

THE CYCLOPEDIA  
**TALISLANTA**



VOLUME V  
**THE EASTERN LANDS**

# THE CYCLOPEDIA

# TALISLANTA

## VOLUME V

## THE EASTERN LANDS

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# INTRODUCTION

This book is a fantasy role-playing campaign supplement, developed exclusively for the *TALISLANTA* game. Within, players and Gamemasters will find a wealth of material ready to be assimilated into the Talislanta milieu—a unique world setting, designed for experienced fantasy role-players who are looking for something more challenging than the too typical “elves and dwarves” campaign.

Players should delight in the plethora of new material about the East—the full details of Manra shape-changing, a new combat ability for the Kang (Combat Trance), the code of the Mystic Warriors, Harakin and their dractyl steeds, the unknown mountain peoples of Xanadas, and much more. Advanced role-players will enjoy the new Chromid race (diminutive man-like beings), as well as exotic character types such as the Samir shamans (always seeking signs from the gods) and the bloodthirsty Manra Death Warriors.

Along with complete background on the nations and regions of the East, the Gamemaster will find expanded, optional rules for Witchman necromancy (including jujus, soulstones, and the infernal Shrunk Head fetishes), Mandalan runecasting, the Sunra spawning urge, aerial combat, and other useful items. There is also a complete map of the Temple of the Seven Moons, along with biographies of all of the current Xanadasian Savants. A special section lets the Gamemaster in on some of the secrets of Talislanta—*players can use this material only with the Gamemaster's permission!*

Two ready-to-play adventures are provided: “Sunra Surprise,” which begins with an execution in the Coral City of Isalis, and “Path of Peril,” involving adventurers with mysterious patrons and a veiled destination. As always, a page of ideas is provided to inspire those who would like to design their own adventures in the East.

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# OVERVIEW

Eastern Talislanta is a place of danger and barbaric splendor, its fabled riches and mysteries drawing adventurers from across the continent. A few find their fortune. Others find terror and horrifying death.

The East includes the barren steppes of the Greylands, the chill mountains of Xanadas, the lush jungles of Chana, and other extremes of terrain. Much of it is unexplored, and home to dangerous predators and hostile sentients.

## The Empire of the Quan

The armored hand of the **Quan Empire** lies heavily upon these lands. Ruled by the arrogant and decadent *Quan*, it is unquestionably the most powerful nation in all of Talislanta. The Quan rule with an iron grip, holding several races in thrall.

The warlike *Kang* once ruled the Greylands, but were seduced by imperial wealth and became willing slaves of the Quan. Today they grow restive, entertained by thoughts of overthrowing their masters and seizing the realm for themselves.

The *Mandalans* are a complex and fascinating race. Peaceful by nature, they voluntarily submitted to the Empire. Through the ancient philosophy of the Way, Mandalans secretly seek to overthrow the Quan from within. The black-clad Mystic Warriors, martial artists of consummate skill, are their agents in these endeavors.

The semi-aquatic *Sunra* are skilled mariners who capitulated to the Quan when their holy waters—the Inland Sea—were threatened by the damming of the River Shan. Sunra dragon barques ply the eastern waterways, guarding against corsairs and protecting the goods of the Empire.

The *Ispasians*, a race of yellow-skinned mercantilists, occupy many important positions within the Empire. Smart and cunning, they skillfully disguise their distaste for the decadent Quan—and, like the Kang, consider the possibility of taking the Empire for themselves.

The burrow-dwelling *Vajra*, a brave and intelligent people, were conquered through Quan treachery. Today they serve as menial laborers, and their mines and other excavations make the Empire rich.

Foreigners may travel within the Empire if they have official permits. These stamped lead tablets may be purchased in Jacinth, Hadran or Ispasia, and cost 1,000 G.L. However, foreigners are barely tolerated within this land, considered lower on the social scale than the basest Vajra laborer.

## Beyond the Empire

To the north of the Quan Empire lies mysterious **Xanadas**, home to some of Talislanta's longest-lived sentients. Brave travelers who reach the Temple of the Seven Moons may sample the Savants' legendary wisdom.

**Harak**—a bleak, inhospitable land—would lie astride the route from the Empire to L'Haan, except that no one makes such a journey. The reason they don't is that Harak is the home of the savage *Harakin*, warlike nomads who value nothing except their own survival. Riding huge flying dractyls, they constantly make war on the neighboring lands as well as each other.

In the south, the jungles of **Chana** are also unconquered by the Quan, and a rich source of herbs and precious stones. The sinister

*Witchmen* make exploration hazardous, for their necromantic shamans create mindless juju zombies which serve as their servants and warriors. In Chana's northern mountains dwell the Witchmen's enemies, the shape-changing *Manra* and the *Nagra* spirit-trackers. While relatively peaceful, neither race takes kindly to invasion of their homeland.

## Adventures in the East

The lands of the East are full of opportunities for adventure. The Savants of Xanadas guard the wisdom of ages, but the route to the Temple of the Seven Moons lies through the Empire, L'Haan or the Sinking Land. Who can gain this wisdom, and is the journey worth the prize?

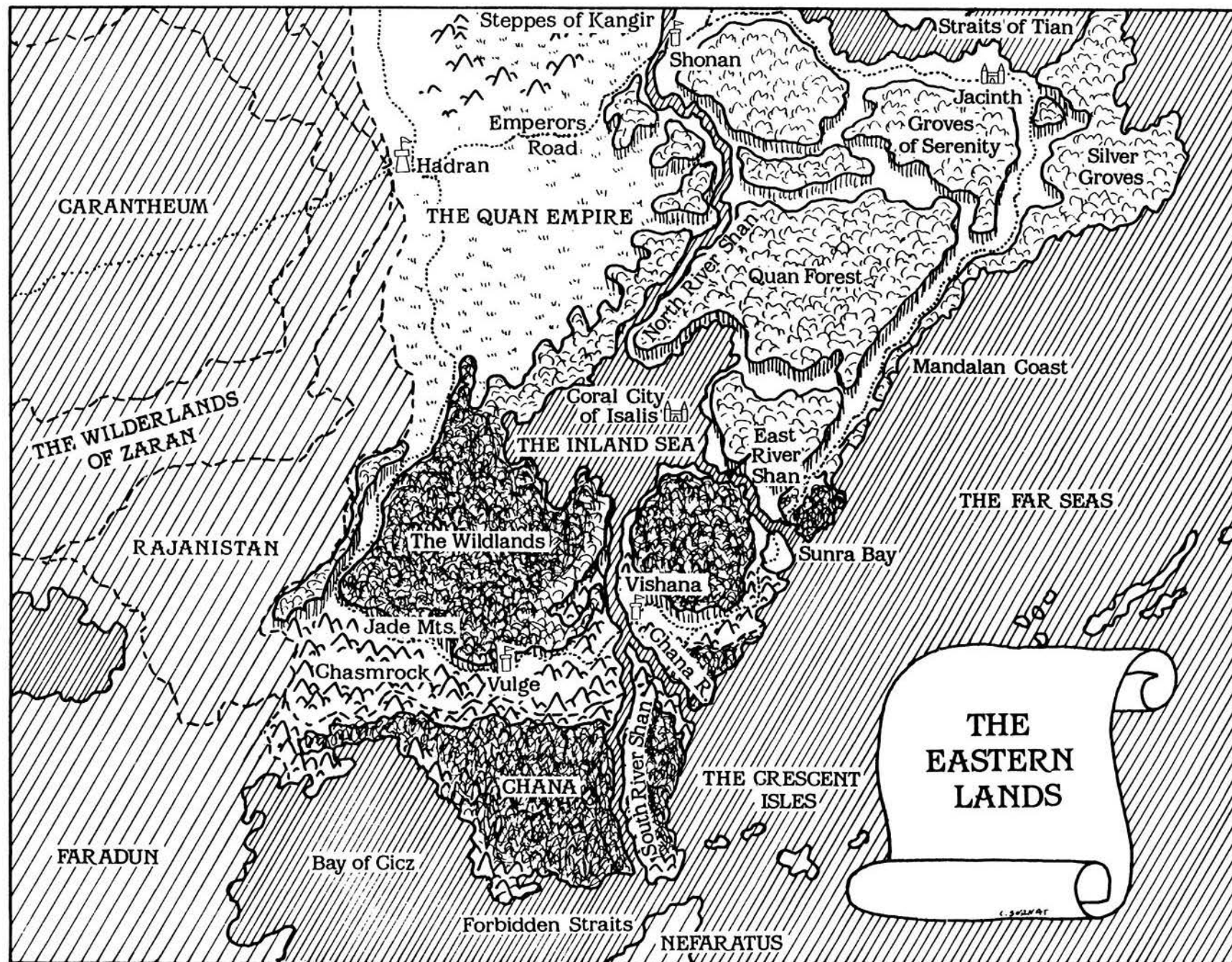
Chana likewise has its attractions. The primitive artifacts of the tribesmen—shrunk head fetishes, soulstones and spirit jars—have a morbid fascination for collectors. The secrets of the shamans are sought by some of the most powerful mages of the age. However, the natives are more than able to protect themselves, ably assisted by the winged apes and exomorphs which are indigenous to this region.

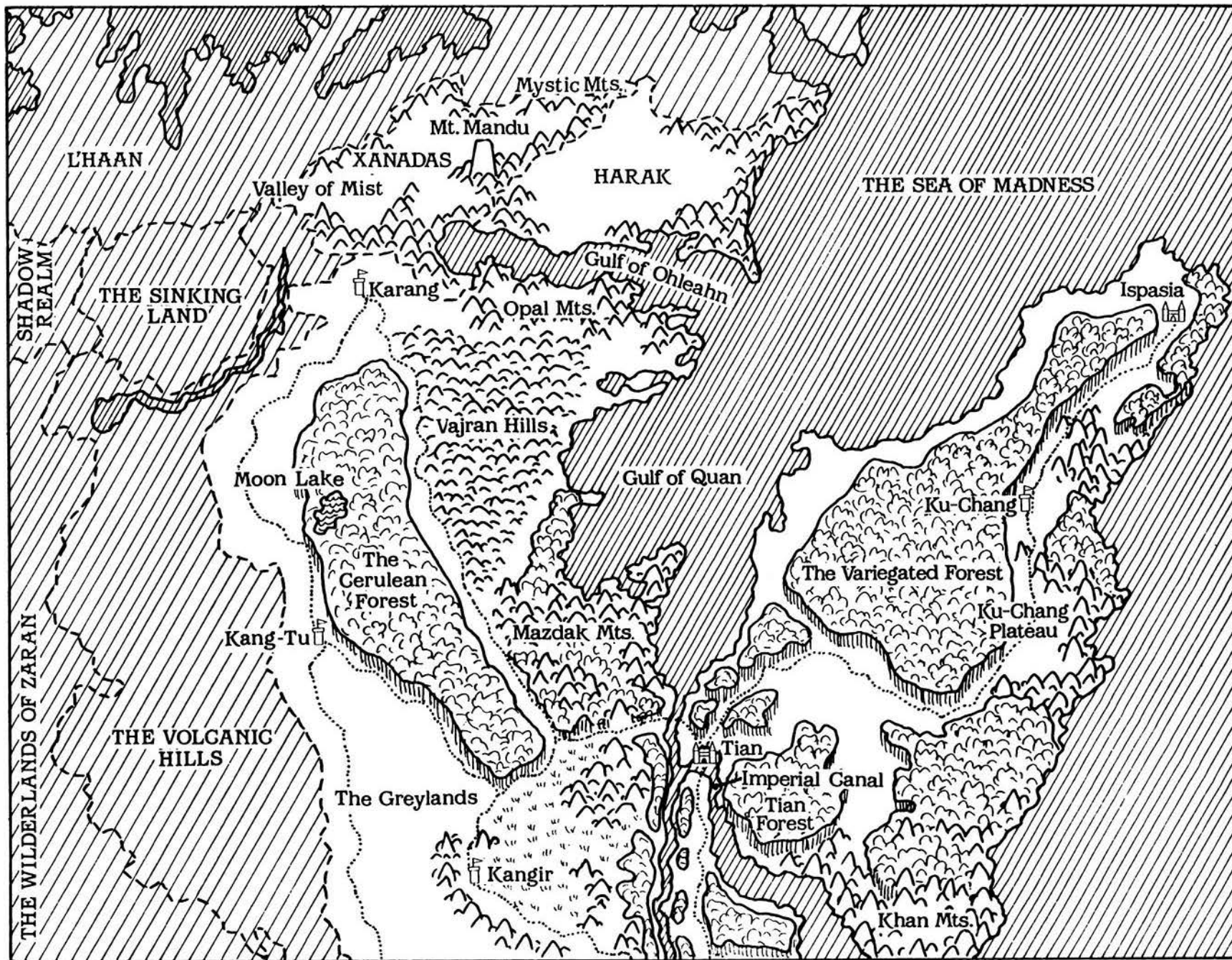
The Empire itself is a potent lure to adventurers. There are many fabulous wonders here, which foreign scholars can seldom investigate because the required permits are so difficult to obtain. Western collectors also pay high prices for art objects, exotic trade goods (such as Mandalan silkcloth), and rare flora and fauna from the Empire. The Quan and their Kang soldiers are loathe to let such items beyond their borders, and are quick to punish smugglers.

For those who overcome the challenges of climate, predators, hostile natives and imperial bureaucrats, the East can be a profitable destination. And for those who can't, the Witchmen can always find a use for a fresh corpse...











# THE LANDS OF TALISLANTA

The following contains supplemental material to the geographical and cultural listings in Volume One of *THE CYCLOPEDIA TALISLANTA*.

## CHANA

One of the most primitive lands on the continent, Chana is hot and humid. Heavy rains during the spring and summer taper off to a continuous drizzle in the winter. In summer and early autumn, the coast suffers from severe tropical storms—winds of up to 100 miles per hour devastate villages as far as thirty miles inland. The Jade Mountains are cooler and drier, especially on the northern slopes which do not get the humid winds from the Far Seas.

Three separate races live within these jungles. The *Witchmen* occupy the southern coasts and the eastern jungles. The remotest parts of the central highlands are inhabited by the *Manra*, while western Chana is home to the *Nagra*.

This jungleland has never been comprehensively mapped; its major geographical features remain unknown. There are no cities, and the villages are ephemeral constructions which rarely last longer than a generation. The **Jade Mountains** cover far-northern Chana. Rich in natural resources—including black diamonds, moonstones, and a tropical variety of cleric's cowl—the mountains are also infested with winged apes and similar terrible creatures. The vermin-infested channels of the **River Chana** run from the Quan border to the southern tip of Chana, providing the region's primary drainage. The **Bay of Ciciz**, off Chana's western shore, frustrates Imrian slave-coracles and Farad merchant-vesels which wish to hug its coasts, an easier route to navigate to the ports of the Quan Empire than sailing further into the ocean. These unwholesome waters are infested with sea demons, giant sea scorpions and Mangar corsairs.

### Creatures of the Jungle

The tropical woodlands teem with avir, feather dractyls, quaal, insects, and other, less harmless animals. Swarms of the tiny insects known as flits descend upon Kang patrols, breaking the soldiers' discipline and driving them away. Some of the Kang warlords believe that Witchmen sorcery directs the insects.

The Death's Head Viper is a twelve-foot serpent commonly associated with Chana. Exomorphs and kaliya, the most evil of Talislanta's dragons, make their habitat in the deep jungle. Colonies of up to thirty blood-sucking alatus have been discovered in single trees. Giant water-bugs, ikshada, urthrax, aramatus, and skalanx infest most of the rivers and lakes.

Plants also endanger those who travel in this jungleland. Chana is infested with serpentvine, stranglevine, and mantraps large enough to swallow full-grown Kang. Unusually common in some portions of the jungle are Mang, a form of sentient tree. While most scholars believe the trees to be a kind of sub-elemental or a mutated form of mandragore, Rajan legends imply that Mang are sorcerously created in Witchmen rituals.

### The Witchmen

These tall people are preternaturally thin, with grey-green skin and cadaverous features. They practice ritual mutilation both as a religious observance and to make themselves more terrifying to their enemies. Their faces are scarred and tattooed in bizarre patterns, their teeth filed to points, and their heads shaven except for a single top-knot, which is bound and lacquered.

Witchmen are often sickly, and tend to lead short lives. A 50-year-old tribesman is considered elderly. Many of their people fall prey to yakuk, a fungal infection which causes a gradual loss of sensory abilities. Others degenerate from no apparent cause. Mandalan scholars believe this rapid aging is due to repeated doses of kesh, a toxic hallucinogen made from the jabutu plant. Among the Farad, long-term use of kesh is believed to cause nervous tremors, baldness, disease of the liver, and death.

**The Witchmen and the Seers.** The origins of the Witchmen are steeped in mystery, obscured by the lack of written records and the difficulty of communicating with the necromantic tribesmen. It is said that many secrets are revealed in the fell *Necromantium* authored by Mordante, although few are brave enough to risk reading this fearsome tome.

Some scholars believe that a race of black-cloaked Seers established a colony in Chana before the Great Disaster, enslaving many of the natives. Legends whisper that the Seers' diabolic sorcery *changed* their native slaves into the Witchmen—giving them emaciated physiques, a bizarre skin-tone, and an aptitude for sorcery.

No one knows what caused the mysterious Black Seers to leave Chana. Some Dracartans speculate that the Witchmen successfully rebelled against their masters. Farad scholars, on the other hand, believe that the Seers left willingly, having accomplished whatever mysterious aim they had set out to achieve. Yet others believe that the Seers abandoned their colony because they became embroiled in intrigue elsewhere in the Omniverse.





Whatever their origins, the Witchmen were an isolated people in 244, when Kang warriors from the Empire of the Quan first reached the jungles of Chana. Encouraged by early victories over the imperials, bands of Witchmen began to raid the plantations within southern Quan—striking at isolated settlements, beheading everyone, and melting back into the jungle. Finally, in 438, the Quan Emperor ordered the construction of a fortress at Vishana, and sent one of his legions south as a permanent guard against the jungle raiders. Nevertheless, jungle once occupied by imperial border forts, villages and farms has never been recovered, and the raids still continue.

In 350, the Imrians signed a treaty with Nefaratus which granted the amphibians' slave-ships access to the Forbidden Straits off Chana. The slavers, previously able to capture Witchmen only along the coastline of the demon-infested Bay of Ciciz, now raid the full length of Chana's coast.

### Life in the Jungle

The Witchmen live in small tribes, each led by a shaman. Although many villages also have a warrior-king to lead the tribe in mundane matters, he is selected by the shaman, and can be removed from office at any time.

Disputes between tribes are resolved by warfare. Witchmen warriors are renowned for their prowess with spear, blowgun, and throwing-stick, and are willing to die for their shaman. Most have killed their first enemy before their sixteenth birthday.

**Rituals and Customs.** The life of a Witchman is bound by a web of custom. There are rituals for eating, drinking, going to sleep, waking, killing animals, gathering herbs, and setting out to slay an enemy (although no custom limits Witchman imagination in the act of slaying). The tribesmen never enter any body of water, even if it is demonstrably safe.

The shamans teach that the Witchmens' souls are imperiled if they do not follow these rituals to the letter. No matter how long a tribesman remains in captivity or how far he is taken from Chana, he never deviates from his traditions. Masters who bar a Witchman slave from their rituals often suffer misfortune. The captives claim that if a master forces them to disobey, the consequences justly fall upon him instead of them. No one knows what happens to Witchmen who violate custom "in the wild"—as far as is known, they never do.

Surprisingly, the shamans feel no compunction about trading their occult lore, should exceptionally bold traders manage to contact them. They usually require potent magical devices as payment, and often cheat. Prospective traders are urged to be cautious.

**Religion.** The standard scholarly belief, proposed by the wizard Kabros in his *Guide to the Outer Planes*, is that the Witchmen worship Diabolus, master of the Shaitans, with rituals learned from the Black Seers. A few modern scholars maintain that the tribesmen actually serve the Lord of the Night Skies, who in turn serves Aberon, the ruler of Cthonia. There is little evidence to support either view.

The truth is that the Witchmen serve the mysterious entity known as Death. Their ability to control souls, both in the formation of shrunken-head fetishes and the construction of juju, requires close involvement with the deity's powers. The Witchmen are terrified of "benevolent" spirits, and encounters with such beings send the tribesmen running.

### The Manra

The peaceful Shape-Changers live in the central highlands of Chana, though they occasionally visit the jungle fringes of south-

ern Quan. They live in isolation, avoiding all contact with civilization. Manra are tall, with golden skin, almond eyes, brown hair and slender builds. They do not tattoo or scar themselves in any way, but wear ornaments of flowers, nuts, and other natural materials.

Manra can "shape-change" to assume the form of any living animal or plant. The talent takes years to master, and can only be used for brief periods of time even by the most skilled Shape-Changers. Nevertheless, the Manra are so good at using this ability to hide themselves that the Witchmen fear them, and refer to the Manra as "the Unseen."

The Shape-Changers have short life expectancies—like the Witchmen, they suffer from yakuk and other jungle diseases.

**History.** Hotan's *History of the World* briefly mentions the discovery of a race of shape-changers in the jungles southeast of the Kingdom of Sharna during the Forgotten Age.

Little else is known of the early history of the Manra. They are a private people who distrust civilization (not surprising, considering some of the implications of Viridian's work). A few scholars speculate that the Manra are members of the race from which the Witchmen were created—and may have developed their shape-changing talent as a method of hiding from the Black Seers.

The Manra are very good at being left alone. On three separate occasions, Kang expeditions to determine the status of the Manra have reported that the shape-changers were extinct.

### Shape-Changer Society

Manra live in small villages in much the same fashion as the Witchmen. Their huts consist of a framework of stiff vines, woven with broad green leaves to make them strong and watertight. Floors are dirt, and windows and doorways are covered with curtains of animal hide. A narrow trench outside keeps water out.

Each village is led by a shaman, who provides both spiritual and temporal leadership. Much of his time is occupied in training the young, and in making the secret preparations which their shape-changing ability requires. The shaman's influence is most visible on the nights when the tribe gathers its crop of jabutu (from which the hallucinogenic kesh is derived), as it is the shaman who determines which plants are ready to be harvested. There is no Manra "king," although some Farad traders claim to have met a Master Shape-Changer who advised several shamans.

If a village needs help, neighboring villagers usually assist, but otherwise Manra settlements remain independent. Any conflict that arises between them usually concerns the supply of the rare jabutu plant. The hallucinogen cannot be cultivated, and is only found growing wild on mossy ridges in the foothills of the Jade Mountains. Each village has its traditional harvesting territory. When there are shortages of jabutu, villages may challenge one another to the *Dance of the Metamorphosis* (see below) in order to win a greater share of the harvest.

**Customs.** The Manra live in relative peace and harmony. Each individual contributes to the village as he sees fit. Some perform specific tasks, such as raising young and defending the village, but most do whatever pleases them at the time. Nevertheless, no task remains undone.

Manra must defend their villages and jabutu harvesting grounds from the Witchmen and the Kang, as well as the dangerous animals of the rain-forest. Besides primitive stone clubs, they use the *t'sai* (a form of bola)—primarily to hunt birds and small game, but they can also use it to entangle, and bring down much larger targets.

Shape-Changers rarely fight with one another. When differences arise, they are resolved through the *Dance of the Metamorphosis*. The ceremony culminates in a "challenge"—a duel in which Manra shape-shift from plant, to animal, to man-like being, attempting to outdo all others in the imagination and fidelity of their adopted shapes. The most successful wins the point, and the dispute is considered settled.

The Manra are nature worshippers who strive to protect their sacred rain-forest and mountain domains. They view all things as aspects of Nature. Even the Witchmen represent something—the Netherworld, source of death and decay. This acceptance of the Witchmen as a natural force keeps the Manra from being afraid of their enemies.

#### Deviant Manra

Some tribes deviate from the peaceful nature of the majority of the Manra. They defend their villages and harvesting grounds with paranoid fervor, raid other Manra villages for kesh and jabutu, and attack travelers without provocation. The most militant collect the ears of their vanquished foes, wearing them strung upon a long necklace. A few of the tribes possess foreign weapons, obtained through trade with Rajanistan.

Some of these tribes are driven to their behavior by jabutu crop failures—all Manra are addicted to kesh to one degree or the other. Others are permanently hostile, no matter the state of their crop. The shamans theorize that the use of stolen jabutu harvested before its time induces the aberrant behavior.

#### The Nagra

The Nagra—also known as the "Jungle People"—are a primitive race of man-like beings with mottled grey-green skin, peaked skulls, small black fangs, and eyes like tiny ebon specks. They dress in rude garments made from the furry hides of winged apes, and carry blowguns and long knives made of bone.

They are skilled hunters and uncannily perceptive trackers—Nagra can even detect the passage of spiritforms. Members of certain renegade clans have dealings with the Rajans and Farad, and hire out as scouts and guides. The Jungle People are fierce and violent, and mark the Witchmen, Kang and Quan as hated foes.

**A People in Exile.** No records from the Forgotten Age mention the Nagra. Although some think they were involved with the ancient Kingdom of Sharna, most scholars believe that the Nagra developed their spirit-tracking and other unique abilities during the Age of Confusion.

The first mention of the Nagra in a written record dates to the beginning of the New Age, when the spirit-trackers were mercenary guides and scouts for the Mazdaks. After the fall of the Mazdak Empire, the Jungle People feared revenge from their former enemies, and retreated to the southern jungles. As the Quan rose to prominence, the Nagra withdrew even further, into the deep jungle.

In 231, an imperial expedition stumbled upon the outlying Nagra settlements in what is now southwestern Quan. The Kang nursed an old hatred for the former Mazdak allies, and—despite Quan desires to ally with the Nagra—hunted the spirit-trackers like beasts.

Many of the Jungle People fled west to the Topaz Mountains, north of the Dark Coast, but the majority of the survivors settled in the Jade Mountains of northern Chana. Here, they use the natural cover and inaccessibility of the rain-forest to defend themselves from the Kang and the Witchmen.

#### Jungle Society

The Nagra are fierce, aggressive, and violent, with few social graces. They are short-tempered, with little patience for the veneer of civilization. Outsiders see them as somewhat "spooky," as their spirit-tracking ability makes them sensitive to events within the spirit realms. Shunning beasts and conveyances, Nagra prefer to travel on foot, and can run thirty miles in a day with ease.

The Jungle People live alone or in small family groups or homesteads. Relations between Nagra clans are infrequent. "Wiving" raids are traditional, however, and Nagra males proudly describe to visitors how their mates struggled to escape when caught.

Nagra are robust and hearty—despite their bizarre appearance—and generally lead long and productive lives. By 15, a spirit-tracker is physically mature, lives in his own hut, and probably has children. Adolescents (ages 11-14) are expected to survive on their own, and to contribute food to the family.

A thin, black-scaled snake called *uyagi* is a favorite of the Nagra, and they raise them in small circular pens. Uyagi tails can be removed without otherwise injuring the snake, and grow back quickly. Removed tails twitch wildly to attract a predator's attention, allowing the snake to escape. Nagra enjoy uyagi tails, and reach into a pen, break an uyagi's tail off, then slurp down the still-twitching tail. In addition to uyagi, the spirit-trackers keep spiders (which they milk for poison) and raise devilroot, black lotus and boniga (a tropical form of blue-vine).

#### Religion

The Nagra worship their ancestors. They sacrifice their first harvest and the first meat of each kill, to ensure the success of their hunts and the strength of their children. They also believe that the souls of their ancestors are reborn within them. The reincarnated souls remember nothing of their previous lives, unless aided by the Nagra shaman.

Shamans are the spiritual advisors of their race. They travel among the clan homesteads, sanctifying births; comings-of-age, and deaths, and consulting with the spirit of the First Ancestor. In return, they receive room and board.

# HARAK

Isolated by high mountains, Harak is a lonely region east of Xanadas and north of the Quan Empire. The coastal borders are marked by mountains, and sheer cliffs that drop into the Sea of Madness and the Gulf of Oleahn. It is the home of the barbarians known as the Harakin.

Swept by frigid northern winds most of the year, Harak boasts a fruitless and barren landscape. The ground is so dry that cracks are visible everywhere, like wrinkles on an ancient's face. Scattered shards of soft black-iron litter the ground. Jagged spires of rock jut upward, as if a subterranean giant attacked the land from below with great rocky spears. Centuries of erosion have pitted and carved these rock spires into weird and grotesque shapes.

Ravengers are found in Harak, as are omnivrax, crevasse spiders, and mountain skell. Dractyls are native to the cliffs on the coast, but can also be found in other high mountain areas. Scorpions, insects, and snakes inhabit the barrens. During lean times, any of the above may be eaten by the Harakin.

Winters are cold here, with constant snowfall punctuated by blizzards and occasional icicle storms. Frostbite is a problem, and sometimes the air becomes so cold that breathing is painful. Spring is warmer and brings rains, but the baked-hard earth refuses to absorb the moisture, channeling it into the crevasses and the depths. Summers are uncomfortably hot. Due to the harsh climate, vegetation is sparse—only deadwood trees seem to thrive, and other plants huddle in the few patches of shade and shelter.

Mandalan scholars theorize that Harak was devastated at the time of the Great Disaster by a great underground disturbance. They think that subterranean veins of black iron overheated, melted, and exploded with enough force to break the bedrock—driving huge spires of rock upward, and showering the land with pellets of crudely smelted black iron.

## Mysteries of the Interior

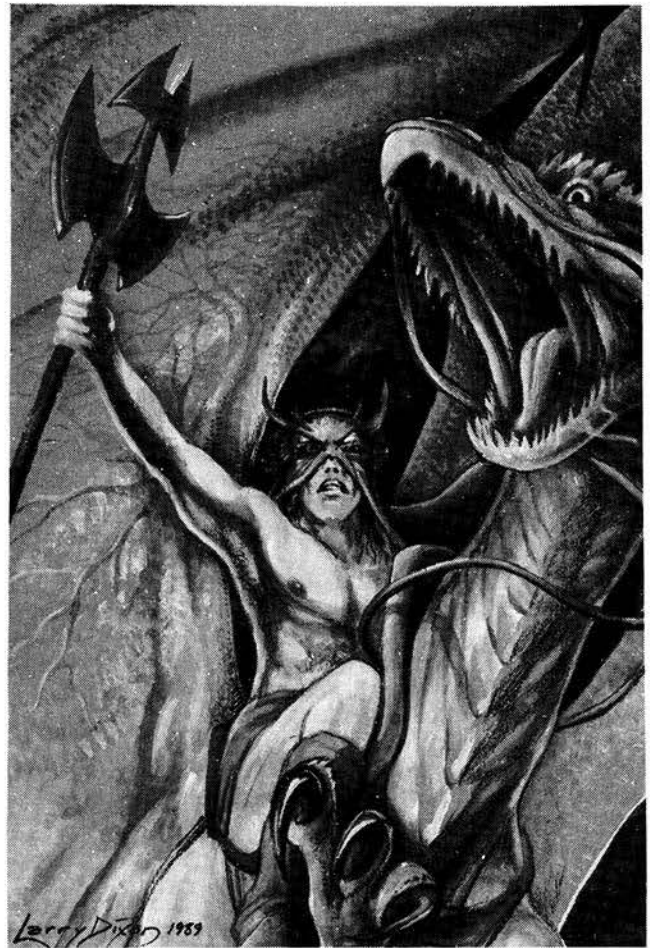
The only relief in this forlorn wilderness are the few isolated springs. Found in the bottoms of the deepest ravines, the water sources occur where a ravine happens to cross the course of an underground river. These springs are small but reliable.

Three of the largest springs in Harak are actually artesian wells—constructed of quarried stone, and are located near ruins:

*South Water*, the smallest, appears to have been part of an entryway to a simple stone building. Large blocks have fallen into the well, leaving only a foot-wide section clear. The shelter of the ruined building attracts vegetation... and predators.

Another small well, *East Deep Water*, appears to be just another heap of boulders from a distance. On close examination, the rocks are smooth—pieces of columns, apparently torn apart by an explosion. The pool is located in a cavern partially covered by the debris. A path leading down to the water has been worn smooth by the passing of many feet, leaving only slight scratches to betray the original carvings in the stone. The Harakin claim the ruins are inhabited by a strange masterless dractyl with the power of invisibility.

*Big Loud Water* is the largest well, located to the north. Five towers—twenty feet in height, and so eroded as to seem a part of the natural landscape—circle the site. Within stands the eroded remnants of a wall, three to four feet high, behind which is a stone bowl. Five wide steps lead down to the well at the bottom of the depression. The towers seem to be intact, though there is no visible entry into them. Small holes dot the upper sides of the structures. During the month of Jhang, unearthly screams are said to resound from the towers.



Two other ruins—partially intact, but not associated with springs—are located at the foot of the Opal Mountains. Severely weathered, the ruins are constructed of the same pale grey stone as the others (a variety not found elsewhere in Harak).

The scholars of Talislanta remain unaware of these ruins, and therefore have no theories concerning them. Finding only useless scraps of paper (books) and pieces of soft metal (mysterious artifacts), the Harakin have decided the ruins are not worth visiting.

## The Harakin

A rugged race, the Harakin are grey-skinned, lean, and tall. They paint their eyesockets with black pigment to give themselves a skull-like appearance. The barbarians dress in heavy furs, with high boots, tight-fitting cowls and gloves of reptile hide.

All Harakin are trained to fight and make weapons. Pregnant women, the wounded, and young children are responsible for gathering edibles, while the others hunt or raid other clans for food. Those demonstrating the skills necessary for survival are treated with respect, while those with abilities not related to warfare or survival are disdained.

The barbarians are a grim and determined people. Life is precious to them, and they feel that only those who are strong enough to survive are worthy of living. Clan members see nothing wrong in taking what they can from anyone, including other clans. If they are strong enough to take it, then it is theirs by right—by the same reasoning, if they are not strong enough to hold what they have, then they deserve to lose it to those strong enough to wrest it from them.



## The Clans of Harak

At the mercy of the elements on a daily basis, the Harakin are too busy surviving to give much thought to politics or the structure of their society. Most clans are small, consisting of only a few mated couples and their offspring. In the eyes of the Harakin, the virtue of the clan is that it helps to ensure individual survival.

Each family has its own tent of skins, erected on poles of black iron spaced closely together, and backed up to a large rock or spire for shade and protection from the weather. In the winter, the clan's tents are joined to form a single large tent, and all of the families huddle within for warmth at night.

Clan leadership is given to the strongest and fastest warrior. Harakin chieftains rarely confer with their followers, preferring to act decisively and swiftly.

**Migration.** The clans move at the dictates of the seasons, traveling from water source to water source, seeking game or vegetation that can support them. These migrations are shaped by the seasons—the times of dractyl nesting, harvesting, and storms. The reptiles which are the mainstay of the Harakin diet hibernate during the winter, forcing hunters to capture and store as much food as they can in the warmer months. Fur-bearing animals are hunted in the late fall. Harakin venture as far as the Opal Mountains in pursuit of wild muskront herds. Strong clans even dare to raid into L'Haan after tundra beasts and woolly ogriphants, despite the risk from crack Mirin border patrols.

When food becomes too scarce, or competition from other clans too heavy, the nomads band together with other dissatisfied clans—the only time these savage people cooperate—and fly south to raid the Quan Empire.

There is only one time in the year when the Harakin deliberately remain in one place. In late spring, the clan marks out a site, and camps from the laying of the dractyl herd's first eggs to the last of the hatching. No Harakin clan will attack another during dractyl nesting season, the traditional time of truce.

Winter also forces the clans to adopt a more settled lifestyle, although few chiefs will allow their people to stay in one place longer than three weeks, unless forced to do so by a prolonged blizzard. When weather forces the Harakin to remain indoors, the clan members break out black-iron nuggets collected the previous fall, which are now used for making weapons.

**The Great Clans.** There are three Great Clans within Harak, clans which have grown large and powerful due to luck or skilled leadership. The largest and oldest is *Two-Marks Clan*, identified by their sign of two equal vertical lines. They possess their own well, having resisted all attackers for so long that their reputation now stops most of the challenges.

The *Jagged Tooth Clan* migrates along the frontier with Xanadas. They know the mountain passes well, and frequently lead raids into the valleys of the Lossians, or to Karang in the Empire.

Rivaling the Jagged Tooth Clan in strength, the *Torka Clan* specializes in making and using the unusual weapons which they are named after. They often fly along the cliffs, diving to loop their torkas over the glimpsed fin or snout of a surfacing sea creature.

## Customs of the Harakin

**Childhood.** Harakin children are weaned at six months, and expected to immediately begin pulling their own weight. Accompanying the food gatherers, they learn from bitter experience how to recognize edible plants and gather them safely. Children also fill waterskins at the springs, prepare food, scrape hides, and care

for the dractyl herd. A few keep watch for snakes and lizards while others pry plants and mosses from rocks.

When not performing their chores, Harakin children are expected to train. Idleness is not tolerated. Combat skills are of primary importance. To gain coordination, the youths throw blunted jangs (the Harakin black-iron boomerang) through hoops: first with stationary targets, then moving and finally spinning target hoops. The next round of training then begins—from the back of a gliding dractyl. The children also start early to master the krin, so that by adulthood they are deadly shots with the spike-firing crossbow.

Armoury skills are also paramount. The muscles that Harakin children build up while hammering black iron into weapons makes it possible for them to later manage the heavy and unwieldy weapons which these barbarians prefer.

A hunter's first kill marks a youngster as a *provider*, entitled to an adult's share of food and hides. The first victory in combat marks a clan member as a *warrior*, worthy to wear his clan's markings.

**Clan Markings.** The clan emblem—usually a simple geometric design—is intended to identify members of the clan to each other during combat with other Harakin. Shallow cuts are made in the arms and face of a new warrior with a razor-sharp dagger. Dirt rubbed into the wound darkens and highlights the resulting scar. The clan symbol is also displayed on saddle blankets, clothing and tents.

**Diet.** Harakin eat anything that could conceivably pass for sustenance, including fallen foes and dead clan members. Hunting parties attack anything, considering no game too large or small. They hunt large prey from the air, but must land to obtain smaller prey—snakes, lizards and scorpions.

Searching for food is not a conscious effort on the part of Harakin, but something done by second nature. Slugs, water insects and moss found near springs are valued foods, and are gathered to be added to stews. In the winter, snow is gathered after a blizzard for its pure, untainted taste.

**Religion.** The barbarians are atheists, believing in no gods and fearing retribution from none. They feel no need for a spiritual leader, and spare no time for rituals or celebrations.

**Springs.** The artesian springs of Harak allow the natives to survive in their hostile environment. Each clan knows the location of a handful of water sources, and its members are experts at finding the telltale signs of evaporation and vegetation which reveal an undiscovered spring. Earth tremors, rock slides and other catastrophes close some springs and open others, so the Harakin always check for new springs as they travel.

Water is drawn using braided-hide ropes attached to bags of reptile belly-skin weighted with black iron. As soon as one bag is filled and brought to the surface, another is lowered, until all of the clan's waterskins are full. Younger clan members do this work in shifts, for as long as it takes. A clan stays camped at a spring until the vegetation and game are depleted, or for as long as its members can defend the site from other clans.

**Weapons.** Clan weapons are fashioned of the raw black-iron of Harak. Individual weapons vary to suit the reach, style and strength of the wielder. A Harakin weapon is considered an extension of a warrior, and is made as perfect as its owner thinks practical.

The barbarians prize themselves on their creativity in inventing new weapons. The four-bladed *tarak* (war axe), for example, can be used to strike or parry. The warriors try to always have at least two uses for any device: the *krin* (a crossbow) is spiked for use as

a pick, and has a heavy warhammer head, while the hooked edge of the *khu* (knife) can cut the straps of waterskins and bags—so that even if an opponent gets away, he may leave behind his property.

### The Battle of the Ice Dragon

The Legend of the Ice Dragon is recounted to every Harakin child as a lesson in ingenuity and cooperation. According to the story, ages ago there was a terrible famine in which many died. The blame was finally laid on an Ice Dragon, which was swooping down from its lair in the Opal Mountains to devour the beasts of the Harak lowlands. Four of the strongest Harakin clans—riding their dractyls, the hereditary enemies of Ice Dragons—tracked down the great foe and immediately attacked.

The ambush turned into a terrible battle. The breath of the dragon embrittled the spike-bolts of the krin so that they shattered on impact, and froze the archers solid before they could reload. Then the Ice Dragon charged through the warriors and took flight, grabbing several Harakin in passing and flinging them to their deaths.

The discouraged warriors were gathering their dead when a dractyl slipped and broke through the ice, exposing a lair of crystal lizards. Famished, the Harakin ripped the animals open and ate them raw, disposing of the crystalline hides in an untidy pile at one side. Meanwhile, the Ice Dragon had circled to see if its enemies had left its lair. Spotting the sparkling hides below, the intrigued leviathan flew closer, fascinated by the shimmering crystals. While preoccupied in this fashion, the dragon did not see the warrior circling in from behind who delivered the killing blow. The vanquished body of the great dragon was divided among the surviving Harakin, to provide water for their clans.

After the battle, the crystal-lizard hides were fashioned into helmets, and are some of the few treasures of the Harakin. Impractical to wear while hunting or during raids, the reflective helm can be a deadly advantage in a sky fight against other Harakin. The Two-Marks Clan possesses seven of the prized helmets.

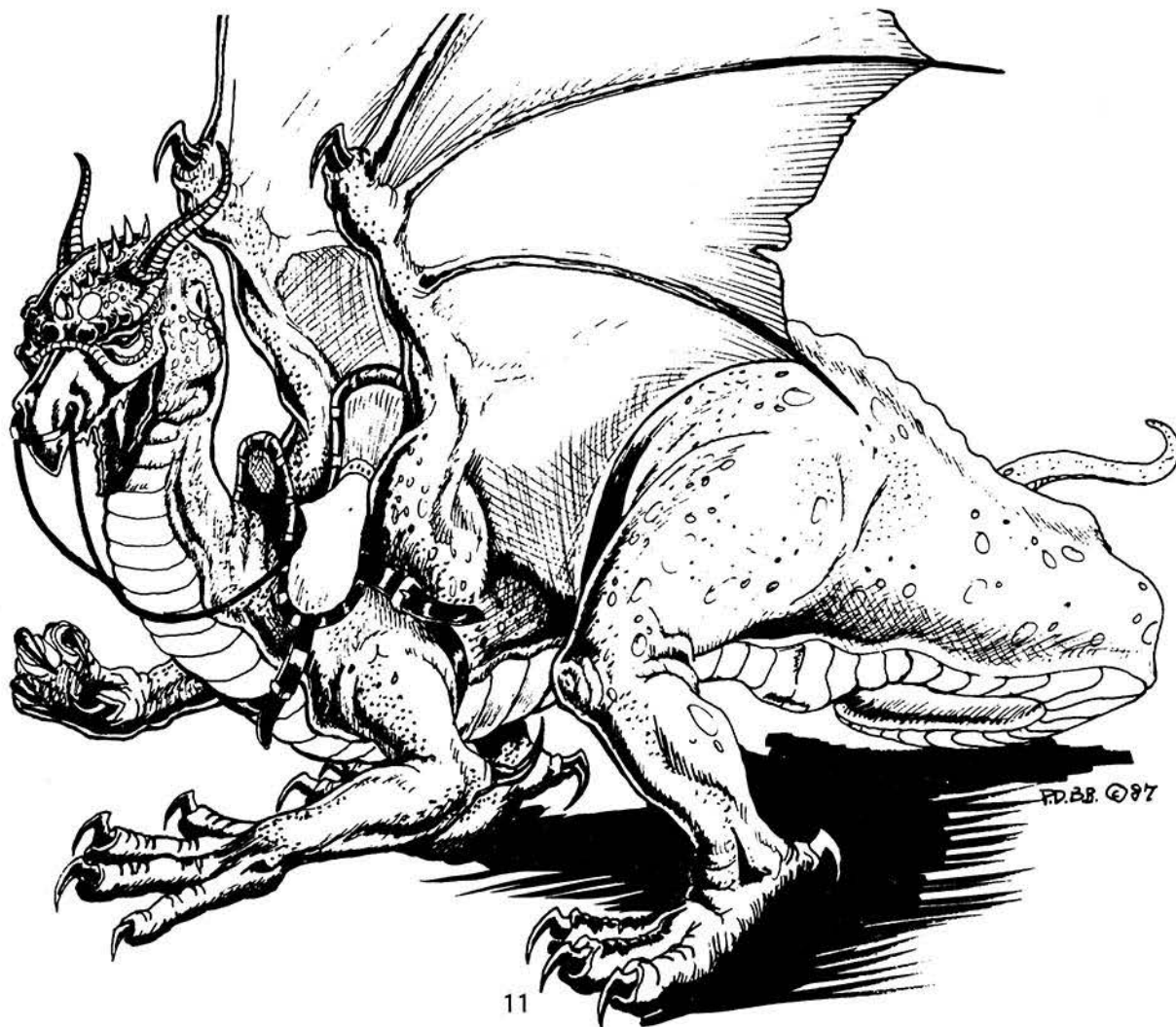
### Dractyls

The steeds of the Harakin, dractyls are kept as herds by the clans. In this harsh land, these beasts are ideal mounts for the barbarians, able to subsist on very little food, and being somewhat edible themselves should the need arise. Dractyls are skittish fliers, and never climb further than 100 feet above the ground. At great altitudes, they choose to walk—picking their way through passes in the mountains.

