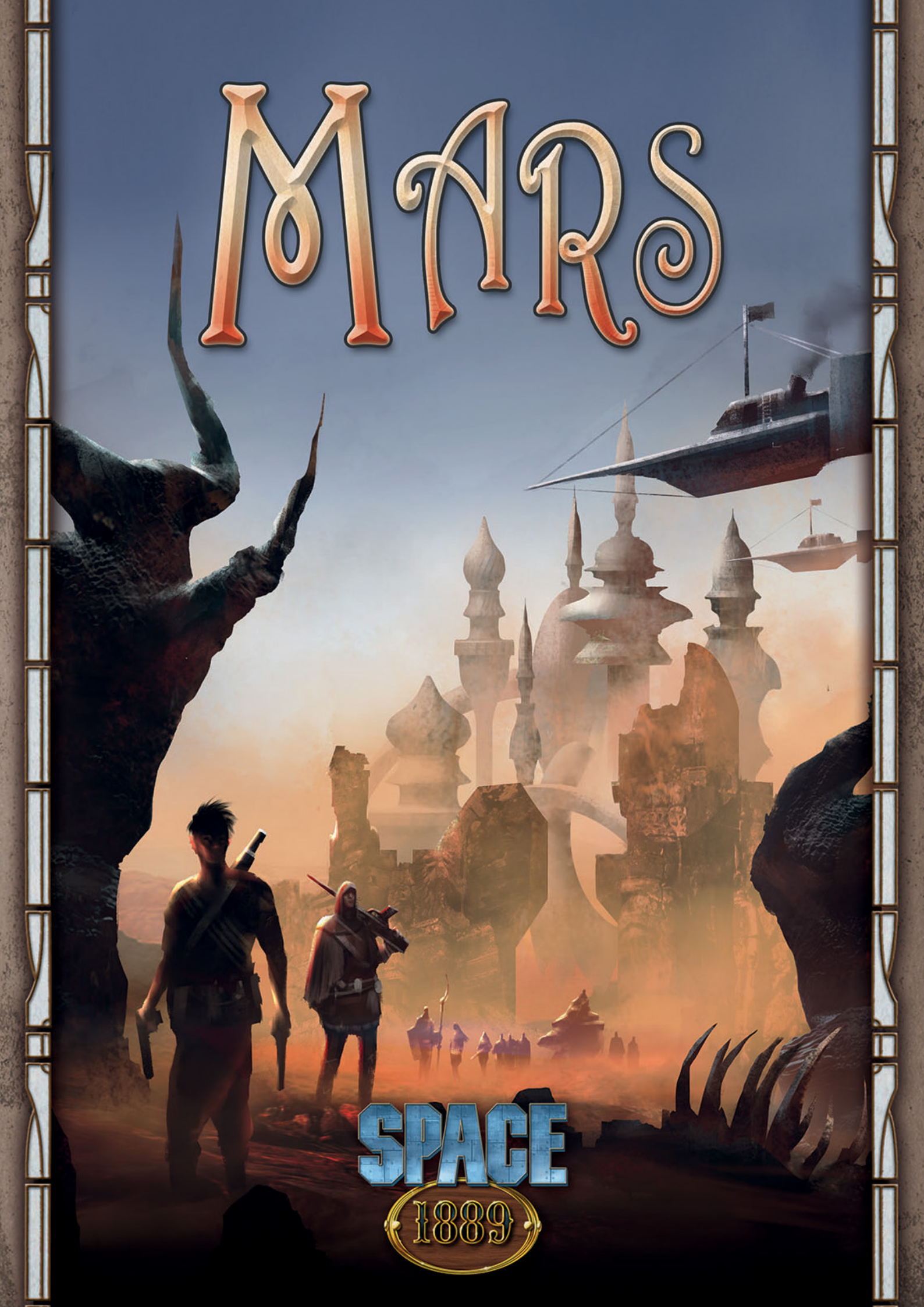


MARS

SPACE

1889



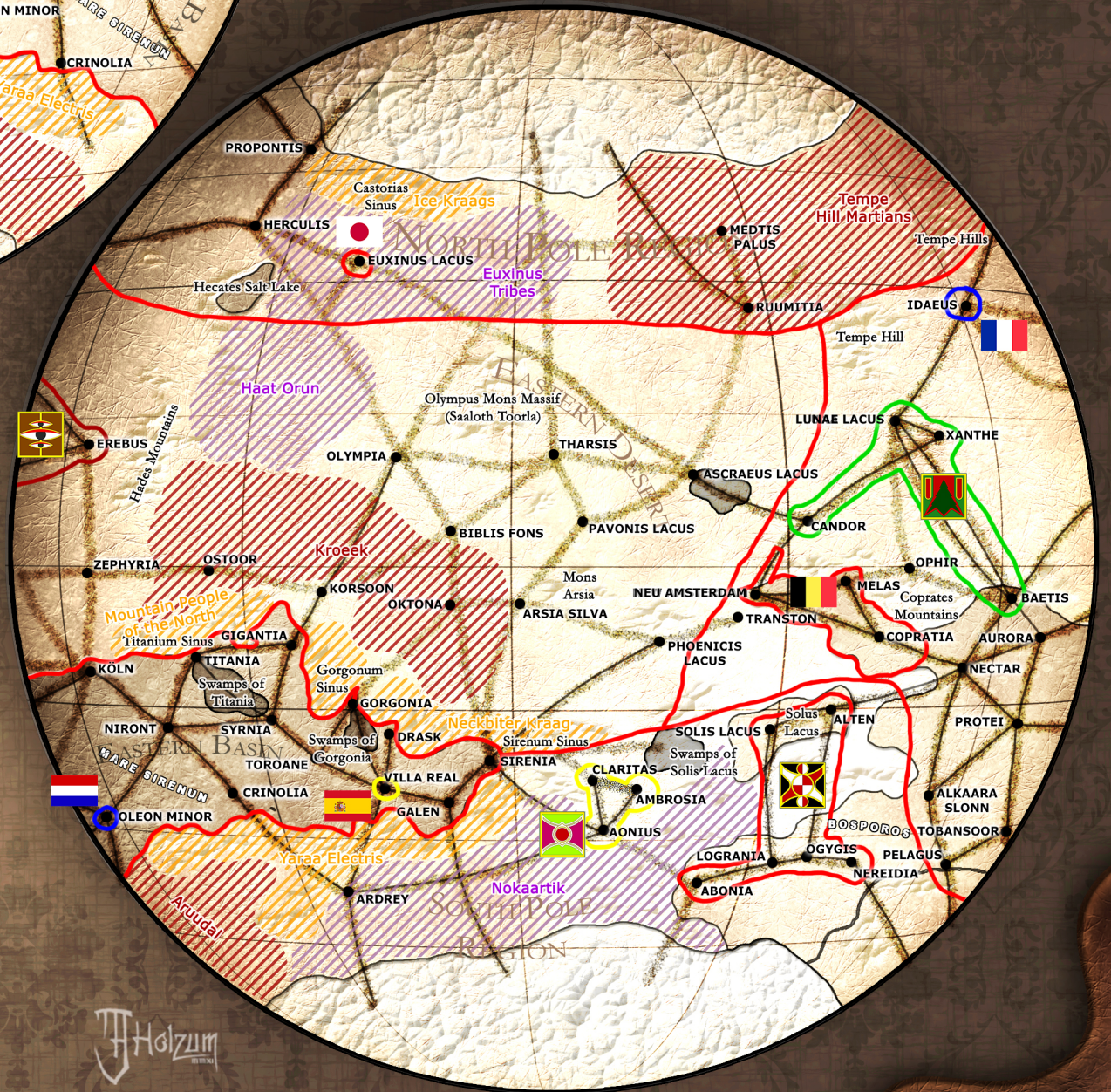
POLITICAL MAP OF MARS



-  OENOTRIAN EMPIRE
-  TOSSIANIAN EMPIRE
-  BOREOSYRTIS LEAGUE
-  BLOODY SQUARE
-  HYDRAULIC LEAGUE
-  GOLDEN TRIANGLE
-  LONG WOODS
-  DEAD RIVER CITIES



-  BRITISH (SYRTIS LAPIS)
-  BELGIANS (AIP) (COPRATES)
-  GERMANS (WEST DIOSCURIA)
-  FRENCH (IDAEUS FONIS)
-  RUSSIANS (HECATES LACUS)
-  JAPANESE (EUXINE LACUS)
-  USA (PRESENCE IN THYMIAMATA)
-  SIAMESE (PRESENCE IN NECTAR)
-  SPANISH (PRESENCE IN VILLA REAL)
-  DUTCH (PRESENCE IN KINSBERGEN)



Credits

Based on the original concept of Frank Chadwick

Editors-in-Chief:

Dominic Hladek, Stefan Küppers

Editor:

Dominic Hladeck

Editor of the English Translation:

Nicole Heinrichs

Written by:

Bjorn Beckert, Christian Bender, Niklas Forreiter, Dominic Hladeck, Stefan Küppers, Dennis Maciuszek, Daniel Neugebauer, Ralf Sandfuchs, Martin Schmidt, Ingo Siekmann, John Snead, Daniel U. Thibault

Translations by:

Bjoern Hake, with Jan Enseling

Special thanks for their ideas, critique, and contributions to:

James Cambias, Roger Carden, Tilman Hakenberg, Nicole Heinrichs, Uli Lindner, Nicolas Mendrek, Mháire Stritter, and Kieran Turley

Cover Artwork by:

Robin Blicker

Logo Design:

Arndt Drechsler, based on the original logo of the Space: 1889 Core Rulebook by GDW.

Interior Artwork by:

Markus Holzum, Daniel Jödemann, Juha Makkonen, Rich Longmore, Eric Lofgren, Mia Steingraber, Holger Kirste

English Language Editor & Proofreader:

Daniel U. Thibault

Index:

Dominic Hladeck, Nicole Heinrichs

Layout by:

Daniel Bruhmeier

Layout concept:

Ralf Berszuck

Space: 1889 is © 2018 Frank Chadwick. All rights reserved.

This edition is © 2018 Clockwork Publishing, under license of Frank Chadwick.

The Ubiquity Roleplaying System and logos are trademarks of Exile Game Studio, LLC. All rights reserved.

Reproduction without the written permission of the publisher is expressly forbidden, except for the purposes of reviews, and for blank character sheets, which may be reproduced for personal use only.

The mention of or reference to any company or product in these pages is not a challenge to the trademark or copyright concerned.

This product is a work of fiction. Any similarity to actual people, organizations, places, or events is purely coincidental.

This book contains mature content. Reader discretion is advised.



Table of Contents

Overview of Mars	5	The Northern Polar Region	114
The History of Mars	6	The Merchant Cities of the North	115
The Treasures of Mars	16	Japan and Euxinus Lacus	118
Art and Culture of Mars	21	The Hill Tribes of Tempe	120
Traveling to and on Mars	23	The Euxinus Tribes – The Ruin Nomads	121
The Martian Canals	25	The North Pole Barbarians of the Ice Kraags	122
Syrtaia – The Central Basin	29	The Southern Polar Region	124
The Crown Colony of Syrtis Lapis - The British on Mars	31	Gaaryan – The City of the Canal Keepers	125
The Oenotrian Empire - Progress through Tradition	41	The Urghuul – The Sentinels of the South	128
The Hellas-Trinacria City-states - Chessboard of Empires	45	Aruudal – The Eternal Hunters	129
The Riders of Nepenthes-Thoth	47	Nokaartik – The Restless of Thaumasia	130
The High Martians of the Astusapes - The Beastmen of Mars	49	Yaraa – The People of Noachis	131
 		The Bloody Square	132
The Western Basin	51	The Golden Triangle	133
The Tossian Empire	52	 	
Thymiamata - Star-Spangled Banner on a Distant Star	55	Flora and Fauna of Mars	135
The Client Cities – On Tossia’s Long Leash	57	Land-Dwelling Animals	135
AIP – The Belgian Occupation Zone on Mars	59	Aquatic Animals	147
The Rebels of the Coprates	63	Flying Animals	149
The Tribes of the South Wind	64	Flora	156
The Eastern Basin	66	Martian Technology	158
Hesperia	67	Telluric Energies	158
Memnonia	70	Crystal Technologies	159
The Swamp Martians	73	Martian Robots	163
The Lowland Martians	74	Martian Equipment	164
The Mountain People of the North	75	 	
 		Sample Characters	171
The Western Desert	76	Xeno-Archaeologist	172
The Boreosyrta League -		Tea Magnate	174
Scented Spices and Stinking Misery	77	Air Pirate	176
The Western Dioscuria Protectorate -		Mathematical Monk	178
The German Mars Colony	79	Wagon Master	180
The Wagon Masters of Meroe	82	Cold-land Barbarian	182
Kel Avashiim – The Warriors of Aeria	83	Duelist	184
The Ugly Horde of Eden	84	Tracker	186
Moab – Outcasts and Fire Jewels	85	Additional Rules for Flying Creatures	188
The Queln – The Sky People	86	Adventures on the Red Planet	188
Cydonia – Holy Ruins and Veiled Riders	87	 	
Meridiani Sinus and Sabeus Sinus	89	The Mysteries of Mars	190
 		The Ruins of Mars	190
The Eastern Desert	91	Technological Relics	193
The Desert Tribes	92	Organizations and Persons of Note	196
The Eremite Tribes of Tan-Puu	94	Wildlife and Natural Sites	200
Cities in the Sand	95	Forgotten Civilizations	202
The Dead River Cities – The Charon Confederation	97	Mysteries of the Moons of Mars	205
Hecates Lacus – Russians on Mars	99	 	
The Tharsis Mountains	102	The Emerald Waters	208
 		Scene 1 – Attack of the High Martians	208
The Green Vein	105	Scene 2 – In the Canal Village	212
Mare Acidalium – The Bowl of the Gods	106	Scene 3 – The Secret of the Emerald Waters	215
The Free Revolutionary People’s Republic		Scene 4 – The Return of the High Martians	217
Hihanahehuzz (Idaeus Fons)	108	Epilogue	219
The Long Woods – Xanthe	110	 	
The Empire of Zavaar	112	Index	220

Preface

Welcome to Mars!

Explore the first planet to be reached by ether travelers!

This is where Thomas Edison first found proof that mankind was not alone in the Etherverse, and that life existed on other planets. Almost two decades have passed since, and although Mars is considered a dying planet with a civilization that is now utterly dependent on water canals first dug tens of thousands of years ago, it is *the* colonial prize of the Space: 1889 solar system. All the great powers of Earth eagerly rush to stake their claims on Mars, some as brutal exploiters with an iron fist, others as cunning negotiators offering protection treaties. Precious resources form the basis of colonial trade, while Earth technology is far superior to that of the Martians and is upsetting the balance of power on the Red Planet.

Even back when Frank Chadwick and other authors first began to fill the original Space: 1889 roleplaying game with life, the focus was on the planet Mars. Countless adventure anthologies, descriptions of cities in the *Challenge* magazine, and source books on specific regions and cultures were published back then. These were joined by unofficial playing aides such as the *Transactions of the Royal Martian Geographical Society*. If one were to revisit these individual sources today, one would find a wide mosaic that offers a wellspring of (sometimes contradictory) information and details on some regions, while very little information exists on other regions of continental size and dozens of city-states, other than their mere names on a map.

My team of authors have thus worked hard and meticulously, and at times with difficulty, to collect, update, and consolidate all existing material for the volume you hold in your hands. In particular, we have instilled the “Terra Incognita” with new life in the form of lovingly detailed ideas and background material.

This volume will grant you an extensive overview of Mars, which is divided into eight great regions. Each of these holds its own setting focus, always listed first in the respective chapter. In addition, the empires and cultures of the colonial powers and the Martian people that define those regions are also described...

Whether you and your players will follow the colonial efforts of the British and take part in the colonial wars against the Oenotrian Empire in the *Central Basin*, or prefer to experience the *Eastern Basin* of Mars (almost) as though it were untouched by human colonization...

Whether you wish to fight as Martian rebels or human sympathizers against the criminal Belgian colonial administration in the *Western Basin*, or delve into the intrigues and trade deals of the “Tea Road” in the *Western Desert*...

Whether you wish to witness the planet dying first hand in the *Eastern Desert* or prefer to seek out the final hope of doomed Mars in the form of the *Green Vein*...

Whether you’d like to play a trapper or mercenary living by their own code of honor in the lawless *Northern Polar Region*, settling matters with your old trusty muzzle loader, or wish to play a fearless warrior in the *Southern Polar Region*, using blade and technology as awesome as magic to save damsels from the gruesome High Martians...

This book allows you to do all of this and more!

Besides descriptions on the regions, you will also find detailed descriptions and statistics for Martian *creatures*, technology and *equipment*, as well as eight ready-to-play *sample characters*, six of which are of Martian origin. You will also not be disappointed with the *Mysteries* on offer. These are located in the gamemaster’s chapter at the end of the book.

Throughout this book, you may find references that are marked with a corresponding symbol (☛). The noted page will provide more detailed information.

We have also marked some city-states as uncharted areas (⊕), which we will not detail further in this book or any future adventures or sourcebooks. These are for you to design to your own desires without needing to worry about contradicting official sources. Each region has a number of these marked cities.

We wish you great fun with this book, and hope you and your players will enjoy adventuring on the dying planet!

Dominic Hladeck, Frankfurt, December 2015



Overview of Mars

Mars - Planetary Data

Diameter: 4,200 miles or 6,794 km
Circumference: approx.. 13,795 miles or 21,343 km
Surface Area: 56 million sq mi or 144 million km²
Average Distance to the Sun: 142 million miles or 228 million km
Length of Year: 687 Earth days (668.5 sols)
Length of Day (Sol): 24 hours 37 minutes
Gravity: 90% of Earth's gravity
Moons: two (*Phobos* and *Deimos*)

"The dawn commences, and Mars rules the hour."

— Friedrich von Schiller, *Wallenstein*

The fourth planet from the Sun, and second smallest after Mercury, orbits our star at a distance of about 142 million miles (228 million kilometers). Even though its surface area is only equivalent to roughly a quarter of that of Earth, the land masses of both planets are similar in size because Mars has no oceans. The gravity of the smaller Mars even comes to a surprising 90% of that of its blue cousin. The air is breathable and similar in composition to that of Earth, though much drier.

After enticing humanity's dreams, the mysterious, dark red planet was finally visited in 1870 by Edison and claimed for mankind (see p. 15).

More details on the general geography and climate of Mars can be found in the **Core Rules**, starting p. 63.

The Polar Regions

The two poles of the planet are the last remaining places where large amounts of water—in the form of ice—can still be found. This is where the canals begin, built more than 20,000 years ago by the "canal builders" to supply the Martian cities with water. Without these canals, no civilization could support itself on the Red Planet. The rough and mountainous **Southern Polar Region** (p. 124) and the **Northern Polar Region** (p. 114) consist of the highlands around the respective poles and are marked by freezing cold and—similarly to Earth—long polar nights and days. The closer to the pole a region lies, the longer these phases last, up to several months in extreme cases. Depending on the season, clouds and precipitation can occur here. There are harsh and rough regions, with few settlements, such as the remote merchant cities in the far North or the few trade hubs of the southern polar steppes. Most of the inhabitants are High and Hill Martians, though, who live under harsh, but bearable conditions due to the existence of water here even outside the canals.

The Highlands

These areas were once the continental landmasses between the Martian seas. Today, they rise up as highlands from the dried-up seabeds, particularly in the northern hemisphere.

They are mostly vast *rocky deserts*, where Hill Martians live, who have adapted to this climate. Though the highlands are crisscrossed by canals, these are dried up in many regions, such as the **Eastern Desert** (p. 91), marked by buried cities and ruins, and the **Western Desert** (p. 76), which is the home of the Tea Road trade route. Today they are merely caravan roads where little water seeps from the ground, allowing for sparse plant growth.

The cold *mountains*, which lie higher again than the deserts, are primarily inhabited by the High Martians and their kraags. Here morning dew provides enough water to allow plants such as liftwood trees to grow.

While some of the highland regions are inhospitable deserts, some areas near active canals or mountains feature a microclimate that can be described as *savannah*, offering the bare minimum needed for survival, such as in the well-known Nepenthes-Thoth savannah.

There even exists a mixed region called the **Green Vein** (p. 105), where a tightly woven canal system and a comparatively small former sea, the *Mare Acidalium*, still maintain a rich vegetation, by Mars standards, and allow for pleasant living conditions. Here the canal cities lie close together, while in other highland regions the distances between them can grow quite long.

The Basins

Large parts of especially the southern hemisphere were once covered by a massive ocean. Today, this ocean has dried up completely and left behind sand and coral deserts. The civilization of the canal builders closely followed the receding water levels with their cities and canal building efforts back then, though, and thus today the former sea beds form the most closely settled regions with canals and canal cities, at least near the equator, as cities become rarer in general the closer to the desolate South Pole one travels. The Basins are thus mostly populated by Canal Martians.

The former ocean can be separated into three rough sub-regions, the **Central** (p. 29), **Western** (p. 51), and **Eastern** (p. 66) **Basins**. The Central and Western Basins in particular are marked by human colonization and the few larger Martian empires, while the Eastern Basin is still largely home to Canal Martian culture with as yet little human influence.

Phobos and Deimos - The Moons of Mars

(➡ p. 205)

General information on the two moons of Mars can be found in the **Core Rules** starting p. 99.

The History of Mars

Prehistory

According to the theory of the ages of planets, Mars formed even before Earth did, and settled into orbit behind the youngest planet, Mercury, young Venus, and Earth. The planetary prehistory is difficult to reconstruct for both Martian and Earth scientists, and is given little priority as the cultural and technological aspects of the ages of the canal builders and the Seldons appear more interesting. Only a few "Areologists" thus study this era and divide it into the following three periods:

Noachan Period (3-5 billion years ago¹)

After Mars was formed, the surface shaped itself into the three major regions still known today: The highlands dominating most of the northern hemisphere, the sea beds of the equator and the southern hemisphere, and the highlands around the South Pole. The massive mountain range of the Tharsis formed, as did the Hellas basin and the Noachan highlands at the South Pole, after which this period is named.

**4.6 billion – 541 million BC: Precambrian (Earth Primordial Age).
4.6 billion years – 4 billion BC: Hadean: Earth's surface solidifies, atmosphere forms, volcanoes, oceans.**

Hesperian Period (1.5-3 billion years ago)

The areological Mesozoic was marked by seismic activity and lava flows, which created vast steppes such as the eponymous Hesperia basin. The flat Elysium region, natural trenches as well as huge river valleys and seas also formed in this period.

4 billion – 2.5 billion BC: Archaeozoic: "Primordial Soup" and beginning of life.

Amazonian Period (less than 1.5 billion years ago)

In this most recent areological age, the volcanoes of the Tharsis region formed. Their lava created new, wide steppes, such as the eponymous Amazonia.

¹In 1889, radio-activity has not yet been discovered, and as a consequence geologists are unable to accurately date geological layers. Various estimation methods are used and accurate datation is an unending scientific debate. The *sequence* of geological eras is fairly well established, on the other hand.

**2.5 billion – 541 million BC: Proterozoic: Beginning of animal life.
541 million – 252 million BC: Paleozoic: Life in the oceans, later insects, amphibians, cephalopods, plant life on land. The era ends with a mass extinction of life.
252 million – 66 million BC: Mesozoic: Age of the dinosaurs, first mammals and birds. The era ends with the extinction of the dinosaurs.**

Prehistory

(more than 50 million years ago,
→ see p. 202)

Scientists suspect that Mars was once a thriving planet, similar to Earth, with about 40% of its surface covered in water. The biosphere was rich and diverse and there were large, dinosaur-like ancestors of today's reptiles, many of them water-dwelling.

Few relics of this time survive, which is why almost no one knows that the *First People of Mars* inhabited the planet back then. Millions of years before even the High Martians, they created the first advanced civilization on the Red Planet.

**66 million – 2.5 million BC: Cenozoic: After the dinosaur extinction, birds and mammals dominated the land masses.
About 2.6 million years ago: Quaternary (Pleistocene): Cold and warm ages alternate.
Beginning of the early stone age (Paleolithic) in Africa through the first use of tools by the genus Homo (Homo habilis, Homo erectus).
600,000 BC: Beginning of the early Stone Age (Paleolithic) in central Europe.**

Pre-Brifadon

(about 33,000 BC)

The by now aged Mars dries up more and more. The once rich biodiversity declines, though many genes continue to be passed on.

**200,000 BC: First Homo sapiens in Africa.
From 130,000 BC: Mesolithic: Especially associated with Neanderthals and hunter-gatherers. Bifaces used as tools.
From 111,000 BC: Beginning of the most recent ice age.
70,000 BC: Homo sapiens reaches other continents (Cro-Magnon man).
From 40,000 BC: Late Stone Age. Associated with modern man. First cave paintings, knife blades.
40,000-35,000 BC: "Châtelperronian" culture in Western Europe: Associated with Neanderthals and possibly influenced by Cro-Magnon man. Bifaces, blades, bone ornaments.**

Brifanoon, the Age of Water (33,000 BC to 23,000 BC)

Though Mars had been dry and infertile up until now, a sudden climate change (a warm age) began to melt the polar ice caps. Large parts of Mars once again became fertile.

Time of Change - Martian Early Stone Age (Neolithic Martian, 33,000 BC to 32,000 BC)

For a few thousand years, the lifeforms experienced rapid evolution: Recessive genes ensure that the very species we now know today came into being.

The culture of the early Martians was roughly comparable to that of Earth's *Stone Age*: They were nomadic or semi-settled hunters and gatherers and performed animal husbandry. They possessed stone, bone and more rarely wooden tools. A few findings and legends suggest that primitive liftwood rafts were used to travel great distances. There are theories that even now High Martian cultures arose that were then wiped out through floods and migrations in the chaos of the returning waters. Their descendants therefore retreated into the high mountains and became degenerate there.

Late Crystalline Age (Neocrystallicum)

In many ways, this age resembled Earth's *Iron Age*, when advanced cultures developed and great empires formed. A significant difference was the dearth of metals, which is why metal mining and refining were sidelined by other resources and technologies. Though iron tools were built, their crystal and glass cousins were far more common: Because of the existence of special crystals that likely date back to the First People and which have kept regrowing since then, primitive lens and crystal technology arose quickly. Sunfire mirrors were built as weapons, and light and heat sources made from natural crystals were invented. A Martian lens grinder or crystal farmer was as important to their village as a blacksmith was on Earth. Electricity and solar energy were discovered early, though initially they were treated as mystical powers. Declarations of godly powers were made, similar to Earth druids and shamanism. This is likely the source of the idea of a *God at the Heart of the World*—the creator of all crystals. There were also antique technical devices that were powered by muscles or crystals, as well as simple machines, steam engines, and clockwork devices.

The Martian Industrial Age - The Crystalline Revolution (27,000 BC to 25,000 BC)

As empires fell and entire peoples migrated, it can be assumed that there occurred a time on Mars akin to the "Dark Ages" of the early Earth medieval times, during which parts of the accumulated knowledge and scientific progress were lost. This then led to an age of new beginnings, comparable to Earth's *renaissance*, *modern age*, and *industrial age*.

39,000–29,000 BC: "Aurignacian" culture of Homo sapiens in West, Central, and Eastern Europe: bone arrowheads and spear tips, bone blades, miniature sculptures such as beast men and "Venus" figurines, bone flutes, cave paintings.

33,000–25,000 BC: Gravettian culture in large parts of Europe: Flint tools, bows, spear throwers and other wooden weapons, peak of cave paintings, ivory figurines, burned clay (such as "Venus of Willendorf") and stone, reliefs on cave walls.

First Advanced Cultures (32,000 BC to 27,000 BC)

Advanced cultures on Mars formed long before on Earth. There were tribes, great empires, cultures, and languages that are forgotten today. Mars was, just like Earth, a collection of empires and peoples who each had their own world views and whose expansion was curtailed by natural boundaries, beyond which lay new land, strange environments, or enemies.

Early Crystalline Age (Paleocrystallicum)

Beside the nomadic tribes, settled tribes also formed, similar to Earth's *Bronze Age*. Cities were founded and empires were organized. The waters were traveled by sail and by oar, agriculture began and animals were domesticated, in particular rumet breehrs and gashants. Wind, waves, and the muscles of Martians and animals were used to power machines. Metalsmithing and mining occurred, but even back then resources were limited. More commonly, mining was done to search for crystalline structures, whose natural properties, such as radiating heat or light, were used without refinement. Thus, this age was called the *early crystalline age*.

Quasi-religious knowledge turned to science, and resources were exploited on a large, industrial scale. While oil and coal were used as fossil fuels, their scarcity prevented them from dominating the economy the way they did on Earth. Instead, it was crystal technology that powered this developmental surge: Science succeeded in developing means of synthesizing specific crystals that were made of the same materials as natural crystals, but were grown from "crystal seeds" in large tubs filled with mineral solutions. Liftwood farming and other regenerative materials and energy sources such as spider hound silk (p. 168) and solar energy were also utilized.

Advances were made in the natural sciences and electricity was largely understood. New breakthroughs were made constantly on Mars in the fields of physics, biology, evolutionary theory, mathematics, astronomy, and chemistry. Advanced crystal lenses allowed for observations of stellar phenomena.

The Evolution of the Martians

Today's people of Mars all share the same roots. While the idea of evolution is still new on Earth and has yet to find traction, the Martians are well aware of the concept.

Wuraag Kawaama - The "Martian Neanderthal"

The first hint of a shared ancestor is a being called—as an analogy to the sensational find by Ekrath and Mettman in 1856—the “Martian Neanderthal”. However, on Mars, some specimens still survive to this day in caves. Their intelligence matches that of a highly-developed ape, though their bodies show bat-like traits: Leathery wings stretch from their clawed hands to their bodies, and the ears are notably pointy. Their gait is bent, but they are also capable of flight, walking on their talons, and even of sleeping while hanging upside down from the ceiling. Their calls are loud and squeaky. Some scientists believe (or wish) these to be a form of language. How these animals are connected to the Martian people is as of yet poorly researched. Charles Darwin posited in his latest book, *The Power of Movement on Mars* (1880), that they are a primitive ancestor of the High Martians.

The Primitive High Martians

The ancestors of the three Martian species developed in the span of the pre-Brifanoon, possibly from the wuraag Kawaama. They were similar in appearance to the High Martians and were capable of flight, an important trait on the dying planet: It was the only way to cross the vast deserts, traveling from water source to water source.

Divergence of the Hill Martians

During the Brifanoon, the Age of Water, the Martian species began to separate. While the High Martians either remained almost unchanged in build or degenerated, the Hill Martians diverged first. This extreme evolutionary leap occurred over just a few millennia.

The Hill Martians most likely lost their ability to fly because of changes in nutrition and in their environment: During the dry pre-Brifanoon they had lived in the high-

lands, breathed the air there, and absorbed nutrients from liftwood trees into their metabolisms. Their descendants who now live in the water rich steppes grow their own plants, eat the animals of the lowlands, and breathe different air. They became settled, which is why the loss of flight was not a crucial disadvantage. It is also suspected that the Martian ability to fly has a side effect in the form of heightened aggression.

Divergence of the Canal Martians

Later during the Brifanoon, the Canal Martians developed from the Hill Martians (though the canals weren't built until later). The ability to fly had already been lost, meaning this was a much smaller evolutionary leap. Even so, life in the cities brought changes that were reflected in their evolution. It should be noted that Canal Martians and Hill Martians can breed true with one another, and they belong to the same genus, though they are of different races. Some tribes, such as the Wagon Masters of Meroe (p. 82) include many 'half breeds' of both races. Earth scientists like to draw comparisons to white Europeans and black Africans.

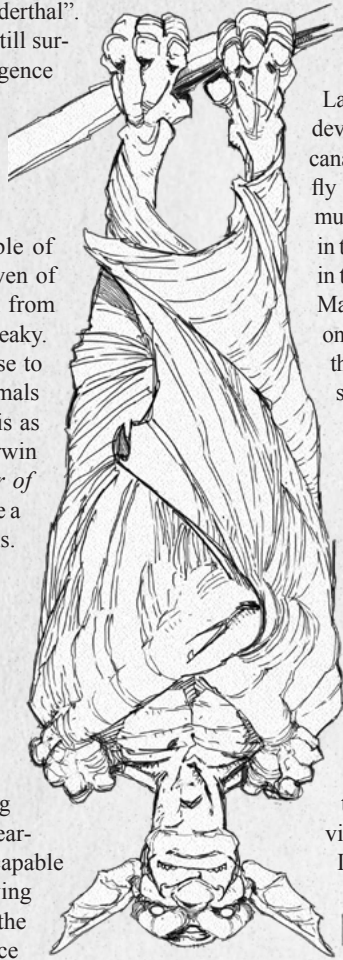
Excursion: The Martian Atlantis

The common theory of a straight line of evolution from the Stone Age High Martians to the Hill Martian hunters and gatherers to the advanced civilizations of the Canal Martians fits easily into the world views of many scientists.

In the basins, however, there are archaeological sites that unequivocally date back to the dry times of the *pre-Brifanoon*, having been submerged during the Brifanoon, only to resurface in the *naBrifanoon*.

They indicate the existence of an advanced High Martian culture during the pre-Brifanoon: Artfully carved pillars, mathematically sophisticated city layouts, foundations of architecturally audacious buildings, and much more.

Furthermore, High Martian myths tell of the “Rattabraxian” empire, which humans have mockingly come to call the “Martian Atlantis”. These myths tell of the destruction of the empire at the hands of the gods (as punishment, out of fear of competition, or as a test to force the strong to adapt and survive). Sometimes a flood was the chosen catastrophe, at other times the “weaker offspring tribes” were made to rise up against the High Martians.



Martian Modern and Information Ages (25,000 BC to 23,000 BC)

During this time the technological advancement surpassed that of Earth during the 19th century, possibly even that of the early 21st century. The population grew massively, Canal Martians lived in metropolises, and the Hill Martians formed many large steppe and seafaring nations. Mars was globalized: Land and sea trade routes connected all of Mars, and liftwood enabled air travel.

Crystal technology took the place of information technology: Crystals for observing distant places or recording sounds and images were as common as paired stones that allowed for Mars-wide communication, and there were thought crystals that allowed knowledge and entertainment to be passed on straight into receiving minds. Even virtual reality was possible. For a brief time, Martian society used technology for entertainment.

Further areas of study were ether travel (though not on a large scale), medicine, and biotechnology. Modern mass transportation such as subways or vacuum tubeways, as well as flying liftwood trains between the metropolises based on telluric energies (p. 158) were employed. True robot technology (p. 163) became possible thanks to memory crystals.

naDrifanoon

(23,000 BC to 13,000 BC)

Just as a unified Martian civilization reached its acme, the unthinkable happened, something only a few scientists mocked as doomsayers had warned of: The water began to recede and gather at the poles of the planet.

The Time of Doubt (23,000 BC to 22,000 BC)

When this millennium began, disbelief reigned at first, denial and refusal to accept this climate change. Then the wars came, over the remaining water and resources. Everything indicated that life on Mars would end. In the beginning, the Nations of Mars each worked on their own escapes. The rural population fled to the cities, as the basis for farming was being lost. The cities grew and grew, and many nations became de facto city-states. The first cities began relocating to what had been the sea bottom to follow the receding water, which is why the basins today have a higher density of canal cities.

Pre-Canal Technology

One of the first hopes for salvation was the development of manned ether travel. Several nations attempted to find ways to flee to other worlds. Many Martians from the highlands and hills outside the cities saw this as the only way and sent generation ships out into space, whose fate remains unknown to this day. Some managed to escape. Other nations hoarded precious resources like liftwood

and sought solutions in crystal technology and telluric energies. Synthetic liftwood extract enabled inventions such as the lifting serum (p. 168). But weapons technology was also unavoidably improved, leading to the design of battle robots, the emergence of fire lances (p. 160), and the unleashing of biological warfare.

Age of the Canal Builders (22,000 BC to 14,000 BC)

What began as a hesitant movement amongst a few technocrats eventually grew to a mass initiative: The cities and remaining steppe empires began to pool their resources to commence the millennia long effort of constructing a canal network. Soon peace returned. *Sun barques* flew through the air and dug the canals with “the gods’ gleaming eyes”. A utopian civilization arose, in which everyone strove towards the same goal. The salvation of the planet was soon seen as a religious and philosophical duty. This meant that projects aimed at leaving the planet could no longer be justified: All efforts *had* to be directed towards building canals.

22,000–18,000 BC: Solutrean culture in Western Europe: invention of the bone sewing needle, drawings and reliefs of animals, jewelry such as earrings with developed artistic understanding.

Canal Technology

In addition to widespread canal building efforts and solar energy implementation, early terraforming attempts were made. Technology at first followed a ‘positive’ path with little focus on weapons development, aiming instead to produce powerful tools and highly advanced medicine. During this time, Mars was full of cloudships, powered by steam engines fueled by the stored solar heat of crystals. Later developments even allowed them to fly in the dark. Martian settlements possessed large, petal-like arrangements of solar collectors that gathered solar energy into storage crystals during the day.

The efforts to develop methods of extracting more energy from crystals led to the discovery of telluric currents beneath the surface of the planet. More powerful telluric power taps were built next to the solar mirror farms, each piercing more than a thousand feet deep into the Martian bedrock. The geography of telluric currents was used in city and route planning during the canal building efforts. Telluric engines powered the sun barques, cities were built on the nexus points of telluric streams to tap into them for power. Crystal technology with its widespread thought crystals allowed for incredible data storage and powerful applications: besides communications, the preservation of knowledge and the transmission of skills were on the agenda, while robot technology played a key role in building and controlling machinery. This was the peak of Martian technology and an age of wonders during which the Martians were able to preserve the knowledge of their greatest scientists inside eternal crystals. Entertainment technology soon fell into disfavor, though.

End of the naBrifanoon and the War of the Gods (14,000 BC to 13,000 BC)

The cities had been connected by canals through great generations-long efforts. The shared work was almost complete and had taken everything, but the naBrifanoon inexorably reached its conclusion. The common goal had unified the people, but now, with the final canal built, this perspective was lost (➡ see p. 194).

Another age of war began. The *War of the Gods* (13,000 BC) shook the world with *celestial fires* and utterly obliterated two of the most influential Martian cities (➡ see p. 190). Martian culture was greatly diminished and much knowledge and technology was lost.

15,000–10,000 BC: Paleolithic and the most recent ice age are coming to an end. First settled societies form in the Middle East, following the invention of agriculture and animal husbandry (Neolithic revolution).

Post-Canal Technology

As civilization collapsed during the “War of the Gods” in the “Age of the 1,000 World Wars”, technologies were repurposed into devastating weapons used to wipe each other out. Their destructive capabilities rivaled that of atomic weapons, but were derived from crystal technologies and, in the beginning, telluric energies. Soon this knowledge was lost, though. Solar barques became warships, canal building crystal tools became death rays, telluric energy was converted into city destroying bombs. The most advanced city-states were still able to use solar energy, thanks to their crystals and solar mirrors. A new wave of space exploration began, as many saw the final end of Mars and sought to flee while they still had the technology.

Age of the 1,000 World Wars (13,000 BC to 3,000 BC)

Many further wars followed the War of the Gods. For 10,000 years, bloodshed ravaged the face of Mars. More and more knowledge was lost, so while the earlier wars were still fought with modern weaponry, the final battles resorted to gunpowder and blades. It was a post-apocalyptic era with greatly fluctuating levels of science and technology. Some technologies only now found their peak in the form of weaponry, leading to some of the most fearsome artifacts and bioweapons ever seen.

From 10,000 BC: Mesolithic.

Time of the Three Nameless Empires (13,000 BC to 10,000 BC)

Though it is a widespread belief, Seldon was not the first conqueror to unify Mars. His empire was simply the final and most famous one. During the Age of the 1,000 World Wars there have been many empires that almost managed to control all of Mars. Unfortunately, information on Mars before Seldon is rather sketchy. Though there are documents about it, the confusing extent of Martian chronicling efforts often makes it difficult to follow the chain of events.

We don't even know the names of the three oldest great empires. Even the order of the three great empires is debated by Martian historians. Earth scientists have only investigated Seldon's empire, as the quantity of sources on this final Martian empire is particularly great. Therefore, little is known on Earth about the Age of the 1,000 World Wars.

From 9,500 BC: Preceramic Neolithic in the Levant, Anatolia, the Balkans: ceramic, first soft precious metal working.

Dynasty of the Star Born (10,000 BC to 9,000 BC)

This great empire lasted for 900 years and was one of the most stable empires of the pre-Seldon epoch. The Dynasty of the Star Born is—depending on which dating one accepts—the third or fourth great empire after the canal builders and was ruled by a group of space travelers returned from the Ether or by noble astrologers—records are inconclusive on this point. The few mad legends of this empire speak of rulers that governed from floating platforms and “didn't have their capital upon the holy surface of Mars”, but were still sons of the canal builders. There are also records that during this time floating metal was used in ship construction, instead of liftwood. At first the Star Born are said to have ruled justly. But their caste succumbed more and more to inbreeding in later generations, and their rule became exceedingly gruesome and arbitrary. Many myths speak of a demigod called the “Green Hero”, who slew the last Great Emperor of the Star Born and ended their dynasty forever. If the location information from these legends is taken at face value, the final battle between the Green Hero and the Great Emperor must have taken place on Jupiter's moon Ganymede. Modern historians consider this to be nonsense and place the battle near what today is called Moeris Lacus.

Collapse of the Achievements (9,000 BC to 5900 BC)

Sources from this time are rare and historians are trying to connect what data points can be found. Everything was marked by decay and collapse, though there were short phases during which smaller cultural and technological high points were achieved. There were

temporary city alliances, which used old technology to secure an advantage against their enemies and were able to rule certain canal routes across regions comparable to today's Oenotrian or Tossian empires. But Mars continued to dry up, while technology and knowledge seeped away along with the water. Canals were lost to the sands, old pumping stations ceased to function, cities were abandoned.

Loss of Technology

While the earlier wars were conducted with advanced technology, a steep decline began after the Dynasty of the Star Born. It is known that this dynasty brought one last push for technology, but three thousand years later, during the age of the *Moon Empire*, a tribe of horsemen with steel blades, rifles, and howitzers were able to forge a great empire in battle. In between, scholars and treasure hunters time and again uncovered small fragments of antique technology. A few of them even learned to understand and replicate them, but most simply used the uncovered devices until they broke. Soon, still-functioning devices were more likely to be worshipped as holy relics. When they ceased to function, they'd be destroyed, discarded, or put away in vaults. The ability to store or generate electricity was lost, let alone that of creating synthetic crystals. Even knowledge of metallurgy declined, which made it difficult to mine natural crystals. In the end, all that was left were oil and gas lamps, muzzle loaders such as muskets and cannons, and those canals that hadn't been lost to the sands as the last lifelines.

includes a strong belief in legends, and there are many examples of remnants of old technology being mistaken for the stuff of tales of magic, monsters, and acts of the gods. Somehow, from this another great empire arose eventually.

From 5,600 BC: Neolithic beings in Europe.

~5,000 BC: Copper age as a bridge between Neolithic and bronze age in Egypt, Southern Europe and West Asia. Copper mining, basic foundations of metallurgy.

5,000–3,500 BC: Danube civilization in Europe, first advanced culture of Europe.

4,500–4,000 BC: Copper age, Egyptian "Badari" culture.

4,000–3,000 BC: Pre-dynastic age of Egypt.

9,000 to 6,500 BC: Maglemosian culture during the Mesolithic in northern Europe: arrowheads, first boats, amber jewelry.

Moon Empire (6,000 BC to 5900 BC)

The Moon Empire was one of the few successful attempts by the Hill Martians to seize power on Mars. The so called "Moon Emperor", whose name isn't recorded anywhere, succeeded, according to legend, in uniting all of the nomad tribes of Mars and claimed high tributes from the city-states. The Moon Empire only lasted for two generations—on this point the records are unanimous—then it collapsed amidst succession struggles. Interestingly, the Moon Empire seems to have included a nomad tribe, extinct today, which traveled in aerial flyers. The Wagon Masters of Meroe claim to be descendants of this tribe. It is not known why this empire was called "Moon Empire".

Martian Dark Age (6,000 BC to 3,500 BC)

This epoch is called the Dark Age, and it resembles the early medieval times of Europe: The collapse of the last great empire left a power vacuum, mass migrations occurred, and no further great empire is known to have arisen during these times. The conflicts became more regional, everything that remained being fiercely fought over. Rarely did small empires rise from the mass of minor city-states. The mysticism of the contemporary sources

Sacred Federation of the Thrice Holy Union (3,500 BC to 3,000 BC)

The Sacred Federation is the direct predecessor of the Seldon Empire. It was actually a theocratic alliance of cities ruled by a council of priests, which managed to seize power on Mars through countless holy wars. Even though the technology of the Federation was barely higher than that of the Seldon Empire of today's Canal Martians, the Federation did possess a kind of superweapon in its early days, whose exact nature remains a mystery today. The Federation attempted to introduce a single, Mars-wide religion, which failed in the end and led to its downfall. When Seldon took the throne, the Federation had once again shrunk to a smaller state amongst many and was finally annihilated by Seldon II at Biblis Fons. The religion of the priests' council appears to have been an antique precursor to the modern belief in the Canal Keepers.

3,500–600 BC: Elam in Persia.

From 3,300 BC: Cuneiform script in Mesopotamia and high culture of the Sumerians.

From 3,300 BC: Bronze Age in Palestine.

From 3,200 BC: Egyptian Hieroglyphs.

Around 3,100 BC: Unification of Upper and Lower Egypt.

From 3,000 BC: Bronze Age in Mesopotamia.

The Seldon Empire (3,000 BC to 1 AD)

The son of King Seldon I of the mountain kingdom of Gaaryan, Seldon II, conquered a large part of Mars. His rule was based on the achievements of his father and derived its authority from an oracle that foretold of his conquest of the world. His army and canal ship fleet subjected city-state after city-state and either integrated them into his empire or destroyed them. Cooperative rulers were pronounced canal princes. Many rulers today can still trace their mandate to an almost 5,000-year-old oath to Seldon.

Seldon sent construction ships to dredge sand from canals to facilitate supplying his army, ordered dams to be refurbished, overflow basins to be cleaned, and locks and pumps to be repaired or replaced. A third of all canals in the basin were restored and reopened, and trade blossomed once more. But Seldon was never content and sought to conquer all of Mars. Reassured by the oracle, he took great risks to life and limb as he believed himself invulnerable. At the peak of his power, exhaustion and disease brought him down, and he was buried in his capital of *Stafrana* (Syrtis Major). Countless technological marvels of his time are said to be buried alongside him in a crypt long forgotten by now, where “his gaze shall ever be towards the stars”.

Seldon forged the final great Empire of Mars—and the one that endured the longest. His dynasty expanded upon his fame and ruled until Seldon LXIX (69). The empire was held together by a web of fealty oaths, meaning every canal prince had to personally pledge themselves to each new Seldon. The empire waxed and waned depending on its ruler at the time, but the cycle continued and there was always one central ruler who kept the empire together.

Seldon's Heirs (3,000 BC to 2,700 BC)

Seldon's son and successor, Seldon III, administered the empire and improved the canal system, but was less ambitious than his father. Trade and wealth grew under his rule, new buildings were constructed and rich tributes were collected. The first of many imperial palaces was erected in Syrtis Major.

His successor also improved the canals and increasingly transformed this endeavor into a religious task. The cult of the Canal Keepers, founded under Seldon II, became a unifying, empire-wide religion (though it accepted other religions beside it). Countless temples were built, especially along the canals.

3,000–2,700 BC: Early Dynastic Period of Egypt.
2,900 BC: First Mesopotamian ziggurats.
3,000–900 BC: Early pre-classic of the Mayans: permanent settlements and agriculture.
2,800–1,800 BC: Harappa or Indus culture in India with geometric city building, trade, agriculture, and artistic crafts.
From 2,700 BC: Bronze Age in Egypt.

The Age of Rediscovery (2,700 BC to 2,200 BC)

Seldon VII (7) received the nickname “the discoverer”, as under his rule much of the lost ancient knowledge was rediscovered. It is said his envoys could “speak words that could kill” and had “wands that hurled lightning flashes”. *Seldon XVII* (17) banished his enemies into the “maw of heaven”, which is believed to mean either onto the ice or to the Martian moons. Many Martian historians believe this quote to mark the beginning of Seldon space exploration, which at first led to the two moons of Mars.

2,700 BC: Old Kingdom of Egypt, the first Egyptian pyramids.
2,500–2,000 BC: The megalithic structure of Stonehenge is built.
2,400–1,800 BC: The Gilgamesh epic takes form.

Science and technology flourished once more in this “renaissance”. Lost knowledge of the canal builders was recovered and space travel was possible—though today this is seen as a myth. New automatons and inventions such as crystal sun mirror weapons were redesigned from old schematics, liftwood ships once more traveled the cloudless skies, and even a few secrets of telluric energy were rediscovered. Countless canal sections were reopened; pumping stations were replaced or repaired. A few individual robots were even put back into use.

Ancient Ether Travelers? (← see p. 203)

During this Martian age of rediscovery, it is possible that ether travel was rediscovered on Mars and that a first contact between the Martians and the advanced cultures of Earth might have occurred. Some pseudoscientists claim that the first Egyptian pyramids, the Mesopotamian ziggurats, and Stonehenge are signs of such contact. They explain the rise of so many advanced cultures and the surges in science, fine crafts, and technology with this thesis of the ancient ethernauts.

Age of Wealth (2,200 BC to 1,700 BC)

Seldon XVII (17) was immensely rich, so rich that it is said his crypt contains a small statue of every single one of his subjects. *Seldon XXII* (22) is said to have possessed flying palaces, lined with fire jewels, and later the wife of *Seldon XXVI* (26) ruled in his stead and brought further wealth to the empire. Decadence and absolutism eventually resurged and tensions grew between the empire and the more down to earth Hill Martians.

Everything was defined by an overemphasis on artistry and displayed wealth. Ether vessels and large aerial flyers were built, based on solar, crystal, and fine clockwork technologies. In many places decadence and resentment against the moralizing Canal Keepers religion grew. But the Seldons of the time did not brook any criticism. The decadence reached a peak when *Seldon XXX* (30) ordered a petty canal built to supply one of his leisure palaces with water. This cut off the water for an entire city-state and condemned its inhabitants to die of thirst. He was later shot in rage with a fire lance by an unknown Canal Keeper priest. This priest did not just condemn the needless deaths of these subjects,

but also declared this intervention in the canals as heresy against the canal builders.

2,200–800 BC: Bronze Age in central Europe.

2,200–1,700 BC: Oasis or Oxus culture in central Asia with fine pottery and metal working, knowledge of mathematics and geometry.

2,100–1,800 BC: Middle Kingdom of Egypt.

2,100–1,500 BC: Erlitou culture in China with palace building and bronze working.

Technology of the Seldon Empire

In matters of science and technology, the age of Seldon was a time of rediscovery of fragments of ancient knowledge, instead of the development of new ideas. Technicians and engineers relearned the use of simple crystal technologies, but even repairs proved very difficult. Even the most brilliant scholars did not understand telluric energy and mistook it for pure myth or magic.

The greatest achievement was the restoration of canals lost to the sands and the repair of damaged aqueducts, broken pumps, and dilapidated lock gates. These efforts were undertaken with simple tools: Shovels, buckets, and screw galleys for cargo transport, all overseen by Martians with basic knowledge in engineering. The number of operational canals increased by more than 25% and the rebuilding of a dozen ruined cities began. In the ruins, scholars and engineers made new discoveries, recovering more knowledge.

Fire lances and heat rays were repaired and served as weapons of conquest in Seldon's army. They melted rock and glass and burned canal boats, even if only during the daylight hours. In this, they were more powerful than any other weapon of the age.

Age of the Wars of Technology (1,500 BC to 700 BC)

After a mad and paranoid *Seldon XXXI* (31) ordered many priests killed in the wake of his father's murder, his son *Seldon XXXII* (32) raged even more furiously, after killing his own father with a fire lance while under the influence of a thought crystal. In a bizarre twist of shame, he began to try and frame technology as "the Temptation of the Worm". His reign of terror was brought to a violent end, and his trusted advisors were buried alive alongside him in the desert. An age of warfare followed.

Cults of Technology

Technologies had remained functional over millennia, until the reign of *Seldon XXXI*, for he ordered their destruction, had manuscripts burned and technicians executed. Many of the "Cults of Technology" were pushed underground, and a few of these rebels preserved knowledge of weapons and warfare technology. Uprisings saw aerial flyers burned and buildings turned to ash, so even civilians eventually began to destroy weapons and technology in outrage over their destructive potential. There was an atmosphere of widespread distrust leading to outright civil war between those for and against technology. Thus, apocalyptic cults arose, whose traditions strongly resembled the Worm cults of today; a few of them found refuge with the High Martians.

More than once, such cults tried to bring about the final end of Mars through the use of ancient artifacts, causing disastrous catastrophes in the process. *Seldon XXXIX* (39) was killed in a 'hellfire' wrought by his enemies.

The moderate cults of technology avoided being banned by trying to be respectfully critical of the strict anti-technology measures of the Seldons, although they were involved in secret machinations behind the scenes. During the reign of *Seldon XLI* (41) this came to a head with the appearance of an 'anti-Seldon'.

Social, scientific, or technological advancements were limited to underground work in this age, more or less strictly outlawed depending on the local government. For a while, the Hill Martians engaged in technology smuggling between the cities, a time during which many caches of crystal technology and devices were gathered, some of which now lie lost in the desert sands, awaiting rediscovery.

1,700–1,200 BC: Hittite empire in the Middle East: steel forging.

1,700–600 BC: Assyrian empire.

1,500–1,000 BC: New Kingdom of Egypt.

1,500–400 BC: Olmec culture in Mexico.

1,000–774 BC: Phoenician city-states ruled by Tyros: maritime travel.

900–400 BC: Middle Preclassic Maya: Settlements throughout the Maya territories, stone temples, highest known Maya pyramid in El-Mirador.

Age of the Ruling Priests (700 BC to 100 BC)

Seldon LVII (57) ended the wars through wise decrees and an end to the prohibitions. After a life of contemplation, he abdicated in his old age, leaving the peaceful Canal priests to rule in his stead and retreating into the desert to live as a lone hermit. Seldon's followers became the *Seheldonnar* after his death (the Veiled People of Cydonia, p. 87).

A high-ranking Canal Keeper priest and relative of his took the throne as *Seldon LVIII* (58) and thus for the first time consolidated the offices of the Seldon and that of a high priest into one person. Through many careful decrees, he began an age of peace.

Technology of Peace

It was decreed that technology was not inherently evil. Instead, the canal builders were revered as almost gods and everything that they had created seen as holy artifacts. While new discoveries weren't forbidden as such anymore, they were still viewed with skepticism. A major focus of this new philosophy was the question of the 'purity' of technology. *Seldon LXI* (61) wrote over a hundred scrolls on the Commandments of Technology. Many, usually incomplete, copies still exist all over Mars today. In general, there was a reluctance to accept new things: The Martians fell deeper and deeper into a kind of lethargy, preferring to 'take the known safe path' in all matters, and loved to muse but hesitated to act. They rejoiced in unchanging rituals and shunned innovation.

800 – 100 BC: Advanced culture of the Etruscans.
 774 – 146 BC: Phoenician city-states ruled by Carthage: maritime trade.
 750 – 620 BC: The new Assyrian Empire is considered the first great empire in Earth's history.
 ~700 BC: Homer's Epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey, are written.
 753 – 509 BC: Kingdom of Rome.
 500 – 336 BC: Greece's classic period.
 509 – 27 BC: Roman republic.
 336 – 30 BC: Hellenistic age of Greece.
 400 BC – 250 A.D.: Late Preclassic Maya: great Mayan centers and ruling elites.
 400 BC – 400 A.D.: The Indian epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, are written.

The End of the Empire (100 BC to 1 AD)

The last priest-emperor *Seldon LXVII* (67) died leaving no clear heir. Some sources describe him as too lethargic to worry about siring offspring. *Seldon LXVII* (68) was killed during his coronation, leaving his nephew *Seldon LXIX* (69) to take the throne, though many canal princes and even parts of the priesthood did not recognize him.

After the Empire (0 to 1889 AD)

In the almost two thousand years since the last Seldons, the achievements of their dynasties were lost. The empire fractured into city-states, some of which would in time forge alliances to form new empires, but none of these achieved greatness approaching that of the Seldon Empire. Scientific and technological stagnation became chronic. It seemed as if the planet was finally dying completely—and with it any desire for achievement. Mars remained in this state of stagnant power vacuum until the humans arrived.

Time of the Civil Wars (0 to 500 AD)

The disagreement between the candidates for the throne first threw the empire into a civil war, which would also be its death throes. The remnants of the empire withdrew further and further from the outer city-states, which were left to fend for themselves. War and temporary alliances were the result.

Mars regressed to an early medieval standard of technology. The miracle machines of Seldon were soon no longer understood, knowledge about them was not passed on. The destruction wrought by the wars between the city-states exacerbated this decay. Also, as the city-states now focused entirely on their own matters and the raising of large armies, the peripheral regions were left to fall victim to Hill Martian raiders and High Martians. Though fortress construction technology was comparable to Earth's renaissance and modern age, and black powder weapons such as rifles and cannons were perfected, it was a time of overall regression. There were no large kingdoms, only local rulers and a few loose city

Seldon's Return?

Ever since the Empire fell, there have been longing legends of the return of Seldon. In particular, Seldon's state religion of the Canal Keepers featured myths on this matter.

Thus, some cults scour the old documents and family histories to find a successor to Seldon. Others have a more spiritual view on the matter and foresee Seldon's return as a being of light. Since the humans arrived, cults have arisen that affirm a connection between the death of the last Seldon and the birth of the Christian Messiah: On one planet, an empire falls, on another, the birth of a new king is hailed by a star. Though the religion of the Canal Keepers won't quite go that far, even they are studying the newcomers from Earth and their world. After all, should a new Seldon arise, it stands to reason that he will be an agent of renewal as well. So why should he not hail from this new planet, still young and full of strength?

alliances. Some city-states flourished culturally, but there was little to no exchange of ideas, meaning any progress was locally contained and quickly led to the envy of the neighbors—which in many cases also meant the quick end of the city-state in question. Between the cities, the tribes of the Hill and High Martians claimed their hunting grounds, where they lived as nomads in isolation to this day.

The canals around the poorer city-states fell into disrepair. Many swamp regions formed and a few city-states were destroyed outright in the wars. A few still saw themselves as keepers of the traditions of the Seldon Empire, but these cases of hubris were often based on obscure or falsified inheritance claims. Sometimes they even called themselves 'empires', such as in the case of the still extant Tossian Empire, but all were, even at their peak, pale shadows of Seldon's mighty conquests.

27 BC – 480 AD: Roman Empire.
 100 – 700: Aksumitic Empire in northeastern Africa.
 250 – 600: Early Classic Maya

Post-Imperial Age (500 BC to 1870 AD)

During this time the foundations were laid for many of today's city-states, regions, and empires. The civil wars had utterly torn the Seldon Empire apart. No power has since tried to forge a new empire of this magnitude, even though many still saw, and in some cases (such as Tossia) still see, themselves as the legitimate heirs. Though there were yet to be more wars between the city-

states and their alliances, the spark of ambition and life seemed to have faded in the Martians: Religions and philosophy focused more and more on the end of all things, ancient knowledge and artifacts were only preserved and worshipped, and the desire to create new things was lost. Revolutions became rare, melancholy and inertia seized more and more minds. Even wars appeared to be trapped in the status quo: Why fight a war with one or a dozen other city-states? Because it's always been that way. It will be that way tomorrow. Why trade with another tribe via caravans? Because it's always been done that way. What other way is there?

More on the history of the contemporary Martian powers can be found in their respective chapters from p. 29 onwards.

- 600 – 900: Late Classic Maya: peak of the Mayan city-states.**
- 395 – 1453: Byzantine Empire.**
- 800 – 1500: Khmer empire in Cambodia.**
- 962 – 1806: Holy Roman Empire.**

The Arrival of the Humans (1870 AD to 1889 AD)

Something new and unexpected did finally happen, despite the prevailing zeitgeist: in 1870 Earth people first landed on Mars. The Scotsman *Jack Armstrong*, an explorer and mercenary, and the inventor *Thomas Alva Edison* began their journey to Mars on the 6th of January 1870 and arrived on the 9th of March 1870. During their landing the hydrogen balloon required for take-off was destroyed. They landed near Syrtis Major and were taken prisoner by Prince *Amraamtaba IX*. Armstrong quickly learned the local language and Edison impressed the Martian ruler with his vast knowledge of technology.

They were soon released and supplied with everything they needed to launch their balloon.

After their return voyage, the two landed on the 7th of August 1870 in Cincinnati, Ohio. They were instantly famous. More ether flyers were built following the design of the Edison flyer and soon they too traveled to Mars.

The Seldon Calendar

On Mars, each canal city, Hill Martian tribe, or kraag have their own year reckoning (or none at all). These mostly begin with local events of great import or mythological occurrences in the past. Often, the inauguration year of the current canal prince is used as a baseline.

Many canal cities know and use, either in addition or in exclusion, the “Seldon Calendar”, introduced by *Seldon X* (10) around 2,500 BC. It is based on Martian years (one year on Mars lasts for 687 Earth days, 668.5 sols (Martian days); the current year is 2,332), at the beginning of each of which the current Seldon was to proclaim the year’s holy animal. This was meant to frame expected events symbolically and according to the nature of the animal. Years of war for example were declared to be of the *steel sandwing* or the *dust wyvern*, while years of wealth and rich harvests might be the years of the *golden wocnids* or the *fat krolik*. As these were predictions made by each Seldon according to their own methods, they could be accurate or horrendously wrong. There are records of prophetic dedications that referred to events that the respective Seldons could not possibly have foreseen. But of course, the vague nature of a holy animal’s meaning allowed for a lot room for interpretation.

Today, many city-states still use this naming procedure, though the holy animals are usually chosen by the canal prince or the priesthood. Within the Tossian Empire, the Emperor officially declares the animal for the year, but it is first chosen for the Emperor by the court bureaucrats through a series of formulas, statistical analysis, and traditions too obscure for any outsider to understand. The religion of the Canal Keepers in Gaaryan also calls out a holy animal each year, and considers itself to be speaking for the Seldon priesthood. Many city-states simply adopt these animals. Oenotria on the other hand uses these proclamations as propaganda, leading to most recently the *black war breehr* and the *crystal sandshark* being called, accompanied of

course by slogans extolling the virtue of perseverance and making promises of victories to come.

The Seldon calendar year is 668 or 669 sols (Martian days) long, following a pattern that repeats every 49 Martian years and results in a calendar that is more than twice as accurate as Earth’s Gregorian calendar. Eight sols makes a week, with the weekdays bearing names—varying by language and region—that usually relate to Mercury, Venus, Earth, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune (the Martians knew of Neptune long, long before the humans discovered it), and a mysterious eighth planet that some surmise must have been Phaeton. The sols are consecutively numbered in the Martian base-eight numbering system, each week being an “eightday” and eight weeks forming a “century-month” (64 sols, which is “100” in base eight), which is as close as Martians come to the Earth concept of month. Martian century-months don’t have special names: they are merely numbered from zero to twelve. For example, the last sol of a 668-sol year is 1234 in base eight: “sol thirty-four of thirteenth century-month”.

Anno Domini	Anno Seldon	Notes
3000 BC	266 b. Seldon	Seldon I.
2500 BC	0 Seldon	Beginning of the Seldon calendar.
753 BC	928 Seldon	Founding of Rome.
1	1328 Seldon	Birth of Christ, Death of the last Seldon.
476 AD	1581 Seldon	Fall of the Western Roman Empire
800 AD	1753 Seldon	Charlemagne is crowned Emperor.
1492 AD	2121 Seldon	Discovery of America by the Europeans.
1776 AD	2272 Seldon	The USA are founded.
1889 AD	2332 Seldon	Today.

The optimistic, inventive, and enthusiastic humans shook the Martian people from their lethargy. The Martian liftwood immediately became the focus of the colonization of Mars by the greatest colonial power of Earth in 1872: Great Britain, which staked its claim in Parhoon and Syrtis Lapis. Other colonial powers soon followed: First the French landed near Mare Acidalium, intent on bringing new political ideas to the people of Mars, then Belgian King Leopold II's founded the *Association internationale des planètes* (AIP) and took control of the Coprates, where he began to exploit the Martians as slaves. In 1883, Russia founded a colony in Hecates Lacus; a year later, Japan did likewise in Euxinus Lacus. Germany only followed in the mid-1880s and in 1887 formally founded the Western Dioscuria Protectorate. Other Earth nations such as America, Austria, the Netherlands, Denmark, and even Siam established trade outposts or sent ambassadors to the Red Planet.

More information on the historical development of the individual human colonies and their influence on the Martian empires can be found in the chapters on the individual cultures and factions of the various regions in this book from p. 29 onwards.

The humans brought with them ether and steam technology that appeared advanced to the Martians of this time. The technology on Mars was thus at a severe disadvantage, roughly matching that of 17th century Earth: Wars were fought with muzzle loaders and muskets, and while aerial flyers existed, these were either pure sailing vessels or screw galleys powered by hand-turned shafts. Some canals still saw the vital maintenance required to operate the locks and pumps, but in many places, they had been abandoned.

221 – today: Chinese Empire.

500 – today: Japanese Empire.

1299 – today: Ottoman Empire.

1707 – today: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

1721 – today: Russian Tsars.

1804 – today: Austrian Empire, Habsburg monarchy.

1871 – today: German Empire.

The Treasures of Mars

One reason for the colonization of Mars was the rich resources that couldn't be found on Earth. And contrarily, many goods common on Earth were rare on Mars as past cultures had consumed them. Today, they are often gathered not from natural sources, but from the garbage and remnants of ancient civilizations.

Liftwood

The most important resource on Mars is the liftwood. It contains a substance that has an antigravitic effect. Liftwood is a generic name for a range of similar plant species called *Lignivolucer*, which only exist on Mars and share no similarities with any Earth plants.

As liftwood grows exclusively in small forests in the mountains of Mars where it is planted by High Martians, it is not only very expensive, but any trade in it is also subject to the moods and unreliability of the High Martians. It is possible to harvest liftwood directly, but this is very dangerous, as there are no known liftwood forests that do not lie within the claimed territories of one High Martian tribe or other. And none of them appreciate having "their" trees cut down without their permission.

Applications

Properly balanced, liftwood can float in the air. It is primarily used to construct aerial flyers, which regulate and direct this ability through a complex system of levers and rollers. Examples of other uses can be found in the section on liftwood equipment (p. 168). The Martians have known about liftwood for a long time, but for the Earth colonists, it is a brand new and highly desired construction material.

Liftwood is a natural product, with all the irregularities that entails: The tree trunks can be of differing qualities, and they are of different species on top of that. In addition, properly balancing the wood is an engineering and craftsmanship challenge. Imple-

mentation requires careful construction. The different sections must be mounted on joints or axles so that their effect can be harnessed to achieve the desired lift.

Liftwood loses its antigravitic properties over time. How quickly depends primarily on the species, but it is almost unheard of for liftwood to last for more than a decade. Environmental effects such as the magnetic field of Venus can greatly diminish this duration.

The Biology of Liftwood

At first glance, there does not appear to be a biological reason for the antigravitic effect of liftwood. It is considered that this ability *only* manifests in liftwood plants that grow in the Martian mountains. Though some plants of the liftwood kind do grow in the lowlands as well, they do not grow as strong, and do not develop pollen or antigravitic properties. Furthermore, there are other plants that grow in the mountains but which do not develop antigravitic properties. The mountain soil is thus clearly a factor, but it does not seem to be the only ingredient of this trait. Because of the High Martians living in the mountains, any expedition is extremely dangerous. Thus, there have been few opportunities to study these plants in the field, and so their biology remains largely mysterious.

Pollination

It is known that all liftwood plants produce fine pollen, traces of which have been found all over Mars, even in the Polar Regions and in the deserts. Animals and water only play a limited role as natural pollen carriers on Mars. Winds spreading the pollen far and wide allows for the rapid spread of liftwood trees.

Procreation

It is known by now that similar liftwood plants can be found in mountains lying far apart. One hypothesis states that the High Martians deliberately planted them all across Mars. But while they do indeed plant the liftwood, the widespread proliferation has a

different explanation, which is also suggested by the discovery of single specimens and wild liftwood in the mountains of Mars:

The saplings that grow rapidly from the pollinated flowers already possess antigravitic traits. Since these plants grow exclusively in mountain soil and thus have little opportunity to spread their saplings through animals, they must instead use the winds to travel hundreds of thousands of miles to distant mountains. This is the only way by which the plant can spread. In wild plants, a large portion of their antigravitic substances is passed on to these saplings, which supports the hypothesis that the flying capability serves primarily for the spread of the saplings. The High Martians cut off the saplings in the trees they grow, which is the reason why cultivated liftwood has better flight capabilities: The substances remain in the trunk and do not escape into the saplings. The High Martians are in fact limiting the natural spread of liftwood.

Carried by the wind, a liftwood plant sapling can float across deserts and steppes to reach faraway mountains. Growth from sapling to full tree takes about 5 years, and young trees lose their flight capability too quickly to make harvesting them worthwhile.

Species of Liftwood

Not all liftwood is the same. Many subspecies of *Lignivolucer* exist, each with different traits, which are named after the location of their first discovery.

- ***Lignivolucer aeria*** is the most widespread species and was discovered first. Edison even brought some with him on his return journey. It can be found in all mountains on Mars, but was first discovered by humans in Aeria. When one speaks of liftwood, this is usually the species that is meant. The wood of a fully-grown tree, once worked, will retain its antigravitic properties for about 10 years. The chestnut-like, gravity-neutral saplings feature a single root as well as leaf extensions that cause the sapling to rotate in flight and increase its travel distance. After a few days, however, the leaves will dry up and strong winds, like those near mountains, can easily tear them off. This causes the sapling to lose weight and float upwards until the root finds purchase with its small hooks. This ensures that the plant will settle in mountain soil.
- ***Lignivolucer edensis*** was discovered by the Germans in the hills of Eden and is common between Cydonia and Noachis. The plant is smaller and yields less useful wood than Aeria trees, but grows much better in sparse environments. The wood retains its antigravitic properties only for about 5–8 years, and only offers about half as much lifting power as Aeria-wood. It is used less in shipbuilding and more commonly for more small scale applications. The pea-sized saplings of the plant feature root-like vines. They float upwards at first and after a few hours settle into a flight altitude which they can maintain for weeks or months. The wind will then carry them until their roots find purchase somewhere. Ideally, this is the nutritious soil of another mountain range.
- ***Lignivolucer arabia*** can be found between Arabia, Meroe, and the Tempe mountains, but is very rare. The tree is shorter, but thicker and free of gnarls, meaning the wood is more easily utilized. Arabia trees offer about 1/3 more usable wood than Aeria trees. Their lifting power is about 50% better than that of Aeria wood and remains potent for about 12 years. The very small saplings of this species are carried far by a thin, gravity-neutral disc, as long as the winds are comparatively

mild. In turbulent weather, they will fall and take root immediately upon contacting the ground. Many saplings land on unsuitable ground but a few make it to rich mountain soil.

- **Seerdiik** is an extremely rare liftwood species that is said to retain its potency for 20 to 30 years. No human has ever discovered such a plant, but the British were gifted a worked piece when the, later murdered, Duke of Parhoon presented them with an ether flyer model made from it. An examination revealed that the tree must be comparatively small and thin. Unconfirmed reports state that Seerdiik is a special creation of the High Martians of Chryse. Nothing is known about its procreation or sapling spread.
- **Wild-grown liftwood** tends to be about 10 to 20% less potent and durable. All of the above information is given for liftwood as grown by the High Martians.

Gumme

Gumme is a substance similar to Earth rubber, but which offers many advantages over it: It retains its pliancy and flexibility even in very low temperatures far below freezing and can withstand great heat; it is considered to be a better sealant, but still more pliable, easier to work, and stronger. On top of that, it takes longer than Earth rubber to become brittle and tear. It almost seems as though the harsh battle for survival on dying Mars has turned this plant and its essences into a miracle of resilience.

Biology

This resilience has its downsides, though: Gumme leaves are razor-sharp, the bark is tough, and its sap is highly irritating to Martian skin, producing acid-like burns, though humans are barely affected. Gumme trees are rather low and squat compared to the tall, thin Earth rubber trees. The bark is thick and the low hanging crown of the trees with its many leaves surrounds it like a protective cloak. It is under this bark that the precious Gumme sap lies hidden, but the tree only produces it for about 20 Mars years. The seeds look like small, thorny nuts, though they are softer in consistency. For Martians, they are barely edible, as they have a similarly irritating effect as the bark. Consumption of large amounts leads to anaphylactic shock, which can be lethal to Martians—a fate that befell more than one Martian amidst the mocking laughter of the cruel Belgian soldiers, who would stuff their slaves' mouths with Gumme seeds for “fun”.

Propagation (see p. 201)

This plant has until now only been found in the Coprates region, where the Martians have paid it little attention over the centuries, considering it just one of the unusually many weeds of the Coprates forests. It was the Belgians who first began to plant and harvest Gumme on a large scale, using Martian slave labor. So far, they are the only Earth power that grows them as crops.

It is possible that other regions of Mars with similar climate conditions are also suited for Gumme plantation. The Long Woods are one candidate, but Mare Acidalium and the Boreosyrts League lie too far north.

Refinement

The Gumme sap must first be tapped from the bark. This hard work is done by Martian slaves and is quite painful due to the acidic nature of the bark and the sharp leaves. During harvest time, they must hack their way through the leaves, and the quotas imposed on them rarely leave enough time for a thorough job. Due to this haste, cuts all over the upper body and on the feet (from fallen leaves) are commonplace. Only deep slashes into the resilient bark will finally bring forth the sap.

For sale and transportation, this sap is either stored in vats and partially pre-vulcanized or pressed into roughly 3 feet (1 m) long leaves that can be loaded onto Martian carrier slaves or Belgian vehicles.

Like Earth rubber, Martian Gumme also requires vulcanization before it gains the elasticity it is so famous for. This process has been known since 1839, when it was discovered by Charles Goodyear. This requires pressure, heat, and the addition of sulfur, and is usually done on Earth.

Applications

There are many applications for Gumme, foremost of all for **ether technology**: Wherever machines are exposed to the low temperatures and harsh conditions of the Ether, it is superior to Earth rubber, which becomes frail and brittle more quickly. Especially, the ether seals of ether flyer pressurized cabins should, wherever possible, be made from Gumme.

The material is also used for **protective clothing**. The best ether suits, chemical protection suits, gas masks, and parts of diving suits are made of Gumme.

The tires of the new so-called **automobiles** and other vehicles can be made of Gumme, as it is more resistant to damage than Earth rubber. Additionally, belts and straps for engines and machines are frequently made of Gumme as they last longer and require less maintenance than rubber belts.

The use of Gumme in **toys and sports equipment** is much rarer due to the costs involved, but there are some high-quality balls, toys, and colorful masks made from this material as it allows for finer details. Rumor has it that some **secret agencies** are working on lifelike Gumme masks for use in impersonations, something that is utterly impossible with Earth rubber.

Animal and Plant Products

Trophies

The Hill Martians trade in the pelts and skins of the animals they hunt or keep as cattle. Exotic furs and pelts, such as those of the red manikin or the red tiger, are very valuable and are exported as luxury goods to Earth. The horns or stuffed heads of wild animals are very popular with human large game hunters. While Earth trophies can justify entire safaris, Martian trophies are even more exotic: Skrill horns, steppe tiger skulls, or even one of the highly sought after Amazonia horns make for great status symbols when mounted above the mantel piece. Mars safaris are a lucrative market, and rifle stocks made of skrill horn are said to make the bullets fly further.

Living Animals

Zoos like Schönbrunn or the London Zoo, circuses like Renz, traveling menageries such as the curiosities of P. T. Barnum—all of them are always on the lookout for new attractions from Mercury, Venus, and Mars. And thus, the business of shipping live animals from Mars to Earth has become very profitable. And because the hunt and transport are quite difficult and the exhibitions have therefore only had few specimens to show, these few are drawing in especially large crowds. There are even a few tamers with trained steppe tigers, enclosures for wocnids, koljis, greiscou tous, roogies, and even a few Martian lap pets owned by private parties.

Black Ivory (→ see p. 202)

This substance is found particularly in Memnonia and the Mare Sirenum. It is a type of bone or horn. The Martian merchants claim it comes from the huge, black remains of unknown creatures that have been dug up by the winds. They sell it either carved into artistic shapes or raw in tusk-like form—with the small difference that they appear to be curved rib bones of immense size! The material is tough but flexible, and very well suited for crafting inlays.

Tea

Trade in tea is especially commonplace in the Western Desert.

- The smoked **scaambra-tea** is what gave the famous Tea Road (p. 77) its name. It is boiled from the black tea plant, an herb that grows hip-high in almost all the higher regions of Mars. The scaambra (“sour smoke”) is different from regular black tea, though. The soil and climate conditions on the plateaus around Protonilus create a particularly sour taste, which is then reinforced by drying it with the smoke of pottery ovens. There are several grades of quality, with the most refined scaambra being extracted from the root tips of male plants, the cheapest from the stems. Quality also fluctuates year by year, and tea from the right year can command exceedingly high prices.
- **T’zkill** is a type of herbal tea. It is bound into small bundles, not unlike Chinese tea roses, and dried in the desert heat. It is a popular practice to bind colorful flowers into the bundles, the colors of which will then become visible when poured. This tea is traditionally served in glass pitchers to accentuate this optical effect.
- **Crumblebrush-tea** is the most widespread tea plant on Mars and derives its name from its tiny, crumb-like seed pods. It grows wild along most canals and on most steppes and is easy to grow. It is easily acquired, very tasty, but is derided as poor man’s tea. The British military has taken a particular liking to this tea, though, and makes great use of its cost free wild growth. It even sells for a profit on Earth.

Spices

Regions like the Boreosyrtris League or Mare Acidalium are fertile enough to allow for plantations. But even the steppes and deserts can produce valuable spice plants, in which the caravans trade.

- Mare Acidalium is home to the extremely spicy **methok** pepper, which is barely edible for humans. Besides being used in almost homeopathic dosages for spicing food in the canal cities of Mare Acidalium, the seeds and pastes made from them are also used by some Hill Martian tribes such as the Tempe people or the veiled people of Cydonia to preserve their food. It is seen as a sign of strength to be able to eat such food. This spice can make even tough gashant meat enjoyable.
- **Pekaay** is a spice that grows only around Zephyria, where it plays an important role in the city's trade. It is only harvested during specific seasons and distributed to the Eastern and Central Basins and beyond via caravan.
- The riders of Nepenthes–Thoth particularly enjoy **Galashei** and **Zimbasta**, two spices similar to Earth ginger and mustard, respectively, which combine into a very spicy kind of wasabi. On Earth this is used for spicy food “à la Népenthès” to bring an air of Martian frontier life into the dining halls of the upper middle class.
- **Ereban** is known throughout the Eastern Desert. Here the merchants are trying to establish trade in this spice with the British, even though it only tastes mildly interesting to humans.
- **Gruuma** herb is considered to be the second hottest spice in the solar system (after Venus pepper).
- **Bhutan** is a tasty and mildly anesthetic spice that is only planted in the cities of the Boreosyrtris League. This plant is barely known to science as it is difficult to acquire complete specimens. The plantations are fenced off, heavily guarded, and worked by slaves. Only few humans have been allowed inside so far—and only under strict supervision. Demand on Earth and Mars is equally high, and the prices accordingly steep. Great Britain has negotiated a protection treaty with the *Boreosyrtris League* and a monopoly on bhutan trade, much to the chagrin of other Martian and Earth Nations. Germany in particular is determined to break this monopoly.
- **Salt** is used as a spice on Mars as well. It is collected where the sea bottom has dried up and is a common trade good of the Hill Martians, who also use it to preserve their food. The lowland Martians gather it in buckets from the ground in the Hellas wastes and the Bosporos, while the Hill Martians and the Tossian Empire mine it.

Fruits

- The red **pushti fruit** (actually a nut or chestnut) is about as large and round as a volleyball. It grows from the roots of trees and, when ripe, grows out of the ground. It is grown north of Syrtis Major as an expensive delicacy. As it cannot be preserved for long, it is mostly unknown outside of the crown colony of Syrtis Lapis.

- **Shiuuskup** is a rare Martian fruit that grows from bushes and appears similar to a sweet, blue apricot with a slight spicy aftertaste. It is popular with Martian gourmets and can be distilled into a strong liquor. The seeds drift upwards when the fruit is opened. If eaten, they will lose their antigravitic properties during digestion. It is hypothesized that these fruits form part of the nutrition of herbivorous flying animals on Mars such as the skrill, and that the substances inside them are absorbed by their flight gland.
- The **honey-root** from Lunae Lacus is an ugly bulb with a high sugar content, from which a sweet juice can be squeezed. This juice is cooked into a syrup and sold all over Mars.
- The Tossian melon cider **moonkla** tastes rather disgustingly sweet to humans, but is quite in demand with Earth's drug dealers. Fresh moonkla is no more dangerous than fruit juice, but the longer it is left to ferment, the more it turns into a mescaline-like substance. Year-old moonkla is mildly narcotic. The rare fifty-year-old kind will catapult the mind of the consumer into strange new worlds for weeks on end... while killing their body.

Metals and Minerals

Metals

Metals are rare on Mars and are mostly gathered from the remnants of ancient canal cities. There are few mines, but garbage sifters and grave robbers are quite common, especially in Arcadia and Amazonia. Metal is mostly exported to the rest of Mars from the ruins and canal builder graves of the desolate Eastern Desert.

Iron and steel are just as rare as copper, tin, zinc, gold, or silver. All metal items are valuable on Mars, with gold being treasured the most because of its color. Tribal chiefs and kings among the High Martians wear copper, gold, or silver jewelry.

In a few places, metal is extracted using actual mining techniques. Emden, for example, possesses the “Fog Banks”, a large source of precious metals, especially gold. The mining and gold smith guilds of Emden are thus very influential. These “Fog Banks” are a relic from the age of the canal builders.

Syrtis Minor is a traditional mining town, but the copper and zinc deposits of the *Cyclopum Sinus* are almost exhausted, putting the future of the town into question.

Gems

Though the resources of Mars have been consumed over the millennia, gems are an exception (apart from the most valuable ones). Though diamonds, rubies, and crystals were mined by the canal builders for use in their technology, they left many other kinds of gems aside, because they were not considered useful. Today, gems can be found in Meridani Sinus around Aryn, in the steppes of Moab (fire jewels), in the extreme Eastern Desert, and in the northern polar ice cap (tears of the Sun).

Thus, prospectors march out to find their fortunes, hoping for a lucky find that will set them up for life. This could be a volcano in the Noachis highlands that spits diamonds from its deepest depths, or a field of emeralds and sapphires in the Tharsis steppes of Lunae Lacus.

Moabite Fire Jewels (→ see p. 194)

The steppes of Moab are the source of one of the most expensive kind of gems on Mars: The Moabite fire jewels. These stones can be found everywhere in the bottom lands of the Moab steppes, washed up by massive floods sometime in the far past. Before the heat treatment, these gems are colored, but not particularly special, and are often easily overlooked by inexperienced travelers.

Once treated with flame and then quickly cooled, millions of tiny crystals form inside the stones. Most stones burst into useless shards, but about a tenth of them remain intact, become transparent, and reflect the light in beautiful patterns. Fire jewels are easily worked with file and chisel before the heat treatment, and can be cut into almost any desired shape or set with all sorts of patterns. Martian craftsmen are known for the beautiful works of art they create from these gems.

Oil

Oil is present mostly in the swampy regions of Mars, particularly in the Eastern Basin. It is a very rare resource and can be quite important to the colonial powers for their industries. Usually, it occurs as the remnant of ancient refineries that have contaminated the ground water with oil. This can be pumped from below the surface, separated from the water and thus collected. The swamps of Gorklimsk are an exception, having come to be as the result of a biological oddity.

One of the companies pumping the oil of Gorklimsk and selling it to Syrtis Lapis is the British *Deimos Mining Company* with its massive steam-powered pumps. A dubious exploitation contract exists with the family of the canal prince.

Coal

Coal is very rare on Mars, as it, too, was mostly consumed by the canal builders. For powering steam aerial flyers and other machines, the crumbling, black substance is worth its weight in gold. There are a few coal mines, such as one near Parhoon under the protection of the British military, and a black coal seam in the Eastern Basin that is being mined by the British *Hesperian Basin Trading Company*. It maintains its own army to man the walls of its Martian ruins, far from the cities.

Crafts and Artifacts

Crafts

- **Hill Martian tribal art** is respected as interplanetary folklore. These pieces confirm the prejudices of the Europeans,

who consider their own culture to be more advanced and the Martians as all around primitive, though fascinating.

- **Dioscurian arts and crafts** are seen as the best Mars has to offer on Earth. Furniture, jewelry, and ornate household items are trending.
- **Hellenic Rogo-wood art** from Yaonis in the Hellas region has found many an admirer on Earth. The fine, dense wood takes on strange and exotic shapes under the guiding hands of the wood carver guild members. Collectors claim these bizarre carvings possess a sleep-inducing effect if viewed for prolonged periods of time.
- Many Martian cities and a few Hill Martian tribes feature a cult-like reverence for **masks**. Tossian masks can fetch quite a high price on Earth, while the allegedly human skin masks crafted by the Worm cultists can only be traded in secret.
- **Glass** finds many applications on Mars, including household items, receptacles, jewelry, and money, even as architectural elements. This is not surprising, as sand is amply available on Mars while the lack of metal has pushed Martian glass-making techniques to much greater heights than has been achieved on Earth.

Artifacts

- Time and again, stories of buried temples and royal tombs full of valuable **grave goods** inspire explorers to go looking for archaeological treasure troves. Ever since the discovery of the tomb of *Jembathranx III* in the southern mountains of Moab with treasures worth more than £240,000,000, this trend has only grown.
- In Tossia, there is an exclusive, secret, and ancient production procedure only known to the imperial bureaucrat-calligraphers which allows the creation of **everlasting paper** that never pales or turns yellow. It is used to preserve imperial edicts for all eternity and thus reinforce their validity.
- Tossia especially is home to excellent craftsmen that have mastered the art of **clockwork technology**. They create clocks for Martian days and mechanical devices such as the *kuurka* (p. 169), but also automatons which, though limited in their functions, still offer a wonderful symbiosis of craftsmanship and art. Similar to Chinese lacquered furniture, Europeans like to place Tossian clockwork art in their halls as decoration.
- **Canal builder artifacts** still lie in wait in ruins or beneath tons of sand, particularly in the Eastern Desert. Most aren't functional anymore, however. Examples can be found from p. 159 onwards.

Art and Culture of Mars

Martian culture is old, rich, and varied, so we can only give some general information on the major points here. You should feel free to include further exotic Martian elements into your games as you see fit.

Language

The Martian languages are varied, though not quite as much so as on Earth. During the time of the canal builders and the Seldon Empire, Mars featured globe-spanning societies which imposed common, shared languages. This historical period narrowed the range of language families extant on Mars. The contemporary Martian language spectrum consists mostly of derivatives of the Seldon language that have developed over the previous two millennia.

Martian scholars are also aware of the **Arcadian** language family which predates the Seldon Empire. It is theorized that these languages still hold elements of the canal builder language, but the only actively spoken form remaining today is the Euxine of a few Hill Martian tribes. The languages of the **Gaaryani** family, on the other hand, derive from Son-Gaaryani, the official language of the Seldon Empire, and are widespread. The particularly densely populated equatorial regions have seen several languages over time, so that the **Syrтан** spoken in the Central Basin and the Eastern Basin's **Bootnai** stem from different roots.

The remote Polar Regions had preserved their own idioms during the Seldon era: **Boreaan**, **Dio-Umbran**, and **Tempes** in the North and **Alaanawaak** in the South. They have spread and developed into further dialects since then.

The **Moabite** family of languages of the Hill Martians of the Western Desert likely developed from elements of older languages and more recent influences, while the tribes of the Eastern Desert use **Rugoraant**.

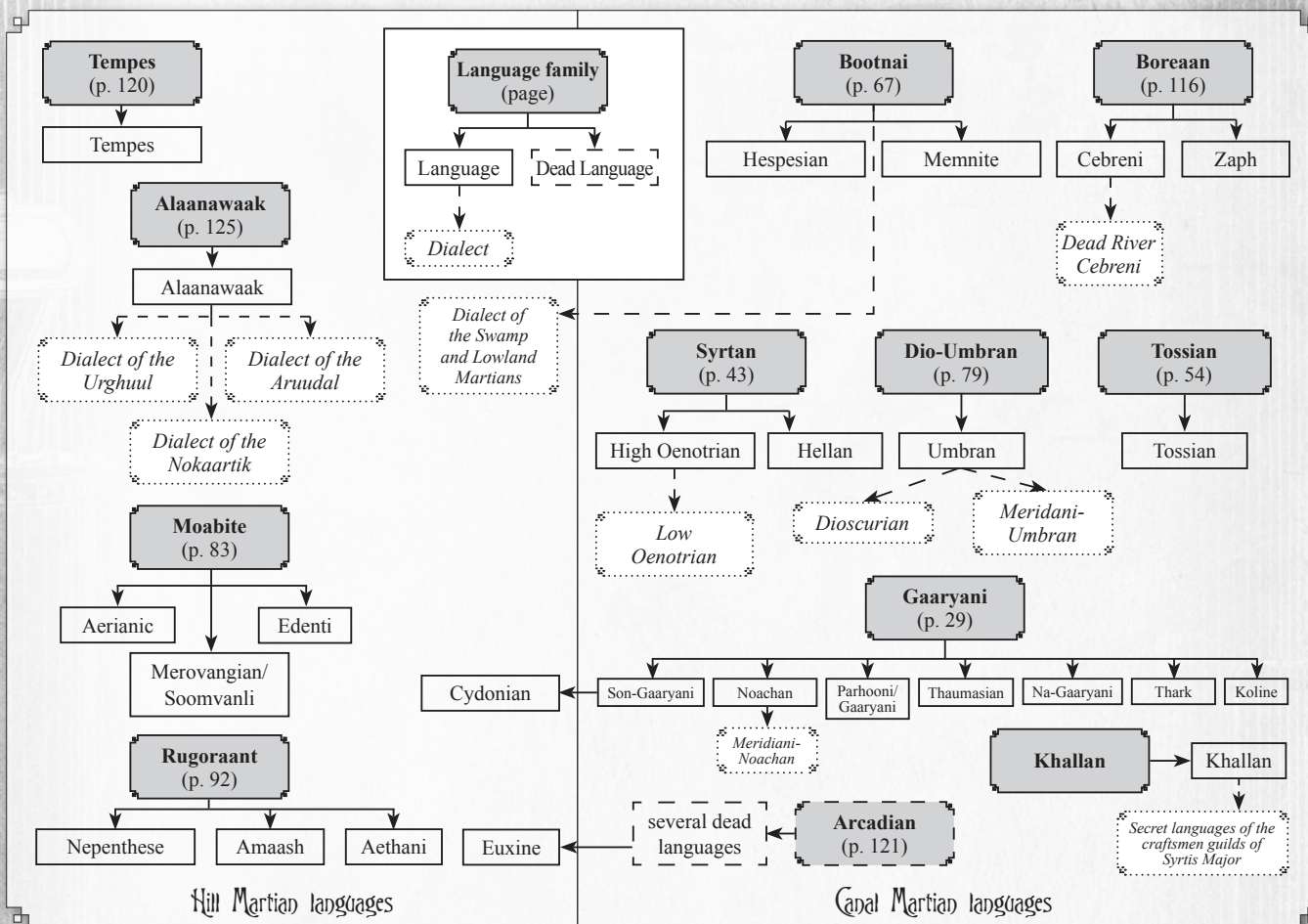
Examples of deliberately invented languages are **Tossian** and **Khallan**, a secret guild language.

Each chapter on the regions will include sidebars on the respective language families with examples.

Books and Literature

Mars holds a treasure trove of literature, ranging from contemporary philosophical writings and novels to Seldon scrolls and beyond to ancient manuals from the time of the canal builders—whose writings no one can decipher anymore.

Unique ancient items are popular with collectors and can make those who discover them quite rich. But even the literature itself is of great interest to Earth. Several times already, Martian works have simply been translated and plagiarized by brazen publishers or devious authors, to sell millions of copies on Earth without even one penny reaching the original Martian author.



Not everyone commits such intellectual theft. In the German Empire, for example, the different types of literature, from philosophical essays to entertaining novels all the way to dirty poetry, are studied eagerly and formally. The British meanwhile prefer the adventure novels of Martian heroes and have begun, inspired by the Martian originals, to write their own novels such as the “*Scarlet Naado*”. The young *Arthur Conan Doyle* has been working on further Sherlock Holmes novels, ever since *A Study in Scarlet* was released to great success a few years ago. One is said to take place on Mars and carries the working title *Scandal in Tossia*.

Sports and Entertainment

“*Play is the highest expression of human development*”
—**Friedrich Wilhelm August Froebel**

Whether purely for the fun of it or to improve the body and soul, there are countless Martian games to play, of which we will present the most popular here. All cities have gaming and sport clubs, and “friendly” games between neighboring cities are commonplace. Some regions even have sporting leagues and championships.

Jiogaada

Jiogaada is probably the most widely known game on Mars and holds a similar place in the public mind as chess on Earth—mastery of the game is seen as a sign of intelligence and good education. Whether it is played on lines drawn in the dust in front of a nomad’s tent or the crystal boards of a canal lord, Jiogaada is enjoyed everywhere. In “living games”, costumed actors play out the moves on a large game board, and in some arenas “deadly games” are held, where gladiators fight for their lives.

The game board is made up of five concentric circles, connected via eight lines, giving the board a certain resemblance to that of the Earth Mill Game. Each of the two players has eight pieces, making one single move with one of them on each of their turns. Moves take place clockwise. Should a piece land on an occupied hub spot, the piece already there is removed.

The three **soldiers** may move one space, the two **gashants** three. The **aerial flyer** may move four spaces. It is the only piece that may also move *counterclockwise*. The **Lord** may move two spaces, and changing from one ring to the next does not count towards this allowance.

The most important piece in this game is the **Lady**. If this piece sits on the innermost ring at the end of her move, she “gives birth to a child”, i.e. an eliminated piece is returned to the board.

Teem

Teem resembles Earth’s game of dominos. It is played with 64 tiles, divided into two lots. The tiles of the first lot each bear a number (1–32), while those of the other lot bear mathematical symbols (the Martian equivalents of +, −, =, etc.). Each player draws eight tiles, the remaining tiles forming the *bank*. The players take turns to try and place their tiles next to those of their opponent to create a long mathematical formula. If they are unable to place a tile, they must draw tiles from the bank until they can do so. Victory goes to the player who can place all of their tiles first *and* complete the equation.

Teem was created as a teaching aid for mathematics classes and is especially popular with math teachers and engineers. The rest of the population of the two planets views the game as a boring affair for overachievers, even though the engineers’ guilds of some cities stage high-stakes tournaments with immense cash prizes.

Nuvaak

Nuvaak, or “Martian polo”, is a development of games played by the nomadic rider tribes. The playing field measures 16 by 16 lines (about 264 m on the side), with two goals located in opposite corners. A team consists of six players, four of which ride gashants. The other two players sit atop a ruumet breehr, one as a rider, the other as a player. The players then attempt to use long bats to drive a large, hair-filled leather ball into the opposing team’s goal. A goal only counts if it was scored directly by the player atop a ruumet breehr or was passed to a gashant rider by such a player immediately before. The game is played over eight runs of five minutes each, with two minute breaks to change mounts. Victory goes to the team that scores the most goals by the end of the game.

Nuvaak is considered the harshest and most dangerous sport of the solar system: broken bones are commonplace, and deadly accidents are likely to occur each season. Last year, a few British officers challenged the reigning champions of Syrtis Major to a game and took the field on Earth horses. As no rules forbade this, the Martian team accepted. The game ended with a final score of 12:0 for the champions and cost the lives of two British players and five horses. The victorious team fled into exile in the Oenotrian Empire.

The Games of the Queln

For the Queln (p. 86), two games are of special importance. In the annual *succession games*, the *rithall* faces off against a worthy challenger. In this game, the two unarmed riders ride flying skrill across a field of spikes driven into the ground and attempt to force the other rider into them.

In the *contests*, two teams chosen by an elder of the tribe compete. These contests take place inside a gigantic dome of wooden beams, in the center of which a skull is placed. The teams then try to seize the skull and keep it in their possession until the game time is exhausted. A team consists of two skrill riders and two runners, who may carry any weapons they desire. Though the weapons are blunted, deaths are a regular occurrence during these games. Victory in a contest brings fame and recognition to the players, as well as to their sponsors.

Watersports

Most Canal Martians know how to swim, but usually only do so for recreation or out of necessity—competitive watersports only take place in the cities of the Eastern Basin.

Surfing is especially dangerous. When the meltwater rushes through the canals at the beginning of the Flood seasons, large waves similar to terrestrial tidal bores can form in some locations—such as Mare Sirenum—that then race down the canals. Especially daring Martians swim onto the water on narrow boards and try to ride these waves for dozens of miles. The surfers of Mars form a tight-knit community and crown a “**King of the Canals**” at the beginning of each Flood season. This king is

determined by a ride from Crinolia towards Niront—whoever gets the furthest wins.

But the true love of the Martians is the **regatta**. Every city has multiple racing clubs that maintain large boats, reminiscent of Chinese dragon boats. On the day, these racing boats are rowed through an obstacle course by a dozen rowers, while thousands of spectators cheer from the canal banks. These races offer large cash prizes and bets, and so, to the delight of the audience, bumps and brawls between the boats are commonplace.

Architecture

Though the same technologies were used to build most of the Martian metropolises, there are many different architectural styles on display. New buildings on Mars are often stylistic homages to ancient architecture, differing from their predecessors only by their erection using less advanced technological expertise. The following styles are the most widespread (the names are Earth labels; the locals use different terms).

Parhoonese Orientalism

This picturesque and widespread style is typical of Parhoon and Syrtis Major. The main features are round towers with domed roofs and bulbous spires, reminiscent of the architectural styles of Earth's Middle East. Pillar halls dozens of yards tall and multi-level buildings similar to Roman insulae are part of this style. While modern buildings often feature a large amount of ornamentation, ancient examples are much more sober. Red and gold are dominant colors.

Oenotrian Runism

Edges, straight lines and geometric shapes define this style, which can be found in its purest forms in the cities of the Oenotrian Empire and in Moeris Lacus. The only ornamentation of this

plain style are geometric patterns and inscriptions of all kinds written in jagged runes (hence the name runism). The towers of this style often appear as vertically stretched ziggurats. Stepped pyramids, octagonal cones, and blocky flats arranged in terraces are also common. Taken on its own, Oenotrian runism can appear bare and soulless, but countless roof gardens and parks help give the cities built in this style an aura of vitality and liveliness that is hard to find in other metropolises on Mars.

Glassblower Style

The towers of the metropolises built in the glassblower style appear less to have been built than cast or blown. Sleek, needle-like towers stretch as high as 650 feet (200 meters), expanding into spheres and connected by a convoluted mess of hanging bridges. Nothing has corners or edges—everything is rounded and seamless, as though cast from one piece. The construction material is a milky, glass-like substance that is very tough. It is completely unknown how such buildings were erected. Nowhere is the contrast between ancient and modern clearer than in the glassblower cities.

Modern buildings are often built in the style of the Parhoonese orientalism and appear outright alien next to the glass towers. Many cities of the Boreosyrtis League and in Dioscuria are built in the glassblower style.

Tossian Baroque

The basic construction principles of the Tossian baroque—which, as the name implies, are predominantly found in the Tossian Empire—resemble a mix of the glassblower style and Parhoonese orientalism. The material of choice here is, however, a surprisingly strong, sandstone-like concrete. The association with Earth's baroque period stems from the complex ornamentation that marks every inch of these façades. Even modern buildings are richly decorated, that they might fit seamlessly into the overall look of the city. In ancient buildings, these ornamentations are often worn away and give the building an irregular, almost organic appearance.

Traveling to and on Mars

If you can afford it, a trip to Mars is an easy undertaking in 1889. Many civilian ether shipping lines regularly travel to the larger colonial cities. If you wish to travel on once on the planet, things get more difficult. Regular traffic is a concept foreign to Martians, and aside from long waiting times, local tolls or bribes must also be factored into one's plans.

Arrival

The gate to Mars is *Syrtis Major*. However, not every European country has an Etherline that travels there. If one wishes to travel to somewhere far from the British colony, a smaller ether port may be a more practical choice in any case.

Origin	Destination	Frequency
Belgium	Copratia, Melas	every 3 weeks
Germany	Copratia, Dioscuria	every 2 weeks
France	Copratia, Idaeus Fons	every 2 weeks
Great Britain	Parhoon, Syrtis Major, Tossia	every week
Italy	Copratia, Syrtis Major	every 2 months
Japan	Euxinus Lacus	every 2 months
Russia	Hecates Lacus	every 2 months
Netherlands	Syrtis Major	every 2 months
Spain	Villa Real	every 4 months
USA	Copratia, Syrtis Major, Thymiamata, Tossia	every 10 days

Some Etherlines also travel to locations on Venus. When the planets align favorably (roughly every 334 days), travel directly from *Fort Collingswood*, *Fort Tsar Peter*, *Nuova Firenze*, or *Venusstadt* to Mars is also possible, instead of traveling via Earth.

There are two basic types of Victorian ether flyers that can travel to Mars: Cargo vessels with a capacity for passengers (usually around 5) and dedicated passenger liners. For take-off and landing, most of these are equipped with liftwood, but ether zeppelins also exist.

The largest ether liners offer the same comfort as an ocean liner—if not for the issue of zero gravity. On top of that, ether turbulences or meteor showers must be considered as well. It is often possible to sleep between the decks without any comforts, which costs about half as much as a bed in a double cabin.

Cloudships

The quickest way to travel on Mars is an aerial flyer equipped with liftwood. The Martians have been operating these since before the humans came. They were called “cloudships”, even though they shared the skies with at best very thin clouds—at least outside the Polar Regions. Was this name coined during a less arid age? Or are these boats seen as clouds themselves?

Traditionally, one to three mast gliders were the vehicles of choice. Screw galleys with crank propulsion required too much energy. But, 18 years ago, *Prince Jinma of Parhoon* invented a wheeled mechanism that stores energy. Galleys using these devices are now commonplace and only remote or traditionally minded yards still build crank-propelled screw galleys.

Glidings continue to exist, as sailing is by far the fastest way to travel in good winds: 180–400 miles (300–650 km) per day (depending on the wind) compared to 180–300 miles (300–480 km) for the various galley types, 300 miles (480 km) for steam flyers and zeppelins.

Steam flyers are aerial vehicles designed by humans, and exist in various sizes and are armed to varying degrees. The British use, next to smaller air launches, predominantly aerial gunboats of the *Aphid*, *Locust*, and *Macefield* classes.

Powering these machines requires coal or other rare fuels. And of course, liftwood is rare as well. The German military, for example, owns only a single steam airboat, the air cruiser *Hamburg*. Otherwise it relies on hydrogen-filled zeppelins.

Some cloudships serve in a military capacity, be it as part of a fleet or in the hands of pirates. It is better to travel with adventurers, merchants, or company expedition vessels, which can carry 4 to 20 passengers depending on the type.

For a fee of, on average, 4 shillings a day for screw galleys, 6 for a glider, or 10 on an Earth vessel, you can experience spectacular views, breakneck maneuvers, sandstorms, and confrontations with enemy captains. Excitement you won't soon forget!

Travel times to Mars

Origin	average distance (mio mi / mio. km / travel time in days*)	greatest distance (mio mi / mio. km / travel time in days*)	shortest distance (mio mi / mio. km / travel time in days*)	Price from (freighter / shared cabin / luxury class)	Price up to (freighter / shared cabin / luxury class)
Earth	142 / 227 / 57–69	234 / 377 / 94–114	48 / 77 / 19–23	15 / 25 / 50 £	65 / 95 / 190 £
Venus	142 / 227 / 57–69	208 / 335 / 84–102	74 / 119 / 30–36	20 / 30 / 60 £	70 / 105 / 210 £
Mercury	142 / 227 / 57–69	177 / 285 / 71–86	105 / 169 / 42–51	25 / 35 / 70 £	75 / 115 / 230 £

*) The travel times vary depending on the vessel, ranging from fast passenger liners (about 2.5 million mi (4 million km) per day) to slower freighters (about 2 million mi (3.3 million km) per day).

Canal Ships

The Canal network is the lifeblood of Mars. Its creators built it to transport polar water and to enable shipping—the traditional method of trade on Mars. The costs are a fraction of those of air travel and even a cargo ferry is quicker than a caravan.

Unlike rowed military vessels or local practices like hauling, the typical Martian merchant ship features a single mast on a wide, rectangular hull of shallow draft. The Earth humans have since introduced paddle wheelers (including experimental ones powered by sewage gas) that can take on up to 20 passengers.

Aside from commercial vessels, private yachts are also common. They are powered by a mix of sail and steam and travel quite quickly. The top of the line are the prestige launches owned by the Martian rulers. Powered by a hundred rowers or several sails, they are intended for diplomatic voyages, though some include squads of archers in the crew. On top of that, floating market places, casino ships, and the “flower boats” (brothels) also exist.

Using the petty canals, canal ships can even reach some of the smaller destinations to deliver mail and passengers or to reach tourist attractions. The Pushti tree plantations of Syrtis Major are such a popular leisure trip destination.

Depending on the speed and crew, a rowing barge can achieve speeds of 18–38 miles (30–60 km) per day. Sailing ships depend on the wind and can range from 9 to 60 miles (15–100 km) per day. A steamer will reach a reliable 50 miles (80 km) per day. It should be noted that a merchant usually plans to spend one day in every major city on the way.

Prices are affordable: Passage on a rowed vessel is 2–10 pence per day, on sailing ships 3–15 and on steamers 5–25, depending on the desired comfort level. Offers range from a spot in the cargo cabin or on deck with cheap meals and the occasional work to be done, to single or double cabins, and all the way to the captain's cabin or a suite. A canal ship typically features a common room and a mess. The ships will anchor at night and some canals offer specific anchoring spots for this.

Pirates can be found everywhere on Mars. They are usually after plunder, but religious and political zealots are also not unheard of. Nowhere is it as easy to cut someone off as here on the canals. And since the canals are in poor repair, it can also happen that ships run aground or become damaged in collisions.

Should the journey remain free of such misfortune, a rickshaw will see the passengers to their hotels at their destination.

Caravans

In the absence of intact canals, one can saddle up a small group of gashants or—for more safety and comfort—join one of the Canal Martian merchant caravans.

These travel mostly along the canals and dried up canal beds, where water can most easily be found. Cities still at least partially connected to functional canals usually see a caravan depart every one to twelve days. In cities with only dried up canal beds, this happens only every one to six weeks.

A passage by ruumet breehr—on a wagon or group saddle (*howdah*)—costs about £1 per 90 miles (150 km)—half for Canal Martians, double for gashants. Considering the speed of 9–18 miles (15–30 km) per day, ample time should be planned for such a journey.

In exchange, a caravan offers the luxury of kitchen, water, and doctor wagons. The largest and most comfortable wagon

belongs to the caravan master and their staff and servants. To guard against ambushes, the specialized wagons are kept in the center. Pack animals are spread evenly along the length. Guards mounted on gashants travel along each flank. This offers reliable protection against bandits or bush monkeys and prevents panic from spreading through the ruumet breehrs.

Come nightfall, the wagons will be circled and tents pitched up, and one tries to recover from the long trip. Every trip begins with a joyful celebration in honor of the gods and spirits to ensure a safe journey.

The Martian Canals

The Work of the Canal Builders

The Martian canals are the largest construction project of all time known to man. It marks the surface of Mars to this day and is even visible from Earth through telescopes. No man-made structure on Earth comes even close to the scale of the canals. That Martians were able to begin and complete such a task demonstrates their great will to live; without the canal network, Mars would already be a dead world.

Canal Types

There are three types of canals on Mars: The **grand canals**, the **petty canals**, and the **dead canals**. Each of them plays or played a role in the irrigation of Mars and enabled not only transportation but also agriculture and life in general in many villages and towns around the great cities.

Grand Canals

The typical grand canal is about a mile (1.5 km) wide and a hundred feet (30 m) deep. In the cities, the banks feature plastered promenades that serve as public places, markets, and bazaars. In rural areas, massive earthworks help control flooding during summer when the first polar water arrives.

Water that seeps into the ground and sides of the grand canals creates an underground water supply (aquifer) that sustains agriculture, forests, and animal life for several miles to either side. These aquifers can reach through the ancient, now dry, sea beds for up to 50 miles (80 km) on either side. But on the once continental landmasses, the aquifer reaches for less than 6 miles (10 km).

The fertile stretches of land flanking the canals are the actual river banks; this is where the fields, the fruit plantations, and the pastures of Mars lie. All agriculture depends on this river water.

Petty Canals

The petty canals split off from the grand canals. These smaller waterways lead away from the grand canals and expand the reaches of the aquifer. They serve two purposes: Irrigation and transportation.

Petty canals carry the water to the edges of the aquifer of the main canal and help redirect excess ground water back into the grand canal. But mainly, they serve for transportation: Canal barges travel from the grand canals to smaller farming villages and offer travel opportunities, postal, and cargo services.

A special trait of the petty canals are the city canals that direct the majority of the water around (most of) the cities to avoid dividing the cities with mile-wide (1.5 km) trenches.

Dead Canals

With time, some of the canals weren't needed anymore or fell into disrepair. These canals filled with sand or rubble and have become impassable. Despite this, many dead canals, though useless for ships and barges, continue to carry some water. Beneath the surface, the water continues to flow along the gravel-lined canals (though at much slower rates) and thus continues to generate an aquifer that allows for plant and even animal life, though the fertile zone is not as expansive as with a functioning canal.

Dead Canals are the highways of the Martian deserts. Though they do not carry water on the surface, the underground canals still allow for vegetation and sometimes even wells or springs with cold, fresh water. Dead canals are the safest routes through the vast, desolate deserts for land travel.

The Design of the Canals

The function and design of the Canals are complex, so we will list the individual components below. A canal consists of a **channel**, which lies between two **banks**. Along the channel lies a deeper area, the **low flow channel**, which can carry boats even when the canal is almost dry. Parallel to each bank lies a **levee** made of gravel and earth. The stretch of land between the canal shore and the levee is the **promenade**, which serves as a road or beach. Behind each levee, the region supplied by the ground water reaches out for 6 to 50 miles (10 to 80 km) on either side of the canal.

Channel

The ancient Martians wielded powers that surpass human imagination, and used them to blast or burn large canals through the desert and the dry seabed. Their floors might consist of rock, tiled walls, or glassed stone. Each grand canal has three potential water levels: **flood**, **flow**, and **low flow**. These names are equivalent to the Martian seasons of the same name.

The Step Wells

All across Mars, both in large city-states and villages, travelers can come across an architectural oddity: the step wells situated near the petty canals. These are deep-reaching cavernous rooms and pillared halls, often several levels of them, with stairwells leading to the surface. During times of flow and flood, the water will flow into these great halls, where it will remain during low flow times. The stairs allow the locals to easily reach the water; the lower the levels are, the more steps they have to descend, and the deeper they have to climb, the more careful the Martians will be if the next flood is still far off.

Most of these structures were built during the Seldon Empire to ensure a year-round water supply. Today, they range from destroyed to perfectly preserved. Above ground they can be hard to spot, often only being marked by a small wall around the stairwell entrance. Unfamiliar travelers are greatly surprised when they look down to discover levels upon levels of underground halls, rivalling palaces in size. Most wells are of course much smaller, and many are collapsed or home to canal creatures. Others form the social centers of villages or city districts, where even the nobles will mingle with the common folk. They are decorated with shrines to the gods or garished for festivals. Many are maintained by priests of the Canal Keeper religion though freely available to the citizens. This is another reason why this religion remains common all across Mars, since local rulers make some donations, but rarely shoulder the full actual costs. In some places, however, the canal prince is the final owner of these wells, or they are overseen by water merchants or criminal gangs. In these cases, a walk down the stairs will cost a fee based on the number of steps required to reach the water, increasing further, the longer ago the most recent flood was.

Banks

The banks of the canals rise steeply from the floor, usually at an angle of 70 degrees or more. However, a number of regularly spaced entrances are cut into this steep bank. Stairs allow for a descent to the current water level or to the dry canal floor, if only the *low flow channel* is filled. Docks (usually paired with stairs) allow ships to slip in or out of the currents. Wide, gently inclined ramps along the banks allow for the deployment of launches.

Promenades

The flat sides of the canals are called promenades. In rural regions, they are rarely more than a flat, sandy edge to the canal. In cities and settled areas these promenades sometimes serve as bazaars (with permanent stores and stalls) or market places (for temporary trading). Other promenades are used as wide squares or parks to enhance the beauty of the grand canals where they pass through cities.

Levees

The levees rise up above the banks of the grand canals, and are meant to control the floods of the Martian spring. Outside the cities, these are often little more than hills of gravel and clay, but inside the Martian city-states, more care was given to their construction. Behind and on top of the levees, the buildings of the city rise in their full glory.

Crossings

Countless bridges cross the canals of Mars. A few basic bridge building principles were used to create a large number of different bridges. Almost all consist of two long causeways on each bank that reach across to where the low flow channel begins. To leave room for boats and masts to pass underneath, the bridge will either feature a sharp upwards arc to leave about 30 feet (10 m) between it and the average water level, or it will be equipped with a drawbridge or turning bridge system.

Straits

Though the typical canal is about a mile (1.6 km) wide, there are places where this width is reduced to between 1,300 and 300 feet (400–100 m). The canal builders were forced to dig the canals deeper in these places to keep the current speeds steady. These straits occur especially where a canal follows a cliff or passes through a city, or where two canals meet.

Locks

Locks help keep the water level of the canal at a navigable level, despite steep inclines and declines. Locks are placed at strategic points all along the grand canals, and where petty canals and grand canals meet.

Cataracts

Where the water needs to flow downhill for long stretches, this is, in many places, left to gravity. The wide current reaches the rim and falls the required distance, before it resumes the direction of the canal.

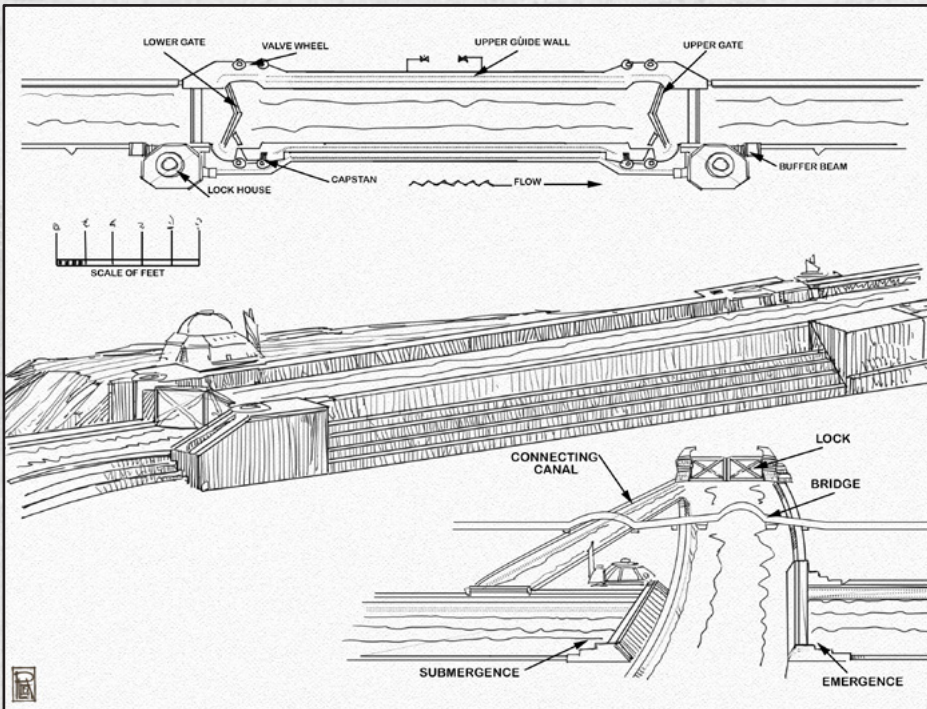
Initially, cataracts were built with large basins above and below the waterfall, and a reinforced rim. Time and the power of countless tons of water have worn away most of these cataract rims and left them uneven at best. Debris beneath the waterfall leaves the lower pool shallow and full of dangerous jagged fragments. Erosion above the waterfall fills the upper pool causing rapid, irregular currents. To protect the shipping from this, the canal builders have included bypasses for the cataracts. Petty canals and multilayered locks were the most common method, but cranes and slipways are also used in some places.

Cascade Pools

There are sections of the Martian canals where a long decline would accelerate the water too much. To correct this, these declines are sectioned off into a series of cascade pools: Wide, shallow pools that slow the water before directing it down the next section of the decline.

Aqueducts

In some places, one canal will flow through the length of a valley while another crosses a valley at a right angle. In these places, the canal builders erected massive aqueducts to bridge the valley and carry the water across the gap, while the other canal continues on down below.



