

THE HOUSE OF BONE & AMBER

AN ADVENTURE FOR SPEARS OF THE DAWN



BY KEVIN CRAWFORD

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In Paraku, a festering bitterness between the native Lokossans and the heirs of a sorcerous slavery threatens to explode in blood and ruin. By the circumstances of their arrival the adventurers have a chance to save the town from its own legacy of bitter hates- or condemn it to a new and hideous unlife.

It has been forty years since the end of the Long War here on the borders of Lokossa, where the darkness of the southern jungles fades out into the golden grasses of the Meruan savannah. Paraku's eldest priest, the zealous Upright Osaze, has recently discovered a book of secrets written by the Old Lord Akhen, the damnable Eternal lord who once ruled Paraku in the days of the Long War. In this book he has learned of a bowl of green stone that the Old Lord once possessed, one that could bind the souls of the dead to their unwilling flesh and the corpse-slave into obedience. In this bowl, Upright Osaze sees the key to scourging the damnable Sun Faithful who threaten to turn Paraku from the path of the Spirit Way and the faith of their ancestors. Paraku will belong to the beloved of the gods once more, and the soldiers of the dead will make it so.

But he must acquire both the bowl and a sufficient supply of fresh bodies if he is to drive the Sun Faithful from the city. The priest is certain that the bowl is still retained by the eldest of the Nebeti, the strange Deshrite-blooded heirs of the Old Lord's servants. As the Nebeti are followers of the old Deshrite gods and doubtless secret followers of the Gods Below already, Upright Osaze finds it pleasing to take both the bowl and their lives from the heathens, and let their corpses be the warriors his cause requires.

Ever since they were drawn unwillingly to the Old Lord's service a hundred and forty years ago, the Nebeti have dwelled in their own quarter of Paraku, apart from their Lokossan fellows. They keep their own laws and own customs, and their elder's word is unquestioned among them- openly, at least. Their unity has

been shaken by a schism between the old elder, Menes Qar, and the young renegade Nebet known as Laughing Seth. Menes cared only for maintaining the customs of his people, and Laughing Seth suffered dearly when his family was cast out for breaking a taboo.

Laughing Seth has become a thief and an extortioner, and he and his poor Nebeti fellows threaten the local merchants with robbery or worse if they do not give food and relief to the impoverished Nebet laborers. Last night, Menes summoned Laughing Seth to a meeting by the amber pits outside town to warn him discreetly that he must stop his thieving, lest he drive the Lokossans to violence. The young man's answer was a knife in Menes' back, and he left the elder's corpse to be discovered by the amber diggers at dawn.

Now Menes' young daughter Kiya Qar is the elder of the Nebeti, and she does not know what to do. Menes' discretion leaves her uncertain of his murderer's identity, but she suspects Laughing Seth. Her father was a friend to the Lokossan Oba Awosi, but so long as the Nebeti extortioners run unchecked, the Oba can do little to protect the Nebeti from the fury of the townfolk. The poor Nebeti love Laughing Seth better than they love her, and she has no allies able to prove the renegade's evil deeds.

This quarrel is just what Upright Osaze desires. He blows on the flames, fanning them with his railings and his condemnation of the Nebeti dogs. First he will have his loyal followers seize the green stone bowl from Kiya Qar. Then he will ensure such a slaughter as to give him an army of corpses fit to drive the Sun Faithful of Paraku out to die in the western jungles..

Kiya, Laughing Seth, and the Oba Awosi all have cause to seek the adventurers' aid. Only outsiders can be trusted to be free of the web of hates and old bitterness that tangles Paraku. But can they avert this disaster in time, or will the dead past prove a heavier burden than any outsiders can bear?

USING THIS ADVENTURE

Spears of the Dawn is built on the assumptions of a sandbox game. It is expected that PCs should have the freedom to go where they please and do what they see fit to accomplish their goals. As a general campaign philosophy, this approach works perfectly well for many groups.

The House of Bone and Amber is a more conventional adventure, however. It makes certain assumptions about the players' involvement and presumes that once events begin in Paraku the PCs will not suddenly take it in their heads to leave town or ignore the impending local disaster. This can leave it as a distinct change of tone compared to the usual focus of a sandbox campaign.

The best way to deal with this potential shift in tones is to communicate clearly with your players and make sure they're actually interested in dealing with these events. Springing the hook for this adventure on them without warning might well lead to them overlooking it in favor of their current goals. They're much more likely to participate in events if they know

that there's something to engage and have agreed that the party will engage with it.

Even after the adventure of the green stone bowl is complete, Paraku can serve as a convenient base of operations for border adventures in Lokossa and Meru. Its legacy of Eternal rule gives ample justification for nearby districts full of tomb-houses and ruined towns, and the Night Men are a constant threat to the inhabitants. If the city has been crippled by violent civil discord, they might be all the more in need of heroes to hold back a hostile world until local disputes can be resolved.

If the adventure itself doesn't suit your group, you can also simply carve out the pieces and drop them into your own campaign as needed. The dungeon sections of the module are all designed to be easily separated for individual use, and the city of Paraku can make an appearance almost anywhere in Lokossa. Even if you do decide to run the adventure, take a moment to note those parts of the module that the PCs never encountered. You can always use those bits later.

FIGURES OF IMPORTANCE

MENES QAR

Deceased level 7 Nganga

The former headman of the Nebeti community, Menes Qar (“MAY-nays KAR”) was a hard and unmerciful man in life. He was absolutely dedicated to the survival of his people and their customs and could be ruthless about exiling those Nebeti who failed to perform the costly rites and obey the intricate taboos of their ancestors. Many among the poorest Nebeti deeply resented these burdens, as they lacked the money to perform the rites as Menes expected. Still, the wealthier Nebeti strongly approved of his vigorous defense of their interests to the Parakuans, and all expected him to live to a ripe old age in his rule.

That expectation was cut short by Laughing Seth’s knife. Last night, the renegade Nebet murdered the elder after a clandestine meeting out by the amber pits outside of town. Menes foolishly assumed that the prestige of his position and his personal prowess as a sorcerer would keep Seth in check; after he berated the young man for his recent extortion of Parakuan merchants, the renegade knifed him as soon as his back was turned. Knowing the sorcerous powers of the headman’s family, Seth took care to cut away the corpse’s jaw so as to prevent it answering any questions about its death; he keeps it hidden in his estate outside town as a talisman against the chance of Menes’ angry ghost.

Goals: None, given his death before the PCs even arrive in Paraku.

KIYA QAR

Level 4 Nganga: AC 6 warding amulet, HP 10, Atk +2/1d4-1 dagger, Move 30’, Morale 8, Save 13+, Skill +2. Str 6, Int 14, Wis 8, Dex 10, Con 11, Cha 15

Prepared Nkisi: *Burning Brand, Deadened Mind, Nganga’s Eye, Ghost, Nganga’s Command*

Young and beautiful, with pale hazel eyes and a fine form, Kiya Qar (“KEE-yah KAR”) was dutiful enough in learning the sorcerous traditions of her family. She has been her father’s only family since her mother died in childbirth, and she feels her duty keenly. Still, her real pleasure was in teasing the young Nebeti men and enjoying their competition for her eventual hand in marriage. She thought that her father would surely live for decades more before she would finally be forced to adopt his position as elder among the Nebeti. His recent murder has left her plans in tatters.

Kiya is deeply unprepared for the position thrust upon her. It would be hard enough in good times, but anyone can see that a pogrom is brewing among the Parakuans, and she has no idea what to do. Oba Awosi was an ally to her father, but he seems powerless to protect the Nebeti so long as the Parakuan merchants are being tormented by Nebeti extortioners. A few ambiguous words from her father before his death have fixed her certainty on Laughing Seth as the author of all her misfortunes. She hates him bitterly and is convinced he is responsible for both the murder and the extortion. She will go to any length to





convince the PCs to help her destroy the renegade and win Oba Awosi's help once more.

Kiya is not a particularly cruel or callous woman, but she has little interest in the sufferings of poor Nebeti. She feels they should be grateful for the sorcerous sacrifices her family has made to protect them, and they should be glad that they still even have the right to maintain their customs in this far and unfriendly land. She finds outsiders to be fascinating and exotic, and will be thoroughly impressed by tales of foreign adventure that have some tangible token of proof to support them.

Kiya is aware of Oba Awosi's interest in her as a potential wife, and it a prospect that does not fill her with joy. He is aging, sour, and unappealing to the vivacious young woman. She is also acutely aware of the trouble it will buy Oba Awosi to ally his own clan with the Nebeti, and fears he may not be strong enough to deal with the outraged Meruans and rivals among the Lokossans. Still, she is likely to agree in the end out of a lack of any better solution for her people's troubles. In truth, there are several handsome younger kinsmen of the Oba whom she would like much better for husbands, but the Oba is unlikely to consent to another relative having her unless induced to it.

Goals: Avenge her father, Regain Oba Awosi's protection of the Nebeti against Upright Osaze and his zealots.

LAUGHING SETH

Hardened Criminal: AC 5 warding amulets, HD 5, HP 30, Atk +5/1d8+1 sword, Move 30', Morale 10, Save 13+, Skills +2.. Str 9, Int 13, Wis 12, Dex 16, Con 9, Cha 14

Seth is a thin man, with ropy muscles and heavy-lidded eyes. His parents were poor amber miners who were caught delving into the forbidden tunnels beneath Paraku, places taboo to the Nebeti. As a punishment for their trespass, they were thrown out of the quarter and forced to make their living among the Parakuans. His mother was compelled to take up whoring and was beaten to death by a drunken customer; his father was speared for killing the man. With no relatives willing to help him and a town coldly indifferent to his survival, Seth became an expert thief, plying his trade on foreign traders that had no leisure to pin the thefts on the cold-eyed Nebet.

Over the years, Seth has become something of a godfather to other Nebeti renegades, and is quietly supported by many of the poor folk still within the quarter. He has been known to slip food and other necessities to those in deepest want, and the debts so charged buy him a great deal of silence. Even the poor Nebeti who are still ostensibly loyal to the elder are willing to do him favors and overlook his trespasses.

Those trespasses are many. For some time now he has been excavating tunnels beneath House of Bone and Amber for the buried tribute ingots and forgotten relics they hold. This blasphemy against Nebeti custom scandalizes the good souls of the quarter, but the poor have little luxury for reverence when a silver ingot can spare their families from starvation or a suffocating death in the amber pits. Seth has formed a small corps of supporters who are even willing to fight and kill for him.

They are also willing to extort. Local Parakuan merchants are approached in the dead of night and "encouraged" to contribute food and goods to the poor Nebeti. Those that fail to cooperate find their shops ravaged by thieves or their steps dogged by footpads at night. With no specific soul receiving the payments that are demanded, Oba Awosi has been frustrated in identifying the culprit- but Menes Qar could discern Seth's hand in it. That discernment cost Menes his life. He thought that a fierce rebuke of "the boy" by the amber pits would be enough to stop his foolhardy games, but Seth simply found it an opportunity to avenge his dead. Now with Menes out of the way, Seth is mulling over whether he should seek to wed his daughter or have her killed and claim her position by default.

Seth is a man driven by his loathing for the wealthier Nebeti. In the face of a pogrom, his first instinct would be to fortify the poorer parts of the quarter and let the Parakuans do what they will with Kiya and her "henchmen". He is perfectly willing to cooperate with outsiders toward this end, though even they will be discarded in an eyeblink if they start to prove a liability to him or to the poor among the Nebeti.

Goals: Depose Kiya Qar, Succor the poor among his people, Punish those who oppress his people.

Oba Awosi


Level 5 Nganga: AC 5 warding amulet +1, HP 13, Atk +3/1d4 dagger, Move 30', Morale 10, Save 13+, Skill +2. Str 9, Int 12, Wis 16, Dex 10, Con 11, Cha 14

Prepared Nkisi: *Nganga's Eye, Blessed Spear, Burning Brand, Nganga's Command x2, Tearer of Veils*

The Oba of Paraku, Oba Awosi ("OH-bah ah-WOH-see") is a tall and graying man with a faced lined by intricate ritual scarring and perpetual scowls. While he is a nganga of substantial accomplishment, his noble clan, the Ekona, are disturbingly short of additional magical talent. If he dies without recruiting another nganga into the family, the ruling Ahonsu of Lokossa will surely put another family on Paraku's ruling stool. He has searched for suitable candidates for some time, but in the city only Kiya Qar has sufficient aptitude- and marrying her is unthinkable so long as Upright Osaze is agitating against the Nebeti. If Osaze were to be silenced, it would be a much simpler matter to add Kiya Qar to the family- it's not as if she could deny the Oba, after all, not with the safety of her people dependent upon his goodwill. Once she is wed, she can establish the sorcerous pedigree of the Ekona even if a Lokossan member of the family must step up as the actual oba.

In theory, Awosi's word is law within Paraku, and life and death both hang upon his will. In practice, he is forced to account for the interests of the two other noble families within Paraku- the Ezeze and the Awopere. Both of them have cleverly snatched up the handful of petty nganga within the city, depriving Awosi of any chance to reinvigorate Ekona's bloodline. Any foreign nganga who looks to settle in Paraku is likely to receive very aggressive marriage offers from one or both of these clans, with "no" a most unhealthy answer.





Oba Awosi is not a kind man. He has little or no interest in the wishes of others where they conflict with what he considers to be the good of Paraku. Still, his meticulous adherence to the customs and laws of the city have won him the favor of the common folk, who are grateful for an Oba who takes no more than his due. Such temperance is not expected of the other two noble families in the city.

Currently, he is bitterly frustrated by the Nebeti extortioners who are pressing the local merchants. Until he can track them down and execute them, he dares not defend the Nebeti too vigorously. Every mouthful of cassava and yard of cloth given to the Nebeti is that much less to give to the Ahonsu, and the people will not stand for any attempt to defend those who would increase their already-heavy burden. Even worse, the extortion only gives more strength to Upright Osaze and makes it more difficult to attain Kiya Qar's hand in marriage. If the situation cannot be solved quickly, matters might get out of hand.

Goals: Maintain peace in Paraku, Execute Menes Qar's killer, Stop the extortion of the local merchants

UPRIGHT OSAZE

Level 5 Marabout: AC 9, HP 24, Atk +4/1d4 knife, Move 30', Morale 11, Save 13+, Skills +2. Str 9, Int 13, Wis 8, Dex 10, Con 14, Cha 16. His marabout spheres are Spirit, Curing, and War.

A rail-thin man with a white beard almost as broad as his shoulders, Upright Osaze ("oh-SAH-zay") is a brutally uncompromising priest of the Spirit Way, viewed with a mix of dread and awe by the believers of Paraku. Not even his own grandsons are permitted to stray from the path of custom without a stinging rebuke from the old man, and he's driven more than one troublemaker out of town with fearful imprecations and the help of his devoted followers. Still, there are many poor faithful in Paraku who owe their lives to the healing blessings he gives freely to the devout. Upright Osaze dwells at the Shrine of Seven Red Miracles at the town's heart, where he performs rites and prayers of one kind or another from dawn until nightfall each day.

Upright Osaze was born in Paraku during the height of the Old Lord's rule. He was born to a simple common family, and from his youth he hated the Nebeti and the town's undying master. When the Meruans first arrived at the end of the Long War, their hatred for their Nebeti cousins at first disposed the marabout well toward the strangers. As the years passed, however, the spread of the Sun Faith started to threaten Upright Osaze in a way that the beast-headed gods of the Nebeti never could. The Nebeti at least knew their place as a subject people—these Meruans wanted equality both for themselves and their ridiculous religion.

For the past ten years, Upright Osaze has hated the Sun Faithful with a cold and shining purity. They are too many to expel without destroying the town in the process, but every year their faith becomes a little stronger, their poisonous lies a little more palatable to the good Lokossans of Paraku. His warnings and

rebukes grow less effective with each season, and when he dies, what will happen to his people's faith?

With the discovery of the hidden temple beneath the Shrine of Seven Red Miracles, Upright Osaze was given the tools he needed for his sacred mission. The moldering books spoke of the green stone bowl that could make any corpse into a shambling servitor of the bowl's master—and Osaze knew that the Nebeti elder possessed the bowl. All that is necessary is to incite the Parakuans into a pogrom against the Nebeti, and Upright Osaze will have both the bowl and all the corpses he needs for his great plan. Then the walking dead will turn upon the hated Sun Faithful and provide the town with an army fit to defend it from every foe within and without. By the obvious favor of the spirits, the Nebeti are even giving him the perfect excuse for whipping up the local fury, and Upright Osaze is taking every advantage of the opportunity. So long as no one discovers the source of his sudden enlightenment or the tainted purpose of the bowl, his plan will surely meet with glorious success.

Goals: Steal the green stone bowl from the Nebeti elder, Kill as many Nebeti as possible in order to animate their corpses, Slaughter the Sun Faithful with the newly-raised army of corpses and enlist them in turn to defend Paraku from their kinsmen.

YAO THE PRIEST

Common Priest: AC 9, HP 4, Atk +1/1d4 knife, Move 30', Morale 7, Save 15+, Skills +1. Str 9, Int 11, Wis 13, Dex 10, Con 11, Cha 12.

Pudgy, good-natured, and shaven-scalped, Yao the Priest is a local Parakuan brought up since youth to be a priest of the Spirit Way. He has never been a man overly burdened with ascetic impulses, but his theology is good by Upright Osaze's standards, and his distaste for the Sun Faith covers a multitude of personal failings. One such failing being a distinct lack of scorn toward the local Nebeti, as Yao is a kind-hearted man. The Nebeti may worship strange gods, but it's not as if they're Sun Faithful, and he feels it wrong to torment them for the deeds of their ancestors. He has been responsible for numerous occasions of peace-making between Nebeti and Lokossan.

His time on earth is short, however. He recently overheard Upright Osaze performing an unholy rite in the Shrine of Seven Red Miracles, and is convinced that the marabout found something horrible down in the tunnels below the temple. The mercenaries that Upright Osaze hired will permit none to enter the passage—but Yao hopes to lure them away with wine and women long enough for outsiders to go in and investigate the passageways.

In this he will find success; unfortunately, Upright Osaze's suspicion will catch up to him shortly thereafter, and barring some unusual intervention on the part of the adventurers he is doomed to become a sacrifice to the mad marabout's sinister ambitions.

Goals: Find out the truth about Upright Osaze's excavations, Keep the peace in Paraku



Paraku is a small city on the eastern border of the kingdom of Lokossa, one built on the western bank of the modest Mekru River. The Lokossan jungle surrounds the city and its rice fields, but a few miles east the thick foliage starts to give way to the yellow grasses of the savannah, where the lands of the Lokossans end and those of the Meru begin.

There are five thousand souls who live in Paraku, though that is less than a tenth of the population that dwelled there before the Long War started a hundred and forty years ago. This population is made up of three major groups- native Lokossans, Meru immigrants forced out of the savannah by growing population pressure there, and the despised Nebeti heirs of the city's former tyrant. There are roughly three thousand Lokossans in the city, one thousand Meruans, and one thousand isolated Nebeti.

The Lokossans rule the city. The Oba is always a Lokossan, of course, chosen from one of the sorcerous noble clans, albeit not always a sorcerer himself. The current Oba Awosi is the last nganga of his clan, however, and if he cannot adopt or marry a suitably skilled addition to the bloodline the Ekona will almost certainly be demoted to the common class upon his death. One of the other two noble clans of the city will be awarded the Oba's post, then, and will have the life-and-death authority over all within the city that the mighty Ahonsu of Lokossa has granted its ruler.

Lokossans usually dwell in rectangular, thatch-roofed houses of wood poles, woven stick walls, and grass matting on the floors. Their structures are lightly built against the heat and constant inroads of insects and decay, and they rebuild them every seven or eight years. Public buildings are fashioned in more lasting materials, but such things are avoided for personal dwellings- to live in a "rotten house" strikes most Lokossans as being unclean and slovenly, and they prefer to fashion fresh dwellings.

The Lokossans are largely craftsmen and artisans, fulfilling Paraku's ancient role as a city of blacksmiths, weavers, carpenters, leatherworkers, and fabricators of all those things the Ahonsu requires for his armies and his officials. Some work as menial laborers, but even then they are most often foremen over the work of Meruans or Nebeti. Every family has a certain tribute in goods they are expected to present to the Oba at the yearly tribute-gathering. Failure to produce the necessary goods means that the Oba must find the missing sum somewhere else, because the Ahonsu does not accept excuses for failure. Those who put the Oba in this awkward position tend to find themselves first in line for the yearly "Traditions", the sacrificial rites that empower the Ahonsu to protect Lokossa from the hideous Night Men beyond the southern border.

These Traditions are a grim necessity among the people of Lokossa, with dozens sacrificed at the yearly rite. Criminals are chosen first, then slaves, then those whom the Oba thinks can be best spared from the city's labors. All mourn the necessity, but the Ahonsu must be empowered by the rites if he is to hold back the Night Men and balk their terrible priests. To volunteer for the sacrifice is considered a mark of sublime nobility, and the Traditions invariably close with costly and elaborate rites in honor of those who have gone to protect the nation.

The Meruans are relative newcomers. Bronze-skinned and straight-haired, unlike the dark Lokossans, they are a nomadic people whose lives revolve around their cattle herds. Even so, with the Long War over and the Eternal King no longer sending his troops to hunt and kill them, both they and their herds have increased greatly over the past two generations. There is no longer enough water or pasturage on the savannah to support their numbers. Some have been forced to leave the grasslands and settle in neighboring cities, bringing their monotheistic Sun Faith with them.

Unlike the many gods of the Spirit Way favored by the Lokossans, the Sun Faith insists that only the Sun is a true god, and that he is best pleased with prayer and good deeds rather than sacrifice. Indeed, the Sun Faithful refuse to participate in the communal rites that are so important to the Spirit Way, though they pay their tithe of lives to the Traditions as a matter of necessity.

The Meruans have few skills that are useful in a city. Their herding and hunting talents are of limited use here, and so most are forced to work as menial labor in the rice fields and jungle. They never dig in the amber pits, however, but serve only as overseers of Nebeti in such work. A few have been made moderately well-off by their leatherworking skills, while even fewer have made themselves rich by brokering cattle deals between the Lokossans and their Meruan kinsmen on the savannah. The Meruan tribute to the Ahonsu is usually given in uncompensated labor, which is onerous but less prone to sudden shortage than a tribute in goods.

The Meruans still live as their kinsmen do on those rare occasions when they settle in one place for a season. Their houses are square, with rows of wooden poles supporting a mesh of woven branches which are then covered in a mixture of mud and cattle dung which dries hard and repellent to insects. Prayers and auspicious sun-and-rays symbols are often etched into the daub, as an unusual percentage of the Meruans are literate due to their reverence for the written scriptures of the Sun Faith. While the Meruans have no formal leader, the Sun Teacher Ammon's opinion is very powerful among them- though this authority has been weakened by his stubborn insistence that the Nebeti ought not to be treated so harshly.

The Nebeti are the wretched of the city, heirs to the former living administrators and slaves of the Old Lord- not that there was any distinction in the roles. They served as the hands of the Old Lord, his executioners and taskmasters among the subjugated Parakuans. They were also the ones who were first to suffer his hideous appetites. Akhen spent the lives of his slaves with casual contempt, and the living near him always suffered the worst. All the same, this was small consolation to those Lokossans conscripted to the Old Lord's Eternal legions or to adorn his banquet table.

It was the Nebeti who struck during the chaos at the end of the Long War and brought down the Old Lord's dread fortress, the House of Bone and Amber they had built for him. The sacrifice of their elders and most trusted counselors bought the city freedom from the black sorcery of the Eternal lord, and per-



suaded the Lokossans to begrudgingly permit them to live. They serve as menials of the lowest class, little more than slaves in the amber pits and carving shops of the city, or sweating backs at the maintenance of the city's walls and fortifications. Hardly a Lokossan alive considers their simple existence to be anything more than a gift from their betters.

