

GURPS<sup>®</sup> *Traveller*<sup>®</sup>

# ALIEN RACES

*Aslan, K'kree, and Other Races Rimward of the Imperium*

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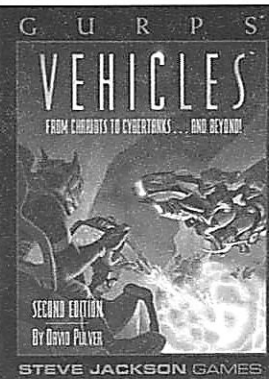
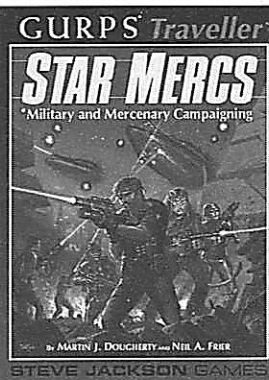
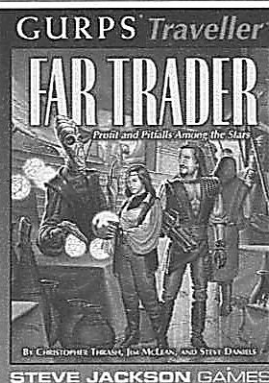
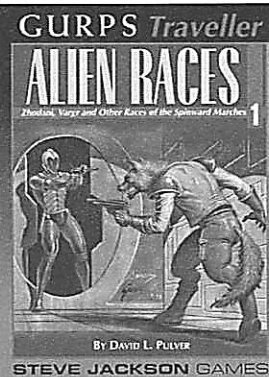
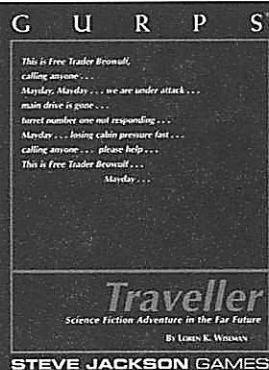


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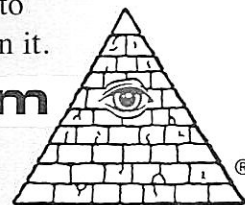
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# ALIEN RACES

*Aslan, K'kree, and Other Races Rimward of the Imperium*

2

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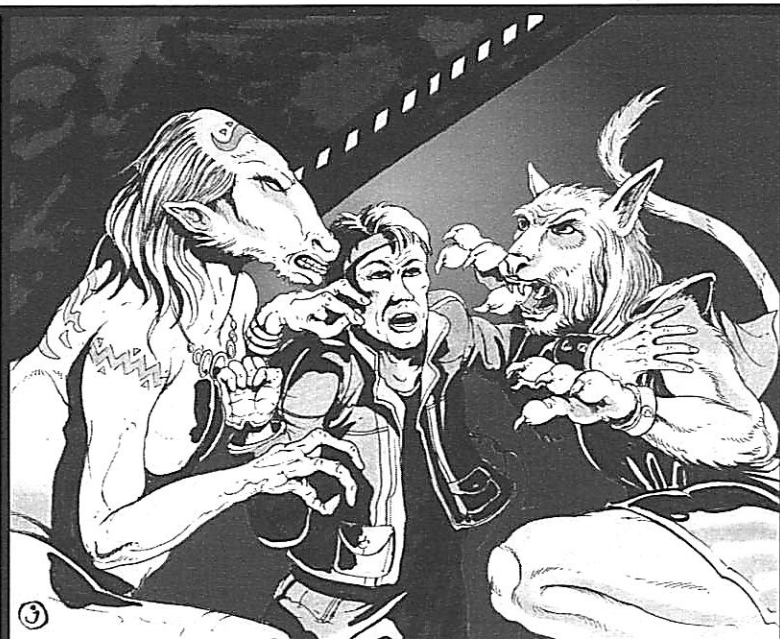
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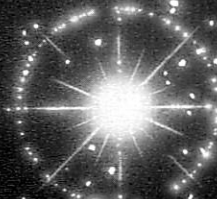
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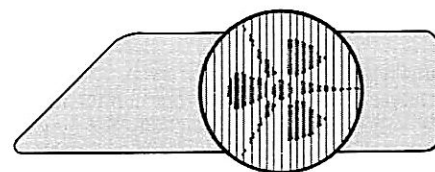
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# INTRODUCTION

Four alien races of the *GURPS Traveller* milieu are described in this book. The Aslan warrior race has a mindset focused on honor and glory; their traders and mercenaries are found throughout the Spinward Marches and the Solomani Sphere. Their wanderlust and combative nature make them well-suited to adventuring. Their habit of grabbing land (or whole planets) when no one is looking also makes them good recurring adversaries in a campaign.

The militant vegetarian K'kree are driven by their faith to rule the Galaxy and eliminate all meat-eaters. Players may join this crusade, fight against it, or simply try to make a living while it goes on around them. The K'kree are constantly embroiled in skirmishes with the Vargr, and keep an uneasy peace along their borders with the Hivers and humanity.

There are also two new minor races, one each from the Two Thousand Worlds and the Aslan Hierate. All four races are intended for use both as PCs and NPCs; campaigns set in Aslan or K'kree space are also possible, featuring Humans in alien space or aliens at home.

This is the second book in a four-part series; the first covers Zhodani and Vargr, the third will cover Hivers and Droyne, and the fourth will deal with many minor races both new and familiar.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Andy Slack is a weregamer (he turns into one at night) who has been playing and writing about *Traveller* since 1977, and playing *GURPS* since its beginnings. By day, he is a project manager in the software industry – the (office) politics involved in this role make it suitable work for a male Aslan. He has a son, Nicolas, and a small landhold in Hampshire, UK, administered by the requisite three females – wife Costanza, and daughters Anna and Giulia. He is a member of BITS (British Isles Traveller Support – check out their website at [www.bits.org.uk](http://www.bits.org.uk)), and a technophile who wrote his share of this book on a palmtop computer while traveling between company offices.

David Thomas lives and works in London. He has been playing *Traveller* and *GURPS* for longer than he can remember. Like Andy, he is a member of BITS. Unlike Andy, he has the requisite two cats.

David Pulver is a game designer and author based in Kingston, Ontario. David's published work includes more than two dozen RPG sourcebooks, including *GURPS Alien Races 1* and *GURPS Vehicles*.

## ABOUT THE LINE EDITOR

Loren Wiseman was one of the founding partners of GDW, Inc., original publisher of *Traveller*, and spent over 20 years there as a game designer, developer, typesetter, and editor. After GDW closed, Loren freelanced for a time, and then came to SJ Games, where he is the *Traveller* line editor and expert-in-residence.

## THE TRAVELLER NEWS SERVICE

For many years a feature of the *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society*, *TNS* chronicled the ongoing life and times of the Imperium. Loren Wiseman is once again writing *TNS* as the alternate history of the Third Imperium develops. It is updated regularly; read it online at [www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/news.html](http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/news.html). "Back issues" of *TNS* are also online.

The SJ Games *Traveller* page has links to the *Traveller* Web Ring, and thus links to most of the major *Traveller*-oriented web sites. For information on subscribing to the *Traveller* Mailing List, contact [traveller-owner@mpgn.com](mailto:traveller-owner@mpgn.com).



# The Aslan

The Aslan (who call themselves *Fteirle*) are the youngest of the six major races, having only developed jump drive a little over 3,000 years ago. The earliest Terran explorers saw in them a resemblance to the Terran lion, and they have been described as lion-like ever since. Ferocious carnivores, they have been driven by their instincts to develop a warrior society based on territory, loyalty, and honor.

## PHYSIOLOGY

Aslan are warm-blooded, four-limbed, bipedal sentients; they are grossly similar to Terran felines in appearance, although internal details vary considerably.

## EVOLUTION

The Aslan are descended from solitary, arboreal predators native to the forests of Tafahti, the largest continent on their homeworld of Kuzu. This means that, unlike the Terran lions to which they are often compared, the Aslan are practiced climbers, very much at home in Kuzu's equivalent of trees.

Approximately 1.8 million years ago, severe climatic changes turned much of the forest into grassland, eliminating the small fauna on which the proto-Aslan fed. Pushed onto the grasslands in search of new prey, they found that the larger plains creatures were too much for a single Aslan. They were forced to begin hunting in prides of several families, and developed intelligence to support the planning and communication this required. The strongest male present took the lead, with his family receiving the choicest kills, sleeping places, and waterholes.

## DIET

The main component of the Aslan diet is meat. They use plants only as spices and seasonings (in addition to the drug dust-spice; see p. 38); they practice agriculture almost exclusively to support their animals. They prefer fresh meat, but have tough digestive systems and can feed on carcasses in an advanced state of decomposition.

Typical of carnivores, *Fteirle* have a short, simple intestinal tract; the small intestine, if fully extended, would be less than 20 feet long.

The higher proportion of meat in their diet means Aslan need noticeably more water than Humans (although not enough to be significant in terms of life-support requirements).

## PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Aslan average 6 feet (1.8 meters) in height and weigh about 200 lbs. (90 kg). Aslan have good night vision and a heightened sense of smell. Aslan posture is upright and digitigrade – they walk on the pads of their toes. They have strong limbs, flexible spines allowing them to climb and pounce, and short muzzles.

They have a single, highly specialized dewclaw under each thumb, which folds like a jackknife from a joint at the tip of the thumb into a horny covering in the base of the thumb and palm. Three fingers oppose the medially placed thumb, all with more ordinary retractable claws. The ability to withdraw the claws allows the Aslan to move silently at need. The claws – especially the dewclaw – make the Aslan clumsy when using Human tools, but the powerful shoulder configuration (unusual in such an advanced species) gives them a strength of arm superior to Humans or Vargr.

## Diurnal Cycle

**K**uzu's day is 36 standard hours long. Aslan spend about one-third of their time asleep – 10 to 12 hours of sleep followed by 24 to 26 hours awake – longer but at less frequent intervals than a Human.

Like most large pouncers, Aslan are often active at night, especially if the night is dark and stormy, when they find it hard to sleep. Variations from their normal diurnal cycle affect Aslan less than Humans, although lack of sleep dramatically reduces their efficiency.

It is thought that the proto-Aslan hunted mainly by night, and that their habits changed with the adoption of agriculture and other technologies.

Aslan tend to eat their largest meal shortly before retiring for the night, so that their digestive torpor has less impact on their other activities.





## Perceived Gender

**T**he division of labor between the sexes is so profound for Aslan that they often unconsciously judge an alien's gender by his or her profession.

Piloting, gunnery, politics, and combat skills are male activities for the Aslan. If these define a character's job, then to an Aslan, he is male. For example, Dame Hilda Lewis, the Imperial ambassador to a clan, would be addressed as "he"; treating him as a female could be discourteous, and he might then be expected to issue a challenge (see p. 9).

Conversely, commercial, financial and technical roles are "women's work." Commander Henry Armstrong, chief engineer of the cruiser *Victorious*, is a female as far as an Aslan is concerned. If she claims to be male, she may insult the Aslan's judgment, although she is unlikely to be challenged since she cannot be expected to understand male honor. If Armstrong's masculinity is acknowledged, he will be assumed to be psychologically disturbed, of very low status, or disgraced.

A side effect of this is that when talking or writing about a Human in the Aslan language, it is not easy to determine the Human's biological gender.



## Legally Male

**A**slan culture provides a mechanism for a female to declare herself "legally male." Although it is almost never done, this is featured in several Aslan sagas. The closest Human analog would be the Albanian "sacred virgins" of pre-spaceflight Earth.

All a female's assets are transferred to her husband's clan when she marries. If a family loses all its adult males in a clan war or other catastrophe, it may also risk losing its landhold. As a desperation measure, one of the unmarried adult females may become "male" in law, thus securing the land until one of the family's sons come of age.

She must pledge never to marry and to remain celibate, and is expected to act as a male in war and other matters of honor.

An undeveloped fifth finger exists as a spur of bone on the hand, entirely concealed within flesh. Given the four visible digits, Solomani sometimes refer to Aslan as "Toons," which is considered an insult.

Dentition shows 28 teeth, with well-developed canines in front and powerful shearing teeth at the sides. The Aslan cannot chew like a Human, as he has no flat-crowned molars; he cuts his food into small pieces, then swallows these whole. Unlike terrestrial felines, the Aslan did not develop a spiny patch on the tip of the tongue, so they use their hands and claws to scoop up liquids and groom each other – practices more like Humans or the great apes than cats.

The eyes are proportionately larger than Human eyes, and deeper-set, with the vertical-slit pupils common to pouncing creatures.

Aslan fur is normally some shade of brown, although gray is occasionally seen; the mane is dark brown or black. As with Humans, the species comprises various bloodlines. These differ mainly in the size and the fullness of the male's mane, the size and conformation of the ears, and the smoothness or shagginess of the coat. There may be a subtle pattern in the fur.

Aslan are particularly susceptible to respiratory diseases. Since the *Fteirle* sense of smell is essential to their evaluation of food, an individual with a nasal infection may completely lose his appetite. Fortunately, few cases of Human or Aslan maladies crossing the species barrier have been documented.

## REPRODUCTION

There are two sexes, male and female. Males are larger and have a thicker mane. Females outnumber males by 3-to-1.

Aslan children mature more rapidly than Humans – they undertake their rite of passage ceremony (*akuaeuhrekhyeh*) at the age of 16 *ftahea* (14 Imperial years). Interestingly, old age begins later, in the mid-60s (54-56 Imperial years), but deterioration is swift once it begins.

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*"Fteir [the Aslan code of behavior] stresses self-control, respect for one's family and ancestors, and a spartan lifestyle. This body of ideas has flourished in Aslan society because it reduces violence and makes behavior predictable, making it easier for Aslan from different families to cooperate. "While **fteir** is sometimes described as a philosophy or a religion, its focus is on mundane existence rather than spiritual essence . . ."*

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## PSYCHOLOGY

Aslan psychology is driven by their male-to-female ratio, and their ancient, subconscious need to define and control a hunting range. These manifest in four main ways: territoriality, gender differences, pride, and loyalty.

## TERRITORIALITY

A deep-seated territorial instinct causes the Aslan to be obsessed with owning land. Males covet land for its own sake; females value it for its crops, mines, and other resources.

## GENDER DIFFERENCES

Gender is much more important in defining Aslan behavior than it is for Humans.

Male Aslan are warriors, concerned with owning land, and the combat and political skills needed to get it and keep it. Those of high status already own land, and are



obsessed with gaining more; those of low status scheme constantly to acquire their own land.

Female Aslan are concerned with trade and knowledge; they are engineers, technicians, traders, teachers, scholars, and managers. A common female goal is to amass enough money to marry well – a large fortune both gives her the wherewithal to support a high-status male and demonstrates her capability to run his estate.

## PRIDE

Some Imperial anthropologists speculate that Aslan pride is a reflection of their territoriality. The theory goes that a primitive Aslan could best defend his females and territory by the appearance of strength. A vigorous response to any threatened intrusion on his rights would deter other males before an actual fight started. The value of this lay in avoiding injuries for both sides. If this theory is correct, then for an Aslan male to appear weak or vacillating is to invite other males to take from him all he holds dear.

In more modern times, the average Aslan wants to ensure that while he may die, his name should live on in honor, in the memories of his family and clansmen. To achieve this, he must ensure that his reputation is unsullied, wiping out stains upon his honor with blood if necessary – someone else's blood is preferable, but if he must spill his own, then so be it.

## LOYALTY

Some think the Aslan developed this trait when the move from the forests to the plains forced them to hunt in prides, with a consequent merging of family hunting ranges and thus a need for joint defense against intruders. Groups which could trust each other implicitly in battle or on the hunt had an evolutionary advantage; they could seize and hold better lands, and tackle larger prey – whether individual beasts or herds – with more chance of success.

This is reinforced in modern society by the Aslan code of honor (see below), especially in its notions of transferable debts of honor and guilt by association.

## PHILOSOPHY

Just as the Aslan have no central authority, they have almost no concept of racial unity or purpose. What they *do* have is a fierce pride in their culture, which is embodied in their code of honor: *fteir*. The depth of their commitment to these values is evident from their name for themselves – *Fteirle*, “those who live with honor.”

## FTEIR: THE ASLAN CODE

*Fteir* stresses self-control, respect for one's family and ancestors, and a spartan lifestyle. This body of ideas has flourished in Aslan society because it reduces violence and makes behavior predictable, in turn making it easier for Aslan from different families to cooperate.

While *fteir* is sometimes described as a philosophy or a religion, its focus is on mundane existence rather than spiritual essence. Essentially, *fteir* tells the Aslan *how* he should live, and he rarely asks *why* it should be that way.

### Self-Control

*Fteir* holds self-control to be a great virtue. Its followers must control their base impulses. In practice, this means living frugally, speaking honestly, meeting one's obligations to family and clan without stint, and facing one's enemies without fear. Putting one's own safety or comfort ahead of one's duty is dishonorable.

Landholders in particular are expected to exemplify these virtues to foreigners and the lower classes. They must offer their *ko* (clan chieftain) total loyalty and any sacrifices required for the good of the clan.

## Polygamy and Celibacy

These are rooted in the 3-to-1 ratio of females to males. Polygamy is largely a subconscious response for Aslan, while celibacy tends to be a conscious decision.



*Polygamy*: The proto-Aslan male and his cubs stood more chance of survival if their several females hunted for them. This remains true, although females now hunt knowledge and profit rather than herbivores. Given that a larger, richer landhold provides a better living, a female's children will also be better served by her being one of several wives to a wealthy male. A noble Aslan male may have four or five wives.

Adultery occurs because the most attractive biological parent for one's offspring is not necessarily best able to provide for them after birth. Such behavior is not at all acceptable in Aslan society, where marriage customs evolved principally to ensure that only the landholder's biological children were eligible to inherit his land, and is cause for dueling or a feud if discovered.

*Celibacy*: When a female marries, her wealth is transferred to her husband's family, and she risks losing control of it. From the viewpoint of her family or clan, it follows that senior executive positions in a corporation are best entrusted to females who have sworn to remain unmarried.



## Thinking Like an Aslan

**T**he detailed guide to being Aslan is *fteir*, the Aslan code of honor (see *Philosophy*, p. 7). It emphasizes stoicism, honor, and loyalty. Here is the quick summary for GMs and players new to the race:

*Keep your given word*, regardless of the cost to you or to anyone else.

*Never show fear or pain*. No one lives forever, but die well, and your name will be remembered by your clansmen.

*Never let your friends or relatives down*, for any reason. Expect them to support you, whatever the cost.

*Don't ignore insults* from anyone, for any reason. Fight for your honor if necessary; expect others to fight for theirs.

*Landholding and fighting are for males*; everything else, especially money, is for females. Discussing a subject inappropriate to an Aslan's gender is an attempt to take advantage of him (or her), and therefore offensive.

The third and fourth guidelines often conflict with following the first; most classic Aslan sagas focus on a hero in this dilemma.

## Variations on a Theme

While the above aspects of *fteir* are so widespread as to be nearly universal, nothing Aslan is truly homogenous. Many facets of the code vary from clan to clan. For example:

*Camouflage and stealth*: In some areas, it is considered dishonorable to conceal oneself from enemies or sneak up on them; in others, it is accepted as honorable, and indeed part of one's Aslan nature, to do so. Insofar as there is a general rule, Aslan believe that relying entirely on stealth and surprise would be cowardly. It is permissible to attack a foe who is unprepared so long as he has some warning. Disguise or camouflage are acceptable so long as the enemy clearly understands they might be used.

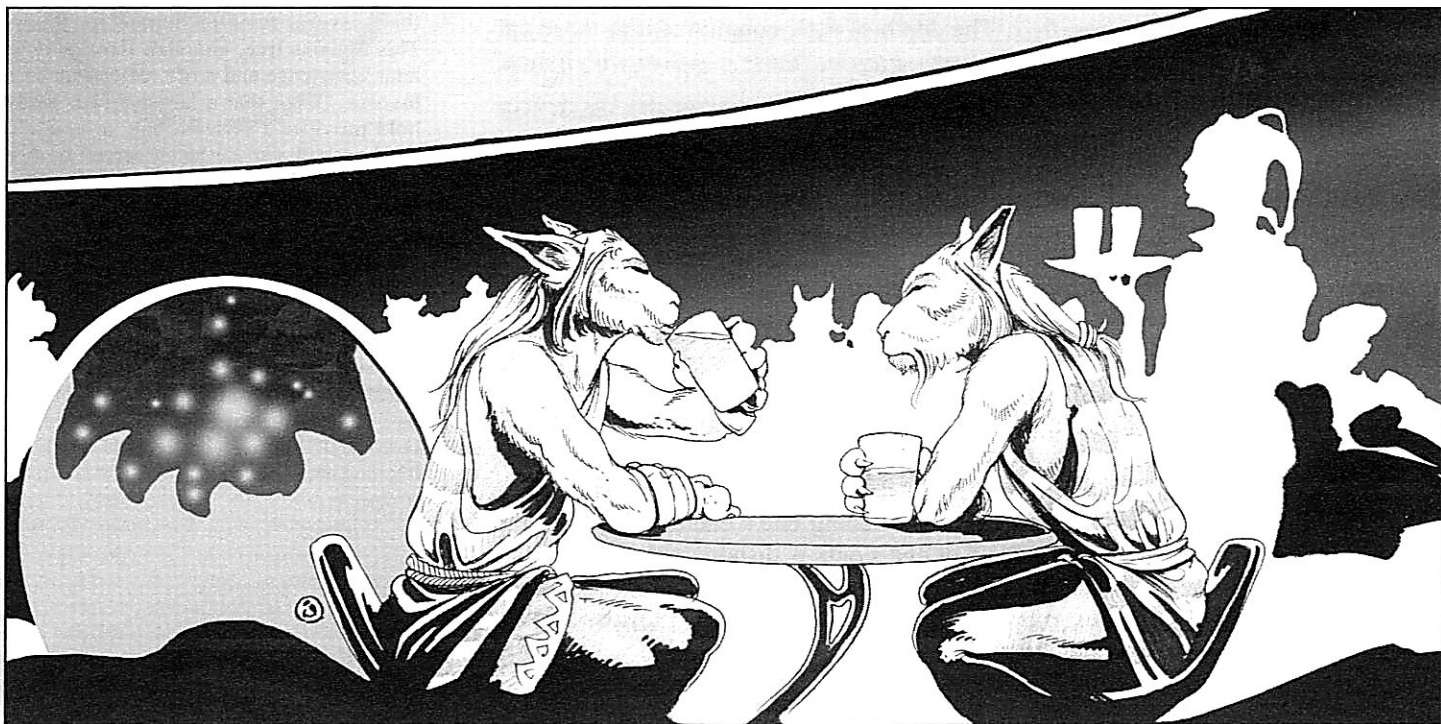
Some clans traditionally use trickery, arguing that since it is their custom, their opponents must have this understanding by default. Debate is ongoing in the trailing parts of the Hierate as to whether this expectation should be extended to the Solomani (as ever, there is no consensus among the *Fteirle* on this point).

Some clans – usually those eschewing stealth themselves – consider Human Special Forces troops to be cowardly and dishonorable. If captured in battle by these clans, the Humans are normally shot out of hand, but may be challenged to duel to the death, with their freedom awarded for victory.

*Torture of captives*: Some clans consider it dishonorable to injure a helpless prisoner who has no prospect of fighting back. Others consider it a legitimate tool for intelligence-gathering, no more or less honorable than any other tactic. Some think it honorable to offer an enemy the chance to demonstrate his courage by resisting pain. The clans most feared by Human mercenaries treat torture as a sport, with such elaborations as false promises of freedom and handing the wounded over to Aslan children to practice upon . . .

## GURUS

The *fteirko* (literally, “honor personified” or “honor itself”) is not a priest. He is an Aslan with a detailed knowledge of *fteir* as practiced by his clan (including a vast body of historical precedent) and the wisdom to apply it correctly in an ethical dilemma. His understanding of the fine points of Aslan and clan culture, and his reputation for honor, make it likely that he is also an *earleatrais* (p. 15), though this is not always the case.





## AFFAIRS OF HONOR

It is very easy to offend an Aslan, and real or imagined slights may lead to duels. Dueling originated as a way of settling personal disputes, especially over inheritance. For millennia, the Aslan way was for the landholder's sons to fight for their inheritance, strongest takes all. The current system of primogeniture (eldest son inherits all) is a relatively new luxury made possible by jump drive, which provides an easy way to migrate to new lands on other worlds.

### Giving Cause

Aslan have more effective natural weapons than Humaniti's feeble teeth and blunt nails, so (paradoxically) confrontation between individuals has more posturing and less actual violence, since once combat does occur it will lead to severe injury or death rather than a few bruises.

*Fteir* includes many rituals designed to defuse tension and avoid duels. Dueling itself is a last resort, surrounded by formal codes which prescribe exactly what is cause for what type of challenge, how the duel should be fought, and how the winner is determined. The codes divide offensive behavior into three categories, of which only one is cause for a duel.

*Familiarity* occurs when one treats a social superior as an equal. Gross and habitual familiarity may be considered discourteous behavior.

*Impoliteness* is due to improper upbringing or poor education. It includes failure to address other Aslan (especially superiors) in the correct manner, losing one's temper in public, or accidental insults arising when clan traditions are unknowingly violated. Since what is impolite in one landhold may be an entirely innocent remark in another, the first response to impoliteness is usually a warning, so that the offender realizes his error. ("Them's fightin' words around here, stranger."). Persistent impoliteness calls into question the effectiveness of the offender's clan leader in educating his relatives. In theory, he could be accused of discourtesy for this; in practice, the clan will safeguard its reputation by dealing with the offender itself before matters get that far.

*Discourtesy* is a deliberate, malicious insult – a cause for an immediate challenge. There are so many ways to insult an Aslan that it is pointless to list them; if he is set on issuing a challenge, he can find a way to construe any word or action as insulting. Should a character wish to be deliberately discourteous, a slight on his opponent's honor is a good place to start.

There is a formal art of discourtesy, with a number of ritual ways to provoke someone into a duel. A discourteous Aslan may actually gain status if his opponent fails to challenge him. There are even specific ritual insults which allow young bravos to duel as a way of proving themselves, but without causing lasting enmity between their families (see sidebar on *Dueling Societies*, p. 10).

Challenges are not made lightly, but being thought reluctant to challenge is a sign of weakness. One way for a non-Aslan to gain respect is to issue a challenge, and duel, when appropriate. This shows that one is not entirely an ignorant barbarian after all.

### Satisfaction

As with Human practice, duels are fought after a short cooling-off period and a ritual opportunity to withdraw the discourtesy. An independent *earleatrais* watches the duel to ensure fair and honorable combat.

All duels are fought unarmed, i.e., with the dewclaw (or with *ayloi*, p. 34, if the duelist has no dewclaws). Normally, they are to first blood – the first duelist to wound his opponent wins. More serious matters are settled by duels to the point of unconsciousness; or even to the death, though this last is rare.

The winner's honor is satisfied, and the loser must make ritual apology to him, even if the loser was the one originally insulted.

## Honored Ancestors: What Would My Father Have Done?

**M**ost *Fteirle* are not motivated by belief in an afterlife or materialistic hedonism, but by what their families think of them, and how their actions reflect on the family's good name. Honor is infectious – if an Aslan does honorable deeds, that enhances the reputation of the clan as a whole; if he acts in a cowardly way, he shames his relatives.

Human concepts of good and evil are less relevant to an Aslan than the traditions of one's clan and the Aslan code. (This is very similar to the gaming concept of "playing in character." It is realistic to roleplay an Aslan as if he were concerned about losing character points for out-of-character actions, because he *is*, although he will use different terminology for it.)



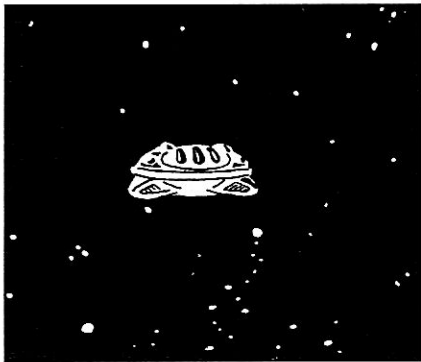
An Aslan faced with a difficult decision retires to meditate on what the family role-models – ancestors with a reputation for honorable deeds – would have done, or consult a clan *fteirko* for guidance.

Note that while Human troops often grow "as close as family," Aslan troops *are* blood relatives. Since they are often recklessly brave as well, they will almost never leave their dead or wounded behind, preferring if necessary to stand and die with them. In clan wars, it is considered good form to agree to periodic truces so that bodies can be recovered from the battlefield and returned to the clan females for treatment or burial.



## Dueling Societies

These are perhaps closest in spirit to the *Verbindungen* or “fighting bodies” found in German universities on pre-spaceflight Earth. Their membership is drawn from many clans and families (unlike most Aslan institutions which are contained within a single clan). The societies each have a specific purpose, strict rules, distinctive dress or insignia, meetings which are closed to outsiders, and varying prestige depending on their members’ deeds.



The clans tolerate these societies for two reasons: First, they provide a legitimate means of informally exchanging information or “settling out of court,” when pride or honor forbid a direct discussion between rival clans. Second, they provide a way for unblooded males to demonstrate their skill and courage by dueling, in controlled conditions where no real slur is made upon either party’s honor, and there is no risk of the fight escalating into a feud or clan war.

Some dueling societies also form around legendary martial arts masters, as young warriors seek to learn their secret maneuvers.

Those societies which draw the most attention from the Human media are composed of fanatical followers of the Aslan code of honor, bent on purifying their race by eliminating all non-Aslan influences. If the Hierate can be said to have terrorists, it is these people, although their devotion to their philosophy often compels them to eschew secrecy and give accurate advance warning of attacks (like some clans’ assassins). The clans claim to be unable to deal with this problem, as dueling societies are necessarily outside the normal clan structure and jurisdiction.

Females have similar societies, although these place less emphasis on dueling and are perhaps better thought of as guilds.

## Limitations on Dueling

Males and females never duel. Strictly speaking, they cannot be discourteous to each other, as the sexes do not understand each others’ honor, and consequently they cannot challenge each other. Blatant and extreme cross-gender provocation is cause for a challenge by a close relative of the correct sex.

Children never duel with their parents, or other adults of the previous generation in their family.

## Feuds

Disputes between families or prides, as opposed to individuals, may become feuds if they cannot be settled by negotiation. If kept at a low level, a feud is a pretext for discourtesy and causes continual dueling between the parties. Feuding may get out of hand and involve the vassals or overlords of either party, which typically results in the dispute escalating to a clan war (see *Government*, p. 12).

## DEBTS OF HONOR: YOU SCRATCH MY BACK . . .

The Aslan’s supreme obligation is to his clan, even if this causes suffering for himself or his immediate family. (A favorite drama in Aslan tales is the conflict between an individual’s devotion to his family and his duty to his clan or its overlords.) However, obligations extend beyond one’s family.

When one Aslan helps another, a debt of honor is created which must be repaid on demand by a reciprocal service. If the original debtor cannot or will not repay his debt, it is transferred to a relative of the same gender. Debts of honor may lie fallow for years – even generations – and can be transferred between Aslan or clans like bearer bonds. (“My grandfather saved the life of the *Yerlyaruiwoko*’s father 50 years ago. If you help me now, that clan will owe you a great favor.”) The complex web of debts of honor is what binds alliances of clans.

A debt of honor may range in “value” from very minor (say, changing a broken grav module on an air/raft) to enormous (perhaps for saving the lives and honor of an entire clan). The Aslan language has many words for favors of different values so as to precisely state the nature of services rendered or owed. In a sense, this is the currency of noble males.

## SOCIETY

Aslan society is a matrix of clan and corporate loyalties, with the clan aspects dominant. Clan loyalty is based on the strong bonds between blood relatives, and on oaths of fealty between overlords and vassals. Corporate loyalty is discussed on p. 30, under *Business, Trade, and Commerce*.

Although most Aslan have duties and responsibilities on both axes of this matrix, males tend to emphasize the clan, while females balance clan and corporate demands.

## FAMILY, PRIDE, AND CLAN

The basic unit of Aslan society is the *ekho*, a family of some two to 12 individuals, led by a patriarch. The largest family ever recorded is 23 adults and 14 children, but this is extremely unusual. The *ekho* includes the patriarch, his wife (or wives), the patriarch’s unmarried siblings, aged parents, orphans of blood relatives adopted into the family, and perhaps members of allied or conquered clans exchanged for one’s own relatives. This last allows future comrades-in-arms to train together while young, and provides hostages for the good behavior of new vassals (the newly conquered are honor-bound to keep their word, but there can be quite a difference between the letter of a treaty and the clan’s best interests).

Several families combine into an *ahriy* (pride), with one family dominant. The pride’s overall leader is the patriarch of the dominant family.

A number of prides are bound by blood and oaths into a *huiha* (clan), with one pride dominant. Clans may be vassals of other clans, but the majority are independent. Theoretically, each clan is descended from a single *ihatei* male, the first to hold its lands; the clan name is derived from this ancestor's nickname. Therefore, an Aslan founding a new landhold is likely to change his nickname to something with style and panache, which his descendants will be proud to bear.

The clan conducts most social services which would be provided by the government in Human space, such as roadbuilding, justice, and education. The clan may handle these matters internally, or may contract with a corporation to deal with them on its behalf.

## LANDHOLDING

An Aslan's stature in society is determined by how much land he (or her husband) holds, and the amount controlled by his clan, directly or through vassals.

The lowest classes are landless – farmers, craftsmen, factory workers. Any Aslan whose family holds land (Status 1+) is considered noble. Approximately 28% of Aslan families are landholders, with about 17% (Status 2) holding 400 square miles or more, 8% (Status 3) holding at least 4,000 square miles, and 3% (Status 4) controlling 40,000 square miles or more. Each clan has prides and families of all social levels, with the highest-status families holding the largest lands.

The 29 preeminent clans (see p. 14) have landholds consisting of many worlds and parts of worlds. No individual can administer such a large fief personally, so vassals administer it in the name of the clan; these are usually male relatives by blood or marriage. (Traditionally, when Aslan sons fought duels over inheritance, the loser would become one of these vassals, or migrate in search of new lands.)

The head of a clan may grant a landhold to one of his vassals as a reward for a great service to the clan, usually military in nature. The clan itself acquires new land through exploration by its *ihatei*, or through warfare.

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*"The Imperium and the Hierate are both feudal power structures; but while the Imperium is based on a single ultimate ruler, the Emperor, the Aslan Hierate is ruled by hundreds of clan patriarchs, all of whom are theoretically equal in standing. Thus, the Aslan do not have one interstellar government in the human sense, but many 'pocket empires' ranging from tiny landholds to confederacies of dozens of worlds."*

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## CUSTOMS

In describing details, such as these customs, the GM must emphasize that the *Fteirle* are aliens, not just Tokugawa samurai in lion suits. Remember that traditions vary from clan to clan, and there are thousands of clans in the Hierate (and hundreds of billions of Aslan in charted space). Whatever custom the GM wishes to include can probably be found somewhere. Some of the more common customs:

**Adoption:** Some clans will admit clanless outsiders, even non-Aslan, who have done them a great service. Whether they are "associate members" with limited rights or full clan members depends on local custom.

**Exogamous Mating:** To avoid inbreeding, it is traditional for young males to take wives from clans other than their own. If a male has several wives, they are likely to be from different clans. This may lead to rivalry or intrigue among them, especially since only the eldest *surviving* son can inherit. Exogamy is also used to consolidate alliances, and expand a clan or its lands. The latter application is in some ways similar to a Human corporate merger or takeover.

## Picking on Someone Your Own Size

**S**ome disparity between duelists is inevitable, especially in skill level, but it is bad form to fight someone who is obviously weaker. If the opponent is wounded, the proper thing is to defer the duel until he has recovered.

If he is aged or infirm, it is polite to offer to fight a healthier relative. If he is not, it is a fine insult to make the offer anyway.

If the clan cannot field a fair match for a challenger, professional duelists are available (typically assassins seeking glory or dueling instructors keen to maintain their reputation). Female combatants can be hired; using a professional male duelist creates a debt of honor to him.

It is also poor form to risk depriving a clan of a soldier during wartime. Again, the duel can be deferred.

Note that a promise to fight a duel is a debt of honor. If the original duelist is killed or permanently incapacitated, the debt passes to the closest relative of the appropriate gender. Where clan wars go on for generations, it has been known for duels to be deferred for many years, and eventually be fought by descendants of the original duelists.

## Adventure Seed: Offer Money to a Male

**A**s the group concludes a lucrative deal with an Aslan clan, a young male Aslan suggests the money be paid to a specific party member – one who the clan perceives as male because of his (or her!) skills. A challenge is clearly called for. Dare the insulted member issue it, and face an Aslan bravo claw to claw? And why has he chosen to provoke them?



## Aslan Honor

**W**aftou'iy was a gunner aboard an escort vessel roughly a millennium ago. Crippled by enemy fire during a clan war, his ship began to break up. Unable to continue fighting, the captain surrendered with honor and ordered the crew to abandon ship.

Due to battle damage, there were not enough lifeboats to save everyone. Unlike Human tradition, noble males boarded first; with no time to resolve the issue by dueling, lots were drawn by lower-status crewmen. Waftou'iy won a place, but a scuffle developed when a losing crewman tried to take it.

"Since you are determined to live at any cost to your honor," Waftou'iy said to him, "take my place." They exchanged places, and Waftou'iy died with his ship.

Waftou'iy's courage and honor so pleased his *ko* that his brother was given a small landhold. The coward who took his place was cast out of the clan, and his name expunged from all records. Today, both are long dead, but Waftou'iy's name lives on in honor, and that of the dishonorable one is forgotten by all.

Ahiyeaftah was a young calligrapher forced to defend her family's honor after her father was insulted by a female from a rival clan. It was her first duel, and though her opponent was no stronger, everyone knew that Ahiyeaftah was much less skillful. She approached her father and asked:

"Teach me how to begin a duel, so that although I must lose this fight, I will not disgrace our family." Her father obliged, instructing her in the basic fighting stances.

On the day of the duel, Ahiyeaftah assumed one of these positions and stood fearlessly immobile, because she knew nothing more. Her opponent circled for a while, finding no weakness in the stance. At length, she deliberately cut herself on one of Ahiyeaftah's dewclaws, saying, "I submit to the stronger spirit." Both clans gained honor; the insult was forgotten, and they formed an alliance.

Laftakh was a young warrior fighting in a clan war. Rendered unconscious by his wounds, he was by chance left on the battlefield when his comrades withdrew. Because they had fought honorably and well, his enemies took him in and cared for his wounds, intending to release him during the next truce.

Before he could be returned, his pride attacked the landhold where Laftakh was recovering. Bound by the code of hospitality to defend his host's house, he fought valiantly against his own clansmen, killing his own brother and dying himself as a result of further wounds.

Both clans praised his bravery, and the story is often told as an example of honorable behavior.

*Honor Chest:* Many Aslan, especially males, keep a small box of souvenirs, each a memento of some great personal deed. This is also the Aslan equivalent of a résumé – its contents are discussed in detail if the owner wishes to join a new lord's service or move to a different landhold.

*Meals:* The patriarch is served first at any meal, then other males, then females, and finally children. Eating in descending order of status also applies in the military, unlike the Human custom that "in combat, officers eat last." Aslan are both able to consume more at a sitting than Humans and to go longer between meals. There are recorded instances of a male eating over 30 lbs. of meat in one meal, and then not eating again for nearly a week.

*Pets:* Some clans do not have pets. They consider animals for hunting or eating – companionship and protection are provided by one's family and its males, respectively.

Others place great reliance on trained animals for transport or as guard or hunting beasts. Members of these clans often develop affection for their animals, sometimes keeping them merely for the pleasure it gives them.

*Primogeniture:* Almost without exception in the Hierate, landholds are handed down from father to eldest surviving son. This is a recent innovation, less than 1,500 years old. Originally, sons fought for the right to inherit, with losers becoming either *ihatei* or the winner's vassals.

The family's other children get nothing. The inheritor may opt to make them his vassals to administer holdings on his behalf, but the land remains his. Some clans – especially in the Transrift and along the Hierate's spinward frontiers – do not subscribe to this view and retain the old ways.

*Yarns:* Aslan are wont to spend their free time telling tales of their exploits, past and planned. This practice is more common among *Fteirle* than the Human habit of watching or listening to recorded entertainment, and Aslan with no pressing business can easily spend 30 hours a day sleeping and yarning in shifts.

Slight exaggerations to embroider the story are expected, but outright lying is impolite; accusing someone of it is discourteous and may result in a challenge.

## GOVERNMENT

The Imperium and the Hierate are both feudal power structures, but while the Imperium has a single ultimate ruler (the Emperor), the Aslan Hierate is ruled by hundreds of clan patriarchs, all theoretically equal in standing. Thus, the Aslan do not have one interstellar government in the Human sense, but many "pocket empires" ranging from tiny landholds to confederacies of dozens of worlds. There is no authority higher than the head of a clan. Some clans are larger and more powerful than others, but none speaks for the race as a whole.

Aslan governments are always feudal, though survey crews may record them as bureaucracies, corporate states, etc., to better reflect how they affect a traveler's life. In its purest form, the feudal system has a major clan dividing its land into hereditary fiefs, which it assigns to vassal clans in return for loyalty and military service. A vassal clan in turn divides its landhold among its prides, which each subdivide their share among their component families. At the bottom of the pyramid are the landless workers and farmers, who are in a sense owned by the land, rather than owning it. They are tied to its service, and change clan allegiance whenever war, marriage alliances, or gifts move the land to a new clan.

### Loyalty

The near-universality of the Aslan language and the feudal system reinforce the Aslan's loyalty to his blood relatives and de-emphasize loyalty to a geographical region, such as a planet or country. The noble's land is a cherished possession, and is administered properly so as to benefit his family. A lower-class Aslan has no great emotional investment in any land he may work – after all, it isn't *his* land.

## Service

Originally, the service a vassal owed his lord was purely military – provide so many warriors on demand, equipped to an agreed standard, for a maximum of so many days per year.

Where the overlord already has enough troops to guard against likely threats, the vassal may be asked to provide other services instead – perhaps working the fields or industrial labor.

Some overlords do not actually need the services of their vassals, in which case the females of the families involved usually negotiate a cash payment in lieu of service. This may be called rent, tribute, or taxes, depending on the location.

It is important to note, however, that the relationship between a *ko* and his clansmen is not that of master and serf. It is more like the relationship between the head of a Human family and the family's children or cousins. Likewise, the transfer of landless low-caste Aslan when land changes hands is not a sale of slaves; it is more like giving a child's hand in marriage. However, in the same way that marriages may be arranged as well as love matches, some clans offer their vassals choices in these matters, and some do not.

## CLANS

The majority of clans are independent, but some are vassals of other clans. This may occur when a weak clan seeks protection by allying itself with a stronger one, or when an *ihatei* colony is founded with strong loyalties to its parent clan. In any case, a clan which becomes powerful enough will negotiate or fight for its independence. A vassal clan may itself have other, less powerful clans as vassals.

Clans may own entire worlds or (more commonly) areas of land on different worlds in several systems, each of which also has colonies from other clans. Where a system is split between several clans, each has its own bases, laws, and military forces. Each will also have envoys representing their clan's allies, overlords, and vassals.

## FEUDAL OBLIGATIONS

The vassal and the lord each have duties to the other. Typically, each is required to maintain a high level of military readiness, and be prepared to march to the other's defense.

### *The Vassal's Duty to His Overlord*

The vassal manages a specific landhold on his lord's behalf. He is responsible for maintaining order, ensuring a certain level of agricultural or industrial production, and possibly recruiting and equipping a suitable military force to defend the landhold. This force must be made available to fight for the lord at need, usually for a set amount of time annually.

### *The Overlord's Duty to His Vassals*

The overlord is expected to protect and provide for his vassals, and resolve disputes between them fairly, with justice and honor. He must also administer his landhold prudently; the financial details are left to his female relatives.

The overlord guarantees his vassals secure (and usually hereditary) tenure of their lands, and rewards them with further territory he may acquire by conquest or other means. Since an overlord's vassals bear the brunt of the expense of fighting, and demand additional lands in return for their service, Aslan warfare emphasizes offensive action to seize new land. Defensive warfare is unpopular since the vassal armies gain nothing for their efforts.

The overlord is also responsible to his peers for the actions of his vassals. If one vassal clan is causing trouble with another, the overlord must discipline it . . . unless he decides to back it up, and escalate the conflict. (It is not unheard of for major clans to fight limited wars by proxy through their vassals, but this is rare because it casts doubts on the courage and the honor of the major clan.)

## Aslan Sports

**F** *teirle* sports focus on martial activities: mock dueling, marksmanship, and so on. Races, whether on foot, on riding beasts, or in vehicles, are also popular. Hunting with hand weapons or the dewclaw alone is no longer necessary for survival, but is still practiced for recreation, usually by females.

A major difference between Human and Aslan sporting events is that Aslan do not normally wager on the outcome, although they do speculate loudly and continuously throughout the match. The typical Aslan also prefers to see a live event rather than a broadcast or recording.



## Possessions: Traveling Light

**T**he typical Aslan measures himself by his honor and his landhold, not by mere possessions. When encountered, he will have less equipment than an equivalent Human – only what he needs for the task in hand. What he saves by foregoing luxury items, he spends on improving the quality of the essentials, so the tools and weapons he does have will be ornate, well-made “designer” items, inscribed with heroic sentiments or martial scenes. A noble's weapons, especially if heirlooms, are often fine or very fine items. Cheap ones are almost unheard of, as no noble would willingly own one, and no weaponsmith would condescend to make one.

Similarly, automation is relatively rare in the Hierate. There is no honor to be had in a robot's loyalty or a mass-produced tunic. A faithful vassal, or a tunic hand-embroidered by an acknowledged mistress of the art . . . now *those* are worth having.



## Domestic Policy: Survival of the Fittest

**T**he *Tlaukhu* makes no laws, does not decide policy for the Hierate as a whole, exercises no power over any clans save its members and their vassals, and maintains no military forces, fleets, or bases save those of its member clans.

So, who does these things? No one. Each clan follows its own interests (whatever those may be), constrained only by its adherence to the Aslan code of honor (however it interprets that code). Each clan's freedom to swing its claws ends only when they slash the flank of another clan strong enough to do something about it.

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*"[Aslan] **ihatei** are often painted as a swarm of interstellar transients, sweeping from the stars to claim squatters' rights to any unsettled or partially settled world. The reality of the situation is this: **ihatei** are pikers compared to the grand champions of interstellar manifest destiny – Humaniti."*

– *Eneri Hault-Zhugaashfila,*  
**Reflections**

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## Foreign Policy: "You Weren't Using That Land, Were You?"

**O**fficially, there is no unified Aslan foreign policy (there is no single Aslan government) – treaties must be negotiated with each clan individually. The de facto policy is one of Aslan grabbing land whenever and wherever they can.

The clans have a duty to equip *ihatei* and send them off to settle new lands. In inhabited areas, this means buying the land or fighting for it. But if a pleasant world is lying fallow and *ihatei* chance by, the owner may well find himself with a few thousand Aslan squatters.

## THE TLAUKHU

This term refers both to the 29 most powerful Aslan clans and their 29 representatives who meet continuously on Kuzu to arbitrate interclan disputes and set common policies. (See also *Formation of the Tlaukhu*, p. 19.) In theory, their decisions bind only the 29 themselves, their vassals, and those who request arbitration; in practice, they affect other clans by developing new technology, changing trade routes, starting or stopping clan wars, and so on.

To remain within the 29, a clan must be independent, and have sufficient population, wealth, and firepower at its disposal to be a credible member. A clan leaves the council when it fails to meet these nebulous criteria, or when its power wanes to the point where it must become another's vassal. Only 19 of the current 29 have been members since the *Tlaukhu*'s inauguration; the others have replaced previous clans in this way, and some of the positions have changed several times.

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## LAWS, CRIME, AND PUNISHMENT

Aslan law, like all things Aslan, is decentralized and based on family ties. Civil and penal codes – being extensive bodies of local precedent rather than a coherent code of laws in the Human sense – vary from clan to clan, so an *earleatrais* studying law is well-advised to specialize separately in the laws of several clans. Along the Aslan/Human interface (see p. 16), clans have adopted a number of Human legal concepts, typically those dealing with mercantile law. Attempts by Human traders to convey the idea of copyright on designs have met with mixed success.

The patriarch resolves disputes within the family. Disputes between families are dealt with by the pride's leader. Conflicts between prides are heard by the *ko* or head of the clan. Problems between clans are handled by the *Tlaukhu* if both clans are members or if they request arbitration. In other cases, the relevant clans resolve the matter themselves, by negotiation or violence. The *Tlaukhu* becomes involved only if one of its member clans is affected, and even then only by request.

### Types of Crime

Discourtesy and related offenses, covered in *Affairs of Honor* (p. 9), are not illegal, just dangerous. There are three types of actual crime:

*Crimes of passion* include assault, drunk (or drugged) and disorderly behavior, rioting, and so forth. Judged by the *ko*.

*Crimes with victims* include theft, fraud, extortion, kidnapping, piracy, terrorism, etc. Judged by an *earleatrais*.

*Crimes of honor* all center around failure to observe one of the rituals laid down in *fteir*, such as ambushing an enemy, lying in clan council, failure to obey an *earleatrais*, or dereliction of duty. Judged by the *ko*.

### Collective Guilt

The Aslan code stresses that the individual and his family are responsible for each other's actions as well as their own. This encourages socially acceptable behavior in the absence of a unified code of laws and police to enforce them.

Consequently, if an Aslan found guilty of a crime cannot or will not make restitution, that guilt – and any associated bad reputation – devolves upon his relatives. For most offenses, the family or clan looks after its own, making amends as necessary and taking the matter up with the guilty party internally. For crimes of honor, or others so serious that the clan cannot afford the financial penalties or the damage to its reputation, it limits its liability by declaring the individual outcast, much as a Human corporation might fire an employee for gross misconduct. This rarely happens, since such a major crime almost certainly gives cause for a duel to the death.

## MY WORD IS LAW: THE ROLE OF THE *Ko*

Crimes of passion are judged by the head of the family, pride, or clan, depending upon their severity and notoriety. If the accused or the plaintiff disagree with the *ko*'s ruling, he may appeal to the next higher patriarch. The clan leader is the highest authority. Punishments include formal apologies, working for the plaintiff for a set period, and fines. Typically the judge is lenient in a first offense, but escalates fines rapidly for habitual offenders.

Crimes of honor are likewise judged by the pride or clan head. These are the most serious crimes an Aslan can commit. If found guilty, he faces exile at the very least, and more likely mutilation, branding, or death. Such cases rarely come to trial, as they are cause for a duel to the death.

## ARBITRATION: THE *EARLEATRAIS*

Originally, crimes with victims were also judged by the *ko*, but current practice is to appoint an independent arbitrator or *earleatrais* to handle the case. Appeals may be made to a panel consisting of the heads of the families of the victim, the accused, and the *earleatrais*. Penalties call for restitution at a minimum, and possibly double or triple this amount (again, fines may be levied in cash or in days of forced labor). If the victim is killed or injured, some clans traditionally inflict the same fate upon the guilty ("an eye for an eye"). The typical *earleatrais* is lenient with males in cases involving money, as males cannot be expected to understand finance.

Being invited to act as *earleatrais* is a great honor for the individual and his clan. A skilled *earleatrais* is able to resolve cases fairly and in accordance with the principles and precedents of the Aslan code and divergent clan traditions, while preserving the honor and pride of both litigants. Note that the same term is used for a magistrate, the person who supervises a duel, and the referee in a clan war. As with most Aslan terms, the meaning depends on the context.

## FULL-BLOODED MILITARY NEGOTIATIONS: INTERCLAN DISPUTES

Disputes between clans are generally over land – who owns it, who has access to it, who may use its resources. Since the formation of the *Tlaukhu*, clan wars have been formal, ritualized affairs, with an *earleatrais* from a neutral clan and specific rules, agreed upon in advance by all parties. There are several types of clan warfare, depending on the severity of the dispute:

**Open warfare:** Sadly the most common format, this can result in many combat deaths and widespread destruction. The *earleatrais* and his staff enforce the rules of war to ensure that neutral parties, innocents, and civilians do not become involved more than necessary (the primary motivation for this is not humanitarian, but to limit escalation). Whenever it can be arranged, open warfare participants agree to use barren areas as battlefields, to avoid damaging valuable mines or crops.

**Capture the pelt:** This type of conflict is limited to the use of assault troops or assassins to remove some specified object from a designated enemy stronghold – the first side to bring their opponents' token home wins. Depending on the rules, lethal force may or may not be used.

**Wars of assassins:** Such disputes are resolved by using assassins to kill, kidnap, or simply count coup upon specific members of the opposing clan. Normally, they are bloodless; a demonstration by one side that it *could* have killed the target suffices to grant it victory. Only occasionally are targets actually killed.

**Space battles:** When ships owned by warring clans meet, they are governed by the restrictions agreed for that particular war – their rules of engagement may allow them to ignore each other, exchange insults, play "chicken" by adopting intercept courses or acquiring fire-control locks, or fight.

## Aslan and Others' Philosophies

The Aslan view of other people's philosophies is straightforward – whoever they are, wherever they are from, they ought to follow the principles of *fieir*.

If they have never had a chance to learn these ways, they may perhaps be forgiven, especially if they express an interest in learning about the One True Way. But if they know about it and deliberately choose to follow other principles, there must be something wrong with them. It is even worse if they are racially Aslan, because they *really* should know better.

Since the superiority of *fieir* is self-evident, *Fteirle* feel no missionary urge, although many will explain their philosophy if asked politely.



## Sample Clans

As the clan is so central to Aslan life, an Aslan will naturally know what clan he belongs to. Some "ready-to-wear" clans in case one is needed in a hurry:

*Aroaye'i* – a vassal of the *Hlyueawi*.

*Hkastahistoti* – allies of the *Loakhtarl*.

*Hlyueawi* – a moderately powerful clan.

*Khaukheairl*, *Yerlyaruiwo* – both members of the 29. They were co-discoverers of the jump drive, and arguably the two most powerful clans in the Hierate.

*Loakhtarl* – one of the earliest and most successful clans, it once dominated half the *Ealiyasiyw* sector. Its power was broken during the Border Wars – for all its glorious history, it is no longer a major political force.

*Raohkeil* – rivals of the *Loakhtarl*.

*Wahtoi* – a vassal of the *Aroaye'i*.



## Sources of Inspiration

Ideas for Aslan adventures and characters can come from many sources. *Fteir*, the One True Way, is not too far removed from some Human martial codes (one reason Humans in Hierate space have found it possible to adapt to it).

The Japanese samurai of the 12th to 18th centuries had a similar mindset to Aslan. *Chambara* (swordplay) movies, *GURPS Japan*, and numerous books and comics can all be mined for ideas. The same attitudes can be found in Western gunfighters as portrayed by Hollywood, and to some extent in the Klingons of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

The uniformity of Aslan language and philosophy, and tolerance of outsiders who adopt them, have a Terran analog in the Arab states of 700-900 AD.

## THE ASLAN HIERATE

The term *Hierate* (see sidebar, below) properly refers to the agreement between the 29 pre-eminent clans of Aslan space to meet and negotiate their differences on a regular basis. However, Hierate is now used idiomatically to describe the main region of space dominated by the Aslan race.

Membership in the Hierate is more a matter of culture than nationality – there is no overall government, and clans operate independently (as their debts of honor and shared interests dictate).

The Hierate includes about 4,000 clans (there is no central body to collate census data, and some clans prefer not to make their numbers public) spread across some 7,000 worlds in 17 sectors. (For comparison, the Imperium has 11,000 worlds in 21 sectors, and the Solomani Confederation has 2,400 worlds in six sectors.)

## ASTROGRAPHY

The Hierate is a roughly triangular region, six sectors from spinward to trailing and three sectors from coreward to rimward at its largest extents. The area between the Hierate and the Solomani Confederation, too diffuse and mixed to be called a border, is referred to by the military and social scientists as “the Aslan/Human interface”; the people call it “the buffer.”

## Why Aslan? Why Hierate?

When the Solomani made first contact with the *Fteirle*, they encountered a minor vassal of the *Yerlyariwo* clan. The Human crew, part of the wave of Turkic-speaking settlers then spreading spinward from Terra, immediately tagged the new species *Aslan*, from a Turkic word meaning “lion.”

Due to difficulties in translation, the Solomani mistook the Aslan code of honor for an organized religion, and their contact’s relationship with his clan and its overlords for the entire Aslan social structure. The captain’s hobby was the study of ancient languages, and he coined the term “Hierate” from the Greek *heiros* (“sacred”) to express both notions in a single word for the newly discovered state.

By the time the situation was properly understood, the term Hierate was already in widespread use and marked on thousands of map chips issued by the Rule of Man. Most spacefarers just wanted a simple, unambiguous label for that region, and didn’t care what it meant.

The Aslan shrugged, and continued to call their steadily expanding sphere of influence *Htoifteirlakht*, literally, “the bountiful lands ruled by the lords of honor,” or more idiomatically “all the places where the followers of *fteir* live.” If the Humans wanted to make up another unintelligible barbarian noise to represent this concept, that was their option.

Numerous Aslan colonies across the Great Rift, or otherwise beyond the borders of the Hierate, are not part of the Hierate proper. However, the Aslan living there are closer to the social norms of the Hierate than Human client states are to the mores of the Imperium or the Solomani Confederation.

The political astrology of the Hierate is a shifting patchwork of overlapping clan territories, for several reasons. First, most worlds have settlements from several clans. Second, the first clans to explore a subsector claim the best worlds, with later expeditions forced to settle for less hospitable ones. Third, clan wars, marriages, and shifts in the balance of power among vassals of the great clans result in reallocation of fiefs every so often.

Clan territories are thus disjointed rather than contiguous, and without up-to-date information, the traveler cannot be sure who currently controls a world. At best, a powerful clan can be said to dominate a given subsector, even though many of the inhabited planets will be held by other clans.

## BORDERS AND EXPANSION

The Hierate is bounded to coreward by the Great Rift, which can only be crossed by the J-5 Route in the Riftspan Reach (Aslan: *Iiyoihuakh*), and to trailing by the Solomani Confederation. Since the Solomani developed jump drive centuries before the Aslan, most of the territory near Kuzu was already taken when the Aslan erupted into space. Indeed, had the Long Night not already fallen, the Aslan might have been incorporated into the Rule of Man as just another minor subject race.

Aslan expansion is therefore primarily to spinward and rimward, where no rival interstellar states can contest land claims. Recently (in historical terms), these frontiers have pushed out so far from Kuzu that it is cheaper and easier for Cisrift *ihatei* to cross the Great Rift and expand along its rimspinward edge, rimward of the Zhodani Consulate and its client states and spinward of the Imperium.

The Hierate proper is surrounded on its spinward and rimward frontiers by a mass of smaller states. These are a mixture of Solomani, Aslan, and assorted minor races, with the Solomani concentrated to trailing along the rimward frontier.

## IHATEI AND ASLAN "INVASIONS"

*Ihatei*, who cannot expect to inherit lands from their families, have traditionally migrated elsewhere in search of new lands, either on the same planet or on worlds in other star systems. Their right to do so, and to demand support from their clan in outfitting their expeditions, is enshrined in Aslan tradition – and for a good reason; if they do not migrate, some will eventually try to seize lands from other Aslan, leading to war.

So any clan which can afford it periodically organizes an *ihatei* fleet, and those clansmen feeling the urge to claim new lands enlist. Their status in the fleet is based on their skills and reputation, and on their family's financial contribution to its outfitting. It is also traditional for the clan to donate surplus transport and escort vessels to the fleet. An *ihatei* expedition is thus characterized by highly motivated crews of wildly varying skill levels, flying obsolescent craft.

The expedition benefits the clan principally in two ways: First, potential troublemakers are converted into distant allies. Second, the work of outfitting the fleet helps the local economy. It also serves to improve the position of the larger clans compared to their poorer neighbors, as they prepare larger and more frequent expeditions, and so claim more new lands.

### New Lands

The ideal new lands are those on an unclaimed Earthlike world with nearby markets for the new colony's products and services. For most *ihatei*, this ideal is unreachable; they are forced to settle on less hospitable worlds or those which already have settlements from other clans or races. This is not necessarily bad; other settlers mean an existing market, a source of supplies, and emergency help, as well as proof that the world is habitable.

Fleets entering unexplored sectors send out scouts to find suitable planets. Those whose destinations are in settled space are directed to a world by an *aikoho earleatrais* (fleet dispatcher), an official with a mandate from the *Tlaukhu* to allocate lands. Members of large, wealthy clans – especially those with seats on the Council of 29 – tend to be allocated better territory, because their fleets are more frequent, bigger, better equipped, and typically the first to enter a region. Of course, these circumstances do not prevent occasional allegations of corruption.

The *aikoho earleatrais* may or may not consult existing inhabitants of the region. The dispatcher has no real authority, since wandering *ihatei* are technically not part of a clan, and in any case her decisions would only bind *Tlaukhu* members. But most expeditions follow her suggestions nonetheless, since it would be impolite for the clanless to ignore her, and she knows local space better than they.

Having found a likely world, the fleet enters orbit while the females investigate the available land and any existing settlements. Most colonists have traveled in low berths to maximize the numbers carried. The first wave is awakened and dropped to the new colony's landing site, where they prepare quarters, and begin to plant crops and dig mines. As the new colony grows, more and more Aslan are awakened and descend to join it.

Meanwhile, the escort vessels stand guard in orbit. If the expedition owns its ships, they will form the core of the colony's navy, while the transport vessels will be gradually refitted as the cadre of its merchant marine. If the expedition has leased its ships – as *ihatei* from smaller clans sometimes do – they move on immediately to their next contract.

The settlement becomes a vassal of its founding clan, required to support it and entitled to its assistance in return. As the colony is usually a long way from its parent clan, over time it becomes self-sufficient and begins to feel closer ties with other, more local clans. Typically, after 150-200 Imperial years, it demands independence, by negotiations or force. It may or may not succeed.

Once all available land on the planet has been claimed, the new colony produces its own *ihatei* fleet, which will seek out more new lands. This normally takes several centuries – even a small planet is a *big* place.

## Clan Hospitality: My Brother's Keeper

**A**n Aslan may expect free food, lodging, and medical aid from any landhold of his clan, or its overlord, vassals, or allies. One of the finer points of *fieir* is that to a certain extent he can also expect succor from his enemies, depending on their clan traditions. Some clans see honor in defeating a strong, healthy foe, and would not have it said that they gained a cheap and cowardly victory by letting an enemy starve or bleed to death. (For other clans, any means of killing one's enemies is acceptable.)

Naturally, just as they are entitled to receive hospitality, *Fieirle* are also honored to provide it.

By accepting clan hospitality, the visitor also agrees to certain conditions: he may not insult or attack clan members while a guest, he must defend them against attack, and he must assist them with other problems. These obligations cease when the visit ends, although if the host is a fellow-clansman, similar duties remain in force.



A non-Aslan wishing to conduct business in the Hierate must form a relationship with a local clan, not only for the usual commercial reasons, but also because there are almost no hotels in the Hierate. A traveling Aslan will normally either live rough or claim hospitality at a local landhold. Non-Aslan must often do likewise, especially as one moves deeper into the Hierate, farther from the Aslan/Human buffer (see *Astrography*, p. 16). Of course, one can always trespass, insult the landholder, duel him, and trust to his mercy . . . but this is a risky course at best. Most traders from beyond the Hierate seek clan patronage. The ideal is to be adopted by the clan, and thus entitled to its full protection and support.

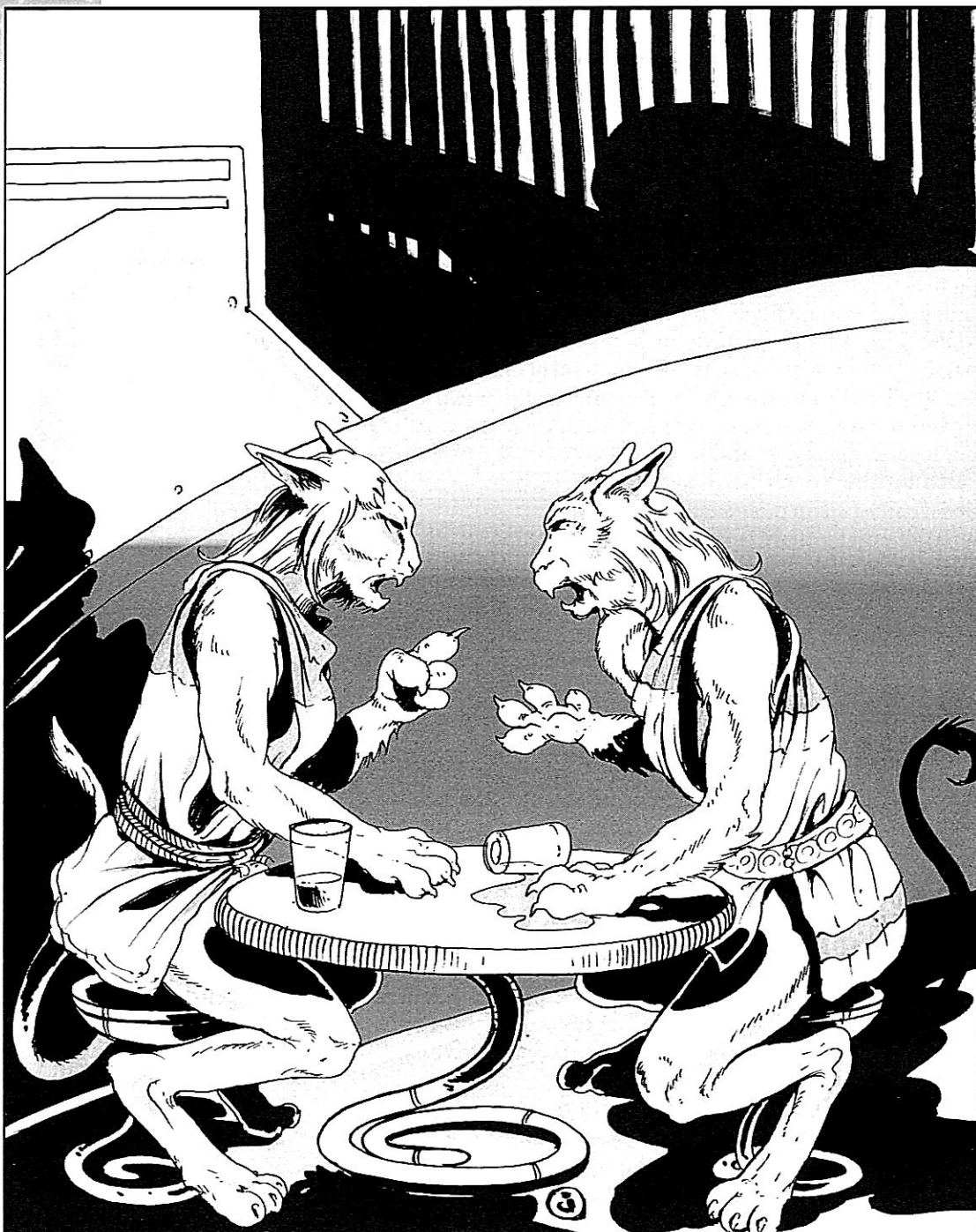


## Aslan Art

The Aslan indulge in the full range of visual and auditory arts, characterized by vibrant colors and an emphasis on decorative effects for utilitarian objects (an Aslan is more likely to have a finely engraved weapon than a plain weapon and a separate *objet d'art*). Calligraphy and engraving are therefore common art forms.

There is tremendous variation from clan to clan, but the general preference is for literature and the "live" spoken word rather than music and recorded entertainment. An Aslan is more likely to give, or attend, a reading of sagas or poetry than watch a broadcast of an event or a movie. *Fteirle* poetry has a distinctive and elaborate quality (which some have called artificial). Bard and Poetry are skills much appreciated and in demand; a good storyteller is more likely to be granted hospitality by strangers.

Dance, atypically, is something most Aslan watch rather than participate in. It is intended to display the grace and precision of an individual dancer (often male) or small group (usually female). It is closer to ballet or the Highland fling than to a waltz or disco, and probably originated in the victory displays of males after a duel or females after a hunt. Solomani observers have likened Aslan dance to martial arts *kata* or *tai chi*.



## Invasion

The average Imperial citizen thinks of Aslan *ihatei* as violent conquerors, a stereotype from the Aslan Border Wars (see p. GT22 and p. 20).

The truth is less dramatic. *Ihatei* are driven to own land, but conquest is only one way to achieve this goal – and not always the most efficient.

Aslan often buy unused land from a world's rulers to settle. This is a cheap option on a sparsely populated world with more land than its inhabitants will be able to use for centuries. They may pay with cash, with promises to pay taxes or royalties, or with military service. The media focus on agreements where the Aslan commit to fight for their new allies, and many agreements do stress this aspect (it is easy for *Fteirle* males to understand, as it mirrors the feudal obligations common in the Hierate). However, a new source of meat or minerals is often more important for the other signatories, especially if there are no serious military threats in the area.



The Aslan may also just squat on unused land. The typical frontier planet lacks the population, firepower, and political will to eject them. In fact, the other inhabitants may not even notice they have landed for months.

When it seems best, the *ihatei* fight for the land they need. But their obvious effectiveness as warriors means that the threat of violence is often enough, without actual combat.

## HISTORY

Each clan maintains its own records, stressing whichever aspects of history interest it. These tend to embellish the clan's contributions while downplaying those of its rivals. With the exception of a few key events, it is hard to be sure who did what, or when, especially since the diaspora from Kuzu. But there are broad periods of time in which certain things unarguably occurred.

### Before the 29

The Aslan rose to sentience as hunters on the plains of Tafohiti, Kuzu's largest continent. During this period, their males defended the pride's lands against encroachment by rivals, and females conducted the hunts.

Females are credited with all Aslan innovation – discovering fire, tool-making, herding livestock, metal-working, and eventually agriculture (solely for the purpose of supporting livestock). This trend began with the use of primitive spears and thrown weapons to deal with prey too large for claws alone, and continues to the present.

Given the deep-seated Aslan territorial instinct, their culture was feudal from the beginning. Prides combined into clans as a result, but the fierce Aslan pride and need for each male to carve out his own territory discouraged larger social units.

A variety of customs (see *Philosophy*, p. 7, and *Society*, p. 10) evolved to contain male aggression, but clan wars grew more common as the population increased. Female inventiveness and population pressure made wars gradually more destructive, with nuclear weapons being employed from -88 Aslan (-2160 Imperial). The only constraint on their use was the female desire to avoid permanent damage to valuable territory (a surprising number of males would rather own a barren plain of radioactive glass than see a lush pasture owned by someone else).

### Formation of the Tlaukhu

By -2083 Imperial, the Aslan had reached TL7, and warfare had become so destructive that the risk of serious damage to the ecology was obvious, even to a male. When failed negotiations could mean nuclear fallout blighting herds and crops for generations in the lands of neutral clans hundreds of miles from the fighting, a new approach was needed. The 29 most powerful clans agreed to meet periodically and negotiate, rather than the previous method of each crisis being handled as it arose, with input only from those clans directly involved.

This did not eliminate friction between clans, but did reduce it. Warfare continued, but the Hierate instituted a system of limited, formal wars with independent referees, and – in an informal, unstructured way – to modify *fieir* to include this.

### The Key to the Stars

The Hierate was clumsy and inefficient, and lacked the global authority needed to make it a true planetary ruler. Then, roughly a century after its creation, a second great innovation was made – jump drive.

The exact date and circumstances of the discovery are shrouded in mystery, but involved an unprecedented degree of cooperation between the two most powerful clans of the day, the *Yerlyaruwo* and the *Khaukheairl*. Interstellar travel provided a better relief for population pressure than fighting for land on Kuzu, since the new worlds orbiting other stars offered better lands than most clans could hope to claim on the homeworld. Thus, the Aslan exploded into space.

## Aslan Clothing

**T**ypical Aslan clothing consists of a tunic and kilt, both richly decorated along the hems. Aslan rarely use hats, gloves, or shoes, except in survival dress such as vacc suits.

Since Kuzu's weather is mild and Aslan have fur, traditional Aslan garb is thin and light, more for decoration than warmth. By their cut, material, and decoration, the garments announce the wearer's clan and status, and possibly profession as well. When away from home, clothes act as a kind of credit card; by visibly announcing allegiance and social standing, they inform fellow clansmen who do not know the wearer personally just how much clan hospitality the visitor is entitled to claim, and from whom. A successful Heraldry (Aslan) roll allows a character to determine an Aslan's clan allegiance and approximate status based on the details of his clothing (unless he is deliberately trying to conceal it).

## An Aslan Timeline

ASLAN	IMPERIAL	EVENT
-123	-2190	First World War.
-88	-2160	Second World War (nuclear).
-60	-2136	Aslan space travel.
-22	-2102	Orbital bases.
-18	-2098	Third World War.
0	-2083	Formation of the Tlaukhu.
94	-1999	Aslan jump drives.
117	-1980	First contact with Solomani.
350	-1776	Rule of Man collapses; Long Night begins.
1101	-1118	Aslan Border Wars begin.
1185	-1044	First crossing of Great Rift.
2304	-63	Great Conclave (Sakolusalso) begins.
2312	-56	Cultural Purge (Uwaralyekose) begins.
2368	-7	Great Conclave ends. Codices of Sakolusalso mandate primogeniture.
2432	49	Cultural Purge ends.
2810	380	Peace of Fiahall; Border Wars end.
2902	461	First contact with Zhodani.
3043	585	Ihatei offer to fight for Darrians in exchange for land.



## Nomenclature

**W**hile female navigators use the pragmatic Imperial approach of subsectors and sectors, male-dominated political geography refers to general areas of the Hierate, ignoring sector boundaries. Below are such general divisions of Aslan space. Different clans give these regions different names and boundaries, depending on their perception of political astrology.

### The Dark Nebula

The *I'aheako* (Dark Nebula) sector is the spiritual home of the Aslan race – the scene of its first exploration and colonization efforts, and also of much of the fighting during the Aslan Border Wars. It is often extended to include the Hierate's other central sectors, *Karleaya*, *Staihaia'yo*, and *Iwahfuah*, whose worlds are similar in age and population density.

Most of this region has been settled for more than 3,000 years. Human and Aslan settlements are mingled extensively, with some of each having adopted the other race's culture, especially to trailing. It is an urbane and civilized region, although tension between the trailing clans and the Solomani Confederation has been steadily rising over the last generation.

### The Buffer Zone

This refers to the *Aeitle Sakh* (Reaver's Deep) sector, which was an area of particularly heavy fighting during the Border Wars that became a demilitarized zone as a result of the Peace of *Ftahalr* in 380 Imperial. However, similar agreements were reached in the *I'aheako* and *Ftahtuak* (Ustral Quadrant) sectors, and the term is sometimes extended to include those, too.

This has never been a truly peaceful area, and it is currently characterized by racial tension and sporadic clashes between Aslan *ihatei* and Solomani settlers. It is hoped that this does not escalate into full-scale war.

### The Cisrift

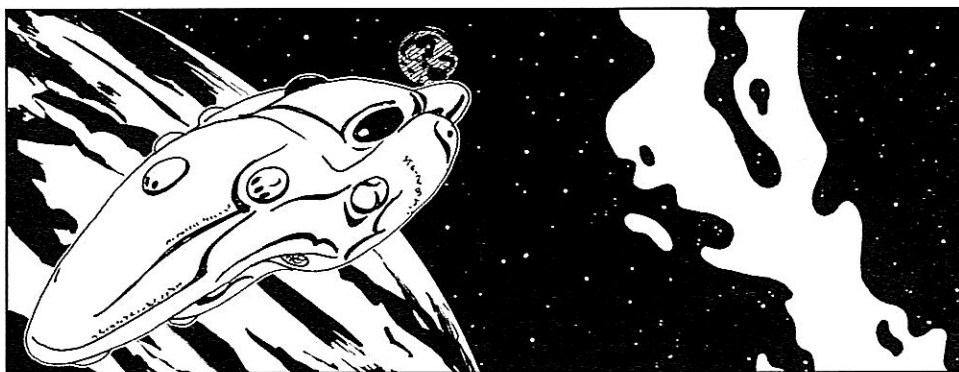
This includes the *Esai'yo*, *Waroatahe*, *Ftaoyekyu*, *Afawahisa*, *Hlakoi*, and *Ealiyasiyw* sectors; it refers to that part of the Hierate on the rimward edge of the Great Rift. The only real outlets for *ihatei* seeking this region for treasure worlds are clan warfare or the expensive crossing of the J-5 Route to the Transrift colonies. They are also forced to settle less hospitable worlds than elsewhere.

*Continued on next page . . .*

The period 96 to 2100 Aslan (-1999 to -242 Imperial), often compared to Earth's Renaissance, was one of exploration and high culture for an Aslan society revitalized by its new freedom to travel among the stars. Fortunately for the Aslan, this coincided with the Long Night following the collapse of the Rule of Man. The Human successor states that the Aslan encountered during their initial spaceward push were no stronger or better organized than an Aslan clan, so combat and negotiations were on an even footing. Some Human worlds even joined the Hierate voluntarily, preferring Aslan rule to the chaos of the Long Night, but others were absorbed by conquest. The result is that the trailing side of the Hierate includes a number of worlds with Human or mixed Human and Aslan populations which have embraced *fieir* and Aslan culture – the so-called "cultural Aslan."

## The Aslan Border Wars

Aslan expansion into the power vacuum left when the Ramshackle Empire collapsed was not uniformly welcome. Some Human "pocket empires" resisted the Aslan advance by force, sparking the Aslan Border Wars of 1101 to 2810 Aslan (-1118 to 380 Imperial; see p. GT22). These wars pitted Solomani splinter states and Aslan clans against each other in a confused morass of intrigue and combat for centuries. It ended in the Peace of *Ftahalr* in 2810.



The popular picture of these wars is a straightforward conflict between the two races, but the truth is more complex. Where Aslan clans had already absorbed some Human worlds, their populations fought as vassals of their overlord, sometimes against other Humans. Solomani splinter states hired Aslan *ihatei* to fight for them in exchange for land. Solomani also encouraged inter-clan warfare to relieve pressure against them, by engineering incidents or supplying ships and weapons to one side or the other. Likewise, clans played off rival Human states against each other, distracting them with pinprick raids using Human vassals flying false colors.

The effect was that the border between Aslan and Humans moved slowly back and forth over the generations, a few systems at a time, and grew gradually more vague and blurred, with the races' territories shading gently into each other rather than having a sharply defined border.

The Peace of *Ftahalr* ended the wars, defined current borders, and established a buffer zone of independent systems between the Hierate and the Solomani 30 parsecs wide in the Reaver's Deep sector (Aslan: *Aeitle Sakh*).

## Across the Great Rift

In 1185 (-1044 Imperial), one of the Cisrift clans was persuaded by a charismatic explorer to build a long-range survey craft capable of five successive Jump-1s. He led it on a three-year mission across the Great Rift, where it found a variety of unclaimed worlds in the Trojan Reach (Aslan: *Hlaoirloahauri*). He reported these to his clan (claiming the best treasure world as his own), and the land rush to the Transrift was on. Aslan ships explored in all directions from this toehold, and soon encountered the Human and Vargr states nearby.

