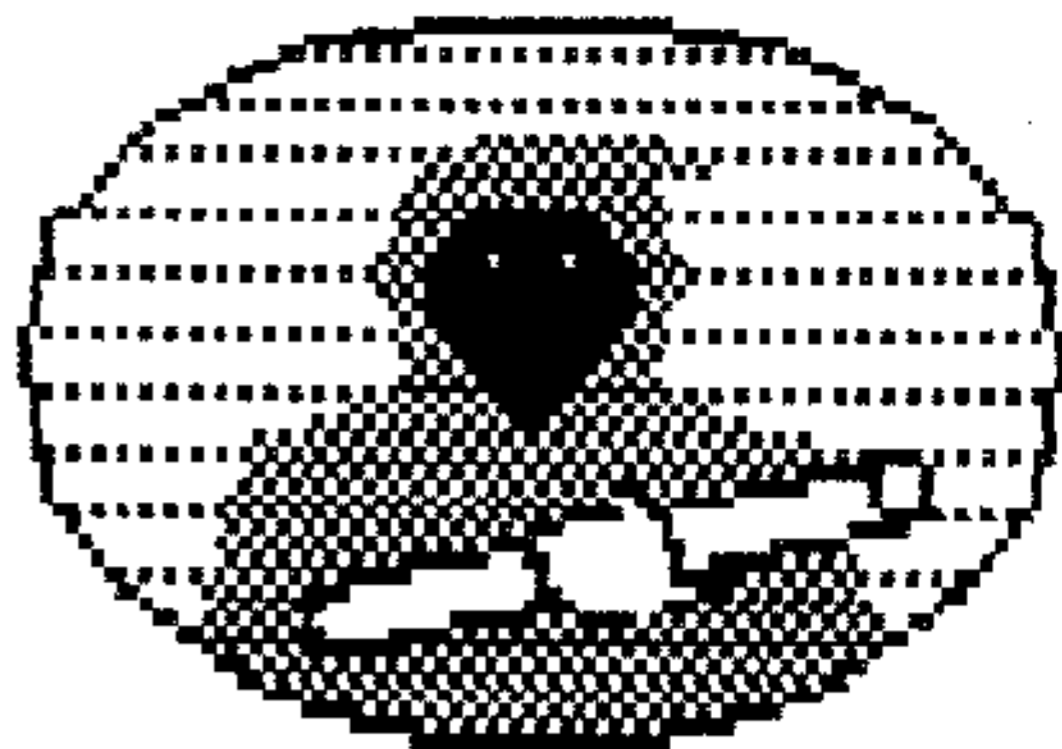


# THE POPYRUS

Welcome to the first issue of the POPYRUS, an irregular newszine of Ideas and Information on RPGs. Comments and submissions are solicited but no payment will be made as the POPYRUS is meant to be a forum of free exchange. Submissions should be ready for copy or be on a floppy disk in ASCII format. Thank you and enjoy.



## The Tabaxi, a variant PC/NPC for AD&D

The Fiend Folio describes the Tabaxi as intelligent feline humanoids. These cat-men range in size, weight and age similar to humans. Their coats are tawny and striped like that of a tiger, and like all felines they groom their fine coats frequently. Their intelligence and lack of unbalancing special abilities makes the Tabaxi well suited for use as a non-player character or player character race.

Normally Tabaxi are a solitary race, having nothing to do with other humanoids if it can be helped. They live in prides of two to eight members made up of one to three males, females and young. Each pride roams a large area of tropical jungle rarely encountering another pride intentionally. The exception is during the spring when prides exchange recently matured adults to avoid weakening the species through inbreeding.

A Tabaxi pride is a mobile hunting camp. The adults are excellent hunters, skilled at stalking and trapping prey. When hunting they have been known to hide their own scent with aromatic herbs. Tabaxi hunt mostly game animals but their skills are great enough to allow them to prey on creatures of high intelligence as well.

