

Adventures on TSCHAI

by Steve Winter and Forrest Johnson

In the years 1968-70 Jack Vance wrote four books — City of the Chasch, Servants of the Wankh, The Dirdir, and The Pnume. These are two-fisted adventure stories set on the planet Tschai. They are full of aliens and exotica, larded with violence and well-nigh choked with detail . . . in short, perfect for Traveller.

Tschai is 212 light years from Earth. It was, amazingly enough, discovered during the initial period of Solomani exploration. Even more amazingly, one expedition member, Adam Reith, survived and returned to Earth. A second expedition was planned, but the First Interstellar War intervened and the precise location of Tschai, with many other records, was lost during the hostilities. It is generally presumed to lie somewhere rimward of Earth.

Tschai's profile is 967670. It orbits a K2 star, and has two small moons, called Az and Braz by the natives. There are a number of starports on Tschai — Hei and Ao Hidis must be reckoned as Class A — but none are open to strangers. In fact, it is not even safe to orbit the planet. For each day in orbit, roll two dice; on 8+ someone has fired 1-6 nuclear missiles at the ship, a token of Tschai hospitality.

Tschai is the home world (and presumably the only world) of the Pnume, who still live in secret cities beneath its surface. About 7 million years ago, it was conquered by the Shivvan, followed by the Gjee, the Fesa, the Hsi, and so on. Nothing remains of these races but ruins. The oldest invading race still on Tschai is the Old Chasch, which has been there for a mere 100,000 years. There also exist colonies of Blue Chasch, Dirdir and Wankh. An uneasy peace prevails.

About 50,000 years ago, the Dirdir brought some Humaniti slaves, probably of Solomani origin, to the planet. These have multiplied into a hundred diverse races, scattered over the entire globe.

All intelligent creatures of Tschai, except the Phung, Green Chasch and Wankh speak a common language. Some have other languages as well.

Economics

Off-world currency is worthless on Tschai. The basic monetary unit is the sequin, a hexagonal disc one inch across. Sequins are obtained from chrysophine,

a crystal which grows only in the uranium-rich soil of the Carabas. A full nodule yields 282 sequins.

A sequin's value is determined by its color. Immature crystals are clear, and progress through the colors of the spectrum as the node matures. Once harvested, sequins do not change in color. Clears, therefore, are the basic value sequin. Values of the other colors are:

1 Milk	=	5 clears
1 Sard (light blue)	=	10 clears
1 Blue	=	20 clears
1 Emerald	=	25 clears
1 Scarlet	=	50 clears
1 Purple	=	100 clears
1 Bice	=	Fragment, 1/6 of a clear

The economy is not controlled in any way. Anyone may enter the Carabas, or Black Zone, and harvest chrysophine nodules if they can (a) locate the nodules among the gullies and rocky hummocks of the Carabas and (b) escape or evade the Dirdir hunting parties from the camp at Khusz. An average day in the zone nets a group about 400 sequins.

Prices on Tschai are variable. If a buyer looks wealthy, the price goes up. The following is offered as a general guide:

Decent meal: 1 sequin.

Frugal lodging: 5 sequins/day.

Simple durable clothing: 10 sequins.

Sailing ship passage: 4 sequins/day.

Caravan passage: 1 sequin/3 km.

Unskilled labor: 4-6 sequins/day.

Devices of tech level 7 or higher will be of alien manufacture, expensive when available at all. Obvious off-world technology will arouse wonder and suspicion.

Weapons

Gunpowder is rare on Tschai. Aliens are often armed with laser pistols. Humans have a fairly standard assortment of

swords, spears, and so on. In addition, there are at least two weapons peculiar to Tschai:

Hand Catapults. These are basically upgraded slingshots, firing feathered bolts. Treat a catapult as a sporting cross-bow.

Sand Blasts. A sand blast accelerates electrostatically-charged grains of sand to near-light speeds. Treat as a light machine gun, but weight is double.



Scenarios

Many, many adventures are possible on Tschai. Referees should have no trouble expanding on these ideas:

Exploration. Tschai is carpeted with improbably ancient ruins. Investigation could prove fruitful.

Rescue. A distressingly handy scenario. Characters will need frequent rescues from slavers, from the Dirdir, from the Old Chasch, from. . .

Prospecting. The Carabas is always a likely scene for an adventure.

Underground. A really ambitious party might try raiding Foreverness. In this case, *Traveller* would take on some of the aspects of D&D.

Leaving. As Adam Reith discovered, Tschai is not a good place to park a starship. Spare parts are hard to come by. The natives are not friendly. A safe landing can be difficult; a safe take-off may require heroism.

