

THENNLA

A Campaign World for Mythras



Mythras

THE DESIGN
MECHANISM

THE WORLD OF THENNLA

A Setting for MYTHRAS

By
Jonathan Drake

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Thennla is an introduction to the world explored in greater detail in the Mythras supplements *SHORES OF KORANTIA* and *THE TASKAN EMPIRE*, both available now in print and PDF copies.

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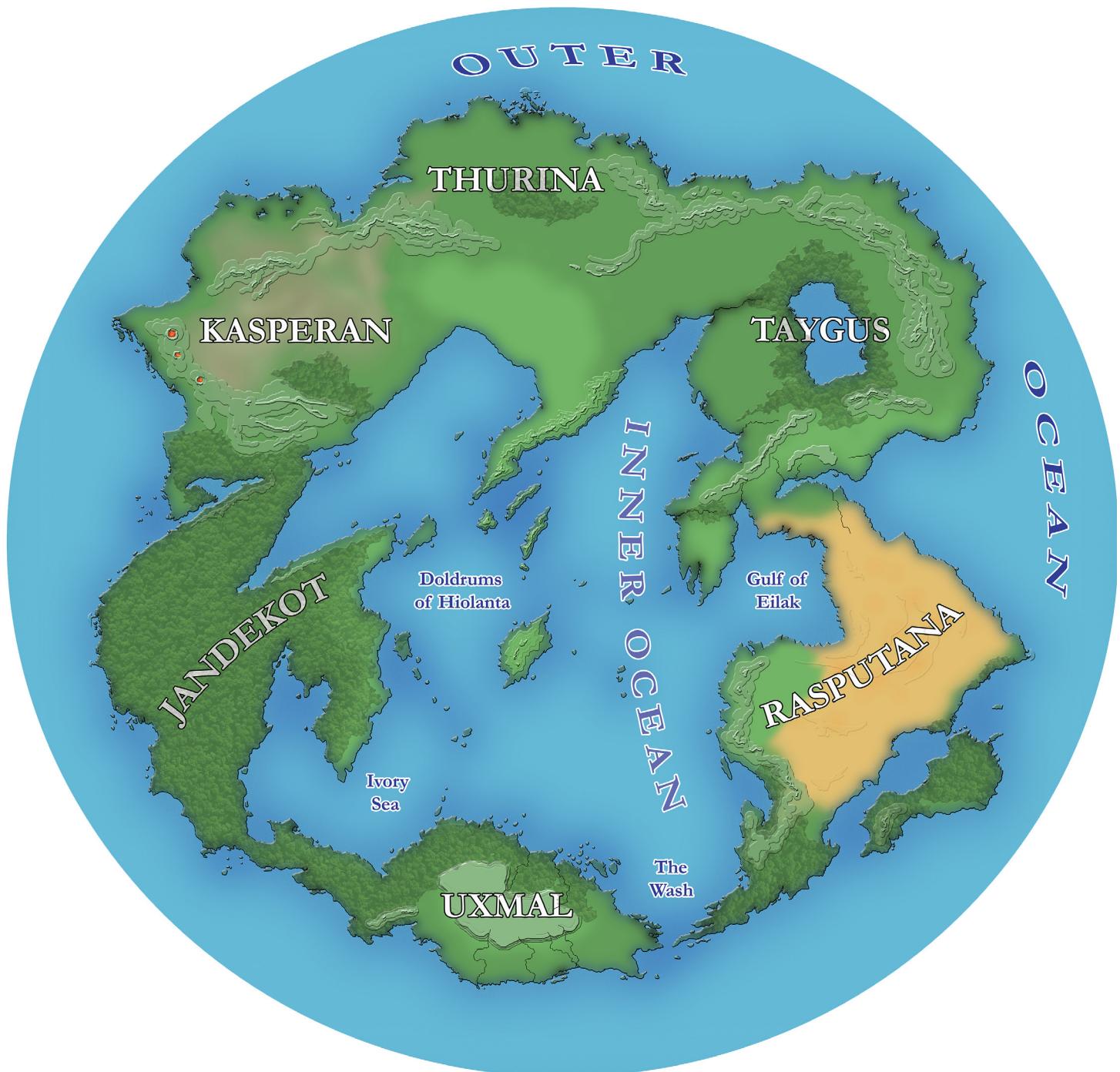
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Thennla is explored in two sourcebooks: SHORES OF KORANTIA and THE TASKAN EMPIRE, each providing more detail on two of the great empires of the world. This sourcebook extracts information from these supplements to give prospective players and Games Masters an introduction to Thennla before delving into greater details. It concentrates on the continent of Taylus, home to the Taskan and Korantine cultures.

THE WORLD OF THENNLA

Thennla is named after its primary earth-goddess, Theyna. This world is one in which humanity is not only the dominant sentient race but, according to many, is the *only* sentient race.

Geography

The world is a disc upon which the major land masses encircle an Inner Ocean and which are, in turn, surrounded by the Outer Ocean. Beyond the Outer Ocean is the Edge of the World and it is variously reported that crossing over is impossible, is certain death, or offers transport to other worlds or dimensions. Above the world is the realm of sky, which stretches all around at least as far as the Edge of the World, and above that is the Vault of Heaven which, so far as is known, is solid and impenetrable. The distance from one side of the world to the other is about 11,265 kilometres. The Vault of Heaven's height is unknown, but it is assumed to be dome-shaped and at least 1,600 kilometres high at its centre. Some scholars suspect that it is, in fact, the upper part of a sphere within which sits the earth,

with the vast majority of the sphere's volume being beneath the earth's surface, where the Many Hells are to be found.

One can walk overland from one end of the world to the other, for there is only a single break in the encircling land-masses that separate the Inner from the Outer Ocean. Nobody, we can be sure, has ever done so; but Aristentorus of Hypata made a circumnavigation of the Ocean 300 years ago and confirmed this to be true.

The Outer Ocean

Lashed by epic storms, whipped up by divine powers and stirred by magical tides and currents, the Outer Ocean is unfathomably deep and makes for unbelievably dangerous sailing. Having said that, it is not such a broad ocean – the Edge of the World is disconcertingly close if you can survive the crossing.

The Inner Ocean

The principal route of communication between human cultures, the Inner Ocean is generally kind to shipping, and its shores support the greatest concentrations of human population. The Ocean has its own geography of underwater volcanoes, treacherous shallows, deep-sea trenches and stormy capes. It is at its most violent and hazardous in the South where it meets the Outer Ocean. Powerful currents can help or hinder the seaborne adventurer or merchant, and frequently dictate the most commonly used navigation routes and the siting of key settlements.

The northern and southern reaches of this ocean are different in character, and this includes the weather gods who rule the

skies above. In the north, Palaskil drives the winds in a more or less anti-clockwise direction, while in the south Somadsil drives them the other way. Both these deities appear to be banned from a stretch of ocean east of Fierla, known as the Doldrums of Hiolanta; Hiolanta is said to be the divine mother, yet she is not an entity that anyone worships.

The Continents

(See map, page 3)

Reading clockwise from the southernmost, the continents are:

Uxmal

A southern land comprising of a huge, cool, central plateau pierced by rivers and surrounded by forested mountains descending to hot tropical lowlands. The people of Uxmal are known cannibals, and while the ruling caste keeps many lesser folk in thrall and treats them as livestock, foreigners washed up on their shores make for an exotic alternative.

Jandekot

A warm, humid land, much of its interior covered by a vast tract of rainforest and home to the greatest concentration and diversity of life, but thinly populated by humankind.

Kasperan

A land of sparse vegetation with a near barren interior, which is dominated by a chain of fierce volcanoes.

Thurina

Framed by tall mountain ranges to East and West, at its centre is a forest of massive pines surrounded by broad plains. Thick glaciers spread across its north-eastern reaches.

Taygus

Temperate lands of rolling plains, hills and forests give way to hot subtropical lands in the South. Considered the most amenable to settled life and home to perhaps two-thirds of humanity. At its heart is Lake Taygus, the largest body of fresh water in the world.

Rasputana

The hot desert interior is thought to be the driest place in the world, but the southern tip is home to lush forests.

The Sky

Every day the sun follows a path from East to West across the sky, passing just South of the centre of the world and

meandering slightly on its way. Depending on where in the world it is viewed, the sun's orb has a subtly different hue; only from Korantia does it appear to shine with a pure, golden-yellow light. The night sky contains both stars – which do not move – and planets, which look like stars and *do* move (which is how you can tell the difference). Some planets travel around the sky in set patterns, others stay static but change their aspect or appearance as they turn on their axes. Planets are agreed to be living entities and for many people they are gods. The stars are mostly thought to be there for decoration, each star or constellation set in its place to serve as a memento of some legendary event, or as the heraldic badge of a god rather than the god itself. The moon is stationary and, as the world is flat and nothing is ever over the horizon, it is always visible on a clear day unless blotted out by the sun's glare. It does, however, look rather small if you are on the other side of the world from the point above which it is anchored, Methalea. The moon has phases, but this is the result of changes in the glowing light emanating from within as it rotates, marking out the months of the year.

The Year

A Thennlan Year is 366 days long, measured by the time it takes for the sun to complete a full cycle of the various stations he may visit on his daily travel across the Vault of Heaven. His gradual shift from one path to another and back again is the primary cause of seasonal changes. For most people this year is divided into 13 months of 28 days each, and two additional days are inserted ('intercalated') at the end of the year to make 366. However, for the Jekkarenes, the year consists of 13 Lunar months that conform directly to the phases of their moon goddess, and two of these months are 29 days long: an extended full moon in mid-winter and an extended dark moon in mid-summer. Legend has it that the Lunar and Solar years were once completely in harmony at 364 days, but upon the divorce of the moon goddess and sun god some 1,200 years ago they became fractured, and the moon was forced to alter her step to prevent a disaster of cosmological misalignments. There are some cultures, such as the Jekkarenes, who do not use the Solar Calendar at all.