Physically and psychologically Tabaxi are very similar to the tigers they resemble. Unlike most felines, tigers and Tabaxi do not fear nor even dislike water. Like all cats they often "play" with wounded prey or enemies, before finally killing them. Being chaotic neutral in alignment, the Tabaxi hold little reverence for the laws and morals of others that might prevent them from hunting other intelligent beings. Their only concerns are for their pride and themselves. To a Tabaxi there are two kinds of beings, Tabaxi and non-Tabaxi, they view all races but their own neutrally.

Tabaxi possess excellent night vision which allows them to see twice the normal distances listed on Table 62 of the 2nd Edition PHB (page 117), up to the clear sky maximum, during twilight or night. Unencumbered, adult Tabaxi can jump 12 feet horizontally, 6 feet vertically and leap 36 feet with a running start. Their movements are quick (movement: 15"), graceful and balanced. Tabaxi are extremely stealthy and thereby surprise opponents 50% of the time when unencumbered.

Tabaxi characters personal statistics are determined normally. Due to their feline agility, dexterity scores should be increased by one and never be lower than 15 (natural armor class ranging from 9 to 6). Their natural curiosity often gets the better of them and is accounted for by subtracting one from their wisdom scores. A Tabaxi's strength can be no less than 8 and charisma score no more than 17. Although most Tabaxi are chaotic neutral, any alignment is possible.

Tabaxi characters can be either rangers, thieves or ranger/thieves. All characters must choose both the hunting and tracking non-weapon proficiency skills at first level. Also, Tabaxi characters must use one of their initial weapon proficiency slots on their natural claw/claw/bite attack (1-3/1-3/1-3) or suffer non-proficiency penalties when attacking in that manner. Tabaxi may advance to 12th level in either or both classes, if multi-classed.

Tabaxi rangers possess climbing and find/remove trap skills. They advance in these skills as an average thief of the same level (see 2nd Edition DMG, page 23, table 19). The natural feline abilities of the Tabaxi warrant adding 5% to all thief abilities with the exception of opening locks, picking pockets and reading languages, each of these suffers a 5% penalty. This applies to all ranger thief-like abilities as well.

1st Edition AD&D players can open the assassin class and thief/acrobat split class to Tabaxi characters. Any combination of two classes should be possible in multi-classed characters. In any case these additional classes are also limited to 12th level for Tabaxi characters.

Exceptional characters in both 1st and 2nd Edition campaigns may become low level priests, called shaman. A character with wisdom, intelligence and charisma scores of at least 17 can be a Tabaxi shaman, which function as a ranger/priest (ranger/cleric in 1st Edition games). Their ranger abilities are as above and they are limited to 7th level as priests. These exceptional characters will be distinguishable from other Tabaxi by their fur which will be white with tiger stripes. These creatures are loners and are likely to wander into civilized areas in order to quench their insatiable curiosity.

The Tabaxi god is sexless and requires little of them other than quiet respect, intra-racial harmony and a curious nature. The Tabaxi see their feline god/goddess incarnated in various deities of other mythos such as Bast, Ki, the Cat Lord, or Meerclan. Tabaxi shaman will therefore pay homage to whichever cat god is native to the region by leaving a small offering of food, usually a freshly killed rodent or bird, at the temple altar.

Tabaxi can use any weapons allowed for their chosen class but initial weapons should be kept simple (e.g. no cross bows, fancy pole arms or specialty weapons like nunchaku). Armor, helms, boots and gloves will need to be special ordered and tailored but there are no restrictions on types save those imposed by the character's class. Similarly, they can use any magic items not specifically denied their class except for rings, which interfere with their retractable claws.

Tabaxi take to adventuring for varied reasons, curiosity is paramount. Some are drawn by the promise of finely crafted weapons which most Tabaxi find appealing. Still others are left prideless, by natural or violent means, and have no choice but to make adventuring their life. It is rumored that in some lands Tabaxi are encountered frequently in civilized areas and in all walks of life as well. Being excellent thieves, scouts, spies, guides and assassins, they are in great demand in these far off realms.

