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Wanted: Questions

If you have a question concerning Tékumel, forward them to us at the following address:

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P.O. Box 9854
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Questions not accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope can only be answered in the question-and-answer column which will appear in some subsequent journal. Questions accompanied by such an envelope may appear in this column and may also be answered personally, if possible.

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Note: News of the slaying of high Imperial officials, the starting of wars, the destruction of major cities, etc. sorely distresses the tranquility of the Emperor's repose. Send such reports only at the risk of His Majesty ordering the High Princes at Avanthár to ferret out the truth!

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Journal Notes

A distinctive feature of the Tékumel mythos is that it was first presented not as a novel, a comic, or a movie, but as a game. For this reason, when it first appeared in the summer of 1975, critics termed it too personal a creation to be a success. Instead, it has become a milestone in the development of fantasy gaming.

Based on Prof. M.A.R. Barker's world of Tékumel, a science-fantasy creation some forty years in the making, its sweeping imaginative scope and fastidious attention to detail have sketched out an alternate reality as compelling as any known.

Close association with Prof. Barker has given my colleagues and me access to a vast wealth of information which is not, and might never be available to others interested in the Tékumel mythos. This has presented us with a unique opportunity -- and an obligation -- to share those facets of a world which might otherwise remain in shadow.

That is what this journal is all about: an attempt to explore systematically and to fill in the details of the Tékumel fantasy which will otherwise be missed in the game, the scattered articles, and the question-and-answer letters of Prof. Barker. As of this writing, he is some ten chapters into a novel about Tékumel, but even this will serve only as a tantalizing introduction and an overview of the world in which it is set.

In the game, needless to say, certain factors were exaggerated, others toned down, and still others left out for reasons of playability and considerations of space. As more elements of the mythos reach print, very few of which will be couched in game systems, players will have to decide what to include, modify, or leave out altogether.

At this time, this journal cannot be published periodically but will be issued occasionally as interest and material permit. Our method will be to use articles which are complete in themselves, but which are written to complement other articles on similar subjects which have appeared before, or which are yet to come. In time, it is hoped that these specific, short articles will form a comprehensive, general whole.

We hope you will enjoy discovering Tékumel as much as we have!

Gary R. Rudolph

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"Empire of the Petal Throne," © Tactical Studies Rules, Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, 1975. Thanks are due to Mr. E. Gary Gygax for his encouragement and cooperation in the present work.

The Temple of Thúmis, Sage of the Gods

—An overview of Tsolyáni temples

by M.A.R. Barker

Knowledge of Thúmis, Lord of Wisdom, Knower of Arts, Hidden Seeker of Eternal Knowledge, Sage of the Gods, may well date from before the advent of the Golden Age. Worship of a being with this name is recorded upon a stone lintel from the period of the Dragon Lords. Yet it was the crippled priest, Pavár of Gánga, who developed a means of contacting the great, enigmatic interdimensional beings who act as "gods" for the humans of Tékmel. Pavár compiled a book of mysteries (now lost) and coordinated the doctrines still followed in all of the human empires. Thúmis seems to have been one of Pavár's principal sources of information about the laws of science and magic which operate in this dimension.

There is a fragment purported to be in Pavár's own handwriting preserved in the Temple of Eternal Knowing in Béy Sí which reads: "This Lord is cool and detached, clear and open to the intellect, full of knowledge and quick to reply. . . . When one is in contact with Thúmis, it is as though one were being viewed by a Mighty Eye, as a man views the antics of the Drí [a tiny ant-like creature; Translator], sympathetic in a wise and unemotional way, all knowing and aware of present and past, yet somehow concerned for Man. . . ."

The Golden Age ended with the subsidence of the entire region around Gánga. The mighty city of Éngsvan hlá Gánga sank beneath the sea, and with it sank most of Pavár's knowledge and that of his successors. Much more was lost during the ensuing interregnum. Men who had some access to ancient secrets began to style themselves "wizards" and "sorcerers" and to oppress the land. The worship of Thúmis had always been popular in the northern reaches of the Dó Cháka Protectorate, however, and bits of knowledge were preserved at Chéne Hó and Páya Gúpa. With the coming of the Second Imperium, the organised worship of the Gods and Cohorts began again throughout the human lands of Tékmel, and temples to Thúmis were erected in Béy Sí, Jakálla, Jaikalór, and other great centres. The priesthoods gathered together what books and documents had survived the cataclysm and began to piece together the doctrines of Pavár once more. Contact was again achieved with Thúmis and with others of these "deities," but this contact was much less complete than the method developed by Pavár and now lost. Still, it provided mankind with some insight into the laws of magic and science and man's relationship to the cosmos. [Unfortunately, however, either these beings are unaware of Tékmel's original dimension or are unwilling to tell their human worshippers about it; in all of the many centuries of contact with the "gods" not one of them has given any indication of knowing how Tékmel came to be in its present

"pocket dimension," how to get back to mankind's original dimension, or even that such a dimension exists. It is probable that this is beyond the limitations of these "deities."]

With knowledge and the establishment of an organised religion came doctrine, and with doctrine came dispute. Various references to the "Mighty Eye" of Thúmis in the writings of Pavár and his colleagues led to the doctrine that Thúmis "possesses the Eye to View the World"; i. e., omniscience and omnipresence. As all who have seen a temple of Thúmis know, the image of an eye is worked into the hem of the robe of this god, and his priests wear this symbol upon their breast-plaques. Dispute arose over the nature of this "viewing." Some say that the Eye of Thúmis is not a physical eye at all but rather an inherent presence of Thúmis (a "viewing") in every particle of being. Others claim that Thúmis does indeed possess physical eyes, but these are not manifest in this world but rather view it from his own dimension. A third party takes the mention of "eyes" quite literally and theorises that Thúmis has physical eyes which can manifest themselves at his will in this world. This sect points to the many miraculous appearances of "the Eyes of Thúmis" throughout history. They point to the eye-like impressions which magically appeared upon a bare cliff face overlooking the site of the Battle of Chéne Hó in 2,019 A.S., to an eye-shaped stain upon a woman's shawl now held as a sacred relic in the Temple of the Eye of Thúmis in Páya Gúpa, and to many other such "miracles." These three doctrines--the "Imminence of the Eye," the "Transcendentalism of the Eye," and the "Phenomenal Manifestation of the Eye"--have split the priesthood of Thúmis since before the beginning of the Second Imperium, and this dispute continues to the present day. At times this has led to rioting and violence. More often it has cropped up as quiet intrigue, preferential treatment for one's own sect members, and discrimination against members of the other two sects. The current High Princeps, Gámalu hiBeshyène, has attempted to extirpate this ancient discord by commanding all of his priesthood to busy themselves in the codification of mankind's accumulated knowledge into a series of great encyclopaedias. This project began well but has faltered somewhat since long-held rivalries and hatreds cannot be so easily discarded. Assisted by a young Cardinal, one Chiréne Nemanándu, the current High Princeps continues to persist in his attempt to unify the temple, but the weight of centuries bears heavy against him.

There are several other doctrines of the priesthood of Thúmis which may be mentioned. Some of these are almost as thorny as those described above, while others are shared by all of the sect. Firstly, there is the "Emanation of Supernal Light": this holds

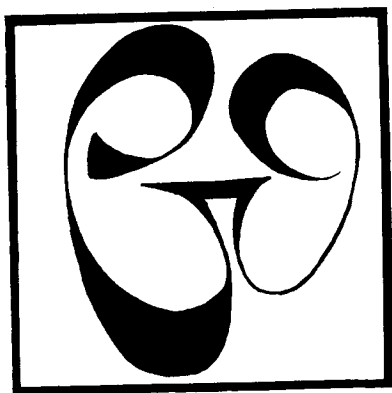
that all wisdom (and indeed even knowledge of our own being) has Thúmis as its source, and emanates outward from him like the radiance of the sun. Those who have "gone nigh unto the god" and "opened their intellects to his light" are able to gain knowledge more easily and quickly than those who have "shadowed" themselves with mundane matters. There is a strong strain of mysticism in this doctrine, and within the Temple of Eternal Knowing at Beý Sý there are several adepts who accept pupils for training and who demand that real knowledge requires the renunciation of the material world. Again, this doctrine becomes embroiled in the controversy over imminence, transcendentalism, and physical manifestation. One group of the "illumined," as they call themselves, dwells in a craggy monastery in the Dó Cháka foothills and faces the sun from dawn until dark, believing that this is the visible source of Thúmis "Light." Most of these adepts are totally blind. Others hold assemblies in which they sway and chant and pray for a manifestation of Thúmis "Light" upon "the eye of the brain." Others of less mystical bent believe that Thúmis will reveal himself only through knowledge, and they thus spend their lives studying and concentrating upon every intellectual and philosophical problem they can devise. The extremes of this group can be seen at Mrélu, where the priesthood of Thúmis offers free board and lodging to any who can provide any item of knowledge not already recorded in their books--but if a visitor fails to add something to their store of learning, they charge him exorbitantly, often resulting in the imprisonment of a luckless traveller as a debtor!

One of the most prevalent doctrines--and one about which there is no dispute--is the "Perpetration of Sagacity"; the employment of knowledge for societally useful purposes in this world. Thúmis is the patron of teachers, scribes, mathematicians,

physicians, and all those who work with their minds to serve their fellow man. In Jakállá there is the Hall of the Extended Hand, where physicians endeavour to cure diseases and wounds; in Beý Sý there is the Dome of Interacting Numerals, where scholar priests aid engineers, architects, and others with mathematical problems; in the Monastery of the Sapient Eye in the foothills of Dó Cháka [hex 4105] there is the Gallery of Gazing Forth by Night which houses the best astronomers and astrologers of the Imperium; and in Thráya the House of Laying Out the Lands collects information from merchants and travellers in order to complete a geography of known areas of Tékumel.

In "Empire of the Petal Throne," the image of Thúmis is described as a seated, scholarly man with a golden halo, a book in one hand and the traditional Staff of Power of the old Bednálljan kings in the other. While this is the most prevalent depiction of Thúmis, Tsolyáni iconography is really much more complex. Mythologically, Thúmis is the Scribe of the Gods and is thus often shown as a seated, crosslegged scribe, a roll of parchment open upon his knees, bareheaded or wearing a simple black skullcap. He is also a frequently occurring character in various mythological epics; e.g., in the Epic of Hrugga, Thúmis appears first to Hrugga (the major Tsolyáni culture-hero) as a serious-appearing man of middle age, who warns him of the Snares of Hehekáino. Later he occurs as a haloed, dazzlingly golden manlike figure with hands which consists of many rays of light; here he bestows the Orb of Eternal Light upon Hrugga. Again he is seen as a two-legged bejewelled serpent who protects Hrugga from the demon Qu'ú, again as a many-faced, many-armed anthropomorphic being who shields Hrugga during the battle on Dórudai Field with the minions of Missúm, Lord of Death, a form of Sárku; and once again he appears as a great eye from which rays stream forth when Hrugga calls upon him in the Ebon Pyramid. All of these forms are considered by Tsolyáni theologians to be equally valid and identifiable aspects of Thúmis, who can appear at will in many such shapes. There are some forty-seven "usual" manifestations of this type, and iconographers include about another score of "rare" or "unattested" forms. Those interested in this topic may consult "Khá'riyelyal hiHáyasa" (Appearances of Mighty Glory) by Cha'anya hiNáshomai in the library of the Temple of Eternal Knowing in Beý Sý.

For those who have never visited Tsolyánu, it may be of interest to describe the physical structure of a temple. Although styles differ from period to period, region to region, and deity to deity, certain basic features remain the same. Wherever space permits, the Tsolyáni build their temples upon high, flat-topped pyramids of masonry or brick. These great structures have two functions: to raise the temple up above the heat and dust of the surrounding city and also to create a feeling of awe in their worshippers. The temple proper is then constructed upon this platform, and ramps or staircases lead up to its surface from the street below. At the head of these stairs the worshipper first comes to a closed porch or colonnade, where temple guards and low-level duty priests are posted to assist the worshippers and to protect the temple premises. Within, a hall or pillared antechamber leads into a great central hall, often of several storeys height. Here the worshipper finds a great image of the deity, and here the public rituals are performed. Side halls and further colonnades lead off to smaller shrines of some of the particular "aspects" worshipped in this temple, and there are usually gates barring the way to an inner shrine which can be visited only by persons of status. In some temples sweeping staircases lead up to a higher level where this inner



The Emblem
of Thúmis.

shrine is situated. At the back of the main hall and of the smaller shrines there are staircases within the wall-thicknesses which lead up to priests' quarters on the upper floors. Living quarters are frequently built as side buildings on the pyramidal platform as well. Important assets, such as great libraries, astrological observatories, museum-like Halls of Wisdom Made Manifest, temple schools, etc., etc. are also constructed on the pyramid-top to the side of back of the central temple. The pyramid itself often contains rooms and passages which lead to private shrines, cult rooms, storerooms and guardrooms, and eventually down to the ancient levels of the city underworld. Since the Tsolyáni often pull down the superstructure of a temple and enclose it within a bigger and grander pyramid, building a new shrine on top of the new construction, many of the older shrines are buried under many layers of previous temple buildings. These are carefully preserved and maintained as secret inner shrines accessible only to the higher initiates.

