

THE CYCLOPEDIA
TALISLANTA



VOLUME II
THE SEVEN KINGDOMS

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THE SEVEN KINGDOMS

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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.

For players, there are a dozen new character types, plus new fields of magic, skills and weapons. For the first time, a role-playing guide is provided to help gamers new to Talislanta understand the motivations of some of the common races.

Gamemasters will find an abundance of new information, including optional rules which can be included in a campaign to allow a wider range of character activities. There are also new traps, enchanted devices, alchemical products, and above all else, new cities, along with complete descriptions of the lands within the Seven Kingdoms.

Three short adventures are included in the back of this book, plus a collection of adventure ideas. Gamers planning to play in these scenarios should not read this information, but should save it for their Gamemaster.

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OVERVIEW

Nestled in east-central Talislanta, the Seven Kingdoms is the spiritual heart, if not the geographical center, of civilized Talislanta. A loose union of semi-autonomous states, this nation is a prosperous, enlightened society where knowledge and advanced crafts flourish.

The Seven Kingdoms is a crossroads for travel from eastern and western Talislanta, since roads are surer and safer than the sea. Merchants wishing to cross the continent by land must either use the Seven Roads (and pay the tolls and tariffs), or risk a dangerous journey across Urag or the cold northlands.

The land ranges from the rocky, desert wastes of Sindar and Kasmir to the dense forests of Astar and Vardune; from the tropical jungles and swamps of Taz to the lightly wooded open country of Cymril and Durne. The Axis River forms the western border, keeping Aaman at bay. The waterless Dead River canyon performs the same function in the east, keeping the bandits and raiders of the Wilderlands of Zaran at bay. The mountains of southern Urag, and the dense swamps and mountains along the borders with Mog and Jhangara, likewise provide protection on the northern and southern frontiers.

THE KINGDOMS

Each kingdom within the Seven Kingdoms is the home of a different people.

Wooded **Astar** belongs to the Muses, a strangely aloof race of flying humanoids with rumored supernatural powers. Flighty and incomprehensible to outsiders, they live primarily in the Enchanted Grove along the shore of Lake Zephyr, venturing into the outside world rarely and for indiscernible reasons.

Capital of the Seven Kingdoms, the green glass city of **Cymril** was founded by a race of magicians, and is the most cosmopolitan of all Talislantan cities. Almost anything can be purchased here – and if it can't be found here, then clues on where to find it can be gained at the Lyceum Arcanum, the city's magic academy. Wealthy visitors are always welcome in Cymril – especially by the prevalent thieves. "All roads lead to Cymril" is the popular saying, and it is right.

Durne would be a tranquil parkland, except for the depredations of Darklings and Stryx crossing over the Obsidian Mountains to the north. While the Grand Army patrols these northern borderlands, the kingdom's inhabitants – the Gnomekin – dwell safely underground. Their Subterranean City is famed for its mushrooms (both edible and magiceutical varieties) and crystal-farms (which provide the Gnomekin Crystalomancers with their powers). The Underground Highway is a safer link between Durne and Cymril than the surface's Durne Road.

Sandy, desert **Kasmir**, guarding the major bridge over the Dead River, has its grasp on the throat of east-west commerce. The walled city is the home of the money-lending Kasmir, a rich and stingy folk with connections and influence across the continent. If you need money, come to Kasmir – but only if you have the collateral to cover a loan . . .

The dual-brained Sindarans rule in the mesa kingdom of **Sindar**. They are an ancient people, renowned as masters of alchemy. Merchants are attracted from distant parts to purchase elixirs and to sell the rare resources from which the dual-encephalons produce their goods. Another bridge spans the Dead River at Nankar.

Travel through the tropical jungles and swamps of **Taz** is hazardous, but hiring Thrall mercenaries in their capital city of Tor is less expensive than hiring the more worldly-wise Thralls elsewhere. The Thralls are the preeminent warriors of Talislanta, sorcerously created for this purpose by their lost masters in pre-Disaster times.

Vardune is a necessary stop for the botanically-minded. The Ardua – a race descended from bird-like ancestors, divided into sub-races of Green and Blue – are the masters of Botanomancy, the art and science of plants. Almost any plant in Talislanta can be bought (or sold, if the seller's plant is rare) here. If a customized plant is required, Botanomancers can even create a new breed.

The free policies of the Seven Kingdoms draw people from across the continent. There has never been a battle among the races of the Seven Kingdoms. The fact that these peoples live in peace, and cooperate in matters of defense and commerce, is unique in Talislanta. There is no official religion, and religious persecution is forbidden. Slavery is outlawed – escaped slaves make their way here from as far away as Quan and Imria. Experienced magicians come to Cymril to practice their craft, and to experiment without excessive restrictions. Merchants appreciate the reasonable trade laws, and the financing available from the Kasmir money-lending houses.

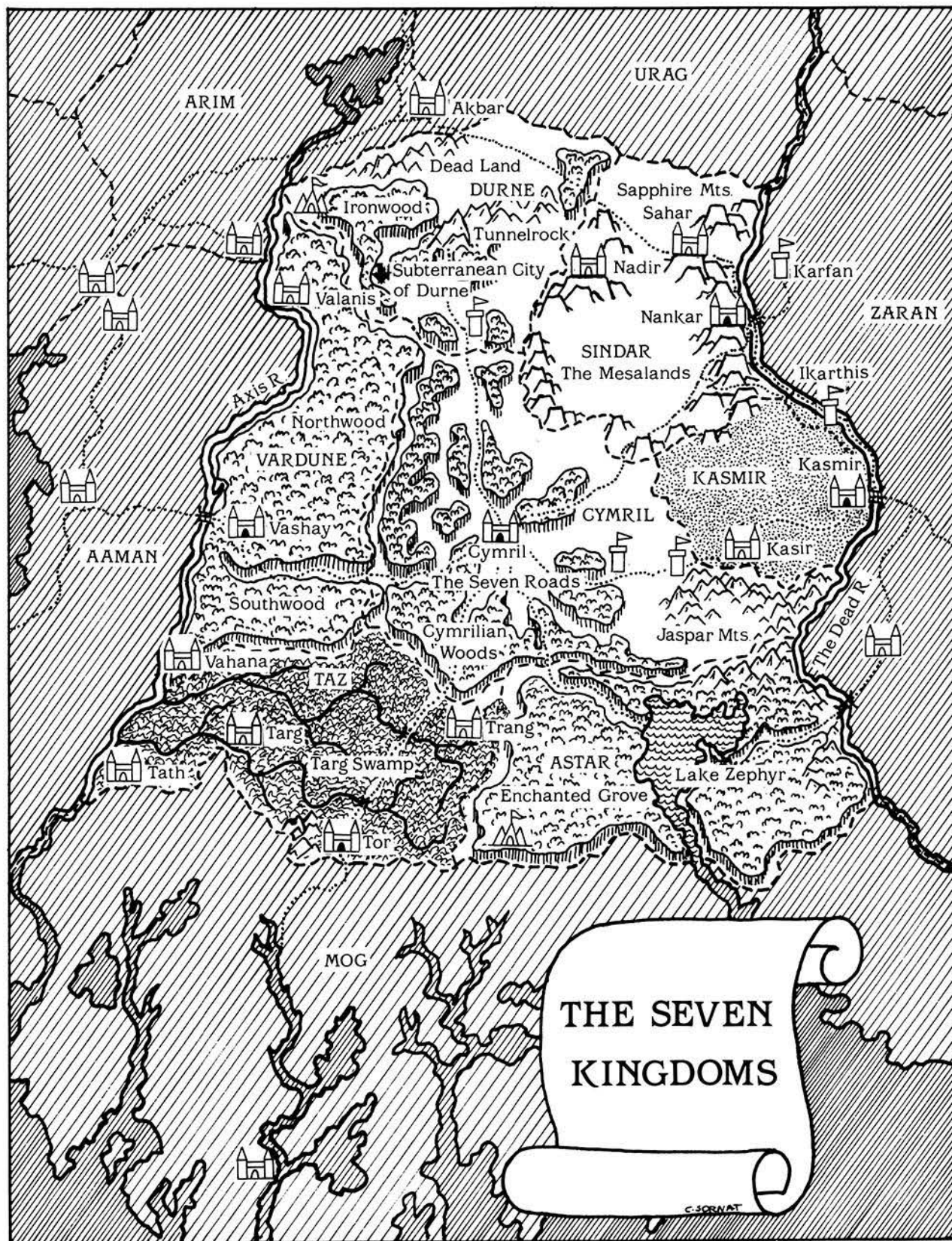
ADVENTURING IN THE SEVEN KINGDOMS

Since the Seven Kingdoms is prosperous and peaceful, it makes a good base for adventurers – especially Cymril, where almost all races are welcome.

Though tamer than most other places, the lands of the Seven Kingdoms are not destitute of adventure. Cymril has its share of thieves, and is also home to sinister magicians as well as friendly ones. Bandits commonly cross the borders to raid the trade caravans in Kasmir, Sindar and Durne. The jungles of Taz conceal lost ruins which Cymril's Lyceum Arcanum is eager to explore. The Gnomekin must continuously struggle to keep their Underground Highway clear of subterranean predators, and their own city is built atop a sinister secret. Dracartan thaumaturges journey hundreds of miles to "mine" the waters of Lake Zephyr, supposedly for its sweet water – but no one (not even the Muses) knows what they really do there.

The central location of the Seven Kingdoms makes it a good starting point from which to explore the Wilderlands of Zaran, the mountainlands of Urag, the swamps and jungles of Mog and Jhangara, or to visit Zandu and Aaman in the west.





THE LANDS OF TALISLANTA

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

THE SEVEN KINGDOMS

Prior to the Great Disaster, the lands of the Seven Kingdoms were largely uninhabited. The ancient Archaens deemed the area a hostile wilderness. Then the Great Disaster twisted and changed the land.

In the wake of the destruction elsewhere, refugees came – the *Gnomekin*, sheltering in the caverns beneath Tunnelrock in Durne; and the masterless *Thralls*, gathering in the tropical jungles and swamps of Taz and Jhangara. The *Kasmir* ceased their wanderings in the Wilderlands and settled in the desert of Kasmir – along with wealth looted from ancient ruins.

As the New Age matured, two groups of refugees from the Phaedran Empire fled here as well. The Green and Blue *Ardua*, escaping persecution, settled in the Vardune Forest on the eastern shore of the Axis River. Twenty years later, they gave reluctant permission for a second wave of refugees to pass through: the Phandre, driven from the old Phaedran Empire, who went to the forests beyond Vardune, built a city, and became the *Cymrilians*.

Two kingdoms' pasts remain clouded. No one knows when or how the *Muses* came to Astar. Similarly, the *Sindarans* have never disclosed their origin, although some suspect they have inhabited their mesas since before the Great Disaster.

THE BEAST WARS

The *Cymrilians*, fearing attack from their Orthodoxist enemies in the Phaedran Empire, signed treaties of mutual defense with the Thrall and Gnomekin kingdoms. The wary *Ardua*, distrustful of the descendants of their former persecutors, refused to cooperate.

The Three Kingdoms prospered, and the city of Cymril became a modest center of commerce. The *Kasmir* were attracted by the money-flow – their money-lending Houses opened the first foreign

offices in Cymril. The safe trade routes restored for *Sindar* its ancient trade in alchemicals, lost since the chaos of the Disaster.

In 193, the loss of a *Sindaran* mining outpost to the Beastmen of Golarin made suddenly clear the upsurge in Beastmen strength along the frontier. With *Sindar* and *Kasmir* desperate to hire new Thrall mercenary armies, the *Cymrilians* made a cunning offer – an allied army from all five of the kingdoms, if *Sindar* and *Kasmir* would join the alliance. Faced with fanatical Beastmen unified under Tyranus, a brilliant and charismatic leader, the two kingdoms agreed.

It took time for the Grand Army to assemble, while the Beastmen plundered up and down the eastern frontier – some raiders made it as far as the gates of Cymril. Gnomekin slingers and Crystalomancers were the first reinforcements to reach the mesa-cities. Meanwhile, the Thrall tribal army marched to the relief of the city of Kasmir, lifting a Beastmen siege. The new *Cymrilian* battle fleet – windships armed with *Sindaran* alchemicals – was temporarily delayed by a rebellion in Cymril, but soon it was scouting an enemy confused by the sudden growth in hostile forces. When Tyranus marshalled his armies to overwhelm the mesa-city of Nankar, the Grand Army struck. Gnomekin Crystalomancers, Thrall shock infantry, and *Cymrilian* windships helped to crush the horde. Those Beastmen who could escape across the Nankar Bridge fled back to their wild plains. The Beastmen leader was never seen again.

Further battles were fought for the next two decades, as smaller Beastmen hordes were confronted and defeated, but the allied nations were never again seriously threatened.

THE FOUNDING OF A NEW NATION

Sindar and *Kasmir*, worried that the *Cymrilians* were becoming too powerful, demanded formal rules for the new alliance once the Beast Wars were over. Weakened by a Tanasian rebellion, the Wizard King of Cymril felt forced to make concessions. These negotiations led to the creation, not of a new alliance, but of a nation composed of equal states.

The *Ardua* of Vardune asked to join the unifying kingdoms, fearful that they would otherwise become a buffer state between the growing power of Aaman and the "Five Kingdoms." Plans for the "Six Kingdoms" were drawn, and copies of the treaty readied for signing with proper pomp. As the ceremony began, a Muse landed on the podium and informed the assembled representatives that he was empowered to sign for Astar's membership in the treaty. The treaty was hastily amended, and the Seven Kingdoms came into being in 222.

THE KINGS AND THE COUNCIL

The Seven Kingdoms is ruled by the Council of Kings. Each region supplies one representative to the ruling body. Not all are actually kings, since *Sindar*



and Astar have no royalty. The Council determines national policy – five of the kings must support a proposal before it can become law.

The monthly Council meetings are examples of how politics should not work. Wrangling is common over the issue of funding the country's outposts in the Eastern Borderlands – the Ardua see no need for these forts, while Kasmir and Sindarans argue over which post deserves the largest expenditure. Outpost mercenaries are left unpaid until the required majority of five votes can be arranged. On one previous occasion, the outraged troops revolted and had to be subdued by the Grand Army.

Cymril – the undeclared capital of the Seven Kingdoms – welcomes the kings, the foreign dignitaries, and the flow of wealth that follows all of them. However, the traditional monthly march of the kings and their retinues to Cymril is a strain on the army. In recent years, they have been hard pressed to provide security for all of the travelers.

THE GRAND ARMY

The Seven Kingdoms' position between two river barriers provides natural protection against invasion. A superb national army of mercenaries, small but well-trained, is the final guarantor of security.

Nearly 10,000 Thralls and Ardua form the backbone of the Grand Army, and are never without opponents – fighting Za, Beastmen and Ur raiders with equal enthusiasm. The army is organized into seven regiments, each containing roughly 700 Arduan pikemen and skirmishers, and 900 Thralls (400 shock infantry, 300 light cavalry, and 200 assault cavalry). Each regiment is commanded by a General of the Kingdoms – often a Thrall, although it is sometimes politic to appoint an officer from one of the other races. Foreign mercenaries also serve in the army, and are eligible under the Seven Kingdom's enlightened laws to reach command level.

The full strength of the Grand Army includes seven windscouts – small, 10-man windships – plus a windship-of-war stationed in each kingdom's capital. (Astar, which does not have a capital, and Durne, with its subterranean city, maintain their assigned windships on permanent patrol near the Enchanted Grove and Tunnelrock, respectively.) The Ardua also operate barge-fort squadrons on the Axis River.

The **Brilliantine Regiment** patrols the northern borderlands, protecting the Durne Road from raiding Ur. It is based in a series of temporary wooden forts built along the roadway. General Monn is a forty-year Thrall veteran, and a former commander of the Wilderlands outpost at Akmir.

The **Green Regiment** is quartered in Kasmir, and guards the Kasmir Road – the "golden highway" from Cymril to Kasmir, one of the most traveled routes in Talislanta. It has a barracks in Kasmir City, and guard towers along the road. General Mok is a middle-aged and cautious Thrall. A Za chieftain, Baruk, has sworn vengeance against him, blaming him for the death of his son in a raid.

Severely mauled by the Beastmen in a large-scale raid, the **Regiment of Gold** had to be rotated from the pressure of the Sindaran frontier to the quiet of southern Astar. The rebuilt formation contains a high percentage of replacements. The inexperienced recruits leave the mostly-Arduan veterans with more than their share of patrol duties. Duty here is lonely, as most Muses ignore the mentally "mute" soldiers. The troops live in tent encampments, as permanent forts are forbidden in Astar. General Kamm is an ambitious officer, and feels that the Regiment of Gold is ready for battle. He hopes to lead it into combat soon.

Often called to scout deep into Urag, the **Skoryx Regiment** is newly assigned to safeguard the caravan routes opening between Sahar in Sindar and Akbar in neighboring Arim, through Durne's Dead Lands. The regiment quarters are rude dugouts in the wooded

northwestern corner of Durne. Arsenia, a Danuvian Swordsman and renegade, is the regimental commander.

The Sindaran frontier has been active for the past several years, corresponding with the increase in trade along the new routes to Akmir. The **Viridia Regiment** is the most experienced in the army. General Ak'k, a rash Arduan commander over-eager for action, has a plan to launch a preemptive strike against the strengthening Ur clans, but has not been able to get Council permission. The regiment has its barracks in Sahar.

The **Serenity and Crusher Regiments** are reserve units of the Grand Army, and are kept at half-strength. The Crusher Regiment is quartered in Cymril, and is mainly concerned with road patrols. Its commander is General Rav, a Thrall. The Serenity Regiment is assigned to protect Vardune and Taz, but the duty is mostly ceremonial – those two kingdoms have extensive armies of their own. The regiment is led by Tymrallo, a Cymrilian Warrior-Mage of some reknown.

The small size of the Grand Army is made possible by the current peace in central Talislanta. In the event of war, the army of each of the kingdoms – large forces from Taz and Vardune, plus the Cymrilian Legion, the Gnomekin Fellowship, Sindar's Mesa Scouts, and the Kasmir Guard – would fill another seven regiments. The reserve warfleet, in storage in Cymril, would be manned and returned to duty. The Sindarans would also break out their stores of alchemicals and siege equipment.

The three isolated Wilderlands outposts maintained by the Seven Kingdoms – Akmir, Ikarthis and Karfan – are manned by the Legion of the Borderlands, an organization separate from the Grand Army. Commanded by volunteer officers from the Army, the Legion's troops are desperate men, the outcasts and criminals of Talislanta.

THE SEVEN ROADS

The Seven Roads link the capitals of the Seven Kingdoms, and are vital roadways in the east-west trade routes of Talislanta. Even the fanatical Aamanians recognize the importance of being on good terms with the Seven Kingdoms, for the sake of their cross-continental pilgrimages.

The original Council plan called for constructing six roads, but the Muses insisted that there had to be one road for each of the member kingdoms. To soothe Astar, the road network was named the Seven Roads, even though there are only six (apparently, the Muses have never counted them).

The road network was completed in 451, and is among the best on the continent – stone-paved, averaging twenty feet in width. They are maintained by work crews of Monads, Maruk and Gnomekin. All roads are frequently patrolled by the army (d6 x 2 Arduan pikemen, or d6 Thralls with mangonel lizard mounts). Despite these efforts, bandits, dangerous wildlife and rabble (such as the Tanasian Exiles) still prey on road traffic.

The Seven Roads proved their usefulness when Imria invaded Astar in 570, looking for slaves. Grand Army cavalry moved swiftly over the roads to counterattack, and resoundingly defeated the raiders. This was the last military threat to the Seven Kingdoms to date.

Travelers passing through the Seven Kingdoms may be asked to pay tolls upon entering and leaving each kingdom – paying two tolls in a row (one for leaving and the second for entering) is common. Fortunately, these tolls are rarely more than one payment per person or conveyance, and range from five pieces of silver to one gold lumen. Tariffs on trade goods carried into a kingdom are 1% of the item's retail value.

Slave-owners are allowed to pass through the Seven Kingdoms, but they may not sell or buy slaves here. Escaped slaves may legally seek sanctuary anywhere in the Seven Kingdoms.



THE KINGDOM OF ASTAR

The land of Astar is made up of temperate forests growing over gently rolling hills. The weather is balmy – temperatures seldom dip below 50 degrees. Rains are warm, drifting up from the tropics of Jhangara. East of Lake Zephyr, the forests give way to rock and dust, eventually leading to the Dead River.

The Muses live mostly along the western shore of Lake Zephyr, in the peaceful woodland known as the Enchanted Grove. They are a humanoid people, slender and slight of build. They have delicate wings colored in bright pastels – these tones are mirrored in their skin and hair color – and antennae protrude from beneath their hair. They are known throughout the Seven Kingdoms for their art and arcane talents. (Muse Telepathy is discussed in the “Arcana” section of this book.)

Signs of civilization in Astar are limited to the Astar Road, and to the Dracartan buildings along the eastern shore of the lake. The Grand Army regiment stationed along Astar’s southern border is forbidden to erect fortifications. Outside of the Enchanted Grove, however, exomorphs, ogriphants, and other dangers roam the land.

MUSE SOCIETY

There are communal villages of Muses throughout the Enchanted Grove. Their elaborately woven huts are used for refuge from inclement weather and for storage, rather than as dwellings.

Muses are hunter/gatherers. All food goes into a common store, shared by all. Most care nothing for money. They handle their commerce by barter, trading hobby products (every Muse has a hobby) for things which are attractive – gemstones or pebbles, a flower or a delicate picture.

Aside from gathering food, there is one task essential to every commune: to keep the nearby grove clear of dangerous animals and unwanted strangers. Dangerous creatures are manipulated away by Muse sentinels, using subliminal mental broadcasts. Friendly Wood Whisks rid the groves of plants hazardous to Muse and Whisp.

Despite their peaceful environment, life can be hard for the Muses. The first three years are the most difficult – their infants are born very small, and are highly susceptible to disease. Many die from Coughing Sickness and the Spotted Death. Pregnancy lasts six months, and the baby is raised by his Muse mother and the mother’s Wood Whisp friends.

At age seven, surviving children are adopted as village members by the community. They must then help to gather food, although abundant time is left for play. The older children are supervised by Wood Whisks, who take over as surrogate parents.

Muses reach their full adult size by age twelve, although it will be another forty years before they are reproductively mature. Older females generally bear one child per year – easy pregnancies, due to the small size of the babies. Twins are very rare, and female babies are twice as common as males.

Old Muses are rare, due to the race’s lack of resistance to disease and physical injury. There would be even fewer, were it not for the protective care provided by the Wood Whisks.

OTHERS IN ASTAR

Aside from the Muses and their Whisp companions, there are very few people in the kingdom. The Astar Road comes to an end on the shore of Lake Zephyr. Some enterprising merchants raft across the lake, continuing on the almost wild trail to Danuvia’s Dead River bridge, but most prefer the Kasmir Road.

The Dracartans enjoy good relations with the Muses of Astar. Carantheum has a pact with the Muses to “mine” fresh water from Lake Zephyr. Thaumaturgists transmute the water to solid form, which is then shipped by caravan to the desert kingdom of Carantheum. In return, the Muses send periodic representatives to the mining camp to collect Dracartan sweet powders and incense, and sometimes stay to entertain the polite visitors. Muse company and the climate make the camp a popular post for the thaumaturgists, despite the danger of skalnax living in the lake.

The Kasmir and Sindarans are suspicious of the Dracartan connection in Astar, and suspect a plot to soften the Muses’ allegiance to the Seven Kingdoms. Rumors that the thaumaturgists are involved in experiments at the lake have never been substantiated.

Kasmir merchants would like to trade with the Muses, supplying potions, foreign nectars, and delicate jewelry in exchange for musical instruments and other crafts. The Kasmir are stern but fair with the gullible artists – to a Kasmir, cheating a Muse is bad form (there’s no challenge to it). Unfortunately, the Muses dislike the unattractive money lenders.

THE KINGDOM OF CYMRIL

This kingdom consists of two very different parts: the city of Cymril, and the largely virgin lands which surround it.

THE CITY OF CYMRIL

Cymril's only city – also named Cymril – is the undeclared capital of the Seven Kingdoms. It is located at the nexus of the Seven Roads, and is surrounded by high hills and wealthy estates. Beyond the hills lie farmlands and vineyards operated by Green Ardua from Vardune. Food is plentiful in the City of Cymril, which imports what it does not grow.

Cymril's green towers can be seen for miles. Public buildings are made of translucent green crystal, while most other structures are covered with green lacquer. The city's architecture is light and airy, with tall towers and arches looping over the roadways. The city is divided into six hextants, with the Council Hall of the Kings at the center of the city. The Council of Kings meets here every month. A map and a detailed guide to the city can be found both in *THE CHRONICLES OF TALISLANTA* and *THE TALISLANTA HANDBOOK* (second edition).

The citizens of the city are descendants of the Phandre. There are two sub-races in Cymril: the *Koresians*, the dominant people in the city, and the *Tanasians*, a historically rebellious faction. (Another sub-race, the *Pharesians*, live in the woodlands beyond the city, as do some Tanasians exiled from Cymril.)

HISTORY

The Phandre were once the masters of the ancient Empire of Phaedra. In 111, when the Orthodoxists rebelled, the Phandre fled east to escape the collapsing nation. The Ardua granted passage through their forest, and the refugees reached an uninhabited woodland. Here in 146, they established the settlement of Cymril ("safe home").

During the exodus, the Tanasians – formerly the ruling class of the Phandre – were blamed for the dissolution of the Empire. The Koresians took control of the new city along democratic lines, supported by the Pharesians. The former aristocracy did not relinquish power happily. As the Koresian Wizard Kings of Cymril signed

treaties with the Gnomekin and the Thralls, the Tanasians objected, prophesying that the Phandre would be betrayed and enslaved by outsiders.

In 194, when the Wizard King Jevos built a windship warfleet to defend Sindar and Kasmir during the Beast Wars, the Tanasians rebelled. Led by the Tanasian wizard Rajos, once an advisor to the last Phaedran Emperor, the Tanasians entered the palace, killed Jevos, and declared Rajos the First Emperor of Cymril.

At first, the rebellion was a success. Many of the powerful Koresian wizards fled Cymril, while the Pharesians supported the new emperor. Rajos destroyed his reign by reactionary policies. First, he ordered all non-Phandre out of the city – creating a financial panic as the departing Kasmir money lenders called in their outstanding loans. Distrustful of the allied races, Rajos then declared a spell tax in order to raise a new mercenary army – free of Thralls.

Six weeks later, when Pharos, the original Wizard King, returned to Cymril, the citizens unanimously ousted Rajos and voted for Pharos to resume his mantle. The leaders of the rebellion were exiled, but the other Tanasians were permitted to remain in the city.

CYMRILIANS AND MAGIC

Cymril's fame is its magicians. Although they form a small portion of the city's population, they have always ruled here. The Tanasian minority is especially known for their wizardry.

Magic is the primary industry of the city. Cymril does a brisk trade in enchanted items, exporting them throughout the continent. The city's second industry is magic-related: the production of levitationals and other windship components.

Minor magic is common in the city. It is not unusual to see a mage slowly walking along Cymril's streets, an open book floating gently before him, turning pages by magic alone. Conjurations are used to create multiple sets of workmen's tools, as well as advertising flyers which disappear at the end of the day. Illusion Spells create magical signs, while Radiance Spells light night sporting events. Some taverns offer *Rodinn's Spell of Instant Sobriety* for those whose celebrations have lasted too long.



Well-born Cymrilians begin training in magic at an early age. Many can perform the simpler arts – deciphering magical scripts, and casting spells from scrolls (the equivalent of Magic Training skill) – by the age of 12. By adulthood at age 18, these upper-class citizens have mastered the common minor enchantments (Secondary Magic skill), and are eligible for advanced training.

The Lyceum Arcanum is the highest institute of sorcerous learning in the Seven Kingdoms (some say in all of Talislanta). Its libraries are a valuable storehouse of arcane lore, and its faculty – gathered from across the continent – provides a wide spectrum of knowledge and skill. (For more details, see the Lyceum Arcanum description in *THE SORCERER'S GUIDE*.) Formal qualifications for the school are minimal, but the fierce competition for positions in the apprentice program means that good grades in primary education are almost always required.

Everyone practicing professional magic in the city must register annually with the city government. This registration costs 5 G.L., and is paid automatically when students graduate from the Lyceum Arcanum. Foreign-trained magicians must demonstrate their competency before the Council of Examiners before they are permitted to practice magic. The Wizard King's Investigators look into charges of unprofessional conduct concerning the city's mages. Diabolism or the use of dangerous drugs, for instance, are considered grounds for revoking a mage's license.

Several shops cater to magicians, offering alchemical apparatus and supplies, powdered essences of various creatures, magical inks and parchments, and all manner of rare books and magical writings. Minor magical items are also readily available in Cymril's magical shops.

CITY GOVERNMENT

Cymril's representative to the Council of Kings is the Wizard King. He is selected by an election held annually during the Magical Fair. All citizens can vote, but only wizards can run for the position.

To be a citizen of Cymril, a person must be a descendant of another citizen residing in the city. A foreigner can only become a citizen by decree of the Wizard King, which is extremely rare. Non-citizens must pay higher taxes and tuition and cannot vote, but otherwise have rights equal with the Cymrilian citizens.

Law is straightforward in the city. There is no presumption of innocence – those accused of crimes must prove they did not commit them. Fortunately, the Wizard King's sorcerers make use of Charms of Veracity to force witnesses to truthfully answer questions.

City law assumes that the magical discipline required of all magicians enforces high ethical standards. A licensed mage's testimony in court carries more weight than any non-magician's, and they are not required to submit themselves to the Charm of Veracity. (Most mages could circumvent the charm with defensive spells.)

Non-violent crimes carry sentences of enforced labor in Cymril's distant mines on the Sea of Glass. The most severe punishment is banishment from the city, which applies to the criminal and to all of his descendants. The banished are enchanted with a special spell (see *Shaladin's Alarums and Diversions Spell* from *THE SORCERER'S GUIDE*) which alerts the guards if the subject attempts to enter the city. Banishment can be repealed only by the Wizard King, and a considerable amount of bribery is required to get the application through the bureaucracy to his attention. Banishment based upon ancestry is easily set aside for the right price.

It is a crime to shoot arrows and crossbow bolts, or any other missiles, within city limits. Public buildings in Cymril are made almost entirely of crystal and glass – one thrown stone can permanently deface them. A small contingent of wizards from the Lyceum Arcanum is assigned the task of constantly monitoring the weather, and preventing possible damage from hailstorms.

THE ECONOMY

Besides magic, the other thriving industry in Cymril is the production of windship products: levitationals and gossamer sails. The methods of creating this equipment are the secrets of the powerful Windship Guild. Only the most promising Magical Operations students are invited to join, and even the best will not be accepted without sterling recommendations and Cymrilian citizenship.

Many of Cymril's non-mage citizens become Air Men, the sailors of the commercial windship flotillas. The best become Windpilots, masters at navigating the air currents of the sky.

Currency. Cymrilians accept the Gold Lumen and the Copper Piece, as do most other nations of Talislanta. In addition, they produce the Gold Pentacle, which is worth 5 G.L. and is accepted throughout the Seven Kingdoms.

Other coins are frowned upon. Aamanian Coppers may be sold at their equivalent weight in ingot copper of poor quality (1 G.L. per thousand). Zandir Crescents are valued at 1 G.L., but cannot legally be spent in the city – they must be converted into pentacles or lumens at a money-changer's (run by Kasmir, who charge high fees for the service).

Due to the large number of magicians in Cymril, a fair amount of antique coinage flows into the country from mysterious sources. Sharp traders know to watch the coins they are given by any city merchant – some exotic coins might be of interest to collectors or curio dealers, while others may be worthless.

Aquavit. In all of the Seven Kingdoms, only the Sindarans are more captivated by the manufacture and consumption of liquor than the Cymrilians. The favorite beverage of Cymril's citizens is aquavit, an effervescent liquor made from the fruit of the Vidas tree, which grows only in the hills around Cymril. Green Ardua deliver the fresh fruit to the aquavit distilleries daily. Less expensive beverages are also popular, ranging from common grog to Tazian Fire-Ale, over a broad range of prices.

Cymrilians have an astounding capacity for alcohol. Drinking – although it gives them a heady feeling – neither diminishes their physical nor their mental self-control. This is very fortunate for Cymril, as a society with drunken wizards and windpilots would be very dangerous.

RELIGION

Cymrilians believe in the Creator, the mystic creative force behind the world and – the Cymrilians believe – the source of all White Magical energy. They view the Creator as a single glowing eye, which sees everything and directs its beneficent rays upon the world. Creativist symbols vary. Magicians often carry crystal spheres on necklaces, while craftsmen wear emblems of the tools of their craft pinned to their clothing.

The most common servants of the Creator are the Archons, 10'-tall humanoids with bodies of pure light, whom Cymrilians worship as the deliverers of White Magic. Three other revered figures in Cymrilian theology are Fate, Death's ferryman, who brings souls to Death's palace in the Underworld; Death, who rules the Underworld; and Destiny, the "Author of Fate," who sends departed souls to the plane of existence most suitable to them.

Creativists worship privately, through acts of creation such as art, farming, childbirth, and crafts. Magic is revered, since it is directly connected with the powers of the Creator. The most revered creative act is the formation of a new magical spell, which combines personal creativity with an immersion in the creative force embodied by magic. Destructive acts such as vandalism and murder are Creativist sins. Creator worship tolerates other religions, except inherently destructive theologies such as demon and devil worship.



Creativist temples conduct services only on Cymril's two holy days, the Conjunction of the Twin Suns (49th of Phandir) and the Equinox (49th of Drome). Devout Creativists tithe 1% of their income from their creations. This money goes to the temple, to maintain the grounds and to support the small group of priest-caretakers. Tithe money is also used to award prizes for beautiful, interesting, and well-made creations at the Magical Fair or on the holy days.

DARK FORCES

Few outsiders are aware of the sinister side of this pleasing city. Two of these dark forces come from within the city, while the third is of foreign origin.

The Thieves Guild. Crime abounds in Cymril, though it remains beneath the surface of urban life, and is often contained in the seamier hexants of the city. Thieves are attracted by the rich caravans which pass through this crossroads. Cymril's own fascination with magic helps to foster a black market in contraband magic items.

Mages unable or unwilling to register to work legally serve in the criminal underground – without their help, the criminals would quickly be eradicated by the Wizard King's Investigators. Rogue magicians also practice bizarre and dangerous sorceries, freed by their lack of registration from the prying eyes of the Investigators. There are also magicians' shops which deal in illegal and stolen goods.

Certain merchants in the Eastern Hextant deal in a new and powerful – though crude – imitation of Phantasian dream essence. Fearflash lacks the subtlety of true dream essence, but creates an intense adrenaline rush and occasional hallucinations. A second drug, Black Heart, is even more potent. Both are illegal in Cymril. The Dealers set prices artificially low for first-time users, then escalate them rapidly for addicts. The victims are then coerced into criminal acts on behalf of the Thieves Guild, in order to obtain the drugs they need.

The Thieves Guild has no single master. To coordinate efforts within the city, a Criminal Council meets quarterly, composed of the most dangerous and powerful rogue magicians in the city.

The Circle of Tanas. This covert body of Tanasian mages is seeking to reestablish the Empire of Cymril. They form the darkest threat to the city's survival, and are willing to try any experiment or contact any power – even diabolist or demonic – to gain their goals.

When the Wizard King's Investigators discover one of these traitors, the criminal's magical power and dark alliances make ordinary banishment ineffective. In these cases, the rebel's sorcerous abilities are burned from his mind to prevent further threat to the kingdom. It is rumored that the wizards who carry out this sentence have been known to "err," permanently erasing the memory, personality, and possibly even the soul of the most depraved offenders.

The Revenants. The nation of Arim supports the Revenants, a secret society specializing in arson, theft, muggings, and murder-for-hire. Kasmir Auditors introduced this blight to the city, following their age-old tradition of vengeance against those who fail to honor their debts. Efforts by the Wizard King to stamp out the Revenants seemingly eradicated them from Cymril two decades ago. Nevertheless, occasional murders and robberies continue to bear the Revenant stamp.

THE LEGION

Cymrilians are not warlike by nature, but bandits within the surrounding woodlands, as well as the continuing threat from the Plains of Golarin, force the city to maintain a small private army of mercenaries.

Only Seven Kingdoms citizens are permitted to join the Cymrilian Legion. The formation is traditionally commanded by Thralls, with large numbers of Ardua, Gnomekin and Cymrilian infantry, and a wing of Thrall assault cavalry. An elite unit composed of Cymrilian Warrior-Mages serves with the military windships.

In addition, Cymril quarters the Crusher Regiment of the Grand Army (a half-strength reserve formation), the seven windscouts of the Grand Army, a single active windship-of-war, and the warfleet of the permanent reserve (aerial assault vessels).

THE WOODLANDS

Sweeping hills and light forest dominate the Cymrilian countryside. Cymril's forests are primarily deciduous, the largest being the enormous span-oaks. Much of Cymril remains unexplored.

Cymril's animal inhabitants seem tame when compared to other areas of Talislanta. The forests are filled with common avir. Rodents (called *kerrunk*) are ubiquitous in the open country. Wild grey- and silvermane roam Cymril in small herds (d10 x 6 equs). The equs shun contact with humanoids.

Indigenous plant life is slowly being pushed away from the civilized areas by the insidious spread of viridia. The hardy plant was invented by Viridian during the Forgotten Age, and brought to Cymril by the Phaedran settlers. It is choking out the native grasses and trees, and the settlers are trying to exterminate it, despite its myriad uses. The only known way to destroy the plant is with strong magic or the spores of the Scarlet Sporozoid. Arduan Botanomancers are searching for a less expensive way to keep the plant under control.

PHARESANS

In 224, Pharos declared pale green to be the city's official color. This seemed natural to the pale-green Koresians and Tanasians, but the lime-green Pharesians felt isolated and discriminated against. The wearing of multi-colored clothing became their sign of protest against social discrimination.

Eventually, the Pharesians left the city to live in the woodlands, followed by many disaffected or exiled Tanasians. "It is better to live in the wilderness amid the colors of Nature," spoke one Pharesian leader, "than to be branded by color in the city of Cymril."

The Pharesians today follow a nomadic life, living entirely from their trade wagons. Still wearing their multi-colored cloaks of protest, they travel throughout the Seven Kingdoms and the nearby lands, peddling their minor magic, folk medicine cures and anything of value they can procure.

There are eight Pharesian clans. The members of a clan meet only at eight-year intervals, held at the height of summer somewhere in the open lands of Cymril. These gatherings are also the traditional time for Pharesian maids to choose their husbands. The festivities can become quite wild, as prospective mates show their talents in wagon driving, wrestling, racing and with magical cantrips. The older peddlers hold their own contests, competing to make the best trades in animals and goods, to spin the best stories, and to share the most distressing examples of Pharesian persecution.

TANASIAN EXILES

A few villages of Tanasian exiles are spread around the kingdom. Most were once clustered within a day's ride of the City of Cymril, but in the last two centuries they have spread along the Seven Roads. Unlike their urban brethren, these Tanasians have little desire to overthrow the Wizard King, and in fact have grown to detest cities.

The typical woodlands Tanasian is a rough frontiersman, able to ride an equs and swing a sword, with only a fraction of the magical knowledge of his city counterpart. Rumors persist in Cymril of Tanasian robber villages whose livelihood is made from preying on the trade caravans, but the exiled Tanasians vehemently deny this.

AN EIGHTH KINGDOM?

The Jaspas Mountains, in the southeast corner of Cymril, are officially uninhabited. The mountains were granted to the Kingdom of Cymril shortly after the unification of the Seven Kingdoms, because neither Kasmir nor Astar wanted them.

The perplexing problem involves the immigrants. The homeless races of the continent – the Yassan Technomancers, the Bodor, the Yitek, the Orgovians, and so on – would love to claim such a protected land as their own, and settlers continue to move into the mountainland. For similar reasons, the Za bandits have been trying to set up a base here for years. Just as persistently, the Grand Army locates these intruders and forces them out.

Recently, the Wizard King decided to favor a petition to allow the Yassan to settle here as a new kingdom. Unfortunately for the technomancers, the issue can't be settled without an approving vote of the Council of Kings. The recent discovery of silver in the Jaspas has complicated the issue, since Kasmir now would like to claim the mountain range as part of its kingdom.

THE KINGDOM OF DURNE

The grassy, rolling hills of Durne give no hint as to the identity of the land's true rulers. The diminutive Gnomekin have lived in Durne, according to their own legends, since shortly after the Great Disaster, and they fiercely defend their land against those who would conquer it.

Far from warlike in their everyday behavior, these small, brown-skinned humanoids are rarely seen outside their homeland. Many of Talislanta's peoples are unaware of their existence. The Gnomekin, secure in their underground stronghold, are quite happy with this state of affairs.

THE LAND ABOVE

Durne's uninhabited hills and plains can be dangerous for the unwary traveler. There are no rivers in Durne, and few lakes – most of the land's water is found below-ground. No surface cities exist. The closest "settlements" are five Grand Army timber watchtowers, strung out along the Durne Road, and the rude dugout encampment of the Grand Army's Skoryx Regiment in the northwestern woods.

The Dead Lands, comprising the lower slopes of the Obsidian Mountains and the plains south of the range, have been thoroughly poisoned by the Darklings and are devoid of growing things. The new caravan route, from Sahar in Sindar to Akbar in Arim, runs through here. Raids on the trail forced the Council of Kings to transfer the Skoryx Regiment into Durne six months ago. Travelers are advised to beware of wild ravengers and malathropes (as well as more intelligent raiders), and to carry their own drinking water.

Ironwood, the large ironwood forest in western Durne, is the home of malathropes, land kra and shathane. If it wasn't for the predators, it would be a major resource for the Gnomekin.

The Obsidian Mountains, just north of Durne, create a formidable barrier which helps to keep the Ur clans out of the kingdom. The Darklings and Stryx launch periodic raids from here.

Tunnelrock is the most notable feature of Durne's topography. Honeycombed with tunnels and passageways, the stone mound is well-defended. Deadfalls, cul-de-sacs, pits, bottomless shafts and other passive obstacles help the rock's garrison of Gnomekin to frustrate would-be raiders. Non-Gnomekin visitors must be blindfolded before being led through the maze by guides. Below Tunnelrock lies the Underground Highway, the main route to the Gnomekin's Subterranean City, 50 miles to the southwest. The only entrance to the highway in Durne, Tunnelrock is a vital defensive position for the Gnomekin.

THE SUBTERRANEAN LAND

It is said that a traveler is safer below-ground in Durne than on the surface. The Subterranean Land includes the Underground Highway and its connecting tunnels and caverns. The Gnomekin city is in the grandest network of these caverns yet found. The tunnels, extending apparently throughout the continent, mystify scholars, who cannot agree whether they are natural or were somehow constructed in ancient times.

