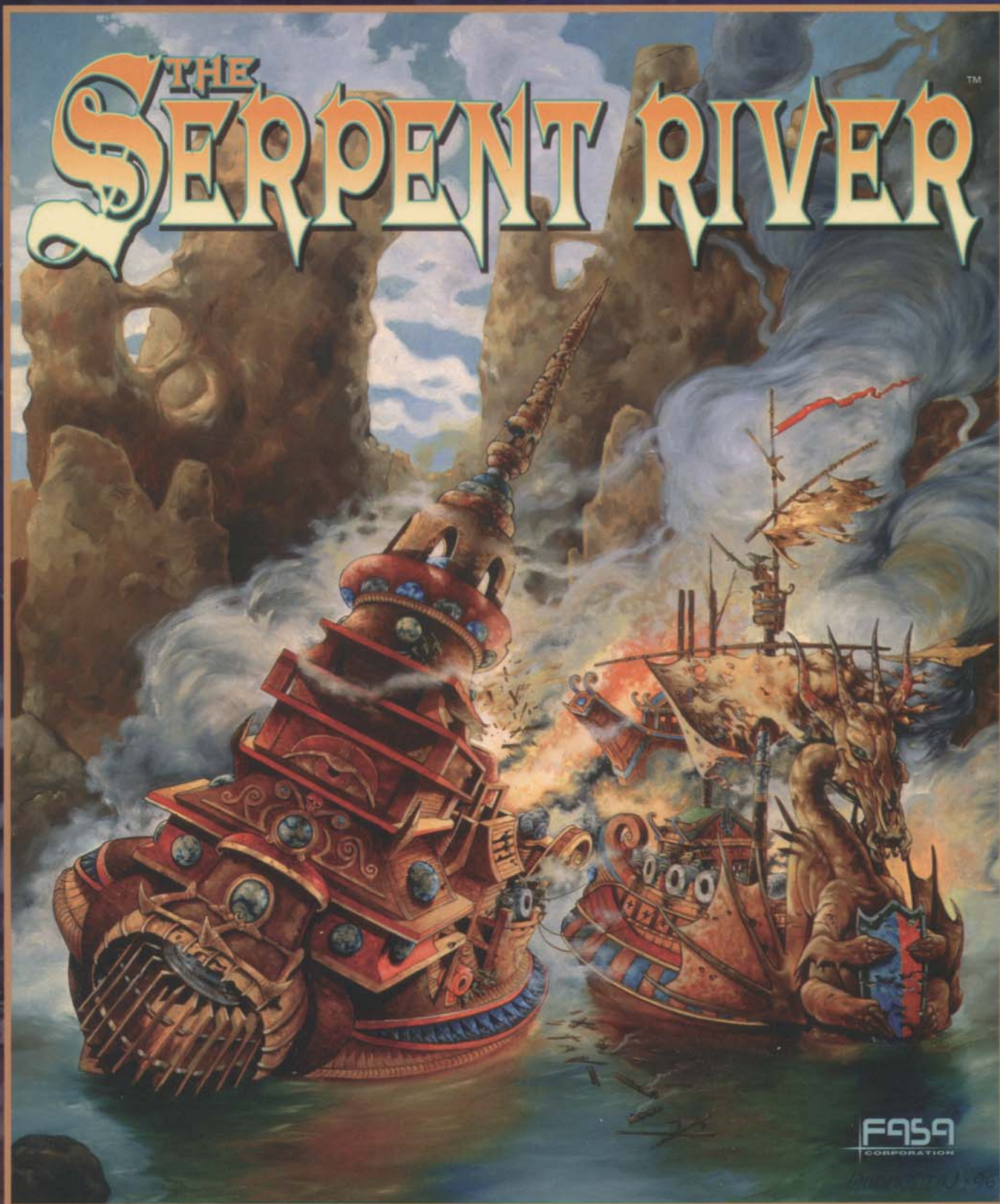


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THE SERPENT RIVER[™]



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THE SERPENT RIVER™



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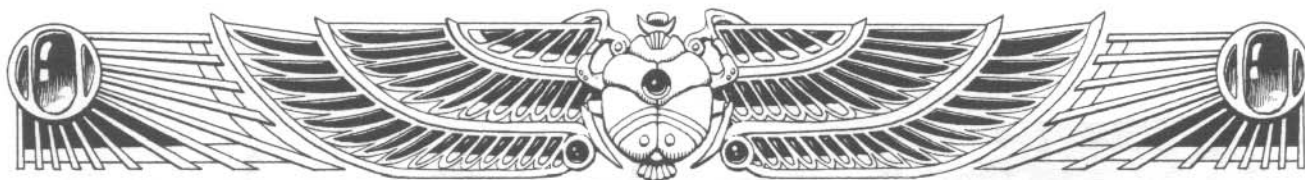
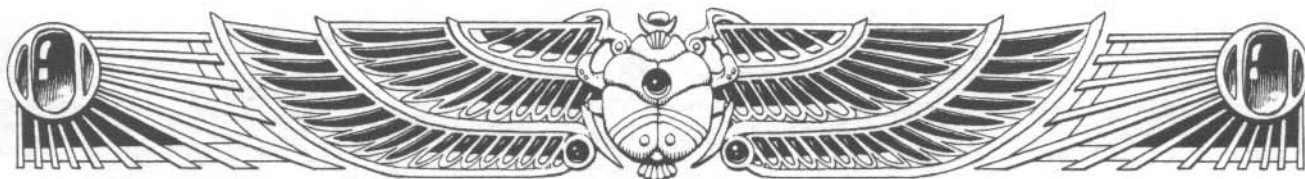


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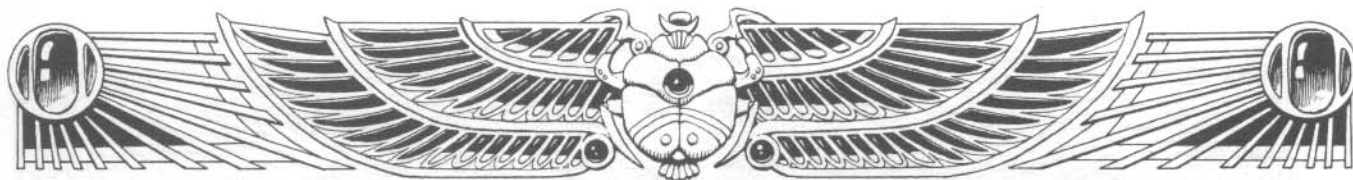
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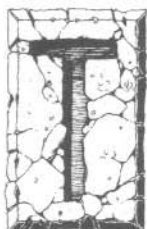
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INTRODUCTION



The water of the Serpent River is the blood of Barsaive.

—Sephiria Mons, troubadour to Queen Alachia of the Blood Wood

The t'skrang know her as Shivoam, the River Dragon. To the dwarfs of Throal, she is Zhirazkhul the Encircler. The elves of the Blood Wood call her Shilarai, the Watersong. And the trolls of Barsaive know her as the Shining Path, for she becomes a glittering ribbon of light when seen from an airship. From the rushing waters of the Grand Cataracts to the impenetrable fog of the Mist Swamps, the Great Serpent River runs the length of Barsaive, connecting the far-flung settlements of the province. Since the dawn of history, Name-givers have plied her waters in fishing boats, merchant vessels and mighty warships. And today, the Serpent River still flows through the hearts and histories of Barsaive's peoples. To know the Serpent River is to know Barsaive.

THE FOUR GIFTS OF UPANDAL: A T'SKRANG TALE

Of all the Name-giver races, none is more closely associated with the Serpent River than the t'skrang. To the t'skrang, the river is life itself—a source of food, shelter, livelihood, even divine inspiration. The traditional t'skrang tale of the Four Gifts of Upandal explains the origins of the t'skrang mastery of the Serpent. This tale is told in t'skrang villages to this day, each word unchanged since the first telling.

In the days before the Theran Empire, before t'skrang riverboats and village towers had spread across the river, the t'skrang foundations lived on the banks of the Serpent and plied its waters in oar-driven galleys. In those days the elves were a great nation, and they vied with the t'skrang to be masters of the river waters.

It so happened that the Passion Jaspree favored one of the Elven Queen's attendants, a questor Named Elidar, with powers over elemental wood. Armed with these powers, Elidar crafted a new kind of ship, a vessel propelled by the wind and the energy of elemental wood. So swift were these new ships that they outpaced even the swiftest t'skrang ship. The elves armed their ships with archers and swordsmen, and expanded the realm of the Elven Court all along the river from Lake Vors to Lake Ban.

Now in those days, one shivalahala ruled all the t'skrang—the Prophetess of Syrtis. The Prophetess had great wisdom, and the t'skrang of the Serpent River looked to her as the elves did their Queen. When the elven fleet besieged the Halls of Syrtis, countless brave t'skrang came to their honored leader's defense; but the elven fleet was strong and well-supplied, and all too soon the defenders of Syrtis came near to surrendering from sheer exhaustion. The shivalahala, seeing their distress, drew upon the vast knowledge and power of generations of t'skrang, and beseeched the Passions to aid her people.

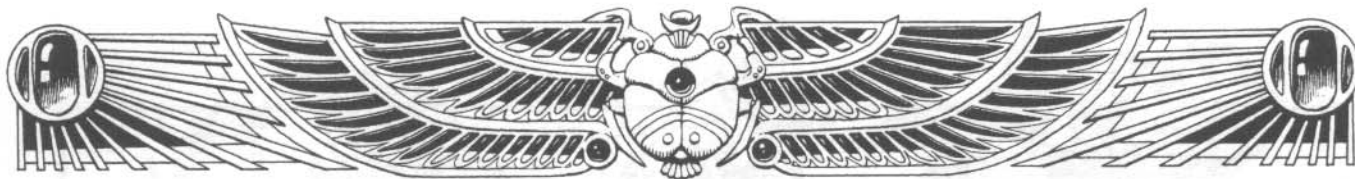
In answer to her call, Upandal the Builder appeared to the shivalahala as a huge four-armed t'skrang, clad in the apron of a blacksmith, carrying a hammer and a steel triangle in his right hands and bearing a cup and a flame in his left hands.

"Welcome, O Passion, to the Halls of Syrtis, the Nightwatcher," said the shivalahala. "From Lake Vors to Lake Ban, the elves in their sailing ships chase my people away from the river. Our ships lie sunk and abandoned on the riverbed. Our villages are empty and the people have lost hope. Jaspree has delivered a great boon to the elves, but a great curse upon t'skrang. We seek counsel and salvation, Upandal, you who laid the foundations of the world."

Upandal looked out over the face of the land and saw that things were as the shivalahala said. And the Passion said, "The balance of life on the river has come undone."







I cannot undo the work of Jaspree, for hers is the power over life—and thus over the wood and cloth that makes the elves strong. But in my hand lies command over the other four elements. What will you have of me, Mother of the Riverfolk?"

The shivalahala thought long, then answered thus: "The Halls of Syrtis are a great fortress against the enemy, but my people are many and these halls cannot hold them. If it can be, I would ask that you provide refuge for my people in citadels all along the river, that they may defend themselves against the elves."

At this Upandal let fly his hammer, and the hammer ran the length of the river. And where it touched the surface of the waters, great towers of stone erupted from the riverbed.

And the shivalahala thought again and said, "My people will rest safe under the great towers you have raised, Upandal. We shall make our homes on the riverbed of the Great Mother Shivoam. But our gills are not such that we can live under the River's water. We must have air to breathe."

And so Upandal reached out with his steel triangle and cut half of the towers to the surface of the river. The force of the river's current broke against these towers, and air flowed through the towers.

Once more the shivalahala thought, and said, "The ships of the elves can still come against us, bringing war to our towers and blood to our homes. We must have fortifications to turn back their ships."

And so Upandal overturned the cup in his left hand and elemental water poured forth into the river. The water took solid form as reefs of spikes around the towers, sure to pierce the hull of any ship that passed too close. These were the *refselenika*.

Finally, the shivalahala said, "All this that you have made is wise, Lord Upandal. But what good shall come of all you have wrought if the t'skrang are prisoners in the fortresses you have built for us? We must have a boat that can stand against the ships of Elidar, so that we can come and go along the river as we please."

In reply, Upandal placed his remaining hand on the forehead of his questor, T'chaidos. The flame in the Passion's hand passed into the questor's mind. Filled to the limit of madness by the Builder's gift, T'chaidos constructed the first fire engine and the first riverboat. Armed with these new tools, the t'skrang soon raised a fleet and sailed against the ships of Elidar. And when the *K'choss na Erawyrm*, the War Between the Elves and the T'skrang, ended, the t'skrang became the undisputed masters of the Serpent River.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The **Serpent River Sourcebook** is a sourcebook for **Earthdawn** players and gamemasters. The book offers readers a cross section of legends, history, customs and lore of the people who live along the Serpent River, with a particular focus on the masters of the river, the t'skrang. Players can use this information to enhance their characters' backgrounds and increase their knowledge of the world of **Earthdawn**. Gamemasters can use the wealth of opportunities in this book to create new adventures, flesh out the game world, and expand the scope of evolving campaigns.

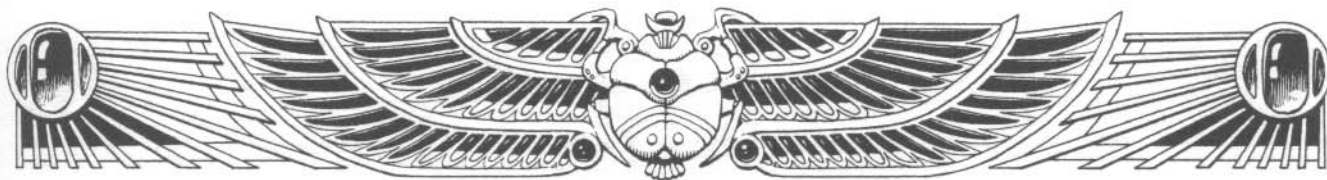
In addition to the **Earthdawn Rulebook (ED)**, players and gamemasters wishing to use the **Serpent River Sourcebook** may find **Denizens of Earthdawn, Volume I** and the **Earthdawn Companion** helpful. The former provides considerable background information about the t'skrang and their relationship to the Serpent River; the latter offers rules and guidelines for ship combat, a common activity along the shores of the Serpent and its tributaries.

This sourcebook begins with an overview of the Serpent River, offering a brief glimpse of the waterway and surrounding lands, the various t'skrang trading houses that control it, and the manner in which travel and trade are conducted along the river's length. Following this overview are sections devoted to distinct stretches of the river: the South Reach of the Serpent, the Coil River, the Mid Reach and the North Reach. Each of these sections is described in detail, including the t'skrang House that controls each region, notable settlements and communities along each stretch of the river, famous and infamous characters that players may encounter, and other items of interest.

The final three sections of this book offer game mechanics and rules for situations that might arise when adventuring along the Serpent River. The **Ships of the Serpent River** section includes new rules for ship combat and statistics for several different types of river boats. **Flora and Fauna** provides descriptions and game information for several new creatures and unusual plants. Finally, **Magical and Treasure Items** includes descriptions and statistics for various magical items that adventurers may encounter on their travels along the Serpent.

Because the Serpent River and its major tributaries form a network of waterways that extends for more than ten thousand miles throughout Barsaive, no single sourcebook can possibly describe it all. Much of Barsaive remains unexplored wilderness, and the Serpent River network is no exception. The purpose of this sourcebook is not to fill in all the gaps, but to open the doors of the gamemaster's and players' imaginations.





OVERVIEW OF THE SERPENT RIVER



The following overview of the Serpent River briefly describes the river's geography, the aropagoi that dominate the various regions, present-day politics surrounding the river trade, and the workings of trade and travel along the river.

GEOGRAPHY OF THE SERPENT

The long, winding Serpent River runs the entire breadth of Barsaive, from beyond the Scol Mountains in the north to the Mist Swamps in the south. Countless tributaries feed the Serpent along its course, forming a network of watery highways that travelers and traders have used for thousands of years. The Serpent also provides fresh water to thousands of Barsaivians, and its banks contain some of the richest farmland in the province.

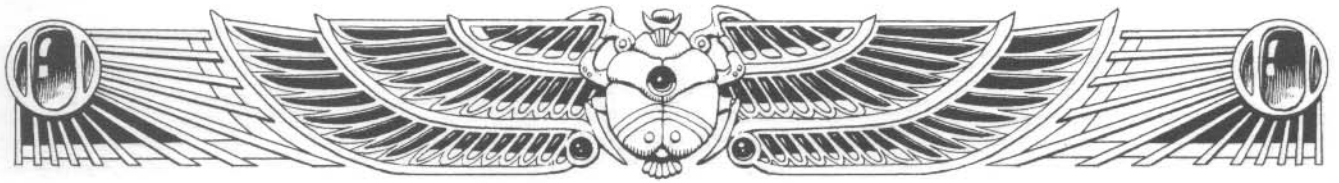
The source of the river lies in the uncharted mountain ranges to the northwest of Barsaive beyond the Grand Cataracts, a series of waterfalls that tower more than one hundred feet in the air. The river becomes unnavigable beyond the Cataracts, and so the exact source of the Serpent remains unknown.

A few hundred miles south of the Grand Cataracts, the North Reach of the river runs south past Iopos, home of the Denaraistas clan, then winds eastward in the shadow of the Scol Mountains, the domain of isolated troll moots. From there, the river continues east to Lake Vors, site of the Citadel of House Ishkarat, the fierce t'skrang aropagoi that dominates the Serpent's North Reach. The harsh, untamed lands along the North Reach contain little more than isolated settlements of Name-givers.

East of Lake Vors the Serpent is joined by the River Mothingale, which marks the beginning of the Serpent's Mid Reach. The Mid Reach flows east through the foothills of the Scythia and Caucavic Mountains, then turns south before it reaches the Lalai Gorge, site of the Cliff City of House Syrtis. As the river flows south, the rugged foothills give way to lush vineyards and increasing numbers of farming settlements. The Mid Reach passes through the dwarf settlement of Tansiarda and the renowned boatyards of Denlikiyan before reaching the northern shores of Lake Ban.

Lake Ban marks the confluence of the Serpent and the Coil River, which flows from the Throal Mountains down to Urupa, the powerful trading city on the shores of the Aras Sea. The lake is best known as the site of the Floating City of House V'strimon, a powerful t'skrang aropagoi.





From Lake Ban, the South Reach of the river flows west to Lake Pyros, located along the edge of the Servos Jungle. Pyros is the smallest of the Serpent Lakes, but its fertile shores continue to attract numerous Name-givers in spite of the nearby jungle's hazards. West of Lake Pyros, the Serpent is joined by the Byrose River, which runs south to the wealthy trading city of Travar. The Serpent then continues west and is joined by the Servos and Tylon rivers before it empties into the Mist Swamps.

TRADE AND POLITICS ON THE SERPENT

Throughout the history of the Serpent River, trade and politics have been intimately intertwined. The t'skrang communities of the Serpent have dominated both since time immemorial, and this dominance—personified by the aropagoi, the t'skrang great trading houses—largely determines the conditions traders and travelers on the Serpent must face.

