

THE COMPASS OF TERRESTRIAL DIRECTIONS, VOL. III

THE EAST™



A SETTING
BOOK FOR



THE COMPASS OF TERRESTRIAL DIRECTIONS, VOL. III

THE EAST™

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yawn
Ah, spring.

And it seems this world is no worse off than I left it.



Not exactly, Jorst.

What's this?



Oh, hello there. It's Grandfather of Brilliant Jade, right?

What did you mean 'not exactly'? Has something happened?



Oh yes. Last night, a Solar Prince slept in my forest.

Lucky! Was it the Bull of the North?

No, that's just it. It was one the Wyld Hunt had missed. Another one.

All of a sudden, they're popping up all over the place.



There's even one in Halta.



Halta!



Well, that hardly seems fair!

Jorst, don't get distracted...



INTRODUCTION

*If you go out to the woods today,
You'd better not go alone.
It's lovely out in the woods today,
but safer to stay at home.*
—Jimmy Kennedy, “Teddy Bear’s Picnic”

Of all the sectors of Creation, the East possesses the greatest habitable area. This region curls around the Scavenger Lands in an immense arc. In the First Age, many strange and wonderful cities rose in the East. The Great Contagion and the Fair Folk invasion laid most of them low, and the forest reclaimed the ruins. New societies grow in the East, now, largely untouched by the Realm—and frequently isolated from each other as well. Some have ancient roots. Others are entirely new. Not all this growth, however, is sane or healthy. Many dangers lurk in the East: some obvious, many hidden.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The Compass of Terrestrial Directions, Vol. III—The East is a setting book, designed to assist players and Storytellers who want to set their **Exalted** series in Creation’s forested frontier. The East holds

many societies, from miniscule tribes to the sprawling wilderness kingdoms of Halta and Linowan. Some of these cultures reach toward new heights of civilization, while others wallow in degeneracy. In the Time of Tumult, they all face new challenges.

Chapter One: Roots of the East

This chapter gives an overview of Eastern history, from the time of the pre-human Dragon Kings to the present.

Chapter Two: The Empire Wilderness

Halta and Linowan, the two largest nations of the East, have fought each other almost since their founding. Each nation claims the patronage of a powerful god and fights in that god’s name. For centuries, the war between the river-loving Linowan and the tree-dwelling Haltans was a stalemate. Recently, however, the Realm and the Bull of the North both intervened in the eternal war.





Leaders in both Linowan and Halta now ponder the possibility that their long war might finally end in the complete destruction of one side—or both.

Chapter Three: Strange Hybrid Flowers

Many Eastern countries are quite small, but are no less unique for their size. This chapter describes the funereal city-state of Sijan, the hawkriders of Mount Metagalapa and the enigmatic nation of Chaya. In each of these three places, mortals live in strange partnership with other intelligences.

Chapter Four: Savage Lands

A great many Easterners do not live in nations at all. They belong to tribes. This chapter describes a number of the tribes dwelling in the Eastern forests. Some tribes, such as the Ten Tribes of the remote

East, might become nations in time. Others, such as the Wyld-touched Arczeckh Horde, seem caught in savagery. The grimmest societies of the East, however, occupy ruins from the First Age. In Mahalanka and Rathess, remnants of ancient civilization join with Exalted power and madness to produce horrors that may well explode across the East.

Chapter Five: Gods and Monsters of the East

A wide variety of spirits, peoples and wild creatures live in the East and shape its destiny. This chapter describes a number of influential gods and Exalts, beast-men and other people who seem at least partly human, and various animals and monsters. Some might become allies or resources for Eastern characters; others serve as deadly foes.









CHAPTER ONE

A HISTORY OF THE EAST

From the mile-high conifers of Halta to the lush jungles that hide Rathess, the East is the most expansive, populous and diverse of the four Directions of the Threshold. The Elemental Pole of Wood defines not merely the nature of plants but that of all life. From the dawn of the First Age until the advent of the Great Contagion, the gardens, fields and vineyards of the Eastern territories served as the breadbasket of the Solar empire and the Shogunate alike. Even now, during the Time of Tumult, when the various kingdoms, principalities and nations of the East suffer from so many problems, famine is rarely one of them. Wars, pestilence and death, on the other hand...

ANCIENT HISTORY

Most modern savants agree that the very first humans fashioned by the Primordials originally dwelled

in the East. The earliest human settlements began within the territories of the Dragon Kings, to whom the Primordials gave the task of overseeing the new life form. The names of these first settlements were long forgotten even before the first Exaltations—but Old Sijan certainly existed in the Age before the Primordial War, and the Dragon King capitol of Rathess definitely existed long before Sijan. Old Sijan, the largest and most populous human city of the time, fell along with the Primordial known as Jheel-Khan, Whose Laughter Turns the Skies to Blood. The dead Primordial's body fell on the area that later became the Black Chase. The resulting earthquake destroyed Old Sijan and its two million inhabitants. The victorious Solars rebuilt Sijan and made it a memorial to the war dead. It has served as Creation's most famous purveyor of funereal services ever since.




In the immediate aftermath of the Primordial War, most Exalted actually resided in the Southeast. Although the gods ascended to Yu-Shan, their former metropolis, Meru, lay in ruins. The war left Rathess as the oldest and most prominent city in Creation built by mortal hands. It served as the capitol not only of the Dragon Kings but also of all Creation for the first century or so after the war's end. The province that held Rathess, Ochre Fountain, became the center of early human culture; while Queen Merela of Rathess, the most powerful and puissant of the post-war Solars, became the de facto ruler of all Solar Exalted. Merela herself asserted more than de facto rule: the Unconquered Sun himself bestowed both the Creation Ruling Mandate and the Crown of Thunders upon Merela, and she interpreted these divine gifts to represent her right to rule as the Incarna's regent in Creation. Unsurprisingly, Merela's Solar peers disagreed.

The resulting conflicts were brutal but short. Merela consolidated her authority and became the Empress of Creation, but the practical realities of the situation required her to acknowledge a power-sharing relationship with the other Exalted in the form of the Solar Deliberative. As a way of redirecting her political rivals

away from challenging her authority, Merela eventually relocated the seat of Exalted power away from Rathess to Meru. From that point, she redirected the other Solars to the edges of the world, pushing them to expand the boundaries of Creation in every direction. Merela's policy was to wield an increasingly lax control over territories the further they were from the Blessed Isle, with the intentional result that Solars who most resisted her authority moved as far from the Isle as possible. In the hinterlands of Creation, they could rule as they wished over their subjects.

Throughout the High First Age, the East received the largest share of these ambitious Lawgivers. The Elemental Pole of Wood made the East the most fertile quarter of Creation, and its Essence facilitated the creation and manipulation of new life forms. In the Sandy River District, Exalted savants experimented with microscopic Essence-wielding life forms. In the Flowing Grasp Province, the Dawn Caste Sorraza Dalon twisted the very souls of her subjects in hopes of creating the perfect warriors. Had she lived long enough, she might have succeeded, instead of leaving behind a people congenitally obsessed with revenge and blood feuds. Farther east, the young Lunar prodigy Silver Python



discovered mating techniques that permitted her (or him, depending on his mood) to sire intelligent animal offspring, the forerunners of modern Haltan ata-beasts and san-beasts. Solars who established kingdoms within the lands forged from the Wyld near the ever-receding Elemental Pole of Wood could fashion even stranger societies, as those peoples borne of the Wyld through Solar Charms could have any characteristics their makers desired.

The High First Age also saw the creation of mighty cities in the East, though few Old Realm cities endure into modern times. Followers of Brigid the First Sorceress founded Sperimin as Creation's greatest center of learning. In time, the Solar Deliberative ordained it as the central repository for sorcerous lore. Dozens of cities sprang up among the mighty Northeastern redwoods, most notably Amber Salmiaren, famous for its elaborate climate control system, the floating city of Sal-Maneth and Malessa of the Eleven Towers.

THE USURPATION

A few Eastern Solars and Lunars escaped the wave of murders that began the Usurpation. Most notably, the great manse-builder Kal Bax and 11 of his followers astonished the usurpers by teleporting directly away from the initial attack and apparently vanishing from Creation. The Dragon-Blooded never did learn their fate. Only years later did the Green Lady, a Chosen of Secrets, give her fellow Sidereals convincing evidence of their deaths.

Other Exalted escaped less dramatically, though sometimes more successfully. The Solars Albaio and Pleasant Clouds fought their way to Rathess where they were brought down like common dogs. The dashing Lunar socialite Ma-Ha-Suchi staged a daring rescue of the young sorcerous prodigy Raksi from a circle of Sidereal assassins who tried to slay her at Sperimin. The two fled into the Wyld to escape their pursuers. The gender-shifting Silver Python also escaped into the Wyld, stopping long enough to rescue Rain Deathflyer—who had only just received Exaltation—from death.

Although the Usurpation was a success by its own terms, the East became the region most plagued by Solar Anathema in future centuries. The Sidereals' Jade Prison never held the Exaltations of Albaio, Pleasant Clouds, Bax and his cohorts and a few others. Mortals continue to receive their Exaltations—frequently, in the East. From the time of the Usurpation until quite recently, however, such Anathema never seriously threatened either the Shogunate or the Scarlet Empire, because

the Sidereal-led Wyld Hunt slew newly Exalted Solars before they could come into their full power.

THE SHOGUNATE ERA

Like the Celestial Exalted before them, the Dragon-Blooded shoguns found the East essential to their hegemony. The East remained Creation's breadbasket, and its High First Age infrastructure made it vital to Shogunate security. Of course, that also meant the East saw the bulk of the Shogunate's internecine conflicts.


The remarkable bio-diversity of Eastern mortals troubled the Dragon-Blooded, however, as they could never escape the fear that the ancient Solars tainted the races they fashioned at the edges of Creation, and controlled them from beyond the grave. Almost immediately after the Usurpation, nearly the entire population of the Sandy River region died—human and animal—of some unknown disease. In the 200th year of the Shogunate, hordes of snakes and birds of all types attacked the city of Manessa of the Eleven Towers and ravaged it using what survivors insisted were organized battle tactics. Similar phenomena plagued Eastern cities as they did the rest of Creation, but perhaps with greater vigor and regularity.

Moreover, the Shogunate simply was never up to the task of maintaining the First Age infrastructure of the Solar Exalted. About 350 years after the Usurpation, Sal-Maneth's anti-gravity mechanisms failed due to the inability of the Dragon-Blooded to maintain them. The floating city dropped nearly 200 feet before coming to a rest, at a noticeable incline, on the branches of several giant redwoods. Unable either to restore the city to flight or even to guarantee its structural integrity in its new resting place, the Shogunate evacuated the city of all but its essential personnel.

THE GREAT CONTAGION

No living person ever identified the precise vector by which the Great Contagion entered Creation, but savants know it began someplace in the Far East, then spread rapidly along the densely populated riverlands. The birthplace of that dread disease lay in the Noss Fens, one of Creation's oldest shadowlands. The First Age Solars did not discover the Noss Fens until several centuries after the Primordial War, and so, its origin remains uncertain. The ancient Solars knew that the center of the Noss Fens held a strange set of ruins that they initially took for prehistoric relics of the Dragon Kings, but some Solars suspected them to be far, far older.





After the Usurpation, the Dragon-Blooded were too busy to worry about a quiescent shadowland at the edge of Creation; they cared more about the shadowlands created during the Usurpation and its aftermath, such as Marama's Fell and the City of Dead Flowers. Their apathy nearly destroyed the world.

In time, the Noss Fens became home to one of the most powerful and malignant of those beings that would later become known as Deathlords: the Dowager of the Irreverent Vulgate in Unrent Veils. Within the Fens, the Dowager discovered an ancient power source called the Well of Udr that she used to open a connection to the very heart of the Labyrinth. Through her peerless necromancy, the Dowager shaped the chthonic forces rising from the Well into the Great Contagion and unleashed it on an unsuspecting world.

The death toll of the Contagion brought the Shogunate to its knees and destroyed almost every remnant of Old Realm culture and society in the East. It incidentally frayed Creation with many new shadowlands. Worse, in the Contagion's aftermath, the Fair Folk stormed the gates of reality and sought to undo all of Creation. Most of the East's outer perimeter collapsed back into the Wyld. Untold millions of square miles within the provinces once known as Flowing Grasp, Serene Canopy and the Labyrinth of Soothing Shadows boiled out of existence within hours of the Fair Folk invasion. Even those territories that survived the collapse of Creation's boundaries suffered disruptions of local reality, with Wyld zones of varying sizes emerging throughout the East. One of the most extreme distortions relocated Mount Metagalapa to a new position hanging in midair. Other parts of Creation saw their geography reordered as Wyld storms swept in the Fair Folk's wake.

THE IMPERIAL AGE

The Terrestrial Exalt who became the Scarlet Empress drove the invaders back, but the East, like the rest of the Threshold, lost at least 40 percent of its pre-Contagion territory. The societies in the regions left behind soon collapsed into anarchy and barbarism. In the aftermath of the Fair Folk invasion, the Scarlet Empress focused her immediate attention on consolidating her authority and securing the obedience of the Threshold territories. She succeeded more at the former goal than at the latter—mainly because the discipline and magitech resources of Lookshy enabled the new city-state to repel several Realm invasions. Any military adventure the Imperial Army attempts in the East must deal with the presence of a hostile Lookshy at its back.

The Scarlet Empire did eventually annex several Eastern territories, most prominently the Shogunate of Calin and the city of Greyfalls. In time, the Dynasty forged an alliance with the Queen of the Linowan. The Empress also agreed to recognize the historical neutrality of Sijan, although she had little motive to do otherwise. Sijan had no assets of use to her empire, except a potentially strategic location at an important river juncture... if Lookshy were not in the way.

THE LUNARS RETURN

In the earliest days of the Scarlet Empire, the Empress did not make a priority of pursuing Anathema who lived beyond her sphere of influence, while the Sidereals who secretly ran the Wyld Hunt cared more about mopping up residual Fair Folk invaders. As a result, the Lunar Exalted escaped constant Wyld Hunt harassment for the first time in centuries. The Silver Pact soon established footholds among the collapsed societies at Creation's rim. The elders who returned to the East included Rain Deathflyer, Silver Python, Ma-Ha-Suchi and Raksi. Regrettably, the latter two Lunars fared poorly during their sojourn in the Wyld. Ma-Ha-Suchi suffered such deformity while in the Deep Wyld that his fellow Lunars nearly put him down as a chimera, while Raksi's experiences during the exile afflicted her with a host of derangements.

Rain Deathflyer and Silver Python relocated to the Far Northeastern forests, where they joined tribes of hawkmen, snakemen and various sentient animals to the human population, and so laid the foundations of the Republic of Halta. Ma-Ha-Suchi returned to his First Age manse that he repurposed as a base of operations. Then, he began a long-term beastman breeding project, using captured local mortals as breeding stock. Raksi seized the ancient and virtually abandoned city of Sperimin, renamed it Mahalanka, and devoted herself to studying the mighty *Book of Three Circles*.

NEW SOCIETIES RISE

One of the first new societies to emerge in the East was the Republic of Chaya, which officially came into existence in RY 80. The Chayans were originally mortal refugees who, desperate for food and shelter, colonized the long-abandoned and supposedly haunted Sandy Rivers region. Instead of plague, they found strange gods who guided them to build one of Creation's most orderly societies... except for one month of the year, when everyone goes mad. In the Northeast, Rain Deathflyer and Silver Python proceeded methodically in the construction of Halta, while remaining unknown to the Haltans themselves. Over the centuries, Halta



grew into one of the most expansive and powerful nations of the East.

Meanwhile, the pitiful survivors of Mount Metagalapa adjusted to the fact that their home now floated in the air too high for any of them to reach the ground. They developed a close-knit and insular society designed to maximize their limited resources and protect them from their beastman enemies. Only recently have the Metagalapans mastered the art of taming giant hawks to use as steeds capable of reaching the ground.

To the south, Raksi repopulated Mahalanka with an assortment of simian beastmen and loyal Wyld barbarians. Since her conquest of the city, the children of Raksi have defended Mahalanka from all intruders on the Lunar's sanctity, but the society she built is unstable; her followers seek little beyond worshipping their mistress.

Not all mortals of the Second Age succeeded in building a society; some just saw their cultures slowly die out. In Rathess, the Contagion destroyed the last remnants of culture and enlightenment among the Dragon Kings. Today, a few thousand feral "stalkers" are all that remains of their once-proud population. Further east, the Ten Tribes of the Oak, after centuries of faithful service to their god Elder Oak, found themselves betrayed by their deity and abandoned for an army of invading loggers. Today, the Ten Tribes teeter on the brink of cultural extinction, while the logging city of Farhold grows with Elder Oak's enthusiastic support. Throughout the East, moreover, innumerable tribes of humans, near-humans and beastmen have neither flourished nor declined, subsisting in the same barbarian, hunter-gatherer collectives first established by their post-Contagion ancestors more than seven centuries ago.

WAR IN THE EAST

Like so many places during the post-Contagion era, the East is no stranger to martial conflict. The region has largely escaped the Realm incursions that plagued the Scavenger Lands—mostly because the Realm had to go through the Scavenger Lands first—but that only left its peoples free to pursue conflicts with one another. In RY 280, a protracted and bloody war between the Linowan and the Haltans ended with the Battle of the Fields of Woe, which created the shadowland of the same name. The resulting truce did not last long: in RY 318, the Linowan invaded Halta a second time in the disastrous War of Summer Conflagration.

The Arczeckhi, a primitive and savage breed of Wyld barbarians, first made its presence felt in the East in

the middle of the third century post-Contagion. These denizens of the Southeastern wastes regularly raided Chaya and then throughout the Hundred Kingdoms, until Lookshy mercenaries handed them a decisive defeat in RY 435.

For all their casualties and destruction, however, none of these conflicts ever represented as seismic a shift in the East as a new threat from outside: the rise of the Bull of the North.

THE ANATHEMA WARLORD

The Bull of the North is certainly not the first Anathema to become a warlord in the East. The Wyld Hunt has existed since the Usurpation for the express purpose of ending such threats, whether Lunar invaders from the Wyld or the reincarnations of those few Solars who survived the Usurpation. It has done so with ruthless efficiency ever since. Ten years ago, the Wyld Hunt suffered one of its few failures, and the ramifications now threaten the Realm's future.

At that time, the Anathema now called the Bull of the North was simply an aging icewalker barbarian named Yurgen Kaneko, who left his tribe to seek an honorable death in the Northern winter. Exaltation gave him a new life, and a lifetime of wilderness survival training bolstered by Solar Charms enabled him to lure his Wyld Hunt pursuers into a fatal trap. Kaneko then kept a low profile for the next several years as he quietly unified the icewalker tribes and forged them into an army.

In RY 761, Kaneko unleashed his horde in a two-pronged attack, sending part against the Roka-Jin and Talinin tribes south of Linowan, while personally leading the rest of his forces against Linowan from the north. Realizing that the Bull intended to conquer her entire country, the Linowan queen petitioned the Realm for aid. Meanwhile, the Republic of Halta, sensing a powerful ally against the Linowan, allied with Kaneko.

For all the Bull's considerable power, his icewalkers and Haltans initially were no match for battle-hardened Imperial troops. The Tepet legions decisively defeated the icewalkers under the command of the Bull's Dragon-Blooded lieutenant, Mors Ialden, at the Battle of Krellen Ford. The victory was pyrrhic, however: although Tepet Arada's armies inflicted heavy casualties on Ialden's troops, they could not prevent Ialden from rendezvousing with the Bull. The combined forces of Ialden and Kaneko, bolstered with the sorcery of Kaneko's Zenith Caste ally Samea, devastated the Tepet pursuers.

Tepet Arada might still have defeated the Anathema and his barbarian hordes had disaster not struck

the Realm. The Scarlet Empress actually vanished during the Calibration following RY 763, but her disappearance did not become widely known until later in RY 764. Almost immediately thereafter, the Tepet legions suffered reductions in supplies, armaments and reinforcements, as their Dynastic rivals schemed for the throne. Then, the Solars returned en masse, and all hell broke loose.

The simultaneous re-emergence of scores of Solar Anathema across Creation caught the Sidereals off guard. The Bronze Faction's position was further weakened when the Great Houses started reallocating their assets away from the Wyld Hunt and foreign wars, and toward parochial concerns. Several returning Solars flocked to the Bull's banner, and one helped him immeasurably without even meaning to: In Ascending Fire of RY 764, the Dawn Caste known as Lyta Exalted on the grounds of the Palace Sublime itself, and before fleeing the Blessed Isle, she killed more than 30 Immaculate monks scheduled to travel to Linowan and aid the Tepets.

Worst of all, the Bull stepped up his assault, exercising the full force of Celestial-level Charms and sorcery against the Dragon-Blooded for the first time since the

Usurpation. The Bronze Faction escalated in response, going so far as to magically exterminate the entire mortal population of the city of Fallen Lapis, capital of the nation of Ardeleth, which had declared allegiance to the Bull. In retaliation, the enraged Solar killed one of the Sidereals in personal combat. (Heaven's own government executed the other Sidereal for war crimes.) The eldritch destruction of Fallen Lapis still mystifies and terrifies people throughout the Northeast because they don't know who did it, how or who might be next.

Divine politics, combined with shock over the unforeseen death of two members, led the Bronze Faction to withdraw from the East. Without it, the legions found themselves helpless before the Bull's superior magical power. Late in Ascending Earth of RY 764, the Bull annihilated the Imperial forces at the Battle of Futile Blood. In the process, he crippled one of the Great Houses and threw the supremacy of the Scarlet Empire itself into doubt. Throughout the East, as in the rest of the Threshold, people plan for a future without the Realm. Some people fear this future; others see a chance to fulfill their wildest ambitions. While the Bull's victory holds the greatest import for the Northeast, it heralds a Time of Tumult for the entire region.



TIMELINE OF EVENTS IN THE EAST

Below is a timeline of major events in the history of the East. "RY" means Realm Year, referring to the Scarlet Empire's calendar. No dates from before the Fair Folk invasion are given: due to Wyld-influenced temporal anomalies, chronology from before the Great Contagion is so approximate and contradictory as to be meaningless.

Realm Year	Event
0	The Scarlet Empress defeats the Fair Folk. Mount Metagalapa takes flight.
1	End of the Great Contagion.
8	Ma-Ha-Suchi returns to the Salon Provocative.
19	Raksi and her beastmen conquer Sperimin.
22	The Scarlet Empress endorses Bendaris as Queen of the Linowan.
27	Elder Oak adopts refugees from Sperimin; start of the Ten Tribes of the Oak.
75	Realm troops occupy Sijan.
77	Realm troops leave Sijan, apparently without arriving anywhere else.
80	Republic of Chaya formally established in Sandy River region.
265	War between Laris and Velen draws in other countries and spills onto Chaya. Use of Essence weapons apparently poisons the Sandy River for years to come.
280	Battle of the Fields of Woe.
281	Treaty between the Republic of Halta and local Fair Folk.
318	War of Summer Conflagration between Linowan and Halta.
364	Arczechk Horde unsuccessfully invades Chaya; Lookshy drives them out.
367	Two Chayan towns attempt secession, are mysteriously destroyed.
450	The Haltan Succession Crisis.
547	Fair Folk briefly invade Chaya, leave unsatisfied.
610	The warlord Erushon occupies Chaya; frenzying Chayans tear him and his army limb from limb.
657	Filial Wisdom comes to Rathess; two years later, he becomes the leader of Han-Tha's cult.
661	The hawkriders of Mount Metagalapa initiate contact with the surface world.
667	Founding of Farhold.
761	Bull of the North attacks Roka-Jin and Talinin tribes in southern Linowan territories.
763	Tepet legions join with Linowan against the Bull of the North and his icewalkers.
764	The Scarlet Empress disappears. Tepet legions score several initial victories against the Bull of the North, but ultimately cannot compete with the Bull's superior magic. Tepet legions destroyed at Battle of Futile Blood.
768	Present day.





THEY SHOULD HAVE RANSOMED YOU, THEN. WE GAVE THEM A CHANCE.

WHAT HAVE WE GOT?

PLEASE, PLEASE... I HAVE A FAMILY!

FIVE FEET, EVEN.

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! THEY'RE POOR. WE'RE ALL POOR!

ONE LESS MOUTH TO FEED, THEN. YOU'RE A HEROIC MARTYR.

STOP THIS, PLEASE!~ I'M A HUMAN BEING!

REALLY? I THOUGHT YOU WERE LINOWAN.

LUNCH TIME, PRETTY ONES!

LADY CALTIA, FORGIVE ME! CALTIA, SHOW ME MERCY, I BEG YOU!



CHAPTER TWO

THE EMPIRE WILDERNESS

Just past Sijan, the Silver River joins the River of Tears. As you travel upstream for thousands of miles, the meadows grow smaller and the forests of mingled hardwoods and conifers more extensive. The Silver River flows from a mighty lake formed where several other rivers join. This was called the Silver Tarn in the First Age, but the Linowan who live in the area now call it Lake Sanazala. Heading further north or east along any of these tributaries, fir and pine become more common. To the east, mighty redwoods eventually dominate the forest. As the land grows chillier to the north, hardy larch and spruce take over. The immense Golden Leaf Canal, a wonder of the Old Realm, cuts across the Silver River tributaries in an arc more than 1,600 miles long.

Two mighty nations dominate this vast region: the river-loving Linowan and the tree-dwelling Haltans.

Between them, they control an area almost as large as the Blessed Isle. They are also locked in a perpetual war that has lasted for centuries, with no end in sight.

LINOWAN

The Linowan people live along the length of the Silver River and its tributaries. Their sailors ply the rivers all the way to the Inland Sea as fishers and pirates, bringing back trout, whales and booty alike. While few Linowan farm, they constantly attempt to expand their meadows and hardwood copses at the expense of the Northeastern redwood forest, cutting down trees and killing Haltans whenever they can.

The Linowan Queen, Arkasi, seeks Realm legions and Dragon-Blooded aid against the Haltans, while simultaneously juggling hostilities against the Bull of the North. The Realm indulged her once and the result



THE OTHER COUNTRIES

In few other parts of Creation does the map deceive so profoundly. Outsiders ignorant of the Northeast—such as Realm folk, or even most people in the Scavenger Lands—think Halta and Linowan are the only nations in the Northeast, and that everyone must therefore be Haltan or Linowan.

Not so! This region holds many other cultures, ranging from tiny villages and tribes to nations hundreds of miles wide. Some of these countries and cultures acknowledge Linowan or Haltan dominance as tributaries or protectorates; others stay fully sovereign. Quite a few would be considered important countries in their own right, except that Halta and Linowan are so much larger. Conversely, Halta and Linowan are strikingly loose empires that actually control very little of the territory the map shows as theirs. They surround some countries and interpenetrate others, such that half the people in a community might be Linowan citizens while the other half claims some other nationality and live by other laws.

Most notably, Halta overlaps three separate domains of the Fair Folk. In these areas, the raksha rule the ground and the Haltans rule the trees; separate nations, each recognizing the other's sovereignty, separated by just six feet—vertically.

was the greatest military disaster the Scarlet Empire had suffered in centuries. Queen Arkasi now lobbies for greater help. In doing so, she may draw the region into the struggles of the Time of Tumult: the Haltan lands have powerful Lunar guardians, while the Realm itself is in turmoil. The Linowan may become simply a pawn in greater power struggles, possibly to their doom.

HISTORY

Very little of Linowan history was ever written down; the people preserve their history through songs and stories, with carved wooden masks and poles to remind them of great events. Most of it would not interest anyone but Linowan.

Long ago, however, this land was part of the Flowing Grasp Province of the Old Realm, a land of great prosperity and sinister ambitions. The land remains rich and fertile, but marked by ominous scars. The Linowan do not know the source of the lights that shine from the vast Crypt of the Windrider, and they do not want

to find out. This massive castle-tomb is not the only shadowland in the region, either. Most Linowan treat all ruins of the past as uncanny places, best avoided. They have no tales from before the Great Contagion, let alone the Old Realm; the Linowan call this the Time Before Us, and say it is not good for mortal folk to know.

SHADOWS OF THE FIRST AGE

The Linowan know so little of the Old Realm in part because the river bottoms where they live are unusually deficient in literary remains, and the ruins are especially ruinous. In the battles of the Usurpation, a powerful Eclipse Caste named Heihtil Menander called in hundreds of bargains and oaths to spirits and elementals to send floods against Dragon-Blooded armies, incidentally washing away entire lowland cities and every scrap of paper they contained. Heihtil Menander himself fell in his cataclysm and his body was never found; the Dragon-Blooded erected a cenotaph (location now unknown) to appease his vengeful spirit and contain his staff and ring.

A subtler relic may lurk in the blood and bones of the Linowan people. A Dawn Caste named Sorraza Dalon used the country in a project to culture ideal warriors. They were supposed to be capable of fearless, ruthless aggression, then return to a peaceful, civilian mindset with neither anguish at their deeds nor continued rage at their enemies. She half succeeded: Sorraza didn't quite perfect the *off* switch for her perfect warriors. Countless people in the Flowing Grasp Province fought the Dragon-Blooded at her behest, without a trace of fear or mercy. Most of them died. The survivors became ancestors of the Linowan.

Linowan certainly are enthusiastic warriors, ready to fight at a moment's notice. They hold grudges and vendettas to a remarkable degree. Do they live as pawns of Sorraza Dalon?

Maybe; maybe not. Many centuries have passed. Other people moved into the region, during the Shogunate and after the Great Contagion, so Linowan blood carries only a trickle from Sorraza's warriors. Other cultures, in other parts of Creation, are also prone to vendetta and perpetual war. No mortal alive today even knows what Sorraza Dalon did, and none but the Five Maidens could guess the consequences if the Linowan learned about their First Age heritage.



Exalt

THE LINOWAN NATION BEGINS


At the end of the Low First Age, the Silver River region once more supported flourishing towns and a thriving population of farmers. It also had clans of people who spent most of their lives on the river. When the Great Contagion struck, the farmers, boat clans and townsfolk all died; but the boat clans died a little less, because they lived in smaller groups and had less contact with other people. These boat people became the ancestors of the Linowan. The Contagion taught the proto-Linowan that water meant safety, towns were dangerous and the only good *raksha* was a dead one.

The proto-Linowan became a nation in the way that so many countries began after the Great Contagion: through the efforts of an outcaste Terrestrial Exalt. Bendaris, a spirit negotiator for the Shogunate, did her best to organize the boat people into a country. The Linowan honor her as their founder. Bendaris built Rubylak as her capital, though the town grew slowly. She also learned, through trial and error, that trying to re-create the Shogunate civil service among people with no fixed abode didn't work very well. Instead, she awarded noble titles to cronies and clan leaders, beginning the Linowan aristocracy.

Queen Bendaris allied with the Realm. She did not become a vassal, exactly, but she accepted the Scarlet Empress as *de facto* ruler of Creation. For her part, the Empress treated Queen Bendaris as the *de facto* ruler of the Silver River—for what that was worth. The sense of a privileged relationship with the awesome, distant and little-understood Scarlet Empire has lasted ever since.

Queen Bendaris made another fateful decision when she gave up her attempts to instill the Immaculate faith and sought the favor of Golden-Eyed Jorst, whom many of her people worshipped anyway. Her attempts to extend her empire to the Silver River's headwaters ran into the nascent kingdom of Halta, a nation pledged to Jorst's rival Caltia. A simple attempt to seize territory quickly became a religious war without end.

Once the war began, Queen Bendaris exploited it to draw the Linowan together. A common enemy tamped down the feuds between the boat clans; they competed to kill Haltans instead of each other. The need for fortresses justified the imposition of taxes. When Bendaris died two centuries after the Great Contagion, she left a growing nation. The pattern of Linowan life was set, with clusters of extended families called boat



clans, and war bands assembled to fight the Haltans or go river raiding.

In RY 279, the Linowan learned what their war against Halta could cost. Hordes of Linowan warriors invaded Halta. Equal numbers of Haltan soldiers met them. They slaughtered each other so completely that the battlefield became the shadowland now called the Field of Woe.

In RY 318, the Linowan tried again. Bendaris' descendants included no more Exalted, enabling a charismatic outcaste Terrestrial named Summer Conflagration to seize the throne. Summer Conflagration led hundreds of war canoes upstream in a massive assault on Halta. She did not comprehend the extent of the aid the Haltans could gain through their treaty with the Fair Folk, negotiated in the aftermath of the previous Linowan invasion. In the initial encounter, Summer Conflagration and her host burned a band of Fair Folk into ash. On the next day, an enormous horde of hobgoblins and cataphracts attacked her army. The Fair Folk slew Summer Conflagration and devoured her troops. Only a few dozen members of this great armada returned to report their defeat.

In the following centuries, one Linowan queen after another asked the Realm for help to crush Halta. The Scarlet Empress consistently sent only minor aid: she cared little about barbarian nations at the edge of the world when she had important foes such as Lookshy to guard against and rich satrapies to keep subjugated. On the other hand, the courage and skill of Linowan auxiliaries as wilderness scouts made them valued adjuncts to Realm military operations in the North and East.

RECENT EVENTS

For centuries, the war between Halta and Linowan was a stalemate. Neither side could conquer the other, and no one from outside cared to intervene. That changed in RY 761. The charismatic Solar warlord called the Bull of the North brought his icewalker horde to the region. He took the Linowan completely by surprise; the icewalkers lived more than 1,000 miles away, after all. What could they do?

Quite a lot, it turned out. The Bull's envoys convinced two kingdoms, Bloody River and Ardaeth, to conquer tribes and kingdoms living south of Linowan territory. Linowan offered what aid it could to its beleaguered southern allies, Talinin and Roka-Jin. Suddenly, the Linowan faced an icewalker army to their northwest and an allied, hostile army to their southeast. Then the Haltan queen approached the Bull of the North, proposing an alliance against their common foe, and providing both military and logistical support.

The war dragged on for many months, becoming increasingly large and deadly. When the Bull committed his Zenith Caste ally Samea to the struggle, together with a Second Circle demon and a pair of ronin celestial lions, the Linowan appealed to the Realm for help. The Realm sent in the Tepet legions. Slightly more than a year later, the combination of powerful Solar magic and Charms with Haltan and icewalker troops wiped out the last remains of the Tepet legions in the Battle of Futile Blood. The loss of these legions stunned both the Realm and its Linowan allies.

The last of the minor kingdoms south of the Linowan fell near the beginning of RY 765. The Bull then stopped to consolidate his victories, but he may turn his attention back to Linowan at any time. The Haltan troops pulled back as well, allowing the Linowan to retrench and consider their situation.

While much of the fighting took place outside Linowan territory itself, the country and people still suffered. Their war bands still mourn their dead and recruit new members. The Queen and royal clan are in a quandary: while their alliance with the Realm undoubtedly saved them from being overrun by the Bull of the North, the fact remains that his forces slaughtered the Realm's legions. With the Empress herself now gone, how much help can the Realm provide if the Bull attacks again? All Linowan would revolt against the idea of subservience to an ally of Halta—but how can they stop him?

Would any other Celestial Exalted accept Linowan's current alliance with the Realm? Can the Linowan put aside their war with Halta to deal with a new threat? This would be more difficult than ever, since the Linowan chiefs blame Halta for their losses more than perhaps they should. At the moment, few Linowan would even consider a solution that didn't involve thorough and bloody revenge against *somebody*. Yet the Linowan may have to quell their anger for once, if they hope to survive as a nation.

GEOGRAPHY

Linowan territory lies in a wide band of meadows and deciduous forests, stretching along the Silver River and its tributaries. This territory reaches at least 1,600 miles and, in places, extends 800 miles wide. Linowan rarely live more than 20 miles from a navigable river, though, so this immense swath contains tribes, villages and whole nations of other peoples. Many of these local cultures accept some degree of Linowan dominance, though few are ruled outright. Indeed, the Linowan nation has only one border, that of Halta to the northeast. In every other direction, Linowan settlements simply



peter out with no clear boundary between them and other territories. Linowan villages may have border disputes with other local communities, but these do not concern the nation as a whole.

On the other hand, the Linowan watch their Haltan border closely. The slightest incursion (if detected) provokes an immediate response, and the Linowan themselves raid across it constantly. Young warriors prove their martial prowess in such attacks, while older ones stage retributive strikes or simply fight to hold back Haltan incursions.

In the southwest, Linowan territory fades somewhere opposite the Black Chase shadowland; the Linowan avoid the Black Chase itself and make no claim to that territory. Neither does anyone else.

LINOWAN CLIMATE

Linowan has long, humid summers; the mosquitoes gather over standing pools of water, bringing disease with them, but the fish are plentiful and wild foodstuffs grow in abundance. Spring and fall are both brisker seasons, with the winds from northwest and southwest bringing short, sharp showers of rain. Occasional heavy storms and downpours are believed to bring the best fish to the surface of deep lakes and rivers, resulting in Linowan fishing boats and canoes heading out by the dozens.

In the winter, winds from the north beat across the Linowan meadows. While southern Linowan merely becomes chilly, northern Linowan suffers occasional blizzards. The rivers fill with broken ice, and the smaller lakes freeze over. The Linowan themselves take to snowshoes and ice skates when they must journey on foot.

Winds from the deep East carry the spores and pollen of strange plants from Halta and the eastern Wyld. The Linowan regard them as unlucky, and often speak of projects that have gone wrong as “touched by the Eastern wind.”

CITIES AND TOWNS

Linowan towns are collections of wooden buildings that range from simple log cabins to elaborate “stave” structures built from narrow boards layered like the quills of a porcupine. While ordinary dwellings are usually low longhouses, public buildings such as shrines or palaver houses rise in exuberant stacks of gables. The population generally cycles in and out through the year, with people leaving to go raiding, trading, fishing or spend time on the Haltan frontier. The larger towns need to bring in food, as they can’t gather sufficient victuals in the vicinity. Each boat clan arranges its own shipments of food, sending their gatherers, hunters and fishers out separately. In times of famine and

hardship, the matriarchs of the local boat clans meet in the palaver house to negotiate hunting territory and to share supplies.

Linowan’s capital, Rubylak, is its only real city. Rubylak sprawls across both banks of the Silver River. The west bank holds the main part of the city, including the dwellings for the royal clan, nobles and foreign dignitaries. The east bank hosts the main cargo docks, warehouses and war fleet installations. It’s a haven for ruffians, alcohol, gambling and dubious trading. A war band from the royal clan, led by Eluan Dagger-Tooth, patrols regularly to keep the place under some semblance of control. Day and night, boats ranging from one-man coracles to large dugouts and rafts sail between the west and east bank.

Rubylak’s population fluctuates but seldom exceeds 50,000. Other Linowan towns are even smaller, seldom exceeding 10,000 souls. The Linowan simply prefer villages and their boats. Whenever disease sweeps through a community, the Linowan promptly evacuate to their rivers. Even Rubylak has been left a virtual ghost town for months at a time. Notable towns include Basten, Galdtern and Shadowholt.

Basten, located on the westernmost tributary of the Silver River, has become increasingly militarized of late. The town’s locally influential Whitewater boat clan sponsors several new war bands. Setheda Sealcutter, leader of the largest war band, is paranoid about Haltan and icewalker spies. Her war band inspects all trade caravans and canoes going in and out of Basten. While she herself is a woman of integrity, some of her junior commanders take bribes. Basten used to see traders from as far away as Crystal, but Setheda’s harassment drives the merchants north to Haltan towns such as River Blossom and Resplendent Peak.

Galdtern, located where the Silver River emerges from Lake Sanazala, sees a constant stream of young war bands passing through, eager to make their first raid on Halta. While some bands return victorious, others return decimated or not at all. While the people of Galdtern loathe the Haltans as much as any other Linowan, they see the carnage a bit more than most: a significant fraction of the town’s population consists of maimed warriors who feel too ashamed to go home. Arrisa, the matriarch of the dominant Mouth of Many Waters boat clan, cares more about keeping the border forts manned and the Linowan presence strong than in giving newcomers easy assignments. The local shaman Elleno Hawkswift, on the other hand, listens to the spirits when guiding new war bands and directs some young warriors to surprising victories.



Shadowholt lies opposite the Black Chase; most Linowan consider it more or less their southern border. Here the Linowan build in brick as much as wood, and the local clay fires to a gray-black hue. Trade with Sijan and other southern cities makes the people prosperous. Shadowholt also forms the jumping-off place for expeditions downriver to the Scavenger Lands and the sea. A bend in the river and a slough leading to a nearby lake supplies excellent harborage, attracting Guild and other ships to the town. Despite Shadowholt's utility, though, the Linowan consider it an unlucky and unhappy city: people go there to seek their fortune, but few stay longer than a few years.

THE LINOWAN PEOPLE

The Linowan are formed by an agreeable environment, by the constant war with Halta and by the stories of their ancestors. They are very much a warrior culture: a typical Linowan finds equal attraction in a day spent quietly fishing on the river or going out on a bloodthirsty raid, and would feel surprised that an outsider could find this peculiar.

LIVELIHOOD

The Linowan see the bounties of nature as gifts from the spirits. These gifts should be appreciated, not forced. To farm the land or keep animals in barns and pens shows distrust and ingratitude to the gods; it suggests that their gifts are insufficient. A Linowan simply gathers what he needs from the forests and rivers, and puts aside a little extra for winter.

Linowan pirates view merchants in much the same way: they are harvested rather than slaughtered—unless they fight back too much, and the warriors get carried away. Either way, the raiders offer due thanks to the gods for their generosity.

The fertile meadowlands along the Silver River provide a diverse and abundant harvest, even though few till the soil or sow the fields. Apple, pear and cherry orchards grow widely. Fields of wild grapes and berries allow the Linowan to produce wines and brandies, so many adults learn to brew and distill, an activity chiefly practiced in winter. Gathering grapes and grains to produce alcohol is one of the few occasions when the Linowan organize themselves to gather crops on a large scale.



Yams, squash and corn form the staples of Linowan diet, along with turnips in the more northern settlements. Buckwheat, barley, amaranth and other grains grow wild as relics of First Age agriculture. The Linowan additionally gather acorns, chestnuts, filberts and other nuts. The Linowan do not plow, but they do scatter seeds and plant nuts from especially tasty trees, vines and other plants, with offerings of fish-guts and other fertilizers to thank the spirits for the superior fare.

Flocks of wild sheep and goats in the north, and deer in the south, provide meat, wool and skins. The Linowan take pride in not domesticating the herd animals, claiming that war and hunting are worthier occupations than farming or herding. As river folk, however, fish is the principal meat in Linowan cuisine. Expeditions sometimes range south to the mighty Yanaze and all the way to the sea to catch whales—not an important part of Linowan diet, but highly prestigious.

In winter, however, when the trees lose their leaves and Golden-Eyed Jorst sleeps in the depths of the forest, the Linowan depend on hunting and what they gathered during the long summer. Northern clans use snowshoes to hunt or travel. Winter fare often consists of dried fish or mixtures of ground meat, fruit, nuts and grains preserved in animal fat and stored in gourds. Especially harsh winters can still result in local famines, though the royal clan tries to organize shipments of food.

About half the Linowan live as partial nomads. Their clans each claim several territories scattered along the Silver River and its tributaries, and cycle between them as the seasons change. These Linowan consider their boats far more important than their longhouses or cabins. Indeed, during the summer they tend to dwell in tents of skin or bark-cloth, which they can quickly and easily dismantle and ship to a new location.

The pines in the northern forests, and oak, beech, willow and other deciduous trees, provide wood for building houses and boats. The Linowan think that some forests are particularly favored by river spirits, and wood from them is believed to produce fortunate boats. There have even been minor clan feuds over these trees.

APPEARANCE AND CLOTHING

The Linowan people have reddish-brown skin and straight black hair with green highlights. They make their clothing from animal skins, bark cloth and wool from wild sheep and goats. While both men and women wear the same simple tunics and trousers, or robes for formal occasions, custom differentiates them by their ornaments: men wear whalebone and mother-of-pearl, with sharks' teeth and scales embroidered onto their

clothing; women bedeck themselves with beads of carved wood, horn and ivory.

Linowan territory holds few deposits of metal or jade (at least, they don't know of any). As a result, the Linowan must import jewelry made from metal or gems, and only the nobles sport such finery. A Linowan commoner who wears metal is viewed as infringing on the privileges of nobility and may well be whipped for the crime. Linowan tolerate foreigners who wear metal ornaments, though they appreciate the courtesy of foreigners who choose not to wear metal.


The Linowan also must import glass beads (chiefly from the Scavenger Lands), but their low price puts them within the reach of most people. The Linowan make ceramic beads themselves. Men and women alike adorn themselves with such beadwork. The Linowan also ornament their clothing by weaving in feathers or dyed porcupine quills, with men and women wearing different designs.

When they go raiding, Linowan warriors adorn their buff jackets with their ornaments and paint their faces in bright colors. Linowan raiders on Haltan territory, however, dress in mottled green and brown and paint their faces to blend in with the Haltan forests. On ceremonial occasions, nobles wear mantles embroidered with the crest of their boat clan. The Queen herself wears a simple crown of carved wood that goes back to the earliest days of Linowan. Legend says the crown came from Jorst's feasting hall, and that Queen Bendaris received it from the god's own hand.

BOAT CLANS AND WAR BANDS

In the Low First Age, the Linowan ancestors grouped together to produce boats for fishing and travel. Whether or not the Shogunate deliberately created a caste of boat-dwellers, the boat clans survived the Great Contagion and now form the basic structure of Linowan society. Lesser boat clans swear allegiance to more powerful ones, in return for support during winter, famine or clan feuds.

Every Linowan belongs to a boat clan. A man who doesn't belong to a boat clan, due to expulsion or the death of the rest of his boat clan, can no longer truly call himself Linowan. In the latter case, another boat clan may adopt him, but he cannot recreate the boat clan to which he used to belong. When a Linowan introduces himself to another Linowan, he gives the name of his boat clan as well as his own name, and the names of any boat clans to whom his boat clan owes allegiance. (Thus: "Thiswi of the Third White River boat clan, sworn to the Upper Rawaqsi boat clan.")



The other main unit in Linowan society is the war band. This forms within a boat clan or across allied boat clans and centers on a particular war leader. A band may vary from half a dozen Linowan adults to thousands of warriors. As with boat clans, lesser war bands can swear fealty to greater bands. This can create awkward situations, if war bands coming from feuding boat clans both swear allegiance to the same warlord. In such cases, custom dictates that the war bands work together in battle and then try to kill each other quietly once the current campaign ends.

Boat clans are matriarchal. Each clan matriarch chooses her successor from among the elder women of the clan. (If a clan matriarch dies without naming a successor, then the leadership passes automatically to the oldest living woman in the clan.) Linowan join a clan by birth or adoption: children born to a woman of the clan automatically belong to that clan but are also formally sworn into the clan when they become legal adults.

Adults may be adopted into a clan at any time, but this requires the permission of the clan matriarch and the clan council of elders. The new clan member must swear loyalty to the clan. Moving between clans becomes much easier with permission from the previous clan. Notorious clan feuds have begun over the “poaching” of particularly skilled or influential clan members, or in cases where Linowan lovers flouted the will of one (or both) of their clans.

The Linowan have no formal marriage. In theory, Linowan can pair off as they wish, though all children belong to the mother’s clan. In practice, unions between clans can become... awkward, if one participant does not join the other’s clan. A woman may declare that a particular man fathered her child (and is usually expected to, if there is a clear physical resemblance), but this does not give the man any rights of paternity. Children belong first and foremost to the clan, not to individual parents. Brothers and sisters who have the same birth mother usually become close, and a mother’s siblings customarily train her children in fighting and other skills.

The clan council of elders consists of the boat clan’s matriarch, the head shaman of the boat clan, any nobles in the boat clan and anyone else the matriarch chooses to name. Matriarchs of lesser boat clans may also be included, though they usually stay busy in their own boat clan’s territory. While a matriarch is expected to listen to and balance the opinions of the clan council, she is not obliged to obey them and ultimately has final authority over the boat clan’s destiny.

If members of a boat clan object to the matriarch’s orders, they can challenge her authority, but cannot replace her. The only formal way to do this (short of a direct order from the Queen) is the traditional duel of judgment. When this happens, the current matriarch and the woman who would take her place both take a dose of divine red mushroom (a hallucinogen with the lethality and other effects of Arrow Frog Venom; see *Exalted*, p. 131). If only one woman survives, the gods clearly ruled in her favor and she becomes the matriarch. If neither survives, then the clan council chooses a new matriarch. If both survive, then the gods want the Queen to decide the matter.

Custom says that war leaders should obey the matriarch of their boat clan. In practice, most matriarchs let war leaders of their clan take their bands raiding where they want. They exercise strict control only over raids into Halta or on boat clans that have frequent contact with their own.

NOBLES AND SLAVES

Linowan nobles achieve their ranks through feats of valor or exceptional prowess. The Queen typically awards noble status to warriors who return from the Haltan forests with redwood logs or living captives, but Linowan also win noble rank for being exceptional shamans, healers, storytellers, artisans or just being widely admired. All nobles receive gold or silver pendants, lip plugs or ear spools from the Queen to indicate their status. In addition, nobles often receive special wooden masks that shamans imbued with spiritual powers.

The Queen has the right to choose *not* to ennoble a candidate. She might do so as a political move against the candidate’s boat clan or as a mark of personal disapproval. This can result in political discontent and inter-clan feuds. In one notorious occasion 150 years ago, Queen Onkara refused to ennoble the famous warrior Gunoshe after he returned with five redwood logs and a dozen prisoners. Gunoshe came down with Hal fever a month later and was killed while attempting to escape to Halta. Accounts vary on whether the Queen did right in refusing to ennoble him, seeing his coming infection, or whether her refusal actively left him open to the infection. Gunoshe’s boat clan, the White Bend River clan, still holds a grudge against the royal clan.

In Linowan, only nobles can own slaves, and they only keep those slaves they capture in battle. These unfortunates have no legal rights and usually spend the rest of their lives in menial labor. In a few cases, a slave distinguishes himself through some act of courage and



is freed as a reward and adopted into a boat clan. More often, though, a slave who seems surly, rebellious or otherwise “uppity” may be lamed in one leg to prevent him from running for freedom.

THE ROYAL CLAN

The ruler of Linowan is either the matriarch of the royal clan or her chosen successor; an aging queen may abdicate and pass rule on to the clan daughter of her choice, remaining as the new queen’s advisor. It is of course a high honor for a woman or man to be adopted into the royal clan: this is one of the few cases where a clan willingly allows a member to leave and even celebrates it. All members of the royal clan are automatically nobles.

Children born into the royal clan experience heavy pressure to prove themselves worthy of their place in the clan. Many of them die on heroic raids into Halta, trying to prove their courage. Some lead colonizing parties to the north or south and establish new boat clans.


The royal clan owns a large number of boats of high quality: Queen Arkasi herself owns a magic canoe over 20 yards long, built of whalebone and kraken hide. Occasionally, one of the royal clan’s boats is ceremonially presented to a lesser boat clan as a token of respect. For

the Queen to give an old or damaged boat is a profound insult to the boat clan in question and carries the weight of a royal reproof.

CHILDREN AND ELDERS

Linowan children are indulged, petted and cared for; they are looked after by adults with time to spare, given food at any hearth in the boat clan, trained by any adult who feels like sharing his experience and praised when they play at hunting and gathering. As they grow older, though, adult protection becomes deliberately stifling: children may not travel more than a day’s journey from their boat clan, and most importantly, they cannot own their own boats or weapons (belt-knives excepted). If the grownups catch adolescents trying to make boats or weapons, they beat the children and burn the items. Most Linowan adolescents soon become desperate to be treated as adults.

Maturity, in Linowan society, comes somewhere in the teens. The informal test for adulthood is for a young Linowan to travel, alone or with fellow adolescents, to another boat clan’s settlement and back again. They can journey by land or water (though most go by water) and can take as much equipment as they wish, but they must make the journey without grownup assistance.



When they return, their boat clan accepts them as adults. The youngsters usually travel to a friendly boat clan. However, some young would-be warriors travel to an enemy boat clan and bring back some sort of trophy. Grownups discourage younger children from attempting such trips; perhaps a tenth of those who attempt the journey die in the attempt or are crippled for life.

When boat clans feud, they usually leave the children unmolested (though children may be caught in general disasters, such as being trapped in a burning building or a sinking boat). If one boat clan completely destroys a settlement, though, it forcibly adopts the children. On rare but memorable occasions, one boat clan raids another specifically to kidnap children, whether for forcible adoption (if disease or other mischance left the clan short of offspring) or as slaves (as a supreme gesture of dominance and malice). Child stealing drives a feud to a higher level of enmity, though, which forbids any possible peace between clan members, under any circumstances whatsoever.

Elders are respected by Linowan and cared for by their boat clan. Considering the dangers and challenges of Linowan life, they've earned it. Some live out their days as advisors and artisans, while others choose to make one last journey across Linowan, expecting to meet their death while on their travels. Such elders are said to have "gone to Jorst's Hall."

GENDER IN LINOWAN SOCIETY

While Linowan society is fundamentally matriarchal, ruled by a queen and with matriarchs in command of the boat clans, the genders are treated equally on the day-to-day level. Both men and women become warriors, sailors, gatherers, storytellers, artisans or shamans. The only fundamental rule is that pregnant women cannot go to war or raid. The matriarchal sys-

tem began because pregnant or nursing women were left behind to guard and run the settlements while the men and the other women went out raiding or sailing; and so, it became custom for women to rule the boat clans. Even today, it is rare to have a matriarch who has never born children.

Linowan's association with the Realm strengthened this attitude. Even the smallest and most remote Linowan settlement knows the Scarlet Empress as a legendary figure. Some Linowan sacrifice to her as the Queen Who Lives Forever.

The farthest-traveling war leaders are mostly men, since they are not restrained by the hindrances of pregnancy or babies. Their war bands are largely male for the same reason. Auxiliaries sent to the Realm may be either male or female, as may regular warriors on the Linowan borders.

Linowan make no particular distinction between male and female visitors, but do react strongly to pregnant women who travel. The Linowan consider this highly improper behavior, unless the woman has truly vital reasons to make such a journey. Under these circumstances, most Linowan offer lodging to the pregnant woman until she gives birth; this goes beyond the customary three days for hosting guests.

SACRED HOSPITALITY

The Linowan treat new visitors with trust, respect and easy-going acceptance. Just as Golden-Eyed Jorst opens his house to all guests, so a Linowan adult should prepare to receive anyone who comes under her roof, whether the guest is a personal friend, a personal enemy or red-handed with the host's own sister's blood. The guest must be honorably greeted, given food to eat and water for washing, and allowed a place to sleep. For three days and nights, the host must protect the guest at the risk of her own life, must rebuke any insults from others to her guest and must give the guest any necessary medical attention.

Naturally, the Linowan have ways around this tradition, long-celebrated in legend and history. Any adult Linowan knows tales about ways that guests abused hospitality, and ways that clever hosts countered the abuse. While the guest must receive food and water, this can be bread crusts and dish water. While the guest must have a place to sleep, this can be a patch of floor in the woodshed or the bottom of a canoe, in mosquito season. And while the host must protect the guest for three days, she can inform the guest's enemies of the guest's presence and allow them to wait outside her home for the guest to leave. It is acceptable for a host to shelter

LINOWAN RECORDS

Linowan keep very few written records, preferring to remember the lore-songs and teaching myths instead. Most Linowan have a good memory, and shamans have near-perfect recall. Elders of the boat clans write down such things as financial records, tribute from other boat clans, numbers of men sent off as auxiliaries to the Realm and so on, but all the truly *important* things are remembered and passed orally from generation to generation. Children learn their people's traditions and lore through songs and poems, stories and proverbs.



a guest who broke Linowan law if the host can prove that she does so *purely* because of guest-right.

Also, if the guest formally rejects the host's hospitality, then he cedes all further rights and protection, freeing the host to act as she wishes. Any sort of complaint by the guest can constitute a rejection of hospitality—even something so small as saying that he dislikes his meal or his host's taste in music.

One famous Linowan story tells how the war leader Sinsar sought refuge at the house of his sworn enemy, Avathris. Avathris accepted Sinsar as a guest but then seated him among his own slaves for the meal and offered him a dinner of Haltan food and wine. This so enraged Sinsar that he insulted Avathris, thus forfeiting his protection. The two dueled: Avathris won and burned Sinsar alive on a pile of Haltan redwood logs.

LAW AND ORDER

The Linowan have no written statutes. Their laws come from custom and tradition. Local law is upheld by the boat clan in whose territory the crime or dispute takes place, with the nearest noble acting as judge. If another noble disagrees about how to handle the matter, then the dispute goes to the matriarch of the local boat clan, or to multiple matriarchs if the nobles come from different boat clans. Ideally, by Linowan tradition, the noble takes statements from all involved, and acts on the advice of local elders when giving judgment. In practice, a noble almost always rules in favor of his own boat clan, if that is one of the issues; otherwise, traditions of appropriate vengeance always receive a favorable hearing.

Linowan often seek a sort of "posthumous justice," where two boat clans come to a noble to settle a feud *after* multiple killings took place and everyone who was originally involved is dead. The noble frequently orders both boat clans to adopt members from the other clan and to exchange boat-making materials or even completed boats. Another option is to send all major participants in the feud on near-suicidal missions into Halta as a combined war party; survivors from such missions are sometimes adopted into the royal clan or ennobled themselves.

Crimes of assault between boat clans committed *before* the start of a clan feud receive harsh punishment, especially if the boat clans are currently on good terms. Punishments may include public beatings, the loss of a hand or arm, or even execution. However, assaults or murders committed *after* a clan feud begins are regarded as merely part of the ongoing dispute. Although they might worsen the clan feud, Linowan treat them as acts of war rather than individual crimes.

Despite the hospitality shown to well-mannered and honest visitors, offenses committed by travelers result in public whipping followed by exile. Linowan brand such exiles on the face to prevent their return. Occasionally, in cases where a noble felt the criminal particularly offended the traditions of guest-right and host-protection, the clan "exiles" a criminal from a boat by dropping him directly into the river.

Linowan assume that anyone from outside the boat clan who commits serious crimes (such as rape or murder) must be a Haltan spy. Those found guilty of such crimes die as Haltan prisoners do: by fire after the appropriate celebrations. Linowan reserve similar treatment for anyone known to aid the Haltans, with one addition: a Linowan found guilty of aiding Halta is tortured during the celebration, with every celebrant having the right to do as he wishes to the traitor. The only limit is that the traitor must stay alive for his execution pyre.

TRADE AND COMMERCE

Trade inside Linowan usually consists of barter, except for truly rare items or in the larger towns. In the smaller communities, the local hunters and gatherers trade bundles of furs and rare herbs for metal spear points and tools. The Linowan greet trading caravans from the Guild with great enthusiasm, but they value the stories that the merchants tell as much as their wares.

Linowan sea raiding and loot brought back by Realm auxiliaries result in unusual items entering the Linowan economy: silks, jewelry, rare foods, unusual weapons, books (unread) and so on. Such treasures—of no practical use, but valued as curiosities and tokens of great adventures—seldom become items of trade. Instead, leading Linowan give them as gifts to show the wealth and heroism of their boat clan or war band, or to show respect to a host. These items are more common in the major towns than in the outlying settlements. They are rare enough in outlying boat clans that guest gifts of such items (not strictly necessary, but a polite token of esteem) are enough to gain respect and goodwill.

WAR AND RAIDING

Raiding is simply part of Linowan life. Quite often, there is no personal malice involved (unless it's done against Haltans or as part of a clan feud): it's just one of those things that people naturally do to each other. Linowan warriors often take valor-names that memorialize some particularly notorious deed or habit. It's a snub not to use a warrior's valor-name when speaking to or about him. Casual dueling also happens



THE GUILD

The Guild views Linowan as a land of opportunity—*wasted* opportunity. The Linowan don't cultivate their fertile land. They don't sell the slaves that they take in raids. They don't channel the truly exotic trade items from Halta that can fetch fortunes elsewhere in Creation. They don't squander their wealth buying the Guild's drugs. Instead, the Linowan people sit around telling stories and carving masks (*magic* masks that they don't sell!), hunting and gathering, and fighting their eternal war with a country that offers some of the most exciting trade goods in Creation. And then the Linowan don't even have the decency to hire mercenaries.

The Guild cannot allow this state of affairs to continue. A number of Guild factors hope the current unsettled conditions will finally give them a chance to persuade the Linowan to do business. This is a time to import new weapons, to offer mercenaries for hire, to sell combat and leisure drugs, to persuade Linowan raiding parties to take more slaves and sell them to the Guild, and generally to get a hold on the Linowan economy.

Unfortunately for the Guild, the Realm ensured that the Linowan royal clan knows all about Guild tactics. So far, the Linowan resist importing mercenaries (pay someone to take your own clan's chance for glory?), remain purist on the subject of slaves (they are restricted to nobility as a sign of each noble's prowess in enslaving them) and block any large imports of drugs (leave the mind-altering substances to the shaman professionals). The Guild steps up its scheming, though, and looks for the proper lever—or the proper person—who can give it access to the Linowan economy.

frequently among Linowan, though rarely to the death (on purpose). Every warrior engages in some sort of raid at least once a year.

Winter is a time of peace for the Linowan: storms from the North force clans to remain inside their longhouses. Being homebound does not make Linowan less aggressive. They fight like cornered wolverines if anyone attacks their homes during the winter. Some of the greatest Linowan strategists launched unexpected raids during the winter months, bringing back captives and redwood trees from Halta.

Linowan frequently raid other boat clans because of old vendettas, recent insults or practical disputes such as rights to a particular berry patch or fishing spot. Mild insults or disputes result in semi-playful attempts to make off with some of the boat clan's goods, with minor injuries to defenders. Even when a boat clan stays on good terms with all its neighbors, it indulges in occasional mild raiding as a form of one-upsmanship. However, vendettas can escalate all the way up to full attempts to seize the other boat clan's territory and resources, wipe out their adults and adopt their children. Raiders may invite foreign guests to join them on the more forceful raids, but not the more light-hearted ones, due to the risk of them causing serious injuries and the violence of the raid escalating in response.

To the northwest and southeast, war bands raid for pride and trophies (including slaves). A war band usually seeks the cooperation of a boat clan living near the point where they leave accepted Linowan territory; this involves promises to share any loot. The war band travels by river as far as possible, and the raiders hardly ever go more than a few days' journey overland.

Linowan boat clans typically have treaties with their settled neighbors not to raid them, but now and then, a war band from further away passes through to do some looting. The other cultures in Linowan territory learned not to treat these raids as general declarations of war. (The people who didn't learn this are now all dead or forced away.) More often, raiders head out to attack people whom they do not encounter regularly. Rarely do Linowan try to conquer the folk they attack or exterminate them outright. Towns or fortified communities often force war bands to retreat. The raiders always come back, though, the next year or the year after that, until some boat clan moves into the area and either sets up a treaty or the fighting escalates into a vendetta that attracts glory-seeking war bands from throughout the territory. Few besides the Haltans ever lasted long against intensive Linowan attack.

Linowan also raid passing ships that look like easy prey. Particularly adventuresome war bands sometimes take their war canoes all the way to the Inland Sea and raid along the coast. Only well-armed ships could dare sail the length of the Silver River. Vessels that trade regularly and deal fairly with the Linowan, however, receive specially woven flags bearing symbols of allied boat clans to fly when they sail in Linowan waters. These ships are not attacked... unless they encounter a boat clan that's in a serious feud with a clan that supplied a flag. Entrepreneurs in neighboring countries sell duplicate flags—but crews who cannot answer Linowan



LINOWAN BOATS

Linowan boats are canoes carved from hollowed-out tree-trunks or coracles made from wood, bark and leather. Large dugouts, up to 40 yards long, may carry sails and outriggers. Such dugouts can carry a war band of 50 to 70 warriors. For inland travel on lakes and rivers, the Linowan use smaller canoes that carry one to six people. (See the Average Travel Times table on p. 264 of *Exalted*.) The Linowan show no particular interest in upgrading their boats. Although they can learn to use higher sailing technology, they don't need it for their customary river travel.

questions about where they got their flag are captured and sacrificed as allies of the Haltans.

THE HALTAN BORDER

In the Northeast, Linowan war bands raid into Halta to take prisoners and cut down the redwood trees. The Haltan border with Linowan stretches 1,600 miles, in a broad arc that cuts across all the rivers that join at Lake Sanazala. The Linowan build fortresses every 25 miles or so along their side of it, well out of the trees and with good visibility in all directions, so that the Haltans cannot approach from above. (They shoot any birds that hover more than a few minutes over a fortress.) These fortresses are single-story buildings of adobe and wood, surrounded by a log palisade. They are designed for quick construction and as a base from which to strike rather than as serious defenses. In the event of a Haltan attack on a fortress, the Linowan warriors fall back and rouse the interior of their country, while simultaneously lighting beacon-fires to signal the forts on either side.