Subterranean Durne is not without hazards, however. Darklings and Satada

raid here, as do land kra, crag spiders and cave bats. Earth Demons, urthrax, great cave worms and unfamiliar creatures occasionally reach the Subterranean City itself and, more rarely, the surface world, carrying off Gnomekin or travelers for their own hideous purposes.

Exploration of the Highway does have its rewards. Gems, precious metals, treasures, weapons left by lost explorers, and even artifacts from the Forgotten Age may be found in the darkened reaches of this realm. Many chambers remain unmapped and unexplored, even close to the Gnomekin's home.

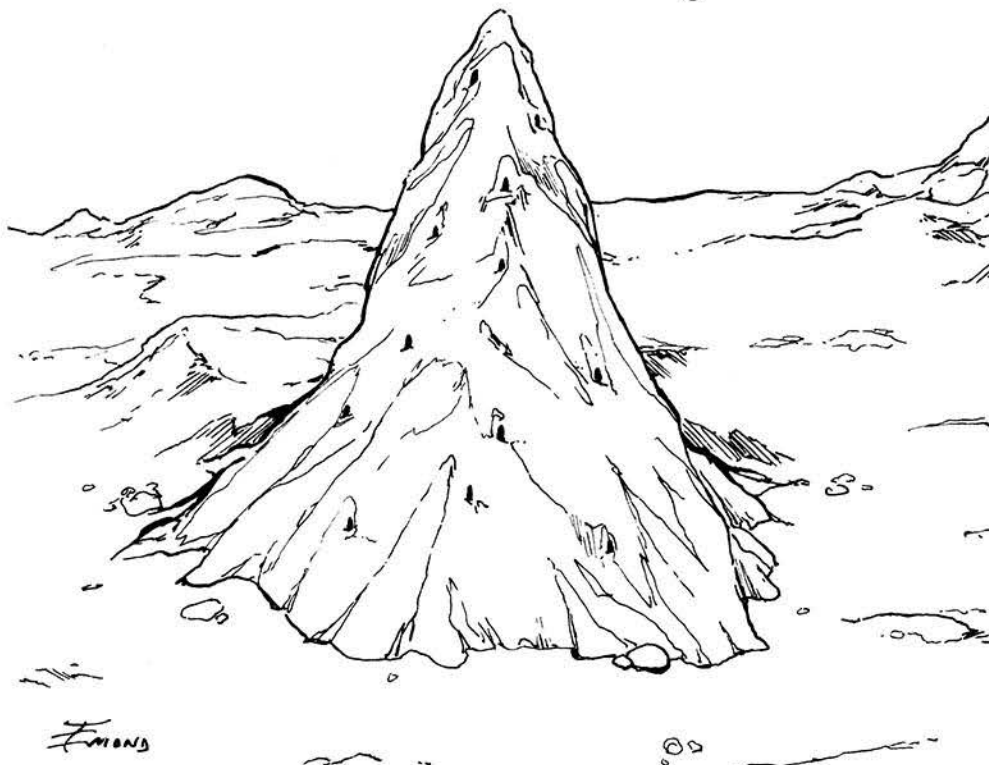
Gnomekin continually patrol the tunnels leading to Cymril, Sindar (Nadir), and Taz (Trang). The other passages are infested with hostile creatures, and the Satada use the passageways extensively. Many tunnels have collapsed or are geologically unsafe. Hidden pits, deadfalls, bottomless lakes and swift-flowing rivers are among the natural hazards which endanger explorers.

THE LAND BELOW

The Gnomekin sometimes confide, in hushed whispers, that below their city is another land, one both strange and terrifying. Called *Surrouu Kooruha* by the Gnomekin, it is rarely visited by them.

In 202, Gnomekin diggers accidentally broke through to a series of ancient caverns beneath the Subterranean City. Creatures from this Land Below have plagued them ever since. The intelligent Subterraneoids and their Drone slaves have never attacked in strength, but their destructive raids cause considerable loss of life.

Gnomekin Crystalomancers claim that the Land Below is ruled by fallen gods and nameless demons – powerful beings banished to the underworld, slowly growing twisted and evil, resentful of upperworlders and thirsting for vengeance. Such claims have not been confirmed – few who have dared to venture Below have returned.



As to the actual geography of the Land Below, no one is certain.

GNOMEKIN HISTORY

The theorists at the Lyceum Arcanum speculate that the Gnomekin are descended from the Gnorls, a mysterious race still found in isolated regions of Talislanta. Surface-dwellers, the Gnorl/Gnomekin were driven underground by the Great Disaster. Beneath Tunnelrock, they discovered the hidden passages of the Underground Highway, hollowed out living space, and eventually discovered the caverns which became the Subterranean City.

The Gnomekin thrived in secret for many years, developing the art of Crystalomancy and cultivating the Whitecap mushroom and Koriana tuber. Unfortunately, the Darklings to the north were forced to migrate south by the predatory Ur. First individuals, then entire bands arrived in the Land Above. Brutal and unintelligent, the Darklings enjoyed slaying the small Gnomekin. Darkling war parties even penetrated the Underground Highway. When the Gnome-King Oseni Kosobo was killed by Darkling raiders in 60, the Gnomekin realized that war was inevitable.

Sabo Orabio, the new Gnome-King, supervised the fortification of Tunnelrock and the Subterranean City. He was just in time. Within five years, the Darkling hordes united under a single leader and prepared for a massive invasion, to defeat the Gnomekin once and for all. Frustrated along the familiar underground approaches, the Darklings marched overland and camped at the base of Tunnelrock, ready to starve the Gnomekin into submission. The Darklings were surprised when no army came out to oppose them, and after an uneventful week, they assumed that the "cowardly" Gnomekin weren't going to resist. The guards of the sprawling, disorganized warcamp became more lax than ever.

Erupting from concealed tunnels, Sabo and his warriors fell upon the unprepared Darklings in a furious midnight attack. Beset on all sides, the invaders died by the score. The survivors fled in a blind panic back toward the mountains, where most were enslaved by the Ur. This victory, known in Gnomekin lore as the One-Day War, is celebrated each year on the 30th of Drome. It is recognized as the event which united Durne as a kingdom.

Sabo Orabio's descendants ruled with intelligence and wisdom. Contacted by the Cymrilians in 146, the Gnomekin saw considerable benefit in an alliance with surface-dwellers. They played an important role in the Seven Kingdoms' victory over the Beastmen, engineering pitfalls, landslides and other catastrophes which killed thousands of the enemy.

THE GNOMEKIN

Brave, affectionate with their families, friendly and somewhat innocent, Gnomekin are easy to like. Idle observers are cautioned, however, not to read too much into their seemingly gentle nature, for the Gnomekin have shown steely resolve against such dangerous opponents as Darklings, Ur and Beastmen. The Gnomekin are a far more complex race than initial appearances suggest.

Gnomekin average three-and-a-half feet in height, with childlike features and large green eyes adapted for life in the dim light of their caverns. Their large, pointed ears are sensitive, giving Gnomekin exceptional hearing. Their hair grows in a single thick black strip which extends as a mane down their back. Gnomekin strength, toughness and recuperative powers are remarkable. They have been known to survive falls of over forty feet.

Literacy is almost unknown among the Gnomekin, and thus they have no books or scrolls. All knowledge is passed verbally, in their pleasant Talislan dialect which sounds to outsiders like the purring of cats. Adapted to life in the dim light of their underground city, they must wear special cusps over their eyes to prevent impairment when exposed to direct sunlight. The warriors are primarily armed with slings – which can hurl crystal or stone missiles, or vessels



containing stenchroot or brown mold – and crystalline shortswords. Gnomekin are also masters of Crystalomancy, a magical art otherwise unknown in Talislanta. (Details on Gnomekin Crystalomancy can be found in the "Arcana" section of this book.)

Gnomekin are self-sufficient, living happily off the bounty provided by their loving Goddess. In most years, they export surplus food to the surface world, where the exotic fare sells at premium prices. Durne also exports crystals and gems, though only inferior crystals with limited magical properties are sold – paying for needed imports.

Often seen by outsiders as carefree, childlike creatures, uncorrupted by the surface world, the Gnomekin are much more than this. The concerns of the surface world – greed, power and conquest – are not important to them. They prefer their simple lives of farming, fishing and artistry to the confusing, often deceitful, practices of the surface dwellers. In such matters as Crystalomancy, subterranean farming, and the defense of their kingdom, however, they are definitely not "carefree." Trusting and generous, their hospitality toward visitors is legendary. The Earth Mother provides Her bounty freely, the Gnomekin say, and they themselves can do no less. Such generosity is withdrawn, however, should a visitor abuse the Gnomekin's gifts.

FAMILY LIFE

Gnomekin family groups are large, close-knit, and affectionate. Couples almost always have young children in their nook, and may raise as many as 40 offspring during their lives. Clans of up to twenty families live together, share a common surname, and are represented by their oldest member on the Gnome-King's council.

Among the most long-lived races in Talislanta, Gnomekin live for up to 150 years. Well cared for – and perhaps, spoiled – while young, a Gnomekin child spends most of his time playing in the tunnels, or accompanying his parents while farming, fishing or working with crystals.

At five years of age, a Gnomekin reaches adulthood and chooses his career. Most follow in a parent's footsteps, though in recent years Gnomekin have begun adventuring in the surface world. Such exploration is looked upon favorably, since the Gnomekin value knowledge of the Land Above.



All Gnomekin marry, and they mate for life. There is no marriage ritual. When a couple wishes to unite, they go to a crystal garden for meditation. After several hours of contemplation, they may end the relationship without quarrel, or take up residence in the communal caverns where they will raise their family.

Pregnancy lasts for six months. During the final three months, the future mother remains in her nook, unable to care for herself, served by her mate and clan sisters. While single births are the rule, multiple births are not uncommon (2-in-6 chance of twins or triplets).

THE GNOME-KING

The ruler of this kingdom is the Gnome-King, whose duties include food distribution, trade relations with other kingdoms, and command of the Gnomekin army in time of crisis. Gnomekin view the hereditary position of Gnome-King as an onerous duty which takes time away from valuable tasks such as farming and crystal cultivation.

The current king, Anio Orabio, is a direct descendant of Sabo Orabio, the Gnome-King who defeated the Darklings in the One-Day War. One hundred and forty years old, Anio is an accomplished artist and Crystalomancer. He speaks most of the major Talislantan languages.

The Gnome-King is advised by the eldest member of each Gnomekin family. He receives military counsel from his most experienced warriors. Political infighting and intrigue are refreshingly absent among the Gnomekin.

Loosely organized under the command of the Gnome-King, Durne's small militia – known as the Fellowship – is capable of taking on and defeating a force several times its own size. Though invasion of the Subterranean City from the surface seems impossible, given the labyrinthine defenses of Tunnelrock, the Gnome-King is very concerned about assault through the Underground Highway . . . and the threat from the Land Below.

The basic unit of the Fellowship is the squad: four to twelve warriors from the same clan, armed with shortwords and slings. Most squads include a Crystalomancer. The oldest Gnomekin commands the group. Males and females both serve. Though not normally warlike, Gnomekin fight fanatically to defend their kingdom. Their

natural toughness helps them survive wounds which would prove fatal to other races.

The Fellowship has no officers, besides the squad captains and the Gnome-King. The Gnome-King gives all of the battle orders, and the captains report directly to him. In the absence of the king, the eldest squad captain takes command. The Gnomekin's cooperative nature prevents serious conflicts over tactics.

LAW AND ORDER

Crime is virtually unknown among the naturally generous Gnomekin. Since this gentle folk have no concept of materialism, thievery is incomprehensible to them.

Visitors or trespassers who damage the harmony of the Subterranean City meet with immediate mob justice. Angry Gnomekin strip, bind, then banish the offender, beaten and covered in stenchroot and offal, to the surface, never to return. Those guilty of the worst crimes – murder, deliberate damage to a crystal garden, black sorcery, or assaulting the Gnome-King – are bound, stripped, and abandoned in the Obsidian Mountains (if the criminal survives, he is still forbidden to enter the Kingdom of Durne).

When crime does occur, suspicion immediately falls on outsiders. The Gnome-King may eject all foreigners for the crimes of one, to avoid further risk to the community.

RELIGION

The Gnomekin revere Terra, the Earth Mother, to whom they owe their lives and livelihood. They see their goddess as a generous one, and are grateful for their uncomplicated lifestyle. Having received of the Great Mother's generosity, Gnomekin feel an obligation to share what they have with others, even non-Gnomekin. Aid sincerely sought is always given.

Female Gnomekin may serve Terra as priestesses, leading worship and prayer services in the city's sacred caverns. Priestesses are accorded great respect, but have no apparent supernatural powers.

Gnomekin religion contains little dogma, as none presume to force their inspirations on others. All have equal access to communication with the Great Mother.

THE KINGDOM OF KASMIR

The Kasmir are known by many names. The Djaffir call them "Tu-Beshal" or "Bloodsuckers." A Zandir saying refers to something being "cold as a Kasmir's heart," and the Sindarans call a particular alchemical vessel "the kasmir" because they use it to boil rare substances without losing a single drop. Wealth always attracts envy, but nothing about the Kasmir belies their reputation.

In ancient times, the Kasmir were slave-stock in the Quaran Empire. They went wandering when that empire fell, along with a like-minded tribe, the Djaffir. Both tribes traveled across the Wilderlands of Zaran, eking out a meager existence in the ravaged wastelands.

Crossing the Dead River, the two tribes came upon the ruins of an abandoned city, surrounded by desert. Passing merchants offered to sell them food and water, but charged a price the liberated slaves could not pay. These tribes were so thirsty that the chief of the Kasmir – they had no king then – descended into the rubble to look for water. He had to be carried out, screaming with joy. Gold coins filled the ruins.

After buying water, Kasmir's chief offered the Djaffir chieftain a chest of treasure out of fellowship, making it clear that his people planned to keep the rest of the golden hoard for themselves. The Djaffir wanted to divide the treasure equally. Djaffir and Kasmir began to quarrel. Tent-cords were cut in the night, stones were thrown, and animals poisoned.

In the end, the Djaffir relented. The Kasmir allowed the Djaffir to leave in peace, but the Djaffir chief said that there would be bad blood between the two peoples from that day onward. The chasm of the Dead River was set as their border – the Kasmir would keep to the west of it, and the Djaffir to the east.

The former slaves had now become rich. They solemnly vowed to keep their wealth and use it wisely, so that no Kasmir would ever want for food or water again.

THEIR DESERT HOME

With their newfound wealth, the wandering tribe decided that they would wander no more. The Kasmir claimed the ruined city – reasoning that thieves would steer clear of such a forsaken place – and built a city, reopening the ancient wells with the aid of their Sindaran neighbors.



Little rain falls in Kasmir. Windstorms sweep the sand, sculpting new dunes constantly. Sponge-bristle, sickleweed and desert palms grow in the northern desert, but tanglewood and scimitar bushes supplant them in the marginally damper south. Sand Demons and malathropes sometimes prowl the Kasmir Road, forcing travelers to seek refuge in the towers of country Kasmir until mercenaries come to drive the beasts away.

Kasmir City. Every Kasmir House maintains a dwelling in the capital city, even if their holdings are in Kasir, or elsewhere in the desert.

Kasir. This small town was built to shelter the caravans on the long journey to the city of Cymril. The discovery of silver in the nearby Jasper Mountains brought unexpected wealth to an otherwise dismal community. The closest mines are operated by foreigners, but are mostly owned or mortgaged to the Old Families.

The Bridge at Kasmir. One of the first, shrewd moves by the Kasmir was to obtain the aid of the neighboring Sindarans in erecting a bridge over the Dead River chasm. This stone bridge, modeled after the much older structure at Nankar, has only enough space for one wagon or three mounted riders to pass at a time. Large caravans take a long time to cross. The kingdom charges a toll of one gold lumen per person or five per vehicle. The twenty Thrall guards stationed here make sure the tolls are paid.

THE OLD FAMILIES

When the Kasmir looted the ancient city, each family took a share of the treasure, with the newly-declared King of the Kasmir retaining more than anyone else. These clans are today known as Kasmir's Old Families, or as the Houses of Kasmir. Only members of these Houses are voting citizens of the kingdom. Every Kasmir money-lending shop, whether in Kasmir or abroad, is associated with one of these powerful families.

The Old Families long ago realized that wealth is of little use if allowed to lie stagnant in protective vaults – they remembered what happened to Orgovia's stagnant currency. Kasmir Houses began to loan money for interest. These investment funds provided capital to build cities, organize caravans and launch businesses – and Kasmir families held mortgages on them all. As borrowers made their profits, loan payments came due . . . and the Kasmir hoards swelled.

Today, Kasmir operate money-lending shops across western Talislanta. The Patriarch of each House distributes his family's hoard among cousins, nephews, children and grandchildren – in Kasmir and abroad. Even if one family member makes a poor loan, or lives in a land that suffers a catastrophe, most of the family fortune is elsewhere. (Naturally, if a Kasmir continually makes bad loans, his family stops trusting him with money.)

The Patriarch (or Matriarch) may also distribute money in order that family members may study trapsmithing (and sorcery), accounting, auditing or other suitable professions. Each Family has its own trapsmiths (no Kasmir trusts his security to outsiders). Likewise, Houses try to keep their auditing contracts within the family, to guard their financial secrets. And while only the dual-encephalon Sindarans can really understand Kasmir's financial system, each family maintains a few Kasmir accountants as a safety measure.

Few realize how much of the western continent's business is controlled by the Kasmir. The money-lending Houses own many of the world's merchant caravans, though they seldom involve themselves directly in trade. With the growing peace in the Wilderlands and the improved chances for getting caravans across the continent, the Kasmir are rapidly expanding their operations into Carantheum and Faradun, and are negotiating with the Ispasians.

Most who learn about the extent of Kasmir's power are afraid to talk about it – with good reason. The Revenants of Arim admire the Kas-

mir money-lending network as a model of discreet operation, and act as a collection agency for Kasmir Auditors . . . a profitable arrangement for both parties.

THE POWER OF THE KINGDOM

A king reigns over Kasmir. He bears no title but "King of Kasmir," and does not receive much public honor. The King of Kasmir has four main functions: to control the Royal Treasury, to serve on the Council of Kings in Cymril, to command the kingdom's army of Thrall mercenaries, and to oversee the Kasmir legal system. The king also appoints the King's Board, a council of between ten and thirty Patriarchs from the Old Families, the head of which serves as the Royal Vizier. The king receives a salary of 10,000 gold lumens per year. He holds his post for life, and can not abdicate.

The kingdom's treasury is rumored to control fifty million gold lumens, in coins, gemstones, and investments spread among many nations and currencies. The coin is kept in the Royal Kasmir Vaults, protected by the kingdom's most ingenious traps.

The Treasury keeps as much as twenty million of its lumens circulating through Kasmir's Old Families. The Houses are allowed to borrow the money at a fraction of the normal interest rate. By adjusting the amount of capital available and the rates of interest, the king can use the Treasury to control the Old Families.

In effect, this lets the king set interest rates for the western world. When the king raises his rate, all of the Houses must hike theirs to maintain profits. High rates then constrict the economy of western Talislanta, making gold more precious than ever. Through this control, the king can bankrupt nations who do not use gold currency (such as Imria). Meanwhile, he keeps the Cymrilian Pentacle artificially inflated in value to support the Seven Kingdoms (and the Kingdom of Kasmir). By lowering his interest rates, the king can flood the market with coinage. When food is scarce and gold plentiful, this causes rampant inflation.

Given these extraordinary powers, the mystery for outsiders is why the kings of Kasmir are so lackluster. Most of the kings appointed by the board are young and inexperienced, often from less distinguished Houses. The reason for this is that the king is a creature of the Old Families. If he offends the Patriarchs, they can arrange to have him killed. The king has no power to resist assassination. His police and army are mercenaries, loyal to the kingdom . . . but not to the king. No Kasmir king dares to offend the Old Families. When a king dies – naturally or under suspicious causes – a new king is selected by the former king's Board.

The Patriarchs of the Old Families are the real rulers of Kasmir, wielding more power than most armies. The nations of western Talislanta court them, sending ambassadors (and spies) to the desolate Kasmir desert to seek favors from the money lenders.

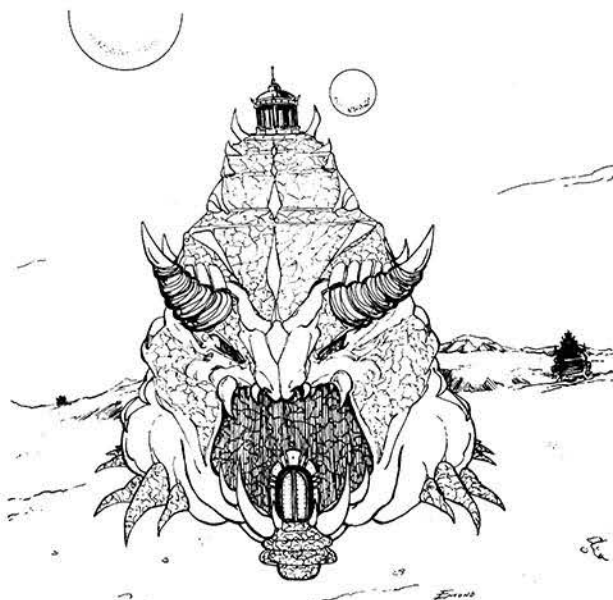
THE LAW

The king has absolute power to create and revoke the laws of the kingdom, but every change must be formally announced from the top of the king's tower nightly for two weeks before it becomes official.

Most of Kasmir's laws have existed for centuries. The Kasmir Legal Codex is 20,000 pages long, and a copy costs 5,000 gold lumens. Most litigators do without a copy, memorizing the laws they use most often. The kingdom's judges and barristers charge high fees for resolving disputes, a condition which minimizes petty lawsuits and litigation.

Some samples of Kasmir law:

"On Being Proven Guilty of Theft, by Stealth or by Violence, for Reasons Foul or Laudable, a Robber Shall be Stripped of the Booty and Flogged on the Kasmir Road, with One Lash Administered for Every Gold Lumen in Value Taken."



"On the Death of Any Citizen, His Fortune Shall be Impounded by the Royal Treasury Pending Examination of the Deceased by a Physician. If the Deceased is Determined to have Died of a Natural Ailment or a Calamity Known To Be Beyond Control Of The Living, the Fortune Shall be Received by the Patriarch of His House. In All Other Cases, the Deceased's Fortune Shall Remain Impounded Until the Killer's Head has been Hewn Off and Displayed to a Judge."

THE MERCENARY ARMY

The Kasmir trust only one race to patrol their kingdom – the Thralls of Taz. The Kasmir Guard consists entirely of Thralls, and is both the kingdom's police and army. The guards perform their job diligently, arresting anyone who breaks well-known laws or offends the Thralls' sense of propriety. The Houses of Kasmir also hire their own mercenaries. The combined strength of these personal guards is far larger than the official military.

The Grand Army's Green Regiment is quartered in the City of Kasmir, and protects the vital road to Kasmir. The border fort of Ikarthis and its legionnaires keep the trade routes to Nankar clear of bandits, while the Seven Kingdoms troops at Akmir in the Wilderlands ensure that east-bound trade from Kasmir moves safely.

KASMIR TOWERS

Traditional money lenders live in windowless towers with a single door. Almost all House towers are built from hewn stone, to avoid the threat of fire. At the same time, Kasmir insist on keeping their homes brightly lit – shadows encourage thieves. The most wealthy Kasmir light their homes with magical globes, considering this expense worthwhile to avoid the danger of fire. The more miserly depend on oil lamps . . . and worry.

Old Families usually own several towers. The Patriarch lives in the clan's tallest tower in the City of Kasmir. When a House opens a money-lending shop abroad, it tries to build a tower there – Kasmir consider foreign buildings vulnerable to theft.

Typical towers. The entrance to a Kasmir's tower opens onto an empty corridor, which ends with a second door. Both doors are barred and stout, and each has a lock of a different type. To break into a Kasmir tower, a burglar must be able to decipher two challenging locks.

The first floor is the money-lending office, with cubicles for each money lender, the office's accountants (mostly Sindarans), and the

one or two menial laborers which most Kasmir employ. Above this level, each floor is a single room. The next higher levels are living quarters for members of the House, one level per family. The Patriarch of the Tower – the head of the family members living here – has his family's quarters above all of the others. The highest level is a dry storeroom. Most towers have a porch on the roof, where the Kasmir congregate in the cool of the evening. Beneath the money-lending office are two basement levels – a library, where financial records are stored in racks of scrolls; and beneath it, a cool storeroom for perishable goods. Kasmir vaults may be concealed anywhere within a tower. The money lenders strive to hide them in unpredictable places.

Ladders connect the levels. Each ladder contains a hollow rung full of jingling bells. At night, the Kasmir pull these ladders up to the living quarters and lay them flat. If a thief tries to set the ladder up and climb it, he cannot help but ring an alarm. Nobody can sneak through a tower without waking the Tower Patriarch.

CUSTOMS IN KASMIR

The Aht-ra. The Kasmir tell dozens of parables concerning the aht-ra. This animal regurgitates its food to chew a second time before completely swallowing it, and stores its fat in several humps. One tale compares money lending to the wise habit of regurgitating food with the intention to improve it and swallow again. The same story can also be an exhortation to reuse worn items. To the Kasmir, an aht-ra's humps symbolize savings. They point to the aht-ra's prodigious consumption of food and water to justify their own hoards and stockpiles.

Because of these tales, Kasmir love aht-ra. When the Kasmir and Djaffir were partners, however, the Djaffir aht-ra handlers never gave them anything but gelded males. The money lenders want a breeding stock of the desert mounts, but remain frustrated by their old enemies.

Clothes. A Kasmir's clothes are always purple, a royal color which indicates that the owner can afford the best. The purple dye comes from imported pearls, and is grossly expensive. Still, no Kasmir will use a cheaper dye.

Women and men alike dress in hooded cloaks and robes, and wear homemade sandals (or padded boots with curled toes, in cold weather). Children's clothes are similar, but their robes are sewn into quilted masses of hems. As a child grows, his mother releases these folds. One garment can last an entire childhood.

Concealed Weapons. Most Kasmir carry hidden weapons to safeguard their wealth. Bladestaves and spring-knives are common, as are other ingenious devices, such as weighted change purses (favored by Kasmir women).

Death and Inheritance. The Kasmir follow careful rules of inheritance. After common Kasmir die, their possessions revert to their House and are redistributed by the Patriarch. When a Patriarch dies, his most profitable money-lending sibling or child becomes the new Patriarch, receiving custody of the family towers and fortune. If the death is suspicious, however, the judges of Kasmir interfere with the inheritance until the cause of death is determined.

Entertainment. Kasmir does not have casinos or most other public entertainments, because the people would never pay to visit them. The money lenders shudder at the thought of gambling. They abhor courtesans for similar reasons – no true Kasmir would risk fathering an extra child whose mother might demand financial support. Only the cheapest restaurants remain popular.

Food. The Kasmir diet is based on foods which will keep. Flat bread and sourdoughs are common. Kasmir also eat pickled tubers, dried/salted meat, nuts, and a spicy bean tea called mochan. Most supplement their stores by gathering bitter desert greens to eat fresh. Except for these greens, Kasmir imports all of its food.

Marriage. Older Kasmir claim to have an idyllic view of marriage. However, Kasmir Houses need large families to expand their ventures – they cannot afford to wait for true love. Parents arrange most marriages, plotting with the Patriarchs to concentrate wealth and spread influence. The betrothed then negotiate with each other over the dowry, which in the end is usually paid by the House most eager for the wedding – regardless of the gender of their betrothed.

Religion. The Kasmir have no native religion. A few money lenders claim to follow Avar the Golden, and regard Farad missionaries as their priests – however, they refuse to pay for temples and statues, and certainly never buy Avar's "holy relics." Most priests of Avar avoid this land.

Success and Failure. Not all Kasmir make good money lenders. The Families try to discover whether children have financial talent early in life, so that the unsuccessful can be guided to other careers in family service while young. Older Kasmir who prove to be failures become the "black aht-ra" of their House. They are often sent to desolate outposts where no one else will go, and are given little investment capital. Others are kept in large and busy shops, under the thumb of a more proficient sibling.

In cases of extreme negligence, the Patriarch of a House will disinherit a Kasmir. Without a House, a Kasmir has nothing and usually commits suicide.

THE TRAP ARTISTS

Kasmir do not have much to export, other than their famous locks, traps and intricate mechanical devices. The most honored craftsmen in Kasmir are its trapsmiths.

Every building in the kingdom contains at least one protective device. Major vaults – those of the Old Families, as well as the Royal Treasury – can only be reached through a series of deathtraps. Kasmir like mechanical defenses much more than live guards, who must be paid and can be corrupted. They feel that the pitiless efficiency of mechanical traps terrifies thieves. The Patriarch of every House chooses clever relatives to become House Trapsmiths, who design the instruments that protect their family's wealth.

Trapsmiths are wizards, studying magic at the trapsmithing academy in the City of Kasmir – founded to obey Shaladin's exhortation to create "the sentinels which watch unblinking." Scholars carry carved wooden eyes as talismans. Sindaran instructors also come to the Academy of Shaladin to teach the apprentices a basic understanding of alchemy. Trapsmiths form close friendships in the Academy, and have a camaraderie which few Kasmir know.

Kasmir traps may be designed to sense trespassers, and capture or even kill them. They often work in magical ways which seem to defy the laws of mechanics. Some traps merely make noise. Common ones use bells on a string, or weights which slide down chutes dragging rattles. Skilled carvers make piercing whistles, powered by air bladders under floor tiles. When someone steps on the flagstone, the bag is compressed, blowing the siren. Another trap uses hollow sound ducts in the floor to amplify noises. A guard listens to these tubes for repetitive sounds, which might be a thief's footsteps.

Many Kasmir employ alarms that alert them without warning the intruder. The simplest method involves a wire which leads through hidden pipes to tug a distant bell. Another popular trap involves sealing rats in a room, who scurry away if the door is opened. If a guard sees them, he knows that someone has opened the door.

Master trapsmiths take pride in simple, inexpensive traps. Some of their favorite devices are based on sand, which can be used to conceal blades or tripwires, as a counterweight for mechanisms with moving parts, or to smother would-be thieves.

Killing thieves is not murder in Kasmir. There are two regulations on man-traps, obeyed by most Kasmir: traps cannot be set without permission from the landowner, and victims may not be lured into a trap.

THE KINGDOM OF SINDAR

Sindar is desert country, consisting in large part of sand which the relentless sun has baked into hardpan. Considered by most visitors to be a wasteland, it has its own beauty. The multi-colored minerals that form the hardpan can, under the right light, make the desert appear paved with gemstones. The ancient, twisted multi-colored stone arches and mesas towering over the flat landscape inspire awe.

According to the kingdom's alchemists, an inland sea covered this area long ago – perhaps as distant as the Time Before Time. The tremendous amounts of sand, silt, salt and gypsum make this land a vast store of resources. Even deeper, the igneous rock underlying the hardpan is a source of silver and rare minerals.

Extremely dry, Sindar actually has vast reserves of water, deep underground. Depth to the water-table is at least 75 feet in most places – too deep for most plants, and for wells. In a few places, there are natural hot springs and geysers, but the water is usually bitter and mineral-laden.

Very little grows here, as the hardpan soil is sterile. The great alchemist Uuriakin Lyth Motaas claimed that "the stuff lacks any virtue to grow plants." He alleged that the Great Disaster was responsible, and started a century-long project to restore the hardpan to productive soil. Although the alchemists eventually formulated a method to turn hardpan into soil, it was so expensive, and required so many alchemists, that it was given up as impractical.

A major problem of the Kingdom of Sindar is food. Two-thirds of its food must be imported, principally from Vardune and the vil-

lages of Cymril. Reflecting this, the typical Sindaran meal is meatless – grain is cheaper to produce and transport. Sindarans typically import dried meat only for flavoring in stews and soups.

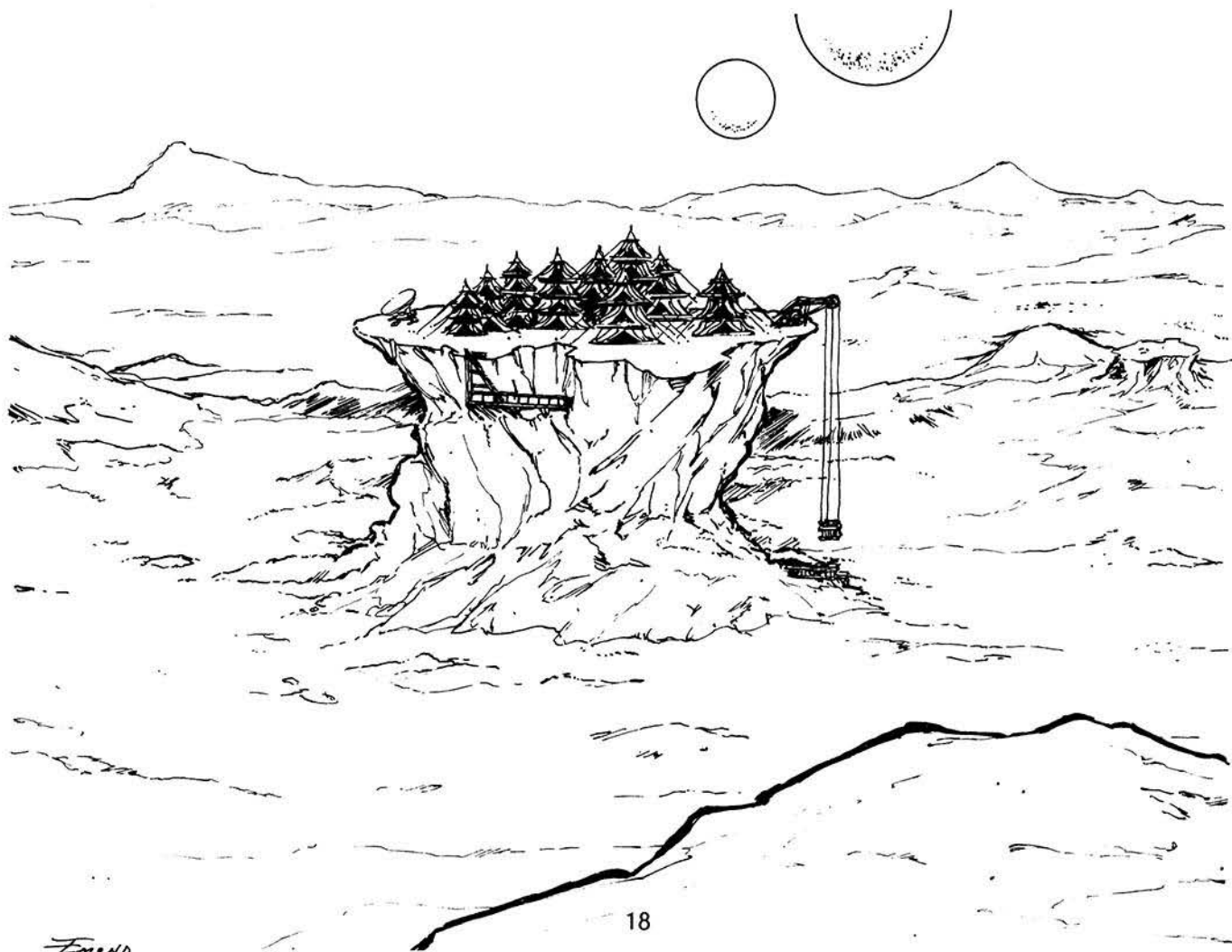
MESA CITIES

The Sindarans dwell on towering mesas, huge sharp-sided rock mounds with flat tops. Mesas can rise up to one thousand feet above the desert hardpan – Nankar is that high – though most are half that tall. Riddled with cracks and crevices, the mesas are protuberances of the rock that underlies all of Sindar. The mesa crown – its flat top surface – is often as large as ten square miles, varying between one square mile (the smallest) to fifty (Nankar). The flat mesa tops or crowns are the most defensible places in Sindar, and this is where the Sindarans build their cities.

The three mesa-cities of the kingdom are:

Nadir. Home of Sindar's best-known Trivarian players, this mesa soars 200 feet in the air, and has a rare natural geyser-spring. Few outsiders travel here, as it is off the caravan routes. A branch of the Gnomekin's Underground Highway surfaces in the mountains north of this mesa.

Nankar. Capital of the kingdom, and the home of its alchemical industry. Merchants seeking alchemicals come to the city from across the continent. In former years, most journeyed along the Sindar Road (leading to Cymril), or the Dead River and Desert Trails (both leading to Kasmir). Recently, a new caravan route has been pioneered to Akbar in Arim, passing through Durne's Dead Lands.



Sahar. Once an isolated community known mainly for its moonstones and dangerous animals (chasm vipers, satada and op-teryx), Sahar is now the Sindar end of the Dead Lands Trail, the new caravan route to Akbar. Raiding Darklings and Ur trouble the alchemical wagon trains, and the need for caravan guards has attracted a rough and tumble crowd of mercenaries to this waystation. The troops of the Skoryx Regiment of the Grand Army also call here frequently.

Each mesa-city has its own gardens and groves. Although Uuriakin's scheme to transform the hardpan into farm soil failed, the alchemists used the formula to create arable soil on the mesa crowns. Fruit trees, grains and green vegetables are all cultivated, irrigated from the mesa wells. These gardens provide one-fourth of the food needed by the desert dwellers.

Nadir Bolthok ura Jatan invented the turning screw, now used by all of the Sindaran cities to pump water from the caverns deep below the desert. The modern water-screws are wind-driven and operate constantly, keeping the water-tanks full. Nankar has five immense pump-screws, requiring a full-time team of Yassan Technomancers to maintain. Although water is plentiful, it is heavy and takes time to draw – Sindarans use it as sparingly as possible.

All mesa-cities have windship docks, including complete facilities for windship maintenance. The mesa-cities also have mine shafts – mostly abandoned – beneath them. Nadir and Sahar were once mining towns, and there are very ancient mine shafts beneath Nankar as well. The upper portions of these tunnels are used for storing perishables. Sindarans also keep their larger collections underground, with only the choicest or newest items staying in the personal possession of the collector. Only the inconvenience of accessing the tunnels detracts from their usefulness.

OUTPOSTS AND STATIONS

Small outposts and villages are scattered among the other mesas of the kingdom. Many of these are mining communities, digging for silver and the rare minerals required in Nankar's alchemical works. The tunnels cannot extend deeper than 100 feet below the level of the desert, since the groundwater floods the excavations at that depth, preventing exploitation of the deeper wealth of Sindar. Experience shows that the deeper a tunnel goes, the larger and more frequent are the valuable deposits. Nonetheless, the available minerals are sufficient to last Sindar's alchemical industry for the next thousand years.

All mining towns have their own water shafts and turn-screws to bring up the life-saving liquid – this is the first act of any new settlement in the desert. Some larger towns have windship docks, but no repair facilities. The Sindaran attitude of "prepared is equipped" means that most dock-equipped outposts keep an emergency supply of Cymrilian concentrate, or, far more infrequently, Phantasian distillate on hand.

There are also frequent communications relay outposts throughout the mesaland. Each has a reflecting mirror – fashioned from a mosaic of Gnomekin brilliantine crystal – to pass coded signals with the neighboring outposts along the communications line. Night or day, the reflectors function – in day, by sunlight; and at night, using Sparkling Oil (a local alchemical product) to fuel giant lanterns.

The reflector system allows the Nadir Absolute to monitor all traffic through his realm, and to quickly become aware of missing caravans. If war came to the Seven Kingdoms, even the most remote Sindaran in the kingdom would know of it within a day of the news reaching any signal station. Since each outpost and community is in constant contact with the system, any disruption in communications is noted and investigated – though a shattered reflecting crystal might be suspected, rather than a Beastmen invasion.

The Sindaran reflector system employs a concise code, so that messages can be passed quickly – from Sahar to Nankar in four hours,

typically. The most urgent or sensitive missives are encrypted in a baffling "Trivarian code" that only dual-encephalons can understand.



DUAL-ENCEPHALY

With two minds, a Sindaran can do two things at once – ponder an alchemical problem while conversing with guests, read two books at the same time, or follow two different conversations. With two brains to devote to knotty problems, a dual-encephalon can unravel complex riddles, untangle twisted situations, and double-check his own conclusions. They delight in the intellectual thrill of out-thinking their opponents, and in using subtlety and subterfuge (but not treachery).

Being double-minded does present problems. Most glaring is the Sindaran inability to learn – or fathom the concepts behind – magic. Attempting to cast a spell disorders the delicate connection between the minds of a Sindaran. The dual-minded brain is also somewhat poorly protected in the skull, and must be carefully guarded against injury.

The hardest task the dual-encephalon can turn to is the game of Trivarian. It requires the absolute coordination of both minds, and is a total mystery to non-Sindarans. Dual-encephalons attach metaphysical and political significance to the game.

The Trivarian board is an exceedingly clear crystal, with long cylinders removed – about one-sixth of the pyramid's volume is empty. In the center, a glowing light – typically a raknid scintilla – radiates. Trivarian playing crystals, known as orbs, bend the scintilla's light when inserted within the playing volume, producing bizarre and beautiful patterns which shift with each succeeding move. The game is played by three competitors.

All Sindarans play Trivarian. The best players are given the title of "Nadir," recognizing their ability to control the vital lower levels of the game's pyramid. Beginners – who are usually trapped at the apex of the board – are termed "Zeniths." Most players fall into the category of "Paridigm," meaning that they comprehend the patterns of basic Trivarian. A game between Nadirs can draw a crowd of hundreds. Much wagering goes on, and large quantities of skoryx and thema – grain cakes popular in Sindar – are consumed.



The best Trivarian player in the kingdom – the Nadir Absolute – rules Sindar. The *Tournament of Nadirs* at Nankar is held every third year on the 21st of Ardan. By force of etiquette, all Nadirs must compete. The tournament typically lasts five days, during which Nankar is swamped with visitors and enveloped in celebrations. The winner becomes the Nadir Absolute, the new ruler of Sindar. As a talisman of his position, the Absolute receives one of Sindar's greatest treasures – a large diamond cut to resemble a Trivarian board, suspended on a gold chain.

THE NADIR ABSOLUTE

Sindar is a loosely organized kingdom. At its head is the Nadir Absolute, but his job consists more of coordinating the efforts of the mesa-cities' Nadir Governors than of dictating their actions. The Absolute is limited by Sindaran etiquette to acting in matters of national concern: the defense of the kingdom, trade and the economy, and maintaining peaceful relations with other nations and between the mesa-cities.

Defense. The Beastmen of the Plains of Golarin, and the Ur warlords with their Darkling and Stryx confederates, pose a constant threat to the security of Sindar. The last invasion was beaten back – with the help of Seven Kingdoms allies – almost four centuries ago, but the raids have never ceased.

Raiders entering Sindar must either make their way through the northern mountains or cross the Dead River chasm. However they approach, they are sure to be spotted – the Seven Kingdoms outpost at Karfan patrols in the Wilderlands, two Grand Army windscouts assigned at Nankar make routine frontier sweeps, and Sindaran Mesa Scouts constantly keep the borderlands under surveillance. Once an enemy is spotted, the reflecting crystal relay stations allow fast and accurate reporting of that fact to the Absolute at Nankar.

