

# THE CYCLOPEDIA TALISLANTA



VOLUME III  
The WILDERLANDS of ZARAN

**THE CYCLOPEDIA**  
**TALISLANTA**  
**VOLUME III**  
**THE WILDERLANDS OF ZARAN**

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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 usual “elves and dwarves” campaign.

The Wilderlands offers a wide variety of barbaric character types, as well as a new variety of magic (thanks to the Talismancers of Maruk). A role-playing guide helps players to understand the characters they are trying to play.

The detailed information on the desolate wastelands provides Gamemasters with dozens of ideas for future adventures, whether in the ruins of lost cities or the fortresses flanking the vital Wilderlands Road. For the first time, a special section lets the Gamemaster in on some of the secrets of Talislanta — players should use this material only with the Gamemaster's permission!

A scenario for the Aberrant Forest is included in the back of this book, along with adventuring tips for the Hadjin ruins. Gamers planning to participate in these adventures should not read this information, but should save it for their Gamemaster.

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If you'd like to subscribe to **BARD GAMES'** free *TALISLANTA* newsletter, or if you have any questions or comments concerning the *TALISLANTA* game, send your name and address to:

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# Overview

Sprawling across the center of the continent, the Wilderlands of Zaran is the devastated wasteland that separates the civilizations of eastern and western Talislanta. It is dominated by sterile wastes where only the most stubborn types of vegetation can survive.

The Wilderlands Road — one of the last remnants of the ancient Kingdom of Zaran — connects the prosperous and modern Seven Kingdoms with the old Empire of the Quan in the east. Merchants and Aamanian pilgrims regularly traverse the highway, which is haunted by bandits and thieves. While the merchant who gets his caravan through can expect a rich reward, those who fail often leave their bones bleaching in the desert suns.

The Volcanic Hills and Rajanistan's desert form the western border, keeping the eastern imperials at bay. The waterless Dead River canyon performs the same function in the west and south, retarding the expansion of the Seven Kingdoms. To the north, only the limitless wastes provide a defense...but then, few seem intent on conquering this profitless region.

## THE TERRITORIES

The **Aberrant Forest** is in the far southwest, isolated behind the great desert, the Topaz Mountains and the Dead River. Few have traveled here and returned. Popular tales tell of bizarre, mutated flora and fauna gone out of control — intelligent plants, giant animals, and weird hybrids not ordinarily found in nature.

**Ashann** is a parched southern wasteland, a great kingdom in former days. Of the Old City of Ashann, nothing is left beside shattered ruins of stone. The Wanderers of Ashann — shrouded figures of mystery — reportedly gather here.

The Banditlands is the eastern strip of the Wilderlands, where the Bandits of Za hold sway. This clannish and barbaric people claim to be descended from the citizens of the ancient Kingdom of Zaran, which ruled here before the Great Disaster.

Nearly uninhabitable, the **Barrens** lie in the northwest, sandwiched between the Wilderlands and Maruk roads, the Dead River and the Fangs of Golarin. The Danelek, a fierce nomad people, live in the central salt flats.

The citystates are the sole beleaguered outposts of civilization in this portion of the continent. The **Citystate of Danuvia** belongs to a martial folk whose mercenary swordswomen successfully compete with the Thralls of the Seven Kingdoms for employment in western and central Talislanta. The **Citystate of Hadj**, like Danuvia, was settled by refugees from the fallen Phaedran Empire (the site of present-day Zandu and Aaman). The Hadjin were members of the ruling class, cousins of the founders of Cymril in the Seven Kingdoms. They discovered great wealth when they came east to reclaim their ancient homeland. Hadj remains one of the wealthiest cities on the continent. In sharp contrast, the **Citystate of Maruk** is one of the most forlorn settlements of Talislanta. Bedeviled by a recurring curse called the Wane, the Maruk have resorted to gathering ogrond dung in order to survive. Crushing poverty and immobilizing despair combine to create an unusual society here.

The **Desertlands** is the most desolate region of the Wilderlands, for without water, nothing grows. The ruins of lost civilizations are rumored to lay here, but perhaps only the Thaumaturges of Dracarta — who cross this land in duneships, on the way to their operations on Lake Astar in the Seven Kingdoms — know where to find them.

The **Eastern Borderlands**, oddly enough, is in the northwest, and forms a narrow fringe of mountain and fertile plain between the Barrens and the Dead River. The land was named by the Seven Kingdoms, who consider it a buffer zone between them and their enemies in Golarin. A few Cymrilian homesteaders linger here, remnants of an aborted project to settle this land centuries ago.

The **Kharakhan Wastes** are seldom traveled, being far to the north of roads and civilized peoples. The ruined city of Kharakhan was formerly the home of an advanced race of giants. The giants who dwell near here today may be their descendants.

**Sharna**, like its neighbor Ashann to the west, is a waste which was once home to a kingdom now lost. Little remains except the mysterious maze complexes and puzzle-artifacts. The land conveniently serves as a buffer zone between warring Rajanistan and Carantheum.

The **Topaz Mountains** are part of the southern border of the Wilderlands, and are home to the outcast Nagra spirit-trackers. Large deposits of topaz, a magic-resisting mineral, cause strange effects in this region.

The **Wastes of Quaran** were once ruled by the ancient Kingdom of Quaran. Their strange ruins continue to cast an unwholesome influence.

The Wilderlands attracts loners, individualists, and outcasts from the rest of the continent, those who thrive in the absence of law and order. Some enlist in the service of the citystates or the Seven Kingdoms, providing the mercenaries who protect the western trade routes. Others become bandits, plaguing the merchant caravans and looting the ruins.

## ADVENTURING IN THE WILDERLANDS OF ZARAN

The danger of the Wilderlands of Zaran makes this region ideal for adventure, although player characters may want a secure base somewhere else. The ruins of lost kingdoms offer unbounded campaign possibilities, with the chance of stumbling onto something more unusual than flesh-and-blood predators and mundane treasure. Commerce also provides the chance for adventure, whether the player characters are traders, mercenaries... or even bandits. Lastly, the Wilderlands is a good place to lay low if the adventurers have gotten into too much trouble somewhere else!

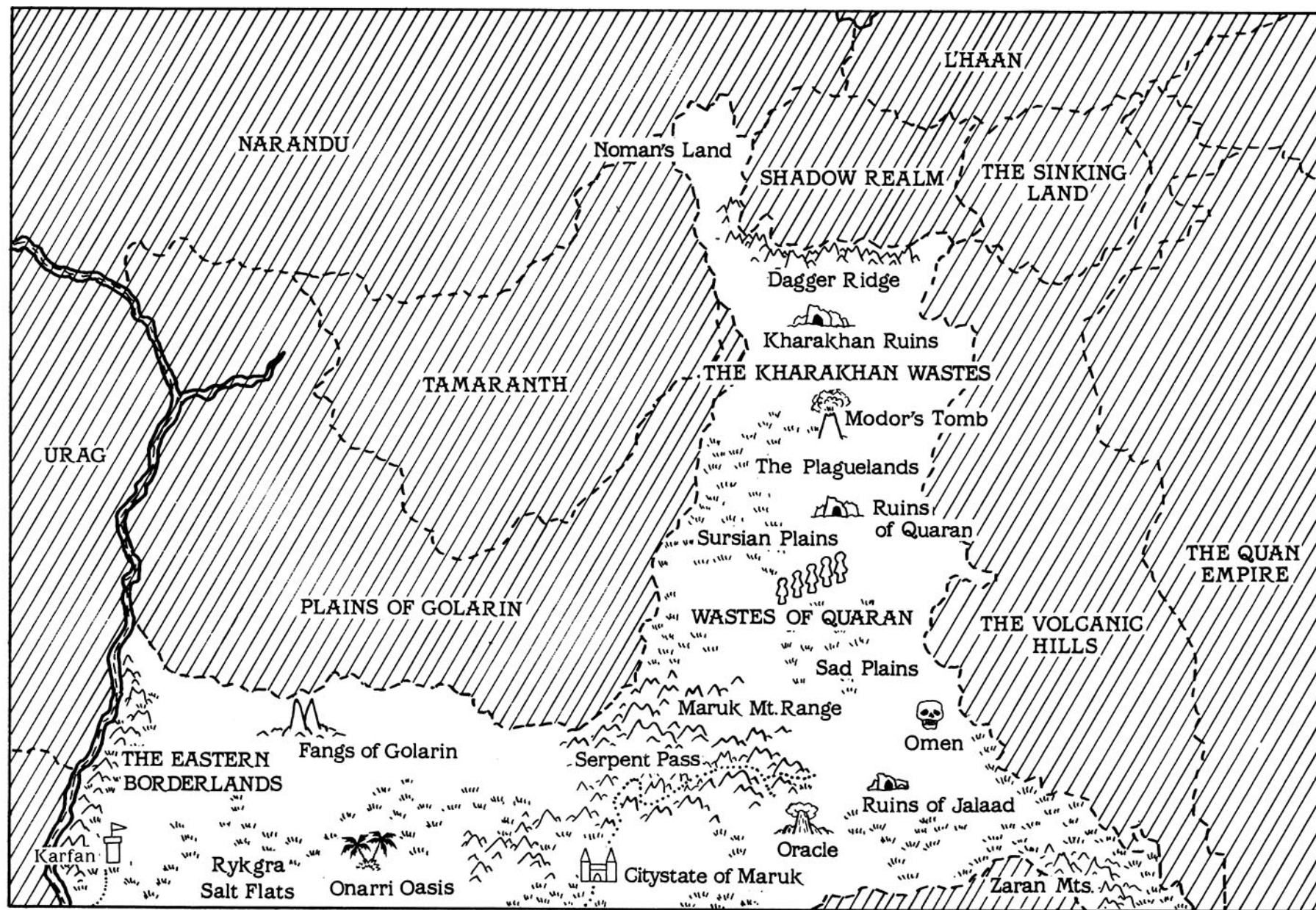




# MAP OF THE WILDERLANDS



# MAP OF THE WILDERLANDS



# THE LANDS OF TALISLANTA

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

## THE WILDERLANDS OF ZARAN

Spanning the territories once claimed by the ancient Zaran Empire, the Wilderlands is a region of vast cultural and political differences. Much of the land was laid waste by the Great Disaster, leaving barren deserts and dry salt plains in their wake.

The citystates of Danuvia, Maruk and Hadj hold a loose sway over the west, despite the neutrality of Danuvia and the open animosity between Maruk and Hadj. Though few formal treaties exist between the citystates, there is a small body of common law. Slavery is legal, though each city has its own regulations over ownership and trade. Murder and violent crimes are outlawed, though extraditing a criminal from one city to another is problematical.

Politically, the Wilderlands operates as a barrier between the democratic confederacy of the Seven Kingdoms in the west, and the dictatorial Quan Empire in the east. It serves the same purpose for Carantheum and Rajanistan.

After the Great Disaster, the land was inhabited by the remnants of many once-proud nations, surviving at a level barely above subsistence — Kharakhan Giants, Wanderers of Ashann, Orgovians, the Za, Danelek tribesmen, Sauruds, Ferran scavengers, and Araq, not to mention the rumored strange inhabitants of the Aberrant Forest.

Change came due to events in the west. The Empire of Phaedra, composed of the lands held by modern-day Aaman and Zandu, collapsed in 111. Religious differences, flamed by the internal strife caused by the inequitable distribution of wealth — a recurring problem with the old Phandre aristocracy — culminated in three centuries of Cult Wars between the Orthodoxist and Paradoxist factions. The magicians of the ruling Phandre class, involved in a scandal, were forced to flee for their lives. They went to the Forest of Cymril, where they eventually established the modern Kingdom of Cymril, one of the Seven Kingdoms.

### The Hadjin Refugees

Among those victimized by the purge were the Hadjin, a class of aristocratic financiers and land-owners whose ancestors fled to the Western Lands following The Great Disaster. When the Phaedran Empire collapsed, the vast majority of the Hadjin were ruined, their assets seized by militant factions of the Orthodoxist and Paradoxist Cults. Many were executed, or sold into slavery to finance the war effort.

A consortium of the wealthiest Hadjin managed to escape to Arim, where they were granted sanctuary by the the Exarch (ruler of Arim) in return for future considerations. In a remarkably prescient move, the Hadjin consortium had wisely retained ownership of the territories once held by their ancestors, located in what was now known as the Wilderlands of Zaran. With the Cult Wars raging throughout the now-defunct Phaedran Empire, the Hadjin were able to sell off part of their holdings — at a sizeable profit — to two other refugee peoples, the Andrik and the Namfar. These properties would eventually become the City States of Danuvia and Maruk. The third and most desirable property became the new home of the Hadjin — the City State of Hadj. In consideration for the assistance which they tendered to the Hadjin

Consortium, the Arimites were granted exclusive construction rights on all three cites — again, a deal which brought the consortium a handsome profit.

### The Andrik Exodus

The ancestors of the Danuvians were the Andrik, tribes who lived on the rocky headlands of the Sea of Sorrow, across the straits from the modern Zandir city of Phantil. These warlike people fought incessantly among themselves until, recruited by gifts of fine cloth and bronze, the Andrik allowed themselves to be annexed by the Phaedran Empire.

Concerned about the barbarism of their new subjects, the Phaedrans instituted a scheme to civilize the Andrik. The strongest young men were sent to the imperial capital of Badijan, where they were trained and schooled, then employed as apprentice scribes, shopkeeper's assistants, and civil servants. Orthodoxist agitators barred females from the program, fearing that the uncivilized Andrik women would lead to the moral decay of the capital. The women remained in the highland villages, raising children, forging weapons, and hunting.

When the Cult Wars broke out, Shaedara, clan chief of the Andrik, forbade religious fighting among his people. A Paradoxist convert, he demonstrated his tolerance by marrying Allu, a young Orthodoxist. She consented happily, enchanted by the dashing warrior chief. Later, a disappointed Allu wrote that Shaedara cared for nothing but politics. However, the Andrik grew rich under their rule, in a whirlwind of trade with both Paradoxists and Orthodoxists.





Then in 189, the situation fell apart. Orthodoxists, exasperated at the sea trade between the Paradoxists and the tribesmen, laid siege to the Andrik heights. Shadara's son, Chief Aerithas, protested his people's neutrality, but in the words of the Orthodoxists: "To refuse to slay the heretic is to deny the Faith." The clerics gave Aerithas a single night to raise either a White Blazon of Aa or the standard of the Paradoxists. That night passed. When dawn came, the hilltop banner defiantly flew gray.

Knowing that his people could not resist the Orthodoxists, Chief Aerithas ordered the Andrik to flee, promising to lead them to a peaceful land east of the Axis River. Most of the males, whose fathers had been schooled in timidity at Badijan or corrupted by cult teachings, proved useless as warriors. Short of soldiers, Aerithas formed warrior legions of tribeswomen. It was the swordswomen of the Andrik who fought their way through to the sanctum of the Forest of Vardune. Many of the men remained behind, and were butchered by the Orthodoxists.

The Ardua, also refugees from Phaendra, were kind to the immigrants, but could not offer them a home in their well-managed forest. The outbreak of the Beast Wars opened up new opportunities, luckily, and the swordswomen were hired by Cymril and its allies as mercenaries. After the wars ended, the Andrik found work protecting trade caravans across the Wilderlands, and helping to man trading outposts. They remained homeless until the Hadjin agreed to sell them the plains of Danuvia for 777,000 gold lumens. The Andrik declared their nation to be the Citystate of Danuvia, and from that day forward called themselves Danuvians.

### The Namfar Arrival

Last of the refugee groups, the Namfar were a class of magically talented artisans in the Phaendran Empire. They traced their ancestry to the Woodlands of Zandu and claimed a distant kinship with the Dhuna, but at an early date their people became converted to civilization. Every major Phaendran city had a Namfar district, where the artisans crafted their wares.

When the Cult Wars broke out, the Namfar were condemned by the Orthodoxists as witches. Much blood was spilled before the survivors were able to gather in Paradoxist territory with their brothers. Orthodoxist hatred did not end there. Witch-hunters from Aaman continued to seek out the Numenians, making raids and terrorist attacks over many years.

At last, and despite Paradoxist efforts to protect them, the Namfar decided that it would be best if they moved on. Possessed of a moderate fortune, they resolved to invest in a beautiful mountain valley in central Talislanta. The Hadjin were glad to sell it to the Namfar on their terms — for 777,000 gold lumens, to be paid in annual installments. Enchanted with their new lands, and thinking themselves safe from the distant wrath of Aaman, the Namfar took on the name of their newly purchased valley, becoming the Maruk in 442.

### Danuvia's Curse

The cities of the Hadjin, Danuvians and Maruk were built their cities virtually simultaneously, putting a great strain on the resources available and driving up prices. Nonetheless, the three city states maintained good will toward each other, and discussed the creation of a Wilderlands League, similar in concept to the Seven Kingdoms alliance. In 480, all three citystates celebrated a year-long Jubilee which saw, at its conclusion, the completion of all three cities.

That year, a curse descended on Danuvia. The men of Danuvia had always deferred to their aggressive women, but now the man-children came forth physically weaker, with slender waists and

delicate features. Danuvian men became impulsive and timid, superstitious, emotionally immature and effeminately sensitive. The curse struck every male born to a descendant of Shadara's people, no matter how tenuous the blood-tie.

To make matters worse, the new city attracted the attention of manrak nests in the Topaz Mountains to the south — the winged insectoids descended from the skies, terrorizing Danuvia. In this time of crisis, Princess Allu — named after the Andrik queen — seized the throne. Although the swordswomen had dominated their culture for over a century, Allu was the first to break tradition and actually rule. She launched a war against the manrak, hiring foreign mercenaries to organize her warriors and teach them new tactics. A Kang soldier brought with him the religion of Zorah, the patron god of soldiers. Queen Allu, tired of the Phaendran cults, listened and grew enthralled. She built a secret cairn-altar to Azorah, the female incarnation of the Red God.

The queen's new army — inspired by her private warriors, the Viragos — swept the manrak back into the distant mountains. King Azir of Carantheum, faced with the same threat in his desert kingdom, wanted to hire the citystate's army for a winter campaign. Queen Allu agreed, with the condition that the Dracartan army march to Danuvia's forum after its victory and allow herself and her counselors to court soldier husbands — the beginning of the modern Conjugal Feast. Allu recruited a harem of soldiers from the victorious army, and bore a daughter in her forty-first year.

### The Wane of Maruk

Bad luck came to the new city of Maruk only a year after the Jubilee. In 481, a severe drought brought famine, decimating the population. King Shiz ordered the Maruk Reservoir to be constructed to prevent future droughts. Two years later, unprecedented rainfalls caused the new reservoir to burst, flooding the city. The Maruk, lamenting their poor luck, embarked on a year-long crusade against "evil." Priests descended on the city, and temples sprouted like weeds.

In 485, a swarm of chigs — destructive, six-inch insects with razor-sharp, metallic pincers — marched east from the Barrens. Devouring all living creatures in their path, they forced the temporary abandonment of the city. Despairing, the citizens lynched the priests and tore down the temples.

Disasters — called "waners" by the Maruk, since they seemed to be tied to the waning of the moons — continued to fall upon the hapless citystate. Two years after the chigs, the Red Death swept Maruk. In 487, the fruit crop was tainted. Strange colors never before seen and bizarre flavors appeared, and many fell ill. The city's merchants suffered economic collapse when Hadj and Danuvia refused to import the produce. Two years later, the tainted harvest repeated itself.

In 491, those who believed Maruk to be under a curse had their worst fears confirmed. The moment after Laeolis passed Phandir — creating a "Ghost Moon" — the dead rose out of their graves. The aristocracy, attending a ball at the palace (unfortunately near the graveyard), were devoured in a disaster more bloody and horrific than any that came before.

This Night of the Draugur convinced all of the Maruk that something was wrong with their valley. They accused the Hadjin of selling cursed ground, both to them and to the Danuvians. The Maruk vowed revenge, and refused to make further payment on their land. The new City Council, composed of the guildmasters who seized power after the slaughter of the nobility, instituted a 100,000 lumen reward for lifting the Curse — a reward offered to this day.

## THE ABERRANT FOREST

The Aberrant Forest is one of the most dangerous and intriguing areas of Talislanta. Little is known about it because few dare to venture within. Rumors tell of strange sentient plants, dangerous carnivores, and perversions of nature. The few who do forge their way into this hostile environment do so in search of the rare herbs which purportedly thrive here in abundance. Most decide to forage for their herbs elsewhere.

Because the Forest is so strange and unknown, its details are described only in the "Gamemaster's Section" of this book. Players should only read this material with the permission of their Gamemaster.

## ASHANN

This region was once the homeland of the race known as the Shan. Little is known of this ancient people, but their reputation as powerful mystics survives. It is widely believed that their theocrat-mages may have been partly responsible for the destruction of this region. During the Great Disaster, Ashann was reduced to parched desert, and its only known city to ruins.

The Desert Scouts of Carantheum claim that the region is inhabited only by sand demons, winged azoryl and the mysterious entities named after this land — the Wanderers of Ashann. Explorers from Cymril's Lyceum Arcanum report occasional encounters with horned devil-men, who are more commonly found in the Desertlands.

The few wells are associated with ruins, and considered unsafe by most travelers. **Bathra Oasis** is located near some Ashann ruins, and is said to be frequented by horned devil-men. The oasis has a year-round freshwater spring which supports large stands of desert palms. Frequented by roving herds of land lizards and durge, the oasis also attracts predators.

Far off the beaten path, Ashann attracts visitors of two kinds — scavengers and scholars. An old tale claims that the Wanderers roam this wasteland searching for an artifact lost during the Great Disaster. Greedy scavengers comb the wastes and ruins for that legendary object, fueled by speculation that it has occult significance, is worth a fortune, or has the power to restore the lost kingdom of Ashann to its former greatness.

Scholars are attracted to Ashann due to the mysteries it poses. The Lyceum Arcanum of the Seven Kingdoms is researching anything that might have bearing on the Great Disaster, out of the fear — largely Arduan — that a new Disaster looms in the future. The mage-explorers are fascinated by the legend that the Wanderers are sentinels, waiting for the first rumblings of a Second Disaster. Excavating the ruins, questioning the uncooperative Wanderers, and collecting scraps of legend, the scholars continue to probe this ancient mystery.

## THE WANDERERS OF ASHANN

The Wanderers are so named for their habit of roaming the wastes, and are especially common in Ashann. No one knows much about these odd figures. Some scholars believe them to be descendants of the ancient Shan. Others, citing Dracartan or Mazdak legends, believe the Wanderers to be anything from the animated dead to servants of the Archons.

This much is known: The Wanderers of Ashann are nearly eight feet in height, and travel in small groups, usually of two to five individuals. Long robes shroud their angular frames, and their

features are concealed beneath elaborate headdresses — beneath these coverings, none know what a Wanderer looks like. Each carries a staff of white oak inscribed with a curious symbol: a staring orb, set in the center of a silver pentacle. Some claim that the Wanderers "see" by means of these devices. Others think that the staff is the master element, controlling the body which carries it. Dracartans speculate that this staff gives the Wanderers their rumored ability to ward off predators. The Za and Araq claim it is a potent magical device — one reason why they avoid the roamers.

## THE BANDITLANDS

The Banditlands features arid hills, scorched dust flats and occasional expanses of desert sand. Shifting sands and dust storms often obscure the few landmarks. Lack of water makes this land the bane of merchants and travelers alike. Water must be ported in, sandstorms must frequently be waited out, bandits are common, and navigation is difficult. Travelers can fall victim to Aberrant Weather with little or no warning. Wandering bandits and tomb robbers comprise the sole inhabitants. There are no cities here. Orgovian traders relate an ancient Za legend about demons once waging an epic battle here. The landscape looks as if a giant hand crushed out all trace of fertility, the single oasis somehow escaping between the thumb and fingers.

The only oasis in the Banditlands is the **Zanomi**, midway between the Wilderlands Road and the Zaran Mountains. Isolated and infested with bandits, it is not often visited by travelers. Its ownership is hotly disputed among the Za bandit clans. Other water sources exist, but these rare capped wells present their own dangers. Insects commonly attach themselves to the underside of well coverings, attacking the unwary. Some wells have been poisoned with dangerous parasites, such as raylok and sprouts.

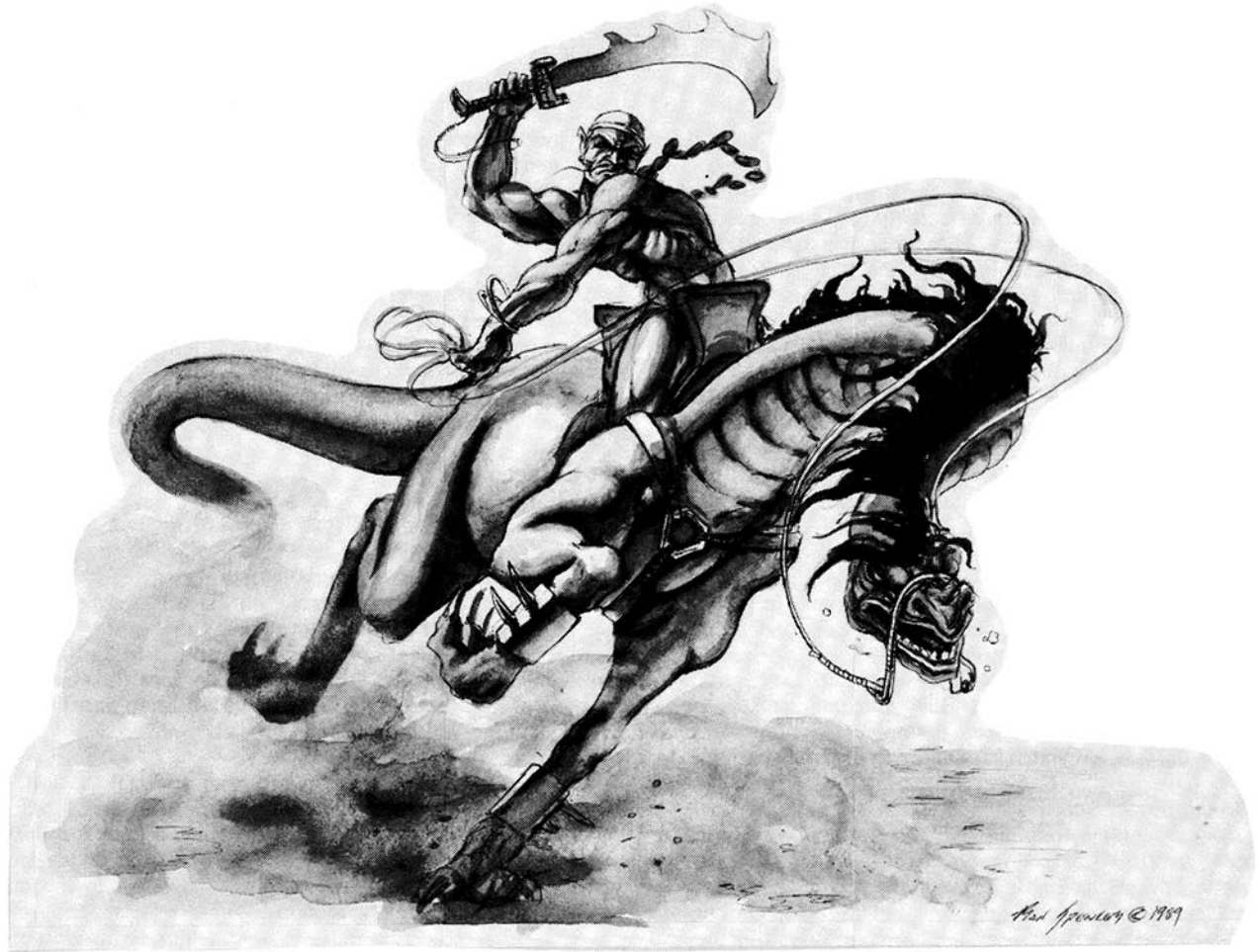
Except at the Zanomi, vegetation is sparse. In the arid hills, a few hardy withergalls and sponge-bristles can be found. The bleak northern mountains are honeycombed with caverns, some of which may have once been inhabited. Exploration here is discouraged by the bandits, and by sightings of giant land kra.

### The Caravans

Despite the hazards, merchants continue to travel through the Banditlands. From wealthy Dracarta in the east, the Wilderlands Road cuts across these lands to the Great Bridge of Vasheen, gateway to the Quan Empire. Virtually all land trade crossing the continent passes along this road, moving in large, well armed groups.

A crowded caravan does not alleviate the loneliness and desolation. Miles of dust and sand in all directions distort perspective to the point that travelers feel at the mercy and whim of uncaring forces of nature. Those who frequently journey here say that to travel the Banditlands, one must be at peace with oneself. Most travelers hum or talk to themselves to cover the shrieking of the wind. Caravaneers frequently sing songs or engage in contests of storytelling to occupy their minds.

Some predators, rare elsewhere, are attracted to the caravan routes. Behemoths, omnivrax, sand demons, and winged azoryl are common here. Near the Volcanic Hills, vasp are a problem. Travelers are on their own in the eastern Wilderlands, where there are no outposts or regular patrols to protect them. Desert scouting parties from Dracarta provide aid when they can, but seldom scout the roadway. Quan troops restrict their activities to the other side of the border. As for the Rajans, rescuing victims of the



wastelands is sacriligious to them — it would be a rebuke to Death, their god. The only people whom the Za permit to travel without harassment are the Orgovians, since their caravans provide needed supplies to the bandits. Knowing that the Orgovians are nomads like themselves, the Za do not worry that the traders will try to claim “their” land. Bullying or cheating the Orgovians is considered unwise. Though the Za outnumber the traders, the Orgovians are far from defenseless.

### The Za Bandits

The Za are lean and muscular, standing just under six feet. Their skin is pallid yellow, heavily creased and leathery. They wear little clothing. Armbands and headbands made of reptile skin, and necklaces fashioned from hammered black-iron disks are their preferred ornaments. Young Za make the necklaces, learning skills that will later produce weapons. For vanity or to appear fierce to their enemies, males shave their skulls and wear long braided mustaches. Za females shave only part of their scalp, and wear a long braid over each ear.

Fierce and cruel by nature, the Za wield jagged-edged swords and fire barbed arrows from their bows. They respect few foreigners, thinking themselves superior to all. Their respect can be won only on an individual basis, and only by strength, bravado and skill in combat.

Each Za has his own greymane, bonded to him by tribal ritual. A mount’s long mane and tail are tightly braided, to keep sand and dust to a minimum and make grooming easier. Each clan develops a unique knot style, so that Za are able to recognize a clan by looking at the braid of the greymane mounts. The braiding styles are indistinguishable to outsiders.

The nomadic Za range throughout the Wilderlands, but consider the Banditlands their home. They claim descent from the people of the vanished kingdom of Zaran. As rightful heirs, they claim the right to deal with trespassers as they will. Valorous foes are taken alive, to be later slain in ritual fashion so that the victors may drink their blood from skull-cups — they believe that it gives them the strength of their foes. Claws, ears, scalps or weapons of courageous foes are carried as talismans. The Za sometimes take prisoners to sell as slaves, but more commonly execute their victims. Those suspected of being wizards are killed quickly, as the Za fear magery.

### The Clans

The bandits clans are held together by the chieftain, or *Zakihir*. A *Zakihir* rich in booty and plunder can draw and hold a clan of several hundred together, though some clans number as few as a dozen members. When a *Zakihir* dies, the clan disbands and the survivors join other bandit groups.

There is little unity among the Za. Clans fight over raiding territories and watering holes. However, the Za claim to have a supreme ruler, known as the *Tirshata*. According to legend, his identity must remain concealed until a designated hour, when, according to an ancient battle chant: “The *Tirshata* shall be revealed, and the Za will rise up and smite all their enemies, until they alone rule the lands from east to west.” Belief in the *Tirshata* is the closest the Za come to being religious. Some scholars wonder if the *Tirshata* is supernatural. Others believe it is a title that is secretly handed down from generation to generation, a secret order within the bandit society.



## THE BARRENS

The Barrens is justly named, due to its expansive salt flats and scrub plains. The Rykgra salt flats dominate the central region, snaking from the Caraiglin Hills in the east almost to the Eastern Borderlands in the west. The ancient Caraiglin Hills precede the greater heights of the Maruk range. Other than these places, and the narrow strip of fertile land which flanks the Wilderness Road, the Barrens is a hostile scrub plain.

Hot and dry throughout most of the year, the Barrens is swept by high winds which create dust storms and foster heat lightning. Aberrant weather is frequent. Black wind is common near Golarin, and acid rain elsewhere. The scrub plain is dominated by hardy plains grasses and choke weed — the preferred habitat of the large herds of mangonel and land lizards — though withergall, sponge-bristle and scimitar bush can be found as well.

The herbivores attract predators — omnivrax, behemoths, and winged azoryl. Morde scavengers are common. Other dangers come from across the border. Ravens, spotting prey from their vantage point on the Fangs of Golarin, swoop down on unsuspecting travelers. Also from the north, Beastmen riding darkmanes raid here when they are pursuing trespassers escaping from Golarin, eager for a fight with Seven Kingdoms mercenaries, or just very hungry. Cavalry patrols from the outpost at Akmir range deep into the Barrens, on watch for Beastmen or bandit activity.

To explain the devastation this region suffered during the Great Disaster, some scholars theorize that the Barrens were once inhabited by a lost race of wizards. According to a popular legend, ancient mages unleashed an awesome power while studying arcane secrets, which utterly destroyed them. Hadjin youngsters are threatened with being left out for the Lost Wizards if they disobey their parents. Superstitious Maruk refuse to even mention the Barrens, thinking that to do so might bring unwanted attention from a power which might still be active.

### The Rykgra

For most of the year, the Rykgra Flats are hostile to life. The suns beat down on a salt surface that brilliantly reflects light, threatening blindness to the unshielded. The surface is crisscrossed with great cracks where it has dried and shrunk from the heat. The only water available is deep beneath the surface — warm and brackish.

Relief comes during the spring, when the rains come. Dry lakes and riverbeds fill to overflowing, turning the surrounding plain into thick, sucking mud, and the salt flats to a vast shallow sea. Flash floods are common after a heavy rain. Rolling in the thick mud to cool themselves, herds of land lizards lie submerged and camouflaged — a potential surprise to the unwary. Poisonous crustaceans, the v'crey, lurk in the shallow spring sea, but hibernate deep below the crusted surface during the dry season. The wet season is mating time for behemoths, omnivrax, greymanes and mangonel lizards. For a few weeks, the Rykgra is lush and green . . . until the clouds evaporate, and the suns reclaim the moisture that was given. By midsummer, the region is parched once more.

Stories tell of treasures dropped to the bottom of spring lakes for safekeeping by bandits on the run. Never reclaimed, such booty lies buried far beneath the flats during the dry season. Treasure seeking is dangerous, for the Danelek tribesmen consider the Rykgra to be their territory, and do not hesitate to attack travelers.

Somewhere within the salt flats lie the ruins of the **Lost City of the Rykgra**. Unlike other lost kingdoms of the Wilderlands, this place is known only by its artifacts and ruins — there are no legends pertaining to it. The location of the lost city is uncertain. Explorers

claim that severe storms surround the ruins, completely disorienting all who travel there. No two expeditions report the ruins to be in the same location. Survivors speak incoherently of horrible predators, and adamantly refuse to attempt a return visit.

Scholars are divided over whether the city actually changes location, or is just protected by powerful magic. The best speculation is that the ruins predate the Great Disaster — but by how long, no one knows. Complicated in construction and made from foreign materials, the recovered artifacts defy analysis. Finds from the ruins bring high prices from collectors and scholars due to their rarity, especially in Nankar's market.

### The Caraiglin Hills

To the southeast of the salt flats is a range of desolate, rugged hills — the Caraiglin country. Flora here is sparse, limited to an occasional deadwood tree, withergall or sponge-bristle. Winged azoryl circle in the skies, coasting on the warm updrafts while eyeing the herds on the southern plains. Curious shelled skank, small, chattering quaal and wingless drac lair in the hills. The Caraiglin is also a known habitat of earth demons and enim. Most travelers avoid this region. There is little reason to pass this way, as there are few roads on which to travel.

The ancient hills are honeycombed with artificial caverns, rumored to contain shattered ruins. No one has discovered the purpose of the network. Most scholars believe it to be the work of earth demons, since the creatures now infest the underground warrens. Ravens and rock urchins also dwell in the outer caverns, limiting study of the tunnels. A few scholars believe the caverns to be tantalizing clues to yet another civilization, now forgotten, destroyed by the Great Disaster.

### Oases of the Barrens

The **Onarri Oasis** lies in the scrub plains just south of the Rykgra flats, yet it is rich with artesian springs and pools of fresh water. The lush zone covers two square miles and supports almost a hundred desert palm trees — a sight often mistaken for a mirage when seen on the horizon. The Danelek consider Onarri a holy place, given to them by their gods to make living on the Rykgra bearable. During the dry season, Danelek warriors prevent outsiders from approaching — except for the vital Orgovian trade caravans.

The **Nenmiri Oasis** lies in the east, just across a ridge from the Wilderlands Road. Much smaller than Onarri, the Nenmiri also provides fresh water year-round. Just to the east of this oasis is a small grove of deadwood trees. Due to its proximity to the Road, the Nenmiri is often used by bandits as a base. Raiding Danelek come here also, for the clans think that attacking the caravans is great sport. Through attacks like these, Danelek warriors increase their number of "kills" and thereby raise their rank and status within the clan. Both of these oases are freaks of nature. A popular theory is that all of the Barrens was once this lush and fertile, and that the Onarri and Nenmiri were somehow spared during the Great Disaster. How they were spared, if they were, is a question scholars would love to answer.

### The Wilderness Road

The Wilderlands Road follows the fertile strip curving around the southern Barrens. Compared to the farmlands of Maruk or Danuvia, the plains are hardly notable — but compared with the wastelands on either side, they stand out dramatically. Small lizards and rodents are found here in abundance — including the climbing viper, a serpent prized for its venom, strong flavored meat, and colorful mesh hide.

Water is plentiful here in the fall and winter, running in small streams which parallel or crisscross the ancient road. This is a blessing for caravan masters, whose animals can graze off the land rather than feed on costly, ported fodder. In the summer's heat, the grass turns a brittle yellow and poses a fire hazard. Herds of land lizards and ogront graze here at the height of the dry season, sometimes blocking the road for miles. Only in the spring does the number of beasts and their predators diminish, as the animals migrate north to the Rykgra.

The Wilderlands Road is the only highway which crosses the Wilderlands from east to west. Linking the Quan Empire in the east to Kasmir of the Seven Kingdoms in the west, the route also has a spur — the Maruk Road — which travels north to that citystate. Pilgrims, adventurers and merchants use the Wilderlands Road as the safest and easiest route across this desolate land. Orgovian trade caravans are a common sight. While Danelek raiders and bandits of several types are a threat, travel on this portion of the road is much safer than the eastern Banditlands route.

Between Kasmir, Hadj and Maruk, the road is regularly patrolled by cavalry troops. Large caravans or those with hired guards seldom have trouble. The outpost at Akmir, the only civilized settlement within the Barrens, is located at the fork in the road where the Maruk Road leaves the main highway. The easternmost outpost of the Seven Kingdoms, this fortress serves as a base for the mercenaries who protect the western coalition's trade interests in this part of Talislanta.

One of the enduring puzzles of the Barrens is the road which surrounds it. The Wilderlands Road predates the Great Disaster, and was built when all of the Wilderlands was presumably lush and fertile. Scholars question why those territories closest to this road were spared the worst of the blight which struck the rest of the region. Others wonder what happened to the other roads leading to the lost kingdoms of Ashann, Sharna, the Desertlands and the Rykgra. Today the road is in a dangerous state of disrepair. Missing many of its original hexagonal stones, it is often impassible during the spring rains. Unfortunately, no government is willing to pay to repair the road.

North of Akmir, the freshwater **Well of Alcar** is a traditional sanctuary. Travelers, merchants and even bandits have an unofficial truce here. Alcar is an isolated well, not an oasis, and is not marked by the luxuriant vegetation surrounding Nenmiri and Onarri. Other wells attempted in this area have not been successful.

