

Tsóludhàliyal

Cinematic and Social Adventuring on Tekumel

Alexander Stojanovic



Unofficial Sourcebook and Rules

8 June 2006 Edition

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Contents..... | 2 |
| Social Role-Playing Within the Empire of the Petal Throne..... | 4 |
| Part One: Introduction to Adventuring on Tekumel..... | 5 |
| Historical Background and Setting | 5 |
| Part Two: Building a Dynamic Persona | 7 |
| The Seven Social Axioms..... | 7 |
| Creating a High-Level Tekumelani Persona | 7 |
| Psychological Motivation (“Character”) | 8 |
| Personal History and Key Events | 10 |
| The Core Persona Aptitudes and Skills | 11 |
| Degrees of Association (“Social Bounds and Bonds”) | 15 |
| Noble Action, Honor and Social Capital..... | 16 |
| Reputation Modifier (Optional) | 19 |
| Personal Genius (or “Affinity”) | 19 |
| Group Affiliations and Titles | 20 |
| Language and Education..... | 23 |
| Social Network Generation..... | 24 |
| Wealth and Other Pedestrian Concerns..... | 27 |
| Loans and Repayment..... | 27 |
| Part Three: Basic Mechanics for Play..... | 27 |
| The System in a Nutshell | 27 |
| Advancement and Rewards..... | 29 |
| Physical Status and Damage Levels | 30 |
| Resurrection and Revivification of Personas..... | 31 |
| Action Resolution | 32 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Elite Military Training and Prestige (Optional) | 32 |
| Combat | 33 |
| Pooling of Resources and Forfeit of Honor | 36 |
| Sorcery and Extra-Planar Magic | 37 |
| Monster Ratings and Descriptions | 44 |
| Part Four: Running Adventures on Tekumel..... | 45 |
| Plot Generator for Tekumel Adventures | 45 |
| The Basic Structure of an Adventure | 46 |
| Tables for Creating an Adventure Plot | 46 |
| Example of Plot Generation | 52 |
| Random Social Encounters | 54 |
| Adventure Kernels (“Starting Points”)..... | 56 |
| Part Five: Campaign Toolkit and Examples | 57 |
| Example of Persona Generation (“Heijjeka hiBurusa”) | 57 |
| Example of Play (“A Fete at the Dome of the Sweeping Sea”)..... | 58 |
| Campaign Starting Locale (“Dome of the Sweeping Sea and Residents”)..... | 61 |
| Notable Characters at the Dome | 62 |
| Adventure Hooks for New Arrivals at the Dome (“Where to Begin”)..... | 65 |
| Appendix A: Persona Record Sheets..... | 67 |
| Appendix B: The Tsolyani Language for Everyday Use | 69 |
| Top Twenty-Eight Survival Phrases, Expressions and Words | 69 |
| Appendix C: Map of Tsolyanu (Portion of Tekumel)..... | 70 |
| Appendix D: Map of Penom and Key to Locations | 71 |
| A Note Concerning Copyright and Intellectual Property | 72 |

SOCIAL ROLE-PLAYING WITHIN THE EMPIRE OF THE PETAL THRONE

This is an introduction to social role-playing on Tekumel. It takes a subtly different approach to the published systems devised for Tekumel (Empire of the Petal Throne, Swords and Glory, Gardasiyal, and Tekumel RPG). It eschews most of the common mechanics of role-playing a persona within one of the Five Empires - in favor of a cinematic and social network focused system. The goal of this is to shift focus away from learning mechanical minutiae and towards empowering new players (especially those with no exposure to Tekumel and its cultural background) to quickly and easily assimilate into the mindset of Tekumelani cultures. It also seeks to dispel some of the folklore about the difficulty of role-playing on Tekumel - folklore unfortunately rooted in some of the complexities of previous role-playing rules and a certain overweening "Otherness" fostered by random exposure to Tekumelani history and socio-cultural details which overemphasize the uniqueness of the environment. We think this is somewhat misplaced. There are simple and obvious correlates to almost all of the institutions and practices and histories one encounters in reading the Deeds of the Ever glorious in the Chancery of Avanthar - or in the secret histories compiled by the great and noble clans and the ruling Tlakotani royal house. This guide takes an *in media res* approach to role-playing - trying to throw the player (and his/her persona) into the rich cultural and political backdrop of Tekumel. The technique makes players important personages with high profiles within their respective social groups. There are no "Barbarians landing in a boat at Jakalla" assumptions and the express purpose of this minimal rule set is to create powerful, dynamic, and resourceful personas. They should be able to start adventuring and intriguing within the highest circles of the Five Empires dominating Tekumel in its mysterious pocket dimension. These rules were developed and play tested by our Tekumel group in 1991-1998. We have been adjusted to take into account some of the learning derived from introducing players with no prior experience to Tekumelani cultures. Once the social aspects were introduced - players were able to understand the basic "axioms" of life in the pocket dimension - and really blossom as unique and intriguing characters. Although the rules are slanted towards human personas - the basic framework (honor, advancement, social connections) are equally applicable to non-human races - Pe Choi and Pachi Lei especially. Several of our players were able to integrate these alien races into our campaign - which was focused around a complex web of intrigue involving the Pariah Deities and the murder of a (seemingly) inconsequential Scholar Priest of Ksarul in Urmish during one of their year-end festivals (The Festival of the Dancer in Azure Serenity). That campaign material may (at some point) be published as an unofficial Tekumel adventure (like these rules) - Threnody of the One True Shadow: Against the Goddess of the Pale Bone. We will eschew diacritical marks (accents) except for the glottal stop in this text. Most players do not worry about the proper Tumissan accent in their pronunciation of Belkhanu. (we prefer bel-KHA-noo) We trust this will not detract too much from the exposition. Approximate pronunciation is good enough for Tekumel - style is the key to a successful atmosphere for adventuring.

The rules appear suitable for live action role-playing (LARP) with some simplifications. The primary one being elimination of stochastic permutation (i.e. dice rolling) in favor of pure role-playing. The core social skills can offer a basic guide to how to play the role given. The numbers simply are not determinative of how the live-action narrative unfolds. The majority of skill applications (persuasion, seduction, brutality, etc.) would simply be gamed rather than computed. I would be interested to hear from anyone on their opinion on these rules - and suggestions for their improvement. The social networking aspects of the system may appear daunting at first - but when weighed against the significant simplification of combat, skills development, and mechanics of magic casting - we feel that it is worth it. We certainly had fun with the system - and thwarting the Pale Goddess and her minions across Tekumel.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION TO ADVENTURING ON TEKUMEL



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND SETTING

The world of Tekumel is a unique and exotic planet - discovered well into our future by the Lords of Humanspace through the use of the Three Light Drive provided by the alien Pe Choi. Designed to be a pleasure world and transit point for the Star faring Lords and their allied races- it was brutally terraformed by Man and allies. This idyll was not to last long however - it was soon to be plunged into a pocket dimension by forces still unknown and barely comprehended. Tekumel and its solar system were literally isolated from the rest of Humanspace. At this point, the upward technological progress of the society was halted and reversed. Separated from the rest of Humanspace by powers unimaginable, the stranded humans and allied races first struggled to find ways to return to their own dimension. Soon, desperation and intercene fighting took an inevitable turn towards atavistic barbarism and social reversion. The light of high technology was extinguished and in the long dark twilight of history since this cataclysm with the true origin of Tekumel was to be forgotten and buried in layers of mythology, legends and allegorical fables. Humanity faltered, rebuilt, and gradually settled into the current set of cultures and politics that define the Five Empires of the western hemisphere of Tekumel. These five nations - Tsolyanu, Mu'ugalavya, Yan Kor, Salarvya, and Livyanu - represent a fascinating mélange of practices and deep seated cultural values - a mixture of Mayan, classical Egyptian, Mughal Indian, Melanesian, and Classical Chinese influences. When the influx of alien races, friendly and inimical, are thrown in, one

is faced at times with an overwhelming density of cultural forms and rituals - from the social cueing of the Meshqu Plaques to the intricate body art of the Livyani denoting social and political affiliations (Aomuz). All is not lost however for the newcomer - because man's basic (base?) instincts evolve at a much slower rate. Morale conventions and mores aside - Man is the same. Human psychology runs very deep and is predicated on some basic aspects of Mammalian neurobiology and hierarchical drive structure. We use this insight to define our role-playing model for Tekumel. Envy, greed, joy, pride, love, competitiveness, humiliation, elation, anger - all of these are common to the peoples of the Five Empires as they are to us - albeit masked in unusual symbolic forms and practices. This is good news actually - we can jump into the fast moving river of Tekumel without drowning. Just think of cultures such as the Italian City States of the High Renaissance, the ceremonially rich and opulent Mayan Cities of

the Yucatan, the Umayyad Sultanate, or the warring German principalities prior to the unification of the 19th century – different yet comprehensible. All of these were unique in many respects, but ultimately quite understandable in terms of psychological motivations and social dynamics.

One thing has remained the same throughout Humanity's long physical and social evolution - the drive towards affiliation, personal excellence and social preeminence. It is this vital psychological thread running through *Homo sapiens* as a species that allows us to understand and appreciate the mores and customs of the Five Empires from a vantage point far removed from the slave-owning, xenophobic, and ruthless lords of the Five Empires.

Today, in the year of 2385 A.S. (as per the Tsolyani Calendar), you have been born into the role of an important member of one of these societies. You are a prince (in Machiavelli's sense of the term) - perhaps not a member of the Tlakotani royal lineage - but certainly a select member of the highest clans and social strata (Clan of Sea Blue, Golden Sunburst, etc.). Your position and advantages are envied and coveted by the rabble - the teaming, sweating masses that work the menial and unglamorous jobs of your society. For most players new to Tekumel role playing - this society will be Tsolyanu - the Empire of the Petal Throne. It represents one of the strongest political institutions in the known world. The Seal Emperor, ruling from ritual seclusion in the golden tower of Avanthar besides the capital Bey Su (The Soul of the World) represents the symbolic and institutional apex of a society ruled by tradition, cunning, and brutal pragmatics and self-preservation when the times dictate it. The Empires have seen revolts, famines, wars, battles for succession - and have endured largely due to the immense self-sustaining nature of group dynamics - people have a lot vested in the status quo. As a prince of the realm - you command an interesting vantage point. You are the Renaissance-equivalent of a Diplomat-Spy-General-Courtier-Philosopher - switching roles and attitudes as the circumstances dictate. You are guided by ambition, honor and social obligations - you are one of the elite - enjoy the power and risks that are attendant to such an exalted status. This rule set is not designed for generation of low power, weak, and low status individuals - but rather to help support the elite of Tekumelani societies to achieve the true measure of their potential and to take their positions at the head of their respective social groups. It represents our "house rules" distilled to their mechanical core. Pictured here is the southern coastal city of Penom, within the Tsolyani Empire. The temple district is depicted with the imposing Pyramid of Lord Ksarul looming on the left. The Tlokiriqualuyal are very prominent in this region.



PART TWO: BUILDING A DYNAMIC PERSONA

THE SEVEN SOCIAL AXIOMS

As with any culture, there are a number of basic assumptions built into the worldview (*Weltanschauung*) that are almost too obvious to discuss - but mention them we shall. These are the core of your persona's perspective on the world, your place in society, and the tremendous importance that honor and duty have for your social existence and development. You are special - so remember:

1. Your honor is the most important thing that you have - lose it and you lose everything
2. The Empire is ruled by powerful "Princes" (formal and informal - seen and unseen) - either serve or become one - they and the Emperor are the true powers of this world
3. The Empire rewards the clever and successful - if they develop the right patronage along the way and know how to make their patrons appear competent and brilliant
4. Your background (clan and lineage) and breeding do matter - do not consort with the rabble - you are special and unique in your current position in life - you deserve it - obviously!
5. Never trust foreigners - they are always up to something - barbarians to be tolerated at best or enslaved and/or eliminated should they become too loud or meddlesome in affairs that do not concern them
6. The Empire is the greatest society in the world and the luminous culmination of social perfection - the envy of all and worth protecting at all costs (it works very well as is and "the High Road" to anyone who thinks otherwise...)
7. Nothing is straightforward - everyone has an agenda and appearances matter (observe the formalities to avoid being thought a rude or uncultured person)

Now - these axioms can apply equally well to any of the Five Empires - they are a subjective "orientation" tool designed to get to the core of the psychology of the elite within these hieratic and formalistic cultures. The mixture of pride, honor, xenophobia, daring, importance of social patronage, and deeply ingrained loyalty are the fabric from which are woven the rich personalities that rule this world (and others beside). Some societies may rank these differently (such as the Livyani or Mu'ugalavyani who might be more xenophobic and suspicious than their Tsolyani neighbors) - but they are within a standard deviation from one another. Only the indigenous races – Ssu, Hluss, etc. – and bizarre races like The Shunned Ones and Mihalli are so truly alien in psychology and motivation as to be unintelligible.

These axioms are so deeply engrained that the average successful Tekumelani would be puzzled and bemused (then likely suspicious) of anyone questioning these "self-evident" truths. Combined with the five skills nurtured, inculcated, and refined by Tekumelani social institutions - they are the social memes of the Five Empires.

CREATING A HIGH-LEVEL TEKUMELANI PERSONA

The role-playing system presented tries hard to eschew mechanical details and focus the majority of action on dramatic (cinematic) resolution. Die rolling is to be discouraged except for truly dramatic situations - in the normal course of gaming the players are taking on the roles important personages within the Empire. They are not the Chri-flies common to previous systems - where slow, laborious advancement was the expected and normal course. You are one of the beautiful people - looking down from your colonnaded balcony as the unwashed cluster in their rundown clan houses near the wharves -

consorting with foreign rabble and lucky not to be swept up in a general Ditlana of the slums the priests have been pressing for. So what are the key elements of your persona?

1. Biographical Information and Interesting Background Information
2. Social Capabilities (Five Core “Manifested” Aptitudes – Persuasion, Seduction, Social Psychology, Improvisation, and Brutality – Which Form the Basis of Your Quantitative Profile)
3. Personal History, Genius and Psychological Motivations
4. Social Capital (Honor and Noble Action)
5. Affiliations and Titles of Important Groups the Persona Belongs to
6. Social Network (The Web of Personal Contacts, Patrons, Friends, Lovers, and Enemies That Define Your Place in the Social Order)
7. Favored Personal Items (Fashion, Techno-magical Artifacts, etc. This is the “Accessorizing” Aspect and an Important for Personalizing the Character)



These will all be discussed in due course except for favored personal items. The GM must exercise discretion in the kinds and quantities of artifacts, books, ancient technologies, and gadgets to introduce. These rules focus more on the psychological construction of Tekumelani personae that really “feel” like they belong in the upper echelons of the Five Empires. The figures depicted below are warrior-priests of the Naqsai Goddess Isu’ulek in her 47th Aspect as “The Ravenous Mirror”. They are members of the race populating portions of the Southern Continent below the Five Empires (c.f.: Appendix C Map). They are simply one of dozens of races and ethnic groups populating Tekumel.

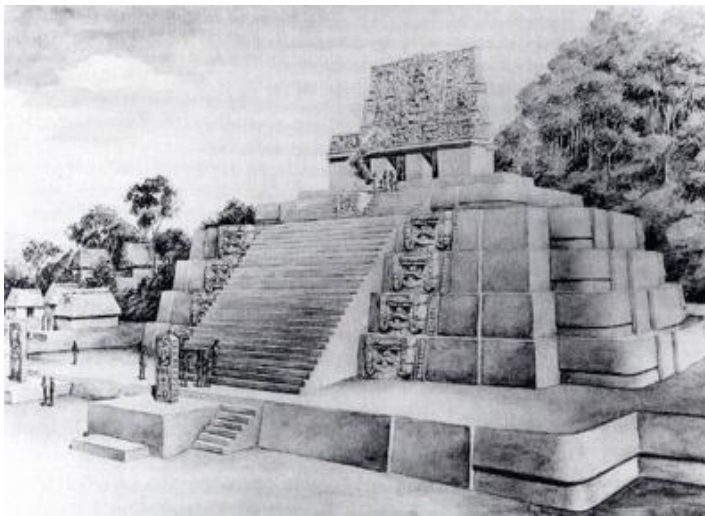
PSYCHOLOGICAL MOTIVATION (“CHARACTER”)

The essence of any person is their character – the bundle of beliefs, hopes, desires, and basic outlook that mold their perceptions. As the poet Mmru’ussa of the “Open Palm” school of Bednalljan epic poetry remarked, “Character is fate.” As a noble and privileged member of society, you have an innate set of psychological motivations which help determine how you deal with training, social customs, interpersonal relationships, etc. All of this varies from person to person. It is important to establish the “need hierarchy” for your persona – the things that drive them in the deepest recesses of their heart. Players may choose (or roll) from the following table two motivations. If they contradict, the player has the option of rerolling – or playing a persona with a high degree of cognitive dissonance (i.e. “I want to be altruistic but the lure of comfort and status are very strong – I feel so conflicted... please pass the wine this way...”). These motivations should also be referenced when distributing d20s amongst the five social skills – allocating additional d20s to areas that line up with basic psychological drives (e.g. a person with strong physical sensuality as a psychological drive might have a higher seduction rating.)

Table: Psychological Motivations

1. Altruism (Altruistic Self-Sacrifice) (helping others and society in general to be a safer and better place is the true measure of a person – everything else is egotism and vanity)
2. Pleasure (and Experience) (understanding people and situations as physical experiences to be savored and enjoyed – sexuality is a key and vital part of life – to be developed and exalted)

3. Order and Duty (and Stability and The Settled Order of Things) (the world is a better place when you can rely on a stable order – law, kinship, friendship – history has much to teach us and the status quo is a wonderful example of how things should be!)
4. Risk and Reward (Ludics, Gaming) (the whole point of life is to take chances and risks that can change you – making you richer, more renowned, etc. – life is a game to be played and won)
5. Fame (and Social Preeminence) (standing out in a crowd of highly competent and accomplished people is the greatest feeling in the world – first amongst equals – it is great to be recognized for one's talents and achievements – especially when the stakes are high)
6. Influence (being the powerbroker or power behind the throne is the ideal vantage point to succeed in life – controlling others through your influence and obligation is the strongest possible lever for social control)
7. Empathy (understanding people deeply and being open to their emotions and needs is the sign of a genuine person who will succeed in life – irrespective of who or what they are)
8. Curiosity (the main thing is to learn and discovery something no one else has – for knowledge is the true source of power in this world and worth the struggle to possess)
9. Accumulation (having the most things is the point of it all – the most exquisite books, wines, women, villas, etc. – hording is an end in itself – people will admire me for what I possess)
10. Egotism (Egotistical Aggrandizement) (the self is everything – my ambition is the master which should rule and subordinate others' desires to my own – anyone who disagrees is delusional)
11. Personal Challenge (the true measure of a person is in the challenges they step up to – the battles they fight, the mountains they climb, the knowledge they wrestle from the dim past, the terrors they overcome in their journey to self-understanding and social recognition)
12. Aesthetics (the aesthetic appreciation of the universe's beauty and horrors - everything within it - is an end in itself – beyond course physicality and economics lies the realm of the beautiful and sublime...)



For example, Heijjeka chooses pleasure and challenge as his two key psychological motivations. He will later allocate large amounts of social skill development (d20s) to seduction and brutality as a result. Heijjeka chooses to align his outward behavior and skills to his inner drives – making the persona rich and approachable. It is possible to play the conflicted persona too – the one whose inner drives are thwarted by social conventions and trappings. There is dramatic pathos in both approaches – and the player should try to evince this in playing their character and modulating

their reactions to events within the game. Players who align their social skill ratings with psychological motivations should be granted a +5 to social skill rolls during the game. This is done by placing a majority of d20s in aligned social skills. If pleasure is a motivator, then a large seduction skill allocation is considered well aligned. It is a small edge that over a lifetime can mean the difference between outstanding success or series of “near wins” that never quite worked out. Psychological alignment is a key to success in any society –Tsolyani, Mu’ugalavyani, Pechani, Yan Koryani, Mihalli, etc.

PERSONAL HISTORY AND KEY EVENTS

To start with, each player should develop (either via random rolls on the tables below or by selection) a series of notable events that mark their adolescence and childhood. The table below lists a representative set - the GM should feel free to add others. Each player may select/roll for two -adding the benefits to their core social skills (described below). The player is also free to avoid this entirely and just proceed with persona generation. The GM should in that case require the player to provide some written description of their background - to help construct a social network for the player to draw upon during play.

Table: Important Events and Episodes In Your Past That Influenced Your Development (d20)

1. You were cursed by genetics to possess physical features that are considered ill-omened or terrifyingly ugly (blue eyes, albinism, etc.) (-4d20 to seduction)
2. You have a dark secret (see table below) = +2d20 social psychology (you have to be good at hiding things to keep your secret from being revealed)
3. You were initiated into the erotic arts by your Temple and showed considerable natural talent = +1d20 to seduction
4. Your father was/is an influential politician = +1d20 to persuasion
5. Your mother was/is an astute judge of character and of aesthetics = +1d20 to social psychology
6. You saw your best friend murdered by foreigners = -1d20 social psychology
7. You studied with a brilliant weapon master (note name and city) = +1d20 to brutality
8. You enjoyed hanging out with the "wrong crowd" often being bailed out of tight situations by your elders = +2d20 persuasion
9. You studied with an eccentric magic user associated with your Temple = +1d20 to improvisation
10. You were deeply in love with a socially "inappropriate" person and they were "removed" by your family = +2d20 brutality and -1d20 social psychology
11. You loved learning about the past - especially anything in musty old books and scrolls left around by your relatives in the scholarly branches of your Temple = +2d20 improvisation but -1d20 brutality
12. You were a drug addict and nearly died = -1d20 brutality
13. You traveled extensively with your diplomatic family (note countries and cities) = +2d20 social psychology and +1d20 improvisation
14. You were a favored poet/artist amongst your circle of close friends (specify area) = +2d20 seduction
15. You were recruited by a foreign country to spy for them (are you still in their employee?) = +2d20 social psychology
16. You were severely injured as a child and spent a sickly youth being pampered and looked after = +2d20 persuasion but -1d20 brutality
17. You suffer from periodic fits, blackouts, and spasms - usually brought on by severe stress = -1d20 brutality
18. You were the best student at the Temple school - a standout even amongst the superb student body = +2d20 improvisation
19. You helped save an important political person from ruin and disgrace (who?) = +2d20 persuasion and +2d20 honor points and you are owed a favor...
20. You were raped/molested as a child by a trusted clan elder = -1d20 social psychology

The dark secret a player may start with may be selected by the GM or rolled on the following table. This dark secret can serve as the vehicle for blackmail, intrigue, adventure "hooks", or comic interludes - the

GM is encouraged to populate their world with NPCs that try to learn, exploit, and manipulate the player's persona through knowledge of the dark secret. At this high stratum of society - everyone has a little dirt on everyone else. Have fun with it.

Table: Dark Secret from the Past:

1. You are secretly a spy for a foreign government (which one?) - whose cover may have been accidentally compromised recently
2. You and/or members of your immediate family have participated in treasonous discussions against the lawful ruler (what a shame) although it has not yet come to light
3. You have stolen an extremely valuable techno-magical item from your clan or temple and are coveting it (this theft would be severely punished if you were uncovered)
4. You are a drug dealer and importer of extremely dangerous substances into the Empire (all proscribed and punishable by death)
5. You are a depraved maniac who enjoys the torture and subjugation of others as a part of sexual pleasure = -4d20 seduction but +2d20 brutality
6. You are a delver into forbidden and proscribed knowledge - Sunuz, Pariah Deities, etc. - and are in touch with highly suspect persons throughout the Empire
7. You are an agent provocateur for the OAL - you are actually a well placed member of the Omnipotent Azure Legion (OAL) and work to ferret out seditious radicals for the Emperor
8. You accidentally revealed state secrets that compromised the safety of the Empire
9. You were responsible for the near economic collapse of a province/large town through your financial miscegenation - let's hope the Emperor never hears about this...
10. You are a royal heir (Tlakotani) that has not been announced (yet) - many would love to ensure that you are never revealed and disposed of appropriately (oops)

The remaining two dark secrets are purely optional – GMs need to decide whether they can be successfully incorporated into a campaign without spoiling the dynamics of play.

1. You are an Avatar of the Hero of the Age (a part of the composite being destined to fight the Pariah Deity known as the Goddess of the Pale Bone) (Hey, nothing to get worried about - just the extinction of all matter-energy in the pocket dimension if you lose...)
2. You are not what you appear - but in fact a creature/doppelganger/simulacrum (He'esa) sent by the Pariah Deities to infiltrate human societies and "prepare the way" = +3d20 persuasion but -4d20 social psychology (note social skills "below" 0d20 round up to 0d20 for game purposes)

THE CORE PERSONA APTITUDES AND SKILLS

All personas in Tekumel role-playing share a fundamental core of socially manifested skills or aptitudes which are useful in defining them for players as well as for allowing the GM to arbitrate conflicts, actions, etc. in the normal course of play. Unique to this rule set, the majority of core components are abstract and social in nature. Gone are the classical prime requisites of Dungeons and Dragons(tm) and mostly quantitative attributes of Tekumelani RPG systems of the past. They just are not that useful in the high stakes political and social intrigues that players of this system will likely find themselves involved with under normal circumstances. We have found that the minimal aptitudes required for creating dramatic action resolution revolve mostly around the ability to persuade, seduce, violate, discern and improvise.

The behavioral essence of a Tekumelani is derived from the following five skills: persuasion, seduction, social psychology, improvisation, and brutality.

To start the game - as well as to reflect the exalted stature of the persona within the society - the player may distribute 12 "d20" skill points amongst the five social skills. These constitute the "ratings" used in the game to assess success, failure, and complexity of actions. Modifiers may effect these ratings and are typically applied during action resolution.