If there is room in the city surrounding the temple, there will often be an outer compound, where further guard rooms, priestly quarters, administrative chambers for the recording and keeping of temple tithes and land grants, cookrooms, storerooms, etc., etc. are to be found. One important feature of the Tsolyáni temple is usually built in these outer compounds too: the Túnkul tower. This strongly buttressed edifice contains the temple's great cylindrical gong, the Túnkul, which is rung to announce the holding of ceremonies within. Each temple has its own Túnkul, and the notes of these are recognised by the people of the city and are used to tell the time, much as church bells and great clocks such as Big Ben in London are utilised in this world. Some of these Túnkul are huge, needing a score of priests swinging a great padded beam slung from ropes to strike them. If the city is too crowded to allow room for these out-buildings, as at Khirgar, the Túnkul tower is built upon one corner of the pyramidal central structure.

Each temple has its own roster of daily rituals, and these differ from city to city even within the same sect. Usually, however, the priesthood of Thúmis celebrates the rising of the sun at dawn, a great mid-day ceremony, another at sunset, and yet another about three hours later. Some add particular rituals at the rising and setting of Tékumel's two moons, Káshi and Gayél. In Báy Sí there are more; there the rituals are in order, "The Opening of the Eyes of Radiance" at dawn, the "Purification of the Intellect" at midday, the "Following of the God" at about three o'clock, the "Purifying of the Lips of Thúmis" at sunset, the "Rising unto the Planets" about two hours later, and the "Visitations of the Night" at about two o'clock in the morning. These involve the presence of all priests and priestesses resident in the temple, much chanting from the "Korúnkoi hiHengándalisa" (the Book of Mighty Splendour). Thúmis accepts no human sacrifices, and thus the only presentations made to the god are baskets of fruit, flowers, and--from richer patrons--eye-shaped memorial objects made of gold, gems, and other precious substances. These last are inscribed with the donor's name and a request for intercession from the god.

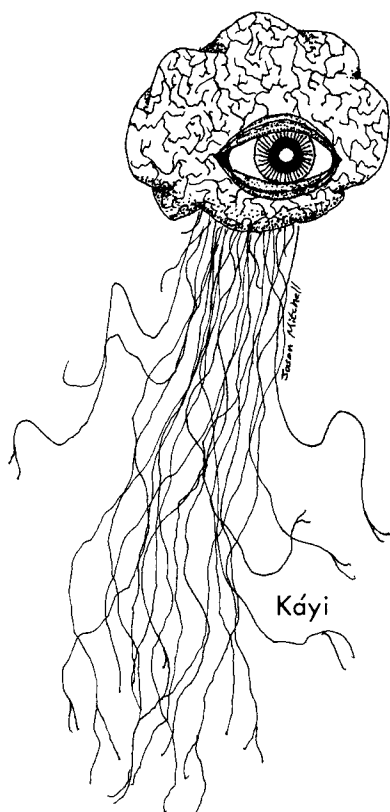
Individual services are also possible upon payment to the priests. The poor may obtain prayer-scrolls from the horde of priestly scribes who sit in the outer courtyards, or who line the outer entrance halls and colonnades. Wealthier persons can enter at almost any time of day (the gates of the temple are usually shut at night, except for a tiny postern), and a payment of a few Kaítars will be sufficient to arrange for the personal mention of one's name and presence to the deity. The side shrines and other public worship

areas can be visited and will also require small donations. Those proceeding to the inner shrine will be expected to pay more, of course, and the ceremonies there are correspondingly magnificent. Participation in the inner mysteries, held in the older shrines beneath the upper temple, is possible only for the most devout--and most well-to-do. Even then the most ancient and secret shrines and ceremonies are open only to high ranking priests and worshippers of the highest clan status and Imperial position.

The organisation of the priesthood is far more complex than was given in "Empire of the Petal Throne." On "real" Tékumel, almost all of the twenty major priesthoods of Tsolyánu are divided into three types of specialists: ritual priests, administrative priests, and scholar priests. Those who deities favour military matters also have units comprised of military priests. A fifth variety, the lay priests, consists of men who are devoted to the deity (and usually to scholarship, magic, the practice of medicine, etc.) but who are not technically within the hierarchy. For purposes of the game, all of the first three varieties were lumped together as "priests," players interested in a combination of military action and religion could be either "priests" (using such weapons as maces, etc.), and the lay priests were termed "magic users."

Actual practice is as follows: (1) the ritual priests are those concerned with temple observances, as their name implies. After once passing beyond the stage of acolyte and first-level priest (in "real" Tékumel the term is "first circle," but "level" fitted just as well), a ritual priest is assigned to a temple where he/she learns the basic observances, studies the books of sacraments and ceremonies, and progresses on through many, many intermediate levels to become a temple's chief ritual priest. Beyond this stage, the levels are partially ritualistic and partially connected with internal temple administration; one can progress to the levels of High Priest, Grand High Priest, and finally Temple Preceptor. (2) After becoming a first-level priest and after assignment to a specific temple, an administrative priest is given tasks involving the recording of tithes, the keeping of records, maintenance of vital statistics for the residents of his/her area, collecting and accounting of land taxes, produce, donations, etc., etc., and many other such clerky tasks. Most temples own large tracts of land, worked by peasants, tenant farmers, renters, etc., and all of these things must be kept in order. Temple buildings, payments to craftsmen for decorations, repairs, new accoutrements, robes and symbols, etc., etc. are also to be recorded, and the network of priestly administration has to be maintained and overseen out into the smallest villages. If an administrative priest shows promise, he/she can be promoted to head of a local temple bureau, then to temple administrative commandant, then to commandant of a smaller city temple complex, then to a larger city or fief, then to overlordship of a district, then to the governance of a major city and its suburbs, then to regional or provincial commandant, and finally to the High Council of the temple. At this level, the High Preceptor of the ritual priests also becomes a member of the High Council. (3) Scholar priests again pass through their acolytship and are assigned to a temple. They continue their studies in the temple's schools and go on to higher study in a major city, where they are promoted to the rank of scholar, then to senior scholar, then to ranking scholar, then to licentiate, then to proctor of scholars, then to High Scholar--and these last are also members of the High Council.

Temples which have military units within their hierarchies (as opposed to the patronage or financial support of a non-temple Imperial Legion) hire low-



level soldiers directly from their adherents among the peasantry and urban residents. Some temples, such as the Temple of Vimúhla, insist that all temple soldiery undergo training as acolytes, first level priesthood, and then a special indoctrination as military priests before they can become Soldiers of the Flame. These recruits are quickly separated into those who will be fighters and field officers, versus those who will go on into military administration. The latter progress much as regular Imperial soldiery: through a sort of basic training in officership, to captain, major, colonel, force commander, general, and high general (the terms are all rough equivalents of the Tsolyáni terminology and do not mean exactly what they imply in English). High generals are again members of the High Council of the temple.

Lay priests are generally quite unstructured. These scholars usually have occupations other than those of regular priests, and their main connection with their temple is simply one of religious membership. In "real" Téकुmel such lay priests are often itinerant physicians, makers of spells and potions for the poor, scribes and teachers with a bent towards religious study but who are unwilling to undergo the rigours of temple hierarchy membership, etc. Some of these lay priests do go on, of course, to become great scholars in their own right, and they are then recognised by their temple as great wizards and are included, if they wish, in the High Council of the temple.

The High Council is supervised in most temples by senior priests, termed "patriarchs," and these in turn select two or three of their number to serve as a governing council. One of these then acts as Grand Adept for the temple as a whole and reports directly to the Petal Throne in Avanthár. A few temples have an intermediate level between their governing council and

the Grand Adept: a small body of Lord Adepts, who act as the advisors to the Grand Adept.

Education in Tsolyánu is obtained primarily through temple schools; those of the "good" alignment attend the schools provided by the priesthood of Thúmis and his cohort, Keténgku; those of the so-called "evil" persuasion are schooled by the priest-hoods of Ksárul and Grugánu. Other temples maintain smaller specialised educational institutions where their particular doctrines are imparted. Those who wish to learn the profession or skill of their clan do not attend a temple school but rather a specialised clan school; these teach the fundamentals of reading and simple mathematics and then go on directly to impart their clan occupation to the apprentice. When a particularly bright boy or girl is found, however, his/her clan may provide support to keep the child at one of the temple schools. These offer courses in the basics of literacy and mathematics, plus theology, calligraphy, the recitation of epics, music, divine ritual, languages, history, poetry and versification, etc. Further training is then provided for those who would remain in the priesthood, while less priestly-inclined students return to their clans, apply for posts within the Imperial bureaucracy, etc. Peasants and low-level townspeople are largely illiterate and enjoy none of these benefits, of course. No census has ever been issued, but one might estimate a literacy rate of only fifteen or twenty percent in the Empire. Most military units recruit directly from the peasantry and also from the townspeople. More literate and intelligent youths are then trained by the Legion for officership, while the remainder serves out a contracted term as simple soldiery.

Education, thus, is the prerogative of those who can find support, either from their clan or from the personal fortunes of their parents and families. Slaves are not normally educated, although the great households maintain training for slave clerks, scribes, and such specialised skills as singing, dancing, poetry, art, etc. The scions of the great nobility are often educated partially by these slave tutors and partially at one of the more prestigious temple schools. Any free citizen of Tsolyánu may enroll as a priest or priestess and undergo whatever education and training he/she can afford. Once accepted into the hierarchy as a priest/priestess, the young student need no longer be supported by a clan, parent, or other patron but rather receives support from the temple.

The priesthood of the temple of Thúmis is thus a complex institutionalised structure. Both males and females may serve in the hierarchy, and, unlike many religious groups in this world's history, priests and priestesses may marry--within their own clans, usually, but also occasionally one another. Depending upon their parents' desires, the children of such unions can be made members of the parents' clan to learn a skill or profession, or they may be brought quite young into the temple school and educated for the priesthood. As has been stated elsewhere, the Tsolyáni do not share the sexual restrictions of many cultures of this world, and there is considerable mixing between boy and girl students at the temple schools. This is not frowned upon unless it interferes with the student's educational development. The only deity who does not favour "co-education," thus, is Dilinála, the cohort of Avánthe, who accepts only females into her sect.

Players who wish to be priests/priestesses in the game "Empire of the Petal Throne" are allowed to assume that they are already part of the Tsolyáni hierarchy. In fact, however, foreigners entering the Imperium for the first time may spend a year or two finding their way about this complex culture before

deciding to enter one of the priesthoods. They are then allowed to enter the temple schools, where they must support themselves until they are approved as first level priests/priestesses. They are then given the usual training and allowed to serve as their interests and skills permit. It is true that the deities of Tsolyánu have their counterparts in some of the other empires--Mu'ugalavyá, Yán Kór, and to some extent Salarvyá (Livyanu's shadowing deities are another matter)--although attributes and forms may differ considerably. A young Salarvyáni follower of Shiringgáyi, their principal goddess, might choose to follow Avánthe, her nearest Tsolyáni counterpart, but this is not absolutely necessary--he might perceive closer affinities with Hnálla, Thúmis, Karakán, one of the cohorts--or even with one of the "evil" deities, since Shiringgáyi embodies several of those attributes as well. In "real" Tékelmel, stray castaways from the great southern continent across the Deeps of Chanayága are very rare. Their religious predilections seem to fit in with one or another of the Tsolyáni deities, however, and several such foreigners are now recognised priests, scholars, etc. within the Tsolyáni hierarchies. Again, this seems to be a matter of personal conscience and desire.

Nonhumans are another problem. The Ahoggyá, Hláka, Pygmy Folk, and Tinalíya would not in "real" Tékelmel ever give allegiance to one of the human gods; their own deities are quite different and almost unintelligible to humankind. The Páchi Lei, Pé Choi, and the Swamp Folk, on the other hand, tend to ape their human neighbours and accept the human deities as their own while they are in the lands of men. They claim that these same deities are manifested to them in much the same way as they appear to humans; the names and attributes are different, of course. The Shén accept human deities indifferently while journeying in human territories, but they always revert to the worship of their own two great deities when they return home. One of these, the One of Eggs, is apparently roughly equivalent to the human "good" alignment taken all together, while the other, the One Who Rends, is an amalgam of the evil deities. The inimical races--Hlutrgú, Hlýss, Shunned Ones, and the Ssú--stand completely outside the human system. There is no question of alignment for them; they are always hostile and make no alliances with human "good" or "evil." Their gods, whatever they may be, are totally opposed to the whole human pantheon, whether it be Hry'ý or Hnálla.