Primary defense of the kingdom lies in the hands of the Viridia and Skoryx regiments of the Seven Kingdoms' Grand Army. The soldiers

of the Viridia Regiment are battle-hardened, as this is the most active Grand Army post within the greater nation. The Skoryx Regiment is newly to this frontier, charged with protecting the Dead Lands Trail.

The Nadir Absolute commands the Mesa Scouts, Sindar's only native military force. Reflecting their racial obsession with the game of Trivarian, the scouts are organized into formations of fifty scouts, known as "orbs." As the premier Trivarian master of the kingdom, the Absolute is responsible to move his military orbs to meet projected threats, just as a Nadir makes moves to win a Trivarian match.

Alchemical stores are maintained at Nankar under tight guard. The Sindarans are reluctant to use their powerful weapons, but they will be made available to the Grand Army's windships in the event of war. Limited stockpiles are distributed by the Absolute to the governor of each mesa-city.

Economics. The Nadir Absolute monitors the condition of each settlement and outpost, offering food, troops or cash to those which need it. The kingdom maintains a large reserve of food in the caverns beneath Nankar, keeping it replenished by taking tariff payments on imports in food rather than coin.

Justice. The Nadir Absolute arbitrates disputes between Sindaran communities, should any arise. He also has complete authority over all foreigners within his realm. However, the Absolute may not intervene in matters of justice involving city Sindarans – the Nadir Governor's authority is final.

Since mono-encephalons have difficulty understanding dual-encephalon etiquette, Sindarans allow foreigners considerable leeway. Peacekeepers politely point out any offenses, and request that they cease. In serious cases, outsiders are brought before the Nadir Absolute for an Inquiry. The proceedings, involving Sindaran etiquette, are confusing to mono-encephalons. Typical sentences range from exile (for up to twenty years) to death.

The Nadir Absolute may be forced to abdicate before his time, but the process is difficult. Two of the three Nadir Governors must call for him to step down. However, the Absolute is obligated to heed the call only if any of the governors can best him in a Trivarian match. If the position of Absolute becomes vacant – due to death, natural or otherwise – the Governor of Nankar becomes the interim ruler until the next Tournament of Nadirs.

NADIR GOVERNORS

Each Sindaran city is administered by a Nadir Governor. Like the Absolute, the Governor is determined by a Trivarian contest modeled after the Tournament at Nankar. Each Governor has great latitude to conduct local affairs – constructing new facilities, devising defense measures, meting justice, and providing for the welfare of his citizens.

Mesa defense. Defending the mesa is the prime concern of a Governor. His Peacekeepers inspect the catapults, ballistae and man-traps, to make sure they are always ready for action. Mesa defenses are oriented in two directions: preventing assault from below, and attack from above (Stryx are the most common airborne threat). A variety of noxious and acidic liquids can be dropped on raiders scaling the mesa cliffs, including alchemicals and mining wastes. The most effective is flamphine, an alchemical product which burns hot enough to melt flesh. Tunnels also play an important role in the defense, allowing surprise flank attacks or, in an emergency, the evacuation of the mesa.

Welfare. Just as the Nadir Absolute has responsibility for the well-being of the kingdom, the Governor is responsible for his citizens. He supervises community schools, arranging for instructors and assigning young Sindarans to their classes. He also sees that all Sindarans are gainfully employed.

Justice. The Governor is the only judge in Sindar, and has jurisdiction over all Sindarans in his community. Not even the Nadir Absolute can overrule his sentences. His enforcement arm consists of the Peacekeepers, Sindarans dedicated to maintaining law and order. As detectives, the dual-encephalons are formidable; as police, they often intervene *before* a crime can happen. Peacekeepers also guard the water tanks, armories, and other vital installations of the mesa.

Punishment for Sindarans who commit minor crimes typically involves an onerous task, or a short period of banishment to a mining settlement. More serious crimes call for exile or death.

SINDARAN SOCIETY

Alchemy. Though Sindarans do not practice magic, their culture is not backwards: alchemy takes the place of magic. While not as powerful a tool as magic, alchemy is more easily employed. A *Spell of Elemental Fire* is impressive, but flamphine (a Sindaran alchemical) burns flesh nearly as well, and anyone can throw a vial of it. Nor does killing an alchemist render his wares harmless.

Architecture. Sindarans prefer open, breezy structures. Even their largest “buildings” are frames of hardwood and carved stone, with slit gossamer curtains that shield the interior from the sun and let the winds blow through. A common arrangement is to have communal and cooking rooms on the first floor, with sleeping chambers above. Wealthy Sindarans may have a third tier, where they have private offices and an alchemical library, and quarter their servants.

Collecting. Sindarans have tremendous curiosity, and an insatiable passion for collecting things – almost anything. Collectors generally have a single interest which they devote themselves to throughout their lifetime. Some collections are clan interests, passed down from mother to child. Sindar is a perfect place for preserving fragile things. The dry air is gentle on ancient parchment and wood, and the cool and spacious storage tunnels make marvelous natural preservation chambers.

The Guilds. Alchemists, farmers, scouts, scholars, peacekeepers, and the other professions all have their guilds in Sindar. A Sindaran’s guild is as precious to him as his family. Guild members feel a close brotherhood.

Law. In Sindar, etiquette has the force of law – it is, in fact, the only law. Sindaran etiquette is best understood by dual-encephalons, but the basic outlines are known. The Prime Rule is: “Not shall you impose on others.” The Second Rule is: “Aid when you may.”

The New Alchemy Movement. The Nadir Amoon Nynn was the first Sindaran to theorize that all magic could be explained by the laws of alchemy. He founded the New Alchemy movement, which seeks to decipher the theoretical laws of alchemy which supposedly underlie the phenomenon of magic. The “New Alchemists” are considered radicals by Sindar’s traditional alchemists, but have made some exciting discoveries.

Magic. Regardless of whether demons or devils are involved, magic is not against Sindaran etiquette so long as only willing subjects are involved. The dual-encephalons have a native distrust of magicians, however. Peacekeepers keep a polite, cautious eye on mages who visit Sindaran settlements.

Marriage and Families. Sindarans have no concept of marriage, and have difficulty understanding the importance others associate with fatherhood. Children are entirely the responsibility of the mother and her extended family. Most fathers never meet – and may never be aware of – their offspring. Despite this, there is absolute equality of the sexes in Sindar: males are as likely as females to raise a clan’s children, and both genders are equally prominent in the professions.

Philosophy. Sindarans believe that the world is a reasonable place, and, given time and effort, ultimately explicable by the application of study and logic. While they acknowledge the existence of a creative force and worship the Creator, without proof they do not believe in such things as luck, fate, miracles, and destiny.



THE KINGDOM OF TAZ

The air hums with the sound of insects. Colorful species of avians, many never catalogued, fly from tree to tree, uttering raucous calls. Poisonous snakes and carnivorous plants prey on travelers. Exomorphs, flying vipers, urthrax and even kaliya may be found. Inhospitable to other races, the dense jungles and swamps of Taz are home to the warrior people known as the Thralls.

The Jungle: Thick, richly green tropical jungle dominates most of Taz, forming a dense barrier against invaders and a daunting challenge for explorers. The jungle grows thinner in the north, eventually giving way to the temperate forests of Varduneand Cymril.

There are elevations within the jungle lowlands – rugged rock outcrops, covered with vegetation. Twelve years ago, a party of Sindaran collectors and their Thrall guide found a concealed entrance to one of these. Venturing inside, they discovered that the mound was artificial – a ruin dating perhaps all the way back to the Forgotten Age. While this particular mound proved empty, explorers – mage-scholars from Cymril's Lyceum Arcanum, Sindaran collectors, and greedy rogues from all over – are eager to investigate the hundreds of remaining jungle-covered outcrops. Only the extreme dangers of the jungle restrain them.

The Swamps: The humid jungle-swamps of southern and western Taz are popular with Thrall hunters, but to outsiders they are only hazards along the trail to Mog. Numerous small rivers make travel difficult. Without a Thrall guide, parties have been known to vanish in the region's bottomless bogs. Treasure supposedly left behind by butchered Imrian invaders centuries ago has never been found.

Bog devils, urthrax, swamp demons, and giant leeches threaten travelers, and are hunted enthusiastically by Thrall expeditions. Yellow stickler, serpentvine and whisp bane are likewise found here, along with less benevolent species such as needleleaf, stranglevine and violet creeper. Bombo trees thrive along the southern rivers.

The Rivers: The broad Axis River, on Taz's western border, is frequented by Jhangaran canoes and Arduan barges. Hostile Jhangaran raiders, as well as water raknids and other dangerous river creatures, make journeys to Taz and the south difficult. The trading settlement and river port of Tath is crowded with Thrall mercenaries hoping to be hired by barge captains. Jungle hardwoods and herbs are traded here, as well as Tazian-trained steeds.

Many small rivers crisscross Taz, providing a further barrier against invasion. These rivers are shallow and slow-moving, but river crossings are complicated by schools of chang and hidden sinkholes.

The Cinnabar Mountains: These low ranges, named for their rich deposits of red cinnabar, form a natural barrier between Taz and Mog. The worn, forested slopes are the only significant highlands in the kingdom. Thralls hunt exomorphs, mandragore and the rare crested dragons here. Poisonous snakes and crag spiders add to the thrill of the sport.

Legends persist of an ancient city whose ruins perch on one of the peaks, but no modern explorer has seen it. More pragmatic souls are interested in speculation that a Phantasian windship flotilla, lost en route to Cymril, crashed here with a cargo of dream essence.

THE TRIBES

The Thralls' basic political unit is the tribe, a military organization with the chief as supreme commander. The chief selects specialists for the seven positions on the tribal council: armorer, beastmaster, blacksmith, chief of scouts, master of tattoos, provisioner, and war engineer. Clan leaders act as junior officers. Two-thirds of each tribe's population serve as warriors.

Tribes are divided among as many as four settlements. Thrall villages are military fortifications, with log palisades, communal bar-

racks, and warehouses for supplies, all surrounded by a defensive ditch. Typical villages have several hundred inhabitants, but a Thrall city may have several thousand.

Taz's dense vegetation precludes an extensive system of roads – narrow trails connect Thrall villages. The Taz Road, leading from Tor to the wizard-city of Cymril, is the only paved surface in the kingdom. The road is maintained by the tribes through whose regions it passes. Wealthy tribes sometimes hire Maruk laborers to handle road care, while less affluent villages send young labor gangs to do this work.

The Aam Tribe controls the kingdom's capital city and the vicinity. They are an aloof and proud people, aware of the important role which their tribe has played in Tazian history. Their tattoos are the most complex and detailed in all of Taz. Chief Traz is quick to help warriors and travelers in distress, but he's strict – more Thralls are outcast from his tribe than any other.

Chief settlement: The City of Tor (population of 3,000)

Tattoo colors: Red and yellow

The Junn Tribe lives in and around the river-port trading city of Tath, and has more contact with foreigners than most of their countrymen. Chief Tegg leads the Junn in battle.

Chief settlement: Tath village (1,500)

Tattoo colors: Orange and green

The Kann Tribe takes pride in its tradition as battle commanders, pointing to the role which their tribe took during the Imrian invasion of 570. Many Kann serve as officers in the Grand Army of the Seven Kingdoms, and in mercenary contingents in foreign lands. Eight years ago, a Faradun merchant hired a large number of Kann to serve as officers – enough to staff a small army. None have returned, though gold from their employer continues to arrive in Trang as promised. Chief Gaz is concerned, but can think of little he can do to resolve the mystery of what has happened to his warriors. Trang is built around a hilltop containing an outlet of the Gnomekin's Underground Highway.

Chief settlement: The City of Trang (2,500)

Tattoo colors: Red and blue

The swamp city of Targ is home to the **Nam Tribe**, the finest hunters in Taz. Chief Ruzz has personally slain six swamp demons, and continues to accompany her warriors on hunts despite her increasing age. Recently, several hunting parties have failed to return. Ruzz is planning an expedition into the swamp, fearful that dark sorcerers have come to Targ Swamp to harvest devilroot and k'tallah.

Chief settlement: The City of Targ (2,000)

Tattoo colors: Yellow and green

There are many other tribes, but none as powerful.

THE WARRIOR-MONARCH

Politics in the Kingdom of Taz are straight forward, based on Thrall martial values. Each year during the Tournament of Challenges, all Thrall who wish to rule the kingdom gather in the City of Tor. A random drawing determines each contestant's opponent, and the warriors battle until a single victor emerges, to be crowned Warrior-King (or Queen) for the next year.

The Warrior-Monarch has the authority to declare war, pardon criminals, and levy taxes and tariffs. He is Taz's representative at the Council of Kings and the commander of Taz's tribal army. He is advised by the Tribal Council, composed of the chiefs of all of the Thrall tribes.

Criminals may appeal to the Warrior-King as a last resort before being executed or banished. The monarch considers the crime, as well as the accused's history (as indicated by his tattoos), before making a decision. Many times, a compassionate king will order

convicts with honorable combat records to be executed, rather than endure the shame of banishment.

The current Warrior-King is King Marr. A 50-year-old veteran of the Grand Army, he is a powerful warrior, making up for his growing slowness with craft – he has never been defeated in garde combat. Recently, he has grown concerned that the Seven Kingdoms' southern borderlands – particularly the uninhabited southeast corner of Astar – are undermanned, and offer little deterrent to a potential Imrian invasion. He has studied the defenses of the Sindaran border, and would like the Council of Kings to approve something similar in the south: scout patrols deep into Mog and the Dark Coast; a fort on the lower Zephyr River, with the Crusher Regiment brought out of reserve to man it; and a squadron of Arduan barge-forts in Lake Zephyr. Unfortunately for King Marr, the Muses violently oppose such a disturbance of their woodlands, the Kasmir oppose the expenditures required, and the Sindarans question the need.

SOLDIERING

Thrall fighting abilities are famous throughout Talislanta. Taz's mercenary warriors have left lasting impressions on the Beastmen of Golarin, the Ur clans, the Imrians, and the Za bandits, and currently serve in lands as distant as Carantheum and Zandu.

Thrall warriors are the backbone of the Grand Army. While loyal citizens of the Seven Kingdoms, the Thralls are officially mercenaries – each has a mercenary soldier's contract to serve the Council of Kings.

Mercenaries from Taz also serve elsewhere in Talislanta, returning home with gold and other treasures to enrich their tribe. Most Thralls serving abroad send a portion of their income home to their tribe. To sell their services more efficiently to foreign buyers, Thrall warriors often group together into mercenary squadrons or companies. The equipment and training required by the mercenary formation depends on its class:

Light Infantry: Skirmishers, flanking forces or scouts, light infantry harry the enemy with bow fire, preparing the way for heavier troops. Equipment: greatsword, bow.

Shock Infantry: An awesome fighting force, Thrall heavy footmen rarely break and never rout. Few enemies can stand before them. Equipment: greatsword, heavy crossbow.

The Thralls developed cavalry after the unification of the Seven Kingdoms (mounted soldiers are impractical within Taz's jungles and swamps). Thrall cavalry soldiers do not use their True Swords, which are unsuited for mounted combat.

Light Cavalry: Scout riders and a pursuit force, Thrall light cavalry outflank their enemies and ride down stragglers. Equipment: broadsword, lance, bow, greymane or marsh strider mount.

Assault Cavalry: Even more feared than their infantry counterpart, Thrall Assault Cavalry are a heavy force, used to crack an impenetrable defense, or to break units already weakened by arrow fire or previous attacks. The Ur especially hate Thrall assault cavalry, and seek them out with vengeful fury. Equipment: broadsword, lance, mangonel lizard.

All Thralls, regardless of their tactical formation, wear garde.

Tribal Armies. Each Thrall tribe maintains its own military force, known as a *zaru*. Any Thrall may be called to duty, but children and the elderly are normally excluded. Tribal warriors wear no armor beside garde, and fight with True Swords. Slingers and bowmen make up one-fourth of the force, and shoot with deadly accuracy even in dense jungle. When time allows, the soldiers in each tribe elect their own commander – a Warrior-Chief.

In a time of national emergency, the tribal forces form the Tribal Army of Taz, commanded by the Warrior-Monarch.

ORIGINS OF THE KINGDOM

The Thralls, sorcerously bred to serve as warriors for one of the forgotten kingdoms, were intended to be soulless pawns, capable of defeating any foe but incapable of disobeying orders. However, they proved tougher than anticipated, outliving their sorcerous masters who succumbed during the Great Disaster.



The freed Thralls retreated to the jungles of Taz and northern Mog, and were overcome by barbarism and superstition. These early tribes fought each other unceasingly. Imrian slavers raiding deep into the coastal swamps and forests found the disorganized warriors easy prey. Soon, the Thrall tribes in Mog were decimated. The Imrians next established inland forts from which they prepared to raid into Taz itself.

Into this desperate situation came a Thrall of exceptional courage and insight – Zar of Aam. He realized that the disunity of the tribes would lead to loss of the Thralls' treasured freedom. Chief of the Aam tribe, Zar formed alliances with three other major tribes, then conquered or absorbed the smaller tribes until all of Taz was united under his blood-red banner.

Finally, Zar led Taz's first Tribal Army south against the Imrian forts in Mog. The slavers were no match for the united Thralls, who drove the slavers back into the sea. Zar, wounded during an Imrian night-attack, led his armies back in triumph and was proclaimed Taz's first Warrior-King.

In 146, the Kingdom of Taz joined Durne and Cymril in the alliance which would become the Seven Kingdoms. Thrall mercenaries were already the backbone of two nearby national armies: Kasmir's Royal Guard and the Cymrilian Legion. Now they became the foundation of the Grand Army of the Seven Kingdoms. Thrall military might would keep the unified nation free and at peace.

THRALL CULTURE

Banishment. A warrior convicted of serious crimes is often banished from Taz. The outcast's True Sword is confiscated and broken, and he is tattooed with the Mark of Shame, an icon symbolizing disgrace. Thralls often commit suicide rather than face this fate. The few that survive become bandits, rogues and criminals of the worst sort.

The Challenge. Thralls rise in social position within their tribe through challenge and duel. Any warrior may challenge any other warrior to duel-combat, including his chief. There is no honor in defeating a less-qualified foe. By custom, a warrior never challenges a superior unless he is certain that he would make a better commander.

Disability. Thralls who are maimed in battle or otherwise physically unfit for combat serve their chiefs as scribes, messengers or advisors. However, crippled warriors often choose ritual suicide, a highly honored act in Thrall society.

Duels. Thrall duels are fought with Tazian garde combat. The battle usually ends with first blood, but competing warriors may fight until one either surrenders, is incapacitated, or dies. Surrender when faced by a clearly superior opponent, or when too wounded to continue, is not dishonorable – a warrior who knows his limitations is respected for his honesty and courage.

Food. The major staples of the Tazian diet are *kasu*, a wild legume which grows in the jungle, and *spotted erd*, 800-pound grazing animals which are a source of meat and cheese. Thralls are hunter/gatherers, who care nothing for farming or herding.

The Hunt. Hunting is admired among the Thralls, and considered suitable training for a warrior. Parties of up to a dozen adults venture into the swamps or jungles in search of exomorphs, winged vipers and other challenging game. The rare swamp demons are particularly favored, and great status is accorded the lone hunter who can succeed in slaying one of these fearsome beasts. The Monarch-King himself makes an annual hunting trip to Targ Swamp.

Law and Order. There is little crime in Taz. A communal society precludes thievery, and cold-blooded murder is rare – violations of military discipline are the only "crimes" committed with any frequency. Warriors found guilty of disorderly conduct, failure to carry

out orders, or similar infractions are exiled from Taz. Serious criminals are executed outright.

Foreigners are not subject to the harsh penalties of Thrall military law. When convicted of a minor crime, an outsider's usual punishment is a fine set by the tribal elders, or service with the Tazian military.

Marriage. Two Thralls who wish to mate and begin a family must declare their intentions to their tribal chief, whose approval is required. Such unions are based on mutual respect between warriors or hunters, as well as the desire to strengthen the tribe with new members. Romantic love is unknown in Thrall culture.

Pregnancy among Thralls lasts four months. Prospective mothers are able to fight, hunt and work without impairment until twelve days before birth.

Old Age. Most Thralls never reach old age. Those who do are greatly respected, and serve their tribal chief as advisors. Although war and fighting play a large role in Tazian society, the Thralls see no dishonor in the infirmity of old age, and value their elders for their experience and advice. Old warriors spend much time in quiet contemplation, or in reliving past glories with their fellows.

Religion. Theology (and magic) hold little interest for the pragmatic Thralls. The religious wars between neighboring Aaman and Zandu seem particularly pointless to them, and their traditions of a sorcerous origin deprive them of any interest in the Creativism prevalent in Cymril. The rationalism of Sindar might attract them, if the Sindarans could explain it without making it too complex for mono-encephalons. The average Thrall feels that religion is a waste of time.

Thrall mysticism centers around reincarnation – the belief that a brave warrior is reborn to fight again – but is believed with more fondness than fervor.

Tattoos. A Thrall's tattoos tell much about his tribe and himself. Upon reaching adulthood, a warrior receives the tattoos of his tribe – icons representing celebrated ancestors and great victories in tribal history. As he grows in experience, a Thrall's battle companions award him further honors – tattoos depicting personal battlefield victories, hunting victories, great antagonists and favorite weapons.

A Thrall can determine many things from studying another's tattoos. Foreigners find these markings colorful, but lack the background in Thrall iconography to decipher their meanings. Few non-Thrall scholars have studied the intricacies of these symbols.

Youth. Thralls are not particularly affectionate parents. Children's games and gifts are exclusively of a military nature. Elder members of the tribe assist a young Thrall in learning the ways of combat and adult life. Yet much of a Thrall's knowledge of combat is instinctive – a talent inbred in the race by their sorcerous creators.

Thralls grow amazingly fast. Within two years, a Thrall child has three-quarters of his full height. Adulthood comes at age eight, complete with a ritual where the colorful tattoos of adulthood are explained and applied. Until adulthood, Thralls may not use or even touch a True Sword, the Thrall greatsword.



THE KINGDOM OF VARDUNE

Vardune is a country overgrown by a vast forest. Most of the forest is composed of viridia trees – a prolific plant that grows so readily that the open country of neighboring Cymril and Durne threaten to be overrun by it. The majority of Vardune's forestland is cultivated and maintained by the Ardua, who make their tier-homes within the viridia trees. Viridia is their most precious resource. The plant provides buildings, roads, linen cloth and much more.

Tanglewood, needleleaf and stranglevine, though dangerous, are allowed to grow here – the Arduan horticulturists insist that the plants are needed for a proper natural balance. Likewise, ogriphants, exomorphs and other predators are allowed to roam the woodlands. Wood Whisps, despised by the Ardua, are a plague in some areas.

The Ardua are able to avoid most of these dangers, because they don't travel the forest beneath their feet. Instead, they use their Botanomatic magic to weave the malleable viridia plant into vine-form, and build lattice-roads high in the air. These roads connect all of the Arduan settlements, parallel the Axis River, and connect to strategic border outposts. The Vardune Road – part of the Seven Roads, leading from Cymril to Vardune's capital at Vashay – is the only ground roadway in the kingdom.

Most visitors find the lattice-roads too precarious for their tastes. Therefore, Arduan border guards make sure that all travelers are shown the bark-rune representing danger. Areas marked with this rune should be avoided. Better yet, those journeying along the Vardune Road should not venture off it.

ARDUAN ORIGINS

The Ardua, unlike most other civilized races, do not keep formal records. They have little use for the past, and find their racial history depressing. Only the lessons from the past are worth retaining.

What history they do have is written into the bark-runes of the History Tree at Vashay, and the Clan Trees of the individual clans. The trees are of various species, but all develop the same unique appearance: towers of branches and forks, intricately managed and styled. Each clan has at least one Clan Tree, tended by a Botanomancer specializing in their care. Whenever a clan female hatches a fledgling, a new branch is grown on the tree. Bark-runes are recorded as the child grows, marking his progress through life. The runes – an ancient Arduan alphabet – are inscribed on the trees through Botanomancy, and consist of a series of vertical marks read from top to bottom.

To write an Arduan history, in the same sense that other races use the term, would require years of research, compiling snippets of information from the trees. Several Lyceum scholars have grown old or mad in the attempt.

Some basics are known, nonetheless. The Ardua believe they originally came from a branch of the great Elemental Tree. They were once capable of flight, but tragically lost this ability – whether due to magical curse or disaster is not known. The Ardua spent generations fleeing from civilized persecutors. Their latest exodus was from the Phaedran Empire, forcing them to take shelter east of the Axis River in the Forest of Vardune. Tired of running, they determined to groom the forest to defend them, and never move again.

ARDUAN PHYSIOLOGY

The Ardua are closely related to birds and other creatures of the air – they are tall, thin bipeds with hollow bones. No longer capable of flight, they can only glide from a height. There are two separate sub-races of Ardua: the Blue, who are hunters and warriors; and the Green, farmers and Botanomancers.

Arduan food consists of seeds and fruit, with the occasional boiled giant waterbug (a delicacy) thrown in. Outside of Vashay, there are very few facilities for non-Ardua. Experienced travelers bring their own food.

Biology. Male and female Ardua are equal in strength and skill. There is no sex-based discrimination in their society. The headcrest is the only outward difference between males and females. A female's headcrest feathers are equal in length, while a male's taper toward the back.

Powerful biological urges and ancient rituals dominate Arduan reproduction. Each mature Arduan female forms a single egg twice a year. During this time, she produces pheromones – sexual attractants – which cannot be resisted by Arduan males. Females which do not wish to be fertilized must avoid males altogether at this time. There are places of retreat set aside for this purpose. The population is kept from growing too swiftly, despite the high ovulation rate of the females, by the fact that females dislike pregnancy.

The Arduan sub-races prefer to breed with mates of their own color, though their biology makes such control difficult. Even if the sub-races mate, however, there are no half-green or half-blue Ardua. The chick always takes after the mother.

Once fertilized, the female ceases to produce pheromones, and the quickened egg grows inside the mother for another three months. The egg is then laid, and must be kept warm and protected for a further three months before it hatches.

Fledglings are raised by the clan chick-rearers until nine years old, when they are apprenticed to someone in the clan to learn a profession. Following this two-year apprenticeship, the fledgling is recognized as an adult.

THE ARDUAN CLAN

Clans have hundreds of members, and are the basic element of Arduan life. These self-sufficient units contain warriors, chick-rearers, food-gatherers, tool-makers and craftsmen. Blue Ardua clans have more warriors, while Green Ardua clans have more farmers. Each clan has its own village, and its warriors patrol its part of the forest.

Each clan produces something. Many Green Ardua clans specialize in one or more viridia products — cloth, parchment, staves, bows, and so on — or grow food. Blue Ardua clans often produce native Arduan weapons — the Arduan javelin, crescent-knife, crescent-spear, and dart-thrower — or traditional Talislantan weapons such as bows, crossbows, staves and hand axes.

When the Kingdom of Vardune united with the other of the Seven Kingdoms, the Ardua — suspicious of an all-Thrall Grand Army — insisted that Blue Ardua warriors be included in the force. Then, discovering that the Thralls were mercenaries, the River King insisted that his warriors be paid as well. Thus, the concept of mercenary soldiering came to the clans of Vardune. Two-thirds of the money paid goes directly to the clan coffers; the soldier receives the balance for personal expenses.

Arduan mercenaries are very important to the Seven Kingdoms, as the Ardua are swift and quick, a good balance to the slower, heavy Thralls. They serve as pikemen and skirmishers, using their speed and numbers to make up for their light weight. Their job is to locate and pin the enemy, allowing the Thrall assault cavalry to launch a flanking charge. Arduan mercenaries are armed with crescent-spears, Arduan javelins and crescent-knives, and wear no armor.

Once introduced to the idea, many of the clans decided that sending their members abroad as mercenaries made good sense. Most of these other mercenaries are farmers and horticulturists — Cymril needs Arduan farmers to exploit its fertile hills.

CLANS AND THE NATION

Ardua are governed by eleven-member clan councils, elected annually from among their clan members. Councils solve all disputes and direct clan policy. Intra-clan disputes are mediated by a neutral council from another clan.

Each clan council sends a representative to the Great Council of the Ardua, the ruling body of the kingdom. The Great Council also acts as the honorary clan for all visitors in Vardune, seeing to their care and executing justice when required.

Through a rotation system, all of the Blue Ardua clans must periodically loan soldiers to the Great Council. This militia force guards the Axis River in barge-forts, and patrols the forest along the northern frontier with the Kingdom of Durne. A standard forest patrol consists of d10 x 3 Blue Ardua warriors from three clans, armed with Arduan javelins and crescent-knives (one in four has a dart-thrower). They seldom wear armor. River warriors use dart-throwers rather than javelins, and carry several crescent-knives. Their living barge-forts are superior to any craft which might challenge them — a fact the Imrians learn each time they try to raid upriver.

THE RIVER KING

The River King stands for the Ardua in the Council of Kings. This is his sole power and purpose, for the Great Council rules the kingdom. Nevertheless, the River King has a heavy responsibility, for the Council never repeals an action which their representative takes while seated on the Council of Kings.

It takes an unusual Ardua to serve as River King. Considerable diplomatic skills are required to maintain amicable relations with the other nations of the Seven Kingdoms. The king is also expected to dwell in Cymril part of the time, isolated from the social reinforcements of clan and forest.

When a new king is needed, the Great Council calls for the clans to propose candidates for the post. Despite the hardships of the job, it is a great honor for a clan to have a member accepted as a River King candidate. The nominees are then placed into a situation — the Test of the River King — where they must demonstrate the necessary virtues of wisdom, knowledge, intelligence, flexibility, diplomacy, and self-control under stress. The candidates are monitored, with the one who performs best in the eyes of the Great Council being declared the River King.

Arduan kings do not serve for life. They may petition the Great Council for release on completion of a successful year of service. Clans may also petition the Great Council to allow the River King to return to them in case of need. The Great Council of the Ardua has full authority to recall poor kings, or to retain needed ones at their post.



CITIES OF TALISLANTA

The following descriptions cover four of the most interesting cities in the Seven Kingdoms: Kasmir, the desert city of towers; Nankar, built on a mesa top; the Subterranean City of the Gnomekin; and Tor, the fortress-city of the Thralls.

Two cities of the Seven Kingdoms have been described in previous books: Cymril, in both *THE CHRONICLES OF TALISLANTA* and *THE TALISLANTA HANDBOOK* (second edition), and Vashay (of the Kingdom of Vardune), in *THE CHRONICLES OF TALISLANTA*.

THE CITY OF KASMIR

Kasmir was originally built upon the ruins of an ancient walled city, considered the most cost-effective means of establishing a settlement. The city's population has grown in the centuries since then, but no Kasmir king has dared to suggest spending money on new walls (for fear of provoking the Old Families). Therefore, the Kasmir continue to crowd more buildings within the same area. Kasmir's once-orderly street grid is now a maze of alleys running at odd angles, jutting in all directions to avoid buildings. Pedestrians can barely squeeze between the congested towers.

Although laws prescribe a fine of 100 gold lumens for tossing rubbish into public view, most of the alleys are choked with garbage – no Kasmir wants to spend money on trash disposal. The king irregularly hires gangs from the Laborer's District to tidy the streets.

1) City Walls: Kasmir's wall is 20 feet high, composed of cracked and discolored stone blocks – unattractive, but sound. Five hundred Thralls of the Kasmir Guard are assigned to patrol the battlements. This wall does not have or need towers, since the Old Families' towers rise over it, providing platforms for archers.

2) Financial District: The Old Houses maintain their ordinary money-lending offices here. Prestigious clients are invited to the Old Families District, or entertained at the Stone Tavern.

3) Trapsmiths District: Kasmir's trapsmiths are located on this side of town, where the materials they need are conveniently at hand. Competition is sometimes fierce between Houses, and each Family keeps its trapsmiths in separate towers. The 1st of Drome is the date of the Trapsmiths Convention, when competitions and seminars are held.

4) Old Families District: The cluster of time-darkened towers here belongs to the most influential Houses in the kingdom. The Patriarchs shuttle through the streets at night with their private guards, moving to secret meetings of the King's Board (without the king) to decide national policy. Several of the Old Family vaults are concealed within or beneath this part of the city. A low wall – and patrolling private guards – separates this district from the rest of the city.

5) Emissaries District: This part of the city, partitioned by a 6-foot wall, is reserved for the use of foreigners. The Old Families rent towers here to their prominent clients, and the kingdom makes sure that powerful nations can rent quarters here for their ambassadors and representatives. Thrall guards close the gates between this district and the rest of the city after nightfall, opening only to Kasmir and their guests.

6) Laborers District: Located outside of the city proper, these shacks are the homes of foreigners working in Kasmir service – mostly as common laborers. Maruk, free Monads and Arimites form the majority of the inhabitants. Arimite Revenants have a firm control on everything that occurs here. The Kasmir Guard does not go here after dark.

7) Farms: A few non-Kasmir eke out a living by raising the desert vegetables which Kasmir relish. With rain unlikely and wells uncertain, life is desperate for these honest but poor wretches – chiefly Maruk farmers and Monad Servitors.

8a) The Kasmir Road: Kasmir's branch of the Seven Roads cuts

through this congested city, and is the only place where one can see the sky. It is also the only part of the city with enough open space for a market. A crier announces the names of defaulting debtors each day along the road.

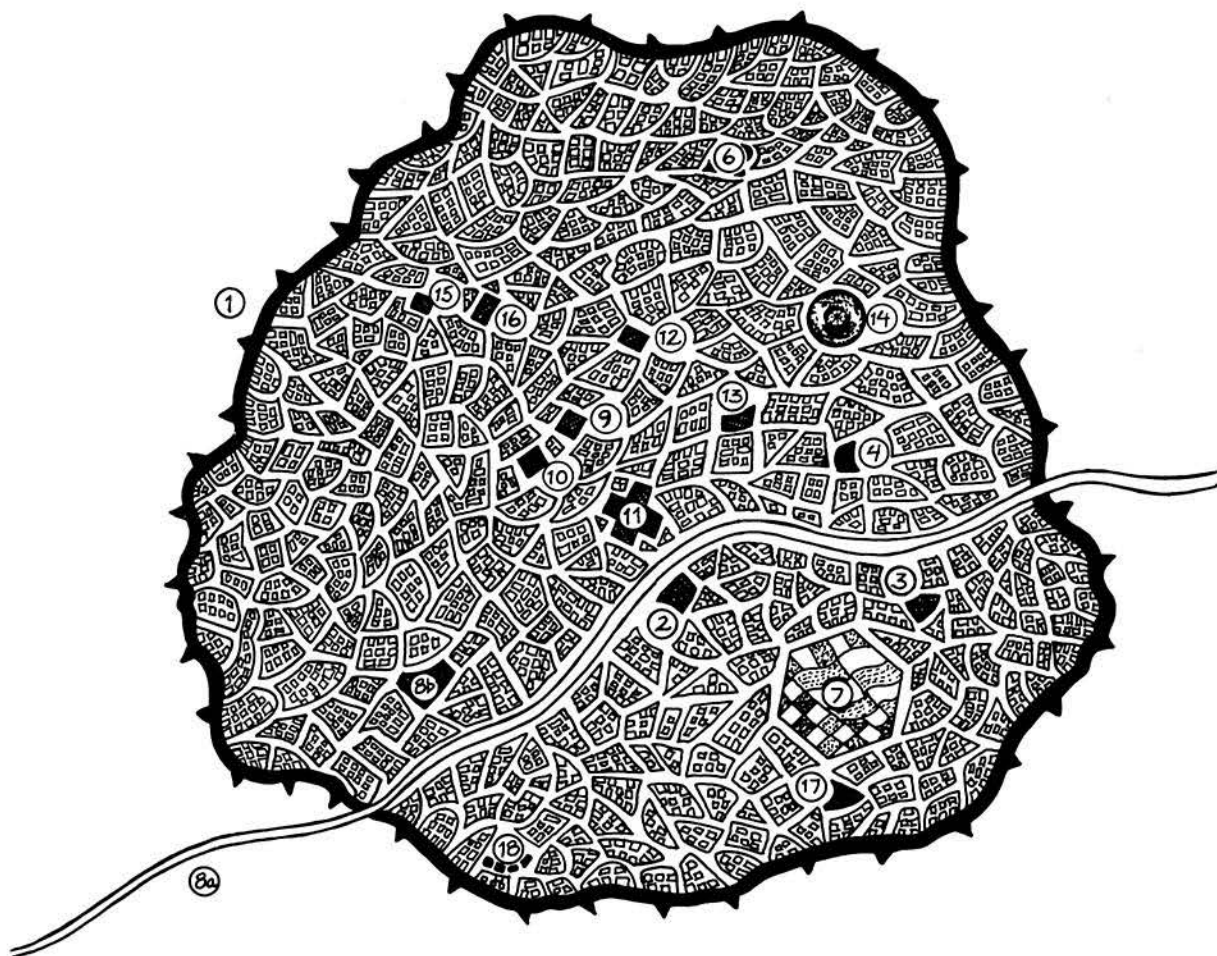
8b) The Market: Merchants erect their stalls everywhere along the Kasmir Road. Most deal in grain, purple cloth, lamp oil and similar necessities. A few sell valuables, as investments for thrifty money lenders. Litigators come here to sell bits of the Kasmir Legal Codex which they have memorized or hand-copied. Trapsmiths in need of foreign business may come here, although they maintain their workshops in the Trapsmiths district.

The stalls threaten to make this area as congested as the rest of the city. Therefore, the Kasmir Guard drives a loaded wagon down the road each day. The law requires that the wagon must have enough space to pass the length of the city without turning. If any stall blocks its way, Thralls tear it down.

9a) The Royal Tower: The King of Kasmir lives in a plain tower, differing from others only in that it is unusually wide. A royal guard (15 Thralls) maintains watch in the entry corridor. Beyond is a barren throne room containing a platform and a carved-wood throne, where the king grants minor audiences. On the level above is the Board Chamber, where the King's Board meets weekly to advise the king. The remaining tower levels are off limits to everyone except the Patriarchs of Kasmir, and are the private quarters of the king, his family and servants. Five trusted Thralls patrol the upper levels.

9b) The Vaults of Kasmir: The fabled vaults lie beneath the Royal Tower. They are reached by descending through a series of ten identical rooms (one above the other), each equipped with the kingdom's best locks and traps, along with secret doors and chained guard-beasts. Only the king and the royal vizier know how to pass through the death maze, and even they make occasional mistakes – errors which cost the life of a royal guard or two. The treasury guards (15 Thralls) live in the vault itself, and are visited twice weekly by the king, along with servants bearing food and other necessities. The treasure is further protected by traps concealed among the barrels of gems and heaps of coins. Each new king conducts an fresh audit of the treasury. It is an ancient tradition that each king ask his House's trapsmith to revise the vaults' defenses.

10) Academy of Shaladin: The Academy is a tall white tower with doors on every side, named for the great Shaladin, the master trapsmith who designed the original defenses of the Royal Vaults. Each entrance has a murderous-looking array of gears and blades suspended above it. Within, experienced trapsmiths teach their art, and young Kasmir wizards practice their craft. This school was built near the Royal Tower, by the king's decree, as a warning to those thinking of robbing the Royal Vaults.



11) Court of Kasmir: Kasmir's judges decide cases here, supported by the Kasmir Guard, which has its main barracks here as well. Off-duty Thralls throng the nearby streets and shops, discussing their trade and eyeing the merchants' imported weapons.

12) Regimental Barracks: The Grand Army's Green Regiment is headquartered here, though at any given moment, two-thirds of its strength is out patrolling the Kasmir Road. This building is a small fortress, complete with its own water supply and extensive stores of food.

13) Guild of Kasmir Auditors: The Auditors meet in this five-story tower, swapping professional news and updating their skills (testing coins, checking files on assassins, or learning how to assay Jasper Mountains ore, for instance). The guild maintains a list of Auditors available for employment to foreigners. Thieves find little of profit here – the Auditors keep their property at their tower-shops, although the extensive files might contain information that could be sold. A dozen Thrall guards defend and patrol here. The guildmaster lives and works on the top floor.

14) Guild of Accountants: The only building in Kasmir which has windows, the guild-home is a hardwood dome carved in regular geometric designs. Colorful gossamer curtains flutter from the many openings. Conversation and quiet laughter echo from this building, as the mostly Sindaran accountants relax, build their collections, play Trivarian and debate philosophy – all while simultaneously reviewing their day's work. Kasmir accountants seldom come here, as they are uncomfortable among their more proficient and less grim counterparts.

No race can fully understand Kasmir interest rates and appreciations, equities, annuities, amortizations and easements besides the Sindarans. The King of Kasmir pays each Sindaran accountant a stipend of 1,000 gold lumens per year, in addition to the 500 lumens per

month paid by their employing Houses in salary. (Some very miserly money lenders try to hire accountants for only a few months at a time, in order to minimize the expense.)

15) The Shop of the Curious: Ripaldam, a Pharesian peddler, sells rare coins, toys, and exotic artifacts (such as silver figurines which balance in amazing positions). He does not always know the exact nature of everything in his shop. Sindaran collectors from the nearby accountants' guild-home congregate here, prizing the oldest and most unusual pieces. Strangers with interesting artifacts may sell them here, but Ripaldam is a good bargainer.

16) Kaliya's Silver Inn: This luxurious inn caters to visiting traders and money-lending clients. It serves delicious food and offers clean rooms for four gold lumens a night. Special suites cater to Cymrilian, Sindaran, Zandir and Dracartan tastes, these being the most frequent visitors. There is nightly entertainment in the central court. The Kasmir management enjoy seeing how much they can charge extravagant foreigners for food and lodging.

17) Stone Tavern: This establishment is one of the rare Kasmir taverns, serving traditional dry and pickled foods as well as hot mochan. Foreign entertainers – mostly Bodor, Djaffir and Thiasian – are paid meager wages to provide traditional desert music and dancing. Money lenders discussing sensitive accounts prefer to meet with foreign clients here, rather than in their own towers or the "extravagant" Silver Inn. Rooms are available for two silver pieces per night – guests are put in large common rooms with stone slabs for beds. Few travelers stay here.

18) Warehouses: These rotund towers, near the entrances to the city, hold a vast quantity of goods of every kind. The money lenders often serve as brokers of these goods, making deals between the great caravan-merchants of the continent.

NANKAR (Kingdom of Sindar)

Nankar Mesa extends for almost two and a half miles. The Sindarans who dwell here prefer open space – a minimum of a hundred feet is required between structures, by order of the Nadir Governor. As a result, the city is quite spread out. As Sindaran architecture tends towards open pavilions, no map of Nankar is truly possible – only some of the more permanent structures can be indicated.

1) Alchemical District: A great many of Nankar's practicing alchemists work here. Mining elsewhere in the kingdom is supported by numerous private laboratories. Metalworkers, glassblowers, and stonemasons also have their shops here.