The fundamental social, economic and political unit of Serpent River t'skrang society is the niall, or foundation. Each niall is an extended family that may include up to two hundred individuals. Some nialls maintain their own settlements along the river, but most often two or more join together to form a village. Each village forms its own crew and trading covenants to operate riverboats. While many t'skrang villages operate as independent economic and political entities, most belong to one of the aropagoi, which represent the pinnacle of t'skrang economic and political power on the Serpent River.

The exact translation of aropagoi is "honored center," which reflects the key function of an aropagoi—to serve as a central foundation based not on family relationships, but on loyalty and respect gained within the aropagoi organization. Individuals may join an aropagoi by being elected or chosen by the aropagoi's members, who are known as aropagoinya. Upon joining an aropagoi, a new member adopts a g'doinya, a name for use within the central foundation. During the g'doinya ritual, the initiate also receives a token of identification unique to the aropagoi. As a member of the aropagoi, the individual receives several privileges, including the opportunity to serve as an officer on one of the aropagoi's warships. Because t'skrang consider aropagoi membership so important, most regard possession of an aropagoi token under false pretenses as a criminal act, and punish offenders by cutting their tails off. Amputation of an arm or leg is the typical punishment for non-t'skrang offenders.

Every aropagoi is led by a shivalahala, who serves as political, social and spiritual leader. Shivalahalas preserve

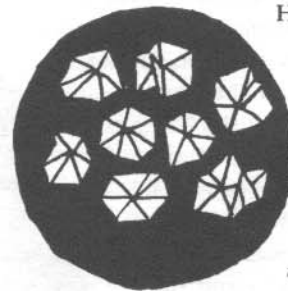
the ancestral memories of their predecessors and many are said to possess supernatural powers. Because of their importance to their aropagoi, shivalahalas seldomly venture forth from their home cities. Most shivalahalas maintain councils whose members aid them in setting and implementing trade and political policies, as well as governing the aropagoi. Generally, council members are selected from the various villages and foundations that belong to each aropagoi.

Before the Theran War, riverboats from more than a dozen aropagoi plied the waters of the Serpent River. These aropagoi grew over the course of centuries, as the river t'skrangs' never-ending quest for supremacy over trading rivals led them to form ever larger groups. Despite their high level of political and economic development, the t'skrang of the Serpent have never exhibited a sense of national identity like that displayed by Barsaive's dwarfs and elves, largely because of the wide dispersion of t'skrang settlements along the Serpent and the intense, ongoing economic competition between the aropagoi.

THE AROPAGOI OF THE SERPENT

Currently, six t'skrang aropagoi dominate trade on the Serpent—House K'tenshin, House V'strimon, House Syrtis, House Ishkarat, House Henghyoke and House T'kambras. Each aropagoi, with the exception of House Henghyoke, controls a section of the river system, but riverboats from all the aropagoi travel the length of the Serpent. Although many t'skrang villages and settlements along the river are not officially affiliated with any aropagoi, all settlements operate under the system of trade the aropagoi make possible.

House K'tenshin



House K'tenshin, the House of Nine Diamonds, controls the South Reach of the river.

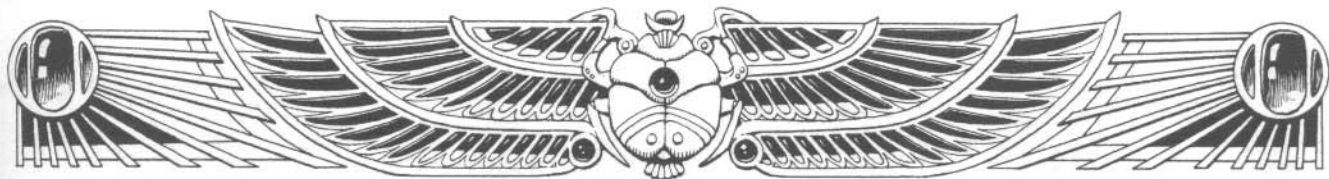
The aropagoi's symbol is nine red diamonds set on a gold field. The g'doinya of the aropagoi is an earring of ruby and gold, which K'tenshin aropagoinya wear in the skin folds

under their left ear slits.

The aropagoi's base is a magnificent river village located on the Serpent between the Byrose and the Servos rivers. The village features sixteen towers, arranged to form a pattern of nine diamonds.

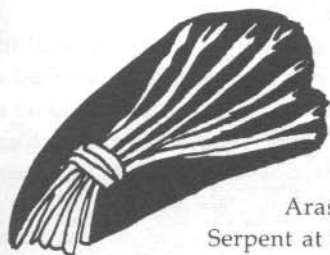
Before the Scourge, House K'tenshin was an ally of the Theran Empire. To this day it maintains close ties with the Therans, and also with the trading city of Travar. The aropagoi is best known for its war college, which is headed





by the Shivalahala K'tenshin, a respected warrior adept.

For more information on House K'tenshin, see **House K'tenshin**, page 16 of *The South Reach*.



House V'strimon

House V'strimon, the House of Reeds, controls the Coil River, which runs from the Throat Mountains to the Aras Sea and intersects the Serpent at Lake Ban. The arpagoi also controls a small portion of the Serpent on either side of the lake. A sheaf of green reeds on a blue field serves as the symbol of the house. As their g'doinya, the arpagoinya of House V'strimon wear bracelets woven with reeds native to Lake Ban. The reeds remain forever green and supple around the bearer's right wrist.

The Floating City, located in the center of Lake Ban, serves as the arpagoi's central settlement. House V'strimon is closely allied with Throat, the city of Urupa, and House Syrtis. The Shivalahala V'strimon, an elemental of monumental talent and a questor of Jaspre, leads the arpagoi.

For more information on House V'strimon, see **House V'strimon**, page 37 of *The Coil River*.

House Syrtis



House Syrtis, the House of the Dragon Moon, has ruled the Serpent's Mid Reach for centuries. The arpagoi's symbol is a silver dragon on a blue field, and a silver ring with a dragon cameo set in blue crystal serves as its g'doinya.

The heart of the arpagoi is the Cliff City, which lies in the Lalai Gorge. The Syrtis arpagoi's only true ally is House V'strimon, but in recent years House Syrtis has joined forces with the elves of the Blood Wood to check the expansion of House Ishkarat. The House of the Dragon Moon is led by the Shivalahala Syrtis, a wizard adept also known as "the Prophetess" for her extraordinary prophetic gifts.

For more information on House Syrtis, see **House Syrtis**, p. 62 of *The Mid Reach*.



House Ishkarat

House Ishkarat, the House of the Wheel, dominates the North Reach of the Serpent River. The arpagoi has adopted a crimson wheel set on a field of white as its symbol. A ritual dagger of black obsidian serves as the arpagoi's g'doinya.

The arpagoi's base, an island fortress located in the western end of Lake Vors, is known as the Citadel of Ishkarat. The arpagoi's thirst for conquest has left it with few allies, other than the Denaraistas clan of Iopos. Little is known of the arpagoi's shivalahala.

For more information on House Ishkarat, see **House Ishkarat**, page 86 of *The North Reach*.



House Henghyoke

House Henghyoke, the House of the Otter, is actually a pirate confederation whose riverboats raid the entire length of the Serpent. A brown river otter carrying a silver egg in its mouth serves as the arpagoi's symbol. As a g'doinya, each Henghyokian arpagoinya wears a platinum torc around his or her neck.

The location of House Henghyoke's base remains unknown, and the arpagoi has no known allies. The Shivalahala Henghyoke is reputedly a powerful illusionist, but little else is known of her.

For more information on House Henghyoke, see **House Henghyoke**, page 25 of *The South Reach*.

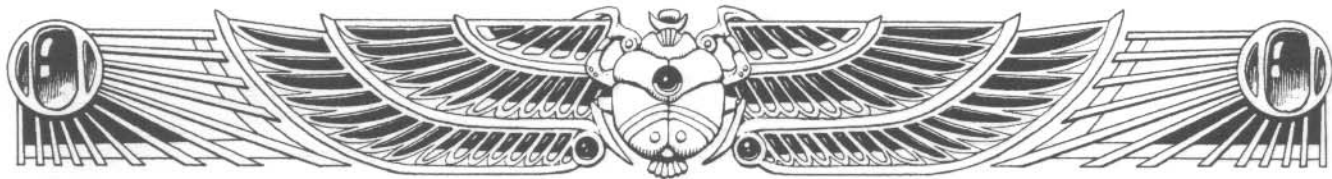


House T'kambras

The recently revived House T'ka-mbras, the House of Swift Waters, vies with House K'tenshin for control of trade on the Tylon River. The arpagoi's symbol is a white salmon leaping over blue-green river rapids. The g'doinya of the arpagoi is unknown.

This arpagoi's influence is strongest along the northern Tylon, but the precise location of House T'kambras' central settlement remains unknown. The house is allied with House V'strimon and has no known shivalahala, but





its most prominent member is the riverboat captain known as Jedaiyen Westhrall.

For more information on House T'kambras, see *The Return of House T'kambras*, page 33 of *The South Reach*.

BALANCE OF POWER

Shortly after the Theran War ended, the dwarfs of Throal brought the three houses of the lower river—Houses K'tenshin, V'strimon and Syrtis—together for trade negotiations. Apparently, Throal's trade shipments along the Serpent were being severely delayed, rerouted and even lost as a result of the t'skrang practice of bakshevas, the ancient tradition of collecting tolls and booty. Bakshevas allowed the captain of a t'skrang riverboat to extort any "toll" he or she could get from any vessel encountered on the river.

The historical meeting produced the Free Trade Compact, an agreement that led directly to the present-day balance of power on the river and set the spheres of the influence that the aropagoi continue to command. In the compact, the K'tenshin, V'strimon and Syrtis aropagoi agreed to suspend the practice of bakshevas and provide all vessels toll-free access to ports within their territories, regardless of a vessel's affiliation. In exchange, each aropagoi retained the right to limit access to any tributaries entering the Serpent River within its territory.

House K'tenshin, which had allied itself with Thera during the war, had to pay token reparations to Throal and the other aropagoi under the terms of the compact. (To this day, K'tenshin aropagoinya still refer to the settlement as "payment for the lease of access to northern and southern ports.") The K'tenshin aropagoi also agreed to relinquish control of the Byrose River, thus opening the city of Travar to free trade. In return, the compact ended the isolation of House K'tenshin and freed its crew covenants to trade in the ports of Throal and its allies. House V'strimon retained control of the Coil River and the lucrative trade with Urupa, and gained access to the elemental-fire trade from the Death's Sea. And by largely eliminating the practice of bakshevas on the lower river, the compact enabled House Syrtis to devote most of its war vessels to checking the rapid expansion of House Ishkarat.

In broader terms, the compact made travel on the lower and middle Serpent River relatively safe for the first time in history and opened up trade on the river. The development of open trade forced the aropagoi to compete for trade and transport contracts with one another, as well as with countless newly independent river villages that had formerly labored under the excessive tributes exacted by the powerful aropagoi. Soon the riverboats of the aropagoi and indepen-

dent villages began to compete for business by lowering their transport and ferry rates. These dropping rates, along with the opening of riverbank roads the aropagoi had once actively sabotaged, led to the founding of new trading towns along much of the Serpent.

Although many have benefited from the resulting peace and prosperity, no organized power has benefited as much from the Free Trade Compact as the Kingdom of Throal. By the end of the Theran War, Throal's merchants had become almost entirely dependent on House V'strimon, which controlled all the river ports near the dwarf kingdom. By opening trade on the river, Throal effectively broke the virtual V'strimonian monopoly of Throalic river trade. By forcing the aropagoi to compete in relatively free markets, the dwarfs lessened each aropagoi's influence along the river. At the same time, Throal won the gratitude of all river residents who had chafed under the yoke of aropagoian bakshevas, gained countless new trading partners and provided itself with an unprecedented opportunity to expand its own economic and political power along the Serpent.

So far, Throal's leaders have made the most of that opportunity. By carefully balancing Throal's trade and transport contracts between the three main aropagoi and the unaligned villages, the dwarf leaders have effectively blocked the aropagoi from monopolizing the transport market and dictating rates to Throal. Ideally, the dwarfs would like to further their economic fortunes by creating their own fleet of riverboats and transporting their own goods. To do that, however, they need elemental-fire engines—and protecting the secret of the fire engine from outsiders is one of the few goals on which all t'skrang, regardless of their political affiliations, have traditionally agreed. Despite this obstacle, the dwarfs of Throal are still attempting to learn the secret of these engines. According to one rumor, an organization of dwarf engineers persuaded a small t'skrang foundation on the Coil River to provide them with a complete fire engine, which the dwarfs apparently intended to disassemble in the hope of learning its secrets. And almost every year some group of dwarfs attempts to raise a sunken t'skrang riverboat or salvage a derelict vessel with the intention of repairing and refitting it. At present, however, the dwarfs have not succeeded in their attempts to obtain their own fire engines.

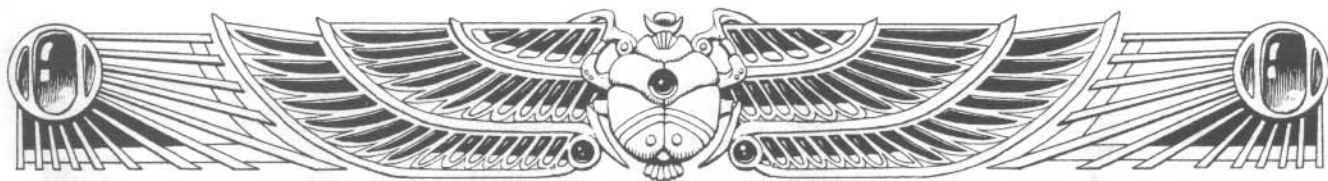
TRADE

The Serpent River and its tributaries are lifelines of trade throughout Barsaive. Most riverboats travel the Serpent loaded to the limit with trade goods: preserved fish and fine baskets from t'skrang trade covenants; spices,





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toys, and ceramics from riverside villages; beer and metal from the dwarf kingdom of Throal; firewood and furniture, wine and vinlo from the towns of the Mid Reach; silk from the far east across the Aras Sea; and much more. All the best that the lands near the Serpent have to offer journeys from market to market on the river. In the days just after the end of the Scourge, few save the t'skrang lived near the river's edge because most of Barsaive's people had built their kaers further inland. The promise of trade, however, has drawn people of every race back to the river to build new towns and settlements.

The V'strimon Protocols, drawn up by House V'strimon at the start of the post-Scourge trading boom, define the standard unit of cargo freight as the duari. The original duari was a wooden cask, four feet tall and three feet in diameter, that could contain approximately 300 pounds of rice. The Protocols specify the exact size, shape, and composition of the cask, and prescribe fines and penalties for traders who deceive their buyers with fake duari. Over time, however, the definition of the duari has expanded to include earthenware urns, baskets, and even bundles and racks of cargo. Just as the legal code of Throal has become the foundation for much of Barsaive's evolving civic structure, so the Protocols have rapidly taken over Barsaive's market places. The duari has become a standard unit of cargo throughout the province, and at every market along the river one can see riverboat crews rolling duari up and down the gangplanks of their ships.



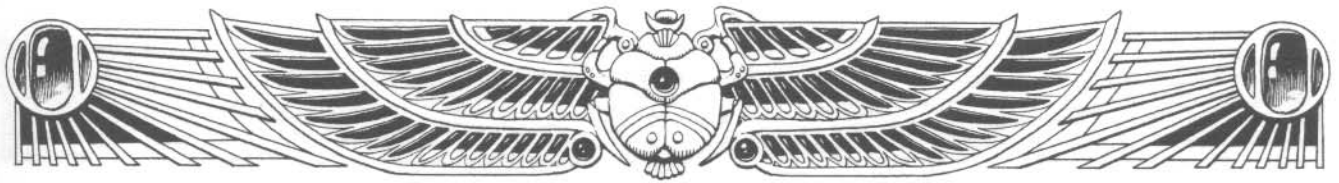
Certain kinds of freight are too valuable to be sold in measures as large as duari: pure elemental substances, spices, dyes, silk, inks and paper. These items are typically sold by the ounce, or by a unit of weight known as the shimsa duari. The V'strimon Protocols precisely define the weight of a standard shimsa, and copies of both the duari and shimsa duari standards can be found in every major market place in Barsaive.

TRAVEL ALONG THE SERPENT RIVER

From Lake Vors to the Mist Swamps, the Serpent River stretches approximately two thousand miles. A man can walk that distance in eighty days, but a riverboat can traverse it in twenty—and do so much more safely as well. The walker must labor under the weight of his own provisions, all the while avoiding bandits, wild animals, foul weather, suspicious villagers and the occasional Horror to reach his destination. The riverboat sailor, on the other hand, need only keep the fire engines hot, his cargo holds supplied and his riverboat running true down the center of the river to reach his goal.

For these reasons, river travel is the preferred method for traveling long distances in Barsaive. By traveling for sixteen hours per day at a speed of five to six miles per hour, a riverboat can cover nearly a hundred miles. Airships may be faster, but airships are hard to find outside the largest Barsaivian cities. Furthermore, airships operate under strict weight and space constraints, so an air traveler can expect to pay thirty silver pieces a day and up for passage. By comparison, riverboats can be found throughout Barsaive, readily accept passengers, and a traveler can book passage on one for as little as five silver pieces per day. And that rate usually includes a bed and two daily meals. For the same rate, a traveler can transport his mount and feed it from the ship's stores. Moreover, riverboat crews are always looking for an extra pair of hands, so an enterprising traveler who is not afraid of a little hard labor can usually work off part or even all of his passage fees.





TYPES OF PASSAGE

Generally, a traveler can choose from four types of riverboat service along the Serpent and her tributaries: freighter passage, passenger service, warship passage and ferry service. Although prices and rate arrangements may vary in different parts of the river, the following descriptions list common fares and the amenities they buy.

Freighter Passage

The trading vessels that run the river usually set aside ten to fifteen berths for passengers, with the understanding that passengers are the best kind of cargo. After all, one never needs to worry about how to sell them to achieve a profit. The so-called standard daily rate of five silver pieces is anything but standard, however, and every riverboat captain conducts fare negotiations in his own way. Some even renegotiate rates each day. Whatever the price they pay, travelers booking passage on a freighter can expect to bunk four to a cabin and take their meals alongside the crew in the ship's galley. Freighters also provide budget-minded travelers with frequent opportunities to work in exchange for passage, because freighter crews invariably are short-handed when it comes time to load and unload cargo.

Passenger Lines

Each aropagoi maintains one or two riverboats devoted exclusively to transporting passengers. These riverboats make scheduled stops along the river and offer a variety of comforts to their customers. Accommodations depend on the rate a passenger is willing to pay. Five silver pieces per day buys a room with three other people and two square meals. For twenty-five silver pieces per day, the traveler can expect all the amenities of a luxury inn, including a private bath and gourmet meals.

The scheduled passenger routes run between large cities or densely settled areas. For example, House K'tenshin operates a route between Travar and Lake Ban. House V'strimon operates two passenger vessels that ply the length of the Coil River between the Kingdom of Throal and Urupa, and another two that take passengers from the Floating City to the Cliff City in the Lalai Gorge.

Although passenger vessels provide greater comfort and convenience than freighters, passengers are rarely allowed to work for their passage on these boats.