The Meruans hate them with a familial passion, as they both spring from the same ancient Deshrite stock. The Meruan ancestors fled the Eternal King's rule, but the Nebeti "traitorously" submitted to the blasphemous lord. Meruan youths hardly spare an opportunity to insult or deal a beating to a Nebet, hating them as traitors and living disgraces to their own kind. Worse, the Meruans fear to be taken for Nebeti by the ruling Lokossans- they both share the same appearance and a similar degree of poverty, but the thought of being identified with such lowly, hated folk drives the Meruans to distraction. They police the boundaries between their peoples with ferocious heat.

The Nebeti houses are restricted to their own quarters within the walls, houses fabricated from the stone rubble left behind when the House of Bone and Amber fell. Unlike their neighbors, the Nebeti prefer to work in stone- it cannot be burnt by angry mobs and it provides better protection than walls of wood or adobe. The expense and difficulty of raising such building leaves most Nebeti living in cramped shared quarters, with the exception of the handful of "wealthy" Nebeti labor-bosses and their ruling elder, Menes Qar.

LAWS AND CUSTOMS

Laws in Paraku are unsurprising to most outsiders. All the usual sins of violence, theft, fraud, assault on holy places, and insult of authority are treated with typical Lokossan rigor. Those without the special status of a noble or a Spear of the Dawn can expect public beatings, fines of silver or goods, or temporary forced labor as punishment for minor crimes not rising to the level of murder, great theft, or assault of a noble. Those who transgress in serious matters can expect to be sacrificed at the yearly Traditions unless the Oba has a more productive use for their lives.

There are three noble clans in Paraku, families gifted with the status because of their sorcerous gifts. The foremost are the Ekona, the clan to which Oba Awosi belongs. They have never been a fecund family, and number only a few dozen men, wives, and children. Worse still, only Oba Awosi has the gift of a nganga's power. If he dies before the family can add another nganga, the Ekona will lose their status as nobility. Their rivals, the clans Es-eze and Awopere, each have several nganga of somewhat lesser talent. Either of them would be delighted to lift the burden of rulership from the shoulders of the Ekona, and privately consider ways of hastening that generosity.

Every member of a noble clan is a noble, though the elders and most accomplished among them are considered to stand above the rest. Commoners are expected to show deference and obedience, though only the Oba has the right to make serious demands upon them. Spears of the Dawn and other remarkable



outsiders can get away with ignoring the requests of the nobility, but such behavior will buy them enemies.

As with most of the peoples of the Five Kingdoms, the Parakuans prize courtesy and good manners. Even the nobles will not speak rudely or insultingly to the commoners unless they are greatly provoked or remarkably boorish. Commands are phrased as requests, greetings are returned with punctilious correctness, and even a market-woman amid her yams can expect a polite hearing from the Oba. Such courtesy makes the Meruan viciousness toward the Nebeti all the more remarkable, and even those Lokossans who view Nebeti as beneath honest Lokossan slaves are uncomfortable with public baiting of their inferiors.

Slavery exists in Paraku, most often as a consequence of criminal trespasses or a family's failure to meet tribute requirements. Most are owned by the city rather than individual families, though the wealthy sometimes have a few as status markers. The Meruans do not keep slaves, and are uneasy with the entire idea. Nebeti are not taken as slaves, as most Parakuans fail to see any meaningful distinction from their current state.

Ultimately, everything and everyone in Paraku exists at the sufferance of the Ahonsu. The witch-king of Lokossa is master of the country, and his strength empowers the Lokossan legions to hold back the Night Men from beyond the southern border. Nobles are enlisted to lives of direct service, but even commoners may be apportioned as he or his Obas think best. This life is hard, but Lokossans consider it necessary if they are to survive the constant incursions of their bestial foes. Most often, the Ahonsu pays no more attention to Paraku than he must, trusting in the Oba to keep the tribute flowing. If something should disrupt this happy state of affairs, the Ahonsu is unlikely to be kind in his correction.

GOODS AND SERVICES

Paraku is a small but significant city, and has many goods and services useful to adventurers. Any ordinary equipment listed in the *Spears of the Dawn* rulebook can be acquired here, and almost any mundane talent or skill can be found available on the market.

The Ezeze and Awopere clans have a few nganga of modest power among their number, 5th level and below, and they are willing to barter their services for stiff prices- or assistance in quietly undermining the Oba. The blessings of a marabout can be acquired from either Upright Osaze or the Sun Teacher Ammon, though the former will only work with those who do not follow the Spirit Way if it advances his deeper plans. Potions can be acquired in the Court of the Gods for prices at least 50% over their base price, and spirit tokens can be commissioned at twice the price of their creation- if a nganga or marabout can be persuaded to do so. Other magic items are not available for any price- the spirits of great artifacts would never tolerate being sold for mere coin, and more easily-transferred items are firmly in the hands of the Oba's trusted servants.

Trade ingots are a less common currency in Lokossan cities than in the northern lands. Most large purchases are made by exchanging sums of goods to fulfill the yearly tribute requirements- the Ahonsu will only show interest in silver when he can gut Night Men with it, so mere cash substitutions are rarely accepted. Adventurers can usually buy personal amounts of goods with silver and precious goods, but major purchases will commonly require them to come up with commodity goods rather than trade ingots.

Because of this straitened commerce, most buyers will pay only one-quarter of the full value of any gems, jewelry, or other treasures presented for sale. PCs with mercantile backgrounds or appropriate trading skills might be able to get as much as half the base price. The city's various legitimate buyers can absorb up to 5,000 silver ingots worth of such plunder every month before the price starts to crash from a glut of riches.

THREE SHADES OF GRAY

Paraku is not intended to be a city of clean lines and easy moral distinctions. The tension, oppression, and inequities in the community exist because of specific reasons. Dealing with the aftermath of this history is hard for all the people of Paraku, and for every citizen who strives to build a better peace there is one who can only remember the crimes of the past.

When you run this adventure, allow your players to make up their own minds about the relative merits of the city's various groups. The detailed line of the adventure assumes that the group will be at least moderately well-disposed toward the Nebeti, as PCs tend to champion oppressed underdogs by instinct, but don't force the issue. Other reasons for engaging with the events of the adventure are available. As long as the PCs have ways of involving themselves with the situation in the city, they should be allowed to come to their own conclusions about the social milieu.

You should also be prepared for players who want to change things. Paraku is in a very fragile state of equilibrium, one which will become even less stable after the events of the module. The most powerful forces of violence and prejudice will have been scattered, and there will be at least some window of opportunity for a new entente among the city's inhabitants. Oba Awosi is a fairer and more even-handed ruler than many of his rival nobles, and the Sun Teacher Ammon is struggling to bring his Meruan kinsmen to a more humane relationship with their Nebeti cousins. If the PCs work to strengthen the hands of these and other unity-minded Parakuans, the old ways of mistrust and harsh isolation might give way to something better for everyone in the city.

Or instead the PCs may simply move on. The world is wide and there are many troubles in it. In the end, the Parakuans will have to make their own peace. There are other places in need of the courage of the Spears of the Dawn, places that need more than the simple and impossible choice to forgive.





Rather than navigating the city by means of a street map and numbered buildings, Paraku is presented as a set of districts, each with its own character and points of interest. These districts are designed to be useful to the GM at the table, each page giving a quick overview of the area, a set of places that might be of interest to adventurers, and a selection of events that can be used as plot seeds for further adventure or rumors to pique player interest.

Most adventurers will arrive at the Herdsman's Gate district or the Mekru Docks. From there, travel to other districts can be glossed, as Paraku is easily small enough to be crossed in a half-hour's brisk walk. The players can consult locals for desired locations, wander randomly to take in the sights, or follow directions given by an employer.

In the tradition of sandbox efficiency, if the players never visit a district or overlook a point of interest, you should make a note of it. You can make a quick name change and use it later when a suitable location is necessary for your own adventures.

QUICK STREET LAYOUTS

The streets of Paraku are a maze of dusty trails and narrow paths between constantly-renewed buildings. If it turns out that you have need of a particular street layout, here's one quick method for generating a simple arrangement of streets.

Take a double handful of at least twenty six-sided dice. Drop them randomly into a box, cake pan, or some other area where their rolls will be contained. Nudge the falls so that every die is near to at least one other die and all are connected. The pattern that results is the street layout, with the PCs currently in the center. Each die-width is equal to the distance a PC can move in one round; if they run, they can cross two. If important building entrances or points of interest need to be marked, just put down a different type of die next to the "road" to indicate the location. If a fresh layout is needed, just shake the box and straighten the results once more.

STREET ENCOUNTERS IN PARAKU

The following table offers a quick list of potential street encounters when a diversion is needed. The people have only the statistics of ordinary commoners when not specified otherwise.

ENCOUNTER LIST	
1	<i>Sullen Guardsmen (1d6)</i> : AC 7 leather armor, HP 4, Atk +1/1d6 light spear, Move 30', Morale 8, Save 15+, Skill +1.
2	<i>Mesdemet</i> , an antimony-eyed Nebeti harlot; 50% chance of being harried by a drunk Meruan. Will complain of the merchant extortions making her life more difficult.
3	<i>Banda the Fish-seller</i> , vending his wares to traders and foreigners. Will complain that he was shaken down by masked Nebeti a week ago.
4	<i>Drunken Rivermen (1d6)</i> looking for a fistfight with an acceptable target. PCs will probably do. Use guardsman stats, but AC 9 and 1d2 damage fists.
5	<i>Red-Eyed Asilu</i> , a Lokossan beggar-woman cursed to perpetual weeping by a witch. If the Lesser Curse is lifted, she will tell of how she saw Laughing Seth mask himself before extorting Banda the Fish-seller. Otherwise she fears him too much to speak of it.
6	<i>Gamu Long-Scar</i> , an elderly drunkard with an assegai mark from throat to hip. He finds it hilarious to regale foreigners with false tales of hidden treasure.
7	<i>Lady Ewiwa</i> , the lagredi wife of Oba Awosi, with a pair of slaves to attend her. She is always eager to meet foreigners who might be working for her lord-and keen to discover their true purposes.
8	<i>Jingu the Scout</i> , a hard-bitten Reaper on maternity leave from her unit Her sister is tending her infant daughter, and she wishes to get back in the field. Might hire on with PCs as a 1st level Warrior.

The Court of the Gods is dominated by the shadow of the Shrine of Seven Red Miracles. This elaborate structure of dark wooden posts and white adobe towers over the houses of the shrine-servants, scholarly laborers, and other workers in less tangible goods. A vast court of pale stone spreads out before the shrine, and each dawn a small mob of servants can be seen washing and cleaning the tiles.

The court serves as the religious center of Paraku, with the Spirit Wayists gathering for their festivals and the Sun Faithful visiting their chosen teachers each Friday for their sermons and instruction. The stones are splashed with red each year during the Traditions, where those chosen for sacrifice are ritually slain to empower the Ahonsu and give him strength to hold back the Night Men of the south.

Nebeti are never found in the court save during the Traditions. They conduct their rites in their own homes, and know that it is not safe to discuss them with others. The Oba is able to enforce a certain degree of tolerance, but flaunting their “foul rituals” before the Lokossans and Meruans would certainly result in mob violence.

Behind the shrine and the adobe houses of the Sun Teachers are a nest of shabby huts and crumbling houses. Those who dwell within assist their clans by selling fortune-tellings, elixirs, amulets, and other spiritual incidentals. Sometimes, these crude tokens actually work.

POINTS OF INTEREST

SHRINE OF SEVEN RED MIRACLES

The post-and-weave construction of most of Paraku is turned to a more elaborate end in the Shrine of Seven Red Miracles, with a high adobe tower erected to offer sacrifices to Oya, the lady of winds. Logs jut from the construction to allow workers to climb up and re-plaster the adobe with fresh mud after each rainy season, and the ends of each are decorated in charred veves pleasing to the gods. The great ebony doors are carved with intricate scenes of the glories of the spirit world, and the shrine itself is connected to a small walled ritual ground and a large hall for the priests. In the days before the Long War it housed many priests, but nowadays it shelters only *Upright Osaze*, *Yao the Priest*, and four other elderly clergy of no mystical power. Tents and temporary shelters around the priests’ hall house forty hard-eyed mercenaries recently hired by Upright Osaze to “protect the shrine from insult”. Every Nebeti knows that it is worth a beating to be caught within sight of the shrine.

SUN TEACHER AMMON’S HOUSE

The young *Sun Teacher Ammon* has been gifted with great favor by the Sun, and possesses the powers of a 5th level marabout with the spheres of Sun, Curing, and Spirits. His square adobe house is one of the larger Meruan buildings in Paraku, the better to make room in the house and courtyard for those who come to his weekly sermons. The truth of the Sun Faith is preached on these occasions, and moral advice is given to petitioners in private audiences afterwards. Even the Lokossans are attracted by Ammon’s charisma and generous use of his gifts,

DISTRICT EVENTS	
1	A young man is being condemned as a witch because of certain items found in his house. Were they planted by his accuser, or is he really seeking occult revenge?
2	Depraved cultists of a dark aspect of Aganyu have stolen a child for sacrifice; the time for the ritual approaches, but they hide somewhere in the tunnels of the House of Bone and Amber.
3	A young Meruan girl has been blessed by a marabout’s power, and has been consigned to a life of stern service to the Ahonsu. Her parents are desperate to smuggle her out of the city to her kinsmen in Meru.
4	A brash new priest promises great luck to those who participate in his strange rites, and some say he speaks the truth. Is he unjustly persecuted by corrupt clergy, or is he actually a servant of the Gods Below?
5	A shrine floor collapses into the House tunnels beneath, a precious relic falling into a swift-flowing stream. Someone must go down into the tunnels and rescue the precious token before it is needed for a ritual this very night. But was the collapse an accident?
6	An exhausted runner arrives for Sun Teacher Ammon, begging his aid for a village chief’s sick wife. Ammon will need sharp spears to get to the remote village, however, for the Night Men are out raiding.

and over the past few years there has been a marked increase of Lokossans attending his services.

Ammon gives almost all of the gifts he receives to the poor among the Meru- and secretly, to some among the Nebeti as well. His popularity among his people is already tempered by his regular insistence that the Sun Faith requires merciful and compassionate treatment even of the faithless Nebeti, and if it were found that he was actually aiding the “traitors” with the gifts given him, he would soon be left destitute of support from many of his kinsmen. He hopes to bring them around in time.

Ammon channels his largesse to the Nebeti through the secret aid of Yao the Priest, right under Upright Osaze’s nose. Yao greatly dislikes Ammon’s faith, but he respects the man’s compassion too much to deny his aid. If the chief priest were to discover this scandalous charity from the Sun Teacher, he would leap on the chance to discredit Ammon with his people.

MOTHER HENDE’S HOUSE

Bent, toothless, and dour, *Mother Hende* does not quite possess the gifts of a nganga. Still, she is surpassingly wise in the compounding of elixirs and potions. Given the hazards of the jungle, she will always have 1d4+1 *potions of healing* available for purchase at 300 si apiece, and can brew other potions for twice their base rate. Upright Osaze made a point of inspecting her hut for implements of witchcraft a year ago, and she nurses a grudge for it still; those who seem likely to cause trouble for the priest might get a one-third discount on her wares.



THE FALLEN HOUSES

At the west end of the city, past the Nebeti Quarter, the walls are toppled and overgrown. Within the space marked by their skeletal outline lies the broken wreckage of the House of Bone and Amber, and around it the slave-built stones of the servants' palaces. The lesser structures of wood and adobe have long since decayed away, but at the empty windows of a dozen ruined estates stare still over the grassy lanes that once were streets.

The fallen houses are riddled with ghosts. In the chaos of the Old Lord's downfall, thousands of men and women died either to the rebels or to the rage of the Eternal. Even after the House fell, it was too dangerous to venture in among the furious Eternal still trapped in the district, and so their bodies were never recovered. At night, their ghosts roam the ruined town, repeating their deaths over and over without end. If disturbed by the living, they will attempt to console their loneliness with a new wraith.

A few treasure-mad explorers might venture among the fallen houses during the day, particularly to reach one of the few entrances to the House's underworks that remain among the ruins. Wild beasts shun the place, but dire spirit-animals and the dregs of the Old Lord's breeding pits still creep among the daylit ruins. If a map for one of the palaces is needed, simply use one of the default maps from the resources section of *Spears of the Dawn*.

Nebeti custom forbids them from entering this district. Others are not so restricted, but to enter is considered a mark of great folly or greater desperation.

POINTS OF INTEREST

THE COURT OF CHOOSING

The Eternal are disgusted by the stink of the living, but they find many uses for the dead. This desolate courtyard once hosted the great choosings that were performed every year. There, trusted Nebeti slaves of the Old Lord would take a tribute of Paraku's youth. The young and comely would be strangled as concubines and catamites to the Eternal, while those more amply-fleshed would be chosen as cattle for their tables. Even now, at night the weeping and cries of the condemned echo on the empty stones.

Against the west side of the court is a great palace where those chosen for translation into Eternal slaves were trained and transformed. The last harvest of lives was never collected by the Old Lord, and they remain within the walls of the palace. Rotting trappings of wealth and decadent pleasure mantle sleepy-eyed Eternal slaves who go through the motions of their intended purpose. Their undying tenders haunt the fallen houses, seeking human flesh to keep their charges fresh and beautiful.

THE OLD NEBETI QUARTER

Near the eastern edge of the district stand the burnt-out shells of many square stone buildings. The favored Nebeti slaves of the Old Lord dwelled here once, close enough to attend him when human service was required, but far enough away from the other Eternal to avoid unfortunate accidents with the less intelligent undying.

In the uprising, the Parakuans put the quarter to the torch, but many of the houses were too sturdy for the mobs to enter. Some Nebeti were trapped inside by rubble or rioters, and died in

DISTRICT EVENTS

1	A small band of Night Men has gotten in among the ruins, and their priest's charms are keeping them safe from the ghosts. They harry the city at night and hide from reprisals during the day.
2	A murderer hid his victim's body in the ruin, but the ghost stalks Paraku's streets, screaming for vengeance. The best evidence to show the culprit's guilt is still on the gnawed corpse in the ruins.
3	A strange and wondrous beast is discovered near the ruins and taken as a "pet" by a rich noble. In truth, it's one of the undying beasts of the House's breeding pits, and will soon break free to hunt in the city.
4	A cannibal cult of the Gods Below has hidden in the ruins since the fall of the Old Lord, persisting in their foul rites and snatching victims outside the city.
5	The Awopere have left incriminating tokens of secret collaboration in a ruined Eternal palace. Both they and their Eseze rivals seek to find these tokens and recover them, though neither will admit what they are until the proof is in hand.
6	The day grows late, but a reckless child has gone playing among the stones. Who dares enter the ruins to retrieve them with night falling so soon?

their houses. Others happened to be hosting Eternal masters, and died to feed their trapped lord's hunger. Such Eternal still wait within for someone incautious enough to clear the rubble in search of lost Nebeti gold.

Still, some houses contained ancient relics of Deshur, idols and tokens of the gods worshipped before the rise of the Eternal. Some among the Nebeti desperately wish their return, but their elders forbid them from entering the district. Agents willing to risk trapped Eternal and angry ghosts could earn much gold from their recovery.

THE DEAD GARDEN

The Eternal despise living things, and a small army of slaves made certain that not so much as a single blade of grass grew within the district. In place of the gardens of a mighty king, the Old Lord ordered that a cunning semblance of dead matter be constructed for his pleasure.

The dead gardens are a broad swath of dark wood carved in the seeming of barked trunks, with tatters of cut cloth for leaves and green stone tiles carved in the undulant patterns of grasses. Dry trenches of glass pebbles mimic streams, and bushes of verdigrised bronze wire mimic living twigs. A few of these shrubs even have berries of smooth, polished jewels or leaves of tarnished silver.

Misshapen, undying beasts from the House's breeding pits stalk the dead trails of the garden. Their nature forbids them from departing, and they are mad with hunger for the flesh of men.



Along the center of the south wall of Paraku stands the broad Herdsman's Gate. The drovers of Meru bring their cattle up from the fords to the south, penning them inside the walls while they chaffer over terms with Parakuan buyers. Such a luxury of space for cattle pens is unknown in most cities, but after the destruction and devastation of the Long War there is much more empty space within Paraku's walls than is commonly the case. Fat herds outside the walls would be too great a temptation to Night Man raiders or Meruan rustlers.

The district around the gate is given over to trade. Unlike the tribute manufactories along the Street of Singing Smoke, the dealers at the Herdsman's Gate trade in sundries and portable trade goods that might interest Meruan drovers and merchants from far Sokone. They also take silver without complaint, which is a less certain thing with the other artisans of Paraku.

Order in the district is kept by a patrol of muscular Lokossan guardsmen who are quick to resolve scuffles with the butts of their spears and a few strokes of a club. Theft or false dealing are unhealthy things in Paraku, and serious deceptions will earn the culprit a place in the Traditions.

Locals who need less-than-licit work done often haunt Yuwa's drinking house, where they can find some foreigner who will do the work and be gone before questions can be asked. Yuwa makes a bit of silver on the side connecting such people with adventurers willing to do work with few questions asked.

POINTS OF INTEREST

FONDAK

The pens and buildings of the fondak provide for merchant needs with secure pens for cattle and safe warehousing for the tribute due to the Ahonsu. Those engaged in trade with the city are permitted to sleep within the fondak without charge, and a variety of small merchants are present to sell necessary provisions and equipment to travelers.

This "fondak market" is the most convenient in the city for adventurers. The other local shops most often work on the basis of barter and long-term tribute agreements, and can be reluctant to sell their goods for simple silver. The fondak merchants take ingots in payment and provide all the usual selection of adventuring gear, weapons, and armor for the prices given in the *Spears of the Dawn* rulebook. Costly items are rare, however, and anything with a base price of 50 si or more will cost double here and may not be available in bulk. Adventurers seeking to sell plunder will be directed to the Amber Carver's Hall and goldsmiths within the city.

TRADE SQUARE

The square is lined by all the shops and booths to be expected in a market town- cobblers, fishwives, brassmongers, tinkers, smiths, spicers, ropeweavers, and all the other services that bring river-village rice to the hungry bellies of Paraku. Most trade is for bulk commodities from the farming villages, and there is little barter in coin.

Knives and tools are easily-enough acquired here, but the few traders offering weapons or armor do so at double the standard

DISTRICT EVENTS

1	A foreign trader has cheated the PCs or one of their allies and fled south into the jungle. Who shall recover the silver first- the PCs, or the Night Men?
2	A corrupt gate captain has been executed for bribery, but his cache of ill-gotten silver was never found. A local thief claims to know the place, and needs strong arms to reach its jungle hiding spot.
3	A Meruan drover laments the theft of his cattle by a cruel forest nganga and his spider-riding slaves. None of the locals dare oppose the nganga's power, and he is desperate to find help.
4	A witch has poured cursed tsetse fly eggs into the water drunk by a herd. Soon the cattle shall burst as giant flies erupt from their bodies and torment the town, bringing the blood they suck back to their master in his deep jungle lair.
5	A trader's guards have perished, but he must bring desperately-needed medicines to a remote forest village- yet the village has rebelled against their noble Eseze masters, and aiding it could be hazardous.
6	A corpulent slaver has brought in a coffle of Meruan "bandits" that include women and children. He is keeping them at his jungle estate until the Oba confirms that they were lawfully taken.

prices, and with little stock. A helpful local might recommend the PCs check with the shopkeepers at the fondak, as they sometimes buys gear from adventurers in need of coin to move on.

