Adventurers gain the following bonuses: +30% to <i>Culture (Beshor Valley People) and Lore (Beshor Valley)</i> +10% to <i>Evaluate and Persistence</i> +20% to <i>Rites (Beshorite)</i>	Beshori Adventurers choose one Combat Style from the following, and gain a +10% bonus: SOC 03–14: <i>Brawl, Sidearm and Shield, Sling</i> SOC 15+: <i>Sidearm, Swordsmanship (Assabian School)</i>	Beshori Adventurers gain the following Advanced Skills: <i>Education</i> <i>Language (Beshorite) +50%</i> In addition, Beshori Adventurers choose two Advanced Skills from the following: <i>Art (any), Craft (any), Language (any), Lore (any), Mechanisms, Play Instrument, Streetwise; Swim</i>	Refer to the SOC table.

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AGE OF TREASON

- CHARACTER SHEET -

PLAYER - _____

ADVENTURER - _____

CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTRIBUTES

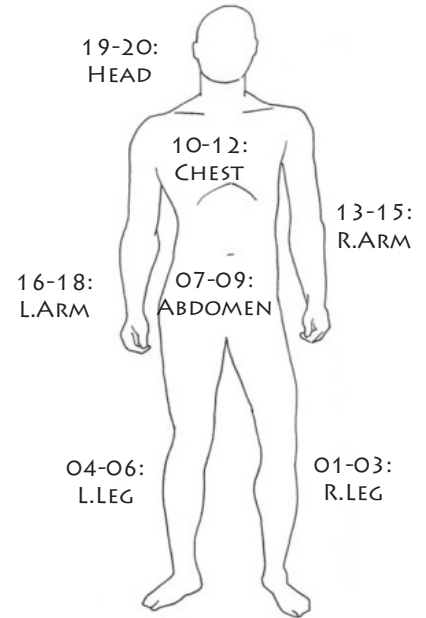
STR	COMBAT ACTIONS
CON	DAMAGE MODIFIER
SIZ	STRIKE RANK
INT	MOVEMENT
POW	DEDICATED POW
DEX	MAGIC POINTS
CHA	IMPROVEMENT MODIFIER
SOC	HERO POINTS

HOMELAND :

CITY OR TRIBE :

PREVIOUS PROFESSION :

AGE:



COMMON SKILLS

SKILL	BASIC %	%
Athletics	STR+DEX	
Brawl	STR+DEX	
Brawn	STR+SIZ	
Culture (Own)	INT x2	
Dance	DEX+CHA	
Drive	DEX+POW	
Evade	DEX x2	
Evaluate	INT+CHA	
First Aid	INT+DEX	
Influence	CHA+SOC	
Insight	INT+POW	
Lore (Regional)	INT x2	
Perception	INT+POW	
Persistence	POW x2	
Resilience	CON x2	
Rites (Own)	INT+CHA	
Sing	CHA+POW	
Sleight	DEX+CHA	
Stealth	DEX+INT	

ARMOUR

ARMOUR PENALTY

ADVANCED SKILLS

SKILL	BASIC %	%

LORES

SKILL	BASIC %	%
	INT x2	
	INT x2	
	INT x2	
	INT x2	

DEVOTIONS

Name or Object: _____
 Pact Skill: _____ Dedicated POW: _____
 Divine Magic: _____

Gifts: _____

Name or Object: _____
 Pact Skill: _____ Dedicated POW: _____
 Divine Magic: _____

Gifts: _____

Name or Object: _____
 Pact Skill: _____ Dedicated POW: _____
 Divine Magic: _____

Gifts: _____

LANGUAGES

SKILL	BASIC %	%
Own	INT+CHA	
	INT+CHA	
	INT+CHA	
	INT+CHA	

COMBAT STYLES

SKILL	BASIC %	%
	STR+DEX	
	STR+DEX	
	STR+DEX	
	STR+DEX	

MAGICAL SKILLS

SKILL	BASIC %	%

AGE OF TREASON

- CHARACTER SHEET -

PLAYER -

ADVENTURER -

WEAPON SIZE REACH DAMAGE AP HP COMBAT MANOEUVRES RANGE LOAD ENC

GRIMOIRES, SPELLS AND SPIRITS

HEALTH AND FATIGUE

EQUIPMENT

ENC

MONEY, WEALTH AND POSSESSION

CONTACTS, FRIENDS, ENEMIES AND RIVALS

CHARACTER NOTES

CULTS, CLUBS AND AFFILIATIONS

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