

# **Tribal Society and Hierarchy On Board the Starship Warden**

**by James M. Ward (Dragon #5)**

In viewing the many tribes of the starship Warden, several common traits are evidenced. All of the tribes have a shaman and a tribal leader. All of the tribes are aware of other intelligent groups on the ship and tribes usually treat strangers as enemies. All of the tribes explore the ship, with differing degrees of success. All of the tribes are influenced in some manner by androids and wolfoids.

The shaman of any given tribe is the most knowledgeable member of the group in dealing with the ship and its devices. The shaman is an indirect tool for the referee, in that this non-player serves as a catalyst in the shaping of the players' goals or directions, when they adventure. The shaman also heals poisons, translates written material, and often shows players how to use the devices they bring in, (for a price, of course).

The leader of any given group (tribe) is characterized by very high ability rolls, especially in the strength category. The leader usually has weapons or devices far beyond those normally found in the tribe; devices like laser guns, slug projectors, or paralysis rods. If a leader lacks these things, he or she invariably has support from sub-leaders or mutations that have been enlisted into the leader's service. Disputes over tribal leadership are rare. These battles entail an anything-goes confrontation, in which power weapons and mutated attacks are common.

Tribes frequently battle other groups on single levels or through out many levels of the ship. These battles often weaken both sides so much that third groups will move in and destroy the first two. Such battles are often methods of knowledge transfer: in the form of new weapons or fighting styles employed.

Exploring tribesmen are usually what players of the game represent. These explorations bring the tribe knowledge of the level and other parts of the ship. There are many knowledge giving devices and creatures on the ship that can be of great service to the would-be-traveler! Things like singing vines, computer screens, and peaceful intelligent creatures all aid the player in an environment that is not conducive to long life.

In the Starship Warden, the two dominant life forms are the Androids and the Wolfoids. The androids have infiltrated into every human society as shamans and have made themselves indispensable. This process gives them great power and allows them to use the human tribe to fight the mutated intelligences of the starship. The wolfoids, on the other hand, seek out other species and trade their considerable skill in metal working (mainly in the form of weapons) for knowledge and devices they otherwise do not possess. Both groups are aware of each other and seek the destruction of each other. The androids understand and use much of the vast technological power of the ship, but are hampered by lack of numbers and inbred handicaps. The wolfoids are numerous throughout the ship, but lack the knowledge of the androids. This lack in technology is partially negated by a deep understanding of the mutated life on the ship.

Many times during the battles between the wolfoids and the androids, player characters have aided one side or the other. This help has resulted in great rewards for those few that lived. One group of players recently killed four very important android scouts and naturally robbed the bodies of their duralloy shields and their color bands. This same group is aware that their shaman is not a human and have taken steps to invade the shaman's hut and gain some of his (its) power. Only time will reveal their success.