The Harakin have domesticated dractyls for use as beasts of burden and as mounts in battle. Stubborn and ill-tempered, these recalcitrant avians are by no means ideally suited for such purposes. They are difficult to train, and exhibit a strong dislike for carrying other creatures on their backs.

The Harakin possess an uncanny knack for training the dractyl, which some believe may originate at the psychic or subliminal level. In simpler terms, it may be said that the Harakin impress upon these creatures a single imperative: Serve as steed, or as food. Given such a choice, the majority of Dractyl become surprisingly cooperative.

Natural mimics, dractyls can imitate the sounds of other creatures, and sometimes use this ability to scare off raiding Mountain Skell or to unobtrusively alert the clan to danger. They are trained to be silent while hunting or on a raid, but when diving to attack, dractyls emit a piercing scream.



## THE QUAN EMPIRE

Outwardly, the Quan Empire would appear to be the most powerful nation of Talislanta. Grim Kang warriors guard its frontiers, Vajra slaves build its palaces, Mandalans provide art and literature, Sunra Mariners sail the seas and inland waterways, and Ispasian mercantilists manage the Empire's finances. Over all of these rule the Quan—paragons of arrogance, decadence and corruption.

The vast Empire remains a potent force, a predatory beast crouched along Talislanta's eastern shore. Soon its army, the mighty Crimson Host, may march again—against Carantheum, Rajanistan, Chana, Harak, or the Volcanic Hills—to place ever more territory beneath the thralldom of the sluggish tyrants.

### Foundations of the Empire

The Quan were once fierce warriors, renowned for their cunning and barbarism. They may have come from Quaran, settling the Quan Peninsula after the Great Disaster, but no one is certain. Foes of the savage Mazdaks, the Quan filled the power vacuum when the Mazdak Empire exterminated itself.

First to fall to the new conquerors were the Vajra, a peaceful and courageous race which capitulated when their nurseries were captured and their precious young threatened. Utilizing hoards of Vajra slave-soldiers, the Quan then dammed the River Shan, forcing the Sea People to surrender. Soon after, the Ispasians—sensing the power of the new empire—voluntarily joined in exchange for the receipt of privileged status. The Mandalans also gave in without a fight, and the Kang, impressed by the sheer quantity of imperial wealth, became willing puppets. Triumphant everywhere, the Quan set the Mandalans and Vajra to work building an imperial capital, ordering them to make it the most splendid and luxurious city the continent had ever seen.

As these events unrolled, a change overcame the Quan. It was neither swift nor overt—it happened over the course of many generations. The once proud and savage warrior race degenerated into soft, decadent pleasure-seekers. Sinking into a morass of perverse luxuries, the Quan even forsook their gods, declaring their own divinity.

As the Quan lapsed into decadence, a cancer began to grow at the heart of the Empire. The barbaric half-men of the Quan Peninsula repeatedly defeated the imperial armies sent against them, inspiring the conquered races to plot and grow bold. The Kang are envious of the Quan, while the Ispasians are said to be preparing for a day of liberation. Behind it all, the supposedly submissive Mandalans secretly wear at the Empire from within, exploiting the corruption at the center of Quan society.

Meanwhile, in the Palace of a Thousand Fountains, the Emperor plans further conquests, seemingly unaware of the forces which conspire to tear his empire asunder. Quietly, the morde begin to gather, eager to feed off the flesh of what may be a dying empire.

### The Master Race

Skilled only in the exploitation of others, the Quan are slothful and indolent, relying on slaves to attend to their every need. They have few ambitions beyond the invention of new luxuries and the practice of ever greater decadence. Obesity and a death-like pallor are considered their signs of success. Most Quan die young, destroyed by orgiastic excess.

This is a curious fate for a race which once took pride in its martial prowess. The Quan of antiquity were a robust, bronze-skinned people of a racial stock similar to the Mazdaks. It is as if, in their rise to civilization, the barbarians lost the ennobling emotions of

love, honor, truth and mercy—and with them, the vigor that created an empire. Ironically, the savage Mondre Khan, despised for their bestial nature, possess more of these civilizing sentiments than the debased rulers of the Empire.

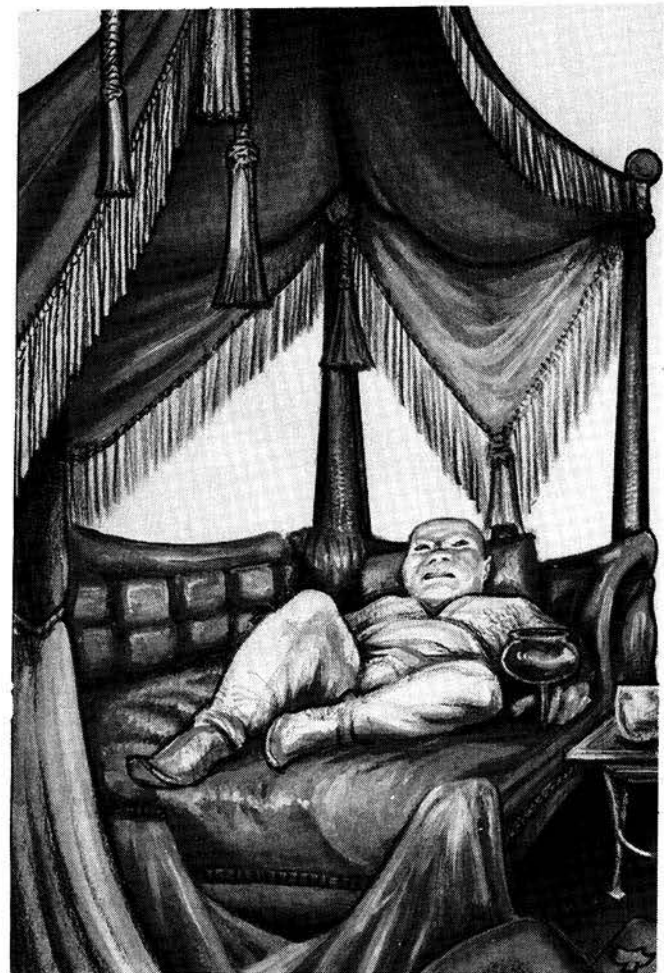
### The Ranks of the Elite

There is a rigid caste system in the Empire. The *Grand Elite*—the Emperor and his extended family—are at the pinnacle of the social pyramid. There are perhaps 300 of these individuals, and their word (in fact, their every whim) is law. No appeal is possible, except to the Emperor himself.

Below them are the *High Elite*, the favored families of Quan nobility. Many have the blood of emperors within their veins, for the "unrecognized" royal offspring of full Quan blood are often granted this status. Second in rank only to the Grand Elite, the High Elite live as they please, served by slaves who cater to their every pleasure.

The remainder of the Quan form the *Elite*. Even these exist in conditions which the nobility of other nations would envy—carried on rich palanquins, fed delicacies, and bathed and dressed by obsequious servants.

Non-Quan of especially favored status make up the ranks of the *Honorary Elite*, a small caste populated mostly by Ispasians and Kang. Only members of the Grand Elite may elevate an individual to this rank. The children of favored royal concubines may be appointed into this caste. On very rare occasions, foreigners are given Honorary Elite status—as in the case of the Thrall mercenary Krag, who saved the life of an emperor. When an individual





is elevated to the Honorary Elite, all of his natural inclinations are indulged. Many choose to live in Quan-like decadence. Others continue to follow their traditions—Ispasians devoting themselves to business and moneymaking, Mandalans engaging in lives of quiet contemplation, and Sunra studying the ancient arts of the Mariner or the Aquamancer.

The *Seven Orders of the Luminaries* follow, reserved for valued foreigners or accomplished members of the subject races. Quan Elite may appoint individuals to ranks up to the fourth order, but only the higher Elite can appoint to the levels above fifth.

Below these ranks come, in order of preference: ordinary Ispasians, Kang, Mandalans, Sunra and Vajra. Below the Vajra are only the casteless “undesirables”—criminals, runaway slaves and foreigners—who have no rights whatsoever.

### The Crimson Host

The imperial army is the largest military organization on the continent. Continually challenged by the Harakin, Saurans, Mondre Khan, Chanan Witchmen and others, the Crimson Host continues to be a tenacious defender of the borders and a deadly threat to its foes.

Originally made up of Quan warriors and their slaves, the modern Host consists almost entirely of Kang and Vajra. A few Quan don gilded armor and accept a token command, “leading” their troops from a luxurious palanquin, but the true commanders of the Host are the scarred Kang warlords and their Overlord.

The Crimson Host is composed of twelve legions, each of which typically includes 5,000 Kang (battle infantry, cavalry and skirmishers), 1,000 Vajra, and 100 war chariots. These numbers may be supplemented by elite Kang Dragons, or as many as six of the war machines known as Behemoths.

## SOUTHERN QUAN

The south is the backwater of the Empire. The only major city is the Sunra settlement of Isalis, a coral city half submerged in the Inland Sea. The outpost of Vishana, reluctant guardian against the hellish denizens of Chana, and the small stone fort of Vulge, perched precariously in the Jade Mountains, are considered the worst combat posts in the Empire.

### The Waters of Birth

For many years, the jade-green Inland Sea made the Sunra unsailable. Their powerful dragon barques protected their city from invasion, and the sea provided fish and aquatic vegetables. Then—five centuries ago—Vajra slave-engineers dammed the River Shan and cut off the fresh water supply, threatening to turn the Inland Sea into a salt marsh. Reluctantly, the Sea People surrendered and were absorbed by the Empire.

The Inland Sea may be strategically important to the Quan, but it is culturally vital to the Sunra. The semi-aquatics refer to it as the “Waters of Birth” or “Sacred Sea.” According to their *Poem of Creation*: “In the beginning, there was only water, but when half of the Sea rebelled against the Creator, the god turned it into land and banished it.” Every Sunra leaving home carries a sealed vial of sea-water as a token of reverence.

**Inland Waterways.** The River Shan and other channels link the Inland Sea with the major cities of the eastern Empire. Travel on these inland waterways is relatively safe—there are few dangerous predators, and the armored, flame-throwing dragon barques discourage pirates. However, Witch Winds occasionally sweep in from the west, causing even the most experienced mariners to head for shelter.

Fortified Kang checkpoints—consisting of 20 troops, a dragon barque and a crew of Sunra Mariners—are located at fifty-mile intervals along the Shan. Vessels must stop at these points and produce their documents. Kang troops often ask for “shipping charges,” which are little more than extortion money. Dragon barques chase down those who try to flee, but the Sunra sometimes deliberately run their barque aground or lose a sail. They don’t have much stomach for doing the Kang’s dirty work.

**The Ocean.** By imperial decree, Sunra are forbidden from traveling south of the River Chana or north of the Gulf of Quan without permission. Kang troops accompany Sunra vessels undertaking long voyages, to ensure that the mariners restrain their adventuring instincts. Sunra vessels leaving Isalis must obtain a travel permit from the governor, identifying the ship, its captain, the cargo and destination.

Foreign vessels must have permission to enter the Inland Sea or Sunra Bay. These permits may be obtained from any bureaucrat, at a cost (not including bribes) of 30 G.L. per person and 200 G.L. per ship. Merchant ships journey to Isalis to collect dried fish, dried kelp, nar-eel ivory, and Aquamantic instruments.

### Moonfish and the Empire

The Inland Sea feeds much of the Empire. In its shallows, Sea-Farmers tend beds of seaweed, mollusks, and other varieties of seafood, while from the deeps, Sunra fishermen collect huge catches of fish. Most of the fish and varieties of seafood are dried and exported.

A special delicacy favored by the Quan is *Moonfish*—a species of fish unique to the Inland Sea. Only Quan may legally eat Moonfish, and triple-striped Moonfish are reserved exclusively for the Emperor. Kang Trackers patrol the sea to prevent poaching.

Sunra have nothing to do with the Moonfish trade, and do not like those who in engage in it. According to their myths, the Creator spawned the Sunra from the depths of the Inland Sea, commanding them to build an underwater city to guard the waters. However, the Sea People fell from grace when their leader caught and killed the sacred Moonfish of the Creator. As punishment, the deity now forces the Sunra to live part of their life out of the sea, and casts the souls of deceased Sunra into newly-hatched Moonfish. Only after a Sunra soul migrates through 100 Moonfish lives, say the priests, will it sink to the bottom of the Inland Sea and join with the Creator.

Consequently, the trade in Moonfish is done entirely by non-Sunra slaves.

### The Sunra

A proud race of seafarers, the Sea People, or Sunra, have been slaves of the Quan for 500 years. This bondage has not changed their society or the unique way in which they see the world.

**Physiology.** Sunra are man-sized in height and weight, but more finely built. They have webbed feet, but not webbed hands. Their flat teeth are designed for tearing and crushing, and their eyes are protected by heavy, transparent eyelids which seal when exposed to air. Most of their swimming ability comes from a strong kicking stroke. Except for their scents, there is no noticeable outward difference between males and females. Elderly Sunra may be recognized by a bronze-colored rust which develops on their scales, as well as a reddish tint in their eyes.

The semi-aquatics have high-pitched voices, and their dialect of the Quan tongue contains strange squeals and whistles—hold-overs from the prohibited Sunra language, which the mariners secretly retain and use underwater.

**Names.** Sunra names are composed of two one-syllable parts—the *newt-name* and the *adult-name*—containing soft consonants and vowels (Sa Wen, Mo Sha, and so forth). The sounds are distinguished by pitches which are nearly impossible for non-Sunra to hear, creating confusion for many travelers. The individual's profession is always mentioned before his name, even in informal or intimate speech. Thus, a pilot named Sa Wen would be properly addressed as "Pilot Sa Wen," never as "Sa Wen."

**Clothing.** The semi-aquatic folk wear Mandalan silkcloth cloaks and loincloths, and boots of rainbow-kra hide. Males wear red while females wear blue, but otherwise their clothing is exactly the same. Professions and political offices are denoted by seashells pinned to a cloak.

**Eggs and Newts.** It takes two years before a fertilized Sunra egg hatches a *newt*. These young Sunra cannot breathe air, and are raised in underwater nurseries staffed by care-givers of both sexes. These hatcheries provide the only families which Sunra have, but the care is affectionate and intelligent.

At age twelve, newts painfully metamorphose into adults. The experience is traumatic. Afterward, the new adults must learn how to live as semi-aquatic creatures who must breathe air part of the time. They are assigned to the Lesser Schools for basic education, then graduate after six years and join one of the Greater Schools, selecting their profession in the process (although they must pass written, oral, and practical examinations before they are allowed to practice their career).

### Schools of the Sea People

The Sunra have an egalitarian, bureaucratic society. Gender and profession have no bearing on social status, for the Sea People accord respect solely for demonstrated competence. Goods and services are produced and distributed according to individual ability and need—a process administered by the priests, who set daily, monthly and yearly quotas. The clerics are notoriously fair, and their decisions may be appealed to the Council of Sea People.

The *Greater School* is the basic social unit of Sunra society. Each adult belongs to one of these professional associations, and his affiliation is marked by a distinguishing seashell badge. Schools look after their members, housing them within citadels (the major buildings of Isalis). A Council of Teachers presides over each school.

The professions of Isalis are: Aquamancers (healers, navigators, and readers of omens and signs), Builders, Cartographers, Mariners (discreetly trained with harpoons and other weaponry), Nurses (guardians of the hatching chambers and the water-bound newts), Pilots (sea captains, promoted from the cream of the Mariners), Priests (primarily merchants and administrators, but also historians, scribes and bards), Sea-Farmers, and Shipbuilders.

Besides competence, the schools acknowledge two marks of distinction. One is age. In the cruel sea, long life is proof of mastery of the skills required for survival. Elder Sunra are treated with great honor, and often hold teaching positions and other important social posts. The second and higher honor is reserved for those who have slain a Sea Dragon. Unfortunately, Sunra seldom encounter their traditional enemies anymore, since the Quan generally forbid them to venture far beyond the Empire's coastline.

### The Occupation Government

Isalis is governed by Xuan Lidot, a crafty Quan governor appointed by the Emperor. His cadre of Ispasian and Mandalan

bureaucrats work in cooperation with the Sunra priests, coordinating trade, regulating shipping, and administering the law. Order is enforced by soldiers from the Fourteen Demons Legion, supplemented by Sunra Mariners who sail the dragon barques.

Theoretically, the imperial governor rules Isalis. In practice, he rules through the *Council of Sea People*, the traditional Sunra governing body—the citizens of Isalis are reluctant to obey anyone else. Each of the Greater Schools elects a representative to the council. By lottery, one of them is selected as the *Sunra-Swa*—literally, "Superior Swimmer"—and presides at all meetings.

While the governor and his Kang soldiers enforce imperial justice when crimes involving non-Sunra are committed, the Empire allows the Sea People to handle the administration of law and order in civil and minor criminal matters. The Sunra have no written laws, but follow an ethical code set down by their priests. The customs emphasize politeness, respect for the group, reverence for history and culture, and pulling one's weight in order to contribute to society.

While minor criminals may simply be given a priestly lecture on the need for social harmony, those suspected of serious crimes—damaging a dragon barque, killing a Moonfish, or murdering a Sunra—are brought before the Council. After a thorough hearing, if the accused is found guilty, he is turned over to the governor for execution. The governor has the right to retry the case under imperial law, but he usually approves the decision of the Council.

Sunra consider drowning to be the most humane and holy form of death. Under the supervision of Kang soldiers, priests bind the victim and tie weights to him, then gently place him into deep water.





## Vishana

Engulfed by hot and hostile jungle, Vishana languishes at the juncture of the South River Shan and the Emperor's Road. The jungle has been cleared for 100 feet around the wall, to allow a clear line of fire for ballistae and crossbows. The cleared zone would be larger, except for the rapid rate at which the jungle grows back... and the Witchmen, who make a special point of dining on jungle cutting crews. Randomly-placed barricades, wooden stakes, pits and trenches defensively reinforce the 20-foot-high wooden wall, built of hardwoods laboriously cut from the jungle. Entrance to the fortress is through a single set of double doors between two gate towers. Because of Vishana's wooden construction, fire magics and unauthorized open fires are illegal.

**The Garrison.** The fort includes barracks, stables, storehouses and drill yards for the Fourteen Demons Legion, and a stone mansion for their commander. The Kang hate Vishana. It is miserably humid, and the casualty rate is higher than anywhere else in the Empire. There is little treasure or glory to be found here. Instead of the pitched battles which Kang love, the soldiers are sent on raiding parties into the jungle. Patrols are afraid of ambush, and attack strangers first—asking questions later. To raise morale, their commander pays 10 G.L. per soldier for each Witchmen head brought in. When not on raids, the Kang spend their time on sentry duty, in the fort or along the docks on the South River Shan.

Legion War Lord Kahrade is the absolute master of Vishana. He decides what the rules are and whether they will be enforced. The warlord also levies taxes, which differ little from extortion money. The rule at Vishana: Money talks, and the more money one has, the louder one's voice.

**Mandalans and Rihkas.** In contrast to most frontier towns, Vishana's structures do not cluster along a main street, but form separate communities within the protective wall. In one corner of the fortress are the modest buildings of the Mandalan slaves charged with collecting rare herbs from the jungle. They do their work with quiet resolve, suffering fewer casualties than the heavy-footed Kang.

Although Vishana is dangerous, the settlement also attracts civilians—known as *Rihkas*, a Kang word meaning "crazy ones." Many come to Vishana to escape foreign justice, and most rihkas are desperate individuals. The majority arrive from Caranthem, Rajanistan, Faradun, or the Wilderlands. War Lord Kahrade overlooks the presence of undocumented foreigners, so long as they contribute to the black market which he operates.

The Rihka district is wild. Life is cheap, and so is lived to the hilt and by the blade. Taverns, brothels, gambling houses and armories—businesses that know how to milk lumens out of Kang—do well here, if they can survive the rough behavior of their clients. Other rihkas sell slaves, provide magical services, heal animals, perform fortune-telling, or hire out as mercenaries. Private citizens receive 7 G.L. for each Witchman head they bring in, and head-hunting parties can make good money quickly... if they live. The Company of Fated Death, the largest rihka mercenary band—led by a renegade Thrall and a defrocked Aamanian Warrior-Knight—specializes in the dirty aspects of jungle warfare which the Kang detest. Almost everything that happens in the Rihka district is illegal in the Empire, but War Lord Kahrade bows to circumstances and common sense.

Rihkas also do a brisk trade in Chanan artifacts. Wrist-vipers, shrunken heads, and magical artifacts are all in demand. Ispasians covertly arrange for shipments north on the southern Shan, and War Lord Kahrade discreetly allows foreign merchants to dock at Vishana.

## Vulge

Recently constructed, the fort of Vulge was built against the wishes of the Kang Overlord. The Emperor, looking on a map, believed the fort would strategically support beleaguered Vishana. He is convinced that Vulge is a symbol of imperial power to Rajanistan and Faradun. These are interesting theories, but they are wrong. Vulge is hard pressed to support itself, let alone aid Vishana, and neither Rajanistan nor Faradun could care less about a fort in the remote jungle.

An embattled company of Kang Trackers, detached from the Legion of the Fourteen Demons, forms the fort's garrison. Although they are supposed to conduct daily patrols, the soldiers rarely venture outside the fort's stone walls because they have been successively beaten by savage Manra attacks. Supplies are difficult to bring in along the Emperor's Road from Vishana, as entire caravans have a way of disappearing into the jungle, never to be seen again.

The Kang commander at Vulge, Major Radek, continues to petition his superior, War Lord Kahrade at Vishana, either for more troops or the abandonment of the outpost. Meanwhile, the Emperor insists on maintaining the "strategic flanking position." Kahrade, being no fool, sends the bare minimum of soldiers to Vulge because he doesn't want to lose more men than he has to. Confidentially, he knows that Vulge's days are numbered, and is trying to devise a plan whereby the loss of the fort won't damage his prestige in Tian.

## CENTRAL QUAN

Home of the peaceful Mandalans, the central portion of the Empire is a place of great beauty and tranquility. While it does harbor dangerous predators, this land remains among the safest in Talislanta.

The Mandalans are handsome people, slender and small of frame, with black, almond-shaped eyes, delicate pointed ears, and golden skin and hair. The men shave their heads, while Mandalan women sometimes wear a single golden top-knot. Both dress in simple robes of silk and plain sandals. Jewelry and other adornments are almost unknown. Enslaved by the Quan, they are the artisans, scholars and bureaucrats of the Empire.

The following are regions of note:

**The Silver Groves.** Once tended by the Mandalans, the great deodars of these groves have grown wild since the Quan conquest. Shathane, exomorphs and mandragores inhabit the region. Dracs are sometimes sought here by Kang Trackers.

The neglect has not escaped the attention of the Mangar Corsairs, who smuggle contraband ashore along this forested section of coast. If the pirates are ever discovered, War Lord Rakmaak's head will roll—and the new commander of the Invincible Legion will quickly march out of Jacinth and into the groves to root the pirates out.

**The Quan Forest.** This expansive woodland is an imperial hunting preserve. Not that the Emperor ever comes to the Quan Forest to hunt—his idea of hunting is to send a few hundred Kang Trackers into the woods, have them hunt down and kill the largest and most exotic creatures they can find, and bring the carcasses back to Tian so that he can gloat over them.

The forest is off-limits to all except the Quan, the Kang Trackers who patrol here, the Vajra loggers who traditionally fell the trees, and Mandalan slaves sent to collect herbs and to reforest the cleared areas.



Less well known is the fact that the forest is also a home to bandit gangs and runaway slaves, who wage a vicious war with the Deathless Legion of Shonan. War Lord Maktik keeps this a secret from the Overlord, hoping to deal with them without outside aid. The soldiers must also deal with chig infestations, when swarms of the voracious insects threaten the ecological stability of the forest.

### The Mandalan Way

"We shall submit to the Quan in the same fashion that the water submits to the stone," said the Mandalan Savant Azae, at the time of the imperial conquest. "The stone may seem to prevail, but in a thousand years the stone will be gone. Only the water will remain. We shall submit, but in submission we shall prevail."

To outsiders, Mandalans seem weak and servile, meekly tending the Empire while their Quan masters grow fat and wealthy. Appearances are deceiving. The Mandalans have survived for centuries—bending, but never breaking—under the weight of foreign rulers and oppressors. Their survival is predicated on *apparent* submission—acquiescence in the face of inevitable conquest, followed by the eventual destruction of their conquerors from within.

The Mandalan faith, known as "the Way" or "the Road," is a deceptively simple philosophy which embodies this concept of passive resistance. The Way draws guidance from Nature, viewing intellect, reason and philosophy as superfluous. This is typically misunderstood by outsiders. The Cymrilian mage Panjamar, for instance, described the belief system as "a primitive form of nature worship which shuns intellect, urging its adherents to live as animals."

Far from encouraging mindless naturism, the Way encourages its followers to live in harmony with the Omniverse. Wind, water, fire and stone—the forces of nature—are to be channeled and utilized, never for personal gain, but for the greater good. To do otherwise would upset the delicate balance of the Omniverse, possibly bringing about a second Great Disaster. In this, the Mandalans' concerns are similar to those of the Ardua of Vardune.

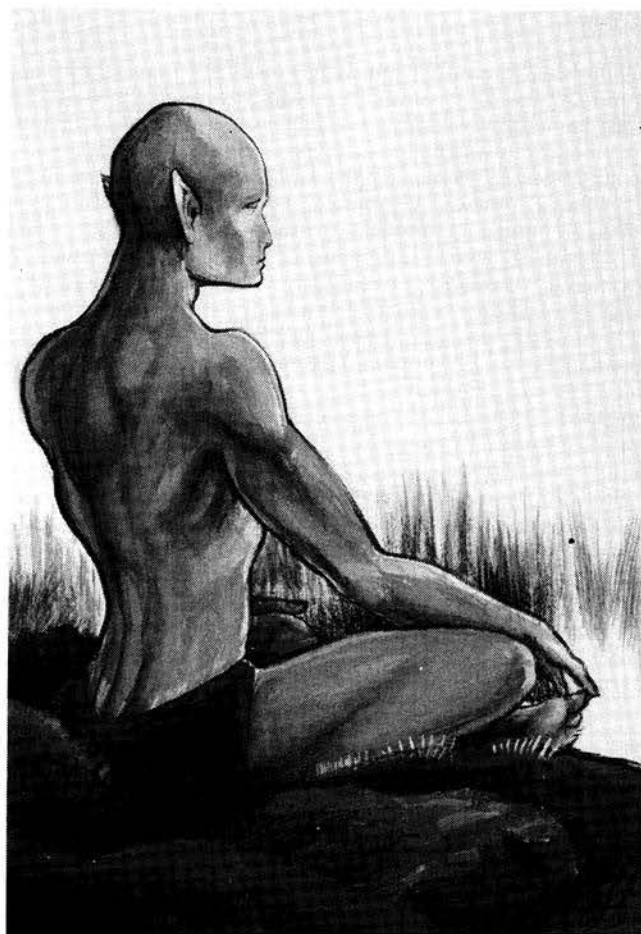
Meditation and quiet contemplation are the source of Mandalan wisdom. The Quan have forbidden such practices, but the slave people continue to practice their faith in secret.

Mandalan conduct toward their conquerors exemplifies this philosophy. Militant resistance to the Quan would have brought needless suffering and destruction—therefore, passivity and apparent surrender were in order. The Way has endured even as the Quan have waned, destroyed through their own greed and excess . . . as were the Chan and the Mazdaks before them. As the Mandalans put it: "The body submits, but the spirit is never caged."

### The Mystic Warriors

Living embodiments of the Way, the mysterious black-clad members of this secret Mandalan society never kill, but advance the cause of freedom by finding ways to turn the Quan's violence against themselves. The Quan are unaware of the existence of the Mystic Warriors, and consider the meek Mandalans their most obedient subjects.

Any Mandalan may receive the call to become a Mystic Warrior. When a slave disappears to follow the "Warrior's Path," his fellow Mandalans cover for him, faking a death or coming up with a plausible explanation for the disappearance. The destination of the runaways is known to all Mandalans. High in the Mazdak Mountains—past a gauntlet of Kang patrols and dangerous preda-



tors—lies the secret *Temple of the Way*, where Mystic Warriors receive their training. The heart of the Mandalan resistance, the sanctuary was established after the Great Disaster to resist the oppression of the Mazdaks.

While there have never been any non-Mandalan Mystic Warriors, there is no custom to prevent it. Foreign followers of the Way are not specifically prohibited from studying at the temple... if they can find it.

## NORTHEASTERN QUAN

The Northeast is a wild frontier. The rugged hills and dangerous forests of the peninsula were stern masters to the primitive Quan, the crucible in which an empire was forged. Yet even though the region is their ancestral home, modern Quan view it as an unpleasant place, better suited to slaves and laborers than the Elite of imperial society. The exception is Ispasia, an island of civilization in the wilderness. The Quan also fear the terrors of falling into the hands of the Mondre Khan, the half-men savages of the mountains.

The peninsula lies at the boundary between the temperate south and the icebound north. Southerly currents of the Far Seas meet the frigid waters of the Sea of Madness, breeding fierce winter storms and sharp summer gales. The coast along the Sea of Madness is one of the bleakest places imaginable—a cold expanse of rocks and sand, virtually devoid of vegetation.

Winters here are harsh. Spring comes late, with heavy rains and high winds. Summers are brief but pleasant, with temperatures rising to eighty degrees or more. Autumn is similarly short, heightening the wild colors of the Variegated Forest with the golds, reds and purples of dying and decaying leaves.

## Ispasia

Absorbed early in the Empire's history, the Ispasians—passionless yellow-skinned merchants who inhabit the northern tip of the Quan Peninsula—have nevertheless retained a high degree of autonomy, due to the valuable services they perform for the Quan. They hold important positions within the Empire, and more Ispasians have been elevated to Honorary Elite status than any other of the subject races.

Ispasians are extremely tall and slender, with skin the color of a lemon. Their naturally expressionless faces are devoid of features except for small ears and lipless mouths, and narrow black eyes without pupils. Lacking noses, they have no sense of smell—making them immune to scent-based magic and chemistry (including the allure of the tantalus plant and Batrean beguilement).

Founding their city shortly after the Great Disaster, the Ispasians honed their diplomatic skills on the Mazdaks, whom they kept in check through complex treaties and extended negotiations. Although twice besieged, Ispasia was never conquered—Kang and Vajra mercenaries guarded the citystate whenever diplomacy failed.

The Quan were, regrettably, another story. The dragon barques under imperial control were fully capable of placing a stranglehold on Ispasian trade, which would force the city to capitulate. Realizing this, the Ispasians negotiated for terms. When they entered the Empire, the merchant people accepted a Kang garrison and a Quan governor, and agreed to pay an annual token tribute. In exchange for such mild treatment, the Quan gained the services of some of the finest merchants, financiers and administrators on the continent.

### The Macron's Society

Ispasia's ruler—the Macron—is chosen every six years, on the 1st of Talisandre (the first day of the Ispasian calendar). The wealthiest merchants of the city gather in the Palace of Jade and Gold for the ceremony, known as "the Counting." The accountants are sworn to honesty on pain of lingering death, and the ledgers of the nominees for the Macroncy are brought forward.

The Counting Panel, an impartial body of retired scribes and accountants, inspects the records and decides which candidate is the most successful merchant in the city. Wealth alone is not enough to bring success to a prospect—diplomatic skill, financial ability, and responsible risk-taking are highly valued as well.

The selected ruler oversees the city's financial affairs for a six-year term. Macrons may only serve a single term, and usually return to their businesses after leaving office.

At a similar ceremony—the "Little Counting," held yearly on the 1st of Talisandre—the Council of Wealth, composed of advisors to the Macron, is chosen. The Counting Panel scrutinizes the account books of the city's merchants, and chooses ten to serve on the Council. In addition to advising the Macron, the advisory body fills vacancies on the Counting Panel.

**Attitudes Toward Money.** Ispasians value wealth, although an ostentatious display of riches is considered frivolous (the flamboyant excesses of the Quan offend them). While slaves, grand estates, fine art and other trappings of wealth may be found in Ispasia, there is none of the excess seen in Tian. The most admirable rich man, they say, is the one who neither acknowledges nor openly flaunts his wealth.

**Ispasian Elitism.** The mercantilists are arrogant toward their fellow subject races. They consider the Vajra to be little better than burrowing animals; the Sunra, worthless rustics; the Kang, con-

temptuous lapdogs; and the Mondre Khan, vermin to be exterminated. Only the Mandalans are granted a degree of respect, due to their art, philosophy and aesthetics. Mandalan Savants—slave and free—work in Ispasia as artists, architects and teachers. All the same, the Ispasians do not understand the Mandalans' passive nature and non-violent philosophy, and consider them weaklings.

**War and the Citystate.** War interferes with the supremely important task of trade, and is therefore considered a menace. On the other hand, cold logic tells the Ispasians that war is sometimes necessary, if only as a last resort. The merchants prefer to leave actual fighting to slaves and hirelings. The defense of the citystate is in the hands of the Watchers Legion, an imperial training unit which also serves as an emergency reinforcement for the hard-pressed Red Dagger Legion, fighting the Mondre Khan insurgents in the southern peninsula.

### Secret Dealings?

Ispasia holds a favored position in the Empire. The normally harsh rule of the Quan is considerably softened here. A Quan governor—along with attendant hordes of slaves, servants and sycophants—keeps to himself in his palace, leaving the mercantilists largely free to manage their own affairs.

Over the years, the Quan have come to rely more and more on their yellow-skinned subjects—in fact, the Empire could collapse without them. Perhaps the only reason that the Ispasians continue to occupy their subordinate position, for they see no profit in bringing down the Empire. Past history has shown the Quan to be merciless in the punishment of rebels. Kang legions have obliterated entire cities merely because tribute was late or short of required levels.

While the Ispasians look down on foreigners, they have no qualms about doing business with them. On imperial errands





abroad, the merchant-administrators are most commonly seen in the Citystate of Hadj, where they share some common interests with the wealthy rulers of that Wilderlands city. Ispasians are also found in the mercantile centers of Carantheum and Faradun, negotiating trade agreements or managing commerce for the Empire.

Some western observers suspect the Ispasians of having interests in these foreign dealings beyond those of the Empire. The continually increasing wealth of Ispasia, the Kasmir note, seems far in excess of possible imperial profits.

### The Variegated Forest

This wonderland of multi-colored animals and vegetation—wild, dangerous, and chilled by northern winds—is every bit as fascinating as the Aberrant Forest, Werewood, or the Enchanted Grove. Plants and animals of every imaginable color and shade are found here. Purple omnivrax stalk bright-green quaal through glades of orange grasses and groves of brilliant yellow deodar. Metallic red-and-green avir pluck pink-and-blue insects from the air. Stands of indigo, violet and red trees grow like floral rainbows.

The forest has attracted scholarly curiosity. It has also attracted the Chromids, tiny man-like beings who have adapted to a multi-colored life. The miniature sentients are popular as pets among the debased Quan, who send Kang soldiers to hunt them. A live Chromid brings anywhere from 1,000-5,000 G.L., depending on his color. The Emperor is said to have an entire tribe imprisoned in his palace.

Chromid hunts and other visits to the forest are made hazardous by rampaging shathane and other predators. Batranc cruise the skies, and malathropes, omnivrax, ravengers and exomorphs prowl through the underbrush. These animals are no less dangerous for their colorful appearance. The presence of such otherworldly creatures as plant grues, monitor imps and barbed horrors implies some connection between the forest and the outer planes.

**Mysteries of the Forest.** Those who explore the woodland report that the deeper one penetrates, the more strange and varied the colors become. Karviu—a Danuvian Virago who plunged into the forest on a dare—claimed to have penetrated to the very center, where she found a wondrous palace of multi-colored glass guarded by a score of rainbow-hued Paramanes. The strangers refused to allow the young warrior-girl admittance until she had, in their words, “seen the true colors of existence.” Exactly what this cryptic admonition meant, Karviu was not certain.

Theorists speculate that the forest might be the result of the Great Disaster or a magical experiment gone wrong. More alarmingly, some think that it is part of a steadily widening breach between Talislanta and a chaotic outer dimension. The famed naturalist Thystram, who took great pains to include all aspects of Talislantan natural history in his *Collectanea*, makes no mention of the Variegated Forest—leading some to suggest that the forest did not exist when Thystram wrote the volume, or that it was not nearly as extensive as it is today.

Regardless of its origin, the forest is a source of profit for the Empire. The Quan sell exploration permits for 1,000 G.L. per expedition, and export licenses are prohibitively expensive. The colorful plants and animals are trapped and shipped through and beyond the Empire, fetching high prices. Wood from the forest is particularly popular in Zandu—where the citizens, in their quest for uniqueness, will pay virtually any price for the bizarrely hued timber.

Unauthorized entrance is a capital crime, punishable by swift and summary execution. Removal of even the smallest shrub likewise carries the death penalty—but in this case, by slow, deliberate torture.

### The Chromids

Man-like beings who dwell in the multi-colored depths of the Variegated Forest, the Chromids are intelligent despite their diminutive size. They live in tribes of up to a hundred individuals, herding insects and harvesting fruit.

Like everything which dwells within the forest, Chromids come in a variety of startling colors, and their society is patterned accordingly. *Gold Chromids* rule and make tribal laws, and serve as tribal chiefs. *Blacks* are soldiers who defend the tribe against marauding animals or hostile insects. *Yellows* herd leaf-worms and scimitar-beetles, providing the tribe with food and beasts of burden. *Greens* cultivate molds, fungi, and other edible plants. *Blues* explore rivers and streams, sailing leaf-boats and diving for small fish and aquatic insects. *Reds* hunt for insects and small mammals (a skank or quaal feeds a tribe for days). The rare *White Chromids* are shamans. Beside these ordinary Chromids, individuals are sometimes born with new colors or startling combinations of colors. These “Extraordinaries” are rare, and receive royal treatment from their fellows.

Chromids are wary of strangers, but quick to befriend outsiders who help them. They are particularly fond of sweets, and a single dram of an alcoholic beverage can keep a tribe entertained for days.

### The Highlands

The southern portion of the Quan Peninsula is dominated by two mountainous masses—the Ku-Chang Plateau and the Khan Mountains. The barren highlands are home to the savage Mondre Khan, bestial half-men which for centuries have resisted the encroachment of the Empire.

**The Plateau.** The rich mineral deposits of the Ku-Chang Plateau finance the Quan’s excesses and keep their Kang allies content. Copper, silver, gold, cinnabar, antimony, crystals and many other commodities are obtained by extensive mining operations. Barren, windswept and inhospitable, the highland is an unwelcoming home to large numbers of Vajra slave-miners, Kang guards, Mandalan bureaucrats and Ispasian overseers.

Service in the rugged, City of Ku-Chang is considered punishment by all who serve here. Thousands of Vajra labor in open-pit mines, and the tailing piles, accumulated over centuries, stretch for miles. The city is a popular target of Mondre Khan raids, requiring the soldiers of the Red Dagger Legion stationed here to always maintain their vigilance.

**The Mountains.** Stronghold of the Mondre Khan, the Khan Mountains also contain vast untapped quantities of minerals and gems. The insurgents prevent exploitation of the region—two previous mining settlements were destroyed. Omnivrax, shathane and crag spiders are also found here in large numbers. Storm Demons have been reported. The rugged slopes are steep and prone to landslides.

### The Mondre Khan

It is obvious that the Mondre Khan half-men must have been created through sorcerous hybridization, such as was once performed by the Quararians. However, the identity of their creator is unknown. A Dracartan scholar claims to have found evidence that a Quararian Sorcerer named Orthanus was responsible. Other mages dispute whether the half-men are even truly sentient.

According to the Mondre Khan, a deity known as Animus created the first two half-men—male and female—and gave them the Quan Peninsula and all the animals which live here. The half-

men believe that upon death, if they successfully shun the animal side of their nature, they will ascend to join Animus in a paradise filled with abundant game, where neither Quan nor Kang will disturb them.

**Modern History.** The Mondre Khan were scattered by the Great Disaster, then enslaved by the savage Mazdak Empire. Escaped half-men gathered on the Quan Peninsula, banding together for the first time under a single leader. Continually harassed by the Mazdaks, they developed the arts of covert warfare: ambush and deception.

The self-destruction of the Mazdak Empire brought only a brief respite. The Quan barbarians, formerly neighbors and sometimes allies of the half-men, erected their empire amid the ruins of the old one. Assuming that the Mondre Khan would recognize their inability to defeat the victorious Quan, the Emperor sent a Kang legion to dictate surrender terms to the half-men. Defeated in several pitched battles, the half-men retreated into the wilderness, then lured the Kang into a mountain pass and decimated their ranks with avalanches, hidden archers, and raids. Three months after the troops marched north, a ragged handful of warriors stumbled to the gates of the Imperial City, the sole survivors of the expedition. An infuriated Emperor had them impaled to atone for their failure.

Stung by the inability of the Empire to destroy such primitive antagonists, each new Emperor sends a Kang expedition to conquer the Mondre Khan highlands. The troops return, if at all, with heavy casualties. It has become traditional by now for the Emperor to impale a company or two of Kang for the failure.

A new plan may hold more promise. Weary of the Mondre Khan's incessant defiance, the Emperor has proposed a massive push to exterminate the half-men once and for all. His plan calls for the construction of a massive wall along the eastern bank of the Imperial Canal and River Shan. When completed, the Emperor's Wall would serve as both a barrier against further incursions by the Mondre Khan, and a base for attacks into their territory.

There are also Kang warlords—although no one at court seems to be able to identify them—who say that the barrier is useless so far west. Like most of the Emperors' grandiose schemes, however, the great wall may remain only an ambitious dream.

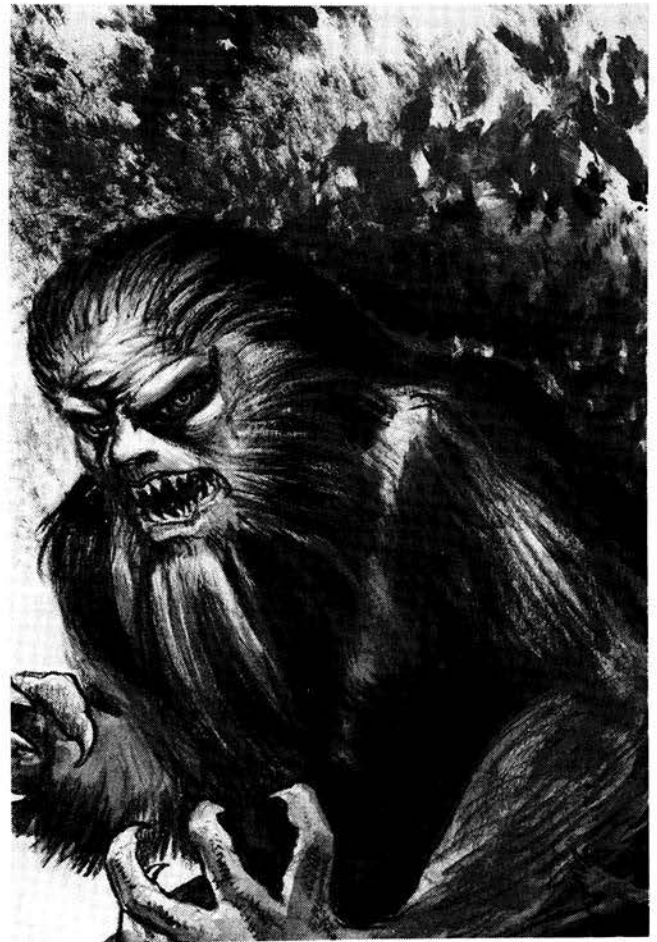
### Half-Men Culture

To outsiders, the Mondre Khan seem pathetic—a race suspended between the worlds of man and animal, unwelcome in either. The Quan see them only as vermin worthy only of extermination, while many scholars view the half-men as sorcerous aberrations suitable for use as experimental subjects, since they are bound for eventual extinction anyway.