THE GUEST HOUSE OF OLUJA

Rich merchants care for better accommodations than the fondak can provide, and do not wish to mingle with the common people at the House of the River Men. Genteel *Oluja* offers them the use of his adobe inn not far from the gates and a dozen comely and artful servants to attend to their every requirement. Times are hard, however, and Oluja is in no position to turn away custom. Even dubious sorts such as adventurers are permitted to take lodgings there if they can maintain good behavior under his roof. Prices are steep, at five silver ingots a day, but the service is impeccable and the food is an exquisite example of Lokossan cookery, redolent of jungle spices, fresh game, and complex rice curries.

YUWA'S DRINKING HOUSE

Fresh from the jungle trail, many drovers and merchants find themselves in desperate need of a good cup of beer. Grizzled old *Yuwa* and his hard-eyed granddaughter *Aseni* do what they can to provide it, collecting scraps of copper and the occasional silver ingot for his murky wares. The house is a thatched long-house of sticks and vine weave, and its door is open all day and halfway through the night.

Locals do not go to Yuwa's house unless they have need of foreign help in some matter. Yuwa prefers it that way, as his usual clientele is not the sort to please strict Lokossan decorum.



THE HILL OF THE GREAT

The Oba's palace of carved mahogany surveys the streets that spill out from this central hill. Clustered at its flanks, the houses of the Eseze and Awopere clans take up the whole of the hill's crown with their peaked and carved roofs a jealous echo of the Oba's splendor. Toward the base of the hill, a few more modest houses have been constructed by grandees of the amber-carving clans and dealers in armor and blades.

There is no special watch charged with guarding this district. Instead, the servants of the noble houses here are jealous and vigilant, quick to interrogate strangers about their business and swift to escort them away if the answer is unsatisfactory. Petitioners climb the straight road up to the more modest building where the Oba holds court on ordinary matters, but any who wander from this way can expect to be questioned. Paraku is not so large that the servants cannot recognize strangers and foreigners, and it is commonly agreed that all of them are thieves just awaiting a chance to plunder the rich furnishings of the noble houses.

After nightfall, other business is conducted. Rough characters and questionable visitors pay calls on these houses to conduct the sort of business that doesn't bear daylight. Watchmen guard each of the compounds against less expected visitors, and a hue and cry will quickly bring their neighbors. Most local thieves know better than to trouble these houses, as there's little they hold that could be fenced without unpleasant attention. Even Laughing Seth is wise enough to avoid those on the hill.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Oba's COURT

Oba Awosi holds court here during daylight hours for affairs that do not demand the dignity of his palace, save when he finds himself closeted with advisors from the other two noble families of the city. The city clerk writes out legal documents for petitioners, and six mail-armored guardsmen stand watch with spears and boundless boredom. The town funds are kept in the cellar behind press-locks much like those used at the Amber Guild, and amount to 5,000 si to be used to maintain order, pay incidental coin tribute to the Ahonsu, and reward helpful citizens. Those wrongdoers who haven't had time to be punished or sacrificed at the Traditions are kept in a cell on the first floor.

Oba's PALACE

One of the finer houses in Paraku, this peaked wooden building is two storeys in height and fashioned of finished and carved mahogany rather than the pole-and-weave materials of most other Lokossan construction. Aside from a half-dozen servants in constant attendance, the palace also houses the elderly *Sage Monassa*, the honored griot to the Oba, who may teach his songs to helpful souls. *Oba Awosi* conducts unofficial business here in the courtyard, behind a low adobe wall that encloses the cooking fire and vegetable patch. Most of his wealth is contingent upon the Ekona clan's place as the ruling clan of Paraku- he has first claim on much of the production of the town provided the tribute requirements to the Ahonsu are met. Still, he and his family have gathered a number of more portable valuables for those occasions when a tangible gift is required, with amber, jewelry, and other objects worth 10,000 silver ingots.

DISTRICT EVENTS

1	A rich merchant has loosed a "tame" cheetah in his garden as a protection against thieves. The trainer who sold it was a witch, however, and the cheetah is a cursed spirit-beast that hunts men at night.
2	A noble's favorite wife fears her beauty's fading, and seeks to consult with a powerful forest nganga. She seeks men to protect her on her way- and in the end, will try to sacrifice them to satisfy the nganga's price.
3	A poor maid was seduced and used as an unwitting accomplice to a heartless thief. She is sure to be sacrificed at the Traditions if the thief is not found and his plunder recovered.
4	A young nobleman of the Eseze dreads reporting for military service next month. He plots to frame some foreigners for his murder, so he can escape north to Sokone with some of the family treasures.
5	Oba Awosi's youngest wife has just given birth last month, and the child hints at a nganga's gifts. The Awopere plot to slay the infant as an impediment to their ascent.
6	A young lagredi wife of the Eseze patriarch is actually a secret spy for the Ahonsu, and desires to discreetly hire catspaws to investigate the Awopere and uncover a suspected plot against the Oba.

AMBER CARVER'S HALL

The amber carvers reserve to their elders the right to dig, polish, and carve amber within Paraku and its surrounding lands. Only carver-approved merchants are permitted to deal in amber, and any outsider who attempts to sell it outside the carvers' auspices runs the risk of having it confiscated and a heavy fine levied upon the malefactor. A half-dozen elders from the amber-selling clans rule the society and spend most of their time overworking a dozen clerks and more than two hundred Nebeti amber-diggers. Most of the actual amber carvers are Nebeti, though they are poorly paid and often mistreated by the Lokossan members of the society.

Because of its obligations to the tribute-gatherers of the Ahonsu of Lokossa, the amber carvers are willing to buy most of the jewelry or gemstones adventurers might find in the course of their travels. The hall will buy such plunder at a quarter of its base price, or as much as half if chivvied by a merchant PC or one who succeeds in a Cha or Int/Business check at difficulty 8.

As a semi-public structure, the hall is fashioned of trimmed logs and spread adobe for greater security. The ground floor is for the conduct of business, the upper floor is given over to carving benches and the private quarters of the journeymen and servants, and the cellar contains the heavy iron tribute chests and their "press-locks"; large stone weights atop the chests that are so heavy that six strong men must lift them off before the chest can be opened. Should some thief be fortunate enough to plunder the four iron chests in the cellar, as much as 20,000 silver ingots worth of raw and carved amber might be stolen.



The steamy Mekru is not a great river, but it is the road along which most of Paraku's goods reach the rest of Lokossa. Its slow brown waters carry the flat-bottomed river barges of traders and tribute-collectors, and poor folk without better wells to hand come at dawn to fill their jugs, so that the silt might have time to settle before they must drink it.

The docks are busy all day long with a small but steady flow of traffic. Wealthy clans dedicated to river-work hug the waterfront with their houses and shops, while behind them a fan of less fortunate families live in humble huts and long thatched houses, laboring as directed by their wealthier neighbors.

Thieves are thick on the docks. Stealing from Parakuan neighbors is a dangerous game in a city as small as it is, but foreigners and traders can be plundered with a great deal more safety. Laughing Seth has recruited most of the Nebeti renegade-thieves in the district into his service. Most of their extortion is done along the Street of Singing Smoke, the better to avoid unfortunate awkwardnesses with neighbors.

Most of the trade is in goods of little interest to adventurers-timber, rice, finished metalwork, ingots from mining villages, dried beef, tanned hides, and other goods necessary for Lokossa's prosperity. The rare amber boats that take in the yearly produce of Paraku's diggings are far better-guarded, as the single barge that carries the tribute might hold as much as 20,000 si worth of carved amber.

POINTS OF INTEREST

THE HOUSE OF THE RIVER MEN

Not every wayfarer who halts at Paraku is a rich merchant, and the bargemen and porters who halt here sometimes lack kinsmen to take them in for a night. The House of the River Men offers minimally tolerable lodging at cheap prices. A mat in the common room and a bowl of mashed cassava fufu and fish soup will run most strangers six copper ingots- or three if they do without the meal. The house's keeper is a bottomlessly cynical old man, *Eresoyen*, who keeps it with his elderly wife *Iyobosa* and their cheery, unreasonably innocent granddaughter *Esohe*. The elderly couple have a hatred of the Nebeti common among the aged of the city- they are old enough to have endured the Old Lord's atrocities and still blame the Nebeti for collaborating with the tyrant. Unbeknownst to them, their granddaughter is quite smitten with *Khufet*, a young Nebeti amber-digger, in a romance forbidden by all custom. Soon, they will flee together to the jungle to seek a new life elsewhere.

THE PALM WINE COURD

This tavern is for Parakuans and foreigners, and the only Nebeti to be seen are those wretched exiles trying to eke out a few more days of life by whatever means they must. The torrid damp of the riverfront seeps in through the thin woven walls of the tavern, and the sour palm wine and rice beer they serve gives a warmth that's less pleasant than the usual jungle heat. The best class of people do not come here, but instead drink at Olua's guest house or in the homes of friends. The fishermen and common laborers have no special love for outsiders, but they can often be persuaded to speak for a drink or two.

DISTRICT EVENTS

1	A spirit-beast in the form of a dire crocodile has provoked a secret cult among the rivermen, and demands sacrifices of struggling young flesh.
2	The Mekru has turned stinking and foul around the city. Upstream, an elusive witch is pouring out sorcerous filth from her kettle to torment the city, and has charmed many awful water-creatures to her side.
3	River pirates are scourging trade, darting out from the jungle in narrow canoes to loot passing barges. Their lair must be found and their spies in the city uncovered.
4	Strange birds from across the river are snatching at jewels and ornaments, scarring the faces of women. A cruel and cunning trainer hides there, preparing his feathered minions for their plundering.
5	A wild-eyed foreign captain is recruiting men for a plundering expedition against a Night Man camp near the riverbank far to the south. Sadly, the expedition is most likely to end in a desperate retreat by a handful of survivors.
6	A drunken riverman talks of a half-buried shrine exposed by a recent mudslide a day's travel north along the river. He has a small jade snake-idol he found in the mud, but was driven away by "scaly things".

CRIPPLED ASAN'S SUNDRIES

Selling his wares out of a river-damped hut by the docks, *Crippled Asan's* leg was torn by a Night Man's spear in his youth, and his clan arranged for him to sell small sundries to rivermen that he might have a living. He is graying now, but still powerful across the shoulders, and with a gleaming smile that does not waver even when he's busy strangling some troublesome fellow.

The ornaments, knives, cording, and other trifles he sells are only the smallest part of his business. He is in truth the best-connected fence in all Paraku, working almost exclusively with Nebeti thieves to move their stolen goods out of Paraku aboard foreign barges. He has spread enough silver among the watchmen and officials of the city to disarm their vigilance, and has no qualms about turning over thieves who dare to rob the nobles.

Those who deal with him are lucky to get ten percent of an item's base value, though he will buy almost anything that will not earn him trouble with the nobles. He can spend up to 2,000 si on his purchases each month before his purse is emptied.

IYENTI THE BOATWRIGHT

Paraku makes its own share of barges and riverboats, and old *Iyenti* is the best of its boatwrights. He and his large extended family fashion such craft for their share of the city's tribute, but he could be persuaded to sell a six-man river barge for 500 si, should the buyers be sufficiently persuasive. The craft is fifteen feet long, ten wide, and can navigate any water with so much as a foot of depth.



THE NEBETI QUARTER

A stone wall twice as tall as a man blocks off the Nebeti quarter from the rest of Paraku, a single crude gate providing the only entrance or exit. A half-dozen Lokossan warriors are charged by the Oba with ensuring peaceful conduct at the gate, and they will interrogate any non-Nebeti who wishes to enter the quarter. They will be particularly reluctant to allow any Meruan within unless he is on very clear business.

Inside the cramped confines of the quarter, the Nebeti have build rambling houses of cut stone and heavy timbers. Narrow streets twist between the buildings, and boards laid down atop the flat roofs allow passage high above the street. Most of the buildings are two storeys in height out of necessity, with whole families packed into a single room. Enough “disturbances” have taken place in the quarter to make the Nebeti reluctant to sleep behind anything less sturdy or more flammable than stone.

There are few businesses in the Nebeti quarter. The local merchants view them as laborers and drudges, and the wholesalers in town refuse to deal with them. The only shops to be found are those dedicated to matters of interest to the Nebeti alone, like the god-shop where their idols are carved or the small establishments that sell materials necessary for funerals and weddings.

The ancient lore of Deshur has not entirely abandoned the Nebeti, however. There are sages and old men among them who can answer many difficult questions about the Eternal and their dark ways, if enough trust can be earned by the petitioner.

POINTS OF INTEREST

KIYA QAR'S HOUSE

The finest house in the Nebeti quarter, Kiya Qar's two-storey stone house has the carved pillars and a squared, monolithic style beloved of Nebeti architects. The windows on the first floor are too narrow to admit a body, and the construction owes something to that of a small fortress. With the recent death of her father, Kiya now lives there with two elderly aunts, three house servants, and the servants' little son. All of them love Kiya very much, and the servants will take up arms to defend her.

NEBETI GOD-SHOP

The Nebeti do not practice their religion before Parakuans, and they close the gates of the quarter when they must perform communal rites to their ancestral deities. Most of these rites require idols or symbols carved of wood, to be burnt or ritually broken as part of the ceremony. The god-shop employs a dozen carvers in the work of creating such idols, though the poor Nebeti resent the great expense that comes of constantly buying new images. The Parakuans prefer to assume that the Nebeti are carving ornaments or meaningless decorations for their houses, and the heathens find it best not to press the point otherwise. The occupants of the god-shop know that there is a secret entrance to the House of Bone and Amber underworks beneath a large wooden idol at the back of the shop. Of course, to enter it is taboo to all Nebeti and its existence is kept as well-hidden as possible. It would have been sealed long since if the god-shop's owner had not wanted at least one bolt-hole for refuge.

DISTRICT EVENTS

1	A weeping Nebeti woman and her children have been cast from the quarter, as her husband was seen descending into the tunnels of the House. She offers directions to the hole to any who would find him.
2	The loveliest girl in the Nebeti quarter has been kidnapped by a slaver and taken to his jungle lair. Her beloved will betray Laughing Seth if she is recovered—a difficult thing since the Night Men are about to overrun the slaver's carelessly-placed estate.
3	A veiled Nebeti sorcerer offers occult lore to warriors who fetch for him the heart of a rare jungle beast.
4	Troubling dreams plague the people of the quarter, dreams of a pale green idol being unearthed from the ruins of the House. The sages say it must be found and destroyed before things grow worse.
5	A stubborn Nebeti trader seeks to bring a load of sundries to a distant village where his kind are not despised. A jealous Lokossan rival has hired thugs to ensure that he never makes it there.
6	A secret cult of embittered Nebeti have decided that if they are to be condemned, they may as well earn it. They worship the Gods Below in hidden tunnels, and are beginning to snatch children and the careless from Paraku's night streets.

NEBETI BURIAL TOWER

In the former days the Nebeti preferred to bury their dead in the ancient fashion, entombed in glory in crypts of stone. Their poverty makes such luxury impossible in these days, so the cult of the vulture-goddess Nekhbet was sought for a solution. The Nebeti now practice sky burial, defleshing their dead and leaving the bones and remains atop the flat roof of this forty-foot stone tower. The peak of the tower is forever black with carrion vultures, their croaking drifting down at every hour of the day as they watch for fresh food. Once the vultures have eaten all the softer parts, Nebeti priests smash the bones to paste and mix it with dried maize to ensure that every particle is consumed by the birds. The other Parakuans consider it a barbarous custom, but as the alternative is finding some place to bury Nebeti near the city they find it best to tolerate it.

YELLOW BANNER TAVERN

The Nebeti favor rice beer over palm wine, and they drink it here in this stone building marked with a broad yellow banner hanging limply in the still, humid air. Nebeti often bring Parakuans and outsiders here to conduct business rather than allowing them into their homes or risking the unfriendly surroundings of the town itself. Those strangers who show up without a Nebeti are apt to induce a sudden, striking loss of Lokossan speech in the barkeep and patrons, despite the fact that Lokossan is the mother tongue of every Nebeti in Paraku. If outsiders don't take the hint after a short time, one of the gate guards is likely to come by and help direct the adventurers to more appropriate drinking establishments.

While Paraku is not a large city, it has enough trade to provide for a small pleasure district. The Plaza of Veils is named for the well-yard at its center, where a dozen slender adobe buildings boast balconies adorned with beauties clad in Meruan grass-veils and very little else. Rivermen, traders, and unmarried soldiers make up the greater part of their custom, and other locals usually find it best to avoid the plaza, lest uncomfortable questions be asked. Multiple wives and concubines are one thing, but adulterous whoring is grounds for divorce among the people of the city.

This does not stop the wealthier men of the city from seeking their pleasures of the evening, but they often hide their faces in the folds of leather cloaks or simple cloth wraps. When talking of the plaza, the people of the city often say that the most important veils of the plaza aren't the ones on the girls.

With so many foreigners and unruly types in the plaza, it is rougher place than the rest of sober Paraku. Footpads sometimes spring out to club down a drunken riverman or lure an unwary victim with the shake of a stalking-girl's hips. Men go about with their knives at their hips and in groups when they may.

While the best houses of the plaza are favored by the nobility and the richest traders, there are drinking-dens, stews, and gambling houses to suit any purse. A judicious evening spent trawling such places and spending twenty or thirty silver ingots is enough to rake up 1d6 local bravos who might be of some use in an adventuring party, at the prices and terms given in the core book.

POINTS OF INTEREST

THE GARDEN OF NUMBERLESS JOYS

A ring of small rooms encircles a colorful garden of fragrant jungle flowers and fine wooden carvings, providing the setting for the best brothel in Paraku. Most of the girls are Lokossans from poor families, though there are a few Meruans for those patrons who seek more exotic fare. Nebeti girls would never work in such a line unless they were desperate exiles, and those would never be permitted in such a fine establishment. Most of the girls can demand two or even three silver ingots for a night's companionship.

The work is a minor disgrace to the girls' relations, and so only the poorest and most needy families would consider it for one of their daughters. Most girls are keen to snare a rich patron willing to make them a lesser wife before age and care take their beauty. Few ever succeed in this, and those who fail in the cause drift down to less esteemed houses, or return in shame to families embarrassed by the ways in which they have supported their kindred. Still, these same families rarely refuse their silver.

THE GAMBLING HOUSE OF THE AMBER LAMP

Gambling is a pastime that unites all classes of the city, and the House of the Amber Lamp provides a meeting-place for those who wish to wager silver, goods, or occasionally their own liberty. The house is quite popular, and all but the Nebeti are welcome to come wager at the tables here. The house itself does not sponsor the games, but instead offers dancers, courtesans, drinks, and game umpires for a tenth part of any wealth won under its roof.

DISTRICT EVENTS

1	Aisha of the Three Blossoms is the finest courtesan in the city- and mistress of a ring of thieves all besotted with her charms. She wants some splendid treasure the PCs are known to possess.
2	A foreign band of musicians have stolen a golden necklace for a nobleman and fled into the jungle. The noble needs that necklace back discreetly lest his wives discover where he was.
3	A set of exotic beauties from far Nyala have set up a splendid little house where they are secretly gathering occult connections to nobles, the better to later bewitch them to their service.
4	One of the local taverns has taken to drugging their beer and selling the foreign victims to slavers. It may be that someone important was in the last batch.
5	In a secret tryst outside the walls, a young married nobleman and his paramour were ambushed by Night Men. He escaped, but is desperate to find someone to rescue the man quickly- or give quick mercy from the unspeakable torments of the savages.
6	An exquisite drug compounded of rare jungle plants is being sold by a foreigner. Nobles publicly scorn such decadent luxuries, but privately many buy- and the seller fears that one may choose to rob, instead.

Gamblers sometimes play at "throwing shells", in which four white shells are filled with dark wax and tossed to find a winner. If three shells come up the same way, the man who throws wins the game; if they come up evenly divided or all of one side, then his opponent wins. The house does not offer the game, but other gamblers might wager a few silver ingots on a toss, while a noble who feels himself in luck might wager as many as a hundred. To run the game at the table, simply roll four dice, counting even results as one side of the shell and odd ones as the other. If the thrower is under some curse to taint his luck or blessing to favor it, he may roll twice, taking the better or worse result as the charm may be.

Those who favor skill over luck prefer to play wari, a game involving a board cut with several wells and bright jungle seeds placed according to the rules. The winner of this game is determined by opposing Int/Gambling skill checks, with most of the better gamblers having a total of +1 or +2 on their skill check.

Aside from the pleasures of gaming, the house also provides a number of discreet, well-appointed rooms for private dealings, along with a rear entrance for less public comings and goings. Nobles in need of illicit assistance often meet their conspirators at the house. Even if discovered, it can simply be passed off as a pleasant evening of gambling with an amusing foreigner.

The women of the house are almost all dancers or of negotiable virtue. A few Reapers from the Oba's guard sometimes enjoy gambling here, however, and may the spirits help the man who confuses them with their more mercantile sisters.

THE STREET OF SINGING SMOKE

The peals of hammers and chisels ring through the haze of woodsmoke and noisome tanning vapors that hang in this district. Trades that might be conducted outside the walls in a safer land must be carried on behind Paraku's defenses here, and that leaves tanners, charcoal-burners, blacksmiths, and other heavy labor to be conducted in this district.

The goods manufactured here are not generally for retail sale. The artisans work for the city's tribute quota, bartering surpluses of their goods for the excess of other families. Little direct trade in silver happens here, and most families are reluctant to have anything to do with strangers who may or may not be incurable cheats. Such foreigners are better off dealing with the traders around the Herdsman's Gate.

Aside from the artisans that labor in this trade, this district also sees many of the square adobe houses of the Meru who work the timber and rice-fields of the city. The land here is cheap enough that even their poor wages can afford some place, though they must endure the stinks and smoke.

While the artisans of the street are good Spirit Wayists for the most part, many generations of work with obdurate iron has left them following certain quiet cults of Shango and Gu. Some of these cults are harmless, being only private rituals of devotion. Others are rumored to involve redder sacrifices. Some say witches deal with these cults to spirit away the remains of their sacrifices for dark sorceries.

POINTS OF INTEREST

TOOLMAKER'S SHOP

The amber diggers who work outside of Paraku use relatively primitive tools, but enough are lost to breakage and burial alive to compel a steady flow of wooden shovels, braided vine ropes, tunnel braces, and other implements of digging. The patriarch of the crafters is old *Baleb*, a man with much-scarred hands and a taciturn way toward anyone not an amber-digger.

Nebeti work gang bosses can be found here during the hottest part of the day, drinking sour palm wine and working out the dig assignments for the next day. All of them claim to know nothing about the murder of Menes Qar, but one of them, *Chimelu*, was working the amber digging where Menes was found, and fears that the elder's spirit might punish him if he does not tell what he knows. If approached carefully apart from the others, he might admit that Menes Qar had asked him to make certain that no one tarried at the pit after sundown. When Chimelu found Laughing Seth walking out toward the amber fields, he warned the young man but was dismissed.

OSSUARY OF THE GREAT ANCESTORS

This long, low stone building was once filled with the bones of the greatest artisans and smiths of the city, each one painted and decorated with the names and deeds of the great one. When the Old Lord Akhen seized the city, he stole the bones of the dead for his own foul experiments, and the ossuary has been largely empty since. Those who might somehow retrieve the bones would earn great favor with their descendants- or a powerful talisman for dark sorceries of summoning.