Settling Pools

The grand canals widen and deepen at regular intervals along their length. This creates a large settling pool. The floor here is deliberately constructed to create torrents and turbulences, to ensure that debris, sand, and mud are flushed into the deeper parts where they won't obstruct the main canal.

As the canal floors lie dry during the low flow season, this lays bare the settling pools at least once a year. Canal-combers seize these moments to search the dirt and debris at the pool floor for salvage, valuable metals hidden in the mud, or even edible plants that grow here due to the considerable moisture in the soil.

Diligent city-states send work parties to clean the settling pools during the low flow.

They know full well that these settling pools will block the main canal after a few seasons, even destroy it eventually, unless they are maintained.

Crane Systems

At certain locations along the canal routes, the planners decided that ships and boats must be able to quickly and efficiently switch over from one canal to another. For a variety of reasons, they decided against using the usual lock system in these locations. That means a crane was needed to lift the ship across to the other canal.

The simplest of the crane systems moves the boat in one go. Cranes are often used near cataracts to also allow the ships to climb or descend great heights.

In the more complex crane systems, combinations of up to ten cranes in sequence come into play, with each lifting the boat vertically and across towards the destination for a specific distance. One system in the Belgian Coprates lifts the ships through a series of eight basins dug into the cliffs above Uir-Barbaat at the edge of the Ophir mountains. Each crane can move a boat up to 650 feet (200 m) and lift it more than 500 feet (150 m). A boat that passes through this crane system travels more than one mile (1.6 km) horizontally, and about 4,000 feet (1,200 m) vertically.

Crossovers

Where two canals meet, they can either join together or remain separate, depending on which option serves the water needs of the area better. Crossovers allow the majority of the water in each canal to remain on its original heading, while the surface water is exchanged, allowing ships and boats to switch from one canal to the other.

Slipways

Though the water might fall vertically at a cataract, ships and boats require gentler means of travel. If the distance is short enough, slipways constructed on gentle slopes allow for ships to be pulled up or let down.

Slipways can be dry or wet. A dry slipway requires that the boat be mounted on a wheeled frame which is then pulled along a smooth stone road from one end to the other. A wet slipway, along which a steady trickle of water flows, allows the boat to be pulled along a gently sloped canal directly—using pulleys or draft animals.

Pumping Stations (see p. 190)

Although the water in the canals flows through the force of gravity, there are many places where it must cross over mountains or descend down into a valley only to climb back out on the far end. The canal builders constructed pumping stations at key points to elevate the water where needed. These pumping stations differ greatly from one another, but almost all are ancient and built from materials that can no longer be replicated. Many were only haphazardly maintained and repaired over the millennia. It is astonishing how the canal builders designed these stations in such a way that the following generations were able to operate and maintain them with only a basic understanding of technology.

Many different methods were employed, and some can still be seen along the shores of the grand canals. Most depend on still unrecovered forms of ancient crystal technology, but in addition, several other and more exotic designs exist:

- Some pumping stations are powered by volcanic heat which produces steam, allowing the water to rise up to 2,000 feet (600 m) through a stone funnel before condensing back into liquid form.
- Other stations feature water flowing through a petty canal to move giant, stone water wheels: The majority of the canal water flows downhill, but that force is used to carry a fraction of the water upwards into a petty canal on top of a rock cliff.
- A station of unknown design pulls the water through an underground canal and spews it back out through a geyser some 10 miles (16 km) away. Explorers have noted extreme magnetic disturbances in the vicinity. Animals placed inside

waterproof containers appear to be able to safely traverse this stretch of the canal.

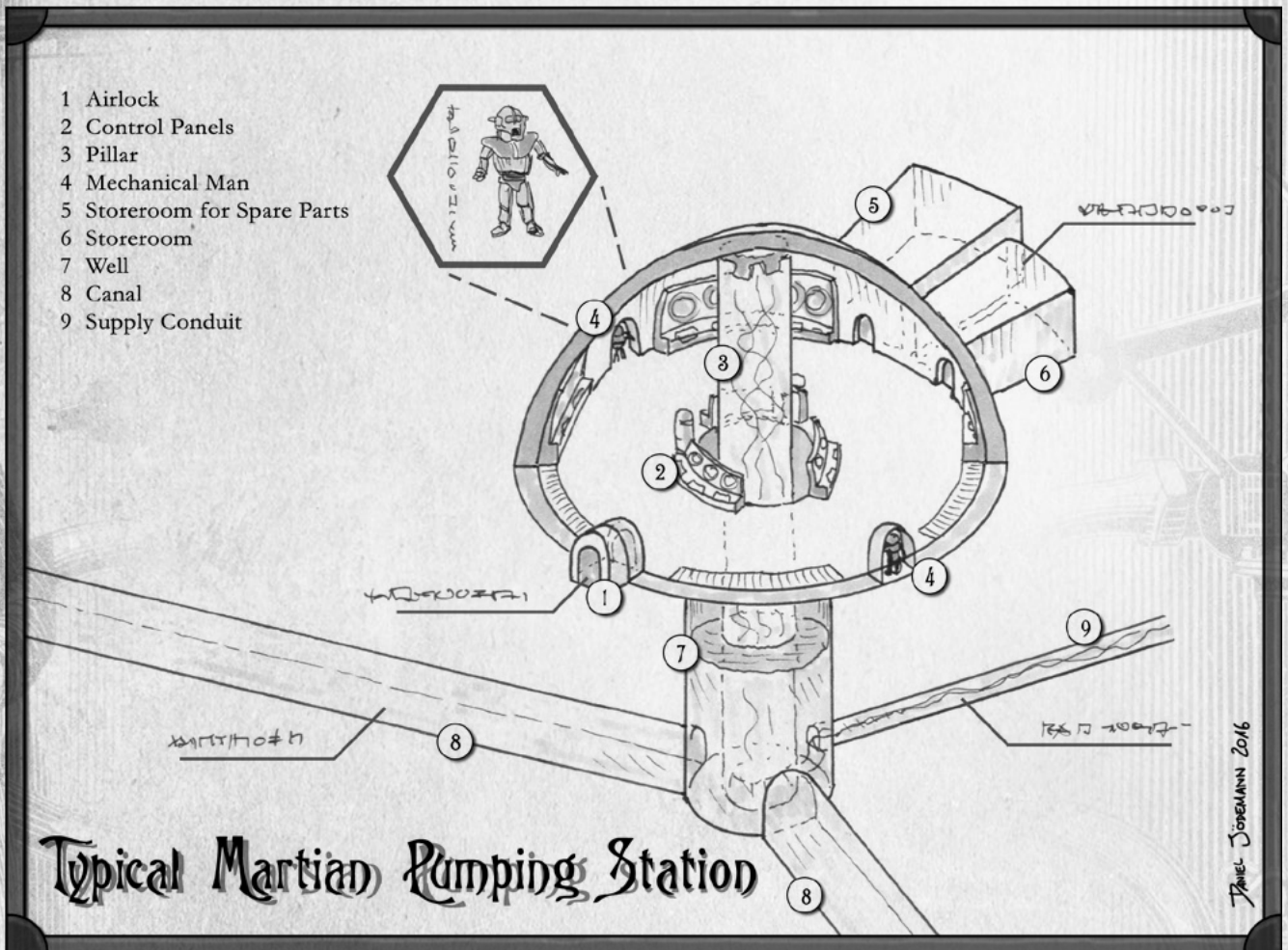
- The derelict Memnonia pumping station once carried massive amounts of water up the Gorgonum Sinus and into the desert beyond. Under the collapsed roof and beams of the station, the huge pistons, pools, and rusting pipes that once propelled the water up the valley can still be seen. Local legends claim that, to this day, the ruins are haunted by the ghosts of the workers who died trying to keep the station running, even as the individual parts kept failing with no chance of repair or replacement. When the station finally ceased operations completely, the grand canal to Arsia Silva was doomed to dry out. Eventually it was lost beneath the sands of the desert.
- The Aeolia pumping station, which once supplied the canals for Zephyria and Amenthes, employed massive turbine pumps to propel the water up a mountain slope. Its mysterious energy source (which fills a large chamber with deadly gas) has been losing power steadily over the millennia, until now the turbines only turn slowly, resulting in an insufficient flow going up the long pipe and beyond the mountains.

Other stations offer similarly mysterious mechanisms that have long since ceased functioning: Collapsed towers that once stood 3 miles (5 km) high; sealed crypts filled with caustic liquids; facilities that clearly once produced power, but not in any way that can be understood today.

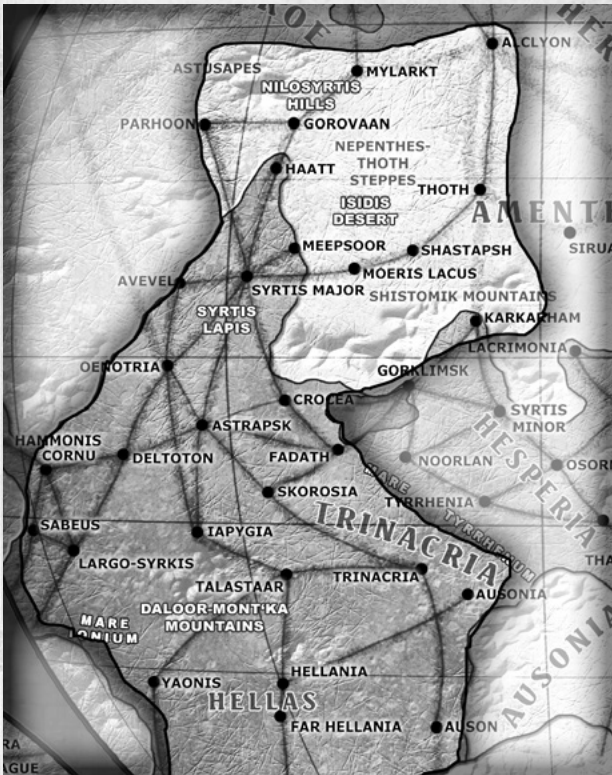
Destruction and Disrepair

Centuries of continuous use—proper or improper—or neglect have left their mark on the canals of Mars. When pumping stations fail and cannot be repaired further, large canal sections are condemned to a sandy death. In some regions, levee repairs were neglected; eventually this resulted in the canal being destroyed and large, difficult to traverse swamp land being created, such as near Gorklimsk. When conflicts between city-states prevent transport and trade along a certain canal section, this also prevents maintenance and repair of said canal. Inevitably, such canals will be buried in sand or rendered useless by collapsing banks.

After thousands of years, many of the canals no longer show the same quality and condition they once had when they were newly built. Collapsed walls have been replaced with stacked stones of far lesser quality. Levees were washed away and never replaced. New bridges have been built, and now their support pillars are affecting the water flow in unintended ways.



Syrtania - The Central Basin



Geography

This region has been the center of almost all Martian planetary maps since the times of Seldon, like Europe is on maps of Earth. The reason for this is *Syrtis Major*, which was the capital of the Seldon Empire and even today forms the largest Martian city in terms of population. As the British have landed here first, they have of course adopted this practice and view the deep basin of *Syrtis Lapis* as the natural center of Martian geography.

The *Trinacria* region and the *Hellas*, which stretches from the equator all the way to the South Pole, are included in this definition as an area called "Syrtania". The former coastline of *Syrtis Lapis* is only included in this name where it falls under British influence: As a result, the wild *Aeria* of the Western Desert, *Myllark* and the *Astusapes* mountains are still considered part of the Central Basin. To the east, the *Nepenthes-Thoth steppes* up to *Karkarham* and the *Shistomik* mountains are also part of it.

Climate

Syrtis Lapis features one of the densest sections of the planetary canal network, which ensures bearable living conditions near said canals—including for animals such as the canal sharks. The basin itself is, however, a dead desert. At the equator, near *Syrtis Lapis* and *Oenotria*, the day and night cycle is very regular. The sparsely settled south of the *Hellas* basin at the South Pole, on the other hand, has months of permanent daylight for half of the year, while for the other half it is shrouded in a dark, cold night.

The Gaaryani Languages

The most widespread family of languages on Mars is based on the ancient **Son-Gaaryani** of the Seldon Empire, sometimes considered the "Latin of Mars". Today, **Parhooni** (also known as **Gaaryani**) and English form the official languages of the crown colony. It is quite similar to the widely-known trade language **Koline**. Between the Central and Western Basins, the Martians speak **Noachan** and its many dialects, such as *Meridani-Noachan*.

Further languages of this family include the more primitive **Thaumasian**, spoken in *Thaumasia*, the *Coprates*, and in the *Bosporos*, with its clipped sounding vowels written with many hyphens, the guttural, feral sounding **Thark**, as well as the clean **Na-Gaaryani**, which still resembles the original *Son-Gaaryani* and is common in the region from *Gaaryan* to *Mare Acidalium*.

This language family can be readily learned by humans and features many sounds represented as double vowels in writings using the Latin alphabet. Its own written form uses 37 of the 628 symbols of the *Son-Gaaryani* syllabary, which are used as letters (not syllables) and resemble ancient Babylonian cuneiform writing. The double vowel sounds each have their own symbol.

Gaaryani is often colloquially referred to as "Martian" on Earth.

Laabuuk – good

Boagram – Goodbye

Moyaari – Please

Abraangara! Asak my Woolaat – Seize him! He has my wallet!

Moyaar tak pekuunuru, ak mu valaarihoo! – Please, take my money, but don't hurt me!

U nuruuk aak pashoon. – I don't want to buy that.

Bass, u nuruu aaka pashoonar! – No, I really don't want to buy that!

Shutuuv tokbaar u nurunuruu aakapam pashoon-ar-paach! – Get lost, I'm not buying the damned thing!

U nar tereek badrary Parhooni-sa. Oloo moy-aari odoor a halaan? – I don't seem to be taking the *Parhoonese* cuisine well. May I ask where the bathrooms are?

Bashaam valauraa ke torrees Varas dejaa? – Has anyone ever told you that you have beautiful eyes?

Daasar u Supruy aa Shutawa, ak barsaam vake-luuhaa tak Nothass – Yes, I have a wife, but our marriage vows only apply on Earth.

Simbuulaar waham, ak vangaar isska! – I don't know what it is, but it's coming right for us!

Syrtania

Only very resilient plants and animals, such as the various coral species of the basin, the death spiders, or the dust krakens, can survive in this climate (see p. 135).

In the highlands around the Syrtis Lapis basin, heat usually prevails, but thanks to the gentler microclimates in parts of the Nepenthes-Thoth and in the Shistomik and Astusapes mountains, those regions enjoy more favorable steppe climates and Martian highlands vegetation.

The Oenotrian War

The Central Basin is currently the battleground for a conflict between the British colonial forces and the Oenotrian Empire.

Start of the War (Early 1889)

Over the almost thirty years of their colonial presence, the British have fought and won several smaller wars against individual city-states (see p. 132). The Oenotrian Empire to the south watched these events with growing concern. In particular, the British annexation of Avenel, a historically close ally of Oenotria, was one of the reasons for the decision to go to war.

When the British eventually struck a decisive blow against King Hattabranx (p. 50) and plundered the liftwood of his Kraag Barrovar, Oenotria feared that the British might seize its own liftwood groves in the Astusapes and Shistomik mountains. Without these, it would be impossible for Oenotria to defend itself against the British or any of its other enemies.

Thus, in February 1889, the Oenotrian Empire declared war on the crown colony of Syrtis Lapis. Rumor has it that the *Ground-cleansers* and German agents also had a hand in encouraging this development.

First Attacks (1st half of 1889)

In the first weeks, the Oenotrians were indeed able to win several battles, but when the air force of the Royal Navy struck, the tide turned: Though the Oenotrian forces were far more numerous, the British gunboats possessed far greater firepower. They fell to the machine guns and cannons of the British, suffered great losses, and were steadily pushed back. Initially convinced their greater numbers and righteousness would bring them victory, they now became more cautious and the mood in the Empire soured.

In May 1889, the British Army was reinforced by troops from Earth and began counter-offensives on multiple fronts. These were very successful, but the British advance soon faltered.

The Current Situation (2nd half of 1889)

Critics bemoaned in particular the overly cautious methods of the British leader *General Sir George Willis*. In the halls of government, words like “cowardice” and “incompetence” are being spoken quietly, and some names like that of the more popular *Major General Clarke* are being proposed as replacements. But

Willis knows that time is on his side: He has proven in several battles that he can defeat the Oenotrians, but his complement of 15,000 British and allied Martian troops is now facing 75,000 Oenotrians. The General is remaining calm, citing the wait for the promised 5,000 additional soldiers from Earth as the reason for the delay. With them, the odds would shift against Oenotria. Until then, Willis plans to keep his own losses low and won't commit to relying on “native” troops for backup. As an experienced general, he does not wish to conduct reckless battles against an enemy with a numerical advantage of five to one.

The frontlines are settling, and neither side has sufficient air or ground forces to drastically change that at this point. Though skirmishes and air battles do occur, the front lines have remained in place for the second half of 1889. Instead, the British must tend to the Shastapsh Rebellion (p. 36), the siege of Alclyon (p. 36), as well as King Hattabranx and the Boreosyrtis League, their trade partner and victim of steadily increasing German pressure.

In the Balance - Means and Crisis Points of the Oenotrian War

The stalemate of the conflict is deceptive, as both sides are working feverishly to upset the balance in their favor:

On the British Side

General Willis is waiting for the promised reinforcements of 5,000 men from Earth. They would enable him to launch decisive offensives and to seize Oenotrian cities. He is already planning new offensives, forging new alliances with Martian city-states against Oenotria, and employing privateers to interdict enemy supply lines. The intelligence duties of the *Cartographic Office* are being expanded upon, and operations are being conducted along the frontlines near the Six Cities League in the Hellas and Trinacria area.

More on the British Military on p. 32.

On the Oenotrian Side

Oenotria does not see a way out of the political disaster that the war has wrought: The losses and failures have put the Empire under extreme success and time pressure, especially as they know that the arrival of 5,000 further, extremely well-equipped “Red Devils” would spell their doom. Their honor code, however, views anything short of victory, even a peace treaty, as weakness and failure, enough to destroy the alliance of the six cities. As described on p. 44, the priest-scientists of the Empire are thus working on uncovering ancient secrets which could offer an effective weapon against the British. This faith in miracle weapons has caused a concerted effort and an expenditure of resources into countless archaeological digs, espionage into the libraries of other Martian cities, and the creation of testing laboratories. They might indeed acquire potent artifacts and valuable knowledge by these means, which could allow them to launch a successful offensive, especially since they now know the British tactics and are able to adapt and imitate them.

The Crown Colony of Syrtis Lapis - The British on Mars

History

From 1872 - Beginnings of Colonization

From the beginning, the British have understood how to use Martian politics to their advantage during colonization. They began with a trade colony in Parhoon, and established good relations with the canal prince there. When he and his son were assassinated in 1878, likely at the hands of an agent sponsored by Gorovaan, the British managed to prevent a coup the following day. As the next heir to the throne was only three months old, Queen Victoria claimed the regency in Parhoon in his name; the British commissioner *Sir Phillip Adelaide* was the first to perform this duty.

1878-79 - Gorovaangian War (First War of the Parhoon Succession)

After the prevented coup, Gorovaan launched an invasion into Parhoon, during which the British assisted their allies against the common foe. Amongst other things, they equipped the *Parhoon Rifles* regiment, recruited from Martians, which was to later become a permanent part of the British Army as *Queen Victoria's Own Martian Rifles*. Additionally, British officers and soldiers (especially from the artillery corps) served aboard the small fleet of Parhoonese aerial flyers to operate the British machine guns and cannons. With this British support, Parhoon defeated and annexed Gorovaan.

1880 - Second War of the Parhoon Succession

Shortly thereafter, a second war broke out in which the British Army now officially took part. The Parhoonese fleet was expanded with screw galleys mounting Hotchkiss cannons and Gatling guns, leading to great successes against the enemy, the Syrtanic fleet. In the end, Syrtis Major, Haatt, and Avenel were integrated into the *Crown Colony of Syrtis Lapis*. *Lord Dundas*, who also directed Parhoon and Gorovaan, was named Governor. Great Britain now controlled enough territory on Mars to require its own air fleet and Army detachment to be stationed there.

Since 1882 - Expansion of the British Fleet

The British troops were expanded and reinforced over the following years and new shipyards were built in Syrtis Major, Parhoon, and Avenel, leading to two ironclad aerial gunboats being launched as early as 1882: *The Aphid* and *The Ladybug*. In 1886, further ships of the *Locust* class were launched. By 1888, the mighty *Macefield* followed, and finally, in 1889, the cruisers of the *Intrepid* class.

Since 1885 - The Royal Navy and the Red Captains

When the order came to hand all British aerial flyers on Mars over to the newly arrived commanders of the Royal Navy, many captains were embittered, viewing the newly arrived officers they

People: Humans (British), Canal Martians
Location: Syrtis Lapis Basin reaching to Avenel in the South, canal cities in the surrounding highlands
Languages: Parhooni, Koline, English, Low Oenotrian (between Shastapsh and Moeris Lacus)
Cities in Syrtis Lapis: Syrtis Major (Stafrana, capital, largest city on Mars, pop. 500,000), Avenel (Avashnapaal, shipyards, claim disputed by Oenotria), Haatt (Lock city, pop. 40,000)
Cities in the Parhoon Protectorate: Parhoon (industrial city, pop. 98,000), Gorovaan (Run-down city of the arts, pop. 65,000)
Protected city-states: Moeris Lacus (trade hub), Meepsoor (trade hub, pop. 50,000), former Shastapsh (In uprising, pop. incl. surrounding lands 90,000)
Nearby areas: Alclyon (trade hub, gate to the Eastern Desert), Thoth (Phoomlarkt, provincial city, fanatically religious), Karkarham (privateer port, melting pot, pop. 90,000), Mylarkt (decayed "city of drugs", pop. 150,000)
Industries: Aerial flyer building, coal mining, bhutan export, import of British products, export of Martian wares

The most important colonial power on Mars is Great Britain. They were the first to found a colony and managed to claim Syrtis Major, the most populous city of the planet. This colony is not popular with all Martians, though.

Territory

The Empire has expanded its zone of influence considerably over the last few decades: The entire **Syrtis Lapis Basin**, with Syrtis Major at its center, is part of the direct crown colony.

To the north, their influence reaches to the highlands of Parhoon and Gorovaan, though it is weak in Mylarkt; beyond there, the *Boreosyrtis League* (p. 77) is the major power, though it is a trade partner.

To the south, Avenel is under British rule, though the *Oenotrian Empire* contests this claim, with the war's frontline lying south of the city.

To the east, the British influence reaches along the canals by the Nepenthes-Thoth steppe. Shastapsh was a British protectorate until the population rose up in rebellion, while Great Britain only exerts unofficial influence over Karkarham, Thoth, and Alclyon.

To the west, the wild *Kel Avashiim* (p. 83) in the hills of Aeria obstruct any and all ambitions to influence the trade along the Tea Road directly, and as a result all expansion plans in this direction have been put on ice.

Syrtania

were being forced under as “inexperienced cadets”. Many officers thus resigned their commissions and became privateers. These *Red Captains* are, in essence, pirates.

1889 - The Oenotrian War

More on the currently raging colonial war can be found on p. 30. It is the chief concern of the British, before fears of German expansion, attacks by Hattabranx’s hordes, and rebellions such as that in Shastapsh.

Government and Politics

The British territory is divided into the crown colony of Syrtis Lapis, the Parhoon Protectorate (including the annexed Gorovaan), as well as further city-state protectorates that enjoy the contractually agreed promise of British military support.

The commander in chief is *Lord Robert Dundas*. The cities of the crown colony are ruled by provincial commissioners under him, while the protectorates are controlled by so-called residents, who represent British interests in the cities. The dealings with the Canal Martian rulers differ: Inside the crown colony, the British are officially in power. The canal princes in the protectorates, however, are usually allowed to retain their titles and certain rights, while the British claim control over trade, military, and foreign policy, which in all practical terms puts them in charge.

Military

The Royal Navy on Mars

Since the Royal Navy took control of all British air assets on Mars, it has established bases in Syrtis Major, Parhoon, and Meepsoor, and built squadrons of gunboats and aerial cruisers.



General Sir George Willis

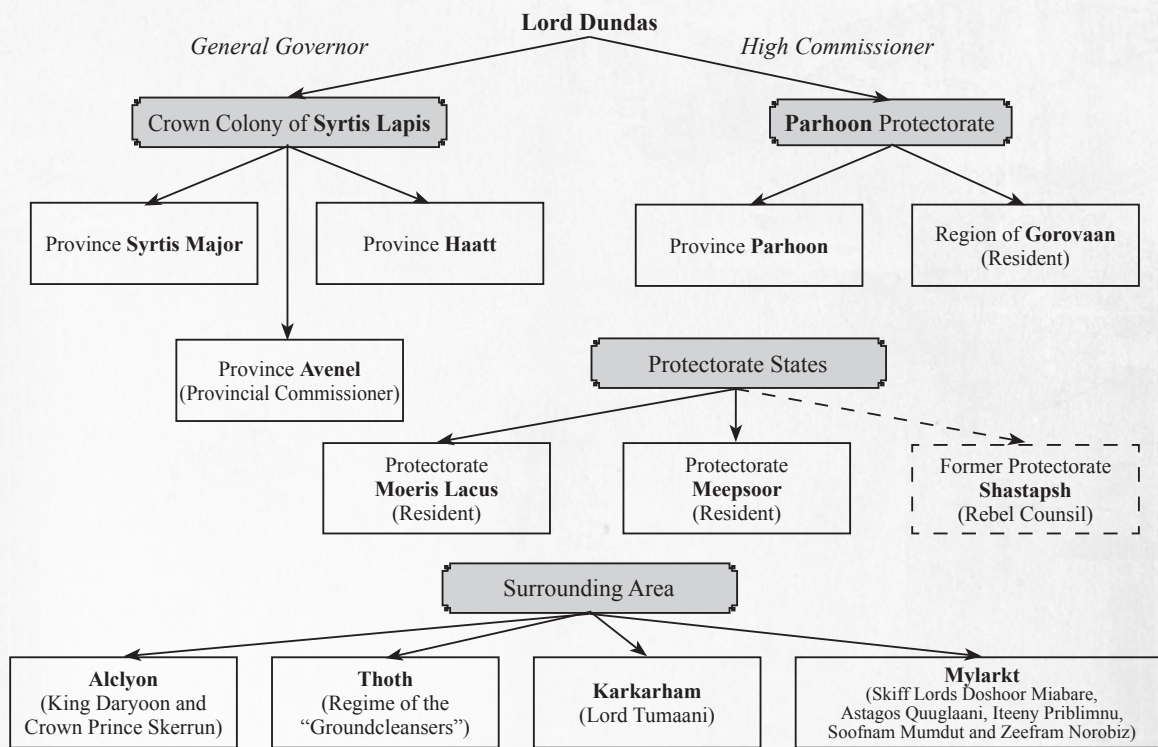
Born in 1823 in Sopley, Hampshire, the list of battles that this officer has fought so far is long. He first joined the British military as an officer in 1841. He led a company of grenadiers as early as during the Crimean War, before taking command of the *Royal Warwickshire Fusiliers* and serving an exemplary career. In the early 1880s, he led troops in the Egyptian campaign and was finally transferred to the Red Planet, where his skills were needed: The famously cautious and diligent general was about to retire when the Oenotrian War began. After a series of early victories, he insisted on a strategy of consolidation until reinforcements arrived, postponing any further advance until that time, as reckless, eager action goes against his preference.

The Cartographic Office

This seemingly harmless government bureau is actually a front for the British Secret Service, led by the competent Director *Charles Marrivale*. One of the most important fields of operation against the backdrop of the Oenotrian War is, in fact, continuing the mapping of Mars. While excellent maps are available for the crown colony and its allies, the front with the Oenotrian Empire is in large parts still Terra Incognita. Thus, agents of the CO frequently travel aboard British air ships and collect information on the geography of the front, enemy troop movements, information on strategic targets, or the locations of buried cities and secret Oenotrian dig sites.

Sometimes, these missions take them behind enemy lines, and, it is said, there are spies in the Hellas basin that probe the possibility of recruiting allies able to open a second front against Oenotria. The recent recruitment of a turncoat German officer who knows details of the German activities in the North is considered a major success of the CO.

Besides these regular Navy aerial flyers, two additional groups are allied with them: The *Parhoonese Fleet* and the *Red Captains*. Neither could simply be placed under Royal Navy command, nor could they be disarmed without incident: The Parhoonese were allowed to retain this semblance of independence, while the Red Captains were deemed to be too dangerous to risk making them enemies. Thus, some of them were integrated as *auxiliaries* into the Royal Navy to exert at least partial control over them. The remainder are issued regularly-renewed letters of marque to maintain the appearance of legality.



Lord Robert Dundas

The Scottish governor of the crown colony can look back on a long, traditional family history. It was for the service and accomplishments of his ancestor *Henry Dundas* (1742–1811) that the British Empire first created the hereditary noble title of *Viscount Melville* in the *Peerage of the United Kingdom* (the British system of nobility). Ever since, the family has served in influential positions in the government and military, such as State Secretary of War and Lord of the Admiralty.

Robert is the 5th Viscount Melville and his appointment as governor of Syrtis Lapis at age 50 is sure to be the high point of his career.

He is an educated, honest man, personifying the ideal image of British nobility: Always prim and proper, strictly following British traditions, even on Mars. He can be found inspecting colonial installations, in his office, at one of the gentleman clubs of Syrtis Major, at festive openings of new buildings, playing golf on the course along the Syrtis Major–Parhoon canal or, at five o’clock, behind a cup of delicious Protonilus-root-tip scaambra-tea.

Dundas has gained a keen insight into the Martian culture. His pro-Martian stance in many areas is seen as a weakness by many on Earth, and thus talks are being held to discuss his honorable retirement. On Earth, he would likely have his choice of position. A potential successor is *Sir Henry Routledge*, a harsh, militaristic man who is unlikely to care much about Martian culture or diplomatic niceties.

Mentor 5

Archetype: Politician

Motivation: Fame

Style: 5

Health: 8

Primary Attributes

Body: 3

Charisma: 5

Dexterity: 3

Intelligence: 4

Strength: 2

Willpower: 5

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0

Initiative: 7

Move: 5

Defense: 6

Perception: 11

Stun: 3

Skills

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Academics	4	4	8	(4)
Brawl	2	2	4	(2)
Bureaucracy	4	4	8	(4)
Diplomacy	5	6	11	(5+)
Empathy	4	2	6	(3)
Firearms	3	3	6	(3)
Intimidation	5	3	8	(4)
Linguistics	4	2	6	(3)

Talents

Alertness, Inspire 2, Skill Mastery (Academics)

Resources

Contacts 5, Fame 2, Followers 4, Rank 4, Refuge 3, Status 4, Wealth 3

Flaws

Overconfident

Languages

English, French, German, Koline, Parhooni

Weapons

Weapons	Damage	Size	Attack (Average)	Speed	Rate	Range
Punch	0 N	0	4 N	(2) N	-	-
Derringer	2 L	0	8 L	(4) L	D	1 3 m

British Ground Troops

The ground troops of the *Royal Army* under *General Sir George Willis* currently count 15,000 men, with 5,000 more being expected to arrive soon. These are predominantly **infantry** units. Part of this force consists of “native” Martians, in particular the *Queen Victoria's Own Martian Rifles* from the loyal Parhoon.

The *Lancashire Fusiliers* and the *King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry* under *Lt. Colonel Sir Peter Barker* stand ready to depart as reinforcements, as are the *Buffis*, the *Scottish Rifles*, the *Gordon Highlanders* and the *1st Bombay Grenadiers of the Indian Army*, alongside a battalion of Gurkhas and the *1st Sikhs of Punjab*.

Gashant riding **cavalry** units such as the *Royal Gashant Corps* have been founded as well. **Artillery** is also employed on Mars, but remains a limited asset due to the difficulty of transporting heavy equipment to Mars.

Role in the Region

The British are the dominant power in the region, even ahead of the Oenotrian Empire (p. 41). They act as a confident colonial power, possess superior technology, and have turned the balance of power on its head: They elevated the once inferior Parhoon to a position of rulership over Gorovaan, creating both an ally but also a vengeful enemy. Cities such as Moeris Lacus, Alclyon, and Meepsoor profit from their cooperation, others such as Karkarham and Mylarkt lie far enough away to avoid direct British rule, while yet others such as Shastapsh have risen up against them.

Culture and Technology

The British Empire has provided the city-states of Syrtis Lapis with a technological leap forward. Steam engines and modern factories work continuously, powered by Parhoon's coal. Funnels shroud the Martian cities in smoke, buildings of British design are being erected, and industrialization is in full swing. Many customs of the “superior civilization” of the British have been adopted.

Current Martian achievements are rarely taken seriously, more likely ignored as primitive—not just by the British, but also by many Martians themselves. Only ancient miracle technology from the times of Seldon or of the canal builders might just draw the attention of British scientists. Too often, though, they are too arrogant to not dismiss such stories as fairy tales.

Cities of the Crown Colony of Syrtis Lapis

Syrtis Major (Stafrana)

The capital of the British on Mars is described extensively in the **Core Rules**, p. 89–92.

Avenel (Avashpapaal)

Avenel is a strategically important city on the southern border of the crown colony. Ever since it has fallen into British hands,

The Royal Parhoon Telegraph Service

One thing that puts the British Empire ahead of previous global powers is its effective communications. On Earth, a widespread telegraph network exists, and a similar system has been installed on Mars from Syrtis Lapis all the way to Moeris Lacus. All the cities in the colonies and protectorates feature a telegraph office, as do the three command posts near the Oenotrian front.

The Royal Parhoon Telegraph Service, with its head office in Parhoon, operates the Martian network. The British military uses it to transmit orders, but private correspondence is also possible, with prices as low as 1 shilling for a short message of 80 characters.

Other than the British, only the Belgians have installed a telegraph network, in their Coprates territory. The Boreosyrtis League and the Tossian Empire are in the process of building one. The Tossian one is slated to be installed by American engineers from Western Union, as soon as the bureaucratic matters are settled.

Telephone Services

Parhoon, Gorovaan, Syrtis Major and other cities, such as Thymiamata and Meroe have (purely local) telephone networks, which function with the assistance of switchboard operators. The first connection *between* two cities was to be established between Parhoon and Syrtis Major, though the outbreak of war put those plans on hold. It is, however, possible to call the telegraph office to have a message sent to another city.

In particular, the government offices have telephones, as do all respected professional groups such as doctors and lawyers. Syrtis Major even has two competing networks: The cheaper network owned by Canal Prince *Amraamtaba*, which, besides his palace, also connects many shops and trade offices, and the somewhat more expensive network run by the British Government, which amongst other things connects all British offices. As there is no way to connect the two competing networks, the British Ambassadors and the prince of the city must continue to use messengers to communicate.

The Orbital Heliograph Stations

With the completion of the *Orbital Heliograph Stations*, which orbit Mars and Earth, the Mars colony has been connected to the Empire on Earth. The *Foresage* is the Martian part of the heliograph system. Placed in Martian orbit, it sends and receives messages to and from Earth's companion station, *Harbinger*, via light beam. Incoming messages are directed to the British residence in Parhoon where the military decodes them. Private use is possible, at £10 or more per message. Oenotria suspects the station is also used for espionage.

it has been a point of contention with the Oenotrian Empire: The Oenotrians lay historical claim to the city, which the British pay little attention to, being only interested in its shipyards and factories. The frontline with Oenotria lies south of Avenel, and it is expected that Avenel would be the primary objective of any major Oenotrian offensive. Consequently, the city is heavily fortified with a major military presence, including several aerial flyers of the Royal Navy.

Haatt

The small “lock city” of Haatt relies on tolls as its main income source. Many ancient locks lie on this steep incline, which are also used for power generation and are excellently maintained.

Haatt has always been politically neutral: Canal traffic is profitable, and the central location has always provided ample protection from raids by the Hill or High Martians. Each attempt to annex the city has been fiercely fought off by the canal princes. However, fearing a loss of influence, Haatt formally joined the British in their war in 1880. In gratitude, the canal princes were allowed to retain their status, though they are now subjects of the British Crown.

Parhoon Protectorate

Before Seldon, under *Haatanethra I*, Parhoon and Gorovaan were part of one kingdom, with Parhoon being the less important part. That is why Gorovan attacked the city in 1879, believing it to be their historical property that required defending against Terran occupation. Their failure in the face of British intervention led to the two cities now being enemies. The Parhoonese are by now fully integrated into the British system of government. The heir to the throne is still a young boy of school age and is being raised by the British in their image, giving them confidence that Parhoon politics will continue to play out in ways beneficial to Great Britain.

Parhoon

The city surrounded by the hills between Aeria and Astusapes lies on a canal between Syrtis Major, lying at an altitude 2,000 feet (600 m) lower, and Gorovaan. Towards Syrtis Major, the canal features countless locks. Towards Gorovaan, the canal runs in an impressively straight and wide line through the hills, along the borders of the High Martian territories of the Astusapes. Bandit attacks by the High Martians and Queln are frequent. Parhoon directs much of its efforts towards maintaining the locks to Syrtis Major and sufficiently patrolling the canal towards Gorovaan.

This city, like no other, profits from the blessings of the British: The industry is booming, not least because of the region’s coal deposits—rare elsewhere on Mars—which have made possible the exceptional level of industrialization of Parhoon and Syrtis Major. Many British companies maintain offices in Parhoon, and cooperation with the Parhoonese businesses is strong.

In matters of architecture, modern constructions show a distinctly British influence. The excellently trained Parhoonese military also ensures the national pride of the city remains intact. Parhoon is confidently looking towards a bright future and is very tolerant towards the humans; no other Martian city is home to more Earth people.

For now, Parhoon is officially ruled by Lord Dundas as High Commissioner and by *Victor Smedley-Harris* as his second in command. This has been the case since an assassination sponsored by Gorovaan in 1878 left the three-month-old *Mala-Daarni* as the last living heir to the throne. Today, this young Anwaak is being raised by the British to one day take the throne of both Parhoon and Gorovaan as a loyal ally of the British. He is attending the prestigious Eton College in England, alongside other future canal princes. During his visits, he and his staff reside in a **citadel** above the city, which is currently being redecorated in a modern, Victorian style.

The British are at home in countless buildings in the city, such as several **gentlemen clubs**, such as the **Parhoon Cricket Club**, next to the **cricket field**. For the ladies, several tea houses have been established, and for wealthy clients, the **Imperial Standard Hotel** has been in operation since 1880, a building constructed in a fusion of Martian and Earth styles using stones from ruins in the surrounding lands. Another fusion of Earth and Martian culture is the **British-Martian Library**, where world literature of both planets can be found.

The British military operates several **forts** for the defense of the city, as well as a **military hospital** which is also available for civilian Earth citizens. Though there are a few private **shipyards**, the most modern one is owned by the British Navy and is the only one able to build steel-armored aerial flyers (though the others are capable of repairs and weapons installation). One of the most important facilities lies about 15 miles (25 km) outside the city: The **coal mine** is strategically irreplaceable and is heavily guarded, as coal deposits are exceedingly rare on Mars.

Gorovaan (↔ see p. 190)

Gorovaan marks the edge of British influence to the north and lies between stretches of the desolate Meroe wastes and the hills of Nilosyrtris. Because they lost the war against Parhoon, the Gorovaanese view the shared colonial masters with resentment.

Gorovaan was once a powerful city full of beauty with an ancient history. But the long, beautiful streets and the breathtaking towers are falling further and further into disrepair while this former center of the arts and sciences retreats more and more into the past. Archivists hoard old knowledge to the best of their ability, but instead of creating anything new, the people of Gorovaan prefer to pine after days long gone, when the Zaganooors still reigned.

Protected City-states

Moeris Lacus (Napshtatshash)

This merchant city on the grand canal between Syrtis Major and Shastapsh has been under the protection of the British since 1882. It is considered to be an outpost next to wilderness. Being the easternmost city of the crown colony, the British colloquially like to call it “The Far East”. Though it is nominally governed by an Anwaak, the British control the military.

Moeris Lacus was unaffected by the Oenotrian War, at first, as it lies far from the frontline. This changed when Shastapsh rebelled. Ever since then, trade to the east has instead passed through Meepsoor, while the trade-dependent economy of Moeris Lacus has collapsed. Unemployment and poverty have become major problems, leading to frequent bouts of vandalism and crime. The British troops are maintaining control, however—except in the deepest Martian slums.

Meepsoor

This city signed a protection treaty with the British in 1882. It is supported by British aid money and its foreign policy is being conducted by a local British resident.

Shastapsh - The City of Rebellion

This canal city is unusual in that it doesn't have its origins, as most do, in the age of Seldon, but was founded much later. Although some legends claim it was built by *Idaan Shastapshaan*, a rival of Seldon, archaeological clues indicate that it was built in post-imperial times and is closer to 300 years old, as opposed to 3,000. These same clues also indicate that the city began as a bandit camp which started collecting canal tolls. Choosing to ignore these "base canards", Lord *Omahuundan II* always bore the family name of the founder *Shastapshaan* with pride, until he was replaced by the greedy *Gemoortav*.

The city is home to about 60,000 inhabitants and counts half as many again as its own in the smaller settlements around the canals in the area. Besides Parhooni, Cebreni and Hespesian are also spoken here.

History

For a while, relations with the British were passable and the city became a protectorate. But when six assassins belonging to an anti-British cult killed two British people (one of them a Methodist missionary), tempers in British politics flared and demands were made to hand the murderers over. Only when British gun flyers threatened to bombard the city did the canal prince comply (possibly delivering six unrelated Martians whom he'd declared guilty). But from this moment on, he was filled with hate for the British. In 1887, ongoing anger by British merchants directed at the high tolls in Shastapsh led to the annexation of the city by Military Governor *Jeremy Strutt*. Lord *Gemoortav* abdicated voluntarily in exchange for a notable sum of money, much to the chagrin of his subjects who felt abandoned and betrayed.

When the Oenotrian War broke out, many troops were pulled out of the city. Only a small contingent from Meepsoor and *Moreris Lacus* stayed behind. When the Martians marched through the streets, shouting, during the *Festival of the Quick Moon*, the unpopular Governor Strutt ordered the Martian city watch to put an end to the festival, an order that was refused. When British soldiers opened fire on the mob, it was the spark that set off the rebellion. Strutt was killed by rebels while trying to flee. The former Lord *Omahuundan II* was most likely a driving force behind this escalation and saw the rebellion as an opportunity to reclaim his throne, though he failed in doing so.

The Situation Today

Instead, the Red-Black-Green flag of independence now flies above the city and an elected council of fifteen rebels governs it and sees to its defense. Of particular influence on the council are *Laareb Mitaav*, who commands the army, *Agodak Juduuz*, the chief of police and the tribunals, and *Vashtann Eelogeem*, a popular leader of the masses.

America does not formally recognize the independence of the city-state, but unofficially supports the rebels as their government shows signs of turning into a young democracy. *Percival Lowell*, the American ambassador, plays an important role in the city.

The Lands around the Colony

Alclyon

This city in the northeast of the Nepenthes-Thoth steppe is called the "Gate to the Eastern Desert" and plays an important role in the caravan trade with its east. It is independent, but has close ties to the British. The ruler here, *Daryoon*, styles himself a "king", and his son, crown prince *Skerrun*, has been attending Oxford for several years now, where he is being educated and trained—according to the needs of the British Crown. One might call him a hostage held by the British, especially as the Arina Stone of the city, which the city of Alclyon holds in such high honor that whoever holds it is guaranteed the rule of the city, is with him on Earth. It is planned that before the year 1889 is out, *Skerrun*'s return will also see the stone brought back to Mars "as a sign of good faith".

Alclyon has beautiful, old buildings and a many-faceted culture, influenced by the trade contacts to the people of the Western Desert, the riders of the Nepenthes-Thoth, the Boreosyrtris League, and now the British crown colony.

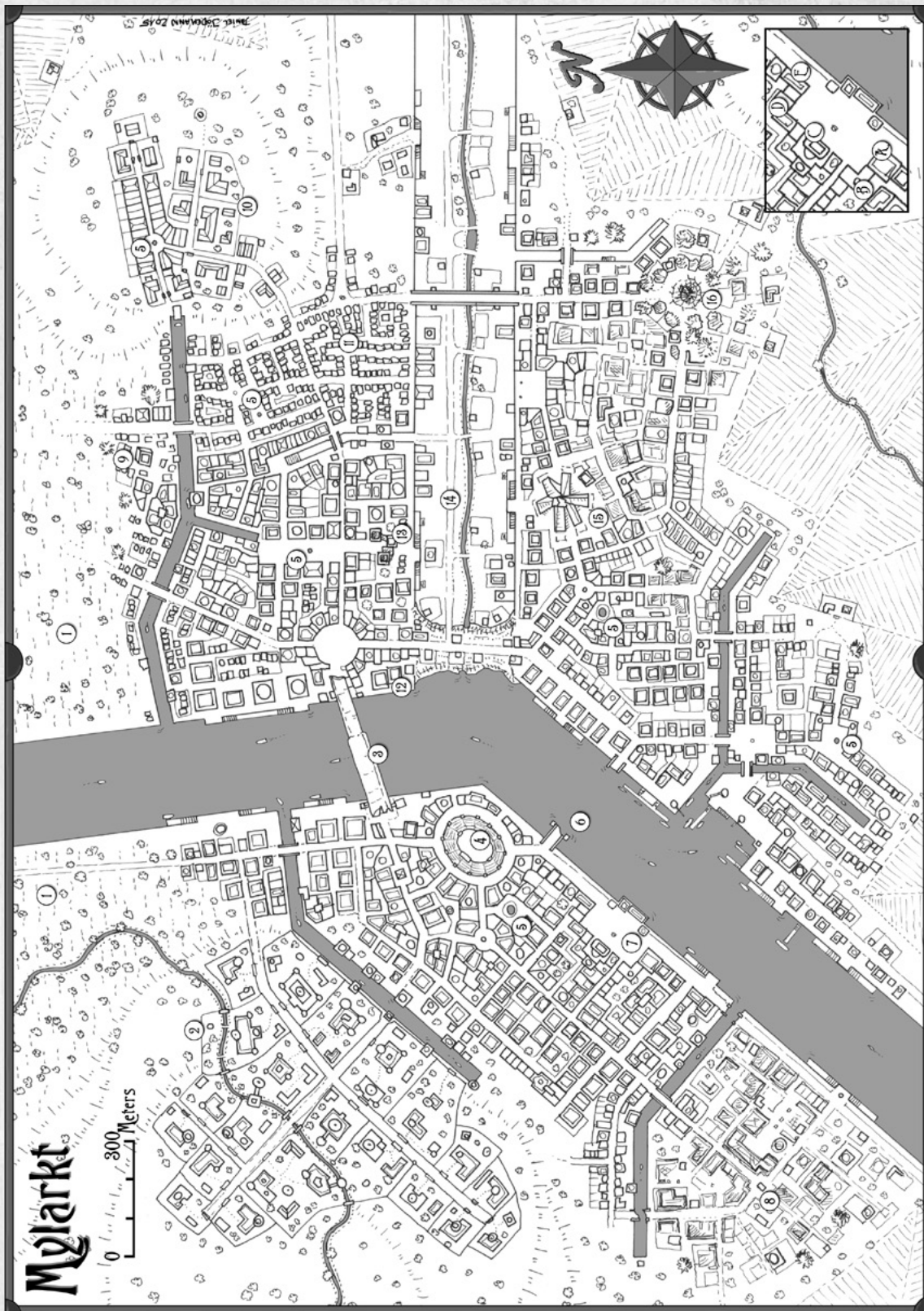
Thoth (Phoomlarkt)

This city-state at the edge of the Nepenthes-Thoth steppe was once an important trade hub on a canal intersection. As two of these canals have long since dried out and can now only be used as caravan roads, Thoth today is little more than a sleepy stopover for traders passing through. But this typical minor state of Mars has recently been drawing attention due to an unnamed religious cult that is gaining prominence here, similar to the *Groundcleansers*. These cultists are easy to recognize by their robes. They eye any and all humans they meet with suspicion. They have almost entirely taken over the city's bureaucracy and government by now. Many Martians are fleeing the city to escape this regime, as any opposition is met with violence. Humans are left alone, for now, as long as they keep to the areas of the city they are permitted to enter (the merchant quarter and the freight ports), but they are not recognized as having any rights anywhere else. All incoming and outgoing merchants are strictly supervised by the "Truth Squadrons" of these fanatics. This new government is still fighting for power, though, and several outlying regions are under martial law. It is generally forbidden to openly carry weapons. The noble district is home to the palace of the former canal prince, who has been overthrown and whose only daughter, Lady *Aramaranda*, is an icon for the local rebels.

Mylarkt - The Delirious City

Mylarkt is proven to be one of the oldest cities on the planet, being mentioned first in documents of the canal builders as a trade hub, and is showing its age quite badly. Most of the buildings are in terrible condition and are barely maintained.

The five rulers of the city call themselves 'Skiff Lords' and have been locked in a cold war of succession for five centuries. Today, *Doshoor Miabare*, *Astagos Quuglaani*, *Iteeny Priblimnu*, *Soofnam Mumdut*, and *Zeefram Norobiz* are basically gang leaders who count their family members—as well as criminal elements—in their ranks.



Mylarkt-Key

- | | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 The Sludge | 7 Miabare Market | 13 The Scorched Archive | A Anatato's Elixirs |
| 2 Painted Quarter | 8 Koning's Station | 14 Old Alclyon Way | B Miabare's Townhouse |
| 3 Priblimnu's Crossing | 9 The Weeping Tower | 15 Hand of Fohshoon | C Nine Briars Emporium |
| 4 Blood Pit | 10 Embassy Quarter | 16 Fireworm Point | D Mylarkt Armory |
| 5 Water Holes | 11 The Scourings | | E The Explorer |
| 6 Collapsed Bridge | 12 Memory Market | | |

Little thrives in the way of culture in Mylark, but the city folk do pride themselves on being part of 'the oldest city on Mars'. They claim to be descended from the "first builder", a mythological figure whose roots go back to the canal builders.

Statues of this faceless, masked or cloaked Canal Martian can be found everywhere in the city. The Mylarkti, as the locals call themselves, are noted for wearing masks to cover their face, mouth, and lower jaw, to protect themselves from the omnipresent smoke. The masks are also shaped and colored to denote the wearer's profession and status, loyalty to a Skiff Lord, and even the city district they come from. To remove someone else's mask is considered a mark of intimacy that is reserved for family members or lovers.

The city is in such disrepair and corruption so widespread that neither the British nor the Germans have succeeded in conquering it. There have been halfhearted attempts, but no government has lasted longer than a few days. During the 'Mylark Incident' in 1886, German and British aerial flyers exchanged fire, damaging parts of the city.

Mylark owes its name to the constant shroud of biting smoke and steam that hangs over the city. While this miasma offers some relief from the direct rays of the Sun, it fosters all manner of pulmonary troubles. Nobody willingly lives in the higher levels of Mylark's towers, perpetually shrouded by toxic fumes. Humans are very susceptible and being sent to Mylark is considered a punishment by soldiers and diplomats alike. The last two British envoys sent to the Skiff Lords died of chest infections so their embassy here is run by a group of very demotivated administrators.

The acrid smoke issues from massive underground vents, cracks in the ancient foundations of the city, where the narrow chasms run down to a continually burning fire in the city's ancient waste disposal facilities. All attempts to venture down into the vents have ended in tragedy, unless aborted early on. Before the succession wars, the Skiff Lords would spend vast sums to cover up these cracks but this hasn't happened in centuries.

Trade in Mylark

Mylark is infamous for its **four great market squares**, each filled with smuggled and illegal goods. Even human slaves are traded here, and numerous Ladies from Earth have been sold into the harems of rich Martians already. Amongst other things, bhutan spice from outside the British monopoly are available here. Each market is run by one of the skiff lords. The **Miabare Market**, for example, lies on the canal and stretches out around a statue of the 'first builder'. Many of the traders here like to operate out of their boats and cheat foreigners; should the disappointed customer return to complain, the boat will have already left and docked again at another spot in the convoluted port.

The **Old Alcyon Way** is a dried-up canal whose bed serves as a caravan road to Alcyon. The canal section inside the city is used as a launching point for these caravans and offers all sorts of stores and side halls for the storage of goods. Many of these facilities belong to the *Quuglaani* family.

The Districts of the City

The **Embassy Quarter** houses embassies for the British and the Germans, as well as a Belgian **Bureau de l'AIP**. Around this area is where most humans live in Mylark, where they are reasonably safe thanks to substantial protection payments to the Skiff Lords. Even so, the embassies are run down and understaffed. They also constantly stage intrigues against one another.

The wealthiest district is the **Painted Quarter**. This is where the Skiff Lords, gang leaders, and rich merchants live and where

the crime rate is at its lowest. The district owes its name to the colorful, geometric patterns on the towers and buildings.

Most of the **other districts** are dilapidated. For example, none feature running water in the buildings; all are dependent on public '**water holes**'. These pumping stations also serve as forums where thoughts on politics or gossip can be exchanged. The walls are used as advertising billboards, blackboards, and for propaganda by the Skiff Lords.

A convoluted mess of tunnels, underground storage halls, sewage canals, and other rooms are referred to as the **Undercity**. Even though poisonous gases are everywhere down here, and some areas are even infested by feral roogies or durge flies, this part of the city is in heavy use. Stories of hidden, ancient technology and treasures in the depths of the hallways abound. The *Tunnel Runners*, who know the undercity like the back of their hands, use it for smuggling while also offering their services as envoys and guides.

The **Sludge** covers part of the farmland around the city and was caused by insufficient maintenance of water pipes and the canal system. This land is toxic, and the Skiff Lords like to use it to dispose of bodies. Rumors persist of monstrous beasts living inside it.

Buildings of Note

Two special **towers** represent the **Hand of Fohshoon** and **Priblimnu's Crossing**: The first is a series of towers that didn't collapse when a sinkhole opened beneath them only because they crashed together and now support each other. Toxic fumes escape the sinkhole, leaving this area devoid of all but the poorest among the poor—and criminals trying to disappear. The tower of the Priblimnu family did collapse and now lies across the canal, mostly intact and about 65 feet (20 m) above the water. It is the only functional bridge across the canal, and so the Priblimnu family collects a heavy toll for its use. Ever since the Mylark incident, during which this tower was among many damaged buildings, some fear that the tower lying on its side might finally snap and block off the canal with its rubble, to devastating effect.

The **Blood Pit** of Mylark is an amphitheater that serves as an arena, where criminals and desperate gladiators fight to the death. The highest form of punishment in Mylark is not death, after all, but enslavement as a gladiator. At times, even humans frequent this arena, where they place bets on the fights along with the Martians. The Norobiz family controls the arena.

Karkarham

The 'Casablanca of Mars', Karkarham lies in a valley of the outer Shistomiks and is connected to Gorklimsk by a canal to the southwest and to Syrtis Minor by another to the south. Streets flank these canals. Another canal to Thoth in the north is dried up, but sees use as a vegetation-rich caravan path. The area around Karkarham is a traffic hub, but also a hotbed of air pirate activity. It is here that the legendary Red Captains and the Martian Cloud Captains of the Shistomiks gather. All parties honor and maintain a wide, agreed-upon safe zone around the city.

Karkarham has about 90,000 inhabitants and has been ruled by the decadent Canal Prince *Tumaani* for the last twelve years. Everyone is corrupt here; just entering the city via the **main landing grounds (6)** requires a bribe of about £1 per person. The difference between bribes and legal tolls in Karkarham is fleeting. In secret, the Lord tolerates, even supports the air pirates.

The different regions of the city (*lower city, upper city, inner city*) with their red and white houses lie along the canal and on two hills rising from the grey-brown rocks.

Karkarham

- 1 Fist of Balakhaat
- 2 Royal Landing Grounds
- 3 Palace
- 4 Balakhaat Ravine
- 5 Balakhaat Causeway
- 6 Main Landing Grounds
- 7 Shipyards
- 8 Karmahheet Hill
- 9 Brumahaan Steps
- 10 Cargo Hoist
- 11 Pumping Station
- 12 Gorklimsk Bridge
- 13 Customs House
- 14 Customs Boats
- 15 Levee
- 16 Dry Canal Bed
- 17 Man's Exile Hotel
- 18 Ravine Fort
- 19 High Fort
- 20 Citadel

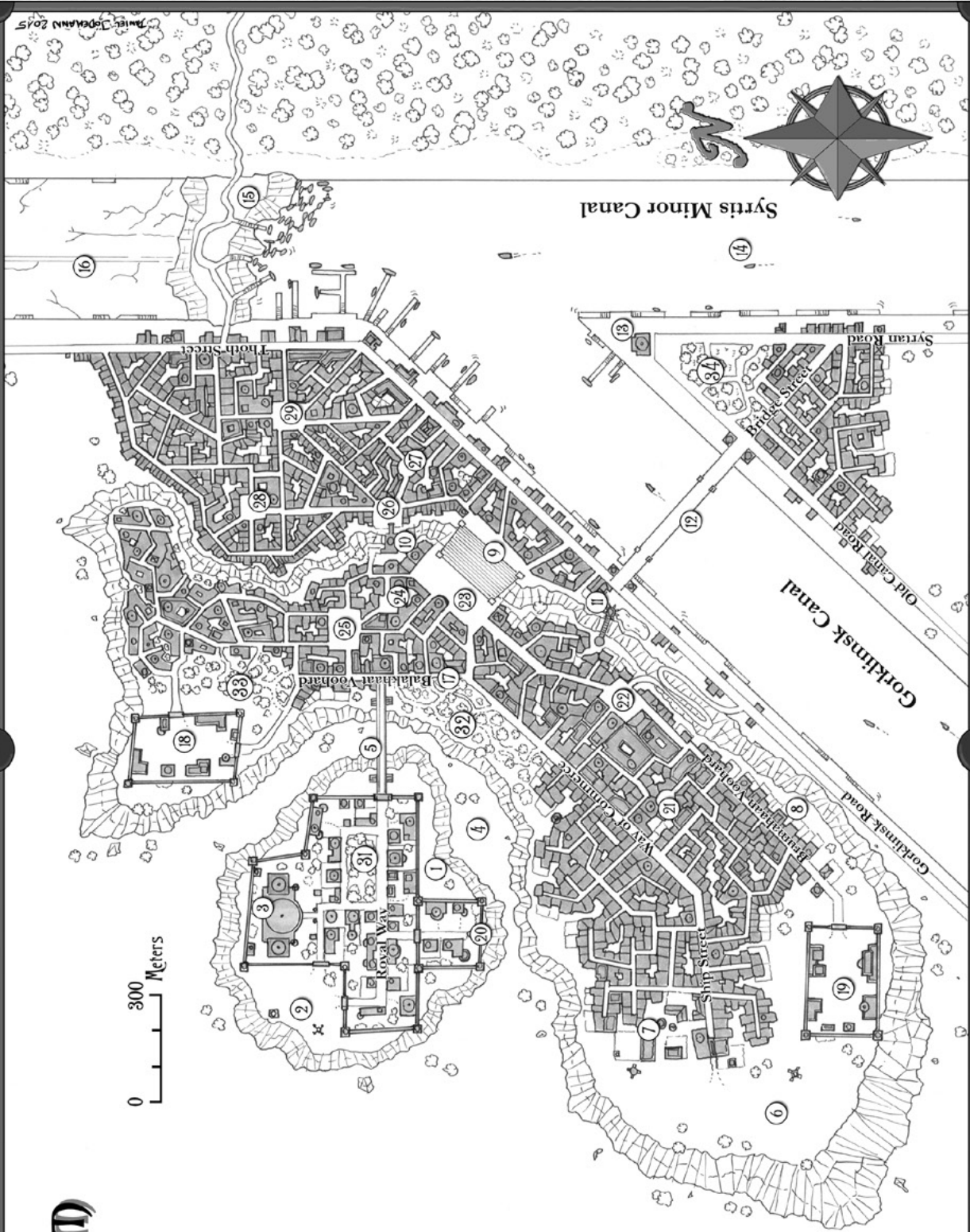
Squares:

- 21 Rugie Place
- 22 Gorklimsk Square
- 23 Great Bazaar
- 24 Pasaan Square
- 25 Balakhaat Square
- 26 Drayage Square
- 27 Jumahheet Square
- 28 Cleansing Mercy Square
- 29 Square of the Captains

Parks:

- 31 Royal Gardens
- 32 Balakhaat Park
- 33 Istobaan Park
- 34 Customs Park

0 300 Meters



The **lower city** is the poorest region with the highest crime rate. The *docks* district can be reached from the warehouses of the canal port by crossing *Thoth Street*. There is a small *European quarter* around the **Jumaheet Square (27)** where failed emigrants from Earth dwell, as well as the *boat city* (the Martian slums). Destitute and often criminal Martians live here on a hodge-podge of derelict boats that are stranded in front of the **levee (15)** to the **dry canal bed (16)**. The massive **pumping station (11)**, powered by slaves, pumps water to the upper city and is a dubious tourist attraction. Among the slaves are human air pirates that have been captured by the Martians.

The **upper city** lies on top of **Karmaheet Hill (8)** and is reached by climbing the **Brumahaan Steps (9)**.

The **Great Bazaar (23)** is a busy place, where many languages can be heard. Those searching for exotic wares (including ancient Martian artifacts) might find a bargain here. Food and clothes are very expensive, however. Slavery is legal in Karkarham, and slave workers—including humans—can be acquired from the cloud captives here. The **Man's Exile (17)**, at the intersection of the *Way of Commerce* and *Balakhaat Vorhaad*, is one of the few hotels in Karkarham that offers somewhat safe and comfortable refuge (£1 per group and per night).

The residential district of the *High Docks*, like the *High Fort*, owes its name to the nearby **landing grounds (6)** and adjoining **shipyards (7)**. Here, one can watch the aerial flyers take on cargo and lift off. Their respective crews can be found in the many infamous taverns around here. Of particular fame is the *Inn of the Red Roogie* at **Roogie Place (21)**. The district between **Gorklimsk Square (22)** and **Balakhaat Square (32)** is home to the many shops and workshops of craftsmen and their homes. Here, things are somewhat quieter.

The north of Karmaheet Hill is taken up by the *Fortress Point* district. In the northeast, past the residences of the middle class and **Istobaan Park (33)**, lies the *villa district* and, to the northwest, the *Ravine Fort*.

The **inner city**, finally, consists of the **Fist of Balakhaat (1)** on a small hill. This is the *Palace district* where the well-fortified and secured *Palace* of the canal prince (**3**) is located, as well as other government facilities and embassies. The inner city can only be reached from the rest of the city via a guarded bridge—the **Balakhaat Causeway (5)**—or from the air. The streets are also well patrolled by guards.

Underneath the two hills, a wide tunnel system stretches out—the *catacombs*. These include the cellars of the residences, crypts, and the sewer system. This network of tunnels was partially built as a refuge for the ruling families of the city in case of attack.

Sir Michael Francis Paget-Smith

This Red Captain is an adventurer, explorer, sky-privateer in the service of the Empire—and a real snob. He acts exaggeratedly vain and won't even spare foreigners or player characters with the *Underprivileged* Flaw a second glance. To get his attention, one needs Resources such as Status, Contacts, Mentor, Rank, or Wealth. Even so, he will make clear that the conversation is beneath him.

Paget-Smith hails from a good, wealthy house, has already traveled half the Earth and has been knighted by the Queen for his

archaeological finds in the Sahara. On Mars, he wrote a bestselling novel about his march through the dusty hills of Aeria after eight months of imprisonment by a Hill Martian tribe. He used the money to have a glider built in Parhoon, the gun kite *Lismore*, which he equipped with four Gatling guns specially imported from Earth. The *Lismore* can be seen cruising the area around Karkarham, as well as suddenly appearing in other regions. The Red Captain can boast a proud 15 aerial kills. No, he is in no way sympathetic, but he is very good at what he does.

The dark-haired 41-year-old is tall, slender, and has a thin moustache. His nose is notably aristocratic. Even in a loose shirt and riding crops, he appears well-dressed. Sir Michael always acts calmly and carefully, almost as though he cares not. Or maybe he's just not very interested in you?

Paget-Smith maintains estates in Parhoon, Syrtis Major, and Karkarham, but as a member of the *Explorer's Society*, he can also be found now and then in the club house in Moeris Lacus.

Mentor 3

Archetype: Explorer

Motivation: Fame

Style: 3

Health: 10

Primary Attributes

Body: 5

Charisma: 4

Dexterity: 2

Intelligence: 3

Strength: 2

Willpower: 5

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0

Initiative: 5

Move: 4

Defense: 7

Perception: 8

Stun: 5

Skills

	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Academics (Earth History)	3	1	4	(2)
Art (Writing)	3	1	4	(2)
Athletics	2	2	4	(2)
Brawl	2	1	3	(1+)
Diplomacy	4	4	8	(4)
Firearms	2	3	5	(2+)
Gunnery	3	1	4	(2)
Intimidation	4	1	5	(2+)
Linguistics	3	1	4	(2)
Melee	2	2	4	(2)
Pilot (Air Ships)	2	3	5	(2+)
Ride	2	3	5	(2+)
Stealth	2	2	4	(2)
Survival	3	3	6	(3)

The Oenotrian Empire - Progress through Tradition

"The cities are beautiful. The streets are safe. The people are reasonable. And the government hates humans. Such a shame!"

—Bertram Higgins, American travel agent

People: Canal Martians

Location: Near the Mars equator in the center of the Central Basin

Language: High Oenotrian

Cities: Oenotria (*Shasmaghaal*, capital), Deltoton (*Urshlanash*, industrial and scientific center), Crocea (*Nurshahaal*), Astrapsk (*Ashtrahaapshk*, farming city), Skorosia ⊕, Iapygia (*Thoruustar*, smallest city)

Trade goods: Manufactured goods, agricultural crops, political turmoil

The new city council immediately formed a pact of alliance with Oenotria, ending a thousand-year-old rivalry.

The princes of Astrapsk, Skorosia, and Iapygia now felt quite threatened by the Jaarpadists. To forestall an attack by a potential alliance of their neighboring cities, Deltoton and Oenotria went on the offensive and defeated all three enemies in a long war that ended in 1756. For the next 50 Mars years, the now established Oenotrian Empire was busy consolidating its power. This phase of the Empire was marked by eager renovation and construction activities in all Oenotrian cities. Even so, the military of the Oenotrian Empire was not idle, as many attacks by nomads and High Martians had to be fought off. This is the time during which the Oenotrian disgust for the Hill Martians began. On the diplomatic side, attempts were made to spread the "Oenotrian Ideas", as the political ideology of the Jaarpadists was called, to the north. This failed, however. Syrtis Major prevented this spread and actively persecuted any political groups with Jaarpadist leanings.

Syrtania

History

17th Century - Jaarpadism

As little as two centuries ago, the cities of today's Oenotrian Empire were no different from the warring city-states of the south of the Basin. Centuries of warfare and corruption had brought them to social and economic lows. But during the 17th century, one figure emerged that would change all that: *Jaarpad the philosopher*. Jaarpad was an unrecognized bastard of *Aarlashkand IX*, the ruling canal prince of Oenotria at the time, and belonged to a small sect of historian-monks. Jaarpad came up with the doctrine that the canal builder society had been perfect in its structure, and that only moral decay and greed had led to the fall of that mighty global Martian civilization. Therefore, all the problems of modern Mars would be solved if only the Martian people would return to the pure paths of the canal builders.

His underground movement displeased corrupt nobles, but was also supported by those nobles who couldn't bear the crippling apathy and decadence of Aarlashkand's court. This "secret war" raged for years in Oenotria, culminating in Jaarpad and his followers seizing control in a bloody revolution. After a brutal but, according to the Oenotrians, necessary house clearing, the "Jaarpadists" began to reshape Oenotria anew. The city monarchy was replaced by an aristocratic republic. When Jaarpad died in 1667, Oenotria had transformed from a corrupt city-state at the edge of bankruptcy to a powerful metropolis, second only to Syrtis Major in this region.

18th Century - The Oenotrian Idea

Military expansion followed the economic one in the 18th century. The people of Deltoton rebelled against their canal prince, inspired by Jaarpad's writings and encouraged by Oenotrian agitators. This revolution also ended well for the Jaarpadists. The prince of Deltoton was hanged from a canal bridge along with his court.

19th Century - The Six Cities League

In 1850, a "cold war" began between Oenotria and Syrtis Major, which brought much of the trade between the north and the south of the Central Basin to a halt. The Oenotrians increasingly directed their attention to the region of Hellas. A new member, Crocea, joined the burgeoning empire in 1882, and since then the official—though commonly rarely used—name for the Oenotrian Empire has been 'The Six Cities League'.

The arrival of the Earth people was viewed with curiosity at first. This curiosity turned to shock, however, when the Oenotrian people realized just what kind of expansionist plans the British were pursuing, and the ease with which they were able to seize even powerful Martian cities. The activities, strengths, and weaknesses of the Earth people were carefully observed, and the military appropriately strengthened. Finally, the high council of the Oenotrian Empire decided to act against the British.

The 1880s - The "Great War of Defense"

Currently, this war is limited to bloody border skirmishes, but it is set to flare up soon. Very recently, the legendary General *Daiban of Thoruustar*, a noble from Iapygia, was elected dictator (a commander in chief with far-reaching executive powers). Daiban made his name in 1887 by almost exterminating the High Martian tribes in the mountains near Skorosia with a military stroke of genius, thus securing the liftwood groves for the Empire. This, it is hoped, will put Oenotria ahead of the British who are pursuing similar plans further north.

The rebellion of Shastapsh is welcomed by Oenotria, and eagerly supported with arms shipments.

1889 - The Current Situation

The Oenotrians know what fight they picked, and have a range of cunning battle plans to force the British off Mars in time. Filing cabinets at the senate building also hold contingency plans for negotiations, should the war go poorly—a fact that is being kept

from the public. It should be noted that Oenotria has managed to expand its network of secret agents across almost the entirety of Mars. Agents, middle men, and scholar priests are searching everywhere for relics of the past that might pave the Empire's way into the future. Despite the war, the Empire's economy is flourishing and its citizens enjoy a high standard of living. For quite a few Canal Martians, it is therefore a shining example to follow.

Government, Politics and Society

The political structure on which the Oenotrian Empire is built is surprisingly advanced by Earth standards. In fact, it is simply a return to the principles of the long-gone times of the canal builders. The newspapers of Earth like to compare Oenotria with the Roman Republic or the city republics of medieval Italy, which

is not inaccurate. The empire is governed by a "semi-theocratic" High Council, which resides in Oenotria. Unlike many other Mars nations, there is no inherited rank structure inside the nobility. One is either noble, or not; titles are simply remnants of pre-Jaarpadist days. Offices and posts are assigned based on ability or by election. This may seem democratic at first glance, but it isn't truly, as only the nobility has the right to vote. The head of state is the "High Leader" and is elected for a term lasting two Mars years; the office is mostly a representative and moderator position. The constitution does allow, however, for a dictator to be elected as commander in chief during times of war, who then holds far-reaching executive powers. The threat that the British pose has, according to the High Council, justified the election of Daiban as dictator, meaning that many of the more democratic institutions of the Oenotrian Empire are currently suspended. The nobility of the Empire almost exclusively originates from the cities of Oenotria and Deltoton, as the "old nobility" of the conquered cities was eliminated apart from a select few sympathizers.

Syrtonia

Dictator Daiban of Thoruustar (see p. 198)

One thing is certain: Daiban of Thoruustar is one of the greatest military masterminds on modern Mars! Few political experts were surprised when the 40 Earth-year-old officer was elected dictator almost unanimously. It is not simply the fact that Daiban can look back on a string of military successes in addition to the stroke of genius against the High Martian tribes: He is also an accomplished public speaker and a respected political theorist, with many of his works considered compulsory reading in the schools of the Empire—he is the ideal of an Oenotrian nobleman. Educated in politics, religion, science, and strategy, and possessing a toned and healthy body that can rival that of any ancient athlete's statue, Daiban appears perfect in everything he does. He is always polite and steadfast, and his rhetoric has so far been faultless.

In military matters, he is particularly noted for favoring surprising and unorthodox strategies, which the simpler-minded canal princes cannot seem to see coming. Even the British have, time and again, suffered greatly at the hands of Daiban's cunning. So while the Oenotrians celebrate their genius military commander, his enemies curse him as a devious bastard. Though he always meets his enemies with respect, he never hesitates to use any means available to further his and the Empire's cause. Even though British propaganda would like to claim otherwise, this dictator is no power-hungry warlord. He is a loyal Jaarpadist and does whatever the Oenotrian Idea requires. This helps reinforce his position greatly, but if the hardliners in Oenotria knew that Daiban would make peace with the British if he thought it the more profitable option, he would lose a fair few supporting voices.

Society

By Martian standards, Oenotrians are quite rational and enlightened, as they are guided by the philosophy and deeds of the canal builders. But not all instances of primitive superstition have been eradicated yet, though the government is working on that. The adoption of the technocratic views of the canal builders has led to a very rigid society, with many laws and regulations.

The Oenotrian propaganda states: Everyone has their place in society! Nobody is worthless! From the highest official to the lowest street sweeper, every Oenotrian is raised with a simple message: The League needs you! Everyone who participates also profits.

For the less fortunate, living in the Oenotrian Empire is indeed *much* better than anywhere else on Mars. The nobility, for their part, lives more modest lives than do their decadent counterparts outside the Empire, eschewing unnecessary luxuries. The feeling of not being exploited by the state or society ensures loyalty, but the ideology that permeates every aspect of life leaves little room for doubters.

Anyone who questions the Oenotrian Idea is better off keeping those thoughts private. Otherwise they might find themselves reported by one of the many eager informers. A criminal condemnation leads to harsh corporal punishment. In the case of severe "community damaging" crimes such as murder, theft, corruption, or demagoguery, the Oenotrians frequently resort to the death penalty. For non-political crimes, however, the proceedings can, more often than not, actually be called fair, with "investigative measures" such as oracles and divine judgement being inadmissible in the courts. Trade in the Empire is controlled by the government and lies in the hands of a caste of bureaucrats. The few private merchant houses that still exist are subject to heavy restrictions. For now, the central resource administration of the canal builders remains an unreachd ideal.

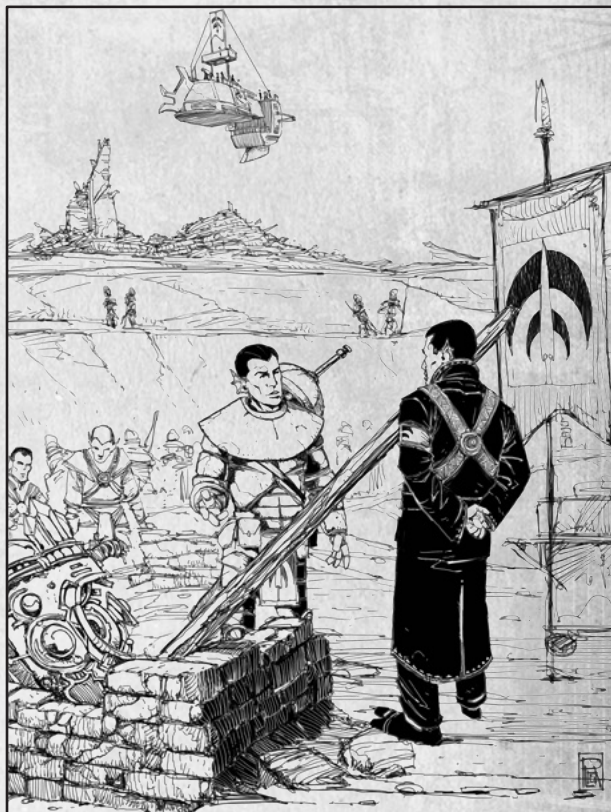
Obligations of Citizenship

A noble is ideally a blend of priest, warrior, and scholar, reminiscent of the technocratic canal builders. Both physical prowess and good education are expected, with the training of young nobles being marked by a strong pressure to excel. The Oenotrians see themselves as rigid traditionalists. The canal builder society is the true, old doctrine, and all other societies are harmful diversions. Equal treatment of the genders is an obvious given, with not

even military conscription discriminating either way. It is to be noted though that the law requires citizens to marry. Adults who remain single for too long are “matched up” by official lottery. The Oenotrian Empire is the only nation on Mars with compulsory schooling for children.

Military

There is a strong focus on the martial prowess of each Oenotrian. All men and women of the Empire must serve under arms for one (Mars) year. The official date for this conscription is the “Honorable Nine” (the ninth birthday of a citizen in Mars years). Young nobles are not exempt from this service requirement, but are trained to be officers, an option only open to common citizens that display exceptional abilities or accomplish exceptional achievements. This system ensures that the Oenotrian Empire can, if needed, call upon a much larger army than other Mars nations, which only keep standing volunteer armies. At the same time, the level of training and discipline of the Oenotrian troops are without equal on Mars, in particular the legendary storm troopers with their shield guns, who had been deemed undefeatable before the war with the British. To maintain combat readiness even after the compulsory service, the civilian population is required to engage in physical training in the form of participation in team sports and morning exercises before work. A side effect of this is an exemplary sense of community.



Syrta
dia

The Oenotrian Battle Fleet

Oenotria does not have an imperial fleet in that sense. Instead, each of the six city-states of the Empire maintains its own troops, even if they are to be placed under common command during war time where needed.

The fleet is divided into *squadrons*, each consisting of 4–6 warships. The larger cities have around 5 of these, the smaller ones 3 each. Squadrons usually segregate between screw galleys and cloudships.

Heavy screw galley squadrons are built around *Hullcutter* screw galleys, supported by vessels of the *Endtime* and *Fleetfoot* classes. **Heavy cloudship squadrons** use a core of *Whisperdeath* cloudships, with *Bloodrunners* in particular being used for support. Together, these squadrons form the main battle fleet.

Light screw galley squadrons are primarily composed of *Sky Runner*-class screw galleys, and **light cloudship squadrons** use *Swiftwood* kites. They serve both as escorts for convoys of merchant ships or as reinforcements for the battle lines.

Finally, the **Defense squadrons** are comprised mostly of *Small Bird* screw galleys and are employed either for the defense of cities or to offer fire support for ground troops, acting as flying artillery. Civilian kites of the *Warm Winds* class can also be armed and deployed in battle.

Over the course of the war, the Oenotrians have developed, amongst others, the *Heavenly Archer* and *Skylord* classes (heavy cloudships), as well as the *Skyfire* and *Skyrunner* classes (heavy screw galleys) of new warship types, which mainly bolster the battle fleets of the city of Oenotria.

Syrta Languages

The predominant language family of the Oenotrian Empire is Syrta. In the Oenotrian Empire itself, the very formal, flowery **High Oenotrian** is used, and it is said that it is impossible to be impolite or to get a point across quickly in this language. **Low Oenotrian** is the dialect spoken to the Empire’s north in Shastapsh and Moeris Lacus. The differences between these two languages are purely dialectal, and they are both written using the Oenotrian runic alphabet. The Hellas–Trinacria city-states speak Hellan dialects, whose relationship to Oenotrian is comparable to that between Earth’s Romance languages.

Ahashaath Mush – Peace and Strength (A greeting, roughly ‘Good day’)

Jaarpad ash hushlamat – Jaarpad spoke true (political slogan)

Fishaam nal, Hashaam pshalp – Look backwards, step forwards (another political slogan)

Pnashpa Paa! – For the ancestors! (military battle cry)

Culture and Technology (see p. 193)

The Oenotrian Empire is as resistant to technological innovation as any other Martian nation, but it is further down the road to improving in this respect. The systematic search for ancient technologies of the canal builders has put unique pieces of advanced technology into the hands of the Oenotrians. Unlike the “mages” and “priests” of other parts of Mars, Oenotrian scholars are attempting to analyze and understand these devices. This reversion to the rationalism of the canal builders has brought many successes to the Oenotrians. Young scholars are increasingly inclined to fill gaps in their knowledge with original research rather than only searching ancient sources. If the Oenotrians were to be left alone for one or two decades, they would enjoy a technological resurgence as it was last observed on Earth during the Japanese Meiji Restoration. It is no wonder that the British Empire fears this development. One limiting factor for this continued renaissance is the availability of advanced ancient Martian research technology. This “resource shortage” has pushed Oenotria more and more towards diplomatic efforts aiming to conciliate other Martian nations.

The Six Metropolises of Oenotria

Oenotria (Shashmaghaal)

The capital of the Empire deserves its fame as one of the most impressive cities on Mars. The metropolis is built entirely according to the sharp and exact architectural style of “Oenotrian Runism” to which it has lent its name. This alone makes it appear orderly and easily navigated. The strict order in the city has also ensured that Oenotria is very peaceful and almost supernaturally clean. The government of Oenotria regularly convenes in the “Ziggurat of Reflection”, a titanic stepped pyramid of over 500 feet (150 m) in height. At its summit there is a small grove that is considered holy. It is here that the council members decide the fate of the Empire. Crime is unusually rare. Apart from the drastic public executions of criminals and enemies of the state, no Oenotrian is subjected to the violence and unrest that are so common elsewhere. Most buildings have been renovated within the last two centuries, and so there are no ruin districts in Oenotria. Those districts that have not been fully restored and renovated were instead converted into parks and gardens, which has earned it the nickname of “the Green City”. The inhabitants have planted such an amount of vegetation that some streets give the impression that the city lies within a jungle. The heart of the Empire is, at least according to the national propaganda, a shining demonstration of the truth behind the “Oenotrian Idea”. Every citizen has come to understand just how true Jaarpad’s words were. Every citizen is a happy and productive citizen. Or at least appears to be one. As peaceful as the city might be, the military has always been ever-present, even before the war with Great Britain had begun. Every corner has a patrol on watch, and the parks are often the stage for parade drills. Oenotria is surrounded by three rings of newly built fortifications, and the airspace is guarded by a dozen aerial flyers.

Deltoton (Urshlanash)

Deltoton is built in the same style as Oenotria, but appears less beautiful. The parks and brightly painted façades so typical of Oenotria are missing, and there a number of ruin districts, where the remnants of old thieves’ guilds dwell. Without fresh paint or the green of plants, the runism architectural style appears bland. The Spanish explorer *Esteban Albiol*, one of the few Earth people who have ever set foot into Deltoton, described the city as “a pile of somber melancholy turned into stone”. The common citizens live in giant apartment blocks, the nobility in strangely simple tower villas. Despite this, the supposedly humorless people of the city are content. Thanks to countless manufactories and shipyards, Deltoton is the industrial and technological center of the Empire. Besides the masses of workers fanatically devoted to the Oenotrian Idea, many scholars can be found here, digging into the mysteries of the Martian past. What happens behind closed doors in the recently founded “Institute for Reclaiming the People’s Rightful Legacy” is kept top secret. Rumors speak of nothing less than miracles.

Iapygia (Thorustar)

Iapygia is the smallest city of the Oenotrian Empire, and for a long time was its “troubled kid”. Situated near the High Martian tribes of the Shashanash Mountains in the southwest, the city regularly came under attack. Additionally, the people viewed the Oenotrians as foreign tyrants and eagerly embraced all sorts of small sects and cults that were at odds with the official state religion. When Iapygia wasn’t being overrun by winged barbarians, one obscure religion or another was secretly preparing a rebellion. Neither achieved much except giving the High Council trouble for decades on end.

More recently, this has changed thanks to *Daiban of Thorustar*, who, as his name suggests, hails from Iapygia. The genocide of the Shashanash High Martians is praised as a heroic deed, as the city will now never again be threatened by this danger. The election of a son of their city has given the people of Iapygia the impression that they are finally being seen as equal partners in the Empire. For the cults that once thought themselves safe inside Iapygia’s underbelly, this has had disastrous results: Those citizens who once hid them are now turning them in to the Oenotrian authorities.

Astrapsk (Ashtrahaapshk)

Astrapsk maintains many large and fertile fields, but was almost depopulated by internal strife, economic mismanagement, and plague when the troops of Oenotria and Deltoton stormed the walls in 1711 to take the city. The defensive efforts were spirited, but too poorly organized to be effective. Today, Astrapsk is the bread basket of the Oenotrian Empire. As the former metropolis had suffered massive population losses and could barely muster the workforce needed to farm its large fields, the Empire sent settlers from other cities to Astrapsk. This has led to many ethnic conflicts between the immigrants and the Astrapian people. The Empire does not tolerate such conflicts and makes no distinction between recent and old citizens. Those who incite such conflicts face severe punishment.

Crocea (Nurshahaal)

Crocea has only been a part of the Oenotrian Empire since 1882 and is a voluntary member, like Deltoton 200 years earlier. During a short succession war in 1879, a group of pro-Oenotrian nobles were able to seize power and over the next three years, negotiated their entry into the League. The many reforms and restructuring efforts meant to turn Crocea into a true Oenotrian city have yet to take effect; many aspects of daily life here are still ruled by the old inefficiencies. Many Croceans are not happy about joining the Oenotrian Empire, offering British agents easy access to sympathizers in the city. Various cults and sects also still exist, and Crocea is therefore the current target of the worst political pogroms and cleansing efforts.

Religion

The “Oenotrian Idea” – A National Religion

The center around which all parts of life revolve in a true Oenotrian is the nation! The all-permeating doctrine on which everything the Oenotrians love and cherish is based is the so-called *Oenotrian Idea*. Based on ancient records, it aims at recreating the social structures of the time of the Canal Martians, as these are seen as perfect. Every societal issue, it is believed, can be solved by exactly following the system of the canal builders. Everyone has their place and function in society, and everyone is cared for and respected—as long as they put their personal interests aside for the greater good.

The main religion is a denomination of the Canal Keeper faith. Many articles of faith and rites are identical, but Seldon is a more controversial figure. He is “merely” seen as a great ruler, not as a supernatural figure. More recent historical dissertations view him with ambivalence. On the one hand, he brought about the last age of greatness for Mars. On the other hand, he founded the hated system of canal princes. Gods are only honored in the abstract. It is assumed that a higher power of order exists, which can only be comprehended through interpretations, as it transcends the realm of mortals.

The Hellas-Trinacria City-states – Chessboard of Empires

“My honest opinion, Sir? They’re even worse down there than the Germans before ‘66. At least they had their customs union.”

—Captain Hugh Crammond

People: Canal Martians, Hill Martians (mercenaries)

Location: Southern area of the Central Basin all the way to the South Polar Region

Languages: Hellan, Koline

Cities: Trinacria (*Cal Paron*), Fadath, Talastaar, Largo-Syrkis (*Daloor-Mont’ka*), Sabeus (*Ulaamadai*), Hammonis Cornu ⊕, Hellania (*Shel’arek*), Far Hellania (*Bir’arek*), Yaonis (*Alyaon*), Auson (*Morastaar*), Ausonia (*Pirastaar*)

Other religions

This concept of godhood allows for several coexisting religions to be “correct” at once. In theory, the government tolerates other religions in addition to the national religion. In practice, the senate decrees which are acceptable and which are branded as nihilistic and therefore persecuted, according to the Oenotrian Idea. *Worm cults* are brutally suppressed, even beyond the borders of the Empire, targeted by the Empire’s spy agency. The *Groundcleansers’* anti-human views, on the other hand, resonate with many Oenotrians and thus the cult serves as a poster child for the “religious freedom” of Oenotria.

Oenotrians, Other Martians, and Humans

The national propaganda has declared humans to be a danger for Mars. If Mars is to ever recover its former glory, the red-faces must be removed. This screaming racism came into being as a result of the war and is, in its purest form, only espoused by the hardliners. Originally, the “Oenotrian Idea” did not necessarily view humans as a danger. More moderate minds saw and still see advantages in contact with the humans: Interplanetary trade and scientific cooperation could accelerate Mars’s renaissance. In return, there are socialists on Earth who see Jaarpadism as a brethren ideology and are sympathetic to the Oenotrians.

The Groundcleansers are currently useful, but tend to be made up of just the kind of scum that the Oenotrian Idea seeks to eradicate. Compared to other Martians, the Oenotrians quite clearly view themselves as intellectually superior. Their own Empire is perfect, or soon to be perfect, while the rest of Mars is governed by incompetent despots and criminals. Martian foreigners are thus either tragic victims or gangsters.

Hill Martians are seen as degenerate barbarians, second class citizens at best. The local Hill tribes are the target of an arch-enmity. High Martians are barely even considered sentient beings. The Oenotrians believe they have finally found the perfect way of dealing with them: To blast them to bits and pieces, when and wherever they are found.

History

The history of the Hellas-Trinacria city-states is a tragic example of decline, minor grievances, and the destruction of great potential. Initially, Southern Syrtania had survived the fall of the Seldon

Empire with comparatively mild hardship. Only the Tossian Empire came out similarly intact.

The Empire of Talastaar

The dynasty of the local ruler Talastaar managed to keep the entire region unified in one empire. It was rich, its legions mighty. But unlike the Tossians who assimilated all subjects equally into their empire, Talastaar reigned as a dictator. This was the seed of his empire's destruction. The initial spark for the collapse came in the year 1,000 AD. The Emperor and his family were killed by a statue filled with explosives, a "present" from the canal prince of Trinacria. The result was a Martian century of warfare and misery on an unimaginable scale. In the end, two power blocs emerged.

The two resulting alliances, the *Talastaar Union* and the *Daloor-Mont'ka Federation* of Largo-Syrkis, utterly hated each other and suffered immensely from internal bickering. Thus, they were unable to react when a new power began to expand from Far Hellania.

The Humble Order of the Green Hand

A fanatical cult formed around a dictatorial "prophet" and expanded aggressively. The "green hands" declared a new, strictly monotheistic empire in which the worship of their "Green God", a type of fertility deity, was mandatory. While this cult remained in power for two Martian centuries, overall it ruled very ineffectively. Religious matters were seen to with ever greater fanaticism, but other areas of government were utterly neglected. Unavoidably, the region fell back into poverty and misery.

Sabeus Empire

When the city of Sabeus rebelled and launched a war of liberation, the occupied city-states rejoiced. However, the empire that was proclaimed after the Order fell almost immediately collapsed, as the Sabeans did not have the resources to hold it together. Old arguments resurfaced and again bickering and small-minded pettiness blocked all progress. The only reason why the cities managed to escape conquest at the hands of Syrtis Major was because Oenotria formed a buffer. Today, the Hellas-Trinacria cities remain a bunch of bickering minor states.

Government, Politics, and Society

Other than Largo-Syrkis and Hammonis Cornu, which are aristocratic republics, the Hellas-Trinacria states are all monarchies. The few city-states that are leaning towards Oenotria are slowly developing "republican" tendencies. Rigid class thinking and corruption are common to all cities, to degrees extreme even by Martian standards. The situation of the lower class is particularly miserable. Foreign ideologies such as the Oenotrian Idea, socialism, or self-proclaimed restoration cults are accepted far too eagerly, only to be aggressively put down by the government.

The city-states all have longstanding feuds, and local wars are frequent. Relations to powers outside of Southern Syrtonia are almost entirely unreliable and difficult to predict. Cities that are leaning towards the British are not so much pro-Britain as they are rather anti-Oenotria. This is because of political and religious

refugees from Oenotria and of course the canal princes' fear of Jaarpadism.

The cities only command small militaries. Due to the constant warfare, compulsory military service is common, as is the practice of hiring Hill Martian mercenaries.

Culture and Technology

The languages of the region are a mix of Low Oenotrian and Hellan, with many different dialects. The city-states do not possess any grand technological oddities. As the cities rarely work together, intellectual stagnation is markedly more pronounced than in other regions. Culturally, each city-state features its own local oddities. Interestingly, the inhabitants of each city assume that their customs are universal to Mars, and thus react with little tolerance of cultural misunderstandings.

Religion, Customs, and Practices

Local Polytheism

Since the end of the Green Hands, there has not been a religion present in more than one city. Even today, countless small temples and other physical remnants from the time of the Order can be found, shunned and avoided. Local city cults are fiercely supported by the citizenry while any kind of monotheism is avoided. Even those cults one might call "unhealthy" enjoy some popularity here. The cities frequently see "cult wars" in the form of street fights and religiously motivated gang violence.

Coral Faith

(see p. 202)

One recurring element of the local faiths in the coral desert of the Hellas region is that said corals are a part of the "God at the Heart of the World". Depending on the city, these are the life-giving blood vessels, the sensitive nerves, or the memory. The fact that they were once beautifully colored on the sea bottom but today are merely dead limestone is seen as a metaphor for dying Mars. A few of the more radical cults defend these corals fiercely and prevent or avenge their destruction wherever possible. Other, more optimistic ones attempt to strengthen the father deity and thus the planet by cultivating the few still-living species. That they often fall victim to the more dangerous coral species in these efforts is a sad side effect, though the deceased are honored as martyrs to the cause, almost as saints even. It is believed they are taken directly to the heart of the planet, which is why suicide sacrifices among the cultists, using pieces of siren coral, are not unheard of—it is said to be a pleasant and gentle death.

The Hellenic City-states

The fact that the Oenotrians and the British are keeping each other occupied is a great relief to the canal princes of the South. Before that war, there was justified fear that Oenotria would annex them. Otherwise, the situation is as chaotic and messy as ever.

Powder Keg Trinacria

Fadath is considered very corrupt and is forced to pay tribute to the Oenotrian Empire. Since the death of Lord Gisra, his widow Kristyaana Anraabu rules the city. She is a relative of the former royal house of Melas (p. 61) and has recently converted to catholic Christianity. The priesthood is aghast at this display of monotheism, in particular since she has abolished slavery. The British see her as a chance for an alliance against Oenotria, but officially Fadath remains neutral.

The most stable of the city-states, and thus the potential ally most sought after by the British, is the formerly powerful **Trinacria (Cal Paron)**. **Talastaar**, meanwhile, is about to explode. Uprisings seek to depose the canal prince, the city's power groups plot and scheme, and one can almost count down the hours before the next incident. In secret, agents of the British and Oenotrian Empires are at war here, with Oenotria standing good odds of successfully enforcing Jaarpadism.

Mare Ionium

Largo-Syrkis (Daloor-Mont'ka) and **Sabeus (Ulaamadai)** are both feverishly but unrealistically attempting to rekindle their old

empires. Various agents are hard at work here to cause trouble. Both the British and Oenotrian Empires seek to gain influence, but are seen as enemies.

Hellas - The Far South

In **Yaonis (Alyaon)**, half the nobility was wiped out by a succession war, while a proxy war over grazing rights is fought between **Hellania (Shel'arek)** and **Far Hellania (Bir'arek)** by Hill Martian client tribes and mercenaries.

Auson (Morastaar) has been under the control of an end-time cult since the beginning of the current polar night. Its priests claim that Deimos (or was it Phobos?) will come crashing down before the light returns. The city is closed off, the population resettled into the catacombs and sewers. Rumors claim that some relics have been found down there, now in use by the cult. This has piqued the interest of many foreign powers, who now seek to gain influence here.

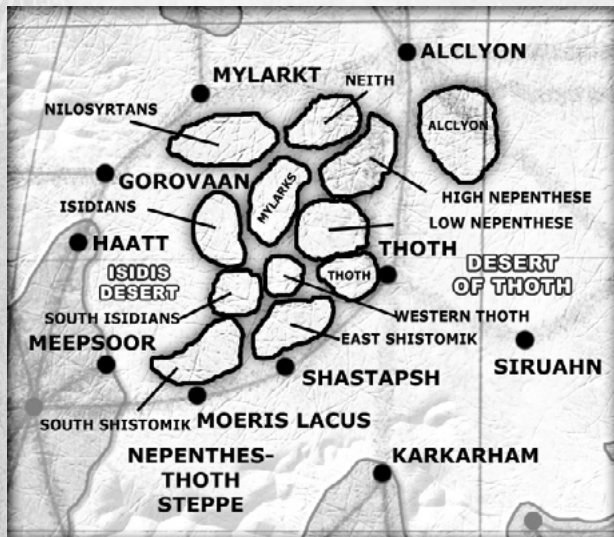
Ausonia (Pirastaar) is a minor state far from all trade routes. It is ruled by the young and proud Anwaak *Jharmook*.

Syrtaida

The Riders of Nepenthes-Thoth

People: Hill Martians, individual Canal Martians, and humans (honorable members)
Location: Nepenthes-Thoth steppe, Isidis desert
Language: Nepenthes
Tribes: Alclyon, South and East Shistomik, Southern and Northern Isidians, Western and Eastern Thoth, Low and High Nepenthes, Nilosyrтанans, Neith

The Riders of the Nepenthes-Thoth desert live as nomads, similarly to Earth horse-riding tribes, such as the Sioux of North America or the Asian Tatars. They use gashants as mounts instead of horses.



Territories

Twelve tribes of riders have divided the *Nepenthes-Thoth steppe* amongst themselves. Canals circumscribe the area (the northern one between Mylarkt and Alclyon is dry), with only the hunting grounds of the **Alclyon** tribe lying beyond the eastern canal.

The **Southern** and **Eastern Shistomik** live in the region from Meepsoor to Shastapsh. The **Southern** and **Northern Isidians** live their meager, nomadic lives on the edges of the *Isidis* desert in the west. The **Western** and **Eastern Thoth** live in the area near the city of the same name, as do the **Low** and **High Nepenthes**. Finally, near Mylarkt, live the **Nilosyrтанans**, the **Mylarks**, and the **Neith**. They call themselves by Nepenthes names, such as the *Haanebencaanish* ("descended from Nebencaan"; Southern Shistomik).

History

There was a settled culture in the Nepenthes-Thoth steppe during the time of Seldon. Graves still bear witness to this today. Since their fall, probably at the hands of plundering Hill Martians after the collapse of the Empire, no historical records were kept, though the nomads still carry treasures of knowledge in the form of myths about great warriors and their deeds. Though fictional tales and lies are unknown in these cultures, oral recitals of the myths are eagerly embellished. According to the understanding of the rider tribes, *all* such versions of the stories are true. While the tribal territories have changed at the hands of conquerors and mighty steppe lords, and while some tribes have been eradicated, the truth must always be sought in legend.

Government and Society

The dozen nomadic tribes of similar cultures are divided into clans of a few hundred members each. Each consists of families whose

usually female leader adjudicates over internal matters such as weddings and the adoption of new members.

Men and Women

Men usually hold authority on matters related to hunting, war, trade, and other interactions with the outside, while women do so in all matters involving home and camp. As each clan member is equal by birth and must prove themselves by deeds, there are divergences from these set roles. Additionally, while the *tasks* may differ, the *rights* of both genders are equal.

Roles in the Tribe

While *healers* and *shamans* expand their knowledge to aid their clans, the *warriors* must prove themselves in battle. Many will leave the clan for a time to fulfill a task set by an oath. Should they return successful, this will greatly increase their standing. One who accomplishes many heroic deeds becomes *chieftain* and gains the right to speak last during votes, and to cast their vote first. Together with the most experienced healers, shamans, and warriors, they form the *elders*. The most respected chieftains may carry the revered honorific title of *Lord of the Steppes*.

Councils

During the *clan councils* held every evening, everyday matters such as the direction of travel are decided. Every adult may speak, but only warriors and respected clan members can vote. During the *elders' council*, the oldest clan members decide important matters amongst themselves, and only those of high standing may speak. On top of that, every Mars year, a *grand gathering* of all the clans of a tribe are held, which amongst other things serves to enable cultural exchange.

Warfare and Role in the Region

Responding to a call to war and marching into battle are individual decisions. No one is viewed as a coward for refusing to join a war, only if cowardice is displayed in battle. In fights between tribesmen, melee is considered more honorable than ranged combat, as is subduing an enemy nonlethally. These fights are usually quick, and produce a clear victor who can expect spoils and a loser who does not lose face.

In warfare against outsiders such as humans and Canal Martians, firearms and lethal violence are much more readily employed. Caravans are usually only asked for 'gifts' in exchange for safe crossing of tribal territory. The riders only care about their own affairs and stay out of the wars of humans and Canal Martians. However, broken taboos and territorial violations can push a tribe to go to war. Warlike tribes have already been abused through lies, promises, and half-truths to further the ends of one side or the other.

Nomadic Culture

Riding, hunting, eating, sleeping—these are the bases of life in the steppes. Thus, the *gashant* plays an important role as a mount,

while *wocnids* serve as cattle whose migration patterns set the course for the clans across the year.

Meat of all kinds is eaten as food: *Wocnid*, *ganz willoi*, and *teshuwaan* are all on the menu, as are in extreme cases even insects and animal blood. Meat is fried rare, spiced with steppe herbs and eaten bloody, but for longer marches it is often also smoked or pickled with spices and salt to preserve it. Flat bread and a weak beer made from wild grain are also common. The most popular spices are *Galashei* and *Zimbasha*, resembling ginger root and mustard, respectively. Together they form a very spicy wasabi.

Dress, Weapons, and Technology

For everyday use, the southern tribes wear little and what they do wear is—in the eyes of the British—primitive clothing made of fur and leather. Necklaces and trophies such as steppe tiger teeth are status symbols. Each clan has its own set rules as to who is allowed to wear what kind of jewelry. Ornate clothing made of animal furs is commonly only worn for ceremonies by the nomads of the northern steppes.

The riders use simple tools fashioned from natural materials: Tents made of animal hide, bows and hand weapons such as spears and axes made of bone or, more rarely, wood. A few tribes even forge swords. Missile weapons and arrows made of liftwood are quite rare, but possess excellent ballistic properties. Firearms are acquired from the Canal Martians or humans (about one warrior in ten owns one), but heavy ordnance and artillery are unknown.

Taboos

There are a number of taboos so serious that violating them is almost certain to provoke an attack and cause a feud. Outsiders are especially prone to do so by accident.

- The crypts from the age of the settled cultures are seen as the "*Gods' Tombs*". Entering them or removing anything from them is a sacrilege. The gods can only be appeased if the stolen item is returned or a gift of equal value is left in its place.
- Using water for purposes other than drinking or preparing food is considered *misuse of water* (e.g. taking a bath or doing laundry). Violating this taboo can only be corrected by replacing the amount of wasted water three times over.
- The *gift exchange* is started with one party offering a small gift, which is why outsiders sometimes induce this procedure by accident. This is followed by an escalating reciprocation with ever more valuable gifts and only ends when one party asks for their initial gift back (and thus admits inferiority). Ending this cycle prematurely or in some other way is a grave taboo.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

The nomads worship the spirits of the steppe and of their ancestors, with an emphasis on fear of returning spirits that might haunt the clan. All tribes have *initiation rites*, which raise a man or woman to the position of warrior. These rites differ among tribes, but most include ritual combat, song, stories, prayers, or sacrifices to the ancestor spirits. *Weddings* are also celebrated with song and rituals, as well as with an exchange of gifts, the final one of which is always the bride being presented to the groom. Some tribes allow for polygamy (on both sides), but marrying within a clan is taboo. During the *funeral rites*, the deceased is buried under rocks or in the ground along with their weapons and mount, which is killed during the ceremony if required. Ritual burning or leaving the body to animals are also practiced, but far more rarely. These

rituals are intended to appease the spirit and prevent it from returning to haunt the clan.

The Riders of the Nepenthes-Thoth and Humans

In general, the steppe people view outsiders (both humans and Canal Martians) as inferior, weak, and corrupt. However, this notion can vary based on the known stories about the humans in the respective tribes and clans. While dishonorable behavior, betrayal, cowardice, or the violating of taboos can trigger violent responses, acts of bravery or strength can convince a nomad to consider any man or woman as an equal. At times, some Canal or even High Martians are admitted into the tribe through rites of initiation, even a few humans have been granted this honor.

The High Martians of the Astusapes - The Beastmen of Mars

People: High Martians, Canal Martian and human slaves

Location: Astusapes Mountains, Shistomik highlands

Language: Gaashwaan and tribal dialects

Kraags: Barrovar, Bentovartex

Government and Society

It is self-evident to the High Martians of this region that anyone who commands a kraag is a king, and they are free to do as they like. Usually, this means rule of the strongest, who almost certainly used murder, violence, or intrigue to oust the competition and who must then keep his strongest warriors happily supplied with plunder and slaves. Slaves perform all lesser labor while the High Martians only view battle, plundering, and guarding slaves as their own tasks.

The kings differ in power, reputation, and influence. Currently, *King Hattabranx* and his people, the *Baarovaangians*, dominate, with many other kings acting as his vassals. The Worm cultists have immense influence in this region.

Role in the Region

The High Martians are a constant source of danger for Syrtis Lapis and the surrounding city-states. Their repeated attacks threaten the economic efforts of the British: Liftwood must be bought at high prices or harvested with great danger. The frequent raiding of the bhutan caravans also limits the profits of any trade with the Boreosyrtis League.

Even the Oenotrian Empire considers it an indignity to have to trade for liftwood with these 'wildings in the mountains'. The High Martians are thus enemies to all, but possess secure refuges in the form of their mountain fortresses.

Religion

The Astusapes and the Shistomik are largely followers of the Worm Cult, with King Hattabranx as its most powerful supporter. The will of these "Worm masters" is spread from his kraag Barrovar, where it is rumored that the Worm speaks directly to the Martians. The focus of this faith is a hate for humans and those who "court" them, i.e. the Canal Martians.

Though there are kings who view this faith with skepticism or reject it, the priesthood of the Worm cults is often so powerful that no ruler dares oppose them. An example of this is Hattabranx's vassal, King *Regesat* of kraag *Bentovartex* in the Shistomik highlands and the high priest *Dortar Spindraxx* of the nearby temple *Draxxklanet*.

Kraag Barrovar

The kraag of King Hattabranx in the Astusapes Mountains is reached through **cave entrances** used by his fleet of aerial flyers. On foot, the ascent is long and grueling.

Its upper section comprises the **slave pens**, from whence the Hill and Canal Martian slaves are driven to their work every morning. Beneath that, the High Martians and their personal slaves keep their dirty **quarters**.

The center of the kraag is the well-guarded **throne room**. It stinks of rot, food scraps, sweat, and blood. This is where Hattabranx holds court and receives special prisoners in person. His personal chambers are located behind it.

Those who would climb down into the mountain from here will encounter sticky heat and fewer and fewer people. This is where the **dungeons** and the **realm of the Worm cult** lie, and where the priests have erected an **inner sanctum**: A domed room, its walls and ceiling covered with writing, its polished floor bare except for a stone altar next to a gaping chasm into the depths. According to the beliefs of the priests, this chasm leads directly to the realm of the "Worm Lord" (→ see p. 203).

Syrtadia

Gaashwaan, the Pidgin Language of the High Martians

Besides the common languages of the region, one language spanning all the tribes has also developed. Gaashwaan translates into “shouting (screaming) at each other” and sounds, to human ears, like guttural hissing and grumbling, interrupted by barking screams, all of which is reminiscent more of animal noises than of a spoken language.

A few phrases

<grumbling> *Taach tshabrr* – *Don't challenge me!*

<barking> *Bratrak* – *Slave*

Krb'ch <barking> *Srek* <grumbling> *Tschatr krp* – *I will grind your bones to dust and feast on your guts, worm food!*

King Hattabranx

The most infamous king of the Central Basin is the ruler of kraag Barrovar, the most powerful in all of the Astusapes Mountains. His name alone inspires fear and terror. He is arrogant, sadistic, merciless, and almost insane.

As a fervent follower of the Worm cult, which has its center of power in his kraag, his hate for the “red devils” is well known and reached its peak when British forces attacked and freed two human slaves from him, the American ambassador to Oenotria *Sidney Boynton* and his daughter *Elizabeth*—an affront he has never forgiven the British for.

Like all High Martians, Hattabranx is short and bent, but hairier and even more beast-like than his compatriots. He is beset by age, with a wrinkled face and leathery skin, lying weakly on the throne, his black hair full of grey strands. Only his hateful eyes still tell of the fire burning inside him—most of all against the humans.

Hattabranx wears the finest clothes obtained on his raids, though these always become dirty and torn before too long. He wears

a large golden necklace, a symbol of his power equivalent to a crown on Earth. He swings his club-like, heavy scepter wildly with every gesture.

King Hattabranx

Archetype: Criminal

Style: 3

Motivation: Power

Health: 12

Primary Attributes

Body: 6

Charisma: 4

Dexterity: 3

Intelligence: 2

Strength: 1

Willpower: 6

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0

Initiative: 5

Move: 4 (8)

Defense: 9

Perception: 8

Stun: 6

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Archery	3	3	6	(3)
Athletics	1	2	3	(1+)
Brawl	6	2	8	(4)
Con	4	1	5	(2+)
Lies		2	6	(3)
Diplomacy	4	4	8	(4)
Leadership		5	9	(4+)
Intimidation	4	4	8	(4)
Orders		5	9	(4+)
Linguistics	2	1	3	(1+)
Melee	6	4	10	(5)
Pilot (Air Ships)	3	3	6	(3)
Stealth	3	1	4	(2)
Survival	2	2	4	(2)

Talents

Inspire 2, Fearsome, Flying, Focused Attack

Resources

Contacts 3, Fame -3, Followers 4, Rank 4, Refuge 5, Wealth 2

Flaws

Callous, Disfigured, Overconfident

Languages

Gaashwaan, Syrton, Umbran, English

Weapons	Damage	Size	Attack	(Average)	Speed	Rate	Range
Punch	0 N	0	8 N	(4) N	-	-	-
Scepter	2 N	0	12 N	(6) N	D	-	-
Bow	2 L	0	8 L	(4) L	D	1	15 m



The Western Basin

“Put aside the conflicts that tore our people apart! Put aside the family wars of the princes and the bickering of the priests, for once more our entire species stands on the brink of destruction. ALL of us, HERE and TODAY, face a threat unlike any since the seas dried up—the RED MAN!”

— political agitator in Aurora

Geography

The Western Basin runs along the equator of Mars. Only the northern reaches, where the Tossian Empire is located, pierce up into the highlands like a thorn. The borders of this basin are the “coasts” of Noachis, Thaumasia, Syria, Xanthe, Chryse, and Eden, as well as the Pandora highlands. Traditionally, it falls under Tossian influence, but this hold has been crumbling in the face of Earth invaders and uprisings in some client cities.

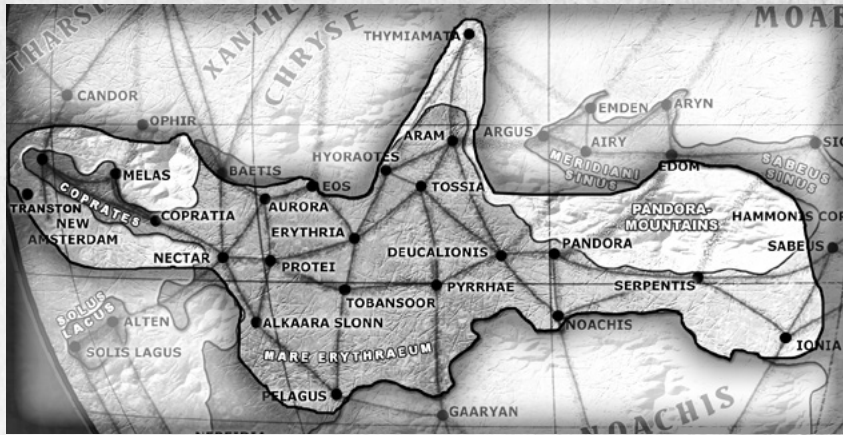
Climate

Without the dense canal network, large parts of the Western Basin would be nothing but an empty, dry dust bowl. The temperatures even rise above the heat of Earth’s Mojave Desert. The interior lands of the Tossian Empire do offer dry grazing land for herd animals like wukkaas and ruumet breehrs, but even these will be lost to the sands soon. The lands along the canals are farmed intensively and are known as the ‘Breadbasket of Mars’.

The climate in the Coprates rift is quite different, though. This “appendix” of the basin lies deeper than the rest of Mars, and in this area known as the “Final Sea”, water remained as late as 19,000 years ago. Today, even here the canals are the only source of water, but as they lie very close together, the climate is still quite humid by Martian standards. The intensive farming efforts keep the region from becoming a swamp as in Gorklimsk or in Olonia.

Flora and Fauna

Plant and animal life in the Western Basin is similar to that of the Central one, so similar in fact that it is generally held to be largely identical. The greatest differences lie in the deliberately planted crops and kept cattle. Thus, the *crimson-striped seote-gashant* or the *bald long-tailed ruumet breehr* can only be found in the Tossian Empire. Even the fruits grown here in the West are different from those grown in the Central Basin. The natural flora and fauna of the Coprates rift also used to show interesting differences from those of the swamp regions of Mars, but the intensive agricultural efforts have left little of that to be studied. Only the *nushwu* remains, a strange kind of land-based sea cucumber that can be found in large numbers on the Gumme plantations of the AIP. Often, these foul-tasting animals serve as the only food source for the workers.



War of the Worlds

“Of course, the Americans seem to be helping us. They bring us money, technologies, new ideas, and, most importantly, weapons. But can we really trust them? Are their claims to not have come here for conquest really true? Or are they just another group of invaders, like the other Red Ones from the Ether? Invaders who are simply acting with more cunning to lure us into a false sense of security?”

—Political agitator in Aurora

For centuries, the Western Basin was a peaceful place on Mars, though suffocating under the weight of accumulated traditions. Recently, this has changed. With the invasion of the Coprates rift by the AIP, the people of this basin now find themselves facing off against a technologically advanced threat. The thugs of the Belgian king rule their holdings in the most brutal ways imaginable. The local population is suppressed and exploited to the utmost. And since the greed of King Leopold II is far from satisfied, even the rest of the Western Basin is in danger. Where the AIP rules, things appear as they do in the classic alien invasion stories. A superior, off-world power dropped from the sky and began to commit unimaginable atrocities out of hunger for power—except that this time, the roles are reversed. The invaders hail from Earth. The rebels, who face death fighting these ‘alien invaders’, must resort to dirty guerilla war tactics in the hopes that one day, they will be able to free their compatriots. Sabotage, abductions, and bombings are considered necessary means. This is all very profitable to the American businessmen who freely sell weapons to the rebels and act as benevolent advisors. But, in reality, they are just an ‘invasion’ by different means: While they do not suppress anyone, even their alien ideas pose a threat to the traditionally-minded Martians. In the region of the Basin (the majority in fact) where neither the Belgians rule nor the Americans “infiltrate”, paranoia and despair are spreading throughout the population. Either the government is acting so reluctantly that no countermeasures can be expected, or everyone is so preoccupied with small-minded bickering that the threat of the Earth people is ignored, such as in Alkaara Slonn. The stars do not augur a kind fate, but there is still hope.

Western Basin

The Tossian Empire

"The capital is difficult to describe. On the one hand, the prevailing mood in the streets, or rather the canals, is as though every day were a state funeral. On the other hand, the pre-revolutionary Versailles would appear to be a tame imitation of this "Island of Palaces". I should think that after all I've seen over the last week, my desire for French adventure novels will be sated for months."

—American cultural attaché
Jonas Bates in a letter to his mother

People: Canal Martians (Vixyles), Hill Martians (Seotes)

Location: The Tossian Empire occupies the majority of the Western Basin.

Languages: Tossian, Na-Gaaryani, Noachan (in Noachis and Pandora)

Vixyle cities: Tossia (capital, pop.: 420,000), Thymiamata (*Silsh*, American presence, trade hub, pop.: 40,000), Aram (*Maaplaka*), Hyoraotes, Deucalionis ⊕, Erythria (*Suluumu*), Noachis (*Hekepan*), Pandora (*Öpolapen*), Protei (*Ulrökan*), Pyrrhae ⊕, Tobansoor

Seote tribes: Saabahaens, Huakes, Noolokes, Ulmuukes, Jekepekes, Gooplakes, Fiinökes, Hophokies, Gluunthukes, Öörbahekes.

Trade goods: Moonkla, clocks, fine mechanical wares, operas

to have found one in the USA, with whom they trade at outposts in Thymiamata, granting discounts on liftwood in return for Earth weapons and logistical support.

Government, Politics, and Society

Those who want to know how the ancient Seldon Empire was organized should investigate the Tossian Empire (*Karuuska Tossiak Sharak*, roughly "Empire of the Highest Lord of Tossia"). The old feudal system of the Seldons is still fully in place here, unchanged for centuries. It is ruled by the *Emperor*, who is always a son of the ancient House Oolorbanik. The Emperor is always also the canal prince of Tossia. Directly beneath him are the 20 lords, the highest rulers of the cities and hill tribes. Ten of them are canal princes, the other ten are Hill Martian chieftains—this symmetry was not deliberate, as is often claimed, but purely a result of chance. All 20 lords of the empire hold a seat in the "*Makraal*", the Tossian parliament, and are of equal rank, though they fill different "*imperial offices*", whose purposes hide behind pompous titles. Beneath them are the smaller city noble houses and the clan lords who only hold the right to speak in their own city (or tribe).

In internal matters, the individual member cities and tribes are autonomous. In external matters, they follow the rule of the Makraal and the Emperor. The relation between the Emperor and the Makraal is very similar to that between the Tsar of Russia and the Imperial Duma: the Emperor has limited legislative power since he needs the consent of the Makraal, though he can disband it at any time and has an absolute veto over all Makraal-issued legislation. In practice the Makraal mostly enacts regulations and makes administrative decisions, legislation being a millennia-old, calcified, Byzantine collection of codified traditions supported by legions of lower officials, where few areas of jurisdiction can be defined clearly.

The Tossian people are divided into two population groups: The *Vixyles* in the cities and the *Seotes* in the steppes.