The ruins of a single building near the well date from before the Great Disaster. Simple in design and devoid of elaborate decoration, the weathered stone offers no clue regarding its origin. A chiseled inscription above the entrance is damaged, and the remaining pieces are too worn to be decipherable. The roof collapsed ages ago, and the walls are only a yard high in places. Within, there are broken stone benches and a chipped dais.

Scholars speculate that the structure was once a temple, crediting this fact for the tradition of peacekeeping at this site. In contrast, the Danelek claim the ruins are evil, and the Za have legends that the place was constructed by nameless enemies. Both peoples avoid this place. No one knows whether the building and the well were built by the same people.

### The Tribes of the Danelek

The Barrens is home to the Tribes of the Danelek. Some speculate that these tall, primitive tribesmen might be descended from one of the Wilderland's lost kingdom, whose adaptation to the heat and terrain of an inhospitable environment created a cruel, sun-blackened race with a harsh and tenacious eco-culture.

Although of a single culture, the Danelek are sharply divided into tribal units centered around hereditary family leaders known as the **Naz**. Each Naz is the voice of his tribe and his word is law. Danelek tribes prize their independence and there is fierce competition between them. Given their warlike nature, lethal hostility is generally the result when rival bands collide. Rivalries may last for years and feuds for generations. Clans argue over water sources, mining rights and hunting grounds. The only formal contact between clans is the interclan gathering called the **Dureth**. The Dureth is held every fifth year at the Onarri oasis and only Danelek are permitted to attend. For the duration of the Dureth, clan hostilities are set aside. Fighting is prohibited except for the competitions in the warriors' skills. The winners of the martial competitions receive great honors from all the clans. Naz engage in trading and arranging marriages for young clan members.

Each clan is, in turn, divided into castes:

The Warrior caste rests at the top of the pecking order. Position and prestige is determined by the number of enemies a Danelek has killed. Anyone outside of the immediate tribe is, except under trading circumstances or during the Dureth, considered a foe. Prowess is indicated by the number of ornaments worn, usually one for each kill. These may be feathers, ear and neck rings, rock urchin shells, bones, daubs or stripes of paint, animal claws or the fingers or ears of slain victims. The ten foot tall, eight foot diameter stone cairns surrounding a Danelek burial site indicate the number of enemies a warrior has slain.

Lest the reader conjure forth an image of the noble savage, it must be pointed out that a kill need not be made in a fair manner. Stealth, ambush or a stab in the back are all permissible under their code of conduct. Unblooded warriors cannot hope to marry as no self-respecting Danelek female would wed one without caste status.

Warriors hunt migrating game, curing the meat with salt to preserve it for use during the times when game is scarce. The hide is used for clothing and trade, and the bones utilized for weapons and as implements. *Climbing Vipers* are valued for their colorful mesh hide and bring a high price from Orgovian traders.

Those of the Drudge caste are essentially slave labor. Most of the year they harvest the salt, hewing foot thick, ten foot square sections from the Rykgra salt flats with adzes and levers. These slabs are then cut into smaller blocks and baled for easier transportation or used to construct the salt huts that house the Danelek for most of the year. When a year is especially harsh, The Drudge may have to leave the Rykgra for the safety of the Onarri oasis.

Danelek worship the Creator, whom they believe gave salt, spring rains and the Onarri oasis, which are the necessities of survival in this harsh land. They believe their deity gives stamina and endurance to the faithful and rewards them by taking them to a heavenly oasis upon death. In contrast, they believe the unfaithful are eternally punished in the burning suns.

### The Holy Onarri

The major source of fresh water in the Barrens, The Onarri is considered by the Danelek to be a gift from their Creator. It must be guarded against outsiders who might taint it by their presence. A special group of warriors, the *Chosen of Onarri*, is selected at each Dureth to guard the waters for five years. Clans vie for this honor. Proud is the Naz who can claim sons among the Chosen.

The Chosen are aided by the *Shamans of Onarri*, the seldom seen priests of the Danelek. These reclusive illusionists elect to stay at the oasis. Their spells in the defense of their homeland have added to the legends of the Barrens. The spectre of a sand demon rising from the salt dust is a particularly effective means of stam-

peding the mounts of their enemies. Danelek shamans are eager for news of Talislanta, but rarely leave the Onarri. Those who leave do so in order to study and learn, with the strict instructions to return to the oasis and impart this new-found knowledge to help strengthen their race.

Few outsiders are ever allowed at the Onarri, and then only on the fringe of the oasis. Only those traders who have dealt fairly with the Danelek in the past are permitted to meet with the Naz to engage in trade. The Danelek are largely dependent on trade for food, goods, and modern implements and weaponry. For these they trade the huge land and mangonel lizards, herded from the salt flats, and sell them to beast-masters, carvaneers, Orgovians and Tazian Thralls during designated trading periods. They also trade salt, and gems and rock urchins gathered from the hill caverns. Food, goods and weapons are also acquired by theft or as spoils of combat.

Travelers passing through the Barrens may be amused by the fact that the Danelek perspire through their tongues as well as their pores. Showing that amusement is ill-advised, as the Danelek do not take lightly to being ridiculed. Young warriors make a game out of attacking small caravans and anyone approaching one of

the brackish waterholes that pass for most oases must need be wary. Danelek often attack strangers as they first set up camp, before they have a chance to post guards, eat or rest. This favorite method of attack is one which the roving bandit forces have learned to imitate.

As noted in "The Chronicles," the Wilderlands experience heavy spring rains which render salt harvesting impossible. During this time, activity shifts to the caverns and tunnels of the hill areas. There are found rock urchins and the gem stones excreted by Earth Demons.

While Earth Demons are formidable creatures, they have a strong aversion to wind and water. Driven deep into the caverns and tunnels by the torrential rains, the Danelek push them still farther from their lairs by imitating the sound of rushing wind as they gather gems and the lichen-eating echnoderms. The Enim, a cavern dwelling race of giant devils with a taste for man-flesh have learned that spring is a good time to hunt Danelek.

When the rains cease and the waters recede, the salt huts and the great scars wrought in the surface of the salt flats by the harvest are washed away, and made smooth for the cycle to begin anew.





# THE CITYSTATE OF DANUVIA

"A brave people, they fled across kingdoms.  
"Born one nation, division tore them.  
"Proud women, they bowed to impotent men.  
"The Red Goddess gave birth to Danuvia from a womb of iron."

— Queen Allu II, *The Theogyne*

Danuvia's citystate exerts control over much of the Wilderlands, from the east bank of the Dead River to the western edge of the Aberrant Forest, and north from the city itself to the Wilderlands Road — a territory which includes fertile farmland rare elsewhere in the Wilderlands. The Queen personally claims the **Zodarocco**, an oasis northeast of the city where vast grain fields are maintained by male slaves under the whips of female overseers. Retired swordswomen are encouraged by their citystate to homestead on the Danuvian plains, but the farmers are opposed by predators and uncooperative herds of ogronts and land lizards. Danuvia's Virago swordswomen police the farmlands, but the patrols are spread thin, often leaving independent farmers to rely on their own defenses.

The **Dead River Gorge** forms the south and west borders of the citystate's influence. Punctuated with spires and nooks, its vertical walls are ribboned with layers of colored stone. The dry riverbed, smoother than most of Talislanta's roads, is routinely used as a caravan route between Danuvia and Nankar — and intrepid traders pursue it south almost as far as Faradun. Steep canyon walls and flanking mountains protect the wagon trains from some predators...but make it impossible to flee from the satada, climbing vipers and viragos which live along the canyon bottom. Seven Kingdoms mercenaries from the outpost at Ikarthis periodically march through the gorge, reducing the number of dangers

The chief difficulty for the trade caravans lays in getting their wagons in and out of the canyon. Brave merchants operate primitive inns along the Dead River, where travelers can buy provisions without leaving the canyon. Ramps have been built by the major trading nations alongside the gorge bridges at Nankar and Kasmir.

Not to be outdone by the older kingdoms, Queen Allu II ordered Danuvia's **Dead River Span** to be constructed. She chose a mile-wide section of canyon for the site, deliberately challenging her people's engineering skills. The Span consists of two black-iron suspension bridges, each of which stretches from one bank to a central rock spire. A stone ramp connects the natural spire with the riverbed trail below. Travelers are charged a toll of three gold lumens per span crossed, while the ramp may be used free. A battalion of Viragos is posted in a round stone keep atop the spire. The bridge commands a spectacular view of the canyon, with its walls layered with stones "as red as Azariah's skin."

Unfortunately, Queen Allu's chosen site has not been a profitable one. Most trans-continental trade passes through Kasmir to the north, and of the north-south caravans, fewer than half use the Dead River route. The others come south from the Bridge at Kasmir, following the Danuvian Road. The most frequent customers are the Dracartan Thaumaturges, who freight crystallized water from Astar on the backs of slave teams.

Viragos dread assignment to the Span. Bandits and Beastmen can easily cut off the defenders from either side of the canyon. The soldiers have long insisted on a road to link the citystate with its canyon outpost, so that reinforcements might speedily reach the Span. However, no Queen has ever authorized the expense. The government sees the Span as an economic failure, and does not wish to spend more on it.

## The Gynecocracy

The Queen of Danuvia is a hereditary magistratrix, whose authority is defined by the laws of the citystate. In addition to being the executive officer of her nation, the Queen is the commander-in-chief of the Virago swordswomen. Her orders are carried out by a large force of male secretaries, monitored by female administratrices. While Danuvians revere their Queen, they do not feel bound to obey her if she violates the laws of the land.

Only women are allowed to hold Danuvian citizenship, and to vote — representing their entire households, in theory — when electing the fifty *Gynes* or legislators of Danuvia. Gynes also advise the Queen and sit in judgment on minor cases. However, the art of politics is seen as unworthy of females. Therefore, each Gyne must select a male *Proxy* to serve under her direction in Danuvia's legislature. Foreign slaves and husbands are seen as the most loyal representatives, but many Danuvian men are skilled at the arts of negotiation and oration.

The Proxies are limited to presenting legislation which has been approved by their Gynes. They bargain, exchange bribes on behalf of their Gynes, and give rousing speeches to support their assigned causes. The men can agree on compromises, but must be careful in so doing not to offend their mistresses. The Queen accepts the results of the legislature, and has male bureaucrats record the Acts in the official Scroll Of Law. When elections are held, the Gynes never engage in electioneering themselves, but leave all speeches to their Proxies. Male secretaries tally the results of the voting under the watchful eyes of the Queen's administrators.

When the legislature is in session, Danuvian women spend their day "evaluating" male Proxies. Women of Danuvia often adore the Proxies, who combine the best traits of Danuvian manhood: charisma, cleverness and physical attractiveness. In the balconies, female spectators cheer for their favorites, sometimes throwing "favors" — knives tied with colored ribbons — to Proxies who are the most attractive. When the men clash in argument, the mood sometimes spreads to the balconies, where the women spill blood in impromptu combats. Famous duels have been fought when a Gyne has suspected her Proxy of being romantically involved with another citizen. The men themselves are forbidden from engaging in physical fighting, which is viewed as unsuited to their delicate nature.

## Trade and Foreign Affairs

"Wise women never pay to fight. Wise women are paid to fight."

— Danuvian proverb

Danuvia shuns alliances and entanglements, rejecting treaties and occasionally expelling diplomats who press for them. No Queen wants to be trapped into a commitment to waste her people's treasure and troops abroad. Furthermore, Danuvia does not wish to alienate any potential employer of her mercenaries.

Trade is vigorous. The citystate grows food for export to Maruk, Hadj and the west. Retired mercenaries purchase imported Arimate black iron and fine weapons from the Seven Kingdoms, and consume luxuries such as Tazian fire-ale, Astar nectars and kori-ana from Durne. Craftsmen — often retired Viragos — require hardwoods from Taz and glassware from Cymril, using them to produce quality export goods. The Queen imports steeds from Taz for the Viragos.

The swordswomen of the citystate are the major source of foreign income. The largest contingent consists of the three regiments

which defend Hadj, paying off through service the 100,000 gold lumens which Danuvia still owes to the Hadjin. Other regiments serve in the Seven Kingdoms' Grand Army and in the guard of Arim's Forbidden City of Ahrazad.

The hiring of mercenaries is strictly controlled by the Gynecocracy. Current events are reviewed, to ensure that an assignment will not pit Viragos against each other. Unlike the Thralls of the Seven Kingdoms, Danuvians always hire out as organized units, serving under their own junior officers. Only rogues and the retired sell their swords individually. Swordswomen expect salaries of two gold lumens per week, plus five silvers to be paid as tribute to the citystate. Leaders receive higher wages: four lumens for a March warden, twenty for a Battalia captain, and fifty for the general of a Regiment.

Slavery is also a major business in Danuvia. City law forbids the enslavement of women, but Danuvian males are born into servitude. Unfortunately, the men are too weak for heavy labor, and bring low prices from slavers. Foreign slaves are treasured, both as hard workers and for the prestige of owning such exotic possessions. Viragos not on foreign assignment must turn over male prisoners to the Gynecocracy slave pens. Other male slaves, supplied by the Imrians through Farad middlemen, are driven from the east by slave mongers. The traders force their captives to carry bags of trade goods on the journey, then sell both captives and cargo at Danuvia. Slaves in Danuvia receive adequate food and rest, and can escape the lash by working diligently. Swordswomen pamper their favorites, assigning them light duties.

#### Law in Danuvia

The most important precept of Danuvian law states that "a woman shall always be judged more highly than a man." No man can walk the streets after sundown, outside of the male quarter. Men must not look directly at a female, but are to keep their eyes demurely lowered. Viragos can arrest a man for almost anything, no matter how trivial, and then prosecute him under the law that forbids men to "offer an insult to a woman."

The accused are put on trial before a Gyne. Women are presumed innocent, but men accused of a crime are assumed to be guilty unless they can prove otherwise. Trials are often fair, but more than one Gyne has left office in scandal, accused of showing favor to an attractive male defendant.

Sentences are also unequal. The Gynecocracy provides honorable executions for women proved guilty of serious crimes, using a traditional silver sword. Females convicted of other crimes may redeem themselves by performing a special service for the Queen, or they may accept exile.

Men, on the other hand, are seen as being redeemable because of their more refined natures. Therefore, the citystate operates a Redemption House, where male prisoners are reformed. Men can be executed for only one kind of offense — crimes against women. Male adulterers are seen as vermin, and the traditional punishment is to banish them, bound and naked, to the Desertlands. Men convicted of lesser insults are paraded through the city on their hands and knees. The aggrieved women lead them on leashes, like animals.

#### The Viragos

"War is a blaze of red fire. Without it, we freeze! Without restraint, it will devour us!"

— Queen Allu II, *The Theogyne*

The Viragos are the all-female soldiers of the citystate. Ten of the regiments compose the Queen's personal troops, known as the



Legion of Allu. Fifteen other regiments exist, two-thirds of which are on foreign mercenary assignment at any given time.

A woman becomes a Virago by finding a regiment which will accept her. She must then swear an oath to serve her comrades, the citystate, and the Queen. A Virago is part of an elite sisterhood, and knows that if she is captured by an enemy, her sisters will give their lives to rescue her. All live communally at their battalia barracks.

Viragos paint their bodies a ruddy bronze, symbolizing that they have painted over their former prejudices when they take on military service. Colored bands on their arms and throat identify their unit. The Queen's legionnaires stand out due to their intricate starburst patterns. Leaders are identified by distinctive patterns of facial paint.

Most swordswomen specialize in mounted combat, practicing saber charges or dextrous thrusts with a light halberd. A favorite tactic is to form a protective square with halberds facing outward, creating a redoubt. Viragos are reluctant to surrender, knowing that male enemies delight in tormenting them.

Each regiment is organized into ten battalia. Each battalia is made up of 5 marches of ten soldiers apiece. Leaders are commissioned by the Gynes, based on personal valor. New commissions and promotions are awarded annually at the Conjugal Feast.

There are only two honorable ways to leave military service: disability and motherhood. Pregnant females who retire to bear daughters for the citystate are honored, though not all mothers choose to leave the service. Barracks schools provide for children of active soldiers.

## The Conjugal Feast

Danuvia's Gynes comb the continent constantly, seeking suitable men to attend the Conjugal Feast. Viragos on foreign service appraise every man they meet, and may even invite honored enemies. Danuvians don't worry about class or status in their search. Some of the best candidates are discovered plowing fields or digging in mines, unaware of their potential. Marital or legal status is of little concern, for the Queen can often redeem slaves or arrange foreign divorces. The citystate's Slave Law allows a Gyne to force any Danuvian to free her foreign male slaves for competition. It is extremely flattering to be selected as one of the continent's most desirable men, and the Queen presents fabulous awards to the contestants.

The Feast begins at noon on the 42nd of Drome with a royal banquet. The male "contestants" are formally introduced before an assemblage consisting of the Queen, the fifty Gynes, and most of the citystate's female inhabitants. The competitors are observed closely throughout the course of the feast, and graded according to manners, style, and grace.

After the meal, the men make a presentation, displaying what talents or virtues they claim to possess, such as martial ability, magical prowess, song, dance, poetry, and so on. The women loudly praise those whose performances they admire, and register displeasure with those of lesser talents by hissing, booing, or showering them with whatever is left on their plates.

After the performances have been completed, the Queen and her Gynes vote for their favorites. The three who receive the most votes are summoned to stand before the Queen. By tradition, the Queen may recruit these as members of her harem — for life, or until she tires of them and grants them their release. The "losers" are given consolation prizes of up to 500 gold lumens, based on their ranking in the contest. It is not uncommon for the Gynes to proposition the most favorable of these contestants, and offer them gold or other valuables in return for their "favors."

After the feast, those contestants who were either not chosen or do not wish to remain in Danuvia are allowed to depart, often amid cheers and offers of marriage from less aristocratic women. According to the Dracartans, if one does not intend to stay in the citystate it is wise to flee Danuvia quickly, lest an overeager Gyne order her Viragos to kidnap the reluctant groom.

Danuvian women are allowed to have as many husbands as they can support. Foreign husbands, or *concubars*, are favored over the Danuvian males, but both are treated as possessions. However, the swordswomen prefer to bear children fathered by Danuvians.

## Azoriah and Other Gods

"We do not burn futile offerings to Azoriah. Rather, we enslave a few for the benefit of all."

— Queen Allu II, *The Theogyne*

Danuvians have been wary of priests, prophets and organized religion ever since their escape from the Cult Wars of ancient Phaëdra. They loathe Aamanians, and pilgrims wisely avoid the citystate. Nevertheless, a minority of Danuvians belong to two cults — that of Azoriah, and the Creator.

The worship of Azoriah began with Queen Allu II, who adapted the religion from what she learned of the Kang war god. In her old age, Allu claimed to have discovered the goddess' true nature in a series of visions, preaching among other things that Zoriah was actually female. She recorded these in *The Theogyne*, a religious tome which Danuvian cultists revere.

According to Allu's book, Azoriah is more than a Goddess of War. She is the Great Mother, giving birth to cities and crafts, peoples and civilizations. War is her primary tool, galvanizing races, creating discipline, and forming leaders. War spurs progress, unerringly weeding out the weak while empowering the strong. Idle priesthoods and rituals are considered blasphemous. Azorians serve their goddess by erecting fortifications, forging weapons, and conquering destructive races such as the Beastmen and the Za. According to the Theogyne, women are the ruling gender, while men — ill-disciplined and irresponsible by nature — are meant only to serve and obey.

A very small number of Danuvians are Creativists, adhering to the standard doctrines of that cult with a single exception — they believe the Creator to be female.

## THE CITYSTATE OF HADJ

Within the walls of their citystate, the Hadjin have created a haven for the idle rich. Both their lives and the city itself are monuments to materialism. A people of highly-refined tastes, they are among the wealthiest of the Talislandans. Hadjin profits have been steadily spent in the traditional manner — buying more land, largely in Zandu, Faradun and the Seven Kingdoms.

### The Consortium

The Hadjin wield power through the Consortium, which oversees everything that goes on in the citystate. Primarily, it is responsible for seeing that the Hadjin grow ever richer. One member from each of the Forty Families of Hadj sits on the Consortium council. The amount of votes each Family may cast depends on the value of the properties they own. The Grandeloquence is the ruler of the Consortium, traditionally chosen from one of the three richest families in Hadj. He serves for life, unless he chooses to retire.

All property owned by the Hadjin is held by one of the Families, or held in common ownership by the Consortium. Every square foot of Hadj has been allocated for rent or lease. The Consortium decides how the rental income is spent, and when dividends are distributed to the Families.

The Hadjin create no goods or products of their own, importing all they require from other lands. The heavy duties and tariffs levied on these imports are a further source of income for the Consortium, and a burden to the general populace.

Except for maintaining the city and the adjacent ruins, and protecting the highway which connects to the Wilderlands Road, the Consortium has little interest in nearby territory. It maintains closer relations with Zandu and the Seven Kingdoms than with any Wilderlands citystate. The Hadjin are also eager to court the Rajans (through Farad intermediaries), to avoid the problems from which Caranthem suffers.

Practical implementation of the Consortium's will is left to masses of hired bureaucrats. Whenever possible, the rulers leave the details of governing up to their servants, priding themselves on remaining undistracted by "sordid detail-work."

### The Lower Classes

Hadjin society is structured according to a rigidly-enforced class system, which is both racist and segregationist.

**The Hajann.** An exclusive minority, the Hajann are inferior in status only to the Hadjin. These people are of the same Phandere blood as their Hadjin brothers, but over the centuries have lost the



records which prove their ancestry. Each Hajann family is bound in service to one of the Forty Families.

Hajann mimic the lofty airs and mannerisms of their masters. They wave scented fans in the presence of outsiders, as the Hadjin do, but are prohibited from using fans of crystal moth wings, or wearing robes of silversparkle. The Hajann are better educated than their idle masters, and are fluent in both written and spoken forms of High and Low Talislan (the Hadjin never speak Low Talislan).

In truth, the Hajann are only a privileged class of servitors. The Hadjin employ them to perform tasks deemed unsuitable for foreigners "not of the Blood." Hajann exclusively perform tasks which require a high degree of contact with the Hadjin, serving as valets, chefs, aides, and overseers. They are more trusted than foreigners, and also serve as senior diplomats, administrators and bureaucrats.

**Skilled Mercenaries.** Ranking below the Hajann are the mercenary classes, a diverse group comprised of useful foreigners. These include the Arduan horticulturists who manage the city's gardens, Callidian Cryptomancers, Sindaran accountants, Kashmir moneylenders, Ispasian mercantilists, Zandir litigators, Yassan technomancers, a wide variety of mages, and entertainment troupes of Batrean concubines, Thiasian performers, and Bodor musicians. Warriors serving in the Hadj Guard — primarily Danuvian swordswomen, along with Arimite knife-fighters, Dracartan desert scouts, and Thrall warriors — are also included. The mercenaries form an important part of the citystate's economy, and are grudgingly accorded fair treatment and decent wages. Nevertheless, the Hadjin angrily resist all attempts to form guilds, and thus far only the technomancers have succeeded.



**The Unskilled.** Least fortunate are the laborers of Hadj, who are viewed by the Hadjin as expendable property. Many are slaves, including the hulking Monads, a hybrid race shamelessly exploited by the Hadjin. Others are indentured servants, serving terms of fifteen years or longer, including large numbers of Maruk, who process the city's dung and waste products into low-grade fuel.

#### Laws and Customs

**Crime and Punishment.** Hadj's Laws of Behavior are similar to those in other cities, with the exception that only two classes of people are recognized: the free (Hadjin), and the enslaveable (all others). Individuals who fail to observe proper standards of conduct are arrested, charged, and if found guilty, fined up to 10,000 gold lumens. Habitual lawbreakers are foreclosed on by the Consortium and sold into slavery.

**Displaying Wealth.** The Hadjin consider themselves advanced and enlightened. They attempt to prove this by displaying their refined tastes and habits. Hadjin delight in purchasing expensive luxury goods, riding in the most elaborate conveyances, consuming the finest food and drink, wear only the most costly and stylish raiment, and display a studied appreciation of music, dance and theatre.

**The Forty Families.** The basic unit of Hadjin society is the extended family, and is presided over by its oldest living member. Family property is owned collectively by the group, so that no individual Hadjin ever holds property on his own. There are a mere forty of these extended families, each descended from one of the original families which fled west from ancient Phandril.

**Genealogies.** Of sacred importance to each Hadjin are the ancient records which prove that his family is descended from one of the original families of ancient Hadjanistan. The possession of such genealogies is the only difference between being a ruling Hadjin or a Hajann servitor. The final authority on all questions of ancestry is the Registrar, a Hadjin appointed to this office by the Consortium.

**Hadjin and the Arts.** The Hadjin equate an object's value with its cost. They are the scourge of Sindaran Collectors, competing with them to acquire valuable antiques and art works. Generations of foreign artisans and craftsmen have benefitted, overcharging the Hadjin for their services ever since the city was built. Some claim that thieves have also profited, hired by unscrupulous Hadjin to "acquire" what is not for sale, stealing it again for resale.

**The Principle of Ownership.** All laws in the citystate are based upon the principle of property ownership. To gain entrance to the city, for instance, visitors must pay a toll — essentially a rental fee which entitles the visitor to temporarily occupy space in the city.

## THE CITYSTATE OF MARUK

Arid and dry, the Maruk mountain range is nevertheless a beautiful sight. Sawtoothed peaks overtop soft foothills of gold, red, and green sedimentary stone, carved into fanciful forms by the passage of time. The Maruk Mountains are waterless except in the spring, when moisture-laden clouds hit the granite peaks, dropping their cargo to sluice down the arroyos and bring a brief kiss of life to the surrounding barrens and wastelands.

The Maruk Valley, a natural catchment, retains greenness far longer than the surrounding lands. To the north and west are mountains. Northeast is the reservoir, a small canyon dammed to provide drinking and agricultural water. An aqueduct comes down from it, feeding a network of irrigation canals, winding through the fields and ultimately into the citystate,

## Serpent Pass

North of Maruk lies the Serpent Pass, a narrow gulch penetrating the Maruk mountains. It is most dangerous during the rainy season, when water swells the streambeds and cascades through a series of spectacular and deadly falls over the granite cliffs. The road winds along a ledge left clear by the water's passage.

**Serpent's Mouth.** At the southern opening of the pass is a bottleneck, known as the Serpent's Mouth. A toll station here, operated by Maruk's House of Customs, asks ten percent of all goods carried, less one set of clothing, one weapon, one personal item, and one beast of burden. Citizens of Maruk are allowed to pass freely. The poor find the toll reasonable and the rich find it outlandish, but it is the custom. An Oracle is always on duty, to serve as an appraiser and to warn the custom agents of troublemakers and smugglers. None of the Maruk are armed, but it is said to be a great misfortune to go through without paying.

**The Weeping Lady.** Along the westward fork of Serpent Pass are seven falls, which slick the causeway with their spray in all but the driest months of the year. The southernmost is known as the Weeping Lady, and the other six as the Lady's Children. Legend has it that, before the razing of Kharakhan, a giantess had a vision of the doom that would befall her race and fled the city with her children. On their way through the pass, however, one by one her children died from the bites of Maruk climbing vipers native to the region. After the death of her last child, the lady sat down to weep, and after the passage of time she and her children were turned to stone. The wail of the wind is said to be her voice, and the spray of the falls her tears. The cliff known as the Weeping Lady truly resembles a gigantic woman hunched over, crying over her children.

**The Oracle.** The treacherous eastern fork of Serpent Pass leads to the Oracle, thought to be the highest peak in the Maruk range (since the peak is continually shrouded in mist, it is hard to be sure). Rumors as to what is atop the Oracle are numerous and contradictory. The popular theory is that a great mystic with knowledge of the past, present, and future resides in a tower at the apex, and answers one question for each brave soul who journeys to the top of the spire. Some believe the mystic to be an incarnation of Hotann, founder of the doctrine of Trans-Ascendancy; others believe it is Rodinn the Mad, chained to the pinnacle by the Creator as punishment for his deeds. Pilgrims believe that the Aamanian god Aa, omnipotent and all-seeing, visits the Oracle to sit on a throne and oversee all of Talislanta.

## Rulers of the Citystate

Maruk is a disempowered monarchy. During the infamous Night of the Draugur — the Seventh Wane of Maruk — walking corpses ate most of the aristocracy. Pirric IV, the present King of Maruk, indirectly inherited his title from King Baramus's third cousin's niece's nephew, Pirric I, who was engaged in questionable practices with a serving maid on the safe side of the aqueduct that night. Considered one of the unluckiest citizens of Maruk, the King inherits only the curatorship of the House of Dung, the citystate's dung warehouse — formerly the Palace of Maruk.

The citystate of Maruk is actually ruled by the Maruk Council. King Pirric IV holds a place on the City Council, and — out of a last breath of respect to the nobility — chairs the council and casts tie-breaking votes when needed. The other Council seats are held by the real power in Maruk, the Houses.

## The Houses of Maruk

Although there are many once-stately homes in the city, there are no manors or estates. Following the disasters and Wanes, the major buildings were occupied by squatters. These citizen groups evolved into the present Houses of Maruk. Each has its own

specialty, and is run according to the House Parents' decrees. The most powerful are the Houses of Oracles, Fate, Fortune, and Customs. The House of Death, known more familiarly as Weavers' Row, traditionally holds absolute power during the Wane.

Due to the great number of orphans after a Wane, the classic concept of family has been done away with. Children are born to Houses. A House member, often a natural parent or a blood sibling, is assigned responsibility for each child and his education. Most Houses ask older members to become Godsiblings for young wards. At adulthood, a Maruk may change his House membership. Individuals belong to only one House at a time. Many change back and forth, and some live at different Houses than the ones they belong to.

Foreigners who wish to join a House must first become citizens. To become a citizen of Maruk, the Council requires that applicants live within the citystate for a minimum of one year, survive at least one Wane, and renounce all other citizenship. To date, there have been few applicants.

## Politics and Trade

The Maruk Council has little concern for the security of the citystate. Alone among the Wilderlands cities, Maruk has no soldiers or police. The politicians rely upon the city's cursed reputation to keep it safe from conquest. The Council is primarily concerned with matters of foreign trade and the domestic peace of their valley.

The financial situation of Maruk is hard to gauge, as the Council always paints the bleakest picture possible. Money which the citystate comes by is turned over to the House of Customs for banking with House Kalatha of Kasmir. The moneylenders staunchly refuse to publicly discuss the financial circumstances of their citystate client.

The prime industry of the city is the gathering of ogrunt dung, which brings in sufficient cash to keep the citizens in grinding poverty. Farming was once a prosperous trade, but Maruk's history of tainted fruit depressed that market until only the poorest Hajann and most miserly Kasmir purchase it. The "taint" appears to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the year. The food is popular among the Maruk, however. Some die as a result, but most have learned to tolerate the taint. Some have even come to relish the strange harvest.

Many citizens are forced to travel abroad in order to earn income for their Houses. Large numbers work in Hadj, although the long terms of indenturement are distasteful to the Maruk. Others work as menial laborers in places as far distant as Aaman, the Seven Kingdoms, and Arim.

## Folk Beliefs and Customs

A hundred years of attempting to explain Maruk's curse have made the city's folklore marvelous and variegated, and its customs incredibly bizarre.

**Adulthood.** Children go on their first dung-gathering expedition at the age of fifteen or so. They are considered adults after they survive the Wane following. The House of Oracles examines new adults, referring them to the House most suited to their talents.

**The Balance of Luck.** Nothing is ever good in Maruk, because that implies good luck — which must mean either that bad luck has been displaced or that good luck has been stolen. To praise a citizen, therefore, is to accuse him of criminal magery. Similarly, to display one's wealth, happiness or good fortune may be considered insensitive and vulgar, outright wickedness, or positive

proof of malignant witchery.

**Crime.** Theft and luck witchery are the most abhorrent crimes in the citystate. Luck-stealing spells are held responsible for almost all of the city's pain and suffering. Though there is no organized police force in Maruk, mob justice is swift and harsh.

**Death and Burial.** Maruk funerals are wonderful sights. Friends and House-siblings of the deceased wear their funerary garb, play flutes, bang gongs, and beat drums to warn away the spirits as they enter Hexwood. The deceased is hung in a specially woven hammock in the branches of a suitable tree. Upon death, a Maruk's personal belongings are willed to friends, the needy of his House, and the House of Customs.

At the mass funerals, common during Wanes, bodies are hung in the branches of hangman trees. Through times of plague, when hasty disposal is necessary, they may be piled on the stone floors of one of the Hexwood's ruined gazebos.

**Magic.** Divination and lucky talismans enjoy a popularity in Maruk equalled nowhere else in the world. At the same time, there is nothing more frightening to a Maruk than a luck-stealing mage. Everyone is suspect — an Oracle, Talismancer, or the dung merchant down the street might all be secretly thieving luck, especially if they have encountered good fortune. "Smiling like a witch" is a common expression in Maruk.

**Marriage.** Formal marriages are uncommon here. Viewing all members of a House as brothers and sisters, the Maruk have no incest taboo.

**Private Property.** Items of great value are communal property in the citystate. The Council and the Houses temporarily loan these to citizens with the greatest need. For instance, most of the Maruk Luck Medallions — popular local artifacts rumored to possess magical properties — have changed hands many times.

**Reciprocity.** Maruk operates by a system of double-edged reciprocity. Coinage is never used, replaced by a system of barter and tokens. Among the citizens, all things are given as gifts. Debts are never formally tallied. Those with more than enough for themselves are strongly encouraged to give their excess to those with less. A Maruk need only ask another citizen for a possession and he will receive it, unless the other person can explain why he needs it more. People who never give anything in return for a gift are looked upon with suspicion. In Maruk, "stingy" is interchangeable with "evil."

Foreigners often get into trouble with this custom, especially rich visitors who do not share their good fortune when asked politely. In retaliation, Maruk raise their demands when bartering with "stingy" foreigners. Most refuse to give anything to a foreigner, using the excuse that the item is not theirs to give. Only the Orgovians have caught onto the system. After a trip through the city, these traders are laden with "useless" valuables given for the asking, while their original merchandise has been given to various and sundry along the way.

**Time and Age.** Maruk do not tally their age by how many years they have lived, but by how many Wanes they have survived. Those who choose to leave the city and then return are, in the Maruk sense of thinking, missing a piece of their lives. Consequently, Maruk serving in foreign lands commonly return home for each Wane.

**Vengeful Spirits.** Many citizens believe that ill fortune is partly caused by vengeful spirits, Maruk who died in Wanes or due to the curses of luck-stealing witches. Anyone who is praised or otherwise accused of stealing good fortune might become the target of these spirits, which can wreak great harm.

**Welfare.** No Maruk goes uncared for within the citystate. Each House cares for its own. In times of extreme hardship, all share equally in the misfortune.



## THE DESERTLANDS

The Desertlands is a harsh and unforgiving region of scorched dunes and windswept wastes. Horned devil-men and sand demons hunt here with a ferocity born of hunger — there is nothing for them to eat except visitors and each other. Danuvians exile criminals here. Those who survive the desert report seeing strange creatures, ships and trees on the sandy horizon. Some may be the mirages known to flicker over the dunes. The intrepid Dracartans also run duneships through this lethal waste, part of their trade link to Astar of the Seven Kingdoms.

Mummified bodies discovered in the desert may date from before the Great Disaster, desiccated into dust that not even sand demons can eat. A few look like men. Others appear to be mollusks the size of ogronts, with five pinchers arrayed about a circular shell. Some of these beasts wear saddles, leading to speculation that they were domesticated. Scholars think an inland sea might have covered this region before the Disaster, though to date, there has been no solid evidence to support such a theory.

### The Ruins Of Kasraan

A few buildings and shattered statues mark this ruin. Its name means "Foresight" in the Kasmir tongue, and the appearance of the statues indicates that cousins of the present-day moneylenders once lived here. The ruins are unique for their triangular pattern of catacomb shafts which plunge to unknown depths, converging toward a common focus. Heavily trapped and protected, these tombs are left alone by even the Yitek.

Only one explorer writes credibly on these caves. Shaladin of Kasmir searched this complex, basing some of his most deadly snares on discoveries made here. The wizard claimed that the Quaran seduced the ancient Kasraan, tempting them into slavery. As the populace succumbed, Kasmir prophets enraged their cousins by warning them of their fate. No tale describes what clashes followed, but eventually the Kasmir priests consented to a bizarre fate. They allowed their cousins to entomb them alive within a special portion of the royal catacombs. The Quaran trapped the entrances, sealing their foes inside. Shaladin claimed that the Kasmir set even more devious traps, to keep an unknown enemy out.

## THE EASTERN BORDERLANDS

Though part of the Wilderlands, the Eastern Borderlands are patrolled and thinly settled by the Seven Kingdoms. Except for the colonists, the only natives are the Sauruds of the hills. Beastmen and bandits seem to lurk everywhere in the wastes. The suns burn like Red Menace. Nobody comes to the Borderlands unless his errand is vital or the reward is staggering.

The only settlement is at Karfan, the Seven Kingdoms outpost established to protect against the menace out of Golarin. Few survive long here. Veterans say not many want to. Supplies, allies, soft women and good drink all lay hundreds of miles away, across hostile lands. Typical Borderlands mercenaries are fugitives, escaping past debts or crimes. Others seek glory. Some are insane.

### The Patrols

Karfan's patrols cannot guard every square mile of the wastes. The mercenaries guard the northern approaches to the Wilderlands Road, and scouts sweep north as far as Osmar and halfway to Ikarthis in the south. The Dead River gorge, even this far north, is patrolled by soldiers from Ikarthis, however. Karfan commanders can never find enough soldiers, and constantly need extra mounts and provisions to refresh their riders.

Karfan troops also patrol the chain of capped wells which runs east of the mountains that follow the Dead River gorge. Beastmen set ambushes at the wells, hiding inside to surprise water-bearers. When the wells go dry, as they sometimes do, the mercenaries suffer indescribable thirst.

### Politics and Mutinies

The Beast Wars posed Beastmen against the Kasmir and the Sindarans, and prompted the formation of the Seven Kingdoms in 222. After the wars, the kingdoms resolved never again to be caught by surprise. Ikarthis was built on the ruins of an earlier fortress, and Karfan was erected further north; both to watch the approaches from Golarin. Akmir came later, built during a period of euphoria over cross-continental trade. The Council funded its forts lavishly in the 460's as protection for Cymrilian visionaries who colonized the fertile strip of farmland just east of the Dead River.

Later, the Kasmir condemned Karfan as a waste of money, claiming it was too far north to guard the valuable trade routes. They suggested that its soldiers sustain themselves by hunting man-gonel lizards — inspiring half the mercenaries to desert. The outposts were allowed to decay until victories over the Za bandits in the 500's made them popular once again.

Today, no political coalition supports all of the outposts. The Ardua and Muses see no need for the forts. Sindar insistently defends Karfan, while Kasmir prefers Akmir and Ikarthis. As political pressures change, some outposts receive generous budgets one year — and almost nothing the next. When the funds dwindle, commanders dismiss mercenaries or reduce pay. The mutinies which these actions inspire have on more than one occasion had to be put down by the Seven Kingdom's Grand Army. More often, discharged mercenaries set out for the trade roads, raiding caravans they once defended.

### The Legion of the Borderlands

The isolated Wilderlands outposts are manned by the Legion of the Borderlands, an organization separate from the Seven Kingdom's Grand Army.

Each fort is commanded by an Outpost Commander, appointed by the Seven Kingdoms Council from a list of volunteers. Thrall veterans of the Grand Army are traditional choices. The commander is magistrate, treasurer and ruler of his outpost — even visitors must obey him. He manages the garrison, and is in charge of recruiting, training, paying, equipping, promoting, demoting and disciplining the troops. Commanders are not required to participate in combat, though the best lead regular patrols. Each receives a salary of fifteen gold lumens per week.

Commanders appoint sergeants, who receive six lumens a week. Each commands a "blade" of 10 to 20 soldiers, and schemes against the other officers to obtain more men and better equipment. Like their commander, sergeants receive choice rations and share the first pick of the loot. When a commander dies, they elect one of their number to act as commander until formal orders are received from Cymril. Feuds are sometimes sparked over the succession — due to the higher pay, and because the Council may promote an acting commander to permanent status.