Warship Passage

Occasionally, aropagoi warships take on passengers—but only adepts who can make a difference in a fight. All warship passengers are expected to be experienced warriors, and to keep their weapons ready at all times. Under

the most typical rate arrangement, a passenger must pay a daily fee of five silver pieces for passage, but all of his money is refunded if the ship sees battle.

Adepts must have a Status Level of 1 (10,000 Legend Points) or extensive riverboat experience before a warship captain will consider taking them on as passengers.

Ferry Service

Ferry boats specialize in crossing the Serpent River rather than traveling its length. Most of the Serpent's ferries are operated by independent crew covenants, which offer exclusive service to and from specific locations. For whatever reason, the aropagoi tend to regard ferry services as unattractive enterprises, although House V'strimon operates an extensive ferry system on Lake Ban.

In addition to the regular ferry providers, almost any riverboat crew can be persuaded to transport a passenger across the river if the price is right. Typically, fares to cross the river range from ten to twenty copper pieces, depending on the weather, the time and the demand for service.

Special Rates

Merchant caravans often receive special discount rates on riverboat travel, regardless of the type of service. Normally, merchants with one or two mules are charged as passengers with mounts, but may receive hourly or half-day rates if they have only a short distance to travel. Larger caravans usually receive cargo rates for both their freight and the people in the caravan (three silver pieces per day).

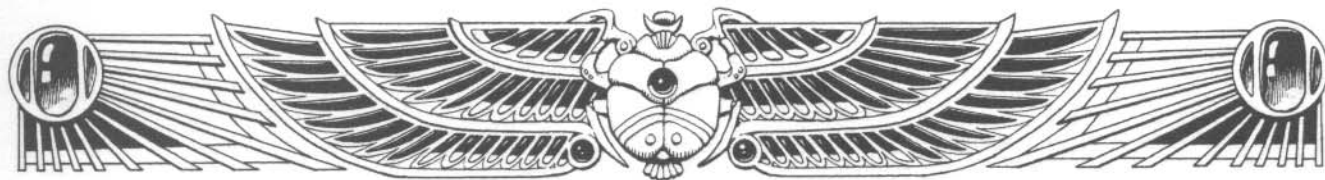
Dwarf barges often hire riverboats to tow them upstream for twenty to thirty silver pieces per day, depending on whether they are carrying a full or partial load.

SHOWBOATS

Among the most welcome sights along the Serpent River are the showboats, the floating shows and carnivals that many t'skrang count the most profitable of the river trades. The first showboats appeared shortly after the Theran annexation of Barsaive, in response to the Theran colonists' craving for culture and entertainment in a province that many of them regarded as a barbarian backwater. The t'skrang, never ones to ignore a chance to make a copper, took immediate advantage of this unique opportunity.

As the t'skrang tell it, the crew of a Syrtis riverboat happened to dock one evening at a Theran outpost. To pass the hours between the evening meal and sleep, the crew began playing and singing their favorite old songs. Within an hour, half the town had gathered by the dock to listen. The captain, seeing his impromptu audience as ready silver and gold, set up a booth near the boat the next





night and charged admission. The t'skrang say this captain never sold another duari of anything in his life, yet retired a rich man.

House V'strimon estimates forty showboats plying the river between Lake Vors and the Mist Swamps, some of them troubadour covenants and some traveling carnivals. The troubadour covenants are the most common, each specializing in varied entertainments. Some offer music, some perform plays and tell stories, and still others offer jugglers, magicians, dancers and comedians performing together in a single show. Some troupes leave their boats to set up chairs and tents on the shore. Others have made their riverboats into huge, covered halls suitable for plays or concerts. Many of the troupes employ illusionist adepts to create dazzling displays of light and sound. Though not all crewmen aboard such a ship are troubadours, every one of them contributes something to the show. Most troubadour covenants are racially diverse, with elves, humans and dwarfs working side by side with t'skrang for a fair share of the ship's profits.

The most famous troubadour showboat belongs not to a t'skrang covenant, but to the company of dwarf actors known as the Royal Theater of Throal. Founded by King Varulus I during the Scourge, the Royal Theater performs the brilliant verse dramas of the Elven Court and the intricate, sophisticated plays penned by the Theran Empire's greatest dramatists, as well as the occasional morality play and tale of revenge that are the staples of dwarf drama. King Varulus wished to keep his people from cultural stagnation and preserve vital artistic traditions should the rest of the world fail to survive the Scourge; since the end of that dark time, the Royal Theater has widened its audience considerably beyond Throal's underground cities. Shortly after the end of the Theran War, troupe director Elbonius Tartakull struck a deal with the t'skrang of Myrenal village, an independent crew covenant in the Mid Reach of the Serpent River. The dwarfs helped to rebuild the covenant's riverboat, the *Quirinalia*, as an enclosed 700-seat theater. In exchange for that labor and a share of the profits, the Myrenal covenant gave the Royal Theater of Throal exclusive use of the riverboat for a three-month tour each year, with stops all along the Coil and Serpent Rivers. Rumors claim that the Eye of Throal, the dwarf kingdom's intelligence service, has placed several members in the Royal Theater company.

The carnival showboats are modeled after the overland traveling carnivals long beloved in song and story. In addition to food and games of skill and chance, showboat carnivals offer spectacular shows on a scale that land-bound caravans cannot hope to match. Unlike troubadour

covenants, the typical traveling carnival is too big to perform on shipboard; it must disembark and set up its tents ashore. Most carnivals turn this necessity into a gaudy, noisy parade designed to attract the townsfolk; crew members wear colorful costumes, caged wild animals and strange creatures ride in open view of spectators, and musicians beat drums and blow horns in an attempt to pique the interest of anyone who might be within earshot. Upon arriving at the chosen site, the carnival unfolds its tents and opens its wagons for business. Once the carnival opens its gates, spectators may wander around the tents and wagons, buying food, playing games of all kinds and seeing various marvels for the price of a copper or two.

Rumors abound along the Serpent that Theran spies sometimes travel with carnival boats, using their many stops at riverside towns and cities to keep the Empire's eye on Barsaive. According to other rumors, alleged spies and soldiers of Iopos known as the Holders of Trust lurk within the traveling carnivals and report all that they see to their Denairastan masters. Thus far, no proof exists of either claim.

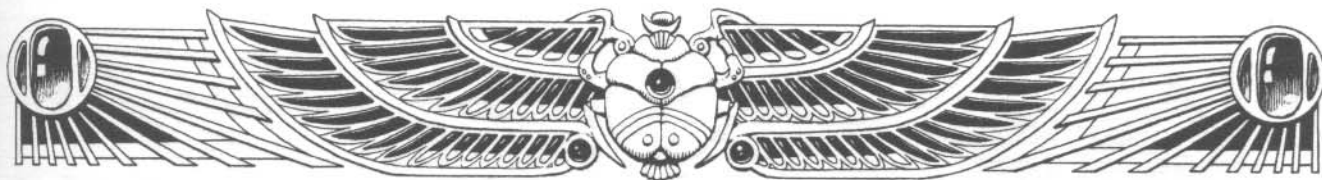
BAKSHEVAS

River travelers and merchants may also incur additional expenses in the form of bakshevas. Although the Free Trade Compact effectively ended the practice on much of the Serpent River, a traveler may still pay bakshevas if he encounters a rogue t'skrang crew or enters a section of the river controlled by an aropagoi or village that does not honor the compact.

The literal translation of the t'skrang word bakshevas is "taking the tenth part." The word is as old as the Serpent is long, and it refers to the toll system still enforced on many isolated stretches of the river, particularly along the tributaries. In the old days, when a riverboat submitted to a pirate vessel, the pirate captain would board and demand a tenth of the ship's cargo in return for the lives of the ship's crew. On receiving his payment, the pirate would then pledge free passage along the river to his victim for year and a day.

As time went on and pirates gave way to crew covenants and foundations, the ritual of bakshevas changed. Trying to ride the Serpent from Lalai Gorge to Lake Ban, handing a tenth part of one's cargo to every pirate that happened along, simply didn't make for good business. And as the volume of trade picked up, the number of possible targets from whom a pirate could extract a toll made it impractical to take a tenth part of everyone's cargo. No riverboat could carry that much loot! Furthermore, killing an entire riverboat crew became no small task as riverboat designs improved, fire cannons





became more affordable, and boatmen became increasingly formidable foes.

As a result, privateers began taking only the most compact and valuable portions of the cargoes they seized. Gifts of gold, silver and gems replaced jars and barrels full of goods. Rather than threatening an opposing crew with death, the t'skrang borrowed a page from the trollmoots and forced defeated crews into indentured servitude, typically for a year and a day. With the advent of the aropagoi, these captured ships would often be outfitted and supplied with aropagoi cargo. When the crew had performed the services required to lift the burden of bakshevas, the aropagoi would give the crew a tenth part of the profits they had earned for the aropagoi and send them back home to their foundations. Soon bakshevas became a ritual of honor, and participants came to rely on little more than blood magic and the captain's good word to seal their deals.

With the establishment of the Free Trade Compact, the practice of bakshevas has largely subsided along the Serpent. Typically, the major aropagoi only invoke bakshevas along the major tributaries that fall within their spheres of influence. On isolated sections of the river, however—particularly in the Servos Jungle, the Caucavic Mountains, and the rivers that feed into the Aras Sea—many unaligned crew covenants protect profits in their waters using the old ways. Usually, these privateers draw up to passing vessels in friendly fashion and ask for a toll using the traditional phrase, *Shivoam v' nokamai daureis*, which translates as "the spirit of the river requests a gift." A round of haggling over the toll ensues, with a typical toll ranging between fifty and two hundred silver pieces. If a toll cannot be agreed on or the target simply refuses to pay, the privateer draws back a respectable distance and both vessels prepare for battle.

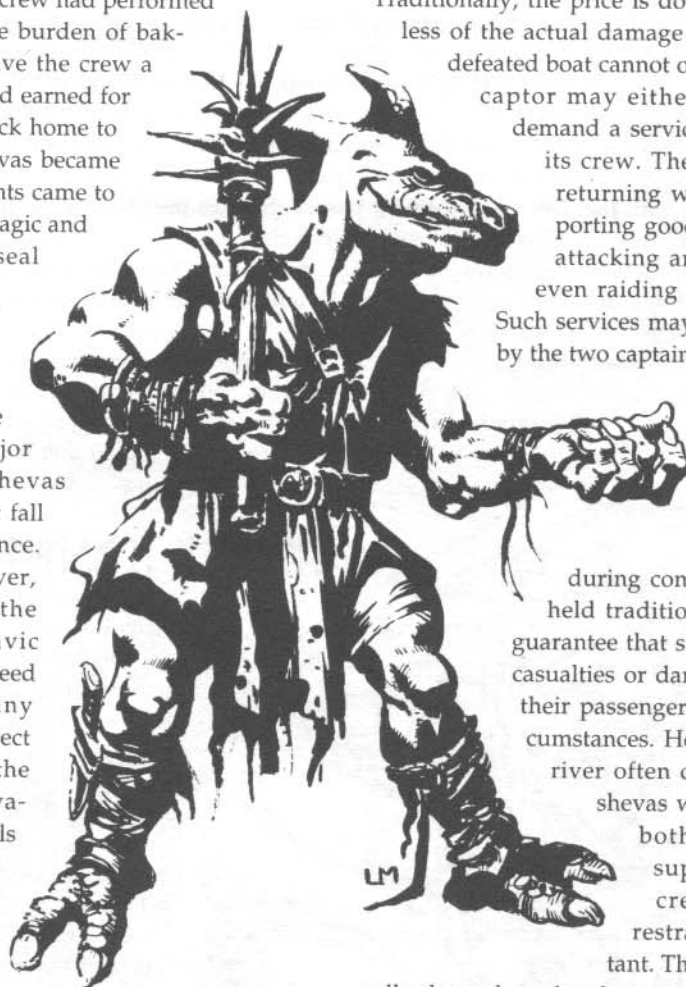
Typically, both captains employ tactics designed to preserve their riverboats and crews. The gunners aim the fire cannons to frighten, rather than kill their opponents.

Crew members who are wounded in the melee lay down their weapons and refrain from combat, and in return their opponents pass over them during boarding actions. Whenever one side begins to gain the upper hand, it offers its opponent numerous opportunities to surrender, long before either side takes considerable damage. And almost all t'skrang crews consider harming passengers, or using them as shields or obstacles, as the greatest dishonor.

Once one side or the other raises the white flag, the victor sets a price for his opponent's freedom. Traditionally, the price is double the original toll, regardless of the actual damage inflicted by the battle. If the defeated boat cannot or will not produce this fee, its captor may either take the loser's cargo or demand a service from the losing vessel and its crew. The service demanded may be returning whence the ship came, transporting goods from one port to another, attacking another ship on the river, or even raiding an abandoned kaer or ruin. Such services may be sealed with blood magic by the two captains or simply with the defeated captain's word of honor.

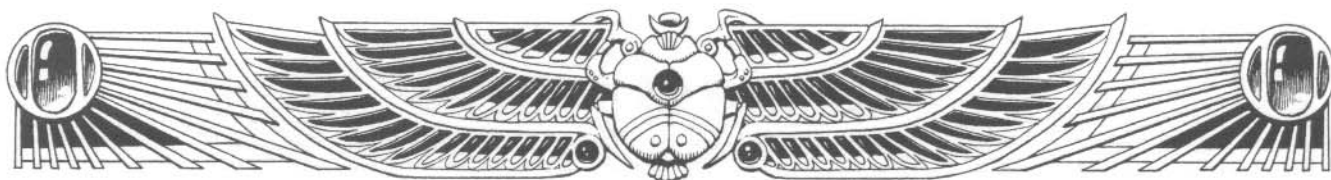
PIRACY

Although the riverboat crews of rival aropagoi may fight quite fiercely during contests of bakshevas, the long-held traditions of that practice virtually guarantee that such contests produce serious casualties or damage to the participants and their passengers only in extremely rare circumstances. However, travelers new to the river often confuse the practice of bakshevas with simple piracy. Although both practices exhibit a few superficial similarities, pirate crews show none of the restraint of a bakshevas contest. The tactics of pirate crews typically depend on the element of surprise, and pirate crews rarely grant their targets any quarter. As a result, pirate attacks often result in the deaths of crewmen and passengers and the destruction of riverboats. Indeed, piracy now ranks as the worst hazard on the rivers of Barsaive. Pirates such as Acharuss of Scol and the raiders of the Henghyoke aropagoi are considered outlaws by almost all the major aropagoi, which devote significant numbers of riverboats to pirate patrols on the Serpent and her major tributaries.

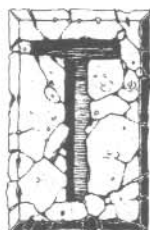


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THE SOUTH REACH

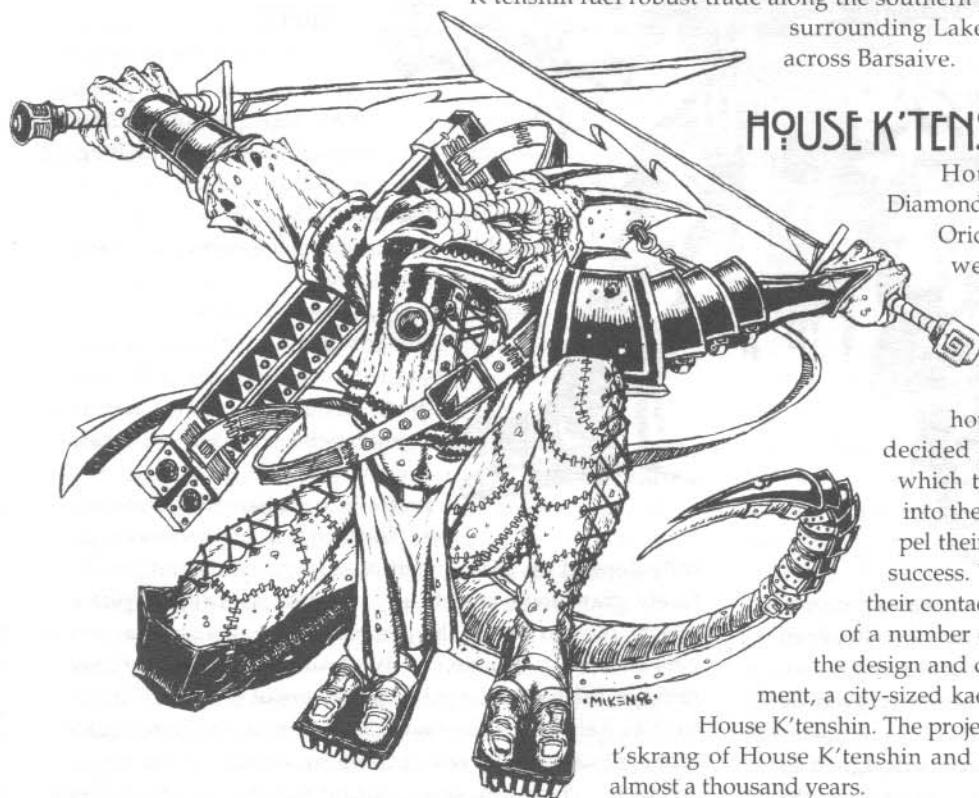


he northern boundary of the Serpent's South Reach is Lake Pyros, whose shores of rich jungle soil are dotted with the homes and farms of settlers from all over Barsaive. As the Serpent flows west from Lake Pyros, it becomes a lazy, winding river, at times more than four miles wide. Here it passes through the southern edge of the Servos Jungle, a forbidding region sparsely populated by primitive t'skrang and human tribes. The river banks contain few civilized settlements here, save for the occasional K'tenshin plantation or trading post.

After leaving the Servos, the river enters a hundred-mile stretch where four of the Serpent's largest tributaries—the Byrose, Servos, Iontos and Tylon Rivers—enter the Great River. The waters of these rivers dramatically increase the speed of the Serpent's current and the river widens to more than six miles across. A few miles down the Byrose River lies the wealthy trading city of Travar, the largest Barsaivian citadel to withstand the Scourge. Near the confluence of the Serpent and Servos Rivers lies the headquarters of House K'tenshin, the aropagoi that dominates trade on the South Reach. The shores of the Tylon River contain the hunting grounds of the Dinganni people, the reputed headquarters of the renegade House T'kambras, and Kratas, the City of Thieves.

Shortly after it converges with the Tylon, the Serpent passes through the shadow of the eastern spur of the Twilight Peaks, which rises to the north. Here, the waters of the river lose their blue-green cast and take on the reddish brown color of the nearby Badlands. As the river continues, its waters heat up and the river becomes enshrouded in thick morning fogs that remain well past noon. Eventually, the river enters the Mist Swamps, where it divides into ever-smaller branches and its banks become a spongy morass.

Despite the forbidding terrain of the Badlands and the Servos Jungle and large numbers of House Henghyoke raiders, the South Reach remains a prosperous region. The powerful trading companies of Travar and crew covenants of House K'tenshin fuel robust trade along the southern part of the river, and the rich farmland surrounding Lake Pyros continues to draw settlers from across Barsaive.