Vixyles - The Children of the Towers

The inhabitants of the great cities and villages lining the canal shores make up about 70% of the Tossian population. The term "Vixyle" is derived from the Son-Gaaryani word "Vixyleemik", which roughly translates as "Tower Child". The Vixyles live in a very conservative society. The strict adherence to all old customs has, so it is believed, prevented the Tossian Empire from falling into the same chaos that befell the rest of Mars. Large portions of the population reject change in all its forms. Stagnation lies over the Tossian society like a shroud. More so than anywhere else on Mars, daily life in Tossia is marked by an overabundance of precise manners and elaborate ritual. Instead of guilds, the craftsmen of the empire are arranged into dynasties, which are based on children almost always learning the trade of their parents to the exclusion of all else, and only marrying within their profession. This practice is the reason why mean-spirited outsiders like to accuse Tossians of inbreeding. The practices of each craft are marked by tradition just as much as manners are, and often also have a ritualistic character. It is not surprising that the Vixyles

History

The empire has withstood all the trials and tribulations of the past few centuries like a steady rock. The final Seldon, according to Tossian records, named his most loyal officer, one *Noohrpak Oolorbanik*, to be his heir and gifted him with the crown to all of Mars in his dying moments. To the Tossians, the Seldon Empire has thus never fallen, it is merely being governed by a new dynasty. Since no one outside the Tossian borders accepts the claim of the Emerald Throne to the entire planet, the Emperor must console himself with "only" ruling the largest nation on Mars and receiving tribute from some of the surrounding cities. In its early days, the empire had still tried to reclaim the "rebellious cities" with military might. In particular, the wars against the competing successor Nectar-Coprates Empire were aimed towards this goal. This phase lasted for about two centuries, until Emperor *Urpak III* decided that the "rebels" no longer deserved his protection. He ceased all military operations and closed the borders of the empire for centuries. Little of mention happened during this time. Only when Thymiamata finagled itself membership in the empire through a cunning coup in 1593 did the borders open somewhat again and did the empire resume its attempts to assert influence over the surrounding cities. The arrival of the Belgians in the Coprates has ensured that Tossia feels heavily threatened and now, for the first time in its history, it is seeking allies. It seems

require a means to vent amidst all the stiff rituals—and this is found in the very popular theater plays and operas of the empire. As these performances are fiction, any and all societal convention may be broken in them. Thus, the most bizarre and outlandish plots can be witnessed on stage here, including a whole range of truly brilliant ones. Even on Earth, Tossian opera enjoys an excellent reputation.

Seotes - The Emperor's Riders

The Seotes dwelling in the steppes resemble the riders of the Nepenthes-Thoth steppes in their everyday lifestyle. There are even rumors these two people are closely related. The greatest difference between the Seotes and their possible cousins is that the Seotes appear “more civilized”. Their inclusion in the empire has in particular improved their weaponry. Each warrior carries at least a long musket. On top of that, all Seotes practice the art of calligraphy, follow the manners of the city folk, and love excessive tea ceremonies. Even though the Seotes believe that their lives are freer than those of the city-dwellers, their traditions are just as restrictive as those of the Vixyles. Seotes are known for their immense pride, as they are believed to be the best cavalymen on all of Mars. Unusually for Hill Martians, they show great interest in luxury goods. Even the lowest-ranking tribal warrior wears as much jewelry as they can afford. Seote tents are furnished with fine rugs and pillows and the tent tarps are elaborately painted. Tribal chieftains own well-built main palaces and several smaller ones, between which the main bodies of their tribes migrate. Apart from tea and jewelry, the life of a Seote is defined by harsh battle practice. The tribes often engage in minor wars against each other, though they are subject to complex ritualistic rules. The American journalist *Hiram Highwater* wrote in 1886 that the internal wars of the Seotes were more like “sports with casualties” than full-blown military conflicts. When fighting against non-Tossians, these ritualistic rules do not apply, and they unleash the full power of their cavalry.

Military

The empire maintains a large standing army. There is no conscription; instead, soldiers have their own rank within the society of the empire. As with other professions, the son will take on the calling of his father. To ensure a steady supply of recruits, soldiers, unlike other citizens, are allowed to practice polygamy and receive bonus payments for every son born. Soldiers are highly regarded, are paid quite well, and enjoy priority treatment during bureaucratic processes. As of recently, large numbers of them have been equipped with American-made rifles; this sudden innovation after centuries of stasis fuels constant debate. In addition to the standing army, there exists a tradition of levying penal battalions of criminals, to be sent on suicide missions. Within the Seotes, every adult is a warrior in addition to their usual role, leaving the tribes able to provide the Emperor with surprisingly large troop contingents if necessary. The Tossian Army is supported by an enormous armada of ancient aerial flyers, though none of these has left the borders of the empire for more than 800 years.

Culture and Technology

The Vixyles excel in one particular area above all—clockworks! In this, they even exceed some human watchmakers. That their fine mechanical skills are so advanced is largely based on knowledge from the time of Seldon having been better preserved than elsewhere—it is certainly not because of any kind of inventiveness! Tossian pocket watches are considered a status symbol, but even musical boxes, small wind-up toys, and astronomical devices are made to exacting standards by the Vixyle crafters. Stories abound of cunning mechanical trick weaponry being employed in the palatial intrigues. The official crowning achievement of Vixyle clockwork technology is the “kuurka”, a rolling-pin-shaped device that easily fits into a coat pocket (p. 169). This ingenious little device can perform all four basic types of calculation as well as square root derivations. Operating a kuurka's eleven dials and end crank isn't without challenges, but once mastered they are invaluable tools for merchants and scholars. Several European watchmakers have recently begun to attempt to copy the kuurka, as it is superior to Earth-made arithmometers.

As mechanical devices, they are likely only surpassed by the Emperor's honor guard: A series of ancient Martian robots (p. 163) that have been maintained for thousands of years by the skills of the Tossian watchmakers. Their numbers are said to have once been sufficient “*to guard every room in the palace at once*”, which is likely an exaggeration because said building includes a very high number of rooms. The fact is that some of these robots do cease to function every year and are only able to serve as a source of spare parts for the remaining ones. The honor guard is much smaller today than it was in the past, but the exact number of operational robots is kept secret by the Tossian court.

The great mechanical skills of Tossians are also put to good use by their greatest passion: the opera. Even the smallest theaters are able to perform impressive stage tricks. Tossia also features large numbers of preserved ancient artifacts on display. The large ring mirror of the Emperor is only the most famous of these. It is also said that all city and steppe palaces of the empire are connected through a complex system of pair-stone televisions (p. 161). This is just one of the reasons Oenotrian agents have attempted large-scale infiltrations of the Tossian Empire.

A characteristic feature of Tossian art is its excessive ornamentation. There is little that doesn't feature many twists, flower patterns, artificial leaves, animal motifs, or decorative gems. Connoisseurs from Earth tend to liken Tossian designs to a mixture of oriental art and European Baroque.

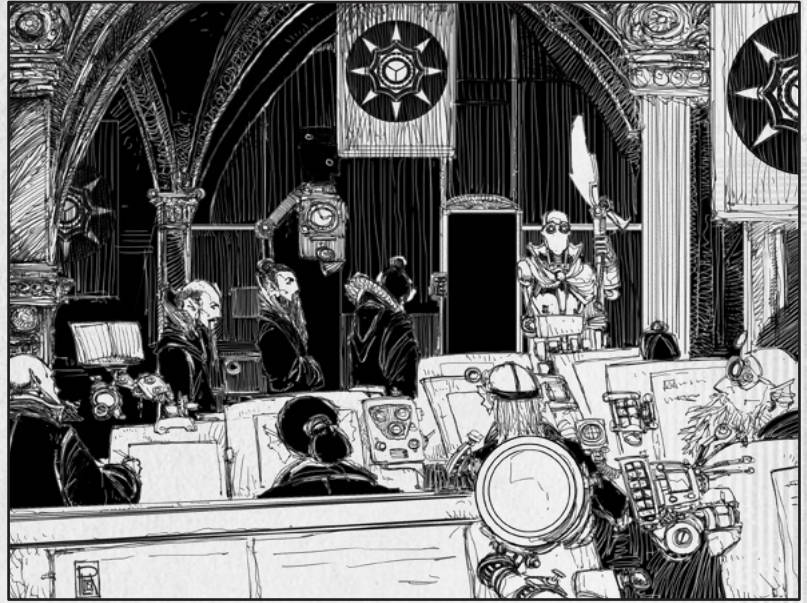
In matters of agriculture, the Tossians are masters of fruit plantation. Their gardens and plantations grow thousands of different kinds of fruits. Locally, they are eaten fresh, but for transport they are pickled, dried, or turned into beverages. Moonkla, a kind of melon cider (p. 19), is particularly popular.

Tossia

The capital of the Empire is one of the largest metropolises on Mars, and architecturally speaking one of the most exciting. The entire city was built inside the circular lake that forms the intersection of five canals. There are no paved roads in Tossia. All travel occurs via boat, bridges or stairs, almost as in Earth's Venice. One can easily see everywhere that Tossia must once have been far mightier than it is today. Even the worst of the slums are palatial in the construction of the flat blocks and teem with ornamentation. Despite countless merchants and bustling activity

on the canal banks, there is always an air of calm in the city. The lives of the people here are of such regularity—dictated by tradition—that everything operates almost as precisely and smoothly as one of the famous Tossian clockworks. Visitors to the city often compare their stay with that in a crypt. More recently, the calm has been repeatedly interrupted by “attacks” by a resistance group calling itself “Phantoms of the Youth”. They engage in such “cruel” activities as repainting statues overnight or ambushing processions by employing crude, loudly tooting instruments. Many Vixyles see this as crimes nonetheless.

The seat of the Tossian Government is the “Island of Palaces” at the center of the city. Viewed from the outside, the massive complex appears like a gigantic fairy tale castle. In fact, it is a collection of several interconnected tower palaces of up to 1,600 feet (500 m) in height. The Island of Palaces not only includes the Makraal, but also the great gathering square with the famous imperial ring mirror, the personal palace of Krahaanik IV, as well as the capital palaces of the imperial lords, a few smaller palaces, and numerous gardens. Particularly impressive is the ancient pumping system that carries water up into



the higher levels where it falls back out of the “tower windows” as a waterfall. The United States embassy is located in one of the smaller towers in the east, while Great Britain and Germany must make do with buildings in the merchant district. The Island of Palaces is a small world unto itself and many court officials never leave it. While the number of people living on the island is huge—nobility, bureaucrats, and servants together make up about 11,000 people—it still appears almost empty because of its sheer size. Stories abound of forgotten halls, gardens, or rooms that no living soul has entered for centuries. The lives of the lower-ranking officials and servants are as regulated as those of the citizens outside the island. The nobility, on the other hand, engages in a multitude of decadent excesses and launches the most devious intrigues for the most spurious reasons. Alexandre Dumas would have thoroughly enjoyed the Island of Palaces.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

Vixyles and Seotes have been monotheistic for millennia already. There are many, probably accurate, theories suggesting that Tossia might be the origin of this widespread religious motif. The priesthood is bound into the political structures of the Empire as the “Imperial Church” and holds great influence. Members of other religions require official permission to practice their faith. That might sound intolerant, but in practice is not as bad as it could be. Such religious practice permits are practically thrown at people by the imperial offices. Even the darkest cults that probably should be prohibited rarely have problems acquiring the requisite permits. The worship of non-official deities without a proper permit (and this includes amongst other things exclamations such as “Oh dear god!”) is punishable by mild fines. The Canal Keeper faith is quite widespread in the south of the empire, Gaaryan being relatively close, but it remains inferior in rank to the Imperial Tossian Church. Declaring Seldon to be a saint is quite acceptable to the government, the teachings of reincarnation less so. To prevent a possible future reborn Seldon from causing trouble, there are countless juristic-theological explanations as to why such a reborn Seldon would not have any legitimate claim to the Tossian throne.

The Artificial Tossian Language

The artificial Tossian language is the official governmental language of the Western Basin. If its use were not mandated by law in Tossia, this excessively formal and stilted construct would never naturally assert itself. Figures of speech may not be altered in Tossian, and it is the only known language in which punctuation marks are fully pronounced.

Jabuhuk Fnool Snurk Laal Fnool Slimsh – Trap slash wire frame for small animal slash supply eating pest (mouse trap)

Nuuhurk saluool Ebelepsh Nipish shlumf if-huusi put Alsapal Noop – The determined cause of death lies in injuries comma that are incompatible with life full stop

Uldadaad Lishipik elbahaap urbat shlumpf uhuur Kadaa Urghiil shlumf Phidailaap jihikil Noop – The plaintiff can thus claim comma that it would have been intolerable to him comma that refuse the satisfaction of his future mother in law full stop

Shukal Burash nak Polshah Fnool Bilshimsh Cushak etal – Writers of texts of the category 42F slash Case officers of complaints and reclamations (lesser imperial office)

Silepsh Alaish Sifuusi Bitarak kufhuusa Balaruu – Teaching staff certified in the subjects of history and public order according to Imperial regulations (imperial office)

Amongst both Vixyles and Seotes, the “Mask Cult” is also a fixture of daily life. Certain moods, events in the family, public holidays or seasons all require that a mask fitting the situation be worn. Some Tossians therefore keep a collection of hundreds of masks in order to be prepared for all eventualities. Wealthy Tossians wear masks of gold, glass, and gems, the less wealthy ones wear masks reminiscent of painted potato sacks. Masks of all grades and for all occasions can be rented. Wearing an inappropriate mask is considered a grave faux pas in Tossian society and has cost many a foreigner a pretty penny.

Current Situation

On the surface, the Tossian Empire appears as calm and stable as it has been for centuries. But this is a serious misconception. The long calm seems to be reaching its end, and this is not just because of the arrival of the humans. The social stagnation has reached such levels that even the Tossians can barely tolerate it anymore. Rituals and bureaucratic processes are so complex that corruption is almost necessary just to get anything done. As such, all sorts of misdemeanors are enjoying massive surges in popularity. The nobility cannot be counted on to solve these issues; the high people sit in their palaces, uncaring of the fate of their people, and feverishly plot their latest insignificant intrigue. Above all of it, Emperor *Krahaanik IV* rules like a rock, an aging tyrant with a heart of flint.

Resistance Groups (➡ see p. 199)

Several resistance groups are currently operating underground against the frozen stasis. While the “Phantoms of the Youth” attempt to wake up the masses through pranks, the secret society “Dynamic” commits assassinations—but only on those who wrong the simple people the most. One might almost view them as a group of Robin Hoods. It is unknown whether they are working

together with the group “Golden Regression”, which is allegedly supported by Oenotria. The Worm cult is also amongst those attempting to act against the Tossian government, but with far less altruistic goals. In the meantime, discontent Seotes gather in the steppes and secretly plan to secede from the empire. Out beyond the border, the humans from far away Belgium now plot to take control of the Tossian Empire, as they have the Coprates. The Americans, with whom the Emperor has entered in alliance to counter the Belgian threat, are bringing all sorts of frightening new ideas into the empire. It would appear that Tossia is in for interesting times.

Tossians and Humans

Despite the atrocities committed by King Leopold II’s thugs in the neighboring Coprates, the Tossians hold no general dislike towards humans. Recently, an alliance with the USA was concluded—a move that, combined with the recent improved relations with the former rival of Nectar, should keep the AIP at a distance. This has created sympathy, at least in regards to America, but the humans continue to seem strange. It is only in Noachis that the humans fell into disfavor after a case of rental fraud by a Boston businessman caused a stir. While an alliance between the progressive USA and the dusty empire might seem strange at first, there are good reasons for Tossia to commit to it. The USA are a powerful Earth nation, but clearly do not have much interest in creating colonies, and are willing to pay for the liftwood that Tossia provides at a discount. To ward off democratic ideas that might “sneak in” through this alliance, the Tossian propaganda specifically plays up the alien nature of the humans. Democracy, it is said, might be perfectly suitable for these bizarre and otherworldly beings, but is not fit for Martians. A more pleasant guest is the ambassador of Siam as a representative of a Monarchy, and indeed he is already being envied for how fast he moves through the bureaucracy of the Tossian Empire (➡ see p. 198).

Thymiamata - Star-Spangled Banner on a Distant Star

“The greatest thing about the rodeo was the Seote dressage riders. They combine show riding with precision shooting from the saddle! Unbelievable! I dropped my malt drops when I saw them! THAT is what I want a picture of in the brochure!”

—Bertram Higgins, American travel agent

People: Canal Martians, humans (Americans)
Location: Highlands north of the Western Basin
Languages: Na-Gaaryani, Koline, English

Thymiamata (*Slilsh*, 40,000 Martians, a few hundred Americans) is the northernmost and smallest of the Tossian metropolises. As a “city of free trade” it is the gateway to the Tea Road and is considered the largest cattle market on the Red Planet.

History

With so many cities on Mars, it is unclear how Thymiamata was founded. Surprisingly, *Slilsh* is not mentioned in any documents older than a mere 5,000 years ago. It must nevertheless have already been a powerful force in trade at that time, due to its placement between the Tea Road and the metropolises of Tossia. *Slilsh* might even have been one of the financial centers of the Seldon Empire, for marble money cast here during that time can still be found everywhere on Mars. Earth historians, meanwhile, like to call Thymiamata the “Venice of Mars”. After the fall of the Seldons, Thymiamata was able to persist for a while as a trade hub before eventually collapsing. Its lowest point came 600 years ago, when the then-ruling canal prince imposed draconian taxes on the merchant houses. The resulting civil war cast the city into chaos and obscurity. Its slow recovery only began in 1593, when merchant prince *Mlakapuu Shlooshka* married a Seote princess from the South and managed to be accepted into the Tossian

Makraal as an Imperial Lord after a cunning coup allowed him to found his own dynasty.

Ever since, Thymiamata has been the northernmost city of the Tossian Empire and profits from tax-free trade with the Tossian cities. This is one of the reasons why the USA began to make its presence felt here in 1876. The advantageous location and the open mindset of the citizens towards a free market society are ideal for American businessmen. To this day, the rest of Earth wonders why the isolationist Tossians opened their city to them so willingly. Their presence has opened new opportunities for the city and a golden age appears imminent. While the city is still but a shadow of its former glory, progress is being made. Since early this year, a small American military post under *Colonel Robert E. Forrester* has been established with the express permission of the Emperor. The Colonel immediately insisted that the traditional tribute payments that had been made to the High Martian tribes for millennia were to cease. Responding to the provocation, “King” *Kurge* launched a retaliatory attack but was beaten back spectacularly. Since then, Forrester has been celebrated as a hero, but a larger war against the “winged pests” appears imminent.

Government, Politics, and Society

Like the other cities of the Tossian Empire, Thymiamata is a monarchy. The current prince of the city *Mlakapuu VII* spends most of his time in the Makraal or with his followers inside his tower on Tossia’s Island of Palaces, however. The actual administration of the city is performed by the ancient merchant dynasties which guide the fate of the city in an almost republican way. As long as they do nothing that angers Tossia or the prince, this local tradition is tolerated. The people of Thymiamata are more open and free-minded than the rest of the empire, in any case. Many *Vixyles* thus consider them to be half-barbarians.

Military

Thymiamata is part of the Tossian Empire but maintains its own martial traditions. The soldier class so common in the rest of the empire (see p. 53) serves only the prince of Thymiamata. The majority of the city’s troops are not made up of Tossian legions. Instead, the greatest of the merchant houses of Thymiamata maintain their own house troops, usually consisting of well-equipped *Seote* mercenaries. Together, they make up the *SDA* (*Slilsh Defense Army*, or *TDF*, *Thymiamata Defense Force*, as the Americans call it). As far as the Tossian government is concerned, the American military post here also serves as “house troops” for the American merchants.

Culture and Technology

Thymiamata is famous for the production of high quality saddles and mirrors (thus the comparisons to Earth’s Venice), but otherwise offers little in the way of technological uniqueness. The focus is more on trade, finance, and cattle farming. Nevertheless, the city’s name is synonymous with technological marvels all over Mars. That is because it is the home of the legendary *Zeenos Quantaani*, the “Leonardo da Vinci of Mars”. He is said to have created countless inventions during the reign of Seldon II. Current

myths like to paint him as a prankster, similar to Earth figures such as Robin Hood. He always aids good people, while playing tricks on evil ones. Even the Worm God itself is counted among his victims. *Quantaani* is said to have tricked him into entering a crystal coffin, which he then sealed and threw into the swamps near *Olonia*. 1,000 years later, the Worm God was freed, however, and it is said that this was the reason for the fall of the Seldon Empire. *Quantaani*’s existence is not a proven historical fact, but even so, many believe that his lost laboratory still lies hidden somewhere beneath Thymiamata.

Overview of Thymiamata

The majority of the human population lives in the *American Quarter*. Countless shops and corporate offices here flush money into the city coffers. Unlike the British Quarter in *Syrtis Major*, the Americans did not reconfigure the buildings but used the old, Martian flats. Nearby lie the *stockyards*, the largest market for livestock on Mars. Auctions take place here every Martian month on the first (every 64 sols), and trade in *gashants*, *wukkaas*, *ruumet breehrs*, and *wocnids* can yield millions. Once a Martian year, on the birthday of the Emperor, a rodeo is held. The stock market is firmly in the hands of the Americans by now and is run much like similar institutions in the USA. Many animals are butchered right here in Thymiamata, processed, and shipped as tinned meat all over Mars by the *Armour Meats* company. This Martian company has commissioned a refrigeration warehouse built by the famous *Josephus Martin*. How the facility gets its power is being kept secret. Rumors claim that a still-operational ancient Martian energy supply system lying beneath the city is used.

The defense of the city is directed from *Fort McClellon*. The military post named after the famous American Civil War hero is located on the extensive grounds of the merchant house *Soorbal*. The last heir of the family, *Zsheelpe*, was almost bankrupt with little more than the property to his name, when he hit on the idea of leasing it to the American government. *Zsheelpe* is now a

The Black Chance

It is only rarely spoken of on Earth, but it is quite apparent on Mars: 70% of the Americans in Thymiamata are Black. There are two reasons for this: While the USA, in matters of racial equality, are more progressive than any other industrialized nation, the situation is still not truly comfortable. Even in the large liberal cities of the East coast, a skin tone that is considered too dark can still get one into trouble. On Mars, however, skin color makes almost no difference. Ambitious black businessmen that ran into the infamous “glass ceiling” on Earth can act without racist impediments on Mars, or at least only with those that the White Earthlings also face as aliens. Here, they have the possibility of building a large business empire without being put down by the White establishment.

wealthy Martian. Meanwhile, the US Army Corps of Engineers has renovated half of the ruins and generously equipped the defenses with 12-pound guns and Maxim machine guns. The other end of the city is the *Ruined Quarter* of Slilsh. It would be similar to many other fields of ruins on Mars, if not for the fact that it was only created during the civil war a few centuries ago. Before the war, it was the banking district of the city, and thus rumors persist that somewhere underneath the rubble, vaults full of gold, glass coins, and bank notes wait to be found.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

Thymiamata has always shared the same faith as the other cities of the empire—a fact that surely helped ease its joining even though the priesthood long refused to be absorbed by the imperial bureaucracy as “glorified scribes”. Administration was seen as a job for merchants. Generally speaking, the *Slilshaan*, the citizens of Thymiamata, are much more open than the Vixyles of the South. As merchants, they are used to dealing with new situations. The youth of Slilsh has recently taken up baseball, even though the Tossian propaganda continues to try and paint this sport as an example of the alien nature of the Americans and claims no Martian could comprehend the strange rules of the game.

Thymiamata and the Humans

Currently, things couldn't be better for either side. Both the great merchant houses of Slilsh and the American “newcomers” are raking in record earnings through their interplanetary cooperation. Foreigners are not allowed to purchase property in the Tossian Empire, but lawyers have found a cunning loophole: The

American settlers lease a property, usually for a single set sum and for a duration measured in thousands of years. By and large, everyone would be happy with this arrangement, if it weren't for the fact that the Thymiamatan leasing laws allow for significant amounts of room for fraud.

Forrester's actions against King Kurge have freed the city of a significant burden. The USA have gained access to liftwood, the Tossian Empire a supply of modern firearms. Thus, humans are quite popular in Thymiamata, though a few tensions do still exist. Attacks on the caravans along the Tea Road are commonplace, the crime rate in Thymiamata is high (as it is anywhere on Mars) and there are cultural conflicts. Particularly the Seotes keep butting heads with the Americans, who have built ranches around the city, as they see their livestock monopoly threatened. And some Americans have trouble treating Martians as equals. They take it as an insult when President Cleveland is addressed as “*Prince Cleveland, honored and noble sovereign of the good city of Yuesey*” in diplomatic missives by the Makraal, simply because tradition does not allow for any other form of address towards a foreign head of state. Both the president and the press take the matter in good humor. More problematic are the growing tensions between the USA and the other Earth powers. While lucrative trade can be had with the British and the Germans (mostly via the Tea Road), the eager trade in weapons by American salesmen is causing diplomatic trouble. Already, some powers fear attacks by High Martian tribes armed with Winchester rifles. In its defense, the US insists that Thymiamata is *not* a colony and that anything American citizens do on Mars is their private business. Berlin and London are not convinced by this argument. There have even been heated diplomatic exchanges between the USA and Belgium. Washington condemns the actions of the AIP in the Coprates, while King Leopold II has decided that the arms shipments of American traders to the rebels are a thinly veiled covert action by the US against Belgium.

The Client Cities - On Tossia's Long Leash

History

“*Harper, could you bring some more laudanum for my headache?*”

— **American ambassador Frederick O'Connell**
on the situation in the Tossian client cities

People: Canal Martians

Location: The south of the Western Basin

Languages: Na-Gaaryani, Koline, Noachan (in Serpentis and Ionia), Thaumasian (Nectar)

Cities: Aurora (*Sakum*), Eos ⊕, Nectar (*Nandahaar*), Alkaara Slonn, Pelagus, Ionia (*Urlek*), Serpentis (*Dekinaak*)

Trade goods: Agricultural produce, glass wares, exotic chemicals (Aurora)

When the Seldon Empire fell, some client cities were overjoyed. The decadent world Emperors had been hated by their citizenry. The provincial capital of Nectar began to establish a large successor empire, which spanned the entire south of the basin and the Coprates. The remnants of the old Seldon rule were fanatically removed, and the once inferior faith in the *Eleven Universal Gods* was elevated to the rank of national religion while the Canal Keepers were brutally persecuted. Gaaryan was annihilated. The Nectar-Coprates Empire soon fell into conflict with the Tossian Empire, though, who saw themselves as the rightful heir of the Seldons. Nectar lost after many long battles, its empire was crushed, and the cities became tribute-owing vassals of Tossia, though they were denied a seat on the Makraal. Thus, the term “client cities” was coined. Nectar alone managed to drive out the Tossians in the 14th century, but is still counted as one of the client cities by all of Mars, much to chagrin of the people of Nectar. The other cities did not succeed in freeing themselves from Tossia. For a long time, everything seemed frozen in place, as it did in the empire. But now that the humans have arrived, everything is going to change.

Government, Politics, and Society

Centuries of Tossian influence have left a political system in the client cities that resembles that of the empire. Each canal prince rules, supported by a council of nobles, with differing degrees of absolutism. Nominally, all client cities owe tribute to Tossia and receive “protection” from the Tossian legions. Tossia is a very distant occupying power, showing little interest in anything but these tributes. Serpentis and Ionia seized this opportunity to openly declare their independence. Nectar instead seeks to reestablish friendly contact with Tossia since the emergence of the AIP threat.


Military

All client cities maintain armies of pikemen and musketeers, supported by rather small aerial fleets. The rapidly escalating conflicts in the region have convinced all cities to begin massive conscription of civilians, even in Pelagus and Serpentis where, until recently, conscription was not used.


Culture and Technology

The technology levels of the client cities can be called average. Only Aurora, one of the eight “ethereal wonders of Mars”, scores higher in this category than other modern cities due to countless ancient relics. The old city is encased in a crystal dome and about 400 public “long-distance call crystals” allow for something akin to “mass telecommunication”—but only to those who can afford the exorbitant fees. Of course, no one knows how the dome was constructed or how the communications crystals function.

RD Overview of the Cities

Nectar (Nandahaar  see p. 198)

The largest client city by far, Nectar is a huge, cosmopolitan trade hub for the West of Mars. The current ruler, Prince *Sitaani*, is attempting to protect his rich metropolis from the AIP, and is even willing to deal with Tossia for support. He is granting sanctuary to the exiled Prince *Mal-ga-par* of Copratia as well as an Earth General from Siam.

Aurora (Sakum) ( see p. 194)

The “domed city” continues to pay tribute to Tossia as it has done in the past, but it does so in the form of strange “artworks” and chemical reagents that no one in the Empire knows how to put to use. This is common for the “Prince Without a Name”, the anonymous ruler of the city. The eccentric monarch remains entirely behind the scenes and only communicates with the city council through missives and pair stones. He appears to truly know everything about everything and secures his power by eliminating anyone who does not follow his orders. No seditious person has so far managed to escape his wrath. He always kills through electrocution. If the records are to be believed, he has been in power since the age of the Seldons. Right now, Aurora trembles in fear of him.

Border War in the Bosphoros

The canal prince of **Alkaara Slonn** has ambitions of becoming a full Lord within the Tossian Empire and engages in bribery and intrigue to secure a seat in the Makraal. Unfortunately, the canal prince of **Pelagus (Elkaara Slonn, formerly Xaxt Nzaxas)** opposes this. As Alkaara Slonn had conquered Pelagus five centuries ago, decimated and driven out the local ethnic population of the Nzios’Xna, and then repopulated the city with settlers from its own slums, Pelagus is considered a colony by Alkaara Slonn. The simultaneous attempts by Pelagus’s prince to also become a Lord in the Makraal are thus seen as an insult by its colony that must be punished in blood. To wage this war, Alkaara Slonn has allegedly even consulted Belgian “military advisors”.

The Renegades of the Noachis Narrows

Ionia (Urlek) and **Serpentis (Dekinaak)** are among the smaller client cities. They have decided to cease paying tributes to Tossia, as they consider the empire too weak. Serpentis even went so far as to poison a Tossian delegation and to declare war on Tossia. Ionia meanwhile considers Tossia too far away to bother with, and the tributes to have been a “mere nuisance”. The canal prince here is more worried about the spread of the Jaarpadists (p. 41), and thus seeks closer relations with the British. Unfortunately, the British ambassador has recently been murdered. Someone managed to lock him into his chambers on the 15th floor of the guest palace and to subsequently flood it with sewage water. The Ionian investigators are at a loss to explain any of this.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

As with the Hellenic-Trinacrian neighbors to the east, the client cities are marked by a confusing number of local rites and customs that appear impenetrable to outsiders. In general, society is less stagnant than in the Tossian Empire. In particular Nectar is quite free-spirited by Martian standards. The client cities all worship the *Eleven Universal Gods*, with Nectar generally being considered the origin of this faith. These Eleven are not worshipped by a single church, but form a multitude of different cults displaying varying degrees of fanaticism. There used to be bloody wars of faith between the Canal Keepers and the worshippers of the Eleven. Nectar considers that era to be one of shame, but Alkaara Slonn celebrates it. Thus, Canal Keepers are rare here, despite the proximity to Gaaryan. There does appear to be a mysterious connection to the “Keepers of the Way” in Nectar, however, a secretive group that is said to possess magical, or at least mesmerizing powers.

Current Situation

A long period of peace is about to end. While everyone fears a grand invasion by the AIP at any moment, a number of smaller simmering conflicts are also coming to a head: Serpentis and Ionia have ceased paying tribute to Tossia. The war between Alkaara Slonn and Pelagus is escalating with ever dirtier tactics. Meanwhile, Aurora’s Prince Without a Name appears to be growing increasingly mad. Friendship between Nectar and Tossia is the only hope for the region.

The Client Cities and the Humans

Thanks to the countless stories about the crimes of the AIP, most of the common people fear the humans. Wherever the “red round-ear devils” appear, people change to the other side of the street, close window blinds, or gather together in a lynch mob.

AIP - The Belgian Occupation Zone on Mars

“Belgians are the scum of the Earth, the most cowardly, cruel, and devious people ever created by God. It is a Belgian custom to hack the hands off their Martian slaves should they fail to meet one of their monthly quotas of Gumme. Their King Leopold II is the most despicable and bloodthirsty ruler to ever sit on a throne in Europe. Such a monster as a head of state would be unthinkable in Germany. No, such a monster and mass murderer is unthinkable to ever rule in Europe again.”

— Oscar Hermansen, Dioscuria Protection Corps, in a letter to his family

People: Humans (Belgians), Canal Martians (citizens, slaves), Hill Martians (mercenaries)
Location: Entire Coprates Rift Valley
Languages: Thaumasian, Koline, French, Flemish
Cities: Melas (*Nya-An-Mee*, center of commerce, owned by the corporation, pop.: 101,000), Copratia (*Zhoom-Panaak*, multicultural trade hub, pop.: 85,000), New Amsterdam (*Po-Poo-Hanna-Kitai*, garrison city, pop.: 80,000)
Trade goods: Gumme, agricultural produce

King Leopold II of Belgium’s drive to increase business and gain international prestige is considerable. In the mid-1870s, he began to send scientific expeditions to the Red Planet, to evaluate the economic potential of Mars’s resources. Leopold’s successes with his *Société générale de Belgique* in the Congo had primed him to expect similar results on Mars.

He chose the Coprates Rift Valley as a target with care: The other colonial powers had set up far from it, and even Tossia, the nearest Martian empire, was distant. Otherwise, only empty steppe surrounded the Coprates. The nearby mountains offered liftwood and the unusually fertile nature promised valuable plant-based products. And he did find what he sought: The difficult to harvest Gumme plant (p. 17) yields a type of rubber that is both superior to Earth rubber and temperature independent. Where Earth rubber fails in ether-based applications, Gumme is perfectly suited. Leopold thus founded the AIP (*Association internationale des planètes*) to harvest this Gumme, and became its majority stock holder.

Territory

The Belgians rule the Coprates Rift Valley. It is divided into the *upper* (northwestern) and *lower* (southeastern) parts. Previously a long, shallow bay in the west of the now dry Mare Erythraeum, this largest known valley in the solar system downright dwarves its Earth

The Groundcleansers have an easy time recruiting here. Government officials view things differently, though. While the Prince Without a Name has forbidden any human to enter the dome of his city on penalty of death, the ruler of Ionia desperately tries to negotiate with the British Empire. The official stances of the other cities fall somewhere between these extremes.

counterpart, the Grand Canyon. The gigantic, miles-high rock cliffs that surround it on all sides offer a serene and beautiful natural landmark.

The microclimate of the rift valley combined with the tightly woven canal network which includes many petty canals creates perfect conditions for agriculture. These circumstances allow for Gumme plantations and the growing of forests.

History

1876: King Leopold II sends a (seemingly) scientific mission to Mars to investigate the Coprates Rift Valley. The Martians exhibit curiosity at first.

From 1876: Further expeditions are launched in rapid succession and establish “scientific camps”, but begin to exploit the natural resources and report to King Leopold II that the exploitation of Mars Gumme could prove most profitable. The King founds the AIP (*Association internationale des planètes*, or *Coprates Company* in English) to represent his interests on Mars. The expedition is guarded by heavily armed soldiers, and skirmishes occur between these guards and the Martians. Curiosity turns to hostility.

1879: Troops from Melas attack the Belgians. Initial successes give hope that the humans can be driven off.

1880: King Leopold II responds by establishing the *Belgian Legion*, composed of mercenaries and soldiers of fortune.

1882: Two regiments of the legion are deployed to Mars. The conflict with the troops from Melas is now a war.

1883: The Belgian army takes Melas. Violence is the order of the day in the Coprates.

1884: Skirmishes between the soldiers of the AIP and the Martians become the norm, colonial rule is brutally enforced. The AIP protests the practices of the American arms dealers, who are selling modern rifles to the rebels. The Americans justify their deliveries as aid to self-defense.

1885: Po-Poo-Hana-Kitai is occupied. The “*Upper Coprates Republic*” under AIP rule is proclaimed. Other European nations recognize it.

1886: Border violations by Melas Lacus in the southeast result in retaliatory expeditions that destabilize the city and finally cause it to fall.

1887: The King proclaims the “*Protectorate of the Lower Coprates*” around Melas Lacus. Foreign investors are allowed to gain footholds. Regular Belgian army troops see deployment on Mars.

1888: While the “Congo Atrocities” damage King Leopold II’s reputation on Earth, a smuggled image crystal lays bare the cruelties of the Belgian legion in the Coprates. The “Coprates Atrocities” cause the Americans to redouble their efforts to sell arms to the Martians in Thymiamata. Po-Poo-Hana-Kitai is renamed *New Amsterdam* (*Neu Amsterdam* in Flemish, *la Nouvelle-Amsterdam* in French) and Melas Lacus (*Zhoom-Panaak*) becomes *Copratia*.

1889: The conquest of the Coprates Rift Valley by the AIP is complete and the surrounding areas are “pacified”. However, swarms of refugees and rebel groups continue to destabilize the region. Attacks on Gumme plantations and punitive action by the Belgian forces become commonplace.

Government and Politics

Upper Coprates Republic

The AIP rules the area around Melas and New Amsterdam. King Leopold II owns 50% of the company, and has kept in control with an iron fist since 1885. The AIP maintains a trade monopoly for imports and exports, particularly for Gumme. Work in the fields is conducted by convicts and slaves under terrifying conditions: The AIP troops impose almost impossible quotas on the Martians, and punish failure to meet them with mutilation or the execution of spouses and children kept as hostages. It is a despicable terror regime bent on maximizing profits while viewing the Martians as property.

Director Georges Flamandes

The highest-ranking representative of the AIP on Mars is a strict, authoritarian man who views profits as the ultimate goal: *Everything* is subject to cost-benefit analysis, threats must be countered with prejudice. He is ambitious and a cold, greedy soul without any moral fiber when it comes to the treatment of Martians (« ressources martiennes »).

Flamandes is short, always properly dressed and maintains a carefully groomed goatee and moustache. During conversations, he appears emotionless. He is used to conveying his intentions with few words, sometimes even just glances.

Mentor 3

Archetype: Moneyman **Motivation:** Greed
Style: 5 **Health:** 8

Primary Attributes

Body: 2 **Charisma:** 3
Dexterity: 1 **Intelligence:** 5
Strength: 2 **Willpower:** 6

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 **Initiative:** 6
Move: 3 **Defense:** 3
Perception: 11 **Stun:** 6

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Bureaucracy	5	5	10	(5)
Con	3	3	6	(3)
Diplomacy	3	3	6	(3)
Intimidation	3	5	8	(4)
Investigation	5	3	8	(4)

Talents

Headstrong

Resources

Contacts 4, Wealth 3

Flaws

Callous

Languages

French, German, Koline

Weapons	Damage	Size	Attack	(Average)	Speed	Rate	Range
Punch	0 N	0	4 N	(2) N	-	-	-

Protectorate of the Lower Coprates

Ever since 1887, after taking the city of Melas Lacus the year before (which was renamed “Copratria” in 1888), other, non-Belgian companies have operated in this protectorate alongside King Leopold II’s AIP, as there is no monopoly here. King Leopold II thus profits twice from his Mars colonies, through taxes and tariffs, and from his own open trade in the Lower Coprates. Working conditions here are kept somewhat less harsh, if only to quell protests in other nations. Even so, the Martians here are slaves under foreign invaders.

Military

The Belgians act as a brutal occupation force in the Coprates, and their military is accordingly powerful.

AIP Troops

The **Belgian Legion** consists of mercenaries and soldiers of fortune and is exceptionally well equipped. It acts as the private army of the AIP in the Upper Coprates. Of the five regiments, one is stationed in New Amsterdam, another in Melas, and two more on the canals between New Amsterdam and Melas and between New Amsterdam and Copratia. The final regiment is split between the Oo-Tareen–Candor canal and the Melas–Copratria canal.

The AIP also maintains **police forces** and **company security troops** in Melas and New Amsterdam, as well as **artillery** in the forts of Melas, Oo-Tareen (on the New-Amsterdam–Candor canal), and New Amsterdam as well as a number of captured **Martian war kites**.

Martian Troops

Several infantry regiments of conscripted **Canal Martians** with muskets serve under human officers, while the **Hill Martian mercenary cavalry** are preferably used outside the borders of the Coprates or as a rapid response force. The Canal Martian population has little but hatred for these Hill Martian collaborators: It is one thing that the “demons from the Ether” are enslaving them, but that the Hill Martians are aiding them in this is unforgivable.

Royal Troops

Three regiments of the **Belgian Line Infantry** serve the King as an army in the Lower Coprates. One is stationed in Copratia, the others are spread in platoon strength along the canals towards Nectar. Belgian **steam gunboats** and their crews are also stationed in Copratia.

Culture and Technology

The Belgians brought to Mars the best military technology they could get. To the Martians, the highly-advanced machine guns and steam gunboats appear downright overpowering.

As the representatives of the AIP are not to want for anything, the heavily guarded compounds of the company offer a rather earthlike environment: There are pubs with Belgian beer, the rows of houses look as though they were taken straight from Antwerp, and even a few motorcars with Gumme tires travel the streets.

Cities of the Coprates

Melas (Nya-Ko-Mee)

After the fall of the Seldon Empire, Melas became a vassal of the Po-Poo-Hanna-Kitai city-state, gaining its independence about 400 years ago. Since it fell to the AIP forces in 1883, its population has decreased to about 101,000, of which 10% are humans. The city is ruled by the AIP. It was previously a moderate trade hub for agricultural products, but the Belgians have expanded this role along with the Gumme production. While the people are being oppressed, a few Martian collaborators became very rich. Corruption is common.

Bastion Belt

Melas lies in a bend of one of the two canals connecting Copratia and New Amsterdam. Thus surrounded by water on three sides, it is well protected against raiders from the mountains to the north, where rebels lurk. The Belgians have expanded the Martian fortresses and equipped them with heavy weaponry. **Fort Albert (1)**

and **Fort Leopold (2)** secure the two ends of the western canal bridge, and **Fort Ghent (3)** and **Fort Louvain (4)** do likewise at the eastern bridge. Additionally, **Fort Waterloo (5)** secures the mouth of a smaller canal towards the north, warding off attacks by canal vessels from that direction.

Harbor District (6)

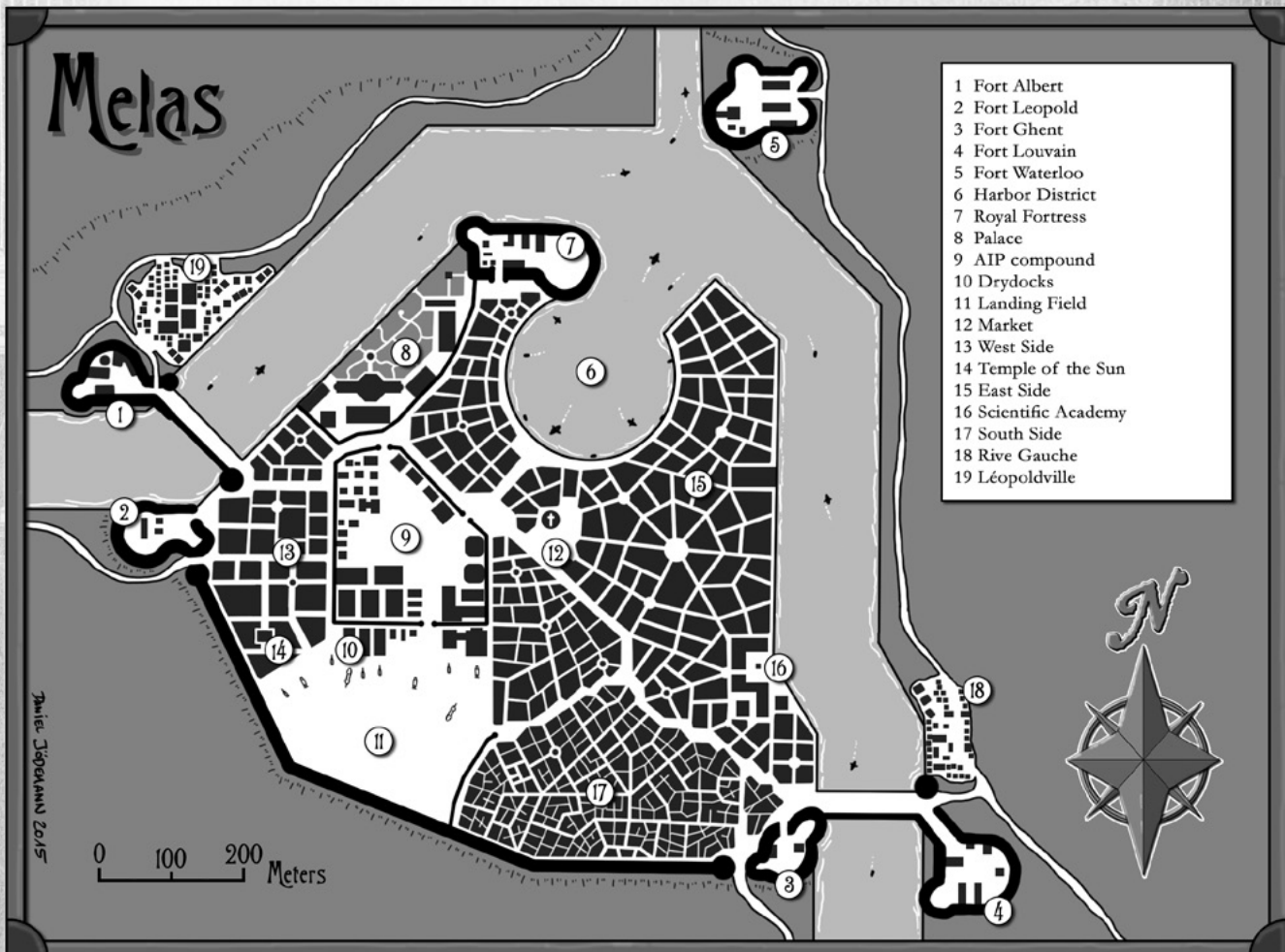
Situated in the north near the canal, this district is defined by its industrial facilities and the cannon factories. This is also where many of the Martian factory workers live.

Palace District

The **former royal fortress (7)** acts as another defensive fortification of the city. The adjacent **palace (8)** once belonged to the *Kro-jo-ser* dynasty of Melas, but is being occupied by the AIP as an administrative building these days. It is partially accessible to the public. The palace is also where the secret police has its headquarters. Their commander is *Jean Terbroek*, a ruthlessly efficient man with an excellent network of informants. On the positive side, he is a curious fan of clever puzzles and delights in admiring Martian antiques.

AIP Compound (9)

The AIP erected a walled-off company compound in the city center that was demolished by mortar fire during the war. This compound includes the most important facilities of the company: The Gumme refineries and storage as well as the living quarters for the human employees. Access is restricted to authorized personnel.



Western Basin

Landing Fields (11)

The landing fields lie at the edge of the city to the south and are frequented by the captured Martian war kites and the Belgian gunboats. Three **drydocks (10)** can build wooden vessels of Martian types, but not steamships. The **landing fields (11)** are also where ether flyers to Earth depart.

Market Square (12)

The most notable building by the market square is the temple of the Harvest Goddess, which today functions as the **Church of St. Albert**. The catholic vicar *Anton Lascaux* is very concerned about the poor treatment of the Martians, but has little success in preaching to the Martians, as they see him as just another human trying to oppress them. He has studied the history of the city, and he is friendly and honorable. His thick, white hair, bulky glasses and pleasant voice only reinforce this demeanor.

West Side (13)

The home of the remaining aristocracy and of the newly rich merchants. The streets and squares are named for the Martian virtues: Hope, Courage, Truth, Persistence, Honor... This district holds the British, French, and German consulates. The **Temple of the Sun (14)** lies at the end of Wisdom Street.

East Side (15)

The residential district of the middle class is rather quiet. Increasing numbers of Terrans are moving in here. The **Scientific Academy (16)** lies beside the canal. While it does not teach students any-

more, it still maintains its extensive library that is consulted by scholars from all of Mars.

South Side (17)

This district is marked by narrow streets and an impoverished Martian population. It is not recommended for humans to visit this district.

Slums

Two slums lie beyond the city walls on the far side of the canal: **Rive Gauche (18)** to the east and **Léopoldville (19)** to the west, named after the nearby fort. These slums are composed of reed and tin huts and are home to Martians exclusively. Besides begging and violent crime, drug trade and prostitution are also widespread here, which is why Belgian and Hill Martian mercenaries are a common sight as well.

New Amsterdam (Po-Poo-Hanna-Kitai)

When the troops of the AIP marched on the city in 1885, preceded by the infamy of their cruel actions, most people either fled in large groups, or fought bitterly to fight them off. While the city-state was eventually conquered and the Upper Coprates Republic formed, the desperate resistance efforts of the remaining Martians continue to this day and are supported by the rebel groups of the surrounding steppes. In this, any means are justified: Martian children are persuaded to carry live American grenades towards targets, kitchen staff is pushed to poison the food of the Belgians. AIP mercenaries, meanwhile, suppress the Martians with undignified checkpoint procedures, arbitrary searches of homes, and lethal force in response to the slightest provocation. The city is dangerous and torn; barely a week passes without more deaths. Only a few AIP-controlled sections in the inner city are patrolled and protected enough to offer some semblance of safety.

Copratia (Zhoom-Panaak)

Zhoom-Panaak, called Melas Lacus by the humans at the time, was the final city-state of the Coprates to fall to the Belgian troops. Whether because of courage, stupidity, or a mixture of both, the young Prince *Mal-ga-par* repeatedly sent troops against the Belgians. The AIP wasn't even terribly interested in the sparse lands of Melas Lacus, but when the military needle stings began to hurt in 1886, the Belgians reacted with a retaliatory strike that destabilized Melas Lacus to such a degree that the Prince was forced to flee from the Belgians and his internal rivals to seek sanctuary in Nectar.

The AIP neither could nor wanted to expend the resources to control yet another city, and thus, in the following year, King Leopold II proclaimed the "Protectorate of the Lower Coprates" and sent actual Belgian troops to Mars to safeguard it. He also opened it to foreign companies, which placated the more suspicious colonial powers tremendously. In 1888, he eventually renamed "his" city Copratia. Today, Copratia is a bustling ether port with visitors from many nations on Earth. The officials of the king attempt to create an atmosphere conducive to business, which includes a much more careful approach to the cruelties inflicted upon the Martians.

The Arina Stones of the Coprates

The fate of the cities of the Coprates is reflected in the fate of their Arina Stones:

The ball-sized stone of **Nya-An-Mee** rests in the hands of the AIP director Georges Flamandes, who keeps it as a trophy on his desk. The Martians consider it a grave insult that he uses it as a paperweight.

The marble-sized stone of **Zhoom-Panaak** is worked into the medallion of rulership of the canal prince, and thus Prince *Mal-ga-par* took it with him into exile to Nectar. For many in the Coprates, this is a sign of hope, as the stone might return one day. For others, it means that the city has lost its "soul", or that it left with the prince for Nectar.

The location of the stone of **Po-Poo-Hanna-Kitai** is a mystery: It was kept as a holy relic in the temple of the canal priests and could only be accessed by them. The people of the city did take it with them when they fled before the arrival of the Belgians, but both the *People's Front of Po-Poo-Hanna-Kitai of Transton* and the *Mountain People Alliance of Po-Poo-Hanna-Kitai* (p. 64) now claim to possess the stone. Both will keep it hidden from the eyes of their followers, as is demanded by tradition. One thing is certain: The city no longer has the stone and is now said to have been cursed with bad luck.

The Rebels of the Coprates

People: Canal Martians, Hill Martians, a few High Martians

Location: Coprates Rift Valley and surrounding highlands

Languages: Thaumasian, Koline, Memnite

Rebel groups: Freedom Fighters of Melas, Nectar exiles and "Revenge Warriors" of Melas Lacus, People's Front of Po-Poo-Hanna-Kitai of Transton, Mountain People Alliance of Po-Poo-Hanna-Kitai

While the AIP has seized control of the Coprates Rift Valley, remnants of the armies of the fallen city-states still exist and are now leading a guerilla war against the hated occupation force.

Territory

The individual rebel groups keep hideouts all around the Coprates Rift Valley, and retreat into the rough terrain after any attack. In the mountains *north* of the rift, the groups from Melas and New Amsterdam make their camps. To the *southeast*, the Copratians are exiled to Nectar and villages along the canals, while refugees from New Amsterdam seek new homes in Transton and the Syria-steppes to the *southwest*. In the Coprates itself, the rebels have withdrawn to the hinterlands, hide in villages and forests, or sabotage the cities of the AIP.

History and Organization

Since the cities of the Coprates fell to the Belgians, refugees from all over the Coprates have begun to form resistance groups, supported by volunteers from the outside. At times these are loosely allied, at other times they are enemies. Internally, their organizational structures range from might makes right to basic democracies to military rank structures and governments in exile.

Role in the Region

The rebel groups are a constant thorn in the side of the AIP and the Belgians, in particular since other Earth powers like the Americans have begun supplying them with weaponry. They keep the Belgians on edge and are a major threat to the stability of the Coprates. Also, they are the grease that is working loose the stuck gears in the governments of bordering Nectar and Tossia while offering a chance for the three divided Martian peoples of the region to band together in the face of a common enemy.

Culture, Customs, and Technology

The rebel groups are attempting to maintain their identity through stories and rituals. These are usually farmers' traditions or glorifications of the past. A few rebels have instead embraced the new

situation or have turned bitter, cold, and humanophobic. In terms of technology, there is a strong contrast between what they were able to save from their homes and what highly advanced gear they can buy or salvage from the Earth powers.

Rebel Groups

Freedom Fighters of Melas

The first and largest of the rebel armies consists of volunteers that have gathered around Count *Ak-Jo-Taar*. They maintain their hideouts in the mountains north of Melas, number about 1,000 men, and are moderately well-equipped, rarely carrying modern rifles but instead relying on muskets. They often conduct lightning strikes, fading back into the mountains immediately afterward. They also maintain contact with underground movements inside Melas and supply them with material for sabotage activities. In exchange, they gain intelligence on AIP plans and troop movements.

Count Ak-Jo-Taar

This young, charismatic rebel leader was once a nobleman of Melas who resisted the Belgian Legions until he had to flee to the mountains alongside other survivors when his city fell in 1883.

While the Belgians portray him as an uncivilized, dishonorable devil, he is a war hero to his people and an icon to the resistance. He has led successful attacks on plantations and Belgian units and is not above risking his own life. Freed Martians are added to his force, while captured Belgians are shown no mercy. He leaves their fates in the hands of his freedom fighters, all of whom hate humans with a passion.

Ak-Jo-Taar himself is more rational, though. He knows that not all humans are alike and has received aid from American arms dealers in Thymiamata and from the French Communards through the *Kasei Valles* (p. 105) numerous times. Even human mercenaries and idealists seeking to fight for a free Coprates have joined his cause.

Though he is young and small of stature, the gifted tactician presents an image of experience and leadership in his worn battle gear. Only rarely, such as when receiving important guests, will he put on those old noble garments of his that he managed to bring with him when he escaped from Melas.

Mentor 2

Archetype: Soldier **Motivation:** Hope
Style: 5 **Health:** 7

Primary Attributes

Body: 3 **Charisma:** 5
Dexterity: 4 **Intelligence:** 3
Strength: 2 **Willpower:** 4

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 **Initiative:** 7
Move: 6 **Defense:** 7
Perception: 7 **Stun:** 3

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Diplomacy	5	4	9	(4+)
Empathy	3	2	5	(2+)
Firearms	4	4	8	(4)

Intimidation	5	2	7	(3+)
Melee	2	2	4	(2)
Stealth	4	3	7	(3+)
Survival	3	3	6	(3)

Talents

Danger Sense, Inspire 1, Natural Leader

Resources

Contacts 1, Fame 1, Followers 2, Refuge 2

Flaws

Criminal

Languages

French, Thaumasian, Koline, English

Weapons

Weapons	Damage	Size	Attack (Average)	Speed	Rate	Range
Rapier	2 L	0	6 L (3) L	2		
Martini-Henry Rifle	3 L	0	11 L (5+) L	D	1	20 m

Nectar Exiles and "Revenge Warriors" of Melas Lacus

At first glance, the Exile Copratians who settled in the city-state of Nectar are the most peaceful of the rebel groups. This is also where the former prince of Copratia, *Mal-ga-par*, lives and has since become a friend of the ruler of Nectar. The government in exile beneath him seeks to move Nectar, or better yet Tossia, to lend military support, hoping to retake Copratia. As a military arm of this group, guerilla units called the "Revenge Warriors of Melas Lacus" have formed and launch regular strikes into Copratia.

People's Front of Po-Poo-Hanna-Kitai of Transton

There are Hill Martian tribes living in the Syria steppe in the West around New Amsterdam who trade with the Canal Martians in the rift. After the fall of Melas Lacus and New Amsterdam, many refugees gathered in the trading posts of Syria, first and foremost

the American ware transit station called "*Transton*" (or Son-Klep-Pai in Thaumasian). It slowly grew to become the headquarters of local Hill Martians and Canal Martian refugees who joined forces to fight against the Terran invaders. They celebrate their alliance as a patriotic union of the Martian people and refuse any and all negotiations with the "brutal and barbaric" *Mountain People Alliance of Po-Poo-Hanna-Kitai*. They are however too weak at this point to seriously undertake any attempt to reclaim New Amsterdam, though the arms shipments from the Americans in Thymiamata and the growing influx of refugees could change that very soon.

Mountain People Alliance of Po-Poo-Hanna-Kitai

Only very few refugees from New Amsterdam dared to run north towards the Candor Mountains when the city fell, for this is the home of the High Martian *Tribes of the South Wind*. While many thus merely became the slaves of tribal chieftains as opposed to slaves of the AIP, others managed to ally with the tribes against the Belgians. This group is considered the most radical and ruthless in the entire Coprates. The death squads made up of both Canal and High Martians destroy Belgian camps and even justify deaths amongst the Martian slaves as collateral damage or just punishment for collaboration. In comparison to the fate that awaits captured Belgians, such quick deaths might actually seem like a mercy. They see the *People's Front of Po-Poo-Hanna-Kitai of Transton* as soft cowards and refuse any cooperation.

The Coprates Rebels and the Humans

Most rebels hate the humans in general and Belgians in particular. A few will lynch any human on sight without asking any questions. Others are more rational and distinguish between friends and foes, such as American arms dealers and smugglers, or the few human fighters that have joined the cause.

The Tribes of the South Wind

Territory

The home of the tribes of the South Wind is the jagged, inhospitable mountain range north of the Coprates. The presence of these famously nasty people has ensured that this area is known as a "land of evil". Superstitious minds in Candor and Ophir even suspect demons to live here.

Government

Outsiders know very little about the internal organization of the South Wind tribes. The constant warfare amongst the many small tribes suggests that no truly complex structures have developed, which is in fact the case. Most tribes are little more than family

People: High Martians
Location: The mountains north of the Coprates
Languages: Gaashwaan and tribal dialects

Warlike, wretched, primitive, and gluttonous, this is how the tribes of the South Wind can be described, even when compared to all other High Martians. They are the only ones who will enslave even their own kind and are infamous for their strong cannibalistic tendencies.

clans. The status of individuals is dependent on their success in battle and is subject to rapid change. A warrior who might be “chieftain” one week can fall to the lowest rank in the clan the next because of a single mistake—and vice versa. In matters of gender, the South Wind tribes practice complete equality; this is possibly their only redeeming value.

Culture and Technology

In stark contrast to their primitive social structures stand the elaborate language manners that are practiced by the South Wind tribes. Unlike all other High Martian tribes, the South Wind tribes communicate with an eloquent, almost courteous language. Impoliteness is seen as dishonorable, while all sorts of other cruelties are acceptable. During the 14th century, scholars in Ophir posited that this fixation might be the last vestige of an early, lost civilization. Some aspects of the tribal religion also suggest this. The South Wind tribes only fashion primitive tools, whose technology levels do not rise above that of Earth’s Mesolithic age. As the warriors reject salvaged weaponry on religious grounds, few ever carry more than spears, slings, or hatchets. Slavery is practiced with enthusiasm, but as the South Wind tribes view anything they catch (or kill) as edible loot, their slaves are not just a source of labor but also a “living supply”. Their sad lot only lasts until the warriors finally decide that they are hungry.

Religion

The religion of the South Wind tribes appears quite simple on the surface. They believe in a spirit world that is both home to the dead and to nature spirits. Shamans can contact these spirits, but they are not worshipped. Rather, it is believed that a warrior must slay all enemies that he killed in life again in the afterlife. Spirit summoning serves the purpose of insulting and unsettling dead enemies to create an advantage for the fight after death. But this is not even the most curious part of this spirit world. The South Wind tribes view themselves as something that Europeans like to call “noble savages”. Progress and civilization, they believe, taint the soul, distance them from creation and weaken them in the eternal war of existence. Once the South Wind tribes ruled mighty cities, only to see to truth and turn away from civilization. That is why they will not claim battlefield salvage. Some more romantic Europeans might interpret this stance as a sort of noble proximity to nature, but in truth, the South Wind tribes only see “nature” as a constant slaughter and act accordingly. They have already hunted several animal species to extinction and one of their favorite battle tactics is arson, which is why so little is left of the few dry valley forests of their territories. The High Martians do not see this as a big loss. The annihilated plants and animals were weak, so this was meant to be their fate.



The Eastern Basin



*"Intandho chuobholo Shiatmooro."
Literally: "I hear the wind Shiatnoor howling."
Figuratively: "I must do something unpleasant."*

— Memnite proverb

Climate

Large parts of the Eastern Basin are dry, dusty, and hot. By contrast, the swamps are very humid, cloaked in fog and damp mist. The low elevation of the sea bottom between the sheer mountains means the Sun sets early in the evening.

Sandstorms often rage across the plains of Hesperia. In Memnonia, the *Shiatnoor* ("the guilty conscience" or "the unfinished task") howls through the canyons, threatening divine punishment and spreading fear.

Geography

Up until about 50 million years ago, the equatorial region of the southern Martian hemisphere was a huge ocean stretching a third of the way around the planet (4,350 miles or 7,000 km). When Mars began to dry up, this ocean progressively shrank, leaving behind a desert. It was only during the Brifanoon that the water returned once more and created three small seas. These were, from west to east, *Mare Tyrrhenum*, *Cimmerium*, and *Sirenum*. About 25,000 years ago, even these dried up. Today, a dusty wasteland covers all three of these partial basins, broken up only by the occasional remnants of deformed coral reefs.

The process evened out **Hesperia**—the western half of the basin—and **Memnonia**—the eastern half—so that even the occasional hilly regions are soft and rolling and can rarely be distinguished from the red salt dunes that the winds drive around. But there are exceptions: The western border of Mare Cimmerium is the *Palentum Sinus* (*sinus* being Latin for "bay"), a chain of mountains between 6,500 and 9,800 feet (2,000–3,000 m) tall, including even a glacier. Meanwhile, Memnonia features sheer canyons in the foothills of its eastern cliffs. Rock spires cast strange shadows and the canals at times wind through valleys and caves where even a whisper can produce minutes' worth of echoes.

The water road network ranging from the city of *Noorlan* all the way to the derelict pumping station near *Gorgonia* is well established. However, the last remnants of the vanishing seas left their mark on the millennia-old constructions: vast swampy regions. These salty swamps harbor different flora and fauna from the freshwater swamps that were created later and elsewhere by the leakage from damaged canals. The *Swamp of Cimmeria* stretches across a cratered landscape that suggests that meteorite impacts destroyed the canal here. Another truly unique feature of the region is the presence of oil fields. Mostly, these are the remnants of abandoned ancient Martian factories. Only the *Swamp of Gorklimsk* contains natural petroleum.

Flora and Fauna

Most of the plants described in the chapter **Flora and Fauna** can be found here, with the siren corals being more common in Memnonia, while the cutting cages occur more frequently in the Hesperia sub-basin. Even the rose of *Oenotria* has spread to small parts of Hesperia. The rather inconspicuous-looking herbs growing along the canal banks should be noted. The **Lowland Martians** use them to produce poisons that fetch high prices in the cities. The mountains offer soil for liftwood groves, which are watched over by the High Martians. The swamps feature a surprising variety of vegetation: Roots, ferns, and carnivorous plants all the way to trees that the **Swamp Martians** fashion into rafts and boats. There are plantations for grain and fruits.

Ruumet breehrs, gashants, steppe tigers, and flying skulls are the most common animal life in the basin. Roogies also occur in the form of the poisonous gugruuzes. Red manikins are even said to be responsible for the crash of an ether flyer in Memnonia. Dust kraken and steppe sharks appear as echoes of the once aquatic nature of this region. The swamps are home to large numbers of cissawaans, rare green kokos, and the feared knoe shoshus. Lizards and other small animals lure in eelowaans. A true nightmare for any traveler in the swamps is the goalmar (for more information see **Flora and Fauna** on p. 135).

The Bootnai Family of Languages

Two Canal Martian Bootnai languages dominate this basin, whose written forms appear very similar when using contemporary Gaaryani lettering. The differences lie chiefly in the pronunciation: Memnite is more melodic, Hespesian more precise and clear-cut. For example, a double O sound in Hespesian is simply a long vowel, but is pronounced with two different tones in Memnite. Some words only exist in one of the two languages. Memnite features, amongst other things, names for fifty different shades of red.

To human ears, Bootnai sounds like a blend of Southeast Asian languages (Hindi, Malaysian, Siamese). To German and British people, it might appear odd how Bootnai keeps attaching noun markers, pronouns, and prepositions to words, producing some impressively long nouns and verbs. On top of that, the locals prefer to speak in evocative metaphors—even for everyday phrases. Even if able to translate the words, the meaning might escape a person not well versed in regional legends or poetic meanings.

On the other hand, arguments can easily be won by simply inventing metaphors that illustrate a point.

It is not surprising that poetry is a well-respected art form in the Eastern Basin, since even all violent confrontations begin with carefully crafted insults, intimidation efforts, and the clear definition of one's own claims.

The Hill Martians of the region have developed a range of different dialects as bridges between the canal cities, using bits and pieces of each of them: **Lowland Martian** and **Swamp Martian**. Both sound coarser, but are quite intelligible by the Canal Martians.

Enuiyo Paulo Schmidtuobho Djermaandhoo – I am Paul of the House of Schmidt from the Nation of Germany.

K'teeyanomee – We greet you.

Vamyánom cheratoionon – We come in peace.

Kyashantinem yooladhimi shéantii – Literally: Your gashants are pawing in the sand. Figuratively: Get lost!

Population

Canal Martians form the dominant culture. Their city-states are often preoccupied with internal bickering and caravans have become rare, leading to the Lowland Martians taking up a special role as hunters, gamekeepers, messengers, and merchants, acting as a lifeline between the cities. The Swamp Martians are the second large Hill Martian group here. They have specialized to survive in the five great swamps. The aggressive High Martians in the border mountains contribute to the isolation of this basin from the outside world. At times, members of the **Mountain People of the North** can be encountered in *Sekoor*, *Tralsk*, or *Drask*, where they trade in liftwood or offer their services as assassins. The only humans in this region are a few British in the large cities of western Hesperia and some first wave colonists from the Netherlands and Spain.

Canal Martians amongst Themselves

Across large parts of the Eastern Basin, the Canal Martians still live as they have done for hundreds or thousands of years. They are ruled by princes that waste their time on launching or fending off intrigues. They are mired in tradition but have forgotten many of the achievements of their ancestors. They sleepwalk through life and dream of heroic deeds that they would never dare to attempt. Woe unto those who would dare to wake them!

Arrogant Ladies, cunning assassins, ignorant canal princes, and advisors who seek to become “Anwaaks in place of the Anwaak”: These are all typical elements of life amidst the court conspiracies and minor wars between the desert nations. In the constant rumor can be heard the fear that settlers and diplomats in Noorlan, *Köln*, or *Villa Real* might just brutally upset the careful balance.

Eastern Basin

Hesperia

“Scarthas vaanyamk'aah dhaartas.”

Literally: *“Feel the black dagger in your back.”*

Figuratively: *“Watch your back.”*

— Farewell phrase or warning in Hesperia

Amidst the dry deserts of the Hesperia steppes, the *swamps of Gorklimsk*, *Thalia* and *Cimmeria* appear as oases. They are the centers of the regional Canal Martian civilization: Rich cities in the west who are wrestling with the impact of the arriving humans, a border war to the south, and the sinister *Warlocks of Olonia* in the east—of which none can say how far their influence reaches. The only truly independent place is the wild *Sekoor* and the even more northerly *Aeolia*, which has long since ceased pumping any canal water towards adjacent *Zephyria*.

People: Canal Martians, few humans (British)

Location: Western part of the Eastern Basin

Language: Hespesian

Cities: Noorlan (rich metropolis, pop.: 100,000), Gorklimsk (oil drilling, pop.: 70,000), Syrtis Minor (*Esh'Heshparasa'a*, mining city, pop.: 65,000), Lacrimonia (*Esh'Veemyathlavi'i*), Tralsk, the *Cities of the “Warlocks”*—Olonia (pop.: 30,000), Odath, Cimmeria (*K'oloor*) and Surukaan—, Thalia (*Esh'Tharim*, pop.: 45,000, at war with Afirenz) and Afirenz (*Esh'Orfath*, at war with Thalia), Sekoor (border city, pop.: 25,000), Palentia (*Shiat'neeb*), Osorma, Aeolia ⊕, Tyrrhenia (*Tiabatoo*)

Territory

Hesperia stretches across the ancient seas of *Mare Tyrrhenum* to the west and *Mare Cimmerium* to the east. It is more of a countryside than a unified country. Each city-state acts independently and would rather cut itself off from the outside than make territorial claims. This even applies to the metropolises of *Noorlan*, *Gorklimsk*, and *Syrtris Minor*, a triangle of comparatively open cities that acts as the gate to Hesperia, when arriving from *Crocea* or *Fadath*. *Tralsk* and *Odath* form a similar border for **Memnonia**.

The border between the two dried up seas is the *Palentum Sinus*. Long mountain ranges form Hesperia's northern and southern borders. High Martians live in the *Laestrygonum Sinus*, between *Sekoor* and *Tralsk*. *Karkarham* in the far northwest is part of the Shistomik Mountains and is considered a city of the **Central Basin**.

Government, Politics, and Society

The basic political entity is the city-state, ruled by a monarch. These are often so preoccupied with internal intrigues that, at best, they are only able to keep an eye on their closest neighbors.

This is contrasted by the nomadic Lowland Martians, who enable the trade of goods (including slaves), rumors, and culture.

The nobility forms the top tier of each state's social hierarchy. Craftsmen and artisans form the middle class. Field workers and prospectors often have far fewer rights. A slave working the plantations of *Afirenz* might be worked to exhaustion, but could still be better off than a contract worker of the *Deimos Mining Co.* in the Swamps of *Gorklimsk*.

The further an Earth human travels east here, the more astonished the Martians will be at such a sight. Large parts of Hesperia are still stuck in the original mindset of the great basins, from before the arrival of the extramartial colonists.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

There are a few remaining Canal Keepers who worship Seldon II, and the God at the Heart of the World is a commonly known myth (though the Worm cult is not spoken of). However, Hesperia chiefly worships its own gods (with the exception of the warlocks, who eschew any religion). Anthropologists describe this as a development of an ancient pantheon that was formed by the faiths of an earlier, Mars-wide civilization (the Universal Gods Hypothesis).

Shiatuu is the wind lord, *Thivi* the water giver, *Vaatu* the shaper, *Gibhoor* the warrior, *Zhoona* the wise one, and *K'aabh* is death without face or gender. *Thivi* and *Vaatu* are very popular in *Thalia*, *Gibhoor* and *Zhoona* in *Noorlan*, while in *Syrtris Minor*, *Shiatuu* is worshiped above all. He is depicted as a hulking man who shoots lighting from his single eye. The new government of *Gorklimsk* has ousted the once influential *Gibhoor* priesthood from power.

Feasts are held and sacrifices are made to honor the gods. These sacrifices can take the shape of a handcrafted item for *Vaatu* or a hunting kill for *Gibhoor*, for example. The sacrifice of living people has fallen out of fashion, "people" here meaning Canal and Hill Martians as well as humans, not necessarily High Martians.

The dances at the feasts are complex rituals—beautiful to behold but difficult to perform. A particularly treasured gift is friendship, meaning a person in whose presence one can feel safe from betrayal and deception.

Cities

Noorlan

This rich metropolis (pop.: 100,000) lies amidst the fertile fields at the intersection of three canals. *Noorlan* is the only city in Hesperia under notable British influence. Prince *Aroniav* (a detached reformer, dresses in European styles) is a fervent admirer of the extramartial visitors, in particular of their technological achievements.

The majority of the people, however, are hostile to humans and sympathize more with the *Oenotrian Empire*. This, and the fact that many noble landholders maintain small, private armies, makes *Noorlan* a powder keg, with frequent uprisings. Until now, the canal prince has managed to forcefully put each of these down. *Aroniav* is also attempting to combat the deep-seated corruption with new laws, though this is meeting strong resistance.

Palace of the Canal Prince

This impressive building is lined with guard walls and protected by the substantial forces of the palace guard. The main building holds a dining hall and ballroom. Feasts of over twenty courses during which servants in British butler and footman uniforms pour blue wine are legendary. Guests reside in suites made up in European styles with water on tap. *Aroniav's* own chambers lie behind his offices, along with his private museum which holds steam engines, electric generators, agricultural devices, and even a complete locomotive! The prince wouldn't dare to put these precious gifts to actual use and risk damaging them, though.

Landing Field and Barracks

This is where *Noorlan's* fleet of ten armed aerial flyers is berthed. The barracks hold about 1,200 infantry soldiers and 600 cavalrymen, though their loyalty has been questionable ever since the canal prince has brought in human instructors and introduced the British rank system.

Palace of the Chief Minister

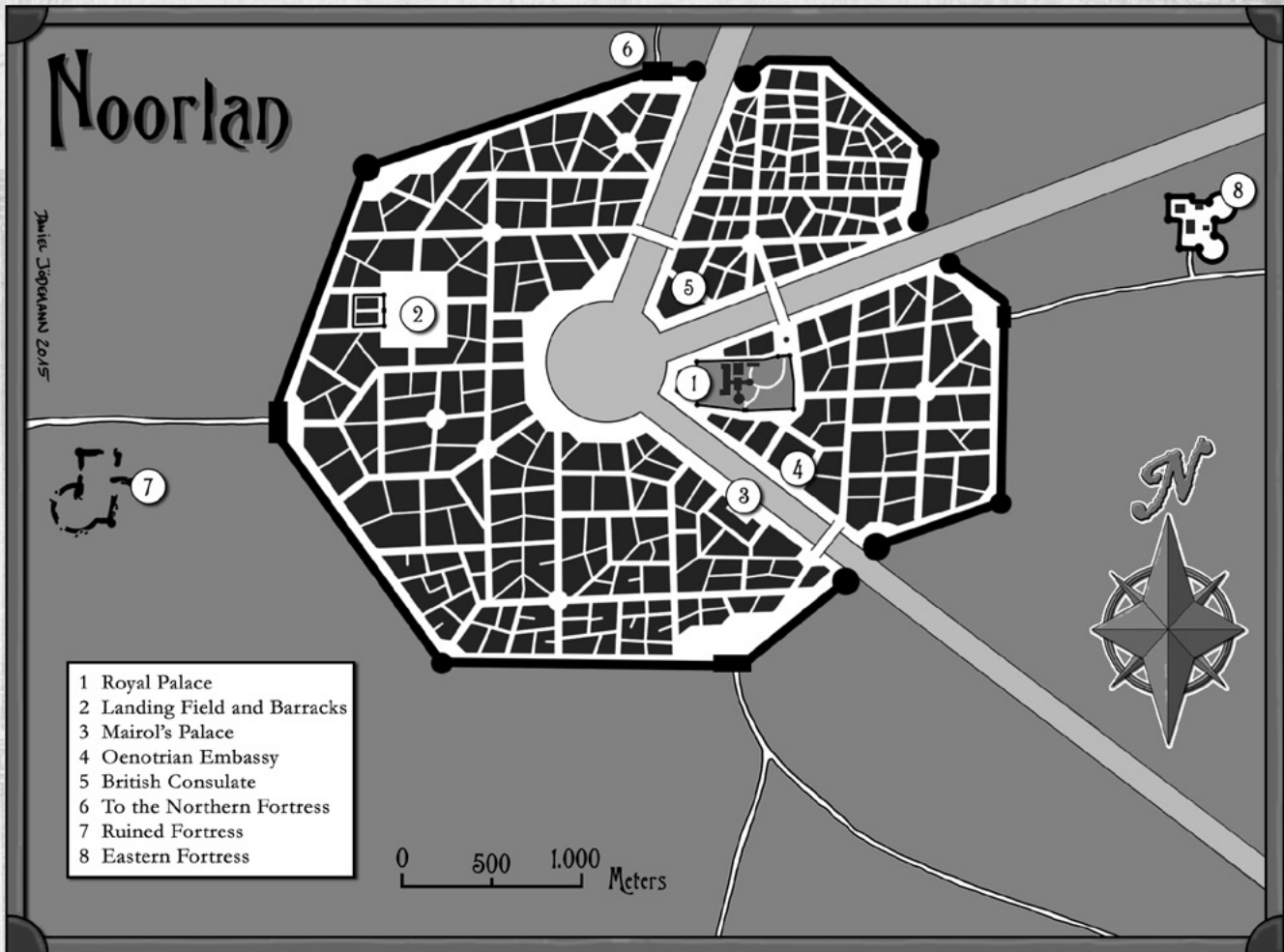
Aroniav's chief opponent is *Lord Mairol*, an aging aristocrat and ruthless oligarch. The chief minister despises the prince's worship of the Earthmen and has gathered a group of like-minded noblemen around him. His right-hand man is the young *Graazith*, a well-built adventurer and tool of *Oenotria* who incites the populace in secret. *Mairol's* palace is guarded by 50 guardsmen and features a dark dungeon into which many an opponent has disappeared.

Oenotrian Embassy

Ambassador *Duke Nochoor*, who was also involved in the 1882 coup in *Crocea*, is pulling strings from the shadows on behalf of the empire. Soon, *Mairol* is set to rule in *Noorlan*. *Nochoor's* own military means are limited, however. A mere twenty soldiers guard the embassy.

British Consulate

Consul *Lleweleyn Rhys-Owen* is short, accommodating, on a punishment assignment, and determined to atone. He considers his posting to be a comfortable one. With the assistance of British companies, he provides many gifts to the prince, certain that this will improve the latter's devotion and strengthen British influence over him. *Rhys-Owen* greatly underestimates the threat of rebellion, however.



Eastern Basin

Castle Ruin

Only the façade remains of this once mighty fortress. It fell almost a century ago, when a succession war in *Ausonia* spilled into Noorlan. Soldiers from *Trinacria* burned the fortress down from the inside. Today, the floor of the circular main building serves as the location for honor duels and illegal fighting rings.

There are still two intact defensive installations, one to the east and one 9 miles (15 km) north, where the prince's best equipped and most loyal regiment is stationed to guard the border with Gorklimsk.

are forced to risk their lives in grueling shiftwork in exchange for minor wages, trinkets, and diluted whiskey.

Human *Deimos* personnel in their grey-red uniforms have become part of general life, and the company is bringing foreign money into the city. A British pub has opened recently. More commonly, humans appear in the form of travelers from Karkarham, Crocea, Fadath, Noorlan or Syrtis Minor—at times even as secretive, cloaked figures that make the rumor mill spin. Do they come from the destroyed Bardobaar to spread a deadly disease, are they part of a dark cult, or both?

Gorklimsk (↔ see p. 191)

Coming from the Central Basin, Gorklimsk (pop.: 70,000) lies directly in the flight path towards the Eastern Basin. Entering the swamp is dangerous: Pirates, local wildlife, and natural phenomena are all present and vicious. There is a mountain pass through the Shistomik Mountains, known only to the military. The Karkarham and Syrtis Minor canals see frequent use, however.

The creation of the swamp of Gorklimsk revealed valuable oil fields, which the British *Deimos Mining Co.* is now exploiting using huge steam-powered pumping rigs. This is permitted by a dubious contract of access concluded with the family of the canal prince. Workers are recruited from the surrounding villages (*Grovaanaae*, *Pandaar*, *Zhamit*) and the slums of the city. They

Syrtis Minor (Esh'Neshparas'a ↔ see p. 199)

This traditional mining city (pop.: 65,000) has long suffered from the depletion of the copper and zinc deposits of the *Cyclopus Simus*. Many workers have moved to Karkarham in the North, where they sought their fortunes and found none.

In the autumn of 1886, a group of Earth geologists discovered a previously unknown black coal deposit, and everything changed. They insisted on their status as discoverers, secured the mining rights and sold it to the *Hesperian Basin Trading Co.*, a British company that maintains its own army and has built forts from the walls of Martian ruins in the wilderness for trade, research, and defensive purposes.



The dusty black substance is worth its weight in gold for powering steam aerial flyers and as a fuel for the power grids of the future. The *HBTC* established a mine and now recruits workers to descend into the depths and use the steam-powered rock cutters to mine the coal, all for a minimal share of the profits. The sandstorms of the Cyclopus Sinus make life hard for the prospectors. For one, the shafts keep being covered in sand, and for the other, each storm is accompanied by fearsome lightning storms that damage the above-ground facilities.

High priest *Anthalaqlan*, nominally an equal of Princess *Myrrvha*, is convinced that the lightning is a sign of Shiatuu's anger. Myrrvha should never have allowed infidels to dig into the holy soil.

Thalia (Esh'Tharim) and Afirenz (Esh'Orfath)

In Thalia (pop.: 45,000), the "merchant princes" have ruled for 300 years, nominally along noble lines of succession, but in practice more frequently through assassinations and bought titles. Most recently, *Prince Shesh* had reigned for an unusual length of time until parties unknown poisoned him in his sleep three years ago. Quickly produced evidence indicated an intrigue originating from the neighboring city of Afirenz, beyond the swamps of Thalia.

Shesh's first-born son *Braltar* found himself forced to declare war on Afirenz. Neither of the two cities was prepared for this; both armies were small and poorly equipped. The canal connecting the two cities leads through difficult mud lands teeming with Martian swamp pirates. Thus, whenever an infantry regiment reached the walls of the other city, it was quickly slaughtered. This has gone on for three Mars years already, and by now both sides are tired of this war. But neither side can simply end it, even though more and more clues about the murder point in all directions but Afirenz.

Just a few years ago, cargo barges from Thalia and merchant galleys from Afirenz could be found all over Mars, but the conflict has cost many lives and every ship that has dared to enter those mud lands. No one still ventures forth, and what boats remain today serve as floating bazaars and brothels.

Women are not treated well in Thalia or Afirenz. Only those who are successful are allowed to choose their husbands. Slavery is legal in Thalia, though it is not as commonly practiced as on the plantations of Afirenz.

Olonia (see p. 199)

Close to this small city built on old ruins (pop.: 30,000, including many hunters and trappers in the surrounding swamps), lies a complex of slim, white towers. Officially, these are a school for supernaturally gifted Martians. There are similar buildings near *Surukaan*, *Cimmeria*, and *Odath*. How one gains membership, who controls the *Utluluqim Olonem* (warlocks of Olonia), or whether they pursue an overarching agenda is unknown, even to many of its members.

Every local chapter has an area of specialty: Olonians command alchemy and pyromancy, warlocks from *Surukaan* have visions and precognition, *Cimmeria* teaches the creation of homunculi, and *Odath* is the center for all things telepathic. The people fear the warlocks, who have essentially infiltrated all local governments and driven off all Swamp Martians. They deliberately spread myths and disinformation to hide the mythical source of their power. Additionally, the female witches host a feast every year on the mountain of *Zhoolaiya* in the Palentum Sinus, during the time of the flooding. The few rulers who take them up on their invitations are allowed to speak to their ancestors and return full of awe towards the warlocks.

Sekoor

A wild border town (pop.: 25,000) lies beyond the swamps of *Cimmeria*. Here, Canal and Swamp Martians live next door to each other. The city is administered and defended by both.

Two dried up canals lead through the *Laestrygonum Sinus* towards *Zephyria*, making this outpost a trade hub for long-distance merchants and even envoys of the High Martians. It also attracts humans who will travel far and wide for liftwood.

The singer *K'tree'-eenya* is a local celebrity. She is a stocky Canal Martian woman with long, flowing red hair. She has mastered the art of telling legends like no other, in particular when it comes to the strange ruins in the desert. In fact, she gets her knowledge first hand from the *Red Tigress* treasure hunter, who prowls the mountain passes as an air pirate.

Memnodia

"*Vaniátamo Lynoo.*"

Literally: "I will go to Köln (Lyno)." — Memnite proverb

Figuratively: "I will die."

People: Canal Martians, a few humans (Dutch, Spanish)

Location: Eastern part of the Eastern Basin

Language: Memnite

Cities: The "Giant Cities"—*Titania* (*Silyram*, pop.: 110,000), *Gigantia* (☉), *Gorgonia* (*Ly'groom*, pop.: 125,000) and *Sirenia* (*Parysiris*, pop.: 90,000)—, *Köln* (*Lyno*, pop.: 65,000), *Villa Real* (*Lythioom*, pop.: 60,000), *Niront*, *Crinolia* (*Ly'anathraan*), *Toroane*, *Syrnia* (*Siloane*), *Galen* (*Ash'Miyamooriaa*), *Kinsbergen* (*Oleon Minor*, *Ly'shéantee*)

Mare Sirenum lies beyond *Hesperia* and fades in the east into the shadows of tall mountains. Few foreigners know that several huge cities lie against the sheer cliffs that, depending on the time of day, shimmer rust brown or glow dark red.

Historically, the former coastal metropolises of *Titania*, *Gigantia*, and *Sirenia* followed the receding waters at the end of the *Brifanoon* and stretched out across the sea floor, while atop the cliffs, everything bar the palaces was left to rot. From ruins and collapsed crypts, the rulers now gaze down onto their people.

Humans are mostly unaware of the four "giant cities". The west, in contrast, has seen the first colonization attempts by several smaller Earth powers, none of which has managed to claim a sizeable piece of the Martian pie so far.

Territory

In the west, a hilly plain separates Mare Sirenum from Mare Cimmerium. The westernmost city is *Oleon Minor* (called *Kinsbergen* by the Dutch).

To the northeast, the tall cliffs of the *Titanum Sinus*, *Gorgonum Sinus*, and the *Sirenum Sinus* form a clear barrier against the desert, even though parts of this desert are still considered to lie in Memnonia by some Martian cartographers. The same cartographers also include the northern and southern coastal mountains in Memnonia. High Martians of the **Mountain People of the North** can be found around *Drask* in particular.

Government, Politics, and Society

Visitors to one of the giant cities will approach from the west by canal barge, arriving first in the *port city*, a low-lying district where merchants and crafters of the middle class make their living selling swamp fruits, animals, utensils, or artwork.

A series of locks then leads the way up the cliffs, following the narrowing canal. Here, in the *lower city*, the poor and outcasts live. Access to water and goods is limited here, while crime is in abundance. Those who don't watch their step might just be ensnared by a thrown net coming from a side alley, or knocked out temporarily by a dose of *Ghantoor* (p. 166) before being relieved of their possessions.

Above all this lies the *upper city* where the palaces of the nobility can be found, with most houses led by women. The *Melkhaa* ("Sultaness") is the symbolic ruler, while her council directs the state's affairs. They command a diligent army of poorly paid servants, who view their positions as an honor. The level of education of a servant can be determined by his weapon: From daggers to spears to the loonsoor. The latter one can also be found in the armies. The heavy armor makes clear, however, that soldiers form their own rank. Only *Villa Real* in the west has had a human ruler for about a year now.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

Memnonia also fits the universal gods hypothesis. The pantheon is a little different from the one in Hesperia: *Tu'athlan* (male, the Sun), *Shiatuu* (male, the wind), *Thivi* (female, the water), *Tu'dhit* (swift moon, god of poetry), *Tu'dhee* (slow moon, goddess of love), *Va'ata* (female, dream weaver), *K'aabh* (male, death).

While the celestial bodies and elements are worshipped in almost every part of Memnonia, *Va'ata* is also the guardian goddess of Sirenia. The main temple of *K'aabh* lies in *Köln*. The *Guild of the Mechanics* should also be mentioned, who endeavor to maintain the pumps on and near the cliffs of the giant cities. Given all the showing off they do as part of their procedures, they appear more as a cult than as competent professionals.

In the port city districts, neighbors band together into backyard communities. They eat together, which improves everyone's access to a variety of spices. A truly fortunate event would be to travel as a group to the spice markets of *Crinolia*.

Antiquities fetch a high price, particularly if they are connected to legends of famous ancestors. Those who think highly

of themselves will not be above wearing the garments of a former dignitary to a feast, or putting on millennia-old jewelry.

The people live in the past. This means, among other things, that the cities hold several well-preserved archives and libraries with records in Son-Gaaryani. Those who can afford it employ a scribe and pay the exorbitant fee for a spot at a reading desk.

The nobility enjoys the shadow theaters with their all-around screens and carefully placed candles (oil lamps in Titania). Once a year, an opera festival takes place in *Nironet*, where actors reenact ancient battles and real blood is spilled.

Cities

Titania (Silygram see p. 199)

Like every one of the four giant cities, Titania (pop.: 10,000) impresses with its opulent buildings that reveal round shapes and elaborate details upon closer inspection. The once colorful façades have faded, and only the gold of the governmental palaces can still shine. *Melkhaa Xaarvha XII* keeps her distance. The people only see her in the form of statues, and even those wear masks.

As Titania sprawled out downwards, the port city grew into the swamp. Here, conditions are oppressively humid, and thus the settlers built their huts in the shade of hanging branches or inside very tall, mazelike root structures.

Together with the local **Swamp Martians**, they created a blend of cultures where each side profited from the other. Titania today boasts the best Canal Martian hunters and animal trainers of the region. This includes the central airmail system located here, which uses trained baadshaulis (p. 149).

A few years ago, a group calling themselves the *Gardeners* tested a new fertilizer whose recipe they discovered in the archives. This is in fact a specially-grown alga that caused oil to form in the swamp of Titania. This appeared to be a gift from the heavens to the Swamp Martians—until microorganisms appeared that consumed the oil and poisoned the drinking water.

Gorgonia (Ly'groom)

Similar to *Aeolia* in Hesperia, *Ly'groom* ("the city above the swamp") suffers from an old pumping station that failed and led to the drying up of the *Oktona canal* towards the *Eastern Desert* (p. 91). The damage is irreparable, and on top of that, the mechanics guild must first contend with a supposed ghost problem (p. 27).

In part, the swamp here even reaches up to the lower city. It is comparatively small overall, but of a very fertile green, featuring palm-tree-like fern as well as trees that bear delicious fruits... and trees that bear poisonous ones.

The *Melkhaa* palace has a large number of floors and connects to the canal. To attend an audience, such as to deliver tribute for example, one must first navigate a difficult maze of underground waterways and staircases. Beyond this, however, awaits the stunning view of the golden throne room and that of *Medhina II* herself wearing her legendary starfish crown that appears as though grown from her head.

Gorgonian nobles still possess crystals with ancient music recorded on them. The stored sounds are heavy and dark, and probably once served a religious purpose.

Eastern Basin



Sirenia (Parysiris)

The upper city of Sirenia (pop. 90,000) sits atop a mountain plateau. A well-known aerial flyer shipyard is located here, home of the *Black Dagger*, the 500-ton screw galley of the famous Cloud Captain *Quatlalani*. The streamlined Sirenian style with its sleek, rounded shapes is particularly suited for freelancer vessels, and it grants them an audacious appearance. Many Martian gliders are berthed along the flyer docks, to be sent all over Mars as soon as they are completed or repaired.

Isyrnis XIII, the “dreaming sultanness”, rules from a throne in a huge glass chamber on a stone lip extending from the cliffs. More than just a politician, she is a seer and gives her commands in the form of prophecies. When she wishes to speak to the people, she strides across a red carpet that leads all the way down to the port city. Carpet weavers are always extending this carpet, hoping that she might walk these extensions to visit their homes one day as well. This is a never-ending task in this great canal city, however, as criminals time and again make off with pieces cut from the carpet.

Köln (Lyno)

In 1888, the ether flyer *Jan Hendrik van Kinsbergen* carrying a Dutch-German expedition crashed near Oleon Minor. The few survivors spread in all directions. Two Dutch soldiers were traveling with the young German officer *Friedrich von Waldeck-Pyrmont*, a brother of the Dutch king. The walked past Niront all the way to *Lyno* (pop.: 65,000). Here, the grand canal split into many petty canals to provide thorough irrigation for the area.

Standing on top of a canal bridge, the Dutchmen felt hope. When they saw the most impressive building of the city, a mighty temple made of dark grey, corrugated stone, Friedrich marked the city on the map without discussion: Köln (known as Cologne to the French and English, Keulen to the Dutch).

What the group had found is the main temple of the god of death, K’aabh—a never completed architectural miracle that is

continuously being repaired and improved. The profession of restorator is one of the most well-paid in Lyno. Martians conduct pilgrimages to this place when a doctor tells them that they will die soon. They believe that a burial ceremony in Köln is the most direct path to paradise inside the planet. The doomed thus loiter in front of the temple stairs and wait for the moment when a masked priest will admit them inside and it is time to say farewell. No one enters K’aabh’s temple of their own volition, and no one returns from the inside.

The prince of Köln is *Tbh-raam*. The people are much more interested however, in his adventurous daughter *Kayeela* who likes to appear publicly and embarrass her father with disobedient com-

ments. Friedrich—himself a prince—and his companions have already approached the Martian woman in the hope of gaining influence in the city through her.

Other lost ethernauts of the *Kinsbergen* expedition can be encountered throughout Memnonia as bandits, merchants, or archaeologists. It is rumored one of them even rose to the position of military advisor in *Toroane*.

Villa Real (Lythioom)

Lythioom (pop.: 60,000) consists of a multitude of residential towers and skyscrapers that stretch upwards together. The *Galen canal* to the east is an aqueduct.

The floors of a tower at times feature a living space for an entire extended family. Those who can afford it possess a balcony that surrounds the floor. These were once docking facilities for aerial flyers, but their numbers have declined over the ages.

Villa Real owes its Earth name to Spanish colonists who had followed the trail of the Dutch but were more fortunate. They managed to land an ether flyer in the steppe and to load their launches with soldiers. At first, a few villages around the city were taken, then the outer districts were overrun.

The self-centered family of the canal prince realized too late that they were in danger. After the death of the old ruler, a power vacuum had occurred as her twin children were fighting for the throne. *Capitán Inigo Cortés* offered to duel both of them to prevent further bloodshed. He won the dramatic swordfight on a balcony of the canal prince palace by provoking both heirs to such a degree that they fell upon each other.

Prince *Inigo* has now ruled for almost a year, and the people are trying to make the best of things. They ferry the humans around in rickshaws, sell souvenirs, or polish boots. The Spanish have secured a trade hub, but where do they go from here? Recently, an envoy headed for Sirenia, carrying construction plans with him for aerial flyers reminiscent of galleons of the time of the conquistadors.

The Swamp Martians

People: Hill Martians, a few Canal Martians
Location: Swamps of the Eastern Basin
Languages: Swamp Martian Bootnai dialects
Swamp Tribes: Swamps of Gorgonia, Titania, Thalia, Gorklimsk, Cimmeria (formerly, currently territory of the warlocks of Olonia), isolated clans in the canal cities

Swamp Martians are a subculture of the Hill Martians who have adapted to the swamps of the Eastern Basin. Their origins lie in the *Swamp of Cimmeria*, whence they were expelled by the feared *warlocks* (p. 70). To the south, west, and east they found further swamps, forests, and lakes, which they settled. Where others get lost in the mazes of broken canals, ever-changing streams, and undergrowth, they feel right at home.

Territory

The natural environment of the Swamp Martians consists of the five great swamp regions of the basin. They left the Swamp of Cimmeria long ago, however. Three Earth years ago, an oil company from Earth exterminated the Swamp Martians of the Gorklimsk region after a series of military operations. Swamp Martians are an endangered people these days, as they only remain in their natural form near *Thalia*, *Titania*, and *Gorgonia*, apart from those that have integrated into the city of *Sekoor*.

Government and Society

Swamp Martians are hunter nomads. Each tribal band is led by a chieftain who is succeeded by his children. Shamans stand at their sides as advisors, keeping the knowledge of the tribe and conjuring visions of the future.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

The Swamp Martian religion is deeply rooted in animism. The hunters speak to the spirits of nature, shamans converse with the dead. To some tribes, the oil fields of the swamps—both those of geological origin and those made of ancient industrial waste—are holy. They believe that the slick substance possesses a spiritual

energy that can be summoned to ignite fires. Such Swamp Martians bury their dead in these swamps and claim to be able to see the souls of the deceased in the colorful reflections in the oil.

Tribes

Swamp of Gorklimsk

When the soldiers of Gorklimsk drove out the northeastern tribes—not without cost—, a few survivors fled into the *Shistomik Mountains*. There, chieftain's daughter and shaman *Khabrita* searches the area for scattered tribal members to rebuild her society.

Swamp of Thalia

This hot, steaming swamp was probably the first region that the refugees from Cimmeria settled. Many Swamp Martians still live here, albeit with many different customs.

Some make their living as bandits and pirates. Armed with bows, nets, and sabers, they attack canal barges that still dare to travel the swamps. They live in tents wherever they feel like. A particularly feared pirate captain and slave trader is *Tark*, a man with burned-off hair who hates humans and has no manners. This former soldier of *Aeolia* and *Sekoor* worked his way up the ladder and eventually took command of a small fleet. *Tark* seeks to satisfy his own greed; he does not care about his people. Spies inform him whenever a ship leaves *Thalia*.

Other Swamp Martians have built villages and became settled wood cutters. Canal Martians in *Thalia* made a pact with the strong and friendly *Grunth*, and regularly trade with his village.

Swamp of Titania

Some Hill and Canal Martians live together as families here. These are the only Swamp Martians that generally know how to read and write *Gaaryani* lettering. They reside in tree houses or between the massive roots.

Swamp of Gorgonia

The Gorgonian tribes consider Canal Martians soft. "An act of heroism every day" is their motto. This can mean slaying a goalmar (p. 148), or winning a swimming race through muddy swamp waters. Adolescent members of the tribes must face an initiation that can be lethal and which is kept a well-guarded secret.

The Lowland Martians

People: Hill Martians, often mixed with Canal Martians

Location: Wasteland between the canal cities of all Basins, in particular the Eastern Basin

Languages: Lowland Martian Bootnai dialects

Tribes: Windstriders, Red Sails, Appolis and Seleti, Star Caravan

These Hill Martian tribes travel in large groups, either using tarp wagons in the steppes or sailboats on the canals. They hunt and trade with the great canal cities.

Wherever they go, the traveling people gather rumors, legends, and songs to bring to other places. That is also how the Lowland Martian culture came to be—a continuously rearranging puzzle. They will adopt influences that they find useful. Undesirable customs are rejected and forgotten. They are a lively people on a dying planet.

Territory

Lowland Martians can be found in all the steppes and hills of the Eastern Basin, with similar groups in the Western and Central Basins.

Government and Society

Most tribes feature a council of elders who elect a leader from their own ranks. The council members are the most experienced representatives of important professions, such as animal trainers, mountain guides, botanists, trackers, navigators, scholars, stone cutters, or musicians. Council sessions are lively events and passionate arguments are made during them. Allied tribes will gather at notable landmarks, such as on plateaus. Here, stories and goods are traded.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

The celestial bodies play a central role in the faith of the lowland Martians: The Sun (*Tu'athlan*) and the moons (*Tu'dhit*, *Tu'dhee*), watch over them and point the ways. Priests use the stars to create horoscopes for the clan as a whole. Particular attention is paid to constellations during earlier events.

The rumors of visitors from another planet caused a stir at first. By now, the Lowland Martians dream of traveling the star sea themselves one day. Is that something the Earthmen can teach them?

Canal Martians from Hesperia view the worship of the moons and the Ether with suspicion, though. In some places, this has caused the Lowland Martians to be accused of demon worship.

Explorers from Earth keep finding more and more mysterious statues in the great basins. A particularly frightening find was a life-size statue of a human in a captain's uniform with a dagger in his back. These are statues carved by the Lowland Martians to mark historic occasions and to communicate with other tribes. This specific case was an attempt to rile up support against Prince *Inigo of Villa Real*.

Lowland Martians love music and dance. Men wear robes, the women dresses or skirts in sand colors, for camouflage purposes. Both genders prefer their hair braided, and the men wear beards, which is quite unusual on Mars in general.

Tribes

The Star Caravan

The Star Caravan travels with building-sized wagons drawn by *ruumet breehrs* across *Mare Cimmerium*. Scouts ride ahead on gashants. They have developed a technique to abseil their heavy wagons at cliffs, despite the weight. Their caravan travels mostly at night, when it is colder.

Appolis and Seleti

These clans of the hills south of the Gorklimsk-Syrtis Minor canal are said to be humanophobic bandits. They are well versed in toxins, though they follow an honor code when dealing with their own kind.

The Red Sails

These convoys of narrow barges traveling the canals of the eastern canyons can be recognized from afar by the color of their sails. This is seen as a good sign, as these boats are usually loaded with exotic fabrics and spices (and other things that are not spoken of in public).

The Windstrider

This is not a tribe, but an aerial flyer that was salvaged by a Lowland Martian clan in the peaks of the *Palentum Sinus*. For generations, the clan gathered the knowledge and gear needed to get the merchant vessel airborne again. This dream was achieved and now the vessel once more travels the skies. The thirty-strong clan has lived aboard ever since. For now, the council of elders insists on only acting as a tramp freighter, but more and more voices suggest it is time to install cannons and find more lucrative work.

The Mountain People of the North

People: High Martians

Location: Northern border mountains of the Eastern Basin

Kraags: Neckbiter-kraag (near Drask), Stormburner-kraag (near Tralsk), Shadowstalker-kraag (near Sekoor)

Languages: Gaashwaan and tribal dialects

Generally, High Martians can be found anywhere in the basins where there are mountains. Near the southern border they defend their liftwood groves, in the interior there are said to be packs hiding in some craters or dormant volcanoes, ready to ambush unsuspecting caravans. The most well-known are the Mountain People of the North, possibly because they are the most social, even visiting the canal cities at times.

Territory

The Mountain People include clans from the *Cyclopus Sinus* near *Syrtis Minor*, from the *Laestrygonum Sinus* between *Sekoor* and *Tralsk* all the way to the *Gorgonum Sinus* near *Drask*.

Government and Society

Power is defined by possession. The king or queen of a kraag is whoever owns the most slaves and treasure. Should a contender return from a raid richer than the king or queen, they may challenge them to a duel in an underground arena. Whoever survives is the new monarch.

The slaves work the liftwood plantations and pursue the eternal task of expanding the tunnel networks. Where there is metal, they mine. Recently, they even had to begin laying tracks for carts in a mine near *Sekoor*. The British man who was captured after he failed to pay his debts and suggested this has since regretted it. The tools are primitive and in abysmal condition.

Few despise their business partners as much as the Mountain People do, but sometimes trade is the best way to acquire possessions. Some even hire out their services as trappers, poisoners, thieves, or assassins. This is a type of foreign aid: A way to demonstrate one's superiority in tasks that outsiders will never understand. And if fun can be had while making a profit, why not?

Religion, Rites, and Customs

For many High Martians, life has little value. It might be over a minute from now. What time remains should be enjoyed thoroughly and therefore spent plundering, feasting, or making heirs.

Others are more spiritual and worship either the war god *Gibrxx*, whom they imagine to be a worm-like creature that grows the more it devours, or *Tvrr* the Avenger, a winged snake with venomous teeth.

Children enjoy special protection. Until they come of age, no one may harm them. To be subject to such protection is considered to be unbearable, and thus young High Martians seek to complete their "trial by fire" as early as possible to gain adult status.

Those who lose the ability to fight, be it through age or misfortune, and can thus no longer serve as warrior, overseer, guard, raider, or assassin, need not fear death if they can find a task for themselves that the clan considers useful: Merchant, messenger, well master, torturer, builder, concubine, or tunnel guide. The latter often know quite a few secret tunnels and escape routes of the slaves. One must still be able to walk quite well, though, to navigate the hallways, ladders, and winding staircases.

Kraags

Shadowstalker-Kraag near Sekoor

These eager merchants are possibly the least despised High Martians of the basin. They largely worship *Tvrr* and are said to own a large galley fleet that is kept hidden in a valley.

Stormburner-Kraag near Tralsk

These air pirates didn't shy away from declaring war on the *warlocks of Olonia* (p. 70), though the conflict has been quiet for some time now. It is said that the warlocks have paid protection tributes in the form of magical weapons, so that they might once more direct their efforts towards more important matters. The people of *Tralsk* are quite worried about this.

Neckbiter-Kraag near Drask

These kraag Martians are able to move freely in *Drask*. The city folk know that the real enemies of the Mountain People are the Hill Martians in the *Swamp of Gorgonia* (p. 73). Recently, Spanish treasure hunters from *Villa Real* have set out to locate the kraag. None have returned. Instead, it appears that now the galleys of the Neckbiters are being upgraded and equipped with new gear.

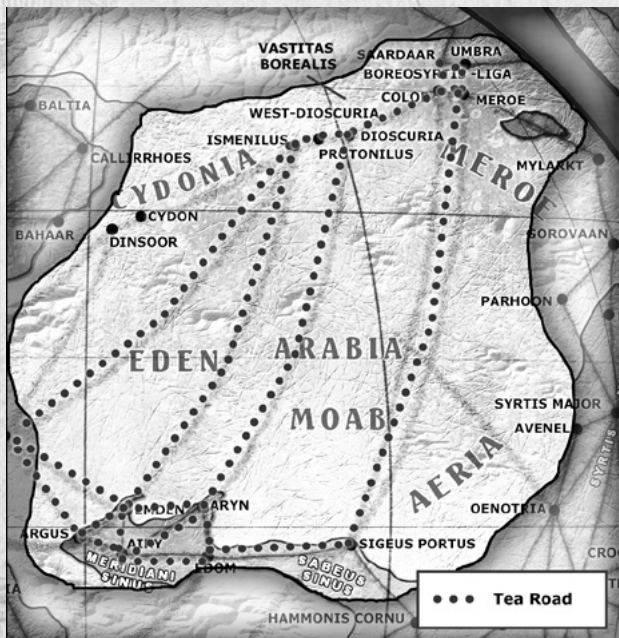
Eastern Basin



The Western Desert

"Me and my brothers against my cousins, me and my cousins against the world."

— Proverb of the Kel Avashiim



altitude. No expedition sent to investigate this phenomenon has yet returned.

To the south lies **Moab**, an inhospitable, jagged rock desert without water. The famous fire jewels are the only reason to travel here. Moab is the home of outcasts (p. 85) who fled here to escape their past. Rumors claim that more and more of them are joining together under an Earth woman.

Aeria is a region of hills and chasms that borders Oenotria and the British colony of Syrtis Major to the east. Its inhabitants are determined to fight off an advance by either power.

Far to the south, there are the **Meridani** and **Sabeus Sinus** (p. 89), which form the outer regions of the Central Basin. There are a number of cities here, well supplied by the canals and protected by their remoteness. Recently though, the Germans have begun to gain influence in the ancient city of Angahiaa, which worries many of the locals.

The Old Canals

Apart from the Boreosyrta League and the cities in the desert's south, none of the cities here are still connected to the canal network. Since the massive pumping stations near Meroe failed, the canals that had irrigated the desert for millennia have dried out. Except for the cities of Dioscuria, which are situated above ancient groundwater reserves, the metropolises on the canals have all fallen.

Only thousand-year-old ruins can be found along the dry and sand-filled canal beds. The largest of these ruined areas lies south of Eden, near the former canal from Ismenilus to Angahiaa. Here, a densely populated region once existed, almost 125 miles (200 km) long and stretching up to 370 miles (600 km) from the canals into the hinterlands. According to legend, this city was called **Karwaaka**, and it built the machines that dug the canals. The Martians whisper of ghosts and dangerous old machines that fall upon careless treasure hunters. This does not deter many adventurers from searching the ruins for what they hope will be the find of their lives.

The canals enable life by different means today. Even in the desert, the air contains traces of water, which settles as dew or hoar frost overnight. Most of this evaporates shortly after sunrise, but some seeps into the ground in the aquifers of the canal beds, where it slowly gathers and flows along the old waterways, sustaining the odd oasis on the way.

Climate

The desert is defined by the winds. At times, it reaches hurricane strength and blasts across the dry hills, pulling along the red dust that lies like powder over the land. In the narrow canyons, this can create an effect not unlike that of a sandblaster. Exposure without sufficient protection can lead to severe damage to the skin. This dust often builds into several feet high drifts and even fills the odd ditch in the ground, into which travelers can then sink without a trace, like they can in Earth's quicksands. When the dust is carried away by the next storm, the mummified remains are revealed.

Geography

The Western Desert stretches from the northern polar cap to the edges of the great basins in the south. To the west, it borders Mare Acidalium (p. 106), and to the east it touches on the hills from Meroe to Syrtis Lapis (p. 31). The total surface area is about 5.8 million square miles (15 million km²), slightly less than South America. In ancient times, the coast of the polar sea ran along its north, though today nothing remains other than a few salt lakes. The region is divided into the following areas:

Vastitas Borealis is the name of the dune fields of the lower plains bordering the polar region. Here the cities of the Boreosyrta League (p. 77) can be found, the most influential trading power on Mars. To its south lies the German Protectorate of *Western Dioscuria*, the only Earth colony in this region.

To the north, **Cydonia** borders the polar plains, while it rises to about 6,500 feet (2,000 m) of elevation in the south. The north of Cydonia is lined by a maze of valleys before flattening out into plateaus. This is the home of the Veiled People (p. 87), the keepers of the mysterious ruins and the famous Face of Mars.

Between Arabia and Cydonia lie the old, dormant volcanoes of **Eden**, which are home to the Ugly Horde (p. 84), a tribe of High Martians that terrorize the region. The horde controls the only liftwood groves in the region, a resource desired by all.

Arabia in the east is a high plain that reaches up to almost 13,000 feet (4,000 m) above the surrounding areas, rising up almost vertically over the polar plain at the border. It is lined by many chasms, and outsiders can easily get lost in here. It is considered impassable, both because of the sandstorms and the *Queln* (p. 86) who live here. Arabia is marked by a mysterious stripe pattern of dark dust, which can only be seen from a great

The dust eventually lands in the dunes of the North, where further storms carry it into the upper layers of the atmosphere. Once it falls back down from there, the cycle begins anew. Every prepared inhabitant of the desert owns a breathing mask and dust goggles.

Population

About eight million people live across this region. The majority—about 5 million—are the Canal Martians of the cities. About 2.8 million Hill Martians live spread out across the desert in small tribal communities. The rest are 100,000–150,000 High Martians that dwell in their fortresses in Eden. A few hundred humans live in the canal cities, trying to make their fortunes on the Red Planet. There are also a few Venusian Lizard-men in Dioscuria, brought here to act as servants of the German officials.

The Current Situation

The general scarcity of resources has repeatedly led to conflicts in the region. Water, fertile fields, and road tolls have also been the cause of century-old feuds and banditry. Theft of cattle and women (and men) is considered a respectable pastime by most nomads, while the Canal Martians do not tolerate it.

The arrival of the humans has heightened the tensions. The war between the British and the Oenotrians had consequences for the people of Aeria as well (p. 83), and the growing number of German products from Dioscuria is affecting trade and industries along the Tea Road. At the very least, the presence of the red devils has brought many locals to refocus on old traditions such as calligraphy and sand dances. Quite a few Martians are also being drawn to radical causes, such as the Groundcleansers or the Worm cultists.

The Tea Road

A network of trade routes stretches across the Western Desert, connecting the cities of the North and South with one another. The individual routes follow the old canals from watering hole to watering hole. Most of this trade is conducted by the Wagon Masters, but daring merchants from the cities also attempt these dangerous but profitable journeys. The most famous good of the Tea Road is the smoked scaambra-tea (p. 18) that is grown on the plateaus of Cydonia and which fetches very high prices. Besides that, most other goods are of the luxury kind: perfumes from Aryn, artworks from Tossia, brocades from Oenotria, and of course bhutan from the League (p. 77). The establishment of the bhutan monopoly by the British has markedly reduced trade. Instead, more and more German manufactured goods from Dioscuria are being carried by the caravans in recent years. The focus of trade is thus shifting increasingly towards Dioscuria, a change which does not sit well with many merchants. Mass production of cheap products is also causing stagnation in many of the old crafting professions, weakening the powers of the Dioscurian guilds.

The Boreosyrtis League - Scented Spices and Stinking Misery

*“This League combines the worst excesses of Kreuzberg’s tene-
ment blocks and the plantations of the Confederate States.”*

— August Bebel in an article in
Der Sozialdemokrat, July 1887

People: Canal Martians
Location: Far north of the Western Desert
Language: Umbran
Cities: Umbra (capital), Saardaar (flowers and perfume), Coloe ⊕, Meroe (*Somovaan*, ruins of old pumping stations)
Trade goods: Bhutan spice, perfumes, wine

The League is chiefly known for the bhutan spice that is farmed by slaves under inhumane conditions on completely fenced-off plantations. This kind of slavery is the target of much criticism on Earth, but the British benefactors of the League insist that the slaves are all criminals and debtors unable to pay their debts in

any other way. As such, the plantations are merely workhouses where those down on their luck can find honest work. This excuse merely fires up the abolitionists and many—both on Earth and on Mars—are unhappy with the situation. There are rumors of groups that help escaped slaves by smuggling them out of the country, and agitators of all stripes find open ears. Baron Hasso von Gruber discreetly supports anti-British groups, the French Commune has sent “missionaries” to the cities and everywhere unrest is increasing. The powers that be crack down hard on any dissidence and ruthlessly make examples of anyone arrested, but this only increases the discontent of the people.

History

The “Confederation of the Honorable Ancestors of Sguuhl”, as this nation is actually called, grew from one of the Seldon Empire successor states. When the canals dried up, the League was the only power in the region to profit, as the water that no longer reached the high plains could now be used to turn its lands into blooming paradises. Constantly threatened by jealous neighbors, the cities

of the League united. Over time, their princes became cunning masters of intrigue and politics, able to play their enemies against each other and secure their homelands for millennia to come.

harshest punishment that can be imposed is a boycott to strike at the purse of the merchants of the city. This has been sufficient to keep renegade cities in line so far.

Government, Politics, and Society

The League is a loose alliance, similar to the Hanse cities of Earth history. The main body of government is the great Council, which meets in the League Hall in Umbra when required. Ever since the arrival of the Earthmen, the frequency of the sessions has increased notably, with seventeen meetings so far in 1889 alone.

The members of the Council with voting rights include merchant houses, canal princes, and land owners, but also wealthy individuals. Acceptance into the Council costs the equivalent of about half a million pounds, in addition to an annual fee of about £20,000. It is permitted to acquire additional votes. All decisions are reached by a two-thirds majority. The Council does not pass laws; that is the purview of the cities. It only sets the guidelines for trade and foreign policy. These decisions are prepared by workgroups open to participation by anyone with an interest in the matter.

Politics in the cities is conducted in a similar manner. They are governed by councils composed of merchants and the owners of the large residential blocks. The cities often ignore the decisions of the League, but this rarely leads to serious consequences. Should the League require the cooperation of a specific city, the

Military

Each city maintains its own troops, which during peace time make up small volunteer armies tasked primarily with police duties. In times of war, all able-bodied citizens are conscripted and mobilized under a shared overall command. Additionally, the League used to maintain a mercenary army, primarily for the purpose of preventing uprisings on the plantations. The protection contract with the British assigned this task to the British soldiers and security assets of the BBTC. A few of the mercenaries were hired by the BBTC, the rest were let go and exiled from the nation. Ever since the British have been forced to send their soldiers to the Oenotrian front, the security forces of the BBTC had to maintain order by themselves, a task they are not truly up to.

Culture and Technology

Every square inch of the country is utilized fully. Streams and paths have been straightened, giving the maps of the region a chessboard look. Beyond the cities lie only plantations, and very few forests for timber production. There are no villages, the workers living in small huts directly on the plantations. The League is one of the few regions where water is in abundance, and a sophisticated system ensures that not a single drop is wasted.

The economy is largely built on huge monoculture farms growing bhutan, and also wine and flowers. The flowers are used for the manufacture of perfumes or dried to sell as jewelry. Prices for basic food supplies are very high, which has led to laws setting minimum quotas of farmland that must be dedicated to food production. The inspectors that enforce these quotas are quite corrupt, however, and thus food prices keep climbing, along with the seething anger of the masses.

The majority of the population lives in the four cities. These consist of ten to twenty residential blocks, each with twenty or more levels, connected by thin, swaying bridges. Each of these holds up to 5,000 people in cramped conditions. Inside these blocks, a rank hierarchy of sorts has developed. The rich live in the upper levels with the large roof gardens, the middle class lives in the flats with windows, and the rest lives in the dark holes making up the rest of the block, where no daylight ever reaches. The poorest, who can't even afford these holes, dwell in tiny huts in the mud outside the blocks. Whenever the Flow and Flood bring the water, these poor souls must fight for their lives on improvised rafts.

The blocks do not just hold flats, but also stores and pubs, schools and hospitals, in short, everything that would make a city. This includes a sewer system that redirects the waste waters to the plantations where they are used as fertilizer.

