

THE CYCLOPEDIA  
**TALISLANTA**



VOLUME IV  
**THE WESTERN LANDS**

# THE CYCLOPEDIA TALISLANTA

## VOLUME IV THE WESTERN LANDS

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# INTRODUCTION

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

Players should enjoy the wealth of new material on western cultures and characters — the lunar magic of the Dhuna, the philosophy behind Zandu's Paradoxism, Sarista caravans and their performers, the society of Castabulan and its inhabitants, Aaman's Knights of the Order and their monasteries, and Gnorl Watchmakers and their devices. Advanced role-players will enjoy the new exotic character types, such as the Serparian beggars of Zandu and the primitive Azir from the Isle of Talisandre.

Along with complete background on the five regions of the West, the Gamemaster will find expanded, optional rules for Aamanian astrology, the Druk songs of madness, Werewood runecircles, and Zandir bladesmanship. A special section lets the Gamemaster in on some of the secrets of the Revenant assassin cult — players can use this material only with the Gamemaster's permission!

Two ready-to-play adventures are provided: “A Night in Ammahd,” concerning thieves and an Orthodoxist temple, and “Midnight's Clue,” which involves the adventurers with Arim's secret lords. The maps for an Aamanian temple and Arimite trading post, provided in the adventures, can also be used as locations for a Gamemaster-designed scenario. Lastly, a page of ideas is provided to inspire those who would like to design their own adventures in the West.

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# OVERVIEW

The Western Lands of Talislanta are a place of great variety and contrast. From the haunted reaches of Werewood to the eternally opposed nations of Zandu and Aaman, there is great opportunity for travel, profit, learning, danger and — most important of all — adventure.

In the north lies **Werewood**, an eerie, haunted forest which is home to such dangerous creatures as werebeasts, banes and moonmoth larvae. The mysterious circles of stones scattered here are said to be tended by the Dhuna, the witch-people of Werewood. Gnorlwood, the oldest forest of the region, is the home of a mysterious people who conjure spirits in order to gain their secrets.

East of Werewood, **Silvanus** — home of the nomadic Sarista — is a markedly more pleasant place, with its forests of silver-beech and glades of meadow grass. Most creatures in these gentle hills are comparatively benign, although beasts from neighboring Werewood and infamous Deadwood are not unknown.

**Arim**, also in the north, is a bleak, arid land of rugged hills and grassy steppes, with few resources save its vast quantities of black iron. A dour and humorless people known as the Arimites dwell here, fighting ceaselessly with the savage Druhk hill tribes and marauding clans of Ur. Wildlife here is of the hardest sort — woolly ogriphants, predatory yaksha and tough, mountain-bred greymanes.

The two great nations of the West — **Zandu** and **Aaman** — were ravaged by the Cult Wars, and have only recently begun to recover. Reforestation and agricultural programs in Zandu have increased food production, enabling the nation to resume exporting. The Aamanians, conversely, engage in widespread clearing of forests for conversion to farmland. This has caused erosion, depletion of nutrients, and the disruption of local ecosystems, but the Orthodoxists do not seem to care.

Southern Aaman is hot and humid, becoming semi-tropical along the borders of Jhangara. Wild predators and Jhangaran tribesmen sometimes cross the frontier to raid, but are swiftly dealt with by the Aamanian military.

## Travel in the West

These lands are a popular destination for adventurers from across Talislanta. The mysteries of Werewood, the dangers of Arim, and the continual conflicts between Zandu and Aaman are strong inducements for explorers, spies, mercenaries, and others of an adventurous nature.

Travel in Zandu is safe, although exomorphs and malathropes may be found in wilderness regions. The Zandir are a generous people, willing to help the hapless traveler, and fascinated by the outside world. It must be noted, however, that a healthy sense of larceny is considered normal here — especially among the Charlatans, Zandu's priest class.

The same cannot be said for the Theocratic Nation of Aaman. While wild animals and dangerous races pose little threat except in the south, travelers must deal with the Orthodoxists themselves. Foreigners are barely tolerated, and may at any time be arrested, taken to the local House of Penance, and converted to Orthodoxy on pain of death. For this reason, travel in Aaman should be undertaken with extreme caution.

Silvanus is a land of great beauty and tranquility, and except for the lethal reaches of Deadwood, travel here is without major difficulty. The Sarista are friendly, though roguish and thieving.

The perils of Werewood are well known. Deadly flora and fauna menace travelers, and despite the potential benefits of such travel — rare plants to be collected, tombs to be plundered, and the like — only the most prepared and experienced adventurers should venture here.

Arim lies on the caravan route from Zandu to the Seven Kingdoms, and its ore deposits make it an important trade region. Of more interest to adventurers may be the infamous Revenant assassin cult based here. The predations of Druhk hillmen, raiding Stryx and Ur, and wild beasts such as yaksha must be taken into account when traveling.

## ADVENTURES IN THE WEST

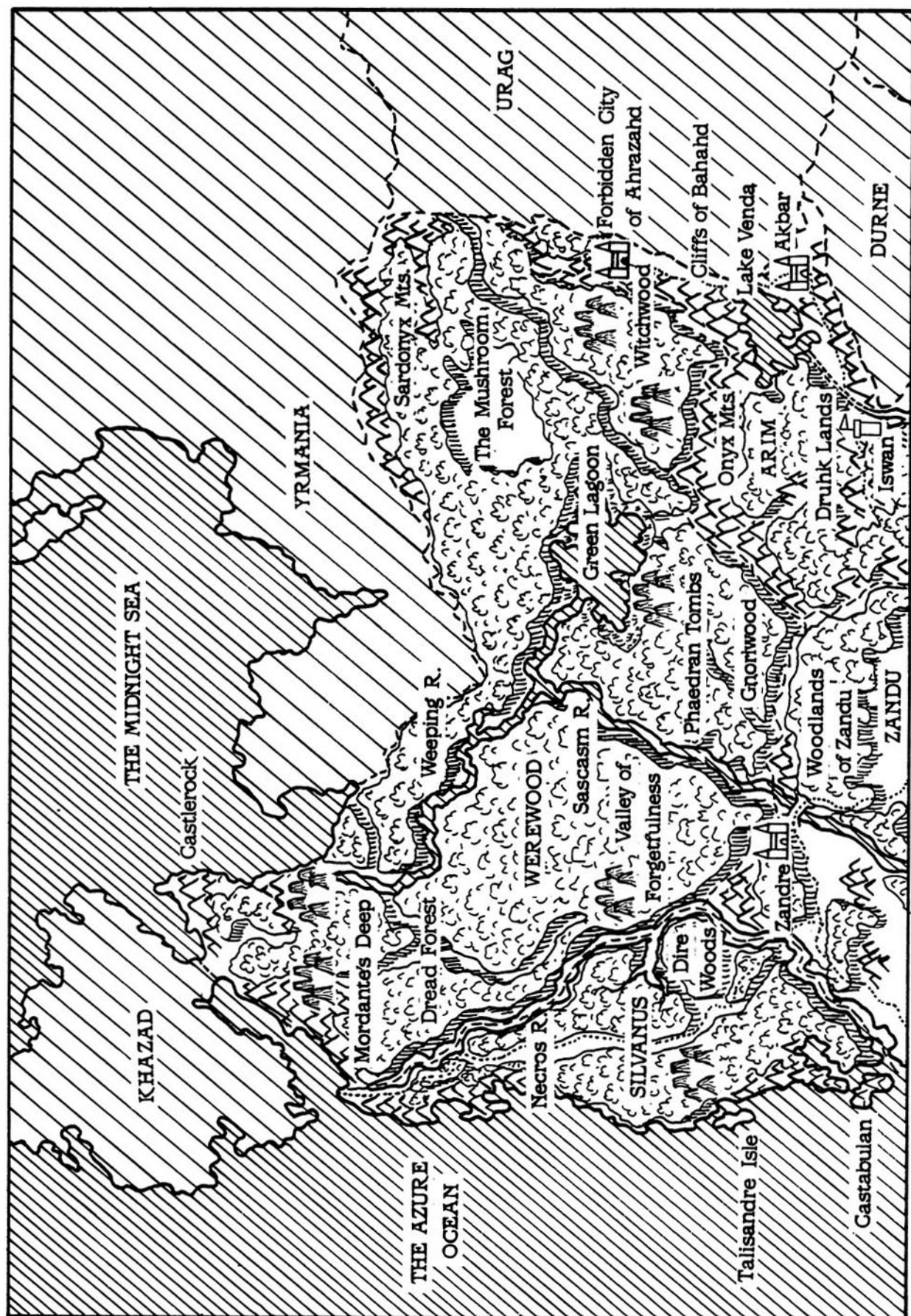
The Western Lands contain wonder and danger enough to intrigue the most jaded adventurer. Who are the mysterious Revenants, and how may one be protected from them? What secrets do the nomadic Sarista keep? What terrors (and treasures) lurk in the hidden depths of Werewood?

And what of Zandu and Aaman? Who will be victorious in this year's Clash of Champions? Will the Cult Wars ever resume, and will there be a final victor? Do the Aamanian pilgrims who travel across Talislanta have a hidden motive? Will the chaos of Zandu eventually lead to that nation's collapse into bickering factions?

These and many other questions may be answered by adventurers brave or foolhardy enough to visit the Western Lands of Talislanta.









# THE LANDS OF TALISLANTA

The following contains supplemental material to Volume One of *THE CYCLOPEDIA TALISLANTA*.

## THE PHAEDRAN EMPIRE

The founders of the Phaedran Empire were ruthless conquerors who annexed most of western Talislanta into their Empire. Their nation was the most powerful since the Great Disaster, and its influence was once felt to the furthest reach of the continent.

The Phaedran calendar, commonly used across Talislanta, begins with the founding of the Citystate of Phaedra in the year 0. In those days, the Phaedrans — descendants of an obscure, pre-Disaster faction known as the Yellow Acolytes — were divided into opposing philosophical camps. The *Orthodoxists*, who demanded strict adherence to the ancient laws of their forebears, were opposed by the *Paradoxists*, who called for more liberal interpretations of tradition, and an evolution of the old views to fit new circumstances. As the competition for control of the new state increased, the antipathy between the groups grew.

### Soliman and Damon

To keep the peace, the moderate Phaedran majority choose the wizard Soliman III as their leader. A kindly, enlightened man, Soliman ended the era of Phaedran expansion and turned inward, reforming the laws, improving the general welfare, and transforming the Empire into a more tolerant and progressive state. Soliman is remembered with affection in Zandu, but not in Aaman, where his tolerance is viewed as proof that he was a secret Paradoxist.

Soliman was advised by the Causidians, a caste of lawmakers who for over a century managed to steer a course between the two extreme factions. As time went by, however, the cults grew larger and more contentious, and this delicate balancing act became more and more difficult. In spite of this, Soliman and the Causidians managed the Empire well, and the land prospered.

In 71, Soliman grew ill and died without a legitimate heir. A young wizard named Damon came forward, claiming to be Soliman's illegitimate son. (Whether Damon truly was Soliman's son is a matter of considerable doubt, for by all accounts, the Emperor was a life-long celibate.) An idiot savant skilled in magic but half-mad, Damon was made ruler as a compromise, since both the Paradoxists and the Orthodoxists felt they could easily control the new emperor. Skeptics said that Damon was too unstable to rule.

Within days of his ascension, Damon began to prove his critics right. He gave the Citystate of Phaedra the new name of Badijan and declared a 20-year period of mourning for the departed emperor. In the years which followed, Damon allowed trade to lag and diplomacy to dwindle. The old conflicts between Orthodoxists and Paradoxists flared, and fights and riots between the rivals became common. The Empire became polarized, with the West being primarily Paradoxist, and the East predominantly Orthodoxist.

By the end of the mourning period, the grand Empire built by Soliman and his followers was a shambles. Damon, now hopelessly insane, declared his intention to found a dynasty, and called for a 20-year period of celebration to follow the mourning. The moderates, faced with the prospect of being governed by a long line of mentally impaired rulers, clapped Damon in irons and chose the sorcerer Kabros as emperor.

### The Last Emperor

While he tried for a time to restore order, Kabros had no confidence in the future of the Empire. Orthodoxists and Paradoxists still fought, and the division of the nation into eastern and western halves seemed irreversible. Many officials now kept private armies which rivaled the imperial forces in size. Secretly, Kabros made plans to flee Phaedra when the need arose.

By the year 100 — when celebrations of the Empire's first century turned into destructive riots, rocking the capital city of Badijan — Kabros had had enough. Advising his friends to beat a hasty retreat, he gathered his embezzled gold and fled to Thaecia, leaving his advisors and aides to pick up the pieces. In desperation, they disguised one of their number — an enchanter named Imorros — as Kabros.

The deception was successful for over a decade, but in 111, Imorros was finally exposed. In the furor which followed, the false emperor and his advisors fled. Within days the Orthodoxists struck, seizing Badijan and declaring the Hierophant Omm to be the new emperor. The followers of Aa arrested dissidents, exiling them to the penal colony of Gao. The religionists thought that they were triumphant, but their rise to power was only the beginning of one of the most bloody and violent periods in Talislantan history.

### The Cult Wars

Within a decade, the Empire was sundered into two warring nations — Orthodoxist Aaman, named after the stern deity Aa; and Zandu, named for Zand, a founder of the Paradoxist philosophy.

The Orthodoxy believed in eradicating those rivals whom they could not drive into exile. Driven by persecution, large numbers of refugees fled the Empire, becoming the founders of such diverse states as Cymril, Danuvia, and Hadj. When the Paradoxists in the West would not acknowledge Omm as emperor, the Orthodoxists unleashed their regimented fanatics in a great, bloody and ultimately futile crusade. A counter-assault by the Paradoxists also failed. Badijan was split between the armies, and was gradually reduced to rubble.

A pattern in the Cult Wars soon became evident — long periods of raids and minor skirmishing, as both sides retrenched and rebuilt their forces, followed by intense, bloody war. Men and women struggled and died, cities were devastated, and vast tracts of land despoiled.

The final blow fell in 366. A gigantic Aamanian fleet, numbering over 300 ships, sailed across the Phaedran Gulf loaded with troops intent on laying siege to the vital Zandir cities of Zadian and Zir. The galleys were met by the Paradoxists' smaller, more maneuverable navy. The battle ended in a stalemate five days later, with hundreds of ships sunk and hundreds of thousands of warriors slain. The Phaedran Gulf is today known as the Sea of Sorrow in memory of this tragic conflict.

The Battle of the Sea of Sorrow was the last major conflict of the Cult Wars. The two factions were shocked by enormous, futile losses on both sides. The truce of 511 was called to prevent further useless annihilation, and the great Barrier Wall was constructed between Zandu and Aaman as a symbol of the nations' eternal animosity.

# AAMAN

The nation of Aaman consists of half of the former kingdom of Phaedra — the original site of civilization following the Great Disaster. The modern state extends from the Sea of Sorrow to the Axis River, and from the foothills of the Onyx Mountains to the Azure Ocean.

Aaman is largely flat, only becoming mountainous in the northern foothills and along the southern coast. The rolling Monastic Hills constitute the central highlands of the country. Once much of the land was covered by forests, but over the centuries the Aamanians have denuded the great woods, forcing the once-mighty Phandril Forest back toward the Axis River. The lands thus cleared are farmed to feed the people of Aaman. Most Aamanians live on the farms of the plains, or in small villages in the Monastic Hills.

Three of the nation's cities have Phaedran roots. **Ammahd**, the Aamanian capital and twin city to the Zandir capital of Zanth, is built on the ruins of the former imperial capital. **Andurin**, the principal military post of Aaman, was formerly the Phaedran crossroads of Azimuth. Lastly, **Arat**, the port on the Sea of Sorrow, was known as Nerot in Phaedran times.

Two more cities have been built in more recent times. **Aabaal**, a small settlement in the forested southern highlands, is more important than its size suggests, for here are located the nation's ironworks. **Alm**, even further south than Aabaal and deeper in the forests, is home to the fanatic members of the Flagellant Order, a sect of monastics given to religious self-punishment.

Aaman's cities are connected by its portion of the well-used and ill-kept Phaedran Causeway. The road is hazardous due to its advanced state of disrepair — in some places, travelers prefer to use paths beside the roadway.

The land of Aaman is fairly peaceful. The army successfully discourages robbers and highwaymen, although some merchants contend that Orthodoxist patrols are bad enough. Most travelers avoid the dangers of the Phandril Forest, which holds the graves of the early Phaedrans and many unidentified plants and animals.

## Mana and Society

Life in Aaman revolves around *mana*, a mystical unit of a person's worth. A individual's position in society is dependent on how many *aalms* (points) of mana he has acquired. Since the easiest way to acquire mana is through expensive contributions to the Orthodoxy, the wealthy usually have a higher social standing than the poor.

At the pinnacle of the Aamanian order are the Hierophant — the ruler of Aaman, who possesses unlimited mana — and his Monitors. Most others are *Aspirants*, graded in hundred-point increments. For instance, an Aamanian with 250 aalms of mana is an Aspirant of the Second Level. Although mana is automatically tallied, Aspirants must formally petition their Monitor to receive new levels. Petitions are posted publicly when approved. Status is indicated by the wearing of "Eye of Aa" medallions — when an Aspirant is awarded a new level, he must purchase the appropriate medallion and wear it wherever he goes.

By divine decree, the highest level of Aspirancy is the Tenth. However, Aspirants of the Tenth Level differentiate among themselves by wearing "aalm scrolls," one for each additional hundred units of mana beyond one thousand.

Lower-level Aspirants must defer to higher Aspirants at all times. They may not speak to those above them, unless they are first spoken to, and must make way for them on the streets. Only those acting for the Hierophant or the Monitors — such as the Adjudi-

cators, or the Knights of the Order — may forgo this, inheriting some of the status of their masters.

**Women, Pariahs, Slaves and Infidels.** A woman may not earn mana, but instead receives an Aspirancy rating one level lower than her husband (or, if unmarried, her father). Women must conceal their faces and forms in public, may not speak without permission to a man, and are considered the property of their husbands or fathers.

Aamanians who have no mana are pariahs, and share the same low standing as foreigners and infidels. They are shunned and distrusted by their fellow citizens, and carefully watched by both the Adjudicators and the local Knights. Pariahs have few rights, and most laws do not apply to them.

Slaves also have no mana, and even fewer rights than pariahs. They are owned by the state and are treated like prisoners, confined to their quarters when not working. These laborers do dangerous or specialized work in Aaman. Slaves in Ammahd, for instance, work the docks, clean refuse, and maintain the sewers. The Hierophant continually denies reports that Gnomekin slaves inhabit portions of the ancient sewer systems of Andurin and Ammahd, and are forced to labor in the iron mines near Aabaal.

Regardless of race or national origin, non-Orthodoxists are, by definition, infidels. Since many foreigners travel through Aaman on business which profits the nation, the Orthodoxist cult allows them safe passage so long as they obey the laws and strictures of Aamanian culture. Failure to do so results in fines, imprisonment or forced conversion to Orthodoxy.

## Theocratic Government

The Orthodoxist government of Aaman is a total theocracy. The absolute head is the Hierophant, who represents the god Aa in Talisanta. In Aaman, the functions of government and religion are hopelessly entwined, for laws and religious strictures are one and the same.

The Hierophant is responsible for guiding the Orthodoxy, and makes or approves all major policy decisions. He sets tariff rates, initiates and approves treaties, makes the final selection of Aaman's annual Champion, and distributes the monies to run the Orthodoxy. He also has the religious duty of strengthening the Faithful by adding his wisdom to the scriptural collection known as the *Omnival*.

There are many — both Orthodoxist and infidel — who feel the need of the Hierophant's blessings. Such *benefactions* are not for sale, but successful petitions are accompanied by donations to convince the Hierophant of the petitioner's good will. Benefactions are popular among merchants, who may desire the Hierophant to grant them exclusive rights within a region or to sell a specific good. When such monopolies are granted, the Hierophant takes up to ten percent of the profits as his due. Benefactions have been given to manufacture pilgrimage emblems, to export ironmongery, and for berthing rights in Arat.

The Hierophant is assisted in his administrative duties by a private corps of advisors and adjudicators. They bring him news from all parts of Aaman via emissary and magic, and serve as a diplomatic corps.

**The Omnivisors.** The College of Omnivisors at the Abbey of Andurin is the last vestige of Orthodoxy as it was during the days of the Empire. The college was formerly the ruling council of the Orthodoxy, until Omm proclaimed himself the first Hierophant and ordered the seizure of Badijan, initiating the Cult Wars.

Today, the council's power is strictly advisory. Its membership of thirty learned scholars devotes their lives to the study of Ortho-



doxist dogma and the Omnival. With the Hierophant's permission, they interpret the scriptures, making sure that what they preach does not conflict with the wishes of their current master.

On the death of the Hierophant, the scholars choose the next ruler of Aaman. The Monitors aid them, bringing reports on the most favored of the Faithful so that the Omnivisors can find one whose wisdom, collected mana, and knowledge of the Omnival qualify him to rule in Aa's name. The voting is always unanimous, reportedly due to the influence of the deity guiding his followers. Outsiders suspiciously note that it sometimes takes the college months to make its "unanimous" decision.

Membership in the College of Omnivisors is limited to the most learned Archimages, since the post requires encyclopedic knowledge of the Omnival. Many Hierophants were members of the College before their elevation.

**Monitors and Adjudicators.** To count the mana accrued by the Faithful, there are administrative overseers known as Monitors. Each has the responsibility of noting the current mana level of each of the Faithful in his district. Monitors watch for infractions of Orthodoxist behavior, adjusting mana levels accordingly. They also collect and transport offerings to the Hierophant, distribute monies from the Hierophant within their districts, and act as superior judges.

Monitors are appointed by the Hierophant. Some positions have become hereditary by tradition, handed down within families (often former merchant dynasties) which make large contributions to the state's coffers — thus acquiring the 1,000 aalms of mana necessary for the position.

The Monitors rely on their servants, the Adjudicators, in order to perform their overwhelming duties. These bureaucrats are the Monitors' eyes and hands among the people. They are invested with the power of common judges, rendering judgment in simple disputes.

Keeping watch on every Orthodoxist is a difficult task. Informants are encouraged, and often rewarded with mana. Anyone may be visited by an Adjudicator — while informing Aamanians of their current mana count, the bureaucrat will warn them about infractions they have committed, and interrogate them about their friends and neighbors. However, the task of monitoring is more than mortal hands can accomplish. Only the Monitor Stones (see the "Arcana" section of this book) make total surveillance possible. Strict records are kept of each individual's behavior and piety.

### Keeping the Peace

Adjudicators keep watch on the populace for signs of transgression and law-breaking. When crimes or breaches of faith are committed — speaking against the Orthodoxy, being disobedient, worshipping other gods, adultery, forgetting the words of a chant from the Omnival, and so on — the Monitor decides whether to call upon the Warrior-Priests to restore order or capture the culprits.

These Priests — the officers of Aaman's Theocratic Order — have the duty to keep the law and the faith in Aaman. They are authorized to take any action necessary to preserve the peace and apprehend the enemies of the Orthodoxy. The Knights of the Order serve at their command.

Suspects and witnesses brought in by the Warrior-Priests are interrogated in the Halls of Penance by the Inquisitors. Criminals and heretics deemed worth cleansing are subject to penance, while the rest are sentenced to a speedy death. A reaffirmation of faith — accompanied by a hefty donation to the Orthodoxy — has been known to reverse an Inquisitor's verdict.



**Penance.** The process by which deviants are rehabilitated is known as *penance*. Inquisitors preside over these rituals, which are designed to drive unorthodox desires from the subject's heart. Techniques include beatings, magical influence, torture, and hours of re-education in the tenets of Orthodoxy.

Heretics receive special treatment. The Inquisitors are charged with converting them to Orthodoxy for the greater glory of Aa. The first step is to obtain a confession of heresy, for until the heretic admits his error, cleansing cannot begin. Many and dire are the methods used to extort confessions. Those who confess and are judged to be true converts are released, but are carefully monitored thereafter. Heretics who refuse to renounce their beliefs are taken before the Monitor for a last chance to beg for conversion. If they decline, or the Monitor refuses them mercy, the prisoners are condemned to a life of slavery. Heretic slaves are often used in the arena to train prospective Champions.

### The Economy

Aaman's wealth comes from farming, animal husbandry, and the ironworks of Aabaal, supplemented with income from trading caravans and gold plundered from long-lost Phaedran graves. From Ammahd to Arat, the land is used for farms and herds. Greymanes, erds, and durges graze where the land has proven unsuitable for farming. Fertile ground is cultivated to raise provender plant, a tuber that Aamanians eat with every meal.

The ironworks of Aabaal produce more than Orthodoxist totems and artifacts — they make second-rate but serviceable armor and weapons for export, via the port of Arat. The black iron of the local hills is also used in the forges of Andurin, but superior black iron from Arim is employed in Ammahd's foundries. Arim is Aaman's primary trading partner, trading black iron for grain and other foodstuffs.

Many merchants travel through Aaman on their way to and from the Seven Kingdoms. The Aamanians treat their "guests" with cold courtesy, collecting tolls for passage and tariffs on sales. Set by the Hierophant, tolls are charged at the border and each city. They can change suddenly, but are usually set at 1 G.L. per person and 2 G.L. per conveyance. Despite the costs, many still travel through Aaman. The journey from Vashay to Zanth seldom takes longer than two weeks, even on foot, and is less dangerous than the long trip through Arim or by sea.

Nearly every item traded into or out of Aaman has a tariff put on it. In the case of Aamanian export goods, this tariff is very slight — perhaps a two percent surcharge. On goods imported into Aaman, the tariffs rise dramatically, often doubling prices. Rates are set by the Hierophant, and the money is collected by the local Monitor.

### Phandril Forest

The graves of the ancient Phaedrants rest in the Phandril Forest. Constructed in the days before it became customary to build elaborate tombs, the elaborate mausoleums are mute testimonies to the wealth of the early Phaedrants. Some that have been successfully plundered have yielded immense treasures — and the Orthodoxy summarily appropriates half of all finds. Occasionally, monasteries of the Theocratic Order send parties into the Forest to plunder tombs. The local Monitor has also been known to sell plundering permits at high prices to foreigners.

### Orthodoxy

The Orthodoxist faith traces its roots to a group of astrologers which claimed to have been visited by Aa himself. The god told them that in order to avoid another Great Disaster, all peoples must follow certain strictures of behavior and thought. He recited these guidelines and then ascended into the heavens. The mages wrote these down, and they are today recorded in the volumes of the Omnival, and teach others of the miraculous warning.

Orthodoxists strive to remain pure and to advance in the sight of Aa. They accomplish this by obeying the edicts set down in the Omnival. Their success is measured by mana, a high mana tally ensuring a favored place in the afterlife. Aalms of mana are awarded for attending lectures and temple ceremonies, the possession of holy objects, and for going on pilgrimages. The easiest way to gain mana is to show devotion to Aa, as symbolized through the contribution of the results of one's toil — money. These contributions are a major source of the Orthodoxy's funds, and are carefully gathered and guarded.

**The Omnival.** The guidelines supposedly given by Aa centuries ago form the basis for the collection of volumes known as the Omnival, the strictures and laws of Orthodoxist life. However, Aa's revelations only compose the first volume — each Hierophant has added more, according to his whim and the demands of the time.

Only two complete copies of the Omnival exist. One is in the Hierophant's Scriptorium, and the other is at the Abbey of Andurin. The College of Omnivisors determines which selections are suitable for public dissemination, and at ten-year intervals edits an expurgated edition of the scriptural library. Even these volumes are rare, limited to wealthy Aspirants and temples. No infidel, and no Aspirant below the Fifth Level, can legally own any volume of the Omnival. Most Aamanians never see the Omnival, knowing only the passages taught to them by their priests.

### Temples of Aa

Temples are the dispensaries of Orthodoxist teachings, and the centers of faith for believers. Mana donations are received here by priests on behalf of the Hierophant and Aa. Each temple is run

by a senior Archimage, and he is served by lesser undermages (lower-level Archimages), guards, scribes, and acolytes (Archimage students). The primary duties of the Archimage are to instruct the Faithful, and to conduct worship services on holy days. Each temple is dedicated to a patron saint, and provided with appropriate shrines and relics.

Magical research is a specialty of some temples, especially those which train acolytes. Some buildings have become partially enchanted over the years, with results often unsuspected by the residents themselves.

### The Theocratic Order

During the early Cult Wars, most of Aaman's male population served in its vast armies and fleets. In modern times, the numbers have declined. The *Armed Host*, the regular army of the Theocracy, includes a mere 5,000 cavalry soldiers (eques and ogriphants) and 15,000 foot soldiers. Far more troops — 30,000 soldiers and sailors — serve in the Theocratic Order, a monastic military order.

The *Theocratic Order* is a militant order of the Orthodoxy, founded to provide leadership and moral inspiration for the regular army of Aaman. Soldiers of the Order are forbidden contact with women except in the performance of their duties. When not on assignment, they live in seclusion, devoting their lives to martial practice and the study of the Omnival.

To fulfill their duties as officers, the Warrior-Priests and their Knights are schooled in all forms of warfare. Monasteries of the Order concentrate on a martial specialty (locations of mother abbeys are given in parentheses): cavalry (Andurin), infantry (Ammahd), marines (naval warriors — Arat), temple guards (Andurin) and scouts (Aabaal). Only Ammahd is large enough to boast an abbey of each type, plus the special monastery which trains champions for the annual Clash. The monasteries compete for alliances with the temples, in order to tap into their wealth. In return, a well-connected monastery can gain influence for a temple and its Archimage.

**Special Cadres.** The *Inquisitors* are a separate branch of the Order. Every Aamanian city has a Hall of Penance where these clerics ply their grisly trade — punishing heretics, converting unbelievers, and obtaining confessions from criminals. An abbey where Inquisitors are trained is located in Andurin.

**Witch Hunters** are another sub-order. These warriors are sent into foreign lands to punish those named as witches by the Hierophant. Hunters are recruited from the best soldiers of the Order, and are trained in a secret location.

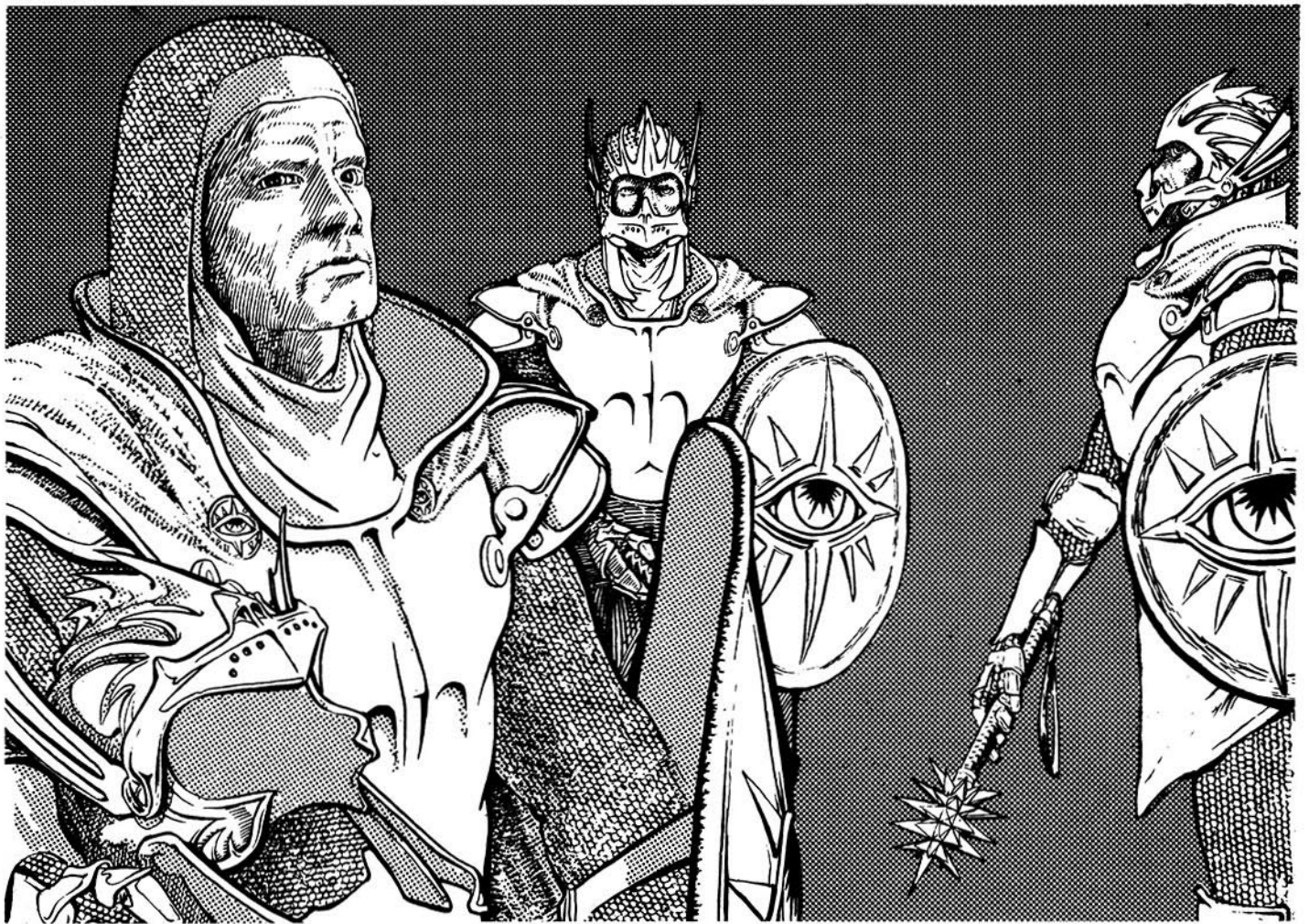
The Order sends certain of its members abroad as *Missionaries*, charged with obtaining converts to Orthodoxy. Temples and monasteries are also maintained in foreign lands, to gain converts, minister to the local Faithful, and serve as havens for pilgrims. The largest foreign temple is in Cymril, but the new one under construction in Dracarta will dwarf the Cymrillian temple in size.

The monastic troops of Aaman patrol the nation's borders and highways, and its members officer the *Armed Host*. Should the Cult Wars ever resume, hordes of drafted Faithful will swell the ranks of the regular army. Meanwhile, the *Host* is a shadow of its former strength, superseded by the political importance of the monasteries and their troops.

### Pilgrimages

Many Aamanians cannot afford to purchase enough mana to gain the levels of Aspirancy they feel they merit. Ten aalms of mana cost 1,000 G.L., more than most families see in years. Instead, the devout acquire mana by going on pilgrimage to the places in





Talismanas that are holy to the Orthodoxy. There are four of these holy sites: the *Well of Saints*, in the Volcanic Hills; the *Watchstone*, on the Plains of Golarin; the *Red Desert of Carantheum*; and the *Sea of Glass*, in northern Faradun. These locations were visited by early Orthodoxists, and — according to the Omnival — Aa manifested himself to them here.

The most important member of the pilgrim caravan is the Adjudicator. His duty is to witness that the pilgrims complete their quest, and then return to Aaman to verify their claims to mana. He is also responsible to keep the pilgrims free of heresy on their foreign journey. The Adjudicator costs 1 gold lumens per day, plus his expenses.

Other costs of a pilgrimage include food, mounts or conveyances, and guards. Knights of the Theocratic Order can be hired, and are often less expensive than unconsecrated foreigners. A group of five first-level Knights cost 5 gold lumens per day (15 gold lumens for mounted Knights). When hiring more experienced Knights, multiply the stated price by the warrior's level. Five fourth-level Cavalry Knights, for example, would cost 60 gold lumens per day.

Expensive as it can be, pilgrimages are considered worth the money. The average pilgrim who travels to the Well of Saints spends less than 1,000 gold lumens — and earns 200 aalms of mana, which would cost 20,000 gold lumens from a temple. However, pilgrimages are dangerous. Robbers, wild beasts, enemies of the Orthodoxy, and the temptations of infidels all threaten the Faithful. Warriors of Rajanistan delight in attacking pilgrim caravans in the Wilderlands, and Beastmen take similar glee when slaughtering the Faithful on the Plains of Golarin. The

Valley of Mist lies across the only path to the Well of Saints, and Vorls wait to turn whomever they catch into dried husks.

Returning pilgrims must bring talismans to confirm their trip — a piece of fractured stone from the base of the Watchstone, water from the Well of Saints, a pinch of sand from the Red Desert oasis where Aa appeared, or a piece of green glass from the Sea of Glass.

### The Enemies of Aa

The primary opponents of the Orthodoxy are the Paradoxist Cult and the Heterodoxist. The Paradoxists of Zandir have been enemies of Aaman for centuries, although the Cult Wars have come to a temporary halt — a truce has been in effect for several centuries. This does not mean peace, however. Contact with the Paradoxist Cult is strictly forbidden, and even speaking to a Paradoxist is a crime in Aaman.

The Heterodoxy is a different matter. A small group of conspirators devoted to the destruction of both cults, they remain a serious threat to Aaman. Heterodoxist agents exist in Aaman and Zandu, and among the descendants of all the peoples displaced by the Cult Wars, and are engaged in disruption or destruction. They have attacked Orthodoxist missionaries in Jhangara, assassinated Witch Hunters in Werewood, harassed and misled pilgrims, and blackened the Orthodoxist Cult's name by committing crimes in the guise of Orthodox agents.

Heterodoxist agents even operate in Aaman. They look like faithful Aamanians, and are careful to evade detection. Heterodoxists engage in theft, sabotage, assassination and blackmail to weaken the power of the Orthodoxy.

## ARIM

Many mountains rise higher than the Onyx range, but few can match its tortured terrain. Canyons slash their way between vertical ridges; fingers of briar and scrub cling to wind-blasted outcrops. In the winter, snow blankets the higher peaks while sleet pelts the valleys. Driving rains fall everywhere in the spring, causing flash floods that wash away villages and cut new gorges through the mountains. The torrents flow into Lake Venda, where they briefly muddy its pristine waters.

Some of the geological highlights of this rough land:

**The Onyx Mountains.** The deposits of black iron, lead, silver and onyx located here provide Arim's chief source of wealth. These veins continue into the Sardonyx Range, mingling with rich golden ore found there. A few miners follow the metals north, despite the proximity of Witchwood, the Toxic Hills and the Wildmen of Yrmania. The rifts and peaks of the Onyx Mountains protect Arim from many of its marauding neighbors.

**The Cliffs of Bahahd.** These 300-foot cliffs channel invaders from the east into Akbar Gorge, where they must confront the Arimite citadel. Abandoned Stryx lairs pock the cliffs. Years ago, the Arimites used scaffolding, war-towers and favorable winds to smoke the foul avians out of these holes. The caves supposedly still contain Stryx treasure hoards, but most can be reached only from the air.

**Akbar Gorge.** This canyon plunges several thousand feet through solid stone, cut by the Axis River, which once ran through here. Where Lake Venda once flowed into this gorge, a great dam of tumbled rocks keeps the waters back. These marbled stones are of a type unknown elsewhere within Arim. Scholars assume that the Shaitan of Lake Venda conjured them. Others say that whoever built the city in Lake Venda brought the rocks, ages before the Shaitan arrived.

**Lake Venda.** This lake looks clear and peaceful, despite the nine Shaitan who supposedly live in the ruins of a flooded city beneath its waters. Though few admit to belief in the old legends, the Arimites avoid disturbing these waters. Lake Venda once fed the Axis River through Akbar Gorge, but today nearly seventy miles of dry land separate this river from its headwaters. Underground channels now apparently link the lake and river. The subterranean chambers act as a reservoir, keeping the Axis shallow during the spring floods while preventing it from drying out in high summer.

The lost city beneath Lake Venda is rumored to contain floodgates which were once used for regulating the river and the depth of the lake. Some fear that the Shaitan could use the gates to flood Shattra, Valanis and other cities downriver, or dry up the Axis, stopping barge traffic. Fortunately, the river flows on dependably. The Shaitan seem to prefer the status quo.

### The Eternal Duty of Revenge

One code rules Arim — revenge. Arimites live and die for family and honor. Every harm must be avenged, and everyone who suffers must seek vengeance. Therefore, the cycle of vendetta can never end.

Arim's kings, the Exarchs, have always abhorred these feuds, and have been made to feel impotent for being unable to restrain the killings. This resentment came to a crisis during the Phaedran Cult Wars. The Paradoxist generals hired Arimite mercenaries, but Exarch Guron favored the Orthodoxists, whose coffers were filled with an abundance of gold.

In the year 300, an Orthodoxist commander offered Guron one million gold lumens in return for an Arimite army. When the

Exarch appealed for troops, his knife-fighters refused to serve. They explained that kings might fight for a while and then make peace, but if Arimite mercenaries fought against each other and shed blood, the ensuing vendettas could decimate the nation. When Guron explained his plight, the Orthodoxists grimly halved their purchases of Arimite black iron. Even worse, the Exarch became an object of ridicule in Zandu. The famed Dancing Bladesman of Zann sent Guron a tiny statuette of a silver kaliya, its heads chewing each others' throats.

Guron resolved to end his nation's feuds, then conscript an army and satisfy his honor by besieging Zanth. He declared the Law of Quiet Sleep, which proclaimed the dead "in slumber" and annulled all calls for vengeance. From that day on, he said, Arimite law would treat revenge as simple murder.

The Exarch's decree only inflamed his people. Whenever the law condemned a killer, the murderer's family placed their king on their blood list. For some time, no one could penetrate the Exarch's castle in Shattra. When a member of the Revenants, Arim's assassin cult, was hired to kill Guron, royal guards caught and hung him. The next day, a warning was found scrawled on the castle walls: "The dead may sleep in quiet. No living Exarch shall." That evening, Revenants slipped into Guron's bedroom and slit his throat.

The throne passed to Guron's heir Shabul, who ordered a bed chamber cast of solid black iron, with a lock devised by Kasmir experts. This foiled the assassins for some time. Then, in the year 321, a Revenant plugged the vents, suffocating Shabul.

The new Exarch, Grika, condemned the entire city of Shattra for the death of his father. The people dreaded a massacre, but instead Grika used foreign slaves to build a new city in the far





north. The new capital of Arim, Ahrazhd, is also known as the Forbidden City, for most of the citizens of Arim are forbidden from entering. The Exarch moved here with his family, as well as his noble entourage and their families. Foreign mercenaries were ordered to slay any Arimite found near the fortress.

Exarch Grika began Arim's modern policy of strict neutrality. He sold both to the Paradoxists and Orthodoxists, just as his present-day heirs sell to warring Rajanistan and Carantheum. He also began to collect between ten and fifty percent of all exports as a royal tithe, but tried to allow merchants and governors enough profit to keep them content, for fear they would ally with the Revenants against him.

Since Grika's time, the Exarchs have relied on a network of spies and assassins. Because the kings did not trust their own people, they hired foreigners to serve in these positions, a practice which continues up to the present day.

**The Governors.** Noble families hold hereditary governorships to Shattra and Akbar. They send the Exarch tithes, ward off invaders, and otherwise govern their cities as they please. The governors send the gold without quibbling, being far too concerned with avoiding assassination to worry about outwitting their king. Whenever a governor's actions cause injury, the offended family retaliates by hiring Revenants. Therefore, the rulers lock themselves into their fortresses, refuse to pass rulings, and try to remain as obscure as possible.