Events

Parties travelling on Tschai should check the following tables daily:

Steppe	Jungle
1. Settlement	1. Heat
2. Nomads	2. Animal Encounter
3. Air/Raft	3. Marshmen
4. Animal Encounter	4. Ruins
5. Storm	5. Settlement
6. Ruins	6. River
7. Green Chasch	7. Swamp
8. Green Chasch	DMs: Seacoast +1
DMs: Dead Steppe +2	

Desert	
0. Settlement	6. Gullies
1. Ruins	7. Dirdir Hunting Party
2. Chasms	8. Dirdir Hunting Party
3. Air/Raft	9. Prospectors
4. Storm	DMs: Seacoast: -1
5. Animal Encounter	Carabas +3

Mountains	
1. Animal Encounter	5. Chasms
2. Settlement	6. Storm
3. Ruins	7. Snow
4. Gullies	
DMs: +1 if north of Jalkh or south of Hei	

Ocean

1. Nothing	5. Pirates
2. Nothing	6. Storm
3. Nothing	7. Settlement
4. Air/Raft	8. Wankh
DMs: Seacoast +1	
Kachan/Rakh/Vord Seacoast +2	

City

1. Slavers	5. Servant Race
2. Thieves	6. Aliens
3. Police	7. Aliens
4. Patron	8. Aliens
DMs: Alien City +2	

Explanation

Air/Raft. An air/raft is flying in view. It will investigate a spacecraft on 5+, otherwise passing by on 4+. Check for occupants:

1. Blue Chasch
2. Blue Chasch
3. Dirdir
4. Dirdir
5. Dirdir
6. Humans
7. Humans

Animal Encounters

Steppe

	Animal	Weight	Hits	Wounds	Weapons	Armor	Reaction
1. 1	Intimidator	400	21/10	11	claws	none	A7F9S2
2. 20	Grazers	200	15/ 9	6	hooves	none	F6A10S1
3. 1	Hunter	50	19/ 5	1/3	hooves/teeth	cloth	A8F5S2
4. 10	Pouncers	25	13/ 8	4/3	claws/teeth	none	A4F6S3
5. 12	Nighthounds	100	17/12	5/4	hands/teeth	mesh	A8F7S2
6. 1	Killer	100	22/ 6	8/8	claws/teeth	mesh	A3F9S2

Jungle

1. 12	Gatherers	6	6/10	3	as body pistol	none	A6F7S3
2. 5	Grazers	25	11/10	5	teeth	none	F7A6S1
3. 1	Filter	1	1/ 0	1	teeth	cloth	A9F9S1
4. 1	Trapper	12	6/10	6	as blade	none	A5F7S2
5. 8	Nighthounds	100	17/12	5/4	hands/teeth	mesh	A8F7S2
6. 3	Amphibious hunters	100	18/ 9	5	teeth	none	A8F4S1

Desert

1. 1	Trapper	12	10/ 7	8	teeth	none	A4F2S1
2. 10	Flying sirens	3	6/ 1	2	as dagger	none	A5F2S1
3. 13	Intimidators	6	5/12	3/1	teeth/hooves	none	A8F6S3
4. 4	Hunters	25	10/12	7	stinger	none	A7F9S2
5. 10	Nighthounds	100	17/12	5/4	hands/teeth	mesh	A8F7S2
6. 8	Eaters	3	5/ 3	4	stinger	none	A6F10S1

Mountain

1. 1	Grazer	1600	29/ 5	17/12	hooves/teeth	none	F9A11S1
2. 22	Grazers	6	6/ 5	1	hooves	none	F6A12S2
3. 5	Hunters	50	18/ 7	2	teeth	none	A9F9S1
4. 9	Chasers	50	16/ 7	3/1	claws/teeth	none	A5F8S3
5. 10	Nighthounds	100	17/12	5/4	hands/teeth	mesh	A8F7S2
6. 2	Intermittants	100	17/ 6	7	stinger	jack	A7F3S2

(Note: Nighthounds can occur in any terrain. They are nocturnal, wolf-like creatures closely related to the Pnume. Nighthounds can be recognized by their characteristic wailing.)

8. Wankh
9. Humans

DMs: Kislovan +1
Kachan/Rakh/Vord +2
Charchan +3

There will be 1-6 passengers. If the race is alien, on 7+ there will also be 1-6 passengers of a servant race.

Aliens. 1-6 Pnume, Chasch, Dirdir or Wankh. If the party is trespassing, they will attempt to detain on 5+, otherwise ignoring on 4+.

Chasms. This terrain is completely impassable to ground travel. It will take all day to go around.

Dirdir Hunting Party. 3-5 Dirdir, attack on 4+.

Green Chasch. The party encounters a tribe of Green Chasch. Roll for reaction at -2.

Gullies. This terrain is highly eroded. Halve travel distance today.

Heat. The jungle is even more sweltering than usual today. Each character must roll endurance or less on two dice or become prostrate. DMs: Medic, Survival.

Marshmen. 10-60 marshmen lie in wait with their spears and clubs.

Nomads. The party encounters a nomadic tribe. Roll for reaction.

Patron. Someone attempts to hire the party. Check Book 3, p. 22, or 76 *Patrons*.

Pirates. A galley with 10-60 crew attempts to overtake the vessel. It will attack on 11+ if the potential victim is obviously well-armed, otherwise on 5+.

Police. 1-6 local police, armed with catapults and swords, attempt to interrogate the party. Roll for reaction.

Prospectors. The party encounters 1-3 humans who are looking for sequins. Roll for reaction.

River. A river obstructs ground travel. Roll 8+ hourly to find a ford.