The first documented trade missions from the Hierate to the Spinward Marches were merchants buying dust-spice (see p. 38) at Romar in 2984 (454 Imperial). Within a decade, the Zhodani were also trading with Aslan clans, and within a century, *ihatei* were serving as Darrian soldiers in exchange for land, earning great glory during the First Frontier War.

## *The Great Conclave and the Cultural Purge*

By 2304 (-63 Imperial), Aslan society was beginning to fragment, contaminated with Human ideology during the Border Wars and with new philosophies sprouting in the distant colonies. At the urging of the *Tlaukhu*, a group of respected thinkers gathered on Kusyu to consider whether – and how – their culture and code of honor should be modified to meet the reality of being a starfaring race. The Great Conclave (*Sakolusalo*) defined Aslan philosophy and culture, introducing several major changes (such as primogeniture and a clan's obligation to outfit *ihatei* fleets) and dozens of minor ones into its codices.

Not all clans agreed with the conclusions reached by the Great Conclave. Failure to resolve the issues by negotiation led to the period of intense clan warfare known as the Cultural Purge. This conflict broke the power of the *Tlaukhu* factions opposed to the reforms and ejected several of them from the council.

Many dissident clans fled to rimward and spinward of the Hierate, or to the Transrift, setting up heretical settlements beyond the *Tlaukhu*'s influence.

## *Current Affairs*

Since the inconclusive end of the Solomani Rim War (3505 to 3519 Aslan, 990 to 1002 Imperial; see p. GT62), the Solomani have quietly abandoned hope of expansion to coreward (and the region to trailing is already occupied by the Hivers [pp. GT10, 35]). Their outward drives are to rimward, into unpopulated space, and to spinward, among the disorganized Aslan client states. Since Margaret I's creation of the Solomani Sphere in 704 (3179 Aslan), neither Aslan nor Solomani are technically bound by the Peace of *Ftahalr*, which was signed by the major clans of the Hierate and the Imperium. So far, the might of the *Yerlyaruiwo* and *Khaukheairl* clans has curbed Solomani expansion. Tension has risen to near-war levels in the last decade, but open warfare seems unlikely.

Meanwhile, *ihatei* fleets expanding across the Great Rift are beginning to seize territory in the Spinward Marches (p. BTC24). This is not a military invasion, but a mass migration; after a number of battles between the Imperial Navy and Aslan fleets, Duke Norris has concluded that military action alone is not the answer.

In 1117, he appointed Fleet Admiral Tranathiaf to deal with the Aslan Threat (or "Hairy Peril" as it is sometimes called in the downmarket media). The Admiral's three-point plan is beginning to be implemented in 1120, and consists of:

*Containment* of the *ihatei* to a band no more than five parsecs wide along the rimward border of the Marches. Within this region, the plan concedes that some – perhaps most – worlds will eventually be settled by Aslan, regardless of Imperial efforts, and may need to be abandoned to them. This information will not be popular with the inhabitants of those worlds, and is presently a secret, though an increasingly open one.

*Fleet buildups* to create a force large enough to expel the *ihatei*. Since the landless Aslan are technically outcasts with no claim on their clan's protection until they settle (when they become a vassal clan with the right to demand military assistance), this part of the strategy focuses on turning back the migration fleets before they land. To attack afterward would risk embroiling the Navy in an expensive and probably unwinnable war with powerful clans across the Rift.

*Negotiation* with the Aslan colonists already squatting within the Imperial border, to minimize their impact. This is the most promising approach, since the Aslan would be good neighbors if it were not for their habit of staging land-grabs. The Peace of *Ftahalr* prohibits these, but since wandering *ihatei* are not part of their clan until they gain lands, they are not legally bound by it. The fine point of whether the Peace applies in the Transrift is the main topic of negotiations.

## **Nomenclature**

[Continued]

### *The Emptiness*

This covers the *Yahehwe*, *Kefiykhta*, *Heakhafaw*, *Etakhasoa*, *Aktifao*, and *Uistilrao* sectors within the Hierate proper, and half a dozen sectors to rimward with scattered Aslan colonies and client states. The area is characterized by low levels of military activity – there are plenty of new lands to go around – and rapid expansion toward the edge of the Orion Arm.

### *The Transrift*

Aslan call the sectors in this region *Hlaairloahauri* (known to the Imperium as the Trojan Reach), *Iiyoihuakh* (Riftspan Reach), *Kyatulyare'*, *Lerlairlaili*, (The Beyond), and *Weasuirlaoa* (Touchstone). A rough semicircle centered on the coreward end of the J-5 Route across the Great Rift, this is a turbulent area where the *Fteirle* of the Cisrift export their surplus population and interclan tensions. Attitudes toward the Spinward Marches (see *GURPS Traveller: Behind The Claw*) and its Human population range from trade and tolerance to outright xenophobia, depending on the clan.

Over the last few centuries, the coreward and spinward borders of the Transrift have become popular destinations for disgraced minor clans forced into exile by their deeds.

## **Adventure Seed: Fleet Dispatch**

**T**he *aikoho earleatrais* who directs fleets to new worlds beyond the Great Rift does so in strict order of arrival. One clan learns that they will get a much better planet if they can somehow move two places up the queue. With some effort, they manage to rationalize doing so as honorable, and hire the PCs to arrange it.

The facilitators' options include persuading the *earleatrais* to make an exception, sabotaging rival fleets, or somehow speeding up the clan's obsolete transports.



## ***We Are So a Major Race!***

*"The Aslan are in no way a major race. They are an inferior, minor race who stole jump technology from Humans during the Long Night – probably by torturing captured Solomani. The 29 Clans have been covering this up for 3,000 years, and for 3,000 years we've let them get away with it. They call themselves honorable . . . how can they be, if their whole culture is based on so big a lie?"*

*– Jevgenijis Nirgudkar,  
Regional Director,  
Solomani Movement*

*"We've had our differences with the Fteirle over the years, but they have always been honorable. They say they discovered jump drive independently; can Mr. Nirgudkar prove otherwise? No. True, Kussyu is at the edge of the Hierate – but only because Solomani expansionism had already seized most of the habitable planets to trailing when the Fteirle invented jump drive, not because they stole any technology. Jevgenijis Nirgudkar's problem is that he can't imagine anyone other than a Solomani doing anything of value."*

*– Eneri Duushaam,  
Imperial Ambassador  
to the Yerlyaruwo Clan*

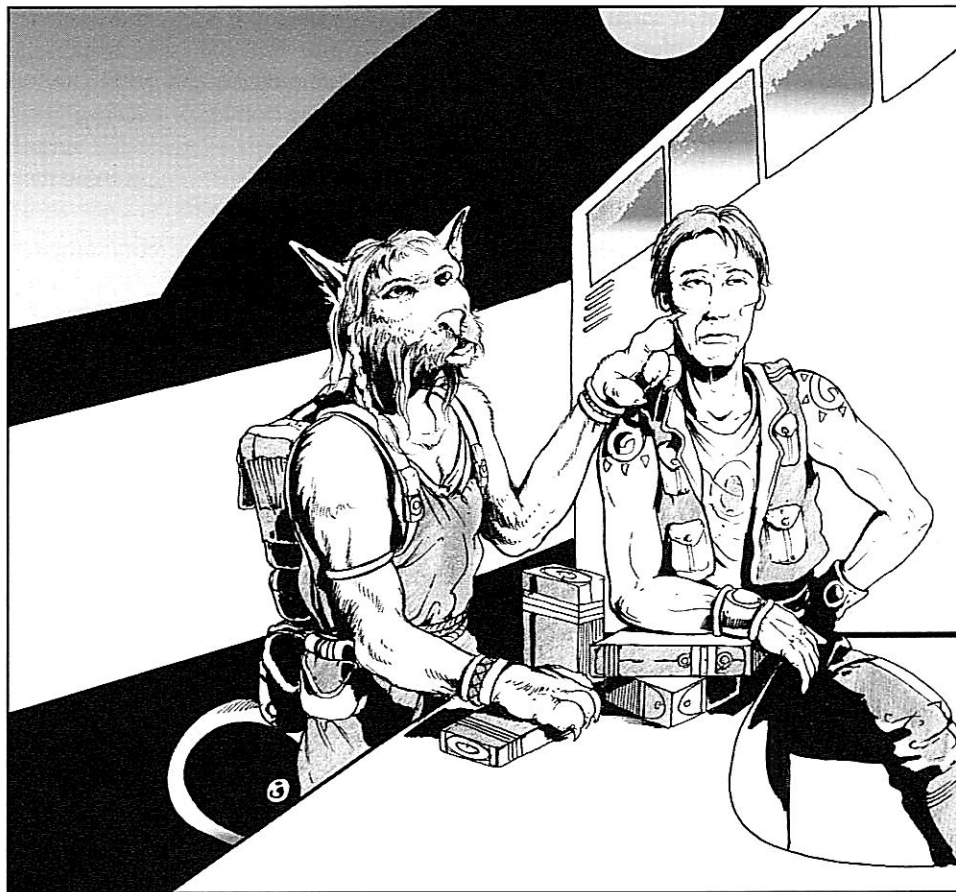
*"Both of you are missing the point. We have landholds on thousands of worlds, and we have been flying starships for thousands of years. How we acquired the jump drive is not important – it is just one tool among many. The important thing is what we have done with it, which is to increase our lands and our honor."*

*– Iroioah,  
Envoy of the Yerlyaruwo Clan*

## ***The Aslan Fighters***

**D**uring the Aslan Border Wars, small groups of Solomani developed a passion for combat with the Aslan. Motivated by bounties or revenge, they were attached to regular military units as auxiliaries and scouts by Human splinter states. Over time, they came to resemble their enemies in ferocity, cunning, codes of honor, and even dress. Some earned their opponents' respect and became trusted intermediaries. A few even changed sides and were adopted into Aslan clans.

The GM may rule that a few Aslan fighters still exist. Such characters should be built on the Scout, Bounty Hunter, or Corsair templates, and have Philosophy (Fteir), Theology (Fteir), or Anthropology (Aslan) to represent their knowledge of their traditional foes.



## **OTHER RACES, OTHER PLACES**

In general, Aslan have no racial prejudices, but do have strong cultural ones.

### ***Humans (and Others) in the Hierate***

The Hierate includes worlds partly or wholly inhabited by non-Aslan, Humans, and a variety of minor races. Clans differ in their treatment of non-Aslan – some clans deliberately keep them in a state of barbarism by restricting access to technology, although most will allow them the chance to join their society. Typically, a non-Aslan who embraces the Aslan code of honor and culture is treated as a near-equal, while one who does not remains a second-class citizen, or worse.

In addition, a number of outsiders will be visiting clans at any given time. These are commonly merchants dealing with Aslan corporations, although tourists have been known to seek clan hospitality. Successful travel in the Hierate requires a sponsor – a noble male or corporate executive who can smooth the way for one's journey. If the traveler's mission is useful to the clan, and he shows respect for his sponsors and their clan customs, sponsorship and hospitality are easy to come by; otherwise, the best a stranger can hope for is a curt request to move on.

### ***Aslan Beyond the Hierate***

Likewise, the Imperium and the Solomani Confederation include planetary regions and entire worlds with Aslan and mixed Human/Aslan populations. Normally, the Aslan population remains apart, maintaining their own culture and traditions, and treating the local government as if it were a feudal overlord. In these cases, the inhabitants are both racially and culturally Aslan.

On other planets, over the centuries since the first Aslan landed, they have adapted to Human culture. These are racially Aslan, but not culturally so. "True" members of the race consider them disgraced because they turned their backs on traditional values; they are worse than aliens, since they should know better.

# ASLAN WORLDS

The typical Hierate world contains independent colonies from several clans, and a delicate balance of power between them.

## STARPORTS

Starports tend to be extraterritorial enclaves, operated by corporations leasing the required land from a local clan. Any bases present are naval bases, under the control of that clan. Although it's not essential, the corporation may be associated with the land-owning clan. If so, it is probably run by females from an allied, vassal, or overlord clan.

On-planet trade routes, owned by corporations which lease the land from clans, are handled in a similar manner. Destinations are always in clan lands or on land rented by a corporation. Permission is needed to enter each route and each destination, unless one is a member of the landholding clan. Clan representatives who can grant this permission are found at the starport and other major transportation hubs.

## Interdiction

Starports worse than Class I denote that the planet concerned has been interdicted by the owning clan, and only clan members may use the starport facilities (which may be better than one would expect for a Class I port). Unlike Humans, Aslan do not interdict a world to protect local sophonts, resources, or wildlife – they do so to ensure that these are exploited for the clan's sole benefit. Depending on the clan's motivation, this may be so benign as to constitute protective interdiction.

## CLIMATE

Aslan favor worlds like Kuzu – dry, Earthlike worlds with mild weather. When they have native life and are not claimed by other races or clans, such planets are called *treasure worlds* and are jealously guarded until the clan can colonize them.

However, any land one can stand on has some value to an Aslan, and that can be found on almost any type of world.

## POPULATION

Overall population levels on Aslan worlds are much the same as in Human space, and range from a handful of *ihatei* assessing a frontier world for colonization to high-tech worlds with ten billion inhabitants. If possible, Aslan cities sprawl sideways rather than towering upward, because each male wants his own patch of land, and will not settle for a patch of floor 30 stories up if there is any alternative.

The stereotypical Aslan planet of the Human perspective has a low population density – perhaps a few million *Fteirle* ranchers – but there are also crowded and inhospitable worlds where the ordinary Aslan leads a life of quiet desperation, supervising widget-making machines all day and spending the evening dreaming of past glories over a large pinch of dust-spice.

These societies have the need and the wealth to outfit *ihatei* expeditions, but lack the experienced frontiersmen necessary to ensure their success. However, this makes them a lucrative source of employment for scouts and survival experts. The number of unemployable *ihatei* shipped offworld in this way is not significant, but has great psychological value by providing a dream of escape for those left behind.

## GOVERNMENT

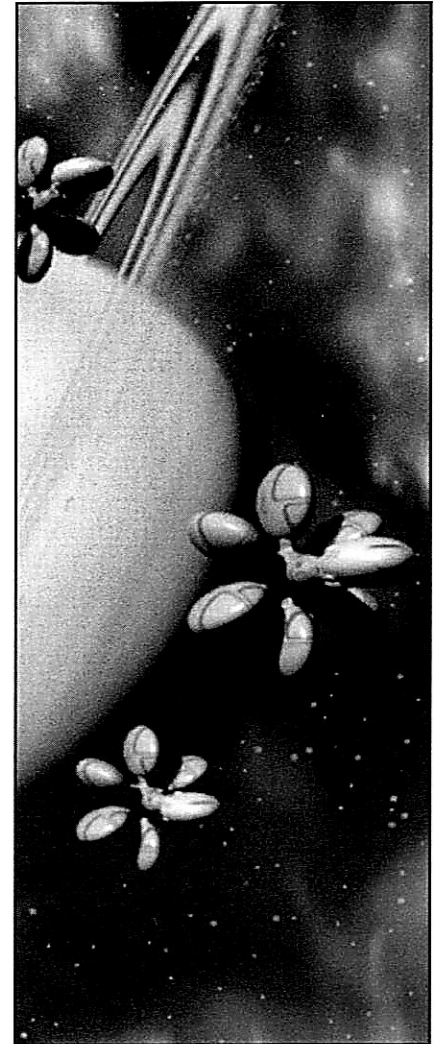
Aslan governments are always feudal, and planets are usually balkanized, with different clans controlling different regions. Survey crews may categorize governments as bureaucratic, democratic, etc., to reflect how regulations around the starport appear from the casual traveler's viewpoint.

If desired, the GM may select one of the following subtypes of feudal government in any way he wishes. The letters G-M in parentheses are the *Classic Traveller* government-type codes for converting existing worlds; N is a new designation.

## Campaign Seed: Mutant Ninja Humans

**A**n interesting campaign can be built around a group of culturally Aslan Humans working as assassins for their clan amongst the Solomani. This group can be the PCs or a recurring opponent.

Remember that they may not be covert operatives in the Human sense. They may need to be reminded that it is dishonorable under their clan's traditions to lay ambushes or strike without at least some warning.



## Imperial Lackeys

**T**he easiest way to introduce an Aslan character into a group is to add a racial Aslan from a clan which has adopted Imperial culture. This will make it easier for his companions to understand his motivations, but he will appear an intimidating ally to outsiders. Most people he encounters will assume he is culturally Aslan and may well react poorly to him.



## At Standard Noon, 062-1120

From the shuttle's open hatch, Khearlao looked over her new land with approval. *Good for the herds, she thought. We'll put the manor house there. We should check out those hills later – there could be iron ore.*

From inside, her sister who had been conducting the survey called, "What's that noise?"

There were four of them, bulgy-eyed, scaly creatures with six limbs, droning softly but insistently as they closed on the shuttle. Khearlao gazed at them as one reared up on its hindmost limbs. Her sister joined her in the hatch, cocked her head to one side.

"That's a belt," she said. "With a knife in it."

Khearlao squinted against the sunlight. An iron knife; so there was ore. And someone who thought they owned it.

Life had just become very interesting.

Akhua'yeh lowered the binoculars and growled in satisfaction. The enemy clan's *t'khearl* trees were in full blossom now, and the *ko*'s message last night confirmed an envoy's visit that afternoon to view their beauty – and discuss a treaty for mining rights. Akhua'yeh's task was to humiliate their foes in front of a potential ally by spoiling the blooms.

Time passed in silence. At length, he made a hand signal, and the assassins gathered around him. He met each of their eyes in turn, wordlessly confirming their readiness.

Hefting his weapon, Akhua'yeh emptied a full clip into the air. He replaced it, and waited a few heartbeats – long enough for any true warrior to realize what was happening, and arm himself. Then he led them across the last 200 yards at a dead run.

*There is no pain. Troifyeal told himself. There is no fear. Only the hunter, and the spear.* He dragged a hand across his brow to wipe away the wetness that threatened his vision. He wasn't sure if it was sweat or blood; he didn't dare look. But his vision was narrowing – not a good sign. Tendrils of agony snaked up his shattered leg, hungry for his screams. On the other side of the cramped cockpit, his engineer hung limp in her straps.

"There is no pain," he gasped. "There is no fear."

Through the broken canopy he could see enemy interceptors circling above the jungle. Soon their troops would come to investigate the wrecked scoutship; he need only bear the pain a little longer. His hand shook as he reached for the self-destruct button and flipped the cover back.

"Only the hunter..."

*Small Station (G):* A facility, perhaps a military, mining, or research base, controlled by an offworld clan or corporation. About 25% of worlds with PR 3 or less have this type of government, but it is never found on planets with a PR of 4+.

*Split Control (H):* The planet is home to a number of clans, each of which rules part of its surface. Roughly one-third of PR 9 worlds, and nearly half of PR 10 ones, have this form of government.

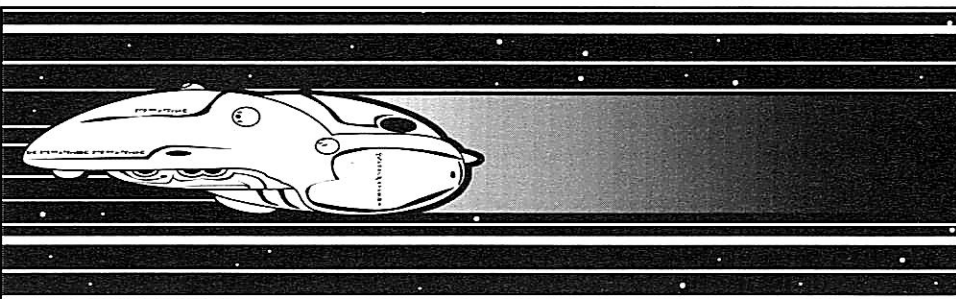
*Single On-World Clan Control (J):* The planet is dominated by one local clan, though other clans may have small landholds here.

*Single Multi-World Clan Control (K):* The planet is ruled by a clan which also has landholds on other worlds, probably some distance away.

*Major Clan Control (L):* The world is ruled by one of the *Tlaukhu*.

*Vassal Clan Control (M):* A single local clan administers the planet as a fief for a more powerful clan, but does not own it.

*Major Vassal Clan Control (N):* As above, but the more powerful clan is one of the 29.



## CONTROL RATING

Aslan have a fairly relaxed attitude toward weapons – they will tolerate items up to 1 LC lower than normal for the CR.

However, Aslan authorities are touchy; when non-Aslan deal with officials or police, subtract the local CR from reaction rolls or effective interpersonal skill levels. Anyone who fails to embrace Aslan culture and the code of *fieir* will find the CR is effectively 1-3 levels higher than for those who adopt Aslan culture. And they will pay higher taxes, too.

## GROUND FORCES

All clan settlements have a military presence. The table below shows the number of *huih'eal* or "battalion equivalents" present by PR and TL. For planets with split-control governments, the GM must decide how these are apportioned between clans. He may also opt to use this table to determine the ground forces available to other races. If the world is not Earthlike (see *GURPS Space*, p. 105), treat the PR as one lower than its actual value.

## Battalion Equivalents Table

TL	Population Rating							
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1-3	–	–	–	–	1	10	100	1,000
4	–	–	–	1	5	50	500	5,000
5	–	1	10	100	1,000	10,000	50,000	100,000
6	1	2	3	30	300	3,000	30,000	300,000
7-8	–	1	2	20	200	2,000	20,000	200,000
9	–	–	1	15	150	1,500	15,000	150,000
10	–	–	1	12	120	1,200	12,000	120,000
11	–	–	–	7	70	700	7,000	70,000
12-13	–	–	–	5	50	500	5,000	50,000

A battalion equivalent averages 450-500 strong. At TL8+, roughly 10% of available battalion equivalents are assault troops (or Marines, for Human worlds) trained and equipped for offworld deployment.

## SPACE FORCES

Any Aslan world with PR 7+ and TL7+ has some sort of space force, either provided by one (or more) of its clans or rented from a corporation. Out-and-out piracy is rare in the Hierate (being dishonorable), but clans at war may bolster their space forces by licensing privateers to raid their foes. Privateers are armed vessels operated by corporations as a legitimate (if risky) business; they are essentially another form of mercenary unit.

The table below shows the approximate number of system defense boats available by PR and TL. These should be treated as *Dragon*-class SDBs (p. GT144) unless the GM wishes to design specific clan vessels. In the case of split-control worlds, the GM must decide how the SDBs are divided between the clans. He may wish to use this table for non-Aslan worlds as well.

## System Defense Boats Table

TL	Population Rating			
	7	8	9	10
7-8	—	5	50	500
9	1	10	100	1,000
10	1	12	120	1,200
11	1	15	150	1,500
12-13	2	20	200	2,000

As a rule of thumb, a clan will have starships equal to 10% of the combined tonnage of its SDBs. The GM should determine what vessels this fleet consists of, emphasizing small commercial vessels over large warships.

## KUZU, THE ASLAN HOMEWORLD

The Aslan Homeworld, Kussy (normally called Kuzu by Imperials) lies rim-spinward of the Imperium, within the Kilane subsector (Aslan: *Kilrai*) of Dark Nebula sector (Aslan: *I'aheako*). Positioned at Dark Nebula 1225 (Kilane 0406), it is roughly four sectors rimward of the Spinward Marches, and two sectors spinward of the Solomani Rim. Unusually for a major race, it is close to one edge of Aslan space, rather than in the center.

## STELLAR DATA

Kuzu orbits a close binary consisting of *Tyeyo* and its companion *Saietaie*. *Tyeyo* is slightly smaller and dimmer than Earth's Sol.

### Tyeyo

Type: G4 V.  
Luminosity: 0.77.  
Radius: 0.93 Sol.  
Mass: 0.96 Sol.



### Saietaie

*Saietaie* orbits *Tyeyo* at a distance of 2.6 million miles (4.2 million kilometers, or about 0.03 AU). It is barely visible against *Tyeyo*'s disc, but can be seen clearly when its orbit swings it clear of the primary.

Type: DA.  
Luminosity: 0.0003.  
Radius: 0.01 Sol.  
Mass: 0.36 Sol.

## But My Last GM Said . . .

For several reasons it has not been possible to include all previously published Aslan material; even if it were possible, it's inevitable that each GM's interpretation of canon will be different. So, how do you play Aslan differently while remaining within the published works?

You could simply state that the GM's word is law, but the Aslan offer several explanations that will not break the group's suspension of disbelief . . .

### Language

The Aslan language uses the same word to convey many shades of meaning. (An example in contemporary English would be "jack," which has roughly 40 interpretations, depending on context.) Some variations in translation are not only permitted, they are necessary to give the feel of being among the *Fteirle*.

Aslan also contains many words (with subtly different meanings) for honor and related concepts. If the GM prefers that the Aslan code of honor, for instance, is referred to by another name, he can legitimately claim that clans in the campaign's area of space emphasize different aspects of it, and therefore refer to it by another name (although any Aslan would recognize the alternative options, much as an English speaker would know that "humanity" and "mankind" can be used interchangeably in some contexts).

Finally, a variety of traditional euphemisms are used in spoken Aslan, much like the "kennings" of Norse saga, where the ocean might be referred to as *the whale's way* or *the gannet's bath*. These change slowly with time. Again, this can be a viable explanation for a change of name — "Hah! No true Aslan in *my* clan has used that term for eight *fiahea*! Where did you learn the Warriors' Tongue?"

### Decentralization

There are no central Hierate archives or media; each clan records the information of interest to it, in whatever way in deems appropriate. This means that each clan has a slightly different version of history and current affairs; as travelers move from clan to clan, what they are told will mutate — sometimes drastically.

Each clan also has its own laws, traditions, and customs, so exactly what behavior is proper changes from landhold to landhold. This is the main reason why even Aslan travelers in the Hierate stick to places they know, or take a native guide; it is too easy to offend your hosts by accident.

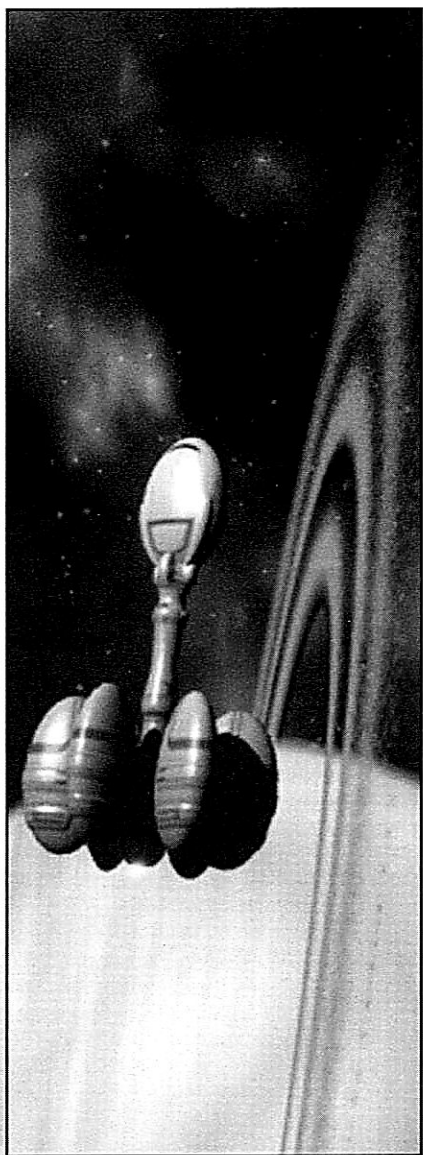


## Adventure Seed: A Stone's Throw From the Beach

**T**he PCs are accompanying an *ihatei* expedition to a new world aboard a chartered Human vessel. Shortly after they disembark and the ship leaves, they realize that the planet doesn't match the holovids they were shown; the weather is bad, there are vicious local predators, the herds are sickly, and the crops won't grow.

The characters must overcome wild animals, storms, and equipment failures. They must convince the *ihatei* that they are not to blame for this breach of contract by interpersonal skills (and perhaps victory in a duel or two).

Then, they must track down the dishonorable barbarians who cheated them and arrange appropriate restitution.



## WORLD DATA

*Starport:* Class V.

*Diameter:* 8,067 miles (12,980 km). *Atmosphere:* Standard oxygen-nitrogen, polluted. *Surface Water:* 60%. *Climate:* Normal. *Population:* 4.6 billion, including orbital and undersea colonies, of which 600,000 are assorted non-Aslan. *Government:* Bureaucracy (the *Tlaukhu* or Council of 29). *Control Rating:* 4. *TL:* 11.

Kuzu's atmosphere is tainted with a mixture of industrial pollutants (common to many high-population, high-technology worlds) and faint traces of radioactive fallout from nuclear wars millennia ago. A similar size to Earth combines with larger polar ice-caps and a lesser hydrographic coverage to generate expanses of tundra and desert. Surface temperatures are slightly colder than Earth at an average 48° Fahrenheit (9° Centigrade), but more stable from season to season as the planet has minimal orbital eccentricity and axial tilt. This also gives the inhabited regions of the world a perpetual spring. The region within roughly 10 degrees of the equator is too hot for habitation, but to compensate, latitudes close to the poles are more temperate than on Earth.

The longer diurnal cycle (36 hours rather than 24) gives more pronounced day-to-night temperature changes.

Kuzu has two planetoid moons, each roughly 250 miles in diameter and home to Aslan colonies. *Aeakha*, named after a legendary warrior of prehistory, and *Syarair*, named for *Aeakha's fteirko*, orbit at 32,000 and 60,000 miles respectively. The lack of a large, close moon such as Earth's makes for minimal tides on Kuzu, and explains why the Aslan have no time period equivalent to the Terran month. There are a number of artificial satellites of various sizes and purposes.

Politically, Kuzu is divided into hundreds of independent landholds. Each of the 29 clans with seats on the *Tlaukhu* has one, as do approximately 300 other clans, the majority with military bases attached. Land on Kuzu itself is especially valuable to an Aslan, and offers status as well as wealth and power.

## GEOGRAPHY

Kuzu has two major continents, both straddling the equator and in the northern hemisphere. There are also a number of large archipelagoes. About 15% of the surface is covered by the polar ice caps.

The continent most often visited by offworlders is Tahohti, where it is believed the Aslan evolved, and where the main starport sits on the southern coast. This is operated by the *Saietaie* corporation, which is jointly owned by the 29 to prevent any one of them gaining a monopoly on its benefits. Other clans who are sufficiently wealthy and so minded maintain their own smaller starports at various locations insystem. As staff in the principal starport are selected for their tolerance and trained in dealing with non-Aslan, casual travelers are advised to stay there, or venture out in tour parties with a reliable guide, to minimize the chance of accidentally being embroiled in a duel.

Kuzu has no planetary capital. Starports are the next best thing, with many clans maintaining a presence. The *Tlaukhu* has no fixed seat, meeting in a series of cities in rotation.

## FLORA AND FAUNA

Vegetation on Kuzu is darker in color than Terran plants. The equivalent of grass, which covers huge prairies in the temperate latitudes, more closely resembles a carpet of ivy or maple leaves. Tree analogs are much like Terran deciduous species, but with no major seasonal changes in weather, they do not synchronize shedding their leaves. Instead, they do so intermittently throughout the year, a handful at a time. As most planets have more extreme weather than Kuzu, native plants do not prosper in the colonies and are rarely seen offworld. The *Fteirle* affect not to care.

Large predators are rare, having been hunted almost to extinction in pre-agricultural times. Smaller ones have adopted a furtive existence, raiding Aslan herds for food. Surviving herbivores are domesticated, good hunting, inedible, or too small to

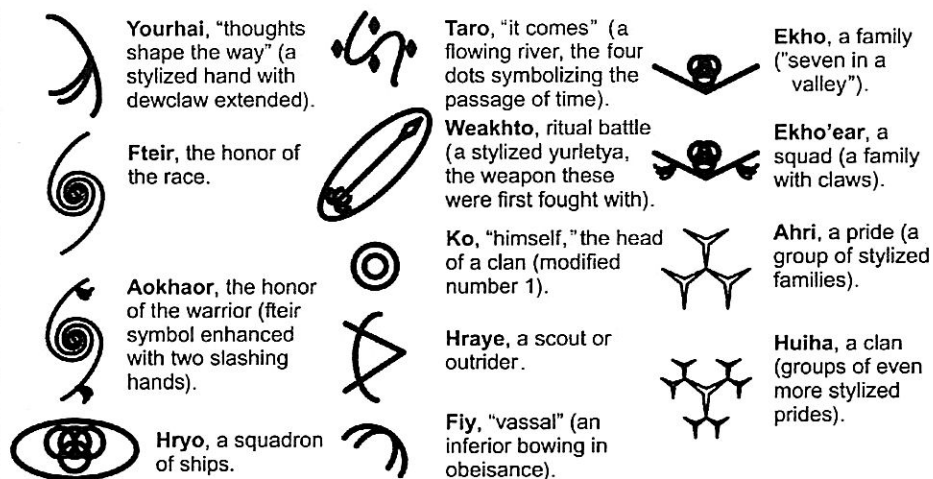
bother with. Those on Tafahti have an instinctive fear of the Aslan with whom they evolved; those elsewhere do not, and as a consequence are not thought to provide such a challenge in the hunt. The inhospitable equatorial regions and stable year-round temperatures discourage migration, and lead to banded ecosystems – north polar, northern temperate, equatorial, southern temperate, and south polar bands – each with distinctive varieties of plant and animal life. Very few species travel across bands. This reduced migratory tendency in the wildlife is thought to have helped primitive Aslan develop settlements; unlike Terran nomads, they did not need to follow wild herds across great distances.

## THE WARRIORS' TONGUE

Almost without exception, Aslan share a common language and culture. This is complex and bound by custom and ritual. Further, the Aslan mouth and vocal cords have a more limited repertoire of sounds than Humans'. As a consequence, Aslan words and names can become unwieldy, although this tendency is moderated by the fact that Aslan is holophrastic and heavily context-dependent – a short word can express one of several complete Galanglic sentences, although which of those sentences it means depends on the circumstances.

Learning Aslan thus demands that the student memorize thousands of apparently random sounds and ideograms, and the specific circumstances for each shade of meaning, in the knowledge that a slip of the tongue could prove embarrassing or even fatal. As a result, most non-Aslan rely on electronic translators, and most Aslan rely on a female relative as an interpreter.

### ASLAN GLYPHS - MALE



## ASLAN NAMES

Aslan have lengthy and precise names for formal purposes (such as government and ritual), and shorter, more ambiguous nicknames for everyday use.

As with other aspects of the language, names are holophrastic (an Aslan word can mean as much as a Human sentence) and context-dependent. This makes them difficult to translate into Galanglic, but a certain amount of ambiguity and variation is realistic. For example, an Aslan mercenary unit called *Tehleikhoi* could legitimately have its name rendered as "Soldiers of Dusk," "Knights of the Setting Sun," or "Warriors of the Evening Star," depending on what aspects of their character the speaker wishes to emphasize in the current situation.

## Timekeeping

**A**slan time is based on units derived from their own characteristics and those of their homeworld. The table below shows these units and their Imperial equivalents; they are used on most Aslan worlds, regardless of local conditions.

### Aslan Time Units

Period	Equals	Translation	Imperial Equivalent
ftahea	212.2 eakhau	year	320 days
eakhau	16 tekhaao	day	36 hours
tekhaao	8 khtauaao	hour	137 minutes
khtauaao	64 areiaao	period	17 minutes
areiaao	8 uealaaao	sprint	16 seconds
uealaaao	—	second	1.988 seconds

The Aslan year is not divided into weeks or months, nor are days numbered as in Imperial practice. Instead, each day has a unique name, and adult Aslan know the sequence by heart. This is broadly similar to the pre-spaceflight Mediterranean (Italian) practice of associating a Christian saint with each day of the year.

Every five years, a 213th day (*Hryofaheakan*) is added to the year to resynchronize the calendar. This is a holiday and a traditional time to announce honors, clan adoptions, and wars.

## Where Exactly Is Kuzu?

**O**ver the years, various editions of *Traveller* have placed Kuzu in several different positions, each of which can be justified. This book aligns itself with the earliest position cited in *Classic Traveller*, which agrees with the map of charted space on p. GT7 (but not with the location stated in the main text, p. GT47, of the first edition [1998]).

If a campaign has been using a different location for Kuzu, the GM has two reasonable choices: He may rule that Kuzu is indeed elsewhere than shown here, that this information is simply in error. Alternatively, he could say that there are several planets called Kuzu (just as there are several cities called Boston on Earth).



## Campaign Seed: They'd Shoot Horses, Wouldn't They?

Somewhere in Human space, the PCs are approached by a K'kree noble with an unusual mission for them.

The Great Herd knows that someday – not soon, but eventually – the Aslan will have to be trampled. Against that day, they need to gather intelligence on their future enemies. K'kree agents would be too conspicuous, and would have to be unusually crazy to conduct the mission, but Humans can come and go in the Hierate without attracting too much attention.

The K'kree have acquired a controlling interest in a free trader, and now they need a crew. Outwardly, the ship will be just another tramp freighter scratching out a living in the Aslan/Human buffer. Secretly, the characters will learn about the Hierate and its clans, and pass this information back to the Great Herd's agents. If the chance arises, the adventurers may be asked to sabotage clan facilities or inter-clan relations, but the primary goal is to set up a conduit for information flowing in and out of the Hierate. A long-term relationship between the crew and an Aslan clan will be essential to the scheme's success.

Is the K'kree what he seems to be, or are the PCs being set up to take the blame for some nefarious plot? Is the Great Herd secretly fomenting war between carnivores and omnivores – letting their foes trample each other? Do they plan to encourage revolt among Aslan-dominated vegetarian minor races? Will the characters come to respect the *Fteirle*, and change sides? And what will the Imperial and Solomani secret services think of all this when they find out?

## Language Difficulties

Aslan is a holophrastic language (one that uses one word to encompass the meaning of an entire sentence) which makes extensive use of metaphor and simile, and words whose meanings depend heavily on context – which furthermore was developed for a race with vestigial fangs. This makes it a Mental/Hard language for Humans. Conversely, Human languages are one difficulty level harder for Aslan – Imperial Galanglic, normally Mental/Average for Humans, would be Mental/Hard for a *Fteirle*.

## Formal Names

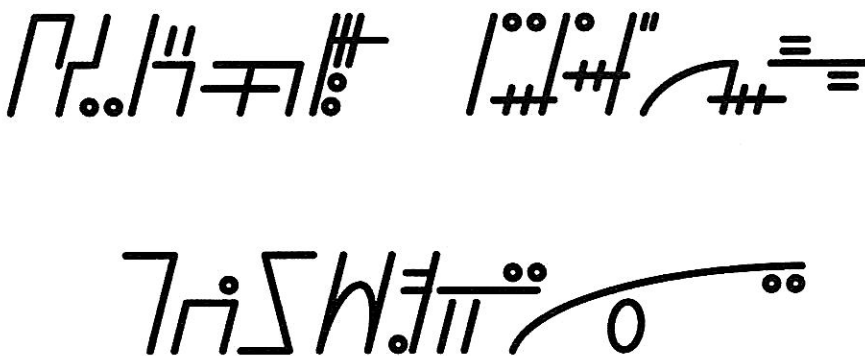
A Human's name usually gives some clues about his or her gender and family, and may offer an insight into cultural background. By Aslan standards, that is hopelessly vague. An Aslan's formal name tells the listener *precisely* that Aslan's job, position in his family, pride, and clan, to which more powerful clans his clan owes fealty, how likely he is to inherit any land, and roughly how much land that would be. A full, formal name is thus quite long.

The head of a clan is known simply by the clan name, since he embodies its character and policies. If for any reason one needs to differentiate between the clan leader and the clan, the particle *ko* ("himself") is added. So, the leader of clan *Hlyueawi* would be called *Hlyueawi* or *Hlyueawiko*.

A lesser noble affiliated to the clan by feudal obligations might be called *Hlyueawi Ahroay'ifyi Wahtoi Layeawiwahfeaktelihlalikhtyeiteyahahtateisiyu* – "unmarried first son of the third son of the grandfather of the head of the pride which holds the valley in the fork of the *Iawhfeal* River, part of clan *Wahtoi*, which is a vassal of clan *Aroaye'i*, itself a vassal of clan *Hlyueawi*." Note that the sequence starts with the highest clan in the chain of vassals and overlords, and ends with the individual.

A commoner would be named for the noble whose vassal he is. A female is named for her closest living male relative, usually a husband, father, or brother. A commoner or wife of the above minor noble would have an even longer name – his, and additional phrases specifying the relation to him, such as "second wife of X, formerly of the clan Y" or "second assistant engineer on X's ship."

## ASLAN GLYPHS – FEMALE



## Nicknames

Formal speech, such as a ritual challenge, uses full names, but practicality dictates using nicknames in everyday speech – imagine giving orders in battle using full Aslan names! Nicknames are chosen by the bearer to commemorate a virtue or achievement, and are changed at his whim whenever a better idea strikes him.

The nature of the Aslan language makes nicknames ambiguous. The only way to find out what it means is to ask the *Fteirle* concerned. He will then settle himself comfortably and explain at length how his achievements led him to select this name.

Any change in job, personal fortune, or family circumstances can change an Aslan's name. This is why formal speech uses full titles – it is necessary to ensure clarity, much as Human bureaucracies address letters to the position rather than the person (who may have died or been promoted by the time the letter arrives). Since using the wrong name for someone could be insulting, it is customary for Aslan meeting each other after a separation to start by stating their current full names and nicknames, even if they are good friends.

## ASLAN SOUND FREQUENCY TABLE

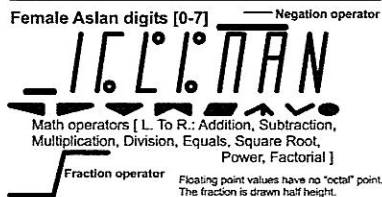
### Initial Consonants (87)

Sound	Freq.	Pronunciation
F	5	whew
FT	4	rift
H	7	it
HF	2	hfang
HK	5	hkang
HL	3	hlang
HR	3	hrang
HT	5	height
HW	2	what
K	7	kite
KH	6	loch (Scottish)
KHT	4	nachte (German)
KT	4	backed
L	2	like
R	3	run
S	4	sun
ST	3	stop
T	8	ton
TL	2	tlaloc (Aztec)
TR	2	trip
W	6	win

### Vowels (52)

Sound	Freq.	Pronunciation
A	10	lock
AI	3	kite
AO	2	Mao (Chinese)
AU	1	house
E	6	get
EA	6	e+a
EI	2	bay
I	4	kit

### ASLAN GLYPHS - MATH SAMPLE



Sound	Freq.	Pronunciation
IY	3	feet
O	2	gone
OA	1	o+a
OI	2	noise
OU	1	o+u
U	1	lute
UA	1	u+a
UI	1	u+i
YA	2	yard
YU	1	feud

### Final Consonants (47)

Sound	Freq.	Pronunciation
H	10	how
KH	4	loch (Scottish)
L	7	all
LR	3	all right
R	5	far
RL	4	earl
S	5	hiss
W	6	wow
'	3	glottal stop

## ASLAN WORD GENERATION TABLES

The tables use two dice to generate Aslan words or names. It is suggested that the dice be red and white, but any two colors will do. GMs may prefer to program a computer to generate a large number of Aslan words quickly, and allocate meanings as they are taken from the list. Those in a hurry for character names can pick one from the sidebar on pp. 42-43.

Words are generated in three steps: determine length, determine syllable types, and determine syllable components.

**Word Length:** Words may be almost any length, although more than six syllables are rare. Roll one die for the number of syllables. To speed generation, the GM may opt to treat any roll of 3 or more as denoting a three-syllable word, or the GM or player may simply specify word length.

**Syllable Type:** For each syllable in a word, generate the type of syllable. The *Basic* table is used for initial syllables, and those occurring after a type CV or V syllable. The *Alternate* table is used for syllables which occur after a type VC or CVC syllable.

**Syllable Components:** The component consonants (C) and vowels (V) for each syllable are now determined from the appropriate tables. Inspect the syllable type to determine the correct column (initial consonant, vowel, or final consonant). Roll one die to determine which table in the column is used, then two dice to determine the specific vowel or consonant used.

If a single-letter vowel occurs at the beginning of a syllable which follows a syllable also ending in a single-letter vowel, the two vowels may not be the same; if this happens, re-roll. For example, a two syllable word might be CV, V. *Hraa* (Hr + a + a, repeated single vowels) is not a possible word, but either *Hrae* (Hr + a + e, different single vowels) or *Hraao* (Hr + ao + ao, vowels repeated but not single) are valid.

**Example:** The GM needs to name an Aslan the PCs have met. Rolling one die for the number of syllables, he finds the name has two syllables. He rolls 6 and 4 on the *Basic* table, so the first syllable type is CVC. This dictates the *Alternate* table for the second syllable, and rolling 3 and 4 yields a VC for the second syllable type.

The GM determines each component for the first syllable (CVC). Rolling a die for the initial syllable table (4) and two dice for the specific initial consonant (1, 5)

## ASLAN WORD GENERATION TABLES

### Basic

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	V	V	V	V	V	V
2	V	V	V	V	V	V
3	V	CV	CV	CV	CV	CV
4	CV	CV	CV	CV	VC	VC
5	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC
6	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC

For initial syllables, or after CV or V.

### Alternate

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	V	V	V	V	V	V
2	V	V	V	V	V	V
3	V	V	V	VC	VC	VC
4	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC
5	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC
6	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC

For syllables after VC or CVC.

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## ASLAN WORD GENERATION TABLES

[Continued]

### Initial Consonant 1

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	F	F	F	F	F	F
2	F	F	F	F	F	F
3	FT	FT	FT	FT	FT	FT
4	FT	FT	FT	FT	H	H
5	H	H	H	H	H	H
6	H	H	H	H	H	H

### Initial Consonant 2

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	H	H	H	H	HF	HF
2	HF	HF	HF	HK	HK	HK
3	HK	HK	HK	HK	HK	HK
4	HK	HK	HK	HL	HL	HL
5	HL	HL	HL	HL	HL	HR
6	HR	HR	HR	HR	HR	HR

### Initial Consonant 3

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	HT	HT	HT	HT	HT	HT
2	HT	HT	HT	HT	HT	HT
3	HW	HW	HW	HW	HW	K
4	K	K	K	K	K	K
5	K	K	K	K	K	K
6	K	K	K	K	KH	KH

### Initial Consonant 4

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	KH	KH	KH	KH	KH	KH
2	KH	KH	KH	KH	KH	KH
3	KH	KHT	KHT	KHT	KHT	KHT
4	KHT	KHT	KHT	KHT	KHT	KHT
5	KT	KT	KT	KT	KT	KT
6	KT	KT	KT	KT	L	L

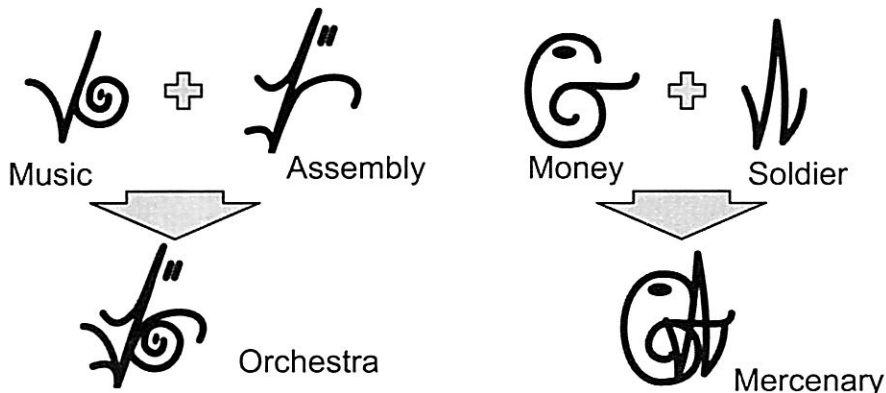
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gives *kh*. Rolling a 2, followed by a 6 and a 3, selects *au* from vowel table 2. Rolling a 3, followed by a 2 and a 5, selects *l* from final consonant table 3. The first syllable is thus *khaul*.

Following the same process for the second syllable (VC), the GM rolls a 3, then a 6 and a 5, yielding *ea* from the third vowel table. Then a 4, followed by 3 and 1, produces *r* from the fourth final consonant table.

The new Aslan name is thus *Khaulear*.

## ASLAN COMBINED MALE GLYPHS



## BUSINESS, TRADE, AND COMMERCE

Commerce and industry are the domain of female Aslan. Upper-class males may be employed by a corporation as pilots or guards, and lower-class ones as workers, but all managers are female.

## CLANS AND CORPORATIONS

Clans are controlled by patriarchs, and a female's assets transfer to her husband's clan when she marries. Businesses may pass from clan to clan in this way, but some are independent (although this is more common for larger companies). Corporations associated with one or more clans normally enjoy monopoly status in their fields within clan-dominated territory, and are exempt from customs duties.

The owner of a corporation may pledge not to marry. Acquiring control may even be conditional on making this vow, especially in clan-controlled businesses. A female wishing to marry may revoke her pledge, but must then sell her interest in the company to its new owners. The rules surrounding this are similar to those which Humans apply to closely held employee stocks.

A number of clans may jointly fund a venture, in which case control is shared between them, and the managers strive to avoid dominance by any of the clans. Such ventures resemble Human cartels.

Corporate mergers and takeovers are thus complex affairs, as complementary marriages may also need to be arranged.

## TRADE ROUTES

The Hierate has no equivalent of the Imperium's Xboat routes, or the commercial shipping routes which follow them. Each clan has its own routes, which it services as and when it deems necessary, not necessarily by regularly scheduled flights.

In general, clan trade routes exist connecting all PR 9 and 10 worlds, with stops at all Class IV and V starports along the way. These are not plotted on Aslan subsector maps, nor are schedules widely published (assuming they exist); the traveler must make his own arrangements with the relevant clans.

## CURRENCY

Money is less important in the Hierate than in Human space. The Aslan male fights or explores to win glory, land, or honor, and might well be insulted by a cash payment. Since all clan leaders are males, debts between clans tend to be settled by gifts of land, pledges of service, and so on, although these may be merely symbols of the cash transfers to which the clan leaders' wives have already agreed.

Females (and to a lesser extent, low-caste males) are more interested in trade, and require currency to conduct it. Most clans produce their own currencies, of wildly varying names and forms. Typically a clan will accept its own currency, and those minted by its vassals and its feudal overlords. Many will also accept the currencies of the 29. Alert traders can spot the shifting status of the 29 by watching the Hierate exchange rates for their currencies; none of the lesser clans wishes to be caught with cash suddenly devalued when the backer is ejected from the *Tlaukhu*.

All Aslan legal tender is backed either by land, or by the products and services the landholders derive from it and its inhabitants. Even males can grasp the concept that cash represents a promise of land in exchange for a service – in fact, some anthropologists argue that Aslan money originated as a concrete symbol of such promises. There is, therefore, a standard way of determining value: How much land, of what type, would this amount of cash buy?

The extra difficulties and costs imposed by multiple currency conversions mean that trade within the Hierate is largely conducted between neighboring clans, and is slightly less profitable than equivalent deals in the Imperium. GMs with financially-oriented campaigns who wish to expand this aspect of life in the Hierate are encouraged to do so.



However, to simplify all of the above, this book uses Imperial Credits throughout. Just remember that when a buyer empties the change out of her pockets, they won't be credits – they'll be coins from several different clans. ("Let's see, I think there are five of these to the credit, this one is worth two credits seventy five, and this is a good-luck charm from the *Aktifao* sector – can't use *that*, we're at war with their biggest clan . . .")

## ASLAN WORD GENERATION TABLES

[Continued]

### Initial Consonant 5

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	L	L	L	R	R	R
2	R	R	R	R	S	S
3	S	S	S	S	S	S
4	S	S	ST	ST	ST	ST
5	ST	ST	ST	T	T	T
6	T	T	T	T	T	T

### Initial Consonant 6

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	T	T	T	T	T	T
2	T	T	T	T	T	TL
3	TL	TL	TL	TL	TR	TR
4	FT	FT	FT	FT	H	H
5	TR	TR	TR	W	W	W
6	W	W	W	W	W	W

### Vowel 1

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	A	A	A	A	A	A
2	A	A	A	A	A	A
3	A	A	A	A	A	A
4	A	A	A	A	A	A
5	A	A	A	A	A	A
6	A	A	A	A	A	A

### Vowel 2

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	A	A	A	A	A	AI
2	AI	AI	AI	AI	AI	AI
3	AI	AI	AI	AI	AO	AO
4	AO	AO	AO	AO	AO	AO
5	AU	AU	AU	AU	E	E
6	E	E	E	E	E	E

Continued on next page . . .



# ASLAN WORD GENERATION TABLES

[Continued]

## Vowel 3

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	E	E	E	E	E	E
2	E	E	E	E	E	E
3	E	E	E	E	E	E
4	EA	EA	EA	EA	EA	EA
5	EA	EA	EA	EA	EA	EA
6	EA	EA	EA	EA	EA	EA

## Vowel 4

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	EA	EA	EA	EA	EA	EA
2	EI	EI	EI	EI	EI	EI
3	EI	EI	EI	EI	EI	EI
4	EI	I	I	I	I	I
5	I	I	I	I	I	I
6	I	I	I	I	I	IY

## Vowel 5

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	IY	IY	IY	IY	IY	IY
2	Y	IY	IY	IY	IY	O
3	O	O	O	O	O	O
4	O	OA	OA	OA	OA	OI
5	OI	OI	OI	OI	OI	OI
6	OI	OU	OU	OU	OU	OU

## Vowel 6

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	U	U	U	U	U	UA
2	UA	UA	UI	UI	UI	UI
3	YA	YA	YA	YA	YA	YA
4	YA	YA	YE	YE	YE	YE
5	YE	YE	YE	YE	YO	YO
6	YO	YO	YU	YU	YU	YU

## Final Consonant 1

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	H	H	H	H	H	H
2	H	H	H	H	H	H
3	H	H	H	H	H	H
4	H	H	H	H	H	H
5	H	H	H	H	H	H
6	H	H	H	H	H	H

Continued on next page...

## WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

This book uses standard *GURPS* units throughout for convenience, but occasional use of Aslan units in conversation will serve to remind the players that their characters are "not in Kansas any more."

Short lengths are measured in *aiyfta* ("thumb width," roughly 1.25" or 3 cm). This is also referred to as the "Aslan anatomical inch" – it is officially defined as the width of a male thumb, and therefore varies considerably. Longer ones are defined in *khauftha* ("man-height," about 6 feet or 2 meters), *areiaaoftha* ("sprint," the distance an Aslan can run in 1 *areiaao*, roughly 150 yards), or *eakhauftha* ("daymarches," the distance an Aslan can walk in a Kusyu day, about 45 miles).

Light goods (e.g., hand weapons or joints of meat) are weighed in *fyftakhau* – "morsel," about 1/4 lb. – or *truftakhau* – "mealweight," about 4 lbs. Heavy goods (e.g., starship cargo) are weighed in *fiyftakhau* – "manweight," or about 200 lbs.

Note that having four digits on either hand predisposes the *Fteirle* to use octal mathematics.



## TREKHYAIR: THE LAND PROTECTORS

The generic term for a clan's military forces is *trekhyair* – the Land Protector, which is exactly its purpose. There are no Hierate forces as such; each military unit is raised by an individual clan or corporation, or (less often) by a coalition of closely allied clans. There is always a clan war somewhere, and any clan may be called to fight at any time by a vassal, an overlord, or an ally, so most maintain the largest forces they can afford at the highest state of readiness possible. External threats to the Hierate are rare since the last Border War ended in 380 Imperial. When they arise, they are handled by the affected clans, with other clans taking the position that it's none of their business.

Direct combat roles are an exclusive male province. Allowing for those too young, too old, or too infirm to fight, even the most desperate clan is hard-pressed to field more than 10% of its numbers as warriors in defense of its lands. Projecting power beyond clan lands is harder (unless there is the prospect of seizing new territory which can be added to clan fiefs), given that the clan's constituent families have less incentive to fight.

Duties between vassal clans and their lords run strong in both directions – to attack one is to attack the other – so it is common for battles to involve several clans on each side, and possibly mercenary units as well. Rivalry for glory and reputation between the commanders of the various contingents can lead to serious tactical errors unless the female staff officers are alert and assertive. Despite the *fteir* emphasis on loyalty, contingents sometimes change sides in mid-battle over a point of honor.

Aslan fight for pay as well as honor – they simply prefer to be paid in land. This is attractive to a small frontier colony with little cash but huge tracts of wilderness. The Aslan gain allies, land, and a chance of glory; their employers gain skilled and loyal defenders. The Aslan in the Darrian Confederation (BTC, pp. 46-50) were originally such mercenaries.

*"The Aslan language does not contain a cognate for 'decimate.' Very few languages do. It seems not many sophonts need a word that means 'kill every tenth creature.'"*

– Dr. Karla Shemi,  
Gould Professor of Sophontology, University of Terra

## ASLAN GROUND FORCES

The Aslan mindset emphasizes close combat with the dewclaw rather than the use of ranged weapons. Further, the average clan's military budget is small compared to (say) that of the Imperium. These factors bias Aslan ground forces toward light infantry, with a lower proportion of battle dress-equipped units, artillery, and armor than would be found in the armies of other races.

### Organization

Organization varies widely between clans, and there is no standard structure for an Aslan unit. An *ekho'ear* ("squad"), for example, may range from four to 12 members depending on which clan raised it, with the most frequent sizes being six to eight troops.

What is universal is the division of labor between the sexes. Males lead or fight; females administer or support.

The unit commander is an upper-class male, responsible for leading the troops and determining battle tactics. His second-in-command is a female administrator. The intelligence and supply officers are also female.

### Tactics

The economics and mindset of clan armies mean that Aslan units are more prepared to trade "lives for lives" (rather than "munitions for lives") than a Human force. A male's offhand willingness to die for his clan or his oath is as terrifying to a Human foe as his deadly efficiency in melee. *Fteirle* officers are well aware that their warriors are more willing than the average Human to risk their lives for glory, and they encourage this – not cynically, as some Solomani have suggested, but because they believe glory is a worthy goal.

The need to preserve some warriors to father the next generation has led to a tradition of settling battles by ritual duels between clan champions, who may be individual Aslan or military units of various sizes. Each side fields its best warrior, and the side whose champion prevails is considered to have won the battle by proving its honor and spirit superior. The need to preserve the battlefield in an era of weapons of mass destruction has led to the concept of limited ritual wars, overseen by an *earleatrais*.

Non-Aslan have trouble understanding these ritual limitations on violence, and Aslan have trouble understanding that not everyone fights their way. Typically, the Aslan are at a disadvantage until they realize that the enemy is not playing by their rules; they then demonize their foe as dishonorable barbarians and over-react, escalating immediately to all-out warfare.

Note that because of their own chaotic politics, it is easy for Aslan to grasp the concept that not all Humans are the same – they intuitively understand that a Solomani envoy, while he may look like an Imperial one, represents a different polity with different goals and methods. Conversely, Humans tend to tar all Aslan with the same brush, which confuses the *Fteirle*.

## ASLAN WORD GENERATION TABLES

[Continued]

### Final Consonant 2

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	H	H	H	H	H	H
2	H	H	H	H	KH	KH
3	KH	KH	KH	KH	KH	KH
4	KH	KH	KH	KH	KH	KH
5	KH	KH	KH	KH	L	L
6	L	L	L	L	L	L

### Final Consonant 3

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	L	L	L	L	L	L
2	L	L	L	L	L	L
3	L	L	L	L	L	L
4	L	L	L	L	L	L
5	LR	LR	LR	LR	LR	LR
6	LR	LR	LR	LR	LR	LR

### Final Consonant 4

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	LR	LR	R	R	R	R
2	R	R	R	R	R	R
3	R	R	R	R	R	R
4	R	R	R	R	R	R
5	R	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL
6	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL

### Final Consonant 5

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL	RL
2	RL	S	S	S	S	S
3	S	S	S	S	S	S
4	S	S	S	S	S	S
5	S	S	S	S	S	S
6	S	W	W	W	W	W

### Final Consonant 6

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	W	W	W	W	W	W
2	W	W	W	W	W	W
3	W	W	W	W	W	W
4	W	W	W	W	'	'
5	'	'	'	'	'	'
6	'	'	'	'	'	'



## Aslan Glossary

Common Aslan terms the players may encounter are listed below, with their idiomatic translations. Literal translations are also provided where these give an insight into Aslan thought.

### Glossary: A

*Ahriy*: Usually translated as "pride." A group of Aslan families.

*Ahr'eah*: A platoon- or company-sized military unit; literally, "armed pride."

*Ahtatei*: Heir. Literally, "first son."

*Aikoho*: Fleet. Literally, "many ships."

*Aikoho earleatrais*: Fleet dispatcher. Literally, "referee of many ships."

*Aikoho siylakht*: Fleet director. The "executive" in charge of the "many ships" in a trade fleet.

*Akhaeh*: Literally, "throwing edge." An Aslan missile weapon.

*Akhuaeuhrekhyeh*: The rite of passage which all Aslan undertake at age 14.

*Aorlakht*: Literally, "new lords." *Ihatei* who have recently acquired new lands, or who will do so shortly. The overtone is one of acquisition by conquest.

*Aositaoh*: Cruiser-class starship; literally, "responsible spirit" or "honorable soul."

*Areiaao*: Sprint. (1) A time unit, roughly equal to 16 seconds. (2) The distance an Aslan can sprint in this time.

*Areiale*: Assault troops, literally, "they who sprint." Sometimes translated as "Marines."

*Atei*: (1) Son. (2) Military officer cadet.

*Ayloi*: Artificial dewclaw, used by Humans who must take part in Aslan duels.

### Glossary: E

*Eakh'*: Literally, "a hunt" or "to hunt." (1) An Aslan, or group of Aslan, conducting a hunt. (2) Any group of females with a common purpose. Note the similarity of roots to *ekho*, family.

*Eakhau*: (1) Day, literally, "hunt-period." (2) A day's rations for one Aslan. (3) A soldier's food-pouch, large enough to carry a day's rations. (4) A merchant starship, especially a free trader – by extension from (3).

*Eakhyasear*: Hunter's rifle.

*Earleatrais*: Usually translated as "referee" or "arbitrator"; someone who enforces rules impartially and justly. (1) The referee of a duel. (2) The referee of a clan war. (3) A magistrate.

*Continued on next page...*

## ASLAN SPACE FORCES

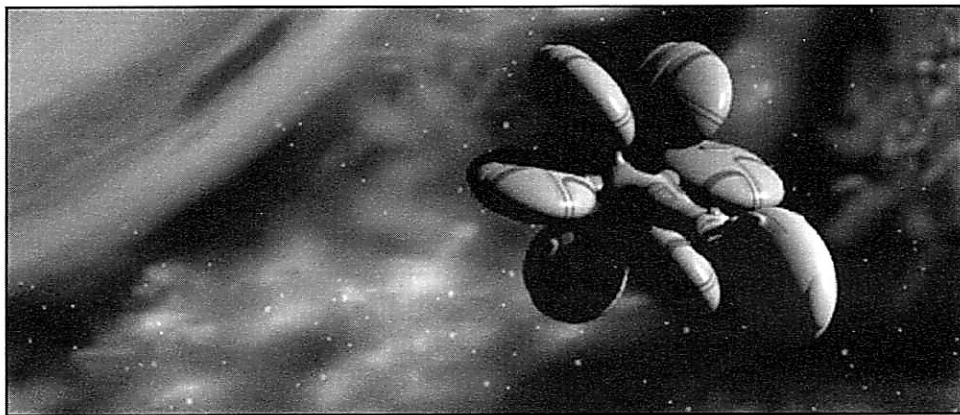
Most Aslan space forces are operated by clans. However, some corporations also maintain them. Like mercenaries, privateers are a legitimate business in the Hierate, run for profit. Such forces are smaller and less specialized than a Human fleet. They undertake the normal range of combat missions, but they also explore (usually looking for new lands for the clan's *ihatei*), and carry passengers, messages, and freight, either for profit or to meet the clan's internal needs. For clans with settlements in more than one system, the space forces also act as a "cultural bridge," reinforcing the bonds of loyalty between the landholds. A colony ignored for too long will separate from the clan, and declare its independence.

Clans which control only a part of one world usually do not have a space force. They meet their needs either by allying with (or becoming a vassal to) a better-equipped clan, or by contracting with a suitable corporation.

Clans which control one world or system have so-called "planetary" space forces. These are biased toward in-system freighters and system-defense boats, but may also include a handful of small starships.

The majority of Aslan space forces are operated by clans who control several systems. Members of the *Tlaukhu* have larger, better-equipped, and more technologically advanced forces, with more highly skilled crews (they can afford more and better ships and training).

Corporations may operate privateer squadrons, and may be issued letters of marque and reprisal by clans if the rules of the relevant clan war permit it. Privateers aim to capture a target intact, selling the cargo and ransoming the ship and crew. (In theory, they could destroy the ship and kill the crew, but this reduces profits and offends potential future customers.) The letters only cover vessels of certain clans under specific circumstances; other vessels, or passengers from other clans found aboard a prize, must be released unharmed.



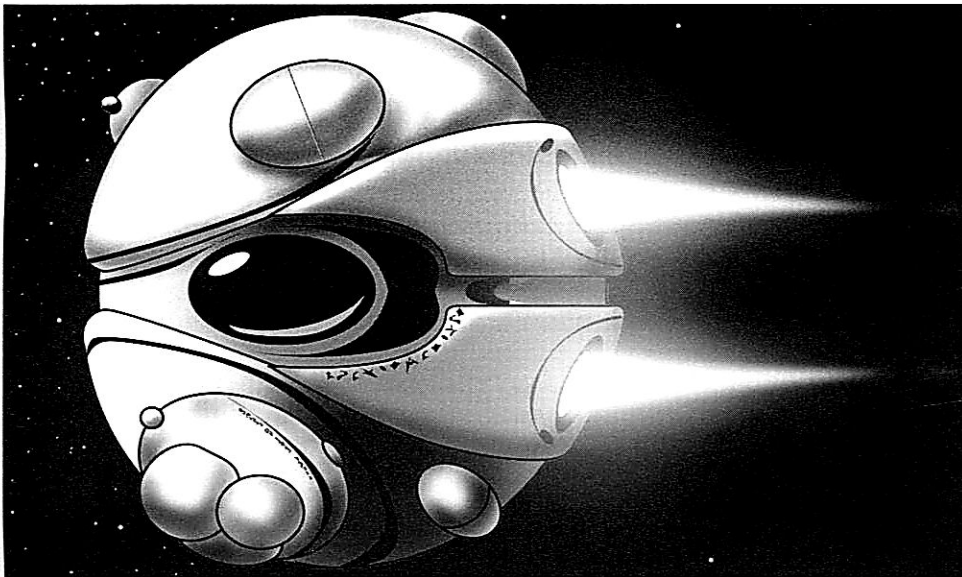
## Ship Types

The male preference for dewclaw-to-dewclaw fighting, and the hideous expense of capital ships, means that compared to a Human fleet, a typical clan navy has fewer, smaller ships. It is rare to encounter a cruiser or larger warship.

In contrast, merchant vessels are almost always armed. Piloting starships is a job for males alone, and the idea of flying an unarmed vessel makes them uncomfortable. The bonds of loyalty within and between clans enjoin these armed trading ships to do battle with clan enemies, so an Aslan battle fleet has more – and more aggressive – auxiliaries than a Human one.

Battleriders – warships with no jump drives, carried between systems by a jump-capable tender – are a popular solution to a clan's naval procurement problems. In peacetime, the battleriders can be deployed as system defense boats, and the tender as a bulk transport (carrying cargo pods instead of riders), thus helping to defray its costs. See, for example, the *Taorl*-class riftliner, p. 57.

Shipyards capable of building large warships are rare in the Hierate, and are usually owned by members of the 29. Most clans buy their warships from one of the *Tlaukhu*, often second-hand. The Council encourages this, as it strengthens the debts of honor between them and their clients or vassals. Second-hand Human vessels are also encountered, refitted with controls suitable for Aslan. Note that a clan may actually *prefer* a used warship with a glorious history to a new one "without a soul." Just as warriors bear their scars proudly, a ship's battle damage is considered a mark of honor – while functional repairs are made, cosmetic ones are often not.



## Organization

Ships operating within territory dominated by their clan do so independently. They are grouped into squadrons and fleets only when venturing beyond clan borders, or as part of a specific military operation.

The *hryo* (literally, "six," usually translated as "squadron" although "task force" is a better analogy in Human terms) contains two to 12 ships, most often six, of whatever types the clan thinks appropriate for the mission. There are traditional squadron compositions in each clan for common mission types, but these are so varied that no general rules can be given. This is in direct opposition to Imperial or Solomani doctrines, which group similar ships together. The *hryo* is referred to by the name of its commander, who is appointed personally by the clan *ko*.

The *aikoho* ("many ships," usually translated as "fleet") has no set size or composition – it is simply a group of *hryo* and may have any number of squadrons or ships. *Aikoho* are only created for a specific purpose, which may be battle, migration, or trade.

*Battle fleets* are created to defend clan worlds, or to project power into other clans' territory in the event of hostilities. Each is commanded by a Fleet Admiral (Rank 7), who reports to the Clan Admiral (Rank 8), who in turn answers to the clan head.

*Migration fleets*, also called *ihatei fleets*, are raised by the clan to export surplus population to new lands. They are commanded by a clan admiral, who answers to the *ko* while within clan space, but is effectively his own master once the fleet leaves clan territory (although *fteir* binds him to follow clan traditions). Funded by the families of the *ihatei* who travel in them, the fleet includes battle squadrons for self-defense, and merchant squadrons carrying colonists and goods.

*Trade fleets* consist of merchant squadrons and their escorts. The fleet itself is managed by the *aikoho siylakht*, a female director (not a military rank, but Status 3 – Administrative Rank 7-8 equivalent), with escort squadrons commanded by admirals or captains, depending on their size and strength.

## Aslan Glossary

[Continued]

*Ekawsiykua*: (1) Bodyguard, retainer; literally, "one trusted by the patriarch to guard his wives." (2) Escort-class starship, by extension from (1).

*Ekaw*: Family head, patriarch.

*Ekho*: A family group of 2-12 Aslan under a patriarch; basic unit of Aslan society.

*Ekho'ear*: Squad of troops; literally, "armed family" or "brothers in arms."

### Glossary: F

*Fierah*: Usually translated as "thong." An Aslan melee and missile weapon.

*Fiy*: Vassal.

*Ftahlr*: Literally, "year's flight" – about 30 parsecs. Hence, "Peace of *Ftahlr*," based on the agreed width of the buffer zone.

*Ftahea*: Year.

*Fteir*: One of the 15 Aslan words for different shades of honor; carries overtones of cultured behavior and righteousness. Sometimes translated as "the One True Way."

*Fteirko*: One of several Aslan words for a spiritual leader, usually translated as "guru"; literally, "honor personified" or "honor itself." Not a priest in Human terms, but closer to a wise man.

*Fteirle*: The Aslan term for their race. Literally, "those with honor" or "the honorable ones."

### Glossary: H

*Hkiyrerao*: (1) Curiosity. (2) Scientist. (3) Research ship or establishment.

*Hraye*: (1) Wanderer, wandering; originally a lone Aslan sent out by his pride to find new waterholes or new herds of prey, and report their location. (2) A military scout or scout unit. (3) A scoutship.

*Hrokh*: A ship's captain.

*Hryo*: (1) Six. (2) Half-dozen, i.e., roughly six. (3) A squadron of ships, not necessarily identical.

*Htoi*: (1) Land, especially bountiful land. (2) A treasure world – one rich in such lands. Note that the Aslan language has a number of words for land, with shades of meaning which denote how good the hunting is there, and so by extension how valuable it is.

*Huiha*: Clan. A group of prides.

*Huih'eal*: A battalion- or regiment-sized military unit. Literally, "armed clan."

Continued on next page . . .



## Aslan Glossary

[Continued]

### Glossary: I – K

*Ihatei*: Literally, “second son”; idiomatically, “landless,” i.e., a male from a family which does hold land, but who cannot hope to inherit that land. Since such males often choose a military career as a way to glory and land, *ihatei* is also used idiomatically to refer to a clan’s troops.

*Khaifealate*: Machine pistol; submachinegun.

*Khaihte*: Pistol.

*Khaihte*: (1) Snub pistol. (2) A gyrocomp handgun (see p. UT46).

*Khtauaao*: Usually translated as “period”; roughly a quarter of an hour.

*Khtukhao*: (2) Clan transport.

*Ko*: Literally, “himself.” The head of a clan.

*Kteiroa*: (1) Miner. (2) Seeker-class starship.

*Ktelih*: Head of a pride.

*Ktiyhui*: (1) Communications specialist; originally a runner sent to carry news or orders between families, nowadays more likely to be a radioman. (2) Courier vessel.

*Kusyu*: The Aslan homeworld, usually written as “Kuzu” in Galanglic.

### Glossary: L

*Lakh*: Land.

*Lakht*: Usually translated as “lord”; literally, “landholder.” (1) A noble male. (2) A polite form of address for a male Aslan of unknown status, or who is known to be from a family which holds land.

*Lalikht*: Grandfather.

*Likht*: Father. Note the similarity to “lakht,” landholder.

### Glossary: S

*Saietaie*: The dwarf companion of Kusyu’s primary.

*Saostoilryu*: Usually translated as “accelerator rifle.” A gyrocomp longarm (see p. UT46).

Continued on next page . . .

## Crew Composition

Upper-class males are the captains, pilots, and gunners. They know which buttons to push and have a good grasp of tactics and strategy, but little idea how any of the equipment works. Upper-class females are the navigation, engineering, and executive officers, positions requiring advanced technical knowledge. In combat, the ship is commanded by the male captain, but the day-to-day running of the ship he delegates to the female executive officer, who is the *de facto* captain until battle is joined.

Lower-class Aslan, male or female, conduct maintenance and repairs, and are generally the equivalent of Human enlisted personnel.

## ASLAN MERCENARIES

As privateers are to clan space forces, so mercenaries are to clan ground forces – an honorable business, providing a service to clans who for whatever reason do not handle these matters themselves. The work is attractive to lower-class and landless males because it offers a chance of glory, honor, and land. A clan normally has more would-be warriors than it can afford to equip and train, and the surplus often become mercenaries.

An Aslan mercenary unit is typically set up by a wealthy unmarried female as a commercial venture. She will delegate its operation to a female relative in return for a share of the profits. Although in theory this relative is the ultimate decision-maker for the unit, she will overrule the male combat commander’s tactical orders only if these threaten the owner’s business interests.

As with clan ground forces, the soldiers and line officers are males, and staff officers and support personnel are females.

## ASLAN ASSASSINS: I’M COMING TO GET YOU . . .

Units of assassins are often compared to the Japanese ninja, but in fact their role is closer to that of Human Special Forces – they are small teams of elite warriors, highly skilled in individual and small-unit tactics, respected by their allies and feared by their foes. Both clan ground forces and corporate mercenaries have assassin units, but they are expensive to operate and infrequently used (see the discussion of wars of assassins on p. 15), so they are rare.

Unlike Human Special Forces, which operate under a cloak of secrecy, the assassins of many clans announce their intentions before an operation, and publicize their exploits proudly afterward. The mystique of these assassins is built on being able to defeat opponents even when the foe has knowledge of their attack plan before the event.

Mercenary assassins may also be used to redress some crimes of honor. They then become bounty hunters or professional duelists, hired to track down a dishonorable foe and issue a formal challenge. This is a common occupation for aging or injured assassins, as honor demands that the duelists be evenly matched, and few can hope to survive a duel to the death against an assassin at the peak of his fitness and training. An assassin employed in this way will either be rewarded in an honorable way – a valuable gift or service – or will have a female relative acting as an agent, who is paid in cash.

## CREATING ASLAN CHARACTERS

Aslan characters can be created using the rules in the *Basic Set*, or the template system of *GURPS Traveller*. A number of their mandatory advantages and disadvantages are detailed in *Compendium I*. Aslan culture and psychology are close enough to Human modes of thought for easy roleplaying, so players should have no difficulty in running Aslan characters. Groups of adventurers may be wholly or partly Aslan.



While it is tempting to emphasize headbanging noble males, players should remember that they need technical and medical staff as much as musket needs pike. They should either have a supporting cast of female allies and dependents, or have some PCs take the roles of physician, mechanic, and voice of reason traditionally undertaken by females in Aslan society.

### Initial Considerations

Two important decisions must be made early on when creating an Aslan: whether the character is male or female, and whether he or she is racially Aslan, culturally Aslan, or both. These affect the advantages and disadvantages acquired, and place limits on which skills can be learned.

Being an Aslan both racially and culturally (e.g., an Aslan raised in the Hierate) is a 2-point advantage. Being a racial Aslan (e.g., an Aslan raised in Imperial or Darrian space and following its culture) is a 28-point advantage.

Being a cultural Aslan (e.g., a Human raised in the Hierate and embracing Aslan culture) is a -56-point disadvantage.

### Height and Weight

Aslan are 2" taller and 45 lbs. heavier than a Human of the same ST, making an average male 6' tall and 200 lbs. As with Humans, females average 2" shorter and 10 lbs. lighter than males.

## ASLAN RACIAL TEMPLATE

### Attributes

ST +1 [10 points]; DX -1 [-10 points]. Aslan are larger and stronger than Humans, but their body structure, especially the construction of their shoulders and hands, makes them less dexterous.

## Aslan Glossary

[Continued]

**Siylakht:** Usually translated as "Lady"; literally, "landholder's female." (1) A landholder's closest female relative, normally his wife but possibly his sister or mother. (2) The female administrator of a landhold, responsible for its economy and logistics, especially during the landholder's absence. In this context, typically translated as "chatelaine." (3) The female administrator of a ship or military unit, again responsible for supply and finance. In this context, normally translated as "executive officer" or simply "executive." (4) A female holding a managerial position in a corporation.

**Siyu:** Unmarried; literally, "no female."

**Soarl:** Special, elite. Sometimes used as a prefix for military unit names; in this context it is usually translated into Galanglic as "Guards."

**Syar:** To seek, to search.

**Syareahtaorl:** Usually translated as "quest"; searching for some worthy, but non-monetary, goal. Most commonly used by ihteai to describe their search for new lands.

### Glossary: T

**Tafohiti:** Largest continent on Kusyu; it is believed the Aslan evolved here.

**Tahiwihateakhtau:** Barbarians; those who do not embrace Aslan culture.

**Takheal:** Long rifle.

**Takhestah:** Long pistol.

**Taorl:** Esthetic fortune; honor, responsibility.

**Tekhaao:** Hour.

**Tlaukhu:** The Council of 29; the largest political structure in the Aslan Hierate.

**Trekhyair** ("land protector"): (1) Generic term for a clan's military forces. (2) Soldier.

**Triluealikhe:** Laser carbine.

**Trolitakheal:** Laser rifle.

**Tyeyo:** (1) Kusyu's primary. (2) Idiomatic term for a star.

### Glossary: U - Y

**Uealao:** Second.

**Uealikhe:** Carbine.

**Weakhto:** Battle.

**Yakh'le:** Assassins. Literally, "they who pounce."

**Yeheal:** Any type of man-portable automatic longarm, especially an autorigle; literally, "pounce-gun," from the original use of these weapons by assassin raiding parties.

