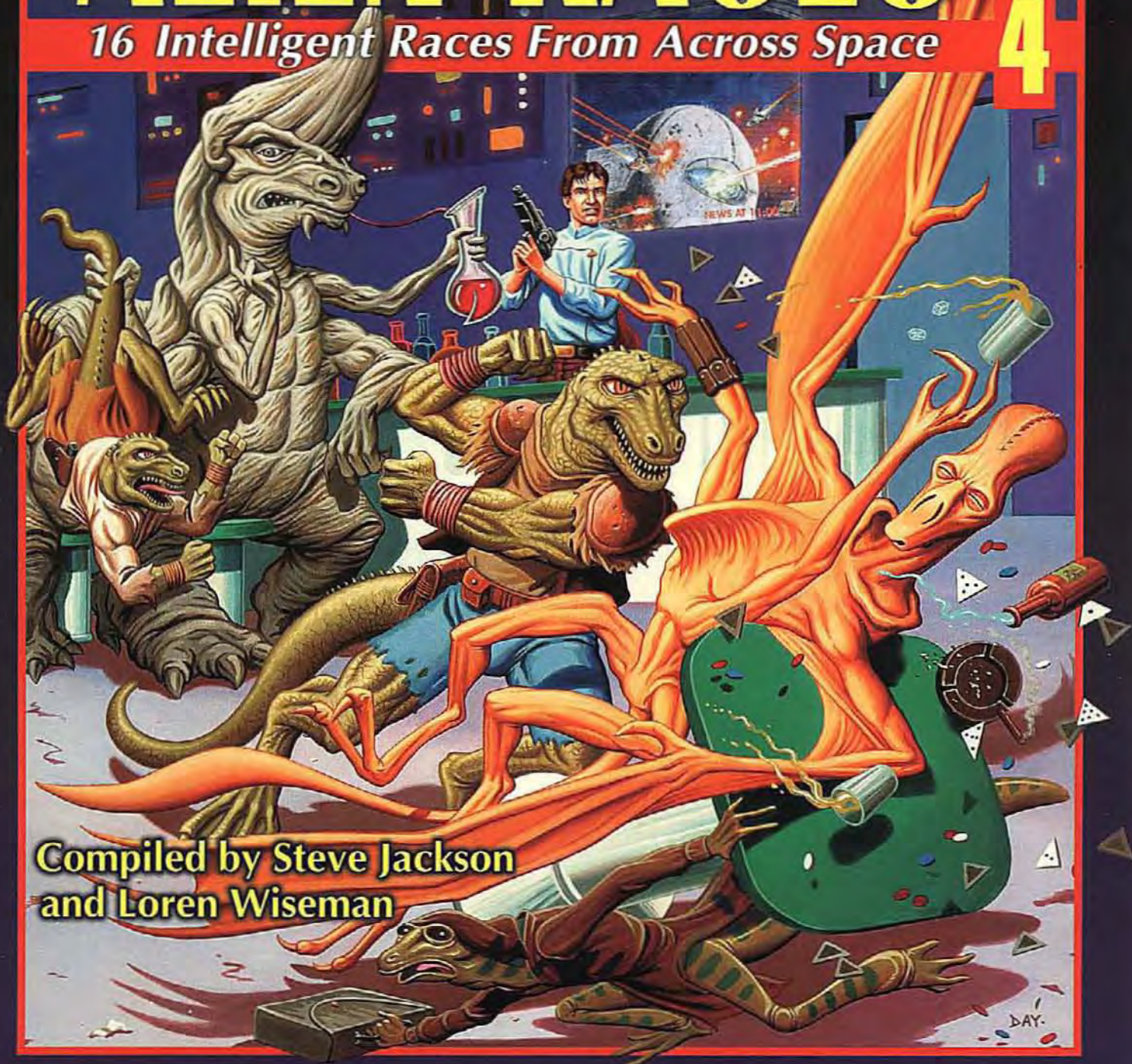


GURPS[®] *Traveller*[®]

ALIEN RACES

16 Intelligent Races From Across Space

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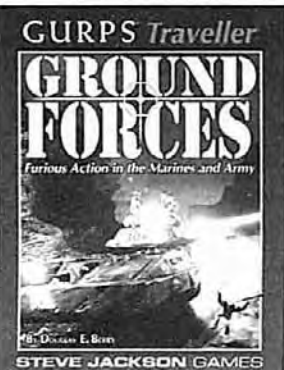
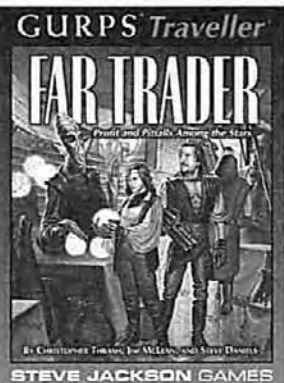
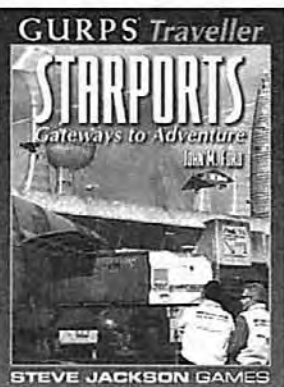


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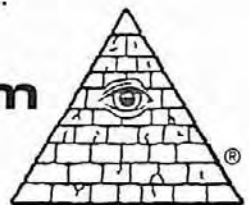
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ALIEN RACES 4



16 Intelligent Races From Across Space

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About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid). Our online magazine includes new *GURPS* rules and articles. It also covers *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, and many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *In Nomine*, *INWO*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures*, and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online!

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. A current catalog is available for an SASE. Or check out our Web site (below).

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE. Or download them from the Web – see below.

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Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for an online catalog, errata, updates, Q&A, and much more. We also have Compuserve and AOL conferences. *GURPS* has its own Usenet group, too: rec.games.frp.gurps.

GURPSnet. This e-mail list hosts much of the online discussion of *GURPS*. To join, mail majordomo@io.com with "subscribe GURPSnet-L" in the message body, or point your Web browser to gurpsnet.sjgames.com.

The *GURPS Traveller Alien Races 4* Web page is at www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/alienraces4/.

Page References

Any page reference that begins with a B refers to *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition Revised*; e.g., p. B144 refers to page 144 of *Basic Set*. CI refers to *Compendium I*, GT to *GURPS Traveller, Second Edition*; T:FI to *Traveller: First In*; and T:FT to *Traveller: Far Trader*.

For a full list of abbreviations, see p. C1181 or the updated web list at www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html.

Introduction

This is (we think) the last of the four *Alien Races* books for *GURPS Traveller*. Where the first three books focused mainly on major races, this is a collection of minor races. Minor, but not trivial!

Some of these races, most notably the Bwaps and the Virushi, have been part of the *Traveller* story for years. Others, like the Hlanssai and the Githiaskio, have been described in various *Traveller* releases, but have not gotten the attention that they deserve. And four – the Tezcat, J'sia, Valkyrie, and Evantha – are completely new.

For most of these races and cultures, we have tried to provide as much detail as possible, to show the way in which the species and its world fits into the *Traveller* background. The exception is the last race in the book – one of the new ones – the Valkyrie. This parasitic species is not tied to any particular place in Charted Space . . . the referee can introduce a Valkyrie outbreak wherever he needs it, or locate their predatory Dominion wherever it will make the campaign most interesting.

Although this is the last book planned in this particular series, we'll certainly continue to describe new alien races. The *Planetary Survey* series will focus on a new world every month . . . and many of those worlds have their own intelligent species.

And there is one further book coming in the current format. It doesn't describe aliens, though; it's about our cousins among the stars, scattered by the Ancients and now growing into their own destinies. That book, of course, will be *Humanity*.

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Steve Jackson had already been playing *Traveller* for years when he founded SJ Games in 1980. He was thrilled to get Marc Miller's permission to do *GURPS Traveller*.

His other work includes the basic *GURPS* system, *Ogre*, *Illuminati*, *Hacker*, *Evil Stevie's Pirate Game*, and, with Chad Irby, *Car Wars*. He likes just about every type of game he's ever played, but is especially into miniatures right now (and is enjoying the process of setting up the SJ Games miniatures division).

Loren Wiseman was one of the founding partners of GDW, Inc., original publishers of *Traveller*, and spent more than 20 years there as a game designer, developer, typesetter, and editor. After GDW closed, Loren freelanced for a time, and then came to SJ Games, where he is *Traveller* line editor and expert-in-residence.

JOURNAL OF THE TRAVELLERS' AID SOCIETY

The long-running *Traveller* magazine is now online at www.sjgames.com/jtas/, edited by Loren Wiseman. It supports all versions of *Traveller* with news, articles, discussion areas, and reviews. Subscriptions are \$15/year for 52 weekly updates and full access to archives.

The *Traveller News Service* is updated weekly, chronicling the life and times of the Imperium, and is viewable free at www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/news.html. The SJ Games *Traveller* links page (www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/links.html) links to the *Traveller* Web Ring, which includes most of the major *Traveller*-oriented websites. For information on subscribing to the *Traveller* mailing list, go to tml.travellercentral.com/tmlform.html.

Ael Yael

Fierce, proud, and provincial: that summarizes the Ael Yael. These avian hunters have stubbornly avoided assimilation into mainstream Imperial culture for over 800 years, resisting with everything from peaceful cultural revivals to violent confrontations. Despite this, the Ael are still found working across much of charted space.

The Ael's resistance to Imperial ways dates back to their introduction to interstellar civilization. Corporate exploitation of the Ael and their planet led to war and near-genocide. That experience has permanently soured the avians' attitude toward both megacorporations and Imperial culture as a whole.

HISTORY

Imperial xenologists believe the Ael Yael first started creating tools around -40,000. Records are unclear, but Vilani explorers first landed on Jaeyelya, the Ael planet, somewhere around -6500. At this point the Ael were still using stone age technology.

For many races the arrival of the Vilani meant subjugation and domination by the First Imperium. In the case of the Ael, the Vilani took a different path. They determined the Ael would be unable to assimilate into their society, but were also unlikely to develop high technology on their own.

Initial surveys also found few readily exploitable mineral deposits. The bureaux decided that the most economical thing to do with the Ael was to ignore them, cut them off, leave them to stagnate. They interdicted the world.

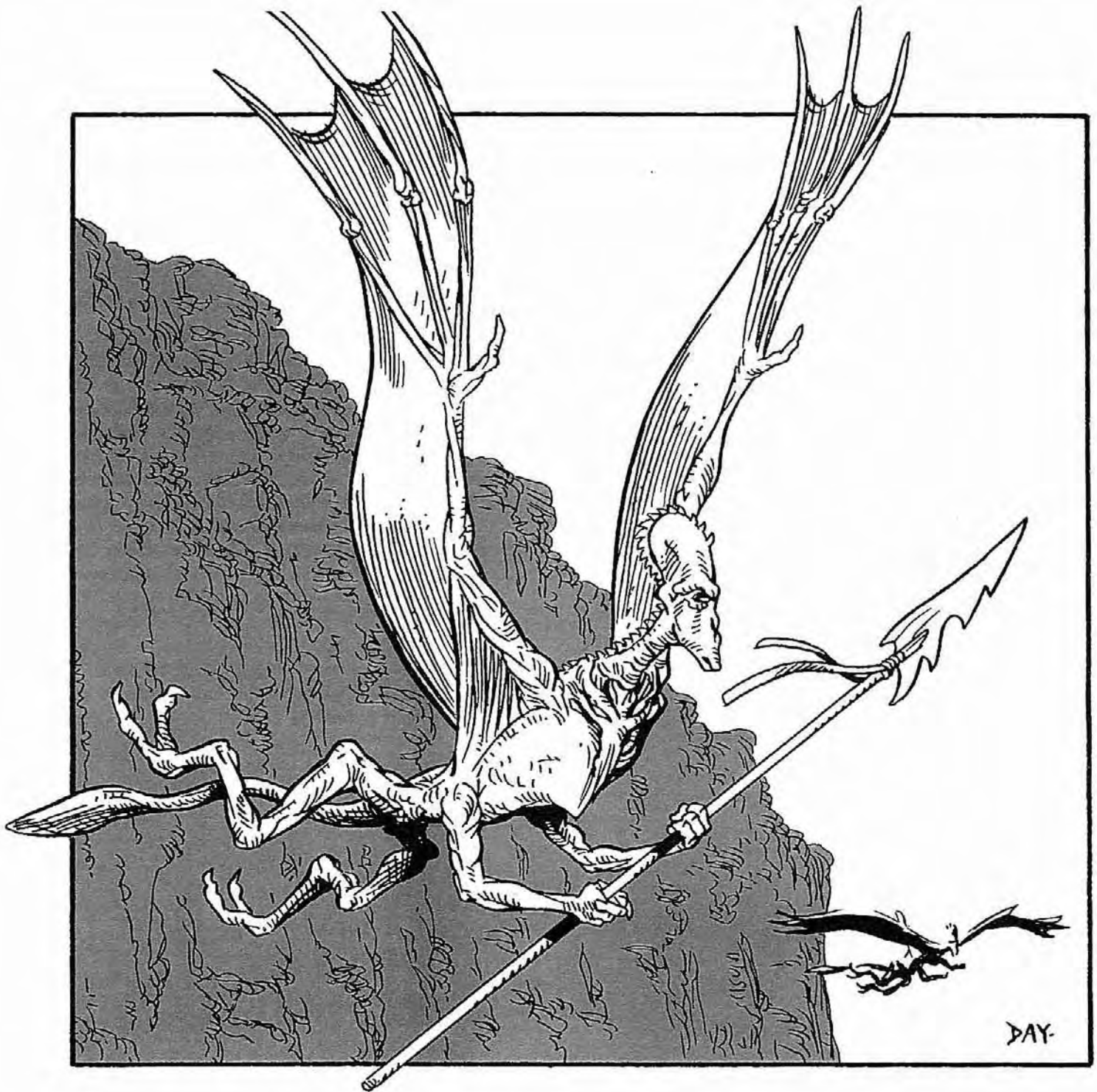
Vilani interdiction was successful. Later administrators were reluctant to change the status quo, and the Ael remained largely ignorant of galactic culture until the Rule of Man.

The new Terran rulers lifted the ban, and Solomani traders occasionally visited Jaeyelya during this period, but no permanent Human presence was maintained. When the Long Night fell, even this limited contact ended.

This pattern of limited contact with the wider galaxy changed dramatically with the dawn of the Third Imperium. Surveys of Jaeyelya found huge, high-grade deposits of manganese and copper beneath *Hi-yayahu lae*, the Glittering Floor, a dry seabed straddling Jaeyelya's equator. In 366 an Imperial mining company, McAteer Mining, LIC, acquired mining rights from several Ael clans, and began tunneling operations on the Floor. Over the next 40 years McAteer built a huge mining operation using tens of thousands of Ael as slave labor. Thousands perished in the squalid mining camps.



The ever-increasing oppression led to organized unrest, and a revolt in 415. It was brutally put down, but resistance to the Human presence on Jaeyelya continued. Steady escalation in "protective reprisals" against the "savages" caused millions of deaths, amounting to well over 95% of the Ael population, over the next 22 years.



Adventure Seed: Che Ael

A guerrilla group on a backwater world has some new members. A militant band of Ael has joined the fight against the planet's megacorporate-dominated government. The aliens have training in a variety of areas. Many are veterans of the Scout Service or other military groups, and are acting as advisors for local forces. The guerrillas have become more and more effective in recent months, and scored several victories against the government. Any group of adventurers could become involved on either side of the conflict, running guns, negotiating, spying, or providing expert advice of their own.

The slaughter was stopped in 437 with the termination of McAteer's corporate charter, intervention by Imperial Marines, and prosecution of the subsector duke for complicity in the genocide. Official historians claim the Emperor's preoccupation with the Illeish revolt (418 to 435) precluded an earlier response to this crisis.

For a time, the very survival of the race was in doubt; the remaining Ael were dispirited, scattered, and unwilling to cooperate with *any* Humans, and several of their most important prey species had been wiped out, or nearly so, by McAteer's scorched-earth warfare. Gradually, though, the Ael recovered, though their numbers on Jaeyelya built up slowly because so many emigrated. There are now more than 800,000 Ael on Jaeyelya, and several times that number scattered throughout the Imperium. Despite their star-spanning

presence, most Ael have maintained a fierce loyalty to their homeworld and its culture.

An Imperial Protectorate administered by the Scout Service has ruled Jaeyelya since the military intervention. Human presence is limited to protectorate administration, the Scout base, and a few other authorized activities. Exploitation of Jaeyelya's mineral wealth is a protectorate monopoly, with all revenues going to support the Ael.

AEL ON OTHER WORLDS

In the late 800s the Ael began to found colonies on other worlds. Each of these colonies is located on a world physically similar to Jaeyelya, with low gravity, a dense, untainted atmosphere, and a warm or tropical climate. Few worlds meet these criteria, and fewer than two dozen colonies have been founded thus far. None exceed Jaeyelya in population.

The independent nature of the Ael, combined with their history of subjugation, has introduced further complications into their colonization program. Ael colonies are extremely jealous of their independence. Most Ael communes insist on dealing directly with the Imperium, bypassing any existing planetary government. Few existing planetary governments have been willing to concede these rights, but several colonies have been placed on previously uninhabited worlds on the frontier.

PHYSIOLOGY

The Ael are descended from six-limbed, bilaterally symmetrical, carnivorous avians, occupying an ecological niche similar to the Terran lion. The upper limbs are membranous wings averaging 14 feet from wingtip to wingtip. The midlimbs are set at the bottom of the torso, near the hind limbs. They are strong and flexible, ending in hands with two long fingers and opposable thumbs. The hind limbs act as legs, are also quite strong for a low-gravity creature, and bear sharp talons.

Intelligence and language developed among the Ael due to a number of factors. Chief among these was a dramatic climatic change, which forced the Ael out of Jaeyelya's forests and into the mountains and cliffs overlooking the Glittering Floor, a dry seabed covered with prismatic mineral deposits. Ael groups who were better able to communicate and cooperate were better able to survive in these harsh environments.

Ael eyesight is significantly better than that of Humans, and Ael eyes are protected by a layer of polarized pigmentation which rapidly darkens with exposure to light. This response is often triggered under lighting conditions most Humans find tolerable, since Jaeyelya's K6 star is relatively dim to Humans. Visual sensitivity extends into the infrared, giving the Ael the ability to see in any lighting conditions short of total darkness. Depth perception is also superior.

Ael wings are fully functional, and Ael are capable of flight under the low gravity and dense atmosphere of their homeworld. On worlds with higher gravity, or lower air densities, Ael either refrain from flying or use contragravity lift harnesses to aid their flight.

Adventure Seed: A Killer Contract

A small publishing company has recently signed a deal to produce the entire 11-volume body of works by the Ael literary genius, Haiychee yee (literally, Climbing Wordweaver). Wordweaver is on a promotional tour of several worlds, speaking, appearing on holovid programs, and signing actual paper copies of his works. Of course, Wordweaver has been assured the publisher is independent of any of the megacorporate chains.

And of course this isn't true. Wordweaver's publisher actually is a megacorporate subsidiary, hidden behind a maze of shell corporations. At least one reporter has already found out about this connection, and the publisher's executives are scared. The company stands to lose millions of credits if its connections to its megacorporate owner are revealed. Wordweaver could void the contract because of this deception, and no one doubts that he would. The executives will resort to any measures, including those which are less than legal, to keep the contract. Adventurers could become involved as reporters, friends, fans, bodyguards, or assassins.

Interestingly, though the Ael can only fly on low-G worlds, their tolerance for variations in gravity is better than Human. An Ael will be completely comfortable and healthy in any gravity from 0.1 G to 1.1 G.

Because Ael body structure is radically different from Human, Ael often have difficulties in Human-designed environments. The midlimbs of most Ael are below the height of most Humans' hips. This difference means Ael have to reach up to manipulate objects or controls placed at convenient locations for Humans. From a Human perspective, desks, controls and other objects designed for Ael are set uncomfortably low. This affects the ability of each race to use equipment designed for the other (see *Equipment*, below). Ael are also physically incapable of firing ranged weapons from cover as Humans do. Though capable of leaning out from behind a building or tree to fire, they cannot rise up from behind a wall or trench without fully exposing their body. In these situations Ael actually prefer to leap from behind an obstacle and use their wings to hover in the air above their targets while firing.

REPRODUCTION AND LIFE CYCLE

Ael are bisexual and bear live young. These *Ael yeyehi* (literally translated as "updraft riders") are even smaller and more helpless than Human children when first born. Young Ael grow quickly however, and can usually fly after about two (Imperial standard) years. Ael become sexually mature after about 10 years, and are fully mature at 15. They begin to age (and make aging rolls) at age 40, and often live to be 70 years old.

We establish this fund as a perpetual reparation for the unforgivable harm we have inflicted on these sophonts. May our children remember our shame and be wiser than their parents.

– Emperor Martin III, year 439

The Planetary Funds

As a part of the plan to compensate the Ael, the Imperial government established a Planetary Development Fund. Financed by the planet's considerable mineral wealth and contributions by Ael employed offworld (see p. 7), the Fund provides a wide variety of services. These include health care, education, housing, and ecological management. As a result, the Fund wields enormous power on Jaeyelya, and over Ael life on other colonies as well. This is resented by a few, but the fact that the Scout Service allows Ael to make most of the Fund's policy decisions and set spending priorities helps avoid most conflict.

Each new Ael colony makes some contribution to the Jaeyelya Planetary Fund to compensate the homeworld for the cost of setting up and supporting the early colony. Most colonies have established local funds as well. These are administered by local Ael, though they are often less well suited for the job than the Scouts. All of these funds are much younger, and have many fewer members to draw on, and are therefore much smaller than the Fund of Jaeyelya.

PSYCHOLOGY

Ael psychology is dominated by their origins as carnivorous social avians which evolved in forest canopies. An Ael's social nature expresses itself in a strong connection to his *hejal*, and, in a larger sense, the Ael race as a whole. Attempts to transfer this abstract racial loyalty to any actual group have repeatedly failed. Imperial xenologists believe this is the primary reason the Ael cannot maintain a planetary government on their own.

It comes as a surprise to those unfamiliar with the Ael that they are not a claustrophobic race. Ael are comfortable in almost any space which will accommodate a Human, including Human-built starships, buildings, and ground vehicles. Aeries are usually no larger than comparable Human buildings, and are often smaller, given the fact that Ael prefer to build in high locations.

Aggressive, predatory instincts are still strong in many Ael. These feelings manifest themselves in a strong desire to confront physical threats in close combat. An Ael will argue all day when confronted, and, in fact, the Ael have produced some excellent orators. However, when presented with a

physical threat, the Ael instinct is to hit that threat as hard as possible and rip it to shreds with talons, spear, or sword.

Ael actually dislike ranged weapons, both because of the recoil and because they miss the thrill close combat brings.

PSIONICS

The study of Ael psionic ability had not progressed very far when the PsionicSuppressions began. Even at the height of Imperial interest in psionics, few Ael volunteered for testing. As a result, less is known about Ael psionic abilities than those of Humaniti or other major races. Telepathic and telekinetic abilities have been documented, but neither teleportation nor ESP abilities were ever found. Psionic strengths among the Ael appear to fall within the same ranges as Humaniti.

Like those of other races in the Imperium, Ael psionic abilities are suppressed by lack of public knowledge and training.



SOCIETY

The McAteer Genocide had a profound effect on Ael society. Over the last several centuries the Ael Yael have created cultural institutions resistant to influence by offworld corporate interests. They have succeeded, but their world has remained underdeveloped. To this day Jaeyelya has almost no industry other than mineral extraction. The Ael accept this as the price of keeping more Humans off their world.

Ael society is centered around the *hejal*, which Humans translate as “commune” – a group of between 40 and 150 individuals, primarily related by extended kinship ties. Multiple *hejal* will occasionally settle an area together to form larger communities, but *hejal* are the largest formally organized units of Ael society.

Physically each *hejal* consists of a central aerie, usually on the face of a cliff, in a large stand of tall trees, or more rarely, on top of a group of constructed towers. Buildings used for storage or industry will be clustered at the base of the aerie. Large tracts of land surrounding the commune will be reserved as pasture for herd animals and hunting grounds. Ael prefer very low population densities; they do not enjoy crowds, even of their own kind, and hunting and grazing require large undeveloped areas.

Decisions are made democratically within each *hejal*. All adults participate in the process, and options are deliberated until a general consensus is reached. This process can take some time. More than one group of outsiders has walked away in disgust after spending several weeks waiting for the *hejal* to make some important decision.



The sexes play similar roles in society. Males and females are both expected to participate in hunting, raising children, defense, and production of goods or services. Individuals are given tasks by the hejal based on talent, need, and the individual's expressed desires.

Property used by more than one Ael is almost always owned by the hejal on behalf of its members. An individual Ael might own his tools, weapons, and other personal effects, but vehicles, production machinery, land, and fixtures on the land, such as schools, homes, windmills, or dams, will be owned by the group. Hejal located on other worlds tend to be more oriented toward trade and interaction with any nearby Human settlements than those located on Jaeyelya.

The Jaeyelya Planetary Fund holds a special place in Ael society. It is the only truly planetwide institution, and provides the closest thing the Ael have to a planetary government. However, the Fund has little ability to force any kind of policy on the Ael. Hejal can, and do, refuse the Fund's resources. The Fund may try to lead, but often the Ael will choose not to follow.

There has been a steady trickle of Ael away from Jaeyelya now for several hundred years. Many young Ael leave their communities for offworld training programs paid for by the Fund. Most return to Jaeyelya, but each year some choose to stay offworld, either joining the Scout Service or another endeavor. This is a continuing source of conflict with the more conservative hejal who view this use of Fund monies as a new

form of genocide. This view has only been reinforced as various hejal establish colonies away from Jaeyelya.

AEL-HUMAN RELATIONS

Even though the Ael are full citizens of the Imperium, echoes of their past continue to affect relations with Humaniti and individual Humans. Many Ael react poorly to all employees of interplanetary corporations. Primitives, labor union members, government regulators and Scouts, perhaps even terrorists who challenge corporations, are looked on more favorably. Sophonts from decadent, consumer-oriented cultures are sometimes criticized for serving the corporations indirectly, or as unwitting dupes of ultra-tech marketing campaigns. This attitude has a huge impact on Ael-Human relations, especially on those worlds where corporate interests have control.

These responses can be affected by the amount of contact an individual Ael has had with interstellar society. Less sophisticated Ael tend

to assume all Humans are just cogs in the interstellar corporate machine, grinding the minor races into the dust. More experienced Ael will be able to distinguish among the roles and motivations of individual Humans, but will still be suspicious of the agents of powerful corporations.

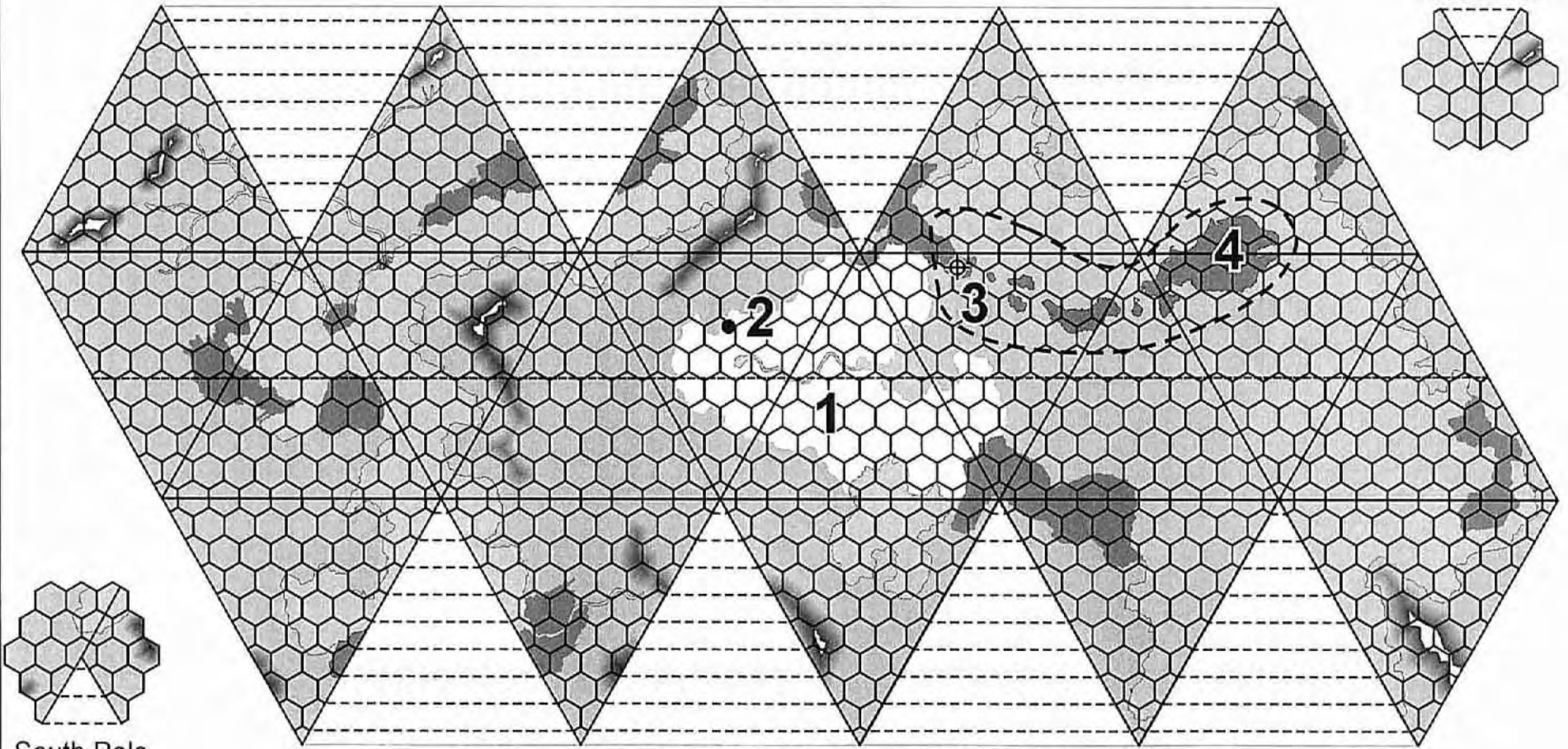
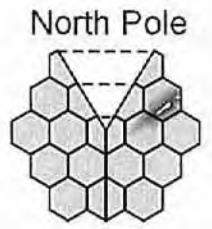
Adventure Seed: The Wayward Tourist

Several groups organize sightseeing tours on Jaeyelya. These visit the Glittering Floor, and replicas of the old mining camps, but are allowed to see almost nothing of the Ael themselves. These restrictions are in place to protect the tourists more than the Ael. The Glittering Floor is a harsh place, and many of the Ael clans take a very dim view of unwanted interlopers.

Heedless of these dangers, one young tourist decides to leave her group on an unauthorized trip. A party has to be organized to find her quickly before the desert, local predators, or outraged Ael do her harm. (Possible complication, or possible help: an elderly noblewoman from the same tour group has taken a liking to the girl, and is demanding action *now!*)

Jaeyelya

AEL YAEEL



South Pole

- 1 hex = 349.5 miles
- | | | | |
|------------|-------------------|--------------|----------|
| Icy/Barren | Hilly/Rough | Plain/Steppe | Starport |
| Ocean | Mountain/Volcanic | Major City | |

KEY

1. The Glittering Floor
2. *Hi-yayahu* commune
3. *Hue-lai yal* (literally "the Walker Place"), Scout Service Administration Center and starport
4. Lanai Island and Human Reservation

"The Ael Yael have always given me an inferiority complex – after all, who of us hasn't dreamed of flying? You need only watch a group of young Ael cavorting in the sky to be overcome with feelings of envy and jealousy. It is extremely hard to get to know Ael on more than a business level. I was stationed there for seven years, and never managed to really connect with any of them. I know that many Ael dislike us for the McAteer genocide centuries ago. What I wonder, and what I have never managed to discover, is this: do they pity us for being unable to fly?"

– Alois Mtume, HISS retired

Adventure Seed: Shell Game

An Ael makes contact with the adventurers, claiming to have evidence of corruption within one of the planetary funds. Unfortunately, her information is not enough to interest any higher authority. She needs help in uncovering more evidence, so that the criminals can be prosecuted.

If the evidence turns out to be true, billions of credits have been embezzled. The perpetrator would have to possess high levels of skill in Administration and Accounting – and several accomplices – in order to pull off such a massive crime. This quality of criminal would have a wide choice of responses to unwanted investigators. These could range from administrative harassment, to violent confrontations, to an attempt to frame the investigators!

The rewards for uncovering hard evidence of the corruption would be considerable. However, the evidence could also be false, and part of some elaborate scheme to discredit the current fund administrators.

JAELYELA (0437, GUSHEMEGE SECTOR)

Starport: Class IV (Scout Base).

Diameter: 4,450 miles (7,120 km). *Gravity:* 0.59 G. *Atmosphere:* Dense oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 37%. *Climate:* Tropical. *Population:* 1.9 million (840,000 Ael). *Government:* Technocracy (Imperial Protectorate Administration). *Control Rating:* 3 within Imperial-settled areas, 5 for non-Ael outside those areas. *TL:* 5. *Gas Giants:* 2. *WTN:* 3.5. *Trade Classifications:* Ni.

Jaeyelya is a hot, fairly dry world with light gravity and a dense atmosphere. It has a sparse but complex ecosystem that has never been well studied.

Most Ael live on or around the area of the Glittering Floor. Rainfall in the interior of the continent has created numerous canyons and eroded mesas along the ancient coastline, within which the Ael now live. Winds around these rock faces are ideal for flying, and the natural defenses created by the cliffs have protected Ael over the centuries. *Hi-yayahu* commune is considered the formal owner of the Glittering Floor, and is zealous in ensuring its wealth is used to benefit Jaeyelya.

Imperial settlements on Jaeyelya are restricted to the Lanai island chain in the Central Ocean, and a small part of the adjacent coast. Most Humans on the planet are engaged in mining the Glittering Floor or support for the starport. A few are engaged in tightly controlled recreational hunting and tourism industries. The small number of Human colonists on Jaeyelya occupy the fertile lowlands of Lanai and its surrounding islands. However, all of the colonists' lands are leased from the Planetary Fund.

CHARACTERS

A typical Ael weighs 110 lbs. (at 1 G) and stands 5' tall. Determine weight and height from ST as for a Human, then subtract 35 lbs. from weight and 8" from height. Wingspan is equal to 2× height, plus two feet. When folded, an Ael's wings extend 12" above its head.

AEL RACIAL TEMPLATE - 14 POINTS

Attribute Modifiers: ST -1 [-10].

Advantages: Acute Vision +5 [10]; Claws (Sharp) [25]; Flight (winged -25%, requires low gravity of 0.6 G or less, -20%) [22]*; Improved G-Tolerance [10]; Infravision [15]; Polarized Eyes [5]; Striker [5].

Disadvantages: Bloodlust [-10]; Fragile [-20]; Intolerance (Corporations) [-5]; Primitive (-5 TLs) [-25]; Sense of Duty (Ael race) [-10]; Short Lifespan 1 [-10]; Uncongenial [-1]; Vow (Donate to Planetary Fund) [-15].

Quirks: Prefers close combat; Prefers to attack from above. [-2]

Skill: Flight (Winged) (P/A) DX+1 [2].**

* On worlds with nonstandard atmospheres, multiply this by atmospheric pressure. For example, in a pressure of 1.2 atmospheres, like the Ael Yael homeworld, the race can fly in up to 0.72 G.

** Flight defaults to DX for races which can fly naturally.

NOTES ON RACIAL ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Claws (Sharp) see pp. C166-67

Ael have clawed feet, allowing their kick to do cutting damage.

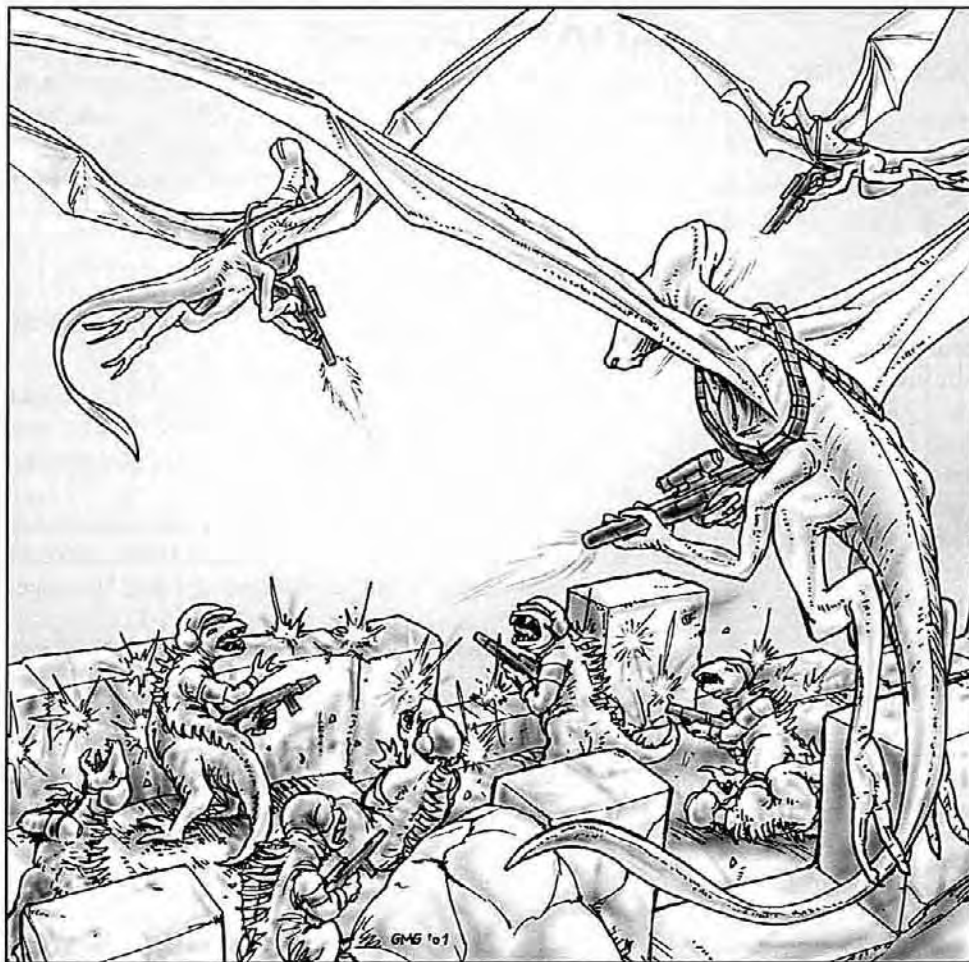
Flight see p. C156

Ael can use their wings to fly on worlds with standard atmospheres at 0.4 G. In environments with dense atmospheres (like their homeworld) they can fly in higher gravities. Divide effective gravity by atmospheric pressure; e.g., an Ael could fly on a world with 1.5 atmospheres and 0.6 G gravity.

An Ael can *glide* at up to twice the gravity he can fly in, with difficulty increasing as gravity increases or pressure drops. Flying requires greater oxygen intake than normal activity; Ael flying on worlds with tainted atmospheres suffer twice the effects of any taint. Ael cannot fly unaided while carrying more than medium encumbrance or while wearing a vacc suit.

Polarized Eyes see p. C163

Crystal formations on the cliffs and desert floor in the Glittering Floor region often create blinding reflections. The Ael have evolved a light-sensitive pigmentation in the lenses of their eyes which renders them immune to that glare.



Vow (Donate to Planetary Fund)
see p. B37

Ael keep only 10% of their income after living expenses. The rest is sent to a Planetary Fund, either for Jaeyelya or a colony. The Jaeyelya Fund is by far the largest and may be tapped by offworld Ael for educational purposes; see *The Planetary Funds*, p. 8. The GM should not normally allow players of Ael PCs to buy off this Vow.

STATUS, WEALTH, AND UPKEEP

An Ael can take any level of Wealth, but all income beyond a basic living allowance is given to the Planetary Fund established by his home planet; see *Vow*, above. Starting wealth is unaffected.

Ael may take no more than three levels of Status. No Ael has ever been named an Imperial noble, and it is doubtful that such an honor would be accepted.

Striker see pp. C166-67

The long tail which the Ael use as a rudder while flying can also be used as a club.

Intolerance (Corporations) see p. B34

There is a deep-rooted distrust of business interests in Ael society. Ael will rarely enter into a venture sponsored by a large corporation, and then only if their race will benefit significantly. Those corporations involved in mining, industrial farming, or other extractive industries are especially suspect.

Primitive see p. B26

Ael educated offworld should buy off this disadvantage. This costs 25 points and raises racial cost to 1 point.

Sense of Duty (Ael Race) see p. B39

Every Ael feels a special connection with his race as a whole. This drives those who leave their home planet to work for the benefit of the race. These efforts can take many forms: some Ael will seek to earn as much money as they can, while others will try to overcome political or social barriers affecting Ael communities. All contribute to the Planetary Fund (see *Vow*, below).

CHARACTER TEMPLATES

SEE PP. GT87-105

An Ael who has never left Jaeyelya would be a candidate for the Barbarian template, although this would cost 70 points and not 50, as Ael already have the Primitive disadvantage and cannot take it a second time. The most common templates for offworld-educated Ael would be Belter, Entertainer (Ael poetry sells quite well on some worlds), Scout, and Hunter/Guide. Since Ael give most of their wealth to their Planetary Fund, and hate Imperial corporations, Ael characters should not normally use the Remittance Man or Merchant template.

Ael in the Navy and Marines are rare but not completely unheard of. Most Ael who would have such skills are veterans of the Jaeyelya local military forces. The Jaeyelya militia are only equipped to TL7, and are not of sufficient quality to be considered part of the Imperial Army.

The Scout Service is the most popular of the Imperial services among the Ael. Ael are most commonly encountered in the Exploration Branch and the Contact and Liaison Branch (see p. T:F110), but are found in all branches of the Service. The inconvenience of providing special equipment for the Ael is more than made up for by the value of flying Scouts who can see in the dark and are comfortable across a wide range of gravities!

EQUIPMENT

Ael use standard Imperial equipment modified for their physiology. Most modified equipment will cost about 50% more than normal, depending on how extensive the modification has to be. A modified air/raft or ground car might cost 20% more than standard, while a firearm or vacc suit redesigned for Ael physiology would cost two or three times the prices listed. No form of battledress has ever been produced for an Ael.

Attempts by Ael to use any *physical* skill with equipment designed for Humans is made at a -3 penalty or worse. Humans using Ael-specific equipment suffer a similar penalty.

You ask why we do not become one with your Imperium? But why should we not soar in skies of our own choosing? Look at what has happened to races who have clipped their wings for Humaniti. They follow their conquerors like shadows. They slink along the ground, and vanish entirely when the Humans fly too far from them.

*— Mind's High Visions,
Ael scholar*

Fall-12 [2]; Gambling-13 [1]; Guns (Gyroc)-15 [2]; Intelligence Analysis-12 [1]; Interrogation-14 [2]; Judo-11 [2]; Law-12 [2]; Law Enforcement-14 [2]; Mechanic (J-Drive)-12 [1]; Piloting (Starship)-12 [2]; Psychology-14 [4]; Research-13 [1]; Savoir-Faire (Military)-13 [0.5]; Streetwise-14 [2]; Vacc Suit-13 [1]; Xenology-13 [2].

Captain Elyaehee is a young but talented investigator for the sector command of the Scout Service Security Branch. His specialty is undercover operations aimed at tracking down people who violate Imperial laws regarding protected planets. In his investigations Elyaehee often plays the role of the Ael terrorist or smuggler popularized in action holovids. He detests these stereotypes, but finds them useful in his work. As he once said to a captive, "You were willing to see me that way. I merely drifted with the breeze."

Captain Elyaehee can be a determined foe of any group trying to circumvent Imperial laws. Smugglers, foreign spies, or people trading in artifacts plundered from interdicted worlds could all become the targets of his attentions. Law-abiding citizens may come into contact with the Captain under very different circumstances. While working undercover, Elyaehee has occasionally employed civilians in perfectly legal capacities to promote his investigations. He could also be assigned as head of security for a moderately sized scout base anywhere inside or outside the Imperium.



SAMPLE NPC

CAPTAIN ELYAEHEE, IISS SECURITY 150 POINTS

Age, 27; 5' tall; wingspan of 12 feet when fully extended; 100 lbs. Leathery, light tan skin and wings.

Attributes: ST 9 [0]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 14 [45]; HT 10 [0].

Speed 5.5; Move 5.

Dodge 5.

Advantages: Acute Vision +3 [6]; Claws [15]; Four reliable Contacts [16]; Night Vision [10]; Polarized Eyes [5]; Rank 4 (Captain, IISS Security) [20]; Security Clearance [5]; Striker (Tail) [5]; Winged Flight [24].

Disadvantages: Ael Yael [-14]; Code of Honor (Scouts) [-5]; Fragile [-20]; Intolerance (Corporations) [-5]; Intolerance (Criminals) [-5]; Sense of Duty (Ael Race) [-15]; Uncongenial [-1]; Vow (Donate to Planetary Fund) [-10].

Quirks: Likes draw poker; Proud; Prefers close combat; Prefers to attack from above. [-4]

Skills: Acting-15 [4]; Administration-12 [1]; Area Knowledge (Imperium)-12 [1]; Astrogation-12 [1]; Computer Operation-13 [0.5]; Criminology-15 [4]; Detect Lies-14 [4]; Electronic Ops (Communications)-13 [0.5]; Electronic Ops (Security Systems)-15 [2]; Electronic Ops (Sensors)-13 [0.5]; Forensics-12 [1]; Forgery-13 [2]; Free

Ael Literature

Prior to contact with Humaniti, the Ael had a rich tradition of oral literature and poetry. Much of this literature has been translated into Galanglic and has become popular in intellectual circles on many worlds. A few modern Ael poets and storytellers have also been published by Imperial companies. However, their insistence that all publishing be done without the involvement of the megacorporations has limited the availability of their work.

Oral literature remains a very important part of Ael identity. Storytellers and poets are highly regarded in Ael society. These individuals often travel across Jaeyelya, or to Ael colonies on other worlds, attracting large crowds of Ael at each stop. Storytellers often mix political and social commentary with their more traditional works; they help maintain the Ael as a unified culture. The continuing distrust most Ael harbor for large corporations is just one example of the power of the spoken word among the Ael.

Ahetaowa



These plantlike neighbors of the Aslan are powerful psionics. Fortunately, they are a highly ethical and peaceful race; the very concept of “private property” is difficult for them to understand.

Few travelers from the Imperium have met these creatures, as the system lies on the Aslan side of the Great Rift. As a peaceful and accomplished race which possesses strong psionic abilities and uses them extensively, they would present a serious challenge for Imperial diplomats!

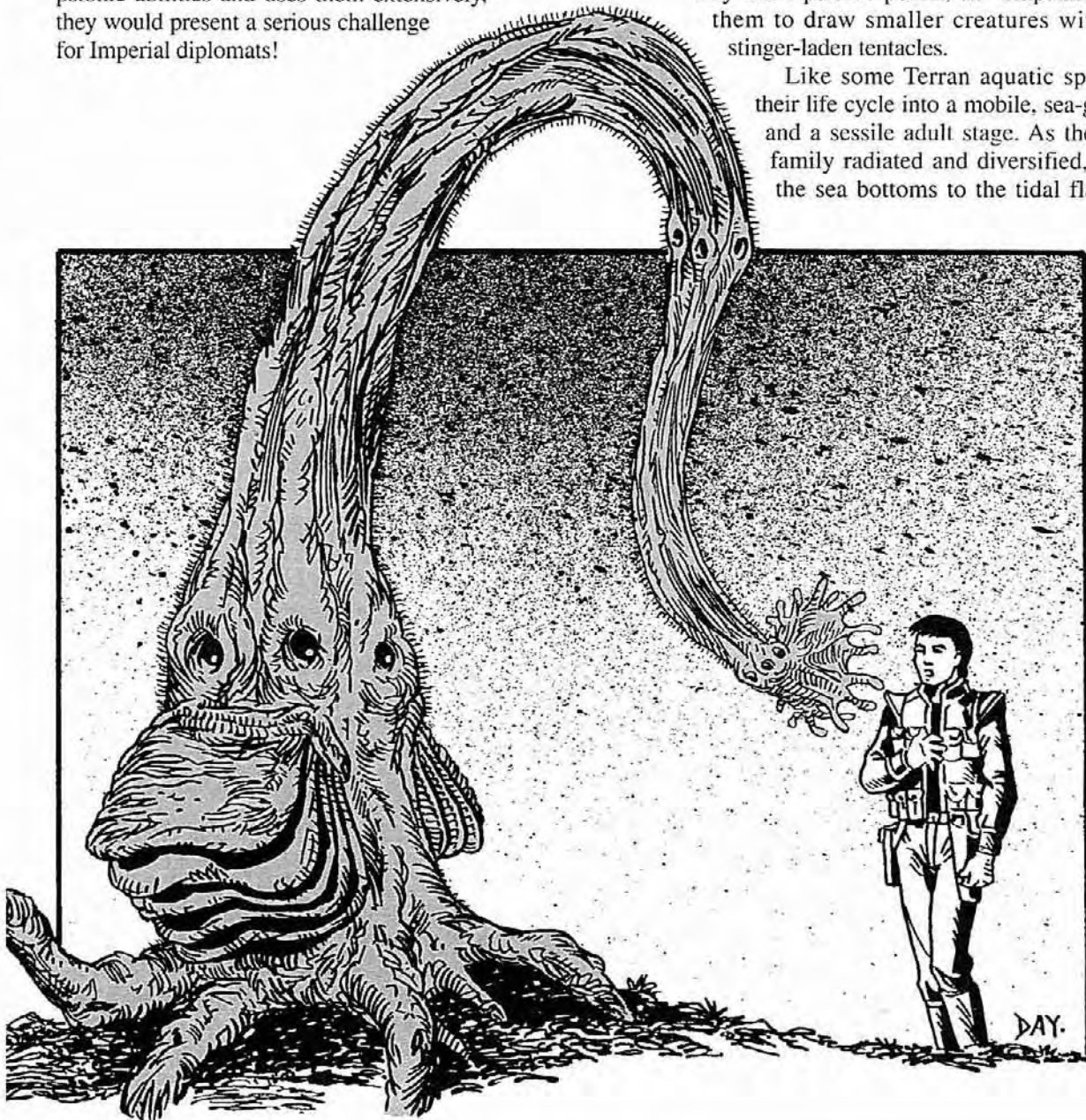
ORIGINS AND HISTORY

The Ahetaowa evolved from marine invertebrates, similar to Earthly jellyfish and anemones. Unlike Terran jellyfish, though, the ancestors of the Ahetaowa developed the ability to acquire food and energy from a variety of sources. Not only did they evolve photosynthetic cells; they also gained a very basic psionic power, an “empathic lure” that enabled them to draw smaller creatures within range of their stinger-laden tentacles.

Like some Terran aquatic species, they divided their life cycle into a mobile, sea-going juvenile stage, and a sessile adult stage. As they evolved, and the family radiated and diversified, some moved from the sea bottoms to the tidal flats and then to dry

land, gaining a waterproof skin, or cuticle, and root systems to anchor them and to draw nutrients from the soil. Other structures developed into a rudimentary lung and circulatory system. Foodstuffs and energy sources remained scarce, however, so the creatures preserved a range of capabilities, including photosynthesis, tentacles with stinging cells, and the “empathic lure” to attract small prey animals.

Though they always remained sessile, developing a body-shape reminiscent of Terran trees to fully exploit their



photosynthetic capability, the combination of tentacles and low-power psionics gave the proto-Ahetaowa the ability to manipulate their surroundings. Their psionic capability enabled them to direct their own young to fertile spots and to deflect other juveniles from settling where they might compete for fertile soil or prey, leading in time to a social system. The land-dwelling Ahetaowa developed intelligence about 2 million years ago, during a period of particularly severe environmental stress; once it appeared, they were able to improve their psionic powers considerably, developing telekinesis and a latent teleportation ability in addition to full telepathy. Very similar creatures, but without intelligence, still live in the marshes and oceans of their home planet today.

EARLY HISTORY

Ahetaowa entered a mini-interglacial period about 40,000 years ago. The melting of ice caps led to a rise in sea level. On the equatorial coasts of the continent of Hrekhas, several groups of Ahetaowa cooperated in constructing dikes and levees to limit flooding. Irrigation networks were also built to make the most of the remaining fertile land.

By -10,000 Imperial, fresh water was scarce, due to depletion of local water tables. Soil salinity was also becoming a very difficult problem. More land was lost following several years of unusually low rainfall. The Ahetaowa began to move into new areas. Shortages were so severe that the usually cooperative Ahetaowa actually fought wars over access to fresh water and fertile soil. It was during these conflicts that bronze and iron were first smelted.

Eventually, conditions improved, and gradually Hrekhas became overcrowded. By -5000, great sailing ships were being constructed and sent on missions of exploration and colonization. Outposts were established in southern Eiekhaor and on the islands southeast of Hrekhas. Hibernating Ahetaowa were then transported to boost the populations of these colonies. Great advances were made in navigation, shipbuilding, and physiology during this period. Expeditions were even sent into the polar wastes, composed of Ahetaowa highly trained in clairvoyance and telepathy.

The planet was fully mapped by -3000. Through a combination of telepathy, shipping networks, and trained messenger animals, communications and trade flourished. Industrialization began in the coal- and iron-producing areas of Eiekhaor around -2500. Groups of Ahetaowa formed cooperatives, producing mining, smelting, and forging equipment. Within a century, steel and chemical production were well developed.

Radio was developed in -2300. The first remote-controlled aircraft flew soon after. By -2000, the Ahetaowa were ready to send robot probes to A'ahels. Over the ensuing half-century, missions were sent to every planet in the Ahetaowa system. Crewed space flight was felt to be too difficult, given the large mass of the Ahetaowa and the supplies required for long-duration missions.

Research efforts were directed towards building more sophisticated computer systems and robotics. It was not until further advances were made in rocketry and hibernation physiology that crewed missions were attempted. In -220, the

first Ahetaowa in space, Crystal Lake, was revived in orbit using a robotic medical system. After completing 30 orbits of Ahetaowa, the spacecraft was landed under crew control. The first crewed missions to A'ahels were made in -200. A permanent base was established in -100. Commerce with the A'ahels base does not entirely rely on physical travel, since some rare Ahetaowa can control their teleportation well enough to visit the moon without a ship!

FIRST CONTACT

The Aslan Seieakh clan contacted the Ahetaowa in 730. Favorable trade relations were soon established, and the current starport was completed by 801. The Aslan provide resources from the outer system and other trade goods from the Hierate. The Ahetaowa export high-quality robotic and computer equipment, art (typically recordings and sculptures), and pharmaceuticals.



PHYSIOLOGY AND APPEARANCE

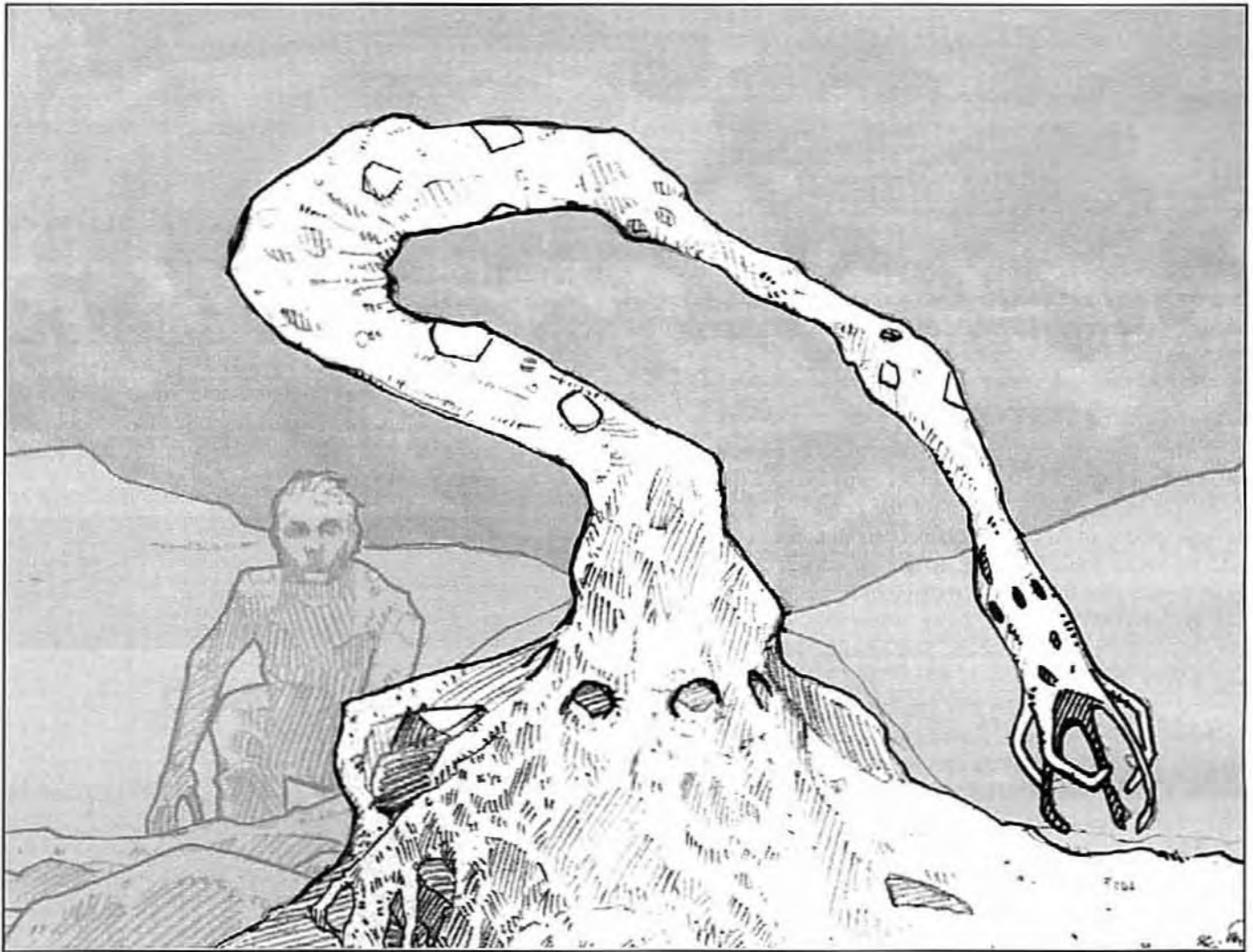
Ahetaowa are shaped like tapered cylinders. A mature individual has a height between 30 and 35 feet and masses a bit over half a ton. The "trunk" of an adult is about 2 feet in diameter at the base, and is quite flexible. It is green or bluish-green in color due to the photosynthetic and circulating copper-based respiratory pigments, and is covered with thousands of small whitish-grey cilia. The cilia have sensory, feeding, manipulative, and reproductive functions.

A circle of 10 tentacles, over a foot long in an adult, is located at the top of the trunk. These no longer have stingers. They are not manipulators, but sense organs, like the cilia but more sensitive; the Ahetaowa's "hands" are provided by their helper creatures.

Two sets of five photosensors placed around the trunk at the top and near the base, as well as five "camera eyes" around the middle of the trunk, permit 360-degree vision into the near infrared. The sense of smell is based in and around the five large inspiratory pores located at the base of the trunk.

Ahetaowa are capable of producing complex sounds by altering the shape and size of the five expiratory pores at the top of their trunks, as well as the gas flow through them.

Most of the nutrient and energy needs of an Ahetaowa are met from the soil and photosynthesis. If the need arises, animals up to a pound in weight can be lured into range and then paralyzed or stunned by poison-producing polyps. Victims are borne along the trunk by the cilia to feeding pores, or stomata, which open into specialized digestive chambers. The general circulation system distributes nutrients and oxygen, and removes waste gas. There is one large heart located in the mid-trunk, close to the five lung units.



The trunk can function as a prehensile limb, due to the layers of circular and longitudinal muscle attached to an internal skeleton composed of a chitin-like material. There is also a hydraulic structural system to supplement the internal skeleton. It is isolated from the general circulation and contains a variety of specialized synthetic and stem cells. The hydraulic heart is located at the base of the trunk. (Thus, an injured Ahetaowa will "bleed" two different fluids, depending on the location of the injury. Injury to the hydraulic heart is inconvenient and unhealthy, but injury to the general heart is usually mortal.)

By extending its root system in a given direction and letting the opposite edge die off, an Ahetaowa can move along the ground. This is a very slow process, on the order of a few yards per year.

The nervous system is complex, based around a central brain located between the five central skeletal spines at the mid-trunk level. There are apical and basal ganglia formed from the fusion of five nerve chains at each end of the trunk. These process visual input and regulate the activity of the respiratory pores and circulatory systems.

If conditions become harsh enough, an Ahetaowa can go into hibernation. Uprooting also induces dormancy. Once the respiratory pores close, the cuticle dries, providing superb pro-

tection against further dehydration for several months. If external conditions are right, years of preservation are possible.

REPRODUCTION

Ahetaowa are hermaphroditic, and bud specialized polyps annually. Reproductive polyps are yellow buds which release an attractive scent and produce nectar. Small animals move from polyp to polyp to feed, enabling fertilization. The polyps then ripen and burst, scattering seeds coated in nutrients on the wind. If a seed lands on fertile ground, a larval Ahetaowa will sprout within two weeks. Larvae are mobile and nonsentient. They are ignored by adults until they show some signs of intelligence. This is usually at the 10th year of age, at which time the youth is invited to take a name for itself and join the community. An Ahetaowa takes 50 years to reach its adult size, and can live for 300 years.

PSIONICS

All Ahetaowa have psionic abilities. Telekinesis and telepathy have enabled them to attain their current level of technology (TL10) by manipulating the landscape and other life around them. Teleportation is a reflex component of a last-ditch survival response, as it will send the Ahetaowa into

hibernation on moving. It is possible to learn to consciously control the reflex, but Ahetaowa that know how are very rare.

LANGUAGE AND NAMES

The primary modes of communication used by the Ahetaowa between themselves are telepathy and a musical language based on a variety of harmonic scales. Most Ahetaowa can readily communicate in Trokh, the Aslan language. Commonly used terms are rendered in Trokh in the rest of this chapter.

Ahetaowa tend to name themselves after features of the locale in which they live. Some Galanglic translations include Wind Through Leaves, Babbling Brook, and Smoke Mountain Lake.

PSYCHOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

The Ahetaowa are acutely aware of their unique place in the ecology of their world. They are somewhere between producer and consumer, and have been gifted with the ability to greatly change their environment. This responsibility weighs heavily on the Ahetaowa, and has encouraged the development of a very strong communal mentality, as well as a cautious approach to innovation and change.

The Ahetaowa place great value on honesty and communication. They are willing to share their thoughts with anyone who will listen. The concept of a deliberate lie baffles them.

No Ahetaowa owns property. All artifacts and ideas are theoretically freely available to any Ahetaowa that needs them. Visitors from other cultures can find this a little difficult to deal with, especially when an Ahetaowa "borrows" an item without telling. Those Ahetaowa who have partially grasped Human standards may try to comply by leaving something in exchange in these situations, but it may not be particularly useful at the time of the "trade" . . .

Balancing these traits are a high level of innate curiosity and a well-developed aesthetic tradition, *utaorl*. Within its admittedly loose framework, ideas and artifacts need to be robust, yet elegant and economical. Ahetaowa tend to be avid experimenters and artists.

Utaorl's main tenets are based around the ideals of symmetry or balance and subtlety. For example, a properly designed mine or factory shouldn't intrude on the local environment; the workings should ideally be buried or concealed. There is no such thing as waste; tailings are returned to a mine, and other byproducts are recycled where possible.

SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT

The Ahetaowa live in groups scattered throughout the river valleys, flood plains, and forests of their world. There are few other surface structures besides those of the Seicakh starport.

Eikhty and Afte

The Ahetaowa have many "helper creatures" which they control psionically to serve as hands. The eikhty and afte are the most widely used.

The ancestors of the eikhty were small (2-ounce) carnivorous flyers that lived in the Ahetaowa's forested areas. Small wormlike creatures, arleoa, the preferred food of the eikhty, had a low level of telepathy, and could change pigmentation and texture in response to the Ahetaowa's ciliary secretions. These worms were selectively bred to encourage telepathic capacity, and the flyers were conditioned to respond to certain sound and telepathic stimuli.

An Ahetaowa would pick up an arleoa with telekinesis, impress it with a message by ciliary manipulation and telepathy, and then summon an eikhty, which would take the arleoa to the intended recipient. Once the message had been delivered, the flyer would make a meal of the worm.

As a result of selective breeding, eikhty now average eight ounces in mass. They have membranous wings with an overall span of 2 feet. The body is covered in a thin brown fur, which is longer at the edges of the wings to aid lift. Eikhty live for about five local years, and produce three to four young every local year.

The afte are gray-furred, bipedal omnivore gatherers that stand about 2 feet tall. They live in nests on and around the eikhtyyo. Afte are adept climbers and forage in trees as easily as the forest floor. They live for about 15 local years. One or two young are born every local year.

Eikhty

| | | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| ST: 1 | Move/Dodge: 18 (fly) 9/9 | Size: <1 hex |
| DX: 15 | PD/DR: 0/0 | Weight: 8 oz. |
| IQ: 3 | Damage: 1d-5 | |
| HT: 14 | Reach: C | |

Afte

| | | |
|---------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| ST: 3 | Move/Dodge: 7/7 | Size: <1 hex |
| DX: 13 | PD/DR: 0/1 | Weight: 18 lbs. |
| IQ: 6 | Damage: 1d-4 | |
| HT: 15 | Reach: C | |

Levees, canals, and the odd satellite uplink facility dot the landscape. Other infrastructure is either underground or in orbit.

An *aikho* (grove) of Ahetaowa numbers a few hundred individuals of varying ages. Within the group, cooperatives are formed to produce goods and information for trade with other aikho. It is usual to find computer equipment and robots scattered around the grove engaged in various tasks.

The immediate area (up to several hundred square feet) around each Ahetaowa is decorated with other plants and artifacts, an expression of that particular plant's personality. These gardening displays, or *khtoi*, are the only personal space an Ahetaowa seems to need; each takes great delight in keeping its patch immaculately trimmed and watered.

Every aikho has several *eikhtyyo* or “messenger trees” scattered through it. These are home to the *eikhty* and *arleoa* that served as the Ahetaowa’s first long-range communications system. There are also nests of *afte*. These animals were bred to be the “hands” of the Ahetaowa. With robots readily available, *afte* and *eikhty* have become valued pets (see p. 17).

Adventure Seed: The Emissaries

Since contact with the Aslan, only a dozen Ahetaowa have traveled by starship to other systems. A particularly ambitious group of elders in one of the larger aikho, “Golden Valley,” want to establish a permanent presence in the Tlelyeo system, home of the nearest Class V starport and a thriving TL11 economy. Tlelyeo is only 3 jumps away from Ahetaowa, and the ability to transport some of the tree-men in their dormant state simplifies the logistics of the exercise.

Unfortunately, this is not going to be a simple milk run. Other aikho, not understanding galactic economics, do not realize that Golden Valley stands to gain a trade advantage. In truth, Golden Valley does not entirely realize that either, nor would the current elders abuse an advantage once gained. Their whole motivation for the project translates very precisely as “Because it’s so neat!”

Still, the other aikho want some explanation from the Golden Valley elders as to why everyone else is not in on the interesting adventure. But there are simply not enough spaces on the expedition to give one to everyone who is interested, even among the sponsoring group itself. In all innocence, the Golden Valley elders have created the first critical scarcity their race has known in centuries! How will the cooperative economy price and distribute this “good”?

On the Aslan side, the question is simpler and potentially bloodier. The authorities on Tlelyeo will want assurances that transplanting the Ahetaowa and their traditional plant and animal companions isn’t going to ruin the native ecology, let alone the problems associated with psionics. Those problems can be solved. But the Seiakh-clan females don’t want their trade monopoly broken, especially when rival Tlaxhu bloc trade legations are well represented on Tlelyeo, and they may go so far as to interfere with the expedition.

There are few laws; violence is anathema to the Ahetaowa, and the concept of ownership of property doesn’t exist. Rules primarily exist to facilitate fair trade, which looks like a never-ending swap meet to outside eyes. While the global communications net allows any Ahetaowa to opine on a subject, disputes are traditionally resolved by the most senior members of an aikho.

Minor offenses are punished by isolation from the community for a short period of time. Major offenses are very

rare, and are one of the few occasions when the entire population will be called on to vote on an issue. Deliberate violence to Ahetaowa or their goods is seen as an offense against the aikho. Such obviously deranged behavior will lead to psychotherapy with the aid of psionic probing. Exile (either voluntary or by teleportation) is the ultimate punishment. Depending on the severity of the offense, the location the offender is teleported to may or may not be compatible with survival.

TECHNOLOGY AND TRADE

The great strengths of Ahetaowan technology are in the fields of computing, robotics, and communications. Vehicle and environmental technology are relatively backward due to the size of the Ahetaowa and the need to carry the soil in which they are rooted. A standard crew position requires 200 cf and 2,000 lbs., allowing 500 lbs. of soil to accommodate the root system. Gravitic technology has led to a boom in vehicle building as the Ahetaowa explore its possibilities.

Weaponry is unknown; the Ahetaowa are well aware of the destructive potentials of their technological base, but refuse to develop it. They believe their psionic powers are adequate defense against any personal threat.

As *utaorl* dictates, most of the Ahetaowan design aesthetic is drawn from patterns seen in the local biology. Personal equipment tends to resemble leaves, flowers, and small animals, while larger items are modeled after trees, hills, weathered rocks, etc.

User interfaces for all devices are highly standardized, and rely mainly on telekinetic or ciliary manipulation for use. Devices produced for export have secondary voice recognition controls. All equipment can be used by sentients with hands and standard vision with a -1 to skill. The Ahetaowa haven’t developed psionoelectronics to the level that the Zhodani have.

The cooperative Ahetaowa economy is fully self-sufficient; their only real interest in outside trade is for technological information and simply to see the galaxy (Ahetaowa who return to their world, of course, can telepathically share their adventures in detail). The Aslan who trade with them value their gadgetry; a few factories have been built near Kheark to create goods for the Aslan market. And, of course the psionic abilities of the Ahetaowa are themselves a marketable service, or will be when more of the race travel offworld (see the adventure seed).

AHETAOWA (2604, EALIYASIYW SECTOR)

Starport: Class IV (Kheark)

Diameter: 5,643 miles (9,080 km). *Atmosphere:* Very thin oxygen-nitrogen. *Gravity:* 0.56 G. *Surface Water:* 52%. *Climate:* Chilly. *Population:* 400,000 Ahetaowa, 10,000 Aslan. *Government:* Clan/Tribal. *Control Rating:* 2. *TL:* 10. *Gas Giants:* 3. *WTN:* 4. *Trade Classification:* Ni.

Ahetaowa is the innermost planet of a G2V-M3V close binary system in the Ihearu subsector of Ealiyasiyw sector, on the trailing edge of the Aslan Hierate. It revolves around its primaries once every 499 standard days. There is a distant M4V companion with its own complement of worlds 300 AU away. A'ahels is Ahetaowa's only moon. It is an airless rock ball just over 600 miles in diameter and revolves around Ahetaowa once every 10.76 standard days.

The continent of Hrekhas straddles the equator. Most of the Ahetaowa live here, as the climate is mild in comparison to the rest of the planet. The Seicakh clan starport, in an Aslan community called Kheark, is also based on Hrekhas. There are Ahetaowa colonies on the northern continent of Eickhaor and some of the outlying islands. Above the mid-latitudes, a few crewed facilities exist, such as mines and factories. The climate in these regions is harsh enough year round that special equipment is required for an Ahetaowa to survive, given the freezing conditions, lack of rainfall, and fierce seasonal storms.

There is a small colony of 100 Ahetaowa on A'ahels. It serves as a laboratory for materials science research and an observatory.

AHETAOWA CHARACTERS

Ahetaowa size and weight depends on age, as described below, and has no relationship to any of their basic attributes. Any adult Ahetaowa would look to a Human like a 30-foot pickle standing on end, with white cilia waving across a blue-green, warty skin. The Human would then notice the Ahetaowa looking back at him from at least two of the five large eyes halfway up its "trunk." Then it would speak to him mentally . . .

Different templates are provided for the different ages, as the Ahetaowa grows from a crawling larva (not suitable as a PC) to a huge adult. Note that PC Ahetaowa need not "jump" from one template to the next; as they gain experience they may buy up their abilities gradually, in the order that they choose, using the next template only as a general guideline.

Adventure Seed: Wildfire

Following an unusually dry year, large parts of Hrekhas are ablaze. The starport itself is under threat. Every effort is being made to contain the fires before the homes of the larger aikho are threatened. The task of relocating other Ahetaowa is straining the available resources.

Characters may be involved in any of several roles in the disaster: firefighting, supplying the emergency services, relocating Ahetaowa, or investigating rumors that some of the fires were deliberately lit . . . Remember, every Ahetaowa has Pyrokinesis ability.

Larva (1+ year of age) -75 points

A miniature Ahetaowa, of only animal intelligence, about 2 feet tall and 15 pounds.

Attribute Modifiers: ST -5 [-40]; IQ -5 [-40].

Advantages: 360-Degree Vision [25]; Autoteleport power 15 (Unconscious -20%, Uncontrollable -30%, Retain orientation and speed, -50%, Goes into hibernation when used, -10%, Total -75%) [15]; Cast Iron Stomach [15]; Extended Lifespan 2 [10]; Extra Flexibility [10]; Injury Tolerance (No Neck) [5]; Metabolic Control 2 (Hibernation, -50%) [5]; Subsonic Hearing [5]; Venom (Poisonous) [15].

Disadvantages: Dependency (Sunlight; need at least 4 hours per day of bright light or -1 HT/hour; fatigue can only be recovered when resting in the light) [-15]; Inconvenient Size [-15]; No Manipulators [-50]; Reduced Move -4 [-20].