The Exarch circulates a blacklist of those he suspects of disloyalty, expecting his governors to punish these traitors. Rather than take overt action, the governors prefer subtle measures, such as pressuring Overseers to fire disloyal mine workers, or seeing that mining claims are challenged. The Exarch's agents watch the governors, coercing them into obedience when they are slow to act.

### Nobles and Commoners

The Exarch, his chosen governors, and a few other families consider themselves noble. Those who may live in the Forbidden City, enjoying luxuries imported from abroad. Once a month, foreign merchants with special licenses may enter Ahrazhd. Each member of a caravan must have an individual permit, a process intended to hamper Revenants who want to slip in masquerading as merchants. Traders pay for their permits by transporting the Exarch's tribute from Shattra to Ahrazhd. The journey to the Forbidden City leads through perilous terrain, and sometimes plunges merchants into Arimite politics. However, the nobles spend extravagantly, making it well worthwhile.

All other Arimites are commoners, and their only hope of progression lies in acquiring wealth. The traditional way to do this is to discover a vein of ore and become an Overseer. Wealthy Overseers enjoy leisure and respect, appointing foremen to operate their mines.

A few prosperous commoners own shops. Arim's merchants and artisans reap heady profits through sales to the nobility during prosperous times, and milk coppers from the hordes of unemployed in leaner years. Merchants, landlords and craftsmen have a fraternal organization — The Order Of Coins — which meets monthly in an elegant inn. Members pay dues of 10 G.L. per month, and former miners are prohibited from joining. These merchants dread the Kasmir money-lending houses, fearing they will build one of their towers in Shattra, then make loans and sell inexpensive merchandise. Some harass the money lenders by hiring Revenants to perform muggings and vandalism.

Arimite miners labor 20 hours a day in the mines, for wages of 2 S.P. a week. The poorest can escape the mines only by becoming

mercenaries. Arim's feuds have given its people a reputation as crazed, bloodthirsty warriors. Employers like Arimite mercenaries because they serve cheaply and have no other loyalties. Hired swords from other lands are often not as faithful — Danuvians, for example, always remain loyal to their Queen. However, no Arimite feels loyalty to the Exarch.

Arimite knife-fighters are hired from as far away as the Citystate of Hadj, in the Wilderlands of Zaran. Paradoxist generals appreciate their talent with knives, and find ways to use them despite a personal distaste for the dour warriors. The Seven Kingdoms hires Arimites as expendable troops for its Eastern Borderlands outposts — the unsocial Arimites do not mind life in the wilderness.

Many knife-fighters eventually regret leaving Arim. They dislike the gaudy entertainments of the outside world, despising song and dance. Arimites often start barracks-fights, since they feel compelled to respond to every offense. Other soldiers avoid them, and some camps restrict Arimite mercenaries to separate barracks.

### Mountain Ore

Arim cannot be called destitute, but its paltry natural resources make it a miserable land. Instead of precious metal, most of Arim's mines yield black iron and lead — resources vital to many crafts, but difficult to smelt and therefore less profitable. Silver mines and jewel quarries dot the northern mountains, but there is little profit here, either — the Exarch claims half of what they produce.

Many Arimite women farm *blue-vines* while their husbands labor in the mines. These purplish plants thrive on the steep slopes, and the bulbous suckers which hold to the rock are edible. Terrace gardens sometimes produce enough to export. The Seven Kingdoms buys blue-vines avidly for consumption in Kasmir and Sindar, and for export to the deserts of Zaran.

During prosperous times, all Arimites have work, and large families can afford luxuries because so many of their members draw salaries. When the demand for black iron falls, however, Overseers send workers away and abandon unproductive pits, leaving them to renegades and Stryx. Crime and vendettas then run rampant, for unhappy people have more reasons for killing. Shattra serves as a rough measure of Arim's prosperity — in bad times, unemployed miners stand on the street corners in surly knots.

**The Overseers.** Every Arimite dreams of finding a mine, because, according to custom, whoever discovers a vein of ore is allowed to mine it. He may confiscate whatever property the mine requires and dig there, taking the title of Overseer, and he may sell one half of what he produces.

Hopeful Arimites prospect in the spring, after the snow melts but before new growth sprouts. This is also a season of prosperity for the Revenants. Farmers, fearful of having their land confiscated, hire assassins to dispose of suspicious travelers, while prospectors pay to have obstructing landowners executed. Meanwhile, old enemies attack, hoping to escape vengeance amid the confusion.

Revenants offer a special deal to vengeful Arimites — they will salt property with ore, which allows a prospector to "discover" a vein, seize the land, and open a mine. The owner must return the land when the planted ore runs out. Meanwhile he can tear up fields, demolish houses and otherwise take revenge while "mining."

An Arimite prospector registers his mine by presenting ore from it to the nearest governor. Disputes occasionally develop when several people attempt to claim the same mine. After examining the sample, the governor sends a noble to visit the site. The



prospector must pay for the nobleman's transportation and bodyguards (1,000 G.L., or more if the mine is remote). Once assured that a vein exists, the governor sends a messenger to Ahrazhd to establish the claim and receive the Exarch's approval.

**Operating a Mine.** Overseers usually employ Arimites, since they understand mining and accept low wages. However, most will hire Maruk, Monads, or destitute travelers in order to save money. Some disreputable Overseers have been known to use gangs of slaves and Druhk prisoners to dig their most dangerous shafts.

Gemstone mines have the worst reputation. The Overseers take stern measures to prevent the small, precious stones from being smuggled out. Miners are required to labor naked, and to dig in a lock-step regimen. Only desperate Arimites accept jobs working in the jewel-pits, and for this reason, most gemstone mines use slave labor.

Miners send their black-iron ore by wagon to Shattra to be smelted. Here, mercenaries appraise the smelted ingots, collect tithes for the governor and the Exarch, and then issue permits to sell what is left to the ore merchants. Spies planted among the teamsters make sure dishonest Overseers are caught. One quarter of a mine's production belongs to the governor of the closest city, and another quarter is claimed by the Exarch. To discourage embezzlement, the Exarch forces several Overseers to trade mines every year. If a new Overseer suddenly reports far more or less profit, a team of royal investigators is sent — usually a punctilious Kasmir Auditor, accompanied by mercenaries to ward off assassins.

The Exarch also demands as his due the soot which coats the walls of the smelter furnaces. Most smelters deliver it gladly. "Exarch's Soot" has become an aphorism for anything trivial to which someone attaches too much importance. Actually, this soot is precious — Yassan Technomancers in the service of the Exarch squeeze out a fortune in metal which the original smelters miss.

**Barges and Caravans.** From Shattra, most ore merchants hire boatsmen to ferry the ingots down the Axis. The journey is dangerous, for giant freshwater kra lurk in the deeper waters, while sand bars snag the barges in the shallows — allowing exomorphs and Druhk raiders along the shores to prey on disadvantaged travelers. Bog Devils infest the upper reaches of the river. For all of these reasons, barge captains hire large numbers of mercenaries. The barges usually follow the Axis to Vashay (in Vardune) — where goods are repackaged for the trip east — or up the tributaries and through the Aaman Canal to Ammahd, for sale to the Orthodoxy.

Zandu must import most of its Arimite goods overland, for the Aamanians prohibit goods bound for Zandu from their canal. The Zandu Trail leads west from Shattra, passing through the trading post at Iswan before ascending the southern branch of the Onyx Mountains.

### Love and Marriage

Romance withers amid the grim traditions of Arim. Feuding keeps potential lovers apart. Wooing is extremely dangerous, since any forward remark or quarrel can start a vendetta. Negotiating an arranged marriage is also perilous, since the slightest insult could start a war. As such, courtship and matchmaking take years of negotiation.

Many Arimite men who wish to marry, therefore, abduct their wives. By custom, kidnapping resolves all questions of honor. If a kidnapper dies, the victim's relatives recognize that he provoked his own death — this does not call for vengeance. When the abduction succeeds, the bride's family considers the loss to be similar to death of natural causes, as if the bride passed away due to disease or accident.

Couples follow an old tradition when informing the mother's parents of the birth of a grandchild. If the baby is a boy, the husband hurls one dagger into the bride's father's doorpost. If it is a girl, he fires one arrow. Twins or other unusual births are marked by leaving some exotic weapon — such as an Arduan crescent knife, Rajan da-khar or Ur warclub — at the door.

Arimite men seize their wives in order to prove their courage, but they quickly grow discontented. Arim's women tend to be shrewish and heavy-set, with hatchet features and stringy hair. Accordingly, men with money hire foreign mistresses. Farad traders bring slave girls up the Axis River to Shattra, charging five times the usual price to compensate for the dangerous passage through Jhangara. Since the girls require lavish care, most Arimites find them too expensive. They may buy one only to find the costs too great, and be forced to abandon her. Discarded mistresses wander through Shattra, looking for money and patrons.

Wives often take lovers, too. The Revenants do a brisk business between spouses and paramours.

### Destiny

Mortals grow old, mines go empty, children die, feuds drag on, and the Arimites see that nothing can change these events. They worship Destiny. He is the gray-cloaked Author of Fate who writes the life of every being before his conception, and who can sometimes be glimpsed but never changed. Since mortals cannot alter fate, Arimites strive to turn it to their own glory, and to win the best death they can.

No formal church serves Destiny. Arimites explain that lesser gods yearn for worship and shaky philosophers fear heretics, but Destiny will be. Neither prayer nor blasphemy can change his writings. Therefore, there is no point in organized worship. True or not, this dissatisfies an Arimite minority — the members of the Destiny Cults.

**The Cults of Arim.** The secret *Cult of the Literate* wishes to read from Destiny's tome, so they can search for passages which reveal the future. Since Destiny's book is already written, theoretically a reader can learn all that is to be. Most mages agree that such knowledge would drive mortals mad.

Some cultists desire only enough prescience to prospect for silver or win at Zodar. However, their leaders have been known to bargain with sorcerers for passage to Omnus or the realms of the Necromanes, where they hope to gain all of Destiny's secrets. Most who leave never return.

Destiny grants his lore to some of the Literate, but requires service in return. He may command supplicants to enforce his harshest decrees, and there is no way they can cheat him. In one famous incident, the cultist Brados communed with Destiny by imbibing an alchemical hallucinogen while upstairs in his father's home. The deity revealed lines of his book, which Brados eagerly copied, then ordered him to kill his beloved father who lay asleep below. In horror, Brados tore up the manuscript and, resolving never to cause his father's death, drank poison. At dawn, his dying body was discovered. The governor concluded that his father had poisoned him, and ordered the old man garroted. Brados revived only once, in time to learn of his father's execution, before dying.

Another cult, the *Para-Faithful*, pursues the messages Destiny sent to ancient Phaendra. This group believes that Destiny inspired the Omnival and Aamanian astrology. Its members sometimes become Orthodoxists and help the Witch-Hunters find their enemies in Arim. The Theocratic Order has established two Arimite monasteries to foster conversions, and to fight the heresies common among the cultists. The Exarch and Revenants watch this cult carefully, suspicious of foreign influence in their nation.



Arim's largest cult, on the other hand, does not concern itself with mystic quests or foreign ascetics. Its priesthood revels in the practical application of Destiny's decrees. They believe that nothing happens by accident. Fate ordains all things, through natural means or the cabals which lurk within every society. Recognizing this, these cultists have appointed themselves to execute Destiny's will. Talisanta knows them as the *Revenants*.

## THE DRUHKS

East and south of Lake Venda, dense brush springs up and stands of thorny trees impede travelers. Muskront, wild greymanes, exomorphs and yaksha roam the hills and ridges. This land is the home of the Druhks, a savage race of sub-men known for their cruel and sadistic rituals.

The Druhk tribes periodically launch raids against each other, and against the villages and mining settlements of the Arimites. They wield stone clubs and jagged bone daggers in combat, and delight in burning settlements and skinning captives alive. Often times, the only warning of an impending raid is the sound of the Druhk's death songs; a dissonant wailing of bone flutes, accompanied by dirge-like chanting and moaning.

Druhks are skilled riders, employing wild greymanes as steeds. It is the custom of these hill people to dye themselves and their mounts with the purple juice of the barberry, a practice which they believe frightens their enemies. Facial scarring and other forms of ornamentation are used to distinguish the members of one tribe from another.

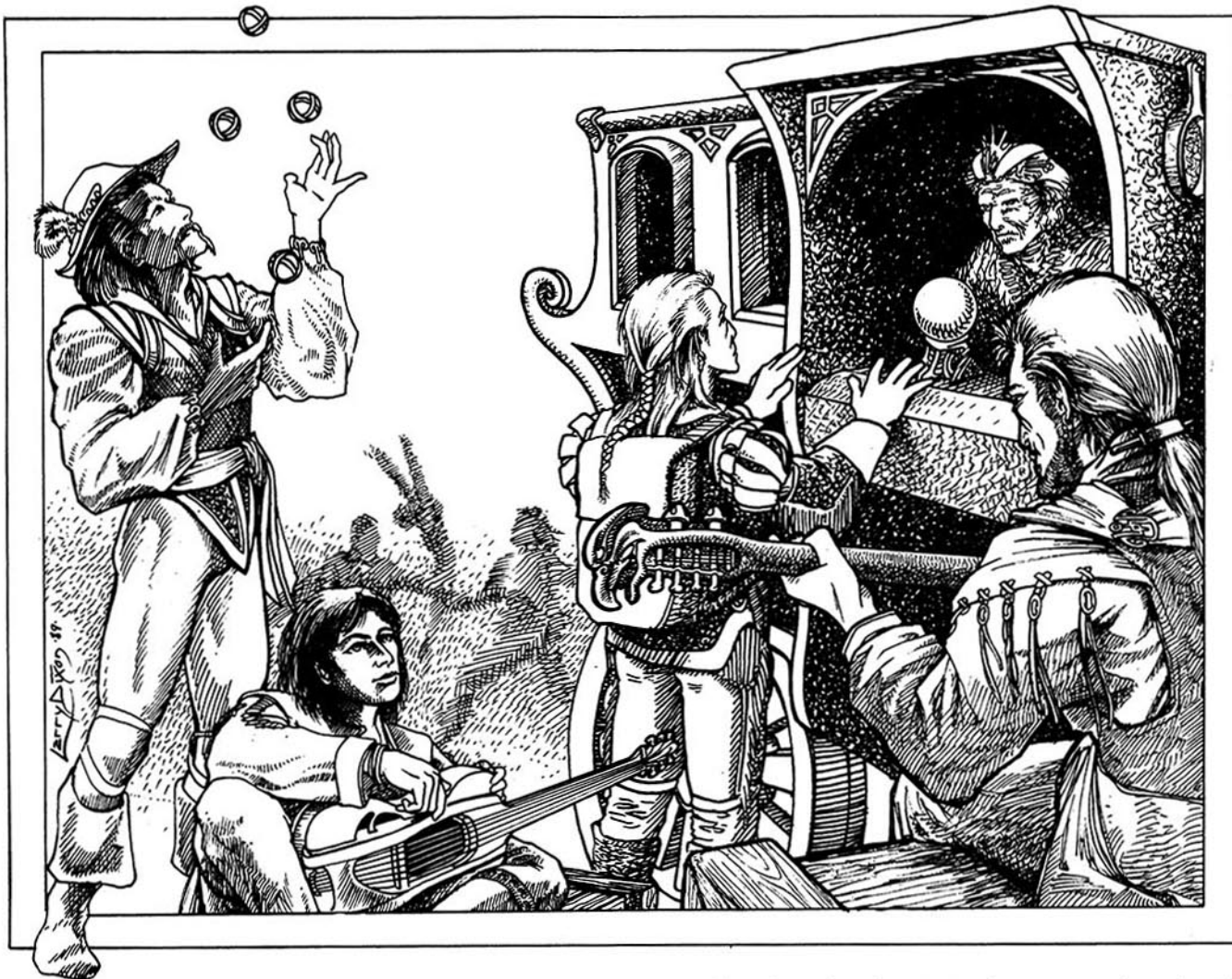
The tribes range in size from small bands of perhaps a dozen warriors, to large clans numbering over two or three hundred members. Each is led by a Shaman, who earns his position by proving himself more cruel and resourceful than his rivals. The tribe's Shaman is always a male, and may have as many wives as he can support. He plans raids, gets first choice of any booty, and arbitrates disputes — usually by stabbing whichever party offends him first. When the tribe suffers a setback, the old chief is thrown out — and his replacement wins his post by inventing the most grisly torment for his predecessor.

Scholars speculate that the Druhks may be the early ancestors of the Arimites, since rural Arimites bear some small resemblance to the hillmen tribes. It is suicidal, however, to voice this theory within hearing of an Arimite — they consider the Druhks bestial, and slaughter them on sight.

### The Slave Trade

Certain opportunistic folk are known to hunt Druhks and sell them as slaves. The sub-men bring up to 300 gold lumens in some regions, where they are valued as torturers. Conversely, Druhk slaves seldom bring more than 50 gold lumens in the Western Lands, though there are some who purchase them to work in the mines. The hillmen are too deranged for skilled work, but labor diligently when threatened with the whip.

Unless coerced in some fashion, Druhks generally make undependable workers. Imprisoned hillmen plot incessantly to escape, and once free, may spend years trying to get revenge upon their former masters.



## SILVANUS

*With shady rills and laughing brooks,  
due east of Oceanus,  
Lie the glades and mossy nooks  
of verdant green Silvanus.  
The suns are warm. The air, its smell,  
is like to that of honey.  
And there the gay Sarista dwell . . .  
Make sure to watch your money.*

— Anonymous  
(variously attributed to Menala, Court Poetess of Zandu;  
Rascibilon, Menala's pet Sardonius;  
and the Wererooks of Werewood)

Regardless of its source, the words of the verse hold true. Rolling hills, shady woods lush with silver-beech and feather oak, ocean shores strewn with seashells and bright pebbles, and vibrant meadows rich with wildflowers characterize Silvanus, the year-round campgrounds of the nomadic (and more than a touch larcenous) Sarista, its only full-time inhabitants.

Silvanus is a puzzle to students of Talislantan politics, albeit a simple one. One of the few regions on the continent both beautiful and seemingly untouched by the Great Disaster, the first question that springs to mind is — why hasn't one of the more powerful nations seized hold of it? The answer is equally simple. Reacting to the Witch Hunters of Aaman who would persecute the magic-using nomads, Zandu considers Silvanus its protectorate — which means that this land is the playground for the idle and

wealthy of Zanth. The Sarista have no qualms about being periodically invaded by the idle rich, who generally leave their land a little bit less so.

### The Necros River

The waters of the Necros, which outline Silvanus' eastern borders, are dark and oily. Scholars claim that a large amount of rock oil is present — explaining the fact that, in certain regions, a torch thrown on the water sets the river ablaze. The oily smoke forms strange patterns, and some report that it may act in the manner of Malderon's Mists, or summon fantasms and shadow wights. This strongly indicates that less wholesome pollutants than rock oil are present in the waters.

Woe to any who drink the waters of the Necros. In the infamous *Black Grimoire*, in one of the few sections deemed harmless enough to be copied into basic textbooks at the Lyceum Arcanum, the black magician Mordante writes: "I believe that the Necros must have its source in the Nightmare Dimension, judging by the properties of its waters. A tiny sip I took as test caused the most wondrous dreams of ancient Quaran, myself being hailed as King Harika. I was filled with great and majestic power and startling lucidity, until my capture and drowning at the hands of Xambrian washerwomen. As this ending does not match my histories, real as it seemed, I must only conclude that it was a nightmare, composed partly of truth."

### The Dire Woods

Sarista avoid the Dire Woods. Fewer banes and werebeasts prowl these woods than the Dread Forest, though far more malefic spiritforms are present. This may have something to do with the legend of Captain Savernelle.



Savernelle Marasaka was a Phaedran free-trader when the Cult Wars began. A restless young woman from a respectable Orthodox family, through luck and astute trading she had come into her own ship. When the Orthodoxy seized power, her ship was pressed into service. As the Hierophant did not believe warfare was a fit place for women, her ship was laden with suspected witches and other dissidents and she was ordered to take them to Gao-Din.

Savernelle set sail, but — being first and foremost a free-trader, and knowing that on her return she would probably be stripped of her ship and sent back to her family — took a calculated risk. She freed the prisoners, threw the Orthodoxist Archimages to the sea dragons, and set sail in a war of piracy against the Orthodoxy.

For 39 years, Captain Savernelle plundered Orthodoxist ships, funneling her bounty to the Paradoxy and the new Rogue City of Gao-Din, until the night in 139 when she and her crew raided the ironworks at Aabaal. Her pirates made off with stacks of gold and silver bars, bags of jewels, hundreds of croziers, chalices and other Orthodoxist regalia, not to mention the cloth-of-gold vestments and miter to be used by the new Hierophant the next week at his investiture.

A frantic chase on the high seas ensued. The Hierophant demanded that Savernelle return his regalia and submit to penance. If she did, he promised to give her a benefaction for her piracy and 500 aalms of mana. Savernelle then swore an impious oath, leaning on the bowsprit of the *Sea Swift*: "I'd rather sail to the Nightmare Dimension and marry Noman, wearing the Hierophant's vestments for my bridal gown, than return to the cult of Aa!" Lightning flashed as the gods witnessed her impious oath. A mighty wind blew the *Sea Swift* up the mouth of the Necros and into the Dire Woods.

To the chagrin of the Aamanians, Savernelle apparently made good her oath. On the 42nd of every month, the Faithful put into harbor and trim their sails, for a ghost wind blows down the Necros, bearing before it the *Sea Swift*, Captain Savernelle at the helm, dressed in the Hierophant's vestments, her ship crewed by shadow wights, fiends and fantasms. Zandir sailors and Gao sea rogues view Savernelle as a good omen, and some claim to have been aided by the ghost vessel on the high seas. Aamanians are much less laudatory in their beliefs.

Captain Savernelle's treasure has never been recovered, and might lay somewhere up the Necros.

### The Sarista

A search into the history of the Phaedran Empire, as preserved in the Omnival, reveals that in the year 111, Omm, the first Hierophant, ordered that "all witches, thieves and others not knowing the true faith of Aa shall be confined to the island of Gao-Din." The Sarista made a hasty exit from the former Phaedran lands shortly afterward, believing they had proof that Fortuna was not there. The nomads returned to their old tribal grounds, accompanied by the Dhuna, animists who did not worship any god.

The Sarista are perhaps the most wildly flamboyant folk in Talislanta. Their caravans are common sights in the West — even in Aaman. They make their living by folk-healing, trading greymanes, fortune telling, and various performing arts. A little thievery, of course, is also in their line of work. They are divided into tribes, each named after a wildflower or insect. The sides of their wagons depict their namesake growing twined with or sitting on meadow-bright, the emblem of the Sarista people. Anyone raised by a tribe is a member of it, and a Sarista.

The men wear their beards neatly trimmed and waxed, usually clipped short, though occasionally grown longer in the manner of

the Farad. Their hair is long, interwoven with ribbons and rings and ornamented with baubles and gemstones. The custom of "wearing one's wealth in one's hair" is a result of Sarista culture — coins are easily pickpocketed, but rings tied into the hair are difficult to steal, unless you cut off the head. As an added safeguard, bejeweled tresses are often coiled under a beret, with one or two braids hanging down as ornaments. Their clothes are the scavengings of last year's fashions, cut, slashed and retailored in the uniquely Sarista style. They prefer fine materials and bright colors, selecting fabrics that complement one another rather than clash.

Sarista women wear their hair in the same manner as the men, only longer and without the beret. They favor wearing full layered skirts, and many possess beautifying tattoos — small accent marks on the cheek, wrist or other areas, designed to draw attention to the charms of the wearer. The women admire the finely drawn tattoos of the Thralls of Taz, but prefer smaller, less garish tattoos for themselves.

### Family Life

Marriages among the Sarista take place on the day when a mother bears a child. If the father doesn't volunteer himself, a fortune teller does a simple divination to establish paternity. If the father is not a member of the tribe, the caravan master selects a caravan member to be the "father."

Most Sarista are married to several spouses, the bond being the children. Parents provide for daughters until their first marriage. Husbands must tend to the needs of their wives for all successive pregnancies, even if the children are not his. A ribald Sarista ballad concerns a young man who, at age 23, had 14 wives, all of whom were pregnant! (The impressive thing was that the children all turned out to be his.) Sarista men encourage their wives to acquire other husbands, thus spreading the financial burdens of pregnancy and the raising of children. The frequency of twins among the Sarista is most alarming to bachelors.

**Adoption.** A caravan cannot have too many children. Anyone who has a particularly beautiful child will be asked by the Sarista to sell him. The nomads pay handsomely, though they usually find few takers outside of the markets of Faradun. As with anything they want which they can't get legitimately, the Sarista sometimes steal children — but only if they are unwanted or neglected. They raise these children as their own, which explains the occasional "Sarista" who looks out of place in his caravan.

### The Caravan

The wagons of a Sarista caravan are painted with vivid pictures and symbols, marking the occupants' specialties — fortune tellers, herbalists, animal trainers, greymane traders, food sellers, acrobats, mountebanks, dancers, musicians and actors. Different tribes have different specialties, and several may join together to pool their talents.

Sarista "culture" actually includes useful skills such as bartering, haggling and herbalism, as well as instruction in politics, comparative religion and classic swindles. Thievery does go on within a Sarista camp — practice, in every sense of the word. Foiling theft is not considered gauche so long as the protection isn't overly dangerous. Glue, bells, safekeep spells, alarms and puzzle locks are all perfectly acceptable, but poisoned locks and lethal traps are evil so far as the Sarista are concerned.

**Actors.** Thespian caravans produce popular plays and dramas, such as the Hadjin love tragedy, "The Death of Jinesse"; the Seven Kingdom's comedy, "The Merchant of Kashmir" (also known as "The Muse and the Miser"); and the Farad classic drama, "K'tallah and Black Lotus."

Sarista theatre is well received, but nowhere more so than in Aaman. For the Faithful, the Sarista perform miracle plays taken directly from the Omnival. One performer puts on the antlered mask of a Shaitan and a yellow cloak, whipping the audience with a small scourge during and after the performance. As the popular plays always leave a surge of religious revivalism in their wake, the Monitors continue to allow the infidel Sarista to traverse their lands. On such missions, Sarista also steal children, and on occasion they smuggle full-grown adults out of Aaman.

**Animal Trainers.** The wagon of the animal trainer is gaily decorated with pictures and carvings of animals. Riding on the roof is a real animal — perhaps a malkin, feather dractyl or a Wererook. Behind the animal trainer's personal wagon are three or four more which contain his menagerie.

Animal trainers exhibit such unusual creatures as potted mandragores, caravan bugs, crystal moths, neurozoids (billed as deadly neuromorphs), and tardisites. Most menageries include a "Fabulous Abomination." These are usually fakes, but real Abominations can be quite intelligent and are sometimes accepted as members of the tribe.

**Dancers and Tumblers.** Sarista acrobats, tumblers, jugglers and dancers perform in many lands. Many are actually freed Thiasan slaves and concubines. A traditional Sarista dance is the "Rulenska," a dizzying dance of swirling skirts and cloaks. Accompanied by much hand-clapping, the fortune teller and animal trainer choose dancers from the circle, pairing them until the dancing ground becomes a sea of bodies. Those selected are expected to join the dance, or risk Fortuna's displeasure.

**Fools and Mountebanks.** The clowns of the Sarista are known as Rodinns, named after the wizard of legend, due to their mad tricks and silly, absent-minded attitude. They dress in garish robes of ruby velvet, splotted with alchemical mixtures, and wear long fake white beards and tall pointed caps (marking their stupidity, say the Sarista). Using their legerdemain, Rodinns search for "the quintessence," going through rituals involving secret boxes and hollow tubes. In the end, all they produce are brightly colored avir, silkcloth scarves, crystal moths and flashes of sparkling powder.

Female mountebanks take on the character and name of Riga, Rodinn's Sindaran alchemical assistant, and wear a padded leather headdress and platform boots with archaic Sindaran robes. Riga, the more intelligent of the pair, makes sardonic comments and funny faces behind Rodinn's back, screaming, "He's not paying me enough for this!" as Rodinn puts her through the cabinet of swords and the sawing-the-assistant-in-half trick, all in his search for the quintessence.

The characters of Rodinn and Riga are also present in a much older puppet show. The story is always the same: Rodinn is chased by the King of Pompados, escapes through trickery, then is sold a forest cottage by a Shaitan posing as a Hajann land merchant. Riga, an unemployed Sindaran alchemist, comes and is hired. Rodinn spoils many experiments and summons a kaliya, which he and Riga dispose of with slappers, then slap each other and wreck more of the lab. Fortuna comes, dressed as a flower girl. Rodinn slaps Fortuna on the bottom, and she becomes offended and leaves, as does Riga. Grandfather Death comes, looking for Rodinn — who tells him that the chair in the corner is Rodinn, since it's wearing his coat and hat. Grandfather Death takes the chair, after which Rodinn finishes his experiment. There's a puff of sparkling powder, and the show comes to an end.

Puppets for daytime shows are fashion of carved wood, and are brightly painted and dressed in fabric scraps. Night shows have a different set, made of colored crystal moth wings glued together so that light from a scintilla lantern projects a colored image onto the back of a silkcloth screen. During the night show, the flames

from the kaliya are particularly spectacular, created by a folded fan of red and orange moth wings attached to the kaliya's mouth.

The "Rodinn and Riga" shows, especially the character of Riga, are a great favorite in Sindar. The Muses of Astar love the artistry and humor, though they are somewhat offended by the crystal moth wings. The Thralls of Taz find the violence amusing, and throw coins into the hat passed around after the performance.

**Fortune Tellers.** Many claim that Sarista magic is pure quackery. It is . . . and it isn't. In any caravan, there is a chance that the fortune teller is actually skilled in spells and divinations. Other fortune tellers have Wererooks as pets, depending on the avir's prophecies for the source of their "fortunes." Yet others rely on crystal balls or other artifacts.

Then again, many tribes are not fortunate enough to have any of these. In this case, the Sarista make do with what they have. Zodar cards, Mandalan tea leaves, astrological charts from Castabulan and plain glass orbs all can provide the appropriate trappings. A scroll of Divination makes do in an emergency when actual prophecy is necessary. It usually isn't. Sarista know that customers pay best when you tell them what they want to hear. A lie is usually prettier than the truth, and people pay more for pretty things.

**Herbalists.** The Sarista are skilled in this ancient art, and many cures have been effected by the wildflowers of Silvanus. Then again, many have not. Despite this, Sarista herbalists do a brisk business. Many Zandir swear to the efficacy of their remedies. Others just swear.

### Fortuna and Her People

The Sarista revere Fortuna, though they would never offend her with "worship" or call her a goddess. "Goddess" conjures up images of a woman chained to a throne, forced to hold court and answer prayers. Fortuna, say the Sarista, is a free spirit, and as she will not stay long in one place, neither will they. The nomads consider themselves Fortuna's Chosen People. When asked why she's chosen them to favor, the Sarista answer — "Why not?"

Knowing that Fortuna is often beside them, Sarista talk to her — which the uninformed may misinterpret as prayers. The one commandment the Sarista always keep is to never speak ill of Fortuna. They believe that she easily takes offense. By extension, they claim that anyone who is rude to one of Fortuna's Chosen People offends her as well. The Curse of Maruk, say the Sarista, was the result of that citystate's ban against Sarista "and other charlatans and peddlers" in the year 483. Sarista fortune tellers claim that if the Maruk would welcome them back, Fortuna might finally return to that city.

Death is the butt of most Sarista jokes. He is depicted as a doddering old grandfather, coming whenever a throat is slit or someone falls off a cliff, and often taking his time at that. Death can be mocked with impunity, they believe, since there are only so many ways a person can die. He is thought to lust after the beautiful Fortuna, but is unable to find her — usually coming just after she has left. As the Sarista say, "When Fortuna is with you, Death is not."

### The Isle of Talisandre

This island lies off the coast of Silvanus, nearest the small point where stand the runestones known as the Pious Pilgrims. The beach below the stone circle is strewn with bright silver sand and white pebbles. At low tide, it is possible to wade across on the sand bar, so shallow is the Azure Ocean at this point. Sea scorpions, kra, ikshada and the other dangers which normally assault Talislantan beachcombers are completely absent from these waters.

Beautiful and rich in the wildflowers sacred to the Silver Moon, the Isle seems a lovely spot for an afternoon, especially to rich Zandir travelers. It is not, however, advisable to wade, row or otherwise journey to the Isle of Talisandre. This is on account of the Azir, a primitive tribe of men who throw rocks, seashells, and anything else that comes to hand at anyone who comes near their island, screaming, "Gaete baeke jaeke, duosite egaene!" This phrase has been recognized by savants to be a much-corrupted dialect of ancient Phaedran, translatable as, "Begone, evil aberrant!"

**Pre-Disaster Talisandre.** Given the number of oracles, soothsayers, prophets and fortune tellers in the ancient world, it was highly unlikely that an event of the importance as the Great Disaster would go unpropheied. It didn't.

Getting someone to believe those prophecies of doom was another matter altogether. The Ecomancers of the Silver Moon convinced only a small group, who retreated to this Isle and built fortifications with which to resist the coming disaster. Ecomantic magics, related to the Trans-Ascendant theories of Hotan the Mystic, gave these mages the power needed to summon the Elementals which diverted the discordant energies of the Great Disaster past the Isle and into the Azure Ocean. Residual effects still warn away the great sea predators, making the nearby waters safe.

However, the Ecomancers did not have a stable culture. Without the threat of the Great Disaster to unify them, the inhabitants of the Isle fell into civil war. The Ecomantic Mages were driven into hiding, and have not been seen for four centuries.

**Talisandre Today.** The Isle of Talisandre was not physically affected by the magics of the Great Disaster. It is home to many rare and wondrous creatures, some of which did not survive elsewhere — the *White Octicus*, an eight-tentacled, iron-clawed land mollusk which stalks the ocean cliffs; *Tuskodonts*, family-dwelling herbivores equipped with wicked double tusks and a scything tail; and *Azirian Springers*, a peaceful species of nimble forest herbivores which can throw their detachable mace-like tails with frightening accuracy. Some of the natives raise a species of tailless *Bounders*, their only domestic animal. The Isle is also the mating grounds of several species of crystal moth. During autumn, the trees of the island shimmer with thousands and thousands of crystalline wings.

The natives of Talisandre, known as the Azir, are heavily built men with olive skin, grey or brown almond-shaped eyes, curly red-blond hair (deepening to auburn with age), and little facial or body hair. They wear leather clothing — short cloaks and pantaloons for the men, and ankle-length dresses for the women. Beads made from shells, antlers and crystal-moth wings are used for decoration. In the winter, the Azir also wear a heavy cape of fur taken from one of the larger predators of the island.

The Azir would worship the Creator, except that they think he is dead — killed by Aberon, whose loosing (according to their beliefs) caused the Great Disaster. They believe that Aberon now rules Talislanta, which has been poisoned and overrun by demons. Every outsider who comes to the Isle is thought to be a demon in disguise, trying to tempt the Azir to leave their safe haven. Nor is there complete safety on the Isle, for (they believe) Aberon spared Talisandre only for his own amusement, and demons will someday overrun the Isle. The Azir cannot decide whether it would be better to fight the evil or surrender. They wish the lost Ecomancers would return and protect them.

### Castabulan

A small, rocky isle off the coast of Silvanus, Castabulan is home to a cabal of Phantasian Astromancers, descendants of a windship wreck. Their twisted observatory tower, known as the Phaeros, sits atop a three-hundred-foot sheer cliff overlooking the Azure Ocean. It serves as a ship beacon, its scintilla and mirrors projecting light for miles around.

The rare visitors allowed inside the Phaeros of Castabulan report many strange and wondrous chambers housing inventions of the Astromancers. One spherical chamber has a tiny aperture in the ceiling, and its floor is marked with a map of the heavens. When uncovered, the hole allows light to enter, projecting the images of the seven moons and the two suns onto the floor. This allows the Astromancers to chart the relative positions of the heavenly bodies. The room is also said to be of some use in certain rituals requiring the light of particular moons.

Life on Castabulan is hard. Travel to the isle is treacherous, due to strong winds and whirlpools, not to mention the sea scorpions which nest in the offshore waters. Inbreeding is a problem among the Astromancers, who are even taller and thinner than most Phantasians.

**Castabulan's Exports.** The Astromancers do a brisk business selling charts of lunar conjunctions, along with basic interpretations, to navigators and mages throughout Talislanta. In addition to charting lunar eclipses, they are able to gauge the erratic solar eclipses — times of extreme magical importance — as well as chart the lunar phases. They have also created a reasonably accurate almanac of tidal flows in the Azure Ocean. Adventurers sometimes brave a trip to the Isle to collect specific predictions of current and tide before embarking on a voyage.

The science of the Astromancers is a closely guarded secret. Many theories have sprung up about them. Zandir sailors believe that the Castabulanese have bound a Wind Demon, who clears the fog from the skies over their observatory. The Aamanians believe the part about the demon, and would send Witch Hunters to the Isle if the voyage weren't so risky.



## WEREWOOD

Black-skinned banes and fierce werebeasts, tangled forests and talking Mang trees, wererooks uttering morbid verses, peculiar Gnorls, and darkly enticing Dhuna witches and warlocks — many of the things said of Werewood are true. And yet, like the crag spiders' webs which drip from the trees in the semblance of moss, all in Werewood is not as it appears.

So far as is known, this region has always been a forest. Tombs and stone circles are common, but ruins of settlements are rare — the only known examples being Ebonixius in Mordante's Deep and the heavily eroded remains in the Dread Forest. The Dhuna claim that the spirits of Nature are strong here, and do not take kindly to any reordering of their realm. The great central woods remain unexplored and uninhabited except by werebeasts and banes. All attempts to domesticate the hoary woodland have met with failure.

### The Valley of Forgetfulness

At the junction of Werewood, Silvanus and Zandu, the Valley of Forgetfulness is a small, densely wooded valley claimed by none of the regions which border it. It is a wonderful and alien place. The vegetation grows in a symbiosis seen nowhere else — silver deodar twines with deadwood, and hangman trees are decorated with living garlands of purple thornrose. No less strange are the creatures to be seen in the woodland. Malkin sport with malathrope and ectomorph, all in peace. Banes and lost travelers, clothed in rags, sing wordless songs and desport themselves with abandon, not seeming to know who or what they are, and call out to passersby to join them.

The oily waters of the Necros run amber as they enter the valley. At night, a silver mist rises from the river. Creatures which breathe the vapor suffer amnesia (for d10 days — resisted with a successful CON Roll). The creatures of the valley reportedly drink directly from the river, and are sustained solely by that fluid, partaking of no other food.

Cairns of convicts from the days of ancient Phaedra line the sides of this valley. It was the educated opinion of the imperial morticians that the mists of the valley would pacify the shadow wights and Malum which tend to be associated with the bodies of murderers and evildoers. Adventurers now come to plunder these tombs, hoping to uncover arcane secrets or treasure buried with the dead. Removing anything in the cairns, however, often awakens dire entities. The Sarista tell a tale of three tomb robbers and a dead wizard with a hook, and leave the grave robbing to others.

A high stone bridge of ancient design spans the Necros. Strangely, the mists never rise higher than the bridge, allowing safe passage so long as one does not stray from the path.

### The Dread Forest

In the west, near the headwaters of the Necros River, lies the particular woodland known as the Dread Forest. It is replete with fiends, banes and shadow wights. Crumbled ruins carved from black basalt are marked with sigils and glyphs that indicate they are far older than anything else in Werewood except the runestones. Some scholars, tracing similarities with ruins further north, believe that the original inhabitants of Khazad once settled here. Rubbings taken on moth-silk paper from the stone etchings are valued by art collectors and cryptomancers alike, since the patterns are beautiful, strange, and more than a touch unsettling.

### Mordante's Deep

Fastness of the infamous wizard of the same name, the forest called Mordante's Deep contains Ebonixius, the castle where the black magician last resided before his disappearance.

The ground slopes downward as one enters the forest. According to the Gnorls, who have made an unprecedented public gift of this knowledge, Mordante's Deep is disappearing into a giant sinkhole. There are extensive limestone caverns beneath the woods, although the passages of the Underground Highway leading into them are blocked off. Aamanian Archimages claim that what lies beneath the sinkhole is a gate into Oblivion itself, where "the Shaitan dance on their thrones, reaching up with hooks to drag down evil witches and black magicians!"

Ruined Ebonixius and its one-hundred-and-seven rooms now house several packs of banes, lured here by the grove of hangman trees and the runestones on the hill above, sacred to Zar. Nearby is the Woodabbey, a mansion of living wood, all that remains of an ill-advised attempt by early Aamanian pilgrims to establish a monastery and purify the region of its evil influences.

Dhuna who have ventured inside Ebonixius claim that some of the legends are true, including the tale that as punishment, Mordante bound a recalcitrant Sardonicus to give "comprehensive literary criticisms" of an archaic form of the Omnival. Reportedly, the Sardonicus still lectures on the flaws of Aamanian theology.

Also giving credence to legend, the spiritform of the ancient Hadjin beauty, Jinesse — whom Mordante is said to have kidnapped in a fit of dark passion, then murdered when she would not return his love — is believed to wander the overgrown topiary mazes behind Ebonixius. She is said to be searching for her body ...and the beautiful dress she wore on that fateful night, spun from golden thread. The dress is worth several fortunes to collectors of historical curios, not to mention the sentimental Hadjin, among whom the tale of "The Death of Jinesse" is the most popular of romantic tragedies.

### Castlerock

The northernmost point of Werewood, this basalt mountain is crowned by the runestones known as Borean's Spearsmen. Castlerock resembles a fortress, and is riddled by ancient caves. Some believe the now-extinct folk of Khazad used these chambers for purposes now unknown. Snow, glaciers and high winds prevent further exploration. Wind Demons have been sighted flying from the stone peaks.

### The Weeping River

The spring run-off from the snows of Castlerock is the source of the Weeping River, the only river of pure water in northern Werewood. Heavy silt and overgrown vegetation make navigation nearly impossible. Stagnant pools along the banks are the spawning ground of nar-eels, who in the spring make the long trek from the Azure Ocean, leaping up the falls and rapids. Some Dhuna erect ladders to aid the eels, harvesting ivory in the process, which they sell to the Sarista for goods and supplies.

### The Sascasm River

Starting from the Weeping River, the Sascasm immediately splits into two forks. The Eastern Sascasm flows into the Green Lagoon, while the Western Sascasm proceeds all the way to Zandu. Both are important sources of potable water. Brown and muddy, the rivers teem with hungry life. Werebeasts often lair in the shallows, swatting chanc out of the river to feed on.

Along these banks, the enchanters of ancient Phaedra were entombed in mausoleums of ostentatious design. Unfortunately, the ancients couldn't predict the changes in the flow and course of the Sascasm. During the month of Drome, the Sascasm overflows its banks, depositing silt over many of the tombs. As for the tomb of Umiya the Magnificent, it now forms an island in the middle of the river.

Fragile Dhuna bridges of deadwood and woven crag-spider silk span the Sascasm at several points. Using feather charms and hooks, the Dhuna come here to fish for brass chang, a delicious river fish and a staple of their cuisine.

### The Green Lagoon

This large body of water is a swirling miasma into which half of the Sascasm wends its way. A whirlpool spins in the center, sucking down all that come near.