**Yurletya:** Spear-hook.



## Dust-Spice

This rare euphoric spice is used as a seasoning. Humans and Vargr use it especially for fruit; Aslan either use it to flavor meat or consume it on its own.

Harvested from the bark of desert scrub-plants on Romar (p. BTC99), it is popular with Humans as a mild recreational drug. Aslan and Vargr also use dust-spice, but its effects on them are considerably more powerful. The spice is so highly prized by the *Fteirle* that in 1117 a group of *ihatei* attempted to seize control of Romar to gain control of the supply.

Like tobacco, dust-spice is cheap, highly addictive for Aslan and Vargr, and legal; a dust-spice user has a -5 point addiction.

## Advantages

Aslan have better senses than Humans. They are tougher and better short-distance sprinters. They also possess natural weapons (claws) and protection (fur). Racial Aslan possess all of these advantages; cultural Aslan who are members of other races (e.g., Humans) obviously do not, unless they form part of the “racial package” for that species. The total cost of these advantages is 58 points.

Acute Hearing +3 [6 points].

Acute Taste/Smell +3 [6 points].

Claws [15 points].

Enhanced Move 1 (running fatigue begins after 5 seconds, -30% limitation) [7 points].

Extended Lifespan +1 [5 points].

Extra Hit Points +1 [5 points].

Fur [4 points].

Night Vision [10 points]. Aslan Night Vision is in black and white, as with those humans who possess the advantage.



## Adventure Seed: Urbane Guerillas

The adventurers are relaxing in one of their favorite haunts when a noble Aslan approaches and asks if he may join them. He is well-educated, polite, and speaks excellent Galanglic.

Over the meal, he announces calmly that he is a mercenary assassin, engaged by the Enemy of one of the PCs to kill them all. He offers a data chip with details of his colleagues, their weapons, and their plan. He then bids them goodnight. The assassins are (of course) an even match for the group in skills and equipment.

Should they fight? Can they win? Can they persuade the assassins that the Enemy is dishonorable, and join forces with them to deal with him?

## Disadvantages

Cultural Aslan get all of these except Poor Grip (which is caused by the structure of the Aslan hand), and Short Lifespan. Racial Aslan only have the Obsession (which is derived from their hard-wired territorial instincts), Poor Grip, and Short Lifespan unless they are also cultural Aslan. The total value of these disadvantages is -56 points.

Code of Honor (*Fteir*; see *Philosophy*, p. 7). [-15 points]. This is the Aslan commitment to the “One True Way,” which guides all their actions.

Intolerance (non-Aslan) [-10 points]. The cultural Aslan is intolerant of anyone who does not follow the principles of their code of honor. This is really a religious intolerance (p. B34), but most Aslan assume that if you’re not the right species, you don’t have the right philosophy. The intolerance does not apply to a non-Aslan who is known to behave honorably. Most non-Aslan know about this trait, and react to Aslan at -1 to -5 because of it (this is a standard component of the disadvantage). Just how badly NPCs react to *Fteirle* depends on how the local clans express their intolerance, which can range from simply remaining aloof – say, never inviting non-Aslan to dinner (-1 reaction) – to unprovoked orbital bombardment (-5).

Obsession (Own land) [-15 points]. Everything an Aslan does is driven by his territorial instincts. If he has no land, he is consumed with acquiring some; if he owns land, he schemes to enlarge his holding. Females differ in this obsession – males are interested in land for its own sake, while females focus on the resources and economic potential of a region. This is essentially a form of Greed, in which the character lusts for land rather than wealth, so the GM may prefer to record it as Greed (Land).

Poor Grip [-5 points]. This represents the difficulty Aslan have grasping and manipulating tools because of the dewclaw, which makes the thumb inflexible. As a “special effect” not worth any extra points, the -2 penalty applies whenever an Aslan tries to use equipment built for Humans or Vargr, or vice versa.

Proud [-1 point]. Aslan are concerned with their reputation, and touchy about perceived insults. A sure sign that a *Fteirle* has been deeply offended is the involuntary extension of the dewclaw in readiness for combat.

Short Lifespan -2 (partially offset by Extended Lifespan advantage, -50% limitation) [-10 points]. See the following section for elaboration.

## ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

The following modifications are suggested for Aslan characters:

*Age* *see p. B27*

Aslan aging is slower in its onset, but more severe in its effects. Aslan do not start to age – and may not gain points from this disadvantage – until 62 *fitea* (54 standard years) old, but must then roll for aging every 6 months instead of every year. To reflect their unusual aging pattern, Aslan have both the Extended Lifespan advantage and a limited Short Lifespan disadvantage for a net -5 points. Aslan characters over 54 standard years old may take the Age disadvantage normally.

*Claim to Hospitality* *see p. C121*

The clan looks after its own. A clansman in need of help can approach other clan members and expect a meal, a place to sleep, medical attention, and a ticket home. Players must pay for this advantage because they can easily forego it by declaring their characters outcasts, or by stating that they are adventuring beyond their clan’s normal area of operations. In the latter case, if they return home, they must immediately buy at least 5 points of this advantage.

*Clerical Investment* *see p. B19*

There are no Aslan priests as such, so this advantage is banned. Being a *fteirko* is instead represented by an appropriate Reputation (*fteirko*, all the time) giving at least a +1 reaction modifier. The point cost depends on how many clans have heard of the character’s wisdom, and how large they are. These should always include the PC’s clan, and may optionally include that clan’s vassals, overlord, allies, and enemies. The would-be guru should also have a high level of Philosophy, with a specialization in *Fteir*. See also the *fteirko* template on p. 48.

*Favors* *see p. B236*

These are especially appropriate for *Fteirle* characters, representing debts of honor between individuals or clans (see *Philosophy*, p. 7.) Note that Aslan Favors can be inherited or otherwise transferred, so the character may be owed one by someone he has never helped, and possibly never even met.

*Primitive or High Technology* *see p. B26*  
*see p. C126*

Typical TLs in the Hierate are 9-10 (see sidebar, p. 45). Any individual or group of Aslan characters can claim to be from a clan of any TL from 7 to 11. Even if no clan of the players’ preferred TL exists in the campaign setting, they could be *ihatei* and their followers, newly moved into the area.



## Adventure Seed: Arms for the Sake of Profit

The characters are hired to escort (or carry, if they have their own ship) a cargo of TL12 military gear to a clan in the Hierate. They must deal with turgid bureaucracy, anti-Aslan factions who brand them traitors to their race, investigative reporters trying to prove that the recipients are using the weapons to suppress or exterminate their Human vassals, and rival clans who want to maintain the current balance of power.

## Naming Ships

Armed Aslan vessels are considered male; the rare unarmed ship is female.

The Human custom of referring to warships as “she” is a source of amusement, and is occasionally cited as evidence that Humans cannot be true warriors.

Both races share the custom of naming ships for cultural heroes or martial virtues (e.g., *Indefatigable*).

## Adventure Seed: Paintball

The PCs are guests in an Aslan landhold, and consequently bound to defend their host against intruders. An elegant meal and enjoyable swapping of tall stories are interrupted by assassins from a rival clan. Will the party-goers realize in time that these gatecrashers are just counting coup, or will they kill one, bringing upon themselves and their host a dishonor which can only be wiped out by a duel to the death?

## Whose Ship Is It, Anyway?

**A**slan may take the Ship Patron advantage (p. GT84), although it's less common than for Humans. The ship is owned collectively by the patron's clan (or, less frequently, her corporation), and he is assigned to operate it in their interest. Ship Patrons are likely to be either Grants or Boons.

### Grant

The character has justified constructive possession of the ship to a clan or corporate leader by demonstrating how this will benefit the organization. The benefits may derive from trade, exploration, *ihatei* expeditions, courier duties, warfare, etc., depending on the type of ship and the ambitions of whoever funds it. The need to fulfill the grantee's expectations reduces the cost of a Ship Patron obtained by Grant by 5 points.

Corporations expect their ships to turn a profit every year. Basic rules for trade and commerce are given on p. GT122; if the ship makes a profit, typically 50% of this goes to the corporation, 20% to the crew, and 30% to the grantee. If it does not, typically the grantee is replaced by another (roleplay it, or make a reaction check; a Poor reaction or worse means the grantee is replaced).

Clans granting a ship pay all the ship's expenses, and receive all its revenues. They are less concerned with pure profit, but do expect to see the intangible benefits agreed upon as the reason for the grant.

It is possible to buy a ship, but since financing would probably be arranged via a clan or corporation this is much the same as being granted a ship.

A character who does not initially have the Ship Patron advantage may acquire it during play by paying the necessary points and presenting his case to the clan/corporate leader in person. Roleplay it!

### Boon

The character has been given a ship for his or her personal use, as a reward for some great service to the clan. Such a service normally entails great risk, and would make a fine adventure; if a PC has a Ship Patron from a Boon, its upkeep is entirely his responsibility, and its revenues are his alone. In theory he could sell it, but this would be an insult to the clan which granted the boon.

## Rapier Wit

see p. C129

In a silly campaign, this is applicable in exchanges of insults between Aslan, and also in the dewclaw fights which may follow, but not in open warfare or common brawls. It can be associated with a suitable Reputation or Trademark.

## Reputation

see p. B17

An Aslan may take a Reputation – especially a bad one – for something his clan does (rather than for something personal). For example, if his clan has a tradition of torturing prisoners, the character may take a Reputation for that without being involved in such acts himself. This is essentially a limited form of a racial reputation.

## Social Stigma

see p. B27

As it has such a powerful effect on the way Aslan are treated, and affects how the culture of local clans is defined in the campaign, this disadvantage can only be taken by agreement with the GM.

A female Aslan may take one or two levels of Social Stigma by claiming that her clan treats females as second-class citizens or valuable property, respectively. She can just as easily claim that her clan respects women equally, and avoid the stigma.

Both males and females can take two levels of Social Stigma by claiming that they failed their rite of passage (see p. 6) and are thus outcasts from their clan. If they do so, they may not have a Claim to Hospitality on any clan.

It is possible – though probably unwise – to take four levels of Social Stigma by stating that the PC, or a close relative, has committed a crime of honor (see *Laws, Crime, and Punishment*, p. 14). This makes the character a “wolf's head” who may be hunted down and killed with impunity by other Aslan. If determined to do this, the player should consider having his character take a powerful Enemy or a Vow to clear his name as well.

## Youth

p. B29

“Legal age” for Aslan is 16 *ftahea* (14 standard years). This is a 0-point effect of their unusual aging pattern. Those younger than that may take Youth normally.

## ASLAN STATUS

Characters with Status 1+ are from a landholding family; higher Status indicates a larger landhold. Aslan do not have noble titles as such, although their formal names define the amount of land held and so serve as a guide. Exact status also depends on the quality of the land and the honorable deeds family members may have performed.

### Aslan Status Table

Level	Landhold or Status	Monthly Cost of Living
7	More than 4 million square miles	Cr50,000+
6	4 million square miles or less	Cr30,000
5	400,000 square miles or less	Cr15,000
4	40,000 square miles or less	Cr8,000
3	4,000 square miles or less	Cr4,000
2	400 square miles or less	Cr2,000
1	40 square miles or less	Cr1,000
0	Average Aslan	Cr500
-1	Low caste Aslan, cultural Aslan who are not racially so.	Cr200
-2	Outcast, pirate	Varies
-3	Non-Aslan	Varies
-4	Racial Aslan who are not culturally so; Aslan guilty of crimes of honor.	Varies



The *ko* of a clan has Status 3 or more, depending on the size of his clan and whether it is vassal to a larger one. Pride leaders have a Status that is 1 less than their *ko*; family patriarchs, 2 less; ordinary clan members, 3 less.

Players should be required to justify creating a character with Status 3+, because this is likely to be a *ko* or pride leader in an independent clan, with little time for adventuring. At Status 7, the character is *ko* of one of the 29 clans, and will need a truly outstanding reason to be wandering around with the party.

The landhold areas shown in the status table are those directly controlled by the character's family, and do not include those of any vassals. Monthly cost of living in the Hierate is variable below Status -1, but is likely to be high. It reflects badly on a merchant's honor when she deals with such people, so she adds a surcharge – and her silence may need to be bought as well.

Note that a non-Aslan who establishes a Reputation for honorable behavior may use it to nullify his low Status ("I've dealt with her for years; she's not a bad sort – for a Human . . .").

## ASLAN MILITARY RANKS

Military officers (Rank 3+) must also have Status 1+. It is possible for a low-caste Aslan of outstanding courage or skill to gain a battlefield promotion into the officer corps – in fact, this is a major reason why many join the military – but such promotions are invariably accompanied by the gift of a landhold.

In most clans, Rank can effectively be bought (p. B22), although this is done with reputation and family connections rather than hard cash. Titles vary slightly from clan to clan; translations for the most common ones are listed in the tables below. Ranks for females may have different names; these are noted in parentheses. Where several titles are shown for a level of Military Rank, they are in descending order of seniority, left to right.

### Space Forces

Rank	Title
8	Clan Admiral
7	Fleet Admiral (Fleet Chief of Staff), Admiral (Chief of Staff)
6	Captain (Executive)
5	Commandant (Executive Officer), Commandant Lieutenant (Executive Lieutenant)
4	Senior Lieutenant, Lieutenant
3	Junior Lieutenant, Intendant
2	Honored Chief Petty Officer, Chief Petty Officer
1	Honored Petty Officer, Veteran Petty Officer, Petty Officer
0	Honored Spacehand, Veteran Spacehand, Spacehand, Recruit

### Ground Forces

Rank	Title
8	Field Marshal
7	General (Chief of Staff), Corps General (Corps Chief of Staff)
6	Division General (Division Chief of Staff), Senior Commandant (Senior Executive)
5	Commandant (Executive)
4	Captain, Lieutenant
3	Junior Lieutenant, Cadet
2	Honored Warrior Leader, Leader of Clansmen, Leader of Warriors
1	Chief Honored Warrior, Honored Warrior, Veteran Warrior
0	Warrior, Veteran Soldier, Soldier

## Reactions

**W**here Humans would *attack* on a poor reaction roll, Aslan will instead be *discourteous* – insulting the other party's honor, lineage, and so forth. If the insulted fails to respond with a challenge or suitable counter-insult, he will lose face, but is unlikely to be attacked. Engaging in a spirited exchange of insults may defuse the situation and avoid a physical duel ("Hah! Spoken like a true warrior!"), or it may make one inevitable ("No one calls me that and lives!").

A result of *very poor* or worse means an immediate challenge, without preliminary discourtesy. This usually means that the speaker has unintentionally insulted the Aslan.

Remember to deduct the local CR from the reaction roll (p. 24).

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*"One thing I've noticed about the Aslan: when you train from earliest youth to be a warrior, you tend to get pretty good at it. If you're going to be around Aslan for a while, my advice is to carefully read a good manual on intersophont etiquette."*

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– Anton Wilson Peale

## Adventure Seed: A Most Un-Aslan Weapon

**T**he PCs are approached by an *earleatras* with a difficult problem. A local bravo has a most impressive dueling record; his unbroken string of victories is a little suspicious, but there is no evidence of trickery. The *earleatras* has been watching him closely, and suspects he is using psionics to give himself an edge – possibly PK or Telepathy. Doing so would be a crime of honor, but to suggest the duelist is cheating would be discourteous and could jeopardize the patron's perceived impartiality.

The characters must determine whether (and how) the suspect is cheating, and if necessary prove it. Accusing the young warrior of cheating will result in a duel to the death – which he has a good chance of winning . . .

## Aslan Names

See pp. 27-28 for a discussion of Aslan naming practices. If you need a name in a hurry, pick one of these (Aslan custom allows you to change it at whim later). Since Aslan informal names are much like Human nicknames, in that they refer to a significant attribute or event, they are not gender-specific (an idea that would horrify any *true* Aslan).

*Note:* Do not use the *ko* suffix unless the character really is the head of a clan!

*Aikhaheh:* "Starts by Throwing." Connotes one who is eager for combat.

*Akhwohkyal:* "Born to the Guns of Battle"; one who was born – or reborn – on a battlefield.

*Akoafi:* "Far-Throwing" or "Longhurler."

*Easokhou:* "Armored Hunter"; implies one who hunts or fights unusually dangerous prey.

*Eiwytlil:* "Wild Twilight," a parallel of the Human slogan, "We own the night!"

*Esouearl:* "Small Wisdom." The implication is that the individual speaks seldom, but wisely.

*Estalyah:* "Thirty Claws," denoting tenacity. Note that a minor change in pronunciation makes this "Small Claws," an insult implying that the individual's blows are too puny to cause damage. For this reason, the name is sometimes chosen by those eager to duel, as some "convenient hearing" allows them to manufacture cause.

*Eteasteah:* "Thirty Stars," normally borne by the well-traveled.

*Heatloi:* "Longblade," typically chosen by an Aslan who for some reason fights with a spear, Marine-issue cutlass, etc. Those so inclined can make any number of insults out of this.

*Hleakhayes:* "Worldstrider," again denoting a starfaring Aslan.

*Hruhyaou:* "Six Valleys," typically chosen by those who wish to advertise the fact that their family holds extensive lands.

*Hwyoweas:* "Ally." The connotation is that the individual is part of a large company, alliance, or brotherhood, and can call on the support of many comrades.

*Iroioah:* "Claw of Legend." This refers to the Aslan's dueling prowess. It is more common as a male name than a female one.

*Kaiear:* "Pistol Wisdom." The main connotation here is of one who enforces clan law or clan honor by force of arms, although there is a secondary implication of expertise with sidearms. Sometimes translated idiomatically as "Gunfighter" or "Shootist."

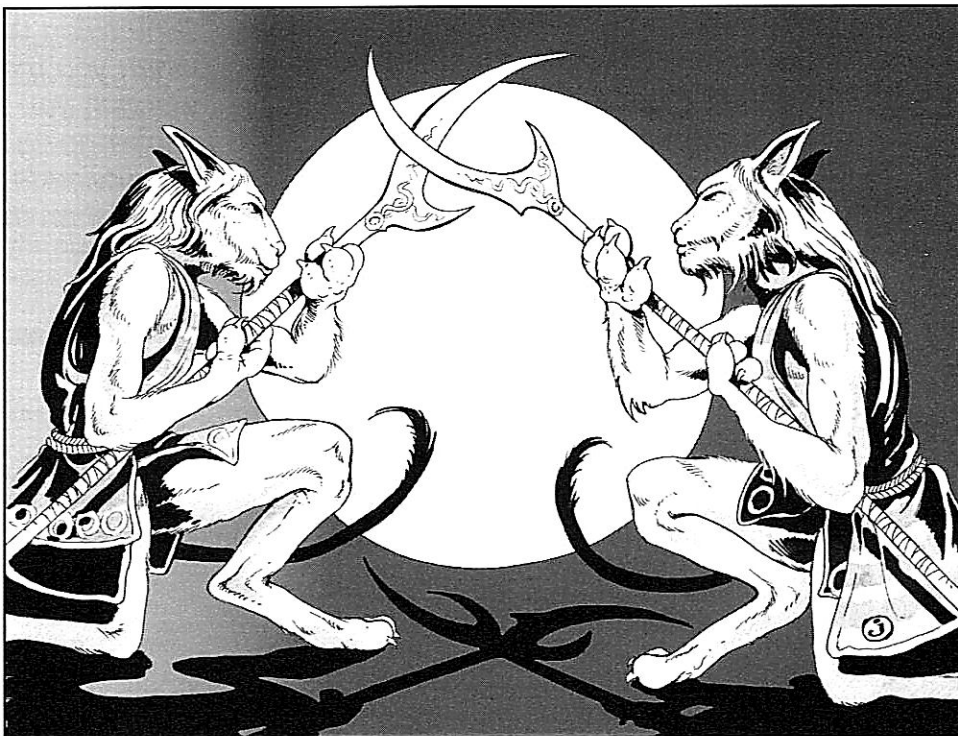
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## DESIRABLE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

The hero of Aslan sagas, epitome of Aslan virtue, would have at least some of: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Cool, Danger Sense, Daredevil, Fearlessness, Heir, High Pain Threshold, Rapid Healing, Status, Strong Will, Toughness, Voice, and Wealth. Allies, Ally Groups, Dependents, and Patrons are easily rationalized as members of one's own clan, as are Enemies as members of a rival clan or outcasts seeking revenge. In a cinematic campaign, *Hard To Kill* would also be appropriate.

Disadvantages especially appropriate for Aslan include Bad Temper, Bloodlust, Bully, Duty (to the clan), Fanaticism (*Fteir*), Glory Hound, Impulsiveness, Laziness, and Stubbornness. Male Aslan rarely retreat or surrender in combat, regardless of the odds – Berserk and On The Edge are both valid ways to reflect this. Noble males (those with Status 1+) should consider Compulsive Generosity, Compulsive Spending, Innumerate, or Self-Centered. They are treated by NPCs as if they have Incompetence (Merchant), so taking this disadvantage is recommended, although not required.

Overconfidence and Sense of Duty (to clansmen and/or comrades) are almost mandatory, but then most PCs behave as if they have those anyway!



## "TABOO" ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

*Fteirle* characters may not have Alternate Identities, Beast-Kin, or Clerical Investment. Pacifism of any sort, or Post-Combat Shakes, are unlikely; an Aslan with aichmophobia (p. B36) is in *real* trouble, because he is afraid of his own hands.

No self-respecting male would admit to having Lightning Calculator, Mathematical Ability, Greed, or Miserliness in polite society, but they are acceptable for females.

Alcoholism, Combat Paralysis, Compulsive Lying, Cowardice, Kleptomania, and similar dishonorable character traits should be accompanied by a Secret (if the PC has somehow managed to conceal them so far) or a bad Reputation or poor Status (if he has not), in which case a Vow to prove oneself or clear one's name is also appropriate.

## SKILLS

The skills culturally Aslan characters can select are limited by their gender. Combat skills are also limited for racial Aslan by their dewclaws.

### Effects of the Dewclaw

Because of their dewclaws, Aslan are seldom skilled in one-handed melee weapons. The significant exception is that Aslan serving in the Imperial Marines will learn Shortsword to handle the Marine-issue cutlass (treat this as a saber; see p. B206). They do this out of respect for the centuries-old Marine rituals and traditions associated with the weapon, not because they consider it better than a dewclaw.

For game purposes, using the dewclaw in melee is covered by Brawling or Karate. Note that in hand-to-hand fighting an Aslan does not *have* to use his claws, but in the heat of the moment, the GM should require a Will roll if he wishes *not* to do so.

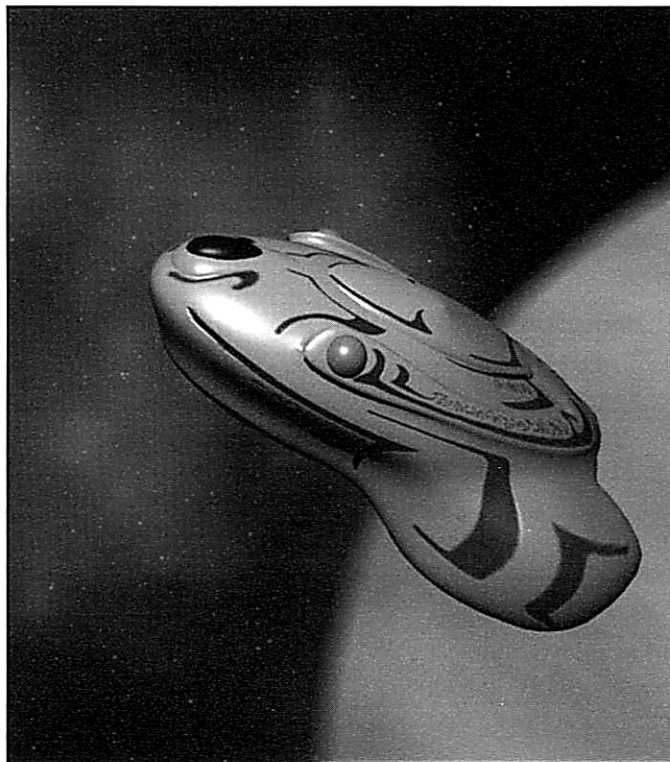
### Effects of Gender

Because cultural Aslan consider certain skills to be the province of a specific gender, it is dishonorable for a male to learn or use a female skill, and vice versa. Extreme circumstances may make this necessary, but an Aslan so disgraced will not admit it in public.

Traditionally male skills include Combat/Weapon Skills and Piloting (Large Spacecraft); Gunner specializations should be restricted to direct-fire weapons. Male characters may learn the skills needed to operate technical equipment without shame, but should avoid knowing how to build or repair it. For example, Computer Operation and Electronics Operation are acceptable – Computer Programming and Electronics are not.

Some skills, such as Mechanic, are borderline; they may be learned by lower-class males, but noble males who admit to knowing them are thought eccentric or effeminate. Bribery is not learned by males, nor is it effective when dealing with them – they neither understand money nor care about it. Males may learn Philosophy or Theology if they specialize in *Fteir* (only a female would have any interest in the false teachings of barbarians).

Female skills include all Craft, Professional, Scientific, and Thief/Spy skills, and the indirect-fire specializations of Gunner. As a female may need to defend herself, her family, or her lands in her husband's absence, it is accepted that she may put a few character points into a couple of Combat/Weapon skills; skill levels above 12 (basic competence) are permitted, but not encouraged. Needlecraft (P/A, see p. CI137) is a common female pastime, and Aslan of either gender appreciate fine handmade clothing.



## Aslan Names

[Continued]

*Khalear*: "64." This bears the same emotional freight for an Aslan as 100 does for a Human. The bearer has done *something* many times (he would like you to think 64 times or more) – perhaps killed 64 foes, made 64 successful trading missions, or even lived 64 years. Ask him, and he'll tell you . . .

*Khyruatre*: "Beast Lore." This has one of several meanings, like most Aslan terms – depending on the user's inclination, it can indicate knowledge of wildlife and its ways, prowess in telling legends about mythological creatures, or a liking for that style of entertainment. It is more often chosen by females than by males.

*Kriskheao*: "Talks With Three Spirits." An Aslan who can see the viewpoints of others and negotiate effectively with them. He is said to speak with the spirit of his own clan, that of the other clan with whom he is dealing, and the spirit of honor. This is a fairly common name amongst traders and envoys.

*Oakhhafuh*: "Facepaint," which implies the use of camouflage, and thus advertises the individual's sneakiness at war or on the hunt. It is therefore not much used in clans that consider such cunning dishonorable.

*Teaearl*: "Star Wisdom," another sobriquet of the far-traveled. It implies that the individual has gained valuable experience on his journeys, and his opinions should therefore carry extra weight. A subtle change in pronunciation creates "Star Warrior," which a younger male Aslan might prefer.

*Tlankhu*: "Fifth Counsel." The Aslan, like Humans, count off options on their fingers (the four digits on each hand). The "fifth option" is one that most Aslan would never think of, a parallel to the Human expression "thinking outside the box." Taking this name advertises the Aslan's ingenuity and versatility. The closest equivalent in Galanglic would be "Jack-of-All-Trades."

*Tlehiui*: "Counsel of the Clan." Most often used by a *fteirko*, this alludes to the respect the user's clan gives to his (or her) opinions.

*Wafoua*: "Remembrance." One of many names used to fish for questions; the listener is sure to ask "Remembrance of what?" The bearer can then settle back and yarn at length about how the name came to be chosen.

*Yehstahweye*: "Thirty Pounces" or "Thirty Leaps." Normally used to denote stamina (the bearer can make 30 leaps before tiring), it can also mean that the user is a veteran assassin who has successfully carried out 30 missions.



## ***Ftewekh'ealyu: A Sample Aslan Dueling Style [7 points]***

**Primary Skills:** Karate, Karate Art, Savoir-Faire (Dueling Etiquette).

**Secondary Skills:** Brawling (for underhanded maneuvers), Fast-Talk (for insults), Intimidate (for persuading others that it would be wiser to apologize than to duel).

**Optional Skills:** History (Dueling and Duelists), Theology (*Fteir*), and Philosophy (*Fteir*).

**Maneuvers:** Feint, Hit Location [2 points], Jab.

This formal dueling style emphasizes precise strikes and good footwork over flashy techniques. It also has a well-defined sense of aesthetic correctness.




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*"Since Aslan have dewclaws, they are seldom skilled in one-handed melee weapons; the only significant exception is that Aslan serving in the Imperial Marines will learn Shortsword to handle the Marine-issue cutlass. This is because they respect the centuries-old Marine rituals and traditions associated with the weapon, not because they consider it better than a dewclaw."*

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Fighters may attempt to deliver a stylish blow by announcing this at the beginning of any round. If the fighter's roll is made by a margin of 2 or better and the blow makes it past his opponent's defenses, then he can add +1 to his reaction rolls at the end of the fight, whether he won or lost. All reaction modifiers from successful attempts to be stylish are cumulative, but cannot exceed a total of +6 for any one fight.

"Underhanded maneuvers" are not properly part of the formal style but may be permitted in some duels; further, a knowledge of them assists the fighter in defending against their illegal use.

Either sex may safely learn Animal, Artistic, Athletic, Language, Outdoor, Social, or Vehicle skills, and specifically Brawling, First Aid, Heraldry, or Karate. Bard is especially valued, for storytelling (see *Customs*, pp. 11-12).

Note that Aslan rarely know the Gambling skill; females don't take unnecessary risks with their money, and males are disinterested in both money and mathematics – if they need excitement, they hunt or duel.

### ***Skill Specializations***

Some skills actually vary from clan to clan because of differences in local traditions – for example, the marriage ceremony in the *Yerlyaruiwo* clan may differ markedly from that performed by the *Hkastahistoti*. The GM may rule that a character knowing such skills has to specialize not only in (say) Aslan law, but the laws of a specific clan. This adds a little complexity, but does stress to the players that the Hierate is not a homogenous mass of identical clans.

Skills for which this is especially appropriate include History, Law, Performance (Ritual), Savoir-Faire, and Tournament Law.

Characters who take Performance (Ritual) should also specialize in a type of ritual – it is common for an Aslan with this skill to have several specializations. Types of ritual include Birth, Clan War, Dueling, Funeral, and Marriage.

Law as studied and practiced in landholds is essentially a detailed knowledge of clan traditions and precedents; if the attorney can demonstrate that a clan ancestor resolved a case in a particular way, there is a good chance he can gain acceptance for the same solution in a similar case.

### ***Converting Traveller Characters***

In addition to the usual guidelines (pp. GT124-129), *Traveller* Aslan have several unique skills which may need translation.

*Dewclaw* should be considered Karate if the fighter has had formal instruction, and Brawling if he learned it informally in starport bars.

*Independence* is best represented by the male concerned *not* taking Incompetence in financial skills.

Treat *Tolerance* as Diplomacy, or alternately allow the character to buy off part of his racial Intolerance for non-Aslan. Note that the former option is honorable (it is used to avoid unnecessary violence), but the latter is not (it is the first step on the slippery slope to adopting Imperial values and denying one's Aslan nature).

For skills relating to Aslan-specific weapons, see *Equipment*, p. 50.

## ASLAN AND THE MARTIAL ARTS

Both racial and cultural Aslan have a wide range of martial arts, with almost every clan having its own secret school. GMs interested in expanding this aspect of Aslan life should feel free to invent these, using *GURPS Martial Arts* as a basis, and create appropriate Aslan names for them using the word-generation rules on p. 29. Aslan schools are broadly divided into “high-stance,” fast styles emphasizing speed and agility, and “low-stance,” slow styles depending on power and toughness. Culturally Aslan Humans, with their slight build and greater agility, tend to train in “high-stance” techniques. Aslan martial arts emphasize the dewclaw (or its artificial substitute, the *ayloi*), so many of the techniques resemble Human knife-fighting.

A typical “high-stance” style teaches the Dual Attack, Feint, Hit Location, Jab, and Off-Hand Weapon Training maneuvers. “Low-stance” styles usually offer Close Combat, Elbow Strike, Ground Fighting, Neck Snap, and Roundhouse Punch. The various kick maneuvers are rare, being less effective than a strike with the dewclaw, but may be encountered as secret maneuvers used by a particular school. Almost any conceivable combination of basic attacks and the above maneuvers has been developed and taught by some clan, somewhere. In a cinematic campaign, cinematic maneuvers and the Trained by a Master advantage may be appropriate. Seeking out an appropriate master to gain the latter in play can make a good quest for PCs, whether they are looking for him themselves or escorting a student to him.

## Commonly Available Tech Levels

**T**echnology in the Hierate is more uniform, but on average slightly lower, than in Human space. This is primarily due to Aslan conservatism – like the Vilani, they place no value on progress for its own sake, and unlike the Solomani, they do not constantly strive for a technological edge in warfare or trade; to do so would distract attention from skill and honor at best, and at worst might be dishonorable.

“Humans have many useless toys,” they say, “and waste much time inventing them. We devote ourselves to our lands and our honor.” While this attitude limits their research efforts in some areas, it has not prevented them from copying Human technology where this is of benefit. And it can be a boon – though the Aslan economy is less efficient than Human industry, they do not waste time on ads and toys.



## ASLAN PSIONICS

*Fteirle* have access to the same range of disciplines as Humans, but their psis are less common and less powerful. Aslan psionic training stresses control of one's own body and emotions through meditation; ESP and Healing are favored. The use of Telepathy is discourteous – it implies that the user does not trust what others say to him, and so is tantamount to an accusation of lying. Telepathy skills are therefore mildly dishonorable themselves, and an Aslan studying them should consider an appropriate Secret, low Status, or a bad Reputation. Their use would only be sanctioned against foes who have proven themselves without honor, such as pirates, outcasts, and perhaps Human Special Forces troops.

The majority of clans have access to TL9 items, and often buy some TL10 items from members of the *Tlaukhu*, especially military equipment and starships. Members of the *Tlaukhu* manufacture TL10 technology for their own use and for export. TL11-12 equipment is not normally available, as only a very few worlds (including Kuzu itself) can produce it; where found, it is normally an expensive import from the Imperium or the Solomani Confederation.

### ***Fteir:* Philosophy or Theology?**

**O**ne could argue whether *fteir* is a philosophy, covered by that skill, or a religion, covered by Theology. The author uses Theology for those who truly live by it, and Philosophy for non-believers who study it to better understand the *Fteirle* or live safely among them; but as the skills have the same difficulty, it makes no real difference in play – the GM should state his preference to players, or use them interchangeably.

An Aslan buys psionic skills normally, and psionic power at a -30% discount because he must meditate for 10 minutes before he can use it (this is the Preparation Required limitation; see p. C1111). He may not spend more than 30 points on power without the express permission of the GM and a *very* good reason, probably expressed as an Unusual Background.

## **CHARACTER TEMPLATES**

Remember that most careers are managed at the clan level. No larger or more powerful organizations exist in the Hierate. Any need for such a body would be met by several clans acting in concert. The exceptions are outcasts and pirates, who lack even a clan's direction and must live by their dewclaws and wits.

Aslan usually enter their chosen career at 16 *fiahea* (14 Imperial years), after undergoing the *akuaehrekhyeh* ritual, which assesses their personal characteristics and fitness to enter society.

## **USING STANDARD TEMPLATES**

Most templates are suitable for Aslan characters. Bear in mind any skill limitations imposed by gender – this will affect which options can be chosen within a template. Templates difficult to rationalize as careers for cultural Aslan are Attorney (replaced by the *earleatrais* and *fteirko*), Bounty Hunter, or Undercover Agent (probably dishonorable), Journalist/Reporter (just not an Aslan thing to do), and Wealthy Traveler (replaced by an *ihatei* using another male template).



### ***Male-Only Careers***

Military careers are the archetypal ones for Aslan males – Army, Army Aviation, Marine, or Marine Special Operations (Enlisted or Officer), and Navy Aviation. Aslan have no Marines as such; characters using those templates are their clan's elite assault troops, and Marine Special Operations templates are used to represent the much-feared and respected Aslan assassins. Officers (Rank 3+) must have Status 1+; this may be met by the default from Rank (p. B22).

Diplomats are the trusted male envoys used to conduct interclan negotiations.

Aslan Scouts are *ihatei* wanderers, entrusted by their clan with a small ship and sent in search of new lands. Take the Ship Patron advantage; the Claim to Hospitality refers to the character's claim on his clan.

Other suitable careers for males are Athlete, Hunter/Guide, Law Enforcer, and Martial Artist.



## Female-Only Careers

These are Belter, Bureaucrat, Computer Technician, Engineer, Manager, Mechanic/Technician, Medical Doctor, Medical Technician, Merchant, Professor, and Scientist. Non-combat roles in the military – e.g., logistics or intelligence officers – are best reflected by customizing one of these templates.

## Careers for Both Sexes

*Barbarians* represent Aslan from “lost colonies,” cut off from their sponsors by misjump or other calamities centuries ago, and regressed to a primitive state.

*Corsairs* may be corporate privateers or outcast pirates. Males tend to options 1, 2, and 6, and females to 3, 4, and 5, but as pirate crews are short-handed, normal gender distinctions often break down.

*Entertainers* or *Farmers* may be of either gender, but are low-caste – the player should come up with a *very* good explanation for Status 1+ in these templates.

*Rogues* are outcast Aslan of either sex who performed so badly in their rite of passage that no clan or corporation will take them into its service; they yearn to be accepted back into mainstream society, and a Vow to this effect is common.

*Navy* (Enlisted or Officer) – males favor options 1, 2, or 6, and females options 3, 4, or 5. These are members of clan space forces, which undertake a wider range of roles than navies of other races; Merchant (female) or Scout (male) templates might also be used for these fleets. Naval Officers should have Status 1+, which can be met by the default from Rank (p. B22).

## Ship Crews:

### *Stewards Are for Nobles, Medics Are for Wimps*

Aslan ships require the same skills to operate as Human vessels, but the lack of a central body to regulate crew composition means that each captain decides for himself what crew he needs.

Crew details shown for Aslan starships in this book are thus only guidelines; a ship may have a multi-skilled individual filling several slots, or someone with no obvious function carried because of the captain’s honor or personal tastes. Aslan ships entering Human space may find a sudden need to hire extra crew to comply with Imperial law – possibly the PCs.

*Medics:* The position of ship’s medic is a legal requirement in the Imperium for all ships above a certain size; Aslan ships only carry a medic if the captain thinks he needs one, or if the crew makes a convincing argument for it.

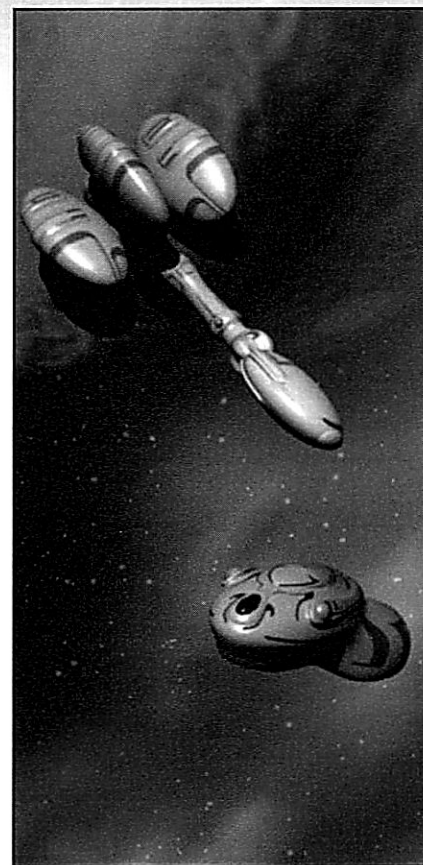
*Stewards:* Again, stewards are not a legal necessity, but most ships carrying passengers have one. Noble males demand the services of stewards in the ratio of one steward per four nobles; if the ship has no stewards, they will commandeer other crew members to meet their needs, leaving the crew shorthanded.

## Gender Roles Aboard Starships

Starship captains, pilots, and gunners are male. Navigators, engineers, medics, and stewards are female. Sensor/commo operators, technicians, small craft crews, security personnel, etc., may be lower-class males or females of any status, though it is customary for fighter pilots to be noble or near-noble males – in fact, success in this career is one way for a male to be granted land.

Any Aslan who cares to think about it will realize that an *ihatei* male flying a scoutship single-handed must overcome his prejudices and learn female skills such as Engineer. This distasteful necessity is not mentioned in civil society – the polite thing is to assume he has a maintenance robot to deal with such matters – and he would not be expected to use those skills while any alternative is available.

The rare Aslan pirate vessel is usually short-handed, and all hands must acquire skills not appropriate for their gender to keep the ship running. They do their best to avoid this disgrace, and to forget it if they ever return to a normal life. Privateers have the backing of large corporations and so can maintain normal proprieties.



## Adventure Seed: *My Father's Rifle*

**T**he PCs are engaged by a noble Aslan to assist him in retrieving a family heirloom from Human space. (His wife has persuaded him that native guides and bearers are an advantage.) His father was killed during a skirmish with Humans in the previous generation, and the family’s most precious heirloom, an ornately engraved rifle, was seized as a trophy. It has now come into the hands of a collector who is willing to exchange it for other Aslan artifacts (more valuable to him but less important to the clan). The weapon must be recovered to restore family honor.

The guides must escort the Aslan, his wife, and their trade goods to the collector, facilitate the exchange, and return them safely to their clan lands. They may be opposed by agents of rival clans who want to compound the family’s dishonor, thieves trying to steal the trade goods, and anti-Aslan fanatics seeking revenge.

Success will bring a modest financial reward, and an Aslan friend who owes them a debt of honor.

# ASLAN JOB TABLE

The standard jobs shown on p. GT106 remain available, but within the Hierate there are some additional ones; note that females may be paid in cash for their own efforts or those of a male relative, and males are paid in kind (land, service, contacts, gifts, etc).

*Job (requirements), Monthly Income* *Success Roll* *Critical Failure*

## Comfortable Jobs

**Fteirko** (Male, Philosophy (*Fteir*) 14+ or Theology (*Fteir*) 14+, appropriate Reputation), PR -2i/-5i, LJ, 2d  
Cr100 × PR

**Earleatrais** (Male, Diplomacy 14+, Philosophy (*Fteir*) 14+, or Theology (*Fteir*) 14+, PR -2i, LJ, 2d  
Status 1+), Cr300 × PR

## Wealthy Jobs

**Aikoho siylakht** (Fleet Director) (Female, Status 3+, appropriate scientific PR -6i, LJ  
or professional skill 12+), Cr100 × best appropriate skill *plus* Cr200 × Status

## EARLEATRAIS (ARBITRATOR)

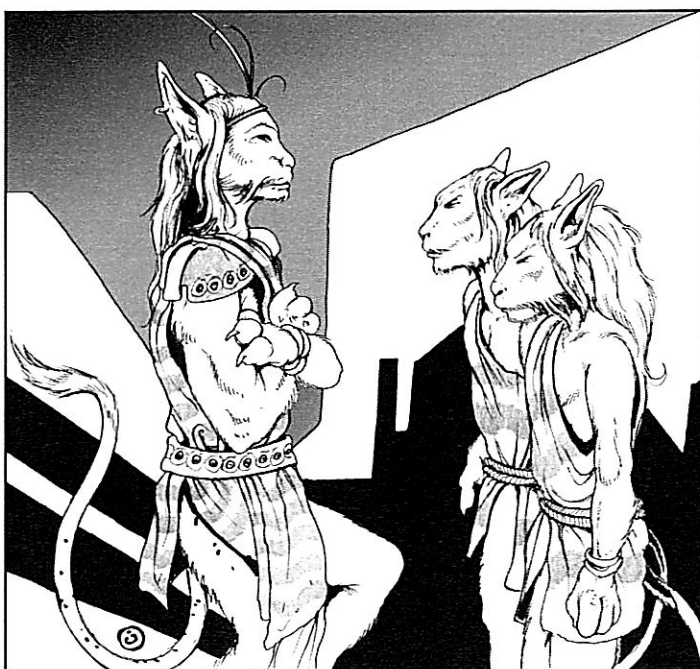
**90 POINTS**

A skilled *earleatrais* is much in demand, travels widely, and is continually involved in duels, intrigue, and warfare; an Aslan PC group could easily be built around him and his missions. The higher his status, the more serious the cases he arbitrates – a Status 1 *earleatrais* oversees duels between young bravos, while a Status 6 one works to avoid (or referee) clan wars among the *Tlaukhu*.

**Attributes:** ST 11 [0], DX 12 [30], IQ 12 [20], HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** Reputation +1 (wise and fair) [5], Status +1 [5] and 20 points selected from Charisma [5/level], Common Sense [10], a better Reputation (a bigger bonus or better known) [varies], Sanctity [5], more Status [5/level], Style Familiarity [1-20], Voice [10], and Wealth [10 or 20].

**Disadvantages:** A total of 30 points chosen from Age [-3/year over 54], Cannot Harm Innocents [-10], Duty (to clan, fairly often) [-5], Honesty [-10], or Truthfulness [-5].



**Primary Skills:** Diplomacy (M/H) IQ [4]-12, Law (own clan) (M/H) [4]-12, Performance/Ritual (M/A, must specialize) IQ+2 [6]-14, Theology (*Aokhaor*) (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-13, Tournament Law (M/E, must specialize) IQ+2 [4]-14.

**Secondary Skills:** Heraldry (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Karate (P/H) DX [4]-12, Savoir-Faire (own clan) (M/E) IQ+3 [2]-15\*, Style Analysis (M/H) IQ [4]-12.

\* Defaults to IQ+2 due to Status.

**Background Skills:** A total of 4 points taken in Guns (any), Politics, Strategy, Tactics, and other specializations of Performance/Ritual, Savoir-Faire, and Tournament Law.

**Customization Notes:** Use the Status and specializations in Tournament Law and Performance/Ritual to reflect the kind of *earleatrais* the character is; the main specializations are Clan War and Dueling, but others are permitted by arrangement with the GM.

## FTEIRKO (GURU) 10 POINTS

A *fteirko* is an Aslan of any career, gender, or background with a reputation for wisdom and a detailed knowledge of the finer points and precedents of Aslan honor. This template is therefore deliberately cheap, as it is intended to be taken in addition to another. It fits especially well with the *Earleatrais* (Arbitrator) template, although a *Siylakht/fteirko* makes for an interesting non-combat character.

**Attributes:** ST 11 [0], DX 9 [0], IQ 10 [0], HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** Reputation +1 (wise and knows *fteir* well) [5], plus 5 points selected from Pious [5], more Reputation [+5/level], and Sanctity [5].

**Disadvantages:** A total of 10 points selected from Age [-3/year over 54], Cannot Harm Innocents [-10], Honesty [-10], and Truthfulness [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Theology (*Fteir*) (M/H) IQ+3 [10]-13.

**Secondary Skills:** None – provided by the character's other template.

**Background Skills:** None – provided by the character's other template.

**Customization Notes:** There's not much to customize here. In effect, this template *is* a customization for another one, which turns it into the Hierate's equivalent of a wise woman, lay preacher, or psychotherapist – the one that good Aslan turn to for advice when they don't know what to do. The *feirko* interprets the Aslan code of honor and clan traditions for them to clarify what their decision should be.

## LAKHT (LANDHOLDER) 90 POINTS

This is the stereotypical Aslan noble male. As a PC, he may be an *ihatei* looking for glory and land; the eldest son, adventuring while he waits to inherit; or an outcast, trying to clear his name so that he can return to mainstream Aslan society with honor.

**Attributes:** ST 11 [0], DX 11 [20], IQ 12 [20], HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** Status +1 [5], Wealth (Comfortable) [10], and 15 points chosen from Ally Group (2-5 retainers) [10], Claim to Hospitality (clan) [5], Heir [5], more Status [+5/level], and more Wealth [+10].

**Disadvantages:** Incompetence (Merchant) [-1], and -25 points chosen from Callous [-6], Compulsive Generosity [-5], Compulsive Spending [-5 to -15], Dependent (50-point wife or sister) [-6], Disowned [-5 if *ihatei*, -15 if outcast], Duty (to clan, almost all the time) [-10], Enemy (rival family) [-20], Impulsiveness [-10], Sense of Duty (to clan) [-10], Self-Centered [-10], and Stubbornness [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Diplomacy (M/H) IQ [4]-12, Karate (P/H) DX+1 [8]-12, Law (own clan) (M/H) IQ [4]-12, Leadership (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Savoir-Faire (own clan) (M/E) IQ+3 [2]-15\*.

\* Defaults to IQ+2 due to Status.

**Secondary Skills:** Guns (Pistol) and Guns (Rifle), both (P/E) DX+2 [1 each]-12†, Heraldry (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Politics (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Strategy (M/H) IQ [4]-12, Tactics (M/H) IQ [4]-12.

† Includes +2 bonus for IQ 12.

**Background Skills:** A total of 12 points in any of the Primary or Secondary skills, Appreciate Beauty (Weapons) (M/VH), Bardic Lore (M/H), Gunner (any direct fire) (P/A), Piloting (any) (P/A), Poetry (M/A), Survival (Plains) (M/A), and Tracking (M/A).

**Customization Notes:** A character who has land spends almost all his time ruling it, and so makes a poor adventurer; PCs should consider taking relatively low Status and Heir. Allies, Ally Groups, and Patrons may be Unwilling, probably representing a period of forced service after a legal judgment against them. A landholder without a female Ally or Dependent (wife or sister) to look after his finances is a liability to himself and his landhold, and the clan will do its best to marry him off immediately to someone with a grasp of finance. This can make for a good thread of comic relief in the campaign...

## SIYLAKHT (CHATELAINE) 50 POINTS

This is the "government-approved" landholder's female dependent – the sort of girl the clan hopes he will marry. This template may be used to build a PC, or a PC Landholder who takes a female Dependent may use it "as is" to represent his wife or sister.

**Attributes:** ST 11 [0], DX 9 [0], IQ 12 [20], HT 10 [0].

**Advantages:** Status +1 [5], Wealth (Comfortable) [10], and a total of 10 more points in Lightning Calculator [5], more Status [5/level], or more Wealth [10].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -25 points selected from Duty (to birth-clan or husband's clan) [-5], Greed [-15], Honesty [-10], Miserliness [-10], Sense of Duty (to birth clan or husband's clan) [-10], and Truthfulness [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Accounting (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-13, Economics (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-13, Savoir-Faire (own clan) (M/E) IQ [2]-15\*.

\* Defaults to IQ+2 due to Status.

**Secondary Skills:** Administration (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Karate (P/H) DX [4]-9, Merchant (M/A) IQ [2]-12, Needlecraft (P/A) DX+1 [4]-10.

**Background Skills:** A total of 4 points in Driving (any) (P/A), Guns (any) (P/E), Language (any) (varies), Piloting (Contragrav) (P/A), and Savoir-Faire (birth clan or husband's clan).

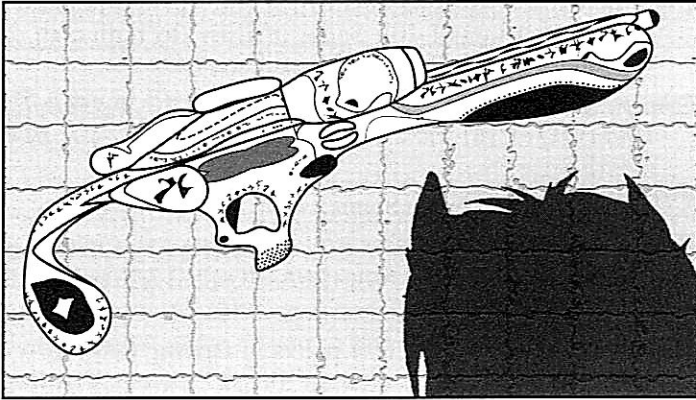
**Customization Notes:** Some interesting conflicts of interest can be set up if the character has a Duty or Sense of Duty to the clan of her birth, but has since married into another clan, and also has duties to them. As females, characters built on this template cannot take the Heir advantage.





# EQUIPMENT, VEHICLES, AND STARSHIPS

Almost all *Fteirle* artifacts are richly decorated, curved, flowing, organic-looking objects, often based on fused ovoids. The decorations usually include clan markings; military equipment and vehicles have low-contrast or camouflage color schemes only when prepared for battle, and then only if clan traditions or the rules of the current war permit such tactics. Civilian items, and military ones in normal use, favor a light, plain base color (perhaps white or tan) with brightly colored bands of decoration along the edges or around the sides. Fine or very fine items are more common than for other races, with cheap ones being proportionately fewer.



Since interclan battles are formal, stylized affairs with prearranged battlefields and starting times, strategic mobility is less important for the Aslan than for other races. This translates to lower sustained speeds and accelerations for their military vehicles and ships, although these often have a “sprint” capability for combat – much like the Aslan themselves. As one approaches the Aslan/Human buffer zone, these generalizations break down, as clans are prepared for war with another species which does not always share their views on honor.

## ASLAN EQUIPMENT

Aslan equipment is designed for Aslan hands, and Humans or Vargr attempting to use it do so at -2 to effective skill. Aslan suffer the same penalty when using Human or Vargr equipment. This means that mixed Aslan/Human military units or ship crews are less common than Human/Vargr mixes.

Cost, weight, and functionality are typically similar to equivalent Human items; the main exception is armor, which costs the same but is 10% heavier to allow for the greater bulk of an Aslan wearer.

## WEAPONS

Aslan ranged weapons are much like their Human equivalents; indeed, many – particularly laser small arms – were copied from Solomani designs. A race with built-in switch-blades has less need for melee weapons, and those which exist are mostly two-handed.

## Modern Weapons

Aslan firearms are bigger than the corresponding Human guns, are designed for Aslan physiology, and have slightly larger magazine capacities – typically multiples of 8 rounds rather than multiples of 5 as is the Human norm.

The table below shows generic clan weapons and the nearest Human equivalent from the table on pp. GT114-115. GMs wishing to detail them further are encouraged to do so using the design sequences in *GURPS Vehicles*.

## Clan Weapons and Human Equivalents

Weapon	Human Equivalent
<i>Khaihte</i>	Body Pistol
<i>Tahestah</i>	Auto Pistol, 9mm
<i>Khaihealate</i>	SMG
<i>Uealike</i>	Carbine, 7mm
<i>Takheal</i>	Rifle, 7mm
<i>Yeheal</i>	Assault Rifle, 7.5mm
<i>Eakhyasear</i>	Rifle, 9mm
<i>Triluealihe</i>	Laser Carbine-8
<i>Trolitakheal</i>	Laser Rifle-9
<i>Khaihteale</i>	Auto Snub Pistol

The *khaihte*, unlike its Human counterpart, is not designed to be easily concealable.

The *eakhyasear* is a noble male’s sporting gun, as much a symbol of its owner’s status and taste as it is a weapon; it is likely to be of fine or very fine quality, and ornately decorated.

The *yeheal* has a dual-feed mechanism with two 32-round magazines. Common practice is to fill these with different types of ammunition; it takes a Ready maneuver to switch from one magazine to the other, but the weapon will switch automatically if the current magazine becomes empty.

The *Saostoilryu* or Accelerator Rifle is equivalent to a gyro rifle (p. UT46). There are no Aslan snub revolvers.

## Archaic Weapons

Most Human two-handed melee weapons and ancient/medieval ranged weapons have Aslan equivalents, and there are also some uniquely Aslan weapons.

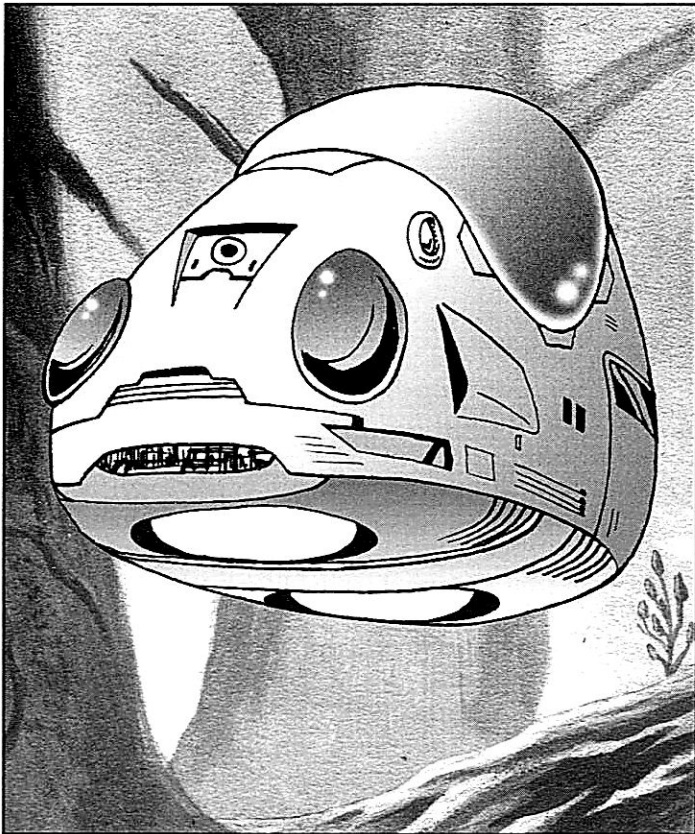
*Ayloi*: Artificial dewclaws, with a 2” to 3” blade, used by Humans in close combat. They are strapped to the thumb and palms (so cannot be dropped or thrown); otherwise, treat as a small knife (p. B206). A Human in Aslan space who wishes to advertise his willingness to duel carries a pair of *ayloi* prominently at the belt; this reduces the reaction penalty for dealing with cultural Aslan by 1 point. Although the Human remains a barbarian, he is at least *trying* to be honorable.

*Fierah*: This is a leather or plastic thong about 5’ long, often worn as a sash or belt. It has a base cost of Cr10 and negligible weight. It can be used in various ways, each covered by an appropriate skill. It can be looped to form a garrote (p. CI134), used as a makeshift sling (p. B52), or have sticks and/or weights tied to the ends to improvise a flail (p. B50) or bolas (p. B49).

*Yurletya*: A combination spear and grappling hook. This was formerly a favorite dueling weapon, and in some land-

holds is still carried ceremonially during clan rituals. The user may either stab (using Spear skill), or swing the four-pronged hook to trip his opponent (using Staff skill). A successful hook attack knocks the opponent prone. Cost, weight, and other attributes are as for a two-handed spear (p. B206).

**Akhaeh:** Essentially a boomerang with sharpened edges, used in exactly the same way but doing Cutting damage. Usually carried in a belt sheath; the relevant skill is *Akhaeh Throwing* (p. B52). Treat this weapon as a thrown Small Knife (p. B207), except that if it misses its target, the attacker may make a further skill roll. If this second roll is successful, the *akhaeh* returns to the thrower's grasp. It must be readied before it can be used again, however.



## VEHICLES

Aslan vehicles are functionally similar to their Human equivalents. They are easily distinguishable by their flowing lines and bulbous windows, which give them an insectoid appearance. The care Aslan artisans lavish on their construction means many are fine or very fine vehicles, which gives them unusually low maintenance requirements. This in turn makes them popular with mercenaries and other freelance adventurers along the Aslan/Human buffer, who sometimes acquire secondhand models and refit them with Human controls. A number of small corporations along the border specialize in such conversions.

### Designing Aslan Vehicles

The only modifications required to the *GURPS Vehicles* design sequences are those needed to allow for the greater

bulk and weight of an Aslan. These effects are assumed to be insignificant when designing spacecraft using the *GURPS Traveller* modular design system, as many modules include waste space to round off their size.

As with personal armor, all crew stations, passenger seats, etc., should be 10% larger for Aslan. Cost and weight for these items are unaffected.

Further, designers should use a generic internal payload (p. GV25) of 270 lbs. per crewman or passenger. This represents an average 200-lb. Aslan carrying a little over a third of his body weight in equipment (probably implements of destruction.)

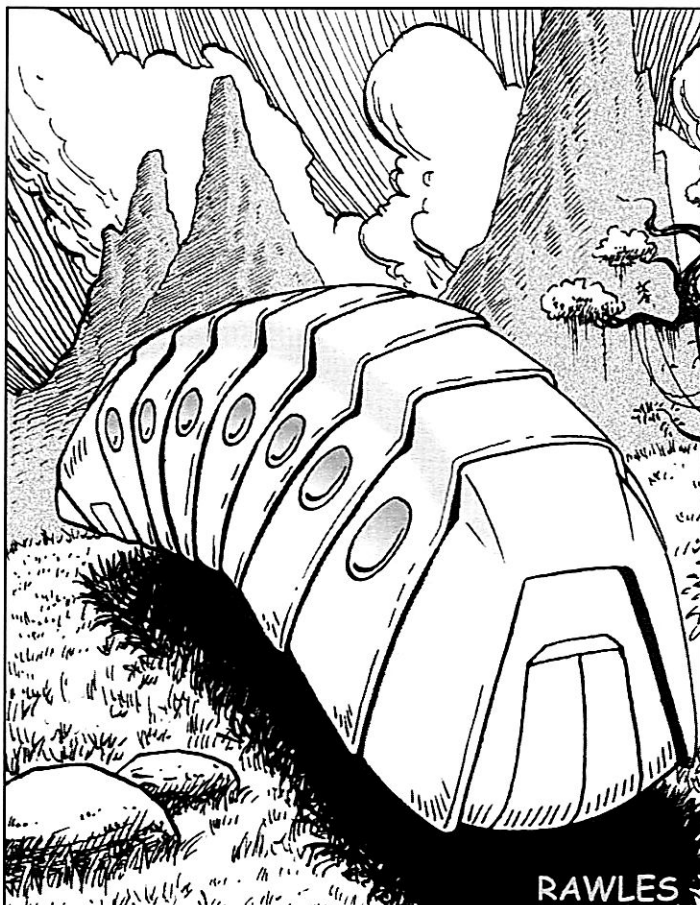
### Enclosed Air/Raft [TL9]

A large, egg-shaped vehicle with huge wrap-around windows, this is typical of many no-frills grav-sled designs produced by various minor Aslan clans. Major (*Tlaukhu*) clans use TL10 designs similar to the Zhodani *Yonchobo* utility grav sled (p. T:AI59), or imported TL12 designs such as the Air/Raft (p. GT147).

- **Subassemblies:** None.
- **Body Features:** Good streamlining.
- **Propulsion:** One 75-lb. thrust TL13 reactionless super thruster (Cr1,500, 15 lbs., 0.3 cf, 37.5 kW).
- **Aerostatic Lift:** Four 2,600-lb. lift TL13 contragravity generators (Cr552, 15.2 lbs., 0.3 cf, 10.4 kW).
- **Instruments and Electronics:** 1,000-mile radio (Cr100, 0.5 lbs., 0.01 cf, 0.01 kW). 1,000-mile laser communicator (Cr1,250, 5 lbs., 0.1 cf, 0.1 kW). 10-mile air-search radar with no targeting (Body front, Scan 17, Cr2,500, 5 lbs., 0.1 cf, 2.5 kW). INS (Cr12,500, 10 lbs., 0.2 cf, 0.01 kW). TFR (Cr2,000, 5 lbs., 0.1 cf, 0.25 kW). Small computer (Cr500, 1 lb., 0.02 cf, 0.01 kW) with one terminal (Cr500, 20 lbs., 1 cf, 0.01 kW).
- **Controls:** Computerized.
- **Crewstations:** Pilot (Piloting (Contragrav)) in roomy crew station (Cr100, 40 lbs., 44 cf).
- **Accommodations:** Short occupancy. Three roomy passenger seats (Cr300, 120 lbs., 132 cf).
- **Environmental Systems:** Environmental control (Cr200, 20 lbs., 0.4 cf, 1 kW).
- **Power:** 56 kW nuclear power unit (Cr32,400, 162 lbs., 1.62 cf).
- **Space:** 1.92 cf short-term access space, 400 cf cargo space, no empty space.
- **Volume:** Body 698 cf.
- **Area:** Body 250 sf.
- **Structure:** Light, standard materials (Cr9,375, 375 lbs.).
- **Hit Points:** Body 188.
- **Armor:** PD 3, DR 5 standard composite armor overall (Cr938, 187.5 lbs.).
- **Statistics:** Empty weight 981 lbs. Usual payload 9,064 lbs. Loaded weight 5.02 tons. Volume 698 cf. Size modifier +4. Price: Cr65,715. HT 9.
- **Aerial Performance:** Stall speed 0 mph, can hover, can fly. Aerodynamic drag 83.33. Top speed 80 mph. aAccel 18 mph/s. aDecel 10 mph/s. aMR 2.5. aSR 4.

## G-Carrier [TL9]

This is a generic armored personnel carrier in widespread use throughout the Hierate and beyond. Its distinctive banded-ovoid shape has led Solomani to nickname it "the Maggot." Many similar designs exist, produced by various minor clans and differing mainly in appearance. Members of the *Tlaukhu* use more advanced TL10 designs, which may be represented by the Vargr G-Carrier (p. T:AI94). The Imperium and the Solomani Confederation are understandably reluctant to sell Aslan TL12 personnel carriers.



Note the relatively basic ECM/ECCM fit; warriors in most clans prefer to trust their fate to their own skills and courage, rather than the work of a female countermeasures programmer. Whether ECM is truly honorable is a topic of debate among the Hierate military, and it is not always permitted in clan wars; however, since some of their enemies ignore the Aslan code of honor, the *Fteirle* do fit such equipment to their vehicles. The IFF unit may be set to act as a standard IFF module, as a transponder, or as a beacon which continuously transmits the vehicle's identity and allegiance, depending on the current rules of engagement.

- **Subassemblies:** Full-rotation turret.
- **Body Features:** Very Good streamlining. Large rear drop ramp.
- **Propulsion:** Two 75-lb. thrust TL10 reactionless super thrusters (Cr3,000, 30 lbs., 0.6 cf, 75 kW).
- **Aerostatic Lift:** Four 7,500-lb. lift TL13 contragravity generators (Cr650, 25 lbs., 0.5 cf, 30 kW).
- **Weaponry:** One 10mm gauss gun (turret front, Cr20,000, 34 lbs., 0.68 cf, 1,000 kW; see below) in a fully stabilized mount (Cr340, 2.5 lbs., 0.068 cf) with 30,000 rounds of ammo (Cr60,000, 990 lbs., 9.9 cf).
- **Instruments and Electronics:** 1,000-mile radio (Cr100, 0.5 lbs., 0.01 cf, 0.01 kW). 1,000-mile laser communicator (Cr1,250, 5 lbs., 0.1 cf, 0.1 kW). 10-mile AESA (Body front, Cr25,000, 15 lbs., 0.3 cf, 2.5 kW). 10-mile PESA (Body front, Cr80,000, 20 lbs., 0.4 cf, 0.01 kW). IFF (Cr1,000, 5 lbs., 0.1 cf). Inertial navigation system (Cr12,500, 10 lbs., 0.2 cf, 0.01 kW). Terrain-following radar (Cr2,000, 5 lbs., 0.1 cf, 0.25 kW). HUDWAC with pupil scanner (Cr1,000). Laser/radar detector (Cr75, 0.75 lbs., 0.015 cf, 0.01 kW). Minicomputer (Cr7,500, 20 lbs., 0.4 cf, 0.01 kW, Complexity 4) with two terminals (Cr1,000, 40 lbs., 2 cf, 0.01 kW). Compact fire-suppression system (Cr500, 50 lbs., 1 cf). All are in the Body except the HUDWAC, which is in the Turret.
- **Controls:** Computerized.
- **Occupancy:** Short.
- **Passengers:** 12, in normal seats (Cr1200, 360 lbs., 396 cf).
- **Crew:** Pilot (Piloting (Contragrav), in the Body) and gunner (Gunner (Autocannon), in the Turret), in normal crew stations (Cr200, 60 lbs., 66 cf).
- **Environmental Systems:** Limited life system with 14 man-days' life support (Cr7,000, 1,400 lbs., 28 cf, 7 kW). Sealed environment (Cr5,000).
- **Power:** 1,200 kW Nuclear Power Unit (Cr490,000, 2,450 lbs., 24.5 cf).
- **Space:** 25.1 cf of short-term access space. 200 cf cargo space. No empty space.
- **Volume:** Body, 912 cf. Turret, 44 cf. *Area:* Body, 500 sf. Turret, 75 sf.
- **Structure:** Heavy, standard materials (Cr115,000, 2,587.5 lbs.).
- **Hit Points:** Body 375, Turret 56.
- **Armor:** PD 4, DR 160 standard laminate (Cr138,000, 13,800 lbs.).
- **Statistics:** Empty weight 21,910 lbs.. Usual payload 7,724 lbs. Loaded weight 14.82 tons. Volume 955.87 cf. Size modifier +4. Cr973,315. HT 8.
- **Aerial Performance:** Stall speed 0 mph, can hover, can fly. Aerodynamic drag 166.67. Top speed 80 mph. aAccel 18 mph/s. aDecel 10 mph/s. aMR 2.5. aSR 4.

## TL9 10mm Gauss Gun

A typical TL9 infantry-support weapon firing APS rounds.

Malf	Type	Damage	SS	Acc	1/2D	Max	Wt	RoF	Cost	Shots	WPS	VPS	CPS	kW	TL
Ver.	Cr	6d×4(2)	20	15	2,700	10,000	34	20	Cr20,000	30,000	0.033	0.00033	Cr2	1,000	9

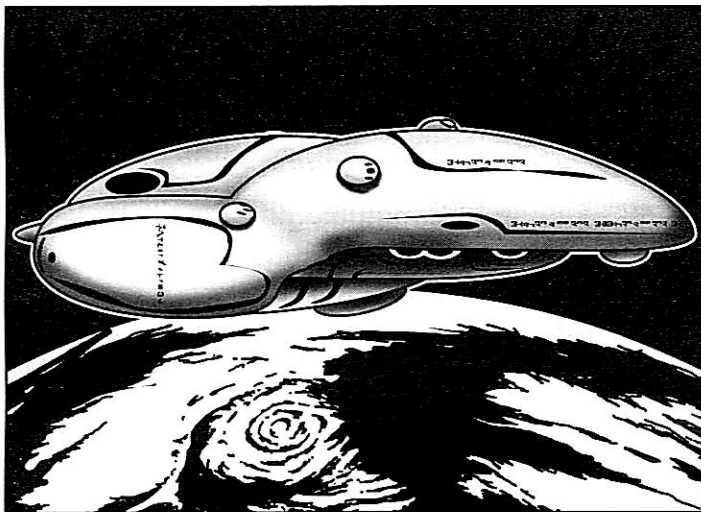


## STARSHIPS

Aslan ships use the same technology as Human ones, and either race can operate the other's vessels if language difficulties can be overcome.

Small craft and ship's vehicles are functionally equivalent to their Human counterparts, and may well be copied from Human ones – despite their fierce pride, Aslan have no compunction about reverse-engineering foreign designs for their own use.

Aslan ships do not have high passage, as the *Fteirle* care little for luxury – all paid passages are middle or low, although noble males are waited on by the ship's steward, and are entitled to “bump” lower-status passengers to ensure they get a ticket. Working passages are only available to clan members.



### *Khtukhao-Class Clan Transport [TL10]*

This ship is used by clans and corporations throughout the Hierate to service major trade routes; it fulfils the same role as Imperial subsidized merchants, ensuring regular service to key destinations.

- **Crew:** At least six: Captain/pilot (male – Piloting (Large Spacecraft), Leadership, and Tactics), navigator (female – Electronics Operation (Communications), Electronics Operation (Sensors), and Astrogation), four engineers (female – Engineering and Mechanic). Optionally, a medic (female – Diagnosis, Physician, and Surgery), up to four stewards (female – Savoir-Faire (Servant)) and up to six gunners (male – Gunner) may also be carried. The shuttle is normally operated by the captain/pilot and one of the engineers.
- **Design:** 600-ton USL Hull, DR 172, 6 Turrets, Basic Bridge, Engineering, 18 Jump, 120 Fuel, 8 Low Berth (32 low passengers), 106 Maneuver, Sickbay, 200 Spacedock (holds one shuttle), 25 Staterooms, 2 Utility, 1 Fuel Processor.
- **Statistics:** EMass 1,037.9, LMass 2,105.4, Cost MCr105.6466, HP 52,200, Hull Size Modifier +9.
- **Performance:** Accel 2.01 Gs, Jump 2.

#### *Khtukhao-Class Deck Plan Key (see p. 62)*

- |                        |                                 |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1: Avionics.           | 31: Low Berths (32).            |
| 2: Bridge.             | 32: Shuttle Spacedock.          |
| 3-27: Staterooms (25). | 33-38: Turrets (6).             |
| 28: Common Area.       | 39: Fuel Tankage.               |
| 29: Sickbay.           | 40: Fuel Scoops and Processors. |
| 30: Cargo Hold.        | 41: Drives.                     |
|                        | 42: Drive Room.                 |

### *Ktiyhui-Class Courier [TL10]*

The *Ktiyhui* is a fast, long-range ship used to conduct clan business, carrying messages and envoys across interstellar space. The basic crew is five – captain/pilot, navigator, and three engineers – but envoys demand the services of a steward, and gunners are added for risky missions. Medics are not normally carried unless the trip takes the ship into Human space, where they are a legal necessity; the envoy could argue that his vessel is technically Hierate soil and so exempt, but few will risk a confrontation over so minor an issue.

- **Crew:** At least five: Captain/pilot (male – Leadership, Tactics, and Piloting), navigator (female – Electronics Operation (Sensors), Electronics Operation (Commo), and Astrogation), and three engineers (female – Engineering and Mechanic). Optionally, one or two gunners (male – Gunner), a medic (female – Diagnosis, Physician, and Surgery) or a steward (female – Savoir-Faire (Servant)) may also be carried.
- **Design:** 200-ton SL Hull, DR 120, Basic Stealth, Basic Emission Cloaking, Heavy Compartmentalization, 2 Turrets (one with twin missile racks, one with a 360-MJ laser and a sandcaster), Basic Bridge, Engineering, 8 Jump, 60 Fuel, 50 Maneuver Drive, 7 Stateroom, Utility, 2 Fuel Processor, 1.5 cargo.
- **Statistics:** EMass 491.21, LMass 498.71, Cost MCr54.8212, HP 24,900, Hull Size Modifier +8.
- **Performance:** Accel 4.01 Gs, Jump 3, Air Speed 3,006.

#### *Ktiyhui-Class Deck Plan Key (see p. 63)*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1: Avionics.  | 11: Cargo Hold.   |
| 2: Bridge.  | 12-13: Turrets (2).   |
| 3-9: Staterooms (7).  | 14: Fuel Tankage.   |
| 10: Common Area. On Aslan ships, this is typically used for eating and swapping yarns. Many clans do not fit the electronic entertainments that would invariably be found here on a Human ship. | 15: Fuel Scoops and Processors.   |
|   | 16: Drives.   |
|   | 17: Drive Room.   |
|   | 18-19: Drive Access Shafts (2).   |
|   | 20-21: Airlocks (2).  |
|   | 22: Ship's Locker. Holds a variety of survival gear, vacc suits, armor, and sidearms. |

## Eakhau-Class Trader [TL 10]

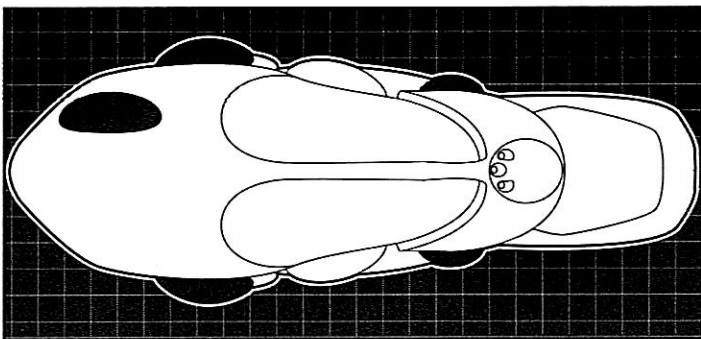
This is the basic Aslan interstellar merchantman, roughly equivalent to the Imperial *Beowulf*-class free trader.

■ **Crew:** Minimum crew is four: Captain/pilot (male – Leadership, Tactics, and Piloting), navigator (female – Electronics Operation (Sensors), Electronics Operation (Commo), and Astrogation), two engineers (female – Engineering and Mechanic). Optionally, a medic (female – Diagnosis, Physician, and Surgery), one or two stewards (female – Savoir-Faire (Servant)), and up to four gunners (male – Gunner) may be carried. These last add no value unless the craft is armed, as most are.

■ **Design:** 400-ton SL Hull, DR141, 4 Turrets, Basic Bridge, Engineering, 12 Jump, 80 Fuel, 4 Low Berths (16 low passengers), 32 Maneuver Drive, 13 Stateroom, Utility, Fuel Processor, 132.5 cargo (plus 12 in empty turrets).

■ **Statistics:** EMass 553.6, LMass 1,216.1, Cost MCr65.7204, HP 42,300, Hull Size Modifier +9.

■ **Performance:** Accel 1.05 Gs, Jump 2, Air Speed 1,845.



## Hraye-Class Scout [TL 10]

This craft fills the same function as does the *Suleiman*-class scoutship in Imperial space, although its missions are more likely to be exploratory than courier duty. *Hraye* scoutships retrofitted with Human controls are occasionally found in Solomani hands (it can carry more cargo than the *Suleiman* if the ATV is disposed of, it can be more easily disguised as an Aslan craft for covert operations, and some Solomani just think it looks cool).

■ **Crew:** The usual crew is two: Pilot (male – Piloting and Electronics Operation (Sensors)) and astrogator/engineer (female – Astrogation, Engineering, and Mechanic). One sufficiently skilled individual with elastic views on skills and gender could fly it single-handed.

■ **Design:** 100-ton SL hull, DR 185, Basic Stealth, Basic Emission Cloaking, Heavy Compartmentalization, Basic Bridge, Engineering, 20 Maneuver, 3 Jump, 20 Fuel, 5,000 cf Space Dock (holds up to 3,500 cf ATV), 2 Staterooms, Utility, 1 Fuel Processor, Turret with 360-MJ Laser and missile rack, 13.5 cargo.

■ **Statistics:** EMass 277.885, LMass 392.576, Cost MCr25.7251, HP 16,200, Hull Size Modifier +8.

■ **Performance:** Accel 2.04 Gs, Jump 2, Air Speed 2,357.

### Hraye-Class Deck Plan Key (see p. 63)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1: Avionics.   | 8: Main Airlock.  |
| 2: Bridge.   | 9: Emergency Airlock.   |
| 3-4: Staterooms (2).   | 10: Ship's Locker.  |
| 5: Common Area.  | 11: Turret.   |
| 6: Cargo Hold.   | 12: Fuel Tankage.   |
| 7: Spacedock for ATV. The ATV is often omitted, allowing extra cargo to be carried. This usually improves performance slightly, as the crawler is denser than most cargo. Even if the ATV is retained, it is common practice to fill the 1,500 cf of extra room around | 13: Fuel Scoops and Processors.   |
|  | 14: Drives.   |
|  | 15: Drive Room.   |
|  | 16: Ladder between Decks.   |
|  | 17: Lift. This extends through the ship's ventral surface to the ground, so the ATV can be deployed or recovered. |

## Hraye II-Class Multimission Scout

Following the success of the *Taori*-class riftliner (see p. 57), the Cisrift and Transrift clans began to experiment with other modular designs. As these are always more complex and expensive than an equivalent single-purpose ship, they have met with a mixed reaction from potential owners and are relatively uncommon. One type which has found a steady niche market for itself is the *Hraye II*, a modular version of the regular *Hraye*-class scoutship. It is identical in appearance and performance to the earlier ship type, but the 5,000-cf spacedock and its ATV are replaced by a 5,000-cf modular socket (see p. VE72) – so when your group of PCs can't afford or won't wait for a custom-built ship, but just *has* to have a scoutship with an extra stateroom, some low berths, a jacuzzi, a *really* neat sound system, and a soulburner-powered Ancient disintegrator in a pop turret, they can just bundle it all up in a 5,000-cf module, plug it in, and fly off.