The British Boreosyrtan Trading Company (BBTC)

In 1875, British merchants founded a company in Umbra dedicated to exporting the highly popular bhutan to Earth. Bankers from London saw the opportunity for what it was and bought into the venture, which became the BBTC in 1878. Through generous gifts it quickly gained influence in the League and in 1883 was able to purchase a seat on the Council. The London investors ensured the required financial backing. Thus, in 1887, against strong resistance, a protection contract was signed that secured the BBTC purchase rights for the entire bhutan harvest. The BBTC has since reported record profits and the League gained stable prices and a guaranteed buyer for all of their bhutan, in addition to military protection free of charge. The merchants of the League are happy with this deal, even though some old house or another may have gone bankrupt and the League has essentially become a puppet state of the red devils. The local director for the company is *Michael Whitney-Roylott*, who operates out of a palace in Umbra. Whitney-Roylott is ambitious, unscrupulous, and hopes to earn a knighthood before too long. The British Empire is likely to approve of his discreet efforts to destabilize the League and create a pretense for annexation.

The Western Dioscuria Protectorate - The German Mars Colony

“PEOPLE CALLED GERMANS THEY GO THE HOUSE!”
— Graffiti on a brothel in Dioscuria

The aquifers of the old canals carry ground water from the highlands into the low plains, where it feeds the soil of Dioscuria and ensures that this region is a blooming oasis. A long time ago, this region was the backwater of Martian civilization. With the arrival of the Germans, a new player entered the field who would rewrite every rule in the book. Western Dioscuria is growing more and more to be the driving force behind the Tea Road, pushing Earth and especially German goods onto the Martian marketplaces. The protectorate enjoys an economic upturn, the influence of the German advisors ensures an efficient administration, and, thanks to modern weaponry and instructors, bandits and High Martians no longer pose a threat to the welfare of the region.

People: Canal Martians, Humans (2,500, 80% Germans), Lizard-men (two dozen)

Location: To the northwest, at the edge of Vastitas Borealis

Languages: German, Dioscurian

Cities: Dioscuria (*Nompha Gisaak*, capital, pop.: 80,000), Protonilus (*Ssessanissa*, tea plantations, pop.: 40,000), Ismenilus ☼

Trade goods: Foods, particularly grain and meat, semi luxury foods (smoked tea), import of Earth goods

The Dio-Umbran Language Family

The Dio-Umbran languages are common across the northern plain and the Southern Basin. **Umbran** is melodic and very expressive. It is considered to be the language of music and poetry. The hissing sounds remind humans of Portuguese. Recording it using Earth alphabets is difficult, and linguists have not yet settled on a standard for doing so. The **Dioscurian** language is also marked by umlauts similar to the German *ä* and *ö* in sound. The **Meridiani-Umbran** spoken in Meridiani Sinus contains many terms adopted from Noachan and other Gaaryani languages.

Ssarassda wuschii baang? – What does this pistol cost?

Aschassa siirgu haschassat Ossamos vashassa? – Do you also have rooms with a view of the bank?

Mesch naschakaa... – I would like to have...
...amvosch wossuscha bossaami – ...the house special

...reschosch fareschi – ...a remedy against diarrhea

...kelvosch falaasch bossagi – ...a bottle of your finest

Aschta Bekaschagi! – Warning! Restricted Area!

Schö papscha mäscha! – Your papers, please! (Dioscurian)

Öschema, schäscheda ennäma Kaischa! – Stop! Stop in the name of the Emperor! (Dioscurian)

History

This region was densely settled even before the canals were built. After the end of the Seldon Empire, Dioscuria, then named Gisaaki, was a buffer state between the Boreosyrtis League and a Protonilic empire. This empire and *Gisaaki* were governed by a series of weaker dynasties, each toppled by coups or barbarian raids. This was the shape of things for centuries. Only the arrival of the Earth people changed this cycle. In 1875, the Earthmen arrived in the region, and *Hasso von Gruber*, founder of the *Deutsche Interplanetare Kolonial- und Handelsgesellschaft* (*German Interplanetary Colonial and Trade Company*, DIKH), signed the first contracts with the Dioscurian *Prince Hastiith*. Afterwards, the German presence grew rapidly. *Hastiith* sought to prevent his city from suffering the same fate as Syrtis Major, which became an Earth colony, and sought closer ties to the French Commune. He died in 1882, when his aerial yacht was destroyed in an explosion. His son, *Prince Shskaas*, was too young to take the throne, and thus High Minister *Ssaskeen* took the position of regent, ruling until the prince celebrates his tenth Martian birthday. That will occur on 25th May 1890.

Government, Politics, and Society

The cities of Dioscuria are governed by a canal prince who is propped up by an oligarchy of noble landowners and the crafting guilds of the cities. To protect their interests, these oligarchs pursue a conservative policy. This is currently changing under the influence of the Germans and as the merchant class is growing in power. The German officials here know that they must wait for months for support from Earth in case of trouble, and that the locals have access to firearms. Together with the DIKH, their advisors attempt to convince the Martians through demonstration of modern methods, generally with success. No Imperial Commissioner was appointed to lord over the Martians. Instead, the DIKH has powers of autonomous self-government and may enter into contracts with the locals to purchase land. Only the power to maintain foreign relations remains with the German government, which maintains an embassy in Dioscuria and a consulate in Pro-

tonilus. The Consul is the highest ranking official representative of the German Empire.

The traditional, inert, and corrupt bureaucracy was replaced by an efficient administration which, much to the surprise of the citizens, is actually performing well. New officials were employed based on their abilities, not their connections, massive piles of unfiled work were finally completed and taxes that would otherwise have disappeared into the pockets of the collectors suddenly began to fill the nation's coffers. Of course, not everyone approved of these changes. Oligarchs who previously used to have the run of the city loudly complained about the loss of their privileges and the "barbaric corruptors of the youth". Ever since some of these protestors met with strange accidents or incarceration for high treason, these voices have become quieter, but not silent.

The DIKH and the German Empire

"I always saw it as a mistake that a private citizen, rather than a consul, signed the first contract between the German Empire and the prince. This has created a confusion of terms, an identity between Empire and society, which now must drag the solidarity of the Empire along with it."

— Dr. Ludwig Bamberger, before the German Parliament

The military potential of liftwood called for the support of the largest German endeavor on Mars, the *Deutsche Interplanetare Kolonial- und Handelsgesellschaft* (DIKH). Director von Gruber, a veteran of the Franco-Prussian war, has secret plans for the DIKH, however, that would likely not be received well in Berlin, such as the destruction of the British bhutan spice monopoly. Von Gruber keeps these secret from the officials and military officers of the Empire, even though he is calling on their resources for his own plans. As the main signatory to the contract with the Prince of the city, he has the final say in most matters—outside of military concerns. His activities might just come to an end, though, if the long-awaited appointment of an Imperial commissioner comes to pass.

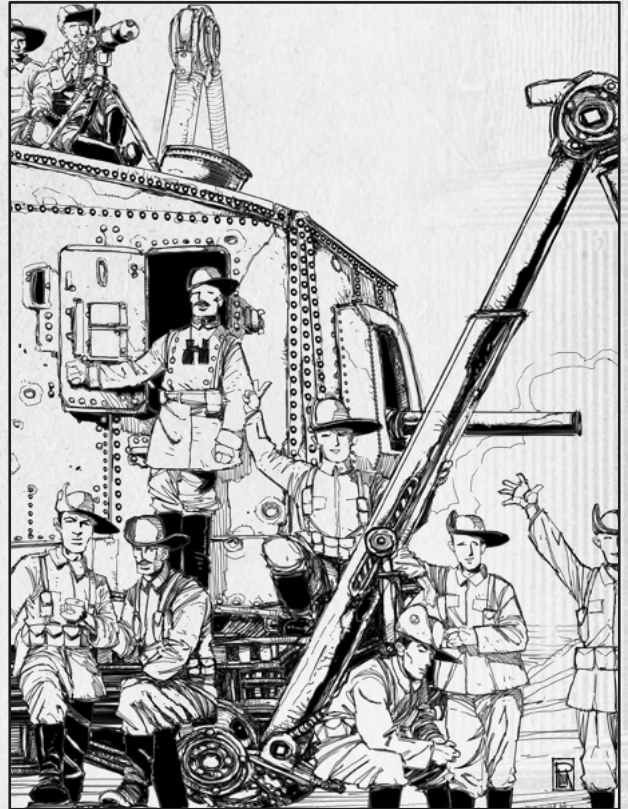
Military

Dioscuria and Protonilus are able to afford the luxury of small mercenary armies. They also maintain a small aerial fleet which they primarily use to hold back the High Martians. To support the fleet, skriff riders of the Queln are also employed as mercenaries. In the countryside, the citizens are required to defend their villages as militias. The local military is traditionally grouped into regiments of 60 men.

Germany has also sent troops to Mars to form the *Schutztruppe Dioscuria* (protection force). Half of these soldiers are stationed in Dioscuria, the remainder is patrolling the hinterlands as "advisors", where they fight bandits and rebels. They are well-armed and include an aerial gunboat, zeppelins, and several tripods.

Role in the Region

Thanks to the German influence, Dioscuria is becoming more and more prominent in the region, something which the Boreosyrtis League in particular is not too happy about. The Germans are



extending their influence in all directions. Towards the east, they discreetly support the Kel Avashiim in their resistance against the British and the Oenotrians. In the south, they intensively court the city of Angahiaa. In the west, they attempt to gain access to the ruins of the canal builders (p. 79), though the Veiled People are preventing this. Ambassador von Gruber has great interest in gaining access to the liftwood of the Ugly Horde (p. 84) and seeks to forge an alliance against these barbarians.

The Cities of the Protectorate

Dioscuria (Nompha Gisaak)

The capital of the protectorate lies amidst countless terrace fields on the junction of the canal to Aryn. *Nompha Gisaak*, its local name, is a wealthy city with a population of 80,000, including 2,000 Germans. Most of the Germans work for one of the companies that are making great profits trading with Earth, and they and their families live in *Klein Berlin* (Little Berlin), though some free spirits have instead sought quarters in the Old City.

The contract signed in 1884 guarantees protection of the city by Germany. In exchange, the Germans were granted the right to their own laws and police for their presence in the Protectorate. This essentially means that all Earthmen in Dioscuria are subject to these special laws, which most consider to be a good thing—the traditional Martian laws are held to be barbaric and archaic.

The city has been going through changes ever since the Germans arrived. The merchants, previously below the crafting guilds in status, profited greatly from their partnerships with the Germans and gained in influence. A few of them built factories, which upset both the guilds and their colonial masters. Germany would prefer a greater dependency on German goods. The most positive measure implemented by the Germans was the abolishment of

slavery, which they were able to enforce despite heavy protest. The merchants had long since realized that free laborers are more economical than slaves, but many land owners now employ their former slaves as “contract workers”, under conditions that aren’t much of an improvement.

Military

The military is organized into 13 regiments (780 men) of infantry and 8 regiments (480 men) of cavalry, of which 2 infantry and 1 cavalry regiment serve as police in the city. One additional regiment guards the gates, the rest is stationed in forts in the hinterlands. The walls and gates feature some old artillery which has become obsolete with the arrival of the humans.

The “**New Model Regiment**” is a special unit. It was only recently founded and is only 180 strong so far. It is equipped with German weapons and trained by German advisors. The soldiers are proud of the special role they play and look up to the shining example provided by the Germans.

The **cloudship fleet** of the city consists of several war kites and three screw galleys, commanded by *Admiral Hraviiith Shaastan*. He commands one regiment of soldiers and these “marines” are considered to be the elite of the city’s military.

The presence of the **High Minister’s Guard** is upsetting many locals. It consists of about 1,000 men, mostly Hill Martians, equally split between infantry and cavalry. This force was levied by High Minister Ssaskeen with his own funds—which he embezzled from the city coffers—and their loyalty is sure to belong to their employer only.

Germany sent half a battalion of the **1st Foot Guard Regiment** to Mars. These troops, normally stationed in Potsdam, are said to be the best regiment in the German Army and are a particular favorite of the Emperor. Half of these troops garrison Fort Friedrich-Wilhelm, the rest patrol the hinterlands.

Overview of the City

The **Old City** lies on a peninsula formed by the branches of the canals. To the north lie the estates of the upper class. This includes the **German Embassy (1)** and the German-owned **Dioscuria Gasthaus (2)**, which offers a homely atmosphere including a beer garden. The south of the old city appears far less wealthy and used to be a dangerous neighborhood. This has changed recently, and now the **British** and **Russian Consulates** can be found here on the **Ten Roads Square (3)**. The **Citadel (4)** is an island in the canal, fortified with walls and enclosing both the **Palace (5)** and the **Temple of the One God (6)**, where the Arina Stone of the city is kept. The New Model Regiment and the High Minister’s Guards are stationed inside the citadel. Prisoners of the city are locked up in the dungeons beneath. Entering the citadel requires special authorization.

The **Market Square (7)** lies between the Old City and the Citadel. Hundreds of wares and goods of all kinds are sold in these lively bazaars. Two wide sets of stairs, which are ideally suited for dramatic sword duels, lead up to the Old City and Citadel. Directly adjacent to the Market Square, the **Caravansary (8)** can be found. Whenever a caravan arrives, the multilayered building turns into a fairground.



Western Desert

The **Old Landing Fields (9)** on the southern edge of the city now only serve the cloudship fleet of the city, apart from a few small Martian vessels. This is also the home of the city's shipyard, which is only capable of building Martian-type vessels.

Klein Berlin (Little Berlin, 10) sprung up in just a few years in the dry bed of the old canal to Aryn. This new city district uses its best to appear just like Düsseldorf or Hamburg. Two dozen officers of the German Police are usually on patrol here. Besides modern apartment blocks, Little Berlin also features villas with carefully kept gardens. About 1,500 humans live here, mostly Germans, but it is also home to 300 citizens of other nations. The largest building in Little Berlin is the **Potsdam Hotel (11)**, the only house in the city that features running warm water. It lies right next to the **Dutch Consulate (12)**, directed by *Consul Jan Van Oort*. Little Berlin features its own modern water and sewage systems.

The **Port District (13)** surrounds the **New Landing Field (14)**, where the majority of the air traffic is handled these days. Tall mooring masts rise up from the brightly lit fields, ready to receive ether flyers, zeppelins, and Martian cloudships. To the east, modern warehouses hold the many goods of the various German companies. For a port district, public order is maintained well, largely due to the presence of the German military stationed in the nearby **Fort Friedrich-Wilhelm (15)**, which guard the port carefully.

In the canal bed north of the city, the **New Town (16)** grew without a plan. These slums of tents and huts sprang up when countless Martians streamed into the city, lured by rumors of a booming economy. It is a desolate place, full of crime and excesses of all kinds. No police officer will dare to set foot in these dirty alleys. It is said that a cell of anarchists has made its base here, but neither German agents nor informants of the chancellor have been able to confirm this.

After the grand canals dried up, the sewers of the city were radically redesigned. Existing pipes were sealed and new canals, wells, and reservoirs were built over time. Additionally, new dungeons, crypts, and secret passages were dug beneath the citadel, creating a labyrinth that is now known as the **Underground** and acts as home to all sorts of elements allergic to the light of day. In the new city in particular, many entrances were dug and it is said that many a building has entrances unknown to any of its inhabitants.

"Humor and patience are two ruumet breehrs that will get you through any desert."

— **Proverb of the Wagon Masters**

People: Hill Martians (mixed with Canal Martians)
Location: Entire Tea Road, centered on Meroe
Languages: Merovangian, Koline, Umbran
Trade Goods: Tea, luxury goods, information, stories, culture

Traveling through the deserts of Mars, there are groups of tribal people who have followed the ruumet breehrs from grazing grounds to grazing grounds for millennia while trading wares and information on their travels. They are the Wagon Masters of Meroe.

Protonilus (Ssessanissa) - The City That Smells of Tea

300 miles (500 km) west of Dioscuria, the old canal bed runs through a region of flat valleys lined by sheer cliffs and flat plateaus. This is where the city known on human maps as Protonilus is located. It has always stood in the shadow of Dioscuria as its "little sister". Its people are considered to be slow, provincial, and behind the times by most Dioscurians, though possessed of a certain simplistic ingenuity. The German Empire has established its consulate here, and a group of military advisors are training the small army according to Prussian methods.

Ssessanissa is an agricultural city. The valleys are divided into manors where ruumet breehrs are raised for their meat. The black scaambra-tea (p. 18) that the city is so famous for is grown on the plateaus. This tea defines the city. Many potters produce tea sets, and the smoke of their ovens is used to dry the tea, giving it its special aroma. The tea is popular with connoisseurs all over Mars and has made the city rich. Even the Arina Stone of Ssessanissa takes the form of a tea bowl, from which the prince of the city drinks to the health of the city on the first day of every year.

The current canal princess is Ssassandia, who inherited the office three years ago. Ssassandia is a true beauty and is being courted by admirers from the most renowned families. No one suspects her secret affair with *Hauptmann Leopold Meyer zu Diestelbruch*, her handsome military advisor. Should this juicy secret ever come to light, the scandal would shock the people of both Mars and Earth.

Protonilus is also known for its aerial races. Several times a year, daring races and regattas take place during which the participants race closely past the plateaus and cliffs. Gliders and screw galleys each have their own competitions, as do skroll riders. At the next race (early March 1890), machine powered aerial vehicles will be competing for the first time. Numerous inventors have already registered their contraptions.

The Wagon Masters of Meroe

Territory

The individual clans can be found across the entire region and the nearby wastelands of Meroe. Each follows its own ruumet breehr herd, which can include up to 100 animals. Their travels follow a set route, meaning each clan will travel the length of the Tea Road (p. 77) over a Martian year.

History

The history of these nomads can only be reconstructed with difficulty from old myths and records. It appears that many ruumet breehrs that had been kept as cattle turned feral in the chaos after the canals dried up. They soon formed herds that instinctively followed the water and the plants that grew seasonally along the now dried-up canals. Individual families of Hill Martians began to follow the herds, and bound together into clans over time.

Government and Society

The Wagon Masters have a simple tribal culture. Several families form a tribe, several tribes form a clan. The chief is determined by inheritance: usually the oldest child of the chief inherits the office.

Role in the Region

The Wagon Masters dominate the Western Desert trade. Besides luxury goods, they mostly carry ideas and messages between the people of the Western Desert. Their storytellers and musicians have helped define almost every culture here.

Culture and Technology

As there are few predators able to threaten ruumet breehrs and the Wagon Masters rarely interfere in the business of other cultures, they live calm, regular lives without much excitement.

Their lives center on their rolling homes. A typical wagon is 25 feet (8 m) wide, 30 to 40 feet (10–12 m) long, and rolls on wheels of about 13 feet (4 m) diameter, giving them a ground clearance of about 6 feet (2 m). The entire surface is decorated with carvings that show scenes from legends or just repulsive gargoyles meant to ward off evil spirits. A wagon is pulled by four to six ruumet breehrs. Each wagon holds one or more families, and they form a circle every night around a large camp fire. According to legends, the wagons of the ancestors could fly and needed no ruumet breehrs, but knowledge of their construction was lost.

Religion, Rites and Customs

Like other Hill Martians, the Wagon Masters follow an old naturalistic tradition, focused on the roles of the spirits of wind, desert, and water. Burial rites are of particular importance. One day after the death at the latest, a body will be exposed in the desert. When the tribe breaks camp, the bones that were picked clean by carrion eaters are collected, wrapped in a blanket and placed in a special bone wagon that is part of every caravan. Thus, it is ensured that no Wagon Master will ever have to leave the tribe.

The Moabite Language Family

The Hill Martians of the Western Desert speak Moabite languages which are characterized by long, vowel-rich words. The sound of these different languages however varies greatly. The cheerful singsong of **Meroic** (called *Soomvanli* by the Wagon Masters) has an exhilarating ring to it and is infused with Umbran and Parhooni words that the Wagon Masters picked up on their travels. This language is only spoken among the clans and only rarely taught to outsiders.

A related language, **Aerianic**, stands in sharp contrast to Meroic. The guttural language of the Kel Avashiim warriors sounds almost unnaturally rough and has a very limited vocabulary. It is supposed to have been influenced by the High Martians' Gaashwaan.

Edenti is spoken by the marauding Hill Martians in the entire desert region from Aeria to Chryse, and its sound ranges somewhere between the other two languages.

Neither **Queln** nor the mysterious **Cydonian** could be assigned to any language group. Linguists suspect however that Cydonian is an archaic form of Gaaryani. Professor *Friedemann Lautenschlager* of the University of Marburg is currently working on a dictionary and a grammar book.

Biiliirikil Maaraabalool Tooranaal? – Could you pass me the waterskin, please? (Meroic)

Echaakchrak Varr! – Skin him. Slowly. (Aerianic)

Pelokaaktar Miboorooch! – Hand over your treasures! (Edenti)

Kel Avashiim – The Warriors of Aeria

“In all my travels, I have never encountered a people as ungrateful, devious, and treacherous as these barbarians. They are, in short, uncivilized, and utterly un-British.”

— Sir Michael Paget-Smith, *Through the Hills of Aeria*

People: Hill Martians
Location: Aeria
Language: Aerianic

Territory

This group is divided into a dozen tribes, with its clans spread out over a region the size of Europe. To the east, Aeria borders the British colony of Syrtis Major and Oenotria. Both nations view

Aeria as their backyard, but the Kel Avashiim recognize neither nation's claim over themselves.

History

Their ancestors had lived in this area as far back as the age of the canals. Back then, the land was still arable, and they were peaceful farmers. The encroaching desert forced them to travel the lands with their herds. Ever since, their lives are defined by caravan raiding and constant feuds between tribes.

Government and Society

"It stays in the family!" – This simple statement defines much of the politics of the tribes. The head of each family, the *janeesh*, decides and passes judgement on internal family matters. Conflicts between families are settled informally between the involved janeeshes. The janeeshes of a tribe form a council that decides on matters of war with other tribes. Should there be a threat from outsiders, the tribes will call for a joint council to determine a common course of action. In extreme cases, they will elect a *janeesh-da-janeesh*, a shared supreme chief. This occurred most recently in 1783, when High Martians attempted to invade Eden's Aeria.

Role in the Region

Currently, the Kel Avashiim prevent the British and Oenotrians from expanding into the Western Desert. To this end, they employ guerilla methods. Shots from ambush, nighttime raids, and explosive booby traps are tried and tested methods in their repertoire. They also like to hire out their services as guides to serve reliably for a time, only to eventually lead a caravan astray. The guide will then be gone one morning, along with all the water skins, and the warriors of his tribe will soon descend upon the tired and thirsty defenders. The British and Oenotrians are ignoring Aeria for now, and have both independently decided to deal with the Kel Avashiim after the war.

Culture and Technology

The wanderers possess surprisingly advanced technology. Each camp features "fog trees", 30 feet (10 m) tall frame constructions holding fine mesh nets. These nets collect morning dew and gather it at the foot of the fog tree. Each tree can collect up to 100 L of water each day. Their gunsmiths produce the *moquaad* (p. 168), a long-barreled musket that is considered to be one of the most precise weapons on Mars.

Religion, Rites and Customs (↔ see p. 205)

Their lives revolve around gashants. These animals serve as mounts and sources of meat, their skins provide the dark tents of the nomads, the bones are the tent poles, and their dried excrement serves as fuel for the fires. What the gashants do not provide for them, they trade for with other people or steal from them. The Kel Avashiim consider anything that cannot be carried on a gashant's back as dead weight.

There are a number of religious cults with the Kel Avashiim, from the guardians of a temple in the Canal Martian ruined city of Dralbaar to offshoots of the Worm cult. Many hold apocalyptic beliefs and practice barbaric rites.

Kel Avashiim and Humans

The first red devil that dared to enter Aeria was Michael Paget-Smith, the famous Red Captain. He led an expedition here in 1885 and was captured, spending many months as a hostage. After his escape, he wrote a book on his experiences, in which he had few kind words for these nomads. The Kel Avashiim were probably given an accurate first glimpse of humanity in the form of the vain and arrogant Paget-Smith, and initially viewed them as little more than a potential source of income. Red devils were either freed for ransom or sold as slaves. Humans that accompanied the Martian caravans are able to avoid such fates by paying exorbitant "road tolls" (at least £10 per person).

The Ugly Horde of Eden

"Brides like a good scar."

— Proverb of the Horde

People: High Martians
Location: Eden
Language: Edenti

Beneath the volcanoes of Eden, there is a labyrinth of lava tunnels that lead deep below the surface. At the fringes of

Eden, ground water from the aquifers of the canals hits underground sulfur deposits and produces underground acid lakes. These play an important part in the culture of the High Martians living here.

Others merely call them the *Ugly Horde*, a title they bear with pride. Most notable are the ornamental scars that mark their warriors. Their own legends tell them that their ancestors were selected by a great Fire Worm to become the keepers of the world one day. The records of the Canal Martians tell the story a bit differently. In fact, the Ugly Horde is descended from barbarians who were driven from their homes by a stronger High Martian tribe and after a long search found a weaker opponent here in Eden, who they were able to displace in turn.

Role in the Region

The members of the Ugly Horde lead the typical High Martian lives of violence and plunder. Their traditional enemies have always been the Queln, as they dared to contest their homelands. The wars between the two people were as gruesome as they were epic. Besides their lives as airborne raiders, they are also dealers in liftwood, which grows in their mountains. In the past, they sold this to Dioscuria or the League, but since those nations have fallen under the control of the red devils, they prefer to deal with the Oenotrians. This means long, risky voyages during which Red Captains will try to seize their valuable cargoes.

Culture

As is common among High Martians, might makes right. The Horde does not have a single leader, however. Whenever a charismatic leader arose in the past and threatened to unify the barbarians of Eden, the rulers of Dioscuria or the League would bribe a rival to remove the potential threat. When that didn't work, a bounty would be placed on his head instead, and sooner or later a keen skroll rider or air pirate would claim it.

As with other tribes, slaves do the work that the High Martians consider beneath themselves. They care for the liftwood groves and build the aerial flyers in docks hidden inside old craters. The lives of the slaves are brief and painful, as the whip of their masters is never far from striking again.

The members of the horde follow a variant of the Worm faith. They believe that the Fire Worm inside the planet will one day cause all volcanoes to erupt, whose smoke will blacken out the Sun and freeze the world. The children of the Fire Worm will be the last to freeze. As a sign that they are among the chosen, they

disfigure their bodies with burn scars. For every act of bravery, a warrior is marked with a glowing hot iron. The first scars will mark the face, and later ones will spread over the skull and torso until they cover every part of the body. The gruesome image this presents can shake even the stoutest Hill Martian warrior.

The acid lakes play an important role in this faith. These lakes are seen as a gift from the Fire Worm, and the bravest of all the members of the Horde are dissolved in these lakes after their death. On certain occasions, living sacrifices are also thrown into the acid to gain the Fire Worm's favor.

Pirates

The Horde maintains an aerial fleet that used to rule the skies above the desert, forcing their enemies to pay them tribute. Ever since the red devils have appeared, these tributes, and worse yet the "respect", have been withheld. This is why the Horde hates all humans and eagerly fights them. Besides attacks on Earth outposts, they act as privateers for Oenotria. Through the Worm cult networks, the Horde has access to information on the comings and goings of many ports in the desert, allowing them to preferentially attack vessels of the colonial powers. Survivors will be enslaved. Male slaves must work for their meager food, females are sold to Oenotrian merchants. Particularly "worthy" opponents are brought to the kraags as sacrifices to the Fire Worm, usually ending in a painful death in one of the acid lakes.

Moab - Outcasts and Fire Jewels

"It is the land where one does not go."

— Proverb of the Kel Avashiim

People: Mixture of Hill and Canal Martians
Location: Moab
Languages: Koline, Edenti

Moab, which is about the size of Mexico, lies between the dried-up canals leading from Dioscuria and the League towards the south. It is a particularly dry region of Mars. During the day, the Sun burns hot, only for the temperature to drop below freezing at night. The area is so inhospitable that even the canal builders wasted no resources trying to access it. The remnants of ancient cities that were abandoned when the water disappeared can be found along the former canals (➡ see p. 191). Afterwards, these desolate lands were the ideal place in which to dispose of unwanted criminals. Thus, prisons were built here, into which generations of convicts disappeared whose ghosts now suppos-

edly lead travelers astray. It is a harsh land, and harsh lands are home to harsh people.

The Others (➡ see p. 199)

The few people of Moab are sickly, misshapen blends of Hill and Canal Martians that speak Koline and are only ever referred to as "the Others". For tens of thousands of years, they have been the last refuge for outcasts who had nowhere else to go. Those who have burned all bridges and cannot return to any other place can find an uncomfortable new home here. The Others offer refuge to any stranger who can pass their tough tests of admission. There is a reason for this. The few children that are born out here are often weak, sick, and unable to withstand life in Moab. Without strangers to join them, most tribes would die out before too long. The tests of admission differ from tribe to tribe, but always try the stamina and willpower of newcomers. Those who pass become full members of the tribe and are never asked about their past. Those who fail but survive are sold as slaves to the next trader that comes along.

The oldest member leads the tribe, and is aided in this by the strongest warrior and a shaman. The successors to these positions are sometimes inherited, sometimes elected. The tribes are always feuding with one another. These feuds are usually based on claim disputes regarding the fire jewel deposits. All tribes seek these gems to trade them at the edge of the desert for tools, food, and water. A handful of fire jewels will supply a tribe with water for a full month.

For a few months now, a deceptive calm has settled on Moab. The Others keep the peace and trade fewer and fewer jewels with the merchants. There are rumors of an Earth woman, the Lady of the Water, who is said to reside in a sunken palace in the desert. It is said that she seeks to unite all the tribes into the service of a certain newly-founded Earth-based precious stone cartel.

Alaag Monar

To the north, where the canal to Oenotria branches off, lie the ruins of an ancient city where a small clan tills fields and maintains gardens. Once a year, a great market takes place here, during which a peace is maintained by all residents of the desert. Nomads from all over the region come here to trade, celebrate, seek spouses, and challenge each other to contests. Merchants, performers, and cutthroats from all corners of the world can be found here. After two weeks, the tents are struck and all that remains are what the several thousand travelers and animals have left behind. The people of Alaag Monar use this as fertilizer for the fields and grow crops to sell during the next market.

Fire Jewels

(→ see p. 194)

These mysterious jewels can only be found in Moab. During sunrise and sunset, the members of a tribe will slowly walk across the search area in the hope of catching the glint of the low Sun on one of these stones. After searching an area, they will move on to only return years later, when the frost will have pressed new jewels out from the ground.

The raw fire jewels are taken by traders—usually the Wagon Masters—to Dioscuria or Aryn, where jewelers must work them before the stones can fetch their enormous prices with the collectors of two planets. Traditionally, they are traded by jewelers in Dioscuria, but by now merchants from Antwerp or London are also buying into the market, often outbidding the locals.

The Queln - The Sky People

"The Queln are coming! The Queln are coming!"

—Traditional Martian shout of alarm

People: Hill Martians

Location: Originally Cydonia/Arabia, but widespread across the Western and Eastern Deserts

Languages: Queln, Koline

From the borderlands between Cydonia and Arabia there comes a people who are said to be the true masters of Mars. The Queln were the only ones to be able to tame the skroll. Now their descendants cruise the skies on their fearsome battle mounts and take what they want from the "skeenwag" (muddy feet).

They were employed as mercenaries by the canal princes as far back as the time of the Seldons. Often, they would fall upon a wealthy city when they were least expected. A swarm of skroll descending from the skies was a sight to give many a Martian nightmares for life, and they are still a popular bogeyman in children stories.

Government and Society

Each of the clans consisting of up to dozens of families is ruled by a *rithall* (Sky Master). This rithall must defend his position in annual succession games. Should one die while in office, the council of the seven eldest appoints a successor to rule until the next games can be held.

Role in the Region

They are considered to be basically a plague upon the lands. From a proud people of mounted nomads who ruled the skies, the Queln turned themselves into bandits and raiders that fell upon cities, aerial flyers, and caravans. Most recently they "dedicate" themselves primarily to the spice trade, and both the British and the League are considering options on how best to deal with this problem permanently. The Queln have a special love-hate relationship with the Veiled People, their "best enemies". Both people lead enthusiastic feuds with one another, but work together to protect the ruins of Cydonia. Most of the Queln live in tent villages that follow the grazing grounds of their herds, as with most nomads. Other tribes live in the expansive caves of Cydonia.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

As most of the Hill Martians, they believe in nature spirits to whom they give their respects. One of their old songs tells of their origin: The Moons goddess drank too much one night, flew too low over the land, and was captured by a warrior. In exchange for her freedom, she revealed to him the secret of taming skrill, a secret that his descendants keep to this day.

Clouds, which are a rare sight on Mars, play a special role in the faith of the Queln. To the Queln, these are the spirits of brave warriors that guard the world against demons and darkness. Reports of Earth's sky and all its clouds are dismissed as impossible, as this would imply that Earth has millions of brave, dead warriors. Even worse are the stinking smoke clouds of coal-powered steam flyers. Some Queln believe that these vessels are fueled by the power of tortured warrior spirits, others believe the smoke to be the very demonic darkness that the warrior spirits are fighting.

Their honor code is focused on pride and bravery. A prisoner who can prove to have both might be adopted if they are prepared to follow the customs of the Queln. All young men are subjected to a brutal training that not many survive. In this, they especially learn to use the *khivatt*, a type of throwing spear. After their training, they use their new skills on the hunt and, once a year, the rithall leads a great hunt in which all warriors participate and which can lead them across half the planet. Apart from the hunt and war, the men of the Queln have no duties. The women keep the camp and collect berries and herbs to supplement the meals of meat. For this, they ride skrill that are too old to or fight.

How to Train Your Skrill

As captive skrill do not procreate, young animals must be taken from their mother shortly after birth, which is one of the most dangerous duties of a warrior. The skrill cubs are locked into cages and fitted with caps until they are fully grown. The caps rob the skrill of their aggressive streak, though about a third cannot be tamed and are instead ritually sacrificed. When a skrill is ready, it is accustomed to saddle and bit. It has holes drilled into its jaws where the bit is attached. The horns and claws are supplemented with metal blades. During flight, the rider directs the mount using clicking and screeching noises. Rider and skrill can perform extreme maneuvers such as loopings, spins, and dives, during which the rider is kept in the saddle with straps. Over the centuries, there have been Canal and Hill Martians who have earned the respect of the Queln and learned to ride skrill. So far, no human has done so.

Cydonia - Holy Ruins and Veiled Riders

"Man fears time, but time fears the mask."

— Proverb of the Sheldonnar

People: Canal Martians
Location: Cydonia
Language: Cydonian

Cydonia is a land full of strange rock formations: Rock needles, plateaus, and natural archways. They create a confusing maze that only the members of a secretive people can fully navigate. They call themselves the *Sheldonnar*, the "free and noble ones".

History

Even during the age of water, long before the canal builders, Cydonia was an arid region. Very early on, clever irrigation systems were installed here, and their builders were seen as specialists of great skill. One of these engineers designed the planetary canal system, and the massive stone mask was carved in his honor. 20,000 years later, Seldon LVII traveled the desert and sought a simple life. After his death, his followers became the Veiled People of Cydonia. Their mythical leader, *Tinaakra* became the tribal mother to all the nobles, her servant (or according to some stories, her adopted sister) *Tamaata* became the leader of the other castes.

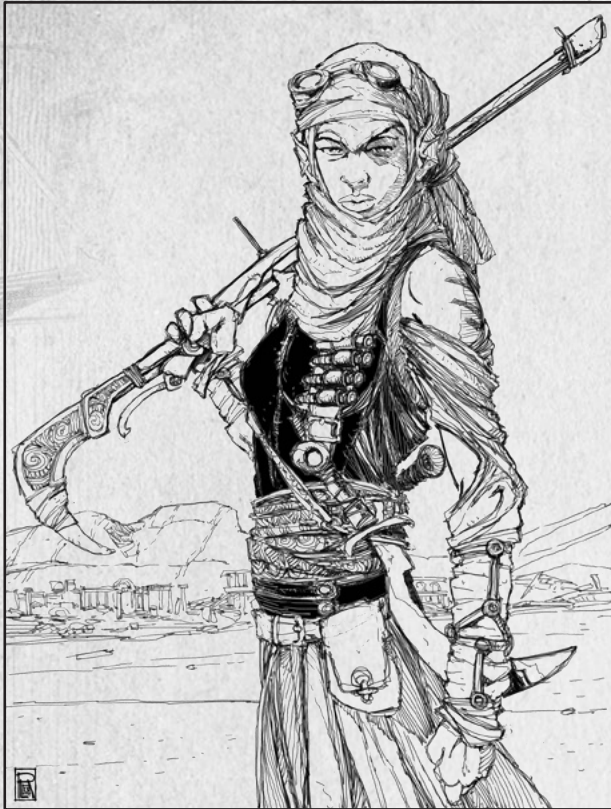
Government, Politics, and Society

About 500,000 Sheldonnar live in family groups that form numerous clans. These clans are grouped into two loose confederations, the *ishagaar* with their capital of **Dinsoor**, and the *iwaalem*, who live around **Cydon (Ilraadai)**. Once a year, a council meeting takes place to which every clan sends a representative. These councils elect a respected noble to be *amaanhoram* (king) for life, who will represent the confederation to the outside.

Their society is based on a caste system. The *ilmaarai*, the Canal Martian nobility, sits at the top of the hierarchy. They are predominantly warriors, but also lead the great caravans that travel through Cydonia. They are the only ones that have the leisure time necessary to become poets. Beneath them is the least numerous caste, the *inekraaman*. They are the scholars, spiritual leaders and judges of the Veiled People. Below the *inekraaman* come the *imoonad*. They are predominantly shepherds and simple soldiers. Beneath them are the *isaadji*, the crafters, who are known for their smithing skills. They are also respected by the other castes, as well as feared as they are considered to be mages and their healers have access to all tents. At the same time, they are viewed as immoral and reckless.

The lowest caste is made up of the slaves, the *ikijaar*, who are considered to be property by the other castes. They live particularly in the cities, where they are guarded carefully by the *imoonad* of their owners, whose family they are considered a part of.

Immigrants, or *imaraad*, stand outside the caste structure. They are the descendants of groups that have migrated to Cydonia over the ages and have sought the protection of the nobility in



exchange for tribute payments. Most of these live in their own districts in the cities.

The caste system is comparatively flexible. Men from a higher caste may marry women from a lower caste, with any children being considered part of the father's caste.

Culture

Most Seheldonnars travel the region as shepherd nomads with their wukkaa herds (p. 147). While the free Seheldonnar live in their domed tents near the herds, most slaves and many crafters reside in Cydon and Dinsoor, the only cities of the region. Besides cattle farming, long distance trade is the main source of income. The nobility often travels for weeks to trade, entrusting their families to their imoonad.

Women play a special role, as the successor of a clan chief is always the eldest child of his sister (sisterless clan chiefs adopt a sister). Women warriors are not uncommon, but also act as musicians of their people, with each Seheldonnar able to play multiple instruments. The men take the part of dancers in this, and perform their complex movements around the seated women musicians during the famous festivals of their people. These festivals are of vital importance, as this is where Seheldonnar meet potential spouses.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

(↔ see p. 192)

Their religion is a strange "technological shamanism". They believe that the soul is a program, written with a kind of mythical analytical engine and copied onto a biological machine, the

body, during birth. After death, this program is copied back into the universal machine and prepared to be written onto the next biological machine. This process will repeat until the universe collapses.

The Seheldonnar honor the memory of the canal builders by reciting ancient instructions and regulations. Young shamans learn how to draw old circuitry diagrams and schematics that grow more and more complex over time. These "technological runes" are laid onto the floor in colored sand and polished stone, and each Seheldonnar carries an amulet with technological symbols on it. Earth scientists are extremely interested in these "superstitions", but so far only a select few small amulets have made their way to the museums of Berlin, London, and Paris.

The ideals of the Seheldonnar are bravery and beauty; as a consequence grooming and good clothes are important to them. Their fashion is loose, wide, and richly ornamented, while slaves are only allowed to wear coarse, simple fabrics. Men wear a turban whose size indicates the age of the bearer and which hides the

The Ruins of Cydonia (↔ see p. 191)

These legendary ruins lie deep in the territory of the Seheldonnar. Everyone knows the famous 1.9 miles (3 km) long and one mile (1.5 km) wide Mask that can be seen with the naked eye even from orbit. The "unworthy" are, of course, prevented from entering it, but over the millennia some bits of information have found their way to outsiders. The interior is said to be made up of numerous chambers and hallways across multiple levels, including a large hall for aerial flyers beneath the mouth. Only the chiefs of the clans and a few scholars are allowed to enter this holy site.

The Mask forms a triangle 19 miles (30 km) to a side with two other structures. The second apex is occupied by the ruins of a large city that must have been the size of Berlin at its peak. All that remains are the collapsed remnants of large houses and streets slowly being buried in red dust. A few miles east of the unnamed city sits a huge dome structure, which must have once been 1,600 feet (500 m) tall.

Perhaps more impressive than the Mask is the Pyramid, the final corner of the triangle. This five-sided structure is more than a mile (1.6 km) tall. It was likely cut from a mountain.

These ruins are holy sites to the Seheldonnar but also to the Queln, who have long cooperated with the Veiled People to guard them. While the riders of the Seheldonnar patrol the lands, the skrill riders keep cloudships from approaching the holy sites. The two people harbor a fierce love-hate relationship with one another, but when it comes to protecting the ruins, all differences are forgotten. The lives of any unworthy who enter the triangle are forfeit.

face. The women cover their heads with a hood that leaves the face free, though they will guard it against dust and wind with scarves, masks, and goggles. Women also carry the wealth of their family on their bodies in the form of jewelry.

Tea is an important part of life here. It is not only a leisure drink, but also an important symbol of hospitality. It is prepared in an elaborate ritual and served by the wife of the host. Anyone

who is offered four cups of tea by a Seheldonnar is under his or her protection. Those who receive only one cup are advised to quickly travel on. Otherwise, the menu is rather sparse. The most important food is flat bread, and there are various milk products supplied by the wukkaa. The most infamous is the wuvaag, a drink made from spoiled milk that causes severe migraines in humans.

Meridiani Sinus and Sabeus Sinus

“The humans are a piece in the game of teem. Predict their actions correctly, and they will bring you great wealth.”

— Prince Piookrihaa Purimin II of Angahiaa

People: Canal Martians, a few Hill Martians

Location: Basin at the southern end of the Tea Road, surrounded by the Eden and Moab deserts to the north, the Pandora mountains to the south, the Tossian Empire to the west and Oenotria to the east

Languages: Meridiani-Umbran, Meridiani-Noachan
Cities: Argus (*Uuargehim*, politically close to Tossia), Airy (*Harroniie*, important aerial flyer yards), Aryn (*Aviinogim*, city of philosophers), Edom ⊕, Emden (*Angahiaa*, mining), Sigeus Portus (*Puuvipalaa*, trade hub)

Trade goods: Several important resources such as gold in Emden or gems in Aryn

The cities of the Meridiani Sinus lie wedged between the Oenotrian Idea and the Tossian Empire. Both seek to gain access to the region, but neither has the resources to simply seize the economically and militarily resilient cities. Most recently, the German Protectorate in the North has made a bid for the region, in particular in Emden. Besides the Canal Martians of the cities, small tribes of Hill Martians live in the surrounding steppes and along the canals.

History

The remains of many settlements and cities can still be found above the slopes of the Meridiani Sinus, which were abandoned during the naBrifanoon and whose people founded the new cities along the canals down in the basin. With the end of the Seldon Empire 2,000 years ago, these cities gained their independence. There are many records of pacts and wars in the past. Amongst other things, the ruler of Airy attempted to conquer the other cities about 900 years ago, while the merchant council of Argus used diplomatic means to launch an otherwise similar attempt a few centuries later. But both the “Meridiani Kingdom” and the “Argus Trade Federation” failed in the face of universal resistance from the other cities.

Government, Politics, and Society

The formal head of state in each city is its canal prince, though they must vie with different councils and guilds for the actual power. In Emden, for example, the gold smiths’ guild is exceptionally influential, while the merchant council in Argus is a major power there, and the Schools of the Flowing Water dictate much of what happens in Aryn. All cities furthermore share similar, not always effective bureaucracies as well as a strong emphasis on clan and family ties.

Military

The individual cities each command sufficient troops to defend themselves and their caravans. At times, the armies are supplemented with Hill Martian warriors. Airy maintains a few examples of its own proprietary class of heavy war kite.

Culture and Technology

A few of the cultural achievements of the Mars civilizations can still be found in Meridiani Sinus, especially musical composition and performance, with or without vocals, and various styles of literature, from philosophical essays to entertainment novels all the way to explicit poetry. Public or semi-public gatherings are also held frequently in the clan or guild halls, particularly in Aryn, where life, religion, and even politics are discussed. Furthermore, the rulers of the city-states often maintain public facilities such as baths and schools, gardens or even amusement parks.

The remnants of Martian technology can also be found easily, in the form of large constructions, clever sewage systems, hydraulic pumping stations, impressive sky-scrappers, and countless industrial ruins that hint at the high level of technology attained in the past. On top of all that, small technical devices can be found here and there that play music or move mechanical puppets, though the knowledge to build and repair them has been lost.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

The most widespread religious teaching is the faith of the God inside Mars, whose churches and orders place great value in

introspection, contemplation, and the worship of creation. The holiness of the Arina Stones is also of great importance, in light of their role in the independence of the individual cities. There are also local cults, such as the Society of the Third Hero in Emden, the different philosophical Schools of the Flowing Water in Aryn, or the air priests of Airy.

The Cities of Meridiani Sinus

Airy (Harroniie) and Argus (Uuargehim)

These two cities are tied together by their shared proximity to the Tossian Empire and their competition for the liftwood groves to the south. Argus is in the better position to trade with the cities of the Tossian Empire, as well as with Emden, while Airy commands the stronger military. In particular, the fleet of Airy is bolstered by a few still functioning, ancient shipyards in good condition. It includes five heavy war kites, though only two of them are operational at this time. They are primarily used against the High Martians in Pandora.

The rulers of both cities consider themselves too civilized for an all-out war, but frequent acts of espionage and sabotage occur. Neither side will hesitate to involve human visitors in their intrigues, if they see an advantage in doing so.

Aryn (Ariinogim)

Aryn enjoys favorable conditions, economically and politically speaking. Its position along the Tea Road, access to various gem deposits, and the technological and botanical basis for the production of high quality perfumes and aromas all combine to ensure a comparably large upper class which enjoys a very pleasant lifestyle. Their members engage in all sorts of leisure activities such as the game of teem (p. 22), but literature and philosophy are also popular in Aryn. There are several schools of thought on almost all aspects of life, often focused on life force, cycles, and the constant, dynamic flow of water. These schools regularly engage in exchanges and cleansing rituals around the

Square of Clarity, a large facility, by Martian standards, full of pools and waterfalls.

Emden (Angahiaa)

Discovered relatively early by the German Lieutenant *Hermann Paulsen*, the city of Angahiaa was marked on Earth's maps of Mars with the name Emden. Due to the great distance to Western Dioscuria, no significant German influence has been exerted here yet, though such efforts are the topic of the adventure **The Fate of Angahiaa**, where player characters can participate in and shape these events. The city also controls a large source of precious metals, especially gold, in the form of the Fog Banks. The mining guild and especially the guild of gold smiths are thus very powerful.

Sigeus Portus (Puuvipalaa)

The only city in the Sabeus Sinus, Sigeus Portus is vitally important for trade through this region. The Tea Road from the North and the water-carrying canals to Meridiani Sinus and Oenotria meet here, as does the dry canal to Serpentinis. Thus, Martians from many nations and cities can be met here, and the merchant guild controls much of the politics in the city. Officially relations with the Oenotrian Empire are friendly, but in secret the merchant guild is going to great lengths to curb Oenotria's expansion plans.

Humans in the Meridiani Sinus

So far, no Earth nation has gained any notable influence over the cities of the region, even though the Germans from the North are attempting to change that. Even so, humans can be encountered here and there, some even residing here and meeting in places such as the "Saloon of the Mars Pioneers" in Emden. The long distances to the wars and the many traces and remnants of ancient Martian civilizations make this a tempting destination for adventurers, merchants, and scientists alike.



The Eastern Desert



Geography

The Eastern Desert is lined by many dried-up canals and stretches from Amethes in the west to Tharsis in the east, from Arcadia in the north to Memnonia in the south. **Amethes** and **Elysium** are vast, red sand deserts. **Amazonia**, on the other hand, is a largely northern steppe with scattered patches of desert, home to a variety of animal life. Further to the east, in **Tharsis**, the desolate land becomes mountainous and the deserts more rocky. Here, the highest mountains on the planet can be found. **Zephyria**, **Mesogaea**, and **Memnonia** form a wasteland with countless canyons, chasms, and jagged rock formations that force travelers to take long detours.

Climate

Since the sea began to disappear, the region has become a dry desert and home to fierce storms. While some of its inhabitants, mostly Hill Martian bandits, use these storms to launch raids immediately afterwards, they tend to be seen as obstacles instead by the Canal Martian people of the cities and the caravan masters. Everyone who has traveled these lands can attest that it is even drier here than anywhere else on the planet, the desert dustier and emptier than elsewhere. Or, as the British say so poignantly: "...a godless stretch of red dunes and red dust, and not a rain cloud in sight."

Fauna

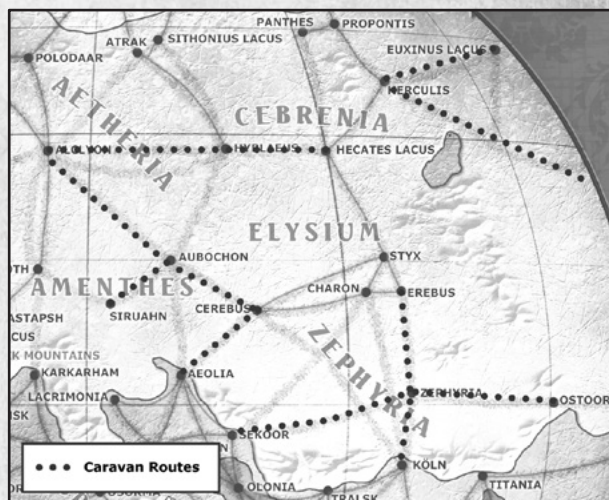
As unexpected as it would appear in this region, there are a few isolated animals in this desert. Amethes and Elysium see the odd gashants, and even ruumet breehrs that wander into the desert from the adjacent steppes. In the Amazonia steppe, the Amazonian unicorn (Varaas Gula) can be found, a popular game animal for

Earth hunters. Encounters with steppe tigers are less likely to be enjoyable, as those with its smaller but more common relative, the red tiger. Red kokos, weethabraars, and roogies are amongst the more numerous desert-dwelling animals. They clearly show that the region is not as lifeless as it might first appear.

The Old Canals and the Caravan Route

There are few water-carrying canals. Travelers often receive strange looks if they seek transportation to here from Syrtis Major. In fact, there are only two petty canals that still carry water here, as well as a small network of canals near the Dead River Cities (p. 97).

The region is home to a few natural groundwater reservoirs, though, which have ensured that some oases persist near the dried-up canals. Caravan routes lie between these cities, which follow the caravan roads as far as those still exist. These caravans also offer the only means of travel from one city to another. Passenger



Eastern Desert

The Rugoraant Language Family

Rugoraant is the dominant language of the Hill Martians of the Eastern Desert. The **Nepenthes** spoken by the riders of Nepenthes-Thoth has no written form and is very heavy on imagery, reflecting a rich culture and deep vocabulary. **Aethani** is similar in grammar and vocabulary, but much simpler. It is spoken by the desert nomads between Aetheria and Amazonia as a common language. The warrior tribes of Amazonia, Mesogaea, Memnonia, and Arcadia all commonly speak **Anaash**, which is very sharp in sound and features a limited vocabulary.

Welo elei Sor Mala Yril Zing Nihai Al Shara
 – Colorful as the desert rose is the light of your eyes (Line from a Nepenthes poem)
Ak Sing Lo! – You will die today!

spots are as popular as they are expensive, as the caravan masters are aware of their monopoly. Travelers able to fight, however, pay less as they might prove useful on the journey.

The northern edge is the most traveled route, reaching from Hecates Lacus past Hyblaeus, which is next to a water-carrying branch canal, all the way to Alclyon. Another busy route is from Sekoor to Ostor via Zephyria. In this city, another route crosses, leaving Zephyria a popular stop for merchants—at least as far as this region allows. Tharsis, on the other hand, has no caravan routes that are even remotely in common use. The few caravans that do come here usually hail from Olympia or Ascræus Lacus, two cities with branch canals that keep their market squares somewhat lucrative.

Cloudships do still operate, but only rarely: The winds across the desert are dangerous, navigation from the skies is difficult due to a lack of accurate maps, and the desert is so sparsely settled that regular long distance trade via cloudship is simply not as common as in the civilized basins.

Population

The population of the region, apart from the Canal Martians in the city, can be divided into a few groups, very different from each other. The desert nomads (Aethani) live in Amenthes and Elysium, where the conditions have forged them into a hardy and stubborn

people. Amazonia and Mesogaea are home to various tribes of desert warriors, while in Zephyria, Eremite tribes can be found.

Doomsday Cults

The apparent hopelessness of the desert dust has led to many communities forming, for whom the end is nigh. Particularly in Tharsis and the nearby cities, they preach the inevitable doom of the planet and its people. The Dead River Cities also have their own doomsday cults that engage in morbid rituals.

The Martians outside the cities follow a type of animism that often features martial, even sadistic aspects and which differ from tribe to tribe. For the Eremites of Tan-Puu, drugs play a major role in their prophetic-religious rituals.

Treasures of the Past

On a closer look, the region offers more than just death by dehydration: Beneath several yards of sand, numerous sunken cities of the early Martian high cultures await explorers and researchers, particularly near Arcadia and Zephyria. They offer fame and honor to the heirs and colleagues of the by now aging archaeologist *Heinrich Schliemann*. Xeno-archaeologists from all over Europe flock to this desert, and recent years have seen outright races for suspected dig sites. A few of these expeditions, however, have never been heard from again. The Martians show no interest in their fates. Several of these researchers are women, who believe Mars will offer them chances they cannot hope to have on Earth.

The digs in the Eastern Desert can indeed yield amazing results. The ruins and buried tunnels here can hold technology and devices of long forgotten ages of Martian high culture. Most have of course ceased working over the millennia, but a few still operate to this day. Many devices offer little but speculation as to their purpose. They often serve as little more than (incorrectly labeled) exhibits in Earth's museums. Other finds can fetch impressive prices. For many archaeologists, as well as grave robbers, these are the true reason for these expeditions. They are not common, however, and finding the right buyer isn't always easy. A few items can still be used today, such as still functional ball- or lens-shaped image crystals (p. 161). Now and then it is claimed that some of these show the movement of an object or being over a certain time. It is also claimed that lenses have been found that were meant to sit in a set of goggles allowing one to see green outlines of one's surroundings, even in total darkness. Less spectacular but still valuable is the talking glass (**Core Rules**, p. 237). Some of these are too small to have saved more than one or two short sentences. Small double lenses with impressive magnification abilities have also been found, though these tend to grow dull over time.

The Desert Tribes

There are many tribes of Hill Martians in the deserts, barren plains, rocky fields, and mountain regions of the Eastern Desert that are defined by their warlike lifestyles. Whether they fashion the bones of brave vanquished foes into jewelry, use the blood of

their enemies to paint their bodies, or regularly abduct hostages to sell for ransom, their lives are ones of combat. A few of them are described below.

People: Hill Martians

Location: Deserts of Amenthes, Elysium, Amazonia, Mesogaea, Tharsis, Memnonia, southern Arcadia

Languages: Aethani, Amaash

Tribes: Aethani (desert nomads), Haat-Orun (“Amazons”), Kroeck (“Ground Queln”)

The Aethani – Nomads of the Desert

The deserts of Amenthes and Elysium, as well as the Dead River region, are home to tribes that are infamous for their disregard for life, a result of the conditions they live in. There is little water to be had, and even fewer amenities. Prey and victims are stalked and attacked without mercy at opportune moments. They are well known for their bravery that borders on recklessness: They are either superior and victorious, or they never deserved to win. Defeated foes are left behind, no mercy kills are made, and prisoners would be little more than a waste of food to them. Between the tribes, however, it is considered a matter of honor to help the wounded, and also for the wounded to replace the food and water that they required for their recovery.

Government and Society

The structure of government is a feudal one, with a varying number of *high kings*, which rule over a few tribes with clearly defined territories, each with their own *desert king*. Each of these commands three princes: the *elder* as their advisor (usually a shaman), the *prince of war* for recruitment and raid planning, and the *prince of the hunt* who is in charge of ensuring a sufficient food supply.

Role in the Region

Other than the creatures of the dust plains, the desert nomads are the greatest danger to travelers and caravans. At times, several tribes will unite for attacks on the hated and soft Canal Martians in Aubochon or the Dead River Cities.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

The Aethani worship nature, the elements of sand and wind, as well as the animals. The latter prominently feature in fables that teach the important aspects of everyday life in their inhospitable habitat. Their shamans search the wind and the ground for wisdom.

Haat-Orun

“How much Henry would come to both enjoy but also curse the coming days when the blood smeared, wild women of Mars tore off his clothes to tie him up and drag him away, he couldn’t possibly have imagined.”

— Excerpt from *“The 77 Days of Amazonia – An Homage”*
by David Chapman

This tribe consists entirely of female, always lustful Martians who view their men as pleasure toys at best and mere means of procreation at worst. At times, the men are considered useful for the basest of labor tasks as well. The best archers sometimes even remove their left breast to prevent it from spoiling their aim with the bow. That is the image that some Earth novelists have painted ever since the tribe has been discovered.

These fantasies have little in common with reality, though. While the Haat-Orun are indeed matriarchal in their society, the men still exist and neither gender is notably more lustful than members of any other culture. These “Amazons”, who call themselves Haat-Orun, received their name from the first humans they encountered. This choice is understandable as they do in fact resemble the mythical Amazons of Greek legend. The matriarchal nature of the tribe is a result of the poor decisions of men that centuries ago almost brought the tribe to an end. Ever since, men have been viewed as incapable of wise government.

Government and Society

The clans of the Haat-Orun are led by a queen who has proven herself through exceptional bravery in battle and exceptional wisdom in the planning of raids. These are meant to be the criteria by which the women of the tribes choose their queens every two years in a three-day election. For this, a large tent is set up with a receptacle inside. Each woman carves the name of her chosen candidate into a shard and places this into the vessel. Men are not allowed to vote. The votes are counted by the shaman and his apprentices. These are the only men high enough in the hierarchy to have their words heard and considered.

Traditionally, the heads of the families are also women. They take on the task of defending the tribes and planning and executing the raids. What they often lack in physical brawn in comparison to their male enemies, they make up for in bravery and determination. The men are hunters, cooks, teachers, and in rare cases also warriors. Men that attempt to escape their set lot in life are simply cast out of the tribe.

Role in the Region

The Haat-Orun are a tribe of aggressive Hill Martians that live in the vast steppes and mountain ranges of Amazonia. They are considered to be as merciless as the desert nomads of the West and just as nasty. They show little respect, in particular for male foes, as they suspect what awaits them should they be captured, but do on occasion spare female enemies.

Religion, Rites, Customs

Choosing a spouse is, unsurprisingly, the privilege of the “Amazon” women, who must first approach the mother of the chosen man. The rest of the courtship is open to individual preference and is not subject to any conventions. In religious matters, the tribe focuses on female nature spirits who live by the will of a goddess inside the planet. The shaman of the tribe interprets the latter’s will.

The Kroeck

The Kroeck are a tribe of Hill Martians living in the sandy regions of this part of the Eastern Desert. Some Canal Martians

believe this tribe is trying to emulate their superior lifestyle, as the Kroeek do not travel the desert on foot or mount, but rather on sand-sailing ships. These at times crude constructions made from former cloudships and their decayed liftwood, which barely allows them to float above the sand, are at first glance somewhat hilarious to look at. But the skill with which the Kroeek use these boats to attack and try to kill any intruder quickly dispels such laughter. The sand sailboats are fast, maneuverable, and surprisingly sturdy. The Kroeek know how to fire their bows even from the moving decks.

Government and Society

The Kroeek have adopted (or been taught) the idea of dynasties. There are ruling families, with new *wind kings* being chosen in fights to the death should such a family die out. Such a king will place family members in all important positions, such as the leader of the wind hunters or the leader of the wind guard, and will attempt to bind the leaders of all other clans to his service by offering the remaining offices or offering other concessions. Besides the windmasters—the “captains” of the sand sailboats—the

carpenters that maintain said boats are among the most respected members of the clan.

Role in the Region

They are occasionally called the “Ground Queln” as their attacks are sudden and frequent. Every time a caravan spies sails on the horizon, they can be sure an attack will come soon. The Kroeek are not after spilling blood or spreading terror, only loot interests them. As soon as they have what they came for, even if it is gained through the surrender of the caravan, they will load their booty on their boats and sail away.

Religion, Rites and Customs

The Kroeek follow a faith of animism focused most of all on wind spirits. The intentions, advice, and will of these spirits are interpreted by the wind-whisperers, the shamans of the tribe. They burn their dead, and the ashes are, wherever possible, cast into a storm as an offering to the wind spirits.

The Eremite Tribes of Tan-Puu

People: Hill Martians
Location: Zephyria
Languages: Zaph, Koline

Certainly one of the strangest people on Mars are the Tan-Puu. Most are marked with red tattoos that show winding lines, glyphs, or (abstract) images whose meaning eludes any cursory glance.

There are a few reasons why outsiders seek out the Tan-Puu. Mostly, this is because of self-doubt or a loss of faith in the fairness of the gods that push a city Martian, or one of the other tribes, to make the difficult journey to the Tan-Puu to find council and clarity. Such an antidote is most likely found with the Eremites of the equatorial region south of Zephyria, as they are said to be the most well-versed in intoxicants, drugs, and poisons.

Simply finding the Tan-Puu is considered the first test, as the clans often move their homes. They live in valleys protected from the wind, natural caves in rock formations, or remote canyons. The next challenge is to understand them, as they will only speak to outsiders in cryptic rhymes.

Government and Society

The Tan-Puu do not use any hierarchy of government. The tribes are loosely allied with each other and are each led by a council of elders. The eldest of all tribes meet four times a year to discuss the most recent developments and findings.

The center of the Tan-Puu tribes are the *Seers of what Is and Should be* (*thoolurhu*), who each day seek to find and understand the reason for existence, the will of the spirits or the plans of the demons. They are surrounded by a guard of the best fighters of

the tribe, the *urhuluu*. A select few of these are granted the honor of accompanying a seer when they travel the wastes to meditate or ask the spirits for guidance. Their task is to ensure the seer’s physical well-being, as despite their position, the Tan-Puu are not safe from attacks, both from the outside and the inside.

The hunters of each tribe are usually women or the less skilled warriors of each clan. They ensure that enough food is available, and while this brings them respect, they are not as highly regarded as they probably deserve. The scouts meanwhile are warriors that have not succeeded in becoming *urhuluu*. They are the eyes and ears of the tribe and make sure that the arrival of any outsider is known well in advance, that they might be greeted with a small drink and meal.

Whatever the Tan-Puu seek, they seek it in harmony with the spirits of nature or the revelations of their seers, whether it involves the hunt, choosing a spouse, or naming a child.

Role in the Region

The Tan-Puu are considered by most Martians, within and outside the region and even by the Queln, to be prophets and voices of the will of the gods and spirits, which also protect them. More than a few even openly worship them as holy men. Whoever would lay a hand upon them must fear the punishment of their guardian spirits.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

The thoolurhu use drugs and other intoxicants to seek the will of the gods and spirits and provide answers on the future to the tribe. But the seers also seek to answer the urgent questions of the planet.

The thoolurhu wrap their dead in cloth and place them inside rocky caves, whose exact location is known only to a select few.

These rock graves, usually natural chambers in a cliff wall, are considered holy places. Their entrances are extremely well-hidden as well as booby-trapped.

Undecephirable by outsiders, the Tan-Puu tatoos announce allegiance of clan and tribe, profession and thus social rank, a

guardian spirit, or the place in a family. In case of separation or death of a partner, the corresponding tattoo is simply expanded on. Even special deeds such as bravery in a fight or cunning on the hunt are noted in these body markings.

Cities in the Sand

Aubochoh (Abak'hn) - City of Warrior Princes

People: Canal Martians

Location: Spread far across the Eastern Desert

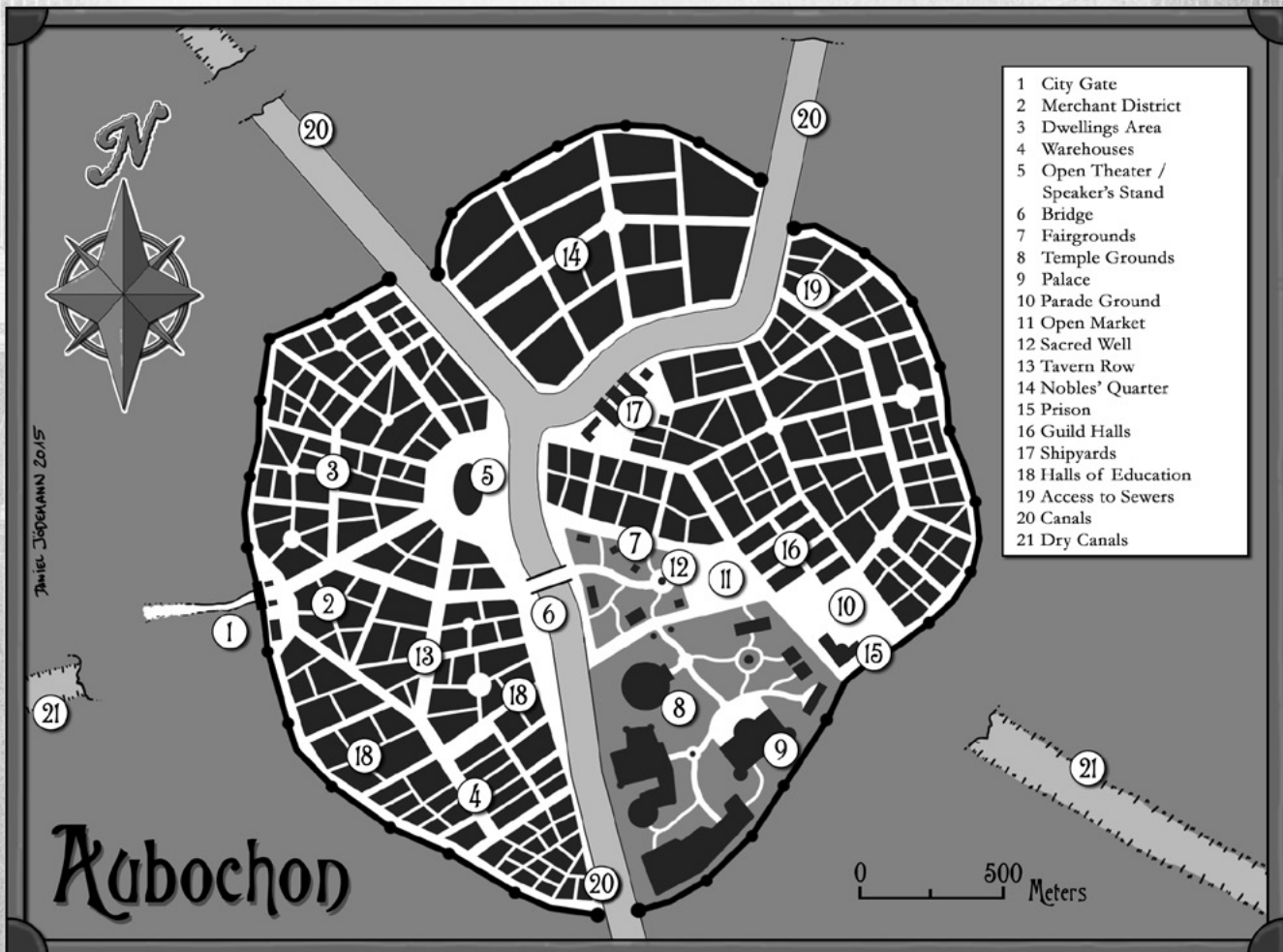
Languages: Cebreni (in Aubochoh and Siruahh), Memnitic (in Ostooh, Oktona, and Korsoon), Zaph (in Zephyria), Koline, Aethani

Cities: Aubochoh (*Abak'hn*, decayed city of splendor), Siruahh, Ostooh (assassins' capital), Oktona, Korsoon, Zephyria (*Pekazapha*, trade hub)

During the age of the canal builders, Aubochoh was one of the most important cities of the Eastern Desert. Today it is a very quiet place, with too many people for its size and none of the elegance it once had: The walls of many buildings used to be decorated with mosaics, of which only faded pieces remain. The streets that once bustled with trade only impress with their smooth stones anymore, and even those are missing or damaged in places. Once artfully built pillars of impressive height are now toppled, quite often onto, and into, a roof or building front.

The city is in a permanent state of siege, as the city walls show. But it has never been conquered, thanks in large part to the warrior princes of Aubochoh. They rule the city with an iron fist, and almost all income goes directly to its defense.

Of the desert cities built upon the oases in the region, three will be presented in more detail below: Aubochoh, Zephyria, and Ostooh.



Around Aubochon

Since the canals dried up, Aubochon has been entirely surrounded by sand and is forevermore cut off from the rest of Mars. That led to the city walls being closed behind two **filled-in canals (21)**. The ground water of the oasis city fills the three **remaining canals (20)** out to a few hundred yards beyond the wall. There, they have been filled in for stretches of hundreds of yards, to ensure that water seeps into the surrounding fields.

Merchant District (2)

Today, one would mostly likely enter the city through its only **city gate (1)**, which is guarded at all times by a strong contingent of city guards and which is directly adjacent to the market district. At night, all houses will be barred and the city watch patrols the area in force to thwart the quite common thieves.

Two-story dwellings (3) can be found particularly to the northeast of the city gate and near the east side of the city. They are home to the majority of the city's population. Past **Tavern Row (13)**, where many good drinking houses can be found, lie the **warehouses (4)** of the merchants of the city. Between them lie the **'Halls of Education' (18)**, the local schools. Aubochon was once known as a center of learning, but restrictive laws in the past have seen most of these facilities closed. Only a handful of teachers attend the almost empty classrooms. Even the support of the current prince of Aubochon, who has recognized the importance of education for trade and tourism, is doing little to change that. In the center of the city, lies its only **bridge (6)**, south of the former **open theater (5)**, which is these days more commonly used for speeches, political and otherwise—and is consequently called the **'speaker's stand'**.

Old Bazaar and Government District

The stone buildings and walls lead along the canal up to the **ruins of the fairgrounds (7)**, with its **sacred well (12)**, and from there to the **market square (11)**. It is only lightly busy, few merchants finding their way here, because of the heavy taxes necessary to fund the city's defenses.

To the south lie the **temples (8)**. While one has burned down, the others are still being used by their priests, though no services are being conducted. The well-preserved, large, impressive white stone **Prince's Palace (9)** and its lush gardens remind one of ages past. The **training grounds of the militia (10)** with its **barracks and prison (15)** lie nearby.

The **guild halls (16)** lie adjacent to the market in the northwest. It must seem strange that the **shipyard (17)** of the city owned by the prince has been so well preserved to this day. In truth, it is struggling to stay in operation, as other than maintaining the aerial barques of the nobility, a few small cargo ferries, and the transport vessels carrying the harvests, there is little to do here. For now, the **water reclamation plant (19)** of Aubochon continues to operate, though rumors persist that the workers there are treated like prisoners.

The Nobles' Quarter (14)

In the north of the city lies a district that is inhabited by the nobility of Aubochon and that can only be reached via their aerial barques

or by their servants in small cargo ferries. The nobility carefully ensures that nothing will change this situation, as they care little for the prince, the lower classes, or the city and its affairs.

Zephyria (Pekazapha) - City of the Pekaay

The southwestern city of Zephyria will appear to travelers at first and even at second glance to be an example of the death of the planet. During the time of the canal builders, four canals met here, bringing the city not just economic fortune but also the ability to exert military influence beyond its borders. Each year, the young city drew thousands of Martians to settle here. This large population made Zephyria a cultural center of significant influence, with a fame stretching far beyond the nearby city-states. Museums were built here that showcased exhibitions from distant regions of Mars. Little remains of this glory today. Apart from countless ruins, there is not much to be seen.

After the canals dried up, Zephyria, like the old desert cities, only remained because of the ground water that can be pumped here—and as the age of the pumps shows, this has been done for quite a long time.

The success and wealth of Zephyria had caused the envy of others. One city that challenged Zephyria lay on a canal intersection to the west. That was a war about which little is known today, other than that it ended in the annihilation of the challenger. Only ruins today tell of this canal intersection and the city that once must have stood there. Even its name has been forgotten.

Today, Zephyria lives off the trade of the pekaay spice that is harvested twice a year. It is so common as to be an everyday good in the city. For the rich and powerful across the rest of Mars, however, pekaay is one of the choicest spices on the planet and they will pay immense sums to once a year have their favorite dish spiced with it.

The spice trade is made difficult by the fact that the city can only be reached via caravan. The already common sand storms of the region are especially frequent during the harvest season, so the aerial flyers that so rarely approach the Eastern Desert anyway avoid it altogether during the harvest.

But the spice isn't the only reason to travel to Zephyria. The extensive ruin fields to the west of the current day city tempt explorers to seek their fortunes, hoping to make valuable finds.

Ostoor - A City at Shadow War

During the age of the canal builders, this city was founded by settlers from Zephyria who sought to follow their faith without having to defend their views against their neighbors. That at least is the legend, and that is what its inhabitants claim when they follow their own, at times very obscure rituals. It does not change the fact, though, that the city has become a mire of many cults and religious faiths. So many that to understand, or even count them, has become difficult. But this also makes the city a popular destination for Martians who seek meaning in their lives, despite the difficult journey. On the other hand, it is fertile ground for secret organizations that train assassins who will pursue their professions out of religious conviction. An outright war of faiths has broken out in the shadows of the city, with more and more dead as it continues—with the victims being either gruesomely sacrificed or simply killed by the assassins. Frequently, even travelers are abducted or killed. Their deaths are often staged

to frame a rival or enemy sect or cult. As much as the prince of Ostoor is trying to gain control of this disaster with the aid of the

high houses to prevent any danger to the lucrative pekaay trade with Zephyria, all his efforts have been in vain so far.

The Dead River Cities - The Charon Confederation

Location: Canal network of Southern Elysium

Language: Dead River Cebreni

Cities: Cerebus (*Uulan-Bahaar*), Charon (*Sandhoor*), Styx (*Shandhaabad*), Erebus ⊕

Trade goods: Chemicals, poisons, biotechnology, flowers, perfume, luxury goods

The city-states called the Dead River Cities by the humans lie to the west of the Hades Mountains, near the only truly functioning canal system in the region. The only canal that leads to their local system, however, comes from the North pole, past Hecates Lacus, and brings less and less water with every passing year. All four city-states have little contact with the rest of Mars. The local culture is marked by a high degree of hedonism and decadence. They are extremely rich, compared to the surrounding states, which makes them the target of many raids.

The fairy-tale-like atmosphere, the overeager joy of life of the people and an aura of incomprehensible age cast the Dead River Cities in a surreal and dreamy light—as though one was seeing a hallucination of an elaborate, wasteful baroque Mars opera, rather than witnessing a real place. Outsiders view the people here as decadent devil worshippers, while the citizens consider themselves to be the final bastion against the original evil.

History (↔ see p. 192)

It is difficult to say how old the Dead River Cities are by now. Their people were described as strange even during the time of the canal builders, and were the source of many bizarre cults and faiths. The first rumors that the Dead River Cities practiced witchcraft were recorded in the early days of the Age of the 1,000 World Wars. The decadent lifestyles also appear to have been the reason for the harshness of their conquest during the time of Seldon II. But by the reign of Seldon IV, the Dead River Cities were mentioned as a “holiday destination” for pleasure-addicted nobles. Only a few decades after the fall of the empire, these cities joined together into the “Charon Confederation”, a military alliance for defense against the steppe people. Nominally, this Confederation still exists today, but largely just on paper.

Government, Politics, and Society

The four city-states are largely autonomous and each cares little for what happens outside its city walls or canals. They are each governed by an absolute monarch. Apart from this, the society of the Dead River Cities appears surprisingly “flat”, as social status is largely measured by the amount of displayed wealth. Society here features a strong dueling culture. Conflicts (be it between

individuals or cities) are settled by duels between single combatants—the troops are too badly needed for the fight against the Hill Martians. The duelists are supplied intoxicants, prostitutes and other amenities for one week and invited to the orgies of the upper class before they spend one more week mostly in isolation, preparing for the duel ahead. A victory in such a battle is rewarded with social status and honor, and everything ranging from material and spiritual gifts to true social advancement with a position in the government or the military.

Military

Without their military, the city-states would have fallen to the onslaught of the desert nomads long ago. Though not great in numbers, the troops have two advantages that allow them to thwart any attempted invasion before it begins: Rapid redeployment between the cities, and large stockpiles of frighteningly effective chemical weapons. Besides poison gasses and acids, this includes more exotic substances such as the “crimson breath”, which completely disorients its victims and sends them into a blind rage.

Culture and Technology

The people of the Dead River Cities are masters of chemistry and biotechnology. The strange products that Earth scientists have been able to analyze all had baffling effects: The “honey of the ancestors”, for example, triggers realistic near death experiences in humans and Martians, without actually endangering the lives of the consumers. Contrary to common prejudice, the Dead River people do not just use their skills to produce drugs. They also possess a range of potent healing elixirs against infectious diseases that put Earth medications to shame. The Dead River Cities managed to hold on to the ancient knowledge of producing antibiotics and bacteriophages (both as yet unknown to Earth science in 1889), though it is obscured by crusty occult rituals and formulas. The “alchemists” of the Dead River Cities also experiment with mutagenics, producing a range of strangely altered “pets” that are used for entertainment or as working animals. Most are unique and unable to reproduce. This impressive knowledge of biology also allows the Dead River Cities to produce bountiful harvests on very small fields and with far less labor than is usually required. Large parts of the countryside along the canals are thus lush parklands.

Knowledge of mechanics and crafts are at about the general Martian standard. Like the Tossians, the Dead River City people love gems and ornamentation. Their style only barely resembles the Tossian one, though. At first glance floral looking, on closer inspection the patterns will reveal themselves to be winding tentacles or organic vein networks. On top of that, the Dead River art makes liberal use of tricky optical illusions to give their artwork seemingly impossible shapes. Even the architecture does not hold back on ornamentations and decorations of precious metals and

gems, nor on extensive parks. The wealthier classes like to wear impressive embroidered robes set with gems; the weapons the men rarely leave their houses without are also heavily ornamented.

Religion, Rites, and Deplorable Customs

Bizarre Sacrifice Cults

All four city-states share a common belief that evil and powerful spirits from Phobos are attacking the God at the Heart of the World and are slowly defeating it. The desert tribes that almost constantly attack the city-states are the servants of these dark deities. Only prayer and sacrifices can delay the inevitable end, or so the people here believe. Therefore, almost all common cults practice ritual sacrifice. The victims are usually condemned prisoners or slaves. Common methods include immolation using a special fire paste, drowning in the canals, or feeding victims to “holy” beasts.

The gods worshipped by the Dead River people are considered devils in most other places, largely due to their strange natures. In Charon, for example, *Lalak-Braal* is worshipped as the Lord of the Canals. His statue appears as a pile of corals and giblets, generously beset with eyeballs of various sizes. At his feet, violent, sex orgies are being held at all times.

Styx is home to the cult of the “*Escaped Synod*”. These cultists worship the mummified cadavers of their founding fathers and treat them as though they were alive. These mummies are consulted on all matters, and their replies are delivered by entranced temple acolytes. These examples are amongst the tamer “deities”. All

The Slave Masters of the Dead River Cities

Slavery is an important part of the economy of these isolated cities. Almost all labor tasks requiring little thought or education are done by slaves. The constant attacks by the nomads create a steady supply of slaves. Warriors that survive the chemical defensive weaponry of the cities are captured and enslaved. The slaves are prepared, guarded, and distributed by the alchemist guilds. Lobotomies and insidious drug cocktails ensure that even the most resolute Hill Martian will quickly become dumb and obedient. It is common for slaves to be adapted to their tasks via surgical alterations or administration of steroids. Attempts by the alchemist guilds to breed a true slave race from the prisoners have so far all failed, though rumors persist of musclebound “half-beings” in the palaces of Cerebus.

cults share a similarly fatalistic world view. The question isn't if the world will end, but when. Like one's own death, the end can be postponed, but not prevented.



Decadence and Duels

This view leads to a macabre sense of humor and drive the people of these cities to enjoy life to the fullest, right until their final breath. Money earned is almost immediately spent again. Whether for pompous meals, whores and pleasure slaves, or an elegant weapon is all up to each individual.

The dueling culture that has become institutionalized in the administrative procedures of the city also defines the lower classes of society. It might be a minor matter that triggers a challenge to a duel, be it with blade or gun. These duels are almost always an excuse to hold elaborate feasts, for tomorrow life might be over, after all. This has also caused duels to be demanded for the most insignificant reasons, for no other reason than to have a feast. Depending on

how high on drugs someone is, or how sour their morning mood, it might take as little as an unappreciated glance to cause a duel.

The Dead River Cities and the Humans

The Dead River People care little for the humans, like for anything foreign. If they are good party guests, they are more than welcome, otherwise one might at least try to gain their favor. This has led to one of the three Russian ambassadors sent here to return as a drug addict to Hecates Lacus, while another went mad. The fate of the third is unknown, or at least it is not spoken of, but has given the Russians a welcome excuse to expand their investigation of the cities.

Hecates Lacus - Russians on Mars

Location: Northern edge of the Eastern Desert, by the canal from Herculis to Styx
Languages: Russian, Cebreni, Koline
City: Hecates Lacus (*Enkabuul*, trade hub, pop.: 35,000)
Trade Goods/Industries: Agricultural goods, fish, cloudship construction, banking

After the successful second Venus expedition, Tsar Alexander III decided to also settle on Mars. Only a few months later, the ether flyer *Almanz* ("Diamond"), which was constructed through brute organizational and financial force, launched under the command of the Cossack Colonel Nikolai Levitz Zubkov. It landed in the Cebrenia region, near the city-state of Hecates Lacus. This city was at that time embroiled in a bloody succession war for the position of mohaani, the ruler of the city. As on Venus, the Russians quickly picked a side and High Prince *Jaimougaa* was soon granted the throne by the Noble Legislature (the parliament of Hecates Lacus). In gratitude, he gifted Colonel *Zubkov* with a real glass dagger. Russian intervention aided the city against the constant threat of the Hill Martians.

Under pressure from Russia, the human and Martian residents signed the Treaty of Cebrenia in late 1883, which established "special Russian Interests" around Hecates Lacus. Soon, regular ether traffic between St. Petersburg and Mars began, including in particular the flights of the Russian ether zeppelins *Vorobey* ("Sterling") and *Golub* ("Dove"). *Alexei Alexandrovitz Romanov*, the younger brother of the Tsar, was appointed governor and given the task of preventing internal conflicts like those that occurred on Venus. *Zubkov* and *Romanov* do indeed work well together, not least of all because of the political and military pressure on their positions.

Although the Russians do not truly rule the city, they have claimed many privileges with the aid of the mohaani and also direct the foreign policy of the city. Thus, they ensured that the anti-Russian ambassador from Oenotria was deported, a decision that is not popular with all residents.

Currently, the situation in the city is deteriorating. *Mohaani Jaimougaa* is gravely ill and dying, and a new succession war is

already brewing. Meanwhile the enemies of the Russian Bear are waiting to see if it and its allies will gut each other.

Territory (↔ see p. 199)

Hecates Lacus is primarily a city-state. The settlements and estates are subject to the mohaani and lie along the northern canal from Herculis. Only a few brave ones have dared to move south, the rest are afraid of the Dead River Cities further down that direction. The Russians, though, have established a few mines in that area, which are primarily worked by forced labor conducted by the unwanted that are kept out of the city this way.

The dried-up northern canal to Panthes is controlled by the Cossacks, who jealously guard their road toll privileges there. A secret installation is said to lie there, supposedly the true purpose of their vigilance.

History

The people of Hecates Lacus claim that they are directly descended from Seldon. If their word is to be believed, their city also once ruled over the entire Eastern Desert, back when it was still a blooming Garden of Eden. Only the slow decline of the canals has given the malcontent newcomers a chance to overcome the true masters of the region.

Government, Politics, and Society

The mohaani is the absolute ruler of Hecates Lacus. He is appointed by the Council of the Noble Ones, a parliament composed of the nobility of the city and the nearby estates and settlements. The seats are passed on by heredity. The Noble Ones take on various administrative tasks.

About a year ago, the mohaani fell ill, and the council took on all tasks of government at his request. The Russians did not approve of this diminishment of their influence. The governor thus recalled the heir to the throne to Mars. Prince *Thimmajoun*

had been receiving an Earth education in St. Petersburg, and now threatens to depose the council. The council is not ready to subordinate itself, however, and the argument between the factions began anew. The Prince enjoys the support of the Russians and some bribed officials, while the majority of the Martian population does not recognize his claim. A return to open warfare appears to only be a matter of time.

Military

Hecates Lacus owns over two dozen war kites which are used for patrols and military strikes. On the ground, they can muster about fifty battle packs, each about 30 strong. One further such unit, the Best of the Best, currently acts as bodyguard to the mohaani.

Since his return, Prince Thimmajoun has begun to levy a light unit of cavalry uhlans mounted on gashants, as well as an all-volunteer regiment. Both are slated to be commanded by Russian officers once deployed.

The backbone of the Tsar's military arm are two aerial gunboats of the *Tsarina* class, the *Anakria* and the *Rotchensalm*. Both were assembled locally from components shipped from Earth. Each vessel has a crew of 22 officers and ratings, and they are supported by twice that number of ground staff.

A 300-strong battalion of Kamchatka infantry is stationed in Hecates Lacus, backed up by artillery support consisting of three batteries of four machineguns each and one battery of four rapid fire cannons. As a rapid response unit, the 42nd Don Cossack Cavalry Regiment is also stationed here, made up of 100 gashant riders armed with lances, breech loader rifles, and sabers.

The current number of troops is sufficient to defend the city, but far too small to support the expansion plans of the Russian leadership.

Role in the Region

A rich trade hub like Hecates Lacus depends on good relations with its trade partners and customers. That is why the mohaani was always focused on maintaining a friendly relationship with all kingdoms and city-states, even if most Earth nations refused his overtures on account of his close ties to Russia.

Many caravans traveling through the Eastern Desert use the city as a rest stop, and the military protects the trade routes. Hecates Lacus's economy is based on a healthy mix of trade, craftsmanship, agriculture, and banking; the loss of even one of these pillars could well spell the end for the city's economy.

For a few years now, Russian diplomats have attempted to open relations with the Dead River Cities, but of the three ambassadors sent out, one returned a drug addict and one a madman, while the third mysteriously vanished.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

Hecates Lacus is a cosmopolitan city that is open to new ideas, even if most are viewed with the indulgent amusement of a superior people. The fact that Hecates Lacus is about to reach the end of a long downward spiral is a fact many insist on denying.

Any and all religions are welcome in the city, as long as they do not interfere with the peace or trade.

Due to the hot climate, men have adopted a kind of toga for their fashion, which is wrapped loosely around the body. The women wear dresses of light fabrics that are tightly cut or tied around the upper body, but loose and flowing around the legs.

Though the saying in Hecates Lacus goes that a poor man is simply not smart enough to be otherwise, it is still considered crass to brag about one's wealth. Even jewelry, for example, is not fashionable. The wealthier citizens have thus made their affected restraint into an art form, with sheer sections allowing glimpses of hidden jewelry or similar items or expensive fabrics with worked-in jewels being used to make otherwise simple clothes maintain a pretense of modesty.

Hecates Lacus (Enkabuul)

Palace and Embassy District

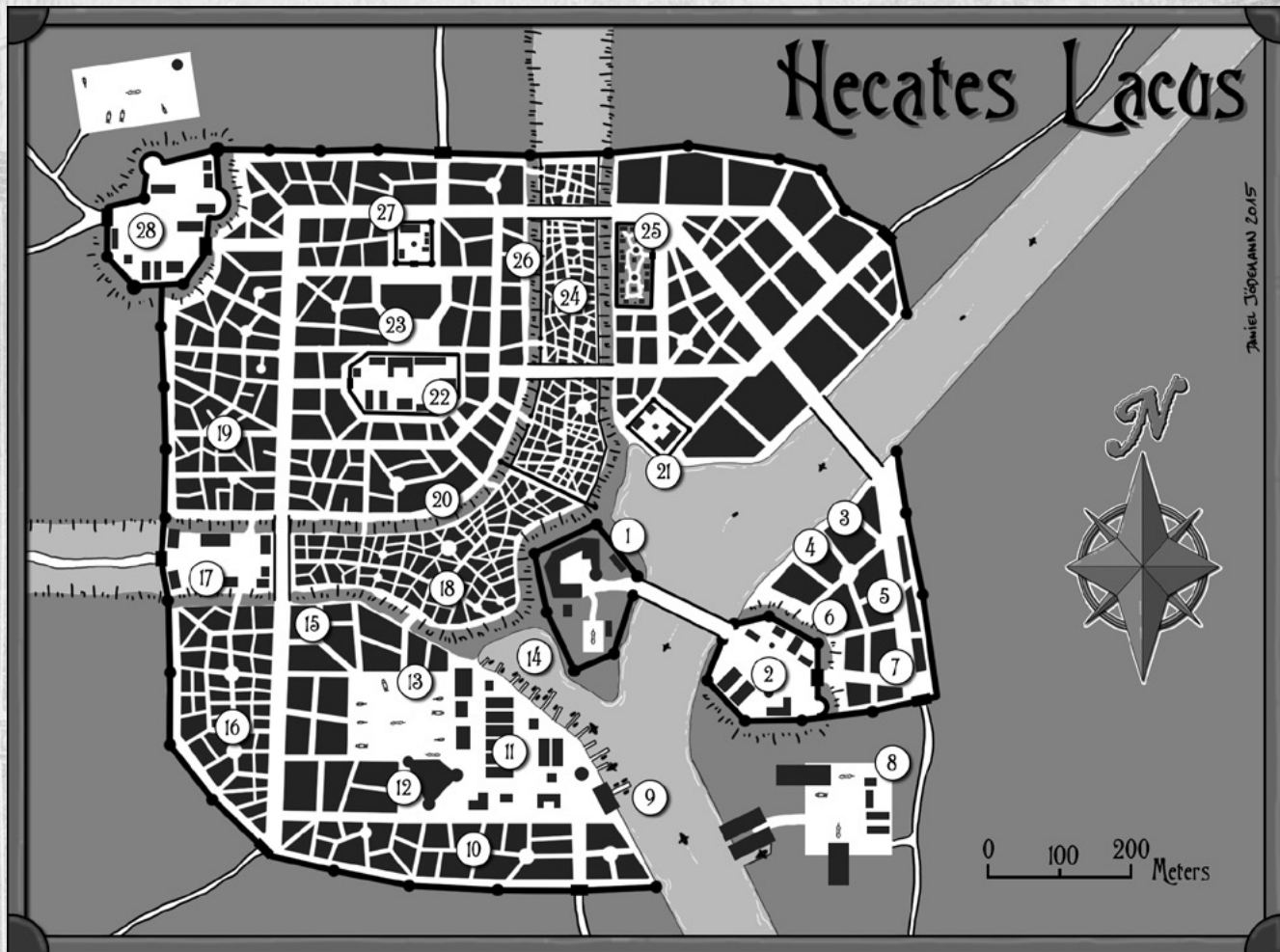
The mohaani and his family live in the beautiful **citadel (1)** of white stone. A side wing holds the Russian embassy, to allow for constant contact with the old monarch. The royal aerial yacht sits on a small landing field in the gardens. The entire facility is guarded by a 30-strong honor guard of the mohaani. One of the two great defensive installations of the city is the **citadel bastion (2)**. About half of the standing army is stationed here, as well as a hundred men of Russian infantry since the Treaty of Cebrenia was signed.

It is claimed that the **Japanese trade mission (3)** is exploring any and all means to weaken the Russian position in the city: they spy, they spread nasty rumors, and they attempt to free the "politicals" coming from Russia. The trading warehouses and **embassy of the British Crown (4)** are carefully guarded by a detachment of the best marines. The **embassy of the German Empire (5)** is by now almost deserted. The Germans appear to be losing any and all interest in Hecates Lacus. The Commune maintains a **French embassy (6)** whose diplomats and traders are watched carefully by the Russians and are hindered by severe limitations as the Tsar does not want to see any communist activity in his colony. After the deportation of the Oenotrian ambassador, the people now claim that the **abandoned Oenotrian embassy (7)** is haunted by ghosts. More likely, these are Oenotrian sympathizers and spies who use the facility to plan their next moves.

Port District

The famous Hecates cloudships that are known by many city-states for their high standards of craftsmanship are constructed in the **shipyard (8)** outside the city walls. The Treaty of Cebrenia forbids the construction of ships for Earth customers, though. A few specialists continue to offer their expertise to assist the *Polyarnaya Zvezda*, however.

All canal ships passing through here must pay tolls and possibly docking and berthing fees in the **customs house (9)**. Those who attempt to evade these payments will be stopped by the fast, armed speedboats of the port police. Very close by, **tavern row (10)** offers establishments for every taste (both Martian or Russian) and every size of coin purse. This is also where information of all kinds is traded. The goods are stored in the **warehouse district (11)**, until either the buyer fetches them or they are shipped on. Every major trade corporation has its own warehouse, but most are now in the hands of the Russians. Cloudships and screw galleys use the **landing field (13)**. It features a customs office, similar



Daniel J. Grogan 2015

to the one by the canal, and at least two war kites are kept ready to intercept any toll evaders. The two Russian gunboats *Anakria* and *Rotchensalm* are also stationed here. The small fortress **Krepost Nakhimov (12)**—serving as the barracks for the crew and support staff of the two gunboats—is firmly under Russian control. A battery of machineguns is stationed here to defend the fort. The **wet docks (14)** offer a lot of space with over a dozen berths. It is active, day and night, as ships arrive and are loaded and unloaded at all hours. The Tsar’s trading company **Imperskiya Marsianina Torgovaya Kompaniya (IMToK; 15)** controls the Russian trade between Earth and Mars almost entirely and pays part of its profits directly to the Tsar. The governor is the local director of the IMToK.

An additional *landing field* for war kites is located outside the city.

Western City

The famous crafters of Hecates Lacus live in the **guild district (16)**. Here, one can buy anything that can be made by hand.

The nearby **caravan bazaar (17)** sells foreign goods, strange foods, illegal weapons... there is nothing that cannot be found in this open-air bazaar if one knows who to ask. Those caravans that do not wish to pay the horrendous prices for accommodation inside the city camp in front of the well-guarded gate.

Should one enter the Russian district of **Malen'kiy Peterburg (Little Petersburg, 18)**, one can be forgiven believing to be walking

through the streets of Moscow or St. Petersburg. Russian police patrol these streets and the crime rate is amongst the lowest in the entire city. To the north, a wall, several yards tall, blocks all travel (and sight) to the slums of the city.

The **physicians’ district (19)** is home to almost all doctors and quacks in the city, including Earth doctors, Martian healers, and dangerous charlatans of both planets.

Those who prefer not to enter the crowded caravan bazaar full of foreign languages will find almost the same goods on offer in the **city bazaar (20)**, albeit at significant markups. Many smaller stalls and cook-shops are wedged in between the many market halls and fill the air with strange aromas and noises.

Northern City

The official residence of the heir, Prince Thimmajoun, is the **Heir-Prince’s Palace (21)**, where he is guarded by his uhlan and their Russian instructors, a detachment of Cossacks. The **Academy of Education (22)** controls almost all schools in the city. These range from the basic public school that is free for any citizen to enter to the elite universities with major admission fees. For a few years now, Russian professors have been teaching Earth sciences here as well. The cultural center of the city is the **Red Square (23)**. It owes its name to the Red Dome, a complex of buildings hosting concerts and theater plays. In one of its wings, works of Martian artists of all eras are displayed. Most recently—much to the amusement of Hecates Lacus’s

Eastern Desert

upper class—works of contemporary Russian artists have been put on display as well.

Inside the walls surrounding the **slum district (24)**, one finds mostly huts, tents, and houses near collapse. Only those with no other choice live here. The police of the city never comes here; it is a place of absolute anarchy. In the north of the district, a bridge crosses over the buildings; humans occasionally stand on it and cast a fascinated and disgusted glance downwards.

The **zoo (25)** holds animals from almost all the regions of Mars, usually the kind that can be bought from the caravans passing through. It only charges a small entry fee and is a popular holiday destination. The newest attraction is a Russian bear, brought from

Earth by Prince Thimmajoun. Should the animal survive, he plans to bring in further exotic animals. Directly adjacent to the slums lies the **police precinct (26)**. About one hundred city watchmen are stationed here, as are the members of the *Okhrana*, the Russian secret police. The **Krepost St. George (28)**, the headquarters of the Russian military here, is manned by most of the soldiers of the Kamchatka infantry and the Cossack cavalry. As commander in chief, Colonel Zubkov also has his quarters here. Furthermore, the recruits of the Martian volunteer corps are housed here. The **military headquarters (27)** of Hecates Lacus also contains cells in its dungeons where the “unwanted” are held until they are ready for transport to forced labor sites.

The Tharsis Mountains

People: High Martians, Hill Martians, Canal Martians

Location: Tharsis

Languages: Thark, Memnite (in Arsia Silva and Phoenicius Lacus), Koline

Cities: Biblis Fons (*Thosoor*, sacred oracle city, pop.: 30,000), Tharsis (*Dulphabad*, ore mining), Olympia (*P'toolor*, famous sports venues), Arsia Silva (*Ko'puroon*, hanging gardens), Phoenicius Lacus (*Malap'Raan*), Pavonis Lacus (☉), Ascraeus Lacus (*Bakabarat*)

The eastern region of the Eastern Desert lies north of Memnonia and east of Amazonia. It is marked by many mountain ranges that include the highest mountains of the whole planet. The highest of these ranges, the *Saaloht Toorla* (the Olympus Mons massif), and Arsia Mons (➔ see p. 200) both lie in this region. Between the desolate mountains lie rock deserts, the occasional steppe, and isolated sand seas. Apart from emeralds and sapphires of immense size that are said to exist here, there is little joy to be found. The rumors surrounding the gems are however persistent enough to always draw new fortune seekers from faraway lands to this region.

Tharsis is home to an unknown number of High Martian tribes that at times will wage war with the cities and at other times engage in alliances of convenience with them. Travelers outside the cities will find, apart from numerous ruins, an untamed wild land where the only laws are those of the ruling tribes. The oasis cities of Tharsis itself appear as bastions of luxury, civilization, and safety by comparison.

The religions here are very similar. In Tharsis, P'toolor, Ko'puroon, or any of the cities, doomsday cults hold great sway and preach that the planet lies in its final death throes after eons of fading away. Proof for this, the cults say, can be seen in all the dried-up canals, the ruined cities, and the increasing attacks of desert tribes and High Martians that bring death and doom, abduction and rape, chaos and violence. The “red faces” are held as a special herald of the apocalypse. Some of these cults call to arms against all symptoms of the end, especially the humans. Others praise the sacrifice of food, animals, and humans, or even Martians all the way to ritual suicide as a heroic deed of healing. Yet others demand that all items of luxury be handed over to the

cult leader to steel one's soul and body. Shared consumption of drugs of various origins is a traditional part of the ceremonies. The closer the city lies to Thosoor, the more likely are pilgrimages to the oracle city, in the hope that one might learn how the end might yet be warded off after all.

In this region, not only High Martians, but also members of the other Martian peoples often follow cults of dark entities or the Worm god. They all found the same answer to the question of how to face the fate of Mars: The dark god must be placated with war, battle, and spilled blood. Convenient targets are the decadent cities, caravans, travelers, humans, and other tribes—particularly those that are growing powerful.

Biblis Fons (Thosoor)

The city of Thosoor in Tharsis, called Biblis Fons by the Earthmen, carries several Martian monikers such as “City of the Crystal Oracle”, “City of the 12 Eyes”, and “Oracle city”. Situated at the intersection of two dried-up canals, it shows little outward signs of its importance. Like Aubochoon, it is completely surrounded by sand and steppe with only few caravans passing through. And yet, Biblis Fons is different from the other cities of the region in a few respects that make it a center of power. For one, there is its architecture. The entire city is contained in a single, tower-like structure that rises up from the steppe for several hundred yards. Below it, hundreds of underground levels continue downwards—where amongst other things the food production occurs—increasing the actual size of the city far past what is visible from the outside. All in all, Biblis Fons is thus the largest example of an arcology that can still be found on Mars today. There are stories though, that claim an even larger structure lies lost somewhere in the Tharsis Mountains.

⚔ Overview of Biblis Fons

Despite its dimensions, the living conditions in Thosoor are rather cramped, as the design does not allow for much sideways expansion. The people live in small **flats (1)**, which provide all necessities within their minimal space. There are also numerous **market halls (3)** that are accessible from all sides, and many **abandoned industrial spaces (8)**. The latter only house pests and criminal scum these days, with many gangs using them as bases. For some inexplicable reason, some still hold functioning

devices and machinery. The water supply, including that for the underground **gardens (5)**, is provided by a clever water reclamation system that, amongst other things, recycles the bodily fluids of the deceased that were laid to rest in the **hanging towers (7)** of the great **cistern (6)**. How exactly this system works, no one knows anymore. Additionally, Thosoor is an oasis city situated above large, ancient reservoirs of water that are also tapped to supply the city.

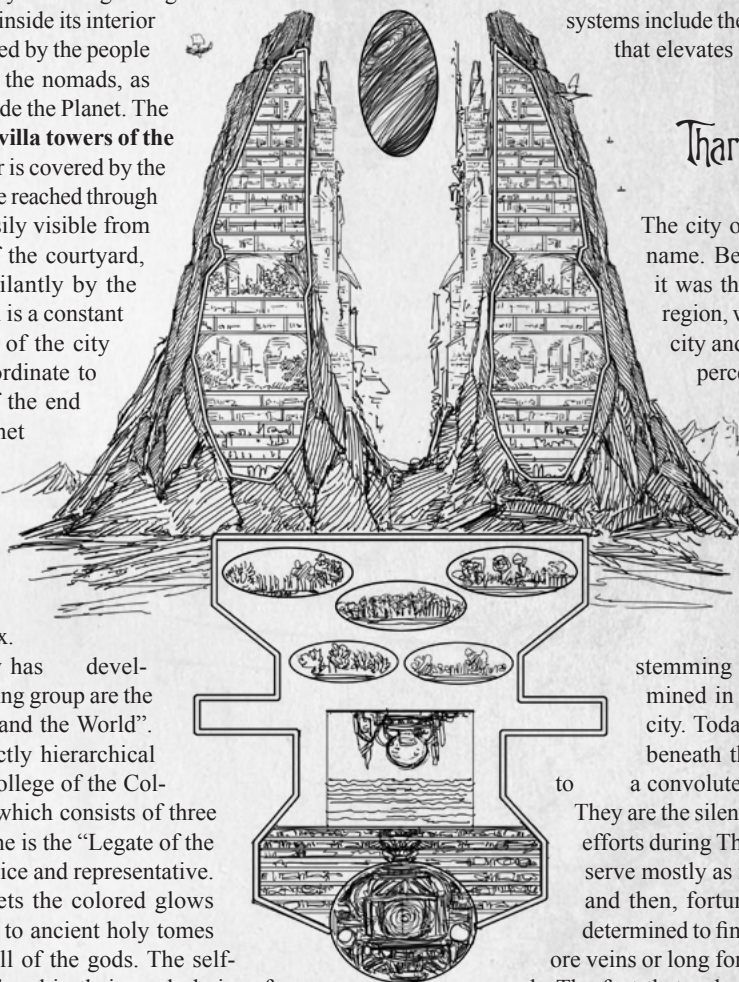
The Oracle Crystal and the Cloud Guard of Biblis Fons (→ see p. 194)

Despite its unique construction, the city is far more famous today for its 3-foot-high (1 m), many-colored glowing **crystal (4)**, which floats inside its interior courtyard. It is worshipped by the people of the region, including the nomads, as the voice of the God inside the Planet. The courtyard also holds the **villa towers of the priesthood (2)**. The floor is covered by the temple gardens that can be reached through the gates of the city. Easily visible from the garden balconies of the courtyard, which are guarded vigilantly by the Cloud Guard, the crystal is a constant reminder to the people of the city that their lives are subordinate to the will of their god, if the end of the city and the planet are yet preventable. Overall, the interior side of the city is under the complete control of the priesthood and essentially functions as a massive temple complex.

A de facto theocracy has developed in this city. The ruling group are the “Guardians of the City and the World”. At the head of this strictly hierarchical organization sits the “College of the Colorful Infinite Wisdom” which consists of three high priests, of which one is the “Legate of the Gods”, and thus their voice and representative. The priesthood interprets the colored glows of the crystal according to ancient holy tomes and thus divines the will of the gods. The self-confidence of the priesthood in their work derives from when their oracle prophecy saved the city from certain destruction a thousand years ago. After a strong ground quake, the High Synod consulted the crystal priests in a panic, and the highest of the seers proclaimed that only if winged guardians were to watch the crystal would the gods be able to keep Biblis Fons from sinking into the steppe. The High Synod then arranged an agreement with a High Martian tribe that happened to be marauding in the nearby areas, who then moved into the city and formed the *Cloud Guard of Biblis Fons* which ever since has guarded the oracle. In exchange for their services, the High Martians enjoy luxurious lives here: Every month, they receive large amounts of gold, decorated weapons and jewelry, a steady supply of delicacies from all over the planet, and as many fresh slaves, male or female, as desired on top of many other ameni-

ties. They have the right to strike down anyone on the balconies whom they consider suspicious—though if they go too far and cause a death, there are at the very least friendly requests to act more carefully in the future. Over the centuries, the Guardians of the City and the World were able to use their influence to slowly weaken the High Synod, which today takes a representative role at best. These days, the priesthood not only regulates access to the oracle and the city itself but also collects generous tithes from the city as well as the many pilgrims, in exchange for the prophecies of the oracle. It also selflessly undertakes the maintenance and protection of the underground facilities to ward off attacks by demons from the depths of the planet, as they are diligent in repeatedly pointing out.

In truth, a large, functional **telluric energy tap (9)** is located beneath the city, which supplies the systems of the arcology and the illumination in the underground gardens. These systems include the telluric-magnetic energy field that elevates and rotates the crystal.



Tharsis (Dulphabad)

The city of Tharsis gives the region its name. Before the rise of Biblis Fons, it was the dominant metropolis in the region, which is why, for outsiders, the city and the region were increasingly perceived as one and the same over the centuries. Tharsis itself lies on a high plateau where five dried-up grand canals meet. As a result, the city is only assailable by military means from above, which helps explain the rise of the Tharsis hegemony. The other reason is the wealth

stemming from the gold veins that are mined in the rock plateau beneath the city. Today, the plateau and the ground beneath the surface under it are home to a convoluted maze of shafts and tunnels. They are the silent witnesses of the great mining efforts during Tharsis’s peak, though now they serve mostly as refuge for the homeless. Now and then, fortune seekers arrive in the city, determined to find some previously overlooked ore veins or long forgotten piles of already-mined rock. The fact that only few appear to find their way back to the surface has not diminished this steady flow of optimists. It is not surprising that many, more or less trustworthy, guides have taken up the task of selling their services to strangers and leading them through these tunnels.

In the above-ground part of the city, many buildings are derelict, and even the city walls have seen better days. The former industrial complexes still hold machinery once meant to refine the gold from the rock. But no one here still knows how they work, though with some luck, that knowledge could still be found in the libraries.

The hinterlands of Tharsis are crisscrossed by smaller canals which, just like the grand canals, are dry and only hint at the traffic that once must have flowed here, with the fortress city on the plateau as their center. Today, these canals do little but point the way for the rare caravan or archaeological expedition.

Olympia (P'toolor)

The city of P'toolor is famous for its slowly collapsing sports facilities that millennia ago were the stage for regular interregional competitions. A hippodrome, arenas, and stadiums of various sizes can be found here, likely intended for team sports whose rules have long been forgotten. The human name for the city derives both from the proximity to the holy mountain of 'Olympus' as well as the ancient Earth holy city of 'Olympia', which was home to the famous ancient Greek Olympic games. It was coined by xeno-archaeologists from Earth which, while traveling by aerial flyer above the city, noticed its many, highly visible stadiums.

Today, only two competitions remain that put the facilities of the city to their intended use. Annual competitions are held during the celebration of the founding of the city, which is said to have followed a fight for the land between a demon and the founder, *P'tol*. Besides that, only the competition for the office of the canal prince of P'toolor remains. Every five years, a new prince is chosen this way, who will guide the fate of the city for the duration of his term. These competitions take the form of fights with various weapons, sometimes with lethal outcomes. Around these competitions, betting pools, prostitution, and crime run rampant, with many attendees drawn to P'toolor from numerous nearby states and even the nomadic tribes. These bets can be placed on the winner, on specific outcomes such as death or surrender, or even the loss of specific limbs by the participants. During these events, the bustling activity and pulsing life in the

rundown streets of the city recall the bright and densely populated P'toolor of times long past.

Arsia Silva (Ko'puroon)

In Arsia Silva, known to the Martians as Ko'puroon, great efforts are being made to deny the coming end of the world. The partially step-like buildings are covered in gardens that are supplied in water by natural ancient reservoirs beneath the city. Only the sheer size of this reservoir keeps the gardens alive and gives the city the appearance of being a promising oasis. These gardens have led to some humans calling the city the 'Martian Babylon'.

The tendency of the synod of Ko'puroon and of the noble upper class to waste the valuable liquid has led to regular tensions within the society. The lower classes fear being literally hung out to dry while the nobility uses its wealth to acquire the vital good some other way. Thus, resistance groups keep forming that attempt to sabotage the pumps of the gardens' water supply.

A few doomsday cults see this waste as the action of demons intent on bringing about the end of the world sooner rather than later. They call for the sacrifice of those who insist on this waste, both to save the planet and also the souls of the misguided. On the other hand, the gardens do produce fruits and herbs with hallucinogenic properties that are exported and thus at least bring money into the ever-empty city coffers.



The Green Vein

The Green Vein is the term the locals use to designate one of the few regions of Mars that is not defined by red dust, but instead dominated by lush plant growth. Under the right conditions, it can even be seen by Earth's telescopes, which will show a washed-out, brown spot. It is a true Garden of Eden, with water, plants, and food, where the people need not fear hunger. Of course, such a paradise draws envy and greed.

Geography and Climate

The region is about 3.9 million square miles (10 million km²) in size, about as big as Europe, and those who travel from Baltia in the North to Baetis in the South will travel the same distance as between Kiev and Lisbon. Long ago, this region was a bay of the original polar ocean. After the water receded, the land took its current shape.

The Green Vein can be subdivided into three parts. The North is dominated by **Mare Acidalium**, a former deep sea trench. This basin is about the size of the Indian subcontinent and descends steeply downwards for up to 6,500 feet (2,000 m) beneath the surrounding lands.

To the south, **Xanthe** and **Chryse** border it. Southeastern Chryse, "the golden land", is a wide, flat plain cut off from the Western Desert to its east by mountain ranges that have protected the sparse steppe landscape that is now home to various nomad tribes. Xanthe, to the west, is marked by many rolling hills and valleys which all run west to east and which once carried water to



the plains of Chryse. Today, Xanthe is home to the last remaining contiguous forest region of Mars, which the locals are tending to with religious fervor. Between the cities ringing Chryse (Niliacus, Oxi, Thymiamata, Hyoraotes, Baetis, and Chryse proper) lies the last patch of jungle on the planet.

The city of **Idaeus** (p. 108) plays a special role in the city, as it is the base of the only Earth power in the region. The agitators of the French Commune have loudly shaken the entire region from its deep slumber.

The climate is warm and mild, though it can get very humid in the southern forests. The sky is often covered in clouds that the wind drives northwards. The dark basin of Mare Acidalium heats up in the sunlight, and the hot air rises, taking the clouds from the south with it. It is replaced by cooler air coming in from the edges of the basin, ensuring a near-constant gentle breeze. Aerial flyers that fly into or out of the basin region are vigorously shaken about by these winds.

The Canals

The canals of the Green Vein are still intact insofar as they enable travel from the northern polar cap all the way to Tharsis in Mare Erythraeum. The canal network in Mare Acidalium is even fully preserved. Here, the water streams down a chain of cataracts and cascades from the polar cap, while massive pumping stations near Nilokera and Niliacus raise it up to the high plain. The Nilokera pumps use huge turbines with 300 feet (100 m) wide blades probably powered by geothermal heat to shove the water up through a huge pipe. The pump of Niliacus is stranger still. In it, the water disappears into the sheer wall of an artificial cave and shoots out of another cave about 10 miles (16 km) away and 6,500 feet (2,000 m) higher. No one can explain how this works. All that is known is that unusual magnetic fields can be detected in this area. Small animals locked into sealed barrels and sent through this pump do survive the trip just fine (apart from a hysterical fear of

Kasei Valles - The Little Valley

This is a massive chasm that branches off from the Coprates and stretches for 1,550 miles (2,500 km) towards Chryse. Compared to the Coprates, it is truly small, but its dimensions (over 1,500 miles (2,500 km) long, up to 300 miles (500 km) wide, and up to 2 miles (3 km) deep) mean it still dwarves Earth's Grand Canyon. The first humans to explore the valley belonged to a Japanese expedition, which is why the valley is marked on many Earth-made maps as *Kasei* (Japanese for Mars) *Valles*.

The jagged, winding chasms, the cataracts (several up to 1,300 feet (400 m) tall), and countless building-sized boulders turn the valley into a devious maze that can't even be properly surveyed from the air. Thus, it is the perfect smuggling route for weapons and supplies headed to the Belgian occupation zone, and for refugees and information coming the other way. The AIP and its thugs are aware of this, but must rely on mere sporadic patrols.

loud noises and the dark). Criminals sentenced to death and sent on the same journey were less fortunate. It appears that there are filters or sieves inside this pump that catch anything larger than a football. The pressure of the oncoming water then grinds away anything larger that won't fit through.

Population

The region has about 30 million inhabitants, most (about 80%) of them in Mare Acidalium. Here, and in the few forests of Xanthe, most are Canal Martians. The savannah of Chryse is home to various Hill Martian tribes and the mountains at the eastern edge of the steppe shelter the kraags of the High Martian tribes. The only notable presence of humans are the 2,000 French "advisors" stationed in Idaeus. Besides them, a small American team is studying the cataracts near Tanais.

The Current Situation

For millennia, the Green Vein has been an island of stability, a window into the age of what Mars used to be like. The region has everything its people need. The water wheels and factories at the cataracts produce wares of all kinds, the fields and planta-

tions of Mare Acidalium offer food in abundance. The forests of Xanthe provide wood and, on the fields of Chryse, the gashants and wukkaas grow fat. The High Martians in the mountains build aerial flyers to ensure that life does not get too boring. The cities and their people have always been strong enough to fend off the sporadic attempts by outsiders to conquer the Vein.

All that changed with the arrival of the humans.

A ship of the Social Democratic Commune landed near Idaeus in 1873, and almost immediately the "political missionaries" of the Commune began to try to convince the local proletariat of the virtues and necessity of revolution. After the coup of 1877, a people's committee seized power and the envoys of the Commune began to successfully "spread the fires of revolution to the hearts of the downtrodden". The French showed them that they were the masters of their own fates. Today, there are many among the poor in the region who no longer fear that a coup would destroy the "divine order of things". French agitators used fiery speeches and pamphlets to grow their numbers. Rumors tell of training camps in the forests where the French are training the local revolutionaries.

The rich and powerful in the region view this with disgust and revulsion. Determined to maintain their privileges, some use even draconic methods to preserve the status quo. Others introduce cautious reforms to placate the masses. The masters of Ophir have even brought in Belgian advisors into their country, fighting the red devils with other red devils. The Belgians will demand a high price for their aid, but the masters of Ophir are willing to pay it to keep their power.

Mare Acidalium - The Bowl of the Gods

"If only one could live like a god in their bowl."

— Martian proverb

abundant water, and fertile soil provide full bellies and peace of mind to the people, who believe that the gods have blessed them.

People: Canal Martians
Location: Mare Acidalium
Languages: Na-Gaaryani, Koline
Cities: Acidalia (*Timunaura*, largest city in the region, pop.: 350,000), Niliacus (*Miianaaka*, shipyards, pop.: 200,000), Nilokera (*Alissanaaka*, corrupt dictatorship, pop.: 180,000), Callirrhoes (industrial city, pop.: 150,000), Oxia (*Oscharilla*, in the highlands, pop.: 50,000), Tanais (cataracts), Baltia ⊕, Bahaar ⊕

Territory

The basin of Mare Acidalium is a plain with many low hills whose people engage in intensive agriculture and forestry. When it was still a deep-sea trench, there were underwater volcanoes here, on whose peaks the famous *timuusha* is now grown: the sweet red wine that has found favor even on Earth. Faded volcanic activity manifests itself as the odd active geyser.