Ruins. The party finds a ruined city. Roll for origin:

- | | |
|------------|----------------|
| 1. Wankh | 7. Old Chasch |
| 0. Wankh | 8. Old Chasch |
| 1. Humans | 9. Blue Chasch |
| 2. Unknown | 10. Dirdir |
| 3. Pnume | 11. Dirdir |
| 4. Humans | 12. Humans |
| 5. Unknown | 13. Unknown |
| 6. Pnume | 14. Pnume |

DMs: Kachan/Rakh/Vord -2
Kotan +3
Kislovan +8

A solitary Phung will be present on 8+; an animal encounter will occur on 11+.

Servant Race. 1-6 Pnumekin, Chaschmen, Dirdirmen or Wankhmen. If the party is trespassing, they will attempt to detain on 6+, otherwise ignoring on 4+.

Settlement. Here is a town of 100-600 souls. Alien on 10+.

Slavers. A gang of 2-12 slavers eyes the party as potential merchandise.

Snow. Heavy snow delays ground travel. Halve travel distance for today.

Storm. Swirling winds buffet the party for 1 die x 8 hours. Ground and air travel are impossible. At sea, the captain must roll 6+ to avoid damage to his vessel. If he misses by 2 or more, there is a shipwreck. DMs: Water Craft.

Swamp. The ground here is very marshy. Halve travel distance today.

Thieves. 1-6 thieves attempt to rob or swindle the party.

Wankh. A Wankh is observed swimming below the surface with water jets. He will ignore the party in 3+.

Here are the races of Tschai . . . the Pnume, Phung, Old Chasch, Blue Chasch, Green Chasch, Dirdir, and Wankh. A UPP is given for each. The UPP may be used directly if it is necessary to generate a character in a hurry; otherwise it may be used to obtain die modifiers for character generation. For example, the Pnume have an average strength of A, so give a generated Pnume character a +3 modifier for strength. ($A = 10.10 - 7 = 3$.) If this process results in a characteristic less than 1, raise it to 1.

The given tech level is the level each race maintains on Tschai; home planet tech levels are higher. Tech levels vary a good deal because of trade. The tech level of the Pnume is unknown because the Pnume are a mysterious race, and it is hard to tell the full extent of their resources.

The listed skills are those a typical individual might have — the civilized species have a considerable variety of skills available.

Note that some of the listed aliens — particularly the Phung and Green Chasch — are not suitable for player characters. Also, no Pnume, Chasch, Dirdir, or Wankh is likely to deal with humans as as equal unless he is himself an outcast or fugitive. Aliens will appear more often

as patrons or as enemies.

Some of the aliens have servant races of humans, inbred over the millenia to resemble their masters. There are many other races of men on Tschai. The major ones include:

Nomads. Tech 1. Their tribes ride endlessly across the steppes. Some are cannibals; all practice banditry. Tribes include Niss, Emblem Men, Yellow-Blacks, Mad Axes, and Kite Fighters.

Marshmen. Tech 0. A dwarfish, yellow people who live among the reeds. They always attack if surprise is possible, and the enemy is not too numerous.

Grays. Tech 3. A widespread, stocky, yellow-gray race. Grays tend to be tolerant, commercially-minded and rather fatalistic.

Yaos. Tech 6. The most technically advanced humans of Tschai. Yaos are the predominant race of Cath. They are obsessed with elaborate etiquette and punctilio. It is dreadfully easy to offend a Yao.

Peoples of Tschai

Hoch Hars. Tech 1. A primitive people who live east of Cath and hate all Yaos, ostensibly for having destroyed the ancient Hoch Har empire.

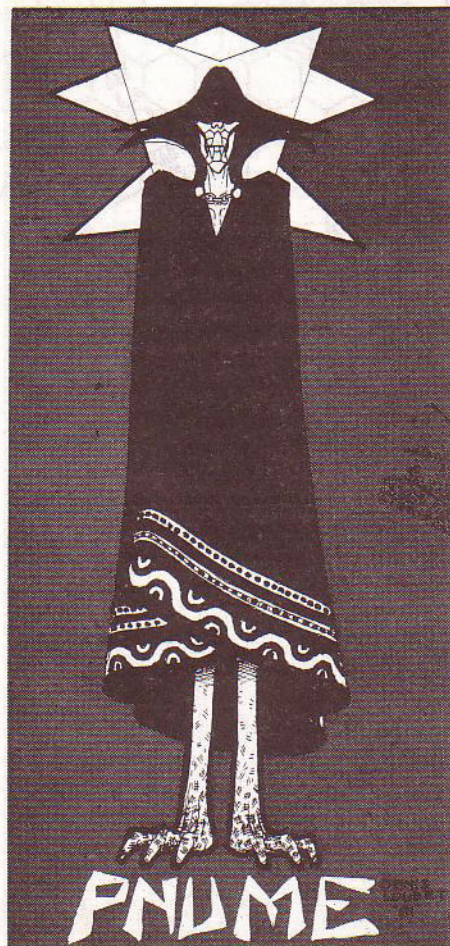
Lokhars. Tech 4. People of central Kachan. The men dye their skin black and their hair white, the women the opposite. Many are employed by the Wankh as technicians.

Dugbos. Tech 1. A ragged, gypsy-like people said to have psychic powers.

Khors. Tech 3. A strange, slender, mustard-yellow people living in north Kislovan. Khors wear black gowns and tall hats. They follow rigid customs and taboos. In combat, they throw iron darts.

Thangs. Tech 4. An avaricious people of northwest Kislovan. They consider cheating and deception normal business practices. Their greatest town is Urmank.