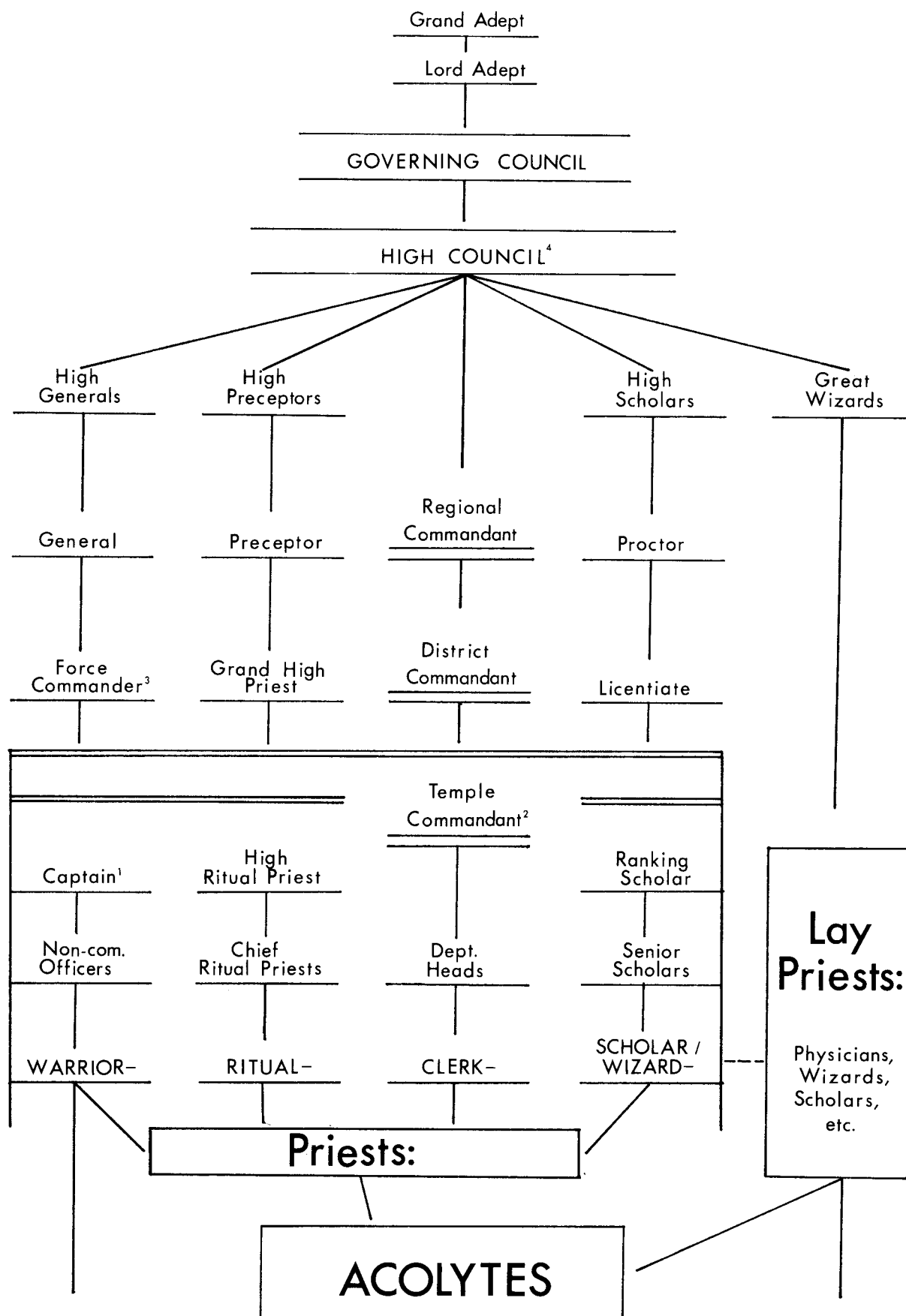
There is also the question of priestly duties for players in "Empire of the Petal Throne." Often a group of players will enter a new city and simply walk up to their temple and ask for food and lodgings. They are then surprised when they are asked for papers from their former city assigning them to this new post. In "real" Tékelmel, of course, a priest or priestess would quickly be given regular tasks within the hierarchy and would be expected to serve there until given an assignment elsewhere. Free choice does not much enter into it. If a member of the priesthood is assigned a post, he or she is expected to go there and perform accordingly; upon this performance he/she will receive further promotions--or demotions. In order to facilitate adventuring in the game, however, priests in my own campaigns usually find some leniency--an understanding duty priest who is willing to report to the player's original temple that this person has now arrived here and wishes to be enrolled in this temple. This is done for a consideration, of course. Priests and priestesses who travel upon temple business are housed in guest quarters in the outer temple compound (if there is one--otherwise in such guest quarters as the temple may possess inside). If

they then enter into the local hierarchy, their permanent lodgings and food are arranged. There are of course special leaves of absence; e.g., to take care of family or clan business, to perform special missions, and even to take care of personal business concerns (priests are not forbidden to engage in trade, providing that it does not interfere with temple duties). A Tsolyáni duty priest would be nonplussed to find a stranger strolling into his temple saying, "Hi, I'm so-and-son, just in from Jakalla--can you fix me up with a bed and some dinner?" In order to simulate more of "Tékelmel-reality," a referee should assign each "priest" or "priestess" regular duties and see that these are carried out. Travel should be with permission of the temple authorities and should hopefully result in some good for the temple. Missions to another city should specify objectives and time to be spent there. Leaves of absence can and should be provided, but within limits. Unauthorised absences and derelictions of duty should be disciplined--even to expulsion from the priesthood. This is how it would really be. . . .

Another question frequently asked is whether or not one will find temples to these same deities in other lands? Can one travel to Ssa'átis and be assured of finding a temple of Thúmis there ready to assist? The answer varies from place to place: in Mu'ugalavyá one finds temples to the local equivalents of all the Tsolyáni gods, plus the peculiar cult god of the Mu'ugalavyáni, Hrsh. In Yán Kór similarly one will encounter much the same deities under new guises, although there are several smaller sects and local cults. Little Pijéna worships their strange "She Who Is Not Seen," perhaps a form of Avánthe, or perhaps an aspect of Dlamélish--strangers are not permitted to view their rituals. Ghatón, Milumanayá, Saá Allaqí--all share modifications of the Tsolyáni religious

Temple Diagram Footnotes

- ¹ This is the highest rank in those temples which do not support legions. Such warriors are temple guards and are locally recruited, trained and supported. There is no central command or coordination of forces.
- ² In temples outside the larger urban areas the high ritual priest also serves as the temple commandant, and the department heads report to him. If the ritual priest is advanced to a higher administrative post, he discontinues his ritual functions.
- ³ A force commander's rank is subject to considerations of location, mission, troops, personal status, etc. The ranks and route of advancement are the same as for the regular military forces.
- ⁴ Members of the High Council are often given the additional status of "Patriarchs."



system, descended from the same ancient faith, that of Engsvan hlá Gánga. The Salarvyáni hold their form of Avánthe, Shiringgáyi, in especial reverence, although small temples to some of the other deities also exist there. In far-off Livyánu the overlordship belongs to Qaame'él, Lord of Shadows, and the other gods of that priest-ridden land are equally mysterious and secretive. Whether these deities are really the same interdimensional beings as the "gods" of Tsolyánu, or whether they are simply creations of their human worshippers--or whether they are interdimensional beings different from the familiar twenty of the Imperium--these are questions known only to the gods themselves. It is clear that the Livyáni are mighty sorcerers and are indeed in contact with some interdimensional force, but whether Qaame'él or the Horned One of Secrets of the city of Laigás are the "same" as the gods of Tsolyánu is as yet unresolved by scholars and theologians. Referees of "Empire of the Petal Throne" may wish to simplify the matter by allowing all the nations of Tekumel to have the same deities, or they may wish to make them different. In reality the matter is quite complex and has not been resolved by the scholars of Tekumel themselves.

It may be noted that even within the Imperium there are centres and strongholds of each deity. The farther west one goes, the more one finds the worship of Vimúhla predominating--so much so that Mu'ugalavyá may be said to be his territory in spite of the presence of their ancient cult-god, Hrsh. Vimúhla is also strong in Fasíltum. Sáрку is very strong in the north, particularly around the city of Sáрку [hex 4115]. Hnálla and Karakán are powerful in Beý Sý and Avánthár. Thúmis, as said above, predominates in Dó Cháka, has a large following in Beý Sý, and is also worshipped in Sokátis. Ksáru is in the ascendancy in Mreú and to some extent in Púrdimal. . . . And so on.

Another frequently asked question concerns the existence of religious feast days and holidays. Thúmis is honoured on the twenty-fifth of the month of Dohála in Túmíssa, when his Festival of the Light of Wisdom is celebrated. The same pageant is celebrated on the same day in Sokátis, and the two cities vie with one another in the pomp and splendour of their rituals and feasting. During the five intercalary days inserted at the end of the Tsolyáni year many festivals are celebrated in various cities: on the first of these days the festival of the "Web of Wisdom" is celebrated by the sect of Thúmis at Mreú, and on the fifth day Páya Gúpa holds the "Visitation of the Eye." These are the primary festivals devoted to this deity, although smaller ones are held almost every month during the year in some city or other. The general form of these great holiday celebrations consists of the distribution of free food and drink at the temples of the god, rich pageants and processions from one temple to another (e.g. Thúmis' image ceremonially "visits" the temple of Hnálla during the Festival of the Light of Wisdom), lengthy ceremonies and offerings, visits by Imperial officials and persons of status to the temples, feasts, dancing, and mimes. All of the temples have such special ceremonies and holidays, which members of other sects may attend or not as they choose.

A final doctrinal point may be mentioned here. Every temple has within it those who may be classified as "conservatives," those who follow the "middle of the road," and those who advocate some type of reform or radical change. The temple of Thúmis is no exception to this common human characteristics, and within the temple hierarchy there are those who staunchly follow the old ways and the laws of the ancestors exactly as they were laid down. Their objective is the continuance of the status quo--if anything, a return to values which they somehow perceive

to be slipping away. These are mostly followers of the Phenomenal Manifestation of the Eye doctrine. Those in the middle are often simply the time-servers, those who go along with their daily cares and perceive no great need to alter society one way or another. The "radicals" are more important: those in the temple of Thúmis have established an inner, secret society called the Brotherhood of Supernal Wisdom, made up largely of younger priests and priestesses, particularly those educated in the temple school at Beý Sý. Another centre of this group is at Sokátis. This group believes that true wisdom must be made to triumph, and those who follow anti-societal doctrines (i.e., the followers of the "evil" deities) must be brought around to perceive the error of their faiths and the Truth of Light. This group has been much suppressed by the senior priests, who fear that such tendencies may bring about violence and a breach of the centuries-old Concordat (the treaty between all of the twenty Tsolyáni sects not to engage in inter-sect violence, assassination, or warfare). This, say the conservatives, would plunge the nation into civil war and would open the door to the Yán Koryáni, the Salarvyáni, etc. The Brotherhood of Supernal Wisdom states that it wants no such violence (contrary to the pressures from certain other secret societies within others of the temples of the "good" gods, who advocate almost a holy war); they say that instead they wish to establish the schools of Thúmis on a broader basis and educate more Tsolyáni children in the doctrines of wisdom; they desire to expand their practice of medicine and science and thus entice more of the common folk to join the temple of Thúmis (to the detriment of the other temples, of course); and they argue that only through a concerted campaign to indoctrinate, to obtain high posts, to favour adherents of Thúmis and the "good" gods, etc. will they be able to bring about an end to the ancient worship of the "evil" ones. In these plans they are joined by the Pure Light Society of the temple of Hnálla, and by certain other secret societies in various priesthoods of the cohorts. They are opposed not only by counterpart groups in many of the "evil" priesthoods, but also by the Girdle of Purity Society of the temple of Avánthe and the Clan of the Sword of Righteousness of the temple of Karakán, which wish to take stronger measures to extirpate the worship of the "evil" gods. The results of this struggle are not clear, but it is obvious that one of their first goals is the removal of the present High Princeps, Gámalu hiBeshyéne, whom they perceive to be essentially a conservative.

A word or two about some of the current personalities within the temple of Thúmis may be of interest. The High Princeps, Gámalu hiBeshyéne, was born at Pétris on the island of Gánga in 2,319 A.S. He was raised as a minor noble's son, studied astronomy and navigation, and served for some time as a merchant sea captain, an occupation not uncommon for the seafaring folk of the southern isles. He first came to Jakálla in 2,344 A.S. and somehow became involved with the temple of Thúmis. He then led several expeditions of a mercantile nature to places as far away as Tsolei. Upon his return to Tsolyánu, he devoted himself to the priesthood of Thúmis and received rapid promotions. Eventually this led to his appointment as High Princeps, with the fief of Páya Gúpa being given to him for personal revenue. He has since attempted several reforms, one of which is the compilation of the great encyclopaedias mentioned previously. He has also attempted to establish a military presence for the sect of Thúmis, who had previously not been known to be a "military-minded" deity: he is the patron and current high general of the Legion of the Lord of Wisdom, 22nd Imperial Heavy Infantry, based at Páya

Gúpa. He now has mustered some four cohorts and has two others in training. He hopes to increase these troops to their maximum of twenty cohorts within a year or two, but the short supply of good recruits around Páya Gupa--and also the lack of available training and equipment there, due to great military demands being currently made upon all of Tsolyáni by its military leaders--have slowed his efforts. Rivals within the temple of Thúmis have also done all they can to frustrate his plans, believing that Thúmis has no business fielding a military force! Such matters, they say, should be left to the violent gods.