Assume that each skill starts with 1d20 plus/minus any changes from the biographical events table mentioned earlier. Such persons are not the common citizens of the five Empires - but represent the elite 1% of the society - the genetically and socially "bred" upper strata that enjoy the majority of perks and privileges of these societies. Your position in society is expected and honored - common people dream about being invited to your fabulous parties and social games - they would do just about anything to be a part of them. You callously and ruthlessly exploit this fact without batting an eyelash.

Think of them as the primary social skills and aptitudes that the persona has been molded or born with - the basis of their more sophisticated and trained interactive and operational skills. All of these are based on a d20-based stochastic probability distribution. Each skill is allocated one or more d20s to represent the 'success factor' for that skill.

For example, Heijjeka hiBurusá has core ratings for his social skills (which does not yet include modifiers from "past history" and "personal genius" choices):

Persuasion: 2d20
 Seduction: 4d20
 Social Psychology: 1d20
 Improvisation: 2d20
 Brutality: 3d20

Based on this, Heijjeka has turned out to be a skilled sexual "athlete" with a tremendous aptitude for combat and matters of physical exertion. He is well-muscled and socially agile, moving easily on the battlefield as in the bedchamber. He has likely been trained by the best weapon masters in the Bey Su, and been initiated in the "Inner Mysteries" of the Temples of either Dlamelish or Hrihayal. He is likely irresistible and a highly memorable bed companion. His social network would be filled with former and current lovers eager to curry favor - and likely he has used his -ahem- physical technique(s) for promotion and social aggrandizement. Although not the most perceptive of individuals - he is charming and always popular (with both sexes) at revels, parties, and social functions - a life of the party. His life has been one of training and refinement - in the manners of speech, dress, comportment, and elegant disposal of physical obstacles. He would almost certainly catch the eye (and patronage) of a high-seated personage like Lord Kaikama - who could appreciate his many gifts and talents.

When required to engage in physical combat (typically a Qadarni or "Little War") - Heijjeka would roll five d20 dice to match against an opponent. The opponent (having say 2d20) would roll likewise. The roller with the higher result (a summation of the values of each of the individual dice) would prevail. Equal results in no result - the process will have to be tried again. Modifiers to those roles are possible - although elided here. The salient point is that personas with high ratings have a greater chance of prevailing in contests of skills. This same model is used for say detecting whether someone is "probably" lying (a check against the Social psychology).

To be a successful member of the upper echelon of society - mastery of at least two of the skills (a rating above 3d20) is recommended. The scale is open-ended - although typical high ranking personas (player- and nonplayer-based) typically top out at 4d20 as an average across all skills. For comparison purposes:

0d20 indicates no training or natural aptitude (typically reserved for non-intelligent or semi-intelligent species or personas that have been effected by magic or extreme violence to the point of incapacity)

1d20 indicates minimalistic or basic training and social breeding in limited environments or conditions (the "provinces") or interrupted or incomplete training (the majority of the lower class clans and lineages are here)

2d20 indicates mentoring and training in the area - this person has been guided and socially invested in such that they possess demonstrable if not outstanding skill

3d20 indicates significant training and mentoring with good mentors in well-funded circumstances and locations

4d20 indicated sophisticated training at elite institutions and with large amounts of patronage

5d20 indicated the highest level of normal training and sophistication with expose to the best schools and social environments (likely elite training reserved for only the most gifted and promising members of the best families) (the person is likely to have a strong social mentor that they can rely on for aide and advice (e.g. a favorite Sword master or Teacher of Engsvanyali Court Poetry))

6d20 indicates all of 5d20 plus tremendous life-based experiential learning as well as remarkable native abilities (which have "blossomed") (This level is reserved for the *swift amongst the swiftest*)

...

9d20 indicates "world class" range capabilities (Once in a decade standout capabilities – having all of the admiration and jealousy one could possibly conceive)

10d20 indicates legendary range capabilities (A Hrugga of Parantha or an Eyloa of Livyanu)

...

15d10 indicates super-human range of capabilities (Origob, Avatar of Ksarul, Pariah Deity Shard/Protrusion)

The scale is non-linear, it is exponential. Even a difference of 1d20 between opponents is a major contributing factor to success. The majority of the populace in Five Empires enjoys 1d20 ratings in these skills - modulo the "personal genius" component which can make even the lowliest and socially ill-equipped persons brilliant and outstanding. Diamonds in the rough do exist but superior native ability amplified by elite training and social conditioning almost always win the day. A notable exception to this is Baron Ald, who rose from the humblest of circumstances to leading the warring matriarchal states compromising the "nation" of Yan Kor.

Persuasion (Tsolyani: *Osulikh*) is the catch for all forms of communication exclusive of sexual seduction and romantic wordplay. Everything from the highest diplomatic negotiations to the lowest quibbling over the price of fruit in a market stall (although let's face it - you'd probably have low-lineage clan brother or a slave do the shopping... but you get the point). Fast talking your way out of tight situation at the Hidden Shrine of Dlamelish's 14th Aspect beneath Jakalla to closing a peace treaty with the Mu'ugalavyani after a punishing civil war then this is the skill you rely upon.

Seduction (Tsolyani: *Pathaikh*) is the basic aptitude for sexual parlay and performance. Conspicuously absent from many role-playing systems (not this one) - it represents the

combination of the ars erotica, verbal and physical seduction techniques, and overall ability to "perform" appropriate to the mores and sexual customs of one's environment. Example: you have met a particularly fetching and copper-skinned Princess from the ruling house from the Tsolei Archipelago - you would like to seduce her - it is time to apply the skills of seduction... You succeed and as a result gain a lover who could later prove very helpful in the context of your travels and work on behalf of your clan (and let's face it - a great lay)

Social Psychology (Tsolyani: *Thumitlenikh*) is the combination of social empathy (the ability to emotionally relate to others) as well as the vague sense of other peoples' emotions and motivations. It is "emotional radar" - those with strong abilities for social psychology are able to effortlessly glide into new roles and groups, make friends, and are the first to spot trends and emotions in people. Those with good social psychology are also able to detect when they are being deceived (the proverbial "BS Detector") or consciously misled. It is not a guarantee of certainty, but a stochastic aptitude. The GM should always roll a hidden d100 (5% chance of misfire on a "successful" application of the skill) to determine if the skill "misfires" and gives the opposite result of what actually is the person's attitude or belief. This is a latent or ambient skill most of the time. GMs should factor in high social psychology skills in players' personas into the fabric of their games, instead of just rolling every time. Modulate the game play to the attributes of the players and save everyone a lot of spurious rolling.

Improvisation (Tsolyani: *Fehlikh*) is the ability to accomplish a task with slight, minimal or no training. It might be thought of the MacGyver(tm) Rating) - and is designed to replace the hypertrophy of "skills" that permeate so many post-Runequest RPG systems. In this rule set - improvisation covers just about everything not covered by the other skills - from searching for a hidden passageway to deciphering a scroll in Duru'ob while being chased by Ru'un in a giant circular death trap adjacent to the Garden of Opalescent Flowers) It is the basis of spell casting and extra-planar dimensional manipulation too. After all, it is all about improvisation in life - working with little to nothing and trying to make a reasonable "go" of it. For this reason we have the improvisation skill. Socially successful personas will have a decent aptitude for improvising solutions - and the patrons of these people will look for the clever and resourceful to promote and use in their games and politics. Improvisation is actually the basis of most successful accomplishment - and it is a remarkably useful skill to develop. Forget what you read in other Tekumel RPGs - scholars and specialists are just trained monkeys to be used by the rich and powerful (like you). Let them sweat the years of Temple schools and mucking our legion barracks - when you need them for some specialist activity - you will pluck them out of obscurity and use them. Then they can go back to their dim corners and continue the -yawn- comparative grammars of Ai Che and Tka Mlhalli in the hopes of a minor promotion in twenty years. What dolts!

Brutality (Tsolyani: *Sakh*) is the essence of martial prowess, capability to inflict psychotic levels of violence, and in general defend oneself in a world that possesses many dangers. It is not a measure of physical strength per se - but rather the ability of the individual to apply native strength, tactics, intuitions, and physical violence in a cold and precise fashion. Brutality is not a negative in Tekumel - it is an expeditious requirement for many circumstances - from the duel fighting in Hirilakte arenas to the successful assassination of political undesirables in the Palaces of the Realm. Reasonable brutality rating (above 1d20) is only possible with training - either within a military legion such as the Legion of the Lord of Red Devastation or (for the elite) sword masters (weapon masters) in one of the great metropolises of the Empire. Training with well-known "masters" boosts social standing and honor -and on Tekumel - it's all about honor and

prestige at your level. But beyond honor and social proprieties, one needs to possess the instinct for pragmatic force to finesse your sought for outcome.

Many of the skills will be applied against inanimate objects, especially brutality and improvisation. The GM must assign them an effective rating for the object to roll against the player. Example: a locked chest might be assigned a 2d20 'rating' - which Heijeka would have to roll against as a kind of defense rating. One point is worth noting - inanimate objects will not possess the correlates of the social skills of player personas - their 'rating' is understood to be an overall defense or complexity rating that must be overcome. Magical objects in fact may have some "skills" which the GM should note. Another example would be an ancient Tubeway car - with a rating of 4d20. A player would have to match up against this to prevail and "figure out" (using their improvisation skill) how to work it. The GM must apply discretion in the interval between successive attempts - a typically guideline would be one hour per d20 level of complexity (i.e. 2d20 would require two or three intervals before attempts could be made again by that person). This should be fairly straightforward to execute in play. -Having one basic statistic for inanimate objects (and for exceptionally unremarkable people - your typical foot soldier in combat) is more than sufficient to move the drama along. Again, the point of these rules is to encourage role-playing - not endless tedious permutation with d20 dice or mastering lists of overly specific "skills". Weaving? Sail making? Forestry? Come on- this is high adventure social role-playing - you have kingdoms to win - not sails to mend. This system is designed to strongly discourage low status vocational skill acquisition. That's what your entourage, minions, allies, and slaves are for, so use them as the tools they are.

DEGREES OF ASSOCIATION (“SOCIAL BOUNDS AND BONDS”)

The core idea of the social role-playing system is that the individual persona is at the center of a set of overlapping social "rings" or "circles". Some are secular and clan-based, some are political, others are religious in nature, and finally some are psychological/sexual/emotional in nature. These circles are not neat concentric ones - they overlap usually. The key point is that you are the anchor or center of these circles - and much of your worth as an individual is augmented or diminished by the company that you keep. An important factor for role-playing on Tekumel lies in defining the social degree of connection to other individuals – both player controlled and GM-controlled. For purposes of abstraction we refer to these as degrees one, two, or three.

Degree One: these are the people closest to you: you loved ones, important patrons, prized protégés you have nurtured, your oldest and dearest friends. These are the people that others will look at when they wish to form an opinion about you - so keeping the right sort of company is critical. Only about 10% of the social network you have should consist of these degree-one relationships. These can be demoted or promoted - and the GM is free to assign you D1 people as part of the campaign. Much of the drama in your life will originate directly or indirectly from this circle of people. You may find yourself being bailed out of hot water by them - or expending significant social capital to help them out of a scrape. ("Brother - how was I supposed to know she was a He'esa minion of the Pale Goddess?!? Please explain to the nice Kerdu of the OAL over there sharpening that stake that it is all a big misunderstanding!") Note them on your persona sheet with a D1.

Degree Two: These are important people that you have significant social contact with - but with whom one is more casually acquainted and identified with in peoples' minds. Random lovers form the legion barracks, cousins met and wooed on languid Spring days in Butrus and reacquainted with later professionally in a Temple function, childhood friends and clan-brothers that one sees every few years and whose children one might look after if they are sent for the

summer to be with "Uncle so-and-so", etc. These people are quite important - but their relative importance to you socially is not as high. They can run afoul of the OAL, the Vru'unek, etc. - without you being docked honor and social capital, your land holdings being confiscated by the Emperor and you being thrown into prison to rot along with them. That said - you can expect to turn to them for advice, business dealings, gossip, and social aide. They can be promoted to D1 or downgraded in degree - by mutual assent of player and GM. Note them on your persona sheet with a D2.

Degree Three: This is the broadest category of your social network. Here are the semi-faceless characters you occasionally have conducted business with in the past, some priest of this-or-that temple that you traded amusing banter with at the last intercalary festival in Tsamra, and people you have been introduced to in the course of your adventuring and social climbing. Most of the time you cannot even recall their name unless prompted. You don't remember to think of them unless something urgent comes up ("What was the name of that sea captain we leased a yacht from last summer in Jakalla? Oh yes - Harchar! Send a messenger to him requesting similar terms for this season.") - but when they show up at the Palace doorstep or clan house - you remember them vaguely and are more inclined to give them a sympathetic ear than just any random blackguard claiming to be a distant cousin from Paya Gupta. They have little direct bearing on you - unless they manage to ensnare you in some particularly nasty scandal - like storing Zu'ur in your villa near Jakalla while you are away on a diplomatic mission to Yan Kor City and them trying to sell you out to the OAL to mitigate their punishment ("Who was helping you import the Zu'ur my little Chri-fly?!? Ah, is that so? We'll have to speak to him when he returns. But now, let's continue with your interrogation."). They are usually more trouble than they are worth but you sometimes find the degree three contacts amusing and useful. They can be promoted or demoted as with D2s. Note them on your persona sheet with a D3.

The persona should start out with 4-6 social network members (contacts). These should include at least two D1 contacts (a patron and mentor perhaps?), one D2 (close friend in the Legion?), and the rest may be distributed as desired by the player. GMs are encouraged to prepare lists of NPCs to suggest as potential D1 and D2 social contacts to players. This makes personalized dramatic events far easier to effectuate – the loss of a close and dear mentor would resonate emotionally far better than the anonymous disappearance of a half-recollected galley slave thrown overboard for insubordination.

NOBLE ACTION, HONOR AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

The five core skills are the most quantitative aspects of the Tekumelani persona. As important from a social perspective, however, is the cluster of ideas related to personal, family, clan, and social honor. Honor is the linchpin of this system - a social construct that has remained largely unchanged in the Five Empires since the time of Bednalljan Imperium and which was codified in intricate social ritual and detail during the reign of the Priestkings of Ganga. The philosophical basis of this concept is the deeply ingrained notion of "Noble Actions" (Tsolyani: *Gardasiyal*) - action which reflects the true beliefs and commitments of a person within their society. Tekumelani societies have a high degree of social polymorphism - many contradictory customs, attitudes, and moral systems (based on religious, political, and secular backgrounds). To accommodate this diversity (and to avoid the schisms and blood-drenched history plaguing historical empires before the golden age of Engsvan hla Ganga) - the Concordat (Tsolyani: *Mi'itlangmekoi*) and Noble Action (Tsolyani: *Gardasikoi*) were elevated to semi-mythological and legal status. The value and correctness of both is unquestioned and taken for granted. The Concordat forbids open aggression ("hate crimes") against worshippers of other faiths - and the concept of noble action requires honorable people to live and extol their virtues and beliefs. If you are a

sadomasochistic worshipper of Chiteng (Cohort to Vimulha) then you are expected to dress and action appropriately. Should you be a Thumis-loving scholar with altruistic intentions at your doxological core - then it will be expected for you to aide others, increase the overall social capital of your community, etc. There is no clear, supervening ethical system in place on Tekumel - besides the binding force of Noble Action and strong social pressures placed on members to conform. Those that forget this run the risk of being side-lined socially, eliminated, shipped off to distant lands (to hopefully expire in misery and loneliness), or to be stripped of rank, titles, and clan status and expelled from the Empire (the worst of all possible punishments for a noble and highborn person - this would be worse than death for you - you would beg to take your own life to avoid this shame - since the shame is partially transitive to your family, clan, and close social group). When players suffer loss of honor so do those within their close social circle. Remember the Vriddi rebels?!? I think there are still a few of them frozen for eternity in the deepest bowels of the Tolek Kana Pits outside of Bey Su. Social death - for the mighty and highborn - is worse than physical extirpation. You will avoid both - but especially the former. This is at the core of your psychology.

Honor and nobility determine to an exhaustive degree the mobility and success of a persona within Tekumel's rich and polymorphous social environments. Persons with low or negative honor are pariahs - shunned, distrusted, abused, and in all cases marginalized. Most people from your social stratum would prefer suicide to social excommunication - and many do take the "honorable way out" when faced with significant loss of honor. Players will do well to preserve and enhance their honor - loss of honor is more fatal to them than loss of blood.

To model the acquisition and loss of honor - a simple system is utilized. All players begin with 100 honor points (think of this as your social capital - to be used to help yourself and those in your social circle(s)). To this base is added a 5d20 (d100) amount of honor. Thus - the starting persona always starts with social capital - since you are born into a life of comparative privilege and social mobility. You come from the best clans, best lineages, and best schools. You hobnob with the elite - and hope to one day be "First Citizen" - or at least someone close to the reins of power and decision.

Honor can be all too easily lost. It can also be acquired - through combat and other 'risk taking' actions that are "socially visible" and considered significant. Finally, it can be expended - to help clan brothers, friends, former lovers, patrons, protégés - to stave off the deleterious consequences of rash and foolhardy actions. This may be thought of as the reciprocal social investment people make in one another. The following gives some basic guidelines for expenditure of social capital (honor points):

To attempt to save a degree-one social network member from shame, incarceration, or public humiliation: 50+2d20 honor points

To attempt to save a degree-two social network member from shame, incarceration, or public humiliation: 500+5d20 honor points

To attempt to save a degree-three social network member from shame, incarceration, or public humiliation: 1000+10d20 honor points

To save yourself from mild humiliation: 1d20 honor points

To save yourself from significant shame or scandal: 10d20 honor points

To save yourself from major shame or social humiliation (and ruin!): 20d20 honor points

To save yourself from well-founded accusations of treason and sedition: 100d20 honor points

(You usually cannot scrape up the social capital to avoid the High Ride for challenging the Tlakotani Clan or avoiding the fate of someone who backs the "wrong" heir in a contested Kolumeljalim)

To convince a degree-one contact to invest in a scheme of yours or to have their open support for you in a risky venture: 10d20 honor points

To convince a degree-two contact to support you openly in a politically or socially risky scheme: 20d20 honor points

To convince a large mass (legion, Temple, sect) to throw in their support for you in a major undertaking: 50d20 honor points (this is really about rallying the troops for a major offense!)

To publically challenge a deeply engrained social myth, ritual, or custom (which does not violate the Concordant, overthrow of the ruling regime, etc.) in a broad way within your social class (clan or lineage): 500d20 honor points

To publically challenge the Concordant or advocate rebellion or overthrow of the ruling regime, etc.: 5000d20 honor points (only to be done when the risks of doing nothing are worse than death (i.e. Pariah usurpation of the Petal Throne, etc.)

Obviously – for several of these expenditures of social capital (honor points) – the expectation would be that degree-one and degree-two contacts would be making substantial contributions of their own social capital to your success. An example of this would be Mirusiya's challenge to the ascension of Dhich'üne to the Petal Throne in a highly contested Kolumeljalim. His "rebellion" was only possible with massive support of other royal siblings, the support of high/noble clans (Vridi, et al), several priesthood, etc. These kinds of society changing actions do not happen lightly. One person cannot, by themselves, move the pillars upon which the Empire stands. Only the most credible, noble, and "well supported" could even conceive of such actions.

A player may solicit his social network for "help" (social capital). Any that are willing to provide aide and assistance would use the table above to determine the amount of "expended" social capital. Now - some modifiers are allowed - to factor in the effect of friends in high places - you remembered to cultivate those - right?!?

+2d20 honor points if the person helping is a well-known social figure (opinion shaper) - typically a very well connected Courtesan or Courtier

+3d20 honor points if person helping you is 10th Circle or higher in a Temple/Legion

+5d20 honor points if person helping you is 15th Circle or higher in a Temple/Legion

+5d20 honor points if the person helping is Very High Lineage and Clan Leader

+10d20 honor points if the person helping is a Royal Heir/Prince of the Realm (You certainly are well connected - or would be too embarrassing to be publically humiliated due to its social "backwash" effect on the Royal Personage - but you won't be invited back into the fold...)

+100d20 honor points if the person helping is a ruling Emperor (the ultimate get out of jail free card) (Hirkane, Mirusiya, etc.)

Needless to say - enlisting the aide of political undesirables, deposed generals cashiered to the provinces, treasonous blackguards, and those who have fallen out of social favor will do the player no services. Their 'lack of favor' may not be well known (aside from the GM) - and the GM must determine the scale of the minus (-) applied. For a deposed and ill-favored general speaking on behalf of you - the GM might ascribe a -3d20 penalty. This amount would be subtracted from your total (unknownst to you) - if you fail to have a sufficient social capital total to "buy your social liberty" - you fail. You still lose/expend all of the honor points though - and suffer the social fate of someone dejected and diminished within society. Too bad - do your homework on who is and isn't popular at court.

The GM should reward clever and brilliant role-playing - including social capital accumulation for using proper phrases in Tekumelani languages (Tsolyani, Livyani, Classical Bednalljan, Sunuz, etc.)

appropriately. This should not be abused however - at most a few points (under twenty) per gaming session as a maximum.

REPUTATION MODIFIER (OPTIONAL)

The core social capital and nobility one possesses is strongly influenced by one's past performance. There is an important element of the "point of no return" in social group interaction: when a person does something to seriously damage their future with the group. This is modeled by reputation. All player personae start out with a 1.0 multiplier. Every honor point they receive is multiplied by reputation modifier – and the result is noted appropriately. IN normal cases – this means multipliers for reputation are superfluous. However, for those personas whom possess either great negative (traitors and villains) or positive (heroes) reputations – the multiplier definitely has an impact.

The reputation modifier may be adjusted (secretly or openly) by the GM. The primary modifier may be general (applying to all interactions and uses of social capital) or restricted to individuals or specific groups. For example, if Heijjeka's "fool proof plan" to make a killing in the Ngalu wine market for his clan goes completely sour – he might receive a permanent modifier (say 1.5) – which would effectively increase the "cost" of any social capital outlay when dealing with his clan elders who are degree-one related to him (his Sea Blue clan do not like being made fool of – even by someone as charming and resourceful as Heijjeka). The GM should decide the length of this reputation modifier.

A persona may be multiple reputation modifiers as a result of various social blunders – or successes. In the latter case – the persona would require less social capital to accomplish certain actions (say .5). Degree-one and degree-two social relationships for the persona are highly susceptible to reputation. People who embarrass their social equals and friends eventually find it increasingly hard to "make amends" – they basically become trapped at the fringes of society. This is the point of no return – where many prefer honorable death. In the Empire – suicide is always an honorable option – with no stigma attached. A successful suicide might "adjust the balance sheets" for a person's clan, lineage, family – and save them the social ostracism and marginalization that the misdeeds and blunders of the character caused. This social model is familiar to Terran history – especially in the Roman Republic and Feudal Japanese.

In extreme cases –a persona may have a "global" negative reputation – like a Prince who does not Renounce the Gold formally (for the Kolumeljalim) – and instead flees to a neighboring land. That person is a pariah by reputation. Reputations matter a great deal within the Five Empires.

PERSONAL GENIUS (OR "AFFINITY")

The assumption is that each person on Tekumel is born with an innate gift or talent (the Latin/Roman morphological root for this is *genius*). This is some area or skill that seems to flow naturally and effortlessly for the persona. The player should pick on area and note it on their persona template. The following list (along with some modifiers to the social skills) is listed below. As with all of the lists and tables, it is merely meant to be illustrative.

The GM and players may mutually agree upon additional areas – but these are geared towards the kinds of roles and social positions that players are expected to take in society.

Table: Genius and Skill Roll Modifiers

1. Aesthetics (+10 Seduction)

2. Swordsmanship (+10 Brutality)
3. Design and Architecture (+10 Improvisation)
4. Making Friends (+10 Social Psychology)
5. Leadership (+10 Persuasion)
6. Sexual Technique and Pleasure Giving (+10 Seduction)
7. Tinkering with and Building Devices (+10 Improvisation)
8. Mathematics and Scholarship (+10 Improvisation)
9. Sorcery (+10 Improvisation)
10. Art and History (+10 Improvisation)

GROUP AFFILIATIONS AND TITLES

All personas are embedded in several organizations in order to be successful in the world of the Five Empires. There are at least four important ones:

Secular and Clan Organizations
 Religious Organizations (Temple, Sect, "Secret Orders")
 Political (Military Legion, Government, OAL, Servitors in Silence, etc.)
 Immediate Family and Lineage

The player should select one of each above. These will be the source of most (if not all) of the player's social network within the game. The various titles associated with the roles are listed here. These are directly derived from Barker's Tekumel Sourcebook. For purposes of mapping between the "Circles" and "Ranks" and "Levels" of the earlier rule sets and this one - the following rules may be applied:

No player starts at less than a 10th Circle/Level/Rank within the professional, religious, or political organization
 No player starts as a scholar or recluse (damage to their honor and social prestige may well make them such in short order) – vital and active roles in temples, religious sects, legions, trade, or government are expected
 No player starts with greater than 15th Circle/Level/Rank within the professional, religious, or political organization

The player should be given broad latitude in picking their titles and affiliations. They are stepping into very big shoes and should be afforded the privilege of choosing some components of their fate.