Kabs. Tech 5. A slender, alert people of southern Charchan. They have brown hair, wide cheekbones, and black eyes. Their thieves are deft; their marital customs, bizarre and dangerous.



The Pnume

UPP: A78688

Population: 150-160,000

Tech Level: Unknown

Skills: Recon -2, Leader -1, Admin. -1

Special: Bare hands treated as club, skin as mesh. Because of their decentralized nervous system, Pnume cannot be knocked unconscious, only killed.

The Pnume are natives of Tschai. They are about two meters tall and slightly built, though quite heavy (100 kg). Their white, expressionless faces are the cast and color of a horse's skull, with complicated rasping and chewing parts beneath. A Pnume's legs are jointed the reverse of a human's. Traditionally, Pnume dress is a black cloak and floppy black broad-brimmed hat. The Pnume are closely related to nighthounds (see Animal Encounters) and to Phung (see below). The three creatures appear to be physically similar and mutually tolerant, but the exact relationship is unclear.

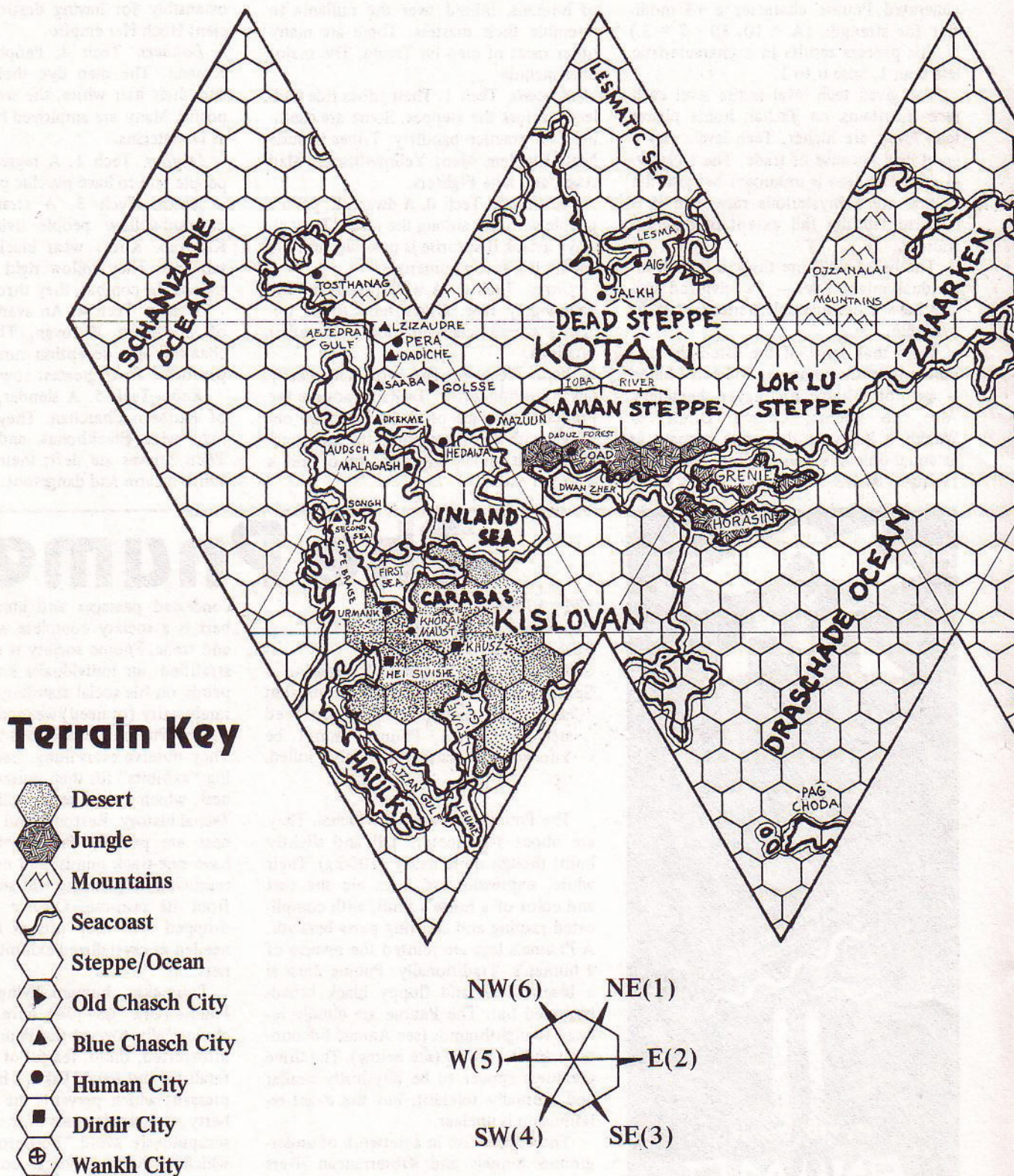
The Pnume live in a network of underground tunnels and subterranean rivers crisscrossing the entire subsurface of Tschai. Within these dimly-lit corridors,

concealed passages and immense chambers is a society complete with industry and trade. Pnume society is secretive and stratified; an individual's knowledge depends on his social standing. The Pnume rarely carry (or need) weapons.