Lord Kashónu hiSsaívrá, of the ancient Green Bough Clan, was born at Jakállá and is now about forty-seven years of age. He is the chief advocate of the doctrine of the Phenomenal Manifestation of the Eye, and is a great proponent of conservatism and the status quo. He is currently senior high priest of the temple in Jakállá. Lord Kashónu is a man of many pleasures, somewhat rotund and known as a good companion at a feast. He is close friends with Prince Eséiné, the Emperor's son, and his contacts include most of the high nobility of the Empire. Lord Kashónu is a dangerous man when crossed, however, and it is rumoured that he will use his influence to topple the current High Princeps if he can. He believes that the temple of Thúmis should emphasise the physical manifestations of Thúmis in the rituals more and should engage in a long-range building programme to house the sacred relics of Thúmis in more grandiose fashion. Pageants and celebrations are dear to him, and he is an inveterate quoter of the sacred scriptures.

Lord Dúruken hiNáshomai, High Princeps of Thúmis in Béy Sy, of the Clan of the Red Mountain, is about fifty-nine years old and is the chief proponent of the doctrine of the Imminence of the Eye. This man is not originally of high clan lineage and has worked his way to the top of his order by dogged effort (and some carefully laid intrigues). He is thin to the point of emaciation, bald, with the typical central-Tsolyáni hooked nose and sharp chin. His interests include philosophy, several of the sciences, and art, and he served on the High Council of the temple with distinction for the past five years--and fully expected to be made Grand Adept of the temple after the recent demise of Lord Tuingáshte hiSsáronel, the previous High Princeps. Instead, the High Council of the temple split between three candidates and ended by recommending a comparative newcomer, Lord Gámalu, to the Petal Throne. More surprising, the Imperium concurred in the recommendation! This was possibly due to pressures exerted by both friends and enemies of the three likely candidates--rather than offend any faction, the Imperium agreed with the High Council and opted for the newcomer. Lord Dúruken is a sincere and devoted man, however, and he will do as the Imperium commands--until he is able to do otherwise with impunity. . . .

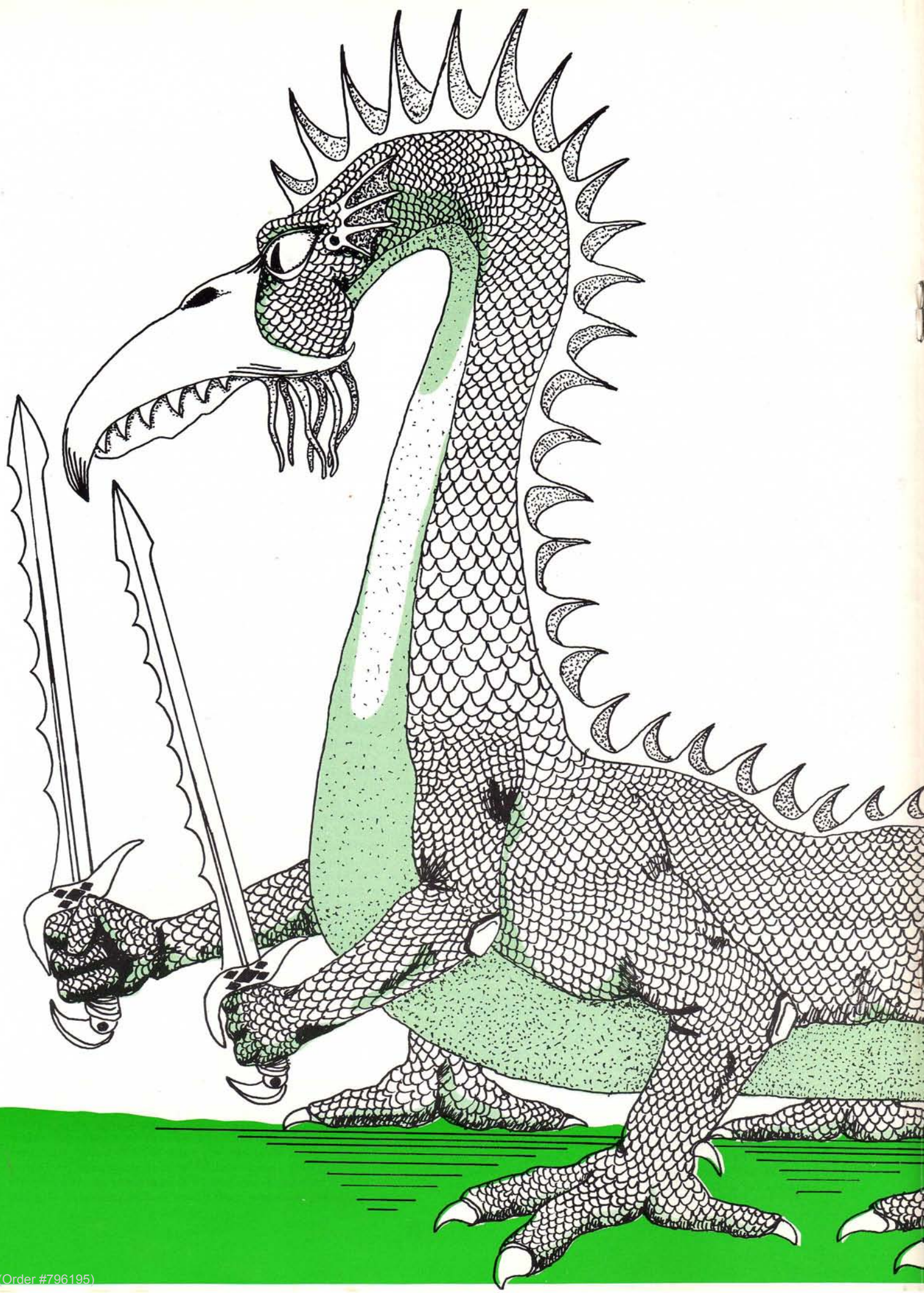
The oldest of the current heads of the temple of Thúmis is Lord Rírutlu hiVrázhimy, of the Standing Stone clan, who is about sixty-one years of age--quite elderly for a Tsolyáni, where life expectancy is not too great. He is the chief advocate of the Transcendentalism of the Eye, and his followers within the hierarchy are very numerous. Lord Rírutlu is one of the senior administrative priests of the temple, and much of the bureaucracy and administrative network are in his hands. He is a thickset, smallish man, of no great strength but yet possessing considerable vitality. In his youth he took a great interest in women, and at one time he had some twelve wives and many concubines. His last wife died about a year or so ago, however,

and he is now alone, totally devoted to his administration--and to a brood of grandchildren who are mostly teenagers now. He is interested in Daqú, the Tsolyáni game of draughts, and in poetry, although in his youth he was quite athletic and a powerful wrestler. His main objective now seems to be the establishment of a solidly effective administration and a central network for tithe collections. He is thus partially in agreement with Lord Gámalu but can never consent to the building of a legion for the temple, holding that this is a great drain upon the temple resources--even if Lord Gámalu supports this legion from the revenues of his own personal fief of Páya Gupa, this takes away tithes and donations which might otherwise have gone to the temple. He is thus firmly opposed to a military role for the temple.

Of the younger members of the hierarchy, one may mention the priestess Lady Sitláya hiHehésha, of the Grey Cloak clan of Páya Gupa. She is a scholar priestess, approximately twenty-three years of age, and belongs to the family of the hereditary governors of Páya Gupa, a post now held by her clan-brother, Lord Díyo Sáno hiHehésha. Lady Sitláya is already an accomplished sorceress, a scholar of ancient and modern tongues, and an astrologer of note. She is also quite athletic and has made journeys back into the Pé Chói hinterlands to search for ancient relics reported to be there. Physically, she is tall and slender almost to the point of thinness, high cheekboned and wide-lipped, as are many of the people of the Chákas. Lady Sitláya is also hinted to be one of the leaders of the Brotherhood of Supernal Wisdom, an accusation which she would no doubt hotly deny. Her life has been exemplary: she keeps only one current slave lover, has never been married (her aristocratic lineage demands someone of equal clan-status, but she has not accepted any of the possible candidates thus far), and devotes herself to her studies at the temple in Páya Gupa. Yet rumours persist that many of the young priests and priestesses who work with her at Páya Gupa and who correspond with her from Sokátis are members of the Brotherhood. This is in itself no crime and cannot be acted against, since the Brotherhood avowedly refuses to support acts of violence--yet this young lady is worth watching.

One of the most respected scholars of the temple of Thúmis is the High Scholar Visárga Kuyumaénish, a man of about seventy-five years of age, who dwells at the temple of Thúmis in Ssa'átis in Mu'ugalavyá. As his name indicates, he is of Mu'ugalavyáni descent. His field is history, particularly that of the Bednálljan period, and his scholarship is famed throughout all of the human lands of Tékelmel. He is uninterested in doctrinal disputes and has little patience for anything but his chosen field. He began as a soldier in the Mu'ugalavyáni army many years ago and took an interest in the priesthood only after his retirement at a rank equivalent to that of colonel. He then studied history and travelled to a great many sites in several countries. His skill in identifying and using ancient artifacts is legendary, and scholars flock to his lectures in the Hall of the Four Niches in the Red Palace in Ssa'átis.

Many other priests, administrators, and officials could be listed here, but this should suffice for the present. Much of what has been said above applies to other Tsolyáni temples besides that of Thúmis, of course, and it is important to establish a general outline upon which later descriptions can be fitted.



Selected Biographies

by Gary Rudolph

Vurósa hi Tukún, forty-five, is the head of the White Crystal clan in Jakállá. His build, which is stout, but not yet fat, has earned him the nickname "the Barrel."

It has been said of Vurósa, who engages in the business of his clan--shipping--with great success, that "whatever goes into his barrel comes out as gold." His fleet of nearly 150 merchantmen ply Chanayága from the Straits of Shéngélu to the seas east of Háida Pakála.

He is a friend of both Tlanéno the Steersman, commandant of the Imperial Marines, and Chiringá, former governor of Jakállá, but has failed to find favor at the Imperial Court due to his abrupt manner and total lack of interest in any but a business relationship.

His only wife died some years ago. He has no children, and thus, his vast personal fortune will revert to his clan upon his death. He worships Lord Hnálla, as is traditional for his clan.

Churrugtëshmu Gaggalmiké is a Salarvyáni merchant based out of Sokátis and Tsatsayágga. He trades primarily in grain, wine, and products of the Gilráya Forest: lumber, pitch, and rope fiber. To a lesser extent, he handles minerals, vegetable oils, and Yán Koryáni glass-coral brought by caravan over the Dry Bay of Su'úm. His immense wealth and high position in the Green Forest clan make him a considerable power in Salarvyá.

In his mid-thirties, in appearance he is typically Salarvyáni; short, blocky, dark, heavy-featured, and hairy. He is a personable, jolly man, but is untrustworthy to the point of criminal when dealing with his partners. Naturally he is extremely careful to avoid scandals and lawsuits while cheating his fellow investors, and has been uniformly successful in doing so

thus far.

His many wives have produced a brood of children, of which several are old enough to have started traveling the caravan routes on their father's business. Churrugtëshmu himself also travels extensively, but increasingly stays in either Sokátis or Tsatsayágga.