The lagoon is a breeding ground of the skalanx. Using large wickerwood traps baited with carrion, the Dhuna come here to capture the aquatic predators. The demonoids are fine eating — one feeds an entire coven for a week. The roe of egg-laden females is a particular delicacy, and a bright-red boiled skalanx makes a festive centerpiece on feast days.

The mudflats are the home of the giant Quaga, a dangerous mollusk which grows up to twelve feet in width. They produce the fabled violet Quaga pearls, whitish-blue spheres which command prices of 300 G.L. to the dram. A perfect ten-pound pearl can fetch 1,000 G.L. from collectors. The Dhuna actively hunt Quaga, not only for their pearls, which possess magical virtues, but for their delicious meat. Gnorls also hunt the Quaga, as the powdered pearls form a dye esteemed as a sign of wealth and royalty — sufficient trade for many secrets.

### The Mushroom Forest

Lying in northwestern Werewood, the Mushroom Forest is a strange place. Underground streams, possibly leading from the Green Lagoon, water its giant fungi. At night, the land glows with

faerie fire from phosphorescent toadstools. Dhuna and Gnorl herbalists come here to gather rare mushrooms and toadstools.

Plant grues, skanks, neuromorphs and neurozoids, scavenger slimes and pseudomorphs make the Forest a perilous place. The worst threat comes from the giant moonmoths which breed here. Moonmoth larvae are huge, fierce, and hungry. Crag spiders lair on the edges of the Forest, waiting for adult moonmoths to emerge.

### Gnorlwood

This is one of the oldest woodlands in Talislanta. Gnorlwood is filled with ancient gnarled span-oaks, shading pleasant swards and ringing meadows bright with wildflowers. Like many places, this — woodland is deceptively peaceful — its mossy hills are home to banes, mandragores and giant shathane.

Gnorls, the ancient folk after whom the forest is named, live underground in nooks formed by the roots of ancient span-oaks. They are a small folk, hunched and wrinkled in appearance, with bright pink eyes glowing beneath furrowed brows. Clipped to the end of their long, thin noses are spectacles made from carefully selected crystal-moth wings (the eye-spots make perfect lenses for reading).

This people dress in turbans and long robes (with numerous secret pockets), all of eye-catching colors. Sashes, scarves, and beaded necklaces are popular accessories. Gnorls have a penchant for collecting unusual walking sticks, umbrellas and parasols, especially those which have uses other than their apparent function. A common sight in a Silvanus meadow is a flower-print parasol, likely belonging to a Gnorl Rhabdomancer who has come to listen to the secrets of whisperweed.





## Secrets and the Gnorls

Rhodomancy, the art of divining secrets, is the focus of Gnorl life. They value secrets above all else. Gnorls never answer a question for free. A token of friendship among the Gnorls is an unopened nut or a crystal moth chrysalis. As the Rhodomancers say, "When it is opened, you'll see something no one has ever seen before."

The Rhodomancers make distinctions among secrets. *Lesser Secrets* are things of little import, or secrets which are relatively widely known. *Greater Secrets* are things which only a few people know. To transform a Greater Secret — a true mystery — into a Lesser Secret is the most profane thing possible to a Gnorl. People who do such things are known as Gossips.

Telling a secret without the proper compensation is a serious offense among the Rhodomancers, second only to telling a lie. The punishment for individuals convicted of lying is *the Serum*. The exact nature of this drug is a carefully kept Gnorl secret. Foreigners caught lying by the Rhodomancers are seldom seen again, and those who return are never quite the same as they were before. As the Zandir say, "Never lie to a Gnorl."

## The Nooks

Gnorls live underground. The hills of Gnorlwood are hollow with caverns formed by the questing roots of span-oaks, and extended by the Rhodomancers. Truly ancient span-oaks are also hollow inside. A spacious Gnorl nook incorporates both the hill below and the hollow of a great tree above. If a traveler notices diamond panes set into the branches of a tree, he has found a Gnorl home.

The nooks are comfortable, though cramped to most races; ceilings are five feet tall, and doorways a mere three feet wide. Every available shelf and pigeonhole is stuffed with scrolls, manuscripts, clocks and curiosities. Some nooks are protected with traps, built using similar principles.

The burrows are also replete with secret doors, drawers, passageways and sliding bookcases. Every nook has several secret libraries where Gnorls hide their books of secrets, and at least one laboratory. Some of the chambers may be unsuspected by the nook's current residents, as the ancient dwellings are inherited, and Gnorls seldom pass all of their secrets along to the next generation. "What good is anything if it can't be a secret?" mutter the Gnorls, especially when guests ask the way to certain chambers.

The caverns of the Gnorls are linked by tunnels to the Underground Highway, the network of subterranean passages which leads from one end of Talislanta to the other. These passageways are heavily used by the Rhodomancers, even though many of the tunnels are flooded. The Gnorls have constructed a system of canals and locks which allows them to travel south into Zandu and Arim, and as far west as Silvanus. They ride in coracles made from Quaga shells, using paddles of skalnx chiton. The Underground Highway is not without its dangers — chang and urthrax — but it is faster and safer than travel aboveground.

## Gnorl Customs

**Families.** Gnorls have no concept of romantic love. Mated Rhodomancers maintain separate nooks, and do not share their secrets with each other. Parents take turns raising their children, trading them back and forth at yearly intervals. When young Gnorls reach maturity (at ten years of age), each parent gives the child a small store of secrets to set the youngster up on his own.

**Food.** A typical Gnorl meal consists of three courses — wild berries, nuts, erd cheese, specially blended liquors, and live insects dipped in honey; followed by wild mushrooms, roots and



tubers pickled with a secret mixture of herbs; climaxed with a stew of ground meat and other unidentifiable substances. When guests ask what is in the stew, they are invariably told, "That's a secret."

## Gnorls and the Other Races

Within Werewood, the Gnorls and the Dhuna maintain a respectful distance. The Rhodomancers know that the Covens have numerous magical and mundane secrets, none of which they will part with or trade. The Gnorl do not like this, but they respect it.

Gnorls hate Weirdlings, as the little thieves often sneak into their nooks to steal curios and journals. Consequently, the Rhodomancers set traps for the Weirdlings, releasing them in exchange for treasures or wishes. They keep careful records, in order not to be caught by a Weirdling's cursed thirteenth wish.

More cordial is the relationship between the Gnorls and the giant Shathane. The Rhodomancers have discovered the secret of rudimentary communication with these creatures (which is all that is possible), and minister to their wounds and illnesses. Indeed, the easiest way to locate a Gnorl nook is to follow a wounded Shathane. A friendly Shathane may accompany Gnorls on a short trip, or bring nuts and berries as gifts to the "Spirits of the Old Trees."

Gnorls are welcome, if not common, in Zandu, where they are most often found frequenting booksellers' stalls or the Institute of Paradoxy. (It's an awful thing to publish a secret, but far worse to not take advantage of it.) Young Gnorls often go adventuring, as there are many strange and forgotten secrets to be found in foreign lands.

Callidian Cryptomancers are *persona non grata* in Gnorlwood — anyone who specializes in code-breaking and can read any



language is as welcome in Gnorlwood as a heretic in Aaman. Kasmir Trapsmiths, however, are valued guests. Both the Gnorls and Kasmir understand confidentiality. Kasmir puzzle-locks and puzzle boxes — especially with secret catches — are avidly bought by the Gnorls, who fit the locks into the hasps of their books, and store them in the puzzle boxes. Gnorls pay extra for particularly ingenious locks (secrets in themselves). Some Kasmir sell blank books with locks and traps included. By far the most sought-after protection, however, is to have a Kasmir Trapsmith pen one of *Shaladin's Alarums and Diversions* directly on the flyleaf of a journal of secrets.

Gnorl wills set aside money to hire a Kasmir trapsmith, so that he can show the heirs how to safely retrieve their inheritance. The inheritors must decode the volumes of secrets themselves, however.

Since few Kasmir make the dangerous journey to Werewood, Gnorls needing traps must undertake a torturous journey — following the Underground Highway to Iswan in Arim (where the subterranean passages end), taking the mountain road to Shattru, traveling by barge to Vashay, and then following the Seven Roads to Kasmir.

### Witchwood

This woodland in eastern Werewood is the home of the Dhuna. It is much like the rest of Werewood, except that there are more of the ancient runestones here than elsewhere, and the Dhuna have driven out most of the werebeasts.

The Dhuna are powerful magic-users. They believe that all true magic ultimately springs from Nature, its truest source. Everything in the world holds power, through its own spirit and by the spirits with which it is aligned. Dhuna magic draws upon the spirits of Nature, bending them to do their will.

The warlocks and witches of the Dhuna have always been Nature mages. When they escaped the collapse of the Phaedran Empire and came to Silvanus with the Sarista, however, they became intrigued by a circle of runestones on the seacoast, known to the Sarista as the Pious Pilgrims. Discovering other runestone circles in neighboring Werewood, they traveled east — to the forest now known as Witchwood — and began to unlock the secrets of the stones. This led to their greatest discovery: lunar magic.

### The Covens of the Dhuna

The focus of Dhuna life is the coven. There are seven of these, each aligned with one of the seven Talislantan moons. The coven teaches and possesses those spells under the governance of its lunar spirit. A Dhuna belongs to several covens in his lifetime, as he strives to master the powers of the different moons.

Aamanian Archimages define Dhuna magic as black witchcraft, while Cymril's Lyceum Arcanum divides the covens into black, white and grey, according to the type of magic being used. The Dhuna themselves do not believe in good and evil — Nature is amoral, they claim. What the Cymrilians have mistaken for black magic is the power of Zar, the Black Moon. According to the Dhuna, Zar is parasitic and destructive, but not evil. Similarly, what others have seen as white magic is the power of the Silver Moon, Talisandre, which to the Dhuna symbolizes good luck. Grey magic is a misinterpretation of the powers of the other moons.

Dhuna spend their days gathering herbs, hunting, and in ritual and study. Within a coven, there are two classes of Dhuna — *Initiates*, those who have joined with the coven's runecircle; and *Applicants*, who have not yet joined. Initiates are as brothers and sisters, sharing their property and wealth freely with each other.

There is some friction between covens, due to the conflicts of their aligned moons — Zar is opposed to Talisandre, Jhang is opposed to Drome, Laeolis is opposed to Ardan, and Phandir is alone by itself. The older witches try to soothe these clashes. "As the moons do not collide," they say, "so neither should the covens."

It is whispered that there are Greater Covens, aligned not with the lunar spirits but with the powers of Stone, Wind, Ocean and Sun. It is said that these Dhuna may take the form of demons and elementals.

### Dhuna Customs

**Costume and Appearance.** Dhuna males are clean shaven, though they have heavy beard-shadow. The warlocks pull their hair tightly back, forming a braided queue at the base of the skull. Arched brows are combed up, and a diabolic appearance is accentuated with a black eye-liner of kohl. Vests, capes, and breeches of black cavebat leather are also quite popular. Shirts are white linen, with cuffs, collars and waist-sashes embroidered with stylized leaves and animals. A jeweled clasp, often antique, secures the cape at the throat.

Dhuna witches wear their dark hair long and loose, accented by a flower, feather or wooden comb. Kohl is worn about the eyes, and their lips are dyed red. The women dress in gauzy gowns of soft grey moth silk, with trailing sleeves formed by the natural tatters.

Both witches and warlocks wear a cord around their waist, dyed the color of their coven's moon.

**Courtship and Marriage.** As a common love poem among the Dhuna goes:

I love my love, her smoky eyes,  
her hair like a purple feather.  
I love my love, in any guise,  
but most when we're together.  
  
Sweet she coos, a soft, winged dove,  
and yet our love is tragic.  
For do I love my love for love?  
or do I love her magic?

This verse sums up the inherent problems of Dhuna courtship. A Dhuna witch can steal a man's heart with a single kiss, so a warlock can never know whether his love for her is real or conjured. To demonstrate the depth of their love, Dhuna witch-maids therefore give love tokens to the warlocks. Much time and artistry goes into these, which are unique and expressive of the artist's soul. A token might be a wooden charm, a hairpin, a sash, or an embroidered linen shirt. A warlock who receives several such gifts from a young witch can be reasonably sure that his admirer is more than just a passing flirt.

When a young couple decides that, all illusions aside, they are ready to wed, they become Applicants with the Coven of Ardan. On the 6th of Ardan, as part of that night's ritual, they attempt together to join with the stones.

**Rituals.** Each coven conducts lunar rituals on the sixth of the month. The most important ceremonies, however, are reserved for the sixth of the month named after the coven's moon. On this night, only the chosen moon rides in the sky. This is the time when all of the Dhuna of a coven gather to their runecircle, and the Applicants attempt to join with the stones. Those who succeed gain magical powers, and are gifted by the coven with an amulet composed of the moon's metal and set with the appropriate moonstone. Dhuna who hold all seven amulets are regarded with awe by their fellows.

## ZANDU

In stark contrast to the regimentation of Aaman, Zandu stands as an tribute to the infinite variety of thought and existence. When their Orthodoxist rivals espoused the rigid disciplines of Aa the Omniscient, the Zandir sought refuge with the gentler teachings of Paradoxism — which declare that, since no one truly knows the answers to life's myriad questions, it is wrong to give precedence to any viewpoint. After centuries, the Zandir devotion to Paradoxism has made their nation one of the most colorful, diverse and confusing in all Talislanta.

### Geography

While most of the nation is settled, large regions of wilderness remain. Some former farmlands, devastated during the Cult Wars, have never been resettled. Zandu suffered greatly during the Wars, as the fanatic Aamanians burned, looted and despoiled the land of their enemies, and the Paradoxists are determined never to let such destruction occur again. The most notable of Zandu's geographical features are detailed below.

**The Woodlands of Zandu.** Located in the north, this region was the scene of several major battles, and was devastated with particular thoroughness by torch-wielding Aamanians. The Zandir are replenishing the soil, planting trees, and releasing animals to help return these woodlands to their natural state. Green Ardua horticulturists and Zandir agricultural experts maintain the woods, and Zandir swordsmen patrol them. However, such dangerous animals as exomorphs, malathropes, and vipers are not uncommon. Recently, a species of predatory insectoid long supposed extinct in Zandu — the Zarant — was observed here.

Zandir work crews have from time to time uncovered weapons and artifacts from the Wars, and tales are told of offended spirits rising to demand the return of their valuables. It is also said that an entire Aamanian army vanished here without a trace, along with a fortune in plunder and equipment.

**The Phaedran Causeway.** A remnant of the Empire, the Causeway is in poor repair and is infrequently patrolled. The lands around it are covered with farms and nobles' estates. Bandits frequent the less-traveled stretches. Most notable is the highwayman known as "The Nighthawk," named for his swift, devastating attacks on small caravans. Dressed all in black, the Nighthawk fights in the flamboyant style of a Zandir Swordsman, but never shows his face. The Sultan, tired of this dashing thief, has offered a bounty of 20,000 G.L. for his head.

**The Zandir Moors.** Located in western Zandu, the Moors were untouched by the Cult Wars. Bog Devils and Malathropes lurk in the swamps, making exploration hazardous. A source for many rare plants, the verdant hills overlooking the bogs are a popular destination for naturalists and sorcerers, particularly those seeking the rare Everblue Starfire.

Not long ago, the Vizier Cyalo and her colorfully dressed entourage journeyed to the Moors on a holiday quest to find the legendary Swamp Demon. She never returned. Two members of her party were found dead, with vital organs missing and limbs mutated into bizarre reptilian appendages.

**Korak's Mountain.** This mountain, the former site of the home of a celebrated sorcerer, dominates the approaches to the city of Zir, a prosperous naval and trading city. Legend has it that the long-vanished Korak still walks these slopes, and that his mansion periodically reappears near the mountain's peak. It is likely that such tales are myths, destined to remain unconfirmed. Expeditions to Korak's Mountain face frequent storms of great ferocity, which can arise suddenly, even in the best of weather.

### Paradoxism

*"Existence is a paradox, and life and death are the greatest mysteries. Let us not be sad or bewildered — let us revel in the paradoxes of the Omniverse. Sing and dance, celebrating the infinite wonder and variety of the cosmos!"*

With these words the *Book of Mysteries*, the central text of the Paradoxist faith, opens. Professing bafflement with the mysteries of the cosmos, Zand — the philosopher credited as the founder of Paradoxism — chose instead to accept the contradictions of existence, and to promote individualism as the natural state of men.

Paradoxism teaches that tolerance is the ultimate expression of individuality. All views are accepted in Zandu — every faith, political faction and philosophy, so long as they do not interfere with the practice of other beliefs. The exception is Orthodoxy, the followers of which are punished by death. By increasing the variety in life, Zandir feel that they promote Paradoxism, for as they say, "Without variety, we might as well be Aamanians!"

**The Book of Mysteries.** The principles of Paradoxism are summed up in the *Book of Mysteries*, which contains 100,000 questions — and no answers. These questions range from the sublime ("Is the soul truly immortal?") to the ridiculous ("What makes darklings so dark?"). The absurdity is considered symbolic of the Omniverse by the faith's practitioners.

Many different editions of the Book exist. Most are abridged editions, reducing the number of questions to 10,000, 1,000, or





just ten. The single question included in all editions — and which is repeated in the art, architecture and writing of Zandu — is acknowledged as the most important and perplexing: “Why?” Other well-known questions from the Book of Mysteries:

“What is Love?”

“Must we grow old, sicken and die?”

“Does a river unseen truly flow?”

“Why is the moon Talisandre silver, and Phandir green? Why not the other way around?”

“Who is this Hierophant, and what makes him think he’s so special?”

**The Ten Thousand.** Paradoxism embraces no single pantheon or deity, instead deferring to a vast collection of saints, heroes, and deities collectively known as the Ten Thousand (the exact number is unknown, and changes constantly). To Paradoxists, the Ten Thousand embody the vast spectrum of existence — and the more entities which are incorporated into the pantheon, the more accurately it represents the Omniverse.

Other faiths are generously represented in the Ten Thousand. Several incarnations of the Gnomekin goddess Terra are present, for example, as well as Zandir versions of Avar, Fortuna and Dreamweaver. The Kang avatar Krosh is one of the Ten Thousand. Also numbered in the pantheon are the saints of Paradoxism, such as Zand, the order’s founder, and Thozias, a hero of the Cult Wars. There are even “evil” figures, led by a Zandir form of Sham the Deceiver.

The Ten Thousand are not worshipped, but their images are found everywhere — as statues, miniatures, paintings and medallions. Some of the icons are enchanted, providing luck or magic, while others are simply carried out of tradition or as personal tokens.

### The Zandir

A complex and colorful people, the Zandir are given to mercurial (some would say manic) extremes of mood and emotion. Outspoken, opinionated, uninhibited, lecherous and extroverted are only a few of the adjectives applied to this people. Originally affectations, the extreme eccentricities of the Zandir have become an integral part of their persona. Outside of Zandu, they are regarded with scorn, and are often considered little better than thieves, liars and lechers.

The Zandir are a handsome race, tall and more generally slender in stature. Their skin is a rich shade of topaz, contrasting with their black hair and green or grey eyes. Both the Zandir and the Aamanians are thought to be descended from a mysterious folk known as the Yellow Acolytes. They actually look alike, but pointing this out to either is sure to prompt a violent response.

**Children.** Paradoxist children are given few guidelines, being expected to find their own path in life. Minor crimes — mostly fighting and petty theft — are tolerated as acts of youthful exuberance. Only when a Zandir reaches his sixteenth birthday is he expected to know the rules of society, and to be subject to the full weight of the law.

**Costume.** Zandir dress in every conceivable style and color. Fashion trends come and go, sometimes within the space of a few hours. Affluent Zandir change their clothes as often as a dozen times a day. Face painting, richly brocaded blouses, exotic cosmetics, hip-high boots, silken pantaloons, flamboyant capes, feathered turbans, gold and silver rings, and curl-toed slippers may all be glimpsed on the streets. Soldiers are expected to individualize their arms and armor.

The only “modesty” on the part of the women is their tradition of hiding their faces behind lush feather fans. This fashion dates back to the more inhibited days of the Empire, when the mad emperor Damon decreed that women should conceal their faces during the twenty years of mourning for the Emperor Soliman III. While the Orthodoxists embraced this decree with enthusiasm — calling for severe penalties for the immodest women who revealed their faces and led men into temptation — Paradoxist women ridiculed Damon’s new law by decorating their oversize fans with rich gems and expensive feathers, and wearing outlandish and revealing costumes behind the demure fan-masks. Today the fans are traditional. In many Zandir ale-houses or brothels, female entertainers wear fans . . . and little else.

**Demons and Devils.** Dealings with demons, devils and extra-dimensional entities are not prohibited by Paradoxism, but most Zandir frown upon such practices. In late 597, for example, the Charlatan Paramus, attempting to summon a Sardonicus from Oblivion, accidentally opened a breach into the Nightmare Dimension. The resultant incursion of barbed horrors, fiends, and bat mantas turned Zanth into a madhouse for three days while the city guards and the Sultan’s magicians hunted down the entities. Paramus escaped in the confusion and was last seen in Thaecia, still attempting to summon a Sardonicus. The Sultan has placed a 5,000 G.L. bounty on Paramus’ head, or “any other suitably vital organ.”

**Magic.** Magicians are respected in Zandir society, but many individuals exist whose claims to be sorcerers are doubtful at best. Zandu is a land filled with scoundrels and frauds. When employing a mage, the buyer should be aware that the quality of the services obtained may be considerably less than anticipated. On the other hand, some Zandir possess spells unknown elsewhere in Talislanta, attracting the interest of foreign scholars and magicians.

**Marriage.** Romantic love forms the basis for many of the Paradoxists’ 100,000 questions. Not knowing any of the answers, Zandir foster a baroque variety of relationships — ranging from the casual, platonic or anonymous to strict monogamy and polygamy. The Charlatans, the seers of Zandu, play no role in the formation of marital bonds beyond an advisory one (and the advice they give is usually contradictory). Marriage ceremonies vary from private declarations of affection to elaborate week-long festivals.

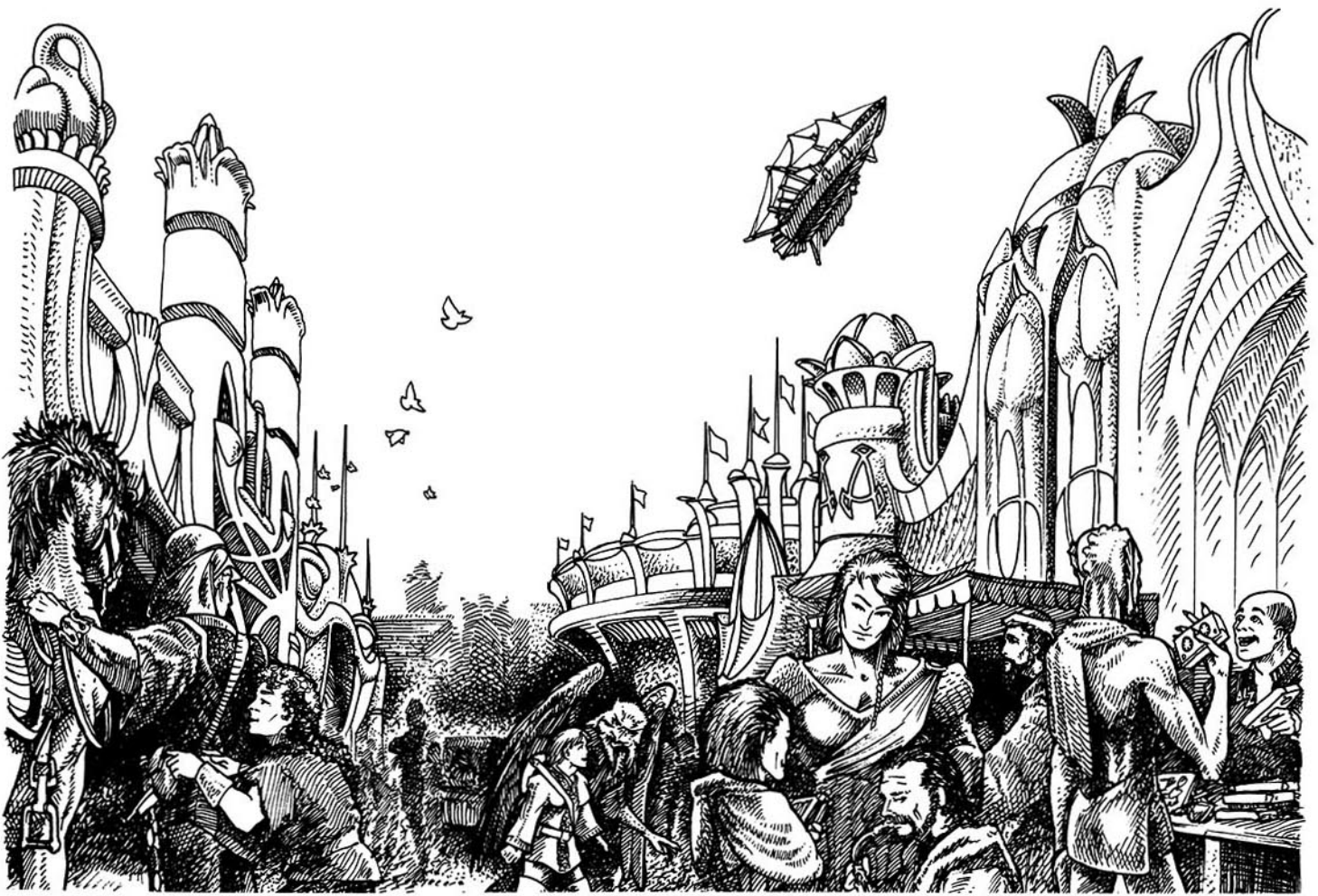
**Tourism.** With the exception of the hated Aamanians, outsiders are always welcome in Zandu — although visitors are advised to keep a close watch on their valuables. Foreigners are in great demand as mercenaries, guards and spies, for intrigue is rife here — rival families, merchants, and government officials all need assistance, and Zandir are not always considered trustworthy.

In Zandu, individuality is prized above all else. Travelers will elicit curious stares and amused whispers if they dress alike. Visitors who wish to remain anonymous should keep in mind that, unlike the citizens of other nations, the Zandir notice the dull and unremarkable. The more individualistic and outrageous a person’s appearance, the less likely he is to be noticed.

The uninhibited Zandir are quite forward in their behavior toward the opposite sex. Foreigners — especially those of exotic appearance, such as Muses, Sawila or Thralls — often must contend with unwanted advances, and run a gauntlet of aspiring admirers.

### The Sultan and the Viziers

Zandir’s absolute ruler is the Sultan, who dwells amid sybaritic luxury at his palace in Zanth. He is a man of mercurial moods and passions, a personal microcosm of Zandir society. The Sultan — it is forbidden to call him by his given name — is a slender,



handsome man in his early forties. He has a decided taste for opiates, women and revelry, which some say has had an adverse effect on his health. The Sultan has developed a persistent, hacking cough, and looks rather wan. His physicians are unable to cure the ailment, but the Sultan has not let it stop him from enjoying the pleasures of his harem and his role as chief legal arbiter of Zandu.

The Sultan's word is unquestioned law. Therefore, every member of the court vies for his favor. Extortion, assassination and other unsavory activities are not uncommon within the palace — the harem, where the Sultan spends much of his time, is especially full of intrigue. However, the Sultan leaves the day-to-day running of his realm in the hands of his Viziers. It is in the enforcement of Zandir law that the Sultan shows his true temperament. After his harem, his greatest love is to devise imaginative and exotic forms of punishment.

The Viziers are Zandir noblemen who advise the Sultan and manage the nation on his behalf. Some are entrusted with the rule of Zandu's major cities. All are appointed by the Sultan, and serve at his mercy. Depending on how they obtained their appointments, Viziers may be talented politicians or posturing martinets. The quality of Zandir government is a questionable matter at best.

### Law and Order

Zandir laws might charitably be described as "lax." The few crimes include treason, murder, assault, obvious thievery, public brawling, overly boisterous or dangerous behavior, and offering an insult to a woman, and are harshly punished. Virtually anything else is allowed, so long as one is discreet. As the Zandir say, "What no one sees, no one knows." Drunkenness, lechery, gambling, the use of exotic hallucinogens and addictive substances, trickery and petty theft are common, and the cities are thronged with rogues, charlatans and frauds of every description.

Justice is administered by the Viziers, although serious or unusual crimes may be investigated by the Sultan himself. Zandir justice is slow, and accused criminals may spend years awaiting trial in the foul pits of a city's dungeons.

In the capital, the Sultan serves as judge and jury. In a city the size of Zanth, however, the number of criminals is immense, and he has neither the time nor the inclination to judge them all. Depending on his whims, the Sultan may issue blanket pardons for certain crimes, or simply order the execution of all those held in a particular dungeon. In less sanguine moods, the Sultan hears cases in the morning, in the audience hall of his palace.

**Trials.** The accused is free to call witnesses on his behalf, and to hire a Causidian solicitor. Persuasive Causidians have been known to sway the Sultan, but if he is in a testy mood — for example, if the previous night's debaucheries proved displeasing, or if his cough is bothering him — nothing short of divine intervention can gain his sympathy.

Strangely enough, bribery is not illegal in Zandu. Consequently, there is open bidding in court to see who can "buy" witnesses and influence prominent officials. While this system seems to favor the rich, Causidians often champion poor clients in the interest of justice.

Only treason and the practice of Orthodoxy guarantee a grisly death sentence. In fact, anyone foolish enough to openly espouse the tenets of Orthodoxy is likely to be subject to swift and brutal mob justice, thereby saving the trouble of hearing the case. (In fact, death by stoning or dismemberment at the hands of a crowd of angry Zandir is probably preferable to one of the Sultan's fiendish executions.)

Punishment for other crimes covers the entire spectrum from fines and brief imprisonment to torture of the most refined sort. The



Sultan takes great pride in inventing new punishments, and has been known to sentence perpetrators to imaginative fates simply to test their effectiveness. However, he is less than consistent in his sentences. In one celebrated case, he chose death by slow torture for a Zandir accused of "fouling the footpath." In another case, the Sultan pardoned a murderer after reciting a Paradoxist parable to him.

### The Military

Zandu's armed forces are of the highest quality, but deeply imbued with Paradoxism. The skilled soldiers are resistant to authority, and difficult to control in battle. However, the initiative of individual Zandir won many a battle during the Cult Wars, when a Paradoxist army would otherwise have been engulfed by a larger and more disciplined Aamanian force.

**The Army.** Service in Zandu's regular army is open to all Zandir regardless of gender or social station, and the nation currently has over 35,000 troops under arms. The soldiers are provided with chainmail, made from high-grade Arimite black iron, and Zandir blades, renowned throughout Talislanta for their quality. Each soldier is trained in Blademan'ship, becoming an expert in the use of sabres and dueling swords. Dark red tunics are issued to the men, but they are free to embellish their uniforms with scarves, sashes, embroidered headbands, painted slogans or family crests. A unit of Zandir swordsmen swaggering down the street is a colorful sight indeed.

There are five branches in the army: greymane cavalry (armored and unarmored), armored infantry, elite guard, sentinel (city defense forces), and coast patrol. Warriors are hired on a yearly basis, with salaries starting at 10 gold lumens per week. Although Zandu's army has not fought a war in decades, it remains well-trained, led and equipped.

**The Navy.** Predictably the opposite of the cumbersome Aamanian galleys, Zandir corvettes are small, nimble ships powered by one or more banks of oars, armed with bow-mounted ballistae and carrying a small contingent of Coastal Patrol warriors. Although basic deckplans remain the same, each ship is painted and decorated in a unique manner. Variations include painted sails, elaborate wooden "castles" astern or amidships, rams carved in the images of the heads of beasts, and fancifully carved outriggers. Most are named after one or another of the Ten Thousand.

**Mercenaries.** The regular army is supplemented by a body of 10,000 foreign mercenaries, organized in units according to their home country. Many serve on border patrol. The most popular are the Thralls of Taz, who also find work in Zandu as bodyguards and bouncers. The Zandir are fascinated by the colorful Thrall tattoos, and often wear similar designs, unaware of their significance. Other mercenaries in Zandir service include Arimite knife-fighters, Danuvian swordswomen and Jaka scouts.

### Zandir Factions

Many different organizations, secret and otherwise, are found in Zandu. All have adherents, and some represent large segments of the populace. The most prominent or infamous are described below.

**Causidians.** A class of solicitors, scribes, legal advisors and diplomats, the Causidians originated during the Phaedran Empire, when they were elite lawmakers. The schism between Orthodoxists and Paradoxists placed great pressures on the Causidians, but they were able to maintain equilibrium in the Empire until the year 90, when the mad Wizard-King Damon stripped them of their powers, reducing their role to an advisory one. Later persecuted by the Orthodoxists, who disliked their open-mindedness, the lawmakers fled from Badijan to the west and were welcomed by the Paradoxists.

In modern Zandu, Causidians may be engaged to arbitrate disputes or to serve as solicitors. Fees range anywhere from 50-500 gold lumens per day, depending on the prestige of the Causidian and the difficulty of the service. If a solicitor is convinced of a poor prisoner's innocence, he may work free of charge, or in exchange for servitude upon acquittal — especially if he is young and needs more experience.

The Sultan sends Causidian diplomats all across Talislanta, where they skillfully represent Zandu's interests. Causidians also act as trade emissaries, negotiating bargains which have left even the wily Farad bewildered.

Although subject to the same vagaries of fashion as other Zandir, Causidians can be recognized by the fact that they always wear something blue — the favored color of their former patron, Soliman III.

**Certaments.** Originally a class of assassins, the Certaments (or Swordsmen) have since evolved into Zandu's class of professional duelists. For a price, they will represent anyone in a dispute which involves formalized combat. While brawling is a crime in Zandir, *prearranged* duels are legal — and encouraged as a way to keep the dungeons uncrowded. Fees range from 10-100 gold lumens per duel, depending on the Certament's experience and reputation.

Skilled in both magic and swordsmanship, the Certaments are known as deadly opponents and valuable allies. Swordsmen also have access to several unique spells which aid them in combat. The Sultan employs forty experienced Swordsmen as part of his bodyguard.

**Charlatans.** The seers of the Paradox, Zandir Charlatans — a title borne proudly within Zandu — are skilled in magic, prestidigitation, and oratory. The average Charlatan is also an accomplished thief and confidence man. The Zandir see nothing wrong with this. Indeed, the skillful combination of wit, charm and intelligence with a healthy sense of roguery and larceny is greatly admired. Charlatans are invariably friendly, affable fellows, ever eager to lend a helping hand — especially if that hand can happen to stray near valuables. They frequently go adventuring, although experienced travelers watch them closely.

**Heterodoxists.** Opposed to both Orthodoxy and Paradox, these terrorists are driven by hatred for the religious fanaticism which tore the Phaedran Empire apart. The Heterodoxists are brutal in the pursuit of their ideals, engaging in extortion, terrorism and assassination. Heterodoxy is treasonous in Zandu. However, most Heterodoxists have well-developed cover identities, and are hard to catch in the act. The extent of the cult is unknown, but assassinations and other acts of violence against prominent Paradoxists are on the rise.

**Serparians.** Normally abhorred in Talislantan society, professional beggars are considered honest working folk in Zandu. Known as the Serparians, these Zandir abide by a complex code of ethics, and are one of the best organized factions in the nation. While the Beggars District in each city also harbors thieves, assassins and other criminals, the Serparians are mostly law abiding, and a valuable source of information for enterprising adventurers. The beggars divide themselves into several categories:

**Supplicants** are those who are normal in all respects, save for the fact that they are beggars. They appeal for money solely on the basis of their poverty or personal misfortune.

**Perjors** are healthy beggars who pretend to have a personal injury. They can simulate blindness, missing limbs or disfiguring diseases with surprising skill.

*Misfortunates* are beggars who are truly crippled or disfigured.

The *Forsaken* are the children of beggars. They take to the streets with sad tales of abandonment, hunger and cruelty, but in reality, they are talented actors well cared for by their fellow beggars.

The Serparians are ruled by the Sultan of Beggars, who is chosen by popular vote every five years. He has the final word in all questions of admission, expulsion, and punishment. One-tenth of each beggar's take must be donated to the Sultan's Council of Viziers, which puts up the money to hire a Causidian litigator when any Serparian is accused of a crime.

Traditionally, each Zandir carries a pocketful of copper coins to scatter to the beggars. Individuals who prove generous may find themselves unexpectedly defended when in danger, by Serparians eager to protect their friends. Similarly, accused criminals have been surprised to have beggars come forward at their trials, presenting evidence in their favor.

**Zann.** The residents of the City of Zann are infamous for being contrary. They greet companions with "goodbye" and depart with "hello." When they wish to express affection, they say, "I hate you" — the phrase, "I love you," is considered to be the most mortal of insults. When discussing issues, Zann invariably take up a position contrary to the person they are discussing it with. How much of this is affectation is not clear — the dark waters of the Necros flow near the city, leading some to suspect that Zann's water supply is tainted and causes this bizarre behavior.

It is a wonder that anything ever gets done in Zann. Bickering typifies the government, and once the Vizier reaches a decision, it is immediately opposed by any who originally favored it. Sometimes this leads to a consensus, for when a Zann voices an opinion, all of the others immediately disagree, thus creating a majority decision. It is grudgingly acknowledged that without Causidian arbitration, Zann would grind to a swift halt.

#### Major Zandir Holidays

**The First of Laeolis.** Thousands of Zandir sailors died on this date, in the tragic Battle of the Sea of Sorrow. It is commemorated with somber ceremonies and remembrances. The Sultan dons black, and Causidians wander the streets reciting the names of the Dead.

**The Night of Fools.** From sundown of the 7th to sunrise of the 8th of Ardan, virtually all of Zandu's laws are rescinded. The populace, uninhibited even in the best of times, totally casts off the bonds of decorum. Burglary and theft are wide spread, and destruction of property and other acts of mayhem are committed with complete impunity. Great casks of opiated wine are wheeled through the streets and dispensed free of charge. Fireworks light up the night, singers and dancers perform, parties spill out from houses and estates, and by midnight, the nation has been transformed into a virtual asylum.

Many debts are settled on the Night of Fools, for it is perfectly acceptable for a debtor to rob his creditor, then return the loot the next day to settle the debt. Rich Zandir spend the night under heavy guard, and the paranoid Kasmir — ever concerned about

the safety of their gold — desert the city en masse, to return the next day when normalcy is restored.

A popular legend tells of a colorfully clad group of celebrants who appear only on the Night of Fools, vanish at dawn, and are not seen again until the following year. A Zandir swordswoman is said to have actually captured one of the revelers, only to have the brightly-garbed man vanish in a flash of blue smoke at sunrise. Those who take the legend seriously believe that the Phantom Revelers are a group of sorcerers who spend the entire year in an alternate, timeless dimension, emerging only to celebrate the Night of Fools. For these fortunate, hardy individuals, the Night of Fools never ends.

**The Sultan's Masque.** On the eve of the Clash of Champions, while Aamanians cringe in fear of the Monitors at Judgment Day, the elite of Zandir society are invited to the biggest social event of the year — a masked ball at the Sultan's Palace. The finest food and wine is served, and Bodor, Thiasian and Sarista performers provide entertainment. Prizes are awarded for the best costumes and the most flamboyant behavior. After the midnight unmasking, 1,000 G.L. is awarded to the individual who first successfully identifies the Sultan. Those Zandir who choose wrongly are subjected to merciless teasing.

Although theoretically by invitation only, many Zandir take advantage of the anonymity provided by the costumes to catch a glimpse of the interior of the palace. Thieves and pickpockets take great pride in being able to sneak in and out undetected.

**The Clash of Champions.** This event is held each year at the Great Barrier Wall, which divides the two cities of Aamahd and Zanth. The arena is a fifty-foot platform erected high atop the Wall's main gates and fashioned of transparent crystal, allowing the ground-level spectators a clear view of the action. Combatants ascend by means of stairways originating from either side of the Wall, depending upon which nation the contender represents.

Built into the main platform are four crystalline pits: one filled with liquid fire, one filled with water, one lined with spikes, and the last containing a number of viscous wild beasts (types vary each year). These serve as obstacles for the combatants, adding to the excitement of the match. A ten-foot elevated platform, called the High Tower, stands at the center of the main staging area, and is accessible by means of ladders. A twenty-foot pole is positioned at each corner of the main platform, serving to designate the boundaries for avian competitors.

The rules for the Clash of Champions are simple: a contestant may win by slaying the opponent, or by forcing the opponent beyond the boundaries of the arena. The winner is crowned Champion, and is accorded fame, wealth, and honors. The victorious nation is awarded proprietorship of the Wall for the remainder of the year, and reaps a vast profit in toll revenues.

Each year, thousands of foreign visitors come to the Great Barrier Wall to watch the contest. Choice seats go for 500 gold lumens, or more, with luxury pavilions costing as much as twenty times that. Standing room is available on both sides of the Wall for a copper piece, and is packed shoulder to shoulder.



# CITIES OF TALISLANTA

The following descriptions cover four of the most interesting cities in the West: Ahrazahd, the Forbidden City of the Arimites; Andurin, Aaman's gateway to the east; Shattru, the bustling river port of Arim; and Zann, the home of the most contrary people in all of Zandu.

## AHRAZAH, THE FORBIDDEN CITY

Ahrazahd Butte juts up from a wooded valley, and its steep sides provide natural ramparts for the Exarch's Forbidden City. Few Arimites may enter here. Foreigners and the few Arimites who receive entry permits are assigned to specific gates, which are unlocked only on particular days. The guards fire volleys of arrows at anyone who approaches a locked door.

**1) Valley:** City guards occasionally leave a corpse in these woods to attract exomorphs and ravengers. The predators help deter intruders.

**2) Guron Stair:** Guests must climb to the different gates of the city along these gravel-strewn clefts. The tower guards (see below) can sweep these trails with arrow fire.

**3) Boulder Cliffs:** Anybody who leaves the Guron Stair trails to scale these heights must pass a Traps roll on the *Action Table* or trigger a small landslide. The slide affects everyone within d10 x 10 feet. Those caught in it take d6 x 2 points of damage, and must pass a STR check or be trapped under the heavy stones. The Exarch's Kasmir set subtler traps here on occasion.

**4) Guard Towers:** Fifty hired mercenaries man each of these towers. They watch the gates, checking permits and repelling intruders. The towers are 150 feet high and are pierced with archery slits. A ballista and firethrower top each one. There are 400 guards in the city — Thralls, Blue Ardua, and Danuvians. Their commander encourages the different races to inform on each other.

**5) Tithing Way:** The Exarch's tithes are delivered to these warehouses. His purveyors also do business with foreign merchants here. Rows of stacked black-iron ingots, covered with hides, line the street. Locked bins hold Caustic Dust and Ur-Stone, which the Exarch supplies for export and to his agents. Occasionally, guards escort a new shipment of jewels from here to the Vault (see below).

**6) Servitor Town:** These large, ornate stone buildings shelter an assortment of Maruk, Monads, Yassan Technomancers, Ardua and other foreigners in the service of the Exarch. Many are technically slaves. However, the Exarch provides a luxurious life for all of his servants. He likes to feel surrounded by splendor, and does not want his servants to be tempted by bribes from the Revenants.

