

The Dzaqtas Adventure

A Supplement for Traveller set in the Zhodani Second Dark Age

Jeff Kazmierski

Dlolpliki, Zhdant

Front cover reverse

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A Traveller Adventure Supplement For adventures in the Zhodani Second Dark Age

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In assocaition with

The men and women of the Zhdantia Language and Cultural Institute

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The Zhdantia Language and Cultural Institute

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ДЖАКТИЛ

DZAQTLAS!



The cities are empty now, dead and decaying remnants of the old world. When the plague arrived, it struck without warning, a silent, deadly force that killed man, woman, and child with neither mercy nor malice. We were unprepared for such a thing.

We had ascended to great heights, and had begun reaching for the stars... our moon, Viepchakl, was naturally our first step into the dark of space beyond. Upon its desolate surface we found, to our delight and surprise, another people similar to our own Zhdantia neighbors. We called them the Viepchaklts, and we welcomed them to our home.

We had no way to know at the time that it would be our undoing.

In our arrogance and hubris we reached for the stars, and the gods put us in our place.

Now the scattered remnants of humanity fight for scraps among the ruins.

Of all the historical events that shaped Zhdantia culture in its nearly 300,000 year history, few rival the plague event known as the **Dzaqtlas** (ㄱㄱㄹㅅㄷㄹㅅ), which brought about the end of the first Industrial Age.

Prior to the **Dzaqtlas**, Zhdant was home to not one but two sapient species, the offshoot of humaniti that would later become known as *Nad Zhdotlas*, and a non-human species known as the *Chirpers* or **Qiknavrats**, as the humans of Zhdant called them.

The **Qiknavrats** (ㅅㅅㄷㅅㄹㄹㄹ), like the Zhdantia humans, had long been known to be alien to Zhdant. While their actual history was unknown at the time, they were, in fact, a regressed offshoot of another non-human species called the *Droyne*, themselves descendents of a long-dead species of creatures known only as the *Ancients*. The **Qiknavrats** were discovered on Zhdant's smaller continent, Qiknavra, and in the succeeding centuries, the humans of Zhdant traded and occasionally made war with them and both species prospered.

The cultural and technological exchanges between the two species brought unprecedented advancement and growth. The humans had technology to trade; the Chirpers had a unique skill that fascinated and intrigued the humans – psionics. Though to the technologically focused humans this new skill was little more than amusing parlor tricks, it would later become critical to their survival.

By c. Imperial year -7980 (-550 by the Zhdantia calendar, about 3500 BCE), when Terran humans were still discovering bronze tools, Zhdantia humans and their Qiknavrats friends took their first steps into space. Orbital flights soon became routine, and exploration of Zhdant's moon **Viepchakl** (ㄱㅅㄹㅅㄹㅅ) had begun. To their surprise and mutual delight, the explorers discovered another species of *Chirper* living on Viepchakl, whom they named the **Viepchaklts** (ㄱㅅㄹㅅㄹㅅㄷ), or *People of Viepchakl*. Intercultural exchanges began between the three species, with representatives of both **Qiknavrats** and **Viepchaklts** visiting each other's home planet.

Unfortunately, unknown to all three peoples, the Viepchakl explorations unleashed an ancient, long-dormant biological weapon left behind thousands of years earlier. Within a few years the entire Chirper population of both worlds was extinct and nearly two-thirds of the human population was dead.

The **Dzaqtlas**, as the plague would be called, erased nearly all the



technological and socio-economic gains of the previous millennia. Because of their alien biology, neither the Zhdantia nor the Chirpers had any prior experience with serious diseases. Medical technology was underdeveloped due to the lack of necessity. As a result, human civilization on Zhdant reverted to barbarism as entire cities were emptied in a futile attempt to avoid the plague's effects. For the next thousand years Zhdant experienced a Second Dark Age during which the population slowly recovered.