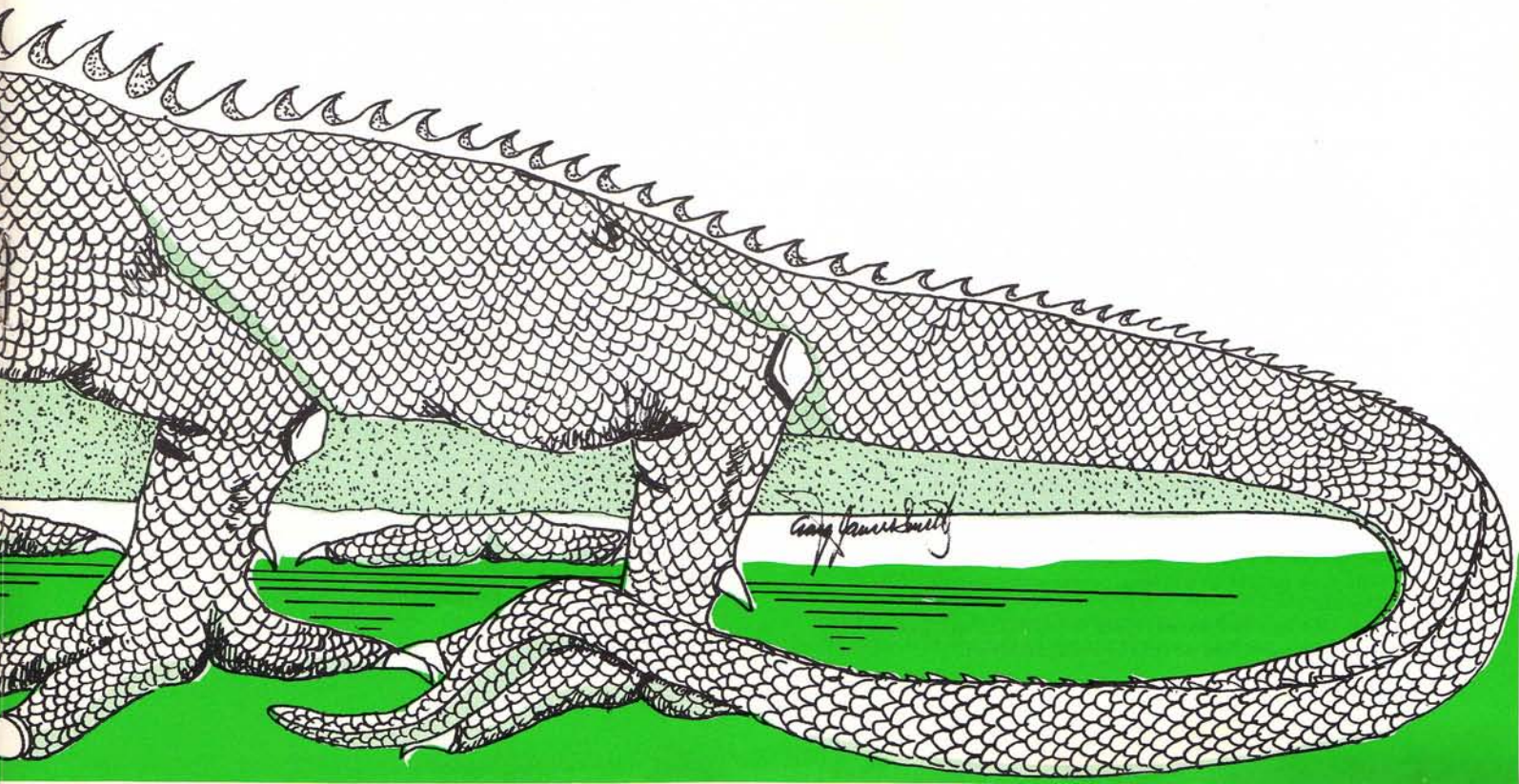
Arkháne hiPurúshqe has been Master of the Tólek Kána Pits for the twenty years since his father, the former Master, died. He is now in his fifties, stout and balding (although he combs his hair to cover it), a man of solemn mien and somber dignity. He rarely smiles, but in spite of the gruesome nature of the Pits, he is not a cruel or sadistic man. Like so many of the Imperial functionaries, he is a bureaucrat filling a now-hereditary post, upholding the fabric of his society.

He has several wives and some young children. His family and the Legion of Kétl, the wardens of the Pits, have come under the patronage of Dhích'une, and thus, the prince and his followers are welcome in the prison, even if the welcome has been somewhat cool since the escape of Qárras hiVriddi during a recent pageant honoring Sárku.

Arkháne worships Belkhánu, Lord of the Excellent Dead, and is a member of the very ancient, very noble Sea Blue clan.

Vorussá hiTukkolén's rise to become Cardinal of Sárku in the city of Sárku, a post previously held by his father, came as no surprise. From his childhood he knew, and was known to the temple hierarchy. Presently, he is as powerful in the Temple of Sárku as the High Preceptor, an old man whom he will soon succeed.

However, even without the connections of his family and clan, the Domed Tomb, it is certain that



Vorussá would have risen very high on his own merits. Now forty-two, he is an intensely serious man of great charisma who conveys the imminence of Sáрку by his simple presence. He is assisted in this by a rare skin condition which has left blotchy areas of black and brown on his face, producing the illusion of decay.

If he is married it is a secret, for the families of those in the city of Sáрку live in special areas of the temples, and are never seen in public.

The family of Murésh hiQolyélmú, commandant of the Omnipotent Azure Legion in Béy Sý, is almost as old and noble as his clan, the Golden Bough. He worships Hnálla.

He passed under the Jade Arch only upon retiring from the military arm of the Legion, where he served with skill and distinction, but his rapid rise and promotions over senior officials to his current post is easy to understand.

His position is second only to the Princes in Avanthar.

Just now entering his middle years, Mureš has one wife, also from the Golden Bough clan, and a young son. He is of squarish build and possesses the typical features of a Tsolyáni of the central Empire.

Élulen hiQolyélmú, the head ritual priestess of Dlamélish in Túmíssa, is of the same familial lineage as the commander of the Omnipotent Azure Legion in Béy Sý, but belongs to a different clan: White Stone.

She is twenty-three, and the beauty necessary to success in her temple includes yellow eyes and fair skin--an indication of blood from the Chákas, where such features are not uncommon.

Élulen was raised in the temple and became active in rituals before reaching her teens. By age sixteen she had completed her education and began her advance up the administrative hierarchy, her looks, talent, and ambition quickly collecting a circle of followers and supporters. She displays a frightening genius in the manipulation of those she meets, to the extent that they quite often believe it is they who are using her rather than she, them.

She is not a religious person, and shows no signs of realizing the final Act of Dlamélish--orgasmic self-immolation--while her beauty holds, but has instead centered her sights on the post of High Priestess.

She is not married, and would not do so unless it meant a long social step upward for her.

Káyish hiTukkímchash, while still quite a young man of thirty-eight, holds the rank of cardinal in the military administration of the temple of Vimúhla in Béy Sý. He is engaged in the task of raising troops for the Legion of Red Devastation, the soldier-fanatics maintained by Vimúhla's temples.

He is a thin-faced man with sharp features, a longish nose, and thin lips. His movements are rapid and violent, betraying the anger and arrogance that an imagined insult will bring out. "He is quick to anger, but not very quick to love."

Káyish is a fanatic, a member of the Incandescent Blaze Society, and devoted to the return of the days when the priests of Vimúhla ruled the whole of the known world.

He has four brothers, only two of whom are in the temple structure. Neither they, nor his deceased father, a priest of Chiténg, evince the fervor of Káyish.

He has two wives, both from his clan, Red Mountain, and has several small children.

The Arch-priest of Keténgu in Béy Sý, Gulgenu hiTiríssa, has been a priest since childhood, emerging the picture of an ascetic: tall, gaunt figure; long, thin face; sharp chin and nose, high cheekbones; and eyes that (due to a physical defect) never look right at the listener.

He studied temple rituals during the early portion of his life, switching to administration only in his middle years. His abilities have raised him to actual control of the temple in Béy Sý, but not to the rank of cardinal. As for so many, his lack of connections (he is of the High Tower clan; a good, old clan, but not one of the old nobility) and lack of personal charm have stopped his promotion.

He is now in his late fifties, and has no outside interests except a game similar to chess, at which he is an acknowledged master.

Chekrásh, a wispy-looking man of sixty-three years, nearsighted, with graying hair and beard, is the physician to the Imperial court in Béy Sý. He worships Grugánu.

His clan is unknown, and, while normally an effusive talker (some would even say garrulous), is secretive when asked about himself. Rumors have said, variously, that he is an agent of Yáń Kór, Mu'ugalavyá, or that he is not even human.

Normally, Chekrásh will only travel between Béy Sý and Avanthar. However, on rare occasions he accompanies one of the royal heirs to a hunting encampment, dragging along one or more carts of books, documents, and medicines.

While his skill as a physician, surgeon, and magician are noteworthy, his greatest value is in his role as an intermediary between the rival factions of the heirs. He is trusted by all the parties, and does much to keep the court of Béy Sý tranquil.

He keeps several magical devices of great power in his library. The only thief to enter it ended up as a vast red smear on the wall opposite the library doors--evidence of an hitherto unknown guardian.

Mrído and Kégo Íto are members of the great family-clan that has governed the Cháka forests for centuries. It is believed that the Ítos began as Mu'ugalavyáni administrators left after the Imperium annexed the protectorates. The family, like the Vrídidi family, is a clan by itself with several collateral family lines. Most of the Ítos worship Sáрку.

Mrído, the elder of the brothers, rebelled against the Imperium some eight years ago, fleeing, however, upon the arrival of Imperial troops. Now, about forty, it is believed that he is in Mu'ugalavyá.

Kégo, his younger brother, took no part in the revolt and was made governor when it ended. He has been closely watched since then.

He is now twenty-nine, a warrior of no great skill, and a mediocre administrator. His great passion is hunting and the raising of wild animals; past-times in which he shows great aptitude.

His several wives are drawn from the daughters of village head-men and serve to strengthen his ties to the collateral family lines.

Mríssa hiChagotlékka fled her clan-house while still a child, declaring her Aridáni status. Originally a devotee of Dlamélish, she switched allegiance to the temple of Chegárra after an unhappy lesbian affair with a devotee of Hríháyal. There she learned the skills of a warrior and joined the nineteenth legion of medium infantry.

Now twenty-nine, she is short, stocky, of a

heavy muscular build, and is quite ugly. Her prowess as a fighter and pride in her Aridani status have led to several duels with men, which she won.

She has seen action during the Íto rebellion in the Chákas and in several border actions with Kéttukal, rising in time to the command of her legion, which is composed of Aridáni women warriors.

Her clan, the Blue Stream, is by no means noble or ancient. She has, thus, added the honorific "hi" to her name on her own, and dares anyone not to use it.

Mríssa is a skillful commander but her lack of clan or family connections and her preference for the rough life of a soldier to that of a courtier will make any further promotion improbable.

She is not married and is not likely to, but has affairs with members of her legion and keeps several attractive slave-girls.

Chayénwetl hiTsúna, Count of Hesúmra (map hexes 3212 and 3213), is a member of the Weeping Stone clan. He was a strong and active warrior in his youth, and a man of some administrative ability. He never rose beyond his current position, however, due to two factors: lack of a powerful clan, and much more importantly, his unwavering honesty.

He is a serious, stern man, never joining in the local festivals; and while he will always be polite and correct, he is still unfriendly to wandering strangers.

A worshipper of Belkhánu, he is a deeply religious man who speaks often of attaining a position near the throne of Belkhánu, or in general of the position he hopes for in the Isles of the Blessed. This faith in the eternal is the basis for his honesty in life, and is likely to be the only reward for that honesty. Only recently Chayénwetl impaled his son-in-law for banditry--a measure of the depth of his feelings.

He has several sons nearing adulthood.

On Customs: The Méshqu

by Gary Rudolph

As any visitor to Tsolyánu knows, their society is highly organized and "status" conscious. Status is the sum of factors both ancient and current: clan and family lineage, governmental or religious posting, wealth, marriage connections, and so on. The stability of the Imperium under the Bednálljan and Tlakotáni dynasties has resulted in an ever-increasing elaboration and stratification of the society around these status rankings.

The Tsolyáni love for the three dimensional depiction of the abstract is legendary. As the status system has grown more detailed, so correspondingly, Tsolyáni dress has grown more elaborate serving as a mechanical aid in the (necessary) display of one's own status and recognizing the status of others. A natural development of this trend is the public display of emotion in a similar, mechanical way.

Even before the time of the Éngsvan hláGárgan Empire households with ill members or in mourning customarily displayed this by hanging squares of colored cloth outside their doors. Taking their inspiration from this, sophisticates of the early Bednálljan Empire began to use plates of chlen hide and new colors to depict anger, feasting, depression, unavailability, and so on; and then more subtle variations of these "méshqu" plaques, as they came to be called. The most sophisticated Imperial circles now use a pack of more than 180 méshqu, although most people use a pack of only a few dozen. The number commonly used is even fewer.

The use of the méshqu extends throughout the upper and middle classes. The lower classes either use no méshqu, or use four or five squares of colored cloth, much as their ancestors did. The Mu'ugalavyáni frequently use the devices, but, except as a novelty item, no other nation does.

Each plaque has a hole near the top edge. When in use, it is hung on an eye-level hook outside the owner's door. Thus, the presence of a plaque also indicates the presence of the plaque's owner. Absence of a plaque is an almost sure sign the person is not home.

To misrepresent your mood by means of the méshqu is considered boorish and, in fact, is all but incomprehensible to most Tsolyáni. It would be as if a person had caused his number to be listed incorrectly in the phone book: not only insulting, but useless.

A plaque is usually square, about 125 to 150 mm on a side, although triangular, circular, oval, and other shapes are used at the owner's whim. They are most often made of chlen hide, but the owner may use cloth, metal, precious stones, or other materials as his station and desires warrant. Pieces of cloth have only the simple, one-color designs showing the most basic moods. Chlen plaques are enameled before the design is painted on. Plaques can be bought separately or in full packs in any market.