Each fort can shelter up to 500 tightly-packed people at a time. The royal clan sends regular food convoys up the rivers, though these do not suffice to sustain the garrisons: Linowan warriors staffing the fort bring supplies of their own, hunt, fish and gather in the vicinity. Some forts are staffed by the nearest boat clan as a regular duty. Warriors hoping to stage a raid or simply wanting to serve on the border man others. War bands that hope to gain experience typically man a fort for a few months, then journey along to the next fort along the border, and continue doing so until they find a battle or mount a raid that brings them sufficient glory. War bands traveling along the

border from fort to fort also transport food, personal messages and news. If the fort has no room for them inside, they pitch tents outside it.

Linowan warriors making raids into Halta usually start out from a fort and shelter at one when they retreat from Halta. Raids meant simply to inflict damage, take prisoners or cut down redwood trees are comparatively simple operations, completed in days. Any trees are tied together and floated downriver (this necessarily requires a fort located within reasonable distance of a river). Professional raids by established war bands, intended to sabotage important Haltan locations, assassinate individuals or plant spies, are often conducted in tandem with an obvious raiding operation by novices, to divert Haltan attention.

By now, the Linowan know many of the common Haltan tactics. They expect Fair Folk interference and carry at least a few iron weapons. Any animal may be an intelligent spy. The deep woods can't be trusted. When the Linowan try to advance the border by cutting down the trees on the edge of the woods and building the forts closer in, they cut down, kill and burn everything, until nothing is left but scorched earth.

The Linowan salvaged few First Age weapons from their territory, and use them only in major pushes to destroy Haltan forest. As superior carpenters, however, they build a variety of catapults powered by muscle, counterweights or skeins of twisted sinew ropes. Mature Haltan redwoods resist fire, but when the forests dry out in late summer, the Linowan assemble trebuchets to bombard suspected Haltan forts with burning hay-bales soaked in pitch. Even if they have little chance of burning a Haltan border fort, raiders can use a forest fire as a diversion to slip into Haltan territory.

BATTLE PLANS

Linowan raiders usually follow two basic battle plans. In the first, they charge toward their enemies, shrieking and whooping like demons, and attack the first enemy they encounter. In the second, the warriors *sneak* toward the enemy, possibly under cover of darkness, until they are poised to strike from surprise. Then they leap out, shrieking and whooping like demons. The warriors retreat just as quickly after making a few kills or capturing a prisoner. Each attack likely inflicts little damage—but the war bands may attack over and over again if they intend a real battle and not just a raid.

The Linowan do not esteem the art of generalship. Few of them have a taste or talent for grand strategy. Only on the Haltan border do they fight to control territory, build fortresses or employ any sort of artillery.





Charismatic and successful war leaders can persuade their allied bands to follow simple strategies, but Linowan don't like being left as reserves or being stationed outside a battle to prevent an enemy's movements. Linowan warriors want to get in the fight *now*.

In small-group tactics, however, the Linowan excel. Flanking maneuvers, skirmishing and feints are Linowan stock in trade. (Their Drill is often quite high.) An experienced war band can seem like a hive-mind as warriors dash in and out, pop up from ambush and disappear again, driving their enemies this way and that. A life of hunting and raiding also means that Linowan often surpass their enemies in raw combat prowess.


The Realm values Linowan warriors as scouts and, of course, raiders. They are some of the best scouts the Realm has available without recruiting Essence users. Linowan are especially good at skulking through woodlands and paddling canoes along streams that would seem too shallow to float a stick. Linowan scouts also make excellent advisors when a legion must forage in the wilderness. If a legion needs a small, highly mobile force to attack as a feint or for a commando raid, Linowan auxiliaries perform admirably.

Despite centuries of exposure to large-scale warfare through service as Realm auxiliaries, Linowan tactics will probably never change... unless some nationwide military disaster, or several, forces them to do so. The Bull of the North handed the Linowan one crushing defeat already. A second could force the Queen and the nobles to attempt new strategies... if the Bull gives them time to develop them.

THEOLOGY AND CUSTOM

Despite centuries of contact with the Realm, the Immaculate Order makes little headway in Linowan. The people prefer to worship the gods who deal directly with their lives and interests. Most worship happens casually, with small gestures to honor a god or ask her favor. In winter, when food becomes scarce, worship grows more fervent, and a whole boat clan may gather for special prayers.

Golden-Eyed Jorst is the god of the deciduous forests and meadows that fill Linowan territory. He sleeps all winter but travels his forests in the summer, disguised as a mortal traveler, or hosts an endless party in his mansion in the deepest woods. Various wood elementals, forest spirits and animal deities serve Jorst, but he makes few demands of them.



The Linowan claim Jorst as their special patron, their Lord of War and Stories. In Jorst's honor, storytellers throw a pinch of dust into the fire before beginning their tales: Linowan tradition holds that Jorst inspires them and that he was the First Teller of Tales at his great summer feasts. Raiders cut down redwood trees in Jorst's name. Shamans throw Haltan prisoners into bonfires while they proclaim that some day, Jorst's trees and lands will cover the entire East.

Linowan worship other gods for their aid in fishing, piracy, hunting and craftsmanship. Sudale of the Flowing Grasp, goddess of the Silver River, naturally receives a great deal of worship. Linowan legend calls her Jorst's lover (though there is actually no special relationship between them). Linowan pour a splash of wine into the river before starting a journey, offering Sudale a drink in hopes of a safe passage. In return, Sudale warns nearby boat clans if any Haltan boat manages to pass Lake Sanazala. Many Linowan call the Silver River by the goddess' name instead.

Grala of the Endless Hunt receives sacrifices, even though she is sister to Caltia, the patron goddess of Halta. All hunters offer Grala a portion of their kill. The Linowan also honor the Five Maidens and the Unconquered Sun. Linowan raiders and sailors pray for Mercury to bless their travels, Golden-Eyed Jorst to bless their weapons, the local spirits of the waters to safeguard their boats and the Unconquered Sun to give them victory.

No specific deity guides the Linowan when they go to sea as pirates or whalers. Certain sea deities (in particular Kireeki, Huntress of the Waves) would like to procure Linowan worship, but for the moment, the Linowan remain faithful to the gods of their homeland.

Any Linowan can pray to the Unconquered Sun or the Maidens, appeal to Jorst and attend his feasts, or make casual offerings to small gods and local spirits. Shamans, however, handle all *serious* interaction between Linowan and the spiritual world. Linowan don't consider it immoral for people to make their own appeals to gods and spirits. They just view it as sensible that, when asking major favors from gods, it's best to leave it to the professionals.

VATA

Vata is the one spirit in the accepted Linowan pantheon that is universally shunned and hated. She is the cannibal spirit, the Hungerer who feeds only on human flesh. Linowan legend says that she began as one of the hounds of Grala, but that she betrayed her mistress and bit Grala's hand before fleeing. That taste of blood gave her divine powers and enabled her to take

on a human form, but also gave her an uncontrollable hunger for human flesh. Vata tears apart any prey that she encounters, but only human flesh truly satisfies her. She brings madness to those who loiter in Wyld areas or around the Fair Folk. Vata currently seeks to learn more about the Abyssals: she hears they have a gospel of death and bloodshed, and she wants to know more.

LINOWAN SHAMANS

Shamans receive great respect in Linowan society. They are arbiters of custom, interpreters for the gods and spirits, and exorcists of Vatal madness and Hal fever. Shamans visit the spirits in their homes and make bargains to gain favors for the Linowan. They dedicate Haltan captives as burned offerings to Jorst. Everyone admires the shamans. Still, very few Linowan want their own children to be shamans.

Shamans select their own apprentices. They watch the children of their boat clan, seeking those who seem drawn to the spirits and the supernatural, or those who show an aptitude for the lore-songs and teaching myths. Young shamans often travel between boat clans to study with shamans who have greater experience with particular skills. Whether or not the older shaman chooses to teach them can depend on the relationship between their boat clans or the will of the spirits.

Linowan tradition gives a shaman no formal initiation or test. However, shamans exist in a culture of respect, both from their own boat clan and from each other. Shamans honor colleagues whom the spirits themselves respect (whether they are liked or feared). All shamans have an honor-name that follows their given name; this usually relates to their early work as a shaman or to some especially notable feat of spirit negotiation.

Linowan shamans typically work with elementals, with animal, bird and fish spirits, or with the small gods of the forests and meadows. They do not try to contact their clan ancestors, as Linowan believe their dead go on to a better life and would not want to be called back from it. In the event of serious troubles with ghosts or creatures from the Underworld, Linowan shamans contact Sijan for assistance.

A Linowan shaman character typically has the traits of a thaumaturge (see **Exalted**, pp. 280-281), with dots in Medicine, Lore, Occult, Survival, Performance and Presence. Many have a friendly spirit as a mentor or ally, but Linowan shamans do not have familiars: associations with sentient or semi-sentient animals comes too close to Haltan behavior. Common shamanic skills include training in the Arts of Alchemy (chiefly medical), Elemental Summoning, Enchantment (used to create the famous





Linowan masks), Husbandry, Spirit Beckoning, Warding and Exorcism, and Weather Working (all described in **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. III—Oadenol's Codex**, pp. 129-144.) They do not study the Art of the Dead. The Art of Demon Summoning is virtually unknown in Linowan (though most Linowan shamans believe the Haltans do it all the time) and punished by death.

HALTAN ANIMALS

The Linowan recognize and resent the way in which the intelligent animals and the half-men of Halta (as they refer to beastmen) fight against them. Over centuries, the Linowan response has hardened from simple dislike of Halta's sapient *ata-beasts* to outright loathing of the creatures. Linowan consider them abominations against the natural order. Many Linowan believe Haltan *ata-beasts* truly don't *want* the burdens of human intelligence and social duties, and would rather live in their natural roles as simple animals. Such profane and unnatural creatures as snakemen or hawkmen should never have been born. Their very existence insults the gods, and the fact that they act as Haltan priests merely proves the utter debasement of Haltan society.

Linowan have no objection to normal animals. They keep pets, train hunting animals and worship the guardian spirits and avatars of those creatures. However, they watch constantly for signs of unusual intelligence or other abominations. Linowan elders memorize long lists of signs that an animal is not natural. They regularly check local domestic creatures, along with prey captured by the hunters. If an animal shows signs of unnatural understanding or quickness of thought, shamans sacrifice it to the guardian spirits of the community. This behavior becomes particularly common after local cases of Hal fever. Some hunters with exceptionally well-trained hunting dogs or hawks keep them away from Linowan communities because of the risk that their beasts will be detained or destroyed.

Visitors who have intelligent animal pets or companions can expect great suspicion. Any odd behavior on the part of the animals risks the arrest of both person and beast as possible Haltan spies. Under such circumstances, the human master may be let off with a fine, but the Linowan may execute the animal as a precaution. Anyone who tries to bring the half-intelligent *san-beasts* from Halta should avoid Linowan, as their stock would be executed on the spot—and the trader killed as a spy.

The animal gods and spirits themselves have no quarrel with the Linowan, as the Linowan pay them proper honor and give them frequent worship.

LINOWAN MASKS

The magical masks made by Linowan shamans are specially crafted to assist in the performance of a specific task. The wearer gains one bonus die in a specific Ability so long as she wears the mask. This bonus can raise an Ability above 5, but it does not count toward the limits for increasing dice pools by Charms.

A Linowan mask must be crafted for a given individual, who must participate in the mask's creation. It is useless for anyone other than the intended wearer. (However, a sorcerer could use a mask as an arcane link for other spells.) No character can attune to more than one mask at a time, though some exceptional individuals change careers and own several masks over their lifetimes.

Linowan masks are one-dot artifacts. A player whose character possesses such a mask as part of her background should discuss with the Storyteller what specific deed of valor or feat of skill earned the character the right to own this mask.

Creating a Linowan mask requires a month of work from both characters involved (shaman and owner), and the shaman must have a Craft (Wood) rating of •••• or higher, and Lore and Occult scores of at least •• each. An individual cannot make a mask for herself: creating one is a two-person task. The making of these masks is a closely guarded secret of the Linowan people, taught only to elder shamans. Owning such a mask gives the character an automatic dot of Influence toward Linowan but also causes distrust from Haltans.

LINOWAN MADNESS

Two odd forms of madness occasionally afflict Linowan. They regard both insanities as spiritual contagions.

Linowan who spend too much time in Wyld areas (or in other places frequented by Fair Folk or dangerous spirits) sometimes become Vatal—possessed by Vata, the cannibal spirit. Vata's flee normal society and live solitary lives in rude huts in the forest. Their teeth and nails grow into deadly fangs and claws, and they crave the taste of human flesh. A Vatal relentlessly pursues anyone who comes near its dwelling. (Yes, *it*: the Linowan regard Vata's as no longer human enough to merit a gender.) Only large numbers or the close

proximity of a village or town can dissuade the Vatal from attacking. Vatal usually act as solitary predators. When the local raksha wish to play at hunting humans through the forest, however, they often gather a few dozen Vatal to chase and corner their prey.

Some highly skilled Linowan warriors specialize in hunting Vatal. These heroes wear grisly necklaces of Vatal claws. Any warriors who survive their first hunt and return with a trophy become nobles. Lesser warriors and general war bands are discouraged from hunting Vatal, though, since it means entering Vatal lairs: the Linowan believe that only the most highly spirited of warriors can resist the Vatal contagion, and anyone else risks becoming infected and turning Vatal himself. Once in a while, a Vatal takes captives rather than killing them on the spot, cages them and feeds them on human flesh to encourage them to join the Vatal. Even if the captive does not become Vatal, he often swiftly goes insane.

On rare occasions, Hal fever afflicts Linowan who live too near the redwood forest or who visit it frequently. Victims become drawn to the great trees. They lose touch with the people around them and yearn to venture deeper into the East. Over time, their hair turns a deep green. Linowan shamans can sometimes banish this affliction, but in many cases, an infected individual either flees to the Haltans or is killed by her relatives.

Linowan afflicted by Hal fever sometimes channel this fascination with the forest into an obsession with conquering it, to the point that they violently resist all efforts to keep them from raiding into Halta over and over again. Though their fellows praise them for their bravery, all know that warriors in the grip of Hal fever soon fall prey to the Haltan warriors or the Fair Folk who haunt the woodlands.

Hal fever is feared even more than becoming Vatal, since it not only alters and perverts the body and soul, but it drives the Linowan afflicted with it into the arms of the Haltans. To a Linowan, it is *worse* to become a Haltan than it is to become an insane cannibal slave of the Fair Folk.

VATAL, A SUPERNATURAL DISEASE

Virulence: 1 (3) **Diagnosis:** 2

Incubation: (Willpower) days **Difficulty to Treat (Mundane/Magical):** 4/2

Untreated Morbidity: 4 **Treated Morbidity:** 2

Symptoms: Vatal's early symptoms are entirely mental, which can make it difficult to diagnose. The shamans try to convince warriors that there's no shame in regular checkups and that it's better to be safe than sorry, but



some fear seeming weak or hypochondriac... and so, they don't see a shaman in time.

Duration: Vatal's long incubation period makes it difficult to identify locations where people caught the disease. The incubation time equals the time it takes from the first cannibalistic urge to physical transformation and overwhelming compulsion (and the Morbidity check). Once a person succumbs to Vatal, the disease is generally incurable.

Vector: People become Vatal by spending time in areas tainted by the Wyld, the Fair Folk, spirits tainted by those forces or people who are already Vatal. It occurs from Linowan and northward, and is greatly feared by barbarian tribes of the Northeast. Halta, though, seems immune. Consuming human flesh, however reluctantly or unwittingly, increases the disease's virulence.

Treatment: Mundane treatment involves prayer, purgatives and a primitive form of aversion therapy (inducing vomiting any time the patient has cannibalistic thoughts). Magical treatment involves alchemical drugs or exorcistic rites—both are thaumaturgical Procedures and are well known to Linowan shamans.

HAL FEVER, A SUPERNATURAL DISEASE

Virulence: 1 **Diagnosis:** 2


Incubation: (Stamina + Integrity) weeks **Difficulty to Treat (Mundane/Magical):** none/3

Untreated Morbidity: 4 (special)

Treated Morbidity: 3

Symptoms: Hal fever is another of Caltia's tools to defeat her rival Jorst. It only affects the Linowan. After a mild fever, the victim's hair turns as green as a Haltan's. He rapidly comes either to love or become

Vatal



completely obsessed with the Haltan redwood forests. In RY 417, one of Caltia's God-Blooded daughters went to Yu-Shan and successfully petitioned both a goddess of madness and a god of disease to create this new illness and inflict it on the Linowan.

Duration: Hal fever lasts between three and seven days. Afterward, the victim recovers. The disease itself is never fatal. Instead of death, "morbidity" indicates a transformation of the person's mind that is permanent and irrevocable without the use of Celestial or Solar Circle Sorcery or Charms that cure mental illness. The victim flees into the Haltan forest and forever more regards it as his beloved home.

After making certain they are not imposters with dyed hair, the Haltan government allows victims of Hal fever to become citizens. However, all are sent at least 400 miles from the Linowan border. Hal fever claims less than 100 victims a year (and fewer survive to reach Halta), but its presence demoralizes the Linowan. Also, the majority of Linowan who catch it are raiders and border guards, and so, this disease provides the Haltan military with much useful intelligence about Linowan forces. Anyone without Linowan ancestry is immune.

Vector: The disease spirits who carry Hal fever only live in redwood forests and only attack Linowan (or people they think are Linowan). Only Linowan who spend a great deal of time raiding into Halta stand much chance of contracting the disease.

Treatment: The mundane treatment for Hal fever depends entirely on the victim. With a successful Willpower roll (difficulty 4), the victim can divert his growing love for the forest into an obsessive hatred. Magical treatment is an exorcism known to Linowan shamans.

LOCAL POWERS

The greatest power in Linowan is currently its monarch, Queen Arkasi. This has not always been the case; often the queen is a figurehead of the royal clan, selected by the previous matriarch as a compromise candidate with the knowledge that she must act on advice from clan elders. Queen Arkasi, however, is a dynamic individual who seeks the best way to use the current situation for Linowan's advantage.

QUEEN ARKASI

Linowan's current monarch was selected early by her aunt Renenth, the previous queen, and trained from childhood together with a couple of other candidates. At the time, Renenth herself was a figurehead queen, but a good teacher: Arkasi became queen 10 years ago. The two other women both hold high-ranking positions as well, with Sinnethi becoming the Linowan Ambassador

to the Realm (and currently residing on the Blessed Isle), while Suwith became Minister for Trade. Renenth still lives as a respected advisor to Arkasi, as well as tutor in matters of state to many of the royal clan's children.

Arkasi is a middle-aged woman with luxuriant hair and with facial scars that she is too proud to have healed—legacies of previous raids that she led against the Haltans in her youth. As a person, Arkasi is an intelligent and cosmopolitan woman (far more than foreign ambassadors expect from the leader of a tribal culture). She has half a dozen regular lovers among the royal clan. While Arkasi holds daily audiences as a matter of state, she also hosts private meetings in one of the clan's smaller boathouses, where she can consult with clan elders or secret emissaries.

The recent war involving the Bull of the North blunted Arkasi's aggression against the Haltans. She does not know how much she can depend on the Realm for support, and she fears that factions among the Great Houses may blame Linowan for the destruction of the Tepet legions. For once, she concludes, the Linowan must think of defense instead of counterattack.

GRADESSI WHITEFOOT

The most potent shaman in all Linowan gets his name from his right foot, which is bleached white from toe to ankle. Haltan tree spiders attacked him while he was in a trance to negotiate with spirits, and they drank all the blood from his foot before he could escape. Gradessi is in his 70s, but still healthy enough to take his place at the oar in a Linowan canoe. He frequently insists on doing so, even though it makes everyone else in the boat uncomfortable to see a shaman doing such ordinary work. With every second sentence, Gradessi emphasizes his humility before the spirits, saying how much he is a mere intermediary for their great powers. Simultaneously, he expects instant obedience from any mortals in the area and treats Linowan nobles as though they were mere children. He treats the Queen herself as a self-indulgent teenager. Gradessi prefers to ignore foreign dignitaries.

Gradessi is skilled and powerful enough that the Linowan not only tolerate his arrogant humility, but also prize him as a treasure of the nation. His mask-making is unmatched in three centuries, his lore is vast, and the spirits flock around him in respect and awe. During the recent war, Gradessi recruited many spirits to help defend the eastern borders, freeing soldiers to fight in the south. He supports coming to terms with the Bull of the North, who is clearly blessed by the Unconquered Sun, but can offer no helpful advice as to how to do so or how to reconcile Linowan with the Bull's ties to Halta.

BASHATHRI HEART-OF-VIRTUE

Mere mortals prefer to deal with Gradessi's assistant, Bashathri Heart-of-Virtue. She is quite a powerful shaman in her own right but constantly must put aside her own meditations and studies to assist Gradessi in spirit dealings, handle mundane business for him and generally run his errands. This is slowly driving her mad with frustration. Bashathri is known for refusing all bribes. This actually means that nobody has yet found a bribe that would actually work. She would do almost anything, except betray Linowan, in exchange for training in demon summoning. It's not that she likes demons, or even thinks they'd be useful. It's just that she thinks being the first Linowan shaman to do *something* would move her out of Gradessi's shadow. The Realm Ambassador knows this ambition and tempts Bashathri with promises of tuition from Heptagram graduates in exchange for influence with Gradessi.

VIRITHAN SPLITS-THE-DOOR

The war leader of the royal clan (and by extension the war leader of all Linowan) is handsome, strong and incredibly skilled at every aspect of Linowan warfare. He only stepped into his current position in RY 765, with the death of the previous royal war leader, Asketet Light-in-Darkness. (The public story of Asketet's death


is that he fell heroically on a raid into Haltan territory. Actually, he contracted Hal fever and led a suicidal raid that the Haltans wiped out to the last man.) Virithan still doesn't command the same authority or respect as Asketet. He knows it, the other war leaders know it, and the rest of the royal clan knows it.

Virithan needs an occasion to prove he is worthy of his post. However, with Linowan currently on the defensive on the Queen's orders, he has no chance to do so. Virithan currently seeks a war or raiding expedition that is large enough and glorious enough for him to prove himself, but small enough that it won't plunge Linowan into wholesale battle again. Junior war leaders under his command collect information from Linowan raiders and visiting merchants, hoping to identify a suitable target.

PELEPS KAIZOKU ATAROVE

The Realm Ambassador is a daughter from one of the Realm's most famous naval households. After Atarove's decades of loyal service in the Peleps fleets, performing secret operations against enemy navies, the Empress made her Ambassador to Linowan. This was partly to avoid a clash between the Mnemon and Cathak candidates (since this ambassadorship is an influential position), and partly because the Empress





felt that Atarove's own experience at unconventional warfare would give her greater empathy with the Linowan natives, and consequently greater influence with the royal clan and the Queen.

Atarove has held the position for 20 years now. She still shows a slight piratical swagger in her walk and an abruptness when it comes to court situations. Her duties include negotiating Linowan auxiliaries for the Realm and surreptitiously working against Guild interests. The recent fall of the Tepet legions horrifies Atarove, and she looks for some way to shore up the Realm's influence in Linowan.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

While Linowan's main relationships are friendship to the Realm and hatred toward Halta, other countries in the region cannot be discounted. Unfortunately for the Linowan, war left two of their largest allies in ruins. The Linowan could not protect their neighbors in Talinin and Rokan-Jin from the Bull of the North or from Halta. Other cultures in or near Linowan territory sense the shift in power. Linowan leaders may need to cultivate their region's minorities—who collectively outnumber them—or find much of their homeland turned against them.

ROKAN-JIN

Rokan-Jin was one of the larger kingdoms to the south of Linowan. While they suffered constant mild raiding from Linowan warriors, the Rokan-jin people had a loose alliance with Linowan itself. Their hilly lands held many gemstone mines. The Rokan-Jin faced their city walls with marble, while rich people adorned their palaces with carnelian, malachite and jasper. The capital city, Carnelian Peak, rose atop the mountain called Sunset's Sword. The Guild used Carnelian Peak as its regional trade hub. Slaves bought from the Guild worked the mines while the Rokan-jin themselves farmed their fields. The trade in semiprecious stones supported a strong standing army.

The Bull's armies took the opportunity to loot as well as to burn and conquer. They also freed the mine slaves and conscripted them into the Bull's forces. Loss of their mining slaves destroyed the nation's economy. The Rokan-jin fought well, defending their walled cities and using the rugged terrain to their advantage. Strategic considerations (and rich gifts and offers of greater fealty) swayed the Linowan crown to provide assistance, but Linowan combat is not well adapted to protecting specific locations. The icewalker armies captured and looted town after town, and the Bull's sorcerous allies utterly destroyed Carnelian Peak.

Rokan-Jin's Queen Sahula survived the death of her husband (fallen in battle) and took command, but her nation is in ruins. Sahula's priorities are to obtain slaves to re-establish the gem mines, to expel all Haltan influence and prevent Haltan incursions, and to rebuild Carnelian Peak. The latter proves difficult, because a large number of ghosts haunt the place. Sahula cares more about reopening the gem mines than reclaiming the farmlands, as she needs an economic or strategic lever to keep her kingdom from being completely swallowed by Linowan.

TALININ

The Talinin clans live further to the east than the Rokan-jin. These people, once hunter-gatherers like the Linowan, long ago settled down to farm and build walled villages. They share a border with Halta, but did not previously share the full Linowan prejudice against them, acting as a haven for outcasts from both regions. While Talinin had no commodities of great value, the Guild used it as a middleman for trade with Halta itself. Despite sharing a border with both Halta and Linowan, the Talinin High Lord and council of clan chiefs showed great skill at avoiding entanglement in the war beyond sending tributes of food to nearby Linowan border forts.

The arrival of the Bull of the North's warriors came as a horrific surprise. Invaders burned the walled villages. Adults were slain, while children were forcibly adopted into barbarian tribes. In the capital city of Dramasine, the High Lord of the Talinin was slain on his own throne. The remaining clan chiefs turned desperately to the Linowan, who conscripted entire towns and used them as raw soldiery to hold off the Bull's troops. By the end of the war in RY 764, the Talinin towns were abandoned, and the previous clans were scattered. In many cases, the new bonds formed by fighting under Linowan, Realm or mercenary commanders are more meaningful to survivors, turning the Talinin into an imploded nation of warlords and refugees.

The Guild abandoned Talinin. The farmlands are battlefields and graveyards (and, in a few cases, shadowlands). The Talinin lost much of their culture through the burning of their towns and the deaths of their elders. The nominal Talinin leader, Clan Chief Allim Bloodyhand, holds power with Linowan backing. He would like an ally in the Scavenger Lands to balance Linowan influence but has little to offer in return.

FURTHER AFIELD

Sijan: The Linowan burn their dead and scatter the ashes. They believe their ancestors dwell in a land

THE MANSE OF SORRAZA DALON

Before she died, Sorraza Dalon closed the doors to her manse and to all the secrets she hid inside it. The manse still exists, however, as do her notes on her techniques for developing aggression among the Linowan ancestors.

Sorraza's manse is a Solar Manse ••••. Its abilities include the Greater Veil of Shadows (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. III—Oadenol's Codex**, p. 76): It cannot be seen and one must literally bump into it to notice it, though sensitive characters or geomancers could detect its Essence flows. Since the manse floats 100 yards above the center of Lake Sanazala, nobody knows the manse is there. Ancient tales about Sorraza (in far lands, not among the Linowan herself) say "her palace flew away once she died," and her secretive habits meant that only her Lunar mate Ethalir knew the truth about her manse. The place is also guarded by golden automata in the shapes of serpents and wolves, and holds several dangerous traps that only Sorraza and Ethalir knew how to disarm.

Among the relics in the manse are Sorraza's experimental notes. She managed to build verbal cues into her subject population (delivered in Old Realm, of course) that could whip them into a fervor of battle. These training cues no longer function as designed: a Linowan who hears the words might feel a bit short-tempered, but that's all. An expert thaumaturge or sorcerer, however, would find Sorraza's trigger-words useful as part of a spell or Procedure to induce battle frenzy. Sorraza's experiments might also have some connection to the Linowan's peculiar insanities: her logs mention her subjects' tendency toward bizarre monomanias. Sorraza's notes might help find a reliable cure for Vatal and Hal fever... or someone who tried to re-create her work might make them much worse.

where the rivers are full of endless fish, and where the storytelling goes on all evening and through the next day. Some clans send their dead nobles and clan elders to Sijan for cremation with model boats, while others burn their own dead (preferably on Haltan redwood). The royal clan sends regular gifts of food—mostly fish—to Sijan as a goodwill gesture. Linowan call on Sijanese

exorcists to deal with shadowlands or hostile ghosts. Other cultures in Linowan territory hire the Morticians' Order to oversee local funerals, and Sijan's black galleys have unlimited right of passage along the Silver River. The Morticians' Order never abuses the privilege.

Lookshy: Far-traveling Linowan pirates sometimes raid Lookshy's commerce. Linowan's alliance to the Realm does not improve relations. Lookshy warred with the Linowan three times in the past 200 years; each war involved multiple punitive missions to burn Linowan towns but made little long-term impact, save to solidify Linowan resentment against Lookshy. Linowan pirates now view Lookshy's traders as doubly valuable prey, both for the goods that they carry and as a means to strike back against Lookshy. The Queen herself sent messages to the Scarlet Empress (before her disappearance) hinting that Linowan auxiliaries would be glad to serve in the field against Lookshy should the Empress plan a new campaign against the city-state. Most Linowan regard Lookshyans as rebels against their rightful Empress and as a military bureaucracy of slave-owning dictators eager to expand their reach. Only the lack of any evidence prevents belief (though not suspicion) that the Lookshyans are secretly allied to the Haltans.

The North: The Linowan don't travel long distances overland, and only a few of them ever took the long journey down the Silver River and then up the River of Tears. A very few Haslanti air boats ventured south and east as far as Linowan but found nothing to justify continued visits across hundreds of miles. Thus, the Linowan knew only the easternmost fringes of the North. The Bull of the North's attack came as a terrible shock. Many warriors want to raid in retaliation. Exploratory war bands now seek routes with short portages from river to river that could provide a shortcut to the River of Tears and the icewalker territories beyond it. Commerce between Linowan and Northern peoples, never large, has shrunk even further; the price (barter or cash) of Northern goods has risen in consequence and looks set to continue to do so.

SAMPLE COMBAT UNITS

For more information about Linowan military capabilities and sample combat units, see **Scroll of Kings**, pages 92-93.

ISTEL STAR-OF-DAWN'S WAR BAND

Description: This is the war band of an ambitious young noble of the royal clan. He made a name for himself on the Haltan border and in the Realm auxiliaries. Several lesser war bands also follow Istel, giving him a total of 800 experienced warriors. Istel and his



warriors could be encountered on the Haltan border, cycling between the fortresses while looking for weak spots or attacking some minor city-state or rival tribe on the fringes of Linowan territory. While Istel frequently loses men (*all* war bands frequently lose warriors, if the leader has any gumption at all), he is famous enough that he recruits more almost as quickly.

Commanding Officer: Istel
Star-of-Dawn

Armor Color: Brown striped with red.

Motto: "The only good Haltan is a burned Haltan!"

General Makeup: Eight hundred light infantry in buff jackets with longbows and axes, spears or maces (equal numbers of each)

Overall Quality: Good

Magnitude: 6

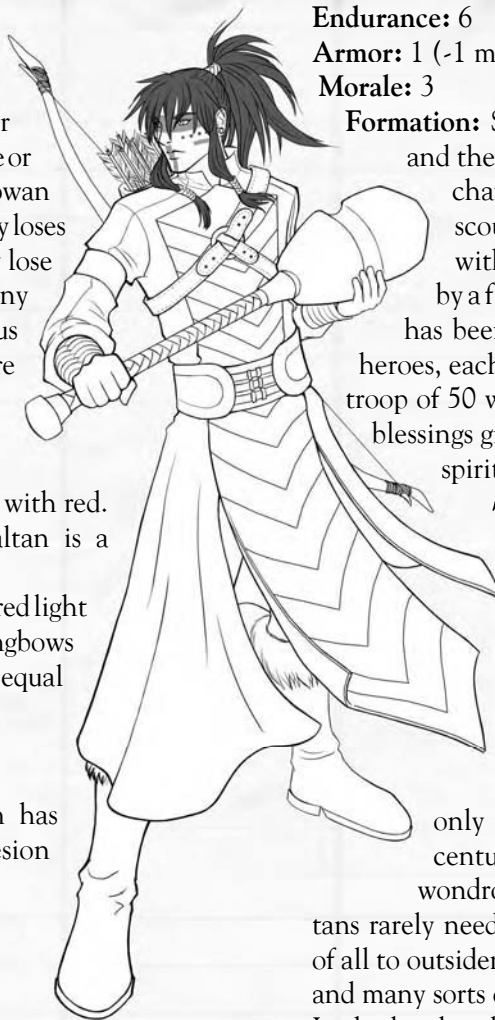
Drill: 3 (Istel Star-of-Dawn has learned the value of unit cohesion and organization)

Close Combat Attack: 4

Close Combat Damage: 2

Ranged Combat Attack: 4

Ranged Combat Damage: 3



Endurance: 6 **Might:** 1

Armor: 1 (-1 mobility)

Morale: 3

Formation: Skirmish at the beginning of battles, and then unordered at the end once they can charge on the enemy. The band focuses on scouting, and then harassing the enemy with quick attacks and retreats, followed by a final charge once the enemy's cohesion has been broken. Istel has six relays and six heroes, each of whom can split off to command a troop of 50 warriors. His unit's Might comes from blessings granted by powerful shamans and their spiritual allies.

THE REPUBLIC OF HALTA

The nation of Haltan lays claim to a wide swath of the Northeastern redwood forest. While other trees grow in the forest as well, the redwoods dominate—through altitude, as well as numbers. The Haltans live only in the redwoods. Over the last seven centuries, the Haltans built a strange and wondrous arboreal civilization. By now, Haltans rarely need to set foot on the ground. Strangest of all to outsiders, their nation encompasses beastmen and many sorts of sentient animals as well as humans. In the local parlance, *ata-beasts* are fully sentient and

Linowan, a Magnitude 6 Dominion

Military: 5 **Government:** 2 **Culture:** 4

Abilities: Awareness 3, Bureaucracy 1, Craft 3, Integrity 4 (Tight-Knit Heritage +1), Investigation 2, Occult 3 (Binding Agreement +2), Performance 3, Presence 3, Stealth 4 (Calculated Assassination +1), War 5 (Forcing an Engagement +1, Slash & Burn Tactics +2)

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 5

Limit Break: Valor **Current Limit:** 4

Willpower: 9

Bonus Points: 30 **External Bonus Points:** 18

Notes: Queen Arkasi, Gradessi Whitefoot and Peleps Kaizoku Atarove are all sorcerers with legitimacy, while several shamans and clan-matriarchs are savants.

Linowan's bonus points go to two dots of Willpower, an additional dot of Military and one dot each of Performance, Presence, Stealth and War. Its external bonus points (obtained through its alliance with the Realm, its trading connections and Golden-Eyed Jorst) are spent on a second dot of Temperance, a second dot of Government and all the specialties.

In the event of a Limit Break, Linowan immediately blames Haltan for its troubles—no matter what the real cause—and attacks its arch-enemy, moving warriors and defenses from other borders to strike at Haltan instead.



Haltan citizens, fully equal to humans. San-beasts are only partly sentient.

Halta grew beyond the reach of the Realm and the other civilized centers of the North and East. The Haltans knew little about the rest of Creation, and the rest of Creation knew little about Halta. The centuries-long war against Linowan gave Haltans little reason to seek contact with distant lands. Only in the last century have Guild caravans, Haslanti air boats and other foreign visitors come to this empire wilderness, and only in the last 10 years did Halta fight its first major war against anyone but Linowan. The Haltans joined the Bull of the North to fight Linowan, and that led to war against the Scarlet Empire's legions. Halta emerged on the winning side—though many Haltans wonder what, exactly, they won. Few Haltans appreciate what their involvement means to folk in distant lands. Powers and power brokers the Haltans could not imagine now watch the forest land, and few of those eyes are friendly.

HISTORY

The Great Contagion killed most of humanity in a few years. Many who were not yet infected fled into the deep forests of the East, hoping to escape the plague. The refugees then faced the invading Fair Folk. In the aftermath, masterless hobgoblins and Wyld-twisted beasts and savages became a chronic threat. The surviving people took refuge in the trees.

THE FOUNDING OF HALTA

As the refugees moved east, they encountered barbarian bands that already lived in the trees, including some tribes of the mysterious tree folk (see **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. II—The Wyld**, pp. 45 and 122). Some tribes accepted the refugees as new members. The refugees, in turn, became a common link between these tribal cultures and started them on the path to civilization. Within a century, a tribal confederation formed; and after another century, the confederation crystallized into the new nation of Halta.

THE ENDLESS WAR

The Haltans' hatred of their Linowan neighbors is matched only by the hatred the Linowan hold for them. While this conflict sprang from the rivalry between Caltia the Eternal, goddess of the evergreen forests and Golden-Eyed Jorst, god of the deciduous forests (see pp. 131-136), this war grew into far more than a lengthy argument between two gods.

Among mortals, the war began with far-traveling Linowan raiders heading upriver to loot Haltan villages and take Haltans for slaves. Or, it began with Haltans

journeying downriver to plant redwood saplings in Jorst's territory. Within very few years, it no longer mattered who started the conflict. By RY 279, the war carried enough momentum for both sides to mobilize tens of thousands of warriors for a massive battle on their border. That battle left the shadowland called the Field of Woe.

Shortly thereafter, Fair folk raiders swept through the war-weakened nation. The monarch of that time, Queen Chaltra Amritsa, and her council decided they could not fight the Fair Folk while keeping guard against the Linowan. Reluctantly, they sued for peace. Halta's gods supported their worshippers, though: when Queen Chaltra faced the raksha leaders, Caltia herself stood beside her, with other representative gods. Faced with the possibility of war against an entire forest-realm of gods, the Fair Folk agreed to an enduring treaty that ceded them the forest floor, but left the treetops inviolate. And none too soon: when the Linowan invaded again in RY 318, they didn't enter Haltan territory as they thought, they entered *raksha* territory, with the Haltans waiting up above to assist their unlikely allies.

Over the centuries, Halta spread far beyond its original territory. The nation suffered growing pains: civil wars and schisms, attempts by monarchs to seize greater power, attempts by the Council of Nobles to reduce the monarchs' powers, scandals, upheavals as new customs spread—the usual for any dynamic society. The Haltans did not accept beastmen and sentient animals as fellow citizens overnight. These conflicts, though painful for the Haltans at the time (and interesting to Haltan historians), did not affect anyone outside Halta. At least once a century, Linowan and Halta each mounted major assaults against each other, which invariably failed.

As Halta matured, so did societies elsewhere in Creation. A bit more than a century ago, the Guild came to Halta, with other merchants in its wake. Small numbers of Haltans ventured out along the trade routes, introducing the rest of Creation to their exotic culture—particularly the soon-to-be-famous beast shows. When the Haslanti invented their air boats, they set up a trading post at the far northwestern end of Halta, forging a tenuous link between these two self-made cultures at the edge of the world. However, the Haltans still thought of themselves as a people set apart from the rest of Creation.

RECENT EVENTS

When the Bull of the North attacked Linowan's southern allies, Queen Chaltra Evamal saw only a



chance to outflank her nation's ancient foe. She and her Council of Nobles thought they could repeat the great success of the Fair Folk treaty and acquire a powerful new ally. More than 10,000 Haltan troops assisted the Bull and his icewalkers against the Linowan and the Realm legions.

This decision did not turn out as well as the Haltans hoped. Thousands of Haltans died. Halta itself gained no territory, no loot—nothing, really, except knowledge that the Linowan fared even worse. For some Haltans, this is enough. At every level of Haltan society, however, people wonder what's next. Choices and dangers face the Republic of Halta that its people never imagined.

GEOGRAPHY

The Republic of Halta occupies a broad arc of forest, chiefly along the streams that flow south and west to form the Silver River. These rivers, and the Golden Leaf Canal that cuts across them, help bind together the far-flung nation. In the north, Halta ends where the high forest gives way to the shorter trees of the taiga. To the south, it ends in a cluster of breakaway societies, some of them sizeable countries in their own right. A tongue of Haltan territory licks south to the

headwaters of the Rock River and the central East. To the west, Halta curves around the border with Linowan. To the east, Halta has no border at all. It fades into the endless forests and scattered tribes at Creation's rim, with trade routes extending into the Wyld.

The Haltan forest is mostly evergreen, a mix of redwoods with pine, fir, juniper, spruce and larch, with a smattering of willows and other deciduous trees. The southern reaches include ironwood trees. Mature redwoods normally grow between 15 and 45 feet in diameter and between 200 and 400 feet tall. Far to the East, the trees grow miles tall, but only barbarian tribes live in these remote regions. Redwoods often live for thousands of years and resist both fire and disease. Most of this forest existed well before the Contagion. Some of the larger trees naturally become hollow inside, creating large spaces that can be home to hatra packs or colonies of giant bats or comfortable dwellings for Haltans who wish to live completely surrounded by their beloved trees.

Although the Republic of Halta covers a truly enormous area, its total population is only about 25 million. The vast majority of Halta consists of wild forest with few if any inhabitants. The Fair Folk control

SECRET GUIDING HANDS

The Haltan people do not know it, but their entire society is an experiment conducted by two old and powerful Chosen of Luna called Silver Python and Rain Deathflyer. Old Haltan legends speak of powerful figures that could take animal form and helped their ancestors survive. It doesn't take a genius to guess that these were Lunar Exalted. The extent of the Lunars' activities—and that it continues—is known only to a few gods, Fair Folk nobles and other members of the Silver Pact, all of whom keep the secret for reasons of their own.

These two No Moons saw in the refugees a chance to create an ideal society from scratch—a nation that would combine the strength, self-reliance and connection to nature found among barbarians with the learning, organization and material culture found in civilized lands. The Haltan people became more civilized and organized than the Lunars expected, but they are not displeased with their experiment.

Over the centuries, this pair of Lunar Exalted secretly helped the Haltans and their gods to forge their treaties with the Fair Folk. They also helped create some (not all) of the intelligent and semi-intelligent animals, known locally as ata-beasts and san-beasts, that are so common in Halta. The hawk and serpent beastmen who live in Halta are the Lunars' own descendants.

One feature of Haltan culture that the Lunars are most proud of introducing is the Test of Survival. Every Haltan youth must undergo this test in order to become an adult. The Lunars believe the Test of Survival encourages self-reliance and keeps the Haltan people from becoming soft and losing their connection to nature.

For details about how Rain Deathflyer and Silver Python shaped Halta, see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Lunars**, Chapter Two.

the forest floor, while feral elementals, deadly beasts and far-roaming Wyld mutants hold sway over much of the canopy. Haltan cities and towns are like islands in a vast ocean of trees, with many miles of untamed forest between settlements. Haltan soldiers and guards loosely patrol the paths between the larger cities and towns. Even on these aerial roads, though, journeys become far safer as part of a large caravan.

The Haltans like it this way. They accept the dangers of the wilderness as healthy challenges that keep them, and their nation, strong. Moreover, they know that many dangers conceal opportunities. If they gave up the forest for farmland, Halta would lose its greatest assets.

CHANTA

The capital of Halta boasts a population of almost two million, making it the republic's largest city as well as the center of Haltan culture and religion. Here, the Haltan queen, Chaltra Evamal, meets with her Council of Nobles in an exquisite parliamentary hall of living wood. Chanta also houses Halta's largest temples to their forest gods as well as a large university and specialized academies that teach thaumaturgy, sorcery and Terrestrial martial arts.

Chanta lies on one of the larger tributaries of the Silver River, and many of Halta's arboreal trade routes converge on the city. As a result, the inhabitants have relatively easy access to goods from across Creation. The wealthy of Chanta can wear silks from the Blessed Isle, ivory from the Southern savanna and pearls from the West, shaped by Halta's finest artisans.


Chanta consists of several thousand huge redwoods spread across four square miles. Most trees are at least 300 feet tall and 30 feet in diameter, with a scattering of smaller, younger trees. The wealthiest residents live within naturally hollow portions of some of these trees. However, most Haltans live and work on large platforms that they anchor to the trunk of one tree and support by two or more branches, or that stretch between several of the forest's closely spaced trees. The largest of these platforms are hundreds of feet across. Chanta consists of many thousands of these platforms connected by walkways and ladders in a three-dimensional maze. Visitors have no hope whatsoever of finding their way around without a native guide.

OTHER HALTAN CITIES

Halta contains about a dozen other large cities whose population exceeds 100,000, and dozens more of medium size. All lie within 800 miles of the nation's western border—but most are also at least 200 miles from this border, to remain safe from Linowan raiders. After Chanta, the four largest are Glorious Crown, Caltia's Triumph, Kajeth and River Blossom.

Glorious Crown sits within a few miles of the Fair Folk stronghold of Yagan and is Halta's primary center of trade with the Fair Folk. (See the discussion of Yagan, on p. 46, for what makes Glorious Crown interesting.)





Caltia's Triumph is located amid Halta's largest groves of ironwood trees. It is Halta's center for ironwood harvesting and for the manufacturing of ironwood tools and weapons.

Kajeth is a trading city located on Halta's southern border. Most commerce between Halta and the Scavenger Lands goes through Kajeth. Half of Kajeth is built on the ground, for the convenience of foreigners. The boundary of the Fair Folk treaty ends more than 50 miles north of Kajeth, so mortals may safely walk upon the ground. About a fifth of Kajeth's 300,000 inhabitants are foreigners.

Kajeth is the center for breeding the rare and valuable Haltan san-horses. The foreigner's quarter includes large stables. Although most beast-sellers only sell these horses to Haltan travelers, many foreigners come to Kajeth in hopes of obtaining one. Horse breeders take special care when deciding which foreigners they allow to purchase one. Ownership of a Haltan horse is a rare badge of honor.

River Blossom is located on Halta's northwestern border, where the North Silver River intersects the Golden Leaf Canal. On the east bank, River Blossom is a purely Haltan city. The city on the west bank, called River Keep, is built on the ground. River Keep is guild territory; the Guild has its own treaty with the Fair Folk, protecting the town in return for a regular tribute of slaves to devour. What little commerce Halta engages in with the small countries and tribes of the Eastern North passes through River Blossom and River Keep.

River Blossom has a population of around 250,000 and River Keep usually has a population of 10,000, with almost 5,000 of the residents being Guild personnel, and the rest being a mixture of Haltan travelers and foreigners who have found it an exotic and profitable place to live.

River Blossom is also known for the fact that it sits on the northeastern edge of a circle of forest a dozen miles in diameter, where most of the pine trees produce glowing sap. In addition, several dozen trees within the city produce large amounts of fresh and delicious water instead of sap and a dozen produce a fine sweet wine that the residents bottle and sell to both the rest of Halta and the Guild.

Resplendent Peak, built near a great glacier at the headwaters of the North Silver River, is the northernmost Haltan settlement—so far north that redwoods will not grow, and the Haltans must settle for other evergreen trees. Many Haltans consider it an outpost rather than a *true* Haltan city. Resplendent Peak is a relatively small

city, with a population of only 60,000. It's all up in the trees, though, except for the stables—built just 10 feet outside the boundary set by Halta's Fair Folk treaties.

Halta's trade with the Haslanti, the icewalker barbarian tribes and the elk beastmen that wander the northern wastes all goes through Resplendent Peak. The city offers a tall mooring mast for Haslanti air boats; Haslanti now make up over a quarter of the foreigners who visit this city. Haslanti traders regularly exchange feathersteel and mammoth ivory for high-quality woods and exotic medicines.

HALTAN ARCHITECTURE

Chanta and the other Haltan cities and towns all consist of a network of dwelling platforms connected by aerial bridges. Some of these dwelling platforms are open plazas surrounded by a low railing, but most carry a variety of buildings. Almost all of the city's dwelling platforms, as well as most of the bridges between them, consist of interwoven long, narrow branches. The houses and shops on these platforms have walls and roofs made from a mixture of living wood and carefully carved wood taken from dead trees and branches. As part of their many treaties with the forest spirits, the Haltans never cut living redwood trees, but dead wood abounds in this vast forest, and other trees are freely harvested. Tree sculptors known as arborists shape the growing wood, while shaman-priests ask dryads and wood elementals to aid these efforts.

Haltan tree cities are exceedingly three-dimensional. The redwoods tower hundreds of feet tall and most have rings of relatively horizontal branches at various levels. Inhabited trees may carry three to 10 dwelling platforms built on these rings of branches. Moving from one level to another involves climbing ladders as much as 100 feet high. Goods and people who do not wish to make this climb can ride between the levels in counterweighted elevators pulled by well-trained forest baboons. In Chanta, several dozen automatic, Essence-powered elevators come from the ruins of the First Age city of Sal-Maneth (see pp. 45-46). Unless they are very young, infirm or elderly, Haltans never ride elevators except to accompany large shipments of goods. Healthy adults who choose to ride elevators are considered either lazy or clumsy, both of which are common beliefs about most foreigners.

Moving to dwelling platforms around a nearby tree requires traveling along the aptly named branch-paths made from the redwood's wide branches. Branch-paths are usually just two yards wide; only the largest reach four yards wide. Arborists use ironwood tools and



thaumaturgy to sculpt the surface of these branches into smooth paths with foot-high rails on either side of the path. Most branch paths also have living vines on at least one side to provide a secure purchase for the elderly and the infirm. Bridges of wooden slats, wicker and living vines fill gaps between branches.

VILLAGES AND TOWNS

People who live in the Haltan forest face greater dangers than in the countryside of most nations. All manner of predatory beings inhabit the forests, some of which eagerly prey upon settlements too small to defend themselves. The greatest danger, however, lies in the regions within 200 miles of the Linowan border. Although this region contains dozens of towns, all of these settlements need a population of at least 5,000 simply to support well-supplied defensive garrisons against Linowan raids. Further from the border, smaller settlements become possible. Halta includes many towns with populations between 5,000 and 50,000, and countless villages with populations as low as 500 Haltans. Towns become smaller and less civilized the further one moves away from Halta's western border.

Some towns and villages fall on trade routes between large cities. While most internal trade occurs along the rivers, on long journeys riverboat passengers often relish the chance to stretch their legs. Towns located along the rivers or the Golden Leaf Canal provide accommodations for travelers as well as a chance to trade for local goods. Other trade routes go through the trees, along well-traveled branch paths. Given the difficulty of this sort of travel, towns built along well-traveled branch paths are especially popular with travelers. These settlements openly welcome travelers. They often become centers for specialty manufacturing, providing the town with a ready source of goods to trade with visitors.

Unlike people from more isolated communities who must make do with the products of their local forest, the inhabitants of these trade route towns have access to both foreign metalwork and ironwood tools made in the southern portion of the Haltan lands. The inhabitants of most such towns enjoy a standard of living similar to that found in Haltan cities. Their dwelling platforms are often quite large and contain dozens of well-made houses and shops.

Truly isolated villages and towns can occur anywhere more than 100 miles from the Linowan border, but become more common further east. These communities tend to be self-sufficient by necessity, and usually quite small. The people own few ironwood or metal tools and enjoy fewer civilized amenities than the city or trade-

route folk. The inhabitants know even less than most Haltans about life outside the Haltan forest.

Many of these communities deliberately isolate themselves from others, to the extent that they might not consider themselves Haltan citizens. Some have eccentric practices, such as the Panests whose multi-partner families consist of a mixture of both human and intelligent animals. Other communities consist of private and reclusive tribes of beastmen. While some beastmen enjoy living with humans, most prefer living among their own kind. Sentient animals also sometimes create their own communities. The inhabitants of such settlements are typically polite with human visitors but never let outsiders stay with them from more than a few days.


THE DESIGN OF TOWNS AND VILLAGES

Most Haltan towns and villages are built on a similar plan. They consist of a collection of between a dozen and several hundred dwelling platforms, each of which is home to between two dozen and a hundred people. In trade-route towns, each platform usually carries at least a few shops and other services, as well as dwellings. To protect the inhabitants against wild animals (and wilder Linowan), residents of villages and towns build their dwelling platforms closer together than those in most Haltan cities. In the smallest settlements, all of the platforms may occupy the same cluster of three or four trees, each platform lying only five or six yards above the one below it. In areas with dangerous animals or where fear of Linowan raiders is especially great, villagers build a wooden stockade around each dwelling platform. Although these walls do nothing to prevent attack from above, they prevent attack from all other directions.

SPIRIT CULT VILLAGES

Small spirit cults inhabit some of the strangest villages. The most exotic of these settlements consist of a mixture of mortals, God-Blooded, and either elementals or minor forest gods. This close to the elemental Pole of Wood, the Haltan forest can be supernaturally lush, with large numbers of wood elementals. Green beards, artisans, stick persons, dryads (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I**, pp. 36-38 and 137-138) and other spirits rule small areas of the Haltan forest, either alone or in small groups. Some of these spirits kill or drive off mortals who trespass in their domains. Others demand tribute or worship in return for allowing mortal travelers to pass safely through the lands they claim.

Now and then, feral gods and elementals decide they want mortal followers, or a group of mortals decide to settle in a portion of the forest controlled by these entities.



The mortals worship and provide various other services for the elementals or gods. In return, the spirits grant various boons to the mortals. After a few generations, some—or occasionally, all—of the mortals living in these small communities carry the blood of one of their gods in their veins.

Most other Haltans avoid these cultic settlements. Brave or foolish traders occasionally visit such communities and return with odd artifacts, strange plants and even stranger stories. Otherwise, they remain isolated unless some unsuspecting traveler strays too close. The treatment of visitors depends on the attitude of the ruling elementals or gods. In most cases, outsiders who do not agree to join this community can remain for a day or two if they offer some form of obeisance. A generous god or elemental might merely ask for prayers. Others demand sacrifices, mutilation, or services ranging from a night of exotic and dangerous passion with one of the gods to raiding the domain of a rival elemental. Visitors who somehow impress these local gods occasionally win exotic rewards such as a minor artifact, a natural wonder or a piece of unique and valuable knowledge.

BANDIT CAMPS

The most dangerous Haltan settlements are those inhabited by bandits. Because of the difficulty of travel off established trade routes, well-hidden bandit settlements can remain hidden for decades or even centuries. Just as Western pirates venture forth from isolated islands to prey upon rich trade routes, Haltan bandits build villages near rivers or the larger arboreal paths. Official patrols cannot control or even map more than a tiny fraction of this vast forest and often have great difficulty locating these hidden settlements. Most bandit leaders are Haltans who served their term in the military and decided that using their skills against poorly armed traders was both safer and more profitable than attacking bloodthirsty Linowan warriors.

Some bandits plant confederates in a nearby city to tip them off about upcoming caravans. Others simply lie in wait for travelers. Either way, the bandits drop down upon travelers and attack with spears, nets and packs of well-trained san-beasts, such as giant wolfspiders. While some release the people of the caravan once they strip them of wealth, many bandits kill their victims to keep them from revealing the bandits' location. The worst sell their captives to the Fair Folk for armor, weapons and illusions to help disguise them and their camps. Bandits living near one of Halta's borders also sometimes sell their prisoners to slavers from the Guild—or even the Linowan, as victims for their sacrificial pyres.

In Halta, selling Haltans to slavers, the Fair Folk or the Linowan are all capital crimes punished by turning offenders over to the Fair Folk. Bandits who engage in such ruthless practices know they can expect no mercy. Most bandit camps are only found because a caravan they attack captures one or more bandits, or a bandit who travels to a nearby city to buy supplies and information is either captured or followed by the monitors, Halta's secret police (see pp. 52-53).

THE FAR EAST

In Halta, the dividing line between barbarians and civilized citizens is far from clear. The easternmost portions of Halta contain many settlements inhabited by people almost indistinguishable from the tree-dwelling barbarians found at the borders of the Wyld. Some of these settlements are home to the green-skinned tree folk created by the Old Realm. Others house more ordinary barbarians or feral beastmen. Actual Wyld barbarians inhabit a few.

Regardless of their exact nature, most barbarians live in tribes of between 100 and 1,000 members. Like other Haltans, they live in the trees. Each dwelling platform usually holds a single longhouse where the inhabitants live and work, though some barbarians weave globular shelters that resemble oversized bird's nests. Having few metal or ironwood tools, they must make their dwellings from a mixture of woven branches and rudely dressed logs. Covered with both leafy living branches and thatch made from dried branches, these structures are sturdy but far less comfortable or elegant than civilized Haltan homes. In the smallest barbarian settlements, the inhabitants often live inside hollow trees. Such villages are exceptionally safe from attack by large beasts and enemy warriors, but residents must take care to keep out poisonous snakes, spiders and other unpleasant creatures.

Despite the barbarians' relative isolation and lack of civilized trappings, Haltan leaders think of these tribes as part of their nation, and many barbarians agree. Tribes at even greater distance regard the Haltans as valuable allies. They welcome Haltan traders, respecting their skill in forest-craft and always desiring the metal and ironwood tools, glassware and bright fabrics they sell. These traders return to Halta's cities bearing unique carvings, valuable plants and other strange commodities from the furthest reaches of the East. Many barbarians have no concept of Halta as a nation, but treat traders and other visitors from Halta as their cousins from a distant tribe.

Merchants who trade with these remote barbarians are the most reliable source for the potent medicinal plants from the Far East. These medicines find use in the rest of Halta and are traded for high prices throughout Creation. (The Guild would *love* to cut into the Haltans' action. They haven't got a chance.) Also, the Fair Folk do not patrol in the far eastern portion of the forest because it is so sparsely inhabited. As a result, many of the barbarian tribes can safely descend from their mile-high trees onto the forest floor to collect shade-dwelling herbs and fungi unknown to the rest of Creation. Halta also relies on its barbarian allies to find long-lost ruins of the First Age and deposits of metal ores and other minerals that Halta might someday find it practical to mine.

FIRST AGE RUINS

Haltan territory contains three major, ruined First Age cities and one First Age enigma. Two of the ruined cities lie on the ground; the Fair Folk claim them. One floats in the air, and so falls within Haltan purview.

THE FLOATING CITY OF SAL-MANETH


The most intact of the First Age ruins is the floating city of Sal-Maneth. This city hovers over the Black-

water River in a relatively sparse region of the forest. Sal-Maneth was one of the wonders of the First Age, and the Fair Folk never looted it. The city was built from a lace-like tracery of metal and glass, and covers almost two square miles. Thirty-foot-wide, walkways of multi-colored metal filigree arch between hundreds of small plazas and tall towers. Although the entire city appears exceptionally flimsy, the walkways and walls all have a Soak of 24B/20L, and require 25 health levels to sever.

Sal-Maneth floats 150 feet above the ground and has never moved. Hundreds of ancient trees grow up amidst the structure of the city. Unknown magics prevent trees from growing to touch any portion of the city. Unfortunately, Sal-Maneth suffered severe damage during the Great Contagion. Almost a quarter of the city's towers and plazas now lie broken on the ground and an equal portion of towers and walkways are now twisted and bent.

Today, eight long rope bridges connect the ruins to the rest of the forest. Several hundred scholars and several dozen hermits live in Sal-Maneth. The more ruinous portions also serve as nests to dangerous animals such as hatra packs and huge wild spiders. While the





scholars have learned little about the magics supporting this floating city, they regularly turn up small useful items such as crystals that provide both light and heat upon command. Nearly a third of the city's intact towers remain sealed. Many scholars suspect they contain even greater wonders.

YAGAN AND GLORIOUS CROWN

The vast ruin of Yagan is a city of soaring towers, nearly half of which remain largely intact. The towers have bases made of limestone, but above the sixth story they consist of the same nigh-indestructible glass found in Chiaroscuro, except here the towers are built in every color of the rainbow. Here dwells the largest and most powerful of the Fair Folk tribes in the Haltan forest, who follow Slulura, Lord of the Lower Branches. Slulura was the first and the most powerful of the Fair Folk kings to sign the treaty with the Haltans, and the closest thing the Haltans have to an ally among the Fair Folk. In honor of the ancient city's ruined beauty, the local Fair Folk's finest glass workers and gossamer smiths now live in Yagan. The Fair Folk of Yagan allow merchants and diplomats to visit their city, but do not permit scholars to study it.

The Haltan city of Glorious Crown is located two miles from the outskirts of Yagan. Many of the gossamer goods, glass weapons and minor fae enchantments found in Halta came from Slulura's people by way of Glorious Crown. Haltans and Fair Folk often visit each other's cities in the course of their commerce, and both sides tread carefully in the other's territory.

THE GOLDWOOD RUINS

The Goldwood Ruins are the last of Halta's known First Age cities. Only a few broken pillars and tumbled walls show that the city ever existed. The Fair Folk looted all valuables from the Goldwood Ruins long ago. The leaves and needles of all of the trees that grow up through the ruined streets, however, are tinged with gold and glow softly at night. The Haltans don't care about the ruins—but they found that powerful drugs could be made from the fungi growing on these trees. Haltan alchemists use these fungi as the primary ingredient in the local versions of sweet cordial and age-staving cordial (see **Exalted**, p. 378).

Unknown to anyone now living, the potency of these fungi derives from the fact that these trees *somehow* produce tiny quantities of orichalcum; any Solar Exalt who discovers this fact could harvest sufficient orichalcum every fall to produce six daiklaves or three suits of orichalcum plate every year.

THE RIVER BLOSSOM ENIGMA

The most mysterious First Age ruin in Halta consists of a circle of pine trees a dozen miles in diameter that surrounds the city of River Blossom. Most of the trees produce glowing sap; a few produce copious amounts of water or sweet resinous wine.

These trees lie above the collapsed ruins of the once-famous First Age city of Samiaren. Many centuries worth of accumulated soil and leaf litter cover these ruins. No one living in Creation knows of their existence. Haltan scholars suspect that the ruins of a First Age city lie below River Blossom, but the Fair Folk on the forest floor prevent any excavations. An excavator might discover the machines that transform pine sap into water, wine or food, as well as mechanisms to cause trees to increase sap production and transform this sap into becoming solid moving elevators and moving stairs, all made of golden amber.

THE HALTAN PEOPLE

Living so close to the Pole of Wood gives the Haltan people a distinctive physical appearance. Their hair is straight and green, ranging from shades so dark that it is nearly black to the light yellow-green of newly sprouted grass. Haltans usually have reddish-brown skin and green or brown eyes. They normally go barefoot or wear flexible, soft-soled shoes that are more like gloves designed for their feet. Haltan toes are considerably more prehensile than usual.

HALTAN BEASTMEN

Beastmen live openly within Haltan society. Most beastmen live in their own villages and towns, or their own neighborhoods in cities (more than 1,000 in Chanta alone). This is due to reverence, not hatred or fear: many Haltan humans regard beastmen as blessed by the gods. Excessive familiarity would show a lack of piety.

Snakemen and hawkmen are the most numerous breeds, though owlmen, chiropterans and a few spidermen also live in the Haltan forest. The Haltans also regularly trade with tribes of elkmen who live to the north of their forest.

Like other Haltans, beastmen serve four-year terms in the military (see pp. 55-57), and those who do well can go on to become commandos. Almost five percent of Haltan commandos are beastmen and many are famous and decorated for their service against the Linowan. Beastmen who live among humans also sometimes become distinguished shaman-priests, with hawk and serpent beastmen usually becoming shaman-priests of the hawk god Yesryk or the serpent god Seris.



Many Haltans see these shaman-priests almost as living incarnations of these deities and view them with even more awe than other beastmen. Other beastmen who live along humans usually work as doctors (particularly the snakemen), thaumaturges, scholars and occasionally even entertainers (such as the eerily formal, three-dimensional Ballet of Webs in Chanta). They are exotic and sometimes a little scary, but also receive great respect. In some towns deep in the Haltan interior, beastmen and humans associate more closely and occasionally even marry but many Haltans view such relationships as disrespectful and taboo.

ATA-BEASTS

The Haltan citizens who most astonish foreigners are, of course, the intelligent animals known as ata-beasts. Haltans refer to the different varieties as ata-strix, ata-bats, ata-pards and so on. Exalted sorcerers created some of these breeds in the Old Realm; gods and Lunars raised other animals to intelligence; and a few may have emerged from the Haltans' own ventures in selective breeding.

These creatures are as intelligent as any person and all can speak and understand speech. Elsewhere in Creation, intelligent animals mostly live in their own societies far from the humans who often fear them. On occasion, they may form close friendships with Exalts or mortal heroes, but most of their interactions with humanity consist of their being captured to serve as slaves to entertain the wealthy and powerful. In Halta, however, ata-beasts are respected and fully accepted members of society.

The most common varieties of intelligent animals are tree-pards, giant wolf spiders, strix, forest baboons and giant bats. Most work as hunters or commandos, but some of them become skilled performers while a few work as shaman-priests or teachers. Ata-beasts that lack hands either hire human servants or have human allies who are willing to perform various tasks for them.