2) Residential Districts: Private homes are strewn seemingly randomly in these areas, along with private gardens and orchards.

3) Transients District: Merchants and other foreign travelers usually stay here, glad of one another's company. The area boasts several good inns and many taverns.

4) The Institute For Advanced Studies: A well-known school of alchemy, the Institute offers non-magical instruction of the same caliber as Cymril's more famous Lyceum Arcanum. The Institute's Ancient History department is also one of the finest on the continent. Unfortunately, all but a few of the instructors are Sindarans, and Sindaran-style education leaves most mono-encephalons confused. It is not uncommon for two lectures to take place at the same time and place, or for a lab course in one subject to be combined with a lecture in another. The instructors go into their subjects in exhaustive depth, spending weeks on the most trifling minutiae. Foreign students are expected to perform adequately – by Sindaran standards – or be expelled. The school is free for Sindarans approved by Nankar's Nadir Governor. Non-Sindarans must pay 1,500 gold lumens per semester.

5) The Pavilion of Assemblage: This huge pavilion is used for large public gatherings. It can be rented from the Nadir Governor for 75 gold lumens per day, plus a damage deposit of 500 lumens. When not rented, the pavilion serves as a quiet spot out of the sun where Sindarans come to meditate. Vendors of food and beverages are located nearby.

6) Absolute Pavilion: Traditional home of the Nadir Absolute. The present occupant, the Nadir Absolute Orbwale, can be found here in the evenings – surrounded by his honor guard – when he gives his well-attended lectures on Trivarian. Adjacent pavilions provide what little office space the ruler requires.

7) Nadir Pavilion: Nankar's Nadir Governor rules from this building. Sindarans in need of work or other aid gather here at daybreak for an audience.

8) Balann Amphitheater: Hewn into the rock of the Mesa, the amphitheater serves as the site of the Tournament of Nadir. Trivarian games are constantly in play here, attracting gamblers and foreigners. Peacekeepers keep an eye on the crowd.

9) The Orange Bazaar: This marketplace is named for the orange booths which the Nadir Governor rents to merchants wishing to offer their wares to the public. It is the only place in Nankar where foreign merchants may sell their wares (few merchants object to trading in the well-patrolled bazaar). The eastern trade that flows freely through Sindar sees many merchants from the East eager to sell their goods and return home; contrariwise, many Zandir and Arimite merchants hesitate to go further east than Nankar. While Kasmir is a choke-point for east-west travel, it offers limited facilities for trade – therefore, the bazaars of Nankar and Cymril maintain a thriving business. Despite the large assortment of goods offered, the mood is subdued. Sindarans are a reserved people, and the Peacekeepers patrol the bazaar heavily. The heat of the day also keeps activities languid. At night the gates are closed, and only merchants are allowed within.

Some of the more interesting permanent stalls:

9a) Bastell's: A disreputable Cymrilian mage, Bastell, runs this business which supplies caravan guards to traveling merchants. His partner, Zadrog, is a renegade Ur warlord. The duo are constantly in trouble due to their former escapades, and are well-known to the Peacekeepers.

9b) The Lost Manuscript: The Tanasian mage Pal'na buys, sells, and searches for rare books. She keeps a scribe on retainer, to copy rare manuscripts for those who can't afford originals. Her collection of Aamanian heretical works has not endeared her to passing pilgrims.

9c) Luftir's Refreshments: This Sindaran chef – a failed alchemist – operates this booth as a hobby. While he makes a wide assortment of non-Sindaran meals, Luftir's real passion is collecting vegetarian recipes. He likes to have a Bodorian troupe playing whenever possible. Luftir is an excellent contact for visitors, as he seems to know everyone in Nankar.

9d) Pyramids of Sand: A curio emporium, Pyramids has been managed by the ura Jatan family for over seven generations. Nadir Medithi ura Jatan can appraise practically anything, will buy items of real value, and for a small surcharge will attempt to locate any desired object. She bargains very well, however. Customers must sometimes wait while Medithi puzzles out her next Trivarian move.

9e) Shop of the Silent One: Caro and Threfir, Sindarans who collect ancient weaponry, opened this shop with The Silent One, a Zandir swordsmith who almost never speaks. The Zandir works only with red iron, and his weapons are of excellent quality. He does not make or repair armor.

10) Peacekeeper Pavilion: This three-tier pavilion serves Nankar's Peacekeepers, who patrol the city. It is more of a guild hall than a headquarters, with many off-duty Sindarans meeting here informally to talk.

11) The Water Shaft: This roped-off, fortified building – one of Nankar's few all-stone constructions – houses the city's water supply. Large-bladed fans within the eight towers turn as the wind blows, and their motion is applied through belts and ropes to turn the huge pump-screws which bring fresh water up from deep below. Clay pipes and a network of aqueducts carry the water throughout the plateau. Peacekeepers guard the installation, ensuring a pure water supply for the city. Only authorized Sindarans and Yassan Technomancers may enter.

12) The Storage Tunnels: These ancient passageways, once active mines as long ago as the Great Disaster, now serve as storage tunnels for Sindarans and their clans. Peacekeepers act as museum guards, limiting access to those who have goods stored below, and making sure that no one tries to remove items from another's collection. The deeper passages are blocked off.

13) Great Nankar Gardens: The royal gardens supply a significant amount of the fresh provender and flowers used within the city. For a small charge (5 copper pieces), the impoverished may enter the garden and harvest all the food that can be carried. The gardeners are trained in horticulture by the Ardua, and constantly experiment to improve the state of desert farming. The calm of the gardens is popular among the Sindarans, and many enter simply to enjoy their beauty.

14) Shop of Trivarian: Marking the increasing commercialism of Trivarian, this shop – one of several in the city – caters to Sindaran gamers. Boards, orbs, manuals of strategy, and accounts of famous games are all for sale here. Custom Trivarian sets may be ordered (payment is required when placing an order).

15) The Slumbering Aht-Ra: The most famous inn in Nankar, the Aht-Ra is patronized chiefly by wealthy foreign merchants visiting

Nankar to obtain alchemicals. During the Tournament, the Nadir traditionally reside here.

16) Windship Docks: This natural ledge serves as a dockyard for visiting windships. Much of the alchemical trade is carried by air, since the cargo is valuable and low-bulk. A small crane and winch are available to raise or lower cargo. One end of the docks is cordoned off for the use of the Grand Army, which bases a windship-of-war and several windscouts here. The governor charges a modest fee of 100 gold lumens for use of the facility.

17) Defense Emplacements: Manned by Sindaran Mesa Scouts (who oversee the use of alchemical ammunition), these structures command the desert below the mesa. They have both ballistae and catapults.

18) Aerial Defense Emplacements: These are tall towers, with colorful gossamer curtains concealing their open framework – and their light ballistae. The Sindaran notion of completeness requires them to have a prepared defense against aerial attack, even though the Stryx of the north have never attacked in strength. The towers are manned by Mesa Scouts.

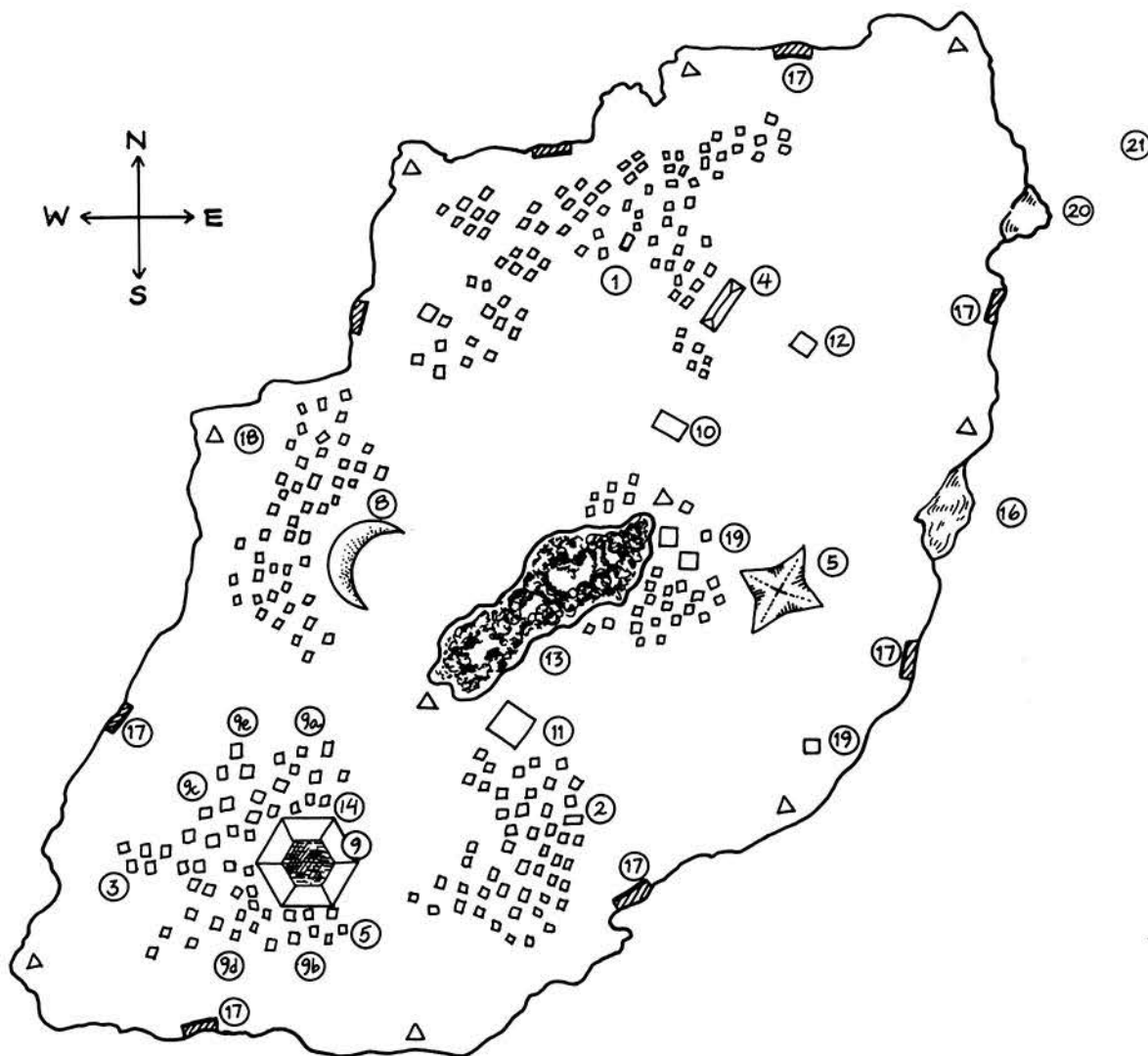
19) Reflecting Crystal Stations: Messages from Cymril and Karfan for the other mesa-cities pass through Nankar, keeping its communications stations busy. Messages of state are relayed immediately to a special station adjoining Absolute Pavilion.

20) The Eastern Overlook: A short flight of stairs leads down some fifty feet to the overlook. Tourists often come for the unobstructed view of the mesalands.

21) The Bridge at Nankar: Flanked on either side by towers, Nankar Bridge – known to Sindarans as the Madin non Tyaas Bridge – spans the Dead River chasm, connecting the Kingdom of Sindar to the Wilderlands of Zaran. Unfortunately, it is a bridge to nowhere. Few merchants dare to make the cross-Barrens run to Maruk or Akmir. Most caravans which come here do so to enter the Dead River gorge, which forms a natural north-south highway. The Nadir Absolute charges no fee for using these facilities, other than the usual border tariffs.

21a) Nankar Tower: Also known as Nadir's Leap, after the unfortunate incident of the Sindra ex-Nadir Burann, the tower on the Wilderlands end of the bridge has catapults commanding the air (against Stryx attacks) and the approaching trails. Rumor has it that alchemicals are secretly stored here for use in war.

21b) Golin Tower: Overseeing the Sindar end of the bridge, this tower's armaments are turned toward the bridge and the air. A long covered ramp descends into the chasm. Sindaran Peacekeepers here have a legendary ability to spot smugglers and cheats.



THE SUBTERRANEAN CITY (Kingdom of Durne)

Located on the shores of a great underground lake, this city is unique in all of Talislanta. It is accessible from the Land Above only through the maze-like intricacies of Tunnelrock. Three passages lead to the dimly-lit wonders of the Gnomekin's homeland and their city, 200 feet below ground level.

Lighting – provided by clusters of phosphorescent fungus, and scintilla imported from Jhangara – is dim at best. Groups of Gnomekin sentries (d4 per group) patrol the city, occasionally (1-in-6 chance) accompanied by a Crystalomancer. They are helpful to visitors, but escort strangers without a guide to the nearest guardpost. Hostile acts meet with immediate action – the alarm is raised, and invaders are lured to the nearest trap or deadfall, where they are mercilessly slaughtered.

1) Entry Caverns: A squad of 10 Gnomekin warriors and a Crystalomancer guard here. The senior warrior has a seeing stone, for communications with the Gnome-King and other guardposts.

2) Traps: Defenses line the approaches to the city. Kashmir trapsmiths have equipped the city with spring-loaded blade-traps, razor-edged pendulum traps, poison gas, trapdoors for delivering red menace and yellow peril, and other, even deadlier mechanisms. The traps constructed by the Gnomekin are less sophisticated – deadfalls, pit traps and ambush stations – but just as lethal.

3) The Crystal Bazaar: Gnomekin Crystalomancers spread their crystals on groundcloths, and bargain with merchants from Cymril, Zandu and Arim. The Gnomekin drive a hard bargain, surprising outsiders with their business acumen. Most visitors see no more of the Subterranean City than this.

4) Ruby River: Flowing through several chambers in the city, this river is named for the valuable gems which are occasionally found in its bed. The richly oxygenated water is ideal for the cultivation of Zog, which are found in clusters along its banks.

5) Crystal Falls: One of the most magnificent sights in the underground city, these falls plummet seventy feet into the main crystal chamber. For unknown reasons, the waters often carry exotic gemstones and high-grade Crystalomantic crystals, polished by the flowing waters. These finds are considered the bounty of the Earth Mother, and are never sold by their reverent Gnomekin finders. The noise from the falls is near-deafening, and creates a deep vibration which can be felt through most of the city.

6) The Sabo River: Named in honor of Gnome-King Sabo Orabio, this deep, swift-flowing river follows a meandering course through the city before emptying into the underground lake.

7) Fish Pens: The Gnomekin have engineered several backwaters over the years, where they raise schools of Boro, a fish which forms a major part of the Gnomekin diet.

8) Bridges: These stone spans stretch over the city's rivers at several locations. In the event of invasion, they are built to be destroyed in order to isolate invaders within one portion of the city.

9) Tuber and Mushroom Plantations: These caverns are where Gnomekin farmers raise the Koriana tuber and Whitecap mushroom. They are lined with rich soil dredged from the shores of the lake, and fertilized with organic waste from the city. The city's rivers provide irrigation. Octomorphs are fond of the Koriana, and their predations cause widespread damage. Black Ikshada parasites also sometimes infest the Whitecaps, as do less dangerous pests such as Root Grub and Scarlet Scale.

10) Crystal Gardens: Places of relaxation, worship and contemplation, these chambers are tended by the Gnomekin Crystalomancers, who spend hours supervising the growth and harvesting of the various types of crystals. The crystal gardens are places of rare

beauty and tranquility, vast caverns gleaming with crystal formations of every size and color. Outsiders are rarely allowed in the gardens. Those who are see wondrous things found nowhere else

11) Parks: Like the crystal gardens, these moss-covered public places are used for prayer and contemplation. Outsiders are welcome here. The exotic foliage, illuminated by the blue-white glow of the Gnomekin's luminescent mushrooms, is impressive. Ferns and club-mosses of enormous size grow here, as do soft masses of pleasant-smelling moss which make convenient chairs or couches. Small, harmless insects are also sometimes found.

12) Family Residences: Here, in moss-lined chambers, live the close-knit Gnomekin families. A chamber may hold as many as twenty nooks, each the home of a mated pair of adults and their children. All of the families in one of the large chambers form a clan, and use the same surname. Decorations are minimal, as the Gnomekin have few material possessions – mostly simple crystal sculptures and wall mosaics.

13) The Gnome-King's Nook: The Gnomekin monarch lives and works in more opulent surroundings than the average citizen, guarded by six elite warriors and a powerful Crystalomancer. Several exceptional crystals decorate the cavern, along with gemstones of unusual size and gifts from the other kingdoms: a set of Tazian garde armor (far too large for any Gnomekin), a Sindaran Trivarian pyramid, and Cymrilian glass sculpture. The chamber also contains a large seeing stone which is the Master Orb for all of the seeing stones in the city.

14) Food Storage: Harvested Koriana and Whitecap, dried Zog and Boro fish are stored in these caverns. Usually unguarded, the storage caves are equipped with a Kashmir-designed alarm system which dumps brown mold and stenchroot on anyone attempting unauthorized entry. Most citizens of the city know how to enter the caverns without setting off the traps.

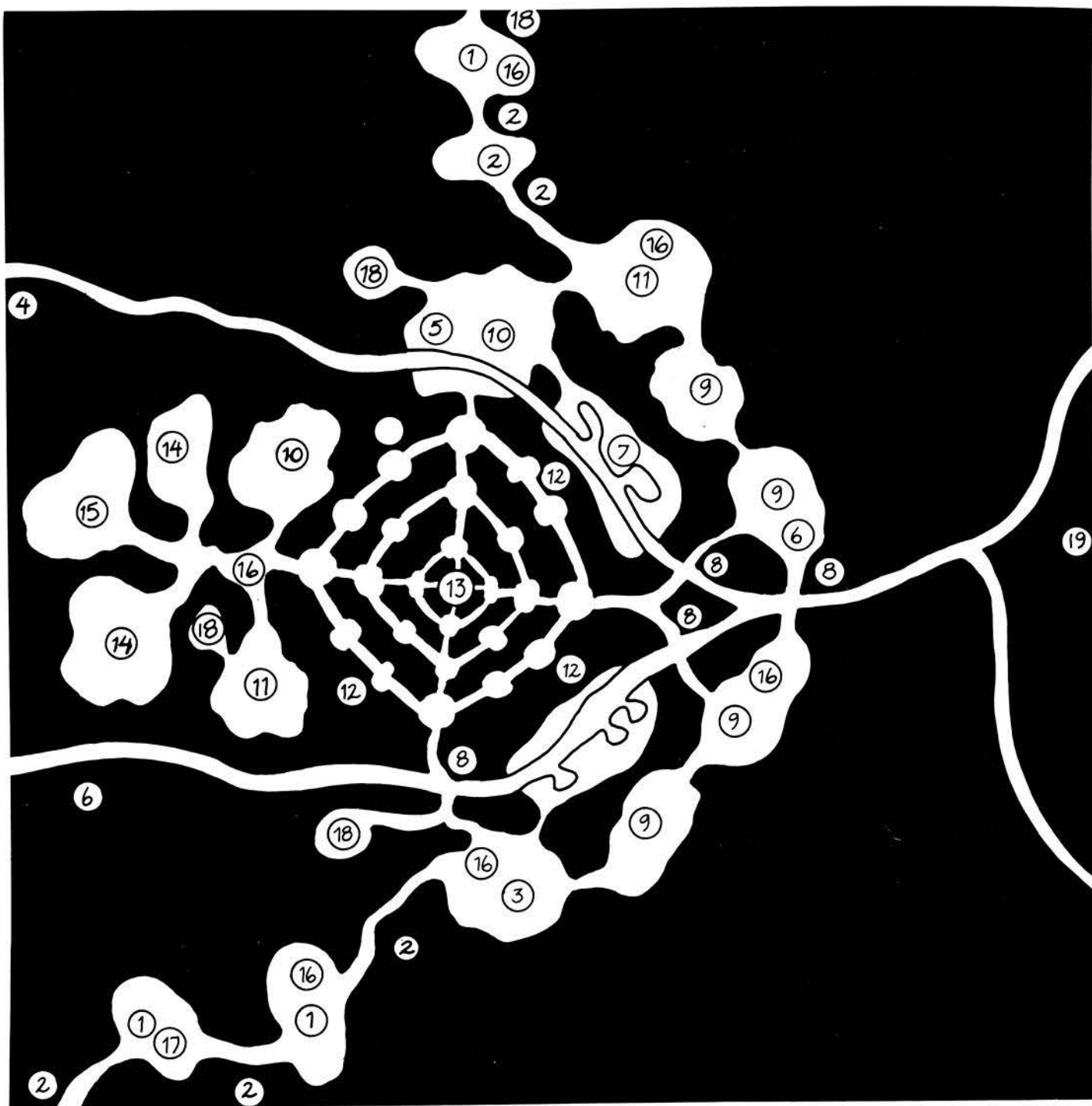
15) Armories: Weapons and tools are stored in these caverns, which are defended in the same manner as the food storage chambers.

16) Guardposts: A squad of ten warriors and a Crystalomancer mans each of these locations. Each post is equipped with a seeing stone for communication with other posts and with the Gnome-King.

17) Entrance to the Underground Highway: The Underground Highway is a complex network of tunnels extending (so far as is known) entirely across the Talislantan continent. Winds which mysteriously blow through the tunnels keep the Subterranean City ventilated. Gnomekin use this underground passage to reach Cymril, leaving the Durne Road to foreign trade caravans and surface travelers. This cavern serves as the jumping-off place for the monthly caravan which carries Durne's exports to market in Cymril. Up to 100 Gnomekin make the journey, each carrying 200 pounds of goods – low-grade crystals, dried Zog and Boro, Whitecap and mushroom ale. Other safe spurs of the Underground Highway lead to the kingdoms of Taz and Sindar, and the Gnome-King hopes to pioneer a route to Arim.

18) Passages to the Land Below: These shafts are blocked with heavy stones and boulders. Each is guarded by a squad of ten Gnomekin warriors. The passages extend beneath the city to the Land Below, the Gnomekin's secret nightmare.

19) The Lake: Ultimate destination of the rivers which flow through the city, the underground lake has never been fully explored. Octomorphs and Renders inhabit its depths, sometimes venturing into the city where they damage crops and kill citizens. Gnomekin legends tell of a lost aquatic civilization, and of ruins and treasures to be found beneath the still black waters. The shallows are staked out with underwater pens, where the Gnomekin raise Boro fish and Zog. To guard against Octomorphs and Renders, the pens are guarded by Gnomekin fishermen armed with slings and spears.



TOR (Kingdom of Taz)

Tor was planned and built during the reign of King Zar, the Thrall who united the tribes and drove out the Imrian slavers. Crouched in the protective shelter of the Cinnabar Mountains, Tor is in many ways a typical Thrall settlement, different from the others only in size. Complex, well-manned fortifications – equipped with ballistae and other war-engines – surround the city, protecting it from attack. Marching troops are a common sight, and the noise of blacksmiths and armorers is constant. Tor is utilitarian and unattractive, its buildings harsh, angular and uninviting against the green, soft shapes of the jungle. Defense of the city is the responsibility of the Aam tribe and its warriors, although the other tribes provide aid if needed.

1) Outer Walls: Twenty feet high and five feet thick, these walls form the first line of Tor's defense. They are crenelated with slots for arrow fire. Iron pots for boiling water or hot sand are found at ten-foot intervals. Access to the walls from the inside is by ladders, which can be removed or destroyed if the wall is taken. A ring of ditches lined with sharpened stakes surrounds the walls, forming a further barrier.

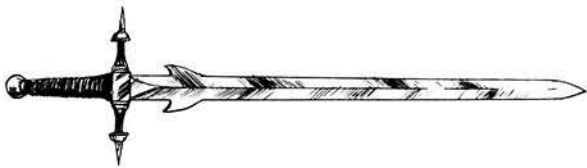
2) Towers: The Thralls who garrison the wall are barracked in these towers. Each contains twenty tribal warriors, as well as a pair of heavy ballistae capable of launching three-foot iron-headed bolts.

3) Sally Ports: Thrall cavalry can launch charges at besiegers from these gates, which are constructed of iron and are normally barred shut.

4) Outer Gates: These heavy red-iron portals have never been breached by an invader. They are normally left open, but may be closed at an instant's notice. The towers which flank them bristle with arrow loops, pots for flaming liquids, and spheres of chemicals such as red menace and yellow peril.

5) Inner Gates: An attacker who breaches Tor's outer gate finds himself face-to-face with two portcullises and a second set of red-iron portals. The passage between the two gates is lined with arrow loops and traps.

6) War Engines: Various ballistae, trebuchets and catapults are lined behind the main walls, providing support to the city's defense with rocks and flaming missiles.



7) Inner Walls: Once the main walls are breached, attackers must contend with these sixteen-foot-high barriers.

8) Citadel: Tor's final line of defense, the Citadel is surrounded by 20-foot walls, and has supplies to support a 1,000-soldier defense force for three months. The Citadel also houses the Warrior-King's quarters and command post.

9) Warrior-King's Command Post: This austere structure is both military headquarters and palace. Should Tor ever come under attack, this is where the Warrior-King will direct the city's defense.

10) War Memorial: This black-iron statue of King Zar is the only physical tribute to the kingdom's battle casualties. Families of fallen Thralls sometimes journey here to hold memorial services. In their simple ritual, they speak of the departed's bravery and skill as a warrior, then renew their vows to defend their tribe's honor and traditions in the name of the fallen.

11) The Smithy: Somewhat of a misnomer, this "smithy" houses the Aam tribe's armorers, leatherworkers, carpenters and siege engineers, as well as blacksmiths.

12) Well: This deep well, sunk by Sindaran engineers a century ago, provides Tor with water in the event of siege. Occasionally the Thralls bring up valuable gems with their ice-cold water, but so far have lacked the curiosity to investigate where the gems come from.

13) The Arena: On the 49th of Jhang each year, the Tournament of Challenges is held. Thralls journey from all over the kingdom to participate in contests of martial skill. The most important event is the selection of the new Warrior-King. During the rest of the year, the arena serves as a training and mock-combat facility.

14) Barracks: Each of these structures can quarter 80 shock infantry, 20 light cavalry and 20 assault cavalry. In time of peace, they are used as surplus housing by the tribe. Portions of the Grand Army's Serenity Regiment also make their home here.

15) Armory: The Thralls of Tor keep enough weapons here to arm every adult resident of the city – forming an instant militia force numbering over 1,000 which, in combination with the city's normal garrison, poses a further challenge to any attacker.

16) Court of Mercenaries: Here, near the barracks, Thralls and prospective employers negotiate mercenary service contracts. Quarters are provided for visiting foreigners (many of whom complain about the spartan accommodations). Contracts are strictly private – no tribal officials intervene in negotiations.

17) Warehouses: Provisions to be used in the event of a long siege are kept here. They are also used during droughts or other calamities.

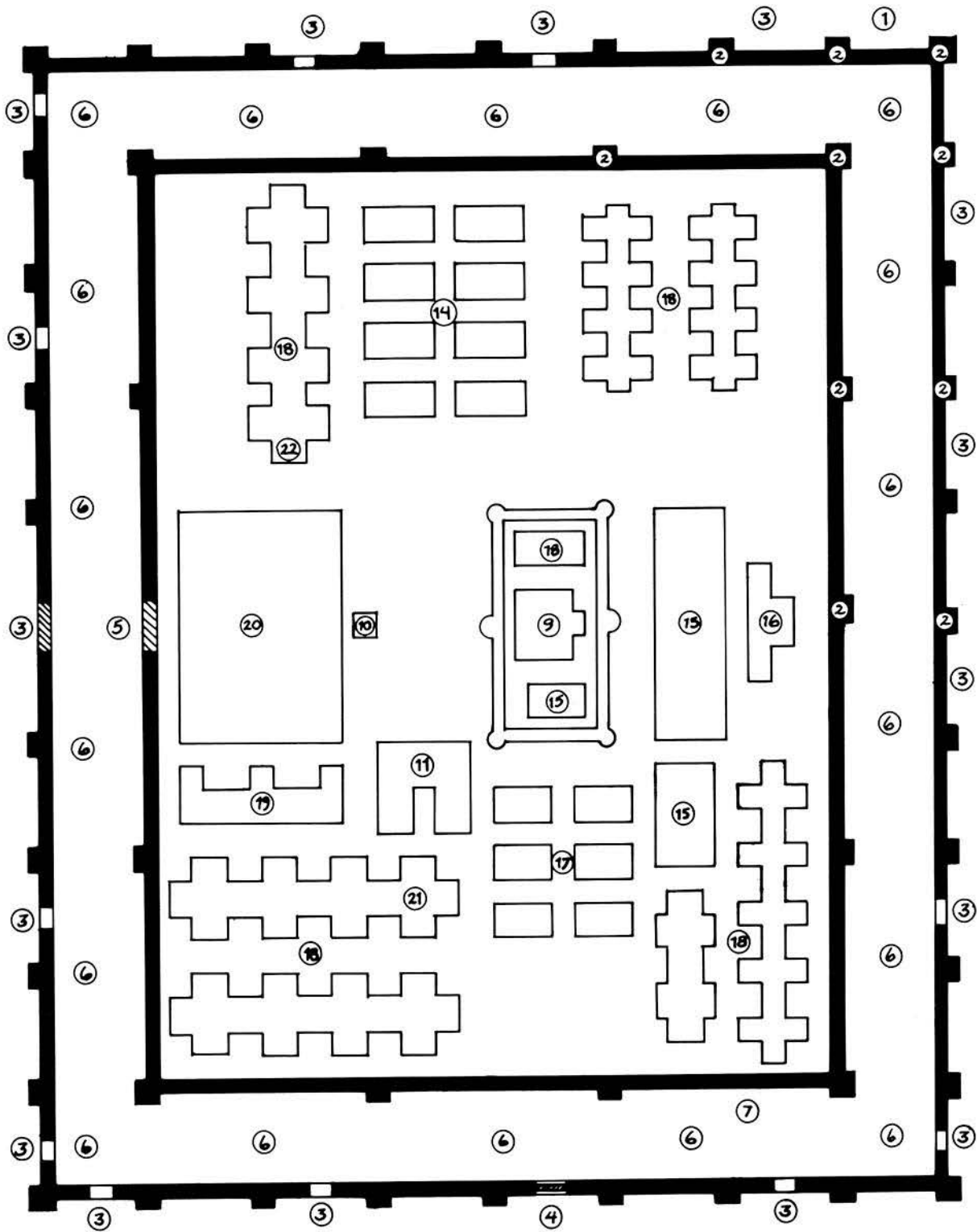
18) Living Quarters: Thrall families live in 12-person tribal barracks. There is little privacy in their communal society.

19) Stables: Here are kept the greymanes, mangonel lizards and dray beasts of the Aam tribe. Adventurers' steeds may be stabled here at a cost of 1 silver piece per day.

20) Training Field: Annually, the Tribal Army of Taz trains here, practicing unit tactics and engaging in mock battles. The Aam's tribal beast-masters practice with their cavalry mounts on this field as well.

21) The Garde: One of few taverns in Tor, here the Aam tribe's warriors indulge their taste for Tazian fire-ale, exchange stories, and engage in friendly competition. While outsiders are not unwelcome, they may find themselves swept up in a Thrall combat game, with potentially injurious results. Tazian fire ale is another hazard – the amount needed to incapacitate a non-Thrall is barely enough to make a Thrall tipsy.

22) The Weary Eqs: Run by a Blue Ardua named Keel, this inn caters to foreign visitors and travelers. Prices are reasonable, and food is prepared according to the guest's race and tastes. Fare for all the races of the Seven Kingdoms is available here, as well as comfortable, if somewhat plain, lodging.



TALISLANTAN ARCANAE

Three new magical or supernatural powers are available to certain races native to the Seven Kingdoms: Botanomancy (the Ardua of Vardune), Crystalomancy (the Gnomekin of Durne), and Telemathy (the Muses of Astar). In addition, the Sindarans are fine

BOTANOMANCY

Green Arduan Botanomancy is a specialized field, developed from the studies of the sorcerer Viridian. It deals with the forces of natural plant growth: how to shape plants by sorcerous force, how to contact their elemental forms, and how to tap into and aid the vegetation's natural powers. Botanomancy is also a philosophy and a way of viewing life. It is divided into two fields: Horticulture and Botanomantic Magic.

Horticulture is concerned with the natural course of plant growth, and makes use of such techniques as cross-breeding, transplanting, crop rotation and fertilization. Green Arduan horticulturists (also known as Low Botanomancers) are experts, achieving results rivaling the Green Men. Where the Green Men use instinct and magical talent, however, the Ardua use knowledge gained from research. The principles of horticulture are recorded in bark-runes in the Grove of the Botanomancers near Vashay, and are available to all who can read the runes.

Botanomantic Magic is a magical field limited to the mages (also known as the High Botanomancers) of Vardune. Magic is used to control and use the natural processes of plant growth. The spells involved were invented by Viridian, or developed by Ardua from his pioneering work. All Green Arduan Botanomancers are sworn to keep these spells forever secret from the outside world.

The Arduan Botanomancers are more than plant-mages, however – they are also the priests for their people. Botanomancers revere the Creator, whom they visualize as a winged sun bringing needed light to the living world. The High Botanomancers insist on working with natural creative forces, rather than against them.

The greatest sin a High Botanomancer could commit would be to violate the purposes of the Creator, through subverting a plant to a purpose which violates the spirit of its creation. For instance, while an Ardua might ensorcel a fruit tree to bear a new kind of fruit, to form a protective hedge, or to walk after sunshine, it would go against Creativist principles to make a fruit tree that ate living flesh, or that could fight with a sword.

Ardua feel that the other mages of Talislanta are using strong forces without understanding their implications. A High Botanomancer, for instance, would only contact a plane other than the Green World in a time of desperate need. Diabolism and demonism are abhorrent to all Ardua.

Although they conduct few formal services, the Botanomancers are important to the average Ardua. Questions of ethics, including the interpretation of the principles of Creativism, are brought to the mage-priests. Horticulturists perform rituals of rebirth annually for the clans. The Botanomaster, senior among the living mage-priests, is revered above all other Ardua, though he seldom meddles in mundane affairs.

Arduan High Botanomancers are required to have either Primary Magic, Secondary Magic or Magic Training skills, and are required to be literate in the bark-rune alphabet. They may use any spell – Botanomantic or ordinary – but are under a strict injunction not to violate the principles of Arduan Creativism.

Students of High Botanomancy must pass a period of apprenticeship, during which they learn the principles of Creativism. They may also learn ordinary non-Botanomantic spells during this time.

alchemists – a list of their best known alchemical products is provided, followed by a selection of magical artifacts made in the Seven Kingdoms.

It is only after completing this apprenticeship – in game terms, when a character reaches second level – that a mage-priest is initiated into the spells of Botanomancy. The Botanomaster and his assistants decide when a mage may learn one of the secret spells.

THE SPELLS OF BOTANOMANCY

Botanomantic Spells and their effects are listed below. All spells require a secret incantation to be spoken. Unless otherwise stated, range is 10 feet per spell level. *Modifiers* are factors which the Gamemaster may take into consideration when assessing penalties to the Spell Roll. *Magic Resistance* is listed only for spells which can be resisted. *Magical Mishap*, where listed, provides hints for the Gamemaster on what can go wrong with this spell.

KIIRIP'S RAPID PLANT GROWTH: Causes a plant to instantly achieve accelerated growth. At first level, this spell gives the subject a free week's growth; the benefit doubles per additional level of the spell. (Thus, at fifth level, the spell bestows 16 weeks of growth.) The spell can be used to heal injured vegetation, to sprout new growth, or to artificially age plants. Maximum area of effect is 5 x 5 x 5 feet per spell level. A single gesture is required.

Magic Resistance: vs. WILL, for intelligent plants wishing to resist.

KREE'S GREEN CONVERSATIONS: A safer version of *Viridian's Green World*, this spell allows the caster to create a very tiny aperture into the Green World, through which he can speak with the sub-elemental entities which dwell within all living plants. Passage through the aperture from the caster's side is not possible. The aperture lasts for 5 minutes per spell level, and is not mobile. A Crystal of Viridia is required to focus the spell energies.

Magical Mishap: There is a small chance of attracting the attention of hostile sub-elementals, who may try to force their way through the aperture and attack.

THE HAND OF VIRIDIAN: The most powerful of all Botanomantic Spells, this spell allows the caster to change the nature of the plant which the spell is cast upon. The area affected is 5 x 5 x 5 feet per spell level. Altering a plant's nature is much more powerful than merely altering the form. Through this spell, a benign fruit tree could become a hostile and thorny menace, or a Snow Lilly become a tropical plant. However, Botanomancers are very careful in their use of this spell, which could thwart the purposes for which the Creator intended the plant. The Botanomaster strictly punishes abuse of this magic.

Casting this spell along with *Viridian's Phytomantic Permutation* creates permanent changes of form in a plant subject. While the Permutation alters the plant to the form desired, the Hand imprints the new design into the plant's membranes. (On a "Maximum Effect" result, such changes even breed true into future generations.) This is how the High Botanomancers produce the lattice-roads of Vardune and the barges which cruise the Axis River, and how they "built" the giant statue of Viridian in Cymril's Vardune Park. The complex spell takes an hour to cast, and requires one dram of Viridia Powder per 5 x 5 x 5 feet volume of the plant.

Modifiers: -1 to as high as -10 or -15, depending on the scale of the changes desired.

Magical Mishap: Warping a plant's nature can drive the sub-elemental associated with that plant into insanity. Such entities may become psychotic, tracking the mage relentlessly until they have a chance to destroy him.

KREE'S PLANT COMPANION: Cast on a cooperative tree or bush, this spell allows the subject's sub-elemental to pass from the Green World into this one. The plant does not change in size or appearance, but does become fully mobile, and its limbs become capable of moving and grasping. It can also communicate through a concealed mouth, speaking the language of the caster. While the plant dislikes darkness, it can live without light or soil. Once summoned, the plant companion remains with the caster until mistreated, or until he or it are destroyed. A Botanomancer may only have one plant companion. Such "Plant Friends" are favored by Botanomancers, for the sub-elementals do not mind performing menial tasks. However, these companions are also constant advocates for the rights of all vegetation.



The spell may only be cast on a plant which has a height in feet less than or equal to the Botanomancer's level. The sub-elemental's level is the same as its height in feet, and it has 2 hit points per level. All attributes are average except STR (+4) and INT (-4). The sub-elemental is immune to all non-magical attacks except fire, heat, cold and acid. It is unarmored, and has no ability to attack. Unlike other forms of sub-elementals, it cannot alter its bodily form. The spell takes 5 minutes to cast, involves a simple ritual, and requires the subject to be anointed with one dose of Oil of Viridia.

Magical Mishap: A rift is opened to a different realm of the Omniverse, allowing one of its denizens to gain access to this world.

PIIRPIT'S PLANT HALT: Causes a plant to magically freeze in place. Commonly used to bind hostile plants without harming them. Affects a plant of size 5' x 5' x 5' per spell level. Lasts for 5 minutes per spell level. Requires a secret gesture.

Magical Mishap: Confers immunity on the subject to further castings of this spell.

CRYSTALOMANCY

Known beyond Durne primarily as crystal merchants and appraisers, the Gnomekin Crystalomancers are actually the magicians of the Subterranean Kingdom. Crystalomancy is little-known in Talislanta, but its powers are formidable. Its spells are powered by the magical forces inherent in certain crystals.

SKRAWK'S BLIGHT: Shoots bolts of elemental energy, which cause the target plant to wither and defoliate. A single bolt does d4 damage per spell level. Only affects living plants. Requires a secret gesture.

SKRAWK'S MOVING PLANT: Grants to any plant the temporary ability to lift up its roots and move around. Affects a plant of size 5' x 5' x 5' per spell level. Lasts 5 minutes per spell level. Requires extensive ceremonial motions when casting (caster's arms must be unconstrained).

Magical Mishap: Such liberated plants have been known to lose control of themselves due to ecstasy, becoming dangers to themselves and those nearby.

VIRIDIAN'S ELEMENTAL AURA: This spell allows the caster to envelop himself in a shimmering aura of elemental energy, which confers protection against non-magical forces of an elemental nature (heat, cold, mists, gasses, winds, plant or animal secretions/exhalations, and so on). The aura does not afford protection from physical attacks, mystic forces or magical energies, nor is it proof from illusions. Duration is 1 minute per level. To activate the spell, the caster performs a secret gesture while speaking Viridian's incantation.

Magic Resistance: None. Viridian's Elemental Aura cannot be used in conjunction with any other protective aura or shield. In appearance, it resembles other magical auras.

VIRIDIAN'S GREEN WORLD: This spell allows the caster to pass into the Elemental Plane, and to converse with the sub-elemental entities which dwell within all manner of plants, trees, bushes, and so on.

By traversing the "inner space" of this dimension, the caster may also cover a correspondingly great distance on the material plane. According to Viridian's computations, one mile on the Elemental Plane is equal to one hundred miles on the material plane. If desired, the caster may bring one additional individual along per every 5 spell levels (for example, one person at fifth level, two persons at tenth level, and so on).

When the caster speaks Viridian's enabling incantation, a pattern of magical forces appears, converging into an aperture leading into the Green World. A Crystal of Viridia is required to focus the spell energies.

Magic Resistance: None. Individuals utilizing this spell should be aware that the Green World is populated by numerous sub-elementals, some few of which may exhibit hostile intention toward intruders who venture into their domains.

VIRIDIAN'S PHYTOMANTIC PERMUTATION: This spell enables the caster to temporarily alter the shape or form of any type of plant life (including trees, vines, shrubs, grasses, etc.) as desired. Some of the more common permutations include plant barriers, bridges, cages, domiciles, shelters, topiaries, obstructions, pathways, etc. The properties of the spell are essentially passive – that is, while a permutation can be used to trap or confine, plants affected by this enchantment cannot be made to cause harm to other living things. Maximum area of effect is 10 x 10 x 10 feet per level, and duration is 1 hour per level. Hand motions are required while casting the spell.

Magic Resistance: None. Individuals or creatures trapped within a plant permutation can effect an escape by the use of edged tools or weapons (time required: 1-3 rounds per level of the spell, based on the type of plant used in the permutation), fire or solvents (requiring 1 round per level), magical fire (twice as effective as non-magical flame) or an appropriate counterspell.

Gnomekin Crystalomancers have access to the new Magical/Alchemical skill, **Appraise Crystals**. They are required to have either Primary Magic, Secondary Magic or Magic Training skills, but with a special limit: Gnomekin Crystalomancers are not required to be literate, and may ordinarily cast Crystalomantic Spells only.

While undergoing training, an apprentice learns his original Crystalomantic Spells. The exact spells known depend on the character's courses:

Skill	Spells Possessed Originally
Magical Training	all Mending spells
Secondary Magic	all Mending and Protection spells
Primary Magic	all Healing, Mending and Protection spells

Additional spells must be learned from other Crystalomancers. Level progression and spell capacity for Crystalomancers are the same as for other magicians.