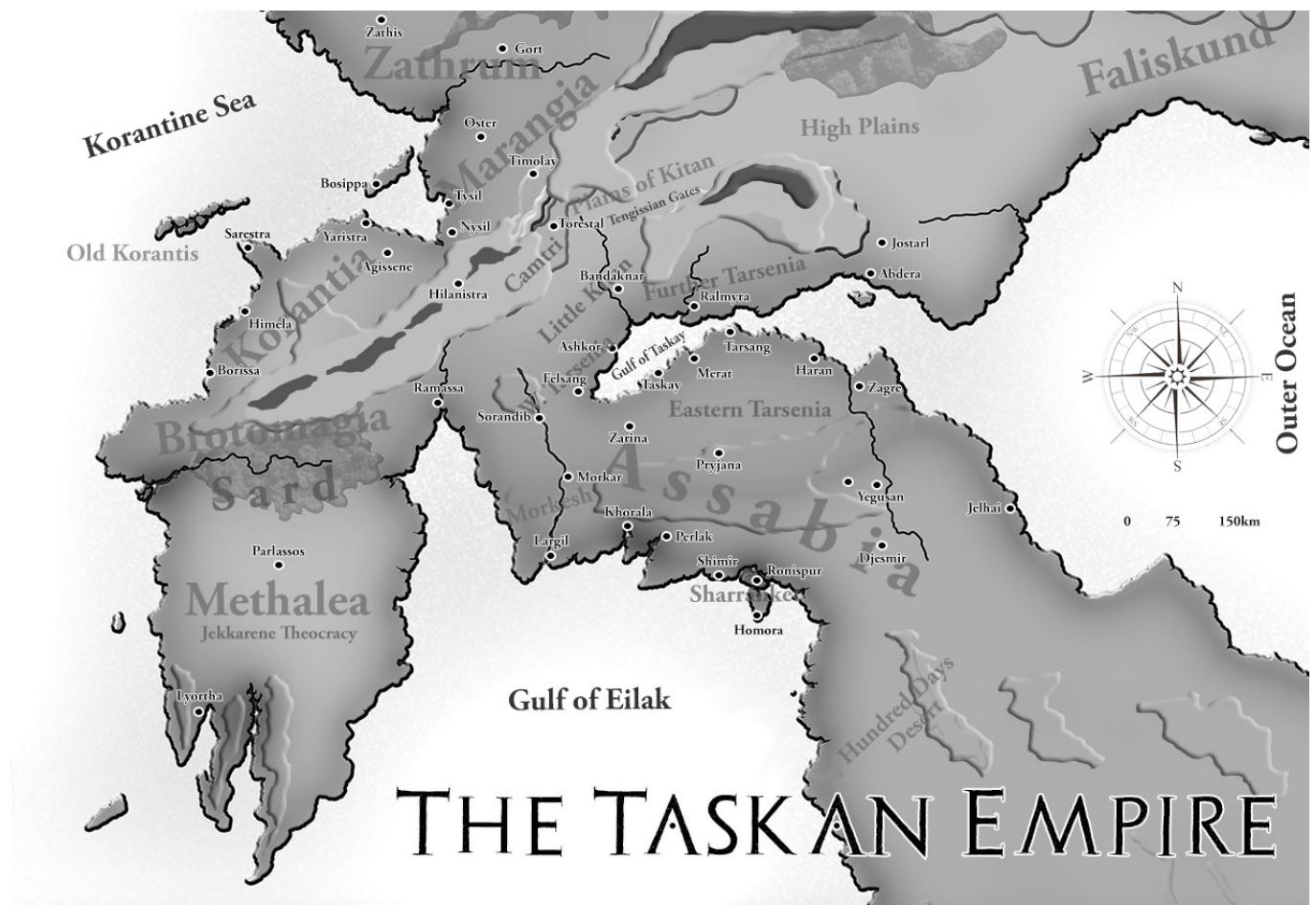
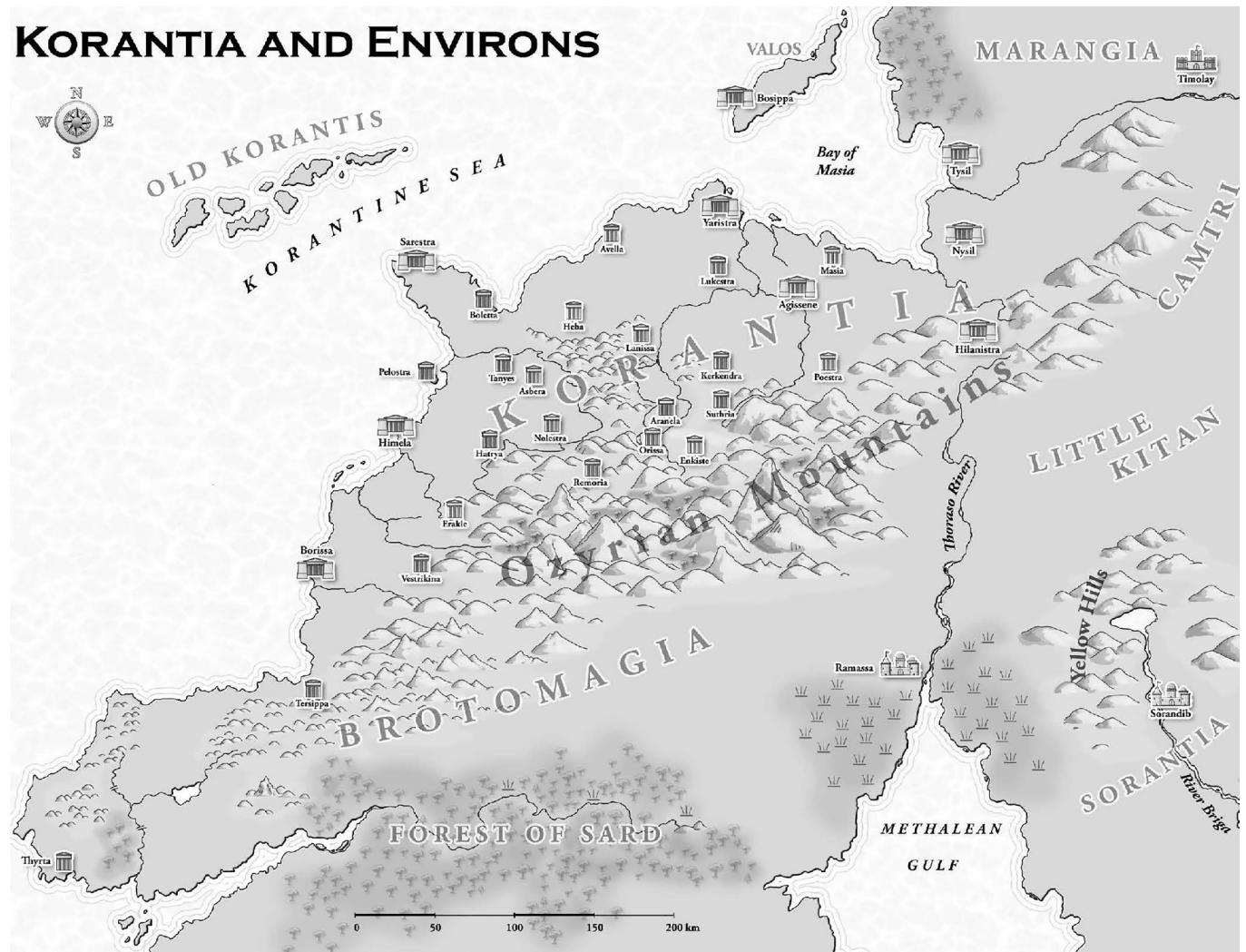
A day is 24 hours long, and a seven-day week is a measure of time traditional in Korantia, based upon the observance of certain astrological cycles, but little used elsewhere. In Tarsenia the month is divided into nine-day 'weeks', the 9th day and the additional (28th) day of each month being reserved for market and holidays. Seasons are experienced in all parts of the world but they are not necessarily the same seasons at the same time.

KASPERAN

TAYGUS



KORANTIA AND ENVIRONS



PLACES OF INTEREST

The lands accessible to travellers on the Ocean are briefly described. These include places where an overland route is technically possible but the time, challenges and expense involved are so great that journeying by sea is always preferable. Refer to the maps on the preceding pages for locations.

Albulo

The capital of the Albirs, situated on the largest of the three main Albir Islands, and home also to a permanent trading post of the Zamada merchant family from Sharraket. Albulo is composed mostly of circular huts, whitewashed and roofed in thatch, with a few larger stone and mud-brick buildings housing the royal and cult centres. Within some of the simple structures are said to be enormous riches; elaborate cult and votive objects fashioned out of gold. It is said that one of the reasons the Sharraketans made friends with the inhabitants (aside from their political interference in dynastic struggles) was that they came to the Albirs offering to bring them gold in exchange for goods and services rather than to take them by force. Albulo is ruled by Barraby, a bloated 50 year-old man who can hardly rise from his stool yet was once a warrior famed for his energy, prowess and beauty.

Assabia

Assabia forms the intersection of Taylus and Rasputana. Much of the region is desert. Its most populated areas are Djesmirket, Sharraket and Morkesh. Rich and varied magical traditions, access to the wider world across the Gulf of Eilak and the Inner Ocean and a constantly shifting political landscape make Assabia a place where many adventures are to be found.

Badlands of Methalea

The whole eastern side of the Taylus peninsula is a lawless region dotted with small communities attempting to scratch a living from the soil through a mixture of agriculture and pastoralism. Where possible, banditry and piracy provide additional income. These people are mostly of Jekkarene origin but they or their forebears were cast-out of society for some misdemeanour or other, and are living in exile. Despite its generally grim reputation the area attracts some voluntary exiles as well as escaped slaves and the occasional religious or social apostate from further afield. One or two notorious wizards have made their homes here in order to practise their researches away from the eyes of civilisation. Less appealing is the fact

that lycanthropy is rife. The Jekkarenes have long used lycanthropy as a traditional curse upon their outcasts, as they are of the opinion that it will keep the exiles' attentions focussed on survival and fear of one another, rather than getting organised and causing a nuisance.

Balbufera

The southernmost city of Rasputana, a place where Sharraketan merchants load with pepper and spices in return for silver. Balbufera is a remarkably peaceful place that relies on its distance from other human settlements for its security. In its long centuries of peaceful existence it has spawned many strains of mysticism, and many exotic arts.

Brotomagia

A land famed for its beauty, the wooded hills and green valleys of Brotomagia are home to many a local chieftain of Thennalt stock who can sport a Korantine education, fluency in several languages, and sophisticated tastes. Some even have a nymph for a wife. However, as Brotomagia is a buffer zone between the Jekkarenes, Taskans and Korantines, there is always a feeling that the good life may one day come to a disastrous end.

Camtri

Camtri is a Thennalt land that has now embraced Taskan rule and is beginning to embrace Taskan customs. There are still a few people around who dream of independence or who resent that they are now drawn into the orbit of the Taskan Empire. Such people increasingly find it convenient to keep their ideas to themselves. Camtri is administered from Torestal and is a key strategic region for the Taskan army.

The ancient kingship of Camtri is now a ritual post only, and a number of prominent families administer the territory through controlling the major priesthoods of the local Taskan Emperor-Cult. Taskan culture and customs are taking over and those who do not embrace the process generally up sticks, and either seek hospitality in Marangia or look for work in Korantia.

Dariscur

Here, the locals are said to build the finest, unsinkable boats found on any ocean, from a timber called *floatwood*. Export of this timber is strictly forbidden, which means that the local shipwrights are assured a steady stream of orders from wealthy patrons from across the Inner Ocean. The island has no overall ruler, so the locals are prone to raiding one another and fighting over control of farmland, sacred sites and, of course, forestry.

Dekos

An inhabited island with a famous shrine to the Ocean Father, a great sea-cave in which Dagomar's priest, Hetrik the Drowner, summons monsters of the deep sending them to do his bidding. Dekos is part of the Kingdom of the Burning Coast ruled from Haprosindra.

Djesmirket

Djesmir is a huge city that is regarded with reverence in the region as home to the most ancient and important temples, and of the most skilled and powerful sorcerers. In reality, it is in a state of decadence and decline – Sharranketan merchants no longer consider the place to be the most prized market for their goods and the Taskan Empire has always been cool towards the Djesmirs since they participated in a war against the Taskans 80 years ago. Djesmirket was once synonymous with the whole region of Assabia but is now simply the territory directly to the south of the Korazoon including the cities of Djesmir, Ankwar, Perlak and Khorala. These cities are Sultanates; independent monarchies that share the same cultural traditions as one another and both recognise and uphold each others' rights of sovereignty. Sometimes Jelhai to the east is considered among their number, but the religious and magical ways of that place are regarded as particularly dangerous and unsavoury and its ruler is snubbed by his peers.

Doldrums of Hiolanta

An expanse of ocean where the winds are always light and often at a dead calm – except, when a violent but localised storm brews up. These storms behave very oddly, are completely static, and can occur when the weather all around is bright and clear. The Doldrums are haunted by the souls of those who have died of exposure on a becalmed ship, and the wraiths made of those swept up in its supernatural storms. Yet they are also home to the Dagomils, who live on artificial islands created by the accumulation of flotsam, jetsam and surface seaweed that gathers here.

Enkefalan

This bustling little port town is part of the Tapropiscan Confederacy, and is the largest settlement within it. Ruled over by an old, one-eyed trader called Damaric, Enkefalan is remarkable for having a settled and more or less integrated population of orcs. These are not outposts from one of the Orcish lands in Kasperan, but an accumulation of those who have left their native culture behind and embraced life among the archipelagan

peoples. Damaric uses them as go-betweens in his trade with the orcs of Nishimbakoi to whom he unloads as many slaves as he can. Damaric also happily trades in the proceeds of plunder, and it has become common practice that once a pirate or raider had sold on his booty to Damaric, there is no case for restitution to those it was taken from, only for revenge.