Young (10+ years) -18 points

By age 10, Ahetaowa are almost 6 feet tall, massing about 150 lbs.

Attribute Modifiers: ST +2 (No Manipulators, -40%) [12]; IQ +1 [10].

Advantages: 360-Degree Vision [25]; Autoteleport power 15 (Unconscious -20%, Uncontrollable -30%, Retain orientation and speed, -50%, Goes into hibernation when used, -10%, Total -75%) [15]; Cast Iron Stomach [15]; Extended Lifespan 2 [10]; Extra Flexibility [10]; Injury Tolerance (No Neck) [5]; Metabolic Control 2 (Hibernation, -50%) [5]; Psychokinesis power 1 [5]; Subsonic Hearing [5]; Telepathy power 1 [5]; Venom (Poisonous) [15].

Disadvantages: Dependency (Sunlight; need at least 4 hours per day of bright light or -1 HT/hour; fatigue can only be recovered when resting in the light) [-15]; Honesty [-10]; Increased Life Support (Needs 2x as much food) [-10]; No Manipulators [-50]; Pacifism (Self-Defense Only) [-15]; Selfless [-10]; Sessile [-50].

Skills: Life Detection (M/H) IQ-2 [1]; Mind Shield (M/H) IQ-2 [1]; Pyrokinesis (M/H) IQ-2 [1]; Telekinesis (M/H) IQ-2 [1]; Telereceive (M/H) IQ-2 [1]; Telesend (M/H) IQ-2 [1].

Quirk: Attentive. [-1]

Customization Note: The power levels for Psychokinesis and Telepathy listed above are a minimum. Young Ahetaowa can have either or both talents at up to power 7.

Adult (50+ years) 83.5 points

An average mature Ahetaowa, at least 30 feet tall, weighing at least a half-ton. As per the young stage, with the following changes.

Attribute Modifiers: ST +5 (No Manipulators, -40%) [36]; IQ +2 [20].

Advantages: Psychokinesis Level 7 [35]; Telepathy Level 8 [40].

Disadvantages: Inconvenient Size [-10]; Increased Life Support (Needs 3× as much food) [-20].

Skills: Life Detection (M/H) IQ [4]; Mental Blow (M/H) IQ [4]; Mind Shield (M/H) IQ [4]; Pyrokinesis (M/H) IQ [4]; Telekinesis (M/H) IQ [4]; Telereceive (M/H) IQ [4]; Telesend (M/H) IQ [4], Theology (Utaorl) (M/H) IQ-3 [1/2]

Customization Note: The psionic power levels listed above, and for later stages of Ahetaowa life, are minimums. Ahetaowa can have extremely high levels of power . . . a level of 15 is not truly rare.

Elder (150+ years) 155 points

Physically weaker, but continuing to gain in mental prowess. As per the adult stage, with the following changes.

EQUIPMENT AND VEHICLES

Two typical Ahetaowan robot designs, and an experimental vehicle, are described below. Robots are built at TL10, except where noted. For a key to the abbreviations, see p. 142.

AGROBOT

This robot is designed for gardening and farming tasks. It has an ovoid body, topped by a head with four eyestalks and the infrared sensor. The limbs are attached to the equator of the ovoid, with the arms making up the middle pair. Teams of these robots are used to move Ahetaowa in the rare instances when urgent relocation is necessary.

Subassemblies: Body, top full-rotation Head, two Arms, four Legs. Standard size modifiers.

Powertrain: 1-kWh rechargeable power cell [20] w/ 0.5-kW TL9 four-leg drivetrain.

Fuel: power cell sufficient for 14.3 hours [0].

Occupancy: – **Cargo:** 1 cf

| Armor | F | RL | B | T | U |
|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| All: | 3/5 | 3/5 | 3/5 | 3/5 | 3/5 |

TL9, waterproof. Character-point cost is 90.

Equipment

Overall: Sculpted biomorphics. **Body:** Small Complexity 4 brain [-5] and global positioning system. **Head:** Basic sensors

MINER

Modeled after a soil-dwelling worm, this robot is the workhorse of the Ahetaowan mining industry. The head serves as a sensor dome. It is mounted on the top of the robot just behind the bore, and can be retracted. The two tentacle-like arms move rock specimens up to the chemical analysis system mounted in the head.

Subassemblies: Body, top full-rotation retractable Head, two retractable Arms.

Powertrain: 30-kWh rechargeable power cell [20] w/ 4-kW TL9 flexbody drivetrain.

Attribute Modifiers: ST +4 (No Manipulators, -40%) [27]; IQ +3 [30].

Advantages: Psychokinesis Level 9 [45]; Telepathy Level 10 [50].

Skills: Pyrokinesis (M/H) IQ+1 [6]; Telecontrol (M/H) IQ+2 [8]; Telekinesis (M/H) IQ+1 [6]; Telereceive (M/H) IQ+2 [8]; Telesend (M/H) IQ+2 [8]; Theology (Utaorl) (M/H) IQ-2 [1].

OTHER SKILLS

Utaorl is a version of Theology (M/H) skill. Adult and Elder Ahetaowa must have at least IQ -3 and IQ -2 in it respectively. All Ahetaowa should have at least one artistic or artisan skill, appropriate for the tech level and their sessile build.



with peripheral and thermographic vision and smoke detector [35] and basic communicator [15]. **Arms:** two ST 20 arm motors with chainsaw in right arm [5] and fire extinguisher, spray gun, and gardening tools in left arm.

Statistics

Size: 5' long **Payload:** 50 lbs. **Lwt.:** 211.8 lbs.
Volume: 2.57 cf **Maint.:** 194 hours **Price:** KCr10.64

HT: 10/11 [5]

HP: 11 [Body] 1 [Head] 7 [each Arm] 4 [each Leg]

Speed is 14.9 [25]. Cannot float [-5].

Design Notes

Body ST is 20 and arm ST 20 [110], with DX 10 and IQ 7 [-20]. Legality 4.

TL9 structure is medium, cheap. The head has 0.03 cf waste space; the legs each have 0.14 cf. Surface area in square feet is: arms 2.5 each, body 7, head 1, legs 2.5 each, for total of 23.

Typical programs include Ambidexterity (Complexity 2); Agronomy [3]-12; Gardening [3]-13; Computer Navigation (Complexity 2); and Domestic and Janitorial utilities (both Complexity 1). Total character-point cost is 260 with the above programs, which factor in Eidetic Memory.

Fuel: 19.86 hours [0].

Occupancy: – **Cargo:** 7.2 cf

| Armor | F | RL | B | T | U |
|-------|------|------|------|------|------|
| All: | 3/10 | 3/10 | 3/10 | 3/10 | 3/10 |

TL9, sealed, radiation shielding. Character-point cost is 131.

Equipment

Overall: Sculpted biomorphics. **Body:** Standard Complexity 4 brain [-5]; basic communicator with 2,000-yard extension cable [15]; TL9 bore rated at 50 cf of hard rock per hour; fire-suppression system; inertial navigation system; 4,000-lb.

winch. *Head:* Basic sensors with discriminatory taste (for chemical analysis of geological samples only), 10-mile geophone, infrasonic hearing, laser rangefinder, magnetic anomaly detector with 10-mile range, radiation detector, and thermographic vision. [85]. *Arms:* two TL9 ST 10 motors with extra flexible and extensible options [25].

Statistics

Size: 14' long [-10] *Payload:* 360 lbs. *Lwt.:* 3 tons
Volume: 127 cf *Maint.:* 45 hours *Price:* KCr197.16

HT: 10/525 [2,575]
HP: 525 [Body] 4 [Head] 9 [each Arm]

Speed is 14.9 [-10]. Cannot float [-5].

Design Notes

Body ST is 102 and arm ST 10 [106], with DX 10 and IQ 7 [-20]. Legality 3.

TL9 structure is heavy, cheap, and flexible. The head has 0.038 cf waste space; the arms each have 0.97 cf. Surface area in square feet is: arms 1.5 each, body 175, head 1.5, for total of 179.5.

Typical programs include Geology [4*]-12, Metallurgy [4*]-12, Prospecting [4*]-14, Computer Navigation (Complexity 2), and Machine Operation (Complexity 1). Total character-point cost is 2,912 with the above programs, which factor in Eidetic Memory.



HKIYRERAO GRAV SLED

This is an experimental Ahetaowan single-crew air/raft design, built around a volunteer. The second contragrav generator is a backup. All components are TL9 unless noted.

The sled has one roomy crew station, equivalent to a suite, and is nominally short occupancy with no passenger space, but there is approximately 100 sf of gardened area (kthtoi) around the Ahetaowa.

Subassemblies: Body +4.

Powertrain: 30-kW nuclear power unit w/ 300 lb.-thrust TL13 reactionless super thruster and two 4,300 lb.-thrust TL13 contragravity generators.

Occupancy: 1 RCS **Cargo:** 100 cf

| Armor | F | RL | B | T | U |
|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| All: | 3/5 | 3/5 | 3/5 | 3/5 | 3/5 |

Equipment

Body: Ruggedized small computer; Complexity 4 robot brain with ruggedized terminal; 500-mile radio; 10-mile navigation

radar with no targeting; terrain-following radar ; 1-mile anti-collision radar with no targeting; inertial navigation system; global positioning system; flight recorder; and navigation instruments, all at TL10. Full fire-suppression system; computerized controls; and environmental control.

Statistics

Size: 8'x8'x11' *Payload:* 500 lbs. *Lwt.:* 2.45 tons
Volume: 689 cf *Maint.:* 72 hours *Price:* KCr77.482

HT: 12
HP: 750

aSpeed: 65 *aAccel:* 1 *aDecel:* 12 *aMR:* 3 *aSR:* 4
 Stall speed 0.

Design Notes

Body is medium, standard, with fair streamlining. Area is 500 sf. Armor is standard, composite.



CHAPTER THREE

Bwaps

The Bwaps (from their name for themselves, Bawapak-erwa-a-a-awapawab, also known as Wabs or Newts) are the most widely spread non-Human race in the Third Imperium. This is a result of their wide employment in the Ziru Sirka (the Vilani First Imperium) as government and corporate bureaucrats. Bwaps have a mindset with a powerful fixation on order and honesty, and are born bureaucrats.

In modern Imperial society, Bwaps are still valued for their administrative expertise. Larger Bwap enclaves tend to be found on worlds on major trade routes, particularly those that were significant administrative centers for the Vilani Bureaux. However, smaller groups of Bwaps can be found across the Imperium and even in the Solomani Confederation. Bwaps are very successful as administrators, bureaucrats, technicians, scientists, and merchants. While Bwaps are not known for their creativity, they are much respected for their thoroughness; a few Bwap assistants in a research project can multiply the effectiveness of that research greatly.

HISTORY

Before attaining civilization, the Bwaps lived in densely wooded swampy mangrove-like jungles, burrowing among the root system of large trees. A shift in the weather patterns of Marhaban shrank the marshes to half their original size, forcing the Bwaps to compete with other species for their habitat. This competition drove the early Bwaps towards the development of new technologies. The discovery of tools and agriculture gave the Bwaps a tremendous advantage over the competition and put them on the road to civilization. Because of their environment, the discovery of fire and metalworking came much later.

The Bwaps advanced in technology very slowly, but had stabilized into a world-spanning society of TL5 or 6 by the

time the Vilani arrived 6,000 years ago. Whether encouraged by the Vilani traders or out of jealousy of Vilani technology, the Bwaps rapidly developed their technology after contact, and advanced to TL9 within 100 years. However, this did not significantly disrupt Bwap society, and the Bwaps have prospered greatly in the intervening centuries.

The Bwaps were also one of the only non-Vilani races to obtain jump-2 technology from the Ziru Sirka. How this happened is a matter of conjecture; records of this time were long ago lost, but the Vilani of the Ziru Sirka were very protective of the secret of jump drive. Some say that the conservative Bwap philosophy appealed to the Vilani, and led to a natural alliance. Others say that the Bwaps were so adept at bureaucratic wrangling that they were able to requisition the design specs from a Vilani corporation. The Bwaps themselves experienced a brief colonial period, and settled large colonies on a dozen worlds around Marhaban. Bwap employees of the Vilani megacorporations generated hundred of small Bwap settlements on the worlds operated by these companies.

The Bwaps were found by the Vilani to be excellent administrators and bureaucrats. Vilani megacorporations sponsored several further Bwap colonies in remote areas to provide employees for future expansion. The Bwap race thrived under the Vilani, and continued to prosper under the Rule of Man. The beleaguered Terrans had no experience governing an empire as large as their new conquest, and saw the Bwaps as very valuable commodities. Bwaps were not traded as slaves, but they did become the subject of heated competition between planetary and subsector administrators.

The Rule of Man built Administration Academies on many of the worlds that the Vilani megacorps had developed as Bwap training sites. As more and more Bwaps became available from the academies, the demand only increased, and the schools were never able to keep up with



the demand. Three such schools survived the collapse of the Rule of Man and the subsequent Long Night, and continue to train Bwaps and others in the arts and sciences of administration. One of these schools is on Marhaban, another on Sylea, and the third on Vland.

Today, Bwaps can be found throughout the Imperium, but they are more numerous in its coreward and trailing portions. Bwaps are dominant on only about a dozen worlds, most in or around the Lentuli subsector of the Empty Quarter sector. Their homeworld, Marhaban, is in this subsector, and they settled nearby worlds after obtaining Jump technology from the Vilani. Many worlds have small Bwap enclaves, and occasional worlds throughout Charted Space host large Bwap colonies.

Emperor Cleon recognized the value of Bwaps to Imperial society, and formed a Bwap-only knightly order, the Order of Wampallally, to honor the contributions of Bwap administrators, scientists, and merchants.

LANGUAGE AND NAMES

Bwap speech has been described as "talking under mud." The words flow and bubble; the language is not easy for Humans to master (Mental/Hard) but is not unpleasant to listen to. Bwaps, on the other hand, master normal Human languages without difficulty.

Some Bwap words and names can be very long compounds, reflecting the Bwap desire to specify exactly where everything goes and how it relates to everything else. See pp. 34-35 for charts to create Bwap names and words.

An Unsuccessful Effort

Status Report 73832-X31

Sealed Manipulation File X31, Project Grimaldi
Manipulations Club of Guaran

(248-1104, Marhaban, Empty Quarter 0426 MOST SECRET)

Following discussions with Intendant Manipulator Chamberlain, I obtained a position on the expedition to Marhaban sponsored by the Bureaucracy Club of Guaran. The trip was long, yet pleasant; I have renewed acquaintances with a number of former colleagues, and the fresh exposure to Imperial Human culture has certainly expanded my outlook.

I admit that the frustration Chamberlain described seemed overstated, but after reviewing his project notes and having met his associates here, I begin to understand his reports. We have been here for four months now, and in that time I have been unable to move Chamberlain's manipulation any closer to a starting point than he could. Each time we manage to get a bureaucrat interested in promulgating a new rule, other Bwaps in the ministry begin adding additional layers, changing the intent of the original suggestion, and generally mooting what little success we have. This does not seem to be by design, or even malicious; if anything, the Bwaps have bent over backwards to help us, and the suggestions we have given them for new regulations are met with great enthusiasm. Unfortunately, our plans have not taken this bureaucratic enthusiasm fully into account.

I know this is a breach of protocol, but please double-check the records and see if there is another manipulation going on here. Did somebody try to manipulate a race into a position where it can never again be manipulated? The Bwaps could provide great service to our Federation, but having an unmanipulable race in the Federation would be a very dangerous precedent. We may need to take another look at the "Imperial Civil War" proposal.

— M. Aurelius



PHYSIOLOGY AND APPEARANCE

Bwaps run from 4 to 5 feet in height and weigh between 75 and 150 pounds. They are upright, bipedal, homeothermic, and bisexual. A Bwap couple fertilize and lay a single egg that incubates for about two months before hatching. The hatchling Bwap requires constant attention for several months, and like most other sentient species, Bwaps require years of education and socialization before coming of age.

Male Bwaps in Imperial society outnumber females by about 10 to 1, as most female Bwaps are found in crèches acting as breeders and child-rearers. This was once a requirement forced upon the females, who carried their young for several months in a kangaroo-like pouch. Modern technology has made this unnecessary, but the strength of tradition and the role of the mother in the Wapawab philosophy continues to keep many female Bwaps out of mainstream Imperial society.

The skeleton is internal and their circulatory system is closed. Their hemoglobin is copper-based and a deep blue in color. Because of this, their skin shows as a faint greenish-blue in areas where pigmentation is absent. Body markings vary tremendously from crèche to crèche, each one having a distinctive pattern. Greens, browns, yellows, and blues are the most common colors, usually in patterns of darker colors over a lighter basic color.

Because their skin must be constantly moist, Bwaps are uncomfortable in humidity less than 80%. With special clothing, Bwaps can exist indefinitely in humidity as low as 20%. Drier atmospheres require a sealed environment suit (a Combat Environment Suit is sufficient; a vacc suit is even better).

Bwap clothing normally consists of a loose-fitting kaftan and a hood covering the head (thus the "towel-head" nickname). The cloth is permeated with many fine capillaries through which water flows to keep the cloth and skin moist. Bwap clothing usually bears a pattern similar to the crèche-pattern of the wearer.

PSYCHOLOGY

From the Human point of view, the Bwaps are obsessed with minutiae, patterns and the order of things. Driven by this internal desire to see everything in its proper place, the Bwaps make excellent bureaucrats, officials, mathematicians, bookkeepers, scientists, and historians.

Their obsession with ritual and proper conduct often makes the Bwaps difficult to deal with. Those who violate the ritual of "standard operating procedure" will often find themselves lectured on the importance and proprieties of doing everything just so, often at great length. Dealing with Bwaps can take time, and trying to hurry a Bwap tends to aggravate them and take even more time.



The Bwap philosophy dominates their life. It holds that each individual has a place in the *pawab*, or tree, a term stemming from the traditional habitat of the Bwap on Marhaban. The literal tree is intricately tied to the planetary ecology, sheltering hundred of species and providing the Bwaps with food and material. The figurative tree, called Wapawab or Tree of Life, is harder to define, but revolves around the

crèche, the relationship of crèche members to each other, and the relationship of the crèche to other crèches and the outside world. Each individual takes pride in being a small, unique functional component in a vast universe of interlinked patterns, crèches, and relationships. The ritual of greeting, for instance, seems like meaningless formality and windy chit-chat to non-Bwaps, but to a Bwap it reflects a communication of "I am in this place and doing my part. Where are you and what are you doing?"

Some Bwaps are more individualistic than others, but even a "solo" Bwap reveres his crèche and seeks to find and maintain order in his area of expertise or interest.

SOCIETY

Bwap society centers around the crèche, or Atta-wapawab. The crèche is like a commune of Bwaps, who band together to birth, educate, and raise the young. Some crèches are huge organizations with tens of thousands of Bwaps. Others are small affairs with two or three extended families. The crèche is where Bwaps will select a mate, where the eggs will be guarded and tended to, and where the young will be educated by the Satha-atta-wapawab (Elders of the Crèche). The crèche is also the center of Bwap spirituality, and is the focus point of study and celebration of the Wapawab (Tree of Life). Bwaps can move to new crèches (and often do when searching for a nonrelated mate), but many remain in one crèche for their entire life. Many Bwaps who seek work in the Human world retain close contact with a local crèche, particularly for spiritual guidance and possible mating opportunities.

GOVERNMENT AND THE GUARDIANS OF ORDER

There is no central Bwap government. Marhaban and the Bwap-dominated worlds around it are ruled by the Atapas-atta-wapawab, the Great Council of Crèches. Other crèches outside of this area are largely independent groups.

The only pan-crèche organization that has influence beyond the Great Council of Crèches would be the Wewaka-atas, or Council of Seemly Order. In the distant history of Marhaban, the Wewaka-atas and its Guardians were the closest thing to a religious military order to be found among the Bwaps. The Council served as the overseers of Bwap ethics and the right-thinking direction of Bwap crèches. Over the centuries, as Bwap society became enmeshed with the Vilani megacorporations and bureaucracy, the direction of the Council of Order changed. The Wewaka-atas became the managers of bureaucratic and accounting standards as practiced by the Bwaps. Since the Bwaps had become the mainstay of Vilani bureaucracy, the Wewaka-atas became the guardians of generally accepted accounting practices.

In the Third Imperium, the Wewaka-atas is not an official Imperial agency, but the bureaucratic and accounting standards maintained and developed by the Council have

Wait Right Here, Please

"I was delivering some prototypes once, from Glissten to Bendor. A lady on board had a baby during the trip. She was Bendori, and the ship had Bendori registration, so there should be no problem getting the kid's citizenship papers, right?"

"So there we are in line at Bendor entry control, there on the highport, and there's a Bwap running the Special Entry desk. She fills out all of the forms for him, and everything looks good, until the Bwap looks at a map and sees that the ship went through Tsarina during the jump. So this Bwap whips out his handcomp and calculates that, at the time the kid was born, the ship would be passing through Tsarina in jumpspace. So he rejects the application, and says the kid has to be deported to Tsarina.

"The lady is hysterical, and the baby is crying, and there's a whole crowd of passengers all shouting at the Bwap and a couple of Aslan fingering these big stickers on their belts, and the little Bwap is very apologetic and polite, but he doesn't budge. This goes on for maybe 20 minutes! Then there's a little flurry in the line behind us, and this harmless-looking couple falls down, both of them together. Then a dozen armed Customs agents show up and take them away strapped to stretchers!"

"And then suddenly the Bwap looks at his handcomp again and says 'I am sorry. I was completely wrong.' And he bows to the lady and stamps her papers and says 'Next!'"

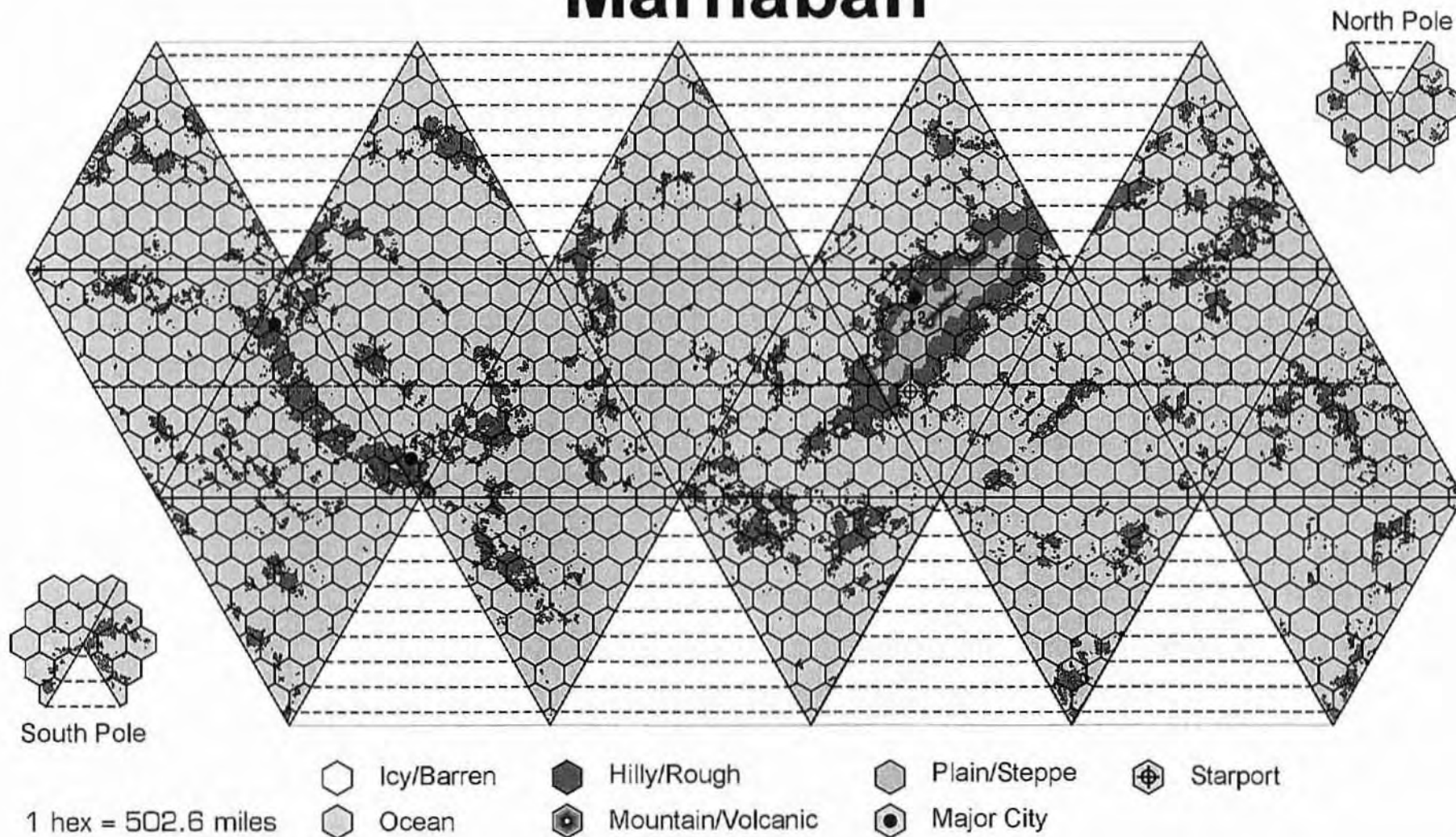
"Well, I knew some people in Customs, so I got the rest of the story from them. It turns out that they were some kind of baddies; my friend wouldn't talk about that. But they were really dangerous. Customs spotted them but had to buy time until a team of snipers could get there from Marine Barracks and get into position with tranq rounds . . . and that Bwap volunteered to stall them. So he figured the best way to do that without their getting suspicious was to stall somebody in front of them.

"And none of us suspected a thing. It just seemed like such a Bwap thing to do. But the poor woman with the baby got a big chunk of the reward. The Bwap insisted on it, for the trouble he'd put her through."

always been considered the Imperial standard. The Council remains headquartered on Marhaban, but there are regional councils in nearly every sector capital of the Imperium, and many in areas beyond the Imperium.

The Tap-a-wewaka-atas, or Guardians of Order, serve as the observation and enforcement arm of the Wewaka-atas. The position has no official Imperial sanction, but still holds great power over the Bwap crèches. The regional or main Wewaka-atas councils have the power to dissolve a crèche, the very foundation of Bwap society.

Marhaban



KEY

1. *Weewasatho-esawawab* Starport ("Weewasa Downport")
2. *Asa-wakaba-atewa* (the Human Enclave, aka "Newton")
3. *Wedethatabaka-wap-atewa*
4. *Paethaka-wap-atewa-asta*

The Human enclave on Marhaban is called Asa-wakaba-atewa in Bwap (which is not as hard to pronounce as it looks, but it is pretty hard), nicknamed "Newton." There are several reasons advanced for this nickname. One is that Asa-wakaba-atewa translates roughly into "new urban place for those dry creatures from the stars," or "New Town." Another is that Newton is a riff on "newt," which is the nickname for the Bwaps (at least it's the one they don't object to). I think the real reason is because Newton takes a lot less time to say than Asa-wakaba-atewa.

*– Bwap Diary: 12 Years on Marhaban,
Gani Jimenez-Kelly*

When a crèche is dissolved, the communal home is abandoned (and generally destroyed), and any unhatched eggs there are also destroyed. Families then must find new crèches to join, and other crèches will not accept more than one family from a dissolved crèche.

In the Bwap mindset, it would be unthinkable for a Bwap crèche or one of its members to disobey a Council order, and any individual who failed to obey a crèche order would be exiled from the crèche. If a crèche for some reason opted not to obey a council order, it would be shunned at the very least, and perhaps attacked by the Tapa-wewaka-atas or even neighboring crèches.

The intricate subtleties of the Wapawab philosophy and the mysterious workings of the Great Council of Crèches makes Marhaban a difficult place for inexperienced Humans to operate or do business in. Regulations, traditions and religious beliefs all blur together in everyday Marhaban life, and the Bwap predilection toward bureaucracy means that the perceived level of legal coverage and administrative oversight seems much, much greater on Marhaban than on most Imperial worlds.

Given this, it is fortunate that a nonviolent lawbreaker on Marhaban is not likely to go to jail, but there will be fines. Worse yet, there will be lectures and re-education attempts by the local Guardians of Order, who will try to make the offender understand, in intricate detail, how he fits into the overall worldview, and how his actions need to be turned to right-thinking behavior under the guidelines of the Wapawab.

Actual criminal behavior is extremely rare, and is considered the worst form of mental disorder among Bwaps, since it deliberately disrupts the proper order of things. Their definition of crime, however, can sometimes be at variance with Imperial norms. The elimination of a greatly disruptive influence is considered good, even if it involves operating against the generally accepted norms of society to restore the proper order of things.

MARHABAN (O426, EMPTY QUARTER SECTOR)

Starport: Class V (Asa-wakaba Wath-po).

Diameter: 6,400 miles (7,120 km). *Gravity:* 0.88 G.

Atmosphere: Oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 85%. *Climate:* Tropical. *Population:* 83 million (3 million Human).

Government: Bureaucracy (Great Council of Crèches). *Control Rating:* 5. *TL:* 9. *WTN:* 5. *Trade Classifications:* Major route.

The homeworld of the Bwaps, Marhaban, is a medium-sized world orbiting a G5 V star in the Lentuli subsector of the Empty Quarter. The name Marhaban is actually the name given by Solomani contact and exploration teams during the Interstellar Wars. The Bwaps refer to their world as Peka-wapawab-a.



It is one of eight planets orbiting its star, Peka-wapakat. There is one small gas giant, with six large and 12 small moons. Most of the system's heavy industry, such as it is, is located here. This includes a small but efficient shipyard, and several factories devoted to the manufacture of large data-warehousing computers. Marhaban itself has no moons, but the star generates tides of 1 or 2 feet. Its slightly erratic orbit leads to frequent (in geologic terms) climate shifts which have had a major impact on the Bwaps and their development.

Marhaban is a warm but hospitable world; its average temperature is nearly 90° F, with a sea-level atmospheric pressure of 1.05 standard. The atmosphere is breathable with no major pollutants or oddities, and the planet has a 23-hour day and a 281-day year. It is dominated by oceans, with one significant continent and a myriad of small islands. The islands tend to be wet and swampy places, with hills or mountains further inland. The area between the coastal swamps and the highlands tends to be swampy tropical jungles. This is also true of the main continent, where the Bwaps evolved.

Most of the population lives on the central continent, but there are many smaller settlements scattered among the islands, and a few undersea arcologies.

The Human population is concentrated in Marhaban's capital, Asa-wakaba-atewa, and in some small communities in the far north near Marhaban's small arctic zone. They are the descendants of Vilani corporate personnel trapped onworld after the collapse of the Rule of Man, as well as some Solomani settlers and colonial overseers. They have been largely absorbed into Bwap society, though they do not display all of the typical Bwap psychological traits.

The climactic shift on Marhaban served to limit the Bwap population of the world. While modern technology would allow the Bwaps to build huge arcologies that suit their preferences, or to "Bwap-form" their homeworld, that would be completely contrary to the philosophy of the Wapawab. So most of the Bwaps of Marhaban live in the remaining swamp and jungle regions of the world. They follow very careful and strict environmental guidelines to prevent the destruction of their preferred environment, and several large jungles have been designated as nature preserves, allowing both natives and visitors to experience the world as it was intended to be, if only for a short while.

Marhaban is home to many other unusual creatures, many resembling prehistoric Terran dinosaurs. The Awaballapab is probably the most famous: a sea-dwelling creature that measures more than 90 yards in length. It looks like an oversized Terran plesiosaur, with six large flippers, a shallowly forked tail, and an elongated neck.

The Awaballapab lives in shallow areas near the coastline, and uses its long neck to feed both on the numerous small creatures near the water's surface and the rarer but larger creatures found near the sea bottom. It can easily take prey the size of a Bwap or Human, but it is strictly protected, so those visiting its home grounds do so at their own risk.



TRADE AND ECONOMICS

Bwap worlds tend to have diverse, efficient economies with no more heavy industry than necessary; the Bwaps prefer to move their industry off-planet, or just to import what they need. Marhaban is a prime example.

Bwap worlds are also richer than one might expect, because there are well-paid Bwaps working all over Charted Space . . . and many of them invest their money at home, return home to retire, send money home to the families . . . Marhaban and other Bwap planets also require little in the way of self-defense forces. They trust the Imperium, and the faithful Bwap clerks who keep the Imperium running, to make sure they're well protected. That frees up more money to improve the standard of living.

BWAP CHARACTERS

A typical Bwap is 4.5 feet in height and weighs around 120 pounds; for an average character, determine weight and height from ST as for a Human, and then subtract a foot from height and 20 lbs. from weight. However, individual variation among Bwaps is as least as great as it is in Humaniti.

BWAP RACIAL TEMPLATE

- 11 POINTS

Attribute Modifiers: ST -2 [-15], HT -1 [-10].

Advantages: Acute Taste/Smell +1 [2]; Acute Vision +1 [2]; Amphibious [10]; Double-Jointed [5]; Peripheral Vision [15].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (The Wapawab and loyalty to the crèche) [-10]; Honesty [-10]; Increased Life Support (High humidity level needed) [-10].

Quirks: Attentive; Careful; Finds comfort and security in complexity; Hates to hurry. [-4]

Skills: Administration (M/A) IQ+4 [10]; Climbing (P/A) DX+1 [4].

BWAP CAREERS

Satha-a-atta-wapawab (Elder of the Crèche) 40 points

The Elders are not necessarily old, but are considered wise (thus old) in the interpretation of the ways of the Wapawab, or Tree of Life. A crèche, or Atta-wapawab (Life Tree Womb) will have several Elders of various age and rank. These Elders will serve as teachers, counselors, and leaders of the crèche. Some Elders (usually junior ones) act as envoys and explorers for the crèche; they travel to other crèches or other worlds, and return with the knowledge gathered in their travels.

A number of Elders have become journalists, apparently expanding their mandate from reporting to their crèche to reporting to the universe.

Think of this career as a combination of Shaman, Scout, and Diplomat. An Elder is particularly respected among Bwaps, but most Humans have no idea what an Elder is or does, and so there is generally little advantage when dealing with Humans. The Acrobatics skill reflects training for a Wapawab ceremony, which commemorates births or deaths. The low cost of this career allows the Elder to participate in a common Bwap pastime: indulge his curiosity and learn a wide range of noncareer skills.

Attributes: ST 8 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 11 [10]; HT 9 [0].

Advantages: Clerical Investment [5]; Reputation +3 (Bwaps only, all the time) [5].

Disadvantage: Pacifism [-15].

Primary Skills: Teaching (M/A) IQ+4 [10]-15; Theology (Wapawab) (M/H) IQ+3 [10]-14.

Secondary Skills: Acrobatics (P/H) DX-2 [1]-8; Bard (M/A) IQ [2]-11; Diplomacy (M/H) IQ [4]-11; Research (M/A) IQ [2]-11.

Background Skills: A total of 6 points in Language (any) or Politics.

Tap-a-wewaka-atapas (Guardian of Order) 85 points

The Guardians of Order serve as the observation and enforcement arm of the Wewaka-atapas (Council of Order). The position has no official Imperial sanction, but still holds great power over the Bwap crèches. Prospective Guardians

Bwap Worlds: Crowded or Empty

While there are many worlds in the Imperium with a Bwap population, only a few dozen are populated primarily by Bwaps. These worlds almost always have a very low population density, or a very high one.

The reason for this lies in the Wapawab philosophy. To the Bwap, a world's ecosystem is a both an ongoing process and a living entity, and should not be overtaxed or harmed. On the other hand, as the Bwap developed the technology to travel into space, they also gained the ability to live on worlds that effectively had no ecosystem, or at least not one that seemed to fit into the Wapawab worldview.

The Bwap also prefer low-gravity worlds. The atmosphere of a low-gravity world (0.6 G or less) tends to be thin or nonexistent, and the hydrographic rating is very low. When the Bwaps were in colonization mode, they found only a few worlds that combined the low gravity, high humidity, and warmth of Marhaban. These worlds were settled with great care, and through a combination of law and social pressure (guided by the the Wapawab), the population of these worlds was kept (and remains) low.

Worlds that did not meet the other environmental requirements of the Bwaps could be settled with less caution. Artificial environments could be built to simulate the Bwap temperature and humidity preferences, and had little effect on the simple ecosystems of these worlds. The overall population of such worlds might also be low, but the density of Bwaps living in the artificial environments would be much higher than what would be found on more "natural" Bwap worlds. A few of these worlds have attained populations measured in the billions, while the Bwap homeworld has never had more than 300 million inhabitants, and today has less than 100 million.

The Bwap arcologies and artificial cities often have amazingly complex environments of their own. Nearly all have some sort of artificial swamp complete with plants and animals to simulate the conditions of Marhaban, and to facilitate the breeding activities of the crèche. Smaller facilities and Bwap starships will have at least one "mud room" which can be controlled to give the humidity and temperature of the swamp, if not the plant and animal life.

are selected at an early age by traveling Guardians, who visit the crèches in their area once every few years. The prospects are taken to the regional or main Wewaka-atapas council that sponsors the Guardian, and subjected to a year of testing. If the prospect makes it past this year, he will become an apprentice Guardian for three years, following a mentor Guardian and "learning the ropes." After this initiate period, the prospect is tested again. Most pass, to become full-fledged Guardians.

May We See Your Piracy Permit?

"Thanks for picking up the tab, man . . . on the run, ya gotta watch the credits, that's for sure.

"That's good . . . ahhhh. Okay, I promised I'd tell ya, so here it is. The operation is gone, man, totally gone. Three million credits in merchandise, the ladies, even the ship. Man, they even aced out the blind accounts at the bank on Mertactor; 10 million credits gone. The Scouts, the Marines, even the Sword Worlders; they all showed up for the raid.

"Why? I'll tell you why; that damn Newt you turned us on to! Yeah, that's right, Pukky-dukky or whatever his name was. The one that had that great plan for skimming funds from that GasBag resupply operation over on Collace. He was the best code-cracker I ever saw, and he knew his way around all the starport red tape and customs forms. I thought he was great; I never thought the bastard would sell us out!

"The weird part was, he didn't run away before the raid; I didn't even know it was him until it was all over. I grabbed one of those Scout suits we had and blended in with the raiders, and I was there when the Imperials were questioning Jonas and Eneri. Ol' Pukky was right there, standing with these two other Bwaps in combat armor, and Jonas was almost crying, asking him why. Then Pukky says something like 'you were breaking the law,' and Eneri almost screamed 'What about Collace!?' Pukky looked right at him and says 'That was different; they were endangering the Wap-wap' or some such.

"So it turns out Pukky was an agent of some kind, working for some kind of Newt cops. Them other Bwaps that was there, the ones in armor; they sit down and start working on some handcomps, and it turns out they are some kind of Newt cop super-accountants or something! They started showing the Imperials how we had not paid taxes in three Imperial systems, and we were violating some kind of Imperial ship registration laws with our legit far trader.

"The capper to the whole thing was that the Imperials raided us because of that stuff; they didn't have enough evidence for the piracy, but they sure as snuff got us for tax evasion. Now, they have enough evidence for everything else, but to think a 70 million credit per year operation went down because we didn't have the right permits? What's a pirate to do, anyway?"

— Imperial Intelligence
surveillance recording:
Nicky "Rednose" Rawlings
Surveillance Recorded 107-1102,
Rocky's Blue Asteroid Tavern,
Bowman Belt, District 268

While the Guardians are more inspectors than warriors, this is one of the few Bwap career paths that involves military training. Traditionally, Guardians serve for only 12 years. Some move on to careers as law enforcers or private investigators, and many return to their home crèche to become Satha-a-atta-wapawab (Crèche Elders). A few Guardians are granted Satha-a-wewaka-atapas (Elder Guardian) status at the end of their service, and become permanent Guardians with no assigned district. These Elder Guardians are given a ship, and tasked with traveling the space lanes to provide aid and guidance to Bwaps living away from their crèches.

Attributes: ST 10 [20]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 11 [10]; HT 9 [0].

Advantages: A total of 25 points from Alertness [5/level]; Higher Purpose (uphold the Wapawab) [5]; Imperturbable or Unfazeable [10 or 15]; Intolerance (Violations of ethics or standards) [-5]; Intuition [15]; Reputation +3 (Bwaps only, all the Time) [5]; Single-Minded [5]. Optionally, spend an additional 25 points for Elder Guardian status and Ship Patron advantage (see *Customization Notes*, below).

Disadvantages: A total of -25 points from Honesty [-10]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Pacifism [-15]; Sense of Duty (To the Wapawab) [-5]; Workaholic [-5]. Elder Guardians will have Duty, 6 or less (to the Wapawab) [-2].

Primary Skills: Accounting (M/H) IQ+3 [10]-14; Administration (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-13; Law Enforcement (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-13; Research (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-13; Theology (Wapawab) (M/H) IQ [4]-11; Writing (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-12; 4 points in Brawling, Guns (Any), Beam Weapons (Any) (all P/E).

Secondary Skills: Acrobatics (P/H) DX-2 [1]-8; Computer Operation (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-12; Criminology (M/A) IQ [2]-11; Driving (Any) (P/A) DX [2]-12; Piloting (Small Spacecraft) (P/A) DX [2]-10.

Background Skills: A total of 6 points in Law (M/H) or Language (Any).

Customization Notes: The Guardian is something of a combination investigator, accountant, and religious inquisitor. Like the Elder, most Humans have no idea what a Guardian is or does, and so there is generally no advantage when dealing with Humans. However, if Reputation is chosen, there is an advantage when dealing with bureaucrats in the Imperium, regardless of species. Note that the Guardian can, for an extra 25 points, be a Satha-a-wewaka-atapas (Elder Guardian), and receive the Ship Patron advantage. To do this, the Reputation advantage must also have been selected, and a Duty disadvantage (Report semi-annually to Council) [-2] also needs to be added. The ship is of the *Teth-o-wewaka-atapas* class, and is built to Bwap specifications at several Human spaceship manufacturing facilities across the Imperium. The regional Council retains title to the ship, and may need to recall it (and the Guardian) for emergency duties. The Guardian is responsible for the upkeep of the ship, though the regional Council may help with major repairs. Loss of the ship is considered a dishonor, and would result in the loss of the Ship Patron advantage and the Reputation advantage (without being able to re-spend the cost of these advantages). However, the Duty disadvantage would also go away, so it would not be a total loss.

OTHER BWAP CAREERS

While most Bwaps become bureaucrats, accountants, or administrators, that is by no means the whole range of Bwap talents.

Bwaps in Law Enforcement

Patient, dedicated, honest . . . patient . . . very patient. Bwaps make excellent investigators, in the field and in the laboratory. If a Bwap has to search a whole parking lot for one flake of broken plastic, or interview every employee in a hundred-story office building, he'll get to work, cheerfully and methodically . . . and he *will* find the answer.

Bwaps in the Military

While rare, a Bwap soldier, Marine, or spacer is not totally unheard of. The vast majority of Bwaps in the military work in the massive bureaucracies that control each service, serve as medical personnel, or even do defense-project research. A few actually serve in combat positions, mostly in the Imperial Navy. Those rare Bwaps found as ground-pounders or able spacers are seen as unusual by their Bwap relatives, and as aggravating but reliable rules-stickers by their comrades in arms.

Bwaps in the Scout Service

This is much more common; Bwaps are no less curious than Humans. They may be more cautious, but their interest is also focused and persistent. While the IISS bureaucracy has many Bwap administrators, there are a surprising number of Bwaps operating in the field. Having a Bwap as a member of a survey team is generally considered a good thing; the Bwap will add a level of thoroughness that is sometimes

Adventure Seed: The Red Badge of Courage

The PCs are a group of college students who are also environmental activists. Their planet is of moderate technology level, but populous, and industrial pollutants are an increasing problem. The party is approached by a Bwap clerk from a local chemical manufacturer. He stumbled on evidence that a new red dye produced at the factory has a byproduct that will pollute the local watershed. He was working with a group of Human and Bwap environmental activists, but they have recently been arrested. He needs the party's help to get into the factory offices after hours, so that he can copy enough records to convince a court. He would prefer to do this without violence, but he recognizes that sometimes things happen.

Complicating matters is the fact that the PCs are not very well equipped, and the Bwap's friends may have tipped off the authorities (who are in the pay of the corporation). Of course, the very paranoid might also suspect that this is in fact some sort of corporate espionage done cheap, and not an evidence-gathering mission.

"Having a Bwap on board was one of the best hiring decisions I ever made. My purser, Akkawatab, has totally reworked the financing for my ship, he's found ways around regulations and red tape on more worlds than I can count, and he's even developed an investment plan for the rest of my crew. Sure, he likes to explain every detail of what he's doing, and he does leave damp spots on the seats and wet footprints in the corridor, but I don't sweat the small stuff. No pun intended."

*– Durevan McCandles,
101 Tips for the Would-Be
Free Trader*

lacking in all-Human crews. The common belief that Bwaps lack a sense of adventure is particularly untrue for IISS Bwaps, but experience has found that they lack the creativity to make good field commanders.

Bwaps as Merchants

Many large corporations and megacorporations have large numbers of Bwaps in their corporate bureaucracies; it was the Vilani megacorp that were responsible for spreading the Bwaps across the region that became the Third Imperium. Bwap brokers are a common sight in most Class IV and V starports, working for corporations or for themselves. Bwaps can also be found working on merchant ships and free traders, generally as a ship's purser or supercargo, but sometimes as an administrative assistant or legal advisor. Most Bwaps have a personality that precludes them from serving as a captain or leader for more undisciplined races, but an able Bwap executive assistant can ensure a ship will wend its way effortlessly through the myriad of rules and regulations on each world it visits.

Bwaps as Scientists










Next to the Bwap bureaucrat, the Bwap scientist is the most common Human stereotype of a Bwap, and for good reason. Bwaps contribute large number of observers, lab assistants, and scientists to the Imperium and its member worlds and corporations. The Bwap scientist is thorough and rigorous in following up new theories and observations. Intuitive jumps are rare, but Bwap researchers are very good at compiling and cross-checking separate observations and assembling them into promising new areas of study. Bwap scientists are particularly common in the biological and medical sciences, but can be found in almost any area of study.

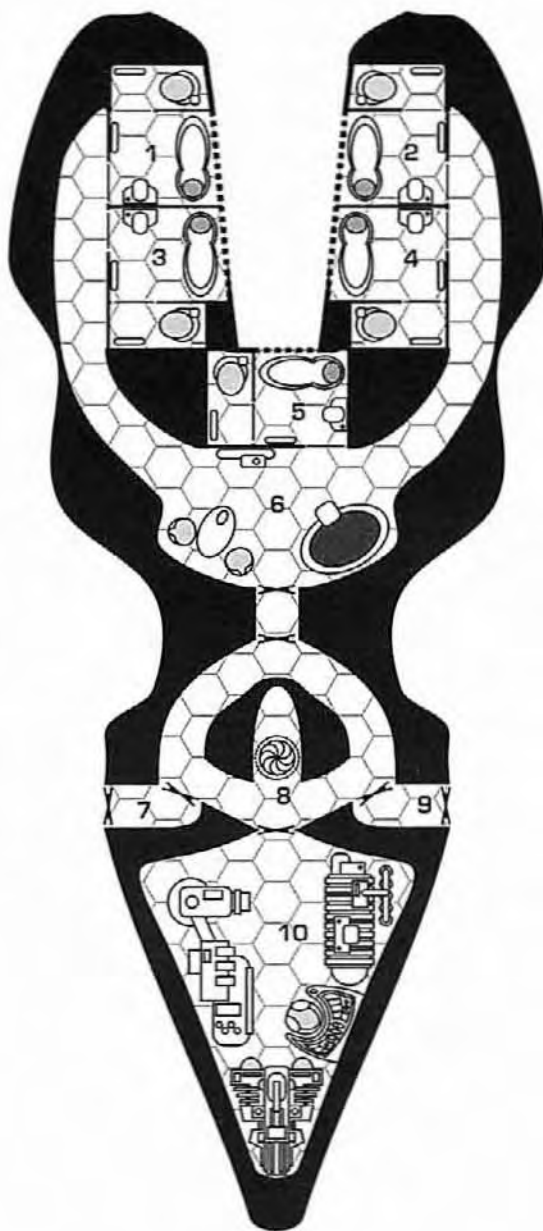
Teth-o-wewaka-atapas-Class Bwap Guardian Runabout

Location Key:

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Pilot stateroom | 8 Central access shaft |
| 2 Engineer stateroom | 9 Starboard airlock |
| 3 Stateroom | 10 Jump drive and power |
| 4 Stateroom | 11 Cargo bay |
| 5 Stateroom | 12 Maneuver drive |
| 6 Common area | 13 Bridge |
| 7 Port airlock | 14 Maneuver drive |

LEGEND


- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ceiling iris |  |
| Ceiling/floor iris |  |
| Floor iris |  |
| Iris valve |  |
| Fresher |  |
| Bed |  |
| Chair |  |
| Accel. Couch |  |
| Wallowing Pool |  |



Lower Deck



Upper Deck

 One hex equals 1 yard

Scale in yards



Bwaps make very good computer programmers, of course. Their patience and attention to detail makes them skilled debuggers.

Bwaps as Criminals

Bwap criminals are rare, but do exist. Most are Bwaps who have adopted other races' philosophies, or have suffered mental damage or great emotional trauma. Those who commit deliberate criminal acts are pariahs in Bwap society; they may be accepted by Humans, but a Bwap crèche would never tolerate such an individual. Of course, an outcast Bwap, with all his organizational skills, would make a perfect henchman for a master criminal!

On the other hand, perfectly reasonable Bwaps may decide that a certain company or organization represents a threat to harmony and order, and work against the target, inside or outside the law, until the problem is solved. Since Bwaps are such masters of detail, this action often takes the form of a red-tape assault, corporate espionage, or hack attack.

Some Bwaps find that this appeals to them, and become full-time "crusaders," using legal, bureaucratic, and other means to bring disruptive companies or groups to their knees. Other Bwaps will consider such efforts to be moral (or at least not immoral) even if they are technically against the law, and explain away the seeming contradiction at a length that can quickly glaze Human eyes.

SPACECRAFT

See p. 142 for a key to the vehicle abbreviations.

TETH-O-WEWAKA-ATAPAS-CLASS BWAP GUARDIAN RUNABOUT (TL10)

Elder Guardians of Order receive a vessel with which to carry out their duties. The *Teth-o-wewaka-atapas*-class runabout has decent space speed and a respectable jump-3 range.

While the basic ship is unarmed, some Guardians will use their own funds to add a turret and weapons, and add another maneuver unit to retain the acceleration and airspeed after the turret is added. Such modifications are paid for by the Guardian in command of the vessel, and are generally not reimbursed by the Council which issued the ship.

The ship can operate with a crew of one, but is more efficient if there is an engineer onboard, and perhaps even another crewman to see to sensors, communications, and navigation. The ship is built with Bwap comfort in mind, so it is dimly lit and very humid. The standard gravity is 0.8 G, but wise Guardians will retain one room as a high-gravity training room to keep their physical skills up to snuff.

Specially sealed control units with fiber optics are used in the bridge and engineering to avoid electrical problems from the humidity; if these areas are damaged and replaced with normal nonhardened control systems there will be a chance of a moisture-induced electronic failure in the bridge or engineering during each jump.

Subassemblies: SL Hull +8.

Powertrain: 14 Maneuver, 4 Jump.

Fuel: 30 Fuel.

Occ: See above.

Cargo: 7.5 dtons

| Armor | F | RL | B | T | U |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| All: | 4/200 | 4/200 | 4/200 | 4/200 | 4/200 |

Equipment

Modules: Hardened Basic Bridge, Engineering, 5 State-rooms, Utility.

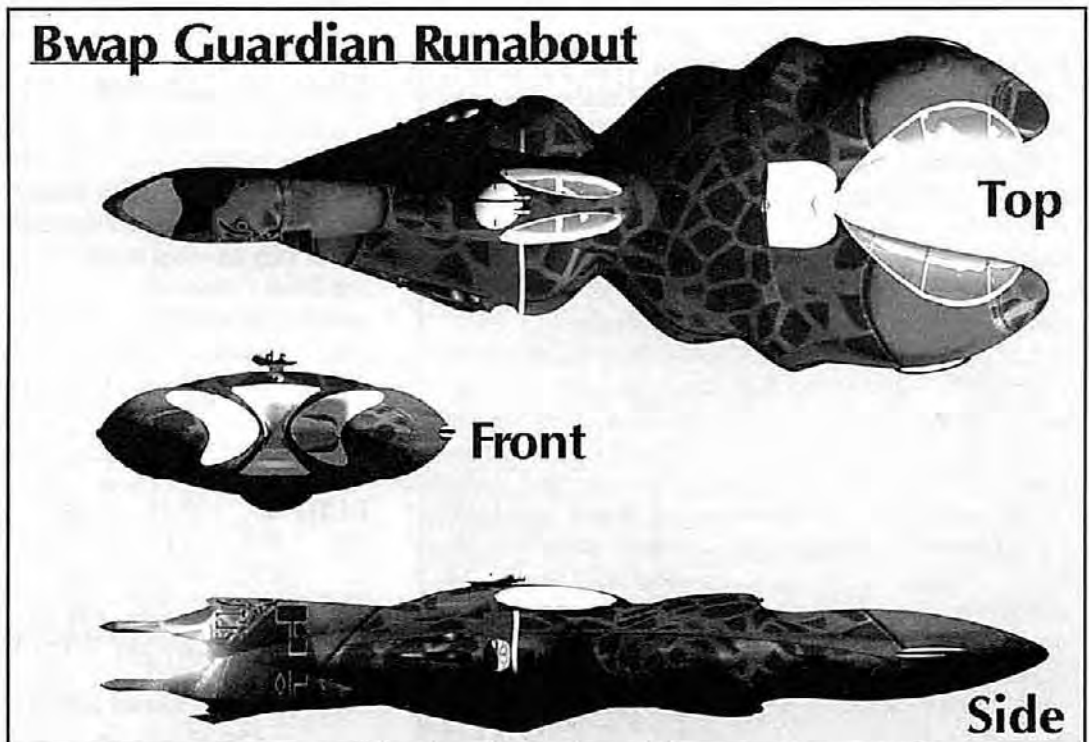
Statistics

Size: 36'x42'x96' **Payload:** 37.5 tons **Lwt.:** 177.7 tons
Volume: 100 dtons **Maint.:** - **Price:** MCr25.01

HP: 15,000

sAccel: 3.15 G

Jump: 3 **aSpeed:** 2,049



Marhaban Down: A Heaven for Bureaucracy

The starport on Marhaban is a modern, full-featured Class V facility. Serving the home of an important Imperial species, the starport is always busy. It is also one of the least popular starports in the Imperium.

Due to the Bwap love of laws and bureaucracy, and the presence of the Great Council of Crèches and the Council of Seemly Order, a merchant will face an amazing array of duties, requirements, rules, and regulations to do business on the world. There are also significant environmental concerns based on the Wapawab philosophy, and many Bwaps will carefully investigate the reputation and Wapawab-friendliness of the manufacturers of goods carried by a visiting merchant. There have been several instances of a cargo languishing in a warehouse at Marhaban Down for months, just because the company that made those goods was found to have violated environmental laws on a world three subsectors away.

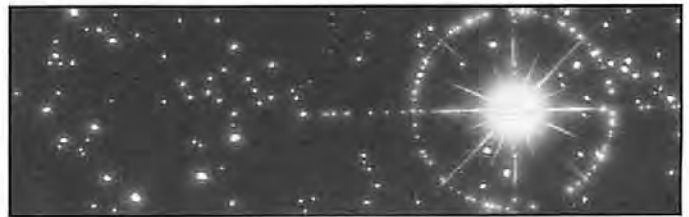
Merchants associated with the larger megacorporations and trade lines tend to have an easier time on Marhaban, simply because their parent company's bureaucratic structure is more suited towards dealing with the Bwaps. In addition, many of these companies employ a significant number of Bwap bureaucrats, and may have Bwap staff on ships that trade extensively with Bwap worlds.

A free trader usually has a narrow profit margin, and cannot afford a staff of bureaucrats. While some Bwaps will work for smaller traders, most prefer large companies with an existing formal structure and bureaucracy. However, there are some ways that the smaller traders can prosper in this environment. Marhaban Down and its orbital counterpart are largely staffed with Human technicians; the Bwaps serve as the managers and bureaucrats. The Human staff will sometimes take pity on a red tape-bound trader and help him avoid some of the regulations. Another possibility is a product of the Bwap bureaucracy that generates all of the problems. The Bwaps handle incoming traffic based on three things: the ship's arrival hour, its size, and its name. Since there are plenty of 200- and 400-ton ships arriving at a given time, many independent operators that do business on Marhaban choose ship names like *Aardvark*, *Aadam's Rib*, and the infamous free trader *Aaaaaabuu*, to get berthing priority.

Some less than ethical traders will fabricate reports of problems with a competing ship or its cargo. A rumor that a ship is leaking coolant, or that the manufacturer of its cargo has been dumping polluted water into a reservoir on some nearby world, will generate an investigation by the authorities, and the investigation will usually tie the competitor up long enough to let the trader sell his cargo and get away. However, this tactic has been known to backfire. If the Bwaps *ever* find out that their system has been perverted into harassment of an innocent party, the trickster will find out just how viciously humorous an aggrieved bureaucracy can be.

Adventure Seed: Crime and Punishment

The PCs are a group of Tap-a-wewaka-atapas (Guardians of Order), with one being a Satha-a-wewaka-atapas (Elder Guardian) with a Guardian Runabout. This group has been tasked with an investigation of activities by a Bwap crèche on a major Imperial world. The crèche, whose members are largely employed by the subsector government, has been reported to have accepted bribes to ignore regulatory violations by megacorporations. The Council of Order wishes to investigate and correct the situation before it is discovered and made public by the subsector government. The investigators quickly finds that the charges are true, but not as simple as originally stated. The local baron has blackmailed several crèche leaders into accepting the bribes, threatening to blacken the reputation of the local crèche. The party will need to decide how to proceed; the crèche leaders are guilty, but they are also victims. The baron controls the local police, and cannot be gotten through legal means. Does the party try to act against the baron? Is he also subject to blackmail? And has the profit of the bribes made some of the local crèche leaders untrustworthy?



BWAP LANGUAGE

Bwap words can be generated using two dice. Roll one die to determine how many syllables the word will have (or decide this for yourself). Then, for each syllable, roll on the Syllables table to determine how the syllable is formed. Syllables may have up to three letters; Initial Consonant, Vowel and Final Consonant. For each letter, roll a die to determine which table to roll on (Initial Consonant 1-6, Vowel 1-6, or Final Consonant 1-6), and then roll two differently colored dice to cross-reference on the appropriate table and obtain the correct letter.

Syllables

| D1/D2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1 | CV | CV | CV | CV | CV | CV |
| 2 | CV | CV | CV | CV | CV | CV |
| 3 | CV | CVC | CVC | CVC | CVC | CVC |
| 4 | CVC | CVC | CVC | CVC | CVC | CVC |
| 5 | CVC | VC | VC | VC | VC | VC |
| 6 | VC | VC | VC | VC | V | V |

Initial Consonant 1

| D1/D2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | P | P | P | P | P | P |
| 2 | P | P | P | P | P | P |
| 3 | P | P | P | P | P | P |
| 4 | P | P | P | P | P | P |
| 5 | P | P | P | P | P | P |
| 6 | P | P | P | P | P | P |

Initial Consonant 2

| D1/D2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | P | P | P | P | P | P |
| 2 | W | W | W | W | W | W |
| 3 | W | W | W | W | W | W |
| 4 | W | W | W | W | W | W |
| 5 | W | W | W | W | W | W |
| 6 | W | W | W | W | W | W |

Initial Consonant 3

| D1/D2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | W | W | W | W | W | W |
| 2 | W | W | W | W | W | W |
| 3 | W | W | W | W | W | W |
| 4 | W | W | W | W | W | W |
| 5 | W | W | W | W | W | W |
| 6 | W | W | W | W | W | W |

Initial Consonant 4

| D1/D2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | S | S | S | S | S | S |
| 2 | S | S | S | S | S | S |
| 3 | S | S | S | S | S | S |
| 4 | S | S | S | S | S | S |
| 5 | T | T | T | T | T | T |
| 6 | T | T | T | T | T | T |

Initial Consonant 5

| D1/D2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | T | T | T | T | T | T |
| 2 | T | T | T | T | T | T |
| 3 | D | D | D | D | D | D |
| 4 | K | K | K | K | K | K |
| 5 | K | K | K | K | K | K |
| 6 | K | K | K | K | K | K |

Initial Consonant 6

| D1/D2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | K | K | K | K | K | K |
| 2 | K | K | K | K | K | K |
| 3 | B | B | B | B | B | B |
| 4 | B | B | B | B | B | B |
| 5 | B | B | B | F | F | F |
| 6 | F | F | F | F | F | F |

Vowel 1

| D1/D2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 2 | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 3 | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 4 | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 5 | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 6 | A | A | A | A | A | A |

Vowel 2

| D1/D2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 2 | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 3 | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 4 | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 5 | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 6 | A | A | A | A | A | A |

Vowel 3

| D1/D2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 2 | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 3 | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 4 | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 5 | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 6 | A | A | A | A | A | A |

Vowel 4

| D1/D2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 2 | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 3 | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 4 | A | A | A | A | A | A |
| 5 | E | E | E | E | E | E |
| 6 | E | E | E | E | E | E |

Vowel 5

| D1/D2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | E | E | E | E | E | E |
| 2 | E | E | E | E | E | E |
| 3 | E | E | E | E | E | E |
| 4 | E | E | E | E | E | E |
| 5 | E | E | E | E | E | E |
| 6 | E | E | E | E | E | E |

Vowel 6

| D1/D2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | E | E | E | E | E | E |
| 2 | E | E | E | E | E | E |
| 3 | E | E | E | E | E | E |
| 4 | E | E | E | E | E | E |
| 5 | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| 6 | O | O | O | O | O | O |

Final Consonant 1

| D1/D2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 3 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 4 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 5 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 6 | - | - | - | - | - | - |

Final Consonant 2

| D1/D2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 3 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 4 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 5 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 6 | - | - | - | - | - | - |

Final Consonant 3

| D1/D2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | B | B | B | B | B | B |
| 2 | B | B | B | B | B | B |
| 3 | B | B | B | B | B | B |
| 4 | B | B | B | B | B | B |
| 5 | B | B | B | B | B | B |
| 6 | B | B | B | B | B | B |

Final Consonant 4

| D1/D2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | B | B | B | B | B | B |
| 2 | B | B | B | B | B | B |
| 3 | B | B | B | B | B | B |
| 4 | B | B | B | B | B | B |
| 5 | B | B | B | B | B | B |
| 6 | B | B | B | B | B | B |

Final Consonant 5

| D1/D2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | B | B | B | B | B | B |
| 2 | S | S | S | S | S | S |
| 3 | S | S | S | S | S | S |
| 4 | S | S | S | S | S | S |
| 5 | S | S | S | S | S | S |
| 6 | T | T | T | T | T | T |

Final Consonant 6

| D1/D2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | T | T | T | T | T | T |
| 2 | TH | TH | TH | TH | TH | TH |
| 3 | TH | TH | TH | TH | TH | TH |
| 4 | K | K | K | K | K | K |
| 5 | R | R | R | R | R | R |
| 6 | P | P | P | P | P | P |

Syllable Notes

1. If the final consonant in the word is -, drop the last consonant.
2. If the first consonant of a syllable matches the last consonant of the previous syllable, it may be dropped.
3. If a letter is followed by an identical letter, insert a "-" consonant between the two letters.
4. The - consonant represents a clicking glottal stop.



PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

The high humidity of the Bwaps' home environment influenced the development of their tools and equipment by selecting for materials that were resistant to moisture. Cutting tools were chipped stone, and the Bwaps soon learned how to use naturally occurring waxes and oils to preserve wood and leather from rot and mildew. The most important advance came with the discovery of *awak*, a plant sap that formed a rubber-like substance when treated with a mild acid solution. Textiles and basketwork coated with *awak* became waterproof. Metallurgy came relatively late to Bwap culture, but corrosion-resistant alloys were eventually developed and allowed Bwap civilization to develop along more or less conventional lines.

Contact with the Vilani and other advanced civilizations has allowed the use of plastics, stainless steel, and other advanced materials.

Bwap clothing has already been discussed (see p. 24). The main use of clothing to a Bwap is to protect his skin from dry air and extremes of temperature, and to provide pockets to carry the myriad paraphernalia of an advanced society.

Bwap hands are slightly smaller than the Human norm, and configured differently, but most Bwaps can use Human tools and equipment with little difficulty. Modern electronic equipment is largely water resistant, and little modification (if any) is needed to protect it from the higher humidity the Bwaps require in their atmosphere.

Bwaps serving aboard Human starships adapt with little difficulty. Bwap garments are designed to remain dry on the outside (although they can cause the humidity in small compartments to rise from their mere presence, unless they wear a completely sealed suit). Large numbers of Bwaps on a starship can require adaptations to the life-support system, but this is well within the performance parameters of most starship LS plants. They can use Human furniture with no modification (moisture protection is necessary in some situations). Bwap beds are more like Human bathtubs, and Bwap quarters need special care to control mold and mildew.

BWAP CUISINE

The prehistoric Bwap diet was omnivorous, and consisted mostly of plant material supplemented by protein sources such as eggs, fish, and small animals. Fire was little used as a means of cooking, and such preservative techniques as smoking or drying were likewise rare.

With the development of agriculture, early Bwaps discovered that preparation improved the taste of food, and rendered certain proteins and other nutrients easier to digest. Bwap "cooking" originally consisted mostly of chemical preparation techniques such as pickling in brine or soaking in mild acids to coagulate proteins. Salt was used to preserve certain foods (primarily meats). When fire became available, the Bwaps made some use of it in cooking, but stuck mostly to the traditional food-preparation techniques. Exposure to widespread interstellar trade introduced alien food items to the Bwap diet, including such Terran foods as fish and other seafood (especially salmon, herring, cod, lobster, and softshell crabs), cheese (the Bwaps prefer softer cheeses such as brie and stilton), caviar,

Adventure Seed: The Art of War

While it is uncommon for Bwaps to join the military, a few do so, though generally in support specialties. The PCs are Bwaps who serve the Imperial Navy in a public affairs unit. Their group has been assigned to capture holographic imagery of a naval anti-piracy patrol in action for new recruiting advertisements. Unfortunately, as often happens in battle, the situation takes a turn for the worse. The pirates and the navy manage to destroy each other's ships, and the PCs escape to the local planet surface in a lifeboat. There is a small mining station on the planet, which is assumed to also have supported the pirates. The refugees will need to travel to the station and obtain a ship of some kind. They will have some gear from the lifeboat, and of course the holographic images of the battle (that was the assignment, after all, and it would not do to lose the holograms now).

assorted pickled vegetables and meats (cucumbers, daikon, sardines, and anchovies in particular), fruits, vegetables, spices, seasonings, and sauces (balsamic vinegar and jalapeño peppers are especially popular). Bwaps enjoy fermented beverages of all sorts, but prefer combinations that strike Humans as unusual (if not revolting), such as Vilani beer mixed with wabak-paste and topped with a dollop of *wasabi*.

Bwap cuisine has been described by some observers as a salad bar combined with a sashimi platter and a science experiment. Along with fresh fruit and vegetables, and some items very similar to Terran sushi (indeed, many of them are Bwap versions of sushi), one finds Bwap specialties such as *pabath* (a crawfish-like creature, pickled in a solution of salt and Bwap spices), *debsakwortab* (slices of a salmon-like creature served rolled in pickled seaweed), and the ubiquitous *wabak* (a sauce made of fish paste, brine, and assorted spices and seasonings, "aged" in wooden vats for several months). Bwaps have adapted more conventional cooking techniques such as baking and broiling, but the concept of frying still fills most of them with revulsion.

SAMPLE CHARACTER

PABETHTASAB, BWAP MERCHANT 150 POINTS

Age, 42; 4'7"; 80 lbs. A slender Bwap with a brownish-green hue, and an unusual, lighter green patch on his back.

Attributes: ST 8 [-15]; DX 13 [30]; IQ 15 [60]; HT 9 [-10].

Speed 5.25; Move 5.

Dodge 6.

Advantages: Acute Taste/Smell [2]; Acute Vision [2]; Amphibious [10]; Business Contact (Skill-18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [3]; Charisma +2 [10]; Double-Jointed [5]; Lightning Calculator [5]; Peripheral Vision [15]; Strong Will +3 [12].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Wapawab) [-10]; Compulsive Gambler [-5]; Compulsive Generosity [-5]; Extravagance [-10]; Increased Life Support (High humidity needed) [-10]; Stubborn [-5].

Quirks: Constantly reading; Dislikes violence; Insists on offering shellfish to companions; Loves listening to opera music; Raises own shellfish for food. [-5]

Skills: Accounting-15 [4]; Administration-20 [12]; Climbing-14 [4]; Computer Operation-15 [1]; Economics-15 [4]; Fast-Talk-16 [4]; Freight Handling-15 [2]; Guns/TL10 (Pistol)-17 [16]; Law-18 [10]; Leadership-15 [2]; Merchant-18 [6]; Swimming-14 [2].

Languages: Bwap (Native)-16 [1]; Galanglic-15 [2]; Vilani-15 [1].

In the past, Pabethtasab was a typical Bwap merchant-bureaucrat, serving as a low-level functionary in the Oberlindes bureaucracy. His first major assignment was as a junior assistant purser on the trade cruiser *Emissary*. Like most Bwaps, Pabethtasab excelled at the administrative aspects of merchant life, but he was not the most outgoing or noticeable sentient on the vessel.

Adventure Seed: Call of the Wild

Many Bwaps find the natural environment to be fascinating, and are sometimes beset with an overwhelming urge to experience the Wapawab as it is manifested on a non-Bwap world. The PCs are a group of troubleshooters working for a megacorp, and have a new assignment. A very important accountant has apparently been overcome with wanderlust, and has vanished into the local badlands, which are an Imperial nature preserve. He is desperately needed to complete a new proposal for an Imperial Navy contract. The party will need to travel overland into the reservation and try to track down the accountant, while dealing with the local environment and its wildlife.

Once he is found, the rescuers might have another problem; if they were unnecessarily hard on the local wildlife, the accountant will be hostile, perhaps even dangerous in a sneaky way. Making all of this even more complicated is that the local Scout Service staff is nervous. It seems some smugglers have been using the preserve as a landing field, and have shot up a few Imperials . . .

This changed when a group of Vargr corsairs attempted to hijack the *Emissary* in 1105. During the fighting on the ship, Pabethtasab was forced to defend himself, abandoning his previously pacifistic nature. While he was no mighty warrior, he did manage to sneak up behind a raider and render him unconscious with a well-applied wrench to the head.

This incident and his actions during it caused Pabethtasab to re-examine his entire worldview. He became more outgoing, and found that he was capable of making friends quite easily. He retained a certain distaste for violence, but he also began to practice with a gauss pistol (which he had taken from the unconscious raider). He found that he was actually quite good with it, and began to compete in intercompany target matches in the Regina and Aramis subsectors of the Spinward Marches.

Pabethtasab could be a wealthy Bwap now, but his change in worldview has led him to enjoy many vices that most other Bwaps ignore. He is a hopelessly addicted gambler (any card game will do), and he loves to spend money on his friends or even new acquaintances. He has enough self-control to avoid gambling all his money away, and he is not so selfless as to give away everything, but Pabethtasab's financial status is rarely beyond "comfortable," and occasionally dips down into "near broke."

For the past three years, Pabethtasab has been the chief purser on board the *Tuembalt*, a *Leviathan*-class merchant cruiser registered to Oberlindes Lines. In that time, he has proven to be an excellent merchant trader, and an incredibly talented administrator and legal advisor. He has also kept in touch with Arlis Clancy, the former chief purser from the *Emissary*. Arlis has been a good friend and mentor for Pabethtasab, and was responsible for Pabethtasab's getting the plum assignment on the *Tuembalt*.

The *Tuembalt* operates as an exploratory merchant in the Uthe and Firgr subsectors of the Vargr Extents, but often makes port calls in the Aramis and Regina subsectors of the Spinward Marches.

Evantha



Winged hunters most comfortable in low gravity, the Evantha (who Imperials call Vanthians) are native to the planet Temeraire. They have been Imperial citizens for millennia, but have managed to retain a distinct culture. Recently unified under a charismatic dictator, they are moving toward closer integration with the Imperium, but not every Vanthian is willing to follow the path their leader has charted.

ORIGINS AND HISTORY

The ancestors of the Evantha were mountain-dwelling avian carnivores who hunted the skies of their homeworld in packs, swooping down upon grazing herbivores, dividing the kill and carrying it off to their cliffside nests. The Evantha never “traded wings for intelligence” . . . in the light gravity and dense atmosphere of their homeworld, the two were complementary.

Climatic changes forced the prehistoric Evantha away from their native habitats on Esral, their world’s southern continent. In the colder northlands of Donathai they struggled to compete with the hardy northern animals, and in the process made considerable technological and social advances. Their innate intelligence led to language and tools. They became roving hunters whose aerial mobility would have provoked envy in any of Earth’s nomadic cultures, then herders . . . they developed cities and machines and reached for the stars.

Unfortunately for them, others were already there. Soon after attaining space flight (in -4238), the Evantha were contacted by the then-expansionist Vilani, who had detected the race’s electromagnetic broadcasts. The Evantha were incorporated into the Ziru Sirka, the First Imperium, as a client race. Over the next millennium they were assimilated by the Ziru Sirka. The Evantha themselves eventually spread to colonize some 17 star systems within the First Imperium.

After the fall of the Ziru Sirka, the Evantha were briefly incorporated into the Rule of Man, and attained a limited degree of autonomy under Terran military governorship.

During the collapse of the Rule of Man, the local governor forged an alliance with native Evanthan forces and carved out a pocket empire of his own. After the governor’s death, the remaining Humans evacuated the planet. Their legacy, the Evantha Protectorate, lasted until it was contacted by the expanding Third Imperium, when it was peacefully incorporated into it.