Table: Priestly Titles (The Ones That "Matter")

1. Njashte (Temple Commandant)
2. Hrugash (District Commandant)
3. Otlú (Senior Commandant)
4. Mriyan (Administrative Preceptor)
5. Tsemel (Patriarch)
6. Jashten (Lord Adept)
7. Tiritlen (Grand Adept)

Table: Sorcerer Titles (The Ones That "Matter")

1. Durun (Enchanter)
2. Chagun (Sorcerer)

3. Tselinal (Wizard)
4. Hneshtu (Necromancer)
5. Badragu (Master Magician)

Tables: Military Titles (The Ones that “Matter”):

1. Molkar (Commander)
2. Dritlan (Cohort Commander)
3. Kerdu (General)
4. Hehellu (Count)
5. Pachu (Lord)
6. Mringu (Great Noble)

Table: Governmental/Political Titles

1. Mayor of <City>
2. Court of Purple Robes (Highest Courtiers to the Seal Emperor in Avanthar)
3. Provincial Governor of <Province>
4. Prefect of the Palace of Foreign Lands
5. Prefect of the Palace of War
6. Prefect of the Palace of the Realm
7. Envoy of the Omnipotent Azure Legion (OAL)
8. Minister of <Department>
9. High Provost of <Department>
10. Ambassador to <Country>

Tekumel is rich with flowery and elaborate titles and stations. The GM is encouraged to adopt these as the “long form” of the titles personas posses. Example: “Guardian of the Glorious Reliquary of the Princess Mirune Mssumi’i and Recorder of the Supernal Directives of Eminent Glory” might refer to a ceremonial role of a member of the Royal Court – their job title being “Senior Page Reporting to the Vice-Chancellor of the Palace of the Realm”. Of course, there would be a complex set of costumes worn for the ritual observances at the appropriate festival days, polite forms of address when speaking to so august a personage, etc. Remember: the Tekumelani take their ritual observances very seriously – it is not a joke to them. Observe the forms.

For each title and group affiliation (each player must have at least one of the following: political organization, religious organization, or secular/clan organization) - the player with GM support must generate persons (NPCs) that will be the contacts, patrons, friends, etc. of the persona.

In terms of actual organization names - the following are duplicated from Swords and Glory (Adventures on Tekumel) reference materials. All non-noble, non-high status organizations have been pruned. Why bother listing them - those are your social inferiors and tools to be manipulated.

Table: Military Organizations:

1. Omnipotent Azure Legion (OAL) (Military and Espionage Arms) (Super-High Status and Coveted)
2. Legion of Ever-present Glory
3. Legion of Hnalla, Master of Light
4. Legion of the Mighty Prince
5. Legion of Mriktine, Hero of Victories

6. Legion of the Givers of Sorrow
7. Legion of Lord of Red Devastation
8. Legion of the Golden Sunburst
9. Legion of the Might of Ganga
10. Legion of the Scales of Brown
11. Legion of the Givers of Sorrow
12. Legion of the Portent Destiny
13. Legion of the Echoing Stone
14. Legion of the Sweet Singers of Nakome
15. Legion of Serqu, Sword of the Empire
16. Legion of Searing Flame

Table: Religious Organizations:

1. Stability God Temples (Hnalla, Thumis, Avanthé, Karakan, Belkhanu) (Cohorts are seen as downscale and not for the best and brightest)
2. Change God Temples (Hru'u, Sarku, Ksarul, Dlamelish, Vimulha) (Same rationale)
3. Foreign Temples (Lady Shirringayi, Mad One of Hliku, Some Livyani Shadow God, etc.)
4. Proscribed Temples (Dangerous! One of Fears, One Who Is, Goddess of the Pale Bone) (These would be "secret" affiliations- the player would definitely have a cover story and organization to disguise this fact)

Table: Clan/Secular Organizations (The Ones that “Matter”):

1. Tlakotani (may only be chosen if a “Dark Secret” result indicates royal parentage...)
2. Golden Sunburst
3. Sea Blue
4. Vriddi
5. Ito
6. Golden Bough
7. Blade Raised High
8. Jade Diadem
9. Cloak of Azure Gems
10. Sword of Fire

Table: Governmental Organizations:

1. City Governor (choose city: Jakalla, Butrus, Urmish, Bey Su, etc.)
2. Palace of the Realm
3. Palace of Foreign Lands
4. Palace of Ever Glorious War
5. Palace of the Priesthoods
6. Omnipotent Azure Legion (Administrative Arm)
7. Servitors in Silence (this is not a vey role-playing friendly occupation – not recommended)

Other organizations should be added by the GM with player consent. This is merely illustrative of the possibilities. Major cross-organizational power blocks are also common. We mention several here. These would be affiliations that might not carry titles for the persona – but would be a source of contacts, colleagues, fellow-travelers, etc.

1. Royalist Party (Tlakotanis and Strongly Aligned Clans at the Seat of Power in Avanthar)
2. Traditionalist Party (Old Very High Status Clans – Typically Polarized Around Stability/Change Trinities)
3. Military Party (Major Legions and Their Backing Clans)
4. Priestly Party (Religious Parties and their Sects – Mostly Aligned Around Tactical Ends and Backing of Specific Royal Heirs)
5. Foreign Parties (Envoys and Diplomatic Missions) (Human and Non-human) (Examples: Livyani Delegation, Haida Pakallan Delegation, etc.)
6. Pariah Sects (Underground) (this extremely secretive affiliation of worshippers and their agents are never seen openly – working through dummy groups and retaining a low profile. They do constantly seek to recruit the high born and well-positioned – making you a plausible target)
7. Hokun Spy Network (Secret) (equally proscribed like the worship of the Pariah Deities, but apparently more secular in its ambitions – the Hokun are plotting to take over the Five Empires and assert their “natural” dominance over base creatures like Homo sapiens. Again, membership is by invitation only.)

All of these would be difficult to join directly unless one had degree-one patronage related to the organization. For the proscribed groups and sects – an adventure sub-plot might revolve around the attempted recruitment of a player into one of these shadowy organizations.

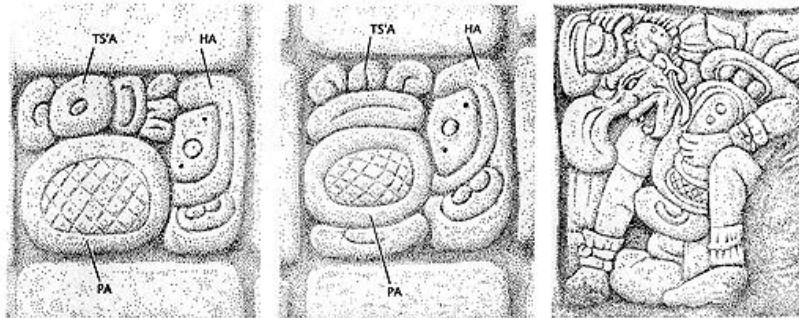
LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION

Rather than laying out the fine language tables provided in previous RPG systems for Tekumel, we shall merely note several of the more popular languages that may be chose by players for their personae. The basic rule of language acquisition is that players start out fluent and fully literate with their native language based on their first d20 skill point for persuasion rating. Additionally, they may acquire (at near native fluency) one additional language per d20-allocated skill point over 1d20 in persuasion. Example: Chiasha hi Tankolel has a 2d20 Persuasion rating – she knows her native language (Tsolyani) and chooses Livyani at near native as her “extra language”. She might well serve as a diplomat or envoy to Tsamra – assuming she can be ripped away from the many delights of the capital (Bey Su).

Table: Selected Modern and Classical Languages (for the Aristocracy and Nobles)

1. Tsolyani (Modern)
2. Yan Koryani (Modern)
3. Livyani (Modern)
4. Salarvyani (Modern)
5. Engsvanyali (Classical)
6. Classical Tsolyani (Classical)
7. Bednalljan (Classical)
8. Mu’ugalavyani (Modern)
9. Duru’ob (Classical and Officially Proscribed)
10. Sunuz (Classical and Officially Proscribed)
11. Saa Allaqyani (Modern)
12. Tka Mihalli (Engsvanyali-related)
13. Ai Che (Modern, Tonal, Aom-family)
14. Thu’usa (Stability Temple Argot)
15. Llyani (Classical)
16. Zna’ye (Classical, Hieroglyphic, and Officially Proscribed)

17. Tongue of the Priesthood of the Worm ("Code", Hieroglyphic, Sarku-worshippers)
18. Tongue of the Doomed Prince ("Code", Hieroglyphic, Ksarul-worshippers)
19. Nom (Modern, Far East)
20. Naqsai (Modern, Southern Continent, including Onchash Chairon)



This is an example of Zna'ye hieroglyphic tomb inscription – transcribed and annotated from Hidden Shrine of the Goddess of the Pale Bone beneath Old Chio'chi in Mu'ugalavya. It forms a part of the Canticle of Final Quiescence. The language consists of a complex catalogue

of phonemes and logophemes with many variations and subtleties of meaning for the savant. Study of the language is both complicated by hidden dangers woven into the "texts" – given its association with the Goddess of the Pale Bone. Typical Zna'ye texts and monolithic inscriptions have a large amounts of theological iconography interpolated as well – the reader will notice the Servitor of Te'e depicted on the far right of sample. There are sorcerous aspects to the placement of these figures within the text, and the student of Zna'ye is recommended to proceed carefully in their study of this and other languages devoted to the Goddess – such as Sunuz.

SOCIAL NETWORK GENERATION

The basic social network a player has to draw on may be generated in on of three ways: stipulation from the GM ("These are the people you know."), stipulation by the player, or by semi-random generation of social contacts. This section assumes the last option, and tries to provide a fast tool for helping players bootstrap their social network. Names of contacts can be generated through the Names and Lineages tables.

All social contacts, irrespective of degree, share a minimal set of features that should be captured on the player's persona sheet: name, lineage, organization (clan, legion, government office, temple, sect), and reputation modifier if it is different from the 1.0 default value.

Assume that each player persona starts with four to six social contacts. The results are designed to create NPCs/social contacts that are slightly larger-than-life. They should make an impression on players and not just simply function as *deus ex machina* plot contrivances.

Table: Social Contact Degree (d10)

- 1 to 6 Range Score: Degree One (Someone very close to you)
- 7 to 8 Range Score: Degree Two (Important people in your life)
- 9 to 10 range Score: Degree Three (You might remember them from the party the other night)

Table: Social Contact Personality Type

1. Taciturn and Grumpy (Unless Constantly Amused)
2. Playful and Mischievous

3. Amorous and Sybaritic
4. Scholarly and Socially Inept
5. Humorous and Fun-Loving
6. Charming and Gregarious
7. Spiteful and Vindictive
8. Distracted and Phlegmatic
9. Duplicitous and Envious
10. Insane and Mercurial (Unpredictable Fits of Elation or Anger)

Table: Social Contact Name

1. Arumel
2. Aishe
3. Birek
4. Terun
5. Miraj
6. Jekesh
7. Noru
8. Chesha
9. Saiya
10. Ma'ian

Table; Social Contact Lineage (Slanted Towards Highly Regarded Lineages and Best Families)

1. Ito
2. Vridi
3. hi Burusa
4. hi Mriktine
5. hi Tankolel
6. hi Sarvodja
7. hi Moltaisha
8. hi Gurushma
9. hi Dhalumya
10. Tlakotani

Table: Social Contact Clan (Bypass if Result from Lineage is Ito, Tlakotani, or Vridi)

1. Cerulean Crescent
2. Golden Sunburst
3. Sea Blue
4. Onyx Mirror
5. Dark Fear
6. Golden Bough
7. Blade Raised High
8. Jade Diadem
9. Cloak of Azure Gems
10. Sword of Fire

Table: Social Contact Organization (Make Second Roll on d10 for Status and Rank: 1-5= Mid-Ranking, 6-8= High-Ranking, 9-10=Top-Ranking Role and/or Title in Organization)

1. Temple of a Tlomitlanyal (Select Deity and Branch of Temple Appropriate to Clan and Status)
2. Temple of a Tlokiriqualiyal (Ibid.)
3. Legion (Select One Appropriate to Clan and Status)
4. Palace of the Realm
5. Palace of Ever Glorious War
6. Palace of Foreign Lands
7. (Semi-)Allied Alien Race Enclave (Select Military or Temple Affiliation as well as select from Pe Choi, Pachi Lei, Shen, or Tinaliya for actual race)
8. Foreign Country Diplomat or Envoy (Select Country)
9. Foreign Legion or Military Group (Select Unit and Legion)
10. Lower Class Occupations (Select one from Sea Captain, Trader, Slaver, Pimp, Drug Dealer, Semi-Clandestine “Business Associate”, etc.)

Table: Social Contact Current Location (d10)

- 1 to 5 Range Score: Your City and District (How convenient!)
- 6 to 8 Range Score: City within your Region (300-500 Tsan Distance)
- 9 In Your Capitol (Bey Su, etc.)
- 10 In a Hidden or Difficult to Reach Location (Select Location with GM Assistance – examples include Monastery of the Sapient Eye, Hmakuyal (Ksarul Temple Training Center and Secret Labs), Dlash, Tolek Kana Pits, Lost in a Tsuru’um, etc.)

Table: Social Contact Reputation Modifier (Note on Persona Sheet) (d10)

- 1 to 7 Range Score: Normal Reputation Modifier (x 1.0)
- 8 Persona has Poor Reputation with This Person (x 2.5)
- 9 Persona has Extraordinarily Lousy Reputation with This Person (x 5)
- 10 Persona has Excellent Reputation with This Person (x 0.5)

Table: Social Contact Context (How You Met, Last Encounter, etc.)

1. Met in the clan house or through inter-clan festivals and social mixing
2. Met will studying or training with the same teacher or at the same school
3. Met through a mutual acquaintance during some innocuous social event (Arena fighting?)
4. Met at a social function (city or regional religious festival)
5. Met at Court during some kind of political negotiations and found each other amenable
6. Ran into each other while pursuing the same object or goal (possibly for different purposes)
7. Met while traveling and developed an affinity for one another (opposites attract?!?)
8. Met during the Civil War – probably thrown together during one of the innumerable sieges, battles, and chaos-filled months following the false Kolumeljalim announcement
9. Met through a mutual - possibly concurrently shared – lover (Select gender)
10. Met through business dealings

This is a purely stochastic method for creating a social web. The GM should encourage the player to create their own social contacts ex nihilo – and provide at least two or three NPCs from the campaign to seed the social network. This will make the adventuring easier and avoid dead ends on the narrative – there will always be someone to bribe, exhort, plead to and confer with in the normal course of the game.

WEALTH AND OTHER PEDESTRIAN CONCERNS

A true gentleman does not worry about their money – they have clan brothers, slaves, and scribes to do the daily work of monetary accumulation and recording. Economics is for the poor. You have virtually unlimited wealth. All players start with a monthly stipend, allowance, etc. on 1000 x d20 Kaitars. This is “spending money” – to be used for gambling, acquisition of gadgetry, bribery, villa building, carousing, mounting festivals and parties, and attiring oneself and one’s entourage accordingly. Any money left over always just seems to disappear – so no real “savings” are possible. Money and wealth are meant to be spent, showered on favorite concubines and friends -generally used as an aide in moving through the back rooms of palaces, temples, and villas where the real action is taking place.

LOANS AND REPAYMENT

It is possible to receive a loan for larger sums of money. An example might be the lease of a swift Tnek (boat) for a commercial venture to Tsamra. This would be a one time loan, and expectations on return on investment would have to be negotiated. Failure to repay on the terms would result in a 5d20 honor point loss and the refusal of the clan to listen to anymore of your brilliant schemes for 2d20 months.

Should players exceed their allowance for considerable time – they will suffer an honor loss of 2d20 honor points per month. Eventually, the clan and social network will drop the person as an undesirable – someone who cannot control themselves and exercise even minimal judgment. To simulate this effect, the persona will lose one random degree-one social network member monthly – until none remain. At that point, the persona is effectively a non-person in the society. They would do well to enlist in a second rate Legion and disappear for several years. It works to assuage social embarrassment, sometimes. The GM should be quite exacting and cruel in these matters.

PART THREE: BASIC MECHANICS FOR PLAY

The basic mechanics of this system relate to the same four ideas prevalent in all of the previous Tekumel RPGs. Combat, sorcery, physical condition (and damage), and development (rewards, accolades, prestige, etc.). The most important guiding principle for all players at this level of society is Noble Action (*Gardasiyal*). Increase of prestige, honor, and public acclaim is worth more than wealth. Let us face it – you are already very wealthy in comparison to 99% of the populace. Now – you are playing a different game on a different board. The stakes are high – but the rewards are unimaginable.

THE SYSTEM IN A NUTSHELL

The basic system employed is based on two simple ideas: summation of skill ratings and modifiers (xd20s +/-modifiers) and opposing rolls to determine victor. Any action’s success is predicated upon the actor’s (appropriate) native skill applied plus any modifiers involved. A raw 5d20 persuasion skill +15 of modifiers might be applied by an actor in trying to negotiate their way out of a scandalous situation. Against the total rolled by the player (a five d20 die are rolled and fifteen added to the result) would be an opposing total from the defending object or person – say 4d20. Ties lead to no result and the opportunity to try again – unless the matter is sorcerous combat. (See the sorcery section for details on spell backfire results)

Two sets of calculations (rolls) occur: for the actor and the direct object (defender). The defender does the same calculation based on their (appropriate) skill and applies any modifiers. She applies appropriate rating and modifiers. Then d20s equal to the rating and modifiers are rolled by each side.

The GM typically will roll for the non-player characters and objects. The highest total “wins” and the expected effect occurs.



This basic system applies to everything imaginable: stealth, running across rooftops while being chased by irate henchmen, physical combat in the battlefield of Hirilakte arenas, sorcerous duels, significant feats of strength, deciphering ancient codices, rebuilding high technology artifacts from the Latter Times, etc. It is uniform and geared towards extremely fast resolution. Devices common, magical, or high technological – may contribute modifiers to the user – but they are treated as “props” for purposes of the game. The role-playing skill and social aptitudes of the player are the key ingredients to most action resolution.

The drama and high adventure are the important points for consideration, not dice rolling. Nothing should slow the action down. The GM is strongly encouraged to role-play rather than roll-play most situations since player reactions and stratagems are usually far more entertaining than simple stochastic permutation. The use of dice should be

used to inject a modicum of danger and difficulty. This avoids creating a campaign of facile accomplishment without any application of guile, charm, and pragmatic violence that makes Tekumel so fascinating a milieu. Drama is the key to an enjoyable session of noble intrigue and social climbing. This is GM rule #1.

Table: Summary of Action Types and Base Social Skill Used to Resolve Them

1. Combat uses brutality rating
2. Sorcery uses improvisation rating for casting (and brutality rating for exhaustion checks)
3. Common verbal activity (diplomacy, fast talking, insults, chitchat, pleading, legal reasoning, persuasion, and public oratory) uses persuasion rating
4. Discerning motivations, emotions and credibility of interlocutors use social psychology rating
5. Sexual performance, seduction and lascivious banter use seduction rating

All actions must be mapped to a basic social skill rating for action resolution to be evaluated. For “monsters” or unimportant NPCs, a single monster rating (MR) is used for all checks. (See monster section for more details)

ADVANCEMENT AND REWARDS

The GM should reward players for their daring, accomplishment, and skillful manipulation of their social network and others around them. The rewards are usually to be in the form of modifiers to their basic social skills/ratings. In rare instances, the social skills themselves might be raised. Any such increases should be directly tied to the application and refinement of a skill in practice. If Heijjeka does a spectacularly brilliant job as Dritlan of a Legion against the Yan Koryani, winning several Qadarni, leading the successful razing of Miluminayan towns (secessionist traitors!), and bedding the first wife of several enemy generals – the GM might reward him with:

The following table lists some common rewards that the GM may use as a starting point.

Table: Rewards for Exceptionally Successful Role-playing

1. +10 to Brutality Rolls (For Martial Accomplishments – Leading a Winning Side in Several Qadarni, Defeating a Powerful Nemesis in a Duel, Surviving a Long Journey through the Underworld, etc.)
2. +10 to Improvisation Rolls (For Scholarly Accomplishments – Deciphering an Old Grimoire, Completing a Grammar for a Half-Forgotten Language, Building an “Eye”, etc.)
3. +10 to Social Psychology Rolls (For Intra-Personal Accomplishments – Sniffing out a Turncoat in the Palace, or an Assassination Attempt on a Member of the Royal Family, etc.)
4. +10 to Seduction Rolls (For Sexual and Amorous Accomplishments – Successfully Completing Some of the 32 Unspeakable Acts of Hrihayal, Being a Well-Known Ladies Man, Seducing Your Way to a Promotion, etc.)
5. +10 to Persuasion Rolls (For Diplomatic or Economic Accomplishments – Convincing a City Government to Invest in Your Economic Venture (a New Legion?), Negotiating a Peace Treaty with Tsolei Pirates, Defusing a Political Crisis That Might Destabilize the Government, etc.)
6. +10 to Brutality Rolls (For Martial Accomplishments -)
7. 2d20 Honor Points (for Sacrificing a Captured Enemy in a Way Commensurate with Their Status and Your Religious Beliefs) (The End for many Captured Foes)
8. 2d20 Honor Points (for Accomplishing a Noble Action in the Course of Dramatic Scene/Adventure – This Cannot be a Contrived “Action” Merely Done to Game the System)
9. 5d20 Honor Points (for Accomplishing a Public Act of Significant Value to Your Social Network Patrons – Making Them Looking Very Good or Accomplishing Their Aims (Tactical))
10. 10d20 Honor Points (As above, but for Strategic Aims)
11. 100d20 Honor Points (For An Act Necessary to the Preservation of the Social Order – e.g. Saving the Life of the Emperor, Thwarting the Destruction of Your Nation, etc.) (very rare indeed)
12. 1-2 New Spells (Temple, Generic, Universal – As Appropriate to Persona) to be Selected by the GM for Accomplishing a Complex Set of Tasks in Which Sorcery was a Large Factor in the Success

The rewards are cumulative – it is possible to receive multiple +10 awards to say brutality. Simply note these are a running modifier total besides the social skill in question. (e.g. Heijjeka has a 5d20+20 brutality rating – as a result of his successful military campaigning). It is always advised to give some biographical detail associated with the reward – like sating the +10 Brutality was a result of the weapons training received at the hands of the master swordsman - General Kettukal – at his private “school” in Bey Su. These details make the quantitative aspects of the reward more plausible and memorable.

These rewards and accolades should not be meted out easily. They would lose their efficacy and diminish the advances made by the player through the Byzantine politics and dangers of Tekumel.

Conversely, for players who act ignobly and contrary to their beliefs and mores – the GM should feel now compunction about awarding negatives (e.g. -10 to social psychology for failing to spot obvious clues to a person's treachery) or in lowering social skills from disuse. If a soldier and general spends all of his time at the House of Pleasant Hour in debauch – their brutality rating might be lowered 1d20 or 2d20 (temporarily). Although – in that case their seduction rating may move up. It is up to the GM to decide how malleable the social skills are. Generally speaking – it is better to assign minus numbers to roles than to lower the ratings (e.g. 5d20-20 brutality from "taking it easy" a little too long between campaigns).

Players whose personas start out in Legions and with strong military backgrounds should be given some kinds of modifiers to their brutality and improvisation aptitudes to reflect their training. The same should apply to those in priestly professions. Typically, a veteran of a legion which saw significant action in the previous Tsolyanu-Yan Kor War (2365-2369 AS) or current Tsolyanu-Mu'ugalavya War (2375-Present AS) should have at least +20 to brutality and +10 to improvisation. The GM may choose to limit this to the preferred weapons of the Legion. For most of the high-status Legions – this means the barbed, great swords preferred for Qadarni combat. For rare individuals, the GM may opt to increase the d20 rating of the aptitude itself –although this is generally discouraged for non-gamed experience. Allow player role-playing to justify true increases in aptitude ratings. It will make the accomplishment all the more real and provide impetus to better role-playing as opposed to roll-playing.

PHYSICAL STATUS AND DAMAGE LEVELS

Physical status is an abstraction as to the general health and vitality of a persona. It does not correlate in a direct way to specific physical features. Instead, it functions as a basis for ascertaining the capability of a persona to withstand physical damage (from violence, illness, magic, and technologies of the Lords of the Latter Times). Each persona has one of five physical status levels:

Normal (disease free, rested, active, undamaged and no hangovers - your feel "marvelous" and everything is beautiful and right in the world)

Lightly Wounded (minor illness, mild poisoning by a jealous mistress, superficial damage from combat, clumsy clan house accident, etc.) (Normal rest and recuperation will get you back to normal status in 2d20 days)

Severely Wounded (major physical trauma from combat, serious infection, repercussion of serious poisoning, tertiary Zu'ur addiction effects, physical misadventure (3 story fall), etc.) (Recuperation will require 2d20 weeks and the ministrations of a healer or spells - this is not something you can "walk off" - untreated for 1d20 days and you are promoted to "dead" physical status...)

Dead (mostly *self-explanatory*... under normal circumstances your clan is either demanding Shamtla, giving you a fine burial with appropriate religious ceremonies and accompanied by the wailing of wives, lovers, and debt collectors, or Mu'ugalavyani children are looting your desiccated corpse in some half-forgotten shit hole of a Mu'ugalavyani border "town" before the desert jackals show up to make short work of your remains...)

For a cinematic and socially-focused role-playing experience this system works reasonably well. Most personas will be in **normal status** 90%+ of the time. Only dangers of physical dueling and Qadarni, the run of the mill poisoning at a Palace function, perilous missions on behalf of a Royal Prince (That Prince Rereshqala... he always has some little "errand" for you...), and Underworld slogging against Ssu and Shunned Ones will likely effect one severely. Of course, the danger of assassination (poisoning, magic, etc.) is a cost of doing business as a high profile noble. You are in the upper echelon and people covet

your status and position. Always have someone in your entourage taste your food and background check potential romantic partners. It just saves so much unpleasantness down the road when the Omnipotent Azure Legion (OAL) officers show up in the middle of the night for "chat" about your latest bedmate's curious political allegiances. Remember - you are very important (dare we say it - irreplaceable). Others are there to bear the brunt of gross physical harm and risk - the Empire needs you - oh scion of the Golden Sunburst clan and leading actor on the social stage!

The GM is the ultimate arbiter of physical status change - she determines when your status is changed as a result of physical misadventures. Normal commonsense should dictate state transitions - a harmless pinprick should not even register on a healthy person - unless there was Nu'ulesh venom on it... then things could get very unpleasant rapidly. A word of caution to young bravos and social climbers - cultivate the patronage and friendship of those skilled in the medicinal arts - you shall likely need them.