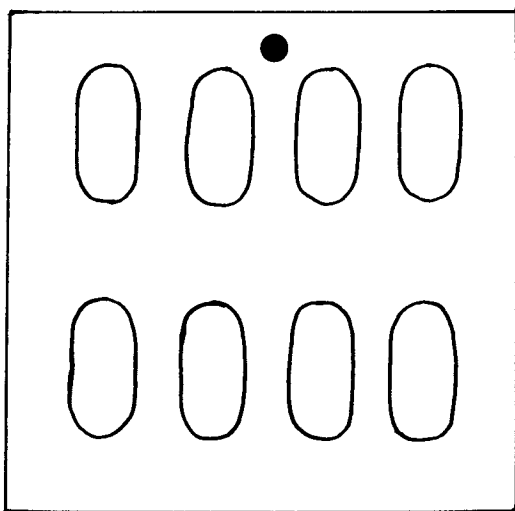
Whatever the shape or the materials of a plaque, the meanings of the colors and the patterns are always the same. A person can, of course, invent or modify patterns to express a new meaning, but that meaning will only be understood by the people he explains it to, and thus, its use would be limited.

Some of the simple plaques are:

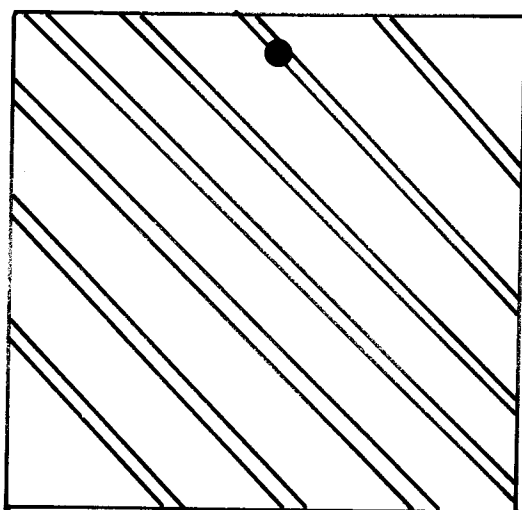
A. The Plaque of Grievous Mourning. This plaque is yellow, and indicates a death in the house, or of someone dear to the owner.

B. The Badge of Prayerful Indisposition. This plaque is white, and indicates illness in the house, or of the owner.

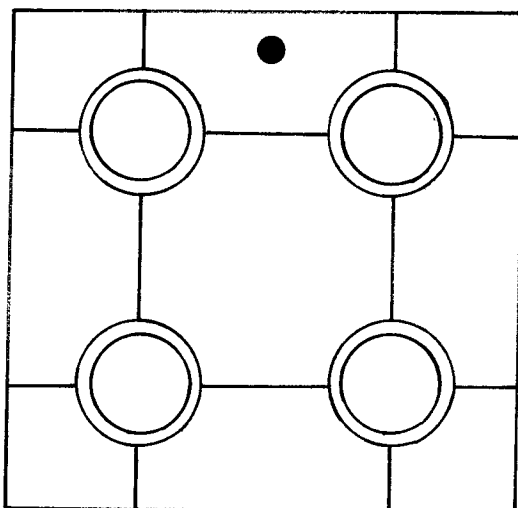
C. The Plaque of Haughty Indignation. This plaque is red, inspired by Vimúhla, and indicates that the owner is angry, probably over something specific,



E



H



J

but also frequently denoting simple bad mood.

D. The Badge of Immediate Availability. This plaque is a leafy green, and is used to show that a business is open, a scribe or clerk is not busy, or simply that the owner is not busy and is willing to receive guests.

E. "Unavailable." This plaque, mossy green with four or more white oval-shaped rings in neat ranks and files, has no name, but indicates the owner is doing something private, or is gone briefly. Whether he is out, or under is not shown, but the message is clear: Call again later.

Some of the more sophisticated meshqu are:

F. The Badge of Solemn Contemplation. This plaque is green, with red stripes running horizontally from upper left to lower right. It indicates the owner is in a relaxed mood, and would welcome a visitor or two for the purposes of leisurely discourse.

G. The Plaque of the Fist of Stern Retribution. This plaque is a checkered pattern of red and black. It indicates the owner is angry, almost certainly about something specific. Think twice before knocking.

H. The Badge of Interminable Repose. This plaque is brown, with gray diagonal stripes from upper left to lower right. It shows the owner is in bed, sleeping.

I. The Plaque of Serene "Palkék" (a word approximating "to take nourishment"). This plaque is striped vertically with red and green. There are gold dots on the green lines. The owner is eating alone, or with intimates. If of equal or higher status you may expect to be fed if you enter.

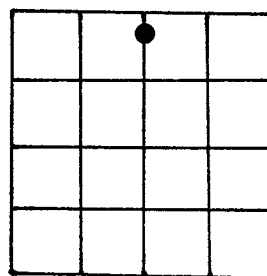
J. The Plaque of Joyous Conviviality. This plaque is green, with gold rings arranged in rows. The gold rings are connected horizontally and vertically by gold lines. It indicates feasting, and an open invitation to all of equal or greater status to enter and join the party.

Some of the even more sophisticated meshqu are:

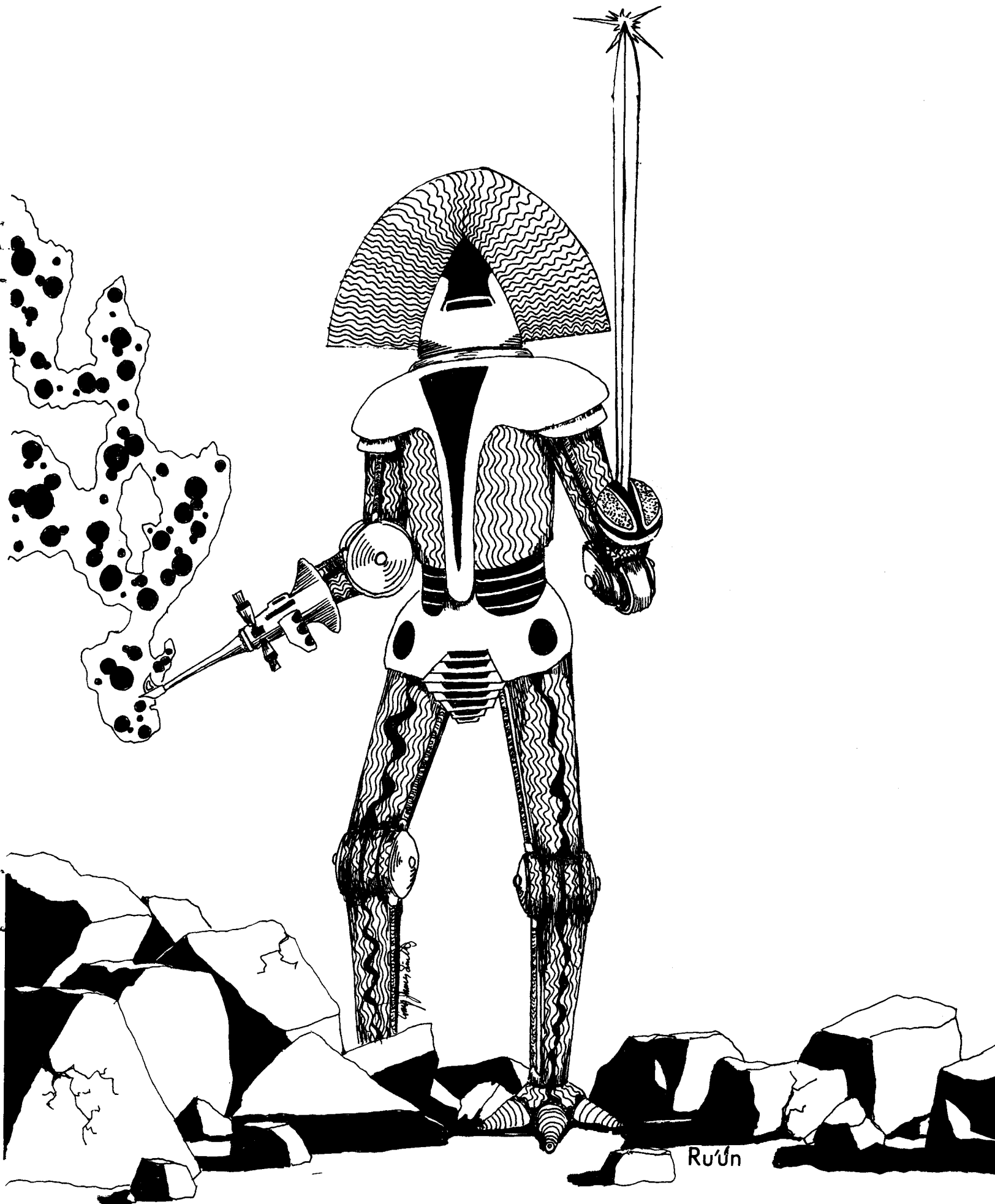
K. The Plaque of Indefinable Sorrow. This plaque is a deep purple-blue. It shows the owner to be sad and depressed. The world is going too fast.

L. The Plaque of Understandable Depression. This plaque is striped vertically with red and blue. It indicates the owner is upset and depressed, and that the reason is known to those who know. It is generally used during the course of conversation, or after a decision affecting the owner is made known, etc. It is a private depression inviting action by those privy to the mood.

M. The Badge of Instant Bravery. This plaque is a checkered pattern of white and gold. It indicates the owner is in a mood to do something, and often pre-sages adventures of a vigorous and sometimes dangerous nature.



M



Ru'ín

SPLENDOR of SHÉNYU

by M.A.R. Barker

Many players of "Empire of the Petal Throne" have asked for information on the Shén, the great reptilian race which inhabits the hot lands south of Livyánu. Of all of the nonhuman races of Tékumel, the Shén, the Pé Chói, and the Ahoggyá seem to be the most interesting to players, and in a number of campaigns players have asked to play the part of one of these beings. It is especially difficult to take on the role of an alien creature, of course, and referees should perhaps advise this only for exceptionally imaginative players. It is not just a matter of being nearly seven feet tall, covered with black scales, and tremendously powerful; there are important mental and cultural differences as well. Some of these will be explained below, while other, more subtle attitudes may perhaps be left to the player to develop.

Historically, the Shén worlds lie around Antares (alpha Scorpii). When man first encountered them, they had already developed interstellar flight and what humans called the "three-light drive," a modification of the torque-stress interdimensional drive used by mankind. At first the Shén were neutral to man, but they soon determined that if they remained passive, the aggressive human worlds would expand and envelop them. They thus colonised all of the worlds close to their region and stiffly resisted human attempts to push them off. A series of small engagements resulted, and both sides suffered losses. Eventually men and Shén came to realise that this was a fruitless enterprise--the logistics of interstellar war are too difficult to make it profitable--and the Treaty of T'kru (the Shén world capital) was signed. Trade developed, and mutual respect also came into being. Although ferocious in battle, the Shén had never been needlessly cruel--and fortunately at this time in human history the forces fighting the Shén were followers of the Transporters, a highly moralistic, authoritarian, almost prudish sect. Neither side thus committed atrocities, and peace came easily once war was done.

The Shén accompanied man to Tékumel as trading partners, setting up a largish mission on the southern continent (not represented on the two maps of the game). This region was too hot for humans but suited the heat-loving Shén very well indeed. Shén records, like human history, do not extend back to the "Time of Darkness," when Tékumel and its sun were cast into a pocket dimension of their own, but it is clear that volcanism, storms, and tidal waves swept away much of this original colony, leaving only a small enclave in what is now Shényu. The Shén epic, "the Recital of Ss-tr," describes in allegorical terms the founding of the city of Ssoruá and the struggles of the earliest settlers. Volcanic activity continued for centuries, both in the southern continent and in the region of the Spouting Mountains in Shényu. Neverthe-

less, the colony persevered and eventually prospered. There was little conflict with the humans, who were based farther to the northeast in what is now Tsolyánu and Mu'ugalavýá, and the ancient strongholds of the native races, the Ssú and the Hlyss, were ruthlessly exterminated.

It may be useful to describe the Shén in more detail than was given in "Empire of the Petal Throne": the "male" Shén (really the egg-creator) is the tallest of the species, ranging up to almost seven feet in height. The "female" (the egg-layer) is smaller and more delicate. The third sex (the egg-fertiliser) is of intermediate height. The males have gleaming black scales, a glittering crest of spiny points which can be raised or kept flat against the skull, a beak-like snout, and three-fingered hands with an opposable thumb. The females are of a blue-black-grey colour, and their crests are smaller. The egg-fertiliser is sometimes hard to identify for humans, since he (she? it?) is similar in appearance to a male, somewhat less black, with tinges of grey on the belly and on the inside of the limbs. All Shén have greyish areas around their reddish eyes, which have a vertical black pupil. There are some further sub-species of other colourations as well, but these tend to be from egg-groups (cf. below) outside of Shényu. In their own land the Shén wear little clothing, preferring only a harness upon which to hang a pouch, a weapon, etc. Those who emerge to fight in human armies, however, often lacquer their crests in metallic colours, wear a metal-link belt with a small metal groin guard over a loincloth of red or blue cloth, and add epaulettes of metal to their harness. Shén also enjoy having more complete body armour and use scale mail sewn on leather, a helmet of metal (copper trim is preferred) or of Chléen-hide (which they do not like but wear when necessary), vambraces and greaves of metal, etc. Shén females wear nothing more than a harness, although they may lacquer designs on their dorsal scales, and the third sex, the egg-fertiliser, tends to copy the fashions of the males, although with subtle differences which can be perceived by a Shén but which humans may not be able to identify.