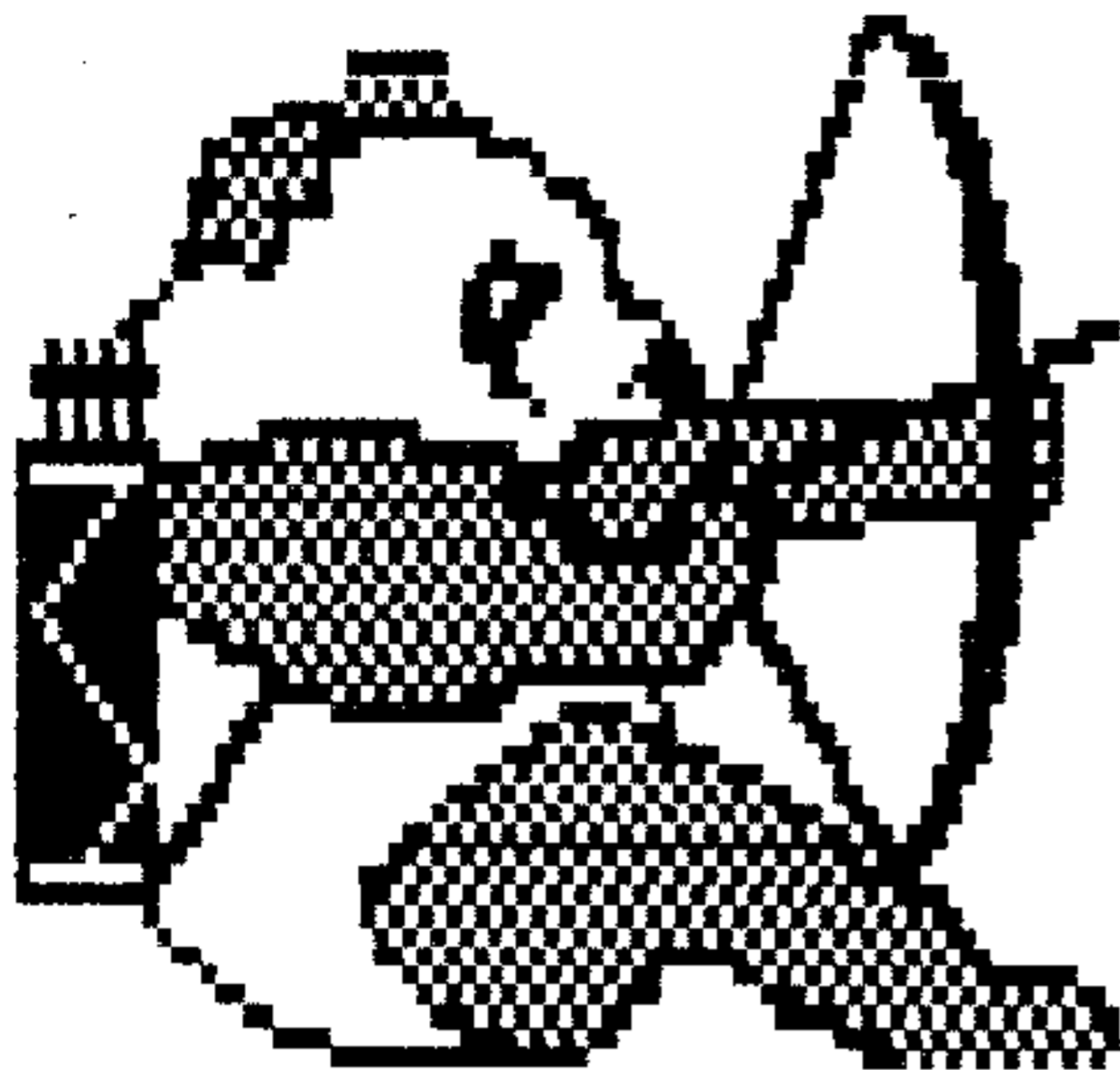
Aside from their racial tongue, Tabaxi characters will speak common and at least one other local tongue. This command of additional languages removes most of the distaste wild Tabaxi have for trading because it puts them on equal terms with other races.