It is not clearly known when psionics rose to prominence, but it is likely that it played a role in the recovery. At some point during the Second Dark Age, some tribes or kingdoms discovered that certain psionically adept individuals could resist the effects of the **Dzaqtlas**, which had remained dormant years later. Others could use their mysterious power to heal others. Eventually the western kingdoms of Dleqiats began embracing psionic healers and other psionic adepts and using them to expand their influence and power. A code of ethics and service like the Terran code of Chivarly was developed – the

Tavrziansh (タヴヰコスア士), or *Morality's Path* that defines Zhdantia culture even today.

The empire building through psionic development and moral guidance enabled the newly emergent Zhdantia society to recover and prosper again, and within a few hundred years of the end of the Second Dark Age, Zhdantia humans had once again achieved space flight and began returning to Viepchakl and beyond¹.

This supplement will cover how to create characters for play during the time of the Zhdantia Second Dark Age. You will need a copy of both the Mongoose Traveller core rules and *Mongoose Alien Module 4: Zhodani*. A copy of *Beginning Zdetl* published by the Zhdantia Language and Cultural Institute may be useful but is not necessary.

TIMELINE OF THE DZAQTLAS ERA

IMPERIAL YEAR	ZHODANI YEAR	EVENT
-302,000	-392316	Ancients arrive on Zhdant with proto-Zhodani humans.
-300,000	-389659	Extensive development of Qiknavra by Ancients
-299,700	-389260	Final War results in devastation of Zhdant.
-280,000	-363085	Nuclear winter follows; beginning of First Ice Age.
-275,000	-356441	End of First Ice Age.
-260,000	-336511	Nomadic tribes of human hunter-gatherers range across Dleqiats.
-250,000	-323224	Huts, fishing developed.
-240,000	-309937	<i>Nad zhdatl</i> emergent on northern Dleqiats.
-200,000	-256788	<i>Nad vlastebr</i> emerges on southern Dleqiats. <i>Qiknavrats</i> rediscover agriculture.
-150,000	-190353	Human races clash: interbreeding creates <i>Nad zhdotlas</i> .
-100,000	-123918	Qiknavrats establish two large, static empires on Qiknavra.
-80,000	-97344	Second Ice Age begins.
-40,000	-44195	Second Ice Age ends.
-30,000	-30908	Animal herding and breeding.
-24,000	-22936	Special domesticated breeds emerge.
-18,000	-14964	<i>Nad zhdotlas</i> develops agriculture and fishing.
-17,000	-13635	Zhodani Iron Age. <i>Viepchaklashtie</i> Empire founded.
-15,000	-10978	<i>Viepchaklashtie</i> Empire at its peak.

¹ Mongoose Traveller Alien Module 4: Zhodani, pp. 57-61

-13,000	-8320	<i>Viepchaklashtie</i> Empire collapses. Beginning of First Dark Age.
-9000	-3006	Rise of noble classes and feudalism.
-8590	-2461	End of First Dark Age. Beginning of first Age of Enlightenment.
-8550	-2408	Invention of the printing press.
-8540	-2394	Ocean trade. Discovery of Qiknavra.
-8530	-2381	First Zhodani contact with <i>Qiknavrats</i> .
-8500	-2341	Invention of movable type
-8300	-2075	Development of elementary psionics.
-8200	-1943	First Industrial Revolution.
-8000	-1677	Warfare between Dleqiats and Qiknavra.
-7980	-1650	Uneasy peace between the continents.
-7959	-1622	First orbital space exploration.
-7,950	-1610	First expedition to Viepchakl.
-7,949	-1609	Viepchakl base. First contact with Viepchaklts.
-7,948	-1608	First meeting between <i>Qiknavrats</i> and <i>Viepchaklts</i> .
-7,945	-1604	Beginning of the <i>Dzaqtlas</i> .
-7,940	-1597	Second Dark Age begins
-7,920	-1571	Rise of the <i>Dlenchiepr</i> empire on Western Dleqiats. Noble houses begin incorporating psionics as part of their retinue.
-7,800	-1411	Present Day.
-6,800	-82	Recovery. Rise of psionics.
-6,738	1	First Teqozdievl.