Fierla

This huge island has been little explored since before the Cataclysm, and most of the earlier settlements have been abandoned or destroyed over the last two centuries. One persists on the north coast: Errabna is an old Kipsipsindran colony that is now a free port where local Sealord Torrik the Greedy makes a point of welcoming anyone who comes to his town, but relieves them of as much wealth as he can while they are there. In the south is Mikosso, a natural deepwater harbour that is simply a stopover on the route to and from the far west. The interior is said to contain many monsters, including dinosaurs and Slagr (which may be dumb brutes or intelligent dinosaur herders, hunters or worshippers – nobody seems quite sure). What is clear is that these Slagr are very dangerous and best left alone.

Forest of Sard

This extensive wilderness region is in fact a mix of hills, valleys and wetlands some 150 kilometres from north to south and more than 350 kilometres east to west, of which half the total area is forested. Through the middle runs the Quickwater River, in places cutting deep ravines, in others fanning out over a flooded landscape. South of the river is a favourite hunting ground for Jekkarene nobility; north of the river is a playground for the Thennalt lords of Brotomagia. Very few people actually live in the forest and those who do are mostly on the fringes. The north west of Sard is increasingly cut into by the Borissan colony at Thyrta, so one might encounter Thyrta prospectors there. Deeper into the wilderness there may be a few bands of outlaws and the occasional hermit, but by and large the land is given over to nature, and in the great expanse of the forest any number of exotic creatures may lay hidden.

Gulf of Eilak

This little sea is a busy stretch of water, with trading ships of all sizes criss-crossing between the ports of Assabia and those of the northern kingdoms of Rasputana. It is, of course, dominated by the Sharranketans whose fleet of well-armed and magically-augmented galleys keeps the sea lanes clear for the comings and goings of its merchant galleons.

Haprosindra

The seat of power of Valorik Blueface, who pretends to the title of King and calls his domain *The Kingdom of the Burning Coast*. Apart from a small area around Haprosindra itself, his kingdom comprises mostly of the large, thinly inhabited island of Haprus, and the more densely settled island of Dekos.

Ivory Sea

This stretch of water takes its name from the main commodity that is shipped from its shores. Mammoths are found in Uxmal and elephants in Jandekot, and for the Sharranketan trading colony at Janisdaron gathering tusks to ship back to the east is a mainstay of its business.

Janisdaron

A trading settlement established on the coast of Jandekot by the Zamada family from Sharranket. Once per year a galleon arrives to collect a cargo of ivory and other exotica harvested from the locale. The Sharranketans have brought a contingent of Albir mercenaries and settled them close by to serve as protection – partly against the natives, but mostly against foreign raiders in the long months between each sailing as the valuable stockpile of goods accumulates.

Kapoli

A long peninsula that is home to the Kapolan race, who tend to be clustered in settlements strung along the southern side facing the Inner Ocean, of which Othrikor is the largest. On the north, facing the Spawning Sea, is The Sunlit Land of the Essanzerai, a kingdom that has been ruled by the same dynasty for seven generations. This is regarded as a remarkable and slightly eccentric degree of stability among archipelagan folk. It is a land that is blessed in its climate and fertility but cursed by orcish slave-raids. The Korantine colony of Hispola occupies territory facing Korantia itself, and is so positioned as to be a useful layover for traffic passing between the northern Korantine states and Kipsipsindra.

Korantia

Korantia consists of many city-states that spread from beyond its heartland on the Western coast of Taygus. Korantia was established over the long millennium of the Empire, some of them only recently. The extent of Korantia is connected and held together only because the sea-lanes between the city-states

are open. Should they be interdicted by foreign powers, divine anger or natural disaster, then the Korantine community would be fractured again just as when the Cataclysm sundered the Empire 160 years ago.

Old Korantis

The site of the lost capital of the Empire is now no more than a collection of small islands, each being an upland peak of the sunken land of Korantis. The islands are uninhabited and shunned by all except the occasional treasure hunter searching for valuable relics beneath the waves. Sometimes there is a spectacular find, such as when some of the Emperor's Paladins successfully located and raised the Sapphire Throne and carried it off to Hilanistra.

Lorsil

The second largest town of the Kapolans (after Othrikor), Lorsil is the cult centre of their race. Every year there is an immense gathering of people arriving by boat to celebrate the festival of Dagomar and Diotima, Father and Mother Ocean. This is an event from which all those of Korantine stock are barred by taboo, which includes most people of Kipsipsindra even though they no longer identify themselves as Korantine. Lorsil is ruled by a council of priests, and the council appoints a strong man to run the town's affairs on a day-to-day basis. The current Sealord of Lorsil is Rukkos the Slight. In a ritual peculiar to Lorsil, the priests will appoint Rukkos' successor in secret, and the candidate must devote himself to the archipelagan god Orchang, who supports revenge and feud (i.e., socially sanctioned murder). It is the candidate's task to then attempt to assassinate the incumbent Sealord. The more underhand methods of killing are not allowed – no poisoning, hired assassins and the like. Rukkos has been Sealord now for seven years, and nobody has managed to remove him.

Lyortha

Lyortha is a port on one of the southern fingers of the peninsula that acts as an entrepôt for trade arriving or leaving the Jekkarid. This is the only place where foreign vessels may land or load goods, and all goods being transported further into Jekkarene territory may only be carried by Jekkarene shippers. The town is ruled over by the notorious Baron Solfernoy – albeit under the supervision of a trio of priestesses from the capital. Solfernoy is not only a very rich man, as a result of the perquisites and bribes he takes along the way, but also an extremely influential one, with ambitions to exercise power as well as influence beyond the borders of the Theocracy.

One of only two places in the Jekkard where foreigners are welcome, Lyortha is also home to a small flotilla of five warships built and maintained for the Taskan navy, and in fact the only ocean-going navy the Taskans have. Above all, though, Lyortha is a trading town where the Jekkarenes attempt to gather goods from the oceanic trade routes and export some of their own.

Marangia

The Marangians are famously warlike and are even considered by other Thennalts to be venal and untrustworthy. The Marangians have a royal seat at Timolay, but this is now under Taskan control; King Arkenson the Portly has been made their puppet and supplied with advisors sent from Taskay itself. The presence in the area of opportunistic Taskan grave robbers, drawn by rumours of fabulously wealthy tombs and cemeteries, increases tensions between the both occupiers and the natives, making life more dangerous for everyone.

The Marangians generally feel very much oppressed even if they are outside direct Taskan control. With Timolay under foreign occupation, the ancient cultic centre at Oster is now regarded as their capital, and it is generally not a place welcoming to foreigners.

Methalea

Methalea is a huge peninsula dominated by the Theocracy of the Jekkarenes, considered to be the oldest civilisation in existence. The northern part is a wilderness region known as the Forest of Sard, and the eastern part of the peninsula is a rough, almost barren region known simply as the Badlands. The rest of the peninsula – and indeed sometimes by extension the *whole* peninsula – is known as The Jekkard after the secretive and matriarchal society devoted to the night-goddess Jekkara. Jekkara manifests as the Moon, usually visible by day but, at night, the biggest and brightest planet visible in the heavens. The Moon hangs stationary in the sky above the capital city, Parlasos.

The Jekkarenes' capital, the only city of any size, is Parlasos. It is situated in an area known as the Vale of Shadow, because it is the centre of the shadow cast over Methalea as the sun passes above the Moon in a daily eclipse. At its heart is a temple of breathtaking size that is the centre of worship, as well as the palace of Queen Semankore, chief priestess and ruler of the Jekkarene Theocracy. The city is surrounded by a rural hinterland where the famed corn known as silver barley (which can draw its nourishment from the moon rather than the sun) is cultivated. Silver barley is sought-after by foreign alchemists, but

there is an outright ban on its export and only temple estates are allowed to cultivate the crop.

Very few foreigners ever enter Parlasos, as the Jekkarenes are notoriously insular. When they do allow foreigners to enter Parlasos, they offer fine hospitality, but it usually comes with both an escort and close surveillance.

Mikosso

The Sharranketan port on the southern coasts of Fierla. As is the case with most Sharranketan settlements, the main town – perhaps a few hundred inhabitants at most – is situated on an island just off the shore for security, and close at hand is a natural deep water harbour. While this is a staging post for traffic to and from Janisdaron, the Factor of Mikosso (the Zamada family's local chief) does send people into the interior to prospect and to seek out exotic goods and materials for trade. The current Factor of Mikosso is called Subursh.

Morkesh

Sitting astride the Briga River, Morkesh is a powerful kingdom currently ruled by a feisty Queen, Tursiba the Lioness, but is also a protectorate of the Taskan Empire. While considered Assabian in culture, its inhabitants speak a dialect sufficiently different to the Djesmiri of their neighbours to be classed as a language in its own right. The ruling dynasty of Morkesh rules from Morkar, and was founded by a pirate, Tark the Reaver, from across the ocean. The coastal city of Largil is the biggest and most important port for oceanic trade and travel outside of Sharranket, and is the site of Tursiba's impressive Summer Palace, surrounded by a broad dry moat inhabited by her pet lions.

Othrikor

The largest town of Kapolis, Othrikor is a rough port city built mostly of timber and a few stone buildings. It has been all but destroyed by fire four times, but has always rebuilt. A permanent shrine to the Ocean Father has been established at the docks, and is entirely dedicated to calling up Undines to put out fires should disaster strike again. Othrikor is mostly inhabited by Kapolans; however, many transients can be found there too. It is a good place to hire sailing crew, and is an excellent place to gamble, carouse and drink if one is willing to brave the rough and ready character of its mud-filled streets and its drunken locals. Othrikor is run by a strongman called Jaskar the Bronze, and he is both an accomplished diplomat and free with bribes and gifts to ensure that nobody deposes him. Support from the kings of Kipsipsindra is a great help.

Pandospalam

The Sharranketans like to keep their trading bases on easily defended islands, and Pandospalam is one such base, situated just off the coast of Rasputana where it is a key stopover point on the long voyage to Balbufera. Pandospalam has a small native population, but the Sharranketan port is its main centre. The island is a domain of the Hirambil family, and Rais Hirambil, a cousin of the family's patriarch, is the Factor of Pandospalam.

Pyrolus Stream

This current is born in the gulf where Kasperan, Thurina and Taylus meet, and sweeps south and west, passing between Kipsiperan and Rekshimetor, skirting the Doldrums of Hionlanta where it is joined by the spawning currents, then turning south along the coast of Jandekot until its power is spent. It is a boon to Korantine sailors travelling westwards, and its path has played an essential role in the establishment of trade routes and the placement of settlements.

Ramassa

Solfernay's counterpart in the north-east of the country is Baron Lankermost, who controls the other entrepôt, Ramassa. Most Taskans who enter the Jekkarid do so here. Lankermost is a trusted and deeply conservative patrician, who is the right man to handle the sensitive commercial, diplomatic and religious traffic between Taskay or Ashkor and Parlasos. Ramassa is situated near the sea and at a great river mouth, but the waterways here are shallow, shifting and choked with silt; in fact, Ramassa is useless as a port other than for the flat-bottomed boats used in and around the delta.

Rasputana

Rasputana is a land everyone knows of, but very few outsiders have visited. Of those that have, the vast majority are traders and merchants from Assabia, among them those of Sharranket, who monopolise the trade in pepper, spices and exotic materials out of Balbufera in the south. The land route from Taylus via Kamritar is not for the faint hearted, and it involves crossing a corner of the vast and mostly uninhabitable desert occupying much of the continent's interior before arriving at the Kingdom of Menkh. Civilisation (as represented by the *Four Kingdoms of the North* and the *Three Kingdoms of the South*) is compressed between the desert of the interior and the highlands of Someja. The barbarian Someshi, inhabitants of Someja, are peaceful enough if left alone, but are quite aware that they

control the choke point between north and south, known as the Usarwi Plain.

Rekshimetor

Home to the turtle-folk, a Guyuntar people who jealously guard access to the giant turtles that come to their shores on the same day every year to lay their eggs. The Rekshmetans worship the turtle god, and make a fine stew from the flesh of his creatures, and armour from their shells.