The central feature of Shén culture, perhaps, is the division into "egg-groups": i.e. lineages of individuals descended from the same male and female the egg-fertiliser, who comes along after the eggs are laid to fertilise them, may be different). A Shén receives cooperation, support, and assistance from his/her/its own egg group. With other egg-groups, neutrality or downright hostility is to be expected, and this is perhaps the main reason why the Shén have never developed into a unified, world-conquering species on Tékumel. The plants and drugs which were used to suppress this inter-egg-group hostility on their own world are no longer available on Tékumel, and thus

the Shén behave instinctively much as their ancestors must have done on the hot, rocky plateaus of Antares IV before these tranquilising substances were discovered.

The egg-group division is primary for the Shén, and this has resulted in the many small "states" north of Shényu: these are enclaves of egg-groups which have split off from one of the central egg-groups of Shényu, gone through a period of "neutrality," and then, as time passed, drifted far enough away genetically to be classified as "hostile." Shén informants have stated that in every clutch of eggs there are always some infants which do not "smell right" (the actual Shén term is untranslatable). The mother weeds these out, killing and eating them as she finds them, but occasionally some escape to run away. These exiles often die of starvation or are caught and killed, but a few survive to reach the northern enclaves. If they are lucky, they may find an egg-group to which they "smell right," and they are then accepted into that group. They may occasionally meet other "exiles" and found a new egg-group of their own. This natural process tends to fragment Shén society and to create continual trouble.

The matter is complicated by the recurrence of the "mating season" during the hottest months of the year, when the temperature in Shényu reaches approximately 60°C. (approx. 140°F.). During this period males from the same or different egg-groups will fight each other on sight, if there is a female with one of them. This fighting is instinctive, and weapons are not used--just teeth, claws, and tail. Females are kept sequestered, usually in the care of the egg-fertilisers, who do not participate in this fighting. The Shén are largely monogamous, forming permanent unions with just one mate, whom they protect and with whom they live. The egg-fertiliser sex, however, is not part of these unions, dwelling first with one couple, then with another, within their egg-group, fertilising each couple's eggs in turn. Each yearly clutch of eggs produces infant Shén within about a two-week period, and these are cared for by the mother and by older female Shén who are past the egg-laying stage. Many of these infants die before maturation, killed by their brothers and sisters in rough play within the "nest." Whenever there is too great a preponderance of one sex, the elderly females also weed out the weaklings, snapping off heads and eating the excess infants. This is only too often the fate of infant egg-fertilisers, not too many of whom are required by the egg-group for its continuation--but it is not correct to apply human standards here!

The exact structure of Shén government is not clear. Senior males seem to dominate within each egg-group, and the larger egg-groups in turn dominate lesser, neutral or friendly-related ones. Elderly females appear to have a strong say in matters affecting the egg-group as well, but the third sex, the egg-fertilisers, have no political or social power and go about performing their endless task with no desire to do otherwise. Each Shén city is organised around a centrally powerful egg-group or cluster of related egg-groups. The elderly males regularly meet (except in mating season) in a sort of loosely democratic council, in which one's status is determined by age, prestige (e.g., due to the size and power of one's egg-group), and personal charisma. This council, called the Hrg-Ssá, organises the functions of government: trade, shipping, policing, military matters, etc. Within Shényu, these councils cooperate with those of other cities, since all are of friendly-related or neutral egg-group lineage. There is no such cooperation with the fragmented hostile egg-group states to the north.



Shényu

- I = Iron
- G = Gold
- O = Gems
- C = Copper

The Shén are great traders. Much of their commerce is internal, with the Chf melon (their main dietary staple when at home--from which they make a bitter, pungent bread-like cake, edible but not pleasing to humans) forming their main trade item from the interior to the coast. In return, the coastal cities supply fish, crustaceans, insects of various types (also part of the Shén diet), and other sea products, as well as items traded in from human cultures. Although not very much given to aquatics themselves, the Shén also maintain a large fleet of ships for trading purposes. For their galleys, the Shén purchase human slaves, since they themselves dislike rowing. They also have a strong navy of fighting ships, sometimes powered by sails and sometimes rowed by hapless humans. The Shén mine gold (hexes 0921, 0822, 0918 being their major mine sites), but this they use largely as a trade item. They prefer copper for their own decorations, and this is mined in hex 0721 at the headwaters of the Krf-grý River. Gems--mostly opals and carnelian--are found in hexes 1021 and 1022 and are traded out to daring human captains by the Shén of the little principality of Rá at a settlement on Sarir Bay (hex 1126). Iron is also mined (probably in hex 0814), but this is kept a secret, and humans are not permitted to view these workings.

From human lands the Shén import glass, pottery (they are poor potters), more copper, Chlen-hide, wines (Shényu is too hot to support good grapes), cloth, condiments, and some food items.

Within Shényu the military is largely made up of males, although occasionally females also are found serving with their "husbands." The permanent army is composed of "legions" (the Shén term is something like Gá-Hf) of 2,401 individuals; these are divided into seven Shf-Gý of 343 individuals each; in turn these are composed of seven Chá-Ss of forty-nine individuals

apiece, and each of these units contains seven Tá-Kr' of seven Shén. The exact number of these "legions" is not known, but it is estimated that ten to fifteen are available around Ssorua', another eight to twelve around Qelegmú, eight to ten around Chri', and an unknown number of others scattered around the land. It is difficult to assess Shén military power since almost all male Shén belong to one or another of these military units, yet when off duty they are free to pursue other business and do not dress or act as "warriors." The "army" of Shényu, thus, is rather a sort of well-organised militia than a separate, standing army. Most of these troops (if one can call them that) are armed in traditional Shén fashion with long halberds, their favourite axe-swords (a three or four foot long sword-like weapon with a heavy chopper on the end), and the small "pistol" crossbow, a hand-held, hand-cocked weapon which fires short quarrels. Occasionally units are armed with long spears and even pikes, probably in imitation of human infantry. The Shén are too clumsy to make good archers, although their field ballistae and siege onagers are much admired by human military experts.

The Shén are also but indifferent magicians. They make use of such technological "magic" as Eyes, amulets, etc., but their use of spells is very poor and limited. This may be due to their clumsiness, to their mental "set" which keeps them from reaching through to the interdimensional force lines which provide power for magic on Tekumel, or it may be because of the lack of strong force lines in this part of Tekumel. Unlike the northern regions, this area (including Tsoléi), possesses few interdimensional force lines and nexus points upon which a magic user can draw for power. Spells, thus, may be used only once by a newcomer and then quickly grow ineffective. The Shén, it is rumoured, possess a number of ancient

technological weapons, preserved from the period of high technology before the Time of Darkness. It is said that these include aircars and some powered artillery, but naturally this is kept a state secret by the Shén.

Indeed, the Shén have little need for more permanent military forces. An attack from the north would have to come from Livyánu, through the many small Shén states (which are similarly organised) and through the ravines and low foothills which stretch from Shryké'el over to the great massif of the Spouting Mountains. Along the southern coasts of Shényu there is another natural barrier; the Morcháptla Swamps, an area of low bogs, tidal inlets, quicksands, and humid, low jungle. Although the Livyáni have occasionally warred with the Shén enclave of Mmatugual and even once made an attempt upon Boch'un, the great Shén city in the foothills of the Spouting Mountains, they have not even tried to penetrate farther south. Human and Shén settlements are intermingled in northern Mmatugual, becoming solidly Shén as one travels south. So confident are the Shén of their isolation that they have not imitated the human Sáke Road system except in Mmatugual. South of the great Heng-Hryggash-Boch'un road, the Shén roads are at ground level, paved with great blocks of volcanic basalt, and only occasionally guarded by squat watchtowers and fortresses.

For game purposes, the religion of the Shén was simplified to agree with that of Tsolyánu; i. e., a Shén can be identified as "good" or "evil" and may worship any of the twenty Tsolyáni deities much as his human colleagues do. In fact, however, the Shén have two great deities of their own: the One of Eggs and the One Who Rends. So far as can be ascertained, the first of these deities corresponds to Avánthe (with overtones also of Hnálla and Thúmis), while the second is a counterpart of Vimúhla (with certain aspects of Hry'y and the scientific bent of Ksarul thrown in). The few Shén willing to discuss this matter have said that the One of Eggs is more passive, more interested in the continuation and preservation of society, more cohesive and constructive, while the One Who Rends stands for the instinctive violence which underlies the Shén temperament, the need to destroy and establish one's individual power over others. There are also many minor deities, demons, and local forces (e. g., the sailors of Ssorua' begin each voyage with a sacrifice to Hú-Shrá, Lord of Winds), but these are not of the same level as the two major deities. It is quite clear that these deities exist for the Shén much as the gods of Tsolyánu exist for humans. It is only when Shén journey out of their lands to seek service with human societies that they may be found worshipping the "human" deities--apparently they are quick to identify their two great principles with the most closely related counterpart in the human pantheon, and so long as they are abroad, they worship this. Upon their return, they revert to the worship of their own deities.

It may be noted here that comparatively few Shén opt for service in human territory. Most of these are young males, seeking wealth and excitement before settling down in Shényu. Very, very few Shén stay longer than two or three years outside of their beloved hot lands, and there is a distinct antipathy to the idea of bringing out one's mate (and an egg-fertiliser) and setting up a colony in some human area. Only rarely, thus, are Shén females seen in human cities, and egg-fertilisers are even more rare. Shén missions and permanent trading enclaves in such cities as Jakálla, Khéiris, Tsámra, etc. may sometimes include females and children, but there is no feeling that this should become permanent, and after a tour of duty the



Shén emissaries are rotated home.

Humans should also note that it is not possible to employ Shén of one egg-group to serve in a legion with Shén from some other egg-group. This produces instant hostility, which may result in violence. Such Tsolyáni mercenary Shén legions as The Legion of the Splendour of Shényu, the Legion of Gr-gá the Egg-Layer, the Legion of the City of Chrí, and the Horde of Hrk-ss the Eater of Eggs, are all composed of troops from the same or friendly egg-groups. On the other hand, the Mu'ugalavyáni employ Shén from some of the smaller states; e.g., Legion XI of the First Palace, "Pride of Xáx," Legion XIII of the Third Palace, "Egg-Destroyers," Legion IX of the Third Palace, "Iridescent Egg," etc. Shén egg-group loyalties must thus be strictly observed even abroad.

To the Shén, men are the "Tsi" (a small monkey-like creature dimly remembered from their own native world); men move about too much, talk too much, and are too flighty. Men find most Shén reserved, rather cold and calculating, given to sudden and unintelligible violence, and without any sense of humour. The Shén are infallibly honourable, within their own cultural limitations, and take no part in the calculated cruelties and sadism of human culture. They thus find men fickle and dishonest, hypocritical and vicious, while men find them stiff, overly righteous about their cultural ideals, and without any understanding of conflicting points of view. In spite of these gaps in understanding, however, the two races have learned to live together, sometimes even in relative harmony. There have even been joint human-Shén expeditions; e.g., the Livyáni-Shén attempt in 1,802 A.S. to drive the Hlyss off of Kushi'il Island (hex 0428, etc.). There are Shén officers in human armies, and human captains of Shén ships (although no human has ever served in the Shén military, probably because of the egg-group social aspects of the Shén military structure). Shén and human merchants have often banded together to operate trading firms, and Shén travellers have even reached the northern cities of Yán Kór, enduring the cold and alien surroundings of those far-off regions.

As for humans visiting Shényu, it may be interesting to note the description provided by Hirikása hiTu'unmra, a Tsolyáni officer who was sent to negotiate for gold in 2,342 A.S.:

"On the next day we passed through the Straits of Va-Mélek, with the low jungles of Shényu to starboard and the rotting swamps of Mélek-Táru Isle to port. All of this coastline is like that near Penóm: an endless wall of green jungle which overhangs the sea all along. The water flows in and out through the tangled roots of this swampy morass, and over all there is the hum of the biting flies. Not a sign of Shén habitation is to be seen, not a hint that behind this hedge of jungle there lies a mighty empire. My companion, the noble Shr-Mgá, sat stolidly in the bows, awaiting a sight of his homeland, which he had not seen for these three years.

"We spent the night tied to the roots of a rotting Sáyu tree, fearing the sandbanks and shoals that predominate in this passage. More, Shr-Mgá warned us of the small pirate craft which dart forth from some tiny inlet and raid passing ships which exhibit few signs of military power. Although our mission had a good twenty troopers aboard, we had no stomach to face an assault by half a hundred hissing Shén, and we lay silent and dark the night long.