DISTRICT EVENTS

1	Bisi of the Burning Hand is becoming aware of the threat rising toward the Nebeti. His long-hidden sympathy for the people has him smuggling spearheads and cleavers to the Nebeti, but he needs brave men to carry them through the tunnels there.
2	An ambitious young smith seeks a cache of black Umthalu bronze his elderly master spoke of seeing in a now-ruined warehouse in the Fallen Houses district. He needs help to find the sorcerous metal.
3	A corrupt tribute-gatherer has stolen a shipment of goods under the guise of a bandit attack. The locals dare not oppose him directly, but others might prove him complicit in the plundering.
4	The Ahonsu has suddenly demanded a great wealth of spears for a new campaign. The armories of the House once had many bronze spearheads that might fill the quota if they can be found.
5	An artisan has bargained with a forest witch to curse a rival in the trade. The rival is desperate for help in finding the witch and ending his ceaseless curses.
6	A young genius of the forge has fashioned an axe out of a forgotten hero's armor, imbuing the axe with a furious spirit. The bitter and neglected ghost possesses him and sends him on calculated rampages.

FORGES OF THE AMELU

Paraku's chief value to the Ahonsu has always been in its metalworkers. Generations of blacksmiths and bronzeworkers have plied their trade here and filled the tribute barges with the gleaming produce of their forges. Among them, the Amelu clan has consistently produced the finest smiths in the city.

Their forges are a sprawl of buildings toward the eastern edge of the district, clan-houses and smithies tangled together and ringing from dawn to dusk- or later, when the tribute quota needs filling. All the countless goods necessary for the Ahonsu's demands are made here, from simple cookpots and metal buckles to the exquisite steel of the great razors beloved by the Reapers.

The patriarch of the clan is *Bisi of the Burning Hand*, famed for fashioning two hundred spearheads in a single night when the Night Men threatened the city's walls. He is older now, but still has the massive thews of his trade and can lift the heavy iron billets he works as if they were river reeds. Bisi is a practical man, concerned with the filling of his clan's tribute quota and peaceful relations with whatever noble clan might rule the city.

Unbeknownst to his kinsmen, he was once the beloved of a Nebeti market-sweeper, hiding their romance from the shame and exile they would both have suffered had it been discovered. Because of this separation, he was not there when a drunken riverman beat the girl to death for refusing his advances. The riverman was executed, but Bisi blames himself still. He will do much to help the Nebeti if convinced that a pogrom is coming.

THE TALE OF THE GREEN STONE BOWL

THE CHARACTERS ARRIVE IN PARAKU

There are several different ways to get the PCs to Paraku, depending on the circumstances of your campaign. Here are four possibilities a GM might employ:

The riverboat the PCs are on is attacked by Night Men near Paraku, and the captain refuses to go further until the Parakuans have finished patrols to drive the intruders away. Other rivermen are equally unwilling to progress until the way is safe.

Talk among mercenaries says that the shrine in Paraku is hiring muscle. No one is quite sure why the priest in Paraku would want warriors, but he's recently hired at least two dozen and wants more still. The wages are paid in ingots of antique silver.

A strange merchant with pale hazel eyes is dying. He speaks of having been exiled from his people in Paraku, but he wishes to be returned for the particular funerary rites of his kind. The paths are dangerous and more sensible guards might balk at aiding a dead man in this duty; will the adventurers take his body home?

Some of the ingots found on their last adventure bear the markings of old Paraku, yet they have no sign of wear. A moneychanger tells them of House of Bone and Amber in Paraku, and speculates that someone has found a cache of its master's old tribute. Perhaps more can be found there, even if the town has a grim reputation.

MOB JUSTICE AND A MEETING

Fresh off the boat or through the gate, the PCs see a score of angry Lokossans clustered around a boy, shouting of thievery and "heathen Nebeti". A rope has been thrown over the end of a roofbeam and the boy is hoisted to dangle in the air. He claws at the rope about his throat as the onlookers hurl curses and stones.

If the PCs choose to intervene, the mob threatens to turn on them. They're in an angry mood but unarmed save for knives. If a griot castigates their behavior, their nerve will break and they will flee. Attempts by other classes at intimidation or reasoning will resolve based on a reaction roll, modified by the best Charisma modifier in the party and the quality of the arguments that the PCs make. In particular, bared steel and blunt threats of murder are worth a +2 bonus on the reaction roll. On a modified roll of 9 or more on 2d6, the mob is placated or intimidated, and will release the rope. On a roll of 8 or less the mob is unimpressed- and if the PCs are threatening violence, they'll attack with their knives and stones, two locals charging every PC that can be engaged.

Rioters: AC 9, HP 3, Atk +0/1d3 knife, Move 30', Morale 7, Save 14+, Skill +0.

Regardless of the exchange, two rounds after a fight starts or immediately after the mob becomes intimidated, a half-dozen men with spears and leather shields come racing up the street, a graying, scar-faced man at their head. Oba Awosi has come to break up the incipient hanging. If the PCs have managed to intimidate or calm the mob the boy will be alive but half-

unconscious in the mud of the street; otherwise he'll be beaten to death by the time the magistrate and his men arrive.

Oba Awosi is furious at the locals for their excursion into free-lance justice, and he and his men will break up the mob with the butts of their spears and no particular mercy. The PCs are obviously not locals, however, and they won't be molested. They will, however, be confronted by the guards and Oba Awosi himself, two of the men leaning over the boy to check him for signs of life.

Oba Awosi will explain the situation to the PCs, describing the recent tensions between the Lokossan artisans and Nebeti in town. "Everyone knows" that the Nebeti have light hands, but lately some of them have been paying visits to merchants at night, inviting them to contribute to the good of the Nebeti community. Those merchants who fail to donate are targeted relentlessly by urchins such as the boy. The extortionists come masked and under cover of darkness, but the extortion is never for simple silver- it's for donations of food to the Nebeti poor and gifts of their wares to Nebeti laborers. If it were a payment to a specific man or woman, the Oba could trace it back, but a bribe paid to a whole community makes it hard to affix the blame justly.

The angry Oba then explains that some vigilante has decided to do without justice in their revenge. The Nebeti elder, Menes Qar, was just found dead by one of the amber pits outside the town. Oba Awosi had just gathered the available guards when another local brought word of the mob. Now he's got to detail his guardsmen to safely get the living boy to the Oba's home or the dead boy back to the Nebeti quarter. He wants the PCs to come with him to the murder site as muscle in case trouble arises. As outsiders, they can be trusted to care nothing about local hates. He'll offer two silver ingots apiece for the work, which should take no more than an hour.

If the PCs killed any townsfolk during the uproar, Oba Awosi will not be happy, but is willing to consider it as self-defense in subduing a riot. He will strongly hint to the PCs that cooperating with him would be a very good way to ensure he *continues* to consider it a matter of self-defense.

A CORPSE AND A WARNING

Not far from the walls of the town, broad scrapes and narrow tunnels are dug down to reach the rich blue earth deposits that contain the nodes of amber. Most pits are thirty to forty feet deep, too small for men to stand upright in them, and always canted at slopes just barely shallow enough to navigate without ladders or handholds. The Nebeti form the great majority of the work force, and every year a half-dozen die in cave-ins or mining accidents.

A Nebet stands by Menes's corpse, wringing his hands and unable to look away from the dead man. Behind him, other Nebeti are climbing in and out of the pits, small satchels of blue earth around their necks, all of them shooting regular glances at the dead man. The Lokossan and Meruan overseers shout them to their work, but the tension is obvious even among them. Oba

A TIMELINE OF LIKELY EVENTS

Hour	Event
0	The PCs arrive in Paraku and have a chance to stop the vigilante murder of a boy, meeting Oba Awosi in the process.
1	They go with Oba Awosi to investigate the Menes Qar murder scene. There, they meet Upright Osaze, who has come to secretly ensure that Menes Qar does not have the green stone bowl on his corpse, and hear the marabout warn the Oba away from the investigation. The Oba promptly hires the PCs as unofficial investigators.
4	Menes's daughter, Kiya Qar, sends a runner to ask the PCs to visit her in the Nebeti quarter. There, she reveals her conviction that Laughing Seth was behind her father's murder and asks the PCs to help find proof of his involvement. She gives the PCs the location of the entrance to the dungeon complex beneath the House of Bone and Amber, telling them that it leads to a secret entrance into Seth's well-fortified estate.
6	Assuming the PCs take her up on her offer, they enter the dungeon complex, navigate through it, and either kill or cut a deal with Seth. Resolving the murder and extortions will win favor with both Kiya Qar and Oba Awosi, but Laughing Seth can be a powerful ally in his own right.
7-18	After their exertions, they likely spend some time resting and recuperating from their adventure.
19	Yao the Priest seeks them out in private, admitting his suspicions that Upright Osaze has found something foul in the ancient catacombs uncovered beneath the Shrine of Seven Red Miracles. Osaze has hired mercenaries to guard the entrance to the catacombs, speaking only of "dangerous things", but Yao spied on him performing a strange and frightening ritual behind the shrine last night. If the adventurers investigate, Yao will reward them.
20	At some point, the PCs will likely seek to enter the catacombs that lead to the House of Bone and Amber's temple complex. Yao will distract the mercenaries with palm wine and women to let the PCs get inside. The heroes may or may not find the incriminating texts of dark sorcery within the temple complex.
21	Shortly after the PCs enter, Upright Osaze will discover Yao and the guards, and realize that Yao knows too much. Osaze will lure the priest alone to the ritual ground behind the shrine, where he will knife him. He shrieks of Nebeti assassins and leads his mercenaries and a mob of angry townsfolk to sack Kiya Qar's home- and to conveniently steal the green stone bowl in the confusion. Stunned and surprised, the Nebeti cannot halt this attack, though Kiya survives unharmed.
22	The PCs emerge from the unguarded catacombs before the mob returns, unless they dawdle greatly in the tunnels. They may take the opportunity to confront Upright Osaze with the incriminating texts they found in the hidden temple. If they do so, the marabout's supporters will be demoralized by doubt and he will lose a substantial amount of support. His mercenaries and a hard core of zealots will remain loyal regardless of the evidence, however.
23-32	None of the NPCs will act further that day until the upcoming midnight, when Upright Osaze tests the powers of the green stone bowl. Using a few strands of hair he took from Menes Qar's corpse, he will cause the wretched revenant to rise from the Nebeti burial tower and pursue the PCs where they sleep, killing any local it encounters on its way. The Nebeti sorcerer's corpse makes a powerful foe.
34	Upright Osaze blames the revenant on Nebeti sorcery. His mercenaries and remaining followers rally to him and prepare to storm the Nebeti quarter. As part of his "ritual blessings", Osaze takes a few strands of hair from each of his followers. Such preparations take time, however, allowing the PCs to respond while the pogrom builds.
35	The forces that can be arrayed against Upright Osaze will depend on which friends the PCs have made in Paraku. Oba Awosi may be willing to risk his loyal warriors against the mob if the PCs have sufficiently impressed him. If Laughing Seth is dead or reconciled, the Nebeti will be able to coordinate their defenses against the invaders. Those involved will instinctively look to the PCs for leadership, as Oba Awosi cannot be seen to be too supportive of the Nebeti and Kiya Qar is young and inexperienced still.
36	The mob invades the Nebeti quarter. Even if they are smashed, Upright Osaze reaches the secret passage under the Nebeti god-shop and uses the bowl to gain access to the Old Lord's throne room and desiccated remains. He intends to use the Eternal to empower the bowl, so that he might turn all the night's dead into undying warrior-slaves for his cause. The Old Lord has other ideas, however, and kills Osaze. If the PCs don't stop the Old Lord in time, he will use the bowl to do what Osaze had planned and raise himself an instant army of undead slaves.



Awosi will let the PCs share in the investigation, on the assumption that they've seen their share of dead men.

In life, Menes Qar was a small man in late middle age with sharp, severe features, straight black hair, and the bronze skin of the local Nebeti. His hands are soft but stained with multiple inks and herbal extracts; any nganga will recognize them as the hands of a witch or sorcerer. He wears the brightly-dyed robes favored by the wealthy among the Nebeti and the pouch at his belt still has twelve silver ingots in it. He appears to have died from a single knife-wound to the heart, delivered from behind. A skilled bladesman will recognize the knifework of a practiced murderer in the placement and precision of the blow. Aside from this wound the corpse's lower jaw has also been cut away and removed, preventing the employ of sorcery to speak with the dead. It is impossible to locate any tracks around the corpse as the area has been hopelessly trodden by workers.

If asked about Menes Qar, Oba Awosi will admit that he was not well-loved by his people. The elder had a very high estimation of his own rank and was harsh about maintaining Nebeti customs. Those he exiled from the community usually starved or fell to bad ends in the town, or were forced to leave Paraku entirely. Still, he kept the peace between Nebeti and others of the city and Oba Awosi respected him as a man who could be trusted to keep his word. Now the Nebeti community's leader would be his only child, his daughter Kiya Qar. Oba Awosi will be distinctly less forthcoming about the daughter, saying only that she is very young.

As soon as the PCs have completed their investigation and any conversation with Oba Awosi, a small cluster of tight-faced mercenaries will be seen descending the slopes toward the amber pits. At their head is a white-bearded Spirit Way priest with sunken eyes. Oba Awosi will identify him as Upright Osaze from the Shrine of Seven Red Miracles, speaking with no great love in his tone.

The priest will give the party a sharp inspection as they approach, but Upright Osaze will speak only to Oba Awosi. The priest is civil, but he is not amused at Oba Awosi's involvement in "Nebeti business", as it was obviously a Nebeti who killed the man. The Oba has no custom to bless his involvement in exclusively Nebeti affairs and the other noble clans will surely agree that this is a matter for the heathens to resolve amongst themselves. Oba Awosi will make a brief effort to point out that it might have been a Spirit Wayist who did the deed, but will cease as soon as it becomes clear that Upright Osaze is not here to be convinced.

Meanwhile, Upright Osaze will cross to the corpse and twine a fist in the man's hair, yanking the head up to scowl at its mutilated face. "Look at these pagan trinkets," he demands as he reaches down the front of the corpse's shirt to pull out a handful of amber-beaded necklaces, thumbing through them for a moment before he lets the baubles drop back. The fists of the Nebet beside the body will clench with fury, but he will not utter a word. Oba Awosi will stiffly "request" that Upright Osaze leave the body alone and the priest will rise with a sneer.

Oba Awosi will make a curt acknowledgement of Upright Osaze's opinion and watch in silence as the priest departs. If the PCs attempt to inject themselves into the exchange, Upright Osaze will be interested in them only to the extent that they can prove their innocence of the filthy Sun Faith that has infected some of the rest of the town. If convinced of their orthodox adherence to the Spirit Way, he will invite them to visit him at the Shrine of Seven Red Miracles after this unfortunate business is concluded; the meeting will be cordial if he is convinced of their orthodoxy, but he will seek only to convince them of the loathsome perfidy of the Nebeti.

As soon as Upright Osaze is safely out of earshot, the Oba will turn to the PCs and express his profound doubts that Menes was murdered by one of his own. With the extortion going on of late, there have been troubles between the Nebeti and the Lokossans, and Oba Awosi thinks that whoever did this did it as a warning to the Nebeti community. The Oba doesn't dare push the point as long as Upright Osaze is opposed to the investigation; the priest can stir up too much trouble among the common folk if he is slighted. If someone else were to look into the matter, of course, he would be very grateful in ways that would fill up empty purses. If evidence proving the guilt of a culprit were to find its way to the Oba's office, Oba Awosi would be quite certain that such efforts would be rewarded by as much as 500 silver ingots. If someone were so incautious as to claim his official sanction on their investigations, however, he would be obliged to deny every word of it and to punish such imposture accordingly.

A MURDEROUS MEETING

In reality, Menes Qar was murdered by Laughing Seth last night, after he had been lured to the amber pits to discuss the recent spate of extortions. Menes knew that Seth was responsible, and demanded that the young man cease his exactions at once. The younger Nebet meekly submitted to Menes' outraged rebuke, waited until the elder turned to go, and knifed him from behind. Knowing the magical skills of his daughter, Menes carved away the dead elder's jaw to prevent any risk of sorcerous detection. He knows that Kiya might well know who her father had gone to meet that night and might even know that he's behind the extortions- but without proof, he's confident that she doesn't dare accuse him of the murder without risking civil war between his backers and her own supporters. If asked by outsiders, he denies any meeting at all. Nebeti and those with a right to know are simply told that he left the elder there after their discussion, as he was unable to help him resolve his difficulties with the recent extortion.

Upright Osaze got word of Menes' murder only a little after Oba Awosi did, and immediately rounded up some of his mercenaries for a visit to the body. According to the texts he found during the catacomb excavations, the Nebeti chieftain was supposed to own a magical green stone bowl, and Upright Osaze wanted to be quick in collecting it. When he found Oba Awosi had got there earlier, he took the opportunity to warn the Oba off- Upright Osaze wants to provoke the Nebeti into retaliation, the better to goad the other locals into a pogrom.





While Upright Osaze was disappointed in his hope for finding the bowl on Menes' corpse, he used the opportunity to yank a few hairs from Menes's head when he gripped the corpse. According to the tomes he has recovered from the tunnels beneath the Shrine of Seven Red Miracles, such an occult connection can be used with the green stone bowl to bind the spirit of the owner to his decaying corpse. Once he has the bowl, he means to try it out on Menes.

A YOUNG ELDER AND A PLEA

After the PCs leave the murder site, the Nebet who stood watch beside Menes's body will run to give word of the meeting to Kiya Qar. The Nebeti's new elder is grief-stricken by the murder of her father and fears herself unequal to the duty of leadership in these troubled times. The Nebeti is sent to find the PCs and invite them to discuss matters with Kiya, in hopes of enlisting them to her aid.

The PCs will be received with utmost courtesy in Kiya's home. After a minimum of conversation regarding the PCs' business in Paraku, Kiya will explain that she desires to enlist them to investigate the murder of her father. Unlike Oba Awosi, she does not think that it was the work of Lokossans. She suspects it was done at the hand of Laughing Seth, though she dares not publicly accuse him without evidence.

Kiya will briefly relate Seth's past and mention how he has made an unseemly alliance with some of the worst elements among the Parakuans. In the cellar of his house, he has cut a passage into the old tunnels that run beneath the ruins of the House of Bone and Amber, and he and his henchmen plunder the place in utter defiance of Nebeti law. He has attracted many of the poor Nebeti families to his cause, and Kiya is convinced that he is also responsible for the extortion against the local merchants.

Of course, his very sins are what make him so popular among the poor Nebeti, and Kiya cannot openly move against him without incontrovertible evidence of wrongdoing. As he is already technically exiled from the community, his taboo-breaking excavations are not enough to damn him; she needs proof he killed her father. Even his hungriest followers would not stand for open murder, and then she could deal with him as he deserves.

An open assault on Seth's home would be futile, as it is as much a stronghold as a domicile. But Kiya's father told her of certain passages beneath House of Bone and Amber, ones that their ancestors had excavated for the abhorrent Old Lord. If the PCs enter a particular tunnel among the Fallen Houses they should be able to find a way into the works beneath Seth's home. If they come up from below, they could take him by surprise and acquire the evidence. Of course, if Seth were to have a tragically fatal accident in the process, it would not wring tears from the new elder.

If the PCs agree to collect the evidence, Kiya will pay them in five pieces of carved amber, each worth 50 silver ingots, with a promise for twice as much when the evidence is in hand. She can tell them nothing more of the tunnels than what she already has, as such topics were greatly discouraged among the Nebeti. All she knows is that there is something very terrible beneath

House of Bone and Amber, and the Nebeti must never go there or have anything to do with artifacts brought from beneath.

AN EXPLORATORY INTERLUDE

It's likely that the PCs will take an interest in the tunnels that Kiya has pointed out, and it's quite possible they'll immediately move to investigate. The House of Bone and Amber section of the module gives guidelines on the various sections of the tunnel complex, and the default assumption is that it is the dungeon complex that leads to Seth's house. If you prefer to use a different one, any but the Temple of Bones or the Throne of the Old Lord will work.

If the PCs do confront Seth, he will calmly offer to double what they're being paid to deal with him. He expects Kiya is their paymaster, but cannot be certain that it isn't Upright Osaze or Oba Awosi. He will explain that Kiya is a damnable witch like her father before her, and that the Nebeti have endured too long under the yoke of their useless customs. He will bring his people true prosperity by excavating the treasures of House of Bone and Amber and taking their rightful due from the Parakuans who have persecuted them for so long.

If the PCs accept the deal, he will immediately pay up to 500 si in old tribute ingots scavenged from the House. He has no immediate instructions for them, but asks them to come by his house one night hence- and through the front door, if they please. Due to the pace of events in Paraku, it's unlikely that this meeting will ever come to pass, but if it does the PCs will be asked to explore a new section of the House of Bone and Amber tunnels with a pair of Nebeti workers. They'll be allowed to keep half the loot they find.

In the not-unlikely case that the PCs kill Seth or force him to flee, they'll find the excised jaw of Menes Qar. The grisly artifact will be ample proof that Seth was responsible for the murder, and Kiya will pay them in full, as will Oba Awosi if they agreed to find the murderer for him. Seth's Nebeti followers will abandon him and the community will be that much more cohesive during the troubles to come.

A WORRIED PRIEST

At the first convenient lull after the investigation of Menes Qar's corpse, a local priest will seek a private interview with the PCs. He will identify himself as Yao the Priest, one of the devotees at The Shrine of Seven Red Miracles. He understands that the PCs have taken an interest in recent activities in the town and he wishes to place a proposal before them.

Some months ago, he explains, Upright Osaze undertook to expand the catacombs beneath the church. Such was his piety that he worked alongside the Parakuan laborers he hired; the Nebeti would have nothing to do with the work, for it was too close to the old House of Bone and Amber tunnels that are forbidden to them. Their caution was justified, perhaps, for Upright Osaze's digging broke into an old stretch of tunnels. The priest was initially delighted at this turn of events, for the old workings would make excellent catacombs once they were cleaned out and shored up properly.





Shortly afterwards, however, Upright Osaze dismissed all the workers and strictly forbade the more junior priests from entering the tunnels. A few weeks later, he hired a dozen burly mercenaries to “help with the cleaning”. They live down in the catacombs now and permit no priest to pass save for Upright Osaze, and the elder priest will say nothing of what he has found down there.

Yao the Priest would be concerned enough with this matter even were it not for an incident last night. Bad digestion had kept him up past midnight, and he had stepped outside to the ritual ground to get some fresh air. From behind a memorial stone, he had overheard Upright Osaze speaking terrible words and appealing to awful powers. He peered around the stone and saw the priest standing in the middle of the ritual ground, gesturing with one hand and holding an open book in the other, reading from it by the light of the full moon. It was no clean rite the priest was performing, and Yao the Priest fled as quietly as he could.

Yao is convinced that Upright Osaze found something horrible in the tunnels beneath the Shrine of Seven Red Miracles, and the mercenaries are there to keep him and the other priests away while he completes whatever awful purposes he may have. He can lure the guards away from the catacomb entrance with wine and women from a local brothel if the PCs agree to go in and find out what’s really in those tunnels. Yao promises them 200 ingots of silver from the shrine’s treasury if they succeed in providing evidence of Upright Osaze’s evil ways, but it must be done quickly- there is no telling what kind of abominations the marabout is planning.

If the PCs agree to the expedition, Yao is as good as his word. He’ll lure away the guards while Upright Osaze is busy with rites in the shrine, and the PCs will have a clear shot at the tunnels. Unfortunately, such aid is the last that Yao will be in a position to grant.

BLOOD AND PLUNDERED JADE

While the PCs are immured in the catacombs, Upright Osaze will come upon Yao and the mercenaries cavorting in the shrine. Upright Osaze had his suspicions about Yao from the start, and this uncharacteristic revelry is all that he requires to confirm his resolve. He leads Yao away from the mercenaries for a walk in the ritual grounds, where he knifes the younger priest. A few more light swipes of the knife are given to himself before he buries the weapon back in Yao’s chest and shouts for help against “Nebeti murderers”.