There are two grades within the Legion: rookie mercenaries with less than one month of desert service, and seasoned veterans. Rookies receive no pay other than their enlistment bonus, and must provide their own weapons. Regulars are paid two lumens a week. The soldiers care nothing for their appearance, and wear

no military markings other than leather armbands. They grimly obey orders, knowing that only discipline prevents them from being overwhelmed by their enemies. However, they do not tolerate the kind of parade-ground regimentation practiced in the Grand Army.

The Legion provides each soldier with an aht-ra, which most soldiers appreciate more than gold — nobody could bear a desert patrol on foot. Furthermore, the mercenaries know that their fellow soldiers are cutthroats, thieves and criminals. The aht-ra is the only companion most dare trust.

A caravan visits Karfan once a year, bringing supplies and pay. New recruits march with it, led by any volunteer officers sent by the Council — the march is seen as ideal training for Borderlands duty. The timing of the caravan is supposed to be secret, but merchants often know in advance, and a determined bandit can buy whatever information he needs. Therefore, recruits must often fight off marauders before they reach the outpost. The weak succumb, and the strong arrive. They will not leave their outpost until they complete their three-year terms...or die.

### The Free Sauruds

The last of the free Sauruds dwell in the Eastern Borderlands. They are a dying race. Their camps in the hills along the Dead River lie too close to other, more active beings. The springs have become irregular, and the great herds of mangonel lizards have been nearly hunted out. Some Sauruds have been reduced to cannibalism.

Farad slave-mongers have come into the region, hoping to catch the gigantic lizardmen while some still exist. This is not an easy task, however;. The Sauruds of the Eastern Borderlands are not oblivious to their fate, and fight with a ferocity born of desperation. Many blame the Danelek tribes and the Cymrilian colonists

for the paucity of the mangonel lizards. The Sauruds claim the right to eat man-flesh as recompense, and grow more aggressive with each passing year.

The old race *could* migrate. They know about wells and herds further east and north, but they refuse to move. Their ancestors lived here, where generations have hunted the same herds. The Sauruds claim that if their children cannot do the same, their race does not deserve to exist.

The creatures live in bands of 20-40 members, without any formal leader or organization. Strong, loud Sauruds usually persuade the rest to obey them, and the tribe follows as long as they are fed. Bold members of other races may also command Saurud bands, if they can avoid being eaten first. Magic impresses the race, but they soon lose their awe — forcing the enterprising sorcerer to think of ever more spectacular feats to perform.

### Saurud Biology

Sauruds are cold-blooded. They reproduce as reptiles do — by laying eggs. The reptiles build nest mounds out of pebbles, then refuse to come near them, believing that their children will not hatch if the eggs are disturbed. Sauruds murderously defend their clutches against intruders. Borderlands troops complain that the mounds are placed next to watering holes, forcing them to violate the nests for their own survival. Some mercenaries steal the eggs for sport.

When extremely cold, Sauruds enter a torpor which lasts until their bodies warm. In this state, they need no food or drink and may be able to live indefinitely. Some Sauruds hunt for places to hibernate, with half-formed hopes of reawakening centuries from now, when the old wells and the lizard herds have been revitalized.



## THE KHARAKHAN WASTES

A land once ravaged by firestorms and other unnatural disasters, the Kharakhan Wastes presents a stark reminder of the Great Disaster. Nonetheless, the wastes aren't lifeless. Despite the bleak terrain and harsh climate, hardy gray-green grasses grow here in abundance. Surface water is rare, but tough plants like the scimitar bush are not uncommon. Even sponge-bristle can be found, if one knows where to look.

The durable vegetation supports great bony-skulled behemoths, crag spiders, draconids, two-headed duadir, the foul-tempered darkmanes, and green-scaled vamps. At the top of the food chain — and bitter enemies — are the Kharakhan Giants and the Araq.

Yet the greatest danger in the wastes comes not from the living, but from the slumbering dead. Ancient peoples once lived here, and their mysteries and malignancies remain to ensnare those who probe too deeply.

### Dagger Ridge

These treacherous, knife-like peaks form the northern border of the Wilderlands, cleanly separating it from the Shadow Realm. There are no passes, and Dagger Ridge is impassable by anyone less than an expert climber. Aberrant Weather is the norm here.

Nothing actually lives on Dagger Ridge, but satada, being expert climbers, are occasionally found here. They sometimes scale the peaks to leave stone crocks to catch acid rain. The fluid collected is used to kill plants, contaminate pools and wells, and torture captives.

### Noman's Land

The northwest border of the Wilderlands, Noman's Land is a rocky valley separating the Shadow Realm from the Amethyst Mountains. Nothing lives here, the ground being bare rock and dust. Little known, Noman's Land is supposedly haunted by pseudo-demons. The landscape is dotted with the ruins of ancient towers and fortresses.

A fragmentary manuscript in the possession of Nankar's Academy, purportedly written by the Zandir mage Sassan on his final journey, records these discoveries:

"After nightfall, the ruins suddenly are restored, complete with inhabitants! The men and women, all of a bewitching beauty, have pale-blue skin and white hair — perhaps cousins of the Mirin, or the long mysterious Fandir of the north? At first they are engaged in harmless banter while I hide and watch, but then the maidens embark upon a most tantalizing dance, one which enflames all of my passions.

"Stepping from my cover, I am about to introduce myself when my suspicions are suddenly triggered. Despite the performance before me, *the participants make no noise*. Then, I realize the truth — these are illusions, after-images of a lost people and their surroundings. They have no intelligence of themselves, but react to the desires of spectators.

"The illusions are harmless of themselves, and entertaining, but mask other dangers. By the light of the morn, I discovered that if I had taken another forward step, an illusionary floor would have disguised a collapsed one, and I would have taken a twenty-foot plunge. Barbed imps and fiends also lurk about, and use illusions to hide before an ambush."

Mordante's Gate, a permanent magical portal to the lower planes, is reportedly located somewhere in Noman's Land. Mordante

may not have created it, but he almost certainly used it, and perhaps more than once. The gate can be detected only as a slight rippling in the air. Black magicians come here to search for the gate, which is akin to a holy place to them.

### Modor's Tomb

An inert volcano in the middle of the Kharakhan Wastes is said to be the last resting place of Modor, a Giant of ancient Kharakhan.

Ariane legends tell of Modor the Warrior-Plunderer, whose clan sacked the cities of Talislanta and stored the booty in a dormant volcano. Modor carved out seven tunnels, and closed them with doors of gold. One led to his true lair, but the others to gruesome death. The doors could only be reached by a two-hundred-foot drop down the volcano's chimney, which was studded with fiendish traps. When Modor neared his end, he entombed himself with his treasure, and caused an ensorcelment to be laid which would return him to life if the fortune were disturbed in any way.

The Kharakhan Giants tell a different story. Modor, they say, was no thief, but a valiant defender against the those who invaded his land. He carved a fortress in a living volcano, complete with Six Doors of Challenge to test the heroic. Modor was trapped inside when the Great Disaster struck, sealed up by the cooling volcano. However, the modern Giants agree with the Ariane that Modor had a treasure worth millions of lumens.

### The Kharakhan Giants

Nomads that range from the foot of Dagger Ridge to the Topaz Mountains, the Giants are the largest man-like beings on the continent — topping even the Ice Giants of Narandu (although, arguably, the Ice Giants are stronger). The Kharakhan have black hair twisted into bristly topknots. Their skin is a deep brown, fading to light brown when protected from the suns for a long period. Their eyes are deep green.

The Kharakhan's primary concern is survival. They must always hunt to obtain enough food to satisfy their enormous appetites. They are compelled to be nomads, as they quickly exhaust the game in any area. Adding to their burden is the constant threat from other races. Many fear the Giants, and hunt them down or patrol against them. With the exception of Orgovian Traders and certain Djaffir, the Giants must consider all outsiders to be enemies. They will also attack trade caravans to acquire goods they can't produce themselves, since the other races won't trade with them. In the Kharakhan Wastes, the Giants attack for a third reason: to slaughter or drive off intruders. The wastes are their original homeland.

The Giants know their numbers have steadily decreased in the last centuries, but they will risk death in order to obtain supplies. When caravan survivors are harmless, they are sometimes allowed to go on their way — minus their goods. The Farad and the Araq are the exceptions. The Giants always slaughter the Araq, who also claim these wastes as their home. Their hatred extends back to the Forgotten Age, when the Quaran created the Araq to battle the Giants. Likewise, the Kharakhan always execute the Farad, who would enslave the Giants. With other races, the Giants often ransom prisoners, freeing one captive to obtain payment for the others. If nothing is paid, they let the prisoners duel for their freedom.

There is a jumble of scholarly theories about the Giants, in an attempt to account for the apparent degeneration of the species. Few believe that these are the pure descendants of the Giants who built the ruined city here. One theory claims they are descended



from slaves of ancient Kharakhan. Another theorizes that the ancient Kharakhan and their slave race interbred, creating the degenerate Giants. None of these theories should be voiced within hearing range of a modern Giant — they insist they are descended from the builders of ancient Kharakhan.

Karn, a Phantasian Dream-Merchant, spent ten years probing the past by inducing dreams in one of the Monoliths of Garganta. His research supposedly revealed that the original Kharakhan Giants were Monoliths who used magic to transform themselves to a more homonid form, hoping to discover the joys and sorrows of the lesser race. When they tried to transform back, however, the changeling Monoliths discovered they could not. Frustrated, they developed a race of servitors, the true ancestors of the present-day Giants, and embarked on a series of dangerous experiments in transformational magic. Karn believes that these experiments were responsible for the Great Disaster. Most Phantasians, however, feel that Karn's book, *Conversations With a Mountain*, is merely an interesting work of fantasy.

### The Eight Clans

Kharakhan families usually number no more than six individuals, including grandparents. Up to ten families form a clan. All of a clan's members are somehow related to each other — some scholars claim that inbreeding is the real reason for the Giants' lack of intelligence. Half of the clan are hunters, another fourth see to domestic chores, and the remainder care for the great War Wagons and serve as artisans. Most clans have two of the huge wagons. Behemoths are their favored riding beasts.

Each clan has two names: a sacred name known only to the clan, and a common name told to outsiders. The names of the eight Kharakhan clans are: Bolt Hurlers (*sacred name*, MuIr'An), Far Trekkers (Br'Kzel), Hammer Hands (Kr'Drna), Load Bearers (Ka-tr'Zu), Long Riders (Mr'Taxz), Storm Trackers (An'Droga), Wagon Wise (Nz'Akzel), and Wide Reachers (Br'Knha).

Appreciative of intellect, the Giants are careful not to limit leadership to the strongest. Most clans have two leaders: a Clan Chief and a War Chief. The Clan Chief must be smart, for he makes all major decisions for the clan. The War Chief is the main hunter, and leads in battle even though the Clan Chief may devise the tactics to be used. Chiefs are chosen by majority vote, and hold their positions for life or until retirement (usually due to injuries or age).

Law and order is enforced by the War Chief, with the Clan Chief acting as judge and jury. Banishment is the sentence for most crimes, for periods ranging from eight months to life. Criminals are given facial scars indicating their crimes. Cowardice in battle or disobedience to the Clan Chief carries the death penalty, although this may be reduced to banishment if the warrior has had a valiant career.

### Slaves and the Clanless

There are no records to indicate how many outcast Kharakhan roam the Wilderlands. Criminal Giants tend to band together, the strongest ruling the others through fear. These bands have lost their racial honor. Sometimes they stray to the softer civilized lands, where the lawless Giants strike from hiding, attack only easy prey, and terrorize the helpless. If met with resistance, they retreat and move elsewhere.

Others of the Clanless are honorable. Some young Giants leave their clans looking for adventure, and become great explorers and heroes. Their clans gladly accept them when they return, especially when they have adventures to tell tales about.

Faradun reportedly has several dozen Giants in their slave pens. The Giants suspect that the prisoners are being used as breeding stock, to create a clan of submissive Kharakhan.

### The Great Clanmeet

No leader rules all of the clans, and most of the time the Giants have little to do with each other. The exception is the Great Clanmeet. Once every eight years, the eight clans of the Giants unite in the ruins of Old Kharakhan. Their celebration features eight competitive events: archery, behemoth riding, club-fighting, koln-tossing, "stare-down," taling, War-Wagon races, and wrestling. Each clan selects champions to compete in each of the events.

The *archery contest* uses light ballistae against stationary and moving targets. The clan with the most hits wins.

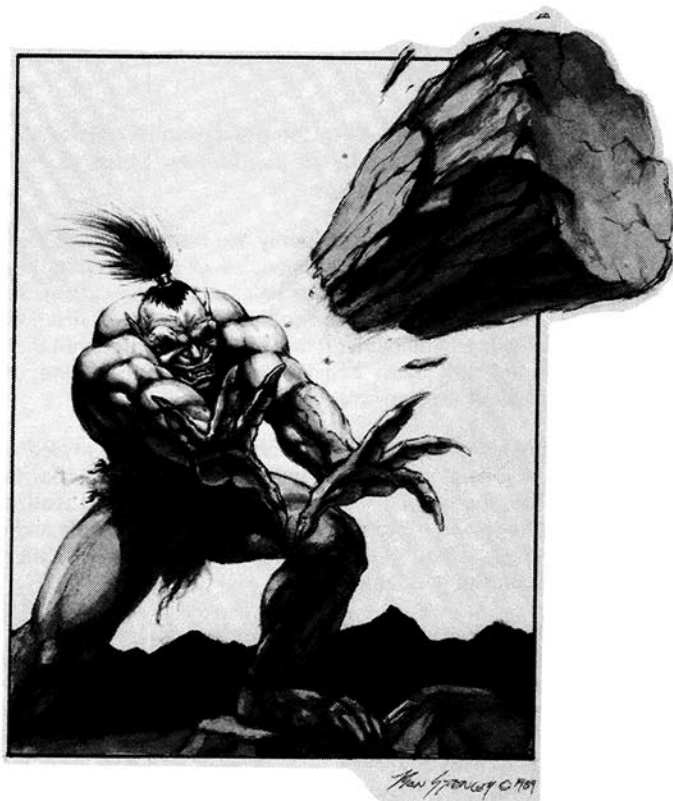
*Behemoth riding* takes place on an obstacle course. The winner is the Giant who finishes first with the least obstacles knocked over or trampled.

The Giants consider *club-fighting* to be a skill match. Only non-edged clubs are permitted, and combat continues until one combatant surrenders or is rendered unconscious. Deaths are uncommon.

*Koln-tossing* consists of the hurling of a 500 lb. rock, known as the koln. The winner is the Giant who tosses it furthest.

In *stare-down*, a uniquely Kharakhan event, the champions stare at each other until one flinches. The Giant who flinches first is the loser.

The *War-Wagon race* follows a circular course, with the winner being the first who returns to the starting position.



A *Kharakhan wrestling match* ends when one contestant has the other locked in a hold for over a minute.

*Taling* is the final competition, and is a special contest with its own reward. The teller of the finest tale is declared the Supreme Taler of the Kharakhan, and becomes an honorary member of every clan.

### Life Among the Giants

**Contests.** The Giants often have wrestling contests and blunted-weapons duels at night. There are no more than two of these in a single evening, since a clan can't afford to have many tired warriors in case of an attack.

**Food.** Kharakhan require 30 pounds of food daily. Land dragons are their primary food. One of these beasts can last a clan anywhere from two to four days, depending on size of both. The Giants also eat ogriphants, and subsist on stews made from grasses and roots when necessary. They are fond of dried fruits and sweet confections, and eagerly trade or raid for them. Despite their prodigious appetites, they consume very little liquid. They cannot abide alcohol, as it makes them physically sick.

**Growing Up.** From birth, the Kharakhan are trained in survival. They are taught to track game (their heightened sense of smell is a great asset), set snares, find water, and to fight on foot, mounted, and from a moving War Wagon. Young Giants are not allowed in battle until they are mature, at 33 years of age. After their first fight, they are allowed to knot their hair as adults do.

**Marriage.** Those of marrying age (45 years) are encouraged to select mates from outside the clan — usually at the Great Clanmeet. Lavish gifts are given to females who marry males from another clan. The male joins the clan of his bride, strengthening inter-clan relations. Marriages rituals are conducted by the Clan Chief.

**Possessions.** The Kharakhan make nearly everything they own, usually from wood, bones and hide. A few of the Giants are black-iron smiths. Items which they can't find or make, they take or barter for. Some carry and cherish items crafted by their ancestors, discovered in the ruins. Others have a fondness for ornamentation, particularly for bracelets and rings of gold.

**Religion.** The Giants practice a form of ancestor worship. They believe the "Old Ones" who built the ruined city can intercede for them with the higher powers. The religion is practiced in an organized form only when a clan visits the ruins of Old Kharakhan. Here, they bow before the Great Dolmen and implore their ancestors to impart to them the ancient wisdom. No sacrifices are made, no vows are taken, and no other importance is attached to the Dolmen or ruins.

**Riddles and Humor.** Giants have an obsession with riddles. During the day, they ponder the riddles of the previous evening. The Kharakhan have an understanding of and appreciation for subtle humor that one wouldn't expect from the hulking brutes. Even so, their sense of humor could easily be mistaken for depression. They have never been known to laugh.

**Talers.** Each night, the Giants gather around the fire and one of the clan, called a taler, spins a tale using speech, dance and body language. Crude and ungraceful to outsiders, the performance nonetheless conveys a great deal of meaning to the Giants. The stories are replete with subtle Kharakhan humor, and with the riddles which the Giants love. Talers are important to the clan. There may be more than one taler in a clan, but rarely more than three. Apprentice talers train with their masters for 20 years.

**War.** Every adult Giant — male and female — is a warrior. The young, infirm, pregnant, or very old who cannot engage in hand-to-hand combat man the ballistae in the War Wagons.

### The Araq

Traditional enemies of the Kharakhan Giants, the Araq are sorcerous crossbreeds of Men and Saurans. They range as far south as the Red Desert, and west as far as the Citystate of Maruk. Most naturalists believe the Araq legends, which state that the reptiles were created by the sorcerers of ancient Quaran to serve as an army of surrogate warriors.

Whatever their origins, the Araq are supremely adapted to the wastes. They are unaffected by the heat, and require little food or water. Araq primarily eat young land dragons and land dragon eggs, although they can also eat insects, vermin, weeds, bone, hide, and each other. All food is devoured raw, for the Araq fear fire (nor do they know how to make it).

Araq are born bright red, dulling to brown by their third year. At maturity most are light brown, but some shade to grey or even black. The closest they ever come to religion is their *Coming-of-Age* ritual. When an adolescent nears maturity, he is given an unarmed prisoner for his first slaughter. The spectacle is enjoyed by the entire band.

These warriors of the wastes travel in raiding parties, carrying everything they own on the backs of their two-headed duadir steeds. A small scouting party may consist of two to eight individuals, while a large marauder band may have several hundred members. The strongest member of a band is always its leader.

Fighting and hunting occupy most of the warriors' time. They enjoy physically bringing down prey, and hunt even when they aren't hungry. Time not spent hunting is invested in savage pleasures: fighting, killing, stealing and lying. Araq speak a barbarous dialect of Low Talislan, and are completely illiterate. They shun all goods and implements created by other races, and have no use for gold or valuables of any kind. For their own use, they make crude armor and weapons from the hide, bones, claws and sinews of land dragons. The Araq have no talent for siege-craft, and possess only the most limited grasp of tactics. They always fight from the backs of their duadir, and use weapons only of their own making. Attacks are direct, seldom with the aid of surprise.

The Araq are more numerous than the Kharakhan Giants, whose numbers have been steadily declining for centuries. Many scholars believe the Giants are a dying race. If this is true, then the high breeding rate of the Araq should guarantee them the eventual domination of the Kharakhan Wastes. However, the debate is academic to those who must travel here.



## SHARNA

South of the Red Desert of Carantheum lie the Labyrinths of Sharna. Little is known about this lost kingdom or its former citizens. The only known water supply is the Kutard Oasis, a small and unreliable freshwater spring. Supporting little vegetation, the oasis is often dry by late summer.

Dozens of ancient maze-like structures have been found in Sharna, half-buried in dust and weeds. Known as the Labyrinths of Sharna, they are scattered in no evident pattern. Some can be reached only through a hidden entrance, and lie entirely underground. A common factor in all of the known labyrinths is the proliferation of traps, deadfalls and secret passages. Many of the traps are of the usual sort — trapdoors opening onto pits of spikes, falling ceilings of great weight, even walls which move to seal in the unwary. Though many believe that the traps protect treasure, the majority of the artifacts discovered so far have been like the mazes themselves — of questionable function, oddities which are neither useful nor informative. Highly prized by collectors, their value lies only in their great age and scarcity.

There is a legend that the Sharna mazes were once the home of an ancient race of beings whose origins pre-date The Great Disaster. This theory originates from the discovery of a maze which was divided into separate compartments, resembling living quarters. The individual chambers are quite small, however, and provide few clues as to who (or what) might have dwelled within.

Historians are intrigued by the ruins, and hope to learn more about the lost race. The only consensus among scholars is that the labyrinths predate the Great Disaster. Some believe that a Lost City of Sharna must exist somewhere. A minority of scholars holds that the labyrinths were used to test young Sharna. Others think they might have been living quarters, despite the lack of furnishings found. The only labyrinth to be thoroughly explored is the Spiral Maze, but it has produced more questions than solutions. The discovery and exploration of a new major labyrinth would fuel academic debate for generations.

Teams of archeologists and mages may be found at any known Sharna site. Most expeditions are funded by Cymril's Museum of Antiquities, sometimes in cooperation with Dracarta's Academy of Thaumaturgy. Other expeditions are funded by the alchemical academy in Nankar, but some researchers claim the Sindarans come primarily to uncover tomes or artifacts for their collections.

Thieves and plunderers are drawn to Sharna because of the high prices which genuine artifacts command. Maps have been found which seem to show the pattern of Sharna mazes, but do not match known labyrinths. Individuals of an adventuresome spirit who successfully brave the hazards can make their fortune. Most, however, are discouraged by Za tales of nightstalkers in the region.

### The Ferrans

Short, rodent-faced beings whose man-like bodies are covered with a coat of dirty brown fur, the Ferrans are common throughout the Wilderlands. Their burrows are especially plentiful in Sharna.

Physically unimposing, Ferrans are able to emit a horrid stench which deters their foes. They possess exceptional senses of smell and hearing, which they use to track and locate prey. Able to move swiftly, the scavengers can spot a likely target and set up an ambush very quickly. It is difficult to surprise or sneak up on a Ferran.

While a solitary scavenger is no threat, bands of Ferrans make travel through Sharna difficult. They are shrewd and cunning, and often use weapons and gear pilfered from others. Familiar with the terrain, Ferrans can attack a party by surprise, or pounce on an isolated sentry or explorer.

Ferrans are quite clever, and employ a number of different tactics in order to relieve travelers of their belongings. They are especially adept at sneak-thievery, and exhibit a high degree of cunning in their nocturnal raids. Though they prefer swift and stealthy assaults, a Pack will not rule out more daring exploits should the opportunity present itself. One caravan was reportedly attacked by a Ferran pack operating a Kharakhan War Wagon, firing projectiles from an Orgovian star-thrower jury-rigged to the upper battlements.

### Pack Society

Ferrans are family-oriented, and merge for protection into multiple-family packs. An average pack consists of between ten and twenty families. The groups have underground dens, and come out in bands to scrounge for food or rob unwary travelers. In a typical burrow there is a large central tunnel, with small tunnels leading off to private family chambers. Untidy piles of "useful" items litter the tunnels. A meeting area is excavated in the deepest part of the den, where the scavengers discuss plans and inspect their latest finds.

Ferrans steal practically anything that they can drag into their lairs, and are habitual collectors of all manner of paraphernalia, geegaws, and brumagem. They assault the poorest of travelers on the chance that even the impoverished might carry something useful. Having no concept of repair, the scavengers use an item until it breaks — then abandon it. Heaps of discards are always found near their burrows.

A few scholars theorize that the Ferrans are descendants of the ancient Sharna, mutated by the Great Disaster or by prolonged exposure to the Black Winds. The degenerate mutations, according to this theory, cannot unravel the puzzles of the labyrinths and claim the blessings of their ancestors, but continue to be drawn to their ancient racial home. Most scholars find it hard to believe the Ferrans were ever civilized.





## THE TOPAZ MOUNTAINS

Forming the southern border of the Wilderlands, the Topaz Mountains run for hundreds of miles along the north side of the Dead River gorge. The higher cliffs and peaks are infested with kite-winged batranc, climbing vipers and murderous manrak, while the jungles of the lower elevations are home to leaping chigs, feather dractyls and winged apes. Barb-berry and spitting crocus form dense thickets in the foothills.

Topaz is found in thumbnail-sized chunks throughout the range, and pieces weighing as much as 20 pounds have been discovered. Mages dislike the region, blaming the reputed magic-resisting properties of the mineral for causing spectacular spell failures.

### The Nagra

A peaceful, easy-going people, the Nagra were forced to change their ways when driven from Southern Quan by the Kang. Most took up residence in these mountains, though a few settled east of here in the Jade Mountains. They have become skilled hunters in the Topaz Mountains, aided by their natural ability to spirit track.

Nagra prefer to live apart from others, but renegade tribes deal with the Hadjin, Farad, and Rajans, accepting employment as trackers. They drive a hard bargain — despite the handicap of working through a translator, since the Nagra speak a Chanan dialect — and a deal is unbreakable once made. Nagra take their pay in coins, supplies, or the heads of Kang, Quan or Chana 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.

## WASTES OF QUARAN

Malignant ruins are scattered through the wastes northeast of Maruk — the remains of ancient Quaran. Once the seat of the greatest empire of diabolical evil in Talislantan history, the ruins of Quaran remain to tempt the present with knowledge of the past.

First seen as blackened stone towers and idols, the ruins hide a vast underground network of tunnels, chambers and tombs. If only half the legends are true, a fantastic concentration of magical devices and arcane secrets still remains buried here, though the ruins have been scavenged for centuries by explorers and treasure seekers of all kinds.

Rumors also claim that the underground labyrinths contain undying monstrosities left over from ancient experiments, as well as traps more dastardly than anything the modern Kasmir know of. (Shaladin, the master wizard of the Kasmir, is said to have learned trapsmithing by studying the devices of the Quaran). Gold and magic can be found in plenty, if the finder doesn't mind the tainted aura of almost every artifact, or the danger of arousing the wrath of a Xambrian Wizard-Hunter.

### The Plaguelands

This land is a desert, glistening in crystalline white perfection. It has little to recommend it to the living. Aberrant weather is common.

It is rumored there is a Black Storm within the heart of the Plaguelands. Mystical energies rage fiercely, and great balls of colored light supposedly move as if possessed of their own sentience. The storm is said to howl over a lake of boiling quicksilver, with sands of solid quintessence on the shoreline. Sandstorms of crystallized quintessence reputedly whip around the shore, mutating or transmuting all they touch. Maruk dung

traders tell of a city on an island in the lake, transmuted to crystalline perfection, filled with immortal people of crystal and ruled by the ancient sorcerer Arkon. No man has ever returned to tell whether this tale is true — though several Abominations have, say the Maruk.

### The Sursian Plains

Blasted stone towers, craters left by violent explosions, unrecognizable shards of twisted metal and glass, and the blackened and rusted hulks of monstrous siege engines characterize the Sursian Plains, a mute testimony to the awful struggle between the dead kingdoms of Sursia and Acimera. While an excellent source of ogront dung, the plains are disliked by the Maruk. Packs of Ferran bandits lair in the mazes of tunnels connecting the craters and ruins. Many of them have mutated due to their close proximity to the Plaguelands.

### The Sad Plains

The streamlets which run off the northern slopes of the Maruk range make soft weeping sounds as they flow across the Sad Plains. They are said to mourn the proud nation of Xambria which once stood here, destroyed by the Necromancers of ancient Quaran. Now the barren plains are wandered by ogronts, land dragons, and malathropes. Kharakhan Giants, Beastmen, and Araq pass through, but only suicides choose to linger.

The plains are said to wail with a Ghost Wind which carries the sounds of fallen Xambria. In the reflection of the streams can sometimes be seen the lights of the empire that once stood on their shores. Similar visions are said to occur during grassfires in the dry season. Stories tell of travelers caught in the flames who survived due a temporal rift, reliving the original burning of Xambria. All who spend a night on the Sad Plains must make a WILL Roll, or succumb to sorrow and suicidal thoughts.

**The Three Hundred and Nine.** Standing as a grim memorial to the past are the Three Hundred and Nine, great obsidian statues of the Necromancer-Kings of ancient Quaran. Staring coldly from black stone eyes, the Necromancers still survey their handiwork, each statue turned alternately to view either the Sursian or Sad Plains. The eyes seem to follow those who pass by.

There are gaps in the line where statues have fallen. The toppling of Queen Kytrewquia's image in 457 curiously coincided with the capture and ritual execution by Xambrian wizard hunters of a purported wizard of Quaran at Cymril's Magical Fair. Other statues, cracked, decapitated, or lying at unusual angles, are rumored to be likewise accredited to the Xambrians.

### Omen

Herd of woolly erd roam the Wastes of Omen. Erd shepherds from Maruk ride greymanes here, herding the erd with the aid of whips and trained dractyls. Besides grey wool — used in Maruk for mourning clothes — the erd produce milk, which is processed into cheese.

The Omen, a tower of skulls nearly a thousand feet in height, was created by the Necromancer-Kings of Quaran, purportedly to seal a bargain with a powerful Shaitan. It represents millions of victims — mostly Xambrians, whose modern descendants make pilgrimages here to mourn their ancestors. It is thought that to walk through one of the tower's two pale shadows is to invite misfortune, and that to stand in the double-shadow cast by the twin suns is almost certain doom. The superstitious Maruk come near only when ogront dung grows scarce, and wait until the twin suns are high overhead and the shadows short.

## THE ORGOVIANS

Survivors of the former Kingdom of Orgovia, these traders live nowhere, but are found throughout the Wilderlands. The dissolution of their kingdom and the devaluation of its lead yatma currency devastated their ancestors. They survived, but vowed only to deal in barter, never again to accept coin for their wares. Seeing that the Great Disaster had left their homeland sterile, the Orgovians promised to make no land their home, living as nomads instead. They also gave up all religion, concluding that they had been abandoned by the gods.

Orgovians have no reservations about who they deal with, so long as they can make a profit. There is only one exception. The traders deal with bandits only if they are promised immunity from future attack. They never forget a wrong. If a thief cheats or steals from an Orgovian caravan, word is spread, and that bandit is a marked man living on borrowed time. If the Orgovians don't get him, their trading allies will. Ferrans particularly distress the traders. The Orgovians are baffled by the scavengers' preference to steal what they need, and cannot understand their lack of interest in trading what they own. Lately, the traders have been trying to incite hatred against the Ferrans among their most powerful clients. The Orgovians hope that a punitive expedition against a few Ferran dens might solve the problem posed by the scavengers.

Each Orgovian clan has its own caravan — a half dozen wagons pulled by land lizards, flanked by outriders on lopers. The traders seldom hire foreigners, preferring to stand guard, care for their animals, and perform other chores themselves. They take pride in self-sufficiency. Young Orgovians are put to work at an early age, cooking for the clan and feeding the land lizards. All are taught how to defend themselves, as well as the skills needed to perform minor repairs on their wagons.

Each clan is ruled by a *Phene*, an elected caravan leader regarded with paternal fondness by his people. Several clans compose a tribe, ruled by a *Khal*. A Grand *Khal* of all the Orgovians is selected every tenth year by the retiring Grand *Khal*. The position rotates among the tribes.

### The Trading Tribes

Orgovians trade to put other merchants out of business, but never compete against one another. To avoid conflict, they have divided the Wilderlands into trading districts. Each of their four tribes has exclusive domain over one.

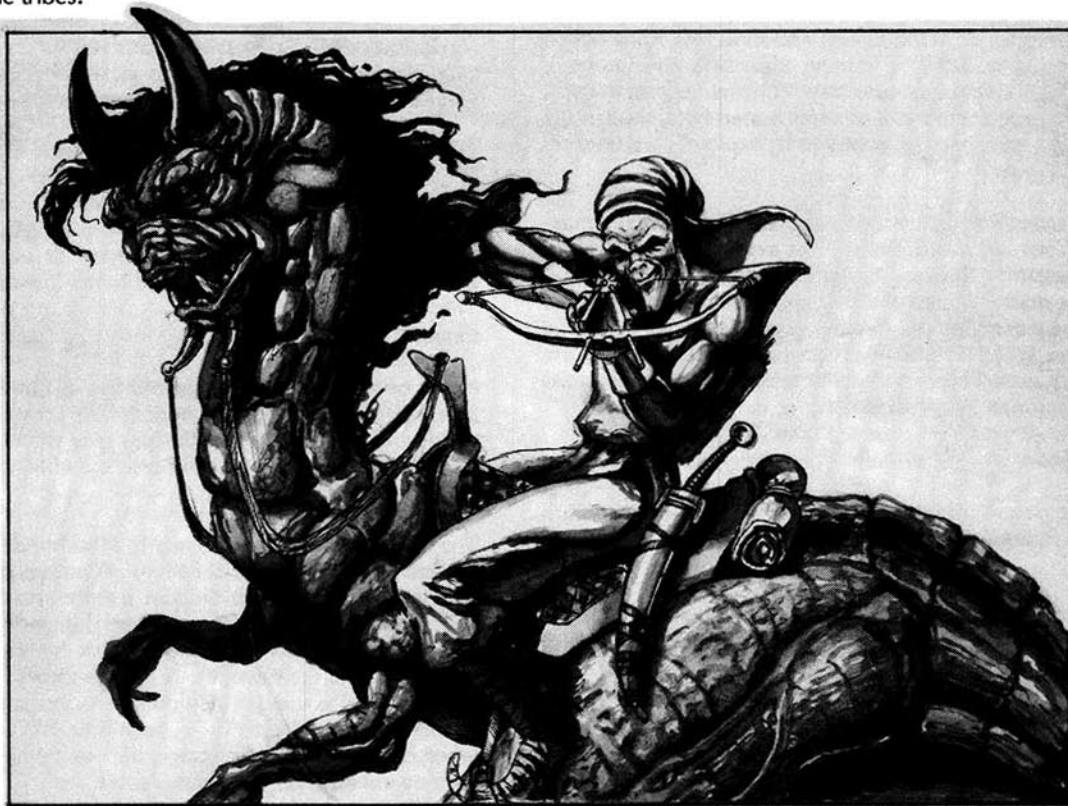
The **Andumar Tribe** holds trading rights to the Barrens and the Eastern Borderlands — including the Danelek lands, the Seven Kingdoms city of Nankar, and western-bound traffic from Akmir on the Wilderlands Road.

The **Siloma Tribe** trades in the northeast, including all traffic north out of Akmir. They trade with Maruk, and occasionally go as far north as Tamaranth. The Silomans have contacts in the Volcanic Hills, and limited trade with some of the Djaffir.

In the southwest is the **Taurele Tribe**. They have the rights to Danuvia's caravan route, as well as exclusive trading rights to the Seven Kingdoms city of Kasmir and the caravan route in the Dead River gorge. Most Orgovian trade with the Seven Kingdoms is negotiated by the Taurele.

The **Yavieya Tribe** is the wealthiest. Their southeast trading rights include the Citystate of Hadj, Carantheum, Faradun and the Quan Empire, plus an exclusive on eastern-bound trade from Akmir. Only the extreme hazards of their territory keep them from becoming even richer.

The Seven Kingdoms outpost of Akmir is neutral trading ground. The Orgovians meet on the plains here to exchange goods. Interclan trade is instrumental in maintaining the traders' reputation for having the widest selection of goods at the fairest prices. Due to their refusal to accept coins, they often receive goods from far beyond the Wilderlands, taken as barter.



# CITIES OF TALISLANTA

The following descriptions cover four of the most interesting localities in the Wilderlands: Akmir, chief outpost of the Seven Kingdoms; Danuvia, the city of the swordswomen; Hadj, one of the wealthiest cities on the continent; and Maruk, the cursed city.

## AKMIR

Standing at the fork where the road from Maruk joins the Wilderlands Road is a walled fortress. Akmir is beset by harsh weather — dust storms, heat lightning, acid rain, and spring thunderstorms. Omnivores and malathropes are common on the nearby strip of fertile plain. Raids by bandits and Beastmen make existence here even more miserable. Professional men-at-arms consider it the most dismal of assignments. Far from civilization, Akmir is a tempting target for marauders. The well of Akmir, around which the fortress is built, is the only source of fresh water within seventy miles. However, the water attracts peaceful visitors as well. The outpost is frequented by Djaffir merchant tribes, Aamanian pilgrims, windships from Cymril and Phantas seeking refuge, and trade caravans from much of the continent. The Orgovians use the fort as a meeting ground — one of their trade wagons is almost always in sight. Without this safe haven, traders could not travel through the Barrens due to lack of water, and land trade between east and west Talislanta would be cut off.

Akmir is manned by dregs and outcasts. Most are fugitives, exiles, or hard-luck mercenaries, attracted by the steady pay. Its troops have earned a deadly reputation. The Akmir cavalry regularly patrols the Wilderlands Road and its branches, providing security for caravans moving toward the three Wilderlands citystates, as well as Nankar and Kasmir in the Seven Kingdoms.

Although there are a great number of troops assigned to Akmir, many are out on patrol at any given time. The pay is lower than at the other outposts, but it arrives more regularly, brought twice annually on a windship-of-war. Nor is there concern about new recruits, since the posts here are filled as the top priority — giving other outpost commanders a chance to transfer to Akmir troops they suspect of being seditious or too ambitious.

### Commander Kjaftur

The commander at Akmir is Kjaftur, a Kang renegade. Allegedly, he was one of the elite dragon troops of the Quan Empire, but he offended the Emperor and had to flee. Raised in the Greylands, he feels at home in the Barrens, distant from the Kang trackers and other imperial agents who seek retribution against him on the orders of the Quan.

The Council of the Seven Kingdoms is pleased with Kjaftur's iron rule and the smooth operation of the outpost. He is influential throughout the Wilderlands, and receives continuous intelligence from the merchants who visit the fort. Some say that the Kang is becoming wealthy on bribes, and that he plans to return to Quan someday with enough riches to reclaim his former status.

Renowned as a fierce and mighty fighter, Kjaftur holds his troops in line through fear more than respect for his rank. Three years ago, two knife-fighters told their companions that they hated the commander and would kill him while he slept. They were found the next morning, tied between stakes before the fortress gate, skinned alive and their tongues cut out.

## Map Key

The fortress is constructed of massive multi-colored blocks of quarried stone. The taller buildings overhang the narrow streets, adding to the outpost's dismal, claustrophobic appearance. A strict curfew has been enforced since last spring's assassination attempt on the commander.

**1) Caravan Gate:** This is the main entrance to Akmir, leading into the enclosed courtyard. The gate is manned by six soldiers and a trusted sergeant. All incoming wagons and burden beasts are searched, and tariffs are assessed on goods. Merchants may keep their caravans within the courtyard, or pay an extra fee to stable them within the greater protection of the main fort.

**2) The Courtyard:** Caravans often shelter here for several days, resting their beasts and taking advantage of inexpensive fodder before continuing their journey. The fifteen-foot-high wall surrounding this grassy field is weaker than the fortress' main wall.

**3) The Travelers' Bazaar:** This open-air bazaar nestles against the outer walls of Akmir. It is owned by no one, and operates freely — merchants bartering and trading goods with one another, meeting to conduct prearranged deals, or just comparing notes about routes and bandits. Slightly damaged merchandise is often offered at bargain prices by traders who don't wish to freight the goods further, usually toward the end of the day, when Bard shops.

**4) Healer of Animals:** Ihmam is an old Djaffir who heals the animals of the trade caravans. His tent is set up in the outer courtyard so that the beasts may conveniently be brought to him. Ihmam was blinded in the right eye and left for dead years ago by Za bandits, but was rescued and brought to Akmir by an Orgovian caravan. Ihmam repaid the traders by caring for a hurt loper. Impressed with his skill, the Akmir commander arranged for the Djaffir to tend caravan animals.