Having an ata-beast as a close companion is a mark of respect in Halta. Sometimes, a human and an ata-beast who become especially close friends live together, often with each other's families. A number of Haltan plays are comedies or dramas celebrating the close friendships between humans and ata-beasts and the complexities that can ensue from the differences between species.

HALTAN PETS AND SAN-BEASTS

Through a combination of mortal thaumaturgy, careful breeding and boons granted by various gods, Haltan animal breeders have created many breeds of animals

that are exceptionally bright, but not fully intelligent. Known as san-beasts, these creatures are as smart and as able of understanding speech as a four-year-old child or an exceptionally bright ape. Because they cannot speak and are clearly not as intelligent as a person, the Haltans consider them to be animals and property rather than citizens. However, mistreatment of a san-beast is a serious crime. Haltans are as likely to defend a san-beast against harm as they would a Haltan child.

Haltans usually own at least one san-beast pet. The labor of san-beasts forms a vital part of the Haltan economy and no small part of the Haltan military. San-strix and san-herons can carry messages or parcels faster than any human courier. Similarly, san-emerald monkeys, forest baboons and giant wolf spiders gather foodstuffs in the forests around the cities. Halta has dozens of breeds of san-beasts. Almost any creature that lives in the forest and could have any possible use to humans has a san-beast variety. Only food animals have no san-breeds. Haltans find the idea of eating a san-beast only slightly less distasteful than cannibalism.


ANIMALS AND THE LAW

In Halta, animals have many legal protections. Ata-beasts have the same rights as humans. There is no legal difference between stealing from or harming an ata-strix and committing the same crime against a human. Seriously mistreating a normal animal or a san-beast is a less serious crime than harming a person (human, ata-beast or beastman), but is still punished by heavy fines or in severe cases, forced indenture. Anyone who treats their animals at all badly is shunned; multiple offenders are exiled to the forest. However, Haltans make a vast

ATA-BEASTS AND SAN-BEASTS

In general, san-beasts have the same Attributes as normal animals, except they always have two dots of Intelligence. Ata-beasts have the same physical Attributes as other animals, but they have the same Mental Attributes as any human. Some ata-beasts even count as heroic mortals, and a few are God-Blooded or otherwise develop an enlightened Essence.

Characters can acquire san-beasts using the Followers Background. Characters may have as many dots in san-beast Followers as they wish, as long as they have at least one dot in Survival. Ata-beasts are purchased as Allies, since they are characters in their own right.



distinction between domestic and wild animals: hunting for meat or trapping for furs are both perfectly reputable occupations as long as they are performed with respect and in ways that minimize suffering. Haltans do not like to see any animal suffer; they despise blood sports such as cockfights or bear-baiting, and regard cultures that enjoy them as mired in depravity.

THE TEST OF SURVIVAL

Sometime between their 12th and 16th birthdays (or the analogous life-stage for *ata-beasts*), Haltan adolescents are expected to go out into the forest alone, for two weeks. They may take along only one suit of clothes, a knife, flint and steel, a blanket and a single full water skin. To complete the test, they must remain alone in the forest for the entire time and return with either an animal they killed or a rare or valuable plant they harvested. Any who cannot return with one of these two prizes within two weeks is expected to remain in the woods until they can acquire it. Youths fail if they return early or without an animal or rare plant. Those who fail can take the test again, but can only do so once a season. No one is forced to take or pass the test, but not passing it means the person cannot marry, inherit property, speak in the local council, become a noble, a commando or a shaman-priest or enlighten their Essence. In short, the person cannot be a legal adult. Almost everyone who does not suffer some significant physical or mental deficiency manages to pass the test or, occasionally, dies trying to do so.

MAKING A LIVING

The Haltan people have adapted well to their forest and found ways to obtain a high standard of living despite living high in the trees. Haltan cities are well lit, clean and supplied with abundant running water. Disease is relatively rare and famine is almost unknown. Most Haltans are at least semi-literate.

ARBOREAL AGRICULTURE

The Haltan forest produces abundant food, but outsiders would not recognize much of it. The two staples in Halta are *kes*, an edible moss that grows on the trunks of redwood trees; and *pir*, a pine nut that grows on evergreen vines that live on the redwoods. Both crops grow in abundance and are highly nutritious. Most farmers use troupes of trained emerald monkeys (see pp. 155 and 159) to harvest these crops. *Kes* is usually powdered and used to make porridge or thicken stews. Haltans press *pir* for oil and use the residue as flour. Haltan farmers also tend and gather a vast array of fruits and berries that grow on trees or vines, as well as many tree-growing mushrooms.

EXOTIC INTOXICANTS

In Halta, the primary intoxicants are berry wine and a fermented tree sap called *sek*, which outsiders describe as a pungent, pine-flavored beer. Coca and marijuana can grow in much of Halta. The richness of their forest and trade with the Far East gives Haltan easy access to many other recreational drugs as well. However, few Haltans over-indulge: severe intoxication makes even Haltans sufficiently clumsy that they become likely to fall to their deaths. Haltans accept this as the natural and deserved consequence of being a fool.

MEAT AND HUNTING

While Haltans regularly hunt and trap animals for food and skins, the idea of keeping animals to eat disgusts them. They do keep several varieties of birds for their eggs. The large, slow-moving and exceedingly dumb tree-sloths are favored sources of meat and leather.

Haltan fishers lower nets into the rivers or send down trained animals to catch fish and other aquatic life. The country's rivers are rich with trout and freshwater mussels; fish and shellfish make up a significant portion of the Haltan diet. The urban poor, however, subsist mostly on nut bread, mixed greens and moss and berry porridges.

WOODEN WONDERS

Naturally, Haltans make everything they can from wood. Ironwood trees grow in the southern portions of Halta, and Haltan crafters know the secret of treating ironwood so that it becomes as strong as steel (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. III—Oadenol's Codex**, p. 157). As a result, Haltans use alchemically hardened ironwood for many purposes. (Of course, this enormous country has deposits of metal ores... *in the ground*: Fair Folk territory. Haltans do not find mining practical.)

The Haltans know how to turn the fibers from redwood bark and other trees into cloth, which they weave as finely as linen. They also pound and chemically treat bark until it becomes as tough as well-made leather. These same fibers can also become an excellent paper. Combined with their abundance of natural and alchemically created dyes, Haltans make some of the finest books outside of the Blessed Isle. They print their books using carved wooden blocks, making books relatively abundant in Halta.

MAGICAL PLANTS

Over the centuries, Haltan explorers domesticated a number of wondrous plants from the Wyld, from Essence-rich demesnes or left from the First Age. The most common of these wonder-plants is a type of lumi-



nescent globular fungi known as glow-pods. They grow on trees and require no tending. Each glow-pod provides light as bright as a large oil lamp. The Haltans also train thigh-thick vines to encircle all of the redwood trees in Haltan towns and villages. Their leaves catch rain and their trunks draw water up from the ground. The Haltans draw faintly green, fresh-smelling water from these vines simply by pounding in metal or ironwood taps. Most of the Haltans' water comes from these vines. So far, all attempts to grow these vines outside Halta have failed—but perhaps a sufficiently skilled agronomist hasn't tried.

HALTANS AND ANIMALS

The Haltans are widely known as a people who are capable of taming all manner of beasts, including monstrous creatures like strix and giant wolf spiders. In their treetop cities and towns, the inhabitants keep a vast menagerie of pets and other domesticated animals. Haltans typically choose pets that can accompany them in most situations: foresters and guards often choose forest baboons, tree pards or giant wolf spiders, while merchants, scholars and other urbanites prefer mospids, emerald monkeys or other small beasts for their companions. Some Haltan animals occur only in that country, or at least are seldom seen in inhabited regions.

TRAVEL THROUGH THE FOREST

Branch-paths run between the cities and major towns of Halta. The Haltan Guard patrols the branch-paths, keeps them in repair and hunts bandits as best

they can—but because countless miles of unpatrollable forest surrounds each branch-path, travel between cities and towns remains somewhat risky.

It is also slow. Without magic or artifacts, people move as fast as they can walk or run. Riding animals are impossible, and flying mounts are exceptionally rare. The branch-paths are considerably quicker than moving through uncleared forest, however—even for Haltans who think nothing of trotting along branches narrower than their feet, and swinging through the trees like a monkey.

Every city is responsible for building small way stations along branch-paths to other settlements. A typical branch-path has one way station every 15 miles. These rest stops usually consist of little more than a small dwelling platform covered by a roof. They are usually stocked with a large water vine and a sealed barrel full of jerky and dried cakes of fruit and nuts. Way stations are marked with small groves of unusually bright glow-pods. On moonless nights, travelers can see this glow more than a mile away.

Hermits sometimes live in these way stations. They help to maintain and expand the stations and care for lost and injured travelers. Most do not dislike other people; they simply feel compelled to live even closer to the forest than other Haltans.

Just about every Haltan enters the wildwood but few of them ever need to go more than 20 miles from their town or city. The further you go from the settled areas, the greater the chance of encountering bandits,

TRAVEL THROUGH THE TREES				
Travel Type	Hourly	Daily	Weekly	Monthly
Along Branch Paths	3	15	75	250
Runner Relays	4	20	120	400
Through The Forest	2	7	35	110
Messenger Bird	35	400	1,600	5,500
River Travel (always assisted)				
Upstream	4	40	200	600
Downstream	5	60	240	720
Supernatural Travel				
Along Branch Paths	10	240	1,600	5,500
Through The Forest	5	120	800	2,700



hostile elementals or predators that haven't learned to avoid humans. Compasses and maps are almost useless in the deep wilderness. If you're lost away from a branch-path, finding a settlement could take weeks. Every community and military patrol includes skilled trackers who can rescue a lost traveler—but only if somebody knows you're missing, and they have some idea where you left a known path. Fortunately, all Haltans know how to gather food and water from the forest and can easily live off the land. Foreigners lost in the wild forest usually die within a few days unless they have Haltan guides.

All these difficulties make over-land travel less common in the Republic of Halta than it is in most societies. This helps isolate the interior of Halta from the war-torn border regions. Except along the rivers, most trade and travel occurs between settlements no more than 150 miles apart.

COMMUNICATIONS

To deal with the limitations their forests impose upon them, the Haltans developed various ways to speed messages and goods.

Along major branch paths, specially trained runners are stationed in every town along the route. They work

in relays to carry messages and small packages (up to around 20 pounds) substantially faster than ordinary caravans of porters can travel. Some of these runners are God-Bloods, beastmen or similar powerful beings and can carry messages even faster.

The Haltans also make much use of messenger birds. Both intelligent and semi-intelligent strix and diving herons (which use the same statistics as raiton) are their primary messengers. Strix can carry as much as 50 pounds of small, well-balanced cargo from one end of this forest kingdom to the other in less than two weeks. They can cover 400 miles a day, and fly for up to two days before they need to land at a settlement, have a raptorist feed them and rest for a day before they resume their journey. Owls and Diving herons are more numerous, but they are much smaller and can only carry messages and packages that weigh less than five pounds. The Haltan government uses the fastest birds for its own messages and packages. However, anyone can send a package by one of the owls or herons owned by one of the various messenger companies. Letters and packages under five pounds cost Resources • and larger packages cost Resources ••.



Most avian couriers are san-beasts who know the way to all nearby cities and towns. They simply require their trainer to tell them where to go. In addition to messages, these birds regularly carry small, valuable cargo such as drugs, medicine, gemstones, fine metalwork, enchanted artifacts and trade goods from the Fair Folk. Every day, several dozen of the flying couriers enter or depart from each large city. Every week, at least one strix or courier-bird visits almost every settlement in Halta. The Halta combination of slow travel and fast communication promotes both local self-reliance and a sense of national unity.

RIVER TRAVEL

Although the Republic of Halta is a kingdom built entirely in the trees, the land contains dozens of navigable rivers. The Halta treaty with the Fair Folk allows safe passage for ships equipped with special gossamer banners, which are effectively impossible for mortals to counterfeit. Halta traders purchase these banners from the Fair Folk. After some centuries, they have quite a few of them.

Docking and unloading a riverboat becomes somewhat difficult when stepping out of the boat onto solid ground means inviting the Fair Folk to eat you. Nevertheless, Halta sees considerable riverboat travel between cities and towns located on waterways. Most large Halta cities, including Chanta, are located above a river. Because river travel is considerably faster than travel through the trees, most caravans and individual travelers do as much of their travel as possible by water, often going well out of their way to do so. The standard way of moving people or large cargoes long distances is to journey to the nearest settlement along a river, then take a riverboat up or downstream and through the Gold Leaf canal to the settlement closest to one's destination.

Halta cities near rivers maintain special arboreal docks. From platforms in trees growing on the riverbank, ladders and simple pulley elevators can be lowered to a boat, providing easy access to and from the settlement without ever setting foot on land. Even near the borders, Linowan raiders rarely attempt to attack Halta ships: the Fair Folk watch the rivers for ships bearing fake banners, people swimming to shore from damaged ships, or for any mortal foolish enough to attempt to prey upon a ship that bears the token of fae safe-conduct.

Most Halta rivers ultimately flow into Lake Sanazala, which is Linowan territory. As a result, most

Halta river traffic is internal trade between different Halta settlements. The Guild pays seasonal bribes to the Linowan to let their boats up the Silver River to Halta. These ships usually venture up the North Silver River to the Halta city of River Blossom, where goods are transshipped to riverboats and barges that carry them along the Golden Leaf Canal and into the heart of Halta.

The Golden Leaf Canal is a relic of the Old Realm. It follows a long arc about 200 miles from the Linowan border. This huge channel is 60 yards wide, 30 yards deep and lined with unbreakable glass. Enchanted locks and dams still operate by voice command (in Old Realm) after more than 15 centuries.

Although shipping distances can be long, the canal and the river channels are both very well maintained. Riverboats generally travel 60 miles a day with the current and 40 against it. However, traveling between rivers is a lengthy process, and so, journeys between settlements located off the rivers remain slow.


GOVERNMENT

Halta is both an elected and a hereditary monarchy, where the 500 members of the Council of Nobles elect the monarch from the close relatives of the previous queen. The current ruler is Queen Chaltra Evamal. She is 39 years old and has ruled Halta for the past 17 years. By ancient custom that became law, however, the queen must abdicate when she reaches 40. The politicking to select her successor has already begun.

Halta nobles are not hereditary. Prospective nobles must demonstrate their competence at everything from Halta history and law, to public speaking and animal handling. The Noble Council questions candidates who pass these examinations, and then it votes on which candidates become nobles.

Every three years, Chanta sees competitions for open seats on the Noble Council. The competition is free and open to all native-born Haltans. Nobles come from all walks of life. However, more than half of all nobles served as commandoes who fought against the Linowan. By tradition, the Council reserves a few dozen of its 500 seats specifically for ata-beasts. Nobles serve until they die, retire, or are forced to step down.

Senior nobles live in the capital city of Chanta and work with the Queen to decide large-scale policy. However, new nobles are assigned districts to administer. To prevent favoritism, the council never assigns new nobles to districts where they have lived. These regional nobles must make frequent reports to Chanta. Also, every three years, a few months before the competition



to become a noble, the residents of the noble's district rate her performance in a secret ballot administered by the local judges. These ratings are made public and the Queen provides both boons and reprimands for exceptionally good or bad ratings. One or more sufficiently bad ratings mean that the noble will be replaced, and sometimes even stripped of rank.

The Queen and the Council of Nobles make laws. Three departments—the Department of Halta, the Department of Religious and Natural Affairs, and the Department of War—implement those laws. Each bears responsibility for wide areas of Haltan life.

THE DEPARTMENT OF HALTA

The Department of Halta handles most of the everyday business of government, such as administering justice, directing public works and collecting taxes to pay for everything the rest of the government does.

JUSTICE

Judges receive their office by passing a wide-ranging series of tests resembling those used to qualify as a noble. (Once upon a time, nobles *were* also judges.) If the applicant satisfies a panel of judges that she has the wit and knowledge of Haltan law and custom to resolve disputes, the judges license her as a mediator who helps to resolve minor disputes. Local nobles appoint judges from mediators who practiced for at least six years.

Judges try all cases that involve serious crimes. The judge appoints mediators to assist every relevant person in the case to present his view most clearly and effectively. Only the judge directly questions witnesses or accused persons, and tries to sift the truth from the testimony. Once the judge feels that she has an accurate picture of events, she decides how to apply Haltan law to the situation. Judgments are final unless the defendant can persuade the local noble to review the case and perhaps send it for a single retrial by a different judge.

PUNISHMENTS

Minor crimes such as petty theft, vandalism or striking a noble or shaman-priest are punished by fining. Half the fine goes to the victim and half to the Haltan government. A period of indentured servitude to the government is a common punishment for greater crimes. Indentured criminals spend up to 10 years leased out as porters or other strenuous or potentially dangerous labor. Haltan law forbids lifelong slavery.

One step beyond indenture, criminals may receive exile. A special tattoo on the exile's cheek lets everyone know the criminal may not return to Halta on pain of

death. Judges reserve the death penalty for the most heinous crimes: returning from exile, paid assassins, demon worship, swearing allegiance to the Deathlords or their agents, mass murder, or betraying their fellows to the Linowan. The means of execution is to give the condemned to the Fair Folk.

As an alternative to indenture or exile, criminals can volunteer for military service on the Linowan border. They join dangerous commando raids into Linowan territory; a curse levied by a shaman-priest ensures their death if they desert. A criminal who would have received indenture must undergo six missions; an exile receives 12. Not many convicts survive that long.

INTERNAL SECURITY: MONITORS

Haltans seldom worry about Linowan infiltrators: few Linowan can move through the forest as easily or confidently as a Haltan native. However, Haltans who live within several hundred miles of the border worry about sneak attacks. Linowan warrior bands regularly slip along the rivers and through the forest to attack sleeping towns. Less often, the Linowan manage to sneak in spies and assassins disguised as foreign merchants or other visitors.

As a result, many Haltans distrust foreigners and only wish to deal with merchants from families that traded with Halta for many years. Haltans also accept Guild merchants with full credentials: the Linowan know better than to impersonate Guild officials. Haltans also trust really *obvious* foreigners from far beyond the Northeast, such as black-skinned traders from the Southeast or blue-haired Westerners, who cannot possibly be disguised Linowan.

The Department of Halta employs special agents known as monitors to keep track of suspicious foreigners. Monitors conduct all espionage outside Halta. They also seek bandits and any of the few Haltans who betray their nation to outsiders.

Monitors are unique among Haltan soldiers because they do not wear uniforms. Instead, they carry special electrum pendants that they can display openly or hide as they choose. Often, monitors dress as ordinary Haltans and simply spend time around visiting foreigners. In most cases, a monitor needs only a short conversation to decide that all is as it seems. Monitors who become suspicious share their fears with their fellows. The monitor team then discreetly spies upon the suspected bandit, spy or traitor. New visitors to Halta often receive a junior monitor as their guide. Of course, no one tells the visitor their guide also spies on them.



Monitors usually serve in settlements near the border or in ones that outsiders regularly visit. The Department of Halta also sends monitors to regions where they suspect banditry. Many commandos who wish to continue to help protect Halta become monitors when they retire.

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS AND NATURAL AFFAIRS

The shaman-priests of this department handle Halta's relations with its gods and the Fair Folk. The department's arborists, meanwhile, must approve any alteration made to a living tree, such as creating a new branch-path or weaving branches and vines to build a platform. Both sides of the department must work together, since Halta's people deal chiefly with the spirits of the forest, and anything done to a tree implicitly treads on the prerogatives of some god or elemental. Just about every town has at least one shaman-priest who can deal with the local elementals and Fair Folk, and one arborist to shape wood and boost the fertility of edible plants.

THE SHAMAN-PRIESTS

As the sanctioned spiritual leaders of the Haltan people, shaman-priests officiate at the cycle of Haltan religious ceremonies and rituals—everything from seasonal rituals to encourage the fertility of the forest to the personal ceremonies of marriage, birth, and death. The shaman-priests honor the gods and ask them for boons; they summon and negotiate with elementals; and make treaties and trading agreements with the Fair Folk.

All shaman-priests know at least some thaumaturgy, usually including Exorcism, Warding or Summoning. Their department also licenses private thaumaturges and sorcerers. All of the military and other official thaumaturges and sorcerers are shaman-priests on loan from the Department of Religious and Natural Affairs.

Shaman-priests wear loose jackets and baggy pants decorated with trim made from bright green fur and embroidered with passages from religious texts. They must also have a san-beast companion to symbolize their connection to the forest. If their san-beast companion deserts them or shows signs of mistreatment, the shaman-priest is carefully investigated by her superiors and may be stripped of her office.

GODS OF HALTA

The Haltan state permits most worship. The government openly tolerates ancestor cults, as well as cults dedicated to the Exalted, and even the worship of the five Immaculate Dragons. Only worship of demons and

the Yozis, the Deathlords and the Neverborn, or the Fair Folk is explicitly forbidden. Anyone who conducts civil crimes as part of worship can expect civil punishment; for instance, committing human or ata-beast sacrifice is tried and punished as murder.



All Haltans, however, must additionally honor the forest and its gods to some degree. Prayers to the forest in general go to the spirit called Glorious Jade Branch, who holds dominion over all of Halta (see below). Many people also worship Caltia the Eternal (see pp. 131-133), Yesryk the hawk god, the serpent-god Seris, and various animal avatars (See **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity**, pp. 56-57). They also frequently revere the lesser forest walkers and the dryads (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I**, pp. 36-38) of the trees that form an integral part of the worshippers' homes.

Of all these deities, the Haltans direct the bulk of their worship to Caltia the Eternal and her forest walker lieutenants. Caltia is the Haltan people's patron deity. Glorious Jade Branch is her active deputy in Halta. While Caltia rarely appears to the Haltans, she spends a few days every decade in Chanta. Glorious Jade Branch appears at the main temple in Chanta once a year, during their midsummer festival, and sometimes delivers boons to Haltans who have served the forest especially well. Much of this service to the forest involves attempting to expand it and to fight off the Linowan invaders who wish to destroy it.

The Haltan people enjoy such good relations with the forest gods because the Republic of Halta provides a great deal of aid to those gods. Among their other

THE UNWORSHIPPED

Although Rain Deathflyer and Silver Python helped found Halta, Caltia and Glorious Jade Branch played an equal role in shaping its culture and destiny. Not a single Haltan worships the two Lunars; they do not even know these secret patrons exist. The two Lunars and the forest gods rarely disagree strongly about anything, but they do not always agree completely. Tensions between them have both helped to shape Haltan culture and given the Haltan people greater freedom to forge their own destinies—which is actually what the two Lunars wanted. For all the reverence the Haltans offer to Caltia, she does not *own* their society.



duties, arborists and shaman-priests work with wood elementals to tend to the health of the forest, treating sick trees and making certain that Haltan cities and agriculture do not harm it. Others work with the military to help expand the Haltan forests.

The Haltan people form an important part of Caltia's strategy to defeat her rival, Golden-Eyed Jorst, by displacing both his deciduous forests and his Linowan worshippers. In return for this service, Caltia protects the Haltan people. Glorious Jade Branch has commanded a host of minor wood elementals and small forest gods to defend Haltan settlements from outside attack by either the Fair Folk or the Linowan. Other forest elements teach the shaman-priests and arborists.

THE HALTAN FOREST WALKERS

Six gods called forest walkers oversee the vast Haltan forest. Their leader is Glorious Jade Branch. In addition to being Caltia's favorite and one of her lovers, he is also the focus of Haltan worship. This makes Glorious Jade Branch significantly more powerful than most forest walkers. (Use the character sheet for a forest walker found in **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I**, pp. 38-39, except raise Glorious Jade Branch's Essence to 5, his Willpower to 7 and his Essence Pool to 95.)

Five ordinary forest walkers assist Glorious Jade Branch in his duties. Resilan, Whispering Needles and Shining Trunk oversee the portions of this forest that are dominated by the great redwoods: Resilan in the north, Whispering Needles in the center and Shining Trunk in the south. In addition, Tylokan Root Binder oversees the mixed forests that lie on the borders of Halta, while Steel-Skinned Ubil is the god of southern Halta's ironwood groves.

THE FAIR FOLK

Halta's relationship with the Fair Folk forms an important part of its culture. The wake of the raksha invasion left many Fair Folk hunting mortal souls throughout the Northeast. To prevent the Haltans from being wiped out, Caltia the eternal and her Forest Lords forced the Fair Folk to negotiate with the Haltans. As the War of Summer Conflagration proved, that treaty makes the Fair Folk one of Halta's most important lines of defense.

The Haltans signed their first treaty with the Fair Folk in RY 280. According to this treaty, the Fair Folk cannot attack or otherwise interfere with anyone up in the trees and must strictly avoid Haltan settlements unless invited to enter. As a result, the Haltan stay upon their aerial bridges and platforms, rarely ventur-

ing down upon the ground. In return, any mortal who walks upon the ground is fair prey for the Fair Folk and their hobgoblin hordes—and no one up in the trees may interfere *directly*. If a person can climb a tree to a height of at least two yards, she is instantly safe. People in the trees can lower ropes or come down to the forest floor to defend someone the Fair Folk pursue. However, the treaty specifically prohibits anyone up in the trees from attacking the Fair Folk on the ground, just as Fair Folk cannot attack anyone up in the trees.

Fair Folk who wish to climb up into the Haltan world must ask the permission of the local leaders. While they are in the trees, the raksha are fully subject to Haltan laws and customs. A few tribes of Fair Folk located in the Far East never signed these treaties. They occasionally attack Haltan settlements, but the Haltans know Fair Folk tactics and can call upon the aid of other Fair Folk to help them defend against such attacks. (The raksha on both sides think such little wars are grand fun.)

As part of their treaty, the Haltans also promise the Fair Folk a regular supply of captives. Any Linowan war-captives whom their people do not ransom within two weeks are taken deep into the forest and set free upon the ground. Less than a dozen of these many thousands of captives ever made their way free of the forest. In retaliation for attacks on both forest and their border towns, the Haltans also occasionally lead raids into Linowan villages near the Haltan border, where they take captives whom they turn over to the Fair Folk.

As described above, the Haltans use this same punishment for their very worst criminals. The list of capital crimes includes breaking the Fair Folk treaty by killing one of the Fair Folk who is on the ground while remaining up in the trees. Simply harming one of the Fair Folk under similar circumstances is grounds for immediate and irrevocable exile.

Haltans have mixed feelings about the Fair Folk. The fae help protect them from their sworn enemies, and yet they are also murderous slavers who eat human souls. Fear and disgust mingle with admiration and gratitude. Most Haltans cheer and celebrate upon hearing that the Fair Folk captured a large Linowan raiding party. Soldiers frequently praise military prowess of Fair Folk they see attacking Linowan raiders. What's more, the Fair Folk provide the Haltans with gossamer armor, weapons and various minor wonders in return for receiving criminals and unransomed war-captives, further increasing ties between the Haltans and the fae.



In Halta, cooperative Fair Folk who forsake the Wyld may live openly among humanity. Such individuals are forbidden to prey upon unwilling victims. However, they can legally exchange a wide variety of services for the right to feed upon dreams or emotions. Although many Haltans feel wary of fae dwelling among them, others see them as useful intermediaries and valuable protectors. The way Haltans live with Fair Folk gives the Linowan one more reason to hate their ancient foes.

A very few Fair Folk work as merchants or exotic entertainers. More commonly, the fae living among the Haltans are cataphractoï who work closely with the Haltan military. A few help the Haltans guard their cities, while others accompany Haltan raiding parties in their attacks against the Linowan. Every Haltan city has at least two or three Fair Folk protectors and most Haltan raiding parties include at least one member of the Fair Folk.

In return for their aid, these raksha demand first pick of all condemned criminals and war captives. The Department of Religion and Natural Affairs provides these fae protectors with special dwellings on the edge of the cities or towns. The protectors rarely interact with anyone except shaman-priests and members of specially trained elite military units who are experienced at dealing with Fair Folk.

Even though most Haltans only see members of the Fair Folk from a distance and quickly move away if one approaches, Haltans are far more familiar with the raksha than most other mortals. They vividly understand how useful and necessary their presence is. Elite military units usually carry at least one razor-sharp gossamer-glass weapon, while a few commandos wear feather-light gossamer plate. Wealthy Haltans may own various minor artifacts, exquisitely made gossamer robes, or pieces of scintillating glass jewelry.

Because they know the fae so well, however, few Haltans actually trust the Fair Folk. Worship of the Fair Folk remains a serious crime, as does giving anyone except unransomed Linowan captives and condemned criminals to them. In addition, the Haltans understand the value of cold iron weapons. Every military unit keeps some nearby in case their otherworldly allies suddenly become their enemies.

THE PLACE OF ESSENCE USERS

Haltans' cordial relations with their gods, elementals and raksha result in many God-Blooded and Fae-Blooded mortals. (By some estimates, one in every 1,000 Haltans shows at least a trace of supernatural blood, though only a fraction of those can channel Essence). In addition, Halta's 25 million inhabitants

include dozens of outcaste Dragon-Blooded (though with no distinct bloodlines; they appear completely at random). The government encourages the God-Blooded, Fae-Blooded and Dragon-Blooded to join the military or to become shaman-priests—their Charms obviously make them superior combatants and enable them to deal with spirits on a more equal footing.

However, none of these people are *forced* into such roles. Most who choose other professions excel in them. Halta has a moderate number of well-respected, half-supernatural scholars, nobles, thaumaturges, arborists and merchants.

In addition, Haltans may enlighten their Essence using thaumaturgy, or receive enlightened Essence as a gift from their gods. Caltia supports this abundance of Essence users, because it makes Haltans into better combatants. Enlightened mortals are still a tiny fraction of the population, but more than occur in most societies.

To accommodate these various Essence users, the Department of Religion and Natural Affairs runs an academy that teaches Terrestrial Martial Arts to enlightened commandos. (Naturally, they favor Wood-aspected styles such as the Ill Lily Style; see **Scroll of the Monk**, pp. 51-53). The department also has its own schools of thaumaturgy in Chanta and several other cities. The steep requirements for enlightened mortals, however, keep actual Sorcery quite rare. Necromancy is nigh-unknown, but considered a criminal act due to the unsavory nature of its chief practitioners.

Haltans regard their native Dragon-Blooded very highly. They regard Lunar Exalted as awesome but reclusive beings: the only Lunars they ever meet enter Halta with the permission of the two elders, and stay on their best behavior. Haltans never even heard of the Solar Exalted before the Bull of the North. With the Bull and his circle as the only examples in their national experience, Haltans tend to assume that any Solar must be an awesomely powerful warlord who leaves wrecked nations in his path—which is fine as long as the nation is Linowan, but the Bull was not so selective.

DEPARTMENT OF WAR

The Haltans regularly battle Linowan war parties that enter their forest. The Department of War also sends raiders into Linowan settlements. Part of the war involves planting redwood saplings on their forest's edges, in an effort to expand their territory—just as Linowan warriors try to cut down or set fire to the Haltan forests, making room for meadows, underbrush and deciduous forest.

For the last several centuries, Haltans and Linowan have killed each other in thousands of small battles, raids



and assassinations. In the Haltan cities and towns located near the forest edge, the people hate the Linowan with a deep and very personal passion. Most Haltans know at least one soldier who fell in a raid upon the Linowan or died defending Halta from a Linowan raid. Very few Haltans advocate any end to the war other than the total surrender or complete destruction of the Linowan people.

The Haltan military is organized along the model of the Realm's scales, talons, wings, dragons and legions. The Haltans, however, call these units leaves, twigs, branches, trunks and trees. Because of the limited use of bows in a thick forest, Haltan soldiers primarily use war boomerangs, javelins and atlatls (spear throwers) as their ranged weapons. For close combat, they prefer short, stabbing or crushing weapons—high in the trees, there just isn't room to swing a great sword or a battle-axe, and a sane person always keeps one hand free for balance and to grab at branches in case of a fall. Soldiers wear buff coats made from redwood fiber, possibly reinforced with judiciously placed disks or slats of ironwood or layered horn.

Soldiers garrisoned in Haltan cities and towns spend most of their time performing non-combat duties: they form Halta's primary fire-fighting force; deliver aid after natural disasters; repair the aerial bridges; and both patrol and repair the branch-paths between settlements.

THE HALTAN GUARD

All Haltan citizens begin four years in the military when they turn 18. Haltans regard this service as a sacred duty to both their nation and their gods. After six months in rigorous training, most soldiers spend the remaining three and a half years performing public works, or occasionally disaster relief. All soldiers serve in the city or large town nearest to their home unless they volunteer to serve at a border fort or to guard the towns nearest the border. Fortunately, many young Haltans volunteer for this duty in hopes of adventure and glory. The Haltan Guard contains about one and a half million soldiers, including some 80,000 ata-beasts and more than 10,000 beastmen. Most of these troops serve in garrisons of between 50 and 20,000 troops stationed in every city and large town. Only around one in 10 of these soldiers serve on the border forts.

When their term is up, some Haltans volunteer for additional terms. Others train to become part of the small, highly trained force of 60,000 elite troops known as the Haltan commandos. Becoming a commando requires a year-long training program that more than two-thirds of candidates do not complete. Part of this training includes learning to fight on the ground in



conventional battles. Every commando has two Melee and Thrown specialties in arboreal fighting, rendering them incredibly dangerous in their favored environment. Haltan commandos are the only soldiers who venture out beyond their forest. Would-be commandos swear to serve a 10-year tour of duty, after which they receive a generous pension (Resources ●●●).

THE BORDER FORTS

The Haltan's primary line of defense against the Linowan consists of a series of 25 forts that protect Halta's 2,500-mile western border. Each fort is the size of a town and contains more than 12,000 soldiers and support staff. Each one is a self-sufficient community.

These fortresses both protect the interior of Halta from attack and serve as Halta's primary defenses against forest fires set by Linowan raiders. To make them more difficult to over-run, all of the border forts are located between 20 and 40 miles from the actual border. Many forts also contain one piece of First Age weaponry, such as an implosion bow or lightning ballista; they are additionally armed with mundane light artillery such as light ballistae or sailcutters. (See **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. I—Wonders of the Lost Age**, pp. 130 and 132, for the Essence artillery and **Scroll of Kings**, pp. 137-138, for the mundane artillery.) Such border forts become the staging areas for frequent commando raids against the Linowan.

WARFARE OUTSIDE OF THE FOREST

Only commandos train to perform raids against the Linowan. The swift, silent commandos typically execute a single sneak attack on a Linowan target no more than three days from their forest's border. After the attack, the survivors flee back to the forest. Haltan commandos try to avoid lengthy battles on the ground.

UNDERCOVER MISSIONS

The commandos also train spies to infiltrate the Linowan. Spies live as warriors or workers in Linowan border forts and towns for as long as a decade. These spies make their reports using a wide variety of tactics. Some use coded messages hidden in lockets or the handles of knives to wandering traders who are actually disguised Haltan couriers. Others regularly sneak out to a set location to rendezvous with a Haltan message bird. The information they provide has proved invaluable in keeping ahead of Linowan threats.

LOCAL POWERS

The most powerful individuals in Halta are Silver Python, Rain Deathflyer and gods. The two Lunars, however, stay in hiding while gods have concerns apart from Haltan society. Many Haltans would say the most

immediately influential people are the Queen and the heads of the three government departments.

QUEEN CHALTRA EVAMAL

During the 17 years of Evamal's rule, she has guided Halta ably and gained many allies through her charisma and good judgment. She retires soon. A delegation of leading nobles asked her to stay in Chanta as advisor to the next queen, but Evamal says she doesn't want to make her successor a mere figurehead. Instead, she speaks about diplomatic missions to Halta's neighbors and its "interior abroad" of independent cultures.

Unlike most of her close allies, Evamal wearsies of war. She thinks the alliance with the Bull of the North was a debacle. As her retirement project, she wants to strengthen Halta's ties with other lands. In this manner, she hopes to gain allies who aren't Fair Folk or divinely-empowered warlords with unknown agendas. She has already started by sending Haltan aid to rebuild Ardeleth.

Evamal's unstated goal is to see the world beyond Halta's cities before she's too old to enjoy the adventure. She recently married her lover Syllon Owlkin, a God-Blooded and recently retired Haltan commando who encourages her in her plans. She does not know that Syllon is actually a relatively young Lunar Exalted and the personal protégé of Rain Deathflyer.


JURAK TREYNA

The head of Halta's Department of Religious and Natural Affairs holds his office by virtue of being chosen by its consistory of senior shaman-priests as the wisest and most powerful of their number. He is also the God-Blooded grandchild of Whispering Needles, one of the Haltan forest walkers. Jurak is one of the few shaman-priests to become an actual Terrestrial Circle Sorcerer, as well as a thaumaturge of exceptional skill.

Jurak is an excellent shaman-priest and passionately dedicated to both Halta and its forest. However, he is also more comfortable with trees and spirits than with mortals. He rarely appears to the public, the Council of Nobles or, for that matter, his department. Jurak lives in a two-dot Wood manse located several miles from Chanta. Officials and shaman-priests typically either send him message-birds or visit him in small groups to obtain his advice.

FLERA SKYWEAVER

The head of the Haltan Department of Warfare is an Air Aspected outcaste and the most visibly powerful high official in the Haltan government. She is also 207 years old. Until recently, she was the massively decorated and highly respected senior general of the Haltan Guard. When she hit 200, though, she decided



she was feeling her age and retired from active duty. At this point, the Council of Nobles unanimously voted to request her as the new head of the Department of Warfare. Flera is a skilled and masterful strategist, but far more cautious as a rear-echelon leader than she ever was as a field commander: she dislikes ordering young soldiers into danger when she is not there fighting alongside them. Flera also speaks out against continuing the alliance with the Bull of the North. The Solar warlord's power, charisma and ambition terrify her, and for the first time in Flera's life she lends credence to foreign stories about "Anathema."

RHALL GESRAN

The head of the Department of Halta is the youngest of the Haltan heads of government, being only 31 years old. Gesran rose so quickly in politics because he is exceptionally ambitious. He also hates the Linowan even more than most Haltans. Rhall grew up near the forest's edge; Linowan raiders killed his father and sister when he was away on his Test of Survival. While not directly in control of military affairs, his zeal to destroy the Linowan counter-balances Flera Skyweaver's caution. Rhall agrees with Queen Evamal on the need to gather allies for Halta, because he hopes to assemble a league that can conquer Linowan once and for all. To this end, he supports continued alliance with the Bull of the North.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Halta's position at the edge of the Threshold gives it relatively few neighbors with which to have foreign relations. With Linowan, it has endless war. With the cluster of smaller states to the south, it has peace, more or less. With the Fair Folk domains, it has uneasy partnership. Everyone else is too far away to present a promise or threat to Halta... or so the Haltans thought until their dubious alliance with the Bull of the North.

THE ALLIED NATIONS

Five of the largest states to the south of Halta are allies of the great forest country. Their people have the same reddish-brown skin and green hair as Haltans. They follow the same cultural pattern and arboreal lifestyle, but are not so prosperous or perfectly adapted to life in the trees. They lack Halta's extensive support from gods and elementals, and its pacts with the Fair Folk. On the other hand, humans can walk on the ground without becoming legitimate prey for the raksha. Of the five countries, Bloody River, Ardeleth and Jarrith lie west of the tongue of Haltan territory that ends in Kajeth, while Shandir Woods and Gossamer Stockade lie to the East.

Ardeleth, at the edge of the great forest, shared a border with the Linowan client state of Talinin (see p. 36); the two countries engaged in occasional proxy wars for their larger allies. The Bull of the North used Ardeleth against Talinin and Rokan-Jin, and he used it up. Ardeleth's towns are burned; the entire capital city of Fallen Lapis died in horror the inhabitants never understood. Halta's onetime ally is now as wild as it was after the Great Contagion.

Bloody River is a hilly forest land ruled by a triumvirate of gods called Gradig, Rejak and Dreaming Lotus. The trio insists on a strict schedule of prayers several times a day, even from children, and forbid worship of any other gods. Gradig is a god of metalwork; mining, smelting and forging are the country's chief industries. Bloody River takes its name from the reddish residue and slag that fouls its principle waterway. Halta gets much of its metalwork from Bloody River. The people live in stockades on the ground or on low platforms.

Gossamer Stockade is ruled by two Fair Folk who suffered exile from the Wyld after a power-play went disastrously wrong. The pair, called Obsidian Wave and Plestara, takes the role of stern but fair rulers. Several hundred obedient raksha commoners and hobgoblins do much of the scutwork and heavy labor for the kingdom. The human population pays a tax of dreams.

Jarrith is very much a smaller version of Halta, with a notable ironwood industry. Unlike Halta, however, the monarch does not abdicate at 40, and Jarrith has kings more often than queens.

Shandir Woods broke away from Halta because of political and religious differences, but made peace with its immense neighbor more than a century ago. The Shandirites honor the Yesryk above Caltia or other gods, largely because the hawk-god makes his aerie in the north of their country. The national priesthood consists entirely of hawk beastmen, and the royal family descends from a God-Blooded son of Yesryk.

THE FAIR FOLK

Three mighty nobles of the Fair Folk claim extensive territories on Halta's forest floor. The three hold quite different views about humans in general and the forest republic in particular.

Marika, Ruler of Rivers and Swamps, dominates the Fair Folk of western Halta. Her domain also extends deep into Linowan territory, all the way to Lake Sanazala. As such, Linowan raiders most often encounter Marika's subjects. While Marika's fae hunt mortals whenever they get the chance, they only assist Haltan forces on Haltan soil. The Water



Witch thinks of humanity as livestock: keep them fat and happy so they are tasty and easy to slaughter when the time comes. She expects someday to feast on the Haltans.

Sluluru, Lord of the Lower Branches, rules a broad territory in eastern Halta from the ruins of Yagan. He came to admire the Haltans for their courage and devotion to their gods, to the point of assisting Haltan villages against invasion beyond his treaty obligations. Sluluru decreed that the Fair Folk under his command would not hunt Haltans who set foot on the ground, and even fought his rival monarch Yseult when she ravaged villages in his territory. In return, Haltans trust Sluluru far more than the other fae; some Haltans even worship him. Playing the part of Halta's valiant ally works very well for the Lord of the Lower Branches.

Yseult, Queen of the Stone Forest, broods at Halta's northern extreme. She came to Creation in the great invasion, and felt the scourge of the Realm Defense Grid. She abides by the terms of Halta's treaties because Sluluru and Caltia swear to destroy her if she doesn't... but she never actually gave her word. Yseult *hates* humanity and seeks ways to annihilate Halta, but without revealing her own involvement until it's too late for retribution. She also loathes Sluluru and Marika for personal reasons.

None of the three monarchs have much respect for the fae of Gossamer Stockade: Yseult feels disgusted that raksha would dare to call themselves benevolent rulers; Sluluru disapproves of ruling humans directly; and Marika is simply amused by Fair Folk who take such pleasure in playing with their food.

COMMERCE

In addition to trading with the Guild and nearby nations, the Haltans send their own merchants to distant lands. Few Haltans want to leave the security of their forest, but these adventurous traders often achieve significant wealth and power selling rare Haltan woods, expensive spices and powerful medicinal herbs in Greyfalls, Nexus or places even further abroad. These traders also make excellent profits selling foreign luxuries and exotic animals to the ever-curious Haltans.

A few of Halta's beast trainers also leave their forests. They most often travel to the Scavenger Lands, with some going to the North. These beast trainers treat audiences to fabulous shows where their trained animals perform amusing or mysterious tricks. These animal trainers, along with their trained san-beasts,

travel in large boxy wagons drawn by the slender gray, green-maned horses that the Haltans breed in Kajeth and Resplendent Peak.

The best of these beast shows command great sums from nobles and magnates who marvel at the skill and grace of the animals. However, while these trainers freely display their animals' skills, they never willingly sell their prized beasts, and go to almost any length to retrieve beasts that are stolen. After all, the humans are not necessarily the ones who run the show: Sometimes the real master of the troupe is an ata-beast.

THE BULL OF THE NORTH

Halta's government allied with the Bull of the North for the express purpose of fighting Linowan and its client states. In the wake of that war, the Queen and her Council debate whether they should continue that alliance and seek regular diplomatic and commercial ties with the nascent empire of the icewalker warlord. Ominously, the Bull has not yet asked for such ties, which makes many nobles wonder whether the Solar warlord views Halta as an allied state or merely a territory he is not yet ready to conquer. They cannot wait long to make their choice, though, for the Bull will not wait long, either.

SAMPLE COMBAT UNITS

For other Haltan combat units and more information about Halta's military capabilities, see **Scroll of Kings**, pages 89-92.

HALTAN GUARD TREE, "THE HATRA HELLIONS"

Description: This unit is a typical example of the divisions of citizen soldiers stationed at each of Halta's 25 border forts. The soldiers wear buff jackets and wield short spears, chopping swords or short swords (equal numbers of each), plus javelins or war boomerangs. The unit's Might comes from its ata-beast members and san-beast pets, who give the unit unusual capabilities for scouting, passing messages and forms of attack. They are largely a defensive force, and act as a complete unit only in the event of a full-scale invasion, such as a massive push from Linowan.

Commanding Officer: Treelord Olazas Sharhoon

Armor Color: Gray and dark green camouflage pattern

Motto: "Many Fangs Kill Mighty Prey."

General Makeup: 2,000 arboreal light infantry with buff jackets and mixed weapons.

Overall Quality: Fair

Magnitude: 7

Drill: 2



Close Combat Attack: 2 **Close Combat Damage:** 2
Ranged Combat Attack: 2 **Ranged Combat Damage:** 2
Endurance: 5 **Might:** 1 **Armor:** 1 (-1 mobility)
Morale: 2

Formation: These soldiers are all extras. They cannot possibly fight in any formation closer than relaxed—a function of occupying tree branches and rope bridges, rather than standing on the ground. Most often, they fight in skirmishing formation. Their commander, an ata-baboon, has enlightened Essence and knows a Terrestrial martial art. He commands seven relays and four heroes clad in gossamer plate who can take command of 500-man trunks of troops. The tree has three sorcerers: an ata-strix who makes power dives at enemy leaders; a human with an artifact atlatl made by the Fair Folk (it makes its own darts); and a Fae-Blooded human with Charms useful for ranged combat. In the event of an attack on the border fort, alternate sorcerers operate the fort's light implosion bow and a pair of sailcutters. (See *Scroll of Kings*, pp. 135 and 138, for description and traits of atlatls and sailcutters.)

Note: Haltan Guards have minimal experience at fighting on the ground. If they must do so, their Close Combat Attack and Drill ratings drop by one.

HALTAN COMMANDO BRANCH, "TYLOKAN'S VENGEANCE"

Description: Commandos exist primarily to raid the Linowan or other external enemies. Regular commandos wear reinforced buff jackets. They wield short spears, chopping swords or short swords for close combat, and javelins, atlatls or war boomerangs for ranged combat. In addition, every commando carries a net or bola to capture Linowan prisoners for the Fair Folk. Every officer carries exceptional weapons and armor; any officer above twiglord has gossamer weapons and armor, and may well have enlightened Essence.

Every border fort has two branches of commandos such as this. A full branch of commandos would act as a unit for an attack intended to destroy an entire Linowan village, or in response to a major attack.

Commanding Officer: Delion Woodson

Armor Color: Gray and dark green camouflage pattern

Motto: Varies

General Makeup: 200 elite light infantry with reinforced buff jackets and mixed weapons.

Overall Quality: Excellent

Magnitude: 4

The Republic of Halta, a Magnitude 6 Domain

Military: 4 **Culture:** 4 **Government:** 4

Abilities: Awareness 2, Bureaucracy 2, Craft 4, Integrity 4 (+2 Tight-Knit Heritage), Investigation 3, Occult 4 (+2 Binding Agreement, +1 Supernatural Etiquette), Performance 4, Presence 2, Stealth 3, War 3 (Defense in Depth +3)

Virtues: Compassion: 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 3, Valor 3

Limit Break: Conviction **Current Limit:** 4

Willpower: 9

Bonus Points: 30 **External Bonus Points:** 18

Notes: Halta has a much lower population than, say, the Scavenger Lands as a whole, but it has very powerful supernatural allies. Halta is somewhat isolationist in its general philosophy and the vast majority of its military is only useful for defense. However, with a large army of citizen soldiers, it is one of the best-defended nations in the Threshold.

Queen Chaltra Evamal and Jurak Treyna are sorcerers with legitimacy, while Flera Skyweaver and Rhall Gesran are savants. Halta's bonus points derive mainly from its divine and secret Lunar supporters, while its external bonus points chiefly come from its treaties with the Fair Folk. The dominion's bonus points go to one dot each of Culture and Government, one dot each of Craft, Integrity, Investigation and Performance, its Binding Agreement and Tight-Knit Heritage specialties, and two dots of Defense in Depth. (Note that although Halta is potentially a Rival dominion, the bonus points in these specialties cannot be dissolved and reallocated to other traits: they represent intrinsic features of the dominion.) External bonus points provide Supernatural Etiquette and the third dot of Defense in Depth, plus a dot of Military and two dots of Willpower from certainty that the Fair Folk will destroy any ground assault.

In the event of a Limit Break, Halta immediately blames Linowan for its troubles—no matter what the real cause—and attacks its arch-enemy. To buy offensive aid from the Fair Folk, Halta may well make promises or offer bribes that the Haltans regret later.

Drill: 3

Close Combat Attack: 3/4*

Close Combat Damage: 3

Ranged Combat Attack: 3/4*

Ranged Combat Damage: 3

Endurance: 7 **Might:** 1 **Armor:** 2 (-2 mobility)

Morale: 4

Formation: *Asterisked values represent the commandos' skill in Haltan forests: each commando has two specialties in arboreal warfare for both Melee and Thrown. The branchlord is the God-Blooded son of Tylokan, one of the forest walkers (see p. 54). He knows the Ill Lily style of Terrestrial Martial Arts up to its Form-type Charm. For special characters, the unit has four relays, two heroes who can take command if Delion Woodson dies, and two sorcerers (snipers, really) with gossamer weapons.







CHAPTER THREE

STRANGE HYBRID FLOWERS

At the other extreme from sprawling Halta and Linowan, the East holds many city-states and small countries. Every country has its own quirks of politics, religion and culture. Some of the strangest cultures arise when humans live in partnership with other creatures, intelligent and otherwise. In the funereal city of Sijan, for instance, the living devote themselves to care for the dead. On the flying mountain of Metagalapa, humans rule a population of hawkmen and depend on giant riding-hawks for contact with the rest of Creation. The little country of Chaya lives in symbiosis with its gods, their sacred fire trees and a secret from the First Age.

SIJAN, CITY OF TOMBS

The city of Sijan is a quiet place. No festivals mar the silence save those celebrated for the dead. Around the city, the Plains of the Dead stretch for miles in every direction, filled with tombs and mausoleums. The city

itself is built in shades of black, gray and white, age trapped in time, death frozen and unchanging. Graceful towers rise above low-built tombs and wide empty roads, while taverns and feast-halls for the living lie deep beneath the city. Life pulses through the tunnels under Sijan, but death walks its streets and goes about its daily business.

THE HISTORY OF SIJAN

Sijan is so ancient that no one knows when it was first built. Some scavenger lords and scholars of First Age history claim it already stood before the Solars ruled. When the first Solars perished, Sijan arranged their funerals. Other savants deny this and suggest that the city's inhabitants promote the myth of an "eternal Sijan" merely to increase the city's mystique. A few crumbling tombs outside the city walls may predate the First Age, however, including mausoleums so ancient




that not even the morticians' archives record their age or who lies in them.

Sijan escaped most of the warfare that wracked the River Province through the centuries. The mortuary city remained consistently and prominently neutral, offering its services to all who could pay for them, and aid to none. Only once has a foreign army occupied Sijan, in RY 75, when the Imperial Legions posted a talon of soldiers. The Morticians' Order granted the Realm's "request," so long as the garrison did nothing to interfere with the day-to-day business of the city. The garrison vanished in RY 77. Nobody is quite sure what might happen if Sijan were roused to anger and to military action, and nobody is in a hurry to find out.

Sijan was quick to join the new Confederation of Rivers and had no objection to formalizing its trade and social ties with other nations. Unlike most city-states in the Confederation, however, Sijan disclaims all military parts of the alliance. The Morticians' Order hires a few scales of Seventh Legion troops to patrol the city-state's boundaries and discourage banditry, but that's a *private* contract. Even should the Scavenger Lands face another invasion, Sijan apparently intends to remain neutral. The Morticians' Order does not care about the squabbles of the living, and who would be mad enough to invade the City of the Dead?

Although Sijan played no role in such recent events as the fall of Thorns, save to bury the dead who were dispatched for their care, the arrival of the Mask of Winters and the growth of his shadowland prompt some unwelcome comparisons. People look from the Deathlord and his undead troops to Sijan and its haunted tombs and wonder whether there could be a connection between the two. Suspicion grows that Sijan might have given the Deathlord information to assist his invasion, or that Sijan supplied the army of risen corpses that march at the Mask of Winters' command. These are slanders. Sijan exists to care for the dead, not to use them. Rumors and suspicions, however, have never depended on the truth.

In keeping with its strict neutrality, the Morticians' Order remains on polite terms with the Mask of Winters and the other Deathlords, going so far as to prepare and embalm concubines and other particular corpses that are sent to them. They also keep up good relations with the rest of the Confederation and even deal with the Realm. Only the heretics of the Realm need Sijan's services, though. The Immaculate faith mandates comparatively simple funerals, with no mausoleum, no grave goods, no death money and no loyal servants sacrificed. Rumors that certain highly placed Dynasts secretly commissioned the Morticians' Order



to design a funeral fit for the Scarlet Empress are no more than rumors—for the moment, at least.

GEOGRAPHY

Sijan lies between the River of Tears to the west, the Avarice River to the south and the shadowed forest called the Black Chase to the north. Two bridges across the Avarice lead to the Plains of the Dead, as the vast cemeteries of Sijan are called. Only the living may cross the Rising Bridge to the east, also called the Bridge of Mortals. Only the dead cross the Setting Bridge to the west, also called the Bridge of the Fallen. Countless hearses cross the Bridge of Mortals, as do parties of young morticians sent to cut back weeds and brush in the Plains of the Dead. The Bridge of the Fallen also sees heavy traffic, though chiefly at night.

THE PLAINS OF THE DEAD

Across the Avarice, the Plains of the Dead stretch for miles, almost to the horizon. Enormous tombs, some the size of small towns, rise up from the earth. Some of these massive structures are built for a single hero or ruler, to honor them... or to appease them. Other mausoleums hold the populations of towns or whole cities, or all the warriors who fell in great battles. From such huge structures, the tombs grade down to villa-sized crypts for noble houses and modest family plots. Sijan offers burial for every income.

Nature steadily reclaims the mausoleums, tombs and burial yards of Sijan—especially near the rivers, where the soft ground and rampant undergrowth quickly consume any monuments that are not scrupulously maintained. The valley of Sijan was once much deeper and steeper, but millennia of building and overgrowth have stacked tombs, crypts and bones on top of one another in such profusion that the valley floor has risen more than 100 feet. Expert morticians periodically descend into the labyrinthine spaces beneath the crypts to maintain these underground tombs and propitiate the buried ghosts.

THE BLACK CHASE

The Black Chase is a shadowland, an eerie and still forest of dark-hued pine and black ash that begins a mile or so north of Sijan. Sounds are oddly hushed in the Black Chase, and it is easy to get turned around or lost in these woods. The paths change and seldom cover the same ground twice. Any attempt to blaze a new trail fails, as marked trees shift to new locations.

Two roads pass through the Black Chase. One follows the eastern shore of the River of Tears and is relatively safe, at least in the daytime. The other road,

DEATH IN THE EAST

The East holds hundreds of tribes and nations, with at least 1,000 different ways of celebrating, venerating or mourning a loved one's passing, and almost as many for the death of an enemy. The professional funerists of Sijan serve them all. Sijan's jet-black funeral galleys ply the rivers of the Scavenger Lands unmolested by brigand, pirate or robber baron. The silver bracers of the Morticians' Order are a common sight in most cities.

The people of the Scavenger Lands believe that this degree of influence is entirely appropriate. The dead are not an abstract concept, and ghosts are not myths. They are a powerful and often dangerous reality. Only proper adherence to the rituals of death can lay them to rest and keep them at peace. An experienced warrior would no more consider abandoning a personal foe's body without proper burial than leaving a living opponent with a clear shot at her back.


which few mortals willingly travel, leads deep into the heart of the forest. If anyone alive knows what lies at the end of the second road, they do not speak of it. Stories tell of those who strayed from the river road and wandered so deep into the Black Chase that they could no longer see Sijan or the River of Tears. The details change with each telling, but all such stories agree that those who enter the forest seldom return.

Ghosts sometimes manage to make their way from the Underworld and through the shadowland to reach the lands of the living. Some immediately journey on to Sijan, while others have business elsewhere.

Black ash wood also comes from the forest. The Sijanese frequently use it for paneling and furniture; the wood resists damp and rot. Certain woodcutters living on the fringes of the forest make a family tradition of removing deadfalls and occasionally cutting down living trees, though they also take care never to go too deeply into the Black Chase. Loggers know they are not welcome in this forest, and even taking lumber from the outskirts of the woods risks disaster.

Most people see black ash as unlucky, so the market is not widespread. That deathknights favor the wood for the way it resists their occasional eruptions of necrotic Essence only increases its baleful reputation. Still, a few collectors become obsessed with black ash





and pay high prices for the small quantities that come on the market (from the Black Chase or other Eastern shadowlands). Sometimes they pay more than cash. A grim tale in current circulation tells of a Guild factor who resolved to panel his entire manor with black ash, eventually sacrificing his five daughters to the Yozis in order to complete the task.

THE BEAST OF THE CHASE

The ghost of an ancient behemoth, a dread hekatonkhire, inhabits the deep woods of the Black Chase. The creature spends most of its time in a dull stupor, only stirring when it feels trespassers in its territory. Then, the hekatonkhire's breath rattles the still branches of the black forest, and the creaking of its bones echoes like the breaking of branches in the wind. Ghosts who risk travel in the Chase are often caught, their souls snatched up and devoured, before they even know the monster is upon them. Survivors cannot describe the creature, having seen nothing more than the huge limbs rising taller than the ancient trees of the forest in which it dwells.

THE CITY

The city of Sijan itself is divided in two: the part for the dead, which is above ground, and the part for the living, which is below ground. Although living

morticians and visitors may traverse the streets of Sijan, the buildings above ground are all tombs and mausoleums. The city's workshops, housing, taverns, council rooms and other facilities for the living stay out of sight, underground.

Upper Sijan, as people often call it, is hardly empty. Even though living people do not dwell there, people always pass through by night and day. Morticians must go out to tend the crypts, to arrange funerals and to perform various other rites. Visitors wander the streets freely, marveling at the architecture or seeking tombs of importance to them. The city stays just as busy at night, if not more so, with the bobbing lanterns of morticians moving through the dark streets and among the towers and graves in glimmers of light. The streets themselves are tangled and confused, with no clear order to the placing of tombs and monuments. While most streets stay wide enough for a funeral cortege to pass, narrow alleys twist between high buildings or cut through small groves of willows and pines. It's easy to navigate toward the high towers at the center of the city or to head outward toward the Black Chase or the rivers, but difficult for strangers to find a precise location elsewhere among the buildings.

Stairwells throughout the city spiral down from the surface to the underground levels. There are no visible guards at the top, but usually, at least one sentry sits by the gate underground, chanting liturgies to appease wandering spirits that might pass by. Some of

THE MUSEUMS OF THE DEAD

Sijan's libraries are famous, but difficult and expensive to access. The city's museums are less well known, but much easier to visit. Over the centuries, grateful clients and families donated irreplaceable artworks and relics of history to the Morticians' Order, or gave them as payment for elaborate funeral services.

Having little use for these trophies, the morticians built museums to house them for the public—the dead as well as the living. While many ghosts jealously guard their treasures in their tombs, others take pride in displaying their possessions and enjoy watching other folk admire their grave goods. (When ghosts donate their grave goods in this manner, placards request that viewers offer a brief prayer as repayment for the ghost's generosity.) Some museums are general, while others concentrate on a given period of history or on cultures now vanished from Creation. In this way, Sijan remembers not only individuals who died, but also nations and societies that passed away. Some members of the Morticians' Order even seek out treasures or bits of history to place in the museums. A few Deadspeakers commission their ghostly clients to recreate long-lost artworks, so that the living may see at least some traces of forgotten history.

The Morticians' Order typically places museums in elaborate tombs on the surface of Sijan that were paid for but never inhabited, or that were commissioned but never paid for in full. Although heavily guarded (usually by the Black Watch), the public can enter most museums for a small fee. The morticians often recommend them as a diversion to the families and retinues of clients who must undergo lengthy preparations prior to interment.



the stairwells are wide and broad, permitting funeral processions to pass easily. Others are narrow and small, barely wide enough for a single person in full armor to descend. In most cases, anyone who wishes to enter may do so. Sijan welcomes all who require its services... or might, someday. If a guard sees or hears an obviously dangerous and violent person approaching, she rings a crystal bell that hangs by her stool and then retreats behind her iron gate and locks it.

BELOW THE SURFACE

Lower Sijan is even older than Upper Sijan. While some visiting scholars and loremasters claim to recognize tell-tale signs of First Age craftsmanship in the dark stone passages and black ash-paneled rooms where the living reside, others say the place is far older even than that. The air stays fresh but chill, as cold as stone. The walls are slick and smooth, made of marble, onyx or obsidian, and the tread of countless slipped feet keep the floors well polished. Glowing crystals light the more frequently used corridors and rooms, while torches or lanterns serve elsewhere. The living quarters and general areas of the city hum with everyday urban noises such as commercial transactions or teachers instructing pupils. Behind these everyday sounds, however, chanting voices and funeral hymns echo in the spaces under Sijan. This regular murmuring background whisper penetrates all but the deepest or most remote of catacombs.

The living city forms a rough set of concentric rings. The innermost ring holds those rooms dedicated to receiving guests (both living and dead) and organizing the business of the city. This area includes Sijan's famous libraries, the great halls used for ceremonies that require hundreds of morticians and the workshops for embalming and necrosurgery. It also includes some taverns, brothels and other accommodations for living visitors. While the local trade among the Sijanese for such things is low, it does exist.

In the next ring outward, for perhaps a mile in each direction, lie the living spaces of the native Sijanese. Each family has a shrine to its ancestors—as well as the tombs on the surface of the city, of course. The lecture halls, temples and classrooms where junior morticians learn their trade are also found in this general area, together with the storerooms that hold the spices, chemicals, masks, robes, surgical implements and other necessities of the rites of death.

Further out still lie stranger rooms and hidden secrets. Some of them are tunneled down from the surface, descending from locked tombs through long

passageways and stairwells to chambers far beneath. Other passages spiral out from the city for labyrinthine miles. Here are doors sealed with the magical materials and barred with ancient curses. Some temples are opened only once in a century, when blood and wine are poured out on the floor to satisfy ghosts and gods who could shake the earth if they were to fully awaken. There are old passages where even the most expert and knowledgeable of morticians fear to walk, that shall keep their secrets until the Solar Deliberative is raised again. While patrolling guards turn wandering visitors away from the entrances to these places, few regular wardens are set. These places need none. The inhabitants take care of themselves, and any fool who should intrude upon them will not return to complain.

THE SLEEPERS OF SIJAN

Some offerings and obsequies help the dead resist forgetfulness and strengthen their connection to the living. Others encourage the dead to let go and accept Lethe, secure in the knowledge that they did not live and die in vain. Sijan performs both sorts of ceremony—whatever a client requests.

Powerful ghosts can raise an unholy ruckus if they don't get the reverence they crave. The Mortician's Order accommodates such extortion. Only a few ghosts, however, are so terrible that they must be kept not just mollified, but asleep.

Who are these terrors of the Underworld, too strong-willed to accept Lethe and too malevolent to remain free? Some may be ghosts of long-dead Celestial Exalted who died in utter madness. Some may be nephwracks who gained dreadful power through millennia of service to the slain Primordials. The most frightful possibility, though, is that they may be component souls of the Neverborn themselves—hekatonkhires, bound in slumber back in the First Age and kept asleep ever since by the Morticians' Order. Indeed, it is at least conceivable (though there is no real evidence for the theory) that Sijan and the Order exist specifically as a prison for these god-ghosts, and the whole funeral business grew out of this necessity. As always, Storytellers must decide the truth for themselves



OUTSIDERS IN SIJAN

Given how many visitors, clients and corpses pass through Sijan, the city must provide a wide range of convenient accommodation for its guests, both the living and the dead. These rooms and complexes (occasionally rising all the way to the surface) all stay in the center of Sijan, close to the main facilities of the city. This area is, by far, the liveliest part of Sijan, full of visitors talking a little too loudly and being a bit too obviously enthusiastic in an attempt to ward off the chill of death and the somber shadow of ghosts.