Under the Imperium, external politics were simple; the Evantha worlds owed allegiance to the local sector duke, while managing their own affairs. The latter were more complex, as trade and political alliances shifted between the 17 Vanthian worlds, most of which possess balkanized governments, and their Human neighbors. This allowed the Imperium to easily dominate the Evantha, but at the expense of numerous brushfire wars fought between rival factions.

Then everything changed. Fifty years ago, Shirani Kay, the charismatic Maia (dictator) of the homeworld nation of Detrans, proceeded to unify the 72 other nation-states of Temeraire under the banner of her Spiral Path party, dedicated to world unification, interstellar trade, free enterprise, and support of the

dominant religion. Over the last two decades, Spiral Path spread like wildfire across the other Evantha worlds – sometimes peacefully, other times in what amounted to religious jihad, although Spiral Path was always careful to observe the letter of the Imperial rules of war.

Much of the success of Spiral Path has come from Kay’s own personality, but she has been backed by a powerful Imperial interest. In 1092 Ling-Standard Products had a plant on Detrans, which was nationalized by the previous government. Kay was offworld at the time, exiled for her politics, and studying at an Imperial university, where she met the daughter of a senior LSP executive. They became friends – and when Kay returned, it was with a new source of funds, and new ideas. Kay did not forget, and after the Spiral Path achieved power, Ling-Standard Products was granted a number of extremely lucrative marketing deals. It is well known that the Maia has used her relationship with LSP to their mutual advantage. What is not known is whether she or LSP calls the shots.

PHYSIOLOGY AND APPEARANCE

An adult Vanthian is about 5 feet tall, but weighs only 70 to 75 pounds, males being slightly more heavily built. The humanoid head slants backward, ending in a curving sail-like crest. The long neck leads to the humanoid torso that terminates in a fan tail. The tail acts as a rudder when the Vanthian is airborne and supports the body when standing. Where the arms would be on a Human, a Vanthian has great wings – folded down to serve as clumsy legs while the Vanthian is standing upright, spread wide in flight. The wings are feathered and end in bony vestigial claws that act like feet. Where a Human's legs would be are the Vanthian's arms, ending in hands with three fingers, tipped with sharp claws, and two opposing "thumbs" on opposite sides of the hand.

Most Vanthians dwelling offworld live in ships or space habitats where the environment can be adjusted to match the peculiar conditions of their home.

Their skin is pale, almost white, and Vanthians are 25% more vulnerable than Humans to UV rays from sunlight or starlight. Feathers cover the crest bone, tail, and wings. These are light blue and white on females, bright blue and violet on the males, although individual patterns vary as much as Human facial features. The colors are duller both before puberty and after middle age.

The face is very Human in appearance, the most alien feature being the eyes, large ovals that are slightly slanted with no brows, set somewhat to either side of the head to provide peripheral vision. The nose is small and flat, as are the ears. The mouth is filled

with sharp teeth, the chin prominent.

Vanthian senses are roughly equivalent to our own. Although their hearing is good in their own dense atmosphere, it is inferior to a Human's in lighter air pressures. Vision is superior to the Human norm, much better at longer ranges, slightly poorer closer up. While the Vanthians are creatures of daylight, their eyes are designed to amplify the weakened sunlight that penetrates Temeraire's thick atmosphere. They are not comfortable in bright light without polarized sunglasses (this is reflected in their Albinism disadvantage).

The Vanthian biochemistry is carbon-based, utilizing left-handed amino acids and DNA. They are warm-blooded, bisexual, and mammalian; females have two breasts. Reproduction is also similar to a Human's. Vanthian infants are carried by the mother for a shorter time than Human babies before birth (flying while pregnant is difficult) and take somewhat longer to mature. A Vanthian reaches full growth after 20 standard years, and lives for about as long as a Human.

Vanthian bones are light but exceptionally strong for their weight, while their metabolism is extraordinarily efficient, permitting wing-powered flight in the light gravity and dense atmosphere of their home world and similar environments (usually artificial space habitats). Even so, their bones are fragile by Human standards and a Vanthian must eat often to satisfy the demands of his metabolism.

Although the Vanthians control several star systems, they are most comfortable on their home world of Temeraire, where the low gravity and unusually dense oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere allows them to fly. But such planets are rare, so most Vanthians dwelling offworld live in ships or space habitats where the environment can be adjusted to match the peculiar conditions of their home.



Clothing and Costume

Vanthians rarely wear clothing on their warm home world, and there is no nudity taboo. Feather styling, body paints, and jewelry are common. Military outfits and spacers use colorful heraldic insignia on armor and space suits to identify the individual and his unit or ship.

Diet

The Evantha are carnivores who feel food tastes best when it's caught on the wing after a good chase. Ship crew may make do with preserved meat reheated to body temperatures. Spices and vegetables are occasionally used to season preserved meat, but this is rare. Milk and alcohol are drunk, often mixed together.

Vanthians tend to be messy eaters, and meals (as opposed to hunts) are not social occasions. Like many carnivores they are somewhat fussy eaters, and have not adapted well to other planet's foodstuffs.

LANGUAGE

The dominant Vanthian language is called Detran; it is difficult but not impossible (M/VH) for Humans to learn. Numerous dialects and other languages exist, and many private and government organizations have their own secret languages known only to their initiates. Military units typically have exotic battle languages designed to rapidly convey information in combat.

Names

Vanthians have two names. The first name is the parental name; a male takes his mother's personal name, while a female takes her father's. The parents choose the second (personal) name. Most Vanthian names consist of one, two (male), or three (female) syllables, ending in u, i, a, or y. Typical male names might be Rudi, Kiya, Chay, Shida; female names include Kay, Istaru, Miraiya, Lai, Shythari. Most names relate to personality or religion ("Rudi" means "sacred warrior" in a pre-Detran language; "Shythari" means "touched by fire").

PSYCHOLOGY

Evantha are claustrophobic in confined spaces (suffering the penalties noted above), with the exception of air and spacecraft – if they are moving and can see out! Freedom to fly is essential, and personal space is very important, physically and socially. The Evantha don't like to be forced into a corner, literally or figuratively . . .

Vanthians are as willing as Humans to obey authority, but require considerable freedom to display their own initiative and style, and they want to know where they are going. Leaders will tell a subordinate what needs to be done and why, but rarely how to do it. Few formalized procedures exist in Evantha society. Bureaucracy is alien to their culture; record-keeping is a necessary evil, but evil nevertheless.

Evantha are a warm people, but close same-gender friendships are very, very rare. Although respect and cooperation between members of the same sex are likely, Vanthians find unthinkable the idea of close friendship with someone you can't mate with. They consider Human same-sex friendships faintly disgusting. Evantha tend to carry over this view when dealing with other races, especially those that resemble them. For example, a male Evantha will have difficulty making friends with a male Human, while he will be very cordial with females.

Far more than Human infants, Vanthian children are emotionally and physically dependent on their parents. When they become adults, most find a substitute family by devoting themselves to a cause larger than themselves, not so much on its own merits as to give direction to their lives. Many become fanatical followers of religions, individuals, or organizations, while their leaders are true believers in the cause. Every Vanthian wants to become a valued part of something that is going somewhere. Exactly where doesn't always matter.

SOCIETY

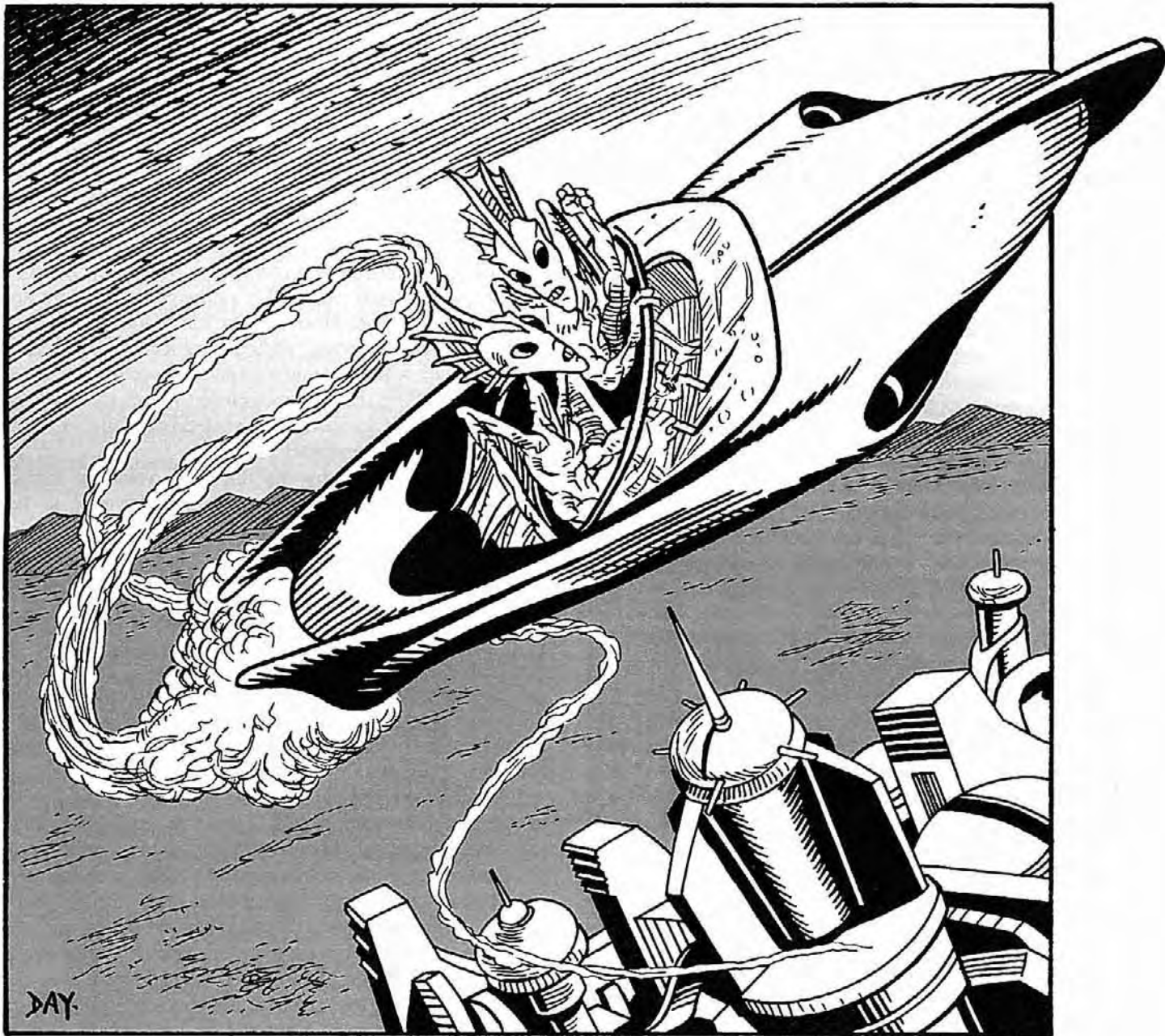
Vanthian society is sexually egalitarian. Most Evantha do not take a mate until late in life, when they are able to devote all their energy to their family, and they typically choose a mate with the same occupation as their own. A Vanthian family consists of two parents and a few children.

The Evantha mate for life, refusing to take a second mate if their first dies, and the bonds between mates and between parent and children are strong. Vanthians with children devote much of their time to their care and education, and the children accompany the parents as much as possible at home and during work. Children will even be present at military bases or in naval spacecraft, and certainly on merchant ships, and when old enough will assist their parents.

Due to their low tolerance of gravity fields that Humanity would consider normal, most Evantha encountered away from their own planets will live in groups of their own kind, and will follow a narrow range of professions that enable them to remain in a low- or zero-G environment. In particular, their good reflexes make Vanthians fine pilots for spacecraft. Of course, Vanthians in their own society can be from any profession: there are Vanthian criminals (fanatically dedicated to their clandestine organizations), scientists, soldiers, and missionaries.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

The planetary government of Temeraire, the Evantha homeworld, and of 12 of the 17 Evantha Protectorate worlds, is the political party Spiral Path. Loosely translated, it can either mean "manifest destiny" or "cautious progress." The other five Evantha worlds are balkanized with a variety of democratic and other governments, but all have one or more nations that support Spiral Path.



Party membership is open to followers of the Initiates of Light religion, but non-Initiates can join provided they served three years in the Shadow Wing military. All members swear a personal oath of allegiance to the Maia.

Party members make up a sixth of the entire Vanthian adult population, but the dictatorship is far from total. Municipal government is left to the citizens of individual cities and towns, using computerized direct-vote or representative democracy (depending on the local TL), without much interference by the central body.

The Maia's rule is maintained by her elite Shadow Wing military forces and the support of the Initiates of Light religion (see below) who consider her Shi Kythari, an Angel of Light and Fire.

There is opposition to Spiral Path, mostly from the devoted followers of various other nationalistic, religious groups, as well as those who see her as having "sold out" the

megacorps. Nevertheless, her ideology and religion match those of most Vanthians. Her optimistic vision of the future, with closer integration with the Imperium and a higher standard of living, are hard to oppose, and if there are more executions, at least the starships run on time. Her designated successor is her popular daughter Shythari, currently a young officer in the Shadow Wing. Her younger son Rudi has run off to join the Imperial Navy.

The Evantha Protectorate

The Evantha Protectorate is *not* an interstellar government. A holdover from the Long Night, the name is used to refer to the 17 worlds predominantly inhabited by Evantha. Today, all the worlds of the Protectorate are self-governing members of the Imperium . . . in theory. In practice, the majority are beholden to the Maia and to Spiral Path.

THE SHADOW WING

The military is a respected career among the Evantha. The elite military force of the Protectorate is the Shadow Wing, zealously devoted to the Maia. Numbering over a million soldiers, the Shadow Wing has the latest in military technology, including ground, air, and space vehicles . . . mostly TL11, and primarily from Ling-Standard Products. The Shadow Wing includes all jump-drive capable vessels and most of the grav armor units within the Evantha military.

The other nations (actually provinces in all but name) within the Evantha Protectorate maintain their own armed forces, which are organized in standard lines at TL9 to TL10 levels. These forces are mostly of militia caliber, with a few elite COACC and SDB units. The exceptions are a number of nations on the five Evantha worlds that are still balkanized, where militaries tend to be heavily armed, well trained, and sometimes backed up by non-Evantha mercenary units.

Shadow Wing forces are (officially) integrated into the Unified Army and colonial naval forces of the Imperium, falling under the local command of the Marquis of Treydotha. In practice, they serve the Maia, and probably would continue to do so whether she was the Marquis of Treydotha or not.

Vanthian Nobility

The Order of Temeraire is an Imperial order of knighthood created for the Evantha. It has a few hundred members, mostly Evantha who distinguished themselves while in Imperial service. The ranking Imperial noble in the Evantha Protectorate is the Marquis of Treydotha (named for the main downturn). This is an appointed rather than hereditary post; the Marquis is responsible for liaison between the planetary government or governments and the Imperium, and for command of the naval and ground forces seconded to the subsector navy and Unified Army.

The current title holder is Shirani Kay, who was granted the title six years ago. Kind words spread at court by certain LSP executives, and several speeches about "closer integration with the Imperium" which played well with the sector nobles, were responsible. The former Marquis died during a freak hunting accident.

THE INITIATES OF LIGHT

The dominant Vanthian religion is known as the Initiates of Light, and has over a billion fanatical followers. They believe in a strict religious dualism between Kythari, who represents order, creativity, and light, and Lir, the force of entropy, evil, and darkness. Unfortunately, Lir is winning, and it's up to the Initiates to change this. The faith believes in reincarnation of the most devoted followers of Kythari, and in "angels of light and darkness," individuals sent into the world as messengers and representatives of the two warring powers.

In Initiates of Light symbolism, the idea of the shadow is a positive one: the shadow ("maia") is cast by the light, a reflection of the power of Kythari in this world. Capitalized and used with a certain inflection, it carries the sense that the title holder is the one chosen by Kythari to represent the world.

The central hierarchy, the Initiates of the Light, has immense political and social influence. All followers of Kythari are expected to fight against Lir, both by embracing Kythari through meditation and ritual and by spreading the faith. Elite religious fighting orders (the "Talons of Kythari") exist to more actively oppose Lir's minions. The Talons are equipped much as are Shadow Wing units, and are approximately one-third as strong, adding significantly to Vanthian military power while creating a counterbalance to the secular forces of the Wing. The Talons include the famous Sword of Light regiment, equipped with battledress, fighters, grav AFVs, and combat missionaries.

It should be noted that the Talons are volunteer forces, and are not under government control. However, with the Spiral Path government supporting Kythari, most other religions are in decline. The exception is the growing heretical worship of Lir, which has provided a focus for dissidents who oppose the Maia.

IO-SETH

Idiomatically translated as "the Scales of Justice," this is a vigilante group fanatically dedicated to preventing injustice and oppression of individuals. Although they are few in number, with under 10,000 members, the Scales of Justice are well-funded from private donations and well-equipped with the latest in technology, including powered armor, spacecraft, and military weapons. Members must pass rigid mental and physical testing, and are required to possess considerable legal knowledge, superior combat skills, and excellent judgment to see both sides of a dispute. They live by a rigid code of honor, wandering the stars and dispensing justice to all they encounter. The organization is not sanctioned by the Initiates of Light, but most Io-Seth members are followers of that religion. Their chief opponents are government when it oppresses the individual, unscrupulous corporations, and organized crime.

Io-Seth is organized into small, secretive cells of a dozen members or less scattered across Evantha worlds. Many are current or former members of the Talons of Kythari. The organization has mixed feelings toward Spiral Path.

Io-Seth normally confines itself to operations in the Evantha Protectorate, but individual cells have sometimes taken their crusade into the Imperium at large, occasionally in association with non-Vanthian groups. The Imperial government (and Ling-Standard Products) see Io-Seth as a potentially dangerous terrorist group, and react accordingly when confronting it. There has been some pressure from the Imperium to rein in the organization, but the Maia has so far chosen to tread carefully. Io-Seth has a "Robin Hood" reputation among many Evantha, and she is wary of its influence among the Talons.

TECHNOLOGY AND TRADE

Advanced technology freed most Vanthians from repetitive jobs that machines could do better. As a result, the Evantha see technological progress as a good thing, and the professions of scientist and engineer are honorable ones. The Vanthian worlds are as advanced as the Imperial average in most areas. Vanthian equipment is beautifully made and less likely to break but costs at least 50% more than equivalent Human items, the result of Evanthan preferences for individuality and style at the cost of standardization and mass production.

Also, one Vanthian manufacturer's product is rarely compatible with another's – for instance, there are no standardized power cells or cartridges that fit all gadgets, each company making its own versions. This is one area that Ling-Standard Products is trying to change, through extensive advertising.

Vanthians have a strong interest in aircraft. Vanthian youths love "hot-rodding" air/rafts by adding various options such as kit-bashed turbojets and solid-fuel rocket boosters.

WEAPONRY

Due to their limited strength and preference for zero-G combat, Vanthians prefer low-recoil or recoil-less weaponry such as lasers, snub pistols, SMGs, and accelerator rifles. In melee, Vanthians use a variety of hand weapons, swooping down on their opponents from the air, and many are expert with traditional hunting weapons such as spears or claws.

Heavy combat armor is rarely worn, since it would interfere with their wings, though light-weight CES and vacc suits are used. Special military units may use combat armor with gray belts.

Vanthian weapons are of uniform high quality, although larger military forces sometimes have supply problems due to a lack of standardization among individual units. One of the Shadow Wing's advantages over other Vanthian forces has been its simpler logistics as a result of using all-LSP equipment. Even in the Shadow Wing, most troops carry personal backup weapons.

SPACECRAFT

Vanthian spacecraft are well-designed. Due to their claustrophobic natures and need for wing-room, the crews require twice the normal space. This means that even military ships only have one crew member per stateroom, while bunkrooms are never installed. Vanthian ships tend to have large open areas (multi-level engine rooms, for example) with few doors (no heavy or total compartmentalization). The ships are pressurized with a dense oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere, but gravity is kept to a minimum, allowing the Evantha to engage in spectacular zero-G flight in any large open spaces such as empty holds.

Spaceship armor is rarely heavy; most manned vessels are streamlined lifting bodies, and the Shadow Wing uses a

lot of fighters. Military spacecraft show a preference of M-Drive and firepower over armor and screens.

ECONOMICS

The Evantha are self-sufficient in most basic goods, especially on their homeworld and larger colonies, but a trader can still make money. Any cheap, high-quality technological goods may be welcomed on an isolated Vanthian colony, although the Evantha tend to sneer at the mass-produced items of giant Human corporations as lacking in proper character.

Imports of luxury goods will probably fare better. Alcohol and certain other common intoxicants are compatible with Evantha metabolisms, and imported meat animals from Imperial space may be delicacies to carnivorous gourmets.

Vanthian technology makes up in quality what it loses in standardization, and merchants will find many devices that can be profitably exported from Vanthian worlds into the Imperium. Vanthian devices, from laser pistols to holographic cameras, will be much in demand among the wealthy. Of course, if they do break, spare parts and factory maintenance may be difficult to come by. The Vanthian preference for hand-finishing over mass production is very like the Aslan attitude, and each race considers the other's work exotic but worthy.

The Spiral Path's trade deals have meant that LSP goods are very common, and LSP is the source of most new high-tech items. Due to the exclusive nature of the trade deals, LSP has been able to gouge the Protectorate on certain items (chiefly high-tech electronics and consumer goods). Smuggling is quite common.

Finally, the Evantha are enough like Humans, Vargr, and Aslan intellectually that their own art and, with translation, literature, may find a market among the major races. And Human, Aslan, and Vargr works of art that appeal to Vanthian psychology may be appreciated.

TEMERAIRE (3020, DAIBEI SECTOR)

Starport: Class V (Treydotha, Naval Base).

Diameter: 4,150 miles (6,680 km). *Gravity:* 0.6 G. *Atmosphere:* Dense oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 52%. *Climate:* Warm. *Population:* 1.2 billion. *Government:* Loose dictatorship (Evantha Protectorate). *Control Rating:* 4. *TL:* 10-11. *Gas Giants:* 4. *WTN:* 5.5. *Trade Classifications:* Hi.

The second planet of a K0 main sequence star, Temeraire is slightly smaller than Earth, with a somewhat lower density. For its size, it has an unusually thick oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere (1.5 Earth atmospheres pressure) and a normal axial tilt, giving it typical Earth-type seasons.

Temeraire is a scenic world with huge mountain ranges, vast equatorial deserts, extensive steppes, and several small seas dotted with islands created by its many volcanoes. It has two small moons, Kabitha and Thasros, and the remains of a third form a bright ring around the planet. The planet rotates once every 20 hours. The dense atmosphere retains heat, so both nights and days are warm.

With just over a billion inhabitants, Temeraire is less crowded than many other races' homeworlds. Herds still roam the prairies, while small towns are more common than huge conurbations, mainly due to the difficulty of feeding large numbers of ravenous carnivores! Water or air transport is used for heavy loads, and older cities are networked with canals. All Vanthians love aircraft ("the Evantha were meant to fly: Kythari gave us wings") and grav speeders and air/rafts crowd the skies. Monorails and the like are rare and subterranean transit unknown, since Vanthians are very claustrophobic.

Despite the roar of the jets from joy-riding teens, a Vanthian city is quieter than an Imperial metropolis. Even more than most modern contragrav-using cultures, the flyers have no need of noisy ground cars and miles of road, and crowded streets are nonexistent. A Vanthian town is a cluster of slender skyscrapers and tall buildings, surrounded by industrial centers, air and space ports, or hunting parks. Individual buildings are open and airy, with spacious rooms, balconies, and skylights providing quick access to the open sky. Even so, most Vanthians would rather not remain inside. Shops and markets are open-air, with goods arranged on upper balconies, and business or government meetings are conducted on the wing or during the hunt.

In addition to the homeworld population, about 9 billion Evantha live offworld, mostly in space habitats in their own system and their colony worlds.

EVANTHA CHARACTERS

Height for an Evantha is 7" less than for a Human of the same ST. Weight is half that of a Human of the same ST if the Evanthan is female, and 5 lbs. heavier for a male.

EVANTHA RACIAL

TEMPLATE -1 POINT

Attribute Modifiers: ST -2 [-15], DX +1 [10].

Advantages: Acute Vision +2 [4]; Claws [15]; Flight (Winged -25%, Requires low gravity of 0.6 G or less, -20%) [22]*; Sharp Teeth [5].

Disadvantages: Albinism (Earth-normal conditions, -50%) [-5]; Claustrophobia (Mild, cannot occupy small enclosed vehicles, -40%) [-9]; Fanaticism [-15]; Increased Life Support 1 [-10]; Reduced Hit Points -1 [-5]; Reduced Move (Running) [-5].

Quirks: Intolerance (Same-sex friendships). [-1]

Skill: Flight (Winged) (P/A) DX+3 [8].**

* On worlds with non-standard atmospheres, multiply this by atmospheric pressure. For example, in a pressure of 1.25 atmospheres, like the Evantha homeworld, the race can fly in up to 0.8 G.

** Flight defaults to DX for races which can fly naturally.

NOTES ON RACIAL ADVANTAGES

Although not required in the template, Sense of Duty (Family) and Dependents (Children) are even more common among Vanthians than Humans.

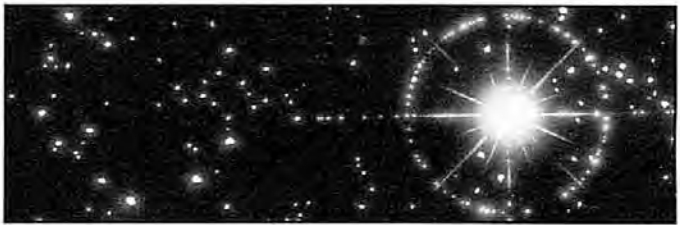
Claws (Sharp) see pp. C166-67

Evantha have clawed feet, allowing their kick to do cutting damage.

Flight see p. C156

Vanthians can use their wings to fly on worlds with standard atmospheres at 0.4 G. In environments with dense atmospheres (like their homeworld) they can fly in higher gravities. Divide effective gravity by atmospheric pressure; e.g., a Vanthian could fly on a world with 1.5 atmospheres and 0.6 G gravity. A Vanthian can *glide* at up to twice the gravity he can fly in, with difficulty increasing as gravity increases or pressure drops.

Flying also requires greater oxygen intake than normal activity; for example, Vanthians flying on worlds with polluted or tainted atmospheres suffer twice the effects of any taint. They cannot fly unaided if carrying more than medium encumbrance or wearing battledress or combat armor, although their CES or vacc suits permit it.



EQUIPMENT

Most Vanthian equipment is either identical or functionally similar to standard Imperial goods.

Rocket Booster Kits

A typical rocket booster kit used by young Vanthians has the following statistics:

Booster Rocket Pod: A solid fuel rocket with 1,000 lbs. thrust and a burn time of 60 seconds, encased in an equipment pod. It can be attached to any vehicle hardpoint rated at 1,200 lbs. or more. At TL10, the pod and engine together weigh 200 lbs., occupy 2 cf, and cost CR 1,160. They have PD 2, DR 4, and 8 hit points. It adds 5 to the aerodynamic drag of the vehicle.

If bolted onto a standard air/raft (p. GT147) the booster rocket pod reduces top speed by 5 mph/s due to drag. However, when activated, the rocket adds +1 mph/s to acceleration and increases top speed to 305 mph. If desired, the pod can be blasted off with explosive bolts to eliminate the drag penalty.

Air/Raft Hardpoint: Adds an attachment point for a booster rocket pod (or other ordnance) of up to 1,200 lbs. weight. 60 lbs., \$120.

Vanthian Armor and Suits

Vanthian full body armor (such as CES) and vacc suits cost and weigh 20% more than Human armor: although the Evantha are smaller, their wing-legs have a larger area. Vanthians often wear vest-only body armor to save weight.

Girug'kagh

Within the K'kree Empire, all other sentient races are the "kr'rrir" or "subjects." There are rather fewer of them than there should be; not all survived being discovered. Those that did subordinated their culture and aspirations to the K'kree interest. Most of these species are ungrateful and unwilling servants, whom their masters retain to perform dangerous or distasteful tasks.

One race has risen above the others and works closely with the Great Herd, assisting their merchants and diplomats when they deal with the Vermin. These are the Girug'kagh, literally "those who stand before the evil leaders," or idiomatically "the translators." Their name for themselves, almost forgotten now, is Savezitaishoh.



HISTORY

The race arose from scaly, scavenging omnivores on a heavily indented coastline, where wide tidal flats alternated with steep cliffs. Originally, they were opportunists rushing onto the tidal flats when the tide went out, to carry back stranded creatures or scavenge the carcasses of drowned beasts. Intelligent individuals were better able to harvest food, so passed the trait onto more offspring. Competition between the groups encouraged cooperation within the groups, and a social, reasoning species evolved.

The Savezitaishoh had reached a metal-using, city-state-based agrarian society when the K'kree discovered them. They were the third race con-

tacted by the Great Herd. Unlike the first two, they did not pose an immediate threat or try to eat the explorers. Their greatest piece of luck was that the mission commander Big Sky/Still Hooves was an early example of the moderate tendency in K'kree thought. He noted both that the planet Kagh'kir (to the Girug'kagh, "Saviztah") was poor real estate, having too much water, and that the inhabitants seemed to be adopting agriculture, therefore might be redeemable. He also, if truth be told, was heartily sick of war.

Leaving surveillance satellites in orbit, he returned to Kirur, where he argued for a change in policy for years. While there, he learned that another exploration fleet had, without bothering to consult with the Steppelord, allowed an alien species to enter K'kree service. Using this as a precedent, he returned to Kagh'kir with a shipload of scholars and there devised a contact protocol. He presented himself and his followers as gods and took the planet.

Although they'd been expecting something with fewer legs, the inhabitants responded quite well to their gods' arrival and set about implementing the New Law. There was an inevitable die-off while their agriculture adjusted to lower yields, following the disappearance of manure, but the locals learned the rudiments of industrial and technologically advanced societies quite well. For their part, the K'kree came to appreciate their subjects' enthusiasm and their usefulness as intermediaries. In an effort to please, the Girug'kagh worked with their masters to create an adequate K'kree pidgin, and taught themselves to understand the nuances of the Herd's language, even if they could not reproduce it. This usefulness persuaded the Herd to transport them to other worlds, a shattering experience for the Girug'kagh, and one which inevitably diminished the K'kree in their eyes and consequently, led the race to a crisis of identity. They came to realize, and to accept, that they were the eternal servants. There were others less fortunate

and some who were more so, and that was the way it would always be.

Aside from that great day 4,000 years ago when the Girug'kagh were granted autonomy and the right to use their own, non-military starships, that is all the history they have.

Although they'd been expecting something with fewer legs, the inhabitants responded quite well to their gods' arrival and set about implementing the New Law.

Translators: Working for the K'kree

Translators have very different lives from their relatives. Anyone can apply for the job. Acceptance is based on talent and the absence of conditions like agoraphobia, not caste. The successful candidates travel offworld to the nearest Overlord's court (in Imperial terms, the subsector capital). There they learn correct behavior, how to understand

K'kree, and how to speak a variety of foreign languages. Depending on talent and present need, the students learn the basics of trade or diplomacy. When they graduate, they are referred to a K'kree diplomatic or merchant family, which adopts them as a very junior worker. Their subsequent career is filled with incident and adventure as they spare their masters the discomfort of meeting the Vermin face to face, and chisel concessions from G'naak for the greater glory of the Two Thousand Worlds.



they were losing their molars when the K'kree came. Those grinding teeth that remain are usually malformed and uncomfortable, but removing them is regarded as a clear slight to the masters, so they remain.

LIFE CYCLE

The species is sexually bimorphous, viviparous, and mammalian, with women giving birth to a single infant after, on average, a 210-day gestation and a trouble-free labor. The young are utterly helpless (even more so than Human babies) and need parental supervision for 20 years. This need is particularly acute in infancy, as the baby's head is far less well-developed than a Human's, and triples in size during

infancy. When the infant is born, the top jaw is incomplete. It forms during the baby's first year, producing what looks, to Humans, like a cleft palate.

The Girug'kagh are extremely neotenic, retaining juvenile features well into adulthood, which lasts for a further 50 years. They do not show many outward physical signs of aging, although the social and psychological clues are certainly there. Old age averages another 10 years, but death is swift when it comes. It usually takes the form of multiple cancers or sudden and widespread organ failure. Strokes and seizures are uncommon, a vicarious benefit of the diet the K'kree require of their kr'rir.



DIET

Biologically, the Girug'kagh are omnivores, but abstain from meat and animal byproducts, a price

they pay to remain part of the Two Thousand Worlds and, for that matter, among the living. Their masters had a conceptual problem with their being *mammals*, but chose to treat lactation as a special case of perspiration, rather than as an instance of flesh-eating. They find it disgusting (see p. 48) but not a mortal offense.

PHYSIOLOGY AND APPEARANCE

The Girug'kagh are homeothermic bipeds, vaguely humanoid in appearance. They stand about 5' tall on wide feet. They are hairless, with skin tones ranging from a washed-out mustard yellow to a dusty gray-brown.

Their ancestors were scaled. Their skin retains a faint scale-like pattern, and sometimes features actual dimples and ridges. The Girug'kagh stain these remnant scales in assorted colors and patterns to indicate caste, occupation, and status.

The race is very muscular for its height, with relatively long arms and short, powerful legs. They have seven fingers on each hand and seven toes on each foot. Four of the fingers are short, stubby and powerful, like Human thumbs; the other three are long, thin and mutually opposable. The corresponding toes have a different arrangement. The three long toes are semi-fused into a single digit, splayed at the ends, while the four short ones remain distinct.

Their two eyes are large and widely set, ranging in color from black through amber to canary yellow. They have a big, flat nose without a bridge and a pronounced cupid's bow top lip, which follows their cleft upper jaw. They have 40 teeth, showing mixed dentition. Although they are now vegetarian, evolutionarily

Caste Marks

The Girug'kagh stain, scarify, and tattoo their skin to indicate caste, status, and life achievements. These form great, intricate, colorful whorls around the upper arms, face, and chest. Except in the most extreme conditions, when they substitute a written account of status, worn across the chest, the Girug'kagh usually show their caste marks off. They keep meticulous records of every individual's markings, taking pictures and an affidavit from a registered tattooist whenever they are added to or altered.

LANGUAGES

The Girug'kagh now speak K'kree pidgin as their native language. It is M/A for other species to learn.

Savezitoiah – the ancestral Girug'kagh tongue – had almost ceased to be a living tongue, but is regaining popularity. This is beneath K'kree notice, which is just as well for the Girug'kagh, because this linguistic renaissance is a cover for the first stirrings of rebellion against the Great Herd (see p. 50).

As their culture retains its phonemes as nonsense rhymes for infants, *Savezitoiah* is M/E for Girug'kagh to learn, but M/H for other species.

Gurvin, the Hive Federation's lingua franca, is M/E.

K'kree is M/H for Girug'kagh to learn, at least as far as

comprehension goes. They speak it as though it were M/VH.

Anglic is M/A for Girug'kagh.

The Commands to Obey (M/E) is the pidgin the K'kree devised (with Girug'kagh help) for easy communication with their subjects. It is a stripped-down version of K'kree, without the snorts or clicks, and has a very limited and extremely slanted range of expressions.



For example "We come in peace" translates as "no-fight, not die."

Lithkind is, by a strange quirk of fate, M/E.

Trokh, *Oynprith*, and *Vargr* languages are M/H for the Girug'kagh.

CHARACTER NAMES

Given that the Girug'kagh use K'kree pidgin, their names sound like shortened K'kree words, but without the clicks, stops, and hisses.

Players who do not possess *GURPS Traveller Alien Races 2* should make Girug'kagh names up by alternating the consonants T, K, R, L, and G with vowels. They can add "H" or double the letters up to taste.

Favors

It is very embarrassing for a Girug'kagh to be seen with a social inferior, and even more so to be of assistance to one. Usually, the caste system enables the superior party to survive the experience, but, should the lesser person require special assistance, the higher caste person is well within his rights to extort extra payment, in the form of favors. A Proctor might turn a blind eye to a minor offense, for example, or a mechanic might fix a teacher's vehicle before a Priest's.

PSYCHOLOGY

After five millennia of K'kree interference, the Girug'kagh are a conservative, rather clannish, touchy yet timid people. Their culture does not mesh with their biology and their upbringing follows an alien directive, so they feel disassociation and confusion. A robust self-image helps, and the Girug'kagh derive one from their standing within their families, and the family's in society. The family and society show their support and acceptance by openly approving of a person's behavior.

This means that each individual is predisposed to defer to a superior, whether a significant relative, someone of higher station, or someone who is older. He also likes it when his inferiors or juniors kowtow to him. Absence of someone either to respect or to look down upon is deeply upsetting. Disputes between individuals of near-identical status can lead to hostile exchanges. This is the main exception to their general timidity; equality seems wrong to a Girug'kagh, and he needs to put a rival in his place.

Unless trying to move up in society or push someone else down, Girug'kagh do not, usually, act on their own initiative.

If denied a sense of being in their right social place, they become listless and unsure of themselves. They are not self-starters, but apply themselves enthusiastically, if under proper direction.

They are very proud of what they do for a living and, especially, how well they do it, so they are prone to seek validation from their superiors and workmates. All of them know this about each other, of course, so each is very scathing about the efforts and abilities of others. A few words of praise might seem an inexpensive reward, but seniors have learned that compliments are best used sparingly.

Girug'kagh Status

The Girug'kagh have a lower spread of Status than other societies, because all Status above 2 is held by K'kree. They compensate with ranks and grades inside their castes.

| | |
|-----------------------------------------|----|
| [Steppelord of the Two Thousand Worlds] | 8 |
| [Overlord] | 7 |
| [Steppelord] | 6 |
| [K'kree Noble] | 5 |
| [K'kree Merchant] | 4 |
| [K'kree Worker] | 3 |
| Priest | 2 |
| Career/Planner | 1 |
| Provider/Proctor | 0 |
| Worker | -1 |
| Outsider (Outcast) | -2 |
| Outsider (kr'rrir alien) | -3 |
| Outsider (non-kr'rrir alien) | -4 |

PHILOSOPHY

When the K'kree came to us, they said, "We will grant you a wish, but we will give double to all of our other subjects."

*"Then kick us half to death, please," we replied.
– Girug'kagh folk tale*

The Girug'kagh have come to terms with what they have got – a glass may be half empty, but at least it's a glass, with something to drink in it. They know that their position is not the best, either racially or individually, but they can live with that, since they know that so many others are worse off.

The race has raised its appreciation of fine class distinctions into a philosophical principle. No matter the problem, there's always a comforting "at least." At least I'm not a janitor; at least no aliens use the toilet I have to clean; at least I'm not a g'naak. On the bright side, knowing one's place means that a failure to achieve is not one's fault. "I'm no Janitor. I couldn't hope to own my own robo-mop."

As long as they know that there's plenty of room at the bottom and that they themselves aren't there, the Girug'kagh mostly worry about their personal rivals.

SOCIETY

The K'kree did their best to inflict their own ways on their subjects, so the Girug'kagh live in a highly stratified culture, where everyone knows his place and the benefits of technology and civilization flow from the top of society. There is little social mobility, and nearly all of it lies between the levels of an individual's birth caste. The rare exceptions are those Girug'kagh who ask to serve the K'kree directly and those who exhibit psionic talents.

Personal relationships may require a higher- or lower-caste member to fall or rise, depending on circumstances, but this deplorable state of affairs is an embarrassment to all concerned, and is a favorite text of young-love suicide movies, the preferred trope of the comedy genre.

CASTES

Castes are occupational and largely hereditary. Their status and rewards flow from their contribution to society, so each gets more for knowing its place than it would through being difficult. Inevitably, the least deserving castes have the most members. Although no one believes the K'kree are literally gods any more, the Girug'kagh rulers affect to be priests of the Great Herd. The Priests are at the top of the heap, which is only fitting for the descendants of those Girug'kagh who worked actively to save their race by accepting K'kree values. They enjoy far greater wealth than their inferiors and have preferential access to technology, so easily remain in power.

Next are the Careers (doctors, lawyers) and the Planners (engineers, administrators); then the Providers (researchers of all kinds, health care workers, technicians, teachers, and merchants), and the Proctors (public safety, police, fire, and emergency services); then the Workers and last the Outsiders (outcasts, aliens, and foreigners).

The Translator's Life

It is important to remember that the translators are a subculture that exists within K'kree, rather than Girug'kagh, society. Only the richest K'kree families have them. Their only meaningful interaction with their own people is on behalf of the local Kiruna, and they seldom if ever go out on their own. When they deal on behalf of the Kiruna, they rank even above the Priests. If they act on their own behalf, they caste as Outsiders, and will be reviled and mistreated by every Girug'kagh with any self-confidence at all. Needless to say, the Translators prefer to stay within their official persona.

To a very great extent, translators re-invent themselves as soon as they leave the parental home. Shorn of cultural reference points and thrust among very unusual aliens, they turn to other, similarly displaced Girug'kagh for friendship and often disregard their previous class prejudice.

This usually leads to close emotional bond, and, very often, to babies. The K'kree find this difficult. They well understand and approve of their translators bringing new children to the family, but they can't handle the breast-feeding thing at all. People eating each other's fatty sweat is beyond disgusting, so the K'kree "exile" their offending translators – including the father – to the *'rrukr'ni* ("where the foreigners smell,") a sealed environment that holds parents and offspring until weaning. Every Great Herd world which employs Girug'kagh has a suitable facility, which forms the basis of a noncaste, expatriate community. The membership changes constantly, but the information base and community support remain.

Translators' children stay with their adoptive K'kree family, and usually become translators themselves, but as they are, legally, K'kree, they spend a term in the military first. The K'kree do not extend their own sex segregation to their Girug'kagh adoptees – if she can't give a stallion babies, she's an "it" and not a "she."

Military Service

As adopted K'kree, the translators are required to serve a stint in the Herd's military. This service is inevitably in intelligence or communications, as the Girug'kagh cannot handle K'kree weapons, or keep up with them on the move. As with the K'kree themselves, they may elect to remain in the military after their hitch is up. Although they are noncombatants, military Girug'kagh are issued ceremonial weapons, usually a naginata-like polearm and a 9mm pistol.

Those who work as translators are ranked as outsider, worthy of notice only because they are mouthpieces of the Herd. They have to be outside the structure so that the K'kree can be protected from the natural Girug'kagh tendency to defer to their betters when the Masters are not around to supervise.

There is a special case of outsider, the *useful alien*. Very occasionally, the Priests determine that, however inappropriate it might be, some outsiders need to be granted caste-equivalent status for the good of the community. These are usually political figures on a shared world or foreign merchants important to the export trade. They receive a caste mark, usually tattooed on the forehead, if the species concerned has one, or a badge, securely fastened to a limb. Girug'kagh will respond correctly to this symbol, with every appearance of deference, if appropriate.

FAMILY AND WORK

Home Life

A Girug'kagh family has a nucleus of mother, father, and children, but is extended to include other relatives, such as siblings, in-laws, uncles, aunts, and cousins. Occasionally, and to everyone's embarrassment, unsuccessful parents or grandparents live as junior members of a younger couple's household. They are automatically inferior to the nucleus, and perform the subservient tasks in the home, like child care, cleaning up, cooking, fetching, and carrying.

Young Girug'kagh are raised as appropriate to their station and as well as their parents can afford. They receive their first caste marks and are taught the basics of interaction; language, respect for successful elders, obedience to superiors, and contempt for inferiors.

Love and Marriage

When the Girug'kagh go courting, they seek their mate through a long ritual of strutting and preening in the shopping malls and parks of their cities, or by showing off behind the controls of the most expensive vehicles they can afford. As they try to make a good impression, they are prone to exaggerate their status, even, on occasion, adding extra, unearned caste marks. Hence the proverb "you only really know after the rain."

When reasonably convinced of a partner's suitability, both seek their parents' approval. This can be tricky. The parents are aware that the ability to raise another's status is a salable asset, and drive hard bargains with near inferiors. If the gulf is too wide, the children usually get sent out to try again. If they remain committed to each other, they're getting perilously close to *Shamed Neighbors Candid Video* territory.

Employment

Most adults enter their caste's occupation, where they enjoy a job for life, but in much the same grade and doing the same work. The talented few are elevated to a managerial caste, while those who disappoint are referred to a lower stratum. Girug'kagh do not, as a rule, retire, but remain in their post until death takes them. Naturally, occupation, grade, and time in post appear as caste marks.

Within an occupation, workplace seniority is age-based. The elderly feel a strong desire to extract respect from their juniors, and their employers are inclined to help them, so every workplace has a cabal of experienced workers.



These represent every job and grade, and insist on telling their juniors how it should be done. Dismissal for any reason is traumatic for a Girug'kagh, so they tend to do what they're told.

CULTURE

The Girug'kagh possess a civilized, urban society, homogenous across the worlds the K'kree have given them.

Architecture

The Girug'kagh find the rectangle to be the most convenient shape for building things. They all aspire to live in large detached houses, surrounded by gardens, but only the highest caste manage this, and most live in densely packed apartment blocks, whose level of cramped griminess is commensurate with their tenants' status.

Large buildings, like office blocks or factories, are brutally functional, but those intended to be seen and used by the higher castes are elegant, with clean lines and pleasing proportions.

As is proper, no Girug'kagh development overlooks a K'kree facility.

Entertainment

The Girug'kagh are obsessively concerned with monitoring one another's successes and failures, concentrating on the social disasters. They prefer not to watch violence or physical suffering, but derive considerable *schadenfreude* from marriage break-ups, unemployment, young love gone wrong, and

Dissent

Not all Girug'kagh are entirely happy with their circumstances, but most lack the vocabulary to say why. It is obvious that their society, while it works well enough, is not natural for them. Their caste system is artificial and restrictive and their common obsession with charting each other's misfortunes is clear displacement activity. They have interstellar travel and trade, but at someone else's gift. It could be worse, but it definitely is not good.

Some can see this clearly and are beginning to take action. The first step is the resurrection and popularization of their own language and the rediscovery of their own culture. As specialist linguists, the translators are ideally suited for this – and indeed take part in the renaissance while exiled to the *'rrukr'ni* – but the most enthusiastic contributors are those who failed to enter direct K'kree service. They had ambition, but were denied and found themselves returned to their former status by the Priests.

The movement has no formal organization yet, nor even a name, but its members are patient and slowly recruiting new allies, obtaining uncensored foreign data and making alien friends.

once-rich families running out of money. The true-life versions are interesting, but the subjects tend not to turn in a committed performance and the whole show lacks proper structure or pace, so there is a strong demand for a more stylized, professionally produced output. It baffles most alien commentators that these items, which chart the doomed love of appealing characters, should count as comedy.

Clothes

When climate allows, the Girug'kagh dress in a vest, usually open to the waist, and a mid-thigh length kilt. The intention is to show caste marks to their best advantage, the better to parade one's own achievements and to see that there are lesser specimens around. The Girug'kagh have only a partial nudity taboo – they keep their genitals covered – but they are suspicious of those who go fully clothed. What could they be hiding? Unmarked, underachieving, low-caste skin?

Naturally, the quality and cut of the clothes is of great importance, and following fashion's dictates is a major obsession for any self-respecting Girug'kagh.

GOVERNMENT

Each Girug'kagh world is an "autonomous" member of the Two Thousand Worlds, with a government answerable directly to the Steppelord, but they do not themselves form an interstellar state. Each planet has a unified government with qualified local autonomy. Each natural community – a city and its hinterland, for instance, or a barge-arcology or pressurized dome – is self-governing at its own level, but is unified with the others in matters of taxation, defense, and foreign policy.

At each level, the highest caste acts as an executive, legislature, and judiciary, who defer to actual experts as a matter of course. So, for example, although only the Priesthood may frame laws, they will not do so unless an inferior caste with appropriate expertise assures them that a given provision is desirable and workable.

LAW AND ORDER

The Girug'kagh divide their law into two bodies: the statutes and the "Obvious." The statutes is that part of the law decided by the legislature, while the "Obvious" is a mixture of traditions, common law, legal precedent, and whatever the people want to see at any one time. Despite their strong class prejudice, the Priests get nervous when the mob speaks, so they apply quick, crowd-pleasing judgments in some cases, usually those involving unloveables like aliens, foreigners, or outcasts.

The concept of civil law has never occurred to the Girug'kagh. Lawbreaking injures the victim and scars the community, so all lawbreakers are criminals. Society's displeasure shows in the scale of penalties. Things which are illegal include theft (and defaulting on loans), breach of contract occasioning loss, purporting to be of a higher caste, homicide and other assaults against the person, the private ownership of weapons (where these are not tools of a trade),

Adventure Seed: It Must Be Love

A PC sees a member of a rival caste out on a date with a social inferior. Handled correctly, this will lead to the rival's shame, expulsion, and fall from grace. Bungled, it could result in his inadvertently elevating an inferior to his own caste, to the disgust of his family and friends.

forgery, shaving or debasing the currency, and the uttering of false coin.

Things that are not actually illegal, but that are dubious and require a court to demonstrate their truth or falsehood, include divorce, childcare problems, other breaches of contract, being drunk or drugged and incapable in public, and purporting to be of a lower caste. The Girug'kagh take no view on calumny or defamation beyond wanting to hear lots of it.

Usually, due process applies, with each side retaining counsel and presenting arguments to a judge, who is assisted by a jury drawn from the defendant's peers. Juries are a constant feature of Girug'kagh trials, both because a judge can't hope to understand the intricacies of each caste's attitudes and traditions, and because the people like it. Jury service is a special treat in a culture that enjoys tales of misfortune.

Penalties under Girug'kagh law never involve incarceration, which would seem to reward the malefactor with a stay in a hotel at the state's expense. Social labor is likewise unacceptable, as people in good standing, albeit of low caste, do those jobs anyway and tend to take it badly when a criminal lowers the status of their occupation.

Instead, their system imposes humiliation, and financial and material discomfort. The standard punishments involve removal of assets and diminution in status within a caste, without the hope of promotion for a number of years. Any money earned in this period compensates the victims or is appropriated in fines. Much more serious is expulsion from caste, as this renders the individual incapable of selling his labor at all, making him an outcast. An irksome element of any judicial punishment is the media crew (or, to be really insulting, a media *robot*) that pops in occasionally to see how the criminal is doing. The high castes are punished worse for misdemeanors than their inferiors, since society expects more from them and revels in their downfall.

DEFENSE

The Girug'kagh have no true military, relying on the K'kree for space-based planetary defense. The Proctors maintain ground forces and some aircraft, principally for public order and search and rescue, but these could see off a minor incident like a raid by Vargr, Lithkind, or Human corsairs without too much trouble.

Adventure Seed: They're All Like That

The PCs are accused of theft when items go missing from a warehouse. The Proctors decide that they are responsible because they're poor or low caste, or just foreign and those kinds of people steal.

Somehow the adventurers must investigate and persuade the authorities that it is in their interests to prosecute the real criminals.

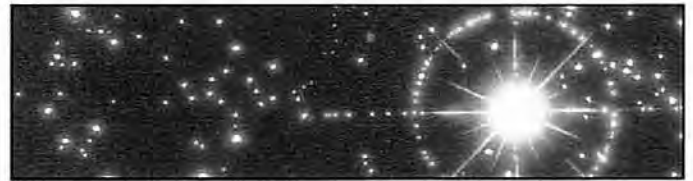
For their part, the K'kree do not mobilize the Girug'kagh for offensive action, perhaps because there is no shortage of other races, whom the K'kree dislike more, to die in droves.

TECHNOLOGY AND TRADE

The Girug'kagh are, on average, a TL10 society, which is better than the K'kree themselves can manage most of the time. Lacking credit and electronic currency, their manufacturing base is sluggish compared to the Imperium. Their consumer products are solid, unexceptional items, suitable for general export, although less-dextrous races are at -2 to use them.

The most remarkable manufactures are their handicrafts . . . unique pieces in media varying from fabric to precious metals and stones. These are turned out in workshops using TL4 techniques, but with tools machined to TL10 tolerances. They are intricate, beautiful, durable, and eminently collectable, especially since each arrives with a certificate of provenance. Their subjects can be abstract or natural, depending on the artist's taste or the actual commission. Very often they tell stories of doomed love or professional failure in a cartoon format, or, in formal works, as a triptych. Non-Girug'kagh seldom realize that these are meant to be funny.

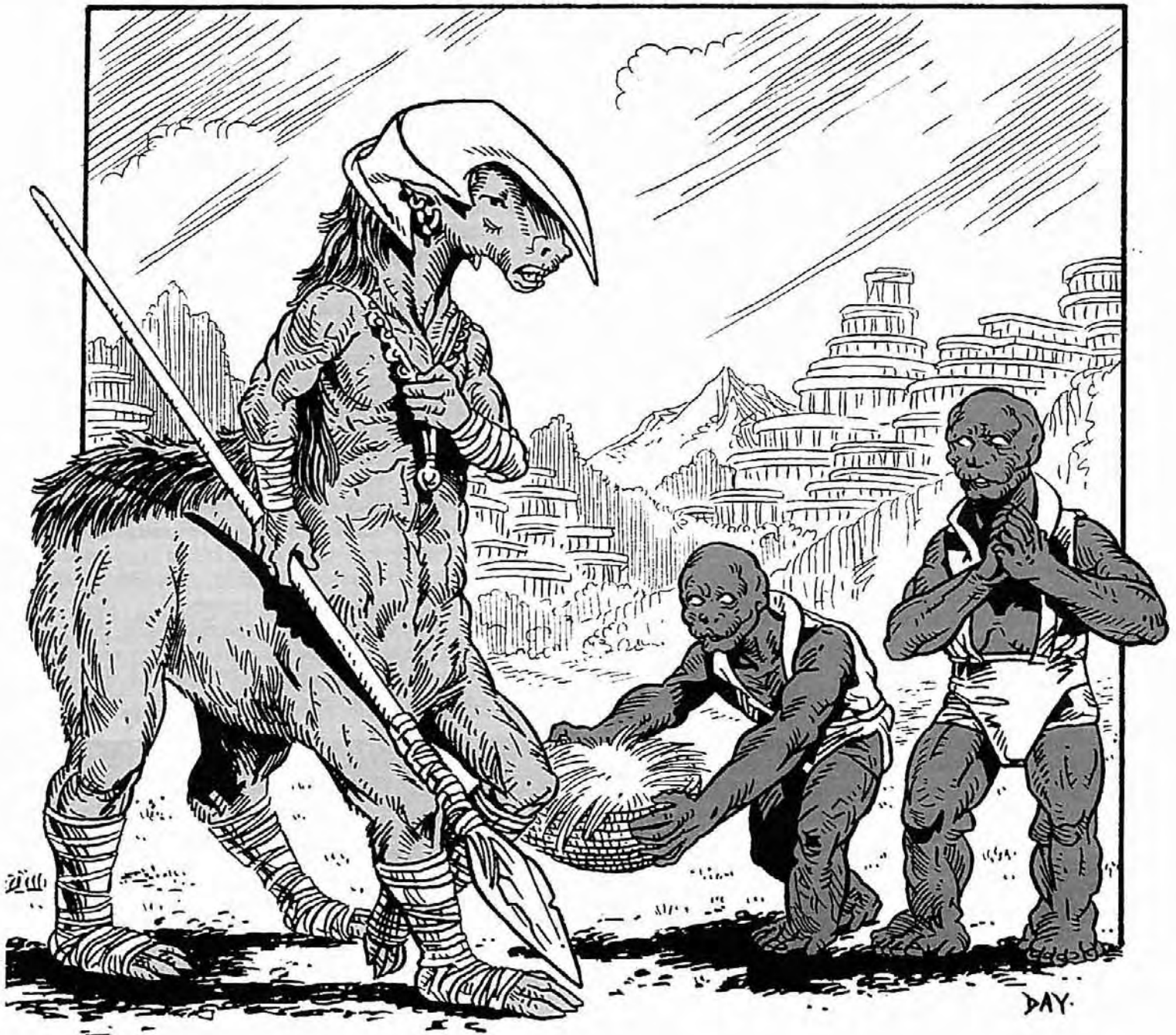
Naturally, the craftsmen are uncomfortable about tendering their work to aliens, so there are shops which turn out low-quality knock-offs for the export market. It takes a trained eye to know the difference.



ECONOMICS

The Girug'kagh have a monetized economy based on the *zavt* (about 2 credits) which is subdivided into seven *ezi*. Each *ez* comprises seven *sohi*. These circulate as minted specie – gold, electrum, and silver respectively – but not as electronic currency.

As the race did not happen upon credit or negotiable paper, this coin represents their actual money supply and they religiously transfer bullion between worlds to settle accounts. This means that their prices can fluctuate, although their conservatism keeps this to a minimum. It also means that, for price stability, they must regulate their growth so that it keeps pace exactly with their extraction of new precious metals.



It is still possible for newly discovered lodes or random trade successes to destabilize prices. In these circumstances, the excess cash is melted down, worked into noncash jewelry, and distributed to all castes, according to their status. If the money supply should tighten, the Priests call for the populace to contribute jewelry for melting down and minting. Those who surrender their jewelry get a commemorative caste mark, which indicates how quickly they responded to the call.

Even with their primitive economy, the Girug'kagh would, in time and left alone, drive the K'kree from every marketplace, simply because they are far more efficient. Their ships can dedicate more space to cargo than the Great Herd's, by several orders of magnitude, and are less expensive to run.

Consequently, the Girug'kagh are not allowed to trade with the K'kree on equal terms, but provide goods and services to them on the K'kree's own acquisition system. They may trade with other kr'rriir, although this is not too profitable, as most subject races are abjectly poor and technologically underdeveloped.

MONEY AND JEWELRY

The Girug'kagh currency is minted from precious metals, and is visually attractive. Aside from being of a standard weight, hallmarked to guarantee purity and milled to discourage trimming, there is no established shape. Each coin is designed to be worn as a body ornament, with a hole for a little hook or a length of string, but can otherwise be as outlandish as its minter chooses. There are polygons, teardrops,

long strips, and circles. All are decorated with aspirational images, slogans, and bon mots, and are worn on necklaces and bracelets or attached to belts.

Precious metals and money are not synonymous to the Girug'kagh. Metal is only money if it has a hallmark. As attractive as the money is, it is meant for use; jewelry is *fine* work. Given the race's high average manual dexterity, this is usually *astoundingly* fine work, and would be a valued trade good across the galaxy if it were more freely available.

EXTERNAL TRADE

The Girug'kagh conduct some trade with aliens from beyond the Two Thousand Worlds, under strict K'kree supervision and for the Great Herd's benefit. There is not much scope for profit, as the K'kree are greedy for foreign exchange.

The most desired articles are unique pieces with a high added value, produced by Girug'kagh artisans, or mass-produced consumer durables intended for consumption by technological inferiors.

TRADING HOUSES

Each state's Priests direct its merchant caste to deal for it with the world government, which trades on the planet's behalf with the outside. This arrangement is suitable for bulk cargoes of all kinds, but less so for incidental trade, occasional blips, or unusual circumstances. These are taken care of by Merchant-caste families who operate small freighters and couriers.

KAGH'KIR (2417, RUUPIIN SECTOR)

Starport: Class V (Kir Kiraa)

Diameter: 6,312 miles (10,099 km). *Gravity:* 0.89 G. *Atmosphere:* Dense oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 84%. *Climate:* Warm, humid, and unsettled. *Population:* 4.2 billion. *Government:* Technocracy masquerading as a theocracy. *Control Rating:* 4. *TL* 11. *Gas Giants:* 4. *WTN:* 5.5. *Trade Classification:* Hi.

The Girug'kagh homeworld orbits a hot, yellow-white star at 1.61 AU. It is a dense world, with extensive oceans and a thick atmosphere. It is highly geologically active, with two monstrous mid-ocean ridges and four vast deep-sea trenches. There are two continents, each sited on a pole and reaching down into the tropics. The seas are stippled with atolls clinging to spent volcanoes. The three moons create chaotic tidal patterns that make the coastlines dangerous. Widespread pyroclastic flows, earthquakes, frequent long-run landslides, recurring ice ages, and mild "nuclear" winters caused by major volcanic episodes all contribute to a challenging environment.

Currently, the planet has a high population and a managed biosphere, with a variety of fast-growing, useful plants and small creatures, of bee size or less, to conduct activities like pollination. The world's fauna used to include large aquatic predators. The K'kree took care of that problem by

dropping comets into the oceans. The oxygen cycle survived, but the shockwaves destroyed all the marine animals of any size.

OTHER WORLDS

There is at least one Girug'kagh settlement in every sub-sector of K'kree space. Usually it is a habitable but K'kree-unfriendly planet, such as a water world. If there is no useless world to stick the Girug'kagh on, they are given a reservation on a remote continent or a small arcology near a starport.

There are also Girug'kagh planets beyond the Two Thousand Worlds' formal border. Very often the race runs a trading enclave, which merchants from the Great Herd are happy to visit in armed vessels.

A few Girug'kagh worlds are too far for K'kree warships to visit regularly, so are outside their formal control. These are defended with K'kree-supplied weapons platforms and by small mercenary forces.



STARPORTS

Being independently space-capable and relatively prosperous, the Girug'kagh have the largest and best starports that their planets can support. These can be designed following the procedures in *GURPS Traveller Starports*, but with a few special features. The first is that, although the Girug'kagh are an autonomous society, the Great Herd are still their ultimate rulers. All facilities must be capable of receiving a visit by a K'kree vessel. Hence all starports must have a dock of suitable size at each ground-based or orbital establishment. For a port of Classes I or II, it must be 10,000 tons; for Class III, 50,000; and, for Classes IV or V, 1,000,000.

Next, the Girug'kagh are themselves extreme snobs, so their own installations must have multiple passenger terminals of varying comfort and efficiency, to guarantee that the higher castes receive *much* better treatment. To reflect this, starport architects provide more than one set of facilities at every starport, with one twice the size and cost of the other. So a Class I port has two sets, one twice as big and expensive, while a Class V would have six separate facilities, with the best 32 times larger and more costly than the standard. Starports that expect alien visits can and should include downgraded accommodation, which can be half or even a quarter the size of the standard.

Similarly, there must be passenger facilities suitable for the K'kree, incorporating environmental enrichment technologies and lots of open space. These are at least four times as large as the best facilities available to the Girug'kagh; they feature items charged as theaters and bars, but represented as open space. Even the K'kree don't really need all that space and comfort, but they like to remind their ugly little underlings who's really in charge.

GIRUG'KAGH CHARACTERS

A typical Girug'kagh stands 5' tall; a difference of more than an inch either way is freakish, and height differences are not related to ST. Weight is based directly on ST, *not* on height, and is 20 lbs. more than that of a Human of similar ST.

GIRUG'KAGH RACIAL TEMPLATE **-24 POINTS**

Attribute Modifiers: ST -1 [-10].

Advantage: Manual Dexterity +4 [12].

Disadvantages: Intolerance (All lesser species) [-10]; Odious Racial Habit (Snobbery) [-10]; Sense of Duty (Caste and family) [-5].

Quirk: *Schadenfreude:* the Girug'kagh enjoy watching other people suffer. [-1]

NOTES ON ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Administrative Rank *see p. C119*

In addition to status, all Girug'kagh have rank within their caste. Members of different castes tend to ignore it, as they take more notice of the difference in status. They can, on a successful *Savoir-Faire* roll, learn the fine distinctions, and know whom to grovel to more or to treat worse.

Favors *see p. C125*

PCs should be encouraged to use favors extensively, and the GM can award them as appropriate as well as or instead of character points. Or a PC can be in debt to a NPC. This is better used as a minor "character hook" or a consequence of an adventure, since the kind of single favor that might be worth points as a Disadvantage would probably be too major and unpredictable to saddle a starting character with. Players who want to owe favors may assume that they owe a *lot* of

Adventure Seed: Teach Us Your Ways

The PCs need a crash course in Girug'kagh culture, and engage the best teacher they can find. She turns up and begins the first lecture with "You worthless scum do not deserve my help and, further, your presence offends me." She then proceeds to extort goods, services, and favors from them, some of dubious legality.

Do the PCs acquiesce or do they abandon their mission? Is their teacher a security agent, giving them enough rope to hang themselves, or is she engaged in some greater illegality of her own?

assorted small favors, and that one is called in on a roll of 9 or less. Treat this as a Duty.

Reputation (Useful alien) *5 points/level*

A non-Girug'kagh may buy status among the race, spending character points during creation or money during play. Each level of status costs 5 points, or 5 months' income if added during play. Players and GMs should bear in mind that the income concerned is that of the job, not the PC's own. For example, a PC wishing to be treated as a local merchant would require certification as a Provider (Status 0), a rise of 4 levels from Outsider (non-kr'rrir alien, -4). This is 20 points, or 20 months' income, which, for the average sales clerk, is 12,000 credits (see p. GT106).

Secrets *-20 or -30 points*

"I am a dissident seeking a better way for my people" is a potentially lethal secret, worth -30 points. "I have forged caste marks" would lead to becoming an outcast, and is worth -20 points.

Unusual Background (Weapons Training) *10 points*

Girug'kagh seldom learn to use weapons, so any who do should have this advantage. The actual circumstances vary: second-generation Translators get military training from the K'kree, the Proctors teach each other, and anyone with prior experience of aliens might have made the time to learn.

NOTES ON SKILLS

Diplomacy *see p. B63*

Anyone might learn this skill, but only a translator would bother to use it. The Girug'kagh enjoy being rude to foreigners. Of course, knowing about diplomacy would enable them to realize just how rude they were being, and possibly to be ruder.

Merchant *see p. B64*

Except when dealing with outsiders, the Girug'kagh do not really use this skill. Every caste has a fitting or suitable range of purchases, so *Savoir-Faire* is more appropriate.

Savoir-Faire *see p. B64*

For the Girug'kagh, this skill includes the ability to read caste marks. However, different castes' little ways vary considerably, so, unless characters learn each separately, they face a -4 unfamiliarity penalty when attempting to deal with any other aspect of another group's subculture. Obviously, impersonating a member of another caste would require a talented forger to add the right marks.

CHARACTER TEMPLATES

Girug'kagh characters can use any nonmilitary template in *GURPS Traveller* except the Martial Artist. As they must buy the appropriate level of Status, the final cost will vary.



There is no ban on combat skills, but, as weapons handling is very unusual, players should purchase the relevant Unusual Background advantage. The Diplomat template does not refer to a Translator for the K'kree working as a diplomat, but to a civil servant working for a Girug'kagh state.

NEW TEMPLATE: TRANSLATOR 51/61 POINTS

The lower point cost assumes that the character is being run in a K'kree-based game. If the translator is among his own people, the cost of his Status would be full price, raising the template to 61 points.

Attributes: ST 9 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 10 [0].

Advantages: Status +3 (Girug'kagh only, small group, all the time) [5] and Cultural Adaptability [25] *or* Language Talent +2 [4] plus 21 points among Charisma [+1/level], Collected [5], Cool [1], additional levels of Language Talent [+2/level], and Voice [10].

Disadvantages: Duty (To K'kree family, all the time) [-15]; Status -3 (Lowest K'kree servant) [-15]; plus -20 points from Charitable [-15], Compulsive Carousing [-5/-10],

Curious [-5/-10/-15], Dependents [Varies], Secret [Varies], Sense of Duty (To K'kree family) [Varies], Xenophilia [-5/-15].

Primary Skills: Languages: Anglic (M/A) IQ+1 [1]-14*, Commands to Obey (M/E) IQ+1 [1/2]-14*, Gurvin (M/E) IQ+1 [1/2]-14*, K'kree (M/H) IQ+3 [6]-16*; Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ+5 [5]-18**. Plus *either Diplomat*: Diplomacy (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-14; Xenology (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-14, *or Merchant*: Finance (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-14; Merchant (M/A) IQ+3 [8]-16.

Secondary Skills: Intelligence Analysis (M/H) IQ [4]-13; Research (M/A) IQ [2]-13; Streetwise (M/A) IQ [2]-13.

Background Skills: 8 points spent among Area Knowledge (Planet, Subsector, or Sector) and Scrounging, both (M/E); Brawling and Knife, both (P/E); Stealth (P/A); Electronics Operation (Communications or Security Systems), Holdout, Lockpicking/TL, Shadowing, and Traps/TL, all (M/A); Linguistics (M/VH); and Languages (Varies).

* Languages include +2 from Language Talent or Cultural Adaptability.

** Savoir-Faire defaults to IQ, IQ+2 in own culture from Status +1.

Customization Notes: A second- or later-generation translator would have served in the K'kree military, so would know Brawling, Guns (Any), and Polcarm in addition. Translators with military skills would need to buy the Unusual Background (Weapons Training). Translators created to form part of a team should have complementary skills. PC translators may find buying off their racial Intolerance useful and can spend any extra points on other languages. Note that Girug'kagh taking Xenophilia can partly or completely replace their racial Intolerance – the two disadvantages are incompatible.

EQUIPMENT

WEAPONS AND ARMOR

Only the Proctors and crews of ships that trade over the frontier need combat gear. It is identical to that on pp. GT108-118, with the reservation that other races are at -4 to use Girug'kagh equipment, because of their different handgrips.

VEHICLES AND SPACECRAFT

There is no practical difference between TL10 Girug'kagh and any other nonclaustrophobes' vehicles, apart from the species' preference for solid, blocky craft. All the small merchant ships in the *GURPS Traveller* books have near-equivalents flying for the Girug'kagh; some were, in fact, captured from the Humans or the Vargr and sold on.

Once the K'kree ordered them not to build military ships, the Girug'kagh had to figure out what they actually meant. After prolonged discussions, they discovered that the true construction of the edict was "do not build anything large enough to mount a military-grade (i.e., 'bay') weapon." This limits the Girug'kagh to vessels of fewer than 1,000 tons.

See p. 142 for a key to vehicle abbreviations.

Gurtu-Class 800-ton Liner/Freighter

The ship presented here is an 800-ton streamlined frame, which the yard fits out as either a passenger liner or as a cargo hauler. Turrets are installed as standard, but only ships working near or over the border mount weapons, usually four triple lasers, two triple missile racks, and two triple sandcasters.

The liner variation is the most interesting, as it has several grades of accommodation available. Should non-Two Thousand Worlds PCs attempt to travel on one, the stewards would insist on low-berthing them, unless they are perceived as *useful*.

Usually 16 staterooms are set aside for the crew (captain, pilot, astrogator, sensor operator, communications operator, four engineers, two medics, and up to 20 other staff including eight gunners, two small-craft pilots, and assorted cargo handlers and stewards). This can allow for a lot of variation. When gunners and/or stewards are not carried, the staterooms are available to caste or family members, who doubtless return the favor in some form or other.

Subassemblies: SL Hull +10, 8 Turrets +5.

Powertrain: 100 Maneuver, 24 Jump.

Fuel: 160 Fuel.

Occ: See above.

Cargo: 100 dtons

| Armor | F | RL | B | T | U |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| All: | 4/100 | 4/100 | 4/100 | 4/100 | 4/100 |

Weaponry

None usually carried, but armed variants, below, carry:

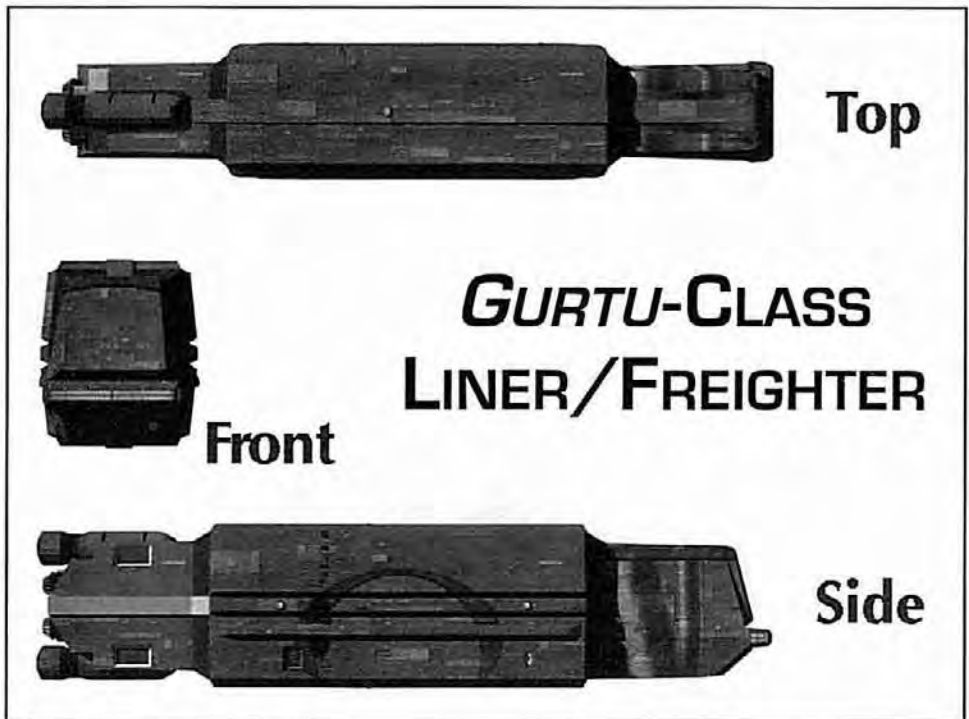
4 Turrets w/ 12xLasers +2.

2 Turrets w/ 6xMissile Bay (77 each) +2.

2 Turrets w/ 6xSandcasters (200 each) +2.

Equipment

Modules: Basic Bridge; Engineering; two Fuel Processor; 52 Staterooms; nine Bunkrooms; 27 Low Berths (108



GURTU-CLASS LINER/FREIGHTER

tubes); Sickbay; two Utility; Vehicle Bay (holds two 30-ton ship's boats).

Statistics

Size: 72'x32'x170' **Payload:** 500 tons **Lwt.:** 1,878 tons
Volume: 800 dtons **Maint.:** - **Price:** MCr132.76

HP: 60,000 1,200 [each Tur]

aAccel: 2.13 G/2.9 G empty **Jump:** 2 **aSpeed:** 2,542

Armed Variant

LMass 1,585.25, Cost MCr144.21, Accel 1.98 G (2.52 G unloaded).