The believers that gather for services will promptly rush out to aid the marabout, and are quick to respond to his accusations. The mob gathers up Yao’s corpse, and with Upright Osaze at their head they charge the Nebeti quarter. Nebeti are beaten and robbed while Kiya Qar’s home is ransacked, with Upright Osaze carefully inspecting the plunder for “damnable relics of the Gods Below”. The green stone bowl is found in the sack, and Upright Osaze promptly lays claim to it.

The entire process will take the better part of an hour, and it’s likely the PCs won’t emerge from the tunnel complex before it’s complete. No guards will be waiting at the catacomb entrance, as all will be engaged in the general rioting, and the PCs will be able to escape without notice.



A PRIEST ACCUSED

If the PCs choose to openly confront Upright Osaze with the evil relics they located in the catacomb tunnels, Upright Osaze will flatly deny that any such artifacts were ever in the tunnels and accuse the PCs of receiving the foul things from their Nebeti allies. Depending on the circumstances and the arguments the PCs make, this accusation will be viewed as more or less plausible by any listeners. Upright Osaze's hard core of Nebeti-haters and mercenary muscle will stand by him at all hazards, but less dedicated Parakuans might be more inclined to question him.

At the worst case, no one believes the PCs. They are driven away by Upright Osaze's henchmen and angry locals. Upright Osaze's forces are undiminished and the impending violence will be that much worse.

In a somewhat better case, Oba Awosi is convinced that Upright Osaze is mixed up in devilish business. Even if he cannot openly accuse the priest of foul necromancy, he and his men will stand ready to fight Upright Osaze and his mob if they start any trouble.

In the best case, the PCs provoke serious doubt and fear among Upright Osaze's followers, and many of them abandon the marabout. He is left only with his mercenaries and a much smaller core of zealous followers. This won't stop him from setting off the pogrom, as he's convinced that he can make all the minions he needs from those who will die in the fighting.

Oba Awosi still doesn't dare confront Upright Osaze directly, but he advises the PCs that if more of his followers can be peeled away, the Oba will be able to take the priest into custody. Such an act would provoke his rivals greatly, but with enough evidence he could withstand any investigation the Ahonsu might send in response to their complaints.

A NEW AND TERRIBLE THING

By now, Upright Osaze is aware of the combinations against him. He needs a suitable event to provoke the horror and rage necessary to trigger a pogrom, and that night he means to provide it with the green stone bowl. Using the instructions given in the Old Lord's books and a ritual performed in the tunnels beneath the shrine, he binds the spirit of Menes Qar to his dismembered, defleshed corpse atop the Nebeti burial tower. Lacking corpse-flesh, the spell binds dozens of carrion vultures into the corpse's ribcage and skull, tangling their feet in ropes of sinew and leaving them to writhe and caw inside the prison of bone.

Shambling Abomination: AC 7, HP 25, Atk +4/1d6 claws, Move 30', Morale 12, Save 14+, Skill +0.

The hideous abomination stalks down the tower steps, killing all in its path as it hunts the meddlesome adventurers. The thing can sense the souls of its targets and will seek them out unerringly, killing any luckless human who gets in its way. The source of the corpse should be plain to observant PCs, as it lacks its jawbone.

A MURDEROUS PACE

The events revolving around the green stone bowl come fast and furious once they begin. As soon as Upright Osaze decides to bring tensions to a climax, the PCs are likely to have very little time to make plans or recuperate from injuries. If the PCs in your group are sturdy or relatively unharmed from their earlier adventures, this might not be much of a problem.

If the PCs are badly depleted in hit points and spells, an extra day might be inserted into the timeline. Upright Osaze would naturally use the time to rally his followers and inspire the hesitant with his own particular brand of zealotry, perhaps making the final confrontation even bloodier.

Despite the likely deaths among the Nebeti, the Parakuans see only a monster set upon them by unholy sorcery. The beast is hardly destroyed before Upright Osaze is passing out torches at the shrine, gathering locks of hair from his followers as pledges of their faith, and whipping his minions into a full-fledged pogrom against the Nebeti. As agents of the damnable heathens who were betrayed by the monster they helped to conjure, the adventurers too must perish.

Upright Osaze wants as much bloodshed as possible, the better to create fresh corpse-slaves for his crusade against the Sun Faithful. His ultimate goal is to reach the hidden passage beneath the Nebeti god-shop, which his books inform him should lead him directly to the Old Lord's throne room. The sorcerous miasma there will be powerful enough to allow him to bind a small army of spirits into their broken shells.

DEATH BY FIRELIGHT

After Menes Qar's corpse is slain once more, there will be an hour's lull as Upright Osaze whips his followers into a frenzy. Common talk in the street will soon alert the PCs to this impending trouble. It's theoretically possible that the PCs could kill him during this stage, but he's surrounded by at least a hundred fanatical minions and more than a dozen loyal sellswords, and it's unlikely that such attempts would prove successful. The PCs are likely to have more luck in rallying the Nebeti and coordinating friendly Parakuans against the looming riot.

Their obvious heroism in dispatching the abomination will make them a natural focus for leadership. If the PCs are allied with Kiya Qar or Laughing Seth, they and their followers will appeal to the adventurers for help and will follow their instructions implicitly. If Seth is dead or discredited, his followers will obey Kiya. If one or both of the Nebeti leaders have reason to despise the PCs, they will make their own attempt to prepare for the pogrom and will refuse to coordinate their efforts.

If Oba Awosi has been convinced of Upright Osaze's perfidious dealings with dark powers, he will put himself and his men at the disposal of the PCs, trusting that they'll be able to deal with Upright Osaze's foul sorcery better than he can. If Oba Awosi is not convinced or has reason to hate the PCs, he'll hold his men back and bunker them down at the Oba's palace, staying out of the riot until the worst has passed.



RIOT OUTCOME MODIFIERS	
MODIFIER	SITUATION
+2	Oba Awosi is allied with the PCs
+2	Kiya Qar is allied with the PCs
+2	Laughing Seth is dead, discredited, or allied
+2	Upright Osaze is suspected of dark sorcery
+1/+2/+3	The defense plans the PCs made were good. Add 1 more if they were made with the help of a PC with skill or background in Tactics. Add 1 more if Bisi of the Burning Hand aids them with his forgework.
+1	For each encounter handled during the riot
-2	Upright Osaze is not suspected of witchcraft
-2	Kiya Qar is dead or hostile to the PCs
-2	Laughing Seth is alive and hostile to the PCs
-2	Oba Awosi is dead or hostile to the PCs

It may be that the PCs have allies among the native Parakuans, particularly Bisi of the Burning Hand and his Amelu kinsmen from the Street of Singing Smoke. If Bisi is made to understand what is about to happen, he will break open the stores of his clan and pass out spears and blades to all the able-bodied Nebeti before he and his sons join them in battle. Other Parakuans allied with the PCs may also recognize the horror that is about to happen and join them in their fight against the rioters.


Once the riot begins, the mob will move directly from the Shrine of Seven Red Miracles toward the Nebeti quarter, trying first to break through the Nebeti quarter gate. If repulsed there, the rioters will swarm over the walls, pushing their way along the street toward the burial tower which they will intend to topple with hammers and ropes. Upright Osaze and a few of his best mercenaries will peel off along the way to break into the Nebeti god-shop and access the hidden passage there that leads down to the Old Lord's private quarters. Even if the rioters are being slaughtered by well-organized defenders, Upright Osaze and his men will make it at least that far- the fanatic actually prefers for as many of his men to die as is possible, so he can use the hair they pledged to bring their corpses back as tireless warriors against the Sun Faith heretics.

The players should be given a few specific situations to respond to during the riot- a squad of mercenaries that make it over the wall and threaten to unbar the gate, for example, or a mob of commoners breaking into a house to drag out a screaming Nebeti girl. Most rioter packs will break and flee after a quarter or more of their number are dead or wounded, and any display of hostile magic will force an immediate morale check. Depending on their diplomatic talents, the PCs may have substantial help from NPC warriors in their defense.

During this fray the PCs can participate as they think best, rallying defenders and driving back rioters. As soon as Upright Osaze breaks into the god-shop, however, a Nebeti runner should come to warn the PCs that their nemesis has taken to the underground, and that the very worst perils in all the House

RIOT OUTCOME	
D20	RESULT
1	The Nebeti are exterminated in an orgy of killing and rapine that goes on for three days. In the end, nothing remains of the Nebeti quarter but rubble and nightmares.
1-4	A ragged mass of two hundred Nebeti escape the slaughter, the rest succumbing to the knives and clubs of the rioters. The Nebeti quarter is looted, the burial tower hurled down, and the survivors flee Paraku to largely perish in the jungles surrounding the town.
5-8	Five hundred Nebeti are killed in the fighting, and many more are hurt. A few strong points in the quarter hold out and provide shelter for the children, but the burial tower is thrown down, Kiya Qar's house is destroyed, and most of the other buildings are looted. The survivors remain in Paraku but are treated as common slaves.
9-12	Three hundred Nebeti are killed and about as many rioters die in the fighting as well. The burial tower is destroyed, but few other buildings are looted, and most of the women and children escape the assault. Much bitterness lingers after the fighting, but the worst of the local zealots died in the assault. The Nebeti become even more reclusive within their quarter.
13-16	One hundred Nebeti are killed, but twice as many rioters die. The invaders push into the Nebeti quarter but are prevented from destroying any buildings, and few atrocities are committed before they are driven out by the defenders. The Nebeti earn a grudging respect from those locals who did not participate in the riots and even the zealots think better of talking of reprisals.
17-20	A few dozen Nebeti die, but almost two hundred rioters perish. Few of them even get over the Nebeti quarter wall, and those that do hardly have time to steal or assault anyone before they're cut off and killed by the defenders. The locals will lose all interest in pogroms for at least a generation.
21+	Deaths among the Nebeti can be counted on two hands as the rioters are brutally smashed. Upright Osaze and his men get to the god-shop, but his escort is cut down as soon as he's in the tunnels and those few confused rioters who actually make it over the wall are dead before they can so much as see a Nebeti girl. The worst of the local fanatics are all dead, and the survivors are much more inclined to wish peace.





of Bone and Amber are to be found down those tunnels. If the PCs are intentionally seeking out Upright Osaze in the fray, they may be there to watch him disappear into the shop and leave his guards behind to cover his flight.

A CHASE OF THE DEAD

If the PCs have been very successful in repelling the rioters, Upright Osaze's escort will be overcome by NPCs by the time they get to the god-shop. Otherwise, the PCs will have to best the mercenaries before they can follow the fleeing Upright Osaze. The mercenaries are not fanatics, however, and are perfectly willing to listen to the persuasion of silver- particularly if it looks like the rioters are losing. As a starting offer, fifty silver for each mercenary buys their immediate departure.

Mercenaries (3): AC 7 leather armor, HD 1, HP 6, Atk +2/1d6 light spear, Move 30', Morale 8, Save 15+, Skills +1.

Once in the tunnels, the PCs need to locate Upright Osaze within one hour. Any longer than that, and Upright Osaze will have had time to complete the ritual of the green stone bowl. With the collection of hair offered up by his followers, he will raise their corpses to slaughter the terrified Nebeti and drag the bodies to the burial tower, where he can later harvest them in turn for his purposes. Any other Parakuan who interferes with the butchery will also be killed. The slaughter will be swift, and will complete within an hour after the ritual is finished.

If Upright Osaze is located before the ritual is complete, he will desperately beckon the Old Lord himself back to life and command him to slay the PCs. Being a far more accomplished necromancer than Upright Osaze, the Old Lord will brush aside the compulsion and kill the priest, even as the PCs attack him. Once Upright Osaze is dead, the Old Lord will turn his attention to the PCs, and claim the green stone bowl for his own once more. His intent for the resurrected soldiers will be somewhat different than that of the fanatic, but the butchery involved will span the entire town and not just the Nebeti quarter.

If the ritual has yet to be completed by the time Upright Osaze and the Old Lord are dead, the enchantment will fail and the dead will remain undisturbed. If they have already been summoned to service by the bowl, they will run wild and rend first the living and then each other. The only way to stop the process is to destroy the bowl. Should it be shattered, all the corpses animated by its cruel sorcery will instantly fall to the ground. If this is not done, the corpses will kill every living thing in Paraku within the next three hours, and then destroy themselves.

Once Upright Osaze and the Old Lord are dead, there will be a little more leisure to inspect the former lord's private quarters and salvage such goods as are worth something to the world.

THE ASHEN AFTERMATH

If Paraku still stands and the Nebeti have not been driven out of the town or massacred wholesale, the adventurers may count on the gratitude of its better citizens. Oba Awosi will need his silver for rebuilding, but will give a *heavy spear +1* to the PC

most able to use it as a sign of his gratitude. The PCs can expect the friendship of the Nebeti if they managed to pull through largely intact, and if Kiya Qar lives she will give them the use of a sturdy stone house within the quarter- tacitly hoping they'll linger as protectors of her people. They may have earned fresh enemies among the more bigoted denizens of Paraku, however, and it may not be entirely safe for them to linger in the town.

In the case that the Old Lord is successful in raising the dead of the town, the Ahonsu himself will lead a scourging army to destroy the loathsome monster and his undead warriors. The slaughter will be spectacular, but the Old Lord will eventually be defeated at the cost of every life in Paraku. The bowl itself will be lost in the chaos of his downfall and the town will be a blasted ruin of evil aspect for generations to come.

COMMON COMPLICATIONS

Adventurers being adventurers, it is remarkably unlikely that events will exactly follow the outline given above. As a GM, you should respect the consequences of their choices- if they do something to completely throw off the plans of the denizens of Paraku, you should allow that confusion to result. You can use the goals listed for each major character to determine their next steps in the case of a disrupted plan, but here are a few tips on keeping things interesting.

Don't worry about the adventurers making NPCs hate them with ill-advised actions or imprudent choices. Even if every major actor in Paraku despises the PCs, their plans will still go off. It will simply be much, much harder for the adventurers to turn a useful profit off events, or to prevent the pogrom if they're feeling charitable. Try to keep the PCs out of prison, however, as that narrows the scope of possible play; in a pinch, you can have one of the NPCs spring them or prevent their arrest simply to spite a rival.

If the PCs are smart enough to murder Upright Osaze early in the adventure, shift the focus of troublemaking to Laughing Seth. The pogrom that Upright Osaze intentionally wanted to provoke might well be accidentally induced by Seth's extortion against the Parakuan merchants, or he might make a move to deniably assassinate Kiya Qar. If the PCs have killed Seth before they executed Upright Osaze, Kiya Qar might become recklessly overconfident and drive the Nebeti to civil war as the poor among them lament the death of their friend and protector.

Whichever choice you make, the key is to maintain some source of problems. As long as there are problems in Paraku- preferably obvious, pressing problems that might be helped by things an adventurer can do- the adventure will progress just fine. If the players are deft enough to completely defuse Upright Osaze and eliminate the risk of a pogrom, then *let them win*. Instead of forcing the pogrom, send a reckless local child into the House tunnels, or have Night Men attack the town, or inflict some other interesting disaster on the place. Let events unfold in an organic way, keep the problems coming until the players want to move on, and everything will work out just fine at the table.

The great stone fortress known as the House of Bone and Amber was raised by Nebeti and Lokossan slaves some one hundred and forty years ago, not long after the initial conquest of the city by the Old Lord Akhen and his Eternal soldiers. The general objected to the near proximity of the living, particularly given the instinctive repugnance his soldiers had for all that drew breath, and so required a more isolated palace.

The House was built at the far west end of the city, with the town walls thrown out to encircle it by sweating native laborers. The stones were mortared by their blood, their lives spent with casual contempt by their new master. Vast sums of local amber were employed in its decoration, and those jewels and the vast loss of life in its building earned it the name by which it is known in Paraku today.

For a hundred years, the Old Lord held his loathsome court within the cyclopean stone walls of the House, summoning living servants only when there was a need for fresh corpses for new Eternal warriors or fresh meat for his table. The Nebeti were held close to its walls, the better to be near to answer their master's bidding, and to be as far as possible from the subjugated Lokossans, who hated them bitterly.

The Nebeti were the Old Lord's favored servants, but often as not that simply meant they were nearest to hand when he had some hideous whim to satisfy. Vast numbers of Lokossans were converted into Eternal foot soldiers or carved flesh on his tables, but the Nebeti were reserved for more exotic and more horrible fates. Perhaps worst of all were the magical experiments the Old Lord conducted into the prolongation of mortal life and the creation of more reliable, biddable slaves than his dreamclouded Eternal soldiers.

In the end, the fall of the House came when the Emperor Kaday made his great invasion of Deshur, sweeping out of Nyala at the head of an alliance composed of all the Five Kingdoms. The Eternal King demanded the Old Lord's soldiers, and the tyrant plainly intended to sacrifice the entire city to feed his king's legions. In desperate response, the Nebeti conspired to steal the green stone bowl and strike vital supports and keystones within the House. The mighty fortress toppled into a mound of shattered rubble, burying the Nebeti elders as their sons and daughters broke open the Old Lord's armories and gave steel to the Lokossan slaves. The remaining Eternal were slaughtered by the enraged populace, and their twitching remains were translated into smoke and ashes in the burning houses of the city.

Ever since then, the House of Bone and Amber has been an ill-omened place. The stones are shunned, even for repairing the walls, and children do not dare to play amid its tumbled slabs. The Nebeti cast out any of their people caught within the ruins, and even the native Lokossans are reluctant to approach it. Everyone knows that the Eternal do not die from mere age, and men fear to disturb what might be lost beneath the darkness. Outsiders are permitted to approach the ruins and the underworks that still stand, for why should the Parakuans care if some foolish strangers choose to die in their city?

HOUSE COMPLEXES

The surface structure of the House is almost completely ruined. What few chambers are still intact have long since been plundered by others. The untouched areas are all beneath the earth, in tunnels and passages carved out by Nebeti masons generations ago. Entrances to these underworks are usually accidental, with surface tunnels caved in by age or falling stone here and there. Careful investigation will reveal as many entrances as you find necessary for the complexes you choose to use.

The underworks beneath the House of Bone and Amber are broken up into a half-dozen different complexes, each with passages running off the edge of their respective maps. Only one passage is drawn in, but you can add others to connect each section as necessary to other complexes. The adventure as written uses only the dungeon, the Temple of Bone, and the Old Lord's chambers. The other sections of the House can be connected to these segments to make larger areas to explore, or they can be held aside and dropped into your campaign as quick dungeon filler for other occasions.

ADVENTURING IN THE HOUSE

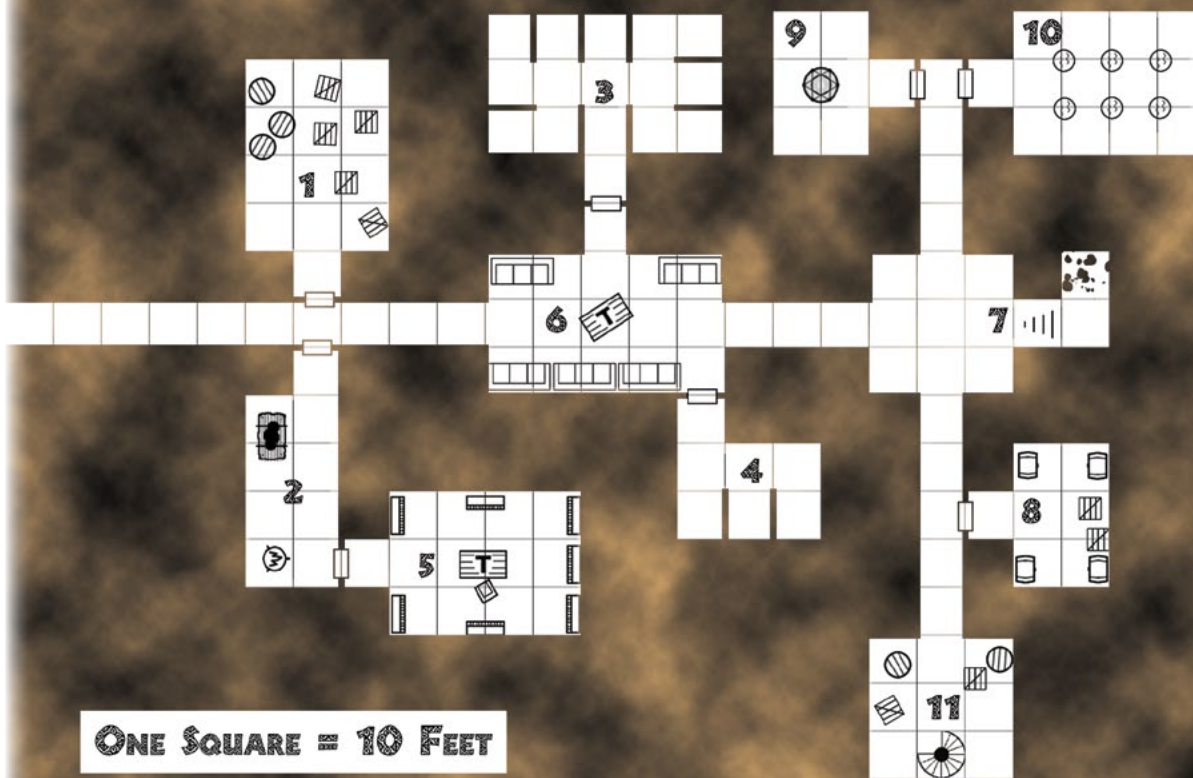
The tunnels beneath the House are all in terrible repair. There are no light sources, the ventilation is very poor, and the ceiling and walls have been known to sag ominously at many places. It is impossible to rest comfortably within the House, and adventurers who seek to recover hit points or spells must emerge into fresher air.

The tunnels are ill-aired but cooler than the jungles of the surface. Armor wearers will be able to wear their harness without risking exhaustion.

Doors in the complexes are all fashioned from tropical woods that resist decay. They have no locks, but each one has a 1 in 6 chance of being swollen into its frame and immovable unless chopped through with suitable implements- a process requiring 10 minutes- or heaved open by a successful Strength/Athletics check at difficulty 10.

Sound travels far in the tunnels. If the adventurers make a point of moving and acting quietly, the noise will extend no more than twenty or thirty down the passages, and will not penetrate any doors. Combat, shouting, or other substantial noise will go three times as far and will penetrate doors up to thirty feet away.

For every ten minutes spent in the tunnels, roll 1d8. On a 1, a group of 1d6 *Eternal Dreamers* enter from a passageway leading to a different complex. They roam silently through the halls at a rate of 120 feet every ten minutes until they have patrolled each passage. If they find no intruders, they leave the way they came.



ONE SQUARE = 10 FEET

This section of the House once served as a dungeon, both for the Old Lord's enemies and for friends of no further utility. A black mold has grown thickly in these tunnels, and great streaky patches of it bulge from walls, ceilings, and floors. While the mold is apparently harmless, it expels thick clouds of black spores if touched. These clouds do no injury, but produce an impenetrable five-foot diameter haze for 1d4 rounds after contact. Everything in the tunnels stinks of wet, moldy bread.

1) STOREROOM

The stone walls of this storeroom are black with an inch-thick mold that swells in streaks and ridges from ceiling to floor. It has a velvety sheen to it, and sometimes it almost seems to pulse in the flicker of torchlight.

A number of brittle wooden crates contain rusting iron chains, bar stock, and crumbling sheets of decaying leather. A large closed book rests on one of the shelves. If opened, the nest of hideously oversized silverfish within will burst outward and crawl over the offending disturber. Their bites will do 1 point of damage per round until the victim smashes them, rolls around on the ground to crush them, or otherwise overcomes their creeping affliction. Rolling on the floor or dropping the book will trigger at least two mold patches.