RESURRECTION AND REVIVIFICATION OF PERSONAS

Dead status is not necessarily the end for someone of your stature. Pathetic, ignominious deaths are for Red Mountain Clan yokels in backwater light infantry legions posted in Saa Allaqiyar or Pechano - your family and social circle want to have their investment in you pay off (usually - assuming you aren't bringing everyone down socially with ignoble acts and loss-of-honor). Resurrection spells and Temple magic can revive "dead" personas - although the practice is quite rare. Fortunately - you are at a level within society where the proper monetary and social inducements are readily available and proffered. That said - the following social capital (honor) costs will be assessed on revived or resurrected player personas:

Initial resurrection/revivification/transmigration: 1000 honor points (expensive but you are worth every kaitar and ounce of social capital)

Second time: 10000 honor points (hmm - do we really need you that much?)

Third time: 100000 honor points (this is getting embarrassing for you and your social circle...)

Fourth time: 1000000 honor points (you must be *extremely* valuable to the Empire...)

Fifth time: Don't ask unless you are an Avatar of the Hero of the Age or an "Undying Wizard" with really atrocious luck)

It is obvious that individuals will typically have no where near the requisite number of honor points - social capital - to revive a colleague. There must be a collective pooling of resources - and this is derived from the first and second degree social network (for first through third revivification attempts) - but up to third degree social network for later attempts. The latter attempts are almost culture wide (the degrees are exponential scale).

The persona's social capital total is included in the cumulative total for the required number of honor points but all of the honor points are drained in the attempt at revivification. Even if revivification fails for some obscure reason the points are expended. This is the social penalty and stigma of being "rescued from the Isles of Teretane and Lord Belkhanu's voyage to the afterlife". Your honor is reset on successful resurrection to zero (0). Revivification is thus a mixed blessing since it carries social stigma. Only a few social groups, such as the necrophiliac Sarku-worshippers of the Copper Dome Society have no stigma around the "undead", revived, etc. within their midst. Indeed, many of their most senior leaders are in fact powerful revenants (Tsolyani: *Jajgi*) who remain sequestered away from the prying eyes of the Empire in stygian citadels like *The Well Which Pierces the Heart of the World* beneath the City of Sarku. You generally do not want to be paying them a social visit under any circumstances.

Fortunately, they are the social outliers of Tekumel. For even august persons like a Royal Prince (Eselne comes to mind), the passage to the “Isles” is considered an appropriate and natural end.

GMs should use revivification sparingly.

ACTION RESOLUTION

The basis of using social skills in this system is that of opposed rolls. When a player uses a skill – say improvisation – her opponent’s improvisation skill (rating) is used as the opposed roll. This applies a basic symmetry to the use of skills – brutality versus brutality, seduction versus seduction, and so forth. Modifiers are applied – both those based on the player’s or opponent’s social skills. Those modifiers provided by weapons, techno-magical items, and sorcery are also included. Finally, players and NPCs, but not monsters as described below, may also expend social capital (honor points) to aide their chances.

The system is designed around finality – no protracted sessions of die rolling. With combat being by default a death match in cases where dueling is not an issue, the outcome is quickly and easily decided. The combat and sorcery sections contain examples of the system in action. One should always pick one’s enemies carefully and never jump to a rash or gross physical action when stealth and guile will to the trick.

This makes for a fast resolution system. Inanimate objects are assigned a single resistance or difficulty rating (some xd20) which act as their generic rating to roll against during action resolution. A simple table suffices to lay out some typical difficulty or resistance ratings commonly encountered.

Table: Difficulty Ratings for Common Actions Concerning Inanimate Objects

| |
|--|
| Forcing a locked door open (1d20) |
| Pulling out iron bars in a jail cell or secured temple storeroom (3d20) |
| Smashing a sturdy wooden box open (1d20) |
| Tearing through a thick canvas tent (1d20) |
| Ripping out jewel or item affixed to a statue (2d20) |
| Breaking an oar in two (single handedly) (2d20) |
| Wrenching loose a bolt or nail from a surface (3d20) |
| Shattering a thick pane of glass (2d20) |
| Punching hole through a semi-sturdy wooden door (2d20) |
| Bending a strong metal bar or railing (3d20) |

The GM should be able to approximate the difficulty of other activities base don these samples.

ELITE MILITARY TRAINING AND PRESTIGE (OPTIONAL)

As remarked upon in the advancement and rewards section, prior training in a weapon or class of weapons is possible. This is strictly optional and left to the GM to decide whether this additional class of modifiers should be introduced. The basic system encourages abstracting away this level of detail from combat resolution. Simply put, a weapon in the hands of a well-trained person is lethal, irrespective of the specific training. This is especially true when used against weak or untrained opponents. As a general rule, the GM may apply a +10 to brutality and improvisation rolls for personas who have had frontline battle experience within their respective legions. This is to model to the hard won life

experience of a soldier who has staked life and honor on the field of battle. The player should, with GM assistance, add some piquant details to their back story for personas that have fought in the Empire's elite legions. Purely ceremonial titles and ranks acquired through judicious bribery, sycophancy and seduction should not receive the bonuses. Your acquired rank should be reward enough. Now, back to planning what you will be wearing for the fete at the Governor of Sokatis' manse!

For those looking for even more details, the following modifiers might be applied to give some more flavor to "battle hardened veterans" of the current and previous wars the Empire has been embroiled in. Some of the legions have a reputation for producing brilliant tacticians and strategists, so this is factored in below. Others have well-deserved reputations for brutality and violence. All of this is designed to add some spice to the back stories of personas. A veteran of the OAL might have experienced not only tactical training but also been exposed to the finer arts of military diplomacy and negotiation – hence the +5 persuasion modifier.

Table: Elite Military Organizations and Training Modifiers:

1. Omnipotent Azure Legion (OAL) (+25 improvisation, +15 brutality, +5 persuasion, +2d20 honor points)
2. Legion of Ever-present Glory (+15 improvisation, +10 brutality, +2d20 honor points)
3. Legion of Hnalla, Master of Light (+15 improvisation, +5 brutality, +1d20 honor points)
4. Legion of the Mighty Prince (+20 improvisation, +10 brutality, +1d20 honor points)
5. Legion of Mriktine, Hero of Victories (+15 improvisation, +10 brutality, +1d20 honor points)
6. Legion of the Givers of Sorrow (+5 improvisation, +30 brutality)
7. Legion of Lord of Red Devastation (+15 improvisation, +30 brutality, +1d20 honor points)
8. Legion of the Golden Sunburst (+5 improvisation, +5 brutality, +1d20 honor points)
9. Legion of the Might of Ganga (+5 improvisation, +15 brutality)
10. Legion of the Scales of Brown (+5 improvisation, +20 brutality)
11. Legion of the Givers of Sorrow (+5 improvisation, +25 brutality)
12. Legion of the Portent Destiny (+20 improvisation, +15 brutality)
13. Legion of the Echoing Stone (+25 improvisation, +15 brutality, +5 persuasion)
14. Legion of the Sweet Singers of Nakome (+25 improvisation, +15 brutality)
15. Legion of Serqu, Sword of the Empire (+15 improvisation, +25 brutality, +1d20 honor points)
16. Legion of Searing Flame (+10 improvisation, +25 brutality)

Inferior legions would not provide the kinds of modifier boosts that enrolling and serving with distinction in the elite heavy infantry legions would have. Again, being a part of the right organization is a major contributing factor to one's upward mobility. It is no wonder that everyone who wants to be a soldier seeks enrollment in one of the star legions as opposed to some upstart medium infantry legion newly activated on the frontier by some local potentate hoping to ingratiate themselves with the Emperor. The oldest legions have respect and tradition to help them recruit. In tradition bound societies like those of the Five Empires, this is a significant advantage.

COMBAT

For purposes of this role-playing system - all combat and physical exertion is resolved using the brutality rating versus brutality rating (or monster rating (MR) of an opponent) - with modifications (+/-) applied to the totals prior to summation. These modifiers are as follows:

Weapon or military training (rolled during background/biography generation, accumulated during game play, or as a "reward" by GM for successful role-playing)

Defense training (Ibid.)

Magical modifiers (spell effects usually temporary)

Technological modifiers (ancient techno-magical effects such as "eyes")

Honor expenditure (use of one's personal reservoir of honor)

Context (surprise, darkness, mass confusion, fatigue, underwater movement (!), aerial, etc.) (this is highly subjective and up to the Gm to decide based on reasonable and consistent levels - i.e. darkness and surprise should typically always give a combined +20 to total - not vary radically from case to case)

Modifiers can be positive (+) or negative (-). Negatives modifiers are ascribed by the GM - for example a -15 due to the incredibly poor visibility and fatigue of participant. Positive modifiers are usually derived from training or rewards accumulated through role-playing. The expenditure of honor is important here - a player may (prior to any roll/resolution of combat) invest their honor to help them. This honor is not automatically replenished in any way - except as noted below.

For normal situations outside of dueling and ritual warfare - combat is swift, decisive, and to the death. In many circumstances, players will be engaging in non-lethal combat – the NPCs will be trying to subdue, ransom, prisoner swap, interrogate, torture, etc. NPCs should have complex motives and not just simply be used as mindless killing machines without wit or agendas. They should be more dangerous as thinking and planning beings who wish to exploit the player personas in clever ways. The capture of a high ranking officer in an enemy legion brings far more benefit than a corpse left to rot in an anonymous forest clearing in Do Chaka or dune in the Miluminayan Desert. Let us not forget the ritual sacrifice of captured nobles to one's gods. Such prestige! Lord Vimulha and Chiteng love to see their living sacrifices writhe in the flames! The honor gained from sacrifice is substantial. Let us not even get into the details of ritual torture preferred by the more zealous members of the Mu'ugalavyani-worshipping priesthood of Lord Hrsh (See following picture). Sacrifice is noble action: the soul energy (Chu'el) of the sacrificed really does feed the Gods (Mitlanyal). Sacrifice is a central part of the social rituals of almost all Tekumelani societies.



Suffice to say that for players, combat death is usually not the outcome during regular game play except in extreme circumstances. Tsóludhàliyal combat is not a belabored and tedious squaring off for hours of dice rolling. The rolls and totals abstract combat and focus on the outcome and key variables effecting success. No attempt at pseudo-"accurate" depictions of combat is considered nor is time measured in rounds or small increments. Combat, like social interaction, is designed to flow quickly and cinematically. The GM should use dramatic language to describe the outcome thereby giving a visual flavor to what would otherwise be a mechanical calculation.

Consider: how much does dice rolling really have to do with severing a person's arm with a sword in "real life"?! Not much. Remember, unless specified

otherwise before rolling is done, the assumption that combat is a death match. Other options include "to first wound/blood" (used in duels and affairs of honor), "to incapacity/unconsciousness", or "to surrender". If incapacity is the outcome sought - the losing party is considered in unconscious physical state (note on their persona record) for $x \times 20$ minutes (For Heijeka the x would be equal to 5) of the winning combatant's brutality rating. They are also considered significantly injured in non-trivial ways. Medical assistance or sorcery will almost certainly be required. The loss of honor points (social capital) always is assessed immediately - since it effects more than just the individual combatant. Honor and nobility may have profound effects on the morale of allied troops – who would not be overjoyed to see their "hero" cut down like a blade of marsh grass in front of their eyes. For "until surrender" outcomes the loser is forced to suffer honor loss and is considered the prisoner of the victor (no escape is possible).

To relate this to the physical status of the combatants use the following system to assess damage.

For "to the death" (default case): A success means the loser is placed in dead status (they have expired and are usually considered removed from further adventuring – unless sorcery or Latter Times technologies are deployed quickly)

For "to first wound/blood" or "to surrender": A success means the loser is placed in lightly wounded status (and can fight again should the other party be so inclined or withdraw - with subsequent loss of honor/social capital) For those surrendering, the assumption is that they are disarmed and rendered incapable of flight or further combat (just then)

For "to incapacity/unconsciousness": A success means the loser is placed in severely wounded status (and will really not be in a position to do anything to anyone - they likely have wounds which are starting to grow infected, have significant muscle and bone damage, are bleeding most unpleasantly all over themselves, trying to explain how their clans will pay any ransom to get them back unharmed, etc.)

Each side in a conflict (combat) may pick its tactic or aim in combat. Importantly, both sides do not have to be fighting for the same stakes. Example: Lord Kaikama may be fighting "to first blood" in a duel against Lord Mirrum. Lord Mirrum, an uncouth scoundrel, may choose to fight "to the death". For noble characters such as player personas not matching a "to first blood" aim against an equally noble opponent is considered very poor form. In the case of a win, such a person would receive no honor points (social capital). He would be considered a *déclassé* and suffer an equal amount of negative honor point penalty. There is a definite social cost to not playing by the unwritten rules of dueling and noble action. Dueling is a symbolic and social act, not to mention a potentially lethal one for one or both sides.

Unintelligent opponents always are considered to be fighting "to the death" – it simplifies matters considerably. The semi-intelligent species may opt for all of the normal aims or outcomes listed above.

The rules for combat are designed to be very fast action. The point of social role-playing on Tekumel is to avoid protracted combat resolution like the notoriously long Runequest 2 combat situations. Some of these took literally hours to resolve.

The bottom line: you are either trying to kill, dishonor, or subdue an opponent. Everything else in between is considered irrelevant for dramatic purposes. The GM should endeavor to give harrowing and explicit details when player personas become severely wounded, to give them a qualitative appreciation of what severe body trauma means to the person.

The rest is tedious accounting for scribes in the clan house or Place of the Realm. You are interested in results and high profile wins (kills, Qadarni wins, and the like). Get on with it. There are kingdoms to be won and social and material riches to be accumulated. Most high status personas will prefer duels and "to first wound" combat anyway - staying alive is important to the rich and powerful are all times and in all places. This is another universal truth. Let the Zrne pick off the stragglers in the herd. You are meant to go on to bigger and better things.

An example of combat would be useful. Heijjeka (5d20 brutality) is engaged in personal combat as part of a Qadarni with a Mu'ugalavyani Kerdu named Liruke (3d20 brutality). Heijjeka rolls $15+20+5+15+1=56$ (base roll). Liruke rolls $12+5+20=37$ (base roll). Heijjeka additionally adds the following modifiers to his roll (+20 elite weapon training from Sanjaz hiKhuroda of Bey Su, +10 defensive training from experience in the Tsolyani-Yan Koryani War of 2365 AS, and expends (prior to rolling) +15 honor points (he marks this on his persona sheet). The result totals $56+45=101$ versus Liruke's 37. Heijjeka eliminates Liruke in a tremendous display of martial prowess. Effectively, he decapitates him in a whirlwind of swordsmanship that seems to pass in a slow-motion ballet of the two figures - until sped up by the death blow that separates Liruke's head from his shoulders sending a sublime red plume of blood gushing into the air. As a reward - Heijjeka may add the difference between his base roll and his opponent's base roll to his honor rating (equaling +19 to honor in this case). Anyone else in his party or within one degree of social distance will also gain that honor bonus. This is considered immediate for game playing purposes. Backing a "winner" brings prestige and honor. By the same token, the losing side will subtract the same number of honor points from their totals. This can have devastating effects on the losing side in a Qadarni battle - they enter full scale combat socially and psychologically diminished. For Heijjeka's legionnaires - they will enter the QADARDALIDIKOI (Great Combat) each with +19 honor points - bolstered by the victory of their champion and ready to crush the Mu'ugalavyani dogs like their hero Heijjeka!

Heijjeka has wagered some personal honor on the outcome of the contest and come out slightly elevated socially. His victory was a little too easy perhaps but enough for him and his legion to win honor and for them to start the main attraction, the major battle, with a slight upper hand. Again, honor permeates all aspects of Tekumelani society. What happens to one's friends and associates can have immediate and significant effect on oneself. Let us not even get into the effects of having a close friend labeled a traitor and executed by the Seal Emperor. This may cast a shadow over an entire clan's social standing for generations. This is yet another reason for accurate record keeping of the status of the persona's social network. They can gain honor and social capital from their network as well as suffer humiliation and social downfall without doing anything directly themselves. A rogue NPC closely associated with a player's persona may cause significant shame and result in demands for Shamtla ("blood money").

On Tekumel, you are the company you keep. Choose your friends and associates wisely.

POOLING OF RESOURCES AND FORFEIT OF HONOR

At the discretion of the GM, it may be permitted to allow players to pool their brutality ratings into a combined rating (say $3d20 + 2d20 + 6d20 = 11d20$) and use that aggregate score against a set of opponents (not individuals). The defending party would also aggregate their brutality rating (and any modifiers would be applied). In such cases of aggregation – all honor points are forfeited for the vanquished foe in the event of victory. There simply is something so unseemly about collective action – there being less opportunity for one's own brilliant role to shine through. This rule set explicitly seeks to force individuals to rise to the occasion and take risks – mass murder just doesn't quite come into it.

Most persons of your stature will opt for Qadarni battles and ritualized duels to settle your affairs of honor. Large-scale butchery is for the commoners impressed into the lower status legions and shipped off to the Mu'ugalavyani border or the Chaigari Protectorate – one way tickets to a brutal and short career in the Emperor's service.

SORCERY AND EXTRA-PLANAR MAGIC

The basic magic system of this rule set is modeled heavily upon that of Gardasiyal and Swords and Glory. A key aspect of the flavor of Tekumel is the exotics of the names and powers granted by the universal, generic, and temple spells. We shall do no more than list the spells - along with some basic notes. The approach taken here is to essentially remove the superfluous details of spell casting and to treat only the important aspects of spell-casting. Casting times, spell components, etc. are all relics of older RPGs that really do not add much to the cinematic, high adventure "effect" – and are downplayed.

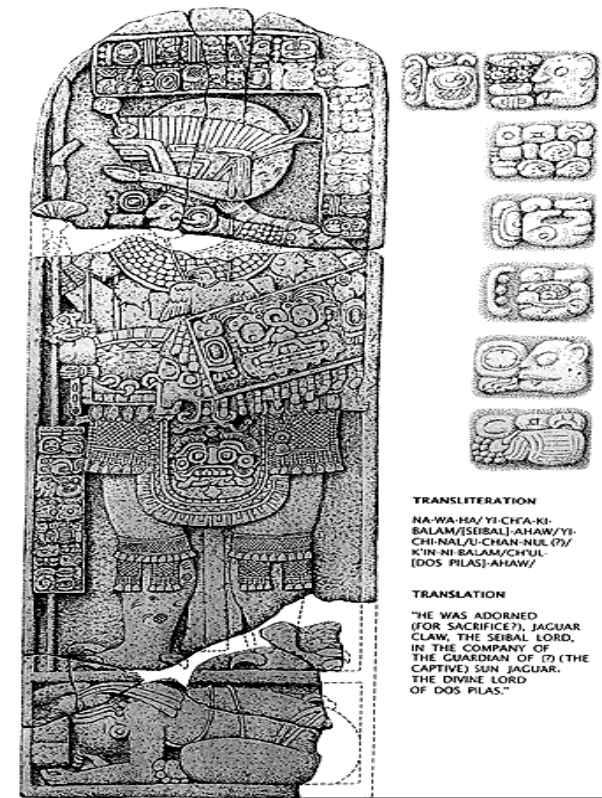
Spell Name (the more exotic the appellative, the better...)

Spell Type (Universal, Generic, Temple, Pariah/Other)

Spell Complexity Level (an open interval from one (1) to ...) (most spells above five are considered quite sophisticated and complex to form the proper matrix within the mind of the caster) (Spells may only be cast by persons with the requisite improvisation rating – a level five spell requires at least a 5d20 improvisation skill, for example)

Spell Effects (given the fast resolution model of the system – this is usually concise and brutal for offensive spells)

When casting offensive spells against opponents - the improvisation rating is used as the "resistance" or defense factor. For Heijjeka - to defend against a Missile of Metallja - he would role 5d20 against the spell caster's improvisation rating (let us assume that is 3d20). The higher total would prevail. A tie would indicate a spell malfunction - and the spell caster would in fact take the full brunt of the spell's effect. This is referred to as the spell misfire rule.



There is a definite danger to spell casting and particularly offensive magic designed to dispose of an adversary. It is not done lightly. Only some significant magical defenses (amulets, etc.) can protect a spell caster from this reverse effect. For willing subjects or unconscious ones in no position to argue or resist no roll is needed. It is considered automatically successful. As such most important people, such as you, sleep protected by wards and sigils that can operate even when the person is asleep or indisposed. The Livyani have taken this to an unbelievable level - their Aomuz markings are considered the finest natural 'guards' against offensive sorcery. They are also the mostly heavily guarded secrets in that paranoid and ancient empire. Most temples, villas of the rich and powerful, and clan houses also are warded in this way to protect their inhabitants.

Spell casting is dangerous and serious business within the Five Empires. Powerful mages and priests versed in the arcane arts are not easily dismissed - and gain an automatic 5d20 honor points at the start of the game. Magical duels, like their physical counterparts, are often fought - sometimes to the death of one of the spell casters - but usually to submission or first blood.

The number of spells a sorcerer may possess (know) at any given time is equal to their improvisation rating. Furthermore, they may only cast spells of complexity up to and equal to their improvisation rating. Some magic and technological items affect these guidelines temporarily – giving players augmented sorcery skills and potential. There is no “spell point” system in place or D&D/Dying Earth-inflected “spell memorization/loss” mechanism. You know what you know. This expedites play considerably – but do note the psychic exhaustion rule.

Spells should be distributed as part of the persona generation process. A one spell per d20 of improvisation rule may be used to determine “starting spells”. The spells may be selected from the universal spells table. Only those trained by the temples may learn generic or temple spells. The cost of acquisition of these spells is considered much harder due to the training and discipline involved.

Example: A 6d20 improvisation rating would allow the person to start gaming with six (6) spells of the player’s choosing from the universal set – limited up to the 6th level of spell complexity. The spells are considered to be permanent knowledge of the player unless they become “Mind Bar”-ed or suffer from the deleterious effects of enemy sorcery.

Only players who have a professional affiliation with a Temple or Sect may continue to learn new spells. Those spells should be granted as rewards for increases to basic improvisation rating or gifts from thankful patrons and social network. This rule is designed to reflect that high-status nobles will, as a matter of training and privilege, usually have some modicum of sorcery training – a Tekumelani equivalent of basic self-defense techniques.

Most of the offensive spells in the lists below are “fatal” to targets (victims) who fail their improvisation rating defense roll. It is a cruel and beautiful world. When a range of levels is indicated, the GM should adjust the power or scope of the spell. Example: a level two Domination spell might only function against 2d20 monster rating creatures and NPCs while the level seven-variant of Domination would work against 7d20 creatures. Simple commonsense is all that is required. Short summaries of spell effects are provided. Virtually all are direct translations from M.A.R. Barker’s excellent Swords and Glory spell system.

Table: Universal Spells (Generally Available to the Rich and High Born – Most Good Families Have a “House Wizard” to Instruct the Precocious Offspring...)

1. Alleviation (2) (Healing)
2. Ascertainment (1-10) (Mind reading and telepathy)
3. Clairvoyance and Clairaudience (1-7) (See and hear through walls and obstacles)
4. Control of Self (1-6) (Eliminate sensation and pain)
5. Disenchantment (4-10) (Neutralize enemy magic)
6. Domination (2-7) (Control intelligent beings)
7. Elicitation (1-8) (Read history and context from inanimate objects)
8. Execration (9) (Curse object)
9. Favoring (6-10) (Automatically heal damage from combat)
10. Healing (10) (Restores lost limbs and significant tissue loss)
11. Inscription (10) (Impress one spell onto an inanimate object for later trigger or release)

12. Invisibility (2-8) (Self-explanatory – you are not visible to creatures seeing in the normal electromagnetic spectrum – this does not mean they cannot hear or smell you...)
13. Light and Darkness (1-6) (Create artificial light (ball-shaped))
14. Nutrification (3-6) (Creates sufficient nutrients in target to stave off hunger)
15. Perception of the Energies (2-4) (Detect magic)
16. Phantasms (1-6) (Create illusions which can fight, disguise caster appearance, etc.)
17. Robustness (3-7) (Lightens weight of targeted object making it easy to carry)
18. The Seal Upon the Powers (10) (Anti-magic shell around caster – in and out of sphere)
19. Soporiferousness (2-5) (Sleep)
20. The Sphere of Impermeable Quiescence (10) (Duplicate for Seal Upon the Powers)
21. Terrorisation (2-9) (Fear)
22. Translocation (1-9) (Telekinesis)
23. Transportation (9) (Teleportation)
24. Warding (4-5) (Anti-weapon and missile shield – physical attacks only)
25. Zoic Domination (2-4) (Control animals and semi-intelligent creatures)

Table: Generic Spells (Although Technically Limited to Only Some Temples – Money/Status Talks...)