Tabaxi characters from civilized backgrounds will be less introverted than those born in the jungle and for the most part behave as the local human population. Having not been climatized, jungle born cat-men will tend to be more cautious, more curious, very quiet and aloof. Experience in other realms eventually affords even the least traveled Tabaxi the confidence to adopt regional human habits.

Variant Tabaxi sub-races may possibly exist. These beings would be similar to normal Tabaxi in every way save coloration. Sub-races can have coats that resemble panthers, leopards, mountain lions, Siamese cats, or any other feline.



## Featured Creatures - new creatures for AD&D gamers.



**RACE:** PANDAN  
**CLIMATE/TERRAIN:** BAMBOO FOREST  
**FREQUENCY:** VERY RARE  
**ORGANIZATION:** CLAN  
**ACTIVITY CYCLE:** ANY  
**DIET:** HERBIVORE  
**INTELLIGENCE:** LOW to AVERAGE (low)  
**TREASURE:** S,U, T,V in lair  
**ALIGNMENT:** CHAOTIC GOOD  
**NO. APPEARING:** 6-36  
**ARMOR CLASS:** 6  
**MOVEMENT:** 9"  
**HIT DICE:** 3+1  
**THACO:** 17  
**NO. OF ATTACKS:** 1  
**DAMAGE/ATTACK:** 2-8 or by weapon  
**SPECIAL ATTACKS:** Surprise on 50%, +1 with bamboo long bow  
**SPECIAL DEFENSES:** Nil  
**MAGIC RESISTANCE:** Standard  
**SIZE:** L (7'+ tall)  
**MORALE:** Above Avg (10)  
**XP VALUE:** 110

**DESCRIPTION:** The Pandans are unique among goblinoids in that they are chaotic good in alignment. These close relatives of the Bugbear are good-natured and gentle unless their homes or lives are threatened.

Aside from the obvious difference in disposition, Pandans are identical to Bugbears except for coloration, diet and weapon use. A Pandan's fur and skin are white with large black areas, or visa versa (similar to giant pandas). Their fur is also thicker than that of their Bugbear cousins, but not enough to affect their armor class.

**COMBAT:** Pandan are creatures of the forest and their weapons and homes reflect this. They wear no armor and dislike all metal (including coins). Their weapons are made exclusively of bamboo and/or rattan.

Pandans are often armed with great bamboo long bows which they use with deadly accuracy. Due to their great strength and proficiency they receive +1 to hit and damage rolls when using these bows.

Aside from bamboo long bows, all Pandan weapons are based on the staff, called kuen. The basic kuen comes in three sizes: the 3' tuan (jo stick); the 5' chi mei (bo stick); and the 6' to 8' chang (quarter staff).

Other kuen used by the Pandans are jointed into two or three sections with leather or sinew. The liang chien is 3' in length with a joint that allows the to 1' to swing freely (treat as a horseman's flail). Slightly larger, the sau tsa is 5' in length with the final 1' free swinging (treat as a footman's flail).

The most advanced Pandan kuen is the san chieh kuen, or three sectioned staff. The san chieh is 7' in length and jointed into three equal sections (damage S&M 1-6/L 2-7).

**HABITAT/SOCIETY:** Pandan clans live in villages of thatched huts and are found in numbers similar to Bugbears. Villages will be surrounded

by snares and pit traps to prevent intruders from entering unannounced.

Each clan is lead by its' eldest shaman (druid up to 7th level). No specific borders exist between clan territories, no Pandans take more than they need and they all share what they have. Councils of local clan leaders are held monthly to settle any rare disputes between different clans, exchange information and arrange marriages.

The Pandans have learned not to trust other goblinoids and are weary of all humanoids and demi-humans save elves. This is due to other races disregard for the forests and extensive use of metals. The Pandan believe that metals belong in the earth like trees in the forest, and they should stay there.

**ECOLOGY:** The Pandan are strict vegetarians and eat a variety of leaves and shoots. Their favorite is bamboo which makes up most of their diet.