Freighter Variant

Substitute 193.5 Hold for 36 Staterooms, the Bunkrooms, and Low Berths. Payload 1,467.5, LMass 2,747.95, Cost MCr126.23, Accel 1.45 G (3.12 G unloaded).

Armed Freighter Variant

Payload 1,467.5, LMass 2,955.55, Cost MCr137.63, Accel 1.35 G (2.68 G unloaded).

Adventure Seed: Risky Business

The PCs trade with a Girug'kagh merchant who asks to meet them in private. When alone with them, he becomes open and friendly, rather than superior and rude. He is still a Girug'kagh, but he's a Girug'kagh who is *trying* to be civil.

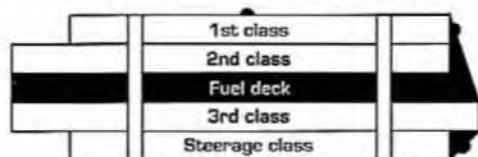
He offers to buy any foreign-derived data they can supply: documentaries, news, entertainment, from any source, and proffers a small, wonderfully worked soapstone plaque as a sample payment. He offers similar goods in future.

Close examination of the piece, by a reputable art historian, will show that the imagery is subtly different from most Girug'kagh work. It is aspirational and slyly critical of both the Priesthood and the K'kree.

If the PCs didn't bite the first time around, representatives from an intelligence agency come calling about a month after they sell the plaque or have it valued. The PCs, it seems, are in a position to make some grateful new friends.

Gurtu-Class Liner/Freighter

- 2 missile turrets mounted on bow.
- 1 sandcaster turret mounted ventrally.
- 1 sandcaster turret mounted dorsally.
- 2 laser turrets mounted port side fuel deck.
- 2 laser turrets mounted starboard side fuel deck.

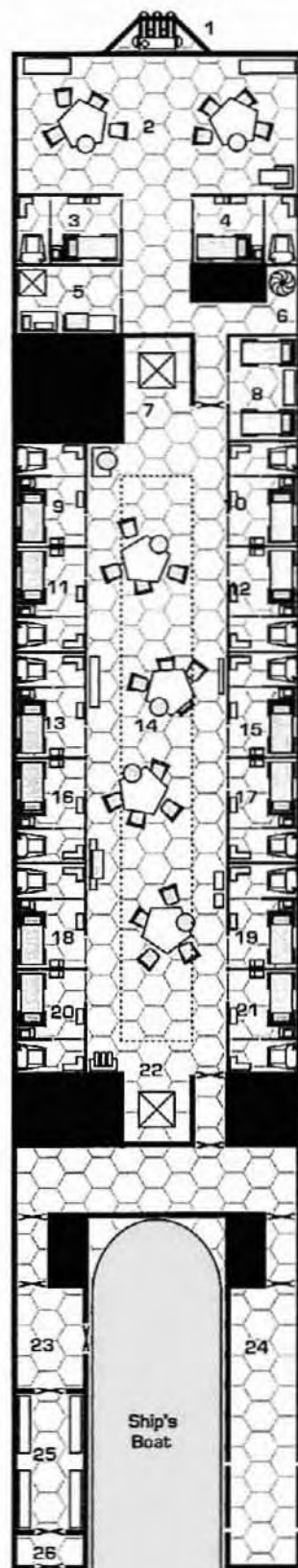
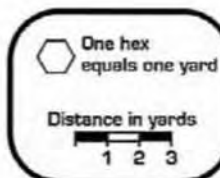


Cross-sectional view

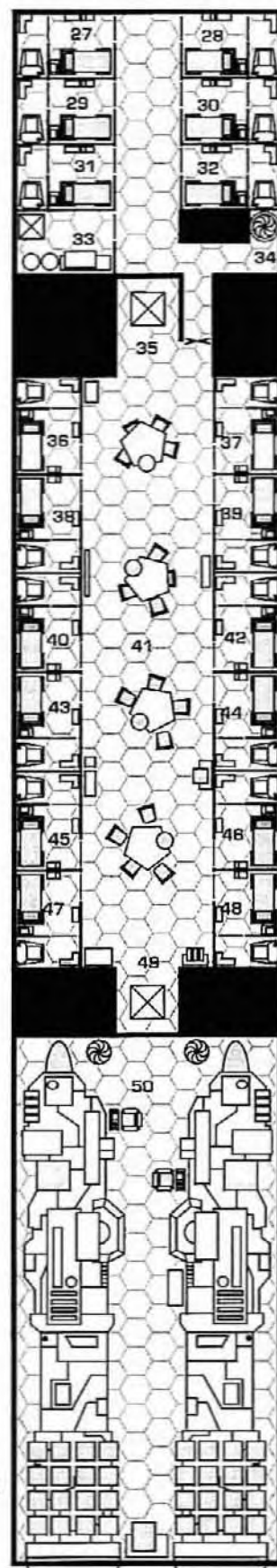
Note: These deckplans represent the liner version of the *Gurtu*. The freighter version is identical, save that the middle passenger stateroom section is gutted for cargo.

Legend

- Iris valve
- Iris, floor
- Iris, floor/ceiling
- Iris, ceiling
- Maintenance Hatch
- Table
- Chair
- Acceleration Couch
- Fresher
- Low Berth
- Bed
- Bunk



1st Class Deck



2nd Class Deck

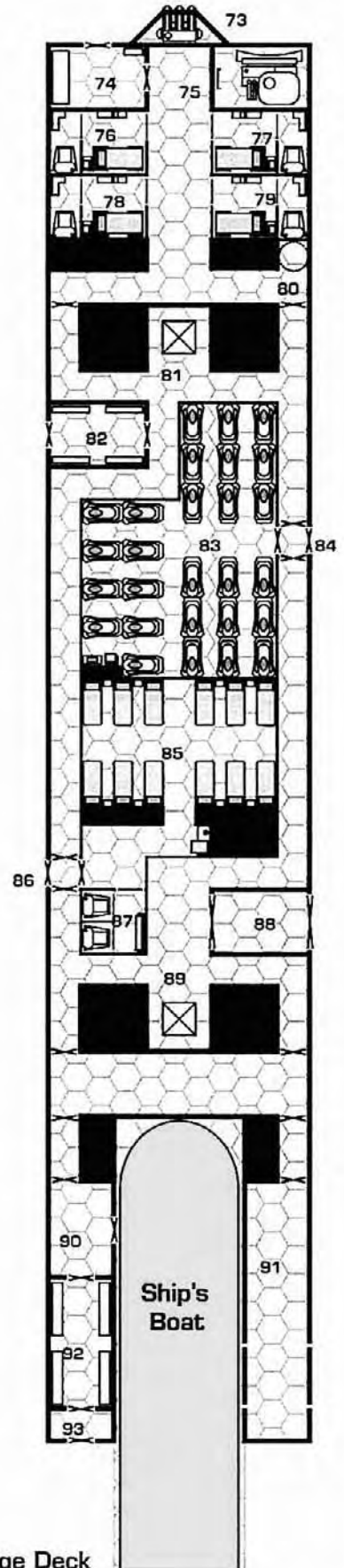
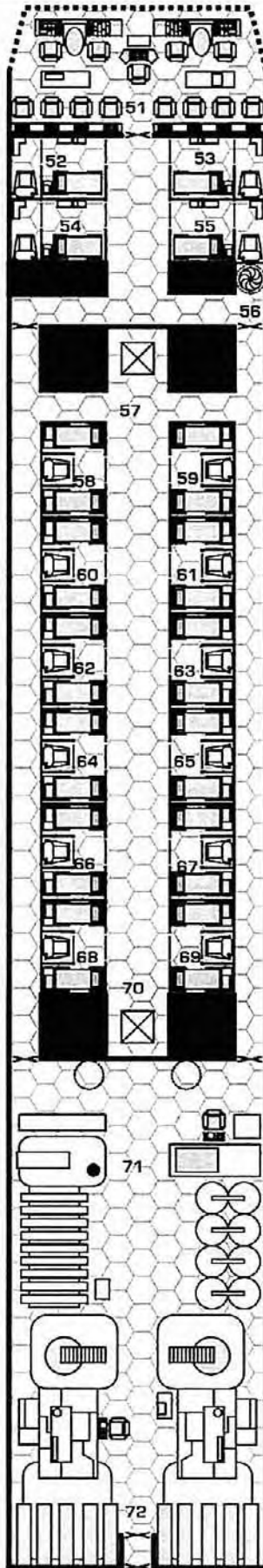
Location Key

- 1 Missile turret
- 2 Crew common area
- 3-4 Crew staterooms
- 5 Kitchen
- 6 Access shaft
- 7 Bow lift shaft
- 8 Sickbay
- 9-13 1st-class staterooms
- 14 1st-class lounge
- 15-21 1st-class staterooms
- 22 Aft lift shaft
- 23 Dorsal boat lock
- 24 Dorsal luggage hold
- 25 Ship stores
- 26 Dorsal airlock
- 27-32 Crew staterooms
- 33 Kitchen
- 34 Access shaft
- 35 Bow lift shaft
- 36-40 2nd-class staterooms
- 41 2nd-class lounge
- 42-48 2nd-class staterooms
- 49 Aft lift shaft
- 50 Maneuver drives
- 51 Bridge
- 52-55 Crew staterooms
- 56 Access shaft
- 57 Bow lift shaft
- 58-69 3rd-class staterooms
- 70 Aft lift shaft
- 71 Jump drive and power plant
- 72 Aft airlock
- 73 Missile turret
- 74 Bow airlock
- 75 Avionics
- 76-79 Crew staterooms
- 80 Access shaft
- 81 Bow lift shaft
- 82 3rd-class airlock
- 83 Low berths
- 84 Low berths airlock
- 85 Steerage class bunks
- 86 Steerage class airlock
- 87 Communal freshers
- 88 1st/2nd-class airlock
- 89 Aft lift shaft
- 90 Ventral boat lock
- 91 Ventral luggage hold
- 92 Ship stores
- 93 Ventral airlock

Ship access is separated by social caste, so that higher-caste individuals rarely have to interact with their lessers.

On the rare occasion (since they prefer their own transport) that the Girug'kagh are asked or ordered to transport K'kree, the entire first- (and possibly second-class) passenger spaces are gutted, and holographic projectors in the ceilings are used to portray a sense of openness. The 1st/2nd-class airlock and aft lift shaft are large enough to accommodate K'kree.

3rd Class Deck



Steerage Deck

PLAYING WITH THE GIRUG'KAGH

The Girug'kagh make useful NPCs, allowing PCs to interact with the Two Thousand Worlds without forcing them to deal directly with the K'kree themselves. When GM-controlled, the race should be snotty, superior, and rude. They don't respond well to inferiors pointing guns at them, so the PCs will need to handle them in other ways, certainly by being polite and probably by finding something they want. Forcing the aliens to be polite to them should be a rewarding experience.

The GM should waste no opportunity to remind any alien visitor PCs that they are the lowest of the low. Every orbiting K'kree or Girug'kagh vessel will be given landing clearance before they get it. When debarking, they will be forced to wait until last, carry their own luggage, and use a smelly, bendy tunnel rather than an air-conditioned concourse with a slidewalk. No matter how wealthy they are, they will be forced into the worst accommodation. As there's no one lower, they will have to do their own cooking and cleaning.

Should a PC be a *useful* alien, he will be treated as appropriate for the most junior member of the caste concerned. The GM should leave the player in no doubt that the locals are responding to the badge and not to the person.

Players of Girug'kagh should try to enjoy their snobbishness. The GM should encourage the players to act it out. If the PCs are all Girug'kagh of different classes, then the higher castes can point out that their inferiors may not drink in their presence, and that it is a servant's place

Adventure Seed: Let's Do It

True Love Comedy, a station broadcasting to the Worker Caste and some of the more uppity Outcasts, needs something to remind their audience that they're not at the bottom of the heap. The PCs become the unwitting subjects of a cruel practical joke, so that the hidden cameras can capture their discomfort.

The PCs are out looking for a cargo, but wake up in a large vat of psychotropic jelly in a room with synthetic Human pheromones pumping through the air conditioning. They are in a "comedy house," with cameras everywhere, and have to find their way out. Nothing dangerous will happen to them, but they will need to extricate themselves and their dignity somehow. Naturally, the show will haunt them forever, appearing on public channels wherever they go, eventually following them back to the Imperium itself.

Adventure Seed: Nice Tats

Some of the PCs – or their friends – have tattoos. Noticing this, local Girug'kagh officials decide that they have been missing a class distinction, so rush to make things right. The tattooed aliens get marginally better treatment than their friends, and often get separated from them. This impacts on the team's operational efficiency and makes it difficult for them to act without local scrutiny. How to persuade the locals that they have misunderstood and still avoid charges for impersonating a better?

to call for food. It is entirely appropriate for PCs to extort favors from each other, too. *Everyone* should be rude to aliens; any player running a Girug'kagh and talking to Humans who doesn't begin the conversation with "Oh, it's you again, scum," isn't doing it right.

PC translators should get to meet plenty of interesting people and travel to exotic locations. They will have all the

benefits of a *Traveller* campaign and the added fun of being able to threaten people with the K'kree. It is, of course, not the case that the translators are a group of spies useful to the Great Herd because they are small and not claustrophobic, so the GM should always be ready to express their Krurruna's bafflement, should they ever get arrested.

Adventure Seed: Hanging Jury

The PCs fall afoul of a crowd and are in real danger of a fast trial and perfunctory lynching. Their only hope is to somehow get the local K'kree representative to intercede on their behalf. First, how to persuade his snobbish translator that they deserve a fair hearing?

SAMPLE NPC

KA'GURUUL 150 POINTS

Age 34; 5'2"; 155 lbs. A strongly built Girug'kagh with cropped hair, pale tan skin, and impressive caste marks.

Attributes: ST 10 [10]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 11 [10].

Speed 6; Move 6.

Dodge 6.

Advantages: Administrative Rank 1 (Squad Leader) [5]; Ally Group (Fellow Proctors; four 75-point officers, 12 or less) [20]; Ally Group (Underground cell; three 75-point agents, 9 or less) [10]; Contact (3 street level, skill-18, somewhat reliable; 9 or less) [9]; Legal Enforcement Powers [10]; Manual Dexterity +4 [12]; Unusual Background (Weapons Training) [10].

Disadvantages: Compulsive Behavior (Snobbery) [-10]; Duty (To state) [-10]; Intolerance (All lesser species) [-10]; Secret (Underground member) [-30]; Sense of Duty (Caste and family) [-5].



Quirks: Careful; Imaginative; Keeps pet herbivores; Schadenfreude. [-4]

Skills: Acting-13 [2]; Administration -13 [2]; Area Knowledge (StarCity)-14 [2]; Area Knowledge (Hkaang'mbaa)-13 [1]; Area Knowledge (Girug'kagh worlds)-13 [1]; Area Knowledge (Two Thousand Worlds)-13 [1]; Brawling-13 [2]; Computer Operation-13 [1]; Criminology-13 [2]; Detect Lies-13 [4]; Fast-Draw (Pistol)-13 [2]; Fast-Talk-13 [2]; First Aid-13 [1]; Forgery-13 [2]; Holdout-13 [2]; Guns (Light Automatic)-15 [2]; Guns (Pistol)-15 [2]; Guns (Shotgun)-15 [2]; Interrogation-13 [2]; Intimidation-13 [2]; Judo-12 [4]; Knife-13 [2]; Law Enforcement-13 [2]; Law-11 [1]; Leadership-13 [2]; Piloting (Contragravity)-11 [2]; Shadowing-13 [2]; Shortsword-13 [4]; Stealth-13 [2]; Streetwise-13 [2]; Tactics-12 [2]; Teaching-14 [2]; Zoology-12 [2].

Languages: K'kree pidgin (Native)-13 [0]; Savezitoiah-14 [2].

Ka'guruul (*Kuh-ger-OOL*) is a squad leader of Proctors from Hkaang'mbaa, a rich water world on the K'kree Empire's spinward frontier, in the Gh!hken sector. Ka'guruul works at StarCity, the planet's immense downport, acting both as a customs officer and as a beat cop. He is also a weapons instructor in the planet's anti-raider forces and a reasonable fighter in his own right.

Hkaang'mbaa is a port of call for over-the-border traders who would rather not deal with directly with the K'kree. Snort the Dew, the local Kiruna, has opted for defense in depth, saving his ships to cover his home. He occasionally sends frigates to "make the sky tremble." The Proctors deter most raiders with deep meson guns and other batteries,

atmospheric interceptors, and infantry engagements. During a raid that reached the surface, Ka'guruul recovered some anti-K'kree propaganda from a dead Girugh'kagh insurrectionist. It made him think. A chance questioning of a suspected traitor convinced him to re-evaluate his life. Now, 10 years later, he is a committed member of the underground, spiriting weapons from armories, acting as a go-between for visiting translators, and compiling intelligence. He keeps his two ally groups apart, for his and their protection. They are all his friends and he does not want them to end up killing each other. He hopes that, eventually, they will all fight the K'kree together on the Glorious Day.

GMs could use Ka'guruul as a surly bureaucrat, as local contact in espionage-based games, with his squad as opponents in a raid, or even as a patron. Perhaps the PCs could smuggle dissidents out of the Empire for him . . .

Adventure Seed: Moody Goods

The PCs are offered a good deal on Great Herd-manufactured weapons and perfumes. The guns look fine, but the perfume . . . who knows? They may, if they like, view this as a one-off piece of good fortune, or take the Girug'kagh merchant's hint that he can get his hands on more.

At the GM's whim, this can be a genuine offer to provide contraband with little risk, a swindle perpetrated on the adventurers, or an attempt to recruit them to work for the K'kree – they will be arrested for illegal trading and offered a way out of lifelong indenture in the pitchblende mines.

Githiaskio

The Githiaskio are a race of intelligent aquatic sophonts (also known as Squids, or “Whooihee” in imitation of their whistling speech) from a planet on the coreward edge of the Imperium. Physically, they are radically different from the Human norm; psychologically, they are remarkably similar.

The Githiaskio evolved from omnivore scavenger-gatherers, inhabiting shallow seas with a fairly profuse growth of marine vegetation. Intelligence seems to have appeared when a period of heavy volcanic activity produced repeated shifts in marine currents and serious water pollution.

HISTORY

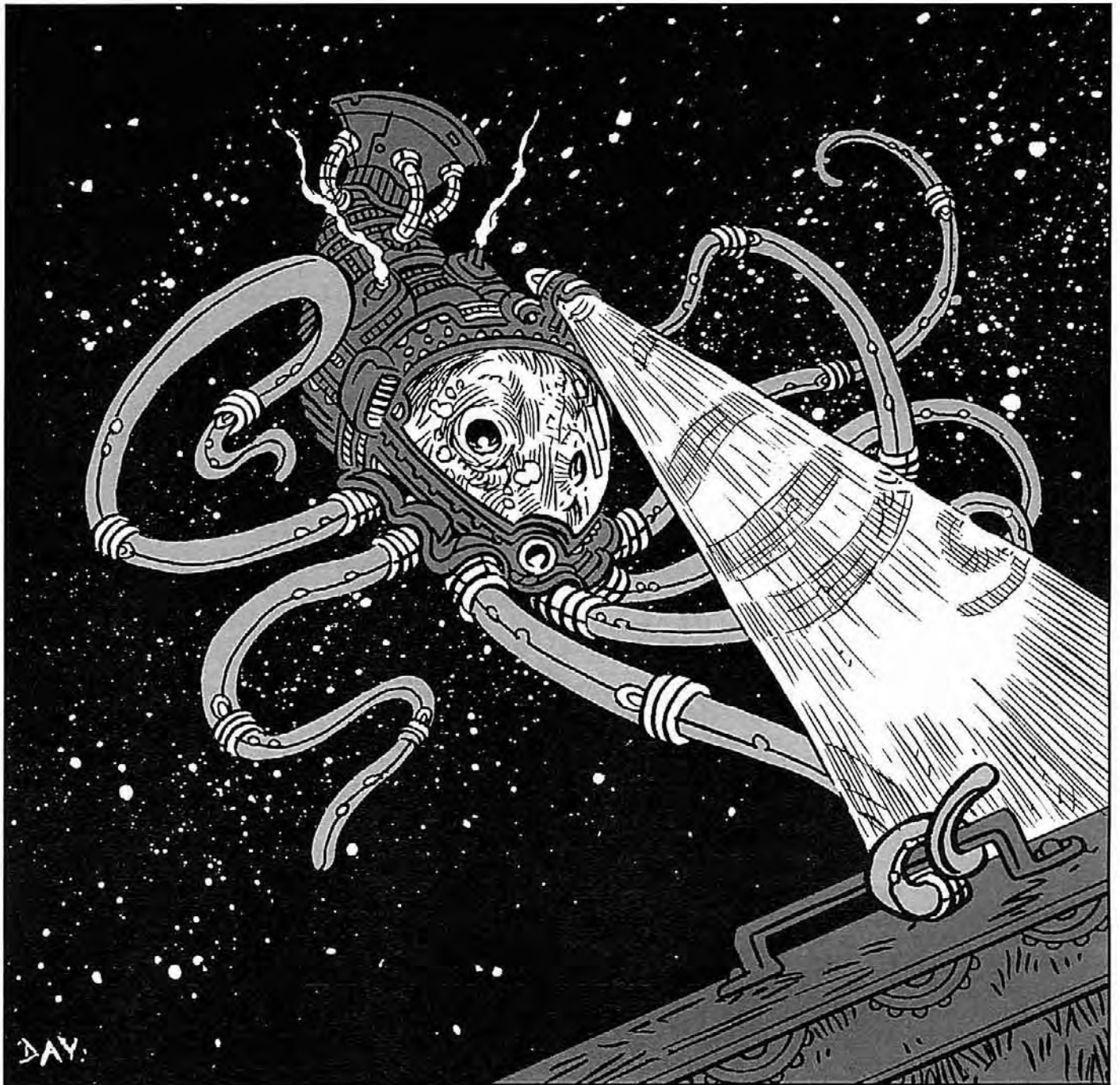
Githiaski, the Githiaskio homeworld, is a rather mineral-poor planet on the fringe of the Lesser Rift; the First Imperium seems to have paid it little attention, for its intelligent inhabitants were only discovered by a merchant ship during the Long Night. Their name for their planet is best represented as *Llaaii-hoin*, with a heavy vibrato on the first syllable and high pitch on the last.

As the world has only a few small continents, consisting mostly of salt marshes and swamps, regular contact with the Githiaskio came only with the rise of the Third Imperium. As scientific study focused on the race, their evolutionary history came to light.

Githiaski's seas teem with life, but forms analogous to vertebrates have never appeared; rather, the dominant phylum has developed a supportive inner “cage” of gristle-like material. The Githiaskio's ancestors may have resembled Terran marine worms which bury themselves in the seabed, leaving only a bundle of tentacles exposed; their closer relatives were certainly squid-like in external form.



The small family groups of Githiaskio were forced into closer cooperation and wider searches for food; intelligence became a key survival feature. Sophontologists have found strong and interesting parallels with Human evolutionary history, particularly as this ancestry has produced creatures so intellectually similar to Humanity that Human psychological sciences are largely valid for Githiaskio.



When contacted, the Githiaskio had developed a sophisticated culture, but had not developed a high-technology civilization because of their lack of metals (which are effectively impossible to refine or work underwater). Their skill in stonework and the use of vegetable fibers was considerable, however, and is still admired. Since the Imperium expanded into their region of space, they have become valued (if independently minded) citizens, trading their services as water-dwellers for high-tech items and information that have enabled them to advance remarkably quickly.

BIOLOGY

Githiaskio are bisexual, semi-homeothermic (maintaining their body temperature within a broad range), and usually

give birth to single live young. They average 6'-8' in length, about half of which is tentacle, and are about 18" in diameter at their broadest point. They have roughly cylindrical bodies, which taper into a muscular swimming "fluke" at one end and divide into six tentacles around a feeding orifice at the other. A cluster of sensory organs is located midway along the body. Githiaskio vision is biased towards the blue-green end of the spectrum, having evolved for life underwater, but their eyes focus poorly. Their prime sense is sound, which encompasses a very effective ability to locate objects in their immediate vicinity by low-frequency echoes and fluctuations. They are very sensitive to strong light and to water-borne chemicals.

Githiaskio require oxygen for respiration; worlds with a thin or better atmosphere are usually acceptable. They can

tolerate a fairly high salinity in their water, but certain chemicals are intolerable. The presence of an atmospheric taint often means problems; basically, they will require complex and expensive protection in the waters of any world with a tainted atmosphere (let alone corrosive or worse), unless the GM decides otherwise (roll 3d if you want a random determination; the water will only be tolerable on 5 or less).

The race can tolerate depths of up to 700 yards at 1 G, although sudden drops in pressure create problems similar to the dangers suffered by careless Human divers. Higher pressures require the use of cumbersome protection. Githiaskio bodies have very slightly positive buoyancy; they float to the surface if unconscious, but can maintain position with trivial effort, and do so reflexively when sleeping.

Githiaskio exposed to air suffer physical irritation, developing into pain, and finally death through dehydration and suffocation. The process takes only a few minutes. Even if an enveloping "wet suit" is available, a Githiaskio removed from the support of water can suffer severe internal injuries unless provided with a complex supportive sling (or an expensive, complex gravitic-technology substitute). Of course, this is not a problem in zero-G.

LANGUAGE AND NAMES

Githiaskio speech has been described as "whistling underwater." It is complex and subtle, relying heavily on pitch intonation. Transliterations into Human tongues contain a great many vowels, with lots of humming, buzzing, hissing, and the occasional popping P.

Githiaskio and Humans can learn to understand each other's speech to a reasonable extent (in *GURPS* terms, treat each race's languages as Mental/Very Hard skills for the other), but neither can speak the other's language without mechanical aid, except on a very primitive basis (attempts are at -10). This problem is complicated by the fact that one language is spoken underwater, the other in air. Most mixed Human-Githiaskio teams carry one or more synthesizer-translator systems that permit swift, simple communication. These are TL9 technology (but are generally only available off the shelf on worlds with a significant Githiaskio population), cost about Cr1,000, and weigh about 10 lbs. They require Electronics Operations skill to set up and maintain if built at TL9 or TL10; more advanced versions are trivially simple to use (and give much better, colloquial translations).

Githiaskio names are complex; Githiaskio customarily adopt Anglic names as nicknames, and Humans working with them likewise adopt Githiaskio names. Mechanical translation is automatic; a Human who works only occasionally with Githiaskio may forget what his own squid name is, but his machine will remember.

PSYCHOLOGY

The similarity of the Githiaskio mind to the Human one is a constant source of wonder to scientists and fodder for humorists. The Squids look nothing like Humans, and live in

Adventure Seed: Hostile Environment Work

With numerous corporations and government agencies employing Githiaskio for their specific abilities, there is a good chance that PCs employed on all sorts of large-scale efforts, from exploration and colonization through military cadre work to espionage, could find themselves working alongside the Squids, at least occasionally.

Likewise, Githiaskio-controlled operations could employ Humans for specific tasks, usually either involving work on dry land or consultancy on technologies that the Githiaskio themselves have not yet mastered. The former type of job is likely to be only lightly supervised, and the latter places the PCs in a position of some effective power, but Githiaskio are rarely fools, and expect decent service from their employees.

For example, the party might be hired to explore and chart a number of islands in a Githiaskio-colonized sea on a frontier planet. The project manager will want results, on schedule, and will have heard every excuse before; therefore, she may not believe reports involving hostile fauna, hallucinogenic plant spores, or secret smuggler bases. Even if they're true.

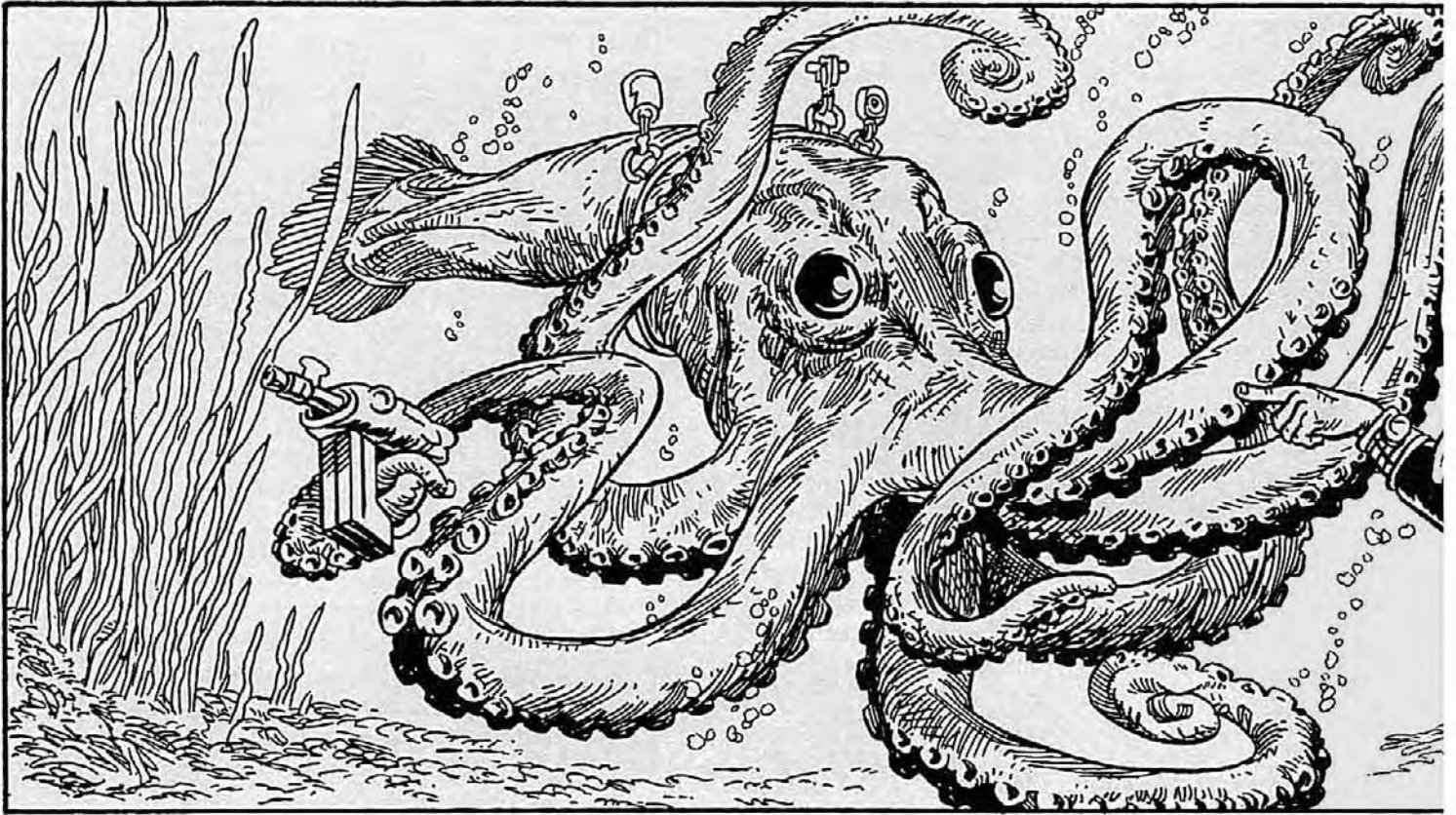
a completely different environment. But they have very similar attitudes toward life and death, families, friendship, sex, success, and even sports.

Most advantages and disadvantages that are applicable to normal Human characters are also appropriate for Githiaskio; in particular, there is no routine psychological condition known to Vilani or Solomani that has not also been identified in this species.

The only variations emerge from physiological or environmental differences – and these are less significant than scientists expected, or are matters of emphasis. (For example, few Githiaskio display a pathological fear of heights, but some have a phobia about the dangers of sudden pressure changes.)

SOCIETY

When first contacted, the Githiaskio had developed several distinct, complex societies, as high as TL3 in some areas, but lacking metals except for the very occasional naturally occurring, nearly pure lump. They had domesticated various aquatic animals, and developed sailing vessels (with submerged hulls and rigging above the surface). The major cultures still display distinct identities, but dealings with the Imperium have encouraged the development of a coordinating bureaucratic organization with some power over the various nations. The language of the largest precontact nation has become effectively universal across the species. Nonetheless, Githiaskio societies are no more fit subjects for generalization than are their Human equivalents.



Aware that they need imported technology to build and to maintain an advanced society, the Githiaskio have produced organizations dedicated to earning interstellar currency. Thus, the world has a small but well-advertised tourist industry, and Githiaskio are frequently found working off-planet in underwater jobs of all kinds, in zero-G work (at which their aquatic background makes them adept), and in academic posts.

drive to industrialize, but it is still fully functional and has been well documented by Githiaskio and Human scholars.

The Githiaskio have established a world government which is basically a federation of older, culture-based states, with a representative assembly but largely administered by a bureaucratic elite descended from the agency set up to deal with offworlders in the wake of first contact. Administration on a local level is mostly democratic, and some of the older

GITHIASKI (2405, ANTARES SECTOR)

Starport: Class V (Loouuowh'p).

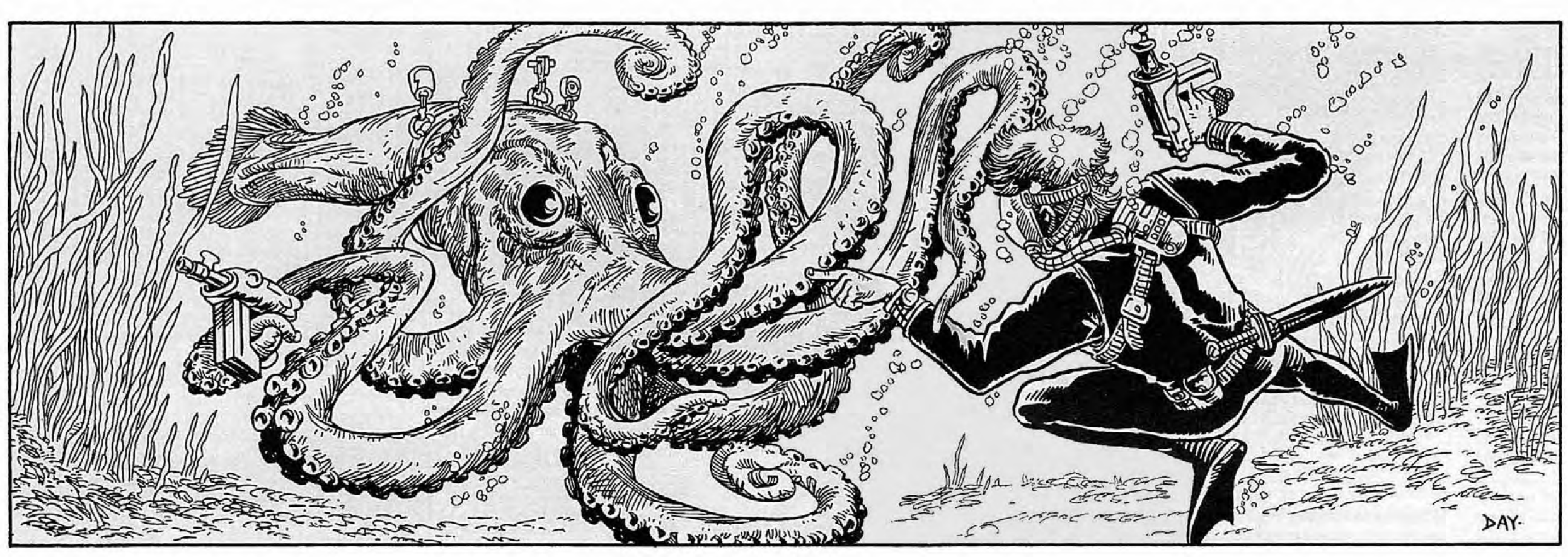
Diameter: 8,180 miles (13,090 km). *Gravity:* 0.93 G. *Atmosphere:* Standard oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 92%. *Climate:* Temperate and humid. *Population:* 2.9 billion (340,000 Human and other races, otherwise Githiaskio). *Government:* Representative Democracy (with powerful Technocratic/Bureaucratic elements). *Control Rating:* 3. *TL:* 11. *Gas Giants:* 1. *WTN:* 5.5. *Trade Classifications:* Hi.

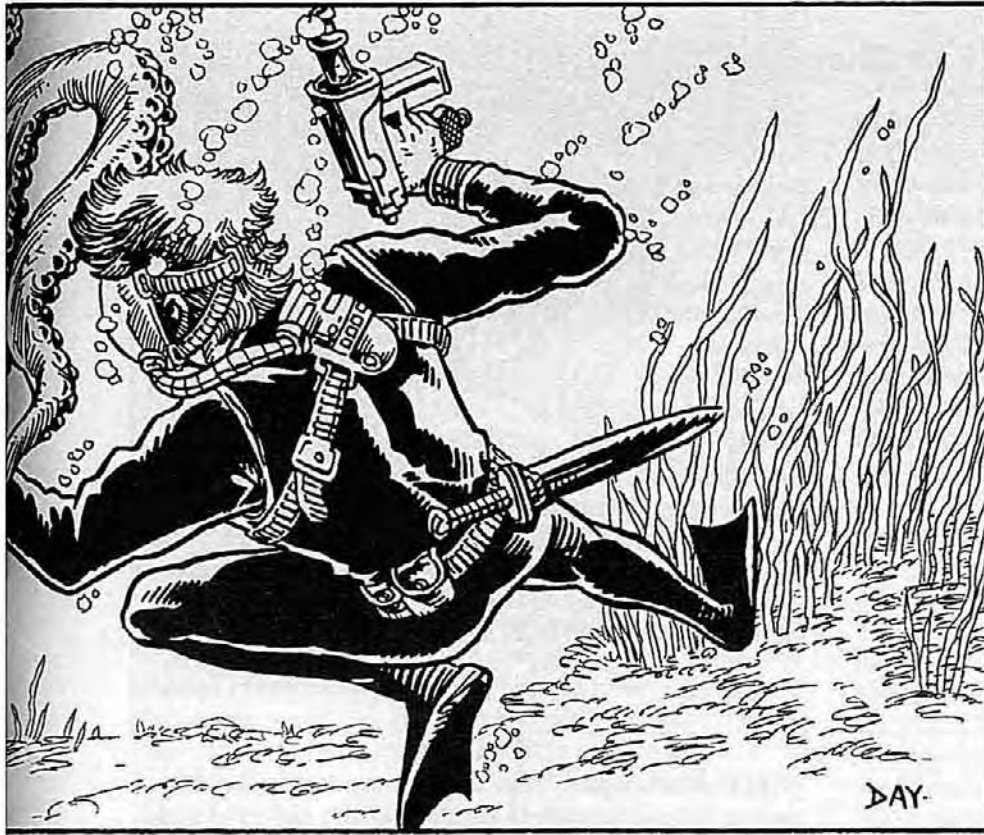
Githiaski was known as "KaaP Pi" under the first Imperium, and a few Vilani charts still use that name. (Early Third Imperium charts also sometimes reflected the Vilani habit of disregarding the non-Human population, at least until it became too advanced to ignore.) The surface is not all water; there are six small island-continents which consist mostly of low-lying marshes. The main starport, whose name translates as "Space Channel," is located on the shore of one of these, with extensive adjacent underwater facilities. The world's ecosystem has taken a little damage in the Githiaskio

Adventure Seed: Things Were Different Then

A mystery: Why was this race never contacted by the First Imperium, though they lived within its borders? The cultural conservatism of late Vilani culture explains a lot, and the Githiaskio never produced a technological civilization to draw attention to itself, but even so . . .

A group of PCs might be drawn into an investigation of this minor puzzle, only to discover what appears to be a determined Imperial effort to cover up the facts and discourage investigation. The precise reason is up to the GM, but it's not impossible that Githiaski was occasionally visited by Vilani ships, and that the Githiaskio encountered Human spacefarers – only to be treated as animals. A few ancient reference works showing, say, Githiaskio being treated as laboratory specimens, and even vivisected, could sour the relationship between Humaniti and this valued race of citizens.





states are assertively defensive of their cultural integrity; some long-term non-Githiaskio residents have acquired voting rights, and some land areas are actually run by Human organizations. Other Githiaskio planetary governments are as varied as Human worlds; some owe some degree of allegiance to Githiaskio or to organizations based there, others are fully independent, and others again are linked to non-Githiaskio local or interstellar organizations.

GITHIASKIO CHARACTERS

Size and weight of a Squid are not related to its ST; a Githiaskio is 6' long plus 4d inches, and weighs 200+(1d×5d) pounds. Some Githiaskio are quite chubby.

GITHIASKIO RACIAL TEMPLATE -13 POINTS

Attribute Modifiers: ST -1 [-10].

Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell +2 [4]; Extra Arms (No Physical Attack) [20]; Extra Fatigue +2 [6]; Extra Flexibility (Entire body) [10]; Faz Sense [10]; Subsonic Hearing [5]; Ultrahearing [5].

Disadvantages: Aquatic [-40]; Bad Sight (Nearsightedness) [-25]; Color Blindness [-10]; Poor Grip [-5]; Reputation -2 (Everyone, 7 or less, as creepy, greedy complainers) [-3].

Quirks: React strongly to very bright light; Find chemical taints in the water highly unpleasant. [-2]

Skills: +2 to Free Fall [2].

NOTES ON RACIAL ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Extra Arms, Extra Flexibility, Poor Grip See pp. C154-55, C101

Githiaskio tentacles represent the equivalent of six arms. Githiaskio can use all tentacles equally effectively, thanks to Extra Flexibility. However the ends of their tentacles are much weaker than a Human wrist, and simply taper to a point, so they lack the subtle flexibility of fingers, giving them Poor Grip. Githiaskio must use two or more tentacles for many tasks, including handling any weapon larger than a knife – firearms require at least three, and often four. Despite having No Physical Attack, Githiaskio limbs can deal unarmed blows (punches), but do -1 damage when doing so and suffer the -2 to hit from Poor Grip.

Aquatic See p. C101

Githiaskio breathe only water. They use their full normal Move score in water. On land, unless specially equipped, all they can do is drag themselves around slowly and agonizingly with their tentacles while they suffocate. As swimming and diving creatures, however, Githiaskio are well-suited to zero-gravity operations, and have a keen sense for three-dimensional action; this gives them a racial bonus of +2 to Free Fall skill. Some also make exceptional space combat tacticians.

Bad Sight See p. B27

The Githiaskio poor vision is the equivalent of Bad Sight (Nearsightedness). This cannot be corrected, because their brains aren't evolved to handle better vision.

Color Blindness See p. B28

This is actually sensitivity restricted to blue-green wavelengths. It is effectively Color Blindness.

SENSES

By the rules, the Githiaskio nearsightedness should give them a combat penalty, while their Faz Sense would only aid them once they had made a roll to sense their target with it.

However, the Githiaskio are very adept at using these senses in conjunction; as a special effect, assume that a Githiaskio can use all combat abilities normally against a submerged foe, at least at fairly close quarters, so long as both its vision and Faz Sense are not actually blocked or incapacitated.

Adventure Seed: The Charge of the 12th Specials

"No . . . ah, no kidding, ma'am, there I was, pinned down in that asteroid outstation for three full weeks. The Zhos had caught the High Command napping, dropped a fleet in-system and landed on the main world, but they had time for sideshows. And that was us.

"First thing we knew was when a Zho destroyer made a close pass, blasted both our shuttles to scrap, and then took out our main and backup generators. And the grav systems, too. Fortunately, the life support lasted long enough for most of us to suit up, but we were stuck there. The Zhos dropped a couple of boats with assault teams to the surface – no teleporters, thank the Eight Saints, they were busy on the main world – and set to work wearing us down. We had orders to keep them busy, and those tunnels were pretty defensible, but they could take their time, hit us when they felt like it.

"So in the end, they had us bottled up in the three core levels, playing hide-and-seek with fusion guns in zero-G. In the breaks, we were down to making our wills and deciding

who we wanted to play us in the tragic holovid of desperate heroism. Then this signal came through on the long-range crypto channels to hold on, help was on the way.

"Except that it was a computer voice – you know, flat. But we weren't going to argue. We pulled back one more time, and then the next thing we knew, the Zhos were running toward us, and the smart ones were signaling surrender.

"I saw why ten seconds later. Have you ever seen a Squid in full combat rig? Firing a fusion gun with three tentacles while using another three to pull itself round a right-angle bend in the corridor? And the comm channels were full of whistling.

"I'm not complaining, you understand. The 12th S-A-G saved my ass back there, no question. But I needed a stiff drink right after, and before I sobered up, I'd lost those three weeks' pay in a card game with two of them.

"I mean, have you ever tried to read a Squid's expression?"

REPUTATION

A few Humans find Githiaskio appearance and speech unnerving, have heard Githiaskio complaining about their Minor Race status at too much length, or have encountered the Githiaskio agencies and factions dedicated to acquiring resources for their race by any legal means. This means the occasional Human (or other Imperial) will feel some prejudice toward the "Squids."

QUIRKS

Githiaskio reflexively draw back and protect their eyes from the source of any bright lights. They also will shy away from, fidget, and complain at length about tainted water. A very slight taint of some fairly common pollutants is as unpleasant to them as a stink bomb to a Human.

CHARACTER DETAILS

Attractiveness among Githiaskio depends on subtleties of body shape, skin markings, and vocal tone and inflection. High or low Appearance may be applicable, although it may not if the being will not be interacting with other Githiaskio much. Few Humans can tell the difference between Githiaskio comeliness and the converse, although it is fairly easy to tell members of the species apart with a little practice. Githiaskio naturally say much the same about Humans.

CAREERS AND TEMPLATES

This racial package can be combined with almost any of the templates in *GURPS Traveller*, given a little sensible flexibility; for example, Githiaskio with melee weapons skill will usually have learned either Knife or Spear, while Brawling and other unarmed combat skills should be replaced by Wrestling. (Githiaskio martial arts consist of a huge range of

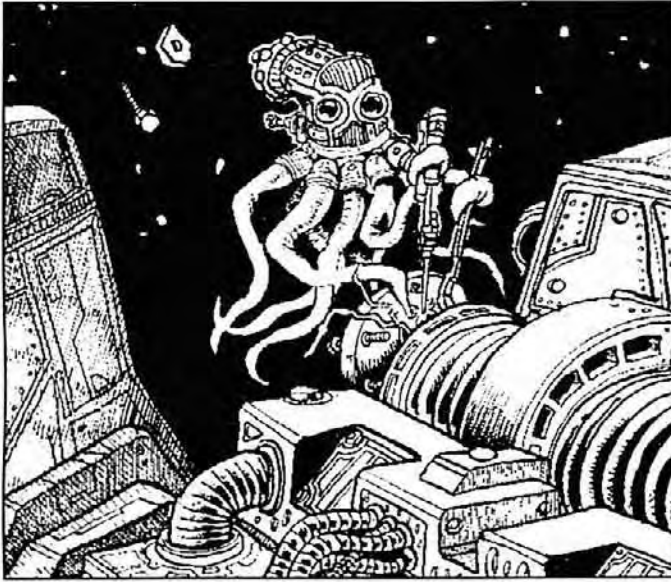
grappling techniques, with subtleties incomprehensible to anyone without tentacles.) Githiaskio itself, and most Githiaskio colonies, are currently at TL10, with intensive research being performed at TL11 and various agencies importing TL12 devices for study, but there are some low-tech backwoods Githiaskio communities, while Githiaskio who serve in Imperial forces often acquire TL12 skills.

Interstellar organizations have many uses for aquatic beings, but obviously have to make special arrangements; the army and marines mostly form "submarine specialist" units, which are attached at corps or army level as needed. The Scouts and merchant organizations tend to assign Githiaskio to special exploratory ships, or to base duty on water worlds. (The armed forces of Githiaskio are organized on the model of the Imperial army, with modifications as required by the combination of nautical and cavalry functions.)

The Githiaskio have adopted the Imperial attitude toward psionics, so little is known of their innate abilities. Since their minds are so similar to Human in other respects, it is possible they have a comparable level of psionic potential.

EQUIPMENT

Githiaskio work best with tools and weapons designed for use with tentacles, but can employ Human devices effectively. (Generally, no or minimal penalties are imposed for such use, but no bonuses for high dexterity should be allowed, either.) Special construction adds little to costs, but such work becomes harder to find farther away from Githiaskio. Lower-tech items tend to cost slightly more to make waterproof; as an obvious example, gunpowder simply does not work when damp (although more sophisticated explosives do), while a solid-state laser merely needs to have its circuits sealed. (But neither weapon type is much use in murky water . . .)



Vehicles can be fitted with waterproof equipment, purifiers, and so on, at an additional cost of about Cr200 per crew position or space unit (in the *GURPS Traveller* modular starship design system) converted. (Use common sense for this; bulk carrier cargo space requires little conversion, whereas low-tech engineering systems demand careful attention.) Living spaces that can convert easily between water and air occupancy are rare and expensive; purification and filtration systems have to be doubled. Vehicles must have sealed hulls if they are to be used by Githiaskio out of water. One of the worst problems with water is that it is *heavy*; it adds 66.7 lbs. per cubic foot of empty interior space to the weight of vehicles (16.7 tons per space unit for spaceships). Only shipyards on worlds with substantial aquatic-race communities usually have established facilities for this sort of construction; the yards on Githiaski pride themselves on being the best.

Special personal armor (other than battledress) and vacc suits can also be produced for Githiaskio; however, any sealed garment should be fitted with special sensor packages that convert scans (usually based on short-range radar imaging) into something that Githiaskio vibration senses can interpret. (If this is absent, a Githiaskio will feel nearly blind, and probably *very* nervous.) Githiaskio Vacc Suit and Battlesuit skills include training in use of these sensors; sense rolls made with them can never exceed the better of these two skills. Such sensors can be useful, but they are also vulnerable to damage, and active radar can be detected by properly equipped enemies.

Specially made Githiaskio protective suits cost 50% over normal cost for the nonstandard and rather complex design, plus the cost of the special sensor package, if required. These packages are available at TL8, when they weigh 8 lbs., cost Cr4,000, and give -3 to sense rolls; remove that penalty at TL9, and halve weight and reduce cost by Cr500 for each increase in TL. The radar is normally tuned to scan no more than 50 to 100 yards, to prevent sensory overload, and is generally restricted to reflect the capabilities of the Githiaskio's innate senses in water; a skilled operator, with Vacc Suit and Electronics Operation skills, can retune it for greater range, at the cost of potential disorientation.

The real problem, however, is that simple sealed suits do not provide enough support for Githiaskio to operate out of liquid under gravity. A few powered "support suits" have been produced, but these are uncomfortable to the wearer and very expensive (about Cr280,000 each); the cost of adapting such designs to battledress hardly bears thinking about.

A cheaper approach involves the use of small, sealed motorized vehicles with external mechanical manipulators and sensor packages, capable of operating on land, in vacuum, or underwater to a depth of about 2,000 yards. One-passenger vehicles of this type cost about KCr30, two-passenger vehicles KCr50.

Playing Githiaskio

Since their mental processes are so similar to those of Humans, players and GMs should have no great trouble depicting the personalities of Githiaski characters. However, the purely practical problems of playing such beings are a little more complex.

A mixed group of air-breathing and aquatic PCs will find many of the PCs taking turns with nothing to do, even if they can afford the array of life support equipment and special gear required for Githiaskio to be comfortable on land (and for Humans to work freely underwater). An all-aquatic group might be an interesting change of pace, but would add a lot of work for the GM without automatically being that much more rewarding. Githiaskio are generally best used as interesting and useful NPCs – comprehensible as aliens go, but with their own agendas and objectives, and a powerful advantage in their home environment.

In fact, their very *similarity* to Humans can be used to throw complacent players off guard; after a few encounters with honest, hard-working Githiaskio, and maybe the

occasional efficient but polite water-world customs officer, PCs may become careless when the next Githiaskio they encounter turns out to be a ruthless organized crime boss.

Minor Status

Githiaskio are fully aware of their status as a "Minor Race." Some individuals become aggressively touchy on the subject, asserting that they are "as good as anyone else," or even claiming that the "Major Races" are decadent and unworthy, while a few others display inferiority complexes, treating Humans as superior beings, or becoming morose and depressive when they contemplate their history. Most Githiaskio, however, just get on with their lives; should a Human be so crass and obnoxious as to challenge them on this subject, they will (more or less) politely point out that an accident of biology and history left them unlikely to achieve space flight, perhaps mention some of their culture's most admired artists or philosophers, or suggest that individuals should be judged for themselves and not for their species.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Hhkar

On the outer edge of the Julian Protectorate are the sleeping dragons known as the Hhkar. They resemble humanoid dinosaurs with large tails and hands with three fingers and opposable thumbs which have short semi-retractable claws. This race, once thought extinct, returned to this section of the galaxy just before the beginning of the Third Imperium. After a 10,000-year absence, the Hhkar had come back to reclaim what was theirs. The Dragons had returned.



HISTORY

Much Hhkar history has been lost in the thousands of years that they have been traveling through space. The Hhkar have been around much longer than have Humaniti. They achieved civilization about -75,000 and space flight around -50,000.

Imperial xenohistorians have reconstructed an early history, based on Hhkar religious writings and traditional stories. The Hhkar homeworld, Ssrar, was a geologically violent planet. Sulfur compounds tainted its atmosphere, which roiled with constantly changing weather. Early Hhkar might be able to stay in one area for centuries, or less than a decade, as conditions shifted and forced them to migrate. Despite their transient nature, the early Hhkar built permanent structures, like pyramids and stone circles, that could endure the harsh environment. The Hhkar built their pyramids not as tombs, but as gathering places for the public. These structures were treated with reverence and were never allowed to fall in disrepair while any group of Hhkar was in the region. Repairing and improving the structures was considered a sign of respect to the original builders.

As the Hhkar population increased, war grew more common, with different groups often competing for the same land. As technology progressed and wars became deadlier, a system of dominant and subordinate *ssaaahk* (subraces or clans) was formed.

Technology advanced at a slow but steady pace. Male Hhkar scouts, often traveling alone, explored their world, then the other planets in their system and other star systems, without the aid of jump drives.

Around -50,000 the Hhkar abandoned their homeworld. The few accounts that Humans have seen do not explain the great migration, or suggest any possibility that the Hhkar

might return to Ssrar. It is believed that since the Hhkar have never developed anything but the basics of terraforming, that overindustrialization caused a runaway greenhouse effect, making it uninhabitable. But this doesn't explain Hhkar secrecy about what happened to their world.

THE RETURN AND EXPANSION

The Hhkar are not native to the Amdukan sector, but it is known that they have been there before. The planet Urinir (Amdukan 2213) was a backwater world during the First Imperium, known for its extensive pyramid ruins. Xenarchaeologists found similar ruins on neighboring worlds but believed this past spacefaring race had died out, probably from disease.

According to Vargr in the Amdukan sector, huge sublight ships arrived in -222 and laid siege to Urinir. At first, the Hhkar were held back by the Vargr's superior technology. However, the sheer size of the invasion force eventually overwhelmed the Vargr defenders. They surrendered after three years, but even after the victory the ships kept coming, in an unending stream.

When the Hhkar took control of Urinir (which they called by its Hhkar name, Skkyhrk) they intended to exterminate the entire population of over 10 million. Vargr emissaries negotiated a slightly better fate (complete surrender) with great difficulty. After the surrender, the Hhkar killed only those inhabitants who were not in their minds productive members of society. Those executed included the elderly, disabled, and unemployed. The rest of the population was enslaved and no additional births were allowed; the conquered generation was the last.

The Hhkar gained jump technology with the conquest of Skkyhrk, and began a period of expansion. Hhkar technology advanced also, rising from TL9 to TL11 by the late 300s. They expanded their sphere steadily, replacing conquered worlds' populations with their own. The expansion ended in 377 after the Battle of Kargar. In that battle, Hhkar war fleets engaged, and with great difficulty defeated, a small fleet of the Julian Star Legion protecting the Kargar system (Amdukan 1812). Impressed by the cleverness and tenacity of the Julians in that first encounter, the Hhkar gave the captured commander, David Lindquist, a honorable execution and withdrew from the system. Despite sporadic skirmishes, the Hhkar grew more cooperative with the Julians, particularly with the Julian megacorporation Menderes. Today, Hhkar operate numerous industrial plants on Skkyhrk constructed by the Menderes Corporation.

PHYSIOLOGY AND APPEARANCE

Towering over most of the known races – at times over 7'6" and weighing around 500 lbs. – the Hhkar are physically impressive when first met. They are roughly humanoid in appearance, with a large heavy tail that they use for balance. They have thick skin, which is covered in tiny scales. They are warm-blooded and carnivorous, with a well-developed fatty musculature.

There is great diversity in the appearance of the Hhkar, even to the non-Hhkar eye, although individuals appear much alike within each ssaahk (family groups). See the box on p. 70.

SENSES

Hhkar hearing is not as acute as a Human's, which is why many Humans think their language is loud. They "taste" the air with their tongues, as do Terran snakes, with no true sense of smell. Hhkar vision leans toward the infrared, so blue lights are invisible to them. This gave the primitive Hhkar an advantage when wandering their home world, allowing them to keep away from the hidden hot spots on their volcanically active planet. Their most unusual trait is their magnetic sense, which is useful on their metal-rich homeworld. Not only can they sense magnetic fields; they can generate them. These small but complex fields are used as a limited form of communication. They can identify each other easily and can also determine each other's physical and mental states.



Random Hhkar Appearance

Skin Color (3d)

- 3-13 Olive
- 14 Dark olive
- 15 Brown
- 16 Maroon
- 17 Light brown
- 18 Gray

Markings (3d)

- 3-13 None
- 14 Mottling
- 15 Flecks
- 16 Striping
- 17 Wide band along spine
- 18 Special

Features (3d)

- 3-13 None
- 14 Small spinal ridge
- 15 Large spinal ridge
- 16 Small horn
- 17 Armor plates
- 18 Other

Tail (1d)

- 1-4 Whip-like
- 5-6 Club-like

Special Feature (1d)

- 1-4 None
- 5-6 Special (for example: long snout, double ridges, webbed feet and hands, wrinkled skin, spiked tail)

DIET

Hhkar are carnivores and prefer their meat raw or very lightly cooked. Meat breaks down quickly on their hot homeworld, so it is eaten immediately after slaughter. Thus, advanced food preparation skills were never needed by the Hhkar. The Human (and especially Vilani) obsession with getting food prepared perfectly is just one of the many things that Hhkar find confusing about Humans. The early Hhkar were simple hunter/scavengers. As they advanced, they learned farming and ranching techniques – and later, genetic manipulation – to maximize the output. Some of the best meat products available in the Julian Protectorate come from Hhkar worlds.

RESPIRATION AND SMOKING

While Hhkar breathe oxygen like most of the races in the Imperium, they are well known for their adaptability to other types of atmospheres. Conditions on their homeworld were always changing due to climatic and geological instabilities. When they were evolving, the concentrations of the taints in the atmosphere fluctuated from merely polluted up to exotic. Hhkar prefer worlds at least slightly tainted by sulfur compounds. They actually

absorb nutrients and minerals from this type of atmosphere. They can live in less tainted environments if they take certain precautions, the main one being to smoke.

The myth that the Hhkar breathe fire probably stems from the fact that they smoke heavily. Since the atmosphere never remained stable on their home world, early Hhkar learned to supplement their diet by burning and breathing in the smoke of specific types of vegetation. This vegetation was later treated with minerals to increase the potency of the smoke.

Since the environment on Ssrar precluded long leisurely meals, smoking allowed early Hhkar to gather and socialize. This custom grew in importance as the Hhkar moved on to worlds with vastly different environments. Smoking parties, or *ceeasshkab*, are an important social ritual. Many non-Hhkar in the Julian Protectorate and the Domain of Antares have adopted several of the customs of the *ceeasshkab*. Hhkar often own large plantations for growing their smoking plants; they are always experimenting with different ways to blend the plants to get the best smoke possible. Hhkar also grow tobacco and related plants for trade with Humans and Vargrs. Although they don't find opiates pleasurable, they grow them to trade to races that do.

GROWTH, REPRODUCTION, AND AGING

Hhkar begin life as an egg, which is laid in a communal area and hatches after around 21 weeks of incubation.

Juveniles have a lighter build, with greater speed and agility, than adults. Hhkar children don't live the carefree life of Human children; they are put to work within weeks of hatching. Older juveniles supervise and teach the younger ones. Newly hatched juveniles are given very basic tasks, like weeding a garden. Older juveniles teach, assist in repair work, labor on the farms, and learn specific trades from adults. Hhkar reach maturity at age 22.

Hhkar all begin life as males, then transform into females later. They can then change gender at will, sometimes cycling between genders up to six times throughout their life spans. Preceded by a variety of biochemical changes, sexual transformation occurs over a few days. It involves the shedding of skin and an almost total regeneration. During this time they can regenerate many types of physical damage. They can even regrow most internal organs and some external ones as well. However, major limbs cannot be replaced through regeneration.

Hhkar are polygamous and do not establish permanent relationships. Approximately once a year, females enter estrus and mate, laying clutches of one to six eggs. These

The Julian Protectorate

The Julian Protectorate is a large confederation of galactic states near the Domain of Antares. These states range in size from small countries on balkanized worlds up to multi-world empires. These galactic states have their own armed forces and conduct their own diplomacy; they give up little authority to the Protectorate. The Julian Protectorate's purpose is to mediate disputes, provide interstellar laws, and promote communication and cooperation between members. It also has a standing armed service for patrols and for emergencies. The Julians bicker among themselves but are united by their mutual distrust of the Imperium. They have had less than peaceful relations with the Third Imperium since the Julian War in 175.

Playing the Hhkar

PC Hhkar will be males, since Hhkar in female mode will normally only be encountered on Hhkar worlds.

Male Hhkar are loners and feel no need to be with other members of their race, so it isn't uncommon to encounter a lone Hhkar far outside the Hhkar sphere. Thousands of males from the lesser ssaahk leave to "scout" around the galaxy, pursuing full careers before returning to their homeworlds to share their experiences. Others will roam space for business reasons, and others for motives hard for a Human to understand.

Hhkar will generally regard all non-Hhkar as beneath any consideration of respect (or disrespect for that matter). Members of the major ssaahk will have little contact with aliens. They usually use members of the lesser ssaahk to mediate with non-Hhkar. Hhkar can feign politeness, especially in military situations, but most often they will treat non-Hhkar as little more than useful or potentially useful creatures. Non-Hhkar can get respect from a Hhkar, but not easily. Military decorations and rank are some of the few things that Hhkar will recognize as signs of status in aliens. Non-Hhkar with status will suffer insults and harsh criticism if they fail to meet the Hhkars' expectations. However, the Hhkar will never insult an individual who has no status, for to do so lowers the Hhkar to the other's level. A Hhkar will never admit to being wrong to those without status, whether they are Hhkar or not.

eggs are laid in a heavily guarded communal area called *ahr!guuhr't'k* (caves of life), which are usually building complexes near the center of the community. In prehistory, these were actual caves, warmed by nearby volcanic vents.

Females oversee the juveniles. They provide leadership and protection, while teaching them skills for adulthood. While the females are extremely protective of the juveniles, they don't exhibit any signs of affection and give no special treatment to their own young. They will kill individuals judged to be deformed, slow learners, or just too difficult to control. There are no problem children in the Hhkar clutches.

The Hhkar are a violent race and many die in the frequent conflicts between the ssaahk. Those that do grow old don't suffer from the effects of aging, due to the regenerative process involved in changing gender. Reports of Hhkar living for centuries, some for over a millennium, led Imperial scouts to think the race was immortal. This is not true. Hhkar generally live almost 200 years, but because of an ability to enter a natural state of suspended animation called *ghraa!ks* (the long sleep), they can live much longer than that. While the Hhkar can enter this state at will, younger Hhkar seldom do. Those that survive to old age sleep with an increasing regularity and duration. Due to this practice, Hhkar society has been able to retain the knowledge and experience of past generations. According to the Hhkar, elderly Hhkar usually die while in the *ghraa!ks*, of their own will.

LANGUAGE

To the untrained ear the Hhkar language is just a jumble of hisses, growls, coughs, snarls, and sharp inhalations and exhalations. When speaking, the Hhkar usually have their mouths ajar, since they seldom use their lips. Some words in Hhkarn require the sound of the jaws snapping shut, which is represented as a "!" in writing. While, with training, they can vaguely understand Human languages, they cannot speak them, nor can Humans form the sounds of Hhkarn unaided. The Hhkar written language is a pictographic one. It represents entire concepts by single characters. These easily can be, and often are, misinterpreted by other races.

PSYCHOLOGY

The Hhkar have the ability to shift their minds into a variety of different mental states. These states can be triggered by a combination of stimuli such as warmth, light variations, dampness, sound, or taste. These stimuli can occur in nature or be created to induce a specific mental state.

These mental states include a learning mode, combat mode, laborer mode, and bard mode. Each mode is different, and a Hhkar in one state can appear to a completely different being from the same creature in another state. In some ways this may be viewed as a split personality on a racial level. See p. 72 for details on the different mental states.

Gender to the Hhkar is just another state of consciousness followed by a metamorphosis into the new gender. A Hhkar will have certain knowledge and skills while in one gender, and a completely different set of skills as the other gender. Gender-specific skills will be lost when the Hhkar changes gender but will be regained when he/she changes back again. It usually takes several weeks for the Hhkar to get used to the new gender again. For this reason gender shifts are often delayed until after a Hhkar's career ends.

The Holdouts

A small group of Vargr has survived for hundreds of years in a massive cave system in the remote south of Skkyhrk. Descended from an elite military "hide-behind" force, they brought in a great deal of materiel in the time between the surrender and the Hhkar's improvement of their own detection technology. These Vargr still believe they can somehow expunge the Hhkar from Skkyhrk. They no longer have any technological advantage over the conquerors, nor have they communicated with off-planet forces in three generations, but they are now directing their attention toward biological warfare. Should they succeed in creating a plague specific to the Hhkar, the balance of power in the sector will be changed radically.



SLEEP AND DREAMING

Unlike most races, the Hhkar do not have a regular sleep cycle. They appear to have no physical urge to sleep after a established period of wakefulness. Instead, they sleep when it suits them. Observers have noted the Hhkar sleep long and often, but they can go without sleep for days without any degradation in their skills. They can also schedule their sleep to a regular pattern if necessary. For example, Hhkar in the Julian Protectorate's navy will sleep on a cycle similar to the Humans.

Hhkar also have a wide variety of dream states. These are used for recreation, as an aid for decision-making and learning, and to provide spiritual insight. The Hhkar lead an active fantasy life in the recreational dream state. The decision-making and learning state helps them to review the day's events and to go over what they have learned from many different angles that are not available when they are awake. With this ability, any Hhkar with Tactics or Strategy skill can use this time to make plans for upcoming battles. Spiritual dream state is the deepest of the dream states and, to Hhkar, the most enlightening. See *Religion*, below, for more details.

MEDICINE

Hhkar medicine is often baffling to Imperial scientists, for in many ways their medical treatments border on shamanistic practices. Most confusing to the Imperials is that this "primitive" system actually works very well for the Hhkar. With the Hhkar, there is a strong connection between the mind and body . . . to alter the body, you must alter the mind, and vice versa. Hhkar medicine depends greatly on the patient's

mental state. A sick Hhkar must truly want to get better before the body can be healed. Hhkar doctors, called *Hhroosska* (healers of the body and soul), are skilled in using the mind to manipulate the metabolism in lieu of drugs. Some techniques look like hypnotism, while others seem like tribal rituals with

Hhkar Mental States

The Hhkar can enter a variety of special mental states at will in order to perform certain tasks. These four are the most important:

Learning Mode turns the Hhkar into an attentive "sponge" for knowledge, totally absorbing all the technicalities of the subject that is being taught. Hhkar in this mode have Eidetic Memory 1.

Combat Mode focuses the Hhkar totally on combat and gives him the Higher Purpose advantage for the combat skill he is using. Hhkar do not use this mode for their ritual battles; it is reserved for war.

Laborer Mode is a zombie-like trance that the Hhkar use when doing repetitive tasks. In this state they become cogs in a machine. They don't talk among themselves, and will work until the job is done or a supervisor orders them to snap out of it.

Bard Mode is the reason why the Hhkar have such a rich oral history. In this mode a Hhkar can recall perfectly stories that he has memorized in Learning Mode, and will recite them with flair. They also use this mode to create new stories to share during the smoking rituals.



drums, songs, and storytelling. These rituals are used to get the patient's mind into a healing mode, focusing all the body's energy to heal whatever damage has occurred. While not a form of regeneration, it is a heightened form of natural healing. Hhkar rarely use drugs other than the traditional smokes, as they can cause imbalances between the mind and body and induce a nightmare state that the Hhkar call *priiska!* (hell).

SOCIETY

The Hhkar race has traveled through space for many thousands of years, and the Hhkar culture has adapted itself to that environment. Amdukan sector is the current home to a large contingent of Hhkar which arrived there aboard armadas of huge sublight ships. Even though they have colonized several worlds in that sector, a significant percentage of the population prefers to live in space habitats. Many of these habitats are ancient, having survived several migrations. They are jump-capable, letting entire communities continue to wander among the stars.

Hhkar society is centered on the *ssaaahk*, a group that has common racial characteristics. Every Hhkar places the needs of his *ssaaahk* above his own needs and obeys without question the orders from the patriarch of his *ssaaahk*. The patriarch has absolute authority over the affairs of the *ssaaahk*, controlling the use of all the lands, buildings, vehicles, companies, and other resources.

Certain physical features characterize each *ssaaahk*. Members born without those features are usually killed as juveniles, and those that survive to adulthood are ejected from the *ssaaahk*. These are known as the *raaabr*, or clanless. They have

the lowest status in Hhkar society and usually do the jobs that no one else wants to do. Some *raaabr* exhibit characteristics associated with a *ssaaahk* other than the one they were born into. They may petition that *ssaaahk* for membership, but they must prove themselves worthy by doing great deeds that will bring glory to the *ssaaahk* that they wish to join.

Males dominate Hhkar society in the role of warriors, diplomats, travelers, and decision makers. Females remain in the background, rearing young and performing other services within the Hhkar community. Since the Hhkar alternate between genders, each Hhkar will have the opportunity to experience both sides of their society. Instinct guides them through the gender shift, and when instinct fails them, society fills in. Many Hhkar behavioral cues are transmitted by their magnetic sense. Non-Hhkar find these cues difficult to interpret, even with electronic aids.

HONOR AND CONFLICT

Hhkar males defend their honor fiercely, ensuring that adequate recognition is given to individual and *ssaaahk* prestige. Failure to accord honor where it is due can lead to combat, although seldom to the death. Because social cues are often transmitted via the magnetic sense, visitors may be surprised to see males grapple and fall to the ground biting and clawing, without ever saying a word to each other.

Hhkar bystanders take no heed of the event, and the participants act as if nothing happened once the conflict is resolved. Honor and prestige play an important role in obtaining the right to procreate, which is usually judged by communal consensus. Specific procedures differ among *ssaaahk*.

Conflicts among the *ssaaahk* are common and take many lives. The interstellar government, however, imposes rules and limits on such feuding. In all but the most extreme cases, the only weapons used are small arms. *Srriikka!ki* (Duel of Honor) is one method of deciding a conflict between *ssaaahk*. It is a battle to the death of the two best warriors of each *ssaaahk*. The patriarchs of the conflicting *ssaaahks* decide upon rules and weapon types.

Hhkar Status

| | |
|----|--------------------------|
| 3 | Member of Ruling Ssaaahk |
| 2 | Member of Major Ssaaahk |
| 1 | Member of Minor Ssaaahk |
| 0 | Raaabr |
| -1 | Respected aliens |
| -2 | Non-slave aliens |
| -3 | Alien slave |

GOVERNMENT AND RELIGION

Eight major *ssaaahk*, known as the Society of Fathers, form the top of a pyramidal government. The patriarch of each *ssaaahk* holds a good measure of power and freedom to act in the interests of his family's well-being and honor. But the eight major *ssaaahk* hold ultimate authority in overseeing the interests of the Hhkar Sphere as a whole.

The Eight Major Ssaaahk

Nhroossrt: The leading ssaaahk in the Hhkar areas known to the Imperium. They have olive skin, a small spinal ridge, and a whip tail.

Ghkaazk: Gray skin with dark striping and a whip tail.

Hhkrask!h: Olive skin with black mottling and club tail.

Bruunhazk: Olive skin, webbed feet and hands, whip tail.

Hrnarskii: Dark olive skin, large spinal ridge, club tail.

Skkeerihrk: Maroon, small horn, whip tail.

Cahkrr!zkh: Olive skin, club tail.

Hhakriizk: Gray and maroon-striped skin, spiked tail.

Example of a Minor Ssaaahk

The Kh!hrnaahrt have light brown skin, armor plates, and a club tail. They prefer warm, dry climates and are well known as great warriors. They owe "fealty" directly to the great Nhroossrt, and will often be found in the planetguard units of the Hhkar Navy.

This governmental structure is similar to that of the Aslan. But while the Aslan Tlauku is not a true governing body, the Hhkar Patriarchy is. It retains control of the Hhkar Navy and ground forces, and enforces its will over all Hhkar. It also reserves the right to conduct diplomacy outside the sphere, although diplomats are never members of a major ssaaahk.

SPIRITUAL LIFE

The many Hhkar religions involve planes of spiritual existence, but they differ in the specific planes, theological interpretations, and means of achieving these planes. Hhkar believe their dream lives are as valid as their waking lives and have deep religious significance. They believe in death they may retire to one of these "higher planes" until they choose to reincarnate. They also believe in "lower planes," states of consciousness that leave them at least aware of the real world, although with different perceptions. This makes normal reality the lowest plane of all, yet it remains the most important as it is the junction at which all the other planes meet.

Pahhkirs (priests) serve as guides, helping each Hhkar to reach the appropriate states of consciousness, using their magnetic sense and personal body fields. Their task is made easier when, during gatherings, the fields generated by other experienced Hhkar also serve as guides.