1. Acceleration (7-9) (Speed up muscular coordination – two attacks per combat)
2. Adornment (1-9) (Increase physical attributes and attractiveness – including gender)
3. Aeriality (2-9) (Fly)
4. Artfulness (2) (Increase competency in some skill - +30 to skill roll)
5. Benefaction (7-10) (Heals psychic exhaustion of sorcerer)
6. The Blade of Inexorable Dissection (3-4) (Light saber weapon for sorcerers)
7. The Blessing of the Planes (1-9) (Anti-magic shield – helping against offensive spells)
8. Comprehension (1-5) (Universal linguistic translator)
9. Derangement (1-8) (Temporary madness and insanity)
10. Desiccation (1-10) (Shrivel body and remove all fluids – ugly)
11. Doomkill (6-10) (Cloud of instant death)
12. Elicitation (4) (Find magic item –by specific type)
13. Empowerment and Enervation (1-7) (Increase brutality of target)
14. Enhancement and Debilitation (3-10) (Increases power of defenses - +30 to brutality rolls)
15. Excellence(1-9) (Increases power of weapons - +30 to brutality rolls)
16. Far Seeing (1-4) (Telescoping vision – able to see for several kilometers distance at fine detail)
17. Guarding (6-10) (ne way anti-magic shell – caster can still cast spells “outward”)
18. The Hands of Kra the Mighty (2-6) (Invisible giant hands that can attack targets)
19. Intrepidity (3-7) (Increase morale of target)
20. Mindbar (6) (Locks memory of target and makes interrogation/torture ineffectual)
21. Missile of Metallja (4-6) (Invisible bolt of force to attack target)
22. Necromantic Domination (1-10) (Control the undead – Mru’r, Shedra, etc.)
23. Nimbleness (1-6) (Increase reflexes - +25 brutality rolls)
24. Pestilence (3) (Cloud of sickness)
25. Prorogation (1-3) (Slow motion effect on target - -30 on all brutality rolls)
26. The Radiant Gaze (2-9) (Fire damage target)
27. Reanimation (9) (Revive the dead)
28. Sagacity (1-7) (Increase target’s improvisation rating by +3d20)
29. Semblances (1-4) (Create audio-visual hallucinations in mind of target)
30. The Silver Halo of Soul Stealing (5-9) (Destroys soul of target – making reanimation impossible)

31. The Speculum of Retribution (1-4) (Reverses offensive spells cast against caster – eq. to rolling “equal” totals on improvisation vs. improvisation rolls)
32. Stealth (1-9) (Move unseen and unheard)
33. Vallation (8) (Creates an extra-planar wall of force to crush targets in its path)
34. The Vapor of Death (2-6) (Poisonous cloud)
35. Visitation of Other Planes (4-10) (Nexal point opening and closing – leading to other planes...)

Table: Temple Spells (These Are Usually Subdivided By Temples – But for Our Purposes Treated as a Master List – No Need to Be So Fussy...)

1. Affable Blight of Lord Uni (1-10) (Horrid fungal infection which spreads and quickly kills target)
2. The Amethyst Expurgation (3-10) (Protection versus undead, demons, and “stability” beings)
3. Amorphia (1-10) (Creates pool or tendrils of pure roiling chaos that destroys anything which comes into contact with it (them))
4. The Antechamber of the Blue Room (6-8) (Transports target to Antechamber of Ksarul’s “prison”)
5. Apathy (1-10) (Produces debilitating ennui and boredom, incapacitating target)
6. The Attainment of Enlightenment (2-10) (Automatically learn any level one to five spell from universal category)
7. Azure Scarab (4-10) (Stores magical energy allowing a “psychically exhausted” caster to continue spell casting)
8. Avulsion of the Spirit Soul (7) (Rips the soul out of target and banishes it to the Isles of Teretane)
9. Barring and Broaching (1-10) (Create impassible flaming barrier)
10. Benignity (1-10) (Turns hostile creatures into friends or neutrals temporarily)
11. The Bolt of Immediate Immolation (1-10) (Lightning bolt)
12. Breath of the Goddess (1-10) (Water breathing)
13. Bridge of Noble Passage (1-10) (Creates magical bridge to span gulfs up to 5 meters)
14. Bulwark of Amber (1-10) (Anti-magic shell around target but does not block “Eye” weapons)
15. Calcination (1-10) (Bores one meter hole in solid objects (and people))
16. Carpet of Conflagration (3-10) (Creates moving sheet of flame that can follow targets)
17. Climatization (1) (Create pleasant environment)
18. Comprehension of Devices (2-10) (Understand ancient technologies from the Latter Times)
19. Concupiscence 1-8) (Increases ecstasy and sexual prowess of target)
20. Confusion (1-10) (Massive disorientation in target – possible permanent)
21. Congelation (1-9) (Freeze target solid)
22. The Crown of Purity (1-8) (Forces target to speak truthfully)
23. The Dance of the Emerald Goddess (1-10) (Enslave target completely with a beautiful image)
24. Decorporealisation (4-10) (Astral projection but retaining tools and accessories)
25. Demonology (8-10) (Demon summoning, binding, and dispelling – keyed to Deity worshipped)
26. Depuration (1-10) (Transmutes steel to copper permanently)
27. Devitalisation (1-10) (Halves the brutality permanently)
28. Devotion of the Flame (1-10) (Berserker-mode attack capability (+50 brutality rolls) for target)
29. Diminution (1-10) (Shrinks target to half physical size temporarily)
30. Discerner of Enchantments (1-9) (Identify the exact spell or magic placed on an object)
31. The Eater of Souls (3-10) (Creates soul destroying humanoid drone that fights target – if successful – the soul of the victim is eaten (and irretrievable))
32. Emerald Paramour (5-9) (Create incubus or succubus to “attack” target)
33. Emulation (1-10) (Disguise caster/target’s gender)

34. Encapsulation (3-10) (Shifts target out of phase with current plane of reality – “frozen”)
35. Enthrallment (1-10) (Seduce target)
36. Entombment (3-9) (Grave creator at location somewhere in close proximity to caster)
37. Envenomization (3-8) (Create a trigger-poison in some object – activated upon caster demand)
38. Eradication of Veracity (3-10) (Creates false psychic impressions or history for inanimate object)
39. Etherealisation (3-10) (pass through solid objects – walls, floors, etc.)
40. The Expeditor of the Skein of Destiny (1-10) (Blinks out target for 1-100 minutes from current plane of existence, returning them otherwise unharmed)
41. Fist of Fire (3-10) (Hurl globe sized ball of magical fire to damage target)
42. Food of the Ssu (1-7) (Creates a large patch or wall of the acidic and poisonous Food of the Ssu)
43. Fructification (1-10) (Cause plants to become fruitful)
44. Fulguration of Immanent Grandeur (8) (Death beam against living (not undead or androids))
45. The Gate of the Gray Pentacle (2-10) (Random teleport of effected undead, automations, and demons coming in contact with pentacle)
46. The Gauntlet of Might (4) (Projectable iron fist attack adding +25 to brutality rolls)
47. The Girdle of the Maiden (1-10) (Boosts brutality rating of female targets by +25)
48. Globe of Distant Discernment (8) (Remote visual spying – no audio)
49. The Glorious Call (1-10) (Increase brutality and improvisation by +30 – morale booster)
50. The Gray Hand (1-10) (Death touch – destroying body, soul, and all possesses of target)
51. Guiding (1-10) (Infallible retrace of previous route taken (useful in labyrinths and mazes))
52. Harness of the God-King (8-9) (Magical enchanted armor providing +50 to brutality rolls)
53. Hebetation of the Intellect (3-10) (Transfers soul, skills, and intellect permanently between “bodies”)
54. Higher Mastery (1-9) (increase target’s brutality by +25)
55. The Hymnal of the Lord of Light (3-10) (Creates Hnalla-face driving Change-aligned beings away)
56. Imbition (1-9) (Increase spell-casting oriented improvisation roll range by +4d20)
57. Inimitable Defender (3-10) (Crystalline barrier against spells and physical weapons)
58. Inexpugnability (1-7) (Flaming glow cast of weapon making wielder immune to physical attack)
59. Infrangible Incandescent Orb (2-10) (Burning defense sphere around caster)
60. The Invigorator of Blades (1-10) (Raises brutality roll by +40 for any affected target)
61. The Labyrinth of Elongated Shadows (1-10) (Transports targets to Ksarul’s Citadel of the Twelve Pylons ruled by Demon Prince Qu’u)
62. Metastasis (5-10) (Long distance teleportation for a small party – same plane)
63. The Muniments of Excellence (8-10) (Totally impervious anti-magic and physical damage shell)
64. Necrofacture (3-10) (Create undead and revenant creatures –Mru’r, Shedra, etc.)
65. Necrophobia (1-10) (Causes hysterical flight when seeing any undead or a specific location)
66. Negation of Instability (1-8) (Dispel phantasms and illusions)
67. The Nightmare of Terror (2-8) (Cause death through induced night terrors and dreams)
68. The Obsidian Obelisk (1-10) (Creates an anti-magic and anti-physical attack shield)
69. Obturation (1-9) (Seals all bodily orifices of target – causing an agonizing death)
70. The Panoply of Iron (2-10) (Steele-skin protection for target – add +25 to brutality rolls)
71. Peaceful Repose (5-10) (Protection against “Nightmare of Terror” spell)
72. The Pearl-Gray Citadel (3-10) (Anti-magic cylinder to protect caster – open at top and bottom)
73. The Perfected Gem of Obliteration (5-8) (Species- or person-configured explosive “gem”)
74. The Periplus of the Planes (3-10) (Detects nexus points and allows them to be opened and traversed and also seeing what is on the “other side” of the point)
75. Polycrust of the Third Octant (1-10) (Either increase sexual stamina and strength or completely immobilize target – as a punishment)

76. Potence (1-9) (Sexual stamina increase)
77. Power of Ultimate Perfection (3-10) (Banish summoned demon to their home plane or dimension)
78. Preserver of Wisdom (1-10) (Preserves perishable objects (paper, book, scroll) from decay)
79. Punition (1-10) (Cause unbearable burning pain and fire damage to target)
80. Putrefaction (1-10) (Cause some limb to rot off and be rendered useless)
81. Re-embodiment (5-10) (Transplant personality of dead character into another body/form)
82. Rejuvenescence and Senescence (5-10) (Temporarily restore youth and vitality to target)
83. The Replication of Heroes (4-10) (Create temporary clones of the target with same brutality)
84. The Replication of the Mighty (4-10) (Create temporary clones of the target with same spells)
85. Revivification (8-10) (Complete resurrection of dead person – with soul and personality intact)
86. Risibility (10) (Generates profound feeling of the uselessness of existence inducing target's death)
87. Ritual of the Purified Sphere (1-10) (Protection versus undead, demons, and “change” beings)
88. Sagacious Acquisition (1-10) (Magically acquire a skill, talent or spell – “speed learn”)
89. The Scrutiny of the Omniscient Eye (1-10) (Allows 360 degree vision of caster also allowing mangling of victims mode of operation)
90. Seismism (1-9) (Earthquake and tremors – sufficient to topple small or rickety buildings)
91. Simulation of the Immovable (1-10) (Creates illusion around caster of some geological or botanical structure – large rock, tree, etc. – disguising the caster and small party)
92. Spiritism (1-10) (Speak to a departed soul – as long as they have been dead five years or less)
93. Summoning of Spectral Hosts (8) (Summon all undead within range to serve caster's bidding)
94. Swift Thrust of Death (1-9) (Rail gun-like metal projectile which impales target)
95. Transfusion (3-9) (Transplant target's or caster's soul into a created phantasm)
96. Transmogrification (1-10) (Visit other planes – including Isles of the Excellent Dead at level 10)
97. Tremulation (1-8) (Vibrations which shake apart bones and internal organs of targets)
98. Valor of the Divine Kingdom (7-10) (Automatic leadership to those in proximity of same species)
99. Vermiculation (5-10) (Worm infestation of floors or special “coins” which can be triggered)
100. Viaticum of the Yellow Robe (3-9) (Permanently destroys undead)
101. The Vindication of Instability (1-10) (Protection versus undead, demons, and “stability” beings)
102. Viscosity (1-9) (Turn people, walls, solid stone or minerals into gooey, slippery mud)
103. The Web of Refulgent Command (1-10) (Psychically control androids, robots or AIs)
104. The Weapon of the Prince of Valor ((3-10) (Creates anti-magic shell for shield or defensive tool)
105. The Well That Waters the World (3-6) (Create water well in specific location)
106. The Winged Disc of the Lord of the Sun (5-9) (Flying disc supporting up to small party)
107. Zoification (3-5) (Animate trees, grass, etc. and use to attack or defend caster)

Temple spells can be highly disruptive to campaigning, so the GM is advised to dole out access to these powerful spells carefully. They make an excellent reward for a successfully completed mission or intrigue – and the persona may receive a small scroll with one to two such spells beautifully transcribed from their patron or “masters”. The most serious magic should be held back for high drama purposes.

Table: Unique Spells and Levels (Added from Other Sources)

1. Spell of Forlorn Encystment (7) (Dying Earth) (Entombs victim at the center of Tekumel's planetary core – until released by the caster)

2. Canticle of the Hungry Shadow (10) (Pariah Deities – Corruption Rule Applies) (Creates a “Shadow-self” assassin of flowing blackness that attacks the victim destroying their soul – and replacing the person with a He’esa under Pariah Deity control)
3. Sigil of Absolute Nullity (15) (Pariah Deities – Corruption Rule Applies) (A nexus point to the Ultimate Nullity is created – sucking the victim through face complete obliteration by the Goddess of the Pale Bone)
4. The Dolorous Embrace of Te’e (15) (Pariah Deities – Corruption Rule Applies) (Creates an amorphous, coruscating circle of Pariah “Energy” that constricts around the victim –constricting and crushing them down to a small dimension ruled by the Demon Prince Te’e – a dimension not listed in Waba’s Almanac or in the usually thorough Book of Ebon Bindings)

The cost of spell casting is not a major factor in this game. Players may continue to cast spells as long as their brutality and improvisation ratings do not reach 0d20 or lower. The cost of spell casting is cumulative - each time a spell is cast successfully - the spell caster roll against their die multiplier for brutality plus the level of the spell - rolling above or equal that on a d20. Should they fail the roll, they will be considered psychically exhausted and required to spend the number of hours equal to their roll recuperating. Example: Badragu Unasa hi Mriktine (6d20 improvisation, 3d20 brutality) casually unleashes a Spell of Forlorn Encystment against Heijjeka. Both roll their dies (6d20 for Unasu = 47, 5d20 for Heijjeka = 23). Heijjeka looks around bewildered for a moment as the coruscating ectoplasm engulfs him - plunging him horror-stricken to the core of Tekumel to await a reversal of the spell. Unasa rolls a 12 on a d20 die - which easily is over her brutality rating plus five (for the spell level) - she can continue spell casting. She casually glances about study looking for any other interlopers for a few seconds, and then wearily returns to the elegant sculpture of Salarvyani verbal forms she hopes to finish and present as a gift to her new patron in the Refulgent Blue Curtain Society. That will teach Heijjeka to intrude upon a savant when her Meshqe Plaque clearly states she is indispose! Cha! She'll free him later tonight - he does look rather attractive after all.

This psychic exhaustion rule is designed to eliminate the casting of large numbers of dangerous and powerful spells by players (and NPCs) – you can be exhausted by the effort.

Some spells may have hidden costs (damage to the Pedhetl (soul) of the caster and open the possibility for Pariah Deity influence to “leak through” and overwhelm the caster, turning them into a puppet of the Goddess. These are noted in the lists. When using such magic – the GM will make a d20 roll against the caster’s psychic exhaustion roll – if he rolls higher than the caster the caster has been compromised and is now an unknowing tool of the Goddess. The caster memories, knowledge, and everything he sees, hears, experiences is directly conveyed to the Goddess in her “null-Space” Bathorn) This fact (being overcome by the Pariah Deities) would be a secret even to the caster – until the GM springs it at the appropriate moment in the narrative/adventure. There are many dramatic potentialities for this – with the persona being unaware of things they are doing (“Hmmm, I must have been sleep-walking...”, “That’s impossible, I’ve never been to the Temple of the One of Fears in Dlash!”, “I did WHAT?!?”). We refer to this as the pariah corruption rule. Use of Pariah Deity-tinged technologies, books, scrolls, sorcery, and knowledge is extremely dangerous. Mere exposure to some magically treated texts – such as the infamous Pandect of the Null – has a chance of “opening the way” of the Goddess to seep into the soul of the reader. The use of Sunuz as a language is proscribed for a good reason, the Weltanschauung embedded in the language somehow seems ripe for opening speakers and listeners to the corrupting siren call of the Pariahs. There is a very good reason for the proscription on all Pariah Deity worship and texts. Certainly, more than half of the Goddess’s servitors and agents are not even fully aware of their complicity in her intrigues. This dark knowledge and power remain seductive. The slow, cancerous

blossoming of her worship in the highest corridors of power and dim corners of the Empire continues, despite the heroic attempts of the Tlakotani Emperors like Tankelol to root out all Pariah worship.

Spell casters may not cast magic in the event of being placed in "severely damaged" or "dead" physical status - there is no "last shot" rule. Spell casting, like physical combat, is a brutal and concise affair for the most part. For spells without a specific target (victim) – the duration of the enchantment is equal to the improvisation rating x d20 hours. This includes typical spells such as Invisibility and various Summon/Bind/Banish spells related to demonological interactions.

Spell casters are not to be trifled with unless one is very certain of their powers. Ask Subadim or any of the Undying Wizards at the College at the End of Time.

MONSTER RATINGS AND DESCRIPTIONS

The following list is a straightforward mapping of the monsters listed in the original Empire of the Petal Throne rules published by MAR Barker and TSR in 1975. The core statistic relevant to monsters is their monster rating (MR). This functions as the generic and abstract representation of their tenacity, violence potential, improvisational skill, etc. Additionally, we will note any modifiers and special capabilities. The MR is a non-linear metric – a MR of 10d20 (say for stability Demon Prince *Ulusarsha of The Cerulean Courtyard* – Quadrant Four, Waba's Almanac Reference# 12345-JXC-91-U) represents a ferocious and diabolically clever opponent capable of making short work on virtually any player persona in one-on-one combat. A MR of 1d20 (say a CholoKh) would denote a wretched piece of Underworld fodder barely able to put up a decent fight or opposition. It would be almost ignoble to defeat them – but sometimes the blade must be bloodied to keep it sharp! The use of the term monster here is meant to be non-pejorative – a catch-all for any non-player character (NPC) which is not fully flushed out and a part of the overall narrative flow of the GM's adventure. Yes, we acknowledge that every monster has a unique perhaps tragic story to tell. But, at the end of the day, they are narrative window dressing. They are simply obstacles used to heighten the danger and accentuate the thrill of role-playing within this lush world abandoned to its lonely dimension.

The comparative rarity of these monster encounters in this role-playing system makes this a workmanlike exercise – the majority of creatures encountered by such august personages as yourselves will likely be "Specials" – denizens from some of the more unsavory Demon Plains, servitors races of the Gods, semi-autonomous Artificial Intelligences left over from the Latter Times, and sundry Undying Wizards showing up requesting favors or demanding 'payment' for services rendered.

Note: a * besides a creature name denotes an intelligent alien race which may be parleyed with under normal circumstances and which may in fact be a possibility for a role-playing persona. This is not recommended for beginners to Tekumel since the Five Empires do harbor prejudices against even the most allied and assimilated species. The subtle alterations of perspective and emotions that the Pe Choi possess are difficult to translate into human terms at times, and players should well consider this before embarking on a role as a member of the species.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Ahoggya* (3d20, Intelligent but Socially Tactless Species) | 6. Chlen (3d20, Useful Beast of Burden) |
| 2. Akho (8d20, Ship Crushing Attack) | 7. Chnelkh (1d20) |
| 3. Aqaa (10d20) | 8. CholoKh (1d20) |
| 4. Birdlu (4d20) | 9. Dlakolel (6d20) |
| 5. Chashkeri (1d20) | 10. Dlaqo (4d20, Giant Beetle) |
| | 11. Dnelu (4d20) |

12. Dzor (7d20)
13. Feshenga (5d20, Intelligent and Dragonlike)
14. Gerednya (3d20, Flying Worm)
15. Ghar (8d20)
16. Giriku (3d20)
17. Haqel (15d20)
18. Hlaka* (2d20, Skittish and Frantic Flyers, Intelligent)
19. Hil'ir (8d20)
20. Hlutrgu (2d20, Devious and Cruel, Intelligent)
21. Hluss (2d20, Inimical Indigenous Race, Allied to Ssu Against Man)
22. Hra (7d20)
23. Huru'u (2d20)
24. Hyahyu'u (3d20)
25. Kayi (4d20)
26. Kheschal (1d20)
27. Krua (8d20)
28. Kurgha (1d20)
29. Kuruku (1d20)
30. Kyni (1d20)
31. Lri (4d20)
32. Marashyalu (4d20)
33. Mnor (3d20)
34. Mrur (1d20, Undead, Immunity to Fear)
35. Mu'agh (15d20)
36. Nenyelu (2d20)
37. Ngayu (2d20)
38. Ngoro (16d20)
39. Ngrutha (3d20)
40. Nshe (10d20)
41. Pachi Lei* (1d20, Socially Complex and Intelligent Race)
42. Pe Choi* (1d20, See into Infrared Spectrum, Use Magic, and Are Highly Intelligent)
43. Pygmy Folk* (1d20)
44. Qaqtla (5d20)
45. Qol (1d20)
46. Qumqum (9d20)
47. Renyu (2d20, Doglike Species, Semi-Intelligent)
48. Ru'un (6d20, Ancient Automatons with Electrical Attack)
49. Sagun (10d20)
50. Serudla (12d20)
51. Shanu'u (3d20)
52. Shedra (2d20, Undead)
53. Shen* (3d20)
54. Shunned Ones* (2d20, Use of "Latter Times" Technology Likely)
55. Sro (13d20, Dragon-like)
56. Ssu (3d20, Original Dominant Species on Tekumel, Highly Intelligent)
57. Swamp Folk (1d20)
58. Teqeqmu (10d20)
59. Thunru'u (5d20, Eye Devouring Attack)
60. Tinaliya* (1d20, Intellectually Inquisitive and Literal-Minded Race)
61. Tletlakha (3d20)
62. Ts'il (6d20)
63. Tsoggu (3d20, Undead)
64. Tsu'uru (5d20)
65. Vorodla (4d20)
66. Vringalu (4d20)
67. Yelet (3d20, Android with Hypnotism)
68. Zrne (6d20, Berserker-Mode Attack)

PART FOUR: RUNNING ADVENTURES ON TEKUMEL

We start with a major premise: running adventures on Tekumel really involves a sense of high drama. Tekumel is not an idle socio-anthropological looking glass to be studied academically. It is a rich environment for action, tragedy, and acclaim for those willing to seize the reins of destiny. The players are assuming the roles of august and dynamic persons at the center of social life and the adventures and dramas should be suitable for them to achieve the acclaim (or infamy) they deserve.

PLOT GENERATOR FOR TEKUMEL ADVENTURES

The generator is designed to help the GM construct ad hoc adventures that may be interludes to the larger campaign they are developing. The plots generated are "Pulp"-fictional – designed to be

somewhat contrived and stereotypical. In this way, the GM's imagination can take them into the particulars of their campaign and player group – relying on a well-known set of plots to guide the action.

THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF AN ADVENTURE

Each plot consists of four acts. Each act has one or more scenes – usually five. Acts should be created so that an experienced set of players could manage an act per three to six hour session. The scenes consist of a location, atmosphere and “mood”, one or more player personae, NPCs, dramatic events and the occasional red herring or comic relief. The overall structure for the acts in this temple is:

Act One: Establish Context and Drama: What is Going on and Why am I Involved?

Act Two: Introduce Danger and Hints to Resolution: Who Might Be Behind This?

Act Three; Escalation of Dangerous Situations and Search for Tools and Allies: How do We Get Out of this Situation? What is Really Going On?

Act Four: Resolution and Set Up for Next Adventure: What Happened When the Dust Cleared?

The individual scenes might consist of the following in Act One:

Scene One: A back story cut-scene establishing the danger (theft of a rare artifact from the Temple of Ksarul by Shunned Ones – much to the social embarrassment of the Temple how has to turn over the Latter Times relic to the OAL within a fortnight for use in the war against Mu'ugalavya – the stakes are high

Scene Two: Players are called in by their patrons to retrieve the item, negotiating for social status and tools to help them – this is the calm before the storm

Scene Three: Following the trail of the loathsome Shunned Ones through the Tsuru'um Beneath Bey Su – to the Tubeway Car system – random combat and flailing around (perhaps include a subplot concerning other temples who would like to embarrass the Temple of Ksarul for political advantage – do one more cut-scene for players so they realize the stakes. Are climbing...)

Scene Four: Meet with Additional Danger – Black Ssu showing up at the Tubeway car station – and trying to eliminate players who have to defend and escape

Scene Five: Successful but pyrrhic victory over the Black Ssu – regrouping in the Tubecar and plotting next moves – how to “track” the Shunned Ones and reach them before they get to their noxious Domed Cities and things get really complicated

There are numerous directions to take the drama. The Shunned Ones might only be in the employ or services of some hidden power (say the Hokun). The middle acts of the adventure would establish and unmask the “real” villains. This might have significant ancillary effects on the situation, etc.