Despite appearances and popular prejudice, the Mondre Khan are complex and courageous—brutal and animalistic toward the Quan and their puppets, yet gentle and loving toward their families and those few to whom they give their trust. Remembering their primitive origins, as well as the hatred and slavery which they have been forced to endure, the half-men treasure their freedom and do anything they can to retain it.

**Clans.** A Mondre Khan clan numbers anywhere from six to twenty individuals. If a clan grows too large, young adults split off to form their own group. A single headman—usually the most experienced warrior—exercises absolute authority over the group. While females are accorded near-equal status, leaders are always male.

Each clan is organized for speed and mobility. The Mondre Khan carry only what they need to survive, and the shelters they build are always temporary. Food is gathered on the move—hunters precede an advancing clan, gathering plants and game animals.



Mobility makes a Mondre Khan clan difficult to track or catch. Kang soldiers are further frustrated by the pit-traps, deadfalls and ambushes which the half-men leave along their trail.

**The Elderly.** Half-men rarely survive to old age, but those who do are accorded considerable status and respect. When no longer able to travel with the tribe, the elderly let themselves be taken as prey by wild animals. A particularly honorable form of ritual suicide consists of an old half-man hurling himself against a party of Kang, harvesting companions for the lonely journey to the Underworld.

**Families.** Mondre Khan families are sources of great warmth and affection. Half-men dote on their children in a fashion reminiscent of the Gnomekin of Durne, rarely inflicting more than token punishment even for the most mischievous of offenses. Youngsters are expected to take on adult responsibilities by the beginning of their sixth year of life.

**Regression.** While Mondre Khan cherish and fiercely defend their freedom, their man-like nature is their most prized possession. Knowing their animal origins, the half-men carefully cultivate those qualities which they associate with sentience—intellect, reason, cunning, honor and so on. A Mondre Khan's greatest fear is that he will regress (or "devolve") back to an animal state, becoming a feral creature shunned and feared by all others.

Devolution is most common whenever blood is shed, particularly during or after combat. The regressed victim might suddenly attack his companions, or flee into the woods uttering animal howls and shrieks. Individuals who permanently devolve are not mentioned again within their clan, as if they no longer exist—and never did. Mondre Khan scrupulously avoid contact with their devolved brothers.



**Torture.** The merciless cruelty of the Mondre Khan toward the Kang is legendary. Captives are kept alive for days, subject to terrible tortures which bring out the bestial side of the half-men. Ceremonial rituals are accompanied by violent festivals, with a savagery unrestrained by any hint of civilization. On the rare occasion when one of the Quan oppressors falls into their clutches, the resulting carnival of blood-letting may last weeks.

**Collaborators**—Ispasians and suspected members of the Honorary Elite—are always tortured, regardless of their race. However, the half-men realize that the Vajra, Mandalans and Sunra are merely slaves of the Empire, and these captives are often granted an honorable death.

## Tian

The southwestern extremes of the Quan Peninsula were once the hunting grounds of the barbarian Quan. Today, these lands are tame and settled, with the capital city of Tian nestled in their midst. Two legions of Kang keep even the wily Mondre Khan at a respectful distance.

**The Imperial Canal.** Conceived in the early days of the Empire, this massive, 40-mile-long complex of locks and channels, took 12 years to construct, at a terrible cost in the lives of Vajra laborers and other slaves, and connects the Imperial City with the Straits of Tian. The canal is forbidden to all vessels except those of Quan registry, or with canal navigation permits (which cost 5,000 G.L.). Needless to say, foreign vessels rarely sail the canal.

After it was completed, the Quan discovered that the channel was too shallow to admit Sunra dragon barques. While the haste of the Emperor in beginning the project was clearly the fault, the channel's Mandalan designers were promptly executed.

## WESTERN QUAN

The western Empire is a country of grasslands and hills, hot and dry in the summer, and swept by windstorms in the winter. All of the major population centers are fortified, and a variety of imperial legions are quartered here . . . for neither the Raknids nor the Saurans of the Volcanic Hills are peaceful neighbors.

### The Steppes of Kangir

Kang tribes ranged throughout these steppes prior to allying with the Quan Empire, and this remains their traditional hunting ground. Some warlords train their Kang troops here, believing that it gives them a sense of history and tradition. Others come merely to hunt wild beasts, while a few find inspiration in visiting the legendary battle sites of their ancestors. Although the Kang guard a vast amount of territory for their Quan masters, some find pride in gazing at the land they once ruled themselves.

Rocky hills and plateaus scatter across the grasslands, a study in grays and browns. Dry and dusty, the plains come to fertile life for only a few weeks each spring, when the orange-and-red wild flowers erupt into brilliant bloom. A trade road crosses west from Shonan to Hadran, linking the two great citadels, while a second road winds through the hills north to Kangir and the former Vajran lands.

The steppes are bordered to the east by the River Shan, a waterway crowded with Quan pleasure barges, Sunra fishing vessels and merchant skiffs. Edible fish, crustaceans and mollusks are abundant. Mammoth springs at Shonan are the source for the river's waters, which flow both north to Tian and south to the Inland Sea.

When the Sauran clans storm across the border in force, riding their armored land dragons, the invasions are usually met and stopped on these steppes, sometimes beneath the very walls of Shonan itself.

**Shonan.** Designed to impress and frighten, this citadel is situated at the crossing of the River Shan and the Emperor's Road, where all who travel the road or the river must come within sight of it. The fortress's 40-foot wall is fashioned of immense grey blocks from the Volcanic Hills, topped with black-iron spikes. The Deathless Legion holds the citadel, reinforced with a contingent of Vajra engineers and artillerymen. Their commander is War Lord Maktik, an egotist sure that this post will bring him riches and power.

Shonan is a traditional resting place for trade caravans, before or after the rigors of crossing the bleak lands to the west. Storage and barracks space is reserved for travelers and merchants. For 20 G.L., a trader may display his wares in the fortress bazaar. The goods here are exotic, including costly hardwoods and rare artifacts from the jungle outpost at Vishana, Sunra sea treasures and dried fish, and weapons and armor to be sold to the soldiers. Most of the business is done between merchants, and prices are low (2-3x standard prices).

**Kangir.** On the fringes of the Greylands, Kangir serves as a training and supply facility for the Crimson Host. The outer wall is wide enough to ride a strider on, with cantilevered galleries to provide protection for archers. Gutters and collection tanks store rain water in reservoirs. Kangir is commanded by War Lord Keliik, who frequently roams the compound making inspections. She sports a vivid scar from temple to chin, reportedly from a Courting Dance in which she bested and refused a certain Kang now on the Emperor's staff.

The complex is crowded but efficiently planned, with no wasted space. The Kaliya Legion of the Crimson Host is stationed here, and uses much of the outpost for the quartering of its supplies and stabling hill strider steeds. Large multi-story work chambers are dedicated to the building, maintenance, and repair of siege engines and war machines, under the direction of Vajra slave-engineers. The subterraneans live underground, and frequently dive through holes in the ground to retrieve tools from their dwellings—an unnerving sight.

Lodging is provided for travelers and merchants, but at high rates (5 x standard) and minimal comfort. On the caravan route between Karang and Isalis, the outpost is popular with dried-fish merchants supplying the troops. Some traders also come here before striking out cross-country through the Greylands, perhaps to avoid taxes at Hadran or to link up with Orgovian merchants who have rights of passage through the Volcanic Hills.

### The Greylands

The weathered grey hills of this wasteland protrude like broken teeth from the ash-like soil. The few lakes are tinged with strange colors, and the water often tastes tainted or is unnaturally cold. Scraggly trees huddle in arroyos, providing a habitat for the fierce creatures which survive here. Maps of the interior of the Greylands are sketchy at best, with only a few landmarks noted.

According to Mandalan Savants, this region was once settled by a tribe of wild sub-men—the *Vehdrek*. Kang soldiers laugh at the rumors of scattered survivors, attributing cowardice and poor vision to those who tell such tales. The patrols which ride the western frontier have enough trouble with the bands of satada which have been moving into the region. Three legions divide the duties of escorting caravans and patrolling along this frontier: Zoriah's Hammer and the Overlord's Hand legions based out of Hadran, and the Dragon-Steeds Legion from Kang-Tu.

**Hadran.** The great fortress which guards the Empire from the West, Hadran is also the staging base for future expansions into Carantheum or Rajanistan. (It is fully detailed in the "Cities of Talisanta" section of this book.)

**Kang-Tu.** A walled fortress in the northern Greylands, Kang-Tu is the post of the Dragon-Steeds Legion and its Kang Trackers. The fort is a traditional target of the Saurans, who storm it every other year or so. Batteries of heavy catapults line the crenelated walls. The commander, War Lord Aak, is a burly Kang with a sour disposition, anxious for his soldiers to make him look good so that he can be posted elsewhere.

Due to the threat of attack, few merchants care to travel here. Dried-fish caravans to Karang come this way, and fortified wagon trains pass here on the journey south to Hadran with valuable exports, guarded by frontier troops and mercenaries.

## Kang

Fierce and war-like, Kang serve in all branches of the military, and almost all officers are of their race. Famed as trackers and warriors, they excel at anything requiring directness and brute force.

**Age and Infirmary.** Extremely productive during their prime, Kang sicken and die quickly once past this stage in their life. Those who can no longer handle themselves in battle are assigned the tasks of tending to the young and caring for the strider herds, aided by recuperating soldiers.

**Childhood.** At birth, Kang have well-developed musculature, digestive and hunting organs, but have no more intelligence than wild predators. Guardians must be assigned to feed the children, clean their cages, and prevent the hungry carnivores from devouring one another.

It takes five long years before the vicious infants' mental development catches up to their physical prowess. Even after passing from the *wildling* stage to become *newarriors*, youthful Kang exhibit fierce competitiveness. They battle each other over the ownership of weapons and personal effects—and for these displays of strength and ruthlessness, the guardians reward them with extra attention and food. Victors become captains of their barracks.

The older children are formed into military training cohorts, working and battling as teams. They are attached to active-duty legions, where adult warriors are their coaches and sparring partners. In this way, adolescent Kang become familiar with their eventual posts and commanders—and the officers spot potential leaders and talented warriors.

**Family and Marriage.** In Kang society, the roles of parent and child-raiser are independent—while it is honorable to bear young, raising the carnivorous babies is a low-status task relegated to the old and injured. Since parents feel no responsibility toward their offspring, the usual concept of family does not exist for Kang. Instead, individuals bond to their barracks-mates and military units.

Surprisingly, marriage is a strong institution among this race, especially among maturing warriors. Mates are seen as status symbols, and no ambitious officer wants to be without one. Marriages are often political, joining strong forces or factions. Such unions may be "requested" by the Overlord.

Kang win their mates through the *Courting Dance*, a ritual combat with swords. Either sex may challenge their intended. The Dance can be an extremely sensual display of skill between willing partners . . . or a battle fought to the death. After one of the warriors submits or loses consciousness, the victor chooses whether to accept or refuse the marriage.

**Pride.** Kang are proud of their history and achievements, and resent implications that they are less than near-equal partners of the Quan. While carefully subservient toward their masters, they chafe under imperial restrictions which limit the practice of their traditions—such as the law which forbids them to speak Kang dialect aloud in a public place.

**Religion.** Zoriah, "The Red God of War," is the patron deity of the Kang. The warriors believe that their coloring marks them as the favored race of the crimson-skinned god. All combat is viewed as a form of worship, through which warriors propitiate their god by victory. Zoriah is often called upon to witness oaths and duels. Once a month, the *Clash of the Swords*—a stylized duel performed by the Warrior-Priests—celebrates the war deity and the power he gives his adherents over their enemies.

The Warrior-Priests of Zoriah are zealous followers of their god. They endure self-imposed programs of rigorous training and drill, believing that this will allow the Spirit of Zoriah to enter their bodies during combat, if they are worthy. Often celibate, these priests hone their combat skills to the exclusion of all other concerns. Before battle, they erect small cairns in the name of Zoriah, symbolic of the many dead they aspire to leave on the field of battle in his name.

**Social Status.** Position in Kang society is based solely on an individual's active rank in the imperial armed forces. To receive a promotion, an individual must usually defeat his immediate superior in a formal duel (fought to death or surrender, although an opponent may honorably submit after first blood has been drawn). Promotions may also occur to replace soldiers who are dead or missing.





Kang Rank	Role
Warrior	Common soldier
Corporal	Commands a half-squad
Sergeant	Commands a squad
Ensign	Commands a double-squad; first commissioned officer rank
Lieutenant	Commands a file
Captain	Commands a company [foot soldiers] or troop [cavalry]
Major	Commands a cohort
Dictator	Commands a double-cohort
War Lord	Commands a legion
Overlord	Commands the Crimson Host

In the higher ranks, the strict rules of promotion do not always apply. A Dictator must be appointed by the commanding warlord, although the results of a duel are often ratified. Warlords must similarly be approved by the Overlord, and can only be challenged to a duel with the Overlord's permission.

The Overlord resides at the citadel in Hadran. Personally selected by the Emperor, he is the supreme commander of the Crimson Host, answerable only to the Quan ruler. He also is the chieftain of all the Kang. By custom, the Emperor asks each Overlord for the names of three warlords as possible successors. The candidates are known only to the Overlord and the Emperor.

**Women.** Both males and females serve as trackers and warriors, without discrimination. However, Kang women are expected to maintain the numbers of their race. As an incentive, there is a 2 G.L. per child monthly Motherhood Bonus paid to Kang females on active duty with an imperial legion. In addition, women seeking advancement to officer rank must have a minimum of three births to their credit. With all of this encouragement, Kang females seek strong warriors as partners, marry young, and produce offspring regularly. Fortunately, pregnancy and giving birth are of little discomfort to female Kang, forcing them to lose a month's work or less.

## FAR-NORTHERN QUAN

This sector of the Quan Empire is heavily wooded, although toward the distant west, sulfur pools and volcanic ash allow only a scraggly grass to thrive. There is moderate weather except in the spring, when cold rains cause flash floods. Sheltered by encircling mountains, this portion of the Empire seldom sees snow despite its northern location.

**The Mazdak Mountains.** Named for their former inhabitants, these mountains are a nearly impenetrable combination of sheer cliffs, thicket-infested ravines, and gravel-shouldered heights. War Lord Koorg's Sunrise Legion is assigned to patrol here. Escaping Mandalan slaves have been tracked as far as the foothills, but the Kang report the only inhabitants of the mountains to be tarkus, wild striders and a few Crested Dragons. Koorg is convinced that rumors of rebel activity in the mountains are an attempt to discredit him in the eyes of the Overlord.

A secret temple of the Mandalans—*The Temple of the Way*—is hidden in a secluded valley. Few outsiders stumble upon it, and those who do return with amnesia or confused memories of ambush by bandits. The temple is a place of great beauty, a smaller version of the Temple of Tranquility in Jacinth. The three Secret Masters who preside here train aspiring Mystic Warriors, and are rumored to be ageless. There are only six students here now, and months or years may go by before the appearance of a new aspirant.

**The Vajran Hills.** South of the Opal Mountains, these hills are the

former homeland of the Vajra—now sealed off by the order of the Emperor. The southern foothills are rich with forests of fernwood, ironwood and whitewood. Further north, the hills become high and rocky. Among the buttes and mesas are wind-carved landmarks: *Far Eye*, a 400-foot natural spire, and *the Hermit*, a formation that resembles a hunched, robed figure.

Among the craggy hills are abandoned rock quarries and sealed mines. Great underground complexes built here by the Vajra in pre-conquest times are now abandoned, their locations known only to those with the old imperial maps. Kang patrols are sporadic, intended to deter thieves from locating and robbing the sealed caverns.

**Karang.** At the foot of the Western Opals, this walled citadel was engineered by Vajra slaves, and rises up as if it is part of the mountain. The huge stone blocks are cut so perfectly that no mortar is needed between them.

This citadel serves a double purpose. Karang's position on the northwestern border of the Empire means that it has a heavy responsibility to defend against the Harakin, Saurans, and raiders who descend out of the Opal Mountains. The Scarlet Legion is stationed here, and patrols as far east as the Gulf of Quan. Its commander, War Lord Takk, is a stern leader who expects operations to flow smoothly at all times. He does not allow mistreatment of the Vajra. Caught in a mine collapse when he first came to Karang, the commander's life was saved by Vajra slaves who carried him to safety and fought off an attacking pack of Tuatara.

The citadel is also the iron hand which keeps the Vajra in thrall to the Empire. Hibernating subterraneans are held hostage in chambers within the fortress. The majority of the Vajra live beneath Karang in underground warrens, serving as slave labor for the great mines within the mountain.

Visitors are tolerated here, but they are charged a toll of 10 G.L. per day for use of the facilities—including meals (dried fish), water, and stabling of mounts.

## The Vajra

A race of miners and builders, the Vajra are suited to a subterranean life—they possess excellent hearing and superb stone-working skills, and are industrious by temperament. The ore produced from the Vajran mines has helped make the Quan among the richest of all Talislantan peoples. Imperial slaves, the subterraneans are only slightly higher in status than foreigners, thieves and miscreants.

The Quan invaded the Vajran Hills in the year 82, and were met with courageous and valiant resistance. However, the Vajra were overwhelmed by sheer numbers, and when the Quan took their capital and threatened to place the hibernation chambers to the torch, the burrowers surrendered to save their race. The Emperor had them removed to the mines at Karang, and banned them from ever returning to their homeland.

**Childhood.** Vajra females give birth at 20-year intervals, apparently without any need for intercourse. The subterraneans spend the first decade of their lives as man-like children, lacking the stony plates and burrowing abilities of adult Vajra. As they reach puberty, however, the increasingly obese youths are inexorably drawn to the underground hibernation chambers. Here, they crawl into a cavity large enough to accommodate an adult Vajra, and remain for three decades until they awaken, fully grown.

**Clans.** The Vajra are a tight-knit people, fiercely loyal and loving among their own kind. They are communal, which is reflected in the deep warmth which the adults feel for all children and hibernating adolescents. Clans—informal working teams of those

with common interests and talents—disseminate information to their members, and take votes to determine their collective opinions. Each clan elects a Craftmaster, who represents his people on the Great Council of Elders.

**Marriage.** Vajra mate for life in the Ceremony of Binding. A chosen group—glowing mushrooms in hand—encircles the couple, walking with them to a ritual burrow where both bride and groom drop a handful of earth taken from a hibernation burrow. The mushrooms are placed in an oval about the couple, who are then left alone.

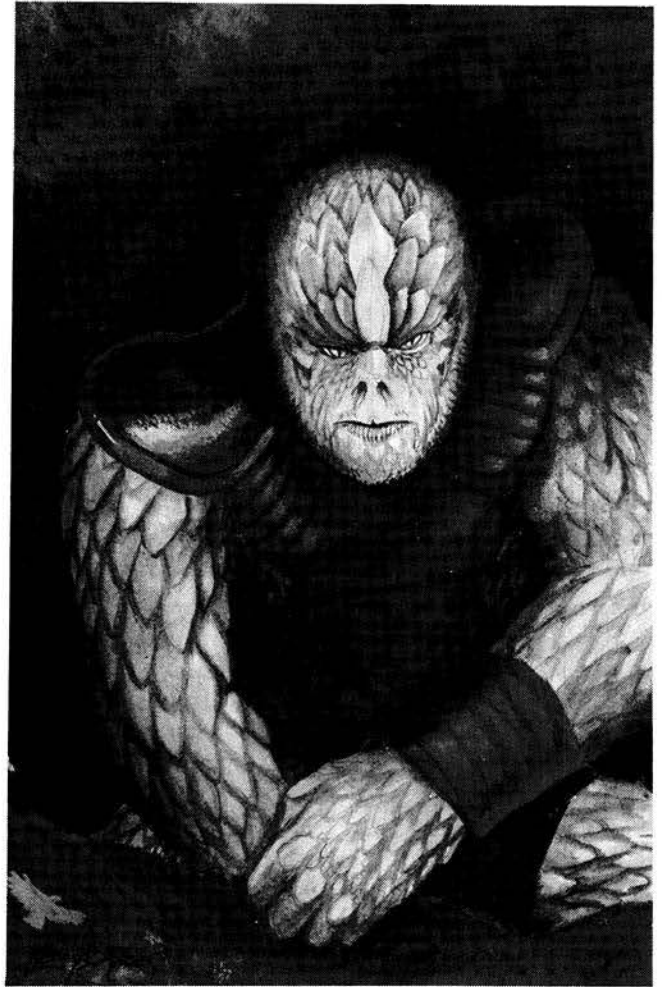
**The Occupation.** After the conquest, Kang troops were assigned to guard the Vajra in their underground burrows. After experiencing several mine collapses—which crushed the soldiers, but left the sturdy slave-miners unhurt—the claustrophobic Kang refused further subterranean duty. The Warlord of Karang is now content to station guards at the entrances to the burrows and mines, only sending patrols underground at irregular intervals.

**Religion.** The Vajra worship Terra, the Earth Goddess, with ceremony and through their lifestyle. They consider excavation and stone-working to be forms of worship. The subterraneans do not seem so much to attack the earth and rock as to commune with it, going to precisely the right place before burrowing or striking with their tools.

Vajra also worship in more conventional ways. Small groups gather with a priest in a cavern filled with phosphorescent mushrooms to chant and pray to Terra. This is illegal within the Empire, so these caverns are carefully concealed deep in mines or at the ends of secret tunnels. Priests of Terra are also healers, and cultivate mushrooms and herbs to use in this work. The Kang allow them to practice medicine, but forbid the priests from any other outward observance of their religion.

The subterraneans believe there is a spiritual link between them and their deity. During their long hibernation, the Vajra claim that their goddess nurtures them and blesses them with her knowledge—which might explain why adult Vajra have a natural aptitude for mining and working with stone.

**Wise Ones.** Occasionally, priests display such closeness to Terra that they become holy figures. When the clerics realize that one of their number has crossed this threshold and become one with Terra, they grant him (or her) a blue robe, a symbol of their infinite respect. The Wise Ones of Terra conceal themselves deep in the bowels of the earth, coming forth only to teach the priests and to consult with the Great Council.



At the time of the Quan invasion, there was an ancient Wise One named Lesta. She remained free, living in the otherwise abandoned tunnels of the Vajran Hills. After a century, however, she vanished, and her body has never been found. The priests teach that Terra holds Lesta safe, and will send her back to lead them when the time is ripe.



## XANADAS

An isolated region just north of the Quan Empire, Xanadas is located high amid the towering peaks of the Opal Mountains. It is the home of the Savants of Xanadas, a mysterious group of mystics, as well as the little-known Lossian mountain tribes.

**The Frost Plains.** The lowest elevation in Xanadas is a frozen plain, constantly chilled by winds streaming off the flanks of the mountains. Stunted withergall and grasses root directly in the snow, supporting small herds of muskrants. Tundra beasts, woolly ogriphants and dractyl are common, some of which have developed a light-colored fur difficult to spot against the snow. Temperatures plunge radically after nightfall, bringing almost certain death to those trapped here without shelter.

**The Foothills.** The foothills of the Opals rival the highest peaks of lesser mountain ranges. Covered year-round with glaciers, the heights are marked with deep, steep-walled recesses scored by the moving ice. In summer, migrating woolly ogriphant and omnivrax threaten travelers.

The climate is sub-arctic, but the chill winds of the frost plains do not blow here. During winter, unstable weather conditions range from near-constant snowstorms to icicle rain and full blizzards. The milder summer weather is best for traveling, but even then, unexpected storms can drop the temperature drastically within minutes. Warm clothing and sturdy boots are crucial, and protection for hands and face is advisable.

Rumors that rebels from the Quan Empire maintain a base here are persistent, and force the Warlord of Karang to waste men and resources searching these mountains.

**The Upper Valleys.** Carved by ancient glaciers, these scattered valleys lie in secluded shelter between the foothills and the higher peaks. They are littered with blockades of mounded gravel, making travel difficult. The Samir contend that the mounds are the burial sites of an ancient race, and cautiously avoid them. Mandalan scholars argue that the obstructions were actually left by receding glaciers.

Tribes of barbarians—known as the Samir—live in these valleys. Primitive and superstitious, they subsist mostly off the muskrant herds they keep. Their villages are small, with fewer than 75 members and muskrant herds of less than 100. The largest settlement is Atonek, located on the flanks of Mount Mandu, at the beginning of the One True Trail leading to the Temple of the Seven Moons. Clereye and Warnot, the other major villages, are located near other major trails.

**The Peaks.** The Opal Mountain Range is the tallest on the continent, with elevations averaging 20,000 feet. Rich in black-iron, silver, gold and precious stones, the mountains are unlikely to be exploited, due to the combination of freezing cold and glacial accumulations of snow and ice. Some of the ice sheets are over a mile thick.

Conditions here are arctic. Skin exposed to the elements freezes, making thick clothing and protective coverings vital for survival. Constant snowfall is accompanied by high wind and bitter cold, and temperatures may abruptly plunge to new depths.

Five mountains tower over all of the rest: Orchid Peak, Whitetop Mountain, Mount Savage, Thunder Peak, and the tallest mountain on the continent, Mount Mandu. Conditions are so frigid and harsh at these elevations that frost demons and ice dragons are the only living entities that can survive unprotected.

At the summit of Mount Mandu stands the Temple of the Seven Moons, where a sect of mystics—known as the Savants of Xana-

das—observes and records events throughout Talislanta. The land and the inhabitants of the temple both derive their name from the leader of the Savants, who left the temple two centuries ago, saying he would return after visiting the afterlife.

Legends claim that all trails into the mountains eventually lead to the Temple of the Seven Moons. This is a falsehood, but few return to deny this belief. The glaciers are especially dangerous—what appears to be solid footing may in fact be a fresh bridge of snow, covering a crevasse hundreds of feet deep. Besides avalanches and wandering predators, violent storms occur without warning.

### The Samir

Inhabitants of the high valleys of the Opals, the Samir are largely unknown outside of their own land. They are man-like beings of average height and build, and depend on their great strength and endurance to cope with their frigid environment.

Each tribe possesses its own valley, and is ruled by a chieftain. The Council of Elders, composed of representatives from each of the village's clans, provides counsel to the chief, but cannot overrule his decisions. A special meeting known as the Gathering is held monthly, at which the chief hears from all of the clans and settles grievances. Those wishing to marry, and youths ready to choose a clan, may petition the chieftain at this time for permission.

Samir belong to one of three clans, depending on their profession: *Herdsmen* are the largest clan, and watch over the tribe's muskrant herds. They are skilled at tanning hides, making rope from sinew, and fashioning tools from bone and horn. *Hunters* supply game for the tribe, and keep dangerous predators out of the tribe's valley. They also watch for strangers entering the valley. Hunters traditionally receive the best portion of butchered muskrants, which they believe gives them ritual strength. Most chieftains are from the Clan of Hunters. *Shamans* are the smallest clan, and have the responsibility to spiritually guide their people by correctly interpreting signs and omens. They oversee all religious ceremonies and celebrations. A drug manufactured from the horn of the muskrant reportedly gives them the power to call forth spirits from the ice and snow.

### The Clan of the Snowmanes

The fourth clan of the Samir tribe is made up, not of men, but of snowmane equus. The Clan of the Snowmanes is represented on the Council of Elders, and its members are fiercely loyal to their tribe. These sturdy mounts are treated with respect—the Samir do not own their steeds, but rather share their valleys with them. They feed and care for them, grateful for the "touch of the gods" which enables the equus to sense impending storms and detect unsteady footing. The Samir claim that their original stock was a gift from their deity. This might be true, as there are no wild snowmanes in the Opal Mountains.

All members of the Clan of the Hunters speak Equine. They consult with their mounts before making any decision, and close companionships develop between riders and their steeds. Hunters share their tents with their snowmanes, and often sleep under the same covering with them.

Snowmanes will only talk to Samir, and the Mountain People will not talk directly to the steeds in front of strangers.

### Customs of the Mountain People

**The Challenge.** Strangers are viewed with suspicion by the Samir, and are "challenged" to prove their worth before they are allowed to travel further through the mountains. Challenges vary, depending on the mood of the gods—as determined by the rolling of the

bones, interpreted by a shaman. Traditional tests are to ride a wild muskront, drink from the horn cup of the shaman, correctly interpret an omen, or fight a champion hunter in single combat. Those bearing trade goods often find the gods in a more lenient frame of mind.

**Childhood.** Samir mothers may keep their babies for five years, but must then turn the infants over to the Clan of the Herdsmen to be taught the ways of the muskront. In their tenth year, adolescents are turned over to the Hunters, to learn to fight and hunt. At monthly intervals, shamans take the village children to a sacred cave and introduce them to the mysteries of signs and omens.

**Daughters and Marriage.** All females in the tribe belong by right to the chieftain, and it is he who must give permission before any are wed. When a couple comes forward at the Gathering and asks for permission to marry, any man of the tribe may ask the chief to give him the bride in marriage instead. If the chief recognizes the challenge, the bridegroom and his challengers must battle to determine who receives the right to wed.

The chief also has the right to give the tribe's unmarried women as wives to honored visitors. The only privilege which Samir daughters enjoy is that, unlike sons, they may belong to any clan regardless of their parentage.

**Fathers and Sons.** A son is expected to join the clan of his father, for a Samir's glory is knowing that his seed will take his place after he dies. If he wishes to break with tradition, a son must leave the tribe and petition to join the appropriate clan in another village. This is a dangerous quest, for although the petitioner is almost always accepted by the new village, he must first survive a lone trek through the mountains... and, sometimes, a Challenge.

**Festivals.** Celebrations are held whenever the shamans decree—when the Hunters bring in large game, for instance, or after a violent storm has passed. For these occasions, the tribesmen break out an alcoholic beverage, *musknal*, made from fermented snow-grass and unclipped muskront hide. The annual Ceremony of Deliverance is held to thank the gods for their aid during the year, ending with a pledge by the Samir to better please the deities in the coming year.

**Samir and the Temple.** The Atonek Tribe believes that it has the special responsibility, bestowed on it by the Instigator, to protect the servants of the Temple of the Seven Moons from intrusion by outsiders. Regarding the Savants as minions of a powerful god, the Samir are afraid of causing their displeasure by allowing unfit visitors to climb the One True Trail leading up Mount Mandu. Only travelers who exhibit honorable intentions receive a Samir guide beyond the Valley of Atonek.

**Muskronts.** The arctic cousins of ogriphants, muskronts have shaggy grey hides and yellowish tusks. They are foul-tempered, hunted primarily for the musk which they carry in their glandular jowl-sacs. The Mountain People regard muskronts as holy beasts, sometimes calling them "the Great Steeds of the Instigator." Almost anything a muskront does can be a significant omen, and a herdsman gored by one is assured of a blessed afterlife. As directed by the Instigator, the Samir utilize every portion of their herd animals—dressing themselves in muskront hides, eating muskront roasts, and making weapons from muskront bones.

**Omens and Gods.** The Mountain People worship an aspect of the Creator whom they know as the Instigator. A virile warrior figure, the deity is—according to their belief—the chief of the gods, and takes a special interest in the Samir, having given them the muskronts and the snowmanes as gifts.

However, lesser gods also exist. The pantheon as a group is responsible for the weather, the fertility of herds and brides, health or illness, and the success of hunting.

Samir are obsessed with watching for signs and omens from the gods, convinced that these will guide them into paths that will not displease the irritable deities. Shamans are consulted before major decisions are made. A particularly favorable omen is the finding of a Mountain Orchid, a rare flower which is the token of the Instigator. The Samir who discovers such a find is treated with awe by his fellow tribesmen, and the elders will be careful not to displease the "Favored of the Instigator."

**Trade.** The Samir occasionally trade with the Mirin, who exchange tools, implements and weapons (sometimes made of adamant) for musk, snow lilies, and rare alchemicals. The Mountain People also trade their services as hunters or guides to other foreigners in exchange for things which they desire, but they work strictly for barter—coins have no meaning to them.

### The Foundation of Xanadas

During the Age of Confusion, several mystics dissatisfied with the state of Talislanta banded together. The legends vary—some claim the mages were members of an ancient race called the Archæns, or Mandalans fleeing oppression. Each of the mystics displayed an unrivaled ability for great magics. Under the leadership of the one known as Xanadas, they sought a retreat in which to study and perfect their talents.

Individually and in teams, the mages traveled across Talislanta looking for a site on which to construct their sanctuary. North of what would later become the Quan Empire, they found the peace they required and the place they had foreseen. However, building here—on the summit of Mount Mandu, the highest peak in all of Talislanta—was a daunting task, even for the best of magicians.

**Allies Sought.** After several false starts, the mystics realized they needed the aid of a special people—stone workers and excavators, of a race tough enough to survive the frigid temperatures and hostile environment. Their only hope was to hire Vajra Engineers.

In those days before the Quan conquest, three of their number sought the Vajra in their underground stronghold at LasHom. The mystics appeared out of the very earth itself, and the subterraneans accepted them as messengers of Terra, the Earth Goddess. A Wise One concluded that the proposed project was a fit challenge for their abilities, and led a group of volunteers into Xanadas.

**Temple Construction.** In the first week of excavation, a series of caverns were unearthed beneath the building site, containing hydrothermal springs and pools—a sign of the approval of Terra, said the Wise One. While construction was in its initial stages, the Vajra took shelter in the same caverns which would later serve to warm the completed temple.

The Vajra quarried the blue-green stone of the temple exterior from Mount Mandu itself. A later discovery of a vein of lavender rock provided facing stones for the interior of the edifice. The Vajra engineers worked slowly, constructing a temple that would defy both time and the elements.

**Servants for the Savants.** After the work was complete, a small group of Vajra chose to stay behind to maintain the temple. Several priests of Terra joined them, eager to cultivate rare herbs using the "blessed" water of the underground springs. In the aftermath of the Quan conquest of their homeland, the existence of this band of free Vajra has been all but forgotten.

Mandalans fleeing Quan oppression have also found their way to the temple. They perform menial tasks for the preoccupied Savants, such as cleaning, cooking and scribing.



**The Farewell.** Two centuries ago, the period known as "The Long Wait" began. Xanadas was taken away by Death, but pledged that he would return from the other plane and meet again with his disciples.

Still waiting for the return of their leader, the Savants light a candle every evening in each window of the temple. Xanadas' chair remains in its customary place in the dining hall, and a full plate of food is placed there at each meal. Uncertain what form Xanadas will have when he comes, the mystics have an unnerving habit of answering gusts of wind, calling, "Is that you, Xanadas?" Except for the lighting of the evening candle, no one enters the chambers of Xanadas.

### The Savants

The masters of the Temple have made few, if any, changes over the centuries. The Savants still dress in flowing black robes trimmed in silver, and wear elaborate headdresses inscribed with arcane symbols, sigils and runes. Dismayed by the irresponsibility of the young races—and certain reckless magicians—Xanadas' disciples carefully chronicle the events of Talislanta so that a record can be preserved for Xanadas' return.

The original Savants numbered fourteen—Xanadas and his thirteen followers. Only five remain of the founding mystics who journeyed with Xanadas. When a Savant passes on, he is replaced by a *Chosen One*, as has been done now for ages. In this manner, the Savants have consistently maintained their original number. Only in the case of Xanadas was a replacement not chosen, due to the great mage's promise to return.

Watching Talislanta through their Scrying Crystals, the Savants are always alert for prospective Chosen Ones. They never make a decision based on race or gender, but look for the most suitable candidates out of all whom they observe.

The Savants prolong their lives through a secret regimen. Xanadas himself at his passing was almost a thousand years old. Over the centuries, it has become evident that the life-extension techniques work better on some races than others. However, this is not considered when a Chosen One is selected.

When a candidate is found, his life is monitored from that point on. When a Savant is close to death, the Chosen Ones are magically compelled to journey to the Temple of the Seven Moons. Few survive the hard trip, but from among those who do, the Savants select the next of their number.

### Politics on Mount Mandu

Factions have developed among the Savants since the absence of Xanadas, and their philosophical debates are heated.

**The Chroniclers.** This faction believes that the sole role of the Savants should be the collection of information, so that they will be ready to greet Xanadas with a full report when he comes. They are morally opposed to interfering with Talislantan affairs. The only interference they cause the outside world is when they call the Chosen Ones. The members of this faction include:

*Carindil of Cymril:* A mage who crash-landed her windship on Mandu's peak in order to answer her summons, Carindil doubts the existence of ultimate truth, and believes that any Xanadasian interference might upset the balance of the Omniverse.

*Janda of the Way:* A Mandalan, Janda is the most introverted of the Savants. She rarely shares her views or joins the debates, but when pressed for an opinion, she states that "no matter how honorable the intent, destiny is not for mortals to decide."

*Jolne the Wise:* An eloquent speaker, this Vajra Wise One was a Quan slave before being called to the temple. He is totally opposed to intervention, believing that it would be presumptive. Jolne pleads with his fellows to comprehend the Omniverse and be in harmony with it, and not try to mold it to suit private ideals.

*Menelril the High Savant:* Appointed to his post by Xanadas himself, this feeble mage is well over nine centuries old. By not publicly supporting any of the factions, he indirectly aids the Chroniclers. Menelril is gravely concerned that Palanya may no longer be trustworthy. He worries that political disagreements may lead to a battle of mages within the walls of the temple itself—which might destroy the records which they have gathered for centuries.

*Ex-Nadir alt Niyaan:* A Sindra and former Peacekeeper, this logician maintains that to interfere in Talislantan affairs would be irresponsible and foolish. He says that there are too many variables to be taken into account, so that an action's consequences cannot be reliably predicted.

*Oromar the Historian:* Menelril's choice to succeed him as High Savant, she is the chief Chronicler and one of the original Savants. Strongly feeling her responsibility as historian, Oromar's impassioned pleas remind the Savants that they are scholars, not gods who can legitimately interfere in others' lives.

**The Guardians.** The second party believes that because of the knowledge and power which they possess, the Savants have a duty to Talislanta and should actively influence the future of the continent. They argue that the mystics are in a perfect position to subtly shape events as they happen.

*Palanya:* The most influential of his party, Palanya cites the approaching collapse of the Quan Empire—a catastrophe which will result in the deaths of millions, unless steps are taken—as the example of the kind of situation which calls for a Xanadasian intervention. He is the youngest of the original Savants, and was an apt pupil of Xanadas.

*Puram of the Broken Bough:* A Mystic Warrior after the Mandalan Way, Puram opposes all tyrannical governments, and fails to comprehend why the others are reluctant to better life on Talislanta when they have the means to do so. He is bitter toward Janda for her support of non-intervention.

*Rogul:* Another of the original Savants of Xanadas, Rogul has no great love for the current state of Talislanta, and believes that interference couldn't make things any worse.

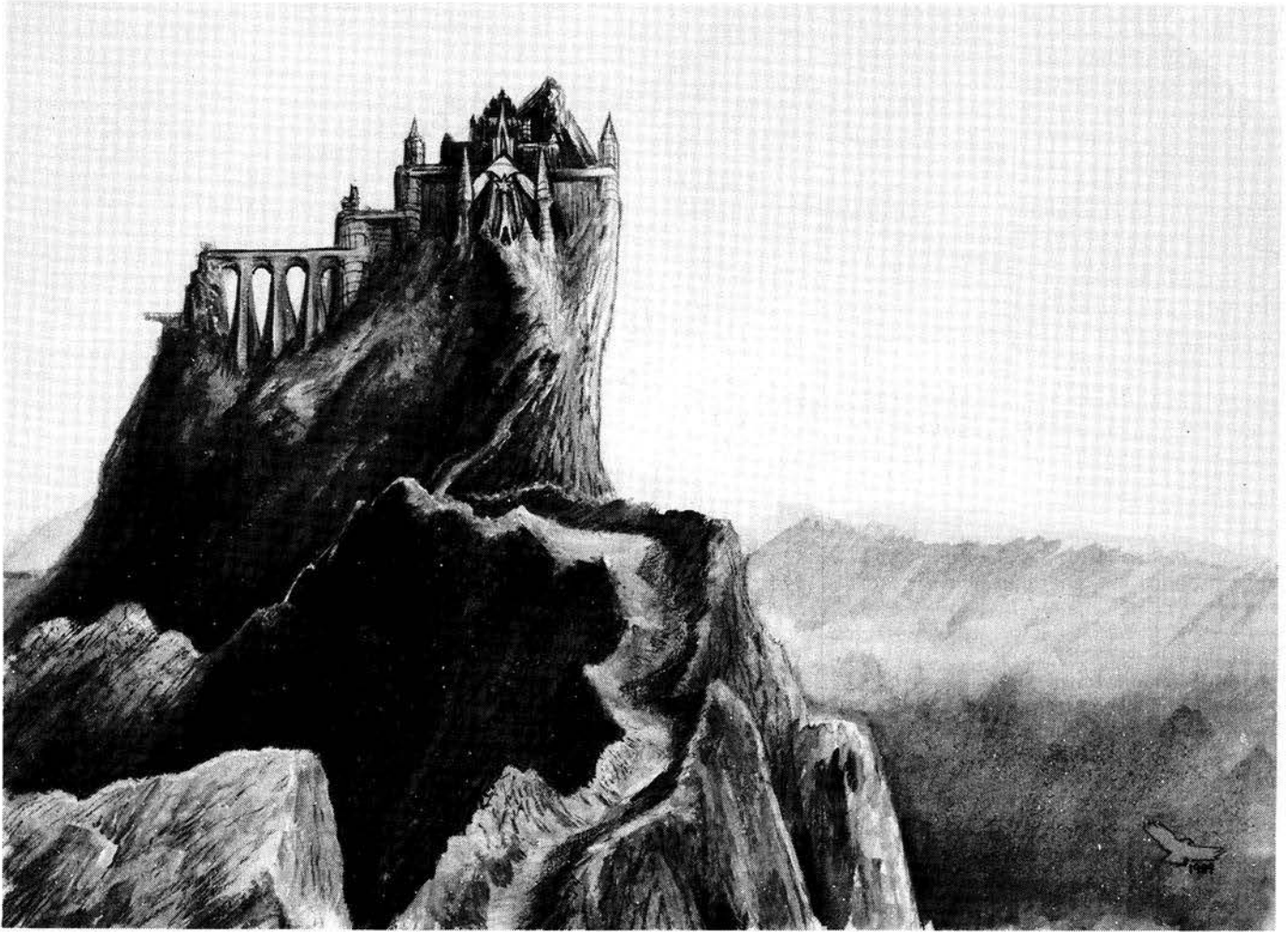
**The Conciliators.** A compromise faction, these Savants try to strike a pose between the two extremes, but succeed mostly in alienating the others. These mystics propose that slight interference—something that wouldn't have a significant impact for a hundred years—would not conflict with their Savantic role as historians.

*Aran the Charlatan:* This foppish Zandir mage weeps unashamedly when viewing the oppressed through his crystal, and recites anti-Aamanian poetry to support the need for interference. And yet, being a Paradoxist, he can also see why taking action could be dangerous.

*Klasma the Trapsmith:* A most unlikely Savant, even Klasma cannot explain what prompted him to accept his calling here, abandoning his House and clients. The Kasmir uses his experiences in finance to explain why subtle actions could have promising effects in Talislantan affairs. He is too cautious to advocate anything more than a first experiment.

*Malinsar the Fool:* The younger brother of Xanadas, this member of the original mystical order has grown bored in his role as observer. He has become emotionally involved with some of the Talisiantans whom he monitors, and wishes to use his powers to aid those he likes and discredit the ones he despises.

*Ralmya:* This shaman of the Samir fears that advocating either side risks angering the gods. He would like to try something small—saving a single slave from the pits of Rajanistan, perhaps—and then see whether the deities of Talislanta react.





# CITIES OF TALISLANTA

The following descriptions cover the four most interesting cities of the Empire: *Hadran*, Gateway to the West; *Isalis*, the Coral City of the Sunra; *Ispasia*, trading center of the Empire; and *Tian*, the Quan capital.

## HADRAN

Constructed of huge stone blocks which dwarf passersby, Hadran is immense, built to defend the Empire from invasion. Its high walls and fortified towers stand astride the only western entrance to the Quan nation—the Great Bridge of Vasheen, which spans the Chasm of Keeva. The number of troops stationed here is intimidating, and the sounds of clashing weapons and marching boots are constant.