The modular socket and its connections add Cr250,000 to the base price for a *Hraye*. If not using *GURPS Vehicles*, design the new modules as 10-ton unstreamlined hulls; anything drawing a significant amount of power will require a Basic Engineering module to represent the startup cost for a second power reactor. Some possibilities using this latter approach are:

### Suleiman Module

This adds 2 extra staterooms and a spacedock for one air/raft, making the ship functionally equivalent to the Imperial *Suleiman*-class scout, which has been a successful ship configuration for many years. The main advantage of a *Hraye II* with this module over a genuine *Suleiman* is the widespread availability of spares and mechanics familiar with the *Hraye* throughout the Hierate.

■ **Crew:** None.

■ **Design:** 10-ton USL Hull, DR 185. 2 Staterooms, 250 cf Spacedock (for air/raft), 1.5 Cargo, 0.25 waste space.

■ **Statistics:** EMass 26.3, LMass 38.9, Cost MCr0.371, HP 3,000, Hull Size Modifier +6.

■ **Performance:** As for mother ship.

### Special Ops Module

This is used for covert operations by clans who conduct such missions, typically inserting, supporting, and recovering a team of assassins deep in hostile territory. Inevitably, a number have found their way into the hands of Human intelligence agencies, special-forces units, and freelancers. To minimize life-support requirements, the assassins are carried in low berths, being awakened and transferred to short-term passenger couches only hours before they are landed. The module also has a spacedock for several air/rafts, which the assassins use for onplanet transport, and cargo space for their weapons and equipment. A medic is normally carried to ensure the safe revival of the assassins and tend to their wounds after the raid; this is more important for assassins than for ordinary troops due to the huge training investment they represent for their clan.

- **Crew:** Medic (female – Diagnosis, Physician, and Surgery).
- **Design:** 10-ton USL Hull, DR 185. Stateroom (for medic), Sickbay, 3 Low Berths (12 low passengers), 1 Passenger Couch (12 seats), 750 cf Spacedock (for three air/rafts), 1 Cargo.
- **Statistics:** EMass 31.19, LMass 51.49, Cost MCr1.254, HP 3,000, Hull Size Modifier +6.
- **Performance:** As for mother ship.

### Survival Module

This is typically fitted to a *Hraye II* carried as a jump-capable lifeboat by a larger vessel traveling beyond settled space; in uncharted territory, resorting to an ordinary lifeboat merely exchanges a swift death for a slow one, but this module offers some hope of being able to return home under one's own power rather than waiting passively for a rescue which will probably never come. The entire module is filled with low berths and survival stores.

- **Crew:** None.
- **Design:** 10-ton USL Hull, DR 185. 18 Low Berths (72 low passengers), 1 Cargo.
- **Statistics:** EMass 56.5, LMass 61.5, Cost MCr4.302, HP 3,000, Hull Size Modifier +6.
- **Performance:** As for mother ship.

### Aositaoh-Class Cruiser [TL 10]

This small warship is intended to transport and support two platoons of clan troops in low-key combat operations. The gunners are often provided by the troop contingent, boosting it to as many as 88.

- **Crew:** Four bridge crew, nine engineers, 10 gunners, a medic, six small-craft pilots, and up to 78 troops.
- **Design:** 1,200-ton SL Hull, DR 413, Basic Stealth, Basic Emission Cloaking, Heavy Compartmentalization, 10 Turrets (6 with triple 360-MJ lasers, 3 with triple missile launchers, 1 with triple sandcasters), Command Bridge, Engineering, 36 Jump, 240 Fuel, 192 Maneuver, Sickbay, 296 Spacedock (holds Launch, 2 Pinnaces, 4 ATVs, and 4 Air/Rafts), 54 Staterooms, 3 Utility, 2 Fuel Processor, 76 cargo.



- **Statistics:** EMass 2,915.58, LMass 3,810.98, Cost MCr240.1365
- **Performance:** Accel 2.02 Gs, Jump 2, Air Speed 3,151.

### Ekawsiykua-Class Escort [TL 10]

The escort is intended for light patrol and combat duty, and it or similar vessels are used by clans and corporations throughout the Hierate. (See deck plan, p. 61.)

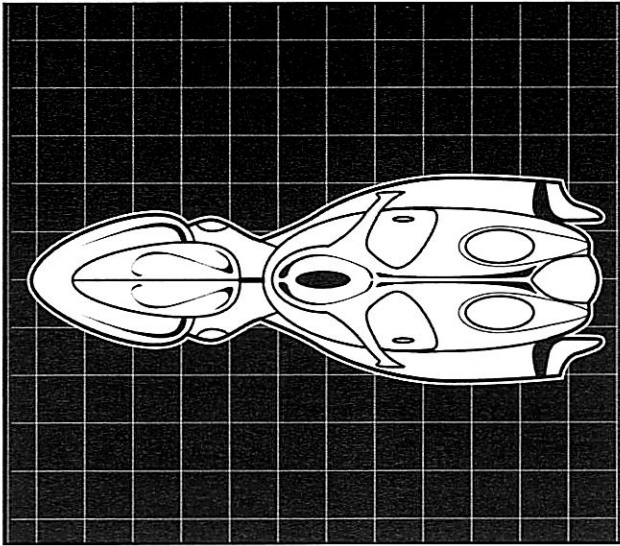
- **Crew:** 16 to 44 depending on circumstances: Captain/pilot (Leadership, Piloting, and Tactics), navigator (Astrogation), sensor operator (Electronics Operation (Sensors)), communications officer (Electronics Operation (Commo)), 12 engineers (Engineer and/or Mechanic), eight gunners (Gunner), nine small-craft pilots (Piloting), and up to 11 troops for boarding parties.
- **Design:** 800-ton USL Hull, DR 600, Basic Stealth, Basic Emission Cloaking, Total Compartmentalization, Command Bridge, Engineering, 32 Jump, 240 Fuel, 266 Maneuver, 260 Spacedock (holds 2 Pinnaces and 5 *Iramda* fighters or equivalent), 22 Staterooms, Utility, 2 Fuel Processor, 10 cargo.
- **Statistics:** EMass 2,943.09, LMass 3,549.09, Cost MCr226.2765, HP 60,000, Hull Size Modifier +10.
- **Performance:** Accel 3 Gs, Jump 3.



### *Kteiroa-Class Seeker [TL10]*

This is the Aslan equivalent of the *Suleiman II*-class seeker. Like the *Hraye*, it nominally requires a crew of two, but can be operated by one person in a pinch.

- **Crew:** Pilot (male – Piloting, Leadership, Electronics Operation (Sensors), and Tactics) and navigator/engineer (female – Astrogation, Engineer, and Mechanic).
- **Design:** 200-ton SL Hull, DR 120, 2 Turrets, Basic Bridge, Engineering, 6 Jump, 40 Fuel, Low Berth (4 low passengers), 32 Maneuver, 4 Staterooms, Utility, Fuel Processor, 58 cargo (plus 6 in turrets).
- **Statistics:** EMass 338.35, LMass 628.35, Cost MCr38.0552, HP 24,900, Hull Size Modifier +8.
- **Performance:** Accel 2.04 Gs, Jump 2, Air Speed 2,404.



### *Hkiyrerao-Class Research Ship [TL10]*

This laboratory ship has a mostly female crew and is used to conduct research or evaluate newly discovered worlds as potential colony sites. As it is unarmed, often there is only one male crew member, the captain/pilot.

- **Crew:** Captain/pilot (male – Leadership, Piloting, and Tactics), navigator (female – Electronics Operation (Commo), Electronics Operation (Sensors), and Astrogation), two engineers (female – Engineer and Mechanic), executive officer/chief scientist (female), and up to 10 scientists (female), some of whom operate the vessel's small craft.
- **Design:** 400-ton SL Hull, DR 141, 4 Turrets (no weapons fitted), Basic Bridge, Engineering, 16 Jump, 120 Fuel, 3 Low Berths (for up to 12 low passengers or captured animals), 25 Maneuver Drive, Sickbay, 81 Spacedock (holds pinnace and air/raft), 15 Staterooms, Utility, 20 Lab, Fuel Processor.
- **Statistics:** EMass 802.35, LMass 970.45, Cost MCr103.3694, HP 49,800, Hull Size Modifier +9.
- **Performance:** Accel 1.03 Gs, Jump 3, Air Speed 1,630.

### *Ihatei-Class Transport [TL10]*

This is one of several standard designs encountered in Aslan colonial fleets; it provides economical movement of up to 10,000 colonists (in low berths) and their start-up supplies and equipment (averaging 7.7 tons per colonist). It is unarmed and lightly armored, and in unexplored or potentially hostile areas is escorted by warships. Since it is at its most vulnerable when landing on a world surface, standard doctrine in most clans calls for the *Ihatei*'s small craft to be deployed as "chase aircraft" or fighter cover, and to this end the cutters are often armed. Cynical observers suggest that this is to keep as many upper-class males as possible off the bridge while the ship lands, so that the crew can concentrate on their jobs.

- **Crew:** 288: 10 bridge crew, 240 engineers, 2 medics, 36 small-craft pilots.
- **Design:** 50,000-ton SL Hull, DR 980, Command Bridge, Engineering, 2,000 Jump, 15,000 Fuel, 2,500 Low Berths (for 10,000 colonists), 4,000 Maneuver, Sickbay, 1,810 Spacedock (holds 8 cutters, 5 shuttles, and 10 air/rafts), 300 Staterooms, 100 Utility, 100 Fuel Processor, 15,438 cargo.
- **Statistics:** EMass 73,616.15, LMass 154,252.15, Cost MCr10,249.285, HP 765,000, Hull Size Modifier +14.
- **Performance:** Accel 1.04 Gs, Jump 3, Air Speed 4,850.

### *Weakhto-Class Cruiser [TL10]*

Typical of the obsolescent warships deployed to escort *ihatei* expeditions, the *Weakhto* is no longer credible as a front-line fighting ship, but is powerful enough to provide protection, scouting, and reconnaissance for colonial fleets. *Weakhto* means battle; ships of the class are named for famous clan battles.

- **Crew:** 172: 10 bridge crew, 33 gunners, 118 engineers, 2 medics, 9 small-craft crew.
- **Design:** 10,000-ton USL Hull, DR 820, Heavy Compartmentalization, Basic Stealth, Basic Emission Cloaking, Spinal Particle Accelerator, 9 Missile Bays, 19 Turrets (3 with 3 missile racks each, 4 with 3 sandcasters each, 12 with 3 360-MJ lasers each), Command Bridge, Engineering, 400 Jump, 3,000 Fuel, 2,860 Maneuver, 1 Sickbay, 602 Spacedock (holds 2 cutters, 2 shuttles and 1 air/raft), 115 Staterooms, 20 Utility, 20 Fuel Processor, 713 cargo.
- **Statistics:** EMass 47,413.535, LMass 52,113.635, Cost MCr3,466.3109, HP 365,550, Hull Size Modifier +12.
- **Performance:** Accel 2.2 Gs, Jump 3.

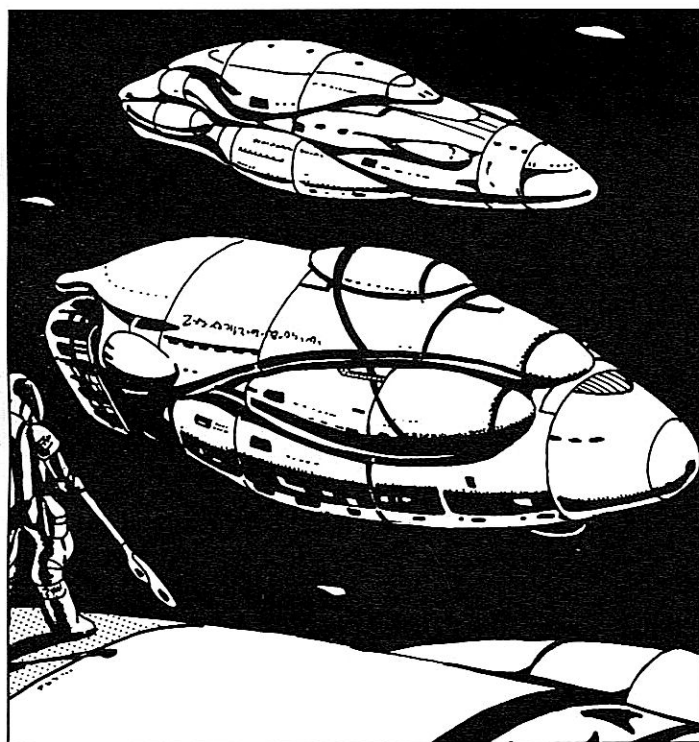
### *Taori-Class Riftliner [TL10]*

The riftliner is a general-purpose clan vessel, manufactured throughout the Hierate in a number of variants by many different clans, but especially common along the edge of the Great Rift. It was originally designed to carry four *hryo* of 400-ton battleriders (equivalent to *Dragon*-class SDBs, see p. GT144), but clans soon realized the possibilities of other payloads.

A range of 400-ton pods for cargo, passengers, and fuel were quickly produced, and the coreward clans then noted that fitting 10 fuel pods gave them a vessel capable of traversing the J-5 Route across the Great Rift while carrying up to 14 payload pods. The fuel pods rely on the mothership's fuel processors to refine fuel at need, but wilderness refueling is slow as the vessel relies on its carried craft to scoop the fuel, so it normally refuels at local starports.

The riftliner is deliberately left unarmed to discourage its captain from engaging in combat, as it has neither the acceleration nor the armor to survive; in wartime, it will carry battleriders or SDBs for self-defense – the “conquer or die” tactics forced on battleriders and their tenders are well-suited to the Aslan psyche.

When encountered, the riftliner will be carrying a mixture of up to two dozen 400-ton payloads; these may be any type of pod, SDBs, *Eakhau*-class traders, or *Hkiyrerao*-class research ships, depending on its mission. With some ingenuity on the part of the crew larger (600- or 800-ton) or smaller (100- or 200-ton) vessels can also be carried.



- **Crew:** 140 for the ship itself (10 bridge crew, 120 engineers, two medics, and eight shuttle crew), plus whatever crew are required for any pods carried.
- **Design:** 20,000-ton USL Hull, DR 714, Command Bridge, Engineering, 800 Jump Drive, 6,000 Fuel, 40 Low Berths (for 160 low passengers – intended for the crew in emergency survival situations), 2,200 Maneuver, Sickbay, 20,000 Spacedock (for 24 pods and 8 shuttles), 160 Staterooms, 40 Utility, 50 Fuel Processor.
- **Statistics:** EMass 29,765.15, LMass 86,036.15, Cost MCr4,004.105, HP 420,000, Hull Size Modifier +12.
- **Performance:** Accel 1.02 Gs, Jump 3.

### Cargo Pod

A basic freight container. Occasionally, a streamlined variant capable of ballistic re-entry is considered, but to date the benefits have not been thought worth the extra cost. A utility module is fitted in case the cargo cannot tolerate zero-G (e.g., wine, which could be ruined by spreading sediment); if used, this must be powered from the mother ship.

- **Crew:** None.
- **Design:** 400-ton USL Hull, DR160, Utility, 399 cargo.
- **Statistics:** EMass 236.5, LMass 2,231.5, Cost MCr4.2, HP 37,500, Hull Size Modifier +9.
- **Performance:** As for mother ship.

### Fuel Pod

Essentially a huge drop tank, mainly used by riftliners on the J-5 Route. There are rumors of some clans having a streamlined variant with built-in fuel processors and low-powered maneuver drives, which can be detached from the ship to skim fuel from gas giants or oceans. This would have some military use, in speeding up refueling, but at a considerable extra cost; the resulting hybrid craft would also not have its full fuel payload.

- **Crew:** None.
- **Design:** 400-ton USL Hull, 400 Fuel.
- **Statistics:** EMass 745, LMass 745, Cost MCr67.9, HP 37,500, Hull Size Modifier +9.
- **Performance:** As for mother ship.

### Low Pod

A pod full of low berths, designed to carry colonists, troops, or startup herds of edible animals across interstellar distances.

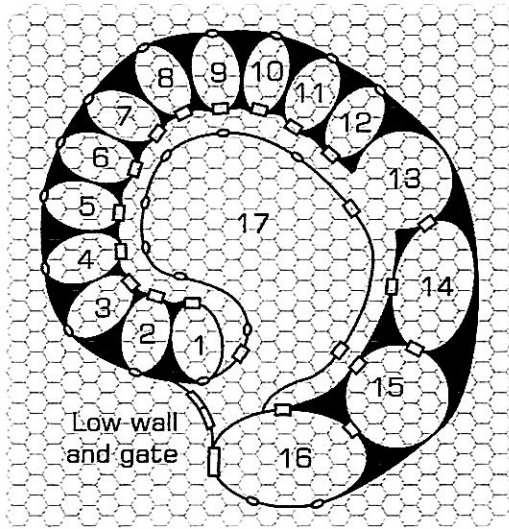
- **Crew:** Two medics (female – Diagnosis, Physician, and Surgery) to supervise low passengers.
- **Design:** 400-ton USL Hull, DR160, Engineering (startup fusion plant cost to provide power for low berths), 768 Low Berths (3,072 low passengers or a variable number of animals in transit), Sickbay, 2 Staterooms (for medics), 6 cargo (medical supplies).
- **Statistics:** EMass 1,770.65, LMass 1,800.65, Cost MCr173.364, HP 37,500, Hull Size Modifier +9.
- **Performance:** As for mother ship.

### Passenger Pod

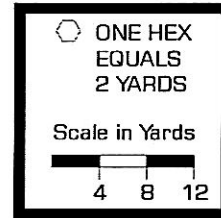
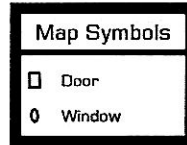
This pod can carry up to 64 noble passengers and the requisite 16 stewards in some comfort, or 160 troops and light personal gear in double occupancy.

- **Crew:** Up to 16 stewards (female – Savoir-Faire (Servant)) to tend to noble passengers, and optionally one or more medics (female – Diagnosis, Physician, and Surgery).
- **Design:** 400-ton USL Hull, DR 160, Engineering (startup plant to provide power for staterooms), Sick Bay, 80 Staterooms, 78 cargo (for passenger's luggage and supplies).
- **Statistics:** EMass 421.85, LMass 811.85, Cost MCr5.34, HP 37,500, Hull Size Modifier +9.
- **Performance:** As for mother ship.

# ASLAN MANOR HOUSE



- 1-12: Private chambers. Each has accommodations for four.  
 13: Kitchen/dining room. The social center of the house.  
 14: Gun room. Weapon and heirloom storage.  
 15: Storeroom.  
 16: Garage. Vehicles and riding beasts.  
 17: Courtyard.



## ASLAN LANDHOLD

This is a generic landhold which PCs may visit, burgle, assault, or even live in. The inhabitants may be Aslan, or members of other races who have replaced the original owners. The landhold may be the sole holding of a Status +1 family, or a country seat for one of higher status.

### THE LANDHOLD

The landhold has a total area of about 40 square miles; a small ranch on a treasure world has been chosen as an example, although landholds based on mining, industry, or hunting are also possible, and less hospitable worlds are settled, too. See map on facing page.

**1: Manor House.** This is where the landholder and his immediate family live.

**2-5: Vassals' Houses.** Accommodations for three to four other families of lower status, who work for the landholder. Note that he owns the houses, not the vassals; their tenancy is entirely at his whim, although the honorable thing is to treat one's vassals equitably.

**6: Boundary Fence.** Not intended to stop intruders, this is a simple marker to advise visitors that they are now entering someone else's land, and should announce themselves and seek permission.

**7: Herd Range.** The Aslan landhold is more a ranch than a farm; crops are only grown to provide fodder for meat animals.

**8: Garage/Workshop.** This houses the landhold's riding beasts or vehicles, any agricultural machinery, and the tools the females use to repair and maintain them.

**9: Barn.** This is smaller than the feed stores on a Human farm, partly because the animals fend for themselves more than Solomani livestock, and partly because the mild climate of Aslan treasure worlds means it holds only a short-term emergency supply of fodder.

**10: Generator.** The Aslan of this clan prefer to be self-sufficient in power, and tend to have generators for each individual landhold rather than power grids. Depending on the

family's requirements, TL, and wealth, this may be anything from a simple windmill generator to a fusion power plant.

**11: Dueling Circle.** This is used both to practice for known or potential duels, or for the recreational duels used to hone skills and establish a pecking order among the males. A Human intending to establish a serious relationship with the landholder's family is encouraged to take part in a recreational duel; to fail miserably will make him the butt of good-natured humor and may result in an unflattering Aslan nickname, but even to try demonstrates his willingness to live by the Aslan code.

### THE MANOR HOUSE

This is a typical Aslan building – low, with curved, flowing lines, painted plain white, and decorated with stripes of symbols at roughly waist height and around the edges of the doors.

Windows are oval or round, and have no curtains – the Aslan are not easily awakened by sunlight, and have nothing to hide. Often, windows are simple openings, given the mild weather on Kusyu and other Aslan treasure worlds. Where the climate is less pleasant, glass or other transparencies are used.

Security is provided by the family's males, so alarms or locks are rare, and mostly intended to deter or protect livestock and small children.

**1-12: Private chambers.** These are where Aslan sleep and meditate. Each has spartan furnishings for one to four Aslan.

**13: Kitchen/dining room.** This is the social heart of the house, where food is prepared and eaten, and stories are told afterward.

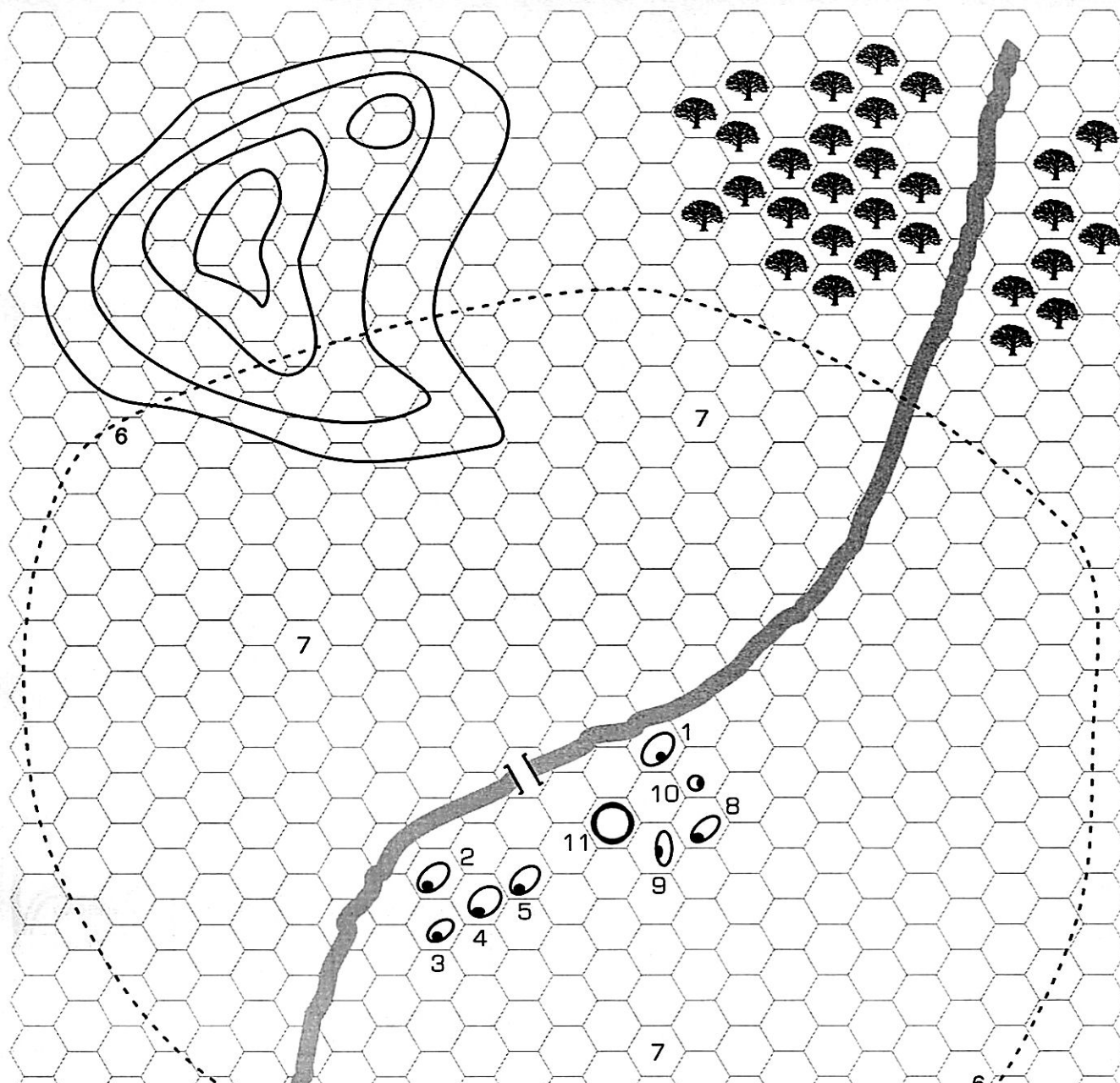
**14: Gun room.** This contains the family's weapons, including heirlooms.

**15: Storeroom.**

**16: Garage.** Depending on the family's means and the local TL, this may contain any kind of vehicle or riding beast.


**17: Courtyard.**





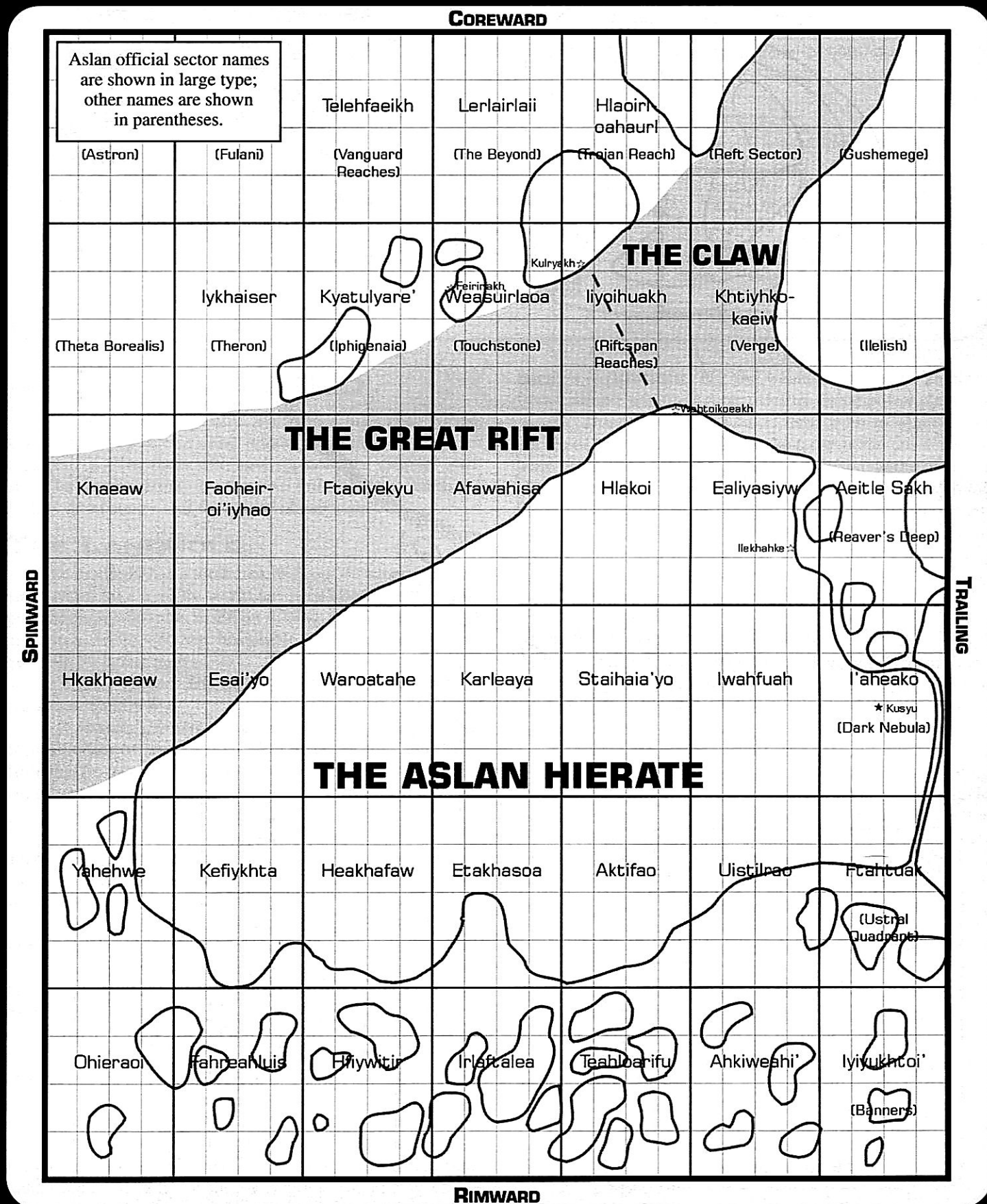
**Aslan Landhold**

Each hex = 500 yards

-  Woods
-  Building (not to scale)
-  Fence
-  River
-  Hills

Location key, p.58

# THE ASLAN HIERATE AND NEIGHBORING POWERS



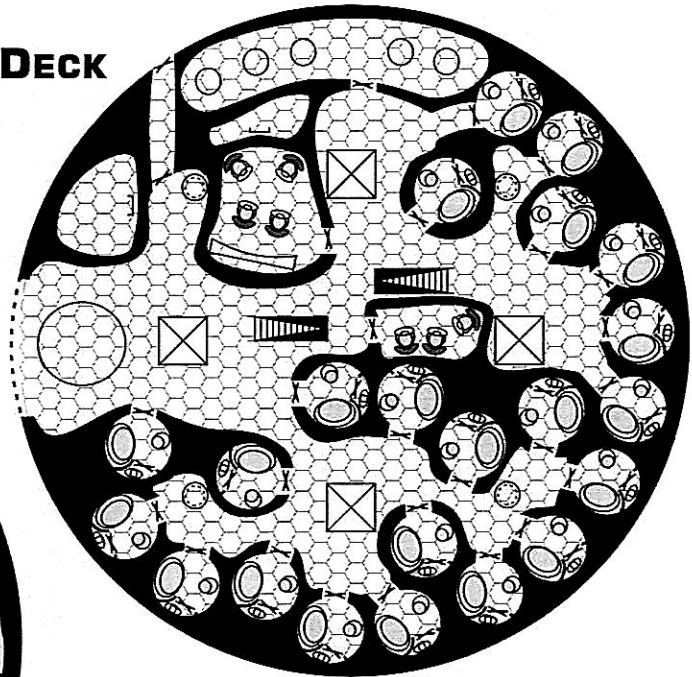
# EKAWSIYKUA-CLASS ESCORT

ONE HEX  
EQUALS 1 YARD

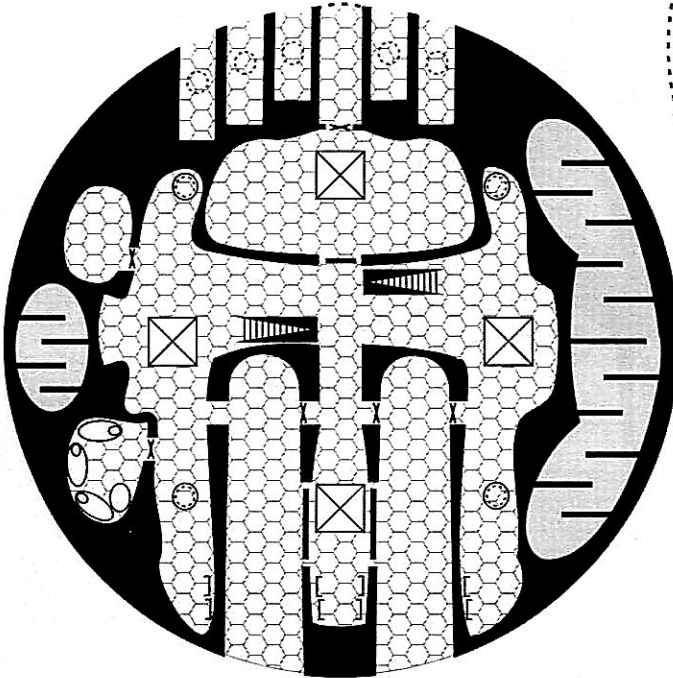
SCALE IN YARDS

3 6 9

## BRIDGE DECK



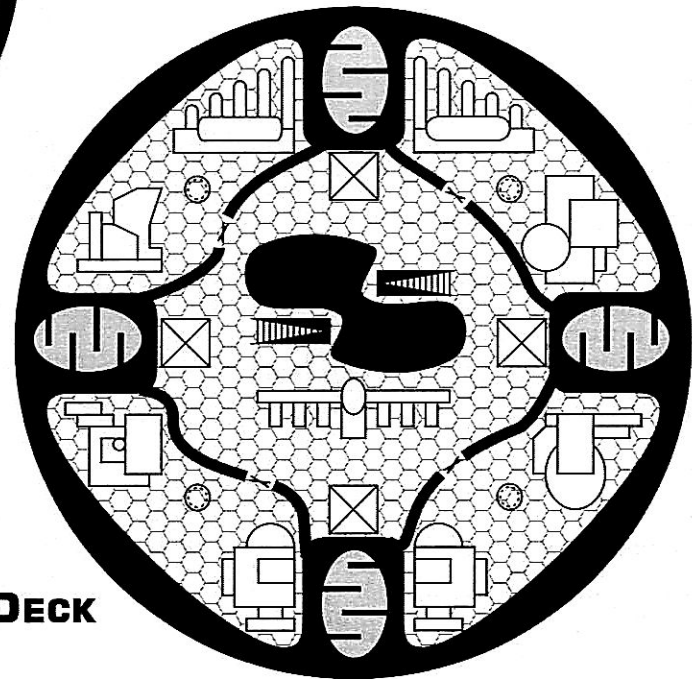
## HANGAR DECK



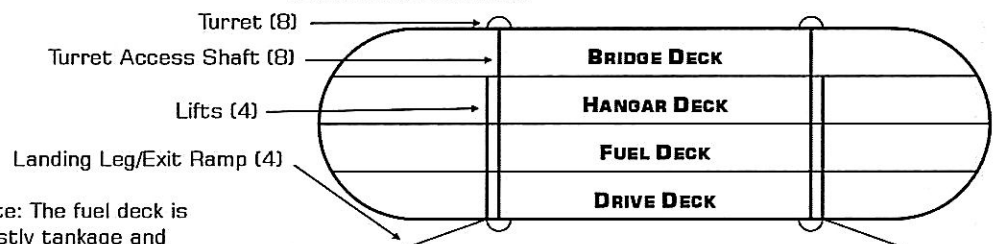
### Deck Plan Symbols

X	Iris Valve
○	Iris Valve, Floor
⊙	Iris Valve, Overhead
⊗	Iris Valve, Floor and Overhead
0	Sliding Door
]	Maintenance Hatch
	Staircase
⊠	Lift Shaft
⊙	Acceleration Couch
⊙	Chair
⊙	Bed
⊙	Fresher
⊙	Low Berth
⊙	Sickbay Bed
—	Airtight Bulkhead

## DRIVE DECK



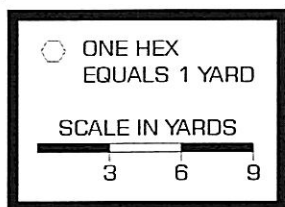
### CROSS SECTION



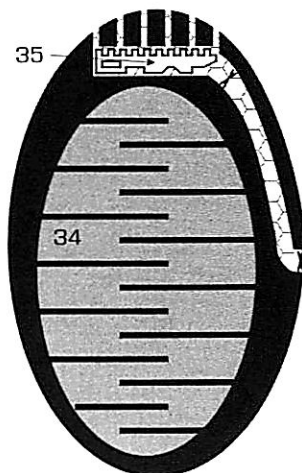
Note: The fuel deck is mostly tankage and is not detailed above.



# KHTUKHAO-CLASS CLAN TRANSPORT



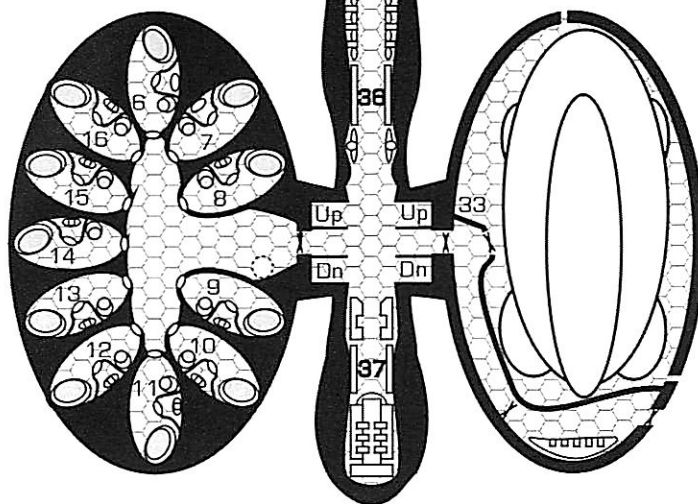
## FUEL Pod



## QUARTERS Pod

The quarters pod is made up of two identical decks, one on top of the other. Only the lower deck has access to the central spine.

Locations 17 through 27 are on the upper deck.



## BRIDGE Pod

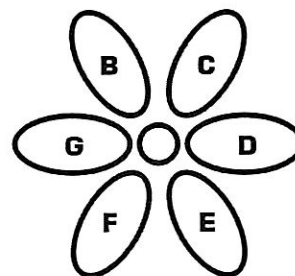
## CARGO Pod

## SHUTTLE Pod

### POD DESCRIPTIONS

- A. Bridge
- B. Fuel Pod #1
- C. Cargo Pod #1
- D. Shuttle Pod
- E. Cargo Pod #2
- F. Fuel Pod #2
- G. Quarter's Pod

### CROSS-SECTIONAL VIEW



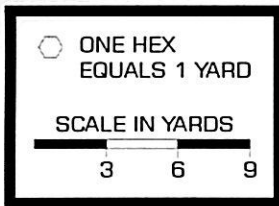
The *Khutkha*-class clan transport has a unique design of seven large pods connected to a central spine. The bridge pod is connected to the front of the spine, while the other six are arranged around it, like the petals of a flower (see cross section to the right). Note that four of the pods do not have their decks in alignment with the central gravity plane. This is of no consequence if the artificial grav plates are in operation, although it is disconcerting to some individuals.

See Deck Plan Key on p. 53

### Deck Plan Symbols

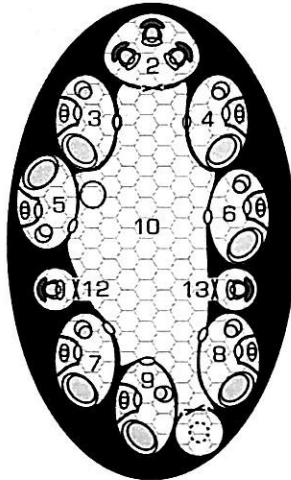
X	Iris Valve
○	Iris Valve, Overhead
0	Sliding Door
]	Maintenance Hatch
⊙	Acceleration Couch
⊙	Chair
⊙	Bed
⊙	Fresher
⊙	Low Berth
⊙	Sickbay Bed
—	Airtight Bulkhead

# KTIYHUI-CLASS COURIER

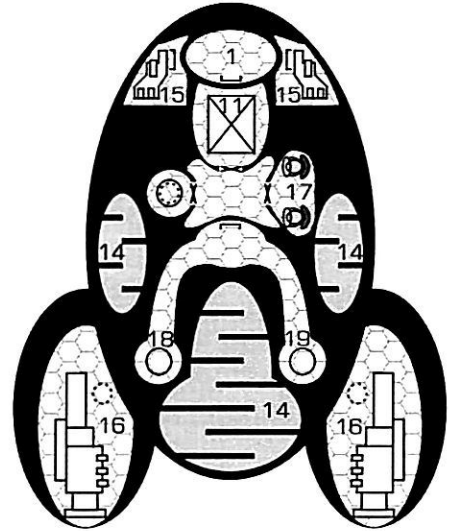


See Deck Plan Key on p. 53

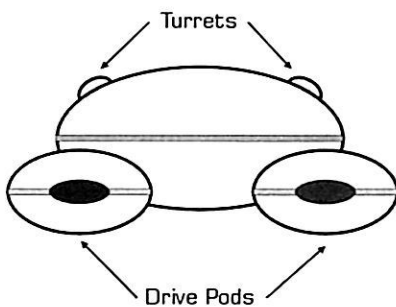
## UPPER DECK



## LOWER DECK



## REAR VIEW

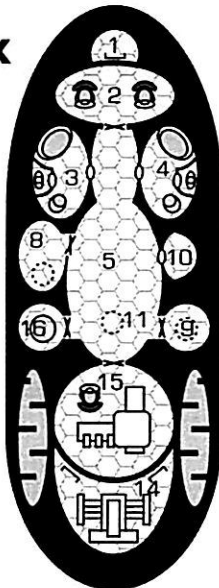


# H RAYE-CLASS SCOUT

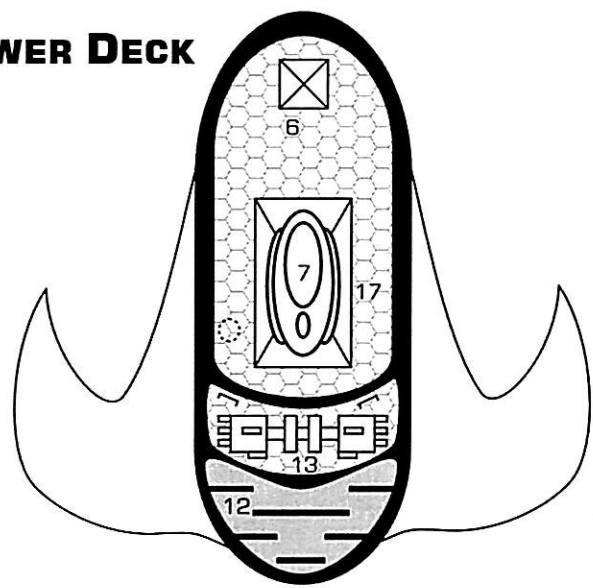
## UPPER DECK

See Deck Plan Key on p. 54

Deck Plan Symbols	
X	Iris Valve
○	Iris Valve, Floor
⊙	Iris Valve, Overhead
⊗	Iris Valve, Floor and Overhead
○	Sliding Door
]	Maintenance Hatch
⊗	Lift Shaft
⊗	Acceleration Couch
○	Chair
⊗	Bed
⊗	Fresher
⊗	Low Berth
⊗	Sickbay Bed
—	Airtight Bulkhead

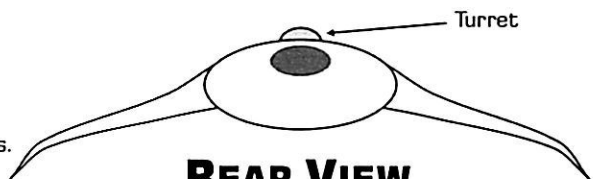


## LOWER DECK



Note: Wings act as landing skids as well as lifting surfaces.

## REAR VIEW



## CHAPTER TWO

# The K'kree

### K'kree Timekeeping

Unit (translation)	Contains	Imperial Time
Pim!bigr (year)	368 Kritur	440 days
Kritur (day)	4 Krix'leeka	28.6 hours
Krix'leeka (watch)	10 R'Keer	7 hours
R'Keer (1/10 watch)	10 Nixir	43 minutes
Nixir (1/100 watch)	10 Trakeek	4.3 minutes
Trakeek (moment)	10 Hkur'ghe	25.8 seconds
Hkur'ghe (instant)	—	2.58 seconds



### The Smart Vegetarians

**H**umanity's scientists had always assumed that intelligence was a byproduct of predatory activity . . . that it helped in sneaking up on or outwitting one's food. Early Human xenologists always stated that a herbivorous species would never need to be smarter than its prey — hence, would not evolve intelligence. These early academics' successors have not yet explained K'kree intelligence in their theories; they are reluctant to admit that their approach is flawed.

The simple fact is that the K'kree developed intelligence in response to challenges to their survival, like all major races. Survival required active, reasoned cooperation to achieve long-term goals. Superior cognitive ability arose in response to the needs of information processing and communication in a large group with complex demands. K'kree society needed language, memory, and the preservation of ideas. They developed them all.

Charges Like Thunder, Steppelord of the Two Thousand Worlds, rules a huge empire from his four-mile-wide domed palace on his home planet, Kirur. He sees his subjects as an enormous extended family and himself as its loving, considerate father. He dotes on his family and worries for them; they face terrible dangers and enormous challenges. He knows that they are fated to rule the entire universe, but fears the cost they must pay. Charges Like Thunder knows that the price is worthwhile and that his people will meet it. They are, after all, the K'kree.

### PHYSIOLOGY

The K'kree, like all living things, are a product of their environment. All of the larger animals on Kirur are hexapodal (with bilateral symmetry), and evolved from a common ancestral aquatic form.

### EVOLUTION

The K'kree evolved on a dry planet with a long year and virtually no seasons. Their ancestors were an extremely social species of large, grazing animals which lived on the verge of extinction — almost succumbing to starvation and similarly hungry predators. This situation changed with a huge increase in hard radiation, courtesy of a nearby supernova (now the neutron star Thirty [0606], so called because it broadcasts 30 pulses a *trakeek*). The flood of particles and, later, actual debris may have saved the species by increasing their mutation rate.

The K'kree happened upon two major evolutionary departures: intelligence and an upright attitude for their front body section. A need to reach inaccessible leaves, berries, and seed cases partly explains their development of a vertical trunk. Lifting their front legs from the ground allowed the development of manipulative digits.

The upright posture also created the opportunity to increase the field of vision. With the head higher from the ground, the K'kree could see hostile creatures at a greater distance than was previously possible. To search for far-off targets, the eyes moved from the sides to the front of the head, providing stereoscopic vision and an ability to judge ranges. This is rare among herbivores, and is not evident in any other fauna on Kirur.

The K'kree ability to detect enemies sooner than competing species gave them another advantage. Carnivores switched to devouring the easier prey (which are now found only in the fossil record), affording the K'kree a window in which to develop. By the time the carnivores returned their attentions to the K'kree, they had developed beyond a risk from fang and claw.

The developing K'kree intelligence reinforced their existing biology. Language enabled cooperation among greater groups. Information on food sources and predator packs passed quickly between families, and individual leaders gained renown for their wisdom and altruism. Eventually, these smaller units fused into the remote ancestors of the modern K'kree herds.

A short time later, by biological standards, they discovered horticulture, then agriculture and irrigation. This last breakthrough meant the K'kree could use their land, and especially their precious water, intensively enough to allow permanent settlements. These in turn attracted the predators they so feared. But using the powerful tools of language and reason, the K'kree decided to end the natural predator-prey relationship. They copied hunting from their enemies, and took the offensive. At that point, K'kree history began.



## PHYSICAL APPEARANCE AND SEXUAL VARIATION

The K'kree have four legs, two arms, and bilateral symmetry. They have enormous heads. They are the most massive of the major races, averaging half a ton.

K'kree are between 6 and 7 feet tall when fully upright, and measure 5 feet to the shoulder. If stretched out horizontally, they would be between 10 and 12 feet long. The presence of a vertical section at one end gives the K'kree an inconvenient center of gravity, high and to the front. This enables them to turn very quickly, but also makes them easier to push over sideways.

K'kree posture is slightly stooped; gravity pulls the trunk down from its vertical position. This is accentuated by a fatty pad on the back of the K'kree "waist," the dorsal junction of the upper and lower spines. This pad, which may be a remnant of a camel-like hump, protects this fragile area.

They are covered in short black or gray fur and have a luxuriant mane reaching from head to waist. The mane is usually trimmed and braided according to strict caste taboos (see p. 73).

To Humans, Aslan, or Vargr, K'kree hands are strange. They have three mutually opposing fingers around an adapted hoof, which stands in for a thumb. This gives a weak grip but superior manipulative ability between their fingers, and a stronger grip with no appreciable flexibility between the digits and the hoof. The complex arrangement of bone and cartilage which enables the retraction of the fingers also makes them weak and easy to snap. The involved nervous system necessary for the "telescoping" mechanism makes injury to this area very painful.

Sex differences among K'kree are difficult for outsiders to spot – females tend to be smaller and lighter, but otherwise look the same.

### Skeleton

The K'kree skeleton has two spines, connected to a single massive structure, called either the "middle collar" or the "front pelvis" (it has characteristics of both). There are heavy ribs on either side of this. The upper set actually agitates the stomachs and has a peculiar arrangement of bony spurs, which provide attachment points for digestive organs. Its contribution to breathing is incidental; the lower ribs drive the lungs.

K'kree bones are thick and heavy, both for support and for blood production. The spine carries the nervous system, and the front pelvis holds a ganglion to boost signals to the hindquarters.

### Internal Organs

The K'kree skeleton provides two voids which could be described as abdominal cavities. Unfortunately, neither can accommodate organs large enough to serve the animal's circulatory or respiratory requirements. Instead, the K'kree have a complex system of dispersed organs. The heart is split in two, one part on either side of the lungs (housed in the lower body). Air is fed to them through a respiratory tract lined with muscle and containing four diaphragms, which can sphincter shut across it. This structure helps to pump air downwards and assists in ejecting irritants. It also prevents a K'kree from choking on food.

All three stomachs are in the upper section. Separate chambers deal with carbohydrates and sugars; cellulose; and proteins, minerals, and vitamins. When food has passed through, it is forced into the intestines by a powerful muscle group, whose name, *uur'loorr*, translates as "gut booster." The digestive tract averages 40 feet, and is coiled up behind the lungs. Sexual organs are housed in the rear pelvic ring and upper back legs.

### Senses and Communication

In Human terms, the K'kree have unremarkable eyesight, good hearing, and an exceptional sense of smell. They have a wide vocal range, which they augment by humming through their nostrils and grinding their teeth. They can also vent gasses

## Legacy of the Plains: Honorifics and Figures of Speech

**K**'kree evolved with wide horizons, not surrounded by trees. They never adopted a vertical symbolism – being above one another – instead seeing their society as a wedge, with the patriarch at the front, followed by his warriors, with his dependents safe at the rear. As there was always a race to be run, either to new food, or toward an enemy, the K'kree see themselves as charging at problems or into the future.

This image is maintained in the customary salutations from an underling to a *Krurruna*:

*May your mane stream and the ground shudder.*

*My only wish is to be lashed by your tail.*

*May I follow where you have tread.*

K'kree have a good sense of smell, which dominates their imagery.

*It smells wrong.*

*The winds told my nose.*

*The wind tells the same stories too often* (a criticism of primitive air conditioning).

*Ah, Two Thousand Worlds, tell me I am home* (saluting the unique ambiance of Kirur downport).



## Smelly Horsies Love Each Other Very Much

The devotion that K'kree show to one another is remarkable even by the most mawkish Human standards. It is only their xenophobia that keeps the love that binds the Great Herd together from becoming a proverb. K'kree are utterly self-sacrificing, whether in their work for each other, the husband's urge to protect his wives and children, or the warrior standing between his family and any danger. Their literary tradition, especially their poetry, is as much romantic as it is religious. The K'kree traditions of obedience and trust are rooted in faith in their bosses.

from bodily orifices, producing sustained tones and rhythms as well as a selection of telling odors. The K'kree also possess a suite of scent glands which can indicate mood. These secretions are involuntary.

Strong smells, whether fresh or lingering, are very important to the K'kree. Followers know how near their patriarch is by how strong he smells. They try to keep as close to him as possible, and find his odor more reassuring the stronger it is. He can usually get them to follow him just by moving away.

### *Reproduction, Life, and Death*

A female's choice of mate is hardly free. In the ancestral herd, she would have been monopolized by the dominant male; in modern times, she is as likely to be assigned to one of his followers or given away to another family.

Females give birth to a single K'kree after a local year's gestation. Providing pre-masticated, or semi-digested and regurgitated, food every hour for the young stimulates a hormonal trigger to reduce fertility. In a harem with young, fertile females, their older colleagues will often take over this feeding duty. This is especially likely if the young female is the patriarch's current favorite.



This belief rests on their knowledge that their masters love them. To outsiders, they have a funny way of showing it, especially where sex is involved, but love and jealousy are age-old counterparts. A K'kree never feels the first without being wracked by the second. Serious violence only arises between them over affairs of the heart.

K'kree love is evident in their politics. The nobility do not rule because they enjoy power, but because they love their dependents and want to assure their happiness. When a male challenges for patriarchy, he is not doing so out of personal ambition, but out of emotion. He is jealous of the incumbent boss and feels that he could do better. He enters a status fight because he cares.

Baby K'kree do not have the stereotypical centaur shape – they come out of the womb straight and begin to raise their shoulders after 50 days. A mother will encourage this by making her child reach upward for food, rather than scooping it out of her mouth and smearing it over the infant's face.

K'kree live an average 103 *pim!bigr* (years). Adulthood begins at 20. They begin to age noticeably at 50 *pim!bigr*. As K'kree age, their pelts become progressively more pale.

### *Diet*

K'kree only eat vegetable matter. They derive proteins from legume analogs, and carbohydrates and sugars from fruits or nuts. Everything they eat is rich in dietary fiber and vitamins. For color and extra flavor, they accompany their meals with handfuls of fresh flowers. They do not require vitamin B12.

In their wild state, they ate food raw. This limited their diet to non-poisonous plants. With the development of fire and cooking, they learned how to eliminate natural toxins. This expanded their range of foodstuffs and gave them a competitive advantage over their rivals on the plains.

# PSYCHOLOGY: THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE FAMILY

The K'kree culture may be the universe's most paradoxical, given the contrast between the bonds K'kree feel for one another and their perspective on all other races.

## HERD MENTALITY

K'kree are only happy in numbers. Despite being free-willed, self-aware individuals, they prefer to follow a leader. They form enormous interdependent groups, with a *Krurruna* (boss, patriarch) at the apex, and follow him loyally. Although not necessarily blood related, they count themselves as family. When it works well, this family is the strongest socio-economic unit in charted space. It is so strong that its members think of themselves more as family members than they do as individuals. The Herd's word for "my" actually means "my family's" and has this sense whether the speaker is the patriarch or the lowliest servant.

Individual K'kree who have become separated from their families will bond with others, either by applying to join the first group they meet or by starting a family of their own. The highest-status male or, failing that, the most capable individual will lead.

## ASPECTS OF THE FAMILY

The evolutionary justification for the family is as an uneasy compromise between the urge of a dominant male to monopolize the reproductive potential of his harem and the need to secure assistance from other males. The armed guards who attend every patriarch are a result of this social contract; in return for guaranteed exclusive access to some of their master's surplus females, they agreed to police his wives for him. In time, they came to protect his interests generally.

The K'kree family is more properly a social cell composed of individuals, some of whom will be blood relatives, which exists to perform three functions. One is to enlarge itself through reproduction and recruitment. This includes splitting off lesser families. Next is self-defense – the K'kree found early on that cooperation made the whole herd safer from attack than individual action. Last is economic survival. Originally this was through the knowledge and exploitation of food sources, but with the development of agriculture and ultimately of industry, K'kree families came to specialize in a productive or service sector activity.

The individuals of a K'kree family are ordered into a strict hierarchy, with a dominant male, the patriarch, at the apex and other males beneath him. Some of the males practice the family's specialist activity, while others are bodyguards and servants. Depending on their rank within the family, they might have wives. Wives assume the same status as their husbands.

The core of the family is the patriarch, his wives, and their children. On average, half the females are his sexual partners or dependents. Then there are the lesser males – bodyguards, servants, and other specialists, some of whom also have females. Large families also possess small satellites, which have a similar structure but more modest proportions, and whose patriarch is subordinate to the leader of the main group. Whether the client group's leader acts as a filter – accepting instructions from his patron and relaying them to his followers – or the ultimate boss addresses them directly is a matter of dispute, which can end in a status fight.

### *The Stallion and His Wives*

The K'kree patriarch's position is immensely favorable. He has the obedience of a troop of talented males and preferential access to a harem of docile females. He does have responsibilities which he must take seriously, on pain of losing his family entirely. He must arrange for his own daughters to mate with promising subordinates or join other families. He must forge alliances with other families and be prepared to join higher social structures as a subordinate. He must make his own family attractive to outsiders who wish to join, without alienating his own followers to the extent that they defect. This is a difficult balancing act; K'kree society recognizes that a successful patriarch deserves his special rewards.

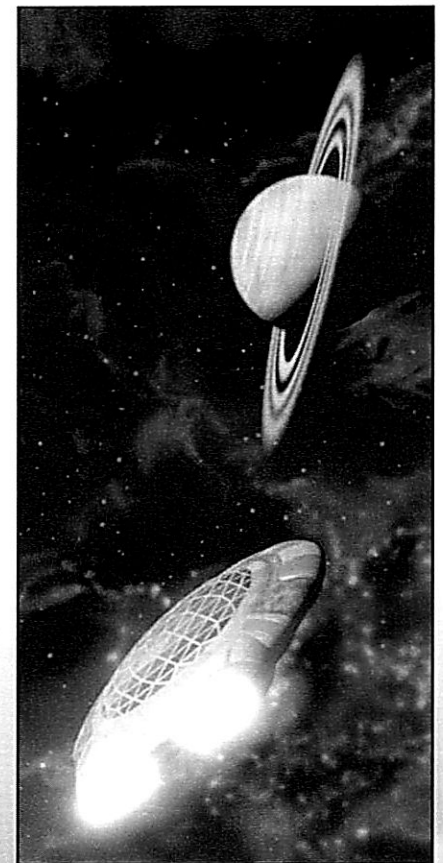
## Microorganisms

The K'kree know, at least on an intellectual level, that their diet unavoidably contains living creatures and little organisms whose precise classification is debatable. Theologically, this is tricky.

The answer is logical. They point out that they don't eat animals and that it is their clear racial duty to ensure that the same will ultimately be true for the whole cosmos. Therefore, their diet can't contain animal matter, because if it did, they couldn't eat it. And they do eat it, so it can't. Practically speaking, anything too small to be observed as an animal is a plant.

K'kree clean their food very thoroughly, using microfine filters, washing, and irradiation techniques to exclude lifeforms from prepared foodstuffs. An ongoing series of planet-wide experiments is trying to remove these creatures from the ecosystem entirely. The authorities measure the success of the animal eradication regimes and publish the results to encourage the Herd to greater effort.

*Adventure Seed:* An Imperial or client state noble has taken the K'kree efforts to avoid eating little bugs as a sign that they are severely misunderstood. To vindicate his contrary belief that the K'Kree are pacifistic, respect life, and love nature, he charters the PCs to transport him on a goodwill mission to the Two Thousand Worlds.







## Two Levels of Violence

**K**'kree tussle among themselves in wrestling bouts and sometimes in status or mating displays. In these circumstances, their hard thumbs raise nasty bruises, but these fights are largely symbolic or ritualistic, and serious injury is rare. Except in the highly unusual cases of the criminally insane, this is as far as K'kree violence against K'kree goes.

The same is not true of K'kree violence to others. The race's history was one of continuous hostility with an enemy who (they were certain) wanted to eat them. At first this threat was from wild animals, next against intelligent neighbors and ultimately from the majority of the other species the K'kree have met. The Great Herd's experience is that this enemy is implacable and inscrutable, often treacherous. In these circumstances the K'kree go out to kill. They seldom recognize concepts of limited engagement, non-combatants, or quarter. They attack and carry on fighting until the enemy offers an unconditional surrender or is dead.

## Low Status and Loving It

In K'kree society, a male's status is strictly a matter of birth – there is no way to change it. Outside observers, especially the ever-judgmental Humans, deplore this, but it is neither strange nor unfair for the K'kree. A low-status male is born into a hereditary caste and has an occupation which he receives as his birthright. He can avoid this job by remaining in the military, but will retain his low social rank. He will still be a valued and appreciated member of K'kree society, though, as long as he does his job well and works hard for his patriarch.

In return for dedicated service, a K'kree can reasonably expect protection, affection, a wife – possibly even a small harem – and the unconditional support of a family made stronger by the male's own efforts. (Any patriarch too stingy or stupid to guarantee this to his followers will suffer mass desertions or a status challenge from one of his close relatives.) Consequently, low-status males usually aspire to serve their patriarch loyally and well. Their society conditions them to assume that they are not up to the demands of leadership – hence their lowly birth – and the rewards for being content with their lot are appreciable.

## Joining a Family

A male may choose to remain a junior member of his father's group, ultimately becoming a satellite by taking a wife assigned to him by his patriarch, following a deal with another male. If he would rather seek his fortune elsewhere, he should consult the local bosses, who will advise him on where his talents would be appreciated, then petition the appropriate patriarch. This is usually done through a communications net. He may have to bring some kind of gift, sometimes even a sister.

## A Home of Our Own

In the early days, the boss was always the first to enter new pasture. He would not begin to feed until he knew that he had walked over sufficient good grazing for his entire family. When he was satisfied that all his dependents would eat well, he would scent-mark the perimeter of the area. Other *Krurruna* would do the same; it was shocking manners to go onto another herd's turf uninvited.

In their nomadic days, these areas lasted only as long as their scent and were in any case grazed to exhaustion. When the K'kree took to long-term settlement, they retained their instinct to remain within the boundaries their bosses set, and supplemented scenting with low walls and beds of flowers. Now each K'kree family has a delineated range – a home. The patriarch is happiest taking his ease there among his loved ones, and his harem is usually nervous outside it. When traveling, K'kree resort to the traditional forms of marking.

## Privacy

The K'kree view privacy and solitude as nothing less than steps on the road to madness. Aside from not straying over a dominant male's boundaries, the K'kree regard being alone or doing things out of sight of others as the most morbid symptoms of aberration. This attitude was obviously helpful as the race evolved – both for warning the family of danger and for assuring the patriarch's control of his harem – and thus it remains, despite its being difficult for an industrialized, space-capable civilization.

## PATHOLOGIES OF BIOLOGICAL ORIGIN

The Herd's unique experiences have left their mark, but have not promoted any real progress in clinical psychology. The K'kree prefer to avoid problems entirely, or if possible change their circumstances so that a problem no longer exists.

### *Xenophobia*

The K'kree are unenthusiastic about even the nicest of aliens. Usually they are downright hostile. This is a legacy of the times they spent being hunted, and is so deeply imbedded in their genetic inheritance that it is only with the most extreme effort that some of them can overcome their urge to kill any strange, frightening apparition.

### *Claustrophobia*

Open plains, a brisk wind, and a need to scan for danger on the farthest horizon did not equip the K'kree for the challenges of living in cities, flying in spaceships, or going down in mines. Most K'kree suffer terribly if confined. This can be controlled with environmental enrichment – animated panoramic murals, big windows, recycled air perfumed with prairie scents, artificial grass, or actual turf – but it takes a special individual to actually want to torture himself this way.

### *Demophilia, Fellow Feeling, and Grief*

The K'kree are always happier in big groups. In the early days, this meant there were always eyes pointing in each direction and a nose to every breeze. If an individual was surprised by ambush, his brother would be close at hand to stamp the life out of the enemy. This interdependence increased by sharing labor for big civil-engineering projects of early civilization. The feeling of comfort from being with loved ones is like a drug to the K'kree. They die if isolated, and suffer shocking trauma if bereaved.

## THEOLOGY

The K'kree believe they do not really exist in the universe. Rather, they are all manifestations of beings from another, perfected existence who have been incarnated temporarily in the present one. They feel it is their duty to perform actions which will, ultimately, make this universe as perfect as their metaphysical home. The K'kree further believe that their *true* selves attained grace by similarly perfecting the preceding universe. Thus, they earned the right to develop a cosmos by completing its predecessor.

Because the K'kree see the Herd as repeating its prior actions, which they already know to have been effective, they believe in a kind of fate. Interestingly, although a K'kree does not fear his own death, he dreads the passing of loved ones. To predestination, they add another concept, *k'lat'rr*; approximately "rightness," "fitness," "contentedness," "being at home with the wives and kids."

*K'lat'rr* is a spiritual virtue, but it emphasizes the joy of life – specifically the joy of seeing one's family alive, healthy, and happy. A K'kree would rather die than face life without a close friend or relative. Similarly, he would destroy any threat to his family's well-being rather than see them suffer. This deeply held theological tenet explains the utter fury of the K'kree at war.

## **Funerary Rites and Disposal of the Dead**

*"All the deceased's relatives attend the funeral service, where they celebrate his contribution to the great work and comfort each other. As they cannot bear the idea of one of their own being consumed by animals or even rotting in the ground, the K'kree practice cremation exclusively. The ashes are divided between the guests and inserted into lockets which they wear all the time. Quite often, these contain small bells which the wearer affects to believe are voices of the dead. Elderly K'kree often have dozens of these hanging from a pectoral or gorget."*

*"This practice opens an interesting window on K'kree thought processes. Most cultures apply devourer symbolism to fire; it consumes things, leaving nothing but ash. Clearly, the K'kree could not feed a dead relative to anything so, for them, the fire transforms the corpse into something else, something spiritual."*

*"Fire as a thing which eats is a singularly unhelpful metaphor. Fire as a thing which transforms, embedded at the core of their belief system, predisposes the K'kree to accept major changes. Indeed, their religion can be taken as work for a lasting transformation."*

– Cordelia Chatham,  
Comparative Thanatology  
for First Year Students,  
University of Rukh Press, 1103

*Adventure Seed: The PCs are given the opportunity to buy an "exclusive and very rare artifact. This K'kree charm-collar has a series of marvelously tuned little bells in dura-glass, bronze, and silver." Obviously, the owner wants it back.*

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*"The K'kree have never killed one another for their religion's sake.' Yeah, right, except for that little episode they don't like to talk about when they **allegedly** exterminated an entire world of their own kind. And whatever else they've managed to cover up. K'kree have no problem with killing in general . . . just with eating what you kill – mustn't do that . . . Where did we get this image of vegetarians as peaceful? Remember that guy in India . . . Ashoka? Conquered an empire, wiped out entire cities, formed one of the earliest police states on old Terra . . . he was a vegetarian, wasn't he?"*

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– Jile "Psycho Prof" Korrigii,  
**Reflections on War**



## Cultural Misunderstandings and Alien Explorers

*"The Human adventurers who decided that we K'kree were centaurs, creatures from their own mythology, also declared that our society is just a flawed version of their own. They used the word **family** to describe a far more involved web of interpersonal relationships and reciprocal duties. They do have terms which, in combination, describe us better – **clan**, **patron/client group**, **cooperative** – but, as no single Anglic word encapsulates all these concepts, **family** it is.*

*"Even when they decided that we operate in **families**, they did not extend us the courtesy of personality. They think we are like hive insects, with only a Krurruna being truly self-willed. They even say we are not individuals. Yet this slight arises solely because of their own language. There are similar terms, **individuality** and **individualism**. One addresses notions of self or consciousness, while the other covers self-importance, personal ambition (or to use another Anglic word, **selfishness**).*

*"This last concept is hard to understand, but try. Humans see acting in an individual's own interest as having a mystical importance. Acting collectively, with your family and for your Krurruna, is regarded as somehow less than noble, even cowardly. Humans decide whom to deal with depending on how strongly they express their self-interest. We do not act this way so, having less individualism, we are regarded as having less **individuality**, hence, as not really being **individuals**."*

*– Knows Much Scents More,  
Xenologist, 13th Grade,  
A Primer of Interstellar Relations*

There are, of course, differences of opinion within the Faith. Some are genuine points of disagreement; others are cynical manipulations of the public consciousness. Sometimes arguments can become heated but, unlike Humaniti, the K'kree have never killed one another for their religion's sake.

## ORTHODOXY

To the extent that the less thoughtful K'kree actually ponder such matters, fate and *k'lat'rr* provide the entire basis of theology and ethical philosophy. They feel that they would already be content but for all the *g'naak* (see p. 78) who insist on eating them. It is therefore right, even necessary, to destroy all flesh-devouring predators and anyone who smells like one, just in case, to assure species survival.

The K'kree do have a problem with why *g'naak* exist at all. At this simplistic level, they argue that there is a contest between the herds of vegetarian light and the forces of carnivorous darkness. Good has to win in this universe so that stinky meat-eating evil does not get to complete it in its own image and, even worse, go on to complete the next universe, too. Rank and file K'kree look to theology to explain their curious circumstances – why a race so woefully unsuited for space travel is fated to require it and why a species which actually abhors killing to eat is doomed to spend eternity killing to survive.

Their faith provides an easy-to-understand answer: holy war. Their homeworld was thick with demonic predators; so is space. Clearly, "perfecting creation" means "destroying all other species." This fundamentalist approach is well represented among the simpler K'kree, but has few attractions for the leaders (although a few *Krurruna* do appeal to it in order to get more followers).

## MODERATION

It upsets the orthodox to note that compromise and tolerance serve the Herd better than zealotry and antagonism. The early bosses discovered this when sharing surplus females and showing appreciation for loyal service paid better dividends than threatening every male they came across.

Moderates argue that the same kind of gains can be made through extending the family structure to those who will submit to K'kree rule. The more advanced, better-educated herds started this relatively conciliatory approach. Families specializing in economics, ecology, or diplomacy could easily demonstrate that peaceful coexistence was more beneficial than conflict. As long as the non-K'kree were subservient, fundamentalists could tolerate this approach.

To give the idea more currency, moderates teach that there is a difference between flesh-eating as an ethos and simple carnivorous behavior. Those who can cease to eat meat can become apostate predators, useless to the forces of the Enemy. There is therefore no point in killing them – better to conserve resources for the real war. And while the ex-G'naak might have surrendered any chance of creating paradise and going on to the next world, at least they are still alive. While they live, they can serve. Once they have surrendered to the K'kree, to the forces of Goodness, they will become targets of Evil. Hence, they need to be defended, and are morally obliged to shoulder the burden of living in the loving family of the Two Thousand Worlds.

This kindergarten apology for imperialism works for the Herd, but the idea of cooperation with *outsiders* is difficult. Most K'kree will not listen at all; their religion tells them that outsiders are always bad. A tolerant attitude to the Enemy is incompatible with traditional faith.

To get around this, moderates have floated the idea that it might not be the K'kree themselves who go on to the next reality. Why should they, if they have built peaceful bliss here? Rather, there is a species out there which deserves a cosmos of its own. The K'kree need to find it, nurture it, and prepare it for its work. Until they know that they have found these inheritors, they cannot commit any more genocide (unrepentant carnivores excepted). Moderates point to their Human subjects' success at total vegetarianism as a signal that no race can be ruled out as the next universe's holy warriors . . . but they are unlikely to suggest that Humaniti might be that chosen species.



## THE SECULAR OPPOSITION

Some families have realized that they can improve their own standard of living and, ultimately, the fortunes of their descendants by breaking faith with the Herd to come to discreet, private agreements with foreigners. Although reprehensible, this is not illegal; being caught at it is decidedly impolitic, but not disastrous.

These relatively moderate groups act on their own behalf, often through pariah-settled client states in Crucis Margin, but are also the government's conduit for TL12 equipment from outside. Inevitably, the participants have become less devout in the process of learning what the Enemy likes and how best to provide it.

The friction between the moderates and mainstream society is most apparent when the Steppelords communicate face to face. For the majority, actively seeking foreign trading partners or even tempting them with good deals is blasphemous. The higher governors are aware that the practice is a necessary evil, but it is hard to convince the pious – even when they find themselves unable to provide the advanced equipment their masters want.

## THE FAITH TODAY

The K'kree have always regarded their religion as a matter for K'kree alone. Since its role was to affirm the Herd's purpose and give them a spiritual justification for self-sacrifice, they never developed a mechanism for its export. The K'kree are not evangelists because their faith *cannot* accept converts. It had always guaranteed that the Herd would triumph. Its members believe that it always has.

However, the Two Thousand Worlds no longer feels the pressing need to kill all its neighbors. There are many planets in K'kree space whose people manifestly do not pose a threat. Some planets are inhabited by inveterate meat eaters, who should die but are often just interdicted, but other species have shown that they can adopt vegetarianism. These may need to be given suitable encouragement – perhaps suffering an occasional demonstration strike or being shown the trial and execution of backsliders. Once a populace accepts vegetarianism, a tolerant, strong-willed *Krurruna* can take over and put the locals to work for the good of the Great Herd, sometimes even recruiting promising aliens into his family.

Not all K'kree approve of this kind of moral suppleness. Some families, indeed even some Overlords, have well-advertised reservations about such liberalism. The faith may be practiced in private, but it is debated in public, often heatedly.

## A UNIFIED FAITH?

K'kree nobles occasionally observe that their religion does not describe the facts of the universe all that well, but the rulers are not keen to share this insight with their subjects. A genetic predisposition to be frightened of the unknown, reinforced by a belief system affirming the value of xenophobic violence and guaranteeing the ultimate success of one's own race, is a godsend to any government.

That many of the Herd's trading partners and alien subjects are much better at space travel, industry, and commerce than the K'kree is far less providential. This would not be a problem except that the Steppelords are anxious about foreign aggression and internal dissent. Policing their frontiers against increasingly technologically sophisticated neighbors is becoming too expensive – it is not sustainable in the long term. Regrettably, the best way to correct this is through moderation. This is difficult to sell to a huge herd of followers who have been told that their purpose in life is to make a universe suitable for K'kree and K'kree alone.

To offset this, the Steppelord of the Two Thousand Worlds has decided to reorganize the religion. It will still be informal, family-based, and simplistic, but over some generations, it will moderate the line that if the K'kree kill everyone else, then they will inherit the next universe as well. This is being done tactfully: Trusted sub-sector bosses suggest suitable religious families. These are elevated in status, if not in caste, and given extra resources, better technology, and – occasionally – wives. The Steppelord also provides picked specialists from his own herd to assist them.

## Adventure Seed: You're Not What You Were, Worshipful Father

The *Krurruna* is old, his attention is slipping, and he has made some unwise decisions. Should his wife accept that his last days will be steeped in indignity? Should she get her sons and nephews to bring his frailty to the attention of the Overlord? Can they win their father a respectable retirement, even death in glory fighting infidels, or must they bring him to his knees themselves, risking exile in the process?



## Misinformation

*Sunset, Mid Year, 7713. White Blaze settled into his couch. He looked down over the diggings. The Humans were making a show of packing up their equipment. Cane-lily, his third and favorite wife, whispered and hummed in his ear. Wives one and two played on the flute and tone-drums. Wives four through seven filed his hooves. K'lat'rr.*

*"They have it?" asked a confident, rich voice from a view-screen woven into a bolster.*

*Continued on next page...*

## Misinformation

[Continued]

"They have it, my Lord," he affirmed. "The old thin one in the hat has slipped it into his bag. He is affecting nonchalance, but he smells excited and cunning."

"I love the smell of Humans when they covet. Only a freshly shaved Vargr smells like that. The smell of destiny."

"Destiny indeed, my Lord. Shall I arrest them now, or give my sons the joy of a brief hunt?"

"Neither. Let them smuggle it out. Have Wind of Rage intercept them in Gh!hken. Your mad nephew can get our relic back there."

"Master, I..."

"Do not question me. And do not talk to the Humans again."

White Blaze half rose, shaking. Cane-lily flinched. She scented shame, stupefaction.

"You are frightening your wife. Smell babies, pretty one, your husband has done well. I want them to copy it, my son."

287, 1111, 3.15 in the afternoon. His Imperial Majesty's Diplomatic Courier Gray Eminence stood down from general quarters. The K'kree fast pursuit vessel, *Hoof of Fate*, had finally stopped threatening to melt her. They'd been angry, but all they'd done was burn off the sunburst roundels, blown away half the thruster plates, and degraded the Jump grid to J-3. Good shooting, surprisingly restrained and precise.

Dr. Axel Thrush cycled the air lock and came inside. He cracked his helmet-seal and tossed his head. He had the habit of imitating people he'd just left. To Lieutenant Myrrna Shaurush (commanding), he did not look that much like a man who had just said goodbye to a priceless 7,000-year-old plate.

"And...?"

"Relax, I took a copy. Translated it, too. Collated it with what that big one with the bad breath was ranting about..."

"Worth nearly getting smeared for?"

"Oh, yes. Seems they're shepherding some minor race. Somewhere in the interior. Holy warriors of the next cosmos or something. That's what the entire Two Thousand Worlds is for. I mean..."

"Well, that's me sorted for my next hitch. You, too, come to think of it."

"Sorry?"

"This is a spook thing. Need to know. We already know, so we'll be going back."

This plan, although responsible, perhaps even visionary, is not without influential critics. Some Steppelords, especially in the borders, are entirely hostile to any weakening of resolve in dealing with G'naak. Their attitudes vary, but some will provoke trouble to provide examples of what vermin will do if left uncontrolled.



## SOCIETY AND CIVILIZATION: THE FAMILY IN THE HERD

The Herd sees itself as a huge, extended family. Apart from the supreme Steppelord, every male has at least one boss to look up to, and every female is subordinate to her husband or father. The female is acutely aware of caste, and can harbor lifelong resentment if a father or brother arranges a poor marriage.

Respect for one's betters is usually automatic among the K'kree. Not being appropriately submissive is a sign of mental illness, one of the ways a K'kree can end up before a court. There are many fine distinctions in the K'kree class system, but the most important is the division of society into leaders, managers, and doers, also translated as nobles, well-born, and servants. This does not mean that all families are led by a noble. Every single family, even the most lowly, has its patriarch, his bodyguard, their wives, and some other people who will obey him. The lowest of these leaders are still well-born, but are in such dire straits that only the meanest servants consider following them to be a privilege.

## CONFLICTS

Not all patriarchs are perfect, and many of their brothers feel they could do better. On the plains, the ancestral K'kree competed for dominance in rutting contests. These evolved into status fights, which were (and occasionally still are) formal martial arts duels. More likely is an audit, held before the most immediate senior *Krurruna*, at which the challenger presents his case to displace a patriarch, and calls that individual's peers as witnesses. Matters examined include the happiness and prosperity of the family, the incumbent's fairness and skill, especially his generosity with wives, and whether there have been avoidable fatalities. Either side may question the other's mental health, although this is regarded as both impious and tacky.

The *Krurruna*'s decision is final, but he could in turn be challenged by his peers if he makes too many strange decisions. If he loses, the patriarch is displaced by the challenger. The loser is often taken into the presiding *Krurruna*'s own retinue so that he can be assisted back into family life, and to discourage a crime of passion.