Since the Gnomekin have no written language, spell lore and procedure is learned by methods other than reading. (Similarly, Crystalomantic Spells can never be cast from a scroll or book.) An apprentice spends hours in the crystal gardens of Durne, contemplating the formations and studying.

Casting a Crystalomantic spell is similar to casting any other spell, with these changes:

- 1) The caster must know the spell. Crystalomantic Spells must always be cast from memory.
- 2) The caster must be in physical contact – wearing a necklace, holding, and so on – with a crystal of a type appropriate to the spell being cast.

Crystals. There are seven types of magical crystal known to the Gnomekin. Others, if they exist, are very rare. Each crystal is distinguished by its color, and by the type of spells associated with it. Except for ambertine, these crystals cannot be enchanted.

According to the Gnomekin, magical crystals originate at great depths – further than Man or Gnomekin can travel. They are brought to the surface by running water (underground rivers and geysers), upheavals (volcanic action, and earthquakes that expose rock strata previously buried deep in the earth), and by entities which travel through the deep rock. For an unknown reason, crystals are unusually common along the Underground Highway.

Using these originals as seeds, the Gnomekin have learned to cultivate crystals in underground farms. Unfortunately, the offspring of seed crystals are always inferior in grade to the crystals used as seed. Therefore, the Crystalomancers are constantly searching for new crystals of a high quality, to be used in the crystal farms.

When a crystal is found, the Gamemaster should roll percentile dice and consult the table below to determine its color. Next, roll d10 to determine its purity. The commercial value of the crystal is determined by multiplying the number rolled by the factor given on the chart below, and is given in gold lumens. Only those crystals of the highest value – die rolls of 8 or higher – can be used for Crystalomantic purposes.

Die Roll	Name	Color	Spell Type	Value
1-30	Ambertine	Amber	None	1 G.L.
31-50	Brilliantine	White	Mending	x 1
51-65	Jacintine	Yellow	Protection	x 2
66-75	Flamtine	Red	Healing	x 10
76-85	Royaltine	Purple	Movement	x 25
86-95	Opaltine	Blue	Construction	x 50
96-99	Emeraltine	Green	Earth	x 75
100	Ebontine	Black*	Destruction	x 100*

* this is the price outside of Durne. By Gnomekin law, all ebontine is the property of the Gnome-King, regardless of who finds it.

Common throughout Talislanta, ambertine has no inherent magical quality. It may, however, be used as an object of enchantment. Seeing stones, illumination sources, crystal hearts, etc., are often fashioned of this amber crystal. (When enchanting ambertine, a

Crystalomancer must still have a crystal of the proper type to perform the spell.)

Crystalomantic Spells and their effects are listed below. *Modifiers* are factors which the Gamemaster may take into consideration when assessing penalties to the Spell Roll. *Magic Resistance* is listed only for spells which can be resisted. *Magical Mishap*, where given, provides hints for the Gamemaster on what can go wrong with this spell.

MENDING SPELLS

These spells, governed by common brilliantine, are known by all Crystalomancers, and are often used by traveling Gnomekin as a source of income. To mend an object, the caster must be in contact with the object continuously for 10 minutes. The object to be mended must be non-living, and may be no more than 6 x 6 x 6 inches in size per spell level.

Magical Mishap: The item is destroyed beyond repair.

MINOR MENDING: Repairs cracks in items of earth-associated materials (wood, pottery, and so on). May be used to repair broken items, as long as all parts of the item still exist, and can be fitted together by hand (that is, the spell will not repair items reduced to dust).

MAJOR MENDING: Repairs badly damaged non-metallic objects. All component pieces of the object must be present, but need not be held together.

Modifiers: 0-4, according to the amount of damage.

METAL MENDING: Repairs minor damage to metal objects. Items must be held together, and must retain their original basic shape (melted or badly deformed metal objects may not be repaired).

Modifiers: 0-6, depending on the softness of the metal. For instance, gold is easily repaired (no modifier), but iron is a -4 difficulty.

PROTECTION SPELLS

Utilizing jacintine, Protection Spells are often used by Gnomekin who work in tunnel construction, patrol the Underground Highway, or serve in the Fellowship.

ARMOR: Provides an individual with 2 points of protection per spell level against non-magical attacks. Duration is 10 minutes. The caster must touch the subject in order to cast the spell.

SHIELD: Creates a shield 2 feet in diameter per spell level, anywhere within 6 feet of the caster. Provides 3 points of protection per spell level, and lasts for 10 minutes.

AURA OF PROTECTION: This spell creates a zone of total protection from non-magical forces, measuring 1 x 1 x 1 feet and lasting 1 minute per spell level. Used to protect against cave-ins. Takes 10 seconds to cast.

Modifiers: -1 to -8, if the caster tries to cast the spell more rapidly than usual.

HEALING SPELLS

These spells require physical contact between the caster and subject. Healing may not restore more hit points than the subject had in the first place. Flamtine crystal is required.

Modifiers: For all Healing spells, the caster may try to cast the spell faster than normal, incurring a penalty of up to -4 to the Spell Roll. *Magical Mishap:* Damage rather than healing is caused.

MINOR HEALING: Heals 1 hit point per spell level. Requires 5 minutes to cast.

MAJOR HEALING: Heals d6 hit points per spell level. Requires 10 minutes of uninterrupted contact.

GREAT HEALING: Heals d10 hit points per spell level. Requires 1 hour of uninterrupted contact.

MOVEMENT SPELLS

Spells of Movement are governed by royaltine, and may be cast on any living creature.

SPEED: Adds +1 to the subject's *Speed Rating* per spell level. Requires physical contact between the caster and the subject. Takes effect immediately, and lasts 10 minutes.

Magical Mishap: The subject's *Speed Rating* is reduced by the level of the attempted spell. Cannot be done deliberately.

LEVITATION: Identical to the *Levitation Spell* from *THE TALISLANTA HANDBOOK*, but does not require incantations or gestures.

Magical Mishap: Duration of the spell is only d6 minutes, and it will end without warning.

CONSTRUCTION SPELLS

Of great importance in creating the Subterranean City, Construction Spells take 1 minute to cast per spell level, and effects are permanent. Opaltine is required.

Magical Mishap: A sea of mud, unpleasant or poisonous gas, or a similar effect is produced.

TUNNEL: Removes an area of earth or rock 1 x 1 x 1 feet per spell level. May not be cast on living beings. This spell is used for excavation, and to rescue trapped Gnomekin.

WALL: Creates a wall of stone 1 x 1 x 1 feet per spell level. This wall has an Armor Rating of 8, and a damage rating of 100 per foot of thickness. The wall resembles a natural rock formation, and may be used for concealment underground, as it blends in with natural rock.

EARTH SPELLS

Gnomekin believe that these spells harness basic powers of their goddess, and so hold this magic in great reverence. Crystalomancers use these spells to create magical items, and in the defense of their realm.

Modifiers: Earth Spells require unusually perfect crystals. There is a -3 penalty for using a crystal with a purity of only 9; and a -7 penalty for crystals of purity 8.

DIVINATION: Identical to the *Divination Spell* from *THE TALISLANTA HANDBOOK*. This spell cannot be enchanted onto a magical item.

Magical Mishap: The Crystalomancer loses all magical abilities for d10 days.

RADIANCE: Identical to the *Radiance Spell* from *THE TALISLANTA HANDBOOK*. May be used to illuminate a 20' radius area, or (on the command of the caster) the crystal may release all of its energy at once, blinding or dazzling foes.

Magic Resistance: vs. SPD, to shield the eyes from being blinded. If unsuccessful, the victim is blind for a number of minutes equaling the level of the spell.

HEAR: Enables the caster to hear everything said in the vicinity of the crystal. Spell lasts for 10 minutes per spell level. The caster must

TELEPATHY

The skill *Natural Telepathy*, as possessed by the Muses, includes six powers: Emotion Sense, Influence, Life Sense, Mind Speech, Projection and Scanning. In all cases, range is equal to 10 feet per level of skill. The use of Telepathic abilities requires one round of undisturbed thought. Unless stated otherwise, the subject may not resist Telepathic attacks.

The Gamemaster may add penalties to the Natural Telepathy skill roll, depending on how alien the subject's mind is. Some sample modifiers: Most animals, +1. Non-humanoids, -2. Sindarans, with their dual-encephalon minds, -3. Extra-dimensional creatures, -5.

remain within 100 feet per spell level of the crystal for the spell to function.

SEE: Enables the caster to see everything which occurs in the vicinity of the crystal. Range and duration are 100 feet and 10 minutes per spell level.

EARTH POWER: Equivalent to the *Spell of Elemental Power* listed in *THE TALISLANTA HANDBOOK*, but with strict limitations. If used in the form of a Bolt, it does d4 impact damage per spell level. If used as a Shield, it withstands 4 damage points per spell level, but only if the damage comes from items made of earth-associated materials (metal, wood, pottery, and so on). The bolt takes the form of a glowing green sphere of energy, while the shield resembles a flickering green disk.

Magic Resistance: vs. DEX, to dodge a bolt of earth power. If successful, victim takes only a single point of damage.

DESTRUCTION SPELLS

These dangerous spells are governed by ebontine, the rarest known crystal. Destruction Spells are known only by the twelve senior Gnomekin Crystalomancers, and can be used within the Subterranean City only with the Gnome-King's permission. The penalty for breaking this commandment is imprisonment or banishment, with all crystals confiscated.

Magical Mishap: The spell succeeds, but at a time and place other than that chosen by the caster.

EARTH TREMOR: Causes a minor tremor over an area of 10 x 10 x 10 feet per spell level. The tremor causes no serious damage, although it might trigger a cave-in in an unstable cavern.

Magic Resistance: vs. DEX, to stay standing. "Failure" means that the subject falls down; "Mishap" means the victim falls and is stunned for d6 minutes.

EARTHQUAKE: By Gnomekin custom, within the Kingdom of Durne this spell may be used only in defense of the nation, or if a Crystalomancer's life is in imminent danger. It causes a strong tremor in an area 10 x 10 x 10 feet per spell level, inflicting d6 points of damage per level on all individuals within the area (halve the damage if the spell is cast aboveground). In addition, the spell's effects on nearby rock formations are unpredictable: it may open fissures in the ground, or cause tunnels to collapse. Used extensively during the Beast Wars.

Magic Resistance: vs. DEX, to avoid damage from falling rocks. Success reduces damage by half. A result of "Mishap" indicates double damage.

GREAT EARTHQUAKE: This spell is forbidden for use within Durne unless the kingdom is in urgent danger – and only with the specific permission of the Gnome-king. Its use will result in widespread destruction within the Subterranean City. The spell causes a major earth tremor in an area measuring 25 x 25 x 25 feet per spell level, causing d10 damage per spell level to every individual in the area of effect. Also collapses tunnels, caverns and passes in the immediate area of the spell, as well as unstable formations anywhere in the general vicinity.

Magic Resistance: vs. DEX, at a penalty of -3. Success reduces damage by half, but a "Mishap" results in double damage.

EMOTION SENSE: Muses are sensitive to strong emotions. Once a mind has been detected (see *Life Sense*), the Muse may try an Telepathy skill roll to sense the primary emotion within that mind. Great anger, consuming jealousy, overwhelming love, and similarly strong feelings can be sensed at a range of 2 feet per skill level. This ability may only be used once per hour, per mind.

On a "Mishap," the subject notices the mental contact. Characters experienced with Telepathy will recognize what has happened, but others become either alert or frightened (Gamemaster's determination).

INFLUENCE: Muses may attempt to mentally manipulate others' emotions. The number of minds which a Muse may attempt to simultaneously influence is equal to the Muse's Natural Telepathy skill level. This ability may be used only once per skill level, per day.

Influence must be limited to basic emotions: hunger, fear, uneasiness, lust, and so on. Planted emotions which are foreign to the subject quickly fade away when the Telepathic broadcast ceases. Influences are most effective on weak minds – the Muses use this power to frighten away animals by making them feel uneasy, restless, or scared

The subject first gets a PER Roll to notice what is happening within his mind. If he notices, he may then make a WILL Roll – if successful, the planted emotion is rejected. The Gamemaster may allow modifiers to the WILL Roll, depending on how natural or strange the implanted emotion is.

On a "Mishap," the Muse influences himself with the emotion he was trying to send to someone else – and might scare himself.

LIFE SENSE: Allows the Muse to make a skill roll to attempt to detect nearby mental activity. This power may only be used once an hour. The precise results depend on the *Action Table* result:

Mishap: Telepathic powers are useless for d6 hours.

Failure: The Muse detects only some of the nearby mental forces, or detects forces which are not really there, as determined by the Gamemaster.

Success: All functioning minds of INT -5 and above are detected. The Muse can sense their location, but nothing else. Sleeping or unconscious minds are not detected.

Success Plus: As for Success, but the Muse receives an impression of the mental capacity of each entity (their INT score) – perceived as a pattern of lights. The brighter the mind's light, the more powerful it is. Bright lights (INT +8 or higher) may temporarily dazzle the Muse.

MIND SPEECH: Muses do not have a spoken language – they speak

SINDARAN ALCHEMICAL PRODUCTS

Sindar's preeminence in the field of alchemy is recognized throughout Talislanta. A list of the most popular alchemicals follow, though the available oils, elixirs, potions and powders are by no means limited to this list. Many Nankar shops do custom alchemy for a small added fee. Player characters who are Sindaran Alchemists can produce these products, using the ingredients listed; non-Sindaran Alchemists cannot.

ANTI-INCENDIARY POWDER: This thick-granuled powder smothers fire almost instantly. One pint will smother up to 5 square yards of fire. Care must be taken not to breathe in the heavy dust – any who do must succeed at a CON Roll, or take d4 damage that will not heal for d6 weeks. (8 G.L. per pint)

Ingredients: 1 dram of fermented Fire Lilly, 5 ambertine crystals, 20 drams of charcoal powder (any kind).

FADON'S HINGE TREATMENT: This useful lubricant can render silent the squeakiest of hinges. Care should be exercised not to spill it, for the slippery fluid makes standing difficult, and movement next to impossible. (One vial covers a 10 x 10 feet area. Characters must succeed at a DEX Roll each round in order to stand or move). Hinge Treatment stains clothing, and is difficult to remove once spilled. (8 G.L. per vial)

Ingredients: 5 drams of Silver Deodar sap, 1 carat of onyx. Makes 10 vials.

FLAMPHINE: This greenish-blue paste burns extremely hot, with a bright blue flame. The heat will burn through 1" of any ordinary metal within one minute. One vial contains enough paste to lay a 12' strip. (20 G.L. per vial)

Telepathically with pictures and images. Mind Speech can only be received, so far as is known, by Muses and Whisps. (Some speculate that Ariane and Thaeicians may have similar abilities.) Muses mind-speak effortlessly and as often as they want to. The "volume" of Mind Speech can be varied to speak to as many or as few minds as desired, in the same way that verbal speech varies between whispering and shouting. Likewise, the distance of Mind Speech is similar to spoken language – some Muses, depending on their skill level, are "louder" than others.

PROJECTION: This is the skill which Muses use to send their mental art to each other. The same ability, used offensively, can startle, fool or frighten a victim. It may only be used once per skill level, per day. Duration of the image is one minute per skill level.

The "picture" to be sent must already exist in the Muse's mind. Since mental art takes days to create, the Telepath must draw on a library of images (one per skill level) previously created. The image may be of anything, real or imagined, moving or still.

The subject resists with a successful INT Roll. The Gamemaster may allow modifiers to the roll, depending on how natural or fantastic the broadcast illusion is. If the projection is not resisted, it seems real to the victim, and – from the victim's perspective – can seem to cause damage. The mental art is invisible to others who resist or are not targeted by the illusion, however.

A "Mishap" when using this skill results in the Muse being confused for d10 rounds.

SCANNING: This is the process through which Muses communicate telepathically with non-Telepath minds. Attempts may be made once per hour per mind, through an Telepath skill roll. If successful, the Muse is able to mentally speak with the subject for the next hour.

On a "Success Plus" result, the Muse may also detect the subject's buried thoughts. On a "Mishap," the Muse's own hidden thoughts are betrayed to the other mind.

Ingredients: 5 flamtine crystals, 1 dram of Araq fat, 2 carats of firegem. Makes 12 vials.

FADON'S SHARPENING TREATMENT: A useful whetstone liquid. Preferred by Thrall warriors for weapons maintenance. One vial is good for six months' use. (1 G.L. per vial)

Ingredients: 10 drams of Oil of Viridia, 1 carat of firegem, pure water. Makes 100 vials.

LYTH MOTAAS'S SPARKLING OIL: This thick, translucent oil contains thousands of reflective points of light. It burns with a bright, cool flame that is entirely smokeless. It is used in the reflector lantern system of Sindar, and is a popular export item to Hadj in the Wilderlands. One pint will fuel an ordinary lantern for 3 hours. (6 G.L. per pint)

Ingredients: 1 emeraldine crystal, 30 drams of Araq fat, 1 dram of wax, pure water. Makes 150 pints.

ROCK REAGENT: This powerful acid slowly dissolves most rock, enabling gemstones to be freed without damage. It is also useful as a gem cleaner, dissolving dirt and grease easily. It is sold in capsules, which are mixed with a gallon of water to form the working reagent. Watered reagent dissolves one cubic foot of rock in d6 hours. The breakable capsules can also be used in combat, doing 1 point of damage per round for d6 x 2 rounds or until removed by water. (10 G.L. per capsule)

Ingredients: 1 dram of skullcap root (powdered), 3 drams of dragon's blood, 10 drams of powdered coral. Makes 20 capsules.

SINDARAN NEUTRALIZING FLUID: Renders most toxic substances harmless, neutralizes acids and lyes, and prevents most alchemi-

cal reactions. Invaluable for controlling minor spills, and required in all alchemical shops. As a general rule, one gallon of fluid will neutralize one vial of anything else. Many substandard variants exist – be sure to buy real Sindaran formulations. Neutralizing Fluid has a distinctive soapy scent. It is poisonous if consumed. Shipped in 1, 5, and 50 gallon containers. (10 G.L. per gallon)

Ingredients: 1 dram of Snipe's shell (powdered), 1 dram of dragon's blood, 10 crystals of jacintine (any value). Manufacture is a tricky process: -5 difficulty to the skill roll. Makes 40 gallons.

SKORYX: The favorite drink of the Sindarans, Skoryx takes five months to properly distill. It is then aged for ten years. The use of rainbow lotus in the distillation process gives the clear fluid an iridescent quality and ever-changing spicy-to-sweet flavor. Claims that the beverage lengthens lifespan have never been documented.

NEW ENCHANTED ITEMS

Crystalomantic Spells may be enchanted only into items containing ambertine – a 4" diameter crystal (purity 7 or higher) is the minimum size required. Gnomekin magic items are rare outside of the Seven Kingdoms. Fearflash and Blackheart are illegal throughout the Seven Kingdoms.

BLACKHEART: Made by extracting the dream essence of someone's dying moments. Fearflash addicts who can no longer satisfy themselves with that drug often turn to this one. Blackheart tends to induce permanent insanity in its users, leading to manic behavior, psychosis, and uncontrolled violence. (200-500 G.L. per dram)

CHARM OF VERACITY. The Wizard King's sorcerers in Cymril have developed a talisman – based on the well-known *Spell of Influence* – which forces its wearer to truthfully answer all questions. Certain counterspells (such as *Korak's Anti-Magic Aura*) can negate the charm. The court mages first examine each witness with a *Spell of Revealment* to ensure that no other enchantments will distort his testimony, and they never use the charms on mages. (12,000 G.L., available only from the court of the Wizard King in Cymril)

CRYSTAL HEART: A polished gem or crystal pendant, these charms convey luck and good health to those Gnomekin who wear them (+1 on all *Action Table* rolls, +1 CON, +d4 hit points). Non-Gnomekin also receive these benefits, but only if the Heart is given freely. Stolen hearts do not function, or may bring about the exact opposite of their benefits. Only one Heart's effect is felt at a time. (500 G.L.)

CRYSTAL OF PROTECTION. Acts as a ward against the *Spell of Elemental Power* (including Earth Power). Usually crafted into a headband, so that the crystal forms a "third eye" on the wearer's forehead. (15,000 G.L.)

Aged Skoryx (over 150 years) is a great delicacy, as the effect of the rainbow lotus only increases with time. (10 G.L. per glass; 100 G.L. per bottle; as much as 150 G.L. for aged Skoryx)

Ingredients: 3 drams of Rainbow Lotus (powdered), 10 drams of desert berries (exact blend varies between alchemists), fermented grains, purified spirits. Makes 20 bottles.

SMOKEPOT: This inflammable grey chalk produces dense, unbreathable smoke when lit. Victims must succeed at a CON Roll each round or cough uncontrollably. The pint burns for 10 minutes, and cannot be extinguished. (5 G.L. per pint)

Ingredients: 1 dozen Winged Viper eggs, 1 vial of stenchroot juice, 5 drams of Gall Oak fiber. Makes 10 pints.

CRYSTAL OF VIRIDIA. This obscure object consists of an unsprouted viridia seed around which a clear crystal has been grown. Enchanted by the Arduan Botanomancers, the device can be used in conjunction with the proper spells to open an aperture into the Green World. (7,000 G.L.)

FEARFLASH: Certain criminal mages in Cymril deal in a crude imitation of Phantasian dream essence, distilled from the nightmares of an enchanted victim. This drug has none of the subtlety of true dream essence, but creates an intense adrenalin rush and occasional hallucinations. Fearflash is highly addictive, and is often fatal in the larger doses required by the addict. (50-400 G.L. per dram)

GNOMEKIN SEEING STONES: Gnomekin employ small versions of these stones, which function as listed on p. 49 of the *Sorcerer's Guide*. All stones in Durne are keyed to the Master Orb in the Gnome-King's quarters. Gnomekin Seeing Stones are highly prized outside of Durne, and are sometimes sold to foreigners. (10,000 G.L.)

OIL OF VIRIDIA. This glistening, golden oil is distilled from the taproot of the viridia plant, and has magical and metaphysical significance to the Ardua. The River King is anointed with this oil when he is crowned. A vial contains 10 doses. (100 G.L. per vial)

VIRIDIA POWDER. The dried sap of the viridia plant is used as a tool by Arduan Botanomancers, who find it adds a +d6 bonus to their Spell Rolls. One dram of Viridia Powder is required for every 5 x 5 x 5 feet volume of the subject plant. (35 G.L. per dram)

WAND OF AMBERTINE. This bone-and-ambertine wand is enchanted with Earth Power (from the *Spell of Elemental Power*). (12,000 G.L.)

THE NATURALIST'S COMPENDIUM

The following section details new varieties of life native to the Seven Kingdoms region. The basic format for the animal statistics is:

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

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

LEVEL: Indicator of general level of ability. If a range is given, then all creatures have at least the lowest score in the range. If a plus sign is used, then the entity has an unlimited potential for improved

levels. If both are used, then most individuals will be from the range of levels given, but exceptional beings can have almost any score.

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

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Extraordinary talents or powers.

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

HIT POINTS: Typical number 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.

BOUNDER

Herd of Bounders roam the plains of Durne, preyed upon by Omnivax and Ravens. These two-legged, flightless avians are named for their incessant hopping, which is necessary in order for the no-necked birds to scan their surroundings.

Bounders have learned an unusual survival tactic. When chased, these birds use their superior speed to lead their pursuers toward less-swift prey. Adventurers sighting Bounders running in their direction should be ready for action.

Though swift, Bounders are sometimes caught by Ur and the Seven Kingdoms mercenaries who patrol this frontier, and are said to be quite tasty. Some say that the animal's attraction to bright reflections, useful to them when locating pools of water in the open, can be used to trick the creatures into traps. The Gnomekin, who do not hunt, leave the Bounders alone.

BOUNDER

SIZE: 4-6', 85-120 lbs.

EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES: STR -3, DEX +2, SPD +8

LEVEL: 1

ATTACKS/DAMAGE: Kick: 1-3

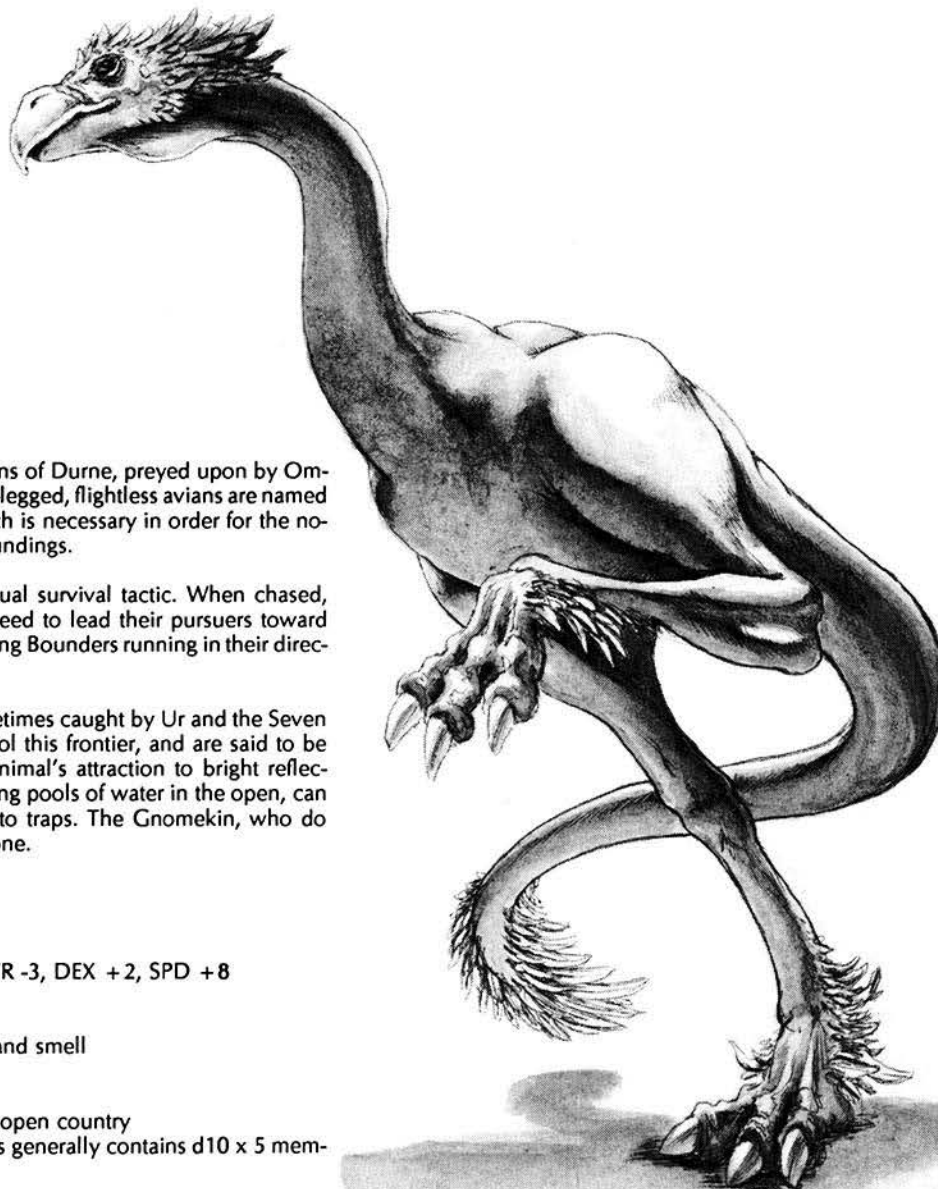
SPECIAL ABILITIES: Keen sight and smell

ARMOR: None

HIT POINTS: 2-8

HABITAT: Grasslands of Durne, open country

COMMENTS: A herd of Bounders generally contains d10 x 5 members.



CATDRAC

These creatures resemble a cross between feline and reptilian. They are highly intelligent, and greatly prized by the Thralls. If captured and trained while young, a Catdrac will think of its owners as family. Such animals are very loyal, and will defend their masters to the death.

A trained Catdrac forms an empathic link with its original owner within the first six months of their companionship. The owner then is able to receive emotional "impressions" of what the animal is experiencing. In effect, this gives a Catdrac's owner a sixth-sense similar to that possessed by Jaka (see *THE TALISANTA HANDBOOK*) so long as their guardian animal is present.

Unbonded young sell for high prices (3,000+ G. L.) in Taz and elsewhere, on the rare occasions when they are captured.

CATDRAC

SIZE: 24-36", 10-20 lbs.

EXCEPTIONAL ABILITIES: STR -1, DEX +3, SPD +4, INT +1, PER +3

LEVEL: 1-3

ATTACKS/DAMAGE: Bite: d4; Claws: 1-3

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Keen smell, natural climbing ability, night vision, limited telepathy (see above), danger sense

ARMOR: None

HIT POINTS: 3-12

HABITAT: Tropical forests of Taz

COMMENTS: Wild Catdrac hunt in mated pairs. Masters of the jungle, they commonly ambush their prey, and find man-hunting pleasurable.



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DRONE

Drones resemble huge bipedal newts, protected by heavy bony plates which also provide immunity to heat and fire. Marginally intelligent, Drones obey their Subterranoïd masters (see below) without question or hesitation, sacrificing their lives if commanded to do so.

DRONE

SIZE: 8-9', 500-700 lbs.

EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES: STR +6, DEX +1, CON -1, INT -6

LEVEL: 1

ATTACKS/DAMAGE: Bite: 1-3; by weapon

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Immune to heat and fire

ARMOR: As per leather

HIT POINTS: 1-8

HABITAT: Caverns, the Land Below

COMMENTS: Sometimes (1-in-10 chance) armed with daggers or spears of alien design.



OCTOMORPH

Octomorphs are large, intelligent cephalopods which dwell in the depths of the Underground Lake of Durne. They raid the Subterranean City for food – Koriana tubers, Whitecap mushrooms and the occasional Gnomekin. Octomorphs sometimes fight with crude spears and daggers fashioned from underwater stalagmites. Mature individuals have hard, shell-like armor which is resistant to cutting weapons.

OCTOMORPH

SIZE: 4-6', 100-150 lbs.

EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES: STR +2, DEX +2, CON +1, SPD -4 (+6 in water, -3 in addition if immature)

LEVEL: 1-4

ATTACKS/DAMAGE: Tentacles: d4; Bite: d6; or by weapon type

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Fast swimming, keen sight, shell (cutting weapons do only half damage)

ARMOR: As per partial plate (if immature, then as per chain mesh)

HIT POINTS: 4-24

HABITAT: The Underground Lake of Durne; possibly identical with a mollusk race reported in the ocean trenches off the Thaeian Isles

COMMENTS: May (3-in-6 chance) carry spears (d8 damage) or daggers (d4). Octomorphs can survive for up to an hour out of water.

FANGED EEL

Fanged Eels are reptilian predators. Moving in small groups, they often follow River Dragons, eating the prey flushed from the foliage by the larger creatures.

FANGED EEL

SIZE: 6'-10' long, 500-1000 lbs.

EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES: STR +3, DEX +2, SPD +1, INT -5, PER +2

LEVEL: 1-5

ATTACKS/DAMAGE: Bite: d12

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Superb swimmer

ARMOR: As per chain mesh

HIT POINTS: 10-30

HABITAT: The Axis River



RENDER

These large, carnivorous lungfish are common throughout the subterranean waterways of Talislanta. Renders live in the water, but crawl into dry tunnels and passageways to hunt. They often enter Gnomekin caverns, gorging on unripened crops, damaging sensitive crystals, and dragging living victims away to their submerged lairs for food.

These attacks have one positive benefit for the Gnomekin – Renders taste excellent, and a fully-grown one can feed a Gnomekin for a month.

RENDER

SIZE: 6-12', 300-600 lbs.

EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES: STR +8, DEX -1, CON +6, SPD -1, INT -6

LEVEL: 1-6

ATTACKS/DAMAGE: Bite: d8; Tail: d4

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Able to breathe in both air and water, metallic scales

ARMOR: As per chain mesh

HIT POINTS: 6-36

HABITAT: The Underground Lake of Durne, other underground waterways

COMMENTS: Commonly live in groups of d6 members. A Render can live out of water for up to two hours.



RIVER DRAGON

The River Dragon is a plant-eating swamp-dweller. It is particularly fond of viridia plants. Incapable of fully supporting its weight, the dragon lives in shallow water.

RIVER DRAGON

SIZE: 30'-100' long, 10,000-40,000 lbs.

EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES: STR +10, DEX -8, SPD -5, INT -7, PER -1

LEVEL: 1-3

ATTACKS/DAMAGE: Bite: d20 (see COMMENTS)

ARMOR: As per plate

HIT POINTS: 60-200

HABITAT: The Axis River

COMMENTS: River Dragons do not attack people – the damage given applies if a person is standing on the River Dragon's next mouthful, and is accidentally chewed and swallowed.



SUBTERRANOÏD

Large, bipedal amphibians with heavy, bony plates covering their bodies, Subterranoïds are an alien race from the place which the Gnomekin call the Land Below (beneath the Subterranean City of Durne).

Subterranoïds appear to dwell in a land of great heat, and are completely immune to attacks based on fire or heat. Many Gnomekin believe that the Subterranoïds are soldiers of the unknown Power – a fallen god or demon, perhaps – living in the Land Below.

Lacking imagination and tactical sense, Subterranoïds attack in the most direct way possible. Careful of their own lives, they have been known to squander the Drones in reckless assaults, or to leave the Drones behind in a suicidal holding position while they escape.

SUBTERRANOÏD

SIZE: 5-6', 200-275 lbs.

EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES: STR +4, CON +2, SPD -2, INT -2, WILL -2

LEVEL: 2-8

ATTACKS/DAMAGE: Bite: d8; Claw: d6; or by weapon type

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Immune to heat and fire

ARMOR: As per plate

HIT POINTS: 2-64

HABITAT: Caverns, the Land Below

COMMENTS: When armed (3-in-10 chance), Subterranoïds carry wavy swords and daggers of an unbreakable shiny black metal, etched with alien runes of unknown origin.

SERPIS

Poisonous snakes with vivid green eyes, Serpis are a continual hazard in the jungles and swamps. Many travelers suffer painful or deadly bites on the lower leg or foot from these hazardous animals. High boots are good protection, but the Thralls spurn such footgear, counting on their own abilities to avoid attack.

When surprised, Serpis rely on the hypnotic qualities of their scales to fend off attackers. The scales constantly form colorful patterns in reds, yellows, blues and greens, and no two patterns are ever the same. This hypnotism is resisted by a +5 difficulty INT Roll, and if failed, causes the victim to fall into a stupor for d10 x 2 minutes.

Used in expensive garments and artwork, Serpis skins sell for up to 10 G.L. each.

SERPIS

SIZE: 1-10', 2-12+ lbs.

EXCEPTIONAL ABILITIES: STR -3, SPD +4, INT -8, PER +1

LEVEL: 1-3

ATTACKS/DAMAGE: Bite: 1-3 (+d6 venom per level)

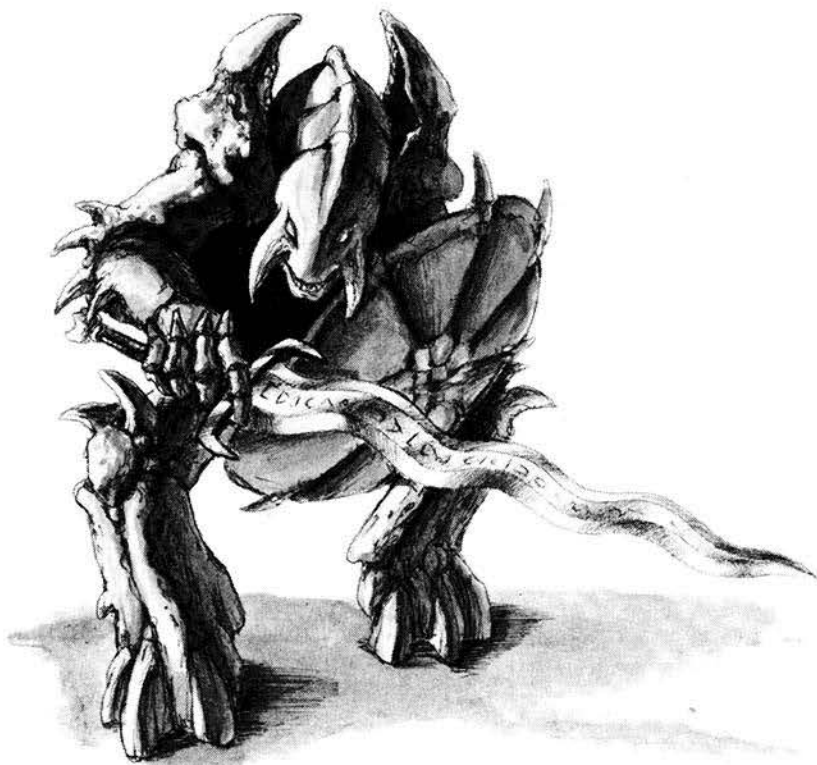
SPECIAL ABILITIES: Hypnotic scales (see above)

ARMOR: None

HIT POINTS: 2-8

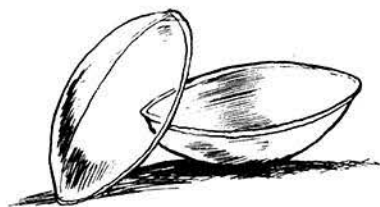
HABITAT: Tropical forests, deserts

COMMENTS: These snakes avoid larger creatures unless surprised or very hungry.



WEAPONRY AND EQUIPMENT

These are the new weapons, devices, conveyances, and equipment available in the Seven Kingdoms. (Statistics for the Gamemaster, where needed, are given in the "Gamemaster's Section.")



AMBER CUSPS (Kingdom of Durne)

Gnomekin are adapted to life in the dim light of their underground city. When aboveground, they must wear special cusps over their eyes to prevent impairment. Without these cusps, all skills which require sight are performed at a -2 penalty when a Gnomekin is in full daylight. In dim light or darkness, there is no penalty. (10 G.L.)



AQUAVIT (Kingdom of Cymril)

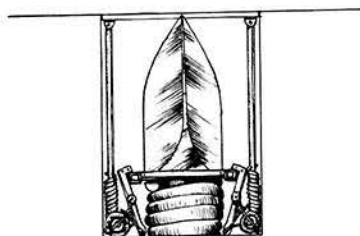
Aquavit is an effervescent liquor made from the fruit of the Vitas tree, which grows only in the hills around Cymril. It picks up the taste of whatever container it is stored in. The only substance which does not taint aquavit is amberglass. Therefore, all distillation equipment, aging vats, bottles, and even glasses must be lined with the precious crystal, greatly increasing the cost of producing aquavit. (2 G.L. per glass)

ARDUAN JAVELIN

Custom grown on special viridia plants, the six-foot shafts of these weapons are lighter than regular javelins but just as strong. (1 G.L.)

ASSAYING TOOLS (Kingdom of Kasmir)

These items – crucible, touchstone, alchemicals, and hammers – are the usual tools of the Kasmir Auditor. (40 G.L.)



COBBLER'S JOY (Kingdom of Kasmir)

This powerful spring-knife trap is imbedded in a floor. When someone steps on it, it fires its blade, impaling the victim's foot. These devices are often installed along ledges or stairs, so that victims will tumble down a staircase or cliff. (20 G.L., plus 10 G.L. to install and camouflage)

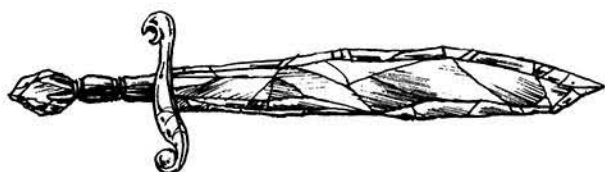
CRESCENT-KNIFE (Kingdom of Vardune)

The crescent-knife is a double-sided knife used as a harvest tool by the Ardua. Blue Ardua are well-trained in its use, and have a +1 to all combat rolls when using it. If a thrown crescent-knife misses its target, half the time it will circle through the air and return to its thrower. Catching it safely requires a successful DEX Roll. (2 G.L.)



CRESCENT-SPEAR (Kingdom of Vardune)

The crescent-spear is a double-bladed spear with curved blades. It is whirled around the head, and used in the same manner as a bladed quarter-staff. The whirling action allows the user to parry against all attacks from the front and sides at his full *Combat Rating*. (10 G.L.)



CRYSTAL BLADES (Kingdom of Durne)

Gnomekin traditionally use an unusual shortsword, blunt and thick and made from crystal. The weapon is rare outside of Durne, and can easily fetch ten times its price from a weapons fancier. (6 G.L.)



GNOMEKIN SCALE ARMOR

Although Gnomekin do not use armor themselves, they manufacture and export a unique, flexible armor made from the protective hide of the Render, a carnivorous lungfish layered with metallic scales. These sets of armor, which typically include a scale shirt, a scale cap with decorative lungfish fangs, and scale leggings, are functionally equivalent to chain-mesh but are lighter and more flexible. Unfortunately, no process has yet been invented to remove the armor's faint fishy scent, which attracts predators. (150 G.L.)

GNOMEKIN SLING AND MISSILES

Gnomekin warriors fight with slings, which can hurl crystal or stone missiles (d4 points of damage) or vessels containing stenchroot or brown mold. A successful stenchroot or brown mold hit reduces the target's Combat Rating by one until removed by the use of vinegar or a mild solvent. (2 C.P. for a sling; 1 S.P. for a pouch with 20 stone or crystal missiles; 2 G.L. for a stenchroot or brown mold bomb)



KAAZ (Kingdom of Taz)

The Kaaz, a six-foot iron staff with a wooden head carved in the likeness of a snake, exomorph, or other jungle creature, is an important totem treasured by the Thrall tribes. Its primary use is in the game known as Zol.

Zol is played (or "fought") by two teams ranging in size from ten to 100. If the teams are unequal in size, excess members of the larger team cannot play. The location and dimensions of the playing field are selected by the host team. Players are armed with wooden clubs, padded helmets and unspiked garde.

The host team begins with the Kaaz, and plants it in a defensible position. The visiting team attacks the Kaaz's defenders – and virtually anything goes, although the weapons used are not intended to deliver fatal blows. Should the attackers capture the Kaaz, play stops while they plant the Kaaz on their side of the field. The two teams then switch roles.

A Zol game lasts from dawn to dusk. Any Thralls leaving the field during the game may not return to play. At the end of the day, a team of judges – composed of elderly, veteran Thrall from non-competing tribes – declares a winner, based on the length of time each team has possessed the Kaaz, as well as individual and team performance. The winning tribe is awarded the Kaaz. Tribes with successful teams have large collections of Kaaz, while other tribes must manufacture new Kaaz frequently.