Segregation by status is rampant within Hadran, all done according to the Quan social ladder. Signs—prominently displayed—state such restrictions as “Kang Only,” “Imperial Citizens Only,” and “Foreigners Permitted.” Foreigners must pay a toll of 100 G.L. just for the privilege of entering the city. This buys admission *only* to Hadran—non-Quan must still purchase a travel pass in order to proceed past Hadran into the Empire.

**1) The Great Bridge of Vasheen:** This stone bridge is 20 feet wide and spans the Chasm of Keeva, which is 600 feet in depth. The bridge is the final destination of the Wilderlands Road.

**2) The Gateway of Gulkuga:** A massive structure carved in the likeness of the open mouth of a Crested Dragon, the Gateway appears to swallow the end of the Bridge. Within are two sets of black-iron doors, ten feet apart, and a portcullis. At the inner barrier, Kang charge the entrance toll. Gulkuga is said to have been the dragon after whom the gateway was modeled.

**3) Emperor's Gate:** A travel pass is required before the guards will allow anyone to leave through this gate. As with Gulkuga's Gateway, two sets of black-iron doors are set ten feet apart, separated by a portcullis. Different segments of the Emperor's Road lead both east and north from here.

**4) The Wall:** The outer wall of Hadran is 20 feet thick, and is honeycombed with corridors, and studded with plenty of window slits for Kang crossbowmen. Armories and storage chambers for siege equipment are also located within the walls.

**5) The Towers:** These squat structures serve as barracks for Kang troops. The sixty-foot-tall towers overlook the Bridge, and afford a good view of the surrounding countryside.

**6) The Drill Field:** The first sight when entering Hadran from the west is this large parade field. Crack Kang troops drill and stage mock combats here, often slaying one another in their excitement.

**7) Barracks of the West (4):** Located in the four corners of the citadel, these huge barracks complexes are large enough to host an army preparing to invade central Talislanta. Each is three stories high. The ground floors are reserved for cavalry, so that the Kang may remain close to their mounts.

**8) The Inner Citadel:** A fortress within a fortress, the Citadel of the Kang Overlord has its own high walls and towers. The gateway is crowded by those seeking an audience with the Overlord.

**9) Dragon Field:** Only the elite Dragon Troops of the Empire may drill and practice here, within the Citadel.

**10) Palace of the Overlord:** This two-story stone structure has been magically overlaid with a fine coating of gold, an ostentatious display rivaling those of the Quan.

The current Overlord, Kershak, is a tall, imposing Kang—fierce when crossed, but a fair and just leader. He is in his prime, and holds a tight rein on his troops. The Overlord often walks about the Citadel, questioning his troops and their officers, and has been known to enter the Green Pearl (see below) to survey goods passing through Hadran.

Suspicious of strangers, Kershak is currently trying to confirm a rumor that some of his Dragon Troops have joined a cult of Avar. He is also concerned by a recent project of the Emperor: Imperial expeditions are being sent throughout the Empire, so that artisans and geographers can collect the information they need to create a huge mosaic map of the Empire to adorn the Emperor's dining hall. Kershak fears the favored status and special authority of the map expedition commanders, and is looking for ways to discredit each of them.

Five commanders within the Crimson Host are fiercely loyal to the Overlord, each convinced that he is on the secret list of successors. Kershak is careful to space them around the Empire, making contact between the five difficult.

**11) Dragon Barracks (2):** These elaborate two-story structures flank the Overlord's Palace. Like the other barracks, the stables are on the bottom floor.

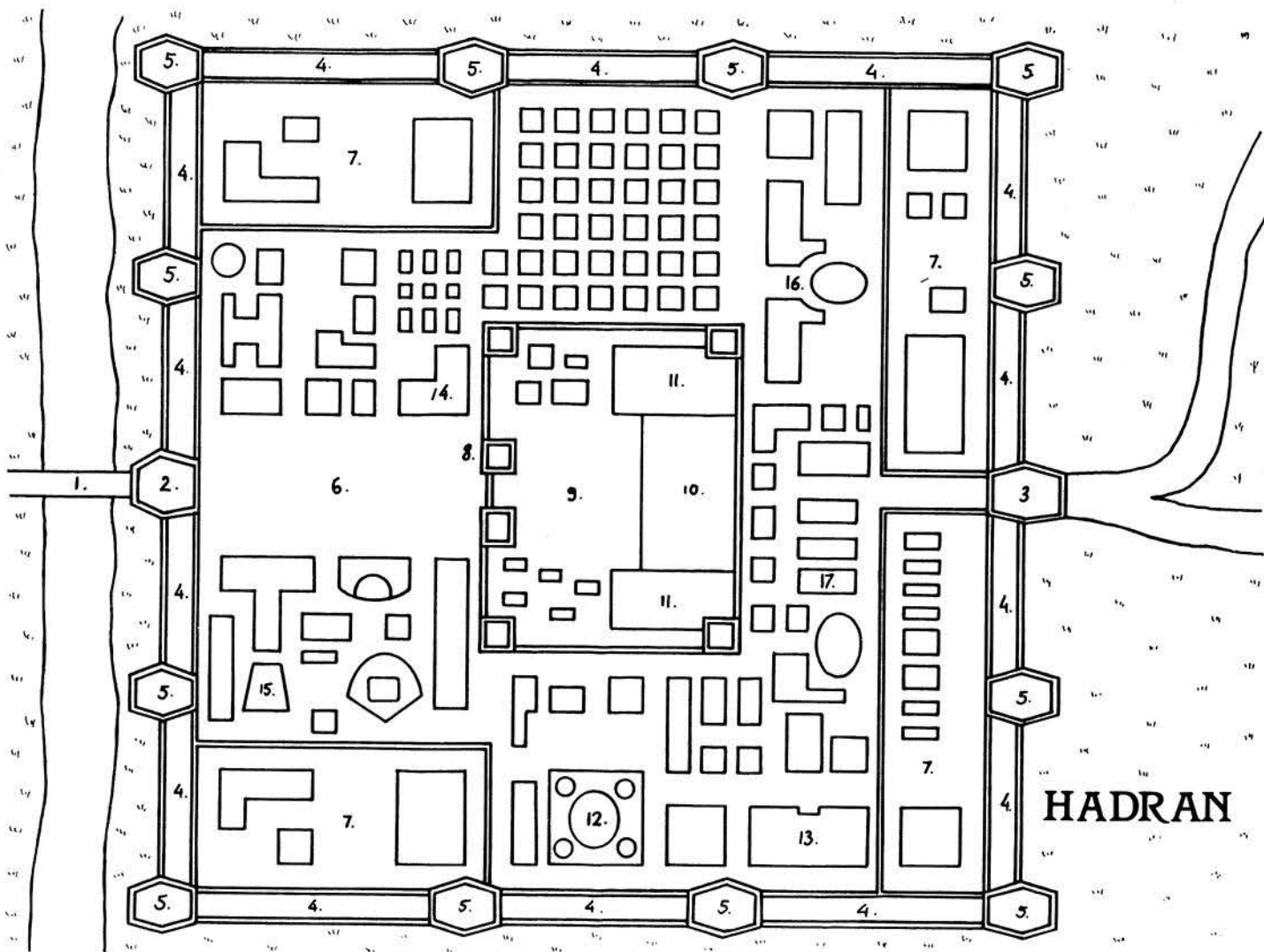
**12) The Foreign Registration and Trade Office:** Responsible for selling the passes needed by foreigners to travel in the Empire, this office always has a long waiting line. Applications for trade within the Empire are also processed here. The Ispasian administrators have authority to negotiate interim agreements, but final contracts must have the approval of the Overlord. One wall of this building is covered with posted notices, listing the names of merchants looking for guards or other hirelings.

**13) Inn of the Travelers:** This decrepit building is the only facility where foreigners are allowed to lodge in Hadran. The establishment, though owned by the Overlord, is operated by an elderly Mandalan and his niece. The old man, Zem Po, sits by the window most of the day, sketching fanciful towers and flowing fountains of another land. His niece, Azema, is friendly and helpful. Soft spoken, she has heard many tales from the travelers that have stayed here. She relates these if asked, but honestly says that she does not know whether the stories are true. Offers of employment are publicly posted in the stairwell.

Foreigners are advised to reserve rooms here upon arriving in the city, as the inn is frequently full. Foreigners who cannot secure rooms must spend the night outside the city walls or in the Overlord's gaol.

**14) The Tavern of the Green Pearl:** Maintained by two Mandalan sisters—Kir Am and Chu—the Green Pearl Tavern is open to all. Only the finest in Mandalan cuisine is served here, cooked in a great fire-pit at the center of the main dining room. The serving girls (also Mandalan) are very attractive, but under strict orders not to consort with the customers.

The Green Pearl Tavern is a popular meeting place for foreigners and imperial administrators—much money passes under the table here. Merchants also come to the tavern to meet with prospective employees. Kang are seldom seen; they feel it is beneath them to mingle with those of lesser status. The Mandalan owners claim not to have traveled much, due to their caste. Nevertheless, they can relate an amazing variety of facts about the Empire.



**15) The Golden Opportunity:** A curious chain of events—including ruthless bandits, a passing caravan and the untimely demise of the previous proprietor of this shop—put an Orgovian trader named Nho in a position to strike a deal with the Overlord. The merchant now barter and trades from this shop, accepting no coinage. Nho has access to all manner of goods through his contacts with the Orgovian clan which travels the Banditlands of Zaran. The Overlord visits the shop once a month, choosing a suitable “gift” for himself from the trade goods. Despite concerted efforts, no one has yet been able to learn the details concerning the deal between the Overlord and the Orgovian.

**16) The Imperial Inn:** This well-maintained inn is reserved for imperial functionaries doing business in Hadrán, making it possible for them to conduct business without worrying about pre-arranging facilities. Most of the Ispasians and Mandalans here avoid dealing with low-caste foreigners.

**17) The Clenched Fist:** Reserved exclusively for the Kang, this tavern is a rough-and-tumble drinking house which foreigners had best avoid.

## THE CORAL CITY OF ISALIS

In ancient times, the reef which underlies Isalis was the mating ground of the Sunra. Later, an underwater city took form here. Over the long process of time, Isalis grew until it rose above the waves, becoming a metropolis split between the air and the ocean.

Sunra myths relate that after the Creator changed their race into semi-aquatic creatures, the deity also gave them the knowledge of shaping and building with coral. Part of this knowledge included sophisticated techniques for grinding coral and seaweed together to form a durable, water-resistant mortar. The Creator's other knowledge involved magic—spells and cantrips—so that Sunra mages could manipulate the growth of coral. Isalis was built with this knowledge.

**The Two Cities.** The Sunra are organized into Greater Schools, each of which dwells within its own citadel. The coral castles are communal living, teaching, and working complexes, growing out of the reef and rising to an average of 30 feet above the waves. A citadel may have half a dozen levels. The lowest are underwater and contain worship, sleeping, and mating chambers. The upper levels of a citadel are above the waterline, and are used as workrooms, offices, meeting and dining halls, and entertainment areas.

Underwater tunnels drilled into the reef bed connect the submerged levels of the city, forming what is called the *Lower City*. The portion above of the waves—which includes the Outsiders Quarter—is referred to as the *Upper City*.

Travel within the city is through canals and tunnels, rather than by streets. Most Sunra swim from place to place using the Lower City's tunnels. Non-Sunra take the canal boats. Hourly fares range from 1 S.P. (a raft) to 5 G.L. (an elegant gondola). Travel from the



Upper City to the Lower City is accomplished by swimming between the levels of a citadel.

The Kang garrison has its own boats, and patrols the Upper City incessantly. They find the Lower City a nuisance to monitor, however. Using Waterbreathing Potions, they awkwardly conduct ineffectual underwater patrols monthly. The soldiers stay away from the Sunra worship and mating chambers. Four hundred years ago, when the Kang shamelessly violated these areas, the infamous Riots of Drome erupted—the only Sunra revolt in five centuries of enslavement. Imperial Governor Xuan Lidot believes that the Sunra have become incapable of rebellion, so he is not worried about the adequacy of his garrison's patrols.

**1) The Wall:** The coral barrier is five feet thick, 30 feet high, and nearly surrounds the city. While useful as a defense against a seaward attack, the Wall's main function is to protect Isalis from damaging tides and storms.

**2) Fire Beacons:** Maintained by Sunra mariners, these beacons are lit at night to guide ships entering the harbor. Kang guardtowers on each side of the harbor mouth stand ready to fire their ballistae upon any ship which tries to leave the harbor without permission.

**3) The Harbor:** Protected by two large breakwaters, this harbor is the safest haven on the Inland Sea.

**4) Dragon Barque Berths:** Dragon barques, the feared warships of the Sunra fleet, are moored here. Each is heavily guarded. Pilots have a habit of sleeping on their ships between voyages.

**5) Commercial Docks:** Merchant and fishing vessels load and unload their goods here.

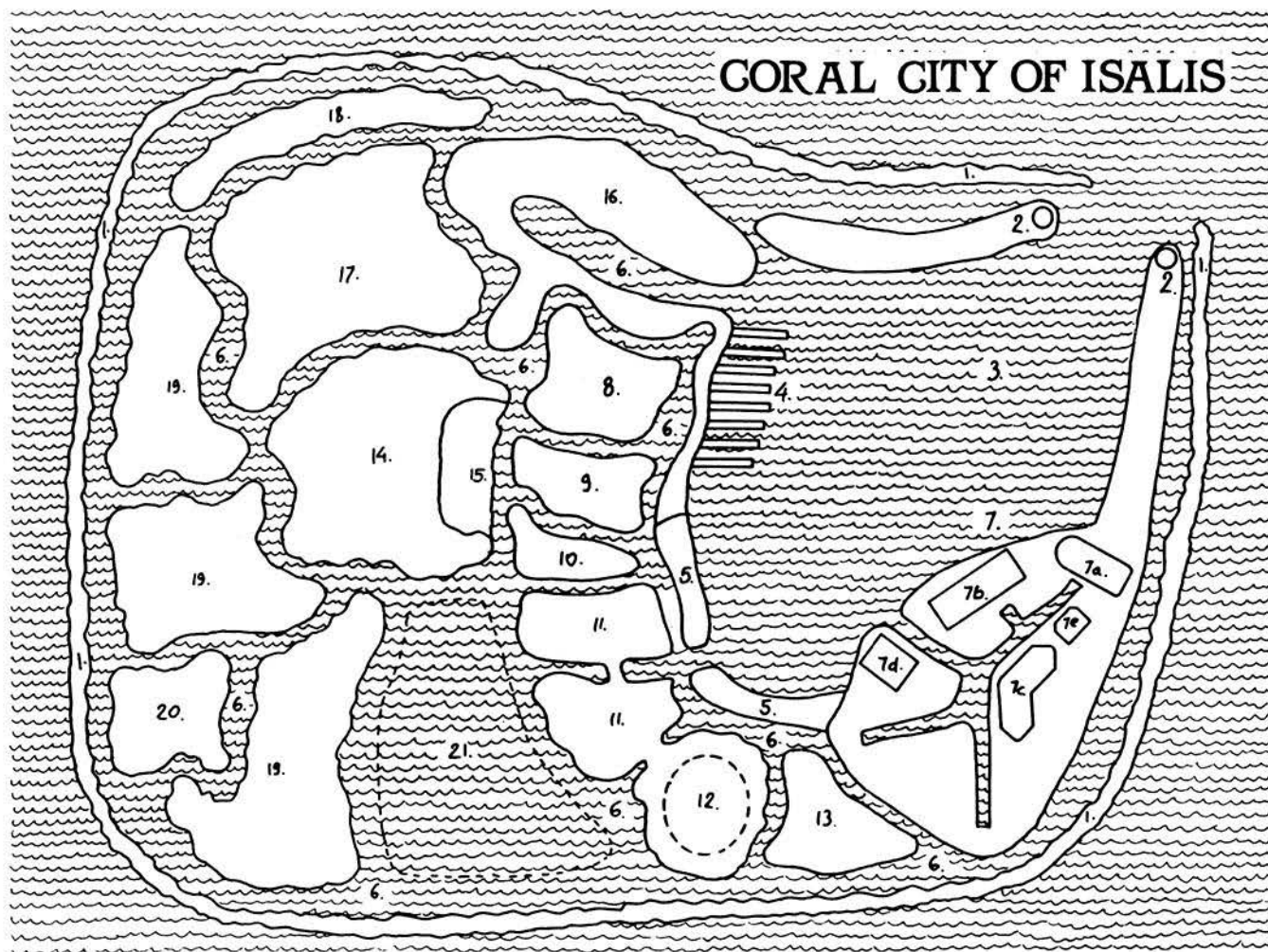
**6) Canals:** These are the main traffic routes through the Upper City.

**7) Outsiders Quarter:** Non-Sunra who live in or visit Isalis must reside here. The Quarter is completely above water, and has wooden boardwalks alongside the canals for the convenience of those who prefer to walk rather than travel in boats. Many of the buildings are constructed of imported wood and stone, to make foreigners feel comfortable. There are taverns, gambling halls, and a scattering of businesses here, as well as private residences. Without a citadel, the Quarter has no entrance to the Lower City.

**7a) Palace of the Governor:** The Palace is heavily guarded, but not for protection from the Sunra. Governor Lidot has paranoid fears that former enemies will seize his personal wealth, including artworks looted from several ancient temples. He seldom leaves his plush, perfumed quarters, loudly complaining that he can't stand "that lamentable fishiness of the city."

**7b) Kang Barracks:** The complex includes a drill yard, armory, mess and prison.

**7c) The Market:** This small courtyard is the site of a weekly bazaar where visiting merchants sell imported luxury goods and other items not ordinarily found in Isalis, but at inflated prices (3 x standard). Under Governor Lidot's lax scrutiny, smuggled goods often exchange owners here. Some claim that his bureaucrats take bribes from merchants, while others say that they demand



special favors in return for "looking the other way."

**7d) Pub of the Sea Dragon:** The principal tavern of Isalis' visitors, this is also the place to find new employers and employees, since seafarers of many races come here. Prices for food and drink are relatively fair (2 x standard). Small rooms with double beds and chamberpots rent for 1 G.L. per night.

**7e) The Iron Fist:** This pub and brothel caters to the Kang of the garrison, who forbid all others from entering. It is run by a lame Imrian named Slezak, a branded traitor to his homeland who relishes the protection the soldiers provide.

**8) Citadel of Mariners:** Before the imperial conquest, this Citadel was the military center of the city. Now the only mariners under arms are the guards bearing the ceremonial spears at the entrances. The building contains drill yards for combat practice, both above and below the water. Unknown to the Kang, a cache of enchanted dragon harpoons is hidden on a lower level.

**9) Citadel of Pilots:** Easily identified by the giant carving of a coral astrolabe over its main gate, this citadel is spacious and comfortable... by Sunra standards.

**10) Citadel of Aquamancers:** The mages keep valuable artifacts stored within their magical laboratories, protected by heavy enchantments.

**11) Citadel of Sea-Farmers:** A canal from the harbor allows fishing boats to bring their catches directly within this complex. Fish and other sea-edibles are dried, weighed, and packaged for export. A bridge connects the citadel to the Aquatic Zoo.

**12) Aquatic Zoo:** Operated by the Sea-Farmers, this complex of submerged cages and walled pools contains chang, echinomorphs, nar-eels, mud-rays and miniature sea scorpions, preserved for newts and young adults to view.

**13) Hall of the Council of Sea People:** The Council Hall is underwater, in accordance with old Sunra customs, while two levels of administrative rooms and archives rise above the water. Priests staff the offices.

**14) Citadel of Priests:** This largest and tallest citadel of Isalis occupies the center of the city, just as the School of Priests occupies the center of Sunra life. Their library is famed for its rare volumes, but outsiders are seldom allowed within.

**15) Marketplace:** The priests operate this bazaar, seeing that Sunra goods are sold fairly for a reasonable profit (standard prices). Visitors may be disappointed by the lack of variety, due to the Sunra disdain for material objects. Bartering is common, since the priests have little use for money.

**16) Citadel of Ship-Builders:** Wood, rope, nails and spikes are brought here, while finished dragon barques, merchant ships and fishing vessels leave. Immense, enclosed drydocks—accessed by a canal to the harbor—allow for efficient shipbuilding, and for sophisticated repairs to damaged vessels.

**17) Citadel of Nurses:** This is where Sunra Nurses (both male and female) learn the art of raising and caring for the young. Most of the newt nurseries are located beneath this citadel.

**18) Citadel of Cartography:** The cartographers purposely located their dwelling place to one side of the city. They desire no disturbances as they meticulously study and script their maps and documents.

**19) Citadels of the Lesser Schools:** Adolescent Sunra dwell in these halls, where they learn to adapt to life as air-breathing

creatures. The complex includes classrooms, libraries, exercise areas and dining halls.

**20) Memorial Point:** This is the Sunra Place of the Dead, but it is not a cemetery in the traditional sense. Bodies of the deceased are swathed in rainbow kra-hides weighted with large pearls, and then launched into the water. The sea does the rest.

**21) Sea Farms:** These shallow waters are tended by Sea-Farmers in small skiffs, who harvest a bountiful crop of seaweed, kelp and shellfish. Some delicacies can be raised only here, rather than in the deeper farms outside the Wall.

## THE CITYSTATE OF ISPASIA

A city of Ispasia's splendor seems inappropriate in this bleak northern land, but still the place exists—a settlement of rare beauty and elegance, home to teeming thousands, and a vital trade crossroads. Ispasia is sometimes called the last outpost of true civilization on the journey north... an appellation not entirely true, but indicative of the city's value to the merchants of eastern Talislanta.

**1) City Walls:** Untested since the days of the Mazdaks, these ill-repaired walls are now garrisoned by squads of Kang and Vajra warriors. Each of the towers conceals a heavy ballista and can hold up to 30 soldiers, but they are usually occupied only by solitary sentries.

**2) Palace of Jade and Gold:** The Macron, supreme mercantilist and leader of the Ispasians, spends his six-year term here amid comfort, beauty and understated luxury. Nowhere near as decadent or extravagant as the residences of the Quan, the Macron's palace is tasteful and inspiring. Here may be found detailed records of all Ispasian foreign investments, information for which many foreign merchants would pay handsomely.

**3) Council Chambers:** The Macron's advisors—the Council of Wealth—meet here daily to regulate the affairs of the city and to establish prices for commodities, trade goods and currencies.

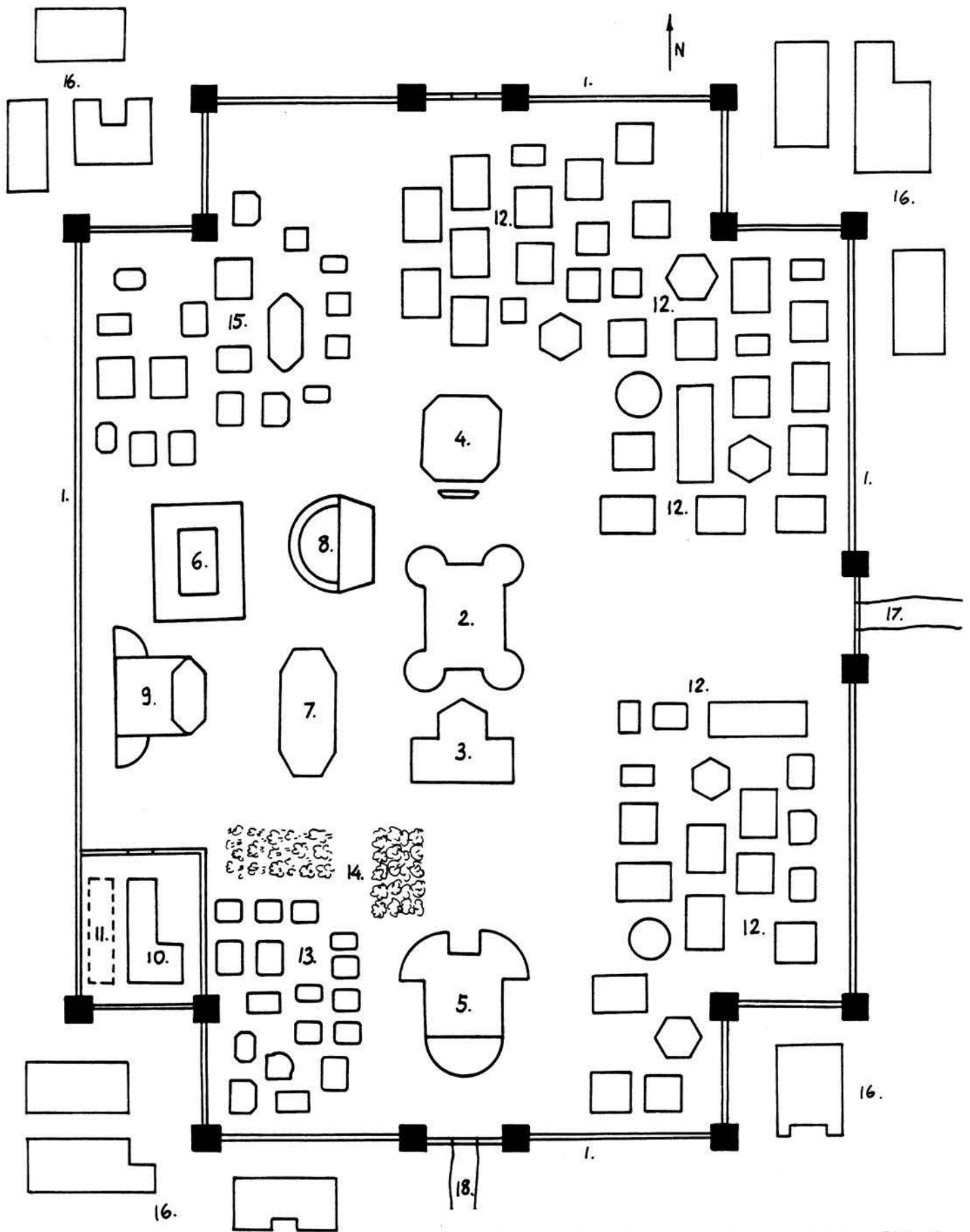
**4) Palace of Learning:** As the second most favored quality among Ispasians, learning has its own shrine within the city. The Palace of Learning is the Ispasians' "financial college," where their young learn the basics of finance, mercantilism, and other vital subjects. While not as important as the financial curriculum, the Palace also boasts courses in art, history, architecture, and similar scholarly fields. Some magic is taught here, with a special emphasis on spells useful in the accumulation of money. Admission is limited to Ispasians (foreigners are not even allowed in the building).

**5) Museum of Wealth:** Since the Ispasians prize the accumulation of wealth above all other pursuits, it is not surprising that they have dedicated this sizeable structure to displaying wealth in all its forms. Money and trade goods from many lands are on display here, as well as Ispasian treasures and works of art. While the structure may seem a tempting target for thieves, it is heavily guarded by Kang sentries, and all the major exhibits are laden with alarms and traps.

The museum curator maintains extensive records on all of the trading races of Talislanta, with detailed information on their money-making skills and favored habits. Many little-known facts about the Zandir, Kasmir, Farad and Dracartans may be learned from study at the museum. Foreigners are welcome to visit the museum, but the curator's records may be studied by Ispasians only. The museum is free to citizens, but foreigners are charged 1 G.L. for admission.

**6) Treasury:** The most heavily guarded structure in Ispasia, this





CITY STATE OF ISPASIA

building houses the citystate's vast stores of gold, thought to number in the hundreds of millions. At least 100 Kang guard the building. To date, no thief has succeeded in gaining entrance to the Ispasian Treasury.

**7) Conservatory:** Many rare plants are maintained in this vast amberglass greenhouse, protected from harsh weather conditions. Flora here include crystal dendrons, desert palms, harpwood, moonflowers, prism plants, serpentvine, and purple narcissus. Some say that the Macron's mages tend a captive whisperweed, a plant which normally grows only in the wild.

**8) Theatre:** Ispasians are fond of drama. Plays from many lands are performed here, including Sarista romantic comedies and Mandalan essays- in-space. The Empire also requires certain patriotic pageants to be performed, which are without exception bloody, excessive and completely pointless. Many Ispasians write plays themselves. The most popular involve a heroic mercantilist who makes money against all odds, including such favorites as "Moonfish and the Man" and "Death in Kasmir."

**9) Governor's Palace:** A typical imperial structure, the palace is laden with thick ornamentation and grossly over-provided with gardens, trees and flowers. Ten times more slaves than are necessary stand about the grounds, tending the lawns and stocking the fish ponds. The governor—an unambitious Quan named Zhu Sem—rarely leaves his palace, and takes no interest in "governing" the Ispasians, his theoretical subjects.

**10) Kang Garrison:** This walled compound is home to the Kang warriors who guard the city. When not on duty, the soldiers seem to prefer the spare comforts of their barracks, stables and exercise yards to the more refined entertainments of the city. The Ispasians consider the Kang a necessary evil.

**11) Vajran Barracks:** The levy forces of Vajra which serve under the Kang live in this underground complex, adjacent to the Kang barracks. The extensive shelter contains barracks for Vajra soldiers, as well as facilities for their families and camp followers. All exits are manned by Kang sentries.

**12) Ispasian Dwellings:** Less spacious than the estates outside of town, these homes are nonetheless extremely comfortable and pleasant places, where the Ispasians live almost free from Quan interference.

**13) Mandalan Quarter:** The most common slave race within the city, the Mandalans are respected by the Ispasians for their intelligence and artistry. The Macron allows the Mandalans the extraordinary courtesy of dwelling in their own houses at night, even though these structures belong to Ispasian masters. These homes are of typical Mandalan design—small and unpretentious, yet aesthetic and comfortable. Kang patrols sweep the quarter constantly, but seldom find any reason to molest the peaceful Mandalans.

**14) Mandalan Gardens:** The Ispasians allow their slaves to maintain these beautiful grounds, even though the Mandalans use them as places of forbidden meditation. Ispasians also enjoy the tiered gardens, and are entertained by the golden people's "quaint" rites.

**15) Foreign Quarter:** Merchants from distant lands are a common sight in Ispasia. Their movements are not restricted during the day, but at night they must remain in this quarter, where they may find food, lodging and entertainment.

**16) Ispasian Estates:** Wealthy citizens maintain villas and small estates outside the city walls. Removed from the crowded city—and from the presence of the Quan and Kang—these dwellings are graceful, pleasant places, carefully tended by Mandalan and Monad servants.

**17) The Sea Road:** This well-maintained road leads to the coast, where many Ispasians maintain summer cottages.

**18) The Ku-Chang Road:** This patrolled highway leads south to the mining settlement of Ku-Chang. Caravans of supplies and precious metals travel this road, and are preyed upon by the savage Mondre Khan. Distrusting the Kang, the Ispasians often hire foreign mercenaries to guard their caravans.

## THE IMPERIAL CITY OF TIAN

The Golden City, Tian is the capital of the Quan Empire. Situated on an island in Tian Lake, the city was designed by the Mandalans and built—at a terrible cost in lives—by legions of Vajra slave laborers. Combining subtle Mandalan architecture with the garishness of Quan decoration, even the Imperial City's lowliest public buildings are covered in gold, and the streets are paved with jade from the Vajran Hills. Palanquin-borne Quan crowd the streets along with their attendant slaves, while exotic birds flit through the perfume-scented air.

Tian is home to the Emperor and throngs of nobles, all of whom lead lives of indescribable luxury—fed, clothed and carried by fawning slaves. Here, at the heart of the Empire, the Quan are truly masters of all—their smallest whim instantly granted, their every desire fulfilled.

Despite its beauty, however, Tian is a cold and joyless place. It is a city without a soul, its luxuries bought at the cost of untold suffering and countless innocent lives. The few foreigners who do visit Tian are always eager to leave.

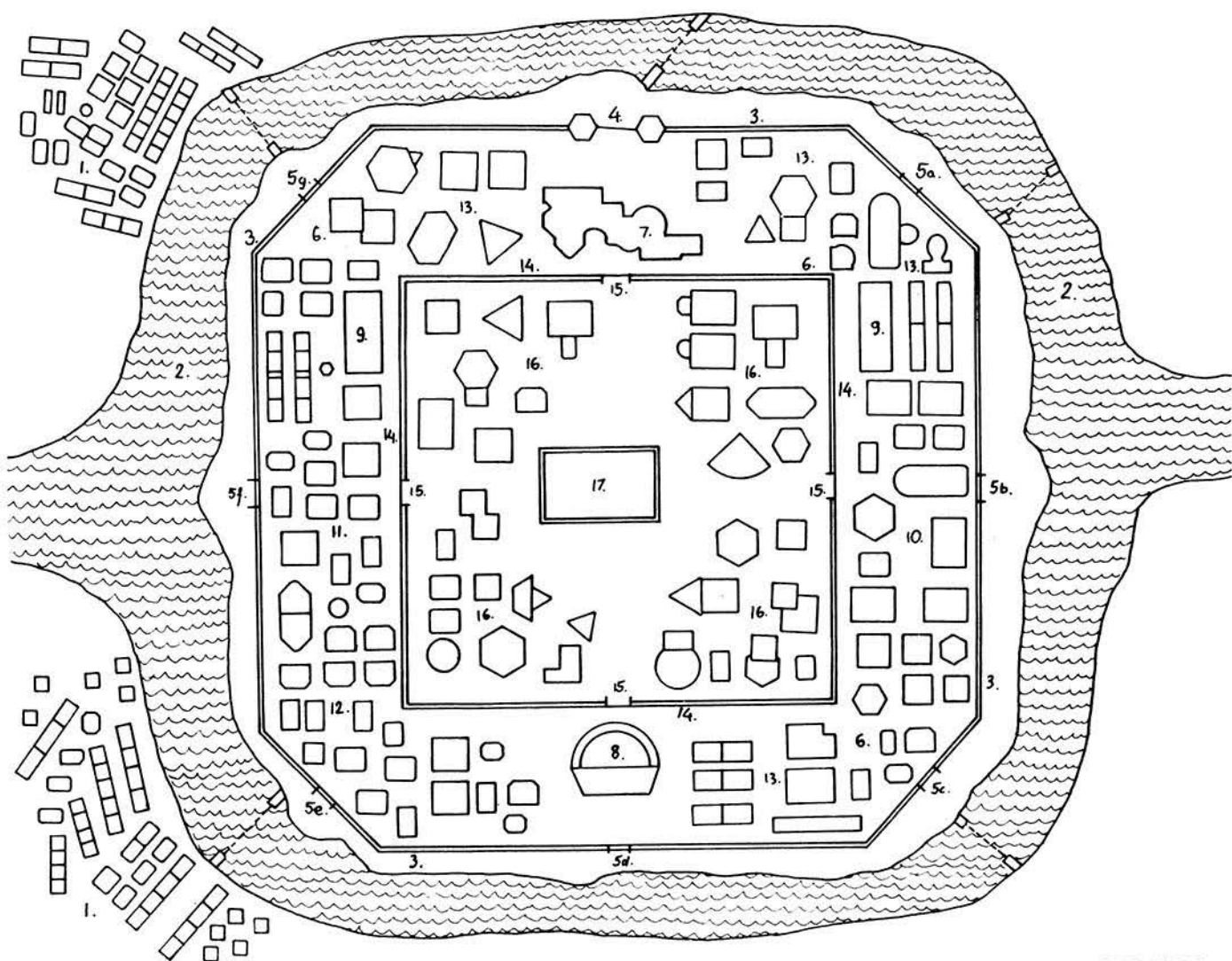
**1) Servant Dwellings:** The slaves and underlings who work in Tian dwell at night in this ramshackle sprawl of hovels and shacks. Vajra, Mandalans and a few others live here in conditions of appalling poverty, continually monitored by patrols of Kang Dragons and Tarkus attack beasts. A few Sunra live near the river bank. However, most Ispasians and Kang are allowed to live inside Tian—they are rarely seen here. House slaves owned by the Quan may dwell inside the city, but may not venture onto the streets at night without their owners' permission.

**2) Lake Tian:** The capital may only be entered by boat or wind-ship. A small fleet of ferries carries visitors across the lake. There are huge, luxurious pleasure barges manned by dozens of Vajra rowers and Sunra mariners, and dirty, barely serviceable hulks which cater to slaves and foreigners. For visitors to the city and others without daily passes, fare for even the smallest of these vessels includes a 1,000 G.L. tax, eagerly collected by the Kang warriors who patrol the shore.

**3) Wall of the Sun Throne:** Twenty feet wide and a hundred feet tall, the city's wall is carved with the images of dragons, demons, warriors and monsters. It is constantly patrolled by armored Kang, and always kept brightly lit. A recurring image engraved on the wall is a Mandalan runecasting multigram, which the golden people claim stands for "wealth, power and good fortune." The truth is somewhat more subtle. Only the Mandalans know that the real meaning of the multigram is that excessive wealth, power and good fortune inevitably lead to destruction.

**4) The Grand Gate:** These massive red-iron and gold portals are cast in an intricate frieze depicting the Emperor Shon Kwo subduing an enormous, demonic dragon—whose coils encircle the great pillars which flank the gate. The gate is usually closed, as it requires the efforts of nearly two hundred Vajra slaves to open. One of the most impressive feats of engineering and art in Talislanta, the Grand Gate is all that most foreigners see of Tian.

**5) The Lesser Gates:** Each of these gates is a work of art depicting a celebrated incident in imperial history. The Quan on these gates are statuesque, finely muscled, armored warriors who bear little



## IMPERIAL CITY OF TIAN

resemblance to the bloated slugs who rule today's Empire. For-  
eigners find the images amusing. The Mandalans who designed  
these gates intended no insult—they merely portrayed the Quan  
as they wished to be shown.

**5a) The Gate of Vajran Submission:** The Emperor, who never  
actually visited the site of conquest, is shown as a towering,  
godlike figure accepting the Vajra's meek surrender.

**5b) The Gate of the Vanquished Sunra:**—A militant Quan is  
shown at the prow of a dragon barque, with heaps of Sunra dead  
stacked about him.

**5c) The Gate of the Mandalan Flowering:** Meek Mandalan ser-  
vants are shown waiting on their Quan master.

**5d) The Gate of Kang Honor:** The Emperor and a Kang warlord  
are shown in parley, with the Quan dwarfing the military chieftain  
in stature.

**5e) The Gate of Ispasian Prudence:** A beaming Quan looks down  
upon a scene of Ispasian industry, while a scrollwork of coins and  
trade goods borders the gate.

**5f) The Warrior Gate:** Many emperors have schemed to make this  
the gate dedicated to the Mondre Khan conquest, but none have  
yet succeeded.

**5g) The Seven Moons Gate:** This frieze of the Talisnantan moons is  
older than Tian itself, having been exhumed from the ruins of a  
Mazdak city. No one living knows the significance of its strange  
glyphs.

**6) The Outer City:** Admittance to this portion of Tian is limited to  
Quan, Honorary Elite, and the few (including foreign dignitaries  
and favored merchants) who can obtain the written permission of  
the Grand Elite or the Emperor. All non-Quan must be out of the  
city by nightfall, on pain of instant execution by the well-armed  
Kang Dragons who patrol the streets.

**7) The Hall of the Emperors:** This rambling, single-story structure  
houses vaults containing the prized possessions of the emperors.  
As each Quan ruler attempts to outdo his predecessors, new  
additions to the hall grow larger and more ornate. Over the  
centuries, the structure has grown into an architectural night-  
mare—a violent mixture of styles, colors and baroque excesses.

**8) Imperial Amphitheater:** Watched by assembled Quan, Kang  
gladiators fight captured prisoners here. The battles are invariably  
bloody, drawn-out affairs—the more elaborate the production,  
the better the Quan like it. Prisoners are kept in the dungeons  
beneath the stadium prior to the gladiatorial contests.

**9) Imperial Barracks:** The Kang of the Sunrise and Moondancer  
Legions are housed here. (The Vajra members of these units live in  
the ghetto outside town.) Service in Tian is considered the best  
assignment in the Crimson Host. The Kang live in conditions of  
great luxury, tended by personal Vajra and Mandalan slaves.  
Their commanders—all of Honorary Elite status—engage in deca-  
dence and debaucheries approaching, but never equaling, those  
of the Quan themselves. Needless to say, discipline and military  
efficiency are lax. The two Tian legions, formerly elite, are rated  
as green or even levy quality by foreign commanders.



**10) Ispasian District:** Administrators from Ispasia are also allowed to live within Tian. These Honorary Elite live in restrained luxury, and perform many vital functions for the Empire. The Quan are puzzled by the fact that the Ispasians, who could obtain many other luxuries, perform most tasks for themselves and—most shocking of all—actually walk under their own power rather than ride in a palanquin.

**11) Visitor District:** This area is reserved for visiting dignitaries and Quan from other parts of the Empire. Foreigners may stay in the palatial residences here, providing they can provide 5,000 G.L. per night.

**12) Commercial District:** Mandalan and Ispasian agents sell items here for their masters. This is where foreigners may buy and sell goods—although high tariffs often make it prohibitively expensive to purchase imperial goods (10 x standard prices). The Quan rarely visit this district, preferring to leave the grubby business of buying and selling to their underlings.

**13) Quan Residences:** Even the lowliest Quan lives in a palace. The architecture is truly awful, combining ornate tastelessness with gilded excess. Each residence includes a main structure of at least three stories, stables for pets and riding beasts, gardens and reflecting pools, and quarters for the owner's servants. Only slaves owned by Quan citizens of Tian may live within the city. A slave caught on the street at night without his owner's written permission is punished with instant death.

**14) Wall of the Seven Moons:** Of dimensions similar to the outer wall of Tian, Seven Moons Wall protects the inner city. Intricate reliefs of Talislanta's seven moons are carved at regular intervals along its length. Elite and Honorary Elite may enter only by invitation of the High Elite. Foreigners are strictly forbidden from entering, unless they have the permission of the Emperor... or bring a suitable gift to the Quan ruler.

**15) The Inner Gates:** Four gates—one for each compass point, richly decorated—allow access to the inner reaches of the city. Each is guarded by Kang Dragons, and attended by Vajra slaves.

**16) The High Elite Quarter:** The status-conscious High Elite are careful to make certain that their residences are larger, more luxurious, and more richly appointed than those of the ordinary Elite. In general, this means that the structures are taller, broader, uglier and even more grotesquely decorated than the Quan mansions in the outer city. Most High Elite feel compelled to maintain small armies of slaves, far more than are actually needed, in barracks-like structures attached to their palaces.

**17) The Palace of a Thousand Fountains:** More than just a palace, the Emperor's residence is actually a city within the inner city. Only the Emperor, his family, the Grand Elite and their servants are allowed here.

**17a) The Gate of the Demon:** Cast in the form of the gaping maw of a giant wind demon, the gateway is a single piece of black iron, and the doors are sheathed in red iron. Fifty Vajra are required to open or close the entryway. The wind demon's single eye, which glares outward, is made up of hundreds of emeralds and diamonds, surrounding a single perfect ruby the size of a man's head. Rumors claim that each of the gems is protected by a guardian demon, and that removing the giant ruby will cause the gate itself to come to life and devour the thief.

**17b) The Fountains (20):** Depicting monsters and heroes from Quan history, each of these fountains is different. The Fountain of Sublime Victory, for example, depicts Kang warriors and their Quan masters defeating an army of Saurans on the Kangir Steppes. The Fountain of the Emperor's Glory shows the Emperor accepting tribute from his subject peoples. Other fountains have no

theme, but are of abstract designs suitable for meditation and contemplation. Unfortunately, these subtleties are lost on the Quan, who prefer the fountains which depict violent death or dismemberment.

**17c) The Hall of Generous Welcome:** This is where the Emperor receives visitors and tribute. The generosity in the name of the hall applies not to the Emperor, but to his visitors, who are required to pay a tribute worth at least 50,000 G.L. Ispasian assessors are on hand to receive the gifts—and Kang executioners and torturers stand prepared to deal with those whose tribute fails to please the Emperor.

**17d) The Palace of Harmony:** Designed by the Mandalans as a place of meditation, the Palace of Harmony has instead been used by the Quan to house surplus tribute. Its aesthetic pillars, lintels and arches have been obscured by random piles of boxes and chests filled with accumulated riches. Even so, the palace remains a beautiful sight, truly a place of harmony.