In principle, any male of the herd may challenge a patriarch of the same status, but it is usually only his blood relatives who actually do so. It is possible to build up a large family through status challenges, but using this as a deliberate strategy is not typical.

## SOCIAL LIFE

K'kree society is private and inward-looking. Individual families hold private parties and services. Nearer the apex, there are similar gatherings of bosses and lords, with the lower-ranked taking the positions of junior family members. In the body of the herd, members of different families interact with each other far more freely than alien observers imagine. Individuals are primarily loyal to their own patriarch and keep to their allotted place, but they often have interests which the family cannot satisfy, so they make friends with like-minded outsiders. These activities often blossom into long-term friendships.

However, society encourages this only between K'kree of the same sex. Comradeship promotes trust, allowing continuing cooperation. It is a valuable way of monitoring a regional herd's prosperity and happiness. The patriarchs become aware of possibilities for good marriages between families. Just as important, they receive early warning if a boss becomes erratic or unwell and is in need of attention.

Unsanctioned meetings between males and females are another matter entirely. The typical boss is fanatically protective of his females, and polices their activity with spies from his harem. Any tryst is automatically a crime of passion, followed either by an informal beating or a hearing before a superior patriarch.

Entertainment falls into two categories. First is the attentions of the female K'kree, whose role is to provide comfort, reassurance, and *diversion*. This last word is an imperfect rendering of *rruungakraa*, which has the sense of actively working to provide a feeling of contentment. Diversion includes cooking. Xenologists have hypothesized that it has its origins around the ancestral campfire on the steppes, and reflects the satisfaction the *Krurruna* felt when looking over his people, especially upon seeing his harem tending to his children.

Next is the active use of performance or creative media for serious expression or just empty spectacle. This is the preserve of male artists, from perfume-makers to dancers, actors, and musicians. The visual media are not well represented among the K'kree – something which just sits there waiting for people to look at it, indifferent to being studied, has an uncomfortably *female* subtext.

### The Crazy

Most of the Herd hate to be enclosed, and despair if isolated from their relatives. This makes for a homogenous, supportive society, but it does pose problems for whole classes of activity, ranging from mineral extraction to covert operations, and from space travel to sea-floor exploration. For a society with so strong a desire to conquer, this fear of isolation interferes with the use of armored fighting vehicles, aircraft, and cost-effective fighting ships.

Luckily, the Herd has a normal distribution of claustrophobes and demophiles. At one end are the morbidly timid and clingy. At the other are what passes for extrovert loners among the K'kree. Although still panicky by Human standards, these individuals can stand to be alone and enclosed long enough to operate vehicles or fight building to building. Before the invention of robots or the enslavement of subject races, they did all the deep mining. The rest of the Herd thinks of them as "crazy," and has a split view: they are very brave, but somehow not right. They are, however, what makes the K'kree military and the Two Thousand Worlds possible.

## TABOOS

The K'kree have two main social prohibitions – acting up, and trusting their females with anything important.

The K'kree tendency to obey orders without question rests on the assumption of their legitimacy. In the oldest days, it was the big boy at the front who said what was what, and followers trusted the hero at the sharp end. Now it's the one with the most hair, which is suggestive of a great river of followers streaming behind their leader.

All males are born into a hereditary caste, with an associated, unavoidable occupation. They cut their manes in submission; the style's severity is determined by status. The servant caste shave the mane off entirely; the well-born only have a

## Cooperation Between Herds and the Attila Phenomenon

The Herds of ancient Kirur discovered the benefits of coordinated actions against their opponents even before they began to settle. Early missions to get resources often ran into trouble, so the K'kree would stagger their approach, with one party acting as a lure, followed by a heavily armed contingent to surprise an enemy already hotly engaged.

These missions took on a trading character – active groups would recover wood or stone for weapons and exchange it directly for food. Each of these communities would then take part in combined search-and-destroy missions in addition to mercantile cooperation.



As settlement continued, different communities took part in huge sweeps of the steppes, driving their opponents to a prepared killing ground. The large scale and success of these missions inevitably elevated the herds' bosses in status, entrenching the leader caste. Spectacularly good *Krurruna* became heads of large (albeit temporary) coalitions, controlling huge territories and often millions of followers.

They used their resources in bold, innovative ways which are usually alien to the K'kree. The last of them was Nightmane, the founder of the united government. Only under such leaders can the Great Herd approach its true potential. It is fortunate for the rest of charted space that such racial heroes are few and far between. As the most simplistic K'kree religious aphorism has it, *one boss, one destiny*. The Two Thousand Worlds' neighbors can count themselves lucky that no current K'kree leader has decided that he is that *one boss*.



## A K'kree Family at Home

*Shimmering Lotus was lost in thought. Outside the family dome, in the Factors' Park, her husband Gorgeous Thunderous Ground Shaker was out with his bodyguards. He was working, supervising a gang of foreigners. They were war criminals, all bald and all different, funny colors. His guards prodded them with polearms whenever they slowed down or said they were thirsty. They were laying foundations for the new atmosphere processor and water cleaner. They'd been really upset when they had to break up their own ship for the parts the Herd needed. It served them right. They were lucky to be alive, anyway. Coming to Xagn'rrarr' without asking. Plotting to kill Gorgeous. They would take the food out of her mouth, starve her children, watch her die of heartbreak. If she had been male, they would not have breath to lift their picks. They would all be twitching and whimpering...*

*She felt a pull at her mane. Her own son, Mighty Ground Shaker Number Three, was hungry. So was his little friend and half-brother, Comes Like the Wind. She scratched them behind their ears, vented "wait, only a little" and "I love you both." She had food stored, some honey and sap and part of a risotto she had eaten the night before. Mmm, it still smelled nice a whole krix'eeeka later. More tugging. What to do? She only really had enough for one of the boys. Comes Like the Wind was the senior. She had to look after him because his mother was number one wife.*

*But she wanted her own son to eat. She coughed up some nuts and curd-sprouts she'd been saving for herself and spat them in front of the children. When Comes like the Wind dashed in, she stood on one of his toes. She felt bad about it, but while he was crying, she fed Mighty the risotto and honey. Comes looked so upset she gave him the resin after all. The look he gave her said, "I smelled what you did." He would grow up bright, he would.*

*When the boys had fed, she took them over to the boundary, to watch their father. She chatted to her sister-wives, and vented "happy, but busy."*

*The boys trotted ahead, looking back at her, excited, worried in case they went too far. They stopped at the hedge, rested their chins on it, enjoyed the flowers. Watched their father be in charge. He looked back. He smelled k'lat'rr.*

*Continued on next page...*

tonsure. Nobles let their locks flow. This obvious statement of position makes it very difficult for K'kree to impersonate other ranks, incidentally reinforcing the prohibition on adultery. A female adopts her husband's caste, including its haircut. This can be galling for a daughter of a steppelord who has been assigned to a tank pilot in recognition of his heroism.

Another relic of the "don't act up" taboo is the tradition that only fighting K'kree (active members of the military and bodyguards) may bear weapons. The majority of these are followers of the patriarchs, and they carry their polearms, the *!!ring'k*, everywhere.

The K'kree quite literally *never* entrust their wives or daughters with anything other than childbearing and raising or homemaking. Outside observers find this very odd indeed, especially as the females are usually present at important discussions and even in the workplace. They often develop a *grasp* of male matters, but never are asked to participate. Scholars postulate that this wasteful custom stems from a family head's anxiety over adultery, but the K'kree won't discuss it.

## SETTLEMENT AND INDUSTRY

K'kree cities are huge, horizontal developments of single-floor buildings. Where possible, these structures enclose an open space, and often, these communities have a domed plaza as their center. Usually, a family residence will be a clearly marked area with few actual walls. The central zone of a city holds the main civic buildings – rambling structures set off to one side of a park.

Concentric circles of streets and buildings extend outward, with radial thoroughfares dividing the city into districts. These routes are wide, tree-lined boulevards, as straight as possible to afford long sight lines. To an extent, this mitigates the common anxiety of seeing too curved a road. If necessary, the entire conurbation is tented under a robust, transparent material.

The K'kree build their communities to this plan wherever possible, but unhelpful scenery occasionally frustrates them. In such cases, they may build artificial mounds, islands, or promontories, but are not above flattening the entire area with strategic weapons to provide an open site.

K'kree cities are always sited next to extensive natural resources, whether reclaimable minerals or good agricultural land. The early failure of K'kree farms and the fickleness of ore-bearing seams, as well as their nomadic roots, prevented the Herd from linking the idea of permanence to the idea of settlement. They are quite happy to abandon a failing town and move on. Those whose ancestors picked a good site for truly long-term settlement are never slow to remind others of this.

Industries are intermixed with homes and, climate permitting, are in the open air. Where this is not possible, the whole enterprise – workshops, heavy plant, houses, generators – will be covered by a dome, with the manufacturing area in the center. Agricultural settlements are often covered market gardens, worked using advanced, intensive farming methods. Larger farms are run on a two-stage rotation method: year one is crops, with lacings of fertilizer, and year two is fallow. K'kree use second-year plots to go and unwind, eat fresh pasture, play, and socialize.

The first thing a visitor notices is the smell. In sanitary engineering, the K'kree distinguish between *odor retention* and *waste disposal*. They do not use synthetic, cloying floral scents to mask the wholesome, socially desirable, and reassuring evidence that their relatives are healthy and well-fed, nor do they remove it with air scrubbers. Like any civilization which knows about disease, however, they do dispose of bodily wastes. These are stored near the fields, for use as fertilizer.

The widespread belief among Humaniti that the K'kree are unhygienic arises partly from their absence of taboos about privacy and partly from the same anthropocentric viewpoint that insists on seeing the Aslan or Vargr as just cats and dogs – making the K'kree just like horses. Granted, the K'kree do not enclose their toilets, but they do have properly designated areas plumbed into a sewer system. Many of the sewers are open or indifferently covered, but this is due to the difficulties with sinking and maintaining tunnels. Indeed, K'kree cities do smell very strongly, but K'kree do not pile bodily wastes around or inside their houses.

Imperial commentators also claim that sewage is only cleaned away when the local *Krurruna* needs something for a criminal to do . . . the suggestion being that the K'kree deliberately arrest foreigners for this purpose. In a sense, this is true. The local people are the chief's family; it is only natural that he would take a personal interest in their well-being. He also knows that sewage work carries health risks. If he could, he would use robots, but aliens too rude to respect the Herd's customs will do just as well.



Industrial pollutants are disposed of as scrupulously as domestic refuse. However, some do seep down into local water tables or run into rivers, so K'kree settlements usually include water purification plants or fusion stills.

Individual buildings are airy. If not under the city's dome, a building will have one of its own. Rooms are roofless and tapestries or movable screens are the most common method for marking boundaries. Actual walls are rare; they are present as barriers against inclement weather or when the homeowner needs a load-bearing structure.

## GOVERNMENT

Charges Like Thunder is the *Ghik'k'kreek T't'kakh Xeng Kirr Tkexirr*; the Steppelord of the Two Thousand Worlds, ruler of the K'kree Empire. He is assisted by senior counselors drawn from his own family and by other ranks of nobles, from "Overlords of Lords" who govern subsectors (equivalent to Imperial Dukes), down to the Lords of Steppelords, who rule planets. Individual Steppelords and bosses rule districts, with lesser grandees in charge of towns.

Control is hierarchical – superiors command, inferiors obey (theoretically without question). This model is far from ideal for a technologically sophisticated, interstellar state, and the Two Thousand Worlds has suffered from following it. Bosses rule through many subordinates, occasionally hundreds. It is too much to expect the *Krurruna* to always have all the facts. An inferior who genuinely knows better than his boss could, out of love, mention any glaring errors in his orders, but this would be impertinent. It might be better for a capable subordinate to act on his own

## A K'kree Family at Home

[Continued]

Further round the boundary, some of the older children were at their lessons, leaning into the Knowledge Park, where *Clever Mind Quick Fingers* showed them a projection of the Steppelords' Empire. He showed them *Thirty*, the great navigational beacon the Gods put there to guide the Herd across space. He showed them the bad place, where the foreigners came from. He told them that at lunch time, *Lord Gorgeous* would let them poke the prisoners with sticks. Even the girls could, if they wanted. *Shimmering Lotus* hummed. She had the best husband in the Two Thousand Worlds.

## The K'kree Alternative to Prisons

The K'kree do not imprison their criminals, even to assure their attendance at court (the *Krurruna*'s guards would much rather go looking for absconders). Following conviction, a K'kree can be exiled to a place – such as a client state, unpleasant planet, or reservation for the insane – or from a place . . . that is, he can be excluded from a specific region, planet, or the entire Two Thousand Worlds.

Matters are a bit more creative where foreigners are involved. The Great Herd needs to be able to perform live-fire tests in controlled conditions, and the best subjects are potential future enemies. Similarly, many K'kree go mad through grief but some can be rehabilitated with the right kind of therapy. The armed pursuit of *g'naak* is sometimes recommended.

### Adventure Seeds

*K'kree*: The PCs have been exiled to a wilderness world beyond the frontier for three months (a local year). While there, they must establish the planet's suitability for a colony. They have their ancestral weapons and their wits to help them.

Problems could include Vargr raiders or even local sentients who fled the K'kree thousands of years ago (but still hate them).

*K'kree*: If the players have wasted their families and gone mad in the process, the PCs may return to sanity through hunting down a group of *g'naak*. The GM will need a terrain map and some enemies. Aslan or captured Human mercenaries would make good prey.

*Continued on next page . . .*



## The K'kree Alternative to Prisons

[Continued]

*Non-K'kree:* The group has offended the Great Herd and their sentence is to act as a therapeutic tool for some deranged ex-soldiers. To assure their enthusiastic cooperation, the K'kree will provide them with safe passage out of the Two Thousand Worlds if they survive.

The task is to successfully evade a hunting party of grief-stricken warriors for three days. To prevent the convicts from just hiding in a cave, they are dropped off 60 miles from their rescue ship's landing pad. They are given knives, a local star chart for navigation, and a tinderbox. Local vegetation alternates between elephant grass, bamboo, and scrub.



initiative, but protocol assumes that he will await fresh orders. Obviously, this can seriously inhibit the proper functioning of a bureaucracy.

Popular traditionalism influences the choice of leaders. *Krurruna* attract patriarchs in the same way that they attract personal family members – by promising love, success, and sexual partners. Similarly, unsatisfied followers can always defect to other groups. This means that the more successful bosses will be able to extract promises from their betters for access to a good quality herd.

As the hindmost K'kree are more likely to be religious puritans than the more forward, this has the side effect of promoting orthodoxy among the larger and more influential herds. The K'kree call this “selection from behind.” Theoretically, they disapprove; this conservatism impairs economic activity. Except when under the most visionary and able leaders, the Herd is hampered by over- or underproduction, inefficient delivery of services, and low quality-control. It also suffers from a reluctance to modernize, except where absolutely necessary.

## LAW, CRIME, AND PUNISHMENT

There is little crime among the K'kree, so they do not have many laws. Basically, anything which outrages their morals is offensive, and anyone stupid enough to do so is probably insane. However, the courts do recognize the need to deal differently with crimes of passion, when a K'kree attacks another out of sexual jealousy or unrequited love.

The K'kree judicial system is very simple. Malefactors are brought before a *Krurruna*, who listens to the charges and satisfies himself as to their truth. If the case is in doubt, he can dismiss it at this point. If the case stands, the defendant should consider throwing himself on the mercy of the court. Otherwise, the judge listens to arguments in mitigation. There are three possible pleas: misunderstanding, passion, or insanity. If one of these is mounted successfully, the boss can lay down an appropriate sentence (typically some combination of apology, fine, socially useful labor, or exile). A failed defensive strategy leads to a secondary punishment for being uppity.

If the defendant is non-K'kree, there is also the matter of deliberate impiety, or even of treason against the Two Thousand Worlds. In any event, aliens get a far rougher ride from the *Krurruna* than K'kree could ever expect. Among K'kree, for all that sentencing is creative and *ad hoc*, it is at least compassionate, even merciful. For foreigners, if the judge is so minded, it is downright brutal.

No matter whether the lawbreaker is alien or K'kree, extreme cases and persistent recidivism call for euthanasia.

## THE TWO THOUSAND WORLDS

The Herd's empire is home to about eight trillion sentients, all but 200 billion of whom are K'kree. The state is present in some 16 sectors, but its aggregate holdings would only fill eight.

## ASTROGRAPHY

The Two Thousand Worlds lies on the edge of charted space. Coreward and across the lesser rift are the Vargr Enclaves, where there is a small K'kree outpost. About 64 parsecs to spinward is the Imperium. One jump to rimward is the Hive Federation. Beyond the trailing border is the unknown. A patchwork of independent states lies between K'kree space, the Hive Federation, and the Imperium. Some of these are the result of early colonization efforts by the Humans, especially the Solomani, or the Hivers.

There are also some native sentient species, and some independent K'kree worlds, either the survivors of a misjump or exiles from the Herd. The Steppelords claim that communication and control difficulties prevent them from annexing these societies, at least until their scholars make a long-expected scientific breakthrough, but this is less than honest. The K'kree have kept to their present boundaries for three millennia.



## HISTORY

The history of the K'kree is a tale of slow progress, driven by fear and necessity. The K'kree do not *like* progress . . . but they do like *growth*. In an ideal universe, the Herd would grow ever larger without changing.

### *From the Earliest Cities to Gravitic Flight*

K'kree history begins with their first cities. These were clustered at the edge of the Xtengir Uplands, where the winds blowing off the polar seas brought sufficient rain to grow forests. After the trees were felled, the rain supported agriculture. Soon, the K'kree extended their territory into the high plains and down the rivers to the sea. But their coastal farms experienced salinization from over-irrigation and failed. The irrigated margins of the riverside settlements did not have the same problem due to the through-flow of water, but the K'kree did not make a connection between the phenomena, deciding only that the sea was somehow bad. This led to a prejudice against ocean-side settlements.

A side effect of the forest clearance was the exploitation of ores, especially hematite. Along with the development of hotter fire, the abundance of these ores allowed the K'kree to skip the bronze age, moving straight from stone to iron.

The K'kree had discovered combustion early on, and used it extensively to defend themselves against their enemies. With the development of cities, they used fire to weaken and undercut stone outcrops on the upland margins, creating steep slopes around their settlements. To do this effectively, they invented charcoal. Using charcoal and rock fragments in their kilns inevitably led to the discovery of refined iron – albeit brittle, low-quality iron.

With iron and trees, they soon came up with the traditional K'kree weapon, the *!!ring'k* polearm. Interestingly, until their accidental discovery of explosives, they never developed missile weapons.

The K'kree took arms against ferocious predators, and exterminated them in a campaign of conquest and settlement. Communities grew wherever water supplies would permit. Outposts sprang up near exploitable sources of essential minerals. This expansion prompted the development of the axle and the paved road. Eventually, their racial aversion to being enclosed stimulated an interest in automated vehicular systems – the railways which followed their roads were constructed to allow control from the tracks.

At this stage, their culture was supported by leagues of autonomous city-states which formed trading groups and hunting alliances. This evolved into a vertical hierarchy of communities, which reflected the pre-existing K'kree tendency to form extended groups of relatives and allies.

Kirur has only one continent, with a generally open geography. With no suggestion of natural boundaries, the K'kree had no impetus to develop nation-states. Instead, the agglomerations of cities into trading leagues and ultimately into economic and social pyramids led to the peaceful adoption of a planet-wide government in 3210 (-4305 Imperial).

At Unification, K'kree science was at the TL6/7 boundary, with some major exceptions: their military technology was at TL2, they had no flying machines, and their grasp of ecology was non-existent. This last problem, in particular, would prove to be a vital factor for change.

The united government was led by Nightmane the Wise, who claimed the title Lord of the Steppelords. As his new central authority collated reports from his subjects' domains, his advisors realized that the race and faith faced global environmental catastrophe.

The K'kree have a predisposition to ignore the benefits of predator/prey relationships. Thus, when their crops began to suffer from a surplus of small, uneaten herbivores, they defended their farms and granaries using poisonous, noxious, or dense and thorny plants, and netting strung to keep out insect and bird analogs. But this also excluded beneficial insects. The effect was more of the same – lower yield. With fewer insects to pollinate their crops, the K'kree adopted hybridization and asexual methods. This approach made their crops less disease-resistant, more prone

## A K'kree Timeline

-3,000,000	Thirty goes supernova.
-2,999,997	Kirur and Kirrixur are bathed in heavy particles and hard radiation.
-2,994,002	Three huge meteors hit Kirrixur; one hits Kirur.
1	<i>Rakeer!</i> founded.
3210	Planetary government established.
3330	Gravitic lift and reactionless thrusters invented.
3231-3331	The First War.
3346	Discovery of jump drive. The K'kree visit Thirty.
3350-5099	The Triumphant Progress – the K'kree explore space and conquer the Two Thousand Worlds.
5086	First contact with the Hivers.
5099-5112	The Hiver War.
5117-5317	Contact with Human explorers either from or fleeing the Empire of Man.
5320-Now	Contact with and border skirmishes against the Vargr.
6716	Contact with the Sylean Federation; as far as the Third Imperium is concerned, first contact between the K'kree and Humaniti.
7713	The present.



## Speaking to the Motion

*Excerpts from discussion of the motion, "This house condemns the K'kree Empire for its oppression of women," during the All Charted Space Women's Solidarity Conference on Tarsus, Spinward Marches, 48/1119:*

*"... Xenologists have to look hard to find examples of female emancipation among the Herd. Among us Fieirle, women run everything. Our males expand our domains and defend us. Regardless of sex, we all have the same political and social rights; anything less is unthinkable. The same goes for my Human and Vargr sisters.*

*"But K'kree females never take part in business, politics, or war, though they are always on hand to support and coddle those who do. They have the same brain capacity and native intelligence as the males, and interaction between harem members demonstrates highly advanced social skills, yet there is no sign of dissatisfaction with their lot.*

*"However, most studies of the K'kree are conducted with their assistance, so this observation must be taken with a nip of saline.*

*"These people will always accept a lone wanderer into their midst, however destitute. The same is not true of a family in similar straits. Such a group is shunned by all; even orphaned individuals will not join it. My research shows that these Pariah families have their origin in adulterous unions. Consider this scenario:*

*"The males are brigaded according to class and occupation. Their genetic code, their urge to be present in the next generation, does not vary with this status – how could it? They are all related in close degree to their masters, as these studs father at least half the children in the whole Herd! The K'kree are not a super-organism, they are a sexual oligarchy.*

*"Now, while they are conditioned to be happy with their lot on a social level, this does not affect their hormones. They are an affectionate species who prize closeness. A harem member could easily be neglected by her boss. What could be more natural than that she seek attention elsewhere? And what could be more inevitable than that a low-status male, a servant or junior soldier perhaps, denied a wife and any legitimate outlet for his reproductive urges, accommodate her?"*

*Continued on next page...*

to pathological mutations. And the intensive farming brought pollution to the seas, which threatened to compromise Kirur's oxygen cycle.

Along with agricultural waste came massive industrial pollution. Mineral extraction was difficult for the K'kree. Their claustrophobia and large size prevented deep mining until very late in their industrial history. Instead, they scoured the surface of Kirur in search of exposed seams. When the drifts played out, they took to open-pit mining. This process produced huge amounts of dust. Dispersed by the wind, it fouled irrigation courses, promoted respiratory diseases, and ultimately rose high enough to form a persistent layer of micro-fine particles. In addition, K'kree industry used fossil fuels exclusively, creating another source of atmospheric pollution, especially acid rain.

Based on all this data, Nightmane's scientists predicted a planet-wide failure of agriculture due to crop destruction and reduced sunlight, which would be followed by a decline in atmospheric oxygen levels. Life on Kirur would be impossible.

The Lord believed utterly in the promise of K'kree religion, so he would not accept his scientists' dismal prediction of his people's fate. He resolved to act in their interest.

In the short term, he encouraged the erection of transparent domes over the cities, enabling a clean domestic environment and lower rates of respiratory disease. He ordered factories to scrub their emissions and organized efficient procedures for the elimination of sewage. For the longer term, he encouraged contemplation and research, stimulating a flowering of K'kree scientific and cultural knowledge which was to have profound effects.

The domed city is still the cultural norm in K'kree architecture; its influence can even be seen in the design of their spaceships. Cleaning factory smoke and pollution provided sulfur and potassium nitrate. Mixed with the ever-present charcoal, these byproducts enabled the K'kree to develop explosives and propellants. But it was the push given to pure science which had the most far-reaching consequences.

For the first time, the K'kree came to look at the 2,000 stars visible in their night sky as something other than a navigational aid. In short order, they deduced orbital mechanics, a law of gravity, and quantum theory. They went straight to gravitic technology without trying rocketry, lighter-than-air technologies, or airfoils. But then, they had a special stimulus – for the first time, they had looked closely at their moon and noticed something very alarming.

There were predators in the sky.

## The First War of Many

In the K'kree language, *g'naak* means "predator." Enclosed in a cartouche (the K'kree equivalent of capitalization), it also denotes the Enemy, specifically the technologically inferior culture of hunter/chasers that Kirur scientists noticed infesting their moon. The Steppelords saw their near neighbors as an abomination and a threat to their security. Being well aware that scientific progress is non-linear, they decided to act while they had the advantage.

For a credible assault on the moon, they needed two things – technology to take them, and soldiers willing to make the trip. There had always been mad K'kree – the ones who did not mind being enclosed or spending a long time alone – so the bosses looked for them among the Killers of Vermin and brigaded them separately. As the first experimental gravitic vehicles became available, these crazy warriors tried them out. First there were open grav sleds, equipped with chemical propellant guns. Then came sealed shuttles. When the invasion force was ready, the Lord of Steppelords dispatched it to Kirrixur.

The K'kree had expected a quick war of extermination, a vindication of their religion, but they were disappointed. The G'naak had chemical weapons of their own, and rockets. As each side captured the other's materiel, they entered a spiral of competitive development of new technologies. Soon the K'kree had explosive ordnance, strategic weapons, heavy guns, autocannon, and efficient assault rifles, and the G'naak had gravitic aircraft.

The war lasted a century, and was fought with a bitter intensity. Eventually, the K'kree found they were handicapped by the small number of crazies they could recruit. So they worked to develop the environmental enrichment techniques necessary to keep their race sane in stressful conditions, and then built huge vehicles capable of transporting regular soldiers to the moon. The enormous increase in armed troops in the war zone assured a K'kree victory – they entirely exterminated the G'naak and settled into their new acquisition.



## To the Stars

The study of G'naak relics and the increase in astronomical data, especially from orbital facilities, enabled the K'kree to significantly expand their knowledge base. The recruitment of crazies during the war left a surplus of them in peace. High Command decided that these – extroverts, they were politely called – could explore the rest of the star system, to make sure that there were no more unpleasant surprises.

This outward push stimulated the invention of reactionless drives, and eventual-ly of the jump drive. In 3346 (-4142 Imperial), the K'kree were ready to travel among the stars. They were not going for curiosity or lack of living space. Their motive was a fusion of self-preservation and religious duty; out there were more meat-eating hunters, which had to be destroyed for the Faithful to be safe. The first K'kree starfarers took with them a dread of what they might find, but when they went, they went to kill.

## Devourers in the Dark

The K'kree were astonishingly unfortunate with their immediate interstellar neighbors. At first, they met no spacefaring peoples, and took this as a sign that the night sky was theirs. But they did find inhabitants on the near worlds, and landing parties generally met ferocious opposition; some explorers were eaten. This encouraged the view that while space might be open and full of promise, like a big, dark steppe, the worlds it held were infested with *g'naak*, implacable and hungry.

The military decided that wherever they found a biting mouth, there should also be a bullet. To avoid unnecessary casualties, the K'kree took to saturating inhabited planets from orbit, either with weapons or, less expensively, by dropping rocks on them. Scientists would then investigate what was left of the native civilization while soldiers took care of any local survivors. Although spiritually satisfying, this method was

## Speaking to the Motion

[Continued]

*"If detected, this pairing appalls the family, and the couple are driven out. They then raise their children as best they can in isolation and disgrace. It is a little tragedy, played out all across the Two Thousand Worlds, sad not only for the ones who suffer, but more so that this desperate infidelity is the only sign of rebellion and self-assertion that a female K'kree can make."*

*"Sisters, I commend this motion to you."*

– Dr. Khearlkhai, Aslan delegate

*"Twelve years ago, my parents took me to Run-click-grur-clickclick-rocksk (deep breath, to scattered applause). I've just returned. While there, we had breakfast one day with the local Krurruna, The Wind Knows Our Name, and his family."*

*"The lord had us sit with him and treated us all graciously. He showed no surprise that my mother had been in the army. [Data-link insert: Baroness Colonel Araminta Armstrong-Shaim served with distinction on Emerald in the Fifth Frontier War.] They had a long chat about serious military matters – attack tactics, supply problems, stuff like that. Neither did he question dad's cookery show. [Data-link insert: Baron Mazun Armstrong-Shaim is a leading Vilani shugilii and a pioneer in the field of Solomani-Vilani syncretic cuisine.]"*

*"For the record, his wives, daughters, and dependents were obviously happy and healthy. I even fenced with one of his sons. (He wasn't rude enough to let me win. It was fun.) There was no suggestion of underlying sexual tension."*

*"We need to be definite about who and what the K'kree are. They're alien. They have a strange society. They have different thought processes. That's what "alien" means."*

*"I have serious doubts that a K'kree of either sex would understand this debate. The Wind Knows My Name did not recognize me or my mum as female, or mistake us for men, any more than he saw my dad as male or mistook him for a woman. To him, we didn't have gender because we weren't K'kree. We were aliens."*

*"I suggest that this motion is misconceived and irrelevant. As it is pointless, meaningless, and close to silly, I move, as a point of order, that this question not be put."*

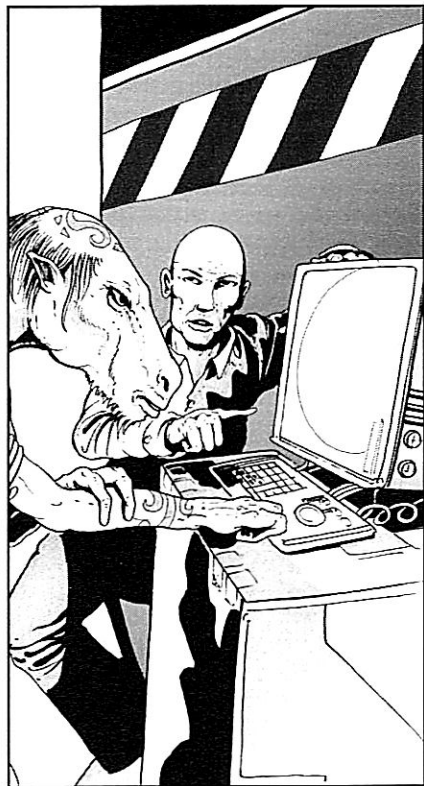
– Dame Gami Sunshine Armstrong-Shaim, Harmony Wholefoods delegate



## Multiracial Herds

**S**ome Herds, especially on worlds where the K'kree are uncomfortable, have accepted other sentient races as members. These people are always of the meanest servant caste, and are required to obey their masters without question, even to the extent of representing their own spiritual beliefs as subservient to the Great Herd's.

The local bosses are always K'kree, but they do place some of their subjects in authority over the others. These act as charge hands, bosses' spies, and – on occasion – informal executioners. The K'kree use their subjects in unpleasant environments like oil rigs and mines, but are aware that dissent can arise. So they give marginal rewards to those who police disaffection on their behalf.



## The Devourer in the Dark (Reprise)

**T**he trailing border of the Two Thousand Worlds is littered with small states. Some are clients or economic satellites; others are independent. Among them are a few small, very frightened carnivorous races which managed to flee from K'kree eradication. They maintain an extreme defensive posture and will attempt to overwhelm a K'kree ship on sight. Lest one slip by, they will attack anything disk-shaped without warning . . .

expensive and wasteful. Scientists especially bemoaned the data they could not read, with no one left to ask.

This policy softened when the Herd came across a space-capable civilization which was already communicating with an interstellar neighbor by radio. These creatures came to terms, forswearing meat and promising to tell their neighbors to do likewise. The bosses found this an effective way of conquering, and sent an invitation to reform to all subsequent contacts. Failure to comply led inevitably to annihilation or conquest.

## We Are Not Unique

The K'kree had felt that the jump drive was a sign of their unique genius. The societies they found were either long-range radio clubs or the result of primitive if ingenious slower-than-light exploration and settlement. The K'kree had superior mobility, a reassuring reminder of the prairie.

However, their more remote subjects told them of other spacefaring races, of strange four-limbed meat-eaters, some long-faced and furry, some flat-faced and bald. There were funny, six-legged things without heads and big scaly warriors with tails. This came as a shock.

The K'kree became more cautious, concentrating their ships into big task forces. One of these crossed the lesser rift in 4961 (-2203 Imperial) and eventually spread colonies through just over a subsector. Contact with increasing numbers of extremely hostile carnivores called *Vargr* led to the decision to cease expansion and hold current possessions. Their subjects' reports of jump-capable aliens had proved true, so the Steppelords took time to restructure the military. The first test of their improved forces came in 5099 (-2029 Imperial) when they met the Hivers.

## The Wars We Don't Mention

The K'kree are more secretive than usual about two past events: the war with the G'naak, and the one with the Hive Federation. Although a splendid vindication of K'kree religion, the G'naak war is diplomatically sensitive. The senior Steppelords do not want to advertise the fact that, in addition to espousing universal vegetarian hegemony, their civilization is the only major race actually to have wiped out another sentient species. (Not to mention the fact that the G'naak war led to the destruction of other planet-bound species; but those worlds are far enough away for the K'kree connection to be overlooked, unlike the evidence on their own moon. And if details of the G'naak war get out, it will lead to the other worlds . . .) The Steppelords feel this would cause a preemptive attack by their opponents, acting in common and out of self-preservation. Even the most jingoistic of K'kree high command recognize that this is a war they would lose.

The war with the Hive Federation is counted as the low point of K'kree vermin control. Their progress through the night sky had been uniformly victorious before they met these strange, malicious omnivores in 5099 (-2029 Imperial, 2472 A.D.). On first contact, the Hivers seemed a pushover – dedicated to cooperation and togetherness, they proved easy to defeat because they did not even have warships. The K'kree forged ahead until two really unpleasant events. First, their opponents began to field very efficient fighting vessels, with fire-control and targeting systems able to hit ships at extreme range. When the K'kree attack had been blunted in 5112 (-2013 Imperial, 2508 A.D.), both sides agreed to a truce. During the negotiations that followed, the K'kree got their second shock.

The Hivers demonstrated that they had been active among the Faithful. In four years (five Imperial standard years), they had changed K'kree on selected bordering worlds into something the Federation could live with – a compromise-making, personally selfish, meat-eating K'kree. The Steppelords were horrified.

At *Gnaa Xarr'rr* (*Gzirr!k'l* 1916), the K'kree signed a peace treaty with terms that amounted to a surrender with full admission of blame. A buffer zone of independent states was established between their borders. Then the K'kree interdicted and sterilized the worlds the Hivers had changed. They remain uninhabited.

## The Long Peace

*Gnaa Xarr'rr* marked the end of the Herd's active expansion. They were now aware of a dynamic interstellar empire on their spinward flank. While they never officially met the Rule of Man, K'kree warriors did fight some sharp engagements with bald, flat-faced, smelly bipeds called "Humaniti." They recovered technologies new to the K'kree from some of these encounters, and the sheer number of exploratory vessels coming their way led analysts to the conclusion that there had to be something very big out there. It was also apparent that the ships the K'kree saw were operating beyond this state's range of control. Simple prudence dictated that the Steppelords should keep to their borders until Humaniti had tired itself out, settled down, and forgotten about the Herd. Then the K'kree could exterminate them at their leisure. Similar observations, as well as the difficult crossing of the Lesser Rift, prevented the Two Thousand Worlds from expanding much toward the Core.

The Herd did not return to the offensive during the Long Night, when the Human states became quiescent. Curiously, they did not move further to Trailing, either. No good account of the reasons for this are found; K'kree history only suggests long-range control problems and hints at "troubles at home." Official history chooses not to reflect on why these troubles became endemic after the peace of *Gnaa Xarr'rr*; or why the Herd is still dealing with them 2,609 years later.

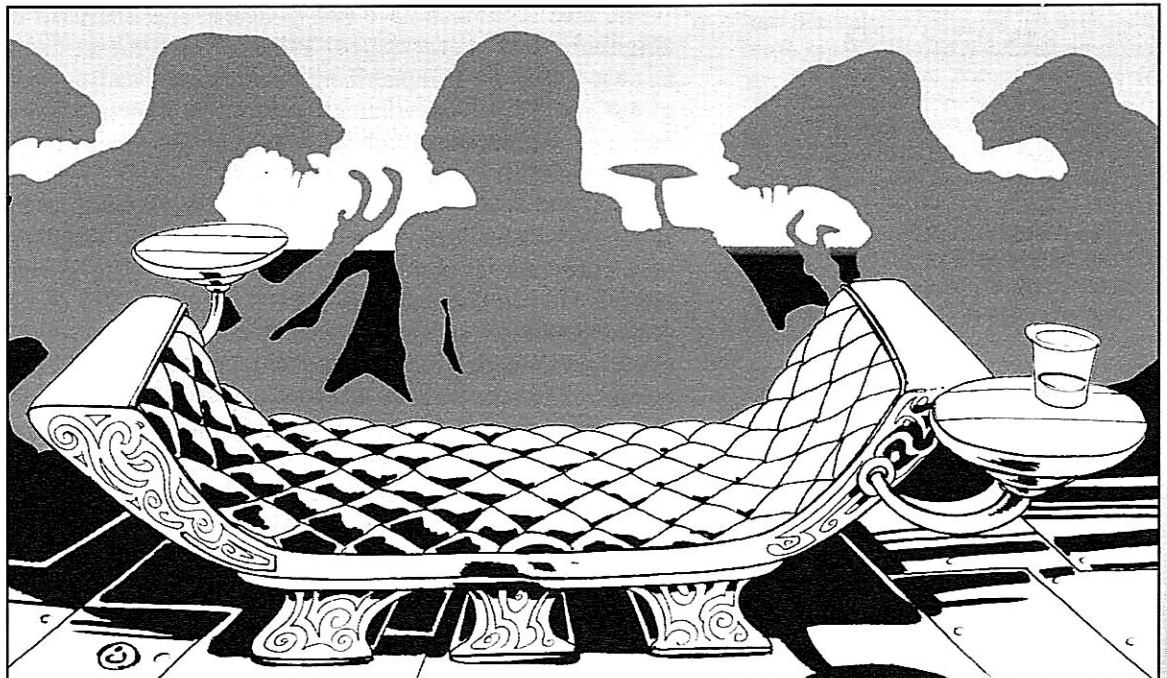
## DOMESTIC POLICY

The K'kree work to ensure the harmony and security of the Herd. This includes conciliation meetings between bosses of equal rank, arbitrated by their immediate superiors, but under the supervision of a more exalted *Krurruna*. Beyond assuring that their species dominates its empire utterly and that all the families participate in the work that keeps this going, the Steppelords are unconcerned about what their subject families do. If things go so awry as to allow a slave rebellion or an outbreak of extreme moderation, such as a new foreign trading station, the higher ranks will take an interest. (The local ruler will lose a status fight and retire.)

## The Cleansing

Some K'kree minorities are passionately devoted to their religion. Usually these groups cluster in the rear ranks, as nobles tend to be more materialistic and secular, but there are exceptions. Certain Steppelords are firm believers in their race's destiny and push for a more muscular foreign policy (if only across the trailing border).

Others, denied this outlet, take a harder line than usual with the subject peoples and uncorrected ecosystems. Occasionally, under an energetic *Krurruna*, these groups solidify into a political party. Members exchange information and facilities to enable the suppression of the unholy, and agitate to be allowed to take the faith abroad.



## Adventure Seed: Not Me, Master, He's Spartacus!

The PCs, who can act as a ship's crew, have fallen from favor and have been sent to an asteroid belt. They must force local slave laborers to dig out and refine 32 displacement tons of refined nickel, aluminum, and iron every *k'kaatu*. A ship operated by the clan monitoring their exile will call to collect. There are worse postings, should the PCs consider loafing.

**Set-up:** The characters and dependents are housed in an impact crater on a major planetoid. The bottom is filled with a lump of ice (another asteroid) and covered with a heated false floor which is carpeted with synthetic turf. The mouth of the crater is closed with a transparent dome, held up by the air underneath it. A big grow lamp in the roof gives a Kirur-like feel. On the surface are a landing pad and a refining plant. Underground, extensive mine workings lead out from the crater.

There are also outposts on other bodies in the belt. The caretakers need to resupply these bases regularly, using their in-system boat.

**Problem:** While the party is away in the boat, the miners on the base revolt. They promise to blow open the dome, killing the wives and children living there, unless their demands are met. They want to be taken out of the Two Thousand Worlds on the next starship. But even if the PCs accede, the visiting merchant vessel won't.

## **Adventure Seed: The Lost Carnivorous K'kree**

**T**he Great Herd fear that they did not exterminate all the K'kree the Hivers changed into a blasphemous *g'naak* form. They patrol the Trailing/Rimward margins of their empire just in case there might be more of them. They also scour communications traffic and imported entertainment or news items for any hint that might point to surviving monsters.

The PCs are a starship crew, K'kree or foreign, who happen to pick up some old travel show holocrystals containing pictures of K'kree meat-eaters. The world in question lies between K'kree and Imperial space in the Crucis Margin. The PCs are retained by a subsector governor to visit the planet in question, acquire hard evidence of the presence of changed K'kree, and return to the Two Thousand Worlds.



*Set-up:* This world does indeed exist. It's called the Harmony Garden and supports populations of alien races from across charted space, including Vargr and Aslan. It is ruled by a Confucian-style autocrat (see *GURPS China* or *GURPS Japan*), who insists on a personal monopoly on violence (Gun Control LC 5). The current Daughter of Heaven has equipped her guards with TL9 weapons and armor.

The PCs happen to arrive during the Dragon's Dance competition, a biennial martial arts contest, including artistic and full-contact events. There are same-species competitions, fights by weight category, a handicapped interracial knockout event, and a full-contact, no-holds-barred challenge.

*Problems:* A carnivorous K'kree community could not have survived without powerful friends, so the PCs will have to work at survival. If the spies are K'kree themselves, they will want to take immediate executive action. They can do so legitimately only if they enter the Dragon's Dance...

## *Subject Races*

Any group which can abstain entirely from eating any animal product, and which will promise never to synthesize any animal product for any use whatsoever, may live within the Two Thousand Worlds under the supervision of a senior *Krurruna*. To repay this mercy, they must serve the boss in any way he deems fit. This includes personal or military service and paying a tribute in food, raw materials, or manufactured items. It should also involve doing so with every appearance of enthusiasm, but many bosses have found that this is too much to expect. Useful, well-behaved subjects are allowed to colonize worlds of their own, under the supervision of their *Krurruna*. The planets usually chosen for this are unappealing to the Herd, a fact not lost on their settlers.

Some minor races have accepted dominion as inevitable – their ancestors woke up one morning to find that visitors were trying to teach them the meaning of “obey or die.” Others, particularly Human and Vargr splinter groups, have managed to conceal their true feelings and intentions from their masters, and retain a touching belief in salvation from outside.

No matter – the K'kree seldom really trust their subjects. Hostage-taking is common, as is installing thermonuclear devices in big cities. Even with these safeguards, the bosses are aware that covert enemy action is a real threat, so they audit their ethnic minorities carefully. Any unusual phenomena are investigated thoroughly. The price of this oppression is continuous dissent. There is always a subject-race rebellion somewhere in the Empire.

## **SCARED OF THE NEIGHBORS: K'KREE FOREIGN POLICY**

For all of their posturing, the K'kree are a nervous people. This is reflected in their foreign relations, which are at odds with their domestic pronouncements. The Great Herd has never really recovered from their trouncing at the hands of the Hive Federation. They stopped expanding long before they met the Vilani, made no formal contact with the Rule of Man, and failed to absorb more than a fraction of the Human settlers who appeared on their borders. Yet the Steppelords insist that they have a manifest destiny to exterminate all predators and carnivores in the galaxy. This opinion is well known across their borders; it is a spur to military spending among their lesser neighbors, but causes no alarm at all in the Imperium. The Vargr, and especially the mixed-race Julian Protectorate, just laugh.

K'kree diplomats have two policies. The first is to intimidate their immediate neighbors into subservience. These clients act as listening posts, initiate raids against Imperium-sympathizing counterparts, and do their best not to offend religious sensibilities by voluntarily adopting vegetarian practices and exterminating their own carnivorous wildlife. K'kree nobles are always willing to pop in and lend a hand with this last item.

When dealing with more powerful neighbors like Imperial Archdukes or the Julian Protectorate, the language is conciliatory. The Two Thousand Worlds maintains consulates at sector capitals and on important worlds, including a magnificent domed park on Capital itself. The diplomatic staff, equipped with nose plugs and pomanders, call on manufacturers, scientists, nobles, and educators. K'kree merchants travel widely outside the Two Thousand Worlds, making a point of communicating their experiences at every opportunity. This intelligence is rushed back to their empire, as are frankly alarmist accounts of external technology and war-readiness. These are used both as a guide to realistic planning and as a tool to dissuade religious fanatics from rash actions.

The K'kree do not have any direct contact with the Hivers at all. They will blackmail Human subjects to make trade runs into the Federation by way of the buffer states, and pay very well for independently derived intelligence, but they do not want to deal with the Manipulators at all. The Rimward K'kree border is policed 12 parsecs deep, at huge cost and inconvenience, to guard against the Hivers.



## WORLDS

The K'kree prefer only to inhabit planets like Kirur. As there are few and far between, the Herd must make do with second best. Many worlds are unsuitable for K'kree – anything mountainous or with too much sea – but nevertheless require a presence to deter squatters and to exploit natural resources. Families or clans which have displeased their betters are settled in such places. If such a planet has sentient natives, the *Krurruna* sets them to work. If not, the *Krurruna* assigns colonists. In this case, he makes sure that the settlers know this is a great privilege.

### Hostile Environments

These require specialized, enclosed living conditions. It is not cost-effective to build such facilities large enough to accommodate a typical K'kree community. Instead, the most practicable site for a basic group is developed instead and its occupants are instructed to use robots or slaves to exploit the world.

### Control

Small settlements, usually mining stations or research bases, are run by individual families. Worlds with less than a million K'kree will be controlled by a single boss or a number of lesser patriarchs who report to an offworld chief. Otherwise, the planet is ruled by a resident Steppelord.

### Starports

Like all K'kree developments, these sites ooze across the landscape like bubbly scum. They follow the standard *GURPS Traveller/GURPS Space* classification. Types IV and V have extensive orbital facilities, exceeding by many times what outsiders would expect. The ground facilities are widely dispersed, separated by residential areas, warehouses, and chandleries. The facilities available vary with starport class, but even the most mean include a hostel (*k'ghikre*) for traveling K'kree (intended as the last resort for the desperate). Occasionally, a sole male will stagger in to be cosseted and adopted by the locals; more often, a whole family of pariahs will pass through on their way to disgrace. For a husband to need a *k'ghikre* for his dependents is extremely shameful – it shows he has no friends and no boss.

### System Defenses

Many border worlds and a few important systems have bases for resident naval contingents and support facilities. Others have smaller outposts instead. The bases mount patrols in all the adjoining systems, and across the border. They are usually given the duty of policing activity in an entire Main (p. GT48). They also resupply outposts. The standard ships for these duties are the 5,000-ton frigate and an armed version of the 10,000-ton merchant (see p. 121).

Outposts are a regrettable compromise. The K'kree cannot afford naval establishments for all their strategic assets, so must make do with semi-automated redoubts. These carry big anti-ship weapons and remote-controlled fighters.

A typical K'kree measure is to mine gas giants. Robot fighters (p. 118) keep station in the lower atmosphere and attack any vessel which does not give the right signal before entering. This code is available on request from the system's starport. If the system does not have a starport, the code should be available from the nearest settled world.

## KIRUR

The K'kree homeworld orbits Gzang, a hot, yellow-white F5 V star (mass 1.3 Sol) at 176 million miles (approximately 1.9 AU). It is the third planet. The system contains three gas giants, a hot greenhouse world, a hot rock, an asteroid belt, and four ice balls. Kirur has a large, close moon, Kirrixur, which the K'kree also inhabit.

## Welcome to the Family!

**A** K'kree family has a patriarch, at least one wife, at least one bodyguard, and some servants. Successful families have upward of 50 members and small satellites – the personal dependents of junior members. Families can be of any status. Usually, the boss is higher than the rest. Where family members are the same class, they can be differentiated by social rank.

The patriarch should be proficient in his family's work skill, which can be anything from Professional Skill (Custodian) to Strategy (Space). If performance of a skill requires the assistance of other, lesser talents (such as electricians for power-plant engineers, orderlies for doctors, or communications operators for ship's captains), then ancillary family members can possess these jobs. The bodyguard will, inevitably, be an ex-soldier.

The servant should possess Savoir-Faire (Servant) and Scrounging. In a poor family, he might also have a subordinate technical skill.

The females should be good at childcare (a M/E Professional skill), Sex Appeal, and Massage. Females may also learn medical skills and the Jack-of-All-Trades advantage (p. GT125).

## A-Hunting We Will Go

**T**he K'kree hatred of predators knows no bounds, which is ironic since they are themselves such enthusiastic hunters. They have exterminated all the large carnivores in their empire, but are always on the lookout for others to run down and kill. What they look for in prey is a fast, cunning creature which will give them a good long run and a hard fight before dying on a polearm.

Subject peoples are required to notify their masters of any local threat to productive capacity. Once informed, the *Krurruna* gathers his guards and friends and the game is afoot. On worlds where sport is scarce and the overlords tend to moderation, it could be argued that slave communities are established on the margins of wild land to encourage their predation, providing something to hunt.

## The K'kree Arts

**T**he K'kree like music, dance, hand-crafted furniture, decorative cloth, and things that smell. Their dance is not readily exportable and their music is an acquired taste. The Herd's furniture is best bought new and is prized both for its beauty and its ability to stand up to heavy treatment. (Aside from its notorious contribution to parties at Capital, it is best known for being able to stop a 10mm Magnum at 3 yards.) K'kree cloth is interesting – heavily embroidered and intricately hand-woven – but shipping costs are high. Perfume is the most famous and readily transported manufacture.

The subject races of the Two Thousand Worlds have their own arts and crafts, too, but these are heavily censored and ground to a fine paste if found to be subversive.



## Adventure Seed: A Saurian Solzhenitsyn

**W**hile on a K'kree world (or in a K'kree client state) a party member is approached by a small, lizard-like alien, who presses a holocrystal into his hand, makes eye contact, and leaves. The GM should roll his dice secretly and smile. He should then hand the player a note saying, "You feel compelled to take this crystal back to an Imperium-based news corporation."

The group will be searched thoroughly by K'kree guards for the remainder of their stay, and will be attacked by armed Human mercenaries on their way to whichever news corporation they decide to visit.

The crystal contains a series of novels describing life as a subject of the K'kree.

## WORLD DATA

*Starport:* Class IV.

*Diameter:* 8,500 miles (13,600 km). *Density:* 5.5. *Gravity:* 1.07G. *Composition:* Medium iron. *Axial Tilt:* None. *Length of Day:* 28.6 hours. *Atmosphere:* Standard oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 31%. *Climate:* Cool and dry. *Population:* 10.5 billion. *Government:* Extended family. *Control Rating:* 0 (5). *TL:* 12.

## GEOLOGY

Kirur is a dead world. It has no vulcanism and minimal radioactivity at its core. Kirur is so old that it has no naturally-occurring fissile materials in its crust. It does, however, have large deposits in the Dead Sea, an enormous impact site of great antiquity. Geologists hypothesize that this feature, contemporary with three on Kirrixur, dates from the nova which preceded the neutron star at Thirty. No native radioactivity means no active mountain-building, and no recycling of minerals in the crust. Kirur would have been scoured as smooth as an egg long ago, but for activity from two sources.

As Kirur cools, its mantle shrinks slightly, causing the rigid crust to wrinkle; to the inhabitants, these bumps are big enough to be mountains, or at least hills. The other agent for geological activity is the moon, Kirrixur. This large, close body causes regular seismic activity, opening fault lines and inducing land slips and eruptions of water.

## HYDROSPHERE

The world was once a lot wetter, but erosion and lack of new uplift produced first swamps and lagoons, then drier measures, and ultimately, the mixture of soil and badlands of the present surface. There is a lot of fossil water on the planet – some plants can sink roots deep enough to tap it, but much is too salty for use.

## GEOGRAPHY

Kirur is a dry planet. In its natural state, it was grassy steppe and semi-desert, with badlands and wonderfully severe wind-carved hills. Stands of trees edged watercourses and flourished in wetter areas; thick beds of water-weeds choked the shallow seas. Civilization has changed this. Huge, sprawling cities stand on the edges of good, arable land. Desalination plants dot the irrigated fields. Automated mines scour out the highlands. Farming machines work the sea floors; fountain-towers, slick with algae, manage the oxygen content of the atmosphere. The coasts are ringed with the ancient ruins of failed agricultural communities. The early K'kree were not kind to their home and their descendants are still paying the price.

There is only one continent, with seas at each pole and a narrow tongue of water between them. No K'kree has ever crossed this strait by ship, although it narrows to only 200 miles (the Herd are not sailors). The lands facing the seas are backed by low, rough hills. The interior holds wide plains, rising to a series of old mountains running northwest to southeast across the planet. These are not high enough to prohibit movement, but they do present rough going. They experience only intermittent, unpredictable rainfall, often in the form of flash floods, so are cut by deep valleys which end in fans of debris. They are also the lands most influenced by Kirrixur's pull, so they are faulted, and prone to landslides or small earth tremors.

Where the plains get water – from rainfall, rivers, or buried ancient seas – there is pasture. Elsewhere is bare rock or stony desert. Strong prevailing winds blow the sands away from the mountains. Dunes can creep six or seven feet a day into fertile land before collapsing under their own weight or being stopped by winds from the sea. From its interior out, Kirur is a desert, shading into arid steppes, then to prairie, and ultimately into fertile lowlands and temperate or subarctic rainforests. The flat land is punctuated by relics of old floods, lone sand dunes, and occasional fissures.

## FLORA AND FAUNA

Kirur's seasonal variation is slight, so its plants have not adapted for intermittent growth. Some of any one stand will be flowering or sporing, while others are bearing fruit or just germinating. The plants have a love/hate relationship with the local wildlife. They do not want to be eaten, but they do want their seeds to be

spread, ideally in a nice pile of dung. Consequently, the plants are poisonous for parts of their life cycle, or have a combination of toxic and innocuous segments.

Most of Kirur's plant life is grassy, in the sense of growing from the junction of its root and leaf, rather than from the tip. Almost all of it contains a water trap mechanism for capturing early morning dew. From the K'kree point of view, disappointingly little of it is woody, and tree or shrub analogs only arise on slopes facing into a sea breeze, or along surface watercourses or over fossil aquifers. What wood there was had too little tensile strength to suggest "bow" to the Herd, but it did grow long and straight enough to poke with.

Kirur's animals are all hexapods. Only the K'kree developed a centaur's body; the rest remained strong, ground-hugging animals. There are a few gliding creatures, with great webs of skin between their legs, and smaller relatives capable of flight, but no true birds, and no examples of an airfoil surface.

Few of Kirur's fauna survived the K'kree. All the big predators were killed, the collapse of predator/prey relationships ruined the ecosystem and, apart from the Herd itself, all that remains are a few innocuous scavengers in the badlands and some marine creatures under the margins of the ice caps. There are not even any zoos to preserve the last of the meat-eaters. K'kree have no interest in the Enemy besides knowing that it is dead.

## The Capital

*Rak'keer!*, "Eternal Vigilance" or "Everlasting Hour," was the first recorded K'kree settlement; the K'kree calendar starts with its foundation. Equivalent dates are -8175 Imperial, or 3668 BC, making the Herd's capital a contemporary of Eridu on Terra. The city sprawls at the southwestern margin of the Xtengir uplands. It is huge, some 80 miles across, and rises in a series of gentle tiers from the plateau. To its seaward side, it descends to the water in a wide bulge of curved steps. Viewed from the south, *Rak'keer!* rises high above its sea farms. On land, it is surrounded by paddy fields, where sewage from six million inhabitants is spread into played-out open cast workings by servants, robots, and impertinent foreigners.

The city stands on an artificial mound, the leavings from the old mines. This pile inevitably covered older buildings, but the original city has been preserved – it was excavated and restored by a team of Imperial archaeologists. The K'kree then sculpted the surrounding land to sweep down to it, to preserve an open aspect, and covered the site with an elegant dome. The result is an enclosed park, planted with attractive species from across the Two Thousand Worlds, called, inevitably, *Holy Destiny Gardens*.

The governmental district and palace complex stand at the city's center, with a park between them; the main road runs straight from there to the starport, 100 miles away. Subject aliens with reason to be on Kirur are kept in a ghetto at the starport. *Rak'keer!* has a resident-aliens quarter with its own railway line to the starport and the capital. It is, symbolically, downwind, and is enclosed in a separate dome. It houses Imperial, Solomani, and Zhodani embassies. Each Vilani megacorporation keeps a station here, and the other Imperial megacorporations are petitioning the Imperium to arrange this for them, too. There is no diplomatic accommodation for Aslan or Vargr, but they can take out insurance with Sharushid (p. T:BC16), who will ask the Imperial ambassador to take an interest.

## KIRRIXUR

### World Data

*Starport:* Class III.

*Diameter:* 7,037 miles (11,259 km). *Density:* 5.1. *Gravity:* 0.82G. *Composition:* Medium iron. *Axial Tilt:* None. *Length of Day:* 119.2 hours. *Atmosphere:* Standard oxygen-nitrogen with a spore taint. *Surface Water:* 87%. *Climate:* Cool and wet. *Population:* 55 billion. *Government:* Extended family. *Control Rating:* 0(5). *TL:* 10.



## Adventure Seed: A Very Tight Squeeze

**A**n extremely snotty K'kree family is stranded in a starport. The PCs have a starship, either a far or free trader, and have already sold their cabin space to Aslan. Luckily the Aslan and K'kree are going to the same place, and equally luckily, the K'kree will accept accommodation in the cargo bay, provided that the PCs make it comfortable, installing air conditioning, scent synthesizers and all-wall view-screens showing pictures of the prairies.

The problem: neither can know the other is there.

An extra inducement – the secret service will pay the PCs a month's charter fee for their ship if they will take both groups, bug their cabins and send back a report by Xboat.

Another problem – both groups will try to kill the PCs if they find out about each other or the secret service connection. If they find out about *both*, the PCs will be present at the first ever Aslan-K'kree joint forces operation. Regrettably, they will not live to see their erstwhile passengers kill each other afterward.



## Adventure Seed: And What Exactly Is a Hamburger?

The PCs are working on a world in the Crucis Margin or Star's End, where the Two Thousand Worlds and the Third Imperium are indulging in a little informal war by proxy. They are either the representatives of the local Astroburger franchise (p. T:BC20), or a K'kree family bent on establishing a per-fumery, market garden, and *k'ghikre*.

In any case, they are required to persuade the local authorities that their plan is the right one. They may not resort to violence overtly.



## Small Unit Organization and Tactics

The basic K'kree unit is the platoon, or *ring'r*, of 50 soldiers (the size of a prosperous family). This is too unwieldy for duties such as scouting, patrolling perimeters, or house-to-house combat, but this is no problem – the Great Herd far prefers reconnaissance by fire, area denial from artillery, and flattening buildings to fighting through them.

The *ring'r* follows K'kree organizational concepts – it is made up of the same proportions of middle- and lower-class troops as civilian society, with an integral headquarters section. Armament is predominantly long rifles, with five light machine guns and five laser designators.

*Continued on next page . . .*

Kirrixur is the wet, close satellite of Kirur. As it is face-locked to their home-world, the K'kree describe it as having inward and outward hemispheres. It has a day/night cycle, determined by its orbit around Kirur, rather than by its rotation. Its most striking feature is the set of three huge impact craters on its inward face.

## Atmosphere and Hydrosphere

Very deep oceans cover Kirrixur. They are shallower around the great craters, and are broken by the tops of huge submarine mountains. The extensive hydrosphere, the long local day and Kirur's tidal pull make for extremely violent weather. The atmosphere is tainted by spores, courtesy of the local lifeforms, which use the high, persistent winds as an agent for dispersal.

## Flora and Fauna

The K'kree eradicated the G'naak very thoroughly. None survive on Kirrixur, nor do any creatures of the same phylum. What remains has filled the vacated niches surprisingly quickly. Amoebas, lichens, soft-bodied coral-analogs, and fungi are the most common lifeforms. Plants are fast-growing and tend not to be woody. They propagate asexually by emitting creepers or by venting their spores into the atmosphere. On land they form huge mats of fern-like growth.

Animals are all varieties of fish, arthropods, or insects; some are amphibious, others can fly. The smaller move around as aeolian plankton. The biosphere is best-developed in the shallows round the craters and on dry land. Elsewhere, it is very sparse.

## K'kree Settlement

The K'kree try not to go to Kirrixur. However, it has some useful recoverable minerals, and its extreme geography and poor climate make it a good place for hostile-environment training. The Steppelords would quarter subject levies on the moon, but for a nagging anxiety that they might rebel, seize control of the spaceport, and somehow contrive to bomb Kirur.

## ECONOMICS, BUSINESS, TRADE, AND COMMERCE

Domestically, the K'kree have a top-down command economy, where the higher bosses say what they want done, and their underlings do it. This can be inconvenient, especially for the smaller, lower-caste units which attend to the manufacturing, rather than the planning. It also bewitches the higher nobles with unrealistic expectations. Planning is a stressful process for the Herd. There is a systematic mismatch between demand and supply of components and support for manufacturing efforts.

This is inevitable and due in its entirety to the nature of the K'kree state. A coalition of families which can cooperate for simplistic ends, such as the extermination of all carnivores, is ill-suited to the detailed work of providing the components for that glorious progress, especially when there is no end in sight. Filling orders is tricky. It is easy enough for a local steppelord to arrange for his followers to produce some food, some minerals and a few superconductors, then send off the excess to another herd somewhere else. Doing so repeatedly and to a schedule is more difficult to arrange. There are too many changes at the grass roots. When children are born, their fathers take time off to dote on them. There are always weddings to arrange and harems to police. The harder a male works, the greater the danger that an interloper will sneak in. This anxiety keeps his mind from his work, which is unfortunate as his performance is tied to his actual social rank.

When the goods have been produced, they need to be taken to their users. While some herds – the Steppelord of the Two Thousand Worlds' own entourage, for

instance – internalize these logistical problems, most groups are too small or squeamish about space to do so. Some specialist families act as intermediaries in exchange and (crucially) shipment of goods; some have become eminent in the process. Regrettably these are often crazy people, and some are even moderate! Their trading partners are always uneasy when dealing with them, and the Steppelords are interested in their contacts with outsiders.

## Business

Among the Herd, business is a matter of paying respect to one's superiors without starving in the process. A clan will have families which perform most of its activities. A sufficiently large and diversified herd could have factories, farms, or transport facilities, and each would provide these to its member families in return for a reciprocal consideration, and ultimately under the guidance of the patriarch. The higher-caste clan members get better service and more stuff, which is as it should be, but the boss is required to make sure that no one suffers through doing his duty. This presents a difficulty for planning or large-scale work. On just one world, the actual productive capacities and levels of stock are known only vaguely; over interstellar distances, it is a miracle if the required goods actually turn up on time and in the right quantity.

Concepts such as a profit motive are largely absent, although real-world stimuli like comparative advantage and diminishing returns do have an impact. The difficulty with these factors is more spiritual than material for the K'kree. The boundaries of practicable company extent are seldom the same as the ideal size of a K'kree clan. The patriarch wants as many enterprises as he can imagine, and prefers them to be as large as possible.

The idea that there might be an optimum or maximum size for an endeavor is not accepted without a feeling of regret that this is somehow inconsistent with racial destiny. That some specialists in some locations can produce goods more cost (strictly speaking more *resource-use*) effectively than others is seen as somehow unholy, or at last antisocial.

## Currency

The K'kree rarely use money and do not value it. Transactions are agreed to by herd elements specializing in that kind of thing, then the goods and services involved are apportioned according to the wishes of the *Krurruna*. The Herd does use something similar to cash for business via third parties, or where the goods exchanged are intended for remote destinations. They do not think of the notes involved as having any *inherent* worth; they just describe a pile of physical items in a field somewhere in the Two Thousand Worlds.

K'kree traders have got the hang of monetized economies. They still find it amusing that these little bits of metal or plastic, or notations in a database, are deemed to have value, but take this as proof that their neighbors really are doomed and benighted savages. Better-informed K'kree know that hard currency, especially the Imperial Credit, makes it a lot easier to acquire high-tech imports. Charges Like Thunder prefers that any foreign exchange ends up in his war-chest, and will offer very generous exchanges to assure this. The Overlords follow similar policies, as do some hard-line fundamentalist clans.

## K'kree Interstellar Companies

Despite their innate conservatism and tendency toward local self-sufficiency, the K'kree can benefit from trade between the stars, and herds have arisen to take advantage of this. These clans are made up of families spread among different worlds, so are seen as distinct from their one-world, one-herd neighbors. They are, of necessity, better informed and often more open-minded than most K'kree. They are also closely linked with the high command. All movement within the Two Thousand Worlds is, theoretically, controlled by the *Krurruna*. Trade requires autonomous action, so the traders have license to move through the Empire and across its borders in pursuit of trade goods and money.

## Small Unit Organization and Tactics

[Continued]

Units will also have at least two open-mounted, crew-served mortars or mass drivers and may also have a heavy machine gun, carried by a strong K'kree and, possibly, a trooper in battledress with a PGKP (Plasma Gun, K'kree Portable), or VRFGG. See p. 112 for details of all these weapons.

Communications noise and large numbers mandate the adoption of simple, stylized tactics. The *ring'r* is intended as an attack formation. In open terrain, it draws up in two staggered lines, with the second rank covering the gaps in the first. The leader is at front and center, between two target designators. The flanks have two more painting lasers and two machine guns.

The second rank holds the final spotter and the other three support weapons. The heavy machine gun and plasma gun (if any) are concentrated opposite the most strongly held enemy position, or command unit, if obvious. In more closed terrain, the unit disperses its spotters and sends forward small parties to probe the opposition. They do this by spraying their front with fully automatic fire, and watching for anything that bleeds or shoots back. Any sign of resistance is targeted and saturated by mortar fire.

If defending, the *ring'r* will mine and booby trap a significant obstacle, using autonomous smart guns if available. They will then draw up behind it and counter-charge anyone who survives to stagger out of the mound of rubble.



## So Why Haven't the K'kree Won Yet?

*"Cut that out. Less of the barking. It's not that bad. One-to-one, K'kree soldiers are devastating, but their tactics only work in specific, difficult-to-arrange cases. The K'kree battle plan assumes air superiority, massive fire support, either planetside or from space, ideally both, and an opponent who is trying to hold ground."*

*"These circumstances describe the suppression of internal dissent, or the last stages of an invasion of a hopelessly out-classed world, but not any conceivable action against a major power. Don't forget that the K'kree have yet to win an engagement with any one of our bands."*

*"No matter how fast they might trot, they are far less mobile than even TL7 mechanized troops, and are hardly lift-capable at all. They invite counter-fire. Ask yourselves, how difficult is it to hit a grav carrier big enough to hold 50 claustrophobic Rraehksue? In a main action they walk."*



*"By concentrating their assets, they can put appreciable crewed fighting vehicles into one theater, but their scope for a mass deployment on all fronts is limited by the rarity of potential crew members. This is exacerbated by the logistical demands of interstellar warfare: their spacers are drawn from exactly the same pool as the tank drivers."*

*Continued on next page . . .*

The Overlords also control the importing, manufacturing, and trading in items of strategic interest. This essentially means that serious military equipment and high-level intelligence gathering are government monopolies. All of The Two Thousand Worlds' plasma guns are made by a dependent of the Supreme Steppelord.

## Unfree Trade and Anti-Competitive Practices

The K'kree are not good with ships. Their hull volume to cargo ratio is appalling by the standards of any other spacefaring race and their traders compete very poorly outside their own worlds. This comes from their freight practices – the rest of charted space uses containers, usually 500 cubic foot, convenient to handle and easy to store in a nice, neat hold. Not the K'kree. On their ships, cargo space is determined in the main by how many relatives the crew want to take along with them. There is some dedicated cargo storage – 0.5 percent of a ship's tonnage is typical – but the rest of the freight is spread across the saucer, intermixed with little children who play at jumping over it. It has to be moved manually through the passenger hatch. It is not even piled conveniently near the exit – the crew and passengers complain of feeling "closed in."

Outside their own worlds, this inherent inefficiency, combined with the higher berthing charges their ships attract, prices them out of the market. Their merchant fleet only survives inside their Empire because of their xenophobia and anti-competitive practices. As non-K'kree shipping is at least an order of magnitude more efficient, special rules apply to foreigners. These cover restricted access to berths and stevedores, painstaking searches of unloaded containers and brutal demurrage charges. Foreign shippers are made to wait while the local officials solicit for a K'kree merchant to bounce them from a contract, and any passengers are intimidated into considering a Herd flight instead.

## ACROSS THE BORDER

The Two Thousand Worlds contains exactly the same selection of mineral resources as any other empire in charted space, so there is no overwhelming need to indulge in large-scale trade. Specialized items do get exchanged, usually exotic luxury goods such as perfumes; new, advanced technologies; and embargoed information. A starport somewhere in the mosaic of independent client states between the empires is the usual venue for this kind of trading, since it needs to be discreet, deniable, and close to each party. Even if the K'kree would prefer to trample them, they recognize the value of the little satellites between themselves and their rivals.

## Foreign Traders in the Two Thousand Worlds

The Imperium is more technologically advanced than the Herd, who have learned the value of Imperial credits, leaving scope for trade. Adventurous merchants occasionally make the trip to K'kree space in the hope of a good deal on compact, high-value goods. The costliness of such an undertaking, and its low chance of success, arouse the suspicion of local patrols, who reason that a scruffy merchant ship could easily be spying. As the K'kree are difficult to bribe, only the lucky, skillful, or genuinely innocent make it to a starport. First-time traders who take no notice of starport gossip are often robbed outright – K'kree merchants will be related to the customs officials and local defense force, and will intimidate visitors into handing over their goods for safe passage out. The only way around this is to make an educated guess as to really desirable merchandise and promise to bring some on subsequent trips.

Often, goods for the K'kree market need special modifications to accommodate their strange hands. This increases the price to the trader and, in the case of restricted goods, alerts customs officials or naval anti-smuggling patrols. Once adept at dealing with K'kree, Imperial merchants can justifiably charge what they like for the perfume they bring back. However, traders with an established business are well advised never to take on new partners or accept generous subsidies to defray their costs. These approaches might not be from Imperial Intelligence, but the K'kree would not give suspected agents the benefit of the doubt.



Anyone rash enough to visit the Two Thousand Worlds without good cause, but able to provide the K'kree with reason enough not to kill him, will have a tale to tell on his return. K'kree law and customs apply with extra force to smelly foreigners. The Emperor has long since stopped trying to get the Herd to respect His request that His subjects be treated fairly.

## K'kree in the Imperium

There are no K'kree enclaves, settlements, or permanent communities in the Third Imperium. There are trade missions (offering very poor deals on luxury goods), as well as consulates and roving bands of K'kree. These are usually ambitious merchants or scientists, sometimes diplomats meeting nobles in private. The security forces are well aware of their presence and movements, and will occasionally arrange for an accident to inconvenience them, just to see what happens.

## THE MILITARY

*Kitunika'rra*, the K'kree word for military, means "Vermin Exterminators" or "Pest Control." It combines both its space and ground components in a single, seamless force. The Herd's strategic posture has always been to attack rather than defend, so they think in terms of combined operations in enemy space rather than patrolling their possessions. Hence, they do not make the same distinction between ground side and space actions. They do recognize the vulnerability of troop ships to fighting vessels, and keep them in the rear during the space fight, but this combat is seen as preparation for a planetary invasion, in which the ships will be providing orbital fire support.

Ultimate authority rests in the Steppelord of the Two Thousand Worlds, but is divided into three strategic commands. *Kirur'xki'!xkukt'xr*, or "Home Group," is based at Kirur. It is the main coreward depot for the *Kitunika'rra*, combining training, supply, and command functions. Troops in transit are guaranteed to spend time at Home Group.

*Krurr'xki'xkukt'xr*, or "Advanced Group," is an autonomous command on the farther side of the Lesser Rift. Its task is to discourage Vargr activity with aggressive action from its base at *Aat Nokr K'ng*. The *Ga'hk'r* outpost is separated from the Two Thousand Worlds by a jump-4 route and is inconvenient to re-supply or reinforce, so its troops are very capable and even more numerous than usual for K'kree.

*Kruxugh'tritr'xr*, "Hero Fleet," operating from *Kteuxt!ligh* in *Bar'kaki* sector, is the rimward military depot. Despite the long-standing peace with the Hivers, the region is turbulent and High Command suspects malicious neighbors of tinkering.

## HIGHER MILITARY ORGANIZATION

Charges Like Thunder directs Pest Control. Where possible he does so in person, but he often must delegate his authority. The two external depots are all but autonomous, and he trusts the other Lords of the Steppelords to act responsibly with his forces. Expert opinion and professional support are available from his permanent staff, the Foremost. These are the best logistics specialists, strategists, analysts, and xenologists available. The other regional commanders have similar followers, but not the same resources as the Foremost. The present staff does not have a religious advisor.

The Lords organize their forces into the inevitable families, where possible expanding them to include necessary support elements. This allows the military to field platoons without difficulty. Similar arrangements enable them to provide the most common (and to the K'kree, most cost-effective) military ship, the frigate. When more than a *ring'r* is required, the K'kree become mission oriented and *ad hoc*. Larger forces are drawn from the Steppelords' followers. Who they are and how they are armed depend on circumstances.

## So Why Haven't the K'kree Won Yet?

[Continued]

"The doctrine assumes an offensive posture, which cannot be guaranteed in the field, and K'kree are poor at defending. They cannot use cover effectively, prefer not to enter buildings, and lose their fire support as soon as the enemy engages them closely.

"When in space, their ships, although impressively large, suffer from a poorer volume to armament ratio than any of their opponents, and have inherently more complicated, thus easier to damage, life-support systems.

"Strategic planning is plagued by their herd society's unhappiness with individual initiative. They feel the need to consult a higher authority. This denies them flexibility and simultaneously makes their lines of communication a highly desirable target for deep strikes. Defending it consumes their assets and reduces efficiency.

"Our corsairs can strike deep into their space, threaten their communications, and divert their resources from their attack. Our capital ships will vaporize theirs. Now, one last thing. I do not believe that they will come to the League, but if they do, they will beg us to be allowed to leave."

— Gvoekh,

Senior Strategic Studies Lecturer,  
Meat Skulls League, Vargr Enclaves

## K'KREE SCRIPT

Whispering

Winds

Whispering Winds [canyon]  
- a formal name



## Adventure Seed: Live Fire

**T**he PCs are covert military advisors from the Imperium or Solomani Confederation who are studying the long-term threat posed by the K'kree. To do this they have been inserted onto a world which an independent K'kree band is raiding, in preparation for conquest. Their job is to study the enemy's techniques under different conditions and experiment with countermeasures. Then they must report back alive. If at all possible they must bring back a prisoner.

The unit they are facing is a single *ring'r*, armed at TL9 and operating from a frigate (see p 121). Its task is to intimidate the locals into accepting assistance from a local, cross-border K'kree family. The PCs need not worry about finding the *ring'r*. They need only leave a few burger wrappers lying around and it will come to them. The GM should arrange for the PCs to take on the K'kree in a variety of terrain.

If they are replying to a threat, the local commanders decide where the blow will fall, take a guess as to when, and rush all available forces there, hoping that they will be in time. This response does not work very well, so it is often adopted in conjunction with a counterstrike against the presumed enemy.

When the K'kree are attacking, their composition is determined by the logistics of bringing them to the front lines. Whenever they get to choose the terms of engagement, the Foremost try to deploy some green troops from throughout their Empire, pairing them with more experienced elements from their own retinues. As these move to the front, the Foremost order units from appropriate nearby worlds to join them. Military transports collect these local detachments. Only when the entire task force has met at the staging area do the commanders know what they have.

This system is fraught with difficulty. Communication lags and varying transit times prevent full mobilization. The families involved serve to the best of their abilities and in good faith, but there are frequent mismatches. Different families tend to specialize in ground forces, space assets, and especially *vehicles*. Providing sufficient effective atmospheric craft is beyond current organizational ability.

Jump-synchronization problems inevitably delay some units of any task force. Since commanders have to set departure dates, often they do not leave with their entire force. The date is usually early: K'kree do not like hanging about in spaceships, so there is a pressing need to maintain morale by minimizing this inconvenience.

K'kree units are, logistically, difficult to support in the field. They use vast quantities of ammunition, eat more than any other species, and expect to receive bulky food. Not to mention the fact that they need mountains of drugs to keep them sane. The problems of interstellar communication are even more profound for the *Kirunika'ra* than for any other race's military.

## The Role of the Military

The K'kree state has long given up on its religious duty to conquer the galaxy, so its armed forces have adopted a strategically defensive posture. This is at odds with their necessarily offensive tactical doctrine and with the cultural assumption about the ultimate military purpose, *to kill vermin*. It also annoys their more devout herds, and confuses the back ranks of society. They learn to attack, they want to fight, so why are they standing around?

The K'kree use their soldiers and ships to intimidate and discipline subject races, to guard their interstellar borders and internal communications and to punish aggression. The Steppelord of the Two Thousand Worlds also uses his more aware followers to maintain an informal empire of client states along their spinward frontier. Ambitious, religious families follow suit, often without the actual sanction of their master.

## K'KREE ARMED FORCES

All male K'kree spend at least six years (7.25 Imperial) in the military. Those who like it can either stay, or join a family as its bodyguard component. The full time military is, like all K'kree institutions, a big family. Rank and prospects are directly related to caste. Servants are the private soldiers. The middle classes join as junior field officers, and command units in the field. Staff officers are drawn from the nobility.

Many support functions can be delegated to family members. Females do not serve on warships, or in actual combat zones, but are present in other formations. They provide part of the logistical tail and given their comforting effect on the males, also serve in place of a chaplain's contingent.

As their soldiers are unsuited to bunkers and trenches, the tactical posture is aggressive. This is exacerbated by two K'kree phenomena – their inability to go prone and their ability to carry a lot of ammunition and protective gear.

## TACTICS AND EQUIPMENT

K'kree have always liked long, menacing-looking weapons. They are especially fond of their polearms, and use them whenever possible. They also wear a lot of armor. Their large size, high load-bearing capacity, and sniper-friendly silhouette have all promoted a spiral into ever-heavier equipment.