**5) The Bitter Stein:** An outcast Kasmir, Behn Abn, operates this dark and cramped tavern in a weathered wooden shack. The villainous-looking place is patronized by laborers and guards from the caravans who can't afford anything finer, and by off-duty mercenaries. It is filled with half the continent's rumors. The drinks are of poor quality (but at standard prices), gambling is fair (cheaters are expelled naked into the Barrens), and Behn Abn always has a few "cousins" in residence in the back. The Kasmir is preoccupied with operating the tavern, and does not engage in long conversations with patrons.

**6) Three Thralls Forge:** This smithy and general outfitter is located in another courtyard shed. Quality is average, prices are only 2 x *normal*, and repairs can be made fast. The Forge was originally a family establishment run by three Thrall sisters, but has changed hands several times without changing its name. The current proprietor is a wounded Danuvian swordswoman named Karleen, staying on at the Forge to earn traveling money and to recuperate.

**7) The Main Gate:** This impressive two-story gatehouse has doors of black iron, and is straddled by towers on either side. Though not as tall as the corner towers, these towers exert a commanding presence over the outer courtyard.

**8) The Main Wall:** A thick wall that is supposedly siege-proof, but is only thirty feet tall. Located at each corner of the main fortress are four massive defense towers, which are forty feet tall and overlook the surrounding plains. Each has two ballistae and a catapult.



**9) Customs House:** Confiscated trade goods and items given as payment of tariffs are temporarily housed in this two-story building. If the items can be used by the outpost, the commander may requisition them. Otherwise, he tries to convert the goods to coinage, which he can use. Illegal, dangerous or unusual items are sent to the Seven Kingdoms on the next available windship.

**10) Barracks (2):** Mercenaries and scouts stationed at Akmir are housed in these buildings, without regard to race or gender.

**11) The Stockade:** This squat, single-story wooden building has underground cells where prisoners — captured Beastmen, bandits, felons, troublemakers, or anyone who displeases the commander — are incarcerated.

**12) The Mess Hall:** Mercenaries and scouts are fed here. The food is sustaining but tasteless.

**13) Medical Office:** Scrube the Leech is the outpost's Thrall medical officer. He has little knowledge of medicine or sanitation.

**14) Windship Docks:** This scaffolding can support two windships as well as several of the diminutive windscouts, but visiting windships-of-war must moor to the docking mast. A large stock of emergency repair materials is kept. Merchant vessels may use the docks for a fee of 100 G.L. (collected by the commander). A windscout is permanently assigned to Akmir, but is often on patrol or courier duty.

**15) The Smithy:** The outpost smith sees to the needs of the troops. Officially, he is not available to help a trade caravan, but the commander can sometimes "arrange" a favor.

**16) The Sticking Point:** This inn offers common fare, at lower prices (only 3 x *normal*) than The Silent Moon. The Point is operated by Krokta, a retired female knife-fighter from Arim. Maneke, a Yassan, often resides here. The Technomancer met Krokta two years ago and was immediately smitten. Now he takes only short-term contracts, showering Krokta with extravagant gifts whenever he returns. Maneke has made himself an integral part of

the garrison, repairing and improving much of Akmir's antiquated equipment. He also collects an occasional windfall for repairing windships. Kjaftur is pleased to have a technomancer in residence, and encourages Krokta to be pleasant to the Yassan.

**17) The Silent Moon:** This well-stocked inn is frequented by merchants and wealthy travelers. Here, they can relax, wash off the dust of the road, and forget they are in the wastelands. However, prices are 4 x *normal* here. Two Sindarans run this establishment. The eldest, Torvak, lost part of her left leg in her youth, but wears a wooden limb with which she displays remarkable agility. She is very curious, and enjoys conversation with her many patrons. Regulars customarily bring an oddity or two with them to trade with Torvak for accommodations or food. A younger member of Torvak's family, Vilash, keeps the inn running smoothly. The two can often be seen at odd hours, playing Trivarian and conversing into the night. Both consider the inn an incredible opportunity for collecting.

**18) Outpost Stables:** Mounts, harness, and fodder are kept here.

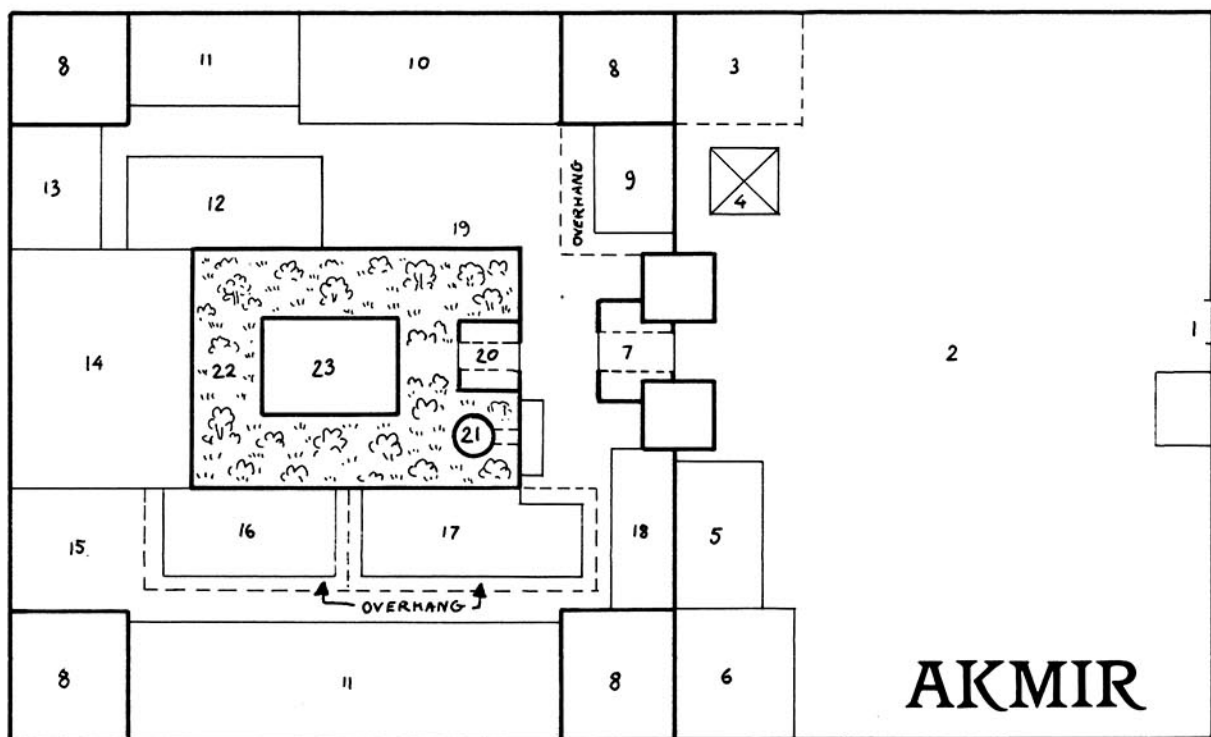
**19) The Redoubt:** This central keep has walls fifty feet in height — higher than the outer main wall, but half as massive.

**20) The Inner Gate:** A marvel rarely seen outside of Quan, this gate is of Vajran design and construction. Solid stone doors swing open on perfectly balanced hinges. The gate was commissioned by the Seven Kingdoms to impress merchants and dignitaries.

**21) The Well of Akmir:** Within the Redoubt, the outpost's only well is constantly guarded. Ceramic pipes lead to a trough outside the wall, where soldiers and visitors fill their canteens.

**22) Gardens:** Filling the tiny courtyard of the redoubt are fruit trees, donated by the Ardua to supplement the food supply of the garrison.

**23) The Command Tower:** The tallest structure in the fortress, this six-story tower contains quarters for the commander and his sergeants. A map room on the second floor is used for strategy and planning sessions. Six light ballistae are mounted on the roof.



## DANUVIA

The city of Danuvia was built on top of primeval ruins from a lost civilization. The Andrik immigrants built their first homes from the blocks of collapsed buildings. They gave no thought to planning their new settlement, but built haphazardly. Queen Allu II later imposed military order. She razed houses and ruins, carving straight, broad streets through the rubble, and saw that interior defense walls were built. Allu divided Danuvia into districts, which she called the Five Fingers of Azorah's Red Hand — "they can caress the citizens," she said, "or grasp and wield them" (from *the Theogyne*).

**1) Shaedora's Ramparts:** Danuvia stands on top of a slight rise, formed by the collected rubble of the ruins over which it is built. Old walls and lonely pillars jut out from the long slopes, forming a ring of obstacles which serve as an outer defensework. A careful searcher can find entrances to buried buildings. Beneath the rubble, some ancient streets are now tunnels, but the passageways collapse easily and are riddled with hidden pits. Escaped slaves and a few Danuvian males shelter in crude hovels built from the debris, and honeycomb the old ruins with burrows in which they hide from Viragos and slavers.

**2) Allu's Wall:** A twenty-foot high wall protects the city. Two dozen Viragos guard the sole gate, halberds at the ready, collecting a toll of one gold lumen from each who enters. The gates in the interior walls stand open and unguarded, but during an invasion they would be sealed, dividing the city into six independent fortresses.

**3) The Bastions:** These are solid pillars, not hollow towers. A staircase spirals up the exterior of each, leading to a stone shelter on top where a dozen Viragos operate a Deathstroke catapult.

**4) Tal Virago:** This fifth of the city, the "Thumb" of Danuvia, is devoted to the Virago infantry. Barracks and commissaries line the streets. Most of the traffic consists of Virago patrols policing their beat, overseers driving male slaves to work projects, and regimented troops of uniformed schoolgirls singing martial airs. Retired Viragos run shops and armories here, selling to their old Regiments and the public. Their wares cost half again as much as ordinary arms, but are of excellent quality.

**5) Tal Equus:** This district is similar to Tal Virago, but serves the Virago cavalry. The streets are wide, accommodating the equus cavalry steeds, and troops of Danuvian slave-boys who collect equus droppings.

**6) Tal Honora:** Tall buildings loom over these streets. The city-state allots this "Center Finger" district to civilians, mostly aging veterans and their husbands. A few inns cater to restless retirees, offering food, spectacles, Thaeian drama, and occasional duels between foreign slaves.

**7) Tal Lumenia:** Inns, markets and shops fill the "Ring Finger" merchant district. Djaffir, Orgovians and Pharesians sell their wares in open-air bazaars, while Farad slavers deal from squat blockhouses. Foreign tradesmen need a permit to sell here — it costs 10 G.L., can only be obtained from a Cyne, and must be renewed each week. A Cyne can revoke a permit at any time.

**8) Tal Degrada:** Danuvia's native men are forced by law to live in the "Stunted Finger" district. Most live in communal shelters built by the women who own them, where capable administrators take care of the impractical males. Patios are crowded with men drawing, sewing and bodypainting. A causeway runs across this district, allowing women to pass through without delay. Five-foot-high walls of rubble screen the roads, but males line the crests, showing their crafts or posing seductively in the hope of being shown favor.

**9) Citadel Teria:** This is Danuvia's central fortress. The Gynes employ male artisans to inscribe the history of the city on its outer wall, which is known as the Wall of Memory.

**10) The Pentagonal Palace:** The municipal complex is both the dwelling of the Queen and the council hall of Danuvia. The palace is built of a strange red marble salvaged from the ruins, and consists of low pentagonal structures built concentrically on a gentle hill. The only males who may enter are the Proxies of Danuvia, and they are limited to the council chambers of the outer ring. Ten Viragos pace each of the five gates, in a choreographed march popular among foreign visitors.

**11) Field Of Glory:** The amphitheater doubles as an arena for athletics and a parade ground for the Viragos. Swordswomen execute convicted criminals here in an elaborate ceremony featuring a ceremonial silver sword. The Conjugal Feast also centers on this field, although the crowds usually spread throughout the rest of the citadel. A deep well produces enough water to keep the field covered with lush grass year-round.

**12) Street Of The Orthodox Fallen:** This bare, whitewashed street is one of a pair dedicated to those who died — Andrik and others — in the Cult Wars, as a reminder of the folly of that war. King Shaedora awarded this route to the Orthodoxists to commemorate their war dead, but the Hierophants of Aaman have refused to have anything to do with it.

**13) Street Of The Paradox Fallen:** King Shaedora awarded this street to the Paradoxists as a memorial to their war dead. The Zandir obliged by filling it with statues, ornaments, triumphal arches and dark stone obelisks. There are rumors of an underground Paradoxist cult of Danuvian males who meet here after dark, disguised as women to evade the curfew — but no Virago takes the story seriously. Traveling Zandir patronize inns on "their" street, where they play lively music, drink wine, admire the slaves, and try to seduce Viragos.

**14) Street Of Shaedora** After King Shaedora disappeared, his daughter consecrated this thoroughfare to his memory. Leading to the public wells, the road is noisy, crowded with slave-boys and apprentice Viragos trudging past the king's memorial carrying water and trading rumors.

**15) Street Of Allu:** An immense statue of Queen Allu I, striking down an Orthodoxist soldier with her sword, presides over this stark, solemn roadway. In an annual ceremony, the modern queen stands on a platform built in Allu's shadow and reports to her citizens on the city-state's condition.

**16) Street Of The Red Goddess:** Worshipers of Azorah, encouraged by Queen Allu II, built cairns and public atriums to their goddess here. The majority of Danuvians are irreligious, however.

**17) House Of Honor:** Virago healers care for the sick and wounded in this cool sandstone dome. Their services are free to those who fall serving the city-state.

**18) Virago Barracks:** Swordswomen live in these marble halls. At any given time, d10 x 10 warriors are present in each, along with d20 girls in training.

**19) Virago Stables:** The city-state's cavalrywomen keep their steeds in these slate barns. Two marches of Viragos guard them.

**20) The Communal Nursery:** While Danuvians dote over female children, male infants are sent to this facility for upbringing. Slaves care for hordes of boys here, teaching them basic skills

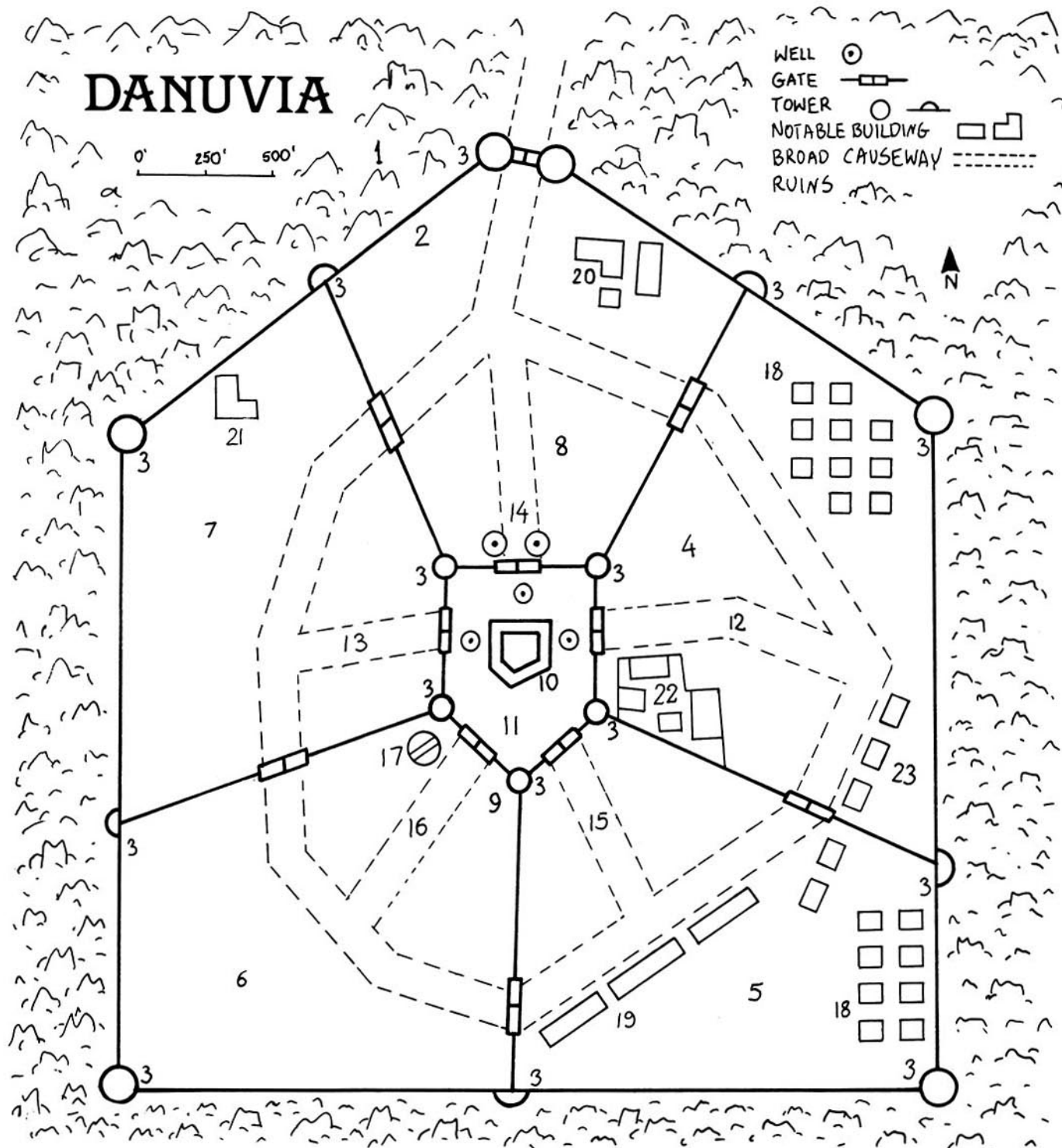
such as bodypainting, dancing, sewing and drawing. Advanced classes teach proper deportment, oration, flower arrangement, and the skills needed to serve as apprentice scribes and bureaucrats. To instill discipline, labor marches of young boys are assigned to clean the city streets.

**21) The Exchangery:** Retired Viragos operate this communal shop, which specializes in mastercraft weaponry. The store is often thronged with visiting mercenaries who admire the craftsmanship, but few can afford the prices.

**22) Embassies to the Queen:** Behind this low white wall dwells a small diplomatic community. Hadj, Faradun and the Seven King-

doms have permanent ambassadors here, while the official representative from Maruk (who is also a dung merchant) visits the city irregularly. A guard force, composed of soldiers from each of the nations represented, polices the area and watches for trespassers.

**23) Regimental Inns:** Taverns line this crescent, each operated by veterans of a different regiment of the Viragos. Soldiers meet old comrades here, and young mercenaries mingle at the bars hoping for news of foreign contracts. Social ties among ex-soldiers are important, for regimental factions have political importance when it comes to voting for the Gynes. Patrons of the different inns are friendly rivals, occasionally staging stick-fights or other competitions.





## HADJ

Close to the ruins of ancient Phandril, the modern Citystate of Hadj is one of the wealthiest cities on the continent. The Hadjin rediscovered wealth when they looted the Phandril necropolis, and maintain their riches by wise investments in property. Their extravagant lifestyle is supported by a vast number of slaves and servitors — including the Hajann, their disinherited cousins.

**1) The City Wall:** The walls of Hadj stand forty feet high, and are twenty-five feet thick. The Arimite-designed fortifications include a system of ports and conduits through which a variety of noxious substances — boiling oil, molten lead, Arimite fire and others — may be poured upon would-be assailants. Passages built into the walls allow defenders to move unseen throughout the structure.

**2) Solitary Gate:** These thirty-foot-tall doors are constructed of black iron imported from Arim, and are wide enough to accommodate the largest land arks. A toll of 20 G.L. per person and beast is collected by Danuvian and Thrall sentinels. Agents of the Consortium check all cargoes entering the city, levying a 50% import tax on all salable goods. The city has only one entrance.

**3) Watchtowers:** Each of these structures stands fifty feet high, and measures thirty feet on a side. Arimite fire-throwers are the primary defensive weapons.

**4) Hadjin District:** The most exclusive sector of the city is reserved for the grand family estates of the Hadjin. A thirty-foot-high, fifteen-foot-thick security wall surrounds the district. Security passes — gold tablets, stamped with the official Consortium seal — must be presented to the Danuvian mercenaries at the gates. Typically, only the most elite of foreign dignitaries can obtain these passes.

**5) Hajann District:** This sector is inhabited by the Hajann, who dwell in standardized multi-family complexes. Patrols of mercenaries provide adequate security.

**6) Market District:** Foreign mercantile concerns have a wide variety of shops here, leasing space from the Consortium.

**7) Monad District:** Rows of circular stone hovels house the Monads of Hadj. The slaves may be hired from their owners through Hajann representatives at the Monad Labor Hall for a minimum wage of one silver piece per day. Groups of hulking Monads gather about tables of rough stone at the only Monad tavern, consuming plates of gruel (1 C.P.) and mugs of sour beer (2 C.P.). There is no security in this district, but the Monads have little inclination to crime.

**8) Maruk District:** Hadj's Maruk population lives in dingy, ramshackle tenements in the indentured servant portion of town. The stench of sewage hangs thick in the air. A tavern caters to Maruk tastes, serving tankards of grog (4 C.P.), plates of boiled Maruk fruit (2 C.P.), and little else. Crime is rampant here, but the Guard does not interfere.

**9) The Consortium:** This vast facility houses the offices and staff of the Grandeloquence and the ten High Magistrates who serve as executive officers of the Hadjin Consortium. Through its Hajann subordinates, the Consortium runs the citystate, awarding or revoking leases, collecting fees and tariffs, and adjudicating legal matters. Permits to explore or tour the Hadjin ruins must be obtained here.

**10) The Repository:** The exterior of this massive black onyx building is studded with omnivrax and malathropes in bas-relief, who leer down at passersby. Within, Hajann servitors represent their Hadjin masters, trading foreign and domestic parcels of

land. All transactions are carefully recorded by scribes and sealed in quartz vaults beneath the building. Among the most active commodities in recent years are mines (Cymrilian glass and Arimite black iron), Zandir forestries, and farms in Cymril and Danuvia. Maruk and Aamanian properties are the least active.

**11) The High Court of Hadj:** Civil and criminal cases are tried here by Hajann servitors working for the Consortium's magistrates. Convicted felons are allotted twenty-four hours to pay fines levied against them, failing which they are sold into slavery. An adjoining fortified tower is a holding area for convicts. Farad slavers visit here daily, bidding on prisoners they wish to buy. The tower is heavily guarded.

**12) Office of the Registrar:** This institution is responsible for examining and authenticating all claims to pure Phandre ancestry. The Registrar is a Hadjin appointed by the Consortium, but the work is performed by a staff of Sindaran genealogists. The Guard provides tight security, and Hajann are prohibited from entering.

**13) Embassy Square:** Embassies from most of the major nations of Talisanta, including the Quan Empire and Aaman, are located here. A typical embassy has a staff of 20, including ambassadors, dignitaries, scribes and guards. Zandu enjoys full diplomatic and trade relations, largely because Hadj is a popular vacation place for the Zandir. The Seven Kingdoms exports a considerable quantity of goods to the citystate, but rivalry between the Cymrilians and the Hadjin and the issue of slavery prevent closer relations. The Farad representatives are valued as a conduit through which to communicate with the reclusive Rajans.

**14) The Palace of Dreams:** This fabulous structure is comprised of glittering silver turrets, green glass domes, and fluted ivory colonnades. It is the custom of the Hadjin to visit the Palace of Dreams once a week to indulge in crystal vials of Phantasian dream essence — the stuff made of dreams, distilled in liquid form. Some say that this is the closest Hadjin come to creative thought. Reserved exclusively for them, the interior is sumptuously decorated with perfumed fountains, silken divans and hanging gardens. Spiral stairways provide access to private apartments on the upper levels.

**15) Symphony Hall** Bodor orchestral and operatic troupes perform in this elegant hall. Hadjin attend performances as a matter of status-seeking, rather than from any love of music. A charity performance for Hajann and foreign mercenaries is held annually.

**16) Hadjin Gallery:** Hadjin purchase expensive paintings, sculpture and tapestries here. Their appreciation of art is limited to its monetary value. Social status is associated with owning famous and costly pieces of art.

**17) Hadjin Institute of Culture:** This exclusive school for dilettantes offers instruction in financial strategies, investment in real property, management *in absentia*, and a host of related subjects. Liberal policies allow students to attend irregularly, and to hire servitors to write papers. The only degree available is a Masters in Hadjin Arts and Philosophy. The school is restricted to Hadjin only.

**18) School of the Hajann:** This institute instructs young Hajann in the skills necessary for senior servitors. The basic curriculum includes courses in diplomacy and protocol, Hadjin history and customs, etiquette, linguistics, and "cultural appreciation" (the ability to appraise art and antiquities).

**19) Office of the City Commander:** The commander of Hadj's guard has his headquarters here. The Hadjin is assisted by a large staff of Hajann aides who carry out the actual work. (In reality, most military decisions are made by the mercenary officers, but it is impolitic to point this out.)

**20) Barracks of the Guard:** These facilities house a sizeable contingent of Danuvian, Arimite, Thrall, Dracartan and Kang mercenaries hired to protect Hadj and its interests. This complex includes stable facilities for equus cavalry and land lizard transport units.

**21) The Open Market:** This large open-air market, operated by the Kasmir under an exclusive Consortium license, offers goods imported from throughout western Talislanta — including crystals from Durne, magical wares from Cymril, and alchemical mixtures from Sindar. Djaffir caravans sometimes call here to trade as well. Catering to the Hadjin, the Kasmir import such extravagances as fire gems from the Volcanic Hills, gold funerary masks from Khazad, silken robes from Quan, blue diamonds from L'Haan, and rare hardwoods from the jungles of Chana. Both Hadjin and Hajann are eager to purchase fine wines and gourmet foods, such as Thaesian nectar, Mandalan green wine, varicolored warbler eggs, gold beetle soup and lotus pollen. Prices are exorbitant (*10x standard rates*), but quality is guaranteed. For the benefit of their customers, luxury items are engraved or stamped with an identifying emblem by the Kasmir.

**22) The Emporium:** Owned by the Consortium, this shop caters to the Hadj Ruins trade. It is the only legal supplier in the city of rope, lanterns, crowbars, metal cutters, augers, sledge hammers, saws, chests and other "tomb-robbing" equipment. Prices are *4 x standard rates*, but quality is good. Exhumed artifacts are also sold here. Hajann are sent here to purchase artifacts, particularly when a crystal sarcophagi is unearthed — the Hadjin delight in displaying these heirlooms in their homes.

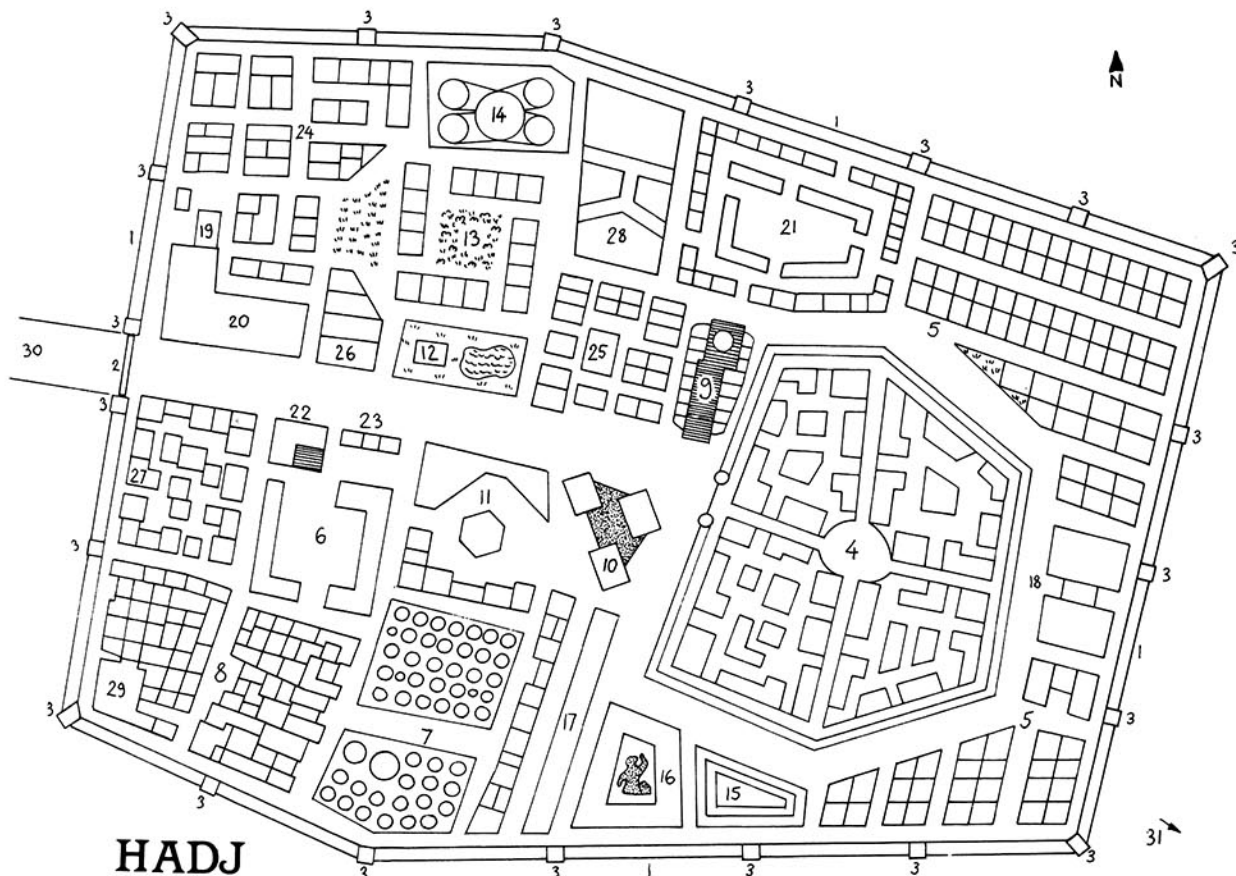
**23) Farad Slave Market:** Ostensibly a slave and concubine market, this row of stalls is actually a cover for a Farad monopolist who has paid the Consortium for the right to sell contraband goods in Hadj (technically, such a license is illegal). K'tallah, black mushroom powder, devilroot powder, draconid venom and necromantic fetishes are available for roughly *5 x standard prices*.

**24) Street of Swords:** Taverns and other establishments on this street cater to the city's diverse population of skilled foreigners, most of whom are soldiers.

**25) Yassan Guildhouse:** The city's contingent of technomancers lives here, in a large Guildhouse rented from the Consortium. The facility includes a large, spacious tavern, where entertainment is provided by Bodor musicians and Thiasian dancers. Yassan make custom tools for *2x standard prices*, but the quality more than justifies the price.

**26) The Wayfarer's Inn:** The most popular inn among foreigners, rates here are only *2x the standard rate*. The diverse menu includes Zandir rose wine, Cymrilian aquavit, Sindaran skoryx with fresh rock urchin, and Farad black wine with batranc in scarlet lotus. A full meal costs up to 20 G.L., while a room costs four. Sarista jugglers provide entertainment. A Hajann emissary remains on the premises, to aid those interested in booking a tour of the ruins, selling land, or any other business involving the Consortium.

**27) The Topaz Inn:** This dark and eerie place caters to Nagra spirit-trackers, employed by the Consortium to hunt down those who steal from the Hadjin ruins. The fare offered here is palatable only to Nagra, and includes live serpents in baskets (2 G.L.), raw winged-viper eggs (1 G.L. apiece), and kuadian, a caustic, mildly toxic liquor delicately flavored with venom from the death's head viper (1 G.L. per mug).



**28) Windship Dock:** The Consortium rents a dozen windships from Cymril, which are available to Hadjin for business or pleasure. The Four Winds Travel and Supply Company of Cymril operates the facility, offering monthly flights to Cymril (800 G.L.), Zanth (1,000 G.L.), Dracarta (600 G.L.), and the Thaesian Isles (2,000 G.L.). Phantasia windships carrying cargos of dream essence dock here as well.

**29) Hall of Dung:** Maruk process the city's waste products into fuel, which the Consortium sells. Lizard-drawn dung carts crisscross the city every evening, returning here with their loads.

**30) The Hadj Road:** An extension of the Wilderlands Road, this highway was recently improved by Yassan technomancers and teams of slaves. They raised the roadbed ten feet above the surrounding terrain, added sloping shoulders for drainage, and resurfaced the roadway with stone from the Topaz Mountains.

**31) The Hadjin Ruins:** The ruins of ancient Phandril and its necropolis lie ten miles southeast of town.

## MARUK

Architecturally, Maruk is Phaedran Revival, though it is heavily influenced by the ruins of ancient Numenia on which the city is built. Lotus columns, frescoes, tiled roofs, gables and geometric mosaics characterize the oldest surviving buildings. Third- and fourth-generation structures are of a more somber tone. Memorials to the victims of the bi-annual Curse of Maruk, the Wane, are found throughout the city.

**1) The Old Wall:** An ancient and crumbling wall rings the city. The Council refuses to repair it, reasoning that any people so foolish as to invade a cursed city are more than welcome to it.

**2) The North Gate:** Nailed over the arch of this gate is the skull of the dragoness Zandrogina, killed by the people of Maruk.

**3) The South Gate:** Over this gate's arch hangs the skull of the dragon Zandrolak, killed by Grazzini the Thrall. Some believe that the dragon's spirit still inhabits the skull, whispering devious temptations to passersby.

**4) The East Gate:** Most often used at dawn and dusk, this is the farmers' gate.

**5) The West Gate:** This small gate gets infrequent use and is normally locked.

**6) The Aqueduct:** Flowing from the Maruk Reservoir 20 miles to the north, the aqueduct provides water to the city. In the early years it separated the rich and poor sections of the city. It is lined with blue glazed tiles, making its surface slick and treacherous. In the summer the aqueduct is often dry.

**7) The Dung Warehouse:** Formerly the Palace of Maruk, this fire-gutted stone shell is now used to house ogront dung. The King of Maruk and his family live in the only wing which hasn't burned.

**8) The Marukion:** The public amphitheater of Maruk, the Marukion is presently closed for performances due to wreckage left after an unsuccessful raid by Ferran bandits in a windship.

**9) The House of Customs:** This House handles Maruk's dealings with the outside world. Foreigners entering the city are expected to register here. The clerks accept both currency and barter, and can exchange coins for Maruk barter tokens — the exchange rate depends on the clerk's perception of the wealth of the traveler. Contracts are also negotiated here for those who want to hire Maruk as indentured servants.

**10) The House of Dancers:** Also known as "the Madhouse," the House of Dancers is a white granite edifice with fluted columns, towering turrets, strange statuary and no less than five overgrown topiary gardens. The *ogront dancers* of Maruk are numbered among the Doomed by their fellow citizens, since luring ogront to their deaths by jumping off cliffs is a dangerous sport — especially considering that their only protection is a gliding cloak. The phrase "short as the life of an ogront dancer" is a common Maruk saying. Truthfully, an ogront dancer has a maximum life expectancy of about five years. They therefore wear their funerary garb constantly.

**11) The House of Disrepair:** The lawns of the House of Disrepair are piled with an unimaginable assortment of broken items awaiting repair. This is the home of the Maintainers of Maruk, skilled artisans who tend to the upkeep and repair of the city. They also trade second-hand items, recognizing that one person's discard may be another's treasure. Sindarans are frequent visitors to this House, searching through heaps of rubbish for rare artifacts or collectibles. Visitors are welcome, especially those trying to get rid of something.

**12) The House of Fate:** This mansion was built by Masir the Mercantilist, whose entire family perished in the Red Death epidemic of 503. The current residents are known as the Medicants of Maruk, and are among the most skilled healers in Talislanta. Their services are free to all citizens, but costly to others. However, the physicians never turn away a patient. As their badge of office, Medicants wear Hands of Fate — one black glove and one white glove — which are symbolic of their power to save lives or take them as necessary.

**13) The House of Flowers:** Formerly the Palace Gardens, this land and its outbuildings now shelter the horticulturalists of Maruk, who grow many beautiful and exotic varieties of plants. Their products are prized by their fellow citizens, who offer the potted plants as propitiations to vengeful spirits.

**14) The House of Fortune:** Home of the Talismancers of Maruk, this House operates as a depository for Maruk Luck Talismans. These are given to any citizen who needs one, as well as to new citizens, but strict records are kept of each talisman's whereabouts. The Talismancers who create these artifacts are loathe to sell any part of the Luck of Maruk to a foreigner, although they might if the need is just...or the payment right.

**15) The House of the Misfortunates:** Founded by a wayward pilgrim, Aabacca of Aaman, the House of Misfortunates is home to a cult whose tenets combine elements of Orthodoxy and Maruk folklore into a bizarre theological melange. Through pain, suffering, and misfortune, the Misfortunates are desperately trying to pay off the spiritual debt of Maruk and lift the Curse by taking disaster onto themselves. Usually available at their House, Misfortunates are also found throughout the Wilderlands — walking into the paths of speeding dung carts, hand-feeding hungry land lizards, telling Xambrians that the Quaran Empire wasn't all that bad, or doing other foolish or dangerous acts.

Except for splints, canes, and bandages, Misfortunates dress the same as other Maruk. The white garb of Aamanian disciples is not worn, nor do they use the depilatory of Aaman — Aabacca reasons that it is an effective preventative of head lice and other pests, and true Misfortunates endeavor to be safe from no Misfortune. Cult members also avoid Maruk luck charms, preferring instead to collect Cursed Lozenges. The only distinctive mark of a cultist is the wax tablet and stylus he carries to tally Misfortune.

The Hierophant of Aaman views Aabacca's cult as a heresy. Rather than drive her followers from the church, he would prefer that they become a properly sanctioned mission. However, such is the eloquence of Aabacca — still alive and suffering, though



blind, crippled, partially deaf and confined to a sedan chair — that the Warrior-Priests sent to Maruk by the Hierophant have converted to Misfortune. It is rumored — outside of Aaman — that the Hierophant is considering adding the visions of Aabacca to the Omnival. However, he must first arrange for her to die a suitable martyr's death.

**16) The House of Oracles:** The Seers of Maruk dwell in this well-kept mansion. To aid in their premonitions, most wear black opal jewelry or carry an opal orb. They dispense advice freely to the local citizens, but charge foreigners stiff fees or even refuse them audience. The reputation of the Oracles is such that even Kasmir moneylenders have been known to consult with them, and they are not inclined to spend money foolishly.

**17) The House of Potters:** Makers of earthenware jugs, the potters also produce tiles for roofs and mosaics, some of which are exported by the House of Customs. Clay and ores for glazes are dug in the nearby foothills. The House of Potters has collected thousands of pot shards from the Numenian ruins in this valley, and many of their designs are gleaned from ancient urns. They do not sell their antiques, despite the pestiferous inquiries of Sindaran collectors.

**18) The House of Sorrows:** The grand hotel and tavern of Maruk, the House of Sorrows is well run and the food excellent. The proprietress is Lorelarn, a Thaesian enchantress who is now a citizen of Maruk, writes tragic love poetry and murder ballads which she inflicts on any listener, along with long tales of her unhappy love life. Dinner is accompanied by poetry readings. Unlike the rest of the city, this House accepts foreign currency. Two Bodor musicians work at the hotel, playing dirges and providing morbid drinking music during the Sorrowful Hour.

**19) The House of Vines:** The winery of the citystate, the House of Vines is also sort of a cloister. Naturally born Abominations, as well as those who become grossly mutated later in life, are welcomed in by the vintners. Few of the mutated venture forth from behind the high walls, so it is unknown how many live within the former church's extensive subterranean caverns. Rumors claim that the cellars somehow connect with the Underground Highway.

**20) Weavers' Row:** Hanks of bright newly dyed yarn and the smell of bleach typify Weavers' Row, a series of interconnected shops and houses on Weavers' Way. These are the homes of the Silverthreads, the morticians and funerary shroud designers of the city. The tailors are available for custom work, and have a large supply of crystal moth sequins, gold and silver viper skins, Cymrilian glass beads, and rare Ariane laces to work with. The Silverthreads distrust foreigners, for stories have surfaced of unscrupulous or ignorant travelers who have shrouds designed, then wear them improperly in foreign lands.

**21) The Granary Tower:** This storehouse holds the grain of Maruk. Both a windmill and a watermill are available to grind flour. The Bakers Guild has its council chambers here, though the members themselves live in small bakeries throughout the city.

**22) The Park of Memories:** Filled with low pedestals and benches, this shady park is where Maruk come to offer gifts of food to the spirits of their dead relatives. Avir and small rodents grow fat on the offerings.