The treasures of centuries lie carelessly strewn about. Millions of lumens' worth of jewels and coins are piled in bags—some of which have split from age, scattering their contents across the floor. Antique manuscripts line one wall (few emperors have been interested in reading them). Exotic weapons from other lands fill another chamber—some were wielded by famous warriors, and have been thought lost forever, while others are enchanted or made of priceless materials. Magical potions, elixirs and charms have been stored seemingly at random. The mask of the Djaffir hero Ammad al Ras, for example, is carelessly jammed between a copy of the infamous *Maleficium* and a volume of Zandir erotica (the mask is said to provide complete protection from all forms of hostile magic).

**17e) The Splendid Hall of Fourteen Dragons:** Fourteen solid gold pillars cast in the forms of dragons support the domed roof of the grandest building in Tian. The Emperor spends much of his time here—attended by his slaves and doted upon by his family—planning impractical military conquests and adding new layers of fat to his already obese frame. At the rear of the hall is a long barracks which houses the Mandalan, Vajra and Kang servants who attend and guard the Emperor. The treasures which take the Emperor's fancy are stored or displayed here... and their value is incalculable.

**17f) The Guest Palace:** Personal guests of the Emperor stay here, at a cost of 10,000 G.L. in tribute per night. Many Quan, desperate to gain status, have gone broke staying in this palace.

**17g) Palace of the Concubines:** It is said that the Emperor has over 1,000 concubines. That may be true—this richly-furnished and decorated structure could easily house twice that number. The palace is guarded by Kang eunuchs.

Though officially slaves, the Emperor's concubines are of particularly favored status and are well cared for and attended. Women of every conceivable race and nationality may be found here, the better to suit the Emperor's jaded tastes. Sawila, Batrean and Mandalans are the most common of the courtesans. Rumors claim that the Emperor even has a Vajra mistress, but most scoff at this as impossible. Despite their officially low status, concubines have been known to wield considerable influence—the right word in the Emperor's ear at the right time has changed the history of the Empire. Many courtesans are veteran schemers, and intrigues within the concubines' palace are legendary.

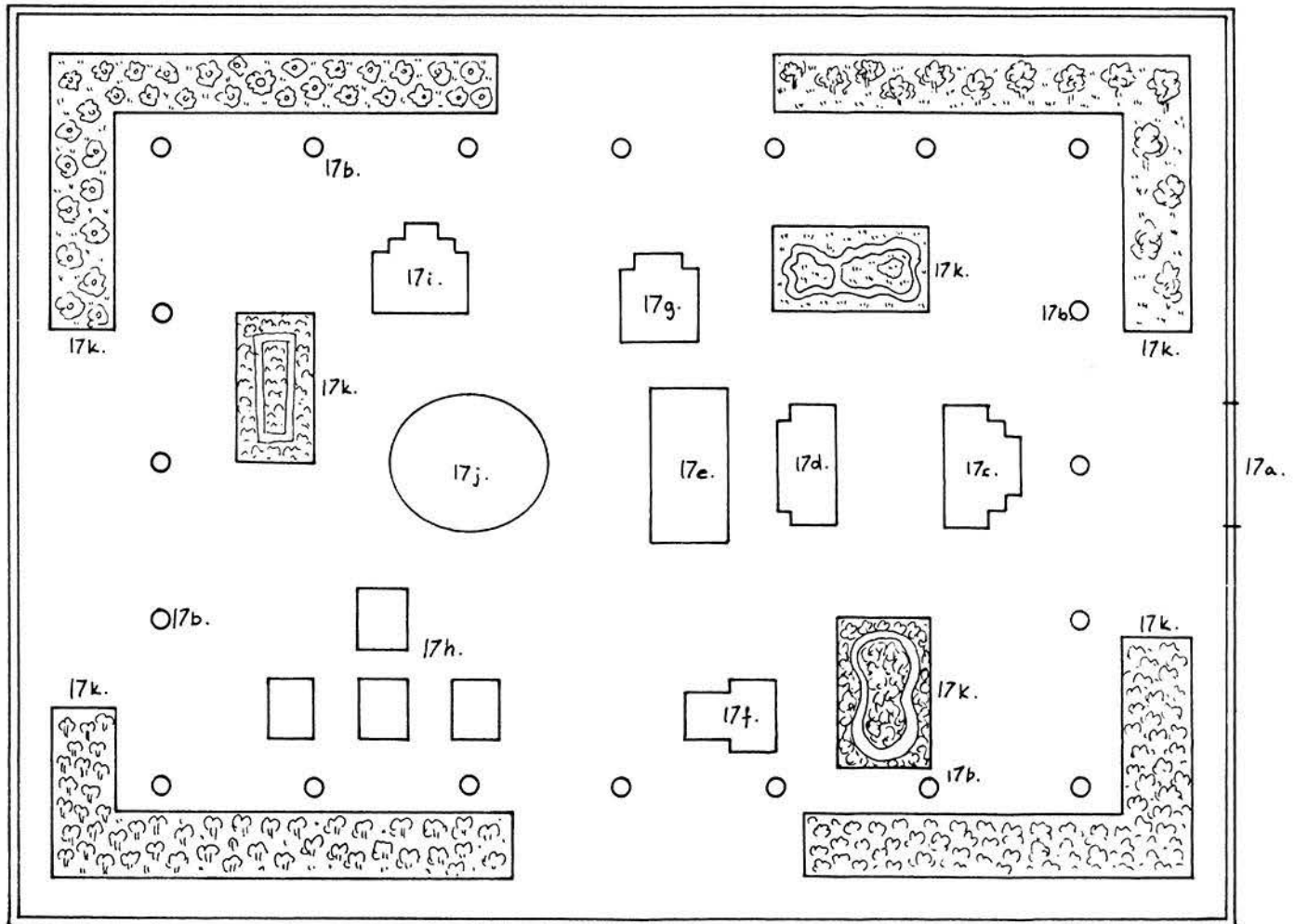
**17h) Palaces of The Grand Elite (4):** Each of the Emperor's relatives has his own residence. Royal sorcerers, diviners and alchemists are also maintained here, as guests of the Grand Elite.

**17i) Pavilion of the Favored Servants:** Not all of the Emperor's slaves live in the outer city or the lakeside ghetto. Certain Ispasians and Mandalans have rendered services valuable enough to merit permanent residence in this multi-tiered structure of lacy red iron. The Ispasian administrators and Mandalan artisans are allowed to perform their business without interference, except for a rare summons to appear before the Emperor.

**17j) Reflecting Pool:** The Emperor and his family sometimes dine beside this huge pool, and are fond of pole-barge cruises across its serene surface. Mandalan gardeners maintain the surrounding

grounds, taking time to think on the significance of the image of water and stone.

**17k) Verdant Gardens (7):** The current Emperor professes no interest in plants or growing things, but the gardens remain here for tradition's sake. Status-conscious Quan follow the Emperor's example and avoid these stands of deodar, crystal dendrons and colorful mosses, leaving them to the Mandalans and Ispasians. Here, at the heart of the Empire, the Mandalans contemplate the beauty and balance of nature, while the Ispasians come here to find some measure of isolation from the troublesome Quan.



PALACE OF 1000 FOUNTAINS

# TALISLANTAN ARCANA

A variety of arcane phenomena are known among the peoples of eastern Talislanta. Some of these include: runecasting and other unique magics of the peaceful Mandalans, the Nagra ability to sense the spirit plane, Manra shape-changing, and the necromantic magic of the Witchmen. Also provided in this section is a selection of new magical items.

## MANDALAN MAGIC

Mandalans see magic as the simple manipulation of elemental forces. A Mandalan sorcerer would never use magic to physically harm an enemy, but he might use a spell to misdirect an opponent or render him harmless. Mandalan Savants and Mystic Warriors have access to the following unique spells, rarely taught to outsiders:

**THE DISTANT CALL.** Enables the caster to send a single mental message of up to 10 words per spell level to a familiar subject in a known location. Difficulty increases with distance, with a hundred miles being the maximum range. This spell is used by Mandalans to communicate with scouts or to guide escaped slaves.

**PACIFY.** This spell eliminates aggression and anger in the subject, causing him to cease any violent behavior and sit in quiet contemplation for the duration of the spell. This spell affects all sentient creatures within 10 feet of the caster, and lasts for d6 minutes per spell level. It takes five rounds to cast. On a "Magical Mishap," the caster becomes infuriated and cannot act rationally for d20 minutes.

**MAGIC RESISTANCE:** vs. WILL, to overcome the relaxing effect of the spell.

**ORB OF PROTECTION.** A protective sphere forms around the caster when this spell is cast. The translucent golden bubble provides 3 points of armor protection per spell level, and remains for 10 minutes. The caster may take no offensive actions while protected, but may cast spells of a defensive nature. This spell is often used to provide protection so that the pacification spell can be safely cast.

## MANDALAN RUNECASTING

Mandalan Savants cast messages and cryptic prophesies utilizing sets of carved Rune Stones (described in the *SORCERER'S GUIDE*). To correctly read the results, a character must know how to read the runes—knowledge seldom granted to non-Savants—and successfully cast the *Spell of Divination*.

Runecasting has effects essentially identical to those of the *Spell of Divination*. The differences are minor but important. The stones provide a +2 bonus to the spell's level, and the divination is notoriously hard to thwart by mortal means. The results are always cryptic, and should usually be given (by the Gamemaster) in the form of a poetic fragment or a wise saying.

If powerful supernatural entities are involved, the casting of the stones may attract their attention—to the point where the beings might interfere with the rolling of the cubes (PER check to notice), or even cause the Rune Stones to burst into flames. Just as often, however, a benign power of local origin may be able to express a message or provide a warning through the stones.

Possession of Rune Stones is a capital crime in the Quan Empire, so Mandalans keep them well hidden.

## NAGRA AND SPIRITS

Nagra have the ability to follow others by noticing the signs left by the passage of their spirit. Some of these jungle people also carry arcane objects within which they store their own souls.

### Spirit Tracking

Nagra can track creatures and beings by following the faint trails left behind by their spirit essences, an ability the trackers claim is maintained by eating live serpents (the connection eludes non-Nagra.) Any creature with a spirit leaves such a trail. The ability to see spiritual residues is unique to the Nagra, and relies upon techniques taught by the shamans to each youth during the coming-of-age ceremony.

To find the trail of a known being or type of being, a Nagra must succeed at a PER Roll on the *Action Table*. There is a -1 penalty for every day passed since the trail was made. Spirit tracking, unlike regular tracking, is not affected by normal weather, but Black Wind, Black Lightning, and the Ghost Wind completely obliterate all spirit trails. Once the trail is picked up, it can only be lost if masked with strong magic.

### Spirit Jars

All Nagra Spirit-Trackers wear these small stone vials on cords slung about their necks, or secreted in a belt or shoulder pouch. They claim that these devices contain their soul-essences, and confer protection from hostile spiritforms of all sorts. Most Spirit Jars are handed down from the Nagra's ancestors, although when necessary, Nagra Shamans can still manufacture them.

A Nagra with his soul in a Spirit Jar is immune to all *Charms*, *Hexes*, and *Spells of Influence*, as well as the necromantic abilities of the Witchmen. Other attempts to magically affect the Nagra are at a -3 due to the protection of the jar.

However, the Spirit Jar is also a disadvantage—Nagra are greatly weakened (halve their current hit point total, rounding up) if their jar is not on their immediate person. Even more serious, destroying a Nagra's Spirit Jar separates the Nagra's spirit from this plane, effectively killing the spirit-tracker. Nagra are therefore loath to let an "occupied" Spirit Jar pass out of their hands.

## SHAPE-CHANGING (MANRA)

The unique Manra ability to change their shape distinguishes them from all other primitive tribes of Talislanta, although some Forgotten Age tomes hint that similar metamorphic abilities were once known among the now-extinct lycanthromorphs.

Manra Shape-Changers may temporarily assume the form and abilities of any plant or animal. The change takes only a minute, as does the return to their normal shape. Only their bodies are transformed—possessions and clothing are not affected. Manra wear few clothes, to avoid problems when shape-changing.

To shape-change, the Manra must consume a kesh elixir (made from the jabutu plant). This brew is prepared by the village shaman, using rituals no outsider has ever seen (or, at least, reported). One plant produces enough juice for 3 doses of shape-changing elixir. Consuming this Elixir of Kesh without having the Manra training, however, causes random, generally permanent shape-changes in the imbiber.



Manra children learn to shape-change almost as soon as they can walk, and are able to assume the shapes of simple plants and weak animals for as long as a minute. The best Shape-Changeers can maintain their changed shapes for an hour or more—but not much longer, for the strain might cause permanent injury, or even prevent the Manra from returning to his natural form. Manra who maintain a shape for too long may have limbs twisted, withered, or permanently held in a bestial (or even plant-like) shape. A Shape-Changer knocked unconscious loses whatever shape he has adopted and quickly returns to his original form.

In game terms, a Manra can adopt any shape with a level less than or equal to his own, for a number of rounds equal to 10x the shape changer's experience level. Each additional ten minutes require a successful roll against the character's WILL, with a -1 penalty on the *Action Table* for each previous successful WILL Roll. If a "Failure" is rolled, the Manra immediately returns to his natural shape. A "Mishap," however, can lead to serious consequences. A roll versus CON is required, to determine whether the Shape-Changer has damaged himself—if he fails, he cannot shape-change for d20 days. At the Gamemaster's discretion, other results are possible. In rare cases, Manra have become trapped in their shape-changed shape, or have been unable to fully return to their original form.

Such a short-duration ability might seem useless, but timely use of their shape-changing powers can make a Manra virtually undetectable. When Witchmen and Kang raiders strike into the Jade Mountains to butcher or imprison the Manra, they find only empty villages—while the Manra remain close at hand, concealed as trees or birds.

## WITCHMEN NECROMANCY

The magic of the Chana Witchmen combines the twin principles of sympathy and contagion—that is, that each body retains a connection with its spirit after death. Witchmen necromancy uses these concepts to control spirits and animate the bodies of the dead.

Study of these necromantic practices is banned in the Seven Kingdoms, the Quan Empire, Aaman (but not Zandu), and most other civilized countries. Witchmen figure strongly in Talislantan children's tales, holding a place beside the Beastmen, the Ur, and the Jaka as frightening villains. Given these legends, a Witchman can expect a poor reception anywhere.

### Juju

The Witchmen are not alone in their ability to animate the corpses of their enemies and use them as servants, but they are the most capable at this grisly sorcery. An expurgated quote from Mordante's *The Necromantium* provides us with the best description:

"The creation of a juju or walking dead-man is a complex ritual taking three days, including the associated ritual chants, gestures, and dances, each of which is performed with solemnity. The living subject is made to drink four ounces of kesh each day—a poisonous dose which kills some victims early, ruining the ritual. The shaman gradually removes those organs which promote decay, using anesthetic implements made from the wood of the violet creeper, and seals the orifices with stitches of fine plant fiber.

"At suns-set on the third day, the shaman removes those organs which sustain life—the brain, the heart and the lungs. If he can, he immediately imprisons the subject's spirit in a small wicker image, previously prepared by being wrapped in the hair and soaked in the blood of the victim. If successful, the shaman then places a soulstone within the subject's skull, stitches the eyes and mouth closed to keep the new spirit imprisoned, and begins a

night-long ritual to abjure the spirit to obey its new master. Sunrise reveals the new juju."

To imprison the victim's spirit, the shaman must succeed at a Primitive Magical Talents roll on the *Action Table*. The victim spirit resists by succeeding at a Will Roll, with a penalty on the *Action Table* equal to the Magic Rating of the shaman.

Juju are bound to the wicker image used in their creation—possession of it gives the shaman control over the reanimated body. The zombies obey verbal commands, although like most such revived creatures, they understand only simple orders. Destruction of the image causes the juju to instantly decay to a putrid slime.

Although the ritual retards decomposition, juju are not immune to decay. The bodies start to rot within days. In game terms, a monthly CON Roll must be made for every juju. "Failure" means that the creature's CON drops by 1. When the score reaches -5, the juju collapses and is no longer of any use. On a "Mishap" result, the corpse disintegrates within the next d10 days.

### Soulstones

The Nagra use these necromantic fetishes to trap wandering soul essences such as spirits of the dead, the astral bodies of dreamers, and even the spirits of individuals under the influence of kesh or other mind-expanding substances.

A Nagra soulstone is a black diamond, black opal or ebontine crystal not less than thirteen carats in weight. The ritual to create the soulstone requires rare magical pigments and aromatics, which take d10 x 3 weeks to gather. The shaman begins by painting arcane symbols on his body and inscribing others upon the ground. He then makes a fire, and places the stone within it. Finally, he adds the aromatics, along with a few drops of kesh, creating a temporary opening into the spirit plane. Any spiritform which approaches the opening is drawn through and trapped within the soulstone. Once the spirit has been captured, the shaman may discern the characteristics of the spirit and communicate mentally with it by concentrating on the soulstone.

To discover what has been captured, the Gamemaster may roll a d20 and consult the following table:

Die Roll	Spirit Type
1-3	No Spirit
4-14	Lesser Spiritform
15-17	Spirit (d10 level) with d10 Skills
18-19	Spirit with One Attribute at +3
20	Unique Spirit (Gamemaster's discretion)

*Lesser spiritforms* have no outstanding abilities. They are typically wandering dreamers or kesh-addicts, with little value except as spirits to be placed within jujus.

*Spirits with a high attribute* must have at least one mental attribute—INT, WILL or PER—with a score of +4 or higher. The Gamemaster might select the spirit's former character type semi-randomly by leafing through the TALISLANTA HANDBOOK until he sees one that qualifies.

*Spirits with unusual skills* retain at least one of the talents they knew when alive. To determine the main thrust of the spirit's former training, the Gamemaster may roll a d20 and consult the following table:

Die Roll	Skill Group
1-4	Backgrounds and Common Abilities
5-8	Combat Skills
9-10	Magical/Alchemical Skills

11-12	Performing Talents
13-14	Scholarly Pursuits
15-16	Thieving Talents
17-18	Trades and Crafts
19-20	Wilderness Skills

Skills within a given group can be selected randomly, or they can be assigned (Gamemaster's discretion). Once the spirit's major training is known, the Gamemaster can select a character type for the spirit which is compatible with the skill.

**Uses of Soulstones.** The enchanted gems are often used in the creation of jujus, allowing the shaman to place an obedient spirit within the animated body. Stones containing powerful entities are greatly prized, for the spirits can transfer their abilities to the shaman who captured them—if they can be allied. To ally a spirit in a soulstone, a shaman must consume 3 ounces of kesh, leave his body, and fight an astral battle with the spirit in the soulstone.

To resolve the battle, the shaman rolls against his Primitive Magical Talents on the *Action Table*. The spirit's WILL rating is a penalty to the roll. "Success" or "Success Plus" means that the spirit in the soulstone is allied with the shaman, and he can now draw on that spirit's attributes or skills. For example, if the allied spirit has a PER score of +3, the shaman could replace his natural Perception with the spirit's. A "Failure" means that the spirit resists the shaman's alliance (no future attempts may be made). "Mishap" indicates that the spirit in the soulstone defeats the shaman—the shaman's spirit is trapped in the soulstone, and the victorious spirit gains possession of the shaman's body.

#### Shrunken Head Fetishes

These grisly tokens are the shrunken heads of Witchmen enemies. To create a Shrunken Head fetish, a shaman requires a live captive, an empty soulstone, and a large supply of kesh. A repetitive ritual is employed to force the spirit of the living captive from his body and into the soulstone. Meanwhile, other Witchmen torture the captive, and force him to drink kesh until he dies.

To succeed at the ritual, the shaman must succeed at a Primitive Magical Talents skill roll on the *Action Table*. The subject's WILL rating applies as a penalty to the roll. If the shaman is successful, the victim's soul is imprisoned within the soulstone.

Next, the shaman boils the head of the now-dead victim for three days in a mixture of devilroot, kesh and blood, until it shrinks to half its former size. He then places the soulstone inside the skull cavity, stitches the back of the head closed, and replaces the head in the pot. The Witchman boils it until the skull constricts around the soulstone, and the lips retract to expose the teeth in a grisly grin.

A spirit captured in the soulstone of a Shrunken Head can be made to truthfully answer 3 questions per day. Normally, it can only answer with information it possessed when it was alive. However, there is always the chance (1-in-20) that the spirit within the fetish can contact a more powerful being from one of the other planes and obtain an answer from it. These occasions are usually marked by noticeable disturbances—sudden chill winds, mysterious lights or noises, or other manifestations from the being contacted. Unfortunately, these powerful entities are not bound to answer truthfully, and certain cosmological questions are beyond even their ken.

#### Wrist Vipers

Witchmen train the deadly Death's Head Viper, making it docile enough to ride on their wrists like a living bracelet. In the *Necromantium*, Mordante describes the methods used to train these vipers:

"Each shaman maintains a small mound-like burrow where a colony of these vipers resides. When a warrior wishes to gain a living adornment, he captures an enemy and brings him to the shaman. The three go to the viper colony, and the Witchmen each consume two ounces of kesh.

"The shaman pounds rhythmically on the ground to summon a young viper to the surface. When the serpent comes out, the shaman performs a ritual transferring the soul of the captive into the viper, and binding that viper to the warrior. The warrior is given a graven image which represents the bond between the serpent and the warrior.

"While the shaman controls it, the warrior must feed the viper with his own blood mixed with one ounce of kesh. This must be done daily for several weeks. This period is critical, as if the shaman errs, the snake will use its poisoned fangs on the warrior. Even the Witchmen do not have an antidote to the venom of the Death's Head Viper. If, however, this grisly fate is avoided, the two grow into symbiosis, and the viper attacks anyone who comes near it, except one who possesses the graven image."

At the time of the ritual, and each week thereafter for d10 weeks, the shaman must succeed at Primitive Magical Talents skill roll on the *Action Table* in order to maintain control of the serpent. "Failure" indicates that the serpent has bitten the warrior. On a "Mishap," the shaman himself is bitten. A shaman may only train one wrist viper at a time.

## MISCELLANEOUS ARCANUM

**DEAD VINE:** Native to Harak, the plants known as Dead Vines are parasites found growing on Deadwood trees. Their dusty yellow leaves and clusters of small black berries give a semblance of life to the lifeless-seeming trees, but the tightening roots of Dead Vines gradually kill their hosts by burrowing within and infesting the heartwood.

**The Fruit.** Dead Vine berries are tough and chewy, and when wrapped retain their pungent flavor and potency for up to two years. There are d20 berries on a single tree. This fruit is highly toxic. Non-Harakin victims must make a CON Roll for each berry they swallow—"Failure" brings on severe nausea for d20 hours, followed by d6 days of extreme thirst and hunger. "Mishap" causes the victim's death.

Harakin build up a tolerance as children, starting with one berry and increasing the dosage as they grow older. This practice is directly responsible for their longevity and limited telepathy. Eating a handful of berries allows a Harakin warrior to travel for d6 days without water, and doubles his telepathic range for d20 hours. Afterward, however, the warrior must make a daily CON Roll (at a -5 penalty)—until he succeeds, he is physically unable to eat or drink. (50 G.L. per berry; not ordinarily for sale)

**The Leaves.** Thrown on a fire, Dead Vine leaves create an intoxicating smoke that, when inhaled by Harakin warriors, results in a battle frenzy (+2 to all combat rolls on the *Action Table*). Warriors so affected are oblivious to pain and fatigue for d10 hours, but require d20 hours of uninterrupted rest when the effects of the smoke wear off. Non-Harakin exposed to the smoke suffer terrible hallucinations for d12 hours, and are unable to sleep until they succeed at a twice-daily WILL Roll. (10 G.L. per bundle; not ordinarily for sale)

**ENCHANTED DRAGON HARPOON:** Only a dozen of these Sunra harpoons exist. Carefully kept secret from the Kang, they are stored in a secret underwater chamber in Isalis' Citadel of Pilots. Once every fifty years, a champion mariner is chosen to use one for a sacred (and secret) sea-dragon hunt. The harpoons are also used in important religious ceremonies. They range in

increased damage from +2 to +4. (15,000 G.L., to a collector or the Quan; not sold)

**MANDALAN PEACE CHARM:** Small, seemingly nondescript bits of metal on leather thongs, these Peace Charms are in reality potent magical items. Each is enchanted with the *Mandalan Pacify* spell, which forces those attempting violent acts against the wearer to make WILL Rolls (see the spell description, above) or be pacified for d6 x 3 minutes. (500 G.L.)

**POTION OF WATERBREATHING:** A secret of the Sunra, this potion allows a non-aquatic being to magically breathe for d20 x 6 minutes while underwater. It has no effect on Sunra or similar semi-aquatic races. By imperial decree, the Sunra are bound to keep the Kang garrison in Isalis supplied with two potions per soldier. The imperials sell their excess, but forbid the Sunra from trading it themselves. (However, the potion may be surreptitiously given to outsiders the Sunra respect and trust.) To manufacture the potion, an Aquamancer requires 3 drams of powdered pink coral and 2 Chang gills. (500 G.L.; normally available only from imperial suppliers)

**POTION OF EXTENDED WATERBREATHING:** Works the same as the Potion of Waterbreathing, but lasts for d12 days. To concoct this powerful potion, an Aquamancer requires the same ingredients plus the complete gill set of an Imrian. This magic is unknown to the Kang or their masters. (10,000 G.L.; very rare)

**POWDERED MUSKRONT HORN:** This hallucinogenic is manufactured by the shamans of the Samir Herdsmen, who use it in small doses to bring on visions of the gods. Drinking this drug is one of the challenges offered to those wishing to travel through the valleys of the herdsman.

Those forced to drink this drug must try a CON Roll on the *Action Table*. On a "Failure" result, the victim hallucinates for d4 hours (a successful PER Roll is required to realize the hallucinations are not real). Multiple victims participate in one another's illusions. The Gamemaster may use a failed PER Roll as the excuse for a truly fiendish adventure, which in the end turns out to be a dream

sequence. A "Mishap" indicates that the victim becomes dislodged from this plane and migrates to the Nightmare Dimension.

The drug is created through the Concoct Powders skill, and requires the inner horn of a muskront (powdered), 3 drams of water gathered from icicle rain, and 1 dram of Yaksha musk. These ingredients are a well-guarded secret of the Samir shamans. (2,500 G.L. per dose; extremely rare)

**SUNRA AQUAMANTIC GLOBE:** Using this enchanted item, a Sunra Aquamancer can determine his vessel's position at sea, relative to Isalis. He must successfully cast a *Spell of Divination* to activate the globe, and succeed at a Navigator skill roll to correctly interpret the results. Non-Sunra cannot use the globe unless they have been trained to do so. The base of the globe is carved from coral and set with three immense pearls. The sphere itself is a polished gullet stone obtained from the stomach of a sea dragon. (15,000 G.L.)

**HEADRESS OF THE SAVANTS:** Made sometime during or before the Age of Confusion, these devices contain powers which are only dimly perceived by those who currently possess them. The artifacts are never out of the sight of the Savants of Xanadas, who wear them constantly. The scholars at the Lyceum Arcanum have made these speculations about the enchanted headgear:

- The headdresses enable the Savants to telepathically summon the Chosen Ones, and compel them to make the journey to the Temple.
- The Scrying Crystals are somehow linked to these headdresses.
- Before the founding of the Temple of the Seven Moons, the Savants used the headdresses to teleport. Apparently, three Savants were required to travel in a group.
- The Savant's ability to prolong their lifespan depends on the wearing of this headgear—if it were to be removed, the ancients would immediately wither and die.



# THE NATURALIST'S COMPENDIUM

The following section details new varieties of life native to eastern Talislanta. The basic format for the statistics is:

**SIZE:** Typical height/length and weight, usually given as a range.

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** Any unusually low or high attribute score possessed by a typical member of the species. Positive ratings indicate superior abilities, and negative modifiers denote below-average scores. Attributes not listed are average. The attributes used in the Talislantan system are: physical strength (STR); dexterity (DEX); constitution (CON) or *endurance*; speed (SPD) or *quickness*; intelligence (INT); willpower (WILL); perception (PER) or *sensory awareness*; and charisma (CHA).

**LEVEL:** Indicator of general degree of ability. If a range is given, then all creatures have at least the lowest score in the range. If a plus sign is used, then the entity has an unlimited potential for improved levels. If both are used, then most individuals will be

from the range of levels given, but exceptional beings can have almost any score.

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Indicates the type of attack used, and the typical damage caused.

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Extraordinary talents or powers.

**ARMOR:** The rating of a creature's natural protection is given in terms of manufactured armor (chain-mesh, plate, and so on).

**HIT POINTS:** Typical score for an average individual, usually given as a range.

**HABITAT:** The region or terrain types where this creature can be found.

**COMMENTS:** Miscellaneous information for the Gamemaster.

## ARACHNUS

These large, carnivorous Creatures reside in the deep crevasses of Harak. Arachnus' dislike leaving their rocky nests—doing so only at dusk, when their dark-gray coloring blends in with the surrounding landscape. Hiding in the darkest shadows, a hunting spider builds a series of traps within which to catch its prey. Thick, ropy strands of webbing are stretched between boulders or attached to stunted trees, hanging in loops at a variety of heights (from ankle-height to eye-level).

When a victim blunders into a strand of web, the material reacts instantly, contracting in length and thus pulling its prey high into the air. The coating on the web is a powerful adhesive which sticks to any surface. The only known way to remove the webs, once they adhere, is to burn the flammable strands.

Once a victim is within its trap, the spider layers it with webbing to immobilize it, then drags the cocooned prisoner back to its crevasse nest. Injecting the victim with digestive juices, the spider then stores the living creature for d6 days until the acids have properly "cured" its food. The spiders of the nest gather when it's time to devour their still-living prey, viciously fighting over the remains and often rending the unfortunate victims.

Harakin hunting parties wear leather vests and high boots to protect them from the webs, shrugging out of the loose clothing when it becomes snared. They also carry weapons with which to chop through the strands. The arachnids are frequently hunted by the Harakin, as the meat from a Arachnus can feed a small clan for several days.

### ARACHNUS

**SIZE:** 3-5'; 130-150 lbs.

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR +1, DEX +3, CON -1, SPD +3, INT -2, PER +1

**LEVEL:** 2-5

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Bite—d6

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Digestive juices, webbing with powerful adhesive and constrictive properties

**ARMOR:** As per plate

**HIT POINTS:** 10-30

**HABITAT:** Harak (crevasses and rocky plains), rare elsewhere.

**COMMENTS:** The webs have an Armor Rating of 1 and a Damage Rating of 15. The digestive juices enfeeble their victim and cause exquisite pain, doing d6 damage per day for d6 days. The spider can drag prey up to four times its own size.



## HILL STRIDER

Heavier and sturdier than their western cousins, Hill Striders are just as fierce. Bred from the wild herds of the Kangir Steppes, these steeds are used by the Kang as heavy cavalry mounts and as burden beasts to pull chariots and war machines.

Stronger but slower than normal Striders, Hill Striders can wear chain-mesh leather barding without being noticeably encumbered. Other differences between Hill Striders and other types of Striders are their sharp horns (used in bloody mating rituals), tougher skin (studded with bony knobs), and shorter, ridged tail.

Hill Striders are hard to control, particularly during mating season (the months of Ardan and Drome). Steeds which have escaped from captivity roam in bands through the Kangir Steppes, and sometimes attack caravans when maddened by seasonal lusts.

### HILL STRIDER

**SIZE:** 7'-8'; 850-1,000 lbs.

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR +8, DEX -1, SPD +4, INT -6, PER +2

**LEVEL:** 1-5

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Bite—d6; Talons—d10; Horn—d6

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Claws and bite penetrate leather (this armor offers no protection against a Hill Strider attack)

**ARMOR:** As per chain-mail

**HIT POINTS:** 15-35

**HABITAT:** Greylands of Quan, Steppes of Kangir

**COMMENTS:** At the beginning of any combat, a Hill Strider rider must succeed at a Riding skill roll to retain control of his steed. If he fails, the animal ignores further commands and madly attacks the enemy—the rider must make a DEX Roll each turn to avoid being thrown clear. During the mating season, all riding rolls are made at -3 penalty on the Action Table.



## MANTID

These nocturnal hunters are smaller relatives of the dreaded Bat Mantra, and live on small game they catch with their whip-like tails. Though frightening in appearance, Mantids are not capable of—or much interested in—doing harm to larger creatures.

Hunted for their rich brown body-fur, the Mantids were quite rare before the Quan conquest of the Vajra. In modern times, however, the unmolested avians have rapidly increased in numbers. Capable of entering small openings by folding their wings and wriggling within, Mantids generally lair within caves and abandoned mines.

These nervous creatures try to escape by taking flight if attacked, and may panic if surprised in their underground nests. Bright light blinds Mantids, although they compensate by relying on their keen sense of hearing.

### MANTID

**SIZE:** 3' long (5' wingspan); 45-85 lbs.

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR -3, CON -2, INT -3, PER -1 [daylight] / +3 [in the dark]

**LEVEL:** 1

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Tail (whip)—d6; Wings (buffeting)—d4

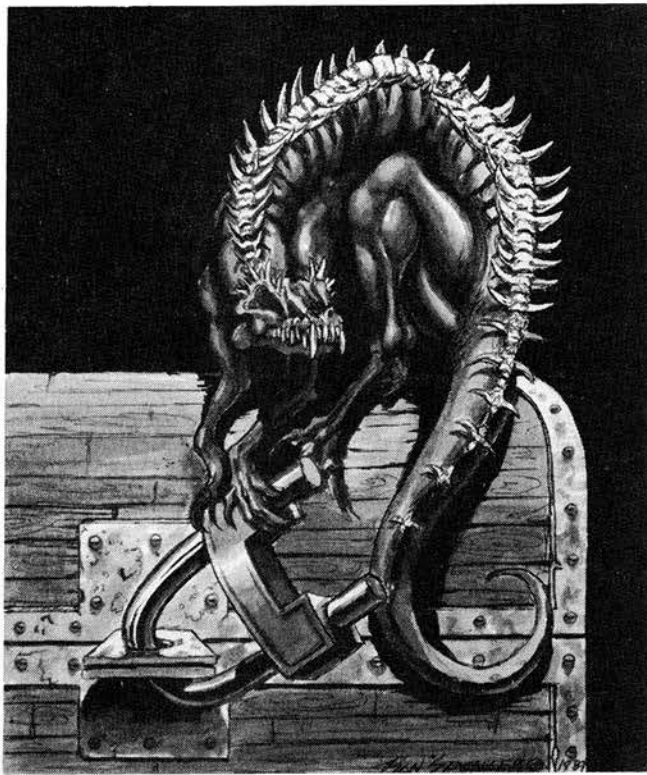
**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Beautiful fur (body), flight, keen hearing, night vision

**ARMOR:** None

**HIT POINTS:** 3-10

**HABITAT:** Vajran Hills (caverns, caves and abandoned mines)

**COMMENTS:** Mantids sleep during daylight hours, in large nests of 6-10 individuals.



## MOUNTAIN SKELL

Native to the coastal regions of Harak and northern Quan, these large, furred, scavenger-rodents are crafty bandits. Hoarders by nature, Mountain Skell swarm in packs through Harakin camps and wild dractyl cliff-nests, stealing whatever they can. Unattended nests or huts are certain to be ravaged. If an occupant is encountered, some of the Skell attempt to drive off or distract the enemy, while the others take sharp objects and useful tools, or delicious dractyl hatchlings and eggs.

A Mountain Skell is no match for a hungry adult dractyl. The avian predators repay the scavengers for their raids by hunting them relentlessly. The Harakin trap the creatures for their fur, but they find Skell meat bitter and tough.

The intelligence of the Skell is transitory. The animals are driven to learn, and seem incapable of ignoring a challenge such as a locked chest or a puzzling new Harakin tool. However, once they master a secret—when a Skell finally figures out the purpose of a stolen implement, for instance—they move on to new puzzles, and soon forget what they've discovered.

The Mandalans tell many tales about the Skell, endowing them with near man-like intelligence and perception. Some of the most famous include legends of a Skell which learned to cast spells, and of the "Master of the Packs," a Great Skell which supposedly presides over packs of lesser Skell. Western scholars dismiss such stories as fanciful imaginings.

### MOUNTAIN SKELL

**SIZE:** 1'-3'; 45-80 lbs.

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR -1, DEX +3, SPD +2, PER +1

**LEVEL:** 1-3

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Bite—d4; Claws—d6

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Expert climber, prehensile tail

**ARMOR:** As per leather

**HIT POINTS:** 8-16

**HABITAT:** Harak (coastal mountains)

**COMMENTS:** Skell live and travel in groups of up to 12 individuals, and attack as a pack. The species may be related to the race of Ferrans.

## SCRUGGER

Small carnivorous rodents, Scruggers run in packs through the jungle. The six-legged creatures have mottled brown fur, with short, pointed ears and broad paws. A third of their body length is taken up by a long, double-jointed jaw lined with tiny, needle-sharp teeth. A Scrugger is naturally slender, but swells to a near-spherical shape should it find enough food to gorge itself.

The life cycle of the Scruggers appears to be a d6-day binge of eating, during which they devour any animals they can catch, followed by a d8-week hibernation, when the next generation of the rodents is born. The young Scruggers' first meal consists of the bodies of their parents.

The jungle rodents have no intelligence to speak of—just a powerful instinctive drive to find the nearest source of meat. Scrugger-infested regions are often littered with bare skeletons of prey surrounded by the tiny skeletons of their conquerors. If they can find no other prey, Scruggers willingly attack one another, consuming those which die.

### SCRUGGER

**SIZE:** 1' long; 15-30 lbs.

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR -2, SPD +4, PER +2

**LEVEL:** 1-2

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Bite—1-2

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**ARMOR:** None

**HIT POINTS:** 1-2

**HABITAT:** Chana (jungles), Quan (southern jungles), Faradun (rare)

**COMMENTS:** Scruggers travel in hordes of d10 x 10 members. They swarm their enemies, with d10 rodents attacking each man-sized foe.





## TUATARA

White and eyeless, these reptilians evolved deep beneath Talislanta in the network of passages which some have named the Underground Highway. Tuatara infest the deep caverns of eastern Talislanta, and sometimes come as far as the lowest levels of Vajran excavations.

The predators are driven by ravenous hunger, and eat plants and endure toxins which other animals find poisonous. However, their preferred prey are the other animal denizens of the underground. Tuatara hunt in packs, and relentlessly track their prey once they have picked up a scent. When the animals sense the heat of their prey nearby, they call out in a strange throbbing roar of triumph which echoes for miles through the subterranean labyrinths.

These determined, slow-witted reptiles attack any creature they can catch. Their massive jaws are built to bite down and hold onto their prey, rather than to bite and then bite again as other predators do. Even large victims are often unable to dislodge their Tuatara attackers, and bleed to death as a result.

### TUATARA

**SIZE:** 4-5'; 80-130 lbs.

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR +5, INT -3, WILL +3, PER +3  
**LEVEL:** 1-2

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Bite—d6 (see below)

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Ability to detect creatures by the heat they produce (60' range), keen sense of smell

**ARMOR:** As per chain-mesh

**HIT POINTS:** 8-16

**HABITAT:** Eastern Talislanta (deep caves and caverns)

**COMMENTS:** Tuatara travel in packs of 2-8 members. Once they successfully bite, they continue to hold on to their victim—and the bleeding causes an additional 2 hit points of damage per round. While held in the lizard's jaws, the victim has a -4 penalty to all *Action Table* rolls.

There are two methods to escape the jaws of a Tuatara. The first is to wrench free, which requires a successful STR Roll from the victim—and the Tuatara's STR is a penalty to the roll on the *Action Table*. Whether or not the victim gets free, he immediately takes an additional d8 points of damage from the attempt.

The second way to escape is to convince the reptilian to release its hold. This requires a powerful blow to the Tuatara's skull—a "Critical Hit" on the *Action Table*.



## TALISLANTAN INSECTS

Most Talislantan insects (including those listed below) have the following common characteristics:

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR -15, DEX +10-12, CON -10, SPD +10-12, INT -15, PER +6

**LEVEL:** 0

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Bite or Sting—1 point

**ARMOR:** None

**HIT POINTS:** 1

### LEAF-WORM

The larvae of a small, nondescript moth, Leaf-Worms are common in the Variegated Forest, where they may be found in virtually any color. Large and slow moving, Leaf-Worms are herded and used as food by Chromid tribes.

### SCIMITAR BEETLE

Named for the large, sweeping mandibles of the male insects—used only during mating combat—Scimitar Beetles have been domesticated by the Chromids, and serve as their beasts of burden.

## TALISLANTAN FLORA

**Azure Wood:** A hardwood tree with coarse bark, Azure Wood grows up to 80 feet in height and is found deep in the Cerulean Forest. The lower canopy of these trees is 20 feet off the ground—making it difficult to gather the tree's valuable leaves, which are used to produce a dark blue dye. The deep blue color and extreme hardness of this wood are popular with sculptors, and artwork made from this wood is reputed to have a hypnotic and calming effect on those who view it.

**Azurine Phlox:** A healing herb found on the shores of Moon Lake, this low-growing annual's small, highly fragrant blue-gray blossoms contain a healing substance—*azulen*. Infusions of this rare herb—employed as herbal hair rinses, eye baths and face washes—are reputed to restore d10 hit points. Azulen teas are also promoted for settling stomach upsets, and some alchemists use *azulen* as a potent substitute for balmroot.

**Chromasia:** A species unique to the Variegated Forest, this bush produces berries of every imaginable color—all on a single plant. The fruit is used in the Empire for gourmet cooking, and sometimes exported as an exotic foodstuff.

Perhaps one-in-100 Chromasia produce berries which have magical or healing effects dependent on their color. The Sindaran Torann's *Alchemical Companion* lists the following effects (per single berry). Effects are not cumulative—that is, six yellow berries do not provide +6 armor protection. Torann adds that unripe or rotten berries—detectable with a successful *PER* Roll—have unpredictable effects.

**Yellow.** Temporarily hardens the subject's skin, providing an additional +1 point of armor protection for d10 minutes.

**Blue.** Increases the subject's *CHA* rating by +1 for d10 minutes.

**Green.** Increases the subject's *DEX* rating by +1 for d10 minutes.

**Orange.** Increases the subjects *STR* rating by +1 for d10 minutes.

**Purple.** Increases the subject's *SPD* rating by +1 for d10 minutes.



**Ergif:** This plant, known to the Vajra as "Earth Gift," is a rare healing herb now found only on the shores of Moon Lake. Once cultivated by the Vajra, Ergif and its properties are known only to their priestly healers. This wide-bladed, pure-white plant can cure otherwise fatal diseases, neutralize poisons, and restore vision and hearing. If the leaves of the plant are wrapped in pure mothsilk and soaked in the waters of Moon Lake, they retain their potency for up to a week.

**Gallwort Caprice:** A tan mushroom with a pale green cap, this fungus is found in caverns and abandoned mines. At maturity, it releases a powerful and aromatic pheromone at the same time that it releases its spores. Animals are attracted to the sweet scent, thereby picking up the spores on their skin and fur and transporting them to other parts of the caverns. These mushrooms are highly valued by perfumers and alchemists who seek to distill the aromatic attractant. Dark Tanasian experiments hint that distilled Caprice will work on sentient beings, allowing them to be ensnared and manipulated through their affections.

**Iron-Black Annularia:** A herbaceous joint-grass found on the shores of Moon Lake, this blue plant has wide black leaves with an unusual medicinal use. Tasteless and odorless when dried and powdered, the leaves can be added to any liquid. The unwitting drinker becomes light-headed, giddy, and romantically inclined toward his present company of an opposite sex for d8 hours following consumption (resist vs. *WILL*). Giddy characters suffer a -2 penalty to *WILL*, *DEX* and *PER*.

**Iron Weed:** A small gray plant, Iron Weed has wispy, dessicated-appearing tendrils. Found flourishing in shaded ravines in Harak, the weed is as strong as black iron, and its tendrils can cut through flesh like thin wire. Assassins, Revenants and thieves pay great sums for the few specimens which arrive in the outer world, and

use them as strings in their garrottes. The Harakin have no use for the tendrils, but eat the weed's large, soft tubular root.

**Methaline Woadberry:** Native to the Cerulean Forest, this striking dark-blue shrub grows up to 12 feet in height. Blooming in early summer, the flowers release a strong heady scent. The berries ripen by the end of summer and hang for weeks if undiscovered by shriekers, who are especially fond of the bright blue fruit. There is profit in harvesting this wild plant. The flowers are used cosmetically to soften skin, ease sunburn, and reduce the effects of aging. The berries make an interesting dye which permanently stains the skin, while wine made from woadberries causes the imbiber to see everything in shades of blue for d12 hours.