The number of females and young in a clan will each equal 50% of the male population.

Pandan fur is a rare and valuable commodity, it is extremely warm, easy to clean and luxuriously soft. One adult skin may bring up to 500 gold pieces at market. The Pandan are aware of this and avenge murders for fur with great perseverance and brutality.

**SKILLS:** Pandans' are skilled in hunting, climbing trees, tracking and stalking. They make excellent scouts, trackers or guides on familiar terrain, (Pandans rarely, if ever, leave the security of their bamboo forest homes).

**THEOLOGY:** Druidic, using bamboo vice mistletoe.

### COMMENTS/ENCOUNTERS:

Adventurers may encounter Pandan hunting parties or, more commonly, be confronted by an armed group of Pandans ready to escort them out of the woods via the quickest route. They will however heal the sick and wounded and provide assistance as necessary when the situation warrants it.



**RACE:** Polare  
**CLIMATE/TERRAIN:** Arctic  
**FREQUENCY:** Rare  
**ORGANIZATION:** Tribal  
**ACTIVITY CYCLE:** Any  
**DIET:** Carnivore  
**INTELLIGENCE:** Low  
**TREASURE:** J,K,L,D in lair  
**ALIGNMENT:** Chaotic Evil  
**NO. APPEARING:** 3-18  
**ARMOR CLASS:** 4  
**MOVEMENT:** 9"  
**HIT DICE:** 4  
**THACO:** 17  
**NO. OF ATTACKS:** 1  
**DAMAGE/ATTACK:** 2-8 or weapon  
**SPECIAL ATTACKS:** Surprise 50%  
**SPECIAL DEFENSES:** Immune to cold above absolute 0  
**MAGIC RESISTANCE:** 90% against cold based attacks  
**SIZE:** L (7'+ tall)  
**MORALE:** Above Avg (10)  
**XP VALUE:** 120

**DESCRIPTION:** These hairy behemoths are cousins of the bugbear. In nearly all respects they resemble their fellow goblinoids. The most apparent difference between polare and bugbear is color, polare are pure white with icy blue eyes. Polare also out girth bugbears due to an extra layer of blubber that keeps them warm in the most severe storms and protects them against cold based attacks. Their thick fur and blubbery hide preclude the need for garments to stay warm so, in the interest of stealth, polare remain unclothed.



**COMBAT:** Polare are extremely fierce and brutal in combat. Common weapons include bone clubs, harpoons, glaives and daggers. Unarmed, polare battle effectively with claw and muscle.



**HABITAT/SOCIETY:** Polare tribes make their homes in tunnels dug beneath ice shelves. Each tribe maintains a large maze that allows them free movement, regardless of weather, within their territory. These tunnels are also used to ambush prey and enemies through trap doors to the surface. Tunnel complexes will include ice caverns for various public and private purposes as in any village.

Polare tribes keep polar bears as pets and guards. Polar bear families are housed in lairs near entrances to the tunnel complexes as well as within them.

Hunting parties of polare adult males and bears roam great distance to find meat to satisfy their tribes voracious appetite. Their quarry will consist of seals, walrus, penguin, sea lion and an occasional whale or dolphin but any creature will be considered a potential meal.

Polare speak a rough dialect of the bugbear racial language and otherwise communicate via scents which are excreted from special glands at the base of the neck. These scents convey emotion and can be used to signal single polare or coordinate the actions of many.

**ECOLOGY:** Tribes range in size from 30 to 100 individuals, 50% of them being females and young. The unforgiving arctic climate contributes to a high infant mortality rate among the polar. The major killer of young and female polare is other polar, inter-tribal cannibalism is rampant in the more harsh winter months.

**SKILLS:** Polare excel at hunting, trapping and tracking in their arctic homelands. Masters of camouflage and ambush they surprise their opponents 50% of the time.