Clients of the city who come to arrange contracts or who bring the dead with them for treatment or burial are housed and fed free of charge. The precise nature of their accommodations depends upon their social rank and dignity. Royal emissaries, servants of Deathlords, ambassadors from city-states and such ilk receive elegant suites, while the less important or wealthy are allotted clean yet simple rooms in good taste. (They can, of course, rent better-quality rooms if they so desire, and can pay for it.) Such hospitality doesn't stretch into free housing for years, though. After the funeral ends, or the arrangements are made, Sijan expects its clients to take their leave and politely encourages them to do so.

Visitors who come for other reasons, or simply for tourism, must pay for their food and residence. Prices resemble those found elsewhere in Creation, and there are usually some spare rooms in the city. (If all the visitors' accommodation in Sijan were occupied, the situation would truly be dire, as it would only occur as the result of plagues or huge wars striking a huge swath of Creation.)

The Sijanese treat all visitors politely, but the degree of actual friendship depends on the visitors' reasons for their sojourn. Clients enjoy every courtesy, as do those who visit to honor ancestors or some revered figure of the past. For instance, generals and would-be warrior-kings visit Sijan to pray and make offerings at the tombs of famous heroes and conquerors, in hopes that these great commanders might aid them in their own wars.

Scholars or other people with a plausible reason for visiting Sijan are directed to the appropriate libraries or contacts, then left alone to get on with their business. Pure tourists receive a somewhat cooler reception; local guides point them toward Sijan's great museums to occupy themselves.

Requests to "see the skeletons" or similar stupid and disrespectful attitudes toward the honored dead cause locals to stonewall—politely—and to call the Black Watch if necessary. Anyone who is foolish enough

to suggest that he is a tomb robber, or indeed that he associates with people who maliciously disturb the sepulchers of the dead in any land, finds the Sijanese slamming doors in his face and calling the Watch at once. (Scavenger lords who visit Sijan should be tactful about how they describe themselves. "Scholar" or "historical researcher" is usually acceptable.)

The city's taverns, brothels and similar businesses depend far more on visitors than on the native Sijanese for their trade. They veer between charging as highly as they can (as the only local sources of entertainment) and cutting their prices to the bone (to steal business from their neighbors). Friendly locals can point visitors to establishments that currently charge low to reasonable prices, or even offer to put the visitors up for the night themselves. Local tradition holds that it is a meritorious act to expose outsiders to Sijanese culture and gently remind them that death is an inevitable part of life.

Notable among the Sijanese who deal with outsiders are Blushing Spring, a middle-aged woman who runs the city's most expensive inn, and Wandering Heron, a man who runs the city's best inn. Blushing Spring is far more politely servile to outsiders than is Wandering Heron. This means that she gets more custom from the Observances sending clients to her establishment, but Wandering Heron has better kitchens and a far better wine cellar.

THE MORTICIANS' ORDER

The Funereal Order of Righteous Morticians and Embalmers, to give them their full and formal name, is the closest thing to government that Sijan possesses. Sijan has less need for government than most cities, but more need for scheduling. The whole city realizes the importance of appeasing the dead who are already buried there, arranging for the funerals of those who have recently arrived, and preparing for future arrivals. Being Sijanese isn't just a nationality, it's a vocation.

The Morticians' Order consists of three divisions called Observances. Each Observance has its own set of duties, some of which overlap. The leaders of the three Observances meet once a month in council to decide the course of Sijan's government and to consult with the dead Observances who have gone before them. This is largely a ceremonial duty, though, compared to their jobs as chief administrators of their respective divisions.

All members of the Morticians' Order wear heavy gray gowns, with thick overshawls to protect them from Sijan's ubiquitous chill. Heavy silver bracers tell a given mortician's rank and Observance. With experience and exposure, outsiders can learn to determine a mortician's

branch and rank by the ornamentation and design of his bracers, though few visitors acquire enough close and regular contact with the Order to learn the patterns.

FUNERISTS

The members of the Funerists' Observance are Sijan's masters of ceremony, rite and ritual, the supervisors and, in some cases, designers of the city's many funeral services. Funerists know the burial rites of dozens of cultures, which rituals are needed to propitiate the dead and what forms should be observed based on the client's status in life. In some cases, new cities in the Scavenger Lands commission a master of this Observance to design burial rituals for their people.


Funerists are learned scholars and trained memorizers, as well as practiced public speakers and artists of performance. A tale in Sijan (and repeated elsewhere, though not in front of Dynastic ears) claims that the Scarlet Empress commissioned her own burial rite several centuries ago, before the influence of the Immaculate Order became so pervasive, in case her unfortunate demise should actually come to pass. These days, another story has it that certain highly placed members of the Funerists' Observance now prepare to travel to the Realm to carry out that rite.

The current leader of the Funerists' Observance is Lucid Moonlight, an elderly, mild-mannered librarian with huge crystal lenses perched on the end of his nose and half-gloves on his hands. He is a scholar of the highest order, able to recall mortuary customs from hundreds of different lands and cities at a moment's notice. Lucid Moonlight also applies that attention to detail to the organization and scheduling of his own Observance. He is not himself especially creative, but he knows toward which of his assistants he should direct visitors who need newly designed rites. Lucid Moonlight's highest personal enjoyment, for which he has little time, lies in researching obscure and forgotten mortuary rites. He is married, with children and grandchildren, all of whom followed him into the Funerists. His assistants include Clear Forbiddance, an artistic woman who has many friends among the Funerists and the Mortwrights; and Willow Leaf, an aging man with an irascible temper and harsh manners, but a great gentleness toward departed souls.

MORTWRIGHTS

The morticians of the Mortwrights' Observance prepare bodies for final disposition. The Observance boasts the world's best embalmers, morticians, necrosurgeons and fleshcrafters. They find their services in high demand





among certain Deathlords, who send their concubines to Sijan to be beautified and their own necromantic experts to Sijan for lessons. While the Deathlords' own servants far surpass the Mortwrights at military necrosurgery (with what results, see **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Abyssals**), the Sijanese excel at delicate repairs and alterations of dead tissue.

This Observance is full of practical artists, who are both used to working with the raw matter of skeletons, corpses and broken bodies, and able to visualize and create the ideal face and body that the corpse should possess. Mortwrights have the most contact with the minions of the Deathlords; most Mortwrights adopt a strictly professional attitude toward them. However admirable the technical skills of the Deathlords' necrosurgeons, the Sijanese find the intended applications of their work... none of their business, and they would like to keep it that way.

The current leader of the Mortwrights is Lorskier Pinebranch, a hugely muscular man capable of breaking a femur between his fingers or shattering a skull in one hand, though he is all care and precision when it comes to his work. From the earliest days of sweeping up nails and hair clipped from corpses, he always knew that the Mortwrights' Observance would become his home. Pinebranch places professionalism toward the corpses in his care above any other concerns, which caused some worry among the other Observances. After all, without proper concern toward their spirits as well as their bodies, one runs the risk of falling toward the Deathlords and their heresies. Pinebranch is a loyal servant of Sijan, though. He has no spouse or children but several young nephews and nieces frequently come to stay with him to learn about his work. His assistants include Elegant Knife, a necrosurgeon with prematurely gray hair and a disturbing sense of humor; and Sweet Plum, a talented young woman who needs more experience but who will likely become one of the premier embalmers of the city in future years.

DEADSpeakers

The smallest of the three Observances manages contact between the living and the dead. These mediums can discern the wishes of those who left no testament or whose families either cannot or will not come to a consensus about the burial. This Observance also guards the techniques used to raise ghosts, to bring back the dead to unlife, and the rituals of exorcism that banish the restless dead to the Underworld. The Deadspeakers do not like to exorcise ghosts—but the covenant between the living and the dead works both ways. Just

as the living must be punished for despoiling the dead, sometimes the dead must be prevented from unjustified attacks on the living. The Deadspeakers treat exorcism as a last resort, though, when all persuasions fail.

The Deadspeakers are the most secretive of the Observances. Few people who visit Sijan ever see one, unless they came specifically to contact a particular ghost. The younger members of the Observance have the most contact with the living, and do most of the scheduling and negotiating. The older Deadspeakers are much too busy talking to the ghosts.

Silken Veil is the current leader of the Deadspeakers. Like every member of her Observance, she spends far more time in communion with the dead than with the living. She regards those people around her who still happen to be alive with a gentle tolerance. Silken Veil is nearly crippled by arthritis, but refrains from dosing herself with drugs in order not to hamper her perceptions of the dead. Her tall body is now stooped with age, her long hair has turned pure white, and her movements betray the pain in her joints. She is the most informed person in all Sijan on current affairs in the Underworld, and she uses that knowledge for the city's good. On the other hand, Silken Veil is also one of the most likely people in Sijan to hire outsiders to perform deniable actions or missions on the city's behalf. Her assistants include Topaz Embers, a quiet middle-aged man who has long endured prejudice due to a streak of divine blood in his family, which shows in his yellow eyes; and Grieving Shadow, a woman who seems morbid even for Sijan, and who worries other Deadspeakers by her intense commitment to passing on messages demanding vengeance.

PROPITIATING THE DEAD

Scheduled ceremony and ritual fills every day in Sijan. There is a constant list of current funerals to perform and old ghosts to propitiate. Tombs must be tended, weeds cut back, tablets cleaned, incense burned; day and night, apprentices and full morticians move throughout Sijan, keeping the houses of the dead in good order.

In some parts of Sijan, particularly in the Plains of the Dead, no one still living remembers the funerary arrangements and rituals of those inhumed. Even the Observances who reign in the Underworld might not recall some of the niceties about how to propitiate the ancient dead. Those places where no one knows how to perform the necessary rites to keep the dead resting quietly often become very dangerous for the living. The few ghosts that still remain amid these ancient



bones sleep uneasily, if at all. They may take out their resentment at being thus forgotten on any living mortal they discover.

Fortunately, these wrathful ghosts also tend to hunger for some show of respect and remembrance, even if it isn't the one ordained by their culture. A sacrifice, however performed, *may* mollify the ghost enough that it explains the ceremonies it wishes performed. After that, a promise to refurbish their burial places and perform the appointed rites usually sets them at ease. If an individual forgets or breaks that promise, however, the ghosts' anger is as vast as their age. (One of the most frequent themes among stories told to Sijanese children is that of the traveler or young mortician who promises to repair a tomb, but then forgets or shirks his work. In all such stories, the neglectful mortal dies a horrible, shameful death at the hands of the ghosts when he finally returns.)

Unfortunately, the dead do not always *remember* the details of their funeral rites—whether because so much time has passed since they last witnessed the ceremony, or because the ghost itself is a bit senile or insane. Nevertheless, these ghosts have little patience with claims that the rituals have passed from living memory. Recovering these lost but vital details can be exceedingly difficult, especially when the ghosts come from societies that predate the current Age.

Not everyone in Sijan is a mortician, but everyone has a duty to the city. Children pluck up weeds and dust funeral tablets as part of their daily chores. Men and women who don't belong to the Observances support those who do: trade with other cities brings in food and necessities; alchemists prepare the embalming fluids for the Mortwrights; scribes and scholars collate and file materials for the Funerists; and healers and negotiators provide backup for the Deadspeakers. While the Observances are undoubtedly the most respected and valued citizens of Sijan, everyone has a place in the City of Tombs.

FAMILY AND CUSTOM

The Sijanese greatly value their families, both those currently alive and their dead ancestors. Family is a chain that reaches forward and backward through the centuries. The dead guard and guide the living, and the living honor and propitiate the dead. Marriages are for life, and the Sijanese expect children to take care of their parents and grandparents in their old age.

The Sijanese treat marriage as a strictly civil contract, celebrated before the ancestral altars of both families. Marriages are usually arranged: parents pick

SIJAN IN THE UNDERWORLD

The Underworld's version of Sijan rises in terrifying glory. Much as in the living world, the living and dead mingle in the ghostly city. In fact, the chief difference between them is that the Underworld's Sijan is larger and grander, while its walls and towers rise much higher.


The Observances rule the Sijan of the Underworld, just as they do the living city. In fact, the living Observances serve their dead elders: careers in the Observances do not truly begin until after death. Through the Deadspeakers, Sijanese ghosts contact their living associates, pass along messages, request offerings and involve themselves in living politics.

The dead throng the Sijan of the Underworld—not just the ghosts of those buried in Sijan, but immigrants from other parts of the Underworld. The ghosts buy and sell offerings and looted jade, while desperate ghosts from across Creation pay vast sums of funerary gold to have messages carried to the living Observances.

In addition, Sijan contains several shadowlands entirely free of Deathlord influence. The largest is, of course, the Black Chase. Ghosts with enough courage and strength can pass into the living world through the eldritch forest. The labyrinth of catacombs and long-buried vaults that spreads out and down from Sijan also contain a number of tiny shadowlands—single chambers where the worlds of the living and the dead intersect. Only senior members of the Morticians' Order (whether living and dead) know the locations of these vaults and how to unlock them, but they provide another way for the twin Orders to coordinate their business.

For further information about the Underworld city, see **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. IV—The Underworld**.

a suitable spouse for their child or at least give him a choice of suitable spouses. If young couples develop an attachment before either is formally married, then the socially proper thing to do is to let the families arrange matters and act as if they planned it all along. When two people fall hopelessly in love but their families refuse to let them marry (perhaps due to feuds between ancestral ghosts), they can only leave Sijan. Even death



is no romantic haven; after all, their families wait for them on the other side.

Children in Sijan grow up loved and cared for, but they are expected to join the same trade as their parents—unless, of course, they are lucky enough to enter an Observance. While junior morticians teach general classes in reading and writing, they watch the children for potential recruits to their Observance. Funerists seek memory, scholarship and performance; Mortwrights look for precision, deftness and artistry; and Deadspeakers watch for spiritual gifts and sensitivity to the Underworld.

At the age of 12, children are apprenticed to a particular trade. Some children go with the Observances, while others learn trades concerned more with the living. Even though children often take up their parents' occupation, they apprentice with someone else, someone who can judge their progress more objectively. Over the next three years, a child may change her apprenticeship without any disgrace; the Sijanese accept that talents and inclination may take a while to manifest. By the age of 15, however, children are expected to settle firmly as apprentices in the career in which they will spend their lives.

At the age of 20, children become adults. Those studying in the Observances take their full oaths as morticians and don plain silver bracers on their arms, marked only with the sigil for their particular Observance, but without any signs of rank. Other Sijanese gain their own tokens of adulthood. This is the earliest age at which an inhabitant of Sijan can legally marry and is often the age when a descendant takes over a significant part of the family trade.

Some Sijanese choose a graceful suicide when they feel old age creeping up on them, while others work until they drop, but the Sijanese accept both extremes. The important thing is that their spirits should join their ancestors and that the living family should not forget them. Their descendants lay them to rest according to their previously expressed choice of funeral customs, and the neighborhood joins to celebrate another joyous passage from life to death.

GENDER IN SIJAN

Sijanese society does not segregate occupations by gender: all are equal in the eyes of the dead. Anyone can take up whatever trade suits them best. When dealing with cultures that have strong views on gender, however, the Sijanese ensure courteous negotiations by presenting an expert mortician of the proper sex. This is not so much politeness to the living as politeness to the dead.

If the deceased wished to have his funeral organized and carried out only by men or only by women, who are the Observances to go against his wishes?

It is perfectly acceptable for the Sijanese to have lovers of either gender, as long as any marriage remains undisturbed and the family ancestors present no objection. As with most cases of social manners, the dead become the ultimate arbiters.

WORK AND TRADE

Morticians in Sijan either negotiate contracts through their Observance (in which case the Observance gets a percentage of the fees) or directly with their clients. Only the experts or the desperate attempt the latter: experts become famous enough for clients to seek them out by name, while the desperate take any sort of job, however dangerous or reckless. The Observances do their best to see that all their members find reasonable employment, and Sijan certainly has enough clients to keep all three Observances constantly busy. The unskilled or the lazy end up with barely enough work to keep them housed and fed, though.

The regular, living needs of Sijan are met by booksellers, tailors, smiths, innkeepers, grocers and all the other various trades that the living require. The Observances fund some of these professions—morticians often employ their relatives as incense-makers, shroud-tailors and the like—while others are purely privately run. Trade is slow, but regular. Nobody gets rich as a Sijanese butcher, baker or candlestick-maker, but nobody goes bankrupt, either. Sijanese shops are quiet and polite, and little bargaining takes place. Outsiders who set up shops in Sijan find themselves reasonably well accepted by the locals.

Sijan's docks are the most visibly busy part of the city, and form a district of their own (which the Sijanese think is not *really* part of their city). Black hearse-galleys come and go, sending out morticians and bringing back clients. Other ships, however, outnumber them ten to one. Sijan occupies a superb location for commerce, near the juncture of the Silver River, the Avarice and the River of Tears. It's safe. The Guild is only the largest mercantile concern to use Sijan as a trade hub. Most of the sailors and merchants never go past the dockside warehouses and hostelryes. The city's funereal influence also reaches the docks, though. Compared to most ports, the dockside saloons of Sijan are quiet indeed.

CULTURE AND ART

Almost everyone in Sijan is literate, well-read and skilled at some art or craft. Of course, their culture focuses on a very specialized area: death and funerals,

in all possible forms. Even children chant skipping rhymes along the lines of, “One for ash, two for stone, three for silver, four for bone, five for coffins, six for steel, seven a secret I never reveal...”

The Sijanese enjoy humor, romance, epic dramas, stories of heroism and all the usual kinds of art in which people elsewhere take pleasure. They simply view art, craft and culture through their cultural lens of dealing with death. Humor is morbid. Romances last beyond death. Stories of heroism involve submitting to the will of fate and remaining loyal into the Underworld. Tales of battles and war all end with careful descriptions of the funerals of slain combatants. Furthermore, while Sijanese appreciate the technical skill of outside culture, they tend to keep their esoteric tastes to themselves, or only share them with fellow enthusiasts. The taverns for outsiders in Sijan are the most likely place to find minstrels or performers with repertoires from beyond the City of Tombs. Visiting dignitaries often bring their own entertainers, as some antidote to the city’s atmosphere.


The Sijanese treat cooking as a fine art. The highest form of cookery involves the proper use of spices, with tastes varying from moderate use of a spice against a very plain background, to complicated throat-searing spices in combinations that could nearly wake the dead on their own. In deference to the palates of visitors, meals for guests are usually muted and lack the true glory of Sijanese spicing. A friend of local citizens knows that they truly appreciate him on the day that he has to swallow several jugs of milk or eat several fistfuls of bread during a single meal.

CRIME IN SIJAN

Despite the strict oaths they swear regarding conduct, the wishes of the dead, the sanctity of their role as guides to the afterlife and the need for circumspect behavior, a small number of morticians abuse their role and occasionally their clients. Naturally, this happens more often with the bodies of the destitute or those who lack family or friends to protest such behavior. Even the rich and powerful, however, are not immune to the actions of a sufficiently deranged mortician. The Morticians’ Order rarely needs to punish such crimes—the ghosts of Sijan see to their own justice. The screams of miscreants who violate the rights of the dead echo in the far caverns beneath the city for months or even years.

Sijan also sees occasional tomb robbing. The Sijanese view this offence with the same disgust and horror that other folk reserve for wholesale murder, violent pederasty or temple defilement. Any ordinary





Sijanese does not condone tomb robbing, does not take bribes to ignore it and certainly does not take part in it. The people of Sijan, and the Black Watch in particular, have centuries of experience in dealing with this particular crime. They know how tempting some of their ancient mausoleums are, so they keep a tactful but sensible eye on outsiders, especially outsiders who loiter or explore in a suspicious manner. Tomb robbing carries an automatic sentence of death, which the Black Watch carries out on the spot. Offended ghosts may assist in carrying out the sentence. There is no such thing as justifiable tomb robbing to the Sijanese, and it would take a truly legendary eloquence to persuade them otherwise.

Both visitors and locals sometimes commit petty theft, assault and even murder. The Sijanese believe that crimes against the living, while regrettable, simply cannot compare to crimes against the dead. The local guardsmen investigate the crime; a junior Deadspeaker seeks witnesses among ghosts who may have been present; then a tribunal of elders—one from each Observance—sentences the criminals. Crimes are punished by payment to the victim or service to the city. If the criminal expires before the term of his service, then his ghost is bound to serve the city to the end of his sentence.

RELIGION IN SIJAN

Sijan treats the gods with detached respect. After all, many funeral prayers request that some god or another accept and protect the souls of the departed. Only an utter fool would deny the reality of the gods or their honored place in Creation. This doesn't mean that the Sijanese engage in active worship.

The visitors' quarters and public places offer many anonymous, easily rededicated shrines, where anyone may address a quick petition to specific deities or the gods in general. Sijan's cellars and storehouses hold the ritual paraphernalia of a thousand gods, whatever the morticians might need for specific funerals. Only a pitiful trickle of Essence rises from the city to Yu-Shan, however, compared to the flood of Essence-rich prayer that goes to ancestors and other ghosts. The Sijanese give the gods their due, but they give the dead their reverence.

From time to time, visiting priests try to promote the worship of particular deities. The Sijanese are never less than polite (except in the case of violently blood-thirsty rites) and let the priest use some spare rooms as a temple if he so desires. They just won't bother to attend services or offer prayers. After a decade of living underground in Sijan, in a constant atmosphere of

funerals, with no success to report and nothing except cool politeness to reward their efforts, most missionaries decide they would rather encourage faith somewhere else. *Anywhere* else.

MILITARY AFFAIRS

Sijan has no real military, because it needs none. The Morticians' Order does not care about the squabbles of the living—save to bury the dead afterward.

The city does maintain a small town guard to quell disturbances, keep order and ensure that foolish or desperate bandits make no attempt to sack the city. Although the revenge of the dead for such an act is as sure as the turning of the seasons, Sijan exists to protect and care for the dead, not to rely on them for protection.

Most of Sijan's guardsmen are mortals. They wear dark reinforced buff jackets and carry staves and swords. A sizable number of undead—ghosts who know how to animate corpses—also serve in the guard. The most famous of these are the Black Watch, nemissaries in superheavy black plate armor who wield massive swords of dark steel. Black Watch members are often ghosts who suffered grave robbery and now delight in silently stalking the city for tomb raiders. (Rumors even abound that some of them were originally enslaved by Deathlords but fled their bondage and found shelter in Sijan.) Ghosts also serve in the guard as spies and lookouts, scouting the area and directing the nemissaries to sources of trouble.

For more detail on the Black Watch, see **Scroll of Kings**, page 97. For Sijan's military capacity in the Underworld, see **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. IV—The Underworld**.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Sijan is and always has been neutral. While the city belongs to the Confederation of Rivers, it has no obligations of mutual defense. It deals with the dead and caters to the dead. That is all. As such, Sijan has good political relations with most of the Scavenger Lands.

Great Forks is the notable exception. The deities of Great Forks, and by extension the city itself, hold Sijan in disdain. While the gods are not actively hostile to Sijan, its ships are not welcome at Great Forks' quays, and citizens of Great Forks don't seek funerals in Sijan—at least, not publicly. Sijan simply ignores Great Forks whenever possible and interacts politely where necessary (at Confederation Council meetings, for example). In private, many Sijanese coldly deplore the folly of those who give their devotion and Essence to gods instead of to their ancestors.

Sijan, a Magnitude 3 Dominion

Military: 1 **Government:** 3 **Culture:** 2

Abilities: Awareness 3 (Blackmail Official +3), Bureaucracy 2, Craft 1, Integrity 3, Investigation 2 (Ancestral Secrets +2), Occult 4 (Supernatural Etiquette +1), Performance 1, Presence 2 (Religious Conversions +2), Stealth 2

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 3, Valor 1

Virtue Flaw: Conviction **Current Limit:** 2

Willpower: 7

Bonus Points: 15 **External Bonus Points:** 9

Notes: Sijan's perpetual neutrality keeps it a Background Dominion; it most likely remains quiescent unless it or the dead are threatened. Its bonus points (chiefly derived from its importance in the Underworld) go to one dot each of Awareness, Investigation, Occult and Stealth, plus its Investigation and Occult specialties. Sijan's external bonus points come from its trade connections and its mortuary business throughout the East. These points go to Sijan's second dot of Presence and its Awareness and Presence specialties. Lucid Moonlight and Silken Veil are both potential savants.

Sijan's insistence that its loyalties lie only with the dead are at once its greatest strength and greatest weakness. In Limit Break, the Morticians' Order ignores even the most blatant threats to the city and to Creation while it busily refurbishes old tombs, builds new mausolea and makes deeply imprudent deals with Deathlords.

The Realm views Sijan as heretical but harmless. Sijan views the Realm as safely far away.

As mentioned, Sijan accepts business from Deathlords. Many in the city, however, see a possible conflict in the near future: not just with the Mask of Winters, but also with other Deathlords who might want to co-opt Sijan forcibly as an ally. Sijan is both vulnerable and defended in ways that other parts of the Scavenger Lands are not. The living city depends on its inhabitants in the Underworld to guide and guard it. Many powerful ghosts dwell within the Underworld city's high-strong walls. If Underworld Sijan were conquered, however, the living city could not hope to resist a powerful foe. Sijan seeks to remain neutral but the morticians know this may not be possible much longer. Some within the walls say Sijan should surrender to the Deathlords if that's what it takes to continue serving their obligations to the dead. Others argue that no servant of the Deathlords could ever be free to *properly* minister to the dead. Arguments take place behind closed doors, and the dead themselves are afraid.


METAGALAPA

As the Fair Folk invasion ended and the Contagion died out, few noticed the miracle that occurred in an Eastern mountain range. Mount Metagalapa, the greatest of the Ravanashi Peaks, somehow ripped free from its earthen roots and soared several hundred feet into the

sky, where it remained fixed. Modern savants explain this as a fusion of the raksha-borne Wyld energies in the region, the Essence from the Realm's recently deployed defenses collecting in the valleys between the mountains and... okay, they have no explanation. Whatever the cause, Metagalapa's mysterious ascent stranded a few hundred people on the mountain.

Those trapped on Metagalapa were a diverse lot: local miners and shepherds; a patrol of a Shogunate soldiers (by coincidence, another fragment of the Seventh Legion that was currently founding Lookshy); the bandits that patrol pursued; a walled retreat school for the children of the wealthy that had been carefully hidden from the Contagion; and a few other miscellaneous refugees from plague and the raksha invasion.

This motley population faced many trials from the alpine climate, the difficult terrain and the scarcity of familiar food. The greatest threat, however, came from savage birdmen who saw the flying mountain as a secure nesting site—and the people and their flocks as a convenient source of food. The new Metagalapans pulled together, though, and found a way to survive. In time, they even subdued the hawk-folk and made them servants. Most importantly, though, the Metagalapans bred the oversized hawks that also nested on their mountain, and the rocs—giant condors—that are some of the largest creatures in the skies.



About a century ago, these birds finally became large enough for a person to ride—and the Metagalapans finally restored contact with the rest of Creation. They found a world changed beyond recognition from the old tales they remembered. The rest of Creation found a strange new skyborne culture of eager traders and dangerous raiders. The tiny nation of Metagalapa has become an important player in regional politics and war. The Metagalapans found their lives changed, too, in ways that not everyone likes and that could tear their society apart.

METAGALAPA'S ISOLATION

Of course, Metagalapa was never truly isolated: the hawkmen came and went as they pleased, hunting for food and carrying brushwood to the mountain for their nests. The Ravanashi range also held other communities of miners, shepherds and other folk. While the Metagalapan humans could not leave, they could easily have arranged for communication and limited trade with their neighbors...

...Except the hawkmen drove their neighbors away. The Metagalapans had to protect their flocks (and children) from the hawkmen and eventually force a peace with them; they had no other choice. The people on the surface found it easier just to move away. For at least 500 years, no human except the occasional prospector came within 50 miles of Metagalapa, and no one imagined that other humans lived on the flying mountain.

THE LAND

The flying mountain extends about six miles by four miles, with the highest peak reaching a mile above its base. Several subsidiary crags and ridges surround that central peak. The whole enormous mass floats about 700 feet above the shallow crater that once held the mountain's base. The alpine climate resembles that of the rest of the Ravanashi Peaks, with warm days but cold nights due to the altitude. The highest peak has permanent snow.

The terrain is a patchwork of barren, rocky crags, meadows and pockets of evergreen forest on the lower slopes. Very little land is suitable for plowing. The Valley of the Roc, a square mile of lush blue-green grass and hardy pines near the bottom of the southern slope, forms a notable exception. Unfortunately, this most temperate and beautiful region on the mountain

is also the most dangerous, being a favorite haunt of its namesake.

Metagalapa sees little rain, but clouds frequently wreath the mountain and leave their moisture in the form of dew or frost. A few ponds collect in the mountain clefts; a few creeks tumble down the mountain, supplying power for water-mills. Metagalapan settlements include large cisterns for collecting water from the intermittent streams.

THE UNDER

Metagalapans seldom think about the shallow crater left from where their mountain went aloft. "The Under," however, is an area of more than 20 square miles whose interior stays in constant shadow. Shade-loving plants grow around the fringe of the Under, but the interior is barren. It's also icy, as water collects in the crater but is never warmed by the sun. Only a few people have ever explored this uncanny place, and they didn't stay long. No one really knows what the Under might hold.

TUSHIPAL

Although many small settlements cover the mountain, Metagalapan life centers on the cliff-side town of Tushipal. The town itself houses about 4,500 people, with six to eight occupants per home. Tushipal consists of three wards: the Shelter Ward, the Publica and the Aerie. Outside the city proper extend the Working Precincts.

THE SHELTER WARD

Homes are arranged one atop another in terraces, with entrances on the roofs. Most homes are carved out of the mountain itself, with only minor embellishments and reinforcements. Over the centuries, more sophisticated floor plans and outer flourishes appeared, turning the Shelter Ward into a hodgepodge of diversely painted and designed homes. The refinement of any one family's home largely depends on that family's expertise, though some families help one another with renovations.

Several apartments are reserved for use by visiting diplomats and soldiers. Tushipal statutes limit the total number of foreigners permitted in the city at any one time to 40.

THE PUBLICA

The public life of Tushipal is centered here, in one rambling building that houses all of Metagalapa's civil, military and recreation facilities. The central courtyard of



this structure functions as a general meeting area for social gatherings, weddings, funerals and public addresses.

The Council of Riders meets under a great dome. The doors of this large chamber stand 15 feet high and weigh three tons apiece. In recent years, this hall has been lushly decorated, appointed with furniture of rare woods and expensive fabrics, all donated by former hawkriders and traders who joined the Council.

The Scholia houses the hawkriders' training barracks, where selected children begin their training as hawkriders. It also functions as the hawkriders' central offices.

The Communita is a maze of offices and tunnels burrowed into the mountain. The city guard offices, maintenance and record-keeping facilities can be found here, but few can navigate the labyrinth easily.

Finally, the **Cafeteria** services all Metagalapans who work in the Publica. It offers food of markedly higher quality than that served in the Aerie's dining tents or the grill pits of the mines and the farms. The cooks regularly make valiant attempts at exotic foreign dishes.

THE AERIE

The highest ward is the stationing point for all on-duty hawkriders and the support personnel who care for the mounts. The Metagalapans do not use cages or leashes in the Aerie, as they keep only trained birds here. Therefore, all mounts can exercise as they like and return at their pleasure. While there is a danger of birdmen ambushing lone hawks out for a midday flight, the mounts typically exercise as a group.

The dining tents serve average-quality local fungi, breads, milk and other staples.

WORKING PRECINCTS

Most of Metagalapa's workers travel outside Tushipal daily for work and return at night. The grill pits in the working precincts serve grilled fungi and unidentifiable stews. While the food is usually safe for consumption, it is not a joy for the palate.

The dozen or so active mines near Tushipal employ roughly half of Metagalapa's workforce. Iron and silver are the primary ores, but the Metagalapans found small deposits of other ores elsewhere on the mountain. The huge arrays of smelting-mirrors also rise near the mines.

The Metagalapans breed hawks and great rocs for beasts of burden and battle steeds. They tend these animals in open-air cotes built on terraces near the mountain's base.

Hawkman servants may enter Tushipal in limited numbers. The Metagalapans built several dormitory-style facilities outside the city to house them and their handlers. These facilities have been carefully designed to give bird-

men the illusion of freedom. While trained hawks and condors are permitted to fly off at will, birdmen live in locked hovels and adhere to a regimented daily schedule. After all, even trained hawkmen have wild tendencies and have been known to escape and never return.

METAGALAPAN SOCIETY

Everyday life on Metagalapa is full of toil. The flying mountain just barely manages to support 4,600 humans and about twice that number of hawkmen. About two-thirds of the hawkmen now live in association with humans, domesticated as a servile underclass.

THE PEOPLE

Metagalapan humans look like typical Easterners, with tan skin and a preponderance of red-to-blond hair. Curly or wavy hair is notably more common than usual. What other Easterners find most notable, however, is that Metagalapans are short. In part, this is because the Metagalapans select small, wiry, lightweight people as hawkriders—but the average Metagalapan stands just five feet tall, instead of the six feet common in the East.

The hawkmen look like birds that someone didn't quite finish transforming into human shape. Their legs bend the way birds' legs do, with avian talons for feet, and their arms are wings with claw-fingers at the wing-joint. Their heads are completely those of huge birds of prey.

After more than 700 years, these avian folk still present many mysteries to the Metagalapans. They can learn Forest-tongue but prefer their own strange language, which some Metagalapans learn but seldom well. Raptorial instinct still dominates the hawk-folk's thinking, giving them vicious dispositions. They use tools, but do not make them unless a human supervises; but the hawkmen who still live on the mountain peak, away from humans, weave shelters of twigs and branches, or use such wattle-work to make natural caves and overhangs more snug. Some hawkmen remain completely wild, either on Metagalapa itself or on other mountain peaks.

SUBSISTENCE

Most effort goes into feeding the population. Most crops grow poorly in the mountains, but the Metagalapans manage to cultivate barley, oats, cabbage and turnips. Huckleberries and blackberries grow on the lower slopes. Only a tiny percentage of their mountain, however, is suited for any sort of farming. More importantly, the early Metagalapans discovered how to grow edible fungus in caves and played-out mines; this became the staple food of Metagalapa.



In the mountain meadows and scrub areas, the Metagalapans graze sheep, goats and alpacas. Human Metagalapans eat little meat; but they need their beasts for milk, wool and as pack animals (in the case of the alpacas). The hawkmen must eat meat, but the Metagalapans learned to stretch the supply by mixing blood and ground guts with fungus and flour to produce a cake that the hawkmen can stomach—but the hawkmen still prefer to hunt for their food as much as they can. Every day, hundreds of hawkmen fan out from Metagalapa to seek what game they can. The Metagalapans would like their hawkmen to start their own herds on the ground, but the hawkmen seem temperamentally incapable of tending a flock instead of eating it.

Most Metagalapans eat one major meal, dinner, at about midday, with smaller meals of bread and cheese in the morning and evening. A typical dinner consists of one part fungus, one part salad of cabbage or turnip and one part bread. For centuries, berries were their only sweets. Only in the past century have sugar and spices come to the mountain, and only to the tables of the privileged.

MINING

Mining is the next great industry of Metagalapa. Both humans and hawkmen work in the mines and the foundries. Veins of several ores run through the mountain, though chiefly iron and silver. They no longer use charcoal to smelt their ore; there isn't enough wood on the mountain. Instead, they use sunlight concentrated by huge steel mirrors coated with silver. The diversity of ores—and a lot of practice—enables the Metagalapans to produce excellent steel and other alloys.

FALCONRY

A smaller but highly respected segment of society cares for the giant birds upon which Metagalapan life now depends. Originally, the Metagalapans bred giant hawks for falconry—sending them out to hunt and bring back their prey. Increasing numbers of Metagalapans work as stablehands, plumers, feed specialists and trainers to maintain a healthy stock of riding hawks and great rocs.

The hawkriders themselves number about 200, with 50 or so merchants. This small elite brings in so much wealth, however, that several decades ago they became the ruling class of Metagalapan society.



Up until 100 years ago, everyone worked simply to stay alive. The only significant social division lay between humans and hawkmen. They lived by barter. Since the Metagalapans restored contact with the surface world, some citizens—notably those involved in foreign trade—have amassed a wide range of luxuries. People without such goods feel increasing discontent, as their mining efforts largely make trade possible in the first place.

CULTURE

For all their burgeoning reputation for brigandage, Metagalapans insist upon both honor and honesty. Telling the truth and keeping your word becomes very important when you absolutely cannot get away from people you betray, deceive or simply disappoint and annoy. Metagalapans shun people whom they feel have lied, cheated or slacked at their work (seen as cheating the community). They do not accept apologies: talk is cheap. Anyone who wants to make good a slight must make amends through a gift of food, labor or some other concrete benefit. The Metagalapans also have a system of dueling to resolve conflicts: straightforward fistfights, throwing blunted javelins tipped with red ochre paint to show who *could* have killed the other, or—when anger grows deep enough that only real blood will do—fully armed and armored battles to the death. When true hatred arises, the Metagalapans prefer that one person dies quickly, than that a conflict festers to endanger the community. Dueling is one of the most frequent causes of death among Metagalapans... though it does help them control their population.

The Metagalapans judge outsiders by the same standards of honesty and square dealing. An outsider, however, has no access to the traditions that limit and resolve conflicts. Thus, the hawkriders feel no compunction at massacring outsiders they regard as enemies... or prey.

Metagalapans place little stock in formal education, though some families do teach their children to read and write, as a matter of tradition. The school that once graced Mount Metagalapa was dismantled long ago for building materials, but many books survive. They are available for loan from the Scholia. The Lookshyans were surprised to find some Shogunate-era books they'd never seen before. Merchants now find literacy useful as well, for recording contracts. Most Metagalapan culture, though, is handed down in the form of traditional songs, stories and pictures chased in metal plaques.

RELIGION

Metagalapans are not particularly religious. They maintain a very basic prayer-favor relationship with

local minor gods, though only the few priests who intercede between Onibala and the citizenry feel any real religious devotion.

The Immaculate faith many of the original Metagalapans shared died out centuries ago, though they keep the five pillars as guidelines for moral conduct. They maintain no belief in a reward for honorable behavior, considering honor a goal that exists for its own sake.

Onibala, the Mountain Princess: The only god regularly revered by Metagalapa is an eight-foot-tall, ice-winged woman with blue skin and seven haloes of colored wind. While she despised the Metagalapans at first, punishing them with icy weather, she soon warmed to them and allowed them to worship her. She lives in a cloud-borne castle above the highest peak; Metagalapan priests built her temple directly below it.

Onibala shows her favor by issuing rainbows and calm weather, while her anger is unmistakable as violent storms of driving hail and lightning. This moody goddess sometimes pays close attention to Metagalapa for weeks, reacting to the smallest misstep or noble act. Other times, she goes for years without casting the Metagalapans a glance. As a result, Metagalapans aren't sure how best to honor her. She does appreciate prayers, which seems to be the only sure-fire appeasement.

Rage of the Birdmen: Every score years, Rage of the Birdmen comes for vengeance. In his fortnight-long visit, he slays and devours humans who have gravely abused his people. He arrives dematerialized only and acts through any convenient birdman, who attains a godlike strength and cunning when so possessed. After the god slakes his thirst for vengeance, he journeys to the Council of Riders' chambers to scold, threaten and extract oaths of gentle treatment for the coming years.

Birdman handlers, and others who frequently deal with the hawk-folk, quite rationally fear Rage of the Birdmen. His revenge does much to limit how badly the Metagalapans treat creatures that are—to be blunt—their slaves. Many poor individuals spend years in prayerful penitence to placate Rage of the Birdmen for some injury they did to a hawkman. Stranger attempts at appeasement include giving the offended birdman one's daily ration, inviting the birdman into one's home or even (in the case of those who live in Tushipal) going so far as to sneak the birdman into the city and illegally hosting it for weeks on end. Whether such elaborate acts of contrition always placate Rage of the Birdmen cannot be said, but some have breathed a sigh of relief after being passed over with only a glare.



ESSENCE WIELDERS

Metagalapans occasionally Exalt as Terrestrials, thanks to the Seventh Legion members trapped when the mountain took flight. While this rarely happens more than once in a generation, the Metagalapan population includes about half a dozen Terrestrials of various ages. No aspect is more common than others, and Dragon-Blooded can appear in any family. The hawkriders try to recruit any Dragon-Blooded, no matter when they Exalt. A few outcaste Terrestrials and Seventh Legion retirees double the number of Dragon-Blooded on the flying mountain.

The Exalted are not the only Essence wielders, though. Onibala sometimes enlightens the Essence of her priests or other Metagalapans, sometimes for no reason the mortal understands. The Metagalapans also include several God-Blooded, including offspring of Onibala herself. These enlightened mortals become the mountain's best thaumaturges. They particularly focus on the Art of Husbandry, which helps them breed their hawks and giant condors.

PROMINENT FAMILIES

While there is no emphasis on lineage among Metagalapans, a few old families have risen to dominate certain aspects of society.

Wathustret: Many prominent guards, hawkriders and Council members come from Wathustret stock. The family dates back to Wathustret Ux Uree, a warstrider taizei of the Seventh Legion. He led a scale of men onto Mount Metagalapa in pursuit of the Gusho Foxes, a marauding league of bandits. The Wathustrets pioneered many aspects of Metagalapan society and designed many laws and traditions that guide daily life.

Since regaining contact with the Seventh Legion in Lookshy, the Wathustrets' star has climbed even higher. They hosted the first foreigners on Metagalapa and commissioned the visitors' apartments. Members of this family travel to Lookshy more than any other. Because of this, some Metagalapans doubt the family's true loyalty. The few Wathustrets who considered rejoining the Seventh Legion in Lookshy found that without Dragon-Blooded members, they would never achieve any real status. While they admire Lookshy and all that the Seventh Legion accomplished over the centuries, the Wathustrets understand that they belong on Metagalapa.

Alibeth: This family dominates Metagalapan trade, with seven family members acting as trade ambassadors and 11 working as mine administrators. While they all spend part of their life in the mines, most eventually

move on to business. This family's history dates back over 400 years to Alibeth Surmoon, an ingenious miner who developed many time- and labor-saving procedures still used today. Some Metagalapans now criticize the Alibeths for the riches its members acquired as gifts from trading partners, items they display unapologetically. Most Alibeths have no desire to leave Metagalapa.

Barrat-Su: The Barrat-Su are politically dangerous. They have a history as gadflies, and now speak out loudly against contact with the outer world. The Barrat-Su family is valued for its skill at mustering carefully reasoned arguments for whatever position they hold. Their parents educate all Barrat-Su children, such that not only can they read and write, but also by adulthood they have mastered logic and oratory. The family's hawkriders are famously loyal and know Metagalapan law by heart. As a result, they often find places on the Council of Riders. The Barrat-Su do not endorse foreign trade or the alliance with Lookshy; they argue that foreign powers will seek to exploit Metagalapa and perhaps destroy their nation in the process. Their loud and eloquent denunciation of foreign luxuries makes them popular with laborers and others in Metagalapa's emerging lower classes.

Vallux: This once-insignificant family attained considerable power by managing Onibala's temple for the last three generations. The family now includes a few of Onibala's own God-Blooded (directly, or married into the family), while the goddess has enlightened the Essence of a few other Valluxes. While the Valluxes make a show of devotion to Onibala alone, behind the scenes their elders carry on a deep rivalry with both Metagalapa's Dragon-Bloods and the Council of Riders.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

For centuries, most Metagalapans were content to live a life of toil and simple pleasures on their mountain. After all, it wasn't as if they had any choice. Most Metagalapans still never leave the mountain: only hawkriders and traders can ever expect to visit the world below. Even these patriots are not overly fond of leaving the mountain, though. The outer world still seems very strange to them. Not many Metagalapans want to extend their little country's rule; and although they now have the means to do so, no one suggests that they relocate *en masse* to the ground.

The Metagalapans have few friends, even among those with whom they do regular business. Thanks to their insularity and their reputation, however, their enemies are many. They have not had enough contact



with most nations to determine any kind of definitive stance in the region, though.

Greyfalls: The Metagalapans' only contact with the Realm comes through Greyfalls, a city-state with which they have traded amicably for decades. Thus far, the Metagalapans trust Lookshy's lead in their dealings with Greyfalls and do not consider them exemplars of the Realm.

Halta: The southern edge of Halta lies at the furthest reach of the hawkriders' range. Early contacts went badly, despite both societies' reliance on trained animals. The Haltans are outraged by the way the Metagalapans treat their hawkmen (a different breed than the Haltan hawk-people, but still). The hawkriders responded by raiding the Haltans' southern allies. They have robbed the city of Kajeth a dozen times in recent years.

Lookshy: Lookshy became a great friend to Metagalapa, in part because the mountain-dwellers' folk tales turned the Seventh Legion into legendary heroes. Soldiers from Lookshy periodically journey to Metagalapa to train the mountain-folk's soldiers and learn to coordinate their own tactics with the hawkriders. Lookshy also opened up several lucrative trading opportunities. Some of the prominent families would like closer relations with Lookshy, though most Metagalapans are glad that their ally is a safe 2,000-plus miles away.


Metagalapa recently obtained a heliograph system from Lookshy, which it uses whenever possible to contact customers, to take orders, to arrange drop-off points or for other business dealings. As Metagalapa and Lookshy are military allies, the heliograph also gets used for strategic planning, scheduling, intelligence updates and a myriad of other applications.

Thorns: Most Metagalapans do not understand the politics of death, as the ghosts of the Metagalapan dead never return to the mountain. Given this fact, the Mask of Winters is just a scary story from far away. Metagalapa agrees to loan a small number of hawkriders to Lookshy should the Mask of Winters invade, but otherwise, they are determined to stay out of harm's way.

COMMERCE AND BANDITRY

Metagalapa produces some of the best metalwork in their section of the East. The mountain contains high-quality ore, and smelting it with sunlight possibly reduces some impurities in the metal. It is their only export. In return, they seek foodstuffs, cloth and anything else they cannot produce on their flying mountain—but the difficulty of transport puts the emphasis on small or lightweight, high-value items.





The hawkriders' duties include scouting new markets. If a town, tribe or village seems amenable to trade, merchants come on roc-back with a load of samples for a trial barter. When the Metagalapans decide they have a trustworthy partner, they schedule additional pickups and deliveries. Since they still prefer to minimize contact with the surface, most trades take place below Metagalapa itself: the Metagalapans drop ingots of metal off the mountain's edge to the traders below, and rocs or teams of birdmen pick up the payment. A heliograph system obtained from Lookshy helps the Metagalapans arrange these deals.

If the hawkriders feel they do *not* get a good deal—especially if they feel the surface folk insult them or try to cheat them—they bring in hawkman reinforcements and attack the town from the air. Once the Metagalapans crush all resistance, they bring in the rocs. The Metagalapans then strip the town of everything valuable, load it on the rocs and fly away. Such communities hardly ever get a second chance to make peace with the hawkriders, and the Metagalapans hardly ever give them reason to: every few years, the hawkriders return to the people they have defined as enemies, and loot them again.

HAWKRIDERS

The hawkriders of Metagalapa are not merely a class of highly trained and gifted soldiers, they are an elite society that effectively rules the nation. Only hawkriders are eligible for election to the Council of Riders.

The hawkriders select recruits at an early age, usually six or seven, and raise them in close proximity to the hawks that will one day become their mounts. While the Council of Riders tries to select suitable children from throughout Metagalapan society, families who tend to be short and wiry naturally produce more hawkriders, and rise in wealth and prestige as a result.

Selection is cause for celebration for the family and, to a lesser degree, their neighbors. The Council provides good wine and hosts the family and its guests in a rite-of-passage celebration in the Publica.

The selected children, called hawkrider-chosen, go the Scholia and spend every day learning the skills needed for battle and caring for their mounts. After one year, a hawk is entrusted to each child's care. The hawkrider-chosen must care for their hawks themselves; in so doing, they form inextricable bonds of loyalty and friendship with the creatures. They also learn to communicate with their animals by means of subtle facial movements, hand gestures and stirrup manipulation. At the age of 17, a hawkrider-chosen becomes a hawkrider and goes out on trading and raiding missions. Metagalapa

has more than 100 hawkriders in active duty; there'd be more, except for the cost of feeding the giant hawks.

At age 40, a hawkrider becomes eligible for the Council of Riders, though most do not attempt to join until age 50, the normal retirement age. All hawkriders are expected to run for Council at least once.

As hawkriders age, they typically retire from field excursions. Those whose hawks die in battle or through sickness typically go through a period of profound depression, but they are expected to bond with another hawk. Some especially talented hawkriders who lost their hawks turn to raising the great rocs as their new mounts.

QUESTING HAWKRIDERS

Over the past century, certain hawkriders felt driven to explore and adventure in foreign lands. The first so stricken were forbidden to leave, but could not resist the urge and abandoned Metagalapa anyway. In recent years, the practice of questing has become increasingly common and is now officially sanctioned. Questers, as those who become infected with wanderlust are called, are typically granted leave for a period of 10 years. While given no specific mission, a quester must always act for the sake of Metagalapa and defend her homeland's interests and honor wherever she goes.

THE COUNCIL OF RIDERS

The Council of Riders is Metagalapa's ruling body. It consists of 12 retired hawkriders. Members are elected for life by the hawkriders, and elections are held only when a vacancy arises. Any Dragon-Blooded rider pretty much has a seat in the Council if she wants one, and the Council has three Dragon-Bloods already. Some Metagalapans realize that the long lifespan of Exalts means that eventually, the Council may be all Dragon-Blooded.

The Council makes laws, but tradition remains a stronger force in Metagalapan society—wherein lies the Council's weakness. The Council appointed itself to rule, and achieved its power through control of trade and military force. It calls itself an instrument of the people, and most hawkriders sincerely believe this; however, increasing numbers of Metagalapans left resentful by the growing disparity of wealth in their little nation regard it as a self-serving clique. If a large number of Metagalapans decide the Council of Riders has *cheated the community*, the strife could tear Metagalapa apart.

MILITARY

The key to the Metagalapans' success is their remoteness, coupled with their skill as aerial tacticians. While they are masters at ambushing, they also have no qualms about giving up a losing fight and returning to the safety of their mountain.

The rest of Creation encounters Metagalapan military force in the form of hawkriders and hawkmen; see **Scroll of Kings** for a sample military unit (as well as in-depth discussion of their aerial tactics). At home, Metagalapa's chief military force is the unimaginatively named Guard, which protects the human population from wild or renegade hawkmen. The Council of Riders also directs the Guard to train to repel an assault on Metagalapa, now that contact with Halta and Lookshy revealed that they aren't the only flyers around.

METAGALAPAN GUARD TALON

Description: These mortal soldiers act mostly as guards in Tushipal. This force protects Metagalapans against wild birdman attacks and breaks up fights between citizens. The entire force numbers about 700 foot soldiers—a huge force for such a tiny population, but being a Guard is a part-time job. Only one talon of the Guard is on duty under normal circumstances.

Anyone the Guards would need to chase can fly, so these warriors do not worry about weight and fast movement. They normally wear reinforced breastplates and pot helms, but they keep a stash of articulated plate and even superheavy plate—just in case. They train with javelins (for fighting birdmen) as well as chopping swords, axes and other weapons suited for tunnel or house-to-house fighting (in case of invasion or a riot). They usually operate solo or in fangs, but their Lookshyan military advisors now train them at fighting in larger groups.

This necessarily means creating officer's ranks for larger units; the Guard naturally uses

the Seventh Legion as a model, with a taimyo in overall command, a shozei commanding each talon of 100 soldiers, a chozei to lead scales of 20 and a gochei for each fang of four or five. While their command structure answers to the Council of Riders, hawkriders do not become guards and guards do not become hawkriders.

Commanding Officer: Guard-Shozei Barrat-Su Hyksos

Armor Color: Gray

Motto: "Claws of Iron."

General Makeup: 100 heavy infantry in reinforced breastplates, with chopping swords or axes and three javelins each

Overall Quality: Excellent
Magnitude: 3

Drill: 2

Close Combat Attack: 3

Close Combat Damage: 3

Ranged Attack: 3 **Ranged**

Damage: 2

Endurance: 5 **Might:** 0

Armor: 3

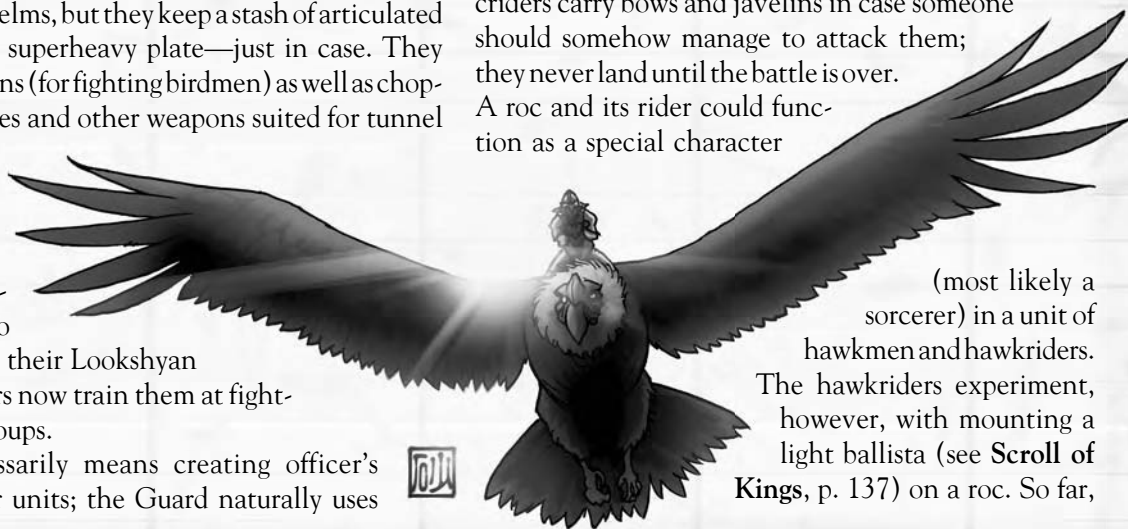
Valor: 2

Formation: The on-duty Guard is based in a barracks complex in the Publica, though half the talon is always spread through Tushipal, keeping the peace.

ROCRIDERS

Description: Great rocs do not seem to respect mortals as riders, so only the most experienced hawkriders dare to work with them. Rocs are too rare and valuable to use in combat, as there are only 25-30 great rocs on hand at any given time (they rarely reproduce). Rocriders carry bows and javelins in case someone should somehow manage to attack them; they never land until the battle is over. A roc and its rider could function as a special character

(most likely a sorcerer) in a unit of hawkmen and hawkriders. The hawkriders experiment, however, with mounting a light ballista (see **Scroll of Kings**, p. 137) on a roc. So far,





Metagalapa, a Magnitude 2 Dominion

Military: 3 **Government:** 2 **Culture:** 2

Abilities: Awareness 1, Bureaucracy 1 (Trade Agreements +2), Craft 3, Integrity 1, Presence 1 (Imperious Demands +2), War 3 (Pinpoint Raids +2)

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 1, Temperance 4, Valor 4

Virtue Flaw: Temperance **Current Limit:** 6

Willpower: 8

Bonus Points: 10 **External Bonus Points:** 6

Notes: Metagalapa is brittle. The desire for wealth and glory struggles against its historic need for tight self-control. In Limit Break, the resentments spawned by the emergence of a military elite and commercial/raiding tycoons break loose. Riots and looting fracture Metagalapan society, while rebellious hawkman serfs add to the chaos or flee the mountain. A few Metagalapans (such as Onibala's high priest, a Barrat-Su clan elder or a senior member of the Council of Riders) might act as savants or sorcerers (but never with legitimacy).

Metagalapa's bonus points go to a third dot of Military and its specialties in Integrity, Presence and War. External bonus points come from Lookshy and Metagalapa's other established trading partners. They go to a second dot of Government (the Metagalapans imitate the Seventh Legion) and the Bureaucracy specialties (whatever their faults, the Metagalapans have a reputation for delivering what they promised, right on time).

the rocs don't allow it. If the Metagalapans can pull this off, though, their aerial artillery could become a shocking surprise to the East.

THE REPUBLIC OF CHAYA

The Chayan Republic is a small nation of about 180,000 people at the southeastern edge of the Scavenger Lands. The whole country is no more than 220 miles across. Here, small rivers from the nearby forest join to form the Sandy River. The republic itself consists of 12 walled towns knit together by a shared history, government and traditions. Their neighbors know the Chayans as placid, if somewhat austere, folk with a strong sense of community and honesty. They have never tried to conquer anyone. Despite certain odd customs, Chayans are *nice* people... for 14 months of the year.

The tale is well known in the Scavenger Lands that Chaya becomes dangerous to visit when the fire trees bloom in the month of Resplendent Fire, though many dismiss the bizarre stories of placid folk turned terrible and murderous. On the other hand, some people believe the Chayans are a duplicitous, evil race who lure in hapless travelers for strange rituals to inhuman gods. Tales grow stranger from there: the Chayans are ascetics; they are secret epicureans; they do not eat; their children grow on trees; or they do not dream. Few people travel to Chaya to find out. Only traders have much reason to visit this small, remote country.

GEOGRAPHY

The Chayan plains are fertile and prosperous, with rolling fields of abundant crops and lush vegetation. Frequent, gentle rains and mild winds keep the temperature comfortably warm but seldom hot. Three small lakes, Tegeus, Machilo and Pancho Bae, occupy the heart of the country. Ruins of First Age factories and fortresses scar the land in places, though. While some of these ruins merely look picturesque, others are truly a blight on the land. These wrecks occupy former demesnes, so weakened and maimed that they no longer produce usable Essence. Little grows in these ruins, and nothing grows *right*. Vicious clans of scavengers known locally as *slag tribes* claim these ruins. The Chayans stay well away from all First Age ruins. Instead, they congregate in their 12 widely spaced towns and travel between them on well-maintained cobblestone roads.

All Chayan towns are rectangular in shape and have a logical, nearly identical grid-like layout. Each has a population of 8,000-10,000, though Larjyn has a population of about 15,000. Most Chayan buildings are made of wood, with flat roofs, and seldom exceed three stories. Homes never have more than two stories; Chayans build them 40 to 50 feet from one another to make room for backyard gardens. Every town has a log palisade 20 feet high, with 12 manned towers. The town walls have a glassy sheen due to their coating of



a fireproof lacquer made from the sap of Chaya's well-known fire trees.

Chayans keep their streets scrupulously clean. The streets are usually narrow, with some roads only wide enough for walking. All are lined with fire trees, though. At the center of each town rises the four-story rectangular oratoria, the seat of town government.

All towns are divided into three districts: the *Market*, the *Oratorium* and the *Temple Districts*. Citizens live in each district, with homes nestled between and among public buildings, bath houses, small shops and parks with copses of more fire trees, scattered apparently at random.

HISTORY

Chaya's history begins shortly after the Great Contagion. The Chayans themselves say merely that their ancestors found a good land and settled down. Here they found their national god Xochichem and received its scripture, the *Radiolari Protocols*, to guide their lives. The Chayans soon built Larjyn as their first city, and the great Temple of Xochichem and the First Tree. Larjyn remains the center of Chayan religious and political life. By RY 80, the Chayans had founded the other 11 towns and joined to form their republic.

When the Scavenger Lands defied the Scarlet Empress, the war never reached Chaya. The little country was too far away from the Realm and the strategic locations in the old River Province. Their only conflicts came from the equally-new slag tribes. The early Chayans played the scavenger tribes against each other when they could, avoiding much open warfare.

In time, other societies encountered Chaya through commercial exploration by the early Guild, visits from Immaculate missionaries and various military excursions. The stories about bizarre Chayan customs began and grew stranger with every telling. Even by RY 130, though—decades after the city-states of the Scavenger Lands formed the League of Many Rivers—Chaya still had no regular contact with other civilizations.

THE POISONED RIVER WAR

Despite their efforts, the world finally came to Chaya. For decades, the Chayan National Council declined invitations to join the League of Many Rivers, which resulted in their being left out of important negotiations regarding the fate of their region. In RY 265, a long-standing dispute between the provinces of Laris and Velen over rights to the water of the Sandy River flared into active war. Chaya's neighbors all took sides in the dispute. Soon, battles were fought in

Chayan territory and armies from hundreds of miles abroad bivouacked near their cities. Even Lookshy got involved, as the Seventh Legion tried to assert its dominance over everyone else. The fighting destroyed Chayan farms and villages. All sides ignored Chayan protests, saying there could be no neutrals.

Late in RY 265, the war came to a head when armies from Laris and Matetha fought on Chayan soil and the Seventh Legion used Essence artillery to annihilate them both. The Lookshyans also incidentally destroyed a Chayan village. A week later, the Sandy River became toxic. The whole squabble about water rights abruptly became meaningless. Investigating sorcerer-engineers from the Seventh Legion concluded that the Essence weapons must have released some unknown contaminant from a First Age ruin. For the next 16 years and 300 miles downstream, the Sandy River killed crops and sickened anyone who drank from it.


The Chayans, meanwhile, breathed a sigh of relief that the fighting was over and set about the task of rebuilding the nation. For potable water, the Chayans built aqueducts from the central lakes—and incidentally discovered they had a particular talent and inclination for public service and public works construction.

THE CHAYAN CIVIL WAR

In RY 364, the Arczeckhi Horde invaded the eastern tip of the Scavenger Lands. Most of the fighting took place hundreds of miles from Chaya, but one mob of Arczeckhi marauded through Chaya for several weeks before Lookshyan troops mopped them up. The Chayan militias themselves had little success against the barbarians. Unfortunately, the Seventh Legion troops caused a fair bit of damage themselves, albeit largely by accident and through ignorance of local geography. This experience prompted the National Council to seek a treaty of mutual assistance with the Seventh Legion, offering them land use rights in exchange for protection. The resolution passed by only one vote.

While little outright violence took place, the end of their traditional neutrality outraged many Chayans. In RY 367, the town of Querecha (half of which had burned down in the fighting between Lookshyans and Arczeckhi) announced its secession from the nation. Later that year, Bhochin followed suit. Some expected armed conflict to erupt, but the National Council astonished everyone by suspending all military operations. Given that no town would take up arms against another, the two towns were implicitly permitted to leave the republic.

Three months later, citizens of Querecha and Bhochin appeared in twos and threes in other Chayan



towns, naked and begging for forgiveness. They told of children born eyeless or not at all, and of fire trees smoldering into heaps of metal-flecked glass. The gods had taken back their blessings and abandoned them, they said. At the next National Council session, Querecha and Bhochin were officially forgiven and envoys dispatched to both towns to deliver the news. When the envoys arrived, however, they found no one living. All of the houses and buildings were burned to ash. The town's walls were scorched and blasted from the inside. All that remained of its citizens were cleaned skeletons huddled together in desperate embraces.

That was Chaya's last internal conflict. The National Council, however, reconsidered alliance with Lookshy, and stayed neutral.

THE FAIR FOLK

In RY 547, the Fair Folk invaded the Hundred Kingdoms. Once again, the fringe of an invasion brushed against Chaya. The Chayans found themselves helpless against raksha predation, but after a few weeks the raksha left as suddenly as they appeared.

RECENT EVENTS

Chaya's last experience of war happened in RY 610, when Erushon, warlord of Cho-Holuth, marched his army into Chaya and declared it part of his growing empire. The next time the fire trees bloomed, the Chayans went mad and tore his army limb from limb. Erushon came with a new army to punish the Chayans. Though he came in the second week of Descending Fire, he found the Chayans still in their yearly frenzy. The God-Blooded warlord died in Chaya, and few of his soldiers made it back to Cho-Holuth.

Since then, no one has invaded Chaya. The little republic maintains an associate membership in the Confederation of Rivers, but does not send delegates to the Confederation's council. The Guild made Larjyn a hub city because it made a convenient base for ventures into the Southeastern jungles, but it does not meddle in Chaya's politics. In view of the unsettled conditions that seem to spread everywhere in the time of tumult, the Chayans recently began building a wall on their eastern border—but they do not mobilize for war themselves. Chaya stays a peaceful, prosperous country of peaceful, prosperous people. Chaya is quiet. Chaya is *harmless*.

For 14 months of the year.

THE PEOPLE OF CHAYA

The average Chayan looks quite different than the average Easterner. Men and women both stand

over six feet tall, with long, slender limbs, pale skin and white-to-blond hair, worn very long. Their eyes have large, violet irises and don't seem to blink often enough. Chayans have reedy, gentle voices that never shout in anger.

Chayans dress in long, beautifully decorated robes of thin cotton, usually of a rich yellow or red (or a combination of these), decorated with geometric designs. In the winter months they wear long corduroy topcoats. Women and men both wear one or two pieces of chakamaya—lacquered wooden jewelry—as adornments.

NAMES

Chayan surnames usually begin with a vowel and have only one syllable, such as Ah, Ay, Ec, Ov and Il. As in the custom in much of Creation, the surname precedes the given name in formal address. Given names usually begin with Ch-, M-, Xo-, Xm-, Ya- or Ym-. The Chayan 'X' is a hard aspirant, somewhere between an 'H' and "Sh."