**Midnight Valerian:** A hardy perennial with many uses, this tiny plant grows in the Cerulean Forest, sporting leaves so dark blue in color as to appear almost black. Its powder-blue flowers bloom briefly in the summer. The short roots have a strong and rancid odor when exposed, and are used in medicinal teas to promote sleep and prevent nightmares. Caution should be used when taking Midnight Valerian internally, as over-use of the plant causes subjects to exhibit a bluish tinge and become extremely lethargic.

**Mountain Orchid:** The pristine environment of Xanadas is occasionally broken by the beauty of this surprising flower. Blooming once every fifteen years, this rare two-inch-high orchid has a pale silver bloom which is highly valued in Quan and L'Haan. Mandalan Savants claim that, under proper circumstances, the fragrance of a fresh blossom induces True Dreams—divinations of considerable detail and scope.

**Periwinkle Milkweed:** This tall weed grows in clearings in the Cerulean Forest. The milkweed forms pods that burst, sending thousands of pale blue seeds gliding on silken parasols through the forest. If inhaled, the seeds confuse the mind of the victim for d6 x 10 minutes, and all sense of direction is immediately lost. On a failed CON Roll, the victim never recovers his full sanity. Milky sap from the stem of this plant is said to make a pleasant skin lotion.

**Sea Grass:** Common in forest clearings near Moon Lake, this grass provides the illusion of waves upon water when stirred by even a slight breeze. Though a pretty sight, this effect is also hypnotic (resist vs. WILL). Predators lurk near these patches, waiting to ambush hypnotized travelers.



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# WEAPONRY AND EQUIPMENT

These new weapons, devices, and other items of equipment are available in the East. (Statistics for the Gamemaster, where needed, are given in the "Gamemaster's Section.")

## AHKTAHK (Quan Empire)

A weapon used by Kang heavy troops, the Ahktahk's heavy blade is designed to cut through armor. In the hands of a sufficiently strong warrior, the weapon can punch through the stoutest battle armor. (50 G.L.)

## CRIM (Xanadas)

Used by the Samir Herdsmen as a prod for herding foul-tempered muskronts, this weapon consists of a long piece of muskront bone sharpened at one end. The blunt end is wrapped with fur and leather, and is attached to the wrist with a thong. (3 G.L.)

## DRAGON HARPOON (Quan Empire)

This ten-foot-long barbed missile weapon has been used by the Sunra for centuries. Although dragon barques mount ballistae which throw darts that are heavier and do more damage than the harpoons, the Sunra believe it is more honorable to give the death-blow to their prey with this weapon, using their own strength. However, this means that the Sunra must maneuver their ship within throwing range of their wounded prey—a dangerous practice, especially when hunting sea dragons.

The Empire has outlawed the Dragon Harpoon because of its association with Sunra glories from before the conquest. Nevertheless, many dragon barques have a hidden cache of these weapons—and all mariners secretly receive training in harpoon throwing. (50 G.L.; illegal within the Empire)

## DROP WEIGHTS (Harak)

These small, irregular pieces of black iron—honed and sharpened by Harakin children—are used as missile weapons. Thrown or dropped by a dractyl's rider, the weights can strike with tremendous momentum from their fall. If they miss the intended victim, the weights imbed in the ground and may later impale the foot of a foe. (5 G.L.; not sold by Harakin)

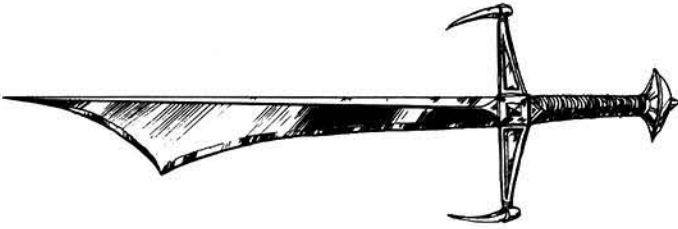
## KANG WAR CHARIOT (Quan Empire)

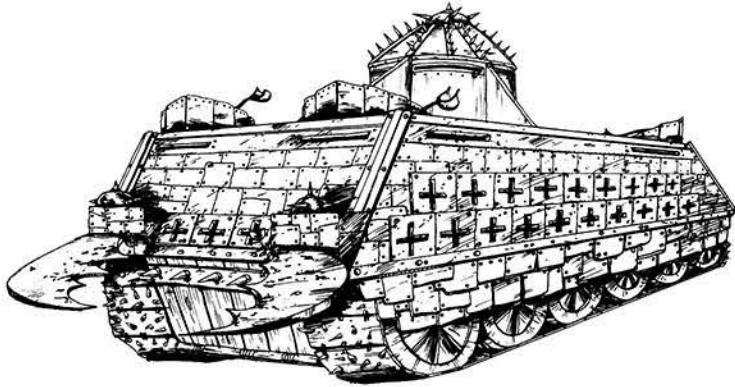
A Kang chariot is a beautiful vehicle—gilded, embellished with rich hardwoods, and towed by a team of four armored hill striders. The fighting vehicle carries a crew of six: two Vajra drivers, and four Kang warriors armed with heavy crossbows and scimitars.

Typically employed as mobile missile platforms, chariots race back and forth in front of an enemy battle line while their archers whittle down the ranks of the opponents. Against primitive forces, these tactics—followed with a headlong charge by chariots and cavalry—can be devastating. In battle with more civilized opponents, the chariots may be shot to pieces by foot archers, ridden down by light cavalry, or trapped and smashed by heavy riders. Nevertheless, the war chariots are a proud tradition of the Crimson Host, and continue to be employed. (5,000 G.L.)

## QUAN BEHEMOTH

A massive engine similar to the Kharakhan war wagon, the Behemoth is used by imperial legions on the Kangir Steppes





(against the Saurans) and the Quan peninsula (against the Mondre Khan). In hostile territory, Kang warriors may need to remain inside a Behemoth for days—a situation which poses numerous sanitary and ventilation problems.

1) The entire engine is covered with plates of black- and red-iron, providing an armor value of 8.

2) Four light catapults hurl rocks and other missiles (amberglass spheres of Red Menace, for instance). Each is crewed by a trio of Kang warriors.

3) Vajra slaves provide the power for the Behemoth, walking slowly along two huge treadmills to drive the vehicle forward. The outside of the treadmills are spiked to provide traction, and to destroy stubborn obstacles or tenacious enemies.

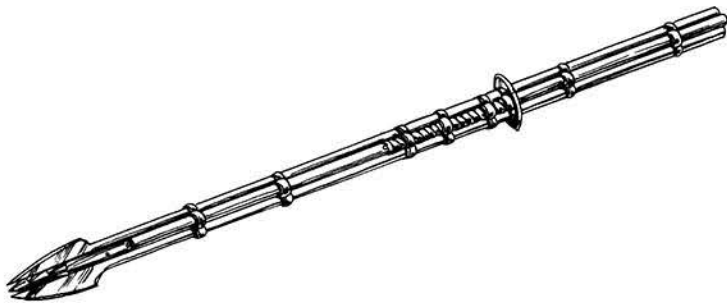
4) Serrated scything blades, operated by other Vajra slaves, move back and forth to cut through heavy vegetation, barricades, and even the wooden fortifications of the primitive tribes of Chana.

5) Kang crossbowmen man the arrow slits along the length of the Behemoth.

6) Vajra drummers under the command of a Kang officer produce the beat which regulates the speed of the Behemoth. The treadmill slaves move in cadence with this rhythm, and drums of separate tone are used for each treadmill. To turn the vehicle, Kang officers must slow down or speed up one of the treads. The Behemoth is not very maneuverable, but given adequate time and space, the vehicle can eventually change its direction.

7) A great hinged ramp swings down from the front of the Behemoth, allowing the Kang warriors inside to swarm out—perhaps to take advantage of a breach in a fortification or the rout of an enemy battle-line.

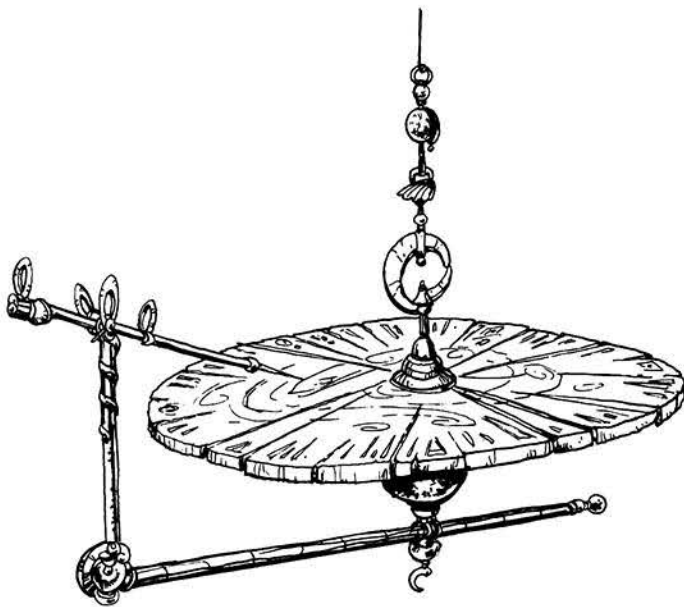
8) The Behemoth's commander rides in this heavily armored cupola. His orders are relayed to the Kang warriors below.



#### SHATAHK (Quan Empire)

This extraordinary Kang polearm was originally designed for use against the raknids of the Volcanic Hills. The Shatahk has three separate shafts, connected by iron brackets. The outer shafts end in sharp wedges, while the spring-loaded central pole has a wicked barbed point.

When a warrior strikes a raknid with sufficient force, the wedges catch between the insectoid's scales and pry them apart. The cocked pole then fires, driving its barb deep into the vitals of the foe. The weapons are cumbersome and unreliable, and only a few Kang are properly trained in their use. (500 G.L.)



#### SUNRA ASTROLABE

The Astrolabe measures the attitude of Talislanta's two suns and seven moons in relation to the observer. It consists of a coral plate on which are mounted an iron ring and a pivoted wooden limb. The circumference is marked with a graduated scale. When in use, the Astrolabe is suspended from the ring, and the limb is moved until a beam of light (from a sun or moon) lines up with both of its sights. The limb now points at one of the numbers marked along the edge of the Astrolabe, indicating the altitude of the targeted sun or moon above the horizon. By consulting detailed sky tables, the observer can then calculate his position.

The Sunra Astrolabe is the best non-magical navigating instrument in Talislanta. It is useless under an overcast sky or without reference tables, however. (500 G.L.)



### SUNRA SKY TABLES

These tables tell a Sunra navigator where he is relative to the Coral City of Isalis, based on the date and sightings made with an astrolabe (see above). The charts are intricate and have taken centuries to compile. They are commonly bound in enormous volumes, with water-resistant covers made from sea-dragon hide. The Quan Empire considers the tables to be state secrets, and promises death to any who divulge this information to a foreign power. (4,000 G.L. within the Empire, sales strictly regulated; 50,000+ G.L. elsewhere)

### TORSKA (Harak)

A twelve-foot length of braided Skell hide, the Torska is an ingenious device used to climb steep mountains. The Harakin forms the Torska into a loop, revolves it over his head, then launches it toward a protruding boulder higher on the mountain, while retaining a grip on the other end of the leather rope. If the Torska falls over the target rock, the warrior cinches the rope tight by pulling on his end, then uses it to pull himself up the mountain.

The Torska can also be used in battle to disarm or dismount opponents, to entangle foes, or to capture an escaping enemy. (10 G.L., not sold by Harakin)

### T'SAI (Chana)

A hunting weapon used by Manra warriors, the T'sai consists of four strips of hide—each three feet in length—tied together and weighted on one end by spheres of black iron. While one ball is held in the hand, the other three are whirled, and then the entire weapon is thrown to entangle a target. The T'sai is a favorite of Manra youngsters. (2 G.L.)

### VAJIRAN STONE TOOLS (Quan Empire)

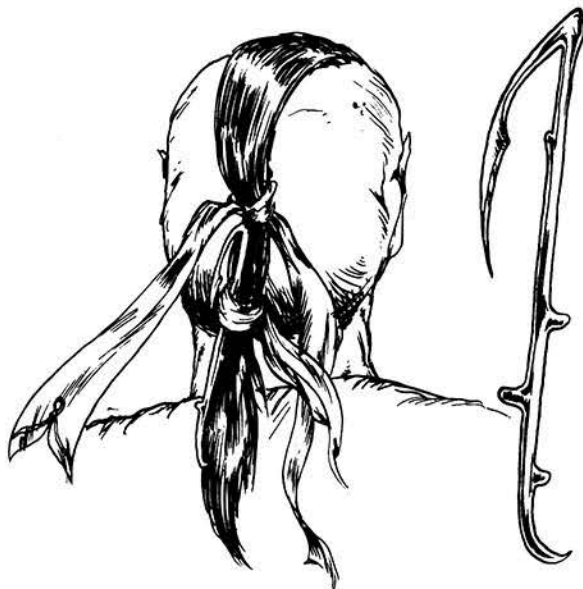
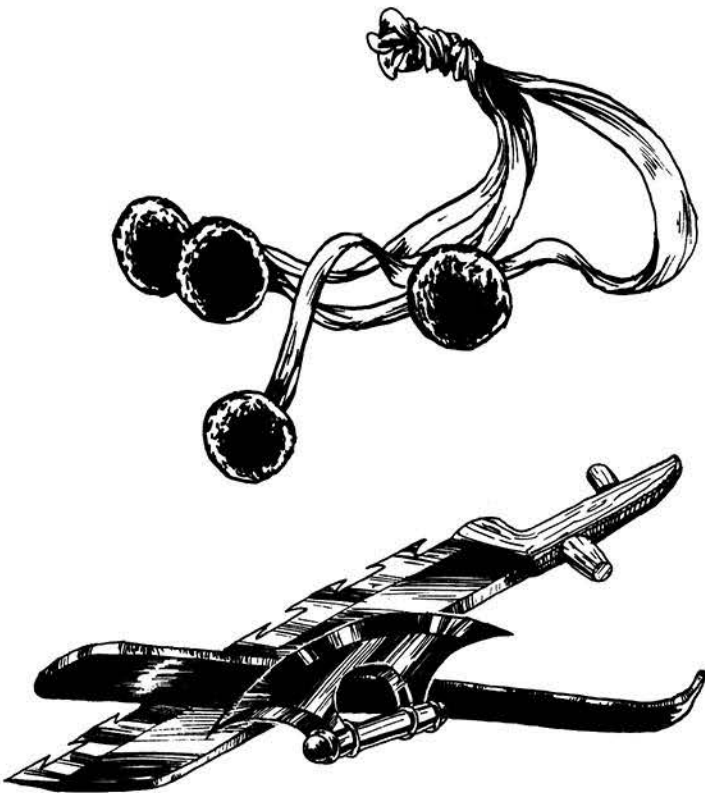
The stone-working devices of the Vajra are made from black iron, and come in a confusing variety. Some are large enough to require teams of workers, such as the Great Saws and Walking Saws, while others are small enough to be carried in a Vajran tool belt. The most common device is the Stone-Shaper, a crescent-bladed implement of amazing hardness used to carve stone. Vajra use the tools as extensions of their own bodies and earth-working talents, and do not seem able to explain their use to outsiders. The Quan consider all Vajran tools to be property of the Empire, and forbid their possession by foreigners. (50 G.L. within the Empire; 150 G.L. elsewhere, to collectors)

### WIPPEN (Xanadas)

The Samir Herdsmen use this odd weapon with amazing ease. Eight ten-foot lengths of braided muskront hide are threaded through a very short, hollow pole, and the ends are weighted with sharpened pieces of bone and horn. In combat, the herdsmen can whirl the weights overhead as a defensive measure, or gather the cords together and strike with them at an enemy. By adjusting the inner pole, the Wippen can be used against foes at several ranges. The unique whistling sound of this weapon is used by the herdsmen to call their beasts. (10 G.L.)

### ZORIAN HOOK (Quan Empire)

Kang Warrior-Priests of Zorih wear this device in their hair, attached to their queue. Concealed by brilliant red ribbons, this slender hook of black iron can be a deadly surprise in close combat. The priests are adept at using it to stab the unprotected face of an opponent. For a foreigner to handle the sacred weapon is sacrilege. (100+ G.L. to collectors, not ordinarily for sale.)





# PLAYER'S MATERIAL



CHROMID



KANG  
WARRIOR - PRIEST



MONDRE KHAN  
HUNTER



NAGRA  
BOUNTY HUNTER



SAMIR HUNTER



SAMIR SHAMAN



SUNRA PRIEST



VAJRA PRIEST

## NEW CHARACTER TYPES

### CHROMID

**SIZE:** 1-3", 1-3 oz.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Tiny, various colors

**ATTRIBUTES:** STR -6, SPD -2, INT +2, WILL +5, CHA +3

**HIT POINTS:** 2

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Telepathy (with other Chromids only)

**SKILLS:** Based on the Chromid's color:

*Black.* Camouflage, hide, mounted combat (aerial cavalry only), primary combat, riding (Iron Dragonfly—*aerial cavalry only*), weaponless combat

*Blue.* Beast lore, fishing, hide, secondary combat, scout, swimming, wilderness survival

*Gold.* Concoct powders, hide, identify flora and fauna, secondary magic (may only cast spells up to fourth level), wilderness survival

*Green.* Agriculturist, combat training, healer, herb lore, hide, identify flora, wilderness survival

*Red.* Beast lore, camouflage, hide, hunting, secondary combat, scout, stalking, tracking, wilderness survival

*White.* Administrator, diplomacy, hide, secondary combat

*Yellow.* Beast handler, beast lore, combat training, hide, identify fauna, riding

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Belt, pouch, Chromid-sized dagger [Chromid weapons do only 1 point of damage] (Aerial cavalry have an Iron Dragonfly mount)

**WEALTH:** None

**COMMENTS:** Tribes of Chromids may be found throughout the Variegated Forest. When confronted with hostile behavior, Chromids hide and allow their warriors to deal with the intruders.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** Outsiders may make friends with non-combatants by offering them sweets or intoxicants. In such cases, Chromid non-player characters may be valuable allies, guiding characters through the dangerous reaches of the forest and warning them of enemies. Chromids found outside of the Variegated Forest—often escaped pets or former subjects of magical research—make useful though challenging player characters, since their small size gives them access to areas denied full-sized beings.

### KANG WARRIOR-PRIEST

**SIZE:** 6'-6" 8", 120-220 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Crimson skin, hard features, white eyes, long black hair (worn in queue)

**ATTRIBUTES:** STR +4, DEX +2, CON +2, INT -2, WILL +1

**HIT POINTS:** 16

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**SKILLS:** Command ability, mounted combat, primary combat, riding, weaponless combat (Kanguan), *plus 2 of the following:* ambush, assassinate, coerce, interrogate or torture

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Plate mail, gauntlets and helm (all of black iron), cloak, twin dragon-pommel long-daggers, Zorian Hook (concealed in queue), greymane steed, *choice of weapon*

**WEALTH:** d20 x 15 gold lumens' worth of mixed coins (the Kang are well-paid mercenaries of the Quan)

**COMMENTS:** Fanatically trained from a young age, Warrior-Priests each have a personal motto (such as "Death to the weak!") and are obsessive about the need to demonstrate their valor to Zoriah, the war god of their people. Kang Combat Trance (see the

"Optional Rules" section of this book for details) is their most interesting resource.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** These interesting but rare player characters wander western Talislanta, working as mercenaries and seeking for Zoriah's blessings. As non-player characters, Warrior-Priests are common throughout the Quan Empire, serving as private guards or in elite military units.

### MONDRE KHAN HUNTER

**SIZE:** 6-6 1/2", 160-250+ lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Mane of coarse black hair, bestial features, shaggy forearms/forelegs, claws, leathery brown skin

**ATTRIBUTES:** STR +3, DEX +3, CON +2, INT -1, WILL or PER +1, CHA -3

**HIT POINTS:** 14

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Claws (d4 damage—can be used to climb sheer rock surfaces, walled fortifications, and so forth)

**SKILLS:** Ambush, camouflage, evasion, hunting, scout, secondary combat, stalking, tracking, weaponless combat, wilderness survival

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Leather armor, hide loincloth, rasp, d8 blade-stars, pouch, tinder box

**WEALTH:** d10 gold lumens' worth of semi-precious stones, gold dust or animal skins

**COMMENTS:** Anti-social, the Hunters find an excuse for avoiding their fellows in serving as scouts and hunters for their tribe. They almost always operate alone, enjoying their own company and frequently talking with themselves. Many have minor psychological problems.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** A non-player Hunter character might act as an ally or a guide for adventurers, although his true motives will be hard to discern—he could be using the player characters for his own purposes, or lead them into ambush. Player-character Hunters are those whose dislike for other beings has driven them to leave their tribe. They are insular and hard to get along with.

### NAGRA BOUNTY HUNTER

**SIZE:** 5' 2"-6', 80-160 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Mottled grey-green skin, ebony eyes, peaked skull, black fangs

**ATTRIBUTES:** STR +2, DEX +2, CON +4, PER +2

**HIT POINTS:** 14

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Spirit-tracking

**SKILLS:** Coerce, disguise, hunting, mountain climbing, secondary combat, stalking, tracking, *plus any 2 Thieving talents*

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Loincloth and cape of winged ape's hide, pouch (slung over shoulder with cord), exomorph- or tarkus-fang earrings, ankle and wrist bands of woven plant fibers, scimitar, bone long-knife

**WEALTH:** d10 x 8 gold lumens' worth of small, uncut black diamonds

**COMMENTS:** Members of renegade Nagra tribes are hired by the Farad, the Dracartans, and (occasionally) the Rajans to capture escaped criminals or slaves who have fled into the wilderness. The Bounty Hunters drive a hard bargain—despite the handicap of working through a translator, since the Nagra speak a Chanan dialect—and consider a deal unbreakable once made. Nagra take their pay in coins, supplies, or the heads of Kang, Quan or Witchmen, their hated foes. If the other party in a deal reneges, the trackers become implacable foes until they or their former employer is dead. The Bounty Hunters are slightly more civilized than their deep-jungle brothers, due to their exposure to the cultures of their employers.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** A non-player Bounty Hunter could be hired by adventurers, or employed and sent after them by their enemies (always a good idea for a sub-plot in a Talislantan campaign). Bounty Hunters also make excellent player characters, as they readily travel, have few ethical qualms, and are always looking for employment.

## SAMIR HUNTER

**SIZE:** 5' 10"-6' 4", 135-230 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Pale blue skin, white hair, dark blue eyes, muscular build

**ATTRIBUTES:** STR +1, DEX +2, CON +4, INT -2, PER +1

**HIT POINTS:** 14

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Partial immunity to cold

**SKILLS:** Beast handler (snowmane), hunting, language (equus), mounted combat, primary combat, riding (equus), scout, tracking, wilderness survival

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Heavy muskront-hide clothing, boots, bone-headed mace, Wippen, snowmane steed (with side bags and harness)

**WEALTH:** None (Samir have no notion of money)

**COMMENTS:** The warrior clan of the Samir, Hunters believe that the gods might punish them for fighting with other Samir, but they have few such reservations about combat with outsiders. The warriors are friends with their snowmane mounts, considering them equals.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** Sometimes expelled by their clan for warring against other Samir tribes, a few Hunters roam Talislanta, ever seeking the chance to prove their combat skills. They are the most likely of their race to be met as player characters. As non-player characters, Hunters defend the valleys of the Opal Mountains, hunt game, and scout for intruders.

## SAMIR SHAMAN

**SIZE:** 5' 4"-5' 11", 90-180 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Pale blue skin, white hair, dark blue eyes, muscular build

**ATTRIBUTES:** DEX +1, CON +3, WILL +1, PER +1

**HIT POINTS:** 12

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Partial immunity to cold

**SKILLS:** Antiquarian lore, metaphysical doctrines (various and unorthodox), riding (snowmane), secondary combat, secondary magic, wilderness survival

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Heavy muskront-hide clothing hung with medallions of muskront horn and bone, boots, Wippen, snowmane steed (with side bags and harness)

**WEALTH:** None (Samir have no notion of money)

**COMMENTS:** The smallest of the clans, Shamans are looked to by all other Samir for guidance and direction. They have the responsibility to keep peace in their mountain valleys, which they do by preventing anyone from angering the gods. Custodians of many obscure legends and tales, these Samir are aware of hundreds of ways to offend deities, and thousands of ways to appease them. Except for cantrips, the only magic known to the Shamans is the *Spell of Illusion*.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** Adventuring Shamans are rare, as most of these characters live within their home valleys for their entire lives. The few who make good player characters are the *scape-goats*, Shamans who have been driven out by their village after a god's anger has ravaged the settlement. As non-player characters, Shamans rule the valleys of the Opal Mountains, and often command that visitors be brought before them.

## SUNRA PRIEST

**SIZE:** 5' 10"-6' 4", 120-180 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Skin covered with fine silvery scales, smooth features, deep blue eyes

**ATTRIBUTES:** SPD +2 [underwater] / +0 [otherwise], INT +4, WILL +1, PER +3

**HIT POINTS:** 10

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Semi-aquatic (can breathe underwater for up to 24 hours).

**SKILLS:** Acting, administrator, barter or haggling, diplomacy, literacy, merchant/trader, oratory or song, *plus any single Scholarly Pursuit*

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Cloak and loincloth of Mandalan silkcloth, boots of rainbow kra's hide, ceremonial dagger, silkcloth document bag, ledger, quill pen, crystal vial of sepia ink, d6 large books (theology, history and poetry)

**WEALTH:** d10 x 10 gold lumens' worth of mixed coins (money in the hands of Sunra priests is considered the property of the Empire—characters may only keep what they need for their trading and administrative duties)

**COMMENTS:** Sunra priests occupy a central administrative and spiritual role in their society, supervising the economy under the direction of the Governor of Isalis. On a typical day, a priest might lead a worship service, record the births of all newts for that day, and then see that a load of dried fish is delivered to one of the Greater Schools. Priests are the only Sunra allowed to handle money, which they use to buy imported goods for Isalis. They do not learn magic, believing that such study allows certain entities to influence one's thoughts.

## VAJRA PRIEST

**SIZE:** 4' 8"-5' 4", 140-200 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Body covered with overlapping orange-brown plates, squat, heavy-limbed

**ATTRIBUTES:** STR +2, CON +4, SPD -2, INT +2

**HIT POINTS:** 16

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Burrow in ground (1 cubic foot per round), plated skin (equivalent to chain-mesh armor)

**SKILLS:** Artisan (stone, gems or mosaics), engineer (mines and tunnels), geography, herb lore (Vajran herbs and fungi), horticulture (fungi and subterranean herbs), literacy, metaphysical doctrines (Terra), secondary combat, Talislantan history (Vajran)

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Loincloth, fungus headdress, wide belt (with tools), iron spear, shoulder pack

**WEALTH:** d10 gold lumens' worth of uncut gems (Vajra are slaves of the Quan, and must hide their money or have it confiscated by the Kang)

**COMMENTS:** Priests (and Priestesses) lead the Vajra in worship, directed by those ancients known as the Wise Ones. They cultivate fungi and herbs underground for healing, while simultaneously using the experience to draw closer to their goddess. Humorous and industrious, they can burrow through earth like moles, but are uncomfortable if above ground for any extended period.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** Vajra Priests are extremely rare as player characters in the Quan Empire, due to the low status they enjoy and the restrictions this causes. Outside the Empire, free Vajra Priests make challenging adventurers, and are usually involved in plots to overthrow the Quan. Non-player Priest characters may be encountered at imperial mines, or with large colonies of Vajra slaves.

## OTHER CHARACTERS

Eastern Talislanta character types not mentioned in this book are described in *THE TALISLANTA HANDBOOK* (second edition). Some have also been mentioned in previous Talislantan products:

Chana Warrior (HB), Chana Witchman/Witchwoman (HB), Har-akin Warrior (HB), Ispasian Mercantilist (HB2; CY1), Kang Tracker (HB), Kang Warrior (HB), Mandalan Mystic Warrior (HB2; SG), Mandalan Savant (HB), Manra Shape-Changer (HB), Mondre Khan Warrior (HB2; SG), Nagra Spirit Tracker (HB; formerly "Nagra Hunter"), Nagra Shaman (HB2; SG), Quan Noble (HB), Sunra Aquamancer (HB2; SG), Sunra Mariner (HB), Vajra Engineer (HB), Xanadasian Savant (HB).

Abbreviations used: HB (*THE TALISLANTAN HANDBOOK*, all editions), HB2 (*THE TALISLANTA HANDBOOK*, second edition only), SG (*THE SORCERER'S GUIDE*), CY1 (*THE CYCLOPEDIA TALISLANTA*, Volume One).



# A ROLE-PLAYING GUIDE

Role playing—getting into the roles of the characters you play—is part of what makes Talislanta different. To help you in developing player characters, the following tips about “typical” characters and their personalities are provided. You won’t want to pattern your adventurers *exactly* after what’s presented here, but the sketches below should give you some useful ideas about particular races and cultures in the East.

## CHROMIDS

You understand the language of color. Every tint and hue has a purpose and a meaning, imbedded within it by the Creator—you can sense things intuitively by viewing the colorations of a plant, a race, or a person’s selection of belongings. The caste society of your people is a natural result of skin color, since you can’t help but think of yourself in that particular role whenever you see your color reflected in a mirror or a pool of water.

Despite the beauties of the Omniverse, life is a constant struggle for survival. Only cooperation keeps small creatures like yourself alive. You are a natural builder of coalitions, and enjoy being part of a team.

Your forest is a safe place, but venturing beyond it is dangerous beyond belief. Larger beings exist out there, supposedly sentient, which do not share your belief in peaceful cooperation—they want to trap you and make you do their bidding. Therefore, you distrust anything larger than yourself. At the same time, you realize the advantages in having an ally of great size. You give your friendship cautiously, always ready to revoke it in the face of treachery.

Money and possessions have no importance to you. The goal in your life is happiness, both for yourself and others, whether it’s from sampling an intoxicating brew or viewing a field of newly blossomed flowers. You like variety and change, and dislike anything *monochrome*—that is, something uniform or static. You can never settle down, for one place or one companion could never satisfy your need for inconstancy.

*Ask your Gamemaster about additional information concerning the Chromid race.*

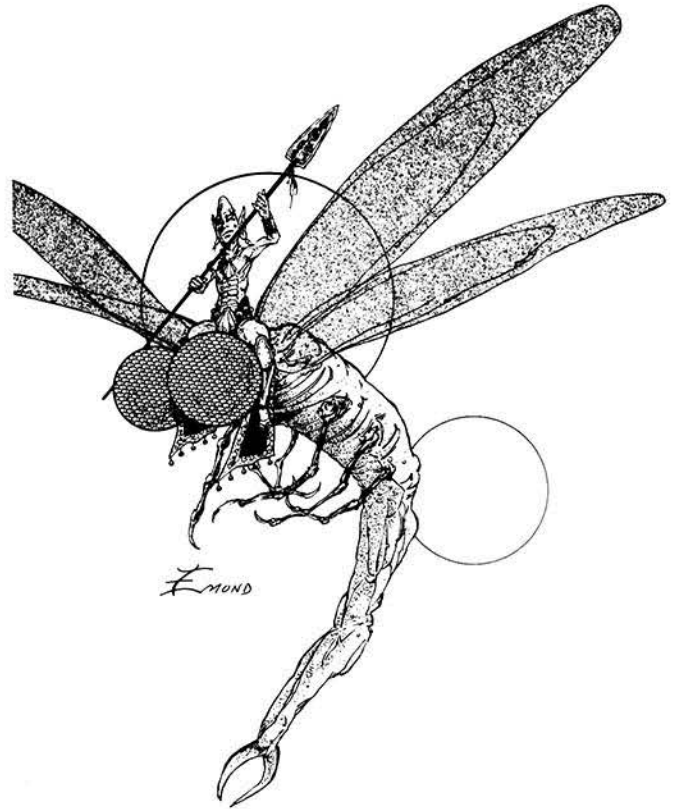
## HARAKIN

You are a warrior, trained to fight and survive by your desolate, relentless homeland. Skills not necessary for survival are useless, and you despise those who pursue them. The concept of money—strange trinkets of metal—is meaningless to you. If an item cannot be eaten or used in combat, it is not worth the energy needed to carry it around.

Your first and foremost consideration must be your own survival. All living things prey on each other, and only the strongest survive. There are no gods, and no one to fear but a stronger enemy. There is no time to relax, for only a fool lowers his guard. An individualist, you always do what you think best for yourself.

Traveling with others is for your own safety—never jeopardize your life to help another. You make a poor follower because you refuse to trust your life to anyone else. You are a poor leader because you insist on making decisions unilaterally, acting swiftly and by instinct without “wasting time” talking matters over. The opinions of others have no value, and friendship is a weakness to be avoided.

You must always concern yourself with supplies, making sure that you know where your next water source is, and keeping an eye



out for edibles as you travel. If you are strong enough to take something, it is yours by right. The dead should be eaten, never wasted.

Bonded to a dractyl steed, you hold it to you both by force of will and through commanding its respect. There is no affection between you—the animal is only a means of survival.

You prefer to speak in sign among your own people, seeing conversation as another method of wasting time. Foreigners often mistake your grim silence for arrogance.

## ISPASIANS

Profit is the great motivator. Your supreme goal is the accumulation of wealth, power and control. Life consists of profit (to be sought) and loss (to be avoided). Unprofitable business ventures are to be swiftly discarded, successful enterprises to be cultivated. You favor subtlety and skill in business. In fact, successful business practice is an art—and your goal is to become a master financial artist.

You are not as paranoid as the Kasmir, nor as extravagant as the Quan. Elegance is better than mere luxury, and learning is preferable to decadence. In fact, learning is second in importance only to the accumulation of wealth. It is through education in the ways of the world that one gains control of it, and through studying the history of wealth that one learns how to amass it. You value histories and geographies, and probably have an extensive collection of books.

Magic is just another aspect of learning, and dabbling in a spell or two is currently fashionable in Ispasia. However, it would be eccentric of you to devote yourself wholeheartedly to such a sideline, just as you wouldn't become an astrologer or a mercenary. People like that can always be hired. If forced to fight, you might be competent, but you would rather offer a bribe than be forced to kill someone personally.

You are also skilled with figures and mathematics, and perhaps serve the Quan as an accountant or business manager. In this way, you learn much about the Quan and their Empire, and gain increasing power through such knowledge.

## KANG

Born into the world with the ferocity of a wild animal, you are a natural warrior and the favored of Zorah, the Red God of War. You enjoy combat and are ruthless when fighting. You prove your worth to Zorah by victory in battle.

You revel in your role as Protector of the Empire, and enjoy your social standing above the other subject races. You do not tolerate offenses or insults to your nation or race. The caste system of the Quan makes good sense to you. It comes naturally to you to be rude to those lower than you in status, and to find them odious and repulsive.

Individual Quan are rather effete—and their physical condition appalling!—but you envy their power and wealth. You want to be an Honorary Elite so badly that it keeps you awake at night, and would do almost anything to make that happen. Watch the Quan, and learn their tastes and customs so that you fit in when you gain your goal. Your desire for wealth is almost sexual, especially for anything made of gold.

You are a devious plotter and schemer. No one can be trusted, and all promises are meaningless (even your own). Serve your commander well, but only so that you can note his weaknesses, so that you can someday successfully challenge him for his rank. Maneuvering for allies in the right places is a necessity, but always be ready to change sides in an instant—one good double-cross deserves another.

Corruption is a welcome method for increasing your wealth. Sell yourself to as many bidders as you can—whether informing on fellow Kang to the Quan, or “looking the other way” when smugglers cross your path.

## MANDALANS

Nature is your supreme guide, and the Mandalan Way is the philosophy by which you live your life. Every living thing manifests the Way, and is therefore worth understanding. Even magic is nothing more than the manipulation of natural forces. The limits which the Way places upon your activities are many, as preserved in the Highest Laws:

*“Revere Nature and her order throughout the Omniverse, and contemplate her ways.”*

*“Do not kill any natural being, for these are as entitled to existence in the Omniverse as thou art.”*

*“Defend life in all of its natural forms, restraining those who would cause injury to another.”*

*“Resist passively, wear away the stone—never weakly resort to the forceful methods of destruction.”*

*“If you must cause injury, do so only by redirecting the aggressions which others aim at you.”*

The Way is gentleness and the absence of strife. Discuss but never argue, for it is far better to withdraw and meditate than to create conflict and acrimony. Wisdom is greater than knowledge, for without wisdom's light, mere knowledge cannot be directed for good.

The Quan consider themselves your overlords. The Way tells you to redirect the forces of the Empire so that the conquerors destroy themselves. By fulfilling the Quan's desires, you only hasten their downfall. Though it will take many generations, you will prevail.

If you are a Mystic Warrior, take an active role in hastening the Quan's demise. Incite dissent, misdirect the Quan and Kang, and encourage opposition to the Empire.

## MANRA

You are a Shape-Changer, and can alter your form to match that of any creature you have ever studied. The purpose of this gift is to allow you to live as you wish, undisturbed by others, for you can disguise yourself through taking other forms. Use your shape-changing ability to remain unseen, to go where others do not want you to go, and to trick or bluff your enemies.

If you wander to other lands, you may do so to seek closer contact with new creatures, so that you may enlarge your repertory of forms. You have no stomach for fighting, and adventuring for its own sake does not appeal to you.

Beware of outsiders, for they are violent to a fault. Reveal your true nature only to the rare individuals whom you trust, and never reveal truths about your race, your customs, and the locations of Manra villages.

Remember to always bring kesh with you, for you are addicted to the drug as all Manra are. Without a supply of the hallucinogen, you cannot maintain your ability to shape-change.

**Deviant Manra.** As a member of a hostile tribe, you enjoy combat and the slaughter of your enemies. You may adventure to slake your thirst for personal conquest, but you feel the same constraints about betraying your nature as do normal Manra.

## MONDRE KHAN

You are a member of a complex race, far more sophisticated than outsiders suspect. Others call you a “half-man,” implying that you are less than fully sentient. However, you treasure your man-like side, and shun the savagery and bestiality which lurk within your unconscious.

While you are fierce in combat, exercise self-control—never allow yourself to regress to the bestial state. If you revert totally to animalism, you abandon forever the chance to join with Animus and live in paradise. Regressed Mondre Khan fill you with horror, and you flee from such.

You value independence, freedom and nobility of character. Stealth is your weapon—ambushes and other forms of covert warfare are the techniques of your kind of fighting. In a fair battle you know cannot win against the numbers and resources of the Empire, and so you operate in the shadows, striking without warning, and then stealing away before your enemies can find you.

The Quan are your hated foes, and you view them as evil incarnate. There is no punishment too horrible to use against them. The Kang are to be despised for serving as imperial lackeys. Likewise, you dislike the Ispasians, although they don't commit the sin of fawning upon their conquerors. You have nothing against the other slave-races, and even have some liking for individuals who are fellow victims of the Quan.

Your clan is the source of your strength and pride. Its children are to be defended at all costs, for they are your future. Stay on the move, and never leave any evidence as to where you have been or are going. Anything which slows the clan down must be avoided. The needs of the many outweigh your own needs—if you are unable to travel, you would never encumber your clan. Instead, you would stay behind, sacrificing yourself to the Kang if you must. The Mondre Khan remain free, even in death.

## NAGRA

You are Nagra, and this means that you live in two worlds: the natural plane on which Talislanta stands, and the invisible spirit plane. Among the sentient races, only you have the natural ability to sense the events and presences of this higher realm of the Omniverse. While this ability to witness the spiritual world allows you to track by following the scent of a person's spiritform, it is also inconvenient at times—you may be startled or distracted by ethereal happenings which have nothing to do with matters in mortal Talislanta.

Every Nagra dreams of the day when he and a companion will lay down the foundations for a jungle homestead, a sanctuary in the wilderness for themselves and their offspring. Each structure is unique, although many share common features: multiple levels linked by rope ladders, overhangs with trapdoors through which to attack suspicious intruders, and atriums where edible avir can be raised.

Crowds are anathema to you, partially because of the spiritual phenomena they attract. Cities can make you physically nauseous. You prefer the company of a few people who are well-known to you, especially if they allow you moments of solitude.



A reputation for violent cruelty helps to gain the fearful respect of your enemies. Sometimes it is necessary to do cruel things to demonstrate such toughness. However, this is only an act—you are no more cruel by nature than any other people. You are skilled with weapons, but don't consider yourself a warrior.

## QUAN

You are one of the Elite—the most favored, intelligent and gifted race which has ever graced Talislanta. Other races deserve slavery beneath your heel. They exist only to serve you, and can be thoughtlessly discarded when you tire of them. Foreigners—those who have not yet accepted your rule over them—especially merit disdain and contempt. You rarely deign to speak with those of lower status, delegating such tiresome endeavors to your servants.

The only people you defer to are Quan of higher status—the chief of which is the Emperor himself. You accord them the proper obeisances, but you do not truly respect them. In your heart, you know that all Quan are equally divine. Scheming for greater power and influence within the Empire can be an addiction for you, the only competition in which you face worthy equals.

Your wealth is beyond the imagining of most Talislantans, giving you the freedom to devote your life to the pursuit of pleasure and luxury. The poverty and suffering of others is to be ignored, or to be attributed to their own failings. When you cause harm to another, it is comforting to remember that you are divine, and that all of your actions are ultimately justifiable. Like all Quan, you are good at rationalizing.

Physical exertion is beneath you. Walking exhausts you, which is why you command your slaves to bear you where you want to go. Most of your life is spent reclining in a palanquin, while slaves feed, clothe and bathe you. Seek obesity and pallor of complexion, for these are attributes of beauty among your people.

You have learned to forget the higher emotions, such as love, pity, honor and loyalty. Luxury and pleasure are your primary motivations, but you also cater to your baser instincts—hatred, lust, jealousy and greed.

## SAMIR

You belong to a race which has been touched by the gods. The Instigator rescued you from extinction, allowing you to become the Mountain People and to have a new chance in the world. Understanding this, you also know that you must strive to please the Instigator and the lesser gods in order to continue to receive their benevolence.

Gods are responsible for everything that occurs, either through their actions or willing passivity. Watch for omens and signs, which are the primary way mortal beings can know the moods and thoughts of the capricious gods. Even a stone in your path might have significance. By interpreting omens correctly, or by trusting the interpretations of a shaman, you can know what actions to take to avoid the anger of the gods.

You are proud of your clan, and the skills you possess. When you use them well, the gods are pleased and grant you victory.

Other races do not understand the ways of the gods, and often risk deific displeasure by their casual disregard for what they call "coincidences." On the other hand, outsiders often bring fortune of one kind or another with them, not even knowing that they do so. Therefore, while members of other races make you anxious by their behavior, you may also profit by their company.

**Hunters.** You believe in personal honor, and fight to avenge yourself... but are constrained by the taboo against shedding Samir blood without proper cause. You feel closer to your snow-



mane than to your own clansmen. Speak to him when no one else can hear, and keep strangers away from him.

## SUNRA

The Sea is superior to the Land and to the Air. It is the Mother of all life, and at the end of time all things will return there. You revel in your ability to journey beneath the waves, and pity the majority of the other Talislantan races for their incomplete, land-bound existences.

Your "family" is the Greater School to which you belong. Most of your friends come from here. While there is a friendly rivalry between Schools, you do not seriously denigrate the abilities or necessity of any Sunra profession.

The group's needs supersede those of the individual. You know that wisdom is best found through the collaboration of minds, and you rely on the counsel of your peers before coming to a decision. By the same token, you are uncomfortable when forced to make decisions swiftly or unilaterally. Once your group has set its will to a task, you support the decision steadfastly regardless of your original opinion. A Sunra group roused to anger is frightening, for the emotion is communal, sustained by the united consent of all of the members. You are not prone to regrets or to changing your mind.

You are endowed with patience, and are quiet and seemingly complacent in the company of other races. You seldom speak unless you have something to say, assuming that your silence will be taken as agreement when this is what is in your heart. Your social skills are those of compromise and negotiation, and combative argument is foreign to your nature.

After centuries of slavery, acquisitiveness has been bred out of your culture. "Too many coins makes you sink," is a Sunra saying. You believe that goods should be distributed to a group's members according to need. This creates great confusion when you find yourself dealing with foreign peoples and cultures.

## VAJRA

You are a survivor. At the bottom of imperial society, subject to insult and abuse, you have learned to endure quietly and go about your business.