This region is not called the "bowl of the gods" in the various Martian languages for nothing. Life is good here: The mild climate,

History

Before the canals were built, the basin was a barren, dried-up salt lake where only the lost ended up. The first permanent settlers were the construction crews that dug the canals. Their descendants made the basin arable. After the fall of the canal builders, work began to independently maintain the infrastructure that was so vital to the survival of the entire basin. Thus, the theocracy of Acidalia was born, which later resisted the armies of Seldon for almost a decade. After his victory, Seldon had the priests drowned and installed military governors to administer the cities in his name. Their descendants became the local nobility, which ruled the basin after the fall of the Seldon Empire. For centuries, they controlled the political and military power while the priests commanded the souls of the common people, who in turn subserviently tilled the fields and worked the factories.

Government, Politics, and Society

Each city in Mare Acidalium has its own customs and form of government, with mostly—by Martian standards—liberal social structures, enabled by the generally high levels of wealth. The cities are loosely organized into the *Hydraulic League*.

The Hydraulic League

As early as during the construction of the canals, it became clear that the facilities in Mare Acidalium would require constant maintenance to keep the region habitable. Should the pumps or cataracts fail, the basin would become inhospitable within weeks. To prevent this, a special office was formed. After the canal builders fell, the locals founded various organizations to take over this task. The most recent successor is the Hydraulic League, formed around 1400 AD.

Unlike the Boreosyrtris League (p. 77), the Hydraulic League is a purely technical alliance with no influence on the politics of the members. The members of the League contribute money and labor to the maintenance of the canals, pumps, and cataracts. Their forces man the fortresses that guard the most important facilities. The headquarters of the League are in *Acidalia*, inside an old palace. There, the engineers plan the required measures while archivists guard the records that reach back millennia. The cellars of this palace are where the money given by the member states is hoarded.

Military

Each city maintains its own military, which are placed under the shared command of the Hydraulic League. Besides the defense of their home cities, these troops form the garrisons for the various forts guarding important facilities such as locks, pumps, and cataracts. They consist primarily of infantry and light cavalry. Until now, the troops were arranged defensively, but the coup in *Idaeus* (p. 108) changed that. Many of the soldiers driven from *Idaeus* joined the forces of the basin and brought with them a notable increase in discipline and boldness. Within the military of the basin, voices demanding the liberation of *Idaeus* grew louder. As the League has so far shied away from open warfare against one of the Earth powers, impatient officers might be making plans for a coup of their own, which could even find support with the priesthoods of the cities.

Role in the Region

Mare Acidalium is one of the economic powerhouses of Mars. It is the vegetable garden of the planet, and many of its plantations grow the famous *gruuma* herb, the second hottest spice in the solar system (after Venus pepper). Additionally, the cascades by the northern edge and the heat of the geysers drive the factories whose products are sold all over Mars. Despite the protests of the priesthood, ores from *Idaeus* are still being processed, and junk dug up all over Mars is brought here for recycling.

The technology of Mare Acidalium had only been surpassed by the canal builders until the humans arrived. The cascades by the

northern edge turn water wheels that drive building-sized gears, massive drive shafts, and miles of transmission straps to power industrial regions whose factories need not fear comparison to Earth facilities. The engineers sent by Edison are studying the cataracts of *Callirrhoeos*, while their rivals from Westinghouse investigate the facilities of *Baltia*. It remains to be seen if the electricity wars between the two companies will continue on Mars.

Culture and Religion

The people here view their home as the final bastion of Martian high culture and themselves as the “true heirs of Seldon”. The other people of Mars and the red devils are inferior. To them, only savages and barbarians live outside the basin, who at best mimic the civilization of true Martians. Every child is taught early on that they belong to the peak of Martian creation and that outside the basin, chaos and ignorance reign. This has led to arrogance when dealing with foreigners. When hard facts are used to set the record straight, some *Acidalians* can react very strongly.

A Rigid Society

Isolated by geographical features, the Bowl has developed its own culture which, in part, strongly deviates from other Canal Martian customs. Their roots lie in the subjugated original population and the occupation forces of the Seldon Empire. Though they mixed over the millennia, most members of the upper class are descended strictly from these troops’ corps of officers, while the farmers and workers are descendants of the original population. Social upwards mobility is almost entirely inexistent, and every citizen is brought up from a young age to believe that everyone has their set place in society—which is to follow the example of one’s parents.

The only way to escape this predetermined lot is offered by the temples. Intelligent *Acidalians* may attempt a difficult aptitude test to join a temple as a novice, which will lead to them being ordained as priests or temple sisters after five years of service. An appropriately ambitious member of the temple can reach as high a position as temple master. The various temple masters of the city form a *Curia*, which can exert great influence on politics. The *Curias* of the cities send representatives to the Great Council in *Acidalia*, where several times a year the spiritual heads of the basin meet to decide the politics of the temples and of the Hydraulic League.

A Religion of Water

The religion honors water in the form of various avatars, each of which represents a different aspect of the element. *Alissaa*, for example, is the Lady of Fertility, the life giver and love goddess, while *Vaarak* is the farmer, the builder of lives and culture. *Amvook*, who is Death, can bring the end through dehydration or drowning, while the icy *Mijaara* embodies the polar caps and guards their precious fluids.

To placate them and the other gods, living sacrifices are made on particular days of the year by tying a victim up and leaving them to freeze to death inside a glacier chasm. Their spirits are then said to serve *Mijaara* for all eternity. Only especially worthy sacrifices can be made to the gods, which means nobles and important leaders, and it is considered an honor to be chosen. The priests are not sacrificed, they instead have the solemn duty of choosing the next sacrifice. As times are tough, more sacrifices are made than usual, and thus the ranks of the priests’ enemies are thinning.

Cities of Mare Acidalium

Acidalia (Timunaura)

The largest city of the basin sits at the intersection of three canals like a spider in its web, controlling trade all throughout the basin. The port and warehouses take up almost half of the city, the remainder is mostly habitation blocks and manufactories. The rich and powerful of the city live on top of the golden hill which rises above the port, covered in the villas of the upper class. At the center of the city lies the walled-off temple district, whence the fate of the city is controlled. The local Prince *Kajamaani* is a senile old man cared for by a select few priests who interpret his nonsensical babbling as divine decrees. Acidalia is the center of the anti-French movement and the stage of many intrigues. In the halls of the League, spies of two worlds pass each other regularly. Very recently, German advisors were invited—against the protests of the British consulate—to help modernize the military of the city.

Niliacus (Müanaaka)

The city of the “hidden pump” is known for its shipyards where aerial flyers and canal ships are built. It is these shipyards that are the targets of *Idaeus*, and thus many “political missionaries” are attempting to win over the workers for their revolution. The army and the secret police are using draconic means to prevent such uprisings, which is why the efforts of the missionaries find open ears and, increasingly, progress in the shipyards is interrupted by vandalism and sabotage. Prince *Dardag* is a mere puppet of the High Priest *Aeverdigon*, whom he appointed Prime Minister as well. To *Aeverdigon*, reforms and change are heresy and his thugs are mercilessly fighting against those. For the Prime Minister, humans are the root of this evil and are only barely tolerated. The few Terrans in the city—mostly British merchants—live in the Foreigner Quarter and are only allowed to leave it by special permission.

Nilokera (Klissanaaka)

For generations, Nilokera has been ruled by a noble family that has used clever intrigues to prevent the priesthood from gaining

traction in the general population. The current dictator, Prince *Osuura*, has revealed himself to be a decadent man of pleasures, however, and is incapable of ruling the city effectively. Thus, Nilokera is in rapid decline. Corruption and nepotism are bleeding the economy dry, the large warehouses are rotting away, and the fields around the city grow more and more gruuma herb, leading to skyrocketing food prices. Participation in the League only continues under pressure from the other members, and the military of the city is essentially a joke. This miserable situation increases the influence of the French, who can operate almost freely in the slums. Many Nilokerans from the upper class are fleeing the city in fear of an uprising like in *Idaeus*, and rumors of a planned coup by the priesthood are making the rounds.

Oxia (Osharilla)

Oxia is a special case of the Hydraulic League. This small but busy city does not lie in the basin, but in the highlands at the edge of the desert. Here, two cultures are blending together. Besides the Canal Martian merchants, one can also find *Seheldonnar* (p. 87) and the caravans of the Wagon Masters (p. 82) here. While the old cataracts have long since collapsed, Oxia still lies on one of the few passes leading down into the basin and, as an end point of the Tea Road, is an important trade hub.

Callirhoes

Callirhoes lies next to one of the cataracts that carry the water from the North into the basin. The view from the city wall towards the north is breathtaking, especially during the Flood season. The thunder of the floods is a constant sound in the city, and only lets off during the Low Flow season. The cataracts have always been lined with water wheels, and during the time of the canal builders, the industrial districts reached all the way up the cliffs. Most factories have been abandoned or have fallen to rot since, but many have been reconfigured again and again over the millennia and are still in use today. The essentially unlimited power and the empty factory halls draw in eager inventors, and in many of the derelict halls, ridiculed geniuses are creating inventions that could change the world. The most famous of these tinkerers is Edison, whose engineers are studying the cataracts in the hopes of building a power plant here.

The Free Revolutionary People's Republic Hihanahehuuz (Idaeus Foss)

“Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one.”

— Karl Marx

People: Humans (French), Canal Martians
Location: West of Mare Acidalium
Languages: French, Na-Gaaryani, Koline

Idaeus is the city that was most changed by the arrival of the “red devils”. Overnight, the millennia old status quo here was turned on its head, and none dare predict what these changes will mean for the planet as a whole.

Hihanahehuuz lies in a region of broken hills overgrown with bushes. One of these bushes is the druhkma plant which is deadly to Martians and claims new victims every year. Farming is only possible along the canal; the hinterlands are used for cattle herding. For millennia, copper and lead have been mined here, which left the hills full of holes and shafts. Today, the miners are scraping the final deposits from the old seams and slag heaps, as most shafts are exhausted. Gas pockets, inclement weather, and

collapses leave the mines dangerous places, and on top of that many shafts now act as shelter for outlaws and predators.

History

The city began as a massive construction hut during the time of the canal builders. After the canal was finished, the workers became farmers and merchants, and Hihanahehuuz grew to become a typical Martian city. It was ruled by a series of dynasties, each eventually falling to intrigue, assassination, or inbreeding. The last big change here occurred during the Age of Seldon, who executed the rulers of the city and appointed officials who in turn became the new upper class.

In the year 1873, a strange vessel appeared in the sky. This was the *Liberté*, the first ether flyer of the French Commune. The expedition was led by *Doctor Claude Massigny* and was welcomed by King *Lotmar*, who hoped that the strangers would bring opportunities for the city. Once the locals and the French learned to communicate, and the rulers realized just what kind of terrifying ideas these visitors were bringing with them, the relationship cooled off immediately. The government made life difficult for the Commune people, and the priests began to incite hate for the red devils. There were repeated violent incidents, and on the 14th of July 1877, the army attacked the French embassy. The Commune had been expecting a reaction like this, though, and was able to turn the situation around once the initial surprise was past. That same night, King *Lotmar*'s refusal to negotiate with the French resulted in the poor and downtrodden of the city rising up in rebellion. Millennia of cruel oppression exploded brutally into revenge all at once, and the members of the upper class were all killed or driven into exile. The rebels hung the bodies of 120 nobles and priests from the bridges of the city, where they remained for weeks, entertaining the people. The dead included King *Lotmar* and his successor, Prince *Akvan*. *Akvan* had a son, but this legitimate heir disappeared that night and has been declared dead since.



Government, Politics and Society

The organization of the free revolutionary republic follows the example of the French Commune in many ways. The system is built on two types of ruling bodies: the **cooperative societies** and the **committees**.

The *cooperative societies* administer physical properties like flat blocks or factories, and every worker or inhabitant shares in their ownership. *Committees* represent the various interest groups and take the place of unions, political parties, or clubs. A typical citizen is a member of the cooperative societies for his work place and his residence, and belongs to the committee for his profession and for his street. On top of this, each citizen is likely also a member of various political or hobby committees.

Cooperative societies or committees of at least 500 members may send a representative to the People's Council of the Republic. These delegates are not elected but appointed, and can be recalled at any time by their committees.

This parliament of the Republic is where the delegates discuss new laws and appoint the members of the various panels that take on the task of administration. These panels are in charge of areas like waste collection, financial policy, or the military. Each of these panels has "revolutionary advisors" appointed to them to make sure that any decisions are made in the interest of the people. Previously, these advisors hailed from France, but in the last few years, most of these posts have gone to the children of accomplished (Martian) revolutionaries who have been gifted with and completed an education at the *Paris College for Revolutionary Philosophy* by the Commune.

The political factions of the city are often in disagreement. Socialists, communists, anarchists, farmers, workers, canal ship crews, waiters, and street sweepers all form a multitude of groups that ally and feud seemingly at random. Usually leaflets, graffiti, and insults are the worst of it, but each group also maintains an armed militia, and, on occasion, actual street battles have broken out. Whenever things get too heated, the People's Council tasks the army and neutral militias with reestablishing order. In

such cases, units of the Red Guard are always present to mercilessly enforce the unity of the revolutionaries.

Military

The entire People's Republic is armed to the teeth. Beside the city's standing army—including male and female conscripts—there are militias for the various factions which defend the city when needed. These are mostly armed with obsolete muskets, only the parliament's guard—an elite unit of the army—is equipped with French *Lebel Modèle 1886* rifles. The aging cannons of the city have been replaced by modern Earth artillery and machine guns.

The French Commune maintains about 2 battalions (about 1,000 men) of the infamous Red Guard in the city. It is composed of sympathizers of the Commune from all nations who came to France to fight for the revolution. Though some would claim the Guards are only here because the Commune has no other use for them, it cannot be denied that this unit is exceptionally loyal and proud to serve.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

Though officially there is freedom of religion, actual practice of religious rites is frowned upon. The temples have been seized by the government and “handed over to the people”, which usually means that they have been given to the cooperative societies. Thus, the former temple to the water god now serves as a market hall, and in the temple of the Sun god, a cooperative society of veterinarians treats sick gashants.

Those who still follow one of the old (new) faiths do so in secret. Faith is considered “un-revolutionary” and quickly draws the ire of informants eager to oust enemies of the people to the panel for public safety. This panel is quick to send traitors to the mines or plantations for “reeducation”, that they might reconsider their ways. This panel is always busy, as the city is gripped by a certain paranoia. The former peons fear that their new freedoms might be taken away again, and suspiciously eye anyone who could be a spy or a traitor.

Humans in Idaeus

About 1,500 French people live in Idaeus. Besides the members of the Red Guard, these are mostly “advisors of the revolution”. As the British refuse to transmit the messages of the Commune via heliograph, the Communards must rely on their own courier ships which require weeks to travel to Earth. This has led to the political missionaries largely acting on their own authority, which at times leads to rash decisions and diplomatic fallout.

An important institution of the Commune is the *Institut martien des sciences*, which officially studies Martian history, though some treasure hunters claim that it actually seeks to find ancient miracle weapons to aid in the victory of socialism. The most positive aspect of the French presence is most likely the introduction of wine plantations. In 1880, the French planted the first grape fields and by now the project is yielding promising results. The red wine grown here has become a favorite of many Martians, while Earth wine connoisseurs tend to dismiss it as a mere curiosity.

Beside the French, about 100 Americans live in Idaeus, acting mostly as traders and struggling to convince the locals of their sympathy for the revolution. The installation of pneumatic dynamite cannons invented by the American *Edmund Zalinski* on the city walls has contributed greatly to these efforts, though.

The Long Woods - Xanthe

“Who has made you, you lovely Forest, built up so high there?”

— Joseph von Eichendorff

People: Canal Martians
Location: Southwest of Mare Acidalium
Languages: Na-Gaaryani, Koline
Cities: Lunae Lacus (*Amraataka*, pop.: 30,000), Xanthe (*Gashanera*, pop.: 50,000), Ophir (*Pak-aana*, pop.: 45,000), Candor, Baetis ☼

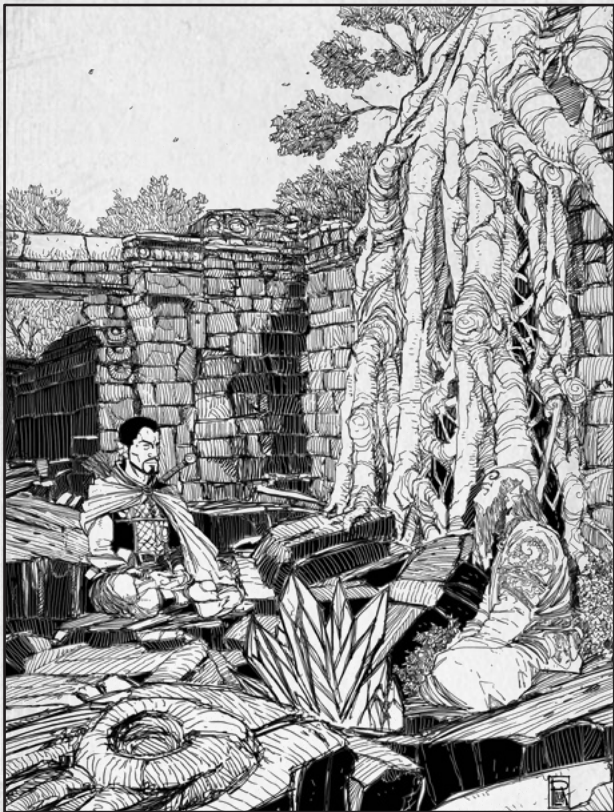
The bush and grass covered hills of Xanthe are mostly inhabited by wandering nomads who let their wukkaa herds graze here. Only the humid meadows along the canals allow for crops and gardens to be grown, in the shade of over 300-foot-tall trees (100 m). These fields belong to various small villages that have been built into the crowns of the giant trees to escape the Flood. Other settlements have been dug into the huge, hill-like roots of the trees. This green belt that stretches for 930 miles (1,500 km) along the canals to the southeast is known as the Long Woods by the Martians. The villages here are under the protection of the two large cities of the region: Xanthe—after which the region was named—and Lunae Lacus, which lies to the west of it. Both cities guard what is probably Mars’s greatest treasure—the ancient forest. It is a treasure threatened by greed and ignorance.

The Long Woods

Spread over a triangular area about the size of the Kingdom of Bavaria between the canals of Xanthe and Lunae Lacus, lies an impenetrable jungle of pine-like and leaf-bearing trees whose strange red and orange tones put any Earth autumn forest to shame. The trees and undergrowth cover steep hills and deep valleys, and hide countless old ruins, many of which are little more than a roof poking out from the ground. The climate is pleasantly cool, and a high humidity ensures frequent, dense fogs that give the branches and bushes a spooky appearance. The forest is carefully tended, and numerous animals and plants can be found here that are long extinct everywhere else on Mars. No one is allowed to disturb the fragile ecosystem of this old forest, and access to it is strictly forbidden to all “unworthy ones”. Few exceptions are ever made, and even the locals are barred from parts of it. Those few foreigners who are allowed access are mostly scholars, although a few artists have also been admitted. Only a few paths lead through the old forest and foreigners are restricted to those roads that follow the canals. Every caravan and every canal ferry is escorted by rangers who keep a close eye on the travelers.

History

The canal builders laid the canals very close together in this region to create much farmland to feed the hungry masses of the fading



planet. After the end of the canal builders, an agricultural society formed, governed by oligarchs from the cities. For millennia, the soil was drained again and again by intensive farming, until it yielded nothing anymore and the villages were abandoned. After the soil recovered decades later, the farmers would return and begin the cycle anew. The scholars recognized the connection, but their warnings were ignored by farmers and land owners alike.

When Seldon's troops came, endless monocultures covered the land that was just about to become a dusty wasteland once more. The scholars were able to convince Seldon to plant part of the region according to their designs, and only a few years later the first successes were apparent. The region between the canals was declared a protected zone, only to be farmed under strict and careful guidance. The Long Woods became the hunting grounds for the Seldonian rulers, off-limits to anyone but them and the rangers. When the Seldon Empire fell, the philosophy of the old scholars had become the religion of the forest dwellers, who now view the woods as a sacred site that must be protected if the people here are to survive.

The Hill Martian Nomads

And the forest must indeed be protected. The greatest threat is presented by the nomads of the surrounding steppes who repeatedly plunder the woods. To the Hill Martians, the woods are a kind of candy land, where they simply take anything they want. They will not see why they cannot simply let their herds graze or hunt as they please. To the nomads it is obvious that the gods gifted them with this forest to make their lives easier. And the gods will ensure that sufficient trees and game will grow. Only the rangers and the aerial flyers of the cities are keeping the nomads from destroying the forest.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

The forest dwellers worship the forest in its entirety as holy. Everything that lives in the woods—be it a tree, animal, mushroom, or man—is part of a spiritual whole. This “forest deity” is a living being that can only withstand foreign intruders and injuries within limits. This faith has neither temples nor special services. The woods are instead worshipped through everyday activities intended to preserve the balance of the system. Organic waste, for example, is gathered and composted to fertilize the plants of the forest where it is particularly needed. On special occasions or holidays (such as the beginning of the flowering season of specific plants), the faithful flock to special trees and thank the forest for its gifts. For each child born, a tree is planted, which the child will look after all their life. When a forest dweller dies, they are buried next to “their” tree, that they might nourish it. The souls of the dead become part of the forest, and when a tree dies, the soul is reborn into a new child.

There is a priesthood that, to humans, resembles ancient druid circles. These “forest priests” serve voluntarily while earning their living as farmers, crafters, or merchants. When a forest dweller believes themselves called to become a priest, they must face a council of priests and rangers. If accepted, aspirants will undergo a pilgrimage, several months long, to the old woods where they are initiated into the mysteries in a secret location.

Cities around the Woods

The City in the Woods - Lunae Lacus (Amraataka)

Amraataka grew out of an old hunting lodge built by Seldon V and is known today primarily for its scholars. The “city without walls” is home to about 30,000 people whose homes are spread over a wide area. These buildings are mostly hidden underneath trees, leaving Amraataka almost invisible from the air. The city has no walls; for protection, it relies on the dense forest, deep moats, and strategically placed explosives along its roadways.

The people of Amraataka mostly live off the trade of forest and agricultural products. The most important product is the “honey turnip”, an ugly root with a very high sugar content from which a sweet juice can be extracted. This juice is cooked into a syrup and sold all across Mars. The center of the city is an academy specialized in forestry and nature studies. Most of the 1,000 students come from the surrounding forest, but there are a few human students among the Martians, predominantly from Scandinavia. Amraataka is one of the few democracies on Mars, though only the priests have the right to vote. The numerous forest priests elect a council that governs the city. The highest officers of the rangers automatically have a seat on this council and can block decisions with a veto if they fear for the safety of the woods—but this veto must be unanimous between all officers.

Xanthe (Gashanera)

Apart from its many trees, Gashanera is a typical canal city. It has been ruled by the same dynasty for centuries, with Canal Princess

Mavaaka VII being the most recent head of state. Mavaaka was a ranger and the scourge of the poachers and canal pirates before she took the office six years ago. She is married to a former colleague and the mother of four children.

Like in Amraataka, the economic basis of Gashanera relies on the trade of its agricultural and forest products. The city is one of the largest trade hubs for these products, which must bear the seal of the rangers in order to be sold. This trade is controlled by an upper class of rich merchant lords, who rule Gashanera along with the Princess from her throne council. These merchants generously support the rangers with money and staff. In exchange, the merchants of Gashanera are the only ones who may sell products from the woods. The regular troops and aerial flyers of the city often join forces with the rangers to fight off larger threats.

Ophir (Pakaana)

Ophir is under massive pressure. Ever since the Belgians took over the Coprates, countless refugees have fled into the city. The city must now care for its 40,000 inhabitants and another 5,000 refugees, most of which are being housed in ancient ruins and several tent cities. Many of these refugees are determined to take vengeance against the Belgians and repeatedly march out to strike into the occupation zone. The Belgian colonial government in response keeps giving ultimatums to Ophir to act against these "criminals and Worm cultists", and has reinforced its troops in the border regions. At the same time, the creation of the colonial territory has taken Pakaana's most lucrative trade partners, forcing the caravan masters to seek new sources of income. The woods to the northeast of the city are the most promising. Wood, game, and in particular the fertile soil could generate the profits necessary to save the merchants of Ophir.

Humans in the Long Woods

So far, only few humans have found their way into this region, mostly students and natural scientists who study the woods and share their findings with the rangers. There are also a few American merchants living in Xanthe, whence they export exotic woods to Earth.

The presence of a few French artists who arrived in Xanthe in 1886 is of note. Their works delighted the priests so much that the artists were granted access to the ancient forest, a privilege no other foreigner has ever received. Both Martian dignitaries and other Earth artists have protested this, as these so-called *Impressionists* break most of the established rules of art. Their style doesn't even find many admirers in their own French home, but *Paul Gauguin*, leader of the group, is convinced that his "School

The Rangers (→ see p. 195)

Part religious order, part wildlife preservers, part scientists, the rangers are the guardians of the Long Woods. About 3,000 men and women have voluntarily taken on the task of protecting the forest by becoming rangers. After initiation into the group, the members undergo several years of training during which they learn everything they need for their tasks. Once training is complete, they become fully qualified rangers, acting as scouts, foresters, and natural scientists. Besides their main task of performing deep patrols of the woods, they raise new plant species in experimental gardens, replant exhausted areas, and work on the farms and lumber camps whose profits finance the rangers.

Besides the academy in Lunae Lacus and a barracks in Xanthe, the group also maintains a number of smaller outposts spread across the entire forest. Each of them consists of a large tree house in which usually about a dozen rangers are stationed. Their patrols are conducted on foot or on gashant. For their work on the canals, they also possess a few small vessels. The group has no aerial flyers, but if needed they will be supported by flyers from the city fleets.

The rangers are primarily armed with muskets, though it is planned to switch to modern Winchester rifles across the board. The group has no heavy weaponry, only a few of the canal barges having mounted swivel guns. These are also slated to be upgraded to modern Earth designs.

The rangers are highly motivated and far from shy, as many have discovered. The rangers also protect the ancient ruins spread across the forest, which have been drawing more and more attention from archaeologists and treasure hunters in the last few years. Only the initiated know that some of those ruins hold special meaning for the rangers and the priests.

of Xanthe" will prevail. The style appears to speak to the Martians, and an exhibition in Tossia last summer drew many visitors. The Tossian Emperor even purchased Gauguin's "Four Dancers in the Forest" for the impressive sum of £50.

The Empire of Zavaar

People: High Martians
Location: Highlands of Chryse
Languages: Gaashwaan and tribal dialects

The hills of Chryse are home to High Martians who prey upon the entire Green Vein and the surrounding regions with their aerial flyers. Their leaders have long since recognized that protection rackets bring in more money than theft, and thus focus more on collecting tributes as opposed to plundering the region. One should not make the mistake of considering them weak for this,

though—these barbarians are as vicious as any of their kind, and their new leader is acting with exceptional determination.

History

As with many High Martian tribes, the nature of their ancestors is lost to the ages. They themselves claim that they came to Chryse as mercenaries for Seldon and drove weaker hordes from these kraags. The chronicles of the Canal Martians however claim that they were slaves of those High Martians, which were wiped out by Seldon's troops during the conquest. The only certainty is that they have lived in the cave fortresses of the steppe edges ever since. Their loud, obscene songs tell of a large succession of chieftains who each reached power due to displays of strength or cunning, only to die gloriously or be cunningly murdered. Only very recently, this chain was broken with a remarkable change of pace.

Government and Society

(↔ see p. 200)

There are about 20 kraags in the hills around Chryse, each home to a horde of about 2,000 to 5,000 of these wildlings. Generally, each horde is led by its strongest fighter, who is supported by a group of vassals. In the past, these hordes have constantly warred with one another, fighting over women, gold, hunting grounds, or aerial flyers. At times, a chieftain would become strong enough to conquer another kraag, resulting in a short-lived "King of the Air", until he would die during yet another conquest or be murdered by jealous rivals.

In 1884, *Zavaar*, chieftain of a minor kraag, gained surprising support from the outside. An unknown power supplied weapons and money, which enabled him to subjugate his neighbors. It is

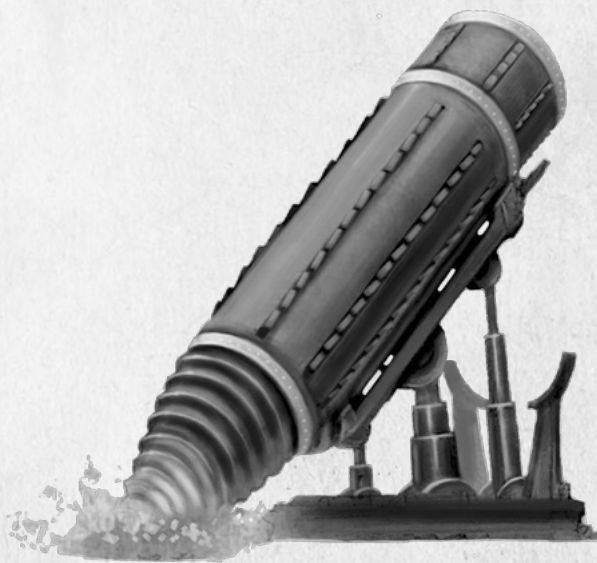
likely the counsel of this benefactor that made *Zavaar* *not* execute the followers of the conquered chieftains. Instead, he absorbed them into his horde to fight for him, offering rewards of gold, wine, and women. *Zavaar*'s own followers became stewards or aerial flyer captains, allowing his empire and the wealth of his horde to grow.

By now, *Zavaar* is recognized by the surrounding nations as the "ruler of Chryse". The nearby cities pay tribute to him in exchange for safe passage for their ships, flyers, and caravans, and the lords of Ophir are negotiating with him to forge an alliance against the forest priests of Xanthe (p. 110), hoping to seize the riches of the Long Woods for themselves.

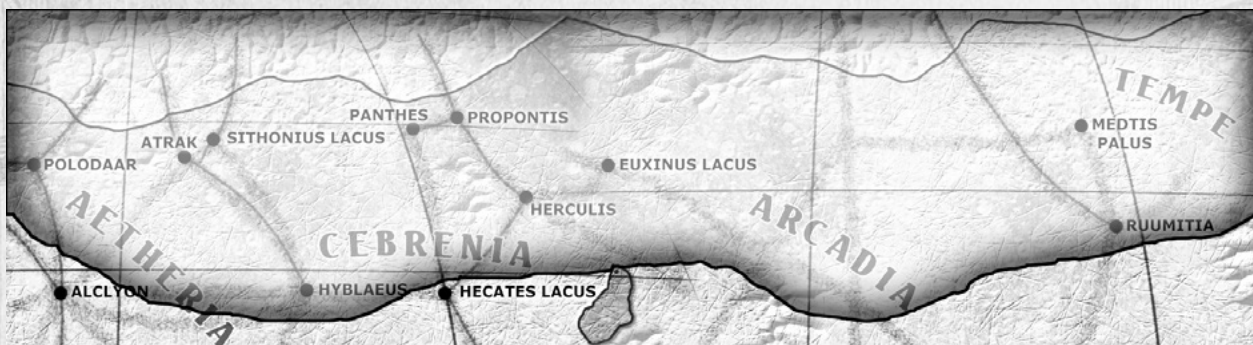
The forest priests seek means of stopping such an alliance, and all of Mars is wondering who is backing *Zavaar*. All of the Martian empires and all of Earth's colonial powers deny any involvement with the flying barbarians, and none of the spies sent to investigate have ever returned.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

The High Martians of Chryse also worship the Worm who lives inside the planet and will one day destroy it. He will spare his loyal followers, though, should they offer sufficient tribute. That is why the Chryse High Martians hoard wealth and treasures for the coming end of the world. To gain fame and status, a member of a horde must first gather appropriate wealth. The easiest way to achieve this is to serve the chieftain well in order to be rewarded with a share of his income. A warrior will then directly gain status by displaying the wealth this income brings him, or by using it to purchase weapons, luxury goods, or women. Sometimes, a group of warriors pool their money to purchase an aerial flyer and heads out to raid distant lands. Should they return successfully, *Zavaar* will be granted a portion of the plunder as a sign of respect, so that the King of the Air might assign them better hunting grounds instead of exiling them from the horde.



The Northern Polar Region



"This is a different kind of gashant, lad. Will carry you even when they start freezing solid. And in the end, you can always just roast them, so always bring along a few extra ones."

— Damien van Owen, trapper from Polodaar

Geography (↗ p. 201)

When cartographers speak of the Northern Polar Region of Mars, they refer to the polar ice cap, but also to the vast, cold steppes that surround it. More specifically, the northern rim regions of *Aetheria*, *Cebrenia*, *Amazonia*, and *Tempe*.

This region is, along with its counterpart in the southern hemisphere, the origin of the water supply for Mars's canal network. To the locals, it is a blessing to be this close to the life-giving waters. At the same time, it can be a curse, if the gushing glacial waters aren't kept under control during the Flood season. While water racing through the canals in the South is celebrated, up here in the North, it spills over the canal banks. Overland travel becomes dangerous, and the settlers fear for their homes. Water here represents both life and decay.

Where the ice melts, water will also evaporate and—along with dust and carbon dioxide—enter a cycle that results in precipitation across both Polar Regions, the only ones on Mars where this occurs. Snow falls and freezes back into ice. The polar cap never fully melts, much of the ice always remains. What science has not yet discovered: The total area of the moving, melting, and re-freezing glaciers is declining a little every year.

Natural resources are rare or as yet undiscovered in the Polar Regions. If the Japanese have found exploitable minerals, and if that is why they are present in Euxinus Lacus, then they are keeping it a secret. In fact, the most valuable deposits are hidden under the glacial ice.

It is immensely difficult to exploit any find in the ice regions. Human diggers are exceedingly rare, while hunters and trappers are somewhat common. Travel is dangerous, as many crashed flyer wrecks that haven't been washed back into a canal yet can attest to. They are rotten and often plundered clean, although the occasional ancient one may be of interest to archaeologists.

While traveling on foot or gashant, there is always the danger of breaking through the ice over a lake to drown or freeze to death. In the glacier regions, thinly iced-over crevasses present a similar danger of deadly falls. Impassable chasms at times block the way, adding days to the journey as one must walk around them. In the

mountains, careless hikers cause avalanches. In the southern parts of the North Polar region, sand storms can occur. There is also quicksand, which is almost impossible to spot before it is too late.

Climate

The axis of planetary rotation being tilted very much like Earth's is, at the poles half of the Martian year is bright day while the other half is dark night, relieved by aurorae much less frequently than on Earth. The two poles are offset by half a Martian year: when one is in sunlight, the other is in darkness. The Flood and Flow seasons of each Martian hemisphere are also offset by half a Martian year. Being in continuous sunlight around the time of the Flood and Flow is quite handy for charging solar boilers. It is likely that massive water wheels also used to exist, to capture the energy of the rapidly flowing waters—although none have been found so far.

Tears of the Sun (↗ p. 195)

It is said that the Sun goddess *Paal* rewards those that survive a particularly harsh Low Flow season by shedding colorful tears to mourn their dead. These gems allegedly simply rain from the sky.

Many explorers report seeing a sparkle in the ice. A few have even brought home small stones that shine sapphire blue or amethyst purple in the sunlight. They are hard, but also brittle, like volcanic glass. Who knows how many more of these could be out there?

One needs to know where to look: Places where the Sun has carved gullies or tunnels into the ice by melting the water. These gems are sometimes simply washed ashore at the springs off the tributaries of the grand canals. Specimens can reach a few inches long. Tears of the Sun reaching over a yard in size are occasionally found lodged far deeper beneath the surface.

Temperatures around 32 degrees Fahrenheit (0 °C) are common in this region. Especially at night, it is fearsomely cold. During Low Flow (winter), dark blue clouds will form in the sky, and during the day it will then snow. When the temperatures rise during the Flood (spring), mists can form. Depending on the season and how far away from the pole one is, sand or snow storms become a serious threat.

From the pole all the way to the cities, the climate zones succeed each other in fixed order: Eternal ice (that never melts), glacial ice (partially melts during the Flood season and fills the canals), swamp (underwater during the Flow season), cold steppe (comparable to Earth's tundra; plains with mountain ranges that keep the meltwaters away and redirect it), and finally canal cities (within range of the water, but spared from any flooding).

Flora and Fauna

The water and cold have ensured that mosses, grasses, shrubs, as well as some few needle-bearing pine-like trees have spread throughout the region. The most common plant here is the Martian cabbage. Liftwood also grows here, on the mountain slopes of Cebrenia and Tempe, as well as north of Euxinus Lacus.

The eegar herds grazing on the cold steppes are a common sight. Crafters make good use of their horns, and they are a great source of meat and fur.

Gashants are found here too, but with a darker skin tone, presumably to better absorb heat. Their thick, insulating fat layers beneath the skin are the result of adapting to the cold climate.

The cold-blooded cissawaans are only active during the Flow season, and otherwise hibernate, crawling together into great piles in caves and burrows. It is unwise to wake such a lizard pile.

One of the most dangerous predators of the ice region is the 20-foot-long (6 m) snow-worm (**Space: 1889 Core rules**, p. 73), followed by the flying eelowaans and skrolls, the great kommotas as well as wocnids and roogies with particularly thick fur. Spider

hounds must have lived in the canals here at some point at least, for now and then one of the highly popular spider cloth armor sets (p. 168) surfaces here. More on these creatures can be found in the chapter **Flora and Fauna** starting p. 135 and in the Core rules, pp. 72–77.

Population

While the North is more sparsely settled than for example the basins, a few **isolated** merchant cities are found around the polar region—some near the glaciers, others almost halfway to the desert. When the ice melts, the water that does not flow into the canals as intended reaches latitudes all the way to that of **Euxinus Lacus**, the city-state under Japanese influence.

The city-dwelling Boreans are Canal Martians of short, stocky stature. There is an indigenous Hill Martian tribe in **Tempe** as well as scattered Euxinus tribes and hunter clans near the edges of the glaciers who have never yet seen a human. Some Hill Martians make a living as survival experts in the cities or help out as mercenaries to protect the canal cities against attacks by the High Martians of the **ice kraags**.

Wild North

Toughened trappers wander the endless cold steppes. Lonely gashant riders disappear into the horizon of the polar night. Snow and dust bury entire settlements. City folk argue and cheat each other out of gambling debts or engage in duels while in drug-induced stupors. Proud law keepers proclaim themselves judges and grim Hill Martians defend their homes against intruders—the Northern Polar Region is a western setting, the only difference being that it is not new settlements that are faced with harsh and cruel lives in the unknown, but rather ancient decaying canal cities.

The Merchant Cities of the North


Dear niece, what should I write you of Polodaar? During the Flood, it stinks, in the winter it freezes to ice. A pathetic lump of crooked towers. I will travel on first thing tomorrow.

— From “**Letters to Spuulin**”, travel reports of **Quuhom Kaldaariks**, 18th century

People: Canal Martians

Location: Aetheria, Cebrenia

Languages: Cebreni, Koline

Cities: Polodaar (outpost, pop.: 30,000), Atrak , Sithonius Lacus (*Ghnool*, City of Lights, pop.: 40,000), Hyblaeus (*Quueshabh*, crime guilds, pop.: 35,000), Panthes (*Fhnuukpaalquomi*, agriculture, pop.: 25,000), Propontis (*Hnoolquofnuumi*, port city, pop.: 45,000), Herculis (*Agthavuul*, melting pot, pop.: 50,000)

The independent canal cities at the edge of the polar cold steppes are far away from the glaciers, forming the final outposts of civilization before the actual polar region.

Territory

The canal cities of the North do not form a unified nation. Each city-state is on its own, though some trade occurs along the canals via ship or caravans (and, rarely, via aerial flyers). The canal cities of the **Tempe region** (p. 120) as well as the city-state of **Euxinus Lacus** are sometimes considered part of it.

Government, Politics, Society

The *Anwaak* (or *mohaani* in Hyblaeus) is the canal prince (or princess) of the city-state, usually supported by a council. He acts as administrator and military commander in chief, and also

maintains diplomatic ties with all neighbors. These areas of jurisdiction are sometimes spread amongst multiple members of the ruling family.

Saarpak-Naado - The Revolver Knights

The guardians of peace and justice are considered to be competent public servants, superfluous anachronisms, or outcast troublemakers, depending on the city-state. The members of the ancient imperial order pass secret knowledge from master to apprentice, as well as their saarpaks—legendary multi-shot muzzle loaders of exceptional precision and firepower (p. 167). They hunt criminals singlehandedly, and bring them to justice according to a strict code.

The naado is law and order. No one is above the law. No one is above suspicion. No suspect is guilty until proven so. Those who are found guilty forfeit all rights.

Admired by some, feared by others, a naado is of great value when it comes to keeping order in an isolated, run-down city and

its surrounding area without simply casting out all criminals to prowl the wasteland.

At their peak, there used to be hundreds of naados in the metropolises of the North. Today, even the greatest of the city-states maintain no more than a dozen, each village one at most. Exiled naados have been working as masked vigilantes as far back as the decline of the Seldon Empire and are said to have left the odd secret lair in some of the catacombs, while a few lone, wandering naados tend to take the law entirely into their own hands wherever they appear. Many naado bloodlines have died out since. The current masters tend to “adopt” promising apprentices instead. In many places on Mars, the saarpak-naados are legends of adventure stories. The popular novel “The Scarlet Naado” was recently published in England.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

Boreaan culture is very pragmatic. This is obvious right down to fashion: Elaborate mantles are only worn by some of the nobility. The people wear warm, simple fur and leather clothes.

The main focus of life is surviving the harsh environment of cold and floods. In many places, the very same levees that broke the year before during the Flood are rebuilt over and over again, without a single thought spent on how to make them last better this time.

Crime is widespread. One often has to simply take whatever is needed to survive the day. The nobles in the administration do what they can to stem these habits, but at the same time, they are more than open to bribes and influence peddling. Where there are no naados to ensure law and order, vigilantism is commonplace. Some arguments can be settled with a pub brawl, others with a duel in the streets at noon.

The regional pantheon includes *Paal*, the giver of sunlight and fertility goddess, *Hnool*, the unpredictable water giver, as well as *Ghemi*, the down to earth crafting goddess who rewards daily diligence. The *cunning moon* (male) and the *tempting moon* (female) are dubious deities. The *God at the Heart of the World* plays only a minor role. The *Worm cult* acts in secret in some of the cities.

The Merchant Cities

Polodaar

Once a northern outpost of the Empire, this former metropolis has only been able to survive after the fall of the Seldon Empire thanks to the regional fur trade. During the wetter seasons, the hunter nomads come to this city to barter their wares, in which they compete with the city-dwelling trappers.

With about 30,000 inhabitants (including the surrounding farmlands), only a tenth of the original population remains, spread over the same area. This is reflected in the ring-like construction of the city.

The outer ring is devastated by the yearly floods, and mostly consists of wall remnants sinking into the mud.

The middle ring is where the lower class lives, in the ruins of former living towers and dried-up sewer side tunnels. The hygiene standards are terrible, the level of education low, and the crime rate very high. One of the towers serves as the **headquarters of the order of the Saarpak-Naado** (17). It is surprisingly well-

The Boreaan Language Family

Boreaan was the language of earlier inhabitants of the Northern Polar Region. Today, there are many dialects descended from it, and Boreaan has spread almost to the equator through migrations to the warmer South.

The canal cities of Aetheria, Cebrenia, Elysium, and the Eastern Amenthes all speak **Cebreni** now. South of Hecates Lacus, divergences from the language are becoming apparent, with **Dead River Cebreni** almost constituting its own language. **Zaph** however, is only spoken in the city and territory of Zephyria.

Linguists believe Boreaan to have parallels to the language of the Inuit, though it does feature extraterrestrial traits such as additional consonants (transcribed as dh, fh, etc.) that do not occur in Earth languages. Common consonants are pronounced sharply and form a contrast to the frequent double vowels, including ou and uo. The ritual songs are a very special case, as their melodies only match Cebreni singing.

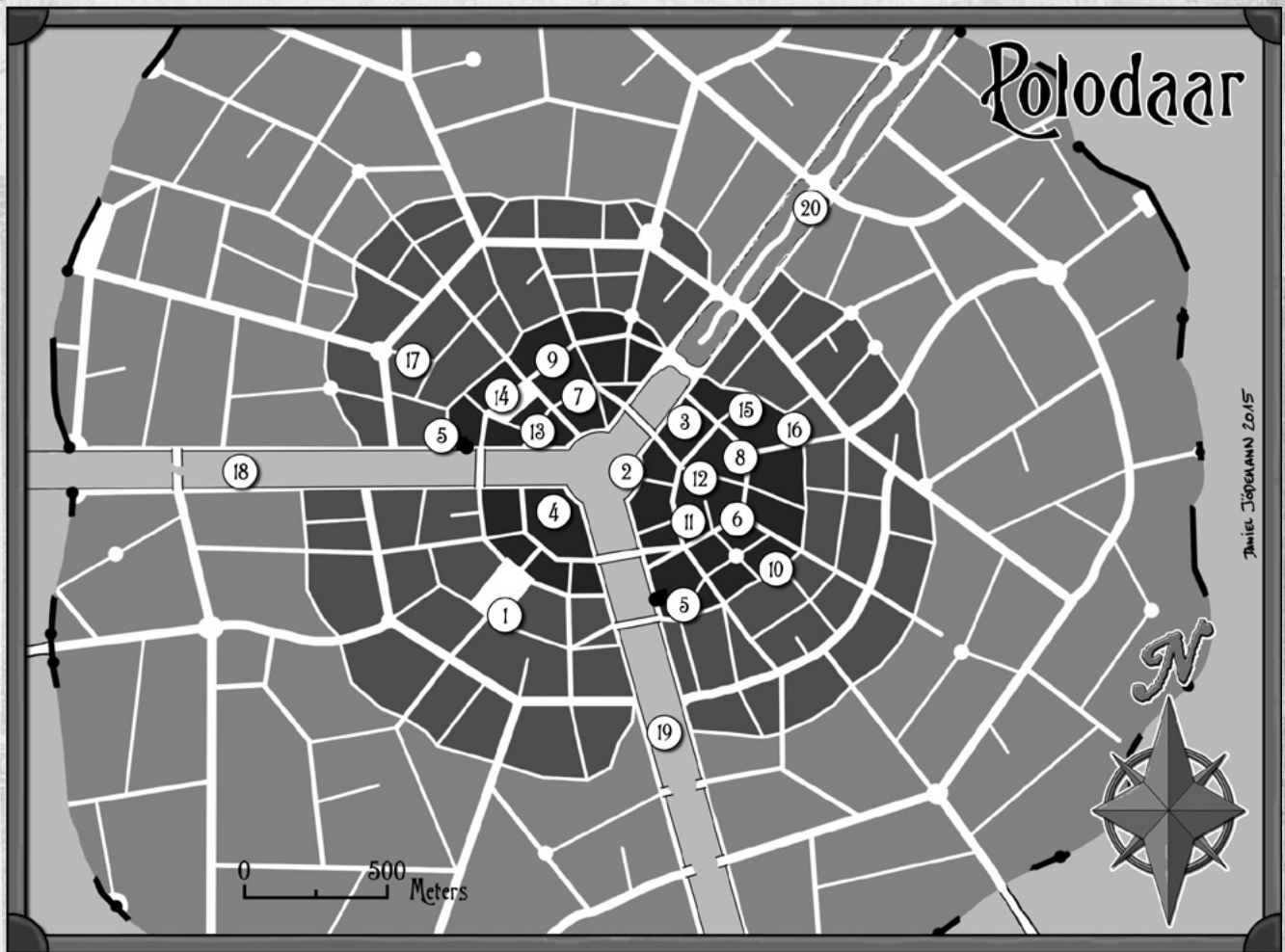
Grammatically speaking, the Boreaan languages have influenced Bootnai (p. 67) over the course of their spread. Both language families can end up using very long expressions. In the past, Boreaan featured its own symbolic alphabet that can still be found in some cave paintings. Today, it is written using the Gaaryani alphabet.

Paadhlee! – Have a wonderful day!

Quuokhmaafhi! – Stop that thief!

Theenaadam. Dhuuquaalii. – I am the law. You are under arrest.

Theanthaq (jou)dhuokii! – I challenge you to a(n honorable) duel!



Daniel J. JOHANN 2015

preserved and secured by traps. This is where traveling naados store their gear and documents.

Only the inner ring and its protective dams meet the standards of the more southern canal cities, and serve as a refuge for the middle class. Here, gantries and rickety bridges made of wood connect the populated, higher levels of the buildings, ensuring that even during high floods no one needs to get wet feet. The **landing field (1)** for aerial flyers rests on top of pillars. From here, foreign dignitaries can quickly reach the hexagonal, so-called **ice crystal cathedral (4)** which includes the tower of the Anwaak, currently *Salaskaartuq II*, as well as the council hall. Some of the few sights worth seeing are the **temples of Paal, Hnool, and Ghemi (6–8)**, as well as a **hall dedicated to the moon gods (9)**, which sometimes serves as an observatory. The priests also work at the **hospital (10)**.

Canal barges still travel the **Alcyon canal (19)** to the south and the **canal to Umbra (18)**. Trade with the Boreosyrtris League is conducted through the **port (2)**, where arriving ships are first searched by the soldiers of the respective **guard towers (5)**. Food then makes its way to the **market halls (11)**, while more specialized goods are sold by the **artisans (12)** in the **tanners' district (13)** and on the **cattle market (14)**.

The **northern canal (20)** is one of the tributaries feeding the network of the northern hemisphere. During Flood season it is completely washed out. During Low Flow, it lies dry and empty, as though dead. During that season, gashant riders use it as a road to the **caravansary (3)** or the **trapper station (15)**. The caravansary also serves as an inn, while the pub **Hot Spring (16)** is warm but also quite run down. An American can be found among the trap-

pers, the former gold digger *Damien van Owen* (60, short and stocky, bald, dark beard, competent but unreliable).

Sithonius Lacus (Ghpool, see p. 194)

While the city approaches the darker half of the year, during which the Sun shines all too briefly and weakly, it is difficult to trust one's eyes. Like fireflies, bright lights in the city center shine into the polar night.

The port promenade is brightly lit and goes by many stores and cook shops for those on a stroll. Upon closer inspection, each street lantern will reveal a single, thick lens made of a convex crystal. It is said that these crystals store up the sunlight of the summer and radiate it back out during the all-too-long winter nights. How exactly this works, no one can explain anymore. Only members of the *polishers' guild* are allowed to touch the crystals.

Across the western polar region, the street lights of Ghnool are considered one of the eight *Uulan Pathaanaq* ("Ethereic Wonders of the World"). The lanterns light up a path to the Paal-temple. Inside, it is warm without a single fire burning.

Hyblaeus (Queshabh)

This city lies close to the desert tribes of *Elysium* (p. 92), at the junction of five canals, four of them dry. Access to drinking water is controlled by the noble families, and strict rationing is in

Northern Polar Region

place. However, the high ration fees have caused severe poverty in the population.

This has encouraged the growth of petty crime, which in time has organized. Today, smuggling, thieves' and assassins' guilds compete in the underground of the city. They hide in the beds of the dried-up canals, in the maze of canal side tunnels and the entrances to the old catacombs. Here, they have made an interesting discovery. One guild found a camp of the Saarpak-Naado, and is now equipped with weapons and spider cloth armor (p. 168). Another group found groundwater and opened up a black-market water trade. A third guild found a cache of stolen goods belonging to the first guild and took possession of it. Thus the struggle continues, with no winner in sight. The ruler, Mohaani *Dhona IV*, is more than content with this. As long as the guilds fight and divide their spoils, there can be no unified threat and thus no rebellion.

But it's not like all guild members were constantly looting or revenge killing. The mazes are home to the families of the lower class as well. Children play, families cook and play music, and, together, the next heist is carefully planned.

Panthes (Fhndookpaalqoomi)

This is an agricultural city. The canal builders created fine-branched irrigation systems just outside the west gates. The Flood is thus carefully directed, and there is water available for the fields and paddocks all year round.

The Panthese have domesticated the six-legged wocnids and keep them for their fur and meat, both for themselves and for export. The shepherds of the wocnid herds are tough Canal Martians who spend most of their lives under the open sky and know how to use their muzzle loader rifles to fight off cattle thieves. Generally, the animals do not belong to the shepherds, who instead work for the landowner's family. The most important tool of their trade is an up to date map of the paddock divisions. Land and cattle have both become units of currency in Panthes, and the frequent buying and selling moves the property borders about. Should a shepherd lose track of an animal in the hopelessly divided plains and should that animal end up wandering onto a neighbor's property, then by law it passes into their possession. As these borders are not marked on the ground, there are frequent arguments, which at times lead to bloody feuds.

Propontis (Hhoolqoofnaami)

This port city is a trade hub for animal products from the west and goods from the southern cities, which by now also includes goods bartered from humans. Many of the port workers are convicts from all over Cebrenia. They are easy to spot by the chains around their feet which limit the length of their stride. It

is possibly advantageous to Propontis that two rival Earth powers, Japan and Russia, are present in the region. At least Japan appears to be intent on treating the city as neutral and keeping the Russian military away from it.

The canal shipping does attract High Martians from the **ice kraags** (p. 122), though. Time and again they will attack the Herculis cargo barges passing by the eastern mountains. Recently, they have been acquiring Earth-made tools and weapons as part of their plunder.

Propontis is defined by the water and the spiritual center of the Hnool faith. At a lock halfway to Herculis, a small canal branches off to the west where it leads to a cenote. During the Flood season, the glacial waters create a thirty-foot-tall (10 m) waterfall as they pour into the cenote. Pilgrims pass under the waterfall as they descend along a path carved into the cenote's sheer walls. This passage is considered as a kind of ritualistic baptism. Upon reaching the lake at the bottom, the pilgrims board a sacred boat, which is then steered through an underground cave labyrinth lit by the blue glow of fungal growths on its walls. Following a specific pattern of lights will soon lead to a glass door in the floor, the entrance to the Hnool Sanctum. A short dive will lead one to meet eight priests behind an airlock. Besides religious texts, ancient knowledge on strange hydraulic artifacts and machines is stored here. During Low Flow, this chamber is empty and guarded by a code lock. The sacred boat is stored somewhere in the caves during that time. Accessing the caves during that season is nearly impossible as the descending path stops opposite the entrance and the sacred lake's level is now lower by another thirty feet (10 m) or more.

Herculis (Agthavool)

The majority of the population of this cultural melting pot is Canal Martian. Hill Martians of the Euxinus tribes (p. 121) and humans of at least two nations can also be found in the many street markets and taverns, though. In the taverns, card games are played, illegal gashant races are bet on, illicit goods swap hands, and dubious treasure maps are peddled that likely have been passed around half of the polar region by now. The bustling humans have only accelerated the pace of trade in items and information here in Cebrenia, as well as that of the political machinations. A Japanese embassy has recently opened in the city center.

Anwaak *Ilivoth IX* is considering a military alliance with the Japanese in *Euxinus Lacus*, now that the Russian colonists have reinforced Herculis's rival *Hecates Lacus*. However, the local Saarpak-Naado *Thuvvajouna* is viewing the meddling of the non-Martians with concern. She doesn't want them to get the idea that they are above or outside the law, which in this city-state is still her domain.

Japan and Euxinus Lacus

People: Humans (Japanese), Canal Martians
Location: Far north of Amazonia
Languages: Japanese, Cebreni, Koline
Cities: Euxinus Lacus (*Khourivhaak*, pop.: 60,000)

The Japanese do not follow the usual strategies of colonial powers on Mars. Their expedition has orbited the planet for months, to finally land and take possession of this specific place near the city of Euxinus Lacus. Euxinus Lacus itself has largely maintained its freedom, however.

History

The Japanese Empire began its ether flight project in 1873 with the explicit goal of forming a Mars colony. The first expedition finally took place in 1884 and after almost a year of scouting Mars, Japanese scientists eventually chose a village near Euxinus Lacus to become the first outpost of the Empire. After short and, in the eyes of the Japanese, fruitless negotiations with the villagers, the Japanese simply seized the village by military force and drove out its inhabitants. They then immediately constructed *Unebi Station*, part science outpost and part barracks. It is exceptionally well guarded and no Martian nor human from outside Japan has ever set foot inside. Since then, a number of trade agents and government delegates have come to Euxinus Lacus to expand Japan's influence there.

The Japanese Way

Apart from the initial seizure of the area around Unebi Station, the Japanese have shown little aggression in their movements on Mars. Though they would have been able to easily seize Euxinus Lacus by force as well, they have instead signed a few exclusive, but by no means one-sided, agreements with the Anwaak of the city. They repaired the damage done by their arrival, and now enjoy a good reputation with most Canal Martians.

They have also sent delegates to various cities in the area. Russia and its efforts towards Herculis are of particular concern to Japan; the expansion of the Russian Mars colony is viewed with the same concern as the Russian influence over the Korean peninsula on Earth. But so far, they have restricted themselves to diplomatic exchanges and trade to encourage and support the independence of Herculis and Propontis.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

Though the ether flight program was conducted on the authority of the Imperial Japanese Army, Count *Yasushi Hashimoto*, the Imperial representative on Mars, also enlisted the services of a few former samurai. But whether Imperial officers or samurai, they all view most Martians as inferior, defeated foes and accordingly treat them with little respect in their daily dealings. Only those who follow some semblance of an honor code, such as traveling Saarpak-Naado or some of the local Hill Martian tribes, are shown respect. This is a requirement to even begin to compare the differing views of honor.

Bushido

With the abolishment of their rank in the year 1869 and the resulting loss of their privileges, many samurai have been searching for new occupations, be it in the economy or the civil service. A few, however, remained faithful to the Bushido code and found a new opportunity on Mars to live by their convictions, wear their traditional armor and the paired swords, and still serve the Emperor. The Bushido is their honor code: it is passed down orally and defines their conduct in all aspects of life. It is based around the core idea of seven virtues and five challenges to the warrior. The most well-known are of course absolute loyalty to their lords and a readiness to sacrifice one's life at any moment to serve said lord or the values of Bushido.



Yamato-damashii

The supposedly more modern version of Bushido is also common within the Imperial Japanese Army. This "Spirit of Yamato"—the province where Emperor Jimmu legendarily founded Japan—not just guides the life of warriors, but includes all Japanese traditions, though loyalty to the Emperor and the glory of serving and if need be dying for him are the primary focus amongst the soldiers. This spirit of determination in the face of great danger, to never surrender, can—so it is taught—simply not be understood by foreigners.

Unebi Station (↔ see p. 200)

While Count Yasushi Hashimoto commands the overall mission to Mars, the military is led by General *Baron Masakuza Ichamura*, a key supporter of military modernization and opponent of the idea of samurai on Mars. The scientific part of the mission is led by *Masahiro Okazima*, who studied at the University of Leipzig. He is accompanied by his wife *Yukari*, who has officially never studied, but is still able to assist her husband with equal skill.

Military

Two battalions of the 23rd Infantry regiment, supported by the 44th Field Battery and four squadrons of the 1st Cavalry regiment are stationed at Unebi Station. Furthermore, the air ships *Mikasa* and *Yashima* are based here. A third ship, the *Rakio*, is currently under construction in Euxinus Lacus. One company of infantry is always stationed at the Japanese embassy in Euxinus Lacus on a rotating basis. The troops are equipped according to Western standards, only the katanas of the officers still call to mind the image of samurai, as well as regularly causing friction with said samurai, who still view it as their privilege to bear these weapons.

Euxinus Lacus (Khouriwhaak)

Euxinus Lacus was founded about 5,000 years ago and grew slowly. About 1,000 years ago, the canals dried out, forcing the city to rely on the annual Flood riptides. It is no small wonder that Euxinus Lacus never grew to become wealthy nor a major political player. It can barely even support its 60,000 inhabitants with its limited water reserves and minor trade volume brought in by caravans and aerial flyers. Ever since the Japanese arrived in 1885, followed by further Earth powers, trade has seen an upswing, however, and for the first time in its history, other Martian nations view Euxinus Lacus with interest.

Government

Anwaak *Sasidaar* rules the city, advised by a council made up of members of the corrupt upper class. Though the Japanese have obeyed the laws of the city, save the seizing of the lands around Unebi Station, *Sasidaar* feels personally insulted by their aggressive methods and now waits for an opportunity to take revenge. He has even recently sent envoys to the Russians in Hecates Lacus.

Military

The air fleet of the city, “The Anwaak’s Arm”, consists of eight aerial flyers, while the army is made up of 14 bands of infantry, 7 bands of cavalry, and 14 heavy guns. The level of training is

low and the standard of equipment poor. A large number of the soldiers bear only medieval weapons, meaning that Euxinus Lacus is essentially defenseless against modern forces. The Japanese keep most of their forces near Unebi Station and only post a small unit inside Euxinus Lacus to guard their embassy.

Humans in the City

The Japanese are renting a large property on which they have stationed a company of infantry, as well as a large number of diplomats, trade agents, and their staff. Additionally, they are leasing, and thus controlling, several central facilities as per the local laws, including the city’s shipyard. Great Britain, France, and Russia maintain small consulates, mostly to keep an eye on the city’s development and the activities of the Japanese.

Ruins of Amazonia

The dried-up canal that leads southwest from Euxinus Lacus eventually connects to the canal between Herculis and Olympia. Here, the ruins of a city lie in the dust, its name long forgotten. A Japanese science team has, however, uncovered several stelae covered in Arcadian symbols and now seeks to decipher their meaning. For this, they have attempted to contact the Hill Martians of the region (p. 121) who to this day continue to use a derivative of the Arcadian alphabet, unlike the Canal Martians of Euxinus Lacus. Whether this has anything to do with the activities inside Unebi Station is unknown.

The Hill Tribes of Tempe

People: Hill Martians
Location: Tempe steppe
Language: Tempes

For more than 10,000 Mars years (approximately 19,000 Earth years), Hill Martians have lived and hunted in the Tempe steppe. When the canal builders came, burned trenches into the ground and built the cities of *Medtis Palus* (cool, floods in the summer, conditions as in *Polodaar*) and *Ruumitia* (warmer, canal access, but too isolated to become a trade hub), the hill tribes resisted—and were defeated. For a long time, the people coexisted, but now, in light of the dying strength of the canal civilization, many dream of retaking the ancient territories.

Territory

The hill people live to the north and east of the canal cities. The dead end of the *Ruumitia canal* marks the border where, millennia ago, a ceremonial oath on ancestors and descendants to come brought peace between the hill people and the canal builders.

Tempes Language Family

Tempes is the only language of this eponymous family. It occurs from the Tempe core region to *Mare Acidalium*. Canal Martians use the Gaaryani alphabet to write it.

In the eyes of the Hill people, though, writing down a word changes its true meaning as only a simplified form is recorded without tone. True honesty is to tell someone one’s opinion to their face. History is passed on only orally, though a remarkable amount of knowledge about history, nature, and medicine has been preserved.

Nuume – Good day (indifferent)
Nuumea – Good day (genuinely interested)
Goore – Farewell
Kho’ore – Farewell forever!
To vames, tos yaames – Your will (or possibly: rage) is strong.
T’asquillam Ruumitian’keelt – literally: walking through the *Ruumitia canal*; figuratively: to declare war

Government and Society

The smallest political unit is a village of about a dozen large tents, a stone wall, and the surrounding hunting grounds where one travels by raft during Flood and Flow or by sled during Low Flow. Adults ride gashants, the children are mounted on eegars. Once an area has been fully grazed, the village travels on to allow the wocnid populations to recover.

Each clan is led by an elected chieftain. Conflicts with other clans are usually resolved by hunting competitions or by a game of *kleetos*. This involves two competing players batting at a moss-filled sack suspended above a ditch, a “canal”, with clubs. Should a player’s gear fall into the ditch, it is said to be spoiled, and the opponent scores a point.

Most Tempe Hill Martians despise the canals and the Canal Martians. For a long time, they have kept their distance, but recently there have been many provocations. Most of these instances were hunters shooting wocnids on canal people territory. Bows and spears are stockpiled and the borders are patrolled in force. Loud rattles or frosty flute sounds are made and war dances practiced. One tribe to the east is training roogies as war beasts. The general disposition of a clan can be seen in its facial paint patterns.

It will take but a single dead Martian or shipment of superior weapons from an outside force, and a bloody war will be triggered. For now, fanatical determination and a rundown military are at an impasse. The Saarpak-Naado or those Hill Martians that act as mercenary scouts for the cities might be able to negotiate a peace.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

The faith of the hill people is focused on nature and ancestor spirits with whom the shamans converse. The chieftains will not decide any major matter without first consulting their circle of shamans. Even the recent warlike provocations of some of the clans can be traced back to shaman whispers.

The shamans wear black face paint, necklaces, and talismans for rituals and tribal feasts. In a medicine pouch that each shaman sews for themselves, they keep healing herbs, brush bundles, and claws and teeth of totem animals, as well as amethyst-colored meditation stones that aid in focusing their concentration.

In fact, these are washed up, raw thought crystals (p. 162) which, if polished, can absorb and reinforce emotions and ideas. They inspire, induce dreams, but also fan the flames of aggression. Through shamans trading these stones, a single vision has spread throughout the Tempe tribes: When a flying sled appears in the skies, the time will have come to retake the ancient hunting grounds. Player characters in an aerial flyer could well be mistaken for this sign.

Erratic boulders are a different type of stone, large rocks shaped by the Flood waters which the northern clans use as fortifications for their villages, or for burial mounds—portals to the underworld.

The Euxinus Tribes - The Ruin Nomads

People: Hill Martians
Location: Amazonia, Arcadia
Language: Euxine

Many see the steppes of *Amazonia* and *Arcadia* as a wasteland of dry canals and abandoned, plundered ruins. Not so the spread-out Hill Martians of the Euxinus tribes who still travel the routes their ancestors followed along the dry canal network.

Territory

The nomads travel along the canal beds. The western tribe follows a triangle between *Herculis*, *Euxinus Lacus*, and a ruined city south of those two. A tribe of northern Arcadia visits the ruined complexes at three canal intersections. During Flood season they have access to melt water. All contact with a third tribe in the Eastern Desert seems to have been lost.

Government and Society

These small tribes are not divided into clans, but are governed as one. Wocnid teams pull the chains of connected, comparatively light caravans. There is always a male and a female elder who advise each other, but always call for a tribal gathering for important

Arcadian Language Family

The Hill Martians share their Euxine language from the small Arcadian language family with the Canal people of Euxinus Lacus. Their common history is long and marked by significant cultural exchange. The city people today write Euxine using the Gaaryani alphabet, while the nomads have instead kept using a simplified form of the Arcadian cryptoglyphs. It has always been their custom to leave messages just as they find them along the paths and in the ruins. They carve the geometric base patterns into round milestones using spiral patterns drawn from the inside outwards. They scratch path descriptions, travel tales, and insights, always from the bottom upwards, into pillars of cold steppe wood.

Some in Euxinus Lacus and *Herculis* still use Arcadian glyphs to encode messages. Only a Hill Martian can read or write such messages, as the mathematical system that governs the symbols remains a mystery to anyone else.

Par sisaade se'tin'to suun - The next well is three days' march south

To'og raa - Turn back (also a form of farewell)

decisions. The politics of others are of no concern to them. Why others need trade partners or information, these tribes never ask. This might change if the curious strangers with the vestigial ears continue to dig through the ruined cities.

When the Euxinus nomads travel through the territories of other Hill Martians, they trade and freely pay any required tolls. But a true exchange does not occur, as the strangers always seem intent on speaking incomprehensible languages and following nonsense religions. Against High Martians, the Euxinus tribes hold a deep grudge. According to a legend, a kraag king from the Eastern Desert once urinated into the holy lake *Xigunis*, and caused the water to retreat out of disgust.

Culture and Technology

Due to their language and writing system, the nomads are experts at cracking codes and solving logic puzzles—purely based on their intuition, with no ability to explain their methods. They are also collectors, always looking for items that others gloss over. Remnants of past civilizations are the basis of their existence. They know where abandoned orchards still bear fruit. They know every well and can even repair some pumping mechanisms. And they have learned how the traps in the ruins function that still catch animals

now and then. They have disarmed and reverse engineered them. The Euxines are the key to many an ancient secret. Their priests use special divining rods that not only help to find water sources but are somehow connected to the canal network.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

The canal nomads live in the moment and only look ahead to the next intersection. There, the next heading is decided over the course of a wild festival: Does the *tempting moon* pull them one way? Or does the *cunning moon* push them the other way? During these nights, the adults reenact the cycle of the floods as dances. Most children are also conceived during these events.

Using their detectors, the moon priests interpret the will of the gods. Maybe someday, scientifically oriented player characters will discover that the tools the priests found in the ruins react to telluric currents (p. 158).

A Japanese anthropologist has recently joined the western tribal caravan. He believes to have found parallels between the moon cult and the dual nature of the male *Myo* and female *On* of the Japanese *Onmyōdō* cosmology. The Martians have taken him in gracefully, but are becoming steadily annoyed by his intellectual frivolities and his insufficient physical stamina.

The North Pole Barbarians of the Ice Kraags

People: High Martians
Location: Northern Aetheria, Cebrenia
Languages: Gaashwaan and tribal dialects

The High Martians of the North are renowned air pirates and gashant rustlers. Some act subtly and attempt to rope into their criminal schemes city people that are down on their luck. They live in stalactite caves or in kraags carved straight into the glaciers. Precious liftwood grows on their mountain slopes. The ice caps of the peaks, which melt during Flood season and flow into the valleys through streams and over waterfalls, provide them with ample water supplies.

Territory

Individual kraags can be found in the northernmost *Aetheria* or south of *Panthes*. The actual hunting grounds of the North Pole barbarians is *Castorius Sinus*, however, which lies east of *Propontis*. The almost 1,200-mile-long (2,000 km) ridgeline derives its human name from a comparatively small lake, the *Castorius Lacus*, which acts as a reservoir for the meltwater of the Flood and Flow.

Government and Society

Kraag society can best be described as a bandit gang where the strongest, most loudmouthed, or most cunning is leader. This leader plans the raids, can extend his protection to members or

Castorius Lacus (Ghoulan Fḡdūq)

During Low Flow, lights in the snow storms lure wanderers to this final settlement before the mountains, the final refuge for expeditions and the last chance to trade goods. During summer, the rapid and rocky stream that supplies the eponymous lake with water shrouds the huts and market stalls in spray mist clouds.

The most notable building is the *White Worm* inn. It offers a resting place and stables. The common room is always bustling: Canal Martians play *jiogaada* for money and other bets. Hill Martians perform masterful displays of marksmanship. At times, a Japanese koto-player can be found plucking the strings of his instrument. Rumors and drugs make the rounds. Every evening ends in a brawl, until a group of High Martians appears as if out of nowhere to relocate the guests into the sleeping hall.

In truth, the High Martian *Snake Gang* runs the *Worm*. It uses it as a source of information on the canal cities and to hire dubious scum for crooked deals it cannot engage in itself without drawing attention.

punish them. Banishment into slavery is seen as akin to a death sentence. After all, who wants to toil alongside the steppe sneaks, canal worms, or shrink-ears?

Service as a pass guard is seen as a prestigious posting. The winged guardians lurk on rocks and needle-bearing trees along the paths. Kraag membership is displayed to outsiders using body art, trophies, or a “coat of arms” borne on a kilt or war drum.

The drum serves as a long-range communications device. There is also a secret language of gestures, but its use is seen as cowardly, so it is only used when dealing with allied—subjugated!—non-High Martians, i.e. people who are cowards by definition and do not earn their property in battle.

Culture and Technology

The culture of the North Pole barbarians does not just include orgies on the eve of a raid, or the hoarding of trophies. The war drum for example is also used to accompany fanatical ritual dances.

There is a very popular sport, in which one rides rafts down rapid meltwater streams, jumping off at the lip of a waterfall to glide downwards on spread wings.

During their pilgrimages to the *Great Battlefields*, the High Martians here fall oddly silent. These snowy valleys are not necessarily the sites of battles, but rather they are cemeteries.

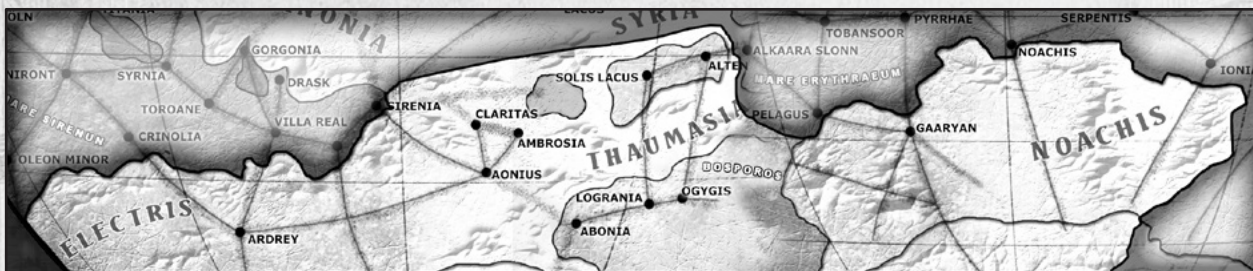
Otherwise, the term “culture” must be applied loosely to the ice kraag barbarians. Should a barbarian come across cave paintings, the artist inside him awakens and urges him to add bushy beards, horns, and tentacles to the ancient images. Knowledge of air travel, weapons, or even crystal technology does exist. Thankfully not all within the same tribe.

Recently, scouts have discovered depictions of cloudships and burning crystals in a southern cave. A tribe from a neighboring glacier kraag has found similar crystals in a crag. Having only known archaic hunting weapons until now, the tribes are now attempting to understand the powers of these devices, without any scientific procedures. So far, no one knows that the *Black Sky Serpent*, a screw galley that is sometimes seen above the peaks, belongs to one of the northern cliff clans. The largest of the found crystals could be mounted on this vessel.

The infamous *Roogie Gang* has come into the possession of large amounts of *fire powder* (dynamite). After a few unfortunate mishaps, the ideal application has been discovered: to shoot it from afar with burning arrows. This is both effective and a lot of fun.



The Southern Polar Region



Geography

The South Pole is surrounded by the Noachis highlands and, west of that, the plains of Gaaryan, where some water-carrying canals can be found, particularly in the Canal Keeper city of the same name. East of Noachis lies Hellas, and beyond it the mountains and countryside of Ausonia, Eridania, and Electris. Finally, between Electris and Gaaryan lie the steppes of Thaumasia with the so-called Golden Triangle and Bosphoros with the southern part of the Bloody Square that reaches all the way north to Solus Lacus.

Climate

Mars is known for its dry and hot climate, though its poles, like those of Earth, are quite cold. During the Low Flow season, the water of the planet gathers at the poles as snow and hail, and the nearby mountain ranges and highlands are plagued by snow storms. The precious water hits upon rocky ground and low temperatures here, though, leaving the area unfit for agriculture apart from a small number of valleys. The polar ice cap largely melts during the Flood season, time and again revealing ancient research laboratories, untapped natural resources, or creatures trapped in the ice. As Mars has an angle of rotation similar to Earth's, the days and nights become notably longer the closer one comes to a pole.

Flora and Fauna

During the high waters, the meltwater finds its way to the lower plains outside the canals, allowing the development of several sparse, tundra-like steppes where tough grasses, mosses, and small shrubs grow. Additionally, various species of Martian cabbage grow here, whose large leaves unfurl during the day to collect as much sunlight as possible. Along the canals and other meltwater streams, leaf and needle tree forests even occur. On the high plains, large liftwood groves are carefully guarded by the powerful High Martian tribes.

Only the Canal Martians and the *Urghuul* engage in agriculture, otherwise hunting and cattle herding form the basis for life. Gashants are the most common such cattle, and the local species features additional insulating and nutritious fat layers. The *Nokaartik* of Thaumasia keep very large herds while the *Aruudal* rely solely on hunting.

The various reptiles of the region compete fiercely for the local prey. They dwell predominantly near the volcanic mountains, but warm-blooded species such as the teshuwaan can be encountered elsewhere as well.

The so-called “red manikins”, whose soldier animals can disrupt the levitating properties of liftwood—and can thus cause aerial flyers to crash—, live predominantly around Electris. Far larger creatures can, according to legends and myths, be found, particularly in Ausonia and Eridania. The most infamous is of course the brifa oum, an ape-like “Colossus of the Ice”. The legends also tell of giant snakes and flying squids, as well as of the mighty ancestors of the storytellers who vanquished these creatures. More on these can be found in the chapter **Flora and Fauna** (p. 135). Of note is the Martian Roundhead (**Core Rules**, p. 72), which resembles a ball in size and shape.

Canals and Caravan Routes

The polar ice caps are the key to the water cycle of Mars, and countless canals with finely branching tributaries begin here, carrying the meltwater yearly across the entire planet. The cities of the region, namely Gaaryan, the Golden Triangle, and the Bloody Square as well as Ardrey, are directly supplied with water in this fashion. Between Ardrey and Aonius lies another canal that also serves as a trade route for many caravans of the *Nokaartik*.

The cities of the Bloody Square have only limited contact with the outside, while Ardrey and the Golden Triangle do trade with the cities to the north. Gaaryan is the center of the Canal Keeper faith and thus already more strongly connected to the rest of Mars.

Population (→ see p. 204)

The cities of the Golden Triangle and the Bloody Square predominantly house Canal Martians, as does Gaaryan, whence the upper class of the *Urghuul* also hails.

The Hill Martians of the South Pole descend from the people of the *Urghuul*, though the split occurred several thousand years ago and the clans of the *Aruudal* and *Nokaartik* have long since developed their own customs. The local High Martians call themselves the *Yaraa*. So far, only few humans have come to this region.

Besides the *Gaaryani* languages and *Koline* (in the Golden Triangle), the *Alaanawaak* language family is widely spoken.

The Aaanawaak Language Family

Earth linguists first learned of **Aaanawaak**, the main language of the eponymous family, from the nomads and were surprised by the abundance of agricultural terms in its vocabulary. This mystery was resolved when it was established that these words came from the settled Urghuul. They reflect the latter's farming lifestyle. The languages and many dialects of the nomadic **Nokaartik** and of the primitive **Aruudal** both evolved from Urghuul. Though they differ quite strongly in certain respects, communication is possible between the two peoples with some effort.

Aaanawaak features the double-vowels of the Son-Gaaryani, but its sounds are sharper, with more stops. The Urghuul use the 46 symbols of the Oenotrian alphabet, but assign them different sounds. Only very few Arudaal and Nokaartik know how to write to begin with.

Maak Suk – Then leave! (farewell statement similar to 'goodbye')

Laat – Thank you (only common during religious ceremonies)

Uklaapaak (short: *Paak*) – Rifle

Tuukin – Scythe (also 'axe')

Nulmuk – "Heathen" (also 'foreigner')

Utsertoo – Corn guard

Ta akilugo Kosaanek Aailik – I will pay any price for that fur coat!

Apaalpok Tongaak nankilaak – Red devils [i.e., humans] taste disgusting!

Kinkuumut Ta kiluutkook aak Ankookto Nklaait – Back off! I will curse you in the name of my magical bible!

Archaic Rites and Dark Cults

Around the South Pole, most of the peoples and tribes are at war with one another. The Urghuul are determined to repel the Aruudal and Nokaartik, the descendants of their outcasts. The clans of the Aruudal and those of the Yaraa are always feuding amongst themselves. The cities of the Bloody Square have been at war with each other for centuries.

Thus, it is not surprising that many places harbor secret war and death cults, and that the Worm cult can be found performing secret rituals in hidden temples. The Canal Keeper faith of Gaaryan and the Urghuul as well as the churches of the Golden Triangle stand as a counterpoint.

Magic Swords and Holy Scepters

The Aruudal and the Yaraa, but also some clans of the Nokaartik, know basically nothing about the past of Mars, and furthermore reject the Canal Martians and their cities. The animistic faith of the tribes, which views objects as possessing souls, combined with occasional exposure to remnants of ancient technology, has resulted in obscure beliefs in magical artifacts and mages who wield them. There are even followers of these faiths amidst the Bloody Square, particularly since all parties involved will use any means available to turn a battle in their favor.

Special artifacts are central to this belief in magic. They hold only symbolic power, however: Conventionally forged weapons, such as multi-shot rifles, but also a few ancient Martian relics. The "Red Scepter" of Vulrk, a traveling mage of the Yaraa in Noachis, is particularly famous, as is the blade named "Kasdrakkar on the Sword", which is said to be able to cut anything, as well as the "Eyes of Zukala", which are little more than a colorfully blinking face mask, though it is believed to be able to mentally enslave others. It is kept in a shrine in Eridania by a mage of the Aruudal.

In general, the ranks of these mages include both ruthless imposters who seek to give hope to their followers through their supposed magic against their own knowledge of the truth, as well as mages who are themselves convinced that they possess greater powers.

Gaaryan – The City of the Canal Keepers

People: Canal Martians

Location: Eastern Noachis

Languages: Na-Gaaryani, Koline

Cities: Gaaryan (pop.: 40,000)

Territory

Gaaryan is a remote city-state in eastern Noachis, one of the smallest on Mars. But as the barons of the Hill Martians living in the surrounding lands have sworn fealty to the Prince of Gaaryan, it does rule a notable part of eastern Noachis. The modern city

of Gaaryan has no greater ambitions, however, and is commonly viewed as provincial by foreign nations.

History

Gaaryan is possibly the oldest city on Mars. Over countless millennia, it has been conquered many times, razed, and rebuilt. The city was already old when the canals were first planned. It may have been the capital of a Noachic island Empire during the Brifanoon. Such an empire is mentioned in Urghuul legends. In the end, it was the capital of a nation that, when the rest of ancient Mars was unifying to begin the canal project, refused to submit to this new world government. Therefore, it was subjugated.

Later, Gaaryan is mentioned as a center for high technology, which is likely one of the reasons why it was bombed and abandoned in the opening of the Age of the 1,000 World Wars. Later, it was reclaimed by the Urghuul and “new settlers” migrating from the North. It switched ruling dynasties a few times, until the ancestors of the first Seldon succeeded in establishing it as a great city-state. Once the Seldon dynasty created its empire, Gaaryan served as the capital of the Planet for just under 100 years, until the government moved to the larger and economically better situated Syrtis Major. Still, Gaaryan remained the spiritual center of Mars: the predecessors of the current Canal Keeper cults began here. At this time, Gaaryan was considered a great center of science and was universally known as the “Garden City”.

Gaaryan fell again soon after the fall of the Seldons. The Nectar–Coprates Empire (p. 57) was opposed to the Canal Keepers on religious grounds. The forces of Nectar were able to overcome Gaaryan in a bloody campaign and razed the city down to just its port facilities. The Nectar government never managed to consolidate its control over Gaaryan, as Tossia attacked the Nectar–Coprates Empire from the north shortly after, and all interest in the smoking ruins of Gaaryan was lost. And so, the people, led by remaining Canal Keepers and Naarnak the Builder, founder of the Naarnak dynasty, began to rebuild the city.

Government and Society

Gaaryan is a constitutional hereditary monarchy. The canal prince is the head of state and is supported by a parliament consisting of an *upper house* (Haarbak) and a *lower house* (Haarnak). The upper house is made up of the barons of the city and the Hill Martian lands surrounding the city. The barons are called “Tu” and inherit their seats. The lower house consists of elected representatives of the various crafters’ guilds. Both houses are roughly equal in power. While the crafters are represented by the lower house, the farmers are only represented by their Tus, which has caused much tension with the rural population. The “*Gaar-Mak-Nool*”, the constitution of the city, stands above the canal prince and the parliament, and is meant to be a safeguard against and abuse of power. It can only be changed by a reincarnation of Seldon himself.

The ever-present Canal Keeper cult does not directly rule, but does fill the function of a “state church”. Even the national flag shows the “Amulet of Seldon”. Almost all bureaucratic offices of the city are held by members of the clergy, giving the cult powerful means to influence policies, without being directly involved in the government.

As per the Tradition of the ancient Seldons, every prince of the city bears the name of their predecessor. The current ruler is *Naarnak LXXII*. This rational monarch, ever intent on creating a positive relationship with the ethnic groups under his rule, has begun a new age of peace. As a sign of friendship with the Urghuul, he has grown a full beard, which is highly unusual for a Gaaryanian. His political rivals have nicknamed him “Prince Fuzzy Beard”.

Free speech is one of the pillars of Gaaryanian law. Any subject of the prince of Gaaryan may speak freely at any time. The *Gaar-Mak-Nool* says that only a prince who knows the thoughts of his people can rule justly. Thus, freedom of opinion is considered sacred. Additionally, every adult Gaaryanian has the right to bear the “Ultmak-Aark”, the “citizen’s dagger”, which resembles the seaxes from Earth’s history. It is debated whether or not subjects from outside the city may also carry it. Prince Naarnak LXXII is in favor, but the members of parliament disagree. They see the

city’s privileges as threatened, should farmers become allowed to bear the Ultmak-Aark.

Military

The military is comprised of the nobility of the city and the warriors belonging to each house. When required, a citizens’ and a farmers’ militia can each be called on as well. In times of war, the nobility and their warriors fill the roles of officers and sergeants, while the citizen soldiers fill the ranks. As each citizen is allowed to bear arms and the militias train regularly (military exercises and shooting competitions play a large part in the leisure activities), the Gaaryanian military can be considered well prepared for battle. Additionally, it maintains a small fleet of galleys. These are technologically obsolete, but are operated by highly skilled crews.

Technology

Gaaryan’s level of technology is, apart from gunsmithing and book printing, somewhat lower than the average among the Canal Martians. By Earth standards, it is more late medieval than baroque. The crafters of the city produce high quality weaponry, but prefer simple production methods.

Rd Overview of Gaaryan (→ see p. 194)

Thanks to Gaaryan’s eventful history, the city’s architecture is highly varied. Little remains of the carefully planned buildings of the Canal Keepers, all in the **port district**, the ugliest part of the city. The invaders from the North had left a few buildings intact here, to use as a base for further operations. The blocky designs resemble Oenotrian Runism, but the buildings are not set with any inscriptions. Rather, they are grey, dirty, and patched up haphazardly in many places.

Newring, the part of the city that was rebuilt during its recovery, is much more pleasant to look at. This is where the majority of the population lives. The design of the houses follows the Urghuul style. The buildings, reaching up to six levels tall, resemble European timber-framing, but are built more intricately and twistedly. To human eyes, they appear fairytale-like and surreal. As Gaaryan was rebuilt without any set plan, there is none of the clear structuring that marks most Martian cities. Even the locals can get lost in the many alleys. Gaaryan has no functioning sewer system: waste is carried along gutters to the few drains still operating.

The upper class of Gaaryan lives in the **High City**, the “acropolis” of Gaaryan. Here, next to the many gardens, the great dome of the Canal Keepers temple rises up. After the main temple, which lies several miles from the city, this is the greatest sanctum of their religion. The well-guarded and locked-up dome holds a dark labyrinth with the “Eye of the Builders” at its center. On a few select days each year, the priesthood convenes at the Eye for prayers while a single ray of light, the “Divine Spark of Reincarnation”, shines from it.

This district also holds the residences of the nobility, the guild halls, and “the Block”—the massive, cube-shaped castle of the Naarnak dynasty. The hill upon which the High City lies is hollowed out with many chambers and tunnels. This underground

complex serves as a “keep” in case of a siege and can hold almost two-thirds of the city’s inhabitants. Gaaryan is surrounded by the *garbage walls*, a vast fortification made of piled-up rubble that was dumped there during the recovery.

Ethnicities

Three ethnic groups coexist under the rule of Gaaryan: The city-dwelling *Gaaryanians*, the rural *Urghuul*, and the *Nzios’Xna* canal fishers. Today, this coexistence is essentially peaceful, but the past saw many conflicts between the city and countryside populations. All three groups are loyal followers of the canal builder religion.

The proud and hospitable Gaaryanians consider themselves the most civilized subjects of the canal prince. For Canal Martians, they conduct themselves rather casually. Honesty and free speech are sacred to them. Excessive politeness and complex rites are nowhere to be found. Even open submission to superiors is uncommon. Elsewhere, the Gaaryanians are seen as primitive because of this. Of course, they themselves claim that only they have maintained the healthy manners of the past. Gaaryan cuisine, the Martian equivalent of “meat and potatoes”, is solid and often decried as bland by other Canal Martians. The Gaaryanians like to consume large amounts of tea and hot alcohol with their sizable portions of meat and turnips.

The Nzios’Xna have lived in the north of Gaaryan for 500 years now. Originally, their people ruled the city of Pelagus. After it was conquered by Alkaara Slonn and the Nzios’Xna were driven out by bloody pogroms, they settled near Gaaryan and were integrated into the nation as refugees. Even today, they are referred to as “immigrants” or, because of their dialect, as “hissers”. They are closely related, culturally, to the Urghuul, though they tend more towards fishing for fish and crabs than towards farming. Another difference is that the Nzios’Xna practice blood vengeance, unlike the Urghuul. Further north, this has earned them a reputation as notorious assassins.

The Order of the Canal Keepers

Politically, Gaaryan is insignificant. Religiously, it is of immense importance, however, as it is the center of the ancient faith of the Canal Keepers, whose predecessors were the state religion of the Sacred Federation of the Thrice Holy Union (p. 11), whose remnants were integrated into Seldon’s Empire. There, the Canal Keepers slowly morphed into their modern incarnation. Their primary task was, and still is, to ensure the continued function of the canals—as per their name. The Canal Keepers, like the *Mathematical Monks* and other similar societies, descend from the scientists and engineers of Ancient Mars. Hidden behind their many supposedly esoteric articles of faith stands hard, factual science. Many of their texts, which are collected in the holy book called *Ylmiil*, are in fact dissertations on mathematics, architecture, astronomy, and mechanical engineering.

The Soul Continuum - The Mysticism of the Canal Keepers

The peaceful Canal Keeper cult believes, simply put, that the “*God at the Heart of the World*” will live for as long as water

flows through the canals. Some groups inside the cult are more atheistically inclined and see Mars more as a planet than a deity. Some Canal Keepers even worship other deities, or even adopt Earth religions such as Buddhism or some denominations of Christianity, seen as compatible with their faith.

More strictly, they believe in a spiritual continuum, above and beyond the physical universe, the *Smuur-Maku*, whence the souls of all living beings hail. This continuum resembles the “Swedenborgianist Space” of European mysticism. The souls of the dead go there, but can always reincarnate. The Canal Keepers assume that a certain number of “noble souls” are reborn repeatedly as part of a grand cycle to better the material world. They appear as heroes or saints and remember nothing of their true nature once corporal. The most important of these “noble souls” is the first Seldon, whom the Canal Keepers view as the most important saint, as his actions allowed the dying Mars to bloom once more for centuries. The “crystallization point” of these souls is the “Heart inside the World”—a type of anchor, sometimes seen as a god, which connects the souls with their respective planets, as well as helping them to manifest. According to the beliefs of the Keepers, this entrance will remain for as long as the planet lives. In particular, the Earth powers interpret this as the “God at the Heart of the World”. The arrival of these “noble souls” can, according to the holiest texts of the order, be predicted through complex astronomical calculations.

The Canal Watch - The Great Task

The canals of Mars not only carry water, according to the beliefs of many Canal Keepers, but also “life energy”. The maintenance of the canals is thus not merely an economical or ecological task, but also a spiritual one. The massive task of maintaining the canals spiritually and technologically has spread the Canal Keepers all across Mars: they can be found in most cities, though they usually only form small communities. They are in fact the most widespread religion on Mars, possibly even the one with the most followers. Outside of Gaaryan, they do not form the majority faith in any city, however, and are frequently dismissed as a minor, dubious cult. Originally, the Canal Keepers were administered directly by a high priest in Gaaryan, or rather in the central temple some 20 miles (30 km) outside Gaaryan. In recent centuries, a kind of “cell structure” has developed instead. Every residence is self-administered and only sends reports to Gaaryan every two years. When local problems are reported, a legate is sent from Gaaryan to solve them.

Every ten Martian years, a special ritual takes place in an otherwise empty temple complex on the “empty” canal intersection south of Gaaryan, to commemorate those who died during the building of the canals. (Much to the chagrin of all would-be plunderers, this temple doesn’t even contain any treasures.) This is the most revered celebration of the Canal Keepers and representatives from all “cells” of the planet are encouraged to participate. Evil tongues will insist that the Canal Keepers conduct extensive orgies in secret at these festivals. In fact, the ceremony is rather prude—as befits the strict demeanor of the Canal Keepers, who deny themselves immoral behavior, drug consumption, or laziness. The Canal Keepers are not celibate. Weddings are rare, but are generally permitted.

The Book Ylmiil

The Ylmiil is the bible of the Canal Keepers and is about four times longer than the most important book of Christianity. The first half contains the stories of Seldon and other beings, as well as the history of the Order of the Canal Keepers before the founding of Seldon's world empire all the way to its end. It also includes various philosophical riddles and thought exercises intended to sharpen the mind of the reader. The second half consists of texts on the scientific foundations of astronomy, engineering, mathematics, and architecture. These are detailed enough that the book could be used as a text book at any of Earth's universities. On top of that, it includes a detailed description of the Smuur-Maku, which appears to include parts of modern ether physics. It is this part in particular that has caused a stir on Earth. Is it possible that the soul is a part of the ether? Could ancient Martian wisdom finally reconcile religion and science? For now, the Ylmiil is only available in Gaaryani, but a certain *Dr. Anton Bigsby* of Cornwall is working on a translation into English. What the Ylmiil does not contain are instructions for religious rites. These are only preserved as apocrypha. Furthermore, rumors persist of a missing part of the Ylmiil that covers the topics of ecology, physical immortality, or even sorcery. Such texts surface again and again in occult collections, but so far have always proven to be forgeries.

Current Situation

After the city was plagued by increased nomad bandit activity along the trade routes to the north and by rising ethnic tensions between the city and the rural regions in the mid-19th century, the current rule of Naarnak LXXII appears to have brought about a new age of peace. Finally, the three peoples of Gaaryan are working together once more. Naarnak's troops have brought down the worst of the bandit gangs. The most recent harvests have all been very successful. Everyone hopes for the good times to continue. But three things might shatter those hopes: Internally, the many planned reforms of the pragmatic canal prince are upsetting the parliament. Naarnak seeks to improve the rights of the rural population, bringing them to the same level as the city people. This does not sit well with the Tus of the surrounding lands or the guild masters. Externally, the war between Pelagus and Alkaara Slonn is giving cause to worry. Pelagus troops have repeatedly harassed the far north Nzios' Xna villages as they suspect partisans of Alkaara Slonn are hiding there. If these acts continue, Gaaryan will have no choice but to react with military force. And finally, strange things seem to happen within the ranks of the priests themselves. Several members of the clergy have let slip cryptic remarks on the impending dawn of a new age. And why have some of the priests been sent off to far away Earth?

Gaaryanians and Humans

Gaaryan is far too remote to have had much contact with the humans. Of course, everyone here has heard of the arrival of these aliens, but it has had little effect on the daily routine. The few encounters between Gaaryanians and humans have been quite peaceful, though they mostly occurred within the Tossian Empire. As far as anyone can tell, no Earthling has yet entered the city of Gaaryan. The arrival of the humans has caused little surprise within the priesthood of the Canal Keepers, though. The official statement of the priesthood was: "We've always known that there were people living on Earth. Why should anyone be surprised if they come here?"

The Urghuul - The Sentinels of the South

People: Hill Martians, Canal Martians (nobility)
Location: Noachis
Language: Alaanawaak

Territory

Little is known about the history of this strange people, as the Urghuul themselves, apart from a few temple registers and their oral tradition of legends, keep no detailed historical records. No matter how far one goes back through the Martian chronicles, the Urghuul always seem to have been around. It almost appears as though they might be the oldest of the Martian people. Of the

legends of the Urghuul, those dealing with their early history are particularly interesting, as they describe Noachis as an island and tell of many naval battles occurring around it. When the oceans receded, the Urghuul united as one in peace, and have not broken this peace to this day. Every war they have waged since has been one of defense against invaders. The Urghuul have never played a major role in global Martian politics. Since the age of the Seldons, they have been viewed as an independent but loyal people, consisting mostly of farmers.

Government and Society

Individual villages are ruled by a council of elders. Above that, the Urghuul are organized into chiefdoms called "Tuknuuks", each of which consists of eleven villages and is governed by a noble

house led by a “Tuu” (a title most closely translated into English as “baron”). While the common Urghuul are all Hill Martians, the nobility is made up only of Canal Martians. All Tuu have sworn fealty to the lords of Gaaryan.

Military

The Urghuul do not maintain a standing military. In case of war, the hunters and farmers of a village form a militia that will defend the fields and groves with cunning guerilla tactics. The government of Gaaryan regularly conscripts Urghuul as well, and primarily deploys them as scouts and couriers. The renowned Gaaryan Temple Guard is also made up of Urghuul.

Culture and Technology

By and large, the technology of these people can be described as late medieval. Their villages use timber frame construction, which differs from the Earth versions in the red rock that is used for the foundations and the light twists and curves in the frames, which give the buildings a somewhat more organic look. The Urghuul are also great weapon smiths. Both their axe blades and their hunting rifles are considered to be legendary. Swords are exceedingly rare commissions from the cities of the Canal Martians, as the Urghuul focus on producing hunting weapons and tools. The Urghuul are

exceptional wood carvers. They feed themselves mostly through agriculture and forestry, as well as by hunting.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

The Urghuul are faithful followers of the Canal Keeper religion, and in some cases even more religious than the inhabitants of holy Gaaryan. The religious practices of the rural villagers, however, combine the complex philosophies of the Canal Keepers with spirit and ancestor worship. The major religious services are conducted by Canal priests, while the lower-key, smaller scale rites are conducted by the family heads. Unsurprisingly for farmers and hunters, fertility, harvest, and hunting rituals make up the bulk of these. Crimes are adjudicated by jury trial, with the village elder or a Canal priest as arbiter. The death penalty is abhorred and is only imposed for the worst crimes. Even manslaughter is only punished by exile. Should an outcast try to return to their village though, they can expect to be shot. The fact that many such outcasts gather into nomad tribes is one of the reasons the Urghuul harbor strong resentment against the nomads. The social status of an Urghuul is displayed to those in the know by the hairstyle. Serfs have no beard; the free people have moustaches. Full beards are reserved for the elders and the nobility. Interestingly, the Urghuul even judge foreigners by their beards. For women, the number of braids indicates their status. As Urghuul society is strictly patriarchal, however, a woman’s hairstyle is not considered as important as a man’s beard.

Aruudal - The Eternal Hunters

People: Hill Martians
Location: Ausonia, Eridania, Electris
Languages: Tribal dialects

The “Eternal Hunters”, as they call themselves, travel the plains around the South Pole, living off the hunt and raiding. They are engaged in ancient feuds with one another, the Urghuul, and the High Martians, and they are famous and feared for their bloody rituals. Though most of their days are spent foraging the sparse lands and hunting for tough animals, the Aruudal consider themselves warriors first, and prove this claim through frequent feuds, duels, and martial rituals.

Territory

Though some few clans are traveling the highlands of Noachis and the steppes south of Gaaryan, most of the Aruudal live on the opposite side of the South Pole, in Ausonia, Eridania, and Electris. They avoid the cities. Only rarely do some of the clans visit *Ardrey*, the city of the nomads in Thaumasia. Additionally, there are a few small settlements with a very small number of permanent residents, where one can barter goods or visit shrines and temples. The religious clans regularly come here to make donations to the shamans and to perform important rites.

History

The Aruudal keep no historical records though they have existed for a very long time. Within the clans, the assumption is that the Urghuul exiled them because of their honor, their skills, and their independence when the Urghuul began to submit to the Canal Martians, who are considered soft and weak. In contrast, the Aruudal see themselves as pure and strong.

Government and Society

The Aruudal are grouped into clans, within which the status of any member is measured by their skills at hunting or fighting. There are a few exceptional positions within a clan: the chieftain; one or more arms bearers, who often carry special ritual weaponry and direct the other clan members during battle; the shamans; and the mothers, which in this case means the wet nurses.

The men are generally held to be superior to the women. For humans, their gender policies might still be confusing, as it is not at all strictly adhered to. Anyone who excels in “male” tasks, such as battle, hunt, or witchcraft, is considered a man. Conversely, all those who show great skill in the “female” tasks, such as raising children, foraging, trap laying, or dancing, are considered to be women. As such, some Aruudal are considered to belong to both genders, or to a different one than their sex would indicate.

Culture and Technology

The Aruudal reject all types of fine manners and cultural achievements of the Martian civilizations as weak and decadent. Their level of technology is thus primitive at best. They use simple weapons like spears, knives, hatchets, and wicker shields. Their grim determination in battle and their willingness to use poisons, including guguuz poison, make them dangerous opponents nevertheless. Otherwise, their knowledge is limited to the many ways of preserving food (drying, smoking, fermenting...). They have also domesticated a resilient breed of piiras as tracking animals.

The few ancient Martian artifacts that the Aruudal have stolen or found in the ice, they consider to be magical gifts of spirits and demons. Only powerful shamans are able to wield them. It is possible that they treat unknown Earth technology the same way.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

The Aruudal follow several variants of spirit and demonic faiths, all of them warlike and bloodthirsty. The moons of Mars are the homes of powerful beings, and their warriors call upon those powers with obscure blood rituals. As if this weren't fearsome enough, the Aruudal also practice ritual cannibalism. As part of their ceremonies, they perform scenes from legends, usually duels between a warrior and a supernatural being or monster. The victorious warrior will be subsequently killed and feasted upon by the clan. Thus, the power gained through the magic ritual is passed on to all clan members.

Nokaartik - The Restless of Thaumasia

People: Hill Martians
Location: Thaumasia
Language: Alaanawaak (Nokaartik dialects)
Cities: Ardrey (*Tkoo*, trade hub)

The name of these Thaumasian nomads is most directly translated as "restless" or "people of the vast lands". Like the Aruudal, they were originally part of the Urghuul. Why they left their homes is not recorded.

Territory

The clans of the Nokaartik travel mostly through Thaumasia and the east of Electris, but can also be found in Bosporos, Western Electris, and in small groups in the adjacent regions. The region around the Golden Triangle, the city of Ardrey, and the canal from Ardrey to Aonius are the center of their trade efforts. The nomads attempt to avoid armed conflict with the Aruudal or between the cities of the Bloody Square whenever possible.

History

The history of the Nokaartik is passed down orally in each clan. Every member of a clan knows the most important ancestors and events of the past, and is also required to learn their own family history, names, and deeds, up to seven generations back. Telling the clan history to one another is part of the greeting rituals, whenever two clans meet.

The most important event in recent history is the liberation of the city of Ardrey from the cult of the Black Skull, about 200 years ago. After trade began to die off and more and more reports of gruesome blood sacrifices spread from the city, numerous clans of the Nokaartik joined together to oust the cultists from the city.

Government and Society

Every clan of the Nokaartik holds a certain rank with respect to the other clans which is determined by a complicated value system. This includes measurable quantities such as size of the herd, trophies and weapons, but also more nebulous factors such as the reputation of the shamans. Whenever two clans meet, this hierarchy determines their interactions. Generally, the lesser clan must pay the superior one tribute, but may demand duels according to certain customs. Victory in such a duel will allow the clan to reduce the tribute, or even demand trophies from the other clan.

The Nokaartik also form tribes, each with a king, but membership in a tribe and the status of its king are merely additional clan ranking factors.

Culture and Technology

The Nokaartik are known as traders, particularly in the cities of the Golden Triangle, but also in the Bloody Square and in Gaaryan. In addition to their own language of the Alaanawaak family, the nomads also speak Koline and Thaumasian. Their level of technology is low, and they receive almost all of their more modern devices through trade with the Golden Triangle. The Nokaartik are especially skilled in the taming and domestication of animals, and most clans own several more animals in addition to their vital gashant herds. Some of these are additional food sources, such as wocnids or snakes. Others are trained for specific tasks, such as hunting roogies. Almost all clans carry with them one or more specimens of their totem animal, caged if a more dangerous species, of course.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

Animals and spirits form the core basis of the Nokaartik faith. Encounters with animals, successful hunts, and the condition of the herd are interpreted as good or bad omens. The shamans also

look after the trophies of the clan. Their number and quality are an important part of the clan rank hierarchy. In particular, trophies from the clan's totem animal are of great importance. These are not collected and carried along, but rather placed on ritually erected wooden towers in the vast steppes. The further the territory of the species is thus expanded, the better the fortunes of that animal and the clan it protects.

Ardrey (Tkoo)

Built inside and upon the ruins of an ancient Martian city, Ardrey is a presentable trade hub today. Many clans of the Nokaartik gather here, and sometimes even Canal Martians or Arudaal come to trade. The rank hierarchy does not apply within the city, and a city watch—formed after the victory over the cult of the Black Skull—enforces law and order. The totem animal of the city, chosen by the shamans of the victorious tribes, is the tortoise, and many living specimens freely move about the city.

Yaraa - The People of Noachis

"You are as great as the enemy you have slain."

— Proverb of the Yaraa of Ausonia

People: High Martians
Location: Mountains around the South Pole (Electris, Ausonia, Eridania, Noachis)
Languages: Gaashwaan and tribal dialects
Tribes: Yaraa Electris, Yaraa Ausonis, Yaraa Noachis

The name Yaraa can refer to the chieftains or all the warriors of a clan, or to all the High Martians of the region. As elsewhere on Mars, they are wild barbarians and proud of it. They are at war with the Arudaal, raid and enslave the Nokaartik, and ambush the Urghuul. The Canal Keepers of Gaaryan are their special nemesis.

Territory

The Yaraa are particularly numerous in Noachis, but also in the high plains and mountains of Ausonia, Eridania, and Electris. Individual clans can also be found in the mountains south of Gaaryan and in Thaumasia. Their kraags are predominantly located near volcanoes or in geothermally heated cave complexes.

History

The Yaraa consider the mountains of Noachis to be their original home. From here, the clans travel around the entire South Pole to find mighty artifacts and holy liftwood, and to test their strength against the local creatures.

Government and Society

Though conflicts do arise within the clans, they are still the most stable political units of the Yaraa. Larger groups such as federations or even a kingdom haven't existed for centuries. Even so, individual warriors or warlocks have at times managed to gather

a larger group of followers, at least temporarily, and to lead successful campaigns of conquest.

Culture and Technology

The location of the kraags near volcanoes or in geothermally active zones tend to provide sufficient warmth, allowing the Yaraa the freedom to wear little clothing even in these cold regions. When heading out into the cold, they wear fur coats that can quickly be discarded when battle is joined. Headwear, whether it is helmets, animal skulls or tiaras, is reserved for mighty warriors, warlocks, and priests. Their wives are permitted simple headbands.

The Yaraa themselves produce no goods. Everything they use, they have either stolen on a raid or they've had their slaves make it for them. The Yaraa of Noachis are particularly fond of goods from the Urghuul.



Religion, Rites, and Customs

(→ see p. 195)

The women of the Yaraa have clearly defined roles. They must make themselves available to the men, and are to look after the offspring. Their best chance at an independent life is to become priestesses.

According to their beliefs, the Worm god lurks in the ice and sends forth his creatures to destroy the world. The warmer the weather, the larger and more powerful the creatures from the ice become, and the bloodier the battles. Of particular note are the Kull—creatures that resemble the High Martians, but which possess real wings and long, razor-sharp claws. Whether the Kull are simply a legend, a forgotten tribe, or the remnants of genetic experimentation on High Martians, no one can say.

A Few Tribes

Yaraa Noachis

The Yaraa have lived in the mountains of Noachis for millennia, and thus many great kraags have been built here, though some have also crumbled back into ruins. Most of the kraags include large arenas where battles are held between gladiators and beasts or slaves. It is said that some arenas keep legendary creatures such as brifa oums or red Martian wyverns.

Yaraa Kusonia

According to legend, the local highlands here were ruled by giant snakes until they were annihilated by the Yaraa under the leadership of a great warlock, called Firefather, and his magical lance “Red Fang”. To this day, the warriors of the Yaraa meet in bloody arena fights every seven years to fight for the honor of bearing that lance.

Yaraa Eridania

In the mountains of Eridania, the black rocks, countless lava lakes, and frequent ash storms create a truly surreal landscape. One of the volcanoes holds the temple of the high priestess *Z'rrum 'Ba*, whose origins are the stuff of many conflicting tales. It is said that her disciples are the most beautiful women, stolen from all across Mars. Only the mightiest of warriors are allowed to approach them.

Yaraa Electris

The Yaraa in Electris have spread all the way into the mountains northeast of Ardrey, and some clans are to this day moving into yet more new regions. They follow the cult of the Devourer and are searching for the World Seed, intending to sacrifice it to their god so that the planet might finally be killed.

The Bloody Square

People: Canal Martians

Location: Bosporos and Solus Lacus, eastern Thaumasia. To the north, Syria marks the border of the region, as does Thaumasia with the Golden Triangle to the west.

Language: Thaumasian

Cities: Abonia (liftwood), Alten (*Alateen*, Tower of Light), Logrania (cult of the Black Skull), Nereidia ⊕, Ogygis (spice trade), Solis Lacus (*Pargyis*, fire cult)

The cities in and around Thaumasia have been at war with each other since the fall of the Seldon Empire. The local Canal Martians are the perfect example of the decline of Martian civilization, which has robbed itself of all technological and cultural achievements through constant warfare. But the soil between the canals is comparatively fertile. The plantations and villages of these forests and bush lands are guarded by soldiers from the cities or by mercenaries, while at the same time all parties seek to improve their own supplies or deny the enemy theirs through raiding. Not even massacring slaves and burning down crops are off the table. Time and again, guerilla groups made up of escaped slaves achieve temporary successes as well.

Only a few of the now derelict districts of the once great cities are still inhabited. To get from one district to another thus often requires long travel times through semi-wilderness and overgrown ruins where all sorts of dangers might lurk.

History

About 800 years ago, the cities of the Bloody Square signed the Contract of Nereidia. It decrees that no agricultural products may be raided or destroyed between Solus Lacus and Bosporos. Ever since, the food supply of the respective upper classes has been ensured and the war focuses mostly on Thaumasia.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

The ongoing wars in the Bloody Square have produced rough customs and a blooming warrior and blood culture. The faithful believe that by sacrificing animals or defeated foes, the spirits of their ancestors, brutal war idols, or the Deity at the Heart of the World will grant them new strengths. Even the Worm god is worshipped at times, though its cult acts mostly in secret.

Government, Politics, and Society

The individual districts of the cities of the Bloody Square are largely independent, with their troops gathered in the central districts. The wars in the Bloody Square currently consist mostly of skirmishes in Thaumasia as well as of near-hopeless commando raids into the enemy cities seeking to seize their Arina Stones. These are exceptionally well guarded and protected, but none of the cities can afford to hide their Arina Stone for good. They must regularly expose them to prove continuing possession, despite the risk of theft.

Military

Each city commands a sizable contingent of determined infantry, veterans of many battles, though their equipment standards vary from poor to primitive. Cavalry and aerial flyers exist only in negligible numbers.

The Cities of the Bloody Square

Atten (Ateen)

This city enjoys the advantages of a working canal to Nectar. However, trade with Nectar has dropped to nothing recently, following the death of several Nectarian merchants, killed when enemy agents set fire to the aerial shipyards. The canal prince is himself worshipped as the God of Light. He lives in the only remaining skyscraper of the city and proclaims his allied leaders and accomplished warriors as saints of his church.

The Golden Triangle

People: Canal Martians
Location: Western Thaumasia
Languages: Memnite, Koline, Thaumasian
Cities: Ambrosia (*Voshnapal*), Aonius (*Erepal*, trade hub), Claritas (*Barlan Tschok*, oracle)

The cities of the Golden Triangle have forsaken centuries of war and destructive cults and now seek to achieve wealth through trade. They maintain friendly relations with the Nokaartik nomads and, through the canal from Aonius to Sirenia, they are in contact with the rest of Martian civilization.

History

Up until about 150 years ago, the leadership of Ambrosia was regularly embroiled in war with the cities of the Bloody Square.

Logrania

While the knowledge of refining and preserving the various spices of the Bosporos region is lost to the neighboring cities, the crafters of Logrania still know how to refine the precious powders and oils. As trade is only possible with cities currently at war with Logrania, most of these are stockpiled in the city, waiting for peace to break out, however short-lived.

Ogygis

After their defeat in Ardrey, the *cult of the Black Skull* has gathered in Ogygis and found new strength. Currently, the black-armored soldiers of the cult control several districts of the city, have conducted several successful and brutal missions against the city's surrounding plantations, and are now a thorn in the side of the canal prince of Ogygis.

Solis Lacus (Pargygis)

Several sizable oil fields lie near this city, which the ruling Fire cult considers holy and uses for all sorts of rituals. Neither the cultists nor their enemies are aware of the technological applications of the oil, let alone its military potential.

Abonia

Not currently directly involved with the ongoing wars of the Square, Abonia is conducting operations in the surrounding mountains to fight the High Martians there for their liftwood. The efforts of the Golden Triangle to restore the Aonius–Abonia canal are viewed with suspicion, although the trade benefits are undeniable.

Religion, Rites, and Customs

Inside the Golden Triangle, the future is viewed with optimism. The cults of the God at the Heart of the World have discarded any warlike intentions here, gaining in popularity as they did so. A community of Canal Keepers has even formed in Aonius.

Government, Politics, and Society

The individual districts of the cities are each usually led by a clan, a cult, or a guild, in addition to being subservient to the central district on the canal intersection. Here lie the residences of the upper classes, the markets, and the caravansaries. Each city is

governed by a council consisting of members from each district. The final word lies with the canal princes, though, who each also draw on a respectable power base of their own.

The Cities of the Golden Triangle

Ambrosia (Voshnapal)

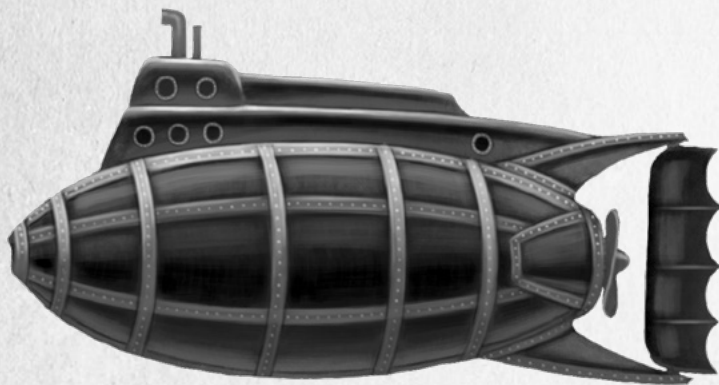
Once the ruling power of the Triangle before Aonius took that role, the merchant class has now replaced the military as the voice of the city. The outer districts still bear the scars of the wars: destroyed buildings, lecture halls, and laboratories of the abandoned universities, now lined with trenches, underground fortifications, and cellars. There are also many temples and secret shrines here, where obscure gods are still worshipped and which are guarded by dangerous creatures and cunning traps.

Aonius (Eepal)

Situated on five canals, Aonius has always been the trade hub of the Triangle. It was the restoration of the water flow in the canal to Sirenia, however, that changed things. The canal to Abonia is planned to see similar restoration work in the coming years, which should grant access to the spices of the Bosporos region.

Claritas (Barlan Tschok)

This city is directly connected to Sirenia by a dried-up canal. The rulers have no ambition to restore the latter, focusing instead on their role as the religious capitol of the Triangle: Claritas is home to the Temple of Tenfold Knowledge, where a floating, glowing blue squid points out sets of ten from hundreds of stone tablets suspended around it. The priesthood then reads the future from the symbols on the chosen tablets. The squid is extremely docile and is said to understand rudimentary speech.



Flora and Fauna of Mars

The creatures presented here supplement the Martian animals listed in the **Core Rules**. You can find more on Martian wildlife in the *Space: 1889* supplement **Marvels of Mars**.

On Martian Flora and Fauna

The flora and fauna of Mars is characterized by many parallels to, but also by many differences from, life on Earth. Scientists feverishly study the Martian ecosystem, and anticipate the future development of terrestrial evolution based on their findings, while the Martians simply know this animal kingdom as it is.

Drought

Water is scarce, and so is food. Because of this, Martian creatures are nearly all extremely tough and resilient: thick hides, deadly defensive weapons, and high energy efficiency are typical traits for Martian fauna. Only in a very few regions are the animal inhabitants showing a touch of excess. In these places, one may find colorful furs and fragile beauty with some species, and have a glimpse at the “glamor of bygone days.” From a terrestrial viewpoint, the diversity of species is quite low, but the taxonomical inventory is only rudimentary at this point.

Extinction

Many species on Mars went extinct because of the drought, and the survivors fight in their own way to delay their inevitable extinction. A harsh struggle for survival defines the everyday life of the creatures of Mars.

Ability to Fly

The unique conditions of Mars encouraged the development of the ability to fly. This is of special interest, as there are no Martian birds at all. Instead, the skies are dominated by other creatures: draconian or serpentine lizards, mammals floating with the help of flying membranes, and creatures with organs containing substances not unlike those responsible for the properties of liftwood.

Land-Dwelling Animals

Brifa Oum (Land Whale)

It is unknown which animal species this legendary beast belongs to. Eyewitness accounts, cave paintings, and Martian myths describe the “White Ape” as a giant animal with six limbs and white fur. It could be a gargantuan descendant of a gorilla-like ape species; some explorers, though, classify it as a “land whale” that was able to find a new habitat in the icy areas during the naBrifanoon

on Mars. The main evidence supporting this hypothesis is that, in contrast to the head, the eyes are tiny, and the maw visible in pictures is nearly completely clotted by lappets reminiscent of baleens. In addition, its Na-Gaaryani name means something like “behemoth of wetness” (although the terms “ice” and “wetness” are used synonymously in most Martian languages).