Although Kaaz are coveted by non-Thrall collectors, it is Thrall tradition that a Kaaz may only be awarded as a token of victory at Zol. Fortunately for such collectors, Zol competition is not limited to Thrall tribes. Wealthy collectors sometimes sponsor non-Thrall teams in order to acquire a Kaaz. Others, less scrupulous, offer a high price for any Kaaz, "no questions asked." (8,000+ G.L., not ordinarily for sale)

KASMIR TEST PAPER (Kingdom of Kasmir)

This valuable material, specially produced by the Auditors Guild using Sindaran alchemical compounds, changes color when rubbed against gold. One strip of paper can be used only once, to test one item. Not normally available to non-Auditors. (1 G.L. per strip)



NEEDLE PURSE (Kingdom of Kasmir)

This wallet contains a metal clasp, which one opens by squeezing. The fastener contains a poison needle, which can be avoided only by holding the clasp a certain way (different for every purse). (15 G.L.)

POD SKIFF (Kingdom of Vardune)

The skiff is a single lacquered viridia pod. It is quite durable but difficult to handle. (5 G.L.)



TAZIAN FIRE-ALE

A cheap, common grog, Tazian Fire-Ale has a fiery flavor that is an acquired taste. Mercenaries and bravoos prefer this beverage. The secret of manufacture is kept by the Thralls, who usually insist in their mercenary contracts that their employers provide weekly rations of their native drink. (1 C.P. per glass)

THE TRUE SWORD (Kingdom of Taz)

The Tazian "True Sword," a form of greatsword, is the symbol of a Thrall adult warrior. Forged by the tribal blacksmith, a True Sword is a masterpiece of the weaponsmith's art: strong, flexible, and perfectly balanced. To an unpracticed eye, it may seem like any other undecorated greatsword, but Thralls recognize one anywhere.

On the day chosen for his ascension to adulthood, a young Thrall is presented with his True Sword. He is then taken into seclusion for three days by the clan elders, while the tattoos symbolizing full adulthood are applied, and tales of ancient Thrall heroes learned.

Only one True Sword is given to a Thrall warrior. If the weapon is lost or broken, it cannot be replaced. No Thrall ever uses a True Sword other than his own. Thralls grimly respect non-Thralls who have gained a True Sword through combat. They feel that the weapon is dishonored, however, if it is wielded by a non-warrior. (75 G.L., not ordinarily for sale)

VIOLET QUAGA PEARLS (Kingdom of Kasmir)

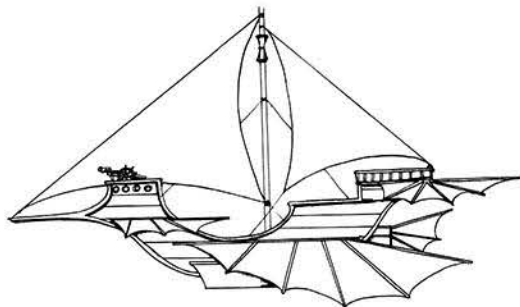
Not a product of the Seven Kingdoms, Violet Quaga Pearls are imported from the Dhuna of Werewood, who obtain them from the Violet Quaga of the Green Lagoon. These pearls form an expensive but superior purple dye when powdered and mixed with wine. Clothes colored with violet quaga dye are a sign of wealth and royalty. Kasmir money lenders in particular insist on wearing robes of this distinctive hue. (300 G.L. per dram, enough for one robe)





VIRIDIA BARGE (Kingdom of Vardune)

The barges are grown from viridia plants, and will stay alive as long as they are kept in the water. A transport barge can carry four wagons, while the smaller passenger barge will hold 20 people. Not suited for ocean use. (500 G.L. for a passenger barge; 1,000 G.L. for a transport barge)



WINDSCOUT (Kingdom of Cymril)

Windscouts are small patrol windships used in the Grand Army of the Seven Kingdoms. Forty feet in length, the single-masted vessels are similar to the traditional windship (see *THE TALISLANTA HANDBOOK*), but are slimmer and rigged with fore-and-aft spinifax sails. The armament consists of a single forward-mounted heavy ballista. There is a large forecabin, and three small cabins within the aftcastle. The standard crew consists of an Aerial Captain, First Officer, Windpilot, and seven Cymrilian Warrior-Mages. (75,000 G.L.)

WINDSHIP-OF-WAR (Kingdom of Cymril)

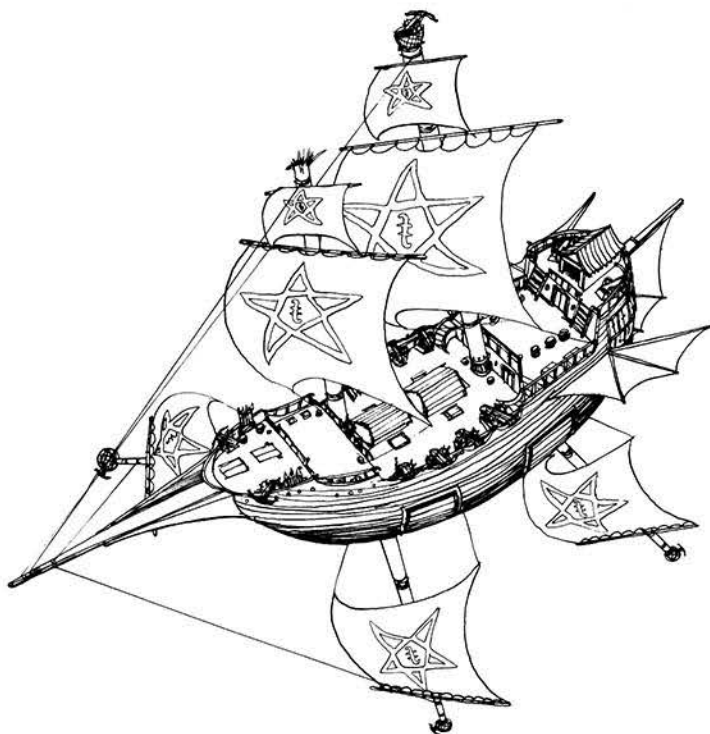
These mammoth behemoths of the air, constructed at great expense by the Kingdom of Cymril, are the largest such structures known in Talislanta. Fourteen of these huge vessels have been constructed, with only seven currently on active duty; all belong to the Seven Kingdom's Grand Army.

Six masts protrude from the great hull, two rising vertically, and the other four descending at an angle. Each supports a gossamer sail painted with the Pentacle of Cymril. Light ballistae, contained in basket mounts at the end of each mast, are the vessel's primary defense against airborne attackers (such as the bat-winged Stryx). The hull made of lacquered span-oak, and contains four decks or levels. Two light ballistae are mounted on the forecabin. The aftcastle also has two light ballistae, and a roofed enclosure housing steering and control mechanisms. Four heavy ballistae line each side of the main deck, firing to port and starboard.

Large drop hatches in the flat bottom of the hull allow the Windship-of-War to perform its primary functions. A special Warrior-Mages unit of the Cymrilian Legion is trained to make aerial assaults, dropping hundreds of feet from ropes suspended below the warships. In the event of a general war, the Sindaran would make their alchemicals available to the warfleet. The windship's drop hatches can then be used to drop Sindaran alchemical "bomb-kegs" on an enemy, while the heavy ballistae can be adapted to throw similar alchemical canisters.

The typical crew consists of an Aerial Admiral, First and Second Officers, two Windpilots, seven Aerial Sergeants, two Cabin Boys, thirty Air Men, and ten Cymrilian Warrior-Mages. An additional hundred Warrior-Mages may be carried for airdrop operations.

Windships-of-War are ungainly and slow, and their complex rigging requires constant maintenance. Landing procedures are especially intricate, as the lower masts must be cranked into a horizontal position before the great ships can land. (400,000 G.L.)



PLAYER'S MATERIAL

CYMRILIAN
WINDPILOT



CYMRILIAN
AIR MAN



TANASIAN
EXILE



SINDARAN
ALCHEMIST



SINDRA
RENEGADE



SINDARAN
PEACEKEEPER



SINDARAN
MESA SCOUT



KASMIR
AUDITOR



THRALL
HUNTER



THRALL
OUTCAST



WOOD
WHISP



New Character Types

CYMRILIAN AIR MAN

SIZE: 6'-6"4", 120-160 lbs.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: Light green skin, nondescript features, slender build

ATTRIBUTES STR +1, DEX +1, SPD +1, PER +2, CHA +2

HIT POINTS: 12

SPECIAL ABILITIES: None

SKILLS: Artillerist, magic training, primary combat, sailing (windships)

EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS: Leather half-cloak and breeches, padded helmet, high boots, goggles, green shirt, longsword, belt-knife

WEALTH: d20 x 2 in gold pentacles (Seven Kingdoms currency, worth 5 G.L. apiece)

COMMENTS: Cymril's Air Men are sailors of the air, the daring and dashing crew of the windship fleets of Talislanta commerce. Due to their innate curiosity, it is not uncommon to see Air Men anywhere on the continent, with or without a windship.

CAMPAIGN ROLE: Excellent as player characters. As non-player characters, they could be met almost anywhere – shipwrecked, or adventuring.

CYMRILIAN WINDPILOT

SIZE: 6'-6"4", 120-160 lbs.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: Light green skin, nondescript features, slender build

ATTRIBUTES DEX +2, INT +2, WILL +2, PER +1

HIT POINTS: 12

SPECIAL ABILITIES: None

SKILLS: Artificer or engineer (windships, levitationals), literacy, magic training, navigator/pilot (windship), secondary combat

EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS: High-collared green cloak of heavy viridia linen, robes of white gossamer, leather helmet with golden wings, boots, goggles, longsword, belt-knife, windship maintenance tools

WEALTH: d20 x 3 in gold pentacles (Seven Kingdoms currency, worth 5 G.L. apiece)

COMMENTS: All windships require a windpilot in order to navigate the air oceans of Talislanta. The windpilots of Cymril form a close brotherhood, watching out for one another in distant lands.

CAMPAIGN ROLE: Useful player characters if the adventurers have their own windship. As non-player characters, they are usually encountered as part of a windship crew.

KASMR AUDITOR

SIZE: 4'6"-5', 70-110 lbs.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: Mahogany brown skin, shriveled features, hunched posture

ATTRIBUTES DEX +1, INT +3, WILL +1, PER +1

HIT POINTS: 12

SPECIAL ABILITIES: None

SKILLS: Administrator, appraise treasure, literacy, merchant/trader, secondary combat, stealth, underworld; *one of the following:* interrogate, streetwise, torture, tracking

EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS: Hooded robe, cloak, curl-toed boots, coin purses (concealed), Kasmir spring-knife (with pouch of six blades), assaying tools, Kasmir test paper

WEALTH: d20 x 100 gold lumens (locked in various strongboxes and treasure caches)

COMMENTS: Kasmir Auditors evaluate treasure and investigate clients, working for their House or under contract to non-Kasmir. Money lenders use them (and the Auditors' Arimate contacts) as enforcers. Auditors belong to the Guild of Auditors in Kasmir.

CAMPAIGN ROLE: Best used as non-player characters, in pursuit of debtors (villains) or investigating mysterious cases (patrons). Auditors travel everywhere.

SINDARAN ALCHEMIST

SIZE: 7'-7"4", 180-220 lbs.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: Rough sandy skin, narrow eyes, crest of six protrusions on skull, bony chin spur, emaciated appearance

ATTRIBUTES: STR -1, INT +8, WILL +4

HIT POINTS: 10

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Dual-encephalon

SKILLS: Administrator, alchemical operations, artificer (*select one: black iron, clay [pottery], crystal, gemstones, gold, red iron, silver, or wood*), brewer/vintner (skoryx), combat training, all "concoct" skills, literacy; plus a single trade and craft skill (often healer or merchant/trader), and any two scholarly pursuits

WEALTH: d20 x 100 gold lumens in coins and alchemical products

COMMENTS: Not as esteemed as their Mirin counterparts, Sindaran alchemists have the advantage of being more accessible. Their alchemicals are fine, and are often purchased in favor of cheaper, unpredictable magical distillates.

CAMPAIGN ROLE: Excellent player characters, especially if the healer skill is taken.

SINDARAN MESA SCOUT

SIZE: 7'-7"4", 180-220 lbs.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: Rough sandy skin, narrow eyes, crest of six protrusions on skull, bony chin spur, emaciated appearance

ATTRIBUTES: DEX +1, INT +8, PER +1

HIT POINTS: 10

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Dual-encephalon

SKILLS: Ambush, archery, combat training, cryptography (Sindaran flash-code), knife-throwing, literacy, scout, snares, tracking, wilderness survival (desert); plus any single scholarly pursuit

EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS: Silk loincloth, arm and leg bracers, cape, bandoleer with 6 throwing knives, light crossbow with 20 quarrels, shortsword, Trivarian (game set), collection (at home), flask of skoryx (Sindaran liquor), flask of water

WEALTH: d20 x 50 gold lumens in mixed coins and collectables

COMMENTS: Mesa Scouts rely on their intelligence and ranged weapons (crossbow, knives), rather than the brute tactics used by other soldiers. "Orbs" of scouts report directly to the Nadir Absolute in Nankar.

CAMPAIGN ROLE: Excellent as player characters, either in an all-scout campaign or as retired scouts who have gone adventuring. As non-player characters, may be met anywhere within Sindar.

SINDARAN PEACEKEEPER

SIZE: 7'-7"4", 180-200 lbs.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: Rough sandy skin, narrow eyes, crest of six protrusions on skull, bony chin spur, emaciated appearance

ATTRIBUTES: INT +8, PER +3

HIT POINTS: 10

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Dual-encephalon

SKILLS: Administrator, alchemical training, combat training, interrogate, linguistics, literacy, oratory; plus any single "concoct" skill, any single scholarly pursuit, any single Thieving Talent, and any single Wilderness Skill

EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS: Silk loincloth, arm and leg bracers, cape, bandoleer pouches (for carrying vials of Sindaran alchemicals), silver blowtube, silver earrings and necklace, Trivarian (game set), collection, alchemical apparatus, flask of skoryx (Sindaran liquor)

WEALTH: d20 x 100 gold lumens in mixed coins and alchemicals

COMMENTS: Sindaran Peacekeepers serve their mesa-cities in the capacity of police and militia. Dual-encephalon detectives are hard

to outwit – many crimes are thwarted even before they've been committed. A successful thief should flee, as the Peacekeepers will sooner or later solve the case and come looking for him. Foreigners offer large salaries to draw the dual-encephalons from their land.
CAMPAIGN ROLE: A Peacekeeper makes an interesting player character in a crime-foiling campaign. As non-player characters, Peacekeepers might be patrons, pursuers (if the player characters are suspected of a crime), or allies.

SINDRA RENEGADE

SIZE: 7'-7'4", 180-220 lbs.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: Rough sandy skin, narrow eyes, crest of six protrusions on skull, bony chin spur, emaciated appearance

ATTRIBUTES: As for base character type, but reduce INT to half
HIT POINTS: 10

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Violence prone

SKILLS: As for base character type. Once all skills have been selected, delete half of them randomly – they are the skills known by the missing mind (now lost)

EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS: As for base character type, except for the Trivarian set (Sindra cannot play)

WEALTH: d20 x 100 gold lumens in coins, alchemical products, and magical artifacts

COMMENTS: A Sindra Renegade, one of "the Demented Ones," is a Sindaran who has lost the dual-encephalic double mind, usually as the result of a sensorium damaged by physical concussion, narcotics, or a deliberate attempt to learn magic. They are pitied and patronized by other Sindarans. Obsessions, paranoia, and phobias are common among Sindra, who are prone to violent behavior. Unlike other Sindarans, Sindra can learn magic and often possess magical devices.

CAMPAIGN ROLE: Sindra have every excuse to become wandering adventurers, and as player characters offer an unusual blend of magical and alchemical possibilities. Demented Sindra non-player characters can be used as villains or for unusual encounters.

TANASIAN EXILE

SIZE: 6'-6'4", 120-160 lbs.

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

ATTRIBUTES: STR +1, DEX +1, CON +2, SPD +1

HIT POINTS: 12

SPECIAL ABILITIES: None

SKILLS: Beast lore (eques), hunting/fishing, mounted combat, scout, secondary combat, stalking, tracking

EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS: High-collared leather vest, hide shirt and breeches, boots, mace or shortsword, javelin, coil of rope, greymane or silvermane mount

WEALTH: d10 x 5 gold lumens in mixed coins

COMMENTS: The Exiles, during the centuries since they were forced to leave the city of Cymril, have become hardy outdoorsmen very different from their city-dwelling cousins. They dislike city-life, preferring the wilderness.

CAMPAIGN ROLE: Excellent player characters; as non-player characters, chiefly met within the kingdom of Cymril.

THRALL HUNTER

SIZE: 6'8", 300 lbs. [male]; 6'4", 200 lbs. [female]

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: Hairless, devoid of pigment, body covered with colorful tattoos, muscular build

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

HIT POINTS: 16

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Immunity to fear, inability to comprehend magic

SKILLS: Ambush, beast lore, hunting, primary combat, scout, snares, stalking, stealth, tracking, weaponless combat

EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS: Loincloth, sandals, pouch, dagger, True Sword (greatsword) with shoulder sheath, garde (Tazian armor), shortbow with case, 20 arrows in quiver, spool of cord (for snares)
WEALTH: d20 x 5 gold lumens in assorted coins

COMMENTS: Thrall hunters serve as guides and scouts in the jungles of Taz. They may also engage in "sniper" duty in time of war.

CAMPAIGN ROLE: These rustic Thralls make excellent player characters, especially in southern Talislantan campaigns. As non-player characters, they are primarily found within the Kingdom of Taz.

WOOD WHISPS

SIZE: 1'-6", 1-6 oz.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: Wings, brown-green skin, slender build

ATTRIBUTES: STR -10, DEX +8, SPD +8, INT +1, WILL -2, PER +4

HIT POINTS: 2

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Flight

SKILLS: Camouflage, combat training (spear or bow), concoct poison, evasion, herb lore, identify flora and fauna, secondary magic (natural talent), snares

EQUIPMENT/POSSESSIONS: Spear, bow with 20 arrows, pouch (all Whisp-sized) [Whisp weapons do 1-2 points of damage]

WEALTH: Whisps have no need for money

COMMENTS: Wood Whisps are knowledgeable and reclusive forest creatures. They have a tightly-knit relationship with their larger cousins, the Muses – Whisps are their companions, watching over Muse children, acting as sentries and guards, and translating from Low Talislant to mind-speech or Sylvan for them. In return, the Muses perform physical feats beyond the powers of the diminutive Whisps.

CAMPAIGN ROLE: Interesting player characters, especially if Muses are around; as non-player characters, chiefly found in woodlands, and may be helpful sources of information or mild irritants.

OTHER CHARACTERS

All of the other Seven Kingdoms characters not mentioned in this book are described in *THE TALISLANTA HANDBOOK* (second edition). Some of these have also been mentioned in other Talislantan products:

Blue Ardua River Warrior (HB), Cymrilian Magician (HB), Cymrilian Warrior-Mage (HB2), Gnomekin Crystalomancer (SG), Gnomekin Warrior (HB), Green Ardua Botanomancer (CT), Green Ardua Horticulturist (HB), Kasmir Money Lender (HB), Kasmir Wizard (SG), Muse Esthenian (HB), Pharesian Peddler (SG), Sindaran Collector (HB), Tanasian Wizard (HB2), Thrall Warrior (HB)

Abbreviations used: HB (*THE TALISLANTA HANDBOOK*, first edition), SG (*THE SORCEROR'S GUIDE*), CT (*THE CYCLOPEDIA TALISLANTA*), HB2 (available only in the second edition of *THE TALISLANTA HANDBOOK*).

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 Seven Kingdoms characters, the following tips about “typical” characters from these lands are provided. Use these sketches as taking-off points for creating your own role-playing characters.

ARDUA (Blue and Green)

As an Ardua, you are a great companion when times are rough – and the rest of the time, you get on others’ nerves. Always remember that you are part of a Chosen People, a special sprig from the Elemental Tree. When foreigners do something wrong – and they always will (see below) – speak your mind. They may think you haughty or intolerant, but correct them anyway.

Making friends with the other races isn’t easy for you, and at first, they will think you cool and emotionless. Your seeming reluctance is due to the strong bonds of Arduan comradeship – when you do extend friendship, it will be the kind that only death can break. You may be hurt if others do not reciprocate these feelings.

The main problem with non-Ardua is their casual use of magic. You have been taught that only the Botanomancers know the secret laws which make magic safe to use – all others are dabbling with powers beyond their understanding, and may bring a Second Disaster upon all of Talislanta. If the others want to experiment with a newly-found magical device, let them – but you’ll stand a safe distance away.

You have many dislikes, and love to discuss them at length with any who will listen – cities, riding, magical devices, devils and demons, domesticated animals, and most mages. You are also mildly claustrophobic.

Cymrilians are at the top of your “distrust” list, because they are mages, and descendants of your race’s ancient Phandre persecutors. You dislike the Kasmir (materialism is a perversion to you), Muses (they are too frivolous about family relations and the use of magic), and Wood Whisps (your clan grows fields of whisp-bane to keep

the pests away). You hate Aamanians – you despise them for proselytizing, and suspect them of harboring invasion plans against Vardune – and Arimites, who have no honor.

There are two races in the Seven Kingdoms which you admire – the Thralls, with whom you share similar concepts of honor; and the Gnomekin, whose Crystalomancers respect natural powers when using their magic.

You have a strong sense of justice, and great concern for your personal honor. Once you’ve determined which course is right, you stick to it – Ardua don’t rationalize. If you are a Botanomancer, you are confident in your ability to discern right from wrong; if you aren’t, you may want to ask one for advice on ethics from time to time.

As an Ardua, your family ties run deep. You should never desert your clan or disobey the clan council. Your loyalty is to clan first, then to the Great Council (the collective clan of all Ardua), and finally to the Seven Kingdoms (the “super-clan”). You often send some of your wealth home to your clan, and no matter where you travel – with the blessings of your clan council, of course – you will always remain at the beck and call of your superiors. Traveling Ardua are frequently homesick, and visit woodlands for comfort and meditation.

Blue and Green Ardua think and act similarly, as they share the same culture. The old rivalry between the aggressive Blues and the pacifist Greens, though less pronounced than in ancient times, still remains in evidence in some parts.

CYMRILIANS

You are from a land of magicians, the least superstitious people in Talislanta. Magic is a tool, to be used like any other tool – to entertain, to preserve food, and to protect valuables, for instance. Study of the sorcerous arts dates back to your Phandre ancestors, who were among the finest sorcerers of their age. Magic is your preferred solution to any problem, even if you aren’t a mage – and unfamiliar magical devices fascinate you.

If you are a magician, you may be an Initiate, selling your minor spell-casting services from a humble shop. Or you might work for someone else, manufacturing enchanted potions, philters, amulets, rings, staves, or wands. The guild which manufactures windships might claim you as a member. Or you might follow in the steps of the most intrepid magicians of Cymril and travel to faraway lands. Some journeyers return from their adventures wealthy, even becoming faculty at the Lyceum Arcanum. Some never return at all.

A devoted cosmopolitan, you love good food and drink, city life, and all forms of entertainment (especially magical). You enjoy wearing clean, fashionable clothes that smell good. You view the wilderness with distrust, having been raised on stories of the harmful creatures which infest it. Green is your favorite color. You are confident in your own powers – others may think you overconfident. Prejudices and myths are often unfounded, and you seldom rely on “facts” reported by the uneducated.

You have little sense of family. If you have offspring, your pride dictates that you raise them well – but you are more likely to invest money than time in children. Likewise, your own parents will be disinclined to become involved in your problems, unless their reputation is somehow concerned.

Of the races whom your people commonly associate with, three are worthy of your respect: the Dracartans, who have mastered the art of Thaumaturgy; the Kasmir, whose financial power you are very aware of; and the Sindarans, for their great intellect, although you



can rarely resist an opportunity to compare your magic against their alchemical abilities.

Gnomekin are an "immature" race that must be helped and protected. They see this as a patronizing attitude, but you mean it sincerely.

Both Ardua and Thralls are useful. Use their concepts of honor and pride to get them to do what you want done. The Ardua are especially fun to tease. However, you know the value of these races, and will readily (and insincerely) apologize if they become offended.

As for Muses, they possess primitive magical abilities, but are good for little more than entertainment. They can't be taken seriously.

GNOMEKIN

It is exciting to be a Gnomekin in this age. Your people are emerging as an important race, and you are proud to venture forth into the world as their representative.

You feel a natural reverence toward the Earth Mother and all of her aspects. If you aren't a Crystalomancer, those magic-casters similarly fill you with awe as representatives of Her power. Reflecting the Earth Mother's character, you try to always be outgoing and friendly. Skills dealing with agriculture, healing or crafts interest you. Though you would never become a thief, some of the "thieving" talents attract you as well.

Kingdom, clan and family are important to you. Although you may be adventuring now – fortified by the knowledge that your people support your quest for understanding of the surface world – you know that someday you'll go home to start your family. If the Kingdom of Durne is ever threatened, you'll almost certainly return to aid in the defense.

You get along well with most of the gentler races of Talislanta, and they find you to be a brave and reliable companion. You respect the magicians of Cymril, and know Gnomekin craftsmen who enjoy journeying to that city to assist in construction and excavations. You admire Thralls for their bravery (but find them otherwise dull), and Muses for their artistry and closeness to nature. Zandir and Arimites are regular importers of Gnomekin foodstuffs, so you feel kindly toward them.

The Ardua and Sindarans are hard to relate to – they have little sense of fun – but you don't dislike them. Kasmir trappingsmiths are respected, but similarly hard to like. None of these would be your first choice as a traveling companion.

You barely tolerate the Aamanians, who are rumored to utilize Gnomekin as slaves. The Kingdom of Durne has no relations with Aaman, and forbids its pilgrims from crossing Gnomekin territory. Nor do you have much love for Za bandits or Beastmen, though they are seldom seen in your land.

As for Darklings, Ur and Satada, you hate them, attacking them at every opportunity. The Darklings are your sworn enemies, still challenging your race for control in the Dead Lands and along the Underground Highway. The Satada have been appearing in increasing numbers on the Underground Highway (the Gnome-King is considering another expedition to drive them out).

KASMIR

Money is power – all Kasmir hold this truth to be self-evident.

You are part of a Kasmir House, one of the great money-lending families of the kingdom. If you are a money lender, then your life is wrapped up in the pursuit of money – not for yourself, but for your House. If you are an Auditor or a Wizard (trappingsmith), you are less concerned with wealth, but you feel no less drive to make your family triumphant in all of its endeavors.

Work with your Gamemaster to develop your family, and your ties with it. If you are in the Kingdom of Kasmir, your Patriarch and his officers have constant contact with you. If you are traveling in distant lands, perhaps you are a highly trusted member of the family. In the West, every major city has its money-lending tower, and you will often find useful contacts there (though a rival House will be less than sympathetic to any plight you may be in).

You loathe to spend money – never purchase anything without bargaining the price down. Complaining about money when you must spend it is a habit. When you find a sale, stockpile – for instance, trappingsmiths collect bits of wire, hinges, wooden spars and similar items which might become useful. Hoarding food in case of siege or shortage which might raise prices is instinctual.

Travel is not enjoyable, because it is less secure than being home in your tower. One of your traditional fears is fire, that remorseless destroyer of wealth – Kasmir build with stone to minimize that risk.

Except for the comradeship among guild professionals, you find it hard to make friends. Whenever you consider an action, ask yourself, "What will this cost me?" – this helps you to fight emotional impulses.

Among the Seven Kingdoms, your favorite races are those who pay their debts on time. Ardua, Gnomekin and Thralls are at the top of that list – you respect their codes of honor, even if you reserve the right not to adopt similar views. Thralls are the only race entrusted to defend Kasmir against enemies.

The Sindarans give you mixed feelings. No Kasmir feels casual about the knowledge that his finances are in the hands of a foreign accountant – and that he can never understand the intricacies of dual-encephalon mathematics. There is also the terror of having a trusted accountant injure himself – a Demented Accountant can cause havoc. Nevertheless, you cannot do business without them.

Cymrilians, Arimites and Aamanians are all the same in your book: as long as they pay their debts, you are glad to service them. If they don't meet their obligations, you call an Auditor.

The Kingdom of Astar may be the single chink in your otherwise flawless emotional armor. The financially defenseless Muses seem to open doors in frozen hearts – few Kasmir can bring themselves to hurt a Muse, and many do things for them which others would never believe from a money lender. Of course, no Kasmir would admit to such a weakness.

MUSES

Your race marches to the beat of a different drummer. Items which others find trivial attract you powerfully. The Moment is what is important – unless peril is *immediately* imminent, ignore it and enjoy life. Above all else, remember that you are an artist.

Outsiders don't understand. They see your preoccupation with states of the heart as childish, and your disregard for planning and forethought as foolish. They misinterpret your Moments of artistic creation as disinterest or stupidity. Many think that Muses mature physically but not emotionally (little do they know!). Although you feel friendly toward them, you know better than to waste valuable Moments explaining yourself. Besides, language is difficult – while many Muses understand Talislantian, few speak it.

Your magic abilities come naturally. Magic is another form of art. You insist on using your magic only when it amuses you to do so . . . or if you are in immediate danger. Casting a spell, without first modifying or personalizing it in some new manner, is repellent. You would rather take the Moments to make changes in it, enjoying the challenge that the modified spell poses to cast correctly. The Whisps are always glad to help in making "spell-art."

You, like almost every Muse, have a hobby. Weaving, the crafting of musical instruments and magical wands (sorcerer-wood and harp-

wood are native to Astar), and "mind-art" – the construction of elaborate mental images for projection to other minds – are favorite pursuits. So is singing – Muse performers use their voices as instruments, singing wordlessly. Your people love dancing, simple games and all forms of romance. Foreigners sometimes mistake your love-games for seductions. When you are doing something you enjoy, you may forget to sleep or eat (but if you have a Whisp companion, he will remind you).

You enjoy fruits and fermented nectar – nectar affects you as alcohol affects other races. You are also fond of crystalline sweet powders (imported from Carantheum), as well as mushrooms from Durne and exotic fruit from Vardune.

Books and study bore you – few Muses master anything scholarly, and most aren't literate. Non-violent, you disdain weapons, armor and martial skills. Except for nectar, you don't indulge in drugs or other stimulants – they often make you physically ill, and usually give you a splitting headache. You don't understand the concept of money, and are terrible even at bartering. Muse society supports its members – if you need something another Muse can provide, he will give it to you.

The world is dangerous, so be cautious and shy around the unknown – but once you are sure of your safety, move in for a closer look. Remember the value of Moments. If the subject proves unworthy of interest, move on. Wood Whisps are your best friends. You depend on and like Whisps so much that you are seldom without your small companions.

Most of your kind find the "mute" races – those without mindspeech abilities – uninteresting, and avoid them. You prefer the company of artistic races: Gnomekin, who revere both art and nature; the Thralls, whose tattoos fascinate you; and the cosmopolitan Cymrilians, for example. Beside Imrian slavers, only the Sindarans are disliked, and for a practical reason – their hyperactive double minds partially blind your Telepathic powers.

PHARESANS

To be a Pharesian is to know the cruelty of the world. Look for examples of persecution and injustice, and treasure them in your soul. As a Pharesian, you know better than to give your heart to anything – it will only be broken. You accept what you can get from life: a trade wagon full of goods, a jingling coin purse, perhaps good health, and hope for nothing more.

Nothing means more to you than your freedom: the freedom to travel far and wide, to trade and sell whatever goods you please, and to defy the decrees of governments. If all your wares are not what they are purported to be, what's the harm? Life is full of surprises, some more pleasant than others.

The world of outsiders does not deserve your respect. Cheating a foreigner is only justice for the persecution your people have been dealt over the centuries. You especially take joy in making a fast lumen off a Cymrilian, the despised masters of your race's former city. You are cynical about all lands and people – only the Gnomekin earn your grudging respect.

SINDARANS

If you are Sindaran, you are a dual-encephalon, and that fact dominates your existence. You enjoy the thrill of out-thinking challenging opponents, and delight in subtle plots and machinations – but you never cheat.

You are contemplative and cool. When faced with a difficult choice or problem, you run it endlessly through your minds – you can analyze a situation for hours without taking action. The concept of "completion" is fundamental. You never consider a question answered until all of the potential ramifications have been explored. Mono-encephalons may find you irritating or boring.

You belong to an extended clan. If your interests are similar to theirs, you will probably use your clan name as well as your personal name – the alchemist Lyth Motaas, for instance, belongs to the Motaas clan, famed for its antiquarians and alchemists. Many Sindarans, however, use only a personal name, such as Torann, Madian, or Sarauk.



As with all dual-encephalons, you have a compulsive urge to collect things. Soon you will latch onto some theme or subject – perhaps an ancestral clan interest – that will inspire you for the rest of your life. Some types of collections, with examples:

Art: Cave paintings from Urag are collected by Nadir ta Paal, whose service with the Mesa Scouts gives him the opportunity to venture north to seek them out.

Cultures: There is a friendly rivalry between Nadir's Blaas clan, who collect Zandir medallions, and the alt Yaam of Sahar, who specialize in Aamanian holy objects.

Historic Periods: The Motaas clan of Nadir collect modes of archaic dress from the defunct Quaran Empire.

Regions: Taxidermic trophies from the Kharakhan Wastes are collected by the ta Benit clan of Nankar.

Scholarly Subjects: Nadir Trevon rul Jara collects codes of law, including ancient legal inscriptions from ruins and tombs.

Substances: Red iron and its use through history is the interest of Nadir Governor Ibe'er in Nankar, while rocks and minerals from the Underground Highway obsess the Umiil clan of Sahar.

Technology: Glassblowing equipment and samples of ancient glass are sought by Wiik ta Buuk, the well-known Peacekeeper.

You consider mono-encephalons – the rest of the world – to be aggravating, but pride yourself on acting with patience toward them. Cymrilians are the hardest to take, a race of upstart magic-casters who think themselves the equal of your ancient race. Thralls have excellent minds, within their strict limits, and you respect the Kas-mir and Gnomekin, who are well-versed in their occupations. Muses baffle you.

SINDRA

Despite your madness, you know that you are more intelligent than anyone else. Your affliction – if the loss of dual-encephaly can be called that – isn't the curse others think it is. You feel free to act without thought or caution, overcoming cultural inhibitions against dishonesty, guilt and violence. In fact, you enjoy physical mayhem. You hardly miss being able to play Trivarian, thanks to the delight of opening new realms of experimentation – your new ability to learn magic.

The bouts of schizophrenia which occur when your separated minds struggle for control of your body cause interesting dreams.

New passions – which others call psychoses – come and go. Sometimes you think so rapidly that you become confused or dazed.

Sindarans consider you to be the most wretched of creatures, and provide free shelter and food for you in their mesa-cities, so long as you are not violent. If you do not restrain your physical episodes, they will expel you from the community, along with suffocating pretensions of sorrow. You no longer feel any kinship with your Sindaran family and former friends.

Like most Sindra, you may leave Sindar permanently, plying whatever crafts or skills you still possess elsewhere (preferably at a great distance from other Sindarans). Some travel to Cymril or Arim, and many reside in Zandu, working alchemy and living in their own sections of the larger cities. Some travel to Aaman and convert to Orthodoxy, to the joy of the religionists there.

TANASIANS

The Tanasians are split into two distinct divisions. The Exiles fled Cymril during the political turmoil of the Beast Wars, and over time have become rugged frontiersmen. Their brethren who stayed in the city, nursing old grudges against the city's masters, are the magically-adept Rebels.

The Tanasian Exiles. As an Exile, you know that life can't be handled by magical means alone. Physical labor and close contact with nature are important. Your worth as a Man can only be determined by pitting yourself against life-threatening challenges.

Your first and best friend is your equus, which you captured and tamed. Some say your rapport with the animal is supernatural, but you know that it comes from long hours of practice and training.

You have little patience for Cymrilians, but don't actively hate them. The regimented Thralls and the self-righteous Ardua amuse you. Your hatred is reserved for the Kasmir and their financial network, which you feel is the real cause of your ancestors' defeat and exile.

The Tanasian Rebels. As a Rebel, you share the same culture as the Cymrilians. Many of their interests parallel yours. The major difference is this: you dream of power, and the means of regaining it. No ethical concern would stop you from trying something sinister, if you thought that it would increase your magical ability or political control. Secret plots, espionage, and intrigue fascinate all rebel Tanasians.

You hate Cymrilians and their servants, the Kasmir and the Thralls. You know that you are superior to the Ardua, Gnomekin, Thralls, and Muses. Only the Arimites win your grudging friendship.

THRALLS

Above all else, you are a warrior – the martial philosophy pervades all levels of Thrall society. This is an instinctive trait of all your race.

Your society is based on a code of honor. You will slay enemies in fair battle, but will not kill innocent or helpless opponents. Except for the full garde worn by the shock infantry and heavy cavalry of the Grand Army, you shun protective armament. Full armor is too heavy and cumbersome for Tazian combat, and will only weigh you down in battle.

Others may believe that your race lacks intelligence. They are wrong. There is no strategy or tactic too complex for you to grasp. You will use their mistaken beliefs to your advantage, should the time come to fight.

Advance in Thrall society depends on success in honorable combat. If you are fresh from the jungle and unfamiliar with the ways of the civilized world, you may frequently challenge incompetent companions for leadership. However, you know better than to challenge your employer.

Bonds of companionship are strong for you, especially toward your fellow warriors. Your race's mysterious creators bred you to be incapable of disloyalty or rebellion. Once you give your word, you will never break it, save in the case of extreme treachery by an employer. While loyal and steadfast, you are quick to point out flaws in a companion's combat plans – and in military matters, your advice should not be taken lightly.

Decide which tattoos you wear, and how they affect encounters with other Thralls. Remember that you have tribal tattoos as well as tattoos for personal achievement. Include icons representing famous ancestors, great events in tribal history, and – as you gain experience – your own victories and skills. Your tattoo record may attract allies and friends among Thralls you meet, through non-Thralls cannot decipher the iconography of the tattoos. Above all, these tattoos set you apart from other Thralls. They are your identity.

Most Thralls speak only Low Talislan, rarely learn another language, and are seldom literate. Magic (and magicians) have no interest for you. You prefer action to passivity, and are decisive rather than circumspect.

You are not normally a heavy drinker, although Tazian Fire-Ale is popular in Taz. While you can drink a lot before becoming drunk, alcoholism can be a problem even for a Thrall.

You are not in awe of the Cymrilians, though you are intrigued by the military potential of their windships. You are genuinely fond of the Gnomekin, whom you admire for their bravery and resourcefulness, and you work well with the Blue Ardua warriors, your major partners in the Grand Army. Muses and Sindarans puzzle you.

You have little love for the miserly Kasmir, but fulfill your mercenary duties toward them rigorously. The Orthodoxists of Aaman approve of your physically identical race for doctrinal reasons, and long to convert you to their dour and colorless faith. Centuries of proselytization have left your people cold to their appeals, however.

WOOD WHISPS

As a Wood Whisp, your primary concern is survival in a world hostile to small beings like yourself. Your second concern is for your friends and distant cousins, the Muses.

Survival is something you are very good at, thanks to your ability to fly, your shrewd natural cunning, and your limited magical abilities. Your pride in your ability to take care of yourself often leads you into precarious circumstances, because a Whisp is resourceful . . . and never (well, hardly ever) afraid.

Your large relatives, the Muses, fill you with great awe whenever you think of them. Their mental-art entertainments enthrall you, and you delight in the way their artistic minds work. However, Muses aren't truly meant for this dangerous world – they are killed very easily, due to their lack of protective instincts. As a Whisp, you are proud to watch out for and shepherd your larger friends.

In the Enchanted Grove, your clan is associated with a Muse commune. When one of the larger beings leaves, one or two of the Whisps come along to safeguard him – no matter how long the journey takes. As an adventuring Whisp, you almost certainly have a Muse partner whom you protect. Since your large friends seldom speak verbal languages, you may be required to translate between other people and your Muse.

Should your particular large friend become injured, you will care for him as best you can; if he dies, you will grieve. If you could give your life to save his, you would. However, you are well aware that this is a tough world – Muses are going to die, and there's no stigma to failing as a guardian. Most Whisps return to their home if their friend dies, but some find new friends among the other large humanoids of Talislanta. If so, you'll be their guardian too, using your craft and guile to protect them from this very dangerous world.

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

STATISTICS FOR NEW EQUIPMENT

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

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

COST is the typical cost of the item in its native area (costs are frequently higher elsewhere). Unless noted otherwise, values are given in gold lumens.

DAMAGE is the amount of injury a weapon will cause. For conveyances, the Damage Rating is the amount of injury which the conveyance can sustain before being destroyed; if it takes half this damage, it is useless and must be repaired.

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

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

RANGE applies only to missile weapons, and indicates the effective range of the weapon in feet. Maximum range is twice the effective range.

WEIGHT is the weight in pounds.

WEAPONS

TYPE	DAM	RANGE	WT	MIN STR	COST
Arduan Javelin	d8	50§	4	-2	1
Crescent-Knife	d4	50*	½	-	2
Crescent-Spear†	d8	-	5	-1	10
Crystal Blade	d8	-	5	0	6
Gnomekin Sling	d4	100	1	-	2 C.P.†
Stenchroot Bomb**	spc	-	-	-	2
True Sword	d12	-	20	+1	75§§

ARMOR

TYPE	PROTECTION	MIN STR	COST
Gnomekin Scale	3	0	150

CONVEYANCES

TYPE	ARMOR RATING	DAM RATING	COST
Pod Skiff ††	1	10	5 ††
Passenger Barge	3	75	500 ††
Transport Barge	4	100	1,000 ††
Windsout	4	120	75,000 §§
Windship-of-War	5	200	400,000 §§

* plus 10 feet per +1 STR

§ plus 20 feet per +1 STR

† Crescent-Spear Skill (new) is required to use the weapon properly

† a pouch of 20 missiles costs 1 S.P.

** used with Gnomekin Sling

§§ not ordinarily for sale; price is the estimated value of a captured item

†† Watercraft can be bought or rented at any Arduan river settlement. Rental price is 1/20 of the buying price, per day

†† skill and handling rolls are at -1 while in a Pod Skiff, due to its instability.



NEW TRAPS

Cobbler's Joy. Does d8 damage. The injured foot cannot be used until at least half of the damage is healed. Thieves can spot these traps with a successful Traps skill roll. Disarming the trap requires a second successful Traps skill roll.

Needle Purse. Requires a -4 difficulty Traps skill roll to spot a needle purse, and a second Traps skill roll at -6 penalty to correctly open it. The poison does d6 x 2 total damage, at a rate of 1 hit per minute. The victim feels an unbearable burning as the poison spreads through his bloodstream.

Revenge Purse. Kashmir use these wallets to punish thieves who have learned to deal with Needle Purses – usually by hacking stolen wallets open with hatchets. Revenge Purses contain a bladder filled with a mixture of acid and indelible dye, which sprays in every direction when cut open. The acid causes 1 point of damage, while the dye marks the thief. (50 G.L.)

Requires a -5 difficulty Traps skill roll for an experienced thief to tell a Revenge Purse from a Needle Purse. Revenge Purses can be opened safely in the ordinary manner, but usually contain valueless items – paste gems and clinking metal disks. Since non-Kashmir are not familiar with this item, it is mentioned here only, and not in the "Weapons and Equipment" section of this book.