The Pnume are obsessed with history. They observe everything, frequently seizing "exhibits" for their museum, Foreverness, which details seven million years of Tschai history. Restraint and unobtrusiveness are primary Pnume virtues. They have one-track minds, and no amount of reasoning or pleading will sway a Pnume from its purpose. Captive enemies are dropped into deep pits, if they are not needed as crystallized exhibits in Foreverness.

Pnumekin, humans living among the Pnume (UPP: 687744), have evolved psychologically toward the Pnume. They are introverted, timid, fearful of open spaces, fatalistic and naive. Diko, a hormone suppressant which prevents the onset of puberty, is a regular part of their diet. They scrupulously avoid "boisterous activity," which includes physical contact, noise, sudden movements and being seen without a hat.

The scale is approximately 1,000 km/hex.



Travel on Tschai

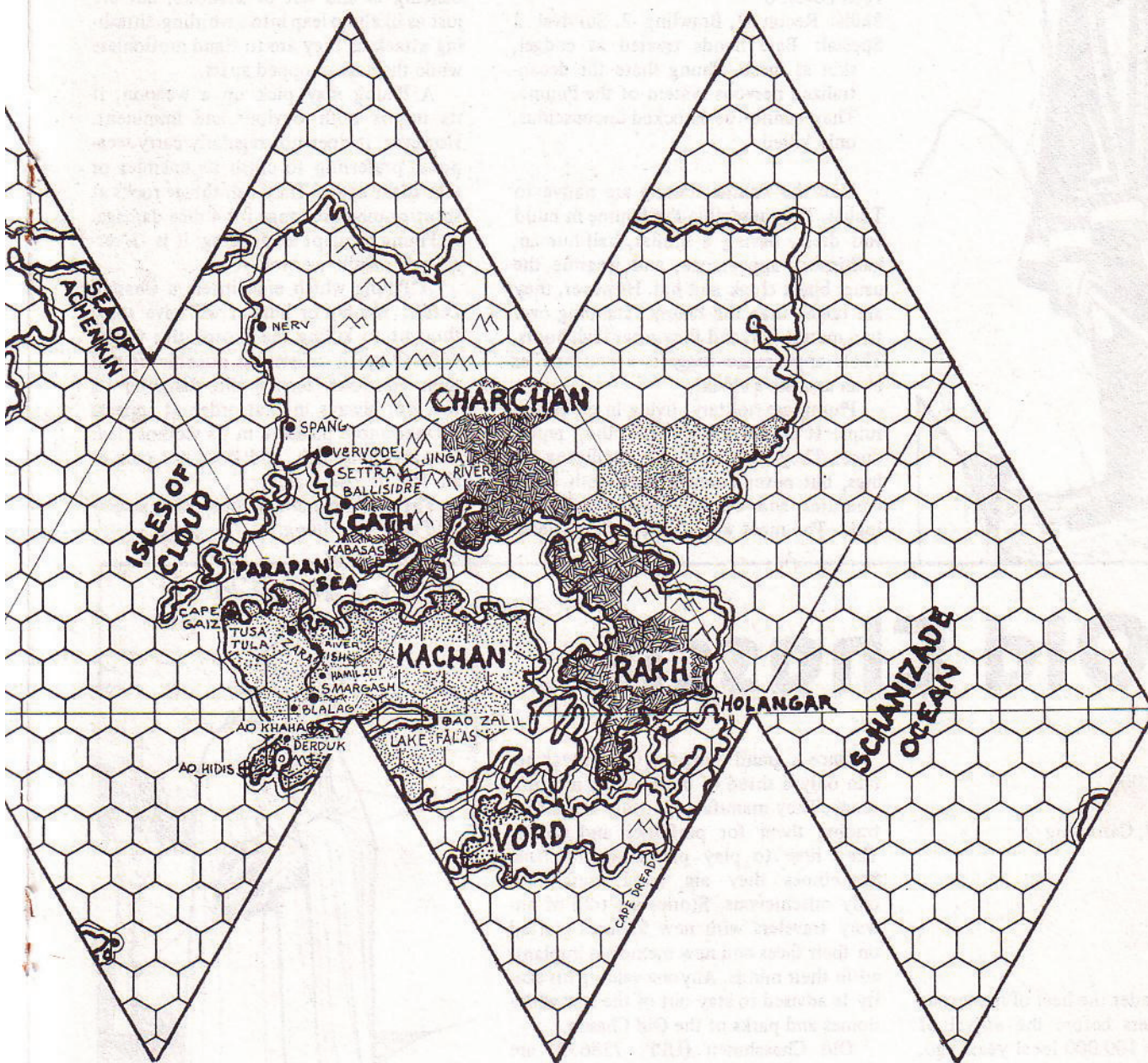
The chief overland mode of travel is the caravan — consisting of 10-60 motor drays, of which at least 1/6 mount sand blasts. Motor cars and trains are common in certain limited areas. Air/rafts are always scarce, at least among the human

population.