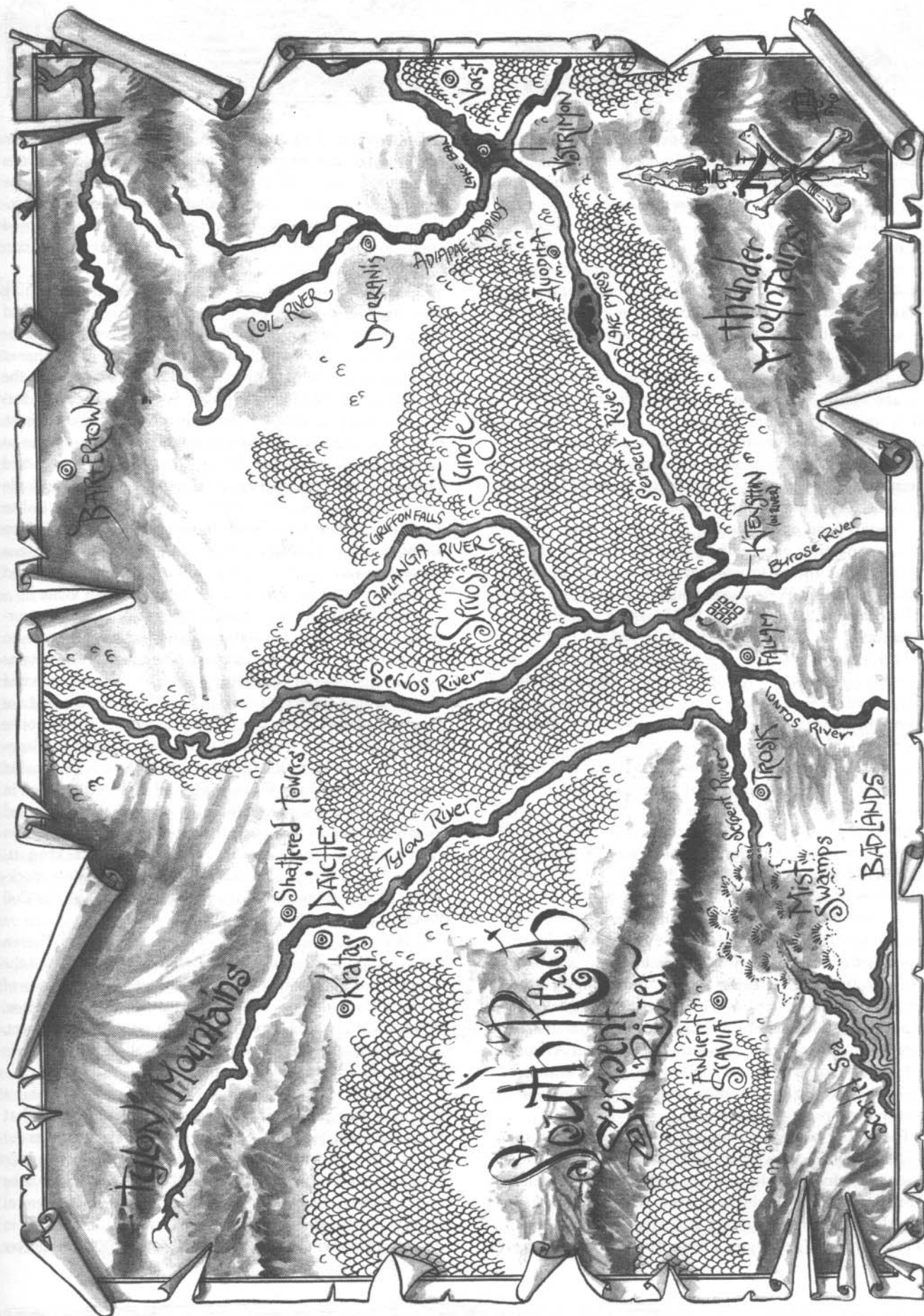
HOUSE K'TENSHIN

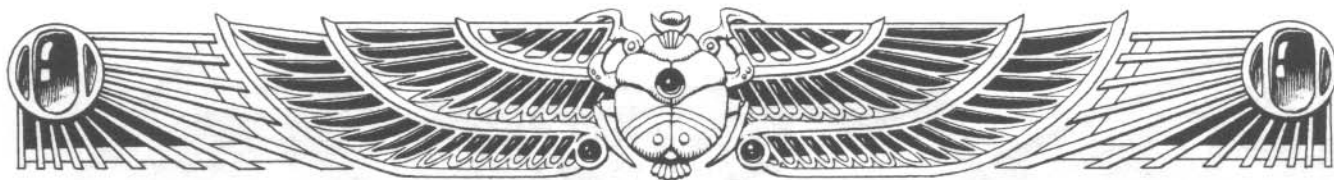
House K'tenshin, the House of Nine Diamonds, was founded two centuries before the Orichalcum Wars by four t'skrang villages west of Lake Pyros. These villages had acquired great wealth through piracy and, more important, they had acquired influence among the Therans through the Theran trading house of Carinci. Eventually the villages decided to build a huge river settlement from which they could absorb weaker communities into their growing network of alliances and propel their burgeoning enterprises to even greater success. They pooled their wealth and, through their contacts in House Carinci, bought the services of a number of skilled Theran elementalists to aid in the design and construction of the ambitious new settlement, a city-sized kaer now known as the Sixteen Towers of

House K'tenshin. The project also cemented an alliance between the t'skrang of House K'tenshin and the Theran Empire that has lasted for almost a thousand years.

As Theran influence in Barsaive grew, the fortunes of their t'skrang allies in House K'tenshin rose as well. At that time, the land between the







Servos Jungle and the Mist Swamps contained some of the finest farmland in all of Barsaive, and settlers from across the province had carved out a number of prosperous cities, towns and trading posts along the banks of the Serpent River and its southern tributaries. Using military force and intrigue, the K'tenshin began to extort money and goods from nearby settlements. Eventually, the arapagoi gained control of all river settlements from the Mist Swamps east to Lake Ban and perfected a system of taxes, tolls and protection money that enabled House K'tenshin to skim enormous profits from these settlements.

In those days, House V'strimon controlled the Coil River and House Syrtis ruled the Serpent from Lake Ban to Lake Vors. After careful consultation with the Therans, House K'tenshin attempted to strike a deal with House V'strimon that would enable V'strimon to concentrate on undermining the power of House Syrtis. House V'strimon had no interest in negotiating free passage across Lake Ban to an upstart band of pirates and racketeers, however, particularly one that engaged openly in slavery. House V'strimon's rebuff led to war between the two arapagoi, but the Orichalcum Wars soon overshadowed that conflict. The Orichalcum Wars, in turn, left Barsaive vulnerable to annexation by the Theran Empire.

Theran annexation proved a double-edged sword for House K'tenshin. Although the Therans supported their arapagoi ally's aspirations to control all trade on the Serpent, the annexation opened up increased opportunities for air transport in Barsaive, and competition from air transport soon slashed the profits of river traders. In the end, House K'tenshin found that its market had shrunk even as its power among the t'skrang had grown. Despite this setback, House K'tenshin managed to bring House V'strimon to heel and planted the seeds of dissent in House Syrtis during the sixty years between the end of the Orichalcum Wars and the Scourge.

House K'tenshin weathered the Scourge fairly well, thanks to the Theran magical spells incorporated into the Sixteen Towers during their construction. The arapagoi's t'skrang fell into a reptilian torpor, like their brethren throughout Barsaive, and the Theran spells lengthened the K'tenshinians' hibernation. House K'tenshin did not emerge from the Scourge unscathed, however. At some point, two hundred and forty members of the arapagoi's Kerioli niall—virtually the entire foundation—and four of its riverboats simply disappeared.

The House of Nine Diamonds awakened slowly after the Scourge lifted. Riverboats of House V'strimon, which had emerged from its slumber slightly before the opening of Throal, passed through the Sixteen Towers of K'tenshin while the towers' inhabitants still slept. The V'strimon riverboat crews, however, chose not to awaken their

ancient rivals. The K'tenshin arapagoi did not awaken until the Therans returned to Barsaive and landed vedettes inside the Sixteen Towers—a coincidence that has led some to claim that the Theran elementalists who laid the foundations of the Sixteen Towers intentionally incorporated spells to keep the K'tenshinians in a state of hibernation until the Therans' return.

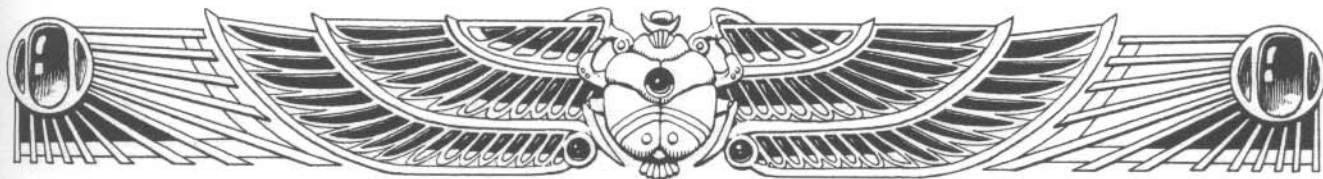
Whatever the truth of this allegation, the returning Therans found in House K'tenshin an ally ready to aid them in the reconquest of Barsaive. To prove their allegiance, House K'tenshin invited a contingent of Theran t'skrang from House Carinci to take up residence in the tower vacated by the Kerioli niall. Soon, the Theran generals set a twofold role for the arapagoi in the reconquest. First, House K'tenshin would establish supply routes to Theran garrisons as the Theran legions pushed toward Throal; second, the arapagoi's riverboats would blockade enemy vessels along the Serpent and Coil rivers to isolate Throal from her allies. With these plans laid out, Theran airships and K'tenshin riverboats set out from the Sixteen Towers to reconquer Barsaive, full of all the swagger and confidence of an imperial power certain of swift victory.

Both the Therans and their K'tenshin allies were surprised to discover that Barsaive and her people were no longer a ripe target for conquest. The arapagoi's captains quickly discovered that House V'strimon had contacted almost all the river villages between Lake Pyros and Lake Ban and placed them under its protection. Thus, House K'tenshin found itself forced to reconquer hostile villages that had once been its vassals. When the first K'tenshin warships reached the Floating City of House V'strimon in Lake Ban, they discovered that the rival house had fortified its city so heavily that even the most aggressive K'tenshin captains blanched at the thought of attacking it. Meanwhile, V'strimonian blockade runners made a mockery of House K'tenshin's efforts to block trade on the Coil River and isolate Throal.

House K'tenshin's performance during the Theran War was a disgrace to its proud warrior tradition, and the Therans did not hesitate to bring this fact to the attention of both the Shivalahala K'tenshin and the First Governor. When Overgovernor Pavelis chose to retreat to Sky Point, all of Barsaive knew that Thera had abandoned House K'tenshin to the mercy of its enemies.

Perhaps this abandonment made House K'tenshin's enemies prone to mercy. Some observers say that Barsaive's troubadours, with their relentless lampoons of K'tenshin naval disasters, had rendered the arapagoi's predicament so comical that Throal found it difficult to be angry with its black-sheep neighbor. Other, more cynical observers speculate that Throal was none too anxious to destroy House V'strimon's primary competitor in the river





trade, in the interests of Throal's prosperity. Whatever the reasons, the terms of the truce were a yoke that hung lightly around the neck of House K'tenshin. Indeed, some observers claim that the Free Trade Compact placed the aropagoi in a better position than it might have gained from a Theran victory.

THE SIXTEEN TOWERS

House K'tenshin maintains its headquarters at the junction of the Byrose and Serpent Rivers. Here, the Sixteen Towers of K'tenshin form a four-by-four gridwork that outlines nine diamonds, an arrangement that gave the House of Nine Diamonds its name. The towers, which are the largest and tallest anywhere on the river, soar three hundred feet above the water's surface and are a bit more than two hundred feet in diameter. Although the towers are spaced at regular intervals, their shapes are irregular. Some look like natural rock formations, in contrast to the smooth, man-made appearance of most of the Serpent's t'skrang village towers. Wooden and rope bridges span the gaps between the towers, and wooden balconies sprout like strange fruit on the stone ledges that jut out at every level.

On the surface of the water, the K'tenshin t'skrang have surrounded each tower with a wide, encircling boardwalk where boats of all sizes can dock, load and unload cargo and passengers. The four central towers, known as the "Inner Towers," are so large that they can each house a full riverboat. These towers serve as dry docks for repairing and refurbishing the aropagoi's vessels. Before the Theran War, the roofs of these squat towers often docked Theran airships, including massive kilas. After the war, the Therans withdrew to Sky Point. In the past few years, however, several Theran airships have been sighted at the Sixteen Towers, giving rise to rumors that House K'tenshin is again strengthening its ties to the Theran Empire.

The bustle of the Sixteen Towers immediately dazzles any traveler entering the settlement for the first time. Here swarm t'skrang in boats, on bridges, along balconies, on airships, even swimming in the water. The settlement looks as if the Serpent had flooded an enormous city and everyone simply climbed up the tallest tower they could find to escape the rising water. Amazingly, this bustle represents only a portion of the Sixteen Towers' population, because most of the residents live in the traditional domes that lie at the base of each tower on the river bottom.

Each of the twelve "Outer Towers" is named after the niall that lives in the tower's dome: the Abanos Tower, Byepo Tower, Gamaroon Tower, Daishan Tower, Edeinos Tower, Zeugmani Tower, Henika Tower, Thymbrium Tower, Ippikos Tower, Carinci Tower, Lamia Tower, Meru Tower and Naxos Tower. The four Inner Towers are named for each of the four pillars of haropas: The Jik'harra Tower,

Kiatsu Tower, P'skarrot Tower and Kya'apas Tower. The domes of the four Inner Towers reach inward toward the settlement's t'slashina—the central, sheltered area where crops often grow—like the petals of a flower. An enclosed underwater garden called the *Haropakilea*, the Flower of Haropas, lies at the intersection of the domes. Legend has it that the Shivalahala K'tenshin ordered the garden planted during the years immediately before the Scourge, so that her people might better remember the beauty of the outside world. The garden features flowering plants of unusual size, shape and hue, and many plants that radiate heat and light in every color of the rainbow. Certainly the Haropakilea is one of Barsaive's pre-Scourge marvels, and those who can swim will find it a sight unmatched in the province.

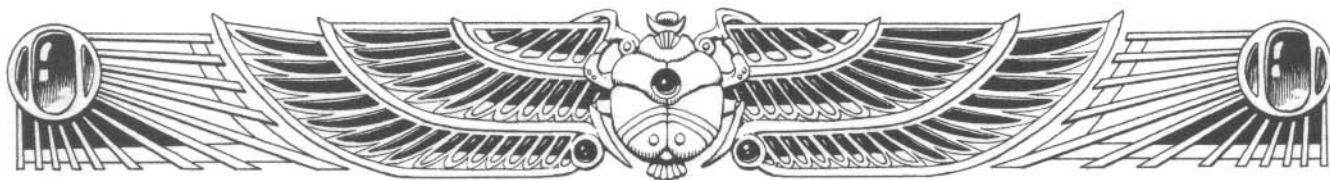
Outside the Inner Towers lies a cordon of twelve smaller towers submerged just below the water's surface. These are air ducts that keep fresh air moving through the underwater city of House K'tenshin. Between these towers and the defensive refselenika lies the complex's t'slashina, which is the most expansive on the Serpent River. To work such a large area, the K'tenshin regularly capture slaves from the primitive t'skrang tribes of the Servos Jungle.

THE NIALLS OF HOUSE K'TENSHIN

The twelve nialls, or foundations, of K'tenshin are Abanos, Gamaroon, Meru, Byepo, Zeugmani, Daishan, Edeinos, Henika, Ippikos, Lamia, Naxos and Carinci. Each niall owns a riverboat of the same name and performs some type of specialized work to benefit the aropagoi. For example, the Abanos are slavers, and their tower is home to the largest slave auction in Barsaive. The Gamaroon and the Meru are both farmers, but the Gamaroon specialize in the underwater crops grown in K'tenshin's t'slashina, while the Meru farm rice, beans and vegetables on the nearby riverbanks and the aropagoi's plantations. Byepo handles the trade in elemental fire and other resources from the Scarlet Sea, and the Zeugmani turn these resources into K'tenshin porcelain in the glassblowing shops of their tower. The Daishan niall makes baskets, while the Edeinos specialize in fish recipes. The Henika are woodcutters who harvest the rare and colorful hardwoods of the Servos Jungle and produce everything from barrels to furniture to decorative art. The Ippikos are hunters. Like the Henika, they depend on the Servos Jungle, where they obtain the hides, feathers and wild animals that they sell to the people of Travar for the city's annual Founding festivities.

The Lamia niall runs the K'tenshin shipyards, which are located in the Kya'apas and Kiatsu Towers. The K'tenshin shipyards are considered by many to be the largest and best in Barsaive. However, K'tenshin shipwrights work only on riverboats that belong to the





K'tenshin aropagoi. For years after the end of the Scourge, the Lamia niall petitioned the Shivalahala K'tenshin for permission to open a for-profit shipyard somewhere along the river. The shivalahala refused, however, because she rightly realized that any ship the Lamia repaired or refurbished would likely be turned against House K'tenshin when the Theran reconquest commenced. Soon after the Free Trade Compact went into effect, the shivalahala reconsidered her decision and allowed the Lamia niall to establish a dry dock in the village of Tremeer, just west of Lake Pyros. Now the shipyards of Tremeer and Denlikiyan, the unaligned village north of Lake Ban, vie for the reputation of finest shipyard in the province.

King Varulus of Throal once described the Naxos niall to a visiting blood warder from the Elven Court as "the School for Spies and Thugs," and with good reason. The Naxos niall trades in information and persuasion, and its members have refined gossip, rumor, and blackmail to a science. According to rumor (which may well have originated in Naxos), nothing moves on the river without the Naxos niall's knowledge. Of course, the apparent failure of Thera and her allies to predict the actions of their enemies during the Theran War casts some doubt on the competence of the Naxos t'skrang. Another rumor, however, contends that Naxos deliberately misinformed the Therans on several occasions because the Naxos leaders had no desire to see the Therans triumph.

The last of the twelve nialls, Carinci, is named after the Theran House Carinci. The tower that the Carinci occupy originally belonged to the Kerioli niall, which disappeared mysteriously during the Scourge. The niall now consists mostly of Therans who relocated to the Sixteen Towers when the aropagoi headquarters served as a center of operations during the Theran War. After the war, the Shivalahala K'tenshin convinced many of the Theran t'skrang that lives of uncertain rewards in Barsaive would be preferable to the certain disgrace they would face upon returning to Thera. So persuasive was the shivalahala that a small crew of non-t'skrang asked to remain with the aropagoi as well, and so the ranks of the Carinci niall include orks, humans and elves. The Carinci niall maintains facilities for Theran airships visiting the Sixteen Towers; in addition, many members of the niall are adepts in the combat Disciplines and serve on K'tenshin warships or teach at the aropagoi's renowned war college. The crews of visiting Theran airships prefer to bivouac in the Carinci Tower because the niall's non-t'skrang members maintain a separate living area within the Carinci dome that is far removed from the relentless bustle of the niall's communal t'skrang quarters.

THE SHIVALAHALA K'TENSHIN

The Shivalahala K'tenshin is a commanding leader whose presence demands obedience. She maintains a military outlook on life, and has little patience for answering too many questions when she gives orders. Aropagoi lore attributes this outlook to the fact that the first Shivalahala K'tenshin was a graduate of the Theran Military Academy, and that the present-day shivalahala is only twice removed from the original.