𐤆𐤋𐤍𐤇𐤏𐤓𐤕𐤌𐤏𐤕𐤓
𐤆𐤋𐤍𐤇𐤏𐤓𐤕𐤌𐤏𐤕𐤓

DLENCHIEPR HOUSEHOLDS



ZHODANI CHARACTERS

Zhodani characters of the Second Dark Age follow generally the same procedures as for Zhadani characters of the “modern” *Traveller* era, but with several crucial differences that will be outlined in this section.

The most important difference that experienced players will notice is that Social Status and Psionics are not necessarily connected. The psionic Nobility has not yet ascended to prominence during this era, and many who would be considered “proles” or **zhant’ad** in the modern era can be psionically strong and conversely, the Nobility includes many non-psionic individuals.

INITIAL CHARACTER CREATION

Seven characteristics should be generated randomly for all Zhadani characters:

Strength	Measures physical prowess
Dexterity	Manual dexterity and agility
Endurance	Toughness and physical stamina
Intelligence	Ability to reason and solve problems
Education	The highest level of formal schooling attained
Social Status	How high you’ve risen in society
Psi	Psionic strength

These are determined randomly by rolling standard six-sided dice, referred to here as “D” (2D = two six sided dice) and taking the sum of the results. The usual method is to roll each characteristic in order.

You may also use one of the following alternatives:

2D, player-assigned: roll in the usual way but place the values where you want them.

3D, drop low values: roll 3D instead of 2D and use the highest two results for each characteristic.

1D + 6: if you want a more heroic game, where the characters are all “above average”, this produces starting stats ranging from 7 to 12

High Psi: Roll the first six on 2D as usual but roll Psi at 1D+6 to guarantee a high level of ability. This is well suited to campaigns that focus on psionic abilities.

There is no “official” way to roll up a character, however; how it’s done is between the player and the referee.

Regardless of the method chosen, the values assigned confer *modifiers* to die rolls against those characteristics, as shown below:

Value	Dice Modifier
0	-3
1 – 2	-2
3 – 5	-1
6 – 8	+0
9 – 11	+1
12 – 14	+2
15	+3

Social Status

During the Second Dark Age, Zhadani society has not yet become as highly structured, stratified as we know it in the Charted Space era. During these early years, nobility is not tied to Psionic talents and most titles of nobility are still inherited. However, among some communities, notably, the western feudal kingdoms, the beginnings of a society based on psionic talent are emerging. Characters with high Social Standing are considered part of the *Nobility*. At this point in Zhdantia history, psionic ability and social status are not yet connected; a character may have high Psi but be from low background, and a noble character may have little or no psionic talent. In any case, high Social Standing confers a title of nobility.

<i>Social Standing</i>	<i>Title</i>		<i>Zdetl</i>
11	Aspirant	Pranatl	ᠠᠨᠠᠳᠤᠯᠤ
12	Wellborn	Jdistebr	ᠵᠢᠳᠢᠰᠢᠨᠢᠨ
13	Highborn	Viestlas	ᠦᠢᠰᠢᠲᠤᠯᠤᠰ
14	Noble Born	Zhobrtlasche	ᠵᠢᠪᠣᠷᠲᠤᠯᠤᠰᠢᠴᠢᠰᠢᠬᠤ
15	Princely Born	Preblshienchiashav	ᠫᠢᠷᠪᠠᠯᠰᠢᠬᠢᠢᠨᠴᠢᠰᠢᠬᠠᠰᠠᠬᠤ

Psionics:

Nearly everyone who survived the Dzaqtlas has some measure of psionic ability, but not all to the same level. All characters roll 2D for Psionic strength (optionally, 6+1D for higher powered games). Then, roll 8+ on 2D + DMs based on Psi talent and the learning DMs below for each talent known. All characters regardless of SOC may learn Psionic talents.

