The Dzaqtlas Adventure

A Supplement for Traveller set in the Zhodani Second Dark Age

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*DZAQṪAS*

# *DZAQTLAS!*

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 (**DZAQṪAS), which brought about the end of the first Industrial Age.

A picture containing linedrawing

Description automatically generatedPrior 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** (QIKNAṼAṮ), 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** (VĪPĈAḰ) had begun. To their surprise and mutual delight, the explorers discovered another species of *Chirper* living on Viepchakl, whom they named the **Viepchaklts** (VĪPĈAḰṮ), 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** (TAṼZĨNŚ), 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 beyond[[1]](#footnote-1).

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 | *Nad zhdatl* emergent on northern Dleqiats. |
| -200,000 | -256788 | *Nad vlastebr* emerges on southern Dleqiats. *Qiknavrats* rediscover agriculture. |
| -150,000 | -190353 | Human races clash: interbreeding creates *Nad zhdotlas.* |
| -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 | *Nad zhdotlas* develops agriculture and fishing. |
| -17,000 | -13635 | Zhodani Iron Age. *Viepchaklashtie* Empire founded. |
| -15,000 | -10978 | *Viepchaklashtie* Empire at its peak. |
| -13,000 | -8320 | *Viepchaklashtie* 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 *Qiknavrats.* |
| -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 *Qiknavrats* and *Viepchaklts.* |
| -7,945 | -1604 | Beginning of the *Dzaqtlas*. |
| -7,940 | -1597 | Second Dark Age begins |
| -7,920 | -1571 | Rise of the *Dlenchiepr* empire on Western Dleqiats. Noble houses begin incorporating psionicists as part of their retinue. |
| *-7,800* | ***-1411*** | ***Present Day.*** |
| -6,800 | -82 | Recovery. Rise of psionics. |
| -6,738 | 1 | First Teqozdievl. |

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# Dlenchiepr Households

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# Zhodani careers

Zhodani characters of the Second Dark Age follow generally the same procedures as for Zhodani 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 Zhodani characters:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Strength | Measures physical prowess |
| Dexterity | Manual dexterity and agility |
| Endurance | Toughness and |
| Intelligence | Ability to reason and solve problems |
| Education |  |
| Social Status | How high you’ve risen in society |
| Psi | Psionic strength |

1. Mongoose Traveller Alien Module 4: Zhodani, pp. 57-61 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)