**THEOLOGY:** The polare worship the auroral lights that glow in the skies above the planets poles. Ceremonies are held at each equinox to mark the change in the amount of time the auroral lights rule the sky. Worship includes sacrifices of fresh meat and, at the equinoxes, polare female virgins. The polare believe the aurora is a great hunter god who's prey is color which he extracts from the world leaving it white and blank. All offerings to the aurora are therefore adorned in whatever colorful items available and are then buried in the snow for the god to find.

**COMMENTS/ENCOUNTERS:** Encounters with polare will, for the most part, be the result of a polare hunting party figuring the strangers to be easy prey. Convincing the polare that they would not be a good meal should be the captives' first concern. Offerings of colorful items, hunting equipment and fresh meat are the best way to at least delay slaughter. Captives spared in this manner become the guests of the tribe until food becomes scarce or they can escape.



**RACE:** Jack-a-lope  
**CLIMATE/TERRAIN:** Woodlands/meadows  
**FREQUENCY:** Rare  
**ORGANIZATION:** None  
**ACTIVITY CYCLE:** Daytime  
**DIET:** Herbivore  
**INTELLIGENCE:** Animal  
**TREASURE:** 0 in lair  
**ALIGNMENT:** Neutral  
**NO. APPEARING:** 1-8  
**ARMOR CLASS:** 6  
**MOVEMENT:** 18"  
**HIT DICE:** 1  
**THACO:** 19  
**NO. OF ATTACKS:** 1  
**DAMAGE/ATTACK:** 1-4  
**SPECIAL ATTACKS:** hopping charge  
**SPECIAL DEFENSES:** set antlers vs charge  
**MAGIC RESISTANCE:** standard  
**SIZE:** S (3'+ long)  
**MORALE:** 16  
**XP VALUE:** 15

**DESCRIPTION:** The males of this large species of hare sport racks of antlers like miniature stags. Females antlers are much less grandeur yet remain just as effective in combat. Their soft coats change color with the seasons: brown in fall, white in winter, yellow in spring and green in summer. These color changes help the jack-a-lope to remain camouflaged at any time of the year.

**COMBAT:** In combat the proud males will rush to the offensive, head bowed, antlers bared, often hopping into the faces of their opponents for maximum effect. This kind of attack gains pluses like any charge would.

Females of the species will attempt to escape conflict with their young. If cornered they will set themselves against their assailants. When the aggressors get within reach of the young jack-a-lope, the females too spring for the face.

**HABITAT/SOCIETY:** Jack-a-lope live in small family groups of up to 3 of each, male and female, adults and 3 young. These groups may be found grazing on leaves and vegetables or in the small caves and hollows they use as lairs. Among the seed horde in a lair can be found small items of worth mistaken as edible by the inhabitants.

Every spring adult males joust with one another for mating rights. The males have been known to travel great distances to collect as many mates as possible.

**ECOLOGY:** Jack-a-lope are slightly less fertile than their rabbit cousins, birthing 1-3 fawn each year. After their first year, antler buds will appear and grow to full size in about four years. The young take about 5 years to reach adulthood at which time they strike out on their own.

The eating habits of these creatures puts them at odds with local farmers because they ravage vegetable gardens and are not frightened nor easily defeated by dogs. Their only benefit is that they keep foxes and scavengers away while they feed.

Jack-a-lope fur is a highly marketable item in any color. Coats, cloaks, hats and other lined apparel made from their fur are among the warmest. Their heads, antlers and feet are considered charms of great luck making the jack-a-lope even more sought after.

**SKILLS:** None

**THEOLOGY:** None

**COMMENTS/ENCOUNTERS:** Random encounters and hunting expeditions are the most frequent ways to see jack-a-lope.

Jack-a-lope may be trained or just kept as pets if they are removed from the wild between 6 months and 1 year after birth. On rare occasions they have been encountered as familiars.