This has followed them into modern warfare. K'kree carry long-barreled, long-range, light automatic weapons with prodigious quantities of ammunition and big bayonets. Their preferred method of fighting is to suppress an area to their front and advance into it. When close enough to charge, the leading warriors do their best to get among their opponents with cold steel, while their comrades cover their attack.

The obvious shortcomings of this approach are minimized by calling on grav tanks, ground attack fighters, and indirect artillery fire. Where possible, commanders enlist the support of friendly ships or orbital platforms. The use of rear-echelon assets requires some warriors to carry lasers, initially as target designators, but now popular as light anti-personnel weapons. For extra lethality, these usually mount a coaxial RAM grenade launcher, belt-fed from a backpack. The gunner can use his laser to paint targets for his grenades.

Because so many K'kree dread fighting in buildings, doctrine is to flatten them, unless they are important. The idea of capturing positions is in any case alien to the K'kree. Not only are they unlikely to fit inside one, they also see war as a matter of purification rather than imperialism, so they prefer not to leave one stone on another. Actually securing a structure intact is rare for the K'kree.

### *The Crazy Contingents*

These are the cream of the K'kree military, a superbly indoctrinated, disciplined, and motivated force whose skill and courage keeps their brethren from being mowed down. Without the crazies, the Herd could not go to war. Both they and the normals know this and it leads to friction – the flyers, spacers, and tank crews give themselves airs, and the rest look upon them with squeamish jealousy.

The AFVs are large vehicles, mounting both dorsal and ventral turrets and elaborate point-defense systems and countermeasures. K'kree grav tanks are big and easy to hit.

Most aerospace fighters are drones remote-piloted from the rear echelon. However, there are really big gunboats crewed by three crazies, which act as heavy close-support vehicles.

The K'kree hate the sea and dread serving on ships. Instead, they use enormous floating platforms, almost fortresses. All submarines and attack craft are robotic or remote-controlled, and are piloted from these huge vessels.

The Space Navy is the most important arm of the K'kree military. It takes the soldiers to the fight and supports them with overwhelming fire from orbit. All the crew of a fighting ship are crazy. They are forced to travel with a reduced family (only those who can fulfill a useful shipboard role – so no wives). Spacers expect to be well compensated for their sacrifices, and are regarded as slightly higher in status than their actual caste. But they are still weird in the eyes of most of K'kree society.

### *The Normal Contingents*

K'kree who aren't crazy fight as infantry, work artillery, or serve in a support capacity. Although nominally air-mobile or at least mechanized, they prefer to march into combat, accompanied by slow-moving – often drone – machines. These devices act as gun platforms, or handy sources of ammunition. They are served by

## Adventure Seed: Anabasis

**T**he PCs are survivors (they lost) of a mercenary crew working for a K'kree boss on a TL5 world near the Ley Sector border. Their employers are dead, the locals are upset, and their repatriation bond is invalid (they're outside the Empire). The survivors have their guns, knives, and wits. They can have a full magazine each, plus 1d grenades between them.

Merchant ships call here occasionally (roll above 10 for one to arrive, one try per week).

Before going in, their *Krurruna* gave them a voucher for a luggage-storage locker in Dukh highport. The locker contains four liters of perfume, worth Cr192,000. The ticket expires in three months.

### K'KREE GLYPHS



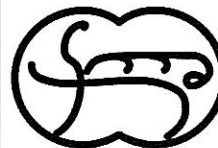
**K'kree -**  
["Great Herd"]

Line thickness indicates few (thin lines) or many (thick lines).



**g'naak -**

[A carnivore eating a panicking K'kree.]



**G'naak -**

Formal name for exterminated predator race on Kirrixur.



## K'KREE WORD GENERATION TABLES

The following will enable readers to generate K'kree-like strings of letters and punctuation. Their meaning is up to their creator, who should bear in mind that more complex concepts require longer words. They work in exactly the same way as the Aslan tables on p. 29.

### Basic

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	V	V	V	CV	CV	CV
2	CV	CV	CV	CV	CV	CV
3	V	CV	CV	CV	CV	CV
4	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC
5	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC
6	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC

For initial syllables

### After C

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	V	V	V	V	V	V
2	V	V	V	V	V	V
3	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC
4	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC
5	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC
6	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC

For syllables after VC

### After V

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	CV	CV	CV	CV	CV	CV
2	CV	CV	CV	CV	CV	CV
3	CV	CV	CV	CV	CV	CV
4	CV	CV	CV	CV	CV	CV
5	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC
6	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC	CVC

### Initial Consonant 1

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	B	B	G	G	G	G
2	G	G	GH	GH	GH	GH
3	GH	GH	GH	GH	GH	GH
4	GH	GH	GN	GN	GN	GN
5	GN	GN	GN	GN	GN	GN
6	GR	GR	GR	GR	GZ	GZ

Continued on next page . . .

K'kree of the technician caste. The soldiers are accompanied by their families, who remain far behind any battle-line. Here they are available to prepare food, offer comfort, and give the fighters an added motivation to carry on killing.

The majority of soldiers serve their term and then return to their clans, but a few long-timers make the military their career. These K'kree form the training cadres and actual backbone of the military. They practice martial arts. They have spent a lot of time under fire and are reliable in combat. Their actions inspire the new draftees. The rigid class structure of the Herd guarantees that there will be veterans in all ranks, so every K'kree unit will have a sprinkling of troops who know their work. This is especially important since High Command believes that all troops need combat experience, so they rotate every green trooper through a war zone at least once in his hitch. The presence of battle-hardened troops is guaranteed by the K'kree custom that a soldier remains with his unit for his entire career, and is never reassigned.

A persistent problem is the loathing of fortifications. K'kree are hugely vulnerable to artillery barrages and their rear echelon is an attractive target. A *Trukr'x'Pekree* or "portable sky" was developed to counter this. It is a huge tent of heavy, environment-sealed ballistic cloth or armored ceramic plates. It is erected far from the front line. Point-defense weapons are mounted all around it, slaved to high-quality radar and ladar detectors. Powerful countermeasure suites augment these defenses. The inside is a large screen. The roof shows peaceful scenes of clouds and sunlight. The sides have nice, safe prairies. Non-combatant family members take cover inside this very obvious structure. The remote pilots work from here, too. A portable sky has two functions – to protect the soldiers' families, and to remind them of what is at stake, so that they fight all the harder.

## Non-K'kree Levies and Foreigners

Suitably loyal troops from the Herd's subjects are occasionally pressed into service. Their morale is indifferent at best, and desertions are common, but smaller, less anxious races are of use. They will swim underwater, for instance, creep through sewers, or hold fortified positions. Both Humans and Vargr can be found in K'kree service. The *Krurruna* usually takes hostages to ensure their good behavior. Foreign mercenaries also work for the *Krurruna*, either to stiffen the subject troops, or work in deniable operations. The pay for this work is exceptionally good, and usually made in perfume. Rumors are afloat that the Herd uses its mercenaries as shock troops or kills them to keep wages down.

## Force Sizes

A planet has about 0.005% of its population under arms, so an average world will have 2,500 soldiers. The Two Thousand Worlds has about 8 trillion inhabitants, and thus could call on (but would not be able to mobilize) 40 million soldiers.

The smallest K'kree expeditionary force is a frigate with a *ring'r* of troops. These are either space-trained crazies (making the ship an elite element), or, more likely, a standard unit of ground soldiers. The ship must land to deploy them.

A combined-arms unit will have four frigates (which take high guard and provide orbital fire), a rear echelon contingent operating drone fighters and indirect artillery, 50 grav tanks, three gunships, six APCs, and at least 4,000 foot. If it is expecting trouble, then it will add specialist subject levies such as sappers and trench-fighters. A punitive force should contain at least ten fighting ships, a command vessel, and five scouts.

## Bases

Military families maintain base facilities for themselves. Most often, these are expansive rear-area establishments where wives and dependents can be safe from harm. Most units are dedicated to one planet, and form both its police and near-orbit defense forces. Their home base is allocated to them by Foremost Command, subject to the commands of the planetary *Krurruna*. He usually adopts them into his herd and arranges for specialist families to feed and equip them. Once established,

the troops and their followers will be under local administration, but can still be detached for tours of duty at the request of the local Lord of Steppelords.

These planetary bases are extensive, with anti-space defense weaponry, remote-controlled orbital platforms, hospitals, stores, and training grounds. A defended planet sports at least six anti-ship batteries, sited as near as possible to 30°N and 30°S latitudes, and 120 degrees apart. Polar bases are often added. These are fusion gun or missile emplacements. A planet of suitably high TL will possess deep meson guns as well. Fire control is assisted by powerful sensor stations, on planet, in orbit, and scattered throughout the system.

Unless the family is a crisis-response outfit or border guards, it will have no interstellar lift capability. If it needs to move, transport will be provided by a superior Steppelord. Space bases are depots, supporting patrols, reconnaissance, or fighting ships. They also service outposts, bringing them supplies and replacement staffs.

## K'KREE WORD GENERATION TABLES

[Continued]

### Initial Consonant 2

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	HK	HK	HK	HK	K	K
2	K	K	K	K	K	K
3	K	K	K	K	K	K
4	K	K	K	K	K	K
5	K	K	K	K	K	K
6	K	K	KK	K	K	K

## K'KREE GLYPHS



Half cartouche,  
originating as a  
hoof print.

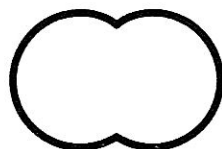
[Indicates emphasis.]



Ring'r



Insignai awarded to a Ring'r  
which has distinguished itself.



Full Cartouche,  
two hoof prints.

[Indicates identity or completion.]



Space Mobile Ring'r.



10th Ring'r – Unit designation.

## K'KREE LANGUAGE

The K'kree language is, to all intents and purposes, unpronounceable by Humans. What follows will assist in understanding K'kree thought processes, but the actual words will be of most use when presenting the species as NPCs. If the Herd is the only player-character race available in the game, readers are recommended to stick to English.

The tongue is grammatically and philosophically distinct from Anglic. The Imperial language conveys meaning through word order, K'kree does not. Anglic is concerned with the communication and development of ideas or information, and sharing of emotions. The Herd largely takes both of these for granted: original thought flows from the leaders backward, emotional issues are acted out in plain view of the whole clan. Instead, K'kree is concerned with reassuring the listener that he is in his proper place in the social order, that what he has been told to think or do is within his capacity and appropriate for him, and that, spiritually, there is still order in his world.

### Basic Concepts

K'kree is *agglutinative*, that is, it constructs complex words and ideas by running simple ones together. All words serve interchangeably as nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. Which is which is determined by inflections, rising or lowering tones, and by emitting simultaneous complementary sounds, especially sneezes. When written,

### Initial Consonant 3

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	K	K	K	K	K	K
2	K	K	K	K	K	K
3	K	K	K	K	K	K
4	K	KR	KR	KR	KR	KR
5	KR	KR	KR	KR	KR	KR
6	KR	KR	KR	KR	KR	KR

### Initial Consonant 4

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	KR	KR	KR	KR	KR	KR
2	KR	KT	KT	KT	L	L
3	L	L	L	L	L	L
4	L	L	L	L	M	M
5	M	M	MB	MB	MB	N
6	N	N	N	N	N	N

Continued on next page . . .

# K'KREE SOUND FREQUENCY AND PRONUNCIATION TABLE

## Initial Consonants (100)

Sound	Freq.	Pronunciation
B	1	ball
G	3	gun
GH	6	joke
GN	4	ignite
GR	2	groan
GZ	1	gags
HK	2	sock
K2	4	kale
KR	10	crowd
KT	1	nicht (German)
L	5	load
M	2	mane
MB	1	wombat
N	4	nun
P	1	pus
R	12	rude
RR	3	Rolled, as in Hollywood Scots or French
T	7	tune
TR	2	tramp
X	4	xenophobe
XK	1	cockscorn
XR	1	mixer
XT	1	mixed

The following lists the frequency of K'kree's assorted vowels, initial and final consonants. They include a poor approximation of the letter's sound. There is also some punctuation which stands for specifically K'kree vowels.

## Vowels (45)

Sound	Freq.	Pronunciation
A	19	may
AA	2	may, but longer
E	3	me
EE	4	me, but longer
I	6	my
II	2	my but longer
O	1	home
OO	2	home, but longer
U	6	fuse
UU	2	fuse, but longer
'	8	glottal stop, as in British football club Millwall (mi[stop]worr)
!	3	click
!!	1	click-lick, almost simultaneously. Easier to do with an 18-inch tongue.
!'	1	click[stop]

## Final Consonants (42)

Sound	Freq.	Pronunciation
B	1	rub
G	2	dog
GH	1	joke
GR	1	great
K	6	sak
KR	3	crowd
L	2	pill
M	1	swim
N	2	nun
NG	3	sing
P	1	zip
R	8	fur
RR	4	Rolled, as in Hollywood Scots or French
T	3	pit
X	3	fox
XK	1	cockscorn

## K'KREE WORD GENERATION TABLES

[Continued]

### Initial Consonant 5

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	N	N	N	P	P	P
2	R	R	R	R	R	R
3	R	R	R	R	R	R
4	R	R	R	R	R	R
5	R	R	R	R	R	R
6	R	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR

### Initial Consonant 6

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	RR	RR	T	T	T	T
2	T	T	T	T	T	TL
3	T	T	T	T	T	TR
4	TR	TR	TR	X	X	X
5	X	X	X	X	X	XW
6	XK	XK	XR	XR	XT	XT

Continued on next page . . .

special markings or even colors are used. The language is poor in phonemes (available sounds), so its words are often long and forbidding to look at when transcribed into the Imperial phonetic script. Sentence structure and word order vary as neither is required to convey meaning.

The result is that all communication is through long, rhythmic exchanges in which the same sounds and words are repeated several times with slight differences in pitch and tone. Each participant repeats what he has just heard. He alters his delivery so that his status and distance from the origin of the message are also conveyed.

Non-K'kree scholars hypothesize that, since K'kree are often unintelligent by other races' standards, orders and information needed to be reiterated to assist comprehension. As listeners of any intellectual capacity could glean *some* meaning out of what they heard, if only by picking up on the simple root ideas, attempts to give them instructions were not wasted.

It is certainly the case that K'kree use emphatic repetition to draw the listener's attention to key points. This feature is so well entrenched that it explains word formation – the K'kree word for honor is merely the repetition of the root parts of "foreign-odd-foreign-odd."

Because the language always alternates vowels and consonants, spoken K'kree has a sing-song rhythm. A wheezing snort (stress) or a low whinny (no stress) fill in where the words used would otherwise force a break in the flow – to avoid saying two consonants in succession, for example.

Concepts such as doubt, negation, and affirmation are covered by differences in delivery, rather than with words. The speaker repeats what he has just heard, but adds a bed to the spoken words if he wants to do any of these. To agree, the listener must meanwhile vent gas from his stomachs, producing a reed-like drone similar to bagpipes. To question, the speaker produces a stream of grunts through his nostrils. To negate, the speaker grinds his back teeth and makes sucking noises. K'kree can do all of these without breaking their verbal stride.



These sounds evolved on the ancestral steppe. The affirming drone is similar to the noise a mother makes when processing food for her children, the questioning grunt comes from sniffing unfamiliar foods, the tooth grinding and sucking are preliminaries to leaning backward, then springing on an enemy. Written K'kree uses different styles of underlining to convey the same differences in sense.

Readers should remember that the Herd can voluntarily produce sounds (often with attendant smells) which are impossible for other speakers to reproduce. Often, the smell can be taken as a word in itself.

## K'KREE GLOSSARY

This is a short selection of K'kree particles, suffixes, and the occasional word. Readers who want to make words from them rather than straight from the tables should bear in mind that some letters can elide and that others can be added to assist in pronunciation by *K'kree*, if not by Humans.

*a* – The most common K'kree vowel. It is present in many words indicating basic things. Its origin is a short gasp, the non-verbal expression of interest.

*aa* – An elongated *a*. Its use indicates a more challenging version of the humble pause for thought, so it often conveys a more complete or even metaphysical version of a basic concept.

*atu* – Inverse.

*ghi* – Front, lead, first; the root word for “lord,” “master,” or “control.”

*ghik'keer!k* – Steppelord.

*gzang* – Fire, also the K'kree sun.

*g'* – Bad, threatening.

*g'krurr* – Crazy. Literally, “bad/threatening lead.”

*g'r* – Hivers, literally, “bad legs.” Non-Hiver xenolinguists like this word because it sounds like an appalled gasp.

*g'rraal!pim'xer'* – Aslan or Vargr. Literally, “malign, bad smelling two legs.”

The K'kree tend not to distinguish between the two.

*gzang!k* – Funeral. Literally, “completing fire.”

*hk* – The prefix which indicates that a numeric quantity is an integer. It is not always used and can also mean “those that . . .”

*hkeegh'ti* – Family. Literally, “breeding grass-eaters.”

*hkur'ghe* – 2.58 seconds. The time it takes for an unhurried K'kree to move forward one body length. Literally, “whole big lead.”

*k* – Particle denoting totality.

*ka* – Ten, but with esoteric associations that are beyond Human comprehension and often including a feeling of sufficiency.

*kahk'rik'kreg* – Courier vessel. Literally, “Conveyance for ten poor nobles.”

*ke* – A blade of grass, and both or either of insufficiency and promise.

*kee* – Steppe, grass in a physical sense.

*ker* – Steppe in a mystical sense.

*kir* – Earth, soil, stuff with both living and dead in it and, therefore, the dead.

*kirunika'rra* – The military, pest control, or killers of vermin. Literally, “enough to do the job of killing the abusers of earth.” Note that here *kir* stands both for the action of killing and for the earth that is being abused. Note also that, to the K'kree, “abuses” does not hold any connotation of reverence for the earth. It simply means that someone other than them is enjoying possession of it.

*kirloor* – Gravitic technology. Literally, “earth drive.”

*kirr* – Earth, etc., but with a suggestion of mystery.

*kree* – Noble. The word's origin is a cry for attention.

*kreg* – A noble in distress or impoverished circumstances.

*krit* – Long (when referring to time), or repeated.

*kritur* – A day. Literally, “dawn repeats.”

*krumunak* – Junior rank boss. This word is used to distinguish between differences in seniority between bosses.

*krurr* – Foremost, exposed, leading.

## K'KREE WORD GENERATION TABLES

[Continued]

### Vowel 1

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	A	A	A	A	A	A
2	A	A	A	A	A	A
3	A	A	A	A	A	A
4	A	AA	AA	AA	AA	AA
5	AA	AA	AA	AA	AA	E
6	E	E	E	E	E	E

### Vowel 2

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	E	E	E	E	E	E
2	E	EE	EE	EE	EE	EE
3	EE	EE	EE	EE	EE	EE
4	EE	EE	EE	EE	EE	EE
5	EE	EE	I	I	I	I
6	I	I	I	I	I	I

### Vowel 3

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	I	I	I	I	I	I
2	I	I	I	I	I	I
3	I	I	I	I	I	I
4	I	II	II	II	II	II
5	II	II	II	II	II	O
6	O	O	O	O	OO	OO

### Vowel 4

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	OO	OO	OO	OO	OO	OO
2	OO	OO	U	U	U	U
3	U	U	U	U	U	U
4	U	U	U	U	U	U
5	U	U	U	U	U	U
6	U	U	U	U	U	U

### Vowel 5

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	U	UU	UU	UU	UU	UU
2	UU	UU	UU	UU	UU	'
3	'	'	'	'	'	'
4	'	'	'	'	'	'
5	'	'	'	'	'	'
6	'	'	'	'	'	'

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# K'KREE WORD GENERATION TABLES

[Continued]

## Vowel 6

Red Die	White Die					
Die	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	.	.	.	.	.	.
2	.	.	.	.	.	.
3	.	!	!	!	!	!
4	!	!	!	!	!	!
5	!	!	!	!!	!!	!!
6	!!	!!	!	!	!	!

## Final Consonant 1

Red Die	White Die					
Die	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	B	B	B	B	B	G
2	G	G	G	G	G	G
3	G	G	G	GH	GH	GH
4	GH	GH	GR	GR	GR	GR
5	GR	K	K	K	K	K
6	K	K	K	K	K	K

## Final Consonant 2

Red Die	White Die					
Die	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	K	K	K	K	K	K
2	K	K	K	K	K	K
3	K	K	K	K	K	K
4	K	K	KR	KR	KR	KR
5	KR	KR	KR	KR	KR	KR
6	KR	KR	KR	KR	KR	L

## Final Consonant 3

Red Die	White Die					
Die	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	L	L	L	L	L	L
2	L	L	L	M	M	M
3	M	M	N	N	N	N
4	N	N	N	N	N	N
5	NG	NG	NG	NG	NG	NG
6	NG	NG	NG	NG	NG	NG

## Final Consonant 4

Red Die	White Die					
Die	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	NG	NG	NG	P	P	P
2	P	P	R	R	R	R
3	R	R	R	R	R	R
4	R	R	R	R	R	R
5	R	R	R	R	R	R
6	R	R	R	R	R	R

Continued on next page . . .

*krurruna* – Senior rank boss. The distinction between this, family head and junior boss is a matter of context. *Krurruna* also denotes “family head,” in much the same way as “captain” can, to Humans, be both the commander of a ship and a specific rank.

*kruxugh'* – Literally, “lead and think,” a hero.

*kr'* – “All individuals,” or “others.”

*kr'rrir* – Subjects, in the sense of people ruled.

*k'* – Particle denoting progress toward totality, unity, function, or enlargement.

*k'ghikre* – Literally, “move toward one lord,” a hostel for the destitute.

*k'kaatu* – 37 *kritur*, a tenth of a K'kree year. Literally, “a tenth of the big one.”

*k'k* – Male.

*K'kree* – Literally, “all the nobles,” which extends to “all the nobles and all their retainues,” or “The Herd.” Note the overlap with *k'k* and *reer* which gives the pun of “running males.”

*k'lat'rr* – Wholeness, fitness, contentment. See p. GT45 and *Theology* (pp. 69-70).

*la* – Female.

*lakrit* – Mother. Literally, “repeating female.”

*larirr* – Young or unmarried female.

*lat* – Family, possessions, or surroundings. Bear in mind that the K'kree are always surrounded by many of their kind. Whatever the view, a relative will usually be in the foreground.

*loor* – Drive or force.

*luu* – Wind or breath, moving air. Its origin is onomatopoeic.

*nak* – Vermin.

*naak* – Vermin which endanger those who would trample them.

*ni* – Particle indicating a person doing something.

*nixir* – 4.3 minutes. The average K'kree attention span. Etymologically, three particles, *ni*, *xi* and *r!* for “action, now, you!”

*pim* – Spiritually bad, but not actively threatening.

*pim!bigr* – 368 days, a K'kree year. Literally, “remorseful, regrettable badness.”

*ree* – Run.

*ring* – Forest, hedge, or, figuratively, lots of weapons.

*ring'r* – Platoon. Literally, “forest of legs or legs with polearms.”

*rr'xi* – Love, desire.

*rr'xighik'ker* – Frigate. Literally, “the lord who loves mystical steppes.” Why this should suggest “small warship” to the K'kree is a mystery.

*rrir* – Less, lesser.

*r'keer* – 43 minutes. Literally, “my own grass” and thus the average time it takes to eat a daily meal.

*r!* – Possessive particle indicating ownership by one individual, or even individuality itself.

*tra* – Bend or straighten.

*trakeek* – 25.8 seconds. Literally, “and the grass bent,” the time it takes for a blade to take in its captured dew and return from a wilted to an upright position.

*triitr'xr* – Large, active unit or fleet.

*tur* – Dawn.

*t't* – Verbalization of “order of magnitude.”

*u* – Particle indicating misuse.

*ur* – Big, as in expansive.

*uurr'* – Guts, intestines.

*x'lee* – Duty, inaction, contentment.

*xe* – “Alternate,” as in “one or other of two.”

*xee* – Optional; two or more choices.

*xeek'kir* – Merchant vessel. Literally, “chooser between mysterious soils.”

*xeng* – Two.

*xugh'* – Thought.

*xi* – A particle used for emphasis.

*'ak* – Possessive pronoun “of” or “s.” It is placed between the owner and the thing owned. Does not indicate individual possession, c.f. *r!*.

'ri – Leg, support, or tree.

'rik' – To use one's legs, walk, move, or carry.

'rr – Root word for smell, sense, or feel. It represents passive, not active use.

'rraarr – Smell, apprehend, realize, or learn.

'rraal!pim'xer' – Humans. Literally, "bad smelling two legs."

't – More. In mathematics, it indicates each order of magnitude after the second.

! – Particle indicating alarm. Similar to Anglic *uh*.

!! – Talk or exchange thoughts. It derives from a pause to consider matter, attended by popping berries against the roof of the mouth.

!!luukir – Gun. Literally, "converse with wind-carried death."

!bigr – Remorseful, regrettable.

!ku – Scribe, recorder, one who remembers. Onomatopoeic origin: the sound of chipping soapstone with a wooden chisel.

'xki'xkukt'xr – Major organizational unit.

!xeng'ri – Literally, "Ummm, two legs!" Strangers, those living outside the Two Thousand Worlds.

!xexixexi – Honor or reliability; predictable weakness.

## K'kree Names

K'kree names are long. They contain a personal element, a bit like a nickname or first name, and then an extensive description of the person's role, caste, and status, including the name of his immediate master and clan. The result is that the more senior the K'kree, the shorter his name. The top K'kree is just Charges Like Thunder, Steppelord of the Two Thousand Worlds; a sorry underling could be Fungus-Hoof, servant and flax-retter in the first degree to the Well-Born Eyes-Like-Coal, Chief Data-Scribe of the Noble *Rraxc!mbarr* clan. Anglic cannot render all K'kree names satisfactorily, but they always have extensive meanings for their possessors.

## Script

The K'kree use ideograms derived from ancient hieroglyphs. Originally, they represented words through visual puns, what linguists call the *rebus* system. This can be a difficult idea to grasp, but an Anglic equivalent would be to combine a railing and a rifle, to arrive at "bar-gun" and thus "bargain" or "trading opportunity." The word still retains its original pictorial meaning so, again in Anglic, a picture of an eye would mean both "eye" and "first person singular, subject."

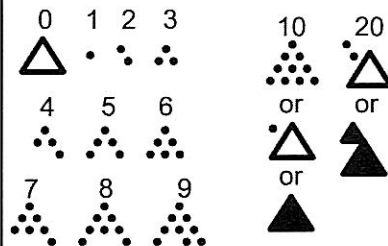
Quantities presented difficulties for this scheme. They could either be represented by an ideogram for the item with an adjacent numerical symbol, or by a combined pun. For instance, two cans could be shown as the number 2, "..." to the K'kree, next to a small picture of a food container, or by a picture of a black bird with a big red-and-yellow beak. The separate notation of quantity was obviously more useful, so is more common in business. The more elaborate pun system is used where pre-Empire of Man Terrans would use Roman numerals.

With time, the hieroglyphs have become increasingly stylized, so now it is, in practice, hard to establish what they were meant to depict; their meanings have to be learned by rote. As the standard script came to represent definite, agreed sounds, it mutated into its present form which, though phonetic on the syllable level, does not allow the representation of individual letters. The K'kree have encountered better scripts than their own, but won't change. They have adopted a version of capitalization, though – they write names inside a cartouche.

## Mathematical Notation

K'kree use base 10. Their notation uses four rows of staggered dots, each one less than its predecessor, for the numbers 1-10 at any single order of magnitude. The dots are arranged as the filling of an equilateral triangle. Enclosing the group in concentric boundaries indicates orders of magnitude, one per boundary. Zero is denoted by an empty triangle. Operators are indicated by the relative size of numbers and by their precise arrangement and orientation.

## K'KREE MATHEMATICAL NOTATION



### Operators

Addition:



Subtraction:



Multiplication:



Division:



## K'KREE WORD GENERATION TABLES

[Continued]

### Final Consonant 5

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	R	R	R	R	R	R
2	R	R	R	R	R	R
3	R	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR
4	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR
5	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR	RR
6	RR	RR	RR	RR	T	T

### Final Consonant 6

Red Die	White Die					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	T	T	T	T	T	T
2	T	T	T	T	T	T
3	T	T	T	X	X	X
4	X	X	X	X	X	X
5	X	X	X	X	X	X
6	XK	XK	XK	XK	XK	XK



## CAMPAIGNING WITH THE HERD

The K'kree present unusual challenges to roleplayers. Their psychology is alien and many of their attitudes are repellent. They do, however, offer some intriguing possibilities.

### GENDER ROLES

Sex segregation among the Herd is more complete than in any Human society. Finding things for female K'kree to do is likely to tax most GMs and players. The easiest solution is to treat them as dependents and force the males to protect, rescue, or mourn them, as appropriate, which seems a waste of half a species. With some thought and preparation, interesting games are possible. They rest heavily on harem politics and misunderstandings with aliens and are light on combat. A conspiracy by secretly psionic females to manipulate their relatives for their own benefit has promise.

### K'kree and the Martial Arts

**T**he K'kree have their own repertoire of grappling and striking techniques that *GURPS* lumps under the Judo, Karate, and other unarmed-combat skills. These are very different from the Human versions; bipeds and K'kree cannot train one another in martial-arts skills.

The K'kree can force their opponents onto their back legs, then use a front leg to sweep them away. The victim is then trampled by all four feet! This works tolerably against a quadruped and excellently on bipeds. Often a two-legged opponent will just crumple at first impact.

Note that the Breakfall maneuver does not default to Judo for K'kree practitioners.

#### Judo Art *p. C1132*

This is the ceremonial form of the close-combat skill. The K'kree version does teach the rudiments of locks, grapples, and throws, but combines them into a spectacular and graceful dance rather than into an effective fighting method. See pp. B51, MA28.

#### Karate *pp. B51, MA28*

The main K'kree attacks are the kick (usually 3d+1 plus skill bonuses – more than enough to take care of an unarmored Human, Aslan, or Vargr!) and the buffet – a backhanded, swinging punch with the upper arm, connecting with the thumb (for a total damage of swing-1 plus skill bonuses). The buffet is identical to the Roundhouse Punch, except that it defaults to Karate, not Boxing, for K'kree.

#### Karate Art *p. C1132*

Unlike real fighting, which emphasizes standing on the back legs and striking with the front set, K'kree Karate Art makes use of the high, forward center of gravity to enable fast spins about the grounded forefeet and powerful-looking kicks with the back legs.

*Continued on next page . . .*



### SETTINGS

Games featuring the Herd can take place within the Two Thousand Worlds, inside a relatively well-ordered state like the Imperium, the Solomani Confederation, or the Zhodani Consulate, in hostile territory, or in neutral space.

#### Home Turf

K'kree space is a daunting prospect both for GMs and players. Any non-K'kree are followed, harassed, spied upon, perhaps even attacked. Properly roleplayed K'kree do the oppressing, or if there are no foreigners about, just serve the boss. Visiting traders need to barter for cargoes as the K'kree do not use money much, or will have to use any hard currency sparingly to encourage cooperation. Rupophobes, demophobes, and agoraphobes (p. B35) certainly earn their character points.

The main difficulty in sustaining this kind of game is that the government can do exactly what it wants. It also has the full support of the people. If PCs get into trouble, they get punished. Visitors cannot expect much help. There is no underworld to turn to, and if the local rebels actually had a starship, they would have left on it long ago.

## Human Space

Humanity is the only major race the K'kree can stomach, and the only one that tolerates the K'kree. Luckily, there is a lot of fun to be had exploring Human-K'kree interactions. The two cultures disagree on virtually everything and especially on the matter of destiny. This is particularly entertaining with the Solomani, who also believe that the universe should belong to them. "K'kree among the Humans" works best if the tone is light, rather than intense. A K'kree mission observing Human techniques in Aslan-fighting, or an exchange program studying what to do with Vargr, works well.

The main problem is that the good jokes only really work once each.

## Hostile Territory

As no K'kree is allowed to enter the Hive Federation, and as no ship which misjumped there has ever left again, this really means "on maneuvers against the Vargr." The adventurers have to fight a whole pack of dogs, with nothing except their superior strength and bigger guns to help them. Some gaming groups enjoy firefights, and this approach guarantees them.

The drawback of this is that it is hard to arrive at a level of danger which makes the game interesting without making it undesirably deadly.

## Neutral Space

A game set elsewhere has much to recommend it. The PCs could be explorers or exiles, realistically as independent as a K'kree can get. If the GM likes that kind of thing, he can make up whole new states and races. The players can feel that their characters' actions actually count for something.

The difficulty is that there is often too much work for the GM to do, so the background becomes sketchy and the story turns into "another session, another robbery, another fire-fight and dash to 100 planetary diameters."

## A Suggested Compromise

GMs might want to consider setting a game in the Crucis Margin, a sector equidistant from the Imperium, the Hive Federation, and the Two Thousand Worlds, and also on the route between K'kree space and the Solomani Confederation. It is therefore a natural resource for informal diplomatic work and a possible flashpoint for interstellar war.

The sector contains client states of all the main powers as well as independent K'kree worlds, allowing for the Herd but without an enormous empire behind it. It also offers the possibility of a K'kree family descended from pariahs working *against* the Two Thousand Worlds. Adventures could run the whole gamut from warfare to diplomacy, espionage or trade, without straining credulity too far or requiring too much work from the GM.

## K'kree and the Martial Arts

[Continued]

### Polearm (K'kree) (P/H)

This variant style of polearm combat requires a lot of space, and includes cut and thrust techniques. Warriors practice changing grips rapidly for close-in fighting and parrying with the shaft. A successful skill roll enables a K'kree practitioner to change from long to short grip or vice versa in no time. Parry is 2/3 skill. K'kree fighting with long rifle and bayonet use this skill with a -1 modifier, or -2 if changing grip. The damage for a polearm is derived from upper-arm strength. Only K'kree or similarly built races may learn this variant of Polearm.

### Polearm Art (P/A) p. C132

This is more common than the combat skill, and represents the use of the weapon in demonstrations, rituals, and parades. As the polearm is decorated with streamers and pennons, it reminds some Solomani of Bavarian flag twirling or Chinese opera. Although Polearm Art defaults to Polearm (K'kree) at -3, the artistic version does not include the fast changing of grips or the improved parry at 2/3 skill.



## Adventures

**T**he Herd can serve in all the usual roles in a game, but there are points to bear in mind.

### Villains

To the rest of charted space, the K'kree are violent, implacable bigots. Most interaction with them will be hostile if not actually violent. Intelligence agencies or corporations might hire the party to work for them within the Herd's space. Alternatively, they could be on the defensive, facing K'kree troops or diplomats. A *ring'r* would present a huge challenge for most adventuring parties. In a corporate skullduggery game, the Herd has things other people want, reason enough for the business community to break ranks and act against long-term political interests.

In either case it is worth remembering that, while most K'kree are rather dim, they come in large enough groups to guarantee that a few will be quite bright. Simplistic plans won't work. Add the fact that it is difficult to sneak up on them – even if they don't smell danger, there is always one looking in every direction – and they present a real challenge.

### Allies

It takes a special kind of person to make friends with the K'kree! Anyone who manages it (an adventure in itself) will find that he has acquired loyal companions who will happily die for him. Given the Herd's psychology, it is likely that only pariahs will take up with an outsider, so his new patron will have to provide suitable accommodation and food. He will also need to equip them. As pariahs, they will not have access to K'kree-made equipment. Any attempt to acquire some will attract the Herd's attention.

### Patrons

Both subject aliens and foreign nationals could become a *Krurruna*'s clients. The work would be varied, unpleasant, and dangerous, usually in hostile environments or enclosed habitats. Outsiders should be cautious; there is an obvious security gain in arranging for foreign mercenaries not to survive long enough to tell anyone what they did. Prudent travelers should take care to withhold one vital thing from their employer, so that he has to let them live. They should also leave word of where they went, so that their comrades will know what killed them.

## CREATING K'KREE

K'kree can be created from either the basic rules or the templates in *GURPS Traveller*. K'kree player characters can be used in some unusual campaign styles:

### One Player, One Family

Allow each player to generate an entire K'kree family of at least six individuals, and run them as a collective. Handle the point cost by treating the boss as the main character and the others as his ally group. This is enormously time-consuming, and vulnerable to abuse. A player might be tempted to treat the patriarch as his only character and regard the other family members as expendable. GMs should apply the rules on grief and trauma as strictly as possible in these circumstances. Done correctly, this option does present an idea of how awesome the K'kree can be. They all support each other and they force the other races to accommodate their uniquely large social groups.



### One Group, One Family

This approach, admittedly, requires gamers who really enjoy immersing themselves in the background. In it, the PCs are different members of the same family. For this to work, the players must be happy with hierarchy and be prepared to be given orders by their *Krurruna*. Similarly the boss must be ready to listen to their opinion about whether an action within a PC's sphere of ability is feasible or even advisable.

Playing members of a status-ridden group can be a lot of fun if done well. This suggested method of running K'kree will retain a flavor of one family per player – there will still be a few dependents who need protecting or rescuing. Players can take a wife as a dependent at -36 points, but must actually put in the effort to create a plausible character. Incidentally, if a player declares that his wife is a secret psionist, GMs should remember that it's a secret, hence not known to the husband!



If the GM is running a family-members campaign, he could allow the players to develop more than one character each and have them run the member most appropriate to the adventure. In this case, some players are likely to sulk about not being able to earn enough points to turn their favorite characters into super-powered, low-status K'kree. If this is likely, the GM can either decide that this isn't the approach for his players, or perhaps allow players to spread a couple of points among other family members, to reflect the race's emphasis on community. It can be rationalized inside the game by claiming that the rest of the family learns something through listening to their relatives talking about their experiences.

### *Including a Patriarch*

Whichever route the GM chooses, an important decision is whether a patriarch is present in the PC group or not. Obviously, this depends on the group's composition and mission. If it is a mercantile or diplomatic group acting autonomously, then it must include someone with the authority to make big decisions. If the players are running members of the same family, then they can be given their orders offstage, but as matters of status and hierarchy are so central in K'kree society, their ultimate boss would include one officer.

## **K'KREE RACIAL TEMPLATE** **10 POINTS MALE/-25 POINTS FEMALE**

Both of the K'kree-specific campaigns will result in characters of varying point totals. The "one player, one family" option will also result in some characters worth more than 200 points. As long as the players can live with this, it really doesn't matter. If the group wants to start with equal points and status, then, at a pinch, the PCs could be members of a military or ship unit who have lost their families and are being forced to depend on one another. To be properly K'kree, they would have to sort out their order, which would involve status fights and other unusual roleplaying opportunities.

Manageable K'kree can be created on 100 points, with the usual 40 points in disadvantages and 5 in quirks. Special Forces or high-status K'kree will need to be developed from at least 200 points.

Some K'kree have more than the allowable 40 points in disadvantages just by having families. GMs can approach this in two ways – by waiving the 40-point limit (as in *GURPS Cyberpunk*), or by assuming that a more interesting PC is its own reward.

### *Attributes*

ST +2/+20 [62 points]; IQ -2 [-15 points].

*Note:* K'kree have split strength, normally of 12/30. The lower number is for their torso area; arm damage and psi Fatigue will be based upon it. The higher number represents main body ST; kicking damage, encumbrance, and travel Fatigue will be based upon it. Additional ST is purchased normally.

### *Advantages*

Acute Hearing +2 [4 points]; Acute Taste and Smell +6 [12 points]; Enhanced Move +1 [10 points]; Extra Hit Points +6 [30 points]; Extra Legs [5 points]; Empathy (based on sense of smell; only works on other K'kree, -30% limitation) [10 points]; and Temperature Tolerance +2 [2 points].

### *Disadvantages*

Fanaticism [-15 points]; Gregarious [-10 points]; Vulnerability to Grief [-5 points]; Hidebound [-5 points]; Inconvenient Size [-10 points]; Increased Life Support (Eats four times as much food as Humans) [-20 points]; Intolerance (All non-K'kree) [-10 points]; Phobia (Severe claustrophobia) [-30 points]; and Reduced Dodge -3 [-5 points].



## ***Adventure Seed:*** ***Into the Empire***

**T**he adventurers are approached by a descendent of Human exiles from New Beginning, a system in *Kaa G'kul* sector. The K'kree annexed this world in his grandparents' time. His grandmother has just died, leaving him the family business, a battered old subsidized freighter. Now, local competitors have challenged the will, and he needs to prove that his grandmother had clear title to the ship. He hopes that such evidence is available on New Beginning. He needs a party to go there and retrieve either some of his relatives or unassailable documentation.

## Commonly Available Tech Levels

The Two Thousand Worlds claims a cutting-edge technological level of 12, but this is an extreme case, true only where the central government is prepared to expend hard currency on imports. Average K'kree technology is much lower, about TL8-9, with reliable gravitics. The Overlords present TL10 as typical for their military, but this is an exaggeration, with high-end TL9 being closer to the truth.

The K'kree have an uncomfortable relationship with machines. Their view is that their simple idyll was interrupted by a continuous offensive from their enemies and they developed technology to deal with it. They are aware that their science has thrown up questions which their theology cannot answer, and they blame the sciences. Another problem with material progress is the way it always seems to lead to being enclosed.

The K'kree are nominally as high-tech as the Imperium, but in reality are far more primitive. They dislike devices and try not to use them. Also, their own discoveries flowed from political necessity, not scientific curiosity, so they invented the reactionless thruster, artificial gravity and contragrav, and the jump drive, but never discovered the propeller or airfoil (although they have observed them in use by other cultures). Their contempt for the natural world limits their grasp of ecology; they know their worlds will wear out through overuse, but rather than stop the process, they simply resent the fact.

The Great Herd's poor trading record and conservatism have kept its science somewhat primitive by major race standards, an observation that leads to complacency about the K'kree. While this bias is justified, it is also true that another "holy war" would focus the K'kree on overcoming some of their aversion to technology. It might be difficult for them to win such a war – unlike the First War, this one would involve more than two worlds – but with the resources of their subject worlds, they could make life interesting and uncomfortable for the target of their outrage.

*Female K'kree add:* Combat Paralysis [-15 points]; Duty (Learn only child-rearing and social skills) [-10 points]; and Social Stigma (Valuable property) [-10 points]. The duty really consists of a cultural taboo, which is in effect all the time but is rarely life-threatening.

K'kree take a -2 to Free Fall skill, in addition to requiring an Unusual Background to learn it at all. This is a 0-point racial attribute. Note that the -30 points for the K'kree claustrophobia accounts for the many extra measures that they must take to circumvent their fear. The increased space they must design into starships, etc., does not also give them additional levels of Increased Life Support.

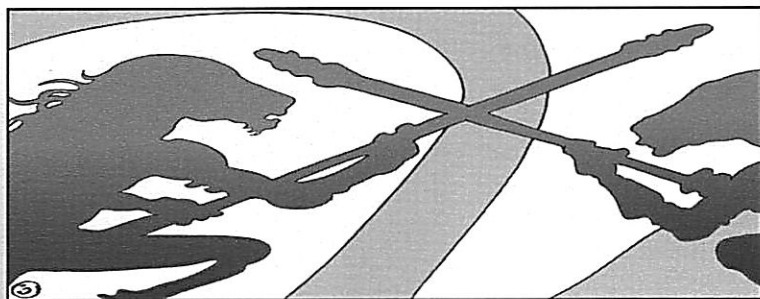
The costs of a K'kree's family as an Ally Group, Patron, or the like tends to cancel out with the costs of the attached Duty, Dependents, or such. Thus, the social cost of being a normal K'kree in K'kree society is roughly zero, regardless of position. The disadvantages *do* count against the individual's limit of -40 points.

## STATUS, STIGMA, AND RANK

The K'kree have a far more acute concept of class discrimination than *GURPS* models. The simple -4 to +8 spread of Status is all very well for major divisions, but within these every K'kree also has an occupational rank, based on time in post and ability (see social rank, below). Status and Military Rank are identical, *provided* the individuals involved are in the military. Ignore the rules on p. B22. There is no cost of living entry on the table, as K'kree society automatically provides the necessary goods and services.

### K'kree Status Table

Status	Caste	Rating
+8	Noble	Steppelord of the Two Thousand Worlds
+7	Noble	Overlords of lords, marshalls, fleet admirals
+6	Noble	Lords of steppelords, generals, squadron commanders
+5	Noble	Steppelords, ship captains, staff officers
+4	Well born	Company commanders, military ship's department heads, interstellar merchants
+3	Well born	Platoon commanders, military ship's officers, planetwide merchants or industrialists
+2	Well born	Junior officers (any service), regionally significant manufacturers
+1	Well born	Specialists (includes flight crew), warrant officers, civilian starship officers, senior managers
+1	Servant	Junior traders, senior sergeants, doctors, chief petty officers
0	Servant	Technicians, creative artists, sergeants, petty officers
-1	Servant	Skilled factory workers, entertainers, junior NCOs
-2	Servant	Farm workers, semi-skilled laborers, senior privates or spacehands
-3	Servant	Unskilled laborers, private warriors, spacehands
-4	Subject	Aliens



*Bachelors* must take the -2 stigma of being *unmarried*. This is worth -10 points. Males with only one wife must take the -1 stigma of *monogamous*, worth -5 points. These count toward the allowable 40 points of disadvantages.

*Starting Wealth:* Money is alien to the K'kree. The *Krurruna* sees to his followers' needs personally. Players should decide what they would like and make an appeal to their characters' boss. If the patriarch is also a PC, he must then ask his *Krurruna*, played by the GM.

## ADVANTAGES

### High Technology

The base K'kree TL is 9, one lower than the Imperial standard. Important K'kree families and reputable military units have TL10 capabilities. The most senior K'kree, such as the Steppelord of the Two Thousand Worlds' personal guard, have TL11 equipment. A K'kree-only campaign could be established at a base TL9, with most other races or K'kree from important families needing 1-3 levels of High Technology. Or the *Traveller* standard TL10 could be maintained, with most K'kree taking one level of the Primitive disadvantage.

### Strong Will (Limitation)

K'kree generally take any Strong Will with the -50% limitation that it cannot counteract the effects of claustrophobia or grief, bringing the cost to 2 points per level. Levels of Strong Will that improve rolls against claustrophobia or grief must be purchased as the Crazy advantage.

### Social Rank

*1 point per level*

This represents the fine grading of K'kree occupational status. Higher rank commands respect and obedience from lower, but only between K'kree of the same Status band. There is no upper limit.

### Unusual Background (Space Training) 10 points

K'kree spacers must have this background to learn the skills Free Fall and Vacc Suit.

### Unusual Background (Psionic Training [male]) 15 points

Psi training is offered by some religious and trading families. Possessing these skills does not provide a route out of the birth caste. The cost includes a -1 Social Stigma (Trained psionic).

### Unusual Background (Psionic Training [female]) 5 points

This is cheaper than the cost for males because it incorporates the Secret (Female psionist).

## Wealth

For K'kree characters, wealth does not actually provide any extra money. Rather, it indicates that a family is prosperous and provided for properly. The precise meaning of this is up to the GM and players, but wealthy families will have imported goods, fabrics with built-in circuitry, better-equipped guards, and more interesting food. Any status bonus for wealth accrues only to the patriarch and his wives.

## NEW ADVANTAGE

### Crazy

*10 for the first point,  
5 points thereafter*

This advantage improves the Will roll to avoid claustrophobia or the effects of grief. It's essentially Strong Will with the limitation that it only works against claustrophobia or grief, with Unusual Background costs added to each level.

## DISADVANTAGES

### Addiction

In a sense, all K'kree are addicted to love, but this is dealt with in the racial template. They can also become habitually dependent on environmental-enrichment technology, alcohol, barbiturates, opiates, steroids, soporifics, or stimulants, each -10 points (\$20-100 a day), commonly available. As they vent methane through their mouths when talking, K'kree do not usually smoke.

### Odious Personal Habit (Uppity)

*-1/-5/-10/-15 points*

The character cannot keep to his place and insists on talking back to his superiors. The levels reflect the magnitude of the problem:

- 1 Is just being sarcastic and mildly annoying.
- 5 Shows disrespect to senior members of one's caste.
- 10 Includes all the above and adds disrespect to the next caste up.
- 15 A false belief in egalitarianism.

### Poverty

A poor K'kree family has few members, even fewer followers, bad food, shoddy equipment, and only a leaky dome to call home.





## Primitive

See *High Technology*, on p. 103. The Two Thousand Worlds are usually at TL9, so most K'kree will have one level of this disadvantage in a *Traveller* campaign. Within the Herd, some poor families will have TL8 equipment and training, worth an additional -5 points. For K'kree, Primitive does not count against the -40 points allowed for disadvantages, since it's practically part of their racial template.

## Reputation (Cuckold) -10 points

The character is known to be unable to keep his harem in line.

## Secret (Adulterer) -20 or -30 points

The character could be an unfaithful wife, an uppity subordinate, or an inconsiderate boss. The K'kree expel adulterers from their herds, so this secret is potentially lethal. Thus it is worth -20 points if each adulterer is a PC, and -30 if only one is.



## NEW DISADVANTAGES

### Disorientation -5 points

K'kree are so claustrophobic that they can only travel in an artificial environment tailored to remind them of Kirur. It often comes as a shock to them to discover that, on leaving the vehicle, their new surroundings do not resemble the homeworld very closely. Characters with this disadvantage are so disoriented that they come out of any environmentally enriched transport in a stunned state, and remain so until they make a Will roll.

## Vulnerability to Grief -5 points

When a K'kree dies, the rest of the family is plunged into deep sorrow. This is especially evident if a K'kree dies in combat. When this happens, all family members must make an immediate Fright Check. This can be delayed if the characters are wearing *combat auto-injectors* (see p. 110).

K'kree also become grief-stricken and pine to death if left alone for a prolonged time. This is simulated by making a Fright Check every day, with a cumulative -1 to the K'kree's Will score. If the K'kree is left unattended long enough to become catatonic, but is saved before dying of dehydration, he will remain too damaged to resume his place in society. Instead, he will be put on a reservation with other, similar unfortunates.

## Patriarchal Responsibility -5 points

The Patriarch feels strongly responsible for his people. Every time any die through a mischance brought about by obeying his orders, the patriarch suffers a cumulative -1 to all skill rolls for the remainder of the adventure.

This modifier represents a long-term failure of self-confidence, and the penalty can normally only be removed after a period of counseling, soul-searching, and religious purification. If the GM is running a campaign, this penalty will remain until proper corrective action is *roleplayed* – a different kind of adventure!

GMs should be sensible about this, and set the penance the patriarch has to perform against the behavior of the patriarch's controller. Should the cumulative modifier exceed the PC's Will, then the Patriarch has, alas, become irredeemably traumatized, and must retire (as per *Vulnerability to Grief*, above).

Military leaders, must, of course, sacrifice troops – they still feel pain at this,

but do not suffer ill effects unless the losses are disproportionate, or caused by their own error.

## Reduced Dodge -5 points

The K'kree are large and awkwardly shaped; they have the same silhouette as a big chair. They find it especially difficult to go prone. This disadvantage imposes a -3 modifier on their Dodge score, and cannot be bought off. It's modeled on the first level of *Lame*, with the -70% limitation "only applies to Dodge score."

## SKILLS

### Astrogation

*see pp. B59, S34*

This skill is not required for routine starship operation. The K'kree use navigation computers extensively, especially on ships which never leave their space. This makes misjumps particularly hazardous, so important families prefer to take along a living astrogator.

### Lance

*see p. B51*

Use this skill whenever any shafted weapon is held firmly and then inserted into an opponent by a K'kree running straight for him. This includes bayonets on rifles. Damage is based on lower body strength.

### Languages

*see p. B54*

K'kree is M/VH for all the other races. The various Aslan and Vargr languages are M/VH for the K'kree (due to the psychological difficulties of speaking a carnivore tongue), while the Human languages and Oynprith (the Droyne tongue) are M/H.

### Musical Instruments

*see p. B47*

Percussion, woodwinds, and plucked string instruments are the most common among the K'kree.

### Poetry

*see p. B47*

Players must specify written poetry, which is M/H, with a skill bonus of +1 for DX of 11, and +2 for DX 12 or above, or spoken poetry, which is M/A.

### Professional Skills

*see pp. B58, CI153*

Carpenter, Embroiderer, Masseur (P/A), Metalsmith, Perfumer (M/A), and Weaver all have an esteemed place in K'kree culture.

### Spear

*see p. B52*

The K'kree have used these as a cheap substitute for polearms, but they don't look quite nasty enough to be really popular.

## NEW SKILLS

### Fire Breathing

*P/E, based on HT*

All K'kree can ignite the methane in their second stomach. This skill represents the training necessary to be able to do so artistically, and especially to vary the gas mix with air from the lungs. Proficient fire breathers can squirt flames out of their nostrils, even alternate between them. This skill works well with Fire Eating (p. CI129). In a game, the player should describe the effect he is going for and the GM should



set an appropriate penalty (see *Juggling* on p. CI131 for ideas). A critical failure represents an unpleasant internal injury. GMs should note that this methane jet is not hot enough to act as a breath weapon.

### Pilot (Remote)

*P/A*

The K'kree use drone craft extensively. This skill enables an operator to control one effectively in combat. A +1 bonus is available for each of the following which applies – IQ of 11, IQ of 12, Danger Sense advantage (p. B20), Intuition advantage (p. B20), Tactics skill at 10 or above, Tactics skill at 20 or above. If all these apply, then the pilot has a +6 bonus.

## K'KREE PSIONICS

K'kree can learn the skills listed on p. GT84. Possessing these abilities is a mild stigma for males, and a major Secret for females. These inherent disadvantages do not count as pside effects and drawbacks (see p. B174). A suggested drawback is the development of an emotional rapport with the subject of telepathic contact on a failed Will roll. Separation from this individual is treated as a bout of grief.

## MARTIAL ARTS STYLES

K'kree separate their pretty ceremonial art from their battlefield method, which is downright brutal.

### Hooves of Faith

**10 points**

This style is part of religious instruction for male K'kree. It uses long-form kata in which participants take the roles of ancestral heroes and their doomed opponents. Weapons are decorated with streaming ribbons and bells. Performances can last for several *r'keer*.

Younger students must begin by playing the victim roles, and stand in for the victors as they rise in seniority. If an actual status fight takes place within a conservative herd, it will be under this art's rules.

*Primary Skills:* Judo Art, Karate Art, Polearm Art, Theology, History.

*Secondary Skills:* Acrobatics, Dancing, Jumping, Musical Instrument (percussion, woodwind instruments), Singing, Tournament Law.

*Optional Skills:* Fight Choreography (p. C1129), History (Theater), Performance, Professional Skill (Set maker, Costume maker).

*Maneuvers:* Back Kick, Jump Kick, Kicking, Spin Kick, Spinning Punch.



## Supreme Destiny 15 points

This is a typical body of skills passed down among professional fighters. It does not form part of standard K'kree military training, but serious bodyguards and career soldiers study it. K'kree who specialize in fighting other races might have other abilities. Really scary K'kree can take up to three levels of Full Coordination at 50 points each.

*Primary Skills:* Judo, Karate, Polearm (K'kree) [2 points].

*Secondary Skills:* Body Language (specific race), Intimidation, First Aid, Running.

*Optional Skills:* History, Tactics, Strategy.

*Maneuvers:* Arm Lock, Axe Kick, Back Kick, Feint (Karate or Polearm), Hit Location (Karate or Polearm), Kicking [2 points], Lunge (Polearm), Roundhouse Punch, Stamp Kick, Sweep Kick.

### Typical Combinations:

Grapple, Sweep Kick, Axe Kick. (6 points)

Grapple, Kick, Kick (both forelegs). (6 points)

Polearm Parry, Kick. (4 points)

Polearm Lunge, Sweep Kick, Stamp Kick. (6 points)

Stamp Kick, Stamp Kick, Stamp Kick. (6 points)

### Most unpleasant kata:

First turn: Grapple, Sweep Kick, Axe Kick.

Second turn: Stamp Kick, Stamp Kick, Stamp Kick.

## Greater Glory 10 points

This martial art developed from the inadequacy of a long rifle for close-in fighting. It is much simpler than the others and is intended to emphasize body mass, speed, and strength.

*Primary Skills:* Karate, Jumping, Acrobatics, Running.

*Secondary Skills:* Judo, Polearm (K'kree), Intimidate.

*Optional Skills:* None.

*Maneuvers:* Axe Kick, Back Kick, Jump Kick, Kicking, Knee Strike, Stamp Kick.

The typical technique is to charge an opponent, hoping for a knockdown. Prolonged stamping follows. An opponent who retains his footing is kicked or kneed repeatedly. The Jump Kick is risky, but if it succeeds, the target and any friends of his who happen to be looking should make an immediate Fright Check. They have just seen half a ton of hostile alien hurl himself through the air at them. If the K'kree makes an Intimidation skill roll, the margin of success acts as a Fright Check modifier.

## CAREER TEMPLATES

### Using Standard Templates

The *GURPS Traveller* templates are not always appropriate for the K'kree, who tend to be more focused than their alien counterparts. Some of the occupations described do not exist in the Two Thousand Worlds. The Army Aviation, Attorney, Bounty Hunter, Corsair, Law Enforcer, Navy Aviation, Rogue, and Undercover Agent are not open to K'kree. K'kree Belters are extraordinarily rare; a manager of robot or slave labor is far more likely.

Special considerations apply even when the templates are otherwise usable. Like the original game, *GURPS Traveller* assumes that the character has retired from the job described and taken up a life of independent traveling and adventure. *K'kree simply do not do this.* Players should ignore any references to "ex-members" of services. They are still employed, although they might be working for a different family. They also do not possess "honor ranks."

There are other adjustments: AFV pilots must take the Crazy advantage (p. 103), and are advised to buy it at a high level. K'kree who work in space need both the Crazy and Unusual Background (Space Training) advantages on p. 103. Merchants should be understood to be working across the border; otherwise they will just be ordered about by their clan boss – not a very interesting game.

The Claim on Hospitality in their template represents tolerant aliens who give the K'kree access to their paddocks.



## Basic K'kree Worker

25 points

K'kree do little beyond work faithfully for their *Krurruna*, then relax with the family. Use this template to produce the junior family members.

**Attributes:** ST 12/30 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 8 [0], HT 10 [0]

**Advantages:** Social Rank 5 [5]

**Disadvantages:** Status -1 [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Divide 16 points between two complementary *marketable* skills. At least one of them must be at level 12 or above. Examples include Physician and Diagnosis (both M/H); Professional Skill (Perfumer) (M/A) and Appreciate Beauty (Perfumes) (M/VH); Polearm (K'kree) (P/H) and Polearm Art (P/A); Leader (M/A) and Tactics (M/H); Agronomy and either Electronics Operation (Robots) or Intimidation (all M/A); Singing (P/E) and Poetry (M/A).

**Secondary Skills:** 1 point in each of Gun (Needler or Rifle), Gun (Light Automatic), and Brawling, all (P/E). If any of these skills have been taken as Primary, then these points should be spent on Intimidate (M/A), Survival (up to two environments, M/A), and Tactics (M/H).

**Optional Skills:** Spend 6 points. First, buy any prerequisites for the primary skills, then spend on hobbies such as Astronomy (M/H), Hiking (P/A), Polearm Art (P/A), Running (P/H), and Theology (M/E).

**Customization Notes:** Any increase in attributes, especially IQ, would help. If this character is being developed as a full-blown PC, then hobbies that encourage his friendship with members of other families would make him more interesting.

## Examiner

95 points

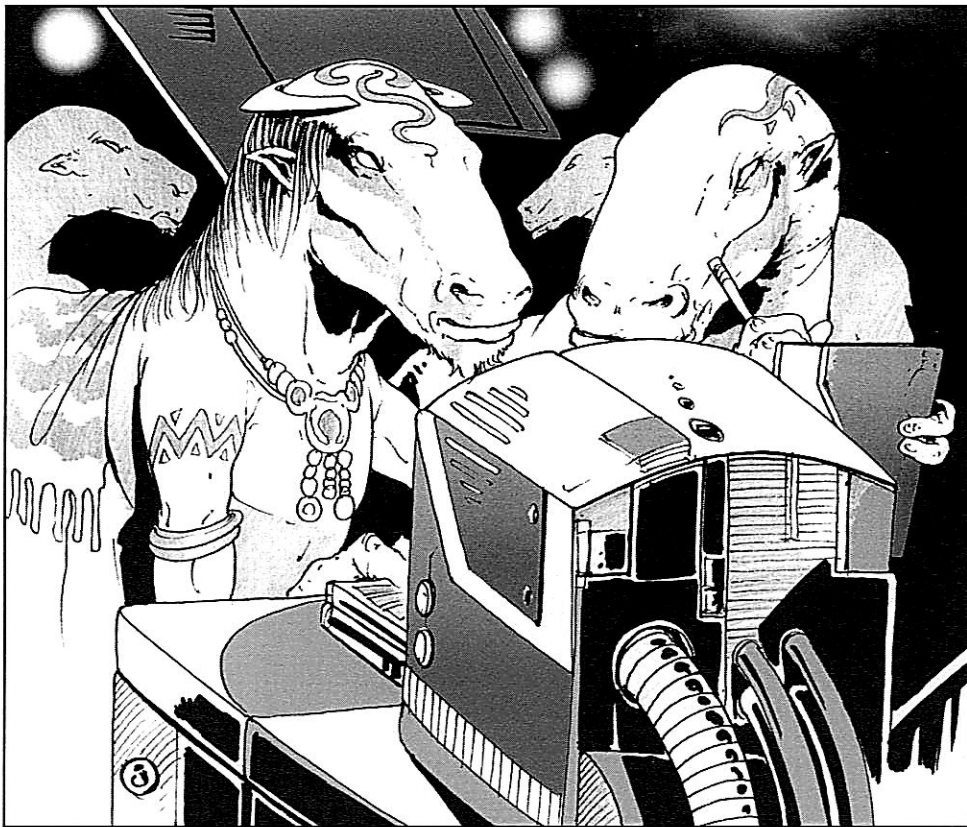
This is an important servant of an Overlord, perhaps even of the Ghik'k'kreek T't'kakh Xeng Kirr Tkexirr himself. The Examiner's job is to visit the worlds of his master's domain, looking into and reporting on any unusual events. His brief includes the economic, civic, and spiritual health of the Herd, and the grateful submission of the subject races. He can recommend that audits of patriarchs take place, and has special legal powers to ease his movement. He can also hold trials of non-noble families. The Patriarch template and this one should be bought together. The Great King's Eye from Achaemenid Persia is a partial Terran analog.

**Attributes:** ST 12/30 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 13 [45], HT 10 [0]

**Advantages:** Status + 5 (with Wealthy from Patriarch template, effective status is +6) [25], Claim to Hospitality (Can require passage on any civilian vessel, and any one of his own herd's military vessels) [10], Legal Immunity [5], and Legal Powers (Can recommend that audits take place, can try junior patriarchs and their followers, and can insist that confidential information be provided) [10].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -30 points from Callous [-6], Curious [-5/-10/-15], Gluttony [-5], Intolerance (*Krurruna* of lower rank than his own boss) [-10], Jealousy [-10], Lecherousness [-15], Unfit [-5], and Workaholic [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Accounting (M/H) IQ [4]-13, Administration (M/A) IQ [2]-13, Intelligence Analysis (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-14, Intimidation (M/A) IQ [2]-13, Leadership IQ+1 [4]-14, and Savoir-Faire (M/E) IQ+2 [free from Status]-15.



**Secondary Skills:** Divide 8 points between Area Knowledge (Local Star Systems, Two Thousand Worlds) (M/E), Politics (M/A), and Xenology (by race).

**Optional Skills:** Divide 4 points between any Combat skills, any Combat Art skills, History, Poetry, and Theology.

**Customization Notes:** Up to 14 points could be spent on Social Rank. Note that he will require at least two wives. The main interest in this character is in dumping him and his family in a dangerous environment and seeing if he can cope, so Alertness, Common Sense, and Versatile would all help. He will still need to rely on his family, which – accordingly – should be designed with care.

## Junior, Well-Born Patriarch 12 points

This template *adds on* to any of the male character templates in this book or *GURPS Traveller*. This character can be built into a major *Krurruna* by bumping up his Status, the frequency of his Patron's appearance, the size of his Ally Group, and his Wealth.

**Advantages:** Ally Group (Male family members: 2 bodyguards, two technicians, one servant; present all the time) [30], Patron (Senior patriarch, a powerful individual who appears rarely) [8], Wealth (Wealthy) [20].

**Disadvantages:** Dependents (Wives) [-36], Duty (To patron, fairly often) [-5], Patriarchal Responsibility [-5].



## Lesser Wife 50 points

This is the industrious, diligent, and loyal spouse of a Lord's follower.

**Attributes:** ST 12/30 [0] DX 11 [10], IQ 8 [0], HT 11 [10]

**Advantages:** A total of 20 points in Appearance (Attractive) [5], Charisma [5/level], Jack-of-All-Trades [10/level], Pitiable [5].

**Disadvantages:** A total of -20 points in Compulsive Carousing [-5/-10], Delusion (I will get a better husband) [-5/-10/-15], Jealousy [-10], Odious Personal Habit (Uppity) [-1/-5/-10/-15], Pyromania [-5], and Secret (Adulteress) [-20].

**Primary Skills:** A total of 18 points in Cooking (M/E), First Aid (M/E), Professional Skill (Childcare) (M/A), and Savoir-Faire (Servant) (M/E).

**Secondary Skills:** A total of 8 points in Diagnosis (M/H), Politics (M/A), Professional Skill: Massage (P/A), and Sex Appeal (M/A).

**Customization Notes:** Add 4 points in Dancing (P/A), Fast-Talk (M/A), Hiking (P/A), Running (P/H), and Singing (P/E).

## Patriarch's Wife 85 points

This is a patriarch's favorite wife. She is probably more clever and attractive than the others, but still works hard at keeping her husband's interest. Like all K'kree women, she can become well informed simply by being present when the males do things.

**Attributes:** ST 12/30 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 12 [30], HT 11 [10]

**Advantages:** Status +1 [5], plus 30 points chosen from Appearance [5/15/25], Charisma [5/level], Jack-of-All-Trades [10/level], Pitiable [5 points], and Sanctity [5 points].

**Disadvantages:** Choice of Jealous [-10] and Intolerant (Other women's children) [-5], or Lecherousness [-15]. Choice of Compulsive Carousing [-5] or Intolerant (Lower-status women) [-5].

**Primary Skills:** Professional Skill: Childcare (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13, Sex Appeal (M/A) HT+3 [8]-14.

**Secondary Skills:** Cooking (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-13, Fast-Talk (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13, Intimidate (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-13, and Savoir-Faire (Servant) (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-13.

**Customization Notes:** Add 6 points as desired in Area Knowledge (2,000 Worlds, homeworld) (M/E), any Hobby (varies, see p. B54, p. C1145), Hiking (P/A), History (M/H), Politics (M/A), Running (P/H), and Theology (M/H).

## Templar 135 points

This is a hard-line veteran soldier from a religious family. He is only really suitable for a high powered game. He could be a politically ambitious frontier patriarch, his bodyguard, or a member of a religiously motivated military herd. As presented, he is one of the first two. If he is a serving soldier, his cost rises by 120 points as he has 49 equally hard friends with him all the time! His constant training has given him superb physical condition and paying attention during sermons has made him a little less dim. He has studied both the Greater Glory and Hooves of Faith styles, but has done little else with his life.

**Attributes:** ST 15/33 [30], DX 13 [30], IQ 9 [10], HT 13 [30]

**Advantages:** A total of 20 points in Collected [5], Combat Reflexes [15], Composed [5], Fit [5], G-Experience [10], and Toughness [10]. If *Space Trained*, substitute Crazy+1 [10] and Unusual Background (Space Training) [10]

**Disadvantages:** Extra Hazardous Duty (does not count against usual -40-point limit) [-20] plus either two from Bloodlust, Bully, Gullible, and Overconfidence [all -10], or Jealousy (Males with more wives) [-5] and Lecherousness [-15].

**Primary Skills:** Acrobatics (P/H) DX [4]-13; Gun (Rifle or Needler) (P/E) DX+1 [2]-14; Gun (Light Automatic) (P/E) DX+1 [2]-14; Gunner (Grenade Launcher) (P/A) DX [2]-13; Jumping (P/E) DX+1 [2]-14; Karate (P/H) DX+1 [8]-14; Running (P/H) HT-1 [2]-12; Savoir-Faire (Military) (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-10. If *Space Trained*, the following replace the Gun and Gunner skills: Beam Weapon



(Laser) (P/E) DX+1 [2]-14; Free Fall (P/A, with -2 Racial Modifier) DX-2 [2]-11; Vacc Suit (M/A) IQ [2]-9.

**Secondary Skills:** History (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-8; Intimidate (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-8; Judo (P/H) DX-2 [1]-11; Judo Art (P/H) DX-2 [1]-11; Karate Art (P/H) DX-1 [2]-12; Polearm (K'kree) (P/H) DX-1 [2]-12; Polearm Art (P/A) DX-1 [1]-12; Survival (up to four environments) (M/A) [4]; Theology (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-8.

**Optional Skills:** 4 points between Dancing (P/A), Musical Instrument (Percussion or woodwind) (M/H), Singing (M/E), and Tournament Law (M/E).

**Martial Arts Styles:** Greater Glory and Hooves of Faith [3]. *Note:* These styles cost 10 points apiece, but the majority of the points spent are tallied against the appropriate skills and maneuvers, for consistency. The 3 points shown above represent points wasted in learning two styles; 1 point each has been lost in the Back Kick, Jump Kick, and Kicking maneuvers.

**Martial Arts Maneuvers:** Axe Kick-13, Back Kick-13, Jump Kick-13, Kicking-14, Knee Strike-16, Spin Kick-14, Spinning Punch-14, Stamp Kick-15 [1 point each].

**Customization Notes:** A level or two more of IQ wouldn't hurt. Up to 15 points of Social Rank could be added. If the character's story calls for combat experience on different worlds, then more points should go into Survival. A hobby like Flower Arranging and a jealous, grasping wife would provide a nice counterpoint.

## Zealot

95 points

This is an active member of a religious family. He takes an interest in current events and agitates for a hard line. In addition to public speaking, he is a devoted, if indifferent practitioner of the Hooves of Faith style.

**Attributes:** ST 12/30 [0], DX 12 [20], IQ 11 [30], HT 12 [20]

**Advantages:** Charisma +2 [10], Voice [10]

**Disadvantages:** Intolerance (All but hard-line militants) [-10], and a total of -20 points from Bloodlust [-10]; Bully [-10]; Delusion (The gods meant *whatever has just happened* this way) [-5/-10/-15]; Gullible [-10]; and Odious Personal Habit (Uppity) [-1, -5, -10, -15].

**Primary Skills:** Bard (M/A) IQ+5 [4]\*-16; History (M/H) IQ [4]-11; Judo Art (P/H) DX-2 [1]-10; Karate Art (P/H) DX-2 [1]-10; Polearm Art (P/A) DX-1 [1]-11; Teaching (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-13; and Theology (M/H) IQ [4]-11.

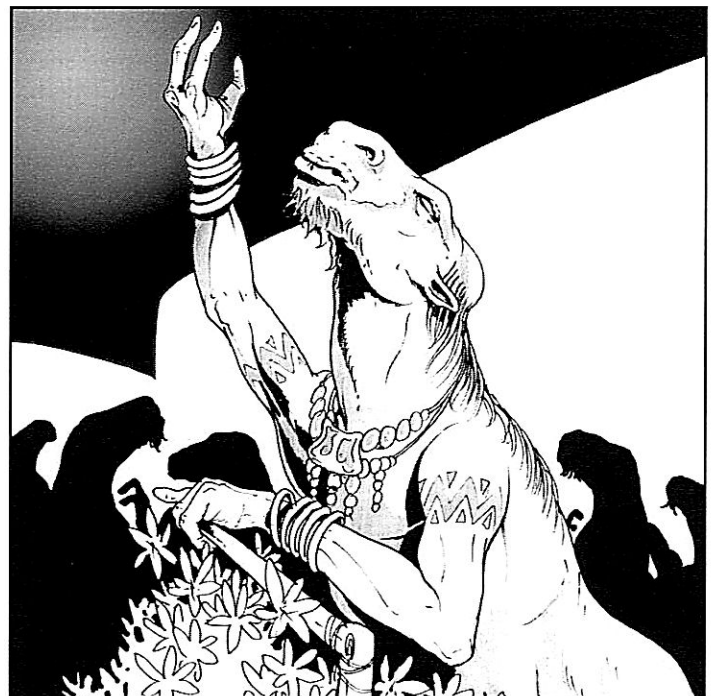
\* Includes +4 for Voice and Charisma advantages.

**Secondary Skills:** A total of 7 points in Area Knowledge (Current planet, local systems, Two Thousand Worlds) (M/E); Intimidation (M/A); Politics (M/A); Savoir-Faire (M/E); and Singing (P/E).

**Optional Skills:** A total of 2 points in Acrobatics (P/H) and Musical Instruments (Percussion or woodwind) (M/H).

**Martial Arts Styles:** Hooves of Faith [0]. *Note:* While the style costs 10 points, its cost has been tallied against its skills and maneuvers, for consistency.

**Martial Arts Maneuvers:** Back Kick-8, Jump Kick-8, Kicking-9, Spin Kick-9, Spinning Punch-9. [1 point each] *Note:* All maneuvers are based on Karate Art, and the skill represents graceful execution of a display move. Usage in combat would be at -3.



**Customization Notes:** He could be given computer, research, and writing skills, making him a scribe. Alternatively, he might be made rather better at martial arts. If he's a bachelor or monogamous, he could also acquire the Odious Personal Habit of moaning continually that his *Krurruna* won't give him enough wives.



# EQUIPMENT, VEHICLES, AND VESSELS

K'kree equipment is not generally interchangeable with anyone else's. Their hands are the wrong shape and they are too big for other race's armor. K'kree attempts to use outsider gear are at -6. Outsiders find the Herd's equipment to be less of a problem and use it at -4. Skilled technicians could alter any small piece for another race's use in a day or so, depending on its complexity (GM ruling). Clothing or armor are unalterable, but their component parts could be used to make an improvised suit if the artisan possesses the Gadgeteer

advantage (p. CI25). It takes five Human-sized suits to salvage enough useable pieces to cover one K'kree.

Prices are a matter of case-by-case negotiation: K'kree merchants are reluctant to part with hard currency, while being obliged to rake it in for Charges Like Thunder. A few of the following item descriptions include a *suggested* sum. Anything which does not have a listing isn't for sale *at any price*. Attempts to buy such goods (weapons, armor, drone fighters) will attract the local *Krurruna*'s interest.

## EQUIPMENT

### Cellular Phones

All K'kree possess these. Their phones are made with a conference setting only. Cost is Cr15 to Cr7,500, depending on quality, materials, and need.

### Combat Auto-Injectors

These devices are worn by all family members who feel that they may be going into a perilous situation. They include a small microchip and medical scanner and two reservoirs, each holding three doses of a drug. They are usually loaded with "Rest in the Arms of Fate" and "Spiritual Consolation." More than one auto-injector can be carried.

### Drugs

K'kree also take (and often become addicted to):

*Holy Inspiration*. This produces limited-duration Berserk and Bloodlust. The effect lasts for a *r'keer*. Post-Combat Shakes is part of coming down, which takes a *krix'leeka*.

*Never in Vain*. This is a dangerous drug which causes rapid coagulation at an open wound. It is used topically. If a patient fails a First Aid or Physician roll critically when applying it, the drug enters the bloodstream. The resultant embolisms will either incapacitate or kill the unfortunate. All K'kree present will suffer Vulnerability to Grief (p. 104).

*Rest in the Arms of Destiny*. This adrenaline-based compound delays a Vulnerability to Grief roll until after the present danger has passed (GM's call).

*Righteous Endurance*. This is a sustained release analgesic, taken as a suppository. It gives +4 to any rolls to avoid pain and shock for three *r'keer*; after which it causes terrible indigestion and cramps (-3 to all skills until the character has had a good meal and some sleep).

*Spiritual Consolation*. This synthetic, soporific, endorphin complex so dulls K'kree senses that the user does not notice being enclosed. It counteracts and is counteracted by Steppe Sunrise. While under the influence, K'kree become drowsy and loose-limbed (-4 to perception and skill rolls, -1d from any falling damage). The drug lasts for a *nixir* per dose. It is usually pumped through air conditioners.

*Steppe Sunrise*. This counteracts Spiritual Consolation. The human equivalent would be a synthetic amphetamine, caffeine, and testosterone mix! It penetrates the mucous membranes, so

is atomized in APCs just before the hatches drop. Steppe Sunrise makes its users feel alert and in charge. It also adds +3 to a PC's will for the purposes of resisting disorientation.

## CONSUMER ITEMS

### Seats

To Humans, the K'kree chair (see p. 81) looks like a cross between a short-legged vaulting horse and a psychiatrist's couch. Its "back" is actually at the front – it is a rest for the heavy top section and users lean against it, with their arms hanging over it. They then fold their legs up. It is a robust piece of furniture, capable of supporting more than 3,000 lbs. The cheap versions are covered in synthetic fabric and foam rubber. More luxurious designs are upholstered in heavily embroidered fabrics and stuffed with subordinates' manes. Factory-fresh K'kree seats enjoy a vogue in the Imperium as durable day-beds. Good pieces can fetch Cr50,000; most retail for about Cr1,400.

### Tables

K'kree tables are made from 6-inch-thick, three-ply hardwood, giving them a DR of 12. They come in yard-square increments, which weigh 140 lbs. each. The most usual size is 6 by 9 feet. The tables have three-foot legs, and are robust enough for a K'kree to dance on. Prices start at Cr1,100 and rise to Cr75,000, depending on workmanship and materials.

### Clothing and Fabric

The Herd does not need clothing, but K'kree wear decorated fabrics as indicators of status and reputation. The fashion is for bespoke tailoring, either close-fitting or inspired by armor, or for swirling robes. Most cloth is heavy, but dandies sport diaphanous gauze and taffeta. Some *Krurruna* collect their followers' shorn manes and have clothes or even tapestries woven out of them. Less august bosses ape this fashion by spinning their underlings' locks into yarn and using it as embroidering thread.

K'kree cloth retails for between Cr5 and Cr10,000 a square yard, and is available in any width up to 18 feet. The cheapest fabric is like sackcloth; the most expensive has the volume of cashmere, but will pass through a Human's wedding ring.

The herd's technophiles like to weave circuitry into soft furnishings. Animated displays, entertainment screens, sound synthesizers, scent emitters, and cellular phones are the most common devices. They cost four times the list price in *GURPS Ultra-Tech* or *Ultra-Tech 2*, plus the cost of the cloth.

## Perfume

K'kree *eaux de toilette* are remarkable. Some reek of a sewer, but others command huge prices among their neighbors. It is not always possible to tell which is which, and traders have been duped into buying gallons of ditch water. Astute merchants can get the real stuff.

The selling point of good K'kree perfume is the perfumer's ability to tailor the scent to its user's biochemistry. All perfumes change according to length of exposure to the air, but K'kree manufactures are much more sophisticated. Given sufficient information, the craftsman can engineer a product which has an initial innocuous but pleasant scent, then changes according to stimuli such as temperature or moisture variation, glandular secretions, even pheromone output. These perfumes are specifically manufactured for each major race except for the Hivers.