**7) Furnaces:** A cliff keeps this area from the Exarch's view. Heaps of soot are gathered here by law from the smelters of Shattru. Monad servitors continually cart the black powder into the furnaces, under the direction of Yassan Technomancers. Due to the superior technology of the Yassan, the ash yields metal which the original smelters missed. Twice-smelted ash is useless. Monad servitors scatter it over the side of the butte.

**8) The High Houses:** Only Arim's nobility may live in these rectangular villas of gleaming black stone. The Revenants have death warrants against all who live here. The nobles trust nobody, not even their hirelings. They talk to guests through speaking tubes from other rooms. Some of these families are enmeshed in feuds involving families in Shattru or Akbar. Since they dare not leave Ahrazahd, they hire avengers who can.

**9) Mysterarium Of Arim:** The Exarch's wizards live in this palatial stone building. Most are Kasmir Trapsmiths, who use all the arts of Shaladin to ward off the Revenants. Others are Cymrilian mages and Dracartan Thaumaturges, who build marvelous devices for the Exarch. Colored smokes drift from the laboratories, staining the walls.

A stone head, given to the Exarch as a gift from the Kasmir, leans over the entrance to the Mysterarium. It can see and hear, and if anyone plots to murder the Exarch while within its presence, the head shouts an alarm. The head's jaws open when the offender is placed between them. Then the fangs slam shut.

Foreign magicians might win a position at the Mysterarium by offering the Exarch some arcane service. Ducon, the mercenary commander, investigates each applicant to make sure he isn't an assassin. The Exarch pays sorcerers by the assignment. Wizards who serve here do so for money, or safety — many sorcerers have compelling reasons to live in Talislanta's best protected city.

**10) Commander's Tower:** Ducon, the Exarch's younger son and his mercenary commander, has his office in this tower. Ducon's assistant is a renegade Kang Tracker, who assists patrols with his Tarkus. There is a small prison beneath this building. The Exarch owns five Druhk slave-torturers, and prisoners are interrogated in these cells. Ducon despises the Druhks, and does not have the stomach to watch them practice their "art."

**11) Botanomancer's Mansion:** Vardua, a Green Ardua Botanomancer, lives here. His gardens provide the Forbidden City with exotic fruits, and he is considered one of the Exarch's most valuable servants. Unfortunately, Vardua shares the restlessness of his Blue Arduan kin, and feels that the mountain frosts make serious Botanomancy impossible. The Exarch financed a crystal-roofed greenhouse (behind the mansion) to keep him content. However, even in the greenhouse, Vardua's Purple Narcissus refuses to grow.

**12) Portal of the Exarch:** This entry hall is surrounded with kitchens, bedrooms and other amenities for the Exarch's guards and trapsmiths. Every guest is carefully scrutinized. The traps — pits, deadfalls, spring-spears and magical wards — are constantly changed so that nobody can map them. Ten Thralls live here.

**13) Tower of the Exarch:** This is the palace of the Exarch. The first chamber is a fur-carpeted reception hall. The Exarch speaks with his guests through a voice-pipe, which curves to stop darts and contains several diaphragms to block poison gas.

Farther inside, the palace's decorations become ever more opulent. Gold leaf plates the doorknobs, and jewel-crusted scintilla orbs hang from the vaulted ceilings. Every corner contains statues or engravings. There is a dining hall with tables set for twenty diners, even though the Exarch usually dines alone. Thralls watch his food through every step of its preparation, and the Exarch does not choose his seat until after the food is served. The grandest chamber is the Throne Room, where the Exarch spends most of his waking hours.

A grand set of stairs leads below ground, where 20 Thralls guard a great silver door which they believe leads to the Exarch's living quarters. The door leads to a silk-draped passage, which makes several turns before ending with a pit trap. The trapped floor swings on a hinge, dropping whoever steps on it. A counterweight swings it back into position. Victims fall 100 feet onto a stone floor. A Scavenger Slime dwells at the bottom, emerging to dispose of the remains.

A secret door behind the curtains connects the tunnel with the passage leading to the Exarch's real quarters (see below). Only the Kashmir Trapsmiths know this truth.

**14) Concubinary:** The Exarch does not need (or want) an Arimite wife. He keeps his slave-concubines in this wing of the palace. Ten Batreans and five Sawilu courtesans live here, in rooms stacked with silkcloth cushions filled with animal fur. The Exarch employs 10 Danuvian swordswomen to guard the concubines and inspect them for weapons, considering it unwise to hire men for this service. (Male warriors might conspire with the women, and eunuchs would resent the Exarch's manhood and plot against him.) The Danuvians take pains not to let anyone mistake them for courtesans.

**15) Vault of the Exarch:** This unmarked tower contains the Exarch's hoard. The doors are locked with fifty Kashmir puzzle-traps. A series of perils within the tower release alchahest, cross-bow bolts, red menace and yellow peril if the traps are incorrectly defused. The Exarch's hoard is said to contain twenty million gold lumens' worth of coins, jewelry, silver and artifacts.

**16) Orchards:** These fruit trees are tended by Vardua, the Royal Botanomancer.

**17) Terrace Gardens:** Arimite blue-vines cover these narrow terraces, which climb the cliff face like wide stairs. Although the plants look ordinary, the Royal Botanomancer has hybridized them to bear many assorted vegetables. Scimitar Bushes are planted in strategic areas to discourage Stryx, who sometimes attempt to land on the cliff face.

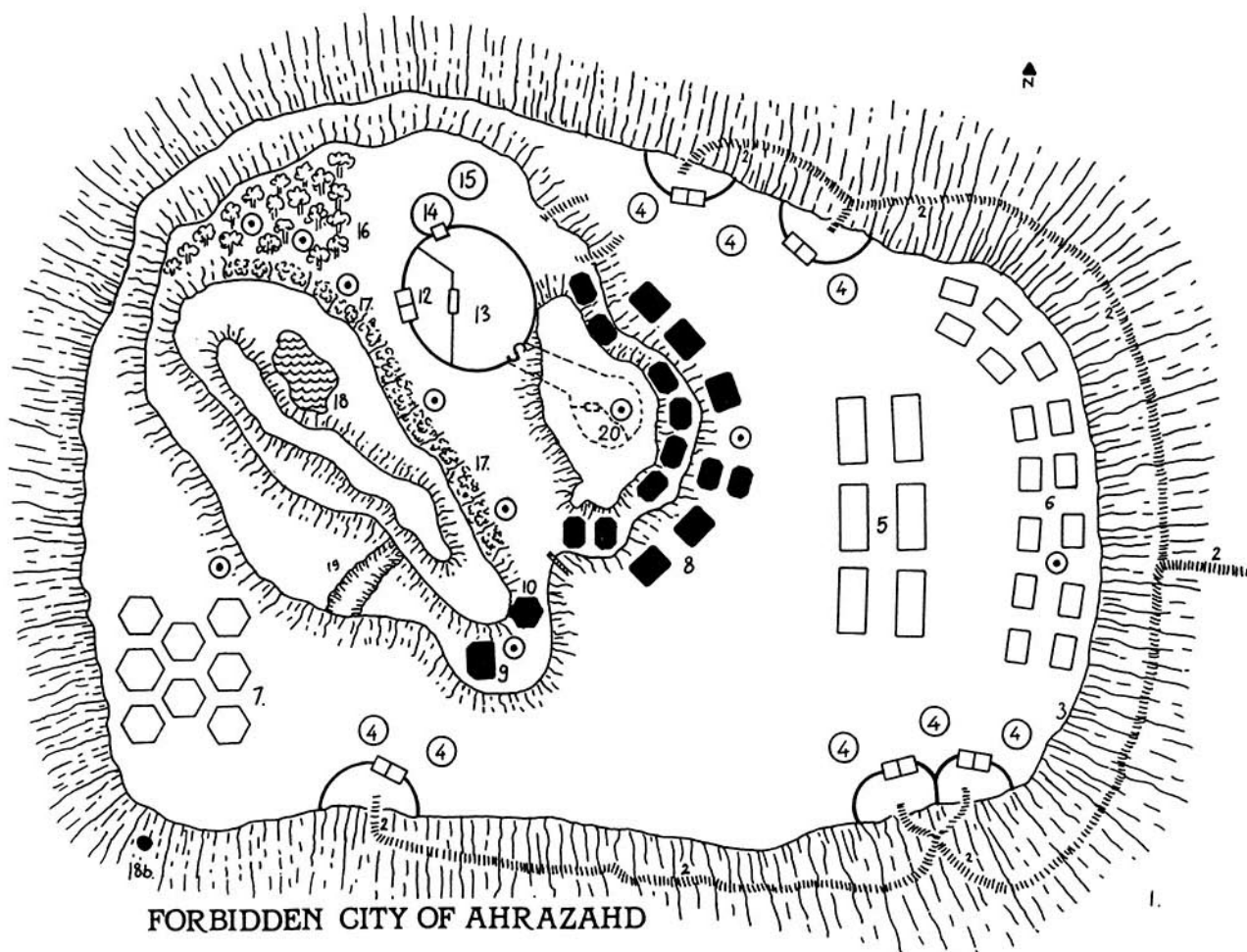
**18) The Waterways:** This clear pond provides the Forbidden City's water. It is fed by streams from the cliff, and water is drained away through a network of subterranean aqueducts. The

channels feed wells and flush out the sewage chambers beneath many of the buildings. The dirtied water washes to a central pit, empties through a cave, and falls over a 100-foot cliff (18b). The Exarch worries that enemies might crawl up the sewer. Therefore, 10 guards watch the outlet ceaselessly, although the combination of sewage, current and Kashmir-emplaced spikes discourage most infiltrators.

**19) Black Street:** This "street," actually a crevice, is lined with crypts containing the city's dead. A stony-faced Dracartan named Al'abid is in charge of the grave sites, assisted by 20 Monads in gray smocks. The Exarch dislikes the topic of death. He overlooks these servants when distributing gifts, and when he becomes nervous about Revenants, he often has the entire mortuary staff executed.

**20) Exarch's Quarters (secret):** The Exarch actually sleeps in this underground fortress beneath Ahrazahd's central crag. The numerous air pipes curve to foil blow-gun pellets. A painting of the Talislantan moons hangs over his bed. The mattress rests directly on the floor, so that assassins cannot hide under it. His bedclothes are made of silkcloth. The quarters include a bath chamber, with its own spring — the Exarch does not trust the public water supply.

Mikeb, the current Exarch, chafes in his isolation. Travelers can always win his ear with news from distant lands. Since he does not dare leave the city, Mikeb hires foreigners to conduct trade deals for him, and plots with his agents to harass the Revenants. Although he looks soft, the Exarch is a deadly knife-fighter, and personally dispatched the last Revenant to attack him.





## ANDURIN (AAMAN)

Andurin is Aaman's gateway to the Seven Kingdoms and the east, and the starting point for the vast majority of pilgrimages. Formerly one of the chief cities of the Phaedran Empire, Andurin was transformed into a military base and a temporary capital by the Orthodoxy. The Aamanians have added new structures over the centuries, but the city still retains the circular pattern of an imperial settlement.

Aamanian buildings are built according to strictures laid down in the Omnival. All houses except the temples of Aa are built of rooms whose dimensions can be measured in increments of ten feet. The structures are roofed over with Arimite slate and white-washed. Temples use barrel vaults to support their roof, allowing much larger dimensions to the structure. Studding the walls of every Aamanian building are Eyes of Aa — large, half-lidded eyes with pupils of crystal. These are often the only decorations allowed, and many are of more than ornamental value. Some Eye crystals are connected magically to Monitor Stones and are used to watch the Faithful.

Like most former cities of the Empire, Andurin has an underground sewer network. It is fed by springs, and empties into a sinkhole west of the city. Drainage problems in modern times have created an unsightly cesspool-lake in the sinkhole.

**1) Farmlands:** The fields around Andurin are worked by the Faithful. Besides crops of provender plants, they raise fodder for equus and ogriphants.

**2) Phaedran Causeway:** The old imperial highway connects Andurin to Ammahd, Arat and the road network of the Seven Kingdoms. The Causeway is poorly maintained — cavalry travel on the road's shoulders rather than risk the loose, equus-laming paving stones. In bad weather, the highway is nearly useless.

**3) Gate Towers (3):** The towers are manned by Knights of the Theocratic Order at all times. Unbelievers are charged admittance to Andurin — a toll of 5 S.P. per person or conveyance. The cost, low for an Aamanian city, reflects Andurin's wish to attract trade.

**4) Abbey of Andurin:** This famed monastery is the center of Orthodox instruction and dogma. Acolytes — Archimages in training — are sent here to receive their initial schooling. The Abbey also houses the College of Omnivisors, and one of the two complete copies of the Omnival.

**5) Halls of Penance:** The Halls are usually filled with soldiers doing penance for minor transgressions. Witch Hunters also bring infidels here from the east, to be converted to Orthodoxy by the Inquisitors.

There are rumors that a wealthy Farad Procurer named Reedro was imprisoned by the Warrior-Priests after he was discovered smuggling scented dipilatory cream into Aaman. The Adjudicators are keeping a watchful eye on the Hostel of the Infidels, convinced that someone will try to rescue their captive for the reward. Meanwhile, the Heterodoxists are said to be taking bets on how long it will take before Reedro "converts."

**6) Abbey of the Inquisitors:** The Inquisitors for all of Aaman are trained here, a job made difficult by the presence of the infidels who trade in and travel through Andurin. Heresy must constantly be guarded against. Three years ago, an entire class of Inquisitor-Acolytes had to be sent to penance, after being subverted by Heterodoxist-doctored copies of the Omnival.

**7) Theocratic Monastery, Knights of Cavalry:** This is the mother abbey for Aaman's mounted knights, housing over 3,000 War-

rior-Priests and Knights. It was formerly a castle-fortress of the Phaedran Empire, and it still looks capable of resisting any assault. The central tower is tottering, and has been reinforced with a scaffolding of timbers.

**8) Theocratic Monastery, Knights of Infantry:** These Knights are the infantry officers of the Armed Host. This monastery teaches strategy, and is the center of Aamanian military planning. The building was formerly a winter palace for the emperors, until a fire during Damon's reign gutted one wing. Some of the rooms could not be salvaged, and were walled off from the rest of the structure.

**9) Theocratic Monastery, Knights of the Guard:** This is a mother abbey, but it is primarily used for training and as a home for aged and infirm Border-Knights. The active forces are stationed in outposts along the Zandir frontier and the banks of the Axis River.

**10) Monitors' Towers (4):** The Monitors of Andurin are kept especially busy keeping the mana records of the local Armed Host units up to date. They also are responsible to the Hierophant for paying the soldiers.

**11) Infantry Barracks:** This huge barracks complex houses several thousand foot-soldiers of the Armed Host, Aaman's regular army.

**12) Ogriphant Stables:** Over one hundred war-ogrighants of the Armed Host are trained and kept here. The ogriphant handlers, men trained in the care and feeding of the great beasts, live in barracks on the second story.

**13) Depiliator:** The Andurin depiliator is the largest in all Aaman, serving the soldiers and the Faithful of the city. Every citizen is required to report here bi-weekly. There are separate entrances for men, women, and children.

**14) Temples (4):** Archimages in Andurin wield great power, due to the number of important Warrior-Priests and Knights in their congregations, and because of the contacts they have with the Omnivisors. The four temples in Andurin are:

**14a) The Temple of Omnipotent Aa:** Archimage Lelix is justly proud of his collection of relics, including some of the most ancient in the Orthodoxy — the first Eye of Aa medallion; a gilded sandal worn on the first pilgrimage to the Sea of Glass; and the bloodied sword of Mondro, the Knight who led the successful assault on the imperial palace in Badijan during the first days of the Cult Wars.

**14b) The Holy Temple of Wondrous Aa:** The most interesting item here is the Mural of the Orthodoxy, an immense depiction of the Eye of Aa beaming light to his Faithful. The artwork was created by Thredan, the fourth Hierophant, and actually glows in the dark on the holy days. Archimage Pregor is concerned, however, by recent disappearances which seem to be tied in with the mural. Scholars at the Lyceum Arcanum believe that the work of art was stolen by Thredan, and is actually the Lost Panel of Cascal. Just what the arcane artifact really does, the Cymrilians don't know.

**14c) The Temple of Aa, Omniscient:** Old Urton, the one-armed Archimage of this small sanctuary, retired here after a long career as a Witch Hunter. The Monitors keep a watchful eye on him, suspecting that an event on his last mission left him disaffected with the Orthodoxy. Although the Knights of the Order prefer to attend the more opulent temples, Urton's plain speaking is popular with many of the common soldiers of the Armed Host.

**14d) The Orthodoxist Temple of Aa:** The newest temple in Andurin is also the largest. Young Archimage Engrac is preoccupied with the floor in the rear of the central vault, where the new

stonework has fractured. He has heard strange sounds in the still of the night. If only he could discover what buildings were razed in order to erect this edifice.

**15) Pilgrims' Hostel:** These poor-quality lodgings are provided at standard prices for pilgrims readying themselves to travel to the east. Foreigners looking for hire should wait until the pilgrim caravan is several weeks' travel to the east — in Andurin, the pilgrims are confident of themselves, and don't wish to contaminate themselves with infidels.

**16) Hostel to the Infidels:** This immense, drafty inn — formerly an imperial asylum — is operated by the Orthodoxy for the use of non-believers traveling through or trading in Andurin. Service is poor, and prices are inflated (2 x standard). Foreigners in Andurin must have an Orthodoxist escort, or they are restricted to this hostel and the bazaar. An escort consists of five Knights and costs 5 gold lumens per day.

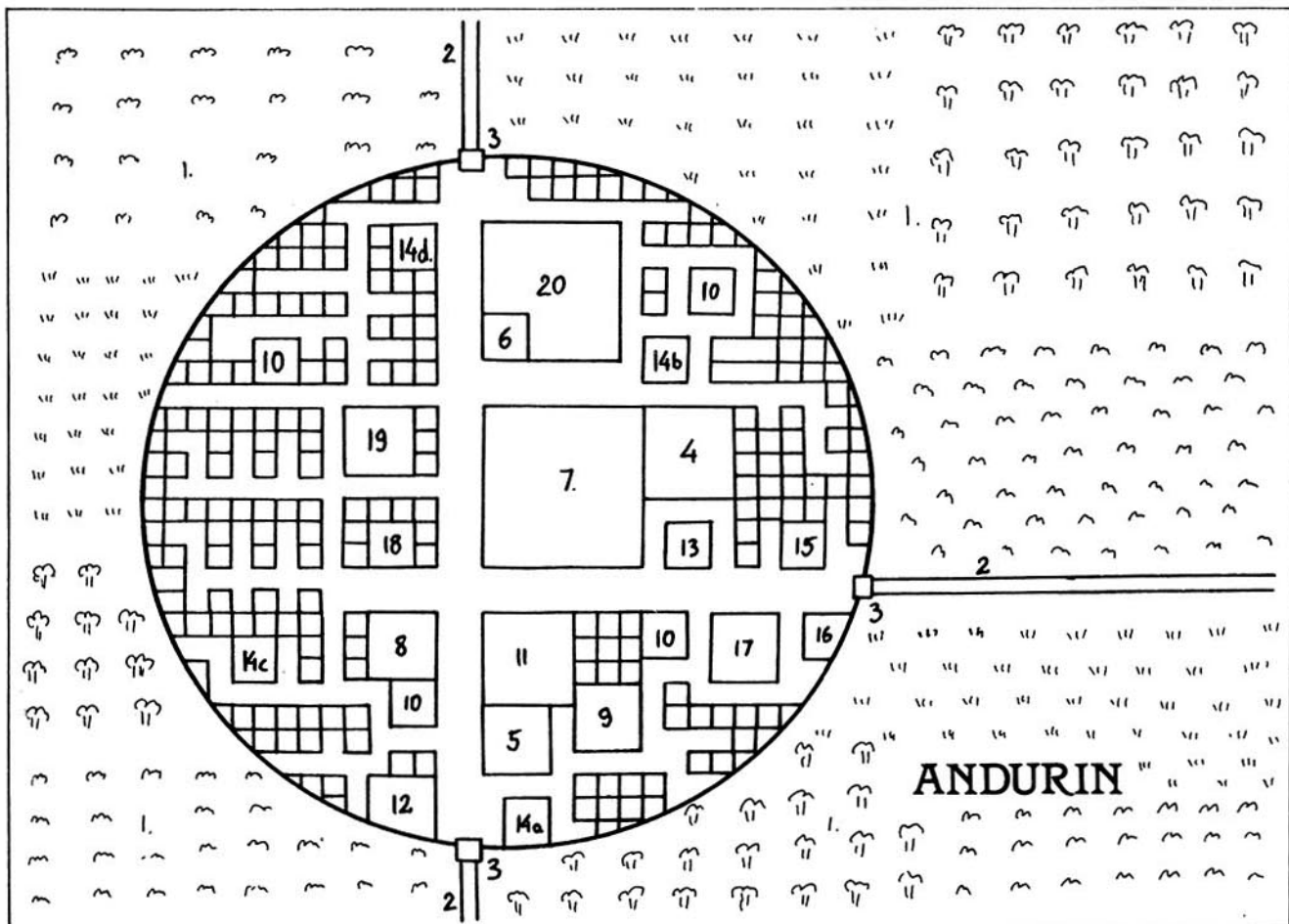
Roughly one in three of the servants are actually Adjudicators. Knowing the difficulty of catching spies and Heterodoxists in the act, the Aamanian agents sometimes pretend to be heretics, in an attempt to lure their enemies into the open.

**17) Andurin Bazaar:** Merchants from other lands come here to trade their wares and buy from licensed Aamanian merchants. Adjudicators carefully record every transaction, so that the Monitors can levy appropriate tariffs.

**18) Knight Mondro's Reliquary:** This modest sanctuary holds the mortal remains and artifacts of some of the most beloved Knights of the Order. Mondro himself was the imperial general who converted to Orthodoxy and captured Badijan for the glory of Aa. Fortunately, he didn't live to see the Paradoxist victory which gave them half of the ancient capital. Mondro's Staff of Command, a wooden rod ending in a black-iron spike, is said to have mystically turned the tide of more than one battle.

**19) Orthodoxy Vault:** Donations to be carried to the Hierophant are stored here. The building is heavily guarded, and fortified with magical protection as well.

**20) Warehouses:** The surplus fruits of the harvests from the farmlands around Andurin and in the Monastic Hills are stored here for shipment to Ammahd.





## SHATTRA (ARIM)

Shattr is one of the busiest crossroads on the continent, but it isn't a place most want to visit. The town is little more than a collection of ramshackle huts built out of discarded mining timbers, with only a few shops or trading depots appearing amid the squalor. Most of the Arimites here are temporarily unemployed, waiting for new mines to open. They try to keep themselves drunk until then. Dozens of inns and streetside bars serve them.

The more notable features of this town are:

**1) Wall Of Stakes:** Instead of a rampart, Shattr depends on a fence of iron stakes to keep intruders out. The barrier is a 30-foot-wide band of iron pikes planted in the ground at an angle, supplemented with caltrops. When the settlement is attacked, Arimite knife-fighters man the two dozen ballistae and fire-throwers, firing while their enemies slowly advance through this zone. Shattr's governor would prefer to build a stone wall, but the Exarch forbids it — the fortified town would be too powerful in the hands of a rebellious governor.

**2) River Towers (2):** The Axis River winds through this town. Ten knife-fighters man these wooden keeps where the waterway enters and exits Shattr. Ponderous black chains can be dragged across to the Vardune side of the river, to block invading boats or river predators. Each tower's ballistae can fire harpoons designed to pierce water and hit underwater targets, or cast hollow missiles which break and foul the river with caustic pitch. At night, the chains are stretched out, and guard boats patrol within the town's limits.

**3) The Governor's Isle:** Access to this island in the Axis is forbidden to most of Shattr's citizens.

**3a) Iron Barracks:** This iron-framed building is surmounted by a cupola within which two ballistae are mounted. Shattr's garrison shrinks when mine wages improve, but there usually are 250 guards. The Arimite soldiers are not known for their diligence in obeying orders from the hated governor, but fight well against raiders and invaders.

**3b) Governor's Mansion:** Shattr's governor lives in this block-house. Hated by his people, he seldom dares to leave his island. Fifty Arimite knife-fighters protect his mansion, and a bodyguard of 10 Blue Ardua accompany the ruler at all times.

**4) Slave Isle:** Black iron cages, covered with canvas tarpaulins to ward off the sun, line the island's beaches. This slave market is one of the largest west of Imria, and speculators come here from across western Talislanta to invest in every variety of chattel. Arimites usually buy miners and sell Druks. However, concubines fetch the highest prices (5 x standard).

For 1 gold lumen per day, a slaver can rent a slave cage, including use of a watering trough, two buckets of blue-vine slop, and protection by the market's 30 knife-fighters. Several dozen captives can be crowded into a single prison. However, valuable slaves — such as Batrean concubines — are kept in separate cells and given more nourishing food. Merchants who distrust the guards arrange to camp near their cages.

**5) Dippers' Pier:** Citizens of Shattr take water from the Axis River here, upstream of the town's pollution. The wooden structure is ancient, and perceptibly quivers when walked on.

**6) Axis River Docks:** Barges eddy around these piers continually, loading Arim's exports to other lands. Fifty knife-fighters in the pay of Shattr's governor strut about, insolently demanding tithes.

**7) Smelter District:** Blackened smelter buildings loom over these streets. The mining camps send their ore here to be smelted. The governor's knife-fighters demand tithes for the Exarch and the Governor, and collect soot from the furnaces. Foreign merchants bound for Ahrazhd are forced to carry the Exarch's tribute with them.

Ascar owns one of the largest, noisiest and sootiest smelters in Shattr. One can feel heat from his furnaces several buildings away. Ascar can seldom be found at his establishment. He has a great deal of money, and spends it quickly at bars and shops. He makes some of it by secretly smelting a second time before giving his soot to the Exarch. Ascar earns the rest as a Revenant. He often burns victims or nosey intruders in his Ore-Eater furnace.

**8) Market:** This huge market centers on a public block, where Overseers hire workers and merchants hawk goods. Laborers stand around, waiting to be brusquely appraised by prospective hirers. Arimites consider it quite dashing to slay an enemy in this public square.

**9) Hireswords District:** These "stables" — mercenary slang for hiresword shops — are barn-like halls, running the length of this street. Merchants here sell knives, armor, and cheap rooms, and fighting instructors operate small studios.

According to Arimite tradition, mercenary contracts are negotiated over mugs of chakos. The recruiter must buy as many drinks as the potential mercenaries want. To appraise a warrior's skills, recruiters often hire fighting instructors or bring a Druhk slave-gladiators to duel with their prospective employees.

**10) Tavern District:** Drunken Arimites slump over these inns' tables at all hours of the day. Discarded concubines beg or sell their services outside. Behind each tavern is its chakos brewery, a shack filled with fermenting barrels and copper stills. A yeasty smell filters throughout this part of town. Foreigners are unwelcome here.

**11) Guest District:** These inns and their associated taverns cater to the foreigners who travel through this crossroads. Arimite bargemen come here to seek passengers and guards for the journey south, while caravan masters likewise visit here before setting off to the west.

**12) The Coracle:** This inn, built on a marshy stretch of the riverbank, caters to Imrian slavers. Several channels connect to the river, allowing the lower of the tub-like rooms to be flooded. Prices here are high (three x standard). For an extra gold lumens per night, the Arimites provide the salt to create a briny bedchamber.

**13) Revenant Stake:** This rusting pike is a meeting ground for Revenants and those who wish to hire them, and is marked by a black cloth tied under the tip. The rag is almost always here, no matter how often the Governor's men remove it.

**14) Iswan Road:** This well-trod road leads west to the trading post at Iswan, where caravan routes lead northwest to Akbar or west into Zandu.

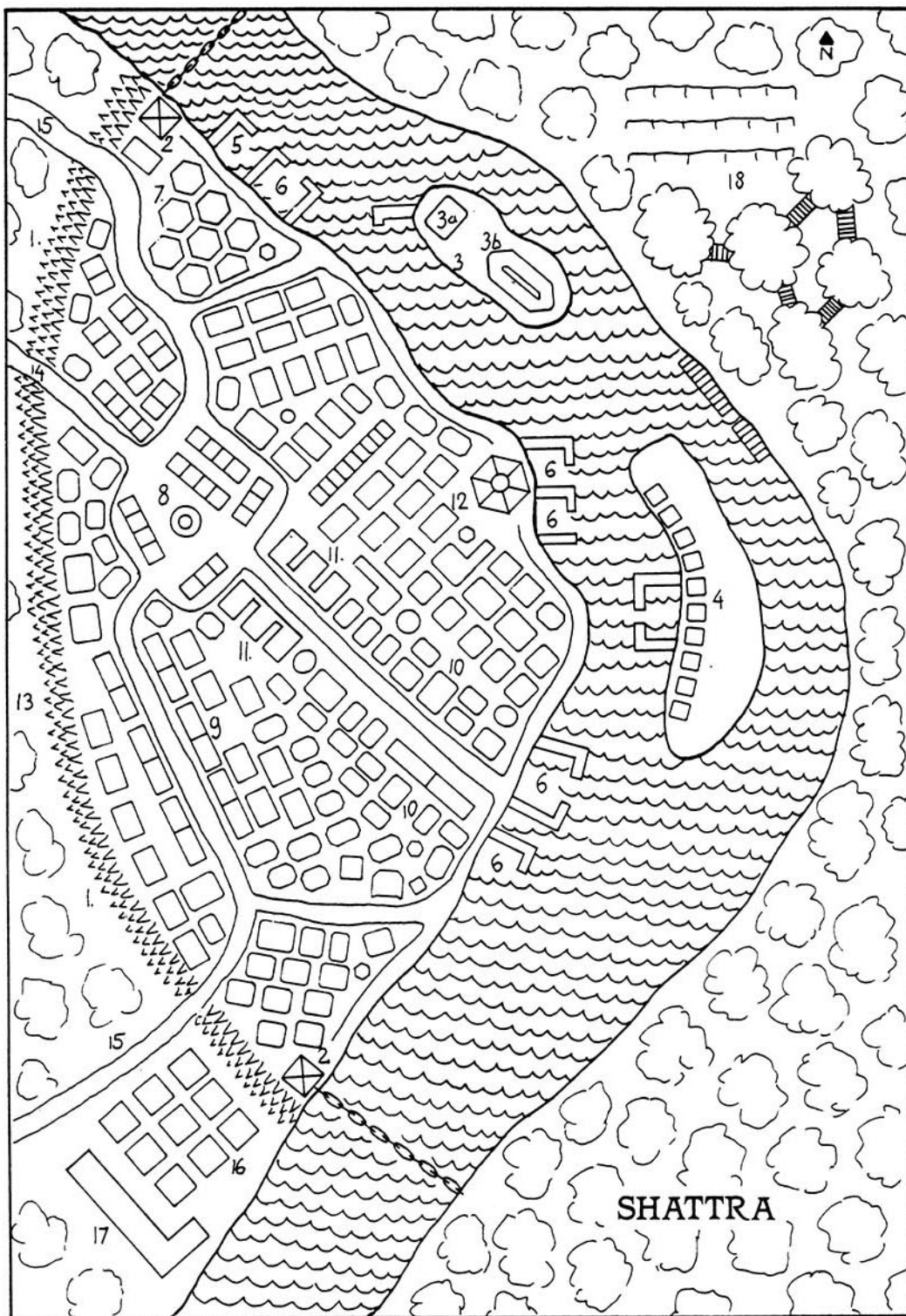
**15) Gravel Trails:** These rough gravel tracks lead to local mining camps. One trail loops north to intersect the caravan route as it enters Akbar Gorge. Wagon trains continually haul ore into Shattr along these trails, and troops of newly hired miners trudge away on them toward the mountains.

**16) Block Under The Eye:** On this hill just south of town, Aamanian Witch Hunters and Missionaries operate a small colony under license from Shattr's governor. Aamanian merchants stay here while buying black iron or slaves, and Archimages come here to work with their Arimite converts.

The plain buildings shine with whitewash, and dirt is forbidden. Knights patrol these streets, demanding a 1 gold lumen "devotional donation" from everyone who enters the colony. Those who do not pay must provide "devotional service" instead — usually sweeping streets, but occasionally involving more risky tasks, such as carrying sealed messages between Witch Hunters.

**17) Theocratic Monastery of Aa in Arim:** The Theocratic Order runs this small monastery. They shelter the Arimite poor, but require penance- work and harangue their supplicants about the virtues of Orthodoxy. Only the truly destitute accept their protection.

**18) Arduan Village:** Vines rise above the forest on living viridia stakes, tended by a small community of Green Ardua. The horticulturists export their fruits and vegetables across the river to Arim, where the produce is bought by those Arimite who can afford it. Poorer Arimite resent this trade, and delight in stealing from and harassing the Ardua. The Exarch's agents come here to meet with Blue Ardua warriors, hoping to recruit them for service in Ahrzaahd.





## ZANN (ZANDU)

Zann is famous as the home of the most contrary individuals in Talisanta. It is a prosperous fishing settlement, and also serves as a Zandir naval base. The contentious Zann have great difficulty managing their affairs, and a small corps of Causidian lawmakers live in the town, serving as the final arbiters of all disputes. This does not sit well with the Zann, but it seems to work.

**1) The Guardian Isles:** These low, scrub-covered islets protect the settlement from storms, and sometimes serve as temporary moorage points for Zann fishing vessels.

**2) The Tributaries:** These rivulets — named the Upper, Middle and Lower Streams — are Zann's primary source of drinking water. Unfortunately, they are part of the Necros River's tributary system, and possible pollution of Zann's water has often been suggested as the reason for the Zann's contrariness.

**3) The Hall of Disharmony:** Theoretically the seat of Zann's government, this ornate stone structure is more often the scene of brawls and shouting matches as Zann's Vizier, the town nobles and citizens argue and sometimes fight over civil issues. The Causidians, who live conveniently nearby, find themselves summoned to the Hall at all hours in order to mediate disputes.

**4) The Vizier's Manse:** The city's current "ruler," a half-mad Zann named Druzil, lives here in a somewhat demented imitation of the Sultan in Zanth. He collects art and expensive tapestries, as well as various exotic hallucinogens which he uses with great enthusiasm. His harem, currently numbering eight, includes a Sawila, a Muse, and two Batreans. Starshadow, the Muse, is extremely unhappy and wishes to leave, but Druzil's guards prevent her. She has recently been telepathically broadcasting calls for assistance, hoping that someone will hear and come to rescue her.

**5) Zandir Barracks:** Unlike most Talisantan cities, Zann has neither wall nor towers — the inhabitants claim that they do not need any. Several years ago, the Sultan ordered construction to begin on a wall, but every night angry Zann secretly disassembled what had been built during the day. The project was finally abandoned. Today, the city's defenses consist of a garrison of 250 Zandir cavalry, who consider duty here onerous and taxing due to the Zann's contrary nature.

**6) Boatworks:** Here the Zann build flat-bottomed dories, single-masted sloops and double-masted ketches. These fishing vessels are famous for their workmanship and seaworthiness (apparently, Zann contrariness does not affect their shipbuilding skills).

**7) Causidian Residences:** The lawmakers who arbitrate Zann disputes live in these comfortable homes free of charge, their expenses paid by the Zann. Most Causidians are austere, and few have possessions of great value besides their law books and some minor magic items.

**8) Sarista Ghetto:** Similar to, but smaller than, the Sarista ghetto in Zanth, this windswept grassy plain slopes down to the sea. There is usually at least one Sarista caravan here, and often as many as a dozen. The nomads are amused by the Zann, and exercise their larcenous skills on them at every opportunity.

**9) Homes of the Wealthy:** Rich Zann live in conditions of considerable luxury, but spend great quantities of money attempting to distinguish themselves from their neighbors. Should a wealthy Zann paint his residence, for example, his neighbors rush to paint their homes contrasting colors. The desire to be unique is so strong among the Zann that the wealthy are known to hire spies to monitor one another, so that each can deliberately avoid imitating his neighbor.

**10) Beach:** This stretch of grey shingle is where the Zann beach their fishing vessels and spread their nets to dry. On any evening, dozens of boats are hauled up here, with numerous Zann engaging in scraping, painting, and performing routine maintenance tasks.

**11) Fish Drying Pens:** During the fishing season — from late Drome to mid-Talisandre — these areas are covered with oil-cloth, and each fisherman's catch is spread out to dry. The smell is overpowering to outsiders, although the Zann have grown quite used to it.

**12) Fishermen's Huts:** These small, one-story homes are kept separate — the Zann cannot stand to live close together. In fact, the fishermen rarely tolerate having more than one of their children living at home at the same time. The fishermen are devoted workers, but are not acquisitive. Most homes contain personal items, furniture, driftwood carvings, and little else.

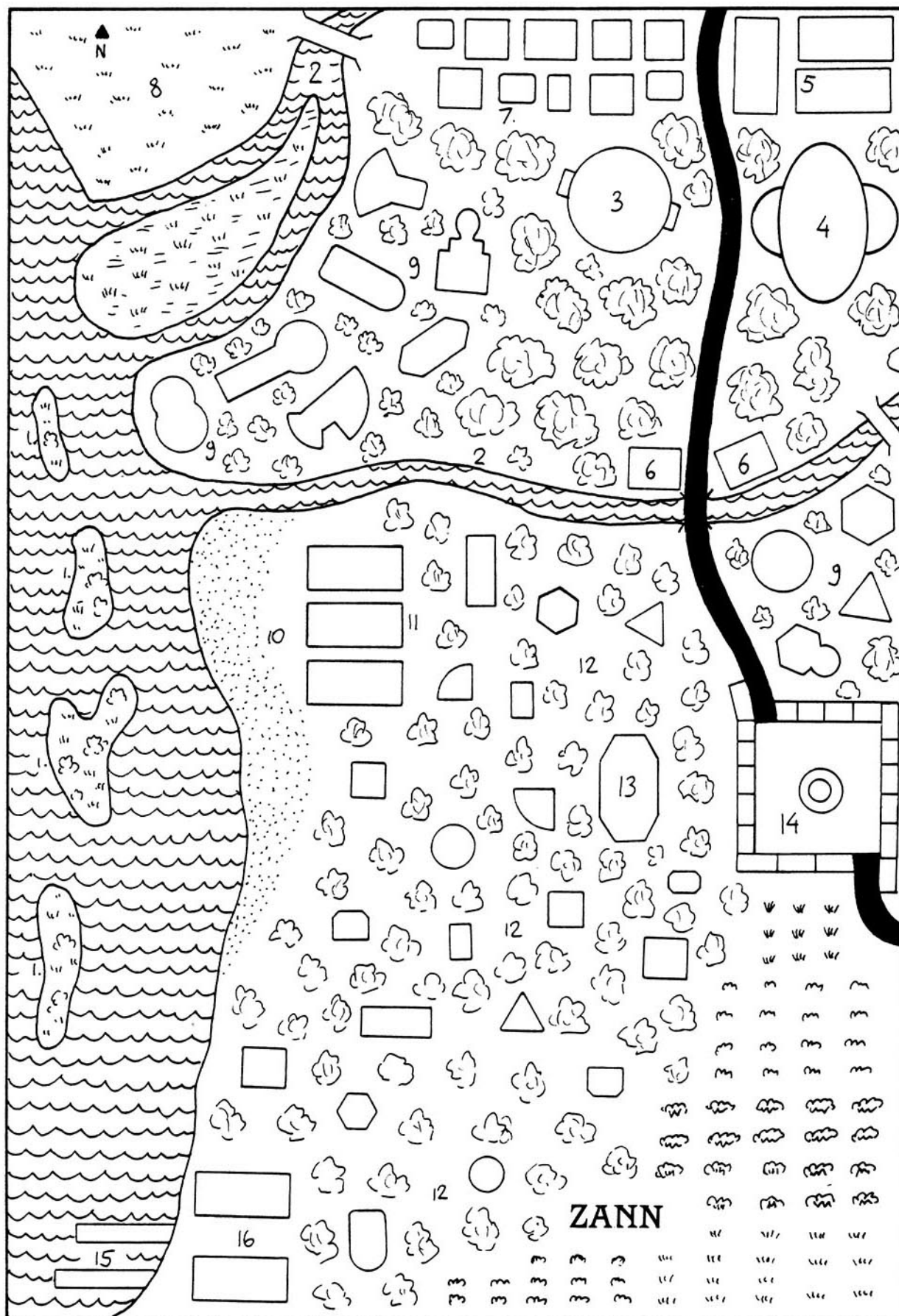
**13) The Discord:** Zann's only tavern is a popular destination for fishermen at the day's end. An evening here always includes arguments and a few brawls. Most annoying to travelers is that fact that the contrary innkeeper tries to talk visitors out of staying at his establishment, and the serving girls argue over ordering the simplest items. Rooms and meals cost half the standard rate, and fresh fish is popular in season.

**14) Marketplace:** Dried fish is the most common trade good, sought by Zandir merchants for sale in Zanth and export to Arim. Cloth, weapons, fishing hooks, and utensils are traded in return by the mercantilists. However, the selection is quite limited.

Haggling here is an interesting phenomenon, for a Zann must never seem to agree with anyone. Typically, a prospective buyer insists that the item he desires is underpriced, and tries to persuade the seller to raise the price. The seller, by Zann tradition, responds that the buyer is offering far too much, and insists on lowering the cost to something more worthy of the buyer. Such haggling eventually results in agreement of a sort, but only after considerable argument. In the end, the buyer angrily slaps down his money and stalks off with his purchase, loudly grumbling that he never really wanted to buy it anyway. Foreigners who do not understand Zann ways may anger the natives, and have sometimes been driven from town by mobs angered at their ignorance of custom.

**15) Naval Docks:** A pair of Zandir corvettes is stationed here to deal with pirates and marine predators which threaten the fishermen. Only the *Spritely Kalska* is seaworthy. Her sister ship, *Plennu the Mariner*, ran aground on a guardian island and is being repaired.

**16) Shipyard:** Zann's repair facilities are limited, but routine ship maintenance can be accomplished here. The *Plennu* is here, being repaired by Zann shipwrights. The contrary workers wish to make alterations in the ship's armament, but the Sultan's admirals don't agree. Meanwhile, the ship has been stripped of its planks, and is useless until a decision is made. Her sailors, frustrated by the long delay, are lodged at the barracks. Fights between the sailors, the cavalymen, and the Zann are increasingly common.





# TALISLANTAN ARCANA

A variety of arcane phenomena are known among the peoples of western Talislanta. Some of these include: Aamanian astrology, and the direct intervention of Aa the Omniscient; the Druhk songs of madness; Dhuna moon magics; and the Rhabdomantic spirit conjurings of the Gnorls. Also provided in this section is a selection of new spells and magical items.

## THE INTERVENTION OF AA

The Orthodoxy has but one god, Aa the All-Seeing. He is depicted as a giant, hairless man with a single eye in the middle of his forehead. Aa's symbol, the all-seeing eye, is visible everywhere in Aaman. He is a stern god, jealous and demanding.

Orthodoxists are taught to rely on their Archimages and other clergy for aid, rather than to directly petition their busy deity. However, Aamanian legends are full of incidents when the Faithful have received the help of Aa...or have been chastised for daring to bother their god.

To petition Aa, a Faithful character rolls on the *Action Table* (at a minimum penalty of -20), using his Cult Rituals or Metaphysical Doctrines (Orthodoxy) skill. The petitioner's level of Aspirancy acts a bonus to the roll. The character's hands must be free, and the loud prayer takes at least five minutes. On a result of "Success Plus," the deity hears the plea.