TABLES FOR CREATING AN ADVENTURE PLOT

Table: The Basic Plot (Choose One)

1. Something has been stolen and you have to get it back
2. Someone has been murdered and the blame is falling on you
3. Political intrigue is threatening your clan with disgrace and ruin
4. Someone within your organization is a traitor and must be ferreted out
5. Foreigners are plotting against the stability of the Empire and you have to stop them
6. A strange device has been discovered in a disputed area which may upset the balance of power within the Empire

7. Rebellion is threatening to break out unless something is done to diffuse the situation
8. A Royal Prince is in grave danger and only you can save him
9. The Ssu (or other creepy alien race) are threatening important centers of civilization and you have to stop them from getting something necessary to their plans
10. Some groups are aligning against your interests and you have to stop the alliance
11. The Emperor needs you to lead a diplomatic mission to a foreign country and negotiate on his behalf – the stakes are very high
12. An old and trusted patron or mentor has been kidnapped by unknown but inimical forces – you must do what it takes to bring them back safely and punish the perpetrators
13. Family or clan business has started to collapse – with mysterious accidents and major economic pressure mounting – you have to find out who is sabotaging your family’s interests and “make things right”
14. A close friend or lover has been accused of treason and is in danger of being executed by the Emperor – you have to find out who is behind this accusation and save your friend/lover
15. You are part of a military campaign that has gone terribly wrong and you find yourself behind enemy lines with little chance of escape and the enemy closing in around you
16. Distant relations have requested your aide in dealing with a menace threatening them – you need to find out who or what is behind the trouble and resolve it
17. During excavations for a new villa on your family estate – a previously unknown Tsuru’um is uncovered that houses many dangerous artifacts – and an ancient, active Tube car system... What will you do to ensure the “wrong” people don’t get their hands on the artifacts?
18. You anger senior people within the government and are given a “promotion” -- dispatched to a “backend of nowhere” city in the far northeast of the Empire. What will you do to pull yourself out of disgrace and social ruin? What are the locals hiding from the government in the old ruins outside of town?
19. The Emperor nominates you to lead an expedition to ascertain the status and whereabouts of a previous expedition in a remote corner of the globe. Contact was lost and one of the Emperor’s favorites (best friend?) is now considered lost... he wants him/her back! And the mystery of their disappearance explained to his satisfaction
20. The Pariah Deities are up to something and you have to stop them even if it means your death and those around you. A seemingly trivial act or occurrence triggers an escalating series of terrifying events that are leading to “Something Really Bad Happening” (SRBH)

Table: Dramatic Opening which May Act as a “Cut-Scene” (Every Story Needs One)

1. A causal acquaintance contacts you about and “important matter” and asks you to meet him somewhere safe – when you arrive you find him near death or severely incapacitated – he just manages to blurt out a difficult to recognize phrase or name before slumping over...
2. A explosion rocks the area causing significant loss of life and property – disguising the theft of an important object or piece of knowledge and sealing the scene of the crime in rubble and bodies
3. A supernaturally-created “storm” comes out of nowhere and dashes a sleek and elegant ship against the rocks – killing all but a single passenger who crawls to safety clutching something tightly in their grip and muttering to himself that “They didn’t kill me or get the <object>! And they never will!”
4. A fierce debate is raging in the Royal Court with the OAL Representatives trying to calm people down – but to no avail – this situation is boiling over and the senior Adepts and Lords begin to whisper to their staff to prepare for “trouble”

5. A blood-splattered bedchamber is discovered by the “cleaning staff” – hysteria and mayhem break out amongst the group as the master and (supposed) bedmate are nowhere to be found!
6. A shadowy figure moves stealthily behind a frightened looking person who is trying to evade them – but just as they think they are free and clear they round the corner – a scream pierces the night as the shadowy figure steps up and murders the person – wiping an assassin’s blade off afterwards....
7. A Hirilakte Arena combat gets out of hand suddenly – one of the beasts (a Zrne?!?) bolts free and launches into the crowd – panic and flight ensue while an abduction takes place (thanks to the distraction)
8. A nobleman (or woman) receives a mysterious letter – which causes them considerable anxiety – they leave their palace/mansion/villa in a hurry without informing anyone of their aims – they do not return
9. A ritual chamber is filled with the chanting, ululations, and screams of participants – a Demon Prince is being summoned – he/she it arrives and an Adept whispers some instructions to it – later mysterious thefts or accidents or mayhem ensue
10. A duel in a secluded glade ends poorly for one of the contestants – the other side has cheated and poisoned their blade – as the victor gloats over the dying man (or Aridani female) – he mentions that “This is just the beginning of our plan...”

Table: Complications and Obstacles (Choose One or More)

1. One of your party is working for “them”
2. Your patrons are using you in a more complex chess (DenDen) match with stakes far different than those you imagine
3. Hostile parties are aware of your mission/goals and trying to stop you
4. You are ill-equipped and underfunded – your opponents have massive numerical and technological advantage
5. The success of the mission/attainment of the goal would be embarrassing to those “above you” – so you are in a no-win situation
6. The allies you were counting on prove to be fickle or useless when the moment comes
7. Several important details or facts were hidden from you and you accidentally uncover them while pursuing your objective
8. An old lover or close friend is mixed up with the other side(s)
9. Your mentor and role model has turned renegade and you have been ordered to dispose of him as part of the overall mission (you are quite conflicted)
10. Time is running out – you have much less chance to succeed than initially suspected

Table: Villains (Primary and Secondary) (Choose One or More, Secondary Should Be Revealed First)

1. A member of the highest levels of your government
2. A Royal Prince or someone within his entourage
3. Human agent for an inimical nations’ interests (usually super powerful)
4. A powerful enemy clansman or someone you have slighted in the past
5. A high ranking bureaucrat within your Temple or Legion
6. A high ranking bureaucrat within an “opposing” Temple or Legion
7. A deranged sorcerer who has lost his or her grip on reality (Nyelmu anyone?!?)
8. A foreign spy masterminding a web of intrigue (Vru’unek, OAL, etc.)
9. Mihalli agent working for someone creepy and reprehensible (e.g. People on the “otherside of the Pole”, Shunned Ones, Hokun, Silver Suits)

10. An Undying Wizard (the bastard!) or suitable super-entity

Table: Motivation for Villainy (Choose One or More)

1. Greed and avarice
2. Political “one-ups-manship” (just to show you who is boss, top dog)
3. Revenge for a real or imagined wrong
4. Political and temporal gain
5. Delight in misery of others and basic sadism
6. Racial, species or ethnic hatred
7. Personal Vendetta (paybacks are a bitch)
8. Cover-up of an accidental initially but now villain too craven to stop it (running out of control)
9. Controlled by larger villain (who?)
10. Misplaced love, honor or duty twisted into something monstrous and hateful

Table: Surprises to Throw at Players (Choose Two or More)

1. They have been following the wrong leads
2. Their supposed ally is actually in bed with the enemy
3. The location they need to reach is extremely perilous – much more so that initially suspected
4. The villain has a dead man switch to use if things go really downhill
5. Using the tool required to stop the villain actually may be worse than letting him win
6. The answers are lying right under the nose of the players –they have looked everywhere but the “obvious” place/source
7. When things look bleakest a helper emerges (ally, inadvertent group stumbling upon players)
8. The villain hopes to create a political embarrassment to damage the Empire – using the actions of players as a pretext/tool
9. One of the major Temples is actually helping the villain(s) succeed
10. Your patrons have actually sent you on a suicide mission – you weren’t supposed to succeed!

Table: Dramatic Tensions and Later Complications (Choose Two Or More)

1. Inter-party squabbling as to whose advice, commands, directives should be followed
2. Love interest develops within party that drives a schism between people
3. A dangerous escape by players is required but is fraught with danger
4. A player persona must be sacrificed for the group to succeed
5. An old friend of one or more of the players is being held hostage and threatened
6. An old friend or lover of one of the players is brutally and savagely tortured, molested, or killed by the villain(s) as a punishment and warning to the players
7. Class consciousness and social priorities get in the way of an easy solution – snatching defeat from the jaws of victory early on
8. Infiltration of a hidden fortress, secret complex or tomb is required to accomplish a major objective in the drama but death and horror lurk behind every bend in the Tsuru’um
9. Completing the mission or drama will require a journey to the Planes Beyond and commerce with some truly awful denizens of those Planes (what do they want in return for their help, indifference, or even to just let you leave their realm?)
10. The Goddess of the Pale Bone is subtly involved just off camera and her influence can be seen to permeate the actions of the villains (and may reach out to corrupt one of the heroes/players)

Table: Helpers (Optional But Very Helpful to Campaign Building and Dramatic Flavor)

1. Undying wizard (Select Which One: Subadim, etc.)
2. Friendly alien race (Select Which One – Hlaka? Urununen? Tinaliya? Pe Choi?)
3. Foreigner with a true sense of nobility and honor (what a guy!)
4. Your old friend in an allied Temple, Legion, or Clan
5. A loyal servant or slave who possess talents/depths you hadn't fully appreciated
6. A current lover or romantic interest who risks a great deal in helping you
7. A trusted elder or mentor from your school days who reappears into your life
8. A "magical creature" whom you rescued and/or repair and who is grateful
9. The head of your organization is forced to become involved "against their better judgment"
10. An Extra-Planar entity (demon) who owes you a favor or is in some way smitten by you(?!?)

Table: Tools or Devices Propelling the Story (Hitchcockian "MacGuffin")

1. A relic in easy reach whose powers you do not appreciate but discover just when you need them by completing some activity ("Oh, that's what that thing is for?! For the love of Hru'u!")
2. An amulet or other small object hidden by an ally before he is done away with by the Villain or sub-villain and which holds a vital key or link to winning for the players
3. A device of the Ancients, perhaps an AI "Core", to repair a critical system of Latter Times technology which has to be used to complete the drama(?)
4. A sacrifice of a specific human being (special genetic or magical properties) at a critical moment (the sacrifice may or may not be a willing one...)
5. An important manuscript or tome locked away by the Villain or her henchmen in a "safe place"
6. A letter or holographic document that implicates the main Villain (physical clue or evidence)
7. A half-forgotten spell buried in some scroll or other (who might know where it is?)
8. A item of deadly Ssu, Shunned One, Mihalli, or Hokun technology that is the only thing which can counteract the Villain's ill-effects and possibly reverse them
9. A rare plant or mineral that is required to construct something (an antidote?)
10. A magical device hidden in a pocket dimension or Demon-plane (and likely guarded) by something unpleasant in the service of the Villain or sub-villain

Table: Red Herrings to Throw Players off the Scent Temporarily (Optional)

1. A coincidental murder causes confusion and stress (but bears no relation to the main action)
2. A mysterious, undecipherable manuscript you uncover
3. A rumor you uncover or beat out of a suspect or NPC (people will say anything under torture)
4. A rash of thefts in the vicinity with a similar modus operandi
5. A love interest whom appears then departs mysteriously (it's called poor plotting...)
6. A map allegedly leading to something required to accomplish the mission/story
7. A casual and flippant remark that is easily misinterpreted by the players
8. A terrifying creature under someone's control whose trail appears to lead to a resolution
9. A deranged noble who promises to reveal things to players – only to have other considerations in mind ("Most Dangerous Game", "S/M Torture Dungeon World", "Diabolic Genetic Experiments", "Political Ransom", etc.)
10. False planted clues that point to one or more people within the party or within the broader social circles they are allied with (nothing like fear and doubt to divide the party)

Table: Comic Interludes and Tension Relievers to Lighten the Mood (Optional)

1. A clumsy and naïve junior member of the organization sent to tag along with the group

2. A semi-intelligent creature (Renyu?) who possesses better instincts and thoughts than his “masters” concerning the right course of action
3. A stranger to the customs and mores of the locale who is always getting into social hot water
4. A sorcerer who possesses a tool/spell/device that can help the players and who is quite grumpy in demeanor (but a sweetheart underneath)
5. An officious and glib government official (maybe OAL?) who insists on observance of proper protocols and procedures at all times – even when his life is in peril
6. A blowhard and raconteur who attaches himself to the party at some point and just won’t shut up and is “all talk” (modeled on Falstaff from Henry V)
7. An aged aristocrat with an overactive libido and few charms who develops a burning passion for one of the party and untiring in her pursuit
8. A pair of droll, leisure loving friends who are masters of the bon mot and in criticizing and commentating on everything the players are doing (wrong – of course) that always seem to turn up when the players have bungled something substantial or made to look foolish
9. A hypochondriac acquaintance who is forever worried of “coming down with something” but who grudgingly comes along to help players when need (all the while complaining about his health)
10. A ridiculously out of shape and flabby “military hero” who tries to impress the players constantly and glom onto their successes – debauched, debased, and slightly desperate for a social victory and redemption

Table: Dramatic Action Sequence (Choose 1 to 3 for Some Adventure or Danger in Middle of the Story)

1. A roof top chase across a Temple complex (with optional attacks from all sides by henchmen of the Villain or sub-villain)
2. A precarious fight on a partially collapsed ruin or Tsuru’um complex (“If we make too much racket the whole place will collapse around us!”)
3. A game of cat and mouse with a determined and skillful assassin through the streets and back alleys of a city or large complex – trading shots and narrowly missing one another
4. A magical “booby trap” that springs on someone involved with the players – but all of their lives in danger (“I told you not to open that jewel box until we make sure it isn’t cursed... nooo!”)
5. Just when the players appear ready to vanquish a foe (main or alternative) – a large number of reinforcements show up to whisk them to freedom – thwarting the players (OAL officers making an inopportune appearance work well)
6. A nightmare sequence (see spell “Nightmare of Terror”) or a diabolical attack by a Succubus or Incubus (or both?!?) to really catch a player or players off guard (“Get out of my head!”)
7. The Emperor or his Agents (OAL) show up to arrest you on suspicion of <something> - and you have to escape them so that you can “prove your innocence” – it may involve melee and magical escape
8. The undead attack you at a moment of weakness or frailty – triggered by your getting too close to the “truth” (pick which kind depending upon the power of players – make it hurt)
9. A special assassin is dispatched – a Yelet or a magical creature (demon or servitor race) – to quiet you permanently – the assassin is waiting for you in a place that you sure was “safe” from infiltration
10. You are ambushed or forced to take part in a bloody and dangerous battle in an unfavorable location (legionnaires storming walls to get at you, there is close hand-to-hand combat, frantic flight to safety, and possibly the death of one or more personas – the stakes really are getting high!)

11. A party of Ssu show up and they want something you have (and which is likely required to unmask the Villain or slow him down in some way) – the Ssu are most insistent however!
12. A mysterious Mihalli shows up with an Orb of Immediate Eventuation and forces the players through some display of magical violence or effect to bargain or barter with it for something valuable – possibly fighting them if things really go poorly during negotiations

Table: Thrilling Locations (Choose Several – These Are Just the Tip of the Iceberg- To Give Players a Taste for the Exotic on Tekumel)

1. The Unstraightened City and Nexus Point (with Silver Suits Present)
2. The Plain of Towers and the AI-Controlled Island/Resort (reachable from there)
3. The Tsuru'um Beneath Old Chio'chi (Pariah Temple)
4. The Tolek Kana Pits (Perhaps to Run into an Old Friend?!?)
5. The Well Which Pierces the Heart of the World (Sarku-Citadel full of the undead)
6. Avanthar and its Precincts (Perhaps the Catacombs Beneath it?)
7. Inner Precincts of the City of Dlash (Temple of the One of Fears)
8. The Hidden Genetics Laboratories of the Temple of Ksarul (Deep Below Hmakuyal?!?)
9. The City of the Ancients in the Far Polar Extremes (reachable only by Tube car)
10. City of the Red Tiled Roofs (Isolated island thousands of *Tsan* away from the Five Empires)
11. Beautiful and Exotic Jungle Temple of the Cannibalistic Naqsai (Mysterious “Lost Race”-vibe)
12. Treasure Vaults and Ritual Chambers of the “Mad One of Hlikku” in the Northwest
13. Orbital Space Station (with Working FTL Spacecraft) Above Tekumel (AI-Controlled)
14. Crystal Palace of the Hokun (Other side of Tekumel)
15. Palace of a Major Demon (Select from Book of Ebon Bindings) (Enjoy the interaction!)
16. The Dim Past (e.g. Private Bedchamber of Queen Nayari, Llyan of Tsamra's Private Workshop, Nluss Citadel during Reign of the First Dragon Warriors King, Pariah Deity Temple beneath Jakalla's Necropolis During the Reign of the Three States of the Triangle)
17. Shen City in the Hot South (Select Which Shen Enclave and How Well-Disposed They Are Towards Your Group – Not all Shen are Alike!)
18. The Barrier Pylons in Extra-Planar “Space” (and the “Ship” Located There)
19. The Garden of the Weeping Snows (Nylemu will be pleased to have new companions)
20. The College at the End of Time (i.e. Avanthar and its Undying Wizards in residence)

We hope that you have fun with this plot generator. Between it and the social network players have to fall back on, creating one shot adventures or episodes should be straightforward. Weaving together the right mix of villainy, thrilling locations, dramatic reversals, and personal triumphs (and tragedies) – one can have a very enjoyable time role-playing on Tekumel.

EXAMPLE OF PLOT GENERATION

The following is one random example of the results possible. The GM should always reroll obviously impossible or patently ridiculous results (although they can be privately amusing...). The generator is a stimulus to GM creativity; it is not meant to replace the GM's discretion and sense of storytelling.

Plot: Someone has been murdered and the blame is falling on you

Dramatic Opening: A blood spattered bedchamber is discovered – but the supposed occupants are missing and hysteria erupts amongst the household

Complication: An old lover or close friend is mixed up with the other side(s)

Complication: One of your party is working for “them”

Main Villain: A high ranking bureaucrat within your Temple or Legion
 Villain's Motivation(s): Revenge for a real or imagined wrong
 Surprise to Spring: The villain has a dead man switch to use if things go really downhill
 Dramatic Tension(s): Infiltration of a secret complex or tomb is required to accomplish a major objective – death and horror lurk behind every bend of the Tsuru'um
 Helper(s): Foreigner with a true sense of nobility and honor (what a guy!)
 Tool(s): An amulet hidden by an ally
 Dramatic Action Sequence: A rooftop chase across a Temple complex
 Red Herring(s): A mysterious, undecipherable manuscript you uncover
 Comic Relief: A ridiculously out of shape and flabby "military hero" who tries to impress the players constantly and glom onto their successes – debauched, debased, and slightly desperate for a social victory and redemption
 Thrilling Location(s): Avanthar and its Precincts

From this simple framework – the GM should be able to hang a single night's adventure. The adventure might be entitled, "Night of the Obsidian Knives", and the GM would have to fill in a small back story (or improvise one) for the motive – how Tsemel Mirek hiSainareva and Jokalto Kuresh hiZharvide were childhood rivals and Mirek had just been "tapped" for a role Kuresh coveted and had been "promised". The drama might open with the blood spattered bedroom of Mirek being uncovered by his trusted household staff, who would immediately report the apparent murder and disappearance to people known the requested. The players would then be summoned and have the facts explained to them and their aide enlisted. The villain Kuresh might be introduced to players early, posing as a concerned friend of the victim who wants to help in whatever way he can, like pinning the murder on the player group and spreading calumny and suspicion about the players behind their backs. The villain will turn one of the players against the others, perhaps through sorcery, and also use a "honey pot", an old lover of one of the party when they are getting too-close-to-the-secret to lead him in the wrong direction. Only through the well-timed intervention of a foreign Lord will social disgrace be avoided. The Lord may have suspicions about the true culprit and will let players know that someone is spreading vile allegations about them. This will help propel the action since the players will know that unless they find a plausible suspect for the murder, they may end up filling the role. The Lord may prove to become a semi-trusted ally in subsequent adventures. In any case, he will put aside ethnic and political considerations (a rare thing indeed) to aide players – earning him their respect. He may also be able to start pointing players in the right direction. The Lord may also help the players recognize or find an item, say an amulet, with a power to help defeat the villain Kuresh. The item may appear very nondescript at first, but with the help of the foreign Lord (Hehellu Somebody) the players may become aimed to actually defeat Kuresh and his contingent of undead or genetic miscegenation that he has at his disposal.

At some point in the evening's drama, the debased but comical former military hero (perhaps a true friend of the victim, grizzled and drunk) Kerdu Inesh hiQuruma makes an appearance. He is ex-Kerdu of the Legion of the Searing Flame, and may show up and demand to be part of the hunt for, as he slurs it, "The murderous (hic!) swine that killed poor Mirek!". A mysterious object (book) might be uncovered, perhaps another trick by that dastardly villain Kuresh, which really proves to be irrelevant to the murder mystery but gives the players a chance to explore their web of social contacts, do background research, seduce and persuade their way into peoples' lives and perhaps uncover a clue as the villain's motives and identity.

In between, assassins in the employ of Kuresh wind up chasing the players in a deadly cat-and-mouse game through the Temple precincts and rooftops of Jakalla – where the trail had led. They are too be

assaulted from all sides by adversaries. The players are supposed to barely escape with their lives. This is an “action bridge” to the rest of the adventure. Now the villain knows the players are closing in on him!

Eventually, the trail might lead to some old records or former associates at Avanthar who knew Mirek and Kuresh in the “old days” and can supply the motive for the crime. The climax of the night’s adventure might be a showdown in the Tsuru’um/Private Workshops of Jokalto Kuresh – booby trapped to collapse dramatically into a pocket dimension and guarded by Shedra and Mru’r under Kuresh’s command. He knows plenty of Temple spells after all including Necrofacture. The players would have to employ many of their skills (persuasion, fighting, seduction, and spell casting) to make it to the climatic scene and their rewards would be increased honor and their reputations restored from the background villainy of Kuresh!

There is certainly enough to keep players and GM busy for an evening! Remember to use the social network to help players out as well as to add texture to the world and events as they unfold. Menace a close friend of a player’s persona and use that to heighten the drama: “Now he’s disappeared too?!? I just left him at his villa near Penom two hours ago!” Keep the players slightly off balance by throwing a surprise attack on them or a false accusation that they need to diffuse unless they wish to be seized by officers of the OAL and thrown in the Tolek Kana Pits.

The GM is really encouraged to play with the elements and results of the plot generator. Build scenes and interesting locations focused around the psychological and narrative dynamics. Do not turn every session into a Tsuru’um crawl. That’s not for the high caliber personas generated by this rule set. Although “Pulp fictional”, it can serve as an excellent starting point for ad hoc adventures on Tekumel. Think of favorite films and books and add their details to the tables here.

RANDOM SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

The GM is encouraged to leverage the existing random encounters tables published in Gardasiyal and the older Empire of the Petal Throne for Tsuru’um encounters. However, for social random encounters, the following tables may be used for several common “set pieces” (scenes) that highborn persons will likely find themselves in – much more so that spelunking in some Tsuru’um (Underworld) beneath Hmakuyal, Old Chio’chi, or Purdimal. These are very useful for stocking large social functions and adding walk-on parts and minor characters without the GM having to specify them all upfront.

Table: Private Fetes and Parties

1. High Ranking Foreign Dignitary (Select Country and Title)
2. Beautiful and Expensive Courtesan
3. Musty Old Senior Priest (Select Temple and Sect)
4. Lively Senior Military Hero (Fresh from Victories Up North...) (Select Legion)
5. High Society Aesthete (Select Drug of Choice and –Ahem- Proclivities)
6. Unscrupulous Middle-Level Politician and Glad-handler
7. OAL Officer (Determine Whether Clandestine Operative or Not)
8. Renowned Performing Artist (Puppetry, Dance, Music) (Select Regional Style or School)
9. A Degree-One Social Contact (Select One from Your List)
10. An Old Rival or Enemy Who Is Doing Much Better Than You Socially (Select Which One)

Table: Festivals and Public Gatherings

1. Middle Ranking Foreign Dignitary (Select Country and Title)

2. A Degree-Two Social Contact (Select One from Your List)
3. Very Senior Administrative Priest (Select Temple and Sect)
4. Lively Senior Military Hero (Fresh from Victories Up North...) (Select Legion)
5. Drug Dealer or Pimp (Offering Private Entertainment Arrangements...)
6. Polished Senior Politician (Local Governor Perhaps)
7. OAL Officer (Clandestine Operative)
8. Administrative Officer from one of the Palaces (Glorious War, Foreign Lands, Realm, etc.)
9. A Degree-One Social Contact (Select One from Your List)
10. Royal Prince (Select Which One)

Table: Private Villas, Reserves, and Estates of the “Aristoi” (People like You!)

1. High Ranking Political Dignitary (Same Government as Location Owner)
2. A Degree-One Social Contact (Select One from Your List)
3. Very Senior Administrative Priest (Select Temple and Sect)
4. House Sorcerer (Determine Specialty)
5. A Senior Status Political Dissident (Perhaps Being “Hidden” There to Safeguard him?)
6. Location Owner’s *Consigliore* (Advisor and Strategist) (Select Personality)
7. Lascivious Priestess or Priest of Temple Devoted to “Sensual Knowledge”
8. Senior Administrative Officer from one of the Palaces (Glorious War, Foreign Lands, Realm)
9. Military Officer and Friend of Location Owner (Select Legion and Reputation)
10. Talented Protégé and/or Lover of Location Owner (Select Gender and Talents)

Table: High Status Clan Houses

1. High Ranking Political Dignitary (Same Government as Location Owner)
2. A Degree-One Social Contact (Select One from Your List)
3. Very Senior Clan Master (Select Personality)
4. Middle-Level Negotiator (Go-Between) (Clan Businesses and Holdings)
5. Pretty Clan Cousin (Select Gender and Degree of Sexual Chemistry)
6. One of Your Wives (Remember Them? Select Disposition and Level of Umbrage)
7. One of Your Children (“Hmm – you’re Harsan right? Oops, I mean Terun – great to see you!”)
8. Your Best Friend and Clan Brother (Select Topic to Discuss)
9. Foreign Trader or Negotiator Conducting Business (Select Country and Goods/Services)
10. Slimy and Overly Familiar Debt Collector (“You Cannot Hide from your Obligations!”)

Table: Secret Locations (Political, Religious, and Otherwise)

1. Senior Priest (Select Appropriate Temple Given Location and Determine Their “Mood”)
2. Senior Military Officer of an Elite Legion (“What’s he doing here?”)
3. Obvious OAL Officer (Determine Disposition After Recognizing You)
4. Degree-Three Social Contact (Select Location Appropriate One)
5. Well-Known Politician and Grey Eminence at Court (Select “Mood”)
6. “*I Thought You Were Dead!*”-Style Figure (*Abe Vigoda*-Scenario – A Formerly High Profile Personage Whom Everyone Assumed Had *Shuffled from this Mortal Coil* a Decade or Two Ago) (Develop their “Back Story”)
7. A Degree-Two Social Contact (Select Location Appropriate One)
8. A Suspicious-Looking Highborn Foreigner (Select Country and Agenda)
9. A Guardian Creature or Automaton That You “Bumped Into” (Select from Ru’un, Yeleth, etc.)