TECHNOLOGY

The harsh environment of the Hhkar homeworld, as well as their magnetic sense, caused Hhkar technology to advance along unusual paths. Metallurgy and electricity were discovered early. With these discoveries they never used rollers, gears, or ball bearings, preferring magnetism to guide and drive mechanical action. Their urban vehicles generally employ magnetic levitation. Hhkar even use magnetism in their décor, although this is invisible to the Human eye. This is why Hhkar still prefer magnetic levitation in their vehicles. A well-tuned magnetic vehicle is a thing of beauty to the Hhkar.

Magnetics gave the Hhkar access to the stars. Before acquiring jump drive from the Vargr, the Hhkar used ramscoops to send their ships at near light speeds to other stars. The Hhkar ramscoop is an incredible engineering feat; Human ramscoops never achieved the same capabilities that these huge fusion-powered rockets did. Sweeping hydrogen out of interstellar space with a miles-wide magnetic field to fuel its magnetic bottle-contained nuclear reaction, these ships took the Hhkar across the galaxy.

Hhkar products are incredibly durable and virtually impossible to wear out, probably because Hhkar equipment has very few moving parts, since most of the movement is provided by magnetics. However, Humans and Vargr find these products undesirable, since they tend to be very heavy and "strange." The ever-resourceful Menderes Corporation contracts with the Hhkar to make products more compatible with their Human and Vargr customers in the Julian Protectorate. Hhkar gauss weapons are in particularly high demand.

PLANET INFORMATION

The Hhkar's home planet is long lost in time and space. The Hhkar won't say anything about it to other races, and few Hhkar in the Amdukan sector even know the truth.

Ssrar was destroyed. The world was dying from a runaway greenhouse effect brought on by overindustrialization. The Hhkar built domed cities and constructed huge colony ships to take as many of their people off the planet as possible. Not all could leave; most of the Hhkar population left around -60,000 while the ones that stayed behind could only watch their world slowly die around them.

For the next 1,000 years, all the Ssrar Hhkar could do was survive. Some of them stopped looking "inward" with their minds and tried to expand outward. They discovered that they had psionic abilities. Eventually they became quite powerful, blending their talents with technology and creating many devices that expanded their range and strength. Over the next 9,000 years they developed a mature, fully psionic society and were able to reverse the damage done to their homeworld. Oddly, the new breed of Hhkar had none of the wanderlust of the "old race" – they did not try to colonize other systems, or even explore their own, even though they knew they had cousins among the stars. They had saved and remade their world, and they were content to stay there.

Psionics and the Hhkar

It is unknown if the Hhkar possess psionic abilities, but they do believe that psionics pervert the soul by "turning it inside out." Since psionics allow the spirit to interact with the temporal world, a psi can never enter the higher planes of the inner self. To the Hhkar, when a psionic dreams he can only enter the "hells." Hhkar will react violently toward anyone known to be a psionic. There is a Droyne world in the Hhkar sphere of influence, but the Hhkar forbid any outside contact with them, and some speculate that genocide is taking place.

Around -50,000, a huge migration fleet of Hhkar came back to Ssrar. They found the new Ssrar to be a very frightening place. The psionic Hhkar seemed more different and fearsome than any aliens. Mutual incomprehension soon led to genocidal war. The psionic Hhkar had an advantage at first, using long-distance mind control to wreak havoc among the spacer Hhkar, but the spacers found the range of their powers and started dropping asteroids down the gravity well onto Ssrar. The psis stopped some of them, but the planet ran out of Hhkar long before the system ran out of asteroids. The spacers continued their bombardment until the world's surface was hot enough to melt lead. Since that time, the Hhkar have hidden their shame. After nearly 50,000 years only the priests know the true story.

Hhkar Characters

Add +20% to the height of a Human of the Hhkar's ST. Multiply the weight of the unmodified height by 3.

Hhkar Racial Template **88 POINTS**

Attribute Modifiers: ST +4 [45]; HT +1 [10].

Advantages: DR1 [3]; Early Maturation [5]; Extended Lifespan [5]; Field Sense [10]; Filter Lungs [5]; Hermaphromorph [2]; Metabolism Control 10 [50]; Mode Advantages (See below, Accessibility: Exclusive -10%) [45]; Regeneration (Regular, Only during gender change -20%, Requires 8 hours preparation, -60%, Total -75%) [7], Sharp Teeth [5]; Striker (Tail) [8].

Disadvantages: Callous [-6]; Code of Honor [-10]; Curious [-5]; Dependency (Smoking, Common, Daily) [-15]; Duty (To Ssaahk, 12-) [-10]; Hard of Hearing (Only -2 to hearing rolls, -50%) [-5]; Intolerance [-10]; Sleepy (50% of the time) [-10].

Quirks: Intolerance (Psionics and psi-using races). [-1]

Skill: Lucid Dreaming (M/E) IQ [1]; Meditation (Realistic) (M/H) IQ [4].

Notes on Advantages

Code of Honor

The Hhkar code of honor is somewhat like the Old Teran concept of Bushido. Hhkar place the needs of the Ssaahk above their own, obeying the patriarch absolutely. They must respect their superiors; failure to do so will be considered a challenge to the superior. Proper recognition of an individual's achievements must be given; one who does not recognize your achievements, even a superior, must be challenged. Strength and combat prowess are respected in allies and enemies.

Hermaphromorph

For the Hhkar, the sex-change process can take several days to complete. During the transformation, the healing processes of the Hhkar are accelerated, giving the effect of Regular Regeneration until the process is complete.

The Menderes Corporation

Menderes is the megacorporation that dominates business in the Julian Protectorate. It predates the Long Night and in many ways devised the Protectorate.

More than any Imperial megacorporation, Menderes specializes in harnessing the strengths of non-Human races. In particular, its understanding of Vargr psychology and use of Vargr staff makes its position in the largely Vargr Protectorate nearly immune to challenge. It is justly seen as one of the chief proponents of true Vargr-Human cooperation. Menderes has evolved itself to thrive in an atmosphere of interracial amity and, within that atmosphere, to outcompete any corporation run by and for a single race. Any attempt to stir up racial dissent will be taken as a direct attack on the megacorp's corporate culture as well as its markets, and Menderes will respond decisively.

Menderes lost most of its Imperial markets more than a millennium ago, but it may be coming back for another round . . . it has recently completed a trade agreement with Archduke Ngeaz of Antares.

Metabolism Control

The Hhkar have the ability to put themselves into a state of suspended animation for extended periods of time. This has led to rumors of immortal or extremely long-lived Hhkar.

Mode Advantages

The Hhkar can enter four special mental "modes" (see p. 72). Each of these modes has a defining advantage that can only be used while in that mode. These are Eidetic Memory 1 [30] in Learning Mode, Higher Purpose (Fight at all costs) [5] in Combat Mode, Single-Minded [5] in Laborer Mode, and Voice [10] in Bard Mode. A Hhkar can only be in one of these modes at a time, and therefore only has access to one of these advantages at a time. This is an Accessibility limitation (Exclusive, -10%) based on the total cost of the four advantages.

Striker (Tail)

The tail of the Hhkar can be used to strike a foe in combat. It has a 1-hex reach, but is clumsy (-2 DX to hit). It can strike into side or rear hexes only, doing thrust damage.

CAREERS

Hhkar rarely enter Imperial service. Those few that do will be found in the Domain of Antares, mainly with careers in the Scout Service. Hhkar in the Julian Protectorate can have any standard *GURPS Traveller* career.

SKILLS

Hhkar within their own sphere will have little familiarity with technology of other races. Hhkar who have had careers in either Imperial or Julian services will be familiar with their devices. Few Hhkar within their own sphere will have any Electronics Operation (Gravitics) skill. Most will have a comparable skill based on magnetic technology.

Hlanssai

The Hlanssai are a highly intelligent humanoid race, somewhat feline in appearance, originating in the Vargr Extents but now found in much of the Imperium and other areas. They are widely admired for their artistic talents, grace, and dexterity, but many other races distrust them because of their justified reputation for emotional instability. Nonetheless, sheer wanderlust and versatility have carried the species far.

HISTORY

The Hlanssai evolved on Vvirhlanz, in the Vargr Extents, a planet much like Terra. Their ancestors were intermittent gatherer types, adapted for a semi-nocturnal existence in moderately forested areas. They already possessed a fair level of intelligence when tectonic shifts created a “land bridge” between two continents, allowing many new, and frequently dangerous, species to invade the proto-Hlanssai’s home environment. Flexible, intelligent behavior was encouraged by the ensuing evolutionary pressure, but this was only part of the result. The new dangers confronting the Hlanssai demanded the ability to perceive situations quickly and in detail, and an awareness of all possible subtleties in a given situation. The race already possessed the acute senses of the sometime night-dweller; evolution now enhanced these to exceptional levels. Hlanssai intelligence was the product of the need to analyze and comprehend these sensory inputs.

Hlanssai culture had achieved a degree of equilibrium (and a kind of elegant Bronze Age technology) when the race was first contacted by the Vargr. Normally, the Vargr have poor relations with minor races within their territory unless they are strong enough to stand up for themselves, but the Hlanssai were an exception to this rule. The species’ immense versatility, subtlety, and talent for empathy made them very valuable, and Hlanssai social scientists, servants, traders, and spies have traveled virtually everywhere that the Vargr have gone (and sometimes beyond).

PHYSIOLOGY AND APPEARANCE

Physically, Hlanssai are tall, but very light and slender of build. The race is homeothermic, bisexual, and viviparous, producing one or two young after an eight-month gestation period. Cubs are born able to digest solid food, and soon become mobile.

Hlanssai bodies are half-covered with a silky, glossy yellow fur, and the race seldom bothers with clothing; the most striking Hlanssai feature is the head, with its two large eyes and two even larger ears. Hlanssai see a range of frequencies extending into the ultraviolet; the external flaps of the huge ears serve to detect thermal radiation and air currents with considerable efficiency and focus sound into the highly sensitive inner ears. The hands have three three-jointed fingers and a stubby, jointless opposable thumb. The feet are similar, and can provide some limited grip, especially when climbing.



LANGUAGE

The words-tongues of my people form out of the time of the Vargr-coming – we have called it tethelliiori-chaa-elloom-laa gheelinee. You must have hear. Vvirhlanz, there were a thousand times 10 who walked, like the blood in your veins, like uuleel tuuhaa, like my hands when I painted. But now, Hlanssai are paint across the stars, in patterns that are pictograms, in blood of speech. Ooooh, look and adore, lover of languages, on this our iilloor quan wonder, that is our knack of dialogue. Grasp it?

– A friendly Hlanssai being helpful to a Human linguist

When they were first discovered by the Vargr, the Hlanssai had a single language with minor regional variations; it was prevented from fragmenting further by the large number of wanderers in Hlanssai society. However, since space travel has spread the race so far across the stars, countless local dialects and variations have developed. Most have some recognizable relationship to the original Hlanssai language (defaulting to each other at varying penalties in *GURPS* terms), but some are extremely strange, thanks to absorption of non-Hlanssai vocabulary and structures, and sheer Hlanssai whimsicality.

All Hlanssai languages are subtle, with a musical fluidity to Human ears; Hlanssai make no distinctions between formal, informal, and colloquial forms, and enjoy subtle allusions and ambiguities. A group of Hlanssai may develop a set of references and in-jokes that enables them to communicate ideas to each other that will escape even other Hlanssai that nominally speak the same dialect. In *GURPS* terms, major-race characters treat Hlanssai languages as Mental/Hard, and will probably *never* escape the sense that the Hlanssai are laughing at their mistakes; Hlanssai treat other Hlanssai variants as Mental/Average.

More often, Hlanssai learn other races' languages. They can pick up the basics of another tongue quite quickly, but usually get bored before they have mastered any subtleties such as irregular forms or arbitrary rules. (On the other hand, if they find such things amusing, they may take a delight in mastering them and showing off their skill.) Most Hlanssai are amused by the irritation which they cause other beings by mangling their languages in complex and peculiar ways, and resolve ensuing communications problems by trying multiple

expressions of the same idea, often loaded with similes and metaphors.

Hlanssai Names

Within their own society, Hlanssai usually have several personal names, some given by their parents at birth or in infancy, others picked up as nicknames, titles, or honors (granted by themselves or others) through their lives. There are *no* fixed rules for structuring of these names. Realizing that this can confuse other races, they usually choose one or two names for "public use." These may be long, liquid Hlanssai words, names from the other race's language, or short, seemingly meaningless tags. As in so many things, intelligent members of other races often develop the suspicion that a Hlanssai's choice of name is some kind of subtle joke that no non-Hlanssai could hope to comprehend.

PSYCHOLOGY

Hlanssai psychology is oriented overwhelmingly toward immediate sensory awareness and possible responses. The species' philosophies are generally sensualistic and dismissive of the long term, and notoriously sybaritic and hedonistic. A Hlanssai will usually respond to each situation as it occurs, with little regard to long-term consequences – and often, therefore, dramatically.

This is not to say that Hlanssai are psychopathic or vicious; they are capable of personal loyalty and affection, and their capacity for empathy is quite phenomenal, but enduring trust is alien to them.

N'tarronth and N'tarronchii'a

An important concept to note when dealing with Hlanssai is that of "N'tarronth" and its converse, "N'tarronchii'a." These dual ideas are a further consequence of Hlanssai sensualism. "N'tarronth" is usually translated as "shaping" or "manufacturing," but it can actually best be expressed in Human terms as "imposing arbitrary form upon the universe." Hlanssai are acutely aware of the distinction between the natural and the artificial, and regard one of the most important aspects of individual behavior to be the extent to which a being accepts external reality and acts within existing limitations. A being who rejects things-as-they-are and seeks to shape reality to his or her will is N'tarronth; a being who takes a passive, accepting view is N'tarronchii'a. Despite the fact that other races view them as mercurial and unstable, Hlanssai tend – by their own terms – to be highly consistent in being either N'tarronchii'a or N'tarronth, and regard an inability to choose between the two modes of behavior as decidedly odd, perhaps comparable with a refusal to eat or drink. This does not imply any question of good or evil in Hlanssai terms; it is simply a matter of normal sentient behavior.

(Therefore, this is the one area in which well-trained xenopsychologists can predict Hlanssai behavior.)

In general, music, applied science, law, manufacturing industry, and exploration are classed as N'tarronth, whereas mathematics, figurative art, and hedonism are N'tarronchii'a. To the Hlanssai, therefore, most other races tend to N'tarronth – which is, the Hlanssai feel, their own business – but display an odd tendency to mix in elements of N'tarronchii'a. In other words, Hlanssai understand other species almost as little as other races understand Hlanssai.

As a guideline rather than a firm rule, N'tarronth Hlanssai often have Architecture, Chemistry, Craft skills, Scrounging, and Vehicle skills as well as the Greed disadvantage, while their N'tarronchii'a relatives may display knowledge of Astronomy, several languages, History, Mathematics, and so on, as well as Laziness. Combat Reflexes and Empathy; Curious, Impulsiveness, Nosy, and Short Attention Span; and Artistic skills, Intelligence Analysis (intuitive rather than trained), Savoir-Faire, and Survival are common among both groups (but by no means universal).

The one thing that a female Hlanssai will remain consistent about is maternal affection, at least for the first few years of the infant's life, albeit, at times, in what a Human would call a painfully lackadaisical way. Hlanssai mothers can be violently protective one minute, seemingly unconcerned the next, according to provocations too subtle for Humans to comprehend. Very young Hlanssai children running around loose can cause consternation, particularly on Human worlds. Vargr children love to have the energetic Hlanssai children to play with, at least until a Hlanssai mother turns violently protective for no clear reason.

In fact, even a Hlanssai cannot necessarily predict another Hlanssai's actions more than a few minutes ahead; seemingly trivial stimuli can cause accelerating changes in responses over even this short a time. Human psychologists describe Hlanssai behavior as "chaotic" in a mathematical sense. Hlanssai must be *continually* cajoled, rewarded, or threatened to keep them on a particular course of action.

Hlanssai can seem frighteningly intelligent. Whereas a Human can hold six or seven things in short-term memory, Hlanssai can hold maybe two dozen, and transfer them to long-term memory quite efficiently. They learn fast, and are natural brainstormers. However, they lack mental focus, and are incapable of prolonged, intensive study, so their effective, useful intelligence is broadly comparable to that of Humaniti.

SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT

Hlanssai society has changed little since they were contacted by the Vargr. Their psychology makes complex, rigid systems and long-range planning impossible, and even familial or tribal bonds are weak. Balancing this, the species' drive to cooperate in the face of immediate danger is powerful. The result is a system of administration by self-interested cliques and participant democracy, anarchic to most non-Human eyes but acceptable to most Hlanssai. (A Hlanssai who finds

it unacceptable usually either forms his own clique or takes to demagogic politics.)

Personal violence and theft are quite common, but can represent a sufficient immediate danger to Hlanssai in general to trigger the cooperation instinct. Larger-scale organization for long-term aims is rare, generally only occurring when an unusually capable and charismatic Hlanssai perceives a particularly strong racial need, and persuades his people to work together to meet it.



RELATIONS WITH OTHER RACES

The Vargr generally regard the Hlanssai as useful, dangerous, and fortunately weak; the Hlanssai regard the Vargr as graceless and unsubtle, but interesting and useful. Beyond the Vargr Extents, Hlanssai are widely seen as enigmatic, unstable, intelligent, and interesting; Hlanssai attitudes toward other races vary, but generally involve curiosity mixed with ironic humor.

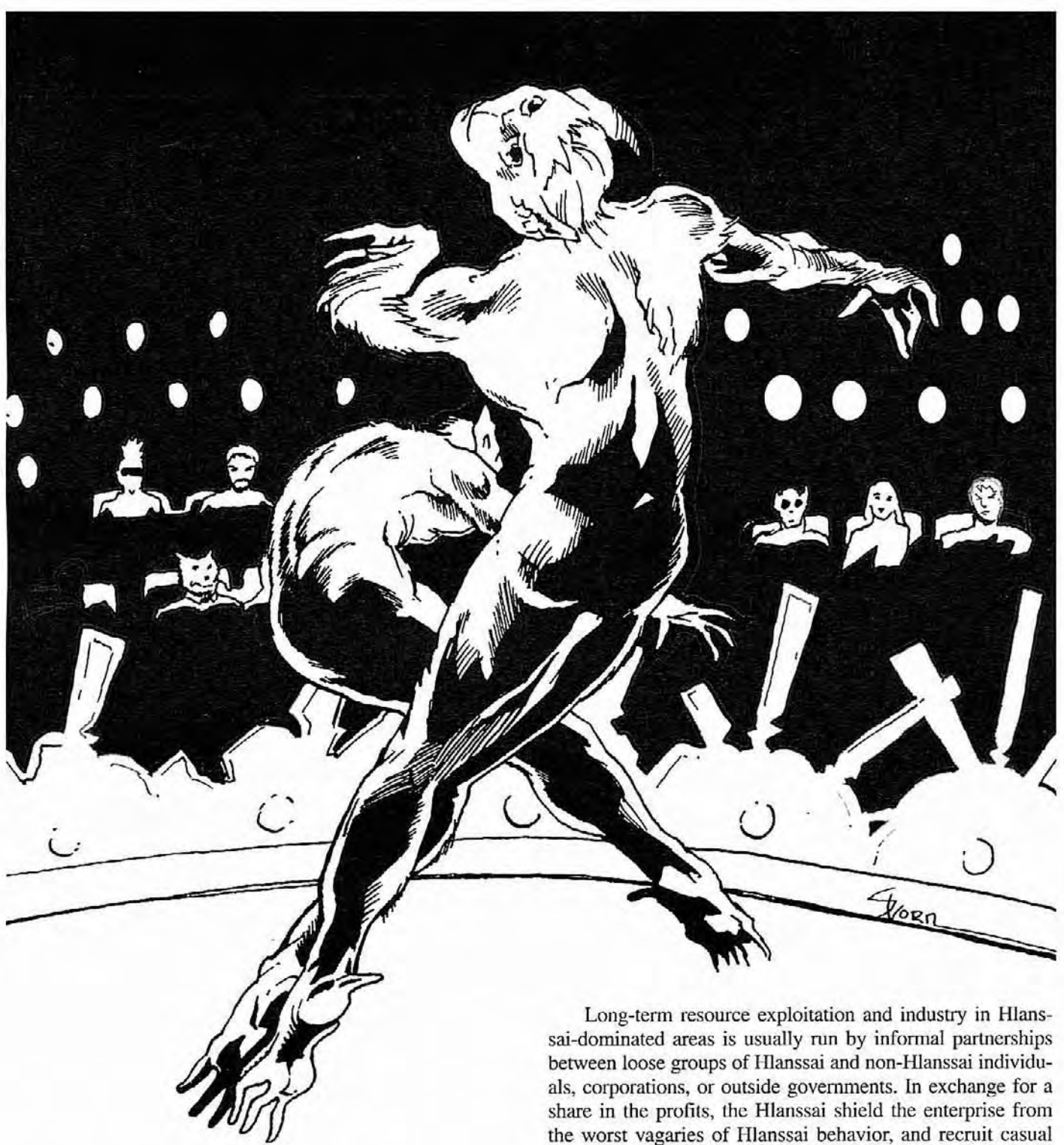
Incidentally, when Humans hear Vargr describe the Hlanssai as "unpredictable" or "unstable," they often react with surprise or hilarity; the Vargr are themselves, after all, a by-word for instability among Humaniti. This is, of course, a foolish error. Vargr behavior is strongly based on the race's perceptions of charisma, status, and ambition; on its own terms, it is consistent and even logical. The Hlanssai, on the other hand, react in complex and rather less predictable ways to their perceptions of *everything* around them, including stimuli that seem trivial to other races. Many Humans have come to understand and empathize with Vargr; it is probably *physically* impossible to achieve the same relationship with Hlanssai.

Hlanssai in Play

Hlanssai may be encountered throughout the *Traveller* universe, particularly in Spinward and Coreward regions, and in a wide variety of circumstances. Many Hlanssai, afflicted with wanderlust, become roving artists, entertainers, animal handlers, or adventurers. A strong disinclination to settle anywhere for long – and a matching inability to remain on perfect terms with one employer for extended periods – generally keeps these beings on the move. Some Hlanssai become "liaison specialists" in the employ of exploration or merchant organizations. Their immense capacity for analyzing others' behavior is extremely useful in these roles, but Hlanssai cannot accept discipline, and so rarely find work in large, formal organizations, and never in military service. Referees should find it possible to operate Hlanssai, once their racial peculiarities are understood. Adventurous players might con-

sider using Hlanssai as player characters, although if Hlanssai are being properly roleplayed, no other PC will trust them, and no long-term aims will be pursued; this might prove an intolerable limitation.

One plausible role for an NPC Hlanssai is that of "wandering artist," perhaps a musician or other performer. Devotees of the arts will often put up with a great deal from geniuses who they admire; Hlanssai may be prone to especially erratic behavior, but then again broad-minded Humans are especially prone to tolerating oddities from aliens. PCs might find work as bodyguards or assistants to a famous Hlanssai; this can be very challenging work. In other situations, the mere fact that an artwork of some kind was created by a Hlanssai should be a clue to knowledgeable Imperials that it is likely to fetch a high price and perhaps have an interesting history.



TECHNOLOGY AND TRADE/ECONOMICS

Hlanssai are not suited to building an organized technological society of their own, but this is no great problem for them. They have a working grasp of commerce and economics, and happily trade artworks and services for high-tech devices, transportation, and luxuries. They are not the galaxy's hardest bargainers, but there is usually plenty of competition for their products and skills. No one has ever succeeded in tying a Hlanssai to a long-term contract, and no one with any sense tries.

Long-term resource exploitation and industry in Hlanssai-dominated areas is usually run by informal partnerships between loose groups of Hlanssai and non-Hlanssai individuals, corporations, or outside governments. In exchange for a share in the profits, the Hlanssai shield the enterprise from the worst vagaries of Hlanssai behavior, and recruit casual Hlanssai labor. The non-Hlanssai half of the partnership brings stability, focus, and any technology or long-term employees needed. Managing such a relationship is notoriously hard work, but can be immensely profitable.

Hlanssai are often very good at *using* technology, once it has been explained to them. Their keen senses and dexterity make them good drivers, pilots, shooters, AI operators, and so on, and they may compensate for their lack of hard training with daring and enthusiasm. There are few or no starships in operation with entirely Hlanssai crews (apart from a few scout or seeker-type vessels that have somehow fallen into a single Hlanssai's hands), and no Hlanssai-specific ship classes, as running or designing a ship both require long-term focus and application, but some Hlanssai serve as crew on Human or Vargr free traders and exploration missions.

VRIIRHLANZ (1635, GZAEKFUEG SECTOR)

Starport: Class IV (Vrir Down).

Diameter: 7,970 miles (12,750 km). *Gravity:* 1.12 G.
Atmosphere: Standard oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 70%.
Climate: Earth-normal. *Population:* 3.3 billion (970,000 Vargr and other races, otherwise Hlanssai). *Government:* Anarchy (with Athenian Democracy, Technocracy, and Corporate administrations in some areas). *Control Rating:* 0 (but local factions may enforce CR 1 or 2 in some areas). *TL:* 10. *Gas Giants:* 4. *WTN:* 5.5. *Trade Classifications:* Hi.

The Hlanssai homeworld remains dominated by the natives, and is generally considered a difficult place for non-Hlanssai to visit; dealing with the local culture requires nerve, tolerance, and fine judgment. Operating in the (unfenced) area around the starport is *relatively* easy, as this area has a high Vargr population who impose their own cultural norms.

Profits from trade have made it worth the while of various Vargr factions to build the starport into a fairly substantial facility. There are a variety of trade offices here, and the Julian firm Menderes (p. 75) maintains a presence with a mixed Human-Vargr staff.



In the absence of any ability to construct a world government, the Hlanssai manage their affairs through their usual mixture of casual anarchy and local participatory democracy. The planet's Tech Level is hard to assess; local industry would be hard pressed to sustain it above 6, but there is a flourishing import trade, and TL11 or 12 devices sometimes show up as expensive toys. The TL10 rating given above reflects what is *regularly* available.

HLANSSAI CHARACTERS

For a Hlanssai character, calculate height and weight as for a Human of equivalent ST, then add 1' to the height and subtract 15 lbs. from the weight.

HLANSSAI RACIAL TEMPLATE 40 POINTS

Attribute Modifiers: ST -2 [-15]; DX +2 [20].

Advantages: Alertness +4 [20]; Ambidexterity [10]; Extra Fatigue +1 [3]; Less Sleep 1 [3]; Night Vision [10]; Reputation +2 (Talented artist, to devotees of the arts, all the time) [2]; Ultrahearing [5].

Disadvantages: Absent-Mindedness [-15]; Odious Racial Habit (Whimsical and unpredictable behavior) [-5]; Reputation -1 (Erratic, all Vargr, all the time) [-2]; Reputation -2 (Crazy, or Vargr minions, or both, everyone, 10 or less) [-5].

Quirks: Broad-Minded; Cooperative under heavy stress; Dreamer; Imaginative. [-4]

Skills: Climbing +1 [1]*; +2 all Artistic skills [12].

* This bonus only applies when the Hlanssai are barefoot; however, Hlanssai rarely wear footwear.

This package assumes that the character will be operating in Human society, not too far from the Vargr Extents; for a campaign based in other regions, the Reputations may be modified, and the Odious Racial Habit *may* also have a different value.

NOTES ON RACIAL ADVANTAGES

Alertness see p. B19

The Hlanssai sensitivity to heat and air currents gives them exceptional senses in general.

Night Vision see p. B22

In particular, their ability to "read" heat and air currents, while not true Faz Sense or Infravision, does allow Hlanssai to operate under low light situations as though the light were normal. This is treated as the Night Vision advantage.

INDIVIDUALIZING THE HLANSSAI

The first concern when designing a Hlanssai is whether it is N'tarronth or N'tarronchii'a (see p. 77). NPC Hlanssai are equally likely to be either, although some jobs are more likely to be taken up by adherents of one attitude than those

of the other. If players are operating Hlanssai, they have free choice, but *must* always act in accordance with their choice. (In fact, any Hlanssai acting in a fashion contrary to his choice for any significant period is probably in the process of going insane; if players refuse to work within the chosen mind-set, GMs are fully entitled, after issuing fair warnings, to take over the mad Hlanssai, operating them as totally unstable paranoids, psychopaths, schizophrenics, or other maniacs.)



Other advantages, disadvantages, quirks, and skills must be determined on an individual basis, with reference to the being's chosen mind-set; Hlanssai usually have plenty of each. However, anything requiring extended, concentrated effort or consistency – whether a high level in a Hard skill or a disadvantage such as Megalomania or Truthfulness – is highly unlikely. On the other hand, a Hlanssai *without* at least -20 points of extra Mental Disadvantages, from Bad Temper through Compulsive Behavior to Kleptomania, will be regarded as horribly dull by others of the race.

Optionally, the GM may even permit Hlanssai characters to shift mental disadvantage assignments around over time – by, say, 5 points per game month – to represent long-term changes in the overall pattern of their behavior. Nonmilitary packages from *GURPS Traveller* may be applied to Hlanssai, but a semi-random mix of abilities is more appropriate; few Hlanssai have careers as such. Combat skills are possible, though rarely high; some of them indulge in rough-and-tumble Brawling, or learn enough about guns to protect themselves in their wanderings.

Hlanssai cannot take better-than-average Appearance; among themselves, aesthetics are vastly complex and personal, while they all look rather similar to members of other races. Unattractive or worse Appearance is rare, usually the result of disfiguring injury or disease.

CHAPTER NINE

J'aadje

The J'aadje are an accomplished and basically peaceful race from a remote area of the Reavers' Deep sector. They have long been in intermittent contact with interstellar society, but only recently have permanent trade links been established. Now they are emerging tentatively onto the interstellar scene. The situation is further confused by the presence of an aggressive Human culture struggling for control of their own planet.



ORIGINS AND HISTORY

The J'aadje are descended from omnivore hunter-gatherers, much like Terran hominids. They appear to have developed intelligence largely as a way of advancing in and manipulating their social groups. Their world, Gaajpadje, has two major habitable land masses, widely separated; the names translate simply as East Continent and West Continent. There are also a number of archipelagoes and islands. The J'aadje evolved on West Continent, and spread across the entire globe, mostly as a result of exploratory expeditions seeking trade opportunities and display items.

The basic pattern for a modern J'aadje culture is usually a city-state, under the dominance of "oligarchs" or "councilors." These individuals possess considerable Ku'densharll (Status or Charisma – see p. 85). Having access to wealth or power, they can put on displays that permit them to gain more, enabling them to dominate their societies. However, because Ku'densharll is only really gained among those who can see a display in person, an oligarch can rarely dominate more than one city and its environs, and usually has several rivals even in that area. Thus, higher levels of social organization depend on negotiations or alliances between oligarchs. The recurrent pattern of J'aadje history has been a new city-state rising on the basis of an advantage in agriculture, trade, or technology, falling under the sway of a prince or council, and expanding aggressively, forcing neighboring cities into alliance until equilibrium is restored. Over centuries, this pattern has become almost formalized in itself.

Eventually, the port city of Rijudjya gained a special status in the West Continent, becoming the "ceremonial capital" where oligarchs could meet, sign treaties, and attempt to assert Ku'densharll over each other. Similar cities emerged on the East Continent, though none achieved complete dominance before a new force swept them away.

THE INTERSTELLAR SITUATION

Gaajpadje lay some way beyond the borders of the First Imperium, in a region with only a sparse scattering of stars; legends suggest that the occasional Vilani expedition reached this far, but no continuing contact was ever established. With the Solomani emergence, Human colonies were established within a few subsectors of Gaajpadje, and probably contacted the J'aadje, but the Terrans were preoccupied with their conflict with the Vilani. Then, in the Long Night, the Human-colonized regions of Reavers' Deep became a jungle of piratical pocket empires, none of which bothered with these backwards, remote non-Humans before the balance of power shifted again with the appearance of the Aslan. The Hierate glanced their way, and the Human states shifted to defensive postures. Wanderers did visit Gaajpadje, but found no reason to stay. Attempts to trade with the J'aadje were rendered too difficult by the formalities of their complex society.

THE COMING OF THE K'TRING

At some point, however, one Human ship came here with other motives. As far as can be reconstructed, around -850, a warship from one of the Reaver States, perhaps damaged in battle, perhaps fleeing defeat, crashed in the mountains of the East Continent. Its crew, finding themselves castaways, made the most of their position. It was a big ship with a crew of both sexes; the gene pool was large enough for survival, and the knowledge base was big enough to avoid barbarism.

The resulting Human culture, the K'tring, always maintained a sternly militaristic attitude, treating the J'aadje as effete inferiors. Although they lost much of their technology in the first few generations, they scrupulously preserved some records, enabling them to advance as they conquered a greater resource base. It took over a thousand years, but eventually, the Warlord of K'tring became ruler of the entire East Continent.

Then, however, their advance was checked. K'tring technology progressed beyond that of the J'aadje, eventually reaching TL6, but was then slowed by the disdain of a militaristic society for pure research. More to the point, the sheer size of the planet's oceans was a formidable barrier.

However, the J'aadje proved equally unable to strike back. Not only did the city-states lack central direction, but their culture proved incapable of matching the technological advance of the K'tring. The situation settled down to stalemate.

Meanwhile, some K'tring moved to J'aadge cities. These were mostly criminals or other refugees, or their descendants, and few had the flexibility and skill needed to operate successfully in J'aadge society, so they were usually consigned to ghettos and found menial work as laborers. This reinforced the general J'aadge sense of superiority over the "crass" K'tring. What the J'aadge did not realize was that the K'tring quarters of their cities held increasing numbers of spies, reporting by radio to the Warlord. The Humans did not intend the stalemate to last forever.

THE CALEDON VENTURES CONTACT

Then the situation changed again. Gaajpadje was still in a remote area of space, where the possibility of Aslan advance discouraged Human expansion while Imperial diplomacy and a lack of worthwhile territory discouraged Aslan intrusion. However, from around 1050, a Human border-

state, the Principality of Caledon, gained power in the area, and a corporation within that state, Caledon Ventures, began looking for new opportunities. Gaajpadje was thought unpromising, its native race being amicable enough but aloof, according to the records. Still, it seemed worth a visit.

The crew of the trade pioneer ship *Scotian Huntress* arrived at the planet in 1108. They were surprised by the presence of a Human culture, but the K'tring were rapidly dismissed as lacking anything worth trading, and rather oafish to boot. The J'aadge, on the other hand, were producing artworks that would sell for a fortune anywhere in Human space.

The aliens *were* rather aloof, but the trained trading team were eventually able to analyze J'aadge social patterns and gain a foothold. Fortunately, the J'aadge, used to all manner of fine social distinctions, understood that these Humans were not the same as K'tring, and even seemed to have some grasp of courtesy. The trade agreement took some time to negotiate, but everyone involved could see the potential for profit.



K'tring Society

Culturally, the K'tring may have absorbed more from their J'aadje neighbors than they will ever admit. They have preserved a functional military dictatorship over 2,000 years, something that few Human societies manage. This is based on three cultural features: a well-judged mixture of meritocracy and inherited power, enabling the dictators to train their heirs as rulers while absorbing competent inferiors into the power-structure; an aggressive posture towards their J'aadje subjects and neighbors, giving K'tring the sense that the military has an important purpose; and a formal, almost ritualized (and hence probably J'aadje-influenced) system of "military etiquette." A K'tring lives to earn promotion, to serve his superiors (within a framework of military honor), and to conquer J'aadje. The soldiers do not come to identify with their subjects because those subjects are, very visibly, not Human. Fortunately, the K'tring see J'aadje as "natural subjects" rather than anything worse; while K'tring rule is severe, it has never been genocidal.

Nor have the K'tring always been entirely militaristic. They have spent decades and even centuries resting and consolidating, with their military structures representing little more than a set of badges and titles. However, the structures have always remained intact, and full K'tring militarism has always been easy to restore when the rulers wanted to expand again.

All but 700,000 of the K'tring live on East Continent, with the rest scattered in garrisons and ghettos across the planet. The J'aadje subject population on East Continent and conquered islands numbers 43 million.

Interstellar Relations

With the recent establishment of trading links between Gaajpadje and the interstellar community, a number of secret emissaries have visited the K'tring from the Solomani Confederation (see *GURPS Traveller Rim of Fire*), looking for possible allies. This represents a real possibility (and threat); Solomani ideology, involving Human superiority over technologically sluggish aliens, appeals to the K'tring. However, genetic tests suggest that the K'tring are descended from a mixed group with both Solomani and Vilani members, making the alliance less appealing to precisely the sort of Solomani who the K'tring would admire most. In any case, Gaajpadje is a long way from the Solomani Sphere. A more promising association might involve the Aslan, to whom the K'tring might offer land in exchange for military support. If the Imperium ever heard of such an alliance, they would quietly seek to sabotage it, to keep ambitious Aslan off their doorstep in this region.

Then, on the night that the agreement was being celebrated, the K'tring struck. (This seems rather a large coincidence; it is suspected that they had learned of the visitors and were determined that the J'aadje should be conquered before they acquired new resources from the stars.) Glider-borne commandos landed in Rijudjya, quickly followed by a larger force in dirigibles. The trade team, caught at a banquet, had to fight their way back to their ship. However, they succeeded, and used its weapons to drive off the invaders.

Nonetheless, this marked the beginning of a dangerous new era on Gaajpadje. The K'tring theorized that offworld merchants, interested only in profit, might not continue supporting the J'aadje if there was nothing in it for them, and might indeed be subverted to support their fellow Humans, or at least to sell them arms. Meanwhile, the J'aadje, driven back in a dozen local wars, struggled to improve their military technology so that they could hold off the K'tring without racking up debts to offworlders. Gaajpadje has become a world of intrigue, while its inhabitants look to the stars.

PHYSIOLOGY AND APPEARANCE

J'aadje have the standard humanoid body plan, but are small compared to Humaniti, averaging little more than 130 lbs. on average. They lack physical strength, but they are agile and dextrous. Their behavior is formal and ritualistic by Human standards.

Size aside, J'aadje could never be mistaken for Humans. They have golden-hued skin and large, pale gray eyes. They breathe through "vents" in their necks (at the side below the jawline), and lack true noses, but their faces project forward over their mouths to form blunt triangular "snouts." Their limbs have flexible articulation completely unlike Human arms or legs, and their hands have two opposable thumbs and five other very flexible fingers, radiating from a near-circular palm.

J'aadje and Humans can eat each other's foodstuffs, with a few exceptions, although some caution and vitamin supplements may be advised. Humans find J'aadje cooking interestingly spicy; it is usually accompanied by a fermented tree-sap that is mildly intoxicating in very large quantities. Human food strikes J'aadje as bizarre, but tolerable in emergencies; alcohol makes them irritable or ill.

J'aadje have two sexes, produce live young (usually in male-female pairs), are homeothermic, and live for about 70 standard years on average.

LANGUAGE AND NAMES

The J'aadje have a number of closely related languages; in fact, Imperial researchers classify most of them as variant dialects of a few basic tongues. The structures and forms are actually fairly straightforward; most represent Mental/Average skills for Human characters (and J'aadje learn Human languages just as easily). However, actual J'aadje speech is often full of formality and allusions, making conversations difficult for Human participants. J'aadje poems and public speeches usually impose a penalty on

the skill of a Human translator, and a Human's effective Savoir-Faire in J'aadje society can *never* exceed his skill with the J'aadje language being used.

The J'aadje language most commonly learned by Human visitors is that of the region around Rijudjya. This is therefore being ever more widely learned by ambitious J'aadje, though some resent its dominance.

Names draw from a very wide variety of cultural traditions; some have a specific (often flowery) meaning, others are just traditional. For flavor, the first J'aadje a party meets can introduce themselves with names like Last Moment of Sunset, Daughter Three of the Tax-Farmers, and Graces the High Staircase . . . then, for variety, the next J'aadje can say "Call me Bort."

PSYCHOLOGY

The Human stereotype of the J'aadje is based on the fact that they are physically small, highly formal, soft-spoken, and produce fine artworks. Actually, it is not *certain* that their behavior derives from anything other than accidents of history and culture. Across the Imperium, there are many Humans just as formal and obsessed with art and beauty as the J'aadje. However, almost *all* J'aadje seem to share these traits, and historical study suggests that they have been manifested in every recorded J'aadje culture, so they may indeed be innate in the race.

It would appear that the ancient packs or prides of proto-J'aadje possessed an intricate social structure, which dictated advantages in everything from feeding through access to sleeping places to mating. In fact, it seems likely that sexual selection acted especially strongly in J'aadje evolution, rewarding complex display behaviors even more strongly than seems to have been the case with Terran hominids. As a result, J'aadje culture is based on successful display.

The other stereotype that many Humans bring to dealings with J'aadje is the idea that they are a peaceable, even timid race. This is based partly on unconscious prejudice based on size, and partly on the fact that the primary recent contact with the J'aadje occurred during a war between the J'aadje and a Human colony on their world, in which the J'aadje faced severe problems. This stereotype is almost entirely wrong.

The J'aadje were fighting wars between tribes and city-states thousands of years before they met Humaniti. Admittedly, J'aadje warfare tends to be wrapped around with rules and formalities, but these are primarily designed to establish clearly who won, and by how much, *not* to minimize bloodshed. A J'aadje will rarely start a fight without a clear objective, but that, after all, tends to be wise in warfare. Conversely, a J'aadje fighting in self-defense can prove fast, ruthless, and sometimes brutal; Human mercenaries taking training tickets on Gaajpadje find their clients to be promising soldiers, if a little *too* respectful of rank (provided that the superior seems to know his job), but have some difficulty explaining concepts such as rules of war.

KU'DENSHARLL

The J'aadje word *Ku'densharll*, central to the species' psychology, has been variously translated as "charisma," "prowess," or "elegance." It actually has elements of all these. In essence, *Ku'densharll* is what a J'aadje demonstrates by creating, possessing, or displaying something beautiful or

fine. A J'aadje with high *Ku'densharll* gains social status and self-esteem, and is considered much more attractive by members of the opposite sex. Displays of wit or skill can grant *Ku'densharll*, but only for as long as observers remember the display, whereas works of art or craft embody the advantage for as long as they endure. Thus, the J'aadje esteem artists and poets above improvisational entertainers (although they do appreciate formal dancing). Rituals,

too, earn temporary *Ku'densharll*, and if they are preserved and repeated, it can become more permanent. However, the species mostly uses ritual to mark its social divisions and points of etiquette. The invention of recording devices, and the advanced recorders now being brought in by interstellar trade, have shifted the balance somewhat, and entertainers are rising in status in J'aadje society.

This is the source of the renowned J'aadje obsession with art and beauty. For centuries, J'aadje have been mastering a huge range of arts, and encouraging their spread by patronage and sponsorship. Furthermore, fully effective displays earn most *Ku'densharll* if they are comprehensible quickly, ideally at a glance. This means that J'aadje art is rarely enigmatic or incomprehensible. Humans appreciate and buy it for its own sake, and are happy with the most traditional forms, whereas, say, the Hlanssai (pp. 76-81) produce a vast range of styles, some of them unappealing to Humans.

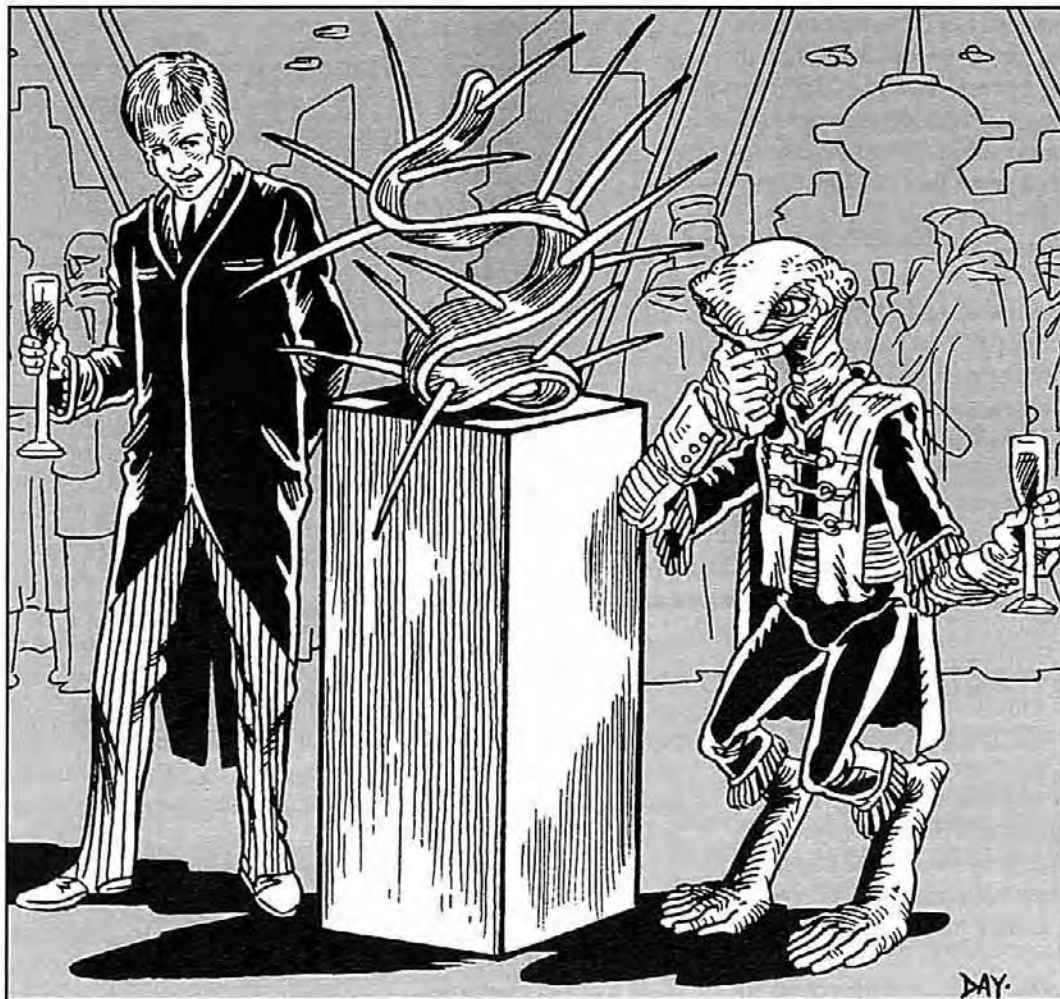
J'aadje art? It's all surface show. But it's a show so intricate and spectacular, you can lose yourself skating on that surface.

*— Sir Claremont Parks,
Marquis of Tallith,
connoisseur*

Personal Weaponry

The planet's Control Rating is usually listed as 2, though details vary from place to place. Actual laws are mostly light, but custom and ceremony can be very aggravating. J'aadje rarely prohibit ownership of personal weapons, although anyone carrying military-grade equipment will attract the attention of law enforcers, and probably be thought inelegant. Anyone displaying especially modern weaponry will soon have many offers to buy it.

As a militaristic society, the K'tring are mostly around CR4; they thoroughly approve of weapons, but have many rules about their proper place, and react severely to inappropriate displays or anyone running guns or technology to their J'aadje subjects. Anyone displaying especially modern weaponry will soon have a single *very* serious and definite offer to buy it . . . from the ranking local K'tring, on behalf of his government. It may be hard to turn down this offer without fleeing immediately.



SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT

There is no single government, even today; the world is balkanized into multiple societies. Although the J'adje city-states have been forced into increased cooperation, they remain highly independent, and in some cases, old mutual hostilities are strong. Each city-state functions as something between an oligarchy and a dictatorship by Human standards, with strong "charismatic" elements, although local details vary. The ancient port city of Rijudjya remains the planet's nexus of power, especially since this is where the starport is located, but it is much more a diplomatic and trade center than a true capital.

Nevertheless, J'adje culture is functionally the same across the planet, though there are differences of locally great importance. The intricate rituals and formalities that the J'adje evolved to demarcate the subtle distinctions of their society have basically ossified that society. It was not that the J'adje dislike change in itself, so much as that any change makes too much trouble for too many individuals. This was to prove dangerous when the J'adje gained the K'tring as neighbors.

MILITARY FORCES

There is *no* standard system of organization or rank in J'adje armed forces. Each city-state is fiercely proud of its own traditional structures.

Even obvious divisions into army, navy, and air force are often absent. Furthermore, promotion is all too often based on a sort of military variety of Ku'densharll, rather than actual competence. The ensuing problems are one reason why the K'tring have so often been able to defeat the J'adje in battle, especially when several city-states were attempting to coordinate their forces.

Recently, some J'adje forces have adopted Human systems of rank and organization, usually through Human mercenary instructors. These are regarded as rather crass by many J'adje, but they are working reasonably well.

The K'tring have a fairly straightforward regimental system of organization, with some rank names recognizably descended from ancient Solomani terminology. Their army consists of regiment-sized specialist units, and includes

an air corps with dedicated strike, support, and transport regiments.

Their navy is mostly made up of fast, lightly armored craft of around destroyer size, with a growing tanker support fleet to give it world-wide range.

TECHNOLOGY AND TRADE

Since the start of the recent conflicts with the K'tring, the J'adje have been struggling, against their own cultural inclinations, to advance their general level of technology. Caledon Ventures has been quietly assisting this, both as a side effect of commercial activities (selling the J'adje high-tech equipment was always part of the deal) and as a matter of policy (to ensure the preservation of this profitable trade relationship). They have also quietly been discouraging the spread of high-tech equipment or information to the K'tring; this has sometimes been difficult, but fortunately, the K'tring have relatively little to offer offworld traders, and make poor merchants and diplomats.

As a result, the major J'adje city-states, and especially Rijudjya, now the location of the world's main starport, have advanced from a refined and elegant TL5 to a ragged and patchy TL8.

K'tring Characters

The K'tring are normal enough Humans, with few visible oddities aside from the usual adaptations to slightly lower gravity. Being descended from a small group who were not specially selected, they are somewhat prone to hereditary diseases, despite some patchy attempts at eugenic procedures. (It seems that their ancestors decided, probably rightly, that it was usually better to live with minor problems than to lose genetic variety.) However, most K'tring are healthy specimens for their age, and the culture values physical training and exercise.

K'tring characters can therefore be created using standard *GURPS* rules, with no universal special features. However, many K'tring have internalized their society's attitudes, giving them a Code of Honor much like that found in many armies, emphasizing respect for superiors and their orders, and protecting comrades and the good name of the unit (worth -10 points). Some have Intolerance towards J'aadje (-5 points), though this social pattern is mostly reflected by giving J'aadje a Social Stigma in K'tring-ruled society. A few feel strongly that they have been maltreated and perhaps betrayed by their fellow Humans among the stars, giving them general Intolerance (-10 points).

A few K'tring have traveled off their world in recent years, for various reasons. (Some have distinguished themselves in low-tech mercenary units.) These will usually have the Primitive disadvantage at some level in interstellar society, and occasionally suffer from a group reputation as backwoods militarists (usually a -2 Reputation on 7 or less, perhaps limited to merchants and admirers of the J'aadje).

Outcasts and Subjects

K'tring living in J'aadje cities have the Social Stigma *Outsider* (-15 points). They rarely have Status higher than 1 or 2, and often have Enemies in the same community or a Secret such as "Spy" (usually worth -10 or -20 points). Streetwise skill is a large advantage.

J'aadje subjects of the K'tring have the Social Stigma *Minority Group* (-10 points), and can never have a Status higher than 1. (The K'tring systematically prevent the J'aadje from forming very complex social groups.)

J'AADJE ATTITUDES TOWARD TECHNOLOGY

Mechanical and practical ingenuity and elegant technological devices have always been one path toward the Ku'densharll that is all-important to J'aadje. However, because not much Ku'densharll is really gained if a thing has to be *explained*, there are limits. Most J'aadje admire simple, elegant devices, but find complex machines boring unless they are exceptionally attractive to look at.

Because of this attitude, the J'aadje advanced quite quickly to TL3 or 4 in many areas, once they had the basic ideas, but progress slowed markedly in any technology whose manifestations were not self-evidently comprehensible to untrained observers. They eventually reached TL5, and made some advances into TL6 mechanics, including lighter-than-air transport and advanced steam engines. However, they never developed useful electrical devices, and what they did achieve took them a long time.

All that said, J'aadje technology does tend to be elegant and well-executed. Human experts on low-tech mechanics often profess themselves impressed by the efficiency of J'aadje designs. When the *Scotian Huntress* arrived on Gaajpadje, the crew discovered a culture in which the most advanced form of transport was a slender dirigible propelled by a refined triple-expansion steam engine, and the standard military sidearms were lightweight, high-velocity rifles, clockwork-operated machine pistols, and needle-slim rapiers. Incidentally, J'aadje industrial processes usually appear very clean and ecologically sound, but this is mostly a matter of surface show; hidden or subtle pollution is as prevalent here as on many Human worlds.

Some J'aadje have taken to demonstrating their refinement and Ku'densharll through mastery of offworld technology. This is a radical fashion, not yet widely accepted in J'aadje society, but encouraged by forward-looking governments.

GAAJPADJE (1124, REAVERS' DEEP SECTOR)

Starport: Class III (Rijudjya).

Diameter: 6,008 miles (9,613 km). *Gravity:* 0.8 G. *Atmosphere:* Standard oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 70%. *Climate:* Temperate. *Population:* 293 million J'aadje, 37 million K'tring, 11,000 Imperials. *Government:* Balkanized. *Control Rating:* 2 in J'aadje areas, 4 in K'tring areas. *TL:* 8. *Gas Giants:* 1. *WTN:* 4.5. *Trade Classifications:* Ri.

The J'aadje homeworld orbits a G4V star. The system also includes one small gas giant and a few uninteresting baked or frozen rocks.

Less than 15 standard years ago, Gaajpadje's starport barely rated as Class I. Ships could land at local dirigible/aircraft ports, with caution, but there were no high-tech facilities or dedicated beacons. However, as up-to-date library files will note, rapid work by Caledon Ventures and other corporations has upgraded the Rijudjya field to Class III, and several other towns (on both continents) have cleared fields and installed basic beacons. While old records show the world as TL5, ignoring the K'tring war machine, current survey files say TL8 – though that is somewhat generous.

J'AADJE CHARACTERS

Calculate height and weight for a J'aadje as for a Human of the same ST, then subtract 3 lbs. and add 2" of height. J'aadje seem willowy or wiry to Human eyes.

J'AADJE RACIAL TEMPLATE

-13 POINTS

Attribute Modifiers: ST -3 [-20]; DX +1 [10].

Advantages: Double-Jointed [5]; Extra Fatigue +1 [3]; Manual Dexterity +2 [6].

Disadvantages: Reduced Hit Points -3 [-15]; Selfish [-5].

Quirks: Establish superiority by flaunting good taste. [-1]

Skill: Appreciate Beauty (M/VH) IQ-1 [4].

Many J'aadje have advantages such as Pious, Single-Minded, or Versatile, or disadvantages such as Callous, Chauvinistic, Compulsive Spending, Dull, Jealousy, Staid, or Stubbornness. A fair few have Intolerance of K'tring after bad experiences in recent wars. Most (but not all) rate as Primitive in interstellar society; see below. Appearance advantages and disadvantages mostly apply only with other J'aadje, but a Handsome/Beautiful or better J'aadje gains a +1 reaction from most non-xenophobic Humans, as the race's aesthetics involve grace and elegance of manner. This is considered a 0-point feature.

Status in J'aadje society runs from -2 (street rabble) to 5 (Oligarch/Senior Councilor). High levels should always be accompanied by either high levels of Appreciate Beauty (enabling the character to accumulate exceptional Ku'densharll by skill) or very substantial Wealth (enabling him to achieve the same result by purchase).

J'aadje from cosmopolitan cities could have skills at any TL from 5 to 8, and those who have been in regular contact with offworld visitors could have some TL10 knowledge, and need not take the Primitive disadvantage.

EQUIPMENT

J'aadje can work with equipment built for Humaniti, though they tend to find it cumbersome; GMs should apply penalties of between -1 and -3 to many skill rolls to reflect this. (With firearms, -1 to attack rolls is usually enough; low J'aadje ST often provides additional problems.)

Most Humans find J'aadje equipment delicate and tricky to use; penalties to skill rolls (from -1 to -4) are common, and DX rolls may be required to use an item at all, especially if the item depends on the user possessing two opposable thumbs per hand.

TYPICAL J'AADJE WEAPONS

While imported weapons are now widespread on Gaajpadje, many J'aadje still use sidearms constructed by their native industry. The following are two typical examples, both using similar but not interchangeable locally made 6mm ammunition. One is a rifle, designed to be as effective as possible while still being suitable for typical J'aadje soldiers; the other is a hand-held gatling, the weapon referred to as a "clockwork machine pistol" by some visiting Humans, which fires rather low-power rounds in large quantities.

The rifle has a medium-length barrel (about 14 inches), and a manual repeater action with a 10-round detachable box magazine (usually a bolt action, though lever or pump actions are also possible). The "machine pistol" has very short barrels (3 to 4 inches) and a 32-round drum that includes the spring that operates the gun; it can only be used in full-auto mode, not with selective fire.

WEAPON TABLE

| Name | Type | Damage | SS | Acc | 1/2D | Max | Wt | aWt | RoF | Shots | ST | Rcl | Cost | LC | Hld | TL |
|------------|------|--------|----|-----|------|-------|------|-----|-----|-------|----|-----|-------|----|-----|----|
| 6mm Rifle | Cr. | 4d+2 | 12 | 9 | 400 | 2,800 | 5.25 | 0.4 | 1 | 10 | 8 | -1 | 105/1 | 6 | -4 | 8 |
| 6mm Pistol | Cr. | 1d+1 | 9 | 3 | 100 | 300 | 2.5 | 0.4 | 8 | 32 | 8 | -1 | 75/1 | 6 | -1 | 8 |

The Long-Reaching Conversation of Elegance

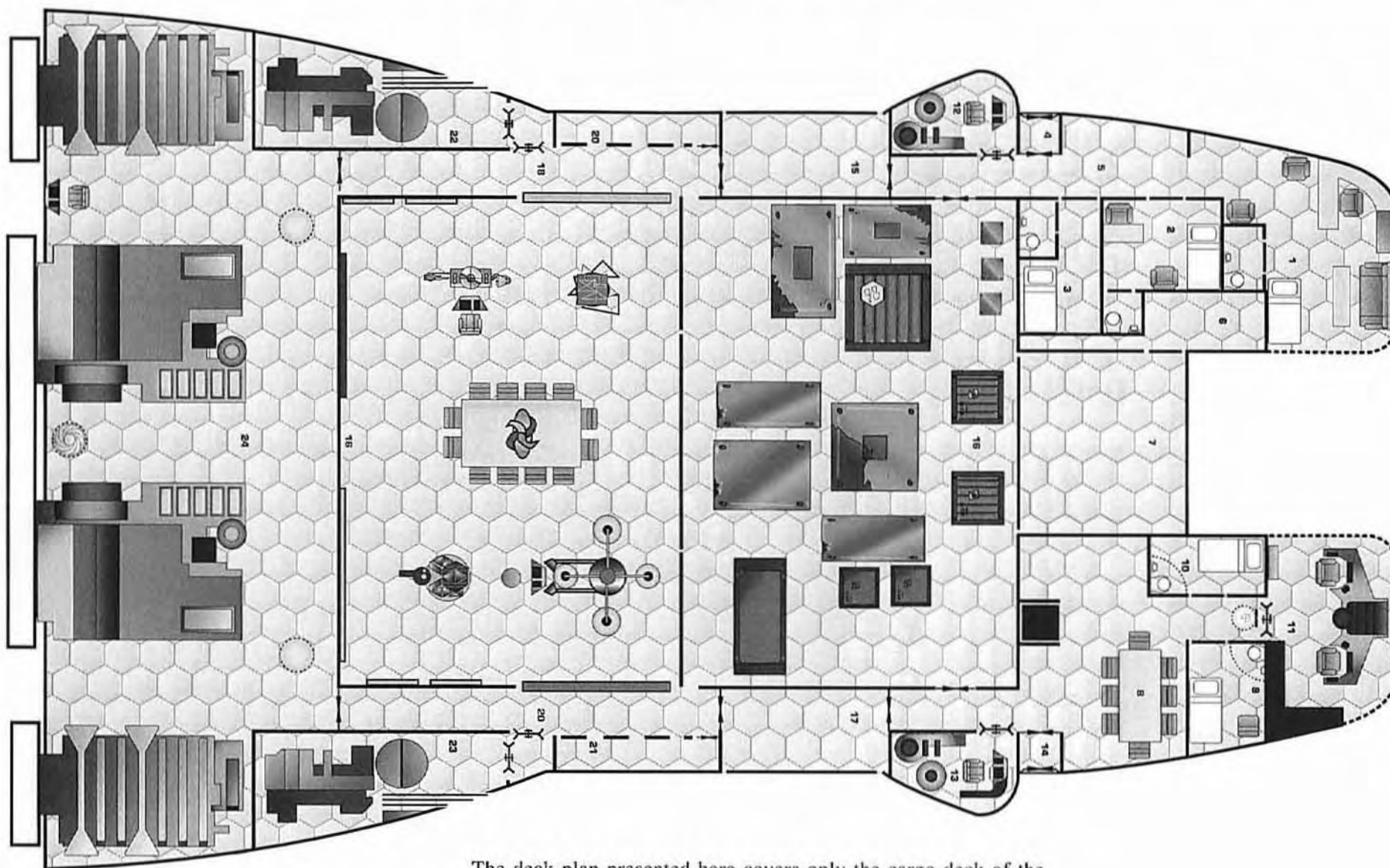
A number of J'aadje oligarchs and councilors have recognized the potential advantages to be gained by having more direct contacts with other worlds than trade with Caledon Ventures may grant them, or suspect the Human merchants of having their own agendas. (This is actually true up to a point, though Caledon Ventures *mostly* shares the same concerns as its customers.) To expand their horizons, these leaders have pooled their resources to acquire a starship of their own: the *Long-Reaching Conversation of Elegance*.

This is a second-hand (though fairly new and well-maintained) 200-ton *Empress Marava*-class far trader (see pp. GT135 and T:FT110-111), modified for its current function, and crewed by hand-picked J'aadje with the best training that a fair amount of money could buy in the time available. Its controls, crew seating, and maintenance systems have been adapted for J'aadje, so far as possible, and all but two of its staterooms have been given J'aadje-suitable furnishings (which would be subtly but aggravatingly uncomfortable for Human use). The most impressive modification, however, is the conversion of half of the cargo space to a flexible artistic display area. At the cost of having its functional cargo capacity reduced to 25 tons at the absolute maximum, the *Long-Reaching Conversation* has been made into a jump-capable art gallery. The dining facilities have also been slightly upgraded, enabling the crew to entertain potential customers in style.

The J'aadje are not naive, of course; the ship still has its twin turrets, each now mounting two TL10 lasers and a sandcaster. The ship can defend itself, and, perhaps incidentally, could help defend its sponsoring cities in the event of a war. (The K'tring, fully aware of this, have made the acquisition of anti-ship weapons a priority.)

This vessel is intended almost as much for diplomatic and communications purposes as for trade (although the trade is intended to make it self-financing), and might be encountered in many spinward and rimward regions of Human-occupied space. If its crew ever need assistance or advice, they can usually pay fairly well, although they are shrewd negotiators who are perfectly willing to prolong a formal conference for as long as necessary.

LONG-REACHING CONVERSATION VARIANT OF MARAVA-CLASS FAR TRADER (TL10)



The deck plan presented here covers only the cargo deck of the *Long-Reaching Conversation*. The upper deck is basically identical to that of a standard *Marava*, as presented in *GURPS Traveller Far Trader* and described in detail in *Deck Plan 2: Empress Marava-Class Far Trader*.

Jgd-II-Jagd



The Jgd-II-Jagd are gas-giant dwellers originating on Jagd, a world on the coreward edge of the Imperium. They are intelligent creatures with a high technology, but their thought processes are so completely alien to those of Humanity that true communication will probably never be possible. Nevertheless, they can be reliable trading partners for valuables harvested from their chilly homes.

ORIGINS AND HISTORY

As a rule, gas giants do not develop life, and when they do, it remains scattered and primitive. Rarely, though, organic molecules have not only formed, but develop into something more. The conditions under which this becomes possible are not entirely clear, and some scientists insist that intervention (perhaps by the Ancients) must have been required, but it appears that a sufficiently high level of heavier gases permits the formation of complex molecules, a layer or two of dense clouds of various chemicals (such as ammonia) can give them an environment in which to evolve, and a continuous “rolling boil” of activity in the planetary atmosphere prevents heavy compounds from sinking into the lethal depths too easily. Multicellular gas giant life often develops internal “gas-bags” of near-pure hydrogen at above ambient temperatures, enabling it to float around like balloons; this is certainly the pattern on Jagd.

Insofar as such terms have meaning in this context, the Jgd seem to spring from omnivore/intermittent stock. What little is known about the early Jgd indicates that they were “grazers” on the floating life of the gas giant’s atmosphere, but that even though most of that life was microscopic, it required some degree of skill to find it. The Jgd were not whales swimming through an ocean of food; they seem to have required intelligence to survive. How their civilization developed remains a mystery.

Though they were not star travelers, the Jgd possessed very advanced technology when they were first contacted by Vilani explorers in about -4200. Since then, for obscure reasons, they have never employed jump drives of their own, although their slower-than-light ships have ventured many parsecs from Jagd. Jgdi colonies are common across several subsectors, and outposts and new developments are even more widespread. In fact, individual Jgd have visited most of Human-colonized space in heavy life support units carried by bulk transporters. Jgd groups have even collaborated with Humanity on a few exploration and resource-exploitation activities.

PHYSIOLOGY AND APPEARANCE

The Jgd have roughly spherical bodies, 9 or 10 feet in diameter, dotted with clusters of sensory cells, and with three long manipulative tendrils distributed regularly around the “equator.” The densest mass of sensory organs, plus a large number of manipulative “feelers” and feeding structures, are sited on the lowest point of the body. The internal structure is based on a number of thin-walled compartments. One of these, near the body center, houses the brain (or at least the largest neural nexus), but most are empty but for hydrogen secreted by the body chemistry. Control of secretion rates and partially directed release of gas give the Jgd considerable control over their atmospheric buoyancy and direction of flight, but these “living balloons” are still rather susceptible to atmospheric currents. It is generally believed that accidental population redistributions were common in primitive Jgdi society, leading to loosely bonded communal organization and exceptional homogeneity in Jgdi culture.

There is only one sex; genetic interchange is achieved by airborne spores, and reproduction is achieved by a sophisticated form of binary fission. Their senses are based on extreme awareness of atmospheric vibration, plus very limited response to a very wide range of electromagnetic waves. Jgd can communicate limited information over tens of miles, using pitch-modulated ultrasonic “whistling,” but their primary form of “speech” involves electrical impulses transmitted by direct physical contact. It is thought that this allows the transfer of very large quantities of information at the semi-subconscious as well as the conscious level, further enhancing the homogeneity of Jgd culture.

The Jgd live extremely long lives; apparently no condition of “old age” exists, although eventually a fissioning Jgd undergoes division of the parent brain, rather than generating a new “child” cerebrum. Average life of an identifiable Jgd individual, barring accident, is approximately 630 standard Imperial years.

LANGUAGE AND NAMES

All Human communication with the Jgd passes through a translator; both races have been improving their translation equipment for thousands of years. Communication about *things* is now fairly effective; it is only discussion of *ideas* that will probably always be impossible.

Jgd from different worlds or colony ships may be identified by their translators with names corresponding to colors, to numbers (which in some cases correspond to wavelengths of light, and in other cases seem arbitrary), or to nonsense noises. This variety is about as close to a "cultural difference" as has been identified among the Jgd.

SOCIETY AND PSYCHOLOGY

The basic Jgd technology involves manipulation of crystalline matter which they derived from various communal microscopic life-forms among the ammonia clouds of their homeworld; crystallography is as central to their technological history as metallurgy is to Humaniti's. They developed activities akin to farming rather late, but their social systems are immensely refined, and spring from the need to organize for food-gathering, crystal-seeking, and hunting. The basic social unit is termed the "hunt" by Human xenologists, and consists of a cooperative body formed for a specific purpose

— not always anything as short-lived as a hunt for food. Many "hunts" are millennia old, but even disregarding natural mortality, the membership is extremely flexible, with individuals leaving and joining quite frequently in most cases. Hunts to some extent resemble Human businesses, trusts, or colleges, or Hiver nests, but each hunt actually holds a rather deeper role in Jgdi culture than this implies, in a way that only the Jgd themselves really comprehend. The crew of a short-range spaceship will usually comprise one hunt, while an interstellar craft will have three or four "active" hunts aboard, plus the social nuclei of several more that become active as and when the ship establishes a colony or base on a new world. The system is remarkably flexible but robust.

The other key element in Jgdi psychology is what is usually referred to as an obsession with *balanced exchanges*, apparently running at least as deep as Human curiosity, Aslan land-hunger, or Newt orderliness. A Jgd is almost physically incapable of "unilateral behavior." For example, the Jgd never initiate exploration for its own sake, but only send ships where there is a very high probability of finding exploitable resources, or of establishing a colony that might eventually send vessels back to Jagd.



This obsession, apparently linked to the inherently bilateral nature of Jgdi conversation, has resulted in almost all contact between Jgd and other races taking the form of trade. It also causes the Jgd to operate a peculiar (and slightly brutal-seeming) legal system; theft is always punished by fines, violence by violence, and so on (in short, "an eye for an eye"). It is even hypothesized that the Jgd commenced interstellar travel when and only when they were first contacted by Humaniti because only then was a degree of symmetry implied by the activity.

The homogeneity of Jgdi culture is a major factor in Jgd society, but it must not be overstated. Jgd are discrete and independent individuals, with distinct personalities and powerful personal drives; they have a concept of private property; they have personal violence, if not wars. Nonetheless, it is important to note that education – in the sense of a transmission of data – is extremely easy for them; hence almost any Jgd can employ almost any Jgdi device or technique with at least minimal competence. This does not imply that the race lacks individuals specializing in particular fields of competence, but that total incompetence in any field is rare.

GOVERNMENT, POLITICS, AND RELIGION

After thousands of years of contact with the Jgd, it is still a matter of scholarly argument whether any of these concepts even applies to the creatures from Jagd. We do not understand the way Jgd within a hunt relate to each other, how resources are allocated between hunts, or whether the creatures even have a philosophy. Their obsession with balanced exchange does not seem to equate with the Human idea of "fairness." Jgd are not driven to balance because they *should* but because they *must*. It is known that on occasion the Jgd kill each other quite enthusiastically, but the reasons for their violence simply don't translate as anything better than "unbalanced exchange."

TECHNOLOGY AND TRADE

No known race thinks the way the Jgd do; hence, communication is a persistent problem. The obvious difficulty of simply conversing is generally solved by use of powerful Imperial or Jgdi computer translators, but even these tend to struggle with many concepts; nor is pronunciation of synthesized phonemes always easy. (The name for the race used by the Imperium is a Human corruption of something produced by an early Jgdi machine.) In general, relations with Humaniti

Posted! Keep Out!

Jgd-inhabited systems will always be patrolled by a number of large and powerful vessels (see p. 94); these rarely take much interest in outside affairs unless Jgdi interests are threatened. Fuel-skimming a Jgd world is extremely unwise; shock waves from the pass may cause severe harm to thousands or millions of intelligent beings and their environment, and they are certain to balance the matter with high-energy weapons fire. For this reason, Jgd systems are well-marked with navigational beacons.

ti and other races are restricted to trade and informational exchanges.

Jgd understand the concept of money, but prefer barter-type systems, and the more similar the exchange the better; a party seeking low-temperature crystals will probably get the quickest agreement if they trade with industrial diamonds or refined titanium. Partnerships in exploration are possible, but take time to negotiate.

Data exchange is hard to set up, but – whether the Jgd are "curious" or not – they are definitely customers for information, provided an even trade is involved.

The Imperium classifies the Jgd as a friendly associate species with autonomous government; actually, no formal pacts exist, although relations are in a state of stable equilibrium. No other interstellar government has even this degree of mutual understanding; it's a lucky accident that the Human propensity for trade dovetails with the Jgd passion for exchange.

The Jgd sphere of influence overlaps Vargr and K'kree territory. The Vargr sometimes trade with them successfully, but occasionally get into trouble through misjudged attempts to dominate Jgd; their natural curiosity often clashes with hard experience. The K'kree have learned that the wisest thing to do about the gas-dwellers is think of them as fellow vegetarians, on the rare occasion they think of them at all, and stay strictly away from their worlds.



JAGD (2307, LISHUN SECTOR)

Jagd is a gas giant, slightly smaller than Sol's Saturn (110,000 km diameter). As such, its atmosphere is hundreds, if not thousands, of miles deep, and consists mostly of hydrogen with an admixture of other gases. At the vast pressures of its depths, the gas becomes liquid, then a metallic solid, but these conditions are too extreme for life.

The system includes two other gas giants. Neither is suitable for Jgd colonization, but both have numerous Jgdi outposts and resource-exploitation bases. There is also a handful of unremarkable rocks. One of these, known by the old Vilani name of Pim, is large enough to maintain a trace atmosphere, and has a Class III starport, a Scout base, and a

The Jgd Jump-Drive Mystery

The Jgd failure to construct jump drives, even today, is a mystery to Humans; the task could easily be performed by Jgd technology. The usual explanation is that the race actually refuses to do so because it is impossible to enter into an “exchange relationship” with hyperspace, making the subject anathema to them. Other popular arguments hold that jump travel is somehow dangerous to them, which is clearly true in some ways. After all, the Jgd travel units occasionally loaded onto Human jump ships carry extremely heavy insulation (though this is more a matter of preserving their internal environment in the conditions of a Human ship).

A few xenologists have acquired a slightly deeper grasp of Jgdi psychology, and recognize the greater problem. What they have come to understand is that Jgdi behavior evolved, from a very early stage, as a set of responses to the stormy, energetic climate of their homeworld atmosphere. Some scientists say, not entirely as a joke, that the Jgd-II-Jagd had a detailed understanding of Newtonian dynamics millions of years before they developed sentience. Thus, Jgdi physics is not so much an advanced study as a refined instinct.