**RACE:** Rhajgoblin  
**CLIMATE/TERRAIN:** Mountains  
**FREQUENCY:** Rare  
**ORGANIZATION:** Cast  
**ACTIVITY CYCLE:** Any  
**DIET:** Carnivore  
**INTELLIGENCE:** Avg  
**TREASURE:** J,M,D,0(x5) in lair  
**ALIGNMENT:** Chaotic Evil  
**NO. APPEARING:** 3-30  
**ARMOR CLASS:** 5  
**MOVEMENT:** 9"  
**HIT DICE:** 2  
**THACO:** 19  
**NO. OF ATTACKS:** 2  
**DAMAGE/ATTACK:** 1-6/1-6 or Weapon(s)  
**SPECIAL ATTACKS:** Nil  
**SPECIAL DEFENSES:** Nil  
**MAGIC RESISTANCE:** Standard  
**SIZE:** L (7'+ tall)  
**MORALE:** Regulars (12)  
**XP VALUE:** 35+

**DESCRIPTION:** The hand of chaos long ago warped a nation of hobgoblins into these tall four armed terrors. Their basic body structure and features are in keeping with their hobgoblin ancestry. An extra long torso supports an additional pair of arms below the first pair. Their heads and faces are hairless and sport two fangs protruding from the lower jaw, like tusks (not unlike another hobgoblin offshoot, the norker). Skin color varies and includes: blue, purple, grey, scarlet, amber and green.

**COMBAT:** Rhajgoblins prefer to use weapons that allow them to take

advantage of their four arms. Each pair of arms should be treated as a single attacker, in other words, a rhajgoblin armed with 4 scimitars may make 4 attacks at -2/-4/-2/-4 to hit. All attacks must be made against a single target though because their brains are unable to coordinate simultaneous attacks on multiple targets.

The one specialized weapon rhajgoblin use is the double composite bow. Quite simply it is two parallel bows joined at a large grip in the center. One or both draw strings can be used on a single target, this allows for a firing rate twice that of a regular composite bow.

**HABITAT/SOCIETY:** The rhajgoblin make their homes on a great peninsula, isolated from the rest of the world by some of the highest peaks on the planet.

Their society is based on a cast system, an individuals position within the cast is determined by the color of their skin in the following manner:

Blue - shaman, called Swami

Purple - royalty/upper class, one Maharaja and many Rajah

Grey - courtiers and bureaucrats, called Viziers

Scarlet - warriors, called Nawabs

Amber - commoners, called Hajj

Green - slaves, called Untouchables

Individuals are forbidden to mate out of their cast, any such offspring are born green rhajgoblin and condemned to a life of slavery.

The rhajgoblin have built their civilization within the ruined cities of a long dead race which dot mountain sides throughout the rhajgoblin sub-continent. Nothing is known of the previous inhabitants of these cities. Carved from the living mountain sides, close to the frost line, they include extensive tunnel systems. It is possible that much of the builders' knowledge and many secrets are still hidden within these cities.