<i>Talent</i>	<i>Learning DM</i>
Telepathy	+4
<i>Clairvoyance</i>	+3
<i>Telekinesis</i>	+2
Awareness	+1
<i>Teleportation</i>	+0
<i>Psychic Transfer</i>	-1
<i>Empathic Healing</i>	-1
<i>Machine Symbiosis</i>	-1
<i>Blocking</i>	-2
Healing	-2
<i>Mimic</i>	-2
<i>Teleprojection</i>	-3
<i>Precognition</i>	-6
<i>Per talent already learned</i>	-1

For example, a character with Psi-10 gets a +1 for natural talent plus the Learning DM for the Discipline desired. The first talents to check for should always be Awareness, Healing, and Telepathy. All talents begin at skill level 0.

Any of the talents listed can be learned except for Machine Symbiosis, which requires actual working machines and computers to be useful. This

should be learned only because of some unusual life event or luck.

Characters with Psi-9 or higher and who are from the civilized Eastern Dleqiats Empire automatically become *Dlenchiepr* (ᠳᠡᠨᠴᠢᠭᠢᠫᠤᠷ), The Chosen, and are part of a noble's retinue as Priests, Healers, or Agents. Agents are either Bringers of the Word – the *Tozjabr* (ᠲᠣᠵᠢᠶᠠᠨ) - or Guardians of the Word – *Tavrchedl* (ᠲᠠᠪᠷᠴᠡᠳᠤᠯᠤ).

Barbarians (baz) with high Psi talent can become shamans, holy men and women, seers, fortune tellers, or charlatans.

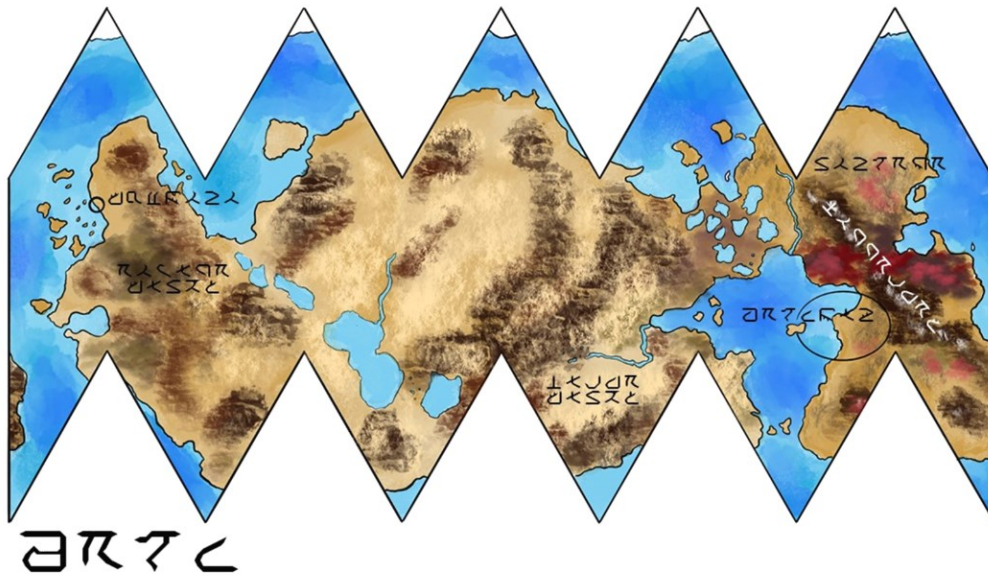
Homeworld:

All characters are, of course, born on the Zhodan homeworld of Zhdant. Zhdant of the Dzaqtlas era is very different from the world of the Third Imperium period. Remnants of the old and lost technology can still be found in the howling wasteland, but such items are rare and often in states of extreme disrepair.

Characters are either from one of the kingdoms of Western *Dleqiats* (Kaznad, ᠵᠠᠨᠠᠳ, ᠵᠠᠨᠠᠳ) or Drifters (Baz, ᠪᠠᠵ). Players may choose their background, or it may be assigned, depending on the campaign style.

The map and table on the next page show how Zhdant was changed as a result of the Dzaqtlas.

Zhdant of the Dzaqtlas Era



Pre-Dzaqtlas Zhdant	C654878-7	Ag, An	Population: appx. 2×10^8 human, 1×10^7 chirper
Post-Dzaqtlas Zhdant	X654778-3	An	Population: appx. 4×10^7 human, chirpers extinct