Sharranket

Sharranket is a small but very wealthy nation famous for its position as the hub of many of the world's most important trade routes, and for being the only nation to have an economy almost exclusively based on trade. The territory consists of two offshore islands and a small stretch of mainland bordered to the north by Djesmirket. Each of the islands has a city, one the capital of Homora, the other a smaller city named Ronispur; the third and smallest city, Shimir, being on the mainland. Formerly a sultanate, Sharranket is now ruled by a council drawn from five families of merchant princes who plant trading enclaves along the major trade routes they operate, stretching across the Ocean as far as distant Jandekot, and serviced by the most advanced fleet of ships in the world.

Taskan Empire

The Taskan Empire is the most powerful political entity in the world at present. Two hundred and fifty years ago an exiled Jekkarid warlord by the name of Zygas Taga intervened in the endemic wars between rival city-states in the land of Tarsenia, and ultimately unified them choosing one, Taskay, to be his capital. Since that time the Taskan Empire has grown in size and power, and has brought many neighbouring lands under its rule. The Emperor himself was declared a god and has shut himself away in his palace to prepare for his ascension to the heavens. In his place, he has left a magically animated statue to be his chief officer of state and manage the Empire's affairs, supported by colleges of priests who run the Emperor cult in each city and province. First came the Marble Simulacrum, which was destroyed in a disastrous battle over 100 years ago, then the Iron Simulacrum, which still rules the Empire today.

The heartland of the empire is Tarsenia, a heavily cultivated and densely populated region comprising the cities of Taskay, Tarsang, Pryjarna, Ashkor, Felsang, Merat and Zarina. The empire has grown to incorporate the Kingdom of Yegusai to the east, the Thennalt land of Camtri to the west, and a region now known as Further Tarsenia to the north where the city of

Ralmyra has been founded. Morkesh and the Jekkarene Theocracy are its protectorates.

Someja

Home to the Someshi barbarians, this region of rugged coast has no proper ports, but there are places to put in with a small vessel and the welcome can be quite warm if the visitor brings a desirable cargo. The Someshi themselves have little to do with the sea and seem rather frightened of it.

Sorantia

A little kingdom surrounded on all sides by the Taskan Empire, yet nominally independent. Sorantia is a failed kingdom, and much of its lands are now returning to wilderness or at the mercy of bandits and outlaws. However, its capital, the city of Sorandib, is still a place of wonder, for here is the seat of a famous sorcery school known as the *Artificers*. These people are thought to have fashioned the magically animated statue, The Iron Simulacrum, which rules the Taskan Empire. Sorantia is known as the origin of a drug called Fengo that can be refined for a variety of purposes, as well as the source of gunpowder used by an elite regiment in the Taskan army, The Unconquerable Heroes of Taskay.

Southern Draw

This current is a surge towards the outflow from the Inner Ocean into the Outer Ocean. It picks up more power on its way until it runs into the inflow current coming from the other direction, and the battle between these huge volumes of water creates an area of turbulent seas that makes navigation of the straits between Rasputana and Uxmal impossible.

Tapropiscur

A large island with many settlements, and the source of aggressive raiders (Reavers) famed for their willingness to travel the breadth of the ocean in search of adventure and plunder. Tark the Reaver, founder of the royal house of Morkesh, and Korsaddin the Reaver who was crushed by Kalacho of Agissene in the attack on Valos, were natives of Tapropiscur. The islanders are part of a loose confederacy ruled over by a single strongman, which is currently Mororsi the True — one of the most untrustworthy, ruthless, brutal and successful pirate captains of the last 20 years.

The Four Kingdoms of the North

These coastal kingdoms – Eilak, Menkh, Shuja and Rastush – represent important trading partners for merchantmen from Assabia.

The Three Kingdoms of the South

These three landlocked kingdoms – Zibud, Kessum and Jal – tend to be rather more warlike than their northern neighbours, but expend most of their aggression in fighting each other over petty disputes or stirring up trouble with the Someshi.

Zathrum

Beyond Marangia to the north is Zathrum, a Thennalt land inhabited by folk regarded as either very old fashioned or in touch with their traditions, depending on your point of view. The most powerful ruler is Radabus, the King of Zathis, as a result of his inheriting a Korantine colony on his doorstep at Mersin – sited on lands granted by an ancestor in return for trade monopolies and a regular tribute. Malstrom, the King of Gort, has control of much of the rest of the territory but has no such easy access to the outside world and prides himself as the great and manly upholder of ancient traditions, a posture appreciated by the wild mountain men of Gumathena to the east (considered barbaric even by Marangian standards) whom he can call on for support when he needs to.

CHARACTERS

This chapter provides information for creating Thennlan characters from the major cultures. Use either MYTHRAS or MYTHRAS IMPERATIVE's character creation rules, substituting the cultural details found here for the default cultures. The sourcebooks SHORES OF KORANTIA and THE TASKAN EMPIRE provide much more detailed character creation rules for character hailing from those lands.

Fill in the details using the normal MYTHRAS rules, including rolling for Social Class except where provided for here. For starting money, use the following in bullion Silver Pieces or equivalent, and apply the normal Social Class money modifiers:

- Barbarian: 4d6 x 15SP
- Civilised: 4d6 x 25SP
- Nomadic: 4d6 x 10SP
- Primitive: 4d6 x 5SP in trade goods

CHARACTERISTICS

In Thennla, all characteristics generated on 3d6 or on 2d6+6 have a maximum score in of 21. If this is ever exceeded, it denotes that the character concerned has undergone some sort of change in their nature – becoming god-like or freakish, depending on your point of view. This should have an effect on the way that character is perceived, and perhaps, provide some additional trait. For example, a human being who achieves a SIZ of 22 or greater (which is true of some remote tribes in

Jandekot) may effectively be giants and capable of using oversized weapons.

Games Master Note: When generating characteristics that use different die combinations, each additional d6 or +6 used in generating a characteristic increases the Maximum score for the Characteristic by 7 and the minimum by 1 or 6.

Skill Progression Limits

In Thennla there is a default cap on skills progression of five times a character's Basic Percentage. This represents the limitations of humanity, and is one of the reasons people pursue magical augmentation.

ALBIRS

These formidable, black-skinned barbarians inhabit the Albir Islands in the southern part of the Inner Ocean. Although they claim they are made from the soil, it has been said they originally migrated or were transported there from Jandekot. Of all the islander peoples, they alone appear to lack a seafaring tradition. The islands have limited resources, and in Albir history there are periods during which violence is at levels that interrupts or even reverses population growth. Since the Sharraketan merchants set up a trading post on the island of Albulong, more and more Albirs have been seen in Sharraketan service as mercenaries and bodyguards. Albirs are famed for their stature and physical prowess. Some of them find their way to the cities of the east, because some of those who hire-on as mercenaries inevitably decide never to return home.

CHARACTERS

To generate Characteristics for an Albir character, roll STR on 4d6 and SIZ on 3d6+6 and drop the lowest scoring die in each case.

Culture Type

Barbarian

Language

Albish

Customs

Archipelagan

Standard Skills

Athletics, Boating, Brawn, Endurance, First Aid, Locale (Albir Islands), Perception

Example Combat Styles

Mercenary (Spear, Shield, Javelin)

Professional Skills

Craft (Wood, Leather or Iron), Healing, Language (Archipelagan or Djemirri), Lore (Animal Husbandry), Survival, Track

Cultural Passions

Loyalty (Chieftain), Love (Gold, Glory), Hate (Personal enemy)

Magic Type

Folk Magic, Theism. Albirs honour Zondonza, a version or aspect of the Sun god represented as a bull and said to support the Sun's disc between his horns. An initiate of this god can only fuel his devotional pool by sacrificing cattle. While this is expensive, the god is happy for his worshippers to consume most of the body. Each 3 STR of bull sacrificed provides or restores one point to the devotional pool, and the presiding priest can decide who eats which organs and thereby gains all or some of the available points.

Typical Professions

Crafter, Herder, Mercenary, Warrior

ARCHIPELAGANS

Settled on several coasts and many islands, the Archipelagans (or Peoples of the Sea), range from peaceful farmers and fishers to fierce pirates who are the terror of the high seas. Two major tribes are known: the Guyuntars, who are dominant on most of the islands, and the Kapolans, who occupy the Kapoli

peninsula and the large island of Kipsiperan. Adorned with tattoos and accoutered with seashell jewellery and tortleshell armour, bearing weapons of bronze and in sleek, open decked ships, the Archipelagans can be encountered almost anywhere across the wide ocean.

Culture Type

Barbarian

Language

Guyuntar, or Kapolan

Customs

Archipelagan

Standard Skills

Athletics, Boating, Deceit, Endurance, Perception, Locale (varies), Willpower

Example Combat Styles

Levy Spearman, Reaver (Sabre or Sidearm, Dagger, Buckler. Trait: Sure-Footed), Seahunter (Spear/Harpoon, Club, Dagger. Trait: Thrown Weapon (harpoon)).

Professional Skills

Art (Any), Commerce, Craft (Any), Language (Archipelagan), Lore (Any), Musicianship, Navigate, Rites (Archipelagan), Seamanship, Survival

Cultural Passions

Loyalty (Clan or Crew), Love (Friend, Sibling or Romantic Lover), Hate (Rival Clan or Faction)

Magic Type

Folk Magic, Theism. Archipelagan gods include Dagomar, Father Ocean; Diotimar, Mother of Fishes; Palaskil, storm, sailing and farming; Orchang, war and feuding; Koremchai, god of piracy and plunder; and Heder and Hember, twin brother gods of herdsmen and crafters.

Typical Professions

Farmer, Fisher, Herder, Sailor, Warrior

ASSABIANS

The teeming cities of Assabia are not for the faint hearted. Humanity in all its glory and monstrosity is to be found on open display, and nowhere else in the civilised world are such

extremes of wealth and poverty to be experienced in such close proximity. This is a land where children are sold into slavery by their own parents; where slave owners enjoy complete discretion in how they treat their chattels; where brutality is routine; where the pampered wives of rich merchants, hidden from the eyes of men beneath swathes of cloth, are carried on litters past near-naked prostitutes plying their trade on the open street. Everything has a price and everyone dreams of one day making their fortune; if anyone should be lucky enough to rise from rags to riches, they are sure to be celebrated in story and song no matter how it was done. Assabia is made up of several sultanates (Ankwar, Djesmir, Jelhai, Khorala, Perlak), the Kingdom of Morkesh (actually ruled by a queen, who is said to be descended from foreign pirates) and Sharranket, a former sultanate, now a plutocracy ruled by five ludicrously rich and powerful merchant families.

The Assabians met within foreign lands are often merchants from Sharranket or sailors from Morkesh. Sharranket's merchant galleys are the most massive ships upon the ocean. But it is also a land known for its sorcerers, and is thought to be the wellspring of their art.

Culture Type

Civilised

Language

Djesmiri or Morkeshite

Customs

Assabian

Standard Skills

Conceal, Deceit, Drive, Influence, Insight, Locale, Willpower

Example Combat Styles

Duelist (Rapier, Dagger and Buckler), Levy Spearman (Spear and Shield), Crossbowman (Light Crossbow), Levy Archer (Short Bow)

Professional Skills

Art (Any), Commerce, Craft (Any), Language (Any), Literacy (Djesmiri), Lore (Any), Musicianship, Rites (Assabian), Streetwise

Cultural Passions

Loyalty (Sultanate, Merchant House (Sharranket) or Kingdom (Morkesh)), Love (Friend, Sibling or Romantic Lover), Hate (Rival People, Faction or Gang)

Magic Type

Theism, Sorcery. Deities such as Basat, Shomat (a local sun god), Haliset (a water and fertility god variously described as a toad, cat or hoopoe-bird) and Tolat (earth goddess) are the most popular deities, and their worship is supported by many localised cults. Temmush is also very popular as the bringer of wealth and maker of deals. In Sharranket most people are lay worshippers of the national goddess, Shara Peshwan. However, Assabians are atheists at heart, believing that the gods do not deserve to be worshipped; ironically, the Holy City of Djesmir (as it is often called) is the spiritual home of the movement. Perhaps the reason for this is that the religious practices of the region are grossly venal, conducted in whatever way an individual feels will benefit them most. Many visitors would be shocked at the extent to which, in Djesmirket in particular, relations with the gods are looked on as business transactions, in which both parties negotiate a mutually beneficial deal. Assabians are famous for their pacts with demons and deities.