**23) The Grand Street Bridge:** This bridge is constantly busy with foot and cart traffic. The four cornerposts are bird-visaged demons chiseled in stone, salvaged from the Numenian ruins.

**24) The Bridge of Sorrows:** A delicate stone bridge, this lonely spot is a favorite of suicides. It is known to be haunted.

**25) Maruk Road/Grand Street:** The northern fork of the Wilderlands Road, it starts at Akmir and leads to the Serpent Pass. Within the city, the road is Maruk's main thoroughfare and is known as Grand Street.

**26) Market Street:** Running east to west, Market Street is frequented by farmers and craftsmen.

**27) Weavers Way:** Running parallel to the Aqueduct, Weavers' Way separates Weavers' Row from Manor Row.

**28) Amphitheater Circle:** This street encircles the Marukion. Due to its numerous small alcoves and statuary niches, it is a favorite trysting place for the youth of Maruk.

**29) Hexwood:** Originally a hunting preserve and arboretum, Hexwood was a wonder, a six-sided artificial parkland on the outskirts of the city. It was watered by an ingenious system of magical pumps and fountains. The royal family had their own lodge here, and numerous gazebos and pavilions were scattered throughout.

Then came the infamous Night of the Draugur, the Wane when the dead rose and devoured the nobility. In the aftermath, seers forbid further burials — they declared that corpses must be left to decay naturally above ground. The destroyed draugur and their victims were hung in the trees of Hexwood. The forest, left untended ever since, has thrived. Deadwood, hangman's tree and withergall form the greater portion, though sorcerer tree, prophet tree, and even harpwood are said to exist within its bounds. Unfortunately, ghaists, shadow wights, morde and disembodied spirits are also said to dwell here, as well as the occasional Draugur — due to a body which falls too soon into the loam. Hexwood is the only known habitat of the black opal flower.

**30) Ogront Gorge:** Thirty miles outside of the city, this small, deep canyon provides high thermals which ogront dancers glide on, using their cloaks in the manner of batranc, with the comical flapping of a rattlebird added for show. A wonder to behold, the practical result of this is the hunting of ogront. Impervious to just about every other sort of harm, an ogront is likely to be incapacitated after a fall off the three-hundred-foot cliffs of Ogront Gorge. Since the only way out of the gorge is by climbing a rope ladder (or flying), ogront that survive the fall eventually starve. After a successful hunt, the entire city joins in the butchering, and a feast — sometimes a memorial feast — is held in honor of the dancer. Orgovian traders quickly claim the ivory, taking advantage of Maruk's system of reciprocity.



# TALISLANTAN ARCANA





The supernatural abilities known among the people of the Wilderlands include: *Spells of the Maruk*, including Talismancy, the art of luck manipulation; *The Great Call*, a formidable talent of the ancient Sauruds; and rules for creating *Aberrants and Abominations*, characters afflicted by the Black Wind or born under Maruk's Curse. Lastly, a selection of new magical items is included.

## SPELLS OF THE MARUK

The Citystate of Maruk is blighted by Misfortune, much of it — according to Maruk belief — deliberately caused by cultists or foreign mages who *steal* the Luck of Maruk and keep it to themselves. The list of *Talismantic spells* which follows details this new field of magic. Traditionally, the citizens of Maruk lynch those suspected of stealing Fortune, and the Talismancers of the citystate have promised to use their spells only in beneficial ways. *Magic Resistance* is listed only for spells which can be resisted.

### Talismantic Spells

Talismancy is the art of luck manipulation. Luck comes in two polarities — *good* (Fortune) and *ill* (Misfortune). In game terms, these act as positive and negative modifiers on the *Action Table*.

These spells are often cast secretly, in a style wherein hand motions and syllables are disguised within melodramatic gestures and fanciful lamentations. A Maruk dung merchant striking a bereaved pose and proclaiming, "Alas! What terrible misfortune!" may very well be a foreign mage in disguise, casting Misfortune. This style, which limits the free use of the hands, results in a -3 penalty on the *Action Table* when casting a spell.

*Optional:* Many of the spells below affect *Action Table* results. At the Gamemaster's discretion, luck can be shifted only between *Action Rolls* which are of the same relative hazard. That is, a spellcaster cannot stay home and play copper-ante Zodar games or engage in other trivial actions until his earned Misfortune is used up, unless he used his stolen Fortune on equally trivial events.

A selection of Talismantic spells:

**THE EYE OF FORTUNA:** This spell allows the caster to see the Fortune (good or ill) of a Maruk luck talisman, as well as its strength (that is, its *Action Table* modifier). The spell must be cast once for each talisman tested, and the object must be within 10 feet and in clear view of the caster. This spell does not work on Opal Orbs.

*Magic Resistance:* -1 per strength point of the talisman

**FOOL'S FORTUNE:** Popular among some Ogront Dancers, this spell allows the caster to put off his Misfortune until a later date, rather than to discard it onto someone else (which, to a Maruk, would be evil). In game terms, the spell must be cast immediately before the mage is to make an *Action Table* roll. If the spell is successfully cast, the subject may then make several die rolls, and use only the best result on the *Action Table*. The number of extra rolls allowed equals the level of the spell. Each "extra" roll used, however, counts against the caster's future Fortune. The Gamemaster rolls a d20 before each of the caster's future *Action Table* rolls until a "20" is rolled — all of the Misfortune accumulated then applies as a penalty (-1 per extra roll used) to the current *Action Table* roll! (This explains the often spectacular deaths of Ogront Dancers.)

*Magic Resistance:* None.

**FORTUNE AND MISFORTUNE:** This spell allows the caster to throw Fortune or Misfortune from a repository opal which he carries. Black opals can store Misfortune commensurate with

their value, while white opals may store Fortune (one modifier per 10 carats). The Fortune cast on the subject applies to his next *Action Table* roll, unless the Gamemaster decides otherwise. Large opals can be deadly weapons. Range is 50 feet.

*Magic Resistance:* None. Note that casting all of the stored Luck from a gem causes it to absorb Fortune from its bearer (see "Opal Orbs" on the magical artifacts list).

**LUCK THEFT:** Using this spell, the caster steals a small amount of Fortune from a subject while also discarding Misfortune on him. In game terms, the spellcaster uses this spell just before making a roll on the *Action Table*. Both the caster and the subject then make die rolls, and the caster uses the most favorable result on the *Action Table*. The discarded roll is recorded, and becomes the subject's next *Action Table* result. The caster and subject must be in clear view of each other, and no further apart than 20 feet.

*Magic Resistance:* Roll vs WILL, to keep one's luck.

**REVERSE POLARITY:** By using this spell on a Maruk luck talisman, a mage switches the flow of Fortune — making an unlucky talisman "lucky" and the associated lucky talisman "unlucky." The caster must be in physical contact with one of the talismans involved. The reversal is permanent until counteracted by another use of this spell.

*Magic Resistance:* -3 per strength of the talisman.

### Lucky Talismans

Best known of the wares of the Maruk Talismancers are the Maruk Luck Medallions, lead lozenges stamped with the image of the silver moon, Talisandre, whose light "banishes ill Fortune." Not well known outside of Maruk is the fact that the Talismancers make other talismans as well. In fact, this is necessary due to the way Talismancy works. Every talisman must have a matching artifact of opposite Fortune. A talisman functions only so long as its corresponding talisman is in use. If one is lost or set aside, the other ceases to function magically until its mate is taken up again. If either of a set is destroyed, the magic is broken. If linked talismans are brought together, the positive one glows while the negative item darkens.

Therefore, for every lucky talisman in circulation, there must be a bad luck artifact — and, therefore, a Cursed Lozenge to match every Luck Medallion. The Talismancers keep strict records of each talisman's whereabouts, and are loathe to sell any part of the Fortune of Maruk to foreigners — though they will if the need is just or the payment high.

To create a talisman, a Talismancer must start with two newly made objects, mirror images of each other. Many forms are possible, although lozenges of lead are easy to work with. The internal forces of Fortune within the objects are then polarized: one becomes a Fortunate talisman, and the other a Misfortunate. A Talismancer may create sets of talismans with a strength equal to but not greater than half his level (round down). It requires three weeks per point of strength to create a set. The Talismancers distribute cursed talismans as far abroad as possible, while they keep the beneficial ones at home.

### Other Spells of Maruk

Many of the Houses of Maruk possess fragments from archaic tomes of sorcery. From these volumes and through their own experimentation, magic-using Maruk have created or discovered the following spells, known only to Maruk spellcasters and their students.

**CANDLEDREAM** (House of Oracles): Arrayed in his death shroud, the Oracle casting this spell must gaze into the flame of a candle for one unbroken minute. He may then step out of his body in spirit form and tread the edge of the Gray Sphere closest to the material world, taking the spirit of the candle to light his way. The material world is clear, but the caster appears as a ghost in the realm of mortals. On dark nights, it is sometimes possible to see the ghostly spark of a candelreamer's light. The Gray Sphere is hazy, but with some difficulty the spirits there may be seen and conversed with. If the flame of the spiritual or physical candle is extinguished, the caster immediately awakens in his own body. This is useful in dangerous situations, allowing a quick escape back to reality. The spell lasts for 20 minutes per level.

**Magic Resistance:** None. Individuals using this spell should be aware that the denizens of the Gray Sphere — including phasms and nightstalkers — are attracted by ghostly candlelight. Although the caster has difficulty perceiving the Gray Sphere, its inhabitants can see candelreamers very clearly...

**ELIZARA'S EXCHANGE** (Misfortunates only): The caster may transfer injuries from one person to another, or to and from himself, at a rate of 5 hit points per spell level. Once transferred, wounds heal in the usual manner. Through this spell, a healthy sorcerer can refresh a wounded comrade (taking his wounds)... and a dying mage can pass his injuries to another! Alternately, deformities and permanent injuries may be transferred. In these cases, the Gamemaster decides the spell level, but these suggestions may be helpful: minor deformities, second level; withered or weak limbs, fourth level; missing body parts, seventh level. Diseases, poisons and parasitic infestations may *not* be transferred. The existence of this spell is unsuspected outside of the cult. Maruk believe that the devout disciples of Aabacca bless victims through piety and the power of Saint Elizara, a martyr from the early days of the cult. Some even claim that a Misfortunate may restore the recently dead, at the cost of his own life.

**Magic Resistance:** Subjects may attempt to resist, if they desire, by rolling vs. WILL. Casters transferring wounds to themselves must succeed at a WILL roll (with a -1 penalty for every 5 points of damage to be received), or they must break off the spell prematurely due to the pain.

**LIFEBOND:** Under the effects of this spell, the life forces of two creatures are joined. If one is wounded, each takes half the damage (rounded up). If one dies, both die. This spell lasts 10 minutes per spell level.

**Magic Resistance:** Roll vs CON.

**LIFESWITCH:** This spell switches the life forces of two subjects, so that wounds (or healing) inflicted on one are received by the other instead. The spell lasts 5 minutes per spell level, or until the death of either party. The caster must be in physical contact with at least one of the spell's two subjects.

**Magic Resistance:** Roll vs CON. Using such a spell offensively is dangerous, since an opponent who recognizes it can kill the other party by committing suicide.

**MASCOT:** A counterspell to the Jinx aspect of the common *Hex* spell, this spell summons a positively motivated minor spiritform or quasi-elemental to aid the subject of the spell in small ways — mending broken items, averting small blows, and so forth, resulting in a +1 bonus on all die rolls. The subject finds himself the recipient of numerous beneficial coincidences and incidents of "good luck," until the spiritform is banished by a *Jinx*. If cast on an inanimate non-magical object, this spell ensures that it functions correctly when most needed. Cannot be cast on oneself.

**Magic Resistance:** None.

## THE GREAT CALL

Sauruds know no magic but revere Satha, the dragon-goddess. Their people know that dragons and lizardmen have common blood and share an affinity for each other, a memory of a time when the great Drakes ruled and the Sauruds brought them tribute. By roaring together in a ritual known as the Great Call, Sauruds can summon a Crested Dragon.

To sound the Call, a Saurud must find at least one partner, link hands, and bellow under the night sky. The Caller makes a CON Roll, at a penalty of -10. Halve the penalty if the Call takes place under a full moon, and add a +1 bonus to the roll for every 10 Sauruds present. A result of "Success Plus" brings a Crested Dragon. When the dragon arrives, he is not forced to serve the Callers. Dragons are fond of their two-legged kin, but unless the Sauruds can offer an interesting proposal or reward, the summoned creature may very well eat them.

## ABOMINATIONS AND ABERRANTS

No less awful than the disastrous Wanes of Maruk are the minor manifestations of the citystate's curse. One in every 13 babes born in the citystate is an *Abomination*, mutated to the point of being inhuman. An equal number are born *Aberrants*, suffering from birth with a minor deviation. Babes born during the Wane are invariably Abominations or Aberrants, and often go mad or further mutate during successive wanings of the Ghost Moon. In addition, one quarter of "normal" Maruk develop aberrations as they grow older.

The Medicants of Maruk strongly encourage mercy killings, made painless through an overdose of morphiis. No House gladly accepts an Abomination, with the exception of the House of Vines. The mother has the final say over the fate of her child. Certain herbal medicines and magical plants are thought to cure or alleviate physical aberrations, though more often than not they fail.

**Generating Mutants.** As an option, the player of a Maruk character may roll to discover whether his character was a known Abomination or Aberrant at birth. Rolling d20, a result of "1" indicates a Wane-born child, while results of "2" or "3" indicate a non-normal child; on a second roll, an "even" result marks an Aberrant child, while an "odd" result indicates an Abominated child.

Players or Gamemasters may roll a d6 on the following table to determine mutations. Aberrants must roll d4 times, while Abominations should make d10 + 5 rolls. With the permission of a Gamemaster, however, players may change their character's randomly selected mutations to create more balanced or playable beings. Gamemasters and players are encouraged to be inventive with mutant characters, and may devise defects other than those listed below.

*Gamemaster's Note: These rules may also be used to determine what happens to characters mutated by Aberrant Weather or magical mishaps.*

## MUTATIONS

**1) Odd Color** — Roll d6 to determine which part of the body is affected, d6 for number of colors, d6 for pattern (only if there is more than one color). Next, roll d10 and d6 to discover the unusual color and shade.

Die Roll

*Die Roll Result*  
Body Part Table A

1-2	Skin
3-4	Hair
5-6	Eyes

*Number of Colors*

1-2	Solid (one color)
3-4	Two-tone
5	Three-tone
6	Multicolored (d10 colors)

*Color Pattern*

1	Randomly mottled
2	Tabby striped/banded
3	Spots/rosettes, one color on another
4	Shading from a central color to another on the fringes
5	Divided between right and left, harlequin style
6	Complex but regular markings

*Colors*

1	Red
2	Orange
3	Yellow
4	Green
5	Blue
6	Violet
7	Black
8	White
9	Gray
10	Brown

*Shades*

1	Light
2	Medium
3	Dark
4	Metallic
5	Fluorescent
6	Luminescent

**2) Strange Body Part, Table I** — Roll d10 to determine which body part is affected, then d6 to discover what type of creature the body part looks as if it naturally belongs to. The Gamemaster is free to add to or substitute from the list of suggested creatures.

*Body Part Table B*

1	Skull
2	Eyes
3	Ears
4	Nose/Mouth
5	Neck/Voice
6	Arms
7	Hands
8	Torso
9	Feet
10	Legs

*Type of Creature*

- 1 Reptilian/Lizard (d6: Drac, Omnivrax, Ravenger, Satada, Sauran/Saurud, Zaratan)
- 2 Insect or Insectoid (d6: Chig, Crag Spider, Manrak, Raknid, Sea Scorpion, Skalanx)
- 3 Warm-Blooded Mammalian (d12: Ahazu, Exomorph, Ferran, Gnomekin, Jaka, Mogroth, Ogront, Sawila, Shathane, Sindaran, Ur, Wierdling)
- 4 Avian (d8: Azoryl, Batranc, Cave Bat, Dractyl, Gryph, Muse, Stryx, Winged Ape)
- 5 Aquatic (d4: Imrian, Echinomorph, Kra, Oceanian)
- 6 None of the Above (d6: Avatar, Demon, Green Man, Mandragore, Mang, Pseudomorph)

**3) Strange Body Part, Table II** — Roll d10 against the Body Part Table B (above) to determine the part of the body, then roll d10 and consult the Change Table below.

*Change Table*

- 1-2 Body part is missing
- 3-4 Body part is duplicated (d4: once, twice, three times, or d6 times)
- 5-6 In place of this body part, the mutant has gained a unique structure or organ (d6: tail, set of wings, set of horns/antlers, poison sacs, or retractable stinger)
- 7-8 Enlarged body part (roll d6 x 10 to determine the percentage increase in size).
- 9-10 Reduced body part (roll d6 x 10 to determine the percentage decrease in size).

**4) Difference in Scale** — Roll d6 to determine whether the stature (height and width) and weight of the character are larger (even result) or smaller (odd result). The amount of change equals d20 inches and d20 x 3 pounds.

**5) Change in Basic Statistics** — Roll d8 to determine the number of changes, then roll d20 once for each on the table below to learn the modifier to the original score:

1	STR	+1	11	STR	-1
2	DEX	+1	12	DEX	-1
3	CON	+1	13	CON	-1
4	SPD	+1	14	SPD	-1
5	INT	+1	15	INT	-1
6	WILL	+1	16	WILL	-1
7	PER	+1	17	PER	-1
8	CHA	+1	18	CHA	-1
9	CHA	-5	19	Roll again, and triple the result	
10	STR	+3	20	Roll twice more, and double the result	

**6) Special Ability/Disability Gained** — Roll d20 and consult the table below:

- 1 Beguile by Scent (as per Batrean Concubines, vs. opposite sex of original race only)
- 2 Contagious Diseases (as per Ferran)
- 3 Sound-Sight (as per Bodor, able to "see" music, but cannot speak Bodorian)
- 4 Speak in Tongues (as per Callidian)
- 5 Ferran Stench
- 6 Infertile
- 7 Blind
- 8 Influence Plants (as per Green Man)
- 9 Sixth Sense (as per Jaka)
- 10 Telepathy (as per Muse)
- 11 Immunity to Cold (as per Mirin)
- 12 Neuter (no gender)
- 13 Deaf



- 14 Eyes Function Equally Well, Day or Night (as per Parthenian)
- 15 Detect Magic by Sight (as per Phantasia, 5' range, full concentration required)
- 16 Cold-Blooded Biology (as per Saurud)
- 17 Immunity to Fear (as per Thrall)
- 18 Evil Eye (ability to cast the *Jinx* aspect of the common *Hex* spell at will, by glaring maliciously at an object or subject)
- 19 Luck Star (birthmark which attracts Fortune, applying -1 *Action Table* penalties to all others within transferring an equal bonus to the birthmarked character)
- 20 Select anything from this table

## NEW ENCHANTED ITEMS

**BLACK LIGHTNING BRANDY.** An alcoholic distillate of ruby wine, Black Lightning Brandy possesses a magical charge that is usually harmless. However, large or repeated doses have a random magical effect similar to being brushed by a Black Wind (random mutations, changes in skin color, growth or reduction, unnatural aging, and so forth). When placed in bottles made from amberglass gourds, the brandy intensifies its bizarre charge — dark energies arc inside of the crystal decanter. An export item, the brandy is unpopular in Maruk where it is made. (1 G.L. per glass; 10 G.L. per decanter)

**COSTUMES OF WEAVERS' ROW.** These colorful costumes, an integral part of Moribund Week and the Eve of Destruction in Maruk, are often more than they seem. Due to the magical silver stitches of the Silverthreads, many are inhabited by the spirits of the dead. Some noted examples:

*The Costumes of the K'tallah Addicts.* Commemorating the Wane of 533, these funerary clothes are surmounted by a crown of silkcloth k'tallah leaves — tendrils snake from the ears, eyes and mouth. Characters possessed by the K'Tallah Addicts of 533 often give accurate, though rambling, prophecies.

*The Mad Wizard Costumes.* Circa 493, these are some of the oldest, most powerful, and sought after costumes. Costumed characters cast random and unpredictable spells, usually at the least expected moment. Some Mad Wizard spirits are helpful or just mischievous, but most are crazy.

*The Necromantic King of Quaran.* It is rumored that, somewhere on Weavers' Row, there once was a costume inhabited by the reincarnated soul of one of the Necromancer Kings of ancient Quaran, bound into the fabric by the magic stitches of the Silverthreads. Most dismiss this notion as nonsense.

Those wearing haunted costumes must make a WILL roll every hour, to avoid falling under the control of the spirit inhabiting the costume. Costumes containing spirits of great power and malice are kept in carefully locked deadwood chests and are never worn (except by mistake). Collectors of necromantic curios are fascinated by these relics. (1,000-5,000 G.L.; Maruk consider the costumes to be heirlooms and property of their citystate)

**CURSED LOZENGES.** Stamped with the image of the moon Zar, these medallions are otherwise identical to the Maruk Luck Medallions described in the *Sorcerer's Guide*. Cursed Lozenges are commonly slipped into carts of ogront dung bound for foreign climes, or sold as Luck Medallions by "unscrupulous" dealers in foreign cities. Each bears Misfortune, forcing a -1 penalty on all die rolls for their wearer. (200 G.L.; often given away by Maruk citizens)

**MARUK LUCK TALISMANS.** These talismans may take almost any form — commonly that of a small amulet or ornament, though swords, cloaks, wands and other special-purpose items

may possess Talismanic magics. Each has a strength (a die roll modifier) which applies to all *Action Table* rolls made by its wearer. Whether the modifier is positive or negative depends on the polarity of the artifact — Fortune (+) or Misfortune (-). All items with a strength greater than one must contain an opal — white for Fortune, and black for Misfortune. A talisman may cease to function or may function intermittently, depending on the fate of its matched talisman. There is no limit to the number of talismans which may be worn, but only those with the highest positive and negative modifiers function. (200 G.L. per -1 modifier; 600 G.L. per +1 modifier)

**OPAL ORBS.** Talismancers carve these orbs of black or white opal. When properly enchanted, they serve as repositories of luck — Fortune (white) or Misfortune (black) — which can be cast on others through the use of the *Spell of Fortune and Misfortune*. When an opal's charge is used up, it turns gray and feeds on the luck of its bearer until charged to its maximum strength. The gem takes one day per strength point to recharge, and applies a five-point modifier to all *Action Table* rolls of the bearer until fully charged. An "empty" black opal brings good Fortune (the modifier is a bonus), while an "empty" white opal causes ill fortune (a negative modifier).

**PLAGUELAND CRYSTAL.** The crystalline sands of the Plaguelands are prized catalysts among alchemists, since the substance provides a +2 bonus to alchemical skill rolls when mixed into a formulation. Direct contact with the crystals, however, may cause mutations (resist vs CON per round of contact). The crystals must be contained in amberglass vials or they lose their potency. (500 lumens per dram)

**RYKGRA ARTIFACTS.** Artifacts recovered from the Lost City of the Rykgra are fashioned from unidentifiable white stone. Scholars theorize that the lost race was advanced in either alchemy or transmutation. The purpose of the artifacts is hard to determine. Price reflects their rarity, rather than any intrinsic value. A few of the more common types are:

*Dark-to-Light Disk.* These two-inch-diameter, half-inch-thick disks are smooth and warm to the touch. They change from black to white and back again in a repeating cycle that takes a day to complete. (750 G.L.)

*The Empty Mirror.* These objects are long slender handles ending in a large, hollow circle. Seven indentations on the handle resemble finger grips. The objects are smooth and rounded, without seams or indentations to indicate a missing piece. Scholars speculate that they were frames for hand mirrors, possibly enchanted. (2,500 G.L.)

*The Peaceful Fork.* These large "forks" have three tines, each ending in a round sphere. The spheres on the tines make the devices useless for spearing or holding things. (900 G.L.)

*The White Box.* These small boxes fit comfortably in the palm of a hand. When opened at night, the inside of the box is the color of the primary moon in the sky. (1,500 G.L.)

**SABERS OF AZORIAH.** A few Danuvian smiths are capable of forging these masterpiece sabers, imbued with magic. The weapons heal their wielder as it wounds others, curing 1 point of damage for every 3 hit points inflicted on an enemy. The healing cannot restore more hit points than the bearer would normally have. The enchantment functions only for females, and only if the weapon is used in life-threatening combat against mortal beings. The saber punishes male users, acting as a *Hexed* artifact (-1 to all *Action Table* die rolls). Danuvians seldom sell these sabers for any price. (1,200 G.L.)

**SHARNA ARTIFACTS.** Artifacts recovered from the labyrinths remain a puzzle for scholars. Many have no known function. All radiate magic. Price reflects their rarity, rather than intrinsic value. Some known types are:

**Bowl of the Hole.** Misshapen ceramic bowls, each with a large, saw-toothed hole in the bottom. The inside is a violent shade of purple, while the outside is colored light green, orange, blue, and yellow, stitched with a wild spiral dye pattern. (300 G.L.)

**Equs Chest.** The top of these large wooden chests are each decorated with a carving of a three-legged equs. Scholars have identified the beast as an extinct variety of greymane. The inside of the chests are featureless. (2,300 G.L.)

**Flute of Sharna.** These two-foot-long wooden flutes have two rows of holes along their length. While they appear to be musical instruments, all combinations of fingerings produce only shrill and discordant sounds. (1,200 G.L.)

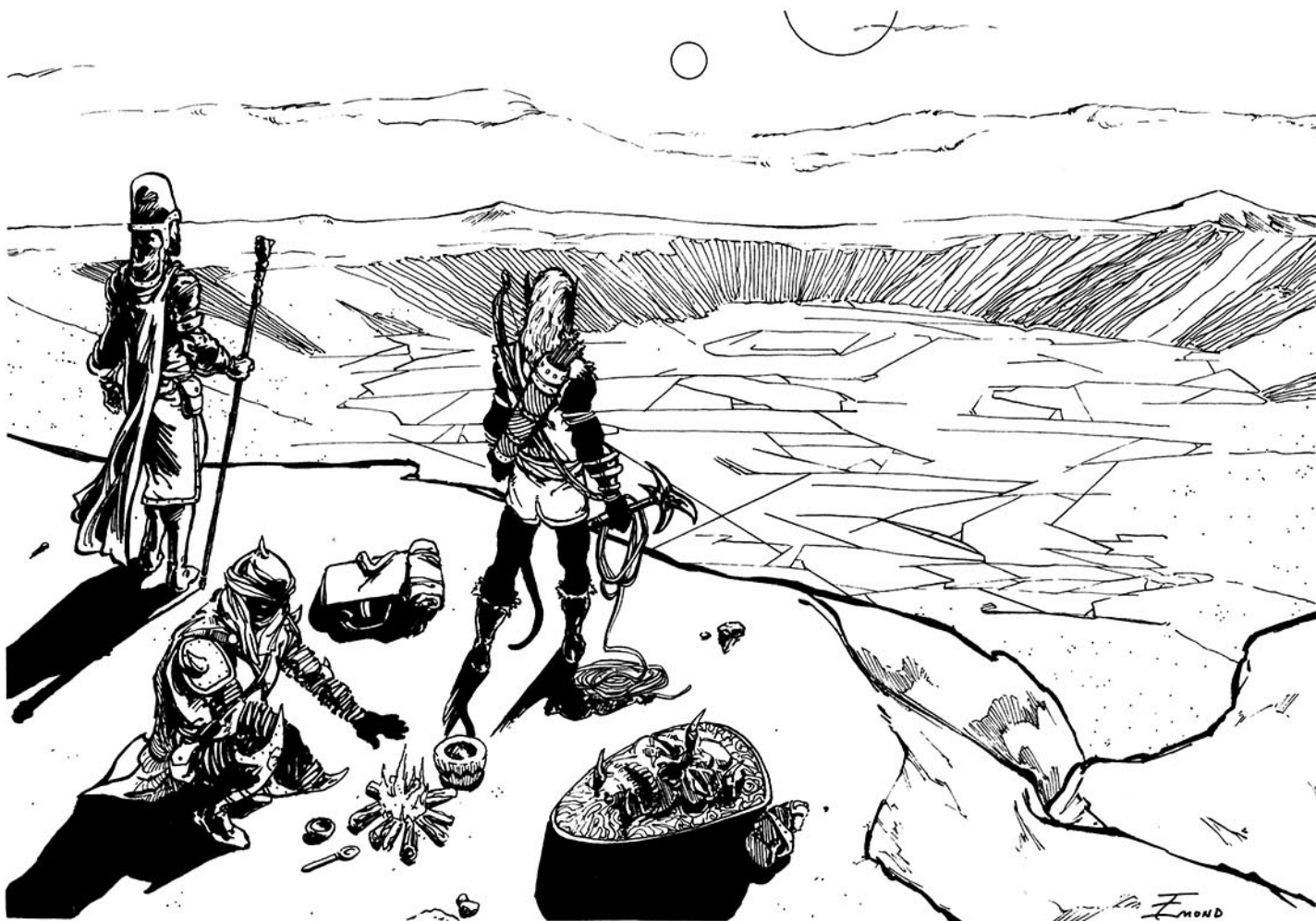
**Lizard Dagger.** These daggers have six-inch wavy blades of red iron. The hilts are carved from ogront ivory in the shape of a drac, with unusually large eyes and a tongue protruding from its open mouth. (1,500 G.L.)

**Pendant of the Eye.** These ceramic pendants, pierced by a hole which seems intended for a leather thong, feature two painted eyes. One is brown, and one is green. The pupils are decidedly crossed. (950 G.L.)

**Pyramid Box of Sharna.** These small wooden boxes have four triangular sides, and open by unfolding along copper hinges into flat, three-pointed stars. The outsides of the boxes are unpainted wood, stained with age, but the insides are decorated with pale green and bright orange stripes. (850 G.L.)

**SILVER SERPENT.** Each of Maruk's Medicants carries a Silver Serpent, one of the symbols of their office. Created by the Talismancers of Maruk, these unusual creations are formed from the carefully removed skin, fangs, and skeleton of the miniature Maruk Climbing Viper. The Talismancers stuff the metallic skin with erd wool, and mechanically connect the fangs to an amber-glass ampule. The Medicants use the enchanted serpent to inject medicinal mixtures, changing ampules as necessary. (750 G.L.; not normally for sale)

**WITCH'S HAND CHARMS.** Maruk Talismancers also make Witch's Hands, silver "pointing hand" pendants on swiveled bobs. When someone casts any kind of Fortune, good or bad, on the wearer of this artifact, the wearer must make a WILL roll to resist the magic (using the spell level of the charm as an *Action Table* modifier). If the resistance is successful, the charm diverts the magic to a random subject, who must be in view and within 10 feet of the artifact. (If further rules are desired, refer to *Korak's Counterstroke* in the *SORCERER'S GUIDE*.) These charms are popular among the Maruk, and Misfortune thrown in a busy Maruk street may ricochet like a Castabulanese gaming ball, coming to rest eventually on an unprotected Maruk or foreigner. (2,000 G.L.; not ordinarily for sale)



# THE NATURALIST'S COMPENDIUM

The following section details new varieties of life native to the Wilderlands of Zaran. Included are several types of flora from the Aberrant Forest — much of which is intelligent, many of which are ambulatory, and all of which are dangerous. The basic format for statistics is:

**SIZE:** Typical height/length and weight, usually expressed 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 level 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.

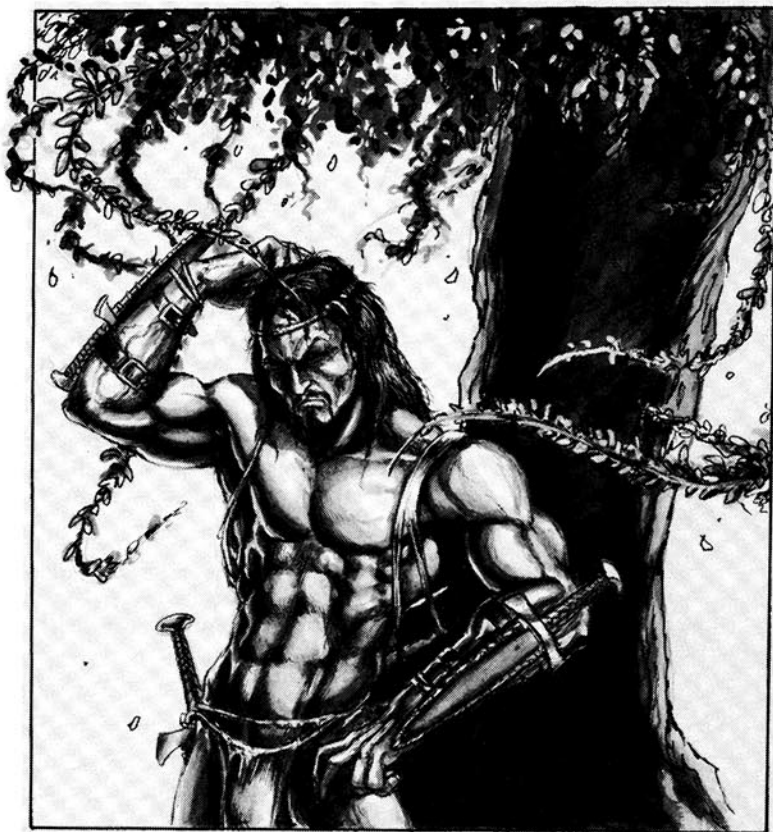
**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Extraordinary talents or powers.

**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.



## AMNESALIA TREE

The Amnesia is very beautiful, a tall growth with long, graceful branches. This beauty is a facade which covers a dangerous threat. The tree "calls" sentient creatures to it by means of telepathy, then drains memories from its victims.

Little else is known about the Amnesia. All indications are that it grows and develops as any other tree. What is the purpose of the memory drain, and the accumulated stolen memories harbored within the tree? Green Ardua horticulturists speculate that the plant long ago escaped from a sorcerer's garden, but in the wild it continues to follow the pattern for which it was designed.

### AMNESALIA TREE

**SIZE:** 60' Maximum.

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** All are negligible

**LEVEL:** 1-3

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** None

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Call sentient creatures, drain memories (see "Comments," below)

**ARMOR:** None

**HIT POINTS:** 35-45

**HABITAT:** Aberrant Forest, lower slopes of the Zaran and Maruk mountain ranges (uncommon)

**COMMENTS:** The Amnesia's call has a 100 foot radius, and is resisted with a successful WILL Roll. Victims find themselves stumbling toward the tree, unable to control their limbs or slow their progress.

Memory drain has a 10-foot range, and takes d10 minutes to complete. It is resisted by another WILL Roll:

"*Success Plus*" means that the tree gains no memories from its victim.

"*Success*" indicates that the tree gains recent memories, but the victim forgets nothing and is not harmed.

"*Failure*" means that the tree gains all of a victim's memories. The victim loses all memory of events within the last (d20 - WILL) months, and is disoriented for d20 hours.

"*Mishap*" means that all of the victim's memories are permanently transferred to the plant. The victim retains only his native language, original skills, pre-adulthood memories, and is disoriented for d20 days.



## BOMBARDIER TREE

The Bombardier is another predatory tree which relies on the decomposition of nutrient-rich animal bodies. It flings six-inch "bombs" in order to secure its victims, reacting to motion on the ground beneath it. There may be a maximum of 40 "bombs" on any Bombardier, d10 of which may be hurled in any round.

These trees are easy to detect by those familiar with them, for there are noticeably fewer plants growing within 40 feet of them. However, Bombardiers are not always dangerous — they do not always need nutrients, and they do not always have bombs.

### BOMBARDIER TREE

**SIZE:** 30' Maximum.

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** All are negligible

**LEVEL:** 1-4

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** "Bombs" — d4 damage per bomb, d10 bombs per level available during any given encounter

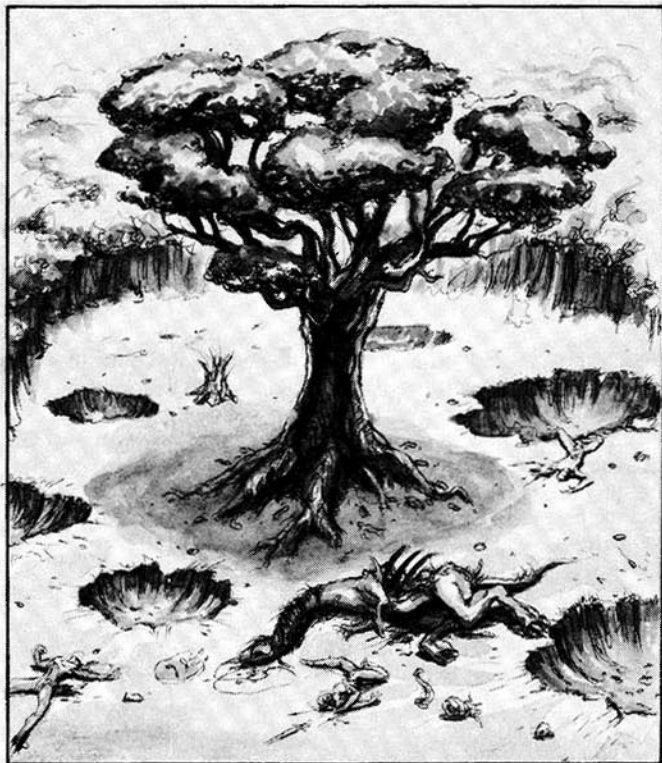
**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Sense motion (40 foot range, creatures of 100 lbs or larger; ground motion only)

**ARMOR:** Bark, as per leather armor

**HIT POINTS:** 15-20

**HABITAT:** Aberrant Forest, other forests (rare)

**COMMENTS:** The bombs explode on contact with their target or the ground, hurling fragments everywhere. Even a miss causes 1 point of damage to everyone within 5 feet of the intended target.



## CLIMBING VIPER

Climbing Vipers are a family of poisonous serpents limited almost exclusively to the Wilderlands region. While there are several varieties, all have one common characteristic: the ability to scale near vertical slopes and trees with ease.

Climbing Vipers are common on the scrub plains. Their scales are simple oxides of bronze and copper. When carefully removed, the skins yield a watertight sock of scaled bronze mesh. These are used by the Danelek as ingenious cooking implements. Grain, water, herbs, vegetables, and bits of dried meat fill the skin, secured with metal pins made from the viper's fangs, and the stuffed skin is allowed to simmer in the embers of a campfire overnight. Among the Danelek the snake meat is considered a delicacy, and the venom is a trade commodity.

In the Banditlands there is a giant species, the scales having an unusual lacquered appearance — white, flecked with blue to blend with the blue-and-white porphyry of the Zaran Mountains. These Great Viper skins are highly valued by the Quan, who consider belts made of it to be the height of fashion.

### CLIMBING VIPER

**SIZE:** 4-8", 2-16+ lbs. (10-18", 200-1,400 lbs. for Great Viper)

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR -1 (STR +6 for Great Viper), DEX +5, SPD +3

**LEVEL:** 1-5 (3-6 for Great Viper)

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Bite — d4 (plus 1 point poison damage per round for ten rounds; 20 rounds for Great Viper), Constriction — d12 x 2 (Great Viper only)

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Climb sheer surfaces, metallic scales, poison bite (see "Comments,"), sense heat (can detect a man 50' away)

**ARMOR:** Scales as per chain mail

**HIT POINTS:** 5-10 (15-25 for Great Viper)

**HABITAT:** Mountains (especially the Maruk range), scrub plains and wastes (Great Vipers are found mainly in the Zaran Mountains).

**COMMENTS:** The venom of the vipers is resisted by a successful CON Roll. A Climbing Viper has only enough venom to bite 3 times per day, and cannot inject venom on consecutive rounds.



## CIBANT

These tall, stick-like insects are native to the Aberrant Forest and certain other woodlands. Normally placid creatures, they spend most of their time grazing on the nectar of wild blossoms and polyp plants. The Verdir of Empyrian attempt to utilize Cibants as steeds, generally with mixed results.

Cibants have narrow, segmented bodies supported by three pairs of six-foot-long, stilt-like legs. A pair of feathery antennae extends from the creature's small head. Large, compound eyes are set on each side of the skull. The Cibant's tapering jaw conceals a long pink tongue which is used to draw nectar into its mouth.