Chayans do not use honorifics amongst themselves in any sort of address. It is appropriate, however, to address someone simply by his or her job title or political office. The given name is usually only used amongst family, intimates and on written contracts.

CHAYAN OUTLOOK

The people of Chaya describe themselves as moralists, valuing freedom and justice above all. They are consciously not individualists: good works should be done for the sake of the republic, the concerns of which outweigh those of the individual citizen. As such, Chayans are devoted to their own particular brand of democratic government, which they invented. Chayans deplore warfare and do not typically invite soldiers into their towns. Too often, soldiers have brought foreign troubles with them.

Chayans dislike changes in the way they run their lives. They believe that exposure to foreign ideas and influences may corrupt their long-standing traditions. While they must deal with foreigners for the sake of trade, the Chaya maintain a polite reserve and do not associate longer than they must. The Dragon-Blooded officers of the Seventh Legion who sometimes visit to arrange shipments of provisions make them particularly uncomfortable. That said, Chayans are by nature industrious and can face great hardship and danger for the

sake of their communities. They certainly rival Lookshy in their patriotism, in their quiet and pacifistic way.

Just about every Chayan accepts his or her duty to participate fully in national life and culture. These duties include public and religious service, procreative obligations and full adherence to laws and the dictates of the gods. Public criticism of any of these things by a fellow Chayan happens so rarely that few Chayans can even imagine it. The extremely few who willfully refuse to participate in Chayan society are ostracized by their families, the monasteries and the government, and are usually stripped of any granted property.

When Chayans say they find most crimes unthinkable, they do not exaggerate: under most circumstances, acts that the *Radiolari Protocols* deem immoral or illegal literally never enter their minds. Popular cautionary tales about the fate of people who fail to conduct themselves properly reinforce this law-abiding mentality. The tale of the Devil Tiger of Larjyn is one such example.

Chayans believe in justice and law by the consensus of the people, rather than some self-appointed monarch or pontiff, within the limits set by the *Radiolari Protocols*. They openly reject the Scarlet Empress and her Dynasty and readily explain why their rule is doomed. Perhaps they would not speak so boldly if they were not so far from the Realm—but they equally reject the political,


religious and social codes of their neighbors. Chayans seem too obstinately confident in their own system to see other forms of government as anything other than tyranny. Despite their limited experience of the world at large (or because of it), Chayans can indeed explain why everyone else in Creation is wrong about everything. Not that it's the fault of foreigners; they just don't have the good fortune to be Chayan.

LIFE AND WORK

Chayans take joy in work and never consider it simply toil. Rather, they delight in the collective effort. Many Chayans hold several positions within the community, working a few hours in each throughout the day, with breaks in between for short siestas. In fact, Chayans draw little distinction between work and social life, as work, meals and interactions with friends and family take place seamlessly throughout the day and overlap continually.

While Chayans follow many of the same professions as other cultures (farmers, artisans, shopkeepers, and so on), they distinguish themselves in a few select arenas. They are natural sophists, quick with sound, logical arguments, and quick to identify fallacious reasoning. As such, they are quite adept at social combat. Such skills become particularly useful for Chayans who seek or are appointed to political office. They all get practice,





though, for Chayans all seem to have free time enough to engage in hairsplitting, very polite arguments about absolutely everything. This is particularly crucial for their democracy, which thrives on debate and rhetorical speech amongst its citizenry.

Chayans also have a talent for architecture. While the superficial design of buildings—rectangular and flat-roofed—may seem tedious, they are remarkably efficient structures, with little wasted space. Chayan homes always seem much more spacious than they could possibly be, with plenty of cupboards and other storage spaces tucked under stairs or beneath the floor. They also make ingenious use of natural light. A Chayan building's overall appearance is not so austere as it might seem at first, for intricate carving, all geometric, adorns wooden overhangs, door-jambs and pilasters.

Civil engineering is another Chayan skill. They erect sturdy structures using a minimum of building materials. Their superb aqueducts, which snake almost invisibly throughout the countryside and cut through several hills, receive the highest praise from the few foreign savants who study them.

Chayan woodcarvers are famed throughout the East for their finely crafted jewelry, called *chakamaya*, carved from local woods and lacquered with fire tree sap. Various highly ornamented polyhedra are common designs. Each piece can take weeks to finish. Some towns also have textile factories that produce fine cloth from local cotton and wild-gathered silk.

Corn and cotton are the two largest crops, though Chayans also grow a variety of other grains and vegetables. At the lake towns, Chayans fish and send their catch throughout the country. The Chayan diet features a simple corn flatbread, fish pies and stews made from local root vegetables. They rarely eat any meat other than fish. Chayans do not spice their food, apart from the salt they use to preserve it. Chayans eschew rousing music or moving works of art. As a race, their specific temperament does not permit it.

Most Chayans are quite fit and practice martial arts daily along with participating in neighborhood morning exercise regimens. Competitions such as races, wrestling, sparring and *trollog*, a ball game similar to the ballgame played in ancient Rathess, are common activities for youths and adults alike. Of course, Chayans never *really* fight each other.

Chayans rarely travel more than a few hundred miles from their home town. The *Radiolari Protocols* expressly forbid unnecessary travel. Chayans see very few good reasons for anyone to leave in any case.

THE FAMILY

Traditional Chayan households consist of a husband and wife, their children and, if either of the parents are firstborn, *their* surviving parents. Once all of a household's children marry, tradition dictates that the remaining adults move in with the eldest married child. Their house then becomes the property of the town and is reassigned to another couple upon marriage.

Chayan law forbids bigamy, though surrogate fatherhood or motherhood is legal. The importance of at least one pregnancy every three years is paramount, regardless of any individual's wishes for fidelity. Chayans accept that medical concerns, absence, death or other complications may prevent a pregnancy for a married couple. Regardless of these concerns, however, all women are expected to give birth in the spring, in Descending Earth or Ascending Wood. Women who do not conceive during Resplendent Fire become ill in those months and sometimes die if they go too many years without bearing a child. Women who cannot produce children must stay celibate to avoid this "spring sickness." They often become midwives or take monastic orders as these professions provide living quarters.

Same-sex marriage is not a consideration, as Chayan marriage is specifically designed for procreation. Popular wisdom holds that there are no homosexual Chayans. In private, some Chayans might admit they are not *completely* sure about this. Those suspected as such seem to suffer constant pain and turmoil.

THE CHAYAN LIFE CYCLE

Sex between Chayan men and women is usually a guilt-free enterprise, as Chayans can only produce children when the fire trees are in full bloom during the season of Resplendent Fire. That said, Chayans take little joy in sex for the remainder of the year, just as they cannot enjoy most other earthly pleasures.

As Resplendent Fire commences and the fire trees bloom, the pollen affects adult Chayans in peculiar ways. Chiefly, they become uncontrollably libidinous, usually to the exclusion of all other activities.

During this period, Chayans violently shun, if not ferociously attack, non-natives. This incidentally prevents them from breeding with foreigners. While sex may be the last thing on a foreigner's mind when facing a frenzied Chayan, this extreme reaction occurs automatically and the Chayans are virtually powerless to overcome it.

Pregnant women eat fire tree fruit during the final months of their pregnancy and while nursing their young. Once weaned, offspring must be fed fire fruit



regularly every day or, so tradition holds, they will not grow into healthy adults or be able to produce children of their own. While young, Chayans differ from children in other parts of Creation only in being a bit quieter, from growing up in such a placid culture. After puberty, Chayans lose their taste for the fruit, but now respond to the tree's pollen as adults.

Chayan children can only be born of a union between Chayan parents. Chayan fathers can produce children with non-Chayans, though the result is not Chayan. Chayan mothers cannot produce viable children with non-Chayans. Such attempts result in stillbirth.

Outwardly, Chayans are among the healthiest races in Creation, rarely becoming ill. Despite this, Chayans typically live no more than 40 to 45 years. Women who give birth to twins one or more times in their life usually live slightly longer than normal. When Chayans die, they are buried in underground tombs near their towns.

MARKET

All major commercial activity takes place in a town's market district. Farmers' markets, large shops, factories and warehouses are spaced among the houses and amenities. This is the most bustling district of any Chayan town, though foreigners find it strangely quiet.

The Chayans easily meet their own needs for food, clothing and other necessities. Rather than laze around the rest of the time, they produce a surplus for export. While Chaya avoids political or military entanglements, the Chayans accept the idea of foreign trade. Each town has its own specialties. Larjyn, for example, manufactures cloth. Jeysaria, in southern Chaya, focuses on lumber, carved furniture and chakamaya production. Chaya's official currency is the silver dinar. In return, Chaya buys practical goods it cannot produce in quantity itself, such as metalwork (the deep topsoil in most of Chaya renders mining impractical), medicines and building stone.

Most Chayan citizens are middle class. Few of them are poor and even fewer become spectacularly wealthy. While no law forbids a Chayan to amass wealth through trade or clever speculation, such citizens often donate their proceeds to their town to help pay for civic improvements.

THE GUILD

Chaya conducts much of its trade through the Guild. Every week, a giant grain freighter sails down the Sandy River, bound for Nexus. Most of the crew is Chayan, but the officers are Guildsmen. Of course, the freighter does not run during Resplendent Fire.

The Guild has a large caravansarai complex in Larjyn. From here, expeditions venture south and east to trade with forest nations, towns and tribes. Although Larjyn is quite far from other Guild hubs, Guild factors like Chaya as a base of operations because the people are so hardworking and honest. Compared to the safety of Chaya (14 months of the year), the Chayans' lack of interest in recreational drugs is only a minor blot on their profitability.

Chaya's refusal to participate in the slave trade presents a greater problem for the Guild. The National Council forbids slavery. If fact, Chayan law holds that any slave who sees two sunrises in their country becomes free. Guild slave-coffles march double-time through Chaya to avoid falling to this most unprofitable law.

MILITARY SUTLERS

Chaya's pacifism and neutrality do not bar the country from trading with foreign militaries. The Seventh Legion has a standing order for Chayan foodstuffs when it maneuvers in the southern East. So do various local militaries. The morality of selling food to people who intend to kill each other supplies an inexhaustible topic for Chayan debaters.


GOVERNMENT

Chaya is a democratic and federal republic that shares power between two components: the local assemblies public that govern each town and the National Council that legislates for the nation. Chaya has no political parties, for Chayans value individual participation in the political process. Demagogues make little headway in Chayan politics, for citizens are expected to serve responsibly and for the good of the people, rather than to popularize themselves.

All Chayan government functions under the rule of one citizen, one vote. Each town's assembly public elects three delegates to the National Council. The government upholds the *Radiolari Protocols* as the source of all law, but has also ratified a constitution.

ORATORIUM

The Oratorium District of a Chayan town contains the oratorium itself, where the assemblies public meet, along with law enforcement stations, tax and treasury offices, and embassies. Oratoria themselves are massive open-air coliseums with excellent acoustics, such that even quiet voices are fully audible to all. This is the most secure district, and most visiting diplomats arrive through its gates and never leave its confines for the length of their stay.



In Larjyn, the Oratorium District also contains the National Council Commorancy, the seat of Chaya's national government. This extensive structure includes living quarters for the councilors and pages, a cafeteria, baths, small meeting chambers and the Grand Legislature, a large, theater-style room with tiers of benches about a round floor where speakers stand.

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL

The National Council is the central government of the Chayan nation. It legislates foreign policy, taxation, import/export laws and tariffs as well as adjudicating political crimes. The National Council has veto power over the assemblies public and may overturn any law or ruling by majority vote. One councilor, usually the oldest, is appointed Councilor Elder, though the office's powers are purely procedural: for instance, someone has to say what order the Council deals with topics of concern.

The Council convenes during Resplendent and Descending Air, and Resplendent and Descending Earth. Sessions happen weekly and have no set length: some last mere hours while others go on for days, depending on the agenda and the councilors' tenacity. A quorum of 2/3 must attend. Otherwise, the Council must either adjourn for the day or declare the session complete.

Sessions are public. All Chayan citizens may attend. To speak before the Council, however, a citizen must be sponsored by a Councilor. Foreigners attend only by invitation, which only happens if the foreigner has a legitimate reason for attending. Any participation other than answering questions is forbidden for anyone who is not a Councilor.

THE CHAYAN CONSTITUTION

The Chayan Constitution is a short, dry document that details how to create laws, what laws the National Council can enforce and what towns must accept to be part of the republic. The remainder deals with matters of taxes and the republic's rights regarding eminent domain.

Chayans cannot own property. The assembly public allocates property to citizens, usually based on who can make the best use of the land.

Each town collects its own taxes, with 70% passed along to the National Council. Every year, one town is remitted from taxes. Some assemblies public tax anyway and invest the extra money in the community. Others pass on the savings to the citizens. In addition, monasteries assess weekly tithes for their services to the nation.

Chayan towns make their own laws, so long as these are voted on by the people (rather than by decree or by a representative vote) and do not contradict either the *Radiolari Protocols* or any federal law.

THE ASSEMBLIES PUBLIC

Each town holds a weekly assembly public session in the oratorium. All of-age citizens attend, as is their right and duty, and each may vote on all items in the session's proceedings, initiate public lawsuits and propose new laws. Such bodies are empowered to legislate all local matters, including land rights, defense, local expenditures, law enforcement, criminal trials and the election of officials. Sessions may last for several days, with each day's proceedings beginning at dawn and ending at dusk.

An assembly public is administrated by three *xmeti*, officers selected by lot from a pool of all those eligible. These officials record the assembly's decisions and ensure that the accepted rules of order are followed. Three *xmeti* are always in attendance to guarantee accurate records and sound decisions in interpreting proper procedure. Disagreements in these matters are settled by vote between them. Citizens must be 20 years old to be eligible and may serve only one three-year term. One *xmeti* is chosen per year, except in the case of death or impeachment, when a special lottery is held to determine who finishes the term in question. *Xmeti* may be impeached by appeal to the National Council.

Once a year, usually in the season of Air, the assembly public elects a new Councilor to represent their town in the National Council. Three Councilors represent each town, with three-year terms. In the event of death or impeachment, the elder *xmeti* is appointed Councilor until the next election. Councilors may serve more than one term.

Other elected officials include the *hunapul*, or treasurer and tax collector; the *tepuel*, a sort of sheriff-monk responsible for local law enforcement; and the *cezarad*, who takes the census and administers elections. Other, ad-hoc offices may be added by vote of the assembly public.

On average, 97 percent of the populace routinely attends their town's assembly public. The rest are usually invalids or those who lost their rights due to conviction for a serious crime. Voting is by simple majority via show of hands, with the *xmeti* determining the results.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Because of the relatively low crime rate, Chayan towns employ between 25 and 50 law enforcement officers. Once in a while, Chayans do find themselves subjected to such stresses or passions that they break the laws. Foreigners also commit crimes that must be investigated and punished.



Common punishments include fines, temporary loss of assembly rights and house arrest. Repeat offenders lose assembly rights forever and are ineligible for elections. Such punishments carry with them a degree of social disgrace that may be more effective in deterring crime than the punishment itself. For serious infractions, such as murder or the willful destruction of a fire tree, criminals may face execution. Chayans consider imprisonment cruel and exile unthinkable and not in the public interest.

Crimes committed by Chayans during Resplendent Fire are neither investigated nor prosecuted. Such acts are committed at the behest of the radiolari, and gods obviously fall outside mortal jurisdiction.

THE RABINAL

Of course, the soft and placid state of Chaya has something hard at its core: the Rabinal, a secret police force and intelligence-gathering office that investigates political crimes. Most Chayans know that centuries ago, their god Xochichem ordained this secret order. Few of them know anything more than that. Some Chayans think the Rabinal is the real power behind the Chayan government.

The Rabinal consists of intellectuals, experienced politicians and influential monks. Their mission is to safeguard Chaya by whatever means it finds necessary. Rabinal activities include negotiating secret treaties, keeping an eye on the Guild, launching espionage operations abroad and otherwise attempting to manipulate the politics of Chaya's neighbors. They also function as the Chayan secret police, ferreting out the rare cases of political sedition and heretics who would flout the *Radiolari Protocols*. The Rabinal's influence is not wide; it cannot wield influence or spy further than, say, Nexus.

Most members are secret. Ec Yanto, a long-serving councilor from Larjyn, publicly admits he is a member; so has Ay Mulac, a leading merchant of Camotli. Several powerful Chayan monks are almost certainly members. Some believe the Rabinal's membership is not entirely Chayan.

DEFENSE

As a nation, Chaya maintains no standing national army. Most Chayans believe it needs none. The Chayan Constitution permits each town to raise a local militia; in practice, they don't. Chayan philosophy extols passive resistance when peaceful coexistence fails...

until the radiolari intervene to save them and punish the invader, as they did when they poisoned the Sandy River and massacred Erushon's troops.

Still, many Chayans recognize that Creation is becoming more dangerous. In RY 766, the National Council and assemblies public agreed to build a wall of rammed earth and lacquered timber along their eastern border, to guard against Arczeckhi raiders and other marauders. Of course, the project will take years to complete—but not as many as Chaya's neighbors might think.

FOREIGN RELATIONS


The number of Chayans who visit foreign lands each year is insignificant compared to the number of foreigners who come, for whatever reason, to Chaya. The nation's isolation, however, also prevents Chayans from learning very much about the world at large. Hence, they tend to make sweeping generalizations about lands of which they have no direct knowledge.

Hundred Kingdoms (Southern): Most of these little countries have a superstitious fear of Chayans that prevents them from forming any lasting relations with the republic. The leaders of a few countries overcome their trepidation and rather obviously covet Chaya's fertile land. Emissaries from the Guild and the Seventh Legion quietly warn these leaders to leave Chaya alone... though for quite different reasons.

Lookshy: The National Council deals soberly with the Seventh Legion as just another customer for Chaya's cornmeal and sweet potatoes. Quietly, a National Council of a century ago signed a treaty with Lookshy that allows Chaya to hire the Seventh Legion should it so desire. Centuries of selling more to the Guild than they buy certainly gives Chaya silver enough for such a contract. Chaya supplies provisions to a small Lookshyan fortress just across the border, where the Seventh Legion trains and recruits from an allied tribal culture called the Karala, so the National Council could quickly obtain small numbers of Lookshyan troops.

For their part, Seventh Legion commanders and soldiers feel little respect for Chaya. They concede that Chayan monks are passable martial artists, but from their perspective these people seem terribly, almost willfully naïve about the world and vastly overestimate their place in it.

Nexus: Much of Chaya's foreign trade goes through Nexus and the Guild. As such, Chaya has excellent relations, always paying their receipts on time. Chayan leaders know how much their economy depends on the Guild and always treat their representatives with due courtesy.



The Realm: The relationships with Lookshy and Nexus, tenuous though they are, give many Chayans a jaundiced view of the Realm. The prevailing opinion is that the Realm is a crumbling empire stretched too thin and on the verge of collapse. The Realm never attacked Chaya, and probably would never find value in a far-flung campaign with the Seventh Legion at their back over what, according to their best estimate, would be an expensively garrisoned community of lunatics.

Immaculate missionaries visit periodically with petitions for the National Council to let them build temples and bring the “truth” to those who have been denied it for so long. The Council always thanks the missionaries graciously for their offer, and then hides behind labyrinthine (largely fictitious) procedures forbidding such an enterprise. The Chayans shall have no gods except the radiolari.

TEMPLE

A Chayan town’s temple district features the temple itself—invariably the largest structure in the district. Schools, gardening centers, gymnasiums and sports fields are also placed in this district. Martial arts dojos typically occupy the top floors and roofs of other buildings, such as schools or the temple.

Religion pervades every aspect of Chayan life, though subtly. The Chayan way of life depends on the divine and mortal aspects of society working together in harmony, as explained in the *Radiolari Protocols*. Chayan law expands upon the Protocols, and obedience to the gods extends to a respect for the mortal laws that they inspired. Like the rest of Chayan society, their religion does not emphasize individuals. Rather, Chayans worship for the sake of all Chayans.

Chayans worship every day in their local temple. Worship consists primarily of prayer recited aloud alternating with silent meditation. The Chayan religion accepts Xochichem as their primary patron, though each town also worships its own protector-god or gods. In return, Xochichem’s temple includes smaller shrines for the other 11 radiolari.

The Chayan temples educate Chayan youths. In doing so, they teach only those subjects that the monks deem will make their charges better citizens. They do not teach foreign languages other than Rivertongue or any but the most innocuous foreign literature on practical subjects such as medicine and civil engineering.

SHRINE OF THE FIRE TREE

An enormous circular shrine built of blue marble rises four miles north of Larjyn. It is the only circular building in Chaya. The shrine consists of a 30-story

RADIOLARI PROTOCOLS

Chayan behavior is governed by protocols set down by Xochichem. They are the basis of all Chayan laws and are considered inviolable. While the protocols are very vague, most Chayans are in agreement regarding their meaning. Several dozen protocols exist, and voluminous commentaries are written about them. Here are a few examples:

Protocol of the Seed: *All Chaya shall multiply with the blooming of the fire tree.*

Protocol of the Tree: *The Chaya shall care for the fire trees and shall not suffer them to perish.*

Protocol of the Fruit: *The Chaya shall not lie with aliens and outlanders.*

Protocol of the Blood: *The Chaya shall not spill the blood of another.*

Protocol of the Root: *The Chaya shall not stray into alien lands.*

cylinder 500 feet across, on a plinth of 300 circular steps. A colonnaded portico surrounds the cylinder. Innumerable windows of variously colored glass, placed seemingly at random, speckle the exterior.

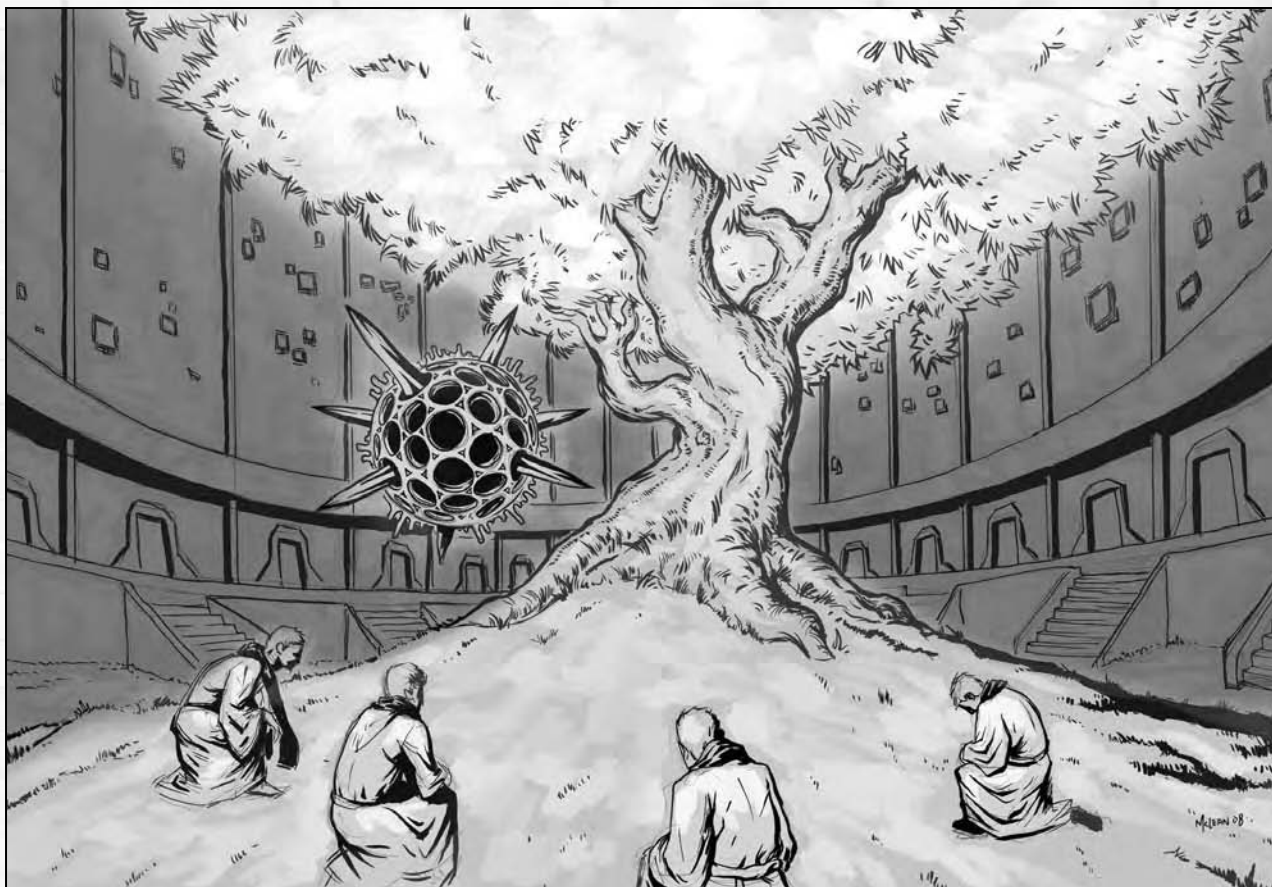
This place is the sanctuary of Xochichem and, to a lesser degree, the other radiolari gods. A long, dark passage running through the shrine suddenly opens into a massive central chamber, open to the sky, containing the first and largest fire tree in Chaya. This tree stands over 100 feet high. It emits a constant glow and low droning buzz, seeming almost animate. A two-story ring of chambers contains living quarters for the monks who tend the grounds and see to the upkeep of the shrine.

Chayans come here yearly for worship or whenever summoned by divine writ. The grounds are off-limits to foreigners. Intruders are subject to attack by any of the graced monks in residence or any number of lesser radiolari visiting the shrine, if not Xochichem himself.

FIRE TREES

Fire trees are the lesser altars at which Chayans worship their gods, and the pre-eminent focus of their way of life. Their pollen triggers the Chayan reproductive cycle; their fruit nourishes young Chayans. The survival of the Chayan race depends both on tending the trees and hiding the full extent of this dependence from outsiders.

Fire trees grow everywhere in Chaya, both town and country. The trees have strap-like leaves, with a



corona of red in the summer months. They take 20 years to reach full height, growing 15 to 18 feet high. In the latter half of Resplendent Fire, and on into Descending Fire, the trees bear masses of large, scarlet blooms that somewhat resemble tulips. The flowers produce copious amounts of nectar and a spicy, intoxicating odor with hints of licorice, jasmine and cloves. Fire tree fruit is a rounded seven-inch oblong, deep green ripening over the winter into a vibrant red, with a thick husk that must be cracked open. For children and pregnant women, the vibrant yellow, custard-like flesh of the fruit tastes faintly of cream and licorice. The fruit tastes sour or rotten to everyone else. The center holds a walnut-sized black pit. Every spring, Chayans feed their children all the fire fruit they can stand, as it contains nutrients necessary for their growth. As a final benefit, fire trees produce abundant sap in the month of Ascending Water; this sap dries as the country's famously fireproof, glassy lacquer.

Fire trees do not grow well outside the Sandy River plains. Those that do take root outside the region grow to about half normal height, and produce blossoms but only a shrunken, vile-tasting fruit. Still, a few wealthy gardeners value fire trees as ornamental shrubbery.

While Chayans do not export or otherwise sell fire fruit to foreigners, outsiders gather small quantities of the fruit and smuggle it out: certain foreigners prize the fruit for alleged aphrodisiac properties, using it in a number of heavily spiced dishes to mask its flavor. Foreigners who, for whatever reason, eat prodigiously of the fruit, do not suffer attacks from Chayans during their yearly frenzy. Only the Rabinal is aware of this fact. Foreign poachers also slip into Chaya to tap the trees during Ascending Water.

Although the fire tree superficially seems like an ordinary deciduous tree, closer scrutiny shows they are nothing of the sort. They might resemble some of the stranger vegetation from powerful Fire-aspected demesnes, or from the Wyld. They are always warm to the touch. During the season of Fire, smoke issues from branches that can burn flesh with their heat. What's more, beneath its hard bark a fire tree consists of a crystalline pulp with silvery rings and veins. When it dries, fire tree pulp resembles a friable mineral more than wood. This material cannot burn: it merely smolders, emitting an acrid black smoke and leaving sandy ash. All in all, a fire tree is more silicate than organic.



EFFECTS OF FIRE TREE POLLEN

Around the second or third week of Resplendent Fire, the fire trees bloom. In days, the Chayan people lose control over long-suppressed emotions. For a month, Chayan society becomes a bacchanal, with everyone experiencing wild swings through the gamut of emotional highs and lows, seemingly at random—rage, melancholy, joy, you name it. Chayans under the effect of the pollen also feel irrepressible sexual desire, though this effect abates for one to two days after fulfillment. Most Chayans also experience a feeling of unendurable xenophobia. Foreigners present during this time experience nothing less than a world gone mad.

Chayans gifted with radiolari grace experience xenophobia to a much higher degree than others. They attack foreigners on sight, even those obviously more powerful or armed—Exalted, Fair Folk or even gods. This unfortunate effect, which comes from the heightened sense of the need to protect Chaya, has been the doom of many a poor Chayan.

Visitors to Chaya lose 2 Willpower points for half a day after exposure to fire tree pollen. Natives lose all Willpower for the duration of the flowering season. They also have an effective Valor of 5 and Temperance of 0.

It is possible to preserve the pollen for later use, though the effect is diminished. Non-Chayan users lose 1 Willpower. Natives are reduced to 1 Willpower. The process is such a secret that only a few Chayans know it. The Rabinal stockpiles pollen as a last-resort measure for the defense of a town under attack. A few Chayans (notably, a small cult from Thajecla) abuse the pollen.

Chayans deprived of the pollen for more than three years begin to go mad. After five years, the effect becomes permanent.

MONASTIC MARTIAL ARTISTS

While every Chayan's life follows the *Radiolari Protocols*, monks do so with greater purpose and clarity. One to two hundred citizens in each town take monastic orders. Most other citizens at least visit the monastery-temple on a daily basis for prayer, meditation and martial arts practice. The monks are their teachers,

priests, sifus and master horticulturists, responsible for tending the public fire trees.

This highest ranking Chayan monk is the *Xbalenque Sifu*, Ec Xomaja. She is over 50 years old and rarely leaves the Larjyn Temple. She oversees two main monastic ranks. *Auditors* live in the temples. Their duties include tending fire trees and leading public works such as cleaning and repairing roads. *The Elect* do not live in towns, but in seven special cloisters scattered through the countryside in order to meditate without distraction.

Most monks do not follow that as their sole career. Many follow secular careers as well. Several Councilors, for example, are also monks. About one in five Chayans joins a monastery for at least part of their adult lives.

Chayans of high spiritual ability (to the Chayans, this means high Temperance and Willpower) may be granted the grace of the radiolari: an enlightened Essence. This requires several years of intensive meditation, martial arts training and religious devotion. Those so graced usually enter monastic life, if they were not monks already. Radiolari grace requires no formal ritual. The bequest happens instantly. Unlike most forms of Essence enlightenment, the god who granted this grace can also revoke it; so can Xochichem, but no other god.

All monks are at least moderately skilled martial artists; more outsiders would know this if Chayan monks ever fought anyone. Their competitions are so stylized that foreigners usually think the monks are dancing. Chayans don't talk about their monks' true prowess; for fear that knowledge of this would attract powerful enemies.

The monks themselves conceal their skills by making their successes look like accidents. In combat, they often appear off balance. Punches that hit their mark seem wild and hastily placed. They practice hard to look so clumsy. Chayan martial arts emphasize quick combat and easy escapes. While many monks eschew the use of them, all are trained to use simple weapons such as nunchaku, staves and sticks.

Monks who achieve grace can (and often do) learn Terrestrial martial arts. (Crimson Pentacle Blade Style would make a good choice for Chayan monks.) Graced monks can also learn divine Charms as if they were God-Blooded. When graced monks hide their talents, they don't use their Charms publicly except to defend their town or similar emergencies, in which case they do not expect their opponents and any non-Chayan witnesses to survive the encounter.



THE RADIOLARI GODS

The radiolari manifest at least once a year in their temples. Xochichem, the most powerful of them and the most active in Chayan society, holds court once per season in its temple. The gods manifest as complex polyhedra two to three yards across made of fine, glittering dust floating in the air, with various strangely-jointed appendages sprouting from their corners. There is nothing even remotely human, or even organic, about their appearance. They keep their sanctums beneath their temples, with special, sacred fire trees as their portals.

Chaya is a small country and the radiolari are small gods. The lesser radiolari are merely gods of the second rank, while Xochichem is a god of the third rank (see **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. III—Yu-Shan**, pp. 122-124). Xochichem is the only radiolari who ever visits Yu-Shan, in its capacity as god of the Chayan nation in the Bureau of Humanity.

Despite their low rank, the radiolari wield awful power over the Chayan people and their territory. They can grant or remove grace to any Chayan they see, compel a Chayan to act as they choose or kill a Chayan by having her body burn from the inside out. These actions automatically succeed; only powerful Essence-based defenses against magic (comparable to Sapphire Circle Sorcery) can protect a Chayan from their gods. Radiolari can turn animals into Familiars (up to Familiar ●●●) and may do so for favored monks; this requires feeding the animal fire tree fruit for a month, and the animal must dine on the fruit yearly. Radiolari can perceive anything near a fire tree as if they hovered in that location, if they consciously turn their attention that way. They can also infuse poison into the Sandy River or perform similar feats on a scale of square miles.

Xochichem created Chayan society and the Chayan race itself. While the radiolari are its primary concern, it looks after the Chayans so long as they heed its dictates. It is confident, however, that the scheme it created cannot fail so long as it continues its supervision. The Rabinal is Xochichem's principal tool for guiding Chaya while keeping plausible deniability (in view of Celestial law discouraging direct rule of mortal societies). Xochichem watches over Chaya with a cold determination to see it survive in its current state. It rarely appears before foreigners.

BENEATH THE SURFACE

Most people who hear of Chaya dismiss it as just another odd little country. People who visit Chaya and observe Chayan customs, life cycle and religion may conclude that it's a *very* odd little country. Investigating

further, exploring obscure sources of information, they may decide that Chaya's neighbors are right: something is very *wrong* about Chaya.

Early History: Shogunate accounts of the Great Uprising may include a story that a skilled historian can trace to the Chaya region. Months after the Dragon-Blooded slew the local Anathema, every unExalted person in the province died, sort of *dissolved* down to the bone. Other strange extinctions and stranger, brief proliferations of life happened over the ensuing decades. Shogunate savants attributed the region's lethality to a death-curse from one of the Anathema, marked it off-limits and let it be. Shogunate botanists do not describe anything much like a fire tree.


The Fair Folk: The Fair Folk called the Unmatched, which lives in the forests southeast of Chaya, remember when they attacked Chaya. Various fae in the Opal Court also participated and might tell their story, for a price.

The Fair Folk found the Chayans meek and easy prey. When they died, it felt to the raksha as if they died a million times. But there was something else, some fascinatingly horrific absence from their eyes. The more Chayans they slaughtered, the stronger the feeling became, until they realized a terrifying truth: the Chayans have no dreams. Now sickened by the sight of their prey, the Fair Folk left Chaya and never returned. They had faced... abomination.

Geomancy: Study of the Larjyn Temple would reveal that it is quite a powerful manse: Air Aspect ●●●●, despite the fiery associations of the sacred tree. It has no Essence flare and, apparently, no hearthstone. An expert on manse construction can also confirm what Chayan tradition says, that their ancestors built the temple after the Great Contagion, which is impossible in the Age of Sorrows—the best manse architects of the Realm can't build a four-dot manse without flaring off excess Essence. Did someone who predates the Age of Sorrows tell the early Chayans how to build it?

Lookshy and Magitech: Standing orders for Seventh Legion commanders who operate in the Chayan area say to keep magitech out of Chaya if at all possible. Manuals for sorcerer-engineers say that magitech malfunctions at a higher rate than usual in the little country, for reasons unknown but perhaps related to the Poisoned River episode. Another magitech accident could possibly trigger a repeat of that disaster, harming Lookshy's interests in the area. Commanders are advised to stop enemies before they must fight in Chaya itself.

Slaglands: The blighted lands around some First Age ruins have points of geomantic interest as well.



A geomancer can tell that some of them are former manes that exploded when their Essence became unbalanced. The underlying demesnes are damaged but still should collect usable quantities of Essence. They don't. They manifest only small, occasional flickers of Essence. In fact, Chaya has no functioning demesnes except the one that powers the Larjyn Temple.

The geomancy of other ruins says they are not demesnes and never were. Nevertheless, the same flickers of Essence play about them. The Essence has no consistent aspect: with patience and keen perceptions, a geomancer can detect flashes of all five elements, plus Solar Essence.

The scorned, desperate outcasts whom Chayans and other nearby folk call slag tribes show mutations and mutilations that suggest exposure to the Wyld: patches of flesh that look scarred, burned or melted, mismatched body parts and the like. There is no Wyld energy in the ruins. Demesnes induce mutation as well, but these tend to be consistent. The Essence around the ruins is not strong enough to mutate plants, animals or people.

Yu-Shan: An org chart for the Bureau of Humanity shows what a low-ranking, weak god Xochichem is. He and the radiolari should not have the power to kill with a glance, poison entire rivers or perform other such feats. Yet, they do. They have this power because

Sealed By Order of Maiden of Secrets.

THE REBELS

The Chayans think they are free. They are not. A small band of Chayan monks haunts the forests to the south and plots the end of radiolari mastery. These Elect monks received radiolari grace. In the exploration of their self and their Essence, however, they came to transcendent realizations about themselves that would be impossible for normal Chayans. Subsequently, they began to dream.

They live on the fringes of Chayan society, moving from forest huts to abandoned factories and slaglands. They have thus far avoided discovery. The monks cannot get too close to Chayan towns because the gods (who could be anywhere, watching through any fire tree) might sense their presence and destroy them.

The monks turned scavenger, something no Chayan did before. Investigating slaglands, using thaumaturgy to open long-sealed doors, they found fragmentary notes from ancient savants, with titles such as *Kleptoplasty in Chaotropic Matrix and the Essence Tetrahedron* and *Endosymbiont Zoosilicate Suspension Engines*. The monks understand very little of these Old Realm texts, but they figured out they have something to do with the radiolari.

Only, these radiolari are not gods. They seem to be tiny, living *somethings* meant to go inside living bodies.

The monks feel their Essence is not their own. It comes from something else living inside them. Something tied to the fire trees, to their gods and to the Chayan life cycle that only now do the monks realize is so *very* odd.

THE TRUTH

Only a great Exalted savant could put all the clues together to find the secret behind Chaya.

In the last century of the Old Realm, a Twilight Caste savant noticed that the Lawgivers had impulse-control problems. This was hardly a unique observation, but this savant tried to do something about it. The savant crafted tiny mechanisms of crystal and god-Essence, inspired by the mechanical pattern spiders that tend the Loom of Fate but much, much smaller. These entities, the radiolari, would live inside the Exalted and tamp down their bouts of madness.

Only, the Usurpation happened before the savant could complete the project. Damage to the savant's laboratory released the radiolari. They entered the local people and other organisms. Because they were defective, they killed. They must have kept trying, though, with one creature after another. They were not intelligent, but they evolved, blindly trying to fulfill their purpose.

All things in Creation have a god. Eventually, so did the radiolari. Xochichem and the rest, however, are not merely gods of the radiolari. They are *made* of radiolari—emergent intelligences from the countless micro-gods spread through the fire trees, the soil, floating through the air and, in particular, living in the Chayans.

Chayans and radiolari have coexisted for centuries. These creatures now live within them, mindless for most of the year, mechanically regulating their behavior. When the fire trees bloom, their pollen activates the radiolari ersatz intelligence and autonomy. The radiolari then pursue the reproduction of their own kind, and the reproduction of their Chayan hosts. As a result, Chayans experience otherwise foreign emotions with lunatic intensity.

A simple cure cannot free the Chayans from these parasites. The Chayans cannot produce children without the radiolari. The radiolari and their gods have altered their biology such that they are no longer strictly human.

The rest of the Chayans have no idea they are parasitized in this manner. They do not know about the resistance and cannot imagine why such a resistance might be necessary. It isn't that their every thought is controlled; they just haven't experienced any evidence that anything is wrong. And Xochichem and the other



gods will make sure they never do. Xochichem values the Chayans—it needs them, after all—but it will not let any foreign meddlers upset the nation it created.

Chayans have lived in their peculiar manner for centuries. They have no reason to consider living in any other way than what their gods, society and very biology supports. Chayans know that other folk live differently, but they accept that they are not the same as foreign folk. If confronted by fantastical claims about their gods or their true natures, citizens inevitably report the troublemaking madman to the authorities.

RADIOLARI AND THEIR GODS

Radiolari are microscopic beings. A polyhedral exoskeleton, made primarily of silica, supports a variety of arms and pseudopodia. They live in colonies located in the brains of their hosts, but can travel anywhere in the body if so directed by one of the radiolari gods.

As individuals, these entities are only semi-intelligent. Radiolari do not use language and cannot communicate with their hosts, whom they are aware of only insofar as they are the landscape in which they live. Radiolari gods, however, are quite intelligent and can direct a radiolari colony in a number of ways, thus causing effects in the colony's host—such as killing them. The gods can also direct the radiolari that live in the fire trees, the soil and drifting through the air. If they wish, they can breed radiolari by the gazillions and send them down the Sandy River to infect and destroy creatures and crops downstream.

The Chayans wrote their own constitution and other laws, but in accord with their gods' wishes for their society. The gods really care only about the Chayans' obedience to the *Radiolari Protocols*, however, which preserve them as the radiolari's hosts. The Chayans themselves deal with minor or unintentional violations of the laws. A serious offender, or anyone who could endanger the nation or the Chayan race, suffers swift death as billions of radiolari devour them from within. The signal to do so must come from one of the radiolari gods, who must somehow know of the threat and must see the offender. There are no pronouncements of guilt, no lengthy demonstrations of punishment to warn others, or cathartic episodes for the innocent or vengeful. The guilty are reduced to bones in seconds.

THE EXALTED

There are not and never could be any Dragon-Blooded Chayans. If any Chayan received Celestial Exaltation, the surge of Essence would destroy the radiolari colony. As such, Exaltation eliminates all behavioral and reproductive controls and the dependency

and effects of fire tree pollen. Post-Exaltation, Chayans experience days of emotional turmoil similar to what they endure during the yearly frenzy, only now they are fully conscious of it. To make matters worse, they are no longer physically or mentally a part of Chayan culture and their former fellow citizens no longer trust them. Even family and friends shun them. During the flowering season, the Chayans will attack the Exalt because she is no longer truly Chayan. The National Council soon explains that while the Exalt is free to visit and to assist in the defense of Chaya, it would be best for everyone if she lived somewhere else. After all, Anathema attract the notice of powerful enemies such as the Wyld hunt and foreign gods. While this explanation is for the most part an excuse, it is also true. Most Exalted with any love for their people would see the wisdom in it and depart.

CHAYAN TOWN

Description: This unit represents an entire Chayan town in the grip of its yearly frenzy. For weapons, the Chayans have kitchen knives, sticks and the like, or their bare hands... but near-perfect morale. Thanks to Chayans' nigh-universal martial arts training, they make better troops than their everyday civilian backgrounds would suggest, and the Imperial legions might envy their Drill. It's almost like they were a hive mind...

Commanding Officer: Xochichem or other radiolari

Armor Color: Red and yellow Chayan clothing

Motto: "You are not of Chaya."

General Makeup: Up to 10,000 lightly armed but fearless maniacs.

Overall Quality: Fair

Magnitude: 9

THE DEVIL TIGER OF LARJYN

The Devil Tiger of Larjyn is a centuries-old tiger that became host to a colony of radiolari. He survived the experience and has, as a consequence, attained a degree of consciousness and intelligence. He considers himself an arbiter of moral behavior for the Chayans, though, for the most part, he could not explain why this is so. Although the Devil-Tiger rarely shows himself, he often stalks the shadows of Larjyn, and confronts citizens whom he believes have been unnaturally tempted by vice. The Devil-Tiger even hunts down those who seem ready to betray Chaya. The gods may use the Devil-Tiger as a weapon against foreign intruders.



Drill: 4
Close Combat Attack: 2 **Close Combat Damage:** 2
Ranged Attack: — **Ranged Damage:** —
Endurance: 6 **Might:** 0 **Armor:** 0 (-0 mobility)
Morale: 5
Formation: Crazy Chayan hordes *look* unordered, and often they are, but they can operate in any formation: skirmish for mobility, relaxed as they surround enemy

troops, then finally close to overwhelm the foe. Of the townsfolk, nine monks act as relays, calling the rest of the horde to locations where invaders can be overwhelmed, while another nine (all knowing a supernatural martial art) operate as heroes. Such a graced monk can split off a smaller unit (say, Magnitude 3) to engage smaller units split off from the main enemy force by the often-narrow streets of a Chayan town.

Republic of Chaya, a Magnitude 3 Dominion

Military: 1 **Government:** 4 **Culture:** 3

Abilities: Bureaucracy 4 (Red Tape +3), Craft 3 (Public Works +3), Integrity 4 (Tight-Knit Heritage +3), Investigation 2, Occult 2

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 5, Valor 1

Virtue Flaw: Temperance **Current Limit:** 3

Willpower: 7

Bonus Points: 15 **External Bonus Points:** 9

Notes: Xochichem and the Xbalanque Sifu are sorcerers with legitimacy, while the current Councilor Elder is a savant. Chaya's bonus points go toward one additional dot each of Government, Culture and Temperance. Its external bonus points go to its specialties. In Limit Break, Chaya tries to shut down all contact with the outside world, acting as if it didn't exist. Its action while in Limit Break is to do nothing at all.





CHAPTER FOUR

SAVAGE LANDS

Beyond the East's fringe of civilized and half-civilized countries, such as Linowan, Metagalapa and Chaya, spreads a huge expanse of forest and jungle, from the stunted taiga of the chill Northeast to the steaming green hell of the Southeastern jungles. This immense forest-land has people of its own. Here dwell countless tribes of humans and creatures partly human, from the most ignorant primitives to tribal leagues on the verge of becoming nations. These savage lands also hold many crumbling remnants of cities now lost, whose ruins reveal both the splendors of the First Age and the appalling decadence, madness and destruction that could claim the rest of Creation.

LAND OF TEN THOUSAND TRIBES

The endless forests of the East encourage diversity. The forest offers many different environments through the many sorts of trees and landscapes. Conifers and aspens dominate the Northeast. Oaks, alders, elms and

maples become more prevalent moving southward. These give way in turn to beech and hickory. Tulip trees and magnolias, sassafras and ceiba become common, before mahogany, palmetto, tallowwood, calabash and ebony take over completely. In the deepest Southeast, the trees shade into baobabs and acacia before giving way to saw grass and savanna. Areas of swampland fill low-lying regions. In other places, the forest covers mountain ranges. Each environment offers its own foodstuffs, resources, dangers and ways to live.

Travel through the forest is slow (at least for anyone who can't fly). People might not need to travel much anyway, since most forest habitats also provide plenty of food. Collecting that food might take a long time and hard work, but the food is there. Eastern cultures tend to be isolated. Cultural patterns may persist over a thousand miles, but each tribe may know only its immediate neighbors. Deep in the East, people know nothing of the Realm, the Scavenger Lands or the Guild.

A tribe's material culture and social organization can vary as much as the environment. Some tribes don't even know the use of fire and would think you were crazy if you suggested anyone could control the great destroyer of forests. Other tribes remember how to smelt metal and are fortunate enough to possess deposits of ore. The simplest cultures have no organization beyond families. The usual next step is the *sept*, a group of interlocking families consisting of anywhere from a few dozen to about 100 individuals. Septs can join into tribes and tribes into confederations and kingdoms. Cutting across these kinship groups, a tribe may include a variety of cults, secret societies, war bands and artisan guilds.

Eastern tribes can also differ physically: tall or short, thin or stout, hair straight, curled or kinked... if the Pole of Wood or the Wyld haven't turned it into leaves, moss, tiny vines or feathers. In the nearer parts of the eastern Threshold, tribal folk tend to have skin in various brown or reddish hues. Further east, shades of green enter the mortal palette. The furthest tribes may have skin like bark or wear fur, making it hard to tell the Wyld-touched from beastmen or the influence of the Pole of Wood.

No one could hope to list all the peoples of the forest. A small sampling can only hint at the possibilities.


THE ARCZECKH HORDE

The Arczeckh Horde is a loose culture of Wyld barbarians; at least, Creation's savants guess the Wyld turned humans into these bestial savages. The Horde's language has no close affinity with any of Creation's major tongues.

Arczeckh "tribes" have little real organization, for Arczeckhi acknowledge no force except physical might and spiritual power. No Arczeckh counts another Arczeckh as a person until they have murdered another one; not even children are so honored. Instead, they treat foreigners and children alike as animals unless they can prove their strength in physical combat. Even their elders and leaders keep their status only so long as their strength endures.

In the RY 350s and 360s, the Arczeckhi were better organized than they are now. Their greatest war-leader, Mokuu, forced the brawling Arczeckh bands into a union. This howling horde pressed north into the central Eastern territories. Lookshy led an alliance that turned back the Horde, slaying Mokuu and his lieutenants in the process. Lookshy and other River Province states keep watch on Arczeckh regions to hold the barbarians in check.





The Horde survives, in wasteland territories southeast of the Scavenger Lands, but once more as bands that fight each other as much as anyone else. Here they herd yeddim and pony-sized goats, feeding them on heather, brambles and scrub, and feeding on them in turn. They use their animals in war as well: half a dozen Arczeckhi might ride a yeddim as an archery platform, while others careen about the battlefield in goat-drawn chariots.

The Arczeckhi believe that force determines reality. Only a blooded Arczeckh is real; all other entities are *nazackh*, a word that means both “weak” and “unreal.” However, an Arczeckh is less real than anything or anyone that can best him in combat. By convention, a superior never uses the name of an inferior. Doing so elevates them to the same rank. By contrast, an inferior regularly uses the name of his superiors, as a way of showing deference. The chiefs of the tribes, then, are those Arczeckhi whom everyone addresses by name.

Arczeckh tribes often become minions for Fair Folk, rogue Dragon-Blooded and other powerful persons who seek power over barbarians. Elementals, small gods and powerful ghosts can ensnare whole tribes. These barbarians are easily ruled through cruelty, so their masters often assert power through the regular sacrifice of the tribe’s weakest non-persons: the old and the young.

The Fair Folk tend to use Arczeckh tribes as expendable pawns. The raksha find Arczeckh dreams rather tedious and unpalatable. They see little point in subjugating an entire tribe when every person only wants to see their family and neighbors mutilated or killed. Instead of feeding on the Arczeckhi, Fair Folk more often subjugate a tribe to send the barbarians against some other foe.

Spirits are rarely so discriminating. The Arczeckhi build virtually no buildings at all, except for small shrines to the gods who entrap them. These shrines generally consist of huts woven of bones and sticks, adorned with the entrails and organs of small game and unfortunate travelers. Altars of uncut stones litter Arczeckh lands, and most of them show signs of recent, bloody sacrifice. To fall into the hands of a religiously-minded Arczeckh is almost worse than being caught by a hungry one. One of the few people to speak on this subject from experience, Lysander of Great Forks, recalls that he lost four fingers from one hand and the other arm below the wrist, when the Arczeckhi who captured him started arguing about which god deserved him as a sacrifice. His companions thus had time to rescue him.

Because Arczeckhi seek chances to kill each other as a way to show their power and dominance, the rude

huts of their encampments stand 30 yards or more away from each other. Each shack has a fenced enclosure, adorned with bits of the occupant’s kills, such as noses, ears and scalps from conquered victims. Arczeckhi of greater cunning build simple booby traps to slay the unwary visitor, such as stake traps or leg traps in the hut’s “yard” or dropfalls above the doorway. (See the rules and examples of traps in **Scroll of Kings**, starting p. 153.) Each hut has a small firepit at the center, and is usually partly dug into the ground so that the occupant is not at risk of a crude spear stabbing her in her sleep through the hut’s flimsy walls.

The Horde lacks much in the way of non-violent activities. Few Arczeckhi are artisans of any kind. Their territory has copper and tin deposits, so Arczeckh smiths hammer out crude hammers, blades, spearpoints and arrowheads in exchange for meat. Other artisans fashion beads and bone ornaments as gifts to the spirits or their superiors. Arczeckhi cut and stitch simple clothing out of skins and pilfered cloth. Possessions of greater sophistication come from the murder of travelers or as payment for doing another person’s brigandage.

Arczeckhi have no marriage rites or funeral ceremonies. A dead Arczeckh is most likely eaten; only a few great chiefs are ever thought real enough to warrant burial, and most of these had spirit guides willing to look out for their interests among the living. Males and females alike force partners into sex, as well: loyalty and fidelity are unknown among them. Some savants believe that the Arczeckhi are such beasts because they do not remember love.

The civilized people of the Scavenger Lands view the Arczeckhi as horrific bogeymen. Mothers terrify children into obedience by promising them to the Arczeckhi. Now and then, someone tries to organize an international campaign to exterminate the Horde. Great Forks and Lookshy each mounted at least one unilateral attempt to destroy these monsters. These efforts obviously failed, largely due to the logistical difficulties of vast armies fighting paranoid bands of creatures who do not even trust each other, on their home ground. Eighty years ago, the Wyld Hunt used the Arczeckhi as practice targets before hunting an escaped Solar, and lost 77 men as a result of their overconfidence.

HURGAA’S HORDE

Description: This Arczeckh band is somewhat larger than usual, a result of its leader being somewhat smarter and stronger than the usual Arczeckh. Hurgaa



grasps the idea of killing people for money. Recently he made the conceptual leap to *not* killing people for money. Every now and then he sends a group of his warriors to towns on the edge of Arczeckh territory and asks how much they'll pay for his horde not to attack. The lowest bid gets ravaged.

Most of Hurgaa's Horde consists of light infantry. They ride to the place they intend to loot in yeddim-drawn wagons, then run about killing everyone they can find and grabbing anything that takes their fancy. A fifth of the Horde rides the yeddim and another tenth (including Hurgaa himself) rides in chariots. Their arms are the same, though: spears and self bows with broadhead arrows. At any given time, though, half the melee fighters simply use their own claws. (See the Arczeckh description on p. 151.) Hurgaa can detach yeddim-mounted groups or charioteers as secondary units to take advantage of their greater mobility.

Commanding Officer: Hurgaa

Armor Color: Crudely stitched yeddim hide, equal to buff jackets, stained red

Motto: "Kill!"

General Makeup: 500 light infantry with spears and self bows.

Overall Quality: Excellent

Magnitude: 5

Drill: 1

Close Combat Attack: 3 **Close Combat Damage:** 2

Ranged Attack: 2 **Ranged Damage:** 2

Endurance: 4 **Might:** 0 **Armor:** 2 (-1 mobility)

Morale: 3

Formation: Hurgaa whips his troops into skirmish formation to begin the invasion of a town or the first charge against a foe, but he soon lets the Arczeckhi follow their natural inclination to unordered formation. He has five heroes who can take command of subsidiary units, and five chariot-riding relays who blow signals on horns. Hurgaa looks for ways to get his heroes killed, since he knows that each of them wants to kill and replace him.

FARHOLD AND THE TEN TRIBES

Where the upper reaches of the Maruto River flow through the Eastern forest, one culture is destroying another. For six centuries, the Ten Tribes of the Oak held this region. This confederation protected the forest at the behest of their god Elder Oak, one of the forest walkers. In return, Elder Oak protected them and the forest sustained them.


The growing cities of the Scavenger Lands needed timber for construction. The Ten Tribes and Elder Oak drove back lumberjacks who ventured up the Maruto River. In time, however, explorers found a path around the tribes. They found tall, straight, strong hardwoods, including valuable stands of ironwood. Logging camps sent rafts of timber downstream. A hundred years ago, the settlers of Farhold cleared a circle of trees and turned their camp into a village.

For a while, the Ten Tribes and their god felled Farholders faster than they felled trees. The loggers sued for peace and sent a Terrestrial sorcerer to negotiate with Elder Oak. They offered the forest walker

HORDES FOR HIRE

The Arczeckh Horde survives for another reason besides the difficulty of finding them all: they are sometimes useful. If you have a diplomat tough enough to march into an Arczeckh camp and survive, it's ridiculously easy to recruit the tribe to attack your enemies. Just say how plump and weak the people are in the target village, town, county or kingdom, and give the tribal leaders some metal weapons and shiny trinkets with a promise of more after the massacre.

Other tribes serve as hordes for hire as well, but none operate with the savagery of the Arczeckhi, or as cheaply. Indeed, some "barbarians" rent their military assets as cannily as any Nexus mercenary company... and may even keep well-staffed offices in Nexus for the customer's convenience.



a deal: fields for the new town and timber for their trading partners downstream, and a fine new temple for Elder Oak.

And Elder Oak betrayed the Ten Tribes. The forest walker remembered civilization from the First Age, and the wealth an organized society brings to the altars of its gods—far more than a few tribes can offer. Why settle for a tribe, when he could have a city? Or even a nation, as in Halta? Elder Oak withdrew his protection and his gifts of power from the Ten Tribes' shamans. He became the patron god of Farhold.

The Tribes reeled from the shock. No longer could their shamans aid them against the loggers, let alone hostile elementals or other supernatural threats. Bows and blowguns were no match for Terrestrial sorcerers flanked by steel-armored soldiers. Little by little, the circle around Farhold grew and the lands of the Ten Tribes shrank.

THE FORSAKEN TRIBES

Elder Oak's betrayal shattered the tribal confederation. All they ever had in common were their customs and Elder Oak. Bereft of their god, they sought some new meaning and plan for their lives.

COUNTERATTACK

Three tribes—the Red Scars, the Get of the Tigress and the Devil Braids—continue the fight against Farhold. They hold the central, eastern portion of the Tribes' territory. The Red Scars lead the alliance. They wear two ruddy slash-mark tattoos across each cheek below the eyes. They are also the fiercest of the three tribes.

The tribes had little success, though. A few years ago, however, the tribes gained a new leader: Dark Eyes, a Lunar Exalt who shares their determination to sweep civilization from the forest. Under the Lunar's leadership, the tribal warriors now at least prevent further expansion of logging in their section of the forest, while Dark Eyes picks off Farhold's leaders and champions one by one. They conduct a war of ambush against the loggers. Often they lead troops sent against them into killing-zones riddled with deadly traps, while the warriors pop up from cleverly-hidden tunnels or attack from the trees.

The three tribes try to hold to their ancient customs. They still perform the dances of their ancestors, sing the old songs and tell the old tales. Dark Eyes forbids any participation in the slave trade. Everything else about their culture is changing, though, as enmity to Farhold consumes their existence. Even if they recover all their



OUT OF THE PAST

The tribes' traditions say they came to the Maruto River region from a place to the south. If anyone followed the directions given in the song-line remembered by their elders, she would come to Sperimin—or as it's called now, Mahalanka. Dark Eyes gained credibility because he came to them along the ancient trail, not just because of his raw power.

Dark Eyes serves Raksi, Queen of Fangs. What she wants with the Ten Tribes is anyone's guess. See pages 142-144 for a further description of Dark Eyes.

ancient territory, they will not be Tribes of the Oak; they will be Tribes of Dark Eyes. Most members of the Red Scars accept this and indeed are proud to follow the powerful Lunar. The Get of the Tigress and the Devil Braids are not so happy about their subordination to the Red Scars, for the Tribes each have their own chiefs. Dark Eyes brooks little dissent, though; it is hard to avoid the demands of an almost-god.

CAPITULATION

The Green Shadow and Axe of Judgment tribes live north of Farhold. Devastated by Elder Oak's betrayal, they initially tried to regain their god's favor by imitating the "magic" of Farhold. They cut down trees themselves and floated them downstream with their prayers. Eventually, the Farholders recruited them to scout the forest for timber that meets their requirements.

When a few tribal members visited Farhold with war-captive slaves in tow, the two tribes learned about the slave trade. Again, they decided to imitate the ways of the powerful invaders. The two tribes now wage ceaseless war against the other eight, and each other, taking captives to sell to the Guild. The tribes obtain metal weapons and other products of civilization, and considerable wealth—but the reward they value most is access to Elder Oak's new temple.

COMPROMISE

The Sky Runners and the Nine Ravens live south of Farhold under their chiefs, Timurish Star Eye and Vahael Blackfeather. These two tribes gave up the fight against the loggers. Instead, they try to profit from them. They gather medicinal or intoxicating plants, hunt for furs, and war on other tribes to capture slaves. Compromise with Farhold brings them benefits in the form of shinier trinkets and better tools and weapons. However,

it also brings alcohol, unfamiliar drugs and discontent between tribal members who grow wealthy and those who do not. Still, they try to preserve as many of their customs as they can, and stay out of Farhold itself. The tribes replace Elder Oak's patronage with a group of small gods related to hunting, certain poisonous and medicinal plants, and a few tree-gods gradually refining their Essence toward forest walker status. Together, this confederation of gods and mortals stands against Dark Eyes—largely by keeping out of his way.

COLLAPSE

The Bone Faces, Wolf Eyes and Endless Branches tribes shattered. The three tribes now consist of small family groups wandering the woodlands, driven from one place to another by the stronger tribes or the loggers. Murder is rife among them, for they have no law to define their lives. They are easy prey for slavers—and for whatever small god or elemental demands their worship. Bewildered by Elder Oak's abandonment, they search for new patrons and submit to anything a spirit asks of them. Now and then, a spirit-possessed member of these tribes terrifies Farhold loggers with displays of spirit powers. The populations of the shattered tribes steadily decline, however. Barring intervention by some greater power, in another 20 years the tribes will be extinct—killed, sold as slaves or absorbed into other tribes.

TEN TRIBES WAR BAND

Description: Actually, these warriors come from only three tribes, but they claim to fight on behalf of all ten. They are expert at sneaking through the woods and setting up ambushes; they wear light armor made from leather and ironwood and carry bucklers of the same materials. Most of their weapons—short bows, short swords, short

WAR, THEN AND NOW

The Ten Tribes used to conduct their wars in a highly ritualized fashion. They counted coup with feather-ornamented wands more often than they actually killed each other. Such customs are substantially dead. Dark Eyes' militants make war only to kill, whether Farholders or other tribes they regard as allies of the loggers. Four other tribes now make war with clubs, nets and bolas as well as spears, to take prisoners and kill anyone who tries to prevent them. These forms of war are new enough, however, that a powerful warrior who challenges them in the old ways might still make some tribal members feel shame.

spears or axes, chosen for wielding in possibly dense forest—are made from ironwood as well.

See **Scroll of Kings**, page 115, for the effects of trap-filled killing zones on mass combat. Alternatively, give the unit +1 Might to represent the advantage of luring an enemy force into terrain riddled with ambush holes, punji stakes, dropfalls and other traps.

Commanding Officer: Ashivol Hanged-Three

Armor Color: Green-dyed leather and ironwood

COUP STICKS, CHIEFS AND CHALLENGES

Each tribe once had its own chief, who rose to power through the support of an oath-sworn war band. These followers accompanied the chief everywhere, brandishing their coup sticks to show the chief's power. A warrior's coup stick carried feathers to symbolize the enemies he humbled, or that his father or grandfather defeated. A warrior who had about as many feathers on his coup stick as the chief could issue a challenge to replace him. Alternatively, a tribe could replace a deeply unpopular chief by poisoning him. A chief's war band therefore also served as his food-tasters. The Sky Runners, Nine Ravens, Green Shadow and Axe of Judgment tribes still keep the old trappings of chieftom, though wealth now matters more in the latter two tribes. So do the militants' chiefs, but they actually retain their power only because Dark Eyes says they do.

Every tribe also had a chief shaman, the only one permitted to pray for an audience with Elder Oak; lesser shamans met the forest walker only when he deigned to visit them. The chief shamans also had a system of challenges to establish rankings, but theirs involved seeing who could take the largest doses of hallucinogens and still sing sacred songs. The remaining tribes preserve the challenges and a profound knowledge of herbal drugs. Medicines and poisons, but again, much of the meaning is lost.

Motto: "Cut the tree-cutters."

General Makeup: 50 light infantry with short bows and broadhead arrows, mixed light weapons and bucklers.