10. Exotic Alien Race Envoy or Scholar (Select from Mihalli, Urunen, or Hokun)

Table: Imperial Courts and Antechambers/Corridors of Power (The Seats of Power)

1. High Ranking Foreign Dignitary (Select Country and Title)
2. Servitor of Silence (Ushering Your Somewhere)
3. Powerful Looking Lord Adept-Type (Select Temple and Sect)
4. Grizzled Military Hero or General (Fresh from Victories or Defeats) (Select Legion)
5. Court Sycophant and Hanger-on (Select Political Allegiances and Motives)
6. Mysterious-Looking Foreign Prince and Entourage (Select Country and “Mood”)
7. Eminent OAL Officer (Determine Title and Portfolio)
8. Distressed Senior Scribe or Archivist or Functionary (Select Topic of “Concern”)
9. Royal Prince (Select Which One)
10. A Condescending Rival or Enemy Who Has “Made It” (Select Which One)

Table: Hirilakte Arenas (The Private Boxes and Areas Naturally)

1. Middle Ranking Foreign Dignitary (Select Country and Title)
2. A Degree-Two Social Contact (Select One from Your List)
3. Very Senior Administrative Priest (Select Temple and Sect)
4. Socially Disgraced Military Officer (Fresh from Defeats) (Select Legion)
5. Drug Dealer or Pimp (Offering Private Entertainment Arrangements...)
6. Debauched Local Politician (Determine Blackmail Opportunity)
7. Middle-Level Courtesan (and Clandestine OAL Operative) (Select “Mood”)
8. Administrative Officer from one of the Palaces (Glorious War, Foreign Lands, Realm, etc.)
9. A Degree-One Social Contact (Select One from Your List)
10. Royal Prince (Select Which One)

The tables are meant purely as a spur to GM creativity in concocting memorable and intriguing “local color” for the players. Some of these randomly generated encounters may in turn become contacts and part of the social network of player personae – the random meeting at a friend’s party that turns into a longstanding acquaintance or an implacable nemesis (for some slight or insult rendered). Use your imagination – these encounters are not meant to be primarily “combat fodder” or “monsters” in the dull hack and slash sense. Give the encountered people quirks, habits, and psychological depth. The realism will help create the verisimilitude required for enjoyable social role-playing in this exotic environment.

ADVENTURE KERNELS (“STARTING POINTS”)

The typical adventures designed to run in high-level, cinematic campaigns are different from the classical Tekumel-style scenarios. Gone are the endless labyrinths and low-level boot licking. Instead, players are typically at the center of action – playing major roles in securing the safety of themselves, their social peers, and the Empire. The following are several possible starting points for such a campaign. They are illustrative only. The GM should customize these or invent new ones to get the adventure and intrigue going. There are empires to save and glory to be won for the noble!

The Players are Pawns in A Large Conspiracy to Overthrow the Lawful Government Through Infiltration by Foreign Agents (at the Behest of their “Unseen Masters”)

The Players have Stumbled upon a Dark Secret Which Could Plunge the Nation into Chaos (Perhaps Something About the TUE History of the Tlakotani Family...)

The Players and their Friends are Being Murdered for Some Reason and They Have To Race Against the Clock to Not be “Removed” from the DenDen Board

The Players are Part of a Diplomatic Mission to a Semi-Hostile Nation and Become Involved in a Diplomatic Incident that could Compromise the Safety of their Nation

The Players are Involved in a Complex Vendetta Against Someone They Thought Had Long Ago Been Neutralized (Who Is Turning Them Against One Another)

The Players are Bureaucrats in One of the Major Palaces and are Jockeying For Favor and Position (with Comical and Tragic Results)

The Players are Unknowingly Involved in an Economic/Business Scheme which Nearly Destroys Their Clan(s) and are Racing to Prove Their Innocence and Restore Lost Prestige

The Players Are Military Heroes Waging a War Against Mu’ugalavya and Being Pitted Against Impossible Odds (“The Petal Thorne Does Not Believe in Failure”...) and Need to Find Allies to Save Themselves

The Players Are in a Lush on Semi-Remote Tropical Island – Veterans of a Recent War And Still Bearing the Psychological Scars. One of Them is A Hired “Security Officer” for a Fabulously Rich Aristocrat and Must Solve Various Mysteries with the Aide of his Close Friends and An Interfering Major Domo on the Estate, Many Villains and Social Contacts “Drop In” From Time to Time to Menace the Players and Provide Drama

The Players Are a Hired Band of Top-Notch Mercenaries Who Have Been Cashiered Out of their Legion (Which One?) – They now Hire Themselves Out to Rich Foreigners for Dangerous and Politically Complicated Missions. Their Reputation for Results Means a Large and Wealthy Clientele Base to Draw From

The Players Are Jaded Aristocrats Looking for Thrills and Adventures – They Often Talk their Way onto Expeditions to Treacherous Missions to the “Uncivilized” Portions of the Globe (Like the Naqsai Lands to the South). They Do This as a Sport and Social Challenge (Prestige Booster) – they do not Need the Money – But Often Accidentally Uncover Things of Interest to the Empire (Political) and Wind up Helping Avert Major Disaster All The While Treating Things as a Big “Game” to be Played and Enjoyed

The starting point can be used to initially orient players around a locale or set of NPCs that they can rely on for action, intrigue, misadventures, etc. The novice GM might use the random plot generator to construct a few forays into the local environment – introducing players to important social contacts, explain the political situation, and the key “power groups” affecting them (major clans, local potentates, shadowy inimical sects, semi-neutral alien races, etc.)

PART FIVE: CAMPAIGN TOOLKIT AND EXAMPLES

The following sections are considered play-aides to help players become acquainted with these rules. Also included is a persona record form that summarizes all of the pertinent information required to participate in adventures.

EXAMPLE OF PERSONA GENERATION (“HEIJJEKA HI BURUSA”)

The character of Heijjeka hiBurusa has been mentioned several times in the course of these rules and background materials. Assuming that he has been released from the clutches of the Spell of Forlorn Encystment, he might well be a NPC or social contact for new players. His summer residence is at the Dome of the Sweeping Sea, a fashionable semi-permanent guest of the Tsemel Irun hiSarvodja. During the rest of the year, one finds him attending social functions, engaging the odd Qadarni battle or duel

and generally living the life of brilliant court nobleman and bedding as many of his social peers as is advantageous. From a persona statistics point of view, Heijjeka was generated by the following application of rules and choices.

Determining name: Heijjeka
 Determining clan: Sea Blue (something of a black sheep though)
 Determining lineage: hiBurusa
 Determining background event(s) and bonuses: (1) he was instructed in the ways of Hrihayal (+1d20 seduction) and (2) his mother was an astute judge of character (+1d20 social psychology)
 Determining dominant psychology motivations: (1) pleasure and (2) challenge
 Determining personal genius: Sexual Technique (+10 to seduction rolls)
 Determining starting (universal) spells: (1) Terrorization and (2) Healing
 Determining starting social capital (100 + d100): 125
 Determining current residence: Bey Su
 Determining physical status: Normal
 Determining languages spoken: Modern Tsolyani (with perfect cosmopolitan accent and style)
 Determining reputation modifier (default: 1.): 0.5 with Military Party Social Peers (he's credible)
 Allocating twelve default skill points (d20s) plus any background bonuses: Persuasion: 1d20, Seduction: 4d20+10, Social Psychology: 2d20, Improvisation: 2d20, and Brutality: 5d20+30 (see below for reason)
 Determining titles and affiliations: Kerdu (General) of the Legion of Red Devastation
 Determining titles and affiliations: Worshipper of Karakan
 Determining monthly stipend (1000 x d20): 12,000 Kaitars (no current debts)
 Determining social contact (D1): Mriyan Tsemel Arumel hi Tankolel (Hnalla, Sea Blue) (taciturn and grumpy, met through mutual acquaintance, currently in Bey Su)
 Determining social contact (D1): Molkar Tesun hi Mriktine (Karakan, Golden Sunburst) (playful and gregarious, met through mutual lover, currently billeted in Urmish)
 Determining social contact (D2): Badragu Chesha hi Dhalumya (Hrihayal, Jade Diadem) (debauched and sybaritic, met at a social function, currently in Butrus)
 Determining social contact (D2): Hehellu Jekesh hi Gurushma (Vimulha, Sword of Fire) (insane and mercurial, met during Civil War while campaigning in the North, currently under house arrest in Jakalla (big mouth!))
 Determining favorite personal item(s) (GM Discretion): Copy of *Book of Five Swords* (Translated into Tsolyani) (gift from Tesun hi Mriktine, +30 brutality rolls)

Heijjeka is just one of many colorful characters one might encounter. Through him and his social network, new players would be introduced to some of the most influential and entertaining people in the Five Empires. He is always throwing parties on his private yacht – slowly sailing between Jakalla and Bey Su during the spring when all the fashionable people are entertaining. He knows everyone worth knowing.

EXAMPLE OF PLAY (“A FETE AT THE DOME OF THE SWEEPING SEA”)

The following is a brief example of social role-playing. It is only designed to skim over the possibilities of adventure and intrigue within the higher spheres of Tekumelani societies. For purposes of the example, the following personas are present at a fete being thrown for Tsemel Irun hiSarvodja of the Temple of Gurganu at the Dome of the Sweeping Sea -- several kilometers outside of Penom on the rocky coastline. It is a languid early evening and the puppeteers and sexual “gymnastics” displays by the

Tsemel's private dancers have started winding down. In a heady atmosphere of alcoholic, sexual, and pharmacological intoxication – a “friendly” conversation ensues between several of the guests.

Tsemel Arumel hiKhadosha of the Temple of Ksarul in Urmish (Tsolyani), Cloak of Azure Gems Clan and (Secretly) A Member of the Blue Curtain Society (+6d20 Persuasion, +2d20 Seduction, +6d20 Social Psychology, +5d20 Improvisation, +2d20 Brutality)

Kerdu Heijjeka hiBurusa of the Legion of the Lord of Red Devastation in Bey Su (Tsolyani), Sea Blue Clan (+3d20 Persuasion, +5d20 Seduction, +4d20 Social Psychology, + 5d20 Improvisation, +5d20 Brutality)

Badragu Ku'e Vrajazev of the Temple of the One of Fears in Dlash (Livyani), (Ostensibly) Gold Sunburst Clan-equivalent but (Secretly) A Member of an Ancient Pariah Sect (name: Brethren of the Vermilion Spire) (+4d20 Persuasion, +6d20 Seduction, +3d20 Social Psychology, +8d20 Improvisation, +3d20 Brutality)

Dritlan Weijun hiDurramane of the Legion of the Scales of Brown (Sarku) Cooper Dome Clan (Secretly) A Sadistic Madman and Pedophile Aligned with Prince Dhich'une (+3d20 Persuasion, +0d20 Seduction, +2d20 Social Psychology, + 5d20 Improvisation, +9d20 Brutality)

Prefect Nusalija tse Monogaturie of the Temple of Lady Shirringayi (Salarvyani) Jade Diadem Clan-equivalent (Secretly) Lover of Tsemel Urund and Spy for the Ruling House of Salarvya (+6d20 Persuasion, +9d20 Seduction, +8d20 Social Psychology, + 4d20 Improvisation, +1d20 Brutality)

As the music dies down in the background, Nusalija whispers to the others, “This is a little boring – I mean, there is only so much of this provincialism that one can take. Lord Arumel and General Heijjeka – perhaps we might retire to my apartments for some more active reaction?” She roles her seduction skill (9d20 = 150) against theirs (Arumel's 2d20 seduction “resistance” roll = 35 and Heijjeka's 5d20 = 75). Both are completely seduced, and are led away like eager puppies to taste the delights of Nusalija's celebrated erotic arts. They will emerge two days later exhausted and drained, but with a new found appreciation for the possibilities of physical pleasure. She will have emerged with several state secrets that the Tsolyani have been trying to keep from becoming common knowledge in the Salarvyani court. She is an adept and charming interrogator – there are certainly far more disagreeable methods of knowledge extraction in common use throughout Tsolyanu.

Meanwhile, the taciturn and socially inept Dritlan Weijun makes an incredible social blunder while intoxicated -- insulting the Livyani Ku'e Vrajazev. Piqued, Ku'e makes a subtle motion in the air, casting a specialized enchantment known to the Priests of Dlash (“The Passageway to the Dismal Lands of Ru'utlanish”). His 8d20 improvisation skill (8d20 = 95) is matched against the befuddled and embarrassed Weijun's 5d20 improvisation “defense” rating (5d20 = 95) – a tie (and “backfire” on the caster). Much to his own horror – Ku'e sees the luminous nexus point begin to form beneath his feet – and the charnel house stench of the Demon Prince's dimension waft upwards. He sees the moist, dripping maw of the demon pass ever-so-slightly through the nexus point and clamp down upon his legs. In a blink of an eye he is sucked through – to be tormented and savored as a fine delicacy for eons (as the perverse will of Ru'utlanish dictates)). Moth agape, Weijun thanks his Worm Lord for his good fortune and scuttles off into the night. Perhaps another slave will meet their end in his depraved “Pleasure Dome” hidden in a slight pocket dimension within his most prized possession – a single fragmentary page from Waba's Almanac disguised magically as a Treatise on Bednalljan Agriculture Techniques during the reign of Ms'sa Gurush IV. Weijun's household is always “losing” slaves mysteriously. The slave merchant clans do not mind replenishing his larder and no one can represent

the slave's interest in court. For now, Weijun's "eccentricities" are tolerated by his close associates and clan.

Finding many of his guests suddenly missing, the aged and mild-mannered Tsemel Irun chuckles to himself and moves quietly out to the broad, colonnaded balcony that rims the seaward side of the Dome. There, amidst the roaring of the waves, he contemplates a long life and his tremendous good fortune in serving within the Temples – and having risen to the point at which many of his youthful indiscretions have been forgotten (or at the very least forgiven) by his patrons. Lost in a brief reverie, he barely notices the slim, black Pe Choi that glides gracefully up to him. He discretely announces himself to Irun. "My Lord, the Prince wishes to send his felicitations and greetings to you. He regrets that he is unable to make it to your celebration, but hopes that you will accept this small gift as a token of his (and his father's esteem." The Pe Choi bows ceremoniously while presenting a small lacquered box to the Tsemel. He then withdraws, observing the polite steps and genuflections of a sophisticated and cultured member of the Tsolyani Empire. Open the box, Irun finds a small eye with a note – scribbled in the Prince's hand – in a cipher known to members of the Ndalul Clan. "You are my shield and compass." Irun smiles to himself – depressing the stud on the smooth oval. He is bathed in shimmering, blue refulgence that seems to contract down around him – drawing him into nothingness. On the other side of the nexus point, he finds himself in the simulacrum of the garden of his close friend – the Royal Prince. This is the same prince whom he raised as a son within the Temple – carefully protecting him from the political interests that sought to remove any challengers to Hirkane's throne. The day is beautiful and peaceful. Out of the shadows of the garden emerge the friends and lovers of Irun's youth – the resurrected and projected memories of the past brought to life in this bubble of memory drawn out of Irun's mind. They delight and cavort with Irun – who recalls the pleasures of Bey Su as a young man – in full vigor and health. They were all there - the favorite mistresses, the friends from the Temple School, and his first mentor in the Ndalul Clan. This gift, Irun thinks to himself, will be enjoyed many times more. It is a private moment of time and feeling captured in a 'private universe' (Bathorn) - constructed with the greatest skill by the Prince's "tame" Mihalli, Lord Chi'egesma. It is an illusion perhaps – but an exquisite

and thoughtful one. Irun makes a note to have a case of his finest Ngalu wine sent to the Prince.

As he turns back from the ocean cliff and moves



toward the Courtyard of Unfolding Night (see map of the Dome), one of his magical defense items (the *Amulet of Implacable Composure Before the Unseen*) suddenly activates. It encases him in a thick blue fog of anti-magical force and duplicates several shadowy images of Irun so that he is not easily discerned. Its ambient detection magic ends up saving his life. For at that moment, two assassins of the Black-Y Society, who had scaled the cliffs of the Dome, jump over the balcony railing and advance toward Irun. The poisoned weapons of the assassins gleam in the moonlight. The first slashes at the closest shadow in the fog and cuts through one of the "Shadow Iruns". He is taken aback momentarily, just long enough for Irun to unleash a spell, the dreaded "Silver Halo of Soul Stealing". The spectral, yellowish glow of the halo appears almost instantaneously above the bewildered assassin, who finds his soul ripped from his body and obliterated. The lifeless body drops rag-like to the marble floor of the balcony. The fellow assassin makes his move by retreating a few steps and unleashing a bolt from an Eye

of Derangement. He hopes to cripple Irun's abilities to cast further spells. Irun matches his improvisation (which happens to be 7d20) against the assassin's (4d20). Irun rolls higher, adding the +40 to the roll from the defensive effect of the amulet, and is thus able to dodge the Eye's beam. Although thoroughly vexed by the assassin, Irun controls his impulse to slay him. No, he needs to know who sent him on this little errand. Instead, he casts a powerful version of the Domination spell against the assassin. The assassin is out-rolled by Irun, the spell takes hold of his mind and he feels all self-control and instincts evaporate. He stands motionless and under the complete control of Irun, who orders him to accompany him to his workshop. He would like to ask the assassin a question or two about his employers. Safe within the protective sigils of Irun's private manse within the Dome, the so-called Preceptory of Twilight, Irun examines the assassin's mind carefully. He finds it Mindbar-ed, his employer was not taking any chances! Being a crafty sort, Irun decides to play a small trick. He casts his own Mindbar spell on him, but instead of wiping the assassin's memory – he implants false memories. From the perspective of the assassin, the mission to eliminate Irun has been a complete success. Now he just has to return to his employers and collect his reward. He is very pleased with himself; it is not every day that a Tsemel of Gurganu is dispatched so easily and professionally. He will almost certainly be promoted by the Brotherhood for this night's work! He is a grinning idiot oblivious to the reality of his situation. As he is escorted from the Preceptory by two of Irun's Qol servitors, a Ksarul-Temple genetically engineered race, Irun casts two spells on him: the Globe of Distant Discernment and a "suspended" version of the Labyrinth of Elongated Shadows. The latter spell will only activate through psychic triggering by the caster. It is a very complicated piece of sorcery, and taxes Irun's strength. He fails his exhaustion roll after that one and remains unable to cast further spells for the time being. No matter, he has what he wanted. Now Irun will be able to follow and see everything the assassin does. Having just "completed" his task, the assassin returns quickly to his employers, a sect within the Stability Temples called the Assembly of Blessed Vindicators. Irun is able to catch enough of a glimpse to see that Mriyan Ge'u mra Tikkel, an old and jealous nemesis from that sect, is the one who paid for the assassination. Irun smirks to himself as Ge'u scans the assassin and finds Irun's Mindbar. The last look on his face is the dawning recognition that his enemy has turned his own assassin against him. Comingled with that is more the terrible realization that he is being hurled into the dimension of the hideous Change-aligned demon, Lord Qu'u. Ge'u fails his improvisation roll and is yanked screaming through the grey nexus point opened by the spell. Irun's Globe of Distant Discernment spell is interrupted at this point, since the assassin was also pulled through to meet a grizzly end in Qu'u's citadel. Irun, exhausted by the night's adventures, slumps into his chair as a Qol servant hands him a glass of the best brandy from his master's cabinet. "You still have a few tricks left old man," he muses. A faint smirk forms on the corner of his mouth. The pleasant taste of the brandy washes down his throat and eases his nerves slightly. It was a good party after all.

All in all, a fairly normal set of events amongst the rich and powerful in Tsolyanu. Subterfuge, villainy, and table-turning are all in a day's work for the noble and powerful. The risks are high but the rewards are even greater for the successful. Someone will surely remember poor Ku'e eventually and perhaps enlist Eyloa of Livyanu's help to negotiate his release from bondage. Perhaps it might even be Irun, who likes to pride himself on never misplacing a guest – unintentionally.

CAMPAIGN STARTING LOCALE ("DOME OF THE SWEEPING SEA AND RESIDENTS")

The *Dome of the Sweeping Sea*, located several kilometers away from Penom on the rocky coastline, is a starting location offered for GMs new to Tekumel. IT has several advantages: it is relatively isolated, it is a controlled environment (smallish number of NPCs), and offers a good rationale for adventuring and skullduggery! The material here is adapted from the original campaign conducted by the author for



adventuring on Tekumel. It is presented in a highly truncated form – mostly to allow GMs to customize the locale, personalities, and dramatic possibilities. The Dome is owned by Tsemel Irun hiSarvodja of the Temple of Gurganu. It is his semi-private villa – owned technically by the Temple – but used as a pleasure dome and negotiation center for the Tsemel and his colleagues. It is conveniently away from major centers of commerce and traffic – just the sort of secluded rich man’s

paradise that the Tsemel enjoys.

The following are major NPCs that are semi-permanent fixtures at the Dome –either living within its precincts or in neighboring villas and mansions along the coastline within easy palanquin or yacht “access” to the Dome and its many delights. Their overall features and demeanor are presented – as are some hints to their agendas and “back stories”. The GM should weave these back stories into the adventures. Many of the NPCs could become, in time, parts of the players’ social networks – and a rich source of role-playing.

NOTABLE CHARACTERS AT THE DOME

Tsemel Irun hi Sarvodja of the Temple of Gurganu (“owner” of the Dome of the Sweeping Sea) (a seemingly quiet and non-descript senior member of the Gurganu clergy – he has many secrets and friends in high places, he is the most adroit diplomat in the area and often holds fetes, festivals, and “religious observances” (read: orgies) within the Dome, his seal of approval ensures anyone access to all the “beautiful people” (*tsóludhàliyal*) in this part of Tsolyanu)

Dritlan Mirek hi Burusa of the Legion of Ever-present Glory (semi-retired guest of Irun) (pensive and moody but a ferocious fighter and duelist when roused to defend his honor)

Tsemel Arumel hi Khadosha of the Temple of Ksarul in Urmish (a major activist in one of the Ksarul sects he is a charming but deadly opponent to anyone not aligned with his current aims)

Kerdu Heijjeka hi Burusa of the Legion of Red Devastation (a semi-familiar sight now at the Dome, he is a dandy and noted lover while maintaining a superb sword arm and ability to mix well with just about anyone – a “big personality”)

Dritlan Weijun hi Durramane of the Legion of the Scales of Brown (a sadistic murder and repellant figure – his success remains a mystery – likely for services done on behalf of Prince Dhich’une during the false Kolumeljalim – he is furtive and difficult to engage with socially)

Prefect Nusalija tse Monogaturie of the Temple of Lady Shirringayi (a spy and lover of Tsemel Irun – she is a lovely and charming social companion with genuine affection for Irun, while collecting information for her masters back in Tsatsaggaya she does not mind exploring the delights of the Dome and visitors thereto)

Provincial Governor Urush hi Hiretanya of the Palace of the Realm (a sybaritic and gullible extrovert who enjoys the weekends at his friend the Tsemel’s Dome, Urush is a well-meaning but easily distracted political figure – hence his posting to the backwater of Penom)

Otlu Faimala hi Qurashte of the Temple of Hrihayal (an intoxicatingly beautiful and depraved of the Temple of the Dark Lady of Delights, Faimala uses her charms and body as weapon of

statecraft, seducing, bribing, and extorting her many conquests to aide her and her Temple's interests)

Pimp Shubba hi Gairushekka of the Clan of the Black Tower (a pimp and purveyor of slaves, drugs, and carnal entertainments – Shubba is a supercilious and fawning to his clients – masking a ruthless disposition not above to assassination and violence to collect debts and settle business arrangements)

Hehellu Quten hi Naikamun of the Legion of the Hnalla, Master of Light (a kindly and pragmatic leader and grey eminence within the halls of power – Quten is perhaps the closest thing to a “straight shooter” in the Dome's population – truly altruistic and forgiving – not no fool)

Tselinal Zhaev Vrazumiq of the Temple of the One of Fears (Livyani) (a reserved but effortlessly cordial diplomat (read: spy) who has a long standing acquaintance with Tsemel Irun (they were involved in a complex and danger diplomatic mission to the Tsolei Isles several years back) – he is often in the company of two or three of his Nluss slaves and always willing to have a drink and game of DenDen with people of the right social class and demeanor)

Vrzh'ak Tsa'aghupkhts (closest phonetic translation) of the Southern Shen Enclave (A towering and impressive Shen – his gruff demeanor and mercurial nature make him a popular duelist in the Dome's private arena – he is here trying to drum up support for his “cause” – but so far meeting with little success)

Njashte Mq'ik Vrre'ek (closest phonetic translation) of The Temple of Karakan (An elegant and gracious Pe Choi who is in the service of Prince Rereshqala and acts as a go-between for Irun and the Prince – he is decisive and shrewd under a mask of politeness and courtly mannerisms)

Jashten Mai'u hi Tankolel of the Temple of Belkhanu (a aged but refined woman who has risen in the ranks of her temple – she owns a villa near to the Dome and is a frequent guest, her lack of sexual charms is offset by a brilliant mind and persuasive personality – and she can “read” people very quickly, she is close friends with Hehellu Quten and the Tsemel)

Molkar Esine hi Herrushen of the Omnipotent Azure Legion (OAL) but posing as a Prefect of the Palace of the Realm (he is a deep mole within the Dome, dispatched by the OAL to ensure the Empire's interests are being looked after and that the nobles of this region do not grow too complacent and insubordinate to the Petal Throne's wishes, he adopts a kindly and beneficent air but remembers everything and everyone passing through the Dome, Penom, etc.)

Chagun Jiresh hi Laimunen of the Temple of Vimulha (a semi-disreputable denizen of the Dome due to some “favor” he did for Tsemel Irun in the past – he is a xenophobic and paranoid figure – both feared and pitied, he spends many evenings in his “private chambers” or drinking himself into a rage and arguing with other Dome residents about theological minutiae, many give him a wide berth when he is “in his cups” – his enemies have been known to disappear mysteriously)

Prefect Pe'el hi Waizheh of the Golden Sunburst Clan (he holds a semi-official role in the Palace of Ever-glorious War, putatively assigned to raise a new legion for the war with Mu'ugalavya, but really seems to spend the majority of the time trying bed good looking males and females around the Dome or gambling, he loves a wager!)