A dangerous predator, it supposedly prowls both polar regions and their icy outskirts as well as the highlands around the polar

Ecological Niches

Since the waters receded, many species have adapted to the pressure of the extreme circumstances and oftentimes found incredible niches in which they can exist. Habitats have changed, so one can encounter the descendants of former water animals on land or even in the sky, and erstwhile inhabitants of the forests now dwell in the desert.

Peak of Evolution

Mars is not only characterized by death and decay: the Red Planet has also reached the pinnacle of evolution. Thus, many animal species on Mars can be considered the “ultimate form” of their development, e.g. the most dangerous predator that ever existed, the most intelligent form possible in a class of animals, or the most resilient beast one can encounter in the known solar system. Some exceptionally intelligent animal species even stood on the brink of forming a culture.

Technologies and Breeds

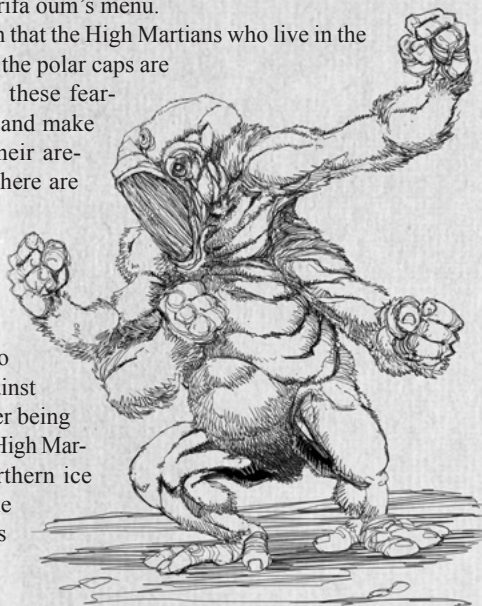
The civilized Martians shaped the animal kingdom through their technology and breeding efforts. The numerous species which, in the early period of Martian culture, originated from domestication were later complemented by those creatures created by science: hybridization and genetic breeding programs had been conducted in the past for various reasons, and left their marks on the modern fauna.

Many Legs

Many creatures of Mars have developed up to ten limbs. The reasons for this are diverse. “Creepy crawlies” became higher forms of life as they were forced to share their habitats with standard quadrupeds: eight-legged crayfish from the erstwhile seas, six-legged insects, four-limbed mammals, limbless snake creatures—they all lived in the naBrifanoon, the Age of Drying, sharing common habitats after the waters receded. This explains the different combinations of use and number of limbs.

caps. Virtually every land animal on Mars can be considered its prey, since not even ruumet breehrs would be too large to appear on the brifa oum's menu.

Rumors claim that the High Martians who live in the mountains near the polar caps are able to capture these fearsome creatures and make them fight in their arenas for sport. There are certainly dozens of drunkards, mostly Earthlings, in many cities, who claim to have fought against these beasts after being captured by the High Martians of the northern ice kraags or of the southern Noachis Mountains.



Brifa Oom

Animal Companion 5

Archetype: Animal **Health: 24**

Primary Attributes

Body: 12 **Charisma: 0**
Dexterity: 4 **Intelligence: 1**
Strength: 11 **Willpower: 4**

Secondary Attributes

Size: 6 **Initiative: 5**
Move: 15 (30)* **Defense: 12****
Perception: 5 **Stun: 12**

Skill	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	11	6	19	(9+)
Stealth	4	2	0***	(0)
Survival	1	5	8	(4)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Brawl rating)

Robust (+2 Health rating)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	10 L	-6	23 L	(11+) L
Claw	8 L	-6	21 L	(10+) L
Trample	12 N	-6	25 N	(12+) N
Ramming Attack	8 N	-6	21 N	(10+) N

*Animals with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

**Brifa Oums have a thick hide that provides a +2 Bonus to their Passive Defense

***Brifa Oums suffer a -6 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

Gluug (Giant Snail)

Measuring up to 15 feet (5 m) long, these creatures are believed to be one of the biggest inhabitants of the vast and ancient Martian sewers. The gluug's body looks like a single lobe of muscle dripping with mucus. Multiple tentacles protrude from the grotesque body, and a sharp tongue flops out of the jaw at its front. These slugs eat everything they can find in the sewers and swamps, and are

often found in small groups. Fortunately, they are slow, but once they have grabbed a victim, it is very hard to escape their grip.

Gluug

Animal Companion 3

Archetype: Animal **Health: 14**

Primary Attributes

Body: 6 **Charisma: 0**
Dexterity: 1 **Intelligence: 0**
Strength: 5 **Willpower: 6**

Secondary Attributes

Size: 2 **Initiative: 1**
Move: 6 **Defense: 5**
Perception: 6 **Stun: 6**

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	5	5	10	(5)
Stealth	1	2	1	(0+)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

Drown (on a successful attack, the victim is pushed underwater and drowned. It can withstand this attack for one round per success on an instinctive Body roll, after which it suffers 1 L per round until it is able to breathe again)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	2 L	-2	10 L	(5) L
Tentacle (Drown)	2 N	-2	10 N	(5) N

*Gluugs suffer a -2 Size penalty on Stealth rolls



Griigan (Furry Lizard)

These six-legged animals are small, furry lizard-like creatures about 12 inches (30 centimeters) long. They are often kept as pets by rich Martians, and are especially popular with the ladies. Having escaped from the manors of the rich, however, some specimens have spread to the city sewers, likely because they are frequently sent there to die. A large infestation of griigans has been reported in the sewers of Dioscuria, but most other cities also suffer stray griigan populations of various sizes.

Though normal specimens do not grow bigger than cats or small dogs at best, legends tell of giant albino griigans with white fur, giant red eyes, and razor-sharp teeth, living in the lightless sewers.

Albino Griigan

Animal Companion 2

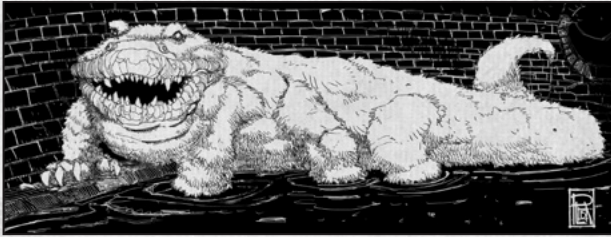
Archetype: Animal **Health: 10**

Primary Attributes

Body: 5 **Charisma: 0**
Dexterity: 3 **Intelligence: 0**
Strength: 5 **Willpower: 4**

Secondary Attributes

Size: 1 **Initiative: 3**
Move: 8 (16) * **Defense: 7**
Perception: 4 **Stun: 5**



Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	5	5	12	(6)
Stealth	3	1	3**	(1+)
Survival	0	5	7	(3+)

Talents
Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)
Skill Aptitude (+2 Brawl rating)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	3 L	-1	14 L	(7) L
Claw	1 L	-1	12 L	(6) L

*Animals with four or more legs double their Move rating when running
 **Albino Griigans suffer a -2 Size penalty on Stealth roll

Gugruuz (Spiked Roogie)

This animal is related to the roogie and resembles a porcupine. The gugruuz, however, is venomous, producing a poison in a gland on its back which it delivers to its victims through its spikes, which can be shot several yards. The poisoned victim lapses into a death-like paralysis, allowing the otherwise defenseless scavenger to quietly eat its still-living prey as if it were carrion.

Gugruuz

Animal Companion 2	
Archetype: Animal	Health: 8
Primary Attributes	
Body: 4	Charisma: 0
Dexterity: 3	Intelligence: 0
Strength: 3	Willpower: 4
Secondary Attributes	
Size: 0	Initiative: 3
Move: 6 (12)*	Defense: 7
Perception: 4 (8)	Stun: 4



Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Archery	3	4	7	(3+)
Brawl	3	5	8	(4)
Stealth	3	2	5	(2+)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

Talents
Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)
Keen Senses (+4 bonus when making smell-based Perception rolls)
Venom (paralyzing; victims suffer a temporary loss of -1 on their Dexterity and Strength ratings)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	1 L	0	9 L	(4+) L
Spikes (Ranged; Venom)	3 L	0	10 L	(5) L

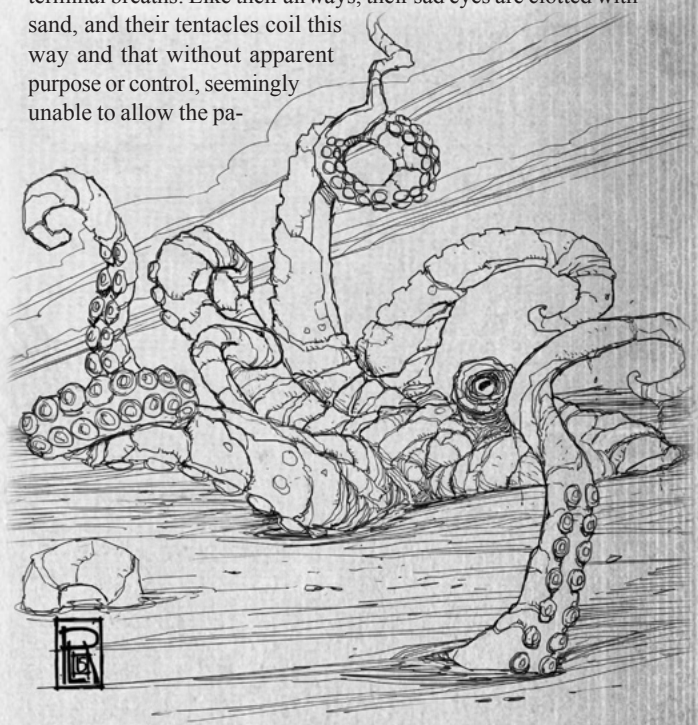
*Animals with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

Karssa Shoshu (Dust Kraken)

When the seas dried up, many aquatic animals went extinct. Up until that time, the "cephalopods," which on Earth are known exclusively as marine animals, were well on their way to becoming an intelligent species. Archaeological evidence hints at the beginnings of a primitive culture. Because of the naBrifanoon, however, the octopods, sepias, and ammonites degenerated before they could develop into the equals of the Martians. They had begun to adapt to the new circumstances by the time some of them left the water.

During the naBrifanoon, the dust octopods remained on the ocean floor in diminishing numbers. On laying eyes upon the rough, wrinkled, crushed exterior of this type of cephalopod, one inevitably gets a notion of how very few of these last octopods exist, desperately clutching at the last straw of survival on those tiny specks of ocean floor. It is questionable whether the survival of their species has really been worth the cost.

These yellow-brown creatures appear terribly pitiful, uttering rattling, dry cries with organs obviously not meant for breathing air; a sound reminiscent of consumption patients drawing their terminal breaths. Like their airways, their sad eyes are clogged with sand, and their tentacles coil this way and that without apparent purpose or control, seemingly unable to allow the pa-



thetic animals to move with any dignity. Anyone with a heart beholding them will curse the cruelty of nature and pray that God have mercy on these hideous creatures.

This mercy comes most easily in the form of a .303 British full metal jacket shot from a Lee-Metford, since dust octopods are indeed very dangerous, burrowing below the desert soil—the former ocean floor—to lie in wait for prey. It would be kinder to say that they make short work of their victims, but unfortunately the opposite is true: One cannot claim that their natural weapons are particularly efficient. Instead, their victims often suffer a long time, screaming as the beak bites into their flesh and the tentacles rip muscles and snap bones, while the creature attempts to suffocate the victim, trying just about anything to make the victim die. A dust kraken will almost never release a victim—for it yearns too strongly for survival and only another meal can ensure that.

Karssa Shosha

Animal Companion 2

Archetype: Animal Health: 11

Primary Attributes

Body: 5 Charisma: 0
Dexterity: 2 Intelligence: 0
Strength: 4 Willpower: 5

Secondary Attributes

Size: 1 Initiative: 2
Move: 6 (12)* Defense: 6
Perception: 5 Stun: 5

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	4	4	8	(4)
Stealth	2	6	9**	(4+)
Survival	0	5	7	(3+)
Empathy	0	1	1	(0+)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Stealth rating)

Dual Wield

Assassin (when unnoticed, it can make a Surprise Attack using its Stealth rating instead of its Brawl rating against the Passive Defense of its victim)

Strangle (on a successful attack, the victim is seized and strangled. The victim can withstand the strangling for one round per success on an instinctive Body roll, after which it suffers 1 N per round until it is able to breathe again)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	1 L	-1	8 L	(4) L
Tentacle	0 N	-1	7 N	(3+) N
Grab (Strangle)	2 N	-1	9 N	(4+) N

*Burrow (double the Move rating when digging)

**Karssa Shoshus suffer a -1 penalty on Stealth rolls

Koljiss (Carriion Bear)

This furry animal resembles a gigantic, upright bear or ape with a dog-like snout and a long tail that it uses to keep its balance. It owes its “carriion bear” English name to its habit of eating carriion alongside berries and grasses. It lurks in any place where death is not far away. It only poses a minimal threat to humans, since, despite its large size, it does not normally attack creatures approaching its size. Superstitious Hill Martians, on the other hand, consider its appearance a bad omen because of its close connection with death.



Koljiss

Animal Companion 1

Archetype: Animal Health: 8

Primary Attributes

Body: 4 Charisma: 0
Dexterity: 3 Intelligence: 0
Strength: 3 Willpower: 2

Secondary Attributes

Size: 2 Initiative: 3
Move: 6 Defense: 7*
Perception: 2 (6) Stun: 4

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	3	3	6	(3)
Stealth	3	1	2**	(1)
Survival	0	4	4	(2)

Talents

Keen Sense (+4 bonus on smell-based Perception rolls)

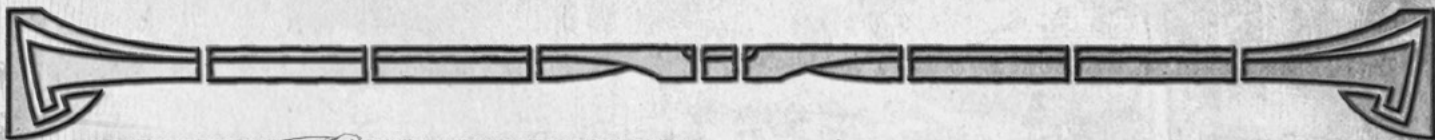
Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Claw	1 L	-2	5 L	(2+) L
Tail	2 N	-2	6 N	(3) N

*This creature has a thick hide that provides a +2 bonus to their Passive Defense

**Koljisses suffer a -2 penalty on Stealth rolls

Mogwuul (Martian Kangaroo)

Descended from a marsupial-like mammal, this animal has a “jumping gland” whose composition is somewhat simpler than that of the well-known lifting gland. Because of this, the tough, bony creature is often compared to the terrestrial kangaroo. Apart from their jumping ability and similar physiques, these two animals have little in common. The mogwuul is a hunter, with sturdy bones and thick, wrinkled, bristly skin like an elephant. The four legs give power to its jump, allowing the animal to pounce up to 100 feet (30 m)—for prey the size of a human this mostly comes unexpectedly; unwary travelers on the steppes often find the peaceful-looking creature, which a moment ago stood calmly in the distance, suddenly hurtling towards them with teeth bared. The two arms are short, yet tipped with massive claws which the creature turns on its target when pouncing. The sheer momentum of the attack knocks the victim down and renders them defenseless as its sharp teeth rip out their throat. Eegars are its preferred prey.



Mogwuul



Animal Companion 2

Archetype: Animal Health: 9

Primary Attributes

Body: 5 Charisma: 0
 Dexterity: 5 Intelligence: 1
 Strength: 4 Willpower: 3

Secondary Attributes

Size: 1 Initiative: 6
 Move: 9 (18)* Defense: 11**
 Perception: 4 Stun: 5

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	4	6	12	(6)
Stealth	5	1	5***	(2+)
Survival	1	5	6	(3)
Athletics	4	3	7	(3+)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Brawl rating)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	1 L	-1	12 L	(6) L
Claw	0 L	-1	11 L	(5+) L
Trample	4 N	-1	15 N	(7+) N

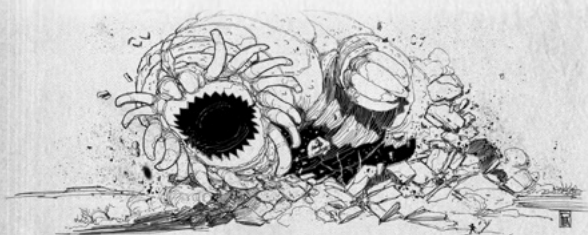
*Jumper (double the Move rating when jumping)

**Mogwuuls have a thick hide that provides a +2 bonus to their Passive Defense

***Mogwuuls suffer a -1 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

Onam Reech (Canal Digger)

The Hill Martians to the south and west of Syrtis Major have a legend about a huge animal digging through the underground, so large that its abandoned burrows now serve as canals. According to the descriptions given by most storytellers, it resembles a titanic, hairless mole without hind legs and with multiple bone plates covering the front third of its body. The natives scare disobedient children with this legend, and it is assumed that the creature is either totally fictitious or an exaggeration of a smaller, more ordinary animal. It is also possible that these stories originate from a primitive and ignorant tribe trying to explain the existence of the canals, not unlike savages on Earth ascribe the formation of lakes to the footsteps of a legendary giant.



Onam Reech

Animal Companion 5

Archetype: Animal Health: 30

Primary Attributes

Body: 18 Charisma: 0
 Dexterity: 2 Intelligence: 1
 Strength: 22 Willpower: 4

Secondary Attributes

Size: 8 Initiative: 3
 Move: 24 (48)* Defense: 12
 Perception: 5 Stun: 18

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	22	4	26	(13)
Stealth	2	6	0**	(0)
Survival	1	4	5	(2+)

Talents

-

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	8 L	-8	26 L	(13) L
Claw	10 L	-8	28 L	(14) L

*Animals with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

**Onam Reeches suffer a -8 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

Raduug Grei (Red Manikin)

Many stories circulate among the daring aerial flyer captains of Mars about the mysterious “red manikins” or “little Martians”. They are said to live in large packs and to watch the sky, holding strange poses and waiting silently. In the unfortunate event that an aerial flyer encounters them, their mysterious powers are said to render the ship unable to fly and make it as heavy as a rock, so that the flyer drops and crashes to the ground. For this reason, the manikins’ territories in the South Pole’s steppes—those of Electris—are avoided when possible.

They are eusocial marsupials, meaning they are colony animals—a rare feature among mammals. Stranger still is the fact that the red manikins actually appear to comprise several animal species, who have come together to form a sort of “kingdom”, living in extensive underground cave systems they have dug themselves.

Raduug Wahgar (Red Watcher)

It is the watchers that are most well-known among the airship captains, and who are often considered to be the definitive “red manikins”. These creatures grow to between 1 and 1.6 feet (30 and 50 cm) with large, elongated heads and wide lemur-like eyes. Due to their watchful poses, they resemble the meerkats of Africa. Their skin is covered by a soft, reddish fluff that is ruffled by the steppe winds. They often spend hours staring into the sky, especially at twilight, and at night they can be found outside the caves of their colonies, guarding against aerial predators.

In fact, their abilities go beyond simple guard duty. Researchers are still in the dark as to how they are able to change the properties of liftwood and similar organic substances over such distances, to the extent that these substances lose their levitating properties for a while. Aerial flyer captains have observed that before their ships lost lift, the creatures straightened and their fur stood on end, suggesting that their hairs serve as some kind of antennae. Beyond this observation, speculation begins: electricity, psychic powers, some kind of “liftwood magnetism”, “ethereal

Flora & Fauna





well”, all of these have been put forward. The fact is that two or three specimens can bring down a flying High Martian, while about twenty animals pose a threat to a gunboat, and about fifty are needed to sink a galley. Using this ability, the red watchers have been observed to keep komkota and other flying predators grounded while the other red manikins foraging for food on the surface can reach the safety of the caves.

Raduug Wahgar

Animal Companion 1

Archetype: Animal Health: 7

Primary Attributes

Body: 3 Charisma: 1
 Dexterity: 3 Intelligence: 1
 Strength: 2 Willpower: 5

Secondary Attributes

Size: -1 Initiative: 4
 Move: 5 Defense: 7
 Perception: 8 (12) Stun: 3

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Archery	3	4	7	(3+)
Brawl	2	1	3	(1+)
Stealth	3	3	7*	(3+)
Survival	1	4	7	(3+)
Empathy	1	2	3	(1+)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

Keen Senses (+4 bonus on sight-based Perception rolls)

Alertness (+2 Perception rating)

Liftwood Disturbance (each point of Damage nullifies the lifting capacity of 22 lbs. (10 kg) of liftwood)

Flyer Disturbance (instead of falling unconscious, a flying creature is unable to fly and may crash)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Claw	1 L	+1	5 L	(2+) L
Interfering Wave (Ranged) (Liftwood Disturbance)	6 N	+1	14 N	(7) N

*Raduug Wahgars receive a +1 Size bonus on Stealth rolls

Raduug Kash (Red Foragers)

Unlike the upright watchers, foragers walk on all fours, measuring about a foot (30 cm) long. They resemble mole-rats or fat hamsters, with thick, red fur which protects against the cold of night and makes them hard to detect on the dusty red ground of the steppes. Under the protection of the watchers, they use their cheek pouches to collect bulbs, shrubs, crunchy insects, and fragrant carrion. They are incredibly agile and have a distinctive flight instinct which allows them to flee into their burrows whenever danger is in sight. Additionally, they can curl up and, due to their red fur, resemble a rock in the desert. Therefore, passengers on aerial flyers get to see them only briefly at best. The foragers are peaceful omnivores and pose no threat to anything bigger than a ganz willow.

Raduug Reech (Red Diggers)

The third species in the red manikin colony is virtually unknown to humans. Looking like red naked mole-rats, the diggers live exclusively underground. Their eyes are covered by lappets, leaving only a small slit to see through—which is likely all that is needed for digging tunnels. Their 0.6 to 1 foot (20–30 cm) long bodies feature shovel-like front paws, and their mouths are designed for digging tunnels without swallowing soil. They are unable to drink and get their water from the turnips they eat by unknown means, as well as from red dust mud they wallow in.

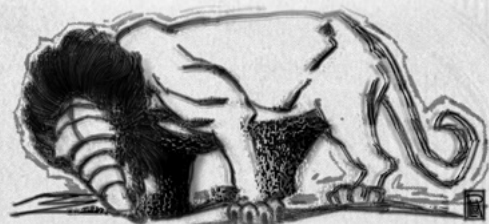
With the help of their tiny hairs, these almost blind animals orient themselves inside the Martian soil and can distinguish between good and bad tunnel-building materials by touch.

Others

In addition to the three main groups, there are likely a number of other roles within the colonies of the red manikins, but this is pure speculation. Dubious reports tell of queens and armored drones, even of huge, bulbous creatures which are fattened by their own fellow species, like cattle for slaughter.

Rakarri (Red Tiger)

The red tiger of the Martian steppes and desert sands is a rare and smaller relative of the steppe tiger. Because of an electrostatic charge whose exact generation mechanism is poorly understood, its fur attracts the sand and dust around it, providing the tiger with a camouflage pattern matching its current environment. The camouflage is so sophisticated that when it is lurking, the creature is virtually undetectable. Its movement is a blur that often appears little more than a whirlwind of color and dust. It is



a popular topic of debate among scholars whether this feature is a natural development or if the canal builders' breeding programs had something to do with it.

Rakarri

Animal Companion 2

Archetype: Animal Health: 7

Primary Attributes

Body: 4 Charisma: 0
Dexterity: 6 Intelligence: 0
Strength: 4 Willpower: 3

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 Initiative: 6
Move: 10 (20) Defense: 10
Perception: 3 Stun: 4

Skills

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	4	5	11	(5+)
Stealth	6	6	14	(7)
Survival	0	4	4	(2)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

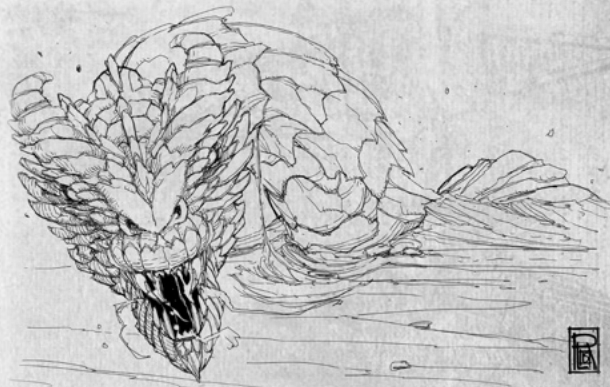
Skill Aptitude (+2 Brawl rating)

Assassin (when unnoticed, it can make a Surprise Attack using its Stealth rating instead of its Brawl rating against the Passive Defense of its victim)

Weapons

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	2 L	0	13 L	(6+) L
Claw	0 L	0	11 L	(5+) L

*Animals with four or more legs double their Move rating when running



Skills

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	3	5	10	(5)
Archery	4	3	7	(3+)
Stealth	4	5	9	(4+)
Survival	1	5	8	(4)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Brawl rating)

Keen Senses (+4 bonus on touch-based Perception rolls)

Quick Reflexes (+2 Initiative rating)

Assassin (when unnoticed, it can make a Surprise Attack using its Stealth rating instead of its Brawl rating against the Passive Defense of its victim)

Venom (the bite and the sprayed venom have a paralyzing effect; the victim suffers a temporary loss of -1 on their Dexterity and Strength ratings)

Venom (the bite also includes a digestive toxin that slowly decomposes the victim. This toxin is a level 3 poison and induces 1 L per hour if the Defense check fails, until the victim has accumulated 5 successes during an extended Body roll (1 roll per hour). See Poisons and Drugs in the Core Rules, p. 217)

Weapons

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite (Venom)	4 L	0	14 L	(7) L
Spray Venom (Ranged) (Venom)	0 N	0	7 N	(3+) N

*Red Kokos double their Move rating when digging

Red Koko

Although the green koko is better known, its relative the red koko is no less dangerous. Measuring 6 feet (2 m) in length, the "red koko" may be considerably smaller, but it is much more venomous. It inhabits the sandy deserts of Mars, slithering just below the surface. It remains under the surface right up until it strikes, appearing like a ripple in the sand as it speeds towards its prey, which it detects through its tremor sense. Dug in and well camouflaged by its red skin, it often lurks for weeks in a state of hibernation. During this, it senses the ground vibrations within hundreds of yards, allowing it to estimate the size and the position of possible prey.

The koko's venom is delivered by its bite but can also be spat. The venom paralyzes the victim and slowly liquefies their innards. The victim becomes gradually immobile and wastes away in agony. Usually while the victim is still alive, the koko digs a hole in the skin with its teeth and crawls inside the softened body. Thank the Lord that during this process the victim will usually die at last.

Red Koko

Animal Companion 1

Archetype: Animal Health: 8

Primary Attributes

Body: 4 Charisma: 0
Dexterity: 4 Intelligence: 1
Strength: 3 Willpower: 4

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 Initiative: 7
Move: 7 (14)* Defense: 8
Perception: 5 (9) Stun: 4

Sekeparaa (Spider Hound)

In the past, the canal builders knew how to domesticate the spider hound and harvest its extremely strong silk.

The animal, which today is seldom encountered and lives in the wilderness along unused canals, looks like a dog-sized, furry spider, though it has ten legs, four of which are used exclusively for weaving silk. Its diet is seemingly enriched by tiny fragments of sand, possibly the secret of the tensile strength of its silk. Rumor has it that, following the success of his jeans, the Franconian industrialist *Levi Strauss*, who lives in San Francisco, is now pulling a few strings through his contacts on Mars to get samples of "wild spider hound silk" from the animals' webs, or even from live or dead specimens.



Sekeparaa

Animal Companion 1

Archetype: Animal **Health: 5**

Primary Attributes

Body: 2 **Charisma: 1**
Dexterity: 4 **Intelligence: 1**
Strength: 2 **Willpower: 4**

Secondary Attributes

Size: -1 **Initiative: 5**
Move: 6 (12)* **Defense: 7**
Perception: 5 (9) **Stun: 2**

Skills **Base** **Levels** **Rating** **(Average)**

Archery	2	3	5	(2+)
Brawl	2	3	5	(2+)
Stealth	4	3	8**	(4)
Survival	1	4	5	(2+)
Empathy	1	2	3	(1+)

Talents

Keen Senses (+4 bonus on touch-based Perception rolls)

Weapons **Rating** **Size** **Attack** **(Average)**

Bite	1 L	1	7 L	(3+) L
Silk Threads (Ranged)	2 N	1	9 N	(4+) N

*Animals with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

**Sekeparaa receive a +1 Size bonus on Stealth rolls

The origin of this animal remains unclear, but its ancestors are assumed to be fish-like amphibian ocean dwellers, similar to the canal shark, with lizard-like features. Just like Earth's birds evolved from dinosaurs after a natural disaster decimated a diversity of species, it is possible that these animals evolved in a similar fashion during the naBrifanoon.

Using its six broad, fin-like limbs, this 13 foot (4 m) long monstrosity skates across the deserts and steppes. In a cloud of red dust, it strikes with only its vestigial dorsal fin showing above the dust, tearing its victim to pieces with its sharp fangs. It will defend its egg clutches to the death.



Sess Par

Animal Companion 3

Archetype: Animal **Health: 9**

Primary Attributes

Body: 5 **Charisma: 0**
Dexterity: 4 **Intelligence: 0**
Strength: 5 **Willpower: 3**

Secondary Attributes

Size: 1 **Initiative: 4**
Move: 9 (18)* **Defense: 8**
Perception: 3 **Stun: 5**

Skills **Base** **Levels** **Rating** **(Average)**

Brawl	5	6	13	(6+)
Stealth	4	2	5**	(2+)
Survival	0	5	7	(3+)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Brawl rating)

Weapons **Rating** **Size** **Attack** **(Average)**

Bite	3 L	-1	15 L	(7+) L
Ram Attack	4 N	-1	16 N	(8) N

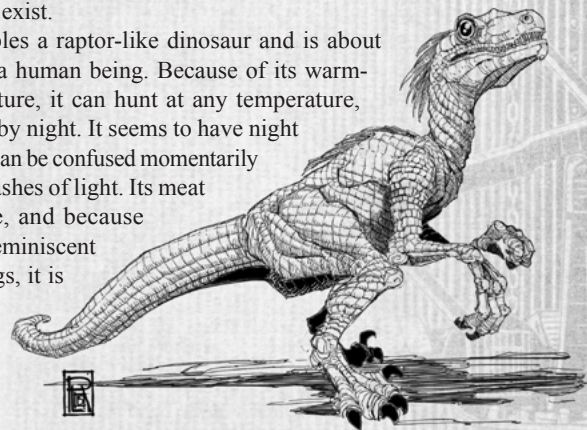
*Animals with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

**Sess Pars suffer a -1 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

Teshuwaan (Martian Hunter Lizard)

The peculiarity of this lizard is that it is a warm-blooded creature. No such lizards are known on Earth, and most biologists would use this criterion to exclude this animal from the reptile class. And yet, the teshuwaan is living proof that warm-blooded reptiles can exist.

It resembles a raptor-like dinosaur and is about the size of a human being. Because of its warm-blooded nature, it can hunt at any temperature, by day and by night. It seems to have night vision, and can be confused momentarily by bright flashes of light. Its meat is palatable, and because its taste is reminiscent of frog's legs, it is considered a delicacy in many places.



Teshuwaan

Animal Companion 2

Archetype: Dinosaur **Health: 6**

Primary Attributes

Body: 3 **Charisma: 0**
Dexterity: 4 **Intelligence: 0**
Strength: 3 **Willpower: 3**

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 **Initiative: 4**
Move: 7 (14)* **Defense: 7**
Perception: 3 (7) **Stun: 3**

Skills **Base** **Levels** **Rating** **(Average)**

Brawl	3	4	7	(3+)
Stealth	4	2	6	(3)
Survival	0	4	4	(2)

Talents

Keen Senses (+4 bonus on sight-based Perception rolls)
Night Vision (no penalties on Perception; may be blinded by bright light for 1 round)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	0 L	0	7 L	(3+) L
Tail	0 L	0	7 L	(3+) L

*Animals with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

Tilri (Hunting Feathertail)

These tiny, nocturnal animals look downright cute and resemble shrew mice to some degree, with big eyes suited to nocturnal vision. A small flying membrane allows them to move incredibly fast by jumping between branches of trees and bushes. In his latest book, *The Power of Movement*

on Mars, Darwin compares this spectacle with that of the rubber “bouncy balls” Charles Goodyear gave away to children during the World Fair in 1876 as an advertising gimmick to promote his tires made of vulcanized rubber.

These little beasts, however, are anything but cute in nature. In hunting packs of up to a hundred, they dare to hunt big prey, even Martians and humans. Tireless, they jump at their prey and cause hundreds, even thousands of tiny but deep bite wounds, cutting the victim like a hail of knives, until it loses consciousness because of the pain and blood loss. The victim is then gnawed down to the bones.



Tilri (Swarm)

Animal Companion 1

Archetype: Animal Health: 7

Primary Attributes

Body: 5 Charisma: 0
 Dexterity: 7 Intelligence: 0
 Strength: 5 Willpower: 2

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 Initiative: 9
 Move: 14 (28)* Defense: 12
 Perception: 2 Stun: 5

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	5	5	10	(5)
Stealth	7	4	13**	(6+)
Survival	0	4	4	(2)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Stealth rating)

Quick Reflexes (+2 Initiative rating)

Swift (+2 Move rating)

Swarm (Only attacks with an Area of Effect inflict damage on a swarm; all other weapons inflict a maximum of 1 point of damage per hit)

Peaceful Appearance (is only considered dangerous on a successful Survival check)

Blood Sucking (on a successful attack, another creature will adhere to the victim's skin. Each creature sucks out 1 point of Health per combat round)

Night Vision (no penalties on Perception; may be blinded by bright light for 1 round)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	2 L	0	12 L	(6) L

*Ti'Iris double their Move rating when jumping

**Ti'Iri swarms receive no penalty or bonus on Stealth rolls; a lone ti'iri receives a +8 Size bonus

Varaas Gula (Amazonian Unicorn)

Called the “Queen of the Red Steppes of Amazonia”, the varaas gula is a pachyderm whose single padded, curved horn hangs over the fireplaces of numerous big game hunters from Earth. These pay pretty sums to get flown from Parhoon to the Amazonian Steppes by aerial flyer. Besides its six legs and the equine frame, the horn is the most characteristic feature of these animals. It grows in the middle of their foreheads, and every single one possesses a unique shape, color, and structure. Similar to those of deer on Earth, the horns serve as weapons for territorial fights the animals carry out against each other. For a long time, it seemed to be a given that only males wore those horns, until researchers proved the opposite. Among this species, which only inhabits the territory of Amazonia, it is the females which surround themselves with a harem of males and defend them against

other females and predators. Their name, it turns out, fits them better than originally intended, as it was only a regional designation.



Varaas Gula

Animal Companion 2

Archetype: Animal Health: 10

Primary Attributes

Body: 4 Charisma: 0
 Dexterity: 4 Intelligence: 0
 Strength: 4 Willpower: 4

Secondary Attributes

Size: 2 Initiative: 4
 Move: 8 (16)* Defense: 6
 Perception: 4 Stun: 4

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	4	5	9	(4+)
Stealth	4	2	4**	(2)
Survival	0	5	7	(3+)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Horn	2 L	-2	9 L	(4+) L
Ram Attack	4 N	-2	11 N	(5+) N

*Animals with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

**Varaas gulas suffer a -2 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

War Breehr

Especially in the Oenotrian and Tossian Empires, these pachyderms are used in battle. Instead of a saddle, war breehrs are equipped with an armored howdah, effectively a small, portable bunker manned by multiple gunners. Such a giant is the war breehr that the standard tactic is to drive the creature through the ranks of the enemy and trample them to death, after which the gunners open fire on the enemy flank and rear, devastating enemy morale. More than one traumatized British soldier has spoken of these "thick-skinned devils" as if they were evil incarnate. Any heavy weapon can be attached to a war breehr, e.g. a Gardner machine gun or a swivel gun.

War Breehr

Animal Companion 3

Archetype: Animal Health: 16

Primary Attributes

Body: 7 Charisma: 0
 Dexterity: 4 Intelligence: 1
 Strength: 7 Willpower: 4

Secondary Attributes

Size: 3 Initiative: 7
 Move: 11 (22)* Defense: 8
 Perception: 5 Stun: 7

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	7	6	15	(7+)
Stealth	4	1	2**	(1)
Survival	1	4	7	(3+)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Brawl rating)

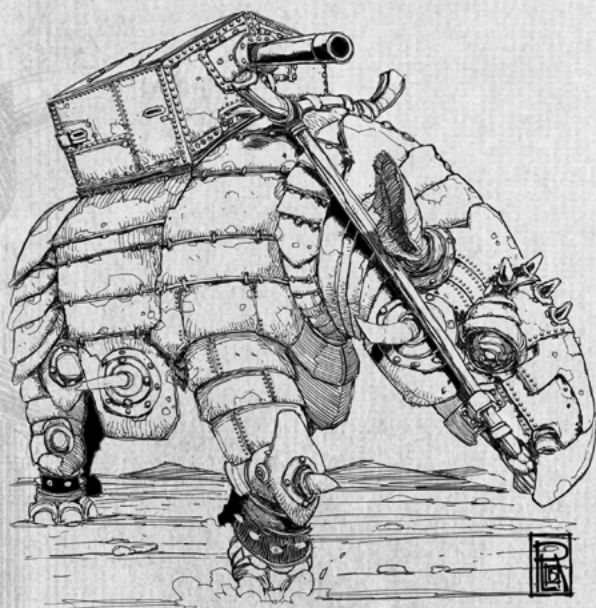
Quick Reflexes (+2 Initiative rating)

Robust (+2 Health rating)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Head butt	4 N	-3	16 N	(8) N
Trample	5 N	-3	17 N	(8+) N
Ram Attack	6 N	-3	18 N	(9) N

*Animals with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

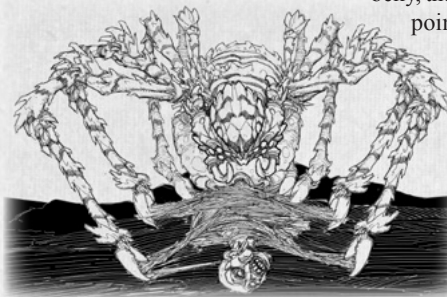
**War Breehrs suffer a -3 Size penalty on Stealth rolls



Weethabraar (Death Spider)

This large spider-like species is the scourge of the deserts. It lives in the caves and canyons of the Martian wastelands, which once were ocean beds, lying in wait for its prey. Researchers are divided over whether the animal descended from a species of spiders, or if it evolved its present form from a crayfish or a marine crab. Its orange shell adds weight to the latter theory, but supporters of the former point out that it could simply be an adaptation to the red desert environment. The fact is, the death spider is able to spin webs. Instead of building webs, however, the highly tear-resistant threads remain attached to its eight legs, and so the spider's body becomes a deadly net in itself. With this ability, it pounces on smaller prey and throws them to the ground. With the help of barbs on its feet, the spider anchors its legs into the desert floor, forming a sort of tent around its victim, so as the victim attempts to escape it becomes tangled in the sticky strings of the net. Once caught, the spider slams its body into its now defenseless prey. On its under-

belly, the spider has multiple pointed, hollow stingers through which it can suck out body fluids and blood, but also fat. All that remains of the victim afterwards is a dried-up corpse.



Weethabraar

Animal Companion 1

Archetype: Insect/Arachnid Health: 7

Primary Attributes

Body: 3 Charisma: 0
 Dexterity: 4 Intelligence: 0
 Strength: 4 Willpower: 5

Secondary Attributes

Size: -1 Initiative: 6
 Move: 8 (16)* Defense: 8
 Perception: 5 Stun: 3

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	4	5	11	(5+)
Stealth	4	5	12**	(6)
Survival	0	5	5	(2+)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Brawl rating)

Quick Reflexes (+2 Initiative rating)

Assassin (when unnoticed, it can make a Surprise Attack using its Stealth rating instead of its Brawl rating against the Passive Defense of its victim)

Blood Sucking (on a successful attack, the creature will adhere to the victim's skin. Each creature sucks out 1 point of Health per combat round)

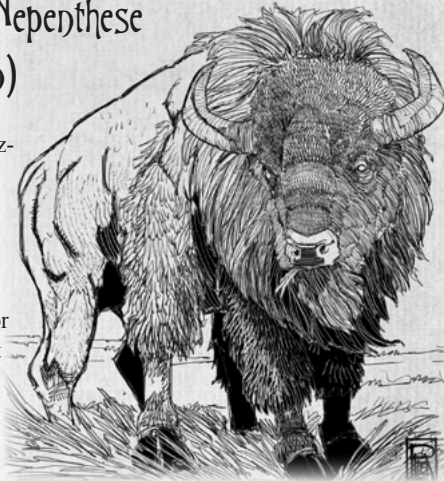
Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	2 L	+1	14 L	(7) L
Entangle	6 N	+1	18 N	(9) N
Throw Down	4 N	+1	16 N	(8) N

*Animals with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

**Weethabraars receive a +1 Size bonus on Stealth rolls

Wocnid (Nepenthes Buffalo)

This six-legged grazing animal lives exclusively on steppe grass and is itself prey for steppe tigers and Hill Martians, who hunt it for its meat and fur. It lives in large herds, which can often be encountered in the steppes.



Wocnid

Animal Companion 1

Archetype: Animal Health: 10

Primary Attributes

Body: 5 Charisma: 0
Dexterity: 3 Intelligence: 0
Strength: 5 Willpower: 3

Secondary Attributes

Size: 2 Initiative: 3
Move: 8 (16)* Defense: 6
Perception: 5 Stun: 5

Skills

	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	5	4	9	(4+)
Stealth	3	2	3**	(1+)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

Alertness (+2 Perception rating)

Weapons

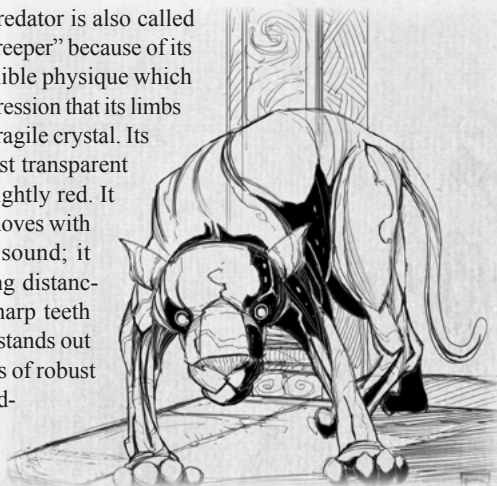
	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Head Butt	3 N	-2	10 N	(5) N
Ram Attack	4 N	-2	11 N	(5+) N

*Animals with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

**Wocnids suffer a -2 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

Zephis (Crystal Creeper)

This feline predator is also called the “crystal creeper” because of its filigreed, flexible physique which gives the impression that its limbs are made of fragile crystal. Its body is almost transparent and glows slightly red. It is agile and moves with virtually no sound; it can jump long distances and has sharp teeth and claws. It stands out from the mass of robust and bulky predators typically found on Mars.



The animal has adapted to life within Martian cities. It is particularly encountered in cities with blown-glass architecture. Gliding between the ancient buildings, it is as if the zephis were once part of the architecture itself—the building designs and the features of their four-legged feline physique bear far too many similarities. Within these ruins, they hunt for small animals and keep vermin at bay.

Many Martians revere these animals as lucky relics from a time when their own people had some influence on the evolution of the wildlife. They would never hunt or capture these animals; instead, they welcome their presence. A Martian superstition claims that the day one sees a zephis will be a day of great luck. However, there are also persistent rumors of crystal creepers which can walk through walls (especially those of glass buildings). These allegedly carry out secret missions and pursue agendas the ancestors of the Martian people supposedly programmed into their genetic makeup.

Zephis

Animal Companion 1

Archetype: Animal Health: 6

Primary Attributes

Body: 2 Charisma: 1
Dexterity: 8 Intelligence: 1
Strength: 3 Willpower: 5

Secondary Attributes

Size: -1 Initiative: 11
Move: 13 (26)* Defense: 11
Perception: 6 Stun: 2

Skills

	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	3	4	7	(3+)
Stealth	8	5	16**	(8)
Survival	1	3	4	(2)
Athletics	3	4	7	(3+)
Empathy	1	3	4	(2)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

Quick Reflexes (+2 Initiative rating)

Swift (+2 Move rating)

Lucky Charm (whoever sees this creature may reroll one die of their choice this day)

Weapons

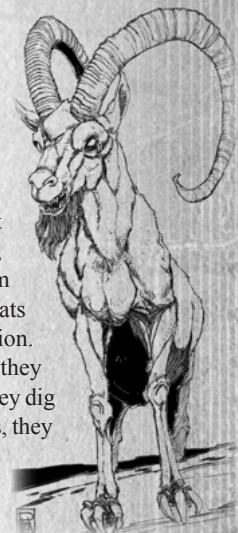
	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	1 L	1	9 L	(4+) L
Claw	0 L	1	8 L	(4) L

*Animals with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

**Zephis receive a +2 Size bonus on Stealth rolls

Zonor (Carion Coati)

This creature, which stands on four thin, long legs and is about the size of a deer, can often be encountered in the vicinity of prairie rat burrows, since these form the bulk of its diet, dead or alive. Claw-like nails protrude from its front paws, with which it digs out the rats from their burrows or uncovers buried carrion. Zonors seldom pose a threat to humans, but they are known to plague burial grounds, where they dig up and eat the corpses. In many areas of Mars, they are therefore considered unclean.



ZODOR

Animal Companion 0

Archetype: Animal Health: 5

Primary Attributes

Body: 3 Charisma: 0
 Dexterity: 4 Intelligence: 0
 Strength: 4 Willpower: 2

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 Initiative: 4
 Move: 8 (16)* Defense: 7
 Perception: 2 (6) Stun: 3

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	4	3	7	(3+)
Stealth	4	3	7	(3+)
Survival	0	3	3	(1+)

Talents

Keen Senses (+4 bonus on touch-based Perception rolls)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	2 L	0	9 L	(4+) L
Claw	0 L	0	7 L	(3+) L

*Animals with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

food sharing and are trained to sniff out outsiders, screech, and attack them. Their loyalty is contingent on regular meals, without which the cunning animals can become dangerous for their handlers.

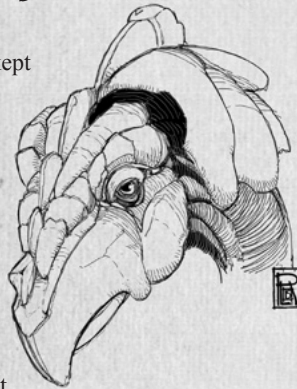
Prey

Whether they are called prairie rats (by the Americans), “Little Willies” (by the British), or “Sausages” (by the Germans), countless nicknames have been given to the **ganz willois**, the steppe dwelling, burrowing rodents. They are surprisingly quick, fearless, and vicious. During the Flow season, entire swarms are often driven from their burrows and fall upon fertile canal land and cities alike.

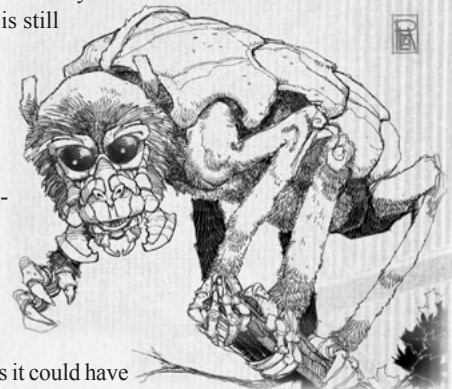


Gashant Breeds

While small **fat gashants** are kept like chickens or cows for their cheap meat, the breeding and racing of **racing gashants** (Talent: *Rum*) unifies the Canal and Hill Martian passions: They trade animals, arrange races, and argue lively about them. The **Queen Victoria gashant**, so named for its characteristic hair plume, is the preferred mount of the Royal Gashant Corps. It is forbidden and severely punished to mention that the Martians call this breed “oun bashanta” (“Gashant dung on the head”).

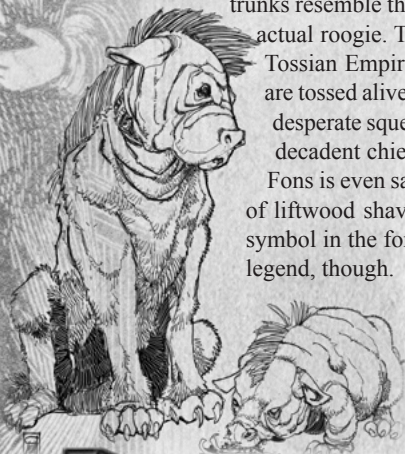


Probably one of the most nightmarish creatures on Mars is the usually harmless **saarksan (Martian loris)** which looks like the little tree-climbing loris of Earth, but features insect-like traits: mandibles, compound eyes, and six arms that it uses to crawl, but also to swing from tree to tree. Its otherwise mammalian body is protected on the back by a shell of chitin. It is still unclear what may have caused this form, though it may have been influenced by its diet: At the beginning of the naBri-fanoon, it could have adapted to eating insects, and sometime during this process it could have taken on insect-like features.



Domesticated Roogies

Why the excessively bred **roogie krae (ornamental snouter)** is so desired by decadent Canal Martians is incomprehensible for humans: The ravenous, fat lap animals with bristled skin and short trunks resemble the Martian roundhead more than an actual roogie. They are prized as delicacies in the Tossian Empire, but they only taste good if they are tossed alive into boiling water. Listening to the desperate squeaking is part of the meal ritual. The decadent chieftain of the Cloud Guard of Biblis Fons is even said to have fed his specimens a diet of liftwood shavings, having thus created a status symbol in the form of “flying pugs”. This is only a legend, though.



Roogie paraars (Martian mas-tiffs) are a common sight in the city palaces or the caravans. These carrion eaters are made into “members of the pack” through

The name of the **eegar (steppe antelope)** is an onomatopoeic description of its warning cry. The eegar is the fastest of all the Martian land animals. These long-necked creatures protect their herds by posting a guard comprised of the longest-necked members at the edge of the herd, constantly on the lookout for threats. They can escape a predator’s surprise attack with astonishing speed. They are quickly fatigued, however, and untiring endurance hunters like roogies pose a much greater threat for these antelope-sized animals than impressive runners like the steppe tiger.

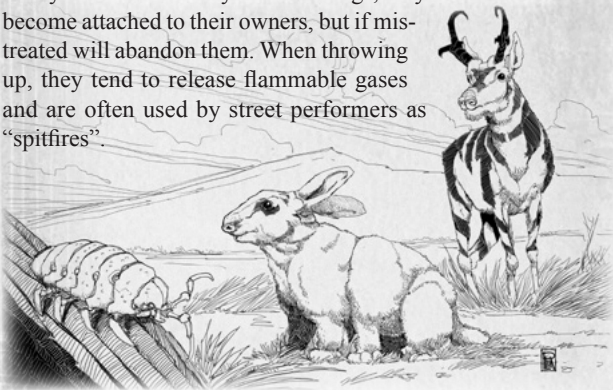
The **shakh hilai’I (shaggyleigh)** are common burrowing insectoids that can often be found in the steppes and in caves. They form a large part of the diets of numerous Martian predators. Its appearance is somewhat like an eight-legged, grub-like armadillo. Clicking its legs and feeling with its antennae as it moves, the shaggyleigh is often seen climbing rocks and searching the ground for eatable carrion, bulbs, and tiny animals. Some High and Hill Martians regard the slimy and soft innards of the animal as a delicacy (even, to the horror of humans, when eaten raw). Earthlings who have seen one of these animals mainly agree that they would rather eat their own feet.

Livestock

Wukkaas (Martian calves) are small, cow-like animals that are kept for their meat in the Martian agricultural regions. Some nomad tribes also own herds of these.

If there ever were wild **kroliks (Martian rabbits)**, they died out eons ago when the steppes formed on Mars. The few existing specimens are domesticated through and through, and are bred for their delicious meat, especially from their six thighs. Kroliks share many similarities with rabbits from Earth. A full-grown animal weighs about 10 pounds (5 kilograms).

The gecko-like **dwarf dragons (penukhit)** are about 1 foot (30 cm) long and are kept as pets. They are especially common in Mylarkt and Boreosyrts. Like dogs, they become attached to their owners, but if mistreated will abandon them. When throwing up, they tend to release flammable gases and are often used by street performers as "spitfires".



Dangerous Small Animals

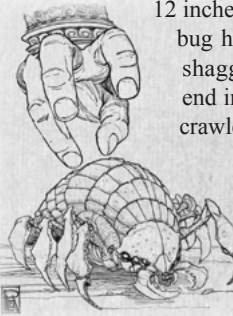
The **brifazak (water tick)**, an ugly arachnoid species about the size of a hand, lives in the grass and foliage of the few remaining woodlands. It is so named because it sucks the water of its prey. Shaped like a black leaf, the water tick lies in wait for its prey. Once it encounters bare skin, it instantly sinks its teeth in and attempts to drain the host's water so fast that the body part it attaches to begins to wrinkle and dry up almost instantly, turn-

ing necrotic within minutes. If the creature is not removed quickly, the affected body part will be so necrotic at this point that the only chance of saving the victim's life is amputation. Some peoples of the High Martians and Hill Martians carry a specimen with them in a pouch and place them on defeated enemies. Afterwards, the filled-up animal is carried like a water skin to be stabbed and drained later.

The **shamm baalo (pleasure worm)** is the scourge of the Martian cities of Mare Sirenum. With its hair-like antennae, it nestles on the skin of living creatures and secretes a drug with an ecstatic effect. As soon as the tiny hairs penetrate the skin, the victim experiences pleasure approaching that of sexual climax. During this, the worm sucks the victim's nutrients through its antennae.

The poisonous, six-legged **ts'kkiiss (tess'kiss)** is about 12 inches (30 cm) long and is identified by its characteristic jagged tail. Its bite injects a poison that is life-threatening to Martians (poison level 5, damage 3 L per hour, 10 successes on hourly Constitution rolls to end the effect). Humans, on the other hand, only suffer from temporary total paralysis (-1 Strength and Dexterity ratings instead of damage).

The **gata sarostarr (Deimos crawler)** is supposedly one of the most poisonous living creatures on Mars (6 L Damage). At about 12 inches (30 cm) in length, this lamellar-shelled bug has a similar appearance to the harmless shaggyleigh. Two of its eight legs, though, end in pointed stingers. Touching the Deimos crawler provokes a reflexive sting which results in suffocation within minutes. A handful of Worm cultists are taught a secret grip that paralyzes the animal, rendering it harmless in order to extract its poison or to place it in, for instance, an enemy's bedroom.



Aquatic Animals

Kabarthapa (Canal Shark)

There are many horrors on Mars, but one creature has killed more travelers than all the others combined: The canal shark. Although primarily a scavenger, it does eat living prey if it falls into the canal near it; something that happens more often to Earthlings than Martians. In addition, stones, parts of ships, and other scrap have been found in the shark's stomach, which probably both serves as ballast and helps its digestion, similarly to crocodiles. It is a type of reptilian-like fish. The females carry fertilized eggs which mature into sharklings astonishingly fast. An effective way of repelling canal sharks, known among Martians, is to use an extract of the oontha root, which grows along the canals and smells slightly repugnant.



Kabarthapa

Animal Companion 2

Archetype: Animal **Health: 9**

Primary Attributes

Body: 5 **Charisma: 0**
Dexterity: 3 **Intelligence: 0**
Strength: 4 **Willpower: 3**

Secondary Attributes

Size: 1 **Initiative: 3**
Move: 14 (0)* **Defense: 7**
Perception: 3 (7) **Stun: 5**

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	4	5	11	(5+)
Stealth	3	4	6**	(3)
Survival	0	6	8	(4)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Brawl rating)

Keen Senses (+4 bonus on smell-based Perception rolls)
Assassin (when unnoticed, it can make a Surprise Attack using its Stealth rating instead of its Brawl rating against the Passive Defense of its victim)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	2 L	-1	12 L	(6) L

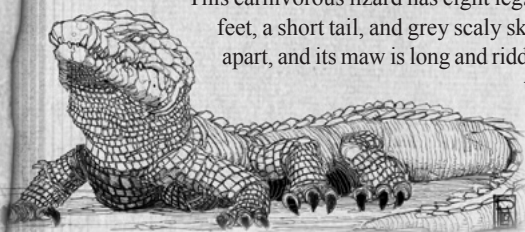
*Aabarthapas double their Move rating when swimming, but cannot move outside of the water

**Aabarthapas suffer a -1 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

Greiscoú Tou (Mars Crocodile)

This carnivorous lizard has eight legs, massive clawed feet, a short tail, and grey scaly skin. Its eyes are far apart, and its maw is long and riddled with teeth like that of a crocodile.

It grows about 10 feet (3 m) long and is feared by Canal skippers.



Greiscoú Tou

Animal Companion 2

Archetype: Animal **Health: 8**

Primary Attributes

Body: 4 **Charisma: 0**
Dexterity: 2 **Intelligence: 0**
Strength: 5 **Willpower: 3**

Secondary Attributes

Size: 1 **Initiative: 2**
Move: 7 (14)* **Defense: 5**
Perception: 3 **Stun: 4**

Skills **Base** **Levels** **Rating** **(Average)**

Brawl 5 4 9 (4+)
Stealth 2 3 4** (2)
Survival 0 4 6 (3)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

Weapons **Rating** **Size** **Attack** **(Average)**

Bite 2 L -1 10 L (5) L
Tail 2 N -1 10 N (5) N

*Animals with four or more legs double their Move rating when running

**Greiscoú Tous suffer a -1 Size bonus on Stealth rolls

Groalmar (Crusher)

The natural habitat of this fish-like species, which is also called the “Martian catfish”, is the swamp. It is assumed that it originates from the canals. Their scales are leathery and brown or grey, though mostly covered by mud. Since they are ambush predators, they wait in the swamp waters, ready to pounce on prey up to the size of a gashant. As soon as their prey approaches, they launch themselves off the ground with their powerful hind flippers and jump onto it like a slobbering muddy avalanche. The catfish’s maw, having as



many rows of teeth as a shark’s mouth, takes up half of its body, the drooling aperture spreading from the massive head—which is attached without a neck directly to the torso—to just under the belly. Usually, a single jump attack is enough to crush the victim under the groalmar’s massive body weight and drag it into the muddy waters, to drown it or bite it to death.

Groalmar

Animal Companion 3

Archetype: Animal **Health: 10**

Primary Attributes

Body: 5 **Charisma: 0**
Dexterity: 2 **Intelligence: 0**
Strength: 6 **Willpower: 3**

Secondary Attributes

Size: 2 **Initiative: 2**
Move: 8 (16)* **Defense: 5**
Perception: 3 **Stun: 5**

Skills **Base** **Levels** **Rating** **(Average)**

Brawl 6 5 11 (5+)
Stealth 2 4 6** (3)
Survival 0 5 7 (3+)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Stealth rating)

Assassin (when unnoticed, it can make a Surprise Attack using its Stealth rating instead of its Brawl rating against the Passive Defense of its victim)

Drown (on a successful attack, the victim is dragged underwater and drowned. It can withstand this attack for one round per success on an instinctive Body roll, after which it suffers 1 L per round until it is able to breathe again)

Weapons **Rating** **Size** **Attack** **(Average)**

Bite 2 L -2 11 L (5+) L
Body Slam (Drown) 4 N 2 13 N (6+) N

*Groalmars double their Move rating when jumping

**Groalmars suffer a -2 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

Talpeish (Croaker)

The frog-like sounds these tiny, six-legged and carnivorous reptiles utter have earned them the name “croakers”. They inhabit the sewers of many Martian cities, but also dwell in swamps. They are almost suicidal in that they attack and eat everything they come across, attacking even humans. Fortunately, they are only really dangerous in large swarms. Fire has proven to be an effective defense against them: they flee from it immediately.

Talpeish (Swarm)

Animal Companion 1

Archetype: Animal **Health: 8**

Primary Attributes

Body: 4 **Charisma: 0**
Dexterity: 5 **Intelligence: 0**
Strength: 3 **Willpower: 3**

Secondary Attributes

Size: 1 **Initiative: 5**
Move: 8 (16)* **Defense: 8**
Perception: 3 **Stun: 4**

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	3	3	6	(3)
Stealth	5	2	6**	(3)
Survival	0	4	6	(3)

Talents
Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

Swarm (Only attacks with an Area of Effect inflict damage on a swarm; all other weapons inflict a maximum of 1 point of damage per hit)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	2 L	-1	7 L	(3+) L

*Animals with four or more legs double their Move rating when running
 **Talpeish swarms suffer a -1 Size penalty on Stealth rolls; a lone talpeish receives a +4 Size bonus

Sewer Creatures

Being familiar with the unpleasantness that is a terrestrial rat does not prepare one for the utter revulsion one experiences at the sight of a **taur varaata (Martian canal rat)**. Looking something like hairless opossums with bloated skin like a drowned corpse, their smell is just as repellent as are the perpetually bloodshot eyes. Translucent webbing between their toes, fingers, arms, and legs makes them exceptional swimmers. The rats are primarily

carrion eaters. It is interesting, though, that they themselves hunt for smaller scavengers while camouflaged as carrion (since one can summarize their appearance in one word: dead). They are commonly believed to be sneaky and devious. During Flood and Flow seasons, the citizens of Martian cities take various measures against vermin infestations.

The **verteb varaata (armored rat or *Cingulata rattus*)** is about 1.5 foot (0.5 m) long and appears in small groups. It may be only moderately dangerous, but it is also known as a carrier of disease.

The tapeworm-like **partaach (flesh worm)** lives in the water and eats small animal carrion. The worms grow up to the width of an arm and have a mouth with three hideous pincers. Their bodies grow up to 6 feet (2 m) in length and is used to strangle their weak, still living prey. Thus, flesh worms can be dangerous for both humans and Martians wading through water.



Flying Animals

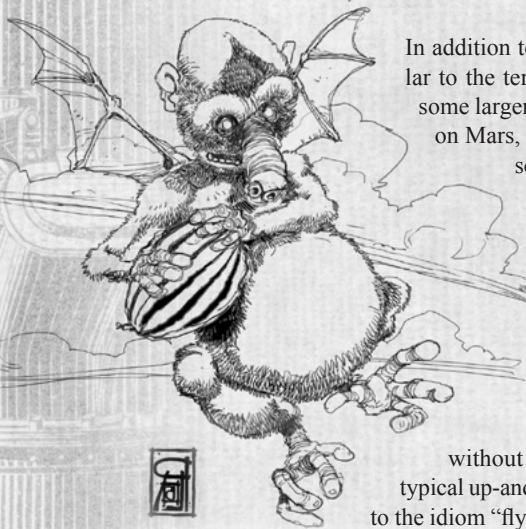
Baadshauli (Galoot)

In addition to small animals similar to the terrestrial bat, there are some larger species of chiroptera on Mars, which in part possess some basic intelligence.

One amusing example is the baadshauli. It resembles a pot-bellied monkey, sporting a trunk-like snout and a gliding membrane which allows it to fly though the air, though

without much elegance. The typical up-and-down of its flight led to the idiom “flying like a baadshauli” among galley captains, meaning to have pathetic piloting skills.

The creature is a harmless herbivore and intelligent enough to split open fruits—those of the pushti tree, for example—by throwing them to the ground. It then sucks the fruit dry with its trunk. In 1884, an unfortunate incident occurred when a British diplomat was hit on the head by a pushti fruit and died on the spot. Since then, an urban legend has circulated among travelers from Earth that one must constantly watch the sky, lest one fall victim to a “baadshauli attack”. In response, hushed baadshauli jokes have spread among the Martians, making fun of the exaggerated caution of Earthlings. Partly as a consequence, the animals are often hunted for sport by British aristocrats.



Baadshauli

Animal Companion 1
Archetype: Animal **Health: 6**

Primary Attributes	
Body: 4	Charisma: 0
Dexterity: 1	Intelligence: 1
Strength: 3	Willpower: 2

Secondary Attributes	
Size: 0	Initiative: 2
Move: 4 (2)*	Defense: 5
Perception: 3	Stun: 4

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Archery	1	1	2	(1)
Brawl	3	1	4	(2)
Empathy	1	1	2	(1)
Stealth	1	1	2	(1)
Survival	1	3	4	(2)

Talents
Peaceful Appearance (is only considered dangerous on a successful Survival check)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	0 L	0	4 L	(2) L
Pushti Fruit (Ranged)	2 N	0	4 N	(2) N

*Baadshaulis use their full Move rating when flying and half their Move rating when on land

Bilair (Blackwing)

Bilairs are flying predators, originating from an age during which there was more water available on Mars. Their relatively

high water requirement has caused them to seldom leave their wet mountain habitats. They are about 6 to 10 feet (2 to 3 m) in size with jet-black bodies (eyes, wings, and all). They swoop on their prey, biting and swiping with their claws. Their vestigial wings aid their quite small lifting glands by beating rapidly, making a humming sound like a humming bird. They live in family units and in swarms that can reach a thousand animals.



Bilair

Animal Companion 2

Archetype: Dinosaur **Health: 9**

Primary Attributes

Body: 4 **Charisma: 0**
Dexterity: 5 **Intelligence: 0**
Strength: 5 **Willpower: 3**

Secondary Attributes

Size: 2 **Initiative: 5**
Move: 10 (5)* **Defense: 7**
Perception: 3 **Stun: 4**

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	5	5	12	(6)
Stealth	5	1	4**	(2)
Survival	0	3	3	(1+)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Brawl rating)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	2 L	-2	12 L	(6) L
Wing Strike	1 N	-2	11 N	(5+) N
Claw	2 L	-2	12 L	(6) L

*Bilairs use their full Move rating when flying, and half their Move rating when on land

**Bilairs suffer a -2 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

Buraak (Liftwood Gremlin)

This little bugger sports a slightly ball-shaped and hedgehog-like body, but also a constant sharp-toothed grin. It causes terror onboard aerial flyers. No bigger than a hedgehog, it sneaks into any place where liftwood can be found. The unique workings of its jumping gland, which allows the gremlin to vault in seeming defiance of gravity, affects the properties of any liftwood around it, ranging from a small drop in flight capability to catastrophic failure. Ships can begin listing heavily, or lose all helm control altogether. The longer the gremlin remains near liftwood, the faster it jumps and bounces, eventually becoming able to glide for minutes. At the same time, the liftwood malfunctions accumulate.

Superstitious Martian air captains like to blame liftwood gremlins for any malfunction of mechanical systems, although they are quite rare and are often wrongly accused. The ether zeppelin captains of the German Empire like to make fun of their British counterparts and mockingly regard the buraaks, or “Marselmännchen”, as their own little helpers.

Buraak

Animal Companion 1

Archetype: Animal **Health: 4**

Primary Attributes

Body: 3 **Charisma: 1**
Dexterity: 4 **Intelligence: 1**
Strength: 2 **Willpower: 3**

Secondary Attributes

Size: -2 **Initiative: 1**
Move: 8 (16) **Defense: 9**
Perception: 4 **Stun: 3**

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Archery	4	3	7	(3+)
Brawl	2	2	4	(2)
Empathy	1	1	2	(1)
Stealth	4	4	10**	(5)
Survival	1	3	4	(2)

Talents

Quick Reflexes (+2 Initiative rating)

Swift (+2 Move rating)

Liftwood Disturbance (each point of “Damage” blocks the lifting capacity of 22 lbs. or 10 kg of liftwood)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	1 L	+2	7 L	(3+) L
Claw	0 L	+2	6 L	(3) L
Impulse	2 N	+2	11 N	(5+) N

(Ranged) (Liftwood Disturbance)

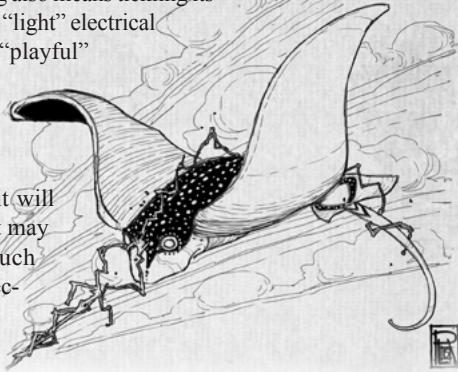
*Buraaks double their Move rating when jumping; after having caused 10 points of Liftwood Disturbance Damage, they are considered flying creatures (and use their full Move rating when flying)

**Buraaks receive a +2 Size bonus on Stealth rolls



Gaeuramin (Flying Ray)

The weightless flying ray is a delicate being, particularly common around Mare Acidalium. Its four fin-like limbs are connected by a single gliding membrane, giving it the appearance of a large ray or whale shark floating through the skies. It feeds on small animals and does not actually pose a threat to humans or Martians. In fact, its behavior is characterized by a curiosity which grips it whenever it catches sight of an aerial flyer. Just like a dolphin approaches a sea-going vessel, a flying ray approaches a flyer, flies alongside it for a while, and “plays” with the vehicle. Unfortunately, playing also means tickling its “companion” with “light” electrical discharges. Such “playful” discharges are in fact powerful enough to kill a grown man. If it feels threatened, it will usually flee, but it may also generate much more powerful electrical discharges.



Gaeuramin

Animal Companion 2

Archetype: Animal **Health:** 6

Primary Attributes

Body: 2 **Charisma:** 0
Dexterity: 6 **Intelligence:** 0
Strength: 2 **Willpower:** 3

Secondary Attributes

Size: 1 **Initiative:** 6
Move: 8 (4)* **Defense:** 7
Perception: 3 **Stun:** 2

Skills

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Archery	6	4	10	(5)
Brawl	2	2	4	(2)
Empathy	0	2	2	(1)
Stealth	6	4	10	(5)
Survival	0	4	4	(2)

when compared to creatures with a lifting gland. This is probably the reason why it has almost been driven out of the airways of Mars by animals with superior lifting glands. Today only very few of these creatures remain.

As predators, these creatures search for prey from the skies. With their spherical bodies and their rubbery skin, they resemble their descendants, but they are larger and have flipper-like feet that allow them to maneuver through the air with “swimming” movements, while the lifting bags regulate altitude by inflating and deflating. Their poison is paralyzing.



Imperial Knoe Shoshu

Animal Companion 3

Archetype: Animal **Health:** 9

Primary Attributes

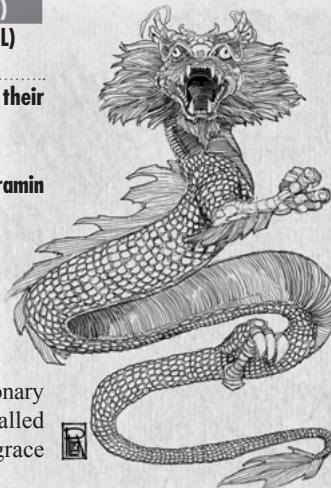
Body: 5 **Charisma:** 0
Dexterity: 6 **Intelligence:** 0
Strength: 4 **Willpower:** 3

Secondary Attributes

Size: 1 **Initiative:** 6
Move: 10 (5)* **Defense:** 10
Perception: 3 **Stun:** 5

Skills

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Athletics	4	3	7	(3+)
Brawl	4	5	11	(5+)
Stealth	6	3	8**	(4)
Survival	0	2	2	(1)



Kasdrakkar (Sandwing)

The High Martians tell tales of an incredibly large flying animal whose size and appearance resembles that of the dragons of Earth mythology. They say it is a big, grim hunter, able to kill a breehr and carry it to its young like a falcon does with a mouse. The people of the Astusapes Mountains claim to have wiped out the monster after the invention of the cannon and the aerial flyer brought

Imperial Knoe Shoshu

The rare imperial knoe shoshu is considered to be the evolutionary ancestor of the widely known knoe shoshu. Using its so-called “lifting bags”, it can fly, although without much speed or grace

the Martians on an even level with the sandwing, and yet other High Martians talk of the creatures as if they still existed. Human scientists, though, have never found any trace whatsoever of these beings.

Kasdrakkar

Animal Companion 5

Archetype: Animal **Health: 20**

Primary Attributes

Body: 12 **Charisma: 0**

Dexterity: 4 **Intelligence: 1**

Strength: 12 **Willpower: 4**

Secondary Attributes

Size: 4 **Initiative: 5**

Move: 16 (8)* **Defense: 12**

Perception: 5 **Stun: 12**

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	12	8	22	(11)
Stealth	4	2	2**	(1)
Survival	1	2	5	(2+)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Brawl rating)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	3 L	-4	21 L	(10+) L
Claw	3 L	-4	21 L	(10+) L
Tail	8 N	-4	26 N	(13) N

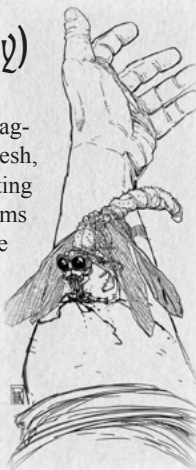
*Kasdrakkars use their full Move rating when flying, and half their

Move rating when on land

**Kasdrakkars suffer a -4 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

Lurec (Flesh-Eating Dragonfly)

Lurecs are small flying insects resembling dragonflies. Unlike dragonflies, they feed on flesh, landing on their prey like mosquitoes and biting off tiny chunks. They cannot harm pachyderms like ruumet breehrs or gashants, but large swarms, on the other hand, can pose a considerable threat to thinner-skinned humans and Martians. Applying camphor or oils to the skin is a common method of repelling them. Their typical hissing sound is created in flight by hairs on their underside.



Lurec (Swarm)

Animal Companion 0

Archetype: Insect **Health: 11**

Primary Attributes

Body: 4 **Charisma: 0**

Dexterity: 4 **Intelligence: 0**

Strength: 3 **Willpower: 5**

Secondary Attributes

Size: 2 **Initiative: 4**

Move: 7 (3)* **Defense: 6**

Perception: 5 **Stun: 4**

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	3	4	7	(3+)
Stealth	4	3	5**	(2+)
Survival	0	4	4	(2)

Talents

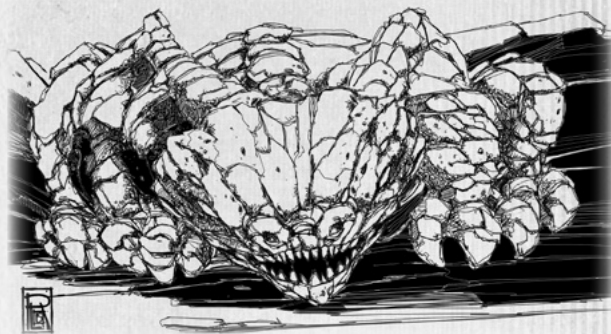
Swarm (Only attacks with an Area of Effect inflict damage on a swarm; all other weapons inflict a maximum of 1 point of damage per hit)

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bite	1 L	-2	6 L	(3) L

*Lurecs use their full Move rating when flying, and half their Move rating when on land

**Lurec swarms suffer a -2 Size penalty on Stealth rolls; a lone lurec receives a +8 Size bonus

Marmrak (Martian Gargoyle)



If, while traveling through the deserts or steppes of Mars, you suddenly come across a boulder which appears to be at the source of a rivulet and you do not believe your eyes, chances are you are encountering the rare Martian gargoyle, and should thus exercise extreme caution. The skin of this creature, which seems to be made of stone, has in fact been coated in sand and mineral particles, which adhere to it and provide ideal protection. On a planet like Earth, the gargoyle would be restricted in its movements, but, this being Mars, the bulk of stone contains substances similar in properties to liftwood. It cannot fly for more than short distances, but it is quite agile and quick.

It is able to allow water to flow out of its mouth and quickly reabsorb the liquid through its skin folds, thus not wasting any. The gargoyle uses this technique to lure in animals such as kroliks and others of similar size. When the prey gets in the vicinity of its maw, from which the water trickles, the gargoyle reveals its powerful set of teeth and bites its victim, its jaws snapping shut like a bear trap. Its teeth cut through flesh like sharpened obsidian, grabbing the prey or slicing off limbs. More than one unfortunate soul lost their forearms and could only stare in bewilderment as the presumed stone unfolded itself and jumped several yards onto the next rise, taking the sliced-off limb with it.

Marmrak

Animal Companion 1

Archetype: Animal **Health: 8**

Primary Attributes

Body: 5 **Charisma: 0**

Dexterity: 2 **Intelligence: 1**

Strength: 5 **Willpower: 4**

Secondary Attributes

Size: -1 **Initiative: 3**

Move: 7 (3)* **Defense: 10****

Perception: 5 **Stun: 5**

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	5	4	9	(4+)
Stealth	2	6	11***	(5+)
Survival	1	5	8	(4)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

Skill Aptitude (+2 Stealth rating)

Assassin (when unnoticed, it can make a Surprise Attack using its Stealth rating instead of its Brawl rating against the Passive Defense of its victim)

Weapons

Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
3 L	+1	13 L	(6+) L
1 L	+1	11 L	(5+) L

Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
0 L	+1	4 L	(2) L
1 L	+1	5 L	(2+) L

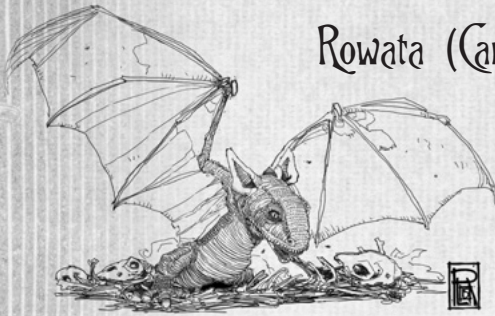
***Marmraks double their Move rating when jumping**

****Marmraks have a thick stone skin that provides a +2 bonus to their Passive Defense**

*****Marmraks receive a +1 Size bonus on Stealth rolls**



Rowata (Carrion Bat)



This easily-scared nocturnal scavenger flies above the steppes and plains of Mars in search of carrion, which it carries back to its nest.

Rowata

Animal Companion 0

Archetype: Animal **Health: 3**

Primary Attributes

Body: 2 **Charisma: 0**

Dexterity: 4 **Intelligence: 0**

Strength: 1 **Willpower: 2**

Secondary Attributes

Size: -1 **Initiative: 6**

Move: 7 (3)* **Defense: 7**

Perception: 4 **Stun: 2**

Skills

	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	1	2	3	(1+)
Stealth	4	5	10**	(5)
Survival	0	4	4	(2)

Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
1	2	3	(1+)
4	5	10**	(5)
0	4	4	(2)

Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
1	2	3	(1+)
4	5	10**	(5)
0	4	4	(2)

Talents

Quick Reflexes (+2 Initiative rating)

Swift (+2 Move rating)

Alertness (+2 Perception rating)

Night Vision (no penalties on Perception; may be blinded by bright light for 1 round)

Weapons

Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
0 L	+1	4 L	(2) L
1 L	+1	5 L	(2+) L

Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
0 L	+1	4 L	(2) L
1 L	+1	5 L	(2+) L

***Rowatas use their full Move rating when flying, and half their Move rating when on land**

****Rowatas receive a +1 Size bonus on Stealth rolls**

Saabrar Kammotu (Flying Swordfish)

This bizarre flying creature resembles a paddlefish from Earth; its upper jaw has grown into a flat, wide, sturdy rostrum. Underneath it is a wide circular mouth, constantly open. It uses its rostrum to spear flying prey. Sometimes, the creature mistakes small aerial flyers for such prey, and it can poke dangerous holes in the hull

or even attack crew members. The creature grows up to 3 feet (1 m) in length.

Saabrar Kammotu

Animal Companion 1

Archetype: Animal **Health: 7**

Primary Attributes

Body: 3 **Charisma: 0**

Dexterity: 4 **Intelligence: 0**

Strength: 2 **Willpower: 5**

Secondary Attributes

Size: -1 **Initiative: 4**

Move: 6 (3)* **Defense: 8**

Perception: 5 **Stun: 3**

Skills

	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	2	3	5	(2+)
Stealth	4	1	6**	(3)
Survival	0	3	3	(1+)

Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
2	3	5	(2+)
4	1	6**	(3)
0	3	3	(1+)

Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
2	3	5	(2+)
4	1	6**	(3)
0	3	3	(1+)

Talents

-

Weapons

Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
1 L	+1	7 L	(3+) L
2 N	+1	8 N	(4) N

Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
1 L	+1	7 L	(3+) L
2 N	+1	8 N	(4) N

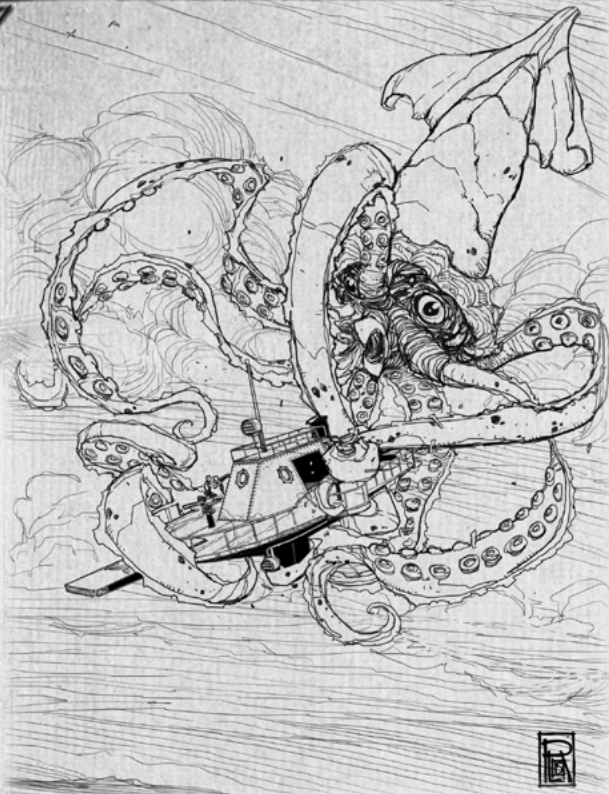
***Saabrar Kammotus use their full Move rating when flying, and half their Move rating when on land**

****Saabrar Kammotus receive a +1 Size bonus on Stealth rolls**

Skrashosha (Liftwood Squid)

In the red skies of Mars, air pilots spin many yarns, and there are many legends in particular about "sky krakens" and other dreadful tentacular creatures hunting for aerial flyers. There is, in fact, a grain of truth in these stories:

Under the pressure of the emerging naBrifanoon, a squid-like cephalopod species which could grow up to 80 feet (25 m) long but was astonishingly delicate by Martian standards managed to shift its habitat from the dwindling seas to the air. Today, these creatures are known as "balloon squids", and they feed not only on the flesh of their victims, but with their beak-like mouth they also suck out the active substance from liftwood and other floating materials; this is how they manage to stay in the air. For this reason, they are often encountered flying above liftwood forests, where they sometimes nest and sleep in the treetops. As of late, their attacks on aerial flyers have increased, as the more liftwood trees are cut down to build aerial flyers, the more the otherwise



rather shy animals are forced to find the substance “second hand” instead of directly from the source. The delicious humans and Martians on board are just a bonus.

Skrashoshu

Animal Companion 4

Archetype: Animal **Health: 22**

Primary Attributes

Body: 10 **Charisma: 0**
Dexterity: 3 **Intelligence: 0**
Strength: 9 **Willpower: 6**

Secondary Attributes

Size: 6 **Initiative: 3**
Move: 12 (6)* **Defense: 7**
Perception: 6 **Stun: 10**

Skills **Base** **Levels** **Rating** **(Average)**

Brawl 9 5 14 (7)
Empathy 0 1 1 (0+)
Stealth 3 5 2** (1)
Survival 0 4 4 (2)

Talents

Dual Wield

Weapons **Rating** **Size** **Attack** **(Average)**

Entangle 4 N -6 12 N (6) N
Ram Attack 8 N -6 16 N (8) N

*Skrashoshus use their full Move rating when flying, and half their Move rating when on land

**Skrashoshus suffer a -6 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

Wihjirakkar (Martian Wyvern)

It is incredible how closely some Martian flying creatures resemble those of terrestrial mythology. In the case of the Martian wyvern, which fortunately inhabits the highlands only, even renowned scientists cannot help but theorize that the mythical wyvern of

Earth may have its origins in a historic encounter with the very much real Martian equivalent, however impossible that may sound.

The Martian wyvern appears as a winged lizard with a red-tinged hide, ranging from yellow-red to rust-brown. Its mouth is wide and riddled with small sharp teeth. Most notable is its agile tail, which is tipped with a poisonous stinger which the creature can use with frightening precision. The poison is deadly for humans and Martians alike. Legends tell of Hill and High Martians capable of taming and riding the wyvern.

Wihjirakkar

Animal Companion 2

Archetype: Animal **Health: 10**

Primary Attributes

Body: 5 **Charisma: 0**
Dexterity: 5 **Intelligence: 1**
Strength: 5 **Willpower: 4**

Secondary Attributes

Size: 1 **Initiative: 6**
Move: 10 (5)* **Defense: 9**
Perception: 5 **Stun: 5**

Skills **Base** **Levels** **Rating** **(Average)**

Brawl 5 5 12 (6)
Stealth 5 1 5** (2+)
Survival 1 4 5 (2+)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Brawl rating)

Venom 4 L

Weapons **Rating** **Size** **Attack** **(Average)**

Bite 2 L -1 13 L (6+) L
Wing Strike 2 N -1 13 N (6+) N
Sting (Venom) 3 L -1 14 L (7) L

* Wihjirakkar use their full Move rating when flying, and half their Move rating when on land

**Wihjirakkar suffer a -1 Size penalty on Stealth rolls



Small Flying Creatures

The *krii krii* (Martian vampire) is a small, bat-like, blood-sucking animal. It can extend a tubular, pointed tongue from its small snout, with which it pierces the victim’s skin and starts sucking blood as though it were a straw.



In some regions of Mars, for example in Angahiaa, **piiras (flying geckos)** are worshipped religiously. They resemble geckos with flying membranes.

The **pseudo-birds** from the Noachis region are a curiosity. They are small, flying reptiles that resemble birds because of their colorful feathers and beak-like mouths. Biologically speaking, though, they are at best a bird-reptile hybrid.

The **koronap**, a seemingly miniature cousin of the skrill, is common in the Eastern Desert. It features a grim looking face that stands in stark contrast to its small stature. This combination makes this bird of prey a popular pet, though it can also be trained to act as a homing bird.

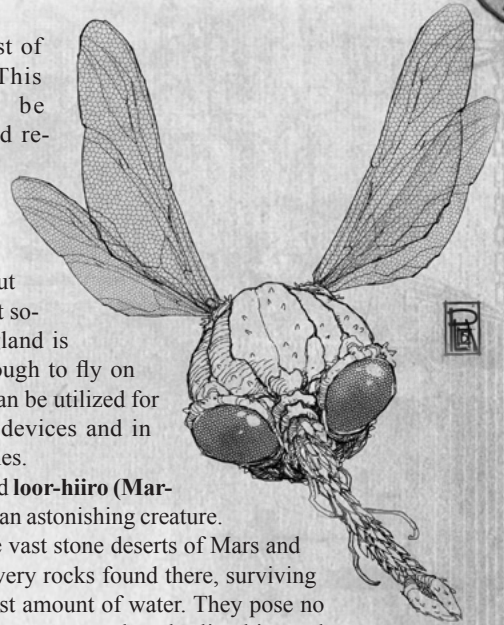
The **hunting skrill** is a bit larger, and to a Martian it is what a British lord's gyrfalcon is. These small herbivorous skrills are about 3 feet (1 m) in length. They violently defend themselves against predators and are very watchful, meaning they can be trained for hunting. A trained specimen remains with its snake-like body wrapped around its master's arm, ready to uncoil on command and rise into the air. They characteristically utter a screech that sounds like a bird of prey's scream played backwards on a gramophone.



Flying Insects

The **bluurg (balloon moth)** resembles a mosquito-like moth, with a body the size of a tennis ball. Eight thin legs are suspended from it, and two translucent wings protrude upwards. The wings do not move, but remain pointing rigidly upwards, being only used for maneuvering and steering. A magnificently developed lifting gland

takes up most of the body. This gland can be harvested and remains functional for weeks, even months, if it is regularly put into a nutrient solution. The gland is powerful enough to fly on its own and can be utilized for small flying devices and in larger machines.



The tiny, red **loor-hiir (Martian louse)** is an astonishing creature.

It inhabits the vast stone deserts of Mars and feeds on the very rocks found there, surviving on the smallest amount of water. They pose no threat to other creatures, but the lice bite and cut tiny passageways through the rocks they infest. If a swarm has lodged in a rock long enough, its stability may suffer and it will eventually break away from the rock wall. Their presence makes rock falls surprisingly common on Mars, and many a caravan has suffered casualties due to such accidents, as such infestations are not visible from the outside.

Ter rakka (Martian locusts) are extremely aggressive. Between hatching and laying new eggs, they devastate everything they come across, sucking out all fluids. A swarm of many thousands is able to drain a failing canal completely dry and doom the nearby population. Even living beings that are in their path are gnawed to the bone, ending up as skeletons in the sands of Mars. Some species do not even spare liftwood trees: With their saw-like front legs, they can work their way through the bark of the trees into the inside and eat their fill. Once a swarm has eaten all it can find, the animals lay countless slimy eggs in the highlands and die.

In the wild, the **driiparak (liftwood borer)**, which is only a few millimeters in size, lives on the liftwood trees of the Martian highlands. Its floating eggs penetrate the tree through breaks in the bark, and from there the maggots eat their way, crisscrossing through the wood. This process leaves a delicate weave of veins where the tree sap—to which liftwood owes its lifting abilities—collects. After many months or years, following an as yet unknown trigger, the grown animals eat their way to the outside en masse. There, they spend hours sucking the liftwood sap out of the veins and injecting it into their eggs as they lay them. The eggs are then given lift by the sap and can float in the air for months. The liftwood borers are a large-scale pest, and no small number of the High Martians' slaves are occupied day in, day out, climbing liftwood trees and closing the wounds in the bark with resin to keep the liftwood borers out. A board of liftwood cut into a buoyancy panel is in essence one large gap in the bark. For this reason, Martian carpenters spend a lot of their time examining new panels, sealing them with lacquer, and checking them constantly for infestations after they have been installed. The direst of consequences is that the panel will only lose its buoyancy the moment the egg laying begins. That is why all aerial pilots who love their lives are mindful of the sudden appearance of liftwood borers ready to lay eggs, since they can cover a liftwood panel like moss within hours.

Flora

Pniir Gadshaan (Cutting Cage)

In the coral deserts of Mars, the ancient sea corals have hardened to form bizarre, fantastic shapes. Though most of their species have long since died and fossilized, some others have developed their own survival strategies in the desert. The “cutting cage” is amongst them. It has mastered the evolutionary feat of movement to some extent. Similarly to heat crystals, the coral collects energy from sunlight all day long. During the night, the coral’s arms twist and grow around their sleeping prey like a cage. The victims usually only awaken once they are already trapped by the branches. Without tools or very hard claws there is little chance of escape. Once a victim is surrounded, the branches constrict ever more around their prey until their sharp spikes and edges slowly pierce them in numerous places. The attack becomes an extremely agonizing torture if the prey has not died by morning, as the coral grows stiff again with the coming of the light and only continues its deadly work after dusk. The prey eventually dies as the coral extracts nutrients and liquids: blood, water, fat, and proteins are absorbed and digested. The bones, however, are incorporated into the coral’s structure, so twisted rib cages, deformed animal skulls, or other skeletal shapes can sometimes be observed among the corals. Due to the coral’s nocturnal movements, such bones quickly begin to deform, losing their original shape over time, but any well-informed wanderer will be aware of such warning signs and set up camp as far away from the corals as possible.



Sharaamblaü (Siren Coral)

This coral species possesses almost transparent, thin hairs which wave in the desert wind. It is difficult to avoid these hairs, which can grow up to 6 feet (2 m) in length. The mere touch of them on bare skin usually means death: it compels the victim to move directly towards the coral as if in a trance. Victims experience ecstatic pleasure that intensifies at the embrace of each additional hair, and often die embracing the coral and moaning in pleasure as the coral’s digestive juices flow over them, dissolving the still-living victim.

Sharaamblaü

Animal Companion 3

Archetype: Plant **Health: 14**

Primary Attributes

Body: 5 **Charisma: 0**
Dexterity: 0 **Intelligence: 0**
Strength: 5 **Willpower: 7**

Secondary Attributes

Size: 2 **Initiative: 0**
Move: 0* **Defense: 5****
Perception: 7 **Stun: 5**

Skills

	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	5	5	10	(5)
Stealth	0	4	2***	(1)
Survival	0	5	5	(2+)

Talents

Poison (hallucinogenic drug; temporary -1 penalty on Willpower and Intelligence)

Pniir Gadshaan

Animal Companion 3

Archetype: Plant **Health: 15**

Primary Attributes

Body: 6 **Charisma: 0**
Dexterity: 1 **Intelligence: 0**
Strength: 6 **Willpower: 5**

Secondary Attributes

Size: 4 **Initiative: 1**
Move: 1/0* **Defense: 5****
Perception: 5 (9) **Stun: 6**

Skills

	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	6	4	10	(5)
Stealth	1	6	3***	(1+)
Survival	0	5	7	(3+)

Talents

Skill Aptitude (+2 Survival rating)

Keen Senses (+4 bonus on touch-based Perception rolls)

Assassin (when unnoticed, it can make a Surprise Attack using its Stealth rating instead of its Brawl rating against the Passive Defense of its victim)

Weapons

	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Cut	2 L	-4	8 L	(4) L

*During the day, the coral is considered an immobile creature and has a Move rating of 0

**Pniir Gadshaans have a robust coral structure that provides a +2 bonus to their Passive Defense

***Pniir Gadshaans suffer a -4 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

Venom (when entangling a victim, the creature excretes a digestive toxin that slowly decomposes the victim. This toxin is a level 4 poison and induces 1 L per hour if the Defense check is failed, until the victim has accumulated 6 successes during an extended Body roll (1 roll per hour).

Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Hair	0 N	-2	8 N	(4) N
Entangle	0 N	-2	8 N	(4) N

*Immobile creatures have a Move rating of 0

**Sharaamblaus have a robust coral structure that provides a +2 bonus to their Passive Defense

***Sharaamblaus suffer a -2 Size penalty on Stealth rolls

Dangerous Mushrooms

With its wide, spiky cap, the giant **guurab** (flesh-eating fungus) protrudes from the ground of the steppes like a large cactus, promising shade and water in the form of condensation collecting on its stem. By this method, it lures in small prey, which quickly become stuck to its sticky stem, triggering a digestive reaction. The excreted body fluids of the carnivorous fungus digest the prey, including its bones. If careful, humans as well as Martians can use the fungus' shade and scoop water from its stem. It is, however, very easy to become stuck on the skin of the fungus—a situation nearly impossible to escape from without aid.

A series of **spore fungi** species have spread in the sewers of Martian cities. Depending on the species, these spores, which often explode from the fungal body, can have different effects on humans and Martians, ranging from clouded sight (blocks the view like Half Cover; +2 Defense rating) and poison (up to 4 L Toxin damage) all the way to spores which, when inhaled, settle in the body and transform the host slowly into a fungus from the inside. The host's skin becomes rubbery and covered in mold, and eventually their legs meld with the ground.

Dangerous Plants

Tumbleweeds are a common sight on the steppes and deserts of Mars, tossed around by the Martian wind. One of them is the “**rose of Oenotria**”, as this unremarkable plant is commonly called. At first sight, the rose does not appear to be more than a dense bundle of thorny shrubs. Similarly to the *rose of Jericho* known on Earth, the Martian rose of Oenotria reacts immediately upon coming into contact with water—and very strongly. As soon as the winds of the Martian steppes blow it in the vicinity of a few

drops of precious water, its thorny branches thicken as it unwinds itself, forming fresh thorny shoots. It would appear that the water acts as a catalyst upon stored substances, starting a chain reaction. On Mars, this spectacle may fascinate travelers, but on Earth, careless interaction with the plant has led to multiple accidents: Inappropriate watering with several gallons of water turned the bedroom of a London governess into a thorny prison overnight, from which the desperately frightened and screaming lady had to be cut out by the police.

The worm-like **ssind** (Martian pipefish) grows in colonies on the former floor of the Martian seas. While two-thirds of its body remain stuck in the ground, the remaining third (about 8 inches, or 20 cm) protrudes out of it. It is assumed that its ancestors were once pipefish or other worms living on the ocean floor. Now, the Martian pipefish has become a danger feared by travelers: Their colonies often stretch for miles across the sandy floor and can hardly be crossed on foot, as the part of the pipefish protruding from the ground is razor-sharp. This is because, over time, dust particles and tiny stones stick to the creature's skin, becoming encrusted on the body and shaped by the wind. Purposeful breeding of these animals along strategically important borderlands is known to be practiced by several Canal Martian factions, since it is virtually impossible for gashant riders or infantry to attack while moving through a Martian pipefish colony. They count as *Difficult Terrain* (Basic Move rating is halved; quadrupeds and sprinters can use their double Move rating only by suffering 1 L damage per round).

The **druhkma** (**Acidalia Nettle**) is a carnivorous plant with poisonous thorns that is quite dangerous to the Martians. It grows particularly around Mare Acidalium. Countless Martians die from its prick, while humans usually experience painful allergic reactions at most.

The **Oenotrian black palm** is common in the Central Basin. This palm tree with a black bark is harmless on Mars, but if brought into Earth's atmosphere it will excrete chemicals during its flowering that incapacitate and eventually kill. As this plant, like many bamboo species, flowers only rarely—at intervals that can be as long as a century, depending on the variety—, this fact has not yet been discovered.

Protected from the Sun and hidden from sight, the **paane tooku** (**death root**) lies rolled up in the cracks and tears of the dry desert floors. At night, though, its roots shoot out. Living beings sleeping in the root's vicinity usually only wake up to the piercing pain of the death root's thorns digging into their skin, their limbs already entangled while they slept. With its thorns, the plant is able to suck the liquids out of a living being like a mosquito. The victims eventually die of dehydration, leaving nothing but a field of mummified corpses. Survivors of such attacks may suffer necrosis of their limbs, requiring amputation in some cases.



Martian Technology

The chapter on Martian history (p. 6) contains more information on the development of Martian technology. During the peak of the canal builders, three key technologies existed, which were

also partially recovered under Seldon later: **crystal technology**, **telluric energy**, and **robots**.

Telluric Energies

The ancient Martians discovered that exotic energies flowed beneath the surface of Mars. These energies held vast power of a type unknown to human science. The only reliable scientific and technical information about telluric energy can be found in ancient and fragmentary documents. However, even the ancient Martians never understood the full power of what they had discovered. If they had learned its true potential, they might have even been able to either change Mars's climate and bring back its oceans, or to escape their dying world—but they never had the chance to learn any of this.

Telluric Currents

Telluric currents flow in lines between specific locations called nexus points. As a result, these energies can only be used along these lines. Many ancient Martian cities were thus built at these telluric nexus points. However, the need for water outweighed even the need for power, and so some cities were built—or maintained—in locations without access to telluric energy and had to rely upon other power sources.

A handful of the oldest Martian texts contain maps of the cities and canals which clearly display markings indicating those settlements and canals that sit above telluric currents and nexuses. However, no Earthly scholar has learned the significance of these markings and no living Martian knows anything more than a few myths about telluric energy. The Martians only developed telluric technology during the canal-building era, the peak of Martian technology.

Telluric Engines

The corroding machinery found in the tallest towers of all ancient Martian cities are not clocks or astronomical equipment as is usually assumed. Instead, they were amazing devices that tapped the telluric currents of Mars and harnessed it for propulsion. Built in the tallest towers, these machines were connected to cables that were also connected to a **telluric power tap** buried deep in the Martian bedrock.

Telluric compressors were designed to work in pairs, with one compressor at each end of a telluric current, but they could also function alone, although less effectively. Telluric compressors must be used with **telluric engines**. Fortunately, telluric engines are relatively simple devices that use the telluric currents to move whatever they are attached to.

Telluric Engine

A telluric engine is a roughly cubic device made of quartz and brass, approximately two feet (60 cm) to a side and weighing about 300 lbs (140 kg). Any player character with a *Craft* (either *Crystal Technology* or *Mechanics*) skill rating of at least 7 and a *Science (Engineering)* skill rating of 4 or higher, as well as either plans for a telluric engine or a working example to work from, can duplicate a telluric engine in approximately four days if they are in a well-equipped workshop with adequate tools.

Vessels can use their telluric engine to move towards or away from the compressor, but cease moving if either the telluric compressor or their own telluric engine is destroyed or turned off. Vessels propelled using a telluric engine do not require a propeller or any other obvious means of propulsion, although almost all cloudships also had backup power sources to allow for maneuverability in multiple directions, such as to flee from storms or attacking raiders.

Telluric Compressor

A telluric compressor is a far more complex device requiring two yellow crystals and one smoky black crystal that are all connected into a complex framework. A single telluric compressor can power cloudships (or boats that follow a canal) all the way into the city where the compressor is located. It can propel boats at speeds of up to 17 knots (20 mph or 30 km/h) and cloudships at speeds of up to 43 knots (50 mph or 80 km/h), up to a range of 500 miles (800 km).

If there are telluric compressors stationed at either end of a telluric current, the vessels can use telluric engines anywhere along this current and the maximum speed of boats and cloudships doubles. Telluric compressors effectively create powerful two-way currents of telluric energy through the air and these currents can propel dozens or even hundreds of boats or cloudships at the same time.

Telluric Power Taps

Martians found many uses for telluric power. In addition to compressors that propelled canal boats and cloudships, telluric power also charged energy storage crystals and powered Martian cities. The same basic device, the telluric power tap, powered all of these advanced technologies. These were complex machines made of careful arrangements of metal and various crystals connected by cables to crystals buried in the Martian bedrock. These machines

drew upon the telluric currents to recharge energy storage crystals and also to provide power for the light and heat crystals that were commonly used in Martian homes and businesses.

Telluric power taps all consisted of three basic parts: The first was a specially made bright yellow cylindrical crystal that was inserted into a hole bored into the Martian bedrock. This crystal was connected to a woven metal cable that ran up to the surface. This cable connected to a large box-like machine of steel, brass, and yellow and blue crystals a yard to a side and weighing half a ton.

Further cables were also connected to the substation. Some were connected to telluric compressors, others connected to large flat circular crystals between three and six feet (one to two meters)

across that distributed the collected energy. Around the edge of these crystals were attachments for other woven metal cables that carried power to charging stations for energy storage crystals or which branched out into smaller cables that went into Martian homes and businesses.

In Martian buildings, the heat and light crystals were all part of a network connected to one of the cables coming from a power tap. The trickle of telluric energy provided to each of these crystals allowed them to function as if they were continuously being recharged by bright sunlight captured by large mirrors. A single telluric power tap could provide all the heat and light required by 50,000 people. Even the largest ancient Martian cities never required more than 150 telluric power taps.

Crystal Technologies

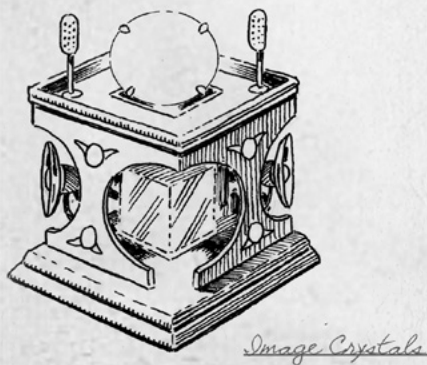
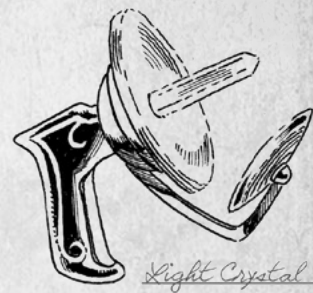
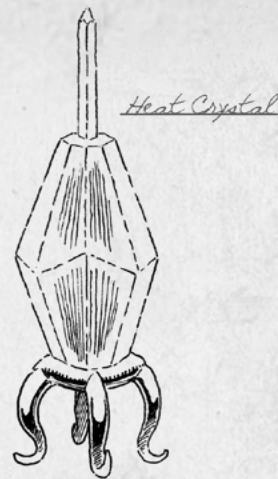
The various unusual crystals are the most common and enduring of the ancient Martian technologies. The first such devices were specially carved natural crystals whose unusual properties the Martians discovered. Eventually they found how to grow artificial crystals from small seed crystals. Many of these crystals are exceptionally durable and anyone excavating ancient ruins could easily uncover one or even several crystals of various types. Of course, they would also need to know that they had found something other than a curiously carved piece of stone. All Martian crystals are transparent. The ones that produce and channel light are clear and look a great deal like clear quartz. However, most of the other crystals are colored and look similar to amethysts, sapphires, or other transparent colored stones. The size of these

crystals can vary, with larger crystals typically being more powerful than smaller ones, but each different type of Martian crystal is always the same color and the same approximate shape.

Burning Crystals (Artifact 1-3)

These carefully cut clear and transparent crystals focus light. Each crystal is long, thin, and hexagonal in cross section, with one blunt end and one pointed end. When light shines into the long hexagonal sides, the crystal focuses and concentrates this light so that it emerges as a narrow beam from its pointed end.

Technology



A crystal's power depends upon both its size and the amount of light it receives. In bright sunlight, a crystal a few inches long (10 cm or less) can burn holes in paper and ignite kindling just as well as flint and steel. A crystal a foot or two long (30–60 cm) can rapidly ignite highly flammable material like cloth or well-seasoned wood that is up to 10 ft. (3 m) away or cause mild burns at the same range, and a crystal three or more feet long (1 m) can cause severe burns or instantly ignite even damp wood up to 100 ft. (30 m) away. Burning crystals become far more powerful when used with mirrors that focus sunlight on their facets. The ancient Martians used larger burning crystals as formidable weapons, further multiplying their power by using smaller crystals to focus light on larger ones.

Burning Crystal Size	Damage (normal sunlight)	Range (normal sunlight)	Damage (focused sunlight)	Range (focused sunlight)
Small (1–3 in. / 2.5–7.5 cm)	–	1 ft./0.3 m	1 N	5 ft./1.5 m
Medium (1–2 ft. / 30–60 cm)	1 L	10 ft./3 m	2 L	50 ft./15 m
Large (3–4 ft. / 90–120 cm)	2 L	100 ft./30 m	4 L	500 ft./150 m

Fire Lances (Artifact 4)

These were the most dangerous personal weapons used by the ancient Martians. The basic model was used for several thousand years, and almost 200 were refurbished during Seldon's Empire. This device is a short rifle-like weapon, about the length of a carbine. The barrel is a burning crystal roughly one foot long (30 cm) with three smaller burning crystals arranged around it. However, the weapon is somewhat cumbersome to use because large lightweight mirrors must be attached to either side of the barrel, making the entire weapon three feet (1 m) in diameter. Also, it can only be used outdoors in bright sunlight. In the morning or evening, or if the sky is somewhat overcast, the weapon's range and damage are halved. On a cloudy morning or evening, reduce the weapon's damage and range to one quarter normal. Any blow to the weapon automatically breaks or misaligns these mirrors, rendering the weapon useless until the damage is repaired or the mirrors realigned.

The most ancient Martian history texts mention these weapons as being highly effective, which seems at odds with how clumsy they are. The secret behind their effectiveness was that they were connected to energy storage crystals that held energy that the burning crystals could convert into light. Usually this was a tellurically-charged energy crystal, one foot long (30 cm) and roughly six inches (15 cm) in diameter, worn on the belt. A narrow cable connected this two-pound (1 kg) crystal to the fire lance. If used with an energy crystal, fire lances did not require mirrors and so were light, durable, and extremely deadly. This way, they could be used under any conditions, including at night or indoors.

Because energy storage crystals required small amounts of electricity to activate, once Martian civilization began to decline, fire lances could only be used with mirrors, and while deadly, they were considerably less versatile than firearms and were gradually replaced.

Weapon	Damage	Range	Capacity
Fire Lance	4 L	100 ft. / 30 m	100 shots

Heat Rays (Artifact 4)

An inventor who acquires a selection of burning crystals can create a heat ray. Heat rays use a trio of burning crystals that are all at least one yard (90 cm) long. The total device weighs slightly over one ton.

The crystals must be arranged in a specific pattern and can be powered by either a large solar mirror or an energy crystal at least a yard and a half (1.4 m) in diameter, weighing approximately five tons.

Weapon	Damage	Range	Capacity
Heat Ray	8 L*	500 ft. / 150 m	200 shots**

*The target and everything within a five-foot (1.5 m) radius suffer 8 L damage and catches fire immediately. It suffers additional Fire damage each round until the fire is extinguished (see Core Rules, p. 215). Outside the radius, the damage is still applied but also reduced by –1 L for each 5 feet distance.

**assuming a sufficiently sized energy crystal

Canal Digging Rays (Artifact 5)

As Jules Verne already surmised, the ancient Martians used focused sunlight to dig their canals. To accomplish this, they used specially-made arrays of seven burning crystals, each of which was at least three yards (3 m) long. These burning crystals were suspended below a cloudship, which also used huge mirrors that extended 30 yards (27 m) on either side of the cloudship to focus sunlight on this array. The power of the beam produced by this device can "burn" up to 50 yards (45 m) of canal in one hour. Too powerful for use with energy crystals, canal-digging arrays required huge solar mirrors to operate. No crystals this large are known to have survived on Mars. However, player characters may be able to find descriptions and diagrams in ancient manuscripts. If the player characters discover the secret of manufacturing synthetic crystals, they could maybe duplicate these weapons.

Energy Storage Crystals (Artifact 4)

These highly advanced crystals were developed during the peak of ancient Martian technology. They allowed Martians to store power that could be used in all of their devices. These crystals were large, egg-shaped objects made of sapphire blue crystal with many-faceted surfaces. They could also release their power in a variety of ways, so that they could provide light, heat, or electricity. The ancient Martians commonly connected large energy storage crystals directly to the electric motors that powered a cloudship's propeller. An energy storage crystal two yards across and weighing only 11 tons could power an *Aphid* class aerial gunboat for two weeks before it needed to be recharged. In addition, it would provide sufficient power to allow the ship to travel 20% faster than normal. A storage crystal the size of a cantaloupe could power a mechanical man for several weeks of continuous activity.

When the Martians developed the ability to use telluric energy, they discovered that energy storage crystals were considerably more efficient at storing telluric energy. If an energy storage crystal was charged by a telluric power tap (see p. 158) rather than by sunlight focused with solar mirrors, it could store twice as much energy. For example, if charged with telluric energy, an energy storage crystal two yards across and weighing only 11

tons could power an *Aphid* class aerial gunboat for *four* weeks before it needed to be recharged.

The one limitation of energy storage crystals is that they require a small charge of electric current to regulate how rapidly they release their energy. If the current stops, the crystal ceases releasing its energy. A small battery was built into each crystal, as well as a metal transformer to regulate energy output. Different settings on these transformers allowed energy crystals to release their stored power as heat, light, or electricity. When the Martians lost the ability to work with electricity or to build batteries, they could no longer use energy storage crystals.

Heat Crystals (Artifact 1-3)

These reddish-orange ovoid crystals can transmute either sunlight or telluric energy into heat. Setting a crystal the size of a grapefruit outside in bright sunlight for a full day causes it to give off sufficient heat to warm a cool room or to make a freezing cold room just about habitable for a single night. Using a simple array of mirrors a few feet (50–100 cm) across to focus sunlight on the crystal allows it to store considerably more heat, so it can provide the same level of warmth for two entire days and nights or four nights, or so it can make a freezing room comfortable for one full day or two nights. Each heat crystal is pierced with a hole that a single rod made from the same type of crystal fits within. If the rod is partially removed, a hot crystal becomes warm and a warm crystal ceases to radiate any heat. If the user takes the rod almost all the way out of the crystal, even a hot crystal ceases to radiate heat. With their rods removed, these crystals can store heat for up to 30 days. When producing heat, all heat crystals also emit a faint red glow.

Larger heat crystals, between the size of a cantaloupe and a large beach ball, were used to provide hot water or heat for various industrial processes. A basketball-sized heat crystal, charged with sunlight reflected into it by mirrors, could provide enough heat to operate a small forge or pottery kiln for a day. A heat crystal slightly more than a yard and a half across and weighing five and a half tons could heat the boiler in a small factory or on an *Aphid* class aerial gunboat for up to a week. Several heat crystals of this size could either heat the boiler for a larger ship or power the same vessel for longer. Heat crystals allowed civilization to function on a drying Mars where other concentrated and portable energy sources like coal or oil were exceptionally rare.

Image Crystals (Artifact 1-4)

Many Europeans are aware of *photographic crystals*, *holographic ring mirrors*, and *talking glasses* (**Core Rules**, p. 237). Image crystals are devices similar to photographic crystals which can also record moving images and project them on screens in a manner similar to a movie projector (as yet unknown in 1889, where moving images were restricted to devices such as the praxinoscope). Unlike many other types of Martian crystal technology, image crystals require a complex device to help them record and replay these images. An average image crystal is a pale green cube roughly the size of a lemon. It must be used in a device that allows it to record and replay images, which contains several lenses as well as microphones and speakers. It takes some time experimenting with this device to learn to either record or to replay images stored in a crystal. However, once they are understood, the controls are

relatively simple. The controls can speed up or slow down, play back or freeze a specific image for closer observation.

The device itself is approximately the size of a child's lunch box and weighs a little over one pound (half a kilogram). Each crystal can hold several hundred hours of sound and images. In addition to recordings, anyone who finds an ancient image crystal and learns how to use it could gain access to recordings made thousands or even tens of thousands of years ago.

Light Crystals (Artifact 1)

Light crystals are clear, colorless convex disks that look like thick glass lenses. After exposure to sunlight, they provide light without heat. Handheld light crystals are the size of an egg and provide somewhat more light than the brightest gas lamp. Light crystals designed for use as indoors lighting are usually the size of a grapefruit. Light crystals can be designed to emit light in a cone, like a flashlight, or in all directions to light a room. Like heat crystals, light crystals have crystal rods that allow users to regulate how much light they produce and to turn them off. A single grapefruit-sized light crystal, charged using solar mirrors, can light a large room as brightly as if it were lit by an abundant amount of electric light for up to two full days.

Pair Stones (Artifact 5)

Pair stones are a very peculiar and valuable piece of Martian technology. Each crystal of a pair is approximately the size and shape of an egg, with one or more sides polished flat. It resembles a large, unusually transparent opal. Each working stone is also fitted with a narrow ring of extremely durable metal containing miniature circuits that link the two crystals together.

Looking into the flat face of a pair stone allows the user to look out from the polished face of its peer as if he were actually there. Additionally, anyone holding a pair stone can hear sound from around the second pair stone as if they were present at that location. Distance is no barrier to using pair stones. They work equally well if one is on Mars and another on Mercury as they would if they were but a few feet apart, although considerable transmission delays occur when using pair stones over astronomical distances (for example, a Mars–Mercury transmission incurs a delay varying between 8 and 18 minutes, while an Earth–Moon transmission incurs a delay of only about 1 second).

Most pair stones have a single facet and are linked to a single other stone. However, some have two, three, or as many as six different facets, each of which is paired to at least one other pair stone. Each of these other stones might only have a *single* facet, or each one of the five other pair stones could have six facets and be connected to *all* of the other five stones, one per facet, in addition to the first pair stone.

Martians regularly used these stones for long-distance communication and observation. If one stone is destroyed, the other stone in the pair darkens and becomes cloudy; if multiply faceted, the linked facet of each other stone darkens. The one limitation of pair stones is that they are rarely found together. This could lead to further adventure in search of the stone's peer, or a character might find one pair stone only to discover that the other one is buried under the sand or in some other location where they have effectively no chance of locating or retrieving it. Stones with lost "twins" are little more than idle curiosities. However, sometimes

the user can determine the location of the other stone, by looking at the stars or by recognizing a familiar landmark. The most valuable pair stones are those which are actually found in sets of two or more, often stored together in a small and usually well-made wooden or metal box. Discovering a set of these stones and displaying them to respected scientists and other important figures will set hundreds of other explorers searching for similar stones and result in generous offers for the set. The British government and military will be extremely interested in these stones, especially once someone learns that they can be used to communicate between planets, albeit in a telegraphic style.

Thought Crystals (Artifact 4-5)

These exotic artifacts were among the greatest achievements of Martian civilization. Thought crystals are transparent purple, like an amethyst, with each different type being cut in a different shape. Martian technicians were able to record thoughts, memories, and even some degree of practical knowledge into specially prepared crystalline lattices. The most impressive and obvious examples of this technology are the crystal brains of the handful of mechanical men that European explorers have discovered in a few isolated ancient Martian ruins, but there are several other related types of thought crystals.

Most probably because human and Martian brains are subtly different, using thought crystals occasionally causes debilitating migraines in humans. This almost never occurs for a Martian user.

Biography Crystals (Artifact 405)

These are the strangest and the most problematic of thought crystals yet to be discovered. They always consist of a headband carved from a single thought crystal, shaped so that it fits comfortably on a Martian or human head. Each crystal contains the life story of a prominent ancient Martian, usually an artist, performer, politician, military leader, or on rare occasions a scientist. These crystals were each made with the help and consent of the individuals whose story they relate, since they contain some of the person's thoughts and memories as well as more general scenes of the person's life.