Overall Quality: Excellent

Magnitude: 2

Drill: 2

Close Combat Attack: 3

Close Combat Damage: 2

Ranged Attack: 3

Ranged Damage: 2

Endurance: 5

Might: 0 **Armor:** 1

(-1 mobility)

Morale: 3

Formation: The tribal warriors typically fight in skirmish formation. Their leader,

Ashivol, is the sub-chief

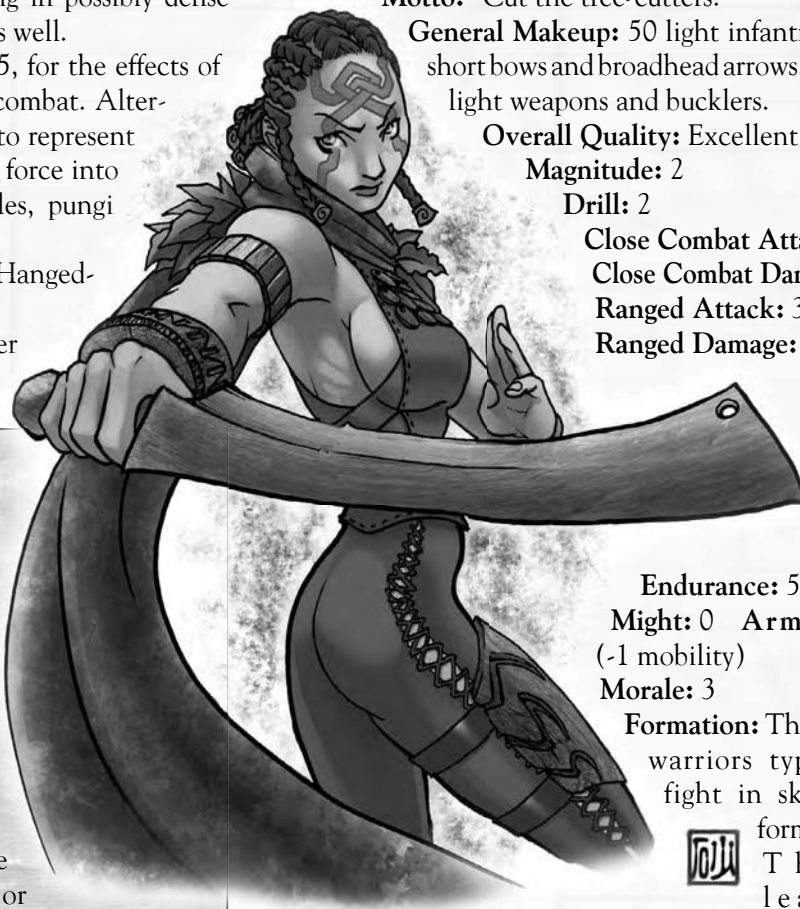
of their village. The war band includes two extraordinarily skilled archers who function as sorcerers. Standard practice for the war band is to begin an ambush with a volley of arrows poisoned with arrow frog venom (see **Exalted**, p. 131). They do not poison subsequent arrows, as this takes too much time from moving and shooting.

FARHOLD

From a logging camp, Farhold has grown into a town of 8,000 people. A sturdy ironwood palisade surrounds the town. Naturally, all the buildings are made of wood.

The stockade is built near the banks of the Maruto River. On the river itself are docks, ramps and yards for raw timber. For about five miles out from Farhold, the land is a patchwork of farm-fields and orchards. Copses of young oak trees also grow; all their acorns are sweet, a blessing Elder Oak once gave to the Ten Tribes. Acorns now equal grain as a staple food in Farhold.

Farhold is a company town, though not just one company. The Golden Axe Brotherhood, out of Nexus, sponsors most of the loggers. Its factor, a retired logger called Faldo "Handy" Honsir, doubles as the town's





mayor. Numerous wildcatters operated from Farhold as well. A middle-aged outcaste Earth Aspect, named Copper Purity but usually called Queen Sledge for her favorite weapon, serves as sheriff and chief of defense.

Keeping a semblance of order in Farhold is almost as hard as fighting the Red Scars. It's a rough frontier town full of gambling dens, saloons and brothels where lumberjacks can blow their pay. All three establishments tend to cause fights as well. Queen Sledge breaks up the fights, and sometimes the buildings.

ELDER OAK'S CULT

The center of town holds Elder Oak's temple, built entirely of his namesake wood and magnificently carved. More young oak trees surround it. Inside, silver, gold and jewels adorn his new altar, which stands before a 10-foot-tall model oak tree plated with these substances. Priests hired by the Golden Axe Brotherhood burn costly incense in the forest walker's honor and pour the blood of sacrificial beasts around the roots of the sacred trees outside. Loggers write their prayers on strips of paper for the priests to hang from the jeweled tree within.

Elder Oak demands more than prayers and offerings from the Farholders; he abandoned the Ten Tribes but not the forest itself. He asks that the lumberjacks perform the same tasks he once assigned to the Ten Tribes: to thin out underbrush, fallen branches and other fire hazards; to fight fires; and to watch for sick or damaged trees. The lumberjacks must spare trees associated with Elder Oak's spiritual cronies (thus giving small gods and elementals greater incentive to

curry his favor). He forbids clearcutting, but permits cutting of roads through the forest. The lumberjacks also must plant three seedling trees for every one they cut. Farhold's fields now include nurseries for oak, ash and ironwood, while less valuable trees gradually decline in the forest.

The forest walker enjoys nigh-universal worship from the Farholders. The only attempt at serious competition comes from Righteous Lily, a lone Immaculate monk—mortal, not Dragon-Blooded—who runs a storefront shrine-cum-charity clinic in town. Her congregation numbers in the high teens, though it includes one tribesman who teaches her about the local herbal medicine.

MAHALANKA, THE CITY OF A THOUSAND GOLDEN DELIGHTS

Farhold and the arboreal cities of Halta merely return urban civilization to a land that once boasted some of the mightiest and most magnificent urban centers in Creation. Most of those cities are nothing but tumbled stones clutched by tree roots or wrapped in vines. A few cities, however, were so great that mighty wars, horrific plagues and the ever-hungry forest could not destroy them.

There is still power in some of these cities. And some powerful persons want to use that power for dark and terrible ends.

Deep in the Southeastern jungle lurk the remains of the fabled city of Sperimin, once the preeminent

Farhold, a Magnitude 2 Dominion

Military: 2 **Government:** 2 **Culture:** 2

Abilities: Awareness 1, Bureaucracy 2 (Well-Placed Bribe +2), Craft 2 (Rally Artisans +2), Integrity 1, Occult 1, Presence 2 (Religious Conversions +2), War 2 (Mercenary Champion +2)


Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Virtue Flaw: Conviction **Current Limit:** 5

Willpower: 7

Bonus Points: 10 **External Bonus Points:** 6

Notes: Farhold's bonus points come from the support of the Golden Axe Brotherhood and its clients downriver. These points provide Farhold's second dot in Government and its Bureaucracy, Craft and War specialties. The dominion's external bonus points come from the pact with Elder Oak: they pay for the second dot of Presence and the Presence specialty dots. Faldo Honsir can act as a sorcerer with legitimacy. Farhold exists because its people follow a dream with all their heart and soul: to make lots of money cutting down trees. The Farholders don't give a crap about much else, and actively despise the Ten Tribes. In Limit Break, the loggers go on an orgy of clearcutting and burning, trying to rip out all the value from the forest they can while forcing out the tribal remnants. At that point, Elder Oak may reconsider his deal with Farhold.



center of learning in all Creation. Few savants now remember the location of Sperimin. Even fewer know it became the forbidden city of Mahalanka, where the Anathema Raksi, Queen of Fangs, rules over her beast-men and barbarian subjects. In accordance with Raksi's wishes, few if any of her people even know the name Sperimin... and none would dare to speak it.

HISTORY

The Exalted built Sperimin early in the First Age. It rose to become the greatest center of learning in Creation, though it never became a complete city. Rather, Sperimin was the collective name given to 12 enormous, interconnected colleges whose faculties, student bodies and support staff numbered in the tens of thousands. Virtually all of Sperimin was devoted to education and research: even the local militia was essentially a campus security force, albeit one with several thousand personnel armed with state-of-the-art First Age weapons.

Sperimin's focus on education became its undoing. In its heyday, the preeminent faculty and administrators of the colleges were powerful gods, spirits and, of course, Celestial Exalted. The Usurpation robbed Sperimin of its Exalted instructors, and its divine faculty refused to obey mere Dragon-Blooded. Sperimin's academic prowess collapsed almost overnight. As the vast flow of students slowed to a trickle, Sperimin had to lay off much of its support staff, which then left the area for other work. By the time the Great Contagion struck, Sperimin's population was less than 10,000. According to the handful of refugees who made it out to more civilized areas, less than 300 humans still dwelled in the vast empty campuses of Sperimin, farming in the old gardens, when Raksi and her armies arrived to claim the city. Although Raksi encourages her people to breed prolifically, Sperimin (since renamed Mahalanka by its new queen) is still home to fewer than 75,000 beings. It is the City of a Thousand Golden Delights, but for Raksi alone.

THE QUEEN OF FANGS

Raksi rules Mahalanka with an iron fist, but in a manner both baffling and frustrating to her colleagues in the Silver Pact. Obviously, Mahalanka is a treasure trove of ancient lore. It is only fitting that a Lunar of Raksi's genius should rule over it. However, the Queen of Fangs shows little support for the goals of the Silver Pact; the society she built has little purpose save venerating Raksi herself. The Crossroads Society, an alliance of Lunar sorcerers, counts Raksi as one of its members, and

she seems to show greater patience for scholarly Lunars than others of their society. However, she refuses every entreaty to make Mahalanka's resources—especially the legendary *Book of Three Circles*—freely available to the Society or to any other Lunar faction.

Some younger Lunar scholars argue that in view of Raksi's evident madness, the Silver Pact should seize the city and its mystical resources for the good of all Lunars. The Lunar elders thus far reject such arguments for three reasons.

First, the elders respect Raksi for her personal renown. She played a crucial role in devising the moonsilver tattoos that saved the entire Lunar host from being lost to the Wyld during their long exile. All Lunars therefore owe her a debt of gratitude they can never repay.

Second, the general precepts of the Thousand Streams River project, to which most Lunar elders subscribe, give all Lunars wide latitude in how they shape the societies they choose to guide. While Mahalanka obviously does not work well as a functioning society, it is not such a failure that it demands the unprecedented step of replacing its Lunar mistress by force.

The third reason for ignoring Mahalanka goes unspoken, even though it is probably the most valid: fear. By the time of the Contagion, Raksi was already the most powerful Lunar sorcerer still alive. Since then, she spent seven centuries honing her powers and mastering the secrets of the *Book of Three Circles*. Mahalanka's defenses include no less than four Second Circle demons permanently bound to defend the city from any who would attack it or its mistress. The *Sidereals* know what goes on in Mahalanka, and they make no moves against Raksi. The Lunars, whose position in Creation is far more precarious, simply have no realistic hope of supplanting her at this time. And so, the elders wait, watch and hope the Queen of Fangs never discovers the final, ultimate secret that still eludes her: mastery of Solar Circle Sorcery.

THE CITY AND THE PEOPLE

Modern savants sometimes speak of "the ruins of lost Sperimin." Such savants betray their ignorance. True, most of Sperimin is gone: all the commonplace homes, workshops, markets, temples and civic buildings fell long ago and the jungle claimed them. The structures that mattered to Sperimin's exalted masters, however, were made to last the ages. The main streets of Sperimin were forged of imperishable adamant glass. The 12 great colleges were built of adamant, spell-reinforced stone, and metal wedded to skeletons of jade-steel. Powerful geomantic effects that survive




the passage of centuries keep these streets and buildings clean of debris and vegetation. Even bird droppings that land in the streets magically clean themselves within minutes. Bare ground in the city, however, burgeons with riotous jungle: pristine towers of porcelain and glass rise amid rubber trees and lianas.

Six distinct breeds populate Mahalanka. The largest population consists of humans, albeit degenerate barbarian humans. These descend from indigenous tribes whose ancestors fell into barbarism during the post-Contagion collapse of Shogunate culture and who were later conquered and assimilated by Raksi's forces. Others descend from Wyld barbarians who swore allegiance to Raksi during the Lunar's long exile in the Wyld. Most of these Wyld barbarians carry a simian aspect, with mutations such as prehensile tails and fur. About 35,000 human and Wyld-tainted barbarians live in and around Mahalanka. The city's other four tribes consist of the four distinct breeds of beastmen bred by Raksi during her exile. They include a number of her direct children, who often become Half-Castes—mortals who inherit the ability to channel Essence from a powerful Exalted parent the same way God-Blooded mortals inherit it from a divine parent.

The black-furred apemen typically stand about eight feet tall and are incredibly strong and durable. They are also preternaturally disposed to violence (a distinct change from their great ape ancestors): most of them, male and female, serve Raksi as enforcers to keep the other Mahalankans in line. About 6,000 apemen live in the city.

Orangutanmen are roughly human-sized with shaggy orange fur. Although they are a little stronger than humans, they are fairly intelligent and fiercely loyal to Raksi. She dotes on her orangutanmen followers and regularly beds them during ritual orgies, with the result that there are more Half-Caste orangutanmen than any other breed. Mahalanka holds about 4,000 orangutanmen.

The baboonmen are the most intelligent of Raksi's followers, which for her is perhaps a mark against them. The baboonmen perform most every mundane job in Mahalanka. Most of the savants and sages in the city are baboons, although Raksi forbids them to learn thaumaturgy. Baboonmen stand slightly shorter than humans but the typical baboonman has an intellect comparable to the typical mortal; many of them are quite learned. About 8,000 baboonmen live in the city.



The last and least of Raksi's beastman races are the monkeymen, who typically stand less than three feet tall. Nearly 20,000 monkeymen live in Mahalanka, but their limited intellect, poor Essence breeding and diminutive stature place them at the bottom of the city's social structure, below that of even mortals.

THE LIBRARY OF SPERIMIN

In the center of Mahalanka stands the Library of Sperimin, the largest library ever built in Creation. The Library is a hexagonal, 40-story building with 12 parapets capped with magical materials and a massive orichalcum dome over its center. The main collection has precisely one million imperishable volumes with spider-silk pages and moonsilver-steel covers. Subjects range from textbooks and reference materials to First Age novels and poetry. Every year, the Library shut down during Calibration, during which the one million books actually rewrote themselves at the direction of the librarians according to which books had been most requested Creation-wide in the previous year. However, the library has not been updated in this manner since the city's fall, and so the million volumes in its stacks represent the most commonly requested books for the year before the Contagion. Most volumes are in Old Realm. None contain any sorcery spells.

The supplemental collection is even larger, though in worse repair. These volumes are in every format known to the Old Realm, from clay tablets to memory crystals, and some books did not survive the millennia well. (See **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. I—Wonders of the Lost Age**, pp. 21-23, for more about the Library and its contents.)

When the library was fully functional, patrons could request a given volume from the library staff that, in turn, forwarded the request to small gods who existed for no purpose except to fetch books. The books were never organized in any coherent manner since the library spirits could intuitively find any book requested. Unfortunately, those spirits fled the city during the Contagion. In their absence, finding anything in the library is a monumental undertaking.

Although any book in the library's collection could be requested, patrons were not allowed to take books outside the building. For a small fee, however, an automated system could make a copy of any book, which was the patron's to keep. Although this automated system still functions, its command routines are long since forgotten, and its animating intelligence (or AI) does not recognize the commands of anyone other than the long-dead library staff.

Persons who attempt to leave the building with any volumes must contend with an automated anti-theft system operated by the library's AI. This AI manifests as a spirit in the form of 12-year-old girl called Manon, which was the name of the daughter of the Chief Librarian at the time of the Contagion (a personal affectation, as the AI's interface could be easily changed, and usually was at the Chief Librarian's whim). Manon can follow a stolen book anywhere in the city. Once she locates the thief, she politely but firmly instructs him to return the stolen volume. Failure to do so (or any sort of attack against Manon) activates a force of 144 brass legionnaires (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. I—Wonders of the Lost Age**, p. 103) that assist Manon in recovering the stolen book and take the thief into custody.

Persons captured by the automatons are placed in small but comfortable holding cells in the command center for the city guard until such time as the Chief Librarian instructs the AI to release the prisoner. Since the Chief Librarian is dead, the AI does not recognize the authority of anyone to order the release of a prisoner. In the centuries since the Contagion, a dozen or so would-be intruders have died in those holding cells—all of old age, as the automated systems keep prisoners comfortable and fed, even going so far as to provide medical assistance and physical restraint in the case of suicide attempts. Raksi could probably override the AI's control systems, or even reprogram it to acknowledge her or one of her minions as the new Chief Librarian. She has simply not bothered to do so, mainly because she considers the Library to be her personal possession, and anyone who tries to steal from her deserves what he gets.

The top five floors of the Library contain the former rooms of the Chief Librarian and the city governor. These levels also constitute a 5-dot Solar manse and are the home of both *The Book of Three Circles* and Raksi herself. The manse's Hearthstone is the Gem of Brigid, which reduces the time for Shape Sorcery Actions by -1 tick (so that Emerald Circle spells require one 4-tick shaping action, while Sapphire Circle spells require two 4-tick actions).

The three-volume *Book of Three Circles* can be found in the manse's hearthroom. Each volume rests on a podium. The first volume rests on a podium carved from a single giant emerald, while the second sits on a similar podium cut from a giant sapphire, and the third is of solid adamant. A single AI, known simply as "the Keeper," controls all of the manse's functions,



including access to *The Book of Three Circles*. While the Keeper recognizes Raksi's authority over it due to her Old Realm status, the AI does not permit any lesser being to so much as touch one of the books' covers without Raksi's permission or a direct order from the Solar Deliberative or the head of the School of Sorcery. Even Raksi herself is not allowed to peruse the third volume, as she cannot practice Adamant Circle sorcery. Not even the Queen of Fangs dares to tamper with the Keeper's functions for fear of triggering the powerful defenses of *The Book of Three Circles*.

The Keeper is a 5-dot AI (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. I—Wonders of the First Age**, p. 146), but has access to every Emerald Circle spell contained within the *Book* and can cast them freely with the Essence cost paid directly from the city's power grid itself. The Keeper manifests as an elderly savant fashioned of origami. Initially reticent about allowing the obviously deranged Raksi to read from the *Book*, the Keeper was worn down by Raksi's powerful Social and Mental Charms. It is now nearly as insane as she is, although its programming still bars it from simply granting her access to the Adamant Circle volume. When Raksi does not actively study the secrets of the *Book*, she sometimes regales the Keeper with tales of bloodshed and grotesquerie. In exchange, the Keeper hints at the lost secrets of the third volume, those that only the ancient Solars knew, and whispers to her of the Adamant Circle spells that are just beyond her reach.

THE TWELVE COLLEGES

The Library of Sperimin rises at the center of a circular courtyard nearly a quarter-mile in radius, ringed by 12 open gates. Each gate leads to the Twelve Colleges, each held in a single sprawling and magnificent building. The dormitories and support buildings around their bases are long gone. Each college was devoted to a different area of academic endeavor: Agriculture, the Arts, Cosmology and Theology, Engineering and Architecture, Government, History, Martial Arts, Medicine, Military Science, Mining and Metallurgy, Sorcery and Thaumaturgy, and Trade. See **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. II—The White Treatise**, pp. 32-33, for a description of the Sixfold Spire, the college of Sorcery and Thaumaturgy. The other 11 colleges were equally wondrous in Sperimin's heyday, and led by Solars as eminent in their fields as the Sixfold Spire's headmasters Devon and Salina. In life, for instance, the First and Forsaken Lion knew the College of Military Science very well... and its buildings may still hold secrets about him.

Most of Sperimin's classrooms and study areas have remained empty since before the Contagion. The current population is a fraction of what the facilities were designed to teach, and has little use for most of the educational resources. Some of the colleges have a lively population even today but the level of academic discourse is, sadly, much declined.

The adjacent Colleges of Martial Arts and Military Science house the barracks for the apemen. Although Raksi herself eschews the finer points of physical combat, she is a bloodthirsty warrior if moved to battle, and she numbers a few combat-oriented Lunars among her followers. These subordinates act as her generals and also as the martial arts instructors for the more puissant of her apemen followers. Raksi's blood runs strong in her children—nearly one in 100 among Mahalanka's beastman population is Half-Caste (and as many as one in 50 orangutanmen), and scores of apemen have been initiated into Terrestrial martial arts.

Orangutanmen make up the priests of Raksi's cult, and they mainly confine themselves to cloisters within the College of Cosmology and Theology. Raksi's religion is a simple one: she is beautiful and divine, and there is no purpose in life but to adore her. As a practical matter, this means that the orangutanmen are not so much priests as secret police, constantly spying on the other breeds (and each other) for any hint of insufficient devotion to the Queen of Fangs. The most loyal orangutans serve as attendants to Raksi in the Great Library, where she instructs Half-Caste orangutans in common thaumaturgy.

The baboonmen constitute the savants of Mahalanka, as well as much of its worker caste. They are also the breed of beastman most likely to view Raksi analytically instead of through the lens of religious devotion, and anyone who does so can't help but see that she is mad. That realization does little to help the baboonmen: even a mad Exalt can rarely be denied. The baboonmen can be found throughout Mahalanka. Baboon farmers toil on the grounds of the College of Agriculture (Raksi does not bother to restore its advanced agricultural and hydroponic facilities). Baboon smiths work in the foundries of the College of Mining and Metallurgy to produce more weapons for the apemen militia. The most learned of the baboonmen seek to recover the lost sciences of the College of Medicine. Raksi bars all but her most loyal orangutan priests from the Sixfold Spire, however, and the baboons chafe at being denied the ancient secrets of applied thaumaturgy.

Some baboonmen are completely loyal to Raksi, or at least enamored of the benefits of appearing loyal.



Such baboon savants live among the apemen in the College of Military Arts, where they seek to master the ancient weapons of the First Age. Fortunately for Creation, the College of Military Arts has theoretical texts on the construction of Essence-based weaponry and warstriders, but no functioning examples of them. The Shogunate, concerned about Solar loyalists among Sperimin's faculty, seized all of the College's functional advanced weaponry after the Usurpation, although the College is still a treasure trove of information on building such artifacts.

Humans and monkeymen alike are found throughout Mahalanka, save in those areas, which are the exclusive purview of Raksi or her orangutan priests. A few monkeymen serve as apprentice-helpers to sympathetic baboon savants, but the orangutans are contemptuous of them, and the apemen can barely be bothered not to tread them underfoot. Despite their pitiful status, the monkeymen are the most populous beastman breed in Mahalanka. As badly as they are treated here, it's still better than the jungles.

The jungles are where most of the humans and Wyld barbarians live, in a broad band around the Colleges. They must hunt and gather for a living. Now and then, Raksi sends them a gift of surplus food from the city; she forbids them to try farming on their own. Once a week, the barbarians troop from their rude huts into the city to present their infants to the Queen of Fangs, and she selects the most beautiful specimens for her banquets. Clans whose babies she finds especially tasty may receive some trivial reward, such as an ersatz talisman they believe confers Raksi's blessing. Clans that fail to provide toothsome offspring for too long have their eldest slain, as a warning to do better.

APEMAN TALON

Description: Raksi's troops do not train in units larger than talons; in centuries, she has never needed any larger unit to reach an objective. (Large combat units also find it impossible to stay in order in a jungle.) Each talon consists of 100 apeman warriors, including their commander and officers. In weekly ceremonies to honor Raksi, the 50 talons hold a torchlight parade in Mahalanka's central courtyard, marching in complex formations. This talon's commander is one of Raksi's Half-Caste children; he knows the Jade Mountain Style of Terrestrial martial arts up to its Form-type Charm (see *Scroll of the Monk*, p. 53). All the soldiers in this elite talon carry minor talismans and alchemical drugs to assist them in combat. Every scale also includes an orangutanman priest who knows useful thaumaturgical Procedures.

Commanding Officer: Ajit Slave-of-Might

Armor Color: Bronze with green stripes

Motto: "Flesh for the Queen of Fangs!"

General Makeup: 100 apeman infantry with spears, bolas and razor harnesses over their breastplates and pot helmets.

Overall Quality: Excellent

Magnitude: 3

Drill: 3

Close Combat Attack:

3 **Close Combat Damage:** 3

Ranged Attack: 3

Ranged Damage: 2

Endurance: 7

Might: 1 **Armor:** 2 (-1

mobility) **Morale:** 4

Formation: The ape-soldiers can fight in close formation when they have sufficiently clear terrain to do so. Out in the jungle, they cannot manage anything closer than skirmish formation and must break into scales of 30. The talon has three heroes who can command such scales, and three sorcerers who are especially skilled at using poisoned bolas to capture or incapacitate enemy commanders.



Mahalanka, a Magnitude 3 Dominion

Military: 3 **Government:** 1 **Culture:** 2

Abilities: Craft 2 (Novel Technology +2), Integrity 2 (Religious Edict +3), Occult 5, Performance 3 (Intimidating Display +2), Presence 2, War 1

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Virtue Flaw: Conviction **Current Limit:** 3

Willpower: 7

Bonus Points: 15 **External Bonus Points:** 0

Notes: Mahalanka's role as a dominion is theoretical at present, since Raksi forbids all interaction with the rest of Creation. If Raksi ended Mahalanka's isolation, the dominion would begin without external bonus points; already, its 15 bonus points are largely due to Raksi herself. They go to the dominion's fifth dot of Occult, its second dot of Craft and all its specialties.

Nothing really unites the tribes of Mahalanka except their worship and fear of the Queen of Fangs, the source of the dominion's high Conviction. In Limit Break, the beastmen and barbarians lose faith in Raksi, or their fear of living under her overcomes their fear of displeasing her. Much of the population flees into the jungle, reducing the dominion's Magnitude by one.

RATHESS

As first capitol of the Solar Empire and ancestral seat of the Dragon King race, Rathess was once Creation's preeminent metropolis. The Usurpation, the Contagion and the relentless march of history conspired to reduce it to overgrown ruins infested by feral Dragon Kings far removed from their own noble ancestry.

However, something far worse than mere savages stirs in Rathess. Horrors long forgotten in Creation gather strength or wallow in their own degradation. The worst of these horrors may be one of the Sun's Chosen, deluded and maddened, who now truly deserves the title of Anathema.


HISTORY

Rathess may be the oldest city in Creation. The Dragon Kings founded Rathess before the Primordial War and even before the ascendancy of the human race. From their glittering city deep in the Southeastern jungles, the Dragon Kings ruled Creation in the name of the Primordials and the Unconquered Sun. After the Primordial War, the Dragon Kings swore fealty to the Chosen of the Sun. Merala, the most powerful of the surviving first generation Solars, became Queen of Rathess. Not long after, the Unconquered Sun himself gave Merala the Crown of Thunders and the Mandate of Heaven, effectively making her his regent in Creation. While Merala's Dragon King subjects rejoiced at this honor, her peers among the Solar Exalted were less enthused. Eventually, Merala used a combination of gentle diplomacy and brutal warfare to secure her *de facto* rulership over all of Creation. However, she

never achieved absolute power. In time, the Solar Deliberative formed as a check on her authority. Merala decided that Rathess was too remote to serve as capital for her far-flung empire, she made Meru the Old Realm's seat of government, and returned control over Rathess to the Dragon Kings.

Although Rathess remained one of Creation's most glorious cities for millennia to come, Merala's relocation inflicted a subtle but mortal wound. Cut off from constant interaction with the Princes of the Earth, the Dragon Kings grew increasingly decadent and insular. This would harm any great civilization, but it was much worse for the Dragon Kings. All Dragon Kings are born into a state of animal savagery. Over time, a young Dragon King achieves first sentience and then intellect through an ongoing process of spiritual evolution under the direction of his more enlightened peers. As their culture decayed, the Dragon Kings of Rathess abandoned the quest for enlightenment in favor of idle entertainment. As a result, each successive generation became less intelligent and less civilized than the one before.

Although the Rathessian Dragon Kings caused their own decline, they had help. Not long after Queen Merala's departure, Han-Tha, a powerful forbidden god of necrophagy, infiltrated the city. Like the other forbidden gods, the Eater of the Dead would not fight on the side of the Unconquered Sun during the Primordial War. He narrowly escaped execution for his crimes against Heaven. Powerful and cunning, Han-Tha concealed himself in the underbelly of Rathess, where he established a cult that venerated him by ritually eating the flesh of the dead in



hopes of gaining their power. The influence of this god of corruption and decay did not directly cause the decline of Rathess, but it greatly accelerated the process.

By the time of the Usurpation, the Rathessian Dragon Kings were too indolent to play a significant role on either side. That did not save thousands of them from dying as collateral damage. First, the Dragon-Blooded assassinated the city's Solar overseers. Decades later, two Solars who escaped the initial massacre fled to Rathess. The Wyld Hunt followed them and slew them, but caused further damage to the city. The lavish tombs for the Solars, Albaio and Pleasant Clouds, became the last major public works project in Rathess.

During the Shogunate era, the Dragon-Blooded viewed the Dragon Kings as a dying people. Very few Dragon Kings attained sufficient enlightenment even to converse intelligently outside their racial language, let alone threaten the Shogunate. Some Dragon-Blooded remembered the race's loyalty to the Unconquered Sun and the Solars and argued in favor of exterminating the Dragon Kings; the Great Contagion rendered moot all such plans.

The Contagion reduced the Rathessian Dragon Kings to a fraction of their former numbers and obliterated their last traces of enlightenment. However, feral raptok stalkers survived to establish a crude hunter-gatherer culture in the city's ruins. Their mosok cousins retreated to nearby Lake Therak.

The surviving humans of the area fared worse. Some fled the dying city, only to be massacred by Fair Folk advance scouts or caught within mutating Wyld storms. Fortunately, the main force of the invasion never came to Rathess, and so the city's infrastructure remained largely intact. The raksha's precipitous retreat from the Scarlet Empress' counterattack, however, left a few hundred hobgoblins stranded in the area; they took refuge in the depopulated city.

Other mortals sought to flee the Contagion by walling themselves into the underways beneath the city. Those doomed mortals inadvertently broke open ancient seals set into place long before the Primordial War. The debased leech gods—foul entities rejected even by their Primordial creators—escaped from their prison beneath the city to enslave and debase the refugees, turning them into the modern underpeople. The remaining mortals eventually fell to the teeth and claws of the stalkers. In the Age of Sorrows, Rathess has been home only to rival tribes of feral stalkers and a squalid and inbred colony of underpeople who dwell beneath the city in the service of the leech gods.

EXPLORING THE CITY

The ruins of Rathess hide deep within the Southeastern jungle. Old texts make it easy enough to find: head south along the Gray River to the town of Chaing-Dav. From here, travel east about 600 miles up the Gray's tributary, the Vaniwayan River. Hack your way 90 miles north through the trackless jungle. If you're lucky, you'll find Rathess. In the dense jungle, however, you could pass a quarter-mile from Rathess and still not see its flying towers through the trees.

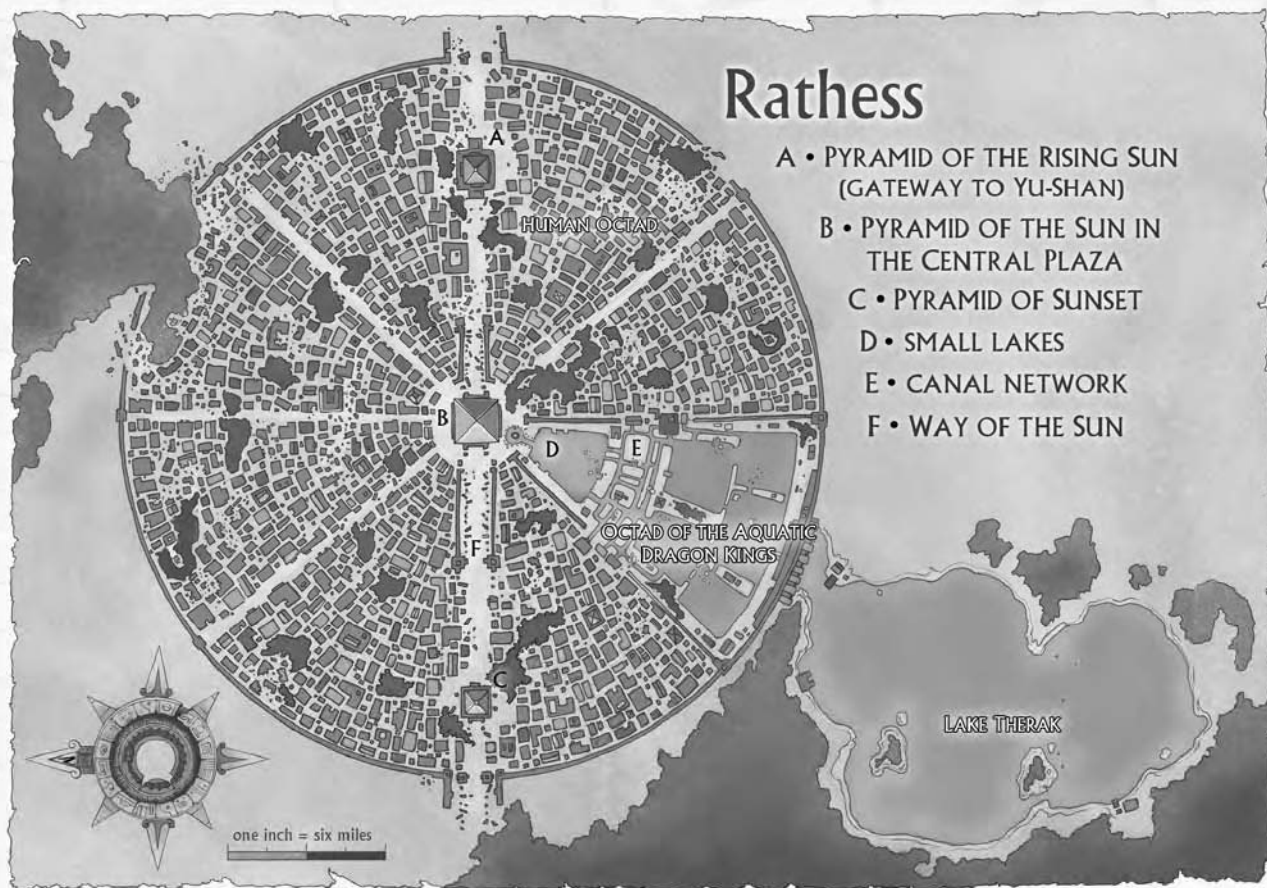
Rathess occupies a perfectly circular area with a diameter of about 15 miles. In the High First Age, a suburban complex extended for an additional 10 miles further into the jungle. The central, circular area dates back to the founding of the city; its builders fashioned the old city according to geomantic principles. The auspicious geomancy of the old city preserved it in part from the encroaching jungle. The surrounding suburbs were less fortunate: nothing remains of them today save for the occasional stone ruin, now covered in dirt and vegetation.

Eight major roads of gold-streaked marble divide Rathess into eight sectors, called octads. The Way of the Sun, which runs east to west through the city, is the only road whose name is still known to even the most erudite savants. The other roads bore the names of legendary Solar Exalted; the Shogunate erased all references to them from the city's history. The Dragon Kings built the Way of the Sun to symbolize the Unconquered Sun's journey across the horizon. Powerful

BREEDS OF DRAGON KINGS

There are four sub-species of Dragon Kings. The thin, graceful **raptoks** were once highly intelligent urbanites and masters of the Dragon Kings' unique vegetative technology. In their devolved state, the raptoks became the savage stalkers who are the dominant predators in Rathess. The much larger, amphibious **mosoks** subsist in Rathess's aquatic octad and in nearby Lake Therak. The hulking **anklok** and the winged **pterok** never maintained a significant presence in Rathess after Queen Merala left the city. Today, those breeds dwell in Rathess in insignificant numbers, if at all.

For more information on Dragon Kings, their physiology and their unique magic, see **Scroll of Fallen Races**.



enchancements keep the Way of the Sun pristine, free of even moss and weeds. Its paving stones resist anything save the magical materials. Even then, a would-be vandal would need prodigious strength to dislodge or even scratch one of them.

The other roads intersect with the Way of the Sun at the city's center. Before the city's fall, six octads were reserved for Rathess's land-dwelling Dragon Kings. The city's human residents dwelled in a seventh "human octad." The city's aquatic Dragon Kings, the mosok, dwelled in the eighth octad. This octad has no roads save for the two thoroughfares on its boundaries. Instead, the mosok's octad consists of several artificial lakes connected by canals. Most of the area's buildings are underwater and inaccessible to surface dwellers without the use of magic or technology. Underground waterways also connect the eighth octad to nearby Lake Therak.

THE DRAGON KING OCTADS


The octads reserved for the land-dwelling Dragon Kings are filled principally with large apartment buildings, with a scattering of temples, theaters, schools, gymnasia and other structures devoted to spiritual, intellectual, cultural and military pursuits. They placed workshops, markets and other commercial locations

underground, as they considered such activities too ignoble to perform in the light and sight of the Unconquered Sun. In some areas, Rathess's subterranean levels extend six stories underground.

Dragon King architecture is rife with religious symbolism, much of which human savants find incomprehensible. The pyramidal structure was sacred, and the Dragon Kings reserved it for their religious buildings: the city's three pyramids and the four obelisk-shaped Flying Towers that served as docking centers for airships.

Most of Rathess's public and private high-rise buildings are built on an equilateral triangular plan. Most Dragon Kings lived in apartment buildings between 100 and 300 yards tall; each floor typically housed six apartments. Wealthier Dragon Kings lived in high-rise villas with only three spacious apartments per floor. A communal species, the Rathessian Dragon Kings had strong taboos against living apart from other Dragon Kings. Accordingly, Rathess has virtually no single-family dwellings outside of the human octad.

About a fourth of the towers are completely ruined. Another fourth are damaged to some degree and reclaimed in part by jungle. The rest are undamaged,



albeit overgrown. Since the Contagion, however, looters stripped anything useful from most of the Dragon King dwelling towers. A few remain pristine because their enchanted substance makes Rathessian buildings incredibly resilient. Every wall and every window has a minimum soak of 20L/25B with a Hardness of 15. An intruder must inflict 60 health levels just to make an opening big enough to crawl through. Furthermore, ancient Dragon Kings of any wealth protected their homes with magical seals that made them proof against any Charms that require Essence 4 or less.

Fortunately, searching the interior of a building is very easy once you're inside. The city's internal power grid largely survived the ravages of time, and so most of the apartment complexes still have functioning elevators. However, the same power source also maintains all of the city's locking mechanisms, meaning that every door that was not left open 700 years ago remains sealed.

Less fortunately, many buildings are still occupied. Although modern stalkers and hobgoblins cannot use most of Rathess's ancient technology, they can use stairs. Many of the unlocked apartments now serve as stalker warrens.

Furthermore, the Dragon Kings were never a particularly ostentatious species. Locked apartments certainly do not contain heaps of gold or other conventional treasures. Also, the average Rathessian did not own Essence cannons, grand daiklaves of conquest or other powerful items. On the other hand, an apartment might contain a treasure trove of 1- and 2-dot artifacts that First Age Rathessians saw as everyday conveniences. Greater wonders are found, if at all, in the underways.

THE HUMAN OCTAD

The human sector of the city is home to far more recognizable architecture: rectangular buildings, market areas and the like. Here too, most buildings were long ago stripped of anything useful. The exception lies in the city's necropolis. The Dragon Kings themselves burned the bodies of their dead, as they knew that reincarnation would come swiftly. The Exalted dead were another matter. The Dragon Kings venerated their Exalted allies as god-kings. When one died, they often begged for the privilege of providing them with lavish tombs.

The Necropolis consists of three walled rectangular areas, one inside the other. The outer wall—the Wall of Illimitable Honor—encloses the tombs of Exalted who were buried here in the last years before the Usurpation. There are relatively few such tombs, and all of them were looted long ago. The jungle has almost completely reclaimed this outer cemetery.

The next zone inward, past the Wall of Transcendent Glory, houses the tombs of important Lunars, all evenly spaced out. Filial Wisdom has already raided most of these tombs, but since their artifact contents consisted mainly of moonsilver, he has not benefited greatly from his acquisitions.

The Wall of Sempiternal Majesty surrounds the innermost area. This area contains the tombs of the most ancient and respected Solars and Lunars buried in Rathess, as well as two newer tombs. Almost all of these tombs are incredibly lavish structures of gold, silver and stone. Powerful magic keeps them looking like new, despite the vines and trees that grow about them. Mighty and ingenious magical and technological traps protect their contents. Two newer tombs (built in a distinctly different and cruder style) house the bodies of Albaio and Pleasant Clouds. The Sidereals hastily erected their tombs in the innermost part of the necropolis to take advantage of the area's existing and still potent defenses.

All the tombs within the Wall of Sempiternal Majesty have essentially the same defenses:

- The walls and door of each tomb are absolutely immune to all Terrestrial Circle spells and to all Charms meant to open or bypass locks or doors that require an Essence of 5 or less.
- Each tomb has a minimum soak of 25L/30B, a Hardness of 25, and requires at least 40 health levels to damage enough to create a man-sized opening.
- Each tomb is also protected by three to five magical traps. These traps may take the form of magical fire or ice, lightning bolts, swarms of man-eating automaton beetles, enchanted bells whose tolling melts the brains of intruders or even more esoteric effects.

For Solar tombs, each trap inflicts at least 30L damage per five ticks of exposure. Each trap takes *at least* 10 ticks to pass through unless the character can fly, teleport, jump horizontally more than 30 yards, or has some other form of special locomotion appropriate to the circumstance. In these cases, a character can get through with only a single action's exposure or possibly no exposure at all (depending on the nature of the trap). Sidereal or Lunar tombs bear similar traps, but they likely inflict only 20L damage per five ticks of exposure and rarely require more than a single Miscellaneous Action to pass through. At least one trap in each tomb inflicts piercing damage or can bypass armor-based soak altogether (for example, crushing blocks or poison gas traps).

In addition to their own unique defenses, the tombs of the inner necropolis collectively have three guard-



ians: a trio of celestial lions assigned to permanent guard duty in Rathess. One of the three guards the gate to the inner necropolis. Another protects the tomb of an ancient Solar (his name long forgotten in Creation) who succeeded Queen Merala as ruler of Rathess until his death in the Usurpation. The third guards the tombs of Albaio and Pleasant Clouds. Although they take a dim view of tomb-robbing in general and try to devour any unauthorized persons they catch in the inner necropolis, their primary obligations are to their specific assignments. A clever thief *might* evade them, at least temporarily.

THE UNDERWAYS


In the First Age, visitors impressed by the size of Rathess were even more astonished to learn that nearly half the city was actually underground. Convinced that commerce, manufacturing and even dining were profane in the eyes of the Unconquered Sun, the Dragon Kings developed a massive underground complex beneath the streets of Rathess. These “underways” housed their shops, restaurants, offices and even factories. The underways extend through the six Dragon King octads,

with access points from the human and aquatic octads. In most of Rathess, the underways extend down to four levels below the surface. In a few places, they reach six levels underground. The Dragon Kings refused to dig deeper than that: wisely perhaps, since the underpeople discovered the leech gods by digging down from the lowest levels of the underways.

As usual, in much of the underways, anything useful rotted or was looted long ago. While these levels once held many manufacturing centers, their Dragon King technology long ago ceased to function. Sections of the underways are flooded, whether by overflow from the aquatic octad or simply from rain and ground water seepage. Stalkers, underpeople and stranger terrors hunt throughout the subterranean tunnels.

Despite these difficulties, large sections of the underways remain intact. In many areas, glow crystals still provide light, and a turquoise grass still carpets the floors. This magical grass keeps the underways clean of dirt and debris, but it died in those areas without lights.

A network of stone corridors from six to 15 yards wide and three yards high runs throughout the underways



in a pattern of radiating lines and concentric circles. The myriad workshops, markets, factories and other urban utilities branch off from these subterranean streets.

A fully automated ventilation system keeps the air fresh throughout the underways. Functioning elevators and a rapid-transit tube-car system service the entire subterranean network. However, while the tube-car system still works city-wide, individual tube-cars have broken down and become unserviceable over the centuries. The still functioning cars require a working knowledge of High Holy Speech and a successful (Intelligence + Lore) roll at a difficulty of 3 to operate. (And of course, many tube-car stations are now flooded.) Filial Wisdom satisfies these criteria. He and his minions use the tube-car system both to explore the underways and to make lightning attacks on their enemies.

PEOPLE OF RATHESS

Rathess is currently home to several thousand feral Dragon Kings, a number of Fair Folk hobgoblins and, surprisingly, one Solar Exalt of exceptional power.

STALKERS

Since the Contagion, several thousand Dragon Kings have lived in Rathess. However, the centuries turned these once noble creatures into feral beasts: the stalkers. The most enlightened colony of stalkers, living in the Eastern flying tower, achieves near-human intelligence but remains mired in savagery. The rest of the stalkers are cunning hunters but they understand neither magic nor technology. Only the efforts of the god Leeayta enables a few of these savages to learn a few of the Dragon King Paths (the unique Charms relied upon by the ancient Dragon Kings), preserving these ancient arts for some future renaissance of their kind. Most stalkers can speak only in a guttural argot that barely qualifies as language. While most stalkers are land-based reptiles, a small sub-colony of mosok Dragon Kings dwells in Lake Therak outside the city. The lake connects to the canals that flow through Rathess, enabling aquatic Dragon Kings to reach most of the city.

FAIR FOLK

Rathess also holds a colony of 300 hobgoblins ruled by a trio of Fair Folk nobles: Vau-Chen, a female diplomat; Poisonous Carnelian Blade, a female cataphract; and Venomous Dreams, a noble whose powers affect earth and wood. Vau-Chen and Venomous Dreams are lovers, and Poisonous Carnelian Blade feels somewhat jealous of their relationship. Any of the three would betray the others to save their own lives. The

hobgoblins—locally referred to simply as “goblins”—are short, skinny humanoids with mottled skin and mouths full of needle-like teeth. A few greater goblins stand 12 feet tall with massive builds and horns on their heads, dressed in scraps of ancient Dragon King armor crudely lashed together.

THINGS ONCE HUMAN

No true humans live in Rathess, but two species of altered humans dwell in the city. The underways beneath the city’s ruins are full of underpeople, the debased offspring of early post-Contagion humans who interbred with the forbidden leech gods dwelling beneath Rathess. The sickly and debased underpeople have a strong aversion to light and stick to their subterranean lairs during the day.

There are also scattered contingents of Wyld-tainted jungle cannibals. Most of these barbarians dwell in the jungles just outside the city, but a few live within its boundaries. Most of these barbarians share common mutations: green skin, a coat of mossy green fur and black eyes without pupils or irises. A few exceptional specimens have claws or prehensile tails. Virtually all of these tribes engage in ritual cannibalism of anyone who falls in their hands.

FILIAL WISDOM, THE GOBLIN KING

Over a century ago, an itinerant Solar named Filial Wisdom found himself drawn to the city. Most likely, he bears the Exaltation of a Solar executed there post-Usurpation. The forbidden god Han-Tha quickly corrupted the miserable and confused Lawgiver. Today, the now-powerful Solar acts as the priest-king of the Ghoul King’s cult, which consists of a mixture of jungle cannibals, stalkers and goblins won over to his cause.

Filial Wisdom tries to conquer all of Rathess and unite its people into an army to spread the cult of Han-Tha by force. The underpeople live in terror of him, for their masters have ambitions of their own and do not want to join forces with Han-Tha. The three Fair Folk despise Filial Wisdom and his followers: they would ally with almost anyone for a chance to destroy the Solar. Of course, any such alliance probably would not last a second once Filial Wisdom is no longer a threat. The cannibals and stalkers hunt each other, and anyone else who enters the city, with nigh-mindless savagery.

GODS OF RATHESS

Several gods live in Rathess. Some of them cannot bear to leave; others have malignant plans for the derelict city and would greatly resent any noble heroes coming to interfere. Of the gods active in Rathess, Leeayta, Relza and

Shining Flower are potential allies. They would only attack visitors if those intruders threatened them or their interests. These gods are described in the format used in **The Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. III—Yu-Shan**. The god Han-Tha, however, is so malevolent that any peaceful contact seems unlikely; while the vine-runners are likely to attack intruders just because they chopped down some inconvenient vegetation. These emphatically hostile deities receive full traits in Chapter Five.

LEEAYTA, THE LIZARD QUEEN

Leeayta, the Dragon King goddess of territorial conquest, was once the leading god in the Dragon King pantheon (after the Unconquered Sun, of course). She fell out of favor as the Dragon Kings lost their capacity to engage in effective warfare. The raids back and forth between stalker tribes simply do not suffice.

Leeayta often manifests as a claw strider standing eight feet tall at the shoulder, with a mouth full of fangs and crests of feathers along her forearms, back and tail. She also manifests as a raptok woman with similar feathered crests and an elaborate jeweled head-dress and collar.

Sanctum: Long ago, Leeayta's sanctum functioned as Rathess' military museum, whose dioramas and exhibits celebrate victories by the Dragon Kings and the Exalted. A number of her temples in the city provide access. Living virtually alone, the Lizard Queen keeps a section of the sanctum in glittering splendor, but anyone who ventures beyond the galleries leading to her apartment finds a maze of darkened halls full of rusty swords and cobweb-covered statues.

Motivation: To restore the Dragon Kings once more to greatness as conquerors. The Lizard Queen would ally with anyone who can assist the rebirth of the Dragon King species. She tries to push the stalkers back toward sentience by possessing one after the other and drilling them in civilized arts and their race's ancient magical arts, but the Lizard Queen is a warrior, not a teacher. She can show little success for her 700 years of effort.

Description: Leeayta once was a god of the Fifth Rank, scarcely less potent than the Incarnae themselves. She is now a god of the Third Rank. Her panoply is entirely ornamental, as she habitually uses no weapons except her own claws and teeth. In her sanctum, however, she keeps a number of Dragon King artifact weapons and, more importantly perhaps, complete instructions on how to make them.

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 5, Temperance 2, Valor 5

Essence: 5

RELZA, CUSTODIAN OF THE FLYING TOWER

Relza is one of the satraps of Vanileth, the Shogun of Artificial Flight. In the First Age, Vanileth had satraps in every city that received significant air traffic. She claims the remaining flying vehicles in Rathess as her own and kills anyone, goblin, stalker or other, who does not treat them as sacred treasures. Relza works with Leeayta in trying to re-civilize the stalkers.

Sanctum: Relza's immaterial sanctum can be reached from the domes surmounting each of Rathess' two surviving flying towers. It consists of a single large, white room with fixtures and furniture of basalt and gold. The room also contains many sculptures and paintings of old Rathess and all manner of flying vehicles.

Motivation: To restore artificial flight in Rathess. Relza would parlay with anyone who seems likely to advance the study of artificial flight, but she is fiercely protective of her domain and her flying craft. It beats being the god of *nothing*.

Description: Relza takes the form of a beautiful young woman covered all over with metallic blue feathers. Great feathered wings rise from her back and she bears sharp retractile claws on all six fingers of her slender hands. She is a deity of the Second Rank.

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Essence: 4

SHINING FLOWER, THE MISTRESS OF HEARTS

Shining Flower is the Dragon King goddess of sacrificial offerings. She also serves Yu-Shan's Bureau of Humanity as the Mistress of Knives. Assassins and knife-fighters across Creation pray to her before battle. During the First Age, Shining Flower personally oversaw the sacrifices made by the Dragon Kings to the Unconquered Sun. Such sacrifices ideally involved cutting out the still-beating heart of a voluntary sacrifice. In the modern era, Shining Flower relaxed her standards and accepts hearts taken from unwilling sacrifices, especially Fair Folk captured by her Dragon King worshipers. She readily rewards anyone who offers her a heart in the proper manner. On the other hand, if she notices someone carrying out a sacrifice badly, she shows how it *ought* to be done by possessing the inept priest and having him cut out his own heart with suitable skill.

As Mistress of Knives, Shining Flower's portfolio is expansive and she could probably be a god of some influence in Yu-Shan if she wished. For reasons of her own, however, she eschews heavenly politics in favor of watching over the Dragon Kings of Rathess. She tries





to teach the stalkers to cut their victims with blades instead of their own claws and teeth. Her decision may yet see Shining Flower replaced by a subordinate who pays more attention to Celestial politics.

Sanctum: In addition to a modest Celestial Manse in Yu-Shan, Shining Flower keeps a larger immaterial sanctum in Rathess. Its entrance is a false doorway in the temple atop the Pyramid of the Sun at the center of Rathess. Her palatial suite features many murals showing Yu-Shan, as well as statues of the Unconquered Sun and an immense collection of knives. Her collection includes many artifact blades crafted from all the magical materials, including two soulsteel knives obtained with great difficulty. The innermost, best-guarded chamber of her sanctum holds an ornate cabinet where the 25 finest hearts she has ever cut out are displayed still beating in orichalcum dishes.

Motivation: While Shining Flower wants to see Dragon King civilization rise again, her overriding goal is to restore sacrifices to her and the Unconquered Sun. (She has not asked the Unconquered Sun if he actually wants unwilling victims murdered in his name.)

Description: Shining Flower looks like a gorgeous young woman with orichalcum skin and moonsilver

hair bound in an elaborate arrangement. She is a deity of the Third Rank—once the Fifth Rank, as one of the Unconquered Sun's chief acolytes, but her political apathy greatly reduced her power.

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Essence: 5

THE LEECH GODS

The dreadful leech gods dwell in the underways beneath Rathess. The Primordials themselves banished these foul entities to the dark areas beneath Creation. No one but the leech gods themselves could say why they nested beneath Rathess. After the Contagion, human refugees unwittingly assisted these foul deities to reach the surface for the first time in millennia. Those poor doomed humans became the ancestors of the modern underpeople. For more information about the leech gods, see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I**, pages 69-70.

The leech gods keep grotesque pets called leech hounds. Not true dogs at all, leech hounds are translucent leeches the size of mastiffs. They move at great speed despite lacking any limbs other than mouth-tentacles.



HAN-THA, THE GHOUL KING

The most important god active in Rathess is Han-Tha, the Eater of the Dead, the forbidden god of scavengers and necrophages. Han-Tha did not become a forbidden god by siding with the Primordials; he served no side but his own. Whenever deities on one side or the other of the Primordial War fell in battle, Han-Tha moved quickly to devour their bodies, batenning himself on their Essences. On a few occasions, Han-Tha even consumed flesh from slain Primordial souls before they could descend into the Underworld to reform as the Neverborn. As a result, Han-Tha gained power far greater than he should have. The Incarnae found Han-Tha an affront on many levels, forcing the god to hide from Heaven.

Han-Tha found a hiding place right under the noses of gods and Solars alike, in Rathess. Slowly, he built a corpse-eating cult that assisted the decay of Dragon King civilization. Han-Tha now seeks to convert the surviving Dragon Kings to his worship, under the leadership of his servant, Filial Wisdom. The god also seeks powerful deities and Exalted whom he can slay and devour. He believes that consuming the Essences of sufficiently powerful beings can raise him to the power of the Incarnae, making decay and carrion-eating into concepts fundamental to Creation.

See pages 136-138 in Chapter Five for a complete description of Rathess' most potent god.

VINE RUNNERS

Finally, the weakest but perhaps most common of Rathess' spirits are the vine runners, a species of wood elemental created to monitor the city's plant life. Most vine runners simply perform their divine duties, monitoring the life cycles of the vines, lianas, trees and other plants found in Rathess—some of which the Dragon Kings bred long ago for now-forgotten purposes. Most of these little gods feel at least somewhat protective of stalkers. The vine runners remember how the ancient Dragon Kings created the region's unique plant life. They hope the Dragon King society of old can somehow be restored, so they can resume their place in it.

Not all vine runners serve such noble goals, though. A few have formed alliances with goblins or Wyld barbarians. Others, especially among those vine runners assigned to oversee the carnivorous plants in the jungles surrounding Rathess, turned carnivorous themselves, hunting any animal creatures that recklessly cut their way through the brush. Vine runners are described more fully in Chapter Five.

THE CULT OF HAN-THA


The Ghoul King teaches that growth comes through eating the remains of the dead. He gained power by eating the dead combatants of the Primordial War; he tells followers that they too can gain power and enlightenment by eating the bodies of others. If Han-Tha and his disciples can kill all of sick, suffering Creation and eat it, they can replace it with a Golden Age and replace its petty, quarreling gods with the benevolent wisdom of Han-Tha.

The Eater of the Dead never attained a widespread following in Rathess, though over the centuries his cult helped drag the city down into decadence. He had no chance of attracting many adherents in the Second Age, either, for two chief reasons: Yu-Shan would kill him if he showed himself; and his doctrine is both ridiculous and repulsive. On the other hand, it *works*, sort of. Han-Tha really can grant a blessing by which one person can gain power by eating the fresh corpse of another.

When Filial Wisdom came to Rathess, however, Han-Tha saw his opportunity. He would prefer a charismatic Zenith Caste, but settles for the Dawn Caste: "Convert or die" should work well enough. Even if Filial Wisdom cannot persuade many people to worship Han-Tha, odds are he will slay many gods and other beings of power for the Ghoul King to devour.

Filial Wisdom has already turned his cult of Han-Tha into the largest and most organized force in Rathess. The cult has about 1,300 members, about half of whom are goblins that prefer the Solar's leadership to that of the three Fair Folk nobles. Almost 200 now are great goblins—some of them recruits, some of them ordinary goblins who became larger and stronger through Han-Tha's gifts. The great goblins serve as shock troops and lead squads of other cultists. The rest are a mix of stalkers, beastmen and cannibal tribesfolk who joined because they'd rather serve Filial Wisdom than die on his blade. Finally, the cult includes 40-odd survivors of a Guild caravan that the cult massacred. These humans are all brainwashed or completely insane from months of forced cannibalism and brutal religious instruction.

The Solar has military training—as a grunt in the highly structured, disciplined armies of Paragon. He has little success training his motley troops to march in formation or hold a battle line. Nevertheless, he commands a few scale-sized units of competent and obedient soldiers, while the rabble can often win through sheer numbers—at least against other rabble. As training exercises, Filial Wisdom sends scales of troops "on



patrol” through sections of Rathess, both above and below ground. These patrols hunt and kill any group weaker than themselves who cannot get away.

If Filial Wisdom ever gets the chance to attempt a full-scale battle, he drives his troops on without regard for their casualties. His rabble is likely to run away before it suffers more than a single loss of Magnitude, though. The Solar directs his great goblins to concentrate on any Dragon-Blooded or other Exalted, to wear them down before he battles them himself.

The cult performs various ceremonies on the city’s three pyramids and at other places where the cultists dwell. Major rites are cannibalistic. In the first and most common ceremony, “The Offering to the Master,” the cult prepares a cadaver for Han-Tha to devour—preferably a chief or shaman from a nearby tribe, though the greatest celebrations come when the cult can capture a powerful or prestigious outsider such as a Dragon-Blooded explorer or a Guild caravan-master. In “The Promise of Things to Come,” a group of cultists themselves feast upon the corpses of slain enemies. “The Expansion of Self” is the greatest rite for the cultists, in which Han-Tha endows selected cultists with the power to absorb the Attributes of a devoured victim. Usually, this is temporary—but cultists who built up merit (and experience points) through their deeds can make these benefits permanent. (See the description of Han-Tha’s Charm, Endowment, on pp. 137-138.) Minor rites of prayer to Han-Tha and Filial Wisdom employ cannibal trappings such as eating from bowls made from past victims’ skulls, or dances in which cultists slap victims’ arm and leg bones together for a crude percussion.

POINTS OF INTEREST

In addition to the areas previously described, Rathess is home to a number of truly amazing architectural marvels.

THE FLYING TOWERS

Located as it was in dense jungle, Rathess’s connection to the rest of Creation depended mainly on air travel. To facilitate such travel, the Dragon Kings constructed four Flying Towers at each cardinal point of the city. These towers served as docking stations for a vast array of flying vessels right up to the Great Contagion. Today, one of the towers is heavily damaged and another is nothing but rubble, but the other two survive.

Each tower originally stood 1,000 yards tall. The lower part of each tower was an obelisk 300 yards across at the base and standing 850 yards tall. Atop each obelisk was a circular domed platform with a diameter

of 100 yards, where smaller airships could land. From the top of each dome, a mast reached an additional 150 yards to serve as a docking port for massive First Age skyships. The 10-yard-wide masts held elevators so that skyship passengers could disembark.


Some unknown disaster completely destroyed the Northern Tower. The Southern Tower lost its docking dome when an out-of-control skyship crashed into it during the Contagion. The remains of that skyship still rest in the jungle half a mile from the city. Although inoperable and overgrown by jungle life, the skyship remains structurally intact. A determined savant/craftsman with a lot of money and time to spend could conceivably get it flying again. (Chapter Two of **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. I—Wonders of the Lost Age** offers a variety of skyships; Storytellers can pick one that suits their series.)

The three Fair Folk called Vau-Chen, Poisonous Carnelian Blade and Venomous Dreams live in the Western Tower along with their colony of goblins. The Fair Folk neither understand nor care about the numerous flying ships in their tower’s docking bay. They would happily trade them for artifacts of more immediate use against Filial Wisdom, though they would undoubtedly drive a hard bargain.

A tribe of about 60 stalkers occupies the Eastern Tower. Seemingly against all hope, these Dragon Kings possess a degree of enlightenment and intellect. Most of them are at least as intelligent as the typical human barbarian, although their limited speech and rustic ways might make it difficult for interlopers to notice how they have evolved beyond the feral stalkers in the rest of the city. They are intensely loyal to Relza, Leeayta and Shining Flower, and they have even begun sacrificing captured goblins and cannibals to the Unconquered Sun. Their encounters with Filial Wisdom (as well as occasional Dragon-Blooded explorers and Lunar raiders) make them suspicious of humans. A determined diplomat who obtained the favor of Relza or Shining Flower could overcome the tribe’s hostility and forge an alliance with them in turn.

THE GREAT OBSERVATORY

For all the wonders of Rathess, the Great Observatory had the greatest fame. The Sidereals may have perfected the art of astrology, but the Dragon Kings invented it, and the Great Observatory lived up to its name. When it was fully functional, the Observatory was the greatest astrological tool in all of Creation, surpassing in some ways even the Loom of Fate. Dragon King astrologers spent millennia perfecting the Obser-



vatory and its instruments. In the High First Age, the most brilliant Sidereal astrologers and Twilight Caste savants improved it even further.

The Great Observatory consists of two buildings. The Eidouranion is a rectangular building that held the facility's libraries, administrative areas, public areas and dormitories for Dragon King astrologers who lived on-site. The Eidouranion has largely been stripped clean in the centuries since the Contagion, but the building itself remains structurally sound. A series of corridors connect the Eidouranion to the actual observatory, a great dome of pure starmetal. At a word in High Holy Speech, the dome's interior fades to a view of the stars at that moment—regardless of clouds, daylight or other obstructions to viewing. Furthermore, the building once held an abundance of telescopes and other viewing devices to enable a closer view of the heavenly bodies. Most of those artifacts suffered damage over the centuries, but many are still repairable (if you can recover them from stalkers, cannibals and others who use them as starmetal clubs or shiny trinkets).

The greatest instrument of the Observatory, however, is the Orrery of Arainthu, named for one of the legendary founders of Dragon King astrology. This immense mechanism of starmetal, moonsilver and orichalcum clockwork once could perfectly model the movement of the constellations and other heavenly bodies, down to the faintest star. Such was the accuracy of the Orrery's movement that the Observatory's astrologers rarely needed to see the actual stars to cast horoscopes of frightening accuracy. The Orrery of Arainthu no longer functions: over the centuries, looters ripped out some of the smaller gears and bearings.

Repairing the Orrery of Arainthu requires craftsmen with *minimum* Craft (Fire) 5, Lore 5 and Occult 5, as well as specialties in Craft (Clockwork) and Occult (Astrology). Next, the craftsmen's players must accumulate at least 100 successes in an extended (Perception + Occult) roll and *another* 100 success in an extended (Intelligence + Craft [Fire]) roll, both difficulty 4. Each roll represents one solid week of work spent installing and adjusting mechanisms. Teamwork is possible, but *all* participants in the repairs must meet the Ability requirements.

Obtaining raw materials presents problems. Missing parts can weigh up to 300 pounds, so a repair crew needs enormous quantities of magical materials, for multiple Resources 5 expenditures. Only the Varang City-States, the Imperial City or possibly Nexus possess the industrial skill to machine such parts. Making

the parts yourself requires 50 successes on an extended (Intelligence + Craft [Fire]) roll. This is in addition to the other repair requirements of the Orrery.

Finally, the Orrery of Arainthu has a prodigious Essence cost: 20 motes per day. The mechanism bears five hearthstone sockets, currently empty, that can reduce this cost. Each dot of Manse dedicated to the Orrery's operation reduces the daily mote cost by 1.

Once restored to functionality, the Orrery of Arainthu operates as follows:

The Orrery must function for a length of time equal to at least one-fifth of the time to be studied. That is, if the astrologer seeks knowledge of events in one year's time, the Orrery must be allowed to function for at least a season. The astrologer must regularly monitor the movements of the heavenly models throughout that length of time. (Accurate predictions require not just studying the celestial configurations at the desired time, but for extended periods before and after, to see the larger plan of destiny. Also, while the user can set the Orrery spinning faster than the actual heavens, to run the celestial model forward or backward in time, the Orrery only moves about 10 times faster than the real celestial objects.)