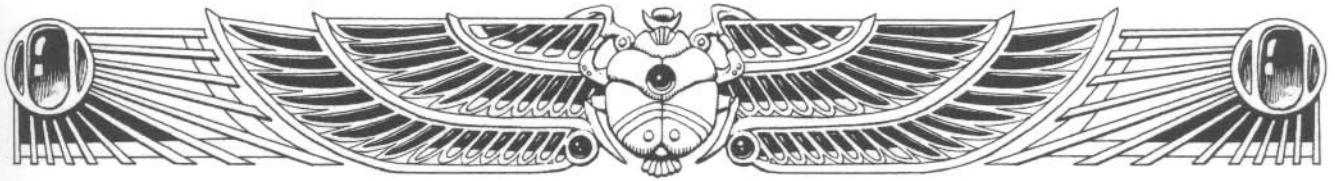
The Shivalahala K'tenshin's face and form provide no clue to her age, a phenomenon common to the shivalahalas of all the t'skrang aropagoi. Some individuals claim that the Shivalahala K'tenshin has guided the House since before the Scourge, a idea made credible only by the aropagoi's long hibernation during the Scourge. If these tales are true, the Shivalahala K'tenshin has lived through the height of Theran power in Barsaive and surely remembers the ambitions of her aropagoi during those glory days—as well as her aropagoi's humiliating defeats.

In many ways, the aftermath of the Theran War was the Shivalahala K'tenshin's defining moment. When the members of the Theran House Carinci made ready to retreat to Sky Point, she urged them to accept the tower of the vanished Kerioli niall as their home. The Theran t'skrang accepted the offer, much to the consternation of many high-ranking Therans at Sky Point. Additionally, the shivalahala, accompanied by a squadron of ten soldiers, journeyed to Throal to personally negotiate the Free Trade Compact—and she used money from her private purse to pay the aropagoi's reparations to House V'strimon, Throal, and House Syrtis. The latter action spawned a rumor that the Shivalahala K'tenshin bankrupted her personal treasury.

Currently, the shivalahala seems obsessed with restoring House K'tenshin to prominence in Barsaive. In pursuit of this goal, she runs House K'tenshin with brutally demanding discipline. She does not tolerate nonconformity or dereliction of duty. In recent years, the Therans have slowly increased their trade with House K'tenshin and increased the number of airships committed to protecting the Sixteen Towers in the event of a serious attack—actions that testify to the success of the shivalahala's determined effort to make House K'tenshin the dominant power of the Serpent River.

The Shivalahala K'tenshin has another side as well. The Haropakilea is her creation, and the peace and beauty of that garden belie the stony, disciplined exterior the shivalahala customarily displays. She is also one of Barsaive's most sought-after teachers of the arts of war, and she personally oversees House K'tenshin's war college. In fact, some members of the K'tenshin council whisper that she spends far too much time at the war college and too little time minding the affairs of the aropagoi.





SHIVALAHALA K'TENSHIN

Tenth Circle T'skrang Warrior

"To my ears, these sound like excuses, captain. Excuses are a waste of my time and your breath. I asked for your report. Either give it or do not. Whatever you choose, the consequences are mine to decide. At present, I am not inclined toward leniency."

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10
Strength (14): 6/D10
Toughness (14): 6/D10
Perception (12): 5/D8
Willpower (19): 8/2D6
Charisma (16): 7/D12

Skills

Artisan/Gardener (6): 12/2D10
Conversation (6): 13/D12 + D10
Pilot Boat (7): 15/D20 + D6
Tactics (9): 14/D20 + D4
Knowledge/
Barsaive Politics (6): 11/D10 + D8
Serpent River (5): 10/D10 + D6

Talents

Acrobatic Strike (9): 15/D20 + D6
Air Dance (9): 15/D20 + D6
Anticipate Blow (9): 14
Avoid Blow (9): 15/D20 + D6
Cobra Strike (9): 15/D20 + D6
Down Strike (9): 18/D20 + D12
Durability (10)
Earth Skin (9)
Gliding Strike (9): 15/D20 + D6
Karma Ritual (10)
Life Check (9): 14/D20 + D4
Matrix Strike (4): 12/2D10
Melee Weapon (12): 18/D20 + D12
Missile Twister (9): 17/D20 + D10
Second Attack (9): 15/D20 + D6
Second Weapon (6): 12/2D10
Spirit Strike (9): 17/D20 + D10
Swift Kick (5): 11/D10 + D8
Tiger Spring (9)
Unarmed Combat (9): 15/D20 + D6
War Weaving (7): 16/D20 + D8
Wood Skin (9): 15/D20 + D6

Karma

Dice: 4/D6
Points: 25

Movement

Full: 33
Combat: 60

Damage

Death Rating: 126
Wound Threshold: 10 [14]
Unconsciousness Rating: 98
Recovery Tests per Day: 4
Recovery Dice: D10

Combat

Physical Defense: 9 [13]
Spell Defense: 9 [13]
Social Defense: 9 [13]
Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 2



General Notes

The shivalahala does not normally wear armor or carry weapons. In the rare event that she enters battle, she dons threaded crystal ringlet armor and may carry any of several thread weapons in her private armory. All of these items have Rank 5 threads and give the shivalahala an Armor Rating of 9 and a Mystic Armor bonus of +9. Each of the weapons has been forged to its maximum potential.

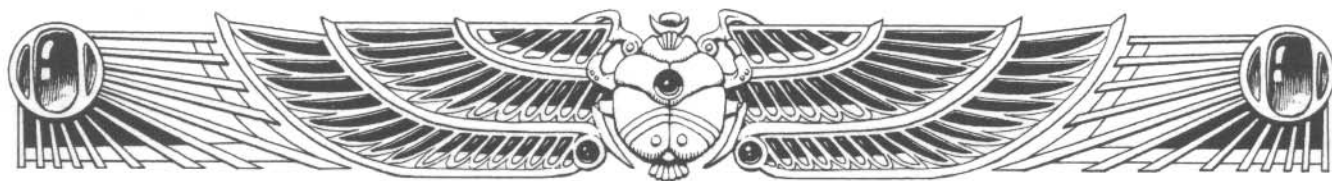
Karma Notes

The Shivalahala K'tenshin can spend Karma Points on Willpower, Dexterity and Strength Tests, as well as Damage Tests made to resolve any melee or unarmed combat attack.

Thread Weaving Notes

The shivalahala has used thread magic to boost several of her characteristics. These bonuses come from Rank 4 threads woven to the pattern items of House K'tenshin. Three of these threads are woven to her Defense Ratings, while the fourth is woven to her Wound Threshold. Because these bonuses are based on pattern items, these increases apply only when the shivalahala is in the Sixteen Towers of House K'tenshin.





HIERARCHY

The Shivalahala K'tenshin rules her aropagoi as an autocrat, with few close advisors. However, she generally reserves her executive prerogatives for matters that affect the aropagoi as a whole. She delegates supervision of many lesser affairs to the the K'tenshin Council, which represents the twelve nialls of the aropagoi. Each of the twelve nialls supplies two representatives to the council—the lahala of the niall and her hand-picked appointee. The council elects one of its members Advocate, an office unique to the K'tenshin aropagoi. Although the shivalahala alone is empowered to make policy for the aropagoi, the council can advise her and the Advocate can veto any of her decisions. Needless to say, the K'tenshin Advocacy is a difficult, if prestigious position.

The membership of the council, including the shivalahala, numbers 25—which corresponds to the sum of the towers and diamonds of the K'tenshin complex. This little piece of numerology may offer the casual observer some insight into the minds of t'skrang. The loss of the Kerioli niall during the Scourge effectively reduced the council membership to 23. This condition persisted up to the end of the Theran War, when the aropagoi offered the Theran contingent from House Carinci full membership in House K'tenshin. The offer—which essentially authorized the wholesale induction of a large group without regard to individual merit—was controversial at the time. However, any misgivings over this breach of tradition were apparently overshadowed by the K'tenshin belief that its failures during the war were caused by a break in its kya'apas, the perfect balance of the house as represented by the Council/Towers/Diamonds equation. When seen from this point of view, the loss of the Kerioli niall represented an imbalance that cursed the aropagoi's efforts. The induction of the Therans filled this numerological void, and undoubtedly most K'tenshinian aropagoinya deemed it vital to healing the house's besmirched honor.

Another unique feature of the K'tenshin's governing structure is its practice of separating the members of the twelve nialls from those of associated foundations that maintain allegiance to the aropagoi but do not live within the Sixteen Towers. These associate villages do not have representatives on the K'tenshin Council and often operate under the direct supervision of an officer from the aropagoi's headquarters, called a *diktos*. The associate nialls pay regular fees to the central aropagoi for safe passage along the river, usually an associate share of their riverboats' profits each year, but otherwise remain free to conduct their business as they choose.

Representatives from the twelve central nialls privately approach prospective candidates for membership in the aropagoi proper. Candidates then petition the central niall of their choice, thus qualifying for the g'doinya.

Candidates who enter the aropagoi from an associate village are expected to move into the headquarters. Aropagoinya born within one of the twelve nialls qualify for full membership in the aropagoi immediately upon completing kaissa.

GOALS

Like every other t'skrang aropagoi, House K'tenshin seeks to expand its influence and increase its profits. To achieve this objective, the Shivalahala K'tenshin is directing her aropagoi's efforts to meet three intermediate goals: renegotiating the Free Trade Compact; convincing the Therans that Barsaive is worthy of their attention; and re-establishing control of House K'tenshin's traditional territories, while preserving the aropagoi's existing sphere of influence.

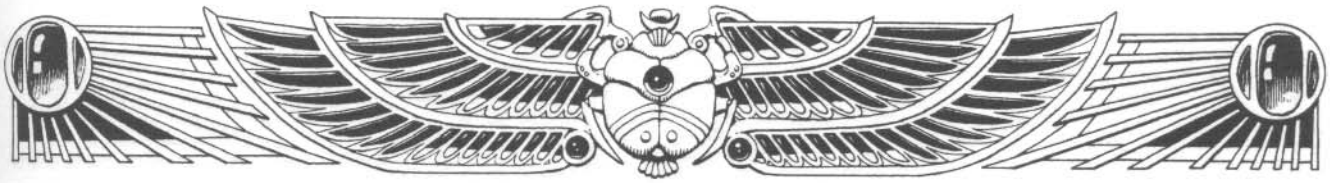
At present, the shivalahala demands that all K'tenshinian vessels observe the dictates of the Free Trade Compact to the letter, because the compact enables K'tenshin covenants to trade at the ports of the aropagoi's former enemies in the Theran War—ports that would otherwise be closed to them. At the same time, she is maneuvering to renegotiate more favorable terms for House K'tenshin. Specifically, she wants the compact signatories to re-designate the lower reach of the Coil River, from Lake Ban down to Urupa, as part of the Serpent River.

Under the current terms of the compact, House V'strimon enjoys exclusive rights to trade on the Coil River. This monopoly has proved especially profitable for House V'strimon because Urupa is the sole port of entry for goods entering Barsaive from across the Aras Sea. By re-designating the lower Coil River as part of the Serpent, all the compact signatories—including House K'tenshin—would have equal access to Urupa and the Aras Sea trade.

So far, House V'strimon has jealously guarded its monopoly, but the Shivalahala K'tenshin's proposal has received strong diplomatic backing from the Theran Empire. Additionally, in this matter House K'tenshin may have an ally in Throal, which has grown concerned over House V'strimon's maneuvers to keep prices high in the Aras Sea trade. If House K'tenshin can coax both Throal and the volatile House Syrtis faction to back its proposal, it may succeed. Not surprisingly, House V'strimon recently granted a position in the Aras trade fleet to a ship from House Syrtis.

By convincing the Therans that Barsaive is worthy of their attention, the Shivalahala K'tenshin hopes to encourage the Therans to increase their economic and military presence in the province. An increased Theran presence would undoubtedly raise the stature of Thera's main Barsaivian ally—House K'tenshin. To achieve this end, the aropagoi's leaders have instructed K'tenshin crew captains to make cut-rate and even below-cost deals with Theran





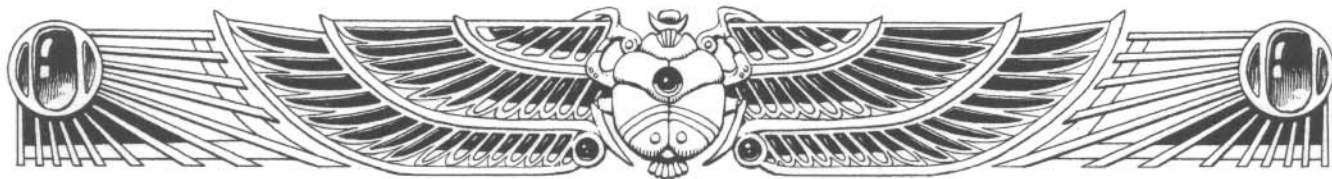
traders wherever they find them. Additionally, even the lowliest Theran air sailor is treated like a guest of honor at the Sixteen Towers. The aropagoi has also recently begun to send to the Therans any rare art treasures, magical artifacts and orichalcum its crews obtain. The shivalahala's strategy appears to be working, for each passing year sees more Theran airships docking at K'tenshin's towers.

Reestablishing control of its pre-Scourge territories and preserving the aropagoi's existing sphere of influence are probably the most pressing tasks facing House K'tenshin. Currently, House K'tenshin is besieged from all sides. The most serious threat facing the aropagoi is its long-time rival, House V'strimon. For centuries the two competing aropagoi have engaged in a bitter feud, fostering a mutual hatred further sharpened when the two houses fought against one another during the Theran War. Although House K'tenshin sealed a peace with Throal and its allies by signing the Free Trade Compact, the pact did little to lessen the animosity between Houses K'tenshin and V'strimon. The riverboats of both aropagoi still engage in combat when they encounter one another on the aropagoi's tributary rivers, and in recent years House V'strimon has taken control of six major river villages between Lake Ban and Lake Pyros that previously lay under House K'tenshin's control.

Furthermore, House V'strimon provides fire cannons, elemental substances and other war materiel to the so-called House T'kambras, a group of t'skrang villages on the Tylon River. In recent years the T'kambrians, who also receive open support from the city of Kratas, have taken control of more than half the trade on the Tylon River—a river traditionally controlled by House K'tenshin. As if to add insult to injury, three K'tenshin warships languish in dry dock awaiting repairs because of the depredations of the T'kambrian captain Jedaiyen Westhrall, whose warship, *Astendar's Desire*, has become the bane of K'tenshinian crews. House K'tenshin has offered a bounty on Jedaiyen's head, currently standing at more than 5,000 silver pieces. Despite monthly increases, the fee has gone uncollected.

The failure of K'tenshin warships to drive the upstart T'kambrians from the Tylon especially disturbs the Shivalahala K'tenshin, because the T'kambrians have inspired other South Reach settlements to rebel against House K'tenshin's tolls and taxes. For example, the T'kambrians recently saved a Scavian barge under attack from a K'tenshin flagship, and soon after that other Scavian barges stopped paying the yearly river toll to House K'tenshin. Shortly after the T'kambrians freed a





Dinganni village from a K'tenshin extortion scheme, Dinganni along the length of the Tylon began threatening to lynch any aropagoinya of House K'tenshin. (For more information on House T'kambras, see **The Return of House T'kambras**, p. 33).

Emboldened by House K'tenshin's weakness, the merchant enterprises of Travar have recently begun to construct a fleet of airships to challenge K'tenshin's trade monopoly on the Travar River. House K'tenshin's military failures have also emboldened the ravenous pirates of House Henghyoke, who seem to have a special appetite for K'tenshin boats and outposts.

House K'tenshin can muster considerable resources against these threats, however. The twelve central nials of the aropagoi remain the most populous on the river, and in their collective memory the glory of the Theran Empire in Barsaive remains fresh. A new generation of aropagoinya has risen through the ranks since the Theran War ended, and they are determined to restore the honor of their aropagoi. The crews and their warships are a match for any on the river (with the possible exception of Jedaiyen Westhrall and *Astendar's Desire*). Finally, the Free Trade Compact continues to provide House K'tenshin with access to previously closed ports, as well as several unexpected allies against House Henghyoke's raiders.

THE WAR COLLEGE OF HOUSE K'TENSHIN

The renowned War College of House K'tenshin is modeled after the Theran Military Academy. The war college's facilities in the Inner Tower of Jik'harra include training rooms, classrooms and dormitories that can accommodate up to 600 students, making the war college the largest warrior school in Barsaive. The school's headmaster is the Shivalahala K'tenshin, who takes her duties as a teacher of the combat arts quite seriously. Each week she stalks the college's gymnasiums and practice rooms, making observations and comments, correcting students' form and teaching classes in the history of riverboat combat. The college's faculty also boasts several grand masters of numerous unarmed combat styles, distinguished scholars of military history and combat-oriented magicians.

Admission to the war college is one of the most sought-after privileges in Barsaive. The college, however, accepts only twenty-five new students from outside the K'tenshin aropagoi each year. All the remaining students come from within House K'tenshin. Training at the war college is guaranteed to any member of K'tenshin's twelve nials who displays the desire and fortitude for it. Aspiring students who cannot afford the college's fees can compete for twelve scholarships awarded to the winners of an annual, open tournament. Candidates compete against one another in non-lethal combat, arranged by single-elimina-

tion rules. The twelve top finishers all receive free training at the college. The overall tournament champion receives a single coin of elemental water as well.

The full course of study at the war college takes six years. Most applicants from within the aropagoi join the year after their kaissa, the time that a t'skrang's gender becomes apparent. As a result, most students enter the college at the age of fourteen. No official age restriction exists, however. Some students have been as old as thirty, and once a young human girl from Travar gained admission at the age of ten by winning the elemental coin at the tournament that year. The student body is 99 percent t'skrang, although there are always a few students of other races wandering the halls of the tower.

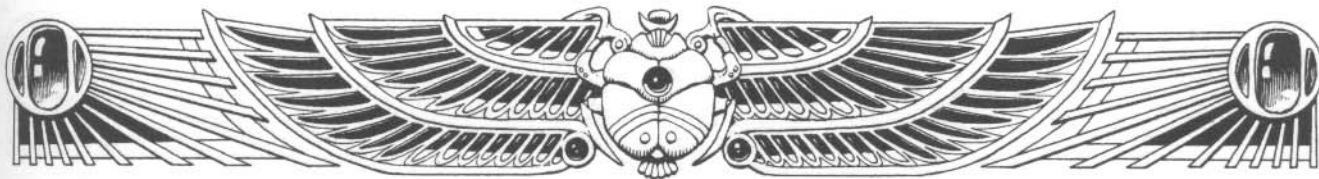
The physical regimen of the college is uncompromisingly brutal. One of the more talked-about exercises students must endure during their first year is the "Standing Lesson." During this exercise, a class is brought to the top of the Tower of Jik'harra just before dawn. After the daily calisthenics routine, the class lines up and stands at attention. They are told not to move from their spots for any reason until the sun sets. Any student who moves is brought back the next day, and the day after, and the day after that until he or she can accomplish the task.