"On the morning of the next day we rounded Chá-Kág Head [hex 0422], and before us there opened out a pretty bay of considerable breadth. Into this we sailed, and after well-nigh a day of journeying we sighted the city of Ssorúa. This lay dead ahead of us,

at the mouth of the Krí-grí River, and at first glance it seemed naught but a solid low wall of black stone, from which wharves and berthings of ships extended out into the bay like tongues of stone. When we had tacked and come about before the city, we saw that this was a mighty harbour, full of great black Shén galleys, sailed warships, and craft from half a hundred ports. The city was only partly visible behind a long seawall of cut blocks of black stone, a tower here and a taller building there. Two Shén pilots came aboard, then, and saw us into a berth beside a trading vessel with the red banner of Mu'ugalavyá on the port side and a Shén warship of black and crimson on our starboard. None came out to us, and as evening was drawing on, we took our meal as was our wont from our own provisions. Shr-Mgá took one of our dinghies and the two pilots and rowed off to visit his people, vowing to return for us at dawnlight the next day.

"True to his word, Shr-Mgá appeared the next morning, accompanied by four great Shén with many colours on their crests and all encased in copper armour. These, he told us, were the representatives of the council of Ssorúa, and they were empowered to escort us to our quarters in the foreigners section of the city. We were rowed ashore in some style by eight great Shén, and when we disembarked upon the quay we were received by another of these creatures who wore a cloak of green feathers all sewn upon silk [an imitation of human official dress; Translator]. We passed along the wharves and under a lowering tower which was well guarded by a company or two of Shén in copper armour. I could see on the battlements an array of stone-throwers and great ballistae which covered the whole harbour. I also noted as we passed through the gateway that the floor was of timber and could be removed and thrown down in case of assault, leaving the enemy to face a deep pit, which, as I could hear, was open to the tides of the sea underneath.

"Within the gate there was another enclosure of stone, pierced by several of the pentagonal doors favoured by these beings. Here we were halted while the Shén hissed and cracked in their own tongue, looking over our documents and inspecting the samples which we had brought. At length one of them who spoke passable Tsolyáni came forth and said that we were to be housed in the Foreigners Quarter and that accommodations were being made ready for us. We sat beneath an awning for upwards of a Kirén [about half an hour; Translator], sweating and dripping in the abominable heat, and then a much more lordly-looking Shén appeared, all attired in harnesses of copper and gems. This, we were told, was one Ta-Hrg, an official greeter from the Egg-Group of the Great Nest, the chief faction [not really--just the most senior egg-group; Translator] of this place.

"This Shén took us in tow, and we were led through the city like a pack of pet Rényu, all eyes upon us. The Shén build few tall buildings, preferring long, low stone porticoes and blank walls, pierced only by an occasional gate. Everything here is curved, few walls are straight. The copings of the roofs are rounded, and the few windows we could see over the walls on every side also are of oval shape. Somehow these curvings seem wrong to a human eye, and all of us felt ill at ease.

"Humans in Shényu are almost entirely restricted to the foreigners quarter. When we entered this, we all seemed to feel a sense of relief, and we caught ourselves glancing at one another almost like green troops who have emerged unscathed from a battle. Here there were buildings with square corners and of a form which was familiar. The Tsolyáni merchants of the White Crystal Clan have a large compound here, and to this we were led. Here we were

welcomed with wine and water to bathe and with food of reasonable quality--much welcomed by all of us after our long sojourn on our vessel. Rayásu hiTukun, the merchant chief of this clan here, provided us with all of our needs and told us what we might expect from the Shén. 'Do not,' he said, 'hope for instant agreements and contracts. The Shén take their time, and their council will chew it all over a hundred times before making up their minds. You'll be questioned and interviewed and talked at until you are ready to throw it all over and go home--and that's when they will make you the lowest offer you ever heard of! You must be patient and cool about it all. The Shén admire that, and eventually they will come about.'

"This Rayásu had lived in Shényu for some ten years, off and on, making voyages home whenever the heat and the local diseases got too much for him. He further offered us pointers on behaviour, saying, 'The Shén will invite you to feast, and go you must. But don't eat their accursed Chr melon, for it brings about a flux in the bowels the like of which you will never endure again. If they give you meat, look it over well, for they eat the infants of their own species which they have no love for--the meat will be a bit greenish and of a dark hue. This they may find delectable, but humans sicken on the stuff. Instead, you must eat only the blue fruits that they call G'ar, and the long yellow pulpy things which are the peeled stalks of the Mmi-gr plant. If the Shén are ill-disposed towards you, they may offer you the flesh of a human slave--although they have little sense of humour, as befits a man, they can be sardonic and cleverly insulting at times. Mostly, however, you will find the Shén solicitous hosts, aware of the differences between your diet and theirs, and you may thus expect courteous treatment. Indeed, they may provide you each with human women for the night; these are slaves upon whom they wish you to beget further children so that they need not purchase further wretches from our lands. You may go in to these women or not, as you choose; the Shén are indifferent to our couplings. Of one matter I must warn you; make no attempt to wander about in the city or the countryside unless taken there by a Shén guide. We humans are not permitted outside of certain clearly understood areas in this nation. If your business takes you outside of this city, you must obtain permission and a Shén guide in order to travel, and should you journey to one of the northern Shén states, you must be guided to the border and arrange with the Shén of that place to take you into their territory, for no Shén of Shényu can cross the borders of Qonú, Xax, Gái, or Shrykhe'él and live. Rá, I have heard, is somewhat neutral. --Oh, of course, there are renegades who leave Shényu and join the northern states [a reference to the egg-group membership mentioned above, of which Rayásu may have been ignorant; Translator], but travel between these lands does not occur, and trade consists of simple barter--you pile your goods on the border, and then we come and pile ours; then we take what is agreed upon from a distance.'

"Rayásu then went on to narrate several further instances of Shén behaviour and to describe the plight of human travellers who had fallen afoul of their many customs and laws. As it was late, I bid my comrades good health and went to bed.

"At dawn I was awakened by a servant who brought a copper plaque from the Shén council. I dressed in what finery I could muster, took my comrades with me, and ventured out of the foreigners quarter in the company of four ceremonious Shén soldiers attired in copper harnesses and helmets. Once again we traversed that curious city. After some time I inquired of our escort if any spoke our tongue.

One did, and I questioned him as we walked. 'Why,' I asked, 'are there no market places in this city?' The Shén pointed from house to house and replied, 'Each great house you see is a nesting place; these belong to one or another egg-group, and within an egg-group all is free. We use little money here for exchange, since we know what is to be taken and what is to be given. If you were to give me your Tsolyáni sword, any egg-brother of mine could demand it of me, and I would give it. In turn, I might demand some thing of his. Only in limited matters, thus, do we need coins--mostly in matters dealing with foreign trade. These we can mint aplenty, for we possess much gold.' I knew from this that he was aware of the substance of my mission.

"We arrived at a mighty hall of finely cut basalt blocks. The Shén decorate very little with carvings and paintings, as we are wont to do, and their architecture is thus of a serious and rather ominous mien. After passing through several courts, we were shown into a room furnished upon one side with low daises, such as we humans enjoy, and upon the other with three-legged stools of copper. Seated upon these were seven old Shén. Never before had I seen an aged Shén, and I was taken aback to see that this race indeed ages much like our own: the crests of these Shén were highly lacquered, but yet they drooped and seemed less stiff and springy; the patches of grey around their eyes had widened and become almost a sickly white; their limbs had become thin, and their musculature was plain in front, where their bodies are softest. One stepped forward to greet us, whom I took to be their ruler [actually the senior-most member of the predominant egg-group of the city; Translator]. This being spoke to us in Shén, which is a language of hisses and growls and gargles to human ears. Another, younger Shén stood by to translate. We were welcomed to Shényu and provided with a gift of a golden armlet each. After this ceremonious greeting, our host inquired our business, and without further delay I expounded our mission to him. [The details of this need not be given here; Translator]. At length we were served basins of cold water, a mercy in this hot climate, and then wine, which I think was Livyáni in origin. As we stood to leave, I was given a message by one of the guards that Shr-Mgá awaited us outside and would conduct us to his house for midday food.

"I had known Shr-Mgá for two years in Tsolyánu, had served with him in the Imperial Army, and had been as close to him as one brother can be to another. Yet I felt him an alien when we stepped out into the steaming sunlight and saw him standing there, all proud and powerful in a new harness of copper all set with garnets and bits of opal. At his side he wore an axe-sword of steel, and upon his head a flared helmet of copper burnished so bright that it hurt the eye. With him were several of his family [egg-group; Translator], and these conducted us most ceremoniously through further streets of enigmatic nature, past two great central rounded buildings which Shr-Mgá said were temples to the gods of this race, and at last to an unmarked gateway in one of the interminable winding walls.

"Within at least it was cool. The outer hall lay in semi-darkness, lit only by four tiny clerestory windows high above. Shr-Mgá passed through this into a courtyard where there was a well and a pile of produce, apparently newly unloaded and ready to be stored within. Then we were ushered into an inner chamber where several more young Shén sat upon copper stools. Knowing our preference, Shr-Mgá had laid out mats upon the floor and a white cloth in the centre of the room. Food of our usual human type was laid out there: a central dish of spicy stew, loaves of

Dná bread, fruits, ewers of water and of wine, ho'ó [a Livyáni grain dish rather similar to rice], and other things. In front of the Shén were platters of greenish cakes [the Chr-melon product mentioned above; Translator], long skewers of darkish meat (about which we made no inquiry), and a variety of fruits of every hue. As we sat to eat, a pack of young Shén ran into the room, snapping, growling, and making rough play with one another. These Shr-Mgá said were his children, sired before he had left for Tsolyánu and now grown almost to full adulthood. Unlike us, the Shén matures within five years and takes his full place in society in about seven. Shr-Mgá also brought forward a Shén of smaller stature, whom he introduced as his 'wife,' although the term does not exactly apply. She quickly disappeared again. The females have quarters deep within the nest-group warren, and the egg-laying rooms are said to be far underground. We were not invited to see those areas, nor had we any desire to do so. The acrid, pungent odour of Shén is strong enough in a Legion barracks at home; here it was overpowering. We were also introduced to several individuals whom Shr-Mgá said were the egg-fertilisers of his group--more complex relationships than we could comprehend in one sitting! Almost apologetically, Shr-Mgá stated that it was their custom to entertain guests with singing and music; yet he felt that we might not enjoy their music and could not comprehend their singing. We urged him not to feel disturbed and took our leave.

"When we were once more in the familiar rooms of the foreigners quarter, Rayásu came to inquire of our adventures. When I had related all to him, he exclaimed, 'You are fortunate! This Shr-Mgá is a member of the egg-group to which the seniormost council members also belong. Your business will prosper, and you may only have to spend a few weeks in this accursed heat!' 'Good host,' I asked, 'if the race of Shén is as organised as they appear, and if they are as powerful as I know them to be, then tell me why they do not form a mighty army and venture forth to take away the lands of men? Do they not covet, as we do? Their troops are brave in battle and as clever as we. Today I have seen that they dwell in an organised society and can surely muster all that is needed for military adventures.' Rayásu replied, 'My lord, this is not entirely clear even to me, who have dwelt in Shényu now on and off for many years. It has to do with their lineages, I think; members of one egg-group cooperate only ill with those of others. Even when there is friendship between two of these great families, there is not the will to go forth upon a dangerous enterprise together. Indeed, Shényu could exterminate all of the little Shén states to the north, but as you see, they do not. They are a conservative race, one much given to its homeland and its ancient places. When young, they do set out upon adventures, but when they attain an age they return here to their blessed heat. Although they do produce individuals who desire foreign adventure, most Shén will remain within their families and homes after maturity. Some time back I am minded of one Rr-Ssa, a mighty Shén you had seen service in the armies of Tsolyánu. Upon his return here he set about building up a legion of his fellows to return to Tsolyánu and establish a new mercenary company there--perhaps to colonise, who knows? From his own egg-group he got some cooperation--thirty to fifty individuals who agreed to go with him. From his related lineages he got less, and from more distant egg-groups he got still less, until it became clear to him that no Shén-organised Company of Foreign Persons (as the devilish Yán Koryáni have named one of their legions) could go forth from here. Dissatisfied, he set sail for Tsolyánu, and I have

heard nothing of him since.' I replied, 'I believe he now serves in the Legion called Splendour of Shényu; I met him a year back when I was in Bey Sy. He seemed then a restless, frustrated person.' Thus we continued our discussion until the servants called us to the evening meal."

Hirikása's further adventures in Shényu are of interest, but space prevents their narration here. It may be noted that he eventually got his trade treaty and returned to Tsolyánu laden with gold and trade goods. At this writing he serves as a High Legate in the Palace of Foreign Lands in Jakálla, where visitors may speak with him further of these matters.



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Two Feshénga