Using the Orrery in this manner gives the astrologer's player a +4 dice bonus to all dice rolls for Procedures in the thaumaturgical Art of Astrology (see **Exalted**, pp. 138-139, and **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. III—Oadenol's Codex**, pp. 132-133). *Lesser Divination*, *Divination* and *Greater Divination* have their maximum accuracy raised by one level, so *Lesser Divination* can generate incomplete but enlightening forecasts (allocating 3+ successes to Accuracy). *Divination* can generate forecasts that are mostly accurate with details (from 5+ successes to Accuracy). Allocating 7" successes to Accuracy for *Greater Divination* generates results that are so detailed they answer questions the astrologer did not think to ask.

What's more, forecasts using the Orrery carry the force of destiny. Events predicted by *Lesser Divination* definitely come to pass unless a magical being directly tries to block the prophecy's outcome. With *Divination*, the prediction definitely comes true unless it is subject to the intervention of beings outside of Fate or with Essence 5 or more. With *Greater Divination*, only the mightiest entities outside of Fate can alter the prophecy's outcome, such as the most powerful Fair Folk nobles, Deathlords or Third Circle demons. The Orrery of Arainthu does not in any way compel the future; rather, it automatically takes account of attempts to disrupt its predictions.





(Even the Loom of Fate can't equal the Orrery as a forecasting aid. How can the Orrery of Arainthu improve on the Loom of Fate? *Filtering*. The Loom constantly predicts the likely futures of *everything*, from the Blessed Isle to every blade of grass. Relevant information gets buried in the noise.)

The Great Observatory is technically a level 4 Sidereal manse, but it produces no hearthstone, as the entirety of its Essence goes to power the Orrery of Arainthu.

THE GREAT PYRAMID OF THE SUN

By far the largest structures in Rathess are its three step pyramids. The largest, the Great Pyramid of the Sun, stands in the direct center of the city. The Great Pyramid is 800 yards wide along its square base and stands 700 yards tall. One must climb nearly 2,000 steps to reach the top. At the top stands a small temple to the Unconquered Sun, to whom the Dragon Kings of old performed living sacrifices. In the temple's prime, orichalcum foil coated it and the entire pyramid. No enchantments protected this most sacred place; the Dragon Kings considered it a shirking of their duty to serve their greatest god. Time and theft robbed them of that precious covering. The Great Pyramid's exposed masonry stand at the mercy of the elements and encroaching vegetation.

The interior of the Great Pyramid is full of passages and chambers accessible only through hidden stairs concealed within the temple or from secret doors on the pyramid's exterior. The Rathessian priests lived within these chambers, and here they parlayed with their Solar allies. They also reserved suites for Merala, whichever Solar currently served as *Rojatan* or "Sun King," the viceroy of Rathess, and other Exalted luminaries who dwelled in the city before the Usurpation.

The largest chamber within the Great Pyramid, the Chamber of the Sun, is actually a three-dot Solar manse. The manse's hearthstone is a crystal of legendary leadership (see **The Books of Sorcery. Vol. III—Oadenol's Codex**, p. 107).

Today, the corrupted Solar Filial Wisdom claims the Great Pyramid for his armies and the Chamber of the Sun for himself. He goes so far as to christen himself as the new *Rojatan*. He also carries the Crystal of Legendary Leadership. However, the Great Pyramid has not given up all its secrets to Filial Wisdom. The Dragon Kings of old hid many of the Pyramid's chambers behind doors undetectable to those who do not know their ways. In particular, Filial Wisdom never penetrated the suite of rooms reserved for the long-dead Queen Merala and, in fact, has no idea that they even exist.

THE PYRAMID OF THE RISING SUN

The Pyramid of the Rising Sun stands on the Way of the Sun about six miles east of the Great Pyramid. It is just 200 yards tall. Here, the ancient Dragon Kings venerated the rest of their pantheon—those gods who were important to the Dragon Kings but beneath the Unconquered Sun in status. Long ago, this pyramid was covered in orichalcum, moonsilver, starmetal and all five colors of jade. Flecks of those precious metals still inlay the pyramid's walls, but most have long since been stolen away.

This pyramid's most interesting feature is on its roof. On the westernmost side of the pyramid's flat top stands a wall of black basalt standing four yards high. The *inside* of this wall bears an inlaid, three-yard high arch made of all the magical materials (except for soulsteel). This arch is actually a gate to Yu-Shan. At dawn on the first day of each season, anyone present with an Essence of 3 or higher can spend a mote of Essence and pass through this portal into Yu-Shan. Such a being can also pass through the arch during the entire period of Calibration, while certain Charms or spells can open the gateway at any time. Regardless, anyone attempting to enter Yu-Shan without proper authorization (or a damn good reason) must immediately face a group of hostile celestial lion guards. The only exception is at Calibration, when Yu-Shan stages its annual Carnival of Meeting and many of Heaven's rules are suspended.

The Pyramid of the Rising Sun is a two-dot Solar manse. Its hearthstone is a sphere of courtesan's constellation (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. III—Oadenol's Codex**, p. 106). Filial Wisdom currently holds this hearthstone, too.

THE PYRAMID OF THE SETTING SUN

The Pyramid of the Setting Sun stands along the Way of the Sun, about six miles west of the Great

Pyramid. Here, the Dragon Kings once burned the bodies of their dead to speed their reincarnations. It appears identical to the Pyramid of the Rising Sun except for its lack of a Yu-Shan gateway. It too is a two-dot Solar manse. Its hearthstone is the Stone of the Golden Bier, which allows its bearer instinctively to sense all animate corpses, ghosts and shadowland boundaries (but not Abyssal Exalted) within 10 yards. Once again, Filial Wisdom holds this hearthstone.

THE GOBLIN KING'S ARMY

Description: Filial Wisdom leads a cult of more than 1,000 cannibals, stalkers and goblins, but cannot muster more than 300 or so at a time. They are disorganized (which is why they haven't taken over the city) but learning, with their master, by trial and error. The motley force wears a blend of leather (often layered stalker hides) and scraps of Dragon King armor; the net result is comparable to a reinforced buff jacket. Only a few officers carry First Age weapons.

Commanding Officer: Filial Wisdom

Armor Color: Green-brown leather, bits of other materials.

Motto: "Light of decay from the son of glory!"

General Makeup: 100 light infantry with javelins and clubs, wearing scavenged armor.

Overall Quality: Fair

Magnitude: 4

Drill: 1

Close Combat Attack: 2 **Close Combat Damage:** 2

Ranged Attack: 2 **Ranged Damage:** 2

GEOMANCY OF RATHESS

The chief geomantic influence on the three pyramid-manses is the city of Rathess itself. In its prime, the whole city concentrated Solar Essence. The damage to the city weakened the three manses. Restoring the underlying demesnes to full power would involve rebuilding large areas of Rathess, including the flying towers. Doing this, however, would raise each pyramid's power by two dots and make their hearthstones much more powerful.



Endurance: 3 **Might:** 0 **Armor:** 2 (-2 mobility)
Morale: 3

Formation: As yet, most of Filial Wisdom's troops can't manage any formation tighter than relaxed. Indeed, he has never led his troops against a foe with much interest in a prolonged battle, so he expects enemies to break and run once he personally slaughters a few dozen of them. Thus, he often lets his troops enter combat unordered. He has not ordained any heroes or relays to help him command, but rewarded three especially skilled fighters with First Age personal weapons: either Old Realm magitech, such as plasma tongue repeaters, or Dragon King crystalline devices that deal comparable damage. These artifact-equipped warriors function as sorcerers.

GREAT GOBLIN SCALE

Description: Filial Wisdom trained this platoon of 40 great goblins as his shock troops. The strong, tough great goblins carry heavier weapons and wear scavenged bits of old Dragon King armor (functionally equal to reinforced buff jackets). He sends them charging at the enemy, preferably from the flank for maximum disruption. Unlike most of the Solar's troops, the great goblins are quite disciplined.

Commanding Officer: Glarboz Feast-of-Glory

Armor Color: Stalker leather and Dragon King crystal/ceramic

Motto: "Feast on their hearts!"

General Makeup: 50 medium infantry with great axes and hammers, dressed in scavenged armor

Overall Quality: Elite

Magnitude: 2

Drill: 3

Close Combat Attack: 4

Close Combat Damage: 5

Ranged Attack: —

Ranged Damage: —

Endurance: 13 **Might:** 0

Armor: 4 (-2 mobility)

Morale: 4

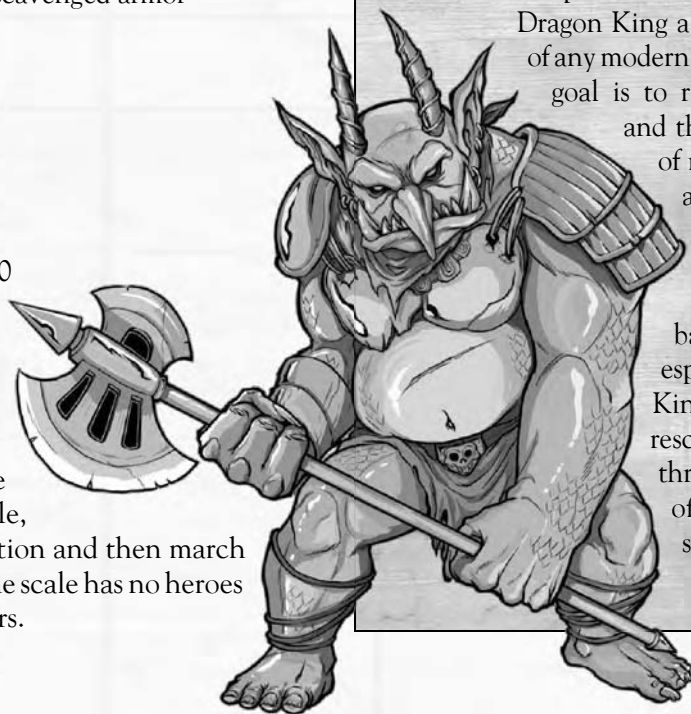
Formation: The great goblins' favorite tactic is to mass in a ruined building or hidden by jungle somewhere near a battle, form up into close formation and then march in with axes swinging. The scale has no heroes or other special characters.

THE SLEEPERS OF RATHESS

The greatest secret of Rathess has eluded all the city's residents. In long forgotten chambers hidden in the lowest parts of the underways, ancient Dragon Kings still endure. As the Great Contagion swept toward Rathess, a few still-civilized Dragon Kings built stasis chambers. They hoped to sleep through the catastrophe and emerge later to lead their people back to enlightenment. The jerry-rigged stasis chambers malfunctioned; these Dragon Kings, no more than a dozen strong, never woke up. They still wait for someone to manually activate the resuscitation protocols. Each of these ancient sleepers is an Essence 5+ being with an encyclopedic knowledge of not only Dragon King magic and technology, but also of First Age lore.

Successfully reviving a hibernating Dragon King requires a savant with minimum Lore 3, Medicine 2 and Occult 2. The savant's player must roll (Intelligence + Lore) at difficulty 3. Failure has no effect, but a botch kills the Dragon King (and, understandably, makes it much harder to win the trust of other sleeping Dragon Kings revived later).

Although an ancient Dragon King most likely feels gratitude to anyone who awakens him, he also suffers enormous future shock from learning that he has slept for over seven centuries. Such a Dragon King also has no knowledge of any modern language. His primary goal is to resuscitate his fellows and then begin the process of returning intelligence and civilization to the Rathessian stalkers. Gratitude to his rescuers must take a back seat to those goals, especially if the Dragon King concludes that his rescuer awoke him only through accident or out of some malicious or selfish intent.







CHAPTER FIVE

GODS AND MONSTERS OF THE EAST

The Elemental Pole of Wood makes the East fertile; humanity shares the Direction with a plethora of diverse creatures. Many of these creatures are quite dangerous. Then again, so are human beings.

SPIRITS OF THE EAST

Many of the most important gods and elementals in the East are associated with the forest and its

people—but not all. The East also has a long history of civilization, of both humans and the Dragon Kings. This section describes some of the most important, distinctive or unusual spirits of the East using the same format presented in the **Exalted** main rulebook. For more spirits who might act in the East, and information about spirit Charms, see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I**.

THE THREE FOREST RULERS OF THE EAST

The rivalry between the East's three chief forest gods goes back centuries, if not millennia. Caltia the Eternal and Golden-Eyed Jorst fluctuate between political scheming and outright war. Arilak the Unseen seldom leaves her sanctum deep in the Southeastern jungles; occasionally she tantalizes either Caltia or Jorst with hints of alliance, temporarily recruiting one or the other to support her in the politics of Heaven. No one can estimate the full effect on the East of the three gods' conflict, but the cumulative death toll of the Haltan-Linowan conflict has few equals in the Second Age.

Golden-Eyed Jorst says that several centuries ago, he found that a servant of Malfeas had seduced both Arilak and Caltia. He killed the Demon-Blooded seducer, as was his duty to Creation. Arilak asked him to erase her memory of her seducer, but Caltia could not accept the truth or the loss of her infernal lover and has hated him ever since. Caltia says Jorst murdered one of her most favored disciples, and spun a story about Malfean seducers to make himself look good. Arilak says little, but has hinted that one or both of her rivals uses their conflict to cover up crimes against Heaven that could get them smelted into starmetal.

ARILAK THE UNSEEN

Jungle Queen, the Hidden Talon, Chatelaine of the Rainbow Palace

Arilak began her career as keeper of the Primordials' zoo. Long before the notion of man, the experiments in life used dragons as their templates. The results were gigantic scaled beasts of terrifying beauty. These experiments led to the creation of the Dragon Kings. Many of the prototype reptiles became liabilities. They were too deadly to become pets and too hungry to live near the creators' new favorites. Arilak, overseer of the first lizards, was tasked with removing them from Creation. She has always hated the Dragon Kings for displacing the creatures that were her original reason for existence.

Over the centuries, Arilak slew thousands of beasts that were only slightly less powerful than behemoths. Against orders, she hid away the favorites of her flock to places far from the notice of the sun or stars, and made them never to age or breed. She lost half her col-

lection to the Fair Folk invasion, though, and so she hates the raksha even more than the Dragon Kings. A few of the lesser reptiles, such as the tyrant lizards and claw striders, remained free to breed.

In recognition for her service, Arilak received dominion over all the jungles of the East. Since then, she has kept most of her secrets. Few realize that Arilak can assume many of the great forms of her ageless pets. She chooses to do so only when word of this power could not reach the ears of Heaven, for she fears that the Unconquered Sun might realize she disobeyed her duties long ago.

Even mortals know about Arilak's power over aging and health. Much to Arilak's irritation, enterprising humans constantly venture into the jungles to seek a blessing of immortality. This does bring Arilak more worship than the jungle tribes provide. On the other hand, Arilak values her privacy and has no intention of simply giving away her great favor to just anyone who can survive a few thousand miles through the jungle.

Arilak looks every bit as deadly as she is. She usually appears as a beautiful woman with green and gold scales and a moderately draconic countenance. The Unseen moves with serpentine grace. She never hides her long golden claws or the way they drip with venom. Arilak wears an eerie black pendant and garbs herself in heavy robes that continually shift their hue.

The Unseen gives strangers a polite welcome to her sanctum. Visitors usually realize that their host watches them closely though, and the slightest discourtesy can provoke deadly retribution. Arilak suffers neither fools nor boors and can quickly banish, curse or kill almost any intruder. Still, Arilak sometimes gets lonely in her palace. Guests who can get beyond her brooding and sometimes menacing demeanor occasionally win friendship, love, trophies or one of the most desirable blessings in Creation.

Arilak never materializes outside of her sanctum because she becomes painfully thirsty and dry. If she must act materially in Creation, she possesses one of her pets. She rarely leaves her sanctum at all. Only official business in Heaven can reliably draw her away.

Like many gods, Arilak notices the Celestial Bureaucracy's increasingly lax oversight of Creation. She entertains serious notions of revitalizing the populations of her ancient flock, for both love and ambition. Using her divine powers, she could breed them quickly, but Arilak thinks this tempting plan is still too dangerous in the absence of powerful supporters in both Creation and Yu-Shan.





Sanctum: The Rainbow Palace is an enormous castle hidden deep within the most dangerous reaches of the Southeastern jungles. Its humid interior is itself a fantastic, colorful jungle inhabited by strange and exotic creatures. The palace rises high above the canopy, covered in glistening jewels and stained glass, visible but permanently dematerialized. Without magic, one can enter it only by riding one of the reptilian beasts of the surrounding jungle.

Attributes: Strength 12, Dexterity 7, Stamina 8; Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 5; Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 4, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Abilities: Athletics 5, Awareness 5, Bureaucracy 4, Craft (Wood) 3, Dodge 5, Integrity 3, Investigation 3, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: Forest-Tongue, High Realm, Riverspeak, Barbarian Tongues) 4, Lore 3 (Jungle Life + 3), Martial Arts 5 (Claws + 2), Medicine 2 (Poisons + 2), Melee 3, Occult 5, Performance 2, Presence 3, Resistance 3, Ride 4, Stealth 4 (Jungle + 2), Socialize 2, Survival 5 (Jungle + 3), Thrown 3, War 2 (Beasts + 2)

Backgrounds: Artifact 4 (Rainbow Dragon sheath), Artifact 4 (Black Core), Contacts 2, Cult 4, Influence 2, Salary 3

Spirit Charms: Arilak has all appropriately themed spirit Charms for which she qualifies. Some important ones are specified below.

Banish—All-Encompassing: Arilak can banish anything within her sanctum or jungle purview, or banish any aspect or instance of the jungle, for 17 motes and 2 points of Willpower.

Hurry Home—For 10 motes and a Willpower point, Arilak can instantly transport herself to any place in the Southeastern jungles where no mortal can see her, or to the Rainbow Palace. In Yu-Shan, she can use this Charm to return instantly to her Celestial Manse.

Impromptu Messenger—Arilak can speak through any creature native to the jungle.

Intrusion-Sensing Method—Senses when any creature not born in the jungle passes more than five miles into it.

Martial Arts—Arilak has learned the entire Terrible Ascent-Driven Beast style, using Beyond-the-Idol Perfection as the pinnacle charm (see the PDF ebook **The Imperfect Lotus** pp. 10-12).

Materialize—Arilak can materialize for 60 motes.

Measure the Wind—Arilak assesses the power of potential enemies (namely, everyone near her); this costs one mote.

Meat of Broken Flesh—Whenever Arilak inflicts damage using her claws, she can spend one mote to drain six motes from her target.

Paralyze—For six motes, Arilak can cause any successful attack to inflict a -6 internal penalty on every non-reflexive action her target takes, until Arilak's own next action. This penalty is at once a Poison, Crippling and wound penalty effect.

Possession—Arilak can possess any jungle animal. She never possesses people.

Principle of Motion—The Unseen typically keeps seven extra actions stored.

Shapechange—Arilak can assume dozens of reptilian forms, some of them beasts that Creation hasn't seen for ages.

Sheathing the Material Form—Scales turn to multi-hued jade, and her eyes shine like orichalcum

Signet of Authority—The recipient of this blessing wears an immaterial crown of rainbow vines and can command jungle reptiles as well as jungle spirits.

Taste of Mortality—All-Encompassing. Arilak's will destroys even an Exalt's most basic defenses.

Touch of Eternity—The difference between a healing draught and a deadly poison is often no more than dosage. Arilak's powerful ichors cause all of this charm's listed effects, except that the aging process is slowed to 10%. However, the target dries out rapidly, suffering from dehydration 10 times more quickly. This generally restricts most recipients to very humid regions that also abound in clean water.

Excellencies—Arilak has the First, Second and Third Excellencies for the following Abilities: Athletics, Awareness, Bureaucracy, Dodge, Martial Arts, Stealth and Survival. She also has Divine Survival Subordination (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I**, p. 142) and Infinite (Ability) Masteries with Dodge, Martial Arts, Stealth and Survival.

Join Battle: 9

Attacks:

Claw: Speed 4, Accuracy 16, Damage 17L + poison, Parry DV 7, Rate 4

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 14, Damage 15B, Parry DV 6, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 14, Damage 12B piercing, Parry DV –, Rate 1

Soak: 4L/8B (12B/12L with Rainbow Dragon Sheath; Rainbow Dragon Sheath, 4B/8L, -1 mobility penalty)

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap



Dodge: 9 (8 with Rainbow Dragon Sheath)

Willpower: 6

Essence: 6

Essence Pool: 90

Other Notes: Arilak the Unseen's divine panoply consists of the Rainbow Dragon Sheath and the Black Core.

The Rainbow Dragon Sheath is a one-piece, full-body robe of ever-changing hues that represent the five elements. For one Willpower point, the wearer may fix the robe's color for a scene. For that scene, the robe gives complete protection against all damage, Poison, Crippling and Sickness effects caused by the element of the robes' color. When the robe takes the green hue of Wood, it prevents damage from wooden weapons or the natural attacks of living creatures, including animal and vegetable toxins. The light yellow hue of Earth blocks damage from metal or jade weapons, or mineral poisons. The scarlet of Fire protects against heat and combustion; the white of Air protects against cold, lightning, arrows and thrown weapons. The black hue of Water blocks damage from drowning or chemical corrosion. Holy attacks, however, can always bypass an elemental defense.

If the robes are left uncontrolled, there is a one in five chance for the robes to be a particular color during any one tick. In addition, the Rainbow Dragon Sheath provides simple armor against all normal attacks. It carries a +1 fatigue value, but this is negated on Arilak because it is part of her divine panoply. The Rainbow Dragon Sheath is a four-dot jade artifact that requires 10 motes for others to attune to it.

The Black Core is a small amulet that appears to be made out of a tight spiral of black vines. It imbues its wearer with complete immunity to a deadly poison called death sap. In addition, the wearer constantly secretes the deadly death sap from her hands. (Death Sap: Damage 10L, Toxicity 4, Tolerance -/-, Penalty -2.) The Black Core is a four-dot artifact that costs five motes for anyone but Arilak to attune.

CALTIA THE ETERNAL

The Hunter Queen, Evergreen Maenad, Patron of Halta

Throughout Halta, people recount legends of the great deeds performed by the proud warrior spirit Caltia the Eternal. All travelers through the Northeastern forests, however, would be wise to fear the Hunter Queen's sudden, often violent arrival. She can bring epic revelry or epic terror.

Since her birth, Caltia the Eternal sought to excel. With the cunning of Luna and the strength of

the Unconquered Sun, she wrestled and tricked tribe after tribe from the clutches of wild Lunars, established Dragon-Blooded and smugly secure gods and elementals. She stood victoriously at the fore of beast armies who fought back the Wyld and other foes of Creation. She made humanity in the Northeast safe from many of its deadliest predators, often at the point of her blade.

For her deeds, Caltia was made Eastern Goddess of Evergreen Forests. Even though she occupies one of the highest offices possible for a terrestrial god, the proud warrior sees her post as a thankless, dead-end position and a bureaucratic waste of her talents. So, Caltia does what she has always done best. She hunts, and celebrates her kills.

Caltia's arrival to a town within or near her domain heralds a great, wild celebration. Caltia and her entourage of spirits bless their hosts, providing meat, wine and beer. The goddess herself sings heroic songs of her exploits and gambles or parties her time away, carousing with local warriors. Occasionally, her eye lands on an attractive warrior, who had best not refuse her advances. Pleasing Caltia means blessings and favors, but those who please her too well are taken away from their homes by the infatuated goddess, and never heard from again.

Meeting Caltia in the wilderness, where she spends most of her time, is extremely dangerous. She instantly decides whether anyone she meets is predator or prey. She greets skilled hunters and courageous warriors with respect. Those who appear weak and show fear, she callously hunts and kills. Sometimes, all that saves a mortal is that he's too awestruck by the spectacle of her appearance to feel fear.

Caltia is a tall, exceptionally athletic woman garbed in hunters' leathers. She goes always armed with her jade powerbow and twin knives. In summer, she rides an elk-drawn wooden chariot; in winter, she drives a sleigh of ice and ivory, pulled by white wolves. Caltia often travels with an entourage of hunting spirits and beasts. She is quite generous, but even more proud, and occasionally quite cruel. She has little to fear but her faith is gone, as has her warrior's edge. Even promoting Halta and pursuing the war against the Linowan and Golden-Eyed Jorst often seems futile. Today, Caltia is usually either mean or she is drunk. Fortunately, she is often drunk.

Sanctum: Caltia has no sanctum. She could easily make one, but claims either that she has no need for a sanctum, or that her last sanctum was useless and she got rid of it.



Attributes: Strength 12, Dexterity 7, Stamina 8; Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 5; Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 2, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Abilities: Archery 5, Athletics 4, Awareness 5, Bureaucracy 4, Craft (Wood) 3, Dodge 4, Integrity 2, Investigation 5, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: Forest-Tongue, High Realm, Riverspeak, Barbarian Tongues) 4, Lore 4, Martial Arts 3, Melee 5 (Knives +2), Occult 3, Performance 3 (Epic Songs +2), Presence 5, Resistance 3 (Endure Fatigue +2), Ride 5, Stealth 3 (Evergreen Forest +3), Socialize 4, Survival 5 (Evergreen Forest +3), Thrown 4 (Knives +2), War 3 (Beasts +2)

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Artifact 3, Artifact 3, Cult 4, Followers 2, Influence 4, Salary 3

Spirit Charms: Caltia has all appropriately themed spirit Charms for which she qualifies. Some important ones are specified below.

Benefaction—All-Encompassing: For 10 motes and a Willpower point, Caltia confers a one-die bonus to all dice pools for the recipient's actions.

Essence Plethora—Caltia has 30 extra motes of Essence (largely due to her extensive worship in Halta).

Eye of Inspiration—For 15 motes, Caltia can grant a mortal the use of her First Excellency for Archery, Melee, Presence, Stealth, Survival or War. Each Ability requires a separate use of the Charm. A recipient who has his own Essence pool can use it to fuel the Excellency; Caltia can also permit the recipient to draw on her own Essence pool. At her whim, she can give free use of the Excellency or set conditions such as, "Only when fighting my enemies," or "Only when I feel like it." As with Caltia herself, the recipient's player cannot add more than +6 dice to rolls. The conferred Excellency counts as dice added through Charms.

Hand of Destiny—For 20 motes and two Willpower points, Caltia can dedicate herself and all her subordinate spirits to the destruction of some chosen foe. From then on, she and they gain an intuitive sense for what they must do to accomplish this goal. Unauthorized use of this Charm is a direct challenge to the Bureau of Destiny, so Caltia must exercise some caution. For instance, she dares not use it to find an ideal means of destroying Golden-Eyed Jorst: such an attempt to bend Fate toward the murder of a god of his rank would lead to Caltia's own audit and possibly her own execution.



Impromptu Messenger—Caltia can speak through any creature native to the evergreen forests of the Northeast.

Materialize—It costs Caltia 65 motes to materialize.

Measure the Wind—For one mote, Caltia assesses the power of her foes or prey.

Meat of Broken Flesh—Caltia applies this Charm to her knives. When they inflict damage, she can spend one mote to drain six motes from her target and transfer them to herself.

Principle of Motion—Caltia keeps seven extra actions stored.

Regalia of Authority—For 10 motes and a Willpower point, Caltia can strike with awe and compel the worship of every mortal who knows and believes the legends about her. Anyone whose Essence is less than Caltia's suffers unnatural mental influence to obey her; moreover, anyone whose Mental Defense Value does not exceed his own Temperance gains an Intimacy to worship Caltia. Finally, Caltia can substitute her Essence for her Appearance while this Charm lasts. The Charms remains active for a scene.

Resisting such Servitude/Compulsion effects costs one Willpower point per action. Spending six Willpower points frees the character from the Compulsions, but not from the Intimacy.

Sheathing the Material Form—Caltia can evoke a glowing aura of invincibility that affects all attacks made by creatures that know who she is and believe her legends. For every two motes Caltia spends on this Charm (up to 10 motes), she adds +1 to her lethal soak and hardness, and +2 to her bashing soak and hardness.

Spirit-Cutting—For two motes per attack, Caltia can make her attacks affect dematerialized entities.

Stoke the Flame—For a scene, Caltia can inspire masses of people to revel with her, fear her or fight in her name. These are all unnatural mental influences. The Charm costs Caltia three motes times the Magnitude of the social unit she wants to affect. Resisting the Emotion effect of the Charm costs individuals one Willpower per action; people free themselves completely once they spend two motes. To implement this Charm, Caltia must attempt a Performance-based social attack against the social unit; her player adds Caltia's Temperance in automatic successes to the roll. For every success rolled, affected mortals gain a special "Stoked Willpower" point that they can spend only on actions related to the emotion Caltia suggested. These points vanish once the scene ends.

Tracking—All-Encompassing. By spending 10 motes and a Willpower point, Caltia can know the distance, direction and surroundings of everything to which

she has committed Essence. For five motes, she simply locates a single creature or object. While this Charm enables Caltia to find the targeted creature or object, committing Essence to something for the sake of finding it later does pose some risk: a sorcerer or spirit could use that mote of Essence as an arcane link to target Caltia herself.

Excellencies—Caltia has the First, Second and Third Excellencies with Archery, Awareness, Bureaucracy, Melee, Presence, Ride, Stealth, Survival and War. She also has Infinite (Ability) Mastery with Archery, Melee, Presence, Survival and Divine Survival Subordination.

Join Battle: 9

Attacks:

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 11, Damage 12B, Parry DV 6, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 10, Damage 15B, Parry DV 4, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 10, Damage 12B piercing, Parry DV –, Rate 1

Yagan Fangs: Speed 3, Accuracy 18, Damage 17L, Parry DV 8, Rate 4

Forgotten Shade Shot: Speed 5, Accuracy 14, Damage 16L, Range 300, Rate 2

Soak: 8L/12B (Barkcloth buff jacket, 4L/4B, +2 fatigue value)

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 9 **Willpower:** 7

Essence: 6 **Essence Pool:** 125

Other Notes: Caltia the Eternal's divine panoply consists of her knives, The Yagan Fangs, and her short powerbow, Forgotten Shade Shot.

The Yagan Fangs are a pair of green and red jade artifact hunting knives. Each carries the statistics of a short daiklave, with standard Speed and Damage bonuses for jade weapons when wielded by a Dragon-Blood or Caltia. In addition, when wielded paired, the first attack of any action does not count toward the determination of multiple action penalties or DV penalties. In essence, the first attack of every action is free. The Yagan Fangs can only be attuned to together, costing eight motes. As a set, they are a three-dot artifact.

Forgotten Shade Shot is a jade short powerbow that automatically negates any environmental or circumstantial external penalties that apply to the wielder's shot. For example, range, wind, and cover are negated, but DVs are not. Otherwise, Forgotten Shade Shot has the same combat statistics as a regular jade short powerbow. It is a three-dot artifact.



GOLDEN-EYED JORST

New Leaf King, Master of Forest Revels, Patron of Linowan

Golden-Eyed Jorst, Eastern God of Deciduous Forests, is one extremely popular Terrestrial deity. Pretty much everyone likes him, except Caltia the Eternal and her Haltan devotees. Jorst regularly entertains powerful gods and Exalts in his sanctum, the Temple of Joy. Jorst's sanctum doors are always open. The carefree god seems always ready to please guests with his easy charm and open buffet of exotic pleasures.

Some of the most powerful gods from Yu-Shan and Creation come to the Temple of Joy. They find it a fun and relaxing place to conduct business: far from the eyes of Heaven, hundreds of miles from all but the smallest human settlements, and shielded from the divinations of rival gods. What's more, it's discreet. Golden-Eyed Jorst doesn't care what or who you do. He cares only that his guests enjoy a wild, worry-free time. What happens in Jorst's hall, stays in Jorst's hall.

Jorst's only stricture on his guests is that when he leaves, everyone leaves. Jorst likes to wander his forests, sometimes for months at a time. He often takes the guise of a mortal and imposes himself upon the hospitality of those he meets. Normally, Jorst doesn't have much of a temper, so those who refuse him rarely suffer for it, but he often blesses people that he likes or just wishes to thank. Stories circulate of Jorst's vengeance, but there simply isn't any reliable evidence that he ever did any of the horrible things for which he is feared. Jorst would certainly deny ever wanting to hurt someone just because they weren't nice to him. Anyway, more stories tell of the Golden-Eyed Lord's beneficence to households that showed kindness to a stranger.

On the last day of Resplendent Air, Jorst always kicks everyone out of his sanctum and bars the gate, so that he can rest. Then, Jorst goes Elsewhere until spring. On the first day of Ascending Wood, Jorst's joyous return triggers an enormous party that may not stop for months.

Jorst's natural form is that of an attractive green-skinned man. He is tall and strong, wearing many layers of fine flowing robes. Fronds of oak and maple leaves form his hair, and his eyes are lidless pools of rippling molten gold. Jorst is expressive and a master raconteur. His touch is gentle and strong. It's easy to see why everyone likes him.

Sanctum: Jorst's sanctum is the Temple of Joy, located in the deepest eastern forests. Visitors enter through a giant archway made of dozens of beautiful trees. On the archway is written the Scripture of the Savory Maiden.

Jorst's sanctum is extremely powerful. For details see Other Notes below.

Motivation: Bring epic revelry to Creation.

Attributes: Strength 12, Dexterity 7, Stamina 8; Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 5; Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 4, Conviction 2, Temperance 3, Valor 2

Abilities: Archery 2, Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Bureaucracy 5 (Divine Politics +2), Craft (Wood) 5 (Topiary +2), Dodge 2, Integrity 6, Investigation 4, Larceny 3 (Eyes of Heaven +3), Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: Forest-Tongue, High Realm, Riverspeak, Eastern Tribal Tongues) 4, Lore 5, Martial Arts 2 (Orgiastic Fugitive Style +3), Medicine 3 (Vegetable Drugs +2), Occult 3, Performance 4 (Storytelling +3), Presence 4 (Threats +2), Resistance 3 (Drugs +3), Stealth 3, Socialize 6 (Gods +2), Survival 5 (Deciduous Forests +3), War 1

Backgrounds: Artifact (Natural Selection) 3, Artifact 3, Artifact 1, Cult 4, Influence 4, Manse 5, Salary 3

Spirit Charms: Golden-Eyed Jorst knows a multitude of Charms. These are only a few that deserve special mention for one reason or another.

Affinity Wood Control—Jorst can manipulate plant life; the volume is comparable to six barrels or cubic yards. He can quickly design and create new drugs, poisons or entire plant species. Jorst can use this Charm to create environmental hazards or attack using razor-sharp wood and vines. This attack cannot be dodged, but affects only those visible to Jorst (invisibility or total concealment protects completely). Attacks using the environment have Speed 5, Accuracy 11, maximum Damage 18B/18L, Rate 6. Environmental hazards have a maximum Damage of 6L/minute and maximum Trauma of 6L. Activating this power costs six motes; it remains active for a full scene.

Banish—Golden-Eyed Jorst can only use this Charm against creatures who commit or threaten violence (such as by drawing a weapon). He can send them to any location in his woodland purview. The target must go to a safe location. High in the branches of a sturdy oak tree is safe, yes? If Jorst feels pissed, he neglects to banish the offending person's clothes (but he won't leave them weaponless). This costs 12 motes and one Willpower point.

Divine Prerogative—Jorst keeps one great secret, his "pick-me-up" (described below). His Intimacy toward that secret renders it inviolate.

Domain Manipulation Scenario—For six motes, Jorst can make the forest within 60 yards do anything that

is normal for deciduous forests, such as calling a nearby hatra pack to attack intruders, or setting truffles growing at the roots of every oak tree. For 12 motes and a Willpower point, Jorst can make an entire woodland behave in wildly improbable (but not impossible) ways, such as calling every tree, shrub and herb to bloom at once even through it's the wrong season.

Dreamscape—Jorst often sends dreams to his devotees. He uses this to communicate with priests and shamans, or simply as pleasant and cost-free rewards to his followers. Jorst can enter the dreams he crafts so as to interact directly with the dreamer's mind in a fantasy-world. This costs him only one mote.

Essence Plethora—Golden-Eyed Jorst has 30 extra motes of Essence (largely due to his extensive worship in Linowan).

Fruit of Living Essence—Jorst can absorb Essence or Willpower from people in the form of worries. He touches the person and spends three motes; his player rolls (Essence + Temperance), with an internal penalty of the target's Essence (plus half the Willpower of a resisting target). If the roll succeeds, Jorst takes three motes of the target's Essence per success rolled; with three or more successes, Jorst can take a point of Willpower instead. Some targets find this experience extremely pleasant as the god wipes their cares from their mind. Targets who have no Willpower or motes to lose instead suffer from a -2 external penalty to their Mental DVs and a -2 internal penalty to all Integrity or Temperance rolls. This is a Sickness effect, and it can stack with itself.

Hurry Home—Jorst can travel instantly to any woodland in the East that's at least 50% deciduous trees. He cannot venture into the evergreen conifer woods of Caltia or the almost-seasonless jungles of Arilak.

Materialize—This costs Jorst 65 motes.

Measure the Wind—The Party God likes to know the Essence-wielding capacity of his guests, the better to steer them towards appropriate delights. In the unlikely event that a guest becomes so unruly that Jorst must eject him... Well, that's another reason to know someone's capacity to wield Essence. This costs one mote.

Memory Mirror—Jorst's eyes can see a person's memories and fantasies of pleasure, enabling him to craft night-irresistible temptations to revelry.

Mind-Knife Sacrament—All-Encompassing. In a scene-long dramatic action in which Jorst has repeated opportunities to touch his target, he can reshape a person's mind to suppress or implant memories, change Intimacies, or even raise or lower the target's Abilities

or Virtues. Jorst cannot raise any Ability by more than one dot, and cannot raise any Ability to a higher rating than he has himself; this may place a target character in experience point debt, as normal for Training effects. Finally, Jorst can make a person his priest.

Use of this Charm costs 10 motes, or 15 motes and one Willpower point if Jorst wants to reshape multiple aspects of a person's mind. However, sculpting a person's mind strips the target of temporary Willpower (at least one point per change) or inflicts unsoakable aggravated damage if the target runs out of Willpower points. Thus, Jorst is careful to make only small changes to his targets' identities. For instance, while Jorst could give a promising Linowan shaman a direct Intimacy to hating Halta at a cost of draining three Willpower, implanting a memory that a childhood friend who drowned was actually pulled underwater by a Haltan assassin would cost the target only one Willpower. At his parties, Jorst subtly makes many such adjustments to the minds of revelers.

Orgiastic Fugitive Style—Golden-Eyed Jorst never studied any martial art, but Creation's most dedicated reveler instinctively performs all the Charms of this Wood-aspected Terrestrial style (see **Scroll of the Monk**, pp. 57-58).

Ox-Body Technique—Jorst takes this Charm once.

Principle of Motion—Jorst keeps seven extra actions stored.

Touch of Eternity—Jorst can grant mortals the same resistance to poison and disease that the Exalted enjoy. This is one of his favorite ways to reward mortals. It costs him X motes.

Excellencies—Golden-Eyed Jorst has Third Excellencies with Bureaucracy, Craft (Wood), Integrity, Presence, Socialize and Survival. He also has Divine Survival Subordination with the Compassion Flaw of Invulnerability: The god can infallibly perform any feat related to Survival, but only on behalf of a mortal and only in his own deciduous forests.

Join Battle: 6

Attacks:

Punch: Speed 4, Accuracy 10, Damage 12B, Parry DV 6, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 9, Damage 15B, Parry DV 4, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 9, Damage 12B piercing, Parry DV -, Rate 1, Piercing

Natural Selection Glance*: Speed 5, Accuracy 12, Damage 24L, Range 60**, Rate 6

*This attack is undodgeable.





**This is the attack's maximum range. It suffers no penalties out to that range.

Soak: 9L/13B (Seity Bands, 5L/5B soak, Hardness: 2L/2B)

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/
Incap

Dodge DV: 8 **Willpower:** 7

Essence: 6 **Essence Pool:** 125

Other Notes: Jorst's divine panoply consists of Natural Selection and the Seity Bands. Natural Selection is a golden collar fitted with a green jewel. It enables Jorst to cast destructive bolts of pure Wood Essence at whatever he looks upon. Natural Selection requires no maintenance as long as only Jorst uses it, but for any other god it requires the same maintenance (and has the same difficulty to repair) as an elemental lens (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. I—Wonders of the Lost Age**, p. 77). Natural Selection only works for gods; it does not focus Dragon-Blooded Essence.

The Seity Bands are a form of Discreet Essence Armor (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. I—Wonders of the Lost Age**, p. 80) that have no magical material bonus. The Seity Bands require no maintenance, even when used by others. They are a three-dot artifact.

Jorst's sanctum is a grand mansion called the Temple of Joy, located within an extremely powerful (5-dot) Wood-aspected demesne. It has been designed as a 5-dot Wood Manse with the powers *Magical Conveniences* (1 pt), *Subtle Breath of Sextes Jylis* (2 pts, Favored), *Geomantic Subtlety* (2 pts), *Veil of Shadow* (2 pts), and *Provider* (3 pts, Favored). The manse can create a comfortable climate around every guest, even those with unique environmental tastes. The great gardens of the temple can provide for many people, and the care-free Essence of the place protects those within from the harmful effects of any intoxicant (but not poisons that are designed and used specifically as such, with no pleasant effects). The manse also obviates the need for sleep. Unfortunately, once people leave the Temple of Joy, their indulgences catch up with them. The damage that *would* have been done (and not subsequently healed) is still there, and every bit of sleep that was missed becomes acute exhaustion.

Only certain chambers deep within the sanctum employ protection from prying eyes, and Jorst keeps that little secret quiet.

The Temple of Joy produces a Gemstone of Deep Drink (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. III—Oadenol's Codex**) that allows Jorst to ingest any food, drug or poison without fear, but he only uses it when he doesn't want to have a good time.

IT'S ALL A LIE

As a powerful god with an impressive domain, someone has to take care of Jorst's interests. Someone is: the other Jorst. Long ago, the irresponsible god realized that his hedonistic lifestyle could not sustain itself. Somehow, Jorst found (or invented) just what he needed: an *anti-intoxicant* that Jorst calls his "pick-me-up." He stores it in a magical copper hip flask that produces five doses each day.

When Jorst takes his pick-me-up, he gains the will to accomplish long-term plans. As a matter of fact, his whole Motivation changes to "Acquire Power." Each dose lasts for exactly 59 minutes. During this time, Jorst becomes an incredibly competent divine politician. In these periods of clarity, Jorst set up his cult amongst the Linowan (who worship him, ironically, as a war god) and made his most lucrative deals, quiet and secure within the hidden depths of his sanctum. In this state, Jorst takes care to parley only with those who will not be inclined or able to reveal what they may learn of Jorst's unexpected skill at politics and blackmail.


Jorst's pick-me-up has the side effect that it reduces his Compassion to 1. He's quick to react with hostility, and prone to cruelty. What's worse, his schemes tend to be extremely long-term and potentially devastating. Jorst doesn't really like what his pick-me-up does to him, but he can't deny that it kept him where he is.

More importantly, Jorst is hopelessly addicted to his anti-intoxicant (a Shaping effect). He can rationalize or deny absolutely everything he does. Jorst usually even follows through with the ruthless plans that he began under its influence, though perhaps reluctantly. On the other hand, Jorst has absolutely no moral problems with covering up his dubious actions. Indeed, he's become practically perfect at the task.

HAN-THA

Ghoul King, Eater of the Dead

The Primordials gave everything in Creation its own god, including the scavengers who feed on carrion. That was Han-Tha, Eater of the Dead. During the Primordial War, Han-Tha chose no side. Instead, he waited for demons, gods and Exalts to fall and dined upon their Essence.



After the war, the victorious gods sought to destroy Han-Tha out of sheer disgust. The Primordial power that Han-Tha consumed, however, enabled him to flee Yu-Shan and hide in Creation.

Through the First Age, the Ghoul King occasionally taught mortals or minor gods to feed as he did and so gathered cults of fellow necrovores. These cults never lasted long before the Exalted suppressed them, but no one ever caught Han-Tha. At last, the audacious Eater of the Dead hid in Rathess, a malevolent shadow hidden amid the radiance of a city dedicated to the Unconquered Sun.

As the civilization of the Dragon Kings declined, Han-Tha helped it fall. The Ghoul King considers his actions entirely justified: the Primordials made him to eat the dead, and he saw no reason to prolong the Dragon Kings' dying civilization. Really, the gods are quite unfair to condemn him. He did his duty, which is more than can be said for many of the gods in Yu-Shan. If Han-Tha has one disappointment, it's that he could not end Rathess more completely.

Han-Tha might have dwelled in the ruins of Rathess indefinitely, quietly sabotaging the other gods' attempts to revive Dragon King civilization among the stalkers, had not a confused, embittered Lawgiver come to the ruined city. In Filial Wisdom, Han-Tha saw a way to ensure that no hypocritical bureaucracy would punish him ever again. And what's more, he saw a tool that could help him feed on a scale not equaled since the Primordial War. Through Filial Wisdom, he hopes to gain enough worship, and power, to defy the Celestial Bureaucracy and feast on gods once more.

Han-Tha usually appears as a 10-foot tall monster with rubbery gray skin. The Eater of the Dead walks perpetually hunched over his great flabby girth, but reacts with amazing speed for his headless bulk. Huge, trunk-like arms end in massive, three-clawed hands. The preposterously large maw in Han-Tha's belly is full of innumerable teeth ranging in size from tiny razors to gigantic tusks. Han-Tha knows that his appearance is horrible, and makes frequent use of illusion and animal forms for subtle matters.

Sanctum: Han-Tha's sanctum is a ruined tower hidden in the jungle only a mile outside the walls of Rathess, where the Dragon Kings stored urns of cremated citizens. The niches are vacant now, and the urns are shards amid a thick layer of jungle mould. From inside, anyone who can become immaterial can enter the sanctum: an intact version of the tower, heaped with polished white bones in every corner and on every flat surface,

up through 100 yards of balconies. In the center of the floor lies a heap of bones 50 feet high; Han-Tha moves through the bone-piles as easily as mortal creatures swim through water. Here and there, Han-Tha tried paneling the stony walls with bones, but never completed any of these projects.

Attributes: Strength 16, Dexterity 6, Stamina 12; Charisma 3, Manipulation 5, Appearance 1; Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 5

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 5, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness 5 (Ambushes +2), Bureaucracy 2, Dodge 5, Integrity 5, Investigation 4, Larceny 2 (Dragon King Security Systems +2), Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: Forest-Tongue, High Holy Speech, Riverspeak) 3, Lore 1, Martial Arts 5 (Claws +2), Occult 3, Presence 4 (Inspiring +1), Resistance 5 (Cast-Iron Stomach +3), Stealth 5, Socialize 4 (Lies +2), Survival 2 (Jungle +2), War 4

Backgrounds: Artifact (various) 5, Cult 3, Followers 2, Influence 1, Resources 4

Spirit Charms: As a god of great power, Han-Tha knows a great many Charms, including all standard Charms. These are only a few of the most noteworthy.

Bread of Weak Spirit—If Han-Tha gets his claws on an Incapacitated spirit, he can spend a mote and inflict up to seven levels of aggravated damage to his victim. For each level so inflicted, Han-Tha converts one level of lethal damage he's taken to bashing damage, or recovers five motes that he spent. If Han-Tha wishes, he can inflict the loss of one Willpower point or 10 motes instead of each level of aggravated damage. If Han-Tha uses this Charm against a spirit whose Essence exceeds his own, he can recover one Willpower point for every two health levels he inflicts, but cannot use this to raise his Willpower points above 2.

Endowment—The Ghoul King can enable mortals to absorb power from corpses by eating their hearts. The Charm's recipient must eat the heart within one scene of the creature's death. Doing this grants a +1 bonus to a single Attribute for every dot of Essence that the victim possessed, to a maximum of 3. The Endowment may not bestow ratings higher than the victim's own, or above human maxima: for instance, if the dead victim had Strength 5 and Essence 3, an endowed character could gain up to +3 Strength—but if the recipient already had a Strength of 4, she could gain only +1 Strength. The endowed may decide which Attributes to cannibalize from the victim, and take more than one Attribute.





Han-Tha can also endow a person with Abilities by enabling him to consume the memories left in a cadaver. These follow the same rules as for Abilities, but the endowed person eats the victim's brain.

The endowed recipient retains the cannibalized Attributes or Abilities only until he prays to a god other than Han-Tha, until the endowed character eats another heart or brain, or at most one month in any case. If the character has (or gains) sufficient experience points to raise the boosted Attribute, however, he can do so and make the endowment permanent: Han-Tha's blessing simply enables the character to forego the normal training time to raise an Attribute.

Granting the Endowment costs Han-Tha one Willpower point and 15 motes. The number of recipients who can cannibalize traits from a single corpse equal the victim's Essence.

Essential Consumption—Han-Tha can reflexively activate this unique power whenever he kills a spirit using Bread of Weak Spirit or he fully consumes a physical corpse. Eating a physical being takes the Ghoul King only two miscellaneous actions: one to put the corpse in his mouth (regardless of size), and one to digest it. With this charm, Han-Tha heals and grows stronger. He heals a number of levels of lethal or bashing damage equal to the target's Essence, and gains one Willpower point. If the Ghoul King already has a full Willpower pool, extra points go to his Reserve of Will.

If Han-Tha manages to eat a victim who had a higher Essence score than his own, then he suffers severe digestive pains for the next hour. This inflicts an additional -4 Wound Penalty on Han-Tha. When that hour is up, however, Han-Tha gains a dot of Essence.

Hurry Home—Han-Tha can only transport himself to his sanctum or the shrine Filial Wisdom built for him.

Materialize—This costs Han-Tha 75 motes.

Measure the Wind—More than most gods, perhaps, Han-Tha has reason to assess the Essence of those he meets. Gods and Exalts have hunted him before.

Outside of Fate—Han-Tha is as much outside of Fate as a Second Circle demon. The Loom of Fate does not register his presence. Not surprisingly, he is also a creature of darkness.

Principle of Motion—Han-Tha stores nine actions.

Reserve of Will—Han-Tha can have as many Willpower points stored as his permanent Essence. However, the Ghoul King can replenish this pool only through Essence Consumption or using Bread of Weak Spirit against a spirit whose Essence exceeds his own.

Ride—The Eater of the Dead can possess willing mortal creatures (including the Exalted). Currently, this means Filial Wisdom. To do this, Han-Tha must touch the Solar (though the god can be immaterial when he does so). Han-Tha spends 18 motes and one Willpower. After a century of off-and-on possession, Han-Tha and Filial Wisdom merge easily, but still not completely. Merged, they use all of Han-Tha's traits, except that the god can use two of the Solar's Charms. Usually Han-Tha acquires Reflex Sidestep Technique and Dodge Essence Flow, which he regards as the most useful Charms for keeping his favorite host alive.

Scourge—For 15 motes and one Willpower point, Han-Tha can curse his victim so that she can eat only uncooked meat, as per the *Wyld Mutation Diet*. What's more, the target's body wastes away, as per the *Mutation Decomposing*.

Sense Domain—For five motes and one Willpower point, Han-Tha can see through the eyes of any corpse or priest within seven miles, or sense the presence of every corpse within that radius with a successful (Perception + Awareness) roll. Thanks to the god's long relationship with Filial Wisdom, he can see through the Solar's eyes and hear through his ears at will and at no cost.

Shapechange—Han-Tha can assume the form of a grotesque undead hyena, or a black vulture with red eyes. This costs five motes and lasts a scene.

Excellencies—The Ghoul King has the Second Excellencies with Awareness, Dodge, Integrity, Martial Arts, Presence, Resistance, Stealth and Survival.

Join Battle: 9

Attacks:

Bite: Speed 5, Accuracy 11, Damage 25L, Parry DV 5, Rate 1

Claw: Speed 4, Accuracy 13, Damage 20L, Parry DV 7, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6 Accuracy 11, Damage 12B piercing, Parry DV –, Rate 1

Soak: 24L/30B (Nerveless gristly horror, 18L/18B, Hardness: 12L/15B)

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 9 **Willpower:** 9

Essence: 7 **Essence Pool:** 115

Other Notes: The gaping wounds from Han-Tha's claws cause victims to bleed profusely. Any victim that is not actually an object (including spirits, ghosts and Exalted, but not automatons) suffers one additional level of lethal damage every 15 ticks thereafter, until someone manages to bandage the wound.

SUNIPA

Eastern God of War Constrained By Law

Sunipa, the East's supreme god of war, governs all aspects of war in which soldiers follow rules. She is the patron of soldiers who follow orders, from grunts in the field to generals who start and end their battles as their heads of state direct. Her purview also covers truces and surrenders, exchanges of prisoners, battlefield challenges, military training, supply contracts, military police and indeed every military activity in which warriors act according to agreed-upon rules. Sunipa works closely with her colleague (and reputed relative) Shield of a Different Day (see **The Compass of Terrestrial Directions, Vol. I—The Scavenger Lands**, pp. 142-144). She also directs a staff of gods who oversee other aspects of professionalized warfare, such as military intelligence, logistics and chains of command.

The goddess herself looks like a fit middle-aged woman, handsome rather than beautiful, with short, gray hair and jet-black eyes. She wears a suit of green and silver magitech armor; a minor illusion makes it look like lightweight, ornamental half-plate with a mottled green and brown camouflage cloak worn over it. Sunipa carries a fire lance called Delicate Scarlet Blossom and a slashing sword called Neverfrost whose blade is carved from steel-hard, unmelting ice. Thus

does Sunipa balance pomp and practicality, heat and cold, the magitech of the Exalted and the blades of common mortal soldiers.

As Eastern God of War, Sunipa answers to E-Naluna, Queen of Warfare in the Bureau of Heaven, and Hu Dai Liang, Shogun of the Crimson of Battles in the Bureau of Destiny's Division of Battles. Sunipa enjoys extensive worship throughout the East. Her cult is particularly strong among mercenaries, who fight according to the terms of contracts. Somewhat ironically, the East's large contingent of guerillas, partisans and insurgents also pray to Sunipa... to keep the regular armies they fight slow and hidebound. In the planning sessions at the Division of Battles, though, Sunipa only backs rebels who feel they have just cause and follow rules about legitimate and illegitimate targets for attack. Sunipa despises rebels who try to tear down a society without building something new in its place, and sees them as no more than bandits with slogans.

For all the power and prestige of her office, Sunipa does not consider herself safe. In the First Age, Sunipa held a lower position in the Division of Warfare as patron of the concept of soldiers under orders. As such, the soldiers of the Dragon-Blooded Host fell in her purview. The wolf-goddess Darunla held the office of Eastern War God. When the Usurpation came, Darunla sided





with the Celestial Exalted. Sunipa felt immensely conflicted: she could not countenance mutiny, but wanted to help her Dragon-Blooded soldiers. Eventually, she sided with the Dragon-Blooded, reasoning that most of the Dragon-Blooded who actually attacked and slew the Solar and Lunar Exalted were just following orders from their own commanders.

After the Usurpation, Darunla disappeared and Sunipa took her place. Sunipa believes the Bronze Faction destroyed Darunla, and could destroy her too if they ever suspect her of working against them. Sunipa does not work directly against Solars in the East (for she fears what the resurgent Gold Faction could do to her, too) but tries to prevent any of the gods under her command from assisting the new Lawgivers.

Sanctum: Sunipa lives in Yu-Shan, where her mansion doubles as an immense command-and-control complex for monitoring wars throughout the East. She staffs her sanctum with automatons called the Sun Guard, equal to brass legionnaires (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. I—Wonders of the Lost Age**, p. 103), whom she respects as near-perfect examples of dutiful soldiers. She usually keeps a dozen of them nearby.

Motivation: To see that warriors fight according to rules.

Attributes: Strength 8, Dexterity 10, Stamina 8; Charisma 8, Manipulation 4, Appearance 5; Perception 6, Intelligence 7, Wits 7

Virtues: Compassion 3, Conviction 3, Temperance 4, Valor 4

Abilities: Archery 4 (Fire Lance +2), Athletics 3, Awareness 5, Craft (Fire) 4, Craft (Magitech) 4, Dodge 5, Integrity 4, Investigation 5, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: Forest-Tongue, High Realm, Low Realm, Riverspeak, Tribal Tongues) 5, Lore 4 (Magitech Weapons +1, Military History +2), Martial Arts 4, Melee 5 (Spears +1, Swords +2), Occult 3 (Military Magic +3), Resistance 4, Stealth 4 (Ambush +2), Thrown 4, War 5 (Large-Scale Strategy +3)

Backgrounds: Allies (staff of subordinate gods) 5, Allies (Sun Guard) 4, Artifact (Verdant Sanctuary) 5, Artifact (Dreadful Necessity) 5, Celestial Manse 3, Cult 5, Followers (Mercenaries and Soldiers) 5, Influence 3, Salary 4, Sanctum 4

Spirit Charms: Sunipa knows an immense variety of Charms. Some of the more important include:

General of the All-Seeing Sun—Sunipa's ability to monitor a battlefield has the same effects as this Solar Charm (**Exalted**, p. 197). She can select any side of a conflict as "loyal" to her, as long as she believes they sincerely

attempt to follow rules of warfare that minimize harm to civilians.

Materialize—This costs Sunipa 75 motes.

Measure the Wind—Naturally, Sunipa always spends a mote to assess the prowess of any creature that might become her foe.

Principle of Motion—Sunipa carries 8 extra actions in reserve.

Reserve of Will—Sunipa has three extra points of temporary Willpower.

Sanctify Oath—When military commanders agree to a truce, conditions for an exchange of prisoners or other rules to conflict, intermissions in battle, its resolution or aftermath, Sunipa can sanctify their agreement in the same manner as an Eclipse Caste, and with the same consequences for breaking the rules. She must manifest visibly (if not materially) to do this; it costs her 10 motes.

Excellencies—First, Second and Third Excellencies with Archery, Dodge, Integrity, Martial Arts, Melee, Stealth and War. She has Divine (Ability) Subordination with Melee and War, both with the Compassion Flaw of Invulnerability.

Terrestrial Circle Sorcery—Sunipa knows several spells with military applications, chiefly those that facilitate communication or construction defenses.

Join Battle: 12

Attacks:

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 15, Damage 14B*, Parry DV 8, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 14, Damage 15B*, Parry DV 6, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 14, Damage 9B piercing*, Parry DV –, Rate 1

Slashing Sword (Neverfrost): Speed 4, Accuracy 19, Damage 13L*, Parry DV 8, Rate 3

Fire Lance, Melee (Delicate Scarlet Blossom): Speed 5, Accuracy 17, Damage 17L/23L*, Parry DV 9, Rate 2

Fire Lance, Charged: Speed 5, Accuracy 17, Damage 25L/31L, Parry DV 9, Rate 2

Fire Lance, Streamer: Speed 4, Accuracy 17, Damage 18L, Range 750**, Rate 2

Fire Lance, Fire Fan: Speed 5, Accuracy 19, Damage 12L, Range 525**, Rate 1***

* Bonus damage from wood dragon armor included.

** Weapon has no extended range.

*** Attacks an area up to 20 feet in diameter; cannot be parried except by perfect parries. Roll the attack once and compare the successes rolled to the Dodge DV of any character who can attempt evasion.

Soak: 20L/22B (Wood dragon armor [Verdant Sanctuary], 16L/14B, Hardness: 8L/7B, -1 mobility penalty, 1 fatigue value)

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 11 **Willpower:** 8

Essence: 7 **Essence Pool:** 110

Other Notes: Delicate Scarlet Blossom is self-powered and regenerates four motes of its 20 mote battery every 5 ticks. It deals the damage of a warstrider fire lance (see **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. I—Wonders of the Lost Age**, pp. 159-160) with triple normal range. Any wielder but Sunipa finds that Delicate Fire Blossom has the weight and Strength Minimum of a warstrider fire lance, too.

Neverfrost looks like a slashing sword but functions as a reaper daiklave; it has no magical material bonus but ignores the first 10 points of its target's lethal soak, whatever its nature.

Sunipa's armor, Verdant Sanctuary, is a suit of Armor of the Immaculate Dragon (wood variety; see **Wonders of the Lost Age**, pp. 84-87). In addition to soak and Hardness, it provides these powers: Filtration Baffles against disease and poison; a Sensory Augmentation Visor for Essence sight; Exomuscular Fibers giving the wearer +1 Strength; Reinforced Gauntlets and Boots that increase Punch and Kick damage; a Cloaking Device; an Astrological Occlusion Field; an Integrated Elemental Lens; and an Essence-Dampening Field that increases an enemy's cost of using Charms.

Sunipa also owns a royal warstrider called Dreadful Necessity, armed with two medium Essence cannons. (Again, see **Wonders of the Lost Age**, starting p. 137.)

Of these items, only Neverfrost and Delicate Fire Blossom actually constitute Sunipa's divine panoply. Verdant Sanctuary and Dreadful Necessity are simply artifacts that she owns.

VINE RUNNERS

Hundreds of minor elementals called vine runners live in and around Rathess. Some of these spirits wandered hundreds of miles away. Most vine runners simply carry out their duties as caretakers of jungle plants, especially those plants bred by the Dragon Kings (such as the blade vines bred as guards; see pp. 155 and 159). A few vine runners form pacts with jungle shamans or Wyld barbarian tribes. These often seek sacrificial victims as part of their worship. Any vine runner, however, might take offense at mere humans who slash their way through the jungle, and decide to do a little slashing right back.

Vine runners know a great deal about the properties and uses of jungle plants. They may be the last entities to understand how to grow and use many examples of the Dragon Kings' vegetative technology. These spirits have short attention spans, however, and would not even consider imparting their information to anyone who did not first propitiate them with offers of fine wood carvings, time spent tending and propagating rare plants, and the blood of dangerous and unusual animals (or people).

Vine runners look like bright green, slender lizards with long legs and no tails. They are the size of dogs. Each leg ends in an inhumanly long-fingered hand.

Sanctum: Vine runners don't have sanctums. They live amid their beloved plants.

Motivation: Tend the vegetation of Rathess.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4; Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2; Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Abilities: Athletics 4 (Climb +2), Awareness 3, Craft (Water) 2, Craft (Wood) 2, Dodge 3, Integrity 2, Linguistics (Native: High Holy Speech; Forest-tongue, Old Realm) 2, Lore 3 (Jungle Plant Lore +3), Martial Arts 4, Medicine 2 (Jungle Herbalism +3), Melee 3, Occult 2, Resistance 2, Socialize 1, Stealth 2 (Jungle +3), Survival 4, Thrown 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2 (shamans or other spirits), Followers 3 (barbarians)

Spirit Charms:

Affinity Wood Control—These elementals can manipulate living plants in just about any way imaginable, from turning fruit toxic to animating branches and vines to attack. A vine runner cannot affect very much vegetation at a time, though—about two cubic yards. Toxins deal only 1L/minute damage at Toxicity 1, while vegetation-based environmental hazards deal a damage of 1L/minute at a Trauma of 1L. In a few actions, the spirit can shape useful items (such as bridges, weapons or small shelters) from plant materials that should be too weak or otherwise inadequate. Animating nearby vegetation enables the vine runner to make attacks with Speed 5, Accuracy +2, base damage 6B or 6L and Rate 2; these can be grapples, using the vine runner's Strength. The base attack roll is the vine runner's (Wits + Conviction). Invoking the Affinity Wood Control costs the vine runner six motes. The effects last a full scene.

Blessed Wood Body—A vine runner has all the benefits of Elemental Rejuvenation (see **Exalted**, p. 302, or **The**





Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I, p. 170). In addition, by spending two motes the vine runner can reflexively and perfectly counter any wood-based effect that would cause it damage: for every three dice or one health level of damage the attack would have inflicted on the vine runner, it instead heals one level of damage or regains one mote.

Dematerialize—Costs the vine runner 45 motes.

Essence Bite—For a scene, the vine runner deals damage to any creature that strikes it. It can spend up to seven motes on this Charm, either one die of bashing damage per mote or one die of lethal damage per two motes. (The vine runner must choose which form of damage it inflicts when it activates the Charm.) The Wood-aspected Essence of the spiritual backlash is elemental and a Poison effect.

Landscape Travel—The vine runner moves through vines and branches as quickly and safely as it moves on the ground. This duplicates the effect of the Wyld mutation *Brachiation* (see p. 149) taken twice (i.e., as an affliction). This is an intrinsic power, however, not a Charm; it costs no Essence.

Join Battle: 7

Attacks:

Claw: Speed 5, Accuracy 9, Damage 5L, Parry DV 5, Rate 3

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 9, Damage 4B piercing, Parry DV –, Rate 1

Short Spear: Speed 5, Accuracy 10, Damage 8L, Parry DV 5, Rate 2

Soak: 8L/12B (Woody hide, 6L/8B)

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 5 **Willpower:** 7

Essence: 2 **Essence Pool:** 55

Other Notes: None

EXALTED OF THE EAST

The Exalted often play leading roles in Eastern societies. Some of them are threats to Creation as mad or evil as any demon. Others pursue their goals with the fervor that makes a mortal deserve the Incarnae's blessing—and whether you call them hero or villain depends on what side you are on.