This makes their science very powerful in some ways, but terribly limited in others. Their grasp of action and reaction, force and flow, is immediate, but any theories that go beyond this – particularly theories built on asymmetry or paradox – offend them at a level below thought. Human minds have enough trouble encompassing quantum physics or jump-space theory; to the Jgd-II-Jagd, they are the essence of insanity. Worse, a Jgd cannot feel safe without a clear and continuing comprehension of the physics and dynamics of its environment; anything else is deeply horrifying. And it cannot *not* think about this.

In other words, to the Jgd-II-Jagd, jump travel is about as pleasant as a Human would find being swung over a pit full of jagged spikes, on the end of a fraying rope, for several days. The only members of the species to travel thus are slightly crazy volunteers, who receive the nearest approximation their metabolism permits to anaesthesia – and they still sometimes suffer the equivalent of nervous breakdowns thereafter.

number of Human-run research and commercial stations which work with the Jgd.

Several Jgd refueling facilities orbit Jagd, and one is specifically designed and designated for their alien visitors. Refueling here will be surprisingly uncomplicated for travelers who have heard how alien the Jgd are! The system is completely automated and run by a sophisticated expert system; credit transfers are handled through any of several brokerages on Pim. As long as they need nothing but fuel, visitors need never communicate with a live Jgd, let alone try to figure out an appropriate barter exchange.

JGD IN PLAY

Jgd should only be played and handled as NPCs; in the unlikely event of any PC interacting with one on a personal, violent level, a typical specimen has ST 12, DX 10, IQ 12, and HT 12/25. Their tough outer integument gives them PD 2 and DR 5, and they have a Move and Dodge of about 4. Their internal gas-bags make them vulnerable to penetrating attacks under some circumstances, but their internal structures are complex and robust; they never simply “burst.”

Jgdi skills are generally specific to Jgd technology and society; the main points to note here are that all members of the race have at least basic knowledge of most Jgdi devices, while specialist Jgd tend to be very well-trained; ships and weapons are never handled with skill levels below 15. Beyond this, the GM should assign whatever skills seem appropriate.

REFEREEING JGD

Jgd are utterly alien beings, and may be quite tricky to referee. (Jgd PCs are out of the question.) The main problem is their apparent obsession with *balanced exchange* in all relationships; practical environmental factors must also always be borne in mind. Nonetheless, the race is neither irrational nor erratic, and basic impulses such as self-preservation are common to Humaniti and Jgd alike.

Player characters may encounter Jgd in a variety of circumstances. Trade is an obvious possibility; so is exploration or, just possibly, mutual defense.

Jgd never, ever voluntarily travel by jump ship except in special insulated capsules; if asked why not, they will be evasive, and what they do say will defeat any translator. (They are not lying or prevaricating; they are struggling to express a deep-seated sense of *wrongness*. See box.) One kidnapped into such a trip will almost certainly go into a state of neural shock the instant jumpspace is entered, rapidly deteriorating into death. And, of course, few hospitals have personnel with the proper expertise or properly heat-insulated equipment to perform delicate medical work on a Jgd. Bear in mind that Jgdi “vengeance” will be certain and thorough. On the other hand, Jgd slower-than-light ships, taking Jgd lifetimes to cross the interstellar void, make strange and interesting encounters. Jgd colonies and outposts are *not* places for hasty fuel scavenging; see below.

Finally, note that Human social skills are of little use when dealing with Jgd, although high levels of Xenology may help. Perhaps the most useful skills when dealing with the species over an extended period are Computer Programming or Electronic Operations, as translator systems may often need fine-tuning.

Courier Work

"The Jgd-II-Jagd?" The old scout managed the pronunciation well, even after a few glasses of the local distillate. "Yeah, I worked for them once. Never met one, though. Well, no one gets to shake hands with them, don'cha know, but I never got closer than a couple of hundred clicks.

"I wasn't even hired by one personally. It was the prof on that research base on the moon gave me the work. A simple courier run, he said, which was right enough, though of course it wasn't your usual package drop. When I asked why the Jgd didn't hire me direct – they've got a station in orbit, and everyone knows they know how to haggle well as the next merchant – he just smiled and asked me what sort of info handling the Jgd could do for me. When I said none, he said Well Then, and that was all I got.

"Interesting job, that. They had to install a special commo laser, and they spent hours making sure my flight-plan was right. I had to accelerate hard for a few hours, and then hit Jump at exactly the right moment. That gave me something like the relative real-space velocity I needed, but I was still moving nothing like as fast as their ship.

"I hate deep-space trips, even the milk runs – anything goes wrong, you're on your own and a billion miles from help – and this one was a stinker. I was sitting for hours near-as-dammit right in the path of an unsanctified-big mass doing a decent whack of lightspeed. Plus, I had to make sure that the laser was adjusting right for doppler shift, or I'd miss the contact. Fiddly work. But I wouldn't have missed that job for all the Tokai on Capital. I barely saw the Jgd colony ship on the scope, but it was beautiful. It glittered like crystal; heck, it was crystal, I guess. And the ionization effect, where its mag field pushed aside interstellar gas, was naked-eye visible.

"So anyway, I beamed over the comp files I'd been given, then had to wait, real respectful like, while the ship found what they thought was right to beam back, and sent it.

"And all the while, I got the feeling I was just talking to a computer. Perhaps they thought there was nothing they could exchange with me. Or perhaps they just had a lousy translator system. Heck, that ship had been on its way since about the Civil War:

"And getting back was a bitch. They'd put the fuel tender into the right intercept course, near enough, but it took me a day and a half to match up properly. Didn't give me a huge margin, don'cha know?

"That Jgd ship sure was a beauty, though."

EQUIPMENT

Jgdi encountered on worlds where they can live unprotected (about 5% of gas giants) or with minimal protection (another 15%) will generally have only the equipment their current circumstances demand. In other cases, Jgd usually use small sealed-environment capsules with heavy heat shielding and armor, each holding 3-10 Jgd; less often, they wear cumbersome personal protection comparable to battledress, complete with strength augmentation. An armed Jgd – a rare sight, which will only appear for a good reason – usually carries plasma or fusion guns, with a few lasers or gauss guns when the situation demands something relatively subtle.

SHIPS

Jgdi ships can be treated as TL11 constructions with TL12 power plants and maneuver drives; no jump drives are ever fitted. Even their smallest in-system shuttles are in the 2,000-ton range, while their interstellar craft range up to 400,000 tons or more; Jgd like a lot of personal space in their crew quarters, have no equivalent of low berths, and make shameless use of very large fusion power systems. If fitted, weapons are generally bay-mounted TL12 fusion guns, along with possibly some TL11 repulsors, nuclear dampers, and some meson screens. Missiles and sandcasters are rare, and limited to TL9 quality.

ENVIRONMENT SUITS

If encountered away from their home environment and out of their gigantic vehicles, Jgd are likely to be wearing protective "suits." These range from cheap emergency survival units to advanced, heavily armored violently-unbalanced-social-dynamics-resolution mechanisms, but a typical rugged all-purpose unit has a central body consisting of a large seamless multi-faceted crystal, a dark smoky gray in color. The three tentacle-like arms are bright fluorescent yellow, and the grabbers at the end are of the same dark gray crystalline material as the body. Some of the suits are marked with streaks of darker or lighter gray on the body and stripes or splotches of bright purple, green or black on the tentacles. The Jgd refer to these as "identification marks," and refuse to explain further. Out-of-date library sources describe the Jgd-II-Jagd as looking like these environment suits.

Because the outer hull of the suit is carbon crystal impregnated with hydrogen, in an oxygenated atmosphere it is extremely flammable. Jgd who need to spend time in such atmospheres usually coat the suit with a layer of titanium and aluminum alloys.

In game terms, such a suit weighs around 21 tons with a Jgd and all its requirements inside, and has PD 4, DR 250. The body has 1,348 hit points, the three 12' long arms each have ST 30 and 254 hit points, and the suit has a power supply good for 10 years of continuous use. It flies using reactionless thrusters and contragravity lifters, and can hover motionless or reach 600 mph in standard atmospheres, or accelerate at 1.38 G in space. On-board systems include the equivalent of long-range radios, laser communicators, inertial navigation, and a hardened minicomputer.

Such a unit must be expensive, even in terms of Jgd-II-Jagd society, but it is clear that individuals who are required to venture into radically hostile environments are considered entitled to proportionately effective protection.

J'sia

Twenty-foot worms whose circular maws are surrounded by three manipulative tentacles, the far-traveling, philosophical J'sia are known throughout Imperial space as pilgrims, scientists, and traders without an ounce of xenophobia. A race of gentle pacifists, the J'sia often get into situations they can't handle, partly due to their tendency to meddle in other races' affairs. Fortunately, their great size intimidates many potential foes.

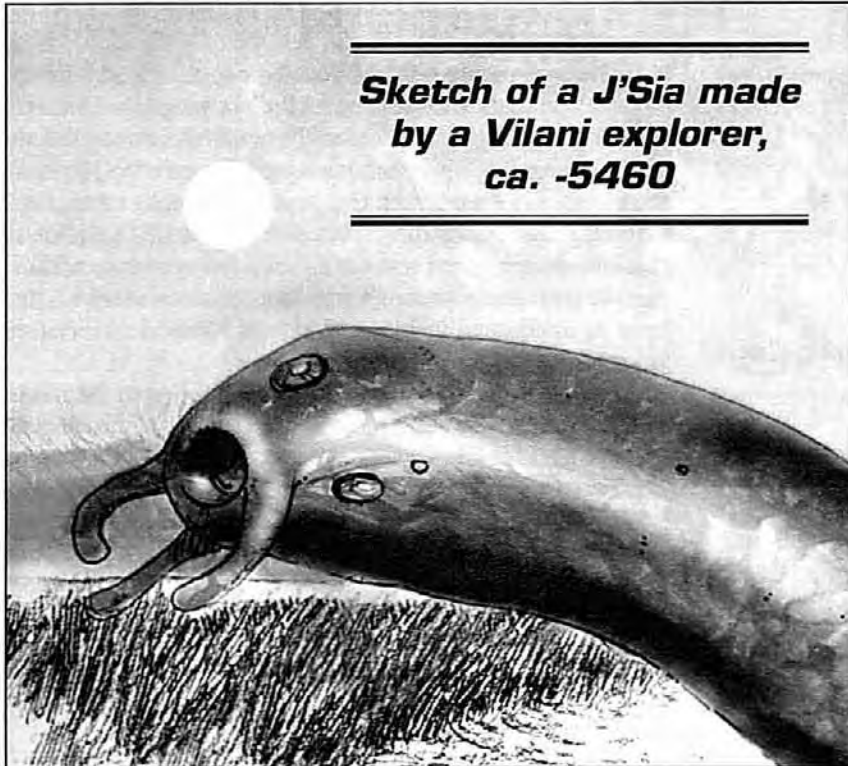
ORIGINS AND HISTORY

The J'sia evolved from swamp-dwelling amphibious omnivores. Sometime in their prehistory, they changed from being primarily water- to being predominantly land-dwellers, possibly in response to some ecological catastrophe that afflicted their environment. This sudden shift of focus provided the stimulus for development of intelligence, agriculture, and finally a technological culture which reached the stars before the founding of the First Imperium.

Several J'sia worlds are long-standing members of the Imperium. The J'sia homeworld in Lishun sector was in the path of early Vilani expansion. The J'sia were first contacted by the Vilani civilization about -5460. At that point they had discovered interplanetary travel and were leisurely observing the universe with space telescopes. They were peacefully absorbed into what would become the First Imperium, and participated in early Vilani exploration and trading. During the Consolidation Wars they largely retreated to their home world, but following the establishment of the Ziru Sirka, they again became active in interstellar society.

A race of gentle pacifists, the J'sia often get into situations they can't handle, partly due to their tendency to meddle in other races' affairs.

**Sketch of a J'Sia made
by a Vilani explorer,
ca. -5460**



The J'sia briefly entertained a Terran governor during the Ramshackle Empire, and were grateful for the exposure to Earth's rich culture. The Long Night brought some hardship, but the J'sia planets retained most of their technology, and by -700 had begun building their own starships and sending out missions, many of them aimed at improving the lot of other worlds.

Some believe that it was at this point that the J'sia "God Makers" (p. 98) were formed, though there are rumors that they were a much earlier institution. J'sia historical records, normally excellent, are unusually vague on this point.

After the Long Night, the J'sia were recontacted by the expanding Sylean Federation, becoming first trade partners, then allies. They were among the first non-Human minor races to join the Third Imperium. J'sia were active supporters of First Survey and remained loyal Imperial citizens ever since, although their pacifism has occasionally led to friction in times of war.

PHYSIOLOGY AND APPEARANCE

The J'sia have narrow wormlike bodies some 7 to 9 yards long and half a yard thick, terminating in a fearsome circular maw edged with blunt bone ridges that serve as teeth. On either side of the mouth are three recessed nacelles housing large eyes. Also spaced around the mouth are three manipulative tentacles, dextrous enough to serve as hands. These mouth-tentacles are two yards long, and are about twice as strong as a Human's arm.

A J'sia's skin is smooth and colored mauve or deep purple. On its neck just before the mouth are four gill-slits: J'sia are amphibious and can breathe both air and water with equal facility. The J'sia biochemistry is protein-based, but with a different set of amino acids than those utilized by Earthly life. Thus, although the J'sia do not use nucleic acids (DNA and RNA), they possess analogs that perform similar functions. J'sia biochemistry uses left-handed amino acids like those of Terran life-forms.

J'sia are amphibians, capable of living in both land and fresh water. They move over land by crawling, and swim through water like huge eels. Although their world has a variety of ecosystems, the J'sia evolved in marshes and swamps and are most comfortable in a wet, humid environment. Primitive J'sia spent much time in the bottom ooze of shallow lakes or migrating to swampy wetlands, as the lakes and streams dried up during their world's long, arid summers.

J'sia eyesight is sensitive in the low infrared spectrum, but they perceive blue and violet as black. They are farsighted, and do not focus on near objects very clearly: at close ranges, J'sia use touch rather than sight. Their mouth tentacles are extremely sensitive tactile receptors – good enough that with practice a J'sia could use them to read print in a book. Each tentacle's tip is also lined with extraordinarily sensitive taste buds. J'sia hearing is slightly inferior to Human in a standard atmosphere, but adequate on their homeworld. Their sense of smell is roughly similar to mankind's.

J'sia have two sexes, but the difference is not readily apparent to a Human. Females lay transparent egg-clusters in underwater spawning pools, which are then fertilized separately by secretions from the males. Most eggs die, but a small percentage will develop underwater into tadpole-like embryonic J'sia, known as "little swimmers." After a year or more in the pools, the little swimmers will have developed the lung structures and thickness of body necessary to survive on land, and will crawl out of the pools to become J'sia children. A J'sia child matures after 20 standard years. The average lifespan is 240 years.

The J'sia homeworld, Life Bearer, has high gravity (1.7 G) and average temperature, and so the J'sia are most comfortable

in similar conditions. They breathe a thick oxygen-nitrogen mix with a faint taint of sulfur and methane at an air pressure of 1.5 atmospheres. J'sia can breathe a standard Terran atmosphere without too much difficulty, but they complain about the bland smell and are likely to become fatigued with any rapid exertion. J'sia sleep once in 30 hours for 10 hours at a time.

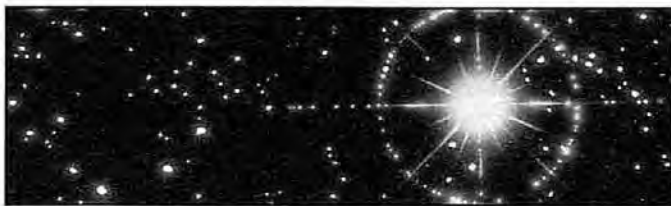
CLOTHING AND COSTUME

J'sia wear no clothing, but for protection against the elements, they have developed "spray-on" coatings (p. 100) that remain porous enough to enable their skin to breathe.

DIET

J'sia eat a mixture of plants and small rodent-like animals, although many are ethical vegetarians. Their mouths and gullets were designed for sifting through sand and dirt in search of food. J'sia like a bit of roughage (e.g., a few pebbles) with their meals to aid digestion.

Due to their large size, they must eat approximately four times as much as a Human. They can digest some of the same foods that Humans do, but many substances that would nourish a J'sia would be poisonous to a Human. A good biology text is useful when a J'sia eats on a Human world – and vice versa.



LANGUAGE AND NAMES

The race communicates vocally, supplementing speech by using tentacles to gesture. All J'sia languages involve complex, hooting calls mixed with seemingly random booming drumbeats. A conversation sounds like a horn symphony accompanied by a drunken military drummer. As a result, the J'sia language cannot be "spoken" by a non-J'sia without a specially programmed translator or a good synthesizer. However, a Human (especially one with Musical Ability) can learn to understand it; it is M/VH, and Musical Ability provides a flat +1 bonus (regardless of level).

J'sia writing is three-dimensional, similar to Braille. It can be learned by Humans, but doing so is very difficult . . . a separate M/VH skill.

J'sia names are summary descriptions of the owner's physical appearance, profession, and current place of residence, and are subject to change as the name-bearer changes. A J'sia name might translate as Sleek Bellied Long Body with Mottled Triangle Markings Who Seeks To Understand the Nature of Human-Robot Psychology at the Five Mountains Commune.

For obvious reasons, J'sia who choose to live or work among Humans are usually compelled by their coworkers to adopt short-form nicknames. Since many J'sia encountered offworld are scientists, these are often prefaced with a scholarly title, e.g., Dr. Sleek Mountain.

A problem must be fully tasted before its solution can be savored.

– J'sia proverb

PSYCHOLOGY

The J'sia were at the top of the food chain in their own ecosystem. Because of this, they were never forced to defend themselves against hostile predators, and as a result are much less aggressive than Humans.

In their dealings with others, J'sia caution is proverbial. They do not like to make important decisions or even offer advice until they can obtain the maximum possible information. They feel strong emotions, but have remarkable control: a J'sia never says anything it does not mean, and never gets angry or flustered. Even with a translator, J'sia speech is careful and measured, without a word out of place. To quote a J'sia proverb: "A problem must be fully tasted before its solution can be savored."

The J'sia have a passion for art and culture. Almost every J'sia is skilled at some artistic pursuit. Their own tradition is as deep and varied as that of any single Human race. Vilani and Solomani critics admire their works of prose and poetry, which is close enough to mankind's to be understandable in translation. Other pursuits are more alien: for instance, they create taste sculptures – works of confectionary genius, not always meant to be eaten, whose subtle emotion-conveying flavors tell a story that can only be fully appreciated by the tongue of another J'sia.

J'sia are quite curious, and are also busybodies. They would make good journalists if they could be more objective. As it is, they can't resist helping underdogs. This can often lead them into conflict with powerful corporations or governments. Almost any organized protest against violation of sentient beings' rights or environmental destruction will attract J'sia. They may not be in the front lines, but they will be raising funds, giving eloquent interviews, orchestrating strategy, filming artistic propaganda videos, and writing powerful, moving press releases. Despite their penchant for behind-the-scenes action, they are not cowards: a J'sia will face death or torture at the hands of brutal security police as bravely as any Human.

Despite their courage, the race is useless as fighters – they will not directly injure another sentient being, and are reluctant to support others who use violence, even if it is in a good cause. If possible they will try to use their influence to prevent excessive violence. They are realists, however, and will try to make their persuasion effective by offering alternatives that actually give better results than brute force.

J'sia pacifism does not always extend to nonsentients. There are some animal-rights or vegetarian advocates among them, but most J'sia have no compunctions about killing an animal in self-defense or for food, although they will not let animals suffer unnecessarily.

SOCIETY

J'sia procreate casually, depositing eggs in communal spawning pools and fertilizing them more as a matter of instinct and duty than passion. They are protective of the pools, but otherwise ignore their "little swimmers" until they leave the water-breathing stage. They do not have families. Instead their society revolves around village-sized com-

munes. Each commune is largely self-supporting, with its own robotic factories and farms, spawning pools and educational centers, religious shrines and fusion plants, all centered around the local school or university.

Most members of a particular commune were not born there; it is common practice for young J'sia to travel to another commune after achieving maturity. Commune populations are deliberately designed to reflect a diversity of professional and philosophical viewpoints, and some have careful selection tests to ensure that applicants will fit in. Communes rarely have populations in excess of a few thousand, and a J'sia is expected to know personally the majority of members. Group activities (e.g., religious and philosophical discussions, education of children, and art shows) are organized to reinforce communal values. Each commune functions like a private corporation combined with a university. Although private enterprise and money exist in J'sia society, it is communes rather than individuals or governments that own the means of production, and which engage in interstellar trade and commerce. Almost all trading, missionary, and exploration ships are owned by communes rather than their captains.

J'sia society has remained relatively static since their first contact with the Vilani, with the exception of a few hundred years of turmoil during the Long Night. Life is idyllic, with robots performing most chores, leaving the population free for whatever intellectual or artistic pursuits they care to indulge in. Those J'sia who seek adventure almost always choose to leave their homeworld, often first tasting the outside world as part of the *elynth*, a combination *wanderjahr* and rite of passage that most young J'sia indulge in when they reach their 20th year. Many J'sia leave their homeworld forever, to live on other planets or journey among the stars. Some have settled on Imperial or other alien worlds, where they earn their livelihood as artists, political activists, art consultants, museum directors, scientists, advertising executives, or religious leaders.

The J'sia's closest relations have been with Humaniti and Vargr. They are interested in Droyne and Aslan, but find Zhodani and Hivers fascinating, in some ways closer to their own outlook. The Hive Federation and the Zhodani Consulate are both favored destinations for J'sia scholars and missionaries. Much of the Imperial literature on Zhodani religion, for example, was written by J'sia. The J'sia interest in the Zhodani has occasionally led to their recruitment as advisors (or spies) by Imperial intelligence agencies. Some J'sia have agreed; others have not, resulting in their being harassed as "Zhodani sympathizers."

GOVERNMENT AND INSTITUTIONS

A political superstructure beyond the commune is provided by a complex system of scientific/technical/artistic/academic guilds, each of which is a cross between a computer bulletin board, professional union, and political party. Members of each guild live in every commune. The guilds debate policy and vote through a computerized form of participatory democracy.

Executive power over matters of planetary significance alternates between guilds every 20 planetary years (each about 700 standard days long). Thus, one year the senior executive might be chosen from the Plumbers Guild, next year from the Sonic Sculptors, and the following year from the Gas Giant Physics Institute. In addition, an extensive cybernetic datanet – “the Data Pool” – helps provide administrative continuity and handles much of the daily business of government.

J’sia politics are always noisy, but while egos are sometimes bruised and reputations tarnished, the disputes are only rarely bitter, and violence is unheard of.

INTERSTELLAR POLITICS

The J’sia are represented in Imperial politics by a Human Imperial noble (the Marquis of Jesikara) who has his seat on their homeworld. In practice, they pay their taxes and otherwise govern their own affairs. Imperial officials are sometimes frustrated at the J’sia attitudes toward justified war and oppression, but tolerate the J’sia because of the cultural and scientific contributions they bring to the Imperium.

J’sia deeply admire the Travellers’ Aid Society, seek to become members, provide financial support, and regularly contribute to its Journal.

MILITARY AND POLICE

The J’sia have no military. The closest thing to police forces are the few hundred operatives on each planet of the Guild of Psychology, who locate and treat those J’sia who develop dangerous mental illnesses. As members of the Imperium, the J’sia rely on the Imperial Navy for protection against pirates and foreign powers.

A few J’sia work with the Imperial military as civilian advisors, usually in roles such as terrorist negotiator or psychological-warfare experts. These J’sia are highly skilled in destroying the enemy’s will to resist through carefully planned economic warfare, propaganda, and nonviolent dirty tricks. The J’sia thoroughly approve of, and often join, the Scout Service (where they get along well with the Virushi), but this is the closest the J’sia regularly get to a paramilitary organization.

INSTITUTE OF ETHICAL SOLUTIONS

This hallowed institute is the nearest thing to a justice system in the J’sia culture. The Institute arbitrates disputes between the J’sia guilds and communes, and (for a fee) will settle conflicts between individuals. Institute members must pass rigorous examinations in impartiality, fairness, justice, psychology, ethics, and philosophy.

A few departments of the Institute specialize in obscure (to the J’sia) fields such as criminology, contract law, and alien legal systems. Since the J’sia encountered starfaring aliens, the Institute has been active in volunteering its services as negotiators, arbitrators, and intermediaries in interstellar and planetary conflicts, and has earned a justified (some would say notorious) reputation for scrupulous fairness and justice. Many Institute members have studied (and sometimes taught) law or philosophy on Human and alien worlds.

RELIGION

J’sia are fascinated by other races’ ethical and philosophical systems and religions. Open-minded though not uncritical, they adopt (some might say *collect* is a better term) the greatest saints and prophets of other races into their own loose pacifistic polytheistic religion. Statues of Buddha stand alongside alien gods in J’sia shrines, and the Bible and Koran are just as venerated (if somewhat strangely interpreted) among the J’sia as among Human believers. The same is just as true of non-Human religions. The J’sia respect the Vargr’s diversity, and regularly send missions into the Extents in quest of new faiths.

J’sia religions weave the diverse stands of their multiple faiths into a single tapestry, and preach a gospel of universal toleration and peace. They are gentle about their faith; they win converts by teaching comparative religion. They respect others’ religions, but delight in pointing out parallels and shared themes that demonstrate their vision of Universal Truth . . .

THE GOD MAKERS

A long time ago (officially during the Long Night, but possibly much earlier) the J’sia in the then-dominant Intelligence Crafters Guild became perturbed at the levels of violence shown among many species. They decided that J’sia missionaries should visit primitive or technologically regressed worlds. They would pretend to be “divine messengers” of whatever local religions (if any) existed, and would subtly twist the native faiths into conformity with J’sia philosophy.

Extensive use was made of drones (mostly remote-operated rather than autonomous) crafted to resemble native gods, spirits, prophets, or demons; starships were built with holographic systems that disguised them as angelic visitors. Flashy technological tricks such as plague vaccinations, localized weather control (cloud seeding, or using starship lasers to heat and move air masses), and seismic manipulation (such as nuclear warheads buried in fault lines or active volcanoes) were used to provide necessary special effects.

The God Maker project enjoyed some success, but also suffered several dramatic failures in which cultures were stunted or warped in unexpected ways. These failures came to a head about the time of first contact with the Sylean Federation, and led to the program being halted, partly due to Human pressure. The God Makers were declared unethical by the Institute of Ethical Solutions, and ceased to be official J’sia policy. Nevertheless, rumor has it that some J’sia communes with interests in missionary work and interstellar trade have continued to covertly pursue the God Maker program. It is also rumored that some God Maker J’sia joined the Imperial Scout Service, and that these techniques remain in the Scout Service’s institutional memory, for use in occasional covert operations.

TECHNOLOGY AND ECONOMICS

The J’sia are an old, highly civilized race whose interests have turned away from technology to art and culture. They have possessed written records for close to 60,000 years, and jump for over two millennia. Even so, J’sia machines are no

Adventure Seed: Relics of the God Makers

While exploring or trading on the frontier, the party come upon an uncharted planet whose primitive inhabitants (these may be any race the GM desires) are ruled by a pantheon of living gods with exotic, seemingly magical powers. Unfortunately, the Gods regard the PCs as interlopers, calling the travelers "Minions of the Worm." Using their abilities, which include lightning bolts, storms, and earthquakes, they succeed in disabling the party's ship (probably while it's on the surface), shuttle, or grav vehicle, forcing them to flee into the wilderness and elude hostile natives.

While on the run, the PCs encounter the Cult of the Worm, a heretical resistance organization who oppose the Gods, calling them "false creatures." After some hair-raising adventures with the Worm Cultists, the party will be introduced to their leader – who turns out to be a J'sia: Dr. Tendril, from the Institute of Ethical Solutions.

If the PCs haven't already figured it out, Dr. Tendril tells the party that the Gods here are actually semi-intelligent robots, their powers the result of ancient J'sia technology, placed here by the deluded God Makers thousands of years ago to guide the people into a utopian society. The basis of these capabilities include a few buried nuclear bombs (to trigger quakes) and lasers built on mountain tops which are capable of both direct attack and heating and moving air masses. Alternatively, the GM may substitute other "technology as magic" tricks that would be possible with TL10 technology.

Dr. Tendril explains to the party about the God Maker project, which he calls a "terrible, terrible mistake." But even though the Institute for Ethical Solutions shut down the God Makers long ago, many records were misfiled or destroyed, and not all worlds where the project had been initiated were properly investigated. Recently a graduate student researching her thesis turned up references to this planet, and the Institute sent Dr. Tendril to check it out, and if things were still going on, to shut down the experiment and put things to rights.

Dr. Tendril was armed with the robot's control codes, but unfortunately, the Gods no longer obey them: abandoned by their creators for thousands of years, their once benevolent programming has decayed into a sinister perpetuation of their "divine" rule.

Although Dr. Tendril has managed to convince a small party of the natives that the Gods are false, so far the cunning and powerful androids and their bag of "special effects" have proven too much for him. Perhaps the party could help?

more advanced than anywhere else in the Imperium, since they have had little interest in improving them. Indeed, many J'sia devices are copies of antiques that date back to the First Imperium.

Still, J'sia produce excellent computer systems, and are good at designing simple and elegant electronic systems, fusion power plants, and robotic systems. In fact, J'sia industrial, scientific, translating, and household robots are a major export item.

J'sia vehicles are always gravitic, and often designed for underwater use. Because of J'sia body size, even a two-J'sia air/raft is the size of a Human truck, though vehicles are often built long and thin. J'sia have little interest in using vehicles for commuting within cities, preferring to walk or swim, but they do enjoy visiting friends in other communes, and as a result, most individuals own some form of personal flyer.

TRADE

J'sia are good traders, but have little interest in material goods or high technology beyond those needed to give them a comfortable living. Instead they seek cultural information and art objects. Some communes, however, have found they can finance their acquisitions by marketing high technology goods, and the result has been the spread of J'sia software throughout the Imperium.

JESIKARA (O110, LISHUN SECTOR)

Starport: Class V (Scout Base).

Diameter: 10,900 miles (17,500 km). *Gravity:* 1.4 G. *Atmosphere:* Dense, polluted oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 82%. *Climate:* Tropical. *Population:* 1.2 billion J'sia (20,000 Humans). *Government:* Guild-based bureaucracy, with democratic elements. *Control Rating:* 3. *TL:* 12. *Gas Giants:* 3. *WTN:* 6. *Trade Classification:* Hi. Meets requirements for an "industrial" world, but "polluted" atmosphere is natural to the J'sia.

The J'sia homeworld, Jesikara ("Life Bearer") is the fourth planet of a bright yellow-white F7 star; its Vilani name is Vakkuun. The world is covered with shallow seas dotted with islands, and has many active volcanoes, vast swamplands, and thick jungle. The largest land mass is about the size of Australia. The planet's thick atmosphere is tainted with sulfur, methane, and volcanic ash, and the air smells like burnt rotten eggs. Non-J'sia without filter masks or better will take 1 hit damage per day. The planet has two moons: the larger Skith and the smaller Iglifrix.

The world is relatively thinly populated for its size. Most J'sia live in communes. The typical J'sia commune is the size of a small town, with a population of 1,000 to 10,000. Communes are arranged in spiral patterns, with public buildings and spawning pools in the center, surrounded by private dwellings, while the outer whorls of the spiral are dominated by robot-run farms and industrial complexes.

From above, a J'sia commune looks like an artfully landscaped Japanese garden, with carefully tended groves of alien trees and flowers, isolated grottos for meditation or lectures and cultural events, and many bathing pools and mud baths. Interspersed among the pools are low, domed buildings covered with flowering or luminescent creepers.

J'sia prefer swimming over walking, so there are few commuters in the streets, and none of the jostling crowds found in Human or Vargr cities. Instead, most buildings have flooded basements with underwater tunnels. These connect to bathing pools and other basements, and J'sia use these for rapid transit, swimming back and forth.

Buildings are geodesic domes, with only one or two floors, connected by gently sloping ramps. Rooms are very large by Human standards, and doors open like camera irises. There is little furniture, as J'sia don't use chairs or beds, preferring to coil up on the ground. Appliances (such as computer screens or shelves) fold into the floor, ceiling, or walls. There are no windows as such: inner and outer walls are normally made of translucent plastiglass, but each section can be made fully transparent with a hoot to the room computer.

J'sia prefer daylight to darkness, just like Humans, but have even less interest in staying up late. At night, J'sia communes are dominated by swarms of robots, who tend the gardens, work in the fields, and maintain machinery. J'sia robots are functional many-tentacled designs, with dual underwater/land propulsion systems.

Small J'sia communes and individual J'sia live on many other Imperial worlds, often on planets with well-known universities or research centers. They can also be found visiting (or attempting to gain access to) centers of worship. Life Bearer hosts a small Human community, consisting mainly of scholars or students who have come to study at various J'sia institutions, often as part of exchange programs with Imperial universities. Although the world's cultural life is inviting, it is not a healthy place for Humans, and few choose to raise families there.



J'SIA CHARACTERS

J'sia are perfectly suited as PCs as long as the GM is willing to design adventures where their J'sia pacifism will not be out of place. An average J'sia's length in feet will be 1.2 times its ST. Its weight will be 70 lbs. per foot!

J'SIA RACIAL

TEMPLATE

83 POINTS

Attribute Modifiers: ST +8 (Natural, -40%) [54]; DX -1 [-10]; HT +2 [20].

Advantages: Amphibious [10]; Composed [5]; Early Maturation 2 [10]; Extended Lifespan 2 [10], Extra Arm (One arm) [10]; Extra Flexibility [10]; Extra Hit Points +5 [25]; Gills [10]; Infravision [15]; Sensitive Touch [10].

Disadvantages: Bad Sight [-10]; Charitable [-15]; Inconvenient Size [-10]; Increased Life Support 2 [-20]; Pacifism [-30]; Reduced Move -1 [-5]; Xenophilia [-5].

Quirks: Nosy. [-1]

Status, Wealth, and Upkeep

J'sia may take no more than three levels of Status. None have ever been named to the nobility. Influential J'sia are likely to have Administrative Rank and Tenure (p. CI31).

Suitable Templates

Scout and Scientist are common for adventurers. A member of the Institute for Ethical Solutions might have the Attorney or Diplomat template.

EQUIPMENT

Most J'sia equipment is similar to that used by the rest of the Imperium, though of course it will be waterproof and resistant to sulfur corrosion.

WEAPONRY

The pacifistic J'sia will only fight to protect themselves, and only with nonlethal weapons or defensive martial arts. Since hostile natives and wildlife are a sad fact of interstellar voyaging, J'sia travelers may be armed with nonlethal drugs, tangles, psychochemicals, and shock weapons. Snub pistols, with their capability to fire gas and tranq rounds, are quite popular.

STARSHIPS

J'sia starships are research vessels or exploration ships, sprinkled with a few traders and personal yachts. These days, most ships are Imperial-built, but designed to J'sia specifications. They tend to be fitted with Jump 2 or better, but are usually only capable of 1 to 2 G maneuvers. Compensating for this are advanced computer and scientific systems, and the best sensors that money can buy. They are never armed with more than sandcasters, but may have decent armor and screens.

J'sia spacecraft are three to five times as large as an equivalent Human vessel, because life support and crew quarters for J'sia take up four times the space of Human ships (so, four stateroom modules or four low berths are required for every J'sia). They tend towards a spherical or flattened-sphere "flying saucer" shape. Most craft are designed for four to a dozen J'sia, but a fair number are built to carry only a solitary J'sia, although they may have a crew of robots.

A J'sia ship's interior fittings are similar to those of their buildings – see *Housing and Cities*, above. J'sia like water, but flooding a starship is expensive. Instead, ships simply maintain a very dense, high humidity atmosphere – Humans who have boarded J'sia vessels have complained of walking through a sauna bath smelling of rotten eggs. On shipboard, J'sia bathrooms are just that: the entire room floods with water.

SPRAYFORM GARMENTS

These are worn by J'sia but may be used by Humans and other races. They come in a wide variety of colors and textures, and can be dissolved by catalyst chemical sprays or ultrasonic baths. A single sprayform capsule weighs one pound and costs Cr16.

It will cover four Humans or one J'sia. Some Humans visiting J'sia worlds adopt them: the effect is a tight-fitting body stocking.

Schalli

The newest race on the Galactic scene is a mass of contradictions. A race with two homeworlds; a stone-age culture that commands the best technology the Imperium has to offer; a newly recognized intelligence whose very existence was hidden for almost a hundred years, now on the lips of citizens across the Domain of Sol and beyond; a race which calls a refugee colony of Dolphins and the Archduke of Sol allies of equal merit; a race with no history of metalworking or space travel, who are proving amazingly adapt at engineering and starship navigation. These are the Schalli.

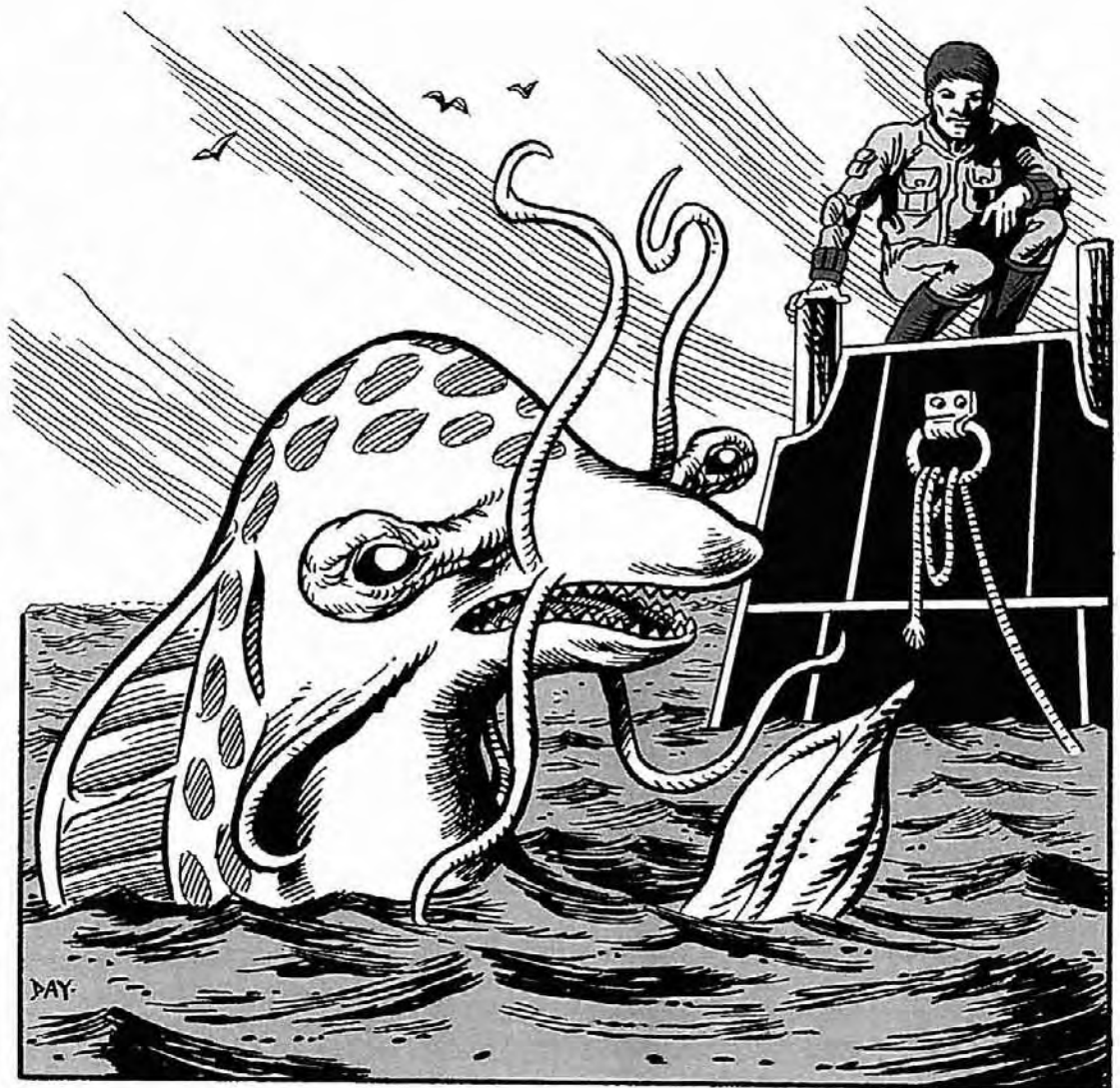
ORIGINS AND HISTORY

The Schalli evolved from island-dwelling amphibians, forced permanently into the ocean by the melting of Vras' icecaps several million years ago. From all evidence, their ancestors were on the verge of intelligence even then, and selection in the new environment finished the job, producing a highly social and analytical intelligence.

This area of space was surveyed in by Ziru Sirka scouts in -3691. Vras was settled by Vilani colonists less than a hundred years later, but the colonists never realized that the ocean-dwelling "kiiroka" were anything but big fish. Likewise, the Schalli considered Humaniti a complicated coral-like organism, analogous to a crab-like native species that built

sea walls from discarded shells and stones. The various ships and air/rafts were considered more exotic new species. (The eventual discovery that Humans were intelligent came as a shock and with some guilt, as the Schalli had considered the odd land creatures something of a delicacy.)

Therefore, the Schalli knew nothing of events as Vras was liberated by the Terran Confederation, fell into a local Long Night, and eventually incorporated into the Third Imperium. Matters went on, with the "kiiroka" recognized as smart animals, and possibly even presentient, but no one found them especially interesting. This changed in 1096,



when the young Dr. Darch von Changli, a cousin of the ruling Marquis of Vras, set out to make a name for himself in academic circles. He decided to study the kiiroka. He conceived a massive project; cost was no object. Among other extravagances, the whole study was to take place on another planet, where, as the young doctor put it, "all variables could be controlled."

In 1098, the first of several thousand "wild kiiroka" were captured (using chemical agents) and relocated to a research station on the nearly uninhabited and relatively worthless world Schall.

This experience, of course, immediately convinced the ocean-dwellers that Humans were not only intelligent, but technologically superior. The Schalli began desperate attempts to communicate. Although Dr. von Changli was hardly a genuine scholar, neither was he an idiot, and he had hired good staff. The sapience of the "kiiroka" was recognized immediately.

Delighted, Dr. von Changli presented his preliminary report to his cousin the Marquis. The meeting lasted for two days; early on the first day, the Marquis called in his chief advisors and most of the planetary nobility. Late on the second day, the servants heard shouting. Dr. von Changli was never seen alive again, though his tragic death in a lab accident was not reported for a month.

The rulers of Vras, of course, could not permit their position to be threatened by the discovery that a bunch of *fish* were intelligent. Quietly they began to plan a genocide. The Schall research facility was quietly closed, and Schall was interdicted for undisclosed reasons. The scientists were scattered to other projects where they could be watched, with a warning not to discuss their work on Schall. Meanwhile, Ecological Protection Edict #1,311 declared the kiiroka a protected species, outlawed hunting and capture, and limited exposure to Imperial citizens. Electric buoys were deployed to "discourage" kiiroka movement near centers of population. The creatures were to be isolated, to prevent anyone else noticing their intelligence . . . until a final solution became possible.

The secret lasted for only five years. Dr. Sarah Covington, one of the researchers who had first realized the Schalli were sapient, had deduced what had happened to von Changli and the project. She knew the kiiroka were in

The Ch'KieeEE Colony

The Dolphin colony on Vras is made up of refugees from the planet Kal (1339 Sarid/Old Expanses), just across the border in Solomani territory, victims of the discord spreading across the Confederation. The Human population of Kal, agitated by extreme factions of the Solomani Party, had become increasingly hostile toward the tiny population of Dolphins. Assets were seized, and random violence was becoming more common.

The leaders of the small settlement realized it was only a matter of time before lives were endangered, and planned a mass escape. In 1105, they seized a bulk freighter used for hauling fish, and all 2,300 Dolphins squeezed inside to jump toward Nemyer and its Imperial Scout way station. The week-long ordeal ended in a successful escape, leaving the Solomani stunned and embarrassed; the Imperium offered immediate sanctuary. It was the largest mass defection since the end of the Solomani War.

The incident caught the imaginations of the whole Domain, and the refugees were given territory on Vras for resettlement over the muted objections of Marquis Alena Chiamas.

The Ch'KieeEE colony was instrumental in uncovering the conspiracy to hide Schalli intelligence and today handles the bulk of diplomacy and administration for the new race, fighting to insure the Schalli do not fall victim to the same prejudices which forced them to leave their own home.

danger. She got around it by writing, not a paper, but a work of romantic fiction set in an imaginary colony on Schall. It told the story of intelligent native creatures called, not "kiiroka," but Schalli. It was published by a university press in 1103.

The book escaped official notice at first; unfortunately, it escaped almost *all* notice. Eventually some readers put two and two together and began asking whether this was more than a fantasy. At that point, of course, the censors woke up. Dr. Covington was secretly arrested and the book suppressed. One of the Marquis' security team impersonated her on the net for the next several years, claiming to have "gone into seclusion" to work on her next novel, and sending increasingly paranoid-sounding replies to all questioners, both literary and academic. Interest in the "crazy fish doctor" soon died down. It looked like the cover-up was successful.

THE COMING OF THE DOLPHINS

Then, in 1116, a group of refugee Dolphins (see box) arrived on Vras. The Marquis had not really wanted to host them, fearing they would interfere with his cover-up, but the public enthusiasm for their escape left him little choice. But it was worse than he had expected. The Dolphins heard the Schalli choral songs (see p. 104) as soon as they entered Vras' oceans. They had been warned on arrival to leave the "dangerous, protected" kiiroka alone, and as good guests had agreed . . . but when they heard the music, they *knew* they were hearing intelligence, and they knew something was . . . so to speak . . . fishy.

"What have we gotten into?" the colony leaders asked themselves. "Have we fled from the orca only to beach ourselves?" They sent contact teams to find the source of the music. When Dolphins encountered Schalli, neither had any doubt of the other's intelligence. True communication took only a few months.

Clearly, the planet's rulers knew the native sea-dwellers were intelligent and were hiding that fact. The Dolphins, who had become quite politically aware after their experiences on Kal, took action – immediately, to protect their new friends; indirectly, to protect themselves.

Working with a Human 3-V reporter who had covered their defection, and whom they had come to trust, they searched the planetary net and found information about the Schall research project . . . and eventually even a copy of Dr. Covington's book! They could not contact Dr. Covington, but they found evidence that she was being held. That was good enough.

At that point, the evidence was quietly set before Archduke Adair, a strong supporter of sentients' rights. Mere months later, over the objections of Vras' nobility, the Schalli were declared sentient, and given full Imperial citizenship. An inquiry was begun into the events surrounding Schall's interdiction and Dr. Covington's arrest.

In late 1118, Archduke Adair revoked the patent of nobility of the Marquis of Vras. Along with several family members and a number of advisors and retainers, the Marquis was jailed for high crimes including attempted genocide.

As reparations to the Schalli, the Marquis' holdings, corporate and noble, were liquidated into a trust to be used to integrate the Schalli into Imperial culture. The planet Schall was ceded to the Schalli race, along with much of the ocean area of Vras, to the Schalli as reparation for their treatment of the last century. Dr. Covington was cleared of all wrongdoing and honored with a knighthood for her efforts on behalf of the Schalli . . . and her book became a best-seller and was adapted for 3-V.

JOINING THE IMPERIUM

The Schalli were as amazed by Human intelligence as the Imperium was by theirs. Once the apologies and misunderstandings were behind them, the Schalli adapted to the fact of extraplanetary intelligence easily. Their own grasp of astronomy always included the possibility that other planets could exist, but the Schalli never expected to prove the theory. That the Humans came to them is considered a blessing . . . their only regret, that they did not recognize Humaniti as sapient earlier.

Today, the Schalli are forcing themselves into Imperial culture as quickly as possible, aided by their own gregarious nature and the collective guilt of the Imperium for denying Schalli intelligence for so long. Through TRI (p. 105) they are even creating a financial presence. All of the Imperial bureaus have been swamped with Schalli applicants. Thousands have applied for and been accepted into the Imperial Army. A new amphibious regiment is being created to take advantage of their abilities. The Scouts are happy to have local access to a fully aquatic race with no need of waldoes for manipulation. The Imperial Marines are watching the Army experiment, having already had a success with the Githiaskio (p. 66), and the Navy is quite interested in these natural pilots and astrogators. Within a generation, the Schalli

From what I hear, they look like the bastard child of a bogbutter, a squid, and a catfish. It's a darn shame they turned out to be intelligent; I hear they's good eatin'.

— Comedian Anton Wilson Peale

will be fully integrated into the society and economy of the sector.

APPEARANCE AND PHYSIOLOGY

From nose to tail, a Schalli averages 6 feet long and about 280 lbs., though unusual specimens can be half again as large. They have streamlined bodies with a powerful horizontal fluke used to push themselves through the water at around 30 mph. A single long fin stretches down the back from just behind the head to the base of the tail. Four manipulating tentacles sprout about a third of the way

down the body; they usually remain flat against the body while swimming. These are extremely dextrous and made up solely of ringed muscle, giving them enormous flexibility but little strength.

Though by Human standards the Schalli are not a strong species, they have far more endurance than any Human, even at peak exertion.

The Schalli breathe both water and air through a complex lung/gill system (the same organs extract oxygen from both). But though they can breathe air, they are creatures of the sea. Outside the water, they are nearly helpless. They can drag themselves across flat surfaces with their manipulating tentacles, but their skin soon dries out and begins to crack and peel painfully.

SENSES

The eyes are housed in short stalks that jut horizontally from the head. Sight is binocular and forward-pointing, appropriate for a hunting carnivore.



The eyestalks are not flexible. The distinctive Schalli whiskers provide taste and smell at levels similar to that of Humans, and the skin is sensitive.

The Schallis' most exceptional sense is hearing. Though not as developed as those of Dolphins, their ears outstrip those of Humaniti both above and below the water, with an uncanny ability to filter out background noise.

DIET

The Schalli are wholly carnivorous pack hunters, preying on fish and arthropod equivalents. Their digestion lacks the enzymes necessary to break down vegetable matter. The mouth contains one row of sharp teeth, inward-pointing like a shark's. They are now experimenting with agriculture, but rather than domesticate their food species, they are planting rich beds of seaweed designed to attract prey.

REPRODUCTION

Approximately three females are born for each male, and the females tend to cluster around the most successful hunters. Monogamy is completely unknown to the Schalli, and individuals change partners frequently with little jealousy. A family is a group of 3 to 5 males and associated females and children. Children are born live in litters of 2 to 7. Schalli childbearing is tied directly to population; hormones produced by the skin interfere with fertility. The more Schalli in an area, the fewer litters are born, and the smaller each litter will be. This enables the Schalli to deal rapidly with a population drop, while avoiding the overpopulation problems associated with high fecundity. The family as a group raises the resulting children, though mothers usually favor their own young.

LANGUAGE AND NAMES

The Schalli possess a single language (the minority population on Schall has not had time to diverge significantly) that is M/A for native speakers and M/H for Imperials. Schalli and Humans can speak each other's language without mechanical aid, though special apparatus is of course required for a Human to speak underwater.

Schalli use personal and clan names, personal name first. The clan names usually describe a trade or trait. The personal names are completely arbitrary; Schalli find deeply alien the idea that a name might represent anything other than the person to whom it applies! Tribal Schalli sometimes name a child after the recently deceased, but the child is then brought up to "be" that person. Modernized Schalli find this abhorrent.



Schalli living among Imperials transliterate their personal name but translate the second one literally, giving rise to names like SEEeekee Deepdiver.

PSYCHOLOGY

As a species, the Schalli are gregarious to the point of mania. They cannot bear to be apart from a group (though that group does not have to include other Schalli); they are proving to be the galaxy's greatest joiners. Communication is essential to their feeling of belonging, and it is a rare individual who can remain silent for longer than five minutes at a time. The Schalli ability to speak and follow several conversations at a time only exacerbates this tendency.

The greatest cruelty to a Schalli is to ignore him.

Intellectually, they are highly pragmatic and analytical, with amazing native talents in mathematics. These abilities are proving to translate well to engineering, astrogation, and computer programming and operation. They are quick to suggest solutions based on their areas of expertise, but as equally quick to accept logical suggestions made by others.

These qualities, combined with their relative newness on the galactic scene, have led to many Imperials seeing the Schalli as nothing more than a race of overenthusiastic children. This is a dangerous underestimation. The Schalli join to learn, and they are good learners. The third racial trait that guides Schalli psychology is competition.

A Schalli's self-worth and reproductive attractiveness depends on his competence in relation to his peers and the ability to interact meaningfully with his environment. With the discovery of the Imperium, the Schalli's perceived environment has changed almost beyond recognition, and the definition of "peer" has grown to include the other sentient races. The Schalli will not stop until, individually and as a race, they prove themselves the best.

SOCIETY

Schalli society is in a state of flux. In the last few years, everything the species accepted about their world and the universe has been called into question. Most Schalli today live as their ancestors did, tribes consisting of 2-5 "families" migrating with food sources through the shallow seas of their homeworld.

CHORAL SONGS

The songs that led to their rediscovery serve the Schalli both as artistic expression and a medium of planetary communication. These songs developed from simple warnings and declarations of territory and evolved into a global communication net.

Togunn Rey Industrials

Marquis Vras' company, which controlled most of the industry on Vras, as well as significant holdings across the Nicosia subsector, is now under the nominal control of the Schalli. The Archduke's generous gift has given the Schalli access to the best technology available (TL12). Under close supervision by Imperial bureaucrats and with the help of the Ch'KieeEE colony, they are aggressively investing in research and industry throughout Old Expanses.

Togunn Rey Industrials specialized in underwater mining and agriculture, but in the last year has expanded its interest into chemicals, medicine, and manufacture. Most of the new projects still focus on the underwater technologies of the old company, but diversification is growing, and it is likely the company will be unrecognizable within a generation.

As of yet, the other commercial concerns of Old Expanses are paying little attention to Togunn Rey, expecting the Schalli to overextend themselves and collapse, but a few far-seeing megacorps are watching the vital new concern. Considering the Archduke's willingness to support non-Human endeavors, if even half of the proposed new projects find success, TRI's influence could grow beyond Old Expanses and into the rest of the Domain.

It is these songs that explain the continued homogeneity of culture and language over the 500 million Schalli on Vras. They maintaining the Schalli sense of belonging, both in creating the choruses and the comfort of their constant presence. A Schalli who can hear the choral songs knows he is not alone. Individuals off-planet typically carry recordings of the songs to combat loneliness.

THE TRADITIONALISTS

A small but growing minority among the Schalli are trying to block the race's entrance into galactic culture. Made up of those less adaptable to the new situation, and those with personal grudges against Humaniti, this faction seeks to undermine the progress being made through rhetoric and petty vandalism. A majority of the "native" population on Schall are involved in some way with this group. It has been only a few generations since their forefathers were yanked from friends and family, subjected to degrading tests, and then abandoned on a planet they were poorly adapted to. The memory of loss has bred a bitter streak in the population of Schall.

These dissatisfied individuals have yet to organize, but media has given them the name of "Traditionalist" because of the common call to return to the simpler times before Human contact. Even those who appreciate the benefits brought by new technologies are united by the thought they do not need Imperial help to be great.

TECHNOLOGY AND TRADE

The great majority of Schalli live comfortably at TL0 as migrating hunters. Native technology consists of no more than woven grass nets to carry food, and sharpened sticks and broken rocks for use as weapons. The most advanced sciences are mathematics and astronomy, at which the Schalli have reached the equivalent of TL5 understanding. Until the discovery of Humaniti, the Schalli were happy with their achievements. Now they are applying their considerable talents to catching up with the rest of the galaxy.

The resources of TRI and the help of the Ch'KieeEE colony (p. 102) have been a considerable help. Education is the current focus, as the Schalli are trying to go from a TL0 society to TL12 in one generation, but significant resources are going into adapting Dolphin technology to the Schalli physiology, to enable Humans and Schalli to interact more easily away from water. Prototype land vehicles have been constructed, including a sort of wheelchair with sprayer attachments that, it is hoped, will let a Schalli use Human mass transit and visit ordinary buildings.

SCHALLI CHARACTERS

Length is equal to the height of a Human of equal ST, plus 6". Weight is double that of a Human of equal ST.

SCHALLI RACIAL TEMPLATE 44 POINTS

Attribute Modifiers: ST -2 [-15]; IQ +1 [10].

Advantages: Acute Hearing +2 [4]; Acute Hearing (Only to distinguish between simultaneous sounds, -50%) [2]; Enhanced Move (Swimming) 2 [20]; Extra Arms (x2) [20]; Extra Fatigue +8 [24]; Extra Hit Points +1 [5]; Flexibility [15]; Gills [10]; Manual Dexterity +1 [3]; Mathematical Ability [10].

Disadvantages: Aquatic [-40]; Chummy [-5]; Dependency (Water, hourly) [-20]; Odious Racial Habit (Constant communication) [-5].

Skills: Free Fall +2 [2]; Swimming (P/E) DX+2 [4].

NOTES ON RACIAL ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Strength

Many Schalli are considerably stronger than the template indicates. Taking several extra levels of ST is not unrealistic.

Acute Hearing *see p. B19*

Schalli can take levels of Acute Hearing with the limitation "Only to distinguish between simultaneous sounds -50%." All Schalli already possess 2 levels of this advantage, in addition to 2 levels of normal Acute Hearing.

This simulates their uncanny ability to pick out useful sounds from the background noise of the sea, and is as much a result of their highly analytic minds as their superior ears.

Primitive see p. B26

This disadvantage does not appear on the template, because it is variable for the race. The Schalli, until just a few years ago, were a stone-age (TL0) culture. Most Schalli on Vras and Schall still have 10 levels of Primitive for -50 points. A GM should not count this against the campaign's disadvantage limits. However, after 1118 this disadvantage is not mandatory. The Schalli show a tremendous learning curve, and significant numbers have been dedicating themselves to mastering new technologies. As Vras' TL is 12, exceptional Schalli could conceivably have the High Technology advantage!

PSIONICS

The Schalli appear to have no talent for psionics, and their legends do not contain the sorcerers common to races who do. A significant Unusual Background should be required of any Schalli character who has psionic training.

CAREER TEMPLATES

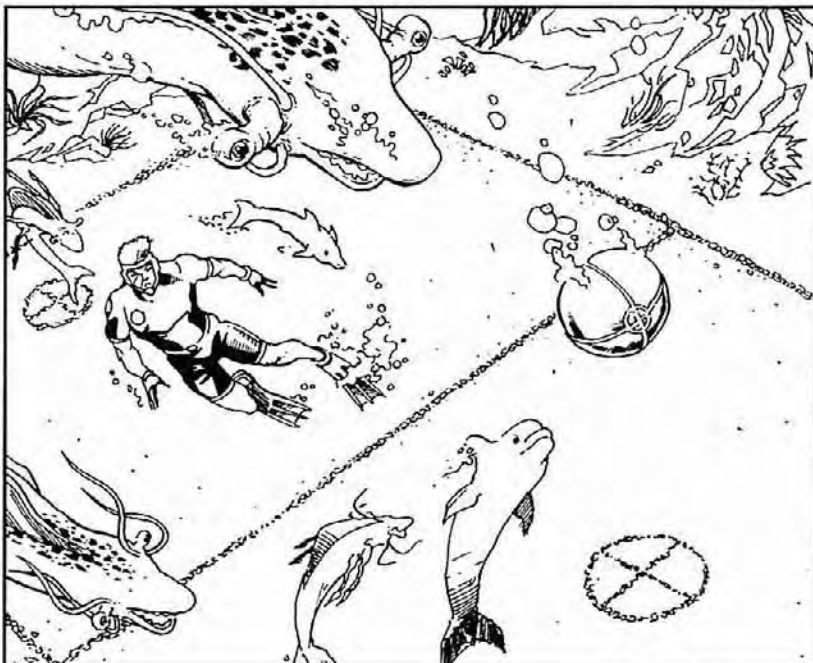
Barbarian is the only template appropriate for uneducated Schalli, but as time goes on, they will be found in every occupation available to Humaniti. In 1122, the first of the wave of Army recruits will have served their minimum term and return to Vras to share their TL10 military training. At that point any of the Army templates will not only be appropriate, but common.

VRAS (0738, OLD EXPANSES SECTOR)

Starport: Class V (Tor Chiamas).

Diameter: 7,200 miles (11,520 km). *Gravity:* 0.9 G. *Atmosphere:* Oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 100%. *Climate:* Warm. *Population:* 503,000,000 (3 million Human, 3,000 Dolphin, others Schalli). *Government:* Balkanized. *Control Rating:* Averages 2, but varies. *TL:* Imperial 10, Schalli mostly 0 but rising. *Gas Giants:* 4. *WTN:* 4. *Trade Classifications:* Ri, Wa.

Vras, orbiting a G5 V star, is the evolutionary homeworld of the Schalli and home to the bulk of their population. It possesses tremendous mineral and biological resources. Officially, Vras' government is split among three nation-states. One, a loose confederation of homesteaders, is scattered over the islands dotting the world-spanning ocean, and two, a civil service bureaucracy and a feudal monarchy, share the one tiny landmass in the northern hemisphere. Until 1118, Alena Chiamas, the Marquis Vras, unofficially ruled the planet through a mining/agriculture corporation.



Today, Vras' society is in upheaval. The Marquis' removal has left a vacuum, as the three governments try to function as more than corporate fronts, and deal with the inclusion of a half-billion new citizens. Resentment toward the Schalli and their Dolphin advocates is growing as the Human population finds itself marginalized on its own planet. Imperial bureaucrats have been brought in to manage the Schallis' new assets for the time being.

SCHALL (0638, OLD EXPANSES SECTOR)

Starport: Class I (Changli).

Diameter: 3,977 miles (6,400 km). *Gravity:* 0.78 G. *Atmosphere:* Oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 99%. *Climate:* Earth-normal. *Population:* 35,000 (1,000 Human and other Imperial, others Schalli). *Government:* Balkanized. *Control Rating:* 4. *TL:* Imperial 10, Schalli mostly 0. *Gas Giants:* 4. *WTN:* 3. *Trade Classifications:* Ni, Wa.

A parsec away is the Schalli's namesake and "official" homeworld. Dr. Covington's original fabrication, necessary to publish her book, has become a victim of Imperial momentum. The Schalli name and home is permanently recorded in the Imperial registry, local movements to change the Anglic name of the species to "the Vrax" notwithstanding.

Schall is a small water-covered rockball about half the diameter and a quarter the gravity of Vras. It possesses a standard oxy-nitro atmosphere heavily tainted with chlorine, to which the Schalli are immune, though Humans and Dolphins must wear a mask at all times. Its only non-Schalli population consists of researchers, Imperial contact specialists, and trade offices. Today the planet is experiencing a boom in population and industry as the focus of Imperial attention on the Schalli. It has no natural landmasses or appreciable natural resources, so the planet is likely to remain a preserve for Schalli for years to come.

Shriekers

The creatures which the Imperium knows as “Shriekers” inhabit a planet at the fringes of Charted Space. Only recently rediscovered, they suffer from two great tragedies. Their world is dying around them . . . and interstellar civilization’s greatest interest in their race centers around the wonderful jewelry that can be made from their unborn young.

ORIGINS AND HISTORY

The Shriekers are bilaterally symmetrical omnivores evolved from plains gatherer/scavengers. Superficially, they resemble gigantic eight-legged furry caterpillars. However, the Shriekers are warm-blooded pseudo-mammals with no real similarity to Terran insects. They evolved from grazing herbivores which learned to supplement their diet by scavenging.

Shrieker civilization reaches back over 150,000 years, but intelligence arose only a few tens of thousands of years before that. Archaeological evidence shows that they first began to use tools a scant 200,000 years ago. By this time, early Shriekers had already developed the migratory patterns and caste distinctions that still dominate their culture today. The tribal nomads migrated with the seasons and to avoid volcanic activity.

At about -150,000 Imperial reckoning, the Shrieker population had grown enough that that simple gathering was not sufficient to feed them. Agriculture and domestication were developed in response, and the first fixed settlements and real governments were born. These remained small and short-lived until -108,000, when the first world-spanning nation rose from a sun-worshipping confederation. This government created the first leisure class, which dedicated itself to art and

science. During this ancient period, still remembered in Shrieker legends as a golden age, the race advanced to a solid TL3, only to fall back to barbarity during a century-long planetary drought.

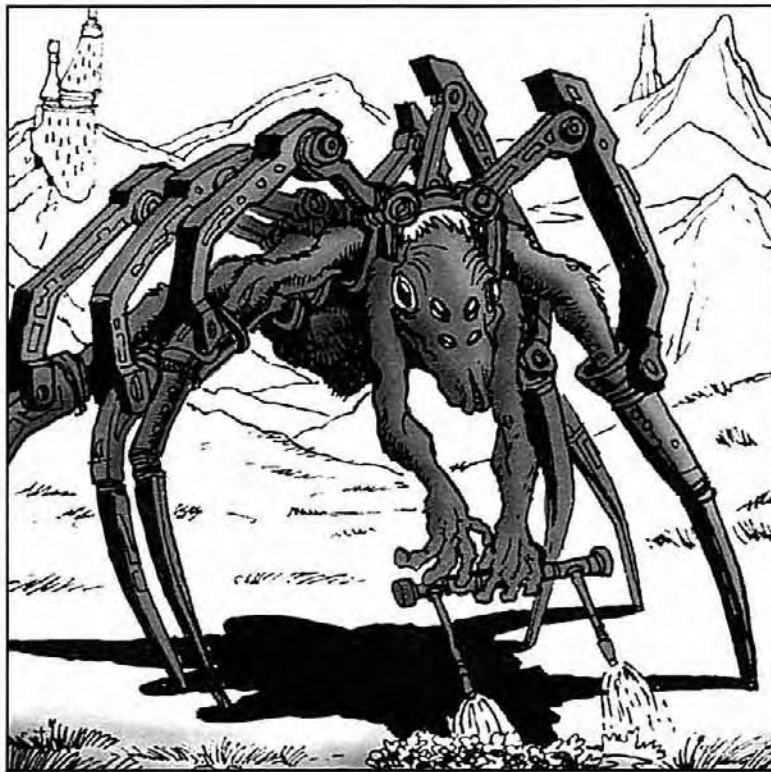
Shrieker society returned to its basic nomadic pattern and remained there until the random expressions of vulcanism created a wide, rich flood plain on the shore of the great ocean. In -15,000, several bands of nomads settled permanently on the plain and redeveloped the complex agricultural techniques of the previous sun-culture. Trade between the tribes led to alliances, and by -10,000 the flood plain was unified under the rule of a central religious authority. The

practice of marriage pilgrimages began to appear at this time.

As the prosperity of the plains civilization grew, it suffered increasingly violent raids from the nomadic tribes still common on the rest of the planet. A dedicated warrior caste arose to protect the nation, and by -9200 had evolved into a secular authority parallel to the religious rule. In -8900 this civil government seized power from the priesthood, and the priests retreated into the mountains as a monastic sect. Over the next several centuries, the military rule evolved into a civil service bureaucracy, and it was during this period the Shriekers reached their height of technological development. Walking-

legs and other prosthetics were developed; massive irrigation and construction projects were undertaken, and the plains civilization reached out to subjugate the entirety of their known world.

About -6000, disaster struck the growing civilization. The volcanic activity and earthquakes, which had subsided in the past 5,000 years, returned with a vengeance. A “volcanic winter” reduced average temperatures by more than 10 degrees, tying up more ocean water in the ice caps.



Naasirka Translation Harness (TL10)

Based on designs cobbled together during the original Thingvellir expedition, Naasirka has created a specialized translation device that can be used for Shrieker-Human communication. The Shrieker unit incorporates a sensitive microphone to pick up the ultrasonic registers of their language, as well as a pair of gloves containing motion detectors to translate gesture and electrical sensors to pick up pulses from the nerve pads. The information passes through a computer mounted on a harness that sits just behind the Shrieker's head; the computer outputs to a speaker in Galanglic or Vilani. The Human version consists of the microphone and speakers (adjusted to produce ultrasound), gloves to replicate Shrieker nerve pulses, and a thin monitor worn over the chest that carries an image of a Shrieker making appropriate gestures. The computer for this model is worn on the belt. The Shrieker version weighs 12 pounds and costs Cr12,000, while the Human version weighs 15 pounds and costs Cr12,500. The high price reflects the semi-prototype nature of the equipment.

A Shrieker and Human equipped with these devices can communicate with no knowledge of each other's language. A Shrieker with command of Galanglic and a translator can understand to the limits of his skill and make himself understood. A Human with the device and some knowledge of Shrieker can speak without difficulty and understand Shrieker at -4 (max skill of 8) without further equipment. The existence of technology such as this is the reason Shriekers do not have the Secret Communication racial advantage. In a campaign where it is unavailable, a GM may wish to add Secret Communication [20] and Mute (only to other species, -50%) [-13] to the Shrieker racial template.

The resultant drop in sea level changed weather patterns and, with the shortened growing season, destroyed the plains civilization's ability to produce food. The nation fragmented quickly back to the migratory tribes of its past. The last remnant of the plains culture survives in the Great Retreat, the home of the exile priesthood. It is from there that the society in contact with interstellar culture is growing.

CONTACT

The native intelligence of Denuli was discovered very recently, and the Shriekers are still struggling to find their place in galactic culture. In 1110, Kaffa Thingvellir, an amateur naturalist, chartered an expedition to capture a specimen of the creature that was later named "Thingvellir's Crested Trapper." The expedition discovered more than it expected. The planet was not only the origin of the mysterious Denuli Gems (actually, Shrieker eggs) but also a heretofore undiscovered intelligent species. In addition to capturing the Crested Trapper, the expedition initiated rudimentary communication with the most

civilized of the natives and assisted the Shriekers in clearing a route from the Great Retreat to the Valley of Memories.

Thingvellir's expedition set the tone for future Imperial contact with the planet – technological assistance and the Denuli Gem trade. Before lifting off, members of the crew not only cleared the pilgrimage trail, but also gathered several gems over the objections of the natives.

PHYSIOLOGY AND APPEARANCE

From the point of view of most other races, Shriekers are built upside-down. Their equivalent of the spine runs along what would be the belly of a Terran animal, and the body, instead of being supported above the legs, hangs from them. They have eight sets of legs, three pairs of which support the body. The fourth has adapted to serve as manipulators, though when not in use, they rest on the ground. Holding their arms above the ground for extended periods is tiring for Shriekers.

The head is round, with a heavy carapace to protect the brain. It contains the organs for sight and hearing, as well as the groundward-pointing mouth. Shriekers have three separate sets of "eyes," each adapted to a specific purpose. The first set is close to the mouth and is used for viewing details. The second set is positioned high on the head and is used for distance viewing; the others are spaced on either side of the head and are used for heat detection. The mouth is a vertical slit, heavy with molars to chew tough grass. Two holes half-covered with a bony ridge are located behind and below the heat-vision eyes. Though they are often mistaken for ears, these apertures open directly to the lungs.

Shriekers possess little ability to lift their head or bend at the spine. Their skeleton is dish-like. The spine supports the weight of the internal organs, while a rib-lattice wraps over and around to protect from above. Wiry hair resembling the plains grass juts upward from the skin, leaving only the distance eyes unobscured, and provides excellent camouflage in their native habitat. Adults mass about 450 lbs. and, unaugmented, stand about one yard high at distance-eye level. Knees will rise a few inches above that. Length averages a bit under six feet. The legs are equidistant along the body; the manipulator limbs are slightly thinner than the rest and located just behind the head.

Shriekers have all five senses familiar to Humanity, though smell and taste are underdeveloped by Human standards. Hearing is comparable to that of Humans, though of less use due to the very thin atmosphere. Shriekers encountering a standard atmospheric density are likely to complain of the noise for the first several days, but will adapt quickly.

The primary senses of the Shriekers are sight and touch. The six eyes provide a dizzying amount of information, and the brainpower needed to process this level of information goes a long way to explaining their large brain size. The high-set distance-eyes have twice the sharpness of the Human eye, though they perceive in a range farther to the ultraviolet. Yellows, oranges, and reds tend to blur together, though they perceive greater variation in blues, purples, and violets. Within 10

yards resolution falls swiftly, to near-uselessness 2 to 3 yards away. The downward-pointing detail-vision eyes can pick out fine detail up to a yard away, but cannot distinguish more than shapes beyond that. The resulting hole in vision is filled by the infrared "heat-eyes" located on either side of the face. Temperature differences of a single degree can be detected up to 20 yards away, and with specific practice, Shriekers can increase the range of this resolution dramatically.

Touch is more localized than in Humaniti. The skin is uniformly sensitive to heat, pressure, and pain, but more detailed information is provided through specialized pads on the equivalent of palms and ankles. These nerve pads are sensitive enough that when in direct contact, they can transfer impulses to the pads of another, and these impulses have become an important part of communication. An unfortunate side effect of this sensitivity causes Shriekers struck against these pads to react like a Human struck in the genitals. Both males and females can be so immobilized.

The organs for both hearing and the sound component of speech are located in a small hump at the forefront of the head. This organ is a bone hollow connected to lungs and honeycombed with tiny bones and tendons. Air forced through this hollow produce the high-pitched squeals which give the Shriekers their name. These vary in pitch from the Human-audible range into ultrasonic frequencies. The same structure is integral to detecting sounds . . . so, while speaking, a Shrieker cannot hear.

REPRODUCTION

Shriekers have two sexes, roughly equivalent to male and female. They are oviparous and typically mate for life. Eggs are created and fertilized in two encounters. The first union of a male and female produces an egg sac containing 10 to 20 eggs. The male then fertilizes these eggs externally – typically two to three per standard year, though the nomads fertilize the entire egg sac at once. The couple continues fertilizing eggs and raising children until the egg sac is empty, though not all eggs will prove viable. Of the eggs in a typical egg sac, only half will be successfully fertilized, and fewer than half of those will survive to reach adulthood. No male other than the one who helped create the eggs can finish fertilization; if the original father dies, the unfertilized ones will never hatch. The death of the mother does not prevent further children, and the father may remove the egg sac from his mate and fertilize them as usual. Often, the egg sac is removed prematurely from a still active female to be kept with the father, to prevent a whole generation dying with the mother. Elders, those who have survived their life crisis, are infertile.