2) TORTURE CHAMBER

Decaying implements of iron, rotten leather, and mold fill this room. Several of the fanged engines are such that the survival of the subject is clearly impossible.

3) LARGE CELL

Rows of iron manacles hang from the walls and stud the floors here, enough of the bindings to contain at least two dozen human prisoners. In those bare patches of wall not conquered by the mold, crude pleas to the gods in the strange glyphs of the old Deshrite tongue can be seen scratched into the stones. Here and there, other prayers for succor are etched in Lokossan signs.

4) CELL OF SMALL BINDINGS

This cell is appointed much as the other, but the manacles and bindings are replaced by locking leather collars, all of them very small in diameter- some no larger than four or five inches in width. There are random scrapings on the walls that might have been crude pictures long ago, but no words.

5) INTERROGATION RECORDS

This chamber is lined with at least a hundred small pigeonholes, each of which contains a parchment scroll. Most of the pigeonholes have been filled with the black mold, and most of the scrolls have perished to the rot. One legible scroll is unrolled on the table, covered with tight, neat Deshrite script.

The scroll records the torture of a Nebeti laborer who was thought to have conspired to steal the Old Lord's green stone bowl. While the Nebet was subjected to flensing, hot irons, and brass claws during the interrogation, the interrogator seems to consider the prospect of being a subject of the bowl's power after death to be the most horrid torment, a fate against which the Nebet vainly begged for mercy.



6) BONE STORAGE

Crumbling yellow bones fill the bins here, each box sorted to contain bones of the same sort: skulls in this one, femurs in the other, boxes of delicate phalanges. A jar sealed with brittle wax is on the table; inside are two pounds of tiny fingernails.

7) FALSE ESCAPE

The stairway up is a blind turn, originally intended as a jest for prisoners. Anyone who steps on one of the stone stairs will cause a sharpened bronze rake to flip downward from the stairwell's ceiling and thrust a spiked horizontal bar at gut-level for a human of average height. Characters wearing metal armor will take 1d6 damage, while others suffer 2d6, with an Evasion save to avoid it. The rake triggers only once before needing a reset.

8) POSSESSION STORAGE

Cabinets and shelving bear lumps of rot and mold that were once the more perishable belongings of the former prisoners. Four locked bronze coffers contain their more valuable possessions: the first contains 544 silver trade ingots, the second contains four pieces of silver-and-turquoise jewelry worth 100 si each, and the third holds a tightly-wrapped spirit token of *Grasp of the Entangling Vines* and two *potions of healing*. The fourth contains a tightly-bound sheaf of interrogation records written in Deshrite; careful study of their contents will show that Oba Awosi's father was secretly involved in pointing out rebels to the Nebeti servants of the Old Lord. Revealing this proof to his enemies would disgrace him utterly and ensure his removal as Oba of the city.

9) SORCERER CELL

This cell was intended to preserve troublesome ngangas until such time as the Old Lord could put them to best use. The walls are carved with occult signs and the floor is dominated by a potent veve of warding. A column of amber rises from the center of the sign. Within the glass stands *Ekwu*, a nganga once versed in foul necromancy. Forty years of helpless stasis have left him violently insane. The amber will begin to crack as soon as the door to the cell is opened, and 1d4 rounds after the PCs enter it will shatter apart and release the crazed sorcerer upon his "rescuers". His nkisi were long since taken from him, and so he fights with a jagged shard of amber that boils and hisses away in his withered hand. The fragments of his prison will all sublimate away in five minutes, save for a few shards worth 150 si.

Ekwu the Mad Nganga: AC 9, HP 15, Atk +3/1d8, Move 30', Morale 12, Save 13+, Skill +2.

10) SPIRIT CELL

Glyph-carved amber globes imprison bodiless spirits in this cell, a half-dozen of them mounted on pillars fashioned of bronze-bound thighbones. If a globe is touched, it darkens and crazes before collapsing into powder as the spirit escapes. Each globe leaves behind an amber shard worth 50 si. An escaping spirit rolls 1d6: on 1-3 it simply leaves, on 4 it attempts to possess a PC, and on 5-6 it manifests as a furious cloud of amber dust. If it attempts to possess a PC, the victim must save versus Mental Effect or be overcome; the victim will attempt to touch all remaining spheres, one per round, and the spirit will only depart

once all others are free. Freeing the luckless victim from this possession earlier than this requires a spell capable of lifting a Lesser Curse.

Amber Wraith: AC 6, HP 1, Atk +3/1d6 choking, Move 30', Morale 12, Save 15+, Skill +2. Conventional weapons can't harm the wraith- liquids, cloaks, or other means of laying dust will destroy it on a hit.

11) ESTATE INGRESS

A trio of uneasy Nebeti guards stand watch at the base of a spiral stair which leads up to the estate of Laughing Seth. They fear the tunnels outside, and will not depart the room regardless of the noises made outside the door. If the PCs are quiet and carry no lights, they may well surprise the guardsmen.

Nebeti Guards (3): AC 7 leather armor, HD 1, HP 4, Atk +1/1d6 cleaver, Move 30', Morale 8, Save 15+, Skills +1.

These guards are firmly loyal to Laughing Seth and despise Kiya Qar as a tyrant's daughter. They will not attack instantly, but will demand that interlopers depart while one will begin climbing the stair to warn Seth of intruders. It takes a full round's action to climb the stair and open the trap door at the top.

The estate itself shares the same floorplan as an intact version of the Ruined Estate in the *Spears of the Dawn* resources chapter. The ladder leads up to the rectangular room in the upper-right corner of the ground floor, which serves as an office for Laughing Seth. The thickness of the trap door will muffle any sound.

Seth himself will be present in the office at the PCs' first arrival, and will demand an explanation for this invasion of his home. If the PCs betray the nature of their mission, Seth will attempt to buy them off, offering 500 si to enter his service and overthrow the "tyrannical witch" Kiya Qar. He is a persuasive man, making much of the cruel demands Menes Qar made on the poor of the Nebeti and the mistreatment his own family suffered at the former elder's hands. If the PCs agree to work for him, he will pay them on the spot with wealth from a bronze-bound chest in the corner of the room and offer them a double sum for the head of Kiya Qar. Seth will keep his bargains, barring some potent incentive to be rid of the PCs.

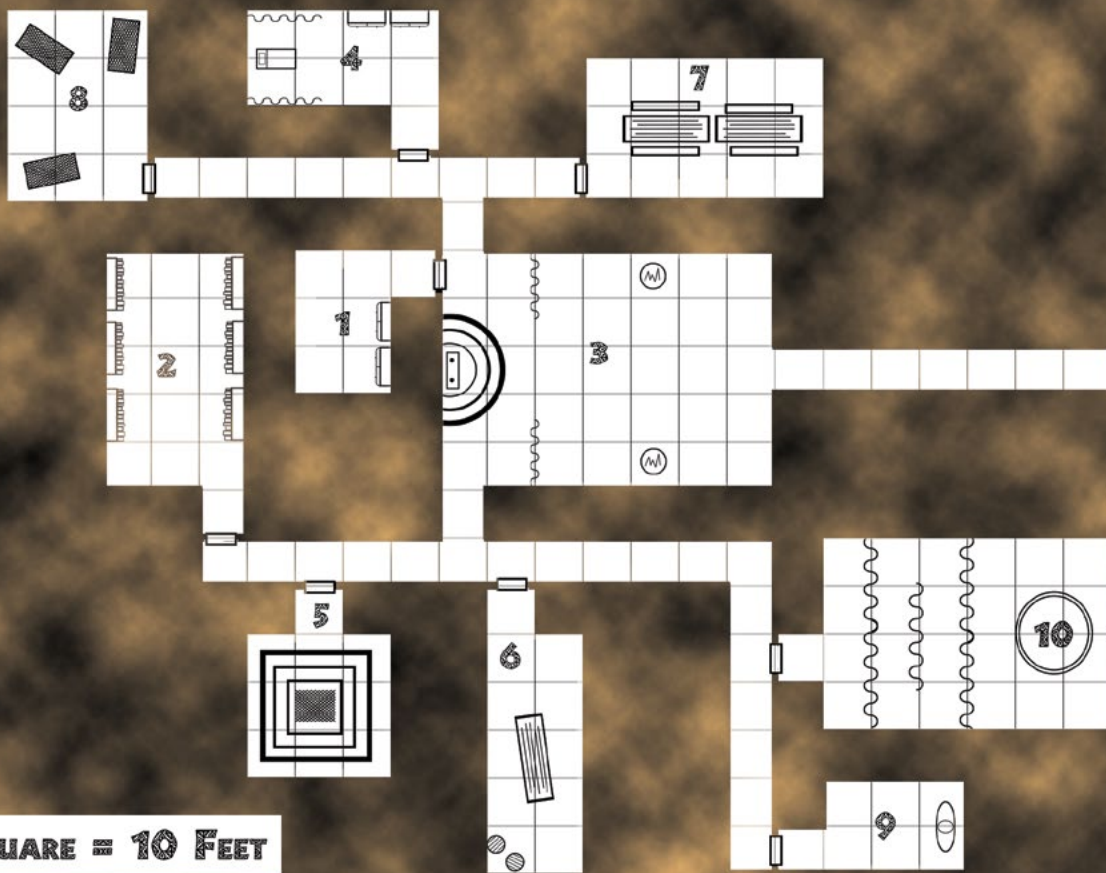
If the PCs prove disinclined to agree to his terms, Seth will try to fight his way to the door and escape. Perhaps unwisely, he ensured that his office was soundproof to keep discreet his dealings, so he must spend a full round's actions pulling open the door before he can bellow for the dozen guardsmen perpetually available at the estate. The guards will arrive at a rate of two per round until all twelve are present. They will not chase the PCs into the dungeon, for they dread its passages.

Laughing Seth: AC 5 warding amulets, HD 5, HP 30, Atk +5/1d8+1 sword, Move 30', Morale 10, Save 13+, Skills +2.

If the PCs have leisure to search the chamber, they will find numerous papers implicating Seth in the extortions of Paraku's merchants, the severed jaw of Menes Qar, and 1,500 si in the unlocked bronze-bound chest.



THE TEMPLE OF BONE



ONE SQUARE = 10 FEET

In the days of the House's glory, the Old Lord maintained these halls as a temple to the abominable Gods Below. Upright Osaze has explored this complex, but his detestation of the blasphemous paraphernalia here has led him to touch little of it. He has warned his mercenaries of the cursed contents, and few of them have any appetite for rummaging in the uncanny place.

1) VESTRY

Cabinets hold the brittle remains of gaudily-colored robes and intricately brocaded vestments. Scowling god-faces and serpentine visages glare from a half-dozen ritual headdresses, and strange holy symbols fashioned from black bronze and sit next to pale jade ritual vessels. There are four such vessels, and the vases and bowls are worth 100 silver ingots each. They are quite fragile, however, and if the bearer falls they have a 3-in-6 chance of shattering. The broken shards are worth only a tenth as much.

2) RELIGIOUS LIBRARY

Unlike most of the other chambers, this one has clearly been disturbed. Most of the scrolls and codexes on the shelves here have long since fallen prey to the humidity, but someone has clearly gone through the mess and picked out the ones that could still be read. Most of the scrolls are religious manuals written in the ancient Deshrite tongue, though a few are Lokossan handbooks of necromancy. A nganga who uses these books can perform certain sacrifices and rituals that will instruct him in the details of any one nganga nkisi or ritual sorcery of less than fourth level, allowing him to add it to his repertoire. The rites require fifty silver pieces worth of ingredients per spell level and involve

the ritual sacrifice of an intelligent living being. A suitably unscrupulous nganga might pay up to 500 silver pieces for these books. One of the necromantic books has a Lokossan note in fresh ink inscribed on the inside front cover, listing a number of volumes that have been taken from the collection and a note to check them for the necessary incantations to use the green stone bowl. It is in the ruddy ink that Upright Osaze makes, and would be excellent evidence of his dabbling in dark forces.

3) ALTAR HALL

The altar that dominates the far wall of this vast chamber is adorned with tattered scraps of rotting cloth and a bowl of worked gold worth 250 si. Within the bowl is a lump of amber incense. Those who ignite it and breathe the fumes of its burning must save versus Physical Condition or feel personally invincible for one hour. For the duration of the effect, they gain +1 on hit rolls, suffer a +2 AC penalty, and they are unable to track their own hit point loss until they are down to 6 or fewer hit points. NPCs under the effect have a Morale score of 12.

4) PRIEST QUARTERS

The Eternal priest that the Old Lord enlisted to aid in the temple rites once laired in this room. Opulent cloth hangings drape in dyed streamers from his rotting bed, and intricate wooden carvings of gods and demons adorn the paneled walls. The mercenary *Hatabu Baldeg* and his two comrades are rummaging through the empty cabinets when the PCs enter, assuming that they've been moving quietly. If the PCs have alerted the mercenaries with their doings, they will be waiting with blades out.



High-strung and fearful, the mercenaries will immediately attack. If their morale breaks, survivors who are unable to flee will retreat to the corner of the room and beg mercy. Hatabu will warn the PCs that Upright Osaze will surely kill them if they harm him. He will readily admit that Osaze hired him and the other mercenaries to guard the catacombs and help “defend the traditions of our people from the Nebeti blasphemers”.

Mercenaries (3): AC 7 leather armor, HD 1, HP 6, Atk +2/1d6 light spear, Move 30', Morale 8, Save 15+, Skills +1.

5) MEDITATION ROOM

The walls of this room are finished in black marble brought at great expense from the Weeping Mountains. The marble retains a mirror-smooth sheen etched by mystically-significant lines and angles, and the light of torches or lamps catches in strange ways on the incisions. The center of the room has a raised dais with the remains of a woven straw mat. Characters who gaze upon the walls for more than one minute must save versus Magic or be prey to short, jarring hallucinations that distort shapes and distances around them. The effect lasts for 2d6 x10 minutes for all affected and inflicts a 20% chance that they will be unable to perform any actions on a given round.

6) CORPSE PREPARATION ROOM

Those sacrificed in the nearby chamber were rendered down to their useful components here. The stone table at the center is cut with blood runnels and the floor is slightly sloped toward a rusted drain grill in the center of the room. Most of the knives, hammers, and flensing tools have long since decayed into rust. When the players enter the room, the pressure of their footsteps on the aged tiles will produce a deep gurgling noise from the drain, like that of some great beast drawing in a wet breath. If the PCs do not immediately flee the room, they will be caught in a great bubble of unspeakably noxious vapors that well forth, forcing a save versus Physical Effect to avoid collapsing to the ground and suffering 1d6 points of damage. Subjects brought to 0 hit points will not die, but will instead be rendered unconscious by the fumes for 10 minutes, reviving with 1 hit point. The cloud will persist for but a few moments before rising upward through the rubble.

7) DARK REFECTORY

The Eternal priest and his acolytes enjoyed gruesome feasts in this room, delicate painted plates set atop a table carved with symbols of death and bodily decay. The plates are adorned with scenes so horrific that no decent soul would ever buy them. Still, a jaded collector might pay 250 silver ingots for the set. Beneath the table, a spider the size of a hunting dog will spring out if the room is entered.

Huge Spider: AC 6, HP 8, Atk +4/1d4+save versus Physical Effect or take another 1d4 damage from the poison, Move 40', Morale 10, Save 14+, Skill +1.

8) SLAVE KENNEL

The stink of fresh rot billows out of the room when the door is opened. A few miserable mats of rotted leather lie on the floor as the beds of the slaves who once served here. A fresh corpse lies on one of them, dead for two days but still evidently

a young woman or girl dressed in a Lokossan skirt and chest wrap. She is **Pabali Sonko**, and was murdered by the mercenary Hatabu Baldeg after she rebuked his indecent advances. Fearing the consequences of her family's anger, Hatabu and two of his friends slipped her corpse down here to hide it, and the three of them are now rifling the priest quarters of the complex. She wears a bracelet of worked silver worth 25 silver ingots that will be quickly recognized by her kinsmen and friends in the town, who have been told that she ran off with a mercenary.

9) RELIQUARY ROOM

A pale stone statue of a serpentine guardian deity glowers at the entrance here. Beneath the statue are a dozen bronze coffers, most of them containing small fragments of bone, skulls, rotting cloth, and other unholy relics of long-dead necromancers and foul ngangas, each labeled and named with their chief sins. A nganga can use them as 200 silver ingots worth of ingredients for the purposes of casting ritual sorcery, and the bundles count as one item of encumbrance.

10) CHAMBER OF DANCING BONES

Thick, time-eaten drapes of pounded bark cloth hang from the ceiling of this room, obscuring everything beyond them. An attack with an edged weapon will cut down a five-foot swath of the decaying cloth. To touch it with one's bare hands will leave a thick, saplike stickiness that numbs the flesh until it is washed away, making the manipulation of nkisi impossible and inflicting a -2 penalty on all attack rolls.

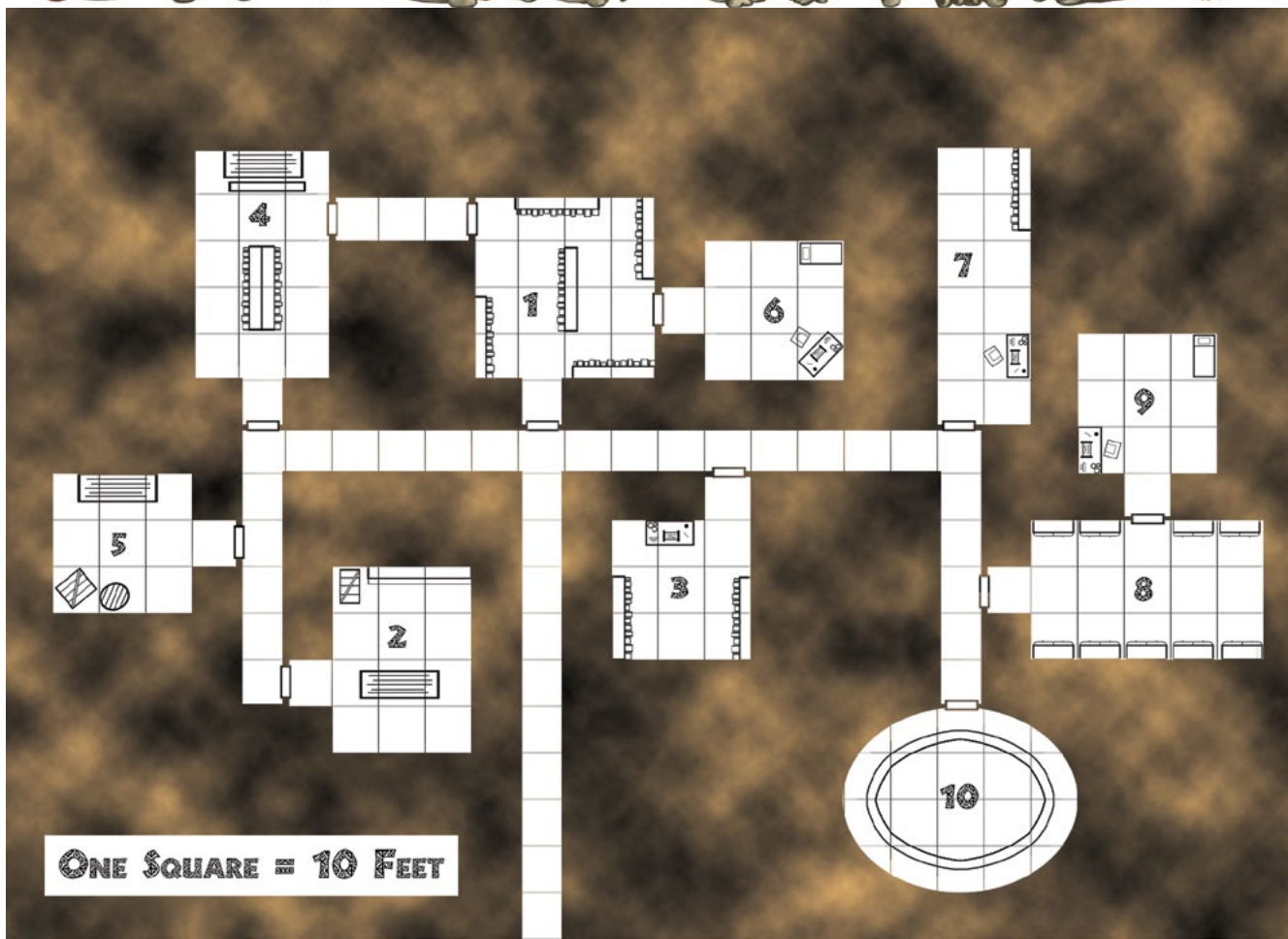
The chamber is pervaded with a rhythmic musical beat of clacking, thumping, and hollow percussion. Beyond the veil of the bark drapes, three man-sized skeletons jerk and rattle in perpetual dance. Their bones are corded together with manskin leather straps, the intricate weavings meeting in the hollow of their rib cages where a tiny shrunken mannikin pulls on the straps to make the dry bones leap and sway.

The skeletons strike each other to sound the percussive notes, circling a stretch of stone floor that has been visibly worn down in the round pattern of their steps. They will completely ignore the PCs unless the party decides to approach or attack them. If a character draws near with no obvious hostilities, the bones will shift their steps to make room in the dance for the PC. If the PC does not immediately join in, the dancers will attack the party. The same hostility will meet any attempt to assault the dancers.

If a PC dances along with the skeletons, have them make a Dex skill check against difficulty 7, with an automatic success if they have any Artist/Dancer skill. If the roll is successful, the PC receives a brief, piercing vision of a single yellow skull on a wall of colored skulls, its jaws slightly ajar and something bright glinting within—a vision of the skull in the Old Lord's chambers which holds the key to his throne room. On a failed roll, the bony dancers turn away from the clumsy-footed one and ignore the PCs thereafter.

Bone Dancers (3): AC 6, HP 10, Atk +4/1d6 bludgeoning bones, Move 40', Morale 12, Save 14+, Skill +2. Each round any given dancer has a 25% chance of simply dancing rather than fighting.





The Old Lord was a voracious seeker of grimoires and forbidden tomes of every description. While a sorcerer of somewhat indifferent power compared to the dark sages of the east, the value of such tomes in bartering and bribing his peers was considerable. Much of this venerable lore has rotted away in the humid jungle air, but some still remains to be plundered.

1) CODEX STACKS

Bound codices were kept in this room, the shelves now slumping with rotten leather and crumbling papyrus. Light cast on the spines will leave them shimmering with the crawling masses of silverfish and other vermin dashing away from the unwelcome radiance. Searchers with the stomach to spend an hour rifling through the remains will find a pair of worm-gnawed teaching fetishes. When given sufficient study, the patterns of inlay and composition of the fist-sized idols will teach a nganga a new nkisi or ritual sorcery. The two fetishes each correspond to a randomly-determined first-level nganga spell. Each time a teaching fetish is used, there is a 50% chance it is ruined by the study.

2) BOOKBINDER WORKSHOP

The books were kept in better repair when the House was occupied. This room is cluttered with the racks, knives, glue-pots and threads needed for bookbinding. The arcane substances needed for working on some of the fouler volumes have wrought strange changes on the vermin who have eaten them, however, and a pair of wolfhound-sized silverfish with scorpion stings will attack any who enter.

Mutant Silverfish (2): AC7, HP 12, Atk +3/1d4+special poison, Move 40', Morale 10. Stung foes must save versus Physical Condition or suffer a maddening hunger for parchment and papyrus, dropping everything to eat at least a dozen pages of the nearest supply they can find. Such gluttony takes one round to satisfy, and will result in the consumption of spirit tokens, warding amulets, and any other small personal object that involves written materials. If restrained or denied, the victim's urge fades in 1d6+2 rounds.