Typical Professions

Merchant, Sailor, Sorcerer

Assabian Sorcerer

The home of sorcery is Assabia, and for many the language of Djesmirket is the language of magic itself, since all the great works on the subject are written in it. The Assabian Rites skill can be used to augment Sorcery skill rolls. Assabian sorcerers may be artisans or even slaves, but the most highly skilled practitioners are usually members of a philosophical school or tradition. Mavericks and loners may end up as dangerous wizards wielding powers for selfish, and sometimes highly unsavoury, ends.

Standard Skills

Customs, Deceit, Influence, Insight, Perception, Willpower

Professional Skills

Craft (Any) Invocation (Grimoire or Philosophical School), Language (Any), Literacy, Lore (Any), Rites (Assabian), Shaping

Sorcery Lores

Assabian Sorcerers study the Three Realities (see the Magic section) as an essential aspect of arcane knowledge and arts. The knowledge they acquire is an essential part of understanding and dealing with supernatural phenomena, beings and artefacts. When these lores are put to use, it is quite possible the object of study is deliberately trying to avoid detection or confound

analysis – for example, a spirit that covertly possesses a human victim; a demon that is taking steps to prevent the revelation of its true name; or a magical item whose creator has obscured its function and purpose. In these cases, the Sorcerer's lore skill should be opposed by a relevant skill of the target or its creator. The Games Master should also take care to ensure appropriate difficulty levels are set for a task.

Lore: The Mundane Arcana

This Lore is used to study and interpret the operation of magic within the material world. It combines physics and metaphysics and an understanding of the way in which the other realities impinge upon and influence mundane existence. All Assabian schools of sorcery can, and should, learn this skill. With this skill a sorcerer can:

- Detect the action or presence of magic, or of a supernatural entity connected to the material world
- Determine the type of magic at work (Sorcery, Theism, Animism, etc.)
- Estimate the strength of the magic or entity at work
- Analyse a magical item or enchantment to determine its function and purpose
- Research the necessary means to conjure a specific ethereal entity (Jinn) using the Evoke spell

Lore: Spirit World

This skill is the specialist field of certain schools of sorcery whose main interest is in summoning and dealing with spirits and other entities who inhabit the Second Reality, the Spirit World. Sorcerers do not have means of discorporation or astral projection, so are limited to dealing with those spirits normally capable of manifesting and interacting with mundane existence. Given that this can involve haunts, wraiths and other souls of the dead, this lore is often regarded as equivalent to necromancy.

With this skill a sorcerer can:

- Detect the action or presence of a spirit, including those bound to a physical object
- Determine the nature of a spirit and its capabilities
- Estimate the strength or intensity of the spirit
- Work out a means to Evoke the spirit, forcing it to materialise or manifest so it can be communicated with, dominated, banished or combatted

Lore: The Many Hells

This lore is rather more restricted and exotic than the others; few sorcerers study the Third Reality in great depth because of the dangers and difficulties inherent in putting this lore into practice. The Many Hells are also far more varied and extensive than the other two realities, so even those who have learned everything mankind can know are aware they are merely scratching the surface.

With this skill a sorcerer can:

- Detect the action or presence of a demon
- Determine the nature of a demon and its capabilities
- Estimate the strength, duration or cause of a demon's presence in the mundane world
- Work out the means and probable cost to evoke a certain type of demon
- Research the true name of a specific demon if it is known to humanity

DAGOMILS

Round-eyed folk with partially webbed hands and feet, the Dagomils are nomads on the ocean. They are part of the cultural matrix of islander peoples, and yet different – distinguished by their physiognomy, language and lifestyle. The Dagomils are regarded as being sufficiently close to the gods and spirits of the ocean that they are somehow suspect of complicity in the Cataclysm that destroyed Korantis. For this reason, they are despised, reduced to beggary, and poorly treated in places like Kipsipsindra, and few wander the northern seas as a result.

Dagomils are said to have a floating refuge somewhere in the Doldrums of Hiolanta, built upon rafts made of seaweed and flotsam, and only they know how to navigate those dead seas or appease the wraiths that haunt them.

Culture Type

Nomad.

Language

Dagomish

Customs

Dagomil

Standard Skills

Athletics, Boating, Deceit, Endurance, Perception, Locale, (varies), Swim

Example Combat Styles

Seahunter (Spear, Harpoon, Scimitar)

Professional Skills

Art (Any), Commerce, Craft (Any), Language (Any), Lore (Any), Musicianship, Navigate, Rites (Archipelagan), Seamanship, Survival

Cultural Passions

Loyalty (Clan), Love (Friend, Sibling or Romantic Lover), Hate (Rival Clan or Faction)

Magic Type

Folk Magic, Animism, Theism. Dagomils worship the same pantheon of deities as their Archipelagan cousins, but with emphasis on different divinities. Animism is practised by Dagomil witches, who essentially are there to mediate with the sea-wraiths that lurk around their home waters.

Typical Professions

Fisher, Hunter, Sailor, Scout, Shaman, Warrior

Special

Swimming is a natural talent for a Dagomil. All skill tests are one grade easier.

JANDEKOT TRIBES

The great and largely wilderness continent of Jandekot is where one finds extreme environments, greater concentrations of magical effects, and more isolated populations than anywhere else. Physical types range from pygmies to giants, and skin colours include mottled green, red, and hues of blue. The slightly-built (SIZ 2d6+4), brown-skinned Warong are the most numerous population group but they share the jungle with some bizarre neighbours – from red-skinned Mandiko (STR 4d6, SIZ 3d6+6), to shy and reclusive tribes of pygmies (STR 2d6+2, SIZ 1d6+6). The forest folk have a close relationship to the spirits sharing their environment, providing advantages that go a long way to make up for their primitive technologies.

The tribes of Jandekot are widely scattered and there are many different cultures and languages. The common tongue of the jungle continent is Jande, a combination of sounds and signs

used for interactions between tribes, but not everyone can manage it. The mere fact such a language exists suggests that Jandekot may not have had more internal trade and diplomatic connections in times past than exist now.

Culture Type

Primitive

Language and Customs

Varies by tribe. For example, Nothern Warong, Mandiko

Standard Skills

Brawn, Endurance, Evade, Locale, Perception, Stealth and either Athletics, Boating or Swim

Example Combat Styles

Forest Hunter (Spear, Sling, Blowngun), Mandiko Warrior (Spear, Shield, Axe), Orlock Headhunter (Spear, Axe, Garotte), Yshpato Spirit Warrior (Spear, Shield, Dagger)

Professional Skills

Craft (Any), Language (Jande), Lore (Any), Navigate, Rites (Tribal Tradition), Survival, Track

Cultural Passions

Loyalty (Headman or Headwoman), Hate (Rival clan or tribe)

Magic Type

Folk Magic, Animism. Every tribe has its own set of Traditional Spirits that they can call upon or summon and expect a compliant and friendly response. Some favour Nature Spirits, some favour Ancestors; others, such as the Orlocks, take the spirits of enemy tribesmen they have slain and make them subservient to their own clan.

Typical Professions

Beast Handler, Fisher, Hunter, Scout, Shaman, Warrior

JEKKARENES

The Jekkarene Theocracy is a closed nation where a land-tied peasantry lives in thrall to the matriarchal cult of the Moon-goddess Jekkara. Head of state is Queen Semankore, who rules from the temple-city of Parlasos. A narrow caste of male ‘patricians’ are elevated to high office (baronies) to fulfil key administrative and military roles, but always subject to their local college of priestesses. The queen’s position is not hereditary but a life-long appointment. Every Jekkarene

queen is chosen by a college of senior priestesses from a pool of more than 100 young women and girls, all carefully selected and removed from their parents when only five years old and subjected to intensive training for a role that, likely as not, they will never have the chance to fulfil.

Ordinary Jekkarenes are extremely parochial and deeply conservative; the world they inhabit is overwhelmingly agricultural in nature. They have almost no experience (and little knowledge) of the world outside, and live their lives in the fixed patterns ordained by the priestesses in the goddess' name. Those who find themselves dreaming about something different may find themselves driven out of their homes and cast out of society, or worse. Apparently those who particularly upset the priestesses are first cursed with lycanthropy, as a mark of how they have rejected civilised society, before being forced across the border so they can sow terror amongst the exile communities of the badlands.

Culture Type

Civilised

Language

Jekkarene

Culture

Jekkarene

Standard Skills

Deceit, Drive, Endurance, Influence, Insight, Locale, Willpower

Example Combat Styles

Huntsman (Spear, Bow, Net), Peasant Levy (Spear, Shield, Shortsword), Noble Warrior (Sword, Shield, Bow)

Professional Skills

Art (Any), Commerce, Craft (Any), Language (Any), Literacy, Lore (Any), Musicianship, Rites (Jekkarene), Streetwise

Cultural Passions

Loyalty (Jekkarene Theocracy (women and people of rank only)), Love (Friend, Sibling or Romantic Lover), Hate (Local lord (for peasant), Korantines (anyone))

Magic Type

Folk Magic, Sorcery, Theism. Male Jekkarenes are barred from any form of higher magic unless they are members of the

hero-cult of Zygas Taga, the Taskan Emperor, which is generally restricted to the rich and powerful (Social Class roll of 96 or higher). Women are only entitled to practice Theism and Sorcery through the auspices of the Moon cult honouring the goddess Jekkara and her daughter Jezri. Both sexes may have Folk Magic: roll 1d3-1 for male characters and 1d3+1 for female.



Typical Professions

Crafter, Farmer, Herder, Official, Priestess, Temple Dancer, Warrior

Social Class for Jekkarene Characters

Jekkarenes keep very few slaves, as the peasantry is tied to the land and there is little need for additional subservient labour. However, there is a large outcast population living in the badlands of eastern Methalea. Jekkarenes are also poor in portable wealth – their traditional currency is in heavy iron bars, to prevent the emergence of a more liquid economy that would be harder for the theocratic state to control. Of course the highest echelons of society have ways to circumvent these limitations.

KORANTINES

The Korantines are a civilised people hailing from one of many city-states, each with its own goddess, cultural norms and social distinctions. They uphold ancient traditions celebrating prowess in physical pursuits, as well as the social skills required to fully participate in city-state life. To be considered Korantine is a matter of language. If one speaks the language as a native, it is assumed one also understands the basic principles of behaving in a civilised manner. Everyone shares the basic assumption that all Korantine citizens are equal under the law, but this only loosely applies to people of citizen rank from other cities; it does not extend to non-citizens with whom they live and work day-by-day, but who lack the citizenship; and it certainly doesn't extend to slaves.

The rank an individual holds within one of the state cults is very important, especially since cult ranks are the means through which political power is exercised. Achieving status within a cult is all part and parcel of the Korantine love of showing prowess, whether in the city's politics, the law courts, athletic competition, warfare or literacy.

Korantines can be very conservative about gender roles. It is fine for a strange, foreign woman to mix freely with men and pursue a male-dominated career, as is common in Tarsenia and among other barbarians, but they would not want their own womenfolk getting any such funny ideas. For this reason, female courtesans who make a living from mixing with male society are almost exclusively foreigners, admittedly often women from other Korantine cities. Gender roles are clearly defined, and only the peculiarities of some of the more unusual cults and customs permit the rules to be bent.

Culture Type

Civilised

Language:

Korantine

Customs

Korantine City State

Standard Skills

Athletics, Conceal, Drive, Influence, Insight, Locale, Willpower

Example Combat Styles

Citizen Infantry (Shield, Spear, Shortsword), Equestrian Levy (Spear/Lance), Levy Archer (Short Bow), Levy Skirmisher (Short Bow, Shortword), Levy Slinger (Sling)

Professional Skills

Art (Any), Commerce, Craft (Any), Language (Any), Lore (Any), Musicianship, Rites (Korantine), Streetwise

Cultural Passions

Loyalty (Home City).