Take pride in your racial heritage. The surrender of the Vajra was noble, because your ancestors sought to protect their young. You would never do anything to put the hibernation burrows in danger, for this would negate the sacrifices of the ancients.

Well-suited to physical labor, you are industrious and actually enjoy hard work. Labor is also how you worship Terra. It is inconsequential that your current efforts benefit the Quan. The structures you construct for the Empire will stand long after the Quan have been forgotten, and the mines have an intrinsic beauty which justifies their existence. When you excavate, you feel Terra guide your hands to the natural soft spots and faults in the earth—it is an act of communion with your god.

Look for a suitable burrow-mate, someone to be your partner for life. There is comfort in marriage, and reward in quiet home life. You and your mate can endure more together than each could individually.

Do your assigned tasks well. Go where you are sent, and never complain. Conceal your emotions. Do nothing that will bring the attention of taskmasters to yourself. It is better to wait for direction than to take the initiative. Do not speak first to outsiders, and keep your answers brief and direct. All of this is to encourage the Kang to view your race as dull, slow to act, and non-threatening—preparation for the time of liberation which is yet to come.

## WITCHMEN

Stoic and fearless, you are a Witchman. Yours is a bleak outlook on life, for you know all too well the powers of death and decay, and resort to the hallucinogen kesh to avoid contemplation of things too awful for the mortal mind.

Life is delineated by ritual. Whether dining on grubs or drawing your weapon, there is a traditional way to perform the action—words to chant, a direction to face, or perhaps a gesture to make. (Work with your Gamemaster to create these for your character.) Follow these customs without exception, no matter where you may dwell, for there are awful consequences to your soul should you transgress.

Your obligations are to your shaman first, and yourself second. Friendship and trust are foreign concepts to you, replaced by fear, and resentment. Remember that all alliances are for the moment.

Death is the entity whom you fearfully worship. You expect little aid from him in life. Should you be killed, however, or forced by another to violate your customs, you know that Death will torment the souls of your enemy, both now and in eternity.

**Shamans.** The members of your tribe respect you for the necromantic secrets you possess. However, mingled with this respect is fear, for your magic reminds them of their eventual end.

## XANADASIAN

*The Savants of Xanadas come from many backgrounds and races. Even more than usual, therefore, this material describes only an "average" Xanadasian—individuals vary considerably. Furthermore, all thirteen living Savants are described in the "Lands of Talislanta" section of this book.*

Xanadas, the mystic who founded the Temple of the Seven Moons, was taken by Death many centuries ago. However, he has promised to return, and you believe that he will. You do not know when this will occur, or in what form Xanadas will come. Meanwhile, you collect knowledge of all aspects of Talislanta, expecting that the Great Savant may desire to know this information when he returns.

You spend hours scanning through your Scrying Crystal, meticulously making notes which scribes will later transcribe and store in the vaults. Other information is best gathered in person. You scan the heavens from the temple observatory, recording changes in the positions of moons and stars. You have been a patient witness to centuries, and expect to witness even more.

Relaxation from your taxing chores is necessary. You enjoy strolling in the gardens, finding comfort in the fact that many of the plants here are the last of their kind, saved from extinction by your brethren. You often spend a quiet hour in meditation, sorting out the thoughts of all you have seen and witnessed. Philosophical discussions help you to deal with the terrible events the crystals have shown you.

The secret rites of the temple prolong your life by centuries. This life extension is merely necessary, not something you gloat over. In fact, after such a length of years, life has become a burden which you sometimes wish you could lay aside. You have little patience with those younger than you, even though you welcome their company and information.

You wear your black robes constantly, only removing them for ritual bathing. Never take off your headdress, for it is the key to powers which even you do not understand—secrets known only to Xanadas himself.

# GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

## STATISTICS FOR NEW EQUIPMENT

The following material contains statistics and special Gamemaster notes on new items used in the East, including those introduced in the "Weaponry and Equipment" section of this book.

**ARMOR RATING** indicates a conveyance's overall resistance to damage by attack.

**COST** is the typical cost of the item in its native area (costs are frequently higher elsewhere). Unless noted otherwise, values are given in gold lumens.

**DAMAGE** is the amount of injury in hit points which a weapon causes. For conveyances, the Damage Rating is the amount of injury which the vehicle can sustain before being destroyed—if it takes half this amount, it is useless and must be repaired.

**MIN STR** is the minimum strength required to employ the weapon.

**RANGE** applies only to missile weapons, and indicates the effective range of the weapon in feet. Maximum range is twice the effective range.

**WEIGHT** is given in pounds.

## WEAPONS

TYPE	DAMAGE	RANGE	WEIGHT	MIN. STR.	COST
Ahktahk	d10*	—	16	+3	50 G.L.
Blowgun*	1-2†	20	1	-2	1 G.L.
Crim	d6	—	2	-1	3 G.L.
Dragon Harpoon	d12	50**	12	+1	50 G.L.
Drop Weights*	§	Δ	5	—	5 G.L.
Shatahk^	d20º	—	20	+2	500 G.L.
Stone-Shaperº	d6	—	15	+2	50+ G.L.
Throwing stick*	d6	65**	2	0	2 G.L.
Torska*	Σ	12~	1	-2	10 G.L.
T'sai*	¥	50**	6	-1	2 G.L.
Wippen**	d10	10~	10	0	10 G.L.
Zorian Hook	d4††	—	1	-3	100+ GL

### Conveyances

TYPE	ARMOR RATING	DAMAGE RATING	COST
Kang War Chariot	3	60	5,000+ G.L.
Quan Behemoth	8	100	10,000+ G.L.

\* After any successful hit against an opponent in metal armor, the attacker may attempt a STR Roll. If he succeeds, the armor's Protection Rating is ignored this round—on a "Critical Hit," the Protection Rating is permanently reduced by 1.

\* Can only be used effectively in combat by characters trained in its use—all others suffer penalties of -5 or greater (Gamemaster's discretion)

† Target must also succeed at a CON roll, or fall unconscious for d10 turns

§ Depends on the altitude from which they are dropped—d6 points per 10 feet. Once dropped, they act as caltrops, doing d4 damage if trod upon.

Δ Maximum range is 100 feet, since this is as high as Harakin dractyls fly. Apply a -1 penalty to the Action Table roll for every 10 feet of height above the target.

^ The user must succeed at a STR Roll, at -5 difficulty, in order to cock this weapon before firing. On a "Mishap" result, the weapon breaks.

º On a "Combat Mishap," the weapon misses and uncocks. Once the weapon is used successfully, it remains embedded within its victim until pulled free (requires a STR Roll at -5 penalty, does an additional d6 damage).

º Not designed to be used as a weapon (-2 to all combat rolls). Due to its extreme hardness, the Stone-Shaper may break an opponent's weapon if used to parry, and easily cuts through metal armor (+2 to damage rolls).

Σ Does no damage, but with a successful "Aimed Shot," the attacker may disarm, dismount, or entangle his opponent.

~ This is the effective and maximum range

¥ It does no damage, but the entangled victim can only move at half speed, and must succeed at a DEX Roll to avoid falling

\*\* Plus 10 feet per +1 STR rating

\*\* On a "Combat Mishap," or if the weapon is blocked by an opponent, it becomes tangled, requiring d10 rounds to fix. Used defensively, the Wippen receives the first attack on all who walk within its set range, regardless of SPD scores.

†† Double the damage if the weapon strikes unarmored flesh

## OPTIONAL RULES

The Gamemaster is free to add any of these new or expanded rules to his Talislantan campaign.

### ADVANCED MANDAQUAN COMBAT

Mystic Warriors have access to sophisticated Mandaquan techniques, depending on their level of advancement. This training is not available to other Mandalan character types.

#### Third Level

**Climb Walls.** With a successful DEX Roll, the warrior may ascend a wall without climbing gear. The wall must have cracks or other handholds—even a Mystic Warrior could not climb a glass wall. The Gamemaster may apply an Action Table penalty of up to -10, depending on the difficulty of the surface being climbed.

**Invisibility.** A Mystic Warrior may become "invisible" to his enemies with a successful INT Roll. This is not true magical invisibility—rather, it is an advanced form of camouflage which allows the Mystic Warrior to "hide in plain sight" by utilizing existing terrain. This skill's difficulty depends on the availability of obstacles and hiding places, as well as the PER of active searchers. In a forest, it would be easy (no Action Table penalty), while in a bare room, the maximum penalty (-10) might apply—although famous Mystic Warriors are said to be invisible anywhere.

#### Fifth Level

**Sleep.** The Mystic Warrior may render an opponent unconscious with a touch. The player must announce his intention to knock out his opponent, and then succeed at an "Aimed Shot." On a "Critical Hit" result in unarmed combat, the victim falls unconscious for d20 minutes. This represents the Mystic Warrior's ability to locate pressure points and nerve centers, and only works against races with man-like physiologies. The Action Table roll is modified by the difference in levels between the participants—a 3rd-level Mystic Warrior attempting to render a 5th-level Kang unconscious, for example, suffers a -2 penalty. The subject's armor adds a further penalty, equal to its Protection Rating (for instance, full plate provides a -5 penalty.)

## Eighth Level

**Amnesia.** The Mystic Warrior may selectively rearrange or excise memories from an opponent, using mesmerism and post-hypnotic suggestion. The opponent must be either unaware of the Mystic Warrior's intentions, or restrained so that he cannot physically interfere with the procedure.

The player announces exactly which memories he desires to affect. The Gamemaster then secretly rolls against the Mystic Warrior's INT. Surface memories, such as those of events which happened in the very recent past, are easily manipulated. Deeper thoughts and memories may be more difficult. The Gamemaster applies an *Action Table* penalty of up to -10, depending on the complexity and age of the memories. Skills are very difficult to remove (-6 to -8 penalty), and magical knowledge and spells even more difficult (-8 to -10). If the subject is conscious and actively resisting the procedure, his INT rating also serves as a penalty to the roll.

If the result is "Failure," the Mystic Warrior knows that he has been unsuccessful. Further attempts suffer a -5 penalty. On a "Mishap," the Warrior has failed, but thinks he has succeeded—the victim regains consciousness with all memories intact!

**Blind.** This skill is the same as the Sleep skill above, but it instead renders the opponent blind for d6 hours.

## AIRBORNE ACTIVITIES (Harakin)

Players with Harakin characters, or whose adventurers possess flying steeds, may want to know what skills and rules govern their aerial activities.

**Riding in the Sky.** There is no essential difference between riding a ground or an aerial creature, as in either case it is the animal which must know how to run or fly—the rider must only convey the direction and speed at which he wishes to travel.

All it takes to be an expert sky rider, therefore, is to possess the Riding skill and to have experience with a flying steed. A character who already has Riding skill may spend 5 experience points to become familiar with flying mounts. Characters riding unfamiliar types of animals (whether on the ground or in the air) must succeed at a Riding skill roll hourly to avoid trouble. An adventurer unfamiliar with sky riding might run into such problems as flocks of dangerous avians, sudden down-drafts, storms, becoming lost in clouds or separated from his companions, or losing control of his mount.

**Aerial Combat.** The ability to fight from the back of a flying animal is governed by a new skill: *Flying Combat*. It costs 10 experience points to purchase, or 5 if the adventurer already possesses Mounted Combat skill. Without this skill, characters suffer from the non-proficiency penalty when in aerial combat.

On a poor *Action Table* result during aerial combat, any of the following might occur: falling (DEX Roll to avoid), dropping a weapon, hysteria, vertigo (WILL Roll to recover), nausea (-2 penalty to all *Action Table* rolls), accidental dive or crash, or accidental injury to the rider's mount.

When in flying combat, characters may add the SPD rating of their mount as a bonus to their own score when calculating initiative.

## KANG COMBAT TRANCE

Kang Warrior-Priests are able to enter a fighting state known as the Kang Combat Trance by repeatedly roaring a personal motto. One WILL Roll is made per round, until a successful result indicates that the character has passed into the higher mental state.

While in Combat Trance, Kang have a +2 bonus to their combat and damage rolls, and may temporarily ignore the effects of all but the most severe wounds and injuries. They remain in the trance state for d6 rounds per character level.

When Kang come out of the trance, they must succeed at a CON Roll in order to avoid collapsing (for d10 minutes per character level). The effects of wounds and other injuries now catch up with them. Combat Trance may be used three times per day, and only by Warrior-Priests.

## KESH AND JABUTU (Manra and Witchmen)

One fixture throughout the tribes of Chana is the hallucinogen *kesh*, used to heighten the senses and detach the spirit from the body. The drug is made from the roots of the jabutu plant, which grows only in the foothills of the Jade Mountains. Since jabutu takes several years to mature, and since it is used both by the Manra (for their shape-changing rituals) and the Witchmen (for necromantic rites), this plant remains scarce.

To produce *kesh*, a shaman crushes a jabutu root, then boils it in its own sap for one day. The liquid which results is poured into a clay pot and mixed with six drams of powdered bone and a pint of blood. (The Faradun recipe uses a dram of grave dust, but the Manra believe Farad *kesh* to be grossly inferior.) The completed mixture is then buried for six days, after which it is ready for use. The roots from one jabutu plant produce three ounces of *kesh*.

The benefits of utilizing *kesh* depend upon the race of the character. For the Manra, the drug provides shape-changing abilities (see the "Arcana" section in this book for details).

Witchmen have a totally different response to the magiceutical. A single ounce enables a Witchman to see invisible and spirit (astral) presences. Drinking two ounces allows a tribesman to see into the spirit world or one of the lower planes. Three-ounces enables the drinker to enter the spirit world or one of the lower planes in spirit (astral) form. All results last for 1 hour. An overdose gives Witchmen hallucinations which last for d6 hours.

Characters who are neither Manra nor Witchman do not have the aid of the training needed to control the ravages of the drug. They suffer only vivid hallucinations (for d6 hours), and a giddy feeling of power.

*Kesh* is addictive and poisonous. Each time it is consumed, the drinker must roll vs. CON on the *Action Table*. A "Failure" indicates that the drinker becomes addicted. A "Mishap" means that the drinker becomes ill—and untrained characters may die (Gamemaster's discretion).

Once a character is an addict, he may attempt to "quit" the addiction by succeeding at a WILL Roll (at a -4 penalty), made weekly. If he fails, he must do everything in his power to get a dose of *kesh*. While trying to quit, addicts suffer from tremors, sleeplessness, nausea and hallucinations (a -3 penalty to all *Action Table* rolls).

No one ever gets clear of *kesh* once addicted. If a former addict gets another dose of *kesh*, the addiction is fully revived. If a reformed addict is exposed to an opportunity to consume *kesh*, he must succeed at a WILL Roll or submit to the temptation.

## MONDRE KHAN REGRESSION

When a Mondre Khan is first wounded in any combat, the Gamemaster must secretly make a WILL Roll for the character on the *Action Table*. "Success" or "Success Plus" indicate that the warrior overcomes his bestial nature. A result of "Mishap," however, means that the half-man has regressed to his animal nature.



"Failure" means that the Mondre Khan is losing control, and must succeed at a WILL Roll every round (until the end of this combat) to avoid regression.

Should a Mondre Khan undergo regression, he must attack the opponent who blooded him until the foe is dead or the half-man is himself slain. All subsequent combat rolls are made at a +3 bonus. After defeating his opponent, the Mondre Khan must attempt a new WILL Roll. If he succeeds, he returns to his normal self. If not, he again focuses on a single foe who has drawn his blood, and battles as before. If there is no suitable opponent, the half-man must flee from the combat, moving toward the nearest wilderness.

Regressed individuals forget how to speak, use complex tools or weapons (such as a crossbow or tinder box), and lose the use of any non-combat skills which the Gamemaster considers civilized. Instead, they constantly growl and utter bestial cries.

Warriors who regress and flee to the wilderness receive a daily WILL Roll. If successful, they return to their full intelligence. On a "Mishap," however, the regression is permanent. Mondre Khan who regress and then recover and return to their tribe are treated with great respect, due to their demonstrated strength of will.

#### SEMI-AQUATIC LIMITATIONS (Sunra)

The following rules apply to Sunra characters, although the Gamemaster might use them with other aquatic and semi-aquatic races as well.

**Drying Out.** Sunra are susceptible to rapid dehydration. They must totally immerse themselves in water each day for 1 hour, or suffer d4 points of damage (d8 in hot, dry climes such as a desert).

**Pressure.** Sunra can swim down to a depth of 200 feet, but suffer d6 points of damage per hour when below 150 feet. They can walk along the sea bottom—and sometimes do to avoid certain predators—but must use their non-submerged SPD rating while walking.

**Sensitivity to Cold.** For every 10 degree drop in air temperature below 70 degrees, or for every 5 degree drop in water temperature below 60 degrees, Sunra suffer a -1 penalty to their *Action Table* rolls due to lethargy. Warm blankets or clothing provide a buffer of 15 degrees in the air and 5 degrees in the water.

**Water-Breathing.** "Semi-aquatic" beings have lungs with a limited capability to extract oxygen from water. Sunra can live in water for up to 24 hours before their lungs become overloaded with liquid and clogged with salt and sea particles. For each additional hour of immersion, they suffer d10 points of damage as well as increasing confusion and disorientation (-1 penalty to INT per hour).

#### SUNRA SPAWNING URGE

During the month of Drome, Sunra become obsessed with the need to spawn. Isalis is their ancestral spawning ground, and Sunra posted away from the city must return by the beginning of Drome if they can. The semi-aquatics can mate while away from Isalis, but the eggs produced in such unions are 99% infertile. The Empire reluctantly allows Sunra serving in the Imperial Navy to return to Isalis during spawning, as long as the lusty mariners leave in shifts.

Sunra player-characters who are abroad on the 1st of Drome must make a WILL Roll. The distance to Isalis and the feasibility of a return journey do not affect this WILL Roll, as this is not a logical matter. On a "Success Plus," they may stay away from Isalis for the month. On a "Success," they must travel to Isalis unless they have a compelling reason not to (the Gamemaster rules whether any goal or project is sufficiently important). On a "Failure," the character must attempt to return, and on a "Mishap," the Sunra must leave that same day.

Female Sunra must spawn during the mating month. For every day past the first day of the month, the character loses 1 hit point if she has not yet joined in a spawning dance. Sexual differences become marked, and females gain an additional +4 bonus to CHA until their eggs have been laid.

Males perform erotic spawning dances (mandatory CHA Roll, daily) to entice egg-carrying females to the lower chambers of Isalis, and the canals become swollen with males maneuvering for partners. Mates change from season to season, since Sunra do not marry as do many other races. For every day past the first day of the month, males lose d6 hit points if they have not yet mated, and become increasingly disturbed and violent (-2 penalties to INT and WILL).

There is no actual coupling in the underwater spawning. The eggs are laid by the female, and then fertilized by a selected male. The eroticism of the act comes from the intricacies of the swimming. In the ancient past, females ate their mates after spawning, but this is no longer the case.

Player-character Sunra males must continue to daily attempt to fertilize eggs until they score a "Success Plus" on a WILL Roll (+1 modifier for each previous fertilization this month) or the month is over. Very little productive work is accomplished in Isalis during Drome.

Fertilized eggs are placed in the egg chambers in the Lower City, where they are ferociously guarded by the nurses. It will be two years before they hatch.

# SECRETS OF TALISLANTA

If you are not a Gamemaster, *do not read* this material! It reveals secret information about the Quan Empire, the extinct Mazdaks, and the Savants of Xanadas.

## SECRETS OF THE EMPIRE

### Ispasia's Allies

How can a citystate on the northeastern fringe of the continent maintain itself as a trading metropolis? Ispasia secretly keeps close ties with the Parthenian sea-traders, and has done so since its founding. The aloof sea-traders, cold and distant to most Talislantan races, transport trade goods for the yellow mercantilists, taking on cargo and off-loading passengers at "summer cottages" east of Ispasia, usually at night. In return, the Parthenians receive Sunra slaves, which they utilize to unknown ends.

This arrangement also allows Ispasian emissaries to secretly visit many lands, where they have concluded a variety of trade agreements. Many foreign businesses—unknown to those who operate them—are substantially owned by Ispasia. Some suspect that the Ispasians will soon break free of their dependence on the Quan, relying on their foreign influence and possessions to help them become a major independent power in eastern Talislanta.

### Friends of the Chromids

A secret known only to Chromid characters (and their players) is that the tiny man-like sentients can communicate telepathically with the great Shathane. The powerful herbivores act as protectors for their small friends, and their attacks to scare intruders away from the diminutive beings are the truth behind the stories of Shathane "rampaging through the forest." In return, Chromids feed and groom their guardians.

### Lost Vajran Ruins

In the Vajran Hills, those who ignore the posted warnings may find the overgrown and sealed tunnel entrances of abandoned Vajran settlements and mines. Seals of the Emperor—large ribbons bearing the golden symbol of the Quan ruler—are an obvious sign that what lies beyond the entrance is imperial property. Kang scouts irregularly patrol here, checking that the seals are still in place and hunting down intruders.

**Typical Settlements.** The sides and ceilings of the tunnels are made of stone blocks which fit together perfectly—no mortar was used or needed. Each block is decorated with geometric patterns—the more intricate designs are found further underground. There is a quiet, tomblike stillness, and the floors are covered with dust.

The entrance tunnel leads to a circular chamber from which passages spin off like spokes in a wheel. A large central pillar, ringed with benches and smaller pillars, is carved with images depicting Vajra from before the conquest. The uppermost figure is always a stooped subterranean in a blue robe.

One spoke in each underground warren radiates a soft glow, and leads to a cavern overgrown with phosphorescent mushrooms. The other spokes end in three-room complexes. Some contain furniture and the remains of clothing, while scattered tools suggest that others were once workrooms.

**Far Eye.** The tallest rock formation in these hills, Far Eye towers 400 feet into the sky and is visible for miles. This tower of eroded rock contains an abandoned fortress of the Vajra. Windows cut

into the crest of the spire, not visible from the ground, provide a remarkable view of the hill country for many miles in all directions. The wind blowing through the openings creates an eerie sighing which can be heard throughout the fortress.

**LasHom.** This abandoned Vajran city is most difficult to locate. Cleverly hidden in the rocks, the doors open only when pressure is applied at the right points. However, one of the seven entrances has been damaged by earthquake. Its outline is visible, and adventurers could force the door open. Each entrance leads to a tunnel and a ramp leading upward.

To protect their ancestral home, the Vajra set many traps to deter intruders. The outer devices—falling weights and hinged floors (over pits of spikes)—are easily foiled, and meant more to scare or discourage than to kill. Deeper within the complex, however, the traps reflect all of the craftsmanship of this ancient race. The glyphs on the walls provide instructions on how to avoid or deactivate the traps, but only the Vajran Priests can read this ancient and secret script.

LasHom Cavern lies at the heart of the abandoned fortress-city. The walls seem to stretch endlessly in all directions, while the ceiling—30 feet above—is decorated with colorful stone panels in a patternless mosaic. Pillars stretch to the ceiling, and low walls of carved stone form a twisting labyrinth which fills the chamber. There are no buildings here, only benches and altars.

LasHom's lower levels are tidy and empty, devoid of furnishings. There are living quarters and workrooms here as in other Vajran excavations, only on a larger scale. One chamber contains an underground lake fed by a waterfall. Hazards abound—flora and fungi once cultivated in LasHom's gardens choke some chambers, and predators lurk within the thickets they create. Tuatara and other reptilians are common wherever there is open water.

The greatest danger to intruders is the Vajra themselves. Hidden passages from the lowest level of LasHom, concealed by artful cave-ins and pools of flood water, lead to secret hibernation chambers. For the past century, the Vajra have been carefully smuggling the most promising of their hibernating young to this part of LasHom. Two Wise Ones prepare the free Vajra for the day when they will lead all of their people out of Quan slavery. The guards who protect this tiny colony take action against adventurers who seem on the verge of learning too much.

### Mandalan Rebel Camp

Though the Kang and the Quan categorically deny the rumors, a secret Mandalan base exists somewhere in the Opal Mountains of Xanadas. Its secluded location and the rigors of traversing the mountains have so far prevented the Kang from finding it. Rock slides and avalanches along the narrow mountain trails have been sufficient to deter scouting expeditions.

The rebels at Jhin Bey, the hidden camp, are involved in smuggling refugees out of the Empire, forging passes and trade contracts, and supporting subversive activities. By nature, the golden people would rather do damage by subtle means than violent. Jhin Bey offers haven to non-Mandalan rebels as well, and it is these warriors who do the raiding and physical sabotage.

Unsuccessful at tracking or capturing them, the Kang maintain that the "ill-equipped" rebels who flee into the mountains die from exposure and wild beasts. An occasional body found in the foothills adds credence to their claims.

The Palace of a Thousand Fountains in Tian is where the Emperor, his family, and the Quan of the Grand Elite dwell. Divided into many factions and interests, they indulge in intrigues and betrayals on a scale seldom seen elsewhere.

**The Emperor.** Sho Yan, Emperor of the Quan, fancies himself a military genius, and constantly interferes with his Kang warlords' plans. He has little interest in governing the Empire, preferring to spend most of his time with his concubines. Therefore, he lets his relatives run the government.

**The Empress.** An ambitious woman, Empress Yoa Din is bitter toward the Emperor, who sired several of her children but now avoids her company in favor of his concubines. Her greatest fear is that Sho Yan will someday discover that several of the "royal" offspring were fathered by the lovers she took in revenge.

**The Crown Prince.** Sun te Qua is a surprising man. Slightly built and dark skinned, he seems to prefer the company of books and his Mandalan tutors over the petty intrigues and luxurious excesses of the court, and shows an interest in history and politics. The answer to this mystery is that the prince is half-Mandalan, fathered by one of his mother's lovers. Sun te Qua is unpopular at court, but he is next in line for the Golden Throne. If not assassinated by a rival, the future Emperor might be the reformer who can save the Quan Empire.

**Princess Wei.** Young and quite attractive, Lee Wei has avoided the excessive weight which plagues her indulgent race. She has great influence within court, and has been known to aid foreign merchants in return for exotic gifts. Rumor has it that she numbers among her lovers the Kang commander of the Sunrise Legion, War Lord Korg.

**Lord Nae Wha Ho.** An illegitimate son of the Emperor, Lord Nae deeply resents the Crown Prince and schemes against him in league with Princess Wei. Some at court suspect him of having an "unnatural relationship" with his half-sister, but nothing has been proven.

**Jasmine of Faradun.** The Emperor's favorite concubine, Jasmine is wily and intelligent, and on several occasions has managed to persuade the ruler to take actions she favored. Most recently, she talked him into having a troublesome concubine rival flogged to death.

**Jhamonde the Mage.** A foreign wizard of unknown race and background, Jhamonde is the Emperor's court sorcerer. No one is certain what he truly looks like, for his appearance changes continually—on some occasions he is a hooded, spectral figure, on others a young boy, and on still others a comely maiden. Jhamonde helps the Emperor to root out enemies, and has assisted the Golden Host in several victories over the Saurans. He possesses a folio of lost spells by Cascal, the Phandril magician of the Forgotten Age. Jhamonde has accepted no reward for his services, except elevation to the ranks of the Honorary Elite and a place at court.

Unsuspected by the Quan are several disquieting activities within the Pavilion of the Favored Servants, where Ispasian administrators mastermind their potential rebellion, and Mystic Warriors covertly practice the forbidden principles of the Mandalan Way.

## THE RITE OF RENEWAL (XANADAS)

The Savants of Xanadas possess a secret which allows them to extend their lifespan. This knowledge is sought by many in Talislanta, but those who seek it have been deceived by the rumors and speculations fostered by the Xanadasians themselves. The truth is that the life extension is due to the Rite of Renewal, a ceremony practiced in the temple's Hall of Mystics on the day of the Conjunction of the Twin Suns (the 49th of Phandir).

The one to be renewed sits in the high-backed chair in the center of the room, facing the large window. The other Savants place their Scrying Crystals in the golden holders which circle the chair. As noon approaches, the double sunlight filters through the window, illuminating the crystal at the north of the circle. At the precise moment of noon, the diamond bursts into dazzling brilliance, and the fiery radiance travels from it to the other crystals until all are joined in a circle of light. As the diamonds pulse and hum with energy, the band of light extends upward until it forms a glowing dome over the Savant seated in the Chair of Renewal.

For five full minutes, the light streams from the diamonds. When the crystals finally cease their beat and return to their normal state, the Savants carry the subject back to his chamber, and reverently return the crystals to the viewing rooms. The one who endured the rite sleeps for d10 days, and when he awakens, finds that his body has been rejuvenated—becoming younger by d20 x [CON +2] years (with a -1 penalty to the roll for each 5 previous renewals), but rarely younger than early adulthood.

## THE LAST OF THE MAZDAKS

The Mazdak tribes ruled in the East until their incessant civil warfare finally destroyed their empire, aided by the subtle manipulations of their Mandalan subjects. It is a "known fact" that the Mazdaks are extinct.

The truth is that a tattered remnant of this once great people remains alive in Talislanta. In the last days of the Mazdaks, a Creativist prophet named Sa-Mir traveled from city to city, testifying against their incessant warfare and prophesying that it would bring them to destruction. He won over a few converts (who fled to the Opal Mountains for safety), and was eventually martyred by those he sought to help.

However, as the final doom of the barbarians approached, more and more of the Mazdaks began to accept the teachings of the dead prophet. Survivors of the final battles straggled into the Opal Mountains, where former disciples of Sa-Mir taught them about the Creator—how to please him, and how to avoid his anger.

Many died in the harsh environment, including some of the clerics, and the Creativist teachings became distorted. Nevertheless, the Mazdaks survived—and are today known as the Samir, after the fallen prophet.



# ADVENTURES IN THE EAST

The adventures which follow can be used to introduce player characters to eastern Talislanta. "Sunra Surprise" takes place in Isalis, the Coral City of the Inland Sea, and allows the adventurers to meet the aquatic race of that metropolis. "Path of Peril" involves a mysterious journey to the Temple of the Seven Moons. The page of adventure ideas on the last page can be used for inspiration by Gamemasters when designing their own adventures.

## SUNRA SURPRISE

The adventurers are in the wrong place at the wrong time—a Zandir has been caught smuggling Moonfish out of the Empire, and the Governor of Isalis is cracking down on all foreigners. To escape, the player characters take the next vessel which leaves the harbor... and find themselves embroiled in mutiny!

*Sunra Surprise* is an adventure for 3-5 characters of levels 2-5. Any character types from beyond the Empire will do, especially if they are handy with a weapon and know how to swim. The Gamemaster may adjust the number and level of adversaries to match the skill and experience of his players' characters.

Since the scenario begins in Isalis, the adventurers should have a reason for being here—perhaps they were hired as mercenaries by a merchant ship which brought a cargo to Isalis.

### "All Foreigners Must Leave!"

The adventurers are in the Dragon Pub when an incoming patron informs the room that a Zandir merchant has been caught smuggling Moonfish out of the city. General commotion breaks out among the foreign traders. (Any adventurer who succeeds at an Administrator or Streetwise skill roll may receive a hint about what is going to happen.)

Soon afterward, a squad of five Kang soldiers and an officer burst into the pub. Demanding that all foreigners present their visitation permits, the officer makes a cursory inspection of the paperwork, then orders the foreigners to accompany him to the Governor's Palace. The non-player characters surrender. If the adventurers resist, the officer warns them once, then orders his soldiers to subdue them. The Kang would enjoy killing the adventurers, but are under orders to only bash in a few heads.

**The Governor's Palace.** One way or another, the adventurers are eventually brought to the Palace of the Governor. The courtyard is crowded with disgruntled foreigners clutching their permits, ringed in by scowling guards. As the player characters arrive, the Governor emerges on a balcony and Kang clear a space in the central plaza. The Zandir smuggler, bound and gagged, is dragged out. "Execute the vermin," orders the Quan. Soldiers lift the man bodily, then impale him on a sharpened wooden stake.

After the execution, groups of foreigners are escorted every few minutes through a large pair of brass double doors into the Governor's Court. Soon, the adventurers' turn comes. They are brought before a bored Ispasian administrator flanked by six guards. Ignoring anything the adventurers say, the bureaucrat silently examines their papers.

*If the player characters injured any soldiers:* The Ispasian announces that this is a "trial" for their crimes. Regardless of the facts, he recommends a death sentence, and an uninterested Governor approves the decision. However, the Ispasian and his Quan master desire wealth more than justice—any suitable bribe will guarantee the characters' delivery at night to a ship leaving the harbor (see below). Alternately, the Gamemaster should give the adventurers a fair chance to escape from their cells.

*If the adventurers harmed no one:* The Ispasian rips up their papers. "Be gone from this city within twenty-four hours," he says, "or face trial for treason against the Emperor." The adventurers are then expelled from the Palace.

*If the characters never reach the Palace:* If they have somehow eluded the Kang and avoided capture, the adventurers should be smart enough to look for a ship out of the city (see below).

If the adventurers own or serve aboard a ship, the governor seizes their ship and/or imprisons their patron at this time.

### The Good Ship *Sun-Yen*

The only way to leave this island city is to obtain passage on a ship. The adventurers might prowl the taverns in the Outsiders' Quarter, inquire at the Citadel of Pilots, or go to the harbor and ask around (the dragon barque berths are off-limits to foreigners, however). Unless the Gamemaster wishes to improvise further encounters, they eventually discover that a Sunra merchant ship is leaving the next day for Jacinth.

The captain of the ship is at the harbor preparing her vessel when the adventurers meet her. The ship is the *Sun-Yen*, and like all Sunra ships, is the property of the Quan Empire. The vessel is under orders to deliver a cargo of rainbow-kra hides to Jacinth.

Surprisingly, the captain of the *Sun-Yen* is a Sunra, named Pilot Tav. She engages in a few rounds of good-natured bartering over passage on the ship. Money has little interest for her, since as a "Sunra slave" it is illegal for her to possess wealth. Tav insists that all passengers help on the voyage, and asks for payment of 50 gold lumens each. However, she's flexible (especially if any player roleplays some bargaining, then succeeds at a Barter skill roll).

If any adventurers have Pilot/Navigator or combat skills, Tav appears interested. "We may need you on this trip," she says cryptically. If pressed to explain, she says that the Mandalan Coast is dangerous this time of year. She asks for the fare in advance, and tells the party to be on the ship at dawn.

### Casting Off

The adventurers arrive the next morning to find Tav nursing a hangover and making last-minute preparations. Her crew consists of five Sunra mariners, a pilot and a cartographer.

A player character who knows anything about Sunra culture or sailing receives an *Action Table* roll to realize that a cartographer is not needed for such a short voyage. If asked, Pilot Tav explains that the Sunra female has been sent by the School of Cartographers to revise the maps of the Mandalan coast.

A successful Talislantan Cultures roll causes an adventurer with a Sunra background to notice that one of the mariners wears the distinctive shell of the Pilot's School. If asked, Tav explains that the Sunra is a criminal sentenced to life as a common mariner. His name is Convict Ti Yav.

**The Kang.** Once the adventurers are settled in, two other passengers arrive—Kang sergeants, Srahk and Fehk. They have plenty of baggage and little tact. Srahk pushes the adventurers around, insisting that they move their bags somewhere else. If they refuse, the Kang snarls and draws his weapon. If the adventurers still refuse, Srahk shouts for the dockside patrol.

After the incident is over, the Kang gloats. "We'll let you live this time," he says.

**The Priests.** Tav is waiting for some special visitors before casting off—a trio of Sunra priests. (It is standard for Sunra ships leaving Isalis to be blessed, but usually one priest suffices. Three is almost unheard of.)

At last, they arrive. Two priests chant poems about the Creator and the Sea. The third scoops a bucket of water from the harbor and holds it aloft, saying, “The Sea is One.” He fills a vial with the water, seals it, and passes it to Pilot Tav, who gingerly accepts it.

The priest then cups his hands and throws a handful of water from the bucket back into the harbor. “As the drops return to the Sea and are One,” says the priest, “as water can be in many droplets but still be One, so are the Sunra One.” The crew, including Tav, reply, “We are One. The Sea is One. We are One with the Sea.”

The priests smile, chat a bit with the crew, and then depart. Tav offers no explanation for the ceremony, but she is obviously moved by it. The Kang officers ignore the ritual entirely. At the Gamemaster’s discretion, a character who knows Sunra culture might realize that the ship is being sent on a dangerous mission.

### To Sunra Bay

The voyage takes the ship across the Inland Sea, then down the East River Shan to Sunra Bay and the ocean. Most of the adventurers’ day is taken up in keeping the *Sun-Yen* in working order and clean. Those with mariner skills may get the feeling that the Sunra are subtly testing their abilities—they are asked to trim the sail, and give their opinion on what weather the sky foretells. Otherwise, the mariners stick to themselves and say little.

Sergeant Srahk sleeps most of the time, while Fehk suffers from sea sickness. They loudly talk about how glad they are to be leaving “Fish City” for their new post in Jacinth.

The ship passes the first Kang checkpoint on the first afternoon, as they enter the river channel. The procedure is always the same: Imperial troops clumsily thump aboard, search randomly through the cargo (and the adventurers’ possessions), demand to see Tav’s permit, then determine the “shipping charge” (extortion money). Since neither Pilot Tav nor her crew have any money, the soldiers confiscate part of the cargo instead.

After taking their shipping charges, the guards gossip and trade insults with Srahk and Fehk. (If the adventurers fought the Kang passengers earlier, Fehk suggests that the guards demand a 1 G.L. “toll” from each player character.)

When darkness falls, the ship releases its anchor and everyone sleeps.

**Other Encounters.** The Gamemaster may improvise encounters along the voyage to the sea. At the second checkpoint—midway down river, on the morning of the second day—a Kang might push one of the crew into the water. Since the guards encourage river predators by feeding them scraps of raw meat, falling into the water here can be very dangerous. The *Sun-Yen* could also be ambushed by a Witchman raiding party (proving how effective Vishana is at keeping the jungle warriors out of the Empire), run aground on a “sand bar” that turns out to be a sleeping River Dragon or other large creature, or threaten to capsize in a sudden storm.

### Mutiny!

At noon of the second day, the *Sun-Yen* arrives at the final Kang checkpoint, where the river enters Sunra Bay. Three dragon barques patrol in the distance. Pilot Tav looks at them with pride. “Fine vessels,” she says. “It is unfortunate that such ships are not allowed to sail the open seas, as they were intended.” Leaving the

checkpoint, the ship heads for the open ocean. The Sunra cannot hide their excitement. Sergeant Fehk looks nervously at the land, and asks why they are heading so far from shore. Tav explains that she is heading out to take advantage of an offshore current.

After a day of sailing, the coast disappears from view. The Kang, increasingly restless, at last demand that Tav turn the ship around and keep in sight of land. At that moment, from hiding places built into the deck, the Sunra produce harpoons, spears and daggers. Pilot Tav stays at the helm, grinning. The unprepared Kang are faced with a mass of barbed points. Convict Ti Yav takes command, ordering the Kang to jump overboard.

The Kang fight desperately, demanding that the adventurers help them and threatening them if they don’t.

**If the Kang win:** If the adventurers helped the Sunra, the Kang toss them overboard or kill them. They are too furious to realize they are killing the only people left who can crew the ship. Otherwise, the adventurers must now help the Kang sail the ship back to Quan. Srahk insists on reaching Jacinth, and promises a 10 G.L. reward to each player character who helps him. He wants to execute any Sunra survivors, but Fehk reminds him how pleased the Quan will be with live prisoners.

**If the Sunra win:** If the player characters collaborated with the Kang, the Sunra now throw them overboard. Otherwise, a chuckling Tav continues to sail out to sea.

Convict Ti Yav has a talk with the party. He explains why he is a criminal—Ti Yav killed another pilot while in a rage brought on by Kang-supplied liquor. He feels great remorse for his act, especially because the female he killed was one of the few living Sunra who have killed a sea dragon. The crime was dealt with secretly by the Council of Sea People. Their sentence was that he should take a vessel into the open sea, find a sea dragon, and kill it to atone for the death of the sea-dragon slayer. All of Ti Yav’s crew are volunteers, and have sworn to aid him in this endeavor or die trying.

Ti Yav offers the adventurers a choice. They can continue with the *Sun-Yen* on her perilous journey, knowing that a merchant ship is not the ideal vessel with which to hunt a sea dragon, or they can be dropped off at night along the coast. However, the pilot clearly would prefer to sail further east rather than west. The choice is up to the players. A party which returns to the Empire had better not show up at Isalis again, and should avoid Kang patrols at all costs. On the other hand, adventurers staying with the *Sun-Yen* are heading for certain danger.

### Further Adventures

Hunting sea dragons is extremely dangerous. Convict Ti Yav wants to take up a position west of the Mangar Isles, where ancient charts record a dragon mating area. The ship might run into an Aberrant Sea Storm (like Aberrant Weather, only worse), sight a Parthenian trireme, or run into the Mangar Corsairs... Cartographer Nah Wav has her own agenda: searching for the fabled rebel Sunra colony believed to exist on one of the Scimitar Isles, and making contact with the Sunra’s long-lost friends, the people of Oceanus.

Then there is the hunt for the sea dragon. In the final battle, it may not be entirely clear *who* is hunting *whom*. Ti Yav’s strategy is direct: close with the sea dragon and use harpoons. Any attacks (including magic) which the adventurers can bring to bear will be appreciated.

Only two things are certain. First, the *Sun-Yen* will not return to Isalis without first killing a sea dragon. Second, the adventurers are in for a cargo-load of excitement.

## Cast

**Pilot Tav.** Sunra Mariner, Fourth level. 5' 4", 110 lbs.

STR -1, DEX +4, CON +1, PER +1, CHA +2

**Combat Rating** +3. 19 hit points. Three daggers, d6. Two dueling swords, d8. Light crossbow, d8. No armor.

**Skills:** Acting, appraise treasure, art, bribe, con, interrogate, legerdemain, magical training, navigator/pilot +6, secondary combat, underworld

Tav is a skilled Pilot and Mariner and a long time friend of convict Ti Yav.

**Crew of the Sun Yen.** Sunra Mariners. Fifth level. 6' 2", 160 lbs.

STR +1, SPD +4 [underwater] / 0 [otherwise], INT +3, WILL +1, PER +1, CHA -2

**Combat Rating** +3. 18 hit points. Spear, d8+1. Harpoon, d12+1. Dagger, d6+1. (All weapons are in hiding.) No armor.

**Skills:** Cartography, fishing, navigator/pilot, secondary combat

**Convict Ti Yav** is seventh level Sunra Mariner. INT +4, WILL 0.

**Combat Rating** +4. 22 hit points.

Additional skills: command, literacy.

**Cartographer Nah Wav** has a rating of +3 in cartography.

**Srahk and Fehk.** Kang Warriors. Third level. 6' 5", 200 lbs.

STR +5, DEX +2, CON +2, PER -1

**Combat Rating** +6. 21 hit points. Broadsword, d10+5. Light

crossbow, d8+5. Twin dragon-pommel daggers, d6+5. No armor (afraid of drowning, these Kang do not wear their black-iron armor on-board ship)

**Skills:** Command, mounted combat, primary combat, riding, weaponless combat

Srahk is ferocious and tough, devoid of mercy. Fehk puts up a stoic, gruff exterior, but his nerves were shattered during his stay at Vishana.

**Minor Characters.** The Kang soldiers and checkpoint guards are first-level Kang Warriors, without exceptional skills or abilities. Their officers are second level.

**The Sun-Yen.** A typical Sunra merchant ship, the *Sun-Yen* is 75' long and 26' wide, with a 6' draught (10' when loaded). The vessel is single-masted with a lanteen-rigged sail and a double set of rudders. A single ship's boat is lashed aboard for emergencies. The ship is highly maneuverable and capable of long voyages, but must avoid shallow water. She's fast for a merchant ship, but no match for most pirate vessels (90 miles/day, under favorable conditions). She requires a crew of 5 mariners and a pilot/navigator. Her cargo capacity is 85 tons and 10 passengers, or 50 passengers without cargo.





## PATH OF PERIL

In this adventure, the player characters are hired by an unlikely pair—a Jaka and a Dracartan—to accompany them on a mysterious expedition into the Opal Mountains.

*What the adventurers do not know:* The High Savant of the Temple of the Seven Moons is dying, and the Chosen Ones have once again been summoned to almost inaccessible Xanadas. Ardana, a Dracartan Thaumaturge, does not know why or how she is being compelled to travel into these mountains, except that she is aware that someone (or *something*) is dying.