The hormones associated with female fertility are stimulated by physical activity, especially travel. Eggs produced without constant activity are less viable. Fewer hatch. This presented no difficulty for prehistoric Shriekers. As gatherer/scavengers, most of their life was spent in migrations following seasonal food supplies, but with the onset of civilization and agriculture the race settled down.

To combat the lowered fertility associated with civilization, the tradition of the "marriage pilgrimage" was started. The journey to a sacred site (several of which are scattered across the planet) is designed to reproduce the conditions of their ancestors' ancient migrations and stimulate the female's hormones to the level where her eggs are more likely to survive. Over time this practice has become ingrained. Children conceived without

the benefit of a marriage pilgrimage are looked down upon as being weak-souled, and are relegated to the lowest levels of society.



AGING AND DEATH

Shriekers live their life in three stages. Each successive stage reached is cause for celebration, as the process of moving from one to the next is dangerous, and most fail to survive. The first is youth, which lasts 8 standard years. Between accidents, fights, illness, and the harsh environment, fewer than half reach the age of adulthood. Because of this, children receive only enough care to keep them healthy until they reach their full growth (see *Psychology*, p. 111).

When a child reaches the age of adulthood, it enters the First Crisis, a state of torpor which lasts about a week. More than half of the time, this torpor ends in death. If the Shrieker awakens, it is now an adult, with a more efficient metabolism, a higher HT, and a good chance of living many more years.

Adults represent the bulk of society. Unexpected death is rare; barring accident, war, or disease, a Shrieker can expect to live about 40 standard years. Age is measured from adulthood and is given in multiples of the adult's life as a child. A Shrieker aged 16 standard years would be considered "one," 24 standard years "two," and so on.

At the age of "four," 40 standard years after hatching, every Shrieker goes through what is called the "Second Crisis," a process similar to Human menopause, though much more extreme. The Second Crisis causes hormonal and physiological changes that kill most Shriekers. The few that survive (typically fewer than 10%) are no longer fertile, but retain their adult vigor for another 5 local years (200 standard years) before going through a Third Crisis that inevitably results in death.

ENVIRONMENT

Shriekers seem amazingly poorly adapted to their own planet. Unlike such races as Humans, Droyne, and Vargr, whose distant ancestors were relocated by the Ancients, the Shriekers appear to have evolved on the planet where they were found. Their genetic codes are clearly similar to the other life found on the planet. In fact, much of the higher life on Denuli also seems to be struggling with its own environment.

The most common theory, which also explains the excessive vulcanism that wracks the planet, is that Denuli suffered a massive meteor strike in the recent (geologically speaking) past. Preliminary studies by the University of Mora suggest

that this could have happened as early as 200,000 to 250,000 years ago, pointing to the Great Ocean as the impact site. An impact of the size needed to create the Great Ocean would have blown much of the atmosphere and surface water off the planet. Certain geologic studies and the existence of a slight water vapor ring around the small planet support this theory. If that is indeed the case, the rise of intelligence could well have been sparked by the evolutionary turmoil that such an event would cause, and the whole biosphere is still in the process of adjusting to the new conditions. The metabolic crises that mark off Shrieker life are part of this evolution, as life finds a way to adapt.



Ancient scholars who agree are looking for evidence that the strike was a side effect of the Great War, though reputable Mora scientists are quick to point out that not everything that happens in the universe must be a result of Ancient activity.

LANGUAGE AND NAMES

Language utilizes a combination of three elements: the shrieks that give the race its name, communication through nerve pads, and gesture. Gesture and sound are used to communicate objective concepts and facts, while the nerve-pads provide subtle shades of meaning and inflection. The written form of this complex language resembles a series of three wavy lines, one above the other. Each line represents an element of language; width, amplitude, and frequency vary to convey meaning. The ability to effectively communicate three concepts at once creates a language stunningly suited to irony, sarcasm, and wordplay.

Shrieker languages are always M/VH to Humans, and can only be understood and spoken in a limited form with special equipment. Shriekers learn non-Shrieker languages at M/H, as they have difficulty adapting to speech that contains only one or two elements.

The Shriekers' names utilize all three aspects of their communication and, like many Human names, can no longer be directly translated. Because of this, the Shriekers have begun to adopt nicknames that their alien visitors can hear and repeat. To most Humans, these nicknames are just a random collection of sounds, and Imperials refer to individual Shriekers in two ways – either an attempt to spell the noise they hear (e.g., Whee-oooh-hmmk and Ahh-ttkcheee) or a simple description of the beginning sounds (e.g., Two-Clicks or Triple-Beep).

PSYCHOLOGY

To Humaniti, Shriekers seem cold, fatalistic, and a bit cruel, but this is simply the way they cope with the peculiarities of their biology and the difficulties of their existence.

Shrieker children are sentient, and require significant amounts of care to grow into useful members of society. However, any given child has less than a 25% chance of surviving to adulthood. The indifference that Shriekers show to their young (which extends to the children of other races when encountered) stems from this high mortality rate. Until they pass their First Crisis, children are given the basic care and training needed to keep them alive, but love, special training, and excess resources are not wasted on those who



will soon likely be dead. The joy a tribe shows at its coming-of-age ceremonies is quite real, because the new adult is now ready to contribute to the tribe by learning and working.

This utilitarian attitude extends to other aspects of their life, a holdover from experiencing such treatment during the years of childhood. Shriekers, as a species, place little value on individuals or objects, but instead value what that object or person can accomplish. The concept of inherent value outside of utility is foreign to them. To a Shrieker, a life

is not precious because it is a life, but because of what that life can do to support the community. As a side effect, crime is punished very harshly, as the concept of mercy to one who would harm his neighbors is considered tantamount to insanity.

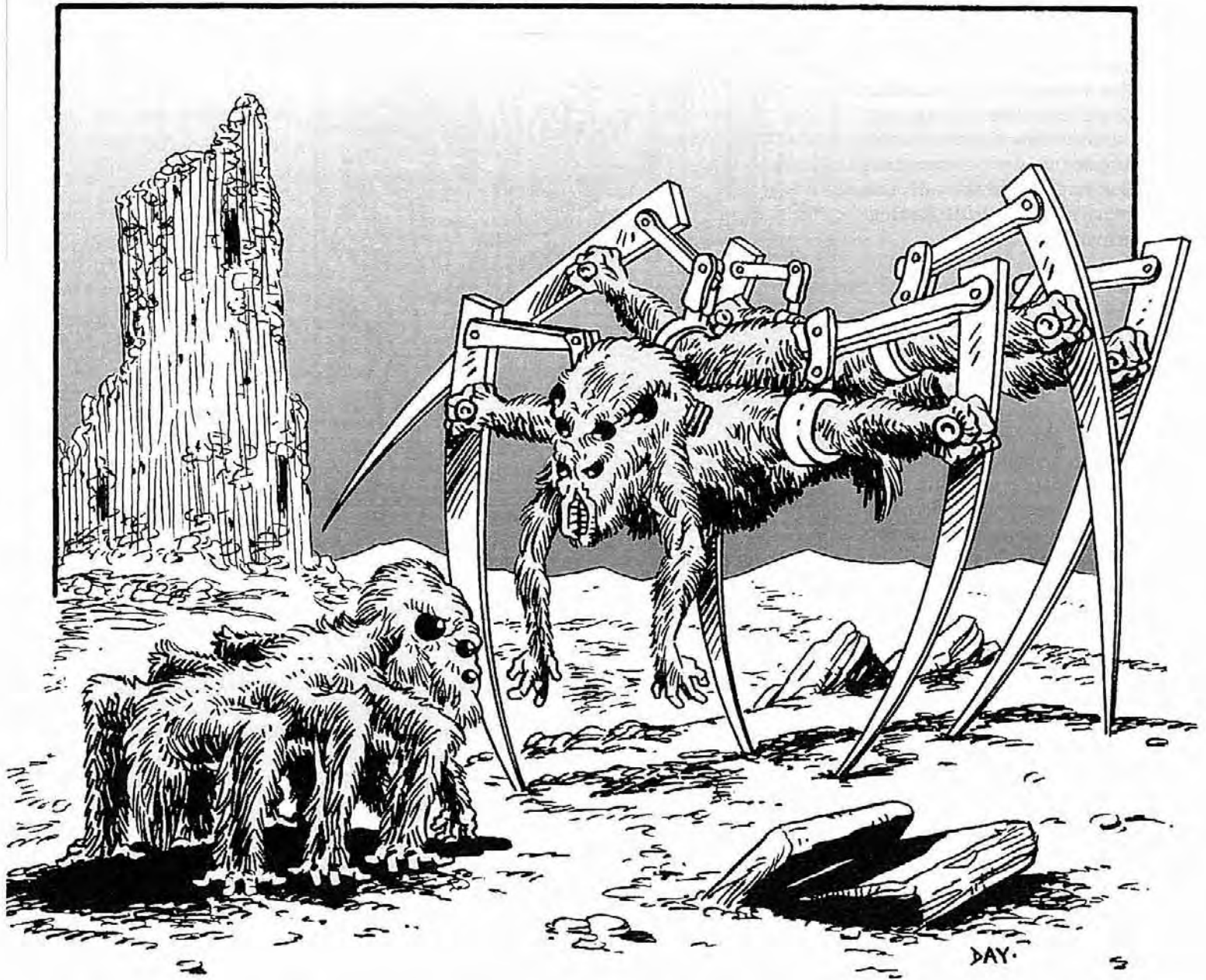
This does not mean that Shriekers do not value each other as distinct individuals. The race is not a hive-mind. But instead of being tied directly to a person, affection and respect are tied to specific deeds. "Great Clatter" the seeker will not be "Whistle-Call's" friend, but would be fond of a successful hunt, the discovery of a new medicine, and being rescued from a ravine. If "Whistle-Call" was involved with these three events, a relationship like friendship could exist between them. Likewise, the seeker would not hold grudges against a specific person, but against actions that person was involved with.

Because of this outlook, Shriekers are less likely to make judgments based on groups, and reaction modifiers that do not reflect the specific deeds of an individual are halved when applied to them.

Fatalism derives from the fact that, barring accident or injury, Shriekers know the approximate date of their own death. No one avoids the Second Crisis, and no one survives the Third. Because of this, members of the race are very accepting of their fates, both as individuals and as a species. They waste little energy on situations with foregone conclusions, preferring to focus their efforts on things that can be changed.

SOCIETY

Society is based on tribes and clans, with the most advanced culture centered on the Great Retreat incorporating aspects of both theocracies and city-states. The strongest single influence on their society is the caste system. The current castes have remained essentially unchanged for 500,000 years, save for the priest caste, which took power after a series of natural disasters destroyed the Plains Civilization (see pp. 107-108).



Government remains informal; decisions are reached by a consensus of elder priests, with input and suggestions from elder members of the other castes. The nonelder priest caste conveys the dictates of the elders to the other castes, who then do what is required.

The harsh conditions of Denuli let this loose system work, even for communities approaching the size of The Great Retreat. It allows the elders on hand to make decisions based on rapidly changing circumstance, and provides a group the Shriekers can turn to for guidance in times of crisis. Rebellion and dissent show themselves only during times of safety. Even the disaffected understand the need to act quickly and as a unit when danger occurs.

THE CASTES

Shrieker society separates itself into four occupational castes. These social classes are not biological in nature, but still have a significant hold on the psychology of the race.

Three developed from tribal divisions when civilization began, and the fourth after the catastrophe that destroyed the Plains Civilization.

When a Shrieker emerges as a new adult, his caste is chosen by consensus of the local priests. While children are observed for appropriate tendencies, they receive little training toward their future life. Only after the community is certain a child will survive will they spend time and effort on it.

Serfs

Lowest are the "serfs." This class evolved from the prehistoric gatherers who first began the practice of agriculture. Today they still produce much of the food, and serve as the labor for most communal projects. They have little voice in their own affairs, and those not governed directly by the priests must obey the orders of the seekers and fighters. Without exception, children conceived without the benefit of a marriage pilgrimage are assigned to the serf caste. Even within their own caste, the "weak-souled" Shriekers are stigmatized.

Fighters

The “fighter” caste derives from the tribal caregivers, and today is still primarily made up of males tasked with watching over egg sacs. In ancient times, while the seekers and serfs were away searching for and gathering food, the fighters remained behind to protect the vulnerable next generation. As populations increased, this responsibility grew to include safeguarding food stores and permanent habitats from competing tribes of nomads. Fighters concern themselves more with defense than offense, and leave aggression to seekers. In modern society, fighters follow the lead of their elders and the priesthood.

Seekers

More completely “seekers after knowledge,” the third class developed from the scouts and raiders of the original migratory tribes. Today they are the most diverse of the castes, including the scientist, engineer, doctor, explorer, and craftsman equivalent in Shrieker society.

The “classic” seeker, however, is still the scout. Seekers, more than any other caste, work alone, away from the eyes of their fellows. It is their task to bring new knowledge to the race, whether through exploration of a newly discovered valley or through the development of a more efficient walking-leg. The seekers are responsible for the growth of their race as a people.

Priests

At the top of the caste system sit the “priests.” The priests appeared as a subset of the seeker caste during the height of the Plains Civilization. Originally rulers, they gradually lost power until they were ousted and forced into exile by a league of fighters. By coincidence, when the volcanoes awakened and the Plains Civilization was destroyed, the priests’ exile monastery was the only spot of civilization to survive. The priests at the Great Retreat utilized their superior technology and secure settlements to impose their rule over the Shriekers who sought refuge in the mountains. Since that time, civilization has been spreading slowly outward from the Great Retreat under the watchful eyes of the priests.

Today’s priests fill two roles in society. In day-to-day life and times of crisis they are leaders and councilors. They pass the decisions of the elders (also headed by priests) to the other castes and perform the daily rituals of life. Priests also serve as society’s memory. They not only record the knowledge brought in by the seekers, but literally remember it. All

settlements keep both a written and mnemonic record of important information.

Elders and Children

Elders and children are special cases. Children belong to no caste; the system ignores them except to feed them. Elders remain with their caste, but become leaders or advisors, depending on their competence. With his comparatively vast lifespan, an Elder is an important resource in terms of knowledge and continuity, even if as an individual he is not particularly wise or bright.

RELIGION

The religion of the Great Retreat is as freeform as local government, but provides up a number of interesting questions. Dtai-denuli, the underlying moral code that frames the religion, is one of the dozen words in the Shrieker language

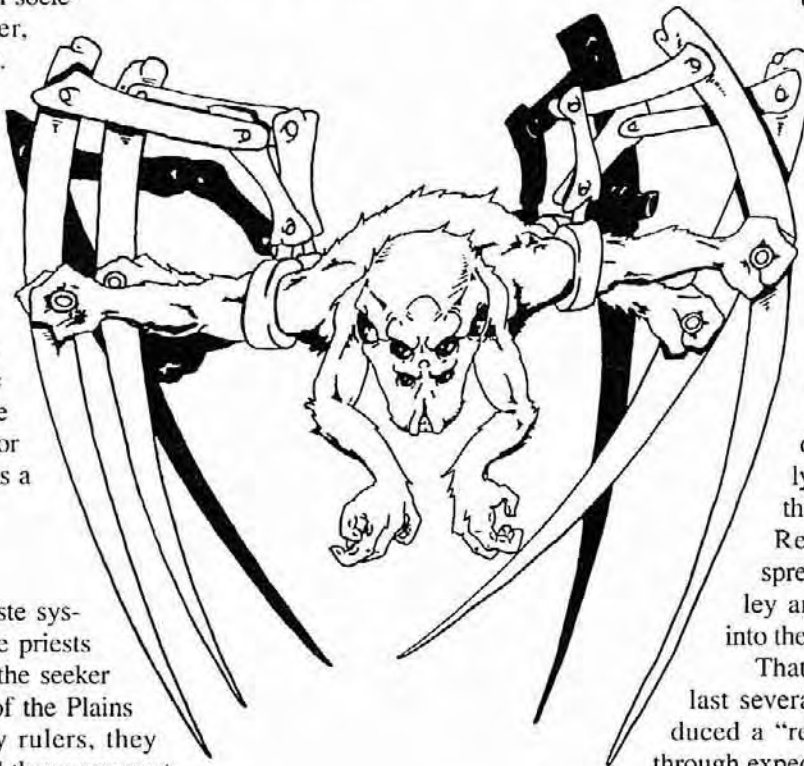
that can be reproduced by a Human tongue. Denuli was the

name of the scout who introduced “Denuli Gems” (see p. 108) to the Spinward Marches, and the code bears an idealized resemblance to the Scouts’ book of standard procedures from the 400s. It focuses on the virtue of exploration and knowledge, and the importance of filling and understanding the universe without destroying it. Coincidentally, it was around 470 to 480 that the Shriekers of the Great Retreat began to actively spread beyond their single valley and incorporate other tribes into their society.

That said, the hardships of the last several thousand years has produced a “religion” that has devolved through expediency into a series of traditions with accompanying philosophy. Little actual faith remains, and even the priests pay it little more than lip service. Its continued existence and that of the current class system is more a consequence of the fact it works than any strong devotion on the part of the Shriekers.

TECHNOLOGY

In contrast to outward appearances, the TL of the Great Retreat is actually 5, with medicine and life sciences a bit more advanced than the physical sciences. The Shriekers’ environment hides many of the overt signs of TL5 technology. The constantly shifting ground makes large structures and plumbing, while not impossible, not worth the effort.



Sulfur and charcoal are abundant, but Denuli has no natural sources of saltpeter (potassium nitrate), so gunpowder was never discovered. As the Shriekers are integrated into galactic culture, both their apparent and real TL will skyrocket. A partnership between a small collection of seekers and the Naasirka enclave are already making progress toward this goal.

Today the Shriekers primarily interact with galactic society through three groups. Thingvellir's employer and patron, the megacorp Naasirka, has taken a proprietary interest in both the planet and its natives. It has built a research station and cultural exchange next to the tiny starport to research the remarkable properties of the Shriekers' nerve pads for application in their artificial limb and organ division. The IISS has a small station in place to study the emerging culture and protect it from exploitation. And the Denuli Gem smugglers are becoming increasingly bold in their raids and have stooped as far as to seize still-viable eggs from isolated Shrieker communities. Denuli is not yet a member of the Imperium, though delegations from several Imperial organizations are observing this new minor race.

WALKING-LEGS AND OTHER PROSTHETICS

The most interesting development of Shrieker technology is in the production of prosthetics, the most common being "walking-legs." Shriekers are slow and have difficulty maneuvering their bodies. Their legs can raise the body no more than a foot above the ground and have little flexibility.

Because of this, Shriekers have great difficulty turning around, fleeing from danger, or making complex combat maneuvers. Early in their history, they turned to artificial enhancements.

The walking-legs, combined with a surgical procedure, vastly increase the mobility of the Shrieker. They bind to the upper leg of the Shrieker, between the joint to the body and the knee, and raise the user a full yard and a half. With practice, the user can maneuver as if the prosthetics were natural limbs. Several designs exist for different types of terrain, providing a wide range of versatility, but the surgery required to use the walking-legs is crippling. Without the prosthetics, an enhanced Shrieker loses even the limited mobility of his unaugmented cousins.

DENULI (1031, DISTRICT 268 SECTOR)

Starport: Class I facilities administered by IISS ReconBase I-SM-082.

Diameter: 5,034 miles (8,054 km). *Gravity:* 1.05 G. *Atmosphere:* Very thin oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 20%. *Climate:* Hot, arid. *Population:* 300,000 (estimated); 500 Humans and other Imperials. *Government:* Theocracy. *Control Rating:* 4

(native law has no relation to Imperial customs). *TL:* 5. *Gas Giants:* 0. *WTN:* 2.5. *Trade Classification:* Ni Po.

The Shrieker homeworld is located at 1031 in District 268/Spinward Marches. Ignored in the First Survey and barely touched in the Second, it was not even given a name, but charted as "567-809." It remained a backwater in the farthest frontier of the Imperium until the discovery of the Shriekers (and Denuli Gems) brought it to the galactic eye. The planet is dominated by a desert that stretches across half the planet, and a single large ocean surrounded by mountains over the other half. While technically habitable, the planet's very thin oxy-nitrogen atmosphere and constant unpredictable vulcanism left the planet virtually untouched until 1110, when its native intelligence was discovered.



SHRIEKER CHARACTERS

For the length of a Shrieker, use the height of a Human of the same ST. For weight, subtract 4 from ST, find that Human weight, and multiply by 3.

SHRIEKER RACIAL TEMPLATE 17 POINTS

Attribute Modifiers: ST +4 [45]; HT +2 [20].

Advantages: Acute Vision +2 [4]; Extra Hit Points +2 [10]; Extra Legs (Six total) [10]; Infravision [15]; Ultra-hearing [5].

Disadvantages: Centauroid [0]; Increased Life Support (Requires twice the food) [-10]; Poor Sense of Smell/Taste [-2]; Primitive/TL5 [-25]; Reduced Move -3 [-15]; Self-Destruct [-20]; Short Arms [-10]; Short Lifespan [-10].

Quirk: Broad-minded. [-1]

Skills: +2 to Camouflage (Only in tall grass, -50%) [1].

NOTES ON RACIAL ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Acute Vision (Infrared eyes) 1 point/level

Shriekers can improve their IR vision with practice. They may purchase additional Acute Vision after creation, but it applies only to the infrared vision eyes (a -50% limitation).

Psionics see p. B165

Shriekers have no history of psionic power, but their legends contain stories of sorcerers and powerful magic. At the GM's option, Shriekers can have access to psionics under the same rules governing psionics for Humaniti.

Reputation see p. B17

A Shrieker conceived during a particularly arduous or long marriage pilgrimage could have a positive Reputation (Strong Soul), good for +1 from members of his race who were aware of it.

Status see p. B18

Shrieker status means little off Denuli. Among Shriekers on-planet, it is quite important:

- 4 High Priest
- 3 Elder Priest
- 2 Priests, Non-Priest Elder
- 1 Nomad Leader, Warrior, Seeker
- 0 Nomad, Serf
- 1 "Weak-Souled" Serf
- 3 Child

An Elder should add an additional level of status for every 2 local years since his Second Crisis (round down); i.e., +1 at age 2, +2 at age 4. No one survives longer.

Poor Sense of Smell/Taste -2 points

Shriekers have substandard senses of smell and taste. They suffer a -4 on rolls relating to these senses.

Primitive see p. B26

The 5 levels of Primitive included in the racial template indicate a Shrieker from the Great Retreat, currently at TL5. Shriekers from the nomadic tribes should take additional levels appropriate to their tribal TL. This can fall as far as TL1 for the most isolated tribes.

More About the Shriekers

For more detail about the Shriekers and their world, and the truth behind the continued smuggling of Denuli Gems, see *Planetary Survey 2: Denuli*.



Reduced Move see p. B29

Shriekers have very clumsy legs. They suffer a -3 to Move and Dodge and suffer a -3 penalty to use any physical skill that requires walking or running. Missile weapon skills are unimpaired, but any hand-to-hand combat skill is affected, as are any skills that involve ground movement.

Social Stigma -5 points; see p. B27

A Shrieker conceived without the benefit of a marriage pilgrimage is considered to have a weak soul, and is therefore unreliable. Any Shrieker known to suffer this stigma will receive a -1 reaction from others of his race. For a campaign off Denuli, this can be modified by the People Affected and Frequency rules for Reputation (see p. B17).

SPECIAL SHRIEKER ADVANTAGES

Neither of these is a new advantage; both are "package deals."

Elder 20 points plus Status

A Shrieker who becomes an Elder buys off the racial Short Lifespan [-10] and adds Extended Lifespan 4 [20] and Sterile [-3]. Self-Destruct remains, on a new timetable. Any Shrieker who survives his Second Crisis must immediately buy this advantage. It can be paid for with earned experience points, or with points made up from reduced attributes (a side effect of the physically draining experience).

Becoming an Elder also requires purchase of increased status at 5 points per level: +1 to +3 levels, depending on the Shrieker's previous status (see below). Even a "weak-souled" serf, if he survives his Second Crisis, will have the same status as any other non-priest Elder; the stigma is gone. Obviously, say the Shriekers, the life of the former serf strengthened his soul to allow him to survive, and others should learn from his virtuous example!

Walking-Legs 1 point

This advantage eliminates the racial Reduced Move disadvantage and replaces it with *Lame (Legless)* (Mitigator, "walking-legs," -60%) [-14]. The net cost is 1 point. A modified Shrieker without its walking-legs is effectively legless, and suffers the effects that are described on p. B29. It should be kept in mind that most Shriekers consider walking-legs a blessing, and actively seek the procedure.

CHARACTER TEMPLATES

The most obvious choice of template for a Shrieker is, of course, barbarian, but several others are suitable as well. Serfs can be Athletes, Farmers, or Rogues. Fighters could be Athletes, Entertainers, or Martial Artists. Priests could use the Bureaucrat, Diplomat, or Manager template, and the Hunter/Guide, Medical Doctor, and Scientist templates are appropriate for seekers. Any template used should have the TL skills adjusted appropriately. Templates unsuited for Shriekers are those that tie directly to an Imperial service branch (Marine, Scout, Naval Officer) and those that rely on high-TL skills (Engineer, Computer Technician).



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Tezcat

The Tezcat are dwellers in the Great Rift. Latecomers to galactic society, their Shaper religion has transformed them into predatory nihilists who believe they live in a universe ruled by powerful alien monsters. Unable to launch a cleansing jihad, the Tezcat have learned to live and let live. They don't have to like it.

ORIGINS AND HISTORY

The Tezcat evolved from social forest-dwelling predators whose chameleon skin and poison fangs let them ambush and bring down prey. Their physical abilities were fierce by Human standards, but their homeworld Aum-Rahr's fossil records suggest the Tezcat were naked and unarmed in comparison to many of their planet's other prehistoric lifeforms. This forced them to rely on intelligent cooperation in order to survive. In fact, the Tezcat were the second race on Aum-Rahr to develop intelligence, sharing the planet with the Varaku, a carnivorous race of amphibious pseudoreptiles.

Competition from the Varaku may have contributed to the development of Tezcat civilization. However, in contrast to Earth, where species such as Neanderthal man were assimilated or destroyed prior to the development of civilization, the interspecies rivalry on Aum-Rahr continued into the planet's early preindustrial age. At one point nearly all of the Tezcat were enslaved by the Varaku, the free survivors living like animals in desolate desert regions. A rebellion led by a cultural hero, Vre'Rhar, brought freedom but not peace, and the struggle culminated in wars of extermination that left the Tezcat the sole surviving race. The price of freedom was a bitter legacy of xenophobia, a feeling that *different* meant *enemy*, which the Tezcat carried to the stars.

Aum-Rahr is located in the Reft Sector in the Great Rift, and as such the Tezcat avoided much of the ebb and flow of empire that dominated Human interstellar history. They developed slower-than-light (STL) flight in 260, making an epic two-parsec voyage to the neighboring world Draykoysap, a pastoral planet inhabited by Droyne. The Tezcat saw the Droyne as resembling their ancient racial enemies, and attacked. The first Tezcat colonization effort was destroyed by Droyne warriors, but the Droyne leaders failed to appreciate that the Tezcat were not simply raiders. Far stronger subsequent attacks, arriving decades later, caught the Droyne by surprise, giving the Tezcat a foothold in the system.

In all, the entire war lasted over 150 years, prolonged by the snail's pace of Tezcat STL reinforcement and the local Droyne preference for a strategic defense over vigorous counterattack. Ultimately, the Tezcat triumphed. Their invasion

was followed by a lengthy struggle to occupy and subdue the planet. The Tezcat were hampered by limited experience in psionic shielding and had no psis of their own. As a result, they took decades to root out the last hidden Droyne enclaves and complete their destruction of the planet's Droyne population. This long, bitter guerrilla conflict confirmed Tezcat racial xenophobia, and added an additional prejudice against psionics that lingers to this day.

Now equipped with copies of the Droyne jump drive, the Tezcat began to expand. Their progress was slow, hampered by the sparseness of the Rift, but between 500 and 700 they spread through parts of Reft Sector. Tezcat merchant cruisers and missionary scouts equipped for multiple successive jumps even penetrated into Trojan Reach, Vanguard, Riftspan Reaches, and the Beyond, occasionally being mistaken for Aslan *ihatei*. They encountered the other major races, fought skirmishes with Aslan minor clans and Human colonies, and carved out a small pocket empire of their own while the Imperium was distracted by the Second Frontier War and Civil War. By 650 the Tezcat were in control of five worlds and had convinced their larger neighbors they were too prickly a pear to swallow whole.

The Tezcat, while upset to find themselves hemmed in by more powerful alien powers, were nevertheless relieved that not all species were psionic monsters like the (now-legendary) Droyne. However, reports of the Zhodani (carried to them by Aslan traders) unnerved them. For their part, the Tezcat's Imperial and Aslan neighbors have found the xenophobic species a sometimes useful buffer and a good source of mercenaries. In recent centuries, both Human and Aslan states have successfully employed Tezcat against Zhodani client states (and each other), especially during the Frontier Wars.

The last few centuries saw sporadic conflict between the Tezcat and the other client states and pocket empires of the Great Rift, but there have been major changes of borders. The Tezcat continue to believe the universe would be a better place were it not so diverse, but they have learned patience, and their more extreme elements have found solace in mercenary service. If they must serve lesser evils to remove greater ones, so be it. In the end, the Tezcat believe a weakness in their foes will be revealed to them, and they will have their day.

PHYSIOLOGY AND APPEARANCE

Tezcat are tailed humanoid bipeds. They are warm-blooded, with a carbon-based biochemistry not dissimilar from those of most other humanoid species. A typical Tezcat

stands some 5'9" tall, and weighs about 140 lbs. Tezcat have two sexes. Females have a pair of functional breasts similar to those of Humans and nurse young with milk.

A Tezcat's face has a small mouth and nose, a pair of large slit-pupil eyes adapted for nocturnal vision, and long, thin, pointed ears. They are hairless, but the top of their head is topped by dark quills, each about 2" long. Modern Tezcat will often style their quills, trimming some and cutting others to form various patterns. Soldiers and spacers trim all down to half-inch length in order to fit into a helmet. A Tezcat's head quills grow back at about a half-inch every week if untended.

The natural color of Tezcat skin is a silvery gray shot with several other shades, resembling a gasoline slick. However, the Tezcat skin contains muscle-activated pigment cells (chromatophores) which allow it to change color. A Tezcat is an instinctive chameleon, and will blend in with his surroundings unconsciously.

A Tezcat's natural weapons are his claws and fangs. The teeth are small but sharp, and armed with poison glands secreting a potent neurotoxin; it can kill a rabbit-sized animal in moments, although it will only make a Human ill. Their arms end in clawed hands with three fingers and a thumb. A Tezcat's razor-sharp finger claws are dextrous tools as well. A Tezcat has such precise control that he could peel a grape's skin with a single claw and not touch the grape's flesh.

They are a quick and agile race, with faster reflexes than most Humans. Tezcat senses of smell, hearing, and taste are somewhat more acute than

man's. Their visual sense is slightly inferior to a Human's in daylight, and has a narrower spectral range, but is more acute at night.

Tezcat children are born blind and deaf, and are helpless for up to six months after birth. Females are very protective of their young. A Tezcat's lifespan approximates that of a Human.

Tezcat enjoy meat, usually small game, that is fairly fresh, though not necessarily raw. They also like freshly picked vegetables. Tezcat also practice occasional ritual cannibalism (see *Religion*, p. 120).

CLOTHING

If climate permits, Tezcat wear little in the way of clothing – a few scraps of cloth or scarves for adornment or modesty. Cold-weather clothing, armor, or spacesuits are worn as necessary; civilian gear tends to be in bright, solid colors. Jewelry is also worn, and both sexes pierce their ears and the tip of their tail. Military insignia consists of jeweled earrings of various shapes to delineate branch and rank.



LANGUAGE AND NAMES

Tezcat speech is a mix of hissing sibilants and deep, low, throaty sounds. The major language group is A'Prur. It is difficult for a Human to learn (M/H), having a somewhat disorderly structure (like English), but can be mastered with study. Tezcat interaction includes a substantial nonverbal body-language component. In particular, skin color changes, tail posture, and ear movements serve as an unconscious means of signaling the emotional states of their owners.

Tezcat names are fanciful and consist of a string of soft words. Names are selected by the child's parents, and are based on parental hopes for the child. Mothers select the names of sons, and fathers of daughters. A name in the dominant Tezcat culture usually includes the word Sume (son) or Mra (daughter) – this is how to tell a male or female name apart. Because of Tezcat hostility, many names are warlike in nature. An example of a Tezcat name is Keshyathree Vre Sume Nathra I'Lurr, which would translate into the "Twelfth Darkness that Stalks the Rift, Son of Dancing Moonlight, Eater of the Soulless."

Tezcat Conquests

Three of the Tezcat colonies were once inhabited by other races:

Draykoy sap was the Droyne world taken by the Tezcat during their pre-FTL period.

Gordon was originally colonized by Humans of Imperial descent (although it was never part of the Imperium). It was conquered in 613; the Tezcat retained the name out of respect for the fight the 12,000 inhabitants put up. A few hundred of them were eventually Incarnated.

Undrey lan was a trading outpost established by a disgraced Aslan minor clan seeking its fortune in the Rift. Several skirmishes were fought over it, and it changed hands twice, but has been Tezcat since 997. Most of the Aslan died in the fighting. It is still a potential flash point, as other Aslan clans would find retaking it a worthy challenge. It is heavily garrisoned by Tezcat forces.

PSYCHOLOGY

Tezcat are descended from social creatures that both lay in wait and attacked in groups. The ideal tactic was for Tezcat to surround a water hole or the like, blend in with surrounding terrain, and attack as a group to overwhelm larger game, using multiple poisoned bites to weaken their prey.

Tezcat mate casually and frequently, usually with respected coworkers and partners. For the duration of the relationship, mates enjoy almost total intimacy, living together and working together as much as possible.

In stark contrast to their chameleon skins, Tezcat do not hide their feelings: they say what they think, and do not

hesitate to express anger or annoyance. An enraged, hungry, or frightened Tezcat often becomes unnaturally still, his eyes glaze, and he ceases to speak, but may hiss softly or gesture. He will usually blend into the surroundings. In contrast, a happy Tezcat usually retains his natural skin pigment, while a sexually excited Tezcat often displays bright colors.

Tezcat play physical games, ranging from complex team sports to versions of tag or hide-and-peek. They also enjoy poetry and storytelling. They have no musical tradition, but do watch both live and recorded drama. A common art form is very energetic acrobatic dancing. Tezcat dances are sensual, often shamelessly erotic, and may sometimes turn into impromptu on-stage courtships. Tezcat also enjoy hunting live prey. Slanderous tales to the contrary, they do not hunt other sentients, except Chirpers, which they consider fair game.

Compared to Humans, Tezcat are very physically affectionate to each other, with even strangers wrapping their tails together in greeting, rubbing together, or touching tongues. Tezcat can swiftly change their mood from deadly serious to playful. Sober meetings on military or commercial strategy may be interrupted for impromptu games of tag around the office suite. These break tension and reduce conflicts, but Tezcat will not, of course, perform such activities when it is foolish to do so (e.g., on a ship's bridge in the middle of battle). In actual combat situations, or when leading up to battle, they rein in this exuberance, and become the silent stalkers that evolution fitted them for.

TEZCAT XENOPHOBIA

The Tezcat reaction to aliens depend on the appearance of the race they are dealing with and the degree of intolerance the individual Tezcat possesses. The more "alien" the race from the Tezcat's perspective, the more extreme the reaction. The exception are a few sects of Shaper fanatics (see pp. 120-121), who consider humanoid races "mockeries of the One True Form," and as such, worse.

In general, warm-blooded humanoids such as Humaniti, Vargr, and Aslan are treated with suspicion or contempt (-2 reaction). An average Tezcat will regard a Human, Vargr, or Aslan as a somewhat inferior Tezcat; they will expect them to conform to Tezcat behavior and values, and react with fear, annoyance, or anger when they do not. A Tezcat can come to respect (or even befriend) a particular Human, but will still think of the vast mass of Humaniti as dangerous and contemptible, and can be patronizing even to Human friends. Any feelings of betrayal may provoke violence.

Aliens like the Droyne, Ael Yael, Evantha, or Newts, who appear humanoid, but have extra limbs, gills, wings, or scales, are treated as racial enemies. So are races that embrace psionics, like the Zhodani. To the Tezcat, they are the heirs in spirit of the Varaku oppressors who enslaved their race, dangerous animals that have somehow learned to use technology, or (in the case of psis) alien collaborators. Tezcat scholars have learned that the Zhodani have had a long racial association with Droyne and Chirpers, and as such implicitly distrust them; they sympathize completely with Imperial intolerance of psionics. An alien of this sort might be able to visit the Tezcat homeworld on a vital diplomatic mission

Incarnation

Even the most xenophobic of the Shaper Priests have acknowledged that sometimes a Tezcat soul is mistakenly born into the body of a soulless alien humanoid. Incarnation is the process that the priests use to free that soul from such a disgusting fate, and is considered the greatest honor the Tezcat can bestow upon an alien. All Incarnations must be approved by the Shaper Church, and requires a family (Iraahr) to agree to sponsor the new Tezcat – usually because an Iraahr member witnessed the bravery or honorable action of the alien in question.

Incarnation involves radical surgery performed on an alien humanoid to turn them into a Tezcat. It can only be performed on races who are somewhat similar to the Tezcat: this includes Humaniti and other humanoid races (e.g., Vargr and Aslan). The process requires about three months of cosmetic surgery, muscle, skin, cell, and bone grafts, cybernetic prosthetics, and organ transplants, followed by extensive conditioning (i.e., brainwashing), but the end result is that the individual becomes “Tezcat” in appearance. The subject’s biochemistry will usually remain quite different, however, which will affect things like diet.

There have been a few instances where mercenaries who served with the Tezcat have asked to be Incarnated and been accepted. However, most candidates for Incarnation are unwilling: Human or other alien heroes, captured in battle. Most of these prisoners, offered the chance to “become Tezcat,” expected to be able to keep their loyalty intact and somehow keep fighting against the Tezcat. They were wrong. Once the process of Incarnation begins, the subject will end up identifying completely with the Tezcat or going mad from the stress.

Even “successful” survivors may be somewhat mad. GMs should require a Will-3 roll just to keep the subject’s basic personality and memories; those failing it should believe they *are* Tezcat. Incarnates have also been known to develop various personality disorders from the shock, such as a raging bloodlust against their previous species, paranoia, and so on.

All Tezcat treat an Incarnated alien as one of them, and will go to great lengths (including psychological counseling) to make such a being feel at home. A Human who is successfully Incarnated as a Tezcat is adopted into the sponsoring Iraahr, in order to encourage his transition into Tezcat society. Iraahr are group marriages, and an Incarnate individual can mate with Tezcat, and will be encouraged to form an intimate relationship within the new family. Since the genetic structure remains unchanged, no offspring will come of this, though adoptions are certainly possible.

(such as discussing its own surrender terms) but it had better stay off the streets if it doesn’t want to get attacked! Only trained diplomats could deal with this kind of alien without showing fear, hatred, or disgust; even they will have difficult concealing their dislike.

The Tezcat have had little contact with nonhumanoid aliens, like Hivers or K’Kree, but would think of them as monstrous animals. No Tezcat would tolerate such a creature in his presence – he would attack or run, and might be physically ill. Only a trained diplomat could avoid an extreme reaction, and would file formal protest against sharing a planet with the race before storming out in disgust.

The Tezcat attitude to aliens is a serious weakness. Tezcat expect other humanoids to be reasonably cunning, but have an arrogant assumption of their own cultural superiority. When dealing with less humanoid races, most Tezcat underestimate their intelligence and capabilities (if they are very non-Human) or, occasionally, drastically overestimate them. Their own fear and hatred of the alien can lead them into poorly planned actions or cause them to fall for simplistic traps or provocation. Members of more humanoid races can use this fear to manipulate the Tezcat into actions against stranger races. With very little provocation, a Tezcat merchant would happily suspect a Newt, Droyne, or Jgd-II-Jagd of a sinister plot to take over the galaxy or drive him, personally, out of business! This can be an asset if a small Imperial, Aslan, or Vargr colony needs help fighting off a Zhodani or K’Kree attack, of course. A group of far-travelling Tezcat star mercs would gladly sign up to stop the alien horde!



SOCIETY

The basic unit of Tezcat society is the Iraahr, a group marriage of four to eight males and females, who live and mate together, and raise their children in common. An Iraahr will typically live in a country estate or smaller urban dwelling (both, commuting, if it is rich enough). All members of an Iraahr are equal partners, although individuals with a strong personality can dominate it.

Iraahr are economic as well as emotional partnerships, and Tezcat law recognizes this. When an Iraahr is formed, contracts are signed that arrange for the division of finances and the support of children if a member leaves the group, or if it breaks up. Although intimate relationships outside the Iraahr exist, a Tezcat female seeking to have children prefers to do so within the security of a recognized Iraahr. Aside from legal formalities, forming an Iraahr or joining one requires little ceremony beyond the agreement of all parties. However, the adoption of a new member is typically an excuse for several days of licentious celebration.

In and beyond the Iraahr, Tezcat society is egalitarian. Larger social structures, including business groups, organizations (even the Shaper Church), and government agencies are democratic rather than hierarchical. The military is a minor exception, but even among the Soulhunters there is no artificial social distance between officers and “common soldiers.” Off-duty discipline is very slack.

GOVERNMENT AND INSTITUTIONS

The Tezcat are territorial, and prior to their discovery of an all-encompassing alien threat, major wars were about as common among Tezcat as they are among Humanity. Minor conflicts still occur. The dominant culture among the Tezcat is that of the aggressive A'Prur nation, from Aum-Rhar's eastern island continent. The A'Prur are technologically inclined, energetic, and armed with a burning religious faith and a powerful zeal to bring civilization to the barbarians. Think of a cross between early Islam and the British Empire. The A'Prur conquered the other Tezcat nations about 200 years ago, and have since worked to expand Tezcat influence through space.

The A'Prur's interstellar government, collectively known as the *Lemente Ezva Har"Tez*, is a church-influenced democracy. A literal translation is "Solar Hegemony of the Sacred People." It is the interstellar union that joins together the worlds controlled by the Tezcat.

The Solar Hegemony encompasses six worlds located at the nexus of four thinly populated subsectors in Refit Sector. The heart of the Hegemony is Aum-Rahr (referred to as "Lemente" on some Imperial star maps), located in Two Little subsector. The other worlds in the theocracy are the populous agricultural colony on Zamoran/Two Little (the conquered Droyne world once known as Draykoysap), and outlying colony worlds of Anorac and Gordon (both in Barker subsector), Undreylan/Lost Way, and R'Bak/Sagittarian.

The Solar Hegemony government is organized into two houses. The upper house, or *Hurama*, is elected solely from high-ranking priests of the Shaper hierarchy. It has veto powers over laws affecting religious issues, and acts as a supreme court of appeal. The lower house, or *Esrarm*, is formed from representatives from each Tezcat world to represent voters by population. Only a priest or military veteran can vote or hold government office. The *Esrarm*, supported by the bureaucracy and military, sets taxes, regulates commerce, and decides government policy. There is no formal chief executive: decisions are made by majority vote, with executive responsibility held by various committees and exercised by senior or popular members within them.

Tezcat interstellar politics represent a balance between Tezcat xenophobia and paranoia, and their instinctive desire to blend in and strike from ambush. The Tezcat are poor neighbors, but useful allies. Tezcat mercenaries have also made a name for themselves. Provided their anti-psionic, religious, and racial prejudices are catered to, they make effective fighters, especially in commando and counter-insurgency operations. They are, however, prone to occasional massacres, and to the despoiling of "heretical" places of worship.

RELIGION

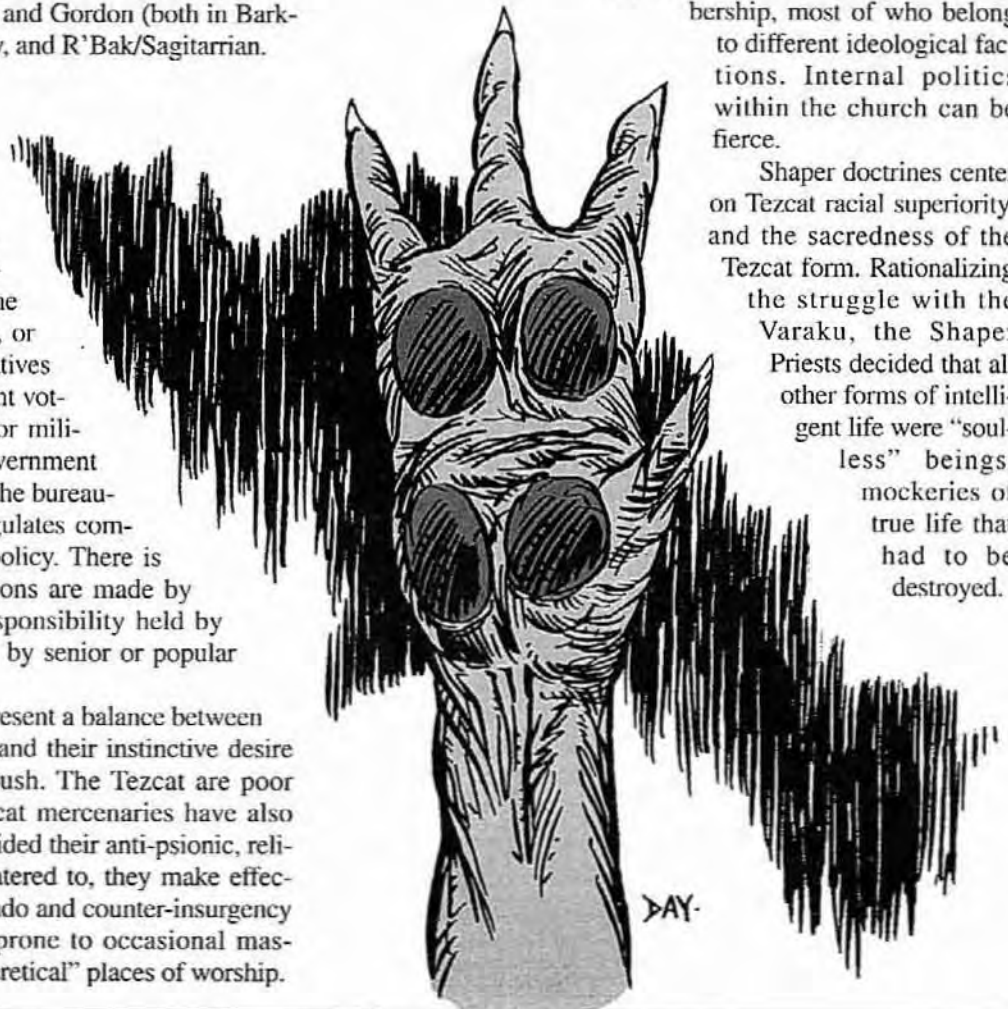
Partly because of their love of life, Tezcat are obsessed with death as the final end. A common belief among the Tezcat is that eating a dead being shows respect for him: he becomes part of you. For this reason, Tezcat funeral services involve devouring the parts of dead friends and loved ones, while Tezcat warriors show their respect for valiant humanoid aliens by snacking on their bodies (if biologically compatible). With some exceptions Tezcat do not seek out sentient beings as food.

Tezcat do not believe in an afterlife or in reincarnation. As a result, much of their philosophy and art revolves around the ephemeral nature of existence and the inevitability of final destruction.

Typical of this nihilist view is the religion of the dominant A'Prur culture, which centers on a being or force known as the Absolute, who created the Tezcat as its chosen ones. The Absolute is not a loving god – it is a personification of entropy that must be appeased with regular sacrifices so that normal life may continue. The worship of the Absolute is directed by the religious organization known as the Shaper Priesthood. The Shaper Priesthood claims descent from Vre'Rhar, the hero who rescued the Tezcat from enslavement by the reptilian Varaku. The Shaper Priesthood, while xenophobic, fanatical, and conservative, is a democratic organization: leaders are elected, and policy is

subject to regular votes by the membership, most of who belong to different ideological factions. Internal politics within the church can be fierce.

Shaper doctrines center on Tezcat racial superiority, and the sacredness of the Tezcat form. Rationalizing the struggle with the Varaku, the Shaper Priests decided that all other forms of intelligent life were "soulless" beings, mockeries of true life that had to be destroyed.



These doctrines were reinforced during the Droyne War. As a result, Tezcat relations with other alien species have been characterized by xenophobia and genocide. Shapers reserve their greatest hatred for “false gods” and would delight in burning places of worship and exterminating heretical religious leaders. As this is frowned on in interstellar society, Shaper church members sublimate these impulses, but they are a strong element in sermons, religious media broadcasts, and iconography.

Although there are many more subtle doctrines and rituals, the most visible form that Tezcat propitiation of the Absolute takes is the sacrifice of living beings. The Tezcat consider aliens to be soulless and unworthy, and so this is not a fate most adventurers need worry about. They reserve the honor for their own criminals and heretics: ordinary citizens need not fear sacrifice to the Absolute, for it will take them in the end . . .

In recent centuries, the Shaper Priests have identified the Absolute with the giant black hole which may exist in the center of the Milky Way galaxy. Other black holes are considered sacred places (“Doorways to the Absolute”); there is a faction among the Shaper Priests that would like to send a combination pilgrimage and scientific expedition to the nearest one. Unfortunately, this means a journey of several hundred light years, and might require cooperation with other species. The Shapers are very interested in the second- and third-hand stories they have heard of the Zhodani core expeditions, and are extremely nervous about what these alien heretics might be up to. This only serves to feed Tezcat paranoia about the Consulate, of course. Additional information on black holes and the route to the galactic core is one of the few things that may lead to Shaper Priests cooperating with other intelligent races.

In ancient times, shrines to the Absolute were usually deep pits surrounded by megalithic structures. Sacrifices were blinded and then buried alive. In these more enlightened times the sacrifices are usually tossed out of airlocks (with suits and a few days of air) with a trajectory that should bring them to the galactic core in a few hundred billion years. A few Tezcat “sacrifices” have been rescued by passing spacecraft before their air ran out. This is one way a Tezcat PC could join a band of Imperial adventurers: he is a religious heretic who owes a debt to the party for saving his life!

The Shaper Priests can be stereotyped as a mix of bureaucrats who have used the priesthood as a road to power, scholarly academics and philosophers including some excellent gravitational astronomers, and fanatical true believers in whom faith burns with a pure light.

The Shaper Priests have suppressed all other religions on Aum-Rhar. Most Tezcat have been brought up with the Faith, and believe in its basic tenets without question: they see themselves as the chosen servants of Entropy, and believe that all other intelligent races are soulless zombies. However, not all the population are fanatics. Some citizens follow only the forms of worship, and there are even a few radical factions within the hierarchy who believe that the Faith should be reformed to allow “humanoid” aliens into the church.

Which Way Will They Turn?

Spurred by the twisted doctrines of the Shaper Priests, Tezcat can be implacable enemies if encountered on the wrong side of a mercenary conflict or brushfire war. Yet their race also has many qualities that Humans consider admirable – if their energies were redirected onto another path, the Tezcat could be a positive force in the universe.

Adventure Seed: Incarnation

The Tezcat are often involved in skirmishes and mercenary operations in the Great Rift, and sometimes prisoners are taken. What if a character’s friend or relative (or another PC) disappears, and in searching for him, it turns out that the missing person was captured by the Tezcat? If the prisoner fought well, he might be judged worthy of “Incarnation” and wake up in the body of an alien race. If the brainwashing failed to take, the captive would still have to “act Tezcat” to prevent being killed, at least until he had a chance to escape. Perhaps a visit to the Tezcat world and a rescue mission is possible, possibly with the help of smugglers. Or maybe the Incarnate’s new Iraahr can be lured off world . . .

If the Incarnated individual is a PC, this would give him a chance to see firsthand the “good” side of the race, and perhaps to make contact with individuals who oppose the Shaper Priests. Incarnate characters might even form friendly (or romantic) relationships with Tezcat, especially if the brainwashing made the victim comfortable with his new form, if not with the racial ideology.

Adventure Seed: Envoys

The travelers are sent by the Imperial Scout Service or an Aslan clan to contact moderate factions among the Tezcat. Unfortunately, the mission is opposed by Shaper fanatics, who will arrange various insults in the hope of precipitating an incident that could discredit the mission or lead to war.

Adventure Seed: Safari

A haughty Imperial noble whose passion is hunting and who owns stock in Instellarms has helped arrange an arms deal for the Tezcat Theocracy. In exchange for this, he demands a favor from a Tezcat diplomat: a chance to safari on the Tezcat homeworld. He won’t take “no” for an answer.

The party, who perhaps have some experience with aliens, or have worked for that particular noble in the past, are hired as retainers. Their mission is to protect the noble and his hangers-on from local wildlife, and to try and smooth over any breaches of protocol with their arrogant and quick-to-offend hosts. What happens if they stumble upon a Tezcat who is actually an Incarnate Human?

MILITARY AND POLICE

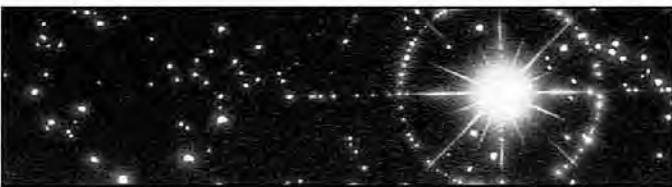
The Tezcat military is equipped at TL10 with some imported TL11 gear, and is reasonably disciplined. A high proportion of planetary gross world product is devoted to military forces, and most Tezcat are quite patriotic. Many Iraahrs have a tradition of military service, and it is common for young Tezcat to serve a stint in the military before switching to another career, while remaining part of a reserve force that can be called up if necessary.

The Tezcat have a number of different military and police forces, of which the most important are the Soulhunters. They are a combined-arms Naval and Marine force charged with invasions and strike missions into enemy territory.

Soulhunter marines contain a high proportion of special operations troops and combat engineers, and are also good at mine warfare and excellent at camouflage discipline. They have grav tanks and APCs, but tend to prefer artillery over armor, and often make use of special forces to set artillery "ambushes" by luring opponents into killing zones.

Tezcat mercenary forces (often in platoon or company strength) are usually ex-Soulhunter marines, and can be found throughout the Great Rift and neighboring states. There are unconfirmed rumors that these forces sometimes include Tezcat officers on detached duty, there to gather experience on how other races fight. All mercenary and regular forces include Shaper priests, who exercise influence second only to the unit commanders.

Soulhunter naval forces are designed for operations in the Rift. Although generally only jump-2 or jump-3 capable, Tezcat ships carry extra or collapsible fuel tanks to allow multiple jumps through empty space without refueling. A squadron is based around a single Broodship, a large vessel that carries extra fuel, food, materials, and workshops to reduce dependency on long supply lines. Tezcat are fond of strategic deception and ambush tactics, practicing gas giant ambushes, Oort cloud refueling operations, and the rapid establishment of stations in interstellar space.



TECHNOLOGY AND ECONOMICS

The Tezcat are presently TL10. Automated robot factories make most goods, and produce them to individual specifications. Tezcat are decent but unexceptional engineers, although notably proficient with high-tech ceramics and composites. They are creative artisans, and consumer products are often attractively designed, if no more functional than those of any other race. Tezcat astronomical observations of stellar remnants, funded for religious reasons, are of high quality, and have had some spinoffs in gravitic research.

TRADE

The Tezcat have an active merchant fleet, trading within their little empire, and (to a lesser extent) with their neighbors. In general, raw materials are brought to Aum-Rhar and Zamoran, and manufactured goods flow out to the other four colonies. Many items, such as intoxicants, recreational chemicals, and those types of artistic expression deemed heretical or politically subversive, are prohibited on religious grounds or heavily taxed.

Tezcat trade with other races is limited by distrust and xenophobia. Even so, not all Tezcat are strongly religious, and they are eager to import higher-TL goods, often paying high prices to those merchants willing to cross the Rift to deal with them. Tezcat's own manufactured goods are of decent quality, and their TL10 weaponry is first rate. Tezcat artisans have long made superior stained glass artifacts, antique examples of which may be valued. Video of sensual Tezcat dances and plays, as well as recordings of religious rites (such as sacrifices) are exotic enough to interest jaded Imperial citizens. Tezcat interest in alien cultural goods is slight, but high-tech equipment is in demand.

In addition to sanctioned trade, some smuggling does occur, usually via Tezcat criminal elements importing goods from alien worlds considered heretical by the theocracy. Smugglers may also be hired to sneak a humanoid alien in, but once on planet, an uninvited alien's chances of evading detection and execution are slim.

AUM-RHAR (1907, REFT SECTOR)

Starport: Class V (Naval Base).

Diameter: 8,830 miles (14,200 km). *Gravity:* 1.05 G. *Atmosphere:* Standard oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 73%. *Climate:* Cool. *Population:* 2.7 billion. *Government:* Representative democracy with theocratic elements. *Control Rating:* 3 (6 for visiting aliens). *TL:* 10. *Gas Giants:* 3. *WTN:* 5.5. *Trade Classification:* Hi.

Aum-Rhar, the Tezcat homeworld, is located in the coreward-spinward corner of Reft sector. It closely orbits a dim orange-red K9 main sequence star; any closer and it would be tidally locked. (On some older Imperial star charts, Aum-Rhar is listed as Lemente, which is the Tezcat word for "solar" or "sun.")

It is a medium-sized planet, somewhat colder and wetter than Earth, with a dense core. It a place of cool forests and icy tundra, perpetually covered with fog. Aum-Rahr has a standard oxy-nitrogen atmosphere at 1.1 atmospheres pressure. Tezcat can live in any environment a Human can, but like it cool, damp, and foggy.

Aum-Rhar is lightly populated for a homeworld. Its more ferocious life forms are long extinct, but there remain a large number of dangerous creatures, some of which, like the Tezcat, are both venomous and natural chameleons, and the planet boasts extensive hunting preserves.

Tezcat cities are situated on the edges of seacoast, lakes, or rivers. They are quite attractive, with wide

avenues dotted with trees and bushes. A Tezcat city is a lively, chaotic place. Ground vehicles are banned within city limits during the day, but robot carryalls hum through the city streets at night. Industry is generally kept in orbit, so the planet is clean and unpolluted. On Aum-Rahr, power is generated exclusively by fusion plants – except in equatorial areas, solar is not practical because of the often-foggy conditions.

Most Tezcat live in houses rather than apartments. Tezcat buildings typically have a stepped-pyramid shape, with a glass skylight or open courtyard in the center. Heights range from four stories to over a hundred, with government and corporate buildings dominating the cities, each surrounded by their own wild gardens. The insides of buildings have paper or stained glass screens dividing the rooms, rather than fixed solid walls. Furniture consists of low tables and sleeping mats; couches and beds do not exist (although spacecraft use couches for protection against acceleration). Colorful murals, often with accompanying written text, cover the walls, telling stories of victories and adventures. Windows are often stained glass or plastic.

Ilynd

One large moon, Ilynd, rules the night sky. Ilynd has a very thin atmosphere; projects have been considered to make it breathable. The moon is the site of several industrial plants and scientific enclaves, but has only a few thousand permanent residents. It is most notable as the personal residence of the elected High Priest of the Shaper Church. The complex includes the church libraries and master computer files, a training center, a medical center (sometimes used to perform the Incarnation ritual), and a domed hunting park incorporating vegetation and prey from many worlds.

TEZCAT CHARACTERS

Figure a Tezcat character's height and weight as though he were Human.

TEZCAT RACIAL TEMPLATE **24 POINTS**

Attribute Modifiers: DX +1 [10]; HT -1 [-10].

Advantages: Alertness+1 [5]; Chameleon 2 [14]; Claws [15]; Manual Dexterity +2 [6]; Night Vision [10]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Venom 1 (Poisonous) [15].

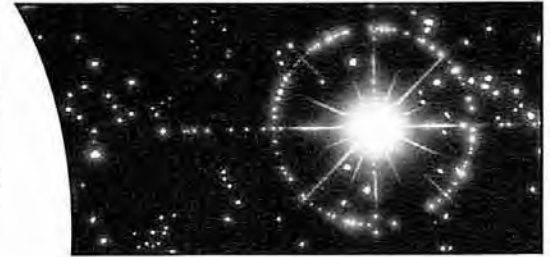
Disadvantages: Bad Sight [-10]; Chummy [-5]; Easy to Read (Own species or those who studied Tezcat only, -50%) [-5]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Intolerance (Racial, psionic, and religious) [-10].

Quirks: Mild Xenophobia. [-1]

Character Templates

Just about any templates are suitable for Tezcat. Exceptions are Noble (as they have a limited democracy).

Soulhunters are equivalent to Navy or Marine types. Shaper Priests can use the Diplomat template, with Clerical Investment [5/level] as a required advantage, Fanaticism (religious) especially common as a disadvantage, and Theology replacing Diplomacy as a primary skill and Astronomy replacing Economics in the available M/H secondary skills.



EQUIPMENT

Current Tezcat equipment is usually copied from Droyne, Aslan, and Imperial designs, with cosmetic changes to make it seem less alien.

WEAPONRY

Tezcat love weapons, and use many different types. In melee, they prefer to use their claws and fangs. They emphasize stealth, and so prefer electromagnetic gauss guns and grenade launchers over energy weapons with a visible signature; they are envious of meson guns. They like smart minefields and remote-controlled multiple rocket launchers. Battledress, CES, and combat armor always have chameleon systems. Hand-grenades are fitted with remote-control timed or detonation systems (+Cr50) to allow them to function as impromptu booby traps.

ARMOR AND SUITS

Tezcat *civilian* vacc suits or full-body environmental suits (such as cold weather gear) are almost always fitted with "two way" chameleon systems built to react to color changes in the Tezcat's own skin. These must be worn over bare skin, but cost the same as ordinary chameleon suits.

STARSHIPS

Tezcat starships tend to be fast and deadly, with even civilian craft well-armed to deal with any alien monsters that might be encountered in a hostile universe. Tezcat designs are very similar to (and based on) Droyne vessels (see *GURPS Traveller Alien Races 3*, p. 104) but better-armed. Tezcat ships have occasionally been mistaken for Droyne, occasionally with unfortunate consequences for those making the mistake. Interiors tend to possess the large communal areas that are also found in Droyne ships, but otherwise resemble those of Tezcat houses, with colorful translucent internal bulkheads of glassy amber, emerald, and smoky topaz plastic, and recessed amenities.

Valkyrie

The parasitic Valkyrie exist inside the bodies of their hosts, slowly consuming them while dominating their minds and bodies. Possessing multiple personalities and capable of sudden shifts of behavior under stress, they seek out new conquests and choose the best of their captives as hosts.

The race's original name is unknown – if, indeed, they ever had one. “Valkyrie” was chosen by possessed Solomani as a name for their hybrid culture. It was derived from the Norse legends of divine maidens who chose the best slain warriors for a new life in Asgard. This reflects the Valkyrie belief that they are selecting an elite and offering them a privileged existence.

ORIGINS AND HISTORY

The Valkyrie evolved on a terrestrial planet far rimward of the Aslan Hierate and Solomani Sphere. Their distant ancestors were free-swimming wormlike creatures with a relatively well-developed central nervous system. These eventually moved into an ecological niche as intestinal parasites in a number of large but fast-breeding and short-lived vertebrate animals. In time, the proto-Valkyrie developed the ability to interact with their hosts' nervous systems, using this to maximize the survival chances of their own offspring and to influence the hosts' dietary choices to favor the parasite's needs. Eventually, proto-Valkyrie were successfully infesting a wide range of species. They also developed the ability to retain and transmit ghostly shadows of memories from host to host, which in some cases proved a significant benefit for the host.

Their most intelligent partners were a primate-like species, which gained something approaching sentience with the addition of proto-Valkyrie memory-structures. Unfortunately, the relationship was not a true symbiosis: it led to the death of the host within a couple of years at best. The Valkyrie came to realize that they could not afford to possess everyone, or risk demographic disaster. An uncertain equilibrium developed, with most of the host population uninfected. Valkyrie young often died before they could find a new host, or were obliged to use less intelligent species.

Insofar as the Valkyrie had minds of their own, they perceived the situation as a tragedy, their gift of immortality of memory being rendered uncertain and unreliable by

brutal biology. Even so, they slowly developed a society and technological culture. The process took a long time, for the Valkyrie were limited by the problems of preserving a sane and stable fully intelligent population. Various solutions were attempted. Societies rose and fell, based around the control of livestock and host bodies.

Then everything changed. Sometime between 700 and 900, a far-ranging interstellar exploration vessel (probably a Solomani far trader or merchant cruiser) discovered their world. The Valkyrie-host pairs observed the visitors and made contact. One of the vessel's exploration parties was captured and isolated, and infested. The two biochemistries proved compatible – barely. Only one of the Humans survived the process, but it was enough.

The Valkyrie learned that their visitors lacked immortality of memory, but occupied an expanding realm of inhabitable worlds. The Valkyrie concluded, honestly and joyfully, that they had a gift they could give the universe, in

The Valkyrie concluded, honestly and joyfully, that they had a gift they could give the universe . . .

exchange for new (and more intelligent) host-partners. The first captive returned to his ship. He brought the gift of possession to his crewmates. A few days later, the vessel took off. The Valkyrie had gone to the stars.

The Valkyrie failed to realize that they were not solving their racial problem, but merely vastly increasing its scale. They certainly did not understand that the experience of mental symbiosis, for a fully sentient brain that neither expected nor desired it, would drive both host and Valkyrie insane. That, nonetheless, was exactly what happened. The only thing that enabled the Valkyrie to retain any kind of mental integrity was the burning conviction that their way was the correct way, and that they had a gift to give the universe – whether the universe was happy to accept it or not. They also had to defend themselves against the terrified hostility of the first sentient populations they met, which soon drove the first offworld hosts to collective paranoia.

Today, hundreds of Valkyrie generations later, all that is left of the initial hope, and the dream of sentient mental immortality, is an absolute conviction, embedded in every Valkyrie memory-structure, that it is the Valkyrie destiny to survive, and to show their superiority over all other “incomplete” races – at any cost . . .

PHYSIOLOGY AND APPEARANCE

Valkyrie are invertebrates, superficially resembling tapeworms. A Valkyrie larva is a 4-inch worm, thread-thin and nearly transparent. It can sense body heat and chemical cues to a range of a few yards. It is semi-intelligent and almost helpless, driven solely by a powerful instinct to find a host. Modern Valkyrie usually assist their larvae by physically inserting them into desired hosts. In the wild on the Valkyrie's homeworld, chemical cues helped the larvae select optimum hosts. If no native forms are present, an unassisted larva will simply search for the nearest warm body (anything larger than a cat). This means that larvae are sometimes found occupying suboptimum hosts such as animals, derelicts, or children.

A Valkyrie larva can enter a potential host through any of the body's natural openings. If targeting a Human, this is usually the nose or mouth of a sleeping or restrained victim. The larva quickly makes its way to its host's intestinal tract. In this fertile environment they grow rapidly, reaching a length

of some three to five yards within several hours. As a larva grows, it extrudes filaments that connect its nervous system with that of its host. It begins to function as a chemical factory, drawing nutrients from the host's body, manufacturing its own specialized cells that subvert the host body's natural defense systems and modify its brain chemistry.

This does not always work. Valkyrie larva can successfully infest the majority of vertebrate species native to their home world without difficulty, as long as the subject is large enough to host a larva (bigger than a house cat). With aliens, success is far less certain. In their first contact, the Valkyrie were lucky that terrestrial biochemistry was surprisingly similar to that of their homeworld. Even so, a "standard" Valkyrie larva attempting to infest a Human or other terrestrial vertebrate will fail 75% of the time, resulting in the death of both. Even if successful, there is a high risk of secondary infection due to the Valkyrie's partial suppression of the host's immune system. The effect on non-Humans varies. For example, Vargr have the same chances as Humans, while the death rate in Aslan and Hivers approaches 90%. It is unknown whether any other major races have been infested.



DAY

To alleviate this problem, the Valkyrie have engaged in genetic engineering to optimize themselves to specific species. The result has been the creation of a number of variant subraces: these include an Aslan-optimized and Terran-optimized Valkyrie. Their larva can infect a particular target species with a much greater chance of success. The host will also be much healthier, for the Valkyrie will quickly take control of the host's immune system, rather than engaging in a constant struggle with it. Even so, the process is risky. On average, 25% of Humans infested will still die.

If the host survives, the larva grows, within a few days, into an adult Valkyrie. At this point it has totally interpenetrated its victim's nervous system and adapted itself to conform to the subject's biochemistry. The victim is "possessed."

After a Valkyrie has possessed an individual for about a year, it is capable of mating. Valkyrie exchange genetic material (in the form of plasmid-like organisms) with other Valkyrie-possessed hosts. This is done through a variety of means, but involves an exchange of bodily fluids, often through sexual activity, sometimes other techniques (e.g., blood transfusion). After mating, Valkyrie will reproduce. During the reproductive process, which lasts for some two months, the host will be ravenously hungry and weak (-4 to ST). When a Valkyrie reproduces, it releases 2-4 Valkyrie larva, who usually exit from the mouth or intestinal tract. (If a female host is pregnant when larva are born, it is possible for a larva to develop in the womb and infest a fetus, although the risk of miscarriage is usually 50% or greater.) They must seek hosts within the next two days, or die. Valkyrie will usually arrange for suitable hosts to be present when they reproduce.

A larva retains an echo of the original's memories, although the amount of neural tissue inside a larva is not sufficient to house a complete copy. This also grants a perverse form of immortality to the Valkyrie's host: since the Valkyrie merges with the host's mind, its passed-on memories also contain fragments of the host's personality, which will live on in its children.

A Valkyrie-possessed individual usually lives for 5-6 years after possession. Then the Valkyrie dies, killing the host. Valkyrie that are not optimized often succumb sooner to various secondary infections (especially while weakened after mating), as a result of the host's compromised immune system.

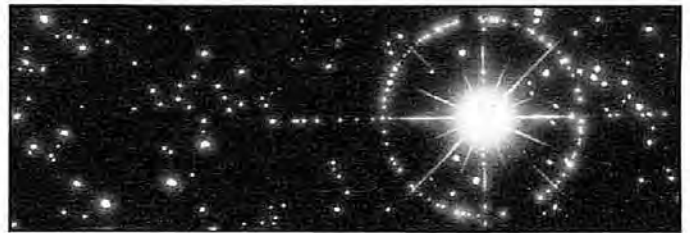
A Valkyrie's natural habitat is the intestinal tract of a living protein-based vertebrate. An adult Valkyrie is part of its

host, and cannot normally be extricated. A Valkyrie larva can survive within a temperature range of 20 to 100 degrees F and a gravity range of 0.1 G to 1.5 G. They can exist in any oxy-nitrogen atmosphere between 0.5 and 2 atmospheres pressure, on land or underwater.

LANGUAGE AND NAMES

Valkyrie can only use their host's methods of communication, e.g., a possessed Human would speak like a Human. Actual language forms are adapted from the languages developed by all previous host forms, and includes linguistic concepts dating back to the ancestral hosts on their distant homeworld.

As a matter of convention, Valkyrie use the name of their host separated by a slash and the name of the host its "parent" worm possessed, followed by the host that Valkyrie's parent possessed. Thus John Karr/Miranda Abrams/Hwyoweas is a Valkyrie possessing John Karr, whose larva came from Miranda Abrams, who was herself infected by a larva from a possessed Aslan host named Hwyoweas.



PSYCHOLOGY

The Valkyrie is in the driver's seat. It is convinced of superiority, and has a driving need to transfer the gift to other races. However, coexisting with the racial mind is the personality of the host. For example, suppose a Valkyrie larva possesses Cassandra Jones, a quiet female executive with a passion for sports. Most of the time the Valkyrie will exhibit its racial pride and desire to dominate, mixed with Cassandra's corporate mentality and love of athletic activities.

The combination is mentally unstable. Larvae carry a residue of their parent Valkyrie's memories, and this includes memory fragments of the entity their parent possessed. Usually only the most recent personalities in the chain have any influence, since the transferred memories tend to become greatly fragmented and distorted over time. In effect, all Valkyrie suffer from a form of multiple personality disorder, and are capable of sudden shifts of behavior under stress. Suppose the larva that possessed Cassandra came from the body of Stick, a violent street thug whose sole goal in life was to get drugs and sex, and the larva who possessed Stick came from Elizabeth, a gentle, inquisitive 10-year-old girl. Every so often, Cassandra the Valkyrie will display personality traits from a violent street punk. Occasionally, there will be residue memories or flashbacks from Elizabeth. The Valkyrie racial fanaticism, however, will give it direction, and sometimes twist the Human persona into new and different forms.

Valkyrie Larva

| | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| ST: 0 | Move/Dodge: 2/1 | Size: <1 hex |
| DX: 10 | PD/DR: 0/0 | Weight: 1/8 lb. |
| IQ: 3 | Damage: - | |
| HT: 13/1 | Reach: C | |

These statistics apply to a larva before it has possessed a host. Valkyrie larvae are reasonably hardy, but if they fail to find a host, they only live for 30-40 hours before starving.

Detecting Valkyrie

The Valkyrie parasite can be detected with a successful neural activity scan (p. GT113), but only if the user knows what he is looking for. The operator should succeed by 3 or more to be able to tell the difference between an ordinary person and a Valkyrie, although specially optimized software could be written to negate this penalty. The Telepathy power's Telereceive skill cannot detect a Valkyrie per se, but reading surface thoughts is often enough to sense something odd is going on, and a success by 6 or more will reveal the presence of characteristic multiple personalities. A successful Diagnosis roll performed using TL7+ medical imaging systems (such as a medscanner or diagnosis bed) or an autopsy at any TL will reveal the alien parasite.

SOCIETY

Valkyrie society is a single, all-encompassing order known as the Dominion, in which there are two orders of being: the Valkyrie-possessed individuals, and those beings who are not currently being used as hosts.