Ancient Martians understood how to use these crystals as valuable aids for learning and research. However, the techniques of meditation and mental preparation needed to use these crystals most effectively were lost millennia ago. As a result, there is some risk involved in their use today. Anyone may attempt to use one of these crystals by putting it on their head and relaxing, but without training, users temporarily lose themselves in the experience and may believe themselves to actually be the person whose life the crystal recounts. This happens occasionally once the biography has reached its end, a process that takes between two and four hours. The character must make a Willpower roll (Willpower x 2) when the crystal's stored information ends. If the user fails a difficulty 1 roll, they believe that they are the person the crystal was about.

If someone or something interrupts the story in the middle or disturbs the person without removing the crystal, then the character must instead succeed in a difficulty 3 Willpower roll (Willpower x 2) to avoid confusing their identity with that of the biography's subject. Sometimes the wearer believes they really are the subject Martian, but more often they believe that they are the *spirit* of the long dead Martian possessing a human (or Martian). In either case, the result can be very disturbing, and perhaps dangerous if the crystal was about a military leader or someone else who was

inclined to violence. This delusion usually fades within a few minutes of removing the crystal, and always vanishes after the wearer has slept for at least four hours. But until either of these happens, the person may remain convinced they are an ancient Martian lost in a strange and disturbing modern world.

Memory Crystals (Artifacts 4-5)

Memory crystals were designed to contain knowledge of the performance of particular tasks. Memory crystals are perfect spheres of purple crystal, usually the size of a large orange. They were then installed in some sort of automated mechanism, most commonly in mechanical men. Creating a memory crystal required that a Martian who was highly skilled in some task perform it while their thoughts were being recorded. Once created, memory crystals could be duplicated using a similar process, allowing dozens of crystals to be created based on a single Martian's experiences. Some examples of mechanisms created using memory crystals are the *Martian robots* described below.

Memory crystals are the most complex type of Martian thought crystals, and also occasionally the most unreliable. The skills and behaviors recorded in a memory crystal are not intelligent or self-aware, but sometimes they contain traces of the creator's personality as well as their expertise. A mechanical man using a memory crystal created from the thoughts of a technician who was highly meticulous might spend an unusually long amount of time cleaning and polishing the machines it operates. Another mechanical man might scratch its head or adopt various idiosyncratic postures when considering how best to accomplish a complex task. A few memory crystals have even more dramatic and unusual idiosyncrasies, such as a habit of doodling when not actively engaged in a task, or of flying into an artificial rage and attacking anyone who damages one of the mechanisms it has been assigned to operate or maintain.

Story Crystals (Artifact 1-3)

Story crystals are the simplest of thought crystals, as well as the most common. Each is a lens-shaped purple disk the diameter of a large human palm and contains between one and three stories. Anyone who touches the crystal with their bare skin and holds it for more than a minute begins to see and hear exotic sights and sounds. For the first minute, these visions and sounds are faint and transparent and immediately cease if the person stops touching the crystal. However, if the person continues touching the crystal, they soon become immersed in the story. Some simply allow the user to see and hear a story. However, some later story crystals were far more complex and allowed the user to participate in an interactive story.

Many story crystals can even be used by up to half a dozen people at once. These multi-person crystals are usually found in or near a device of metal and crystal that appears to be a carved brass disk a foot (30 cm) across which is clearly designed to hold the story crystal. Around the edge of the metal disk are six metal cables ending in an ovoid purple crystal knob the size of a small plum. Users can immerse themselves in the story by holding this knob. Most of these stories are various sorts of fantastic fictions, but this may not be obvious to modern-day users, especially as many story crystals are based on actual historical events. Archaeologists and treasure hunters using one of these crystals might gain invaluable insight into the location and use of ancient artifacts, or they could mistake a wild fantasy adventure for actual Martian history.

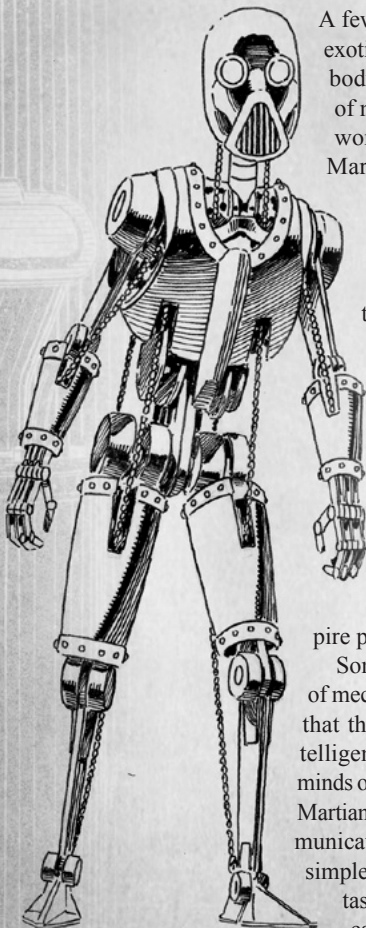
Martian Robots

Only a handful of Martian robots survived the end of the naB-rifanoo and the collapse of ancient Martian civilization. Even during Seldon's Empire, the finest technicians and most brilliant researchers were only able to repair a handful of the robots they found. Most that remain are in remote locations like isolated research bases or concealed pumping stations. Only a few, such as the bodyguard of the Tossian Emperor, are widely known to exist.

Regardless of their duties or form, all Martian robots have a few characteristics in common. All of them have a large memory crystal as their "brain." Also, all are powered by an energy storage crystal, that allows them to move their limbs. They also have a variant of an image crystal, its associated mechanism connected to the memory crystal, providing the robot with its senses (one can consider the image crystal to be in recording mode, the memory crystal consuming its output). Not all robots have the same senses, though; many are only equipped with those senses that are particularly required for their specific task. The robots are obviously mechanical and appear to be made out of a combination of brass, stainless steel, and carved stone crystals.

Note that any Martian robot will speak (if it can do so) and accept commands in archaic Martian languages; though languages change over 15,000 years, on Mars this drift has not been as swift as on Earth.

Mechanical Men (Artifact 4-5)



A few seem to have been created as exotic servants or exceptionally loyal bodyguards, but the vast majority of mechanical men were created to work in locations where ordinary Martians could not, including everything from deep mine shafts filled with toxic gases to remote pumping stations in the middle of vast deserts. Like all other technology created by the ancient Martians, the vast majority of mechanical men broke down more than 15,000 years ago. However, through a combination of luck and exceptional engineering, a few yet continue to function, intact. A few more remain functional because of repairs done by engineers of the Seldon Empire period.

Some Europeans, on hearing tales of mechanical men, become convinced that these constructs are actually intelligent beings, perhaps housing the minds or even the living brains of ancient Martians, and proceed to attempt to communicate with them. In reality, they are simple automata able to perform a few tasks. For example, some mechanical men are programmed to guard

a location against intruders, using weapons or their sturdy metal fists to dispatch anyone who refuses their request to leave, while other types obey simple orders to carry large objects, plow fields, or do other routine labor work. Of course, there still exist some very unique mechanical men that are skilled in highly specialized tasks. According to their specialization, each mechanical man's memory crystal usually contains information on how to utilize a single skill: From piloting a cloudship to using weapons by way of operating and repairing various pieces of complex machinery.

While some were made to different specifications, most mechanical men have the following basic characteristics:

Archetype: Artifact		Motivation: Duty		
Style: 0		Health: 5		
Primary Attributes				
Body: 4	Charisma: -			
Dexterity: 2	Intelligence: 2			
Strength: 5	Willpower: -			
Secondary Attributes				
Size: 1	Initiative: 4			
Move: 7	Defense: 7*			
Perception: 2	Stun: 4			
Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Athletics	5	2	7	(3+)
Brawl	5	2	7	(3+)
Flaw				
Automation (-2 penalty to any roll that requires original or creative thought)				
Weapon	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Punch	1 N	1	7 N	(3+) N

*Mechanical Men have an innate armor that provides a +2 bonus to their Passive Defense.

In addition, all mechanical men possess a single skill at level 4. This skill is usually either: *Craft (Mechanics)*, *Craft (Crystal Technology)*, *Firearms (Fire Lance)*, *Gunnery (Martian Heavy Weapons)*, *Pilot (Canal Boat)*, or *Pilot (Cloudship)*. Regardless of whether a skill is specialized or not, mechanical men only know a single discipline of their skill.

Trim Keepers (Artifact 4)

Although the bizarre Martian mechanical men are far more dramatic, trim keeper robots are somewhat more common, although still quite rare. Created using the experience of a skilled trims man, these devices consist of a wheeled oval casing the size of a slightly flattened watermelon with half a dozen long jointed arms attached to its circumference, and lenses and other sensors on its 'front'. It contains a large flat crystal oval on top and requires at least six hours of sunlight a day or two hours of sunlight if mirrors are used. Otherwise, it becomes dormant until next exposed to sunlight.

This device is capable of acting as a trims man on any liftwood flying vehicle. They respond to verbal commands relating to this duty, but are far more limited than mechanical men in other ways. They cannot be commanded to perform any other duties except to wait until asked to do something. Trim keepers have the following characteristics:

Technology

Attributes

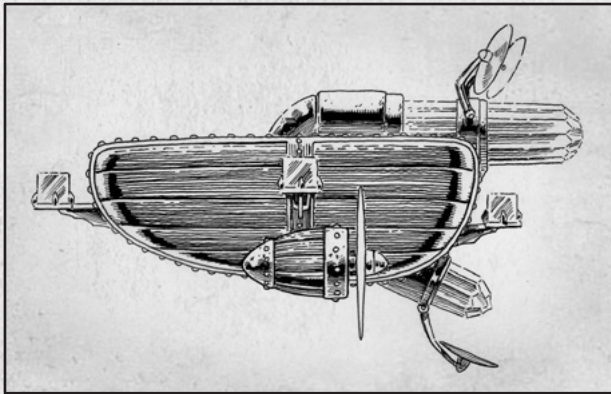
Size: -1 **Initiative:** 4
Move: 2 **Defense:** 6*
Perception: 4 **Stun:** 2
Health: 1

Skills

Pilot (Cloudship) 7 (3+)

*Trim keepers have an innate armor that provides a +2 bonus to their Passive Defense.

Mechanical Hunters (Artifact 5)



The rarest of Martian robots are the ancient Martians' automated guards. While some ancient Martians sometimes armed mechanical men or programmed them for defense, others realized that guards did not require hands or arms—only weapons—and that mechanical men are inherently slow and clumsy. Most mechanical hunters look vaguely like miniature metal-hulled cloudships and are a yard long, two feet (60 cm) wide, and one foot (30 cm) high. Held aloft by capsules of liftwood extract, they automatically regulate their trim and altitude. They also contain a pair of miniature propellers that can move them at speeds of up to 30 miles per hour (50 km/h). They contain a forward-facing built-in fire lance and can turn in place faster than a human. They also possess a nozzle for dispensing peace gas (see p. 167). They have

mechanical eyes that face in all directions, as well as a light crystal equivalent to a powerful gas lamp.

Their memory crystals were modeled on the minds of skilled soldiers and bodyguards, but are almost as limited as those of trim keepers. They can be given a variety of orders, ranging from attacking anyone entering the region they are programmed to guard, to asking intruders to give a password or display some sort of identifier, like a special ring, engraved plaque, or some similar item, and attacking anyone who fails to do so. To prevent unauthorized use, commanding a mechanical hunter usually requires both a password and some sort of identifier. Users can command a mechanical hunter to guard a specific area, to follow them around, and to attack anyone they order it to. Mechanical hunters can also be programmed to protect the user from threats, but these simple-minded creations are disturbingly literal, and can rarely tell the difference between a friendly slap on the back or a child grabbing the user's sleeve and an actual attack. Fortunately, mechanical hunters can also be ordered to first issue a warning to retreat.

Unlike living guards, these machines cannot be reasoned with. If a mechanical hunter orders someone to leave a protected area else it will attack, those are the only two options. It cannot be convinced to do otherwise, unless the person has the password or identifier. During Seldon's Empire, Seldon and the five Emperors who ruled after him used a trio of these devices to protect them during public appearances. Both human and Martian historians have long been puzzled by the strange, small, flat-topped ovals hovering near Seldon in some drawings and reliefs.

Attributes

Size: 0 **Initiative:** 8
Move: 20 **Defense:** 11*
Perception: 8 **Stun:** 3
Health: 6

Skills

Firearms (Fire Lance): 8 (4)

Built-in Weapons	Rating	Size	Attack	(Average)
Fire Lance	4 L	0	12 L	(6) L

Peace Gas Dispenser**

*Mechanical Hunters have an innate armor that provides a +2 bonus to their Passive Defense.

**See Peace Gas, p. 167, for rules

Martian Equipment

Below you will find an overview of useful equipment of all kinds commonly used on Mars today.

Weapons

Melee Weapons

Particularly among the Hill Martians, warrior cultures encouraging endurance and skill with a wide variety of weapons are common. In general, all melee weapons listed in the *Weapons* chapter of the **Core Rules** are also in use in similar forms on Mars. It is only culture-specific weapons such as the *katana* or the *kukri* that do not exist here. Brutal weapons such as *greataxes*, *longswords*, and *greatswords* are common in particular among the High Martians

of the Southern Polar Region. Elegant weapons resembling *rapiers*, *sabers*, and *scimitars* are common in the Central and Eastern Basins. Sword canes are only rarely crafted—by special request—in the canal cities. Air pirates like to use *cutlasses*, and many Hill Martians wield *spears*. *Machetes* are only in use in the Long Woods and the Coprates trench, where extensive forests can be found.

For Martian weapons (see **Core Rules**, p. 226), the *loonsor*, or “Martian mounted halberd”, is a typical armament for gashant cavalry. The legendary *glass daggers* can no longer be manufactured, and the traditional *shuupoong* is a truly bizarre weapon.

Urghuul Axe: The Hill Martian people of the Urghuul produce a range of excellent weapons. Their axe blades in particular are legendary. Though heavy and cumbersome, they can still be wielded in one hand and are razor-sharp. The blades usually have an unusual, curved edge.

The Current Level of Technology on Mars

Technology from the Age of the Seldons such as light and sunfire weapons are nothing more than myth today. Earth scholars and anthropologists have noted how widespread these myths are, suggesting a truth behind them, but even so they are generally dismissed as laughable.

The current level of technology on Mars is roughly equivalent to the Earth Renaissance or beginning of the modern age, but varies from region to region: It is generally lower (near mediaeval level) for outlying territories such as the North and South Poles or the desert tribes, than in the areas of greater population density in the canal cities and greater empires (where it is closer to the baroque standard). The defining aspect here is not what technology has been *achieved* (in this the canal builders were far superior to Earthmen), but rather how much has been *preserved* or *rediscovered* since the fall of the Seldon Empire.

- The knowledge of **gunpowder** and simple *explosives* is widely spread. Complex mechanics as in use in Earth *weapons* are, if known at all, closely guarded by the various guilds. *Shipboard cannons* exist, resembling their Earth equivalents from the Caribbean age of Piracy, but more advanced artillery is rare.
- **Blacksmithing** is a noble craft on Mars: Jewelry, weapons, and tools are all crafted *by hand*. The *scarcity of metal* does not allow for true mass production and in terms of *machines*, only barely understood ancient Martian technology, *simple devices*, and imports from Earth currently exist.
- The production of **ceramics** is highly advanced, both because of preserved and rediscovered knowledge from the age of the canal builders.
- Old writings have been produced by various means. The **printing press** has been continuously preserved on Mars, similarly to gunpowder, though it has regressed to hand-operated, mechanical presses. Books are very popular.
- A few canal cities have the means of producing excellent **clockwork technology**, allowing for complex mechanical devices, though these are limited in their functions. It is an art form more than it is a craft.
- A few empires, such as Oenotria, maintain science departments that produce curious inventions from time to time, but mostly spend their time copying and reclaiming **canal builder technology**.
- In terms of **air travel**, two basic technologies exist that utilize liftwood. *Cloudships* are basically flying sail ships that are about as advanced as Earth caravels. *Screw galleys* use propellers for propulsion. Once these were powered by crystal technology, today that is done by hand instead. With the Earth people came *steam engine* technology, which was soon adopted for liftwood flyer use.
- Martian **architecture** is well past its prime. Many buildings from the Seldon or canal builder ages remain, but there are far more ruins. Though there are fascinating styles of architecture today (see p. 23), they cannot hope to match the skill of Earth or ancient Martian engineering.
- Many **scientific theories** that are new or still unrecognized on Earth are common knowledge on Mars: No repressive religion stands in the way of *evolutionary theory*, *advanced mathematics* are commonly applied even to street games such as Teem, and many cultures recognize the *equal rights of women*. There is little in the way of innovation anymore, though. Traditional forms of government such as the system of the canal princes have remained unchallenged since the age of Seldon, though a few *attempts at basic democracy* have been conducted.
- Some places still possess **automated systems** that perform various functions in the old canal cities. Many Martians today view them as basic parts of life, whose effects are apparent but which cannot be fully understood anymore: Fires in deep pits are used to *incinerate garbage*, with no one asking why they are burning or for how long they will continue to do so. *Sewer systems* still function underground, but no one knows their extent, their principles, or how to repair them. In many ancient *industrial areas*, defects, leaks, and chemical reactions have led to their being repurposed as minable resource deposits: The swamps of the Eastern Basin and the gold mines of Emden are examples of this.

Musket Blade: Like bayonets, these weapons attach to the underside of a firearm. However, these weapons resemble axe or broad knife blades and can fit weapons as small as a pistol. They are not intended for thrusting on the charge, but rather to allow quick chopping strikes.

Dueling Sword: These weapons resemble Earth rapiers and are very popular with duelists and Canal Martian nobles. They are somewhat heavier and sturdier than rapiers.

Ceramic Sword: The rare ceramic swords are primarily in use with the veiled people of the Western Desert, the Kel Avashim, as well as a few warlike tribes of the Eastern Desert. They are created from a secret type of ceramic using ancient techniques and sharpened to a fine edge. They are extremely light but still as sharp as any blade from Earth.

Chopper: The Oenotrian “Chopper” close combat units wield these two-handed swords with sharp, rectangular and broad-tipped blades. They are lighter than other two-handed swords and excel at mowing down enemy ranks with quick slashes.

Primitive Ranged Weapons

For this category, the weapons listed in the **Core Rules** are also commonly known on Mars. While Hill Martians use many types of *bows* and *javelins*, some cultures also use *boomerangs*, *bolas*, *slings* or *blow pipes*. Canal Martians sometimes use torsion weapons like *crossbows* and the *Tossian dynamite crossbow* developed from it (see **Core Rules** p. 226).

Ghantoor: This throwing disk is common in the Eastern Basin and stuns or knocks out foes with its heavy impact. Ghantoor masters don't aim for the head, but rather for sensitive nerve clusters, allowing them to numb specific limbs in addition to inflicting damage.

A hit with more than 5 + (Size rating) successes lowers one Attribute of the target chosen by the attacker by 1 for each success above the threshold. Should this Attribute be reduced to 0, the target is disabled. This Attribute damage heals at a rate of 1 point per minute.

Khivatt: The khivatt is a javelin used by the Queln (p. 86). It is similar to a cavalry spear with a bulging tip, but is instead thrown or dropped onto a target while riding on a skrill. The weighted tip ensures a heavy impact in either case, especially if it is dropped from a height that allows it to fully accelerate before striking the victim to deliver "death from above". The Queln are trained from

childhood to wield these weapons and can achieve remarkable accuracy in hitting ground targets.

When thrown downwards from skrilback and hitting its target, its damage is increased by +2.

Muzzle Loaders

The *muzzle loaders* mentioned in the **Core Rules** are in common use on Mars. They are the most widespread of all firearms and are very similar to their Earth counterparts.

Martian blunderbuss: This term includes the many makeshift firearms common on Mars that were cobbled together from the wreckage of the millennia using all sorts of materials. The principle is always the same: A powder charge will fire whatever has been stuffed down the barrel out into a wide cone. Effective range is extremely short, but it is almost impossible to miss. There is a very high risk, though, that the payload will get jammed resulting in the weapon exploding. At best, this will damage the weapon, but usually also whoever fired it.

It comes in two sizes: A full rifle size (the actual blunderbuss) and a single-handed version (the *dragoon*). Both are popular with gashant riders as they are easy to aim and wield, but assassins, air pirates, prison guards, and street fighters also find them very useful, as does any Martian who can't afford anything better.

As with the French *espingole* blunderbusses, the shot spreads in a cone: Each 10-foot (3 m) range increment spreads the cone

by 5 feet (1.5 m) in diameter, imposing a □1 penalty on the attack roll, but also allowing the wielder to strike multiple targets. Any attack without successes at all indicates a jam or damage to the weapon. It must be repaired using the *Craft (Mechanics)* skill at a difficulty of 2, with each attempt requiring 10 minutes of work.

Seven-barrel: This brutal and ungainly weapon is a muzzle loader with seven barrels. It is sometimes used aboard screw galleys and, more rarely, cloudships. It fires all seven barrels at once. The recoil is immense and will often cause the shooter to drop the weapon. Accuracy is not a trait this weapon possesses; the range is average at best and reloading all seven barrels is a time-consuming task. The sparks that occur

Martian Weapons

Melee Weapons	Dam	Str	Speed	Price	Weight
Urghuul Axe	3 L	3	A	£6	3.5 lbs / 1.6 kg
Musket Blade (fixed)	1 L	1	F	£3	1.3 lbs / 0.6 kg
Dueling Sword	2 L	3	F	£15 8S	2.6 lbs / 1.2 kg
Ceramic Sword	3 L	1	A	£20	2.2 lbs / 1.0 kg
Chopper	4 L	2	S	£9	6.6 lbs / 3 kg
Club Musket (Melee)	2 L	3	A	£6	6.2 lbs / 2.8 kg
Sword Pistol (Melee)	2 L	2	A	£8	4.4 lbs / 2 kg

Primitive Ranged Weapons	Dam	Str	Rng	Rate	Speed	Price	Weight
Ghantoor	1 N*	1	25 ft / 7.5 m	1	A	£5	2.2 lbs / 1 kg
Khivatt	2 L*	2	30 ft / 10 m	1	A	£8	2.9 lbs / 1.3 kg

Muzzle Loaders	Dam	Str	Rng	Cap	Rate	Speed	Price	Weight
Blunderbuss	5 L*	3	20 ft / 6 m	1(i)	½**	A	£6	4.9 lbs / 2.2 kg
Dragoon	3 L*	2	15 ft / 5 m	1(i)	½**	A	£4	2.6 lbs / 1.2 kg
Club Musket (Ranged)	2 L	3	33 ft / 10 m	4(i)	½**	A	£6	6.2 lbs / 2.8 kg
Sword Pistol (Ranged)	2 L	2	33 ft / 10 m	1(i)	½**	A	£8	4.4 lbs / 2 kg
Saarpak	4 L	2	80 ft / 25 m	6(r)	H	A	***	2.2 lbs / 1 kg
Seven-barrel Gun	6 L*	3	50 ft / 15 m	7(i)	¼**	S	£12	7.7 lbs / 3.5 kg

Rifles	Dam	Str	Rng	Cap	Rate	Speed	Price	Weight
Cydonian Ceramic Rifle	3 L	1	130 ft / 40 m	1(i)	1	A	***	5.5 lbs / 2.5 kg
Moquaad	4 L	2	150 ft / 45 m	1(i)	½	A	***	8.4 lbs / 3.8 kg
Urghuul Hunting Rifle	4 L	3	115 ft / 35 m	2(i)	½	A	***	13 lbs / 6 kg

Explosives	Dam	Str	Rng	Cap	Rate	Speed	Price	Weight
Tossian Time Bomb	5 L*	1	10 ft / 3 m		1	A	£4	1 lb / 0.45 kg

* See weapon description for special rules

** Player characters with the Instant Reload talent double the rate of fire of this weapon

*** This weapon counts as an Artifact 1

when firing have been known to set fire to sails. These drawbacks are made up for by the deadly spray of bullets catching multiple, closely-grouped enemies at once, a useful ability during boarding actions between aerial flyers. This advantage is especially effective when firing from above, i.e. from the rigging, or when passing above an enemy vessel.

For every 15 feet (5 m) of distance, the damage is reduced by -1 while the number of targets is increased by +1. An attack roll without any successes will cause sparks from the weapon to ignite any flammable materials near the shooter (or, at the GM's option, jam or damage one or more barrels).

Saarpak (Artifact 1): The saarpak is the legendary peak of Seldonian weapons technology. These reliable revolvers were crafted for Seldon's officers. The secrets of its construction are known to only a few gunsmiths today. Each saarpak is individually crafted and decorated with inlays, etchings, and carved handles. It is similar in design to an American Colt, but uses a friction lock mechanism for ignition. In addition, saarpaks are muzzle loaders requiring each chamber to be loaded by hand—a time-consuming process. They are incredibly powerful and possess great accuracy at long ranges. They are one of the most precise weapons on Mars and even surpass Earth pistols. Most specimens are owned by the Saarpak-Naado (p. 116) these days, and are thus common in the Northern Polar Region. Rich nobles and canal princes have commissioned saarpaks, at ruinous expense, in the past, the weapons becoming heirlooms over time. Ancient saarpaks that are only available as heirlooms or stolen grave goods are even more expensive. Martian folklore is full of stories and legends about the saarpaks of famous heroes.

Sword Pistol: These fascinating weapons are forged for rich officers, aerial flyer captains, merchants, or nobles on special commission by a few Martian gunsmiths, following ancient customs. They are a combination of sword and pistol: The broad, sharp blade is usually forged from steel waste recovered from ancient ruins. A pistol barrel is set along it, able to fire a single bullet—a devastating surprise attack—before it must be reloaded. It is said that the infamous privateer *Quatlalani* once beheaded a man with the blade—and then landed the weapon's bullet right between the eyes of the severed head as it tumbled away.

High Martian Club Musket: This particularly nasty weapon is common amongst the High and Hill Martians. Gunsmiths have integrated four rather inaccurate musket barrels into the interior of these bulky, spiked clubs or maces, allowing them to fire out of the top of the weapon.

Rifles

The modern firearms listed on p. 223 of the **Core Rules** are mostly in use by the Earth armed forces on Mars, as well as by the Martian armies or, rarely, as personal possessions acquired from Earth traders. They are considered to be technologically superior and are very popular.

Even so, the Martians have developed a few truly remarkable firearms, mostly unique pieces. Knowledge of their construction is either a professional secret of the respective gunsmith or has been lost altogether, leaving only a few ancient but well preserved pieces in circulation. One exception to this rule is the *shield gun* commonly used by the Oenotrian military (**Core Rules**, p. 227).

Cydonian Ceramic Rifle (Artifact 1): The mysterious Veiled People of Cydonia (p. 87) have produced one of the most impressive firearms ever seen by humankind. It might have been the lack of metal on this planet that has driven their gunsmiths to the idea of fashioning rifles from kilned, hard-as-steel ceramics. The result is a weapon of such elegance that it surpasses any others. Using the desert heat during the long, bright season in Cydonia, a secret mixture of ceramics is poured into a cast, dried, and kilned. After these steps, special glazing is applied that not only hardens and strengthens the weapon, but also creates patterns based on traditional or original designs: Transparent glazing with sealed-in quartz sand are common, as are designs in bright, gleaming colors or matte glazing with fine patterns.

Moquaad (Artifact 1): The gunsmiths of the warlike Hill Martians of the *Kel Avashiim* (p. 83) make the moquaad, a long-barreled rifle renowned as one of the most precise weapons on Mars. Its range is almost unrivalled and the sight of Kel Avashiim warriors with the thin muzzles of the rifles on their backs rising high above the dunes is truly an ill omen.

Urghuul Hunting Rifle (Artifact 1): This legendary rifle with its thick barrel is used for hunting by the Urghuul of the Southern Polar Region. This double-barreled weapon is very accurate and has an excellent range.

Explosives

Tossian Timed Bomb: While Earth's explosives experts are still experimenting on how to get detonations exactly when intended, the Tossian masters of clockwork technology and inventors of the dynamite crossbow are already centuries ahead. Their crafters understand how to design clockworks to detonate an explosive after a precise length of time has passed. In particular, underground rebels like to utilize this technology in their bomb strikes.

The compressed, powerful explosive acts as a bundle of 12 dynamite sticks, but weighs less and is more compact.

Peace Gas: Created by combining volatile distillates of several Martian plants that are occasionally used as recreational drugs, this gas renders its targets semi-conscious. A victim affected by peace gas suffers a $\square 4$ penalty to all actions and halves their Move rating. The gas automatically affects everyone 1 turn after they breathe it in. It is relatively dense and takes several minutes to disperse indoors (or outdoors if there is little wind). It is a level 6 Toxin. Anyone affected by it must make a Body roll each hour and accumulate 6 successes to recover (see Poisons and Drugs, Core Rules p. 217). Until that time, the victim cannot think clearly and will stumble about as if drunk. Peace gas affects humans and Martians equally; in fact, it affects all terrestrial or Martian mammals. However, the gas does not affect Venusians nor reptiles. The gas is non-lethal; repeated exposure results in little more than a bad headache after the effect wears off. A canister of peace gas the size of a soda can produces sufficient gas to envelop an area 20 feet (6 m) in diameter to a height of 6 feet (2 m).

Ammunition

Liftwood Arrows and Javelins: Some Hill Martian tribes with at least some access to liftwood use it to craft arrows and javelins, granting these weapons a drastically increased range thanks to the gravity-defying properties of the wood.

The range of bows is doubled from 50 to 100 feet (15–30 m), that of longbows to a total of 200 feet (60 m) (though these weapons are mostly unknown on Mars). The range of liftwood javelins is doubled to 50 feet (15 m).

Scrap: Instead of shot, Martian blunderbusses can also be loaded with whatever is at hand: rocks, scraps of metal, pieces of lead. Doing so will reduce the Damage by –1.

Ammunition	Price
Liftwood Arrows (20)	£5
Liftwood Javelin (1)	£4
Scrap	free

General Equipment

Armor

Spider Cloth Armor (Artifact 1): Made from the silk of domesticated Martian spider hounds, the fibers used in this armor are far tougher than any terrestrial ones. They are strong enough to stop bullets, shrapnel, or sword blows. Almost all spider cloth rotted into dust and fragments long ago, but some was preserved for later use in specially sealed rooms or boxes. These suits are as sturdy and flexible as when they were made and are exceptionally useful. The secret of domesticating spider hounds and inducing them to produce silk was lost more than 20,000 years ago, but records of it exist in a few ancient Martian ruins. Spider hounds are rare now, but they still exist in wild areas found along a few of the dead canals near the equator. Anyone who captures a few dozen spider hounds and learns the secret of harvesting their silk could make new spider cloth armor and become very wealthy.



Armor	Defense	Strength	Agility	Price	Weight
Spider Cloth	+2	1	–0	–*	11 lbs / 5 kg
Martian Breastplate	+1	2	–0	£10	22 lbs / 10 kg
Oenotrian Shield-infantry Armor	+3	2	–1	£18	40 lbs / 18 kg
Red Sandtiger Fur	+1	1	–0	–*	15 lbs / 7 kg

*This armor is an Artifact 1

Martian Breastplate: These ornate chest plates that leave the abdomen exposed are particularly popular with the officers of the canal city guard regiments. They are made of hardened leather or more rarely metal and feature artfully crafted pauldrons, displaying both strength and rank. When dealing with Martians in situations where rank or courage are of importance, they can provide a +1 bonus to *Diplomacy* or *Intimidation* rolls.

Oenotrian Shield-infantry Armor: This metal plate lamellar armor is the pride of the Oenotrian infantry. Combined with the shield gun, it was said to make them invulnerable, until the humans arrived. The full set is somewhat lighter than full plate, but it still incurs notable penalties.

Red Sandtiger Fur (Artifact 1): The fur of the red sandtiger is not just armor or an impressive trophy, it also maintains its special properties if treated correctly by a Hill Martian who knows the

secrets of curing it. For the bearer, this results in a +1 bonus to all *Stealth* rolls while in desert or steppe environments.

Liftwood Equipment

The wood of lesser quality or smaller liftwood trees such as those of the species *L. edensis* (p. 17) can also be used for purposes other than aerial flyers.

Lifting Harness (Artifact 3): The ancient Martians isolated the contra-gravitational chemical in liftwood and learned how to create a synthetic version. This garment consists of a small sphere containing concentrated synthetic liftwood extract and worn on the user's back, along with aerodynamic flaps that allow the user to steer. Simple wrist controls allow users to increase or decrease their lift by changing the sphere's orientation. Martians, humans, or even Venusians can all use this device to fly. The easy controls and the design of the flaps give the user +1 to all *Pilot (Personal Flight)* rolls. Most lifting harnesses were made for Martian soldiers and spies, but a few of the surviving harnesses are quite ornate and were made for use by Martian nobles and wealthy merchants. Synthetic liftwood extract only works for six months before it decays. However, it is normally stored as two separate components that only produce lift when combined. In this form, these chemicals can last for tens of thousands of years if stored properly. Early in Seldon's Empire, explorers discovered a cache of more than 200 lifting harnesses and many doses of lifting serum for each harness, which allowed Seldon's elite troops to swoop down upon their enemies.

Lifting Serum (Artifact 3): The ancient Martians developed lifting serum before they had learned to create synthetic liftwood extract. This serum allows any Hill or Canal Martian to fly by stimulating their vestigial lift glands. The user can fly as well as a High Martian, except that flying is a skill that requires practice. Also, users lack the skin flaps that High Martians possess. Unless the character is wearing clothing that duplicates these skin flaps, they suffer a –1 to all *Pilot (Personal Flight)* rolls. Each dosage requires 10 minutes to take effect and lasts for eight hours. This serum does not allow humans to fly, but it does provide them with sufficient lift that they can fall any distance without harm for the next eight hours.

Liftwood Backpack: Backpacks with liftwood frames reduce the load on travelers. They are quite common amongst the caravans. One must be careful when changing stances: Bending over with a full load on one's back could be fatal! The bearer gains +1 Strength for purposes of calculating *Encumbrance* (see the table *Encumbrance* in the **Core Rules** p. 211).

Aerial Life Vest: To ensure the safety of rich or powerful travelers, some aerial flyers carry a supply of liftwood life vests. These are not strong or compact enough to allow for controlled flight, but do ensure that anyone going overboard will land safe and sound, like a feather. No matter how far a player character falls, the damage will be capped at a maximum equivalent to a 10 feet (3 m) fall (1 L; see *Falling* in the **Core Rules** p. 216).

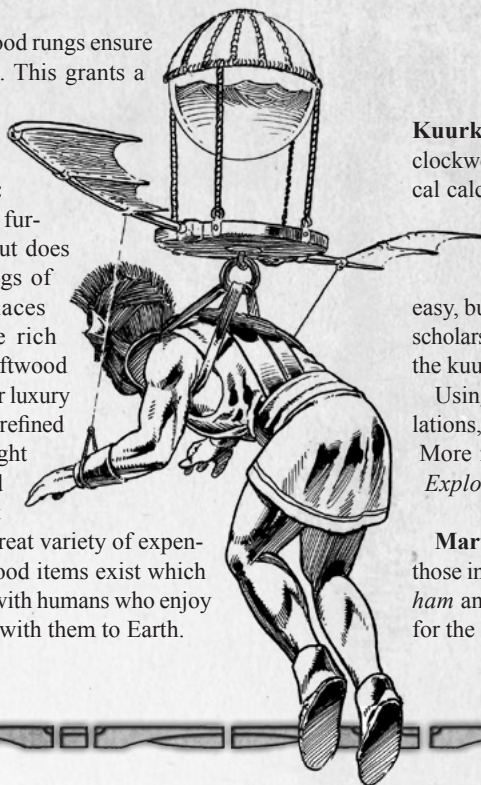
Snow Shoes: Cunning tinkerers around the North and South Poles have built snow shoes out of liftwood, allowing for easy traversal of even the deepest snow. The *Move* rating is not reduced by deep snow (see the **Core Rules** p. 210).

Mathematics and Time Keeping

Rope Ladder: Liftwood rungs ensure easy and safe climbing. This grants a +1 bonus to *Athletics* (Climbing) rolls.

Liftwood Kitsch:

Whether it is liftwood furniture—which is rare but does float beneath the ceilings of some canal prince palaces or the homes of some rich merchants—, floating liftwood model kits for children, or luxury accessories for Ladies of refined tastes—such as extra light parasols with liftwood spokes that can float above one's head—, a great variety of expensive and frivolous liftwood items exist which are particularly popular with humans who enjoy taking these items back with them to Earth.



Kuurka (Artifact 1): The crowning achievement of Tossian clockwork science is the “kuurka”, a rolling-pin-shaped mechanical calculator that fits into a coat pocket. This ingenious device is capable of the four basic mathematical operations as well as handling logarithms. Operating a kuurka via the eleven dials and the crank on the end of the cylinder is not easy, but once mastered, it is an invaluable aid for merchants and scholars. Several European watchmakers have begun trying to copy the kuurka recently, as it is strictly superior to the arithmometer.

Using a kuurka grants a +2 bonus to all rolls involving calculations, most commonly with the skills *Science* and *Gambling*. More rarely, it might also apply to some *Crafts*, *Linguistics*, *Explosives*, or *Gunnery* rolls.

Martian Time Watches: Both Martian watchmakers such as those in Tossia and a few Earth-based ones such as *Charles Frodham* and *A. Lange & Sons* produce specialized pocket watches for the Martian day-night cycle. These are called “Red Clocks”.

Martian Currencies

Primitive Money

The Hill Martians usually rely on bartering, but some primitive currencies have developed among them:

- The *Wagon Masters of Meroe* (p. 82) and the merchants of the Western Desert use **tea money** (*Manasha*): Powdered tea is pressed into tiles. Shape and weight are standardized, and the type of tea indicates the value. Scaambra tiles are the most valuable. Patterns on the surface indicate the value, but experienced traders will recognize each type by color and scent. Humans in particular are often the targets of “counterfeit tea”: Cheaper tea is colored and perfumed to resemble more expensive types, or the tiles are hollowed and filled with sand, or some other means are used to fool inexperienced sellers.
- In the Eastern Desert and the Southern Polar Region, some areas deal in **salt money** (*Valkaarra*). These reddish bars of raw salt are a bartering standard whose value increases the further one travels from the salt mines.
- **Teeth money** (*Burkach*) is fashioned from the teeth of local animals. The species, design, and danger posed by the animal determine the value. Steppe tiger teeth are more valuable than roogie teeth, and Martian wyvern teeth surpass both. They are often worn as necklaces.
- The *Lowland Martians* (p. 74) as well as a few city-states in the Hellas region sometimes trade using **mollusk money** (*Ahaarimi*). These are the conchs or snail shells of the now long extinct ocean

dwellers of the Hellas basin. That makes them a limited natural resource—at least on Mars. Imports from Earth could destabilize this currency. Like teeth money, they are commonly arrayed on strings and worn around the neck, hip, or as earrings.

- Amongst some High Martian tribes, blonde, woven **human hair** has become an impromptu currency.

Currencies of the Canal Martians

The city-states of Mars are home to countless different currencies, often made using unusual methods:

- Some city-states use **paper money** with notes printed as demanded by the canal prince. The most prominent example is Tossia, whose currency—just like its self-identity—remains unchanged from the age of the Seldons—in fact, from the age of the canal builders: The **Tossian Quikruk** is made of an imperishable polymer that is similar in appearance to paper or thin plastic. These bear old denomination symbols, in holographic print!
- Paper money and coins are usually treated the opposite way on Mars compared to Earth: While paper or canal reed papyrus money acts as small change, metal **coins** represent the larger denominations. It is the rarity of metal that justifies their value. Some cities even use iron coins. Coins made of precious metals are exceptionally valuable, such as the **Oenotrian Loshaash**.
- Coins made of **glass** or **ceramic** are more common, even in Angahiaa (Emden) with its rich gold mines.

Their currency, which is accepted all across Meridani Sinus, is the so-called **Pikk**. It is made of colored glass laced with gold strands.

- The flat, circular shape of coins has not come to dominate Mars as it has on Earth. The exceptionally stable and thus commonly accepted **Boreosyrtan Fuul**, for example, takes the shape of small marbles. Size, color, and engravings all indicate the value. The spherical shape of the Fuul (and other local currencies such as the **Acidalian Mollarar**) has ensured that several types of Martian gambling resemble Earth's marble games. On Earth, the saying "he's lost a great deal of money while playing marbles" is taken to be a joke. The danger of cheap, imported glass marbles from Earth looms.
- A currency commonly used in the Golden Triangle (p. 133) and the Eastern Basin is **chain money**, which involves metal or clay hooks that are strung together to form chains. The material and length of the chain determine the value. While laborers carry their possessions with them in the form of clay bracelets or iron necklaces, the rich merchant and nobles display their "chainmail" wealth. Some women even show that they can afford to wear *no* clothes—instead covering themselves fully in golden chain money.
- The **Ogygian Shlop** from the Bosphoros region is particularly unpopular. It is subject to ongoing hyperinflation because of the continued state of war in the region. Bartering directly in liquors, ammunition, or pants buttons is more likely to find favor.
- The Earth colonial powers have introduced their own currencies to Mars. The British Empire has introduced the **Syrtis Pound** (*Puunt*), which is directly coupled to the value of the Pound Sterling.

Exchange Rates

The basis for the exchange rates is always the pound (£) as well as the next most common Earth currency in the region (awkward numbers have been rounded). It should be noted that nearly all Martian currencies are denominated using the octal system as opposed to the decimal one, as the Martian hand only has four fingers. This means that usually 8 or 16 lesser denominations make up the next highest one, rather than ten.

£1	20 Marks	60 Meridian Pikks (fluctuates wildly)
£1	20 Marks	5 Boreosyrtan Fuuls
£1	25 French Francs	7 Acidalian Mollarars
£1	20 Marks	2 Syrtis Pounds (Puunt)
£1	USD\$ 5	10 Tossian Quikruks
£1	—	3 Oenotrian Loshaashs
£1	25 Belgian Francs	17.134.460 Ogygian Shlops (today; might double by tomorrow)
£1	—	1 copper necklace / 1 golden necklace link (chain money)
£1	20 Marks	1 bar of scaambra / 48 bars of lesser tea (Manasha)
£1	—	2 salt blocks / 64 bars of salt (Valkaarra)
£1	—	192 roogie teeth / 24 steppe tiger teeth / 8 wyvern teeth (Burkach)
£1	—	12 elegantly curved snail shells / 96 simple snail shells (Aahaarimi)



Sample Characters

Sample Characters

Xeno-Archaeologist

Archetype: Explorer **Motivation:** Discovery
Style: 3 **Health:** 5

Primary Attributes

Body: 2 **Charisma:** 3
Dexterity: 2 **Intelligence:** 4
Strength: 1 **Willpower:** 3

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 **Initiative:** 6
Move: 3 **Defense:** 4
Perception: 7 **Stun:** 2

Skills

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Academics	4	5	9	(4+)
Firearms	2	2	4	(2)
Linguistics	4	3	7	(3+)
Medicine	4	2	6	(3)
Ride	2	2	4	(2)
Survival	4	2	6	(3)

Talents

Natural Leader, Skill Mastery (Academics)

Resources

Mentor 1 (Family)

Flaw

Reformer

Weapons

Weapons	Damage	Size	Attack	(Average)
Pocket Revolver	2 L	0	6 L	(3) L
Punch	0 N	0	4 N	(2) N

Sample Characters



Xeno-Archaeologist

“Eureka! I knew I would find traces of the canal builders here. You won’t find anything like this on Earth. For God’s sake, use the brushes or you’ll destroy these irreplaceable artifacts!”

Background

Much can be learned from history, but before knowledge comes the search—and searching means getting up from the desk and leaving the library. What? Yes, I’m aware I’m a woman. No, I don’t have any problems getting my hands dirty. Don’t make that face. I’ve seen it often enough already. Just because I’m a woman you think I don’t know how to do science? So what, I just got my degree for nothing?

Mars is the Eldorado of extraterrestrial archaeology—if I can land a big find here, I’ll become a pioneer of my field! No other planet offers as many opportunities or as many different places to start looking. There are all sorts of different cultures here, countless cities and ruins of buildings whose origin are unknown to us. You want examples? Take the desert cities of the Eastern Deserts, which date back to the age of the canal builders. We know almost nothing about that age, apart from a few writings that aren’t exactly reliable. Some canals have been buried millennia ago, who knows what’s hidden beneath... Or the dry canals of the Western Desert: Entire metropolises are buried there, and none have been studied yet. The Martians may speak of some spirits, but that superstition is just meant to keep strangers from the ruins. I’m not going to let such hogwash stop me. Besides, as a serious scientist, I can’t just leave the field to the common treasure hunters. All they want is money. Not me! Of course, securing funding for expeditions isn’t exactly easy, but at least my family supports me in this. Now and then I also act as an appraiser for the odd middleman trying to get rich selling Martian artifacts on Earth. It’s not easy to tell an antique Canal Martian prince’s ring from a cheap copy. Well, for me it is!

Roleplaying

You are a woman in a man’s world. Though you may have studied at a prestigious university and graduated with top marks, most of the men in your field merely humor you. This rejection by society is just more encouragement for you. As you have little professional prospects on Earth, you have followed the call of the other planets.

As an archaeologist, you do not embody the stereotypical woman: You can lend a hand on expeditions and digs and have no qualms about getting your hands dirty. You do not let your male colleagues push you around, but instead know how to elbow your way forward. Once you’ve set yourself a goal, you stick to it and do not let anything deter you. You seek success by any means necessary, including in some rare cases—when you truly need help—playing the helpless damsel in distress to draw the stronger gender to your side. Though you don’t do this lightly, should you be successful—and of course you believe you will be—, then your name will soon be as famous as that of other great archaeologists like Johannes Overbeck.

Tea Magnate

Archetype: Moneyman **Motivation:** Greed
Style: 3 **Health:** 5

Primary Attributes

Body: 2 **Charisma:** 5
Dexterity: 2 **Intelligence:** 3
Strength: 1 **Willpower:** 3

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 **Initiative:** 5
Move: 3 **Defense:** 7
Perception: 6 **Stun:** 2

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Bureaucracy	3	3	6	(3)
Economics			7	(3+)
Con	5	2	7	(3+)
Diplomacy	5	3	8	(4)
Negotiation			9	(4+)
Empathy	3	2	5	(2+)
Firearms	2	1	3	(1+)
Gambling	3	1	4	(2)
Intimidation	5	1	6	(3)

Talents

Bold Defense, Charismatic

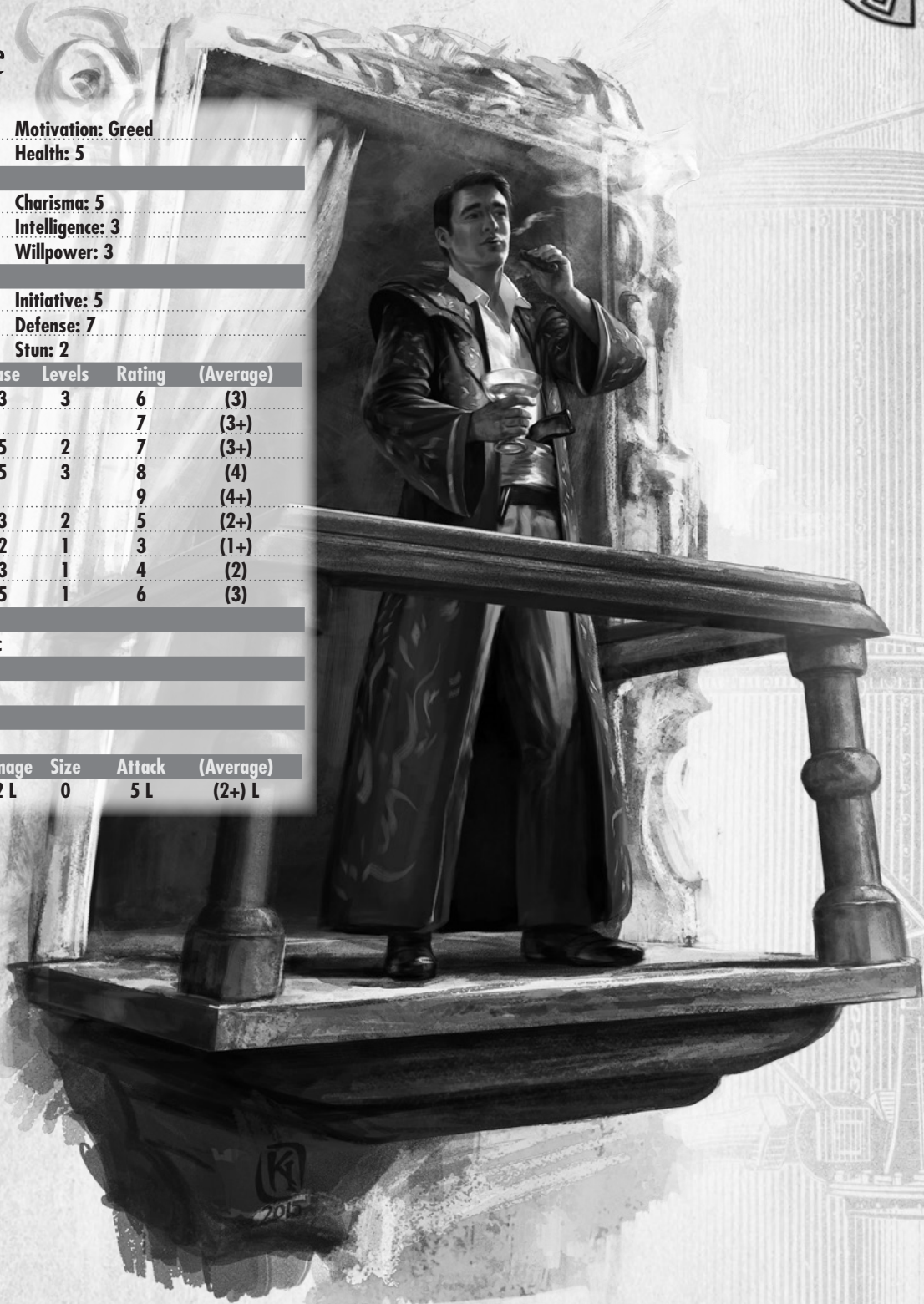
Resources

Wealth 1

Flaw

Callous

Weapons	Damage	Size	Attack	(Average)
Double Derringer	2 L	0	5 L	(2+) L



Sample Characters

Tea Magnate

“The red tea in your Boreo Chai is from our Mars plantation near Saardaar, by the way.”

Background

The old noble houses of Good Old Britain back home still view my family as nothing more than new money upstarts. I must admit that it can be vexing to be seen as middle class by some run-down country nobles. But one day, these small-minded fools in their dusty old estates are going to have to lick my boots! Even now, we have more wealth and influence than most of the traditional noble houses of England. It is families like mine that have made our Empire what it is today! Back in the forties, my grandfather started this business by opening our first offices in Yantei, Tianjin, and Hong Kong to trade Chinese tea—against the resistance of the local Tongs, who would have loved to drive the “white devils” from China. When my grandfather was murdered by one of these secret societies, my father took over the business. The shareholders back in England did not believe in his leadership qualities, but he proved them all wrong. During the sixties and seventies, our influence expanded into the southern provinces of India, to Indochina, and to Japan, and we founded our first own plantations. My father and his mercenaries have seen to making the shipping lanes of South East Asia a whole lot safer from the pirates of the eastern seas, by the way. Well yes, that sea battle with his competitor that he got caught up in in 1872 wasn’t exactly fair play. But I can assure you that those guys had it coming. Our empire grew and flourished, and meanwhile I spent my youth traveling. You must know, I was born in Manipur and set foot in England for the first time at age 21, when I began my studies at Cambridge. I traveled about with my father on our merchant ships, from one of our holdings to another and spent my childhood in the narrow alleys of the port cities of South East Asia, in trading stations, our estates, and yes, even on Mars. At age 15, I had not only seen more of the Empire than most decorated colonial officers, but I’ve also been on ether flights. I learned to duel in Parhoon, had a Japanese Yakuza teach me cards, and listened to many of the stories told by the Wagon Masters of Meroe.

Now that father is looking to retire, it will be up to me to lead our house into the future. And it will be a future of expansion! An expansion into the Tea Road on Mars. The exclusive contract with the Boreosyrts League is set, and we have made contact with a promising young merchant lady with the Wagon Masters. I intend to see the Martian Tea trading monopoly with Earth become mine! Our family arms will brand warehouses all over Mars, no matter the cost! Even if I must brush aside the local resistance as my grandfather did, this time as a “red devil”.

Roleplaying

Your name elicits both admiration and disgust when spoken in civilized society. Your ruthless efforts have brought you more than a fair share of bad publicity, but your daring courage is just as famous. Two things are important to you above all: Your family and your profits. You seek to expand your business empire and to make your house one of the most powerful in the Empire. Other merchants may insist on staying in their offices and study the stock markets; you are a true adventurer like William Jardine or James Brooke. You are ready to get out there and risk your life for business and profit. If that means allying with the barbaric desert tribes or cheating decadent Canal Martians out of their tea plantations, so be it. Anything goes!

Air Pirate

Archetype: Adventurer **Motivation:** Greed
Style: 3 **Health:** 4

Primary Attributes

Body: 2 **Charisma:** 4
Dexterity: 4 **Intelligence:** 2
Strength: 1 **Willpower:** 2

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 **Initiative:** 6
Move: 5 **Defense:** 6
Perception: 4 **Stun:** 2

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Acrobatics	4	2	6	(3)
Firearms	4	2	6	(3)
Intimidation	4	1	5	(2+)
Larceny	4	2	6	(3)
Melee	4	3	7	(3+)
Pilot (Air Ships)	4	2	6	(3)
Stealth	4	2	6	(3)
Streetwise	4	3	7	(3+)

Talents

Attractive 1, Finesse Attack

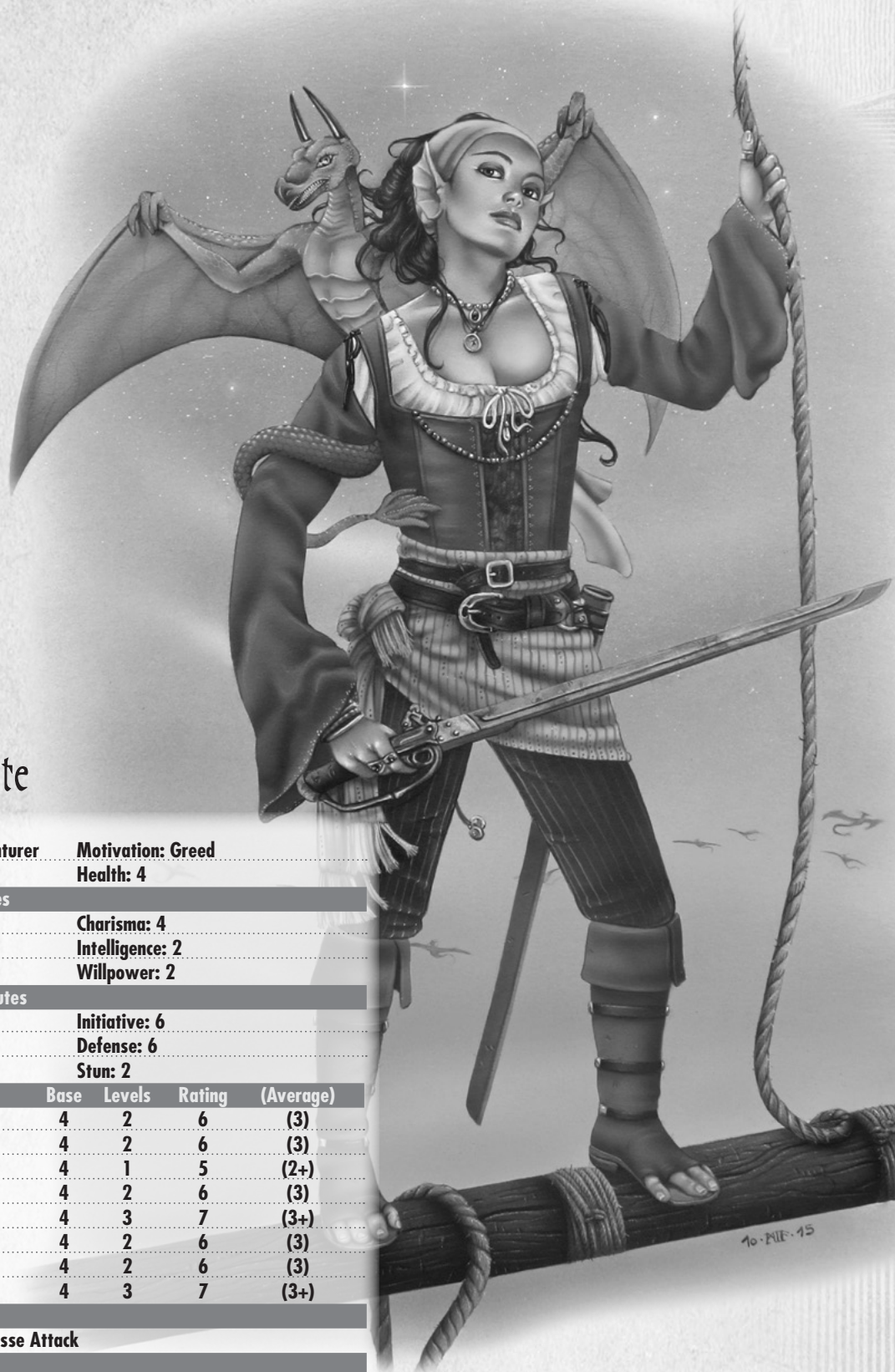
Resources

Fame 0

Flaw

Impulsive

Weapons	Damage	Size	Attack	(Average)
Pistol, muzzle loading	3 L	0	9 L	(4+) L
Cutlass	3 L	0	10 L	(5) L



Air Pirate

“By the Great Worm! How much longer are you fools going to be before you reel in the loofward sail? Someone kick those lame mast gashants up the arse, we have an air battle to win!”

Background

Ever since I can remember, I’ve loved to sit on our favorite section of the city walls and watch the screw galleys and cloudships sail away into the deep blue sky. I’ve always known that I would hire on aboard one of these ships if s soon as I was old enough. I wanted to see other cities and the world from above, like a skrill. I wanted my name to strike fear into any air captain who heard it whispered.

When my phlegmatic mother and her doom saying got too much for me (let’s not even mention the many sores my father would give me ever since the humans started paying him in whiskey), I packed my bags and simply left. I bummed around the darkest pubs of the city for a bit, until I found my way aboard a privateer vessel.

Of course, it wasn’t easy. Work aboard a ship is hard, especially for a landlubber. But I never regretted my decision! And once I sent my first shipmate over the railing and into the sand of the Nepenthes—Thoth hundreds of yards below for not taking no for an answer, I didn’t have to worry about any of that anymore. I didn’t even have to scrub the deck or clean the flying gecko shit off the propellers after that. Ever since, each day has been more amazing than the one before: I have seen skrill graze in the tree tops a mere arm’s length from me, I’ve seen the sunset behind the towers of Karkarham, I have felt the goose bumps you get just before a High Martian galley attacks, and I have celebrated my victories with the privateers. I can shoot a pushti fruit off the head of a sailor while drunk, and when I’m sober I can do that while swinging down from the rigging. No, I know exactly what I want: I want nothing more than the freedom you can only find aboard an aerial flyer!

Which is why this whole impound business is such a drag. Unlike the rest of the crew, I was able to escape, but now I’m stuck here on the ground. Feels funny, my legs aren’t used to the floor not swaying. But it’s nothing I can’t handle. All I need is a good crew and some money, and soon I’ll be up in the skies once more.

Roleplaying

You love the feeling of freedom, the feeling of the Martian winds blowing through your red hair when standing aboard a cloudship of the *Swiftwood* class! You have taken your life into your own hands and live it to the fullest, even if you’ve got to defend yourself by force at times. Adventure, loot shares, and sales profits all beckon, but it is your fame as a daring privateer that travels ahead of you. On Mars, at least where you live, men and women are equal members of the crew, and no man would dare to question you on this. When those odd Earth folk, upon seeing you in your practical flyer-crew getup, blush and cast down their eyes, mumbling something about “that not being appropriate for a lady”, you find that strange and annoying.

You take what you want, and don’t care where your trade partners or loot are coming from, as long as they bring fame and profit. You aspire to become one of the most heroic sky captains ever, you are free and you make your own fortune.

Mathematical Monk

Archetype: Scientist **Motivation:** Secrecy
Style: 3 **Health:** 6

Primary Attributes

Body: 2 **Charisma:** 2
Dexterity: 1 **Intelligence:** 5
Strength: 1 **Willpower:** 4

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 **Initiative:** 6
Move: 2 **Defense:** 3
Perception: 9 **Stun:** 2

Skills

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Academics (Martian Theology)	5	3	8	(4)
Diplomacy	2	2	4	(2)
Empathy	5	2	7	(3+)
Firearms	5	1	6	(3)
Investigation	5	3	8	(4)
Science	5	4	9	(4+)
Stealth	1	1	2	(1)

Talents

Calculated Attack, Skill Mastery (Science)

Resources

Contacts: 1

Flaw:

Paranoia:

Weapons

Weapons	Damage	Size	Attack	(Average)
Punch	0 N	0	0 N	(0) N
Dynamite Ballista	3 L	0	9 L	(4+) L



Sample Characters



Mathematical Monk

“Yes, those are invaluable insights. Possibly too invaluable for just anyone. That is what we must always remember: Knowledge is power, and power must be shared carefully, if at all...”

Background

Yes, I am a scientist. My life belongs to mathematics, history, engineering, and service of the God at the Heart of the World. Our ancestors hid the answers to all our questions in mathematics. All those questions we should be seeking to answer, as our people are dying. They hid them, as they are not meant to be understood by all. If these answers fall into the wrong hands, they could be used for evil. And that is why I hide the answers that I have found as well. You might call it paranoia, I call it self-defense. Everyone is always going to protect themselves first, after all.

And yet, I have no hope of preventing the seemingly inevitable alone, and thus I must compromise. I need help, and will accept help. My knowledge and technical expertise for the calm hands and good eye of a marksman!

It is not just the creeping death of my home that worries me and my order. There is also the matter of the *Saviors of Io'okk Paaron*. For centuries, they have been stalking us, killing some of us, and yet they never managed to stop us. They steal our knowledge, torture our brothers and sisters, and seem to relish our pain. I do not know why they do this or what they want from us. But I suspect that they also seek the knowledge of how to save our world. And then they will use it to blackmail and enslave my people. My brothers and sisters, the *Hands of the Hidden Ones*, must fight them, must drive them back, and they must hide. They must safeguard our knowledge of the planet. And even so, our struggle seems hopeless. And so, I must hurry, for it is up to me and the other *Eyes* to find what we need in time.

Roleplaying

You are an *Eye of the Hidden Ones*, traveling on the orders of the *Hidden Guardians* and their god. You are always on the lookout for secrets and knowledge, while keeping your true identity and that of your order secret. You firmly believe that the reason why your planet is dying was once known to the Ancient Ones, that they saw it coming. And by knowing the reason behind it, the doom can be averted. That is the knowledge you seek. The greatest challenge is not knowing where to start looking. Mars itself is vast, and as if that wasn't enough, the Ancient Martians traveled the Ether as well. They visited the other planets, almost certainly Earth among them. Possibly even Venus and Mercury? You don't know for sure, but you will find out.

You also know that you are being followed, stalked, by the enemies of your order. Everywhere, you must fear the thugs of the *Io'okk Paaron*, the *Heirs to the Ancient Ones*. They will not stop before they hold the power to save the planet in their own hands, to use it to subjugate all the people of Mars. Anyone could be trying to steal your secrets and kill you. Prudence is your companion, distrust your shield, wits your weapon, and faith in your God your fuel. Now and then you stop to consider if you are becoming paranoid. And sometimes you wonder if you already are. But you put these thoughts aside.

You also know that you need to trust a few men and women—need to learn to trust them. You will need the help of others. And you must be prepared to take risks—more is at stake than just your life. It is about all your people! And your God is with you!

Wagon Master

Archetype: Saleswoman Motivation: Greed
 Style: 3 Health: 5

Primary Attributes

Body: 1 Charisma: 4
 Dexterity: 2 Intelligence: 3
 Strength: 1 Willpower: 4

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 Initiative: 5
 Move: 3 Defense: 3
 Perception: 7 Stun: 1

Skills

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Con	4	3	7	(3+)
Diplomacy	4	4	8	(4)
Negotiations			9	(4+)
Drive	2	4	6	(3)
Wagon Master Wagons			7	(3+)
Empathy	3	2	5	(2+)
Firearms	2	2	4	(2)
Larceny	2	2	4	(2)

Talents

Direction Sense, Jack of all Trades

Resources

Contacts 1

Flaw

Superstitious

Weapons

Weapons	Damage	Size	Attack	(Average)
Punch	0 N	0	0 N	(0) N
Musket	2 L	0	6 L	(3) L



Wagon Master

“The Djermaambi may not be as willing to sell weapons as the Amikaani, but they offer better tools. As we are about to head towards the Holidhi farms, that might be the better deal, too. Hammers, saws, and pliers are more in demand there than rifles.”

Background

Your friend just headed down to the guest chambers. He said he was ‘seasick’, whatever that means. I think he’s just trying to hide that the swaying of the wagon was getting to him. My little sister wants to brew him a healing tea. I hope that doesn’t make him feel even worse. She’s not that practiced at tea brewing yet, you know? We’ll get to the village of Haabakaabool soon, probably by nightfall. That’s why I’m up here, to take the breather and practice with my flute a little. Whenever our wise ones tell the epics and poems, us girls are meant to accompany them on our flutes, but I haven’t gotten the melody of the “thousand-year wanderer” quite down yet. I just know that Nothuul, our priest, is going to recite that bloody thing in Dioscuria to the Djermaambi. They like to be swept up in folklore, and it’s good for business. I probably won’t even find the time to make eyes at the boys. Uncle says I’ve got a mind for business, and I’ve even made several deals with some of the villages. Yes, I’m only eight. Well, sixteen in your years. The first was down by Thymiamata—Uncle Hurk had fallen ill on the trip and couldn’t speak, so he wasn’t up for the talks as usual. Cousin Aldu, who usually stands in for him wasn’t looking to leave the wagon either. He had a rather messy affair with the daughter of the village elder the year before, you know? My older sister was supposed to take over and seal the deal, but she wasn’t getting anywhere no matter what she said, so I just chimed in and started haggling. True—I sold the ruumet breehrs that we were looking to unload too cheaply, and I let myself get talked into buying too many gashants, but when Uncle felt better, he said it wasn’t bad for my first deal. So, he took me to other meetings with the smaller villages to learn to negotiate. And that’s much more fun than brewing tea or playing the flute. I think Uncle Hurk is trying to prepare me to take over his place in the clan once he retires to the old wagon. You better believe it, I’ll be a great trader. The greatest ever! Then I’ll open a bank account in the city, buy myself a second wagon, and furnish my cabin with rugs and silk! Don’t laugh. I’m really going to do it! I’ve done the trip around the Tea Road eight times already—my entire life. I know trade and I know the dangers. I can even shoot, a little bit. Not as well as Aldu. You’ve got to know how to, south of Cydonia. When the Hill bastards down there get—how do you Earthlings say it?—“too full of themselves”, they start thinking we’re just there to deliver them free ruumet breehr and trade goods. Not on my watch! We’ll set them straight, with lead if it comes to that.

Roleplaying

As a nomad, you have traveled further in your short life than many others do in 90 years. You are curious, open-minded, and clever. You have a sharp tongue and are well on your way to becoming a truly great merchant. Haggling, negotiating, and clever lying are all skills you’ve learned, and your natural talent makes you the equal of many experienced traders. You’ve even started to figure out how to use your body to get the attention of males. Your success might even be due to the fact that no one expects to have their pockets picked clean by a cute little girl. Of course, you’ve also learned who is after what goods and how to arrange for deals that leave both sides content. Trade and profit are your world, as is the village gossip along the entire Tea Road. Your problem is that you know how good you are, and that your ambition often gets the better of you. At times, you speak before you think. But who would deny a youth their dreams?

Cold-land Barbarian

Archetype: Survivor Motivation: Revenge
 Style: 3 Health: 7

Primary Attributes

Body: 5 Charisma: 1
 Dexterity: 3 Intelligence: 1
 Strength: 4 Willpower: 2

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 Initiative: 4
 Move: 7 Defense: 8
 Perception: 3 Stun: 5

Skills

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Archery	3	2	5	(2+)
Athletics	4	2	6	(3)
Craft (Blacksmithing)	1	3	4	(2)
Intimidation	1	4	5	(2+)
Melee	4	4	8	(4)
Survival	1	2	3	(1+)

Talents

Fearsome, High Pain Tolerance

Resources

—

Flaw

Illiterate

Weapons

Weapons	Damage	Size	Attack	(Average)
Bow	2 L	0	7 L	(3+) L
Greataxe	3 L	0	11 L	(5+) L
Gun Barrel	1 N	0	9 N	(4+) N



Sample Characters

K
2015



Cold-land Barbarian

“Scum! Let...me...eat...IN...PEACE!” (sounds of vicious axe blows)

Background

Let's not mince words, city man. You think I'm a savage and a murderer. And you're right to call me that. After all, the brand on my chest announces me as an exile. If you know the runes of the people that branded me so, you'll know that means I've killed. I don't deny it. Once, when I had a home and a family, I was a blacksmith. That life ended when I bashed the head of the man who raped my sister in with a hammer. I did that in rage, but I did it deliberately. That man was the nephew of our Tuu, our lord. And no one would speak on my behalf. Only the shame of my sister did. And so, they pressed the red-hot iron to my chest and drove me out into the mountains. All I have is the axe they left me, this pistol I stole, and my hands. I could have gone to the Aruudal, like the other exiles, but they are scum. Like other exiles, I could have become a bandit or a thief. But I don't believe in murdering people who've done nothing to me. Of course, I tried to sell my trade in villages far away from where I lived. But the mark on my chest tells everyone what I am. I can't wash it off. I can cover it, but even then, it would betray me. Some few people will let me repair their tools, their ploughs or the bits of their gashants, for a bit of money. Good people avoid me, as though the sight of me could kill. They shun me. They send their children inside as soon as they see me and they make warding signs against evil behind my back. There are villages and cities I am not allowed to enter. The guards will block my way as soon as they see the mark. And so, I live at the edge, between the wilderness and the ruins, amongst those who are outcast like me. I am a murderer, and I can only find work calling for a murderer. As a strong arm and a sell-sword, I am accepted. Some have even trusted me to guard their caravans. And so, I've seen many things. I have fought against nomad bandits, battled the enemies of fat merchant lords in their confusing feuds, and I have plundered the catacombs of the ancients alongside tomb raiders. I have killed men, monsters, and worse. I have seen half the world, including many red faces like yours, who claim to have come from the sky. Yes, in some circles, my name has a certain fame, but most just see me as an axe, not a man. Now you know who I am. If we can make a deal, you will command my arm and the weapon it holds. But I warn you: Do not ask me to kill children, women, or other innocents. Or I will introduce *you* to my blade.

Roleplaying

Your life did not go well. Once, you were a happy, simple blacksmith with a peaceful life. Then your sister was violated and your justified revenge for that crime cost you everything you held dear. You are exiled and branded. Your towering physique is fearsome to behold. The brand on your chest has brought you nothing but contempt from others. Only amongst other exiles can you find some peace. Fate has damned you to a life as a sell-sword, as a tool for hire. You may have become a master at your new trade, but in truth it is not a life you ever wanted. You despise it. A peaceful life, it seems, has been denied to you forever because of that one justified act of anger. You are bitter, cynical, hard. Even so, underneath your cold exterior, you cling to your principles. For in truth you are a better person than you let others, and yourself, believe. Your sight might evoke fear and stories about you may be told with quivering voices, but in the end, you try to be on the side of justice, even though to all the world you are nothing but scum. You will not give those judges the satisfaction of actually becoming the monster that they saw when they exiled you.

Duelist

Archetype: Law Keeper Motivation: Duty
 Style: 3 Health: 3

Primary Attributes

Body: 2 Charisma: 3
 Dexterity: 4 Intelligence: 3
 Strength: 3 Willpower: 1

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 Initiative: 7
 Move: 7 Defense: 6
 Perception: 4 Stun: 2

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Investigation	3	4	7	(3+)
Stealth	4	3	7	(3+)
Firearms	4	4	8	(4)
Pistol			9	(4+)
Melee	3	4	7	(3+)
Streetwise	3	1	4	(2)

Talents

Accuracy 1, Quickdraw

Resources

—

Flaw

Overconfident

Weapons	Damage	Size	Attack	(Average)
Sword Pistol (Ranged)	2 L	0	11 L	(5+) L
Sword Pistol (Melee)	2 L	0	9 L	(4+) L

Sample Characters



Duelist

“Vengii Hoogor! In the name of the Old Emperor—You have been found guilty of countless heinous crimes! Face me in honorable combat!”

Background

Excuse the mask, Madame. You must take me for a madman who has read too many trash novels. Unfortunately, this disguise is required, as the local government, in its corruption, does not recognize my service. Therefore, I must work incognito to put an end to the Lodge, that group of ruthless men who have caused so much hardship. I belong to a group of nobles who have chosen to stand for true justice. We are a dying breed and we fight a losing battle, but that is no reason to surrender. Of course, I wasn't always what I am today: I was born the son of a merchant prince. I fear I was the very example of what you might call “the rotten youth”. I wasted my father's money on all sorts of trivialities and used every opportunity to pick a fight. Duels were my passion, as fencing was my one true skill. What I should have learned as a merchant's son, I ignored in disinterest. I was not enthused when father decided to send me on a journey aboard a cloudship, to “learn the trade of our family in the field and build my character”, as he put it. In fact, I had made many enemies, and was in no small danger of being knifed in the back. By the grace of the God at the Heart of the World, our ship was caught in a storm not two weeks out and crash-landed in the desert. While all others died, I miraculously survived with mere bruises. And there I was, me, who had never left the walls of my home city, alone in the middle of nowhere. Aimlessly, I wandered away from the wreckage, hoping to find a caravan. Naïve, absolutely. But fortune was with me once more, and after two days of stumbling through the sands, I came upon an old abandoned caravansary. There, I found an old beggar. Finally, a living soul! But in my arrogance, I of course ordered him about like a servant. The beating he gave me in response I will never forget. It turned out the old man was a member of the brotherhood I now belong to, and well and truly my better in fighting skill and wisdom. I was surprised to find him nurturing me back to health afterwards, and against all odds, we became friends. Even though I only wanted to accompany him to the next city, once I had recovered, I stayed with him far longer than that. He had something about him that opened my eyes. It was his wisdom that set me on the right path. I saw the good he brought to the world, and I saw the injustice I had visited upon it. He became my master, and I his student. I learned not only manners, but also the truth of justice and how to stand up for it. When he died, shot by a scum from Earth, I swore that I would take his sword and holy pistol and continue his work, as many duelists had before him!

Roleplaying

You are a champion of law and justice. Wherever tyrants abuse the innocent, or bandits steal from the defenseless, you will strike with sword and pistol. At times, this can be difficult, for it is often the governments and rulers that commit these crimes, forcing you to work in the shadows. Two things drive you: The shining example of your master, and the feeling of guilt at having been just one of these irresponsible criminals in your youth. You are truly dedicated to making the world a better place. At times, you choose extraordinarily adventurous methods and you act with excess zeal, but you always fight for the greater good. Many consider you a hero, but just as many see you as a walking nuisance that needs to be ended. You know that you will need allies in your fight against crime—no matter which world they hail from. Sometimes, your misspent youth turns out to be an advantage, for it allows you to convincingly play the rich but harmless fool whenever anonymity is required.

Tracker

Archetype: Huntress **Motivation:** Survival
Style: 3 **Health:** 6

Primary Attributes

Body: 4 **Charisma:** 1
Dexterity: 3 **Intelligence:** 3
Strength: 3 **Willpower:** 2

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 **Initiative:** 6
Move: 6 **Defense:** 7
Perception: 5 (9) **Stun:** 4

Skills **Base** **Levels** **Rating** **(Average)**

Athletics	3	2	5	(2+)
Archery	3	4	7	(3+)
Melee	3	1	4	(2)
Stealth	3	3	6	(3)
Survival	3	4	7	(3+)
Tracking			8	(4)

Talents

Direction Sense, Keen Sense (choose one)

Resources

—

Flaw

Shy

Weapons **Damage** **Size** **Attack** **(Average)**

Bow	2 L	0	9 L	(4+) L
Spear	3 L	0	7 L	(3+) L



Sample Characters



Tracker

“Five gashant riders, Hill Martians, Sir. Came through here yesterday, around evening. They’re carrying muskets. How do I know that? The stench of gunpowder has been hanging in the air for three miles now. So, it’s true then that your human noses can barely smell anything at all?”

Background

I was born under the open Martian sky, in front of my family’s tent, far from the nearest canal. Though my tribe did trade with the canal cities, I was always happy when we left the stinking streets behind us and returned to the clear starry night skies. Maybe it’s because that sky is the first thing I ever saw. Even today, I sit alone at times under the stars and become one with the spirits of nature, listening to their voices, even talking to them. They sing the song of ending, and I answer in a quiet hum, that they might carry my words to my father and other honored ancestors. What would father have thought of the red men from the Ether? He died shortly before we learned of them.

But he had the time to teach me to hunt, fight, and live off the land before his sudden death. I had seen 5 Flows when I shot my first wocnid, and 7 Flows when I helped the other hunters of my clan track and bring down my first steppe tiger. The beast gave me a good scar. It reminds me that Mars is merciless. It demands, and encourages, inner strength and outer hardness. Those who want to survive must be tough and adapt. Even our ancestors knew that, when the sun spirits convinced them to dig the canals.

Now the red man from the Ether has come, and he demands my services. I must admit that I’m curious and fascinated by them. I’ll lead the humans wherever they want to go, patiently explain the obvious to them, and always wonder how they manage to survive on Earth without any of these basic skills. And the things they bring with them, they are fascinating. Some are smoking, stinky, and loud, some are elegant and deadly, and some are colorful and full of life and hope, unlike anything I’ve ever seen on Mars. They pay well, leave my clan in peace, and would be lost without me out here. For now, I will show them the way into my world, and let them tell me of theirs. But that’s only for now. My future is as unpredictable as the steppe winds.

Roleplaying

You are a child of the Martian Steppe through and through. The endless reaches, the clear sky above and a canal city in the distance, that is where you find happiness, these are the things you carry in your heart. You have learned to read what this wonderful land, your home, tells you: Animals and Martians leave trails that endure, you always know how far the nearest canal or watering hole is, and you always know which direction to head in to find game to hunt—and in which direction you shouldn’t go if you want to survive.

You prefer to be alone out here, but various things drive you to seek out the cities and the humans. You talk little, and only when necessary, but you are a great listener. The humans and the Canal Martians are strange to you, and despite, or maybe because of that, you are fascinated by these “pavement warriors”. Sometimes you learn about them, sometimes they perplex you. You like to make friends, but only after a long time, and only if your opposite understands your quiet demeanor and the rhythm of nature as well as you do.

Sample Characters

Additional Rules for Flying Creatures

Skrill Riders

The Hill Martians of the Queln (p. 86) can travel through the air using the skill *Ride (Skrill)*. A tame and trained skrill mount is considered an Artifact 2 and should only be available to characters who are Queln or are at the very least a close friend of the tribe. They may choose the talent *Dive Attack* (see below).

High Martians

Even though this book does not present any High Martian archetypes and the role of these tribes is usually that of a primitive enemy, they are available as player characters. It is up to you and your group to allow such characters, as even other Martians rarely interact with High Martians by means other than combat; humans rarely interact much with them. If High Martian characters are allowed, they must select the talent *Flyer* and may also select *Dive Attack*.

Personal Flight

Artifacts like lifting serum and harnesses (p. 168) grant the ability to fly. To maneuver while doing so, use the Skill *Pilot (Personal Flight)*. The Talent *Swoop* may be purchased.

Adventures on the Red Planet

"I have ever been prone to seek adventure and to investigate and experiment where wiser men would have left well enough alone."

— **Edgar Rice Burroughs, *A Princess of Mars***

Mars is a world of adventure. The wind that drives the red sand across the deserts and plains also propels flying vessels being hunted by air pirates. Proud warriors on flying lizards hunt above half-decayed cities while daggers and poisons start and end feuds in the shadows of the towers below. And while the children of Earth seek to claim Mars for themselves, terrible and wonderful secrets lurk in the dusty tombs that could change the face of the universe as we know it.

Peculiarities of Mars

The conditions on Mars mark the everyday lives of the people as they do the adventures of its heroes. Mars is an old world. While the Romans conquered their empire, Seldon's was already in ruins. The legacy of the ancient Martians continues to leave its mark on the solar system, and its people have long since forgotten ideas that Earth scientists would find new and radical. The local rulers look back on thousands of years of intrigues, a history that might be their undoing in the face of the ambitious humans.

And Mars is a world of scarcity. Unlike on lush Venus, it is possible to starve or die of thirst here, if lost in the wilderness, and the local predators, whether two-, four-, or more-legged, are every bit as dangerous as those of the Morning Star. Items will

Talents for Flying Beings

Flying

Perquisites: Species with the ability to fly.

The character can fly under their own power.

Rules: Flying beings use their full Move rating when flying, and half their Move rating when walking on the ground.

Advanced: —

Swoop

Prerequisites: Flying, or riding a flying mount; Dexterity 3+.

The character uses their flying height to their advantage in order to attack their victim with terrible force by swooping down on the target.

Rules: To apply this Talent, the character must have flown a vertical distance equal to their normal Move. They may then add up to their normal Move again by swooping. When they have finished their Swoop dive, they may attack their target with Brawl or Melee. They get a +2 bonus on this attack for each level they have in this Talent.

Advanced: This Talent can be purchased up to three times.

Special: During the Swoop action, the character can only use their Passive Defense rating, unless they have a suitable Talent.

be used as long as possible, repaired when they break, and, once that is no longer possible, cannibalized for spare parts. All this has made the Martians tough, inventive, and adaptive. Something that the arrogant people of Earth often forget.

And what do we do now? — Adventure Themes

The gamemaster will be able to explore almost any genre on a dangerous world like Mars. The themes mentioned on p. 10 of the **Core Rules** are just a start. Whether **high adventure**, **Ruritanian romance**, or **crime stories**—Mars is the place for daring heroes seeking the unknown to find excitement. But there are also other options to make life difficult for our heroes:

Planetary Romance

One option is the "Planetary Romance", which was first created in the early twentieth century. In this genre, intrepid humans venture forth to fight evil monsters on distant worlds with blade and bullet. Beside fame, this earns them the friendship of noble savages and the hearts of breathtakingly beautiful princesses (or princes). The *Southern Polar Region* is ideal for such campaigns, as well as the *Eastern Basin* and the *Green Vein*, where the influence of humans has not yet reached. The classical examples in literature are the *Barsoom* novels of *Edgar Rice Burroughs*.

The Dying Planet

Mars is marked by decline and the end-times, as are its people. In this genre, both player and non-player characters have traits, professions, and emotions reflecting this focus on decline and the loss of all values and will to live. This can take the shape of an excessive, flamboyant baroque lifestyle, or that of ruthless violence. In particular, the *Eastern Desert* and the *Northern Polar Region* offer fitting backdrops for such adventures. The *Green Vein* offers a lively counterpoint, though it is under constant threat itself. Literary examples are the *Dying Earth* novels by *Jack Vance* and the *Solar Cycle* by *Gene Wolfe*, but inspiration can also be found in the apocalyptic themes of the *Mad Max* and *Fallout* settings.

Soldier, Soldier ...

In military campaigns, the player characters take the roles of soldiers, perhaps serving one of the colonial powers or one of the local armies, and are duty bound to serve their nation. The Oenotrian War in the *Central Basin* and the rebellion against the Belgians in the *Western Basin* offer suitable conflicts for this.

But even if not involved in a war, such a campaign can still offer excitement. As simple troopers, you must deal with incompetent and narrow-minded superiors, and as officers you are responsible for simple-minded and stubborn idiots who truly can't get anything right. Together, you must face the many dangers Mars and fate can throw at you. You can even be on a special mission to deal with an uprising or barbarian raiders.

One advantage of this theme is that the gamemaster will not need to provide excessive exposition. The player characters are given a task and must undertake it. The disadvantage is that the military requires discipline and obedience—and many players hate dancing to the tune of others. As a wise man once said, the life of a soldier is marked by long stretches of boredom, broken up by moments of absolute terror. It will be up to the gamemaster to keep the game exciting.

Sword & Sorcery

The early classic fantasy tradition of *Sword & Sorcery*, full of magic, monsters, and treasure, also works on Mars. The “supernatural” is replaced by weird science, ancient technologies, or the superior technology of the red devils. Wise mages become scholars in the archives of the cities, while the world and ancient ruins are full of Martian creatures waiting to be vanquished. High Martians take the place of orcs or wild Picts, and Lizard-men are basically that already. The challenges will be dangerous, but not necessarily world-threatening. You might face Martian wyverns or Worm cultists. Characters such as *Robert E. Howard's Conan* or *Michael Moorcock's Elric* would fit right in with the *Southern Polar Region*, but the *Eastern Basin* is also a viable alternative.

Martians!

You might be tempted to play a campaign as a fully Martian party: A canal prince and his court, a gang of city thieves, Hill Martian merchants, tribal warriors, or rebels. Your enemies would be Martian secret societies, or possibly the extramartial colonists. In the *Eastern Basin*, you might have heard rumors of the red devils and begin power plays for their favor. In the *Green Vein*, the humans are already at work hollowing out the local culture and values. In the *Western Basin*, they are the cruel invaders that must be repelled by any means necessary.

By turning the basic perspective of *Space: 1889* around, you can create many wonderful opportunities for scenes. Maybe the player characters will discover ancient technology that can be used against the aggressors, if only they could figure it out, or maybe they will uncover the secrets of the *Warlocks of Olonia* who are set to oppose the party's quest for knowledge.

Horror

You don't need undead bloodsuckers or walking corpses to frighten people. True horror stems from feeling helpless when confronted by something you do not understand or cannot fight—and Mars is full of such things. The heroes in horror stories are usually regular people who come into contact with terrifying, inexplicable threats, and who will rise up to fight this challenge, often only to fail. The ruins of Mars are full of ancient threats, and over the 20 millennia, many bloodthirsty cults have risen, who now practice ceremonies that would horrify the ancient Aztecs. Many an idyllic canal village harbors a dark secret that the people there will kill to protect. Those who seek truly frightening inspiration are encouraged to check out the *Mars Cycle* of *Clark Ashton Smith*.

The *Eastern* and *Western Desert* are suitable places for this, and the *Central Basin* can also offer Victorian horror in the British crown colony.

Mars-Western

The *Northern Polar Region*, and also the *Eastern* and *Western Deserts*, are well suited for cowboy style campaigns. As human explorers and “noble strangers”, the player characters will at first be rejected by the locals, but can earn the admiration of a town by taking on bandits, overcoming diseases, or retrieving a religious artifact. This can oppose morality and the law. You can pick fights with the local lords or the Saarpak-Naado (p. 116). Or, you could play a Martian Saarpak-Naado with a band of loyal followers: A gashant trainer, a Hill Martian tracker, and a human doctor, seeking to solve crimes and bring down the perpetrators.

The “Bhutan Soup” features sprinkles of science fiction elements (with inspirations from *Firefly* and *Serenity* as well as the steampunk elements of *Wild Wild West*): Maybe human scientists will learn to harness sun, wind, and water to power giant steam engines in the North and bring life back to the desolate sands. Too late they realize that their drilling has sent glaciers into destructive motion. A treasure map could allow the player characters to find the “Tears of the Sun” and construct the wildest devices. Unfortunately, others hear of their find and a “Crystal rush” is unleashed.

Sky Corsairs

The conflicts of the Red Planet are also fought in the clouds. Besides the fleets of the cities, countless free mercenaries are also traveling the skies to sell their ship's service to one canal prince or another in exchange for the loot they take. The most famous of course are the Red Captains, who often take down Oenotrian vessels on behalf of the British, but the locals have also been plying this trade for millennia.

The player characters will be part of an intrepid gang of cutthroats aboard a screw galley or cloudship, stalking the skies with longcoat, rapier, and blunderbuss. Their adventures are classical pirate tales, only set high above the desert ground. Besides merchant ships with full holds (and lovely princesses or princes aboard), they must face Oenotrian or British warships, as well as the occasional horde of High Martians or swarms of Queln skriff riders for variety.

All three *Basins* offer excellent starting points for such journeys across the planet.

The Mysteries of Mars

The Ruins of Mars

Iruulbor - Victim of the Heaven's Fire

In one of the first wars of the Age of the 1,000 World Wars, it is said, the 'beautiful Iruulbor', once a bustling metropolis with shining skyscrapers, countless factories, and immeasurable wealth, had become the object of desire of many warring factions and eventually burned by "heavenly fire".

At that time, the war had turned ruthless, and many civilians were dying as well. The battles were also being waged with crystal technology weapons capable of melting buildings, and thus the ruined city of Arcadia is today still marked by the "fluid" outlines of molten stone buildings. It took years or possibly decades of bloody street fighting before the leaders of the factions realized that there was nothing left to fight over besides molten ruins and blood-soaked pavement. The final act of madness is said to have been the use of a massive crystal weapon, possibly an orbital one, that melted and burned everything that wasn't already dead and destroyed. Afterwards, all survivors turned their backs on the ruins. Even the few inhabitants of Iruulbor never returned.

Today, it is said, burning and melting spirits of the dead still wander the streets to bring doom to or claim the souls of all those who visit this place of horror. Even so, fortune seekers keep flocking to the ruins of 'beautiful Iruulbor', for some of the lost ancient wealth the city was so famous for is still rumored to be hidden amongst the ruins. Some of the weapons in use back then might even be salvageable, so the hopes go. The final and largest of these doomsday weapons has never been found, though, and it is unknown whether it has ever been inside the city at all.

Hidden Pumping Stations (p. 28)

Countless hidden underground pumping stations exist, in particular near the poles and in remote areas. Here, the canals disappear underground for many miles before they resurface at much faster flow speeds, seemingly without outside influence. The canal builders have deliberately built these stations secretly. They were meant to keep going for tens of thousands of years and are based on highly advanced technology. They are protected against intruders, but still offer access to technicians who know their location, such as through keys or codes that unlock the heavy gates. Some have been sealed shut, barricaded, or equipped with defense mechanisms, such as firelances or mechanical hunters (p. 164) who will attack anyone trying to touch anything inside the station.

One of the most common means of ensuring continued operation was redundancy: Telluric energy taps were often installed in triplicate, and supplied with enough spare parts to build yet three more. Usually, several mechanical workers (p. 163) perform the maintenance.

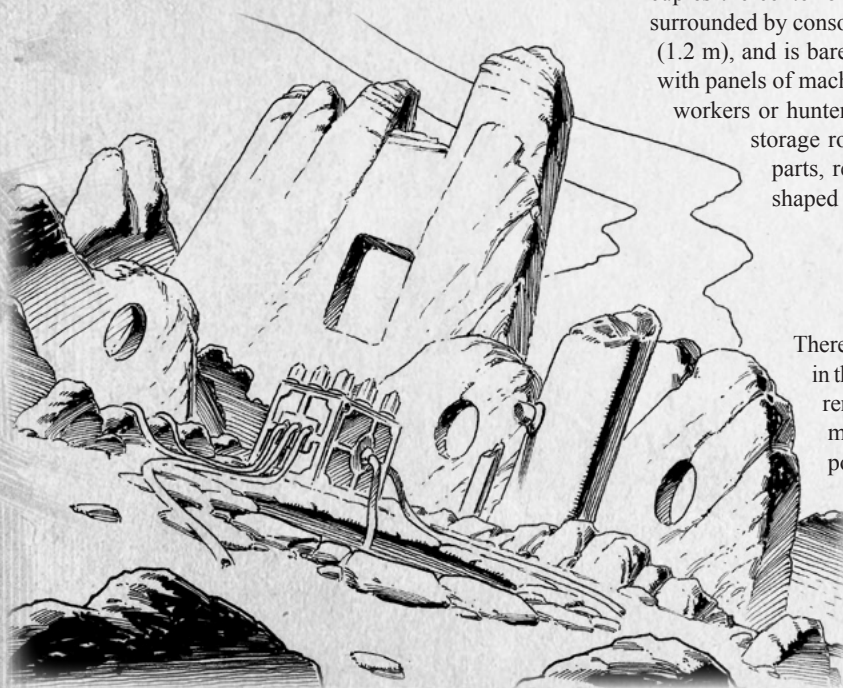
Design

A single entrance with a double, airlock-style door with a sturdy lock leads to a large room that can be circular, octagonal, or hexagonal (between 10 and 15 yards (9-14 m) across with a ceiling between 9 and 11 feet (2.5 to 3.5 m) high). A pillar of sapphire blue crystal between 4 and 5 feet (1.2 to 1.5 m) in diameter occupies the center of the room and provides illumination. It is surrounded by consoles and machines up to a height of four feet (1.2 m), and is bare above that. The walls all around are lined with panels of machinery as well as alcoves for the mechanical workers or hunters. Two doors lead to a tool and spare part storage room and a room for disposing of defective parts, respectively. These are illuminated by lens-shaped light crystals in the ceiling.

Condition

There are *failed* stations along the dead canals that in theory could still function, but which have been rendered useless by natural disasters, damaged mechanical men, or similar fates. Maybe the power supply failed but the components all still function, allowing for a reactivation of the station if power is restored.

The *damaged* stations along the slow-flowing canals might suffer from jammed components, insufficient power supplies, or impaired mechanical workers. These could be repaired.



The *functional* stations along the water-carrying canals still operate at full capacity, though it is almost certain that some components had to be replaced and that at least one telluric tap is no longer active.

The Ruins of Bordobaar (p. 69)

Near the eastern border of the Oenotrian Empire, on the canal between Astrapsk and Fadath, lies the city of Bordobaar which is a mere ruin today. It is said to have once been a powerful city with a mighty army, flourishing scientific academies, and impressive technological achievements. But one day, between 3,000 and 200 years ago (the exact dates are unclear), a mysterious disease began to spread amongst the people of Bordobaar. Its victims suffered horrific deformations and painful growths, but the effects on the mind and psyche were even worse. Those afflicted became animal-like and violent in behavior, attacking anything living in a blind rage.

The disease spread so quickly that public order in Bordobaar collapsed within days. The doctors couldn't find a cure, despite their advanced medical technology, and no help came from the outside. On the contrary, refugees from Bordobaar were denied entrance into the surrounding villages for fear of spreading the disease. Often, they were killed on sight. Whether it was due to this callousness or for other reasons, the plague never spread beyond the now lost city.

All attempts to resettle the city failed, even ages after the disease struck. Every time, the settlers were attacked at night by wildlings who only barely resembled Martians anymore. This, and the fear of the disease being reborn or spread by those savages, have put a stop to all further attempts.

While the canal skippers only pass through these ruins in daylight and taking extreme precautions, there are always some daring treasure hunters who will search the ruins for the rumored treasures. It is said the royal treasury is still untouched in one of the ruins at the center of the city, safe in its vault and merely waiting to be claimed. Ever since human treasure hunters have come to Mars as well, rumors abound of ancient Martian technology located in the ruins of Bordobaar. Of those who actually enter the city, few return; most expeditions that do not, fall victim to the savage attacks of the merciless wildlings. The disease also appears to affect all descendants of its victims, and there now exists an entire tribe of these murderous beings in the ruins. They do not use weapons, because they lack the required mental acuity. Instead, they all have fearsome claws and fangs, and appear to be almost impossible to injure.

The most common explanations for the plague are the usual variants of sorcery or divine curses, or possibly a successful ritual by the Worm cult. Aside from such superstition, the next most likely culprits seem to be failed experiments on Martians or accidents with chemical or biological weaponry. Traces of such projects and their results always quickly draw the attentions of the Earth powers, as well as those of the Martian empires. In truth, it is the "Red Sand" that caused it, an ancient Martian substance that is described in detail on p. 193.

The Hidden City of the "Moabs" (p. 85)

There are rumors of a city beneath the sands of the Moab desert, north of Sigeus Portus and near the dried-up Coloe canal. Its name

and that of its people have been lost, which is why the rumors keep simply calling them "Moabs". The city itself, meanwhile, is granted many mysterious appellations such as "the Sunken City" or the "City Beneath the Sands".

And in fact, there are remnants of an ancient city, almost entirely buried under the dunes.

The people of this almost forgotten city are direct descendants from the ancient Canal Martians, and thus resemble both these ancestors as well as the modern Canal Martians. As the Moabs have been living in isolation from the other Martian cultures and people for millennia, their physiology differs somewhat from the other Martians: Their physique is lithe, as with other Canal Martians, but they still feature wide rib cages. They have small, pointed ears without the typical fanlike shape of the Hill Martians. Their bodies are bent over forward so that their hands touch their knees, leaving them shorter in appearance than humans. They have reddish-pink skin, similar to that of Europeans or North Americans, and pale white hair. The Moabs possess the ability to see equally well in light and in dark conditions, though they prefer the darkness. They have particularly shrill, high pitched voices and they speak a blend of ancient Koline with elements of Son-Gaaryani.

The city itself is almost entirely covered in sand and rubble. Only the peak of a mortar-free temple tower rises above the sandy surface. The stones from which it is built have been fashioned with incredible precision, leaving them tightly interlocked without seam or gap. Their surface is hard enough that no known hand tool can meaningfully damage them. This tower features an entrance without a door, which is the only way for the Moabs to reach the surface. They roam outside the city to hunt. From that entrance, a cavern formed by the buildings of the city that have survived the ages can be reached. The walls are covered in many paintings and writings that resemble ancient Koline, but are in fact written in the unknown language of the Moabs. The walls are made mostly of a bright brown stone and are seamless. At the center of the main cavern, which seems to be mostly limited to one floor, an underground stream provides the drinking water. It originates from a natural water reservoir beneath the city and flows back into it as well, after going through a cleansing facility in the lower levels. That is the only reason that the entire water supply hasn't become sewage yet, as the stream is also used for waste disposal and as a toilet. The caverns are full of seemingly inexplicable mysteries: Some are dry as dust and hot, others are humid and warm. Some are lit by pale blue light, others are filled by a strange calm and quiet.

The Mysteries of Cydonia (p. 88)

Cydonia is home to the oldest buildings on Mars, some of them from the age of the canal builders. Earth's archaeologists dream of the fame that expeditions here would surely bring.

The Ruins of the City

This was the capital of the canal builders; it counted five million inhabitants at its peak. Glass towers rose up more than 1,600 feet (500 m), and in great domes thousands of people cheered for athletes. Everyone dedicated themselves to supporting the canal network. And then, one day, it was all over. The children of the canal builders argued and fought over the scarce resources, turning on each other. Uprisings became bloody civil wars, and

soon the machines meant for digging canals were turned on people. For one moment, a second sun rose above the city—and then it was gone.

That was more than 20,000 years ago. All that remains is sand, ground glass, and rubble not unlike concrete. The old streets lead through the ruins in complex patterns that are sure to intrigue secret societies and cults. There are only a few remaining buried cellars that haven't been annihilated. What can be found inside is up to the gamemaster.

The Pyramid

The pyramid was originally carved from a mountain using heat rays to serve the canal builders as an observatory, navigational aid, and monument to their own vanity. Countless hallways and rooms branch off from the spiral ramp that leads to the tip. These used to be laboratories, but have been plundered over the millennia. At least some remaining wall paintings and inscriptions can still be found, though the Seheldonnar have forgotten what they mean. Still, they copy some designs into their amulets to protect themselves from the spirits of the desert. Should an outsider enter the pyramid, they might be able to make many great discoveries. Besides the secret of the Ether and the atom, secrets of medicine, genetics, and chemistry can also be found here that no one on Earth has even begun to consider.

Another detail is the outer shell of the pyramid. It is crisscrossed by countless tears and fractures, which could be considered to be a sign of erosion. In fact, this is a deliberate design engraved by the architects. Those who study the pattern of lines across the pyramid might discover that it is in fact a detailed star map that shows not only unknown objects at the edge of the solar system, but also many planets in other star systems.

The Face of Mars ("The Mask")

The hill into which the face of the First canal builder has been carved holds 15 floors with thousands of rooms. It was in fact an independent city once, where 100,000 Martians lived and worked. Some rooms still hold signs of the original inhabitants, but prospective treasure hunters will have a hard time finding anything of value.

After the original inhabitants left the face during the early World Wars, the city stood empty for a long time. It was only sporadically visited and looted over time, until the Cydonians conquered the region and declared it to be their holy site. They use the face as a great mausoleum for the mummified bodies of their ancestors. Only the shamans and the leaders enter the face on special occasions to sacrifice water to their forebears. The most notable among the deceased are laid to rest in the great hall beneath the mouth: Seldon II, the conqueror and renewer of Mars and Seldon LVII, the progenitor of the Seheldonnar. The latter is buried with his wife. Whoever opens the grave (or despoils it) will discover the mummified body of a human woman inside the sarcophagus!

The lower levels feature long hallways with pools of algae to feed the inhabitants, and other hallways studded with "crystal seeds", used to grow synthetic crystals. Today, an underground canal that was restored by the veiled people feeds the largest artificial water reservoir of the planet. The Cydonians worship it as the sanctum of their prophecy, and will do anything to keep its existence secret.

The Faces in the Rock

It is said that the veiled people use the faces in the stone as oracles and for religious advice, as they are said to possess lost knowledge of Seldon's descendants or even the God at the Heart of the World. These beings are said to move through the rock and be part of it, to appear as faces on the wall or in the floor. It is supposedly possible to summon them with secret rituals jealously guarded by the veiled people, or, if fortunate, a face might simply appear. If one stands in front of such a face directly, it will answer many questions and speak prophecies. This is a special creation by the canal builders from their capital, and it serves as the "interface" to a massive analytical engine far below the surface which to this day provides information in long forgotten languages. This is the basis of the Cydonian religion.

Acheron - The Fifth Dead River City (p. 97)

There are many myths and legends about the fifth Dead River City, Acheron. They all have in common that the city's doom came because of its sinful and wasteful lifestyle. Some politicians or priests will make reference to "late Acheronian decadence" when denouncing the waste of water or excessive luxuries. "The Doom of Acheron", meanwhile, is a liberally interpreted and widely popular theater play about intrigues, drugs, and orgies.

All these stories do resemble the historical city, which did indeed indulge in even more luxuries and physical pleasures than its four sisters. It experimented with drugs that induced trances and reduced inhibitions, to intensify the already common orgies. In this, they created a drug that would strengthen the egotism of the user to unmeasurable heights while removing any and all inhibitions. Soon, orgies turned violent and everyday interactions became bloody, for even the smallest slight saw weapons drawn and bodies littering the floor. Ruthless gangs tried to sell this highly addictive drug and planned to leave town once there was no more profit to be made. All the while, the drug situation went out of control: Wells were poisoned, houses were burned down, and many a bystander died as a living shield. Those who could, fled, and the rest just tried to stay alive as long as they could. Everything ended in violence and blood, and after some time, the city was left empty. Over the centuries that followed, the sand buried the ruins and bones.

Today, no one knows where the city used to be anymore, though there is always someone looking for it. If the stories about the drug are true, it would make an unstoppable weapon: after all, it is capable of bringing down any nation. It would be incredibly valuable, and knowledge of its production would offer unlimited power.

Noctis Labyrinthus

This extensive trench system in the Tharsis-Pavonis-Ascræus triangle is a silent witness to the warlike past of the Martians. It is said that those who come here and descend down into the trenches would die unless the God at the Heart of the World finds them worthy. Others say that spirits of fallen warriors dwell there to visit their pains upon the living and to add them to their ranks. Those who die can be found on the trench floors, bearing no visible injuries.

In fact, it is a strange natural phenomenon that lies behind these mysterious deaths. During the Age of the 1,000 World Wars, this was the site of grueling trench warfare with hundreds of thousands of casualties. Today, relics of this conflict can still be found here, with some likely being worth a fortune. During these wars, weapons were employed that possessed great explosive power, as

well as others that used long forgotten chemicals to fill a trench with liquid fire or to simply dissolve everything in it. Some of these substances still remain in the deeper trenches, invisible and undetectable by today's technology, while others are sometimes released from buried pockets during earthquakes.

Technological Relics

Ramgaatha - The "Living Sandstone"

This creation of ancient Martian scientists changes its shape when exposed to electrical impulses. It can be found in some ancient ruins. The stone was used among other things to hide secret doors, allow altars to grow from temple floors as if alive, or to create animated reliefs. The shapes are "programmed in". Changes take place when touched by the "key crystal", which is commonly worked into rings, staves, or amulets.

The "*Mu-Ramgaatha*" is a subtype of this technology. Instead of changing shape, this stone becomes transparent, allowing for large panoramic windows or sun domes that can turn back into opaque stone when desired. It was used in ancient palaces and towers of Mars.

The Red Sand

This chemical appears to be just fine, red sand but is in fact an ancient chemical weapon, of which several sub-variants exist. In its purest form, it takes over the mind of anyone who inhales it, leaving them completely open to suggestion: The victims will do anything they are told to do, including murder and suicide. This type no longer exists anywhere on Mars.

One of the less perfect formulas is responsible for the doom of Bordobaar (p. 191): It drove the inhabitants mad. And, as the substance still lies hidden beneath the palace of the city, it continues to do so whenever new settlers arrive, without spreading outside the city. It is stored in red metal canisters marked with crystal runes that can no longer be deciphered and do not resemble anything else that can be found on Mars.

Possible conclusions from studying these runes would be that they might originate from the *Phaetonians*, the *First People of Mars* (p. 202), or from the *Age of the 1,000 World Wars*. Further analysis will show that the key ingredient is the *Venusian Death Blossom*, meaning that the creators of this weapon must have possessed ether travel technology, as was the case at various points in Martian history. The gamemaster is encouraged to decide for themselves who invented this terrible weapon.

Should anti-human groups such as the *Groundcleansers* or the *Worm cults* or the Oenotrian Empire learn of this weapon, let alone receive a sample from Bordobaar, they will do anything to perfect the formula and use it against the Earth colonial powers.

The Golden Demon

Martian legends tell of a malevolent and evil spirit that dwells within the artifacts of the ancient Martians. It is said that this

demonic taint would bring ill fortunes to those who own such artifacts, that it would lead them astray, or even taint the owners themselves with its whisperings. Today, no one but a few technomystics understand the esoteric secret behind this entity, for it is a kind of artificial intelligence that inhabits some crystal technology artifacts like a decentralized network. The technology is based on biography crystals, and is thus in some ways truly a "spirit". It continuously expands itself by copying fragments of other consciousness stones, which it gains when its wielder uses other crystal artifacts. The Martian legends are thus closer to the truth than any Earth mind or analytical engine could possibly suspect.

This Golden Demon constantly changes, as do its goals, depending on the combination of all the thought fragments it currently holds. Whenever someone uses an "infected" thought crystal, they will be subject to whispers and, in extreme cases, lose some of their memory. Only by succeeding at a difficulty 3 Willpower roll can a user break free before the copy is completed. Otherwise such a victim will lose Experience Points at the gamemaster's discretion and will infect all crystal artifacts they attempt to use in the future, because of a hidden trigger inside their own minds.

This Demon can use many infected artifacts and use them to contact people (e.g. it could transmit via a pair stone), but otherwise has little ability to interact with the material world.

Initially, this AI was intended to be a "subservient spirit"; today it is a misanthropic corpse that drives people insane and follows entirely obtuse, ever changing goals. Recently, the "Demon" has come to realize its own mortality. With each infected artifact lost to time and damage, its mind degrades and erodes. Thus, it has determined that it needs to rekindle the production of thought crystals, though it needs more willing "mortals" with a modicum of technical skill to begin this task.

Project "Flame Wövern" (p. 44)

The advanced scientific facilities of Oenotria are largely devoted to the military's needs in the war against the British crown colony. Thus, the scientists at the "*Institute for Reclaiming the People's Rightful Legacy*" in Deltoton have ample resources to conduct their vital military research projects. This includes Project "*Flame Wövern*" under the scientist officer *Ishpaanat Joolunga*, an exceptionally ambitious and brilliant engineer. She is working on a flying craft that can travel long distances without a pilot to crash into precisely targeted coordinates and unleash a large explosion.

She is working on three independent inventions that are required for such a powerful weapon: A cheap but effective propulsion system, a lightweight but powerful explosive, and the greatest challenge: an effective control system.

For propulsion, she has examined various Earth steam engines and developed her own smaller versions, but none of them meet

her power requirements. In particular, the weight of the fuel remains an unsolved problem and requires too much precious liftwood to carry. Her search for a suitable explosive has been more successful, and she was able to mix a gel-like substance from dynamite, liftwood shavings, and nitrate. This shows greatly increased explosive power with very little risk of accident. The question of control and navigation remains the most difficult, though. Joolunga is investigating several high frequency sound crystals that might be able to locate a specific emitter or to target particularly high heat signatures. All of these are archaeological artifacts, however, and cannot be reproduced at this time. Given Joolunga's efforts, it shouldn't be surprising if, despite these difficulties, the Oenotrian military will soon field test prototypes of this weapon, though its success in practice remains to be seen. The British are accordingly eager in their espionage efforts to steal the plans or sabotage the development.

The Secret of the Fire Jewels (p. 86)

Fire jewels are made of carbon and a number of unknown elements—and that's about all the chemistry experts can say. They suspect that it is the sap of ancient trees and thus not unlike amber, but the truth is far more terrifying.

The canal builders, who did not intend to waste water or resources on the Moab desert, instead used it to dump the toxic waste that they couldn't otherwise dispose of. Fire jewels are the remnants of the containers that, 20,000 years ago, contained toxic waste and which eroded over millennia of frost and weather. The toxins contained in the jewels sometimes affect those who wear them for prolonged periods of time, which might explain the curses that are said to afflict some specific stones.

In game terms, this takes the place of a long term toxic exposure (see *Poisons and Drugs* in the **Core Rules**, p. 217), except that the attack takes place over months and years of wearing this 'jewelry'. Legends have transformed the wastes of the canal builders into mysterious treasures, drawing archaeologists and fortune seekers from everywhere. None suspect the ticking time bomb resting beneath the Moab's sands.

Urban Miracle Technology

The Dome of Aurora (p. 58)

This dome is a puzzle for experts from the two planets. It is 1,800 feet (550 m) tall and 6,500 feet (2,000 m) across, made of a crystalline substance, and appears to be of a single piece. Nothing is known about how it was constructed, or *why* it was built. It cannot be a fortification, for while it shrugs off cannon balls well enough, it would have stood no chance against the high-tech weapons that the canal builders used back in their time. In fact, this city was built when the oceans still existed—and the dome was erected *beneath* the surface of the now-vanished sea.

The *Prince Without a Name* is an artificial intelligence based on crystal technology originally charged with directing and guarding the underwater city. The dome provides it with a solid understanding of the interior situation, but in regards to the outside world, it couldn't be more wrong: The firmly hardwired subroutines insist that the ocean around the city remains. The Prince's commands are thus exceedingly pointless or mad, and usually marked by strong isolationism.

The Lanterns of Sithonius Lacus (p. 117)

These are ancient light crystals in the street lanterns. Thousands of years ago, they were present everywhere within the city, but with time many wore out and the Anwaaks gathered the remainder into the city center. The temple—a former hotel—contains a large heat crystal.

The Oracle Crystal of Biblis Fons (p. 103)

The oracle crystal is not a divine device, but rather just a pretty to look at entertainment prop that once induced wonderful trances with the help of drugs. Today, only "heretic" writings still speak of this, and any such material is immediately gathered by the priesthood to disappear into the archives. Outside the city, the Canal Keeper faith is only too aware of this truth, which incidentally is why the two faiths keep butting heads. The enmity of these two organizations is all too easily understood given these facts.

The Eye of the Builders in Gaaryan (p. 126)

The Eye is a large fragment of an ancient Martian heat ray, of the type used to dig the canals. Though it is but a shard of the original lens, it is capable of producing a lethal beam of light (the "Divine Spark of Reincarnation", when the Sun hits it at the right angle. Any who enter the beam are immediately vaporized by the heat. The dark corridors that lead to the center of the dome are filled with traps.

The Incomplete Canal (p. 10)

The only canal begun by the canal builders but not completed was meant to lead from Sirenia north along the Golden Triangle to Solis Lacus. It would have connected Mare Sirenum with the Bosporos, but instead simply ends at the halfway point, far from Solis Lacus. It would have completed the mammoth undertaking of the canal builders, but instead the seeping water here has created a swamp.

It is not known why it wasn't completed. Some say that shortly before doing so, the canal builders realized the hubris of their endeavor and stopped in humility, humbled by the sudden insight. Others believe that the canal builders hoped that their peace would last until the canals were complete. But the truth is far simpler. The long-simmering conflicts over resources and power simply flared up at the mere sight of the end of the great canal building effort: The prelude to the Age of the 1,000 World Wars on Mars.

The planned city at the intersection of the completed canal with another canal to Claritas was under construction. Neither its name nor the intended inhabitants are known, nor its possible scientific or economic purpose.

The construction site sunken in the swamp is fascinating, though. The machinery was never properly packed up, and now lies a few yards beneath the swamp's surface, after a few rash attempts to loot it early on. With some effort, the swamps around Solis Lacus might yet yield ancient, obscure tools and equipment of the canal builders, including the most important relic of its age: A priceless solar barque, a canal burner. One of the legendary vessels that used their crystal eyes to scorch the canals into the planet's surface. It is, of course, badly in need of repair.

Monsters from the Ice (p. 132)

The not entirely reliable legends of the Yaraa of Noachis tell of many giant monsters and beasts that come from the ice and are slain by their mightiest warriors in spectacular duels. Occasional finds of massive bones around the South Pole appear to corroborate these myths. In fact, there is at least one abandoned research station trapped inside the ice, perhaps tens of thousands of years old and seemingly devoted to all manner of biological experiments. Some of the unnaturally large beasts do originate from the work done here, and even today, some may still be kept in the ice, where the scientists once froze them.

During the annual Flood riptides, the laboratory under the ice could be accessed if one knew where it was, though it lies hidden the rest of the year. The heating system can be restored with a little bit of engineering know-how, but along with the heaters, other machines and the creatures in the ice might also become active once more. At the same time, it might be a once in a lifetime opportunity to obtain valuable knowledge and high tech artifacts, enough to make any expedition rich.

The Kull, known by the High Martians to be murderous creatures from the ice with wings and razor-sharp talons, are not the spawn of this research, though. The most recent sighting of the Kull about 50 years ago was a deception by a warrior band of the Aruudal, who had been using the legends of the lethal creatures for a time to spread fear and terror on their raids.

The Mysteries of the Forest Priests (p. 112)

The center of the forest holds the greatest sanctum of the forest people, of which even the people of this region know only vague rumors. The ruins of an ancient Seldonian village lie hidden beneath the tree tops of the 300-foot-tall (100 m) trees. From the cellar of the tallest building, a staircase leads down until it opens into a large cavern 300 feet (100 m) beneath the surface. Here, an old stone throne sits with a crystal circlet above the head rest. The back of the throne is lined with hundreds of biography crystals, all of which connect to the circlet, and which hold the memories of famous biologists and foresters from the ancient times. Every prospective priest must endure two dozen sessions on this throne as part of their two-month pilgrimage and study the thoughts and memories of the most important priests of the past.

These sessions are taxing. Any who sit on the throne will be subject to fierce arguments between twenty brilliant but stubborn geniuses inside their own head, each of them trying to convince the aspirant to see things their way. All candidates will be confused after a session and require days of rest before they are ready for the next attempt. For some candidates, it is too much strain and they lose their mind inside the raging storm of voices in their heads. These unfortunates are cared for in a special facility inside the forest, the *House of the Forgotten*, where they are also isolated from the rest of the world. Here, young priests will see to these unfortunates, whose bodies are often taken over by different personalities, each with their own plans.

The Tears of the Sun (p. 114)

The "Tears of the Sun" (Shineek Kar in Son-Gaaryani) are natural crystals, just like the ones that served the ancient Martians for

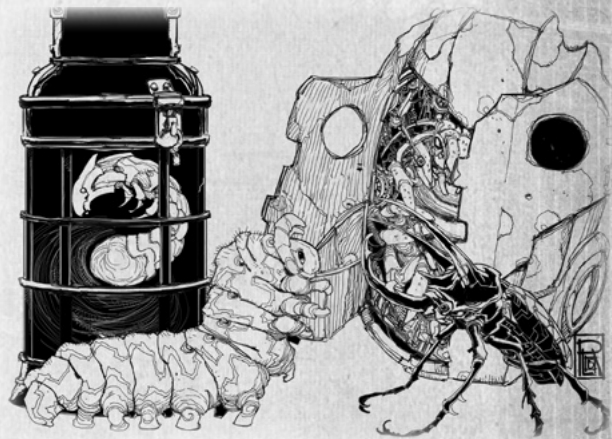
the construction of technological wonders before the creation of artificial crystals. With suitable plans, one could use recovered crystals to create new artifacts. But even just cutting and polishing them shows their power: They emit light and heat.

These crystals were naturally created eons ago, back when the planet was still young. Today, they are cast out of volcanoes and scattered across the snow wastes. In some remote places, such as beneath the ice of the poles, natural deposits might still be found.