3) TRANSLATION ROOM

The walls here are closely inscribed with countless small words, glyphs, and symbols, all translated into Deshrite with guides as to the foreign grammars and modes of writing. Combined with the stacks of glossaries and dictionaries, any text found in the House can be roughly translated in this room with 2d6 hours of effort. The legible books count as five items of encumbrance and might be worth 200 silver ingots to a scholar.

4) TABLET STACKS

Clay, lead, and wooden tablets fill this room, all of them in ancient scripts impenetrable to all but the most erudite scholars, each requiring a difficulty 9 Int/Languages skill check. The contents are largely obscure, sinister magical reflections upon life and death. One palm-sized tablet is fashioned of pale yellow jade and contains an alchemical recipe that claims to be an immortality potion. In practice, the potion, which costs 200 silver ingots to brew, will simply kill the user if they fail a saving throw versus Physical Effect. The tablet itself is worth 250 si.



5) TANNING ROOM

The walls are lined with dried, stretched hides here, from ancient cheetah skins to crumbling bullhides. Against one wall, a frame stretches the skin of a human woman- and beside her, the much smaller hide of an infant. Old vats are crusted with ancient, foul-smelling tanning residue.

6) SCHOLAR-SLAVE'S CHAMBER

This door is barred from the outside. The luckless Nebet slave confined here was a great scholar, and his humble cot and desk still stand. His own remains are curled up on the cot, the wall smeared with his blood in ancient Deshrite glyphs, begging mercy from his gods and salvation from the undying slavery of the green stone bowl.

7) SCRIPTORIUM

An overturned ink-pot smears the lump that was a half-finished copy of the moldering book of sorcery spread open beside it. A careless soul who tries to read the rotting book will provoke the blind hunger of the sorceled mold that has encrusted it. Tendrils of filth will erupt from the book to grab at the victim's head and pull the book up to enwrap his face and devour him. The book can be cut away with 3 points of damage, but half of all damage done, rounded down, is done to the victim. Tearing the book away requires a successful Strength/Athletics check at difficulty 8. For each round the book remains in place, the victim suffers 1 point of damage from the acidic mold and must save versus Luck or permanently lose 1 Charisma point from the scarring.

8) SORCEROUS BOOK STACKS

The most precious of the Old Masters books were kept here, each one secured within locked bronze coffers that have been mortared into the walls. Opening them takes one minute with a Dex/Security check at difficulty 8; on a failure, the aspiring thief still opens the coffer but takes 10 minutes doing so. There are twelve coffers, but the contents of all but 5, 8, 10, and 12 have rotted or crumbled into illegibility. **Coffer 5** contains a scroll of black hide with silver Deshrite glyphs that describe a process for rendering down a human sacrifice into an ounce of black liquid; if a subject drinks as many ounces of this liquid as they have years, they will become 2d6 years younger. The elixir works only once on a subject and each sacrifice costs 100 silver ingots in ingredients. **Coffer 8** contains a perfectly blank book- all of the foul words within have crawled off the pages and are creeping around the interior. The more horrible words have devoured the more innocuous ones and have grown into vast and swollen glyphs of shimmering black opalescence. They will swarm over the person who opens the coffer like roaches made of script, staining their body with hideous blasphemies that can only be effaced with spells sufficient to break a Lesser Curse. **Coffer 10** is a book with pages of beaten gold and a cover made of amber plates, written in the Deshrite tongue; it contains the secret by which a subject may use the book and the sacrifice of his left hand to renew any other lost, maimed, or crippled body part. The rite requires 1,000 silver ingots worth of ingredients, and the book itself is worth 2,000 silver ingots to a buyer convinced of its power. **Coffer 12** contains a tiny dried mannikin no larger than a man's hand. It is a *Hungry Child* as described in the Artifacts section of the adventure.

9) LIBRARIAN'S CHAMBER

This austere room is matted with rotting pages of parchment, sheaves of them sticking to the humid walls and damp ceiling, ankle-deep drifts of them on the floor. A swollen Nebeti corpse slumps against the wall on the far side of the room, his mouth full of papyrus. This thief unwisely disturbed the pages in this room, and the residual sorcery animated them to avenge the insult. The corpse will lurch to its feet to defend the room, streamers of ragged script crawling over the rotting flesh of the thief.

Libram Puppet. AC 5, HP 20, Atk +4/1d6 cuts from folded paper claws, Move 20', Morale 12, Save 14+, Skill +1. Words crawl from the papers that have been stuffed in his every orifice, the ink staining curses onto the skin and possessions of those the puppet strikes. At the end of the fight, all those hit must save versus Luck or have one written object on their person rendered illegible by the infection of words.

If the puppet is successfully dispatched, a search of the room will reveal a locked wooden chest containing a spirit token of *Calling Back*, 147 silver ingots, and a pair of exquisite crystal-and-gold magnifying lenses worth 300 si as a pair. If the chest is smashed, the lenses will be rendered into bits of gold wire and broken glass worth only a tenth as much.

10) DISPUTATION PIT

A dozen wretched Eternal have been nailed down to the tiers of stone seating that climb along the edge of this room, their legs fastened in place by staples of verdigrised bronze. They have long since withered away into mummified shapes that shriek in parched voices when living souls enter the chamber. Any sanity they may have once possessed has long since given way to delirious hunger. A vast, moldering tome lies open on a stand at the other side of the room.

A fine white sand covers the center of the room. The first two PCs to come within five feet of the center of the room will have their ankles snared by mummified hands that erupt from the sand. A successful Evasion saving throw will dodge the hands, but they will continue to attempt a grab every round until all PCs have left the room or until two PCs have been gripped. As soon as two have been snared, a booming, sourceless voice will demand that they "Dispute!" in the Lokossan tongue.

The PCs will be expected to argue about something. Any topic will do, but the PC who makes the least convincing argument as adjudged by the Eternal audience will be hurled into them by the gripping hand, suffering 1d6 damage from the impact and 1d4 damage from the bites of the Eternal. The victim may roll 1d10 to avoid the bites; if the result is greater than their armor class, no bite damage is suffered.

Attempts to strike or break the clutching hands will cause them to hurl the subject into the seats. The audience is insane with hunger, and so they will tend to favor that side of the argument that behaves more violently and passionately, in hopes of having fresh meat provided by the quarrel.

The tome on the far side is full of records of former disputations. The cover inlay is gold, and worth 100 si.



THE TOMBS OF THE FAITHFUL

The Old Lord favored his most loyal living servants with the serenity of true death. Their remains were lodged here, in a section of tunnels dedicated to their memory.

1) CHAMBER OF UNENDING LONGING

The air of this chamber is filled with a haze of dust-fine powdered bone, a thick layer resting on every flat surface. At the far wall, four withered, mummified Nebeti are clawing at the stone wall with fleshless arms. Shackled by Akhen's curses in death and forbidden to leave by the tomb's entrance, their only thought was to return to their families. Their efforts have dug the room out of the bedrock; as their bones are slowly ground to powder, the magic that animates them restores the broken limbs from the dust of the room. They will ignore intruders unless some effort is made to stop them. Even if destroyed, they will eventually reanimate until their remains are carried out of the House.

Tireless Laborers (4): AC 7, HP 3, Atk +2/1d6 sharpened bones, Move 40', Morale 12, Save 15+, Skill +0.

2) AMBER MUMMIFICATION ROOM

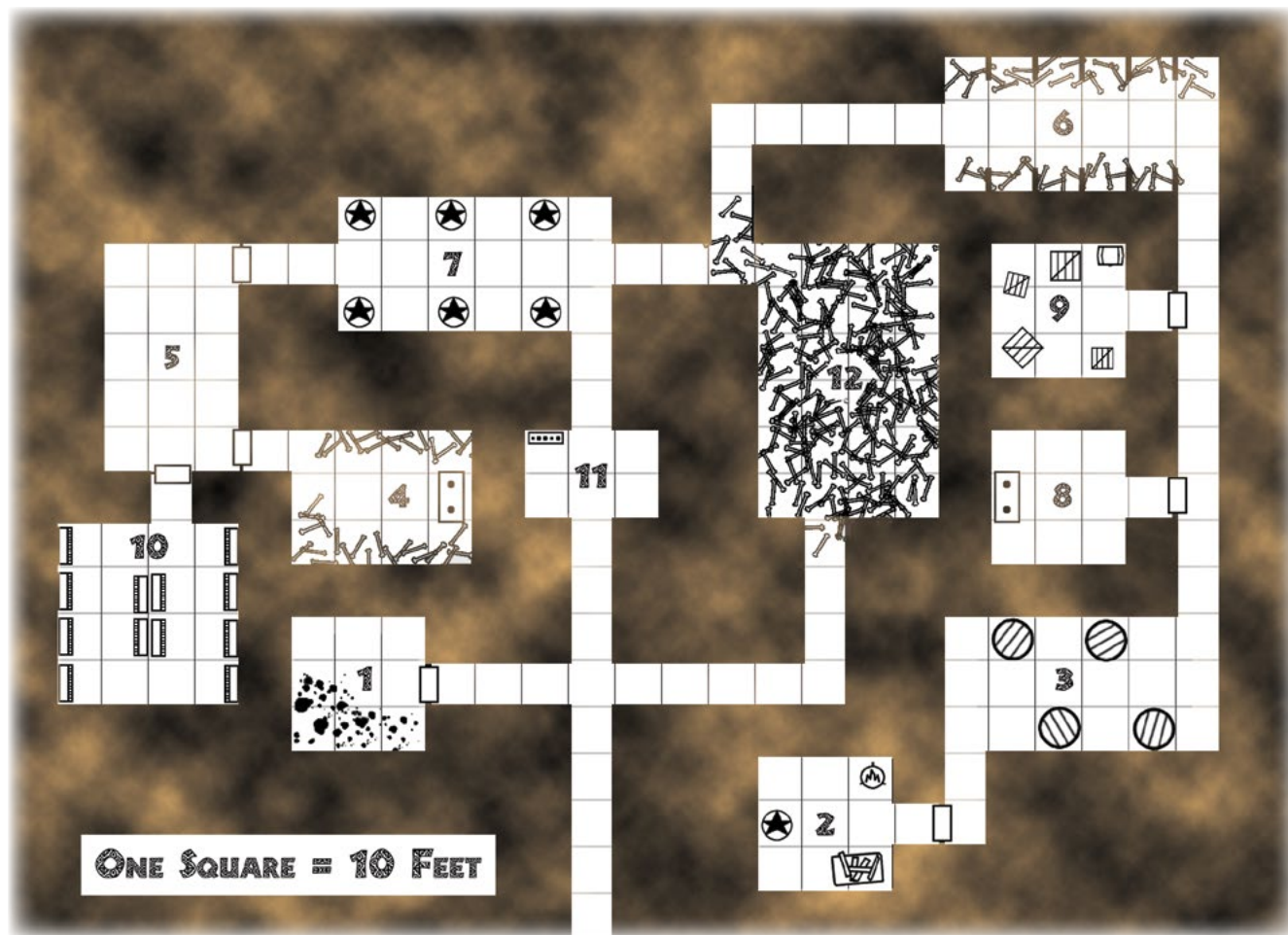
A complex array of vats, cauldrons, pipes, and furnaces fill this room, and the smell of sweet pine still lingers in the air. The Old Lord experimented extensively with amber encasement as a technique for staving off the withering of Eternal flesh, and his final experiment involved a recently-discarded Eternal concubine. The young Nebeti girl stands against the far wall, the perfect flowering of her beauty glazed in an inch-thick layer of

gleaming amber. The girl has been "alive" in the fashion of the Eternal and conscious for forty years, and nothing remains of her self-awareness but a burning desire to see the Old Lord destroyed. If the amber is touched, a last heroic convulsion on her part will allow her to crack the amber shell, screaming of "the key in the yellow skull" in the Deshrite tongue, referring to the key she hid to the Old Lord's private sanctum. Once cracked, the shell will collapse into powder and shards. Her long-entombed body will soon follow after, the vigor of her own motions breaking her into powder indistinguishable from the amber that imprisoned her for so long.

3) DEFLESHING ROOM

Four smooth-glazed clay tanks dominate this chamber, each one the size of a large sarcophagus and covered by a marble lid. Within three of the tanks, the desiccated husks of ancient flesh-eating beetles lie in heaps around the yellowed bones they were meant to clean. Within the northeast tank, the beetles died after feasting upon the corpse of a witch, and the sorcerer's hateful spirit has animated the husks. They will swarm out of the tank as soon as the lid is slid aside, waiting for their prey to fully remove the lid before they lunge for the interloper.

Grave Beetle Swarm: AC 5, HP 15, Atk +4/1d6 myriad bites, Move 20', Morale 12, Save 14+, Skills +1. The beetle swarm is immune to common weapons, while any behavior that would logically destroy a great many beetles will inflict 1d8 damage on it. Magic, torches, or burning oil will do double damage.





4) OSSUARY

The bones of faithful minions were immured here in the ossuary, stacked high along the walls in patterns fixed by mortar and keystone-skulls. A shrine to one of the serpent-headed Gods Below is erected against the far wall, a few pathetic offerings of amber and long-rotten incense left before the fanged face. The amber is worth 50 silver ingots to one willing to steal it.

5) FRESCO ROOM

A Nebeti painter was commanded to decorate this room with wall frescoes celebrating the glorious deeds of the Old Lord and his faithful servants. The conquest of Paraku is depicted in bloody fashion, with the undying legions of the Eternal swarming over the wall and Old Lord Akhen at their head. Foul banquets of human flesh and festivities of more horrid variety still are shown interspersed with scenes of torment and grinding labor inflicted upon the wretched inhabitants of the city. In particular, the Old Lord is shown threatening the Nebeti with a green bowl, a thing that seems to inflict a special terror on his slaves. The floor has been done in parquetry of rotting wood.

6) NICHED HALL

The walls of this chamber are lined with small niches for the bones of the dead, each one labeled with a carving in small Deshrite glyphs. Most of them are Nebeti names, though some seem to be the bones of Lokossan collaborators.

7) MEMORIAL STATUES

Six life-sized statues decorate this hall, each one dedicated to a faithful lieutenant of the Old Lord. Of the six, four of them depict cold-featured Nebeti, while the other two are dressed as Lokossan nobles. The resemblance between the statues and the heads of certain of Paraku's leading families is striking.

8) SHRINE OF THE ANCESTOR'S TRUMP

A trumpet fashioned of a human thighbone rests atop the altar at the far end of the room, framed by vivid wall paintings of famished spirits and wandering ghosts. A character who dares to take the trump from the altar feels an oppressive, anticipatory sense of being watched. If the trump is removed from the chapel without being blown, the bearer suffers a Greater Curse; all undead or spirit creatures will always successfully hit them in combat until they blow the instrument or have a helpful sorcerer lift the affliction. Details of the item's power are given in the appendix.

9) STOREROOM

Tomb-shrouds, spare flensing knives, ossuary jars, and other necessities are stacked in this storeroom. In a small chest against the northeast wall is a sack of broken low-grade amber fragments meant for the mummification room. They're worth 150 si to the Amber Carver's Hall.

10) BIOGRAPHY LIBRARY

In order to better-preserve the glory of his deeds through deathless centuries, the Old Lord ordered that the lives of his most accomplished minions be recorded here for the benefit of the future chroniclers of his empire. Most of these books have since collapsed into filth and decay, but a half-dozen of them remain legible. Five of them discuss the atrocities, necromantic marvels, and hideous appetites of Eternal lords since lost in the fighting that ended the Long War. Mention is made of several villas and tomb-houses dedicated to their plans that may yet be unplundered. Sorting out directions from the tome is possible, but it would take some time and significant local aid to find these vine-buried lairs.

11) GUARDPOST

Four Eternal dreamers stand guard in this niche, their bronze-bladed cleavers thick with Verdigris and the leather armor rotted from their withered bodies. They are lost in their own strange thoughts, indifferent to noise or disturbance until strangers should be seen. On noticing intruders, they move to block the passageway, lifting blades in warning. They will not engage interlopers unless first attacked or an attempt is made to force past them in either direction.

Eternal Dreamers (4): AC 7, HP 4, Atk +2/1d4 bronze cleaver, Move 30', Morale 9, Save 15+, Skill +1. Piercing weapons do minimum damage to Eternal.

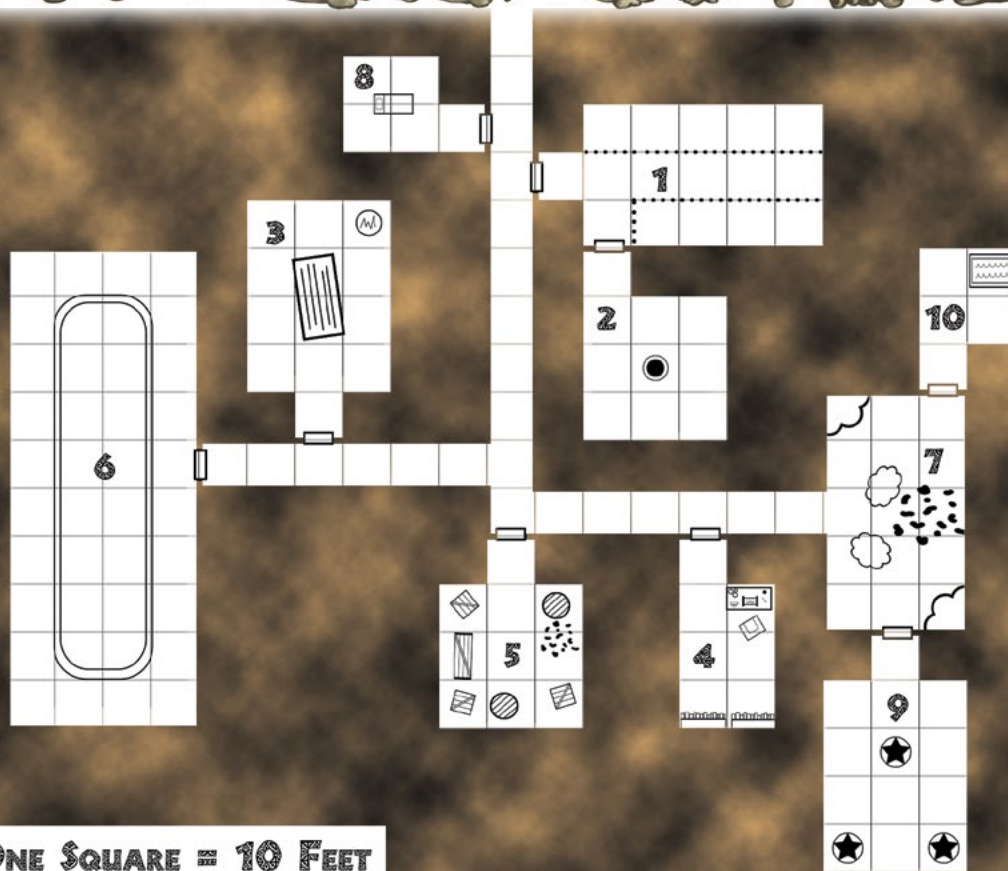
12) BONE PILE

The hungers of the Eternal made for many bones, and not all of them were deemed worthy of careful entombment. The Old Lord preferred to keep them near to hand for his experiments, however, and so this chamber was filled to the ceiling with the yellowed leavings of his table. Foul things have burrowed and dug through the pile until numerous small tunnels pierce its bulk. Humans can wriggle and crawl through the noisome blackness to reach the exits from the room; the sound of rustling and rasping breath fills the darkness. Halfway through the pile, the first PC to crawl into it will feel something cold and clammy beneath their hands. Light will show it to be a face, and that the entire tunnel has been lined with weeping faces, mouths moving without breath as they attempt to tell the PC something they cannot convey. These faces will vanish a round after they are seen, and will not manifest again.

If a marabout or someone else versed in priestcraft performs even the most cursory funeral rites for the bones, all of them will collapse instantly to powder. The next time the priest is about to die, miraculous good fortune will somehow leave them alive and unscathed by that which would have slain them.

Attempts to dig out the pit are largely useless- the bones seem inexhaustible, and there is no practical place to put them once excavated unless they are removed entirely from the complex.





ONE SQUARE = 10 FEET

In the fetid breeding pit of the House the Old Lord conducted unholy experiments in created life, devising creatures that were made without the inclusion of troublesome mortality. Their anguished existence did not offend the Eternal as did the stink of the ordinary living. Few can survive away from the foul sorcery of the pits, but here they live on until finally dispatched from their miserable existence.

1) KENNEL

Small cages of rusted iron wire once contained the smaller abominations that the Old Lord bred. The iron has long since corroded away and only the strongest of the creatures remains alive, huddled in the center of the room. It resembles a cross between a wolf-sized centipede and a rattlesnake, the creature's fangs set like horizontal mandibles.

Hungry Thing: AC 6, HP 15, Atk +4/1d4 bite+poison, Move 40', Morale 8, Save 14+, Skill +1. Bitten characters must save versus Physical Effect or suffer a -2 penalty on hit rolls due to convulsive twitching for 1d6 x 10 minutes.

2) FEEDING CHAMBER

An iron spike juts from the ceiling of the room, something small and humanoid and blackened with age writhing slowly where it hangs impaled on the rusted metal. A slow red trickle of blood drips ceaselessly from the spike to spatter on the stone, where a swarm of toad-sized abominations lap at the spill, whining and weeping in human voices. The creatures ignore intruders, even if attacked.

3) VIVISECTION CHAMBER

The beasts were sacrificed here when they reached their full growth, the Old Lord's scholars carefully examining their living innards as they wept and writhed on the tables. One such beast remains fixed to the table here, a silver-skinned thing as much fanged fish as man. Its flesh has festered around the staples through its wrists and ankles over the centuries, but its internal organs are still heaped in piles around its torso. If released, it will attack the PCs in hope of being finally put beyond mortal suffering. It cannot be healed, as its body was not designed to possess the power of repair. Elsewhere in the room, yellow elixirs and acidic reagents sit in flasks on the worktable and would bring 125 si from a scholarly buyer.

Fish Thing: AC 8, HP currently 5, Atk +1/1d6 bite, Move 30', Morale 12, Save 15+, Skill +0.

4) RECORD STORAGE

Stacks of moldering parchment, drawings, and tablets record the result of the unholy experiments conducted here. A ngang or one versed in the Occult skill who is able to read the Deshrite writing can gain a clear idea of the Old Lord's hideous purposes in breeding these creatures, and his eventual desire to have breathing servants that could work without offending the slow, life-hating minds of his lesser Eternal minions.

5) STOREROOM

Blank papyrus, ink, experimental apparati, fresh manacles, and cage-wire were all once stored here. Nothing of value remains



amid the corroded mess, though it would require 1d6 x 10 minutes of searching to be certain of it.

6) EXERCISE CHAMBER

This long, bench-lined hall was intended for the exercise of beasts, and occasionally for their disposal in gladiatorial games. A pair of whipper-things with the bodies of greyhounds and the faces of handsome Nebeti men still race back and forth in the room, their dark hair flying and their eyes maddened with horror. They will savage any intruder who enters, begging forgiveness even as their instincts drive them to kill. Both wear collars of silver studded with amber worth 150 si each.

Hound Men (2): AC 6, HP 6, Atk: +3/1d6 bite, Move 40", Morale 8, Save 14+, Skills +1.

7) FUNGAL GARDEN

Swollen mushrooms and wet fungi billow from ancient planters in this room, sprawling over the floor in streamers of pale life. The mushrooms have human mouths at the centers of their caps, and they whisper blasphemies in the stillness of the garden. One cap is pierced with thick golden earrings worth 250 si.