The standard riding animal is the leap-horse, a cantankerous creature which jumps around on its oversized hind legs. To control one of these beasts, it is sometimes necessary to thrust a control bit

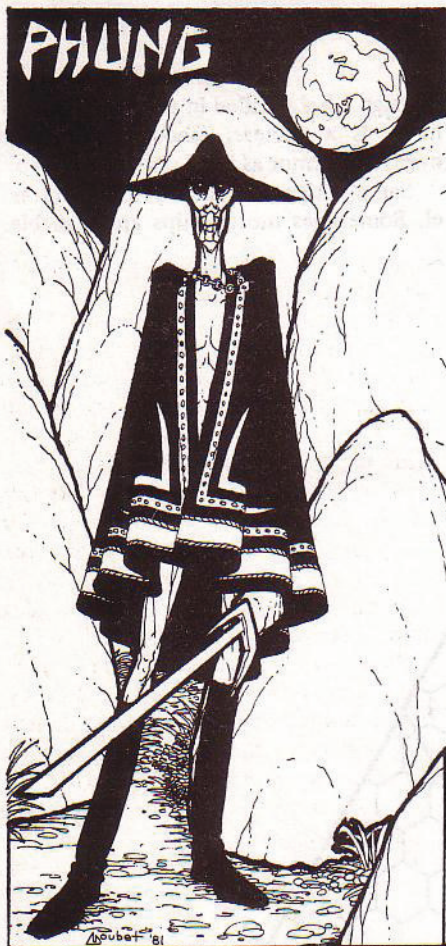
through a hole drilled in the skull. A leap-horse is a gatherer, about 200k, with horns and armor as jack.

Sailing ships are standard for ocean travel. Sometimes motor ships are available.



Travel Times (hours per hex)

	Steppe	Mountain	Desert	Jungle	Ocean
Walking	190	300	220	250	—
Leap Horse	150	250	200	220	—
Caravan / ATV	20	35	20	75	—
Air/Raft	10	14	10	10	10
Sailing Ship	—	—	—	—	100
Motor Ship	—	—	—	—	30



The Phung

UPP: EBC542

Population: 4-5,000

Tech Level: 0

Skills: Recon -2, Brawling -2, Survival -2

Special: Bare hands treated as cudgel, skin as mesh. Phung share the decentralized nervous system of the Pnume. They cannot be knocked unconscious, only killed.

Like the Pnume, Phung are native to Tschai. They resemble the Pnume in build and dress, having a similar, half-human, half-insect appearance, and wearing the usual black cloak and hat. However, they are larger than the Pnume, standing over two meters tall, and they wear high boots. Their appearance suggests a grasshopper in an assassin's cloak.

Phung are solitary, living in caves and ruins. It is not known how they reproduce. They appear to be intelligent beings, but never communicate with other creatures and display no rationality or logic. The most widely accepted explana-

tion for their behavior is that all Phung are totally insane. They usually are seen dancing in and out of shadows, but are just as likely to leap into a whirling, thrashing attack as they are to stand motionless while they are chopped apart.

A Phung may pick up a weapon, if its use is both obvious and imminent. However, it does not regularly carry weapons, preferring to crush its enemies or tear them apart. They can throw rocks at short or medium range for 4 dice damage. A Phung is adept at dodging; it is -2 versus any missile weapon.

A Phung which encounters a Chasch, Dirdir, Wankh or human will give some thought to killing the prospective victim with as much artistry as possible. It will then confront, terrify and slaughter its foe, not always in that order. It appears to take more pleasure in its victims' fear than in their pain, and does not care at all for its own safety.

There is no human subspecies associated with the Phung.

Old Chasch

UPP: 585778

Population: 2-3,000

Tech Level: 8

Skills: Liason -2, Carousing -2

Special: None

Tschai fell under the heel of numerous off-world invaders before the arrival of the Old Chasch 100,000 local years ago. But the Old Chasch have the longest residency of all the alien races currently occupying the planet. They spent much of that time feuding with their cousins, the Blue Chasch, and later with the Dirdir, but they have been no threat to anyone for 20,000 years.

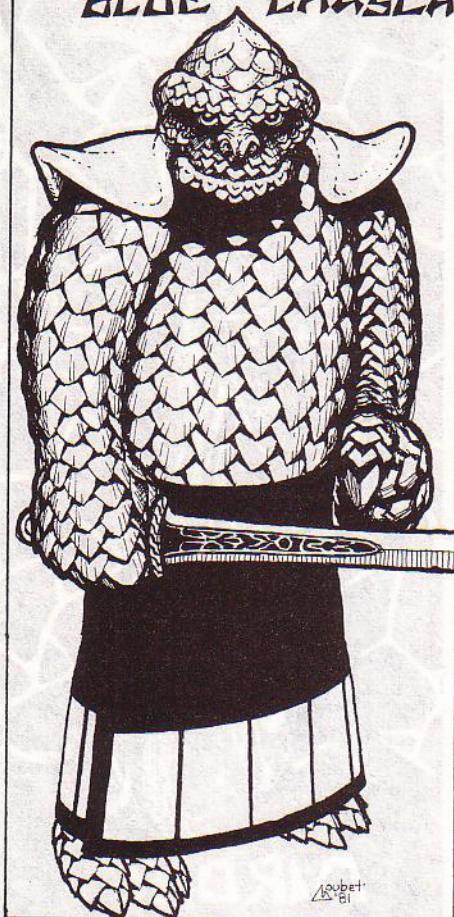
Old Chasch resemble large silverfish with arms and legs. Their skin is like minutely-scaled ivory satin. They have fragile bodies and eyes like small silver pellets that move independently.