The Valley of the Crystals

Deep within the glacier ice at the foot of a volcano, there live some Canal Martians. These are the descendants of ancient canal workers who sought refuge here during the fall of the canal builder culture. A council of elders rules this city-state with just over a hundred people, mostly farmers. Ten ice priests guard the entrance to the underworld—the outflow of the meltwater, where the dead are laid to rest. Ten fire priests serve the life gods, embodied by the volcano. When it spews fire, it announces a gift from the heavens: Falling Tears of the Sun.

Artifact Symbionts



These artificial insect-like creations live off or in symbiosis with Martian artifacts.

Barifaarim (Ice Warrior)

There is a persistent legend on Mars about the Age of the 1,000 World Wars. According to the story, a whole army of mechanical "ice warriors" was supposedly deposited in the eternal ice and was forgotten in the chaos caused by the wars. They were not piloted by means of mind crystals, but using an insect-like hive mind. It is said that in the helmet of each mechanical soldier, there lies an insect similar to a pill bug, able to pilot the walking armor by its own movement. These insects are controlled by a pill bug queen which passes its orders through the hive mind to its swarm. In short, whoever controls the pill bug queen is in command of a powerful army. There have been numerous expeditions to the polar caps in order to find this army. To this day, all expeditions have proved fruitless, but reports of armored helmets dredged from the canals with the husks of multi-legged insects inside have inspired wave after wave of ill-fated expeditions.

Cooparas (Copper Scarab Beetle)

This distinct bug, about the size of a kitten, has metallic antennas and a back pattern that technicians would recognize as resembling a circuit diagram. While other creatures lie in the Sun, the copper scarab sits down on ancient Martian technology made of copper. The pattern on its back may well serve as camouflage. Since it has never been seen to feed and in fact lacks any mouth at all, it is assumed that it receives its nourishment from the charge inside the machines on which it sits. It remains a mystery by which mechanism exactly it can absorb these charges, but anyone trying to pick up a copper scarab beetle from a device will likely suffer burns from electric sparks or find the bug to be searing hot.

Esbaatenabra (Elder Caterpillar, Artifact 4)

Only a very few of these beings exist, carefully guarded and worshipped by the Canal Martians. This is hardly surprising, as these caterpillars are fascinating animals. Their bodies are about half the length of an arm and are translucent white, glowing faintly. Their jelly-like insides feature visible veins that resemble copper wiring and seem to pulsate. If exposed to light, waves of warm light slowly travel through their bodies, as though the light itself

slowed down to bathe their insides before traveling on. These caterpillars were specifically bred by the canal builders to interact with crystal technology. Their long bodies can connect any two crystal artifacts by bridging the gap between them. This produces varying effects: Mind and image crystals transfer contents; fire, heat, and energy crystals are increased in potency; some crystals even change their function entirely when connected.

Luur (Lens Beetle)

The crystalline luur is a strange insect. It resembles a flying worm of about finger length. It is drawn to light and likes to hover near ancient Martian lenses, crystal artifacts, and optical devices. The longer it remains there, the brighter its own green-yellow glow becomes, similar to an Earth firefly's. The glow intensifies until it finally splits into two dimmer specimens in a sudden flash of light. It is assumed that the light energy serves as food and allows their reproduction. Lens beetles are sometimes put into lamps. Correct use requires that they be kept near a fitting artifact to breed so that, when required, some may be fished out with a net or jar to be used as a light source. They lose their brightness within a day, and after two more days go entirely dark.

Rules: A luur lamp can be acquired as gear on Mars for £5 and weighs only 1 lb (0.5 kg). It is exceptionally reliable if used as described above.

Organizations and Persons of Note

Abteilung Z

"How wonderful to be a spy, to enjoy the exciting life of a thief while remaining an honest man."

— Johann Nepomuk Nestroy

Little is known about this German secretive intelligence service. Many rumors abound, some even started by the Abteilung Z (Z-Division) itself. Their work on Venus is the most widely known (see *Venus*, p. 150), but their agents are active throughout the solar system.

Tasks

The Abteilung Z began as a training infantry battalion in Potsdam, tasked with testing new equipment for the German army. Rapid technological progress allowed some officers to fully dedicate themselves to the investigation and development of new technologies. Thus, this task was adopted by a newly formed office inside the High Command. The many artifacts that have been discovered ever since ether travel began in earnest also fall within the jurisdiction of this office. The official mission of Abteilung Z is to "investigate and research unusual new developments and phenomena to evaluate their potential threat or value to the German Empire".

The most important task is the **development of technologies**. Inside special laboratories and workshops, the engineers of the Division examine new inventions down to their nuts and bolts. Depending on the findings of these experts, the inventions in question are then either made to disappear or handed over to German companies for production. The investigation of **strange**

phenomena plays a lesser but still significant role, and the term itself is defined rather nebulously. It doesn't matter whether it's a strange object found in the tomb of a pharaoh, weird mushrooms on Venus, or legendary Martian artifacts from the age of the canal builders—if something is discovered, an agent of the Division will soon arrive on site.

Methods, Agents, and Facilities

To stay up to date, Abteilung Z has acquired informants in universities, companies, and patent offices to gather relevant information. The Division has a staff of about 50, two or three dozen of which are field agents. Each one is a (reserve) officer with sound knowledge of a technical or scientific nature, and each one speaks several languages. About half of them work in the laboratories, a quarter study new publications, particularly technology-related ones, and the field agents are spread across the three planets. They often recruit assistants who, like the informants, rarely know the true nature of their employers.

The official head office is located inside the High Command building on the Königsplatz in Berlin-Tiergarten, but it is only staffed by a few officers working their way through stacks of technical publications who politely keep any conversation about their work vague. The laboratories and workshops of the Division are distributed across several higher institutes of learning of the Empire, where they are maintained by members of the regular faculties, who are secretly on the Division's payroll. Additionally, the Division maintains a few secret stashes where "special objects" are stored.

Through intermediaries, the Division has rented some small warehouses in the port of Hamburg and near the Berlin ether port,

but these are only used for temporary storage. The central storage of the Z-Division lies in the Rabenstein shafts, an abandoned mine near Nordhausen in the Harz. Here the Division keeps hidden all its boxes of dangerous machines, books of troublesome ideas, and cells filled with lethal creatures and persons.

Abteilung Z on Mars

The presence of the Division is weak, as it is still in the process of setting up its facilities. The Martian head office of the Division is located in a warehouse near the landing fields of Dioscuria (see p. 81), but the actual work is being done by the few field agents, who often hire local scouts and mercenaries. On the Red Planet, the search is mostly directed at finding Canal Martian artifacts or preventing them from falling into the wrong hands. To this end, German “archaeologists” search the old archives and attempt to join the most promising expeditions. Besides that, the agents keep an eye out for new Earth technology, like new aerial and ether flyer designs, as well as the British Heliographs. In the latter case, efforts are being made to record and decipher the encoded transmissions, though the mathematicians of the Division are at their limits in that regard. Areas of research include:

- Knowledge of what secrets the Cydonians are hiding and protecting so fiercely (p. 191). A secret expedition to Cydonia is in its planning stages.
- Potential uses for the Moabite fire jewels (p. 194), in which the Division is literally playing with fire.
- Acquiring an “Elder Caterpillar” (p. 196) that is said to be in the possession of a trade magnate of the Boreosyrtris League.
- Scouting sunken cities in the Western Desert in the hopes of uncovering lost Martian technology.
- Military tests of new weapons, such as the armored tripods that are serving well on Mars, including the flamethrower-armed tripod of Project “Dragon” (which during its tests was disguised as a lizard monster).

The Sisterhood of Ne’eb Riss’tteeg

One of the oldest secret societies of the Red Planet is without question the Ne’eb Riss’tteeg. It is an association of women who have worked for centuries to stop the decline of the Canal Martian civilization, using unusual methods:

Through coupling and arranged marriages, they attempt to breed the bloodlines to be as pure as possible, and thus clean the Canal Martian civilization from its, in their eyes, degenerate elements. The existence of the sisterhood is an open secret in many places, but what it gets up to and how many members it counts among its ranks is unknown to any outsider, and even to many members. The Ne’eb Riss’tteeg are generally viewed as a harmless cult of women who act out their frustrations by engaging in marriage arrangements. Most dignitaries also tend to ignore them in favor of more pressing matters that plague the Red Planet. But the sisterhood can exert quite a bit of influence on politics by, say, arranging for the marriage of a canal prince to a canal princess—and not everyone is happy about this. That is why the sisters keep their membership secret and why the Ne’eb Riss’tteeg must hide behind veils in the ranks of the rich and powerful.

Some even claim that Seldon himself was a product of the Ne’eb Riss’tteeg, and that part of the sisterhood considers his reign a great success, while others view him as a failure. Those who believe in Seldon are said to have splintered off the main

faction, though this faction soon disbanded, having decided that their work was complete with Seldon. There are also rumors of many other factions within the sisterhood that hold all kinds of different views. While some seek to create a chosen people, others work towards a great savior, who will be a woman born of noble Martian parents. As a result of these rumors, many believe that the Ne’eb Riss’tteeg are impeded by their own politics. For whatever reason, the members do nothing to change this image that outsiders have of them.

The Hidden Ones and the Io’okk Paaron

Little is known about this centuries-old order—even by its own members. They know that their goal is to prevent the dying of their world on behest of their god and creator, the God at the Heart of the World. The Hidden Ones believe that their ancestors once knew how to save the world, and that this knowledge lies hidden within mathematical formulas and artifacts. It is the self-appointed task of all members to find and decode these keys and to restore the planet to a new, fertile era. It is a lifelong task for the monks and nuns who dedicate themselves to serving their god and the Hidden Ones as tools.

The reason for the order’s secrecy lies in the fact that the danger is too great that the all-important truth could fall into the wrong hands. Thus, the *Eyes of the Hidden Ones* venture forth to gather knowledge and secrets, well protected by the *Hands of the Hidden Ones*, whose task is to prevent any harm to the order. They are the militant branch of the order and are embroiled in a shadow war with the **Io’okk Paaron**, who also seek this knowledge, but do so for their own gain, as opposed to any altruistic ambitions. The Hands and Eyes suspect (but don’t know for sure) that there must be a central board that gathers the accumulated knowledge. This board is the *Head of the Hidden Ones* and is located inside a vast and confusing cave system, the *Body of the Hidden Ones*, from whence it directs the Hands and the Eyes. The Head is made up of the brightest and most loyal Eyes, who are eventually brought here. The active Eyes and Hands make contact with the *Arms or Legs of the Hidden Ones* in the cities, who will take the gathered knowledge to the *Heart of the Hidden Ones*, the central library in the Body, and pass on new assignments to them. This library is where all the knowledge of the order is stored and analyzed by the members of the Head. It is this place that the Io’okk Paaron are seeking—so far in vain.

The She-Devil of the Desert

The She-Devil of the desert has achieved legendary status with both the Martians and the humans. The story goes that, alone in the Eastern Desert at night, when she sought to prove her worth as a warrior, encountered a mighty steppe tiger. This animal bluntly told her it was going to eat her, to which she snarked back that she’d be his most difficult to digest meal yet. With a laugh, the tiger relented and told her to leave her tribe and walk into the desert. There, she would be able to serve and defend those she loved much better by safeguarding all those who would succumb to the sands’ dangers. After a moment of consideration, she agreed to the steppe tiger’s proposal. It disappeared, content, leaving two other large steppe tigers as her companions and protectors. That is the legend of the She-Devil of the Desert.

In fact, there is a silent, very thin and black-haired warrior woman of flesh and blood who has become known as the She-Devil of the Desert: Time and again, caravan masters insist on having seen her and her tigers in the distance. Others swear that she and the beasts have come to their aid in battle and that they saw her wield her double-tipped spear with deadly skills. She hides her face, apart from her eyes, and wears plain clothing that protects her from wind and sand. Much of these stories is exaggeration, but they all contain a grain of truth. It can't be explained any other way when a traveling group down to their last drop of water finds themselves waking next to new skins filled to bursting. And who else but the lone warrior woman could be behind the stone arrows that show those who are lost the way to the nearest watering hole or city?

Her actions, withdrawal from society, and her selfless heroism have earned her the admiration of many young Martians. She seems to embody the purest ideals of the tribal community: Unconditional self-sacrifice on behalf of others in times of danger.

The Ambassadors of Siam

The Kingdom of Siam is not a colonial power, but an Asian empire undergoing reforms to become a modern state. King *Chulalongkorn* is, like his father *Mongkut*, the driving force behind the reforms. He was tutored by the British teacher *Anna Leonowens* along with the about 50 other children of King *Mongkut*.

Though Siam owns a German zeppelin, it has no other flyers so far. Even so, King *Chulalongkorn* spares no expense to send representatives to Mars to open embassies. Instead of seeking to establish colonies, he wishes to engage the Martians as equal partners in situations similar to his: Siam itself is threatened by the specter of colonization, despite friendly relations with Great Britain, France, and Germany, should it not move with the times. Through intellectual and economic cooperation, the king seeks to win allies on Mars and to purchase liftwood for the construction of a modern navy. The other colonial powers know of the Siamese embassies, but see no danger in their efforts.

The Siamese Embassy in Nectar (p. 58)

Siam can easily identify with the situation of the city-state of Nectar, situated between the Belgian Coprates and the Tossian Empire. It is similarly struggling to maintain its independence. *Chulalongkorn's* brother, foreign minister *Devawongse*, has recently begun negotiations with the hesitant Prince *Sitaani* for that reason. After some fierce negotiations, the two of them not only became good friends (and extended their friendship to Prince in Exile *Mal-ga-par* of Copratia), but they also concluded a secret treaty according to which Siam would receive annual shipments of liftwood in exchange for military support and equipment. Siam has learned much about military strategy from its allies on Earth, Germany and the British.

And so, Siam has sent Nectar a delivery of artillery, rifles, and supposedly even war elephants, along with a delegation of military advisors led by General *Luang Bhimook*, who is said to be the greatest military leader of the nation at this time. The general has used his excellent knowledge of elephant cavalry to train the best unit of war breehr cavalry (p. 144) on Mars. Unfortunately,

he is focused on expansion and hates the Belgians. He is ready to seize any opportunity to reconquer Copratia for Siam and Prince *Mal-ga-par*.

Additional Ambassadors

- The ambassador to Tossia is happy to deal with the ceremony of the Emperor's court, but the strict bureaucracy could have impeded him if not for his strange luck: His applications always seem to benefit from strange coincidences, navigating the red tape quicker than any other documents. Emperor *Krahaanik IV* (p. 199) himself is arranging for these coincidences to accelerate negotiations with Siam.
- In Mare Sirenum, an extramartial wanderer is said to be traveling, seeking audiences with the various rulers. It is up to the gamemaster whether this is a (half) brother of *Chulalongkorn* or the king himself who has on several occasions also traveled in his own nation incognito. He offers spiritual exchange and advice and Siam's aid against a potential invasion by the Earth colonial powers.
- Ever since King *Mongkut* founded the *Thammayut* order, whose monks laid aside many old traditions and reevaluated them, Buddhism in Siam has been very open-minded. *Chulalongkorn* therefore sent a mission to the religious center of Mars, Gaaryan. It is made up of several monks led by his half-brother *Wachirayan Warorot*, the abbot of the cloister *Bowonniwet* in Bangkok and the head of the order. The two religions are learning much about each other, exchanging knowledge and finding many commonalities, such as a belief in reincarnation and respect for all life. These monks were the first to learn that a reincarnation of *Seldon* was believed to be possible—and that his rebirth occurring on a planet other than Mars was not considered impossible.

The Dark Secret of Dictator Daiban (p. 42)

The British Secret Service noticed that *Daiban* appears just a little too perfect. Many enemies of the Oenotrians believe that the dictator must be hiding some shameful secret, a secret that could ruin the reputation of this ideal Oenotrian. Some believe *Daiban* to be a mouthpiece, a sock puppet for the Oenotrian senate with little power of his own. Oenotria needed a strong leader in the face of the British threat, and so the rulers of the League created one. Others, most of all the British, draw a different conclusion from the single observed "weakness" of *Daiban*: He appears to be unskilled in courting women, is unmarried at the age of 40 Earth years, and is about to be, as is Oenotrian custom, married by official lottery. Is *Daiban* homosexual? This would suit the British just fine as homosexuality, while not illegal in Oenotria as it is in many European nations, is still socially rejected. If solid proof can be found (or fabricated) that would openly discredit *Daiban* as homosexual, his popularity would suffer tremendously. Whether that would be enough to end his career, as is hoped in London, is another question.

The truth behind *Daiban's* "dark secret" is actually quite sad: *Daiban* has spent his entire life in service to the state. He spent his childhood suffering through long and difficult training in politics, the sciences, and military strategy, in addition to grueling physical conditioning. In this, he managed to surpass even

the excessive expectations of his family by far. But there was a cost. Daiban never got to be a boy! He suffers from strong bouts of depression, though he has been able to hide them well for now. He also hoards the largest collection of children's books on Mars. Many works from Earth can be found among them, such as Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and a collection of fairy tales by Hans Christian Andersen. In his brief moments of respite, he sometimes takes one and reads, sobbing quietly, dreaming of a life that was denied him.

Emperor and Rebel (p. 55)

Emperor Krahaanik IV of Tossia appears to be an outright monster, a bitter and cruel old man who is done with life and hates everyone around him. No one suspects that he merely plays this role to deceive the princes of his empire. If someone were to check the labyrinthine paths of bureaucracy in the Empire and see which decisions actually lead back to the Emperor, the results would be surprising. Krahaanik IV is in fact a shining example of compassion! But he is intent on hiding this fact from everyone. When he took the throne in 1820, he was an idealistic young man, wanting to do nothing more than to tear his beloved Tossia from its lethargy and bring it to new life. He understood that the long stagnation would be the death of the people he loved so much. But soon he discovered another power inside his realm, one that stood even above the Emperor: tradition!

All attempts at reformation by Krahaanik succumbed to court protocols and administrative inertia. Ten years after his ascension, Krahaanik was indeed ready to despair, as none of his ideas had gained any traction. For a few decades, he sought to numb himself with the usual shallow pleasures and pointless intrigues of courtly life, just like everyone else. But slowly, he came up with a plan: A direct decree by the Emperor could not save the empire. First, the armor of ignorance and neophobia that was suffocating his people had to be broken. And for that, he'd have to be cunning.

The Emperor became a rebel against his own system. He is the secret mastermind behind the resistance organization "Dynamic", which fights against corruption and excessive tradition to show the common people new paths and hope. In light of this, it is no wonder that the imperial secret police cannot find the mole inside the palace that supports Dynamic—none would even think to suspect the Emperor himself.

Krahaanik's secret plans also explain his desire to forge an alliance with the USA, of all nations. He is not doing so *despite* their strange new ideas, but *because* of them!

The Source of the Power of the Warlocks of Olonia (p. 70)

The warlocks possess no magic powers at all. The source of their abilities is a collection of ancient Martian technology, much of which they themselves do not fully understand. Olonian "fire magic" is performed with burning crystals and oil-based pyrotechnics, the Surukaanian "precognition" meanwhile is based on the use of history crystals and similar artifacts. The Cimmerian "homunculi" are robots, and the Odathian "telepathy" is done with pair stones. The warlocks of the *Zheelaiya* mountain use parlor tricks and the occasional biography crystal.

The Olonians maintain a secret base in the mountains near Syrtis Minor. They have a basic understanding of electricity and are researching ways to catch it with special "lenses" (crystals that are meant to store solar energy). The many conduits laid down by them are the reason Syrtis Minor is the site of so many lightning strikes.

They also maintain a secret laboratory in a white tower near Titalia, to study the strange, oil-eating algae, and to find ways to use them for their purposes.

The Mistress of the Water (p. 85)

This mysterious woman does indeed exist. *Frances Granville*, née Spencer, was born the child of a country nobleman in 1863. One of her brothers served with the 60th Royal Marksmen and introduced her to one of his comrades in 1882, whom she married a year later. In the mid-1880s, this unit with her husband and brother was deployed to Mars. Frances followed her husband and lived the life of a respected Lady in Syrtis Major.

Then the worst year of her life began. In late 1888, her brother's unit were ambushed by the Kel Avashiim (p. 83) and all killed. Frances was distraught. Only the child she was expecting and the love of her husband allowed her to carry on. A few weeks later, that husband fell in one of the opening battles of the Oenotrian war. That shock was too much for her; she suffered a breakdown and lost her child. The doctors in Syrtis Major did what they could, but in the end, they could suggest only one thing: Frances should board the next flyer for Earth and be checked into a sanitarium there.

Frances Granville disappeared the night before that flyer departed. No one knows what happened to her in the months following, but in the summer of 1889, she resurfaced in the middle of the Moab desert where she passed the grueling tests that granted her acceptance into a tribe of the Others. With her new family, she began to reorganize the trade in the precious fire jewels. She began to sell directly to a merchant from Antwerp, who had an office in the Belgian colony and was paying much better prices than the previous customers. Frances and her tribe don't mind that they are working with the Belgians—for the Others, compassion is a frivolous luxury, and Frances will use any means to get her way. With the water, food, and modern weapons she receives from the Belgians, she seeks to unite all the tribes of the Others, and then lead them on a quest for vengeance against the Kel Avashiim and Oenotria.

The Secret Shipyard Polyarnaya Zvezda (p. 99)

The *Polyarnaya Zvezda* ("North Star") is a top-secret facility of the Cossacks in the north of Hecates Lacus. About 200 soldiers, scientists, and forced laborers work here on Project *Khimera*. This brand-new ether flyer, designed by *Konstantin Eduardovich Tsiolkovsky*, resembles a zeppelin from the outside, but features an internal structure made entirely of liftwood, which, according to the Russian designers, should allow for unprecedented performance. The steel components for the vessel are delivered in secret from Earth and dropped off at the shipyard before heading on to Hecates Lacus. This is the reason why all Russian ether flights are under strict military control.

The Man behind Zavaar (p. 113)

The secret benefactor of Zavaar is none other than *Gilvaak Zaganoor*, the “legitimate ruler” of the city of Gorovaan now under British occupation. Zaganoor, a brilliant and entirely ruthless Martian scientist, plans to decimate the humans with a doomsday weapon of his own design and to then claim rulership over the entire solar system (see *Venus*, p. 149). To this end, Zaganoor has established a criminal network spanning all four terrestrial planets to finance his operation and conduct espionage.

Zaganoor had many reasons to pick Zavaar specifically. First, Chryse is suitably situated for Zaganoor’s plans: amidst several Earth colonies, yet safely distant from all of them. The merchants of the Tea Road allow for access to information, goods, and money. And the High Martians of Chryse maintain a liftwood supply that is so far still relatively safe from the humans. On top of that, he commands a fleet of aerial flyers that can strike anywhere on Mars at any time. Zavaar is also easier to control than, say, Hattabranx. Thus, Zavaar has become an important vassal of Zaganoor and is rewarded accordingly. Besides gold and modern weapons, he receives advisors without which he wouldn’t have come as far as he did. If he proves himself, Zavaar might become Zaganoor’s viceroy for the entire region one day.

Operation Sakura (p. 119)

Both the Anwaak of Euxinus Lacus and the other Earth powers are trying to discover what the Japanese are seeking—or have already found—at Unebi station. Three rumors in particular have spread about the so-called “Operation Cherry Blossom”:

- The most fantastical version asserts the existence of a mineral deposit beneath Unebi station that can be burned in special turbines to produce unlimited energy. The Japanese are currently developing the required technology and will soon equip their maritime and aerial navies with these turbines, designed according to ancient Arcadian plans they discovered in the ruins.
- More likely, a German spy has reported that there is a mineral deposit, but that it is used to design armor-piercing cannon rounds. Old Arcadian formulas are said to provide instructions for creating an ultra-hard alloy from it.
- Finally, the advisors of the Anwaak of Euxinus Lacus claim to have found old records of massive gold deposits near Unebi station.

The greatest secret remains what made the Japanese select this location in the first place, and how their interest in all things Arcadian relates to that. It is up to the gamemaster to decide the truth behind this mystery.

Wildlife and Natural Sites

Olympus Mons (p. 102)

The most important holy mountain on Mars is also the highest in the solar system. It is located in the triangle formed by the cities of Olympia and Tharsis with the Arcadia region. Olympus Mons is more than 14 miles (25 km) tall and 370 miles (600 km) across, nearly the same size as France. It is so massive that an observer on the Martian surface cannot behold the entirety of its size, not even from a distance, because of the horizon. Its base is an escarpment reaching up to 5 miles (8 km) high, though broken by lava flows in some places. The air at its peak is too thin to breathe: an ascent can succeed only with appropriate pressurized breathing gear.

The many Martian cultures and churches that worship the God at the Heart of the World consider this mountain to be a holy site. Some claim to see the mouth of the god in it, and attempt to understand its messages, by interpreting the shape, density, and number of clouds around its peak, which do form more frequently in these extreme heights than elsewhere on Mars. Others see the clouds as the breath of the god, or the mountain itself as its navel, where life on Mars first began or was created. And so, there are many small hermit huts or cloistered communities on the slopes of this mountain, as many people seek to be close to their god and to search for a connection between it and their souls with prayer and contemplation. Pilgrims from all over Mars come here in numbers to find inspiration and revelation.

Other cults, such as the *Travelers of Vuurunak Oorb*, see the mountain as a portal, a holy way into the inside of the planet, and a test of endurance and dedication to the spiritual journey to god and divinity itself.

The inside of the massive crater at its summit—six nested calderas some 37 miles by 50 miles (60 km by 80 km) across and up

to 2 miles (3 km) deep—has not yet been explored. Expeditions rarely ever return, nor do the Travelers of Vuurunak Oorb. The few that do report deep caves and almost impossible climbing challenges that eventually forced them to turn back. But they also tell of strange mirages as they descended. These tend to be interpreted as signs from god. It is only a matter of time before Earth explorers and adventurers make their way into the crater to maybe find the truth about the inside of Olympus Mons.

Arsia Mons (p. 102)

The second highest mountain on Mars, with a height of 9 miles (14 km) and a diameter of 220 mi (350 km), is still massive by Earth standards. It lies east of the city of Arsia Silva. The inside of the crater is subject to frequent, violent storms that can raise dust clouds as high as 19 miles (30 km) tall.

More interesting even are the so called *Seven Sisters* on its slopes, which supposedly have been named after the seven daughters of Xiiparan XI, a past ruler of Ko’puroon (Arsia Silva) who, shortly before the violent end of his regency, proclaimed himself to be the mountain god. These sisters are large shafts leading inside the shield-shaped mountain. The entrances are between 300 and 800 feet (100–250 m) wide and can be climbed with appropriate high altitude climbing gear.

The cave system called *Deena* is home to an impressive variety of plant life, mostly vines and fungi. Some of the plants growing here are unknown anywhere else on Mars, meaning that a botanical expedition could make spectacular finds. The fauna meanwhile consists mostly of insects and small reptiles, none of which are dangerous.

The cave systems of *Kuuloee* and *Veendi* also feature sparse plant and animal life, but the underground ruins down here are likely to draw more attention. These might be forgotten temples or possibly the foundations of a palace for Xiiparan XI and his daughters. There are almost no complete buildings, only portals, pillars, plastered courtyards, and collapsed bridges. No one in the cities around the mountain knows anything about these ruins.

In the cave system dedicated to *An'nii*, only a few mushrooms can be found, though their spores have strong psychoactive effects on humans (but not Martians), resulting in strong, realistic visions of the user's hopes and dreams. A human expedition might find a fascinating dream realm down here, or discover amazing ancient civilizations, or even meet with the mountain god Xiiparan XI and dance with his daughters at a ball.

The other cave systems are called *An'beii*, *Niikanaa*, and *Yanaane* and are unexplored. Nothing precludes the possibility that these also hold new plants, animals, or relics of cults and other temporary inhabitants.

Gumme in the Long Woods (p. 17)

The keepers of the "Long Woods" north of the Coprates of course know of the Gumme plant specimens in their region. They keep this fact secret to not invite an expansion of the Belgian occupation zone into their territory. Ophir, however, already has secret plans to make a profit growing Gumme in the Long Woods in direct competition with the Belgians.

The "Cottage Cheese" of the North Pole (p. 114)

The long-term geological conditions of the Northern Polar Region have resulted in the glacial terrain being marked with deep valleys, spiral trenches, chasms, rises, and wavy ridges. Even Earth astronomers have noted this.

Travelers in the snowy wastes of the Northern Polar Region might thus, after a long journey, find themselves in an unexpected valley several miles wide with hot springs or volcanic activity, offering a microclimate without ice. The descent into such valleys is always steep, and from the air, this creates the impression of a punctured, porous surface.

Besides healing or toxic plants, these hot valleys might also be home to small eegar or gashant herds, which in turn have lured in predators like roogies. The snow snakes of the glacier ice can probably only survive by "fishing" prey from these oases.

Some Hill Martian clans or hunting parties of the Tempe and Euxinus tribes descend into these valleys on their hunts to make camp; some have even settled there permanently. The people of these lonely villages live isolated lives, and over the generations forget—if not visited regularly—that there are other people living elsewhere. Should the player characters meet such a group, they can react with curiosity or hostility. Should they convince some of these valley dwellers to investigate the outside world, that can disrupt the village community, even destroy it, should too many of the next generation decide to leave.

Strange Animals

Phobian Lemurs

In Martian legend, the Phobian lemur is an ominous harbinger of the dark powers of the Martian moon Phobos. This belief may have its roots in the fact that the grey, snouted, monkey-like animal stares with its huge eyes from the treetops at the faraway and hardly visible heavenly body. As it stares, its pupils dilate and contract rapidly, flickering constantly. It is easy to get the impression that they are receiving coded messages from the moon. After a period ranging from a few minutes to several hours, the lemur suddenly ends its nocturnal ritual and will move purposefully in a seemingly random direction, staying active until sunrise.

Death and disaster are said to befall those who try to follow them and, in fact, many Martians and humans have disappeared doing so. Those who do return, however, speak strangely dismissively about how common and boring the nightly activities of these lemurs are: They climb trees, seek small prey, and mate. Often, these descriptions appear to be too similar, too rehearsed. And some of those reporting later vanish without a trace within the following months.

The truth is that they *do* receive some sort of signal from the Monoliths of Phobos (p. 206), and that they are descendants of animals that were bred (either by the Phaetonians, the Canal Martians, or the First People) to read these signals and interpret them as a series of programmed behaviors. How the signals affect the Phobian lemurs and what consequences following them has is up to the gamemaster.



The Omega Beast

One mysterious legend of Mars revolves around a swarm or flock of creatures behaving as if a single consciousness were spread across the collective of animal bodies. This "beast" is said to have been created as a weapon during the Age of the 1,000 World Wars. The people of Tharsis, cornered and on the brink of extinction, counted several great "Masters of Life" (bio-scientists) in their ranks. Under a fanatical leader, those scientists set upon the task of developing a decisive weapon. They created the sensationally named 'Omega Beast' and let it loose into enemy territory.

The weapon, naturally, went totally out of control: The collective organism is said to have wiped out its enemies, then turned on its creators before dying or dissolving.

The swarms or flocks are described differently in each legend, consisting at times of insects, birds, or a mixture of the region's most fearsome predators.

The Black Koko (p. 18)

These animals are believed to be long extinct. Legends about them bear many similarities to Earth's stories about giant sea serpents. Today, there are no oceans on Mars that could be home to such a monster: The black koko is said to have been 100 feet (30 m) long and as wide as a railway car. Earth researchers are eager to find fossils of this creature and take great risks searching the vast deserts for those. Fragments are found on occasion, but to this day, Earth's museums could not put together a complete skeleton between them.

The 'black ivory' that is being traded in Memnonia and near Mare Cimmerium is won from the unusually colored bones of these creatures. Under the sand, treasure hunters can find the odd bone or part of rib cages that must have been 15 feet (5 m) across. Since Memnonia has never been an ocean, it is assumed that these creatures must have been amphibian.

Myths about Corals (p. 46)

Since the seas dried up (and even before that), these bizarre structures have sunken deep roots in Martian literature and mythology. It is possible that these legends originate from the yearning for the glorious age of the Brifanoo.

The existence of the **brain coral** is more or less regarded as pure legend. This creature is said to have a level of intelligence similar to that of Martians, and possibly superior to it. The legend probably stems from some corals' shape resembling a brain, just like with Earth's brain corals. In literature, stories exist about gigantic coral structures inside the Face of Mars, and it is likewise said that the coral desert of Hellas is in no way a dead structure, but rather a wise, titanic being.

Most of the horror stories about **carnivorous corals** are highly exaggerated: They tell of a gargantuan *pniir gadshaan*, a massive coral which rolled across the desert floor for miles until it came across a Martian canal city, which it then surrounds with its outgrowths before slowly working its way inward, consuming the citizens. Earthlings, and Germans especially, mock this fairy tale as "the Martian version of Sleeping Beauty's castle". Still, there have been expeditions with adventurers searching the deserts of Mars for this same "castle", but without any success. Stories also tell of **coral blades** racing across the deserts like spinning whirlwinds. Swarms of these are said to attack, rip apart, and eat caravans in a matter of minutes, which is why some disappear without any trace.

A distinctly more beautiful story tells of the **desert flower**, supposedly a single flower-like coral or an entire reef (**desert garden**) of untold beauty, a true blaze of colors and shapes. It is considered the most beautiful place on Mars, the creation of a Martian god, or an oasis of beauty. The protagonists of the stories stumble upon the desert flower or garden, spend some time in awe of its beauty, and then leave to fetch others to see the place. But they never find it again—the flower or garden are mobile. Most probably the core of this myth lies in the memory of colorful corals once existing on Mars, just like those that can be found in the tropical seas of Earth.

In some canal cities in Hellas, many believe that the corals are a part of the "**God at the Heart of the World**", with each city assigning it a different nature, be it veins, nerves, or memory. Allegorically, the transformation of the sea floor from an ecosystem bright with color and vitality to a crumbling chalky reef is said to represent the slow but eventually death of Mars and its gods. Some radical sects desperately defend the corals and hinder or punish any destruction of the formations wherever possible. Other, more optimistic groups try to cultivate the few surviving coral species, thereby strengthening the father god and the planet itself. It is an unfortunate side effect that by doing so they often fall prey to the more dangerous corals, though the mythology of these sects often reveres those who have died this way as paragons and martyrs, giving them a status close to sainthood. It is believed that by dying in such a manner they go directly to the inner god; some religious Martians even commit suicide by sacrificing themselves to a siren coral—certainly a very enjoyable and painless death.

Forgotten Civilizations

The First People of Mars (p. 6)

"What's old collapses, times change, and new life blossoms in the ruins."

— Friedrich Schiller, *Wilhelm Tell*

The current inhabitants of the Red Planet are not the first people to live on Mars. Millions of years ago, back when there were oceans on Mars, primates evolved into intelligent humanoids. They lived in tribes at first, following the herds as nomads, and later developed high cultures around the northern polar sea. A long struggle of war, trade, and technological advances finally merged these cultures into one peaceful society. The First People knew neither sickness nor famine. War and crime were things they only remembered in their dream plays with nostalgia.

Mars had three billion inhabitants back then, most of which lived in the metropolises around the northern polar sea. Their cities were huge arcologies, rising up several hundred levels. All work was performed by machines, allowing the First People to dedicate themselves fully to leisure, the arts, and the sciences. Their biologists decoded the secrets of life, their physicists tamed the power of the atom, and their ethnologists traveled the cosmos.

And then, their time ran out. Their achievements had robbed their civilization of all effort, dangers, or challenges. Only their dream plays offered distraction, leading to the fake realities taking over more and more of their lives. Eventually, they spent most of their lives inside these dreams, where they could be daring heroes or great conquerors. Every one of them led more than one fake life, in which they found love, triumph, fear, and rage, feelings that the real world could no longer offer them. Real feelings and relationships became too boring, and ever fewer children were

born as a result. But as long as they could flee into their dreams, none of that mattered.

When their world died, that didn't matter to them either: While astronomical events caused geological disasters such as volcanoes and earthquakes, and while the planet cooled down and the remaining water was freezing in the polar caps, the gleaming towers of the cities fell and the last children of the First People suffocated and starved within their dreams, trying to escape reality for good.

Only a few scientists who saw no way to prevent the cataclysm sought to save or extend their own lives. And they were more than successful. Once their experiments were complete, several of them were literally immortal and endured the wastelands of hostile Mars. Some tried to rekindle life on Mars, and it is possible that at least parts of the current ecosystem can be traced back to the efforts of these scientists. But immortality is a terrible fate, and even the strongest mind will break under the weight of the eons at some point. One after the other, the most brilliant minds of the First People succumbed to madness and found, in the few brief moments of clarity they had left, a way to end their lives.

Time has erased the achievements of the First People. The canal builders suspected, based on fossils, that there might have been a civilization on Mars before them, but they did not know that the last survivor of the First People dwelled hidden deep below Astusapes, making ever new plans in his ever-shifting madness.

Kleuth na Vriss, the Immortal (p. 49)

"That is not dead which can eternal lie, and with strange eons even death may die."

— H. P. Lovecraft, *The Call of Cthulhu*

Deep below Astusapes, the man who cannot die has lived since before history. Kleuth na Vriss was one of the most brilliant minds of his people and was one of the scientists who tried to rekindle life on Mars. His mind has been ravaged by dementia. His vast memories have merged into an incoherent mess, from which he can only recall fragments from too long ago. As far as he knows, his last companion took his own life about a million years ago, and ever since, Kleuth na Vriss has lived alone. His only friend is a fist-sized emerald, which he carries with him, stroking it absent-mindedly. This stone has been worn smooth from eons of this affection.

In his madness, Kleuth now incorrectly believes that all life today, including the Martians, is a result of his work and thus in a way belongs to him and owes him fealty. He has on many occasions wiped out entire species where he could, using ancient weapons, simply for being "a failed creation" in his mad mind. He believes that he alone can judge what is good for "his" world. The most important tool in his observations and plans is the Worm cult, which he manipulates and directs, seeing himself as their progenitor (again, incorrectly so!). The sudden and surprising appearance of the Earth humans annoys him greatly, as he sees them as an "impurity" in his great design. He thus supports and incites the anti-human actions of the cult. The humans and their Martian allies are all targets of Kleuth na Vriss's rage.

He is in fact immortal. That is a result of a process that continuously regenerates the cells in his body. This not only prevents his body from aging, but also ensures that his wounds heal rapidly and that even lost limbs can regrow. His body still requires air, water, and food, though. Without these, he will die in time. But even in this event, the body can be brought back to life with proper medicinal care. Only complete destruction of the body makes such a resuscitation impossible.

Kleuth na Vriss's appearance proves that he does not belong to any known species. In size and body shape, he does resemble a thin Earth human. He is about 5.9 feet (1.80 m) tall and weighs a mere 130 lbs (60 kg). His strange, ivory complexion and skin color make clear that he is no Earthling, though. His chin is too long and too pointed, but it is his eyes that make him truly alien. They are entirely black and show neither pupil nor iris, and, when stressed, lids close over them that are the same color as his skin. The Immortal usually wears tunics, pants, and sandals made from a flexible metal mesh that does not wear down and is dirt-resistant.

Archetype: Insane Criminal Mastermind

Motivation: Faith

Style: 5

Health: 11

Primary Attributes

Body: 6 (7) **Charisma:** 4(5)

Dexterity: 5 **Intelligence:** 5

Strength: 3 **Willpower:** 5

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 **Initiative:** 10

Move: 8 **Defense:** 11

Perception: 10 **Stun:** 6 (10)

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Brawl	5	7	12	(6)
Diplomacy	5	7	12	(6)
Firearms	5	5	10	(5)
Melee	5	7	12	(6)
Ride	5	5	10	(5)
Pilot (Air Ships)	5	3	8	(4)
Stealth	5	5	10	(5)
Survival	5	10	15	(7+)

Note: These are merely the skills Kleuth na Vriss currently remembers. He has forgotten much more, and, as determined by the gamemaster, might remember other Skills again in time, such as Academics.

Talents

Charismatic, Iron Jaw 4, High Pain Tolerance 2, Jack of all Trades, Inspire 2, Natural Leader, Quick Healer, Tough

Resources

Artifact (several First People devices), Contacts (Worm cult), Refuge 5 (Old base beneath Astusapes), Status (Head of the Worm cult)

Flaws

Amnesia, Callous, Condescending, Obsession, Overconfident, Secret Languages

Kleuth na Vriss speaks all modern and many extinct Martian languages.

Ancient Ethernauts (p. 12)

Through contact with extraterrestrials from Mercury, Venus, and Mars, a new discipline of (fringe) science has arisen on Earth, that of pre-ethernautics, which falls somewhere between archaeology, ethernautics, and religion. Its adherents believe that there had already been contact between humans and extraterrestrials in ancient times. The traces of ancient, lost cultures that can be found everywhere on Mars have given rise to hypotheses of Martian visitors on Earth, though these are all still preliminary. But there is a truth behind these hypotheses:

- The supposed divinity of the **pharaohs**, their often strange appearance on the sarcophagi, and the rumors of their incestuous procreation are in part because some of them were Martians. They came to Earth in ether flyers and allowed themselves to be worshipped as gods—following the prevailing mindset of the *Age of Wealth* (p. 12). One of these was Queen *Nofrusobek*

Mysteries

who ruled for a few years around 1,800 BC and who was actually a Martian canal princess. Contemporary linguists might notice that her recorded name Sobekneferu is quite close to the Son-Gaaryani term *Soobnefruu*, which means *queen in the foreign lands*.

- It is suspected that the **pyramids** were not (only) built as tombs, but also as etherports and navigational aids. Some of them did in fact fulfill that function.
- The **geoglyphs** of Nazca in Peru, which form 12 miles (20 km) long lines and triangles, served similar purposes. Some of them were originally navigational markers for ancient Martian ether travelers of the *Age of Rediscovery* (p. 12) in the third millennium BC, but were later imitated by humans who didn't understand them, leading to enormous animal shapes and other markings that served no navigational purpose.
- The copper disc that the archaeologist Schliemann found in Troy, the **treasure of Priam**, also dates from this time and is a star map of the ancient ethernauts.
- Buried in a tomb near the small native city of **Xacaja** in the Amazon delta lie the shrouded, mummified bodies of 12 Canal Martians. Buried with them are several objects, including an ancient Martian ether propeller and a "disintegrator" weapon. In fact, this tomb appears to be much older. These are ethernauts who fled Mars during the *Age of the Wars of Technology* about 1,000 BC (p. 13) as persecuted technocultists and subsequently crash-landed on Earth.
- The history of the **Gilgamesh epic** from the Mesopotamian region is partially based on Hill Martian ethernauts (*Gilgamesh*) who teach intelligence to their human but still animal-like friends (*Enkidu*). This epic is millennia old and likely has its origins in the *Dynasty of the Starborn* or perhaps the *Moon Empire* (p. 11).
- **Stonehenge** resembles the most common design of a junction station for telluric energy (p. 158), as they were common at canal intersections on Mars. The human builders had attempted to mimic the images of such junction stations with their own heroic but primitive means (piled stones). It is possible they received these images from ethernauts of the *Dynasty of the Starborn* (p. 10). It is also possible that they sparked the Earth belief in Ley lines.

Sek-Ma-Tak - The Secret People of the South Pole (p. 123)

While the North Pole terrain can be described as a "cottage cheese" of small valleys with different microclimates, the South Pole is more like a "Swiss cheese" with few, but much larger "holes" in the ice sheet. Besides the geographic properties of the Martian ice, the reason for this is that the Noachis tectonic plate, as well as those of Ausonia, Eridania, and Electris, all border each other beneath the southern polar ice, leading to much sub-glacial volcanic activity, melting great holes in the ice. Travelers can make many great discoveries in these mile-wide valleys between the tall ice walls. The most impressive is a complete Martian civilization that has developed here, isolated from the rest of the planet.

Territory

This valley lies amidst the ice of the South Pole. If one follows the canal from Gaaryan, all the way through the massive stone constructions, one will reach the source of the canal, which is holy

to the Urghuul and the Canal Keepers. This dangerous journey has cost many pilgrims their lives. Beyond this spring, one must follow the same direction for another few hundred miles to reach the hidden valley of Sek-Ma-Tak.

History

These people are descendants of the Hill Martian Urghuul. Their historical records have been manipulated by their ruling caste, though, and the official history claims that all of Mars is dead, covered in ice and desert. Only in the Sek-Ma-Tak valley does life remain. Anyone who leaves is considered dead, even should they return, which would be a heinous sacrilege. Thus, every thought of escape is extinguished before it can form.

In truth, their ancestors were the first group of criminals that the Urghuul drove from Noachis across the South Pole to the lands beyond (Ausonia, Eridania, and Electris). The overland route through the Hellas or Bosporos basins didn't exist yet, and the ice of the southern polar cap was not yet as thick, so they chose to risk to travel across the pole. Many died, but some few, half starving and frostbitten, reached a valley where the canal builders had left a long-abandoned city behind. There they found crystal technology and telluric energy taps. They called this place *Sek-Ma-Tak* ("Outcasts find a home").

Government, Religion, and Society

The city is governed by a theocracy: The "White Gods" live in a maze-like ice palace where the canal builders stored their technology. They shave their heads bald, wear eye covering, helmet-like tiaras, and dress in white clothes made of synthetic fibers. They are worshipped and said to be immortal and eternally young. Their word is law, for in the eyes of their followers, they are the last, the final immortal ancient Martians. It is believed that they see all and know all—a belief they are all too happy to encourage with careful use of canal builder technology. They hoard resources for themselves, while insisting that the valley can only support a certain number of people. Thus, each year during the "Time of Light" (the beginning of the polar summer), these gods cast a "verdict". This verdict, a heat ray that redirects sunlight into the crowd, tends to always hit specific critics or suspicious subjects "by chance", silencing their doubts in the "useless ancients" and burning them to ashes. The people are unaware that the White Gods that speak to them do in fact age and die in time, their families living inside the ice palace in secret, with only the young adults ever meeting with the people.

Culture and Technology

The commoners are kept ignorant. There is no literature and no one can read. Instead, they must farm the mushrooms and algae that form their nutritional base, or perform other daily labors. They live in igloo-like houses that are well-adapted to the climate. All public activities are directed towards worship of the White Gods, who supply the required entertainment and distractions. Usually, this means that they appear before the people to receive worship before showing off propaganda movies from the ever-same image crystals, which present the heroic creation myths of their city.

The White Gods themselves hoard and maintain the ancient technology in their ice palace. The best entertainment crystals are reserved for them alone, as is the "green ice", a special alga from the nearby glaciers with intoxicating properties. Warmth,

comfort, synthetic materials, and much more are all supplied to them by the canal builder technology or their subjects. The White Gods fear that life might still exist after all outside the South

Pole and will do anything to protect their power and way of life against any outside intrusion—including using devastating crystal technology weaponry.

Mysteries of the Moons of Mars

Mysteries of Both Moons

The Fall to Mars

The American astronomer *Asaph Hall III* has not only investigated the Phobos Monoliths, he also realized that the orbits of the twin moons depend on each other. In passing by each other, they stabilize their trajectories mostly, but only mostly: According to his calculations, Phobos will eventually crash down onto Mars with devastating consequences, while Deimos will eventually be lost to interplanetary space. He won't say when either events will occur, but he warns that Phobos's crash "might be very soon". Many end-time cults, such as those in Tharsis, feature similar prophecies in their holy texts.

Gulliver's Travels

The famous Anglo-Irish author *Jonathan Swift* (1667–1745) wrote his "Gulliver's Travels" in 1727, long before the moons of Mars were discovered, and in it he mentioned two moons near Mars. In 1752, *Voltaire's* short story "Micromégas" repeated Swift's description of the moons.

Swift listed some very unusual diameters, distances, and orbits for them—which we know today to be entirely accurate! Even stranger is that Gulliver receives this knowledge in the corresponding chapter from the people of the island "Laputa", an artificial, floating island powered by magnetics.

The answer to this mystery is that Swift found on the Irish coast fragments of a thought crystal that had come from a Martian ether flyer that had crashed into the sea during the *Age of Wealth* (p. 12). This damaged crystal contained fragments of images and speech that inspired Swift's strange names in his "Gulliver's Travels", including details about Mars's moons. This thought crystal was buried with him, as part of a brooch, near St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin.

The Temple of Dralbaar (p. 84)

In the hills of Aeria, west of Syrtis Major, lies the ruined city of Dralbaar—a legendary settlement of the time of the canal builders. In these ruins lives a small group of Hill Martians who call themselves the "Guardians of Dralbaar". They avoid contact with outsiders and always seek to quickly drive them from the city.

They watch over an old secret of the canal builders: A temple that contains a type of star gate, which allows for travel to the otherwise almost unreachable moon Phobos. It is possible that the Monoliths of Phobos and some type of gravitic force are behind this technology.

Legends tell that inside Phobos, in a similar temple, all sorts of immeasurable riches and fearsome weapons are just waiting to be claimed. This is the reason for the hostile nature of the inhabitants

of Dralbaar. The fact is that *Jack Armstrong* has made contact with these priests early in his travels—and that since then, they have denied anyone entrance to their city. The only other person allowed in the city is the German archaeologist *Johann Drosselmeyer*, who is currently working on restarting an old irrigation system in a suburb. So far it does little but spew out toxic slime. The Worm cult is also quite interested in the temple of Dralbaar.

Phobos, the Moon of Madness (p. 5)

A crater on Phobos hides the entrance to a cave system that lies just deep enough to keep a breathable atmosphere and sufficient gravity to allow for walking. These caves hold a research station of the Canal Martians in a dug-out space that is today still protected by several mechanical men (p. 163). Here, the feasibility of the canal project was studied from Mars orbit. Explorers can find many, still functioning specimens of canal builder technology here (and far more that are damaged, too).

The most important one is a *cerebral enhancer* which increases the mental acuity of whoever sits beneath its silver cap. Each week of regular use increases Intelligence by 1 (to a maximum of 10),



but any gain is lost at the same rate once the treatment ends. In humans, each increase in Intelligence is also accompanied by a reduction of Willpower by 1 point. If they stop using the machine before Willpower reaches 0, it will be restored as Intelligence is lost, back up to its original level. If Willpower drops to 0, however, the loss is permanent: the character goes mad, and only long term treatment in a sanatorium can provide a chance for recovery.

Further items of note include copper plates that show canal routes (including planned but never implemented ones), as well as items of crystal technology as described earlier in this book (p. 159), as set by the gamemaster.

The Monoliths of Phobos (p. 5)

The Great Monolith

Prof. Asaph Hall has taken intensive dream notes about the Monolith. He hears an inhuman song in his sleep that drives him to sleepwalk; in this trancelike state, he scribbles some of the strange symbols that are worked into the massive Monolith's faces. He also once scribbled the word "Chaldriles", without knowing what it means. Hall now wishes to explore Phobos in person and seeks adventurers to accompany him there. At his ripe old age of 70, this could well be his last great voyage.

Whoever studies the massive Monolith will find pictograms that clearly indicate that people are living far beneath the dust of the moon. The only problem is that the Monolith is so gigantic that everyone nearby will be intimidated. Any being will feel small and insignificant before this awe-inspiring construct of smooth stone. It seems to stretch for miles into the moon, never ending. The mere thought that someone brought it here, worked it, and set it in place will bring a shiver down anyone's spine. At the same time, there will be little but rage over the insignificance of one's own existence. While acting near the Monolith, player characters must pass hourly Willpower rolls or become temporarily insane or aggressive (see below).

Psychic Malfunction

The Monolith is an antenna that connects the consciousness in the Heart of Phobos with the outside world. The thing inside communicates using subsonic music—somehow transmitted by the ether, allowing it to cross vacuum—that affects the human subconscious mind. This can result in madness, fear, and aggression, all of which could lead to disaster on Phobos. Those who study the Monolith extensively will inevitably fall under the influence of the Consciousness at the Heart of Phobos.

This "music" is inaudible in the vacuum of Phobos's surface and doesn't carry well through the ether, which is why this effect is only experienced near the Monolith. That Martians can find the sight of Phobos to be disturbing seems to be due to resonance on the part of the Red Planet or of its atmosphere that makes the "music" weakly effective on the surface. It may be that telluric energy is involved in this resonant phenomenon.

Every hour spent near the Monolith on Phobos requires a successful Willpower roll. The first roll has a difficulty of 1, the second a difficulty of 2, and so on. Those who fail a roll wish to retreat from the Monolith's fearsome presence. Those who remain anyway must make another Willpower roll after 1 hour, but at a difficulty of 5. Should this roll fail, the character will become aggressive and demand absolute quiet so that they can hear the

Monolith better. To this end, all living things nearby may need to be killed.

Such an afflicted player character cannot easily be convinced with Charisma, but a cunning diplomat might still succeed. The only alternative is to knock them out in a fight.

Inhabitants on the Moon

The Monolith shows hints of the existence of a species called *Chaldriles*, a relatively intelligent species of bugs. These friendly beings resemble dog-sized scarabs with black carapaces that shimmer like oil in the light. It could be surmised that the ancient Egyptian prophets were susceptible to the signals from Phobos, like Prof. Hall is today, and that the god *Khepri* was worshipped for this reason—or, more likely, that they met some Chaldriles.

But the Chaldriles are not the only living beings on Phobos. Ranked lower in the pecking order than the Chaldriles are long-legged beings that resemble a blend of spider crab and shrimp. They have an animal-like level of intelligence and are hunted by the Chaldriles for food. Even humans might find their white, rubbery meat palatable. Above the Chaldriles, so say the inscriptions on the Monolith, stand beings called "*Florenskiites*". They hide in the depths of the moon and resemble the "onam reech" (p. 139), possibly even being of the same species, or at least a related one. They eat the Chaldriles and can easily crack their hard-as-steel chitin carapaces with their teeth. Their tongues are forked, and as the *Florenskiites* have no eyes, it must be assumed that they use said tongues to navigate. Their maws are grotesquely misshapen, wide, and constantly drooling. The fur of the creatures is the color of dirty gold nuggets. The pictograms on the Monolith suggest that the *Florenskiites* reproduce asexually and are solitary hunters.

The species that stands above all other moon inhabitants is mysterious. They are called "*Drobates*" and are humanlike in appearance. When they ruled the moon, the Chaldriles served them as slaves. This instinct remains in the Chaldriles today, leaving them intimidated by humans. Whether the *Drobates* were the rulers of Phobos, the people of the lost planet Phaeton, or possibly just a single individual can't be determined for certain.

Cave Cities

Those who find an entrance into the caves of Phobos will discover the great caves, tunnels, and caverns of the moon's inhabitants. Down here, the atmosphere is dense enough to breathe and the gravity strong enough to walk, for some utterly mysterious reason.

Hidden deep in the tunnels lie cities of crystal and glass. They appear to have been cast and worked into the natural, grey stone. Some towers rise up all the way to the cave ceilings, are connected by bridges, or hang down from above like stalactites. Here, the Chaldriles live and ceaselessly work on the perfection of their colony. They use their spittle to form the buildings, bridges, and pathways, letting them harden to crystal. Some Chaldrile cities are abandoned, though. Now, other inhabitants gather in the crystal chambers and strange shadows flit about, seeking new prey.

Humans can crawl through the Chaldrile tunnels, but it is a tight fit. Those who venture even further into the tunnels, resisting the urge to consider the thousands of tons of rock surrounding them, might find the Heart.

The Heart of the Moon is protected by a metal wall. This metal is completely unknown and shrugs off any attack. The massive Monolith reaches from the moon's surface all the way down to the Heart chamber. Inside, something communicates telepathi-

cally with the outside world, via the Monolith. Only beings that are naturally receptive can perceive these emotions, images, and sounds.

Additional Monoliths

It is up to the gamemaster to decide how he would like to explain the handful of other Monoliths on the moon. They might be part of the same psychic transmission system, or be connected to the temple of Dralbaar, or have yet other functions. The myths that consider them to be the peaks of “demonic temples” are likely the remnants of a legend that an ancient superweapon might lie here, possibly of canal builder design, or even of Phaetonian origin. Or maybe an all-consuming Worm dwells inside Phobos.

Deimos (p. 5)

The Terror of Deimos

Deimos is an unhealthy place for the human mind. As captain Oliver Pike describes in the beginning of his report, it is dark and oppressive. He also complains about the increasing hunger of his crew for meat. The log ends abruptly, until the repairs were able to be completed and the *Calypso* finally left Deimos again. At this time, more than three dozen men must have died, as the rescue party only recovered seven crew members from the *Calypso*, five of them dead. When the HMS *Calypso* was found drifting through the ether, Captain Pike was tied to the helm, nearly unconscious. The rescue team also found Aaron Lockhart in the rearmost compartment of the vessel. The other members of the crew were dead, with bite marks on the inside of

their thighs and on their abdomens. Pike was only able to recite the birth dates of his comrades, being otherwise unresponsive. The rescue team’s doctor diagnosed a serious brain fever. The log was found tied around his stomach with a rope. All members of the rescue team have since been promoted, have retired early, or can no longer be found.

Aaron Lockhart

The 18-year-old Aaron Lockhart has seen a lot serving under Captain Oliver Pike. Much of it, he’d rather forget, including the crash-landing on Deimos. He can speak enthusiastically about the departure for Mars. It was to be his second ether flight to the Red Planet. He grew up a commoner in Manchester and was quite popular with the crew. At age 16, he joined the Navy, at some time later the ether flyer crew. He was always diligent in his duties. Even when the *Calypso* crash-landed on Deimos and the situation appeared hopeless, he stood by Captain Pike. Only when the Captain began to eat the dead did Lockhart decide to hide in the storage spaces between the walls of the *Calypso*.

Today, Lockhart is a medical curiosity. Not only is he the only survivor of the catastrophe, but he also suffers from an undocumented type of madness. Commonly, it is referred to as “Moon fever”. Lockhart is almost impossible to control whenever the full Moon rises above London. At the same time, he complains about voices in his head that take over his body at times and force him, while fully aware, to scribble those markings on the walls. When one of the proper physicians of Her Majesty Queen Victoria offered to examine the man, he found nothing. But the occultists of the *Golden Dawn* have also decided to keep an eye on Lockhart, as they suspect a higher demonic intelligence behind his madness, which seeks to communicate with them. A few young idealists even plan a rescue mission, before the doctors decide to perform a lobotomy.



The Emerald Waters

An Adventure by Dominic Hladek

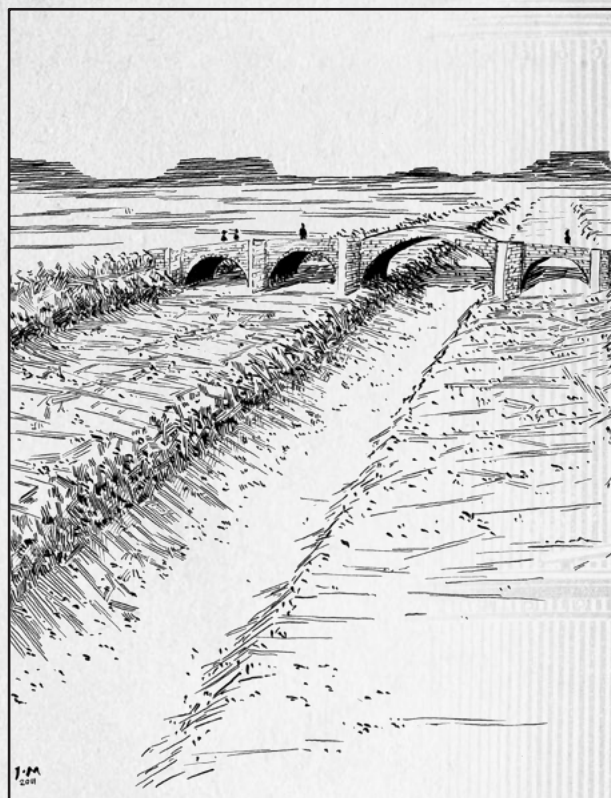
Character Recommendations:

Any of the sample characters from the **Space: 1889 Core Rules** and this source book on **Mars** (pp. 172–187) are well suited for this adventure. Other player characters from Earth or Mars can also easily be drawn into this adventure, especially Canal Martians and Earth travelers on Mars.

Introduction

This adventure is especially suited for those gamemasters who wish to offer their players a brief introduction to the world of **Space: 1889**. It is short, can be played through in one session of 4 hours, and contains all the information required for play (only the sample characters should be downloaded separately and offered to the players).

After briefly describing Mars as a setting, a High Martian attack occurs immediately. Hopefully, the player characters will be able to fight the enemies off, but the flyer aboard which they are travelling will unavoidably end up crashing. The canal village near which the flyer comes down will then not only offer a fascinating view of the Canal Martian culture, but also requires that the player characters deal with the distrust of the locals. Soon, a canal priest will challenge them to a test of conscience but, thankfully, they will be aided in this. Thus assisted, the player characters can learn



the secret of the Emerald Waters and prove themselves worthy of not being handed over to the returning High Martians, which are bound to seek vengeance for their wounded pride. Once they are defeated again—including their chief this time—then both the player characters and the villagers can finally rest in peace without fear of more attacks.

Scene 1 - Attack of the High Martians

This first scene should combine a brief introduction to the setting, a first chance for each player to roleplay their character, and a direct encounter with one of the greatest dangers on Mars: the High Martians! The players will roll their first skill rolls, fight, and learn the basics of the rules system.

Canal. The gamemaster may choose to leave the exact location open or announce that this journey is taking place between Parhoon and Gorovaan, two British protectorate city-states. The route is profitable but not without its dangers as, time and again, vessels come under attack. The players should first be given an opportunity to find their character voices, investigate the immediate surroundings, ask questions, or to interact with the crew.

Journey in the Air

The scene begins aboard an aerial flyer travelling along a Martian

This particular flyer is a Martian merchant kite of the *Warm Winds* class. It is a monstrosity of 130 feet (40 m) in length weighing some 2,000 tons, kept airborne by its liftwood hull. The large cloud sails are operated by a crew of about 50. Life aboard is always busy, commands in Koline (or some other Martian language) are



shouted across the deck, and lines and counterweights are dangling everywhere. The vessel carries over 1,000 tons of cargo, such as food and barrels of spirits. It also carries goods from Earth, such as fashion items (parasols, bowler hats, top hats, frock coats), metals (which are rare and highly prized on Mars) and even some machines and gunpowder.

The Crew and Travelers

This brief listing of personas is intended to offer the players a better idea of the scene and provide the gamemaster with conversation partners as needed. Most of them will die in the attack or afterwards during the crash, unless the gamemaster wishes to keep some around as NPCs for later scenes. All Martians speak the trade language of Koline as well as one or two other Martian languages. The listed officers will even speak some rudimentary English, possibly even some German.

- **Captain Noomik** (turban-like headdress on greying hair, nut-ton chops, wiry, athletic, broad-chested, light skin and pointed Martian ears) is an experienced merchant sailor. He is a proud citizen of Parhoon and greatly appreciates humans, especially the British. He believes that they brought progress and prosperity to his city-state and have made the trade routes safer.
- **Helmsman Lak-Braga** (dark ochre skin, sweats a lot, heavy-set, fairly small ears, authoritarian) is the navigator and first mate of the vessel, and second in command after the captain.
- **Boatwoman Uscoota** (athletic, rich black, windswept hair, almost translucent fine ears, delicate, strict but fair) is the direct subordinate of the helmsman and in charge of maintaining the rigging. She commands the crew.
- **About 50 sailors** (roughly evenly divided by gender) are good people and a solid team. They have known the captain for a long time and trust him. Amongst them can be found the witty ship's doctor *Jugaana*, the ship's cook *Tool-tak* who loves all things spicy, and the female sailmaker *Byrket*.
- **About 20 passengers** (counting the player characters) are aboard. These are mostly Martian travelers, such as a group of five scholars who are looking to visit the library in the destination city, a half-dozen merchants, and two royal officials. But some humans can be found amongst the passengers as well, such as the young British Lord *Mortimer Cavendish* who is

travelling to see the world with his young bride *Madeleine*, or the older and very chatty salesman *Mycroft Dickinson*.

- **The player characters** can be either passengers or part of the crew.

The "Cloud"

At some point, the gamemaster should read out or paraphrase the following:

Some hundred yards above the surface, your kite drifts across the red deserts of Mars. Almost no wind can be felt, and therefore the hull's shadow lazily passes across the rocks and the fine sands below, at times crossing the waters of the massive artificial canal that the captain is carefully following. Ages ago, the canal had been built by a now extinct civilization to carry the life-giving waters from the poles to the rest of the planet. During your journey, you have passed several smaller towns and villages below, and have spied many petty canals and irrigated fields. Only the canal makes life possible here, for if you cast your gaze starboard into the distance, you will see nothing but red sands and desert, all the way to the horizon where it meets the dark blue and cloudless sky. The view to port is little better, even though the foothills of a desolate mountain range rise up only a few hundred yards from you, rising quickly upwards. There is even a cloud above it. I mean, that is a cloud, yes?

Should the player characters observe the cloud more carefully, there will be little to see at first. Merely the fact that clouds are rare indeed on Mars will give reason to pause. When they appear, it is usually over mountain ranges such as the one to the North.

Whether they wait or decide to use a spyglass (the captain keeps one in his cabin), they will make their first skill roll. The gamemaster should give a quick overview of how skills are rolled in the Ubiquity system and explain how the mechanism of *Taking the Average* works (Space: 1889 Core Rules, p. 198). Depending on the degree of success, preparations can be made—or not.

Standard Actions:

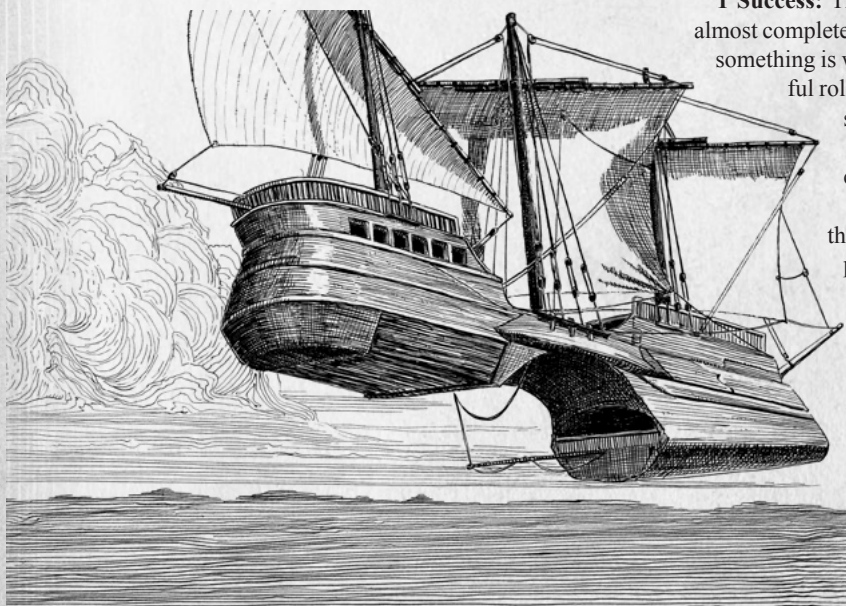
Perception (Difficulty 1)

Failure: The danger is seen too late to prepare meaningful defenses. Each player character will face three High Martians in the upcoming fight.

1 Success: The cloud moves very quickly despite the almost complete lack of wind. To convince the captain that something is wrong, however, requires another successful roll, this time using *Diplomacy* (Difficulty 1; success allows some preparations, reducing the number of enemies faced by each player character in the fight from three to two).

2 Successes: The cloud is moving towards the ship! The captain sees the danger. Each player character will face two enemies in the fight.

3+ Successes: That's no cloud, but rather a swarm of many flying creatures! They are High Martians streaming up into the sky towards the ship from their hiding places! The captain and the crew realize the true danger and rush to make all possible preparations. Each player character will face a single enemy in the fight.



The Fight

The crew will man the cannons and arm themselves with ancient-looking muskets, seeking cover and rushing the passengers below decks. Wherever the player characters choose to make their stand, the fight will bring them face to face with one or more High Martians (de-pending on their successes, see above).

Battle is inevitable as the wind is too weak to carry the vessel away from the High Martians, who can reach impressive speeds when charging from an ambush position. It is recommended for the gamemaster to briefly explain the basics of the Ubiquity combat system before “diving right in”. Any confusion can be cleared up with practical examples during the fight.

The supposed cloud can by now be seen for the danger it really is: Bestial, feral High Martians. Swinging smoking torches, they set upon the vessel like locusts. Whenever some dive into range, torches come flying into the sails or in through open portholes in fiery arcs, before the enemies launch themselves, wielding their spears, into a bloody melee like the horde of barbarians that they are.

High Martians within range will throw their torches towards a flammable target and then set upon the crew and passengers in close combat. Raging fires and devastating chaos soon reign on deck. The player characters can stay in a group, or individually take positions of their choosing. The captain will not demand that any passengers join the fight, but will urge them to go below decks. Whether the player characters do so or not is up to them. Ideally, the ga-memaster will show the players the picture of the merchant kite and then ask where they’d like to fight or seek refuge. Wherever that ends up being, the gamemaster should then con-front them with the appropriate number of enemies sooner or later, as determined by the previous *Perception* roll.

Example Scenes:

- One or more player characters stay on deck and fight alongside the crew. The High Martians will sweep across the deck and 1–3 of them will beset each of the player characters.
- One or more player characters barricade themselves in their cabin. 1–3 High Martians per player character will force their way into the cabin through the porthole or by breaking down the door.
- One or more player characters climb into the rigging or onto the aft castle to take up elevated positions for ranged attacks. 1–3 High Martians will then begin circling each player character and attack.
- One or more player characters hide in the cargo hold. 1–3 pillaging High Martians per player character will then search the cargo hold with torches, possibly stumbling upon them.

Both during the fight (depending on how it plays out mechanically) and in other situations such as attempts to hide from the High Martians, the gamemaster can introduce the concept of *Opposed Actions* and briefly explain it: Hiding player characters, for example, will roll *Stealth* against the High Martians’ *Perception*. As the ‘attackers’, the latter must score at least as many successes as the players during this in order to notice anything amiss (which could then, for example, lead to another roll), and more successes to actually spot the player charac-ter (which will initiate combat).

Opposed Action:
Stealth vs Perception

High Martian Pirate

Primary Attributes

Body: 2 **Dexterity: 3**
Strength: 3 **Charisma: 2**
Intelligence: 2 **Willpower: 2**

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 **Move: 6 (3)***
Perception: 4 **Initiative: 5**
Defense: 5 **Stun: 2**

Health: 4

Skills

Athletics 5, Brawl 6, Intimidation 4, Melee 6

Talents

—

Weapons

Spear 9 L, Torch 7 L, Punch 6 N

* Use their full Move rating when flying or climbing, and half their Move rating when moving on the ground

Canal Martian Sailor

Primary Attributes

Body: 2 **Dexterity: 3**
Strength: 2 **Charisma: 1**
Intelligence: 2 **Willpower: 2**

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 **Move: 5**
Perception: 4 **Initiative: 5**
Defense: 5 **Stun: 2**

Health: 4

Skills

Brawl 3, Firearms 4, Melee 4, Pilot (Aerial flyer) 5

Talents

—

Weapons

Knife 5 L, Muzzle-loading Rifle* 7 L, Punch 3 N

*Range of 30 m, can only be fired every other turn with one reload action in between

The War Chief

During the fight, the player characters should become aware of the leader of the High Mar-tians, their war chief *Harrgarr* (black hat, golden amulet, scarred empty left eye socket, a club musket decorated with bones, an ugly water tick on his shoulder ‘for snacking’, cruel, vengeful, extremely extroverted). He is armed with a High Martian club musket: Four crude musket barrels have been set into a bulky, spiked war club, allowing the bearer to fire from its tip, albeit with very poor accuracy.

Harrgarr will lead the attack from the rear and will be protected by at least six of his body-guards at all times (attacks on him will trigger immediate retaliation from these guards). He will launch his own strikes here and there whenever he feels unthreatened.

It is important for Harrgarr to survive the attack. Should the player characters defeat their attackers or the crew otherwise show more resilient than expected, then the war chief will loudly call for an advance to the rear. First though, he will make the following threat in High Martian (Gaashwaan) and broken English:

YOU ALL DEAD! WE AGAIN COME HERE, CUT YOUR INTESTINES FROM BELLY! FEED YOU ALIVE TO ROOGIES! EAT YOUR HEARTS! DRINK BLOOD FROM SKULLS OF ALL!

War Chief Harrgarr

Primary Attributes

Body: 3 **Charisma:** 3
Dexterity: 3 **Intelligence:** 3
Strength: 4 **Willpower:** 3

Secondary Attributes

Size: 0 **Initiative:** 5
Move: 7 (4)* **Defense:** 6
Perception: 6 **Stun:** 4

Health 6

Skills	Base	Levels	Rating	(Average)
Athletics	4	3	7	(3+)
Brawl	4	4	8	(4)
Diplomacy	3	2	5	(2+)
Firearms	3	4	7	(3+)
Intimidation	3	3	6	(3)
Melee	4	4	8	(4)
Stealth	3	2	5	(2+)
Survival	3	3	6	(3)

Talents

Inspire, Swoop (see p. 188)

Weapons	Damage	Size	Attack	(Average)
Club Musket (Melee)	2 L	0	10 L	(5) L
Club Musket (Ranged)	2 L	0	9 L	(4+) L
Punch	0 N	0	8	(4) N

* Use their full Move rating when flying or climbing, and half their Move rating when moving on the ground

The Explosion

The spreading fire should become the focus of the scene during, or at the very latest right after the fight: The sails are burning away, the liftwood of the hull is glowing with heat and the contents of the cabins and cargo rooms are on fire, filling the hallways with smoke. The gamemaster can now call for a roll, using for example *Athletics* (difficulty 3), for player characters caught below decks in this inferno before they can manage to reach safety without injury. If this roll is failed, another player character can make *Perception* (difficulty 2) and *Athletics* (difficulty 2) rolls to run back into danger and help. Should even this assistance not succeed, the player character will suffer 2 L damage.

While the player characters consider their next step and possibly attempt to fight the fires or aid their friends, the following will occur without warning:

Suddenly, you hear a deafening boom as the kite is gutted by a massive explosion amidships. Wooden shards and splinters rush past you and the burning ship is now seconds from snapping in half.

As your ringing ears recover, you notice that the remnants of the flyer are dropping rapidly, and you can now hear the screams of several sailors falling to their doom!

The fire reached the powder kegs the vessel was carrying, causing them to explode. The force of the explosion snapped the wooden hull in half. While the two large and many smaller pieces of the vessel aren't falling like rocks, being made of liftwood after

all, the severe damage of the explosion and the complete loss of balance due to the bisection of the hull still mean the descent is very steep.

The Crash

The crash of the remains of the flyer can no longer be prevented by the player characters. Now they must see to their own survival. As luck would have it, they are still aboard one of the two larger sections and have not been thrown overboard by the explosion, unlike the less fortunate half of the people on board. If they seek a means of escape, a *Perception* roll will reveal the following:

Standard Action:

Perception (Difficulty 2)

Failure: Everything is spinning and falling. There is no hope of making out anything meaningful.

1 Success: The ship will crash into the canal bend that lies below. Freefalling sailors and passengers cannot survive the fall from a height of far more than 300 feet (100 m), but the liftwood fragments are falling much more slowly.

2 Successes: The canal is not carrying a lot of water at this time of year. One of the larger hull sections should fall into the waters, the rest will crash in the exposed dry canal bottom. The water might cushion the fall somewhat.

3 Successes: Some of the fragments are falling slower than others, possibly because their antigravitic properties have been less degraded by the damage for some reason. Their crash should be much more survivable.

4+ Successes: The player character can spot caves or houses built into the wall of the canal bend beneath them. They can even see the movements of small (but rapidly growing in size) people on the ground.

Depending on the successes and the resulting observations, each player character can then describe how they will attempt to avoid certain death in the crash.

- A freefall from this height on Mars will cause 10 L damage. Anyone who lets go of the fragments and jumps will suffer this damage (but only after a deliberate decision by the player in the face of appeals to their sense of self-preservation by the gamemaster).
- On/with a fragment, the damage will drop to 6 L. Simply holding on will be enough for this. One success on the *Perception* roll is sufficient to be aware of this, and no further action is required to simply hold on.
- Landing with the fragment falling into the water will only cause 4 L damage (2 successes on the *Perception* roll). Those who want to reach this fragment must succeed at a roll of *Strength* (Str × 2), *Athletics*, *Acrobatics*, or some other skill enabled by a brilliant idea (difficulty 2).
- Landing with one of the slowest moving fragments will only cause 2 L damage (3+ successes on *Perception*). This also requires an additional roll (as in the previous case) to reach such a fragment.

Scene 2 - In the Canal Village

After the first, action-fueled scene, things will be a bit quieter for now. The players should be given ample opportunity to express their characters, to interact socially, and, first and foremost, to explore the culture of the Canal Martians in this example village. Still, they must contend with distrust and find a way to survive the situation.

The Rescue

The crash is inevitably going to be uncomfortable. Should someone die due to injuries suffered in the fight and/or by recklessly jumping to their death, it is recommended to keep a few sample characters on hand as replacements. These were also aboard and conveniently had a bit more luck during the crash and thus survived it. It is up to the gamemaster to decide how many survivors there were in the crash, but if in doubt, declare that only the player characters survived, for simplicity.

The player characters will soon notice that someone is helping them: Martians in unfamiliar robes and armor are pulling them from the water or burning wreckage, splinting broken limbs, bandaging wounds, and keeping them stable and hydrated. If they had not perceived it before, they will now realize that they are in a bend of the canal that is only partially filled with water. The face of the steep canal wall features many openings and small constructions: A kind of cave village, rising up about 160 feet (50 meters) from the bottom of the canal!

The characters will be brought into the cool interior, where Martians are speaking exclusively in Parhooni (from the Gaaryani family of languages).

The Reception

After the most immediate injuries are seen to and questions are answered, the player characters will be brought to the palace of the local high priest of the Canal Keeper religion. He will decide what should be done with the survivors. The guards will be friendly to them, and the player characters should notice that life is seen as holy here. But the fear of a High Martian reprisal is also a factor. The player characters should come into contact with some of the guards, healers, curious Canal Martians, and also the following characters, each of which speaks a little bit of English, or possibly German:

- **Captain Tymal** (Large, athletic, broad build, metal breastplate, leather arm and shin guards, refined facial features, a long black pony tail, hot-headed, honorable, faithful, up-standing, brave, in love with Dejaara) is the leader of about two dozen temple guards of the cave village, and thus holds the position of military commander, bodyguard of the high priest, and police constable. He is a natural-born, proud warrior who is respected by all and submits willingly to the wisdom of the canal priests. He was instrumental in the rescue of the player characters and directed those efforts.
- **Healer Dejaara** (fair skin, fiery red hair, elven beauty, ornate garb with water symbols, curious, happy, peaceful, artistic) is a novice of the Canal Keeper religion. She has cared for the wounds of the player characters and is very curious about the humans, for she has never seen or spoken with one. Even

so, she managed to learn some heavily accented English. She will always speak her mind, in particular when it comes to stating her distaste for violence.

- **High Priest Maajaras** (old, fine white hair, always seems worried and contemplative, wise, restrained, generous) is the highest-ranking priest and unofficial leader of the village. The citizens trust his judgement and decisions as though he were the village elder. He honors traditions and is of very strong faith.

The Canal Keepers - The Religion of the Cave Village

The religion of the Canal Keepers is widespread among the Canal Martians: When Emperor Seldon and his descendants partially restored the lost and damaged canals of the ancient Canal Builders, beginning about 2,000 BC, they did not just create a Mars-wide Empire, but also a religion that viewed water as the holy life force of Mars and took on the task of maintaining the ancient canals and related facilities. Back then, it was the major state religion, but today—long after the fall of the Seldon Empire—it is without worldly power, though still widespread, especially amongst the villages along the canals.

To this day, the priests view the water and the canals as holy and perform the maintenance rituals for the ancient machines and pumping stations, as well as caring for the old monasteries, temples, and wells. Here, in the cave village, the word of the local high priest is a holy commandment. He and the other canal priests are treated with the utmost respect and the armed forces are absolutely loyal to the canal priests. Though nominally the Canal Prince of the nearest, far away city-state is their official ruler, this only concerns taxes and tolls. For actual decisions, the high priest is the one consulted.

The high priest will openly state that he fears a return of the High Martians and that they will demand that all survivors of the crash be handed over for slaughter or enslavement. If the village refuses, it may well face an attack of its own by the wild air pirates. He and the remaining priests have not yet come to a decision, but will offer the player characters a chance to speak. He will ask them to offer a reason why they are worth risking the life of everyone in the village by protecting them. He will calmly listen and seriously consider what the player characters say, but he will remain skeptical.

As the high priest does with the player characters, the gamemaster can now look from player to player and ask for an answer. Depending on the reply, the gamemaster can grant a bonus or penalty on the following *Diplomacy* roll (i.e. adding or subtracting dice). If presented with a clever idea, he may even allow the use

of other skills (such as *Academics*, *Empathy*, or *Intimidation*). The individual rolls should be treated as part of an Extended Action, with each player making one roll going around the table:

Extended Action:

Diplomacy +/- modifiers (Difficulty of each roll is 2, required overall threshold successes 5, 5 minutes per roll as the high priest will not let any single player character speak for longer than that)

If, after one such ‘round’ (of one answer per player character), they accrue 5 or more threshold successes, the high priest’s gaze will turn compassionate, but he will still announce that he has not yet decided. He will retire to deliberate with the other priests. Until then, the player characters are to be guests. They may move freely inside the cave village, and will be assigned the cheerful Dejaara as a guide. They may even leave the village, but only under guard.

Should the total threshold successes be less than 5, the gamemaster should describe the high priest turning sour against the player characters. In this case, they will be treated as prisoners and guarded every step they take inside the village. They may not leave, and instead of Dejaara, they must content with the much gruffer Tymal as a guide.

On the Canal Floor

During this low-flow season, the canal carries very little water: Only a small part at the center of the one-mile-wide (almost 2 km) canal is filled with water. The villagers seem to be using the slightly inclined canal bottom as **fields**: Thanks to the ground water, vegetables, grain and even small groves of sweet, exotic fruits grow here. By Martian standards, this is an oasis of immense vitality that yields enough to live off. At other times of the year, these fields are flooded, though this only makes them more fertile and yielding, similarly to the fields by the Earth river Nile.

The **wreckage of the merchant vessel** can be found scattered across the canal floor: One large piece of it rises out from the water, the other lies smashed across the fields. Many small pieces are spread wide and far. If the player characters (under the supervision of two guards each!) wish to go there and search the wreckage for gear or friends, the gamemaster can allow them to find the gear and even the bodies they seek. Those dead that were lying in the open have already been gathered by the village Martians, however, and interred in the crypts deep inside the caves.

The Cave Village

Usually, canal villages are located on top of the canal banks, even along the side canals. This setup is different, architecturally: It had been designed millennia ago, possibly even by the Canal Builders themselves. Here the canal cuts across a series of hills, whose flanks serve as levees. In one such 160-foot-high (50 m) side wall, the openings of a cave system are apparent. Inside, it has clearly been artificially dug: The domed hallways and rooms are too regular, too geometric in their shape. It is likely they were dug with the same technology that was once used to carve or burn the canals into the soil, except on a much smaller scale.

At the canal bank level, there is just one large **gate**: an apparently natural opening into which a heavy wooden gate has been set, seemingly centuries ago. Surprisingly, it can be opened and closed with a simple, but still functioning water-powered ma-

chine. It is always guarded by 4 guards. This is where the player characters were brought into the village. Behind it is a small room with a single exit, a spiral stair leading up to the village’s caves. Clearly this room and the stairs are meant to flood when the canal overflows during Flood season.

Inside, the settlement is constituted of a maze of large, domed **hallways** of about 13 feet (4 m) diameter. All are lit up by strange gas lamps set into the walls. Some lead deep into the interior of the rock, others lead upwards in a spiral, and some do both at once with mild inclines or staircases.

The **living areas** lie exclusively along the outside wall, where daylight can enter and light up the homes. Some of the homes feature alcoves extending out from the rock wall, and include several windows in different directions. While the farmers and laborers live mostly on the lower levels, the nobles, canal priests, scholars, and warriors can be found further up. At the top, about 100 feet (30 m) above the canal bank level, are a few **pillared colonnades** where all villagers can enjoy a stroll. These can be reached through hallways from the interior and serve as public recreational spaces and forums. The **chambers of the High Priest** lie above that. These are easily spotted from the outside because of an impressive balcony. Above even that, 160 feet (50 m) high up and just below the top of the canal wall, lie the **guard platforms**. Two or three warriors are always on watch here and scan the Martian sky for enemies. The rooms behind these feature wooden ladders allowing one to scale the final stretch to the plains at the top of the canal wall.

Much deeper inside the interior, **storage and larders** can be found alongside some of the more important rooms:

Below the level of the canal floor lies a large **step well**. Staircases lead downwards many stories along the walls of a square hole of about 30 feet (10 m) diameter. At its bottom lies a water pool that is connected to the canal by a deep siphon. Depending on the season, the wa-ter level rises and falls, requiring more or fewer steps to reach the water. Currently, the water is very low, forcing one to walk down about four stories’ worth of stairs before reaching the crystal-clear water. The canal priests maintain this well, and the villagers honor—almost worship—it as the life-giving sanctum of the Mother Goddess at the Heart of Mars.

Above this well lies the **Temple of the Canal Keepers** which consists of the temple hall, a few side rooms, and the sanctum: **The Hall of the Emerald Waters**. The player characters will not be allowed to enter this hall until Scene 3. It is guarded by temple guards.

Canal Martian Temple Guard

Primary Attributes	
Body: 3	Dexterity: 3
Strength: 2	Charisma: 1
Intelligence: 2	Willpower: 2
Secondary Attributes	
Size: 0	Move: 5
Perception: 4	Initiative: 5
Defense: 5	Stun: 3
Health: 5	
Skills	
Brawl 3, Firearms 5, Intimidation 4, Melee 5	
Talents	
—	
Weapons	
Short sword 7 L, Punch 3 N, Flintlock pistol 8 L*	
*Range of 15 m, can only be fired every other turn with one reload action in between	

The Emerald Waters

Amongst the Martians

Dejaara, who speaks reasonably good English or German, will be shy at first, but will soon ask the player characters about their planet, their customs, and anything else she can think of. She is not naïve, but curious and ignorant of Earth history and customs. She is very sympathetic and should come across as such, though with firm beliefs (pacifism, helpfulness). Hopefully she should befriend the player characters. Dejaara is eager to learn and does so quickly. She might always be looking for new words in the language of the humans (to be supplied by the players) and to commit these to memory. The gamemaster should ensure that,

especially in the description of feelings and thoughts, Dejaara will be taught many new words by the players.

Tymal and the other Canal Martian villagers are only somewhat enthused about the player characters' successful resistance against the High Martians. Many fear a reprisal, and more gruesome attacks in the future. The player characters will face reluctance and will often be seen more as prisoners than guests, until the high priest makes his decision as to whether or not they may remain, or instead be handed over to the High Martians when they return. Tymal speaks only a little of the human languages, and only reluctantly so. Most of the villagers don't speak Earth languages at all. Thus, communication will be much more difficult than with Dejaara.

The Legacy of the Saarpak-Naado

These so-called Martian "pistol knights" are the legendary descendants of the former officers of the Seldonian armies, comparable to Earth's Paladins or Samurai. They were issued masterfully crafted revolvers (the 'Saarpaks') that today barely anyone knows how to make. Some less ancient examples still remain, mostly in the northern polar region, which is historically where the pistol knight tradition originated. In the northern Central Basin, where this adventure takes place, these weapons are as rare as they are admired for the ideals they stand for. They are considered legendary artifacts representing honor and the enforcement of law and justice. Many stories and legends tell of the Saarpak-Naado, who are honored as champions of another age, or even as superheroes. These spread to Earth, where penny dreadful novels such as "The Scarlet Naado" can be found. The pistol knights usually pass down their skills to apprentices, training them not unlike a Kung Fu master trains a disciple. These apprentices will often be children of the Naado, or students chosen for their exceptional aptitudes.

Until a few years ago, a pistol knight guarded the cave village: Rag Morkas, the father of Dejaara. For many generations, his ancestors were charged with training their children (sometimes sons, sometimes daughters) and to finally bestow upon them their genuine Saarpak from the Age of Seldon. He had defended the village against attack many times. He is the one who scarred War Chief Harrgarr's face, instilling in the latter a reluctance to launch attacks. Rag Morkas's beloved wife died in childbirth, leaving him with only one daughter, Dejaara. He raised her, with the help of the Canal Priests, and watched her grow and mature into a beautiful and peace-loving woman. With growing concern though, both he and the canal priests watched as she mastered the art of healing—but showed no sign of being a suitable successor to her father. Rag Morkas considered taking a new wife and fathering more children, but even after decades, he could not bring himself to let Dejaara's mother pass from his heart. Instead, he hoped that the young warrior Tymal would become a worthy son-in-law and, right until his death of old age some months ago, had attempted to set him up with his daughter. After his death, Dejaara

inherited the Saarpak and could have passed it on to her husband, a fully accepted interpretation of the tradition. But instead, Dejaara decided to join the order of the Canal Keepers as a novice. In this region, her elevation to priesthood, the conclusion of her chosen education, would preclude any kind of marriage.

And thus is the dilemma. Tymal, already captain of the guard, would love to take on the role of Saarpak-Naado—he is quite suited for it—but can't do so because of the technicalities of tradition. Were Dejaara to marry him, he would not only gain his heart's desire, but also be legitimized as the heir to the Saarpak and the position of Saarpak-Naado. But Dejaara not only refuses to take her legacy herself, because of her pacifism, but also insists that she will not marry, as this would preclude the completion of her training to priesthood. It is therefore for High Priest Majaaras to decide: He could deny Dejaara's elevation to priesthood, but—since she is a very studious novice—this would be a dangerous precedent and a breach of religious tradition. Tymal would prefer this choice, as it means he could marry her and become the Saarpak-Naado. The high priest could also allow Dejaara to pass the Saarpak on to Tymal without marrying him, giving him his blessing as the new Saarpak-Naado. Dejaara would prefer this path, as she likes Tymal but does not love him and dearly wishes to become a priestess. Majaaras is still undecided, for he doubts himself and is hesitant to grant the brave but hot-headed Tymal this office, as he might not yet be ready for it. Married life would help him find that readiness, he believes, but he doesn't want to force that on Dejaara. He still hopes that she will make that decision herself, and appeals to her responsibility as the daughter of the Saarpak-Naado. In the meantime, he prays for inspiration from the Goddess at the Heart of the Planet, spends hours over the holy waters of the step well, and ponders. All the while, the end of Dejaara's studies approaches closer and closer, and Tymal's patience is wearing thin.

Worse yet, the High Martian War Chief is starting to suspect that the old Saarpak-Naado is no longer among the living. This is another reason he wants to return to the village to find out if his suspicion is correct, and whether he can once more risk an attack against the Canal Martians.

The gamemaster can introduce the players to some aspects of the Canal Martian culture and current events:

- Introduce the religion of the Canal Keepers (see sidebar on p. 212).
- Show the religious customs of the Martians. Especially the way water is viewed as holy and forms the center point of many rites: Prayers are uttered when water is fetched from the well, for example.
- Summarize the incomplete knowledge of the Canal Martians about their ancestors the Canal Builders and the later Seldon Empire (in particular, note that their technology is seen as almost ‘magical’).
- When questioned about the lights in the hallway walls, the villagers will answer that the marsh gas seeps from the depths of the rock. The Canal Keepers claim that an ancient system of the Canal Builders was designed to turn all the excrements

of the village (which are disposed of into narrow, deep holes) into this gas.

- Emphasize how these villagers fear the High Martians: While the rock wall offers some protection, they are peaceful in nature and only have very few armed guards. These wouldn’t be able to stand for long against a swarm of flying High Martians.
- Explain, through Dejaara, at least in part, the web of relationships between Dejaara, Captain Tymal, and High Priest Maajaras (see sidebar).
- Dejaara will mention that she will be ordained as a priestess soon, in a ceremony involving the ‘Emerald Waters’. If questioned about this, she will say that these waters are holy and that it is forbidden to speak further about them to the uninitiated. It is a vital part of the elevation to priesthood, but no one else is allowed to see them.

Scene 3 - The Secret of the Emerald Waters

This mysterious scene should showcase the wonders of ancient Martian Technologies to the players: The setting of *Space: 1889*, and in particular Mars, offers many secrets and challenges cloaked in myths and the fantastic.

The Decision of the Canal Priest

At last, the time has come: A priest is sent to bring the player characters before the High Priest.

The three-domed temple hall with its vaulted rooves is larger than some city churches. It is lined by statue pillars of Martians that don’t just appear ancient, but also to be moving somehow: Water runs down carefully placed grooves along them to give the illusion of life. The high priest and several more of his Canal Keepers, wearing ceremonial robes, are waiting by the altar.

Guards, priests and many villagers are gathered here. The high priest begins to speak:

“It is our firm conviction that life must be cherished. But that also means that we must consider how best to guard the life of our village against the cruel High Martians. Some of the priests therefore wish to hand you strangers over, citing that your lives might yet be preserved this way, albeit in slavery. Others consider the principle of guarding life to be so holy that they would rather doom themselves than hand you over. There was no clear and simple choice. I therefore declare that the Emerald Waters of our sanctum will test you.”

A murmur rises from the gathered crowd at this, and some seem aghast.

The waters, as Dejaara will explain afterwards, are located in the inner sanctum of the temple. Usually, only priests and those aspiring to priesthood are allowed inside. The water, glowing emerald green, is said to test and confirm the purity of young aspirants. It can reportedly read the thoughts of the subjects and determine if these are vile or pure. As it is a holy place, many resent the notion that outsiders, humans even (at least some of them), are to be allowed entrance into the pool. But the High Priest Maajaaras insists that this is the only way for him to determine “whether the strangers are worthy of their protection”. The test is to begin immediately, and the guards are called upon to take the player characters to the inner sanctum to begin preparations. For now, they will be separated from Dejaara.

The Chamber of Purity

The guards will lead the heroes through an area with many turning passages that run along-side the temple hall. Finally, they will enter a chamber without furniture apart from a stone bench running along the wall all the way around. The player characters will remain here while the guards wait outside and prevent them from leaving.

There is no indication of what will be demanded of them. The players are free to discuss what they think is going to happen next, and what kind of ‘test’ they will be facing.

Before they can initiate any escape plans or lose track of time in deep discussions, several novices carrying water bowls will enter the room, one of them Dejaara. They will be silent (and apart from Dejaara won’t speak any human languages anyway) and will gesture to indicate that the player characters should partially disrobe to be cleansed (they may keep their underwear if they insist).

Dejaara will be the only one to speak to explain what to do, and even that reluctantly, quietly, and with as few words as possible; the other novices will look daggers at her if they notice. Those who succeed on an *Empathy* roll (difficulty 2) will realize that this ritual is meant to be conducted in solemn silence, and that spoken words, especially those in foreign languages, are unwelcome. Even so, Dejaara will seek to help the player characters understand. She will share her knowledge of the Emerald Waters in the form of whispers or instructions on how to behave during the cleansing.

Each player character may attempt to cover for her in some fashion (distractions, etc.). For each successful roll of a suitable skill such as *Diplomacy*, *Empathy*, *Investigation*, or *Stealth* (each at difficulty 3), she can pass along one of the following:

- The Emerald Waters are a test designed by the ‘Ancients’ (Canal Builders) to determine purity of spirit.
- It is one of the magics left behind by the Canal Builders. No one alive today commands such magics.
- The priests view it as their holy duty to test those they wish to allow into their ranks.
- The waters can detect emotions: Fear, hate, rage, deceitfulness, but also love, trust, and peacefulness.
- It is said they will show these thoughts as reflections on their surface.

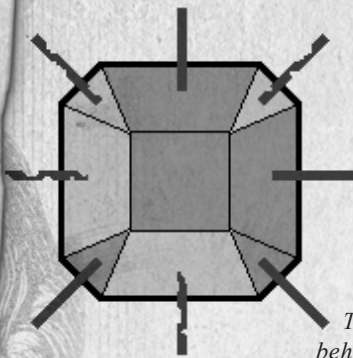
- The power and intensity of these images can be devastating. It is also said that some novices have despaired and lost their minds when confronted with the evils of their inner selves.
- A large part of the training of novices is therefore dedicated to helping them find this inner peace in order to endure the Emerald Waters.
- She will express regret that the player characters have so little time to learn and prepare. To survive, they must focus on the good inside themselves.
- The source of this power is said to lie in an ancient artifact, a crystal at the very bottom of the pool.
- The water in the pool will glow with a shifting, intense bright green. The images will be clearest and most powerful in the brighter parts of the pool.

The Chamber of the Emerald Waters

After the cleansing, the player characters will be fetched by the priests and led to the inner sanctum behind the temple hall, stepping through the metal gates into a room beyond. It turns out to be a natural-seeming cavern, though it almost exactly takes the shape of a perfect sphere: The domed roof makes up one half, while the hemispherical pool forms the bottom half. The pool is filled with glowing, emerald green, crystal-clear water that is the only light source in the room. The room has a diameter of 40 feet (12 m), and thus the ceiling rises 20 feet (6 m) above the water at its highest point, while the pool is 20 feet (6 m) deep at its lowest point.

A gallery leads around the room: Windows will allow witnesses in a hallway outside the room to watch the event. The gathered canal priests are waiting there with anticipation. Those who examine the water will see the source of the green light: A roughly lemon-sized crystal set into the bottom of the pool.

The Test



The novices fetched you from the cleansing room and now lead you into an almost spherical room. The bottom half is a hemispherical pool of crystal-clear water, glowing emerald green. The upper half forms a dome above this room and is lit only by the shimmering light of the waters. The dome features several windows, behind which the canal priests are

watching you intently.

The player characters will now be told to enter the water fully, one at a time. If they do so, nothing will seem to happen at first. After a few minutes, however, the light reflections on the ceiling will form images: Short impressions lasting only a fraction of a second at first, but growing in length as time passes. The player characters will recognize their own memories.

There are several techniques that can be used to pass this test:

The Path of Cunning: A player character who has learned about the crystal artifact at the bottom of the pool from Dejaara, and who notices it with a *Perception* roll (difficulty 3) or realizes that the intensity of the green light differs in some areas of the

The Secret of the Emerald Waters

The most important technology of the ancient Canal Builders was the crystal one. They de-vised many kinds of crystals. Many focused and stored up light, releasing it as soothing warmth, illumination, or devastating rays of destruction, while others could store or transfer images. The most advanced crystals could even store thoughts and replay them for others. The crystal in the water is a combination of thought and image crystal, part of a larger ma-chine buried beneath the pool, that can make one's thoughts and emotions visible. The clear water enables the crystal to read these thoughts without being touched, and to project the images onto the domed ceiling.

The machine under the bottom of the pool will 'read' the thoughts and mind of any sapient being that steps into the pool and remains there for a short while, and project them as images through the crystal.

This will result in a fragmented succession of scenes and images displaying emotions, memories, and dreams. The priests in the gallery will watch these images and judge the soul of the subject.

To the ancient Canal Builders, this crystal was a research project into the combination of im-age and thought crystals. Whether this research was considered successful, why it was done, and whether there exist other such crystals are matters better left to other stories. This crystal, meanwhile, was discovered by the Canal Priests during the Age of Seldon, when many lost pieces of ancient technology were being rediscovered or rebuilding attempts were made. But even that was millennia ago, and today the priests view the waters as a holy and hallowed place.

pool by passing a *Perception* roll (difficulty 2), can react to this. With an *Athletics* roll (difficulty 2), they can dive down to the crystal and examine it (at which point the gamemaster will show the player the image below). They will be able to see 'conduits' in the facets of the crystal that lead into the floor: A hint at an even larger machine below. Some of these conduits appear to be weakened by corrosion and decay. Those sections of the crystal that they connect to have a much paler glow (see image)—and the water in the relevant direction does likewise. This means that there are regions inside the pool where thoughts can barely be read, which can be used to the group's advantage: Those who stay in those areas (far right, left, or near the entrance into the pool) will avoid having their thoughts read and nothing from their mind will be projected onto the ceiling. This allows characters that are less empathetic or strong-willed than they are aggressive to circumvent the test. The group will be able to quietly confer, discuss, and arrange to have their most gentle-minded members stay in the areas that have the deepest green, seemingly by accident. Only they will

need to roll (see **The Path of Wisdom**). The gamemaster should demand *Stealth* or *Diplomacy* rolls during such coordination to prevent the priests from realizing what's happening. If the priests do suspect deception, they will command all player characters to stay near the center of the pool, where the green is a full, deep emerald glow (see the image of the crystal). If *all* player characters avoid the deep green areas, no images will be projected into the ceiling and the priests will likewise realize that something is wrong and direct the group into the center.

The Path of Intellect: Using the knowledge of the existence of the conduits on the floor of the pool, it is possible to manipulate them. Though none of the player characters is likely to be well-versed in Martian crystal technology, metal cables are known on Earth, too (though these are probably conducting something other than electricity, as entering these waters could otherwise be lethal). With a successful *Athletics* roll (difficulty 2) to dive down and a suitable roll of *Science* or *Craft* (player's choice) or *Larceny* (difficulty 2 in either case), the player character can destroy or manipulate one conduit per success, using the lower number of successes of both rolls. Destroying a conduit will turn the relevant section pale (see above), and even one destroyed conduit will do the same for the center area, which the priests will not notice for now. But other tampering is also possible, such as diverting a conduit to another area; it's all up to the player character. Should all remaining four conduits be destroyed, the images won't cease. Instead, they will be replaced

with a placeholder loop of peaceful images of harmony. This will be read as a successful test.

The Path of Wisdom: The player characters can also forgo any tampering and instead focus on the good inside themselves, or somehow control their thoughts and limit what the images on the ceiling will show. This will require a roll suitable to the approach taken, such as *Empathy*, *Diplomacy*, *Con*, *Courage* (Will × 2), *Influence* (Cha × 2) or even other skills determined by the gamemaster, each with a difficulty of 5, though this can be lowered to 2 if the player characters received sufficient advice from Dejaara (again determined by the gamemaster depending on the outcome of the events in the chamber of cleansing). With a success, the images on the ceiling will show the most harmonic and virtuous sides of the player characters. If more than half the group succeeds, the canal priests will judge the test passed.

Each of these paths will allow the player characters to use several suitable skills to aid each other, such as by helping others dive, working the conduits on the crystal, or helping others concentrate on wholesome thoughts. The gamemaster can therefore quickly explain and offer to use the rules for *Skill Synergy* and *Teamwork* (see **Space 1889: Core Rules**, p. 151).

Skill Synergies: For each additional suitable skill rating of 4+ the player character knows, add 2 dice to the roll (maximum +10 dice).

Teamwork: Every character assisting with a skill rating of 4+ adds 2 dice to the roll of the active character (maximum +10 dice).

Scene 4 - The Return of the High Martians

This final scene is once more full of action and should put the player characters at the center of events. They will be allowed to solve the central conflict of the adventure on their own terms and enact vengeance for the original attack on the kite.

The Initial Situation

Depending on how the player characters did during the test, the player characters may now be accepted by the canal priests as guests—without reservation. In this case, the guards will call for them and Tymal to come to the observation posts. Otherwise, it will have been decided that they should be sacrificed to hopefully stay the wrath of the High Martians and save the village. In this case, they will be tied to the rock of the canal wall near one of the guard platforms. Like Andromeda awaiting the sea monster Cetus, they will then initially be helpless before the coming attack. Either way, they will see the following:

In the dark blue Martian sky above the canal, you see a familiar sight: A black cloud is headed straight towards you. There is no doubt this time that these are the returning High Martians.

The guards will prepare for battle immediately, positioning themselves on the entrances in the canal wall, readying ammunition and weapons, while shouts of alarm ring through the cave village. The civilians are evacuated into the interior hallways.

Presenting the Saarpak

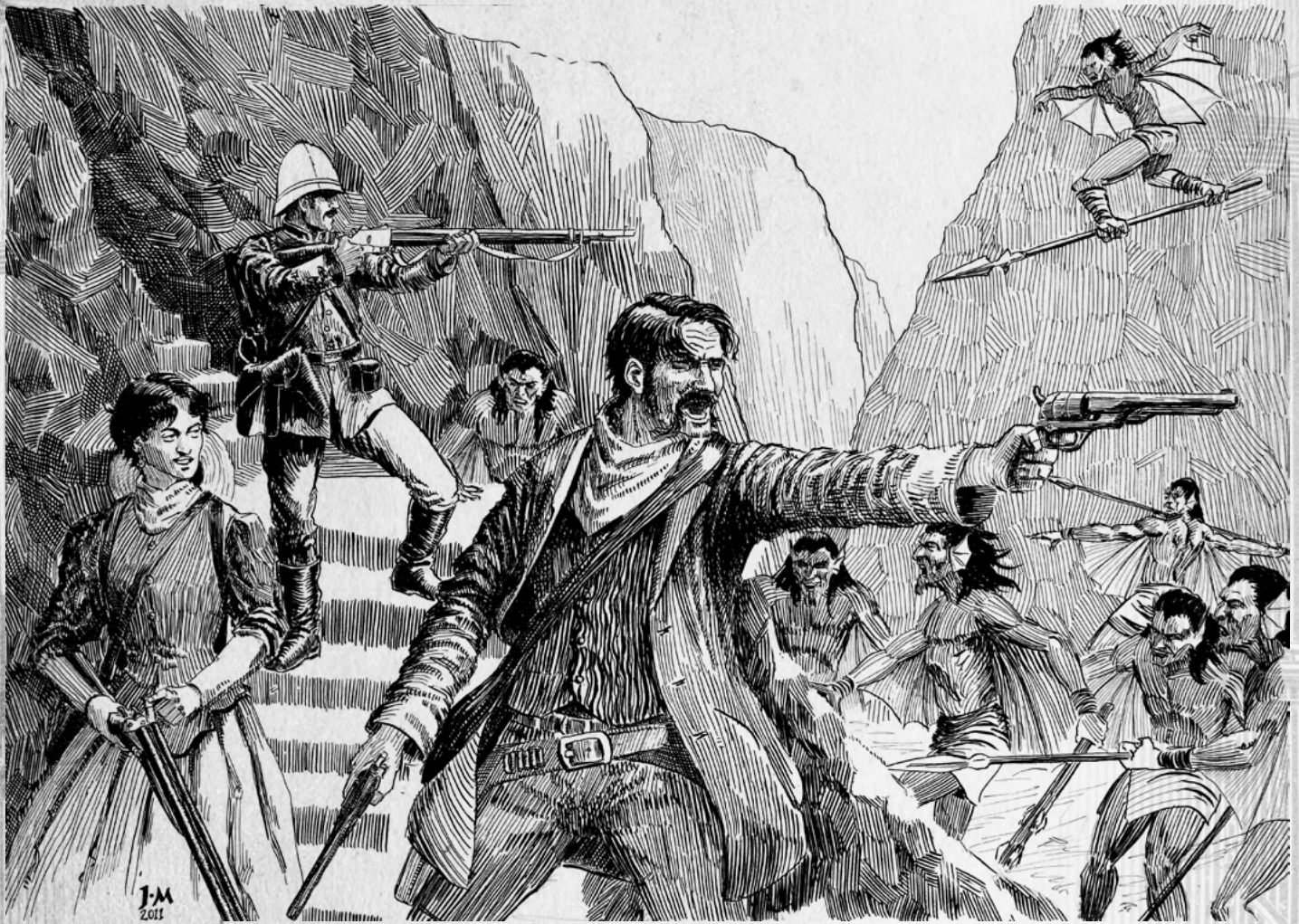
Once more, Dejaara will come to the aid of the player characters: Regardless of whether they are standing with the guards or are tied

to the wall, she will reach the player characters at the beginning of the combat (for dramatic effect, possibly only after a few turns). If she must first free them, this will take 1 turn per player character. Then she will hand her father's Saarpak to a player character who she has learned to trust above all or whose combat skills she judges highest. Wrapped in embroidered cloth and polished as though it were fresh from the forge, she will surrender the symbolically charged weapon. For extra drama, she will be struck by a High Martian attack immediately after, surviving or dying based on the next actions of the player characters.

The Saarpak (Artifact 1)

Saarpaks are legendary examples of ancient Martian weapons design. These reliable revolvers were first forged for the officers of the Seldon Emperors. The secrets of their design are only known to few weapon smiths these days. The Saarpak of Rag Morkas was sculpted to fit the grip of its first wielder and features a handle of fine skrill bone with delicate wooden inlays. The mechanism resembles that of an American Colt, but the ignition is performed by an exotic friction lock. Saarpaks are muzzle loaders, and each chamber of their cylinder must be loaded by hand, resulting in extremely long reloading times. But Saarpaks are very powerful and possess a very long range. They are also amongst the most accurate of all Martian weapons and surpass even Earth pistols in this regard. Martian folklore is full of stories and legends about magical Saarpaks and their famous wielders.

Artifact	Dmg	Str	Rng	Cap	Rate	Spd	Weight
Saarpak	4 L	2	80 ft/25 m	6(r)	M	A	2 lbs/1 kg



The Final Battle

This time, the High Martian horde will attack the village from the air. The guards will have taken position on the various balconies, guard platforms, and windows to defend the village. The player characters are also told to seek such a position (assuming they are not tied up).

Each player character should be confronted with 3 High Martians, and this should include the overconfident War Chief Hargarr (statistics as before on p. 211). The gamemaster should direct the battle into a final showdown, with some of the following scenes along the way:

- A defending guard falls to his death from a high balcony, screaming.
- A High Martian gathers rocks to throw at the player characters from above.
- Some High Martians break through a guard post and enter the village proper. They must be stopped before they reach the civilians!
- A child from the village was eager to see the guards in battle and has snuck onto one of the balconies where the High Martians will attack them as easy prey should they spot them.

- A stoically praying, pacifist canal priest is mercilessly hacked down by the High Martians.
- Captain Tymal is fighting off several High Martians in a berserker rage, but there are too many—he needs help!

As soon as the War Chief sees and hears the Saarpak firing, he will be gripped by fear again—and even his warriors will shy away from the legendary weapon. The War Chief will restrict himself to defensive actions from then on, but should be dispatched, by Saarpak or other means, by the player characters before the end. Once he is down, the rest of the High Martians will rout and not return.

Monstrous Company

If the gamemaster feels the battle could use one more “big boss fight”, then the High Martians can release a captured and broken Martian predator beast. The wihidrakkar (or Martian Wyvern, see p. 154 for stats) has a dragon-like appearance and is extremely venomous. Blasting this beast out of the sky with the Saarpak will have a similar effect on the enemies’ morale as shooting the War Chief himself.

Epilogue

With the aid of the player characters, the village is saved. The High Martian War Chief lies dead. The villagers can once again feel safe, and their community has survived. The canal priests will not deny Dejaara any longer, if she is still alive, and will elevate her to priesthood very soon. They will also—though it goes against some traditions—declare Tymal the heir of the Saarpak-Naado. It will not be difficult to continue the journey, in a few days' time, on the next passing flyer or canal ship.

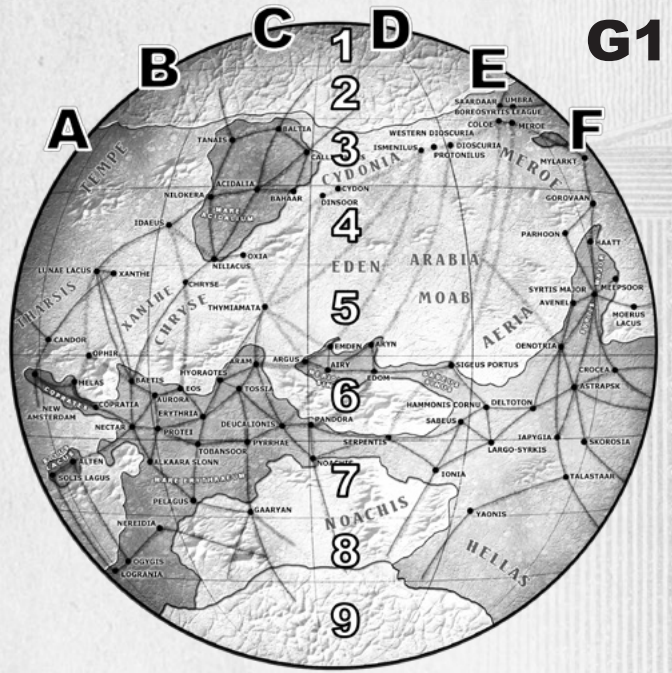
This could be the beginning of a campaign with the player characters as the unusual heirs and successors of the Saarpak-Naado: They have proven their morality and skill in battle, and High Priest Maajas could make them this offer. This would mean one of the player characters becomes the bearer of the Saarpak, with the others their companions and deputies. Together, they will ward off even greater threats to the Martians and maybe run into even greater secrets of the Canal Builders.



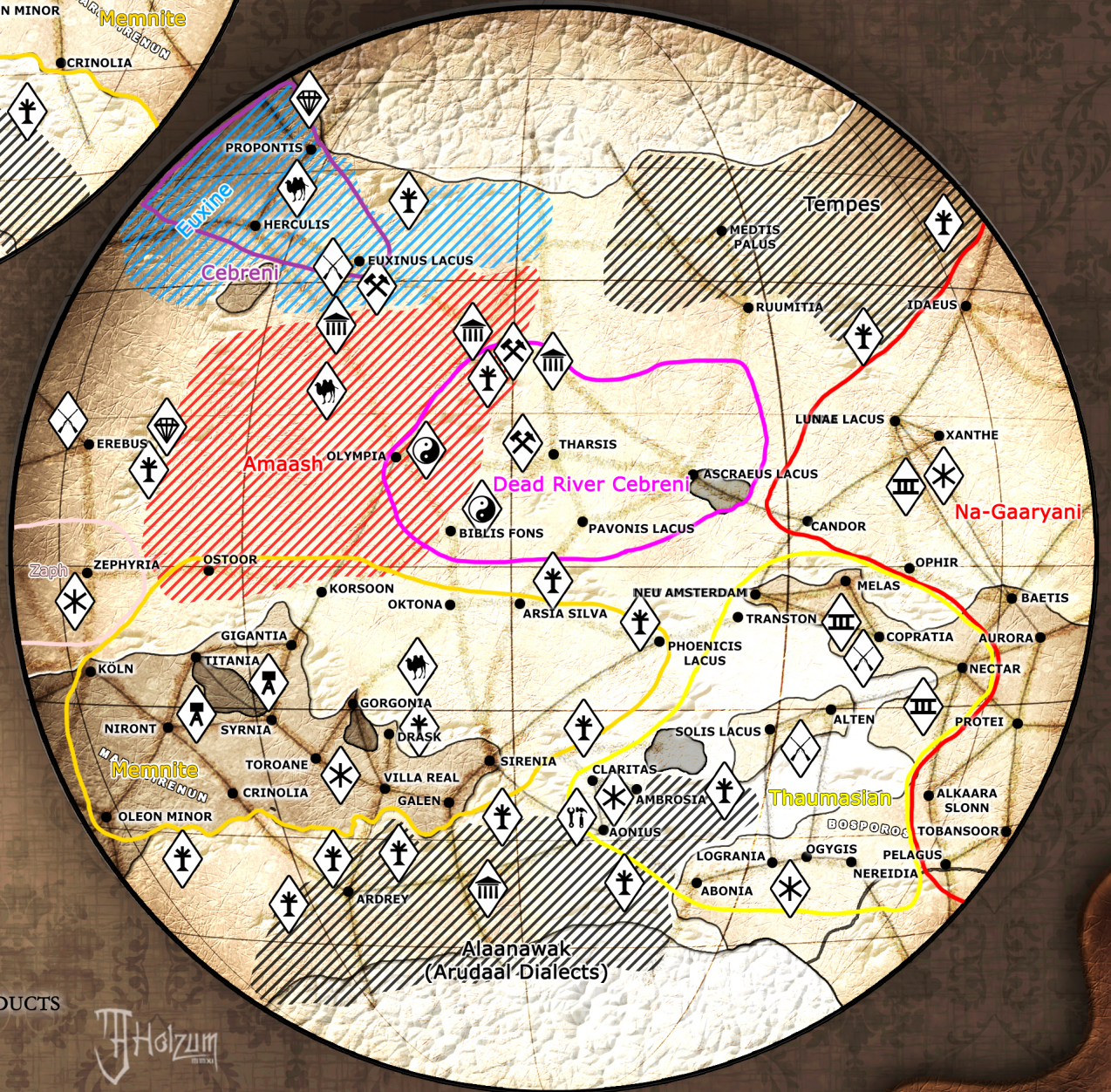
The Emerald Waters

Index

Geographical terms and cities that appear on the Three Faces of Mars maps in the **Appendix** are noted with a coordinate set in addition to their page numbers to allow for a quick location on the map. For this, **G1** refers to the left, **G2** to the center and **G3** to the right-hand map. The digits **1 through 9** indicate the latitude and **A, B, C, and D** the longitude of a location.



LANGUAGES & RESOURCES OF
MARS



- LIFTWOOD
- GEMS
- GUMME
- OIL
- RUINED CITY (ARTIFACTS)
- MANUFACTURING / INDUSTRY
- SPICES / TEA / AGRICULTURE
- MINING (COAL, METALS)
- ART / CULTURE / RELIGION / POLITICS
- WEAPONS (-TECHNOLOGY)
- ANIMALS / TROPHIES / ANIMAL PRODUCTS