This passion is common to all citizens. Non-citizen characters may substitute another Passion; for example, a slave might have Loyalty (Master) instead.

Magic Type

Folk Magic, Theism. Korantines follow a complex pantheon that encompasses both national gods and the goddess that embodies their city-state. Sorcery is anathema to Korantines.

Typical Professions

Any Civilised

ORCS

The tribes of Kasperan are another group displaying characteristics affected by ancient pacts. Orcs come in several strains, often reflected in significant physical variations, and operate a caste system both within tribes and between them. Skin colour ranges from chalky white to slate grey. Orcs tend to be disliked by most others; they propitiate rather aggressive and dangerous gods, and regard anyone who does not as being fair game. They are not entirely evil but it has to be admitted that their biggest city of Nishimbakoi is the scene of human sacrifice on an almost industrial scale.

Orc characteristics are normally generated according to the standard rules for human characters, however, high caste Orcs (Social Status 96-00) usually sport increased STR, CON, and

POW as god-given gifts received in return for the human sacrifices that take place when they are born. Such characters can be expected to have +1d6 in one of these Characteristics.

Those Orcs who inhabit the town of Enkefalan and its environs are more or less integrated with the Guyuntar population they share the settlement with. They desist from human sacrifices, but this does not stop either them or their neighbours from profiting from the slave trade.

Culture Type

Barbarian

Language

Orken

Customs

Nishimba or Archipelagan (Orcs from Enkefalan)

Standard Skills

Athletics, Brawn, Endurance, First Aid, Locale, Perception; and either Boating or Drive.

Example Combat Styles

Huntsman (Bow, Sling, Spear), Tribal Warrior (Spear, Shield, Axe), Lizard Rider (Spear, Shortsword)

Professional Skills

Craft (Any), Language (Archipelagan, Jande), Lore (Any), Musicianship, Rites (Orken), Survival

Cultural Passions

Loyalty (Local Warlord, Head Man or Chieftain), Love (Friend, Sibling or Romantic Lover), Hate (Orlocks, a related tribe of headhunters found in the Jandekot forests; Centaurs, a ferocious race found in the open plains of Kasperan)

Magic Type

Folk Magic, Sorcery. Orcs can weave sorcery spells through the memorisation and recombination of a rich store of poetic verse. The deities they worship are collectively known as The Hungry Gods, but they work no Miracles, merely accept sacrifices and allow the Orc sorcerer-priests to gain some margin on the deal.

Typical Professions

Beast Handler, Crafter, Farmer, Herder, Fisher, Merchant, Sailor, Scout, Slaver, Sorcerer-Priest, Thief, Warrior

Orc Piracy

Orcs have successfully taken to the sea and are very much feared; for whilst their black ships sometimes come for peaceful trade, just as often they are looking to fill their holds with captives to be taken home for sacrifice to their gods. They have also colonised islands across the Inner Ocean but this has been a haphazard and sometimes accidental venture resulting in a scattering of settlements, some of which have not had contact with other human beings for decades.

TASKANS

Taskans come from the powerful empire dominating central Taylus. Relations with the Korantine empire remain peaceful and some trade takes place, but many Korantines are convinced that the Taskan emperor has ambitions to seize their cities. Unlike the Korantines, Taskans allow women equal status with men, do not practise slavery, and worship a god-emperor and the animated iron statue who is his factotum. Taskans are recognisable with their penchant for long-sleeved tunic and trousers; the men wear neatly trimmed beards and let their hair grow to their shoulders.

The Taskan heartland is known as Tarsenia and is a federation of formerly independent city-states: Taskay itself, Tar-sang, Zarina, Ashkor, Felsang, Zarina, Merat, Ralmyra, Haran and Pryjarna. Provinces include Camtri, a Thennalt land; The Little Kitan, inhabited by the Escar horse-people and Yegusai, an ancient riverine kingdom which practices ancestor-worship. The Taskans are protectors of the Jekkarene Theocracy, the traditional enemy of the Korantine race, and also of Morkesh.

Culture Type

Civilised

Language:

Taskan

Customs

Taskan

Standard Skills

Conceal, Deceit, Drive, Influence, Insight, Locale, Willpower



Example Combat Styles

Taskan Citizen Infantry (Sword, Shield, Spear), Zarinian Equestrian Levy (Scimitar, Spear, Shield), Ralmyran Levy Archer (Longbow), Tarsangan Levy Slinger (Sling), Ashkorite Pikeman (Pike/Xyston)

Professional Skills

Art (any), Commerce, Craft (any), Language (any), Literacy (Tarsenian), Lore (any), Musicianship, Rites (Taskan), Streetwise

Cultural Passions

Loyalty (Emperor); many will also have a loyalty towards (or love for) for their home city or province and there are times when these things are conflicting drives.

Magic Type

Folk Magic, Sorcery, Theism. Taskan citizens have one magic point permanently deducted from their total as a cost of their citizenship, which is put at the disposal of the divine emperor Zygas Taga.

Ordinary Taskans benefit from Folk Magic made publicly accessible by the authorities or public-spirited individuals, and gain 1d3 such spells at Character Creation – however, these are rarely, if ever, spells that have practical use outside domestic and

civic community life, and the manner in which they are made available requires that a character is literate (Literacy 26%+) to actually learn them. Typical civic spells are *Cleanse, Cool, Heal, Perfume, Light, Tidy* and *Polish*. Citizens are expected to use them to keep public spaces, monuments and shrines in good order.

Some Taskan theist cults offer standard benefits to initiates, but the majority exist to provide moral and financial support to an individual's personal journey of devotion (see the Magic chapter for information on Personal Religion). Typical Taskan deities are Thesh, god of fire; Tarsen, god of civilisation and letters; Machank, god of war; Tethis, goddess of love; Samanse, goddess of the hearth and home; Basat, god of life and light, and Hoonvel, god of farming.

Social Class for Taskan Characters

The Taskan Empire has no slaves, and the ruling class (aside from the emperor himself who has no progeny) refers to the individuals and families who occupy positions of power in individual cities, provinces or in the army. For Taskan characters, a roll of 03-20 on the standard MYTHRAS table for Social Class is treated as a Freeman, and 00 is treated as Aristocracy. Taskan citizens are not assessed by wealth or status, and all citizens have the right to vote for their local leaders and stand for public office... so long as they do so through the auspices of the emperor-cult.

Typical Professions

Any

THENNALTS

Almost ubiquitous in the northern parts of Taylus, the Thennalts are a matrix of many different peoples, speaking related languages and united by the recognition of the Earth goddess Theyna as the paramount deity. Thennalts are spread across an enormous geographical area, and live in communities that operate at a variety of levels of development and cultural sophistication.

Thennalts can also be quite mobile; a bored young man stuck in an agricultural backwater in Zathrum may well go in search of fortune elsewhere and, for example, offer his services to a Marangian warlord if he thinks that will get him what he wants from life. Home is where one is born and where one hopes to bring up children and be laid to rest; however, at any other time going off to see the world is considered a manly virtue.

Gender roles among Thennalts are clearly defined and traditional, but there is no particular dignity attached to one gender

CHARACTERS

or the other. Thennalt men tend to wear a short, colourful tunic, gathered at the waist with a broad girdle or belt, usually of leather and adorned with bronze. The sword is a status symbol; only married men who are heads of their own household are entitled to use one.

Culture Type

Barbarian

Language

Thennalt

Customs

Thennalt

Standard Skills

Athletics, Brawn, Endurance, First Aid, Locale, Perception; and either Boating, Drive or Ride.

Example Combat Styles

Chariot Fighter (Spear, Shortbow), Huntsman (Spear, Sling, Net), Levy Spearman (Spear, Shield), Thennalt Levy Skirmisher (Shortsword, Sling, Shgrtbow)

Professional Skills

Craft (Any), Language (Any), Lore (Any), Musicianship, Rites (Thennalt), Survival

Thennalts from Korantia must take Korantine Language as one of their professional skills; Thennalts from Camtri must likewise take Taskan.

Cultural Passions

Loyalty (Local Warlord, Head Man or Chieftain, or one of the Thennalt Kings)

Love (Friend, Sibling or Romantic Lover)

Hate (Rival Community, Enemy Lord)

Marangians tend to have a particular and violent hatred for Taskans.

Magic Type

Folk Magic, Theism. There are examples of Animism in Thennalt lands, generally referred to as Witchcraft. Typical Thennalt deities include Theyna, the all-mother; Thenn, the hunter and civilisation god; Palaskil the storm and sky god and Sheagu, goddess of death and burial.

Typical Professions

Crafter, Farmer, Herder, Fisher, Merchant, Scout, Warrior

MAGIC

Thennla is magic-rich; many people have access to low-level spells and cantrips so long as they are respectable members of their society, and, thereby, not excluded from the skills and knowledge their local traditions have to offer. Higher magic is frequently encountered and its effects and possibilities are built into the fabric of most societies.

THE NATURE OF MAGIC

Thennla appears on the surface to be much like our own world. For the most part, it behaves in a predictable fashion and in accordance with rules that can be discerned through direct observation and experiment. However, the presence of gods and other supernatural entities, and the proximity of the Material World to other dimensions, can produce unexpected and surprising phenomena. As a result, natural laws are provisional and can be interrupted, adapted or suspended; the mechanisms by which that happens are generally described as ‘magic’.

Magic Point Recovery

In Thennla, a character’s Magic Points are recovered at the character’s Healing Rate per day, assuming adequate rest. In normal circumstances the day’s Magic Point recovery is achieved by a decent night’s sleep. Recovery may be accelerated or hindered by the magical nature of a location, at the Games Master’s discretion. It may also be prevented by interrupted sleep, inadequate rest, illness or chronic fatigue.

In the Spirit World, a spirit that is native to that world recovers Magic Points at its Healing Rate every hour. As spirit entities lack CON, use their CHA to establish their Healing Rate instead.

Entities that are outside their normal realm – spirits manifest or bound in the Material World, disincorporated mortals in the Spirit World – are unable to recover Magic Points except from external sources (veneration, sacrifice and so forth).

How Magic Works

Magical effects are the product of energy generated through the interaction of the parallel dimensions that comprise the Three Realities of the cosmos, shaped and directed by those with the knowledge to do so. In game terms, this energy is represented by Magic Points. Harnessing and deploying this energy may come easily to supernatural entities that can move between the realities or states of being, but for humans it is quite a feat. Getting the help of the gods in the form of Miracles is the most efficient, and often the most efficacious, way of doing so. Working magic with only the abilities with which a human being is endowed is much more difficult; sorcerers and shamans spend lifetimes learning to master their professions.

What Magic Is For

Magic is encountered day-to-day, used in ways that enforce and support a culture’s traditions and economy. When deployed to support a community’s efforts to grow food, reduce the chance of a merchant ship sinking, or provide defences for a unit of soldiers, it can make the difference between feast and famine, life and death, victory or defeat. Magic can both diminish and

magnify the world's destructive forces. Like any other resource, it is usually more readily accessible to those with wealth and status, and so in some societies, access to it serves to deepen class divisions. There are even whole cultures that are magic-poor because they have few resources and no infrastructure to develop the magical potential of their people.

THE THREE REALITIES

The earth, sky and oceans of Thennla all belong to the material, or mundane, realm; which is itself just one of the three realities that are known to exist. The philosopher Atrivaskos of Masia was the first to demonstrate, through reasoning alone, that these realities *must* constitute the entirety of existence. He observed that, since nothing appears able to escape the realms, and nothing new to enter them, even if the Three Realities were *not* true it would make no difference to anyone or anything. While Atrivaskos' Proof is yet to be challenged, there is no reason why there could not be some portal between one of the realities of Thennla and some other dimension in which one or more inhabited worlds are found.

The Material World

Everything in the Material World is expressed in some physical form. There are five recognised Natures of which physical things are made: Earth, Fire, Air, Water and Flesh. Everything in the Material World partakes of one or more of these natures.