Once a grand race, the Old Chasch retain only a shred of their former magnificence. They manufacture drugs and cloth, trading them for perfumes and scents. They love to play pranks on humans. Sometimes they are cruel, sometimes only mischievous. Stories are told of unwary travelers with new features grafted on their faces and new memories implanted in their minds. Anyone valuing his sanity is advised to stay out of the low white domes and parks of the Old Chasch.

Old Chaschmen (UPP: 758633) are slight and stooped with gray wrinkled faces, bulging foreheads, puckered mouths and no chins. They wear false scalps which jut over their brows and rise to a point, simulating the shape of an Old Chasch cranium. Their skills are the minimum necessary to serve their Old Chasch masters as porters, freighthandlers and technicians. They may be the butt of Old Chasch jokes, when other victims are unavailable.

The Old Chasch live in West Kotan. Their only known city is Golsse.



BLUE CHASCH

Blue Chasch

UPP: 758778

Population: 300-400,000

Tech Level: 10

Skills: Streetwise -2, Laser Pistol -1, ATV -1

Special: Skin treated as jack

Blue Chasch have short heavy legs, a powerful wedge-shaped torso and chitinous shoulder-plates curving into a dorsal carapace. Their skull rises to a bony point, with a heavy brow over glittering metallic eyes and a complicated nasal orifice.

The Blue Chasch invaded Tschai 90,000 local years ago, fighting their racial kin, the Old Chasch. Since then, their technology has declined, and they have lost all zest for space travel. However, they do

still maintain missile pits to threaten their old enemies, the Dirdir.

Blue Chasch have a highly developed sense of smell. With it they can identify men and their possessions and can follow a trail if it is less than one day old and doesn't cross water. They use artificial amplifiers to detect fainter traces.

The Blue Chasch are at once whimsical, harsh and devious. They love to bargain, but prefer to cheat. They hate boredom. They entertain themselves by, for example, putting an enemy in a glass maze with a tormented Phung.

Blue Chaschmen (UPP: 768743) are short and stocky with bowed legs and blunt, chinless faces. They wear Chasch-like skullcaps which rise to a point and overhang the brow, and believe themselves to be the first stage in the Blue Chasch life cycle.

Blue Chasch cities consist of spacious gardens, with low white domes.

Green Chasch

UPP: C7A522

Population: 80-100,000

Tech Level: 1

Skills: Survival -2, Hunting -1, Broadsword -1, Catapult -1, Recon -1, Tactics -1

Special: Skin as jack

Green Chasch are seven to eight feet tall, massive and thick-limbed, with clearly defined glistening green scales. They have the characteristic jutting brow and pointed scalp of all Chasch.

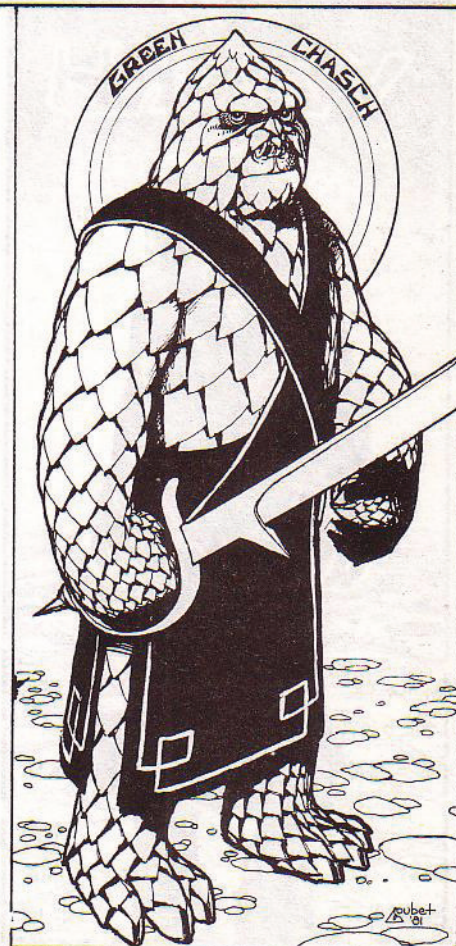
Green Chasch are the barbaric descendants of hybrid warriors brought to Tschai by the Blue Chasch to serve as shock troops against the Old Chasch. Harboring a fierce hatred for the Blue Chasch, they roam Kotan in bands of 50 to 1,000, raiding caravans and human settlements. They fight from the backs of their giant leap-horses with broadswords, picks, crossbows and the Tschai hand-catapult. A

Green Chasch broadsword is too heavy for a human to wield.

The life of a Green Chasch is nasty, brutish and short. A tribe of Green Chasch will accept terrible losses in combat, retreating only when there is no longer any prospect of success. Even when the enemy is fleeing, the Chasch will continue to attack out of sheer ferocity. To replace their losses, Green Chasch pilgrimage to a breeding area northwest of Jalkh; during this period, they are relatively peaceful. Except for that, Green Chasch seem to take no pleasure in anything but slaughter.

Green Chasch are telepathic among their own kind, giving them superb battlefield coordination. They use colored banners to communicate with outsiders, various combinations signifying such things as willingness to trade, bloodlust or the desire to pass through quietly. They have no language. Green Chasch become lethargic at night, but will defend themselves if attacked.