Even worse is that the Savants of the Temple aren't playing fair. As the Chosen Ones have approached, the various Xanadasian factions have helped or hindered their candidates, until now there are only two Chosen Ones left. The accidents, bad weather and mishaps that have plagued their journey have finally caused Lotran, the Jaka, to hire the adventurers—fearing that without them, Ardana the Dracartan is doomed.

*Path of Peril* is an adventure for 4-6 characters of levels 1-4. Both warrior and mage characters are suggested. Statistics for non-player characters are given at the end of this adventure.

### Mercenaries for Hire?

*The material which follows assumes that the party begins in Karang, the closest settlement to Xanadas. However, the Game-master is free to relocate this adventure, depending on the scope of his campaign and the locations of his players' characters. Adventurers from a western campaign face a considerably longer journey unless they can gain permission to travel the Emperor's Road of Quan.*

The player characters are approached by an old friend who works at one of the local taverns. She tells them about the strange couple—a black-furred Jaka and a robed Dracartan—who wandered into town two weeks ago, bloody and exhausted. The two have now recovered their strength, and are quietly asking around about reliable warriors for hire. The adventurers' friend adds that she thinks the strangers have money, and says that she'll arrange an introduction if the characters are interested.

A meeting is arranged in the travelers' private chambers at the inn. The strangers are introduced as Lotran, a Jaka Beastmaster, and Ardana, who says she is a Dracartan Desert Scout. The female seems friendly but distracted, and so the Jaka does all of the talking. He explains that he and his companion are planning to journey into the Opal Mountains, and require escorts with combat experience for their protection. He offers them 500 G.L. apiece, payable upon safe arrival at their mountain destination.

If asked for more specifics about his goal, the Jaka is evasive. If pressed, he says that their destination is a village called Astartet (he's lying—the two do not know where they are going). Lotran says nothing about the purpose of their journey, except that it is "necessary." Questioned about Ardana's strange behavior, he explains that she is grieving for a relative who is gravely ill.

Lotran becomes almost desperate if the adventurers refuse his offer. Taking them aside privately—out of Ardana's hearing—he pleads with them to join him, citing the Dracartan's unsuitability for the northern climate, and calling upon the Creator to witness his earnestness.

The Jaka provides dried provisions and warm clothing for the party, and arranges for the purchase of greymane steeds. He believes that the journey will take at least two weeks, so they need to leave soon. Lotran has already been traveling for a long time, and is anxious to start this last leg.

## Into the Mountains

Riding the greymanes, it only takes a single day to cross the open ground north of Karang and reach the foothills of the Opals. On the second day, however, the going becomes considerably more treacherous—the greymanes prove more dangerous than useful on the icy slopes (they should be abandoned), there is no trail, and there are no guides or maps for these heights. Even under ideal conditions, it would take three days to cross this range.

Scouting rolls are required to find a safe path, and climbing and wilderness survival skill rolls to travel without morbid incident. The Gamemaster might improvise any of these encounters:

**The Gravel Mounds.** Following an animal trail along a ravine, the adventurers find their way blocked by a gravel mound fifteen feet high. Climbing the obstacle is difficult, removing it is probably impossible, and the noise of doing either attracts a hungry predator (probably when the party is spread out).

**Snow Storm.** The characters awaken to a plaintive bellowing seeming to come from near at hand—actually, a muskront calling out a warning of the storm it detects. The blizzard hits just as the travelers are breaking camp (and out of sight of each other). The storm is not severely cold, but it reduces visibility to zero. Anyone trying to go anywhere must pass a PER check or risk falling off the mountain. After four hours, the storm clears.

**Imperial Rebels.** Patrols from the secret camp at Jhin Bey might chance upon the adventurers. (For more information, see the "Secrets of Talislanta" section of this book.)

### Samir on the Trail

The adventurers are descending the far slopes of the first range when they hear a loud bellowing from just over the next ridge, followed by an explosive sound (an avalanche). On any appropriate *Action Table* roll, a character may identify the first sound as a Woolly Ogriphant—very mad, perhaps wounded, and definitely close.

The frightened animal, a spear imbedded in its side, tops the ridge and sees the player characters. Lowering its head, it charges toward the adventurers. Fortunately, the bellowing ogriphant is gravely wounded (only 25 hit points), and in its terror will only trample the adventurers and then run on down the slope.

On the other side of the ridge, a band of eight Samir Hunters has been caught by the avalanche. If the adventurers need help against the Woolly Ogriphant, the Hunters gather their weapons and come to the rescue. Otherwise, the Samir remain in the snow until the player characters rescue them. Unknown to the outside world, the mountain people should come as a complete surprise to the adventurers.

The Samir celebrate the arrival of the journeyers as some kind of a miracle—"An intercession! An intercession!" chant the Hunters in their barbarous Quan dialect. They track down and slay the ogriphant (if the player characters haven't done so already), and invite the adventurers to return with them to their village.

**The Mountain Home.** The Samir live in a small village, in a sheltered valley concealed behind a formidable line of cliffs. Herds of muskronts and snowmanes graze contentedly in the snow, cared for by Herdsmen. The primitive homes are natural caves, with extra chambers built of ice blocks added on the outside.

Suspicious of strangers, the tribe's chieftain runs up to the party and demands to know what is going on. When the Hunters speak in favor of the adventurers, he summons an old man. The Elder of

the Shaman Clan solemnly draws pieces of bone from a pouch and throws them on the ground three times, studying the pattern. Rising, he announces the gods have spoken—"A feast! The strangers bring the blessings of the Instigator!" The ensuing celebration is primitive but joyful, with all of the food stores of the village opened to provide a welcome to the strangers.

While eating, the chief asks where the party is headed. The Jaka looks at Ardana, who shakily points toward a prominent mountain peak fifty miles distant. The tribal leader suddenly frowns, and at his bidding, armed Hunters surround the adventurers. Warning the strangers to be still, he waits until a herdsman brings a large, long-limbed snowmane to the forefront. The old Shaman then brings the animal next to the Dracartan, and presses their foreheads together.

Afterward, a relaxed Shaman addresses Lotran and the adventurers. "Will you serve this woman loyally?" he asks, indicating Ardana. Any who refuse will be asked to explain their disrespect to the "Favored Daughter of the Mountain God."

### Across the Frost Plain

The chieftain coerces the party into spending the night in the village, and in the morning has snowmanes, tents and provisions ready for the rest of their journey. He explains that they must proceed for five days across a treacherous frost plain before reaching the largest of the Mountain People's settlements—Atonek, on the flanks of Mount Mandu.

The chief has also arranged for three Hunters to accompany the adventurers. *Eshla* is the youngest Elder of the Hunting Clan—strong, decisive, and very attentive to the signs of the gods. *Grehr* was one of the Hunters rescued by the adventurers. He is quiet, and regards Ardana with awe. *Drepari* is the third guide. Obviously eager, he keeps staring at Ardana, but refuses to come near her.

*It is the Chroniclers faction among the Xanadasians which supports Ardana and wishes to see her become the next Savant. She is opposed by the Guardian faction. Savant Palanya—one of the Guardians—has tricked Drepari into believing that he will serve the gods by seeing that Ardana never reaches her destination.*

"The gods have taken notice of our tribe," proclaims the chieftain, as the adventurers ride off. "Fare well, Hunters!"

The winds of the frost plain are horribly cold—while the Samir seem unaffected, the adventurers feel more frozen every hour. *Eshla* is forced to call frequent rest breaks, ordering the other Samir to scout ahead for game and predators. She often checks the direction of the wind, the pattern of stones on the trail, and other indicators of the moods of the gods. At night, the party must shelter within a single tent, huddling together for warmth.

The Gamemaster may improvise as many of the following incidents as he feels his players will appreciate.

**The Maddened Omnivrax.** Alerted by her snowmane, *Eshla* shouts a warning. A maddened light-furred omnivrax charges the party. Heading directly for the Dracartan, the creature seems unable to approach closer than two yards from her—veering off and charging repeatedly, as if confused. (Actually, competing Savants are warring for control of its mind.) Both *Grehr* and *Drepari* are out scouting. On a successful PER Roll at -3 difficulty, a player character remembers that the animal came from the direction he last saw *Drepari* traveling.

**The Frost Storm.** During a rest camp, the adventurers' snowmanes suddenly become anxious. The Samir are out hunting for food, so the equus have no way to communicate their warning to

the player characters—a Frost Storm is approaching! The steeds quickly huddle together, holding on to each other's tails and manes with their teeth. Hopefully, the adventurers realize the menace and follow the example of the snowmanes.

Within five minutes, the Frost Storm hits. The cloud is a vortex studded with sparkling particles—ice crystals which have built up an electromagnetic charge. Engulfed by the cloud, characters are half-blinded by the twinkling glare. Even worse, the enchanted frost seeps away body heat, doing d6 damage per minute. Characters may subtract 1 point of damage for every heat source they huddle with (including snowmanes and other adventurers). The Frost Storm passes with supernatural speed, lasting only d10 minutes, and leaves everything encased in a fragile sheath of hardened ice.

After the storm, *Eshla* and *Drepari* straggle back to camp, convinced that the player characters must have been killed. *Grehr* doesn't return. A search finds the missing Hunter's body on the plain, frozen solid by the storm. However, if anyone thinks to check the body—difficult, since it is frozen in place—a throat wound is revealed. (*Drepari* killed him.) *Eshla* attempts to track *Grehr's* missing snowmane, but the storm has obliterated its tracks. She is convinced that this tragedy is a sign that the gods have somehow been angered.

**Ice Quake.** The ice sheet is under constant stress, which the tremendously cold substance can release in only one way: vibration. Without any discernible warning, the entire plain lurches, catapulting the adventurers and their mounts as far as four feet into the air—doing d8 x 2 points worth of damage.

By the time the party reaches Atonek village, *Eshla* is convinced. "If ever the gods smiled on this group," she mutters angrily, "they have certainly changed their minds!"

### Atonek Village

The largest of the Samir villages, Atonek has large muskront and snowmane herds, and over 200 villagers live in its cavern-homes. Suspicious at first, the local chieftain avoids the party, associating their arrival with a bad omen (the Frost Storm). *Eshla* agrees, but explains that her Shaman says that Ardana is favored by the gods. Only after a council between the travelers' snowmanes and Atonek's Shamans does the chieftain agree to help them.

When the Jaka is asked where they will travel next, he again turns to Ardana. With misted eyes, she looks upward—to the peak of Mount Mandu. The chief gasps. "The Temple!" He tells them of the home of the Savants of Xanadas, and of the only route to the peak, the One True Path. The evening is spent preparing for the final ascent—a long, cold journey.

*Eshla*, however, says that she will return home, saying that she has proved unworthy in the sight of the gods. The snowmanes return with her, for they are unsuited for the final stretch of trail. Only *Drepari* insists on staying, claiming that his survival proves the gods are with him. Replacement guides are provided by the Atonek chief—*Greylo*, a master Hunter with faith in his Shaman's interpretations of the omens from the gods, and four assistants: *Blondra*, *Malfi*, *Jask* and *Nerrak*. They accept the responsibility for getting Ardana safely to the Temple, in the name of the tribe. *Greylo* says the journey is a test of the gods, and vows to accomplish this mission or die in the attempt.

### The Highest Mountain

From Atonek, a single trail ascends the tallest peak in the known world. The route is not for the faint-hearted—*Greylo* ropes the party members together for safety, and leads the way along the brims of precipices and between unstable outcrops. The "One



True Trail" is not so much a roadway as it is the only possible way to climb Mount Mandu. Breathing soon becomes difficult, and the party must stop and rest at intervals to prevent total exhaustion. The Hunters carry the heaviest packs, and drag provisions behind them on pieces of stiffened hide.

The Gamemaster may employ as many of the following encounter suggestions as he likes:

**Red Orchid.** Near the end of the day, the party finds Blondra—who had gone ahead to scout—sitting in the middle of the trail. She is holding a blood-red mountain orchid, freshly picked, and seems dazed. The orchids are seen as major omens by the Samir, but a red one has never been seen before. The Hunters are visibly upset, and it is up to the adventurers to convince them that this is a good omen. Otherwise, some may desert.

**The Glacier.** The trail crosses an old glacier, with many deep crevasses dusted over by recent snowfall. The Hunters say it is dangerous. Jask openly wonders if the gods move against them. Nerrak takes charge of the crossing. The adventurers are instructed to follow exactly in the footsteps of the person in front of them, to move slowly, and to stop instantly when the leader does so. After two hours of painstakingly slow movement, their luck runs out—with a sudden rumble, the snow gives way beneath one of the adventurers (the one closest to Ardana).

The character is suspended by his safety ropes over the revealed chasm, but his weight also pulls the others toward the opening—those closest must succeed at STR Rolls to avoid following over the edge. The sharp ice then severs one of the ropes, hurling the dangling victim against the side of the ravine (requiring a DEX Roll to hang on to the rope, and a CON Roll to keep conscious). If anyone thinks to later examine the ropes, a successful PER check at -3 penalty reveals that someone (Drepari, hoping to kill Ardana) has deliberately weakened several of the lengths.

**Other Journeyers.** On a successful PER Roll, characters looking back from the top of a ridge notice small, moving dark spots in the distance—about 20 travel-hours behind them. The group is the same size as the player characters' party, and includes the other Chosen One, Mornamacar of Farad. If anyone proposes getting together with the other travelers, Ardana vehemently vetoes the idea.

**Avalanche!** Moving through a narrow pass overhung with snow, Greylo advises the party to keep as quiet as possible—requiring DEX or stealth skill rolls from everyone. If anyone fails, a sudden rumbling heralds a wave of snow sliding down the mountain. On a successful SPD Roll, adventurers get out of the path of the avalanche. Those failing are caught in the snow slide and buried d12 feet. The avalanche victims are hard to find (PER checks at -3), take d6 damage per minute, and must succeed at CON Rolls every five minutes to remain conscious.

Ardana frantically searches for the Jaka, and one of the Hunters is also missing. The adventurers may become alarmed, as Lotran is carrying their payment money. Both characters are dead—Blondra by accident (smashed against a rock), and Lotran by assassination (another slit throat). The Jaka's gems have not been taken. Jask is shaken by Blondra's death, and talks Malfi into deserting with him unless the adventurers can change his mind.

### Trail of Ghosts

Just before noon of the fourth day, the adventurers reach the top of an especially steep section of the trail. At the crest are two stone pillars, flanking the path, carved with ancient runes made indecipherable by wind and time. "The Trail of Ghosts," mutters Greylo. "Haunted by all who have died trying to reach the Temple." Reminding the Samir that the gods are testing them, the master Hunter passes between the pillars.

The next section of the path leads along an exposed mountain crest, swept by strong winds—requiring STR Rolls to remain upright. Except for the shriek of the wind, there is silence... and bitter cold. Every step forward is a struggle. Lungs hurt from the frigid air, and eyes sting from the wind. Even the Samir are shocked by the cold.

In addition to the encounters which follow, the Trail of Ghosts can be tailored for specific adventurers—populated with spirits of people they once knew or want to question. Seeds for future adventures can be planted here. This part of the mountains is also inhabited by Ice Dragons and Frost Demons.

**A Fire, Please.** Within an hour, the adventurers sight a body wrapped in coats and coverings, lying on the side of the trail, swept clean of snow by the constant wind. Those approaching it hear long, soft sighs and the sound of chattering teeth. Then a quiet male voice begs, "Fire, please... a small one would be fine." Attempts to question the voice only lead to complaints about the cold—"in fact, if you could just get a small fire going, I'll be ready in a minute to travel on."

The victim, a Ferran thief far from home, is dead but his spirit doesn't realize this. If anyone touches the body, the spiritform materializes—causing all of the Samir except Greylo, Nerrak and Drepari to flee back down the mountain. Stealing the corpse's 50 G.L.'s worth of Phaedran and Mazdak coins causes the specter to attack. Otherwise, the Ferran loses interest in the party once it is more than thirty yards distant.

**Assassination.** Ardana suddenly snaps out of her daze. "I'm a Chosen One of the Savants," she marvels. "That's why I must reach the temple—and as soon as possible." Now lucid and beaming, the Dracartan explains her situation to any player character who is willing to listen, crediting the information to a sudden "revealing in my mind."

A character making a successful PER Roll notices Drepari edging toward Ardana, a strange look in his eyes (and a mace concealed behind his back). *If for any reason Drepari is no longer with the party, substitute another of the Samir for this role—thanks to Palanya's influence.* When within two yards of Ardana, the Hunter screams in pain, holding his head and oblivious to the exposed weapon in his hand. (He has been magically attacked by Savant allies of the Dracartan.) Shaking off the assault, Drepari then rushes Ardana, shouting that the gods want her stopped—"they have spoken to me!"

**Kran the Kang.** The adventurers hear soft but sinister laughter, which fades away only to return every few minutes. After several hours of this, the party is suddenly confronted by a Kang warrior, bristling with weapons and wearing spiked leather armor (several centuries out of date). There are no tracks on the trail—the Kang is a disembodied spirit. With a familiar laugh, the warrior tells them that he knows they are spies trying to stop "the Great Kran" from reaching the Temple. He is insulted that such puny beings have been sent against him. Kran challenges them to fight him now, before the weather worsens.

Weapons which aren't enchanted or silver do no harm to the entity, and surprised player characters may actually strike *through* the ghost and hit their fellows (DEX Roll to avoid). The Kang fights back, but his ethereal sword does no physical damage (see Kran's character stats, below). When Kran is severely wounded, he disappears—thanking the adventurers for the battle with a deep chuckle.

A character with any knowledge of the Kang might recall a common phrase—"as strong as Kran"—referring to a legendary warrior able to take on six opponents at once. Anyone searching the area for a body (PER check) discovers it in a deep crevice,



partially covered by ice and impaled with icicles. There is also a saddlebag filled with gold lumens and gems (400 G.L.).

As they continue down the trail, the adventurers again hear Kran. "I don't think you have an advantage, just because you have a head start," says the voice. "I'm used to traveling light. I don't like the look of the weather now, but I'll catch up." His laughter echoes off the mountain.

### Temple of the Seven Moons

At the peak of Mount Mandu lies the Temple (a complete description is given at the end of this adventure). The party is welcomed as all visitors are, but Ardana gets a royal reception. Ushered before the dying High Savant, the adventurers are thanked for watching over the Chosen One, and rewarded with 500 G.L. apiece from the Temple treasure. The other Savants spend the next twenty-four hours questioning them about their travels and their homelands. The arrival of the other Chosen One, Mornamacar the Farad, brings this polite interrogation to a close. The adventurers are offered the hospitality of the Temple for as long as they please to stay.

**Continuing the Adventure.** While at the Temple, the characters have access to the Archives—a chance to research information unknown anywhere else. The now-active Ardana is grateful to the adventurers, and enjoys their company in the absence of Lotran. Meanwhile, Palanya wants to discredit the Dracartan, and the Farad Chosen One positively hates her—perhaps leading to a fire in the Archives, with evidence implicating one of Ardana's friends? Once the new Savant is selected, will the mages abide by the decision, or will war break out in the Temple of the Seven Moons?

Of course, the characters may wish to descend the mountain and avoid all of these political intrigues. If they do, only the dangers of the mountain await them... and Kran the Great may want a rematch.

**Ardana the Dracartan.** Thaumaturge. Third level. 6' 3", 145 lbs. DEX -1, INT +3, WILL +2, PER +1  
*Combat Rating* 0. 16 hit points. Scimitar, d8. Hurlant (with quiver of 12 bolts), d12. Vest of red-iron scales beneath voluminous furs  
*Magic Rating* +5. She knows all of the basic spells and cantrips, plus the *Spell of Surveillance*. However, she is reluctant to use her powers, which will betray her disguise. Ardana is unaware of her latent telepathic ability.  
*Skills:* Alchemical training, arcane lore, combat training, concoct elixirs, enchant items, engineer, inscribe spells, primary magic, riding, thaumaturgic operations

Posing as a Desert Scout, Ardana is actually a Thaumaturge of limited ability. She came to the attention of the Savants of Xanadas after she was wounded in the desert and adopted by the Wanderers of Ashann—where she somehow gained untapped psionic powers. Quiet and introspective, Ardana spends much of her time listening for voices in her mind, hoping to unravel the reasons for her obsession with this journey.

**Lotran the Jaka.** Beastmaster. Fourth level. 5' 9", 135 lbs. DEX +3, CON +1, SPD +3, PER +5, CHA +3  
*Combat Rating* +3. 19 hit points. Longsword, d10. Heavy furs (treat as leather armor)  
*Skills:* Beast lore, hunting, mountain climbing, mounted combat, secondary combat, snares, stalking, tracking (by scent)

Lotran owes Ardana a blood debt for saving his life in the desert. The two have been companions for some time, long enough to ease his native Jaka distrust of magic. He is concerned by her present mental state, but since this journey is the only favor she has ever asked, he will do as she wishes.

**Samir Hunters.** Fourth level. 5' 10"-6' 4", 135-230 lbs.

STR +2, DEX +2, CON +4, INT -2, WILL -1, PER +2,

*Combat Rating* +6. 20 hit points. Bone-headed mace, d10. Whippen, d10. Heavy muskront-hide clothing (treat as chain-mesh armor)

*Skills:* Beast handler (snowmane), hunting, language (equus), mounted combat, primary combat, riding (equus), scout, tracking, wilderness survival

**Disembodied Spirits (various).** Fifth level.

DEX +2, SPD +2, INT 0 [Kang] / +2 [Ferran],

*Combat Rating* +6 [Kang] / +4 [Ferran]. 10 hit points. Energy damage, d10. Can only be hit by magical or silver weapons

*Special Abilities:* Flight, pass through solid substances at will, possess/inhabit inanimate objects

The spirit of Kran the Great is unbalanced. He planned to seize a Xanadasian Scrying Crystal and use it to buy his way into the Honorary Elite. The Kang refuses to acknowledge his death, and now roams the Trail of Ghosts, challenging travelers for the right to pass.

## THE TEMPLE OF THE SEVEN MOONS

At the peak of Mount Mandu stands the home of the Savants of Xanadas. Constructed of massive stones of bright green and dark blue, the building is a vivid contrast to the stark white of its surroundings.

### Ground Floor

1) **The One True Path:** High winds pile drifts of frozen snow across the final stretch of the path from Atonek—the only known overland route to the Temple. The altitude, winds, storms, and lack of windship docks (or a level field in which to land) make coming in by air extremely hazardous.

2) **Temple Wall:** The huge stones of the Wall radiate heat. Snow falling near it is magically deflected, landing five feet away to form a barrier around the building.

3) **Lunar Doors:** The twelve-foot-high doors are made of the same bluish stone as the walls. Carved reliefs feature the seven moons of Talislanta in different phases.

4) **Temple Entry:** This large room has a fireplace and a gradually sloping floor (downward toward the outside wall). A brass gong and hammer are mounted on one wall. Sturdy hooks are provided for visitors to hang their iced clothing on, and clean robes are stacked by the fireplace. Directly opposite the massive Lunar Doors is another set of doors, made from a dark shiny wood. When the gong is rung, the locked doors silently swing open, and a Mandalan servant enters to greet visitors.

5) **Visitors' Hall:** Dominated by four massive pillars made of the same distinctive stone as the outer wall of the Temple, this expansive room is covered with vivid frescos. The most impressive feature an imposing figure in traditional Savant garb (Xanadas), leading his followers across wastelands or surrounded by worshipful acolytes. There are also scenes of the Temple's construction. The columns are carved with intricate scenes from Talislantan history—great battles and the foundations of civilizations. One bears the likenesses of the original Savants. Comfortable benches are placed around the room, and the doors are of polished wood. There are no windows, as the architects did not want to remind travelers of the perils of their journey. Servants tend to the needs of visitors.

6) **Descending Stairway:** This leads down to the first subterranean level of the Temple.

**7) Gardens:** Savants come here for meditation and contemplation. The ceiling is made of crystal, and steam puffs from vents in the floor, creating a greenhouse. Shrubs and dwarf trees line the walls, and the floor is covered with grasses and plants. Many of the flora are extremely rare, saved from extinction by the Xanadasians. The peacefulness is broken only by the soft humming of insects, and by the flickering light reflected off the wings of crystal moths.

**8) Scriptorium:** The Mandalans spend countless hours here, transcribing the Savants' reports for archiving in the vaults. Desks and tables fill the room, and bookcases are crammed with scrolls and books.

**9) Dining Hall:** The central feature of this room is a long wooden table that could easily seat fifty. Kitchens are located on both sides of the doorway. The chair at the far end of the table is reserved for Xanadas—no one else may sit in the chair, and a full plate is placed here at each meal.

**10) Guest/Servant Quarters:** The private rooms are provided for servants and travelers, and the triangular barracks are for servants of the Temple. These rooms are graced with Mandalan paintings and sculpture. The furnishings are plain, but sparkle from polishing.

**11) Ascending Stairway:** This leads to the Savants' private chambers on the level above.

## Second Floor

**12) Grand Hallway:** This echoing hall stretches the length of the second floor, ending in stairways leading to the observatory above and the Visitors' Hall below.

**13) Chambers of Xanadas:** Since the master mystic's departure, only Savants are allowed to enter these quarters, and do so solely to light a candle in the window each evening.

**14) Gathering Hall:** The Savants interview guests and visitors in this hall, which is otherwise reserved for philosophical discussion.

**15) Chambers of the High Savant:** Menelril has occupied these chambers since the Temple was built, and they will be reserved for future Savants holding the office of High Savant after his death. There is chair of lavender stone and a golden stand which supports a Scrying Stone.

**16) Other Chambers:** Constructed in much the same fashion, the rooms are lit by sunlight coming through thick triangular crystal windows. Each suite is decorated according to the tastes and culture of its inhabitant.

**16a) Chambers of Palanya:** A large Mandalan painting of Laeolis eclipsing Drome adorns the wall.

**16b) Chambers of Oromar:** A mosaic of Mount Mandu is mounted above the bed, a gift from a Vajra stone-worker. The bed is scattered with colorful pillows, and dusty scrolls are piled on the table.

**16c) Chambers of Malinsar:** Decorated in brown and blue, this room is austere. A large block of lavender stone serves as both table and bed.

**16d) Chambers of Klasma:** A message tacked to the door, written in the ten languages known to the Kasmir, warns intruders not to enter. It is said that the trapsmith has not forgotten his original calling...

**16e) Chambers of Jolne:** This room is quite dark, as the window has been covered over by an exotic drapery. Stone statues of Vajran design stand on the floor, and a mosaic is in progress on a table in the center of the room.

**16f) Chambers of Rogul:** A bronze lizard skin hangs on the wall, and the blanket on the bed is embroidered with the likeness of a land lizard.

**16g) Chambers of alt Niyaan:** Botanical texts are stacked on the bed, and sketches of rare flowers and plants are tacked to the walls—revealing the Sindaran's obsession with extinct and rare flora.

**16h) Chambers of Puram:** A mural of the Silver Groves of Mandal rings this chamber. A delicate music box in the shape of a Moonfish is actually an enchanted device, which warns the Savant whenever someone enters his room. A sketchpad and charcoals rest on the chest by the wall.

**16i) Chambers of Aran:** The room is littered with scores of shrines and their diminutive statuettes, each dedicated to one of the gods of the Zandir pantheon. Aran also keeps pet serpents, despite the protestations of his fellows.

**16j) Chambers of Janda:** Tomes on philosophy, written in current and extinct languages, line the ceiling-height bookcases. Paper screens, fans, scintilla lanterns, and silken coverings on the bed all give this chamber a Mandalan look.

**16k) Chambers of Carindil:** A low table in the center of the room displays oddities picked up on windship voyages throughout Talislanta. A crystal case displays a worn leather helmet with golden wings, and a faded sky chart is suspended from the ceiling.

**16l) Chambers of Ralmya:** Sleeping furs are thrown on the floor of this barren room, while an assortment of rough stones—arranged in a circle—stand in one corner.

## Third Floor

**17) Scrying Chambers (4):** These rooms are identically plain and free of distraction. Three high-backed chairs of polished lavender stone surround a large golden stand, which supports a great blue diamond—a Scrying Stone. The Savants spend many hours here, taking notes of all they observe through the stone.

**18) Observatories:** Crystal skylights allow the Savants to observe the heavens nightly. Careful study is made of the changing positions and appearance of these heavenly bodies. The walls are lined with charts, marked and remarked with scribbled notations from the observers.

**19) Hall of Mystics:** This majestic hall basks in the light that streams through the great crystal window above the Temple entrance. It is a place of sacred significance to the Savants.

## Subterranean Level One

**20) Fountain Room:** Warm and humid, this room is lined with white marble. Warm mineral water shoots out of the mouths of fanciful red-stone fish, part of the fountain which dominates this chamber.

**21) Pool of the Vajra:** The entry door is covered with intricate geometric patterns of interlocking circles and ovals, and there is no apparent way to open it. Only Vajra know the secrets of the locking mechanism. Beyond the door is a natural cavern. The spring here feeds the fountain in the next room.

**22) Door of the Vajra:** This concealed entrance looks just like the rock wall around it. A tunnel leads to the Vajran caverns deeper within the mountain (not detailed).

**23) Artist Workshops:** Mandalan and Vajra artisans labor in these cells, humming or singing as they work. Many pieces of art which now adorn the Temple were produced in these rooms, some taking centuries to complete. Visitors may see works in various stages of completion: a mural of windships, a red-iron sculpture of a towered castle, and a miniature garden with mosaic flowers of Vajran design surrounded by silk plants by Mandalan artists.

**24) Mineral Pool Cavern:** Gilded copies of the Lunar Doors open onto a warm cavern dominated by a steaming pool. There is also a fragrant herb garden where Vajra herbalists grow rare herbs.

**25) Vault Entrance:** These double doors are kept closed, and only a Savant can grant permission to enter. A Mandalan with a large book sits at the desk just outside, inscribing the names of those who pass in or out. When open, the doors reveal a grand stone stairway which disappears into the subterranean depths. The ten-foot-wide stairs show the merest hint of wear in the middle, from the passage of countless feet over the centuries.

#### Subterranean Level Two

**26) Hall of History:** At the foot of the descending stairs, a Mandalan librarian—the Keeper of the Keys—sits at a large, ornately carved wooden desk. Three trusted Mandalans hold this post, and one of them is always on duty. This grand hallway is lined with statues and paintings, depicting races and events from throughout Talislantan history. Tables and desks are provided for the convenience of visitors. Pens, ink and parchment are set on a central table. Four black-stone doors on each wall are each set with large silver locks.

#### Archive Rules for Visitors

- 1) Only one tome may be viewed at a time.
- 2) Visitors must wait in the hall. A servant will place tomes to be viewed on the desks in the hall.
- 3) Notes may be taken, but writing on or tracing from the pages of archive tomes is prohibited.
- 4) Pouches, bags and backpacks must be left with the Master of the Keys. Pens, ink and paper are the only items allowed on the desks beside the archive tomes.
- 5) Food is not allowed within the archives.
- 6) Visitors are expected to clean their hands before handling any book.

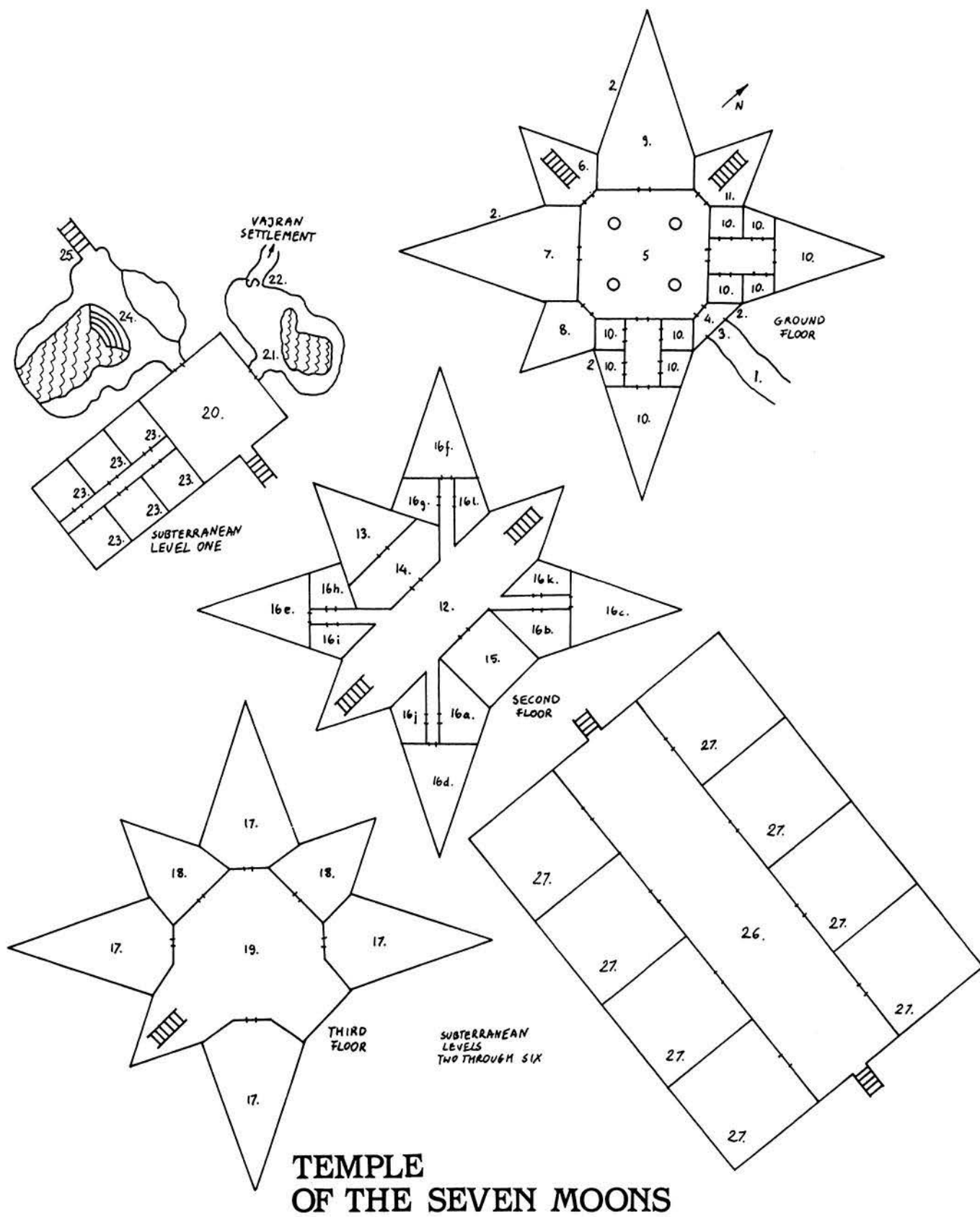
**27) Archives:** These vaults contain the records of the Savants. Rows of shelves contain the massive leather tomes, and small stepstools enable the servants to reach tomes on even the uppermost shelves. The volumes are marked by year, and major events may also be noted on the binding. On this level are the earliest observations of the Savants, some of which are dated prior to the construction of the Temple. Unfortunately, the oldest records are fragmentary and poorly preserved.

#### Subterranean Levels Three through Six

All of the archive levels are architecturally identical. The records on each level are from progressively more modern periods, so that the chambers of the sixth level contain the volumes concerning the current century.







# OTHER ADVENTURES IN THE EAST

The following ideas can be used by Gamemasters to create their own adventures in the eastern lands of Talislanta.

## Chana

**Hunting for Heads.** At Vishana, a Kang named Trahk is hiring foreign mercenaries to accompany a head-hunting expedition into the southern jungles. He is an unfair taskmaster, risking the adventurers' lives rather than his Kang whenever an obstacle must be overcome or a trail scouted. If the player characters rebel, however, Trahk's respect can be gained, especially since he feels that he needs their help.

It soon becomes apparent that the Kang is deliberately avoiding the jungle natives, which goes counter to the very purpose of the expedition. The truth is that Trahk possesses a map to a lost city in the jungle, one which he believes harbors the last living descendants of the Black Seers. Does the metropolis really exist? Are the Black Seers more than the stuff of legend?

**The Lure of Kesh.** The adventurers are hired by Gorali, a Farad trader, for a dangerous journey into Chana. A drug native only to Chana's jungles, kesh, has become the addiction of choice among Farad Monopolists, and demand far exceeds supply. The expedition must cross the Nagra territories to reach the lands of the Witchmen, where a shaman known to Gorali will meet them.

Arriving on the east coast of Chana, Gorali discovers that the shaman does not have the kesh! Instead, the Witchman suggests an alliance against those who do—the Manra of the northern mountains. Stolen jabutu will then be processed to make kesh. Will the player characters cooperate with the villainous Witchmen against the peaceful Manra? When the village turns out to belong to deviant Manra, can the adventurers defend themselves—and can they tell the real adventurers from the shape-changers?

## Harak

**Black-Iron Harvest.** There's trouble in the Empire. Production at the Vajran mines has fallen sharply (due to rebel activity), and Za bandits have disrupted trade along the Wilderlands Road. The price of black iron is escalating. An Ispasian mercantilist has buyers lined up and needs a quick supply—where better than Harak, where the metal "just lays about waiting to be picked up?" Can the adventurers push across the heights of Xanadas, load their cumbersome wagons with black iron, and return before the Harakin and their dractyls get them?

**The Prize.** The curious telepathic abilities of the dractyls of Harak have come to the attention of Cymril's Lyceum Arcanum. The mages are offering a fabulous reward to the first who can bring them a dractyl, plus a bonus if a living, unhatched dractyl egg is included. It will be a race between windships, coastal craft, and a ground expedition planning to cross Xanadas. Can the adventurers win the prize?

## Quan

**Against Ispasia.** An old friend or patron of the adventurers loses his fortune in a swindle, part of a massive financial intrigue linked to an Ispasian mercantilist. The defrauded victims are willing to back the adventurers in a mission of vengeance, but while they have plenty of ideas and talents, the former investors are short on money. Can the player characters score against one of the most powerful financial powers in Talislanta?

**The Danuvian's Tale.** Karviu, the young Danuvian Virago who found a palace of multi-colored glass in the depths of the Variegated Forest, is now a prisoner of the Quan. Mandalan Savants have concluded that the Variegated Forest may be the home of the *Chromasians*, a lost race of wizards who use color-based magic. Two expeditions have been outfitted—a large imperial caravan, bound for the forest, and a much smaller team of mercenaries sent by the Queen of Danuvia to rescue her kinswoman. Which side will the adventurers take? And which side will the Chromasians take, if they exist?

**Mission of Secrecy.** The adventurers are recruited by an Ispasian administrator for a special mission within the Coral City of Isalis. They are to discreetly survey the Lower City, verify whether the Sea People have a hidden cache of enchanted dragon harpoons, then steal the artifacts without the Sunra knowing. The mission is so secret that not even the Kang are aware of it. The penalty for failure is death. The penalty if the adventurers fail to cooperate with the Empire is also death. Can the player characters avoid the wrath of the Sunra? Is the Ispasian truly working for the Quan, or could this be a plot to destabilize the Empire?

**Obsession.** A rich Zandir Charlatan in Tian—Brogadar, a trusted adviser to the Quan—hires the adventurers to help him explore ruins in the foothills of the Mazdak Mountains. His papers are in order, and a contingent of Kang will guard the expedition. But when the caravan reaches its destination, Brogadar poisons the Kang commander, then strikes out on his own for his real goal—the sealed entrance to the ancient Vajran capital! Will the adventurers accompany the Charlatan (he *does* hold their imperial passes), or take their chances with the Kang?

**The Vishana League.** The adventurers rescue a drunk mercenary from a mugging, and he invites them within a dismal tavern and orders drinks for them. "The governor," he whispers with a slur, "is part of the Vishana League. They got a power base here, and they're gonna expand—eventually they'll even seize Tian!" Before the player characters can learn any more, the drunk keels over—poisoned! What is the Vishana League? How did the mercenary gain his information? And are the adventurers now implicated by their association with the dead man?

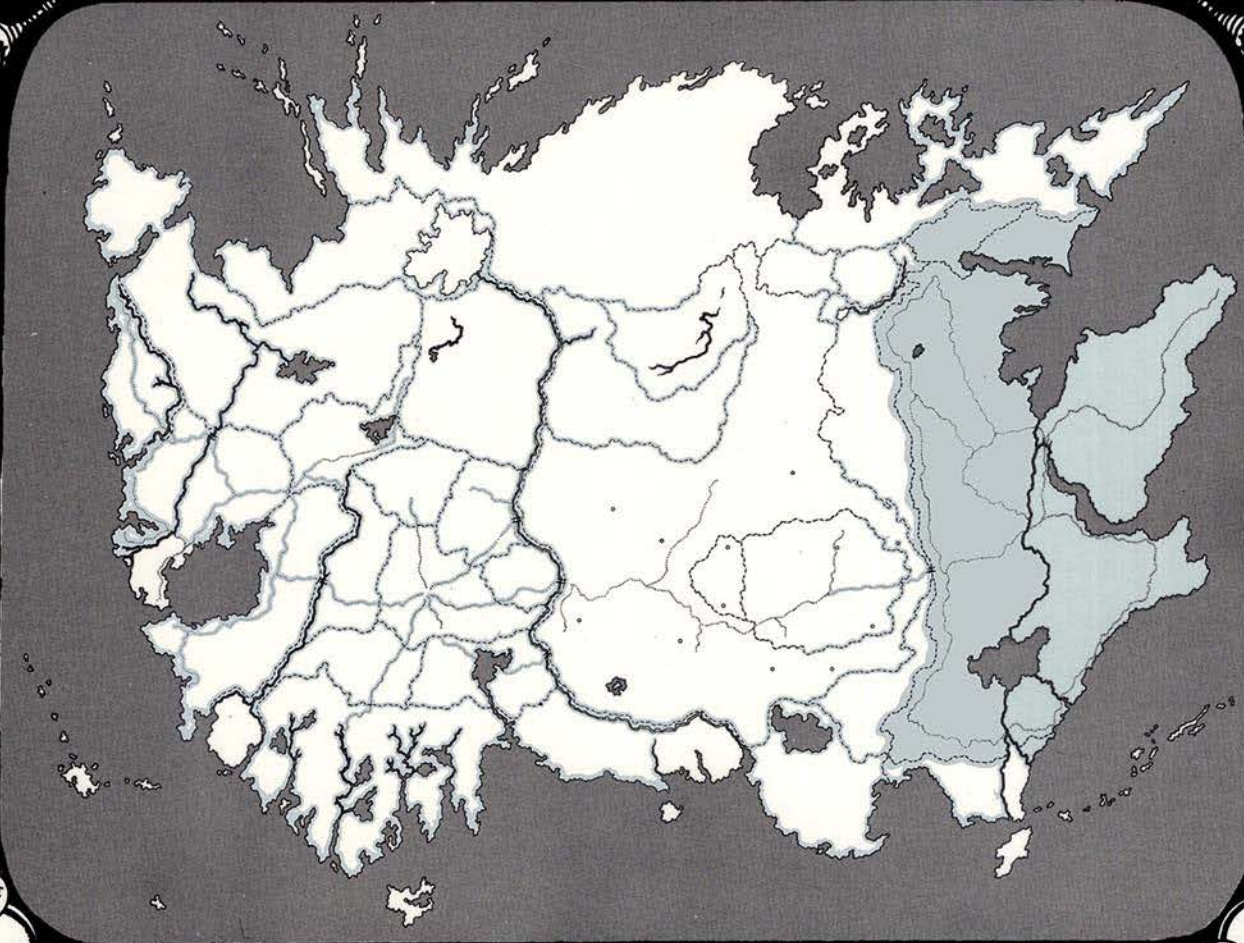
## Xanadas

**The Return.** A scruffy wanderer approaches the adventurers in a dismal tavern, and demands that they help him. He claims to be Xanadas, the great mystic returned from the Land of the Dead, and says there's a fortune for any who aid in his journey. But is this really Xanadas, and if so, where are his legendary powers—and why haven't the Savants noticed his return? How will the minions of the Temple of the Seven Moons react to the coming of Xanadas—will they believe? And what of the wisdom gained from the mage's long sojourn with the dead? "Didn't care for it much," says the wanderer.

**Sent by the Gods!** When adventurers save a snowmane foal from a woolly ogriphant, they earn a warm welcome from the tribe of Samir to which the foal belongs. Rolling the bones, the tribal shaman becomes convinced that the player characters have been sent by the Instigator to save the valley from the mysterious quaking mountain. Are the adventurers up to the task? What will happen if the shaman decides they aren't sent by the gods? And does the shaking of the mountain have anything to do with the sighting of satada in the region?



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