The college teaches armed and unarmed combat, including advanced methods of underwater melee combat and riverboat boarding maneuvers, as well as the use of hundreds of melee weapons and specialized tactics for use against some of Barsaive's more common creatures. The college is especially renowned for its classes in the many forms of t'skrang tail attacks. T'skrang students can learn the use of the *ch'tard*, a four-inch blade attached to the tail, and the *skora*, a steel tail gauntlet used as a parrying weapon.

The student's life is more than physical training, however. The college also teaches military history, siege warfare, naval tactics, the design and construction of fortifications, reading, writing, mathematics and organizational skills. Members of the Naxos nial teach an annual class on information gathering and the dissemination of misinformation, and students also learn how to craft makeshift weapons from raw materials, survival tactics, proper procedures for the operation and maintenance of fire cannons, and Theran etiquette.

The six-year course in the K'tenshin war college trains a student for battle, but the regimen is so exhaustive that less than half of those who start the training ever finish it. At the end of the training, the student is given a battery of written and oral examinations, after which he must engage one of his teachers in non-lethal single combat. The teacher must approve the student's conduct in the combat circle before the student may graduate. The Shivalahala





K'tenshin herself presents gold and ruby rings to those who complete training. (These distinctive rings are customarily worn on the left hand.) Before the Theran War, the shivalahala also exacted blood oaths from graduates, in which the warriors had to swear never to harm House K'tenshin or any of its members. Since the war's end, however, the shivalahala has dropped this stricture for reasons she has yet to explain.

HOUSE HENGHYOKE

In recent years the crews of the mysterious House Henghyoke, the House of the River Otter, have acquired a reputation as the most bloodthirsty and rapacious pirates anywhere in Barsaive. The reputed cruelty of Henghyoke's river raiders exceeds that of Theran slavers. Henghyoke's riverboats have raided settlements and attacked vessels along every mile of the Serpent and its tributaries, and even prey upon the fierce t'skrang of House Ishkarat. Typically, Henghyoke river raiders descend on their victims like thieves in the night. Captives seized in their raids never return, and the raiding parties vanish without leaving any clue to their movements. They seem to strike at random from their secret base, presumably located somewhere on the Serpent River. No known village pays House Henghyoke tribute or claims association with the mysterious aropagoi.

Unlike the crews of other aropagoi, House Henghyoke's crews do not observe the rules of bakshevas. Instead, they take everything they can lay their hands on and destroy whatever they cannot take. Their favorite booty includes riverboats, slaves and the egg-hatching pools of t'skrang villages; the latter has fueled much speculation about the nature of House Henghyoke.

One striking feature of the t'skrang of House Henghyoke is their absolute silence. Those who have fought against them report that Henghyoke warriors never

cry out, even when wounded or surprised. Captured Henghyoke aropagoinya never crack even under the most severe interrogation, and mind spells directed against Henghyokian subjects invariably induce comas or death in their targets.

Every aropagoinya of House Henghyoke wears a silver collar around his or her neck. These collars are fashioned to resemble an impossibly elongated river otter swallowing its own tail, and fetch one hundred silver pieces or more in the larger markets along the

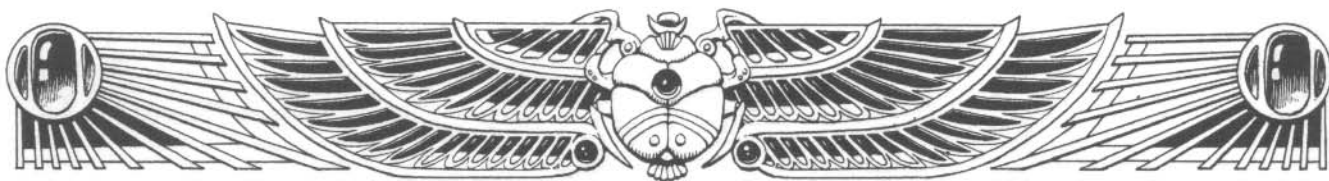
river. However, any attempt to wrest the collar from a captured raider produces hideous effects on the captive. The collars have no locks or latches and must be cut off by a metalsmith.

In addition to the obvious hazards of this procedure, most captives deprived of their collars immediately go insane or catatonic. Occasionally they erupt into berserk furies, threatening foe and friend alike.

This mysterious aropagoi received the name "Henghyoke" from victims who observed Henghyoke raiding parties using huge, trained river otters during raids. In t'skrang legends, the "henghyoke" were a race of shapechanging river otters known for their playful pranks and magical knowledge. Apparently, the raiders of the House Henghyoke keep trained river otters as pets and servants. Reportedly, some of these otters have been bred to unusually large sizes—anywhere from five to seven feet long—and trained to assist in raids.

No record exists of House Henghyoke prior to the Scourge. Just after the Scourge, piracy became a common practice along the Serpent River as villages came out of hiding and took up the old ways, so it is hard to pinpoint when the first Henghyoke attack occurred. The Henghyoke escalated their raids at the same time the Therans returned to Barsaive, which has fostered speculation that House Henghyoke, like House K'tenshin, is aligned with the Theran Empire. However, Henghyoke raiders regularly prey on both K'tenshin and Theran traders. In fact, the Therans offer bounties for the apprehension of Henghyoke raiding parties.





After the Theran War and the signing of the Free Trade Compact, the other aropagoi began to cooperate to repel Henghyoke raids, which seemed to subside for a while. Soon, however, it became apparent that the Henghyoke were simply redirecting most of their attacks against settlements and traffic along the Serpent's tributaries. More than half of the Serpent's tributaries enter the river west of Lake Ban in the vicinity of the Servos Jungle, leading many observers to speculate that the Henghyoke headquarters lies somewhere in the maze of waterways that snake through the jungle.

The paucity of facts available about the Henghyoke has fueled many theories about the aropagoi's structure and origins. One apocryphal story claims that the Shivalahala Henghyoke is actually the last of the magical henghyoke from t'skrang folk tales. Evon Tyrlath, a noted scholar from Urupa, has advanced the theory that the Shivalahala Henghyoke is a powerful illusionist who has hidden her village from the eyes of her fellow Name-givers. Tyrlath suggests that the raiders' primary settlement actually lies right in the middle of the river, but the shivalahala's magic causes boats to pass by it every day without seeing or bumping into it.

LAKE PYROS

As the Serpent River exits Lake Ban and flows toward Lake Pyros, it passes by eight t'skrang villages known as the Stolen Nialls. Before the Scourge, these villages fell under the control of House K'tenshin, but since the end of the Scourge they have pledged their allegiance to House V'strimon. The reasons for the change are clear—House K'tenshin treats its subsidiary villages with contempt, while House V'strimon treats its villages with respect. Changing allegiance has brought enormous prosperity to these villages, which now compete directly with House K'tenshin to supply lumber and wooden items to much of Barsaive. The trade covenants at two of the villages, P'santos and Delenn, have devised ingenious sawmills that use the force of water running down the village towers to spin their cutting wheels.

As the river flows west of Ayodhya, it enters a densely forested region that gradually gives way to impenetrable jungle. About a hundred miles southwest of Ayodhya, the Serpent empties into the third and smallest of the Serpent Lakes, Lake Pyros. "Pyros" means flame, a name derived from the fierce light emitted by the thick layer of phosphorescent algae that covers the bottom of the lake. The terrain around the lake, which is fifty-five miles long and twenty-five miles wide, varies. The lake's eastern banks consist of firm ground and dense forest, while the western banks are covered by an impenetrable jungle and wetlands that extend many miles inland.

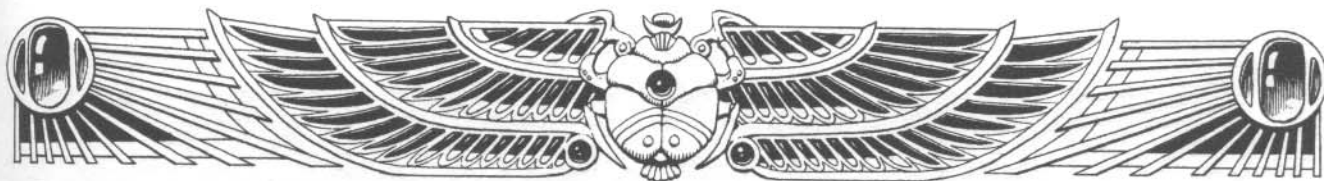
The land around the eastern end of Lake Pyros contains some of the most fertile soil in Barsaive. During the wet season, the lake rises ten feet, then subsides to leave behind a rich layer of muck and mud. Farmers have a saying that "you can plant a lump of coal by the shores of Lake Pyros, and by autumn you'll have swords and armor sprouting up through the ground." Stories like these have sparked a land rush in the area, and waves of immigrants are competing fiercely for whatever farmland they can get.

The first post-Scourge settlers along Lake Pyros were elves who survived the Scourge outside the Blood Wood. When the Scourge lifted, they returned to the court of the Elven Queen, then fled in horror at what they found. These settlers came to the Servos in the hope of establishing a new elven community along the fringes of the jungle. They had hoped to keep their little portion of the Servos as close to its natural state as possible, with wide swaths of forested land between their scattered settlements. As successive waves of immigrants arrived, however, the elves retreated further inland so that they could continue living in the untouched forest. The elven villages around Lake Pyros have since become a vital center of the living legend cult known as the Seekers of the Heart.

Among the second wave of settlers were large numbers of deserters and refugees from Overgovernor Pavelis's Grand Theran Armada, which disintegrated while marching toward Throal. Mostly humans and orks, these refugees were in no hurry to return to Vivane and labor once more for the Overlord of Sky Point. Upon discovering the beautiful land around Lake Pyros, they settled down, hung up their arms, and got down to farming. These immigrants carved out private homesteads, expanding their acreage with each passing year by clearing a few more trees.

The third wave of settlers included members of all the Name-giver races, lured by the promise of prosperity on the shores of the lake. This wave included the Throalic dwarfs who harvest the phosphorescent algae from the lake's bottom with ingenious mechanical suction devices that enable them to pull the glowing algae up to the lake's surface through tubes. They then separate the algae from the mud, package it and send it to the many dwarf communities all across Barsaive that cannot afford light crystals. Along with the dwarfs came hunters, fishermen, lumberjacks and farmers to reap the natural bounty of the land. During this wave, House K'tenshin also began to carve out plantations from the shores of the lake and extort taxes from nearby settlements. This third wave of immigrants have had the greatest impact on the area by far. They arrived in large numbers and built entire villages in the space of a year, peeling back the jungle from the shore and setting up fences and boundaries. At this time, the last of the area's original inhabitants—primitive t'skrang and human hunter-gathers—retreated to the swampy western shores of the lake.





Today, the haphazard development of the region and its rapidly growing population have led to tensions between the various immigrant and native groups. The shores of Lake Pyros have also become favored hunting grounds for the raiders of House Henghyoke. Although the different groups of settlers remain suspicious of one another, they regularly cooperate to defend themselves against Henghyoke pirates.

Numerous t'skrang village towers dot the shores of Lake Pyros. According to all accounts, however, every one of these villages was lost during the Scourge. The advent of the Henghyoke raiders led settlers to carefully explore the village towers for signs of habitation, but all of them are apparently abandoned.

THE SERVOS JUNGLE

Just west of Lake Pyros, the Serpent River runs into the Servos Jungle, the second largest continuous woodland in Barsaive next to the Blood Wood. The word "servos" means "isolated," and the jungle is indeed a separate wilderness kingdom. Here, the river slows to a

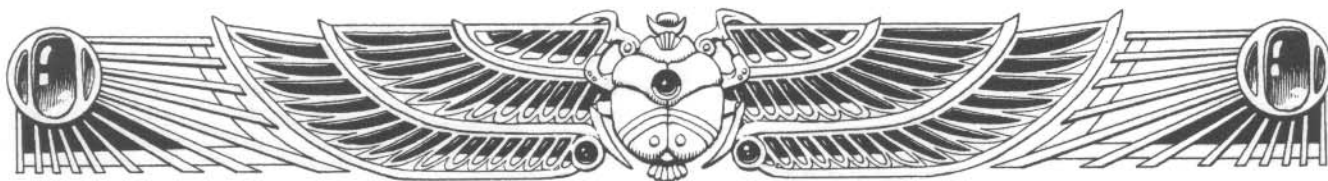
crawl. Sandbars and mud flats rise up from the bottom, seemingly intent on ensnaring hapless travelers, and the river's banks become treacherous jungle swamps that penetrate miles under the canopy of trees before giving way to dry ground. Hundreds of streams and rivers, some navigable only by canoe, flow out from the river to criss-cross the jungle.

Within these swamps and along these jungle streams lie many long-forgotten t'skrang river villages, abandoned during the Scourge. Now these forbidding sites are home to some of the most cutthroat pirates on the Serpent River. Rumor has it that somewhere in this morass lurks the dreaded pirates of House Henghyoke.

Navigating the Serpent in this area is dangerous. Although the river spans four miles in places, the actual navigable channel for riverboats is seldom more than a few hundred yards wide. Furthermore, this channel follows a crooked and ever-changing path, so it takes a skilled and attentive boat crew to make it from Lake Pyros to House K'tenshin without running aground at least once.

Those who wish to travel into the heart of the Servos Jungle must embark north on the Servos River. The Servos





is nearly as wide as the Serpent, but its banks are firm and steep. The banks of the Servos and its tributaries are dotted with the villages of primitive t'skrang and human tribes that apparently survived the Scourge without the aid of the Therans. Originally, these tribes also inhabited settlements along the lower courses of the Servos and Galanga Rivers, but they abandoned these settlements as Theran and K'tenshin slavers gradually advanced up these rivers.

This migration into the upper reaches of the river system has led to intertribal tensions, which have been exacerbated by slavers who regularly hire the fiercer tribes as field agents. The slavers supply cheap labor to the growing number of farms and plantations that are chopping away at the tree-lined banks of the Servos Jungle.

FLORA AND FAUNA OF THE SERVOS JUNGLE

The tribes of the Servos speak of the trees of the jungle as sister-trees, mother-trees, and grandmother-trees. The sister-trees are the undergrowth; the mother-trees form the dense canopy seventy feet up that darkens the jungle floor to near twilight; and the grandmother-trees are the tallest specimens that poke up through the canopy like tent poles. Nearly all the jungle tribes, the Cathan in particular, worship the grandmother-trees as intermediaries between themselves and the God of the Tree, whom Barsaivian scholars have tentatively identified as the Passion Jaspre. The Cathan believe that encroaching settlers, who are cutting down trees to uncover the land for planting, threaten the Tree God and must be punished for destroying the grandmother-trees. This belief lends a certain air of fanaticism to the growing tribal raids on pioneer settlements in the Servos.

The swamps along the Serpent contain low canopies of half-submerged mangrove and cypress trees. The primitive t'skrang of the swamps revere certain mangroves as elemental spirits, often making offerings and even ritual sacrifices to win their intervention and support. The roots of these trees have evolved both heat-sensing organs and powerful pinion jaws that devour offerings and give these rituals a dramatic flair. Reportedly, some jungle tribes sacrifice Name-givers to the mangroves.

The variety of trees in the Servos is uncountable. Ramos of Travar, in his lexicon of the Cathan language, lists more than five hundred different words for trees. The wood of some trees is light as a feather, while the wood of others is heavy as iron. The jungle t'skrang hollow out a tree called the *shivoam* to make their canoes. The Cathan use the bark of the *clematha* tree to create close-fitting suits of armor. The bark becomes as pliable as cloth when soaked in water, and as tough and resilient as dwarven chain mail when dry, although it wears out after a few years of heavy use. The jungle t'skrang make knives and

axes from the wood of the *g'nomsha* tree. Tempered by fire, a *g'nomsha* blade will hold a much keener edge than any stone implement. Servos natives also use the leaves of certain trees as crockery for cooking and serving food, as the source of extracts to make poisons and medicines and as roofing material for their homes. The trees of the Servos truly provide life to the jungle's inhabitants. The fruits of the trees serve as food, the branches as building materials, the roots as medicines. In fact, the jungle t'skrang call themselves *chreostomas*, or "tree-herders."

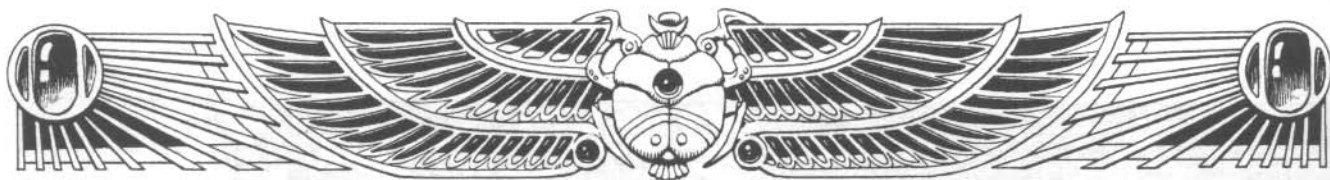
The Servos is also home to an incredible menagerie of animals and monstrous creatures. The air vibrates with the calls and wing beats of hundreds of species of birds, whose plumes command handsome prices in Barsaive's markets. Apes and monkeys are the most prevalent animal family in the Servos, however, with the smallest no larger than a man's fist and the largest—the gorillas—powerful enough to take on a troll. The jungle's animal population also includes big cats such as tigers, leopards, jaguars and black pumas. Deer and gazelle are plentiful as well, along with many varieties of water buffalo in every color and pattern. A patient hunter may even be treated to an occasional glimpse of the Servos elephant, prized for its ivory tusks.

The waterways of the Servos, however, are dominated by lizards. Servos crocodiles typically exceed fifteen feet in length, and sightings of specimens as large as fifty feet are not uncommon. The waterways swarm with snakes of every size and color as well—constricting, poisonous and a few relatively harmless varieties. The banks of the Servos's many rivers house colonies of duck-billed hadrosaurs, fifteen to twenty feet tall, which graze among the trees that hang over the water. Behemoths, massive creatures resembling a cross between a hippopotamus and an alligator, wallow in these rivers, their long necks sticking up six feet out of the water and their feet planted firmly in the river bed thirty or more feet below. Ramos of Travar has recorded one behemoth specimen 110 feet long from tail to head. Despite their formidable size, however, the plant-eating behemoths do not attack Name-givers or riverboats. Indeed, rumor has it that the Servos contains beastmasters who have mastered the behemoths.

The monsters of the Servos are more rare—but far more dangerous—than legends paint them. Many of the Servos's predators were twisted by the Horrors during the Scourge. Certainly the crojen (pp. 57–58, **Barsaive Gamemaster Book**) are a constant threat to all living things in the jungle. Relentless hunters, these small jungle cats become frenzied at the smell of blood, making their attacks more fearsome than that of the largest tiger. The Cathan have devised cunning crojen snares, although they keep the secret of their snares to themselves. The tallest of the jungle trees are home to wyverns, who swoop down from the canopy to attack







their victims. Although blood monkeys (p. 56, **Barsaive Gamemaster Book**) are extremely rare in the Servos, the Servos blood bat swarms from the trees in the same manner as its terrifying cousins in the Blood Wood.