The four-foot-long cocoons of these creatures are worth 50 G.L. or more in Vardune and the Quan Empire, where Cibants have other uses. The imperials use them to cultivate rainbow lotus and other exotic blossoms, while Green Ardua horticulturists find Cibants most useful pollinating their fields.

### CIBANT

**SIZE:** 8' long, 6' at shoulder; 200+ lbs.

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR +1, DEX +2, SPD +6, INT -10, PER +6

**LEVEL:** 1-2

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Kick — d4

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Cibant rage (see "Comments," below), walk on water

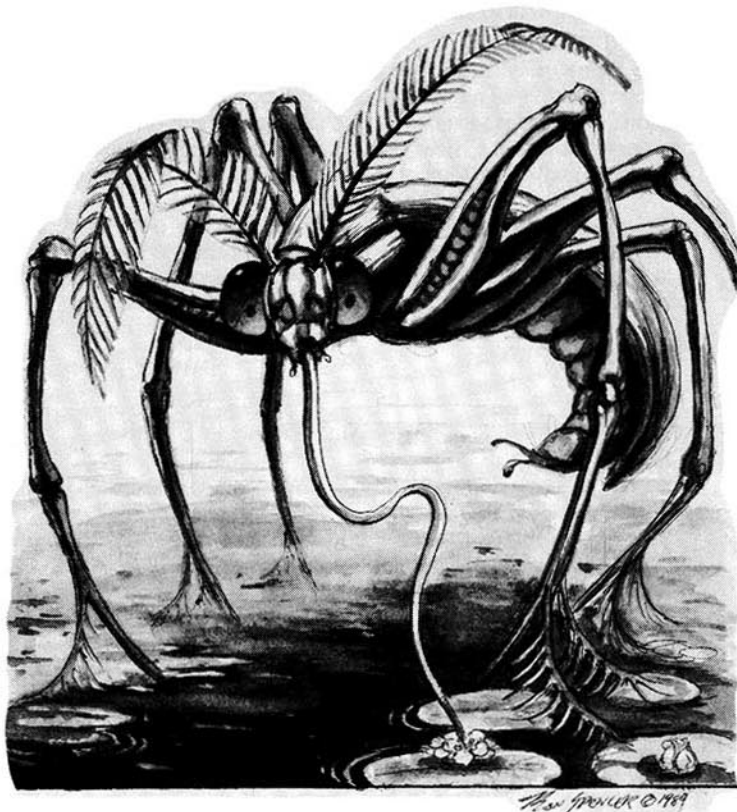
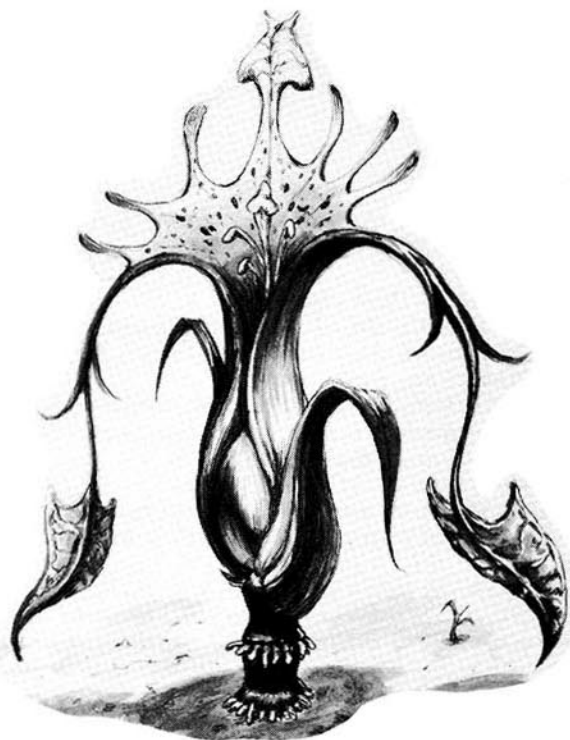
**ARMOR:** None

**HIT POINTS:** 8-12

**HABITAT:** Aberrant Forest, Sylvanus (rare), Quan Empire and Vardune (domesticated, uncommon)

**COMMENTS:** Though large, their slight limbs and expandable foot membranes make it possible for Cibants to actually walk across water much as a water-bug does. The surface must be calm, and the creatures cannot carry more than double their own weight. The animals developed this ability in order to feed on water lilies and to avoid land predators.

One other peculiarity of the creature should be noted — it is wise not to bother them when they are sleeping. A disturbed Cibant inflates to twice its normal size, turns bright red, and becomes violent. For d6 minutes, the frenzied creature thrashes wildly about with legs, tongue and body — doing d10 x 2 damage per round to any creature within 2 yards.



## MONARCH PLANT

The Monarch plant is carnivorous, feeding itself through an orifice on the top of a flexible stalk. Relatively small above the ground, the plant has a large and active root network below the surface.

The vegetation is named for its despotic rule over other plant life. A Monarch attaches its roots to the roots of its victims, taking complete control of the other plants. It then forces its plant slaves to obtain food for the Monarch and to defend it.

Violet creepers and thornwood are common servants of Monarchs. Amnesalias are often targets of Monarch takeover, since this gives the slaving plant access to the tree's collection of stored memories. Monarchs may even take control of other Monarchs, winning direct control over all of the plants the defeated plant once ruled.

### MONARCH PLANT

**SIZE:** 4'

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** INT +7

**LEVEL:** 3-5

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** None

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Take control of other plants (see "Comments," below)

**ARMOR:** None

**HIT POINTS:** 8-10

**HABITAT:** Aberrant Forest

**COMMENTS:** It takes d4 hours to take control of a plant, but this isn't a problem — few plants have the capacity to resist a takeover. A mobile plant must be kept motionless during the process. A slave plant which was formerly ambulatory retains its mobility, but has a defined radius of movement limited to the length of the connecting roots. Monarchs may control plants as far away as 40 feet x the plant's level. The number of plants which a Monarch may control is equal to twice its level.

## SPIMINIAN

Spiminians are small man-like mammals which dwell in some regions of the Aberrant Forest. They are covered with small circular patches of thick, blue-black hair, between which their dull golden skin gleams. Spiminian skulls are completely bald, as are their hands and feet.

The primates are adept at avoiding the dangers of their forests. They have a primitive family-based social structure, and a language which consists entirely of chirps and growls. Spiminians are tool-users, and often employ wooden clubs as weapons. They fashion musical instruments from animal bladders and hollowed sticks, which produce mournful sounds sometimes mistaken by travelers for the groans of disembodied spirits.

These intelligent beings are sometimes captured and trained for use in acrobatic shows and as thieves. The Farad are particularly eager to purchase Spiminians, for sale to the troubadour companies of the Quan Empire.

### SPIMINIAN

**SIZE:** 2-3', 25-40 lbs.

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR -5, DEX +6, SPD +3, INT +1, PER +5

**LEVEL:** 1-6

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Claws — 1-2, Club — 1-3

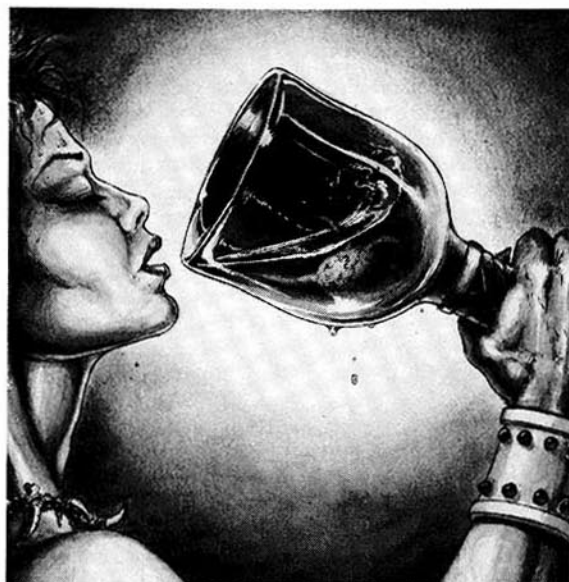
**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**ARMOR:** None

**HIT POINTS:** 6-18

**HABITAT:** Aberrant Forest, Topaz Mountains (rare)

**COMMENTS:** Spiminians often attempt to use weapons stolen from adventurers, but suffer the usual penalties when trying to hit with oversized weapons.



## RAYLOK

Nearly transparent, this gelatinous parasite ends up in a victim's stomach after being mistakenly swallowed from a freshwater source. Victims feel a slimy glob roll down their throats. Vomiting is no solution — though some of the glob may be brought back up, the majority of the Raylok chemically bonds to the flesh of the stomach and esophagus and cannot be expelled. The Raylok digests whatever its victim takes in, leaving just enough to allow the host creature to remain active. The victim suffers greatly from pain, cramps, and lack of nutrients.

Every d3 weeks, the Raylok buds, releasing d4 microscopic young. They are excreted through the host's intestinal tract, soak into the soil, enter the ground water, and eventually make their way to bodies of fresh water.

There are two known ways to successfully rid a victim of a Raylok. The first is to starve the parasite. This is hard on the victim, as a starving Raylok begins to digest the lining of the victim's stomach, incapacitating the victim with pain (causing d4 damage per day). Continuing the fast requires a successful WILL Roll, made daily. If the victim fasts for d6 consecutive days, the parasite dies.

The other method is more direct. The host must swallow a cup of diluted alchahest (1/16th of an alchahest vial, mixed with pure water). The powerful acid does d8 damage to the victim, but has a 20% chance of killing the Raylok. A double dose does twice the damage to the victim, but has a 50% chance of killing the parasite.

### RAYLOK

**SIZE:** 1' diameter, when full grown

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** SPD -9 (land) / +3 (water), INT -4

**LEVEL:** 1-2

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** None

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Steal nourishment from its host (see "Comments" below)

**ARMOR:** None

**HIT POINTS:** 1

**HABITAT:** Pools, springs and other sources of fresh, tranquil water

**COMMENTS:** Victims lose 1 point of STR and CON per week, dying if their effective STR reaches -10. These losses can be regained naturally, at the same rate, only if the parasite has been flushed from the body.



## VIRAGO

Danuvia's warriors name themselves after a quadrupedal predator which lives in the gorge of the Dead River. Wild Viragos form small packs in which female hunters dominate weak, indolent males. The carnivores are slim and feline, with truncated muzzles and three wicked talons on each foot. Viragos have stiff, ruddy fur, almost like wire, which can be ruffled out in hot weather or pulled into a tight skein to ward off harsh storms.

In the wild, these creatures hunt prey of all sorts, including travelers. Danuvian batallias keep tame Viragos as mascots, and the animals fight in battle alongside their mistresses. Danuvian males paint the quill-like fur, creating intricate military patterns.

### VIRAGO

**SIZE:** 5'-7', 200-300 lbs

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR +4, DEX +4, SPD +2, PER +3

**LEVEL:** 1-5

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Bite — d12, Claws (2) — d6 each

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Immune to ghost and black winds, fur repels acid rain and icicle rain

**ARMOR:** As per chain mail

**HIT POINTS:** 25-35

**HABITAT:** Hot wastelands, particularly around the Dead River canyon

**COMMENTS:** A cloak made from Virago fur protects the wearer from acid rain and icicle rain, and halves damage from all other acids.



## VOHL

These hard-shelled omnivores have adapted to the harsh climate of the Rykgra salt flats. They hibernate below the surface of the dry lake in the dry season, burrowing pits that undermine the packed surface of the flats. When a creature of any substantial weight walks upon the weakened surface, the salt crust cracks open, dropping the victim into the Vohl's lair. The omnivores easily wake from their hibernation to devour their victims.

In spring, Vohls inhabit the shallow Rykgra salt sea, where they come to mate, and to lay thousands of eggs.

### VOHL

**SIZE:** 6-10'

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR +5, SPD +1 (land) / +6 (water)

**LEVEL:** 5-8

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Pincers (2) — d12 each

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**ARMOR:** Shell is equivalent to plate, tentacles as per chain mail

**HIT POINTS:** 50-80

**HABITAT:** Rykgra salt flats

**COMMENTS:** A hibernating Vohl cannot attack until it awakens, which requires a successful PER Roll.

# WEAPONRY AND EQUIPMENT

These new weapons, devices, and other items of equipment are available in the Wilderlands of Zaran. Many are not ordinarily sold by their creators, but must be purchased from bandits and similar middlemen. (Statistics for the Gamemaster, where needed, are given in the "Gamemaster's Section.")

## BLACK OPAL FLOWER (Maruk)

Native to Hexwood in Maruk, the black opal flower is considered a dire omen if discovered outside the funerary grounds. One flower signifies danger, two disaster, and three almost certain death. The Maruk believe these flowers to be warnings from the spirits of their ancestors. (Not sold.)

## DANELEK TOTEM MINIATURE

Each clan of the Danelek has a unique *totem* or animal mascot, chosen to reflect its history or way of life. Each adult carries a carved miniature of the totem into battle. The image is also branded on animals, and carved into goods and belongings. While the Danelek revere the good qualities of their totemic creature, they claim no special relationship with it and do not worship it. Equis clans select predator totems, such as batranc and malathrope. Lizard clans prefer reptiles, while the salt clans identify with ogronts, lopers and other large herbivores. (1-10 G.L., depending on scarcity of the type.)

## DEATHSTROKE CATAPULT (Danuvia)

These monster weapons were designed by Yassan technomancers expressly for Danuvia. A pair of catapult arms fire in unison, launching two 100-pound black-iron spheres connected by an immense chain. The projectiles tend to roll along the ground after they hit, mowing down men and animals with their connecting chain. The swordswomen boast that the recoil would topple an ordinary tower. The citystate mounts them on solid stone pillars. (650 G.L., custom-made only.)

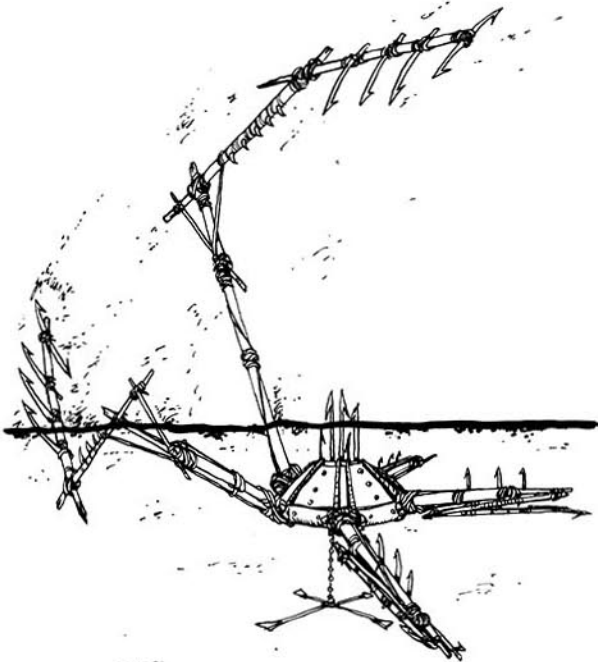
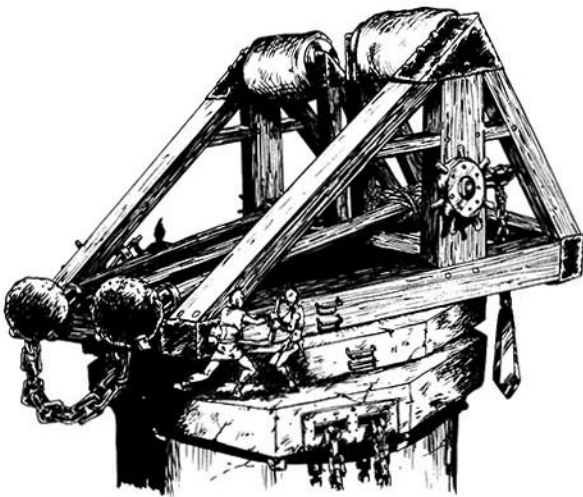
## DRAGON TRAP (Araq)

The Araq catch large prey in these exceptionally large and barbaric devices. The trap is buried in the ground, with only the central hooks projecting above ground. To catch duadir, the Araq use man-flesh as the lure. Exceptionally fiendish Araq have been known to bind prisoners within the traps, hoping to lure would-be rescuers within.

When the bait is disturbed, the trap's arms spring from the ground, rotate their spines inward, and clamp down on the victim at high speed. There may be 2-8 trap arms. The victim must succeed at a DEX Roll versus each arm, or take d6 damage from the impact and be pinned by that arm. Dragon traps are designed to cause pain — necessary for training duadir, according to the Araq — but seldom cause permanent injury. Retracting each trap arm requires a successful STR Roll, and cannot be made by anyone caught within the trap. Until all of the arms are retracted, victims cannot get free. (200 G.L., rare.)

## GARNELLES (Maruk)

Created by Viridia's protege Naranella, garnelles are crystalline fruit, their clear crystal skins filled with sweet red juice and crystal seeds. When the fruit is ripe and the crystal fully hardened, sunlight ferments the juice, causing the fruit to explode along a hexagonal fracture pattern and scatter the seeds. Garnelles fresh from the vine are a rare treat, but are too fragile to make a good market crop. The juice is collected and fermented by Maruk vintners to make ruby wine. The juice is also a favorite of crystal moths, who suck the





grapes dry, leaving hollow crystal shells on the vine. (1 C.P. for a dozen; ruby wine sells for 5 C.P. per glass, 5 S.P. per bottle.)

#### GLIDING CLOAK (Maruk)

These cloaks of finely stretched batranc skin — used by the ogront dancers of Maruk — are sewn with the quill-feathers of the rattlebird to give each a unique pattern. The dancers' arms take the place of two bones removed from the batranc skin, slipping into slots specially cut and cured in the membrane. Characters with the Acrobatics (cloak-gliding) skill, taught only in Maruk, can use these cloaks to glide on strong winds. (25 G.L.)

#### KHARAKHAN ARMOR (Kharakhan Giants)

In battle, a Kharakhan Giant wears the traditional armor of his race: ogriphant hide shirt and pants, armored vest and helmet. The vest is made of ogriphant hide, with small rectangular plates of beaten black iron stitched to it. The huge helmet is fashioned of hand-hammered plates of black iron, crudely riveted together. (200+ G.L. for hide clothing; 700+ G.L. for vest; 450+ G.L. for helmet.)

#### MARUK BARTER TOKEN

These 5-inch brown ceramic disks, punched in the center with three holes for carrying convenience, are used as part of the reciprocity culture of Maruk. When a citizen of this citystate is given something of value, custom calls him to gift something of equal value to the donor. By giving one or more barter tokens, the recipient of a gift pledges to later redeem the token by giving a real gift. Foreigners with coins — valueless in Maruk — may exchange their money for special green Barter Tokens at the House of Customs. Any citizen may bring a green token to the customs house for redemption. (Brown tokens are worth 2 G.L.; green tokens are worth 3-8 G.L., depending on the apparent wealth and stinginess of the user.)

#### MARUK DEATH SHROUD

When one is dead, say the Maruk, there is no more need for mourning. Death shrouds are the exact opposite of everyday wear. Beautifully patterned Maruk woolens, rich velvets, appliques of silver viper skin, and scraps of costly gossamer and silkcloth are sewn together by the Silverthreads into gorgeous costumes, embroidered with opals and crystal-moth sequins. A funerary sash or scarf is often given to a close friend with the note, "For you to wear when you die." Only those marked as Doomed by the House of Oracles — primarily the ogront dancers — and the dead may wear these shrouds, except during Moribund Week and on the Eve of Destruction. Maruk spend much of their spare time dreaming about their death shrouds. (10-100 G.L.)

#### MARUK MOURNING CLOTHES

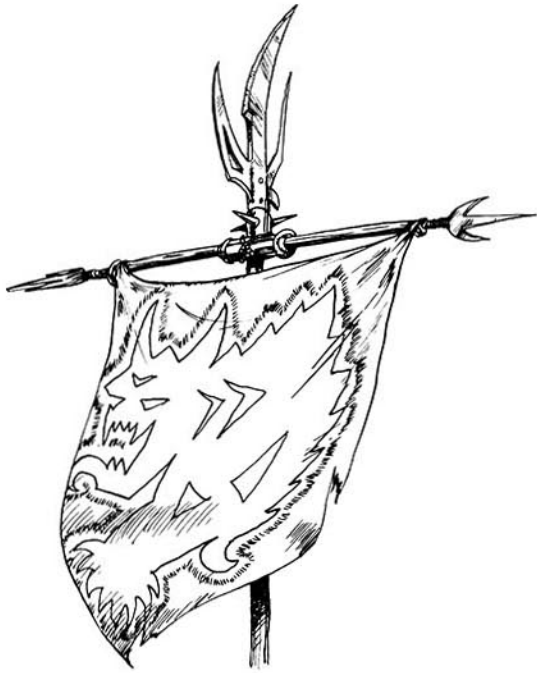
Gray wool mourning clothes are the standard garb of Maruk. The roughspun grey is symbolic of the Gray Sphere, where the Maruk believe their dead now dwell. Wearing gray is therefore a sign of respect for one's ancestors. (2 S.P.)

#### ORACLE MASK (Maruk)

The Oracles of Maruk wear these enigmatic half masks, symbolic of their belief that "only half of anything is perceived." Each ceramic mask has a unique black-and-white pattern. (1 G.L.; more to collectors.)







#### **TOTEMIC SPEAR (Danelek)**

The Naz, chief of a Danelek clan, rules by virtue of a Totemic Spear — a great shaft to which a banner marked with the clan's totem is attached. The Totemic Spear is carried into battle by the clan's greatest warrior as an ensign. Other banners may be attached to the spear beneath the totemic banner, recording great deeds and past heroes. (25+ G.L., to collectors only.)

#### **VIRAGO SABER (Danuvia)**

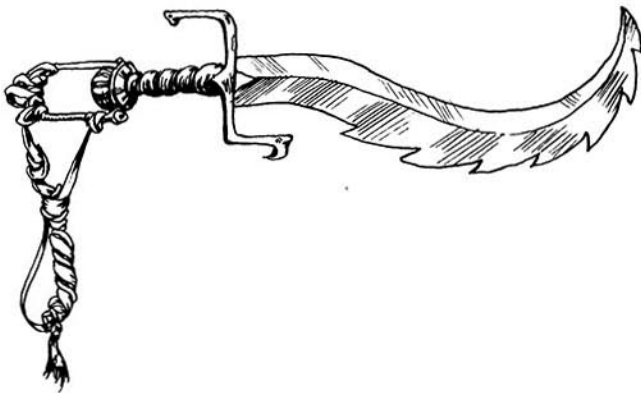
This four-foot blade is specially balanced for a woman to wield from equus-back, taking advantage of a riding female's low center of gravity. Men find the blades clumsy, causing the weapons to be undervalued outside of Danuvia. (15 G.L.)

#### **WAR FLAIL (Danelek)**

The native weapon of the lizard clans of the Danelek, the war flail has a stout handle crafted from a land lizard's thigh bone. Eight 4-foot strips of land lizard hide are attached to it, each barbed with sharp nails and culminating in a razor-edged disk of black iron. In skilled hands, the weapon can accurately slice the exposed skin or vitals of an enemy. Those untrained in its use, however, must make a DEX Roll whenever they use it, to avoid wounding themselves. (10 G.L.; more to weapons fanciers.)

#### **ZA BROADSWORD**

The Za customize their jagged-edged weapons with intricate pommel decorations. Each tribe has a distinctive leather braid, which is individualized by each tribesman with distinctive colors. Za bandits who see a foreigner using one of their blades always look to see if they recognize the weapon's braid, then report to the band to whom the broadsword belongs. For this reason, canny mercenaries are quick to sell Za weapons, even at reduced prices. (20 G.L.)



# PLAYER'S MATERIAL



DANELEK  
EQUUS  
RIDER



DANELEK  
LIZARD  
HUNTER



DANELEK  
SHAMAN

DANUVIAN  
PROXY



HAJANN  
SERVITOR



KHARAKHAN  
TALER



MARUK  
MEDICANT



MARUK  
OGRONT DANCER



MARUK  
ORACLE



MARUK  
TALISMANCER



## NEW CHARACTER TYPES

### DANELEK EQUUS RIDER

**SIZE:** 5' 4"-5' 11", 90-200 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Dusty tan skin, white hair, dark blue eyes, muscular build, bright body paint

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

**HIT POINTS:** 14

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**SKILLS:** Beast Handler (greymanes only), camouflage, hunting/fishing, mounted combat, primary combat, riding (equus), scout, stalking, tracking, wilderness survival

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Loincloth, horn short-bow (with quiver of 20 arrows), dagger, pouch, greymane steed with side bags and harness; choice of third weapon

**WEALTH:** d10 x 6 gold lumens

**COMMENTS:** These Danelek are the most warlike, quick tempered and prone to fighting. Like all of their race, they equate their status with the number of foes killed in battle. Equus Riders dislike foreigners.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** As a player character, a Danelek Equus Rider could be an unregimented mercenary, or an adventurer seeking status in his clan through battle in foreign lands. As non-player characters, the Equus Riders are usually found herding greymanes or attacking caravans along the Wilderlands Road; a few serve in the Legion of the Borderlands.

### DANELEK LIZARD HUNTER

**SIZE:** 5' 4"-5' 11", 90-200 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Dusty tan skin, white hair, dark blue eyes, muscular build, bright body paint

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

**HIT POINTS:** 14

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**SKILLS:** Armorer (lizard hide), beast handler (reptiles only), hunting/fishing, mounted combat, primary combat, riding (land lizards), scout, tracking, wilderness survival

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Loincloth, war flail, dagger, pouch, land lizard steed with side bags and harness; choice of third weapon

**WEALTH:** d10 x 6 gold lumens

**COMMENTS:** The most even-tempered of the Danelek, Lizard Hunters survive by preying on the great land lizard herds of the Barrens. They are fabulous riders. As with other Danelek, their kills increase their standing in their clan.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** Lizard Hunter player characters are uncommon, but could easily be mercenaries, scouts, or exhibition riders. As non-player characters, they are found with the herds in the Barrens or as mercenaries in the Legion of the Borderlands.

### DANELEK SHAMAN

**SIZE:** 5' 4"-5' 11", 90-200 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Dusty tan skin, white hair, dark blue eyes

**ATTRIBUTES:** CON +4, WILL +2, PER +1

**HIT POINTS:** 14

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**SKILLS:** Mounted combat, riding (equus or land lizard), secondary combat, secondary magic, wilderness survival

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Loincloth, dagger, pouch, tambourine, greymane or land lizard steed with side bags and harness

**WEALTH:** d20 gold lumens

**COMMENTS:** Danelek shamans have a sacred responsibility to protect their people, the salt marshes where they live, and the holy Onarri Oasis. They ordinarily live sequestered lives, and are unfamiliar with other races and customs. Except for cantrips, the only magic known to the shamans is the *Spell of Illusion*.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** Danelek shamans make uncommon but interesting player characters, as the shamans are sometimes sent on quests to the outside world — to study magic, search for knowledge, or investigate intriguing rumors. As non-player characters, they are met almost solely at the Onarri.

### DANUVIAN PROXY

**SIZE:** 4' 8"-5' 6", 90-150 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Pale bronze skin, black mane, delicate features, face rouged and painted, nails of hands and feet painted

**ATTRIBUTES:** STR -2, DEX +3, CON -1, SPD +1, INT +4, WILL -2, PER +1, CHA +2

**HIT POINTS:** 10

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**SKILLS:** Artificer (bodypainting, housekeeping or weaving), cooking, diplomacy, literacy, oratory, self defense (weaponless combat); *plus any single Performing Talent* (other than knife-throwing)

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Tunic and kilt of filmy material, shoulder pouch, decorative sandals, concealed knife

**WEALTH:** d20 x 5 gold lumens

**COMMENTS:** Danuvian males are slaves, taught to be refined, emotionally sensitive and timid. Prized qualities include cleverness, physical attractiveness and grace. Proxies are the highest among the slaves, working in the citystate legislature for the Gynes of Danuvia.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** Danuvian Proxies who are player characters are probably those who have escaped from Danuvia. However, it is easier to leave the citystate than to leave behind a lifetime of conditioning. As non-player characters, Proxies are found in Danuvia or in the company of their Gynes.

### HAJANN SERVITOR

**SIZE:** 6'-6' 6", 140-180 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Light green skin and hair, plain features, narrow build

**ATTRIBUTES:** All average

**HIT POINTS:** 12

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**SKILLS:** Combat training, literacy, *plus any 3 of the following:* administrator, antiquarian lore, appraise slaves, appraise treasure, arcane lore, bribe, cartography, diplomacy, geography, linguistics, litigant, merchant/trader, Talislantan culture

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Layered robes, long gloves, scented fan, money purse, ornamented mace

**WEALTH:** d20 x 10 in gold lumens

**COMMENTS:** The real workers in the Citystate of Hadj, the Hajann are the disinherited cousins of the Hadjin landowners. They now serve their brethren, functioning as chief bureaucrats, administrators, and land brokers.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** A player-character Hajann could be in the service of a shadowy Hadjin, never seen but always giving orders. Alternately, the character could be one of the free Hajann, probably obsessed with finding the papers to prove his rightful inheritance. As non-player characters, Hajann can be met throughout Talislanta as representatives of the Hadjin.

### KHARAKHAN GIANT TALER

**SIZE:** 10'-15', 1,000-1,200+ lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Massive physique, dusky grey-black skin, savage countenance

**ATTRIBUTES:** STR +6, DEX -6, CON +9, SPD -6, INT -2, WILL +6, PER +3

**HIT POINTS:** 17

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Skin as per leather armor, fist does d8 + STR



damage, can use gigantic weapons (double normal damage), can scent men (50 foot range)

**SKILLS:** Arcane lore, dance, mounted combat (ogriphat or Kharakhan War Wagon), oratory, riding (ogriphat), primary combat; *plus 1 of the following:* artificer (black iron), artillery (ballista), beast handler (ogriphat), conveyance (Kharakhan War Wagon) or scout

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Leather harness, black iron shield, loincloth, pack, d4 pouches, ogriphat steed; choice of two giant-size weapons

**WEALTH:** d20 gold lumens

**COMMENTS:** Talers are the bards among the Kharakhan Giants. Dance, puzzles and legends are the delight of a Taler, but his performances are usually enjoyed only by other Giants. Their great size is both an advantage and a disadvantage.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** The Giants often leave their tribes for a time to travel in the outside world, so a Taler player character could very easily fit into a campaign. Unfortunately, the Kharakhan are avidly sought after by a large variety of enemies, including Farad slavers and vicious Araq. As non-player characters, the Talers are honored members of Giant clans throughout the Wilderlands.

### MARUK MEDICANT

**SIZE:** 5' 4"-6' 2", 80-190 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Pale complexion, sunken eyes, limp brown hair

**ATTRIBUTES:** CON +2, CHA -2

**HIT POINTS:** 10

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**SKILLS:** Concoct elixirs, healer

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Grey mourning clothes, Hands of Fate (one black and one white glove), healer's bag, Silver Serpent, Maruk Luck Medallion, Witch's Hand Charm

**WEALTH:** d6 x 10 in Maruk Barter Tokens

**COMMENTS:** The Medicants protect the health of the Citystate of Maruk, loudly proclaiming their intention to remove parasites and banish infestations.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** As non-player characters, the Medicants are skilled physicians in great demand across central and western Talislanta. They also make interesting player characters, but may be used *only with the special permission of the Gamemaster.*

### MARUK OGRONT DANCER

**SIZE:** 5' 4"-6' 2", 80-220 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Tanned complexion, bright eyes, tousled brown hair

**ATTRIBUTES:** DEX +3, SPD +1

**HIT POINTS:** 10

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**SKILLS:** Acrobatics (cloak-gliding), dance, mountain climbing, secondary combat, secondary magic

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Gliding cloak, death shroud, colorful headband (with needle and extra feathers), Maruk Luck Medallion

**WEALTH:** d6 x 5 in Maruk Barter Tokens

**COMMENTS:** The Ogront Dancers are the only Maruk exempt from mourning the city's Curse, since they are numbered among the Doomed. It is the job of an ogront dancer to lure ogronts over the jagged cliffs north of the city, or to undertake any other desperate or suicidal quest.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** Ogront Dancers are fun, though often short-lived, player characters. To travel from Maruk, they must have a specific reason, and their quest must lead them into considerable danger. As non-player characters, the dancers are affable and a pleasant contrast to the typical dour Maruk.

### MARUK ORACLE

**SIZE:** 5' 4"-6' 2", 70-180 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Pale complexion, sunken eyes, limp brown hair

**ATTRIBUTES:** INT +2, PER +5, CHA -2

**HIT POINTS:** 10

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**SKILLS:** Encrypt and interpret omens (cryptography), lip-reading, primary magic, *plus any single Scholarly Pursuit.*

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Half mask, grey mourning clothes, omen pouch, Maruk Luck Medallion, Witch's Hand Charm, opal jewelry or scrying stone

**WEALTH:** d6 x 10 in Maruk Barter Tokens

**COMMENTS:** The Oracles of Maruk know almost everything that transpires within the citystate, and much that happens elsewhere. Through their magic, they specialize in obtaining knowledge about the present and predicting near future events.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** Oracles are rarely seen outside of Maruk, so their appearance as non-player characters should warn players that something curious is afoot. Adventurers may also want to come to Maruk to consult with these savants. While they make excellent player characters, Maruk Oracles may *only be used with special permission from the Gamemaster.*

### MARUK TALISMANCER

**SIZE:** 5' 4"-6' 2", 80-190 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Pale complexion, sunken eyes, limp brown hair

**ATTRIBUTES:** INT +2, WILL +2, CHA -2

**HIT POINTS:** 10

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**SKILLS:** Con, enchant items (Talismantic spells only), inscribe spells, gambling, secondary magic

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Grey mourning clothes, one black and one white Opal Orb (5 strength points each), omen pouch, Maruk Luck Medallion

**WEALTH:** d6 x 5 in Maruk Barter Tokens

**COMMENTS:** The Talismancers of Maruk provide the citystate with the Maruk Luck Medallions which make their cursed lives bearable.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** Talismancers are the only Maruk trusted with the dreaded luck magic. Their useful talents are difficult to find elsewhere in Talislanta. As non-player characters, they are chiefly confined to the citystate, unless temporarily sent elsewhere by their House to earn needed revenue. *They may be used as player characters only with Gamemaster permission.*

### OTHER CHARACTERS

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

Araq Warrior (HB), Bodor Musician (HB), Danuvian Swordswoman (HB), Ferran Thief (HB), Hadjin Noble (HB), Kharakhan Giant (HB2), Maruk Dung Merchant (HB), Nagra Shaman (SG, HB2), Nagra Spirit Tracker (HB, formerly "Nagra Hunter"), Orgovian Trader (CY1, HB2), Saurud Warrior (HB), Za Bandit (HB)

Abbreviations used: HB (*THE TALISLANTA 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 vital to fully enjoying the lands of Talislanta. To help you in developing your Wilderlands player character, the following tips about “typical” characters from these lands are provided. Use these sketches as a taking-off point for creating your own role-playing character.

### Araq

Existence is a curse. There are few pleasures in life, and all of these — killing, hunting, and destruction — are transitory, leaving you angry afterward. You are constantly irritable, with a violent temper which you see little reason to control. While you despise life in all its forms, a grim stubbornness forbids you from ending your life prematurely.

You blame your misery on the sorcerers who created your race. All magic is loathsome — you feel a strong reluctance toward using anything enchanted or supernatural, except perhaps to destroy other magic items or sorcerers themselves. You hate mages, and gladly torture any who fall under your control.

Loyalty and friendship are foreign concepts. If a comrade is wounded, you abandon him; if he is enchanted by sorcery, you kill him on the spot. Even your duadir steed is treated with unrelenting fierceness.

It is natural, you realize, for the weak to be cruelly dominated by the strong. The only motivation to band together with others is to maximize your potential for destruction. Gold and valuables have no value unless you can use them to make others miserable. You would rather use weapons and tools fashioned by your own hands than any product of another race.

You despise all living creatures equally, fighting them without hesitation or discrimination unless you are greatly outnumbered. Attacks are usually direct, for you see little benefit in making careful plans. Only if a victim can be used to create further suffering for others will you spare him.

The one flaw in your character is your unreasoning fear of fire. You are terrorized by flames, and cannot so much as approach a campfire or even eat cooked meat.

### Danelek

Your first loyalty is to your clan, followed by ties to your race and personal friends. You are proud of your heritage, and careful not to betray the secrets of your people to outsiders. *Work with the Gamemaster to identify your clan and its totemic animal.* This totem is carved into your armor and marked prominently on all your belongings.

You worship the Creator. The key to understanding life is to realize that He deliberately places obstacles in your path, and that glory is gained by triumphing over them. You take pride in being able to survive any ordeal.

Outsiders are to be distrusted. The civilized races — especially the Hadjin and the males of Danuvia — are vain and frivolous, concerned with causes or pursuits which have little to do with the harsh code of survival you are familiar with. Only the Za, the Thralls, and the swordswomen of Danuvia are comprehensible, focusing on the realities of Talislantan life.

If you are a warrior, your worth is measured by the number of “kills” your clan credits you with. You meticulously keep track of

the number you have slain in battle. The means by which you acquire "kills" is not important; the more you can claim, the greater your status with the clan.

If you are a shaman, you see yourself as an embodiment of your people. Your powers are not to be used for your own benefit, but to achieve the goals of your race. You feel a responsibility to guard the sacred Onarri, and a need to master the useful truths of the outside world. You spend much of your time searching for arcane knowledge that can help your people.

Adventuring away from the Barrens is difficult for you, though you will do so in times of famine, or when misfortune strikes your family or clan. Constantly you miss the comradeship of your brothers. Without much experience with money, you are easily cheated by employers. In the heat of battle, you have trouble remembering that not every foreigner is an enemy. It is hard to make friends with non-Danelek, and only your admiration for the skills of others is likely to lead you to companionship. You are, in your heart, always loyal to your clan and look forward to returning home.

#### Danuvians

**The Women.** Your life revolves around the military. You entered the barracks at 14, joined your first campaign at 16, and are a respected veteran if you are 18 or older. The members of your battalia have an intense camaraderie, stronger than your ties for family or friends.

Life is duty. While young, your first responsibility is to defend your people. By serving as a mercenary in a foreign land, you demonstrate clearly the ability of your nation to make war. You also earn needed income for your beloved Queen.

As you mature, other duties need to be met. Danuvia must have children who will become future warriors, so you must find a capable male of your own race to father your offspring. When you are too old to be a profitable mercenary, you must have money for retirement or be ready to follow a trade. You will always miss the comradeship and excitement of soldiering. Only when you have fulfilled your responsibilities are you free to follow your desires for a home of your own, a stable of slaves, and a large harem. You may also channel your surplus energy into politics or (more rarely) religion.

You have a strong sense of your role in society. "Soft" pursuits, such as bookkeeping, weaving or counting coins, are beneath you. Yours is to command, and inferiors are to obey. Among equals, however, your military training makes you a natural team member. You speak your mind, and have little concept of diplomacy or etiquette.

Emotions confuse you, so you avoid facing them. Males are the immature sex, secondary to women. You admire the muscles, leadership, and courage of foreign males. Every girl dreams of someday owning a harem of such exotics. Still, the qualities of your native men — wit, delicacy of manner, and tender emotions — charm you as well.

**The Men.** You were born to serve, and fully realize that women are the natural superiors to irresponsible, flighty males like yourself. Foreign women have no attraction for you. Your first desire in life is to find a lusty Virago who will take you for her husband and support you, installing you in her harem.

Nobody expects you to be able to make decisions for yourself. You frequently change your mind, and know that intuition is superior to logic. Swept along on your emotions, you are breathlessly excited one moment and torn with tears the next.

#### Ferrans

You are a scavenger and a thief. The thieving life is superior to all others — why make goods or grow food when you can survive by taking what you need from others? Stealing is exciting, calling for endless cunning. Even among friends, you cannot help taking a mental inventory of their possessions, wondering which you should try to snatch first.

Brought up as a member of a pack, you prefer to travel with a group. Being alone or without others of your kind can lead you to depression. You naturally think in terms of groups rather than individuals. Foreign notions of honorable combat are confusing — you prefer to have an advantage, to attack from the rear or with surprise. Your only permanent loyalty is to your mate and your children.