DARK EYES

Warlord of the Ten Tribes

The warrior whom the Ten Tribes call Dark Eyes was born a slave and raised a gladiator. Once he called himself Kan. He had natural athletic talent, survival instinct and peak physical prowess. Kan did well in the arena but the Threshold is unfair. Kan found himself

sold repeatedly, treated as an investment and subjected to countless petty humiliations.

Kan always appeared servile but struck quickly when one lazy master became careless. The young gladiator ran from his prison and into the forest without waiting to find out if his blow had killed. Kan ran for weeks to find his freedom, fleeing civilization.

One evening, Kan found a sleeping simhata in the savanna. Its fierce beauty enchanted him. He approached cautiously, but the beast awoke startled. It roared and charged; Kan defended himself. The simhata struck four times but finally the gladiator got a hold and broke the animal's neck. Kan gently kissed its forehead. A silver hand touched his shoulder, and he Exalted. Luna kneeled next to him, and painted his face in the simhata's blood. As she did, the Silver Lady divined for Kan a future rife with death and pain. Only love, she said, could illuminate this eternal night. Then, as suddenly as the goddess had come, she was gone.

Creatures loyal to Raksi, the Queen of Fangs, found Kan and brought him to Mahalanka. Raksi happily fixed his caste as a Full Moon. The Queen of Fangs then enthralled Kan with wonders and pleasures he had never imagined.

For a time, the young lunar felt happy. He worshiped Raksi and marveled at her city of splendors. Eventually, however, the cruel queen grew disinterested. She sent her loyal protégé on a “final trial”: to collect the Ten Tribes of the Oak, bend them to the worship of Luna and Raksi herself, and bring them to Mahalanka. Sad to go, but eager to please, the warrior departed.

Kan planned to win the tribes' loyalty by defeating Elder Oak, their patron god. He would show them the splendor of Luna's powers, and kill or subdue any who defied him. His plans changed the same day he found the tribes.

Elder Oak had betrayed the Ten Tribes, leaving them divided. Kan realized that to fulfill Raksi's plan he needed to reunite them. He easily took command of the Red Scar tribe; they gave him the name Dark Eyes for his eyes' actual hue and the black patches of fur around them in his simhata form. The trouble began when mercenaries led by a circle of Dragon-Blooded ambushed the tribe. The mercenaries slew many of the Red Scars. Red Eyes drove them off, but not before falling victim to devilish Charms that bent his mind and tortured his soul.

Using the most potent songs and medicines at their disposal, the women of the tribe nursed their new chief back to health. One girl's voice in particular penetrated the

Dragon-Blooded magic and eased his suffering. Her name was First Iris of Spring, daughter of the chief shaman. She showed Dark Eyes compassion—and he fell in love.

When Dark Eyes recovered, he vowed revenge against Farhold and its mercenaries. After several successful battles, a demonic messenger from Raksi asked him how his trial progressed. He replied that a war had torn apart the tribes and that he was fighting it for the Queen of Fangs. Soon, the demon returned to him with Raksi's reply. The war, said Raksi, was good for him. He should fight it and report every detail to the demon on each weekly midnight visit. As soon as the war ended, he must kill the tribal shamans and deliver the people of the Ten Tribes to Raksi's apemen. Dark Eyes was stunned. He did not expect such a vicious order, even from the Queen of Fangs. Even more surprising, he found defiance in his heart.

Though he doesn't completely realize it, Dark Eyes has fallen in love with his new people as well as First Iris of Spring. The twisted wonders of Mahalanka hold little appeal to him now. Still, Dark Eyes remembers the power of Raksi. To avoid her notice, Dark Eyes continues the tribes' war, though it brings more death to his people daily. If the war ends, the Queen of Fangs will surely expect his prompt return. Dark Eyes knows that he cannot defeat the elder No Moon, but he would fight her if he must. He prays to Luna for some better solution, and he needs one quickly.

To his chagrin, Dark Eyes realizes he isn't much of a leader. He's just a warrior. The tribes follow him because he is Exalted—but they don't just want him as a warlord. They ask him to resolve disputes, to speak for them with gods and other tribes, to guide them in peace as well as battle. They want the slave to become a king.

Dark Eyes wants to do right by the Ten Tribes and especially the Red Scars, but he reserves his compassion for the Ten Tribes alone. Farhold made itself his enemy, and enemies must die. If he could, Dark Eyes would go alone into Farhold, burn it to the ground with Elder Oak in the middle of the pyre and then escape with the Ten Tribes to somewhere that Raksi could never find. Unfortunately, he doubts that such a place exists in Creation, even if he could bring down his civilized enemy single-handedly.

Dark Eyes is a tall, strong man with shimmering silver hair that descends nearly to his waist. Silver tattoos spiral along his chest, back and arms. He often goes shirtless, carrying a brace of hunting javelins upon his back. Dark Eyes' countenance is usually more stern than fierce. He saves anger for his war form.

As a half-simhata, Dark Eyes towers nine feet tall, with leonine features, short gray fur except for darker patches around his eyes, and a moonsilver mane. His muscles bulge tremendously, and all four limbs end in dagger-like silver claws.

Motivation: Destroy Farhold and raise the Ten Tribes to nationhood.

Caste: Full Moon

Anima Banner: A simhata of glittering silver.

Spirit Shape: Simhata

Tell: Long, silver hair

Attributes: *Strength 4 (Leaping +3), *Dexterity 4 (Grappling +3), *Stamina 4; *Charisma 4, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

*Caste or Favored Attribute

Spirit Shape (Simhata) Attributes: Strength 7, Dexterity 3, Stamina 6, Appearance 2

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Virtue Flaw: The Curse of the Lone Wolf

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Dodge 3, Linguistics (Native: Riverspeak; Others: Forest-Tongue) 1, *Martial Arts 4, Medicine 1 (Sports medicine +1), Melee 4 (Spear +1), Performance 1 (Combat Showmanship +1), Presence 1, Resistance 3, Ride 1, Stealth 1, Survival 2, Thrown 2 (Spear +2), War 1

*Favored Ability

Backgrounds: Cult 2, Followers 4, Heart's Blood 1, Influence 2, Reputation 1, Resources 3 (Dark Eyes no longer regards Raksi as his Mentor)

Knacks: Deadly Beastman Transformation (Claws, Thick Skin, Cheetah's Pace)

Charms: Claws of the Silver Moon, Eastern Mastery Technique, First Charisma Excellency, First Dexterity Excellency, First Stamina Excellency, First Strength Excellency, Flawless Dexterity Focus (Grappling), Flawless Strength Focus (Leaping), Instinctive Dexterity Unity, Instinctive Strength Unity, Might-Bolstering Blow, Ox-Body Technique (x3), Perfect Fear Scent, Relentless Lunar Fury, Secure Cat Stepping, Silver Lunar Resolution, Subduing the Honored Foe, Unstoppable Lunar Wound

Combos:

Devil's Claw Coup: First Dexterity Excellency, First Strength Excellency, Might-Bolstering Blow, Subduing the Honored Foe, Unstoppable Lunar Wound

Join Battle: 7

Attacks:

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 9, Damage 4B, Parry DV 5, Rate 3





Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 7B, Parry DV 4, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 10, Damage 4B piercing, Parry DV –, Rate 1

Javelin (Melee): Speed 4, Accuracy 9, Damage 7L, Parry DV 5, Rate 3

Javelin (Thrown): Speed 4, Accuracy 9, Damage 7L, Range 30, Rate 2

Simhata Claw: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 10L, Parry DV 4, Rate 2

War Form Javelin (Thrown): Speed 4, Accuracy 10, Damage 8L, Range 30, Rate 2

War Form Silver Claw Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 12*, Damage 10L, Parry DV 6, Rate 3

War Form Silver Claw Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 11*, Damage 13L, Parry DV 4, Rate 2

War Form Silver Claw Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 13*, Damage 10L piercing, Parry DV –, Rate 1

* By spending another 2m on Claws of the Silver Moon, Dark Eyes adds +2 to these Accuracies.

Soak: 2L/4B (4L/7B in war form)

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 4 (3 in simhata form)

Essence: 3

Willpower: 6

Personal Essence: 15 **Peripheral Essence:** 50

Other Notes: The knowledge Rakshi gave Dark Eyes about Lunar culture could charitably be described as *selective*. Dark Eyes knows that other Lunars exist; that each Lunar claims a domain of his or her own; that Lunar elders respect each other's autonomy; and that the Realm and its Scarlet Dynasty seek to kill all Lunar Exalted. However, Rakshi decided that her disciple did not need to know about the Silver Pact, the various societies within it, the Thousand Streams River project to foster new cultures or the Lunars' ancient title of Stewards of Creation.

FILIAL WISDOM, THE GOBLIN KING

The Darkened Dawn, Apostle of the Carrion God

The Solar Exalt Filial Wisdom is one of the best kept secrets and most-dangerous people in the entire East. About 140 years ago, the man who would rule Rathess was a warrior in the service of Paragon. He trained and fought for the Perfect, aspiring to the greatness of the legendary Dragon-Blooded. That all changed during a trip to the Realm, where Filial Wisdom saw firsthand the corruption of Dynastic society. Filial Wisdom's revelation gave way to Exaltation.

Despite all odds, the newly anointed Solar fought his way out of the Realm. Gradually, he wound his

way into the deep wilderness of the Threshold. Driven eastward by hazy dreams and immaculate assassins, Filial Wisdom fought for glory and honor, but he also did some questionable things to defend his own life. After years of sacrifice and injustice, Filial Wisdom found what he never knew he sought: the ruins of Rathess.

Alone and disillusioned, the Dawn Caste rested in the ruins and prayed in the sacred temples to a god who did not answer. Someone answered, though. Han-Tha, forbidden god of necrophagy and decay, approached Filial Wisdom with a vivid vision of a world with meaning—a world of reason, order and fear. The dark god's words revealed finally what Filial Wisdom's experiences had shown him all along: that the defining forces of society were fear and strength. Filial Wisdom and Han-Tha agreed that the Second Age deserved to die. With his orichalcum daiklave in hand, Filial Wisdom vowed to carve a new, utopian Creation from Gaia's corpse.

For over a century, Filial Wisdom has gathered power in Rathess. Han-Tha guided him in raising his Essence. He acquired many of the city's hearthstones and other treasures. Building an army proved more difficult. Most difficult of all, he works on an epic poem that will irresistibly convey Han-Tha's truth to all who hear it. He will not advance his plans for world-wide massacre until the poem is complete.

Filial Wisdom agrees with Han-Tha that salvation, both personal and cosmic, depends on eating the dead, preferably after killing them yourself. Since his life experiences are limited to the Perfect of Paragon's despotism, Dynastic decadence, fanatical, murderous pursuit by the Wyld Hunt and the lethal anarchy of Rathess, he truly cannot find any flaw in Han-Tha's proposal to kill the world and eat it. At times, Han-Tha finds himself acting as the more compassionate member of their partnership.

Fortunately, part of Filial Wisdom does not truly believe the insane philosophy that he has otherwise fully embraced. This unsatisfying burden has unconsciously kept the Goblin King from writing the magnificent work that his glory deserves. What he really needs is a poet. That would be truly disastrous.

Filial Wisdom has the swarthy skin and black hair often found in the South, with heavy brows, strong cheekbones and aquiline nose. He usually wears his orichalcum reinforced breastplate, with his grand daiklave on conquest sheathed at his back.

Motivation: Kill the world and feed it to Han-Tha.

Caste: Dawn

Anima Banner: Thunderheads of white and gold, flashing with black lightning.

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5; Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3; Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 6

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 5, Temperance 2, Valor 5

Virtue Flaw: Fanatical Devotion (see Other Notes below)

Abilities: Archery 4, Athletics 6, Awareness 4, Bureaucracy 1 (Ruling with Fear +2), Dodge 6 (Surrounded +2), Investigation 1, Linguistics (Native: Flametongue; Others: Forest-Tongue, High Holy Speech, High Realm, Old Realm) 4, Lore 3, Martial Arts 5, Melee 6 (Daiklaves +3), Occult 3, Performance 2 (Inspiration +1), Presence 1, Resistance 5, Ride 3, Stealth 5, Socialize 1, Survival 4, War 2

Backgrounds: Artifact 3, Artifact 3, Artifact 3, Followers 4, Influence 1, Manse 5, Manse 3, Manse 4, Mentor 3, Resources 4

Charms: Armored Scout's Invigoration, Bulwark Stance, Call the Blade, Dipping Swallow Defense, Dodge Essence Flow, Dragon Coil Technique, Essence Arrow Attack (all), Feather-Foot Style, First Archery Excellency, First Athletics Excellency, First Awareness Excellency, First Dodge Excellency, First Awareness Excellency, First Martial Arts Excellency, First Lore Excellency, First Melee Excellency, First Occult Excellency, First Resistance Excellency, First Stealth Excellency, First Survival Excellency, Fists of Iron Technique, Flow Like Blood, Foe-Vaulting Method, Fury Inciting Presence, Graceful Crane Stance, Hauberk-Lightening Gesture, Heaven Thunder Hammer, Hungry Tiger Technique, Immunity to Everything Technique, Infinite Dodge Mastery, Infinite Melee Mastery, Infinite Stealth Mastery, Invincible Fury of the Dawn, Iron Whirlwind Attack, Keen Sight Technique, Martial Arts Essence Flow, Melee Essence Flow, Mob-Dispersing Rebuke, Monkey Leap Technique, One Weapon, Two Blows, Ox-Body Technique (x2), Peony Blossom Attack, Reflex Sidestep Technique, Seven Shadow Evasion (Conviction Flaw of Invulnerability), Shadow Over Water, Sledgehammer Fist Punch, Solar Hero Form, Spirit-Cutting Attack, Spirit-Detecting Glance, Stealth Essence Flow, Thunderbolt Attack Prana, Trackless Region Navigation, Whirlwind Armor-Donning Prana

Combos:

Cyclone of Gore (Bulwark Stance, Hungry Tiger Technique, One Weapon, Two Blows, Peony Blossom Attack)

Golden Flash of Destruction (Call the Blade, First Athletics Excellency, Foe-Vaulting Method, Hungry Tiger

Technique, Seven Shadow Evasion, Spirit-Cutting Attack, Thunderbolt Attack Prana)

Join Battle: 10

Attacks:

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 11, Damage 6B, Parry DV 6, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 10, Damage 9B, Parry DV 4, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 10, Damage 6B piercing, Parry DV –, Rate 1

Grand Daiklave (Glory to Decay): Speed 5, Accuracy 17, Damage, Parry DV 8, Rate 2

Long Powerbow (Parting Shot): Speed 6, Accuracy 11, Damage 12L, Range 400, Rate 3

Soak: 13L/17B (Orichalcum reinforced breastplate, 11L/12B, -1 mobility penalty, +1 fatigue value [usually countered by Armored Scout's Invigoration])

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 9

Willpower: 7

Essence: 6

Personal Essence: 27 **Peripheral Essence:** 73

Committed Essence: 18

Other Notes: Glory to Decay is an orichalcum grand daiklave. It used to be called the Scarlet Dawn Daiklave. In his grand daiklave, Filial Wisdom carries the three hearthstones from the Pyramid of the Sun, the Rising Sun and the Setting Sun (see pp. 124-125). Parting Shot is an orichalcum long powerbow.

Fanatical Devotion causes Filial Wisdom to sacrifice everything for an ideal. When his Limit Breaks, he must spend (Conviction) scenes working toward no end other than accomplishing his stated purpose, which must be too grand to accomplish during that time. He will strike down anyone who opposes him, and cast off all burdens in an effort to achieve his perfection. If Filial Wisdom partially controlled his Limit Break, then he would recognize that others have their own beliefs that may be valid to them—but the Solar is too far gone in insanity ever to exercise such restraint. Instead, he believes that anyone who disagrees with him is morally unjustifiable and must be destroyed. In play, Limit Break usually causes the Goblin King to try completing Han-Tha's mission in Rathess once and for all, killing everyone who does not immediately submit and join his mad crusade to destroy Creation.

RAKSI

Queen of Fangs

When Immaculate monks need an example of the evils of the Anathema they need look no further than Raksi, the cannibal queen of the jungle. Raksi is





invincibly powerful, insanely perverted and eternally hungry. The twisted tortures she devises for her own amusement display a wicked creativity reminiscent of the pain galleries of Malfeas. Perhaps worst of all, Raksi hoards all the wonders and wisdom of the ancient city of Sperimin, ancient capital of knowledge. Its treasures include two of the Eight Gifts of Celestial Grace: the Library of Sperimin, and the *Book of Three Circles*. Once, Raksi was a shining light to Creation and savior to Luna's Chosen. Now, she has a heart as dark as the deepest jungles.

At the age of 13, Raksi became the youngest person ever to Exalt as a Lunar. At 16, she was initiated into Celestial Circle Sorcery. Unfortunately, the Usurpation began just a few months later.

Like many other Lunars, Raksi fled into the Wyld. The young Lunar's young mind was no match for the wonders and horrors she encountered along Creation's rim. Her insight and creativity remained intact or even increased: Raksi played a key role in devising the moonsilver tattoos that protect Luna's Chosen from the Wyld. Her personality shattered in the Wyld, however, turning her moral sense inside-out. Raksi leads a life defined by mad obsessions: becoming the first Lunar to master Solar Circle Sorcery; enjoying the worship of her apeman children and making them partners in her depravity; and feasting on raw human flesh, preferably infants.

Raksi appears as an unimaginably beautiful, red-haired girl of 16. Her grace and raw sexuality dominate any scene in which she is present. Whatever her form she rarely hides the moonsilver tattoos that spiral about her body. Setting her further apart from humanity are long fingers and toes tipped with sharp nails, and the sharp teeth that inspired her sobriquet. Sometimes, she becomes distant and fixated as she plays with her own joints, which bend any way that she wishes.

The Queen of Fangs can hide her insanity if she chooses. She does not rave. Raksi can seem like the sweetest, smartest, most delightful girl anyone ever met—right up until she bites into a squalling baby and asks you to join her, lest you become the second course. A visitor might survive as long as he seems useful, amusing or willing to degrade his own soul. Or he might not. The Queen of Fangs' cruelty is devious and all-encompassing: she's willing to string a person along so as to make the eventual betrayal and torture more exquisite.

Raksi's warform is more predictable. Her red half-ape form stands nearly 15 feet tall. In battle (which is rare, and pretty much only for fun), Raksi wears a full suit of moonsilver super-heavy plate and dips her dagger-like claws in demonic poison of her own design. Battle is not her specialty, but that doesn't mean the ancient Raksi is not a match for almost any army in Creation.

Motivation: Make Creation a mirror for her own mad whims.

Caste: No Moon

Anima Banner: Gibbering, grimacing baboon

Spirit Shape: Red Baboon

Tell: Long, sharp nails and teeth; long, prehensile toes

Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 8 (Inhuman Precision +3), Stamina 7, Charisma 7, Manipulation 8 (Terrifying +3), Appearance 7 (Sexual +2); *Perception 8, *Intelligence 8 (Creative New Approaches +3), *Wits 8

*Caste or Favored Attributes

Spirit Shape Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Appearance 2

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 4, Valor 2

Virtue Flaw: The Curse of the Heartless Weasel

Abilities: Archery 5 (Essence Weapons +2), Athletics 8, Awareness 8, Bureaucracy 3, Craft (Air) 6, Craft (Earth) 6, Craft (Fire) 6, Craft (Magitech) 6, Dodge 7, Integrity 4, Investigation 7, Larceny 1, Linguistics (Native: Old Realm; Others: Claw-Speak, Forest-Tongue, High Holy Speech, Riverspeak, Tribal Tongues) 5, Lore 8, Martial Arts 6 (Claw Punch +2), Medicine 2 (Torture +3), Melee 3, *Occult 8 (Sorcery +2), Performance 4, Presence 6, Resistance 6, Ride 2, Stealth 6, Socialize 7, Survival 5, Thrown 3, War 2

*Favored Ability

Backgrounds: Artifacts (many) 5, Backing (Crossroads Society) 1, Cult 2, Followers (apemen and barbarians) 5, Heart's Blood 5, Manse (several) 5, Reputation 5, Resources 5

Charms: All-Encompassing Sorcerer's Sight, Burgeoning Wyld Infliction, Celestial Circle Sorcery, Claws of the Silver Moon, Clay-Wetting Practice, Cobra Hypnotic Method, Counting the Elephant's Wrinkles, Devil-Restraining Grip, Eagle-Fish Transition Prophecy, East Mastery Technique, Eye of the Cat, Flawless Appearance Focus (Sexual), Flawless Dexterity Focus (Inhuman Precision), Flawless Intelligence Focus (Creative New Approaches), Flawless Manipulation Focus (Terrifying), Form-Fixing Method, God-Cutting Essence, Hard-Nosed Denial Style, Harmony with Reality Technique, Heightened Scent and Taste Method, Hide-Toughening Essence, Inevitable Genius Insight, Instinctive Appearance Unity, Instinctive Dexterity Unity, Instinctive Essence Prediction, Instinctive Intelligence Unity, Instinctive Stamina Unity, Keen Scent and Taste Technique, Lessons in the Blood, Lodestone Reckoning Manner, Lost Mirror Flight,

Lunar Blade Configuration, Luna's Blessed Hands, Might-Bolstering Blow, New Friend Aroma, Ox-Body Technique (x5), Perfect Fear Scent, Perfect Symmetry, Relentless Lunar Fury, Resisting the Lure of Madness, Righteous Lion Defense, Roused Bear Throw, Second Appearance Excellency, Second Charisma Excellency, Second Dexterity Excellency, Second Intelligence Excellency, Second Manipulation Excellency, Second Perception Excellency, Second Stamina Excellency, Second Strength Excellency, Second Wits Excellency, Secure Cat Stepping, Silver Lunar Resolution, South Mastery Technique, Spirit-Maiming Essence Attack, Terrestrial Circle Sorcery, Terrifying Lust Infliction, Third Intelligence Excellency, Wasp Sting Blur, Wyld Migration Formation, Wyld-Sensing Instincts

Note: For the Storyteller's convenience, these Charms are deliberately limited to those found in **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Lunars**. Rakshi could very well know high-Essence Charms from **Dreams of the First Age**, miscellaneous Charms scattered through other supplements such as an Absorption Charm (see pp. 21-22 of **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. II—The White Treatise**) or—most likely of all—unique Charms that she invented herself.

Combos: God-Murder (Second Dexterity Excellency, Second Strength Excellency, Spirit-Maiming Essence Attack)

Knacks: Deadly Beastman Transformation (Armored Hide, Brachiation x2—see p. 149, Cheetah's Pace, Fangs, Enhanced Scent and Taste, Inexhaustible, Omnidexterity—see p. 149, Short Gestation, Talons), Devastating Ogre Enhancement, Green Sun Child, Hearth-and-Flame Shell, Humble Mouse Shape, Life of the Hummingbird, Luna's Hidden Face, Prey's Skin Disguise, Subtle Silver Declaration, Terrifying Beastman Alteration, Towering Beast Form

Wyld Mutations: *Afflictions:* Impossible Joints; *Debilities:* Diet; *Derangements:* Cannibalism (Deformity), Hallucinations (Debility), Megalomania (Deficiency), Obsession (Debility), Obsession (Deficiency).

Spells:

Terrestrial Circle Spells: Practically every Terrestrial Circle spell listed in the **Exalted** main rulebook and in **The Books of Sorcery, Vol. II—The White Treatise**. Rakshi also knows dozens of Terrestrial Circle spells that cannot be found in any book.

Celestial Circle Spells: Dozens of Celestial Circle spells, certainly including Demon of the Second Circle, Insidious Tendrils of Hate, Mercury's Deliverance, Raise the Puissant Sanctum, Sapphire Banishment and Sapphire Countermagic.



Join Battle: 16

Attacks:

Punch: Speed 4, Accuracy 15, Damage 6B, Parry DV 8,
Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 14, Damage 9B, Parry DV 6, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 14, Damage 6B piercing,
Parry DV -, Rate 1

War Form Silver Claw Punch*: Speed 4, Accuracy 25,
Damage 16L/9, Parry DV 12, Rate 3

War Form Silver Claw Kick*: Speed 5, Accuracy 22,
Damage 19L/9, Parry DV 10, Rate 2

War Form Silver Claw Clinch*: Speed 6, Accuracy 22,
Damage 16L/9 piercing, Parry DV -, Rate 1

* Using Claws of the Silver Moon at maximum power.

Soak:

Human Form: 19L/22B (Silver skin, 15L/15B, Hardness: 10L/10B, +2 fatigue value)

Red Ape Form: 1L/3B

War Form: 20L/24B (Silver skin, 15B/+15L, Hardness: 10L/10B, +2 fatigue value)

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2
/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 13 (14 in war form)

Essence: 8

Willpower: 10

Personal Essence: 28 Peripheral Essence: 78

Other Notes: Raksi's Righteous Lion Defense protects her ownership of *The Book of Three Circles*.

The Queen of Fangs' Diet consists entirely of raw flesh. Her Obsession (Debility) is with cruelty and evil. Her Obsession (Deficiency) is with casting Solar Circle sorcery. Her Hallucinations (Debility) usually manifest as people and monkeys laughing at her. When she is alone, however, her father comes and beats her for being such a stupid child.

Raksi can manufacture artifacts of virtually any power level, so she has plenty of weaker ones, and several extremely powerful ones. She also has full access to the remaining technology of Sperimin, including its manes and library.

Heart's Blood: Rakshi can take the form of every mundane animal in the Southeast. She also has access to hundreds of unique Wyld beasts and a number of slain demons, gods and elementals. At the Storyteller's option, Rakshi has special High-Essence Knacks (described in detail in **Dreams of the First Age**) that let her use the Essence powers of the demons, elementals and Wyld creatures whose forms she can assume.

Malfean Lacquer: Rakshi created an oil of liquid brass, in which she dips her claws before battle. The oil hardens and lasts for a full scene. So coated, her claws deal aggravated

damage to all Exalted, priests, gods and elementals. It also poisons such targets with effects identical to those of arrow frog venom. However, the oil renders Rakshi unable to channel Willpower through any Virtue for that scene. The moonsilver container for this brew, and the 10 remaining doses, constitute a four-dot artifact.

When she uses the Malfean lacquer, Rakshi wears a talisman that makes her immune to all demonic poisons. The chain of the talisman is moonsilver, and it cannot be removed by anyone besides the wearer. The talisman is a two-dot artifact.

Raksi invented the oil in the course of researching demonic Essence, in hopes that she might find a way to re-engineer her own Exaltation for Solar Circle Sorcery. She didn't, but the demonic oil has the additional use that a mortal tattooed with it becomes Demon-Blooded (assuming she survives the toxic effects). For any creature that already has an enlightened Essence, the oil is merely poisonous.

MORE OR LESS MORTAL

The East holds many creatures that look at least somewhat human. Some of them are humans touched by the Wyld or other forces. Others merely imitate human form in a superficial manner.

BEASTMEN

The special powers of beastmen can be represented as packages of Wyld mutations. **Compass of Celestial Directions, Vol. II—The Wyld** has rules for creating beastman characters, as well as Wyld mutants and tree folk, starting on p. 157. See also that volume and **The Manual of Exalted Power—The Lunars** for additional Wyld mutations. Beastmen are often extras.

GORILLAMEN

Gorillamen are large and strong, like the great apes from which they descend. They have black fur, beetle-browed but almost human faces, and large, strong fangs—but are chiefly herbivorous, despite their ferocious appearance. The gorillaman below is one of Raksi's warriors and so bears weapons and armor unknown to most beastmen of the deep jungle.

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 3, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Abilities: Athletics 2 (Climbing +1), Awareness 2, Dodge 2, Integrity 1, Martial Arts 3, Melee 3, Presence 2, Resistance 2, Socialize 1, Stealth 3, Survival 2, Thrown 2 (Target legs +2), War 2

ADDITIONAL WYLD MUTATIONS

These mutations are specially designed for the beastmen of Mahalanka, though Wyld barbarians can have them too. The tree folk, for instance, all have the Omnidexterity affliction.

Brachiation: The mutant has especially flexible arms and a strong grip for climbing and swinging through trees. One level of Brachiation is a pox: It enables the character to climb and move through treetops with a Move of (Dexterity ÷ 2) yards and a Dash of (Dexterity) yards. The player does not need to attempt (Dexterity + Athletics) rolls for ordinary actions the character performs up in the trees. Two levels of Brachiation turn the pox into an affliction. The character climbs and moves through branches at the same rate as her Move and Dash actions on the ground. All actions to climb, swing or jump through the treetops receive +1 bonus success, making botches impossible.

Omnidexterity: A character with this affliction is ambidextrous with all four (or more) limbs. He never suffers an offhand penalty for any task and can hold weapons and tools in his feet as readily as his hands.

Wyld Mutations: *Poxes:* Fangs, Fur, Large

Join Battle: 4

Attacks:

Bite: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 5L, Parry DV –, Rate 1

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 5B, Parry DV 8, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 8B, Parry DV 4, Rate 2

Razor Harness Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 6, Damage 8L piercing, Parry DV –, Rate 1

Spear: Speed 6, Accuracy 7, Damage 9L/12L, Parry DV 5, Rate 2

Bola: Speed 6, Accuracy 5, Damage 5B + restrain, Range 20, Rate 1

Soak: 5L/7B (Breastplate, 4L/2B, -1 mobility penalty, +1 fatigue value)

Health Levels: -0/-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 3/2 **Willpower:** 7

Essence: 1

Other Notes: A gorillaman's package of mutations costs 3 bonus points. Raksi's gorillamen might carry other weapons than the examples listed here.

OTHER APEMEN

The baboonmen and orangutanmen of Mahalanka physically resemble humans closely enough that they do not require full character sheets. Either breed is adequately represented by the standard humans on pages. 278-282 of **Exalted**, with Wyld mutations and a few specialties. Baboonmen are simply humans with the pox Fur. Orangutanmen have the pox Fur and the afflictions Brachiation (x2) and Fully Prehensile Toes, plus one Athletics specialty in Arboreal.

The bola is a thrown weapon consisting of weights connected by cords. With a successful called shot (**Exalted**, p. 158) it can wrap around a target's arms or legs, restraining them. See **Scroll of the Monk**, p. 158, for complete rules on bolas and restraining weapons.

HAWKMEN

Tribes of hawk- and falconmen live throughout the East, as well as the mountains of the Northeast and Southeast. Smaller colonies live in other parts of Creation. Like their avian ancestors, hawkmen live in trees and on cliffs. They combine a humanoid frame with a beaked, birdlike head, clawed hands and feet, and plumage in the hues and patterns typical of falcons. Haltan hawk-folk have wings as well as arms; Metagalapan hawkmen just have wings, but with three fingers at the wing-joint to form a rudimentary hand.

Hawkmen often experience less prejudice and hatred than other beastmen because of their attractive appearance. However, only the Haltans allow them to participate fully in their society. Most hawkmen either live apart from ordinary humans or, at best, they work on the fringes of society as guides, hunters or trappers. On Mount Metagalapa, they are little more than serfs.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 3; Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 2, Temperance 2, Valor 3

Abilities: Athletics 3 (Balance +2), Awareness 3 (Vision +2), Dodge 3, Integrity 1, Linguistics (Native: Forest-Tongue; Others: Riverspeak) 1, Martial Arts 3, Melee 2, Performance 2, Presence 1, Resistance 1, Stealth 2, Socialize 2, Survival 2, Thrown 3, War 3

Wyld Mutations: *Poxes:* Claws, Enhanced Senses (Sight), Feathers, Tail; *Abominations:* Wings



Join Battle: 6

Attacks:

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 3B, Parry DV 3, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 6B, Parry DV 1, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6 Accuracy 6, Damage 3B piercing, Parry DV –, Rate 1

Short Spear: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 7L, Parry DV 3, Rate 2

Javelin: Speed 4, Accuracy 6, Damage 6L, Range 30, Rate 2

Soak: 4L/5B (Chain shirt, 3L/1B, +1 fatigue value)

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 3 **Willpower:** 7

Essence: 1

Other Notes: A hawkman's package of Wyld mutations costs 10 bonus points at character creation.

MONKEYMEN

Child-sized monkeymen scamper and swing throughout the jungles around Mahalanka. They live at most 25 years, but breed prolifically. Raksi finds them too weak and too impulsive to make good minions. Since most Mahalankans ignore them, monkeymen might know more—and have a more objective view—than Raksi or anyone else imagines. Monkeymen use no weapons larger than knives.

Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2; Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 1, Temperance 1, Valor 2

Abilities: Athletics 3 (Brachiation +2), Awareness 2, Dodge 3, Investigation 1, Larceny 1, Martial Arts 2, Melee 2, Socialize 2, Stealth 3 (Hide in Foliage +2), Survival 2, Thrown 2

Wyld Mutations: *Poxes:* Hair Color (furred body); *Afflictions:* Brachiation (x2), Omnidexterity, Prehensile Tail, Short Gestation, Tiny; *Deformities:* Short Lifespan

Join Battle: 5

Attacks:

Punch: Speed 4, Accuracy 6, Damage 1B, Parry DV 4, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 4B, Parry DV 2, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 5, Damage 1B piercing, Parry DV –, Rate 1

Knife: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 3L, Parry DV 3, Rate 3

Knife, Thrown: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 3L, Range 15, Rate 3

Soak: 0L/2B

Health Levels: -0/-1/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 3 **Willpower:** 4

Essence: 1

Other Notes: A monkeyman's package of Wyld mutations costs 7 bonus points at character creation. Due to its small size, attacks on a monkeyman suffer a –2 external penalty (–1 if the monkeyman is immobile).

SNAKEMEN

Snakemen form communities of their own in the depths of the Southeastern jungles and the Eastern Forests, while the Southwest includes islands inhabited solely by snakemen related to water-snakes. These beastmen also show a surprising taste for life in human cities. Snakemen seem to thrive in urban environments as much as they do in isolated jungle villages.

Urban snakemen often become beggars, petty criminals or circus freaks, but a few of them make their way into the lower levels of criminal organizations. Most people hate and fear snakemen because of their inhuman appearance, scaled skin and disturbingly smooth and quick way of moving. However, they are



well regarded in Halta and a few other nations, where they often work as scholars or physicians.

A few tribes of poisonous snakemen live in the warmer hinterlands of the species' range. Most snake-men in the central and northern forests of the East are non-poisonous.

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1; Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 2, Temperance 3, Valor 2

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 3 (Smell +2), Bureaucracy 1, Dodge 3, Integrity 1, Linguistics (Native: Flametongue, Forest-Tongue or Seatongue; Others: Riverspeak) 1, Lore 1, Martial Arts 3, Melee 2, Presence 2, Resistance 1, Stealth 3, Socialize 1, Survival 2, War 3

Wyld Mutations: *Poxes:* Elemental Adaptation (East, South or West, as the case may be), Enhanced Senses (Smell), Fangs, Longevity, Night Vision, Scales; *Deficiencies:* Temperature Sensitivity (cold), Ugly

Join Battle: 6

Attacks:

Bite: Speed 2, Accuracy 5, Damage 2L, Parry DV –, Rate 1

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 2B, Parry DV 3, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 5B, Parry DV 1, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 6, Damage 2B piercing, Parry DV –, Rate 1

Hook Sword: Speed 5, Accuracy 5, Damage 5L, Parry

DV 4, Rate 3

Soak: 4L/5B (Chain shirt, 3L/1B, +1 fatigue value)

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 3 **Willpower:** 7

Essence: 1

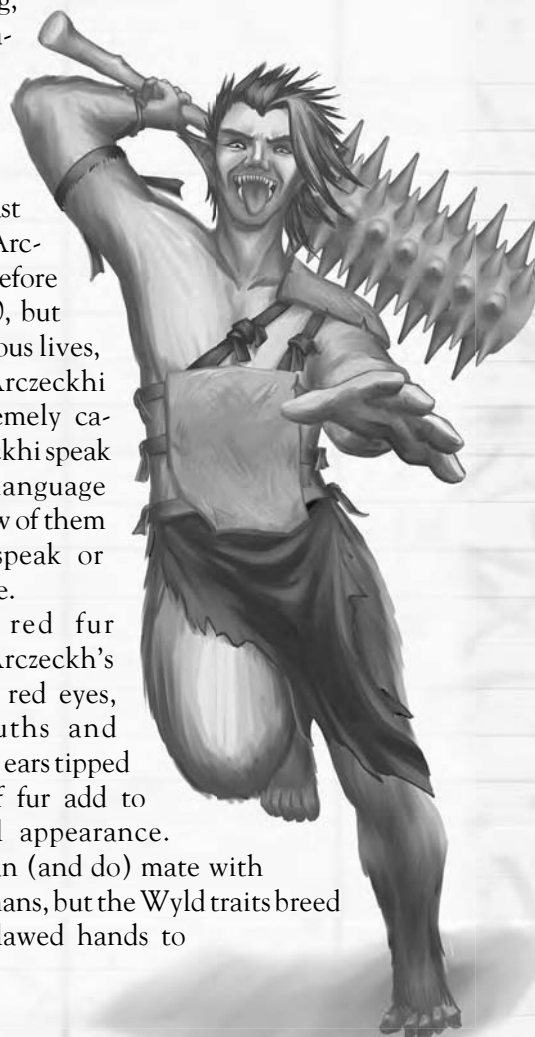
Other Notes: The snakeman package of mutations costs 4 bonus points; or 5 points for Haltan characters, since the Ugly deficiency comes from cultural prejudice. Serpent-folk descended from poisonous snakes (including all Western and many Southern snakemen) also possess the affliction Toxin, for an additional 2 bonus points.

MISCELLANEOUS

ARCZECKHI

The Arczeckhi are crazed fighters who rush headlong into battle. They fight with single-minded enthusiasm and a complete disregard for tactics. It's also tough to scare the horde away, since only those Arczeckhi whom they know have killed (the more the better) are truly real to other Arczeckhi. When Arczeckhi aren't fighting, they're probably building traps with which to defend themselves. The vast majority of Arczeckhi die before the age of 30, but they live furious lives, and older Arczeckhi can be extremely capable. Arczeckhi speak their own language and only a few of them learn Riverspeak or Forest-tongue.

Coarse red fur covers an Arczeckh's body. Beady red eyes, fanged mouths and long, pointed ears tipped with tufts of fur add to their bestial appearance. Arczeckhi can (and do) mate with ordinary humans, but the Wyld traits breed true, from clawed hands to bandy legs.



Motivation: Typically, to assert their reality by killing and dominating weaker creatures.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 2, Temperance 2, Valor 4

Abilities: Archery 2, Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Craft (Wood) 1 (Traps +1), Dodge 2, Martial Arts 3, Melee 2 (Spear+1), Presence 1, Resistance 2, Ride 2 (Chariots +1), Stealth 2, Survival 1 (Scrubland +1)

Wyld Mutations: *Poxes:* Claws, Enhanced Sense (Hearing), Night Vision; *Derangements:* Sociopathic Detachment (deficiency).

Join Battle: 5

Attacks:

Claw: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 3L, Parry DV 4, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 6L, Parry DV 2, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 6, Damage 3B piercing, Parry DV –, Rate 1

Spear: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 7L/10L, Parry DV 4, Rate 2

Soak: 1L/4B

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 2 **Willpower:** 5

Essence: 1

Other Notes: An Arczeckh character's package of mutations costs 2 bonus points. They are usually extras.

GRACED CHAYAN MONKS

Graced Chayan monks achieve an enlightened Essence through meditation, martial training and the gift of their radiolari gods. As enlightened mortals, they can learn Terrestrial Martial Arts Charms. All such monks are serious practitioners of the martial arts and use their skills to protect Chaya from supernatural threats. Although graced monks are rarely well equipped, they are dedicated, prudent and trained in formation fighting. They favor the Crimson Pentacle Blade Style (though as enlightened mortals they cannot form Combos and therefore cannot exploit the style to its full potential). Some monks learn the Golden Janissary Style instead. (See **Scroll of the Monk** for these martial arts styles, starting on pp. 48 and 63.) This is an example of an uncommonly experienced monk, who has developed her Essence and Charms to a high degree.

Motivation: Varies, but frequently something along the lines of, "Guide the Chayan people in the perfect order of the radiolari gods."



Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2; Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Virtues: Compassion 2, Conviction 3, Temperance 4, Valor 3

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Bureaucracy 1, Dodge 3, Integrity 3, Lore 2, Martial Arts 4, Melee 2, Occult 1, Performance 3, Resistance 2, War 2

Powers/Charms:

Crimson Pentacle Blade Style—Crimson Pentacle Blade Form, Eastern Root Protocol, Graceful Tortoise Technique, Northern Lotus Petal Discernment Meditation, Speardancer Concentration

Essence Pool—As enlightened mortals, graced monks have Essence pools of (Essence x 10) motes. They can access a third of that pool normally (round down), but must spend one Willpower point to access the remaining points for the rest of the scene.

Join Battle: 6

Attacks:

Punch: Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 3B, Parry DV 5, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 6B, Parry DV 3, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 7, Damage 3B piercing, Parry DV –, Rate 1

Short Spear: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 7L, Parry DV 3, Rate 2

Soak: 0L/3B (Target shield +1 DV, -1 mobility penalty)

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 4/5 **Willpower:** 7

Essence: 3 **Essence Pool:** 30

Other Notes: None

GREAT GOBLINS

The Fair Folk create hobgoblins of varying power. The great goblins of Rathess are much larger, stronger and tougher than the city's everyday goblins. These creatures stand 12 feet tall, with large horns on their heads and claws on their fingers. Their sharply receding foreheads show they are no smarter than the average hobgoblin, but their Fae creators made them sharp-eyed and cunning. Some great goblins still serve Fae nobles as bodyguards, officers for hobgoblin hordes and elite shock troops; great goblins who switch their allegiance to Filial Wisdom and Han-Tha fill the same roles for their new masters. Great goblins often carry heavy weapons such as great axes, poleaxes or tetsubos (typically, a section of tree trunk). They know how to wield bows, but Rathessian examples generally do not do so.

Most importantly, perhaps, every Rathessian goblin has the potential to become a great goblin. The Fair Folk simply gave extra size and power to basic goblins; therefore, Han-Tha can transfer that power from a dead great goblin to the basic goblins who feed on its corpse. Other aspects of great goblinhood spontaneously appear as the cannibal goblin's Attributes rise.

Motivation: Serve as the master's strong fist of destruction.

Attributes: Strength 8, Dexterity 4, Stamina 10; Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 1; Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 5

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 4, Temperance 1, Valor 4

Abilities: Archery 2, Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Dodge 4, Integrity 1, Investigation 2, Martial Arts 4, Melee 4, Presence 2 (Terrorizing +1), Resistance 2 (Disease +1), Stealth 3, Survival 3, War 3

Join Battle: 9

Attacks:

Claw: Speed 4, Accuracy 9, Damage 9L, Parry DV 5, Rate 2

Punch: Speed 4, Accuracy 9, Damage 8B, Parry DV 5, Rate 3

Gore: Speed 6, Accuracy 7, Damage 12L, Parry DV 3, Rate 1

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 8, Damage 11B, Parry DV 3, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 8, Damage 8B piercing, Parry DV –, Rate 1



Great Axe: Speed 6, Accuracy 9, Damage 15L/2, Parry DV 3, Rate 2

Soak: 12L/21B (Tough hide, 2L/3B; salvaged scraps of armor, 5L/8B, -2 mobility penalty, +2 fatigue value)

Health Levels: -0/-0/-1/-1/-1/-1/-2/-2/-2/-2/Incap

Dodge DV: 5 **Willpower:** 8

Essence: 2

Other Notes: Iron (not steel) weapons inflict aggravated damage upon great goblins, just as with other Fae. Because great goblins exist for the sole purpose of exerting brute force, most of them cannot shape glamour or change their form. A few exceptional great goblins may wield these powers, though.

STALKERS

Stalkers are Dragon Kings who devolved into a primitive state. They barely count as sentient, but show considerable skill and cunning at combat. Stalkers are sometimes led by a semi-civilized Dragon King with more advanced powers. Filial Wisdom occasionally trains by battling stalkers, and his transcendent wisdom and skill during these bouts have enlightened a few of his opponents. Unfortunately, death is usually quick to follow.

The stalkers of Rathess come from the raptok race of Dragon King. These wiry reptilian creatures resemble claw striders shaped halfway into human form: clawed, birdlike legs, body leaning forward with a heavy tail for balance, and a narrow muzzle. They can craft only the simplest weapons and often prefer to use their own claws.

Motivation: Hunt, feed, breed, attack anyone not of the tribe.



Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4; Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2; Perception 3, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Virtues: Compassion 1, Conviction 1, Temperance 1, Valor 3

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Dodge 3, Martial Arts 3, Melee 2, Presence 1, Resistance 2, Stealth 3, Survival 2 (Jungle +1), Thrown 2, War 1

Join Battle: 5

Attacks:

Claw: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 4L, Parry DV 4, Rate 3

Kick: Speed 5, Accuracy 6, Damage 7L, Parry DV 3, Rate 2

Clinch: Speed 6, Accuracy 6, Damage 4B piercing, Parry DV –, Rate 1

Short Spear: Speed 5, Accuracy 7, Damage 8L, Parry DV 3, Rate 2

Javelin: Speed 4, Accuracy 6, Damage 7L, Range 30, Rate 2

Soak: 5L/7B

Health Levels: -0/-1/-1/-2/-2/-4/Incap

Dodge DV: 3 **Willpower:** 4

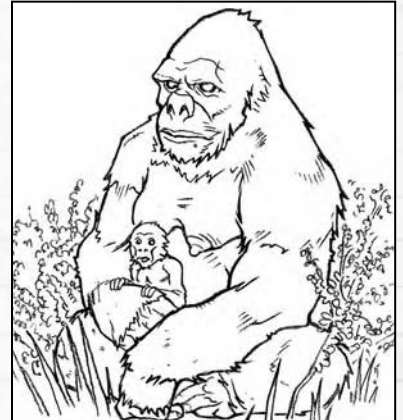
Essence: 1

Other Notes: Stalker leaders occasionally exhibit minor powers, usually of an elemental nature. These powers usually just add slightly to the stalker's athletic or combat abilities, but it has been reported that some stalkers can exert minor control over plant life or lighting conditions, as well. These stalkers achieved enlightened Essence and slight proficiency at one of the Dragon King Paths. See **Scroll of the Lesser Races** for information about the powers of the Dragon Kings.

MONSTERS AND ANIMALS OF THE EAST

APE, GREAT

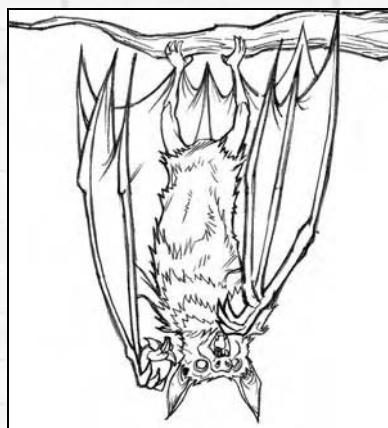
The noble great ape of the jungle has thick black fur and walks on its feet and the knuckles of its hand. Tribes of great apes fight together against the threats of the Southeast, just as humans do.



The great ape and humanity have a spotty history, however, and so great ape tribes distrust humans intensely. Elder males, called silverbacks for the change to their fur color, lead the tribes. Silverbacks are often larger and smarter than other great apes, and can potentially be reasoned with if one can communicate with them. Silverbacks have Social Attributes comparable to humans and may have additional Abilities.

BAT, GIANT

The giant bat is a larger variety of the common bat found throughout Creation. They have wingspans of five to seven feet. Like ordinary bats, they are most active in mornings and evenings, and rely on echolocation more than sight. They also possess fully prehensile back feet with opposable thumbs and three fingered hands on their wings. Giant bats are some of the most agile flyers in all Creation.



In Halta, these creatures are typically san-bats or ata-bats (and have higher Intelligence). Haltans train san-bats as messengers and hunters. The republic includes many colonies of wild san-bats and communities of

ata-bats who live apart from humans.



BLADE VINE

This aggressive carnivorous plant winds upward around any support that it can find, or trails along the ground. When its leaves sense sudden movement, the whole vine lashes out to wrap around its prey. Sharp organic blades and needles along its

length slice into the victim's skin. The Dragon Kings bred the blade vine to guard their garrisons. They now grow throughout the south and central East, though inhabited areas take measures to destroy them before they grow large enough to kill.

Recognizing a blade vine in a typical forest or jungle setting requires a successful (Perception + Survival) roll at difficulty 3. Failure gives the vine a chance for an unexpected attack. The vine's only attack is a clinch, but it can attack up to three targets within three yards of itself without suffering penalties for multiple attacks. A vine cannot attack a given victim more than once per action, however, nor attack additional targets by taking multiple action penalties. As with automatons, the mindless vines never fail Valor rolls and never succeed at other Virtue rolls.

A basic blade vine has the traits listed here. Represent larger vines by giving them levels of Ox-Body Technique (one -1 health level and two -2 health levels); for each level of Ox-Body, the vine gains +1 Strength and Stamina, and can attack one more target at a time.

BURROW LOK

This predator of temperate forests resembles a badger grown the size of a pony. A burrow lok digs an underground den that doubles as a trap for its prey. The den extends up to 30 yards, with periodic chambers that extend almost to the



surface. Anything larger than a small child that steps over a chamber collapses the roof and falls three yards into the tunnel. The burrow lok then sprints to attack its prey with its fangs and claws. Noticing a burrow lok den requires a (Perception + Survival) roll, difficulty 3.

Burrow loks have remarkable senses, equal to the Solar Charm Keen (Sense) Technique for smell and hearing (see **Exalted**, pp. 225-226). Sometimes they venture out at night to hunt prey directly.

EMERALD MONKEY

These small, long-tailed and green-furred monkeys live everywhere in Halta. Haltans keep emerald monkeys as pets, guards and working animals. Some patrol the forests around border forts; others perform simple



tasks such as gathering nuts, spinning thread or polishing wood. All domestic emerald monkeys are san-beasts. Ata-emerald monkeys are fairly rare. Wild emerald monkeys often become pests for travelers, rummaging through packs in search of food.

Emerald monkey stats can represent any small monkey.

FLYING SERPENT

Deep in the East, some snakes can glide by opening their ribcages to form rudimentary wings. These serpents may glide up to 100 yards. All varieties of flying serpent are venomous, but most have relatively weak venoms.





San-baboons are one of the most common domestic animals in Halta. Some are pets or hunting companions, but most carry burdens and perform other simple tasks. Halta also has many ata-baboons, who have lives little different from their human neighbors.

Forest baboon stats can represent any large monkey or small ape. San-baboons have the same social and mental traits as humans.



any sound it has ever heard. A forest mimic hunts by reproducing voices and words that seem to entice its prey—whether the mating calls of birds or a person's cries for help. Once it lures in a victim, it tries to throttle

The traits listed here are for a common variety of flying serpent. There are many types, and some have stronger or weaker poisons.

FOREST BABOON

These moss-green creatures live only in the Northeastern forest. Wild forest baboons normally move on all fours but can manage a slow upright waddle. Haltan san- and ata-baboons walk as easily as any human.

FOREST MIMIC

The forest mimic resembles an oversized orangutan with goatlike legs, great spiraling horns and one large eye. The creatures seem genderless and are never encountered in groups.

This creature can reproduce any voice, or indeed

or bash its prey unconscious before feeding. Though cunning, forest mimics do not seem to be actually intelligent. They cannot create original statements, only repeat what they hear.

A forest mimic's Strength, Stamina and health levels increase as it ages and grows larger. For each additional six feet it grows, it gains +1 Strength and +1 Stamina (maximum 10) and a -0 Health Level. Its greater size also grants a +1 Accuracy bonus to attacks but imposes a -1 internal penalty to Stealth rolls. Recognizing a mimicked voice requires 5 successes on a (Perception + Awareness) roll—not reflexive: a character must consciously suspect an imposture unless she uses Charms that reveal deceit or grant superhuman perception, such as Keen Hearing Technique. It also requires familiarity with the real voice.

GRAVEHOUND

This uncanny breed, first discovered among the necropolis of Sijan, became a favored war hound for both the Abyssals and those who fight them. Unlike other beasts, gravehounds do



not fear the dead or shadowlands, and can see and touch dematerialized ghosts. Most disturbingly, when a gravehound consumes the flesh of the dead, it also consumes the victim's memories, personality and voice. A gravehound who eats a dead person's memories often tries to complete some last, urgent task of the deceased such as soothing the grief of loved ones, seeking vengeance against its murderer or carrying news to its former lords. Since a gravehound is still a dog (albeit a talking one), some tasks are more difficult than others. A gravehound retains the memories of a consumed victim for a number of days equal to the victim's Willpower.

GREAT ROC

These exceedingly rare, mammoth-sized raptors darken the skies when they take flight. With wings that extend more than 60 feet, they can carry sizable loads. Though they live for an extremely long time (no modern great roc has died of old age), the birth of a new roc is so rare that all of Metagalapa celebrates



it. As a result, the Metagalapans seldom use these massive birds in war and instead bring them in only after the battle to carry off the loot.

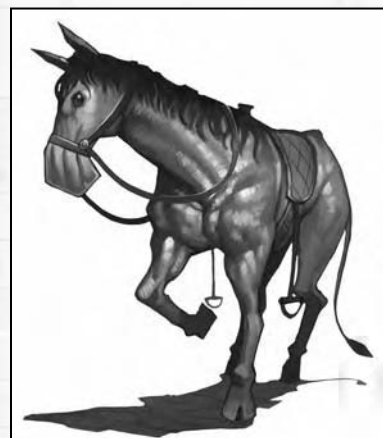
HATRA

Hatra resemble weasels the size of small dogs. Webs of skin between their front and back legs enable them to glide from tree to tree, or swoop down on prey. They live throughout the East.

Hatra colonies usually contain between 10 and 20 individuals. A single hatra is little threat; but a whole tribe may descend at once to kill prey as large as a bear.

HORSE, HALTAN

These slender, gray bodied, green-maned horses are specially bred for traveling outside the forests. Most of these horses are san-beasts, and Haltan traders occasionally sell these animals to buyers who can both pay their high prices and who they



feel sure will treat these horses well. All Haltan horses that are not san-beasts are fully intelligent ata-beasts. Ata-horses are most often found in the company of Haltan traders who spend large amounts of time on the road. Naturally, these are never sold (unless the horse and trader are running a scam—sell the horse to

some sucker, the horse escapes, and the two take the money and run).

LEECH HOUND

Still waters in the jungles may conceal leech hounds. These dog-sized leeches move as fast as a running man, but do not give chase far from the water. They attack by grabbing with their two long tentacles and wrapping their extensible mouths around their target—they aim for the head by preference, to kill quietly as well as quickly. The leech hound only deals damage with an already-established clinch. They are blind, but target prey by scent and vibrations as accurately as any human could by sight.



The vile leech gods (see *The Books of Sorcery, Vol. IV—The Roll of Glorious Divinity I*, pp. 69-70) can control leech hounds and often use them against their foes.

RAPTOR CAT

The poorly named raptor cat looks vaguely feline, but camouflage-pattern green scales cover its body. This animal waits in trees and attacks anything smaller than a tyrant lizard, as long as it has the element of surprise. A full-grown raptor cat extends eight feet from nose to tail, and can kill a man with a single blow. The beast's jaw unhinges like that of a snake, so it can swallow creatures almost as big as itself. Raptor cats also sometimes toy with crippled prey, giving them a frightful reputation for cruelty.



SLITHERER

Amongst the deadlier hazards of Rathess, the slitherer is an aggressive and mobile green blob the height of a large dog and up to 10 feet wide. Its corrosive touch carries a deadly plague. The slitherer can slip under doors and through tiny gaps and cracks. Weapons mean little to the blob: all non-aggravated damage is downgraded to bashing damage, and aggravated damage





(from any source) is downgraded to lethal damage. It is unknown how it senses its prey, but it seems well able to do so, even in darkness.

The slitherer cannot dash. It never tires. It cannot jump. It can reach up to three yards to attack. The senses of the slitherer ignore darkness. It is mindless, immune to social attacks of any kind, and driven to dissolve any animal matter it finds. Like an automaton, it never fails Valor rolls and has no other Virtues.



STEEL SHADOW

These nightmarish creatures come from the northernmost reaches of Haltan territory, but have spread from there. These creatures owe their name to the hardness of their hide and their penchant for

ambush as they silently stalk the night sky. A steel shadow has a black back, ashen belly and glittering blue eyes. Up close, the beast resembles a great raiton, with razor-sharp black claws and an eight-foot wingspan. They hunt any creature smaller than themselves (including small humans) or those who appear wounded. During the day, these creatures sleep beneath sandy ground.

Steel shadow can see much better at night than during the day. In the dark, their vision emulates the charm Keen Sight Technique. During the day, they suffer a -2 internal penalty to all rolls. A steel shadow may fly at five times its ground movement speed.

TREE PARD

Although some Haltans prefer pet giant wolf spiders, the tree pard is the single most common companion for Haltan scouts, hunters, commandos and traders. These gray and black leopard-sized cats weigh almost as much as



a person and are extremely well adapted for life in the trees. Several ata-tree pards are decorated military heroes. Haltans regard both normal and san-tree pards with the same affection that other humans reserve for extremely bright and reliable breeds of dogs.

WARHAWK

These regal legacies of the First Age have wingspans of up to 30 feet and massive claws that could rend a man in half. Despite their size, however, they can carry loads only up to 150 pounds,



meaning most hawkriders are small and wiry. Once a rider properly earns the respect of his warhawk, it becomes exceedingly loyal; rider and avian remain paired for the rest of the mortal's life. Warhawks usually outlive their riders, for their life spans extend more than 150 years, but their low birthrates keep their total population low. A warhawk can reach speeds of 120 miles per hour in a dive, but generally flies only 50 to 70 miles per day, a rapid pace it can maintain for only a few days.



Name	Str/Dex/Sta	Per/Int/Wits/Will	Health Levels	Attack (Spd/Acc/Dmg/Rate)	Dodge DV/Soak
Ape, Great	6/3/6	4/2/3/6	-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/ -2/-4/Incap	Punch: 5/7/6B/3	2/3L/6B
Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Dodge 1, Integrity 3, Investigation 2, Martial Arts 3, Presence 3, Resistance 2, Stealth 2, Survival 4					
Bat, Giant	2/4/3	4/1/3/5	-0/-1x2/-2/ -4/Incap	Bite: 6/7/4L/1, Claw: 6/8/2L/2	4/0L/3B
Abilities: Athletics 4 (Flying +2), Awareness 3 (Hearing +2), Dodge 4, Integrity 2, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 3, Resistance 2, Stealth 3, Survival 3					
Blade Vine	2/3/2	1/1/2/-	-0x3/-1x3/-2/ -2/-4/Incap	Clinch: 6/7/5L/1 (special)	2/3L/7B
Abilities: Awareness 5, Dodge 1, Martial Arts 2 (Grapple +2), Resistance 3					
Burrow Lok	6/3/6	3/1/4/2	-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/ -2/-2/-4/Incap	Claw: 4/7/9L/4	2/3L/6B
Abilities: Athletics 4 (Jumping +2), Awareness 4 (Smell +2), Dodge 2, Investigation 2, Martial Arts 3, Presence 1, Resistance 2, Stealth 3 (Forest +1), Survival 3					
Emerald Monkey	1/4/2	3/2/3/2	-0/-1/-2/Incap	Bite: 6/6/1L/1	4/0L/2B
Abilities: Athletics 2 (Climbing +2), Awareness 3, Dodge 4, Investigation 2, Martial Arts 2, Performance 2, Presence 1, Resistance 1, Stealth 2 (Forest +1), Survival 3					
Flying Serpent	1/4/2	3/1/3/2	-0/-1/-2/Incap	Bite: 4/7/1L/2	3/0L/2B
Abilities: Athletics 1 (Climbing +2), Awareness 2 (Smell +3), Dodge 4, Integrity 1, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 2, Presence 2, Resistance 1, Stealth 3, Survival 3					
Flying Serpent Venom: Damage 5L, Toxicity 2, Tolerance -, Penalty -2					
Forest Baboon	4/3/3	3/2/3/3	-0/-1x2/-2x2/ -4/Incap	Bite: 6/5/5L/1, Thrown Rock: 5/5/4B/2	3/1L/4B
Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Dodge 2, Integrity 2, Investigation 2, Martial Arts 2, Presence 1, Resistance 1, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Thrown 2					
Forest Mimic	5/4/5	3/2/3/5	-0/-1x3/-2x3/ -4/Incap	Punch: 5/7/5B/3	3/2L/5B
Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 5, Dodge 1, Integrity 1, Investigation 3, Martial Arts 3, Performance 5, Presence 1, Resistance 3, Stealth 3, Survival 5, Thrown 1					
Gravehound	3/3/4	4/2/2/4	-0/-1x2/-2x2/ -4/Incap	Bite: 6/6/4L/2	4/0L/4B
Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 4, Dodge 1, Integrity 1, Investigation 2, Martial Arts 1, Presence 3, Resistance 4, Stealth 2, Survival 4					
Great Roc	10/2/6	3/1/2/3	-0x2/-1x3/ -2x3/-4/Incap	Beak: 6/5/14L/1, Claw: 5/6/12L/2	2/3L/6B
Abilities: Athletics 1, Awareness 2, Dodge 2, Integrity 2, Martial Arts 2, Presence 3, Resistance 2, Survival 1					
Hatra	1/4/2	3/1/3/3	-0/-1/-2/ -4/Incap	Bite: 4/8/3L/2	3/1L/2B
Abilities: Athletics 3 (Climbing +1), Awareness 3, Dodge 4, Integrity 1, Investigation 2, Martial Arts 4, Resistance 2, Stealth 4, Survival 3					



Name	Str/Dex/Sta	Per/Int/Wits/Will	Health Levels	Attack (Spd/Acc/Dmg/Rate)	Dodge DV/Soak
Horse, Haltan	4/4/4	3/3/3/5	-0x2/-1x2/ -2x2/-4/Incap	Bite: 5/7/2L/1, Kick: 2/4/6B/2	4/1L/5B
Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Dodge 4, Integrity 2, Investigation 2, Martial Arts 2, Presence 2, Resistance 2, Survival 3					
Leech Hound	3/3/5	4/1/2/3	-0/-1/-2/-2/ -4/Incap	Clinch: 6/7/6L/1	2/0L/5B
Abilities: Athletics 4 (Climbing +2), Awareness 3, Dodge 1, Integrity 1, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 3, Presence 1, Resistance 1, Stealth 3, Survival 2					
Raptor Cat	5/6/6	4/X/5/4	-0/-0/-1/-1/-1/ -2/-2/-2/-4/Incap	Claw: 4/10/9L/4	4/6L/9B
Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Dodge 2, Integrity 1, Investigation 2, Martial Arts 3, Presence 3, Resistance 2, Stealth 3 (Jungle +2), Survival 3					
Slitherer	3/1/3	3/X/2/0	-0/-1/-1/-2/-2/ -4/Incap	Touch: 5/7/8L/4 + Plague	0/5L/7B
Abilities: Athletics 1, Awareness 3, Martial Arts 4, Stealth 3 (Silent Movement +3) Note: If the slitherer's touch inflicts damage, the victim is exposed to plague (see Exalted , p. 353). Exalted are not immune. A slitherer also has Hardness 5L/7B.					
Steel Shadow	4/4/4	4/X/3/4	-0/-1/-1/-1/-2/ -2/-2/-2/-4/Incap	Talons: 4/8/6L/2	3/12L/8B
Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Dodge 2, Integrity 1, Investigation 3, Martial Arts 3, Presence 3, Resistance 2, Stealth 3, Survival 3					
Tree Pard	5/4/4	3/2/3/4	-0/-1x2/-2x2/ -4/Incap	Bite: 6/7/6L/1, Claw: 7/8/5L/2	4/2L/4B
Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Dodge 4, Integrity 2, Investigation 2, Martial Arts 3, Presence 3, Resistance 3, Stealth 4, Survival 3					
Warhawk	5/3/3	3/1/3/4	-0/-1x2/-2x3/ -4/Incap	Beak: 5/7/7L/1, Claw: 5/8/9L/2	3/1L/3B
Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Dodge 4, Integrity 3, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 3, Presence 3, Resistance 1, Survival 1					

Beyond the Scavenger Lands lies much more than a rough frontier of rural backwaters and petty kingdoms. The Far East is full of nations that rival their supposedly more “civilized” neighbors in terms of size and sophistication, from the warring states of Linowan and Halta, to the floating land of Metagalapa and even grim Sijan, ancient city of the honored dead. Still, the region’s reputation as a land of untamed wilds and rough barbarians is not without merit, as the broad Eastern forests are home to a myriad of human, once human and completely inhuman tribes. The wealth of the East lies within these forests, just waiting for those brave enough to take it.

The third of five Terrestrial Direction books devoted to fleshing out the bare bones of Creation presented in the **Exalted** core book, this book includes the following:

- Details of Linowan, Halta and the many other Eastern states
- Mass combat stats for the myriad of Eastern powers
- Traits for the East’s native gods and beasts



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