Pachu l'etzu of the Legion of the Lord of Wisdom (Thumis) (a gregarious and fun-loving Tinaliya whose specialty is the design of exotic weapons (and military magic) for his Legion, his title is mostly ceremonial – he runs a workshop which routinely produces novel weapons to aide the Petal Throne in it's escalating war with the Mu'ugalavyani “Red hats”, many interests would like to get a peek at his workshop but he only allows close friends a “peek”)

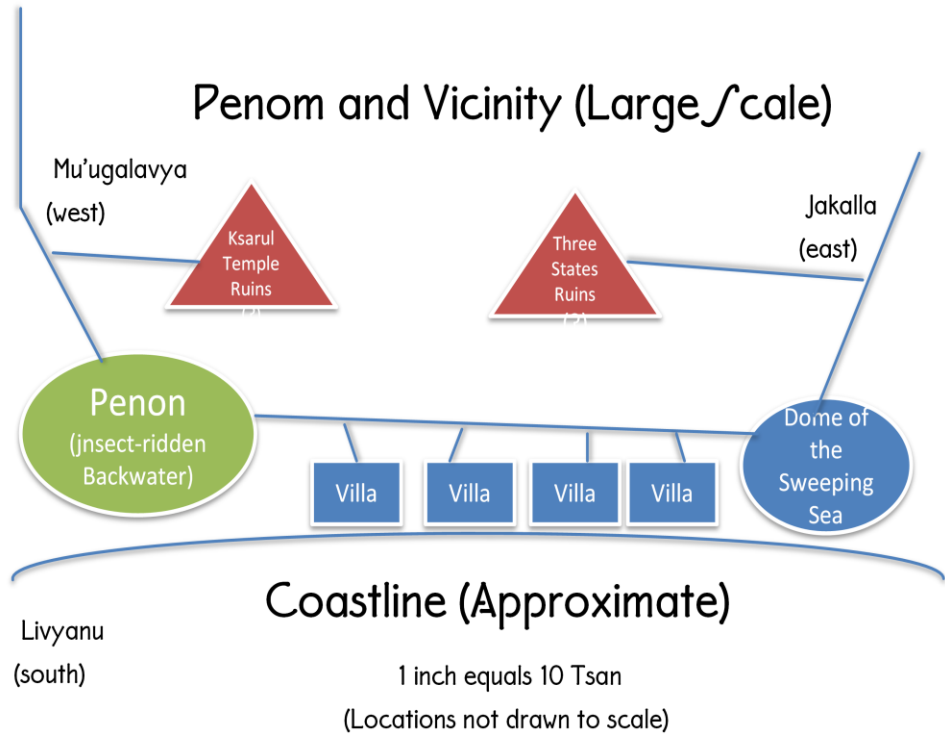
Hehellu Graizamurra mra Mhoste of the Legion of the Lord Hrsh, Champion of Victories (a cold-blooded and scheming military officer in the premier legion of Mu'ugalavya (Lord Hrsh's), he is currently acting as an envoy (read: spy) sent to negotiate with members of the government

about disputed borders – all the while trying to recruit a spy network and establish a powerbase for himself and his government in this region of Tsolyanu)

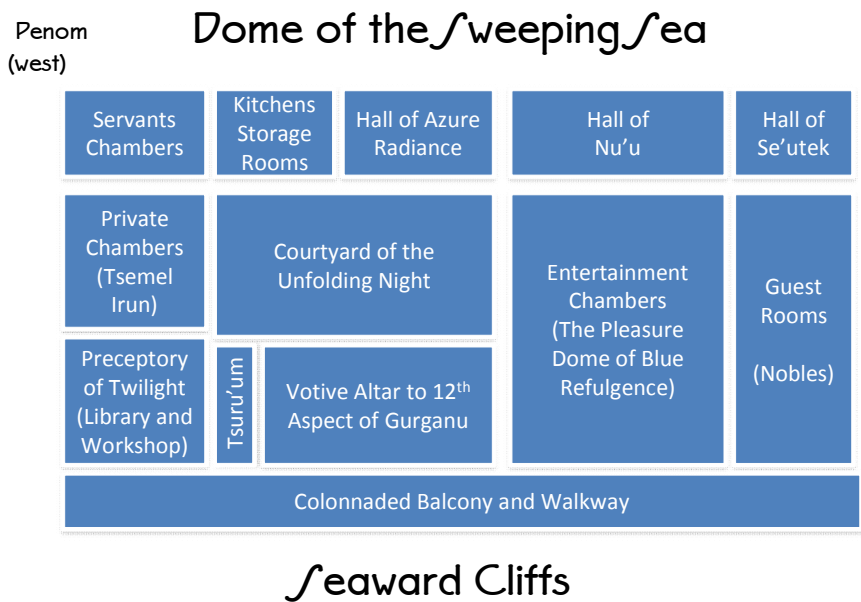
Mriyan Yalisha hi Saijamtane of the Temple of Hru'u (actually a well-disguised Mihalli in the service of Yan Kor, she (it?) has additional techno-magical artifacts to disguise her nature – while efficiently spying on Dome residents and circulating at the various parties thrown by the rich and famous of these parts, she comes off as somewhat “distracted” and “emotionally cold” – but is able to mimic human customs well enough that several of her amorous conquests have not “noticed anything suspicious” – she is a deep mole in the Temple of Hru'u – although her identity may have been compromised unbeknownst to her...)

Finally, the following small maps are provided to help orient the GM. The Tsuru'um is purposely underspecified – with just enough details to whet the GM's appetite to define the “special encounters”. The adventure hooks should be chosen – and the exact contours and purpose of the various sections of the Dome and its Tsuru'um developed. Please note that there is a treacherous and trap-filled way to reach one of the Ancient's Tube car stations below the Dome (location and construction were not coincidental).

Map of Penom and the Dome of the Sweeping Sea



Map of the Dome of the Sweeping Sea ("Residence of Tsemel Irun hi Sarvodja")



ADVENTURE HOOKS FOR NEW ARRIVALS AT THE DOME (“WHERE TO BEGIN”)

Starting the players out at the Dome – the following hooks might be used.

Someone has disappeared while attending a fete at the Dome. The players are either friends or colleagues of the disappeared – and must uncover the mystery of her fate and current “status”. An important negotiation is going to be held at the Dome. Players represent one or more sides with an interest in learning what is being discussed and its implications for their organizations. The players must socially insinuate themselves and spy on the proceedings.

A traitor and renegade is hiding out at the Dome – being shielded by someone with an agenda of their own. The players must uncover the location of the traitor and his unseen benefactor – while ferreting out the benefactor’s agenda and business ties.

A rumored shipment of zu’ur is supposed to be laundered through the Dome. The players must uncover the clandestine network of people involved in this dangerous trade with the Hluss and act according to their patrons’ instructions.

A visiting group of Shen from the south of Livyanu is hosted at the Dome. The exact nature of the visit and their ultimate objective is unknown –making your patrons nervous. Find out what the Shen really want (help to secede from Livyanu?!?) and how is offering to help them (and for what sort of consideration).

Slaves excavating new basements have uncovered a new Tsuru’um beneath the Dome – and most have perished of a “disease” (or so it has been reported). What have they uncovered and who is trying to jockey for position for the artifacts and knowledge contained in the cache of the Lords of the Latter Times? The players, possibly representing numerous political and religious interests, are dispatched to make sure their group’s claims are properly recognized – or at least to ensure their enemies do not get their hands on the “best stuff”.

Apparent increases in Ssu sightings in the vicinity of the Dome have the Tsemel and others worried. How have they come this far west? What are they looking for with their tinkling blue lights and alien technologies? Are they being aided and abetted in some way? The players must figure out the agenda of the Ssu as well as determining who is standing to gain from their foray to the swampy ruins near the Dome? Is there a threat to the Empire?

A prominent politician meets his death at the Dome. Everyone is scurrying about to point a finger at someone else – even the Tsemel is seeking to shift the blame to a “plausible” culprit. The players are in the service of one such unfortunate – deemed expendable and shortly to take the “High Ride” if the truth is not uncovered. Time is running out and the players are not even sure who all the players in the mystery are yet.

The Dome is apparently being haunted by a Bednalljan ghost (a Princess of the Royal House of Kiramuru’a – historically believed to have been obliterated by Queen Nayari for sedition) – who seems keen on terrifying the guests at the Dome into fleeing the precincts. Standard attempts at divine the nature of the ghost are proving frustratingly inadequate. Is it really a ghost? What is really behind this poltergeist activity?

Tsemel Irun is throwing a celebration for the Ksarul and Gurganu-worshipping elite of the area (and Jakalla – who will be arriving by elegant yachts and moored off the coast beneath the Dome). But disaster strikes as a “curious” sea storm sweeps several of the yachts out to sea – hurling them dangerously close to the home islands of the Hluss. The players are parties on one or more of the yachts – and must fight to regain control of the ships and avoid pirates and Hluss. They do not want to spoil the Tsemel’s party plans!

The Pariah Sect (the mysterious and deadly *Brethren of the Vermilion Spire*) is rumored to be making converts amongst the Dome’s semi-resident population and those of neighboring

aristocratic villas. Who has been compromised? Who has become a He’esa? Who is an unwitting pawn or cat’s paw in the machinations of the Brethren? The players must uncover the ringleader and the tools and devices being used to “open the way” for the Goddess and maintain control over the converts. The stakes are very high indeed – and unprecedented cooperation between Stability and Change temples might have to be negotiated by players and their social circle to stave off a cataclysm!

Someone is murdering young noblewomen (the shame of it! Shamtla is owed!) in the vicinity and precincts of the Dome. Who is responsible for these atrocities against the fairest flowers of the Empire? Justice (and a High Ride) waits for the blackguard responsible? What are their motives and how have they been able to avoid detection and capture?

A ritual observance (which is polite speech for a demon summoning) has gone terribly wrong. After the bodies of the slave attendants have been hosed off of the altars, it has become clear that several important personages, including one or two close friends of the players, have been whisked away to some Demon plane or other – or have they? The players have to find out what is really going on – and to bring the august personages back to the safety of their clans and temples.

Someone is stealing important artifacts and objects-de-art from residents and guests of the Dome. Where are they stashing the items? Are they finding their way into certain groups’ coffers? A particular theft becomes the last straw for the Tsemel – who enlists the players to find the elegant cat burglar (he leaves many stylish flourishes as his “calling card”) and try and recover the object (perhaps the “gift” Tsemel Irun received from a certain Prince of the Realm?)

The city of Penom is suffering an outbreak of plague. Many people are dead and others are fleeing in the direction of the Dome. What is to be done? Is there a cure? Are the people approaching infected? If so – with what? Reports of the symptoms are ghastly – withered limbs and morbidity in a matter of hours. Did sailing ships from the southern coast bring a hitherto unknown contagion back to Tsolyanu? Will the cure be found in some remote crypt or abandoned Ksarul-priest “laboratory” deep below the Dome? Once again, the clock is ticking. The players are the best chance for the sickness/condition to be rectified before nervous politicians and Temples in Bey Su demand a more final solution (like a mass *Doomkill* spell over the entire region – “just to make sure” nothing makes it out to infect the heart of the empire).

This should be sufficient to provide GM and players several evenings of adventuring amongst the power players of this corner of the Empire. Later, as the comfort level and sophistication of players increase for Tekumel, the GM may choose to branch out the action and drama to Jakalla, Bey Su, and beyond.

APPENDIX A: PERSONA RECORD SHEETS

The basic persona information required to role-play on Tekumel is summarized below in a convenient format. Permission to photocopy and redistribute this template is given. The basic information, exclusive of belongs, spells, etc., is designed to fit easily on 3x5 cards, although persona biographies and social logs would not be accommodated. The GM should encourage all players to develop 300-500 word biographies and back stories for their characters. These may be generated in a free-form manner or done retroactively based on the “biographical background events”, “starting social network”, and “dark secrets” tables provided earlier in this rule set. Weaving in the social network of people that the player has should be encouraged. This process is helpful for the player to embed his persona into a living tableau of NPCs (and other players) that they can always rely upon for interaction. Many a stalled adventure may be kick-started by a short trip to one’s patron, or a shadowy contact in one of the lower status clans who always seems to, “Knows a guy that could help, for the right price.”. The template is

meant to track important psychological and social details about the persona. Unlike previous systems - the social network (or "web") that personas are embedded in functions as a major source of plot development, NPC interaction, and dramatic stimulation. It also forms a convenient FOAF (friend of a friend) mesh for introducing and linking players' personas to one another without recourse to draconian simplifications (e.g. "You are all members of the Clan of Refulgent Twilight in Butrus"). One can be one to two degree of separation to a vast array of colorful and dangerous characters. The game master (GM) is encouraged to leverage this fact in construction of adventures for the players on Tekumel.



This painting depicts the 7th Aspect of Hrihayal. It is housed at her Shrine in Penom (Location #18 on the Penom map) It is done in the Late Bednalljan Style popularized by the Nrgs'sa School of Painting in what is now southern Tsolaynu.

It is attributed to Nrgs'sa.

Tsóludhàliyal

Player Name

Summary Information

Clan Name

Name and Lineage

Current Primary Residence

City, Region and Country

Core Social Aptitudes and Current Modifiers

Persuasion

Seduction

Social Psychology

Improvisation

Brutality

Distinguishing Features

Singular Genius

Dominant Psychological Motivations

Primary

Secondary

Languages Known

Fatal Flaw or Dark Secret

Wealth

Monthly Stipend

Outstanding Debts

Reputation Modifier

Social Capital (Honor Points)

Physical Status

Preferred Weapons (And Modifiers)

Affiliations and Titles

Secular

Political

Religious

Social Network

Patrons (usually Degree-1)

Close Friends (usually Degree-1)

Lovers (usually Degree-2)

Important Enemies (usually Degree-3)

Casual Contacts (usually Degree-2)

Entourage (usually Degree-2)

Prized Possessions, Fashion Items, and Effects

Known Spells (Name-Type-Level-Effect)

Personal Gadgetry and Artifacts

Biography and Salient Details (Secret History)

APPENDIX B: THE TSOLYANI LANGUAGE FOR EVERYDAY USE

The following is a very limited set of phrases, interjectives, and terms that players might choose to use in the course of role-playing. It is highly unlikely that any players will learn Tsolyani, but being able to throw around the odd phrase adds a small patina of culture and sophistication. For players that use phrases and terms appropriately, and not merely to reap some reward, the GM should consider a small bonus. A GM granted +5 to persuasion rolls is appropriate recognition for the effort taken to use Tsolyani in the course of regular role-playing. The phrases may also be used for comic effect and this should be rewarded too. Imagine the first trip to a House of the Pleasant Hour or the Royal Court at Avanthar! We found the practice to significantly enhance our adventures and verbal banter amongst the high-status nobles of the Five Empires. We did not concern ourselves with exact pronunciation.

TOP TWENTY-EIGHT SURVIVAL PHRASES, EXPRESSIONS AND WORDS

1. Tsóludhàliyal (Beautiful People – basically you, your friends and associates)
2. Ngangmura! (Greetings)
3. Otulengba! (All Hail! (Archaic Salute Before Hirilakte Arena Combat))
4. Cha! (Oh brother! (Expression of Disgust or Resignation))
5. Ssa (Yes)
6. Ya (No)
7. Lan (Good, all right)
8. Sran (Possibly)
9. Brusivel (In a moment)
10. Chegukh, mristeli masun. (Please speak slowly.)
11. Tusmi dnu taino. (You are mistaken.)
12. Masun bussan gual. (This is bad.)
13. Hlonkoi dahlte dom tlayesh masun, t~~l~~aliv~~y~~anu, ne? (Can anyone here speak Livyani? Note: substitute other language and reuse phrase)
14. Tusmimra khatundalisakoi harri gual? (What is your name?)
15. Lum mik~~t~~h~~r~~aya pal taino. (I come from Thraya. Note: substitute other location and reuse phrase)
16. Fazhali masun, tlashar! (Make way!)
17. Lum fenul gual dopal? (Where are we?)
18. Hurshelkanikh fenul gual? (Where is the toilet?)
19. Lummra molnati, kheshdulimasun, prutlathialadhhali! (Send a pretty girl to my room!)
20. Tusmi kaim dopal masun, ne? (Do you like this?)
21. Mitlanyal pagal mura tlalum, thamchegu. (I accept with pleasure.)
22. Desten hyachunin! (How interesting!)
23. Masun vramun dhali-n ya gual. (She is not beautiful enough.)
24. Lum mal ul shaluli mssuran tladheluyal? (Shall I undress?)
25. Tusmi kaim mssuran, tlazhurzhur? (What do you like?)
26. Mitlanyal moltusmi mal ul gual fazha masun! (The Gods will give it to you! (To Express Complete Amazement))
27. Tauknelin miujanyal. (Thank you very much.)
28. Chegukh, mollum fazhali masun, mssuranmra tlanuime. (Please give me a receipt for them.)

The 24+ pronouns used in Modern Tsolyani are not detailed – players will typically be addressed with the “you of profound submission” (Tusmitlakomelu) – which is commensurate with their high status in society. The Tsóludhàliyal are the elite amongst the Five Empires and should be respected by plebes.

APPENDIX C: MAP OF TSOLYANU (PORTION OF TEKUMEL)

The following is a partial map of Tekumel showing the rough area occupied by the Tsolyani Empire – the so-called Empire of the Petal Throne. The entire “far side” of Tekumel is largely unexplored – as is the Southern Continent occupied by the Naqsai off the southern side of this map. The Nom live in the distant east, beyond Salarvya where one would also find the “nation” of the Ahoggya (Omne Tle Hlektis). On the other side of the pole lie the nations of the Hokun and their allies – in addition to remnants and ruins of the Latter Times – some still quite inhabited by artificial intelligences (AIs) and semi-autonomous cybernetic installations. The Ancient’s Tubeway Cars System runs the length of Tekumel and is often used for fast transport across the planet. Many inimical races use the systems too – Shunned Ones, Ssu, Hokun, etc. Beware! Nexus Point travel, via spells such as the Periplus of the Planes, is equally fraught with peril but is often used in high adventure plots to advance the action. Tsolyanu’s neighbors are Yan Kor to the north, Saa Allaqiyar to the northwest, Mu’ugalavya to the west, Livyanu to the southwest, and Salarvya to the east. Many smaller states lie in the vicinity, as to the Shen states near Livyanu and the more distant Tsolei Archipelagos. Remnants of the Isle of Ganga lie off shore, the former seat of the Engsvan hla Ganga Empire.

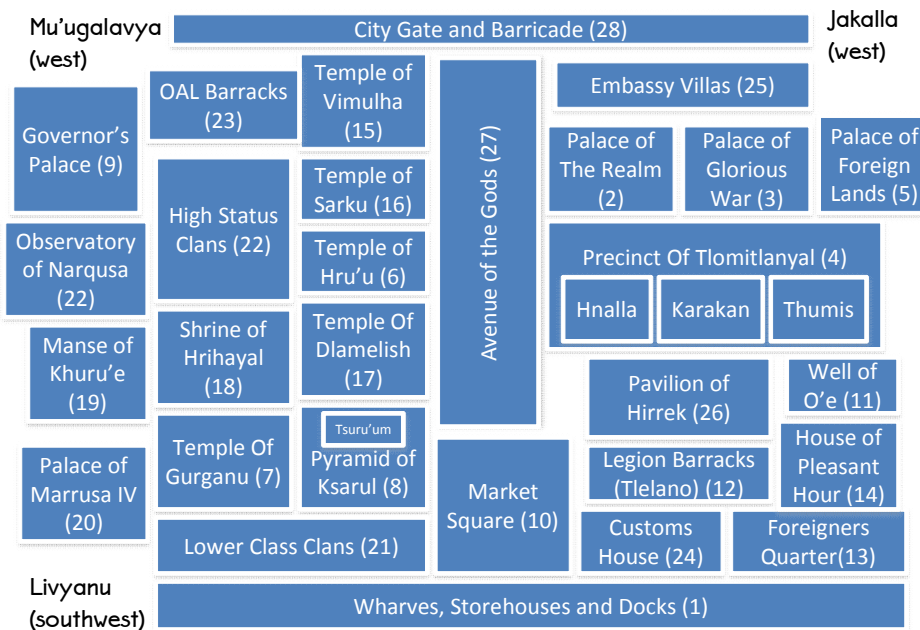


The most important cities of Tsolyanu are: Bey Su (the Capitol), Jakalla, Avanthar (Special Location, Seat of the Emperor), Meku, Butrus, Purdimal, Petris Layoda (on the Isle of Ganga), Tleku, Fasilum, Khirgar, Sunraya, City of Sarku, Chene Ho, Urmish, Paya Gupa, Katalal, Usenanu, Thraya, Jaikalor, Sokatis, and Tumissa. There is also semi-isolated Penom - with its hidden shrines and remnants of the Pariah Deities, Bednalljan Empire, and the curious Ssu ruins accessible from there. They would all make excellent settings for cinematic and social role-playing on Tekumel. The GM should pick a locale as the base setting for adventures and gradually extend the scope of play incrementally.

APPENDIX D: MAP OF PENOM AND KEY TO LOCATIONS

This following is a small map of Penom, located on the shores of Tsolyanu's western coast. It is abutted on all sides by the Flats of Tsechetlan, a dismal swamp teeming with lethal denizens but also containing many old ruins and votive sites. The Three States of the Triangle, the Bednalljan Dynasty, the Priestkings of Engsvan hla Ganga, Pariah worshippers, and the Priesthood of Ksarul all have all had important sites within and around Penom. The area wasn't always a lethal swamp with half meter long insects scurrying about and infesting everything not sealed and preserved. There are also at least three different access points to the Great Ancients' Tubeway car system located in close proximity: one within the imposing Pyramid of the Temple of Ksarul, another within the secret chambers of the Dome of the Sweeping Sea, and a third in the ruins of the Three States of the Triangle. The population of Penom is roughly 45,000 residents with approximately 7500 foreigners and seasonal residents (in the villas along the coast as well as opulent "Embassy Row" for foreign dignitaries). The exact size of the slave population varies. Outside of Penom, numerous villas dot the coastline – the most spectacular is the Dome of the Sweeping Sea.

City of Penom (Tsolyanu)



Penom Location Key:

1. Wharves, Docks, and Storehouses of Penom (Managed by the Palace of the Realm)
2. Palace of the Realm
3. Palace of Ever Glorious War
4. Precincts of the Tlomitlanyal (Who have a weak presence here in Penom and are segregated)
5. Palace of Foreign Lands
6. Temple of Hru'u
7. Temple of Gurganu (Strong presence)
8. Temple Pyramid of Ksarul (Very strong presence and access to Tubeway System and Tsuru'um)
9. Governor's Palace and Precincts (Temple Guards Provided by OAL Detachment)
10. Market Square (Colonnaded, the center of commerce within the city)
11. The Amethyst Well of O'e, 31st Aspect of Dlamelish-ish Like "Local Deity" (Sacrificial Site)

12. Legion of Tlelano the Steersman (Naval) (Barracks and warehouses)
13. Foreigners Quarters (For merchants and immigrants)
14. House(s) of the Pleasant Hour (Operated by the Temple of Dlamelish and Hrihayal)
15. Temple of Vimulha (Weak presence)
16. Temple of Sarku
17. Temple of Dlamelish (Strong presence)
18. Shrine of 7th Aspect of Hrihayal (Secret Passageway to Tsuru'um and Necropolis)
19. Manse of Khuru'e hi Miratane (Famed Scholar Priest of Ksarul)
20. Ruined Place of Marrusa IV (Bednalljan Imperium) (Access to Tsuru'um)
21. District for Lower Class Clans
22. Observatory and Grounds of Narqusa hi Khaidhalisa (Noted Magic User of the Temple of Ksarul)
23. Omnipotent Azure Legion (Barracks and Offices)
24. Customs House (Managed by OAL and Palace of the Realm)
25. Foreign Embassy Villas (Mu'ugalavyai, Livyani, Salarvyani, Tsolei, etc.) (Opulent district)
26. Pavilion and Garden of Hirrek msa Gurushmel (Disposer of Abominations) (Shrine devoted to Noted Bednalljan Hero and Fighter of Hluss)
27. Avenue of the Gods (Mitlanyal) (Wide avenue dissecting Penom and leading past key temples to the Market Square and docks beyond)
28. City Gate and Fortifications (Guarded by Legion of Tlelano the Steersman)
29. A Hirilakte Arena (not shown) lies to the north of the Market Square (It is a minor arena)
30. The "Walking" Mansion of Badragu Vraumez vra Zhaidanes (A Livyani Shadow God Priest and Delver into the Mysteries of Tekumel is occasionally sighted on the cliffs to the southeast of Penom – few guests of the Badragu are seen again although he appears to be an acquaintance of Tsemel Irun hiSarvodja) The "Walking" refers to walking-the-Outer-Planes... beware!

A NOTE CONCERNING COPYRIGHT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The world of Tékuamel and all material pertaining to them are the intellectual property of Professor M.A.R. Barker and are protected by copyright laws. No challenge to M.A.R. Barker's copyright is intended or implied. Material is reproduced herein without permission of the copyright holder. This document is produced as a work of parody. This text (exclusive of materials owned by M.A.R. Barker and all graphics save for the maps of the Dome of the Sweeping Sea and the Locale of Penom) is copyright © 2006 Alexander Stojanovic unless where indicated. All Rights Reserved. No material from this document may be reproduced without written (or email) permission from the author.

Tekumel, Tsolyanu, Mu'ugalavya, Saa Allaqiyar, Salarvya, Yan Kor, Livyanu, Kolumeljalim, Gardasiyal, Swords and Glory, Mihalli, and all other specific names - such as those for spells, monsters and locales - are the intellectual property and copyright of M.A.R. Barker.

The map of Tekumel is copyright by the owner of The Eye of All Seeing Wonder intellectual property.

The depiction of adventurers next to a Tubeway car fighting Hluss is copyright by Kathy Marschall.

Used without permission.