In the Material World, a soul can only persist so long as it is combined with, or cloaked in, a physical form. The most suitable housing for a soul is flesh, a type of matter that is defined by being in a constant state of change and known to be transitory. It is for this reason that a living creature's lifespan is limited, unless magic is deployed to prolong it artificially.

Creatures and entities that are native to the other realities cannot enter the Material World without the aid of magic – in most cases through some form of summons or conjuring spell. Unless subsequently imprisoned or bound in a physical form or object, the visit is always a temporary one.

The Spirit World

Just beyond mortal perception is the strange and abstract world of the spirits. This dimension touches on the Material World at almost every point, and sometimes spirit beings intrude into it or directly influence its inhabitants. The Spirit World is described by some scholars and mystics as like an ocean; one that both

divides the Material World from the Many Hells and, for those who know how to navigate it, connects them. When a mortal dies, his soul is parted from the flesh and has to pass through the Spirit World to its final destination in the Many Hells where it will assume a new form.

A living person can only enter the Spirit World if his soul can be disincorporated, or temporarily separated from the body. To do this requires a rare ability practiced by some shamans, powerful drugs, or a theist Miracle.

An entity of any kind can only have INT, POW and CHA characteristics when present in the Spirit World.

The Many Hells

Beneath the surface of the earth, in a vast subterranean world that dwarfs the upper world of the living, are the Many Hells. These are the lands of the dead, with their own complex geography and their own kingdoms and empires. Those who are native to the Many Hells are commonly called *demons*. They cannot enter the Material World without the intervention of powerful magic, because they must generate or bring with them a physical form to do so. Even the insubstantial souls of the dead that have taken up permanent residence in the Many Hells, cannot be permanently returned to the Material World again without divine intervention or reincarnation.

A soul that descends to the Many Hells faces many dangers, not least of which is the bleak prospect of an eternity of misery and mindless boredom. Fortunately, the newly deceased should carry with them the help and protection of the gods they worshipped in life; and perhaps even enjoy the rewards of a special place reserved for the gods' favourites. If not, they may find themselves enslaved and put to eternal servitude on the estates of some demon lord.

In the Many Hells, only creatures who are entirely native to the place can recover Magic Points at all and, unless allowed access to one of the few locations where Magic Points are known to accumulate and can be harvested, its denizens rely on the offerings made by the relatives of the dead to their loved ones. These tend to dry up after they have been dead a few years and have passed from living memory.

Games Master Note: In the Many Hells it is possible to encounter inhabitants who have different or variant versions of the characteristics possessed by creatures in the Material and Spirit Worlds. One such example are Shades, creatures formed from the spirits of the dead and cloaked in substance produced from no more than shadows. For only in the Many Hells can darkness be a substance (nature) in its own right rather simply an absence of light.

SUPERNATURAL BEINGS

Even in the Material World it is possible to encounter magical, ethereal or demonic entities.

Ethereals

Ethereals are magical beings that are able to materialise or dematerialise a physical form at will. These entities are not the same as spirits as they actually possess a material body, one that can suffer hurt and which can be subject to the ravages of time. Even when dematerialised, Ethereals retain a presence in the Material World. If they can be detected (for example, by a Soul Sight Miracle or Mystic Vision), they can be targeted with spells.

Ethereals can readily be summoned or evoked, but the summoner must use a spell or Miracle with sufficient Range to reach wherever they are, or be present at the right time and in a place where such beings are known to be lurking. Ethereal beings can be banished if the appropriate spell or Miracle is known, but the effect is only temporary and prevents the ethereal from assuming physical form for the duration.

While in material form these beings can suffer injury and the effects of ageing, but cannot recover Magic Points. When in ethereal form they are immune to the ravages of time, and can recover Magic Points very slowly, at their healing rate per month, season or even per year, according to type, but cannot heal their physical bodies.

The many types of ethereal include the ifrit, a tribe of elemental giants who wield sorcery; elves, goblins, trolls and fairie races, such as kobolds and pixies.

Elementals

These more-or-less dumb spirits only have any meaning or purpose when they combine with some aspect of the Material World. Yet they live outside it, and must be summoned or evoked. Summoning an elemental through sorcery requires one point of Magnitude per cubic metre of elemental, and enough of their natural substance with which they can cloak themselves to form a physical body.

Spirits

Creatures in the Material World cannot normally see spirits, engage them in spirit combat or target them with spells, and vice versa. However, there are some spirits that retain a psychic connection to the Material World and can Manifest, making themselves visible, causing physical phenomena or even

making psychic attacks on unsuspecting humans. Of these by far the most common are haunts and wraiths. In all cases there are conditions on when, or to whom, a spirit can manifest. An ancestor spirit, for example, may only be able to manifest itself to someone of the same lineage. The Games Master may rule that Manifestation is a skill, with a basic percentage of POW+CHA; a typical value for a spirit that possesses the skill is five times this base. A sorcerer can only Evoke a spirit that possesses the Manifestation trait, whereas a shaman or witch, with access to the spirit world by Discorporation, can force other types of spirits into the Material World too.

Almost any spirit can be bound to a place, object or person in the Material World by an act of will or magic. A place to which a spirit is bound, such as the area to which a haunt is confined, is usually called a locus. A binding object is referred to as a fetish, and binding to a person or creature is usually seen in the form of possession or the control exerted over a spirit by a shaman. These bindings limit a spirit's normal access to its Spirit World home, or cut it off completely.

Demons

Demons are creatures from the Many Hells, and have a physical substance very different to that of the Material World. They do not, and cannot, exist as discorporated spirits, and so to engage with the Material World, must have a physical presence. This can only be accomplished by a significant expenditure of Magic Points, provided by whoever seeks to summon them. When a demon's physical form is destroyed, its soul is destroyed with it, and vice versa.

Demons can be unique entities or belong to a tribe or race. Many of them are bizarre and shocking to behold, and have highly unusual powers and abilities. When designing a demon, feel free to make use of the Chaos Features provided in MYTH-RAS pages 275-276 in order to represent this.

There are no theist Miracles by which a demon can be summoned to the Material World. The evocations of sorcerers are the only known means to achieve it. For a sorcerer to summon a demon, he must commit one point of Magnitude per Intensity of the target, and commit one Magic Point for every point of SIZ possessed by the demon in order for its physical form to be forced into the Material World.

LEARNING MAGIC

Magical arts can be acquired in a number of different ways. Simple Folk Magic may be passed down within a family or a

trade, and those cults which have an integral role to play within a society usually ensure that magical traditions are preserved and passed on to each new generation. As you would expect, the more powerful abilities and arcane skills are reserved for those who prove themselves worthy in some way. However, there are many supernatural entities in the cosmos which can be a source of magical knowledge to those who seek them out and strike whatever deal suits both parties, so there are ways to bypass the straight-jacket of cult rules and hierarchies.

The Rites Skill (INT+CHA)

The Rites skill represents the basic magical and religious knowledge a character learns and absorbs from their cultural background. This skill replaces the Folk Magic skill, but has wider uses too.

Every culture has its own traditions and philosophies for dealing with magic and the supernatural; hence there are separate skills that can be learned for Korantine Rites, Taskan Rites, Assabian Rites and so forth. The Rites skill can be used to accomplish basic magical tasks learned within that culture, including casting Folk Magic, making the proper observances in a religious ritual, perhaps even using a fetish containing a spirit that is friendly to the character's native traditions.

Games Master Note: In some instances, the Rites skill can be used to augment other compatible casting rolls. A Korantine priestess exhorting her deity to provide a Miracle may, for example, take her time over it and augment the Exhort roll with up to 20% of her Korantine Rites skill. You may also allow that the augment can be divided between her Devotion and Exhort skills. Only Assabian Rites can be used to augment sorcery. The Rites skill therefore defines the benefit to be gained by using Ritualistic Casting Times (see MYTHRAS Page 115). To gain the advantage of Ritualised Casting requires increasing the casting time to minutes for Folk Magic and hours for Theism and Sorcery.

TYPES OF MAGIC

Folk Magic

Folk Magic is not a discrete category of magic in the setting, but a general term for low-powered magical cantrips and blessings in the grain of a culture or tradition, and that provide some resource for those starved of the more potent forms of magic.

The most frequently encountered form of Folk Magic is a blessing provided by a deity or spirit, and accessible through its cult. Folk Magic is usually cast or invoked using the character's Rites skill, depending on where and how it is learned, rather

than with a separate Folk Magic skill, but otherwise behaves as per the rules in MYTHRAS.

Mysticism

Mysticism is an isolated practice, studied and transmitted within extremely narrow communities. Outside of Rasputana the only traditions that conform to the Mysticism model are the Korantine Sibyls, who are no more than a dozen female seers scattered across the whole of Korantia and their apprentices; and the Black Hand of Jelhai, an unsavoury body of fanatics that enforce the rule of Jelhai's Sultan. A number of traditions are known to exist in Rasputana, and even there Mysticism is a rather exotic practice. Rarely a foreigner may travel there to learn from the mystics, and even more rarely such an individual returns to their native land laden with the esoteric knowledge they have gained.

Sorcery

Sorcery is distinguished by being a body of magical lore entirely created through human endeavour. It is the major magic system for several important cultures, but its true home is Assabia. It can even provide the framework for religious practices, as sorcery incorporates sophisticated language and protocols for dealing with supernatural entities. Knowledge of a few spells from a widely-distributed grimoire may be quite common amongst educated people; however, to be considered a professional sorcerer requires not only that you know a handful of spells but also that you are adept at manipulating them. The Shaping skill (sometimes referred to as Spellcraft) is generally only taught to those serving as apprentices to a sorcerer, or through an order or guild. The same can be said for certain spells such as Charm, Enchant and Evoke.

Sorcerers are distinguished from other kinds of magic users by the importance of the written word through which their knowledge is recorded, compiled and passed on. Spell books, glyphs, runes, grimoires, arcane signs and lost languages – these are all the stock in trade of a sorcerer, hence you usually only find sorcerers in literate societies. Nevertheless, it is also the favoured magic system of the barbarian Orcs of Kasperan, who have only a syllabic script that is not up to the job of communicating the complexities of spell casting and whose grimoires are epic songs running into thousands of lines that the sorcerer needs to commit to memory.

A sorcerer who gets consumed by his trade, and goes about it in ways that puts him beyond the pale of regular society, is referred to as a *wizard*. He may be forced to retreat to some lawless border region such as the Badlands of Methalea, where a



wizard can continue his work without intrusions in some lonely and likely enchanted stronghold.

Theism

Seeking the help of the gods is the most effective way to channel magical energy from beyond the material world, because there are supernatural entities on the other end of it that define the effects of the magic and ensure that it works. The cosmos is littered with deities large and small who can offer Miracles, Gifts and more. Some supernatural entities that are not really regarded as deities can also be dealt with in ways that are similar to the rules of Theism.

Deities

The gods do not all live in one place but are scattered about the Three Realities; it is almost a definition of a god that it is a being that exists in more than one reality at once. However,

many gods are still geographically fixed, and while able to move freely along the axis between types of existence, cannot range beyond a particular locale in any one of them, or are limited to a specific pathway or element.

Gods have power to intervene in, or interfere with, the world and, consequently, every human culture interacts with them in some way. While most gods are supernatural beings, not all of them started out as such, and history records several human beings who have achieved this status in their lifetimes. Any entity that is capable of accepting prayers, dedications and sacrifices from a mortal, and providing some sort of favour in return, could be considered a god. However, many daemons and spirits have this trait, and at the same time are not regarded as properly divine.

Gods cannot be compelled to do anything by the use of sorcery, but must be petitioned, propitiated or bargained with, and

this is what religions are set up to do. A true deity can only be requested to appear to its worshippers, typically through the Miracles provided to the worshippers for that purpose. A god that answers the call makes an ‘epiphany’ and is present in a real sense; however, all the more powerful ones manifest a version or aspect of themselves rather than reveal their full glory, which can be disturbing to mere mortals.