SKILLS

With the **Appraise Crystals** skill (new), a Crystalomancer may determine whether a crystal is of magical quality, and if so, what its value is. Crystals not suitable for magic may be used for Gnomekin art, or sold to foreign collectors. Non-Gnomekin characters must learn this skill from someone who already knows it (usually, a Crystalomancer).

Arduan Botanomancy is covered under two existing skills: Horticulture (the equivalent of Botanoculture) and Primary Magic (required to perform Botanomantic magic). While any character with the Primary Magic skill who possesses the Botanomantic spells may make use of them, true Green Arduan Botanomancers limit their spell use for philosophical reasons (see "Botanomancy," elsewhere in this book).

Crescent-Spear skill (new) is required to use the Arduan crescent-spear properly. The skill takes four months to learn, and costs 10 X.P.

Gnomekin Crystalomancy is included within the existing magic skills (Primary, Secondary, and Training). However, there are fundamental differences between Crystalomancy and ordinary magic – without special training, Crystalomancers cannot cast normal magic, nor can regular magic-casters use Crystalomantic spells. Non-Gnomekin characters must complete a special apprenticeship with a Crystalomancer (and pay 10 X.P.) before they can learn or cast Crystalomantic spells. A Gnomekin Crystalomancer must pass through a similar apprenticeship to be able to cast ordinary spells.

OPTIONAL RULES

The Gamemaster may add any of these rules to his campaign.

AERIAL DODGING (Wood Whisps)

Airborne Wood Whisps may dodge attacks by succeeding at a DEX Roll. Dodge rolls are made following the attacker's successful combat roll.

ARDUAN PHYSIOLOGY

An Ardua can glide up to 25 yards from a 5-yard height (the Gamemaster can modify this to allow for winds). Every point of SPD beyond +2 adds 5 yards to an individual's gliding distance. Every extra yard of height adds 2 yards of gliding distance. Ardua cannot glide in armor.

Weapons weighing more than 5 lbs are heavy for Ardua, giving them a -1 penalty to their combat rolls when using them. Ardua cannot use normal bows, due to the way their arms and upper body are constructed. For similar reasons, Ardua find riding physically difficult – when riding (including mounted combat), they must apply a -1 difficulty to all of their skill rolls.

DUAL-ENCEPHALY (Sindarans)

A Sindaran's skills must be divided, half being assigned to each hemisphere of his brain. Memories are similarly divided. With two independent hemispheres, a Sindaran can do two things at once – so long as both actions don't require the same mind and its skills. However, the concentrated mental processing power of two minds is what gives Sindarans their higher intelligence – they suffer a -4 penalty to INT when using only one mind on an action. One mind can even sleep while the other remains awake, allowing a dual-encephalic character to function continuously. However, Sindarans find using only one mind to be unpleasurable, and do it rarely.

The power of two minds gives the Sindaran added strength with which to resist mental attack. In any situation where a WILL Roll is called for, the dual-encephalic character may roll once for each conscious mind, and resists the attack if either one of the rolls succeeds. The double mind also gives physical benefits. All Sindarans are ambidextrous and, when both minds are awake, can give astonishing performances of precise muscle control.

The double brain is not as well-protected as with most races. Any sharp blow to the skull, especially one that disturbs the sensorium knobs running down the back of the head, has a 1-in-10 chance of temporarily knocking out one of the two minds for $d6 \times 2$ minutes. At the end of this period, make a -5 difficulty CON Roll – if a "Mishap" occurs, the unconscious hemisphere is permanently damaged, and the character becomes a Sindra. Magic similarly can damage the connection between the hemispheres. A Sindaran character must make a -5 difficulty CON Roll for each X.P. invested in magical study, and for every spell cast. If the result is a "Failure," the character blacks out for $d20$ minutes; in the event of a "Mishap," the hemispheres disconnect and a Sindra is created.

A Sindaran may possess the same skill twice – once in each hemisphere – by having one hemisphere teach the other a skill it knows. The character must pay half the cost in X.P.s which the skill would ordinarily cost to learn.

GAINING LITERACY (Gnomekin)

Literacy can be acquired by the Gnomekin (and other illiterate races). It costs 10 X.P. to become literate in a character's native language (Talisian, for the Gnomekin). Races whose language has no written form must first learn a foreign language – then they may become literate in the new language. An instructor is required.

KASMIR MONEY LENDING

The Kasmir Houses have branches of their family business in many cities throughout Talislanta. The money-lending families generally obey the local law, and offer honest loans. Adventurers may need money for several reasons: to purchase a windship, duneship, or other conveyance; to build a home or outpost; to repay another debt; or to buy weapons, equipment, and animals.

Obtaining a loan. First, the player character must locate a Kasmir money lender. In many cities, their traditional towers stand out.

Second, he must convince the money lender that he can repay the loan. To do this, he must make a Hagglng skill roll. Apply a +1 bonus for each previous loan he has repaid. If he has ever missed a payment, add a -5 penalty. The Gamemaster may add a bonus if the player character has benefited the money lender in some way.

Third, the borrower must provide collateral worth at least the amount to be borrowed. He must hire a Kasmir Auditor (the money lender will be glad to recommend one) to affirm the surety's value. The auditing costs 1% of the value of the property being audited, with a minimum charge of 15 G.L.

Fourth, establish an interest rate. Try another Hagglng skill roll, subtracting the Kasmir's skill from the player character's. The *Action Table* result determines the interest rate (the Gamemaster may modify interest rates to reflect local supply and demand). The interest on the loan – the amount of the original loan, multiplied by the interest rate – must be paid annually.

Mishap	75%	Success	50%
Failure	60%	Success Plus	30%

Fifth, set a time limit within which the loan plus the interest must be repaid. Most money lenders insist that the principal be repaid within eight years. The adventurer may always repay faster to avoid interest.

Sixth, the deal is not final until the borrower signs the contract. He must hire three Kasmir Litigators (10 G.L. each) as witnesses.

The Hazards of Borrowing. People shudder at the small print in Kasmir contracts. One trick of unscrupulous money lenders is to demand unusually valuable collateral. They then use dishonest means to force the borrower to default on his loan, allowing them to claim the collateral. A Payback Clause appears in all Kasmir contracts, allowing the money lender to demand immediate repayment at any time. According to Kasmir law, the money lender suffers a penalty for doing this – the borrower is required to only pay back the principle, without interest, and any interest already paid counts against the principle owed. In effect, the money lender pays a stiff fine in order to borrow his own money back. Adventurers who succeed at a Litigator skill roll can detect questionable clauses in a contract.

Kasmir Houses also sell loans to each other to raise cash. Adventurers who made a loan with a friendly money lender may later find themselves dealing with a harsher banker.

Kasmir have no mercy for debtors who miss their payments. Generous money lenders will extend the loans for a few years, increasing the interest rate each time. Less kindly bankers turn the debts over to their family's Auditor.

Each House has a trademark method of punishment, such as breaking legs, removing ears, igniting hair, or suspending victims on hooks. Auditors sometimes hire thugs to do their dirty work, and have a tradition of hunting down debtors, no matter the time or effort required. When terror tactics do not work, they often send Arimate Revenants after delinquent debtors.

MUSE CONCENTRATION

Muses have a reputation for being flighty and frivolous. Actually, they are tuning out the world in order to concentrate – and focus their mental abilities – on a single mental project. Concentration is useful for Telepathy (see the “Arcana” section), mental art, and any skill requiring INT or WILL.

It takes one round for a Muse to attempt to slip into a trance. The Muse tries a WILL Roll and checks the *Action Table*. A failure indicates that the trance fails; on a “Mishap,” the Muse falls instead into a Catatonic Trance and is unaware of his surroundings for the next d20 x 2 minutes.

A successful trance temporarily adds +8 to a Muse’s WILL, and +2 to INT. While concentrating, the Muse is interested only in the mental project – PER is at a -8 penalty.

Coming out of the trance requires another WILL Roll (the +8 bonus from concentrating does not apply). Physical stimulus (pain or discomfort) add a +1 bonus to the roll. If the *Action Table* result is a failure, the Muse remains in the trance. On a “Mishap” result, the Muse slips into a Catatonic Trance (described above).

MUSE SPELL-ART

Except in the most perilous of situations, a Muse will “play” with a spell – adding his own personal touches to it – before casting it. This takes one round per level of the spell, and the changes reduce the spell’s reliability. The spells are cast at a skill roll penalty of -2 per spell level, instead of the usual -1 per level.

The changes in the spell should be artistic rather than useful – sparks, a pleasant odor, or a delicate nuance in the spell’s usual result. Unless a “Maximum Effect” result is rolled on the *Action Table*, the Gamemaster should not allow the Muse to achieve extra powers with a spell.

The effects of a “Magical Mishap” for a Muse-customized spell are also more spectacular than for ordinary spells. The Gamemaster should be creative, but earth tremors, momentary contacts with other regions of the Omniverse, and random enchantments are all appropriate. To keep the player from using a mishap to his advantage, the ill effects may occur elsewhere or be delayed.

A Muse’s Whisp companions may assist in spell-casting. Each participating Whisp adds +1 to the spell roll. This counts against the Whisp’s spell limit for the day.

TAZIAN COMBAT (Thralls)

When using Tazian Combat Skill, a character may perform any of the following maneuvers. Roll on the Combat column of the *Action Table* to determine success.

Body Slam. Used to subdue an opponent. Inflicts subdual damage (one-half normal). In addition, if the attacker rolls “Success + Intent” on the *Action Table*, the victim is stunned for a number of rounds equal to the attacker’s strength rating.

Garde-Parry. Character may parry one blow as per shield.

Garde-Thrust. Character may attack with the Garde, inflicting d6 + [the attacker’s STR rating] points of damage.

Grapple. Attempt to restrain an opponent. The victim of a successful grapple may take no action other than attempting to break free. This requires a successful Attack Roll against the grappler. A grappler may take no action beside maintaining the grapple.

Shoulder-Smash. Inflicts d8 + [the attacker’s STR rating] points of damage, but attacker is off balance and may do nothing except parry on the round following this maneuver. A successful shoulder smash



also breaks down most non-magically locked doors. (Gamemasters may make exceptions in the case of iron-bound or exceptionally thick doors.)

Non-Thralls can gain Tazian Combat Skill only with the help of an instructor who already has this skill. Thralls are ambidextrous, and may wear the Garde on either the right or the left.

TRIVARIAN (Sindarans)

Trivarian may be simulated as a contest of INT. Five primary strategies, understood only by dual-encephalons, are involved: *Space*, occupying the largest zone of influence within the pyramid; *Pattern*, achieving arrangements of playing pieces that create pleasing patterns of light, despite the interference of the other players; *Height*, avoiding the upper or zenith positions within the pyramid; *Advantage*, having playing pieces arranged so that moves can be “forced” onto another player; and *Style*, the flair and originality used during play.

A Sindaran has a special rating in each of these strategies. No rating may be less than zero, and the total must equal the character’s INT plus his level. For instance, a first-level Sindaran (INT +8) has 9 strategy points to divide among the 5 strategies – and might be Space-1, Pattern-3, Height-0, Advantage-2, Style-3.

At the start, all players try a Game Roll: rolling d20 and then adding their character’s level to the result. The highest rolling player selects a strategy (if there is a tie, roll again).

The three players now make new Game Rolls, this time adding to the die roll both their level and their rating in the selected strategy. The result depends on the strategy in play:

Space: The highest-rolling player receives 25 Game Points. If there is a tie for the highest score, all tied players receive the points.

Pattern: All players with a result of 20 or higher receive 30 points.

Height: The highest-rolling player gains 40 Game Points. If there is a tie for the highest score, no one wins.

Advantage: The highest-scoring player receives 25 Game Points for each opponent whose score he beats by 5 points or more.

Style: The highest-rolling player receives 30 points. Players who tie are disqualified from winning this round.

At the end of each round, the player with the highest Game Point total selects a new strategy. The same strategy may never be used twice in a row. The game is over when any player has at least 300 points, and has more points than his opponents.

Players may bet among themselves, agreeing on maximum and minimum limits for wagers before the game starts. Spectators may also place wagers – the Quan particularly enjoy wagering on this incomprehensible (to them) game.

TALISLANTAN ADVENTURES

The following are three short adventures, which can be used as introductions to the Seven Kingdoms or incorporated into an ongoing campaign. The Gamemaster is encouraged to modify or expand the adventures to suit his interests, his players' interests, and his campaign style.

MYSTERY AT THE MAGICAL FAIR

It is late in the month of Laeolis, and Cymril is gearing up for the Magical Fair. Already the city's inns are filling, as thousands of fairgoers arrive. Merchants look forward to the extensive profits the Fair will bring. The city is peaceful, for now . . . but large crowds are unpredictable. Cymril's rulers are eager to hire anyone with the look of a warrior as Magical Fair Guardsmen.

The Magical Fair is a wild and unpredictable affair, attended by visitors from across Talislanta. Merchants and peddlers come trading many things, not all of which are legal. In the anonymity of the crowd, some visitors lose their inhibitions, sometimes endangering themselves and those around them. Perhaps most serious of all, the selection of the Wizard King raises tensions among the city's wizards, and occasionally leads to disputes.

Mystery at the Magical Fair is an adventure for 3-5 characters of levels 1-3. Some of the player characters should be warriors, and having a mage is desirable. The adventurers should be of races welcome within the Seven Kingdoms.

ON GUARD

The adventurers are temporarily hired as Magical Fair Guardsmen, requiring them to patrol the Fair – foiling pickpockets, removing public disturbances, and dealing with minor crime. Fair Guards are also guides to the tourists, offering directions to various Fair sites.

There is a certain laxness about enforcing the law during the Fair, especially where no harm is done. Minor infractions, such as public drunkenness, are generally ignored by Fair Guards – tourists have come to the city to have fun, and Cymril wants them to enjoy themselves (as long as their money holds out).

In the line of duty, the adventurers might have any of the following encounters:

- A gang of young Sarista rogues steal a wealthy Hadjin's purse, forcing the adventurers to chase them through the Fair. For the young criminals, this is a lark – they will let the guards get the purse back, rather than be caught. In the meantime, they will have fun at the Fair Guards' expense.
- Attracted by shouting, the adventurers come onto the scene of a Wrestling Tournament. Two very large contestants – a Saurud and a young Kharakhan Giant – and their masters are arguing over a judge's suspect call. There's going to be a free-for-all unless the adventurers can soothe troubled waters . . . and if they can't, they'll attract the ire of their supervisor.
- A little Cymrilian girl's pet has climbed up into a tree and cannot get down. The adventurers must rescue the strange creature, which is totally unfamiliar to them and has some unexpected abilities. (The Gamemaster should choose something which will surprise them.)

VANDALISM

Three days into the Fair, the adventurers are beginning their morning patrol when they are called to a booth – called "The Twelffold Way" – by the proprietor, a Dracartan Thaumaturge named Arjan Thembool. When Arjan opened his booth that morning, he found

Mystery at the Magical Fair takes place at Cymril's Magical Fair, and is a good introduction to that city. *Test of the River King* starts with the adventurers in Cymril, and takes them to the woodlands of Vardune. *Terror in the Enchanted Grove* involves an unexpected encounter during a journey through Astar.

that someone had broken in during the night and damaged valuable artifacts. A law-abiding tradesman, Arjan immediately called for the Fair Guards (the player characters).

Arjan has inventoried his stock, and found the following damaged items:

An expensive Yassan clockwork music box, dumped off a table – its delicate mechanisms are strewn across the floor of the booth.

Several small glass objects from Faradun, including three statuettes and a small phosphorescent sphere, have been broken. Fragments lie about on the counter and on the floor.

Several hand-woven rugs from Carantheum, which floor the shop, were slashed repeatedly, apparently with sharp knives.

A number of other, less fragile items were also knocked over or onto the floor, although they did not break. Arjan also reports the theft of a small amberglass sphere – an egg-shaped crystal which, when broken, releases Yellow Peril. The deadly sulphur gas will kill anyone within a 20' radius if the sphere is broken. Arjan knows the sphere is still somewhere on the fairgrounds: anti-theft enchantments were cast on it which would signal its attempted removal.

The Witness. While the adventurers are talking with Arjan, one of them hears a muttering voice. It sounds as if it is coming from above. If mentioned to him, Arjan nervously dismisses it as vendors in nearby stalls. In fact, the voice comes from a Chana Shrunk Head Fetish which is hanging in a four-sided lantern from the top of the tent. Shrunk Head Fetishes are illegal in Cymril, and the adventurers should confiscate it.

The theft occurred during the night, when the booth was unoccupied. The Head is almost certainly the only witness to the crime. It is also a vital part of this adventure – the Gamemaster should do everything possible to make sure that the player characters notice it, and take it with them.

INVESTIGATION

When the adventurers report to their superior, the Guard Officer is terrified. He suspects that the vandalism was meant to hide the theft of the Dracartan sphere (he's wrong). In order to avoid a panic, he orders the Fair Guards to keep the sphere's loss a secret. He also orders them to return to the booth of the Twelffold Way, to swear Arjan to secrecy as well.

If asked about the Shrunk Head, the Guard Officer will avoid having anything to do with the object, but will insist that the adventurers use it (and any other resource) to recover the deadly Dracartan sphere as soon as possible.

When the Fair Guards return to the Twelffold Way, Arjan has forgotten about the sphere. He doesn't remember ever owning one, or reporting having lost it. He does remember the vandalism and the adventurers' previous visit, but says that no property is missing.

As the player characters continue their investigation, the following sections will help the Gamemaster run the action. "What's Going

On" explains the mystery of the vandalism. "The Shrunken Head" provides a strange ally for the Fair Guards. Lastly, "The Magical Fair" describes the fairgrounds, including the places and people whom the adventurers may run into before the mystery is solved.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The sphere is still at the Fair. So is the thief, but he isn't a someone – he's a something! One of the "broken" items in the Twelvelfold Path is a *scintilla*, a phosphorescent sphere used as a light source by the Jhangarans and Mogroth of the southwest. The Dracartan got the sphere as a curio from a Farad dealer hoping to sell it at the Fair.

Arjan does not know that a *scintilla* is actually the egg of a water raknid. The "broken" sphere is the discarded egg-case for a now-hatched raknid queen. She has taken the sphere of Yellow Peril, hoping to hatch the egg-like capsule and gain a male companion. The queen and her treasure are hiding in the drainage channels of the moat, behind the Wizard King's Pavilion, where she is rubbing the sphere in order to free the drone so that they can start a new colony.

WATER RAKNID HATCHLING-QUEEN

SIZE: 2' long, 30 lbs.

EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES: STR -4, DEX -2, SPD -2, INT +9, WILL +9, PER +4

LEVEL: 1

ATTACKS/DAMAGE: Psychic assault: d8, pain or stun; claws: d6

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Amphibious, immunity to magical influence or control, psionic capabilities (see COMMENTS)

ARMOR: Unarmored

HIT POINTS: 4

HABITAT: Warm seas and oceans

COMMENTS: Raknid Queens possess extraordinary psionic powers. This queen can attempt to read minds, gain influence or control, communicate telepathically, or launch a psychic assault on any living being within the fairgrounds. She is voraciously hungry, and is growing at a frightening pace – soon her body will be too bloated to move quickly.

Although the raknid queen is very young, her telepathic powers are at near-adult strength. She quickly becomes aware that the adventurers are pursuing the "egg" (by reading the minds of Arjan and other fairgoers), and defends it and herself with her psionic powers, dominating weak-willed beings and using them to misdirect or attack the Fair Guards. Some ideas for "mishaps" which she causes:

- At an archery tournament, a contestant makes a wild shot, missing the target and (possibly) striking one of the Fair Guards. He immediately rushes forward to see if they are all right. He claims it was only an accident.

- As the Fair Guards move along a walkway, the rear of a large wagon "accidentally" opens, dumping its contents – heavy and dangerous, or merely smelly and unpleasant – onto the adventurers. The Monad driver apologizes.

- As a carriage of wealthy visitors drives past, the matched pair of pedigreed equus go out of control. The beasts stampede after the Fair Guards, bowling them over and perhaps clawing them.

- Walking along the moat which surrounds the Fair, the adventurers are surprised when, in unison, the crowd begins to edge them into the water . . . where a surprise predator waits among the colorful fishes. The Guards must succeed at a STR Roll to avoid being pushed into the water.

- The little girl mentioned earlier has lost her pet again. She was playing with it near the Wizard King's Pavilion. Suddenly the pet bit her – she shows a bite mark on her hand – and ran off. She thought she heard a splash, but she knows her pet never swims. "I took him once, and he hated it." (The raknid queen has eaten the missing pet.)

As time passes, these "mishaps" increase in frequency and severity. People at the Fair also become rude and hostile toward the player characters, and encounters which would otherwise be normal may quickly become tense and dangerous.

THE SHRUNKEN HEAD

The adventurers would have little chance of survival in the long run, were it not for the Shrunken Head Fetish. The Head protects the player characters from the raknid's mental powers, so long as they remain in its presence. When they leave – for instance, if the party splits up – those who leave the fetish quickly forget about the theft, just as Arjan did (although they remember their Fair Guard comrades, and the vandalism at Arjan's booth).

Most importantly, the Head is the adventurers' primary source of clues. It may be diabolical, but the fetish still has a soul, and is trying to warn the adventurers about what is happening. However, the raknid's constant mental barrage confuses it, forcing it to speak in riddles or seeming nonsense – which are really clues and warnings. Among the Head's possible sayings:



"Claws that click, click, click . . . in the drip, drip, drip . . . and the legs, oh, so many legs . . ." – a very bad description of the raknid.

"Ball of yellow, egg of gold, but if you break it, your body goes cold" – a reference to the stolen sphere.

"Caress and protect, keep it warm, give it love, while we wait, while we wait, for the mate" – the raknid's opinion of what the sphere is.

"Hide-away safe, trickling sound" – the raknid's feelings about its hiding place.

"Medals and prizes, medals and prizes, who will cry for medals and prizes?" – the Head's fears about the eventual outcome, and a clue to the raknid's whereabouts.

The Head also repeats what it hears from the Fair Guards or the other characters during the course of the adventure.

As the raknid slowly wears down its defenses, the Head's speech becomes more and more garbled. Eventually, its life essence fades, and it is rendered inert. It will take approximately 48 hours for this to occur.

If the head "dies," the adventurers have lost. Unprotected from the raknid's powers, they quickly forget about the sphere of Yellow Peril. The raknid wears away at the "egg" until it bursts (during the vote of confidence for the Wizard King), spewing its poison through the Wizard King's Pavilion – killing the raknid queen herself, the Wizard King contestants, and forty other innocent people.

Questioning the Fetish. If the adventurers interrogate the Shrunken Head, it may be able to answer a direct question. Roll on the Magic Column of the *Action Table*, applying positive modifiers for clear, simple questions, and negative penalties for the time since the theft. The fetish will answer only three questions per day.

A "Maximum Effect" means that the fetish manages to blurt out a few lucid words, before the raknid's powers force it back to nonsense.

On a "Success," the fetish answers with a useful clue disguised as a riddle or rhyme.

"Failure" means that the Head babbles incoherently – and possibly misleadingly.

When a "Mishap" occurs, the Head screams and falls silent for d6 x 10 minutes.

THE MAGICAL FAIR

Each year, the Cymrilians hold their famous Magical Fair in an open park in the Eastern Quarter of the city. The Fair offers pageants, exhibitions of magic, windship races, "duels" between rival magicians, oddities and amusements. Hundreds of merchants build temporary booths to sell wares from all over the continent. Food, drink, and crafts are common features of these booths, but the most popular stalls sell exotic magical devices.

The Fair is surrounded by a wide decorative moat, which makes sure that no one gets in without a ticket. Small magical boats sail on this waterway, which is stocked with colorful fish and giant mollusks.

1) Fair Entrance: This grand archway marks the official entrance to the Magical Fair. It is made of green crystal (as is much of Cymril), and is one of the few permanent structures in the Fair. The supporting columns are statues of Pharos, the first Wizard King, and the crown of the arch holds a crystal statue of an Archon. At the foot of the archway are several ticket booths.

2) Fair Guardsmen's Tents: There are several of these tents scattered around the Fair. Along with the usual guardsmen gear, each

contains several "cells": cloth-walled chambers with cots, where celebrants can sleep off their inebriation. Serious offenders are taken from the fairground to permanent city facilities.

Adventure Note: Should the Fair Guards try to pass off the problem of the missing sphere to their superiors, they find their fellow guards in total confusion. As is typical during the Magical Fair, the problem of keeping this many people safe has overwhelmed Cymril's small permanent guard force – that's why the adventurers were hired in the first place. In addition, their superior is affected by the raknid queen – as soon as the adventurers (and the Shrunken Head) are out of sight, he forgets there ever was a theft.

3) Wizard King's Pavilion: This large (15' high) cloth pavilion covers a high stage and surrounding wooden benches. It is constantly filled with activity, as the prizes for the many tournaments and games of the Fair are awarded here. Winners are often accompanied by friends and well-wishers whose exuberance increases the excitement. The prizes are attractive, but not worth stealing.

Adventure Note: The raknid lives under the stage, in a buried drain leading to the moat, where she feeds on the fish. There is a faint fishy smell from the remains of the raknid's meals (floating in the moat), which grows stronger with time. The raknid's mental powers are strong enough at this range to turn the entire crowd against the adventurers in order to defend herself.

4) The Twelffold Way: This pavilion of curios and artifacts is run by Arjan Thembool, a Dracartan who inherited his money from his father's red-iron mines. He collects his wares in journeys through the southeastern regions of Talislanta, buying what he likes and selling it when he tires of it. Arjan has never made a real study of the value of his wares. His booth is a favorite at the Fair, as he never brings the same wares twice, and there is always the chance you can find an unexpected bargain.

Adventure Note: This is the scene of the vandalism.

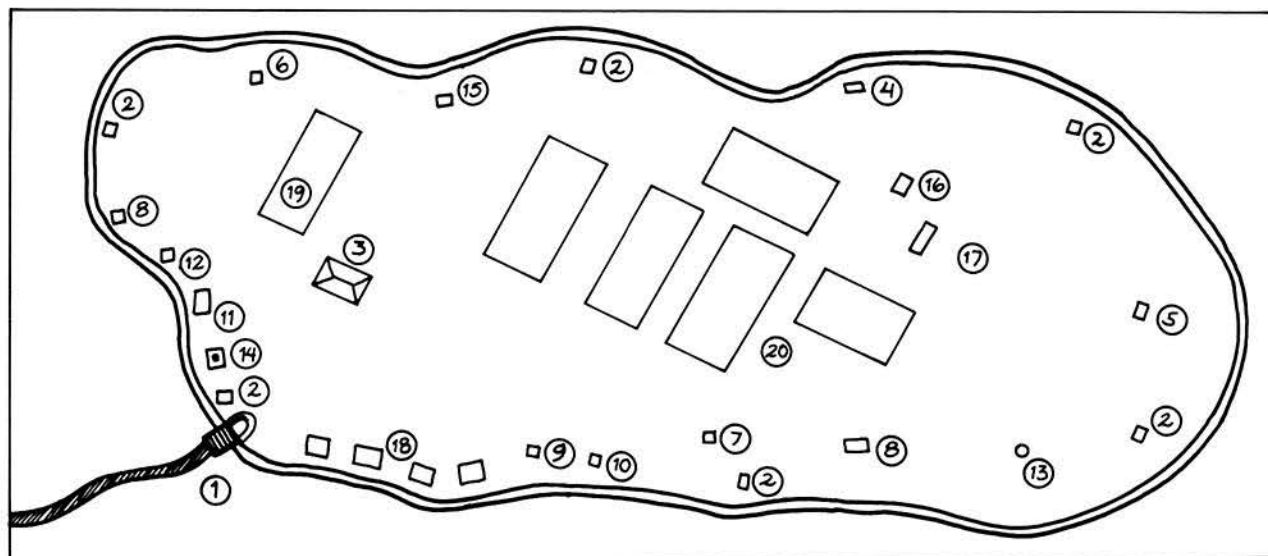
5) Aamanian Mission: This outpost of religious fervor is woefully misplaced. The Aamanian priests who come to the Fair to convert "wayward souls" to the tenets of Aamanian Orthodoxy. Most people ignore them. Gnomekin sometimes assault the missionaries with rocks, driving them inside.

6) The Silver Moon: This small booth houses the Rahastran seer Timbul, who uses his Zodar deck to tell patrons' fortunes for a silver piece. His booth is curtained, and a two-sided sign (one side showing the 20 cards of the Zodar, the other showing a raised hand palm-forward) indicates whether Timbul has a customer.

Adventure Note: The first adventurer who comes to have his fortune told will receive an interesting clue. Timbul produces first the Alchemist card, followed by the Assassin – signifying the raknid's transformation into a thing of death. Timbul apologizes for such a somber reading, and offers to repeat the divination at no charge. Handle the second divination normally.

7) The Gleaming Edge: This Djaffir merchant specializes in weapons. Blades and blunt instruments line the interior of the booth: axes, maces, Kashmir bladed staffs, Imrian capture-poles, and so on. The masked Djaffir sells these instruments of destruction to collectors, instructing customers never to use them except in self-defense. Prices are high, but the Gleaming Edge is a rare source in Cymril for the more unusual weapons of Talislanta. The shop is occupied by a throng of fascinated Thralls.

8) Sandman's Haven: This large booth is run by Nespeth Hedron, a Phantasian Dream-Merchant. He has a wide variety of dream essences, and provides private booths where they can be enjoyed. The most popular variant this year is a dream of fabulous adventure, which Nespeth claims to have extracted from a volunteer at the Fair. There is considerable speculation as to which of the Fair's attendees possesses such vivid dreams. Nespeth isn't telling.



9) House of the Peacock's Plumes: This mercantile booth is run by two Mandalans and their Kang overseer, servants of the Quan from the distant Empire. It has many rare spices, fabrics, beautiful avir and moonfish, and valuable art objects (including paper lanterns, kites, and Sunra coral-statuary). Prices are reasonable – however, customers will be bothered by merchants from the adjacent Glory of the West (see below).

10) Glory of the West: This booth is from Zandu, and its proprietors are worried by the competition from the nearby Quan delegation – the eastern imperials have not been seen here for many decades, due to unsettled conditions along the caravan routes through central Talislanta. The Zandir act contemptuous of the eastern wares, but will do anything to drive the other stall's prices down and damage their reputation in Cymril. The bidding wars are testing the patience of the House of the Peacock's Plumes's Kang overseer, and may lead to a physical confrontation.

11) The Arcanum Society: This pavilion, like the club in the city, is reserved for members of the Arcanum Society and their guests. Aspiring candidates to the Society are traditionally brought to the Fair to be examined by Society members. Fair Guards are also welcome, and receive free refreshments.

Adventure Note: Should the adventurers enter, they will hear the mages discussing a ban on hypnotic spells at future Fairs. Some complain of headaches, which they blame on such spells cast too widely and too powerfully. If the player characters seem hopelessly lost, the Gamemaster might let a friendly mage give them advice.

12) Viridian's Grove: This booth is run by a visiting clan of Green Ardua selling plants: serpentvine, shrinking violet, morphiis, prism plants, whip bane, and neurozoids, among others. They also sell fruit, and plant byproducts such as spices, rope, and silver-sparkle.

13) Underground Market: This large cave marks the opening to the Gnomekin Underground Market, which is included during the festivities as part of the Fair. The entrance is watched by friendly Gnomekin guards.

Adventure Note: The Gnomekin have seen an object similar to the adventurers' description of the sphere of Yellow Peril. It was carried by a crab-like creature (the raknid), which tried to get into the underground market late last night. When the Gnomekin approached, the creature ran away (in the direction of the moat).

14) The Fortress of Wealth: This semi-permanent structure is a replica of a Kasmir money-lending tower. Fair attendees who wish to avoid losing their money to pickpockets often deposit their coins

here, collecting them as required. The Kasmir charge a 1% fee for this service.

15) House of Trivarian: This gambling house specializes in Trivarian games, although other games comprehensible to non-Sindarans are also played here. The house – a consortium of Sindaran collectors – manages all bets. Many Sindarans come here to play Trivarian or observe others playing, and wagering is brisk.

16) Nebros': There are many small food-stalls scattered all over the Fair, serving food from nearly any region in Talislanta – but there is only one Nebros'. This tavern is only open during the Magical Fair. It serves the finest food in Cymril and combines it with a great variety of wines and liqueurs. Only the rarest and most expensive delicacies are permitted at Nebros' – meals generally run 100 gold lumens per person. The restaurant serves one hundred patrons per night, some of whom must wait as long as six hours to be seated. Tables are assigned on a strict first-come, first-served basis (reservations are not accepted). Nebros' reputation is such that a common complement for well-cooked Cymrilian meals is, "good enough for Nebros' table."

17) Kadath's Alehouse: This large structure is a new addition to the Fair, run by a mysterious Tanasian Wizard named Kadath. The hall is usually full of Grand Army veterans, as the alehouse has a plentiful supply of Tazian fire-ale (in short supply elsewhere during the Fair). Bodor musicians and a Muse singer pay Kadath for the privilege of using the stage (and getting the much-increased tips).

18) Free Stages: These open platforms are constantly filled with jugglers, actors, fire-eaters, singers, musicians, and other entertainers. There is no admission – performers "pass the hat" instead.

19) Field of Sorcery: This open area is used for the demonstrations of magical prowess prior to and coincident with the elections for Wizard King. Most magic on the Field of Sorcery is designed to impress the crowd. On years when the current Wizard King is not contested, the shows become even more elaborate, as the city's wizards exhibit some of their most unusual (and sometimes unreliable) spells. Rivalry between the Tanasian and Koresian mages sometimes becomes intense. Any licensed magician may participate in the display, and many do for the publicity (and the occasional tips from entertained fairgoers).

20) Tournament Fields: These large fields are filled with tournaments in progress, including archery, staff-fighting (with padded staves), juggling, knife-throwing, hurling (a sport where an eight-foot wooden log is thrown as far as possible), riding, dancing, singing, and performances of musical instruments. The tournaments are open to the public, with prizes provided by the merchants of Cymril.

THE TEST OF THE RIVER KING

The River King is returning to her clan after five years of successful service. The Great Council of the Ardua has asked the clans to propose their candidates for the new River King. A Test is being devised for the nominees. The Arduan nominees must demonstrate an ability to work well with other races, so the Council is recruiting outsiders to participate in this year's Test. Eechek of the Council comes to Cymril to find companions for the River King candidates.

The adventurers are hired as Watchers, a post with two functions: to assist the River King candidates, and then to report on their behavior to the Council's emissary (Eechek, who remains hidden in the background). Each Watcher is paid 100 pentacles at the end of the conference. Eechek assures the player characters that there is little danger in this assignment. However, he says that he cannot reveal to them what the Test will be until the candidates and Watchers assemble at Vashay.

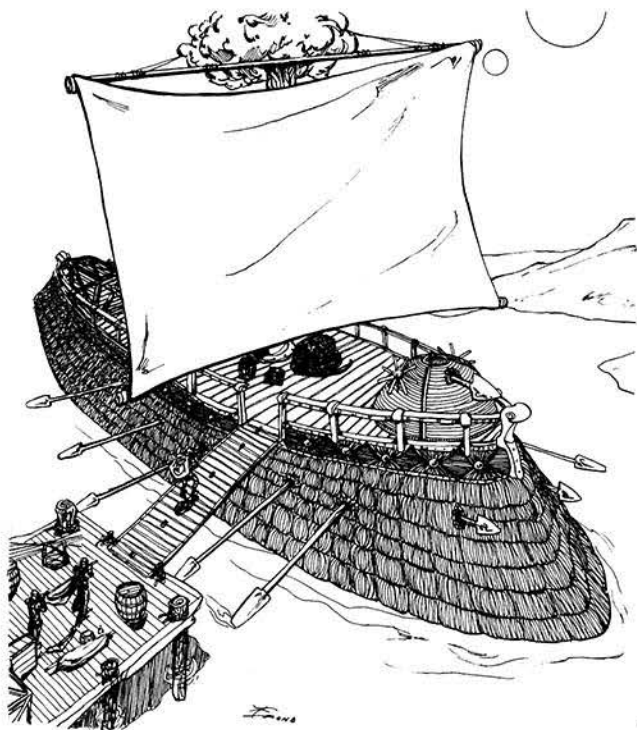
If there are any Arduan player characters, Eechek contacts them first. He then invites them to recruit non-Ardua (the other player characters). If there are no Arduan player characters, Eechek seeks out non-Ardua himself.

Test of the River King is an adventure for 3-6 characters of levels 1-4. While some of the player characters should be warriors, this is primarily a non-combat challenge: diplomats and mages will be handy. Game statistics for the non-player characters are given at the end of this adventure.

STARTING FOR VASHAY

Eechek takes the Watchers with him to Vashay, where they are to meet the prospective River Kings and learn about the Test. Ardua usually travel on foot, but the Counselor says they must travel as swiftly as possible – he has a new six-passenger wagon (recently grown by his own clansmen) and a matched pair of greymanes at his service. He offers to let the Watchers ride with him.

The honored Counselor is passed quickly through the toll station on the border between Vardune and Cymril. Eechek explains that the vine-roads of Vardune cannot be used for this trip, as they are too slow – they must take the Vardune Road. The border guards warn the non-Ardua to stay on the road for their own safety.



The Gamemaster may improvise any encounters he desires along the journey. Some ideas:

Ogriphant Crossing. A herd of ogriphants stampedes through the group's camp one night. Alert sentries may spot the oncoming herd early with a successful PER Roll; sleepers must succeed at a PER Roll to wake up in time. Objects or people caught sleeping by the stampede may be trampled – they must succeed at a DEX Roll to dodge the beasts, or take d12 damage.

Eechek's greymanes panic and smash his wagon. If the adventurers go into the woods, they can recover the greymanes (but they risk further encounters). The Counselor can repair his wagon in a day.

Ambush. The adventurers find a large fallen tree – *Armor Rating 4, Damage Rating 75* – blocking the road in a thickly-forested area. When they attempt to remove the tree, Tanasian Exiles (bandits) leap from the forest and attack. There are more bandits than Watchers. The Exiles are third level, and flee when half of their number are slain.

VASHAY

Arriving in the Arduan capital city, the Watchers are introduced to the three nominees for River King: Cheek, Kreeawk and Skreelak. A day is allowed to prepare for the journey – time for healing magic, the purchase of weapons and other gear, and sight-seeing.

In Vashay, Eechek now explains the Test: The Great Council has decided to use a diplomatic conference between the Seven Kingdoms and Aaman as the Test of the River King. All three hopefuls will represent the kingdom of Vardune as a triumvirate ambassador. This should be a good test of diplomacy, since the Ardua detest the Aamanians.

After a day's delay, the Seven Kingdoms' representatives (including the River King nominees), the Watchers, and Eechek are ushered onto a barge-fort for the trip to the neutral island conference site.

RIVER HAZARDS

The famous Arduan barge-forts are products of botanomancy. A framework of viridia limbs is constructed in the shape of a flat-bottomed fort. Vines are grown across this framework to form a water-tight, buoyant wicker-work boat of living viridia. The craft are self-repairing, "regenerating" up to 10 points of structural damage per day. A viridia tree – altered to live off water-borne nutrients – is grown in the middle of the boat, serving as mast and "crow's-nest." The mast-tree can support sails, but since the tree-crowded shores of the Axis River are normally becalmed, they aren't used often. In battle, the crew use long oars to propel the craft to ramming speed. (For more about barge-forts, see the entry in the first volume of *THE CYCLOPEDIA TALISLANTA*.)

The voyage is a short one, a day's journey following the current down the Axis River. The crew keeps the barge-fort far from shore, hoping to avoid trouble . . . but it doesn't work: a pair of bottom-grazing River Dragons attack, trying to eat the viridia craft. (Statistics for the huge River Dragons are given in the "Naturalist's Compendium" in this book.)

The Watchers must help fight the dragons and protect the River King candidates. Crew members provide long-hafted crescent-spears for those who don't have appropriate weapons. The attack shouldn't last long – the crew are adept at handling River Dragons, and the mages on board help greatly. However, whenever the River Dragons bite the barge-fort, any character near the side must succeed at a DEX Roll to avoid falling into the river. Hungry Fanged Eels wait for mistakes like these.

THE CONFERENCE

Vardune and Aaman have been at odds for centuries. Bad relations and the tolls arising from them have prevented many Orthodoxist pilgrims from passing through Vardune on their trips east. The pilgrims cannot take the alternate route through Arim and over the mountains into Durne, since the Gnomekin have banned all pilgrims from their kingdom. Meanwhile, the Council of Kings — particularly, the Cymrilian and Sindaran representatives — insists on lowering the tolls for fear of provoking a military clash with Aaman. The conference is to decide on a standard pilgrim rate which will apply throughout the Seven Kingdoms.

The Watchers have three duties at the conference: to serve the River King candidates, to keep out of trouble, and to report privately to Eechek. The Counselor assigns each Watcher to assist a different River King candidate each day.

From here on, the adventure is free-flowing — there is no “time-line” to the events listed below. The Gamemaster should use what seems most interesting to him and his players. The adventurers should be kept guessing — they should know as little as possible, and be overwhelmed by simultaneous problems and the responsibility of watching over the River King candidates.

The Saboteurs. The Kasmir representative’s bodyguards actually work for someone else — they are Arimite Revenants here to sabotage the conference. They antagonize the Theocratic Guards. They steal belongings from the Aamanians and plant them in the River King candidates’ tents. They send secret, false messages to opposing diplomats suggesting double-crosses. In short, they do anything subtle they can to cause trouble.

The Trysting. Willowleaf, the Muse representative, falls in love with the Aamanian Captain (this happens to Muses all the time). She tries to entice him into a Muse love-game, first by playing her lyre for the Captain, then by more direct means. He is shocked — her actions are scandalous, enough to have her arrested in Aaman. Willowleaf is persistent — to the point of using magic to achieve her goal. If the River King candidates and the Watchers don’t intervene, the Captain may kill her...or arrest her for Sinful Conduct.

The Captain’s Mace. Collector Xantus, Sindar’s representative, wants the Captain’s silver mace. He mentions to the Kasmir that it might be worth a small fortune, if it’s solid silver. The greedy money lender has his guards fake a brawl with the Theocratic Guards and steal the mace.

The loss of the mace, when discovered, threatens to destroy the conference. The Captain accuses one of the Watchers of being a thief. Zadoc is convinced that the Kasmir is behind it all, but the money lender cannot confess to the theft — the Council would exile him. However, the Kasmir also regrets taking action without consulting with an Auditor first — the mace is *not* solid silver, and is not worth a fortune. The Sindaran is determined to end up with the mace, and makes an offer for it. The Conference will be called off unless the Watchers take the right steps.