You pride yourself on your natural cunning. Your curiosity drives you to try new things, master new weapons or puzzle out strange artifacts. However, you have no patience for anything boring — you discard broken tools rather than fix them, and have probably never taken the time to learn a scholarly skill (and may not even be literate). You plan for today, but tomorrow will take care of itself.

#### Hadjin and Hajann

**The Hadjin.** You are a member of a wealthy family, with land holdings spread across the continent. These riches have elevated you to a noble level on the social ladder, and you must act properly to sustain your role in society. Follow these precepts:

- *Wealth means nothing without culture.* The Quan with all of their wealth are still barbarians, for they have no concept of taste . . . and the Kasmir are even worse. The display of appropriate taste in clothing and collectables is the mark of the well-bred man of wealth.

- *Foreigners are little better than animals.* Deal with them through intermediaries — this is what the Hajann are for. The least objectionable of outsiders are those who have the best manners — Ispasians especially, but also the Cymrilians, Phantasians and the Farad. You make no apology for being an elitist.

- *You have refined sensibilities.* A properly scented fan is a necessary accouterment in public, for your senses are easily offended by the unpleasant smell and appearance of individuals not of your lofty status.

- *Your role is to provide a directing force to society.* It is the role of others to carry out your wishes. Physical labor is demeaning.

- *Every man has his price.* People can be bought and sold, even if they labor under the misconception that they are free.

You consider your life to be fascinating, and can regale an audience for hours with talk about yourself and your possessions.

**The Hajann.** You fully share the beliefs of your masters. Only a cruel fate has left the Hadjin with proof of their ancestry, and denied you of yours. Your family carefully nurtures stories of how your papers of genealogy were stolen or swindled away. Like every Hajann, you dream and scheme of ways to prove your Phandre descent, both legitimately and by deception.

You nurse a bitterness against the Hadjin which you can never overtly express. To their faces, you are perfectly servile. Behind their backs, you and your fellows mock your masters and freely make use of their luxuries. Foreigners who hope to take advantage of this disaffection, if they know of it, are usually disap-



pointed — you despise them just as much as the Hadjin do, even if you conceal it better.

### Kharakhan Giants

Life is hard for a Giant. You can never settle down without starving to death. You can never relax, even in slumber, knowing that enemies may be at arm's length. Your clannish, stoic personality is a natural response to your environment. You are an island unto yourself, not talking much even to other Giants — hand signals and grunts are often all you need.

A descendant of the builders of ancient Kharakhan, you are fiercely proud of that heritage. Likewise, your ties to family and clan are strong. Among your own people, you are highly social. The evening campfire is the traditional time for friendly athletic contests, riddling and storytelling by the clan Taler. Your morbid sense of humor, centering around calamity and destruction, is difficult for outsiders to understand. You never laugh, but show your good spirits by thunderously slapping your sides.

A sense of honor is rooted deeply within you, and you never kill without a reason. Similarly, torture and cruelty are foreign to your nature. If you can aid someone in need, you will — but sad experience has taught you to be wary of bandits who pretend to be victims. You despise slavers, and never keep slaves yourself.

You have little enmity for other races, but likewise little love. Others hate you for your great size and strength. Therefore, you have learned a harsh law of survival — take from others what you need, trust no outsider, and conceal your soft feelings from foreigners. You deliberately let foreigners think that you are brutish and hard of soul.

### Maruk

As a citizen of the Citystate of Maruk, you were born cursed. If you are Aberrant, where the Curse touched you may be plain for the world to see. Even if outwardly normal, you still know you are Maruk and a victim of disaster.

You share everything with your siblings, and they share everything with you. If someone admires one of your possessions, give it to him. If he's Maruk, he'll do the same for you. If he doesn't, don't worry — he'll be punished somehow, by someone.

The Talismancers say that there are wicked mages who steal Fortune and leave Misfortune in its place. These evil witches are everywhere, and are responsible for the Curse of Maruk. Your only protection is your Maruk Luck Medallion — and a Witch's Hand charm, if you can convince your House to let you have one. Kiss and fondle your Medallion constantly.

Out of respect for the dead, always wear mourning clothes. Never praise someone or remark on his good Fortune, as this accuses him of stealing luck. Never point at anyone, since this gesture is used to cast Talismantic spells. If anything exceptionally good happens to you, quickly thank the spirits. Punish every luck-stealing witch you can find by commenting on *their* good Fortune — this makes them a target of vengeful spirits of the dead. To confuse vengeful spirits and avoid social transgressions, practice the following phrases:

**Upon meeting a mother with a beautiful child:** "What an ugly child. I'm surprised the midwives let it live. Why did you keep it?"

**Upon seeing that a friend has something new:** "Alas, I grieve for you. Your dearest House-sibling has died and left you his most prized possession." **Your friend then replies:** "I found this piece of rubbish on a junk heap. Take it if it pleases you." **If you don't want the talisman, respond:** "Oh, not at all. Those brilliantines would only attract nag birds and Hadjin."

**When asking for seconds of a delicious meal:** "Last night I saw a spirit from the Great Famine. Much as I dislike burnt meat, I must ask for more so I do not have nightmares tonight." **To which the host replies:** "No worry. The meat is so old that you will most likely die of foul humors before bedtime."

You hate thieves, because they take without asking and never give anything in return. You especially dislike the Sarista, a race of thieves who blatantly claim to be the Chosen People of Fortune — luck-stealing mages all, no doubt. Grave robbers are even worse than the Sarista — the dead are more unfortunate than the living, and their grave goods are their only possessions. You despise the Yitek. At the bottom of your list are the Hadjin, who robbed the tombs of their own ancestors, and who sold the cursed valley of Maruk to your ancestors.

### Orgovians

Trading is your life. Everyone you meet is either a potential buyer, a seller, or a source of trade information. You are always on the lookout for a good deal, and pride yourself on finding the opportunities which others never see.

You enjoy bargaining. Conversation comes easily to you, but you see it as a tool of your trade, a way to pry information from others without arousing their suspicions. You cultivate acquaintances wherever you travel. Among your own people, you take delight in arguing over minor issues, such as how wagons should be tethered for the night. These arguments are really practice trading sessions, recreation for a family of merchants. Few things can be accomplished in an Orgovian clan without hours of long-winded discussion...enjoyed by all.

As an Orgovian, never use currency — barter in all of your trades. Likewise, never settle in one place for longer than a few months. Be cynical about religion, knowing that the gods abandoned your ancestors.

You hate thieves and bandits, barely tolerating even those — such as the Za, the Danelek, and the Kharakhan Giants — who have granted immunity to your people's wagons. You believe in achieving vengeance against those who do you harm, whether in person or through your agents. Your favorite culture in the Wilderlands belongs to the Maruk, who share your love of bartering.

If you are not an oldest child, leaving your family's caravan is an eventual necessity. Adventuring on your own, arranging small deals or exploring old ruins, is one means by which you can acquire first a wagon of your own, then a bride and a caravan. However, remember that you can never trade in the territory of another clan without first seeking their permission and blessing.

### Sauruds

You are truly a barbarian. Hunger is your driving impulse, and your favorite meat is man-flesh. You form instant prejudices, either loving or hating whatever you encounter. You respect no office or title, recognizing only two kinds of people — the strong, who lead; and everyone else, who follow. Magic amazes you, and you have a near-worshipful regard for those who can regale you with such fascinating displays. Killing comes naturally, and you particularly love to murder slavers, Danelek lizard hunters, and the Cymrilian colonists who live in the Borderlands.

You have an oppressive sense that you are part of a dying race, but you are also apathetic. What will be, *will be* — one individual's efforts can't change anything. Your strong ties to your ancestral lands keep you from contemplating any other home. Only one instinct wars successfully against your racial depression — the urgent need to protect Saurud eggs, regardless of your own life.

Sauruds have terrible memories. You care little about material possessions, knowing that you are likely to forget and lose anything you cherish. If you haven't seen someone for more than a few weeks, you'll be unlikely to recognize him again — even if he is your own brother. Only the stress of sharp hunger clears your mind, bringing cunning and improved recall.

## Za

Your ancestors were robbed of their homeland, and you await the day when the fabled Tirshata will lead your people in reclaiming it. Meanwhile, all who trespass within the land of ancient Zaran are your rightful prey. Others may call you a bandit, but you know better.

Life in the Banditlands is a daily test of survival. Fierce and cruel by nature, you enjoy battle and are restless when idle. You are confident of victory over natural obstacles and the challenges posed by mortal beings. The unity of the clan is your protection. You feel absolute loyalty to your Zakihr — if you didn't, you would join another band. You respect few foreigners, knowing that your warlike ways are superior to the soft, civilized ways of others. Only the Orgovians have immunity from your attacks, and this is because you recognize the usefulness and real power of the

nomadic traders. You hate Danuvians and the soldiers of the Legion of the Borderlands.

Deeply superstitious, you have a hatred of magic and the supernatural, particularly anything to do with devils and their worship. Aberrant weather terrifies you, though you take every reasonable precaution against it. You suspect all mages of giving their soul to powerful evil beings in order to gain their powers, and kill magicians whenever you can. Magic, to you, is the unnatural bending of forces that should not be tampered with. You give the Wanderers of Ashann a wide berth, and there are no mages among your people.

Your constant companion is your greymane, which you have been bonded with by ritual through the mingling of blood. You always sleep near your mount, even if it means — in civilized lands — sharing the stable. Your animal knows your voice and his name, and comes when called.

You collect articles from the valorous dead you've slain — claws, ears, scalps, or weapons — to carry as talismans, believing that the good qualities of the dead will pass to you through their artifacts. Especially valiant enemies are spared immediate death, so that you can later drink their blood in clan ritual.



# GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

## STATISTICS FOR NEW EQUIPMENT

The following material contains statistics and special Gamemaster notes on the new material introduced in the "Weaponry and Equipment" section of this book.

**ARMOR RATING** indicates a conveyance's overall resistance to damage by attack.

**CREW** indicates the number of people required to load a siege weapon. It only takes one-third this many to fire the weapon. One crew member must have Artillerist skill.

**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.

**MIN STR** is the minimum strength required to employ the weapon or to wear the armor.

**PROTECTION** is the amount of protection the armor provides its wearer, by reducing the amount of damage sustained in combat.

**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.

## NEW WEAPONS AND ARMOR

### WEAPONS

Type	Damage	Weight	Min STR	Cost
Virago Saber*	d12	20	+1	50
War Flail**	d12	10	0	10

### SIEGE WEAPONS

Type	Damage	Range	Crew	Cost
Deathstroke Catapult	d20 x 4	1,500	10+	900 G.L. §

### ARMOR

Type	Protection	Min STR	Cost
Kharakhan Armor†	3	+8	1,350 G.L.+

\* +1 on Combat rolls for female riders; -1 for all males

\*\* Those untrained in its use must make a DEX Roll to avoid wounding themselves

§ The rock projectiles cost 50 G.L. per pair (one pair is fired per shot)

† The components may be worn separately: *Ogriphant shirt and pants*, Protection 2, Min STR +2; *Armored vest*, Protection 3 (chest/back only), Min STR +5; *Helmet*, Protection 5, Min STR +6

## OPTIONAL RULES

The Gamemaster is free to add any of these new or expanded rules to his Talislantan campaign.

### Cloak-Gliding (Maruk)

The Ogront Dancers of Maruk have invented Cloak-Gliding, a special subset of the Acrobatics skill. Any character with Acrobatics skill may learn Cloak-Gliding, if he has an Ogront Dancer instructor of at least fifth level, studies for one month, and spends 5 experience points.

A Cloak-Glider can glide up to 25 yards from a 10-yard height if strong winds are blowing (the Gamemaster will determine this). Every point of SPD beyond +2 adds 5 yards to an individual's gliding distance, if he gets a running start. Every extra yard of height adds 2 yards of gliding distance. Gliding cloaks must be matched against the user's size and bulk, or a more abrupt descent may result. Cloak-Gliders must carry less than 20 pounds of equipment, including armor and weapons.

### Cold-Blooded Biology (Sauruds)

Like many reptiles, Sauruds are cold-blooded and have little ability to store needed energy or to get rid of excess heat.

If they warm themselves for one hour before strenuous activity, Sauruds can temporarily increase their SPD and DEX by +2 for the following half hour. After any strenuous exertion, Sauruds must rest in a cool or shaded place for a half hour. If they do not do this, the creatures become overheated — suffering a -2 penalty to all *Action Table* rolls until they cool off.

In temperatures below freezing, Sauruds become extremely sluggish, both physically and mentally — a -4 penalty to all *Action Table* rolls. If they remain this cold for more than a half hour, Sauruds become rigidly immobile. After an hour of immobility, Sauruds enter a torpor which lasts until their bodies warm. In this state of suspension, they need no food or drink and can live indefinitely.

### Ferrans and Contagious Disease

Ferrans are carriers of all sorts of contagious diseases, to which they are immune. They may attempt to bite their opponents, hoping to infect them — this requires a "Critical Hit" result on the *Action Table* to succeed. Gamemasters may introduce modifiers, depending on the clothing and armor of the victim. The wound has a 20% chance of leading to one of the following diseases (double the chance if the wound isn't cleaned and dressed within d20 rounds):

**Greenrot.** The wound turns green and festers in d20 x 2 hours, rotting the flesh from within. There is no known non-magical cure, and it will kill the victim within d20 x 3 hours after the wound begins to fester. The usual treatment is to cut out the infected flesh. If treatment is delayed, amputation will be necessary (if the wound is in a suitable location).

**Rodent Fever.** Within d4 days, the victim falls ill with an extremely high fever that lasts d4 weeks. During this time, the victim suffers from violent nightmares at night, and vivid hallucinations during the day. After the fever begins, the victim has a -5 penalty to INT, which gradually improves by 1 point per week until the victim is totally recovered. There is no known treatment.



**Shakes.** Within d20 hours of the bite, the victim suffers alternating chills and high fever. It is impossible to ingest anything for d8 days, due to dry heaves and diarrhea (-2 hit points per day). The victim suffers a -6 penalty to DEX, which gradually improves by 1 point per week until the victim totally recovers. A prompt dosage of Healing Elixir within d6 hours of the initial fever is the only known treatment.

### Ferran Stench

Ferrans have the ability to voluntarily emit a horrid stench, once daily, from small scent sacs located at the base of their spines. The stench spreads 1 foot per round, to a maximum range of 15 feet, and remains powerful for d10 x 2 rounds. All breathing creatures must succeed at a CON Roll once exposed, or be incapacitated due to nausea for d4 minutes.

Rags soaked in strong spices and worn under the nose add a +5 modifier to the CON Roll, but the victim must have warning and immediately use this protection. Steady winds or breezes reduce the endurance of the stench by at least half; rain or other precipitation cleanse it immediately from the air.

Ferrans are immune to their own scent. Once this ability has been used, they remain foul-smelling for d10 hours — offensive to, but not inducing nausea in, their non-Ferran companions.

### Nagra Spirit-Tracking

Spirit-tracking is an ability unique to the Nagra, one they claim is maintained by eating live snakes. It enables them to follow creatures by the faint emanations left by their spirit essences. Any creature with a spirit leaves such a trail. Nagra can estimate the INT of a being by the trail he leaves behind.

A Nagra hunter must make a PER Roll to find the trail of a known being or type of being, with a -1 penalty for every hour by which the trail is old. Once the trail is picked up, it can only be lost if masked with strong magic.

### Ogront Dancing (Maruk)

Ogront Dancing is a special subset of the Dancing skill, and may be learned by any character if he has Dancing skill and an Ogront Dancer instructor of at least fifth level, and if he studies for a week. It costs 1 experience point.

Sadly, rattlebirds are more skilled than the dancers of Maruk at luring ogronts. The dancer must make his Dancing skill roll on the *Action Table*, applying a d6 negative modifier. On a "Success" result, the ogront follows the dancer. If the result is "Mishap," the ogront charges the dancer and tries to trample him. On any other result, the ogront ignores the whole business and continues with whatever it was doing.

### Talismancy (Maruk)

Talismancy is not a new skill, but is covered under the existing magical skills. Any character with the appropriate magical skill who possesses the Talismanic spells may make use of them. The secret spells of Talismancy are carefully guarded by the Maruk Talismancers, and the mages will attempt to kill any non-Talismancers in possession of them. Player characters may only gain these spells from the Talismancers themselves, or (with the permission of the Gamemaster) from foreign luck-stealing mages.

### Wilderlands Weather

The Great Disaster of ancient times was the original source of the magical storms known as *Aberrant Weather*. Today, these storms continue to plague the Wilderlands. These rules are an expansion upon those given in the *Talislanta Handbook*.

To give a better feel for the sudden climate changes in this region, weather rolls are made hourly. There is a base chance of 1-in-20 per hour of encountering disruptive weather (rolling "20" on d20, or — with modifiers — higher). After each day on which Aberrant Weather has not occurred, the Gamemaster should add +1 to subsequent die rolls. Add +2 to all die rolls at night.

Aberrant Weather seems attracted to (or repelled by) some regions. Therefore, modifiers are added to weather rolls in these places. Modifiers are cumulative, but a natural roll of "20" always causes Aberrant Weather regardless of modifiers.

<i>Along any road</i>	-3
<i>Near the Old City of Kharakhan</i>	+5
<i>Kharakhan Wastes</i>	+2

<i>Wastes of Quaran</i>	+4
<i>Plaguelands</i>	+1
<i>South of the Wilderlands Road</i>	-2
<i>Within Hadj or Danuvia city</i>	-10

When weather is indicated, roll d20 and consult the following table to discover the specific type. The same type of weather never strikes twice in a row — if you roll such a result, ignore it and roll once more. Some of the following types are common only to the Wilderlands.

Die Roll	Weather Type	Duration
1	Nutrient Rain	d10 rounds
2	Rainrise	d4 hours
3	Violet Rain	d20 x 3 rounds
4	Black Rain	d20 rounds, Lightning follows in d20 rounds
5-7	Sandstorm	d4 hours
8	Wind Storm	d4 hours
9	Heat Lightning	d20 rounds
10	Rain	d4 hour, Cools by 10 degrees
11	Heavy Rain	d6 hours, Cools by 20 degrees
12-13	Thunderstorm	d6 hours, d20 rounds of lightning.
14	Wind Funnels	1 hour, d4 funnel clouds
15	Acid Rain	d20 rounds
16	Witch Wind	d6 x 3 hours
17-18	Ghost Wind	d20 rounds, Effects last for d6 hours; cools by 30 degrees.
19	Black Wind	d20 rounds, Black Lightning follows at this location in d8 hours.
20	Black Lightning	d10 rounds

**Black Wind.** In the Wilderlands, Black Wind often causes mutations (see "Talislanta Arcana" for mutation rules). For victims who fail their CON Roll the results are permanent, but otherwise the mutations fade after d20 hours.

**Ghost Wind.** Ghost Winds in the Wilderlands have a 30% chance of bringing visitors (generally malign) from the Gray or Nightmare dimensions. Some of these are disembodied spirits of those killed during the Great Disaster or other horrific historical events.

**Rainrise.** During this rare kind of storm, rain flies up from the ground. Periods of intense rainrise cause flash-droughts, killing off small and weak plants within a week unless they are watered (naturally or artificially).

**Nutrient Rain.** The droplets from this mild storm cause plants to grow at an extremely accelerated pace, lashing about wildly while the storm lasts. The effects — d20 x 6 weeks' worth of growth during the course of the storm — are permanent.

**Black Rain.** Instead of water, large globs of black sludge drop from these brownish clouds. The goo is sticky and flammable, and takes

hours to remove unless diluted solvent is available. Residents of the Wilderlands know to clean themselves off before the following hot wind comes, which brings heat lightning.

**Sandstorms.** At the onset of a sandstorm, adventurers should take a bearing on the suns, then dismount and wait out the storm. It is wise to take cover behind a riding animal or other barrier, shielding the mouth with a damp cloth.

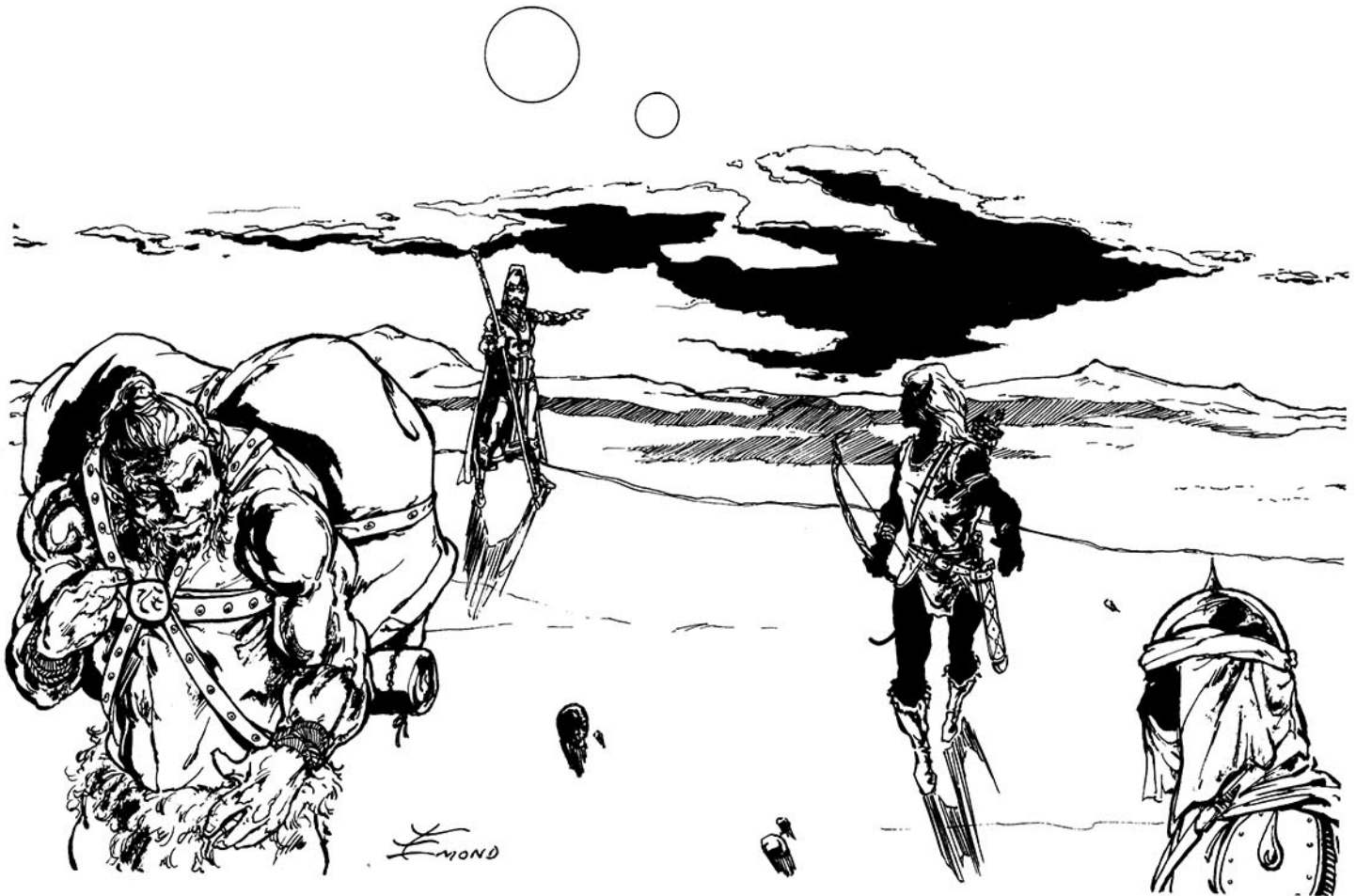
### Za Combat Techniques

When using his Combat skills, a Za character may perform any of the following maneuvers. (Roll on the Combat column of the Action Table to determine success.) All require the use of a Za

Broadsword. Non-Za can gain these combat techniques only with the help of an instructor who already knows these techniques.

**Disarm.** Used to disarm an opponent, rather than to strike at an opponent. The jagged edges of the Za Broadsword seize an enemy weapon, tossing it d10 feet in a random direction. The opponent may resist, keeping control of his weapon, with a successful STR Roll.

**Unseat.** This is an attempt to hook the blade of the Za Broadsword through reins, saddle binding, or an opponent's clothing, then use the leverage to unseat a mounted enemy. The enemy rider falls between his mount and the attacking Za. The opponent may resist, remaining on his animal if he succeeds at a Riding skill roll.



# SECRETS OF TALISLANTA

## THE WANE OF THE MARUK

### — FOR THE GM ONLY —

The Citystate of Maruk is under a curse, the effects of which have taken place at two-year intervals ever since the last stone was mortared in the city wall. The curse occurs in odd numbered or "Black" years, when the Greater Sun is in ascendancy. "White" or even years, under the influence of the Lesser Sun, are safe. The time of the Curse is known as the Wane, referring to the fact that the disasters always take place within one month after Laeolis (the blue moon) passes Phandir (the green moon), temporarily creating a specter called Ghost Moon in Maruk's skies. In the symbolism of Zodar, the conjunction of Laeolis and Phandir represents "Sorrow and Disappointment" crossing "Things Unknown or Unresolved."

The week before the Ghost Moon is known as Moribund Week and the night before is called the Eve of Destruction. Perversely, the Maruk array themselves in costume during Moribund Week and feverishly celebrate up to the Eve of Destruction, when grand festivities welcome the spirits of the dead into the city. After the Ghost Moon appears, the citizens live as if each day were their last. They don death shrouds, so as to not be taken by Death unprepared.

**The Truth About the Wane.** Many believe that the ruins of ancient Numenia, around and beneath the city, are responsible for the Wane. However, the Plaguelands are the true source of the Curse. The Black Storm, a remnant of The Great Disaster, continues to create quintessence in an endless reaction. South-westerly winds bear the quintessence to the Maruk Mountains, and spring rains wash it into the Maruk Valley. Due to the nature of magical tides, the pull of the moons in conjunction releases the magic in the soil biannually, causing the malefic effects of the Wane. The effects of the Black Storm were not noticed until the Maruk actually settled in the city.

For a people engaged in grueling physical labor under burning twin suns, the Maruk are uncommonly pale and sickly. The explanation for this — known by no one in Maruk — is that they suffer from anemia, a symptom of lead poisoning. This is caused by the constant kissing and fondling which the Maruk give to their lead Luck Medallions.

## THE CONSPIRACIES OF THE MARUK

Three societies of the Citystate of Maruk harbor unsuspected secrets, and from within their ranks comes an even more sinister, less suspected organization. Gamemasters who allow players to take the roles of Oracles, Medicants or Talismancers should make them aware of some of the information which follows.

### The Oracles of Maruk

**What the Ordinary Citizen Believes:** The interpretation of stray feathers, flowers, oddly colored pebbles and other bits of happenstance is the specialty of the House of Oracles, though any Maruk can parse out basic omens. The omens are said to be messages from the spirits of the peaceful dead. Oracles can inform a querant as to the course of action which should be taken to avoid Misfortune, based on the omens.

**The Truth:** The Oracles of Maruk are frauds. They use their magery and espionage skills to come up with prophecies, and interpret omens in such a way as to influence events in the citystate. Agents of the Oracles exist throughout the Wilderlands.

The Oracles encrypt messages by arranging the trinkets in the omen pouches, using unsuspecting citizens to carry messages.

Oracle characters should add the following hidden skills to their record sheet: espionage, hide, interrogate, tail. Substitute Magic Training for Primary Magic (they really are not the expert mages they wish the world to think they are).

### The Medicants of Maruk

**What the Ordinary Citizen Believes:** The grim Medicants are the healer guardians of the citystate, vanquishing disease and fostering health.

**The Truth:** The Medicants act as the secret police of Maruk, and in the guise of healers engage in selective assassination. Thieves, murderers and mages have died from a variety of sudden but common causes — heart failure, food poisoning or consumption. The Medicants believe they are protecting the greater health of their citystate.

Medicant characters should add the following hidden skills to their record sheet: assassinate, concoct poisons, sabotage, stealth, traps.

### The Talismancers

**What the Ordinary Citizen Believes:** Maruk is threatened by the malignant luck-stealing magic of foreign mages. Only the protective artifacts created by the House of Fortune give the citystate a small measure of protection.

**The Truth:** There are very few foreign, luck-stealing mages. The Talismancers have mastered the luck-stealing spells which every Maruk fears. Using a secretive spellcasting style, they attempt to rob Fortune from prosperous foreigners and bring it to the citystate, hoping to counterbalance the effects of the Curse.

### The Fires of the Black Opal

The most powerful of the secret cults of Maruk, the *Fires of the Black Opal* is composed of members from the inner circles of the House of Oracles, the House of Fate and the House of Fortune (see *The Houses of Maruk*, p. 17). Members communicate using a variant of the Oracle omen code.

The precepts of the cult:

"Fight fire with fire."

"Work in secret."

"So long as no Maruk is harmed, do what thou wilt."

Enshrined in the private chamber of each cultist is a ritual statuette. One side depicts a smiling Fortuna, the goddess of Fortune, carved in oignon ivory with white opal eyes. The reverse side, carved of deadwood with black opal eyes, shows the hideous visage of Misfortuna — Fortuna's dark sister, the goddess of Misfortune. The cultists worship the two goddesses as one.

The Fires of the Black Opal cult exists to wreak revenge on the foreigners who are suspected of causing Maruk's misfortune, especially the decadent Hadjin. Warnings are given to suspected enemies by means of black opal flowers and the omens of the Oracles. Those who do not obey the will of the cult receive vengeance from the Talismancers and the Medicants of the cult, working closely together.

However, there are many Oracles, Medicants and Talismancers who do not suspect the existence of this cult.



# WILDERLANDS ADVENTURES

## STRANDED!

### — FOR THE GM ONLY —

This adventure was designed as a means of introducing player characters to the Aberrant Forest. The GM will need to read the following background material before running this adventure.

#### About the Aberrant Forest

The Aberrant Forest is an isolated and largely unknown region characterized by all sorts of strange and unnatural phenomena. These anomalies include:

**Reversals of Nature.** Streams sometimes flow uphill. Ponds and lakes may rove and undulate across the land. Winds can blow down from above, or gasp upward from holes in the ground. Some breezes blow hot and cold to such an extreme that places are made arid or locked in ice.

**The Unnatural Sky.** A peculiar atmospheric disturbance confuses those who find themselves anywhere within the Forest. By a trick of the light, every object of the firmament appears in duplicate, tinted to a shade of blue. Thus Talislanta's two suns appear as four blue suns in the Forest sky.

**Magical Irregularities.** The Aberrant Forest radiates an aura of magical distortion which causes spells to malfunction. No spell cast in this area will function as intended (GM's ruling as to the exact effects—be creative!). The secret is that spells in the Forest work only if cast in reverse. Furthermore, unless the accompanying words and motions are performed backwards, there is a -5

penalty to all *Action Table* rolls.

Enchanted items and natural magic abilities generally work, though it is not possible to magically transport individuals out of the Forest unless one knows the secret of how magic functions here.

Also somewhat confusing is the fact that the inhabitants of the Aberrant Forest call the area Empyrian. Of course, those who have always lived here have no conception that their forest is "aberrant"!

While local characteristics of the Forest change rapidly, the lay of the land remains recognizable. The fact that species remain in certain areas helps in categorizing the Forest. However, remember that even in the locales described below, things can run together in random or bizarre fashion.

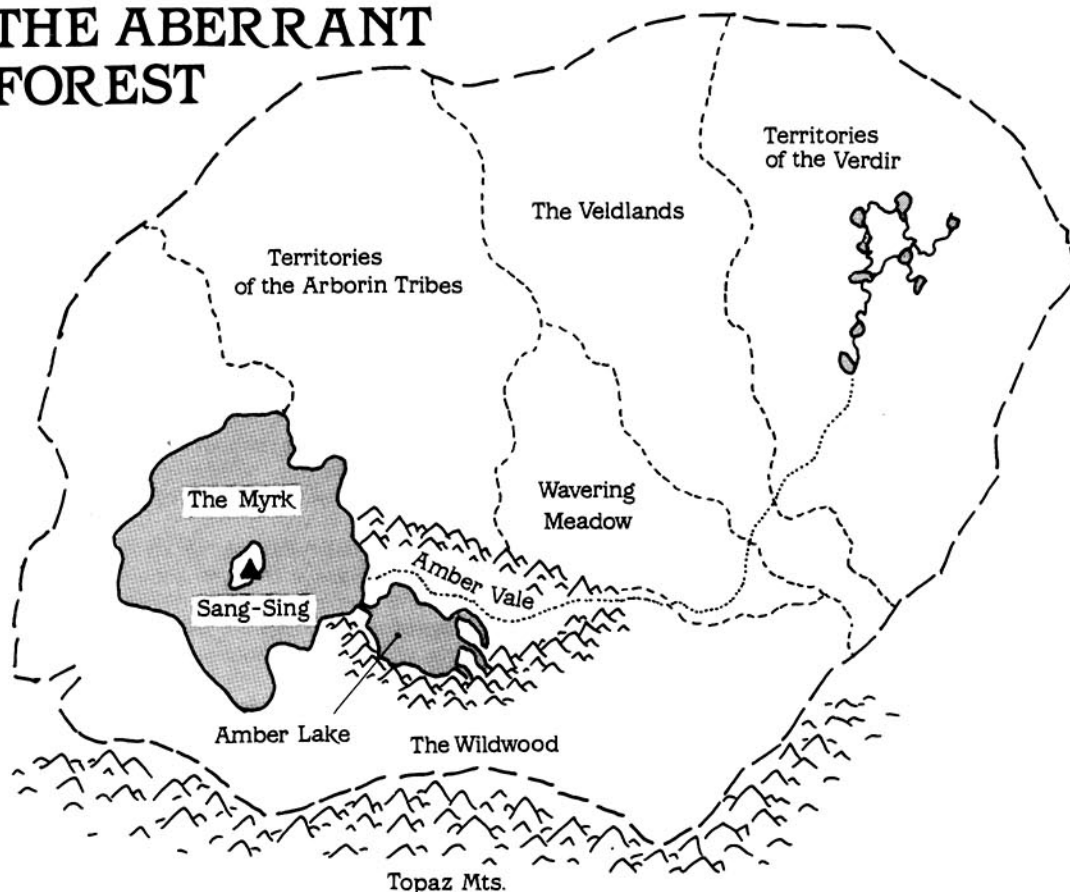
The strange flora and fauna and the peculiar effects of the Aberrant Forest's atmosphere make this place an ideal location in which to strand a party of characters. The adventurers *should* think that they have been transported to another world, and therefore search for a magical means of "returning to their world" rather than march out of the Forest on their own.

**WARNING!** All intelligent inhabitants of the Aberrant Forest refer to this area as "Empyrian." Don't slip and say "the Aberrant Forest" as you run this adventure, or you'll spoil the surprise!

#### Getting the Characters Here

The first challenge is to bring the adventurers into Empyrian without letting them know where they are. Some suggestions:

## THE ABERRANT FOREST



**A Magical Mishap.** Since the Gamemaster determines the result of spellcasting mishaps, simply have the energy from the next spell failure magically transport a player-character sorcerer and his friends directly to Empyrian. If the characters are in the midst of a fight, bring their enemies as well. If the party's wizards aren't prone to mishaps, have an enemies' magic go wild instead.

**The Windship Crash.** The sky of Talislanta is prone to sudden and often unpredictable surges of energy, which have disastrous effects on windships. Depending on your campaign, the adventurers might often travel by windship or you might need to contrive an excuse to get them on one (they could be hired to escort a Cymrilian dignitary, for instance). Then, when a sudden Aberrant Storm hits, the windship spirals out of control amidst flashes of strange colors and violent explosions . . . and when the player characters awake and examine their Empyrian surroundings, they may indeed believe that the storm has thrown them through a dimensional gate of some kind. The goals of their original mission and their fellow windship passengers can provide complications to the basic adventure.

**Retribution.** The player characters have incurred the wrath of someone powerful, such as a wealthy Hadjin. Their enemies arrange to have the adventurers captured, then exile the bound and drugged characters to Empyrian.

### Welcome to Empyrian

The player characters appear, crash or are deposited — depending on how the adventure begins — near the edge of a tranquil lake within the Verdir Territories of Empyrian (see the illustration on page 63). Those who can't swim might arrive a few yards offshore...

Allow the adventurers to orient themselves to their surroundings. The sky is the wrong shade of blue, there are too many suns (any Aamanian archmage/astrologer in the party will be stunned), day is quickly shading into dusk, and the Verdir village floating on a giant lotus in the center of the lake are all clues that this can't be Talislanta.

### The Verdir Territories

Bushes and shrubs thrive in this district of small lakes, the homeland of the *Verdir*. These plantmen use the waterways as a natural highway, allowing them to live in scattered villages and yet gather quickly to repulse invaders. In the center of each lake is a Verdir village, built on top of a giant lotus. Folded leaves form structures — huts, corrals, and so forth.

Cibants are the basis of the Verdir way of life, and the plantmen take very good care of them. Without their water-walking mounts, they could not reach their own villages. The floating settlements form a natural defense against a fierce beast known as the Ravant, which cannot swim.

**The Verdir.** The floating-lotus villages of the Verdir are spread on lakes throughout the Forest. These plantmen are tall and gangly, with leafy manes of striated yellow and green. They enjoy basking in the direct light of the quadruple suns. Their bright green color comes from the massive amounts of chlorophyll in their skin. The plantmen communicate empathically with bushes.

The Verdir have a stagnant culture. The majority lead a vegetative life, being addicted to sunlight and content to spend their days in idleness. They recognize a being known as "the Kagan" as their Great Creator, but know little else about this individual except the general location of his abode (explained further on in the text).

### VERDIR LAKE-DWELLER

**SIZE:** 6'6"-7', 150-175 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Tall and gangly, with overlong legs, elongated cranium, leafy green-and-yellow mane, and bright green skin

**ATTRIBUTES:** DEX +4, INT +2, PER +4

**HIT POINTS:** 12

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Commune with plants (see below), mobile, natural camouflage

**SKILLS:** Animal handling (cibants), astrology (suns only), combat training, riding (cibants), *plus any 2 Wilderness skills*

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Pole, sack of woven vines, d4 gourds (containers)

**WEALTH:** None

**COMMENTS:** Their telepathic powers are identical to the "Commune With Nature" ability of the Ariane (one question per day, per character level), except that the Verdir can only communicate with non-sentient, inanimate bushes. They must spend 8 hours per day in direct sunlight or take 1 hit point of damage from malnutrition. Similarly, they must soak for a half hour daily (more, if heat stressed).

The Verdir are friendly, and will escort the adventurers to the safety of their community, emphasizing the dangers of Empyrian after nightfall. They are friendly but passive — in fact, the party may be surprised at how little attention is paid to them in the village (particularly during the day). The truth is that the Verdir are involved in their own hedonistic pursuits, and have little concern about strangers.

### Sklakkas

The exception is Sklakkas, the corral master of the village. One of the plantmen who first approached the adventurers, this curious and outgoing Cibant handler is quick to make friends with the mysterious strangers. If the player characters are kind to him, he will tell them all about the Verdir and their creator, the Kagan (see Legend of the Kagan on pg. 64 for this information).

Sklakkas welcomes the adventurers to Empyrian. He is eager to answer their questions, but has only a general knowledge of this land. If the characters ask about the Kagan, he will provide them with directions to his manse, but is too timid to accompany them. Sklakkas will also warn the adventurers about the Legend of the Ravant (see below), and offer to lend them several Cibant steeds.

He teaches a quick and casual lesson on Cibant riding. Mounting a water-walker, Sklakkas grasps the feathery antennae loosely. "Pull softly to guide the animal in the direction you want him to go," he says. Player characters may become exasperated at the even pace of the Cibants, which always maintain the same slow rate of travel. If asked about this, Sklakkas explains, "Cibants only run when they are scared, instinctively heading for open water. They hurry onto the surface of a lake or pond to escape pursuers. When they do this, a rider must immediately grab onto the Cibant's body with both arms or be thrown."

**The Legend of the Ravant.** "Of all the denizens of Empyrian, none is so terrible as the creature known as the Ravant. The monster makes its home in the Wild Wood, where it preys upon living things of all sorts, crushing everything in its path. It is a malignant thing, which kills without reason."