It is up to the Gamemaster to decide what happens next. In some campaigns, Aa might not exist and Orthodoxy is a fraud. If he does intervene, Aa usually does so by means of his servants — there has not been a personal appearance by the deity for centuries. After rescuing the Faithful, Aa's minions have been known to give lectures, demand service, or assign penance for wrongdoing.

## AAMANIAN ASTROLOGY

In Aaman, Archimages practice astrology in the service of the Orthodoxy. They believe that Aa rules the heavens, sending notice of his approval or disapproval through the alignment of the suns, moons, planets and constellations. Each temple and monastery has an observatory, an upper room with open windows through which the heavens can be observed.

### Eclipses

Eclipses of the suns and moons have major importance to the Archimages. Each is forecast and interpreted by the busy clerics. Some are declared to be holy days, Aa's notice to his worshippers to worship at his temples. Others are seen as *Oculars*, times when Aa looks directly at the mortal world — the orbs line up to become his Eye. These days are times of great fright in Aaman.

The clerics have also discovered that magic is directly affected by the eclipses, becoming extremely unreliable during these times. As an optional rule, the Gamemaster can determine the magic modifier for an eclipse by rolling d10. The roll of a second die determines whether this is a positive (evens) or negative (odds) modifier to *Action Table* rolls. The modifier changes every fifteen minutes. There is no known way to detect this modifier except by casting a spell. An eclipse lasts for 5 x d10 minutes.

### Predicting the Future

Astrology is also used to ascertain Aa's will on matters of import. Archimages take a simple question, translate its elements into

astrological symbols, and read the skies to find Aa's opinion. Questions put to astrology must be yes- or-no questions. "What is my fate on this journey" is incorrect and vague phrasing. "Will I return safely from this journey" is correct.

The process takes at least one hour of preparation and another hour of star gazing, per question, and the skies can only be read on a cloudless night. There are three kinds of answers (favorable, unfavorable, and neutral), and ten levels of vehemence (higher levels indicate a more positive answer). The usual charge is 20 gold lumens per question. Of course, Archimages may perform readings for themselves and their companions free of charge.

For instance, a pilgrim readying to set off on a long pilgrimage desires to know Aa's pronouncement on his chosen route. He pays an Archimage, and the result is "favorable, fourth degree." Several such questions could then determine the best route to take, according to the will of Aa.

**Game Mechanics.** When the question has been put and the stars have been read, the astrologer rolls a d20. A 1-5 result indicates an "Unfavorable" answer; 6-15, "Neutral"; and 16-20, "Favorable." A further roll of d10 determines the level of vehemence.

Simultaneously, the Gamemaster secretly makes an astrology skill roll on the *Action Table*, to determine the astrologer's accuracy. The only modifier applied is one which the Gamemaster applies to all astrological prediction rolls, indicating the reliability of astrology in the Gamemaster's campaign. Astrologers are not told the outcome of this roll.

"Success" means that the forecast is correct, and the Gamemaster should try to implement it. "Failure" means that the Gamemaster can ignore the prediction. A "Success Plus" means that the prediction is true to the point of upsetting the Gamemaster's plans. On a "Mishap," the forecast is exactly wrong, and the Gamemaster must try to implement the *opposite* of the prediction. "Favorable" and "Unfavorable" are opposites of each other, and either can be the opposite of "Neutral" (at the GM's discretion).

The simplest way to make the prediction come true is to apply the vehemence number *halved* (round down) as a modifier to all *Action Table* rolls involving the action which the question concerned. For instance, during the pilgrimage mentioned above, there would be a secret +2 bonus to the pilgrim's rolls in dangerous situations.

Creative Gamemasters are encouraged to implement astrological results in terms of plot encounters. For instance, a "favorable" result might lead the adventurers to meet allies, while an "unfavorable" result could lead them to dangerous predators. It also means that the Gamemaster lets the party get lucky breaks when the prediction is in their favor ("suddenly, the wind changes..."), and bad breaks when the reading is against them ("your weapon shatters"). Of course, only the Gamemaster knows the true result of the secret Astrology skill roll, and may disregard predictions which would irreparably upset an adventure.

## SONGS OF FEAR AND DEATH

Druhk tribes end each day with music, chanted around the campfire. The music is a mystic ceremony in celebration of nothingness, cruelty and death. Druhk songs consist of muttered chants and wailing noises, repeated endlessly against a background of drum-patters and droning flutes. Some contain words which may be ancient spells, recited in reverse. Outsiders find

hillman tunes strangely obsessive, stirring hallucinations and fostering a fascination with killing. The Druhk participants enter a trance-like state, but otherwise are not affected by their songs.

When a Druhk shaman chants for a complete minute or plays the bone flute, any non-Druhk who hears may succumb to the song's obsession, whether the shaman wants him to or not. Distracting noises do not help, nor does it do any good for a character to plug his ears once he has heard part of a song (individuals who are deaf are protected, however.) The Gamemaster attempts a WILL check for the song's victims, using the Action Table. Those who fail suffer the effect of the song.

The Gamemaster keeps the compulsion secret until the victim gets an opportunity to satisfy it, then he privately informs the appropriate player. While players should be allowed to role-play their obsessions, the Gamemaster must intervene if the command is clearly being ignored.

Unless instructed otherwise below, the Gamemaster makes another secret roll against WILL for the victim after each instance of compulsion. If the roll succeeds, the compulsion ends. However, the player is not told the result of this roll.

### The Songs

Druhk Shamans can use any of the following songs. The number of songs which a shaman can know is equal to his level. Non-Druhks cannot learn these songs, and any attempt to do so will drive them insane. To randomly determine the songs of a shaman non-player character, the Gamemaster can roll d10 and consult the list below.

Hillman songs affect some races more than others. Bodor, with their sound-sight, suffer a -3 penalty on resistance rolls. Thiansians, Muses and Jaka all have a -1 on their rolls to resist. Sawila are immune. Druhk tunes intrigue some peoples. The ancient lords of Quaran supposedly enjoyed them, and Rajanistan imports Druhk slaves as minstrels. Some suggest that the Arimites' experience with the hillmen accounts for their hatred of all music.

**1) The Bloodlust.** The victim feels the urge to murder his or her associates. The sight of blood (or any similar fluid) satisfies this compulsion.

*Trigger:* Coming within 10 feet of someone anyone associated with the subject of the enchantment, including friends, relatives, superiors, etc.

**2) The Deathwish.** The victim feels the inexplicable urge to perform a feat which will almost certainly result in his or her death.

*Trigger:* None needed (effects are felt at once).

**3) The Chant, Elusive.** Anyone who succumbs to this song burns with the desire to hear its subtle rhythm repeated. The victim resists future Druhk songs with a cumulative -1 penalty. This desire and penalty last for life.

*Trigger:* Always.

**4) The Thought, Impure.** A blasphemous thought imbeds itself in the victim's mind. It torments him, producing flashes of hatred for whatever he considers holy. The affected character must commit sacrilege as flamboyantly as possible. (True agnostics act against the admirable cause they most respect.) The compulsion continues until the sacrilege has been committed.

*Trigger:* Seeing a symbol the character or his culture considers

holy.

**5) The Act, Betrayal.** The victim feels uncontrollable resentment for his or her fellows, and will seek to betray them at the first opportunity.

*Trigger:* Any opportunity to betray or desert one's comrades.

**6) The Fatal Allure.** The victim yearns for hallucinations and distorted thoughts — for madness. He has an uncontrollable urge to imbibe stimulating drinks or use other dangerous substances, continuing for d10 hours or until he is unconscious.

*Trigger:* Drinking any alcoholic beverage.

**7) The Weapon-Lust.** The victim develops a lust to possess poisons, weapons and other instruments of death. He will fight, steal or pay any sum to obtain them. The compulsion continues until the character gains possession of the triggering object.

*Trigger:* Seeing any lethal implement more powerful than or significantly different from anything which the character already possesses.

**8) The Grudge, Remembered.** The victim "remembers" a real or imagined grudge, and must attempt revenge whenever it seems feasible. After each act of revenge, the Gamemaster makes the WILL roll to see if the compulsion is over; if not, the character must plan another act against the same individual.

*Trigger:* The shaman may name the subject of the revenge in his song. If he doesn't, the trigger is the next person who offends the victim.

**9) The Enemy Revealed.** A victim of this song thinks he has a secret enemy who is trying to kill him. He may try to protect himself by hiring guards or hiding, but the only permanent solution is to kill the enemy. This compulsion lasts until either the victim or "enemy" dies.

*Trigger:* The shaman may specify a foe in his song. Otherwise, the victim assumes his enemy to be the next person who does something good to him.

**10) The Song, Seductive.** The song entrances its victim. He constantly repeats it under his breath. When the trigger occurs, he sings out loud. The Gamemaster gives the victim a secret resistance roll against the song each day.

*Trigger:* Always (singing under his breath); Silence, or a need to be quiet or appear dignified (singing loudly).

## WESTERN MAGIC

The following spells are known and used by certain groups of mages in western Talislanta.

### Certament Magic (Zandu)

The professional Swordsmages have over the centuries developed several combat spells, which they guard jealously. It is extremely unlikely that a Certament will teach these spells to an outsider, but Certament player characters would know them.

**The Blinding Revealment.** This spell creates a glaring light which can blind an opponent. Certaments normally cast it on their swords, but could place the enchantment on any object of similar size which they touch. The light lasts for one round per spell level, and creates a -2 Action Table combat penalty for the caster's opponent.



**Magic Resistance:** vs. PER, to avoid looking directly at the blinding sword.

**Magical Mishap:** Caster is stunned for the following round.

**The False Swordsman.** This spell creates an illusory double of the caster, existing for a number of rounds equal to the spell's level. The caster has telepathic control of the actions of his double. The illusion is identical in all respects to the caster, and when hit apparently takes damage. The double originally appears at the side of the real character.

**Magical Mishap:** A double of the caster's opponent is created.

**The Mighty Blade.** This spell increases the effectiveness of a weapon, adding its spell level as a bonus to the damage scored by the weapon. Lasts only for one round. Caster must be within 6 feet of the weapon and be able to see it.

**Magical Mishap:** The spell level acts as a penalty to the weapon's damage.

**The Swift Victory.** This spell may be cast upon the caster, or on anyone whom the caster can touch. There are two possible effects, which must be specified when the spell is cast. Enchanted with the *Instant of Speed*, the subject may make a number of attacks in his next round equal to half of the level of the spell (round down). There is a -2 penalty to all of the attack rolls. The spell lasts for only one round. Alternately, the *Span of Speed* allows the enchanted character a +2 bonus to all of his attack rolls. The spell lasts for a number of rounds equal to the spell's level.

**Magical Mishap:** The character suffers a -2 penalty to attack rolls, lasting for a number of rounds equal to the level of the spell.

### Serparian Magic

The beggars of Zandu have access to spells developed by the sorcerers of the Beggars Council. These spells are limited to Serparians and their friends.

**Goldfinder.** This spell, which has a range equal to 10 feet per level, reveals whether or not a specified individual is carrying gold or other valuables. It can also be used to determine the presence of treasure in closed vessels.

**Will-Bender.** This spell temporarily reduces its target's WILL by an amount equal to its level. The ensorcelment lasts for d10 rounds, and the spell has a range of 10 feet x its level. The Serparians use this magic to increase their success when begging.

**Magic Resistance:** vs. WILL.

**Magical Mishap:** WILL is increased instead.

### Aamanian Magic

**The Spell of the All-Seeing Eye.** A spell unique to the Archimages, Irquisitors and Witch Hunters of the Orthodoxy, the *Spell of the All-Seeing Eye* enables the caster to detect heretics and infidels. In order to affect the enchantment, the caster must utter the appropriate incantation while holding forth an All-Seeing Eye amulet or other icon. Range is a ten feet per level, and duration is instantaneous. This spell is often used by Monitors in the employ of the Orthodoxist Cult, as are devices embued with properties of this sort.

**Magic Resistance:** vs. WILL, for the subject to guard his or her thoughts. However, the victim may only do this if he has reason to suspect that this spell or one of a similar type is being cast.

### Ardan (Dhuna) Magic

As theorized by many sages, the women of the Dhuna Coven of Ardan possess many of the folios of the Enchantress Ilse, including the Six-Fold Spell of Fascination, the Veil of Deception and many of her purloined enchantments.

**The Glamour of Ilse.** The enchantress must possess a small object freely given to her by the victim, and be within 10 miles of the subject when performing this magic. Once this spell is cast, the subject is haunted night after night by a dream which prophesies that a beautiful woman (the caster) will soon come into his life. When the victim encounters the caster — which must occur within d20 days after the first dream, or the spell is lost — he sees her as the most desirable woman imaginable, despite the caster's actual appearance. Subject must be a male of a race similar to the caster's.

**Magic Resistance:** vs. PER, with a bonus equal to the caster's CHA, minus 4, to resist being beguiled by the dream woman.

**Magical Mishap:** The caster instead becomes beguiled by the subject.

The secrets in Ilse's *Amorosa Fascinata* account for the extraordinarily high charisma of Dhuna women. Witches who tire of undue attention may avoid (-4 to Dhuna CHA) or even reverse (-8 to CHA) these treatments. As Ilse writes, "Truly, ladies, may I remind you that being desirable is not always to be desired. The hag stands more chance of escaping the army encampment than the maiden."

The *Amorosa Fascinata* is only one of Ilse's many lost Folios. The Dhuna are constantly looking for others, and are willing to pay any price within reason — or take other actions — to gain the desired works.

## COVENS OF THE DHUNA

Each of the seven Dhuna covens is aligned with one of the Talisantan moons. Applicants within a cult may learn the spells associated with that moon (see the lunar chart, below). However, to gain the major powers of the witch folk, the characters must go through the secret rites of the moons.

The ancient runestone circles which the Dhuna found in Silvanus and Werewood are aligned with the cycles of the moons. Dozens of other circles dot the forests, their exact purposes unknown or forgotten, in addition to the seven lunar runecircles used by the witches. The Callidian Cryptomancers claim that the runecircles contain magical knowledge from the past, and that the stories and poems contained in the runes of each circle are the key to deciphering the riddles of the others. The Dhuna are jealous of whatever secrets they possess, and warn away those who seek to decipher the runes.

To become an Initiate and gain the full powers of the coven, an Applicant must undertake the secret rites associated with his coven's moon spirit. There are different rites for each of the seven moons of Talisanta.

The character must appear at the runecircle of his coven (see the lunar chart, below) on its moon's Color Night, the 6th of the month named after that coven's associated moon. On this night, only one of the seven moons rides in the sky. The carving on the runestones glows, becoming legible to those who can read the ancient language. Old sentences are clarified, and new ones are revealed on blank sections of stone.

The witch or warlock must bring an animal allied with that moon's force (again, see the chart below). The animal's hit point total must not exceed twice his own. He must also be prepared to accomplish the deed or make the sacrifice involved in that moon spirit's rites.

Through the ritual's power, the souls of the Appliant and animal are bonded to each other and the spirit of the moon. As a result, the Dhuna gains these powers:

**Shapechanging.** A Dhuna may take his familiar's form at will. He may retain this form for fifteen minutes per character level, possessing his own intelligence but gaining whatever natural abilities the familiar has. If a familiar dies through no fault of the Dhuna, the lunar spirit sends a new familiar to its joined Initiate.

**Linking.** The soul of Dhuna and familiar are permanently bonded to one another. With the lowest or first level of contact, the character instinctively knows when his familiar is in danger or distress, and vice versa. At second level, animal and Initiate can feel each other's strong emotions. Third level allows the two to read each other's thoughts. At the fourth and highest level, the minds fuse, combining the mental powers and resources of both into a gestalt.

The lowest level is the normal bond. To increase the level of linking, the Initiate must concentrate for one minute and succeed at a Magic Rating roll on the *Action Table*. There is a -1 penalty to the roll for every mile of distance between the two, and for each point of injury which either has taken. For each successful roll, the link is improved by one level.

Higher levels of linkage cannot be maintained for more than one hour per day. An Initiate with more than one familiar may only use the higher levels with one at a time.

**Innate Magical Powers.** Joining with a moon spirit offers new magical powers which are usable at will (see the lunar chart for a complete list).

Witches or warlocks may only undertake lunar rites once for every three levels of experience. Before a Dhuna can try a second moon's rites, he must become a member of a different coven and learn the spells associated with it. In the meantime, most witches spend at least some time learning the secrets of the sorceress Ilse. There are also rumors of secret spells known only by the oldest members of the Coven of Zar.

## COVENS, MOONS AND POWERS

### Coven of Ardan, the Purple Moon

The Purple Moon, Ardan, is associated with Amorosa, the Spirit of Love. Purple Magic is the art of love, passion and illusions.

**Coven Spells:** Three charms (*Fascination*, *Passion* and *Spellbind*), and the Spells of *Influence* and *Illusion*.

**Familiars:** Epee, l'latha, quaga.

**Runecircle:** The *Wedding Circle* lies in the heart of Witchwood. This runecircle is the site of weddings and other sacred Dhuna ceremonies.

**Sacrifice:** A Dhuna attempting the Rites of Ardan must first find his One True Love, the person of the opposite sex for whom Destiny intended him or her. Often this person will be a Dhuna. Others, to find their Soul Mate, must travel long and far. The loved one must take part in the rites, even if they are not attempting to join for themselves at this time.

**Powers:** The *Glance of Beguilement* is the equivalent of both the *Spell of Beguilement* and the *Charm of Passion*, but does not require any physical gesture other than a glance. When both have undergone the Rites of Ardan, wedded Dhuna gain the ability to *link* (see above).

### Coven of Drome, the Amber Moon

The Amber Moon, Drome, has much in common with Avar, the Spirit of Peace and Prosperity. Amber Magic is the magic of sleep, protection and conjuration. Dhuna of this coven argue wildly with Farad priests of Avar about their god's true nature. Wealth, insist the witches, is useful only for the comfort and security that it brings, which is the true nature of prosperity.

**Spells:** The *Symbols of Power* (*Sigils*, *Seals*, *Wards*).

**Familiars:** Gold beetle, ogront, quaal, smokk.

**Runecircle:** The *Grove of Peace* circle is on an islet in the Necros, within a grove of fernwood. It is reported that this isle is strewn with gold pieces and amber beads — sacrifices to Avar. The Dhuna say that those who take the riches for any but altruistic reasons are doomed to fall into the enchanted waters of the Necros, where they will forget such worldly thoughts.

**Sacrifice:** The character must save another person, at great risk to his own life and with personal sacrifice. The rescued person must be present for the Rite — if they are not Dhuna, they must be blindfolded.

**Powers:** An additional 10 hit points, due to an increased ability to control the automatic functions of the body — a result of deep meditation exercises. Initiates also gain the ability to detect significant amounts of gold and silver within (2 x character level) feet.

### Coven of Jhang, the Crimson Moon

The spirit of the Red Moon, Jhang, is allied with Zorah, the war god of the Kang and Danuvians. Jhang's magic is of hunting and war.

**Spells:** The *Spells of Mystic and Eldritch Power*.

**Familiars:** Azoryl, exomorph, ibik, ikshada, malathrope, omnivrax, urhound, yaksha.

**Runecircle:** The Circle of Blood is located in southern Witchwood. Visitors may notice dark stains at the bases of the runestones.

**Sacrifice:** Those participating in the Ritual of Jhang are incited to a blood frenzy. They then run into the forest, slay a living being, and return to pour its blood at the foot of a runestone. The slain creature must be large enough to sate a Dhuna's hunger — small animals are not sufficient. Crazy Dhuna have been known to slay one another.

**Powers:** Hysterical strength (2 x weapon damage), and the ability to track by scent. Hysterical strength can only be used when the Dhuna has lost more than two thirds of his total hit points, or when (Gamemaster's ruling) he is in great pain or overpowering danger.

### Coven of Laeolis, the Blue Moon

The spirit of the Blue Moon, Laeolis, is a reflection of Tristea, the Spirit of Sorrow. Blue Magic is the magic of healing and necromancy.

**Spells:** The *Spell of Summoning* and the *Charm of Rejuvenescence*.

**Familiars:** Angorn, nar-eel, snipe.

**Runecircle:** The *Place of Sorrow* encircles the spring which is the source of the Weeping River. The waters of the Spring of Sorrow bubble strangely. The Dhuna say that to drink them gives one the strength to deal with sorrow and loss. Some say the spring is also a gateway to the Underworld.

**Sacrifice:** Only those who have suffered a great personal tragedy, such as the loss of a close friend or loved one, may undertake the Rites of Laeolis. (The Gamemaster rules as to whether a character suffers from true sorrow. The death of an adventuring companion does not usually suffice.)

**Powers:** The *Laeolis Sight* is the ability to see invisible and astral presences, while the *Touch of Laeolis* heals small wounds by touch (1-2 points, once per wound). The Touch may be used as many times in one day as the Initiate's experience level.

#### **Coven of Phandir, the Green Moon**

The moon of mystery, Green Phandir, is one of the homes of the enigmatic Spirit of Destiny. Green Magic is the magic of divination and metamorphosis.

**Spells:** The *Spells of Divination and Metamorphosis*.

**Familiars:** Drac, draconid, malkin, moonmoth, all vipers.

**Runecircle:** Drooping willowood overhangs *Destiny's Discerning*, the runecircle on the edge of the Green Lagoon.

**Sacrifice:** The Appliant must make a secret vow — to do or not do something — or, if he can discover a great secret, to not betray it. The Gamemaster rules whether a particular vow or secret is sufficient. If the secret is ever discovered or the vow broken, the Initiate may never again join with the spirit of the Green Moon and loses his special powers.

**Powers:** *Sixth Sense*, as per Jaka.

**Runecircle:** On a seaside bluff in Silvanus opposite the Isle of Talisandre, the *Pious Pilgrims* were once — according to Sarista legend — a group of Orthodoxist Witch Hunters which came to persecute their ancestors. The Sarista turned them into stone pillars. Scholars claim the circle is of far more ancient vintage. It is the most accessible of the runecircles. On Silver Night, the Coven of Talisandre gathers here for a wild bacchanalia. As this festival is in honor of Fortuna, the Sarista also attend, conducting a week-long gambling carnival in the surrounding meadows. The ritual passing of a goblet of Sarista honey mead, a Dhuna tradition, supposedly results in the blessing of Fortuna for the coming year.

**Sacrifice:** A death-defying feat. The Appliant must have risked all for little or no gain — madly, on the spur of the moment — and survived. If the intent of the action was to qualify for the Rites of Talisandre, then it does not qualify. Talisandre is capricious. On any Silver Night, only half of the Applicants are accepted by Talisandre as Initiates. The Gamemaster makes a secret d10 roll — on a result of 6 or better, the character is accepted. Small modifiers may be added if the Gamemaster thinks that the character has found favor in the past with Talisandre.

**Powers:** *Silver Flight* allows the character to fly through the air by making stroking motions, and is good for 10 minutes per experience level, per day. *Fortune Sight* allows the Dhuna to dictate the fall of cards, dice and other random events once daily. However,

the powers of Talisandre are capricious — the player must roll a d20 when he wants to use these powers, and if the result is an odd number, the abilities are not available in that hour.

#### **Coven of Zar, the Black Moon**

Death is a close friend of the spirit of Zar, the Dark Moon.

**Spells:** All *Hex* spells.

**Familiars:** Spiders, cavebats, flits, leeches, morde.

**Runecircle:** The *Ring of Death* is located on a hill overlooking Ebonixius in Mordante's Deep. Here is where Mordante is believed to have practiced foul rites, including the ritual murder of the Hadjin beauty, Jinesse.

**Sacrifice:** Applicants are drained of their blood, and buried within the Circle of Death. At the following Dark Night, one year later, the Dhuna rise from the graves as Initiates of Zar. During "death," the Initiate's soul dwells within one of his familiars, sharing the body with its original spirit. If the familiar dies before Dark Night, the Dhuna spirit is lost and his body does not rise.

**Touch of Zar,** usable once per day, allows the Initiate to steal life essence from another mortal being. The victim must be unconscious, incapacitated, or willing. For every level of experience, the Dhuna may reduce the victim by 2 hit points, gaining 1 for himself.

## **RHABDOMANTIC DIVINATION**

Gnorl Rhabdomancers, in their quest for secrets, consult with oracles, research in dusty libraries, and travel to strange locales. Possibly the strangest method of gathering information, however, is the Rhabdomantic ability to commune with spiritforms.

Through their knowledge of herblore, Rhabdomancers summon the spirits of the dead using magical fumes created by the burning of rare herbs and powders. It is said that the spirits are always present, and that the fumes only weaken the "veil" between the planes. The ingredients used range from uncommon to rare, and are mixed with rare waxes and resins to make candles. Within Gnorlwood, Rhabdomancers can gather much of what they need (d20 gold lumens worth of ingredients per week).

Each spirit is unique, and it takes a great deal of trial and error to formulate a mixture which has the resonance to exactly correspond to a desired spirit. Until a Rhabdomancer achieves a "Success Plus" result following his herblore roll on the *Action Table*, he does not have the proper formulation. Once he achieves the appropriate mixture, he may summon that spirit with only a "Success" result. Spiritforms appear d20 rounds after the candle is lit.

The experience of a Rhabdomancer also limits his ability to commune with the dead. The spirit must not have died more years ago than the experience level of the Gnorl, cubed. For example, a third-level Rhabdomancer could summon spirits up to  $(3 \times 3 \times 3 = )$  27 years dead. Only by a "Mishap" could a more ancient spirit be reached.

In the event of a "Mishap," the Gnorl summons *something else*. The Gamemaster should roll d20. If the roll is 10 or less, the spiritform is simply another spirit, and possibly an interesting informant or one with a message. On a roll of 11-15, the spirit is a dead mage still able to cast spells, but not necessarily ill disposed to the Rhabdomancer. On 16-18, a shadow wight or similar, angry apparition has been contacted. On a 20, the spirit is a Malum or something else of major power.



Because of the danger, Rhabdomancers always keep a pitcher of water ready to douse the candle. Most spirits may only remain for d10 rounds after the candle ceases to burn.

## NEW ARCANES ITEMS

**AMOROSA FASCINATA.** The Dhuna possess this folio, Enchantress Ilse's only known original work. A confused melange of herbal philtres, simple psychology, cultural commentaries, perfume recipes and directions for compounding and applying makeup, the *Amorosa Fascinata* is a comprehensive work on the art of seduction and beauty, to be used by women on men. It is bound in purple leather with clasps and fittings of enamored, inset with pieces of mother-of-quaga. Ilse's personal Sigil is inscribed on the cover, surrounded by a *Seal of Power*. The work is magically warded to only be opened by women of their own free will. Men are unable to touch or open the volume.

Ilse introduces her work thus: "Sisters, hear my tale and judge for yourselves. I have been called many things, but before and beyond all that, I am one thing — a woman. I have suffered greatly and been credited little, but listen and profit by what I have learned: *All men are fools*. It does not matter whether they are tall and thin or short and fat. And while fools are the most dangerous things in the Omniverse, they are also the most easily manipulated..." (1,200 gold lumens; only one known copy)

**ANIMATE INK.** This magical Dhuna ink is created from the pigment of exomorphs, whisperweed, and several rare herbs. Used to pen an illustration, the ink yields a picture that changes when not looked upon. In the case of calligraphy, the writing changes between viewings, saying strange and unreasonable things. Used by the Sarista, the result is a tattoo that the nomads never tire of. In rare instances, the tattoo grows, sometimes covering the entire body. (2,000 gold lumens per dram, sufficient to decorate one square foot.)

**BAT CLOAK.** Fine cloaks made of cavebat wing-leather, these Dhuna magic items allow flight in the same manner as the *Cloak of Levitation*. The limitation is that the bat cloaks temporarily cease to function when exposed to the light of the suns or other bright illumination. When the user wears the hood — made from the cured head-skins of cavebats — he can emit high-pitched squeaks and detect where objects are by the echo. (20,000 gold lumens.)

**THE EYE OF AA.** This globe of ambertine is set within a black iron frame in the shape of the Eye of Aa. To activate the globe, the caster must hold a personal effect of the subject, and successfully cast the *Spell of Divination*. A view of the subject and what he is currently doing appears within the globe. The range of the spell is apparently infinite within the mortal plane, but the clarity of the image is distorted by distance. Beyond 100 miles, background details become difficult to distinguish. Beyond 500 miles, even the subject's image is blurred and indistinct. (15,000 gold lumens; not ordinarily for sale)

**ILSE'S KISS OF LOVE.** This fragrant salve is made from a recipe contained in the *Amorosa Fascinata* (see above), and is the truth behind the legend of the Dhuna's magic kisses.

"On the Morning of Charms (49th of Zar), slowly bring 1 keg of rosepetal ambrosia to a boil in a cauldron of enamored. Add 7 hearts of tantalus, crushed, and simmer for 7 days. As the syrup cools to a thick syrup, add 1 pint of red stranglevine juice, 1 dram of quaga ink, 7 fresh blossoms of purple narcissus, and 1 pint of oil from the meats of the heartnut tree. Cover and let sit until the Day of Old Happinesses (49th of Ardan). The Kiss of Love is then ready."

Ilse's salve is applied to the lips, dyeing them a lush purple-red. When a woman wearing the pomade kisses a man, he falls hopelessly in love with her, forsaking all other loves and duties (roll vs. WILL to resist). The attraction fades after a month, and repeated applications do not last even this long. (800 gold lumens per jar, enough for 10 uses; not ordinarily for sale)

**MONITOR STONE.** These Aamanian carved crystals are mounted in Monitor towers. Each is linked to eleven "eyes." By tapping the Monitor Stone with a Wand of Sight, the user causes it to display the view from one of its linked Eyes. By tapping the stone again, the view of a different Eye is revealed. Only the original Eyes, created at the same time as the Monitor Stone, function with it. A Wand of Sight is required for the use of the Monitor Stone. (5,000 gold lumens for a Monitor Stone, 500 gold lumens per Viewing Stone, 2,000 gold lumens per Wand of Sight; rare outside Aaman.)

**POTTED QUAGA MEAT.** The meat of the quaga, when properly potted by the Dhuna, is both a rare delicacy and an aphrodisiac. It acts as a *Spell of Passion*, lasting for one hour after eaten. The number of ounces of meat required equals the character's CON score; additional ounces have no further effect. (1 gold lumens per ounce)

**RHABDOMANTIC CANDLE.** When lit, the fumes from this candle fade the veil between the astral realm and the real world, calling the spirit of the dead person to whom it is attuned. One candle burns for d6 x 3 minutes. Use of these candles without the supervision of a skilled Rhabdomancer is not advised. (100 gold lumens worth of ingredients required to create [Gnorls only]; 500- 5,000 gold lumens per finished candle, depending on the spirit it is attuned for)

**SPEAKING STONE.** An Aamanian Speaking Stone is made of flamine crystal. To activate it, the user taps it with the Wand of Speech, causing the Speaking Stone to glow. The stone then causes anything said within earshot of the set of linked Speaking Stones (up to ten) to be repeated within the hearing of the user. The user may also broadcast his own voice to the linked stones by speaking into the cone at the end of a Wand of Speech. Reception becomes garbled over distance, with 1,000 miles being the maximum range of the stones. (7,000 gold lumens for a matched pair; 4,000 gold lumens for each additional matched stone)

**SPIDER GOWN.** This elegant lace gown, tatted from crag-spider-silk by the Dhuna, allows the wearer to spin a web and climb in the manner of a crag spider. It may be mistaken for the common, unenchanted Dhuna lace gown, which is very popular in Hadj. (15,000 gold lumens.)

# THE NATURALIST'S COMPENDIUM

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

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

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

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

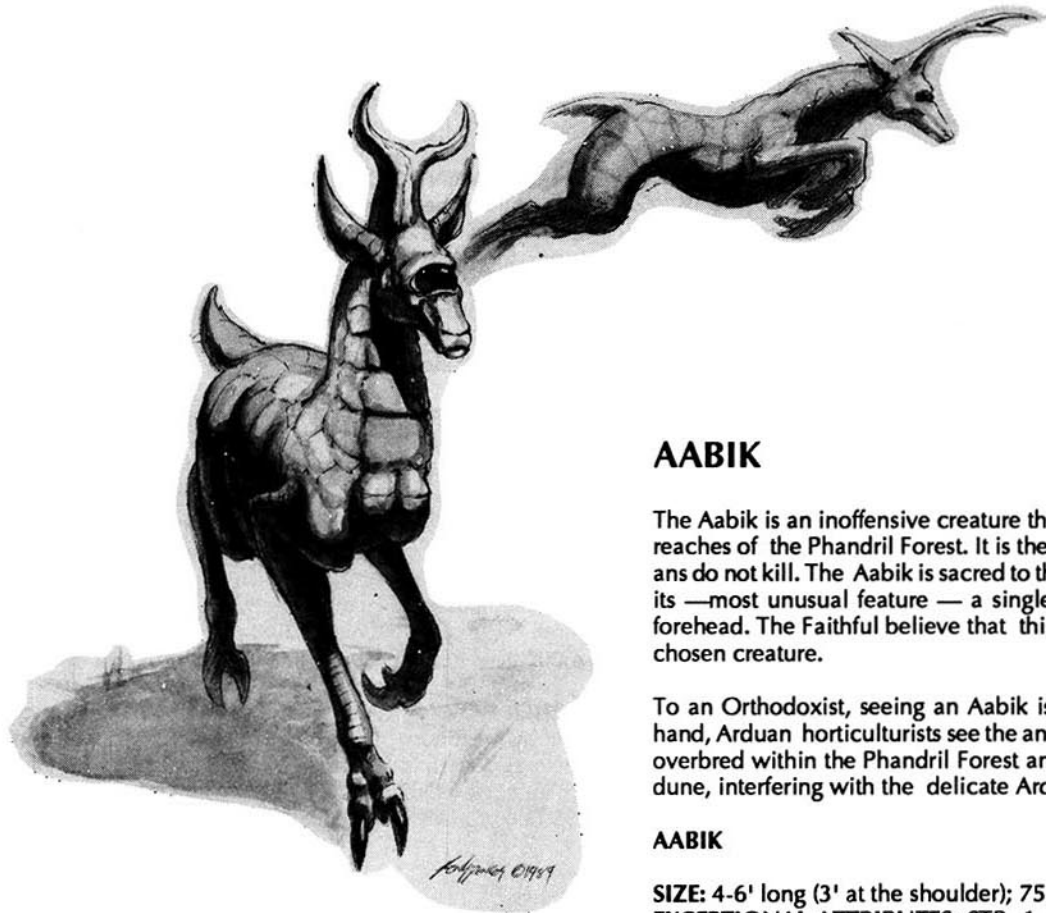
**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Extraordinary talents or powers.

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

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

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

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



## AABIK

The Aabik is an inoffensive creature that roams the northernmost reaches of the Phandril Forest. It is the one beast which Aamani-ans do not kill. The Aabik is sacred to the Orthodoxists because of its —most unusual feature — a single eye, in the middle of its forehead. The Faithful believe that this marks the animal as Aa's chosen creature.

To an Orthodoxist, seeing an Aabik is good luck. On the other hand, Arduan horticulturists see the animal as a pest; Aabiks have overbred within the Phandril Forest and are expanding into Vardune, interfering with the delicate Arduan ecosystem.

### AABIK

**SIZE:** 4-6' long (3' at the shoulder); 75-125 lbs.

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR -1, DEX +5, SPD +5, INT -6, PER +2

**LEVEL:** 1-2

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Horn — 1-3

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Exceptional sense of hearing

**ARMOR:** None

**HIT POINTS:** 3-6

**HABITAT:** The Phandril Forest (very common), southern Vardune

**COMMENTS:** Aabik seldom attack unless cornered or frightened.

## EPEE

Fastest of the avir of Talislanta, the Epee is a blur of movement as it darts from thornrose to thornrose, stabbing its two-foot beak within the blossoms to steal nectar and spear juicy bugs. Its wings — colored in shades of purple, violet, lilac and lavender — beat so rapidly in flight that they can scarcely be seen. The Epee has deep amethyst eyes and a short fantail of twin plumes.

These avir are favorites of the Dhuna Coven of Ardan, which often seeks out the animals as familiars. Zandu's Sultan has offered a fortune to anyone who can procure a selection of these creatures for his palace in Zanth, but no one has yet been able to satisfy his desire.

### EPEE

**SIZE:** 3' long (not including 2' beak), 5' wingspan; 10 lbs.

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR -2, DEX +4, SPD +12, INT -3, PER +7

**LEVEL:** 4

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Beak — d10

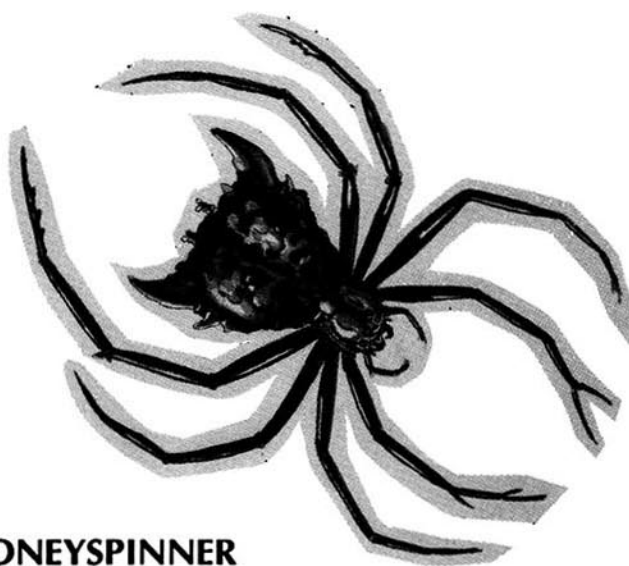
**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**ARMOR:** Unarmored

**HIT POINTS:** 8

**HABITAT:** Silvanus, Werewood, Yrmania

**COMMENTS:** If threatened, the Epee is swift to retaliate — darting forward, its rapier-sharp bill strikes to impale the heart of its opponent (on a "Critical Hit" result from the *Action Table*).



## HONEYSPINNER

A small blood-drinking spider native to the meadows of Silvanus, the Honeyspinner has the habit of collecting droplets of nectar in a silken carrying bag. The bag's contents are brought back to the creature's nest each night and poured into a silken reservoir. The small black arachnid saves this liquid until winter, when flowers are few. It then creates elaborate silk reconstructions of spring and summer blossoms, filling them with condensed and fermented nectar from its stores. Crystal moths and other insects become snared in the spider's pretty trap, giving it blood and juices to feed on in the lean months.

Honeyspinners also attract Sarista, who use the spider's gatherings to brew their intoxicating mead. Such thefts are not without hazard, however — the bite of the Honeyspinner is painful.

According to Sarista legends, it is unlucky to kill a Honeyspinner, as individuals who do so are said to disappear soon after. Some say that particularly old, wise Honeyspinners selectively gather different nectars and mix them with the liqueur of the shrinking violet to brew a magical venom. This poison shrinks even large animals to the size of the spiders. Sarista occasionally show foreigners what seem to be tiny mummified corpses of malathropes and werebeasts as proof of this story. Accordingly, Sarista who steal from the Honeyspinner always leave a dish of blood in the hollow of the tree where the spider resides.

### HONEYSPINNER

**SIZE:** 1" diameter; 2 ounces

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** DEX +4, SPD +7, INT +4, WILL +5, PER +2 (all other attributes negligible)

**LEVEL:** 4

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** 1 hit point

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Painful bite, some can brew shrinking venom (see below)

**ARMOR:** Unarmored

**HT POINTS:** 1

**HABITAT:** Silvanus, Werewood, Woodlands of Zandu

**COMMENTS:** The venom shrinks any creature to 1/4" high (resist vs. CON), and the effects last for d20 days. Mages can break the spell by successfully casting *Metamorphosis*, *Korak's Counterstroke*, or similar spells.

When adventurers are the same size as the Honeyspinner, the spider appears to have these statistics:

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR +7, CON +6, CHA +3

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Bite — 2 x d10

**ARMOR:** As per plate mail

**HIT POINTS:** 100





## MALKIN

Charming and clever in appearance, Malkins are covered with soft black fur, with patches of white on their feet, tail, and ears. A white ring surrounds each eye. Their noses are pointed, and their claws are short and retractable. Double-jointed, Malkins are capable of vaulting into a tree with their powerful hind legs, hooking a low branch with their front paws, and swinging in an acrobatic flip from branch to branch — or to launch into midair to catch a crystal moth, one of their favorite foods. Their tail is strong and prehensile, and can be used as a rudder when vaulting through the air.

Possessed of a preternatural amount of manual dexterity and an insatiable curiosity, not to mention a built-in set of lockpicks, nothing in a Sarista camp is safe from a Malkin. Magical wards and safekeeps are generally ineffective, as the creatures use practiced yowls up and down the tonal scale until they find the appropriate pitch to unravel the magic.

Sarista make pets of them, given a sufficient number of figs and small vermin, despite the troubles Malkins cause in camp. Their acrobatic talents serve to amuse — and more importantly, distract — audiences while the Sarista ply their less appreciated talents. Favorites of children, Malkins are natural acrobats, excelling at flips, tumbles, and tricks on the uneven bars. The animals view men as useful allies, of aid in opening heavy doors or prying open chests.

Their favorite prey in the wild are crystal moths and Warder chicks.

## MALKIN

**SIZE:** 3' long (not counting 1' tail); 20 lbs.

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR -5, DEX +8, SPD +3, INT +2, WILL +8, PER +6

**LEVEL:** 1-5

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Claws — d4; Bite — 1-2

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Immunity to "electrical" types of energy, lock-picking instinct (equivalent to lock-picking skill), natural acrobatics (unharmful by falls of up to 50'), ability to sense and dispell protective magics (10' range)

**ARMOR:** Unarmored

**HIT POINTS:** 4-8

**HABITAT:** Forests of Silvanus and Werewood, Sarista caravans

**COMMENTS:** When a Malkin is attacked with an electrical-type spell, its fur retains a charge equal to twice the animal's hit points for up to an hour. It can discharge this with a jolt of green sparks into anything which comes into contact with its fur.

Protective magics of all types are automatically sensed by Malkins. To dispell the magic, they may try one PER Roll per hour — on a "Success Plus," the magic is deactivated. However, their melodious yowls may attract hungry predators.

## MOONMOTH

Giant Moonmoths are dual-natured. Adults are beautiful and gentle. Their wings are pale blue on the underside and dark blue above, spangled with stars and "moonspots" of different colors. They float over the forests of Werewood, gliding down to sip the nectar of giant plants and trees. Crag spiders, wasps and dragons prey on them.

Moonmoth larvae are another matter altogether. The young are voracious, and swiftly devour the giant fungi of the Mushroom Forest within which they hatch. Soon afterward, the larvae go in search of protein — and any creature that moves is prey. They snare their victims within their pincers, then attempt to impale them on their barbed and poisonous spines.

The one thing Moonmoth larvae fear is fire. Dhuna and Gnorls carry torches while gathering in the Mushroom Forest.