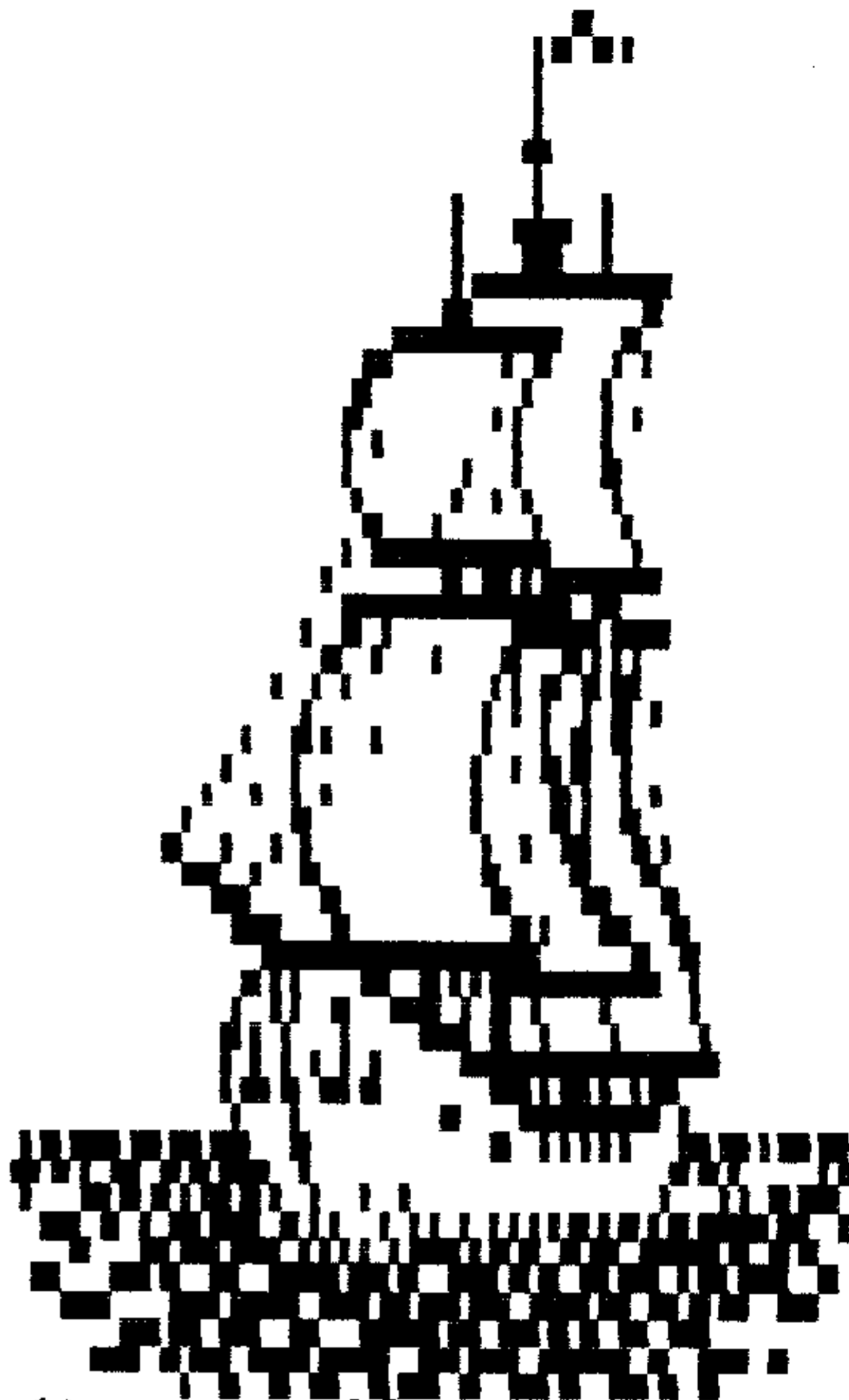
All of the interior spaces are large, which suits the rhajgoblins well. Aside from private apartments, space usage includes: temple(s), storage, palace areas, torture chamber(s), dungeon(s), meeting halls and guest accommodations. Despite this wide usage of space, the cities are still under-populated. Creatures and humanoids of various types are both recognized and unknown co-habitants.

**ECOLOGY:** Rhajgoblin ecology is similar in all respects to that of the hobgoblin race that spawned them.

**SKILLS:** Rhajgoblin warrior leaders may advance up to 7th level and use the warrior THACO table, all others use above THACO. Shaman, high priests of up to 6th level are common. Rhajgoblin chieftains can become witch doctors of no higher than 4th level.

**THEOLOGY:** The rhajgoblin have adopted the chaotic deities of Indian mythos who were partially responsible for their creation. They have chosen Kali as their patron, their devotion is fanatical. Worship of Kali requires acts of destruction and live sacrifices.

**COMMENTS/ENCOUNTERS:** Any encounter with these creatures will result in violence. Their goal is the destruction of the universe, no defacement is too small. The other inhabitants of rhajgoblin cities are often unwilling allies and may even be openly hostile to them.



## Future Issues:

(maybe)

New character races.

A business by the piers.

Inter-system game conversions.

Magic Items great and small.

More featured creatures.

New character classes.

Flying ships and space travel.

Skyrealms in AD&D.

Create new challenges from old