It has occurred to some journalists that, if K'kree perfumes were habit-forming or toxic, many Imperial nobles could be in trouble. The Secret Service has looked into this and found nothing to worry about. (Privately, they feel that anyone so superficial as to make a fetish out of horse scent would not be too much of a loss.)

K'kree perfume has as wide a price range as French wine, anything from Cr1.5 to Cr36,000 a pint.

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*"K'kree sculpt and paint, especially for non-K'kree art collectors, but the art they create for themselves is primarily oriented toward scent. A K'kree statue, for example, will be impregnated with essential oils which are the most important part of the work."*

– Dr. Karla Shemi

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## Jewelry

The K'kree use precious metals and well-worked stones to display status. Jewelry often encases personal gadgets, like the ubiquitous cellular phone. It can also double as a pomander, saving the owner from unpleasant smells. The pieces are often torcs, gorgets, bracelets, necklaces, tiaras, and rings. None is likely to fit any other race, but characters with the Fashion Sense advantage (p. CI24) will see a use for them right away. As this is *couture*, the price is whatever the market will bear.

## Sculpture

The K'kree make attractive statues in a variety of media. Soapstone, marble, and wood are the most common. These items will sell for from Cr100 to Cr50,000 each.

# WEAPONS

## Polearms

The standard K'kree hafted weapon – the *!!ring'k*, or “a talk with the final fence” – has a 2-foot-long, straight blade attached to a 10-foot shaft. A foot beneath the blade is a spiked cross-guard, originally intended to stop enemies from continuing their charge and biting the wielder.

## Close Combat Weapons

The K'kree are poorly adapted for using one-handed melee weapons, so have developed different, unpleasant arms instead. An adjustable ring fits over the thumb. Projecting between the fingers are short, sharp-edged spikes. A vicious spur points backward below the wrist. These attachments add +1 to punching damage and make it cutting. The spur turns a roundhouse punch into a swing/impaling attack, which can get stuck. Serious warriors fit them to their feet as well, giving their kicks cutting damage. Each weighs 2 lbs.

## Small Arms

The K'kree favor rifles as being more accurate, more powerful, and longer ranged than pistols. They have no concept of shooting as a sport, so their weapons are always military – rugged and fully automatic.

They use two technologies – gauss, reverse-engineered from Empire of Man equipment, and binary liquid propellant, which they invented themselves. Each of these technologies is available in two calibers, 7mm and 9mm for their chemical-propellant rounds, 4mm and 6.25mm for electro-magnetic.

The famous K'kree long rifle is produced in 4, 7, and 9mm. It has a heavy, strongly reinforced, 5-foot barrel with a 2-foot sword blade underneath the muzzle and offset by 2 inches. A compact laser sight and RAM grenade launcher fill the gap. The stock holds a gyrostabilizer and shock absorber. Ammunition and propellant, whether liquid or a rechargeable power cell, are carried in a backpack.

The 6.25 caliber is available in a slow-firing gauss gun with an extra-long barrel. Its tactical role is to give an unsupported unit a chance against opposing light vehicles or battle-dress.

## Energy Weapons

These are not popular. Some troops carry laser rifles (p. GT11, 115), for use as target designators. Space-trained soldiers also fight with them, but laser small-arm technology is not regarded as being deadly enough for serious use. K'kree laser rifles mount a coaxial belt-fed 50mm RAM grenade launcher with a 50-round magazine. The gunners tend to use the laser to paint the target and rely on the grenades to kill it. The launcher adds 3 lbs. to the weapon's weight and 1 to SS. Its ROF is 1/2; range as per p. GT115.

Battlesuited or extremely strong K'kree carry the PGKP-10, which does a lot of damage, but is frustratingly slow-firing.

# K'KREE WEAPONS TABLES

## POLEARMS

Weapon	Type	Dam	Reach	Cost	Weight	Min ST	Special Notes
!!ring'k	imp	thr +3	1-3	n/a	12 lbs.	12	See Polearm (K'kree) on p. 99.
	cut	sw +3	2, 3				
	imp	sw +3	2, 3				

K'kree also use spears and weapons with multiple blades, functionally identical to the spears and halberds listed on p. B206.

## PERSONAL WEAPONS

Weapon	Malf	Type	Damage	SS	Acc	1/2D	Max	Wt	Rof	Shots	ST	Rcl	Cost	LC	Hld	TL
7mm BLP Rifle	Ver.	Cr.	11d-1 (2)	14	11	1,800	8,000	11/38	16	1,500	11	-2	2,500/400	1	No	8
9mm BLP Rifle	Ver.	Cr.	7d×2 (2)	17	11	2,000	8,600	18.25/38	16	700	13	-2	4,100/400	1	No	8
4mm Gauss Rifle	Ver.	Cr.	12d+1 (2)	12	11	1,800	8,000	8.75/38	16	18,000/2rD	8	-1	5,500/2,200	0	No	9
6.25mm Gauss Rifle	Ver.	Cr.	6d×3 (2)	17	13	3,400	12,000	21/38	3~	4,900/2rD	11	-1	12,700/2,200	1	No	9
PGKP-10	Ver.	Exp.	6d×13	12	13	570	1,100	9.25/40	1	360/2rE	9	-1	650/4,000	0	No	10

Notes: Ammo is carried in a backpack with umbilical feed to firearm. First weight given is firearm; second is ammo pack. Standard load is APS; Damage, 1/2 Damage, and Maximum Range already reflect as much. Weight does not include bayonet that is attached standard on K'kree rifles.

## SUPPORT WEAPONS

Weapon	Malf	Type	Damage	SS	Acc	1/2D	Max	Wt	Rof	Cost	LC	TL
20mm Autocannon	Ver.	Cr.	6d×3	20	14	1,300	5,500	67.5	20	15,200	0	8
20mm 8-bar 3.4-kW Autocannon	Ver.	Cr.	6d×3	20	14	1,300	5,500	162	120	27,150	0	8
either 20mm with HE		Exp.	2d-2									
either 20mm with HEAT		Exp.	4d (10)									
either 20mm with APDS		Cr.	6d×5 (2)			1,900	8,300					
100mm Mortar	Ver.	Exp.	6d×31	20	12	750	4,800	180	1/5	28500	0	8
6.25mm 8-bar VRFGG	Ver.	Cr.	5d×3	20	16	2,300	8,000	63.25	120	38,000	0	9
with APS			6d×3 (2)			3,400	12,000					

## MACHINE GUNS

Weapon	Malf	Type	Damage	SS	Acc	1/2D	Max	Wt	Rof	Shots	ST	Rcl	Cost	LC	Hld	TL
7mm BLP LMG	Ver.	Cr.	11d-1 (2)	17	12	1,800	8,000	20.75/38	20	1,500	11	-1	4,700/400	0	No	8
7mm BLP 8-bar HMG	Ver.	Cr.	11d-1 (2)	20	14	1,800	8,000	66.25/38	120	1,500/rB	28	-1	15,600/430	0	No	8
9mm BLP LMG	Ver.	Cr.	7d×2 (2)	20	12	2,000	8,600	34.25/38	20	700	17	-1	7,700/400	0	No	8
9mm BLP 8-bar HMG	Ver.	Cr.	7d×2 (2)	20	14	2,000	8,600	110/38	120	700/rB	n/a	-1	24,300/430	0	No	8
4mm Gauss LMG	Ver.	Cr.	12d+1 (2)	12	11	1,800	8,000	16.25/38	20	18,000/2rD	12	-1	9,720/2,200	0	No	9
4mm 8-bar Gauss HMG	Ver.	Cr.	12d+1 (2)	20	14	1,800	8,000	52/38	120	18,000/2rD	n/a	-1	31,700/2,200	0	No	9
6.25mm 8-bar VRFGG	Ver.	Cr.	6d×3 (2)	20	16	3,400	12,000	126.5	120	4,900/2rD	n/a	-1	66,600/2,200	0	No	9

Notes: LMGs include bipods; HMGs and VRFGG include tripods. MGs use backpack-mounted ammo, usually interchangeable with rifle versions; 7mm and 9mm HMGs require inclusion of B cell to power electric Gatling action.

## VEHICULAR WEAPONS

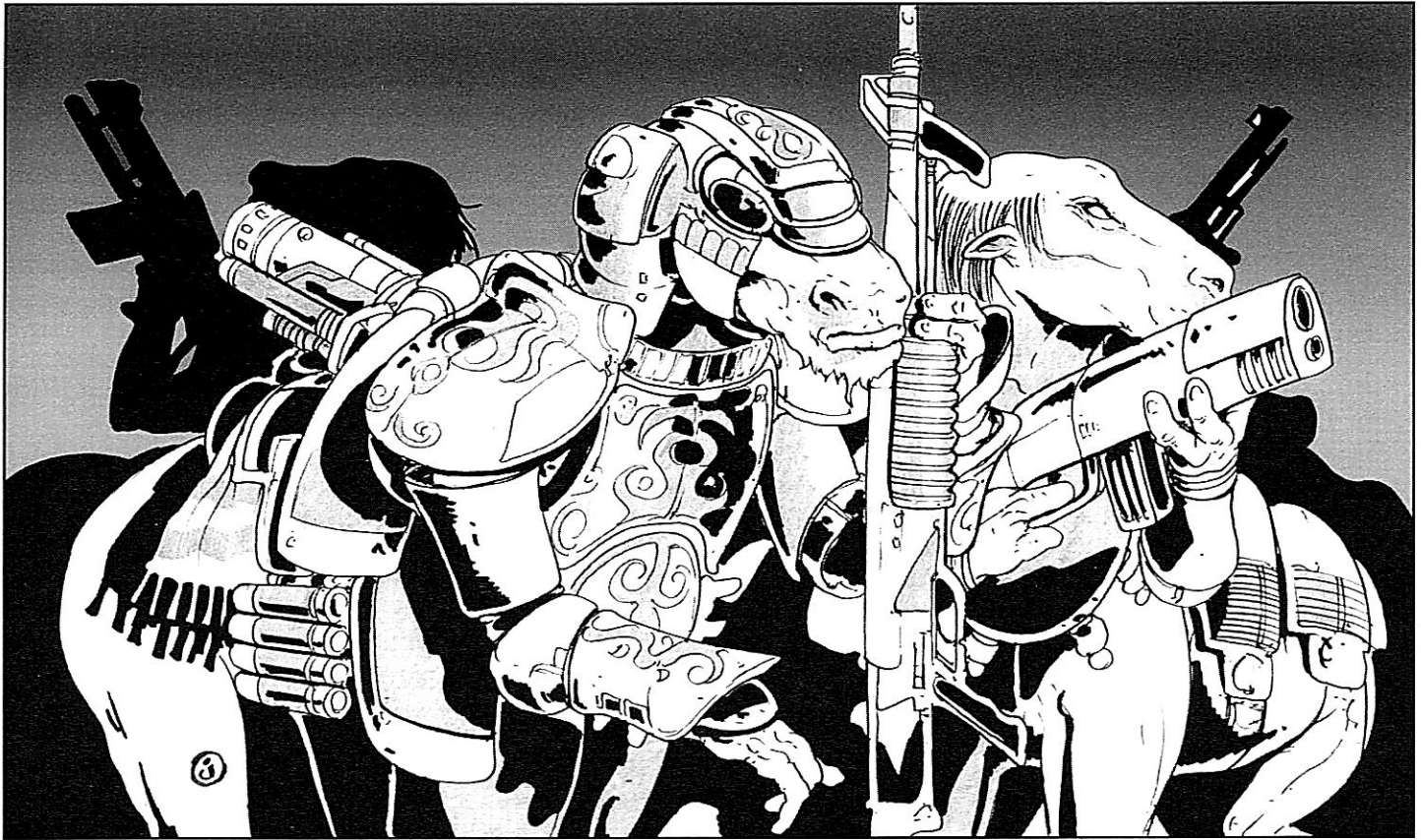
Weapon	Malf	Type	Damage	SS	Acc	1/2D	Max	Wt	Rof	Cost	Shots*	TL
Plasma Gun-A/K 15,600 kJ	Ver.	Spcl.	6d×53	13	19	2,500	7,500	1,300	1	75,000	55	10
Plasma Gun-B/K 7,800 kJ	Ver.	Spcl.	6d×38	13	22	7,000	21,000	1,300	1	75,000	110	10
Plasma Gun-C/K 144,000 kJ	Ver.	Spcl.	6d×200	15	19	2,000	6,000	7,992	1	204,800	6	11
Plasma Gun-D/K 96,000 kJ	Ver.	Spcl.	6d×160	15	21	6,700	20,000	8,000	1	205,000	9	11
Plasma Gun-E/K 18,000 kJ	Ver.	Spcl.	6d×70	15	21	5,800	17,000	7,875	10	201,875	48	11

\* If drawing power from standard K'kree arrangement of 12 TL10 rechargeable E cells (Cr24,000, 240 lbs.). If using TL11 cells, multiply shots by 1.25.

### 135mm Missiles

Weapon	Malf	Guidance	Type	Damage	Spd	End	Max	Min	Skill	WPS	VPS	CPS	TL
Stealthy HESH Missile	Crit.	BPEH	Exp.	6d×460	1,200	115	138,000	50	16	385	7.7	50,000	9





### Support Weapons

K'kree-portable light machineguns are available in all the rifle calibers except 6.25mm gauss. Heavier machine guns exist, and the most common are the eight-barrel 20mm autocannon and the 6.25mm VRFGG, which the K'kree mount in their point-defense socket turrets (p. 112). Individual units also use pairs of single-barreled 20mm cannon extensively. They mount them on *Rrir'rx!xe'lee* (p. 114).

The most common mortar is the rocket-assisted 100mm. The K'kree field it at unit level, again on a robot platform and directed by forward observers.

### Vehicular Weapons

The K'kree use plasma cannon and explosives for serious military work. Their drone fighters and APCs have sockets that will take one of two standard energy weapons or a four-pack of extremely fast long-range missiles.

These energy weapons are designed for dogfights or long-range precision strikes. They are entirely enclosed for better streamlining, and have a bank of 12 rechargeable E cells. The missiles have either HESH or HEAT warheads.

Cutting-edge technology has produced three different plasma cannon: medium- and short-range tank-killers and a short-range, rapid-firing anti-material gun.

Vehicles can also mount a self-contained, half-ton, point-defense turret. This is controlled by a dedicated gunnery computer and usually features a 6.25mm gatling. While its program treats incoming missiles as the gun's first priority, it will also fire upon any targeting laser it detects, or any enemy personnel sensed by its host vehicle's systems.

### Weapon Tables

These tables include price, concealment, and legality entries, but all K'kree weapons are too large to conceal and, in any case, having one is a sign of caste, so it should be displayed at all times. They are never on sale, but are issued to serving soldiers or bodyguards. No one else may own one. A K'kree might *borrow* a weapon for a specific purpose (a status fight, for instance) but would have to return it afterward. The information is provided for use with other races.

## ARMOR AND PROTECTIVE GEAR

K'kree armor is made out of solid plates, strapped to the owner's limbs and body. A central keel, running up the back, ensures that the weight of torso protection is borne by the lower body. Ceremonial suits have elaborate decoration and attachment points for plumes, ribbons, and bells; serious fighting armor is much more functional. Most helmets are open face, and swept back from the eyes, to prevent an enclosed feeling from impaired peripheral vision.

Circumstances such as vacuum, hostile atmospheres, or chemical or biological agents mandate more complete armor. To allow for environmental sealing without encouraging claustrophobia, the helmet has either to be very large and transparent, or incorporate an internal virtual panorama. In either case it will need environmental-enrichment systems (little fans, reservoirs of scent, playback of herd sounds). Even with these aids, the K'kree dislike being so completely covered. The demands for auto-injector soar whenever sealed armor is deployed.

Some soldiers wear battledress which always incorporates a grav belt and an integral plasma gun. Effective power armor and troops crazy enough to use it are rare in the Two Thousand Worlds, so they are as heavily equipped as the K'kree can make them. K'kree battledress weighs three times as much as the equivalent Imperial model, but gives the same protection (see p. GT118).

*Ceremonial armor* is made from cane or wood. It is often brightly painted. Cane armor is PD 2, DR 2 and weighs 60 lbs. Wooden armor is PD 2, DR 3 and weighs 72 lbs. In each case the weight includes a plume, pectoral chimes, and bells for fingers, toes, and tail.

*Traditional metal armor* is made out of steel plates, has PD 4, DR 6 and weighs 200 lbs. Unsealed armor, including an open-face helmet, made to the same pattern as a traditional suit is also available in TL8 materials (PD 4, DR 14) or TL9 materials (PD 5, DR 30). Either high-tech suit weighs 80 lbs.

*Sealed Infantry Armor* (TL8): This is a ballistic cloth suit with hard plates over vital areas and a big bubble helmet. It has an NBC filter and can be fitted with a *nixir* air tank. It protects the body with PD 4, DR 40; limbs with PD2, DR 12; and head with PD2, DR 10. Add 10 to DR at TL9 and again at TL10. A complete suit weighs 120 pounds. See p. UT73 for more information.

*Armored Environment Suit* (TL8): This is the K'kree heavy vacc suit. It has a coolant system, a reflective layer,

and a reassuringly solid helmet. PD 2, DR 20 to body and limbs; PD 2, DR 10 to head and hands. Weighs 90 lbs.

*Pressurized Armor* is available at TL9. It comprises a hard, full-body suit with a rebreather and sealed joints. It can fit one or more *krix'leeka* air tanks and serve as a vacc suit. The body and limbs have PD 6, DR 50; the hands and feet PD5, DR 50; and the helmet PD4, DR 35. Add 15 to DR at TL10 and again at TL11. Weighs 180 pounds.

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*"The K'kree have an uncomfortable relationship with machines. Their view is that their simple idyll was interrupted by a continuous offensive from their enemies and they developed technology to deal with it. They are aware that their science has thrown up questions which their theology cannot answer, and they blame the sciences. Another nagging doubt with material progress is the way it always seems to lead to being enclosed."*

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## VEHICLES

The K'kree ambivalence toward technology is most evident in their transport systems. Most of the Herd hate, and will not use, any form of personal transport. They move goods around in robot or remote-controlled carriers, or by automated railways. Actual piloted vehicles are only necessary in exceptional circumstances, such as travel on undeveloped worlds or in war.



K'kree vehicles are always *vastly* larger and more expensive than those of any other race. This, a constant shortage of pilots, and the resulting lack of real design expertise make

fighting vehicles rare in the Two Thousand Worlds. K'Kree AFVs are usually extremely slow and lumbering: Most often the K'kree fight brushfire wars against poorly equipped opponents clinging desperately to difficult terrain. To date, in larger conflicts they have always had orbital and air superiority, which they use to herd their opponents into a killing ground. They then land infantry to wipe them out.

When designing K'Kree vehicles, multiply weight, volume, and cost of crew stations and accommodations by *six*. Multiply weight, volume, and cost of environmental systems and any rations by four.

### *Rrir'r'xi!xe'lee* Robot Platform (TL6)

This K'kree equivalent of a light truck is a box on wheels, open topped, 10 feet long by 5 wide, and 4 deep. Equipped with TL8 electronics, it has a radio-direction finder set to the same unique frequency as a small beacon carried by its owner. The owner sets a bearing and distance to travel on the platform's simple control panel. The *Rrir'r'xi!xe'lee* ("little dutiful lover") takes off on the set heading for the appropriate duration. It is otherwise almost ignorant; obstacles will often

confound it. More primitive versions exist. These have simple controls mounted on the back. The driver trots along beside his truck and makes course changes as necessary.

Many K'kree own such a platform. It is also a common military vehicle. When exterminating vermin, the control system sometimes is hardened to hamper enemy ECM. The cargo platform usually mounts a single 100mm mortar and a case of shells. Occasionally it serves as an improvised gun carriage. Mechanics weld a girder across it at the back, and add one or two autocannon in open mounts. They often hang an armor plate across the front, sticking out 3 feet or so at each side. Two K'kree walk behind and fire the guns forward. The flatbed is rated for a 3-ton payload.

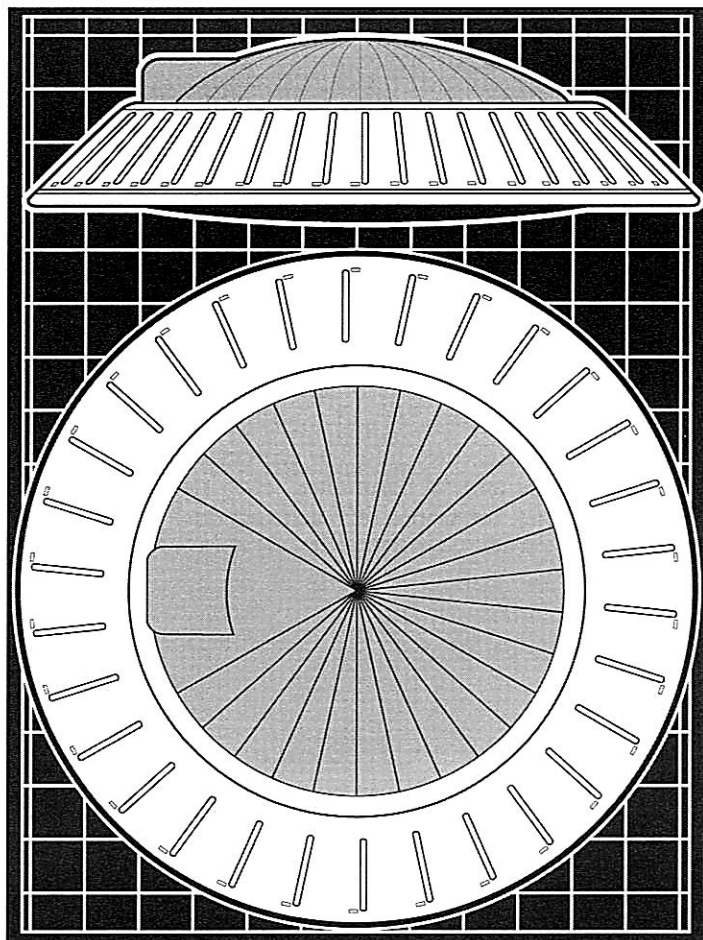
- **Subassemblies:** Four all-terrain wheels (Body, 56 HP each).
- **Propulsion:** 29 kW all-wheel drivetrain (Body, 13 HP).
- **Instruments and Electronics:** TL8 dedicated Complexity 2 small computer (Body, 1 HP) running the Routine Vehicle Operation (Driving) program, medium-range radio (Body, 100 miles, 1 HP, 0.01 kW), surface-search no-targeting radar (Body, 1 mile, 1 HP, 0.25 kW).
- **Controls:** Mechanical.
- **Crew:** None.
- **Power:** 30-kW standard gasoline engine converted to burn alcohol (1.6 gallons per hour); 39-gallon tank (Fire 11) provides fuel for 24 hours.
- **Space:** *Access Space:* None. *Cargo Space:* 150 cf. *Empty Space:* 0.
- **Volume:** Body 164 cf. Wheels 33 cf. *Area:* Body 200. Wheels 75.
- **Structure:** Cheap, medium.
- **Armor:** PD 2 DR 7 cheap metal.
- **Hit Points:** 200.
- **Statistics:** Empty weight 5,098 lbs. (2.5 tons). Loaded weight 11,324 lbs. (5.7 tons). Volume 196 cf. Size Modifier +3. Price Cr16,322. HT 9.
- **Ground Performance:** Top Speed 36. gAccel 2 mph/s. gDecel 10 mph/s. gMR 0.75. gSR 4. OR Speed 5.

### *K'keeluuree All-Weather Roamer*

Th *K'keeluuree* ("wind steppe runner") is the K'kree equivalent of an air/raft. It looks like an upturned glass bowl on a saucer. The roof is composed of alternate fixed and sliding sections, to allow access and ventilation and to minimize passenger claustrophobia. In hostile environments, the roof forms a pressure seal. The craft's sides are sloped and ribbed to assist passengers climbing on or off. The interior has eight passenger couches which face outward. The pilot's seat has a fairing and a set of controls.

This is a civilian vehicle, but it is occasionally pressed into service as a troop carrier. Taking one into combat would be foolish.

- **Body Features:** The sides of the hull are ribbed to assist entry.
- **Propulsion and Aerostatic Lift:** TL9 reactionless thrusters providing thrust of 666 (Body, 40 HP, 333 kW). TL12 contra-gravity unit provides 37,000-lb. total lift, (Body, 2 HP, 37kW).



- **Instruments and Electronics:** Radio (Body, 1000 miles, 1 HP, 0.04 kW), high-capacity Complexity 2 small computer (Body, 1 HP), no-targeting radar (Body, 10 miles, 1 HP, 2.5 kW), global positioning system (Body, 1 HP, neg.).
- **Programs:** Navigate, Routine Vehicle Operation (Pilot), Datalink, and navigational-database software.
- **Miscellaneous:** Turf floor, incidental pot plants, and aerosol drug dispensers.
- **Controls:** 1 roomy crew station.
- **Occupancy:** Short. *Passengers:* 8 on normal seats. *Crew:* One pilot. *Accommodations:* 4.5 K'kree days of life support (4.5 kW).
- **Power:** 350-kW standard gas turbine burns 23 gallons of alcohol per hour. Fuel tanks (Fire 7) hold 277 gallons sufficient for 12 hours.
- **Space:** *Access Space:* 40.5 cf. *Cargo Space:* 20 cf. *Empty Space:* 0.
- **Volume:** 1,861 cf. *Area:* 1,000 cf.
- **Structure:** Cheap, medium.
- **Hit Points:** 1,000.
- **Armor:** PD 2 DR 10 cheap metal.
- **Surface Features:** Sealed hull.
- **Vision:** Good. *Details:* Huge transparent roof.
- **Statistics:** Empty weight 16,838 lbs. Loaded weight 36,844 lbs. Size Modifier +5. Price Cr112,145. HT 10.
- **Aerial Performance:** Can hover. Top speed 70 mph, aAccel 1mph/s, aMR 2, aSR 5, aDecel 8.
- **Space Performance:** 0.02G.



## *Loor'rik'k'ring'r!kir* *Armored Personnel Carrier*

This enormous TL8 vehicle is just a cheap metal cylinder 100 feet across and 14 feet high. The *Loor'rik'k'ring'r!kir* ("Carry the *ring'r* to make death") looks unsafe to most experienced observers and rattles alarmingly in use. The inexperienced might need to make a Fright Check as it rumbles and clanks and blots out the sun overhead. It mounts two socket turrets which can take four socket guns or 16 tank-vaporizing missiles or a combination thereof. The interior has a hub containing the engines, countergravity units, powerplant, and controls, but is otherwise empty. In use it is flooded with soporific gasses and domestic sounds.

The bottom is divided into 100 segments. These hold 50 individual ramps and 50 hardpoints, each rated for 2 tons. When embarking, the troops take a strong dose of a calming drug and back onto the ramps. These are then raised into place. To debark, the soldiers stand on the ramps, and get a massive stimulant injection when they drop. In combat the craft lands with the leader facing toward the enemy. His soldiers deploy in two lines; the 12 on either side of him trot forward to form the front line, and the others move backward and about face to form the second.

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*"The local intel unit had informed us that K'kree units were known to be in our sector, but nobody had any experience with Centaurs. The platoon had moved into position earlier and had dug in expecting an attack at any moment. The map box went on the fritz just as the report came in with their coordinates, and I was beginning to get a little flustered with the thing. I must have begun swearing out loud, because the lieutenant tapped me on the shoulder. 'Never mind about that, Sky,' he said, 'Their APC has been blotting out the moon for the last five minutes.'"*

— Aakmir "Sky" Uspenskaya,  
***Three Cheers and a Tiger:***  
***A Merc's Memoir***

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- **Subassemblies:** 2 limited-rotation 68 cf turrets (T, U), empty till socket weapons installed.
- **Body Features:** 50 hardpoints with 2-ton capacity each. Basic IR cloaking, emission cloaking, and chameleon surface.
- **Propulsion:** TL9 reactionless thruster provides 7,602 lbs. of thrust (Body, 175 HP, 3,801 kW).
- **Aerostatic Lift:** TL12 contragravity provides 525,000 lbs. of lift. (Body, 30 HP, 525 kW).

- **Weaponry:** Up to 16 135mm missiles, eight in each turret. Plasma Gun-A/K and/or -B/K can be installed instead; each gun with its 12rE battery pack replaces four missiles. Full stabilization and universal mounts.
- **Instruments and Electronics:** 2 Complexity-4 microframes (Body, 16 HP each, 0.2 kW) with three terminals (Body, 10 HP each, neg.), scrambled radio (Body, 1,000 miles, 3 HP, 0.04 kW), laser communicator (Body, 100 miles, 3 HP, 0.1 kW), AESA (Body, 125 miles, 24 HP, 31.25 kW), PESA (Body, 10 miles, 6 HP, neg.), inertial navigation system (Body, 4 HP, neg.), terrain-following radar (Body, 3 HP, 0.25 kW), deceptive jammer (Body, 4 HP, 100 kW), military global-positioning system (Body, 1 HP, neg.), IFF (Body, 1 HP, neg.), and advanced radar/laser detector (Body, 3 HP, neg.).
- **Programs:** Gunner, Routine Vehicle Operation (Pilot), Datalink, and vehicle-recognition and navigational databases.
- **Miscellaneous:** Turf floor, internal hologram of rural idyll, and aerosol drug dispensers. Fifty of the floor panels drop down to provide access ramps. Full fire suppression. Modular sockets (both turrets).
- **Controls:** 3 roomy crew stations.
- **Occupancy:** Short. *Passengers:* 50 in cramped seats. *Crew:* Pilot, Gunner, Commander. Limited life support for 53 K'kree-days.
- **Power:** 4100-kW optimized gas turbine; burns 221 gallons of alcohol per hour. Self-sealing fuel tanks (Fire 7) hold 5,314 gallons sufficient for 12 hours.
- **Space:** *Access Space:* 187.8 cf. *Cargo Space and Empty Space:* None.
- **Volume:** Body 8,654. Turrets 68 each. *Area:* Body 3,000. Turrets 100 each. Total 3,200.
- **Structure:** Cheap, heavy.
- **Hit Points:** 6,000. Turrets 300.
- **Armor:** PD 4, DR 800 (F), PD4, DR 100 elsewhere. Turrets PD4, DR 90 on all faces. Cheap metal.
- **Surface Features:** Sealed hull.
- **Statistics:** Empty Weight 369,846 (185 tons). Loaded Weight 512,827. (256 tons). Volume 8,790 cf. Size Modifier +6. HT 7.
- **Aerial Performance:** Can hover. Top speed 135 mph, aAccel 1 mph, AMR 1.5, aSR 5, aDecel 6.

## *G'krurr!k'gzang!k Gunboat*

The K'kree have always found bombing to be a convenient solution to difficult terrain and fortifications. The *G'krurr!k'gzang!k* ("lunatic transforms to the divine") usually serves in this role by loading its hardpoints with city-smashing bombs and piling grenades on the access ramps. The craft cracks any hardened structures and scatters grenades all over the target zone. These are then radio-detonated.

More determined and sophisticated opponents need sterner treatment, and dedicated APCs mount a combination of first-strike cruise missiles and point-defense weapons on the hardpoints, with each troop bay holding a 1-ton bomb. Forces used to dropping these tin cans like flies have been surprised by the overkill this configuration can muster . . .

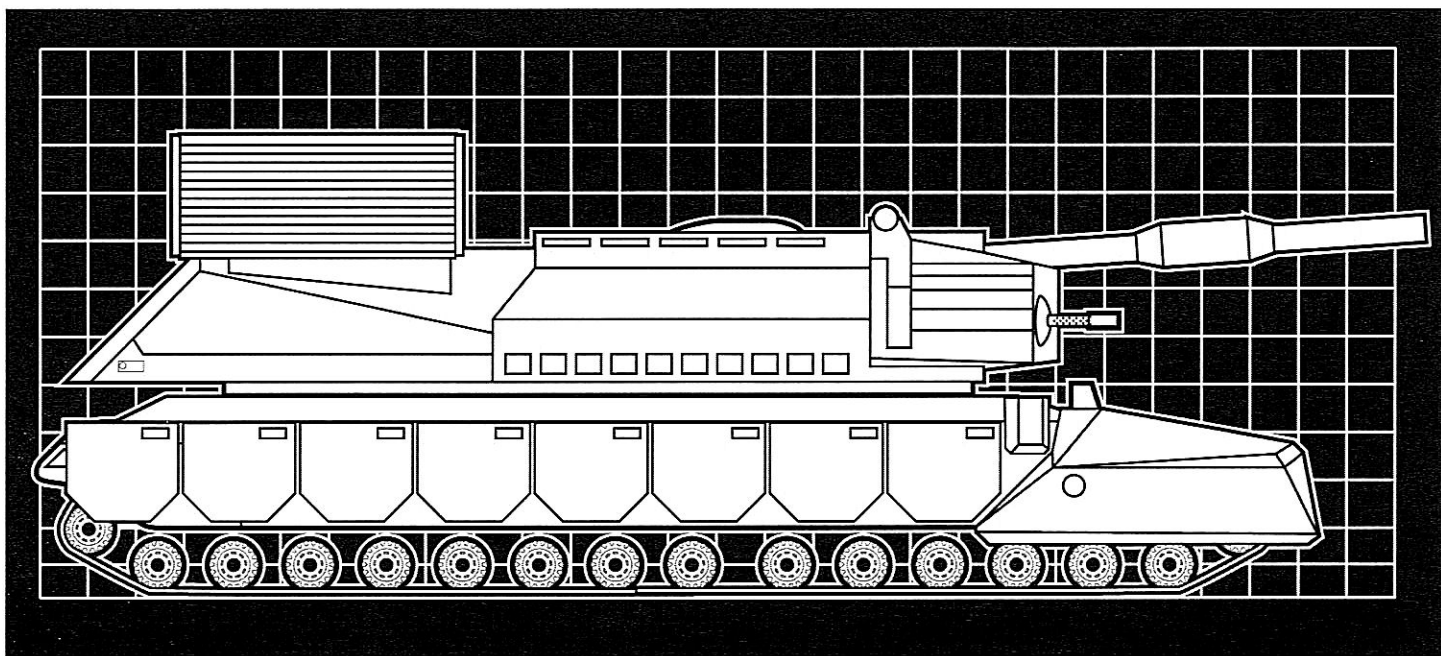
## Gzang!k't't!g'naak Tank

Gunboats will overawe most rebels and ungrateful savages, but better-informed foreign observers find them laughable. This filtered through to the Two Thousand Worlds' military planners after a K'kree diplomat asked his Solomani counterpart to explain what "flying dartboard" meant. Enemy AFVs seized in the Gateway sector provided a shopping list of desirable qualities.

The *Gzang!k't't!g'naak* ("a lot more fire than the *g'naak* can handle") is the result of a frenzied design process, and marks a deliberate break from the racial tendency to put some engines in a big tin and call it a fighting vessel. It's still far from Imperial quality. The K'kree retain treads on their grav tanks out of a conservative design philosophy. The tank is being deployed against the Vargr in *Gn'hk'r* sector, where it is causing satisfying dismay.

0.2 kW), AESA (Body, 500 miles, 40 HP, 125 kW), PESA (Body, 100 miles, 16 HP, neg.), inertial navigation system (Body, 3 HP, neg.), terrain-following radar (Body, 2 HP, 0.25 kW), deceptive jammer (Body, 6 HP, 4 kW), military global-positioning system (Body, 1 HP, neg.), IFF (Body, 1 HP, neg.), MAD (Body, 100 miles, 50 HP, neg.), radscanner (Body, 100 miles, 30 HP, neg.), blip enhancer (Body, 6 HP, 2.5 kW), low-light TV (Body, 1 HP, neg.), and advanced radar/laser detector (Body, 3 HP, neg.).

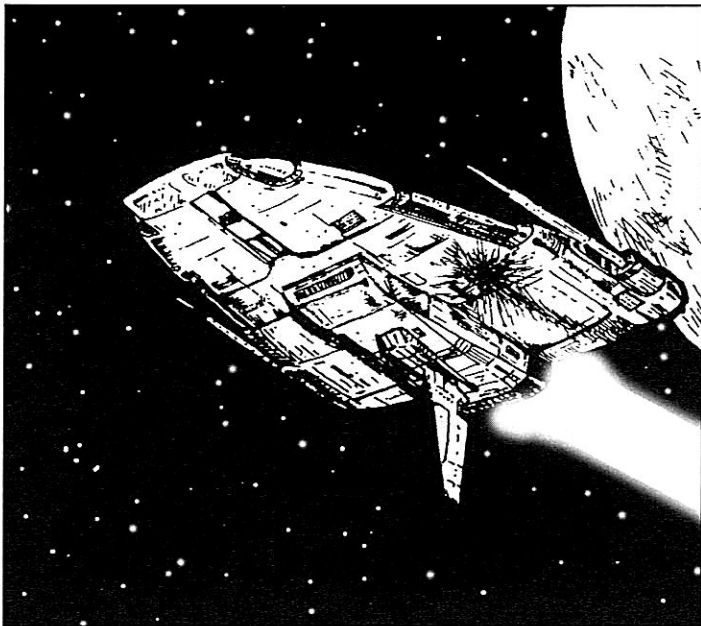
- **Programs:** Gunner, Routine Vehicle Operation (Pilot), Datalink, Damage Control, and planetary, vehicle-recognition, and navigational databases.
- **Miscellaneous:** Full fire suppression.
- **Controls:** 3 roomy crew stations.



- **Subassemblies:** 1 full-rotation 1,000-cf turret (T) and 2 limited-rotation universal 10-cf turrets (L, R).
- **Body Features:** 60-degree slope to front, 30-degree slope to sides, body and all turrets. Basic IR cloaking, emission cloaking, and chameleon surface.
- **Propulsion:** Reactionless thruster provides 120,000 lbs. of thrust (Body, 1,200 HP, 60,000 kW).
- **Aerostatic Lift:** TL13 contragravity provides 525,000 lbs. of lift. (Body, 19 HP, 525 kW).
- **Weaponry:** TL11 Plasma Gun-C/K or -D/K plus coaxial -E/K in main turret with TL10 12rE energy banks each. Energy banks provide shots as listed; powerplant can supply 89,595 excess kW for recharging cells. Each point-defense turret holds 2 VRFGGs with 10,000 rounds each. Full stabilization on all.
- **Instruments and Electronics:** 2 Complexity-5 microframes (Body, 6 HP each, 0.2 kW) with three terminals (Body, 6 HP each, neg.), 2 scrambled radios (Body and main turret, 10,000 miles, 2 HP each, 0.08 kW), 2 laser communicators (Body and main turret, 1,000 miles, 2 HP each, 0.2 kW), AESA (Body, 500 miles, 40 HP, 125 kW), PESA (Body, 100 miles, 16 HP, neg.), inertial navigation system (Body, 3 HP, neg.), terrain-following radar (Body, 2 HP, 0.25 kW), deceptive jammer (Body, 6 HP, 4 kW), military global-positioning system (Body, 1 HP, neg.), IFF (Body, 1 HP, neg.), MAD (Body, 100 miles, 50 HP, neg.), radscanner (Body, 100 miles, 30 HP, neg.), blip enhancer (Body, 6 HP, 2.5 kW), low-light TV (Body, 1 HP, neg.), and advanced radar/laser detector (Body, 3 HP, neg.).
- **Occupancy:** Short. *Crew:* Pilot, Gunner, Commander. Limited life support for 9 K'kree-days.
- **Power:** 150,253-kW fission plant.
- **Volume:** Body 11,031. Turret 1,000 with 2 point-defense turrets at 10 each. *Area:* Body 3,000. Turrets 600 and 2 at 30 each. Total 3,660.
- **Structure:** Standard, heavy.
- **Hit Points:** 6,000. Main turret 1,800. PD turrets 90 each.
- **Armor:** Body and main turret: PD 6, DR 2,000 (F); PD 5, DR 500 (L, R); PD 4, DR 500 (B); PD 4, DR 400 (T, U). PD turrets: PD 6, DR 200 (F); PD 5, DR 200 (L, R); PD 4, DR 200 (T, B). All expensive laminate.
- **Surface Features:** Sealed hull.
- **Statistics:** Empty Weight 511,196 (256 tons). Loaded Weight 517,277. (259 tons). Volume 12,051 cf. Size Modifier +7. HT 7.
- **Aerial Performance:** Can hover. Top speed 495 mph, aAccel 5 mph, AMR 1.5, aSR 6, aDecel 6.
- **Space Performance:** 0.023G.

## Kirloor'rik'rirr'gzang-Class Drone Fighter

The *Kirloor'rik'rirr'gzang* ("earth drive carries lesser fire") are the main aircraft of the Pest Control force. Skilled remote pilots control these versatile, agile machines from the rear echelon. With luck, they can handle a medium tank. They can even bring down small raiding starships, a fact that certainly surprised the crew of the *Broadsword*-class cruiser *Machaira*.



- **Body Features:** Good streamlining. Basic IR cloaking, emission cloaking, and chameleon surface.
- **Propulsion:** Reactionless thruster provides 960 lbs. of thrust (Body, 50 HP, 480 kW).
- **Aerostatic Lift:** TL13 contragravity provides 125,000 lbs. of lift. (Body, 8 HP, 125 kW).
- **Weaponry:** Casemated socket mount (Body, front) holds 4 135mm missiles, or Plasma Gun-A/K or -B/K with its 12rE battery pack. Full stabilization.
- **Instruments and Electronics:** Complexity-5 microframe (Body, 6 HP, 0.2 kW) with three terminals (Body, 20 HP each, neg.), scrambled radio (Body, 100,000 miles, 6 HP, 0.1 kW), laser communicator (Body, 1,000 miles, 3 HP, 0.1 kW), AESA (Body, 100 miles, 13 HP, 25 kW), PESA (Body, 20 miles, 6 HP, neg.), inertial navigation system (Body, 3 HP, neg.), terrain-following radar (Body, 2 HP, 0.25 kW), deceptive jammer (Body, 6 HP, 4 kW), military global-positioning system (Body, 1 HP, neg.), IFF (Body, 1 HP, neg.), and advanced radar/laser detector (Body, 3 HP, neg.).
- **Programs:** Gunner, Routine Vehicle Operation (Pilot), Computer Navigation, Datalink, Damage Control, Transmission, and vehicle-recognition and navigational databases.

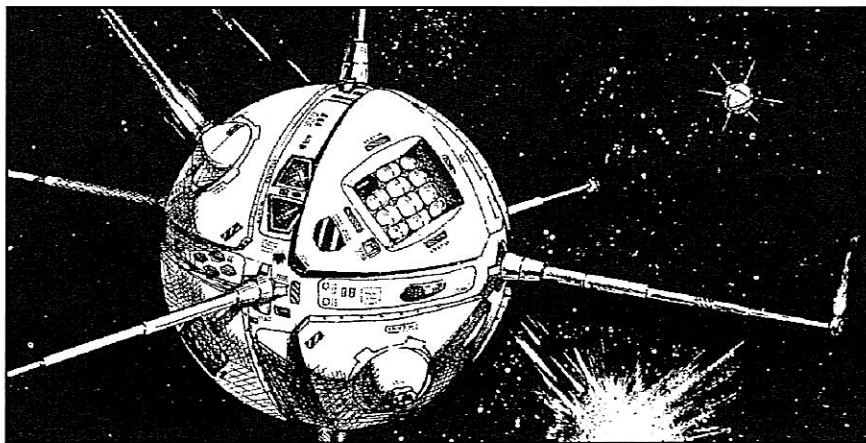
- **Miscellaneous:** Full fire suppression. Modular sockets (casemate mount).
- **Controls:** None. Remote only.
- **Power:** 540-kW fission plant.
- **Volume:** 6,094. *Area:* 2,500.
- **Structure:** Standard, medium.
- **Hit Points:** 2,500.
- **Armor:** PD 4, DR 400 on all sides. All expensive laminate.
- **Surface Features:** Sealed hull.
- **Statistics:** Empty Weight 122,422 (61 tons). Loaded Weight 123,962. (62 tons). Volume 6,094 cf. Size Modifier +6. HT 9.
- **Aerial Performance:** Can hover. Top speed 95 mph, aAccel 1 mph, AMR 2, aSR 5, aDecel 8.
- **Space Performance:** 0.01G.

## NON-STARSHIPS

### Lik'rrugukor-Class Monitor (TL10)

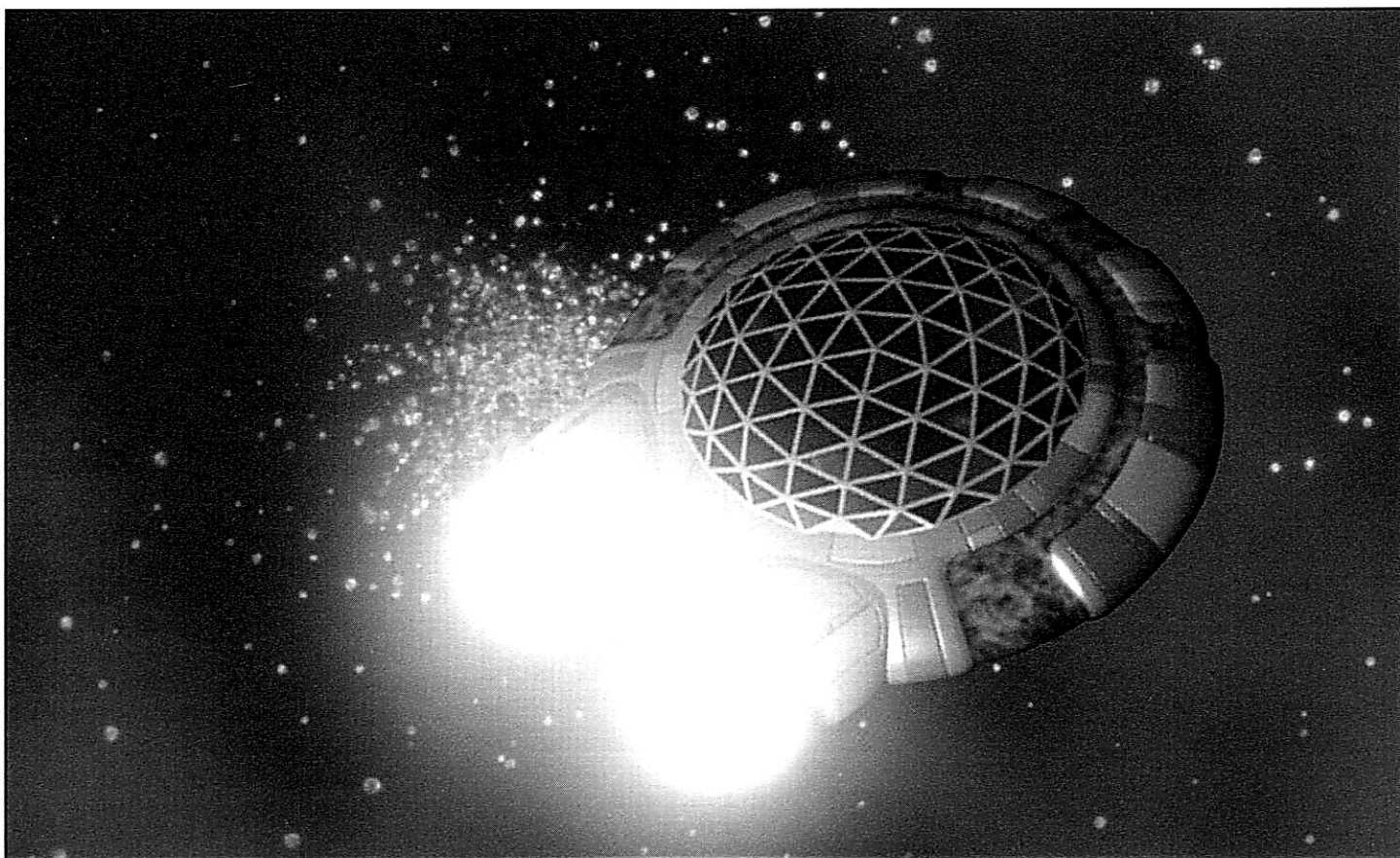
This ship uses the same hull as the frigate (p. 121), but substitutes dorsal and ventral particle accelerator bays for the jump drives, fuel storage, some staterooms, and the missile turrets. The K'kree deploy the monitor in important systems or near the borders. Like most of the Herd's fighting vessels, its armor is weak.

- **Crew:** One boss (Leadership, Tactics), one pilot (Pilot (Large spacecraft)), 12 engineers and technicians (Engineering, Mechanic, etc.), two medics (Diagnosis, Electronic Operations (Medical), Physician), and 32 gunners (Gunner), who double as ship's troops. Stewards will be required if passengers carried.
- **Design:** 5,000-ton SL Hull, DR 200, 2 Bays with 1 Particle Accelerator each, 20 Turrets with 2 360-MJ lasers each, 10 Turrets with 1 Sandcaster each, Basic Stealth, Basic Emission Cloaking, Command Bridge, Engineering, 750 Maneuver, 125 Staterooms, 1 Sickbay, 8 Utility, 75 Cargo.



- **Statistics:** EMass 7,729, LMass 8,104. Hit Points 165,000. Size Modifier +11.
- **Performance:** Accel 3.7 Gs, Jump 0, Air Speed 3,912.





### *Ring!niker!kir-Class Robot Fighter (TL10)*

Main battle fleets launch these little craft by the thousands. The K'kree deploy them in groups of 50. They are programmed to keep station indefinitely and attack any craft they detect unless it transmits the right code. Electromagnetic interference can make this troublesome in gas giants, so one drone performs a visual-pattern match at 100 yards, giving an obviously K'kree ship an extra chance to return a positive signal. If the target ship fires upon the drone, the other 49 will attack it.

These fighters also fly from planetary or even orbital bases, either remotely piloted or under their own programming. Note that the cockpit isn't large enough for a K'kree, and isn't designed to accommodate *any* sentient pilot of any size.

- **Design:** 20-ton SL Hull, 100 DR, 3 forward-mounted 360-MJ lasers, hardened Cockpit Bridge, Engineering, 11 Maneuver, Radical Stealth, Radical Emission Cloaking.
- **Statistics:** Mass 104. Hit points 4,500. Size Modifier +6.
- **Performance:** 4.3 Gs, Air Speed 3,317.

## STARSHIPS

All K'kree starships are disks, and generally massive. All feature a single deck with an 18-foot ceiling. Equipment, engines, and generators are always in a sub-deck, accessed through the floor. Internal compartmentalization of any sort is rare, except at the air lock and in dedicated storage bays. Control areas such as the bridge or gunners' stations are sometimes separated by curtains or screens, but the interior is

mostly one large open space. This is often turfed and usually has large plants growing in it.

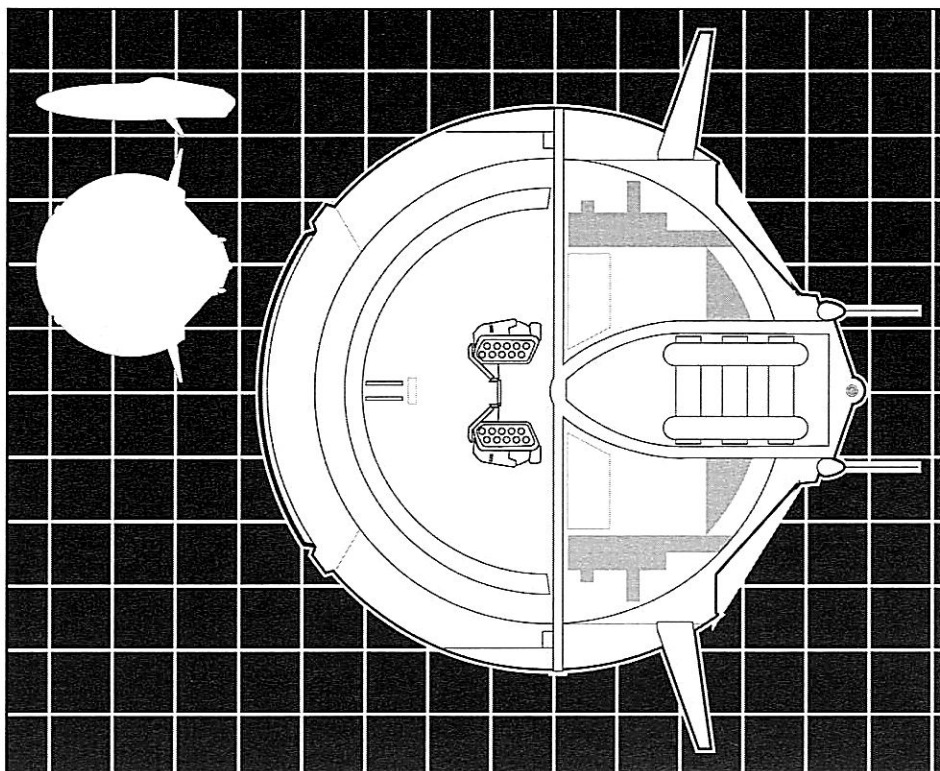
The roof is supported by a thick central column, which holds the projectors and sound synthesizers for the environmental-enrichment equipment, as well as the pumps for the air conditioning and life control. It also reprocesses the crew's biological wastes. Sometimes it is disguised as a large tree.

The lack of internal compartments makes hull breaches catastrophic for the whole crew.

This seemingly bizarre and extremely dangerous style of ship is a consequence of the Herd's racial Claustrophobia. Even the most mentally robust K'kree become depressed by high walls and narrow horizons. Their ships' interiors minimize this by affording long sight lines and a high roof. The ship's life-control systems project sky scenes overhead and the PA plays a savanna safari holiday soundtrack constantly. The air conditioners add pleasing herd scents.

K'kree vessels seldom carry shuttles or ship's boats, but are always capable of planetary landings. Most ships are TL10. A point to bear in mind is that civilian crews travel with their wives and children, so their ship's companies are remarkably large.

When designing manned K'kree vessels, multiply the spaces, mass, and cost of all bridge, low-berth, passenger, stateroom, sickbay, and lab modules by *six*. Note that K'kree starship stats will continue to refer to a number of Staterooms. This merely indicates how many passengers the ship can support (1-2 per Stateroom); each nominal Stateroom contributes its volume to the massive central space as do other personnel and cargo spaces.



### *Kahk'rik'kreng-Class Courier (TL10)*

The government makes these craft available to diplomats and officials. They are quite comfortable by K'kree standards, but this seldom actually alleviates the distress of the passengers, few of whom are space-trained.

■ **Crew:** One boss (Leadership, Tactics), one pilot (Pilot (Large spacecraft)), one navigator (Astrogation), two sensors operators (Electronics Operation (Sensors)), two commo officers (Electronics Operation (Communications)), one computer officer (Computer Operation), 28 engineers (Engineering, Mechanic, etc.), three medics (Diagnosis, Electronic Operations (Medical), Physician), and up to 60 gunners (Gunner), who will double as traveling VIPs' bodyguards. Stewards will be required for additional passengers.

■ **Design:** 10,000-ton SL Hull, DR 200, 20 Turrets with 2 360-MJ lasers each, 20 Turrets with 2 Missile Racks each, 20 Turrets with 2 Sandcasters each, Command Bridge, Engineering, 759 Maneuver, 400 Jump, 3,000 Fuel, 150 Staterooms, 2 Sickbay, 16 Utility, 40 empty Turrets, 82 Cargo.

■ **Statistics:** EMass 14,513, LMass 14,923, HP 255,000. Hull Size modifier +12.

■ **Performance:** Accel 2 G, Jump 3, Air Speed 3,018.

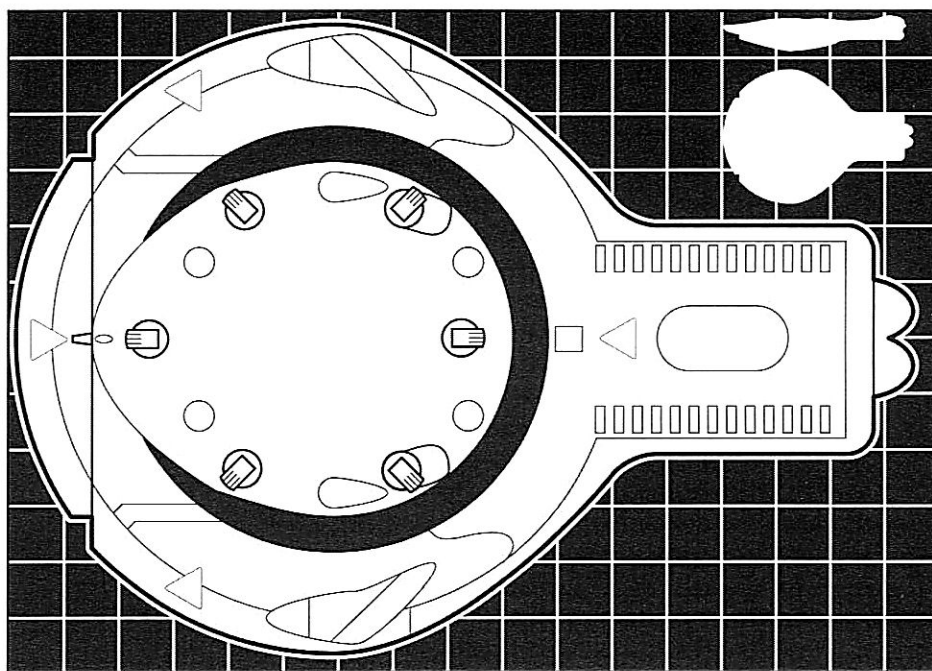
### *Eegur!gzeer-Class Fast Pursuit Vessel (TL10)*

This military craft is an uneasy compromise between J4 capability, local technological support, carrying capacity, and armament. It is a TL10 design with a TL12 jump drive.

The ship's name is a euphemism for counter-raider. It jumps to Vargr or neutral space soon after a hostile force crosses the K'kree border, shoots up the locals, then leaves. K'kree intelligence is usually good enough to send these craft to the right systems, but not always. Other missions are to maintain communications between the Empire and the Coreward outpost, and deep reconnaissance. The ship's high jump number and large contingent meant that a mass savings had to be made, hence the thin armor. The radical stealth and emissions cloaking were intended to compensate for this.

The Fast Pursuit Vessel is the smallest K'kree ship to mount weapon bays. They are mounted such that all five can fire on targets to the ship's front.

■ **Crew:** One boss (Leadership, Tactics), one pilot (Pilot (Large spacecraft)), one navigator (Astrogation), two sensors operators (Electronics Operation (Sensors)), two commo officers (Electronics Operation (Communications)), one computer officer (Computer Operation), 55 engineers (Engineering, Mechanic, etc.), two medics (Diagnosis, Electronic Operations (Medical), Physician), and up to 60 gunners (Gunner). Stewards will be required for additional passengers.





- **Design:** 10,000-ton SL Hull, DR 100, 3 Bays with Particle Accelerators, 2 Bays with Missile Racks, 20 Turrets with 2 360-MJ Lasers each, 20 Turrets with 2 Missile Racks each, 10 Turrets with 2 Sandcasters each, Radical Stealth, Radical Emission Cloaking, hardened Command Bridge, Engineering, 747 Maneuver, 500 Jump, 4,000 Fuel, 100 Staterooms, 1 Sickbay, 16 Utility.
- **Statistics:** Mass 16,936. Hit Points 255,000. Size Modifier +12.
- **Performance:** Accel 1.8 Gs, Jump 4, Air Speed 3,040.

### *Rr'xighik'ker-Class Frigate (TL 10)*

This ship is the standard internal security vessel and troop mover in the Two Thousand Worlds. Its Jump-1 engines limit its mobility, but it can use drop tanks to cross between Mains. All appropriate departure points and destinations maintain a stock of tanks for this purpose.

- **Crew:** One boss (Leadership, Tactics), one pilot (Pilot (Large spacecraft)), one navigator (Astrogation, Electronics Operations (Sensors)), 16 engineers (Engineering, Mechanic, etc.), two medics (Diagnosis, Electronic Operations (Medical), Physician), and 50 gunners who double as ship's troops. Stewards will have to be carried when troops or other passengers are aboard.
- **Design:** 5,000-ton SL Hull, DR 200, 20 Turrets with 2 360-MJ lasers each, 20 turrets with 2 missile racks each, 10 Turrets with 1 sandcaster each, Basic Stealth, Basic Emission Cloaking, Command Bridge, Engineering, 750 Maneuver, 100 Jump, 500 Fuel, 106 Staterooms, 1 Sickbay, 8 Utility, 29 Cargo.
- **Statistics:** EMass 8,067.45, LMass 8,212.45. Hit Points 165,000. Size Modifier +11
- **Performance:** Accel 3.7 Gs, Jump 1, Air Speed 3,873.

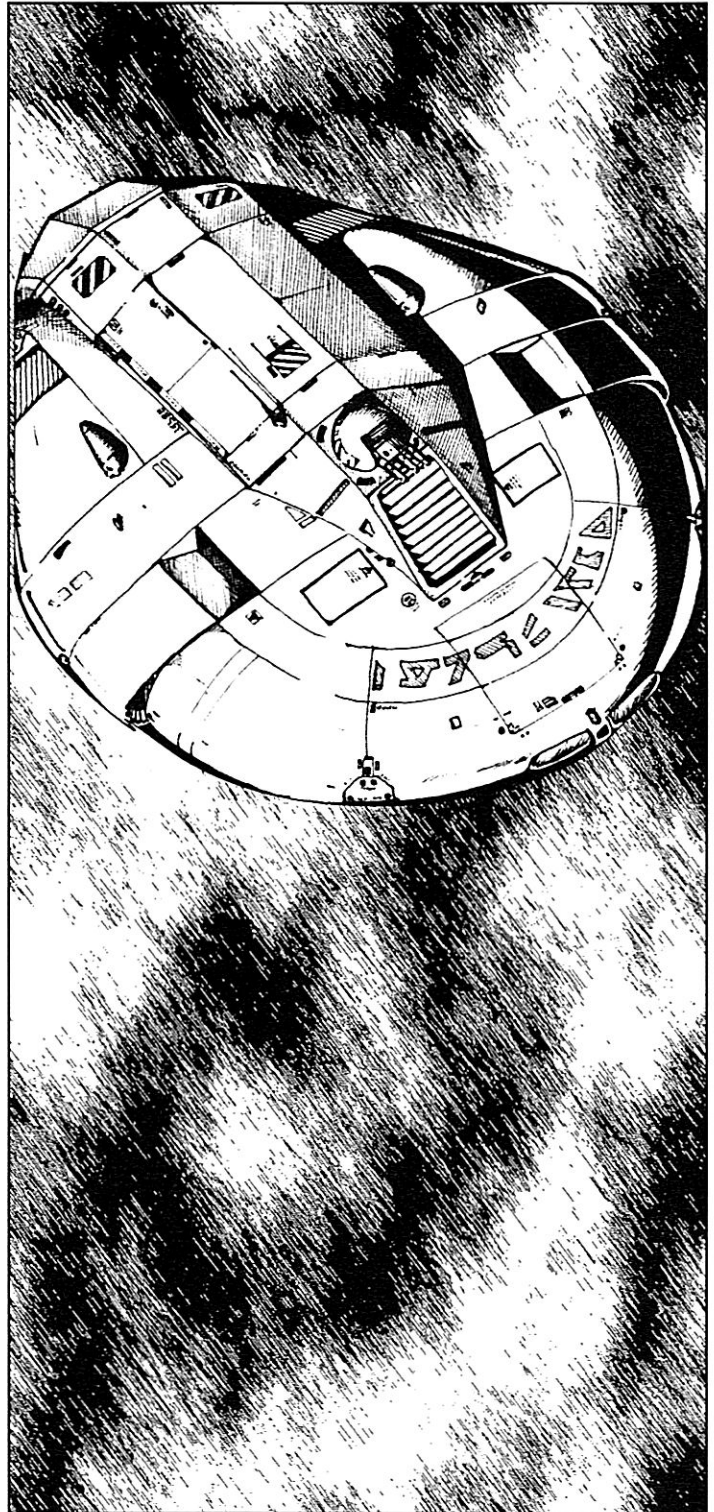
### *Xeekr'kir!-Class Merchant (TL 10)*

This is the K'kree equivalent of a Far Trader. Civilian ships are operated by prosperous, mentally robust families. The crew engage in some speculative trade, but their bosses usually have passengers and cargoes in mind. Ships which never get within 8 parsecs of a border do not mount weapons. Vessels entering foreign space always do. The military uses armed versions extensively.

- **Crew:** One boss (Leadership, Tactics), one pilot (Pilot (Large spacecraft)), one navigator (Astrogation, Electronics Operations (Sensors)), 25 engineers (Engineering, Mechanic, etc.), and two medics (Diagnosis, Electronic Operations (Medical), Physician). Stewards will have to be carried when passengers are aboard. Gunners will be required on armed versions.
- **Design:** 10,000-ton SL Hull, DR 100, Basic Bridge, Engineering, 800 Maneuver, 300 Jump, 2,000 Fuel, 42 Staterooms, 40 empty Turrets, 1 Sickbay, 16 Utility, 3,814 Cargo.
- **Statistics:** EMass 8,582, LMass 27,652, Hit Points 255,000, Hull size modifier +12.
- **Performance:** EAccel 3.7 G, LAccel 1.2 G, Jump 2, Air speed 3,447.

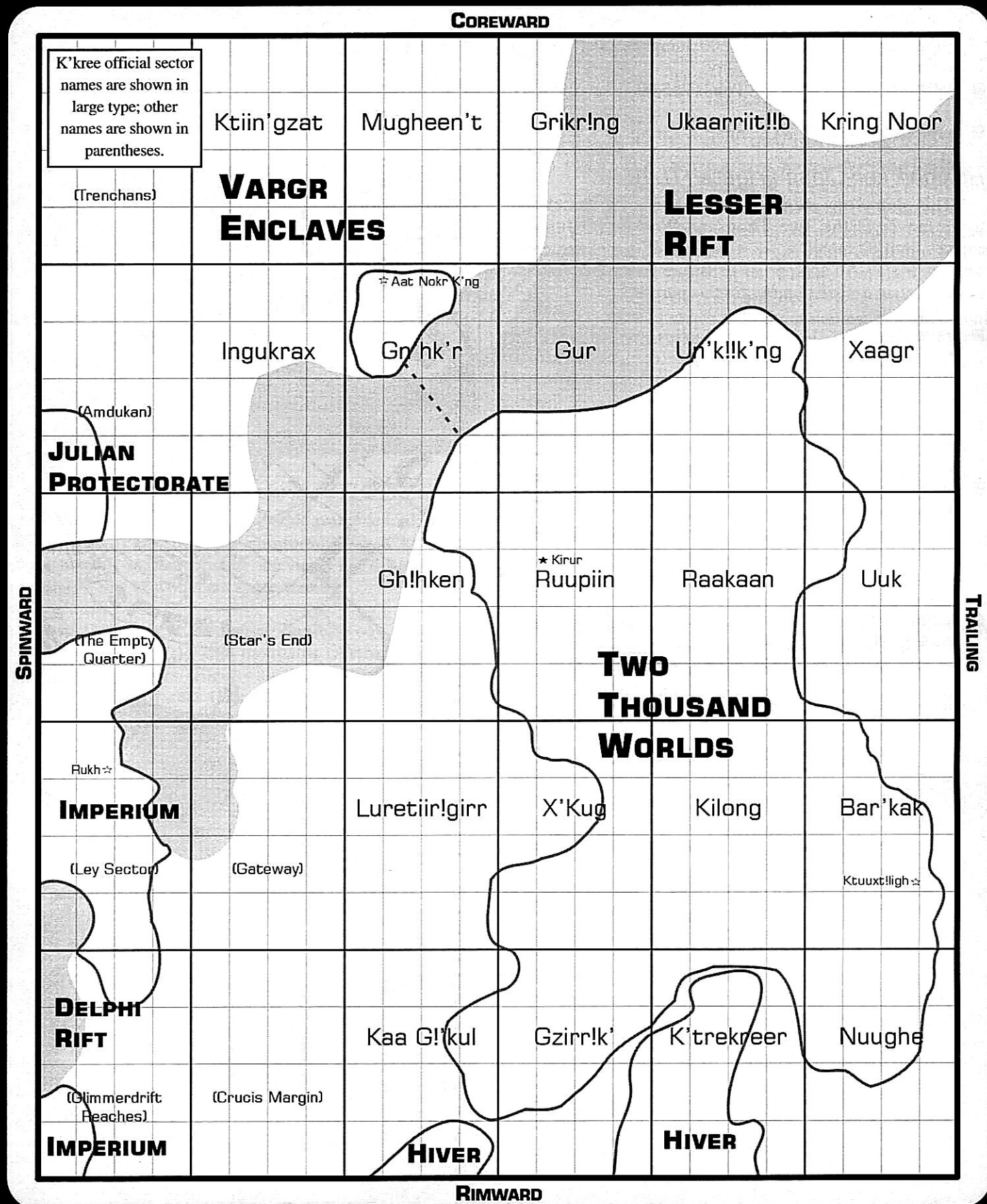
### *Kiitunor-Class Armed Trader*

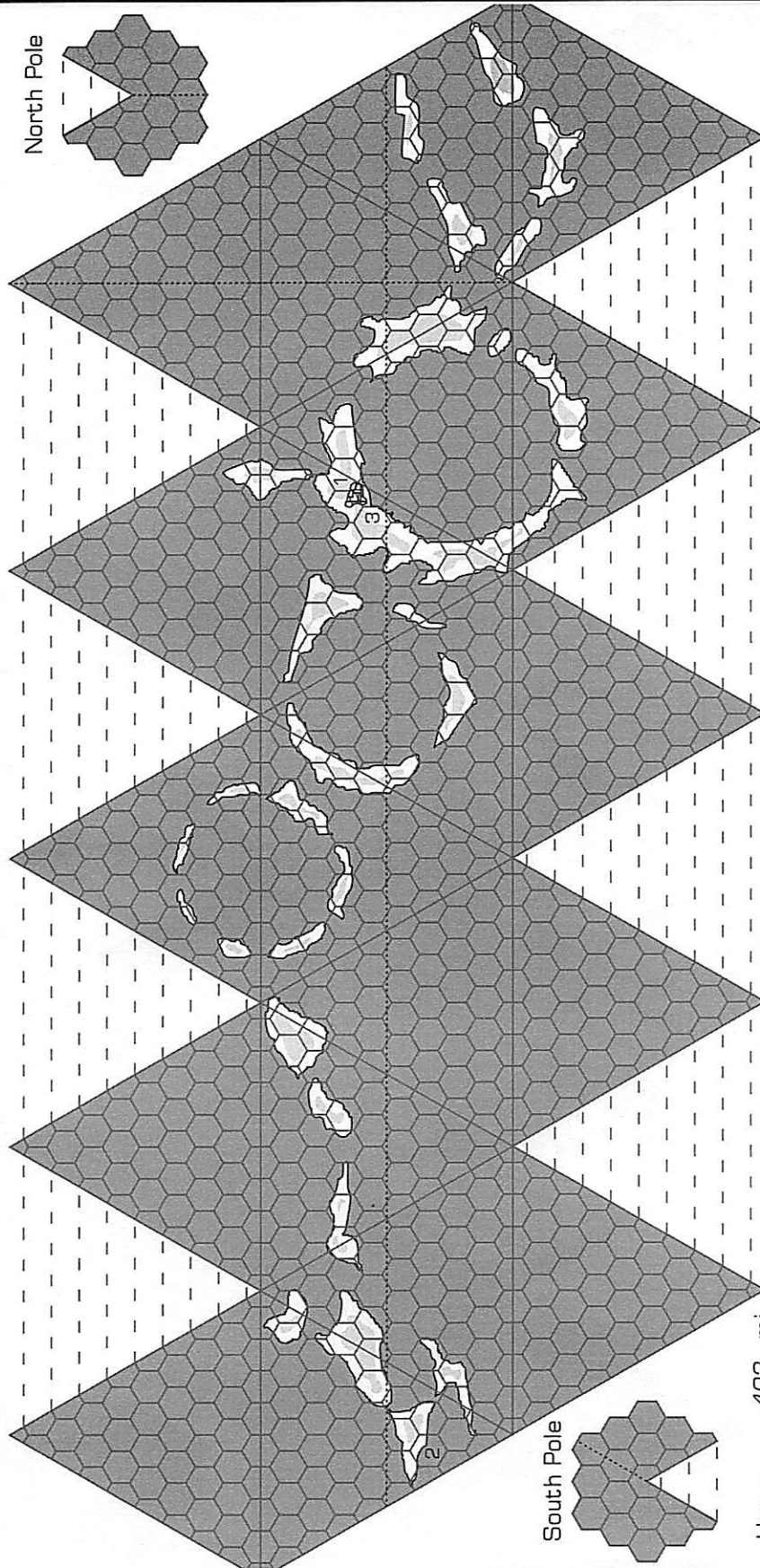
- **Design:** Add 2 360-MJ Lasers each to 4 Turrets, 2 Missiles Racks each to 4 Turrets, and 2 Sandcasters each to 4 Turrets. Add 12 gunners (Gunner), probably from family members of the boss.
- **Statistics:** EMass 9,222, LMass 28,292, Hit Points 255,000, Hull size modifier +12.
- **Performance:** EAccel 3.5 G, LAccel 1.1 G, Jump 2, Air speed 3,447.





# THE TWO THOUSAND WORLDS AND NEIGHBORING POWERS





Hex = 493 mi

Planet Type Terrestrial Diameter 7,037 mi Gravity 0.82 G Density 5.1 Composition Medium iron

Axial Tilt None Seasonal Variation None Length of Day 119.2 hrs Length of Year 105.5 days 1.2 Earth years

Atmosphere: Pressure Standard 0.81 atm Type and Composition Oxygen, nitrogen, and spare taint

Climate Coal Temperatures at 30° latitude: Low 50° Average 60° High 70°

Surface Water 87% Humidity 78% Primary Terrain Rough, forested islands

Mineral Resources: Gems/Crystals Absent Rare Minerals Absent Radioactives Extra Plentiful

Heavy Metals Rare Industrial Metals Ample Light Metals Ample Organics Ample

Moons None. Kirrixur is a moon of Kirur.