Three of the most dangerous Servos predators, however, are insects. The giant spider, which can reach the size of a troll, builds its thin, invisible webs in the gaps between the jungle's mother-trees. The unwary traveler may easily get caught in the sticky web of a giant spider, destined to become a desiccated husk dangling from the spider's lair. The very appearance of the death moth (p. 18-19, **Creatures of Barsaive**) can paralyze an observer with fear. The underbelly of the moth is naturally shaded to resemble a skull, which can trick an observer into believing a disembodied head is flying toward him. The moth then attacks its frightened prey with a potent venom. The venom contains the creature's eggs, which incubate within the victim. The moth larvae then consume the victim's internal organs and emerge from his or her dead body. The *inshalata*, or stalking mantis, as the Cathan call it, is a giant praying mantis that disguises itself by remaining perfectly still. Passersby typically mistake the mantis for a part of the jungle landscape, perhaps a vine or leafy tree. As the unlucky traveler passes, the mantis grabs him or her from behind and attempts to fasten its outer mandibles around the hapless prey. Thus fastened, the creature uses a pair of razor-sharp arms to slowly slice the victim apart, piece by piece, and consumes as much of its prey as possible.

As the Galanga River winds its way through the foothills of Throal, it tumbles two hundred feet downward at a place called Griffin Falls. The falls are named after the Servos's only colony of jungle griffins (pp. 46-47,

Creatures of Barsaive). Like all of their kind, these griffins prefer to frighten off trespassers or hypnotize them and send them away from the griffins' nesting area. Certain tribal shamans send their students to Griffin Falls to gather a fallen feather from a jungle griffin as a test of their aptitude. Such feathers are considered powerful nethermantic totems.

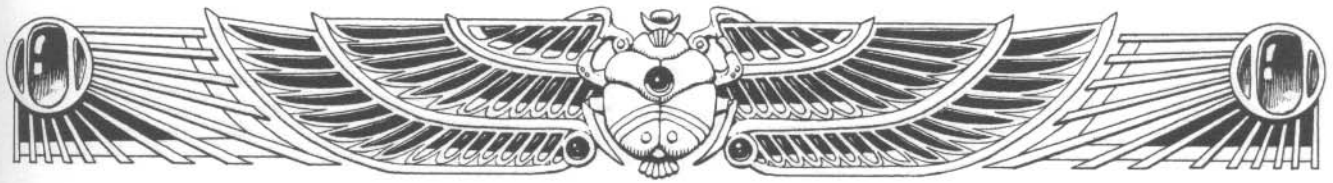
Perhaps the most feared of the Servos hunters are the giant predatory t'skrang that the Cathan call the *velos*. For years, scholars dismissed the Cathan tales of killer t'skrang with rows of sharp teeth and feet studded with razor-sharp claws. Now, however, most scholars accept the existence of these carnivorous t'skrang, who prefer the taste of Name-giver flesh to any other meat. The *velos* walk upright, craft spears that they throw with considerable force and accuracy, and live in scattered villages across the jungle. Recently, a band of forty Theranslavers discovered and attempted to raid a *velos* village. Only two slavers survived the encounter.

SETTLEMENTS IN THE SERVOS

Aside from the isolated villages of the jungle tribes, the Servos contains several K'tenshin plantations and a few scattered independent t'skrang villages. The K'tenshin plantations, which lie along the banks of the Serpent and Servos Rivers, are supervised by master farmers from House K'tenshin's Meru niall.

The Meru currently run thirty plantations in the area and have enlisted merchants from Travar in the construction of twenty or so more. The plantations supply much-needed rice, beans and vegetables to communities along the Serpent's South Reach. Once cleared of trees, the land will grow almost any crop, including bananas, coconuts, corn, cotton, sugar cane, flax, spices and tea.





Additionally, the climate of the Servos allows for two growing seasons each year.

When choosing a plantation site, the Meru builders look for an easy approach from the water, a thick layer of good topsoil and as few grandmother-trees as possible. Then they call in workers from the Henika niall to deforest forty to fifty acres, pull the stumps, turn the earth and build a central stockade. The plantation organizers then recruit craftsmen from river villages and the city of Travar to contribute members to form a self-sufficient community. The typical plantation seed colony numbers twenty to fifty individuals and usually includes a carpenter, a blacksmith, a stablemaster, a baker, a cook, a fisherman and a healer. After the seed colony has been assembled, the first planting goes into the newly turned soil. The community then constructs homes, using wood from the plentiful jungle hardwood trees. At the first harvest, the slavers from House K'tenshin's Abanos niall appear with a contingent of slave labor to bring in the crop. The slaves remain after the harvest to work the plantation as needed.

The layout of a plantation has much to do with the lay of the land and the racial composition of the community. The Meru prefer to divide their fields with ten- to fifteen-yard swaths of small trees, which act as windbreaks and reduce soil erosion. Particular care is taken when constructing the docking facility on the water's edge. The river is generally very shallow along the jungle banks, and so the plantation docks may extend as far as a hundred feet from the shore to keep approaching riverboats from running aground.

If the community is mostly t'skrang, it builds a central plantation house with rooms for every free citizen, communal kitchens and dining rooms. If the community has more racial diversity, each family builds its own house around a central square. Typically, a small road paved with cut hardwood timber connects the settlement's docks to its homes. The stockade built in a community's first year becomes the slave compound. Each evening, when their work is done, the slaves are corralled into the compound for the night. The compound is guarded by slave foremen, who ensure against escapes. Additional foremen are required to supervise the work in the fields each day. A typical plantation keeps no more than two slaves for each free person in the community—any more is considered a security risk.

Admission to a plantation seed colony is a highly sought-after privilege on the South Reach of the Serpent. Such communities are run much like t'skrang trade covenants, with every member of the community sharing in the fruits of its labor. Although the first year requires much hard work, after the first harvest a plantation dweller can generally settle into a life of relative luxury, with slaves to attend his household and a generous stipend

from the plantation's annual profits. Even in years of poor harvests, plantation communities rarely go hungry. Of course, the entire plantation system depends on the seemingly inexhaustible supply of slave labor, and many individuals leave plantation life after experiencing the reality of a slave society and its manifold suffering.

The rivers of the Servos also contain numerous t'skrang village towers, but the domes of most of these villages flooded during the Scourge. Explorers report that the walls of these domes are perforated with thousands of tiny holes, and that the domes themselves do not contain the bodies or bones of their onetime inhabitants. Scholars believe a Horror found a way to breach the defenses of these village kaers during the Scourge.

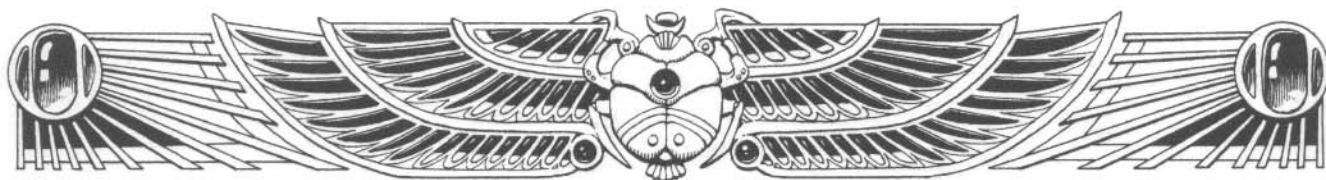
A few isolated t'skrang villages that survived the Scourge are believed to remain in the Servos, most located far upstream on the minor tributaries of the Servos and Galanga rivers. These independent villages typically take extraordinary measures to conceal themselves from outsiders. Villagers usually dock their riverboats in hidden coves and lagoons and conceal all above-water activity, so that their villages resemble the area's numerous abandoned t'skrang settlements. They survive by raiding K'tenshin riverboats and plantations; according to rumor, these villagers imprison or execute any outsider who learns of their existence.

THE JUNGLE TRIBES

The only remaining indigenous inhabitants of the Servos Jungle are the human tribes known as the Cathan and several small t'skrang tribes. All of these Name-givers live in villages, which they build alongside the jungle's rivers and streams. All are hunter-gatherers who primarily subsist on fresh meat, fish, fruits, wild tubers and nuts gathered from the jungle. A few Cathan villages cultivate tubers or beans to supplement their diets, but most of the jungle's people have never learned farming or animal husbandry. These Name-givers fashion tools of flint, wood and bone. For shelter, they construct thatched huts. The Cathan generally build on dry land, while the Servos's t'skrang partially submerge their homes in the water. All use canoes to travel the jungle's waterways.

For centuries, the Servos's humans and t'skrang lived in apparent harmony. Both groups survived the Scourge by taking refuge in a maze of natural caverns, which the tribal shamans sealed against the coming Horrors. (The entrances to these underground caverns still exist but the jungle people refuse to enter them, perhaps because they still contain Horror constructs.) Many scholars believe that the t'skrang somehow shared their ability to hibernate with the humans, for the Cathan often use the term *ixtixtnaqitl*, or "long sleep," to describe the Time of Hiding. During the long years in the





dark, the Horrors breached the tribal shamans' crude nethermantic seals on several occasions, and the Cathan in particular suffered terribly from it. According to the legends of the jungle t'skrang, on several occasions Cathan led Horrors to t'skrang hiding places in exchange for their own lives. These stories describe the source of the current friction between the two groups.

Relations between the human and t'skrang tribes have steadily declined since slavers began to ply their trade in the jungle. To avoid becoming slaves themselves, many Cathan villagers serve as guides for Theran and K'tenshin slavers, and usually direct their employers to t'skrang villages. The jungle t'skrang consider such actions declarations of war and often gather war parties from neighboring villages to attack the villages of their Cathan betrayers. Although the jungle t'skrang outnumber the Cathan, the humans tend to be better warriors and so such conflicts usually degenerate into drawn-out feuds that last until the warriors of the opposing villages exhaust themselves.

The jungle people follow the Disciplines of the archer, scout, warrior, nethermancer and shaman (for information on the shaman Discipline, see p. 103, **Magic: A Manual of Mystic Secrets**). The Cathan are particularly dangerous bowmen. Tribal magicians are most often shaman adepts, and they generally pass on their knowledge to no more than two other individuals in their tribe. The village shaman occupies a place of honor just below the village elder or lahala. Often these magicians have access to powerful ghost masters whom they can contact to help guide themselves and their tribesmen in their quest for knowledge and advancement (for ghost master rules, see p. 225, **ED**).

For additional descriptions of the Cathan and t'skrang of the Servos Jungle, see **Denizens of Earthdawn, Volume I**.

The Gray Ones

According to the legends of the Servos tribes, Horrors destroyed the jungle during the Scourge. Cathan stories, for example, say the Horrors "devoured the jungle like locusts." The basis of these legends is easy to surmise. Almost all Name-givers are familiar with the physical destruction the Horrors wrought on the lands of Barsaive, and it seems likely that the Horrors destroyed much of the Servos's plant and animal life during the Scourge. According to legends, the jungle people restored their habitat with the aid of strange visitors known as the Gray Ones.

In all the tales so far recorded, the Gray Ones appear at the edge of a village during the last hour before nightfall. They appear as a pair of Name-givers, always of the same race, one male and one female, dressed in plain gray cloaks. The visitors share stories with the villagers, instructing them in the ways of the mother-trees and the rejuvenation of the jungle. Every village that received the Gray Ones was said to

be free of the threat of the Horrors for a year and a day. Soon the green returned to the land of the Servos just as the Gray Ones had prophesied, and the people built their homes under the eaves of the newly grown trees.

Most scholars scoff at the legends of the Gray Ones, pointing out that the Servos Jungle is much too large to have grown up from nothing within a scant few Name-giver generations. The tribes of the Servos, however, remain convinced that the tales are true.

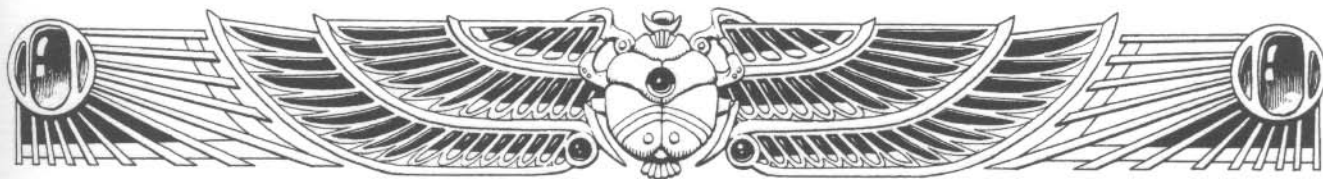
THE TYLON RIVER

The Tylon River, which runs swiftly down from the Tylon Mountains, is the largest tributary in the Serpent's South Reach. The Upper Reach of the Tylon, which stretches from the river's source to the four-hundred-foot falls at Daiche Canyon, flows through densely forested hillsides and verdant valleys that are considered some of the most beautiful wilderness in Barsaive. The Tylon's Lower Reach meanders through the rugged plains where the Dinganni wander. At the southern end of Daiche Canyon, the city of Kratas has built the colony called Daiche, which has become a locus of trade and controversy.

According to local legend, the Tylon River was controlled before the Scourge by the t'skrang House T'kambras, the House of Swift Waters. Eventually, the T'kambrian aropagoi came into conflict with House K'tenshin, as the latter aropagoi attempted to expand its influence by seizing control of trade on the Tylon. After House K'tenshin failed to persuade House T'kambras to allow its riverboats into the Tylon, House K'tenshin declared all-out war against the T'kambrians. For five years the warships of the aropagoi clashed. Finally, with the aid of its Theran allies, House K'tenshin prevailed. K'tenshin warships seized control of House T'kambras's home village, located at the southern end of Daiche Canyon about a mile downstream of the cataracts.

Enraged at the T'kambrian resistance, the Shivalahala K'tenshin resolved to make an example of House T'kambras that would strike fear into the hearts of all who thought to oppose her aropagoi. The K'tenshinians proceeded to sell every T'kambrian prisoner into Theran slavery. They seized the riverboats of T'kambras and its allied villages for their own war fleet and executed the lahallas of those nialls, effectively destroying the ancestral memories of House T'kambras and its allied villages. As a final act of disdain, House K'tenshin used explosive charges of elemental air and fire to destroy the village towers of House T'kambras. To this day the place is called "Shattered Towers." It is said the Shivalahala T'kambras was a troubadour of great power, and as she watched the murder and enslavement of her people and the destruction of her





home, she sang her ghost song before she too died. Legend has it that the cataracts of Daiche Canyon repeat that song under the darkness of the new moon for any who have ears to listen.

Daiche Canyon remained largely uninhabited, and the river rarely traveled, until the end of the Theran War. At that time, Garlthik One-Eye, who had roused the Therans from Kratas, decided that his city could no longer sustain itself simply on the loot recovered from the ancient citadel. Realizing that Kratas lay in the middle of trade routes connecting the lands around Vivane with Throal and the Serpent's Mid and South Reaches, Garlthik surmised that a nearby port on the Tylon River could enrich his city. After opening communications with the weakened House K'tenshin, Garlthik immediately sent one of his best lieutenants, the dwarf Sagramon Steeltoe, to supervise the construction of the colony town now called Daiche. Garlthik then encouraged his many friends among the merchants (fences all, of course) to join Sagramon in a "legitimate and profitable enterprise"—namely, sending all the stolen and looted goods accumulating in Kratas back into Barsaive's markets through Daiche.

Within a few short years Daiche had become a fabulous success. Although the town has fewer than a thousand inhabitants, it boasts architecture of stone and mortared brick, as well as impressive fortifications and ample housing. Each trading company in Kratas maintains its own warehouse in Daiche, and the town's docks are always bustling with riverboats. But the center of attention in town is the ever-expanding castle that Sagramon has built for his ever-expanding family, which now boasts eight children and fourteen grandchildren.

THE RETURN OF HOUSE T'KAMBRAS

About ten years ago, House K'tenshin began raising its riverboat rates for cargo coming out of Daiche. For a while, the Kratas trading companies accepted the rate increases as the cost of business—after all, the arpagoi had a monopoly on the Tylon River trade. Eventually, however, Sagramon and his fellow Daicheans realized that House K'tenshin intended to slowly buy out the entire town. After consulting closely with Garlthik in Kratas, the merchants of Daiche began contracting cargo service from a confederation of pirates and privateers, who called themselves "House T'kambras," and opened numerous clandestine loading sites all along the Tylon.

Within months spies from House K'tenshin uncovered the deceit, and soon the red and gold warships of House K'tenshin began to patrol the waters of the Tylon. After capturing one of the unaffiliated renegade riverboats, House K'tenshin sent envoys to confront Sagramon and demand an explanation. Witnesses claim the old dwarf

simply shrugged his shoulders and said, "Well now, you found us out—but can you blame us, really?" Subsequently, Sagramon and the K'tenshinian envoys made a series of promises that both parties had no intention of keeping. Satisfied, the envoys returned to their warship and prepared to return to the Sixteen Towers.

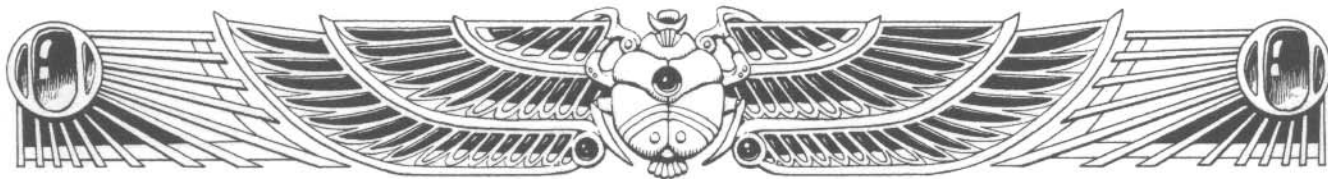
Before the warship had gotten a hundred yards from the pier, however, another warship pulled into view—the first appearance of *Astendar's Desire* in the annals of Barsaive. Within minutes, the *Desire* had transformed the proud K'tenshinian warship into a useless derelict. Then the *Desire* pulled alongside its fallen foe and the renegade ship's captain, Jedaiyen Westhrall, demanded that the K'tenshin arpagoinya drop their token earrings into the river or she would sink their ship. When they chose to save the ship, Jedaiyen gave them a message to relay to the Shivalahala K'tenshin: "Bid the shivalahala to remember the ghost song of the Shivalahala T'kambras. The House of Swift Waters shall live as long as the River Tylon flows into Death's Sea."

Since the appearance of *Astendar's Desire*, the Tylon River has become a hotbed of intrigue. For several years, House K'tenshin attempted to blockade Daiche from all river trade. This heavy-handed tactic only strengthened anti-K'tenshin sentiments along the Tylon, however. The merchants of Daiche began hiring the nomadic Dinganni to transport their goods to secret loading sites along the Tylon's shores, where T'kambrian riverboats would pick up the cargo. The Dinganni hide the goods within their caravans, then make camp on the river banks. K'tenshin patrols can never be sure which encampments hide smugglers, and the Dinganni are such fierce fighters that attacking every Dinganni encampment is impractical.

The Scavians, who live in barge villages along the river banks, also aid the T'kambrians in their long-running battle with House K'tenshin. Long a favorite target of arpagoi patrols, the Scavians are happy to share their expertise in crafting elemental fire with House T'kambras. The Scavians regularly provide the T'kambrians with elemental fire for their riverboats' fire engines and fire cannon. In return, T'kambrian riverboats come to the aid of Scavian barges in nearly any circumstance. Many Scavian barges also smuggle freight out of Daiche and onto the Serpent River, where it can be transferred to other riverboats protected by the Free Trade Compact. The favorite port for making such exchanges is the trading town of Farram, where the Iontos River enters the Serpent.