8) HOST CELL

A single crude bed is placed in this cell. The remains of heavy leather straps spread in smears of rot down the decaying straw.

9) TROPHY ROOM

The most elaborately horrible creatures were preserved and mounted for display here in the trophy room. After so many years of damp and decay, the skins have gone mangy, the flesh moldering and liquescent, and vivid streaks of bright mold climb up all the bestial shapes. Opening the door will change the atmosphere sufficiently to collapse a few of the most decayed in a tumbling advance of deliquescent filth. Those who open the portal are confronted by a hideous stench and the appearance of three beast-human amalgams standing before them with outstretched claws. As the GM, you might invite them to roll for initiative, inform them that they won, and let them act for a round before they realize that all the creatures are dead.

10) CELL OF THE HORROR

A very large crossbar of bronze is slid before this decaying oaken door. If the adventurers stand outside it and converse, the noise will be enough to waken the beast within, who will crouch in readiness for the door's opening. The monster was so extravagantly foul that the Old Lord could not bear to have it vivisected, and so locked it away here in the everlasting darkness. It resembles something akin to a praying mantis with the torso and head of a Nebeti woman and bladed forelimbs that drip a flesh-eating ichor. If the PCs awaken it but do not slide the bar, it will eventually break down the door in its fury 1d6 x 10 minutes later, and hunt them through the complex. If it kills or mortally wounds a victim, it will spend at least one round gnawing at it prey's head, stopping only if attacked. This savaging will make it impossible for mundane medical aid to save the victim, even if it is applied immediately.

Mantis Woman: AC 6, HP 25, Atk +5/1d8 acidic forelimbs, Move 40', Morale 10. Save 13+, Skills +2.

BEASTS OF THE PIT

You may find it useful to assemble your own foul monstrosities as additional pit denizens or dwellers in the ruined areas of Paraku. To create such an unnatural creature, just roll or select from the tables below.

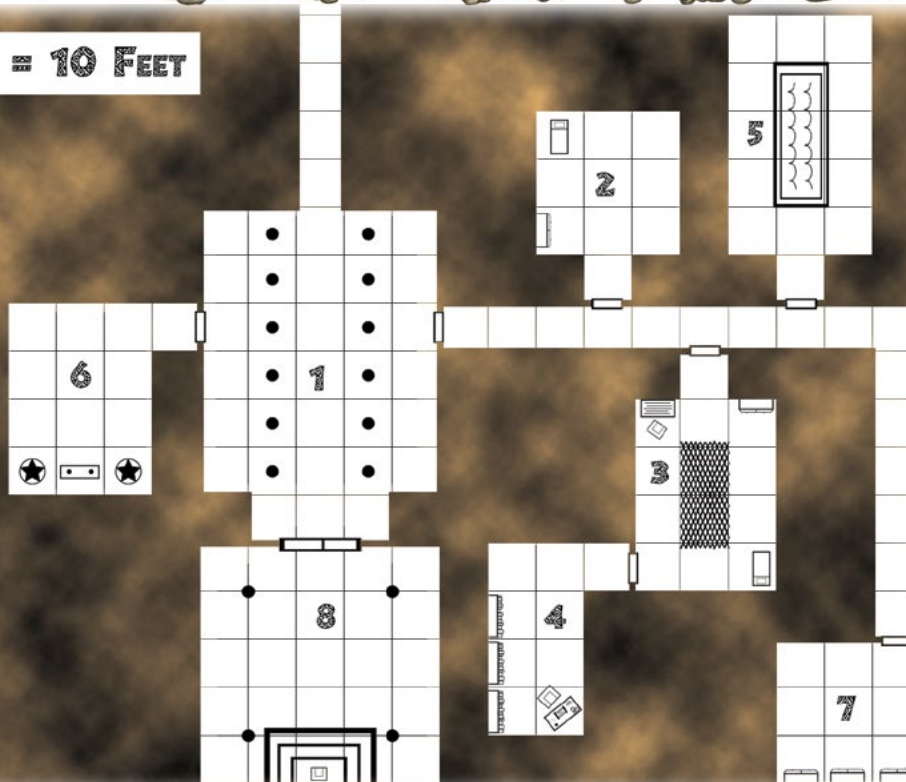
BASE STATISTICS	
1-10	Vermin (2d4): AC 6, HD 1/2, Atk: +1/1d4 bite, Move 40", Morale 7, Save 15+, Skills +1.
11-15	Pack Hunter (1d6): AC 6, HD 1, Atk: +1/1d6 bite, Move 40", Morale 8, Save 15+, Skills +1.
16-18	Stalker (1): AC 4, HD 3, Atk: +4/1d8x2 claws, Move 40", Morale 8, Save 14+, Skills +2.
19	Trapper (1): AC 9, HD 3, Atk: +4/1d8 hidden sting, Move 30", Morale 8, Save 14+, Skills +2. The beast is disguised as a normal human being.
20	Abomination (1): AC 6, HD 6, Atk: +6/1d10 bite and 1d6x2 claws, Move 20", Morale 10, Save 12+, Skills +2.

1d4 COMPONENTS OF ITS SHAPE			
1	Crocodilian	6	Spider
2	Wasp	7	Serpent
3	Ape	8	Worm or maggot
4	Lion	9	Fly
5	Beetle	10	Hyena

SPECIAL HABITS OR QUALITIES	
1	Appears to be a harmless beast at first
2	Still speaks and thinks as a human, but deranged
3	Spreads its attacks to "taste" different prey
4	Physical Effect save or be dazed by its foul breath
5	Will spare those that worship it
6	Insatiable hunger for youths or infants
7	Builds grotesque mockeries of human habitations
8	Inflicts a Lesser Curse of some kind on its killer
9	Relentlessly attacks the biggest target among its prey
10	It burrows and lies in wait for prey
11	Has a functional pair of limbs that double attacks
12	Immobilizes prey to "age" its meal before killing it
13	Thinks itself a chieftain or oba; commands minions
14	Has mastered nkisi like a level 1d4 nganga
15	Can temporarily assume the shape of its victims
16	Can only be permanently killed by fire or magic
17	Parts disassemble to fight on after it is "killed"
18	Absolutely silent in its movements and attacks
19	Maniacally bloodthirsty; Morale 12 and unrelenting
20	Its corpse takes the shape of its slayer

THE THRONE OF THE OLD LORD

ONE SQUARE = 10 FEET



It is highly unlikely that the adventurers will discover this complex until Upright Osaze leads them to it. As soon as Osaze reaches the throne chamber, he will begin the ritual of the green jade bowl, raising any dead followers as loyal undead warriors. The PCs have one hour to intervene; if Osaze can complete the ritual without interruption, his dead will rise and slaughter the terrified Nebeti, gathering their corpses to make a new army in service of the priest's madness.

1) HALL OF GLORIES

Pillars reach from the black-tiled floor to the high shadows above. The walls are lined from floor to peak with skulls- thousands of them gathered through the years and the battles the Old Lord won against his living foes- and later, against his wretched subjects in Paraku. They are all enameled in bright colors turned peeling and poxy with the years, arranged in vees and patterns sacred to the Gods Below. A single yellow skull within reach on the far left-hand side of the entrance conceals a key of polished gold- the key to the throne chamber's door on the north side of the room.

If the PCs reach this room after Upright Osaze, five mercenaries will have been left behind to discourage pursuit.

Mercenaries (5): AC 7 leather armor, HP 4, Atk +1/1d6 light spear, Move 30', Morale 8, Save 15+, Skill +1.

Upright Osaze will seal the throne chamber door behind him if he reaches this area before the PCs. When sealed, the door is an opaque amber slab with a golden keyhole at the center. To open it, the golden key must be used, or else a successful Dex/Security skill check at difficulty 10. If the skill check is failed, a smell of ozone builds and sparks begin to crackle across the surface of the amber. If a second skill check is failed, a discharge of lightning will strike the misfortunate thief for 2d6 damage.

This bolt will fire once more for each further failed check. Once the lock is opened or the key turned, the door will crumble to worthless powder.

2) CONCUBINE QUARTERS

The former inmate of this luxurious chamber is to be found in the tomb complex of the House, but her belongings remain scattered about the room. Imported Nyalan silks lie in brittle tatters and vials of rare scents have long since turned brackish. If her armoire is opened, roughly five cubic feet of cockroach-like beetle husks will spill out around the legs and feet of the intruder; those with the stomach to sweep away the dead insects will find the girl's jewelry in a careless pile at the bottom of the armoire. The two necklaces, three bracelets, four anklets, and belly chain are fashioned of thin gold and bright crimson garnets, each piece worth 150 si.

3) OLD LORD'S BEDCHAMBER

Some of Akhen's former asceticism can be seen in the harshly simple lines of this chamber- a "sleep" platform, a plain-woven rug, a writing desk, a cabinet, and a washstand are all that furnish this room. A full-length mirror is the only concession to vanity, but someone has smashed it with a vicious blow. On the writing desk is the Old Lord's diary written in Deshrite, a foul catalog of perfidies that will take at least three days to fully absorb. Those that read it carefully will learn of the operation of the green stone bowl and the ancestor's trump kept in the tomb complex.

4) STUDY

The Old Lord retired to this chamber to consult his favorite volumes of unspeakable secrets. The years have devoured most of the plush furnishings and iron-bound volumes that once adorned the room. A slate tablet bears a few chalk scratchings



in Deshrite to remind the Old Lord of necessary tasks- "Send to elder for a new concubine. Speak with Oba about tribute error. Have Ohen fix the yellow skull."

5) BATH

The narrow pool at the center of the room was used both for conventional bathing and to aid the maintenance of the Old Lord's human seeming. Hooks dangle from the ceiling above the pool, and the bottom of it is covered with a thick pelt of wet black mold. The walls are adorned with mosaics of sunlit wheat fields and fair maidens on the banks of the great Iteru. In the chaos of the Old Lord's downfall, someone has smashed the faces that were once depicted on these figures.

6) SHRINE

The shrine is done in a perfectly orthodox fashion after the traditional gods of old Deshur, altar adorned with five small golden idols of beast-headed gods and remnants of a once-suitable cloth draped in ragged streamers from the altar. A large ankh carved from dark amber hangs on the wall above the altar. The Old Lord took pleasure in the irony of the place, and took pains to keep all elements in due order. Should a pious adventurer take the opportunity to pray for aid in defeating the damnable wight, he and all like-minded companions will be healed of 1d6 damage, granted a +1 bonus to hit and to saving throws for as long as they remain in the complex, and the first blow each levels at the Old Lord will automatically hit. Adventurers who simply loot the place may get 200 silver ingots for each of the five idols and 350 si for the amber ankh.

7) VAULT

The door to the vault is locked with a heavy, cumbersome seal that requires a great deal of time to unfasten. Unlocking it requires a Dex/Security check at difficulty 9 to and fifteen minutes of work- the key has long since been lost. Should it finally be opened, the treasury of the Old Lord will be within the party's reach... as well as its amber guardian. A gigantic Nebeti warrior has been glazed with a thick coating of amber, preserving him in his everlasting guardianship and helpless obedience to the Old Lord's will. This hulking foe will raise his bronze khopesh to slay any who dare disturb the master's treasure.

Amber Guardian: AC 3, HP 25, Atk +4/1d8, Move 30', Morale 12, Save 13+, Skills +1. A *Nkisi of the Sundered Spell* or a marabout's *Banish Sorcery* will break the amber's enchantment, and cause the guardian to waste away to dust in two rounds.

Opening the sealed chests and counting the contents will take at least 20 minutes. All told, there are 2,343 si, and items of jewelry and gemstones worth at approximately 10,000 si in the vault. A tally-book on one of the shelves reveals substantial rewards for collaboration to the noble Eseze and Awopere clans which are now quite prominent in Paraku. The evidence in the books would be sufficient to have them all reduced to slavery by the Ahonsu and exiled far from the city. The clan elders of each clan would be willing to pay 5,000 si for the evidence that condemns them- and murder any stranger who refused to make the bargain.

8) THRONE ROOM

The mold-blackened corpse of the Old Lord is slumped at the far end of the throne room, his stone stool of office half-buried beneath a fallen rock slab that has plunged from the ceiling like a granite spear to crush the left half of his pelvis. Along the periphery of the room, eight mirrors of untarnished silver reflect the magnificent carvings and amber adornments that make the interior of the throne room a blaze of golden light. The gold is lit by a ghastly viridian as Upright Osaze stands beside the withered corpse, the glowing green stone bowl lifted high as he intones strange words in a long-dead tongue, his left hand clenched about a thick, looping coil of braided hair.

Assuming Upright Osaze has beaten the players here, he will attempt to revive the "dead" Eternal Lord Akhen to defend him against the PCs. Unfortunately, Osaze has underestimated the power of the curse that animates Akhen. For forty years, Akhen has suffered here in helpless debilitation, unable to reach the human flesh that would restore his form. Osaze's approach will offer him what he requires.

The Old Lord will spend the first round seizing Osaze's arm in a leathery claw and dragging him closer. Akhen's ribcage will yawn open, splitting the parchment skin of his torso to form a second mouth for devouring the shrieking Osaze. During this round, Akhen will be helpless and effectively AC 9 against PC attacks. As an Eternal, piercing weapons automatically do minimum damage against him.

Once Akhen has consumed Osaze, he will tear himself free from the pillar that pins him, his body unraveling into spools of sinew, dislocated limbs, and a hideously elongated neck. The Eternal lord is mad with hunger after his long torment, and it will be days of orgiastic consumption before he is capable of remembering himself. Until he has been so fed, he is little more than a beast, seeking to bite and devour living humans with the jaws of his splayed ribcage and rake them with his bony claws.

As an Eternal, Akhen can never truly die, but PCs who manage to smash him down to zero hit points will have rendered him harmless, and fire can burn him to scattered ashes of eternal agony.

Old Lord Akhen: AC 7, HP 40, Atk +3/1d6 x2 claws and 1d6 bite, Move 30', Morale 12, Save 13+, Skills +1. Akhen's hideous reach can assail enemies within a 10-foot radius. He will prefer to split his attacks among equally delicious targets.

The amber panels and other adornments of the throne room are all carved with hideous blasphemies and loathsome depictions of vice. The artistry is exquisite, but the topics make these ornaments extremely difficult to sell; the Amber Carver's Hall in Paraku would offer 1,000 si for the lot as material for their cutters, but certain decadent Nyalan nobles would gladly pay ten times as much for such remarkable exotica. The panels and adornments would require at least one wagon to cart them all away, and they would need to be smuggled discreetly to avoid unpleasant questions.



ELDRITCH ARTIFACTS

Three occult relics in particular may be found in Paraku, all of them sinister artifacts of ancient provenance.

THE GREEN STONE BOWL

This bowl is a shallow oval disc of glossy green stone, as broad at its widest point as a man's forearm and perpetually cold to the touch. Close inspection reveals vague shapes that shift and flow beneath the surface of the bowl. Unwary souls who continue to stare into the bowl's depths must make a save versus Mental Effect or have their vision permanently darkened by haunting shadows, suffering a -2 penalty to all visual Perception skill checks. This affliction can be lifted by a spell capable of banishing a Greater Curse.

Griots of sufficient sagacity will recognize the bowl as the petrified scale of a massive serpent. Legends say that the Eternal King brought up many hideous relics from the forbidden temples of the Gods Below, and the bowl was perhaps one of those foul trophies, one entrusted to Old Lord Akhen in his conquest of the Lokossan lands. The secret of its nature and the incantations of its use are hidden within certain tomes buried beneath the House of Bone and Amber and in a volume retrieved from the tunnels by Upright Osaze.

Use of the bowl requires a drop of blood, lock of hair, or other occult connection with a corpse that has been dead for no more than one day. The corpse need not be present for the amulet to function, as its foul sorcery ignores the mere limits of distance. By the correct incantation of a petition to the bowl's ancient creator, the corpse's spirit is bound irrevocably to its corporeal flesh, and the revenant is raised as a tormented servant of the amulet's owner. The bowl's holder knows the identities and locations of all his slaves and may issue them silent commands from any distance. The corpse will obey until it is destroyed, though the spirit will remain shackled to the largest remaining piece of the body until the remains are completely destroyed. Even a skull or a charred thighbone is enough to leave the spirit in torment.

Spirits bound to flesh retain the awareness of who they once were and continue to possess their old skills and combat abilities. They are simply helpless to do anything contrary to the will of their master. Their corpses will not further decay and are raised at their full maximum hit points, but further damage cannot be healed without costly sorcerous processes that require an hour and 25 si per hit point to be restored.

Under most circumstances, a wielder may bind only one spirit at a time, and the incantations require an hour to complete. In places stained by great necromantic power and pleasing occult configurations, it may be possible to bind dozens or even hundreds of souls to their corpses in a mere hour. Upright Osaze

seeks access to the Old Lord's chambers out of surety that his ancient throne room is one such place.

Unbeknownst to most users, use of the bowl also irrevocably binds the wielder's spirit to his own flesh, just as with the luckless revenants. Even when his heart fails and his flesh grows cold, he will remain active and aware. So long as he retains possession of the bowl, he can control his own body much as he controls all the others, though existence as a walking corpse is excruciatingly painful. Upon the wielder's final destruction and the consumption of his body by time or vermin, his spirit will be rendered over to the bowl's creator to experience horrors indescribable to the human mind.

THE ANCESTOR'S TRUMP

This sinister implement is a trumpet fashioned of an age-browned human thighbone, a black stone mouthpiece at one end. Its use is simple- a wielder blows a high, shrill note through the instrument.

Within one round, starving, forgotten ancestor spirits will manifest in ghostly form about the wielder, biting at his limbs and tearing away pieces of his spiritual flesh. Every round the spirits feed upon the user inflicts 1d6 points of damage and allows the user to make a saving throw versus Magic. After two successful saving throws the spirits are sated and depart. The great spiritual merit granted by this self-offering of flesh to the hungry wraiths will lift even a Greater Curse from the user and cure any poison or disease that might afflict him.

If the user resists the spirits, however, and tries to fight them or drive them off, no merit is accrued by the act and no advantage is gained. Angered, the spirits will now inflict 1d6+2 damage with each round's gnawing, though they are driven away with the next successful saving throw or the use of a spell capable of harming spirits.

THE HUNGRY CHILD

This vile little familiar takes the form of a tiny dried mannikin, no larger than a thumb at its smallest, but growing to the size of a toddler's preserved corpse if well-fed. When fed on the user's blood, the lifeless image will open its eyes and whisper a yes or no answer to any one question related to a present fact or truth. The feeding permanently drains 1 hit point from the user. The mannikin grows larger and more hale with each feeding; when it has eaten nine times, the toddler-sized creature gives its answer and then drags the last user's soul to damnation in the spirit world. Any given mannikin will have been fed 1d6 times when found, and sorceries or sagacity can do no more than to reveal whether the thing has been fed less than four times, or more than thrice.



CONVERTING THIS ADVENTURE TO OTHER OLD-SCHOOL GAMES

It may be that you prefer to use a different game system to run *The House of Bone and Amber*. Converting the mechanics to those of a different old-school game is a simple matter.

Treat ngangas as magic-users, marabouts as clerics, and griots and warriors as either fighters or thieves as their focus recommends. Where an unknown spell is named in the text, simply replace it with a magic-user or cleric spell that seems appropriate to the context.

Combat statistics are largely interchangeable with most old-school games. To find the target to hit armor class zero, just subtract the creature's attack bonus from 20. The saving throw number given can be used for any saving throw, and the skill bonus simply reflects the creature's aptitude at doing the sort of things expected for something of its kind.

Where unknown magic items are named, they can be replaced with more familiar relics from whatever rules system you prefer to use.

Where Eternal or Night Men are named, replace them with intelligent cannibal undead and orc-like humanoids, respectively. The lesser Eternal are dreamy and prone to confusion if faced with a strange situation, while their leaders are cruelly intelligent and capable of creating more minions from corpses.

If you need to insert the contents of this module into your own campaign world, you can do so with a few tweaks.

Paraku's backstory and the Long War exist as given, except the Old Lord was himself the source of the Eternal scourge in the area and was a necromancer of great skill. The neighboring cities and lands may have kept his forces at bay, but he ruled Paraku with brutal vigor for a hundred years until being overthrown by the Nebeti forty years ago.

The Nebeti and Meruans are heirs of those of the Old Lord's people who served or refused him, respectively, with the Lokossans as the natives of the city he conquered.

The Ahonsu's role can be filled by any sufficiently cruel regional monarch, and the Traditions can be credited to his own dark plans. The Spirit Way becomes the traditional faith of the city, while the Sun Faith is the rebel religion adopted by the Meruans when they fled the Old Lord's new rule.

If you don't have a convenient jungle in your campaign world, you can place Paraku almost anywhere that has a small river and a sufficiently dangerous wilderness. Given the nature of most campaign worlds, it should be no problem at all to find a suitably perilous corner of your creation to plant the city and the winding Mekru river.

RANDOM PARAKUAN NAMES AND CLANS

	1d20	MALE	FEMALE	CLAN
LOKOSSAN	1	Afusat	Arewa	Abiola
	2	Amalachi	Arike	Akinyele
	3	Effiom	Baridi	Omotola
	4	Kelechi	Imara	Oyinlola
	5	Olumese	Imina	Risikatu
	6	Onyisi	Kehindi	Sanya
	7	Osahon	Naya	Shakale
	8	Sholako	Nijah	Suliat
	9	Sotonye	Omolar	Tagbo
	10	Taiwo	Zendaya	Wasola
MERUAN	11	Emope	Baketwe	Hotep
	12	Horkaiu	Hetepi	Intef
	13	Manetho	Khesbe	Kamin
	14	Menkhau	Kipti	Kheti
	15	Setep	Meret	Mentu
	16	Yamun	Ta-Hem	Wahkare
NEBETI	17	Kheper	Ashayet	Anu
	18	Nebo	Itaweret	Ibi
	19	Tenre	Sadeh	Kah
	20	Usere	Temi	Nefri

PRONUNCIATION AND NAMES

The pronunciation rules in Paraku are very simple, though the names may appear difficult at first glance. All names use the same rules.

A is pronounced as in "saw"

E is pronounced as in "hey"

I is pronounced as in "machine"

O is pronounced as in "hoe"

U is pronounced as in "true"

The consonants are pronounced as most American English speakers would expect. Where two consonants appear together in a way that seems difficult to vocalize, such as "nganga", the first consonant is often left silent- "GAHN-gah", and sometimes vocalized as in "nn-KEE-see".

There are no silent vowels in the names. "Emope" is pronounced "Ay-MOH-pay", for example. Stress falls on the second syllable in a name.

Most names in Paraku take the form of a given name followed by a clan name, unless they are so famous as to require no specification. Other locals have earned epithets as part of their name, such as Upright Osaze, or Bisi of the Burning Hand. If the names here are difficult to track, you may want to use such epithets to give yourself and your players a little easier time with the names.



THE STREETS OF PARAKU GROAN...

A furious priest shouts curses from the Shrine of the Seven Red Miracles, and the merchants mutter of thieving Nebeti and their damnable ways. The Nebeti elder lies dead by the amber pits, and the Oba struggles to contain the anger of his people. Old grudges are rising, old hates are waxing strong, and the good people of Paraku fear that the streets will soon run red. Who will help them break the grip of the vengeance that even now rises with fire and spear?

The House of Bone and Amber gives the details of the jungle city of Paraku and its stern people. Within you will find a fully-developed city for your game, along with the hidden temples, dungeons, and blasphemous libraries of the fallen House itself. Thrill to the grim tale of the green stone bowl and the doom it threatens for Paraku, and discover for yourself the awful fate that awaits its people. Heroes are needed in this burdened land, brave souls to strengthen the hands of the good citizens of Paraku and break the knives of those who would welcome a dawn of smoke and blood.