Types of Deity

Gods come in many shapes and sizes. The greatest are the Titans, those that you will know about even if you do not worship them. They have been fixtures in the make-up of the world since it began. In fact, the Titans may be so high and mighty that in many cultures they attract a rather exclusive following or none at all, because they are so beyond the human condition that people cannot relate to them. Nor can any single human culture grasp the entirety of their natures, so it is normal that the way in which they are worshipped in one place bears little relation to how they are worshipped in other lands. Mother Earth, Emperor Sun, Father Ocean and Queen of Heaven are examples of Titans. Lesser Titans are of the same generation but of more limited power and aspect. The Moon, the Planets and the key Natures – Fire, Water, Flesh, Air and Stone – lead this group. The Titans are more or less immutable and can afford a measure of indifference about their popularity as objects of worship.

The remaining arrays of gods are very specific – they are attached to a particular place or field of activity but they may, through their lineage, combine powers and natures inherited or borrowed from the Titans. They have a more precarious existence and are motivated to recruit worshippers in order to maintain and grow their power. They fit themselves closely to the needs and social structures of human beings, because this is what wins them followers and enhances their power through worship. Most gods are described in terms of gender; however, this can be quite confused, and of course is not always a relevant term of reference for so complex an entity as a deity.

Likewise, there are the demigods, ancestors and heroes; formerly mortal creatures who have ascended to a state of godhood thanks to their actions in their mortal lives. Despite their junior ranking among deities, these are often the most enthusiastically worshipped because they are closer to humanity.

Pantheons

For the purpose of worship gods are gathered into pantheons, which simply means an array of gods who are receptive to the same rites. These pantheons are therefore human constructs and may not actually reflect a cosmic reality. They may be rigidly

defined, as is the case with the Korantine Pantheon, or they may be in a continual state of creation through a gradual process of selection, assimilation and accretion, as the Tarsenian pantheon. Some gods may happily belong to more than one pantheon but perhaps show a different side of themselves to worshippers in each one, and are consequently known by many different names. There are gods who do not belong to any pantheon, or who currently have no worshippers.

Man-Made Divinities

Some gods are actually created by mankind, called into existence in a form that is relevant and accessible to human minds, fashioned from the essence of some more impersonal or abstract force by an act of human will. The City-Goddesses of the Korantines are just such an example. The POW of an entity of this kind is generated entirely by the prayers of its worshippers, as it has none of its own. Its consciousness is usually some fragment or aspect of a greater entity.

Types of Worship

In many cases, the relationship between an individual and a deity is managed by a cult, and in these cases, promotion within the god’s cult and access to Miracles is handled in accordance with the MYTHRAS rules. However, there are many other types of theist relationship available; every culture has its own ideas about the best way to manage them and new ones are being invented all the time. Some examples of how these are represented are given here.

Personal Religion

Not all access to divine power is conducted through the medium of a cult. In many cases, and in the Taskan Empire in particular, an individual strikes up a direct relationship with a supernatural being, becoming a devotee. In these situations, the worshipper does not hold a cult rank by which to determine which Miracles and spells he is eligible to access, and so the Devotion skill is used as a measure of worthiness both for access to Miracles and as a guide to the maximum size of the worshipper’s Devotional Pool.

Devotion Requirements

MYTHRAS CULT RANK REQUIRED	MINIMUM DEVOTION SKILL REQUIRED
Initiate	51%
Acolyte	71%
Priest	91%

Improvement Rolls for the Devotion skill are usually gained through pilgrimage, service and making dedications to the deity concerned, rather than from the Improvement Rolls awarded through normal play.

Gaining Miracles still requires access to the entity that provides them via some sort of sacred connection – either a face to face confrontation, or through a temple, shrine, relic, holy person or holy place. Such access is often controlled by a cult that attempts to restrict access to its own members, or by some other local power or ruler who charges handsomely for the privilege. Without community support, it may also be difficult to gain access to the place where the devotional pool can be replenished as required.

In lands such as Tarsenia where personal religion is the norm, the role of a cult is more like that of a Brotherhood, and can be simply a mutual support organisation to prepare devotees to undergo the personal pilgrimages and other observances required to establish and grow their relationship with the god. It is quite common for a shrine, artefact or holy man to offer only a single Miracle, and the devotee who wants to develop his range of divinely-inspired powers may have to spend a great deal of time, energy and cash as he makes the rounds of the shrines and religious festivals to be found across the Empire.

A character can have many such devotions so long as they are not mutually exclusive because of the hostility of one deity to another.

Multiple Cults to the same Deity

A deity may have many cults devoted to its worship, and not all are of equal status. Each cult will have its own rules and ranks, and it is entirely possible these cults are hostile to one another, competing for the god's favour and for access to sacred sites and artefacts that add to the cult's influence, prestige and magical power. Some of those cults may not provide the god's full range of Miracles, and some may have access to unique Miracles that even bigger and more potent rival cults cannot reproduce.

Pacts

There are gods who receive no organised worship, and there are many creatures who are god-like or who aspire to being gods, and there are entities that are a fragment or aspect of a true deity that does not merit full worship. All these entities might seek bargains with mortal creatures that provide them with Magic Points to use as their own, and offer any number of benefits, favours, and gifts in return. Such a relationship is known as a Pact.

Pacts are often sought out by sorcerers who spend lifetimes researching which entity can provide them with the benefit they

need, how the entity can be summoned or contacted, and what are the tactics to use when negotiating the terms of the deal. In Assabia, Pacts are the norm for how business is conducted between man and gods, since Assabians make little distinction between deities and demons, treating them all much the same way.

In contrast to the devotional pools of Theism, a Pact actually places part of the dedicator's soul at the entity's disposal, and reduces the dedicator's personal Magic Points until such time as the Pact is terminated. The minimum Magic Point dedication is 1 and, if the entity accepts donations of Magic Points from sources other than the individual's own personal resources, there is no maximum. The points allocated to the devotional pool are not used for calling upon Miracles, but traded for benefits referred to as *boons*.

Boons

A boon is a favour granted by an entity as its side of the deal in a Pact. This is something that directly enhances the dedicator in some way. The cost of a boon in dedicated Magic Points is provided in the table opposite; however, as Pacts are always negotiated agreements, the Games Master is free to adjust these costs as appropriate to each situation.

Boons are permanent effects and continue for as long as the Pact is in place.

The examples provided here are not exhaustive, and you should feel free to use the sample Gifts provided on page 202 of MYTHRAS as alternative boons. Instead of a magical enhancement there may be some other benefit provided to the dedicator. It is said that certain schools of sorcery have been founded on magical knowledge imparted as part of a Pact. Demons have given service, magical artefacts acquired, religions founded and disasters averted. There are no hard restrictions on what is possible to achieve through a Pact.

Games Master Note: When assessing the cost of a boon, bear in mind that a greedy demon or godling will charge as much as it thinks it can get, and a canny one may discount the cost, at least to start with, to encourage mortals to enter into the deal in the first place. It should always feel like a genuine sacrifice – so if a character who seeks a boon has an abundant supply of Magic Points, this is an opportunity for the entity they are bargaining with to demand more!

Pact Terms

Unlike normal Theist practise a Pact is not expected to be a permanent devotion, but is a bargain or contract that lasts a limited period of time. It is true that some Pacts are concluded that are 'until death shall part us', and some even extend into

Boons

BOON	EFFECT	PACT DEDICATION COST
Talented	All skill tests in the chosen talent are one grade easier than normal	Standard Skills: 1 Magic Point Professional Skills: 2 Magic Points Magical Skills: 3 Magic Points
Touched by Genius	Boost the Critical Range of one skill by 1d4+1	2 Magic Points
Characteristic Boost	+1d3 per Characteristic (except POW), up to species maximum.	If Characteristic is at or below average prior to taking the Gift: 1 Magic Point; if Characteristic is above average: 2 Magic Points; if Characteristic is 18+: 3 Magic Points
Folk Magic Effect	Bestows a permanent effect taken from the Folk Magic section of MYTHRAS. As for the Curse Folk Magic Spell, but the effects can also be benign	1 Magic Point
Mastery	+25% or an increase to 90% (whichever is higher) in a skill relevant to the deity's nature	1 Magic Point If the skill is already 50% or higher. 2 Magic Points otherwise.
Possession	Covert possession by a cult spirit	1 Magic Point per Intensity

the afterlife; however, many have a fixed term, with a year and a day being standard.

Pacts usually have other contractual terms that dictate when the Pact expires and the devotional pool ceases to exist, but can include all sorts of provisos, obligations, geasa, quid pro quo and conditions that are to be adhered to, which may include providing additional Magic Points to the entity through sacrificing (or Tapping) others. Someone who breaches the terms may find themselves paying dearly for doing so. It is not unusual for an entity to take permanent possession of their dedicated Magic Points if a Pact is breached, permanently reducing the transgressor's Magic Points Attribute.

Animist Traditions

Animists recognise that anything that has life – is animated – has a spirit, and as spirits can persist independently of the Material World and transitory flesh, the Spirit World therefore represents a higher form of reality. Hence animists study the pathways between the Material and Spirit Worlds and seek to travel them to connect with the greater cosmos. Their traditions sometimes involve or include the worship of gods, but may rather treat certain spirits as friends, family and allies. Animism is often said to be a primitive practice; however, it is not confined to primitive cultures, and the Shaman-Priests of Yegusai and Zagre are famous examples of animists who are the religious leaders of a sophisticated civilisation.

Shamans

A shaman is a serious practitioner of Animism, someone who knows Binding, a skill that allows him to negotiate with, combat

and bind spirits. These spirits are then under his control and will submit to his commands, performing a service or perhaps augmenting his power with their own through spell-like effects.

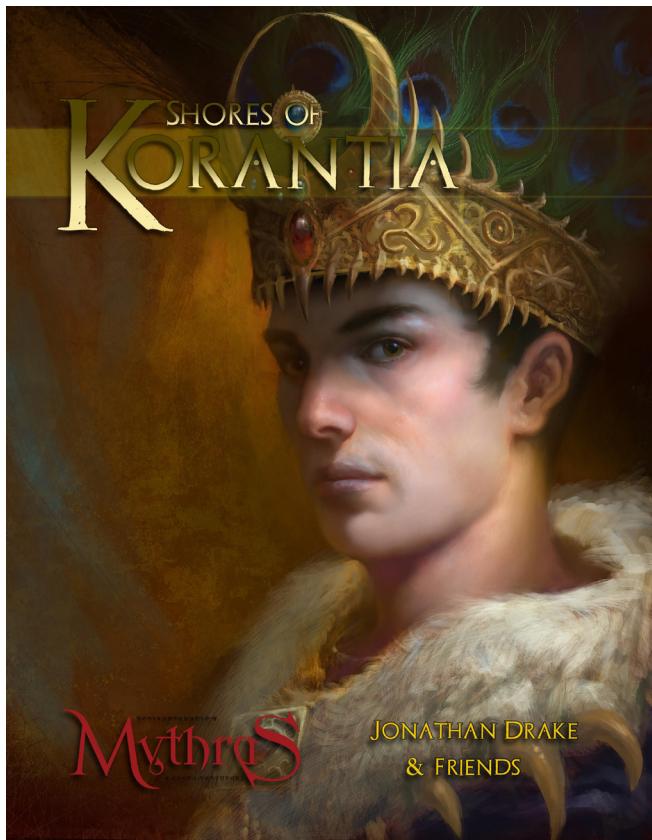
A very few people are able to project their souls into the Spirit World. This ability, the Trance skill, is usually unlocked through a rare talent or divine gift, a form of mysticism, or is replicated through recourse to a Miracle or powerful drugs.

Games Master Note: When entering a Trance entirely through the use of drugs, the Shaman's Trance skill is equal to the Potency of the drugs used.

Traditional Spirits

Each animist culture or cult has certain types of spirits to which it is allied, referred to as Traditional Spirits. These allied spirits can be summoned using the Binding skill and will usually negotiate the terms on which they grant favours or provide service, rather than require the animist to force them to submit to his power and bind them. Followers of an animist tradition who acquire or are given control of a Traditional Spirit to use can do so using their Rites (Own) skill rather than Binding.

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