## MOONMOTH

**SIZE:** 16' long, 30' wingspan (adult); 50-150 lbs.

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR +8, SPD +2

**LEVEL:** 4-16 (adults); 2 (larvae)

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Pincers — d6; spines — 2 x d12; poison — d4 per round, for d10 rounds

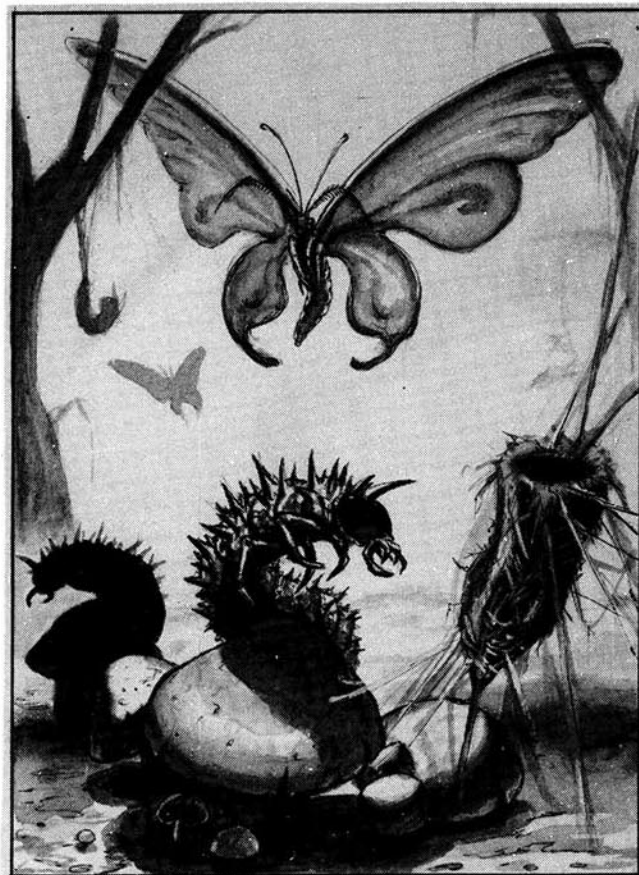
**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Poison spines (larvae); flight (adults)

**ARMOR:** As per plate mail (larvae); as per leather armor (adults)

**HIT POINTS:** 24-48

**HABITAT:** Werewood (larvae are most common near the Mushroom Forest)

**COMMENTS:** When a larva succeeds in combat, it snares its victim with its scissors-like pincers. To escape, the victim may attempt a STR Roll each round — if he fails or doesn't try to escape, he must make a DEX Roll on the Action Table to avoid being impaled on one of the poison spines.



## URHOUND

Originally bred to prey on the Urthrax which infest Zanth's sewers, the Urhounds were the magical creation of Kaxmos, a Zandir wizard. Some observers claimed that the Charlatan infused the essence of demons into his creatures, a claim which Kaxmos vehemently denied. With great fanfare, and despite the misgivings of scholars and fellow wizards, Kaxmos released his first breeding pair of Urhounds into the sewers.

Imprinted to favor Urthrax as prey, the Urhounds swiftly began to whittle down their enemies' huge population. But within a year, the binding enchantments wore off. Urhounds began eating everything (including Zandir), becoming as great a threat as the Urthrax ever were.

The Sultan called for Kaxmos' head, but unfortunately his creations reached a different part of his anatomy first. Witnesses claim that Kaxmos was dragged to his doom by a slaving Urhound which came up from the sewers at an extremely inconvenient moment.

### URHOUND

**SIZE:** 6-8' long (3' at shoulder); 75-150 lbs.

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR +8, CON +6, SPD +2, INT -4  
**LEVEL:** 1-4

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Bite — d8; claws — d6; tail with stinger — d4

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Immune to toxins/poisons, able to cling to walls and ceilings

**ARMOR:** As per chain mail

**HIT POINTS:** 16-48

**HABITAT:** Sewers of Zanth and Ammahd

**COMMENTS:** Urhounds prefer Urthrax prey. Should an Urthrax approach while an Urhound is in combat, the Urhound automatically changes its attack to the Urthrax.



## WARDER

A small avir with the talents of a trappsmith, the Warder has an innate ability to use certain trap magics. Indeed, it is said by the Sarista — no one knows how seriously — that Warders, with their brown faces, purple backs and clever black eyes, are actually reincarnated Kasmir.

The avir construct their nests in the form of a pentagram or other protective figure, and protect them with intricate snares and traps. Warders usually live in out-of-the-way places, such as cliffsides and abandoned towers. Near each nest is a hidden hollow stuffed with valuables collected by these greedy avir.

### WARDER

**SIZE:** 4"; 8 ounces

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** DEX +4, SPD +5, INT +6, WILL +2, PER +2 (all other attributes are negligible)

**LEVEL:** 4

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** None

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Construct snares and traps, engrave *Symbols of Power*, cast magic (*Safekeep*) cantrip, and the three *Spells of Shaladin*

**ARMOR:** Unarmored

**HIT POINTS:** 1-3

**HABITAT:** Forests of Silvanus and Zandu

**COMMENTS:** Warders construct spring-dart traps armed with poisoned thorns, puff-jet traps which eject soporific pollens, and snares which are set off by tripwires or nooses.

## WEREROOK

These large carrion-eating avir are possessed of high intelligence, a fine speaking ability, and a morbid sense of humor. They are jet black, except for a stripe in each wing (colored red, yellow, or blue).

Rooting in entrails and examining scattered bones, Wererooks specialize in an archaic form of the *Spell of Divination*, which they use to locate creatures who will soon die. In fact, hungry Wererooks have been known to inform predators where to find prey in return for the right to scavenge the carcass. They have an affinity for bright, shiny objects (which they line their nests with), and also sell their dire divinations in exchange for trinkets.

Wererooks are commonly found in pairs, perching on the ancient stones that dot Werewood.

### WEREROOK

**SIZE:** 2' long (3-5' wingspan); 4-8 lbs.

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR -1, INT +5, WILL +2, PER +7  
**LEVEL:** 1+

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Beak — d4

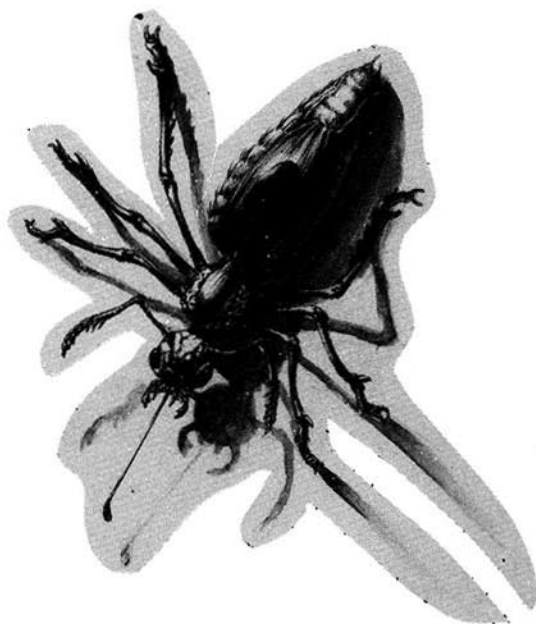
**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Divination magic (equivalent to primary magic skill, but requires entrails and bones — other spells may also be learned), speech.

**ARMOR:** Unarmored

**HIT POINTS:** 4-8

**HABITAT:** Werewood

**COMMENTS:** Wererooks always speak in dry and sardonic verse. They are sometimes employed by Sarista, and Dhuna witches may have Wererook familiars. The Oracles of Maruk pay high prices for hatchlings.



## ZARANT

These six-legged insects are dark gray, with black ovals on their abdomens (said to resemble the moon Zar in an evening sky). Each has a hair-thin needle on its jaw, used for sipping liquids and injecting poison.

Zarants live underground, in a hive of tunnels radiating from their Queen's lair. The hive's solitary Queen spends her life eating, laying eggs, and disgorging honey. Nursemaids bring food, bury the eggs, and serve as royal guards. When extra honey is given to an egg, it gives birth to a Queen. Otherwise, a Worker or a Hunter is born. Hunters leave the hive, gathering nectar for the Queen and carrion for the other Zarants.

The insects often adopt mines, caves and underground portions of buildings as their burrows, driving out the miners or residents with their dreaded burning venom.

Revenants and other assassins pay 250 gold lumens or more for a dose of Zarant poison. However, the insects do not form their juice until the instant before they sting. Therefore, anyone who wants the poison must "milk" a live Zarant, forcing the insect to sting through thin leather and allowing the poison to drip into a vial. At the Gamemaster's discretion, milkers who fail a DEX Roll are stung by their captive.

### ZARANT

**SIZE:** 3" long (most), 12-16" (Queen); 5-11 ounces

**EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES:** STR -15 (-1, Queen), DEX +12, CON -10, SPD +12, INT -15, PER +6

**LEVEL:** 1

**ATTACKS/DAMAGE:** Mandibles — 1 hit point (d4, Queen); Stinger — poison (1 hit point per hour, until death)

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Poison (resist vs. CON; one dose per day).

**ARMOR:** Unarmored (as per chain mesh, Queen)

**HIT POINTS:** 1 (15, Queen)

**HABITAT:** Arim, Zandu (rare)

**COMMENTS:** Zarants sting anything that disturbs them. Each hive has a unique poison. The only known antidote is the honey of the Queen of the hive whose member bit the victim.



# WEAPONRY AND EQUIPMENT

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

## BLACK-IRON BATTLE ARMOR (Aaman)

There are two grades of black-iron battle armor produced by the ironworks of Aabaal. Their *fine-grade armor* is strictly for use by the Orthodoxy and is beautifully crafted, with each breastplate engraved with an Eye of Aa. A *second-rate armor* is made for sale to foreigners. It is relatively inexpensive, but heavy and poorly forged. (2,400 gold lumens [first-rate], 1,600 gold lumens [second-rate])

## BANE-SCOURGE (Arim)

This flexible switch has a razor crosspiece, and a perforated cylinder on the tip to dispense Cautery Dust (see below). The Bane-Scourge carves a swath of bleeding flesh and sprinkles Dust into the open wound. The Revenants use this weapon when killing isn't a sufficient punishment, but the risks of kidnapping a victim for prolonged torment are too great. (50 gold lumens; Cautery Dust not included)

## CASTABULAN TIDAL ALMANAC (Silvanus)

This guide charts the Azure Ocean's tides and currents for the current year. Navigators consider it crucial, but the price keeps the volumes relatively rare. (1,000 gold lumens for current almanac, 10 gold lumens for outdated tables)

## CAUTERY DUST (Arim)

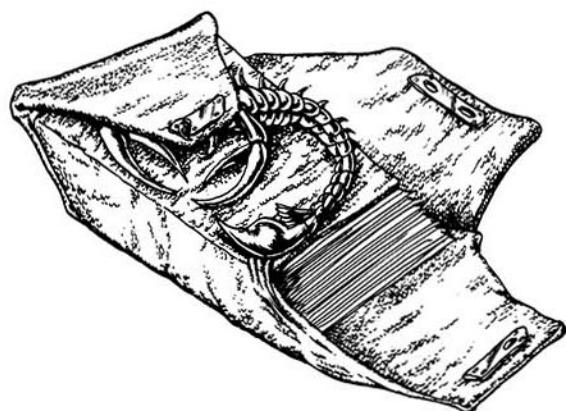
Ore veins in the Onyx Mountains contain natural deposits of a corrosive powder. This Cautery Dust also seeps into the groundwater in places, fouling streams and pools. In a contaminated mine, the slightest movement stirs up the fine dust. On contact with the copper within fresh blood, Cautery Dust becomes a powerful acid. Miners often do not notice the danger until after they cut themselves, when the dust reacts with the blood and begins to dissolve their flesh. Revenants pay well for this poison, and the Druhks have been known to use it to dust their blades. (100 gold lumens per ounce)

## CHAKOS (Arim)

Arimites brew this bitter liquor from the inedible leaves of blue-vines. They swallow it with resigned gulps, making no pretense of enjoying the taste, only wanting an alcoholic haze and an excuse for rude and violent behavior. (The Arimite code of revenge does not usually apply to acts taken while intoxicated.) Brewers store chakos in airtight black-iron barrels to preserve its fizz. (6 silver pieces per mug; 100 gold lumens for a full cask; 40 gold lumens for an empty cask)

## EAR TRUMPETS (Werewood)

Never knowing when they might encounter a patch of whisperweed, Gnarl Rhabdomancers always carry an ear trumpet and a wax tablet and stylus. An ear trumpet triples the apparent volume of any sound. Silver trumpets inset with scrimshaw are a traditional present for Rhabdomancers just entering the profession. (200 gold lumens.)





### FANS (Zandu)

Highly fashionable apparel items for Zandir women, fans range from simple paper affairs to gem-studded feather constructions. Courtesans sometimes carry fans equipped with retractable razor-sharp blades, in order to discourage overly persistent suitors. The blades are concealed along the fan's edges. Female assassins may use poisoned blade-fans. (1 gold lumens [paper fan], 25 gold lumens [cloth-and-silversparkle fan], 500 gold lumens [jeweled fan]; plus an additional 25 gold lumens for concealed blades)

### GNORL CANE (Werewood)

Walking sticks which are more than what they seem are a trademark of the Gnorls. Mechanical power comes from tightly twisted cords of crag-spider silk, a specialty of the Gnorl Artificers.

**Bladecane.** This cane is composed of sections of horn or ivory around a metal core. When the shaft is grasped firmly and the knob pulled, three short scything blades pop out of the opposite end and whirl at a furious speed. Gnorls use this weapon against mandragores. (1,000 gold lumens.)

**Dragoncane.** These golden dragon-headed canes are outfitted with red-iron flasks of compressed swamp gas. Small flints in the dragon's head can ignite a small jet of flame, sufficient to light a candle, torch, etc. If the head of the cane is twisted, however, all of the gas flares in a single burst. Emptied canes can be refilled only by Gnorl Artificer. (800 gold lumens.)

**Snakecane.** Holding this cane with both hands and twisting in opposite directions causes the head of the serpent to pop open. When the end of the cane solidly contacts a victim, the jaws clamp down and inject a dose of poison. (1,300 gold lumens, plus poison; illegal in many lands)

**Utility Cane.** Made from nar-eel ivory reinforced with black iron, this cane is multi-purpose. The removable foot conceals a sharpened iron spike. The silver knob may be used as a bludgeon, and screws off to reveal a waterproof hollow. (50 gold lumens.)



### LUNAR AMULETS (Werewood)

Seven types of these Dhuna amulets exist, each composed of a metal sacred to one of the Talislantan moons and set with that moon's stone. They have no known magical power, but indicate status among the witches. (500 gold lumens, to collectors)

### MINING EQUIPMENT (Arim)

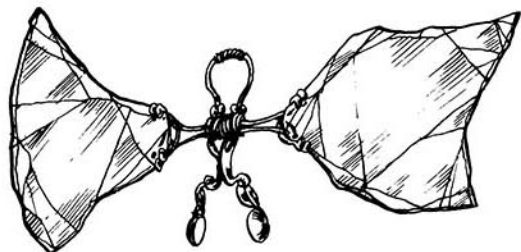
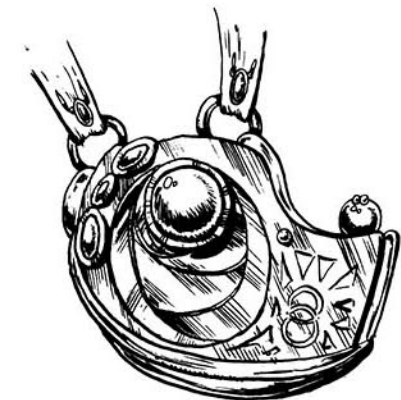
Arimites use a variety of machines in their mines, including equi-powered elevators, drills and cart trains. Water pumps drag wads of rag through a tube, forcing liquid up with them. This machinery allows a mine owner to produce twice as much ore. (5,000-10,000 gold lumens to automate a typical mine)

### MOTHSILK (Werewood)

This seemingly insubstantial gray fabric is made by unwinding the death cocoons which crag spiders spin about giant moonmoths. Mothsilk is actually strong, and has a fine glitter from the scales of the dying moonmoth's wings. It can be dyed, though Dhuna witches prefer to wear it in its natural shade. Cymrilians are experimenting with mothsilk sails in their newest windships. (10+ gold lumens per yard, scarce)

### MOTH-WING SPECTACLES (Werewood)

Made from carefully selected crystal moth-wings, these spectacles are clipped to the end of the nose and correct inadequacies of eyesight. Gnorls use them for reading small print and working with





delicate twisted-cord mechanisms. Some spectacles have lens crystals of different hues, the colors of which are said to be the keys to reading certain of the secret journals of the Rhabdomancers. (800 gold lumens, custom-made only)

#### **RHABDOMANTIC CANDLE (Werewood)**

Gnorl Rhabdomancers summon the spirits of the dead using these aromatic candles, which are composed of rare waxes, incense and resins as well as other, secret ingredients. Each candle must be custom designed so that its fumes will attract the desired spirit. (500-2,000 gold lumens, depending on the age and importance of the spirit to be contacted; Rhabdomancers require 100 gold lumens worth of ingredients to create a candle)\*

#### **RIVER HARPOON (Arim)**

This weapon, used chiefly by Arimite river mercenaries, comes in two forms. The *Casting Harpoon* is designed to pierce water and hit submerged targets, and can be hand-cast or fired from a machine. The *Pitch Harpoon* is weighted and hollow, and breaks apart to foul the river with caustic pitch. (Casting Harpoon, 5 for 1 gold lumen; Pitch Harpoon, 2 gold lumens.)

#### **SMELTING EQUIPMENT (Arim)**

These immense furnaces ingest black-iron ore and produce ingots of refined metal. One hundred laborers stoke the fires, pump the bellows and tend the crucibles of a single smelter. Workers run a regular risk (DEX Roll daily) of being injured by an overheating furnace (d4 damage).

The richest Arimites in Shattra own automatic furnaces, called *Ore-Eaters*, powered by river wheels along the banks of the river. Cogs and belts scoop in the ore, then roll it through a series of stamping presses, automatic hammers, and furnaces. A water sieve washes the slag out.

The Revenants cremate bodies in smelters when their employers want a murder concealed, and have used *Ore-Eaters* for some gruesome executions. (1,000 gold lumens for a slave-powered smelter; 10,000 gold lumens for an *Ore-Eater*)

#### **TIMEPIECE (Werewood)**

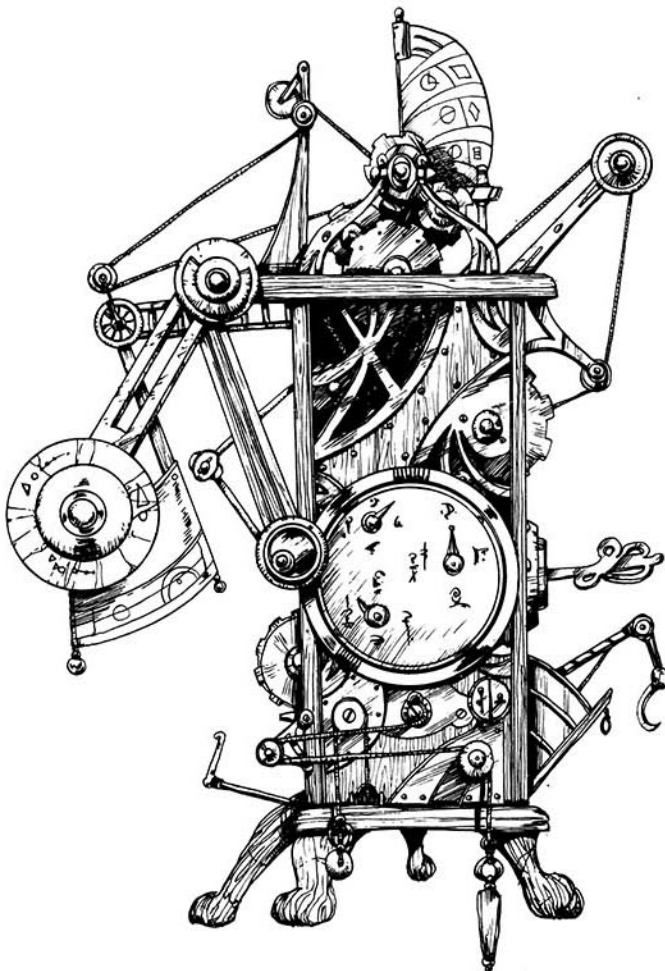
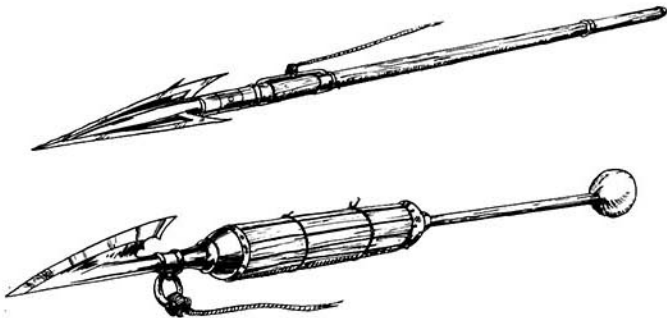
These chronometers are the creations of the Gnorl Artificers, and are powered by tightly twisted cords of crag-spider silk. Secret combinations of the hands open concealed drawers and compartments. They are sometimes used as timing mechanisms for intricate traps and locks. (500 gold lumens per day, depending on the time required between windings)

#### **ZANDIR BLACK-IRON SABRE**

These high quality black-iron blades are the trademark of Zandir swordsmen. Many are enchanted. The finest blades are typically used by nobles, officers, and famous duelists. (500 gold lumens for ordinary blades; 1,500 gold lumens for fine blades)

#### **ZANDIR POIGNARD**

Zandir swordsmen use these heavy-bladed daggers both offensively and defensively. (See Zandir Bladesmanship in the "Optional Rules" section for information concerning their use.) (3 silver pieces.)





# PLAYER'S MATERIAL

AAMANIAN  
ADJUDICATOR



AAMANIAN  
KNIGHT



ARIMATE  
ARTILLERIST



ARIMATE  
OVERSEER



AZIR  
ISLANDER



CASTABULANESE  
ASTROMANCER



GNORL  
ARTIFICER



HETERODOXIST  
AGENT



SERPARIAN  
BEGGAR



F. MOND

## NEW CHARACTER TYPES

### AAMANIAN ADJUDICATOR

**SIZE:** 5' 6"-6', 100-180 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Topaz skin, green eyes, all facial and bodily hair removed

**ATTRIBUTES:** INT +1, WILL +1, PER +1

**HIT POINTS:** 12

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**SKILLS:** Administrator, appraise treasure, interrogate, literacy, litigant, magical training

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Cult vestments, leather-bound mana ledger, ink pot, quill pen, iron holy symbol of Aa

**WEALTH:** d10 x 5 gold lumens (paid by the Orthodoxy)

**COMMENTS:** Adjudicators are the bureaucrats of the Orthodoxy. They work for the Monitors — tallying mana levels, collecting and recording taxes and donations, resolving disputes, and watching the Faithful for infractions.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** Outside of Aaman, Adjudicators are most usually encountered outside with pilgrimage caravans. Their function on these journeys is to serve as witnesses that mana-earning requirements have been met, and to prevent contamination of the Faithful by infidels. This character type is best suited for non-player characters.

### AAMANIAN KNIGHT

**SIZE:** 5' 8"-6' 2", 130-210 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Topaz skin, green eyes, all facial and bodily hair removed

**ATTRIBUTES:** STR +2, WILL +1

**HIT POINTS:** 12

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**SKILLS:** Secondary combat, Ambush [Scout and Guard Knights only], magic training, metaphysical doctrines (Orthodoxy), mounted combat (eques) [Cavalry Knights only], navigator/pilot [Marine Knights only], primary combat, scout [Scout Knights only], eques [Cavalry, Scout and Guard Knights only], wilderness survival [Scout Knights only].

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Cult vestments, black-iron battle armor with helm and shield (lacquered white), cloak, mace, heavy crossbow [Infantry, Guard and Scout Knights only], greymane steed (fully caparisoned) [Cavalry, Scout and Guard Knights only], black-iron holy symbol of Aa.

**WEALTH:** d20 x 10 gold lumens (paid by the Theocratic Order).

**COMMENTS:** All Aamanian Knights belong to one of the monasteries of the Theocratic Order. Each abbey is associated with a different arm of the Order (cavalry, infantry, marines, scouts or guards). In Aaman's convoluted society, the Theocratic Order is both an independent force and the officer corps for the larger Armed Host (the regular army). Knights command common soldiers, and are commanded in turn by the Warrior-Priests.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** As non-player characters, Knights may be found in the company of Witch Hunters or Inquisitors, commanding a border patrol, or on scouting missions deep within nations suspected of being hostile to Aaman. They make useful player characters in a pro-Orthodoxy campaign.

### ARIMATE ARTILLERIST

**SIZE:** 5' 2"-6' 2", 90-170 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Swarthy complexion, black hair, dark eyes, hatchet-like features

**ATTRIBUTES:** DEX +2, CON +1, INT +1, PER +1

**HIT POINTS:** 12

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**SKILLS:** Artillerist, engineer, hunting, literacy, mountain climbing, primary combat

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Fur vest, hide boots, sackcloth breeches, armbands of black iron, black-iron flask of chakos, pouch, two throwing-knives, *choice of two weapons*

**WEALTH:** d10 x 20 silver pieces

**COMMENTS:** The Exarch has a vast number of siege engines, and hires trained Artillerists to man them. These elite soldiers can both build and fire these weapons, and their engineering training allows them to take a prime role during sieges. (When using the Mass Combat System, an Artillerist with a siege engine and men to crew it adds a bonus to his unit's Mass Combat Rating equal to his experience level.)

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** Arimate Artillerists may be found as mercenaries in the employ of any Talislantan army. Many are loyal to the Exarch, and serve as his spies in foreign lands. Others have secret ties to the Revenants. Artillerists serve equally well as player characters or non-player characters.

### ARIMATE OVERSEER

**SIZE:** 5' 2"-6' 2", 90-170 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Swarthy complexion, black hair, dark eyes, hatchet-like features

**ATTRIBUTES:** DEX +1, CON +1, INT +1, PER +2

**HIT POINTS:** 12

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**SKILLS:** Administrator, appraise treasure, miner, prospector, secondary combat

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Fur vest, chain-mesh armor (under vest), polished leather boots, silk shirt and trousers, ornamented hairpiece, two throwing-knives, *choice of two weapons*

**WEALTH:** d20 x 5 gold lumens' worth of coins and jewelry

**COMMENTS:** Arimate Overseers run the nation's mines, producing ore and shipping it to Shattru for refinement. They bully their workers unmercifully, knowing that if they show weakness, their workers and slaves will rise up against them. The Overseers have no love for the Exarch and his nobles, but are forced to cooperate with them against the feared Revenants.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** Rich Overseers often hire younger overseers to operate their mines, then leave Arimate to seek travel and adventure. An Overseer who has lost his mine or the younger children of a poor Overseer may seek their fortunes as mercenary chiefs and traders. One also meets an occasional Overseer far from Arimate, fleeing assassination. Bosses are suitable both as player characters and non-player characters.

### AZIR ISLANDER

**SIZE:** 5' 8"-6' 5", 140-240 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Olive skin, curly red-blond or auburn hair, beardless

**ATTRIBUTES:** All are average (+0)

**HIT POINTS:** 12

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**SKILLS:** Beast lore, herb lore, hunting/fishing, identify flora and fauna, literacy, primary combat, snares, stalking, tracking, wilderness survival, weaponer (stone)

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** *Beaded leather clothes* — short cloak and pantaloons [men], ankle-length dresses [women]; heavy animal-hide cloak, short hornbow, quiver with ten flint-headed arrows, flint-headed spear, pouch (containing beads, herbs, and seashells)

**WEALTH:** None

**COMMENTS:** Believing that the mainland is under the dominance of Aberon and that its denizens are all demons in disguise, the Azir

prefer to remain on their home island (Talisandre). Note that the island has a very different mixture of flora and fauna than the mainland, and that an Azir has at least a -4 penalty to his "beast lore," "herb lore" and "identify flora and fauna" skill rolls when away from home.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** A player-character Azir should probably be a heretic, cast from his island for having become contaminated with outside influences. The advantage of this character type is that Azir are so little known in Talisanta, especially beyond the West. Encounters with Azir non-player characters are usually limited to the island itself.

## CASTABULANESE ASTROMANCER

**SIZE:** 7' 4"-7' 10", 160-200 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Pale skin, amber hair, incredibly tall and slim

**ATTRIBUTES:** STR +1, DEX +1, INT +3, PER +2

**HIT POINTS:** 10

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Detect magic by sight (range is 5 feet, requires full concentration)

**SKILLS:** Alchemical training, astrology, cartography, gambling, inscribe spells, teracy, magical operations (magical pigments), primary magic

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Long cloth coat, seashell crown, robe of woven seaweed, necklace of shells, spell book, sky chart (scroll in a scrimshaw case), tidal chart, pouch (containing magical pigments, ink sticks and compass)

**WEALTH:** d12 x 10 gold lumens' worth of mixed coins and rare seashells

**COMMENTS:** Descended from shipwrecked Phantasian Astromancers, the Castabulanese are a tough and hardy breed of astrologers who are also experts on the currents and tides of the Azure Ocean.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** Like the Azir, the Castabulanese are seldom encountered beyond their island. As a player character, an Astromancer could be questing for new knowledge, selling his expertise in the stars and tides to rich clients, or simply indulging his people's major pastime (gambling). Non-player-character Castabulanese are rarely encountered.

## GNORL ARTIFICER

**SIZE:** 3-4', 60-80 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Wizen features, dark brown skin, glowing eyes deep-set beneath a furrowed brow, squat physique

**ATTRIBUTES:** STR -2, DEX +2, INT +2, PER +2

**HIT POINTS:** 10

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** Manual dexterity (+5 bonus to DEX, actions involving hands only), night vision

**SKILLS:** Artificer (any single specialty), artisan (Gnorl twisted-cord mechanisms), concoct poisons, concoct powders, herb lore, hunting/fishing, literacy, traps, weaponer (Gnorl cane weapons)

**COMMENTS:** Gnorl Artificers are skilled creators, making extensive use of natural materials in contrast to the wires and metals which Yassan Technomancers employ. For springs, they use the delicate feelers of chang and the needles of ironwood. They craft gears from the wings of iron butterflies. Crystals are obtained from the wings of crystal moths. Motive force is obtained from a tightly twisted cord of crag-spider silk, which provides mechanical energy as it unwinds. The Artificers are fine craftsmen, and refuse to slavishly copy their previous work or that of others.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** Player-character Artificers might hunt for necessary parts in the fields and rivers of Talisanta, or travel to learn new methods and sell their wares. As non-player characters, they could be met anywhere — and might be the creators behind a villain's devilishly clever mechanisms.

## HETERODOXIST AGENT

**SIZE:** 5' 6"-6', 100-180 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Topaz skin (in Zandu, probably enhanced with colored pigments), green eyes, black hair (in Aaman, all facial and bodily hair probably removed)

**ATTRIBUTES:** DEX +2, SPD +1, INT +1, CHA +1

**HIT POINTS:** 12

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**SKILLS:** Acting, assassinate, espionage, literacy, magic training, secondary combat, seduce, stealth

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Orthodoxist cult vestments, cape of silken brocade, velvet blouse and pantaloons, sash, high-top boots, water or wineskin; *any armor, any three weapons*

**WEALTH:** d20 x 10 gold lumens' worth of coins and additional equipment

**COMMENTS:** The Heterodoxy is a counter-cult dedicated to the destruction of the Orthodoxy and the Paradoxy. Their agents infiltrate Aaman and Zandu, carrying out missions of blackmail, assassination and sabotage. These statistics are for agents of Phaedran stock, but Heterodoxists could also be Ardua, Cymrilians, Danuvians, Dhuna, Hajann, Maruk, or Sarista.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** Heterodoxist non-player characters make excellent *agents provocateurs*, hiring adventurers to do their dirty work or setting them up for the blame. They also prey on caravans of Aamanian pilgrims and Zandir pleasure-travelers. Being a Heterodoxist is also an interesting secret identity for a player character.

## SERPARIAN BEGGAR

**SIZE:** 5' 4"-6', 100-200 lbs.

**PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:** Topaz skin (enhanced with colored pigments), black hair, green eyes

**ATTRIBUTES:** DEX +2, INT +2, PER +1

**HIT POINTS:** 12

**SPECIAL ABILITIES:** None

**SKILLS:** Acting, bribe, combat training, con, haggling, secondary magic, streetwise, *any two additional non-combat, non-magical/alchemical skills*

**EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS:** Colorful but ragged clothes, sandals, pouch or backpack; *any single rusted or broken weapon*

**WEALTH:** d6 gold lumens' worth of mixed coins

**COMMENTS:** Serparians are the organized beggars of Zandu. Being a beggar is considered an honorable profession in this society. There are several types: *Supplicants*, who are physically fit; *Perjors*, who pretend to have physical disabilities; *Misfortunates*, the truly maimed; and the *Forsaken*, child beggars. The Serparian Sultan takes 10% of each beggar's income as dues.

**CAMPAIGN ROLE:** A Serparian player character could be one sent by the Beggar's Council to travel the continent, looking for useful information or gaining friends. Non-player-character Serparians within Zandu can serve as sources of information, or unexpected allies of the friendless.

## OTHER CHARACTERS

Western Talisanta character types not mentioned in this book are described in *THE TALISANTA HANDBOOK* (second edition). Some have also been mentioned in previous Talisanta books:

Aamanian Archimage (HB), Aamanian Inquisitor (HB2, CY1), Aamanian Warrior-Priest (HB), Arimite Knife-Fighter (HB), Arimite Revenant/Assassin (HB), Dhuna Witchwoman/Warlock (HB), Druhk Hillman/Hillwoman (HB), Druhk Shaman (HB2, SG), Gnorl Rhabdomancer (HB2, CY1), Sarista Rogue (HB), Zandir Charlatan (HB), Zandir Swordsman (HB2, SG), Zandir Swordsman (HB).



# 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 western Talislanta player characters, the following tips about “typical” characters from these lands are provided. You may use these sketches as taking-off points for creating your own role-playing characters.

## Aamanians

As one of the Faithful, your life revolves around the Orthodoxy and its precepts. There is no doubt in your mind that Aa is the greatest of the gods. He is a jealous deity, strict and difficult to love, but you believe that if you live in accordance with his requirements, he will honor his promises to you.

As Aa's servants in Talislanta, the various clerics of the Orthodoxy deserve your respect as well. (If you are a cleric, you have a distrust of Orthodoxist sub-orders other than your own, but your dedication to the Hierophant and your superiors remains undiminished.) The clerics exist to instruct and advise, for Aa does not expect you to think for yourself.

The Omnival rules your life, and you show your fidelity to Orthodoxist thought by liberally lacing your remarks with quotes from it. Those actions which the scriptures prohibit — drugs, intoxicants, brawling, use of magic by the unauthorized, and public displays of affection — are repulsive to you.

Uniformity is stressed, and conformity desired — as a follower of Aa, you strive to think and behave just like all of the other Faithful. You always dress in white, and fashion is limited to holy icons, veils, and charms (black-iron “Eye of Aa” pendants are popular). The wearing of jeweled icons or fine fabrics should be in keeping with your level of Aspirancy, for the Omnival does not prohibit such distinctions if you are the favored of Aa.

Mana, the measure of your importance in the afterlife, is your obsession, more than gold or worldly success ever could be. You are reluctant to do good without a witness to certify to the deed and, fearing the watchful Adjudicators, you are paranoid about committing acts which others might construe as sinful.

**Women in Aaman.** As a female, you have been taught that it is your role to be submissive to Aamanian men, following their dictates without argument. If you are to have any influence, it must be through indirect means. Your first duty is to your husband (the Omnival requires all women over the age of 16 to be wed), and then your sons.

Orthodoxism wisely warns against baring any portion of your body in public. Men are willful creatures, easily led astray, and so it is your responsibility to curb their instincts by limiting the temptations you expose them to.

## Arimites

You are bitter and suspicious. The slightest insult enrages you, and only vengeance can satisfy you. Sometimes you must swallow your bile, but you never forgive. You may not like or even remember all of your relatives — but if any of them suffers a wrong, you are willing to die to avenge your family's honor.

You follow a strict etiquette, intended to prevent feuds. Jokes are forbidden. Shouting or complaining is impolite. The proper manner to indicate displeasure is to remove your purse and jiggle the coins within it — a veiled threat to contact the Revenants. Only in the chakos bar are you free to express yourself, for a

single drink entitles you to say anything, and after two or three you can brawl freely.

Retaliation is the only way to deter crime. Therefore, you nurture a bloodthirsty reputation, and always keep enough money stashed away to buy Revenant justice should you need it.

Unless you are a noble, you do not care for clothes — greasy hides and black-iron ornaments are sufficient for you. Long braided tresses are the mark of adulthood, and a man's moustache, a token of his virility.

If you are male, you scorn Arimite women as unattractive and suitable only as drudges. Your dream of bliss is to save enough to buy a Batrean concubine. If you are female, you care little for romance, knowing that it is unrealistic. Arguing with your husband is customary, but if he truly offends you, he must pay — one way or another.

**Revenants.** You feel superior to others, due to your knowledge of the plots and factions which secretly govern Talislanta. Others may think of you as a thug or assassin, but you relish your status as a hidden lord of Arim. You revel in living a double life, knowing that bitter revenge is always in your grasp.

You love the Mentor who introduced you to the cult. If you must die, you aspire to do so in the glory of achieving justice. A heroic fate marks someone whose name appears in red on the pages of Destiny's book.

## Azir

The unfamiliar *must* be magic. Nature is perfect, but she remains undefiled only on your island — everywhere else, she has been altered and perverted. The enemy of Magic is Magic, which *must* be banished whenever it is found.

You know that the mainland is under the thrall of Aberon, and that its inhabitants are demons (many in clever disguises). You are wary of strangers, for Aberon's minions delight in tricking you with their multi-leveled lies.

If you are an adventurer, then you were probably exiled by your people on suspicion of having defiled yourself through contact with the outside world. You are paranoid and terror-prone, for no matter what you may claim to believe, deep inside you will always wonder whether your non-Azir friends may someday spring from disguise — revealing themselves to be demons. You may become a Truth Quester, seeking after ultimate knowledge in order to satisfy your fears. Or you might join that most dangerous of occupations, Demon Hunting.

## Castabulanese

The Isle of Castabulan is remote, peaceful . . . and boring, if you are adventurous. You've put long hours into your studies, relieved only by the time spent pursuing the Castabulanese pastime — gambling, of all kinds and types, always for money. You now feel entitled to spend several years seeing Talislanta, before you return to settle into a secure niche within the island's organized society.

With your background in gambling and the sciences, you see everything in terms of probabilities and rewards. You are always comparing life to one game or another, and your experience at the gambling tables has prepared you to “bet it all” if a risky endeavor seems worthwhile.

The other influence to your way of thinking is your knowledge of the stars and the tides, in which great forces of attractions and flows create major changes in gradual degrees. You look for the hidden forces in life as well, never trusting to luck, and always looking a gift horse in the mouth.

### **Dhuna**

Your coven is your life and your soul, and the spirits of the moons are the influences you see everywhere in your life. Learning the moon magics so that you can join with the runecircles is the most important aspect of your life. Accordingly, you practice your magic with great dedication, always remembering that Nature is the source of all true power.

You do not worship gods, seeing them as only powerful arcane beings. Nature spirits, which are not impressed by chants or temples, are to be contacted, questioned, and possibly joined with or controlled — but never worshipped.

Forbidden knowledge attracts you. Your ancestors learned the secrets of the moons through the first runecircle in Silvanus, which others had thought cursed or evil — therefore, you are willing to inquire into mysteries which others might leave alone. Magical experimentation is encouraged by your peers. Nevertheless, yours is a cautious investigation of things which are strange, not the hasty blundering of the merely curious.

Raised on tales of those who found their True Loves, you are reluctant to take a mate unless you are sure that your future spouse is “the” love of your life. Your romantic life tends to be tumultuous and troubled, as every disagreement might convince you that your current beloved falls short of what you desire. If and when you find a True Love, however, you are devoted and faithful.

Except for your Sarista cousins, foreigners make you nervous. They have no sense of the deep powers which dwell invisibly around everyone, and innocently cause great offense to the spirits of Nature. You especially distrust mages, knowing that they do not understand the real source of what abilities they have. Therefore, you are reserved when among outsiders, and reluctant to give your friendship.

If you are a witchwoman, you are privy to the secrets of Ilse. This knowledge compensates you for the superiority which males have in strength and size — you do not hesitate to make use of it.

### **Druhks**

Strength does not matter if one is too timid to use it. You respect pain and those who unmercifully inflict it, and delight in inventing new ways to torture and maim.

You worship Noman and, inspired by your god, seek to horrify your enemies. Torture is more effective than killing, for it strikes fear in all of your enemies. You must obey the shamans, for they can send the wrath of Noman to trouble you in your dreams. You must also be careful not to offend a fellow hillman, for torture is not limited to outsiders.

All of your people fear capture — not irrationally, considering the enemies your race has made — and being surrounded or in an untenable situation can trigger violent rage in you. If captured, you will never reveal your secrets, regardless of the methods used to extract information from you.

Friends are a sign of weakness. You are not ashamed to have companions, but you would do without them if you could. However, life is harsh — tribes are often vital to personal survival in your homeland, and foreigners are necessary in other lands as allies and guardians.

If you are an adventurer, you may have left your tribe to escape rivals or because of a disaster. While you cooperate with your non-Druhks companions, you reserve the right to act on your own at any time. You also watch for the smoke signals conveying instructions from the shamans of Noman, because you still fear Noman, and will do his will should he request it of you.

### **Gnorls**

You love secrets. You triple-encrypt them in codes, combinations, and all the other modes of encryption — some of your own invention. The best secrets are kept only in your memory, where they can't be stolen.

You dream of finding a Greatest Secret, superior to any you have known before. This is why you go adventuring, beginning with your youth and continuing every several years until you find your life's treasure. You are doggedly tenacious when you think that you are on the track of a new secret. Obstacles which get in your way are grimly overcome, and concepts of ethics and morality may be discarded when inconvenient.

To avoid accidentally exposing a secret, you talk little and avoid strong drink and drugs. You marry only out of a sense of duty to your race, and produce the minimum number of children — having a large family would only increase the numbers of those who might learn what you know.

If you are a Rhabdomancer, your greatest secrets are the formulae for summoning spiritforms, for they are the keys to discovering ever more secrets. If you are an Artificer, you know that everyone wants the secrets behind the construction of your devices.

### **Sarista**

You are the favorite of Fortuna, and have complete confidence in your good luck. When hard times come, you know they cannot last — bad luck cannot cling to a Sarista. Likewise, you love to take risks and chase after the unlikely, for you believe that your fortune is better blessed than all others'.

Stealing is second nature to you, but you follow simple rules which are widely known:

*Never steal from anyone poorer than yourself.*

*Never take bread from anyone hungry, or a blanket from anyone cold.*

*Never, ever, take anything if its loss will harm another person.*

If your actions ever cause an evil outcome, you must repair the damage or risk angering Fortuna. Nevertheless, you must sometimes take an act in spite of its consequences.

Just as Fortuna is always traveling, so are you. When something bad happens, it's a sign that your luck in this place has run out — it's time to move on. You don't understand how anyone could want to live in one place all their life, or tie themselves down to a building mired in the earth. You are most comfortable knowing that there's a wagon or steed ready to take you wherever you wish to go.