Death in the Night. Archimage Zadoc has strange hobbies (see his description, below). Willowleaf, the Thrall Arn, and any female Watchers are possible targets. Zadoc uses Spellbind, Passion, Beguile and Command to get his victims away from the tents and into the forest. Later, he uses Elemental Fire to destroy the bodies. As the stress of the Conference builds, Zadoc is unable to repress his urges . . . and the first victim disappears. Can the Watchers solve the mystery? How will Zadoc cover his tracks? *Who is next?*

Culture Shock. The Aamanians are offended by the dress and deportment of foreigners. Tempers flare. According to Aamanian law, no one but the Faithful shall be armed in the presence of a Archimage. Zadoc wants the diplomats disarmed before entering the conference tent. The Kasmir representative refuses to surrender

his protection, and his bodyguards confront the Theocratic Guards. The River King candidates (and their Watchers) must find a way to solve the situation.

There are Orthodoxist taboos against revealing the female form. Thrall Arn’s armor leaves too much tattooed skin bare, and the Muse’s translucent gossamer dress hides very little. The Aamanians can’t make them cover up, but they do harass any females (including the Watchers) who have any skin other than eyes and hands uncovered.

Meanwhile, the Theocratic Guards refuse to let anyone inside Aamanian tents without orders from the Captain — not even to look for missing people or items.

The Troops. If things get completely out of hand, Eechek will call in the Arduan warriors waiting in the barge-fort offshore. Unfortunately, there’s an Aamanian warcraft offshore as well — this could escalate into the war that nobody — except the Zandir <196> wants.

THE ARDUA

Eechek of Vardune. Green Ardua. Tenth level. 5', 80 lbs. STR -4, DEX +3, CON -3, SPD 0, INT +4, WILL +1, PER +1, CHA 0

Combat Rating +2. 25 hit points. Crescent-knife, d4. No armor

Magic Rating +12. Knows all of the basic spells and all of the Botanomantic spells, as well as *Dimension Warp* (which he has never used)

Skills: Combat training (crescent-knife), conveyance (wagon), diplomacy, herb lore, horticulture, inscribe spells, interrogate, literacy, litigator, magical mixtures, primary magic

Eechek is an old Ardua, a member of the Great Council. He is a shrewd judge of character and watches the candidates in order to report to the Great Council.

Cheek of Vardune. Blue Ardua. Fifth level. 6', 120 lbs. STR 0, DEX +5, CON -1, SPD +2, INT 0, WILL 0, PER +1, CHA 0

Combat Rating +7. 19 hit points. Crescent-knife, d4. Dart-thrower, d4. Crescent-spear, d8. No armor

Magic Rating 0

Skills: Barter, con, crescent-spear, haggle +3, navigator/pilot (river barges), primary combat, weaponer

Cheek is blustering, sharp-tongued and undiplomatic. He has a talent for making correct choices and haggling. He doesn’t like non-Ardua, but is working hard to curb his short temper. Cheek doesn’t tolerate incompetence, which he defines as failing to carry out his orders as he intends.

Kreeawk of Vardune. Green Ardua. Fourth level. 5' 2", 90 lbs. STR -2, DEX +3, CON -2, SPD +1, INT +3, WILL 0, PER 0, CHA -1

Combat Rating +1. 14 hit points. Crescent-knife, d4. No armor

Magic Rating +5. Has memorized only the spells which deal with plants (including the basic Botanomantic spells)

Skills: Administrator +2, alchemical training, brewer/vintner, com

bat training (crescent-knife), concoct elixirs, herb lore, horticulture, legerdemain, literacy, magic operations, primary magic

Kreeawk has a no-nonsense manner, and values efficiency. She treats foreigners as if they were crops, needing to be carefully managed.

Skreelak of Vardune. Green Ardua. Fourth level. 4' 11", 80 lbs. STR -3, DEX +3, CON -3, SPD 0, INT +5, WILL -1, PER +1, <R>CHA 0

Combat Rating 0. 13 hit points. Crescent-knife, d4. No armor

Magic Rating +6. Knows the basic Botanomantic spells, the minor enchantments, and the basic spells of <MI>Illusion and <MI>Radiance

Skills: Combat training (crescent-knife), concoct elixirs, diplomacy, etiquette, herb lore, horticulture, inscribe spells, literacy, magical mixtures, primary magic, Talisintan culture

Skreelak is a born diplomat and gets along with everyone. He likes to stay well-informed. Hungry for facts, he may order the Watchers to spy for him. His weakness is that he is easily persuaded by a skillful appeal.

THE SEVEN KINGDOMS' DIPLOMATS

Arn the Thrall. Fourth level. 6' 4", 200 lbs. STR +4, DEX +2, CON +4, SPD 0, INT -2, WILL +2, PER 0, CHA 0

Combat Rating +6. 26 hit points. Greatsword, d12+4. Dagger, d6+4. Garde, d6+4. No other armor

Magic Rating 0

Skills: Diplomacy, etiquette, mounted combat, primary combat, Tazian combat

Arn learned "civilized" manners while serving in Zandu — they complement her good nature. The Monarch King of Taz is worried about relations with Aaman, and sent her here to listen carefully — to the Aamanians, <MI>and to the River King candidates.

Cathal of Cymril. Fifth level. 6' 2", 150 lbs. STR -1, DEX 0, CON +1, SPD 0, INT +4, WILL 0, PER 0, CHA +1

Combat Rating 0. No armor.

Magic Rating +6. 21 hit points. Has a ring with fifth-level *Spellbind*; spell book with all of the basic spells, plus *Korak's Anti-Magic Aura* and *Arkon's Impermeable Web*.

Skills: Arcane lore, concoct potions, create automaton, create homonculous, diplomacy, enchant items, haggle, inscribe spells, lip-reading, literacy, magical operations, primary magic

Cathal is an active observer, since the Wizard King is convinced that recent Aamanian military maneuvering is intended as a build-up for military operations, should the pilgrim routes be blocked. He is passionately curious, and may be seen sneaking around, eavesdropping and acting suspiciously.

Emor of Durne. Gnomekin. Third level. 3', 75 lbs. STR +2, DEX +4, CON +8, SPD 0, INT +1, WILL 0, PER -1, CHA +1

Combat Rating +4. 28 hit points. Dagger, d6+2. Sling, d4+2. No armor

Magic Rating 0

Skills: Agriculture (crystals), diplomacy, evasion, healer, secondary

combat, snares, stealth +1

Emor is generally ignored by other people — he doesn't say much, and seems to sleep behind his cusps. Actually, the Gnomekin have a vital interest in this conference: the Aamanians won't admit it, but Gnomekin slaves have been secretly used for generations to construct underground temple vaults. The Gnome-King will let no pilgrim into his domain unless the Aamanians release their slaves — a stand that will prevent the Conference from achieving its objective.

Kahass of Kasmir. Sixth level. 4' 9", 85 lbs. STR 0, DEX +2, CON +1, SPD 0, INT +2, WILL +2, CHA -1, PER +1

Combat Rating +3. 23 hit points. Spring-knives (4), d4. Dagger, d6. Concealed lizard-hide vest

Magic Rating +1. No proficiency in magic

Skills: Administrator, barter, diplomacy +1, haggle +5, lock picking, merchant/trader, secondary combat

Kahass is a Patriarch, and one of Kasmir's toughest money lenders. Unlovable and harsh, he wants a new pilgrim deal — the Kasmir lose money when pilgrim trade is slow.

Kahass's Guards (6). Arimate Revenants. Fifth level. 5' 11" to 6' 2", 120 to 160 lbs. STR 0, DEX +2, CON +2, SPD +2, INT +1, WILL +1, PER +1, CHA 0

Combat Rating +4. 22 hit points. Longsword, d10. Dagger, d6. Various poisons, including Morphi Powder. Chain-mesh armor

Magic Rating +1. No proficiency in magic

Skills: Act, assassinate, concoct poison, disguise, hide, lock picking, secondary combat, stealth

Kahass's guards came recommended and at half-price, so he hired them rather than his usual Thralls. The guards are actually Revenants, contracted by Zandir obstructionists to sabotage the conference.

Willowleaf of Astar. Muse. Second level. 5' 7", 95 lbs. STR -4, DEX +3, CON -4, SPD 0, INT +3, WILL -4, PER +3, CHA +2

Combat Rating 0. 8 hit points. No weapons or armor

Magic Rating +1. Knows the minor enchantments, and has memorized two favorite pieces of "spell-art" — the *Spell of Mystic Power* (shield only) and *Cascal's Reflective Aura*

Skills: Art, artificer, musicianship (lyre), secondary magic, seduce +1

Willowleaf was chosen at random to attend the conference, and cares nothing for it. A lovely creature with turquoise hair, she is interested only in drinking nectar, strumming her lyre, and playing love-games with the Captain.

Xantus of Sindar. Eighth level. 7' 1", 200 lbs. STR -2, DEX +1, CON 0, SPD +1, INT +8, WILL +4, PER +1, CHA 0

Combat Rating +4. 24 hit points. Duelling sword, d8. Various alchemicals. No armor

Magic Rating +4. No proficiency in magic

Skills: Administrator, alchemical training, arcane lore, all "concoct" skills, diplomacy, linguistics, literacy, litigator, secondary combat, Talisintan culture, Zandir bladesmanship

Xantus sees no interest for Sindar in these negotiations. He prefers playing cerebral games. Xantus collects rare weapons, and is attracted by the Captain's mace.

THE AAMANIAN

Aachim the Aamanian. Sixth level. 5' 9", 180 lbs.
STR -1, DEX -2, CON 0, SPD -1, INT +3, WILL +2, PER +1,
CHA +1

Combat Rating 0. 22 hit points. Daggers (2, concealed), d6. No armor

Magic Rating +2. No proficiency in magic

Skills: Bribe, con, combat training (dagger), etiquette, haggling, literacy, merchant/trader +3, oratory, riding, streetwise

Aachim is a pudgy man with an ingratiating manner and a nose for profit. He conceals his greedy nature, and is a skillful bargainer. He wants to persuade the Ardua to lower their tolls and allow a pilgrimage hotel in Vashay — which he will run, at a profit. He suspects that Zadoc will try to wreck the conference, and has a scroll from the Hierophant giving Aachim the authority to arrest Zadoc if the archimage jeopardizes negotiations.

The Captain of the Aamanian Guards. Tenth level. 6' 2", 220 lbs.
STR +3, DEX +1, CON +1, SPD 0, INT 0, WILL +1, PER 0,
CHA 0

Combat Rating +6. 31 hit points. Silver mace, d10+3. Dagger, d6+3. Plate mail

Magic Rating +5. Knows only the minor enchantments and the *Spell of Revealment*

Skills: Administrator, metaphysical doctrines (Orthodoxy), mounted combat, secondary combat, secondary magic

The Captain is a warrior-priest of the Theocratic Order. A stern, intolerant man devoted to Aa and the Order, he does not trust foreigners.

Guards of the Theocratic Order (4). Third level. 6' to 6'1", 200 lbs.
STR +2, DEX +1, CON +1, SPD 0, INT 0, WILL +1, PER 0,
CHA 0

Combat Rating +4. 17 hit points. Longsword, d10+2. Dagger, d6+2. Plate mail

Magic Rating 0. No proficiency in magic

Skills: Mounted combat, primary combat

The guards follow the Captain's orders implicitly, and share his suspicion of outsiders.

Zadoc the Archimage. Eighth level. 6', 170 lbs.
STR 0, DEX 0, CON 0, SPD -1, INT +3, WILL +4, PER 0, CHA 0

Combat Rating +1. 26 hit points. Jeweled dagger, d6. No armor

Magic Rating +10. Knows all of the basic spells, plus all of Sassan's spells

Skills: Administrator, astrology, combat training (dagger), cult rituals, inscribe spells, interrogate, literacy, metaphysical doctrines (Orthodoxy), oratory, primary magic, torture

Zadoc, Aspirant of the Ninth Level, represents the Orthodoxy and reports to the district Monitor. He hates non-believers, and is allied with the Theocratic Knights — he has great influence with the Captain. Zadoc intends to wreck the conference in order to damage Aachim's faction of the Orthodoxy. He has one (large) weakness: he lusts after foreign women, and uses his magic to kidnap and then dispose of them after he's done. If revealed, his crimes could badly injure his faction (and doom Zadoc to life in the Halls of Penance)

TERROR IN THE ENCHANTED GROVE

The player characters have been hired – by a Dracartan agent in Cymril – to take two wagons of supplies (mainly food) to the thaumaturges working at Lake Zephyr. Their payment is to be 200 gold lumens, on the wagons' return to the city. Travel on the Astar road normally presents few difficulties, and is considered relatively safe.

What the adventurers don't know: Lillyandre, a Muse dabbler in magic, tried out a customized *Summoning Spell*, persuading her naive sister Duskwind and some Night Whisps to help her. The spell went awry. A gap in the Omniverse was opened, and a hideous creature came through. When Duskwind touched its mind, trying to frighten it away with her Telempathy, the shock killed her.

Lillyandre got temporary control over the creature, and made it confine itself within a crystal vial. She dragged Duskwind's body to a rock hollow. With the help of the Night Whisps, she now hopes to frame the travelers on the Astar Road for this crime.

Terror in the Enchanted Grove is an adventure for 3-5 characters of levels 1-3. Statistics for the non-player characters are given at the end of this adventure.

NIGHTMARES ON THE ROAD

One night, the adventurers' sleep is disturbed by terrible nightmares of a shapeless horror from which they cannot escape. The Gamemaster should tell each player privately about his character's dream. Each sees a different monster in different circumstances, depending upon the character's background and personality. All have a frightening encounter with something menacing beyond belief. (The dreams are caused by the psychic emanations of the newly-released monster.)

Shortly afterward, the Night Whisps come to steal a "murder weapon" – a dagger or something similar – which Lillyandre will use to wound Duskwind's body. Then the incriminating weapon will be returned to the adventurers' camp. If possible, the Gamemaster should have the Whisps steal the weapon from a character with low WILL. On a successful PER roll, the adventurer will later remember an insect (actually, the Whisps) buzzing around him during the night.



Meanwhile, Lillyandre sneaks back to her village and hides the vial deep beneath the ashes of the Muses' communal cook-fire. The crystalline vial's stopper is marked with the *Symbol of Imprisonment* (identifiable by anyone who sees it and succeeds at an Arcane Lore skill roll).

WHISPS IN THE MORNING

At dawn, Wood Whisps surround the adventurers' camp. The Whisp chief, Creef, wakes the adventurers, asking what they were doing the night before. Other Whisps insist on searching them and their belongings. When the bloody knife is found, Creef questions the owner rigorously, and accuses the suspect of murdering Duskwind.

The Gamemaster should have fun with this encounter, letting the agile, tiny fliers flit freely around, argue briskly with the large characters, and generally acting impudently. If the player characters wish to fight the Whisps, there are 30 of the creatures, armed with miniature spears and their native magical powers. These Whisps are not the same as the *Night Whisps* who are aiding Lillyandre.

In time, Chag – Creef's assistant – comes to the adventurer's defense, contradicting the Whisp-chief. He says that the travelers must be innocent: there are no tracks at the murder scene, and the adventurers obviously cannot fly. Creef thinks this over, then orders his assistant to keep an eye on the player characters until the killer is found.

THE SCENE OF THE CRIME

The murder scene is close by. Creef wants to look it over again, and has the adventurers brought along – forcibly, if necessary.

The corpse lies on a flat-topped rock, in a grassy hollow. It was once an attractive female Muse with pastel-blue hair and wings. She lies in a pool of her own blood, from a stab-wound in her left chest. Her eyes are wide open and her pupils fixed, her face a study in terror.

Characters looking for other marks on her body may attempt a PER Roll (non-healers have a -3 penalty to the roll). If successful, they notice cuts at the sides of the corpse's mouth, and rope burns on wrists, ankles and neck. (Lillyandre bound and gagged her sister as part of the "spell-art.") A successful Healer skill roll also reveals that there has been too little bleeding for this type of wound – it must have been inflicted after death.

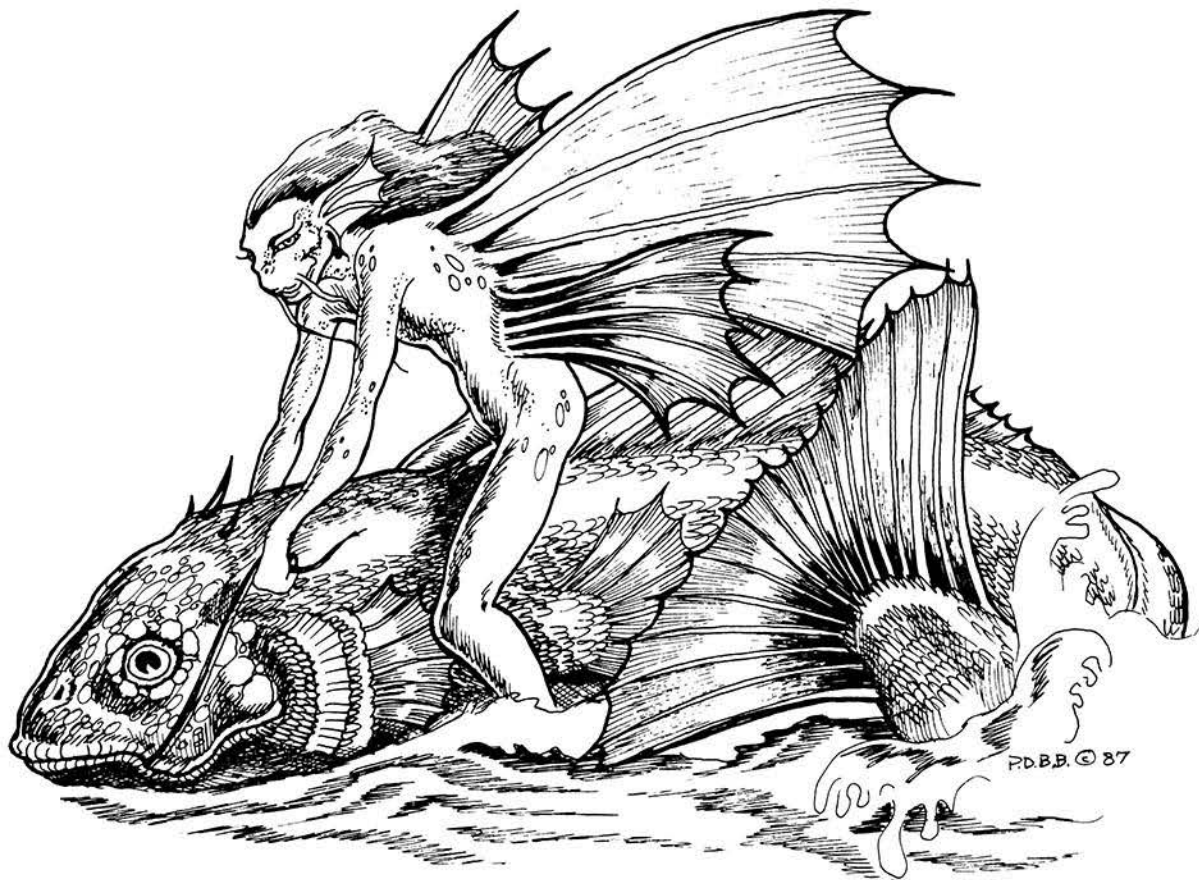
Those examining the ground may try a -2 difficulty PER Roll or Tracking skill roll. Any who succeed spot the faint marks revealing that the body was dragged to its current resting place. The drag marks lead to a small clearing 50 feet away, shielded from view by low trees.

THE REAL MURDER SCENE

Within the concealed clearing, the grass has been smashed flat in a large circle. Characters with Tracking, Hunting, or Beast Lore skills are baffled – there are tracks of webbed feet, hooves, claws, tentacles and round pods. No tracks lead out of the circle.

On a successful PER Roll, a searcher finds another clue: five wooden stakes arranged in a pentagram, ten feet away from the area of trampled grass. There are short ropes – a -5 difficulty INT ROLL will reveal these are of Muse manufacture – tied to each stake. There is no blood.

The clearing is charged with magic. Spell-casting here is at an added -3 difficulty to the *Action Table* roll. *Divination Spells* are at -8 difficulty, and produce an experience similar to the dreams of the night before. A *Spell of Revealment* cast to detect magic indicates



strange forces pervading the area (if the character has had experience with travel through the Omniverse, he knows this is usual when universe-crossings take place).

Creef is shaken if any evidence points at Muse involvement in the crime. Otherwise, he insists on finding ways to blame the adventurers for this atrocity, arguing constantly with Chag.

THE VILLAGE

Regardless of what transpires at the murder scene, Creef next takes the adventurers along with him to the nearby Muse village, where he questions possible witnesses. In the process, the player characters learn about a number of other murder suspects.

Muse villages are collections of huts dispersed around a common fire-pit, with a water source close by. They use homes as shelters from bad weather and as storage space for their belongings, rather than as dwellings. Muses mostly live outdoors.

Secreted in a grove of old trees, these half-dozen huts house six occupants:

Lillyandre. The first hut was used by Duskwind (the deceased) and her sister, Lillyandre. She resembles Duskwind, except that her hair and wings are darker (almost purple). Lillyandre has the beauty of a Sawilu courtesan. Obviously afraid, she cowers inside her hut, afraid of strangers until Creef assures her that it is safe. She gives no vital information in response to the Whisper's questions, other than revealing that her sister often took moonlit walks – and the two largest moons were full the night before.

Should the adventurers search this hut (now or later), they find no incriminating magical books or scrolls – only a few minor magical artifacts. Such enchanted items are a rarity among the Muses, who prefer “live” magic. Even more surprising to anyone familiar with Muse culture is the fact that Lillyandre has no apparent hobby: no craft, performing talent, or other pursuit.

Suntrekker and Greenleaf. Next questioned is Suntrekker, the scout of the settlement – a tall, golden-haired, orange-winged Muse. He is the one who usually takes sentinel duty for the village, telepathically discouraging predators while also pursuing his hobby of making flowered wreaths. When asked by Creef, he claims that he was shooing away a herd of ogriphants the night before. Any accusation that he is involved in the murder is met with haughty disbelief. Suntrekker claims he had little to do with Duskwind.

Greenleaf, the commune's chief vegetable gatherer, interrupts. He says that Duskwind loved Suntrekker, but that the scout spurned her because her colors did not harmonize well with his. Suntrekker, his wings quivering with anger, accuses Greenleaf of secretly loving Duskwind, and of killing her because she wasn't interested in him. The two males fight unless the adventurers intervene.

A search of their huts reveals that both Suntrekker and Greenleaf have knives that could have caused Duskwind's wound.

Thistle, Moonseed and Dewdrop. These three are gossamer weavers, frightened by the events of the night before. They were jealous of Duskwind, who monopolized the attentions of the commune's males – as is apparent to anyone who talks to them and succeeds at an INT Roll. These Muses do not speak any verbal languages, so conversations with them must be in mind-speech through a Whisper translator.

All of the Muses except Suntrekker claim to have been asleep the night before.

STRANGE OCCURRENCES

Sooner or later, Lillyandre's creature will succeed in psychically forcing someone to free it. The Gamemaster should use the following encounters in the sequence given, continuing until the monster is freed. Then proceed immediately to “Othyog Unbound.”

Lillyandre's Nap. At noon, Lillyandre takes her usual nap. As she sleeps beneath a tree, her conjured creature's mental powers go to work. She has a nightmare. Moaning slightly, she mutters, "Stay away . . . You can't have me." Unless she is awakened early, the nightmare ends when she wakes and blasts the village with a mental scream. Everyone within 50 feet must succeed at a WILL Roll, or be momentarily stunned by the telepathic concussion.

After this demonstration of the monster's power, Lillyandre becomes frightened. She chooses the largest, fiercest male warrior available – except the character whose knife was stolen – and plays on his sympathies, reinforcing them with an telepathic suggestion to make him feel protective. She stays close to him, insisting that she needs protection – the murderer might come for her next, she says. Perhaps she was the real target all along, and Duskwind was killed by mistake.

Nightfall. Night comes without a break in the case. The Wood Whisks customarily head for their trees at night, avoiding the disliked Night Whisks. Creef advises the adventurers not to leave the grove, promising that he'll track them down if they do. Lillyandre wants her chosen protector to sleep just outside of her hut.

An improvised encounter with Night Whisks may liven the sleeping hours, if the Gamemaster wishes. Unwary characters find themselves the butt of Night Whisp jokes: burrs in sleeping blankets, small pebbles dropped on them, annoying fly-bys, and so on. The consequences of attacking a Night Whisp are serious – see *THE NATURALIST'S GUIDE* for details. These Whisks are Lillyandre's friends, and won't talk to the adventurers.

The primary action of the night hours involves another mental attack by Lillyandre's creature. Trying to win his freedom, the monster takes psychic control of the player character suspected of killing Duskwind. The Gamemaster should take the player aside and give him private instructions, so that he can role play his part in this encounter without tipping off the other players. Don't tell him who (or what) has taken control of him.

Rising from a gruesome, bloody dream, the suspect begins to sleep-walk. He takes a weapon – preferably the one used on Duskwind – and shambles towards Lillyandre's hut. If allowed to, he takes the Muse prisoner and demands her to "free me." (The monster wants her to dig up the vial and free him, but the player character won't understand this.)

The controlled victim clumsily attacks anyone who interferes with him (at a -3 penalty). Sentries automatically note his actions; sleepers must succeed at a PER Roll to wake up. The victim snaps out of it if slapped or similarly shocked, and remembers nothing but a strange dream – about killing Muses.

Suntrekker Strikes. In the twilight hours before dawn, the monster makes another attempt. All player characters on sentry duty must first succeed at a WILL Roll, or the earlier excitement has worn them out and put them to sleep.

Suntrekker – under mental control – casts a *Charm of Enfeeblement* (a reversed *Charm of Rejuvenescence*) over any remaining guards. Using his own dagger (or stealing one from a sentry, if his has been confiscated by Creef), he tries to take Lillyandre prisoner and force her to dig up the vial from beneath the fire-pit. If Suntrekker fails, he instantly snaps out of mental control and collapses. When he awakens, he claims to remember nothing of the incident.

At Breakfast. In the morning, the Wood Whisks return and help the Muses prepare breakfast for the group. After the meal, Greenleaf quietly douses the communal fire – and starts digging beneath it. A horrified Lillyandre spots him, and attacks. "You can't have it, it's mine!" she screams, finally pushed beyond caution. A duel of magic and telepathy begins.

Greenleaf is *not* controlled by the bound monster – he is an active ally, seduced by the creature's promises to make him handsome.

Guided by the creature – who has now figured out where the vial is buried – Greenleaf desperately tries to uncover it. If he does, he opens it, saying, "Now I have everything I want! You promised!" These are his last words before Othyog materializes on top of him (crushing the unfortunate Muse).

Lillyandre also tries to get the vial, claiming that her sister died for it. She will hide it from view, mentally or magically attacking anyone who tries to take it from her.

To help Greenleaf, the monster will use his mental control on the hostile character closest to the vial. However, the victim cannot be someone previously controlled by the creature – former victims are safe from further attacks. The subject must succeed at a WILL Roll, or falls under mental control and must try to open the vial. Victims show no subtlety – they charge directly toward the location of the vial.

The Gamemaster should continue the battle until the players' interest begins to wane (or until the vial is opened). If necessary, the creature's anger gives him the power to escape unaided. If the vial is underground, there is an earth tremor – all characters must succeed at a DEX Roll to remain standing. If the vial is above ground, there is a high-pitched sound which shatters the vial. In either case, the monster is now free and materializes in the center of the village.

OTHYOG UNBOUND

When the seal is removed from the vial, Lillyandre's monster – Othyog – spills out as a noxious mass of stench-raising jelly. A round later, the jelly coalesces into Othyog's normal form (see the description below).

Othyog boasts, in many tongues and voices, "I am reborn! Oblivion is cheated! Othyog shall walk the world again, in a new form!" He grabs at any female humanoid within ten feet, preferring Lillyandre first, then someone with magic talent. Suspecting that he may be about to die, Othyog is attempting to implant his matrix – a portion of his soul and brain – into a host being. To do so, he must engulf the victim within his massive body and keep her there for 5 turns.

If Othyog is killed before completing the planting of his matrix, his body collapses into a pool of liquified flesh-slime. The adventurers win. If Othyog succeeds in placing his "seed," the adventurers have not won – even if they succeed in killing the now-mindless body. The host mother will bear a deadly child four months from now . . . and Othyog will live on, for a further adventure.

THE WHISPS

Chag the Wood Whisp. Second level. 4" tall, 4 oz.
STR -10, DEX +8, CON 0, SPD +8, INT +2, WILL -1, PER +4, CHA -1

Combat Rating +3. 4 hit points. Spear, 1-2 damage (stings). No armor

Magic Rating +2. Knows the spells of *Radiance* and *Wards* (one of the *Symbols of Power*), plus all of the minor enchantments

Skills: Camouflage, combat training (spear), concoct poison, evasion, herb lore, hunting, identify flora and fauna, secondary magic (natural talent), snares, tracking

Chag is quiet. As Creef's right-hand Whisp, his job is to correct Creef's mistakes – a task he does with bored competence.

Creef the Wood Whisp. First level. 5" tall, 6 oz.
STR -10, DEX +8, CON 0, SPD +8, INT 0, WILL 0, PER +4, CHA 0

Combat Rating +3. 3 hit points. Spear, 1-2 (stings). Acorn helmet
Magic Rating +2. Knows all of the minor enchantments

Skills: Camouflage, coerce, combat training (spear), concoct poison, evasion, herb lore, identify flora and fauna, oratory, secondary magic (natural talent), snares

Creef is blustering, loud, overconfident and incompetent. He's the leader because he gripes until the other Whisps put him in charge of whatever they're doing.

THE MUSES

Greenleaf of Astar. First level. 5' 7", 100 lbs.
STR -3, DEX +3, CON -4, SPD 0, INT +5, WILL -4, PER +3,
CHA -1

Combat Rating 0. 6 hit points. No armor or weapons

Magic Rating +2. Knows only the minor enchantments and the *Spell of Levitation*

Skills: Agriculture, artificer, herb lore, identify flora and fauna, secondary magic (natural)

Greenleaf is the group's farmer/gatherer. He is jealous of Suntrekker.

Lillyandre of Astar. Seventh level. 5' 8", 90 lbs.
STR -5, DEX +3, CON -4, SPD 0, INT +3, WILL -3, PER +3,
CHA +1

Combat Rating 0. 18 hit points. No weapons or armor

Magic Rating +5. Using discovered scroll fragments, she has managed to learn the *Symbol of Imprisonment* (one of the Seven Secret Symbols of Power) and *Malderon's Magic Portal*, as well as all of the basic "Power" spells

Skills: Enchant items, herb lore, literacy, secondary magic (natural), seduce

Lillyandre is self-centered, and feels little remorse at the death of her sister. She wants Othyog's powers. She has scrolls for the spells of *Summoning*, *Elemental Power*, *The Seven Secret Symbols of Power* (*Symbol of Imprisonment* only), and *Malderon's Magic Portal*. They are hidden in a hollow tree outside the village.

Suntrekker of Astar. Fifth level. 6', 140 lbs.
STR -2, DEX +3, CON -4, SPD 0, INT +3, WILL -4, PER +2,
CHA +1

Combat Rating +1. 14 hit points. Knife, d4. No armor

Magic Rating +3. Knows only the minor enchantments

Skills: Art, combat training (knife), herb lore, hunting, secondary magic (natural), scout, tracking

Suntrekker is handsome and knows it, and is used to getting his way. He is the hunter and beast-scarer for the commune.

Dewdrop, Moonseed and Thistle. Level varies. 5' 6" to 5' 10", 80 to 120 lbs.
STR -3, DEX +3, CON -4, SPD 0, INT +3, WILL -4, PER +3,
CHA 0

Combat Rating 0. Hit points vary. No armor or weapons

Magic Rating varies. Know only the minor enchantments

Skills: Art, artificer, herb lore, musicianship, secondary magic (natural).

Dewdrop, the tallest of the three, is good at love-games. Her other hobby is dancing. Level 1, 6 hit points, **Magic Rating** +1.

Moonseed is a star-watcher (Astrology skill). She loves the night. Level 3, 10 hit points, **Magic Rating** +2.

Thistle's hobby is natural medicine (Concoct Medicinal Mixtures skill). Level 5, 14 hit points, **Magic Rating** +3.

OTHYOG

A writhing, shifting mass of fleshy protoplasm and various walking/grasping appendages, appearing/disappearing mouths, and visual organs, Othyog is unique – a hybrid abomination possessed of a malign intelligence.

SIZE: 6' to 10' in diameter, 2,000 lbs.

EXCEPTIONAL ATTRIBUTES: STR +6, DEX -2, SPD -4, INT +3, WILL +6

LEVEL: 5

ATTACKS/DAMAGE: Constricting tentacles (3): d8. Claws (2): d10. Bite (2 mouths): d6

SPECIAL ABILITIES: Mental control, night vision, shocking appearance (see COMMENTS)

ARMOR: None

HIT POINTS: 50

HABITAT: Elsewhere in the Omniverse

COMMENTS: Any who see Othyog must make a WILL Roll. An *Action Table* result of "Failure" paralyzes the victim, while "Success" means the victim can act normally that round. "Success Plus" frees the victim from making further WILL Rolls when looking at Othyog. "Mishap" indicates that the victim goes insane for d6 hours.



OTHER ADVENTURES IN TALISLANTA

The following ideas can be used by Gamemasters to create their own adventures in the Seven Kingdoms.

THE KINGDOM OF ASTAR

Slavers! As King Marr of Taz predicts, the Imrian slavers return. They swim undetected up the Zephyr River, ambush the Grand Army defenders, and then begin to burn the Enchanted Grove in order to drive the Muses into their nets. The adventurers might be passing through Astar at the time (perhaps in a windship). Or they could be recruited – or drafted – in Cymril to join the Grand Army.

THE KINGDOM OF CYMRIL

The Keep. Surprised adventurers win a Jasper Mountains tower in a high-stakes gambling session. The first problem is getting to it; the second is to clear the wildlife from the long-abandoned structure. The third challenge is political: Cymril has begun one of its irregular sweeps to drive illegal residents out of the mountains. Will the adventurers have to fight? Will the Yassan Technomancers in the nearby caverns aid them? And is the tower really abandoned, or will its Za bandit builders ever return?

The North Corridor. When all contact with the Subterranean City is lost, the adventurers are hired to reach the Gnomekin from Cymril by way of the Underground Highway – clearing cave-ins, rescuing besieged Gnomekin in the tunnels, and fighting off bands of Darklings, Satada and Subterranooids. What will they find when they reach Durne?

Willoc of the Whisps. The rebel-mage Willoc has been transformed into a Whisp by his former ally, Morgo the Diabolic. Fearing for his life, he has fled to the forests of Vardune. Willoc's Tanasian associates hire the adventurers to help them find Willoc and cure him. Haste is important, for Morgo's minions also comb the forests for the elusive Whisp, and they aren't there to cure him. (Demons seldom do things like that . . . Morgo isn't called "the Diabolic" for nothing.) And will the counterspell, manufactured by a Thaecean enchanter and sealed in a glassine orb, really work?

THE KINGDOM OF DURNE

Beneath Dark Waters. On a mission for the Lyceum Arcanum, the adventurers venture beneath the Subterranean Lake's waters (with magical protection) to locate the rumored lost cities. The primitive Octomorphs do not welcome this alien intrusion into their realm. Will the adventurers find what destroyed an ancient civilization . . . or will they trigger the same destruction for Durne and the Gnomekin?

The Deep Quest. Following an unusually destructive raid by the Subterranooids and Drones, the Gnome-King – with support from each of the Seven Kingdoms – decides to strike back. But first, he needs information . . . geographic information. The adventurers are sent on what may be the most dangerous mission of their careers, to penetrate the treacherous Land Below.

Escort to Arim. The Nadir Absolute hires the adventurers to guard an important alchemist on his journey to Zanth. The route leads through the Dead Lands of Durne, where caravans have been vanishing. Is this due to the usual raids from Stryx or Beastmen? Or could the stolen caravans' goods be meant for an Ur supply cache, in advance of an invasion?

THE KINGDOM OF KASMIR

Race of Thieves. The annual Trapsmith Convention includes a contest. Guild members design and install a network of traps in their guild-hall, and then offer a fabulous prize to the first person who

can penetrate the building and escape with the treasure. For the adventurers, it's a race against traps as well as rival thieves and adventurers. Some years, no one wins . . .

The Reckoning. A village of Tanasian Exiles managed to borrow a fortune from a senile Kasmir money lender. Nobody can guess how they will pay it back – or why they asked for the money in the first place. The adventurers might be hired by the Kasmir Auditor given this difficult case, or could side with the Tanasian debtors.

THE KINGDOM OF SINDAR

The Collection. A Sindaran Collector hires the adventurers to obtain a sword which would complete her collection, and informs them of its location. Retrieving it from a wrecked and deserted wagon is ostensibly the only problem . . . but what one collector wants, another might want too, and if one sends hirelings to get it, so might another. And what of the sword? Could it be the holy object which Aamanian warrior-priests are looking for? Does it have an even darker history, explaining the Xambrian Wizard-Hunter roaming this territory?

Ribbon of Salt. The mesalands hold vast stores of rare minerals, invaluable to alchemists. The adventurers have been hired to escort an eccentric Sindaran alchemist to a remote canyon north of Sahar, where he intends to retrieve an unusual salt. How harmless is the "salt?" Why is the alchemist so desperate to obtain it? Why cannot the salt be obtained elsewhere – and will someone try to keep the alchemist from getting his supply?

THE KINGDOM OF TAZ

The Hunt. When the Monarch-King makes his annual hunting trip into Targ Swamp, the adventurers – in Tor as representatives of the Council of Kings – are honor-bound to accompany him. Giant leeches, bog devils, and swamp demons are the usual threats, but this time there's more. A mysterious sorcerer of unknown powers turns the trip into a nightmare, assaulting the hunting party with legions of half-men. What is the sorcerer up to? Is he trying to kill the hunters, capture them, or drive them away? When the Monarch-King turns up missing, can the adventurers find and rescue him?

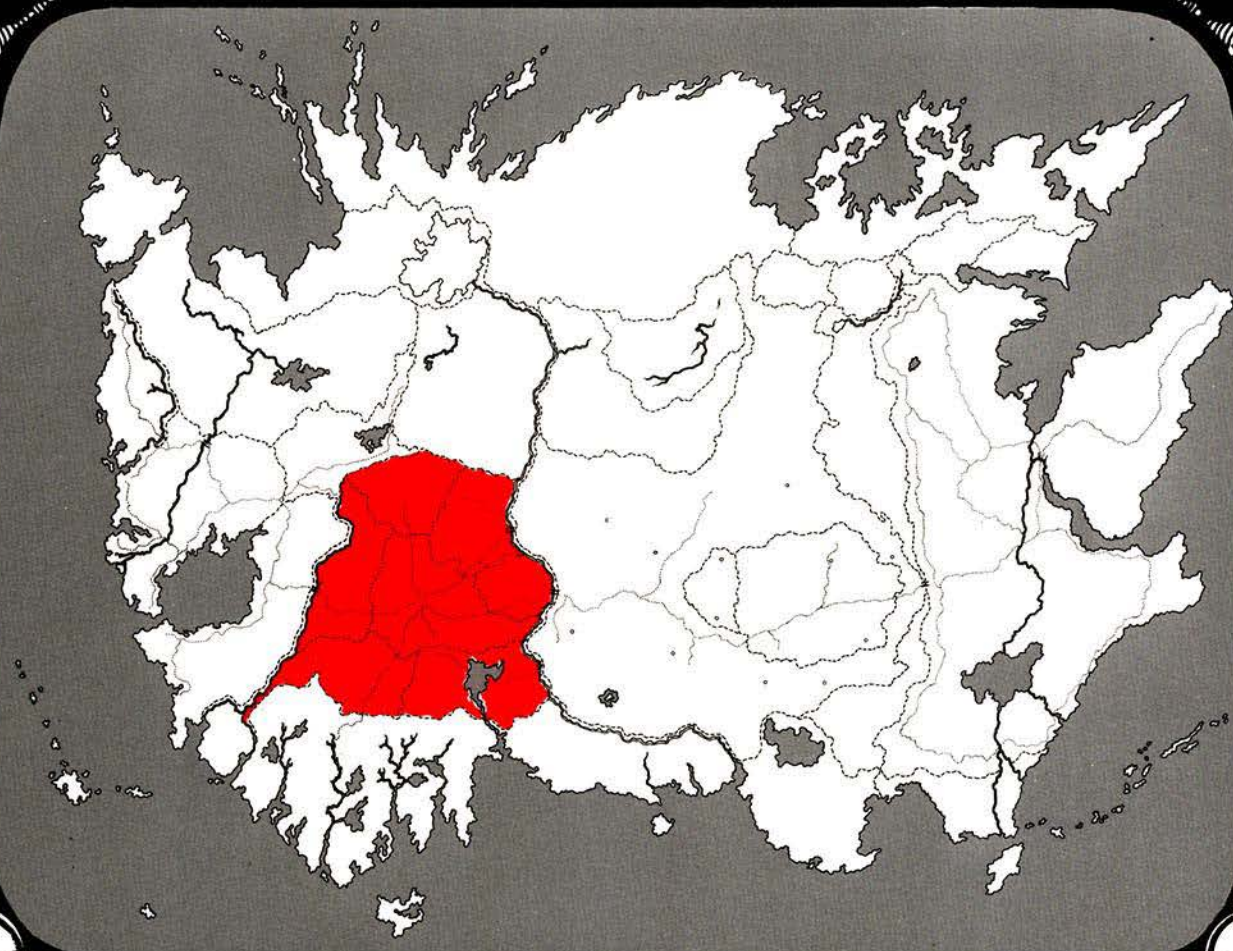
Slarg's Map. The Lyceum Arcanum is interested in mounting an expedition to the Cinnabar Mountains, hoping to uncover once and for all the true origin of the Thralls. Less known is the interest from other parties: Slarg, an Imrian slaver in possession of a centuries-old map purporting to lead to a buried palace complex, and an unscrupulous Sindaran collector named Jadiit, whose passion is the collection of Thrall artifacts (including tattoos).

THE KINGDOM OF VARDUNE

Invasion of the Green Men. A slave-ship full of Green Men bound for Aaman is shipwrecked on the Axis River. The Ardua must catch the Green Men before they damage the carefully maintained ecosystem of the kingdom. The Ardua don't want to harm them, but the Green Men aren't aware of their benevolent intentions – they think the Ardua want to enslave them again! After the Green Men are caught, there is a long, hazardous journey down the Axis to return them to their home – with slavers waiting downriver to grab the Green Men again.

Killer Viridia. What happens when you cross viridia with a Violet Creeper? Unfortunately, an unstable Arduan Botanomancer has done just that, and the Viridia Creeper is preying on traffic along the Vardune Road. Stopping the mobile viridia plant requires more than brute strength – only an Ogront can destroy it. Cleverness, magic, and good detective work are the key to stopping a 300-hit-point tree that regenerates 10 hits per round. The adventurers had better find out how it was made, and un-make it.

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TALISLANTA
VOLUME II
THE SEVEN KINGDOMS



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