THE SLAVES

Only a fraction (usually about 5%) of the population on a typical Dominion planet are Valkyrie. The rest are slaves, used to breed new host bodies (to replace those who burned out) and maintain the world's industrial and agricultural base.

In the abstract, the Valkyrie care little for the lives of those who they have not chosen as hosts. As long as they breed to produce more bodies, and keep the factories running, that is enough.

Many slaves seethe with hatred and dream of overthrowing the Dominion. To live as a slave is bad enough, but it is far worse when the slavers wear the bodies of their friends, relatives and lovers, and even more terrible, possess a vestige of the personalities, sometimes twisted into grotesque parodies of their original selves. Life on a Dominion planet is hell. Oddly enough, the Valkyrie do little to stamp out this resentment. They seem content to suppress, rather than destroy, resistance. As a result, guerrilla groups and resistance organizations often thrive on Valkyrie worlds, and while few survive for more than a couple of years before being destroyed by police raids, a new group usually quickly rises to challenge the alien overlords.

Many observers have concluded that the Valkyrie inability to totally stamp out resistance on their subject worlds is the symptom of a fatal weakness in the Valkyrie psyche, an arrogant reluctance to concede that non-Valkyrie could be a serious threat, or even a belief that the population will voluntarily accept their "gift" given time. They believe that this could be exploited, that covert operations forces could be landed "behind the lines" to organize a slave revolt to overthrow the alien puppet masters.

They are totally wrong. The real reason for the "inefficiency" of Valkyrie counter-insurgency forces is very simple:

the Valkyrie live brief lives and need new bodies for their hosts. They prefer to implant their larvae in experienced individuals. What better recruiting ground for future infiltration specialists than the resourceful guerrilla leaders of an occupied planet? Resistance organizations and guerrilla groups are allowed to grow, even permitted small successes, while being carefully, covertly monitored. When they become too dangerous, police move in, and the supply of suitable hosts is again renewed.

THE RULERS

Every Valkyrie is totally devoted to the goal of achieving ultimate rule of the galaxy. Everyone knows his place, and follows orders with a devotion to duty and zealous initiative that any Human tyrant would envy. In fact, the Dominion is far closer to a cult than a tyranny, for individualism is submerged in a fanatical zeal to fulfill the Valkyrie supremacist vision. However, the Valkyrie retain enough vestiges of their former personalities to have interests and goals beyond the destiny of the race. Valkyrie recognize that the minds and bodies of most species, their own included, require time for rest and relaxation. When a Valkyrie relaxes, he often slips into duplicating the habits or interests of the original host's personality. This may be as innocent as taking care of an ornamental garden, playing tennis, or reading mystery stories for relaxation. But not always. Since Valkyrie hosts house multiple personalities whose ideas of recreation have been twisted by the shock of possession, Dominion worlds are far too often the site of activities which normal beings find repugnant or grotesque.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

The present locus of the Dominion is a couple of sectors directly rimward of the Solomani Rim, bordering a number of outlying Solomani and Aslan colonies. The exact extent of Valkyrie operations is unknown, especially to rimward. It is believed they have absorbed at least four and possibly over a dozen Solomani and Aslan colony worlds. They are also known to have exterminated one entire alien species, the chlorine-breathing Kai-Nal, who were immune to possession. At least a billion sentient beings are thought to be under the Valkyrie yoke. Valkyrie-possessed individuals are thought to number at least 100,000,000, plus an unknown number of Valkyrie who possess nonsentient or presentient beings. It is possible that not all Valkyrie are involved in the Dominion, and that the homeworld may house a more stable and far less aggressive (or insane) population. The exact relationship between homeworld Valkyrie and the leaders of the Dominion remains unclear.

The Dominion frontier worlds (at least) appear to be organized as a vast military machine, and all possessed individuals have military ranks, even if they work in fields such as industry or scientific research. The leadership of the Dominion is vested in the High Command, a central council overseeing all Valkyrie military and political activity.



Under the High Command are the Director Generals of individual Dominion Worlds, and below them various local officials, both civil and military. On a conquered planet, local administrative organizations may remain similar to their original forms, at least for a time.

The actual Valkyrie political structure is partially shaped by their means of reproduction. Because Valkyrie live short lives, they have little time to rise through a hierarchy in the conventional sense. However, since they also inherit their racial memories, and, to a lesser degree, the skills and experiences of their parent's host, a newly adult Valkyrie can be an effective leader. For this reason, social status is primarily based on the experience of the Valkyrie's current host, and those memories inherited from its parent's and grandparent's hosts. If a person was the Dictator of Shogaku before the Valkyrie took over his planet and possessed his body, he is likely to retain that position afterwards. And if the Valkyrie possessing the dictator reproduces and dies, and one of its larvae happens to possess a 10-year-old Shogaku street urchin, the Valkyrie in the urchin's body may still inherit the position of world ruler, since it still has a residue of the original dictator's persona to draw upon.

INFILTRATION OPERATIONS

The Valkyrie prefer to conquer without bloodshed: after all, the native population will be the pool from which their offspring's bodies will be drawn. Why should they reduce the selection? If the planet is poorly defended or primitive, the Valkyrie will simply send warships to overawe the population

into surrender, sometimes after destroying any defending craft as a show of force. But if the Dominion believe any serious resistance is likely, they will use more subtle means.

A favorite technique involves Valkyrie military ships waiting in ambush around the target world's solar system, or (if its SDB patrols are extensive) one of its trading partners. Incoming merchants are attacked and boarded, their crews taken captive and possessed by Valkyrie larvae. The ships are then repaired, and resume their voyage, sometimes with an additional cargo of frozen Valkyrie larvae in low passage. Once on planet, the hosts will "recruit" more help. The traders may invite a prominent local merchant over to their hotel for a business meeting. He and his companions will be captured, restrained, and possessed. A teen-ager is kidnapped off the street. Later she lures her friends away to hang out. A few hours later, they come home possessed, each bearing a small box containing a newly defrosted larva. That night, they sneak into their parents' rooms and open the

box next to their beds . . . Once they have enough manpower, the infiltrating Valkyrie will concentrate on setting up intelligence networks and "processing stations" where people can be possessed. On Human worlds, kindergartens, prisons, and hospitals will be early targets, for young children, prisoners in their cells, and patients confined to their beds are easy victims for Valkyrie larvae.

The most important targets are government, military, and police, for if a planet's ruling infrastructure can be dominated, then the rest of the planet can quickly fall. Even if they are discovered early, the Valkyrie hope to cause enough confusion that the waiting war fleets can swoop down and seize the system without a serious battle.

At least, that's the way the Valkyrie want it to work. In practice, it isn't so easy. A sizable fraction of newly possessed individuals reject the Valkyrie infiltration, especially if the Valkyrie are targeting a newly contacted race, rather than one for whom optimized larvae exist. Instead of being possessed, they get sick – and if they're taken to a doctor, any competent TL7+ physician will be able to recognize that the problem is some form of alien parasitic infestation. They might not be able to save the patient, but can certainly prevent its spread. This forces the Valkyrie into a strategic bind. In order to avoid detection, they need to target individuals who they can safely isolate if they fall ill, or easily dispose of if they die. However, the majority of people the Valkyrie need to target *are* going to be missed. This is especially true on populous high-TL worlds, where many individuals are closely linked to global communication nets at all times.

LONG RANGE OPERATIONS

A few Valkyrie infestations have occurred many parsecs beyond the Dominion. These may be isolated incidents. However, there are fears that the Valkyrie may be using starships that can pass as merchant cruisers or far traders, complete with big fuel tanks, fuel scoops, and fuel processing plants – and low berth vats full of Valkyrie larva. Such vessels might be sent off to insinuate themselves into inhabited regions as far from the known Dominion border as possible. There are good reasons for this tactic. Populations which *know* they're facing Valkyrie a few parsecs away can maintain fairly simple quarantine measures.

On the other hand, worlds which think of the Valkyrie as an unlikely, distant threat are much more vulnerable. This is especially true of low-population backwater worlds, especially those with fairly open societies and low control ratings. The implications are frightening: there could be dozens of secret Valkyrie outposts and seed colonies scattered around the borders and less-visited regions of the major powers.

If the Valkyrie do contact a new sentient species, one of their priorities is to create a new variant race. This involves TL10 genetic engineering for species modification (*GURPS Bio-Tech*, p. 58) and is a major research project, normally taking months or years. Such programs also require experimental subjects from the host population. These subjects rarely survive the experience.

Adventure Seed: Mercenaries

A Rim State world fearing Valkyrie infiltration or assault might visit the Solomani Confederation, the Hierate, or even the Imperium to hire mercs. (Soldiers who haven't heard of the Valkyrie may be more willing to take on the job!) The contract may be a simple cadre ticket to train the local militia, or they might be hired as strikers or commandos to provide stiffening to regular forces if invasion is imminent, or even to support a counterstrike at a world recently captured by the Dominion. The employers may be less than honest about who the enemy is.. Perhaps the mercs are shown videos of "Aslan raiders" in combat and are led to believe they are *ihatei*. (The same confusion, in reverse, might extend to Aslan mercenaries who think they are dealing with a rogue Solomani colony.) It is not until much later that they realize these are actually Valkyrie. The soldiers may forgive the deception – or it may be too late to back out.

THE MILITARY

The Dominion has the largest military it can support; its exact size is up to the GM. The size of ground forces, however, should be based on the ratio of possessed to non-possessed, since slaves do not serve in the forces.

Valkyrie military doctrine, organization, and equipment is loosely based on the Solomani model. Fortunately for its neighbors, the Valkyrie are less effective than their numbers

would indicate. Valkyrie are fanatic but not very innovative, relying on the ships, weapons, and even military organization of those societies they have conquered, only making minor improvements for the sake of standardization and ease of production.

The High Command tries to staff its war fleets and armies with Valkyrie whose hosts have military experience, but the habit of breaking into multiple personalities under stress limits their effectiveness in a shooting war. To counter this problem, Valkyrie often rely on rigid battle plans to the detriment of original tactics. Typically, Valkyrie forces (whether a platoon or an entire fleet) will attempt a single, brilliantly conceived ambush or trap, and if it fails, revert to bloody wave attacks, relying on force of numbers to carry the day. A commander who can outguess the Valkyries' initial stratagem can often outmaneuver and outfight the confused mass assaults that follow.

RELIGION AND MYSTICISM

Individuals possessed by the Valkyrie may continue the forms of worship out of habit or to relax, but Valkyrie believe they are the supreme force in the universe. No deities or mystic forces can exist, for nothing can be superior to the Valkyrie. If any such beings did exist, the Valkyrie attitude is that they would have to be possessed or destroyed.

TECHNOLOGY AND TRADE

The majority of Dominion worlds are TL6 to TL10. The Valkyrie have found it much easier to steal technology from conquered races than to develop it for themselves. Scientists and engineers who are possessed by Valkyrie tend to be redirected toward refining and standardizing existing technology or analyzing the developments of new subject races rather than coming up with new breakthroughs of their own, although occasional bursts of creativity cannot be ruled out.

The Valkyrie economy is centrally planned for maximum control, from its vast collective farms to gigantic asteroid mining operations and continent-spanning industrial parks. However, this often fails to translate into efficiency. The Valkyrie are like locusts, often stripping a world within 90 to 120 years and then abandoning it. The Dominion tends to expand in a linear fashion, leaving a wake of ravaged worlds behind. The size of the Dominion is gradually increasing (worlds are being absorbed faster than they are being abandoned), but its strength is nowhere close to its rate of expansion – it is basically a hollow shell, with a dead core of worlds.

Where it is still working, Valkyrie industry is geared to providing raw materials for viable industrial worlds, and maintaining the Dominion's war machine. Consumer goods and other nonmilitary sectors of the economy are a very low priority. Although the Valkyrie-possessed often live reasonably well, the vast majority of the subject population have few amenities and no luxuries.

Individual Valkyrie are allowed free access to whatever goods and services they need to carry out their jobs, plus additional perks appropriate to their social status. The Valkyrie engage in little trade with non-Valkyrie worlds. However, the Dominion does not always blindly possess or enslave everyone it encounters. Some smugglers are rumored to trade high-tech goods with Valkyrie worlds, or even assist Valkyrie infiltration teams.

INTERSTELLAR RELATIONS

Some cultures have tried to make peace with the Valkyrie, offering them presentient animals or cloned bodies to possess. This has not worked, simply because the short-lived Valkyrie prefer bodies whose minds who are already rich in memories they can experience and who possess knowledge and skills that they can use. At their present rate of expansion, the Valkyrie Dominion may not reach the major Rim States for some centuries, although isolated attacks or infiltration attempts cannot be ruled out. For this reason, few in the Hierate or Solomani governments (and even fewer individuals in the Imperium) see the Valkyrie threat as a major priority. Rather, they are primarily concerned with the panic that even distant Valkyrie might provoke, and attempt to downplay the danger. This may even extend to deliberate suppression of news of Valkyrie or new outbreaks, should any of these have occurred in settled space.

Others, however, are not so sanguine. They point out that if the Valkyrie are permitted to expand unchecked until they directly menace the Solomani or the Hierate, they could become a truly serious menace. It is quite possible that there are secret Valkyrie outposts and seed colonies scattered around the borders and less-visited regions of the major powers. Indeed, Valkyrie ships might have already infiltrated well past the Rim. Perhaps counter-operations are already under way, with covert SolSec (or Scout Service) teams tracking down leads and ready to swing into action to contain any "class V biohazard" outbreak.

THE VALKYRIE HOMEWORLD

The Valkyrie's homeworld is unknown. It is believed to have been a terrestrial garden planet, roughly Earth-sized, with a standard atmosphere. GMs who want to keep the Valkyrie completely mysterious and sinister may determine that their homeworld has long since been destroyed, perhaps in a war with an early victim-species. Perhaps it was even the victim of the Dominion itself, on the grounds that its pastoral, semi-sentient Valkyrie/symbiont culture was an obscene perversion of the true Valkyrie potential and destiny, and might somehow represent a long-term danger.

It is possible that the Valkyrie have ruled *several* interstellar empires, each of which spread with fanatical energy, then crashed when rates of conquest and development proved insufficient to keep up with uncontrolled, geometrical Valkyrie population growth. Indeed, they might currently be in such a "fallen" phase, and PC explorers might discover the ruined

worlds they left behind while investigating reports of an ancient, bizarre multispecies "pocket empire," which rose and collapsed within a few centuries. Meetings with infected remnant populations or the discovery of an automated Valkyrie "cold storage" facility could then put the explorers in danger.

VALKYRIE CHARACTERS

Valkyrie larva are not suitable as player characters, and Valkyrie hosts make better NPCs. However, a possessed Valkyrie who was on a covert mission to spy in Aslan, Solomani, or Imperial space could be an interesting PC, especially if his true status was unknown to other players. The spy would have to be able to explain away any aberrant behavior, but this might be relatively easy if he is from an unfamiliar alien culture or race. For example, a possessed Aslan female who was working passage on a Human ship and whose crew was largely unfamiliar with the subtleties of Aslan behavior might be able to explain away any odd actions as her attempts to adapt to Human mores.

Possession

If someone is infested by a Valkyrie larva, it will take the larva 1d+2 hours to establish itself. (During this time successful surgery can remove the larva. This is dangerous, requiring a successful Surgery roll at a penalty of -1 for every hour the larva has been in the body; failure has the usual consequences of a failed Surgery roll; each attempt takes 2 hours). At the end of this period, the larva has infiltrated the host's nervous system and begins to alter his biochemistry.

The host makes a HT roll, with these modifiers: -4 if the Valkyrie is optimized to the target's biochemistry, +2 if the target is Vargr, Humaniti, or another Earth vertebrate, +4 if Aslan, or +5 if Hiver. (Penalties for other races are up to the GM). Panimmunity or Disease-Resistant add their bonuses. All modifiers should be cumulative.

If the HT roll *succeeds*, the larva dies. The subject also dies unless his roll was a critical success or succeeded by 10 or more, in which case he loses 2d ST (which recovers normally). If the roll *fails* the subject is successfully infested. An infested individual will suffer from the disadvantages Confused, Gluttony, Voices, and Weak Immune System (the latter disadvantage is permanent if the larva was not optimized for his race). The larva can no longer be removed without killing the host. In 2d days, the Valkyrie mind will have taken over. The victim is possessed, as per the Valkyrie host template on p. 131.

A character who has Immunity to Disease is completely unaffected; the larva dies without achieving possession or even causing illness.

If a player character is possessed, he gains the racial advantages and disadvantages shown on the template below, and becomes an NPC.

Adventure Seed: Explorers

The Valkyrie mystery may convince authorities (or a wealthy private citizen) to send an expedition Rimward, perhaps even to find the legendary Valkyrie homeworld. This would be a long, dangerous adventure, equal parts espionage and exploration. Depending on their route, the travelers might encounter Solomani or Aslan colonies under siege by the Dominion, the Dominion itself, or the dead worlds the Valkyrie left behind. The dead worlds may still host a few living beings, perhaps Valkyrie-possessed animals and scattered Human or alien survivors.

VALKYRIE RACIAL TEMPLATE -15 OR -50 POINTS

Advantages: Racial Memory [15].

Disadvantages: Fanaticism (Valkyrie racial destiny) [-15]; Flashbacks (To inherited memories) [-5]; Split Personality [-10]. If not optimized, add Unusual Biochemistry [-5]; Weak Immune System [-30].

A Valkyrie host has its original racial template modified by the advantages and disadvantages shown above. Cost is -15 points if the possessing larva was optimized to the host's race. If not, the Valkyrie damaged the host's immune system while taking it over; use the -50 point cost.

Racial Memory and Flashbacks see pp. C142, C190

Valkyrie have residual third and sometimes fourth personalities from prior hosts. The advantage Racial Memory and disadvantage of Flashbacks reflect this.

Split Personality see p. B37

The Valkyrie's second personality is normally based on the mental disadvantages and quirks of the larva's parent's host, modified by the Valkyrie template above. Often it will have additional mental disadvantages due to the stress of possession. Limitations of memory transfer mean it rarely has much in the way of differing advantages or skills (these capabilities often do not transfer very well). The extra personality should be a synthesis of the host's Advantages and Skills plus the Mental Disadvantages and Quirks of the larva's parent in combination with the Valkyrie template. The restriction on Split Personality character point values described on p. B37 (that they must average 100 points) is waived; they should average whatever the character's point value actually is.

Unusual Biochemistry and Weak Immune System see pp. C185, C105

These do not apply if a non-optimized Valkyrie is possessing a vertebrate native to the Valkyrie homeworld.

Non-Human Possession

The Valkyrie template should be combined with the racial template of any non-Human host it possesses. In addition, if a

Valkyrie larva possess a host whose race suffers a racial IQ penalty, the result will be an increase in IQ: add +2 to IQ (for penalties of -3 to -6), or +1 (for penalties of -1 or -2).

The possessed host has all other racial advantages and disadvantages, including those related to mental capabilities. For example, a Valkyrie-possessed dog is a clever dog, fanatically devoted to the Dominion and with a Racial Memory, but also Dull, Innumerate, Mute, Presentient, and Staid. See *GURPS Bestiary* pp. 107-112 for animal templates.

SECRETS, STATUS, WEALTH, AND RANK

If Valkyrie are infiltrating a planet or operating in non-Valkyrie space they will usually have Secret [-30].

Valkyrie Status is simple: 0 for a Valkyrie host, -1 for the rare collaborators, and -2 for slaves.

Valkyrie make minimal social distinctions per se, so "leader" Valkyrie will have Administrative Rank or Military Rank instead of Status. Valkyrie hosts will usually have Comfortable or better Wealth, while slaves will have average wealth shading into poverty depending on their planet's role in the Valkyrie economy. Some slaves may be given privileged positions if they cooperate. The Valkyrie occasionally use nonpossessed Humans for certain tasks, such as scouting or infiltration of worlds alerted to the Valkyrie themselves. Some collaborators work for financial reward, others because friends or relatives have been captured, and they are threatened with possession if they fail to do the rulers' bidding. Often such quislings only win temporary respite from possession, especially since the Valkyrie have trouble understanding why anyone would refuse their gift.

Adventure Seed: Silent Invasion

The adventurers could discover a Valkyrie attempt to infest a planet they are living on or visiting. At first, they see suspicious characters acting strangely. They investigate, and soon come to the realization that this is a Valkyrie invasion.

Perhaps they discover a plot to take over high-ranking military officials, or find a hidden Valkyrie base containing cryogenic tanks full of frozen larvae. If they survive the initial encounter, the PCs can try to warn the skeptical authorities, some of who may have been already taken over. If that fails, they can take matters into their own hands, trying to stop the aliens before they can infest enough people to make the invasion a success. There are many possible variations. For example, pirates might attack a merchant ship, only to discover that the low berths contain frozen larvae (and possibly possessed passengers, as well). Do they warn the authorities, try and discover the vessel's origin, or sell the larva to a customer? Maybe SuSAG's bio-weapons division is buying?

Virushi

The Virushi have achieved a certain degree of fame in some quarters for one simple reason; they are among the largest intelligent races encountered by Humanity – not counting gas-giant dwellers, hive minds, and other oddities, of course. With quasi-centauroid bodies nearly 3 meters long, standing around 1.8 meters at the shoulder, and weighing around a ton, they are a formidable sight; however, this effect is balanced by their well-justified reputation for pacifism.

ORIGINS AND HISTORY

Virshash, the Virushi homeworld, lies just within the Imperial borders, in the Reavers' Deep sector. It has a notably dense core and a diameter of somewhat over 10,000 miles, giving it a gravity of 1.75 G, and is part of a relatively close double-star system; the second star of the pair produces high levels of radiation across a broad spectral range, which Virshash's dense atmosphere only partly blocks when the star is at its closest to the planet.

The high gravity, dense atmosphere, and high but variable radiation levels produce a significantly unstable environment and a prolific ecology with some physically formidable large life-forms, including the Virushi. Members of the quasi-mammalian phylum which provides most of the large fauna have four pairs of limbs. Eight legs can be useful when having to support a large body under heavy gravity, and the Virushi's distant ancestors included fast-moving eight-legged plains grazers, but their own branch of the family tree developed as adaptable grazer-gatherers. The proto-Virushi adopted a highly varied (though

purely herbivorous) diet, searching through scrublands, river valleys, and the edges of the world's great forests for a range of foodstuffs. With less need for running speed, their front two pairs of limbs evolved for digging and eventually grasping, improving their food-collecting ability.

This diet enabled them to grow ever larger and more active, at the cost of becoming increasingly dependent on the variety of nutrients they could seek out. Nonetheless, their size and adaptability served them well during periods of ecological and climatic instability. However, it also gave them some new practical problems.

THE COOPERATIVE

The sheer quantity and variety of food that a proto-Virushi needed forced the species into a solitary, wide-ranging pattern of foraging; after all, they were well able to defend themselves from most dangers, even when alone. On the other hand, even aside from questions of reproduction, they found considerable advantages in cooperation and the

formation of social groups; individuals could exchange information about food sources

(the origins of Virushi language).

They learned to build crude shelters, and eventually mastered tool-making, which implied a relatively complex society. This led to the creation of a family-based unit known to sophontologists as the "cooperative."

Cooperative organization was never coercive or hierarchical; the race lacked aggressive instincts, and individual Virushi *had* to be able to wander off alone on foraging expeditions, from which they would simply not return if they had no good reason to. (Humans say that



Virushi love freedom; it would be more accurate to say that they simply assume it is the norm.) Their society had to reward cooperative behavior, and evolution thus ultimately favored individuals with a tendency to feelings of obligation and responsibility to others.

Breeding patterns also helped with this. Virushi females, like those of other species on Virshash, can retain genetic material for months after mating, and can choose (albeit at a subconscious level) when to become pregnant, enabling them to produce their young at times when the climate and environment seem most stable. In fact, the mechanisms involved even give them some influence over which of several mates actually father their children. This makes it very hard for males to control their mates' breeding, giving females considerable power in evolutionary terms; proto-Virushi females used this to favor males who displayed the most consistent cooperative behavior. With gravid females tending to dominate the cooperatives' homes and shelters (while needing large quantities of food brought to them in the later stages of pregnancy), the evolutionary pressure in favor of cooperation was overwhelming.

INTELLIGENCE

The emergence of tool use and later fire, and some particularly radical (if temporary) environmental shifts, completed the evolutionary process that produced a race of gentle, cooperative herbivores with no concept of social hierarchy. Their front "digging" and "gathering" limbs evolved into arms and hands with impressive dexterity, giving them greater control of their environment, and they eventually developed limited forms of agriculture. However, they never found an overwhelming need for this; long foraging trips came too naturally to them. With their small social units, lack of what a Human would term "drive," and shifting environment, the Virushi remained contentedly in a stable, restricted social and technological cul-de-sac – until Humaniti found them.

TO THE STARS

Virshash lay some distance beyond the borders of the First Imperium, and so the Virushi were never contacted by starfarers (so far as is known) until Solomani explorers first ventured into the Reavers' Deep sector during a lull in the Interstellar Wars. They remained in at least intermittent contact with various Human states throughout this period and into the Long Night. Probably fortunately for all concerned, Aslan incursions never reached Virshash in any strength during the Human-Aslan border conflicts in this area, so the Virushi were able to maintain a broadly neutral stance until their world was absorbed into the Third Imperium. Sensible Imperial diplomacy and Virushi pacifism made this an easy process, insofar as the Virushi acknowledged the Human idea of power.

Ever since they were first contacted, some Virushi have been traveling off their world. This impulse is a natural outgrowth of their ancient instincts to roam in search of food, and to assist others. Despite their huge bulk and refusal to take orders, they rarely have trouble finding work among the

stars; their physical strength, helpful and stoic natures, and upper arm-pair dexterity have all served them well. Among other things, they make excellent doctors; a Virushi surgeon is currently serving on the Emperor's personal medical staff. They even sometimes turn up in the company of military units, despite their flat refusal to take orders or fight wars; no sensible commander refuses the request of a Virushi medic to join a posting as an "attached civilian" (see *GURPS Traveller Ground Forces*).

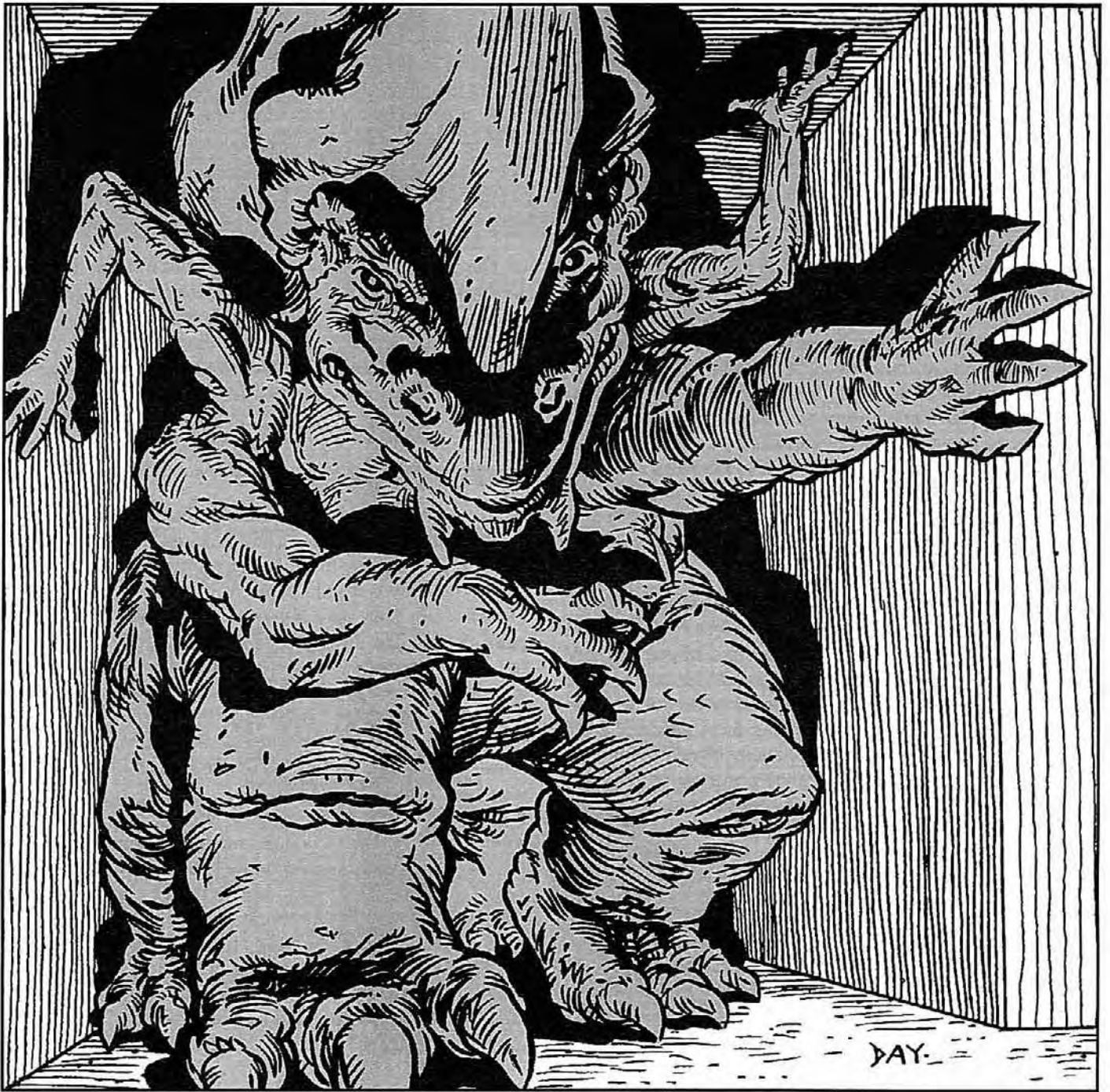
There are a number of permanent Virushi communities on Human worlds, especially those within a few jumps of Virshash. Their nature enables them to fit into many other societies well enough, and indeed some of their Human neighbors show signs of being influenced by the Virushi traits of stoicism, patience, and peacefulness.

PHYSIOLOGY AND APPEARANCE

To Terran eyes, a Virushi looks like a cross between a centaur and a rhinoceros. They are squat, massively built creatures, covered by thick, leathery armor on their back and sides. The body is a solid barrel, with a rather long and very muscular tail. They have two pairs of tree-thick legs and two pairs of arms. The lower pair are heavily muscled and powerful; the upper pair seem almost withered by comparison but are actually about the same size as Human arms. The hands have three fingers and an opposable thumb; those on the lower arms are thick and stumpy, while the ones on the upper arms are long and delicate, rather like Human fingers, including small fingernails.

In addition to their sheer size and strength, Virushi have a number of features resulting from their evolution on a high-gravity, dense-atmosphere world which often has two bright suns in the sky. Their eyes, nearly buried beneath massive brow ridges, work well enough in very bright sunlight but much less well in poor light, let alone near-darkness; they are nearsighted, but their close-up vision is excellent. They have no external ears; they find most "normal" sounds in standard atmospheres almost too high to hear. Their thick hide makes excellent armor, but their size and low-set build makes them cumbersome by Human standards; it takes a Virushi at least two turns to turn around even in a wide open space, and more if there are any kind of obstructions (and, in a Human ship or building, there will be). However, they can be surprisingly dextrous, especially with the higher and weaker of their two pairs of arms, and they are very quick on their feet, albeit only in fairly short bursts. (If a Virushi uses Enhanced Move, the GM should be careful to enforce all Fatigue effects, and should bear in mind the problems of a one-ton creature moving at the sprint.)

They have a broad mouth with two short, rounded tusks protruding downward. Their teeth are designed for a herbivorous diet: a large number of short, peglike molars with a few incisors in the front. Atop the head is a huge horn which, like the tusks and foot-claws, evolved for digging roots rather than for fighting.



Virushi, predictably, eat more than Humans; ideally, they like to eat a *lot* more, but much of it high-bulk, low-protein-content vegetable matter, and they can survive for some time on smaller quantities of higher-value food thanks to their adaptable digestions. Their total food bill is therefore a little more than twice that of a normal Human. However, they also prefer dense atmospheres, needing respirators on *all* worlds that Humans consider to have merely thin atmospheres and some that rate as Human-standard, and special equipment in some that Humans rate as Thin and all that Humans call Very Thin. (Conversely, Virushi rarely require reducing respirators in any but the most extraordinary "Very Dense" atmospheres.) Taken together, these requirements (and their general

need for space on ships) are treated as three levels of Increased Life Support.

LANGUAGE AND NAMES

The Virushi currently have a single language, which formed by the merger of several dialects when Humans first contacted the world and improved its communications. Its structure reflects their attitude toward life. They have adopted the Human word "rule," but to them, it means little beyond "what the Humans claim to do to all those worlds." The nearest words in their own tongue mean either "exert physical control over an object" (they use the same word for

“ownership”) or “provide respected advice to.” And they have no equivalent of Human languages’ imperative mode.

Nonetheless, Humans may learn Virushi as a Mental/Average skill, just as Virushi learn most Human languages. The only problem is that Virushi have very deep voices, to the point that their speech sometimes slips into a subsonic range, inaudible to Human hearers. Likewise, Human conversations are often too shrill for Virushi. Members of either species unaccustomed to talking with the other can be required to make multiple IQ rolls to express or comprehend ideas quickly, at least until they have had a few weeks to learn the right habits of speech.

Virushi have short (two- or three-syllable) personal names in their own language; they may qualify these with mentions of their place of origin, profession, or hobbies, if that helps identify an individual. Some adopt single-syllable Human names (such as “Fred,” “Cheng,” or “Belle”) for convenience when dealing with Humans.

PSYCHOLOGY

Humans typically think of Virushi as “gentle giants,” whose sheer size and strength means that they have little need for aggression, and this is indeed a workable simplification of the truth. However, as in so many cases, xenologists who have studied the subject comment that the more they learn, the more complicated things seem.

Virushi *are* not only huge and powerful compared to other sentient races, but also by comparison to other species on their homeworld (although Virshash has a few predators that are dangerous even to a Virushi). Solomani-trained scientists sometimes compare them to the mountain gorillas of Terra, another intelligent species with few natural enemies and an accordingly gentle nature, but even gorillas have their chest-beating displays and patriarchal silverbacks, whereas Virushi seem unrelentingly cooperative and mild, and bizarrely immune to all concepts of authority.

Some Humans assume that Virushi think that other species are mad, but this in itself implies a whole bundle of mistaken, Humanocentric assumptions. Virushi are not, in the conventional Human sense, judgmental. Whereas other species compare alien races to themselves and classify them accordingly, a Virushi, adapted by evolution to be the biggest and gentlest thing in an environment full of smaller and more excitable creatures, takes those other species as it finds them. It can *intellectually* grasp the idea that those other beings may be aggressive, hostile, and domineering – Virushi are a very long way from being stupid – but that is simply how those other beings are; it does not drive the Virushi to anger or violent defensiveness, because the Virushi lacks the capacity for those responses. At most, it adopts a series of defensive responses, just as its presentient ancestors would have reacted to a predator that attacked them in the forests of Virshash.

HIERARCHY AND ORDERS

The other well-known feature of Virushi psychology is that they do not take orders. Having evolved intelligence in a nonhierarchical society where individuals had to operate alone

Virushi Humor

So me and Henriette, we had this offworlder tourist cornered down the alley, see? We had the pistols on 'im, nice an' easy, and we was just about to lift 'is wallet, nice an' easy, when this [unprintable] walking tank comes down an' asks what we're doing. Real politely, too.

So Henriette explains, expecting this thing to get the hint, 'cause I've got my pistol on the mark, and Henriette's got 'ers on the alien. 'Cept it doesn't seem to get the point. Seemingly, takes Henriette four goes to get the idea over. Then she tells it to [unprintable] off. Simple as that; nothing that dumb is going to have anything worth lifting, she reckons.

Then it just starts this weird rumbling sound. For a minute I thought it was sick or something. Sounded like it was having stomach trouble, you know?

I'd just worked out that the [unprintable] was laughing, when it slapped me right across the alley with that second right 'and it 'as. Broke three ribs. Henriette put a bullet into it – 'cept she didn't, 'cause it bounced off – and then it took her legs out from under her with its tail. Broke both of them, too, actually.

So will you coppers please tell the big [unprintable] to stop coming round here and asking how we're feeling?

– Statement of Jacob Munzorrt, made from his bed in Uburwelt Starport Prison Hospital, while facing charges of armed robbery, 221-1121.

Virushi do have a sense of humor. As with other species, this is largely triggered by the perception of incongruity. Virushi take their time to find something funny – their famous racial patience makes them examine subjects to make sure that there really *is* an incongruity there – but their laughter, while restrained, is as seismic as it sounds. Unfortunately, given the nature of things, the main thing that Virushi end up finding funny when wandering the universe is other races' behavior. They have learned to try to hide this fact, out of politeness, but they do not always succeed.

much of the time, they simply lack the pack/troupe/pride/herd behavior patterns that influence Humans and so many other sentients. They can take suggestions, but see no reason why they should not discuss them and ask for explanation and clarification. A species this rugged rarely has to get organized in a hurry, even in the wilderness.

Of course, this made it virtually impossible for the Virushi to develop a large, complex society with specialized roles, at least until the Imperium gave them advanced computer systems and the idea of advanced market economics. Preindustrial social systems too often require hierarchy.

A Virushi may understand that members of other species can give and obey these things called “orders,” but to them, this simply seems like a weakness; what if the orders are based on mistaken assumptions or false information?

A Virushi's instinct is to question, to ask for reasons. Of course, a trusted figure may emphasize that a situation needs immediate action, and explanation will have to wait, or a Virushi may obey an order to humor another being for one reason or another, but this cannot continue forever. And a being with an innate impulse towards solitary wandering, as well as a rugged resistance to pain (another feature of Virushi biology), is never *good* at taking orders, always turning stubborn in the end.

SOCIETY

Currently, the Virushi dominate their homeworld and a few neighboring worlds, and have substantial colonies on several more. A modern Virushi-run community might be described as a noncoercive technological anarchy, or a socialist-libertarian paradise. Being fully able to appreciate the advantages of a complex high-technology society, they have turned their minds to making this compatible with their own natures.

Their approach is largely based on extensive but discreet computerization, combined with a laid-back sort of capitalism. Virushi are not competitive businessmen, but have learned that markets provides an efficient system of resource allocation. A Virushi "business" will ask a fair price; no sensible Human trader bothers trying to haggle with a Virushi, who will cheerfully take hours explaining why the price is *not* going to change. Instead of government as such, the Virushi have powerful computer systems, paid for by modest taxes and import-export duties, which analyze social trends and periodically suggest courses of action. Most Virushi have learned to trust these suggestions, and so helpful volunteers can always be found to act on them. Extensive if simple automation runs many public services and the like.

The whole system seems hideously inefficient, and Virushi-run societies are far less productive per head than their Human equivalents. It would not work for

Humanity, but it works quite well for Virushi. Humans find them pleasant enough to visit, provided that they don't expect anything to get done until a Virushi sees it as a helpful thing to do.

Needless to say, there is no military. The question "What would the Virushi do in the face of a genuine racial threat?" is an interesting one. The nearest thing that the Virushi themselves have to a police force is a set of emergency response teams, who also handle disaster relief and search-and-rescue. Nonetheless, specialist alien relations units within these teams have access to an amazing array of (mostly nonlethal) heavy weaponry.

The Virushi are neither stupid nor cowardly; there is no law against a Human visitor carrying a weapon of any sort (even military) in public, but any Virushi will guess what it is, suggest politely that it is inappropriate, and contact an appropriate specialist if the Human seems intent on this peculiar course of behavior. Actual use of force against another being will trigger spontaneous responses from any Virushi present; they will restrain the perpetrators if possible, and call for appropriate aid if not.

Virushi and the Major Races

Virushi-Imperial relations are quite friendly, because Virushi and Humans do get along fairly well. The Virushi make little secret of the fact that they consider the Aslan and Vargr to be downright funny, and they seem to view Vargr as barely sentient; in their eyes, Aslan are obsessed with meaningless issues of "rule," without even the Human excuse of efficient organization, while Vargr behavior is purely that of erratic pack predators.

Most Virushi quite like any Hivers who they have met, but individual Hivers, unable even to start manipulating the Virushi, usually petulantly ignore them. At a government/diplomatic level, the Hivers naturally approve of the Virushi for their pacifist attitudes, while secretly trying to manipulate them into being more assertive about these ideas to their Human neighbors. When Virushi meet Droyne, the result is usually complete mutual incomprehension. Aside from the fact that much Droyne thought is predicated on concepts of hierarchy and control that make no sense to Virushi, the Droyne regard Virushi as creatures of no importance, while the Virushi just find that Droyne refuse to be helped.

Virushi have also deeply annoyed various K'kree emissaries who have attempted to convert them to the great K'kree crusade for universal vegetarianism. The Virushi will politely agree with about half the things that a K'kree says, flatly contradict the other half, and sooner or later address a leader's guards on the same terms as the leader.

Virushi mostly get on with ordinary Solomani as well as they get on with Imperial Humans. The occasional Solomani fanatic may call Virushi "whimpering pacifists" or harp on their minor race status, but Virushi just laugh that off.

VIRUSHI AND THE IMPERIUM

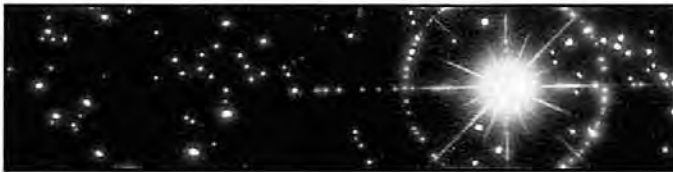
Thanks to their blindness to hierarchy, the race's position within the Imperium is a little odd; they sometimes seem to act as if the whole political system doesn't apply to them, or even as if it's all a great joke. This drives a few pompous Imperial loyalists and bureaucrats to distraction, but Imperial policy has always had to acknowledge that some aliens are just plain alien, and the Virushi are not at all prone to rebellion or insurrection, or even to deliberately spreading their ideologies to other species.

In truth, they find the whole concept of the Imperium a little confusing and truly alien. The most effective Imperial officials and diplomats on Virshash are those who are good at phrasing Imperial policy in the form of advice, and at explaining why it is a good idea.

TECHNOLOGY AND TRADE

Virushi worlds import high-tech devices, medical supplies, some minerals, automated control systems, and a few luxury goods and foodstuffs, but most of all, the Virushi purchase *information*. As a patient and public-spirited race, they recognize that the best thing for their race as a whole is to learn how to do things for themselves, rather than buying quick fixes. They pay for their imports by selling small-volume, high-quality manufactures (their safety standards are second to none), minerals (Virshash and other worlds they like are dense, with plenty of metals), and a few specialized agricultural products. Most offworld Virushi send some of their wages home, too, which helps.

They buy some entertainment recordings out of curiosity, but find most non-Virushi art incomprehensible or distressing; Humans find Virushi entertainment dull, apart from some astonishingly intricate miniature sculptures.



VIRSHASH (2724, REAVERS' DEEP SECTOR)

Starport: Class V (Scout base).

Diameter: 10,400 miles (16,640 km). *Gravity:* 1.67 G. *Atmosphere:* Dense oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 76%. *Climate:* Warm. *Population:* 2.1 billion (1.3 million Human and other races, otherwise Virushi). *Government:* Anarchy (with elements of Athenian Democracy and Technocracy). *Control Rating:* 1 (but see notes). *TL:* 10. *Gas Giants:* 4. *WTN:* 5.5. *Trade Classifications:* Hi.

The Virushi homeworld remains much as it was when Humans first discovered it, which is how the Virushi like it.

The most notable new features are the automated industries, a well-developed transport system (most of it slow but comfortable and nonpolluting), and one extensive starport on a large equatorial island. This has mostly been developed by offworld government and commercial groups, partly in order to support trade with this friendly race, and partly because the planet has proved a good center for frontier communications development; the natives are obliging, hard workers, and keen to learn. The Scouts have a presence on the world; the Navy has a small station on one of the largest gas giant's moons, which quietly monitors traffic through the system without offending Virushi sensibilities.

The starport is run by Imperial authorities, but the rest of the planet is a typical Virushi laid-back anarchy. The Virushi themselves have little need for a formal legal system, but in

Virushi and Other Sentients

Despite their bemusement at other races in general, and incomprehension of orders in particular, nonviolent intelligent behavior of almost any kind triggers a Virushi's instinctive and culturally imbued tendencies towards cooperation and helpfulness. Virushi are, by Human standards, just plain nice people. However, this is very much a species-level instinct; many a Human has been surprised and even hurt when a Virushi who had provided them with directions, medical aid, good practical advice, or transport, has then failed to treat them as a "friend" in a hundred smaller ways. Virushi do make Human friends, but it takes time and some effort on both sides; among other things, it tends to require that the Human behave a little like a Virushi, displaying selflessness and an even temper (towards everyone, not just towards the Virushi). To a Virushi, a "friend" who doesn't pull his weight is too *strange* to really belong.

Also, while a Virushi will understand that other sentients lack its own tendency to helpfulness, it will still believe that helpfulness is the reasonable and logical way to behave. This makes other races' actions a little irritating to Virushi, in a quiet sort of way. To resolve this, Virushi tend to spend a lot of time politely trying to convince their non-Virushi associates of the advantages of negotiation and sweet reason. This is no more "obsessive" than a Human trying to persuade a Virushi that force is necessary in a particular situation, but as Virushi are patient, methodical creatures, they tend to spend a *lot* of time arguing the point.

It should also be noted that, when a Virushi *is* driven to violence in self-defense, it will use every ounce of force necessary (but no more), and seem briskly efficient about its actions. And, while it will display considerable *concern* over the consequences of its actions, alert observers will note remarkably few signs of *regret*. The Virushi may apologize for the necessity, but this is primarily in case it has misunderstood the situation, and secondarily because Virushi have learned that apologies enable other species to "save face" and help recover the situation afterwards. Virushi do not feel guilty about being *forced* to violence. Essentially, they know themselves to be peaceful and restrained, and that they will do their best to minimize the long-term damage; only creatures with a capacity for gratuitous violence need nagging consciences.

order to resolve problems with non-Virushi visitors, Virshash and other worlds have an agreement with the Imperium whereby interactions with and the behavior of those visitors are governed by a system of laws based on those applied to Imperial-run starports. A small Imperial-run security and investigation department reports to an independent judicial body. The Imperium funds all this, and holds criminals in its own prisons, as a goodwill gesture; the Virushi are regarded as valuable citizens, and not irritating them is considered worth the modest cost.

VIRUSHI CHARACTERS

The average Virushi is about 3 yards long, around 1.8 yards high at the shoulder, and around 2,200 lbs. This puts the tip of its horn nearly 8 feet off the ground! Exact measurements for a Virushi character are up to the player or GM; they are unlikely to be very significant in play. Players may note that Virushi character strength is actually rather *low* for their weight. It actually represents the force they can bring to bear with their arms and shoulders; the bones and muscles in their legs and hips provide colossal supporting strength, but cannot exert it for other purposes. A Virushi who is knocked off his feet cannot easily raise himself with his arms, but must roll to put his feet under himself.

The high racial cost of Virushi makes Virushi PCs unlikely except in high-power, cinematic campaigns, where their pacifistic natures may make them especially out of place, but they make interesting NPC encounters. Virushi NPCs will have startling nominal point values, though they will very rarely use their innate assets to full effect.

VIRUSHI RACIAL TEMPLATE 228/230 POINTS

Male Virushi cost 228 points; female Virushi cost 230 points.

Attribute Modifiers: ST +10 (Natural limitation, -40%) [66]; HT +3 [30].

Advantages: DR 5 [15]; Enhanced Move (Running) $\times 1/2$ [5]; Extra Arms $\times 2$ (Do not get racial ST bonus, -66%; DX+3) [31]; Extra Encumbrance [5]; Extra Fatigue +6 [18]; Extra Hit Points +12 [60]; Four Legs [5]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Imperturbable [10]; PD 2 [50]; Reproductive Control (Females Only) [2]; Reputation +2 (As gentle giants and obliging, benevolent people, everyone, 7 or less) [3]; Striker (Tail) [10].

Disadvantages: Centauroid [0]; Hard of Hearing (Not in dense atmospheres, -30%) [-7]; Inconvenient Size [-10]; Increased Life Support 3 [-30]; Night Blindness

[-10]; Odious Racial Habit (Refusing to take orders without clear reasons and advocating peaceful solutions at interminable length) [-5]; Pacifism (Self-defense Only) [-15]; Phobia (Fear of committing violence, mild) [-10]; Taboo Traits (Weapon/Combat skills, Leadership, Politics) [0].

Quirks: Humble; Mild Sense of Duty to most intelligent life; Unhurried. [-3]

Note that an ordinary Virushi thus has 20 ST, 16 Fatigue, 13 HT, and 25 Hit Points, but is treated as ST 10 when calculating jumping bonuses and skill defaults or when using its upper pair of arms. This racial template reflects the way that Virushi are seen in Imperial society; some of its features would not be seen as disadvantageous or remarkable by other Virushi.

NOTES ON RACIAL ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES, AND SKILLS

Reproductive Control see p. B1048

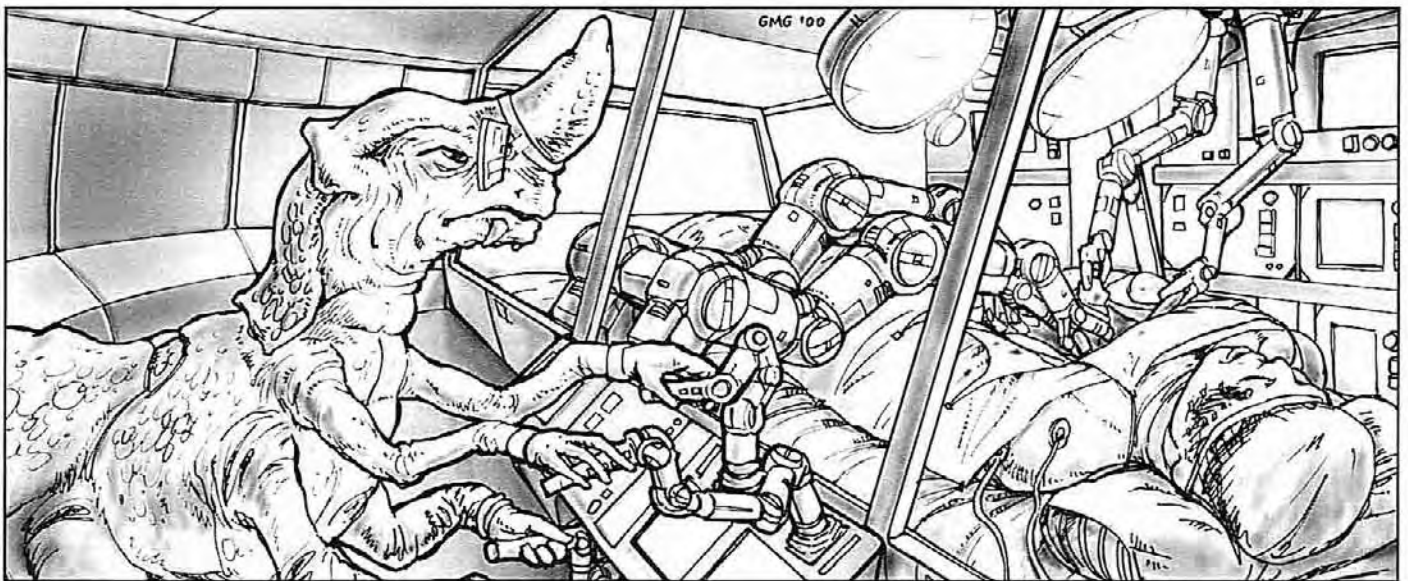
Female Virushi can exert considerable natural influence over their reproductive processes. This usually requires a day or so to adjust hormone levels to either prevent or allow reproduction. For more detail, see *Reproductive Control* on p. 48 of *GURPS Bio-Tech*.

Striker see pp. C166-67

A Virushi can strike with its muscular tail if absolutely necessary. It has a 1-hex reach, and can strike into side and rear hexes only.

Phobia see p. B35

The Virushi are not only pacifistic; they actively avoid anything to do with combat. This does not mean they will run from a threat, or that they won't protect themselves and others if they can do so without actually fighting. In fact, if they can use their superior strength and bulk to break up a brawl





The Big Fella

The door of the Sergeants' Mess swung shut, and Chedvarke, who had entered just the moment before, looked at it with a wry grin. "Four-Laps Foster complaining about the doc again?" he asked.

"He says he's rather have someone the size of the Big Fellow on his assault squad," Yates, the new man in the unit, explained.

"Nice line, but I wish he'd save it for when he's bawling out his grunts," Chedvarke muttered. "I've heard it once too often. And the Big Fellow had me back on my feet inside a week, that time back on Ileish. He's okay."

"Still – you've got to admit he'd be handy in a fight," Yates observed.

"Handy as a target," muttered Chedvarke.

"Virushi may look like tanks, but you hit one with a fusion shot and it'll go down just like you or me. We want the grunts fit, but who needs raw muscle in a shooting war these days? No, I like the Virushi the way they are. Attached civilians. If they ever took to signing up, just think what'd happen with the brass."

"How'd you mean?"

"The generals and aristocrats think like Foster, don't they? They'd jump at the idea. And can you imagine trying to fit a squad of the Big Fellow's cousins in a transport for a three-jump deployment? All taking up twice as much space, breathing soup, and eating their way through a hold full of shrubbery? It'd not only be a criminal waste of good medics; you'd not be able to get Humans onto the same ship for a standard year..."

in a nonviolent manner, they will do so (see the cover). A Virushi can accomplish a lot just by stepping between two fractious Humans! Virushi distaste for violence and weapons is treated as a Phobia – they are not afraid of weapons or violence per se, but a Virushi attempting to use weapons or commit violence suffers the effect of contact with the source of a Phobia. Put a Virushi in for weapons training, and 30 seconds later it's turned pale green and is losing its lunch. (And a herbivore that size has a lot of lunch to lose . . .)

Taboo Traits

All Combat/Weapon skills are Taboo Traits for Virushi, as are Leadership and Politics skills, and they suffer a -4 penalty if attempting to use any such skill at default. Virushi cannot usually learn Leadership or Politics skills. This reflects their complete lack of grasp of hierarchies; note that if they learn certain other interpersonal skills, such as Administration or Teaching, their approach will be based on seeking consensus and making polite suggestions rather than issuing commands. They are equally disinclined to learn combat skills. Most of these problems can be eliminated by taking an Unusual Background, as a Virushi can overcome its distaste by force of will given sufficient justification. By their nature, Virushi should arguably also avoid Interrogation and Intimidation skills, but the fact is that Humans and other smaller races

tend to feel *unintentionally* intimidated by Virushi much of the time, and some Virushi learn to ask briskly for the help they need and not worry too much why the little Humans are so cooperative. A Virushi may learn Leadership, Politics, or one skill applicable to nonlethal weaponry or combat with a 5-point Unusual Background, a group of three or four such skills for 10 points, or a single skill only useful with lethal weapons for 15 points; this represents a studied effort to overcome its natural distaste at some point in the past.

Insanity

Like any sentient species, the Virushi have a few insane individuals, and a very few of these may display a capacity for gratuitous violence or selfishness. However, this does not mean that there are “Virushi who behave like Humans.” A violent Virushi may be deluded in some way, believing that many things in the world around it require an extreme threat response, but that degree of paranoia is both emotionally stressful and physically tiring, rapidly making the unfortunate creature incapable of functioning in society. Similarly, a “selfish” Virushi may lack the race’s vast, diffuse sense of obligation, but in that case, it will tend to expect people around it to behave like other Virushi do to each other, and will rapidly become completely intolerable. A very few insane Virushi are selfishly manipulative, “faking” cooperation with minimal effort, but this tends to be too easy in Virushi society, so that the individual quickly slips into more blatant behavior. On the other hand, it is too hard among aliens, most of whom are accustomed to recognize selfish manipulateness when they see it from creatures with a greater talent for it than Virushi lunatics. Even insane Virushi are effectively incapable of violently coercive selfishness, simply because it doesn’t work on other Virushi; they lack the capacity to formulate effective plans for coercion.

There are several ancient records of Virushi psychopaths – intelligent, scheming monsters who found satisfaction in vicious or selfish acts, while covering their tracks for extended periods. (These must have arisen from physical brain damage.) However, the general nature of Virushi society and the small size of each cooperative make this sort of thing very hard to hide, and modern Human-Virushi medical and forensic science would enable the problem to be detected and treated quickly.

Dangerously insane Virushi were simply excluded from the cooperatives; a very few were actually killed when they triggered other Virushi’s extreme threat responses. Modern Virushi society has an excellent system of psychological medicine. Actually, Virushi insanity mostly takes the form of mild obsessions, recklessness with their own safety, or poor social judgement leading to excessive helpfulness.

Optional Traits

Virushi are almost always Status 0, and will virtually never achieve a Status higher than 2; they lack any interest or talent in social climbing. Virushi can only buy Acute Vision with the limitation “Only in very bright sunlight or equivalent” (-30%), or Alertness with the limitation “Only in very bright sunlight or equivalent and dense atmosphere” (-50%).

Many Virushi encountered away from their homeworld will also have G-Experience (p. CI25) or Improved G-Tolerance (p. CI26); they adapt well to different gravity

fields, and are rarely much troubled by being away from their native high-gravity environment.

Quite a few Virushi have Combat Paralysis, finding the whole business of fighting overwhelmingly distasteful, but adventurous, widely traveled members of the species can be quick enough about their defensive responses. They rarely have either Chummy or Gregarious or Loner or Reclusive; they are happy on their own, but are equally happy to assist other beings. Similarly, Impulsiveness is just not part of Virushi nature. It is, however, rarely hard to find appropriate disadvantages for a Virushi character; Clueless, Oblivious, Selfless, and Truthfulness are all part of the race’s stereotyped image in the Imperium, for a start, though those who really know them well might say that Curious or Stubbornness are more appropriate.

CAREERS

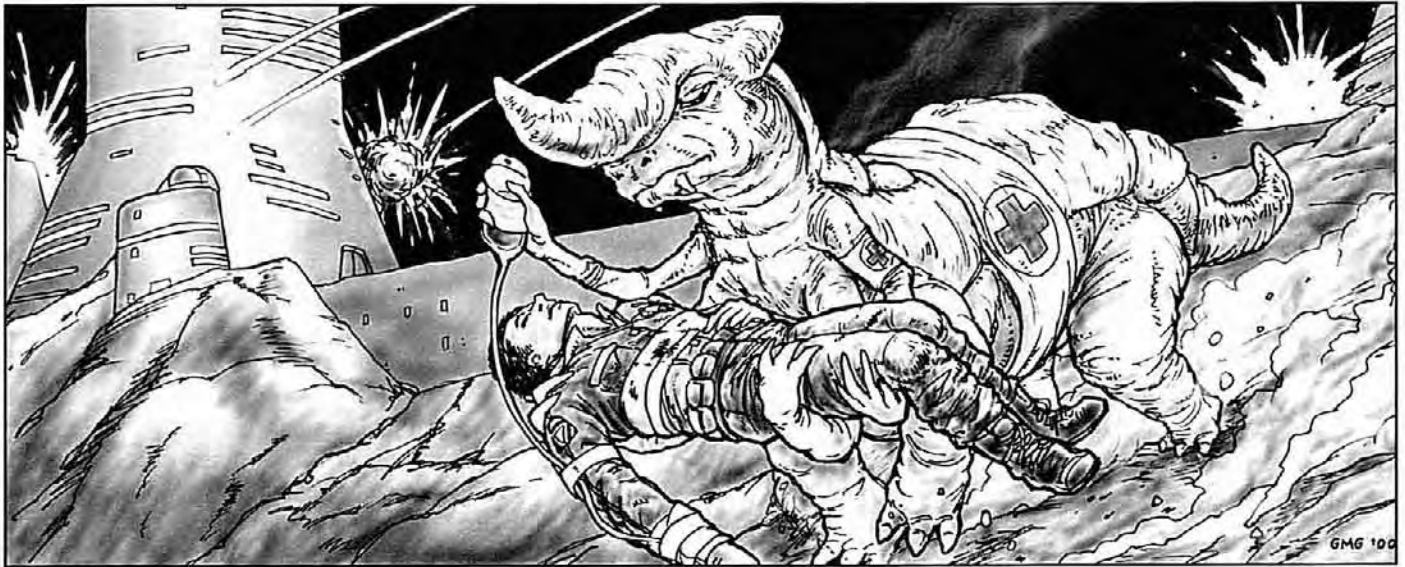
Thanks to their racial psychology, Virushi simply cannot follow certain careers. On the other hand, they often distinguish themselves greatly in appropriate lines of work. Of the templates in *GURPS Traveller*, they cannot take any of the Army, Marine, or Navy templates, or Bounty Hunter, Corsair, Manager, Martial Artist, or Undercover Agent, and are unlikely to be Athletes, Attorneys, or Rogues. If they are treated as Barbarians, Belters, Bureaucrats, Hunter/Guides, Law Enforcers, or Wealthy Travelers, only a subset of the listed options will be appropriate, and the character’s personal history will need some explaining (perhaps involving an Unusual Background). However, Virushi very often become Medical Doctors or Medical Technicians, and quite often Professors, Scientists, or Diplomats (perhaps as “freelance peacemakers”). Virushi Merchants fit the roving free-trader stereotype rather than the “organization man” type, and the Scout Service makes special efforts to accommodate these amiable wanderers, assigning them to exploration rather than administrative work. Other professions (such as technical jobs or entertainment) are wide open to the race, but do not especially suit the nature of most Virushi wanderers.

PSIONICS

Virushi are believed to have at least as great a capacity for psionics as Humaniti, and possibly slightly more. However, they never developed a system for discovering or training such powers, and the Imperium has of course discouraged the idea strongly. This general Imperial attitude means that Virushi unconsciously tend to view psionics as somehow “uncooperative.” Therefore, while they lack the Human capacity for violent prejudice, they are even less likely to pursue the idea of psionic training.

EQUIPMENT

Virushi characters can operate in the Imperium fairly easily, but they have a number of serious concerns and specific problems, starting with their food and atmospheric requirements (see above). Although their hands can use Human-style handles and controls, they prefer equipment tailored for themselves, largely because items made for Humans



tends to break so easily. (GMs should assign appropriate dice rolls for such accidents whenever Virushi are using “delicate” devices in stressful conditions or for long periods.) Vacc suits and the like cost twice their normal prices for Virushi, most other equipment about 1.5 times as much. (Complex military gear such as combat environment suits and battledress are simply not available for Virushi, of course.)

When carrying Virushi in starships or other vehicles or otherwise providing accommodation, *double* the space required for Humans. Thus, a comfortable stateroom for a Virushi requires 8 spaces in a starship design, while a standard 4-space room represents the equivalent of a double/cramped occupancy for a single Virushi. While Virushi are stoic about such conditions, they can do a lot of damage to an unmodified stateroom with accidental sweeps of their tails; it is usually advisable to provide the double-sized rooms. Most civilian transports have partitions that can be removed with a little work, and Virushi-style furnishings can generally be ordered; the whole job of turning two Human rooms into one Virushi cabin costs around Cr5,000 (including the job of reversing the changes at the end of the trip), and Virushi will usually happily meet the cost.

Of course, an ideal conversion will include setting the room’s environment controls to Virshash-level gravity and atmospheric pressure; on some ships, only the pressure can be managed, which is enough to keep most Virushi happy for a normal voyage. Humans visiting a Virushi’s quarters usually end up making jokes about breathing soup; Virushi return the joke by talking about Humans breathing vacuum.

VIRUSHI-SPECIFIC TEMPLATE: FACILITATOR

As noted above, Virushi characters can use many standard career-related templates. However, there are also a few careers that are *only* appropriate to Virushi. Note that some of the skills in these packages are described in *GURPS Traveller Far Trader*.

Facilitator

65 Points

This template represents a Virushi whose vocation is to assist the smooth running and growth of Virushi society. That means using advanced social modeling and economic prediction to determine what other Virushi should be asked to do, monitoring events to provide those computers with up-to-date inputs, and looking after all sorts of commercial and administrative tasks. The job thus is a mix of broker, customs official, statistician, middle manager, low-level diplomat, and tourist guide. Touchy Humans sometimes complain that Virushi facilitators are meddlesome or domineering, but this is what they would think of a Human doing the same tasks; the Virushi, being genuinely cooperative, has no ulterior motives.

Human merchants dealing with Virushi will have to deal with facilitators. Smart merchants learn to take the Virushi at face value, but not to assume they are naive or stupid. Indeed, thanks to their computer aids, and willingness to take a long view, Virushi often drive a very *intelligent* bargain – although they would never try to cause anyone serious economic harm.

Attributes: ST 20/16 [0]; DX 10 [10]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 13/25 [0].

Advantages: 20 points in Charisma +1 [5]; Contacts (Various) [Varies]; Empathy *or* Sensitive [15 or 5]; or +1 IQ [10].

Disadvantages: -15 points from Broad-Minded [-1]; Combat Paralysis [-15]; Curious [-5]; Humble [-1]; Nosy [-1]; Responsive [-1]; Sense of Duty (To all Virushi) [-10]; Staid [-1]; Undiscriminating [-1]; Unfit [-5]; Workaholic [-5]; or Xenophilia [-5].

Primary Skills: Area Knowledge (Home community) (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Computer Operation (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Economics (M/H) IQ [4]-12; Market Analysis (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-14; Merchant (M/A) IQ [2]-12.

Secondary Skills: Administration (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Diplomacy (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Law (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Xenology (M/H) IQ-2 [1]-10.

Background Skills: A total of 8 points in Savoir-Faire (M/E); Hazardous Materials, Planetology, Research, Teaching (all M/A); Anthropology, Computer Programming, Detect Lies, Finance, Intelligence Analysis (all M/H); any Language skills, or any primary or secondary skills.

VEHICLES KEY

The following vehicle descriptions list components in a format intended to make them easy to use in play, rather than the design-sequence format used in previous *GURPS* books. The following information describes the new system. If one of the following categories is missing from a vehicle writeup, the vehicle does not have any of the applicable equipment installed. Unless a component's TL is specified, it is of the vehicle's overall TL or the nearest equivalent of lower TL.

Abbreviations

The three-letter code in brackets following many components indicates their location. If no code is given, the vehicle's body is assumed. For other locations, the abbreviation always will consist of the first three letters of the location as described in *Subassemblies*. For instance, [Tur] indicates in/on the turret, [Tur 1] in/on the first of many turrets, [Cup] in/on the cupola, etc. Also see *Occupancy*, below.

Subassemblies: The number following each subassembly is the targeting bonus to hit it.

Powertrain: Describes the size and type of power plant (or the size of energy bank if used as primary power), and all propulsion and lift systems.

Fuel: For fuel, gives the amount, type (with Fire number in parentheses), type of fuel tank, and "routine" or "cruising" endurance. For energy banks, provides endurance data under various conditions. Vehicles lacking a *Fuel* notation usually have unlimited range.

Occupancy: Each number is followed by an abbreviation. CCS is a cramped crew station, NCS a normal crew station, RCS a roomy crew station, and C no crew station (to designate crew members without assigned stations, such as sailors). Passenger seats use CS, NS, and RS for cramped, normal, and roomy positions respectively. Passenger standing room uses CSR, NSR, and RSR. Any exposed position precedes the normal abbreviation with an X (for instance, XNCS for an exterior normal crew station). Cycle and harness stations will be listed as XCCS (or XCS). Battlesuit stations are CCS.

Cargo: Gives capacity in cubic feet (for *Vehicles* designs), 5-cf spaces (for modular designs), or dtons (for *GURPS Traveller* starships). Each cubic foot generally holds 20 lbs.

Armor: F indicates frontal armor, RL right and left, B back, T top, and U underbody. Any letters following PD/DR

values indicate laminate (L), ablative (A), wood (W), non-rigid (N), or composite (C) armor. Special circumstances (layered varieties of armor, non-matching right and left armor, etc.) will be detailed just below the tabular columns of armor values.

Weaponry: The location notation also gives the facing of the weapon, per *Armor*. All weapons are assumed to be in standard mounts with no stabilization up to TL6 and full stabilization (cancels up to -3 in movement penalties) at TL7+. Special mounts, stabilization exceptions, etc. will be detailed in the descriptive text. Ammunition listings include all shots stored on the vehicle, not just rounds in a magazine. For energy weapons, the value indicates shots stored in energy banks. Energy needs for energy-using slugthrowers are detailed in the descriptive text. Following each weapon is the targeting modifiers provided by all the vehicle's supporting systems. These include the +2 for any active sensors and any bonuses for computer programs listed as standard equipment. For Acc and other weapon statistics, see the appropriate weapons table.

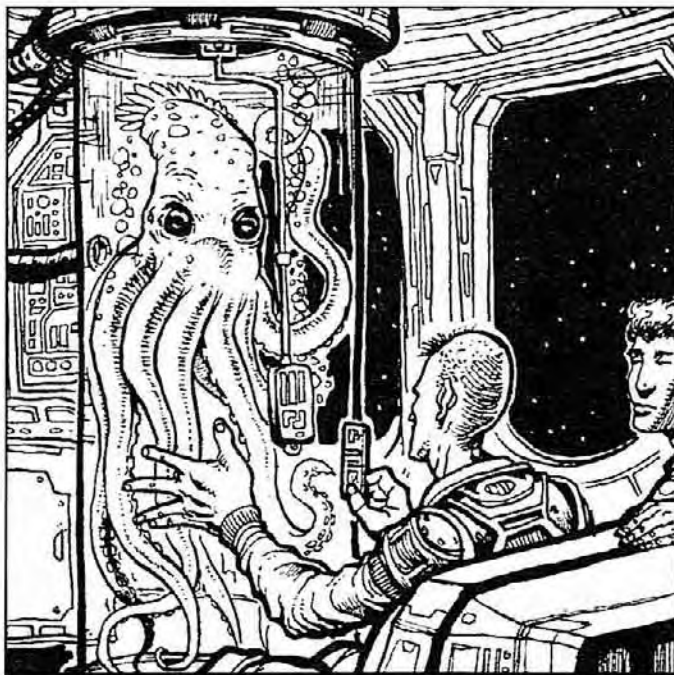
Equipment: Grouped by location, these are *only* the game-play-essential accessories to the vehicle; others will be described in *Design Notes*, below. For HPs and power usage

of individual components, consult *GURPS Vehicles*. For computer programs, a hyphen followed by a number denotes an effective skill level; a "+" followed by a number denotes a skill bonus. Weapon-related skill bonuses are already calculated into the *Weaponry* statistics. *Modular Vehicles*: This section will present a complete list of the installed modules not presented elsewhere in the write-up.

Statistics: *Size* is a rough indication of dimensions, usually height×width×length; *Lwt.* is loaded weight. *Maint.* is maintenance interval; see *Vehicles*. *Price* is the loaded cost, with fuel, ammo, etc. The lowercase figure before a

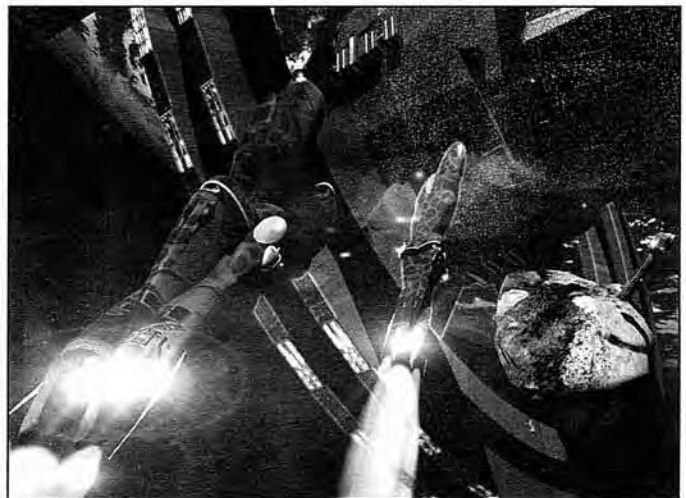
performance rating indicates mode of travel; i.e., *gSpeed* is top ground speed and *aMR* is the aerial maneuver rating. For those without *Vehicles*, to determine turning radius per p. B139, square the vehicle's current speed, then divide by (40×MR).

Design Notes: A compilation of everything else – the vehicle accessories and data that rarely come up during actual game play, but are useful for reverse-engineering the design.



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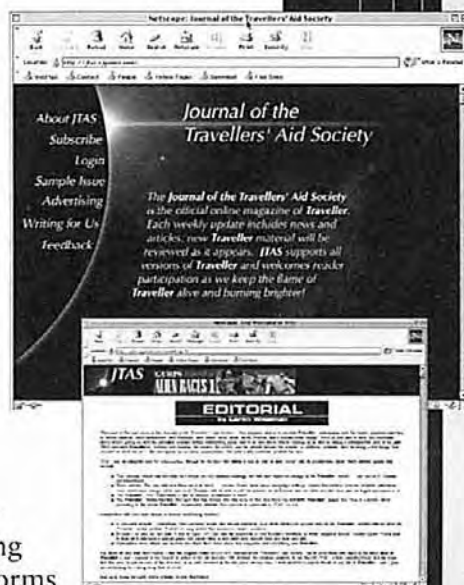
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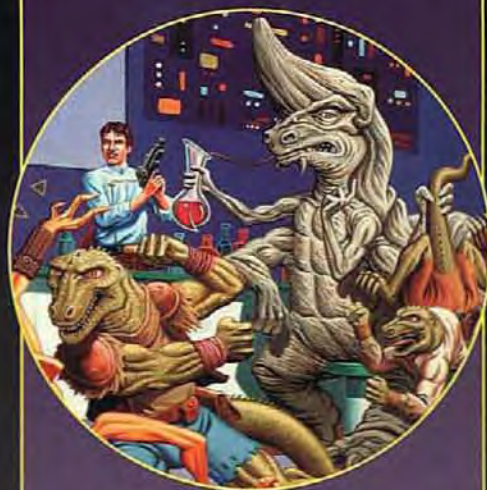
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