There is no human subspecies associated with the Green Chasch.



The Dirdir

UPP: 787769

Population: 250-350,000

Tech Level: 11

Skills: Hunting -2, Brawling -2, Survival -1,

Laser Pistol -1, Air/Raft -1

Special: Claws; skin as jack

Dirdir average two meters tall, are slight and wiry and move "like lizards on a hot day." Their hard skin has the appearance of polished bone. They have deep-set eyes in vaguely human faces, and their heads are topped by antennae which glow when they are excited. (These antennae are removed if a Dirdir becomes an outcast.)

The Dirdir came to Tschai 60,000 years ago, during a period of aggressive expansion. They fight occasional skirmishes with Chasch and Wankh patrols, but take more pleasure from searching out hidden Pnume tunnels and flooding them with poison gas.

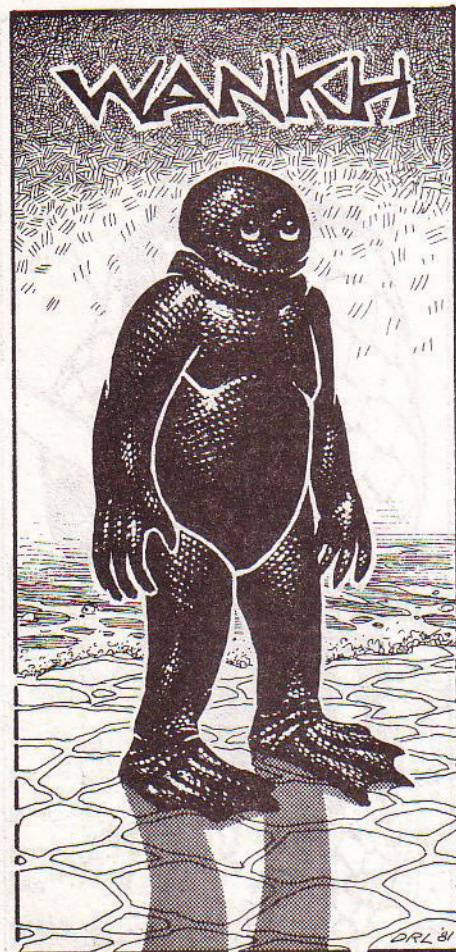
Dirdir are descended from carnivore chaser-killers. Their savage heritage is evident in their ritual hunts. When hunting, Dirdir become animals; reason is subordinated to instinct and aggression. Prey is

eaten. The victims, often human, are kept alive until needed for food. They are controlled with electronic pain inducers.

In their hunting parks and preserves, Dirdir hunt unarmed and on foot. Away from their preserves, Dirdir hunt from air/rafts with laser pistols, swords and infrared and electronic sniffers. They carry shields which give the same protection as cloth armor.

The principal Dirdir city is Hei, which is connected to the (human) island city Svishe by a causeway. At the center of Hei is a glass-enclosed park eight km long, five km wide and 300 meters high. It is surrounded by spires which house the numerous Dirdir clans and castes and remind them of the hollow-tree dwellings of their home planet Sibol. The park is a hunting preserve built to simulate Sibol's cool desert environment. Inside, human criminals are hunted in ritual fashion before spectators.

Dirdirmen (UPP: 777767) are tall, pale and completely hairless. They believe men and Dirdir are two branches of the same evolutionary stock, and revere Dirdir as the higher form.



The Wankh

UPP: 967778

Population: 4-5,000

Tech Level: 12

Skills: Pilot -2, Navigation -1, Communications -1, ATV -1

Special: Amphibious

Slightly larger than a man, a Wankh has a heavy dark torso, squat head, short legs and splayed-web feet. In place of eyes they are equipped with two black lenses which emit pulses every half-second. They wear no clothing.

The Wankh arrived on Tschai 10,000 years ago (13,000 Earth years) during a war against the Dirdir, and built forts on Kachan, Rakh and Vord. They remain on Tschai to keep watch on the Dirdir but they have little interest in the affairs of men. They are rarely seen outside their stern, black-glass towers.

Wankh architecture is stark and labyrinthine, based on concepts incomprehensible to humans. The Wankh language is likewise incomprehensible, pictograms conveyed by single chime-like sounds. The written language is a series of shaded

rectangles, each corresponding to a chime. Humans can learn Wankh only with long and difficult study. No Wankh understands any human language at all.

In general, the Wankh are so alien that the Pnume, Chasch and Dirdir seem almost neighborly by comparison. However, the Wankh are far from being as furtive as the Pnume, brutal as the Chasch or rapacious as the Dirdir. They come and go openly, not seeming to care if humans stare at them. They prefer understanding their enemies to killing them out of hand. (However, the Wankhmen are noticeably more quick on the trigger.) Captives are sent to work in the mines; stubborn cases may be subjected to the mysterious "black boxes."

Wankhmen (UPP: 777777) are self-centered and ruthless, serving as spies and lackies for the Wankh. They hire Lokhars to perform menial and technical work. Wankhmen serve their own interests first, and those of Wankh second. They are the only humans that can speak Wankh, and they use this ability ruthlessly, translating and mistranslating as seems expedient.