You appreciate money as much as the next person, but great wealth — more than you need for clothing and the necessities — has few attractions. If you ever get a large fortune, you would probably divide it among relatives and friends. You are free with what you have, giving food to the hungry, shelter to the homeless, and helping children (adopting them if you can).

Others may think you superstitious, because of your ability to read Fortuna's will in seemingly meaningless acts and coincidences. Nevertheless, you know that your goddess speaks to you through the riddles and mysteries of everyday life. Any chance occurrence — an avir landing in your path, or a cloud which obscures a sun — might hold a message, if only you can perceive it.

Slavery is an abomination, and you do whatever you can to see that intelligent beings are made free. Stealing captives works best, despite the dangers. If nothing else, give a slave a coin or piece of fruit to brighten his otherwise dull life — such an act might lead to a turn of fortune for him.

Above all, life is to be enjoyed. Postpone heartache until tomorrow when you can, and trust in your luck to avoid the calamities which befall others.

### **Zandir**

Life is a Paradox, a mystery beyond understanding. Existence is governed by the random processes of the Omniverse. To be truly happy, you must not only accept these paradoxes, but revel in them, celebrating the varied and subtle experiences of life.

As a devoted Paradoxist, you value freedom above all else. You wish to choose your own destiny, living as you desire — so long as you do not interfere with the freedoms of others. Belligerent behavior or actions which endanger another Paradoxist are not tolerated, but virtually anything else is allowed, so long as you are discreet. As the Zandir saying goes, "What no one sees, no one knows."

By being flamboyant and sometimes frivolous, you show your devotion to Paradoxism. You are passionate and assertive, and individualism demands that you have an opinion on every subject. All the same, you respect the opinions of others, not insisting that your view is the *only* correct one. You have difficulty working as part of a team, since your respect for the differing opinions of others makes it difficult for you to conceive of a consensus.

You resist authority, believing that your free will is more important than the desires of a state or organization. Orders from a

superior are to be followed only at your discretion. You have a healthy larcenous streak and a roguish sense of justice. While you may not be an outright thief, the idea of tricking or deceiving others (especially foreigners) appeals to you.

It is not without reason that, outside of Zandu, the term "Zandir" has become synonymous with "lecher" and "libertine." You are uninhibited with regard to the opposite sex. For a man to insult a woman is a crime, but propositions from either gender are proper — and when rejected, are done with style and wit.

You tolerate all other faiths, cultures and beliefs — except for your age-old enemies, the Orthodoxists of Aaman. You believe that the so-called Faithful have turned their backs on all that is truly good and beautiful in life, seeking solace in a solemn, intolerant faith which binds them like a slave's chains. You endeavor in all ways to be the perfect opposite of your Orthodoxist foes. Where the Aamanians are prudish, you are libertine. Where the Aamanians are distant, you are friendly. Where the Aamanians are restrained, you are outgoing. You cannot act in a decorous, predictable fashion any more than an Aamanian can be deliberately humorous. When you encounter an Aamanian, your hand easily strays to your swordhilt...

**Causidians.** Your life is a paradox — your task is to preserve the variety and uniqueness of Zandir society, while also seeing that the nation runs smoothly. While individualism is the cornerstone of Paradoxism, Zandu would be reduced to anarchy without your Causidian influence.

Zandu has laws, but their logic is questionable and enforcement is uneven. In all things you must defer to the Sultan, but you have great latitude to interpret his orders. You endeavor at all times to make decisions which are fair and acceptable to everyone, accepting philosophically the fact that few will consider themselves bound by what you decide. Modesty is a hallmark of Causidian behavior.

You bring a note of sanity to otherwise chaotic situations. Non-violent solutions to legal and diplomatic problems are to be sought. Compromise is always the wisest course. You strive to be shrewd and perceptive, able to discern each side's strengths and weaknesses.





# GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

## STATISTICS FOR NEW EQUIPMENT

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

**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.

**MAXIMUM DAMAGE** is the most damage which a shield can sustain in a single attack without breaking.

**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.

**WEIGHT** is given in pounds.

### Weapons

	Damage	Weight	Min STR	Cost
Bane Scourge	d8*	3	0	50*
Bladecane §	d4 x 4	2	—	1,000 G.L.
Blade Fan	d4	1/4	—	26+ G.L.
Casting Harpoon	Ω	d8	6	2 S.P.
Dragoncane	d10 x 3°	4	—	800 G.L.
Pitch Harpoon	—†	5	0	2 G.L.
Snakecane	d4 <sup>A</sup>	2	—	1,300 G.L.*
Utility Cane	d6 (spike)	4	—	50 G.L.
Zandir Sabre^	d10	4	0	500+ G.L.

### Shields and Armor

#### SHIELDS

	Weight	Maximum Damage	Cost
Zandir Buckler	3	15	3 S.P.

#### ARMOR

Aamanian Black-Iron Battle Armor:

	Protection	Min STR	Cost
Fine-Grade	6	+5	2,400 G.L. <sup>f</sup>
Second-Rate	50	+6	1,600 G.L.

#### Miscellaneous

**Cautery Dust.** On exposure to fresh blood — including new, unbandaged wounds — Cautery Dust becomes a powerful acid which dissolves flesh, doing d4 points of damage per minute of exposure. Washing the wound with an alkaline substance, such as diluted lye, neutralizes the Dust.

Druhks and assassins sometimes dust their blades with this substance. In this use, the Dust adds d6 to the damage of the weapon if the attack draws blood (one use only). Cautery Dust flakes off

quickly — subtract 1 from the damage roll for each previous unsuccessful attack.

\* The first point of damage done on the initial attack is from the blade; the rest is acid damage. The Cautery Dust inflicts an additional 2 points of damage per round, to a total of d8 x 3 points of damage. A Bane-Scourge holds enough Dust for 3 attacks.

\* plus the cost of poison.

§ when activated, the cane's blades whirl for 5 rounds. Afterward, the bladecane must be rewound (takes 20 rounds). In combat, a "Combat Mishap" indicates that the blades tangle, causing the weapon to unwind harmlessly.

° no penalty when thrown against submerged targets.

° flame jet is 10' long, and the weapon must be refilled by an Artificer after each combat use.

† breaks apart to foul 10 cubic yards of water with caustic pitch, causing 3 x d10 points damage to anything in the water.

^ plus the effect of whatever poison is loaded in the cane.

^ even non-enchanted Zandir blades are good for a +2 bonus in combat (+3 for fine blades), due to their excellent workmanship.

f not ordinarily exported.

◇ following any "Critical Hit," reduce the Protection Factor permanently by 1.

## OPTIONAL RULES

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

### Arimate Knife-Fighting

Typical Arimites are wiry and quick, not strong, so they prefer not to fight hand-to-hand with their enemies. Instead, they wield razor-sharp knives which can be flicked through the air. Knife-Fighters dart about, rolling, leaping, and casting knives with snaps of the wrist.

When making an attack, Arimites prefer "Aimed Shots" to "Standard Attacks," although they may sometimes wish to subdue or disarm an opponent.

Arimate Knife-Fighters always receive a roll to dodge an attack from a ranged weapon, so long as the warrior is not in melee and can see the attack. Dodging does not prevent a Knife-Fighter from making his own attack that round.

Knife-Fighting is not suitable for close combat. When engaged with swords or other melee weapons, Arimites resort to Blood-Madness (see below).

### Blood-Madness (Arim)

These rules apply to Arimites and Druhks automatically, although with the Gamemaster's permission they may be used with any character.

Once a warrior with blood-madness has taken damage from a melee weapon — such as a sword or axe, but not a ranged weapon such as an arrow — there is a chance that he will go “blood-mad.” Try a WILL Roll on the *Action Table*, to see if the character maintains self-control. There is a -5 penalty to this roll (doubled if the character *wants* to become blood-mad). On a “Failure” or “Mishap” result, blood-madness occurs.

In close combat, blood-mad warriors attack feverishly, like cornered animals. They forget all caution in an attempt to repel the foe. Blood-mad fighters gain a +2 on **Combat Rating** when in close combat, and the damage they do in combat is doubled. However, they may use no attack option other than the “Standard Attack.”

Blood-mad fighters must continue to attack the nearest armed characters until the madness wears off. If the nearest character is an ally, the warrior must succeed at a PER Roll to realize this — otherwise, he must attack his companion. (Druks receive a +4 bonus to this PER Roll, since the purple dye easily distinguishes their allies.)

The blood-mad warrior snaps out of the condition once he can no longer see any hostile characters, or when he loses consciousness.

### Mana Levels (Aaman)

In Aaman, status is measured by mana (rated in units known as aalms). Aspirants — those with at least one hundred aalms of mana — are ranked in levels from one to ten, according to how many hundreds of aalms’ worth of mana they have earned. Aspirants of the Tenth Level differentiate between themselves for each additional hundred aalms of mana beyond one thousand. Women are automatically ranked at a mana level one less than that of their husband (or father, if they are unmarried). Slaves, pariahs and infidels have no mana whatsoever.

In some campaigns, players may want to keep track of the Aspirancy level of their Orthodoxist characters.

Character Type	Starting Mana	Mana Gained Per Level
Adjudicator	80 + d6 x 2	15 + d6 x 4
Archimage	180 + d6 x 6	45 + d6 x 4
Inquisitor	150 + d6 x 5	30 + d6 x 6
Warrior-Knight	90 + d6 x 4	30 + d6 x 6
Warrior-Priest	150 + d6 x 6	20 + d6 x 10
Witch Hunter	80 + d6 x 6	30 + d6 x 12
Other Aamanian	c6 x 2	10 + d6 x 2

Mana may also be purchased by the Faithful, at a rate of 1 aalm per 100 G.L. Pilgrimages are dangerous, but grant extra mana for a low cost. Mana can only be received once for each pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage Site	Mana Award
The Well of Saints (Volcanic Hills)	200 aalms
The Watchstone (Plains of Golarin)	100 aalms
The Red Desert (Carantheum)	50 aalms
The Sea of Glass (Faradun)	50 aalms

### Mining (Arim)

The following new skills are available to Arimites, and to other character types (such as the Gnomekin) with knowledge of the subterranean world. Smelting skill is also known by the Yassan Technomancers.

**Prospector.** This skill enables a character to determine if a particular sort of ore exists in an area. It takes 2 weeks to prospect 1 square mile. Prospectors gain a +2 bonus on skill checks in the spring, when foliage is light. Many Arimites resent prospectors,

because of the laws which let them seize land.

**Miner.** An Overseer or other character with this skill may excavate underground passageways, or direct others in doing so. The Gamemaster should apply a modifier to Miner skill rolls, reflecting ore purity, quality of workers, stability of tunnels, and other factors. A “Mishap” indicates a disaster, such as a cave-in or rock-cutting accident. A Miner skill roll must be made daily when operating a mine.

Arimite miners shatter stone by building underground fires and dashing cold water on the heated rock. A bellows is required. A miner can cut up to 6 cubic feet of stone per day using this technique, if he passes his skill rolls.

**Smelting.** This skill qualifies a character to operate an ore smelter, such as those used in Shattra. Smelting transforms metal-rich boulders into metal and soot. A skill roll is required for each load of ore which is processed.

**Hazards of Mining.** Suffocating gasses, occurring naturally or created by mining fires, are the primary hazard underground. Fumes take d10 x 2 minutes to build up, giving characters with miner skill the opportunity to detect the telltale faint odor and order the evacuation of the chamber. The gasses take d10 x 4 hours to disperse, but greedy foremen often force slaves back into the tunnels to test for lingering fumes after a day or less.

Anyone who inhales the gas takes d8 points of damage. The fumes disorient victims and cause their joints to swell. Victims must pass a CON Roll on the *Action Table* to avoid immediate collapse, and must make DEX Rolls to succeed at the simplest tasks (such as climbing ladders). Arimites are resigned to the idea of mining deaths, but if they suspect an Overseer or foreman of deliberately killing a family member, feuds can erupt.

### Ritual Cleansing (Aaman)

The Inquisitors of the Theocracy specialize in the cleansing and conversion of infidels and heretics. They use torture to do this, although they practice it only when necessary for the greater glory of Aa and the Orthodoxy — never to cause purposeless pain or discomfort. Physical tortures include beatings, near-drownings (in deep wells), floggings (with knotted whips), stretchings on a rack, starvation, confinement in metal cages too small for movement, and the driving of splinters into sensitive locations. Psychological tortures include isolation, sensory deprivation, enforced lack of sleep, forced continual activity, and even feigned mercy. The two types of torture are often used in combination. The object is to make the victim desperate and then alter his perception of reality, thus making him receptive to Orthodoxist teaching.

**Game Mechanics.** Orthodoxist torture and its results are governed by the Inquisitor’s Torture skill rolls. One roll is made weekly, representing the primary method of torture being used. When using the *Action Table*, use the victim’s WILL as a penalty to the roll. The Gamemaster may apply other modifiers, depending on the type of torture. If the method is physical, the victim’s CON is a penalty, and the torturer’s DEX is a bonus to the skill roll. When psychological torture is being used, both the INT scores of the victim (penalty) and the torturer (bonus) modify the roll.

On a “Mishap,” an accident occurs. If a physical torture is being used, this may mean that the subject is badly injured. A CON Roll is required — on a failure, the victim dies. Otherwise, he loses half his remaining hit points (round up). If the torture is psychological, the victim regains all points of WILL which have been temporarily lost. Alternately, the Gamemaster may interpret a “Mishap” to mean that the torturer has made an error which allows the victim a chance to escape.

On a "Failure," the victim resists the torture.

On a "Success," the victim temporarily loses 1 point of WILL. Temporary WILL losses are regained at the rate of 1 point per week, and 1 point for each successful resistance to a torture attempt.

"Success Plus" indicates a permanent loss of 1 point of WILL. Such losses can be regained only from the Gamemaster, based on self-confidence reestablished over several months and through skilled role-playing, and are paid for in experience points.

In addition, physical tortures often injure their victims. Most do d6 points of damage per use, but minor tortures (slivers or dunking, for instance) cause only a single point of damage, while dangerous tortures (the rack, or an extended beating) cause d6 x 2 points of damage.

If the victim's effective WILL reaches -5, he becomes a convert, renouncing every belief but those of the Orthodoxy. Unfortunately, Inquisitors often torture their victims beyond this point, knowing that it takes extended torture to break (that is, cause *permanent* WILL loss) to their victims. If WILL is regained past the breaking point, characters may become "unconverted" if they desire.

If an Inquisitor merely wants to extract information from his victim, any torture resulting in a WILL loss indicates that the desired information is extracted. If the torturer is in a hurry, he may reduce the time between torture rolls, but each day cut out is a 1-point penalty to the torture skill roll.

Victims may fake conversion by making a successful Acting Roll, modified by the victim's CHA (bonus) and the Inquisitor's PER (penalty).

### **Zandir Bladesmanship**

Utilized by the Zandir — as well as by some among the Sarista and even the rogues of Gao-Din — Zandir Bladesmanship is a flamboyant, expressive style of combat fully in keeping with the

ideals of Paradoxism. Bladesmanship conveys a +1 bonus to a character's Combat Rating when using a sabre or dueling sword. It also allows a Bladesman to execute the following combat options, in place of a normal attack each round:

**Disarm.** As per standard rules, but a Bladesman performs this maneuver at -2 rather than the normal -5 penalty. The Gamemaster may modify this roll, depending on the size and weight of the opponent's weapon.

**Feint.** This is an attack intended to deceive an opponent into exposing a weakness or drawing him into an unfavorable position. If the *Action Table* roll is successful, no damage is done to the opponent, but the Bladesman receives a +3 bonus to his roll in his attack on the next round.

**Furious Attack.** The Bladesman makes 2 attacks in a single round, but his **Combat Rating** is reduced by -5 for the rest of this round and the round which follows.

**Furious Parry.** The Bladesman may attempt to parry every attack which occurs this round, but his **Combat Rating** is reduced by a -5 penalty for his next attack.

**Running Attack.** This is an attack combined with movement, intended to put the Bladesman in a superior position on the following round. The Bladesman makes his normal attack at a -3 penalty, then must roll against DEX — if successful, he moves to the flank of his opponent (giving him a +3 bonus to his next attack roll on that opponent). On a "Success Plus," the Bladesman has moved *behind* his opponent (+5 bonus to the attack).

**Weapon Block.** The Bladesman uses a poignard (a heavy-bladed dagger) to parry (once per turn), while simultaneously attacking with his weapon (at no penalty).

Zandir Bladesmanship is intended as an expressive, theatrical style of combat. Should a player come up with a particularly appropriate maneuver — flicking a cloak in an enemy's face, swinging from a chandelier, leaping on tables, and so on — the Gamemaster is encouraged to award additional bonuses to the character's attack or defense rolls.



# SECRETS OF TALISLANTA

If you are not a Gamemaster, *do not read this material!* It reveals secret information about the Revenants of Arim, as well as the Sarista and the Dhuna.

## THE REVENANTS

Arim lacks functioning judges, laws and police, since its rulers are in terror of the assassin cult which dominates the nation — the Revenants of Arim. However, no country is more hostile to criminals. Arimites take their own revenge.

Believing that the threat of retaliation is the only way to deter crime, Arimites nurture bloodthirsty reputations. Strength is not required to exact retribution, because anyone with money can hire a Revenant. So many assassins operate here that buyers can locate one by posting an advertisement on a public wall. Revenants complete most missions within one day, and can do so anonymously or with as much fanfare as their employers desire.

Even Arimites who have the strength to take revenge on their own often prefer the Revenants, since the cult can conceal its employer, preventing the victim's relatives from knowing whom to take revenge on. Even if a family can guess who paid for the act, they may honorably refuse to take action based on the uncertainty — thus ending a vendetta without losing face. Nobody feuds with the Revenants themselves. Indeed, it is dishonorable to kill an assassin, because of the horrors such an act would ensure for one's family.

### The Identity of the Revenants

Arimites never know which of their acquaintances might be a Revenant. A cult member could be a male or a female, rich or poor, and may belong to any business or organization. About one Arimite in 100 serves the cult.

The assassins usually slay anyone bold enough to identify one of their members, though they may take pity on innocents unfortunate enough to recognize them. People cooperate by "looking the other way."

Revenants refuse to perform missions against each other. This creates a dilemma — they cannot unmask other Revenants, but refusing to accept a mission against their brethren would be as revealing as naming them. The cult has a simple solution. Assassins agree to complete all contracts, but if the victim belongs to their fellowship, they kill the employer instead. This is one of the few moderating influences on Arimite revenge. When nobody knows who might be a Revenant, vengeance can be perilous.

### Recruiting Members

Cult leaders — known as Mentors — find new members by observing their fellow Arimites, noting the ones who seem bored or rebellious. When a potential recruit is discovered, the Mentor finds an excuse to talk with him, casually mentioning Destiny and the Revenants. If he feels certain that a prospect will keep cult secrets, the chieftain suggests a midnight rendezvous.

A band of veiled Revenants then meets the recruit. They give him an assassin's costume, a weapon and an initiation mission. The Mentor selects an errand which the novice should enjoy — a harried miner might be sent to vandalize his Boss's house, or a wronged wife to thrash her husband. The new Revenant *could* refuse to join, but few disagree with a band of assassins at midnight...

After the mission, the recruit must swear an oath on an uncut tombstone. He promises to keep the cult's secrets, obey its leaders, and fulfill cult contracts. In return, the Revenants promise that if the recruit ever betrays his oath, they will slay him and bury the body beneath the oath-stone.

Over the first year, the Mentor teaches the recruit the passwords of the cult. If the recruit is young, he will be taught the traditional skills of the Revenants. Foreign recruits are instructed in the customs and ways of Arim and Destiny.

### Life in the Cult

Each cultist develops excuses to explain his absences and extra wealth to family and friends. Mentors cooperate by posing as generous relatives, business partners, executors of a deceased beneficiary, and so on. Revenants who earn fortunes usually pretend to inherit money. Then they buy businesses, to launder future income.

Bosses, women, foremen, shopowners and unemployed mercenaries have free time for cult work. Common laborers often do not, but the cult has been known to take extraordinary steps to ensure that their members can perform their work. Rumors tell of secret shafts cut into mines, so that Revenant miners may sneak out of the tunnels, perform their missions, and return. Those who question this may also disappear, only more permanently...



Popular legend claims that the Revenants slay any member who is recognized as an assassin. Actually, the cult stages these deaths. The "victims" flee to a new place, or live in a secret Revenant stronghold.

Revenants seldom see other cultists besides their Mentor. The assassins answer posters and collect fees at will, reporting to their leader before and after each mission. Mentors often have secret chambers beneath their homes for meetings such as these. The chieftains make sure that their assassins do not accidentally fight each other, and collect a tithe of one quarter of all fees earned. Mentors may also send their Revenants on special missions, at no payment, against traitors or enemies of the cult.

After several missions (in game terms, after each increase in a character's level), a Revenant is told the identity of another cultist within his Mentor's clan. Sometimes the assassins collaborate on missions. The Mentors also send Revenants to spy on each other, to make sure they pay tithes and keep cult secrets.

When a Mentor has more than ten followers, he must begin to train one of his Revenants to become a new Mentor. Many assassins choose to avoid this position, fearing that a Mentor's duties will spoil their secret identities. Most Mentors are either single or married to a cult member. Few Revenants dare share their secrets with an unwilling spouse.

Mentors report to the High Revenant, the mysterious figure who rules the cult. He collects one quarter of all the cult revenues received by the Mentors. The High Revenant wins his rank by election. Candidates commonly maneuver for this position through the Revenants under their command. Of course, anyone caught slaying a fellow Mentor or one of his Revenants must die.

### Hiring Justice

To hire a Revenant, a character must post a notice in a public spot naming a rendezvous point. In many communities, there will be a traditional site — a secluded tree or a section of wall — where such notices are placed.

Next, the character must meet the Revenant an hour after nightfall at the rendezvous point. He must describe the mission, and the assassin will name a price. The employer must either accept or reject it immediately — haggling is forbidden.

If the price is set, then the employer must reveal his identity to the satisfaction of the Revenant. The cult watches employers carefully until the mission is finished and paid for.

Once a deed is done, the customer must pay. The Revenants have ways to persuade debtors.

### The Prices of Revenge

Revenants can be hired to commit any sort of revenge desired. Some typical rates:

Abduct an enemy	1,500 G.L.
Abduct an enemy's associate	500 G.L.
Amputation	100 G.L.
Arson	50 G.L.
Assault	50 G.L.
Blackmail*	50 G.L.
Deliver insult	1 G.L.
Deliver threat	5 G.L.

Discover secret	700 G.L.
Infiltrate and destroy an organization	700 G.L.
Investigate	1,500 G.L.
Murder	1,000 G.L.
Murder (untraceable)	10,000 G.L.
Piracy or caravan hijacking	250 G.L.
Perform mischief	1 G.L.
Poison (kill) animal	2 G.L.
Recover stolen property	10 G.L.
Recover stolen property, and steal something in compensation	15 G.L.
Salt land with ore	500 G.L.
Spread rumor	5 G.L.
Thrash**	50 G.L.
Thwart an enemy plot	250 G.L.
Vandalize property	20 G.L.

\*This entails coercing the victim into some payment, action or apology. The employer need not pay until his target relents. Additional fees may be charged, if further action is required.

\*\* An assault which leaves no bruises.

Fees go up if the victim is well-known or seems particularly dangerous, but prices are never lowered for easy deeds. Threats cost more than insults, in order to keep the warnings believable — anyone angry enough to spend 5 G.L. for a threat will probably pay again to carry it out. The cult maintains high fees for murder in order to keep daily life from becoming too bloody.

## THE SARISTA AND THE DHUNA

The Sarista and the Dhuna are practically identical, a fact which they wish to conceal. They possess the same ancestry, being related to the same Sadhuna tribe from which the Maruk of the Wilderlands are descended. Unimposing by Talislantan standards, they both are of middling height with fine features, high cheekbones, black hair, arched brows, olive skin and flashing green eyes. Beard growth is heavy in males, starting at an early age, while their females are quite pleasing of feature until late in life.

Children are freely exchanged between Sarista and Dhuna tribes. As Werewood is a perilous place for young babes, the Dhuna witches give many of their children for fostering to the Sarista. In exchange, Sarista youths wishing to learn magic are sent to be trained in the ways of Dhuna magic. Twins, common among both peoples and ritually significant to them, are separated at birth — one to be raised as Sarista, and the other as Dhuna. As a sign of this, an ancient Phaedran goldpiece is broken and threaded on two chains, to be worn by each of the children.

Each culture makes use of the talents of the other. Sarista bring back rare trade goods and magical articles which the Dhuna need or desire. Credible fortune tellers and animal trainers in a Sarista caravan are probably Dhuna witches and warlocks, dressed in the Sarista manner. The Sarista admire the "real" magic of the Dhuna, while the witches of Werewood have great respect for the survival skills of the Sarista and their incredible journeys in foreign lands.

The main difference between the twin peoples are their contradictory views of the entities known as Fortuna and Death. They do not generally argue, however — the Sarista and the Dhuna agreeing to disagree.

# ADVENTURES IN THE WEST

The adventures which follow can be used to welcome player characters to western Talislanta. "A Night in Ammahd" takes place in — or rather, *under* — the twin city of Zanth/Ammahd, the metropolis divided between Zandu and Aaman. "Midnight's Clue" introduces the characters to the intrigues of Arim and its secret lords, the Revenants. A page of adventure ideas follows these two scenarios, intended as inspiration for Gamemasters desiring to design their own western adventures.

## A NIGHT IN AMMAHD

This adventure is for 2-6 non-Aamanian player characters of levels 1-3. It portrays the difficulties of interacting with Aamanian society — particularly the problems of robbing an Orthodoxist temple and escaping to boast of the feat. The Gamemaster may adjust the number and level of adversaries to match the skill and experience of his players' characters.

### At the Tavern

The Werewood Tavern is one of the least respectable and most dangerous places in the city of Zanth. The player characters have come here to meet an individual named Zaiel (ze-EEL), who reportedly has a proposition for them. The PCs do not know Zaiel, but have been given this information through a reliable source (a NPC third party who, at the GM's discretion, may or may not be part of the actual adventure).

In attendance at the tavern tonight are the following:

**A trio of Bodorian Musicians.** The round-faced Bodorians have been hired to provide musical entertainment for this evening. Doraë plays the intricate spiral horn, and is accompanied on glass flute and timbal by his partners, Lati and Mefa. They're not fond of working in such a rowdy establishment, but need the money. None has heard of Zaiel.

**A pair of Jhangaran Mercenaries:** Zadd and Orgun have recently arrived by barge from the Jhangaran port of Karansk. They are drunk, and in the mood for a fight. If approached, they will attempt to find some excuse for starting an altercation. A meaningful show of force will convince them of the error of their ways. The Jhangarans are Level 2 with average statistics, armed with daggers, and carrying a combined total of 3 silver pieces (they're practically broke, and will take any work offered to them, regardless of how bad the pay is). Neither knows who Zaiel is.

**An old man and a young boy, both very sad looking:** These two dirty and disheveled characters are both Zandir Serperians. The old man, dressed in tattered cloak, slouch hat, and moth-eaten gloves, will introduce himself as Naros (better known in some parts of the city as "the Vagabond Thief", a wily con-artist). He introduces the young boy as Drune, whom Naros claims is "a poor orphan, whose parents were captured and tortured to death by bandits". Naros will beg a few coppers for Drune's supper. If he gets anything from the PCs, Drune shows his gratitude by giving each of the generous characters a big hug ("Adorable little rascal, ain't he?" says Naros). After this, they will leave the tavern. If asked about Zaiel, Naros points to an individual wearing a hooded robe and seated at a corner table with another individual of short stature. "There is Zaiel," he says.

Note: If any of the PCs possess the skill, "Pick Pockets", the GM should roll a d20 in secret. If the result indicates success, the PC will notice that Drune has stolen his or her purse, picked a pocket, lifted a valuable item, etc. (Drune is a Level 5 pick-pocket with a DEX Rating of +4). PCs who are naturally suspicious, and who

check their belongings after being hugged, will also discover that they have been robbed. If they confront the old man and his young charge before they leave the tavern, Naros will act as if he is shocked, and profess no knowledge of the boy's activities. Cuffing the lad about the ears, he'll order Drune to give back whatever he stole (this is an old Serperian routine, which is often used to good effect on likely marks, such as the PC's). If the PC's allow the two to leave the tavern before they notice that they've been robbed, it will be too late; once out in the streets, Naros and Drune are gone, and so is the player characters' money.

**A hooded figure and companion seated at a corner table:** The hooded figure is Zaiel, who, upon closer inspection, may be seen to be a young woman with a dark complexion. She invites the PCs to join her at the table along with her companion — a Ferran thief whom Zaiel introduces as Imog.

### The Proposition

Zaiel lays out the facts before the adventurers. She has a map of part of the sewer network of ancient Badijan, former capitol of the long-defunct Phaedran Empire. This sewer system was abandoned after the Cult Wars, when the city was divided between the rival Orthodoxists Cult of Aaman and the Paradoxists of Zandu, and each side constructed its own facilities. The older system has been in disuse ever since, and is now largely forgotten.

The significance of the map is that it originates from a time before the old capitol of Badijan was divided into the cities of Zanth and Ammahd. The old system still runs below both cities, providing a discreet means of traveling from one to the other without the inconvenience of having to deal with border guards or vigilant Aamanians.

It is Zaiel's plan to traverse the ancient sewers in order to rob one of the Aamanian temples. Stuffed full of gold and treasure, the sanctuaries are loosely guarded, for who would dare to steal in Ammahd? As Imog puts it, "The White-Shirts are too pious to steal, and the Wall keeps out Zandir thieves."

Zaiel's proposition: in return for their help, she offers to cut the PC's in on the deal. They can take what they can carry off, less one-fifth to Zaiel and Imog for their services as guides.

If asked how she knows the map is authentic, Zaiel throws back her hood, revealing the attractive features of a Sarista gypsy, and a shaven head. Zaiel was arrested in Ammahd by Knights of the Theocratic Order, who charged her with indecency and ordered her sent to the House of Penance. She escaped from Aaman via the sewers, and can vouch for the authenticity of her map.

Zaiel stresses the need for swift action, since the Aamanians are performing a ritual this very evening which will occupy the attention of the Orthodoxist authorities. The robbery has to be tonight.

### Under the Cities

The thieves give the adventurers an hour to prepare, telling them to rendezvous at nightfall outside Zanth's Costumer shop. When the player characters arrive, Imog motions the party into an alley, where a small, ancient grate is set in the pavement. The Ferran lifts the grate, and Zaiel leads the way into the vaults which echo beneath the twin cities. The Sarista has come prepared, carrying a dark-lantern to read her map by.

Aside from occasional glints and shafts of torchlight entering the catacombs through the grates from the streets above, the sewers



are completely dark. Those same grates admit sewage and refuse from the upper world — the passageways are navigable, but choked with filth and garbage. Water drips from the stones overhead, collecting in stagnant pools. With each step, the adventurers are ankle-deep in sewage. The Ferran is comfortable here, but Zaiel breathes through a scented kerchief. The twisting passageways are varied. Some are so low that even Imog must stoop, and sometimes the party is forced to crawl through the appalling muck. Others are so tall that even a reaching Phantasian couldn't touch the ceiling.

### Eyes in the Dark

Coming up against a collapsed tunnel, Zaiel has the party backtrack to an intersection while she consults the map. If anyone comments, he says, "These sewers are over five hundred years old, and are much in need of repair. We'll find a way around." She seems flustered, and says the party must find a grate to peer through so that she can determine their location.

Zaiel orders someone else to take the lead, and follows slowly with her dark-lantern out, reading the map and calling out directions. As the party stumbles through the labyrinthine waste-system, those in the rear notice (on a successful PER Roll) something following the group, and glints that might be eyes. If lights are shone behind them, nothing can be seen — but if the group is silent for a moment, splashing sounds that could be footsteps are briefly heard retreating.

### Denizens of the Sewers

Imog warns that predators live in the sewers. "Bright torches keep them at bay...most of the time." Even as he speaks, the party blunders into an ambush — unless the lead character succeeds at a PER Roll to spot, by seeing the shadows on the high roof overhead or the gleaming eyes, the three Urhounds clinging to the ceiling of this passage. The predators attack the party, whether spotted or not (their statistics are given in the "Naturalist's Compendium" section of this book).

Once the beasts have been killed or driven off, Zaiel again insists on finding a grate to look out of. She's now sure that they're in Ammahd, but she doesn't know where. A short search finds just such a grate. Outside, a brightly-lit building dominates the view — the Hierophant's Tower. The streets are deserted, which Imog says is proof that the Aamanians are occupied tonight by religious services.

Zaiel smiles. "We're in luck. If I remember Ammahd correctly, there's a temple just to the west of us. We'll rob the 'All-Seeing Eye' blind!"

### A Crowded House

The Sarista paces off the distance from the grate as the party heads north, until she declares that they must be underneath the temple. "At least I hope so," she mutters. "The building next door is a monastery full of soldiers."

A way upward is quickly found: a hatchway. The debris beneath it shows that the hatch is used as a garbage chute (for the temple kitchen). Through the opening can be heard the sound of many voices chanting in unison, reciting passages from the Omnival (the Orthodox Cult's holy book). Anyone who attempts to open the hatch discovers that it is covered by a rug. Once the rug is cleared away, the character can see that the hole leads into an unoccupied 20' x 30' room. Normally, this room is a guard post, but on this night even the temple guards are required to stand in the presence of Aa's idol.

Three doors lead out of here. One is marked with a magic symbol (the entrance to the Archimage's Suite). This *Symbol of Power* is

a ninth-level *Sigil*, and will cause pain to any who contact the door. The Archimage has also enchanted the door with *Shaladin's Alarums and Diversions* (see *THE SORCERER'S GUIDE*) — if the door is touched by anyone except the ruling Archimage or his assistant Undermage, a sound like a great gong will be heard, alerting the temple guards.

A featureless, unlocked door leads into the temple kitchen. This area is unoccupied, as every Aamanian has been compelled to attend the services in the great vault.

The third exit is a set of double doors, leading into an alcove of the temple's great vault. Any attempt to open these doors reveals that they are barred from the other side — and a hasty attempt may alert the guard standing on the far side. (He can be seen, if anyone thinks to look through the crack between the doors. Observers also see a crowd of worshippers crammed into the large alcove.)

"The ritual is well-attended," Zaiel muses, when she learns of the crowd. "More offerings to Aa, and more gold for us!"

**Another Entrance.** Imog, who is still in the catacombs, goes off to look for another entrance (accompanied by PC's, if they choose). The GM may throw in another encounter here, with other vermin (such as Urthrax, giant water bugs, etc.). Either way, Imog will discover what appears to be an unguarded entrance, and will return to report his finding to Zaiel.

He leads the party to a dung-heap, and points up to small twin holes above: old sewer pipes, slick with mosses, algae, and less pleasant things. It is apparent that anyone more than 4' tall and weighing more than 100 lbs will have to crawl.

### The Baths

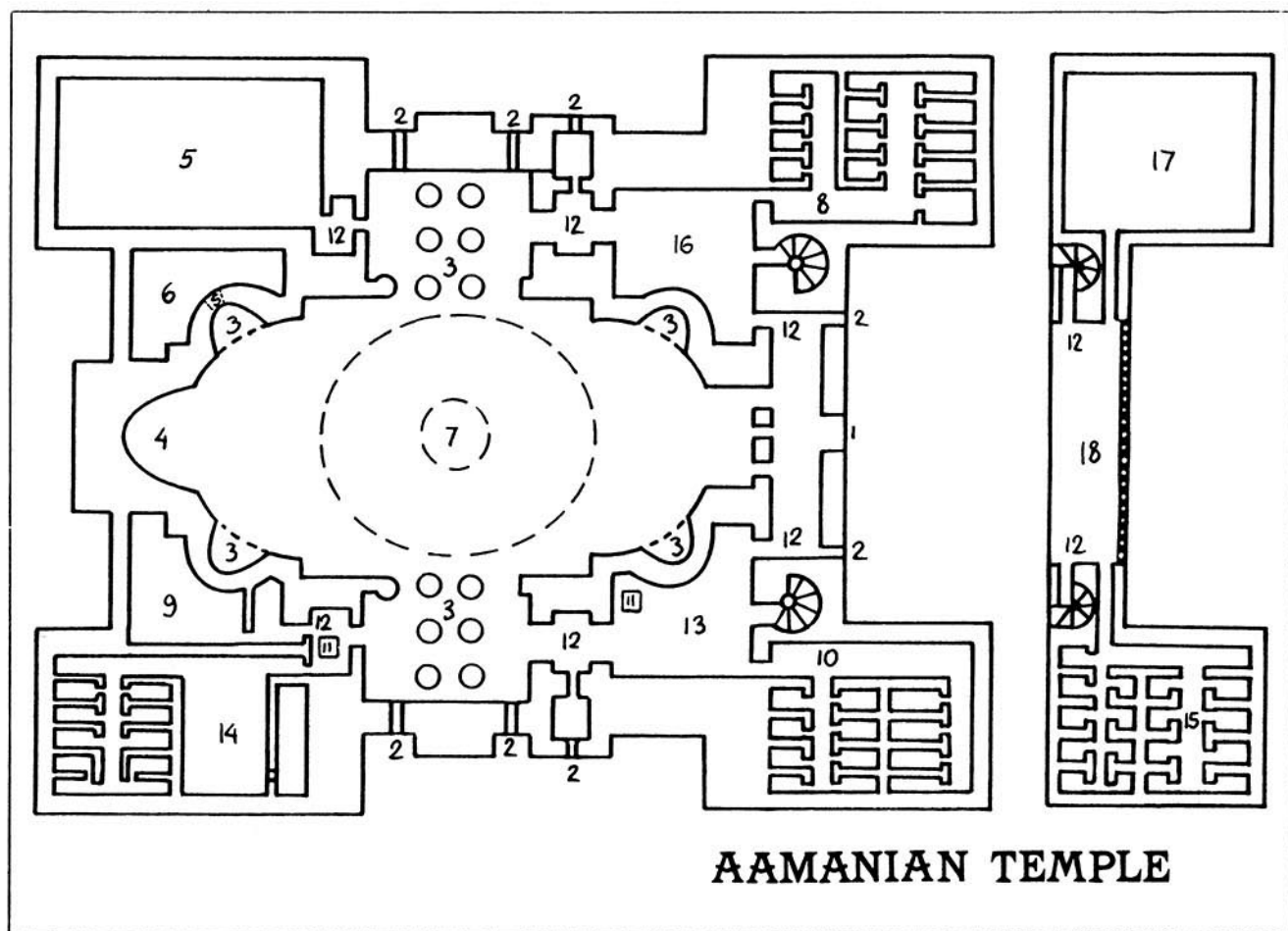
This entrance leads into the temple bathhouse. The adventurers are now filthy, covered with dung and trash. Fortunately, there are water-filled tubs nearby, as well as beige robes and vestments. Characters who think to examine the water notice that it has a slight sour scent. Those who wash in it must make a PER Roll to notice that their hair is coming off in the water — if they succeed, they can stop themselves before removing all of their hair. The water is laced with bald nettle extract.

Zaiel directs them to probe for the treasure room. "I've heard all of these temples have one, hidden behind the wall somewhere. It's where they keep the offerings."

Hairless adventurers of a man-like race who put on the robes and vestments may mingle safely with the crowds of Faithful within the temple, so long as they keep silent (concealing their foreign accents). However, characters of other races — such as Imog — would be spotted instantly. (The Ferran hides in the bathhouse, promising to keep the adventurers' belongings safe.) Observing adventurers view worshippers arriving late, admitted patiently by the guards at the doors.

Those mingling with the crowd find themselves in an atmosphere of religious frenzy, surrounded by drably dressed, hairless worshippers. A priest at the altar leads the congregation in chants from the Omnival. Exploring the temple at this time is difficult, for the adventurers in the crowd are packed shoulder-to-shoulder with Aamanians.

Characters who do not join in the services are also unlikely to find anything worthwhile at this time. The doors leading from the great vault to other parts of the temple are closed and barred — only the central hall and its connecting alcoves are open, crammed with the Faithful. Instead of being at their usual posts, the temple guards stand within the great central vault. Likewise, all members of the temple staff have been ordered to attend the services, leaving the rest of the building unoccupied. The door to the



## AAMANIAN TEMPLE

Archives is locked (-3 difficulty to unlock), and many of the doors to the individual Undermages' rooms are sealed with *Sigils* and other magical protections.

Should the adventurers think to check the outbuildings, the prison is occupied by two unguarded prisoners. Dheng is a woodworker who didn't know the proper prayer earlier. He's scheduled to visit the Halls of Penance for "re-education" tomorrow. However, Dheng is a loyal Orthodoxist, and yells for the guards if he sees anything suspicious. Aaly is a woman whom the Archimage suspects of being an unbeliever. When she was discovered in the temple and searched by the guards, a strange scroll was found (bearing the spell of *Arkon's Flashing Blade*). Aaly is a Heterodoxist agent, sent to assassinate the Archimage at the height of the evening services. Both cell doors are locked (-2 difficulty to open).

### The Temple of Aa

All of the temples of Aa the All-Seeing are built according to the same plan, with an idol of the one-eyed god looking out over his worshippers from one end of a great eye-shaped central vault. This particular temple includes a small school for Archimages, and has been permeated with magic over the years. The effect here is that *Spells of Revealment* have a +5 bonus on the *Action Table*.

The following descriptions are keyed to the accompanying map of the temple.

**1) Doors of the Faithful:** These 15-foot-tall doors are made of iron-bound wood, inlaid with a black-iron symbol of the All-Seeing Eye. They are closed when the Archimages conduct private rituals of a magical or religious nature.

**2) Doors of the Archimages (10):** These seven-foot-tall doors are

for the use of the temple staff. They are usually barred from the inside, and their use by worshippers is forbidden.

**3) Alcoves (6):** Rooms and corners containing shrines to Orthodoxist saints, the larger of these alcoves are also used as classrooms. Tutors instruct prospective Archimages in magic and teach paying Faithful about the Omnival.

**4) Sepulcher:** A great idol of Aa is enthroned on a dias in this large space. The god is depicted as a huge, hairless man wearing flowing robes. His expression is bland. Aa has only one eye, in the middle of his forehead — half-lidded, staring, with the pupil visible.

**5) Archives:** This room is used by the scribes to copy portions of the Omnival for preservation or sale to patrons. It also contains records on the temple's patrons, including mana reports from the local Monitor and his Adjudicators.

**6) Treasure Vault (concealed):** This is the secret treasure room of the temple. Offerings, donations for mana, and temple funds are kept here, and the temple's master copy of the Omnival is locked in here at night. This is also the storage place for the priests' valuables. The entrance is hidden behind a wall panel in an alcove.

**7) The Great Vault:** At the center of this immense hall is an altar, set on a series of progressively smaller circular platforms that raise it ten feet above the floor. The All-Seeing Eye is carved on the altar, facing the temple entrance.

**8) Guard Quarters:** The temple guards — three Knights of the Theocratic Order and three dozen soldiers — live here. The Knights have private rooms, but the soldiers bunk together. One chamber serves as an armory.

**9) The Archimage's Suite:** These rooms are occupied by the

Archimage who rules the temple. The suite includes a bath and a magical workshop. Archimages usually keep an Eye of Aa and a Speaking Stone (attuned to allied temples) in their rooms, and often store their valuables here. The entrance is protected by the Archimage's personal *Sigil*. An Undermage has permission to enter in case of emergency.