**Biosphere:** Dominant Life Form \_\_\_\_\_

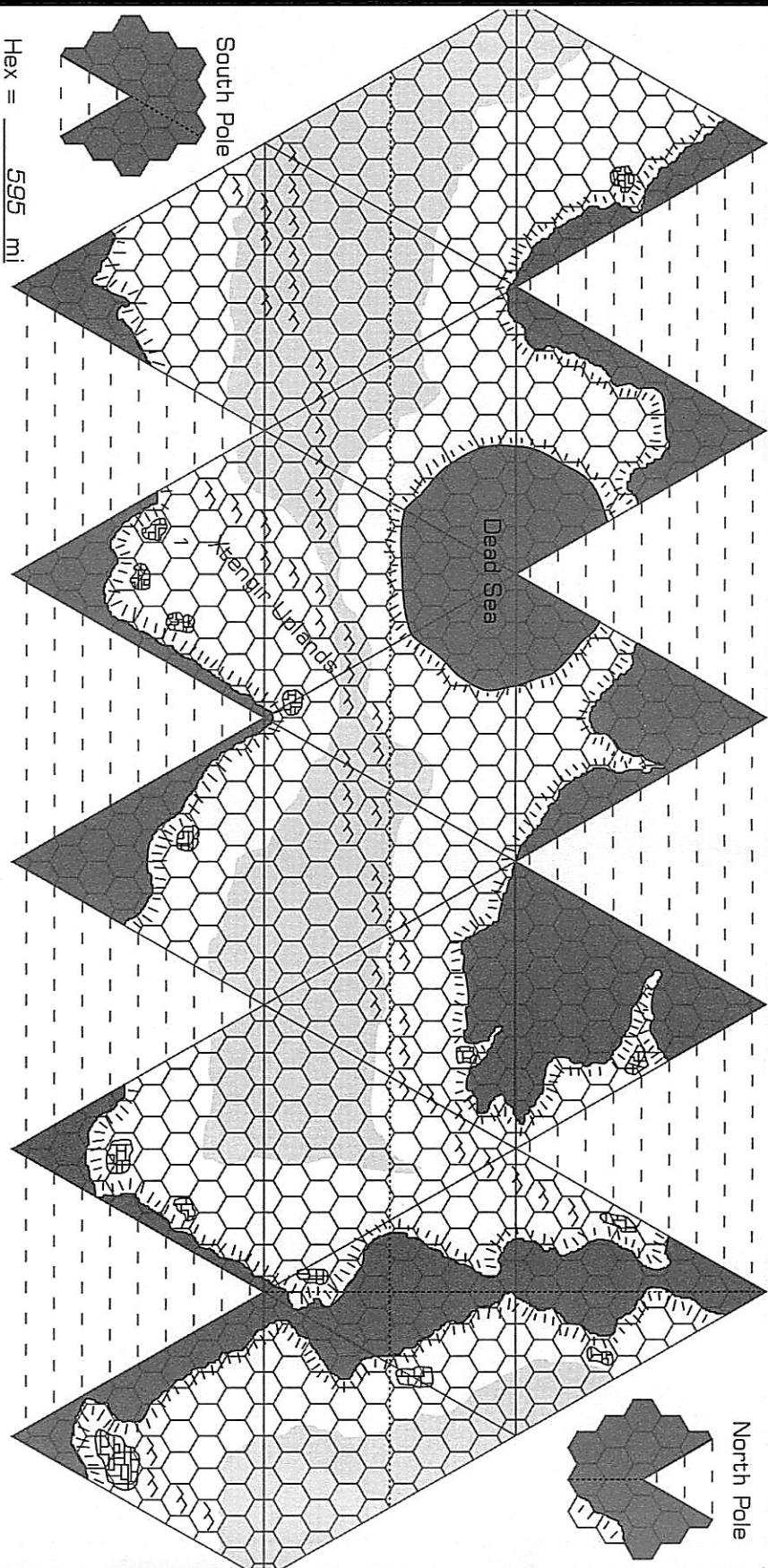
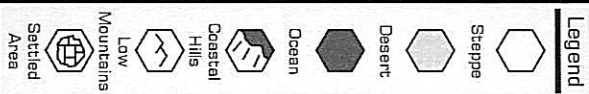
Other significant life forms K'kree

**Civilization:** Populations(s) 55 billion K'kree Tech Level(s) 10 Control Rating Q(5)

Society Extended family

Starports None. Spaceport at Compact Fire (location 1)

Installations Aquatic Warfare School (location 2), Penal Legion Depot (location 3)



Hex = 595 mi

Planet Type Terrestrial Diameter 8,500 mi Gravity 1.07 G Density 5.5 Composition Medium iron

Axial Tilt 1° Seasonal Variation None Length of Day 28.6 hrs Length of Year 368 days Earth years

Atmosphere: Pressure Standard 0.93 atm Type and Composition Oxygen, nitrogen

Climate Cool and dry Humidity 27 % Primary Terrain Steppe and semi-desert Temperatures at 30° latitude: Low 40° Average 60° High 80°

Surface Water 31 %

Mineral Resources: Gems/Crystals Absent Rare Minerals Absent Radioactives Scarce

Heavy Metals Absent Industrial Metals Ample Light Metals Ample Organics Ample

Moons Kirixur at 13 diameters (110,500 miles)

**Biosphere:** Dominant Life Form K'Kree

Other significant life forms None

**Civilization:** Populations(s) 10.5 billion K'Kree Tech Level(s) 10 Control Rating 0/51

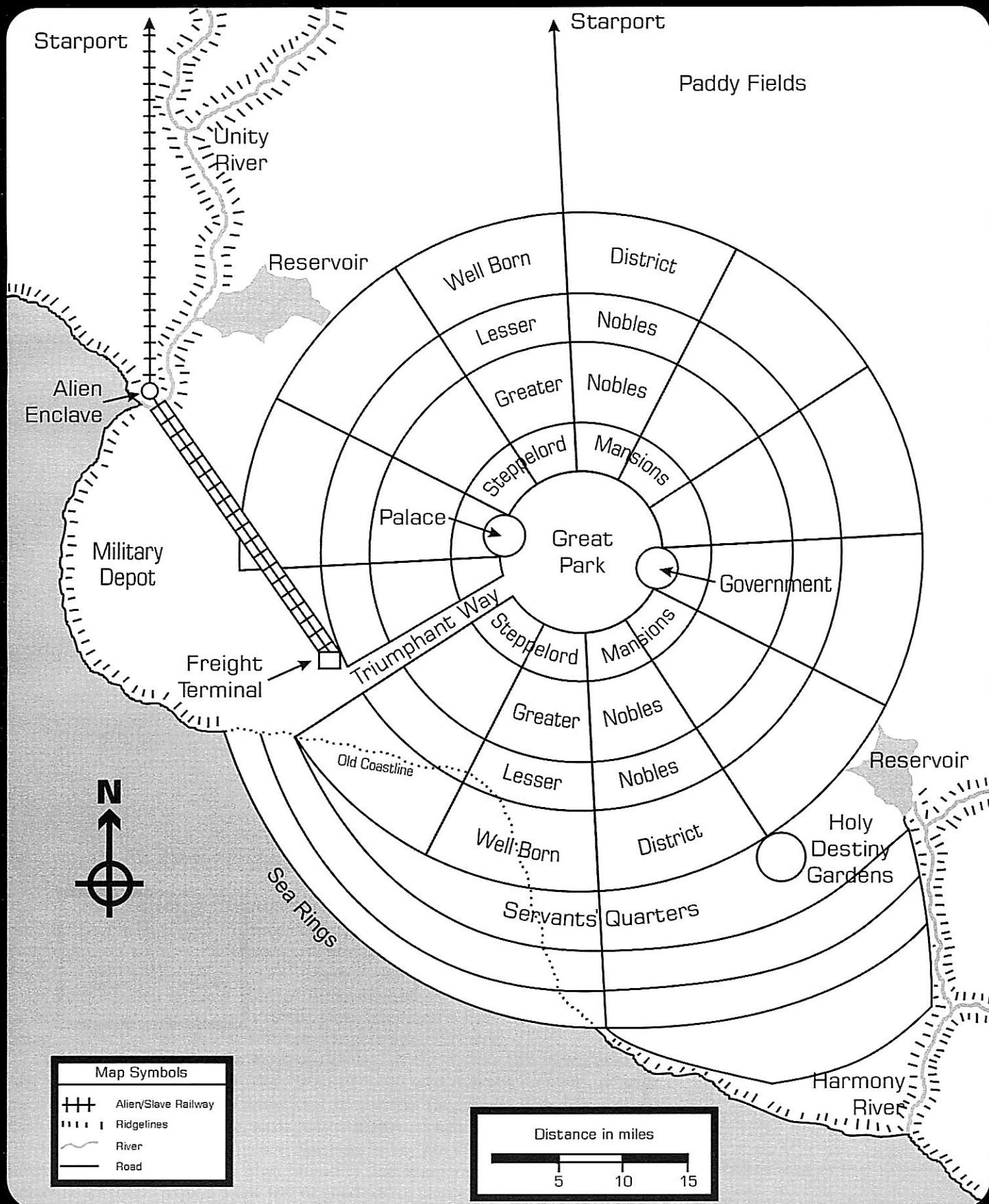
Society Extended family

Starports Class IV at capital (Rak'keer, location 1) and in orbit

Installations Military depot, Seat of Imperial Government, University, and School of Diplomacy (all at Rak'keer)

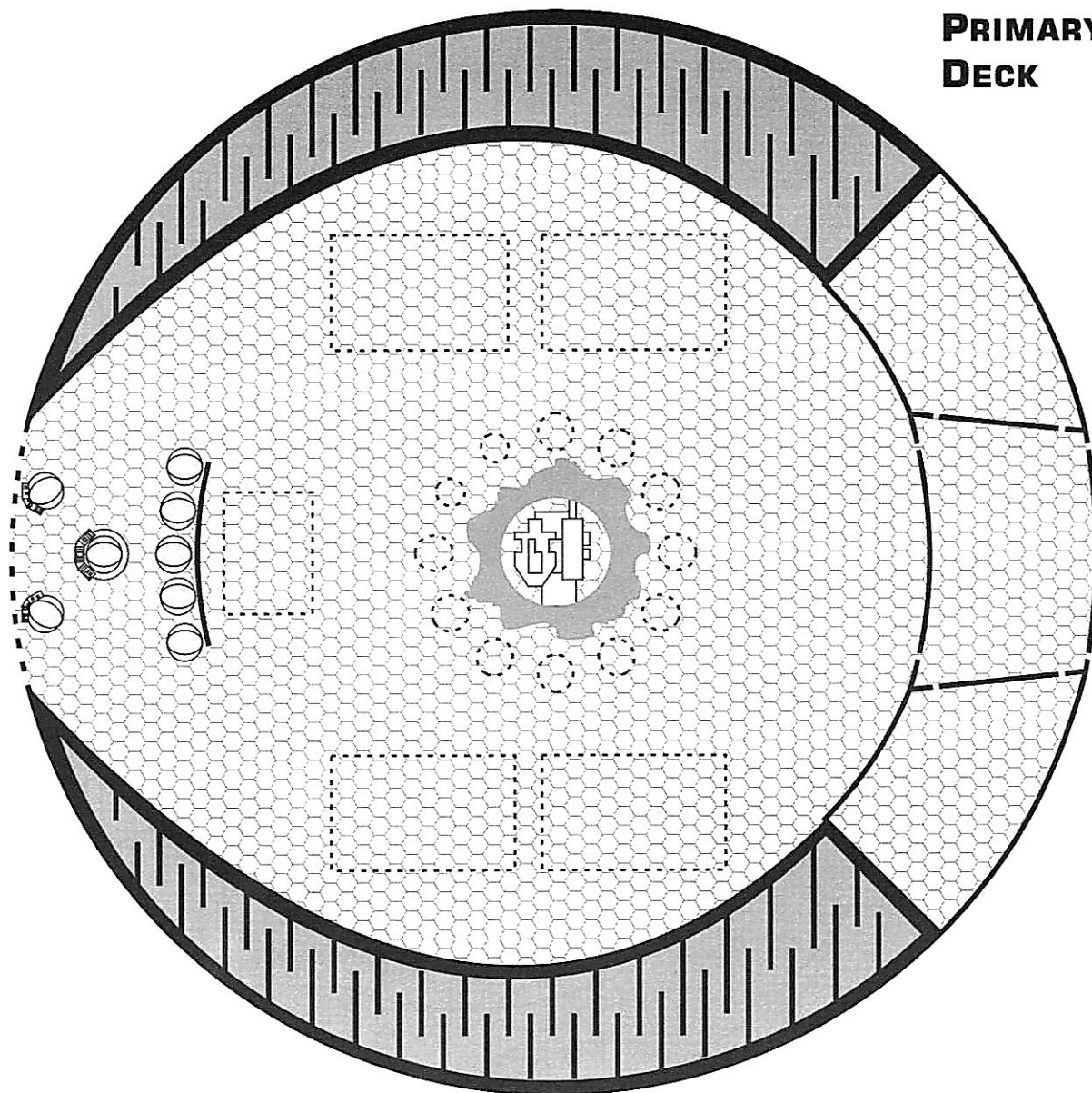


# RAK'KEER!: CAPITAL OF THE TWO THOUSAND WORLDS







# KIITUNOR-CLASS ARMED TRADER

## PRIMARY DECK



### Deck Plan Symbols

-  Airtight Bulkhead
-  Acceleration Couch
-  Recessed Gunner Station
-  Drive Access Panel

Note: Engines and other equipment are located below the primary deck, and are accessed by hidden floor panels.

ONE HEX  
EQUALS 1 YARD

SCALE IN YARDS

3 6 9

# The Devi Intelligence

## CHAPTER THREE

Devi is a warm, wet planet, slightly smaller than Earth, with a relatively slow rotational period and a dense atmosphere. The world's heavy cloud cover and long nights favored the development on land of fungi-equivalents over chlorophyll-using plant species. Over the eons, pseudo-fungi evolved that were similar to animals, including mobile eaters of sedentary fungi and predators who fed on them. Meanwhile, life followed a more conventional path in Devi's oceans. Relatively recently (in evolutionary terms), some sea creatures evolved into amphibians, and crawled onto the land.



The resulting struggle between primitive animals and highly evolved plant life tossed up a mutant fungus – a predator gifted with psionic powers. With telepathic and telekinetic abilities, these creatures had the equal of Human eyes and hands. Evolution favored those members of the species who learned to use them cooperatively, merging their minds to increase the power and intellect at their disposal. Over millions of years, the ancestors of the Devi Intelligence became a single sentient being, a collective intelligence with considerable psionic powers.

The Devi Intelligence (or *Kirrkruxughring*, as the K'kree call them) exists in two forms: the *Intellects*, stationary sentient fungi who resemble colonies of giant toadstools, and their mobile carnivorous spores, the *Shiverbats*. Both forms of the Devi Intelligence are plant life, analogous to highly sophisticated fungi.

Offworld, the Devi Intelligence can exist in any environment that Humans can inhabit, though moderate to high humidity and temperature are preferred. The immobile Intellects require a few feet of good soil or compost.

### First Contact

**D**evi (located in the Crucis Margin) was first surveyed by the Imperium circa 500 (Imperial), although no manned landing is recorded. The system fell into the K'kree sphere of influence during a minor territorial realignment, but the planet's climate delayed any serious exploration until 1070, when an ambitious boss decided to mount a comprehensive planetary survey.

The explorers originally took little notice of the Intellects – just one more “strange fungus” among many. First contact was made by the Intelligence, after it received reports of large flying objects (grav vehicles), and it directed Shiverbats to investigate. Its long racial memory assumed the K'kree were sea creatures, some new form of amphibious life arisen from the alien depths. K'kree explorers had food and weapons telekinetically snatched by curious Shiverbats; the K'kree were both appalled and impressed by their curiosity and abilities. Before violence could break out, the Devi Intelligence used telepathy to contact the expedition leaders.

The discovery that both the native Devi Intelligence and Shiverbats were sapient initially aroused consternation; the K'kree feared they had encountered a planet of psionic *g'naak*. Further contact revealed that while the Shiverbats behaved like predators, their “prey” was merely mobile vegetation. In other words, they were vegetarians. After some philosophical debate, a decision was reached that the Devi Intelligence was not *g'naak* after all.

The Intellects had similar difficulty coming to terms with the K'kree. After they comprehended the idea of other planets (the best analog was “distant islands in the sky”), the Intelligence became interested in expanding to encompass them.

The Intellects were given the name *Kirrkruxughring* (loosely, “mysterious thinkers of the forest”), and permitted to join the Two Thousand Worlds as one of the K'kree's subject races.



## K'kree-Devi Relations

The K'kree have only a mild interest in Devi itself. The planet's warm, wet jungle is not a pleasant environment. In fact, it reminds them uncomfortably of their own moon. The main utility of the Devi Intelligence to the K'kree is the race themselves – in particular, the juvenile Shiverbat form. A Shiverbat's small size and psionic aptitude makes it useful for several tasks that K'kree find unpleasant. Local *Krurruna* have found Shiverbats helpful for maintenance in confined spaces (such as ducts), acting as scouts for vermin exterminators, and serving as mobile telepathic translators when dealing with foreigners.

## SHIVERBATS

The spores, or Shiverbats, are the juvenile form of the Devi Intelligence. Shiverbats resemble giant eyeless slugs with two bat-like wings. They are a mottled gray-green, and their only facial feature is a large mouth with thorn-like teeth.

The average Shiverbat is 2 feet long with a 4-foot wingspan, and weighs about 50 lbs.

Shiverbats are psionic carnivores. They move by psionic levitation, propelling themselves through the air telekinetically at an average speed of 30 mph. Their wings provide no lift, but allow fine control. They are consummate aerialists, and can accelerate instantly to full speed, stop on a dime, or perform complex aerobatics.

### Senses

Shiverbats lack any analog to the Human senses of hearing or sight. They have secondary senses of smell and touch, both several times more acute than a Human's. Their name comes from their primary sense, the ability to use their telekinesis in a sonar-like fashion to scan the area around them. The fleeting caress of their mental fingers is the only warning that a Shiverbat is hunting.

---

*"To K'kree, all life is divided into two groups: plants and animals. The concept of a "moving plant" strains their view of the universe slightly, but they can accommodate it. After all, plants often move too slowly for the changes to be perceived by most of us . . . The concept of an intelligent plant, however, is totally alien to them – and anathema. To acknowledge that something can be, at the same time, plant (and a potential food source) and intelligent (and therefore in some measure animal) would undermine their world view. Thus, they cannot and do not acknowledge such a thing is even possible . . . The Devi, as the first 'plant' the K'kree encountered that showed clear signs of intelligence, placed a strain on this philosophy."*

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*– Dr. Karla Shemi, Gould Professor of Sophontology, University of Terra*

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In exchange for providing tributary labor, the K'kree have permitted the Devi Intelligence to establish offworld colonies on two other planets, both of them hot, wet worlds unappealing to the K'kree. In each case, the world contained large numbers of non-sapient meat-eating vermin, which the Shiverbats were expected to assist in disposing of (but not by *eating*). At present, the combined offworld colonial population is about 3,000 Intellekts and ten times that many Shiverbats.

Shiverbats also serve as levies or mercenaries with the K'kree's *Kitunika'rra* ("Vermin Exterminator") military. Thanks to their small size, psionic senses, and lack of claustrophobia, Shiverbat packs make valued scouts, particularly for jungle, forest, and built-up (non-K'kree) urban areas. As usual with K'kree, the pay is decent but the risk is great, as K'kree commanders have little concern for subject troops' survival.

Excluding those on the two colonies, there are probably about 2,000 Shiverbats offworld at any given time.

### Diet

Shiverbats are omnivore/hunters. Normally, they eat various mobile fungoid lifeforms, the most common of which are small hopping creatures resembling blind two-legged rabbits, as well as certain types of immobile fungoids.

If necessary, they can live entirely on rotting vegetable matter, although they would need to eat a lot of it. They would have no trouble living off typical ship's rations. Since most K'kree find it emotionally upsetting to see Shiverbats hunting down and eating "mobile vegetables," they restrict themselves to "dead" diets when in the presence of Centaurs.

### Lifespan and Reproduction

Shiverbats grow throughout their lives, gradually becoming slower but more psionically powerful. About one in four Shiverbats survives local predators, accidents, and microorganisms to reach their full growth. After 15 years, a Shiverbat will be 5 feet across and weigh 70 lbs. – ready to begin the metamorphosis into adulthood. It will begin making a nest from a pile of compost or carrion. It will then burrow into the ground and roll itself into a ball, entering a hibernation trance in which all its stored energy is used to power its metamorphosis. During this time, other Shiverbats will keep intermittent watch over it, to protect it from burrowing scavengers and predators. After about two months in hibernation, the Shiverbat will emerge from the ground as an adult Intellect, the mature form of the Devi Intelligence.

For Shiverbat "mating," see *Social Structure* on p. 130.

# INTELLECTS

The Intellects are mottled gray-green toadstools, standing 3 to 10 feet tall. They are covered with transparent bumps – growing Shiverbats – and small circular orifices. These openings are feeding maws; every so often, an unwary pseudo-fungoid creature (usually no larger than a mouse) is grabbed by the Intellect's telekinesis and propelled inside.

The most notable ability of the Intellects is their psionic power. Their telepathic and telekinetic abilities evolved to protect them against other predators, and enable them to communicate with the wide-ranging Shiverbats.

## Senses

As with the Shiverbats, the Intellect's primary means of receiving sensory impressions are telekinetic in nature (with a range of 200 meters). Like the Shiverbats, they also have secondary olfactory, tactile, and electromagnetic senses.

## Diet

The Intellects consume rotting vegetable matter and the occasional pseudo-fungoid snagged by their TK.

## Lifespan and Reproduction

As a communal mind, the Devi Intelligence itself is effectively immortal. The physical form of an Intellect lives for about 90 standard years. Several times during its life, an adult Intellect will begin growing spores – the Shiverbats.

Four or five Shiverbats will develop in “pockets” near the surface of the Intellect, like bulging tumors. After three years of growth, the thin membrane covering the pocket will break (without harming the Intellect), and out will burst a new-born Shiverbat.

# LANGUAGE

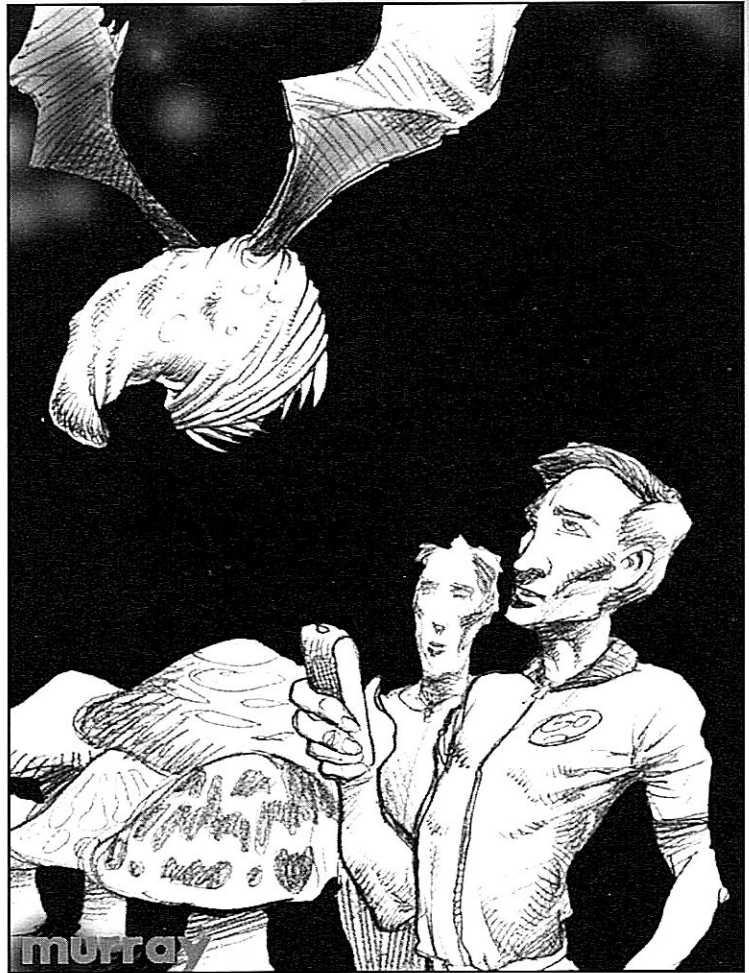
Intellects and Shiverbats communicate strictly by telepathy. Shiverbats are usually not good telepaths, but can convey basic concepts to each other and to Intellects, and with effort can send messages to other species. Intellects are master telepaths, easily as skilled as, say, the Zhodani.

## Names

Shiverbats have no names – they know who they are. In telepathic contact, they refer to themselves as “this seed” and the Devi Intelligence as “we.” If traveling among aliens, they may allow their companions to choose names for them. Intellects have little in the way of identity. They refer to themselves as “we” or, more formally, as “this intelligence.”

# PSYCHOLOGY

When sleeping, the Shiverbats share their mind with the Intellect that spawned them, experiencing – in a second-hand, dream-like fashion – the vastness of the collective Intelligence itself. During the day, they are independent entities under their own volition. Their intellectual capacity is uncertain, but seems to be about that of a Human teenager.



## Interstellar Relations

**A**s a weird mass-mind with strange psionic powers, the Intellects are not trusted by the Herd. Devi itself has been interdicted by the K'kree, and the Devi Intelligence declared a subject race.

## Commerce

Devi has no technology to trade, and the Intelligence does not wish to risk ecological damage by allowing the homeworld's resources to be exploited. Nevertheless, the Intelligence wants something offworlders can provide – transport to other planets and territory to colonize, or money to buy that territory. So what can the Devi Intelligence trade for what it wants?

The obvious answer is labor. If suitably planted (perhaps in a hydroponics deck) and provided with food and fertilizer, an adult Intellect can actually serve as a useful crewman on a starship. With a complement of Shiverbats to act as its hands and feet, it can even provide security or scouting functions on a trading, military, or exploration ship.

## Technology and Trade

**T**he Devi Intelligence is non-technological, but understands (and fears) alien technology. However, rather than learn to use complex devices, the Devi Intelligence prefer to refine their own psychic abilities, either by finding new uses for existing powers, or by devising entirely new abilities.

Shiverbats have more interest in technology. A Shiverbat traveling with aliens could be taught (or discover on its own) how to use its telekinetic abilities to press buttons, open doors, and perform other simple tasks.

On their own, the Shiverbats do not make tools, but they sometimes use their TK to create abstract patterns in sand, pebbles, bones, or driftwood. Much of their "art" can only be perceived by someone with TK or sonar; it is designed to feel good when signals are bounced off it.

---

*"In exchange for providing tributary labor, the K'kree have permitted the Devi Intelligence to establish offworld colonies on two other planets, both of them hot, wet worlds unappealing to the K'kree. In each case, the world contained large numbers of non-sapient meat-eating vermin, which the Shiverbats were expected to assist in disposing of (although not by **eating**)."*

---

## Shiverbat Psionics

**S**hiverbats do not require institutes for psionic training, thanks to their racial memories.

### Shiverbat Telepathy

Note that Shiverbats will generally know each other intimately, giving a +2 to skill (see p. B167). Shiverbats will generally *not* have their Mind Shield up, since at their skill levels it usually interferes with their own telepathy.

### Shiverbat Levitation

See p. B173 for Levitation rules. A Shiverbat does not normally require die rolls or use fatigue to levitate (see *Power and Skill*, and *Fatigue Cost* on p. B165). An average 50-lb. Shiverbat with PK Power 11 (treated as 21 for use of the Levitation skill) gets Move 15 (30 mph).

Much of a Shiverbat's time is spent satisfying its appetite. When not hunting, they are inquisitive and playful, often engaging in aerobic chases (or dances) and games of telekinetic tag. Shiverbats are fascinated by other creatures (when they aren't eating them) and will often catch a fish or mobile fungus to "play with" rather than eat. They are intensely curious, and will often experiment with strange and interesting things regardless of the potential danger.

Shiverbats appear to have little "affection" for other Shiverbats or Intellects in the Human sense. They do possess a strong cooperative survival instinct which leads them to form larger social bonds and which can lead one Shiverbat to risk itself to help another or to aid an Intellect.

All Shiverbats carry the potential race memory of their entire species encoded in their body chemistry. Once a Shiverbat reaches adulthood and turns into an Intellect, it merges into the group mind of all Intellects, the Devi Intelligence. Until this happens, the Shiverbat only recalls these race-memories in a partial, dreamlike fashion.

No one – except possibly another group mind – understands the inner thoughts of the Devi Intelligence. Telepaths who have contacted it have come away with an impression of a vast, coldly logical sentience awash in a deep well of endless memory, the whole throbbing with a driving need to survive and to reproduce. The best analogy for the Devi Intelligence is a giant organic computer with each Intellect functioning as a combination sensor and manipulator. All of the Intellects exist as the same entity, thinking the same thoughts. Everything experienced by the race –

down to the dim morass of its presentient period eons in the past – is retained in the Intelligence's collective memory. Nevertheless, a certain amount of editing happens over time, so that some memories are recalled only vaguely.

The Devi Intelligence is totally ruthless. Since any single Intellect shares memory and consciousness with all other Intellects within range (on the same ship or planet), threats against a single fungus have little effect. Only a threat to a sizable number of Intellects, or the planet itself, will bother it.

The Devi Intelligence fears the technology in the hands of other races. Nuclear weapons, or worse, biological or chemical herbicides, could totally annihilate it. As long as it remains limited to one planet, it faces possible extinction (from the K'kree as well as other races). Safety requires that it expand throughout the cosmos. To do this, it needs offworlders with starships to carry its spores, the Shiverbats, to other planets. The Intelligence realizes that its current two colonies (see sidebar, p. 128) are barely a start on this problem.

Most xeno-scientists who are aware of the Devi Intelligence believe its primary goal is to survive and expand. However, this may be simple-minded. Who knows what the Intelligence is thinking?

## SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The basic social organization of the Shiverbats is a "pack" consisting of three to eight Shiverbats spawned by the same Intellect. Shiverbats appear to have no form of social status; since they lack gender and are born fully able to care for themselves, every Shiverbat is equal.

Within the pack, Shiverbats are highly cooperative. They communicate among themselves via telepathy, play together, work together when hunting or to defend themselves, and act to rescue each other from danger.

Shiverbats of different packs do not hunt or play together, but neither do they compete, restricting their hunts to defined territories. Every so often, members of different packs (recognizable to a Shiverbat by subtle chemical cues similar to pheromones) will mate to exchange genetic material, a process they find pleasurable. However, an "exchange" is not necessary for reproduction, and does not result in progeny.



## POLITICAL STRUCTURE

As a collective mind, the Intellects have no political or social hierarchy among themselves. Intellects that spread to other planets are outside the reach of their brethren's telepathy and no longer part of the group consciousness. Although they still retain all racial memories, they no longer share real-time experiences. Eventually, the extraterrestrial branches of the Intelligence would gradually drift (culturally and mentally) apart from the prime colony on Devi, becoming separate beings.

To counter this, offworld colonies use Shiverbats as messengers to maintain cohesion between separate colonies of the Intellects. This can work because each newly budded Shiverbat contains the complete genetically encoded memory of the Intellect (and hence the Intelligence) that spawned it. By periodically exchanging Shiverbats, who will then grow into Intellects and merge their memories with the local Intelligence, a form of interstellar rapport can be maintained.

A Shiverbat (or a pack) experienced in dealing with aliens is more likely to be chosen as a messenger. This is one reason that a particular Shiverbat may travel a lot.



## COMBAT AND MILITARY

In battle, Shiverbats and Intellects will use their psionics both to directly attack enemies and to coordinate their own operations. They make considerable use of psionic gestalts (see sidebar). After detecting their prey, the pack will close in and intensify their telekinesis. The victim will be suspended in the air, dangling helplessly while the Shiverbats take turns making attack runs and tearing with their teeth. Shiverbats can also attack by flying at targets at high speed, battering their foes much as do dolphins, although this is most effective against small targets. Shiverbats are vulnerable to advanced weapons, though their high speed enables them to evade many attacks.

Shiverbats experienced with high technology are much more dangerous. A Shiverbat can telekinetically pick up and fire a gun or toss a hand grenade; it can also pull the same tricks that Zhodani "scramblers" perform, removing pins from enemy grenades, clicking on safeties, or hitting magazine-release levers, activating or deactivating devices at inopportune moments, and so on.

## Telepathic Gestalts

**S**hiverbats and/or Intellects can combine their minds to focus their power. This is known as a gestalt.

One member of the gestalt is the coordinator. Each individual must enter full communion (see p. B169, *Two-Way Communication*) with the coordinator.

A gestalt can only initiate a single psionic feat at once, as directed by the coordinator. Compute range from the coordinator. The skill is that of its most skilled member, but any fatigue loss and effects of critical failures are jointly suffered by all participants. The strength of a gestalt's Power in the ability it is using is equal to that of the most powerful member in the group, plus a bonus based on a fraction of the total power (in that ability) of all other members. The bonus is equal to the square root of the total added Power, rounded down. For example:

Power	Total Bonus
1-3	+1
4-8	+2
9-15	+3
16-24	+4
etc.	etc.

## Adventure Seed: Sporequest

**T**he Tozjabr (Zhodani Intelligence) have heard vague rumors of the Devi Intelligence. They believe that an intelligent psionic mass mind is worthy of study. Zhodani agents in the Spinward Marches (perhaps posing as a scientific institution, or working through allies in an Imperial psi institute) hire a free trader for a lengthy journey from the Marches to K'kree space. The mission: to acquire either an Intellect or one or more Shiverbats and return them to the Consulate. Getting them through both K'kree and Imperial space will be an epic adventure, but the Zhodani are willing to pay well. After all, once they have Shiverbats in their hands, they can breed their own...

## Adventure Seed: Fungus Among Us

Intellects and Shiverbats know better than to settle on K'kree worlds without permission, but that does not mean they cannot expand outward. With Shiverbats serving as crew (or stowaways) on K'kree and other subject race ships, some are bound to work their way into alien space.

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*"Examining the tendency of the Devi Intelligence to conceal its presence by psionic powers yields some interesting questions. On many worlds, there are remarkably consistent tales of kidnappings by strange creatures and 'missing time,' in some cases dating back thousands of years. Do these stories have a common link? Are there undiscovered colonies of Devi within the Imperium? Did the Ancients discover the Devi Intelligence and carry out transplantations?"*

---

*– Dr. Karla Shemi*

---

If a maturing Shiverbat visits a suitable planet (probably a colony world, largely rural and lightly inhabited), it might jump ship and find a place in the wilderness to "take root." If it settles far from civilization, after several years a small, unauthorized colony of the Devi Intelligence may spring up.

The Intellect colony may use psionics or Shiverbat patrols to conceal its presence. Rumors of strange disturbances, "missing time" (from telepathic mindwipe), or other oddities will lead the Human colonists to hire offworld hunters, explorers, or investigators to get to the bottom of it. Will they settle things peacefully with the Intellects, or will hiring mercs to "clean out" the infestation be the next step?

## Devi: The Homeworld

Devi is the second planet of a K0 V star in the Crucis Margin sector. The system also contains two gas giants, a hot rockball, and three iceballs. Devi has a medium-sized moon, Swami, which is 2,200 miles across and quite airless. The starport (a small K'kree outpost) is located on the moon. Some K'kree merchant traffic passes through the Devi system, usually pausing only to refuel at a gas giant rather than visiting the inner system.

*Continued on next page . . .*

## CHARACTERS

With the GM's permission, a player may have a Shiverbat as a PC. In a K'kree-centered campaign, the Shiverbat will probably be part of the crew, providing security, telepathic translating, and mechanic duties. On a Human or other alien ship, the Shiverbat may have been accidentally picked up by an exploration team or freighter (perhaps having jumped ship from a K'kree vessel) or is "working passage" in return for food or transport; it may also be on a mission from an Intellect, or hoping that when it grows up, it will be able to plant itself to start a new Devi Intelligence colony on a suitable world.

Shiverbats can be created using the Template system or the standard *GURPS* rules. Intellects on Devi are not suitable as PCs. An "uprooted Intellect" that is living aboard a K'kree starship could be playable in a ship-centered campaign; if so, the GM may allow one person to play both an Intellect and a Shiverbat ally, to give some additional mobility. A K'kree ship, which has a large open area with turf and dirt on the floor, would be ideal, but a "potted" Intellect living in a hydroponics deck or the like would be perfectly possible.

### Intellect

73+ points

**Attributes:** IQ +3 [30], HT +1 [10].

**Advantages:** Extra Hit Points +2 [10]; Mindshare: Global consciousness with intelligent drones over a planet-wide distance encompassing 2.4 million drones using normal telepathic means [148]; No Neck [5]; Racial Memory [40]; No Vitals [5]; Psychokinesis Level 4 [20]; Telepathy Level 7 [35].

**Disadvantages:** Blindness [-50]; Deafness [-20]; Laziness [-10]; No Manipulators [-50]; Primitive [TL0, -50]; Sessile [-50].

**Racial Skills:** Uncertain. An Intellect on Devi or one of the two mature colonies is likely to possess all Telepathy and Psychokinetic powers at IQ+5 or more, along with numerous other abilities, by virtue of sharing the skills of the Devi Intelligence. A single Intellect that has just founded a new branch on another world will have the skills it possessed as a Shiverbat.

### Shiverbat

35 points

**Attributes:** ST -2 [-15], DX +2 [20], IQ -1 [-10].

**Advantages:** Acute Taste and Smell +2 [4]; Cast Iron Stomach [15]; Combat Reflexes [15]; DR+1 [3]; Early Maturation Level 2 [10]; No Neck [5]; No Vitals [5]; Racial Memory [15]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Psychokinesis Level 11 [55]; Telepathy Level 6 [30].

**Disadvantages:** Blindness [-50]; Deafness [-20]; Chummy [-5]; Curious [-10]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Primitive [TL0, -50]; Reduced Hit Points -2 [-10]; Xenophilia [-5].

**Racial Skills:** Flight (Unwinged) (P/A) DX [0]-12; Levitation (M/H) IQ+3 [10]-12; Telereceive (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-10; Telesend (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-10; Telekinesis (M/H) IQ+1 [6]-10; TK Sense (M/H) IQ+3 [10]-12.

## NOTES ON ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Most social advantages and disadvantages are meaningless for Shiverbats unless they are part of interstellar society. Traveling Devi generally have low Wealth levels (often working passage) and the Barbarian or Outsider social stigma (p. B27).

## SKILLS

Many skills would be used in different ways by a Shiverbat than by a K'kree or Human. A Shiverbat using Tracking would not look at the ground for footprints, since it can't see. Instead it might scan undergrowth with its TK sense to find broken branches. Remember that Shiverbats cannot speak and have no arms or hands – they can only manipulate things through telekinesis and only communicate through telepathy (although they *could* learn to write by moving a pen telekinetically, for instance).

### TK Sense ★3

This M/H psionic skill is the ability to use telekinesis as a ranged active sensor, reaching out with a feather-light touch. The range is found using the Telepathy range table (p. B167). Thus, with Power 11, a Shiverbat has a sensory range of 200 yards.

Usually TK Sense provides only a general impression of location and size, much like a very quick glance, and is essentially unnoticeable. However, if a Shiverbat focuses on someone (which they will do when they are attacking, communicating, using psi powers, etc.), they can get a detailed tactile image roughly equivalent to a sonar picture, but with a better sense of body texture. This takes no special time – it's equivalent to a Human staring at someone – but because Shiverbat TK is “active,” they may feel a feathery touch across any exposed skin or light clothing. (People in armor, heavy clothing, etc., will not notice this.) GMs can require an IQ roll to identify this “shiver” sensation, with bonuses for Sensitive Touch.

TK Sense functions routinely without a skill roll (see p. B165), but the GM should roll against TK Sense rather than IQ to determine if the Shiverbat has detected someone or something.



## Devi: The Homeworld

[Continued]

### World Data

*Starport:* Class II. *Diameter:* 7,700 miles (12,400 km). *Density:* 5.4. *Gravity:* 0.94 G. *Composition:* Medium Iron. *Axial Tilt:* Slight. *Length of Day:* 20 hours. *Atmosphere:* Standard oxygen-nitrogen. *Surface Water:* 78%. *Climate:* Warm and wet. *Population:* 2.4 million Intellects. *Government:* Mass mind (Communism). *Control Rating:* 5. *TL:* 0.

Devi's climate (except for its polar latitudes) is a humid, tropical hothouse. It is a macabre, pastel world without the bright greens of earthlike biospheres, covered with vast low-lying forests of giant fungi. Rainfall is light to moderate during much of the year, but rains are often accompanied by thunderstorms. Hurricanes are common near the coasts, and there are terrible seasonal lightning storms. Devi's weather is violent enough to damage aircraft or shuttles, and should not be taken lightly.

Although the land ecology is dominated by fungi, there are some other creatures, especially primitive types like insects and burrowing invertebrates. The sea is filled with many different creatures, the most advanced being a form of amphibious crustacean vaguely resembling an insane hybrid of crayfish and electric ray.

Since the Shiverbats are not technological, Devi exists in an undeveloped state; there are no “cities” or “houses.” But the ecology is “managed” in one sense – Shiverbats actively herd or hunt predators that might menace the immobile Intellects, while carefully avoiding overhunting their own prey. Similarly, the Intellect population is deliberately spread out to ensure optimum hunting territories for the Shiverbats they spawn. Since each Intellect can communicate with every other on the planet without effort, they see no reason to cluster close together.

At present, the population of 2.4 million Intellects and about five times that number of Shiverbats has been deemed optimum. Only enough Shiverbats are budded to replace losses due to attrition and old age. Offworld colonies could easily double their population every decade.

*Continued on next page . . .*



## CHARACTER TEMPLATE

### Devi: The Homeworld

[Continued]

#### Swami

Swami has a population of 70 K'kree and a type II starport containing a small semi-automated redoubt. A pair of frigates and a squadron of robot fighters (pp. 121 and 118 respectively) are stationed there. The base has sufficient nuclear and fungicide warheads to devastate much of the planet. No Shiverbats or Intellects are permitted there.

The local *Krurruna* sends ships down to Devi every two K'kree years, picking up a levy of a few hundred Shiverbats for four or more years service in the military or whatever else the *Krurruna* requires. They also return any Shiverbats who have mustered out, or who are approaching adolescent stage.

Traders are permitted to visit Devi itself if they have permission from the *Krurruna*. They are free to "hire" Shiverbats for whatever terms they can negotiate, but Intellects are not permitted offworld. The frigates will search vessels to ensure this.

Similar installations exist on the other Devi colonies.

#### "Shiverbat Barbarian"

35 points

This is a typical Shiverbat serving offworld, often on a K'kree merchant or warship. Some have made their way into Hiver, Imperial, and Solomani space, where their rarity and small size allow them to masquerade as pets. Ship crews tolerant of psionics have found their talents very useful in both legal and illegal activities. An experienced Shiverbat traveler may use extra points to buy off the Primitive racial disadvantage, allowing it to acquire useful skills like Mechanic, learn to operate equipment with TK, etc.

**Attributes:** ST 8 [0], DX 14 [20], IQ 9 [0], HT 11 [10].

**Advantages:** A total of 10 points chosen from Alertness [5/level]; Fit [5]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Pitiabile [5]; Rapid Healing [5]; increased Psychokinesis [5/level]; Resistant to Poison [5]; increased Telepathy [5/level].

**Disadvantages:** Status -4 [-20] and a total of -15 points in Confused [-10]; Gullibility [-10]; Impulsive [-10]; Innumerate [-5]; Kleptomania [-15]; Semi-Literacy [-5] or Illiteracy [-10]; Struggling [-10] or Poor [-15]; Trickster [-15].

**Primary Skills:** Brawling (P/E) [2]-15 and Survival (Forest) (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-11, plus a total of 8 points in any Telepathy or Psychokinesis skills.

**Secondary Skills:** Camouflage (M/E) IQ+1 [2]-10; Stealth (P/A) DX+1 [4]-15; Tracking (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-10.

**Background Skills:** A total of 4 points in any of these skills picked up while traveling: Beam Weapons or Guns (P/E); Free Fall (P/A); Mechanic (M/A); Filch (P/A); or Pickpocket (P/H).

Note that TL-based skills require buying off Primitive.



# The Inyx

The Inyx are a race of aquatic, parasitic ergovores. Their ancestral hosts were whale-sized sea creatures who could generate electrical currents in the same manner as electric eels. The Inyx attached themselves to their hosts' bodies, feeding off this bio-electricity. To prevent their giant hosts taking offense, the proto-Inyx always trickled back a bit of the electric current they stole, in carefully modulated voltages designed to stimulate the pleasure centers of their hosts' brains, addicting them to the Inyx's presence.

Ecological turmoil resulting from a comet impact on their homeworld led to the rise of predators that found the hosts of the proto-Inyx especially tasty. To protect their hosts, the Inyx had to become more intelligent and cooperative. They developed the rudiments of sentient behavior, took their first steps out on land, developed fire and industry, and created a civilization that eventually reached into space.

The Inyx did not discover jump drive, but their slower-than-light ships reached nearby stars, aided by the species' natural longevity and low life-support requirements. Sometime during the Long Night, they contacted both Aslan and Solomani exploration missions; by carefully playing both sides against one another, they secured a place in the middle, establishing alliances with several Human client states and Aslan clans rimward of the Hierate. Today, the Inyx represent a potent economic force on the Rimward edge of known space. Their cultural adaptability, market savvy, and lack of territorial ambition help them secure corporate footholds on hundreds of Human, Aslan, and other worlds.

## PHYSIOLOGY

Visualize a collection of six soap bubbles, joined to form a roughly spherical shape, with one bubble in the center and the others spaced around it. Each bubble is 3 feet across, and the whole about 8 feet wide. Give every surrounding bubble a single opalescent tentacle, 6 feet long, 4 inches wide at the base, and tapering to a finger's breadth at the tip. The entire object gives off a soft phosphorescent glow. Underwater or in zero gravity, it swims like an octopus, moving with a boneless undulating grace. That's an Inyx.

Although they are carbon-based life forms utilizing traditional hydrogen-oxygen-carbon biochemistry, the Inyx push the edge of "life as Humans know it." Rather than being carnivores or herbivores, they are *ergovores*, living storage batteries who use their tentacles to convert electricity directly into the energy needed by their bodies. Even their brains and nervous systems have more in common (by analogy) with a fiber-optic computer than with what Humans expect of "life."

## Religion

**R**eligion is uncommon among the Inyx. They are atheists who only worship efficiency, and consider mystical experiences to be, at best, hallucinations or misunderstood psychic powers.

That is not to say the Inyx are indifferent to religion; they recognize its value as a tool and commodity. In fact, Affinity quietly owns interests in several Solomani and Aslan client-state religious organizations. On some worlds, it even runs many evangelical broadcasting stations.

Inyx do, however, enjoy being worshipped as gods by primitive societies. This is a prime "first contact" strategy recommended by Genesis Corporation's exploration arm.





## Recreation and Art

**P**hysical sports are not enjoyed by Inyx; they prefer intellectual games, from chess to intricate puzzles. They find Human popular culture (and those of most major races) endlessly fascinating, especially enjoying translations of written literature. They claim to enjoy the feel of Human sculpture, and to appreciate some forms of music. They lack a visual sense or the neurological "wiring" to interpret such information, so paintings, motion pictures, and holographic art do nothing for them.

Inyx believe that the greatest cultural invention of the Solomani was the bubble bath – they love the feel of warm water and exotic salts, oils, or soaps on their skin. An Inyx idea of a good rest is to relax in a bubble bath, scanning the latest financial reports while being stroked by the gentle fingers of a well-trained domestic.



## Clothing and Fashion

**T**he Inyx do not wear clothing, jewelry, or the like, primarily because of a lack of visual sensory apparatus. Personal equipment is usually carried in a spare tentacle. An Inyx may have a pouch for small personal items strapped to a tentacle, but one of any status is more likely to have a flunky carry its gear.

Inyx display rank and status through personal attendants; a high-ranking Inyx will be surrounded by servants and guards. Inyx slaves generally adopt the same clothing and fashion as their masters.

Inyx cannot generate powerful electric shocks, but they can deliver very precise low-voltage electric currents. With practice (involving complicated biofeedback techniques), an Inyx can learn to tune these pulses to interact with the nervous system of other beings, producing electronic ecstasy. If an Inyx touches most other species at the appropriate neural junctures (on most humanoid races, at the base of the spine) it can induce sensory pleasure. Doing this to aliens requires the Inyx to have made a careful study of the anatomy of the race in question.

## SENSES

Inyx skin contains many tactile receptors, and is highly sensitive. Much like cats, Inyx enjoy being stroked gently. Along with touch, their other major form of perception is vibrational – their entire skin surface acts as a receptor. They are sensitive enough to notice minute changes in air or water pressure, allowing an Inyx to detect moving objects within 100 yards underwater and 20 yards in a standard atmosphere. They also have good hearing in the same audio ranges as a Human.

Inyx do not have any direct analog to sight, smell, or taste. They do have one sense Humans lack: Their tentacles can measure voltage and amperage of an electrical current at a range of a few inches. They also can orient themselves on magnetic north.

## COMMUNICATION

Inyx communicate by touching tentacles, sending complex electrical signals into each other's bodies. They can exchange information, including what amounts to digital graphics, at about 10 times the speed a Human can talk.

Pre-industrial Inyx lacked a precise way to communicate over a distance in real time; being parasites, rather than predators or herbivores, this was not a serious handicap. (Imprecise methods – analogous to drum signals – were possible.) Modern Inyx wear radio communicators; they pulse directly into the communicator, which converts the signal into radio waves and sends it to another communicator.

Inyx writing began with engravings in rock and (on land) in sand. Modern Inyx writing is similar to Braille.

## MATING AND REPRODUCTION

Inyx reach maturity after 17 years, and live for about 200 years. They are asexual. They exchange genetic material through skin pores, a process which is triggered via electrical stimulation. Inyx generally mate three or four times during their lives. If two Inyx are embracing each other in their tentacles and covered in flickering blue sparks, they're probably mating, and *both* will become pregnant.

About a month after mating, the lower half of an Inyx's central bubble begins to bulge, as a fetal form develops there. After 10 months, it splits open, and a new Inyx is born from within.

## DIET

Inyx are ergovores, feeding on energy. Primitive Inyx drained bioelectricity from native sea creatures, but today most Inyx utilize electrical outlets or portable power cells. An Inyx can drain a "rB" cell in about 20 minutes, or spend roughly the same amount of time touching the power conduits of an electrical outlet. After doing so, it will have enough energy to function for an entire day. An Inyx who goes without electricity will suffer the same effects as a Human who has gone without both food and water over a similar period of time.



## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The Inyx evolved in the ocean depths of a planet with a 0.79 G gravity field and standard oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere. Inyx can survive in a wide range of temperatures (comfort zone is -20° F to 100° F), in any gravity Humans can take, and in any non-corrosive atmosphere with a pressure between 0.25 and 10 atmospheres.

Although they do not need water to breathe, they move most comfortably by swimming or by floating in micro- or zero-gee. Their tentacles are strong enough to lift them in normal gravity, but at a fairly slow pace. Inyx take naturally to zero gravity, suffering none of the hardships Humans do. When Inyx wish to move about out of water and in normal gravity, they wear grav belts. Other accessories usually carried are a translator, an electrical socket to draw energy from, and a link to the local communications and computer net.

## LANGUAGE

Inyx communicate by direct neural linkage. They can speak to Humans by plugging a tentacle into a portable translator, which converts their nerve impulses into sound. Even when translated, Inyx speech is rarely direct – instead, it is full of double meanings, subtle shadings of the truth, allusions, and metaphors.

### Names

Inyx names are untranslatable. When dealing with aliens, titles such as Project Initiator, Marketing Sub-Director, or Assisting Scientist are used alongside whatever local nickname they feel is appropriate to their culture.

Inyx always choose their own nicknames; they will not put up with anything abusive or insulting. Executives dealing with Solomani or Imperials currently favor the names of obscure Terran divinities.

## PSYCHOLOGY

Inyx tend to be lateral thinkers. An Inyx is always doing two or three things at once. They try to avoid relying on a single solution to a problem; they always have a contingency plan, or several such plans. As a result, it often seems that Inyx enjoy intricate schemes and complexity for their own sake. To a point, this is true. They like setting up and solving puzzles, and so make good scientists and administrators.

Inyx corporations often seem to create webs of obfuscating bureaucracy to ensnare the unwary. Some Inyx senior executives are masters of the convoluted plot and the double deal. Others are skilled psychologists (and xeno-psychologists), practiced in understanding what customers (of many species) *really* want.

The Inyx domesticated several undersea animals before they achieved language. As a starfaring race, they find it reasonable to do the same with intelligent beings. Despite this, most Inyx are neither physically cruel nor violent. They prefer more subtle means of coercion.

Inyx do not make friends easily, but an Inyx can have close acquaintances whom it respects; its “friends” are usually professional colleagues.

Mating is purely a thing that one does to produce offspring, a biological imperative performed at a certain point in life. Affection has no impact on choice of a mate – only desire for a good genetic match to produce a healthy child – and mates do not live together. The concept of “love” between unrelated adults does not exist, though Inyx nurture and care for their children as much as Humans do. Still, an Inyx can feel some degree of affection for a colleague, a pet, or a domestic servant.

Inyx are not cowards – they do not panic easily or run away from problems – but they are poor warriors: Their ancestors were never hunters, and it is a rare Inyx who has the temperament to make a good soldier. They delight in power struggles and challenges, but prefer contests more subtle than force of arms.

If a person makes an enemy of a powerful Inyx, it will rarely respond with direct violence. It would much rather destroy its opponent’s finances, blacken the

## Interstellar Relations

Inyx consider their own race superior to most others, but they are not xenophobes – in fact, they delight in encountering new species to learn from and exploit. Inyx are equal-opportunity employers, using trusted non-Inyx in all but the very highest levels of their corporations.

Inyx self-control, politeness, and family values play well in the Hierate. Because every Inyx can become pregnant, and because they have little taste for violence or interest in land (preferring aquatic territories and wealth), the Aslan consider them a “race of females” and let their own female-dominated corporations handle interactions with Inyx. This provides a foundation for business.

Inyx slaveholding has led to some bad publicity. However, Inyx are usually careful not to offend alien sensibilities. Slaves are referred to as “domestics” or “contract employees” in the hearing of foreigners, and care is taken to avoid giving local offense. (Thus, an Inyx planet in Aslan space would use Human or dolphin slaves.)

After some bad publicity a few hundred years ago, Inyx are now rather quiet on the details of how many non-Inyx slaves exist on Inyx planets; they are likely to number many billion.

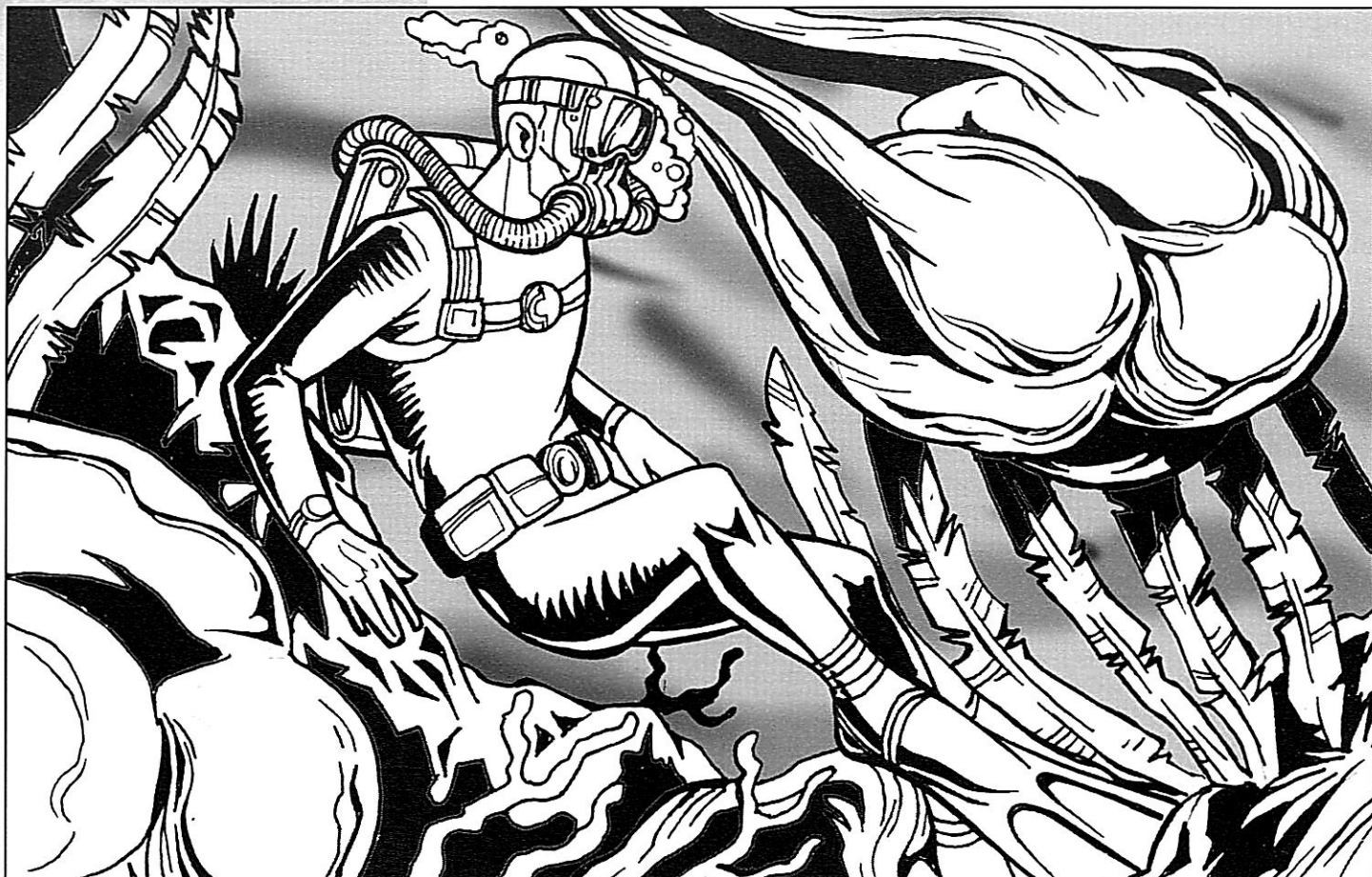
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*“Although they are carbon-based life forms utilizing traditional hydrogen-oxygen-carbon biochemistry, the Inyx push the edge of ‘life as we know it.’ Rather than being carnivores or herbivores, they are **ergovores**, living storage batteries who use their tentacles to convert electricity directly into the energy needed by their bodies. Even their brains and nervous systems have more in common (by analogy) with a fiber-optic computer than with what humans expect of ‘life.’”*

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## Slaves

**A**ll Inyx slaves will have Addiction (Inyx neuro-stimulus, totally addictive, incapacitating, legal) -20 points. Those conditioned from birth usually have a Sense of Duty to their owners.

**Dolphin Slave** 10 points  
ST +3 (No Manipulators, -40%) [18], DX +3 [30], HT +1 [10].

**Racial Advantages:** Absolute Direction [5], Acute Hearing +4 [8], Enhanced Move (Swimming) 2 [10], Extra Hit Points +5 [25], Sonar Vision [25], Ultrasonic Speech [25].

**Racial Disadvantages:** Addiction [-20], Aquatic [-40], Bad Sight [-10], Chummy [-5], Distractible [-1], No Manipulators [-50], Status -4 [-20].

**Gene-Altered Human Slave** -30 points

These Humans are bio-engineered to possess both gills and lungs (requiring TL9-10 genetic engineering).

**Advantages:** Gills [10].

**Disadvantages:** Addiction [-20], Status -4 [-20].

offender's reputation, sell his friends into slavery, and addict all his children to mind-destroying drugs. When there is a risk of physical conflict, Inyx rely on agents, mercenaries, and bodyguards, which may range from specially engineered fighting beasts to Human or alien soldiers (often slaves conditioned for absolute loyalty).

It would be a mistake to consider Inyx to be lacking in what Aslan or Humans consider virtues, however. From a Human perspective, the virtues of the Inyx include a willingness to subordinate the individual for the needs of the group, affection for its own children, a great deal of patience, a strong loyalty to its own species, and a vast appreciation for the culture (and art) of other races.

## SOCIETY

Inyx "families" consist of only a single adult and (if it has mated) its child, though co-workers or friends may share quarters. Children are greatly prized and carefully nurtured, with much affection lavished on them. They are educated by their parents, usually with assistance from whatever corporate organization the parent belongs to.

For the last millennium and a half, Inyx society has been dominated by two large, competing power-blocs similar to Human megacorporations (see p. 139). Most Inyx belong to the same corporation from birth until death.

The average level of education is very high, with most Inyx having equivalents of Human doctorates and many being experts in multiple fields. The Inyx are a wealthy race; no Inyx are common laborers or service people (this is left to slaves and contract workers).

Each Inyx corporation is a complete hierarchical society in itself, with the corporate director at the pinnacle of power, various regional or division directors next

in line, and so on down the pyramid. The corporation provides everything from housing and recreational facilities to day care and education for children. Its employees are well cared for, both psychologically and physically; Inyx executives believe a happy worker is an efficient one. But supervision is constant if unobtrusive, and proof of corporate loyalty is just as important as efficiency in securing advancement.

## Slavery

Inyx enjoy owning other beings. For low- to moderate-status Inyx, these are generally pets, usually with cybernetic or biological modifications to improve their intelligence. For high-status Inyx (Status 2+), these are generally sapients from other species.

Inyx trade slaves among themselves. They do not, however, deal with non-Inyx criminal slavers; that tends to upset local and interstellar governments. Instead, they purchase genetic material or embryos and grow their own, conditioning them from birth to be loyal pets and servants.

## GOVERNMENT

Coming from a water-world, Inyx do not think of power in terms of land or borders. The power blocs in Inyx society are closer to Human megacorporations than nations. Inyx corporations control people and wealth, but have no specific sovereignty over territory except in the sense of buying, owning, and leasing buildings and real estate.

### The Inyx Economic Sphere

The Inyx directly control Matrix (their homeworld) and some 17 systems in Ahriman sector (one sector Rimward of *Iyiyukhtoi*/Banners), near the interface between the Solomani Confederation and the Aslan Heirate. Their total population is estimated at 20 billion.

However, this understates the influence of the Inyx. Their two megacorporations have commercial relationships with Aslan clans and Human client states across a number of sectors on the Rimward borders of the Aslan Heirate (*Akiweahi*, Banners, *Tahloarif*, *Ftahtuak/Ustral* Quadrant), as well as some business contacts with the Solomani. The Inyx have established corporate facilities (trading posts, offices, laboratories, warehouses, factories) on nearly 200 worlds in this region.

Inyx corporate colonies – often set up to develop underwater mineral resources – have been on many non-Inyx worlds. The main reason for this widespread penetration is the Inyx willingness to build underwater or establish quarters in zero-gravity space habitats. In either case, they have very little interest in what Aslan consider “land” and as such are seen as largely non-threatening.

### Megacorporations

There are two major Inyx megacorporations (in Galanglic, their names are Genesis and Affinity – see sidebars, pp. 139, 140). Many smaller corporations also exist, most bound by a web of obligations to the two leviathans. Each corporation has strong holdings in finance, underwater and asteroid mining, and manufacturing, but each also has its own specialties.

Rivalry between the “big two” is intense, and can lead to trade wars and other mercenary actions (although military action is kept off the Inyx homeworld by tacit agreement). In Aslan, Imperial, and Solomani space, they cloak any such conflicts in the forms of the various limited-war protocols used there.

Inyx megacorporations have actively entered into commercial relationships with Solomani and Aslan firms.

## Affinity Corporation

**T**his Inyx megacorporation specializes in computers, cybernetics, and communications systems, optimized for their customer's needs. They specialize in innovative cross-species adaptation of software, control systems, and interfaces, based on a careful study of racial psychology and sensory impressions – for example, modifying Imperial or Solomani software for Aslan, or vice versa.

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*“I read something a few days ago by one of the Solomani party's more conservative wings – okay, no comments from the peanut gallery – Anyway, this guy demands that the Confederation take (and I quote) ‘all measures necessary to enforce the laws against enslavement of Humans by the Inyx worlds located in the Hierate.’ I find this a fascinating concept – enforcing Solomani laws outside the Confederation . . . next thing you know, they'll be trying to collect taxes from the Andromeda galaxy!”*

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– Anton Wilson Peale

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They have a lucrative sideline in the entertainment and media industry, controlling many holovid stations, interstellar news programs, and production studios. Again, they specialize in cross-species entertainments; they work through non-Inyx employees and slaves where alien senses – like vision – are involved. For instance, an Affinity trade representative had a recent success acquiring ancient recordings of Terran *samurai* movies, refurbishing them to 3-D, digitally altering the protagonists from Human to Aslan, changing certain story elements, and marketing them to Aslan females.

In fact, Affinity's extensive purchases of Human and Aslan entertainment and cultural industries have alarmed some observers, who fear that the Inyx will be in a position to influence other species' cultural values. Affinity also has interests in many advertising and image-consultant firms.



## MATRIX

Matrix, the Inyx homeworld, is the third planet of a G7 V star. It is located on the edge of Hierate and Solomani space, two sectors Rimward of Dark Nebula. Travel to Matrix requires passing through various Human and Aslan client states.

*Starport:* Class V.

*Diameter:* 6,216 miles. *Atmosphere:* Standard oxygen-nitrogen. *Gravity:* 0.79 G. *Surface Water:* 92%. *Climate:* Warm. *Type:* Low iron. *Population:* 7 billion. *Government:* Corporate. *Control Rating:* 5. *TL:* 11.

Matrix is an Earth-sized world with a somewhat thin but still breathable oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere. The planet is covered with water, with only a few island chains. It is quite warm, but weather conditions are very turbulent, since storms and hurricanes never break on land.

Most of Matrix's islands are covered with factory-cities.

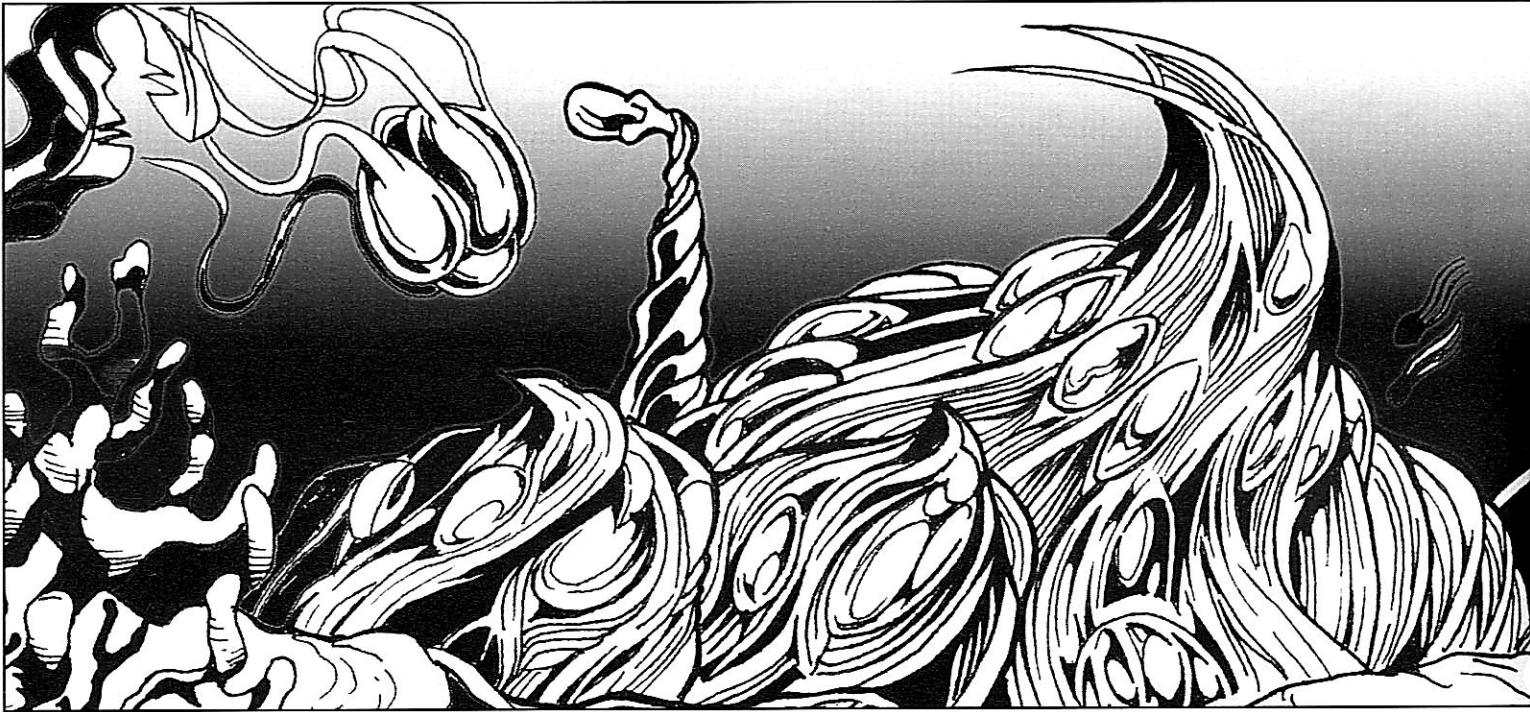
Matrix has a small metallic moon in close orbit, tidally locked to the planet. The moon, Trove, is home to a large Inyx city (population 4.5 million). With its rich mineral resources, Trove houses most of the planet's heavy industry.

Matrix's population breaks down into 2 billion Inyx and an estimated 5 billion sapient genetic constructs and slaves. Most of these non-Inyx have been designed or altered to live underwater, with their lungs replaced with bionic gills or genetic modifications. For geopolitical reasons, nearly all alien slaves on Matrix are non-Aslan – most are Human or Dolphin.

### Genesis Corporation

This megacorporation is heavily involved with genetic engineering, pharmaceutical manufacture, contract labor procurement, and the organized exploitation of alien biospheres (both for new drugs and new sources of genetic material). Genesis controls a large fleet of merchant cruisers that continually seek out new worlds to add to its vast market, along with primitive planets which may be valuable sources for genetic material or (if no one else is looking) live slaves.

Genesis is also heavily involved in the creation of genetic constructs. Unrestrained by Imperial notions of ethics or experimentation on live subjects, their labs are constantly "improving" basic designs. GMs may refer to *GURPS Bio-Tech* for possible Genesis corporation developments.



Although it may appear monolithic from outside, an Inyx megacorporation has its own internal disputes and politics. For nearly three centuries, the Genesis board of directors has had two major factions: the evolutionists, who wish to use eugenics and genetic engineering to build the ultimate "transInyx," and the xenopurists, who restrict genetic engineering to alien stock.

### Housing and Cities

On their homeworld and their underwater colonies, Inyx live in cities constructed from genetically engineered coral.

Inyx *construction coral* comes in many varieties, including luminescent species that produce or carry electrical currents (and which can be used as power conduits). Other species exist that secrete metals, forming carefully managed internal impurities that can function as electrical circuit boards for a variety of purposes.

Inyx buildings are usually one-story structures that follow a radial or spiral pattern, with important control centers or offices in the center, and outer chambers. Doors, airlocks, and windows are living membranes, like macroscopic cell walls, and literally regrow after they have been penetrated.

# CHARACTERS

Inyx can be created using the racial template below and either the *Basic Set* or individual character templates.

## INYX

38 POINTS

**Attributes:** ST -2 [-15], IQ +1 [10].

**Advantages:** Acute Faz +4 [8]; Amphibious [10]; Bioelectric Shock (Can be used for neural conditioning, +50%; does no damage, -50%; 10); Cultural Adaptability [No Charisma bonus, -40%; 15]; Extended Lifespan +1 [5]; Extra Hit Points +1 [5]; Four Extra Arms [40]; Extra Flexibility [all arms, 10]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Faz Sense [10]; Field Sense [10]; Interface Jack [10]; No Neck [5]; Pressure Support [5]; Radio Speech [Touch only, -20%; 20]; Sensitive Touch [10]; Temperature Tolerance [5].

**Disadvantages:** Blindness [-50]; Deafness [-20]; Inconvenient Size [-10]; Invertebrate [-20]; Low Pain Threshold [-10]; Mute [-25]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Reduced Move -3 (Running) [-15].



## ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES, AND SKILLS

The following notes apply to Inyx characters:

### Interface Jack

see p. C126

This advantage does not represent a "cyberpunk" style neural interface jack, but rather the Inyx's natural advantages when dealing with computer and other electronic systems that have been built to take advantage of their biology, and their ability to rapidly transmit information when in physical contact.

## Technology

Inyx have access to the full range of TL11 technology. What they did not build themselves, they have traded with others and reverse-engineered.

Inyx devices have a characteristic "hot plastic" look, as if they have been half-melted and then joined back together, or grown rather than built – which in many cases may be true. Similarly, in the course of their normal operation, other Inyx devices have a disturbing tendency to change shape, pulse, or turn inside out.

Another obvious difference between Human and Inyx devices is that Inyx equipment lacks the visual displays, markings, readouts, or indicator lights that a Human device would have. The reason is simple – since Inyx cannot see, information is conveyed by changes in temperature, sequential electrical shocks, sonic pulses, and vibrations. A Human or Aslan can read an Inyx control panel, but it takes a lot of practice and an iron nerve!

Unlike Humans, Inyx metabolisms are well suited for direct interface with computers, because their brains are basically living computers in the first place. When an Inyx inserts its tentacle into such a device, it can directly link its nervous system to the computer, enabling much more precise control, and direct data-dump from the computer to its brain. The effect is identical to a neural-interface jack (p. C126) except that no jack is necessary. There is no extra cost for such as a system if it is designed strictly with Inyx in mind. If designed for ordinary interface as well, add 75% to the cost.

Inyx are advanced in biotechnology and reasonably good physical scientists. They are good computer and electronics manufacturers, but are actually no more innovative than Humans – perhaps because, with their innate interfacing ability, they have less need for ultra-advanced hardware or software.

Heavy industry is not the Inyx's field; they prefer to buy such things as spaceship hulls or mining equipment from Imperial corporations. They have marketed their unique construction coral (see *Housing and Cities*, p. 140) throughout neighboring space, even developing species that could live on land. Although most races prefer their traditional building materials, on planets where these are in short supply, entire Human cities have been constructed of Inyx coral.

## Weaponry

**A**lthough not pacifists, Inyx favor less-than-lethal weaponry; why kill someone when you can capture them, interrogate them, and perhaps make other use of them? However, Inyx bodyguards are usually equipped with the best weaponry available. Guards in Inyx underwater installations use both blue-green frequency lasers and sonic weapons (water is an ideal medium for transference of sound). For sonics, use the statistics of the stunner from p. B208; Inyx stunners are TL9. Unlike other *Traveller* stun weapons, they only work in water.

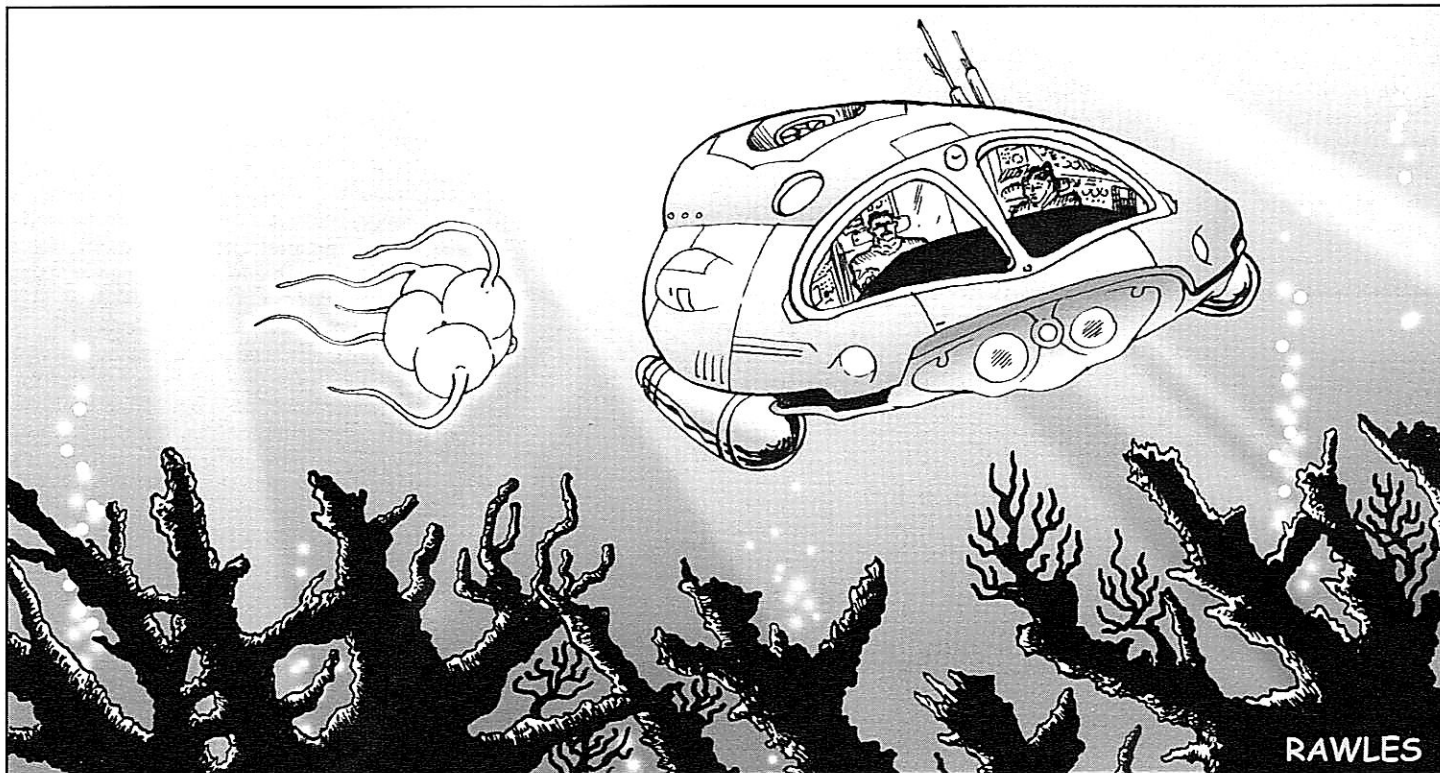
## Duty, Sense of Duty

If the Inyx has offspring, it will normally feel a Sense of Duty toward them. An adventuring Inyx (engaged in difficult/dangerous jobs) usually has a Duty to its corporation.

## Social Status and Wealth

Status represents corporate position, and may range from -1 to 5. Status -1 would be someone who did not belong to a corporation; Status 1 indicates management; Status 2 and 3 progressively senior executives; Status 4 the director of a small independent corporation or a large subsidiary; Status 5 a director of Affinity or Genesis itself.

Inyx of Status 1 should be Comfortable; Status 2-3 Wealthy or Very Wealthy; Status 4+ Filthy Rich, maybe Multimillionaire.



## Spaceships

**I**nyx no longer make their own spacecraft, preferring to buy Aslan and Solomani designs modified for their particular needs. This requires larger corridors and adding interface sockets to the controls. Inyx retain existing lifesystems, since they generally have several humanoid servants. Their own quarters are dominated by large baths and electric outlets for recharging.

The Inyx are aquatic, but do not breathe water. However, they like the freedom of movement it offers. But since water takes up a lot of mass which cannot be spared in a starship, Inyx ships and space stations are usually kept in zero-gee conditions, enabling the Inyx to move around as freely as if they were swimming underwater.

Humanoid crew aboard Inyx vessels work in zero-gee, but sleep and exercise in quarters with normal gravity.

## Animal Handling (Inyx)

Among Inyx, this is the skill of using neural stimulation to render a non-Inyx docile and compliant. For use on life forms not native to Matrix, the skill must be learned as a specialization for a particular biology, e.g., Terran, Droyne, etc. For non-sapient, use the ordinary animal-handling rules (p. B46). The Inyx must attend the subject for at least an hour each day.

Use Contest of Skill between the Inyx's Animal Handling skill and the subject's Will check each day. Failure by the subject produces addiction. Once an Inyx has addicted a subject and he remains in the Inyx's power (i.e., he is a prisoner, or is cooperating to get his next fix), the Inyx may use Animal Handling skill to train the individual, as if he was a non-sentient being.

## CHARACTER TEMPLATES

These templates are most suitable for Inyx characters: Attorney, Bureaucrat, Computer Technician, Diplomat, Manager, Merchant, Professor, Scientist, Scout (albeit for a corporation, not for the IISS), Undercover Agent (for industrial espionage).

Military templates are generally unsuitable.



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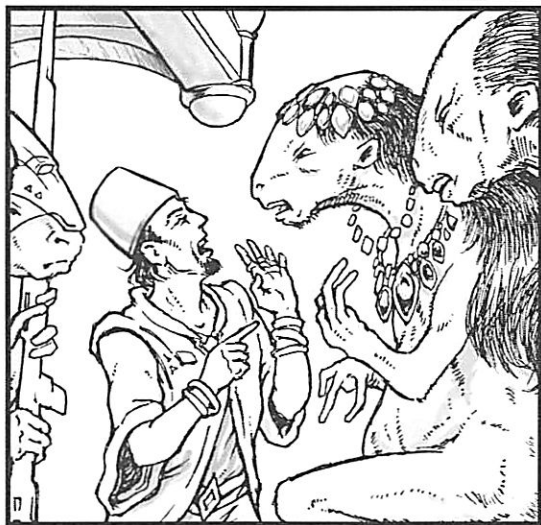
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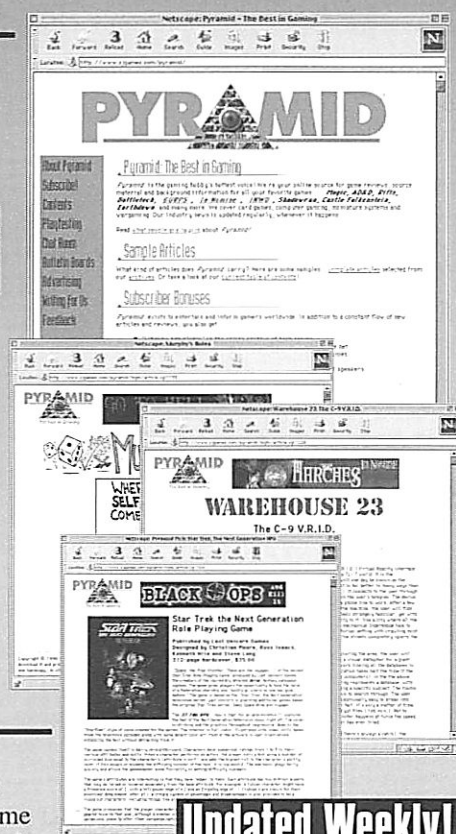
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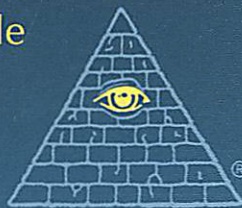
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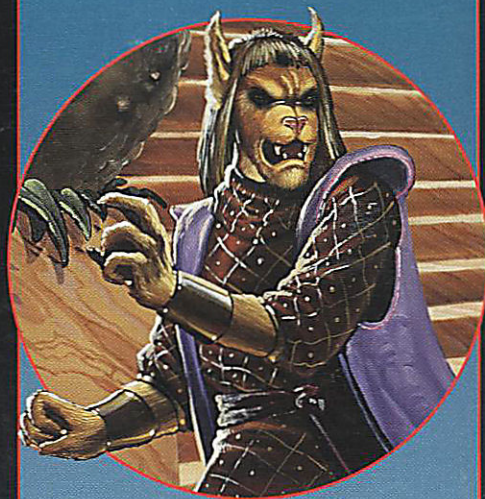
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Two new minor races are also presented here:

- The **Inyx**, a race of aquatic parasites who absorb bio-electrical energy from their whale-sized hosts;
- The **Devi Intelligence**, comprising two forms: the *Intellects*, sentient fungi who resemble colonies of giant toadstools, and their predatory spores, the *Shiverbats*.



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