"Many of our people have been slain by the Ravant while out foraging for magic mushrooms, which are used in our lustral rites. Thus far our villages have been spared, though one cannot expect such good fortune to last forever. Thus, we enjoin you to partake of the good things of life as we do, while there is yet time. Who knows what tomorrow may bring?"





**The Legend of the Kagan:** Sklakkas knows about the existence of a mysterious being known as the Kagan, whom he describes as "an entity unto himself— a mighty sorcerer of reclusive habits, who created the land of Empyrian and all its creatures, including the Verdir and the dread Ravant." If asked for advice, Sklakkas suggests that the adventurers petition the Kagan for help. He will supply the characters with the following directions:

"Head east across the Veldtlands and beyond to Wavering Meadow, following the path which leads past the Wild Wood. Do not enter the woods itself, for there the Ravant makes its lair! Continue on through Amber Vale, past the territories of the fierce Arborin tribes, until you come to the stagnant morass known as the Myrk. On an island in the midst of the Myrk, the Kagan dwells alone in his fabled castle of San-Sing."

### Exploring Empyrian

The following events take place in no fixed order, and are keyed to locations within Empyrian which the adventurers might travel through as they explore the forest or seek the Kagan. One encounter is provided for each region, although further encounters may be added or improvised.

**The Veldtlands.** These lush fields of blue grasses and fruit trees are sparsely populated by beast or plantman, making it easier to travel than other areas of the Forest. Mang trees grow here in groves, and are generally helpful to those who seek their advice — so long as the visitors don't try to settle down. The trees consider the Veldtlands their home, and conspire to get rid of squatters.

The Mang trees here are gloomy and morose. They live in fear of the Ravant, which has already uprooted and slain many of the eldest of their kind. They will advise and counsel the player characters provided they promise not to use fire while in their domains.

**Wavering Meadow.** The most beautiful region of the Aberrant Forest, Wavering Meadow is full of flowers with diaphanous blossoms that shift in color as the direction of the wind shifts. Eddies in the breeze cause stripes, swirls and patterns of color to waver across the meadow.

In addition to countless insects, birds and other wildlife, wild cibants are attracted to the blooms. It is the nature of these animals to gather pollen and distribute it, while devouring the nectar which they feed upon. However, the pollens here change as the colors of the blossoms shift. On a windy day, cibants rush madly throughout the fields, trying to pollinate compatible blossoms before they change color again.

The shifting winds create a wonderful panorama among the changing flowers. Due to one of the frequent mutations of Empyrian, however, today the wind picks up magical effects from the pollen. As the adventurers cross the meadow, these unpredictable anomalies have strange effects on them.

The wind changes every d6 minutes. To determine the effect, roll d6 and consult the results listed below. Alternately, a Gamemaster may invent results of his own. The change in the meadow flowers is only temporary. Once the adventurers have had a taste of several of the results, the flowers return to their normal harmless state.

#### 1-3: No Significant Effect.

**3: Vortex of Color.** A single player character (select one randomly) is caught up as rapid blossom changes around him create a violet and colorful funnel cloud. The cyclone moves with its victim(s), and widens to envelop all who touch it. People within

the vortex are hidden from view for d6 rounds, until the cloud fades away. Roll once per victim on the Mutations Table (see the "Talisantian Arcana" section) to determine the effect. The result lasts for d20 hours.

**4: Purple Wind.** The air is filled with a violet haze. Player characters who fail their WILL Rolls fall in love with the next being they notice. If it has a sex opposite to the adventurer's and is from an appropriate race, the affection will seem to be "true love." In any other case, the character experiences extreme devotion toward the living creature. The effect lasts for d6 days. Once enchanted, the character is immune to further exposures of this magic.

**5: Red Rage.** Clouds of red pollen float into the air. Exposed player characters immediately become irritable. Whenever contradicted or frustrated, an adventurer must succeed at a WILL Roll or immediately go into a berserk rage. The fit of anger lasts d8 rounds, and the victim must attack everything in range. He may only use close combat weapons, and must attack in the most direct manner possible. He is too angry to make use of any magic or advanced combat techniques he knows (Zandir bladesmanship, for instance). Exposed characters remain susceptible to fits of anger for d4 hours.

**6: Stench of Fear.** An unpleasant smell similar to rotting flesh introduces this magical breeze. This pollen works directly on the eyes of its victims, and need not be breathed to have an effect. It induces hallucinations, causing the adventurers to see horror in everything they look at. If they stare at a companion, he sprouts horns and suddenly looks like a devil; if they look at a flower, it drips blood and reaches out with grasping tendrils; and so forth. Characters who succeed at a PER Roll experience the hallucinations, but realize they are only illusory. The effects last only until the wind shifts.

**Optional:** Wavering Meadow also provides the adventurers with a chance to meet a herd of wild Cibants sleeping in the upright position (as they often do). The party must be very careful to avoid the frenzy of rudely awakened Cibants (see the "Naturalist's Compendium" in this book for full details).

**Amber Vale.** This lightly wooded area is a veritable paradise. Trees are stately and beautiful, the waters are deeply gold, and the air is fresh with flowery scents. But this beauty may be overlooked by visitors because of one distraction — the streams run up the sides of the mossy valley.

All of the shallow streams in the vale flow from a central lake. The body of golden water at the heart of the vale is hundreds of feet deep, and is supplied by underground springs. The disruption of nature which allows the golden water to flow uphill may come from the water itself, or be a peculiarity of this vale. The golden water flows normally outside of Amber Vale.

The colored waters are very inviting. Few can resist peering into their shimmering depths. The reflective waters act as a mirror, returning distorted views to those who stare — and putting them within striking range of the inhabitants of the lake. Countless skalax delight in swimming just inches below the surface. When foolish creatures peer into the reflective depths, the beasts are upon them in the blink of an eye. After a second of thrashing, the victim is gone — and only a few ripples witness that anything has happened.

As the adventurers take in their serene surroundings, a curious Cibant — a pack animal without a rider, if possible — wanders close to the river's edge and takes a drink. A battle with lake skalax promptly erupts.

After the Cibant is attacked, the party will probably avoid the lake. However, streams are too shallow for the skalax. Any

character who drinks the golden water could also ingest unwanted parasites, such as raylok (see the "Naturalist's Compendium" section of this book for their descriptions).

### The Arborin Territories

A variety of plantmen called the *Arborin* dwell in these forested highlands. Copses of thornwood trees are strewn throughout the area, making ground travel difficult. The Arborin prefer to make their home among the thornwood, which is no impediment to them since they travel through the treetops. They hunt by luring prey deep into the forest, then ambush it from above. The Arborin are nearly undetectable when motionless within the foliage.

Generations of Arborin have directed the growth of the thornwood trees in a wide band about the perimeter of their main community, making it almost impregnable. Smaller villages exist elsewhere, guarding the fringes of the territory claimed by the plantmen.

These tree-dwelling sentients are shorter than the Verdir, and lack the leafy foliage that their cousins possess. Although they too photosynthesize energy from the light of the suns, the Arborin must supplement their diet by soaking their roots in enriched nutrients. They use blowguns and thornwood traps to kill prey, then bury the bodies to produce compost and mulch.

Arborin consider themselves superior to the animal races and the hedonistic Verdir. They do not believe there is a world beyond Empyrian, and are extremely aggressive toward those who claim to be from Talislanta or other "outside" worlds.

### ARBORIN TREE-DWELLER

**SIZE:** 5'-5' 6", 180-200 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Stocky with deep-set eyes, caricature of a man-like face, skin like tree bark

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

**HIT POINTS:** 14

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Bark as per leather armor, mobile, natural camouflage

**SKILLS:** Agriculturist, primary combat, *plus any 3 Wilderness skills*

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Blowgun, pouch of 12 poison darts (causes paralysis).

**WEALTH:** None

**COMMENTS:** Arborin must spend 3 hours per day in direct sunlight or take 1 hit point of damage from malnutrition. They also must spend 3 hours per day in moist, specially prepared soil or suffer 2 hit points of damage from malnutrition. Both feedings may take place simultaneously.

An Arborin scouting party spots the adventurers soon after they enter the highland forest. They ambush the party, fire an initial volley of blowgun darts, then watch to see what the player characters do. The plantmen are curious about the strange intruders, and wish to test the courage and fighting ability of the characters.

*If the player characters break and run:* The Arborin pursue them. The plantmen do not want a pitched battle, but will continue to launch quick surprise attacks and ambush sentries throughout the night.

*If the party launches a fierce and immediate counterattack:* The Arborin conclude that the adventurers are an invading menace. They send an alert through the woods, beating on hollow trees to communicate with other patrols.

*In any other situation:* Having tested the player characters and discovered that they are neither weak nor aggressive, the plant-

men are willing to talk. A spokesplant warns the adventurers that travel through the Arborin territories is strictly forbidden to outsiders.

### Wildwood

This dangerous woodland is the home of predatory vegetation such as the Monarch and Amnesia, as well as the small mammals known as Spiminians. Using their powers of plant control, the Monarchs have created intricate deathtraps in which they catch their prey. An even worse threat, however, is the ominous entity known as the Ravant, which hunts here.

This trip into Wildwood is intended to be the most dangerous portion of the adventure. Among the many things which may be encountered here are the following:

- **The Monarch Plant.** These dominating plants are highly intelligent, and take control of other plants to feed themselves and to establish a defensive perimeter. This particular Monarch has control of six plants: four trees (Amnesia, Bombardier, Mang and Tanglewood), a stranglevine, and an Arborin plantman. (*THE NATURALIST'S GUIDE TO TALISLANTA* describes tanglewood and stranglevine, while volume one of *THE CYCLOPEDIA TALISLANTA* has information about Mang trees).

The stranglevine, with its limited mobility, has been hidden behind ordinary bushes near the Mang tree. The Mang calls to any sentient being which approaches, claiming to know important information about the Kagan. When victims near the trap, the stranglevine attacks.

Thirty feet away, the Amnesia simultaneously produces its telepathic call as the stranglevine makes its move. It lures its



victims past the tanglewood, which scoops characters into its high branches and holds them there. The Arborin is concealed in the foliage of the Amnesia, ready to defend it. Knowledgeable players might trace the visible control root attached to the Arborin in order to locate the Monarch, but since the root leads into the ground, they only get an indication of the general direction of the mastermind plant.

The Monarch eagerly sifts through the memories which the Amnesia extracts, using them to taunt the others through the voice of the Mang: "Hymrale, your Ardua friend is in much pain." It is protected beneath the Bombardier, which tosses its bombs to keep anyone from approaching.

- In addition to the Monarch Plant, the party could run into the greatest threat in all of Empyrian — the Ravant. (For a complete description of the beast, see the character descriptions at the end of this adventure.)

**WARNING!** *This could be a devastating encounter for the adventurers. The Ravant has greater endurance and determination than most parties. Through your game-mastering, make this immediately clear to the players. Provide the characters with ample opportunity to save themselves.*

When the adventurers encounter the Ravant, vividly describe its loathsome appearance and the violence with which it attacks. Do not tell the players that this is the Ravant — let them figure this out for themselves. There are three methods of surviving this encounter:

**Being Lucky.** When all seems lost, a sudden storm of nutrient rain causes vegetation in the area to swell in size — cutting off the Ravant from its quarry. Mere plants aren't enough to really stop the beast, but the player characters should be able to get away before the beast frees himself. If not, the chase could force the adventurers into an enchanted region similar to the Wavering Meadow, where some strange effect temporarily overcomes or distracts the Ravant.

**Receiving Outside Help.** Spiminians in Wildwood distract the Ravant, allowing the player characters to escape. However, the jungle sentients are likely to ask for payment for their aid, probably before they intervene.

**Outwitting the Beast.** The Ravant pursues its prey with relentless determination. However, it cannot swim — in fact, the beast sinks like a rock. Therefore, if the player characters think to lure their enemy onto open water — and if they still have their Cibants, this isn't difficult — the Ravant disappears below the surface, its demise marked only by bubbles on the surface of the water.

The Ravant should be a constant threat throughout the quest for the moss. Until the adventurers discourage it by luring it into water, it continues to return for further attacks. The beast should get at least one victim with each attack before the Gamemaster allows the characters to be rescued, unless the players think fast.

### The Myrk

The Myrk is a shallow, dirty and brackish swamp. It is hard to believe that these waters connect to the beautiful Amber Lake. In the middle of the swamp lies the Island of San-Sing Castle — home of the mysterious figure known throughout Empyrian as the Kagan. From a distance, the fortress appears to be a fabulous topiary palace fashioned of lush vegetation.

Once the adventurers spot the Island of San-Sing Castle, they will probably want to go there. As they reach the edge of the murky lake, a robed figure poling a flat-bottomed boat approaches across the waters. On close inspection it can be determined that

the figure is a female. She seems very shy and will not speak to the characters unless spoken to first.

This is the Witch Attia (see the character descriptions at the end of this adventure for her complete description). She can help them reach the island. The skittish Cibants will not allow themselves to be ferried in the boat, however. Attia will offer to watch the animals, loaning the adventurers her boat if they will make sure that the Kagan receives the bag of herbs which she has collected. If asked, she will accompany them to San-Sing.

If the party insists on riding their Cibants over the water, she does not discourage or warn them. Riding onto the water prompts an attack by a large aramatus, which rises from the murky waters with incredible suddenness. It is more likely to attack the Cibants themselves (70% chance) rather than their riders. The startled water-walkers dash around randomly, instinctively refusing to flee to solid ground. Riders must succeed at their Riding skill rolls or fall into the water.

If the adventurers get into more trouble than they can handle, Attia intervenes. The aramati will not attack her boat or anything on it. When (or if) the player characters arrive on the island, refer to "The Kagan" section for instructions.

### San-Sing

On closer inspection, it can be seen that the Kagan's castle is not as splendid as it first appeared, but is instead an ancient stone castle, long since fallen into disrepair and heavily overgrown with vegetation. Creepers lace along the walls, and the burrowing roots of trees have dislodged portions of the masonry. A forest of stunted trees occupies the rest of the island.

### The Kagan

Encountered in San-Sing Castle, the Kagan resides on the basement floor, the only part of the building which is intact. He does not much resemble the god-like Great Creator described by the Verdir (For a full description, see pg. 67.) The Kagan is willing to help the adventurers, if they agree to help him with his magical researches. He needs a handful of a rare moss from Wildwood, found only the western side of the trunk of the Yellow Manlicoth tree. This tree is short and slender, with upward-pointing yellow leaves. If the player characters retrieve the moss and return with it to San-Sing, the Kagan agrees to send them to any locale in Talisanta (see "Ending the Adventure").

### Moss Quest

This trip into Wildwood is intended to be the most dangerous portion of the adventure. In addition to the encounter already described for Wildwood (the Yellow Manlicoth might grow near the Monarch deathtrap), the party could run into the greatest threat in all of Empyrian — the Ravant. (For a complete description of the beast, see pg. 67.)

### Ending the Adventure

The most satisfying way to bring the adventure to a close is if the adventurers complete their mission for the Kagan. Back at Castle San-Sing, the Kagan agrees to "return" them to Talisanta (he knows they really never left, but won't volunteer this information). However, the lands he suggests sending them to — Pompadors and Ashann, for instance — are pre-Disaster nations. (The Kagan has been a recluse for a very long time, and is somewhat out of touch with things). While the Kagan only knows pre-Disaster geography, he will agree to transport the party safely beyond the edge of the Aberrant Forest, in whichever direction they choose. He uses a powerful form of *Korak's Spell of Transference*, cast sideways, to transport the characters home.



According to common belief, the Mad Wizard Rodinn created the Aberrant Forest. Originally of the ancient land of Pompados, Rodinn supposedly began a series of questionable experiments centuries ago somewhere in the Wilderlands. Legend has it that an experiment went awry, causing the Aberrant Forest and all in it to undergo a strange transformation. Some scholars believe this accident was the catalyst which brought on the Great Disaster.

*The truth is that Rodinn inadvertently created the Aberrant Forest through the release of a quantity undistilled quintessence. However, he did **not** cause the Great Disaster.*

Alternately, stubborn or lucky adventurers might simply wander out of Empyrian on their own. This alone doesn't guarantee survival — depending on where they exit and how well they know their geography, they might head for the Citystate of Danuvia (across fertile plains where retired Viragos homestead), the Citystate of Hadj (across the wasteland), or through the Topaz Mountains to the Dead River caravan route.

If they ever realize that they were in the Aberrant Forest, the player characters might think to sell their knowledge to the Lyceum Arcanum or another scholarly body. If proof accompanies the discoveries, prices are higher. This may lead to a return trip into Empyrian, and further encounters with the Ravant.

#### Cast

**Attia, Witch of the Myrk.** Fourteenth level. 5' 6" tall, 80 lbs. STR -3, DEX +3, CON -4, INT +3, PER +3, CHA -8  
**Combat Rating** 0. 38 hit points. Pole, d4 damage. Bulky robes. Has a flat-bottomed boat with several bags of herbs.  
**Magic Rating** +15. An enchanted necklace, given to Attia by the Kagan, allows her to assume her former beauty (+8 CHA) at will. This magic can be detected by those who study her at very close range and succeed at a PER Roll, but her real appearance remains unseen unless she wills to reveal it. She knows all of the basic spells and enchantments, plus many others.  
**Skills:** Artificer, concoct potions, herb lore, primary magic  
As a child, Attia was stranded in the Aberrant Forest when a windship owned by her parents crashed after being struck by Black Lightning. Though she was somehow able to survive, exposure to the aberrant energies of the Black Lightning storm left her terribly disfigured.

Attia was raised by the Kagan, who taught her the ways of the forest, and instructed her in the arts of magic. Ashamed of her ugliness, Attia quietly plies the waters of the Myrk, hopeful that one day the Kagan will find a way to cure her.

When encountered, Attia uses her magical item to assume the appearance of a beautiful woman. Despite her magical prowess, she is fearful of strangers and acts as if she has something to hide . . . which the characters may misinterpret.

**The Kagan, Wizard of San-Sing Castle.** 7' 2" tall, 190 lbs.

STR 0, DEX +4, CON 0, SPD +1, INT +12, WILL +2, PER +6  
**Combat Rating** unknown. (Due to his magic powers, the Kagan cannot be brought into personal combat.) His ornate robes are patched and stained. Many devices and instruments of inscrutable purposes protrude from the pockets of his robe.  
**Magic Rating** infinite. He knows any spell which the Gamemaster thinks he might need, and may have any magic item.  
**Skills:** Arcane lore, geography, languages (Archaen, High Talislan), literacy, oratory, primary magic, Talislantan culture, Talislantan history

Known as "the Kagan" by the inhabitants of Empyrian, this mysterious being labors feverishly to find an antidote to the quintessential poison which afflicts Empyrian. Unfortunately, his experi-

ments have only caused more harm — creating the Ravant, for instance, as well as both races of plantmen. The Kagan is a sorcerer of awesome power. If attacked, assume that he can do almost anything.

Strange and reclusive, the Kagan is not comfortable dealing with visitors. He is tight-lipped and reserved, careful to hide his secrets. The wizard seldom leaves the castle.

#### The Ravant

A huge man-like creature, the Ravant is ebony in hue and is composed totally of muscle, metallic extrusions, horns, and bone. Its fangs extend in every direction from a huge, gaping maw. Accentuating its devilish appearance is its tail, an eyeless serpent whose bite means death.

A personification of the destructive forces of nature, the Ravant eats whatever it kills and kills whatever moves. Its only purpose is to destroy. Not very intelligent, it has sufficient cunning to avoid pits and obvious traps — unless angered. Then, however, the Ravant acts as if berserk, losing all intelligence.

**SIZE:** 12' tall, 2,000+ lbs.

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR +14, DEX -4, CON +18, SPD +1, INT -6, WILL +8, PER +4

**LEVEL:** 40

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Bite — d8; claws (3) — d6 + 5; tail — d4 + poison (see "Comments")

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Nearly impossible to kill (immune to poisons, resistant to magical attack), poisonous biting tail

**ARMOR:** Hide as per plate

**HIT POINTS:** 200

**HABITAT:** The Aberrant Forest/Empyrian (Wildwood is its usual haunt)

**COMMENTS:** Hostile magic has limited effect on this monster, seldom lasting longer than d4 rounds. It cannot swim, and will sink like a stone in water. Poison from the tail does an additional d6 points of damage per round, for d10 rounds.



## THE HADJIN RUINS

The Citystate of Hadj's primary tourist attraction, these shattered ruins were once the city of Phandril, capital of ancient Hadjanistan. The best preserved section of the city is the old necropolis, where towering, obelisk-like mausoleums — most still standing, but some leaning at precarious angles and others fallen over — contain the remains of the Hadjin's Phandre ancestors.

The Phandre preserved the bodies of their nobility by alchemical means, placing remains in an air-tight sarcophagus carved from a block of colored crystal. The sealed sarcophagus was then placed within a 10'x 10'x 10' crypt, along with three of the deceased's most cherished possessions. Finally, the crypt itself was sealed, locked, and its entrance concealed.

The sarcophagi were placed by levels which match different eras in Hadjanistan history. The most ancient crypts are found on the lowest levels below ground, while burials shortly preceding the Great Disaster are in the highest tower levels. Fourteen periods of history are identifiable by the color of the crystal used in making the sarcophagi.

Each mausoleum tower stands over 70 feet high, measuring 25 feet on a side. Most have subterranean levels as well, extending several hundred feet below the ground. A tower may contain as many as a hundred individual crypts. Traps, deadfalls and magical and alchemical safeguards were built into each structure for protection from tomb-robbers. The ruins contain thousands of these towers, scattered across a vast region of arid and barren land.

### Tours

The Hadjin Consortium offers tours of the necropolis, at the following rates per person:

Carriage Tour (no extras, with 20+ tourists)	100 G.L.
Carriage Tour (as above, plus food and drink)	150 G.L.
Palanquin (small group, no extras)	200 G.L.
Palanquin (small group, refreshments served)	250 G.L.
Windship Tour (no extras, with 20+ tourists)	300 G.L.
Windship Tour (first class, with servants)	400 G.L.

All tours include a brief visit in a previously-explored tower. The Hajann guide shows a sample sarcophagus, explains construction techniques of ancient Hadjanistan, and demonstrates several traps. Tours are reasonably entertaining and educational, but afford no real opportunity for discovery. Carriage tours take four hours, while the windships take half that long.

### Exploration

The Hadjin Ruins provide an ideal adventure setting for those players interested in archeological-type exploration (what some would call "tomb-robbering"). Permits to explore the ruins cost 1,000 G.L. per day, per person, and can only be obtained from the offices of the Consortium. Explorers can also hire a Hajann guide through the Consortium, for a fee of 100 G.L. per day. Those who purchase permits must sign a standard agreement, the basic terms of which are:

1) The Citystate of Hadj is not responsible for physical, emotional or other damage incurred by explorers, regardless of circumstances.

2) Explorers must turn over all items exhumed from the ruins and the surrounding areas to Hadj's Emporium, where independent appraisers will establish the fair value of all artifacts and may offer them for sale. The Consortium retains all rights to exhumed items.

3) Members of the exploratory party are to paid in gold lumens, in an amount equal to half the appraised value of any recovered artifacts.

4) Explorers will be charged a penalty by the Consortium or its agents for any damage to the necropolis as a result of their actions.

5) The Consortium reserves the right to prosecute individuals who willfully defile ancestral remains, conceal artifacts from the appraisers, or engage in activities which may be deemed reckless or dangerous to others.

6) The Consortium reserves the right to determine which sites and locations with the necropolis are open for exploration. Conversely, the Consortium may set certain areas off-limits to explorers.

Parties are assigned a necropolis tower by lottery, then transported there by windship. They are on their own until the windship returns in eight hours. Any who miss the ship will have to spend the night in the ruins, and are charged a late fee of 500 G.L. by the Consortium.

Ordinarily, entrance to a tower is gained through an iron trapdoor on the roof. This usually leads to a flight of stone stairs and a passageway. Interior doors are heavy, requiring a combined STR of +6 or better to open.

### Hadjin Artifacts

Almost anything can be found in the necropolis. Favorite items of the deceased were buried with them in the sarcophagi: paintings, jewelry, chests of coins, alchemical powders, urns, statues, elixirs and mummified animals. Enchanted fountains, magic mirrors and similar wonders have been found in what seem to have been assembly chambers. Passageways and workrooms may also contain antique mortician tools, greatly prized in certain Sindaran circles.

Hadj's Office of Appraisers serves as the only authorized means of determining the authenticity and value of artifacts exhumed from the ruins. Kashmir Auditors operate this concern under a special contract, employing a staff of 30 investigators, mages, antiquarians, linguists, numismatics and cryptomancers.

The rules they follow for determining the value of a given artifact are:

**Age.** The older it is, the greater its value. Artifacts from the Hadjin Ruins are from fourteen periods of history, identifiable by the color of the crystal used in making that era's sarcophagi. The Great Ages of Phandril culture are:

**Archaic Age.** Includes articles believed to pre-date Phandril civilization. (4 x minimum value)

**Early Age.** Includes artifacts made during the founding years of ancient Hadjanistan, from the Amethyst Period (the earliest), through the Jade, Ruby and Emerald Periods. (3 x minimum value).

**Middle Age.** Articles from the Carnelian, Amber, Turquoise, Topaz and Opal Periods. (2 x minimum value).

**Late Age.** The most recent era, including all articles made during

the Tourmaline, Sapphire, Aquamarine, Onyx and Crystal Periods. (no bonus).

**Condition.** All applicable artifacts are rated as follows:

*Very Poor.* Broken, worn, or otherwise badly damaged articles are usually worthless, unless made of some precious metal or other valuable substance. They are normally regarded as junk, but might be sold to a Maruk scrap dealer.

*Fair.* Slightly damaged, worn, stained, or flawed artifacts are generally worth half their normal value.

*Fine.* Undamaged articles are worth full value.

*Exemplary.* Artifacts in perfect condition, which appear unused or practically new, are worth twice their normal value.

**Rarity.** Any item judged to be rare may be worth two, three, or even four times its normal value. Common articles may be devalued by as much as half.

**Collectibility.** Artifacts which have a wide market as collectibles are considered especially valuable. Articles in this category include sarcophagi, art, works of unusual craftsmanship, and coins.

*The Phandril Masters.* Art collectors covet the works of the early artists of Hadjanistan, the most famous of which were:

Cadelius — Sculptor of the Amethyst Period. (50 x price)

LeFanque — Jade Period painter. (20 x price)

Mordira — Sculptor of the Amber Period. (10 x price)

Neos Naalo — Painter from the Sapphire Period. (5 x price)

Sandelle — Poet of the Jade Period. (Scrolls worth 10,000+ G.L.)

*Notable Crafts.* Artifacts renowned for the skill put into them by artisans in their historical period include:

Crystalware — Amethyst Period vases and goblets. (20 x minimum)

Jewelry — Silver and gold necklaces of the Opal Period. (20 x minimum)

Land Deeds — Carved from ogront ivory, these rectangular plates of the Amber Period are prized by art collectors and genealogists. (1,500+ G.L.)

*Sarcophagi.* The Citystate of Hadj claims all sarcophagi recovered, paying explorers a finder's fee. Foreign collectors gladly pay 20 times these finder fees, if the large artifacts can be smuggled out of the ruins without the citystate intervening. (Finder's fees: 1,000 G.L., Late Age; 2,000 G.L., Middle Age; 5,000 G.L., Early Age)

**Coins.** The ancient Phandre minted several types of coins. The most prized are:

Hundred-Lumen Gold Centares — From the Archaic Age, these coins are unusual for their thick rims. (4,000 G.L.)

Fifty-Lumen Gold Half-Centares — Half-disk coins with thick rims, these are also from the Archaic Age. (3,000 G.L.)

Copper Dragons — Large disks from the Amethyst Period, pierced with a hole in the shape of Crested Dragon. (10,000 G.L.)

Seven Moons Silver Sequins — These fragile coins from the Emerald Period are made of copper overlaid with a brittle, reflective silver patina. (2,500 G.L.)

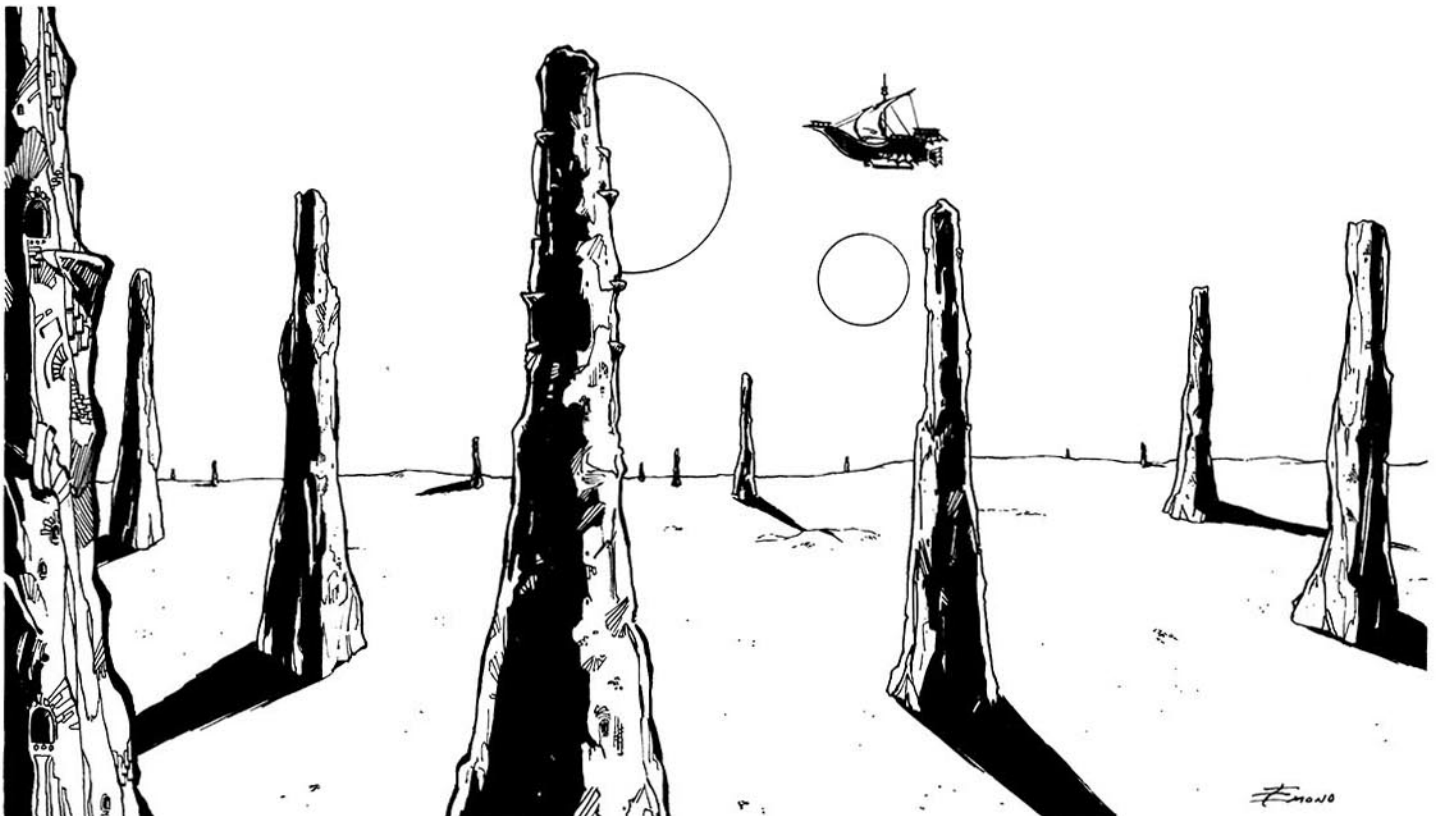
Other Phandril coins are worth more than their face value, due to their age and rarity.

Coins of the Archaic Age (20 x face value in G.L.)

Coins of the Early Age (10 x face value in G.L.)

Coins of the Middle Age (5 x face value in G.L.)

Coins of the Late Age (2 x face value in G.L.)





# OTHER ADVENTURES IN THE WILDERLANDS

The following ideas can be used by Gamemasters to create their own adventures in the Wilderlands of Zaran.

## The Citystate of Danuvia

**The Broken Span.** Adventurers traveling the Dead Canyon route are trapped within Danuvia's bridge fortress by an attack of manrak. Can the party and the Viragos hold out before reinforcements arrive from the citystate? Did the messenger to Danuvia get through? And why did Queen Allu build the span on this site — is there a secret within Danuvia's Dead River Span?

**Triangle.** When an adventurer visits Danuvia, he wins the hearts of its women...two of them. A distinguished Gyne wants him for her harem, but a Virago captain also wishes to claim him. Will the captain's comrades kidnap him? Can a clever Proxy aid his Gyne?

## The Citystate of Hadj

**Ancestral Enemy.** An ancient *something* lives within the necropolis, and enters the city through the sewers of Hadj. When friends of the adventurers disappear, they find that the Hajann don't care — or have something to hide. Does the corpse-eating unknown have a connection with the recent discovery of a very ancient scroll? Is there really a secret diabolist cult within Hadj?

**The Misfortunate.** A Hadjin family is on the verge of disgrace and exile. Disaster has followed disaster — the theft of valuable artwork, the desecration of a sarcophagi on exhibit in the manor, and now the loss of the precious papers of genealogy. Can the loss of the papers be kept secret? Can the hired adventurers recover them? Are the Hadjin right to suspect their Hajann servitors, or are the Fires of the Black Opal to blame?

## The Citystate of Maruk

**Laria's Robe.** Laria the Indomitable was a Farad wizard who claimed to be a reincarnation of Malavia of Quaran. Her spirit, enchanted within one of the costumes of Weaver's Row, takes control of an adventurer who tries on the robe. Now the Silverthreads, who realize their error, want the costume back. Xam-

brian Witch-Hunters are out to kill Malavia's spirit, regardless of whose body he's occupying. Meanwhile, an unscrupulous Sindaran collector will pay 1,000 lumens for the costume. All Malavia wants is to continue her interrupted experiments . . .

**The Martyrdom of Aabacca.** The Hierophant of Aaman decides that it's time for Aabacca of the Misfortunates to go on to a martyr's death. This is easy enough to arrange, but it is necessary to have scapegoats — the adventurers. When the player characters are framed for murdering a saint, who's to defend them?

## Elsewhere

**Child of the Storm.** Adventurers find a baby crying, wrapped in a black velvet shawl at the foot of a statue of a Necromancer-King of Quaran. The Xambrians have a legend that each Quaran must come back to the statue for his final incarnation. Blossom, a poor Maruk girl who pursues the party, says her baby was stolen by a stranger in black robes. The Rajans declare the infant to be the prophesied Black Child of Quaran, and threaten to kill it if the child is not given to them. The Hadjin claim that a baby matching the description was stolen from the nurse of the Registrar of Hadj. What's the party to do, who are they to believe, and who takes care of orphans in Talislanta?

**The Last Call.** The desperate Sauruds have united, and together have succeeded in calling a dozen Crested Dragons to the wilderness. The great predators are eating slavers, Borderlands mercenaries, and caravans as far south as the Wilderlands Road. Sent by the Seven Kingdoms, can the party find a way to banish the dragons and restore the vital trade routes? With Karfan isolated, can the Beastmen resist attempting an assault?

**Whispers From the Past.** Exploring a cool cave, the party awakens a Saurud from hibernation. To their amazement, the lizardman claims to be an escaped slave from ancient Ashann who hid in this cave and fell into hibernation centuries ago. Is his information correct? Is the treasure map he sketches accurate, or has his memory failed him? What will the Wanderers do, if the adventurers are about to unearth the secrets of Ashann?

# TALISLANTA



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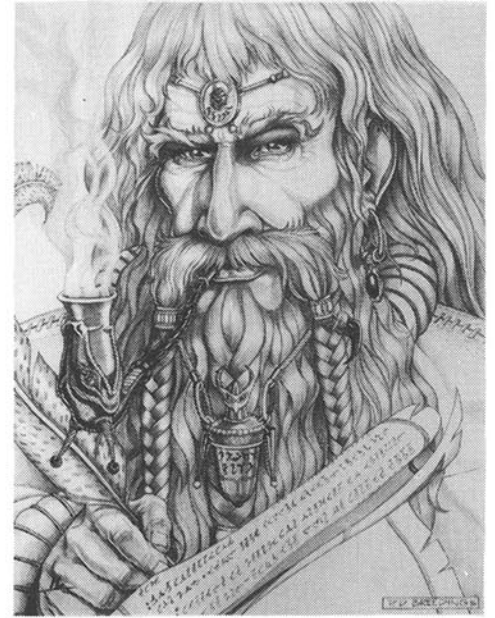


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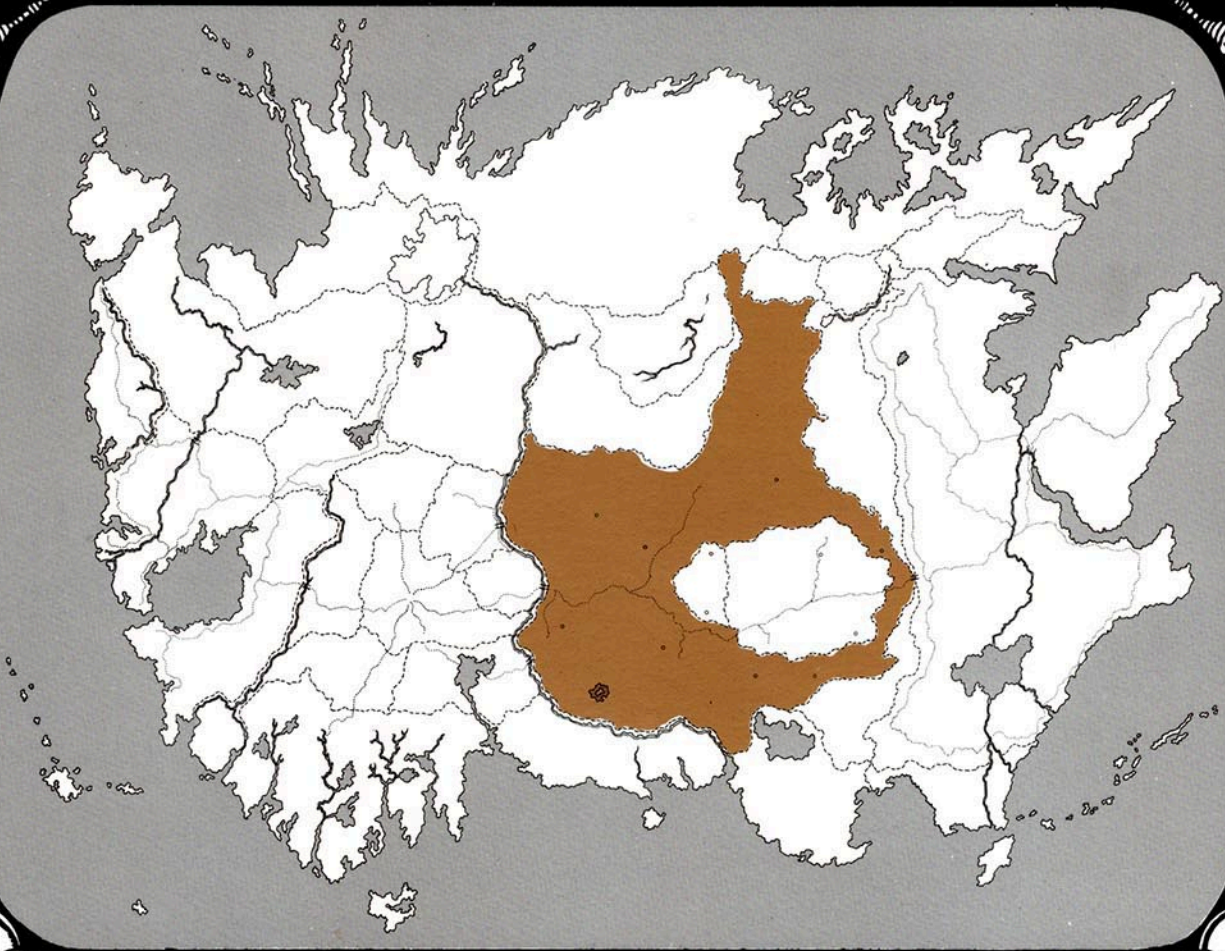




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