**10) Undermage Quarters:** The other Archimages who serve the temple live in these rooms. These priests act as teachers, magical assistants, preachers and healers. Temples have ten Undermages, plus any number of Acolytes (student Archimages).

**11) Sewer Hatches (2):** Temples built over Phaedran ruins are connected to the ancient sewer system. In the temple used in this adventure, two hatches lead down into the catacombs, and are used for the disposal of garbage and waste.

**12) Guard Posts (6):** A guard normally stands at each of these areas when the temple is open to worshippers.

**13) Bathhouse:** This chamber houses wooden tubs, water barrels, and bathroom seats (holes connect with the sewer). The temple staff bathes with bald nettle extract to keep their hair from regrowing. Archimages returning from errands about the city return here to cleanse themselves from the dirt of the streets before going anywhere else within the temple.

**14) Kitchen:** Fireplaces line the south wall, while cold vaults to the north keep stored food fresh. The main chamber doubles as a common room for temple servants, Acolytes and guards. In the evenings, they often entertain themselves here with readings from the Omnival, simple games of chance, and contests of skill.

**15) Servant Quarters:** Temples require servants to maintain them and care for their inhabitants. As many as 50 Aamanians may be crowded into these cubicles, divided into halls for men and women (drudges are the only females allowed to dwell within the temple). Scribes live here also, as well as Acolytes being punished for minor disciplinary problems.

**16) Acolytes Hall:** This large room is reserved for the magical training of Acolytes. It doubles as a lecture hall for visiting Archimages and other prominent Orthodoxists.

**17) Storage:** Mouldering records and dusty chests full of relics and vestments are kept here. Anything really valuable, however, is stored in the vault.

**18) Balcony:** Only the temple staff is allowed here. Priests monitor the worshippers from above, noting lapses for later correction or punishment. Only bland, unleavened loaves of Aamanian white bread are baked here.

**19) Prison:** This strong outbuilding (not shown) contains cells where sinners and heretics can be temporarily kept, until Knights can take the prisoners to the Inquisitors at the Halls of Penance.

**20) Tower of Aa:** This outbuilding (also not shown) is a squat building with Eyes of Aa at the top of each wall. A trio of temple guards keeps unauthorized visitors from entering.

**19a) The Hierophant's Suite:** All temples are required to set aside the lower tower suite for the use of the Hierophant and his servants. The rooms include two sleep chambers, space for scribes, and a private kitchen.

**19b) Observatory:** The upper tower is pierced by windows and skylights, while tables and astrological apparatus occupy the floor. Astrological students study here after dark.

## After the Ritual

An hour after the adventurers arrive at the temple, the ritual service ends. Guards usher the celebrants out, and the temple is cleared in ten minutes. Servants bustle about, cleaning up, and the smells of cooking food drift through the halls. When a bell rings, most of the guards leave their posts for dinner, headed toward the kitchen. However, two soldiers remain on duty in the entrance foyer, resuming their usual posts rather than lingering within the vault.

Meanwhile, the Archimage and the Undermages exit as a body through the Doors of the Faithful (heading to the tower observatory), leaving the temple's great vault temporarily deserted. The large doors are left open after the priests depart.

Hopefully, the adventurers remain within the temple, and now take this opportunity to search the portions of the building which they couldn't obtain access to before. When the correct alcove is investigated, the secret entrance is discovered — if the searcher succeeds at a PER Roll (-3 difficulty). The door is further protected by a ninth-level *Spell of Safekeep* and two locks (-10 difficulty to unlock).

If anyone disturbs the idol of Aa, or if the adventurers cannot overcome the treasure vault's locks, the idol (an automaton) stirs. The half-lidded eye fully opens, and "Aa" says in a deep, droning voice, "What is a question without answer?" (The correct answer is "Paradox" or "Abomination.") If that question is answered correctly, the idol asks, "Who has the answers?" (The correct answer is "Aa.") Wrong answers to either question — or prolonged silence — cause the idol to shout, "Intruder! Unbeliever! Heretic!" alerting the temple guards.

Inside the treasure vault is more wealth than ten parties of adventurers could carry away. Unfortunately, much of it is in the copper coins of Aaman, of little value in any other nation. Even so, there is still as much as 5,000 gold lumens in silver pieces, gold coins, (including pentacles and Zandir Crescents), and jewelry. A complete Monitor Stone set (including eleven satellite stones) and six linked Speaking Stones, each with the required wand, are also here awaiting shipment to an allied temple.

## Escape Below

If the alarm is sounded, the adventurers can escape before the guards can react — through the bathhouse exit to the sewer — if they flee immediately. The guards in the kitchen (31 first-level soldiers, plus three third-level Knights) arm themselves and enter the main hall at the rate of d4 guards per round. The two first-level guards at the Doors of the Faithful remain at their posts unless the adventurers come in their direction. The priests may also return and assist with their spells, arriving at the rate of one every d20 rounds — there are 10 Monitors (Level 5), plus the tenth-level Archimage of the Temple.

The guards do not pursue the adventurers into the sewers. Once underground, Zaiel leads the party back through the torturous maze toward Zanth.

If anything of the adventurers' is left behind, the Archimage is able to follow their progress on his Eye of Aa. Those with Primary Magic skill sense something strange, but must succeed at a PER Roll to realize that what they feel is magical scrutiny. The priest uses a Speaking Stone to send soldiers (first-level) to grates along the player characters' path, ready to stab with their spears anything they see moving below — d4+2 spear attacks, -3 penalty, aimed at random targets.



## Waves

Several minutes after the adventurers flee, a rushing, rumbling sound is heard behind them. It is a vast wave of water, poured into the sewers by angry Aamanians from their main reservoir. (The Speaking Stones allow the Orthodoxists to react quickly against intruders.) Ordinarily, such a wall of water is used to clean vermin from the sewers.

When the water hits, each adventurer must succeed at a Swimming or STR Roll in order to grab onto something before being swept away. A "Failure" means that the adventurer is carried away — taking d6 points of damage from impacts against the walls (armor protects against this). A "Mishap" indicates that, in addition, the character suffers d8 points of drowning damage. On any other result, the player character holds on and is unharmed, though wet.

Those who fail their rolls lodge in a half-blocked archway a few hundred feet along the tunnel. If the Gamemaster desires more action, the archway may catch more than just the water-logged thieves — an aramatus, urthrax or other hungry, angry creature could attack the temporarily divided party.

During the flood, Zaiel loses her map. Lights and torches have also been extinguished, and adventurers may have lost some of their loot (especially hand-held objects, dropped when they grabbed for something to hold onto; roll on the Action Table to determine whether the PCs are able to hold onto such items or not).

## To the Surface

Zaiel remembers the sewer route from the Stadia to the costume shop where the party started, but doesn't know how to get to the Stadia from here through the tunnels. "But I can get us there if we go up there," she grins, pointing toward the torch-lit streets of Ammahd above.

If the wet adventurers emerge through one of the grates (just outside of the Hall of Meditation), they find that the city streets are no longer deserted. Groups of Aamanians walk the streets carrying lit red candles. Player characters wearing appropriate vestments can travel safely if they remain at a distance from other worshippers, but their wet clothing and lack of candles cause suspicion if any of the Faithful get a good look at them.

Unless the characters blunder, they travel within sight of the Stadia before being intercepted. If the Monitors are watching them on the Eye of Aa, they alert soldiers to watch for the thieves. Otherwise, suspicious worshippers may summon an Adjudicator, who orders guards to detain the party. The adventurers must fight their way past 9 first-level soldiers, led by a fifth-level Knight, before they can escape once again into the sewer.

## Aftermath

The remaining trip through the catacombs is without incident. Should the Gamemaster desire more excitement, the party can attract the attention of a patrol when they climb back onto the streets of Zanth. The Zandir captain may think that they are Aamanian spies (they look like Aamanians, if they are hairless and wearing vestments). A bribe of d6 x 30 gold lumens is sufficient to keep the guards from hauling the adventurers in for questioning, unless the characters try other forms of persuasion.

If they succeed in robbing the vault, the player characters now have some wealth. Of course, the City of Zanth provides many opportunities for separating money from the foolish. Furthermore, Zaiel's freelance success may attract the unwanted attention of crime-lords eager for a cut in the profits...

## Cast

**Zaiel the Sarista.** Fifth level. 5' 10", 145 lbs.

STR -1, DEX +5, CON 0, SPD +1, INT +1, WILL -0, PER +1, CHA +2

**Combat Rating** +4. 20 hit points. Two daggers (one hidden), d6. No armor.

**Magic Rating** 0. No proficiency in magic.

**Skills:** Haggling, language (Talisian), literacy, lock picking, pick pockets, secondary combat, stealth, streetwise, swimming, underworld.

Zaielis a slender woman with a shaven head and a petulant manner. She was once a member of a Sarista Gypsy band which traveled throughout Zandu. Enroute to the Seven Kingdoms, she was arrested by the Aamanians for indecency; Zaiel, an exotic dancer and thief by trade, made the mistake of trying to ply her particular talents while still within the precincts of the city of Ammahd. She managed to escape from the Orthodoxists before she could be taken to the House of Pennance, where the Inquisitors planned to instruct her in the tenets of the Orthodoxy.

## Imog the Ferran.

Seventh level. 4', 55 lbs.

STR -3, DEX +8, CON +2, SPD +4, INT +3, WILL 0, PER +1, CHA -1

**Combat Rating** +7. 18 hit points. Three daggers (two hidden), d6. Four throwing knives, d4. No armor.

**Magic Rating** +1. No proficiency in magic.

**Skills:** Acrobatics, appraise treasure, con +10, haggling, pick pockets, secondary combat, stalking, stealth, streetwise, swimming, swipe, tracking (by scent)

Imog is Zaiel's partner in crime. A consummate second-story thief and liar, the Ferran's specialties are stealth and rapid escape. In order to better function in Zanth, he bathes often and anoints himself with perfume. Imog is consumed by greed, a fact he hides well — he has a large stash of coins hidden in the Beggars District. Like all Ferrans, Imog is a scavenger who will steal practically anything of value.

# MIDNIGHT'S CLUE

*No Revenant dies alone.*

— Arimite proverb

This adventure begins at a mountain trading post near Iswan on the trail to Zandu, with the death of a Revenant. The adventurers are innocent witnesses. Arista, the murderer and the inn's proprietor, keeps the party imprisoned in his outpost until he learns who they are and what they might tell.

"Midnight's Clue" is recommended for 3-8 adventurers, levels 1-6. The Gamemaster may adapt it for stronger characters by strengthening the non-player characters.

## Arrival

Following the caravan route toward Iswan in western Arim, the player characters arrive at the gate of a small trading post near sundown. The guards direct them to the guest barracks, where the barracks-keeper collects a fee of 5 silver pieces and reminds them that they must pay promptly each morning they stay.

The Gamemaster is free to improvise evening encounters. At the tavern, Arimite drunk on chakos harass travelers, who are unprotected by the code of vendetta. A rumor sweeps the outpost that there might be a Druhk raid tonight, since the post's owner, Arista, recently bought several Druhk slaves — the adventurers might ask permission to leave the post and scout. (The rumor is spread by Arista, diverting attention from his planned activities.)

The player characters might also notice two men arguing in hushed voices. The younger man is Grana, the sergeant of the guard and (secretly) a new Revenant. The older man is Kayim, the trading post's other owner — and, also secretly, a Revenant Mentor. Should the adventurers listen in, they might hear this:

"Arista and Sorone are creatures of the Exarch," says Grana. "They might plot against us. Tell me about the others of our kind, in case something happens!"

"Be still," commands Kayim. "You are too inexperienced to judge such matters. After you complete your next mission, then you may ask me about mysteries."

## Death at Night

Arista, the operator of this trading post, is a distant relative of the Exarch of Arim. His partner is Kayim, who bought his share last year by paying off Arista's debts. Several months later, a Rajan named Sorone enticed the partners into participating in a scheme to smuggle corrosive poisons from the Forbidden City to Rajanistan's cults of Death. Unfortunately, Arista has learned that Kayim is defrauding him of his share of the profits, and now realizes that his partner is a Revenant. He is terrified that Kayim might kill him. Arista — with the Rajan's help — plans to slay the Revenant first.

Sorone, Arista and Onam (Arista's son) lead Kayim into the hidden mine, where the Revenant suddenly becomes suspicious. When he draws his knife, Sorone drives a da-khar into Kayim's back, killing him. While Arista remains to dispose of the body, the others leave to search Kayim's room and then trap it.

Unknown to the murderers, Grana — Kayim's Revenant apprentice — was made suspicious by the Druhk rumor and left his post to scout around the outpost. Watching through an air shaft, he witnessed the murder. Grana dares not confront Arista alone, and he knows no other Revenants. His only hope for immediate

vengeance is to involve someone else in this mystery, without betraying his secret identity.

## Midnight's Clue

In the night, Grana sneaks into the adventurers' barracks and places a scrap of parchment on one of their pillows, weighting it with a Revenant dagger taken from Kayim's room. (If the party posts a night-guard, he places the message as close as he can.) After leaving the room, Grana wakes them with a piercing whistle.

The message reads, "I tell a story men would pay for. Look behind the shutters where the torch shines. At once!" The dagger is made of black iron, and a silver motto on its hilt reads, "Repayer of debts." It is worth 100 G.L., and grants a +1 to damage rolls due to its fine workmanship.

If the party scouts around, the torchlight shining from the Old Mine's shuttered air vent is easily seen (refer to the map, below). A round, one-foot shaft leads into the hillside, and the muffled sound of sawing can be heard. Anyone lifting the shutter to peek within sees Arista 10 feet below him, hacking Kayim's corpse into concealable pieces. Moments later, the murderer becomes aware of the watcher. Arista frantically puts out the torches, plunging the mine into darkness, and returns to his villa.

It is difficult for the party to do anything more. The guard at the villa will not allow anyone in, and the gate guards — fearing a Druhk raid — adamantly refuse to let anyone leave the outpost. No Arimite will listen for long to the characters' story, since some subjects are safer neglected. There is a good chance that the adventurers do not even know the identity of the person they saw.

Minutes later, orders come (from Arista) — the adventurers are not to be allowed to leave the depot. The trader fears that they know too much. Onam and Sorone found Kayim's possessions disturbed (by Grana, actually), and suspect the player characters of being Revenants.

Arista hints to his men that the adventurers are spies for the Druhks, which leagues the Arimite guards against them — no Arimite wants to talk with them. He orders the barracks-keeper not to collect their room fees, so that the suspects cannot refuse to pay and then demand to be evicted.

## Dawn's Captives

Nobody misses Kayim the next day. The Mentor often vanished in the past, sometimes for weeks, supposedly to visit his ailing mother in Shattrah. Meanwhile, the barracks-keeper searches the adventurers' possessions at his first opportunity (each character gets a PER check to notice the disturbance).

The following map key to the trading post is also a guide to potential encounters at this point in the adventure. Unless stated otherwise, all buildings are made of rough logs.

**1) Gate Complex:** There are two ways into the trading post, and both pass through here. The large double gates lead to the floor of the canyon, while a fifty-foot watchtower leads upward to the rim of the canyon. Mountains press tightly around the outpost. The only other way out of here is to climb the sheer walls — requiring five successful Mountain Climbing skill rolls, all at -5 difficulty. "Failure" means that a roll must be repeated, and "Mishap" plunges the character to the ground (d8 damage per every successful skill roll made up to that point).

Thirty Arimate knife-fighters protect the outpost, led by Sergeant Grana (the secret Revenant). Most of those on duty (d10 x 2) pace the canyon mouth, while the others (d10) man the five ballistae in the watchtower.

**Encounter.** Grana dutifully carries out Arista's orders, but if the party privately meets with him and mentions the death, he bluntly suggests that they spread word of the murder. "After all," he says, "Arista imprisons you only to keep his secret hidden. When the truth is known, I think he will be in too much danger to worry about revenge upon such as you." He explains nothing more.

**2) Guest's Barracks:** Arista's visitors stay in these quarters, at the rate of 5 silver pieces per night. The doors have locks, and guests are told that they have the only keys. Jearn, the barracks-keeper, lives in one of the rooms. His job is to clean the barracks and collect money from the guests.

**Encounter.** The barracks-keeper behaves rudely, staring at customers as if expecting a greeting, then turning away when someone speaks to him. The Gamemaster may invent other guests, who may add their own twists to the plot of this adventure.

**3) Keg Room:** Stacks of chakos barrels line the walls, and a pot of blue-vine stew bubbles over a fire at all hours. Diners sit at stained benches in the center of the room.

**Encounter.** The barracks-keeper (see above) doubles as the master of this primitive tavern, collecting 6 S.P. per drink. The stewpot is free, but characters must serve themselves. Off-duty guards gather here to drink, hoping to goad Jearn into frying them some meat.

**4) The Villa:** This single-story log mansion is the residence of the owners of the trading post. The roughness of its construction is ameliorated by carved stone pillars, brought here decades ago by former occupants. There is a foyer just inside the large doors. A central kitchen and personal quarters lie farther inside, as well as private quarters for Arista, Kayim and Onam.

**Encounter.** Fridar, an Arimate bodyguard, lives in a sentry room near the door. He will not let adventurers in unescorted. Fridar can arrange meetings with Arista or Onam, and always follows guests to make sure they don't sneak into other rooms. (Of course, this leaves the front door unguarded...) If attacked, Fridar calls for help from the gate guards, who arrive in d4 rounds.

**4a) Kayim's Quarters:** There are two large chests on the floor. One holds two fur vests, a gray cloak, three pairs of sackcloth breeches, and a leather shirt. The shirt contains a hidden scabbard. One of the boots, lying on the floor, has a hollow sole with a garrote in it. A gray veil is tucked into one vest's pocket. It matches the cloak. The other chest contains 500 gold lumens and a deed establishing Kayim as half-owner of the trading post. A successful PER Roll reveals that this room has previously been searched (by both Grana and Sorone).

**Encounter.** Arista avoids this room, fearing that his presence here might incriminate him — but he does not want anyone else to get in. After the murder, he has a Kashmir-designed trap attached to the door, which works as follows:

A tube is crimped in the door hinge. One end is attached to an inflated bladder, and the other end to a siren. If the door is disturbed, a whistle shrieks. The trap can be defused by carefully slitting the tube (requires a successful traps skill roll).

Sorone the Provisioner accuses anyone caught by the alarm of killing Kayim, and orders the arrest of the party. If they resist, the guards attack.

**4b) Arista's Quarters:** This large chamber, strewn with several large vases, is Arista's. A black-iron strongbox under the bed contains papers of lineage, proving that Arista inherited the outpost from his family, and indicating that Onam will succeed him someday. Also in the box is a parchment package containing two vials. One holds a dose of *Powder of Madness*, which causes permanent insanity. The other has three doses of draconid's venom (resist against WILL, or be incapacitated due to pain for d4 rounds). Arista plans to give these to Sorone as a reward, once the matter of Kayim is settled. This box also holds 1,000 G.L. Hidden behind a man-sized clay vase is an escape tunnel leading into the Old Mine (see below).

**Encounter:** Arista is eager to speak to the adventurers, hoping to learn more about their motives and patron. He insists that Onam, his son, be in the room to learn the ways of business and act as a guard. Fridar stands outside the door during any long meeting. If the player characters complain about being held prisoner, Arista snorts angrily. "What choice do I have?" If the adventurers are not forthright, the merchant becomes angry. Onam tries to apologize for any inconvenience, but his father interrupts before he gets far.

**4c) Onam's Quarters:** The walls of Onam's room are engraved with scenes from the days of Soliman's rule of Phaedra. One panel conceals a secret door which leads to the Old Mine (see below). A hidden peephole is set into the concealed door.

**Encounter:** If the adventurers talk with Onam, he tries to recruit them to aid his father and conceal Kayim's murder, hinting that Arista might let them leave afterward. However, Sorone will insist that they explain how they learned about the murder — and if the characters mention the midnight message, she insists that they produce the informer who warned them.

**5) Old Mine:** In the past, someone tried to tap a silver vein in the wall of this canyon. After several excavations, they realized the vein was only a small pocket of ore, and gave up the task. Arista and his allies are the only ones who know how to get to the Old Mine, although everyone who lives at the trading post knows of its existence. The main entrance is through the villa. Narrow chimneys in the top of the mine lead upward to the top of the canyon, and steps have been carved so that this escape route can be used if the outpost is ever besieged.

**Encounter.** Arista uses this rough-hewn cavern for smuggling and other illicit business. The floor is mostly stone, with some patches of loose earth (where Kayim's dismembered body is buried). Explorers find a chest in the recesses of the mine. It holds 10,000 gold lumens and a receipt for 5,000 gold lumens worth of Cautey Dust.

Onam peers through his peephole (from his room, see above) once every d4 hours, watching for torchlight and listening for any sign of intruders in the Mine. The Gamemaster should secretly make stealth checks for the adventurers. If they are detected, Onam raises an alarm, summoning the guards. Sorone will accuse the party of murdering Kayim, exposing the newly dug grave.

**6) Air Shaft:** This shaft was built for the miners, to provide extra air so that large fires could safely be lit. Arista covers it with a perforated wooden shutter, and has warned his guards not to disturb it.

**7) Stone Warehouse:** Supplies and spare wagons are kept here, next to the outpost well. Servants take what they need, while guests can buy items at inflated prices (2 x standard). The contents include three wagons, ten greymanes, ten waterskins, 1,000 feet of rope, several bales of hay and 500 man-days' worth of food (including plenty of chakos).

A Djaffir named Sorone, a retired merchant, manages the storehouse. Her few personal possessions — including a da-khar —



hang in a leather sack on the wall. The sack also contains a felt bag of bone fragments, and a bone tube of morphi powder. (Victims exposed to the powder must resist vs. WILL, or fall unconscious for 20 x d6 minutes. Those who successfully resist suffer a -1 on all *Action Table* rolls for d20 minutes.) Sorone carries a slip of parchment on which is written a list of poisons her society wants — especially Ur-Stone and Cautery Dust.

**Encounter.** On a successful PER Roll, anyone familiar with Djaffa detects something false about Sorone — her accent. Only someone familiar with Rajanistan can name the woman's correct nationality. The provisioner is actually a Rajan Assassin serving the Black Mystic cult, and is on a mission to obtain poisons and Druhk slaves.

Sorone speaks as little as possible, waiting for the adventurers who speak with her to say something revealing. She tells them that she wants justice, but cannot make sense of recent events. "If only you would tell me more," she suggests, "I could ensure your release." Like any Rajan, she secretly means the release of a grave.

**8) Servant Barracks:** A contingent of Arimate drudges lives in this shanty. Their job is to dig garbage pits, prepare food, clean, and perform other chores. The women are filthy and grumble constantly.

**9) Accountant's Tent:** Kinar, a Kasmir, manages the outpost's accounts. He lives in terror of thieves, and suspects every Arimate (except Arista and Onam) of conspiring against him. He would leave, but his job pays well. Kinar feels safer around foreigners. The walls of his tent bulge, due to stones placed to shield against crossbow bolts.

The Kasmir keeps his possessions perfectly arranged, so that he will notice the moment a thief disturbs them. A heavy-lidded stone box stands by the bed, hidden beneath coarse cloths. If anyone disturbs the latch, the lid is catapulted upward by a powerful spring, doing d6 points of damage. It requires a successful traps skill roll (at -3 difficulty) to discover the sliding panel which causes the box to open.

Within the chest are 400 gold lumens and the trading post's account books. Kinar counts his money every d12 hours, and alerts the camp if any is missing. On a successful merchant skill or INT Roll, a literate investigator learns the financial history of the outpost, including the secret dealings with Sorone and the Rajans. On a second successful roll, it becomes obvious that Kayim was cheating his partner out of the smuggling profits.

**Encounter.** Kinar asks the adventurers about everyone, trying to determine what secret plots are underway. Once he learns of the murder, he is terrified and pleads for the protection of the adventurers. In exchange, he may give the following warnings:

"I'd say a tenth of the Arimites here are Revenants. Don't be surprised when people start dying."

"Sorone is an imposter — no Djaffir has an accent like her. This might be fortunate . . . after all, real Djaffir are notorious burglars."

"Thieves are about. Arista has hired me to purchase a Noisemaker trap from Shakmir, my trapsmith brother. He plans to install it himself, so nobody will know where his vault is. Prudent."

"Kayim had an unnatural interest in knives. He hid blades in all of his clothing."

**10) Wagon Cave:** Visiting merchants use this cave as a wagon shed. Wheel tracks crisscross the dust of its floor. On a successful miner skill roll, characters realize that this is not a natural cave, but an old excavation by Arimate miners.

**Encounter.** If the Gamemaster desires, he may add a sub-plot to the adventure by including five Druhk slaves here, manacled by their legs to the south wall. The prisoners gaze at the floor, muttering to each other and/or conversing in signs. One of the slaves will promise to show the adventurers something, if only they will release him from his chains. (Of course, he only wants to escape.) The Druhks know nothing useful, but could be allies in an escape attempt.

## Concluding the Adventure

Where the adventure now turns depends on the actions of the PCs. There are many possibilities, but two are most likely. Either the player characters attempt to escape from the outpost, or Arista and his cohorts accuse them of Kayim's murder and try to imprison them.

**Accused!** If the characters are formally accused of the murder, Arista's mercenaries attempt to take them prisoner, confiscate their weapons, and confine them in the Wagon Cave, blocking the entrance with a boulder. If the adventurers resist, the Arimites fight, but Arista insists that no one be killed — he wants to question prisoners, not corpses.

The Gamemaster may roll a d6 hourly to see whether the prisoners have visitors. Those who come are accompanied by d6 guards.

**1: Sorone** — The Rajan tortures one of the adventurers, hoping to break him. (Refer to the rules for Ritual Cleansing in the "Optional Rules" section of this book.) If angered, she may assault a random character . . . and lose her mask in the tussle.

**2-3: Arista** — The outpost master threatens to send Sorone to torture the prisoners, and demands the name of their patron or the informer. He angers easily, storming out of the cave.

**4-5: Onam** — The trader's son promises freedom for the adventurers, if only they will reveal their secrets to him. He brings food.

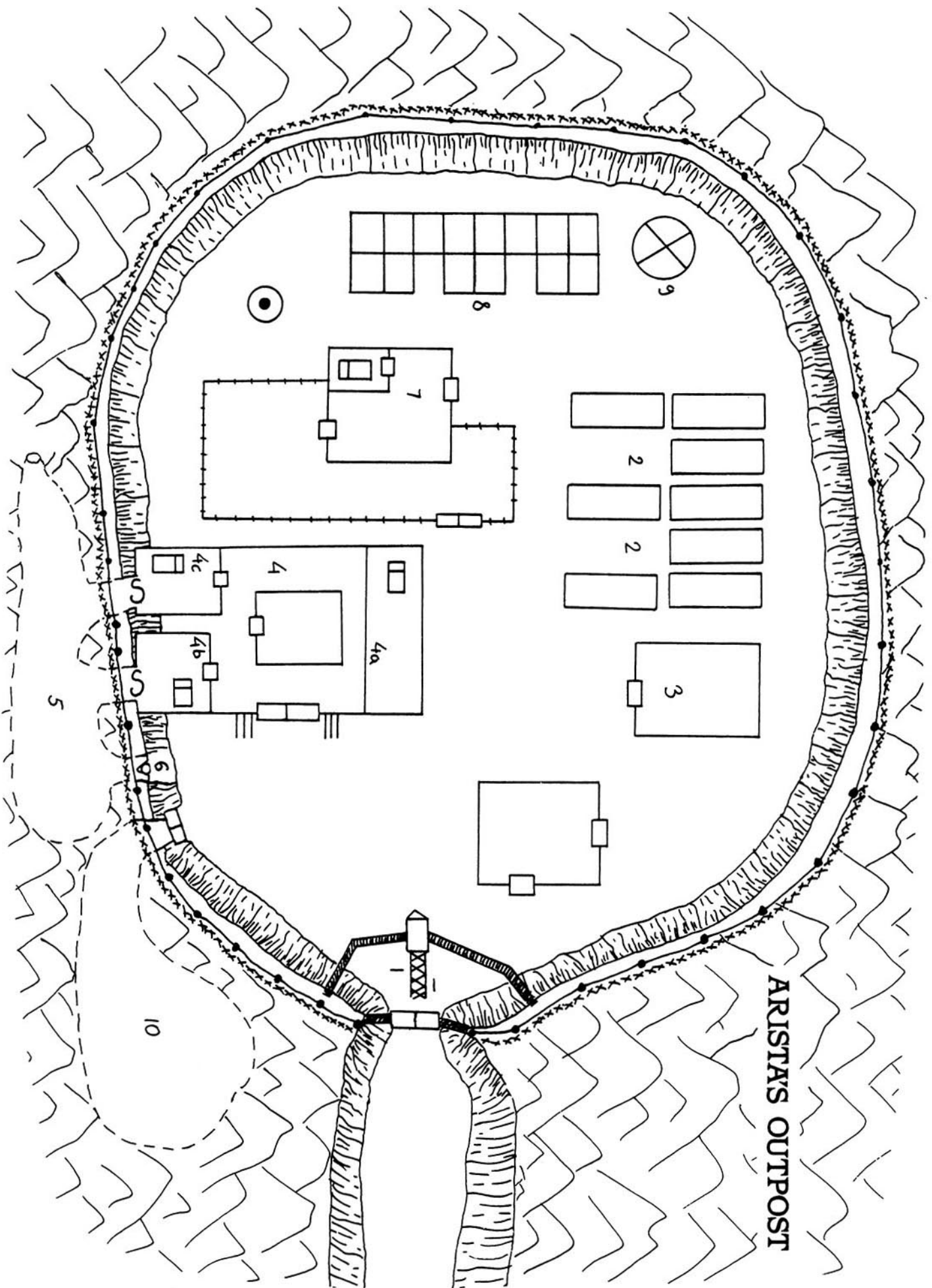
**6: No Visitor**

**Escape.** Arista's guards scan the cliff rim constantly, and have a drill to stop anyone trying to scale the cliffs. While artillerymen fire the ballistae at climbers, two parties of guards (d10 fighters in each) hurry to head off the escapees — one party across the canyon floor beneath the fugitives, and the other party through the tower to the cliff rim. Arista orders them to take prisoners, rather than kill the adventurers.

**Satisfying the Murderers.** There is also a chance that the adventurers might win by talking Arista into letting them go free. To do this, they must give a convincing account of their motives and swear to protect Arista's secret. Onam desires this peaceful resolution, but Sorone would rather kill them. Caught in-between, Arista will grant the characters' lives only if they somehow prove themselves. Onam suggests that the player characters carry contraband to Rajanistan, hoping to involve the adventurers in Arista's crimes. The Rajan may kill one of the adventurers as an example, even if Arista agrees to let them go.

**Killing the Murderers.** The players characters may hope to escape their fate by killing Arista or one of his partners. So long as any of the conspirators live, however, they will not allow the prisoners to leave the outpost. Even if the adventurers assassinate all of them, the Arimate guards must still be talked out of obeying their former orders. The knife-fighters might relent if the party offers to divide up Arista's wealth, especially if Grana is an ally.

# ARISTAS OUTPOST



## Adventure Options

If the players seem stumped, a generous Gamemaster may introduce these elements into the adventure:

**Grana's Aid.** The Revenant, eager to spread word of Kayim's death beyond the outpost, warns the adventurers to watch the guards, because "Fortuna is a whimsical mistress." After d6 hours, a riot breaks out in the keg room over tainted (sour) chakos. Shocked guards (d6 x 4) rush to defend the liquor supply. Grana's diversion lasts for 10 + d10 rounds, enough time for the adventurers to force their way out of the outpost and escape. As they depart, they see Grana in the watchtower, smiling as broadly as Arimite ever do.

If the escape attempt is bungled, Grana might be imprisoned along with the player characters. If so, he is careful not to reveal his secret, but helps in any escape. Once free, he slips away as quickly as possible.

**A Caravan Arrives.** A dusty Kasmir merchant appears at the outpost, asking to buy shelter and provisions. After speaking with Arista, he leads his caravan in, easing beasts to hitching posts and helping his men push wagons to the cave. The merchants sleep in the guest barracks, enjoying the beds and the food from the keg room. This caravan comes from the Jasper Mountains, and carries 2,000 pounds of copper bound for Zantium. There are four wagons, ten Blue Ardua guards, and two Kasmir merchants. The wily caravan master is quick to realize the situation, and offers to smuggle the adventurers out with his group for a mere 10 G.L. each. However, the merchants shun danger — if any adventurer acts nervous, they immediately double their prices. If the Kasmir discover that Rajans and Revenants are involved, no price will do.

## Aftermath

The adventure does not have to end when the party leaves the trading post. The Gamemaster could use any of the following ideas to develop a sequel to "Midnight's Clue."

**Arista's Pursuit.** A paranoid Arista orders the adventurers killed. He dares not leave the outpost, but sends Onam and Sorone to lead the hunt, along with a force of guards. To keep the player characters from allying with the Revenants, Onam hires the assassins to kill them. It will be ticklish to denounce Arista before the cult when the adventurers are on the run from it.

**Kayim's Wife.** Shaliya, Kayim's wife and Revenant partner, comes hunting for the Mentor when there is no word from him for two weeks. Her spies circulate through Arim, disguised as merchants. If Grana speaks kindly of the adventurers, Shaliya might reward them with gold. However, she could also order them to be assassinated, if their role was less honorable. Shaliya's greatest fear is that Kayim has fled with a mistress. Unless she sees a corpse, she may suspect Grana and the player characters of aiding her husband in fabricating the murder.

**Druhk Revenge.** Arista only *thought* he was lying when he said that the Druhks were going to raid his outpost and rescue slaves. A war band attacks the trading post just as this adventure winds to a close. If the adventurers helped to rescue any Druhk slaves, a hill tribe holds a feast in their honor. The heroes are given gifts of stolen treasure. Unfortunately, the shamans perform the Songs of Fear and Death, which threaten to drive the adventurers insane.

**Silver!** While imprisoned in the Old Mine, the player characters discover that there really is silver ore beneath the outpost. By Arimite law, if they can establish a claim, they may seize the land. However, the Exarch is sympathetic to Arista's family because of their noble blood, and his agents act against the adventurers.

## Cast

**Arista the Arimite.** Seventh level. 5' 11", 190 lbs.

STR 0, DEX +3, CON +1, INT +1, PER +1

**Combat Rating** 8. 27 hit points. Scimitar, d8; four throwing knives, d4

**Magic Rating** 0. No proficiency in magic.

**Skills:** Administrator, hunting/fishing, merchant/trader, mountain climbing, mounted combat, primary combat

Arista is a large, bulky man with a mean stare. He spends most of his time in his chambers, planning and lamenting. The outpost master feels wretched over Kayim's murder — not out of guilt, but because of the peril he feels he is now in. He wants to end the turmoil over the Revenant and return to his mostly legal business, but dares not kill the adventurers...they might work for the Exarch or some other powerful patron, or be Revenants themselves.

**Grana the Revenant.** First level. 5' 4", 110 lbs.

STR 0, DEX +4, CON +2, SPD +1, INT +1, PER +2, CHA -1

**Combat Rating** 2. 14 hit points. Two daggers, d6; four throwing knives, d4; pouch of black mushroom powder (causes hallucinations for d10 minutes — resist vs. CON). Fur armor

**Magic Rating** 0. No proficiency in magic.

**Skills:** Assassinate, concoct poisons, disguise, hide, literacy, lock picking, riding, secondary combat, stealth, tailing

Grana smells rancid, and his moustache is unkempt. He keeps a purse with 100 gold lumens in his traveling case, along with the gray cloak and mask of a Revenant. Although he just joined the cult, Grana is a master of taciturn stares and enigmatic pauses. Most think him little more than a moody sergeant of the guard.

**Onam, Son of Arista.** Fifth level. 6' 0", 160 lbs.

STR 0, DEX +5, CON +1, SPD +1, INT 0, WILL 0, PER 0, CHA 0

**Combat Rating** 7. 21 hit points. Scimitar, d8; four throwing knives, d4. Chain mesh armor

**Magic Rating** 0. No proficiency in magic.

**Skills:** Assassinate, hunting/fishing, literacy, mounted combat, primary combat, stalk, stealth, tailing

Onam is proud of his large moustache. He affects the bright-eyed innocence of an earnest apprentice, but secretly fancies himself to be a master of intrigue. According to Onam, one gains power over one's enemies by corrupting them. The young man considers his father timid and unimaginative, and hopes someday to oust Arista and operate the outpost himself. Sorone — developing a potential future contact for the Rajans — has taught him to track, fight and assassinate.

**Sorone the Rajan.** Seventh level. 5' 6", 150 lbs.

DEX +4, SPD +2

**Combat Rating** 6. 24 hit points. Two daggers, d6; da-khar, d4. Leather armor

**Magic Rating** 0. No proficiency in magic.

**Skills:** Assassinate, concoct poisons, hide, interrogate, literacy, riding, secondary combat, stalk, tailing, torture, tracking

Sorone hides Rajan features (and her horns) behind a Djaffir head dress and mask. The Black Mystic Cult sent her here to buy poisons and obtain Druhk slaves. She is an ideal servant of Death, suppressing all emotions except a fierce pride in her efficiency. Sorone hates Revenants, considering them professional rivals. She spies on the party whenever possible, hoping to uncover their secret patron — so she can safely kill the adventurers.

*All other non-player characters are first level, unless the Gamemaster wishes to customize them himself.*



# OTHER ADVENTURES IN THE WEST

The following ideas can be used by Gamemasters to create their own adventures in the western lands of Talislanta.

## Aaman

**Mission to Jhangara.** The Orthodoxy hires the adventurers to bring supplies down the Axis River to their missionaries in Jhangara. The Aamanians, realizing the dangers of the journey, have decided that it is better to sacrifice infidel lives than Orthodoxist ones. The player characters must brave attacks from both raknids and marsh-hunters before they reach the monastery among the mud-miners.

**Penance for a Monitor.** The adventurers are secretly hired by a Monitor who needs help. When a beautiful Aspirant brought the Orthodoxist administrator a large sum of gold in return for business favors, he took the money — and fell for her charms. Unfortunately, she's a Heterodoxist agent, and the gold is stolen from the Hierophant's coffers. To escape a web of blackmail, the Monitor wants the player characters to eliminate this woman and return the gold where it belongs. If they fail, a lengthy stay in the Halls of Penance seems assured.

**The Reward.** Charitable adventurers come to the aid of a hard-pressed caravan of Aamanian pilgrims, using their magical abilities to repel the enemy. An Adjudicator takes careful notes...and the player characters soon learn of a Witch Hunter on their trail!

## Arim

**Fellow Travelers.** Revenants secretly arrange for the adventurers to "discover" a silver mine, then to become embroiled in a murderous dispute over the mining claim which only the Exarch can resolve. The assassins plan to sneak into the Forbidden City along with the adventurers and assassinate the Exarch. Caught between the assassins and the Exarch's agents, can the player characters survive?

**Murder's Price.** In an ordinary tavern brawl, an adventurer unknowingly kills a member of the powerful Zattra family. When other members of the Arimate clan come to investigate the slaying, can the player characters avoid incurring their wrath? Complicating the issue are the assassins sent by another Arimate clan feuding with the Zattras.

**Tender Courtship.** When the fiery son of a wealthy Mine Boss falls in love with a female adventurer, members of his bodyguard discreetly try to gauge how fiercely she plans to resist her kidnapping. Meanwhile, an escaped Batrean concubine uses her charms on others in the party, begging to be taken out of Arim. What can be done?

## Silvanus

**Fortress of Knowledge.** While doing library research, the adventurers stumble upon a forgotten copy of the Prophetess Sharanna's *Impendent Doom*, a tome from the Forgotten Age. It prophesies of a coming disaster, and describes plans for a great library — filled with priceless books of literature, philosophy and magic — to be built which can withstand the disaster. Will the player characters journey to the Isle of Talisandre to see if such a "fortress of knowledge" exists?

**Mask of the Shaitan.** The skull mask and cape stolen by Sarista rogues is actually charged with diabolic powers. Their thespian caravan is now journeying to Aaman to perform a miracle play, and they plan to use the stolen goods as a new costume. Hired by the Zandir Causidian who was robbed, can the adventurers avert a tragedy in the Theocracy?

**Specimens Desired.** The Lyceum Arcanum believes that a rare creature extinct elsewhere still exists on the west coast of Silvanus. The curators of the terrarium hire the adventurers to capture a breeding pair. What the mages aren't admitting is that the last two expeditions sent out never returned...

## Werewood

**The Kissing Game.** When a Sarista caravan comes to town, a jealous Dhuna Witchwoman (posing as a fortune teller) maliciously borrows a female adventurer's drinking horn, leaving a smudge of *Ilse's Kiss of Love* on the rim. By the time that the Sarista kissing game begins, the player character has the enchanted salve on her lips... by morning, she has more suitors than she knows what to do with!

**Rhodomantic Riddles.** An adventurer and his comrades are called to Gnorlwood, when a Rhodomancer he once helped includes him in her will. Also summoned are eight Gnorls and a Kasmir Trapsmith. The catch? To inherit the fortune, the heirs must spend a night together in the nook — and unravel a mysterious riddle revealing the hidden location of the stash. As the evening wears on, more and more of the heirs are found dead — are they the victims of hidden traps, or is there a murderer in the nook?

**The Scent of Murder.** A Rhodomancer accidentally compounds a candle which summons the spiritform of the Hadjin beauty, Jinesse, murdered by Mordante. She wants vengeance, and is perfectly willing to show adventurers the location of her grave — and the fabled spun-emerald gown, worth several ransoms — so long as they swear a Hadjin blood-oath to hunt down Mordante and bring him to justice for his many crimes. Jinesse has learned a few of Mordante's more nightmarish spells since her lifetime, making her a dangerous spiritform to cross.

## Zandu

**The Fan Dancer's Cloak.** While gambling at the House of Chance, player characters discover that Kiya — one of the most notorious entertainers in Zanth — has had her favorite feather-cloak stolen. A large reward is offered, if only the adventurers can arrange its return. There is no shortage of suspects. The cloak was actually taken by Wyleth, a demented Zandir wizard who plans to use it in casting a spell to turn Kiya into his private love slave. Korgo Pleva, the friendly, corpulent owner of the House of Chance, may offer the adventurers other jobs if they succeed at this one.

**The Nighthawk.** The infamous highwayman has gone too far, stripping the jewels from the Sultan's favorite concubine as she traveled the roads by night. The adventurers are dispatched to find the elusive highwayman and bring him to justice. The Nighthawk presently haunts the forests along the Phaedran Causeway, where predators promise to make the adventurers' task even more difficult. The robber also has numerous minions, natural and supernatural. When they finally meet up with their nemesis, the player characters should be surprised to learn that the Nighthawk is a woman and a Heterodoxist, with far more up her sleeve than mere larceny.

**The Sultan's Heir.** Unknown to all, the Sultan is now dying — a result of his lifelong overindulgence in food, drink, and other vices. No physician can cure him. Summoning the adventurers, he charges them with locating and bringing back his secret illegitimate son, Zlygo, cast out years before. The surprise is that the heir, who now calls himself Aago, has converted to Orthodoxism — can the adventurers find him and persuade him to renounce his faith, before the Sultan dies and the land is plunged into chaos?

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