House V'strimon, the traditional enemy of House K'tenshin, also uses the ongoing T'kambras-K'tenshin feud to harass House K'tenshin. Despite the repeated protests of the Shivalahala K'tenshin, House V'strimon continues to provide aid to the T'kambrians and V'strimon warships





regularly escort Scavian barges on the Serpent. Although House V'strimon denies any involvement in the feud, the prominent role of Jedaiyen Westhrall, daughter of V'strimon's greatest modern hero, in the T'kambrian resistance strongly suggests otherwise.

Recently, House K'tenshin has apparently shifted its strategy. Although K'tenshin warships still patrol for T'kambrian vessels, they no longer attempt to blockade Daiche. Instead, K'tenshin riverboats have slashed their cargo rates in an attempt to drive the T'kambrians out of business. The merchants of Daiche, however, have wisely chosen to split their freight between both factions to prevent the formation of a new trade monopoly on the Tylon.

JEDAIYEN WESTHRALL, CAPTAIN OF ASTENDAR'S DESIRE

Jedaiyen Westhrall is rapidly on her way to surpassing her illustrious father as the greatest river captain Barsaive has ever known. No one is quite sure why Jedaiyen chose to abandon House V'strimon for the outlaw House T'kambras, but some believe she is acting on orders from the Shivalahala V'strimon—although the historical friction between the Westhralls and the shivalahala make such a claim almost unbelievable. Others believe that Jedaiyen intends to revive House T'kambras as a political entity. Or perhaps Jedaiyen simply wants to pursue jik'harra, and House K'tenshin—with its ties to Thera and involvement in the slave trade—makes the best possible target against which she can measure herself.

The riverboat *Astendar's Desire* was built entirely with the reward money that the Westhralls received from the Royal House of Throal in return for the elder Westhrall's extraordinary service to that kingdom. Jedaiyen's father designed the riverboat himself and personally oversaw its construction at the Denlikiyan shipyards—much to the exasperation of the engineers at Denlikiyan. The frame of that original riverboat lives on in the present-day *Desire*, a *shimoram* that features a split paddle wheel. This unique design innovation consists of a great wheel that runs the width of the ship, split into a left and right half. The vessel's fire engine can provide different amounts of power to the two wheel halves, which dramatically increases the ship's maneuverability in combat.

Jedaiyen has also increased the riverboat's firepower, and she has made a questor of Floranuus named Milos a member of her crew. Milos, in turn, can use his Passion-granted abilities to enhance the *Desire's* Speed and Maneuverability. Jedaiyen herself is a Seventh Circle boatman (p. 106, *Denizens of Earthdawn*, Volume I).



JEDAIYEN WESTHRALL

DEX: 7 STR: 5 TOU: 6
PER: 7 WIL: 6 CHA: 8

Astendar's Desire

Speed: 7

Maneuverability: 10

Firepower: 21/21

Hull

Armor: 18

Ramming: 28

Cargo: 80

Damage

Critical: 17

Derelect: 54

Destroyed: 61

Crew

Captain: 7 (19)

Crew Size: 75

Crew Skill: 3

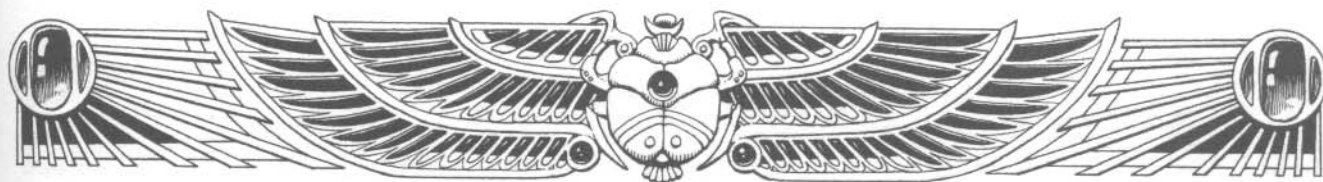
Crew Rating: 17

Morale: 59

Special

Questor of Floranuus, Step 9. Add 2 to Speed and Maneuverability for test result in hours.





TRAVAR

Travar is one of Barsaive's largest cities. Located on the west side of the Byrose River, about two hundred miles south of the Serpent, Travar retains all of its pre-Scourge splendor and grace. The city is famous for the impressive wealth of its citizens, the golden roofs of its towers and spires, and the bizarre spectacle of its annual political contest, known as the Founding.

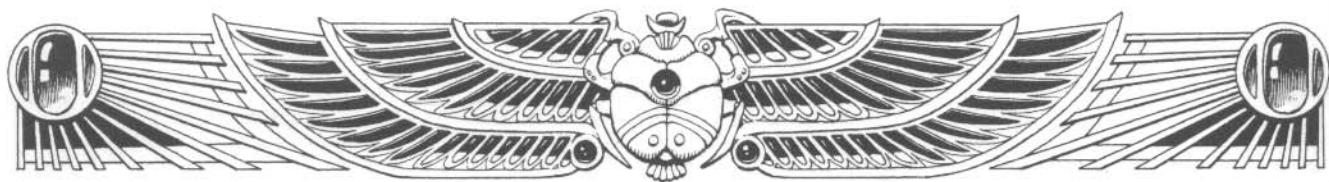
Three magistrates share power in Travar. One magistrate oversees the court system, the second runs the civil services, and the third is free of civic duties and may pursue his own business affairs. At the end of each month, the three magistrates meet to establish new policies and laws based on unanimous consensus. Then they trade places. This arrangement allows each magistrate to serve the city and yet still attend to his or her personal affairs every third month. Each magistrate holds office for three years, and each year one magisterial post goes up for election. The election process, however, is unique.

The city of Travar retains a group of magicians, known as the Body of Five, at the public's expense. Each year, the Body of Five makes all preparations for the Founding. A spectacular tournament involving magic,

wild beasts, puzzles and traps, the Founding is usually held during the first two weeks of the autumn. Candidates for one of the magistrate positions must hire a champion or champions to compete in the tournament. The champion who wins the Founding wins the seat of magistrate for his employer—and presumably a handsome reward as well. As a result, Travar is almost always filled with freelance warriors, a condition that saves the city the expense of maintaining a standing army.

The most powerful Travarian magistrate is Niss Reeves, a troll weaponsmith who has all but abandoned her Discipline to become one of the premiere jewelers in Barsaive. Within the city she is known as "Sparkling Niss," for she has unusual elegance and charm for a troll, as well as a wardrobe and jewelry that would put a Theran noblewoman to shame. Niss has won a magistrate position for three consecutive terms, a remarkable feat made possible by her connections in the adept community from her adventuring days. She supports free trade and a free Barsaive, and she has expressed publicly her loathing of the Therans. Despite these public proclamations, she has resisted the attempts of fellow magistrates to incorporate Throalic law into the code of Travar.





Travar's streets are home to several of the most successful trading companies in Barsaive. If something can be bought or sold, one can find it somewhere in Travar. This includes slaves, though the slave market remains outside the city walls—and the city tax on slaveholders makes slave ownership a luxury available to only the very wealthy. Despite the city's ambivalent attitude toward slavery, several crimes—including theft and adultery—carry the penalty of enslavement under Travar's legal code. However, almost all of Travar's industries use free labor to produce their goods. Many households buy individuals from the slave market, free them from bondage and then bring them into the city, where they employ them as servants and pay them room and board.

The wealthiest man in Travar is the obsidiman troubadour Omasu, founder of the Overland Trading Company. Originally from the Liferock at Ayodhya, Omasu displays no political opinions whatsoever. His company trades all across Barsaive, from Vivane to Throal to Iopos, in every good and service imaginable. The Overland Trading Company now boasts a staff of more than twenty merchants, with caravans leaving Travar every two to three weeks. The company has forged an agreement with House K'tenshin to allow three company-owned galleys to travel the South Reach—something no other trading company has ever accomplished. Initially Omasu traveled widely and did his own trading, but in recent years he has divided his time between his expansive house inside the city walls and his rambling estate on the east side of the Byrose River across from Travar.

Travar's air fleet consists of six drakkars and four galleys, although more vessels are slated to join. The airships provide the city's merchants with a welcome alternative to the K'tenshin riverboats that monopolize trade on the Byrose. The growing air fleet has kept freight costs competitive, prompting House K'tenshin to seek other ways to profit from its monopoly of the Byrose, such as its passenger service between Travar and the Floating City of House V'strimon in Lake Ban.

The city imports its food from hundreds of farming villages along both sides of the Byrose River. Regular ferry service is available to cross the river at the city itself, and good systems of roads line each river bank. The soil of the Byrose valley produces excellent crops of cotton and grain, and the lowlands of the nearby Thunder Mountains provide pasture for sheep, cattle and horses. In the past several years, however, the soil on the west bank of the river has grown depleted. Area landowners blame the depletion on poor farming techniques, but the tenant farmers whisper that the Badlands are reaching out toward the river.

APPROACHING THE MIST SWAMPS

The last hundred miles of water between the Serpent's confluence with the Iontos River and the edge of the Mist Swamps represent the last navigable—and perhaps most desolate—stretch of the river. The easternmost ridge of the Twilight Peaks extends along the Serpent's north banks, and on the south bank the hideous Badlands creep right up to the water's edge. The waters of the Great River change from blue-green to the reddish-brown of the Badlands in this region.

At one time the stronghold of Theran influence on the Serpent, this stretch of the river once contained seven river villages. The mines in the Twilight Peaks were rich with ores, the soil was fertile and easily worked and the ancient Kingdom of the Scavians to the west provided ample supplies of elemental fire and air. With Theran aid, the settlements in the region constructed lavish kaers. When the Horrors entered Barsaive, however, these lands were the first to fall. Now the area is desolate, with only abandoned kaers and mine shafts left to testify to its long-lost prosperity.

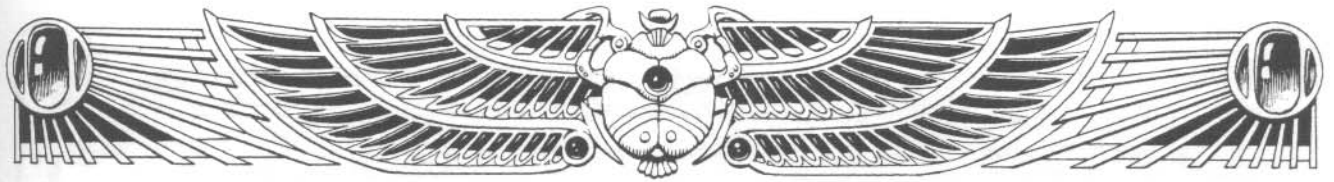
Only the very foolish and the very powerful take up residence along this stretch of the river. A single K'tenshin riverboat patrols the area for escaped slaves attempting to flee into the Badlands. Slaves who survive a foray into the Badlands usually make their way back to the river as soon as they realize the hopelessness of crossing the wastes.

Only two Serpent River settlements of any consequence lie between the Tylon River and the Mist Swamps. The first town of note is named Portage, and is located only a few miles from the junction of the Tylon and the Serpent. Portage is the trail head of one of the best caravan routes between the South Reach and Vivane. The route follows a Theran road built before the Scourge, skirts the northern edge of the Twilight Peaks, and joins a trail from Kratas somewhere near the boundary of the ancient kingdom of Ustrech. Caravans can hire Dinganni guides to help them make the passage safely. In recent years, however, this southern route has fallen into disuse because of increasing ork attacks on caravans. (Rumors say that Garlthik has bribed a number of ork raiders to move away from the Kratas route and south toward the Portage road.)

The second settlement is the small town of Trosk, located on the ruins of a pre-Scourge port city. The inhabitants of Trosk are all questors of Jaspree and their servants. The Troskians believe they have a sacred duty to find a way to stop the growth of the Badlands, though no one can tell how much success they are having.

Tales abound of magicians who have built secret strongholds in the Badlands, but only one is known to have done so. A t'skrang elemental named Sevastos has built a house in the ruined tower of what was once the

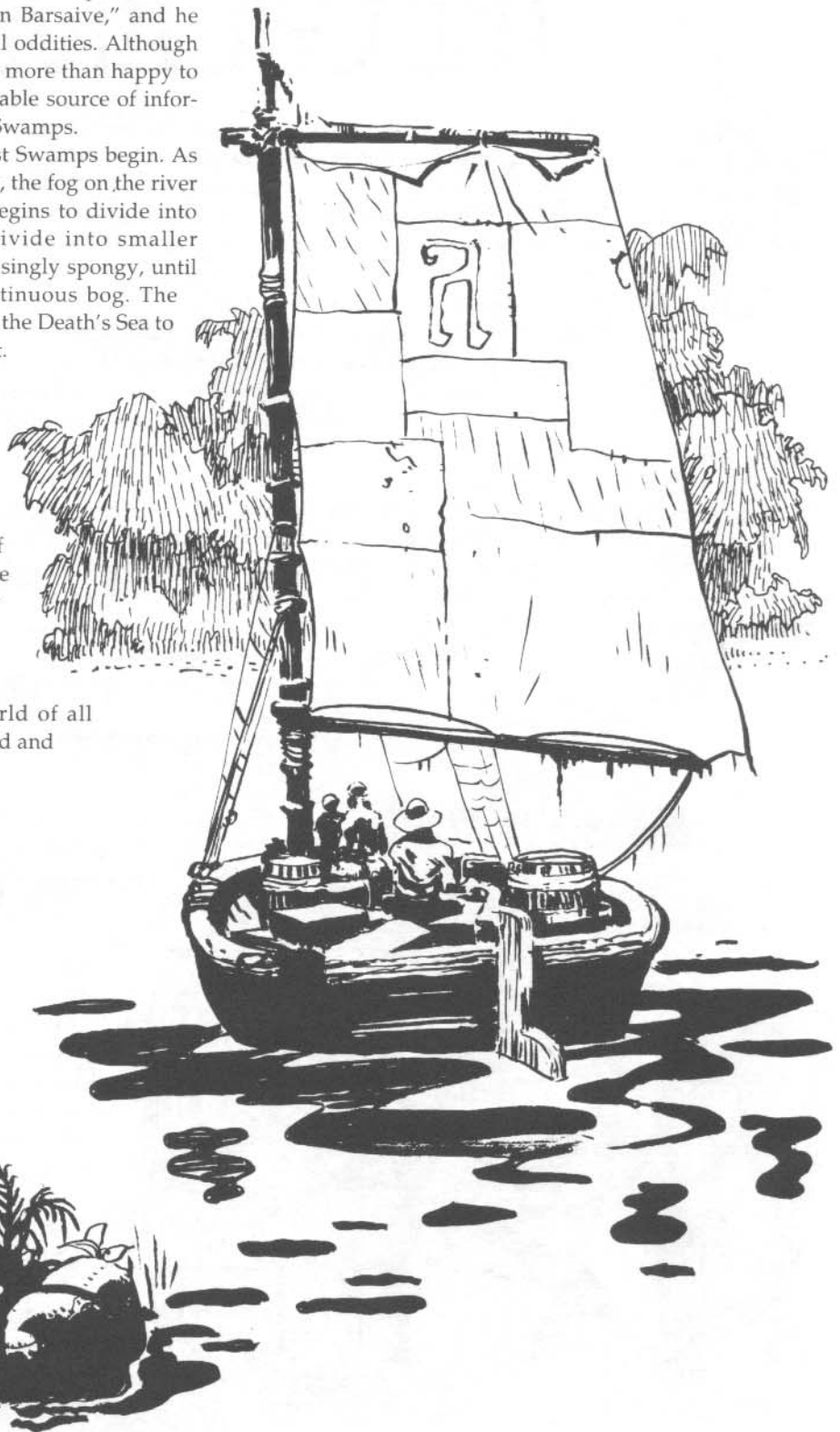


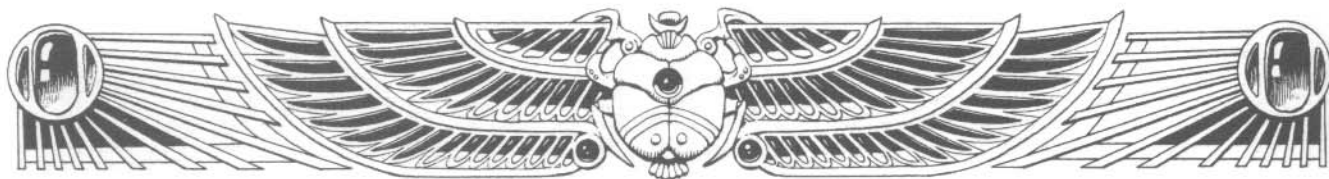


nearest t'skrang river village to the Mist Swamps. He calls his tower "The Last Homely House in Barsaive," and he has filled it with all manner of magical oddities. Although he lives in virtual isolation, Sevastos is more than happy to entertain guests, and he can be a valuable source of information for travelers entering the Mist Swamps.

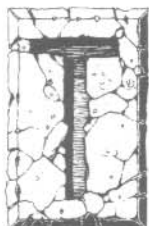
None can truly say where the Mist Swamps begin. As the Serpent passes by Sevastos's abode, the fog on the river grows increasingly thick. The river begins to divide into myriad branches, which in turn divide into smaller branches. The river banks grow increasingly spongy, until water and earth merge into one continuous bog. The ever-present fog, heated by the fires of the Death's Sea to the west, reduces visibility to a few feet.

Very few explorers have ever ventured into the Mist Swamps and returned, and so little is known for certain about this harsh environment. Some explorers, however, claim they have glimpsed the dark spires and menacing walls of the Castle of Assassins through the mists. The castle is reputedly the training grounds for the Hand of Corruption secret society (p. 41, *Barsaive Gamemaster Book*). This dreaded cult, whose self-appointed task is to cleanse the world of all Name-givers, is among the most loathed and feared in Barsaive.





THE COIL RIVER



The Coil River is one of the most prosperous stretches of the entire Serpent River system. From its source in the Throal Mountains to the Aras Sea, the Coil runs as swiftly and strongly as the Serpent and is home to more people than the rest of Barsaive's mightiest waterway. Once considered unnavigable for much of its northern length, the river "smoothed out" during the Scourge. Riverboats can now sail north up the Coil, then ride its underground tributaries through the mountains to the Kingdom of Throal. These tunnels are closed to almost all riverboat traffic, with the exception of certain ships given express permission for passage by King Varulus III.

Midway through its course, the Coil flows into Lake Ban, which connects the Coil with the Serpent River. The largest freshwater lake in Barsaive, Lake Ban is home to the Floating City of House V'strimon, the arpagoi that has dominated trade on the Coil River for centuries. Lake Ban's location—midway between Throal and the seaport of Urupa—and its status as the only junction of the Coil and Serpent Rivers have made it a major economic and cultural crossroads. The Floating City, along with the bustling towns and villages and the networks of canals and roads along the lake's shores, marks Lake Ban as the undisputed heart of the Coil River valley, as well as one of Barsaive's most civilized regions.

From Lake Ban, the Coil flows southeast through the fertile steppes between the Serpent River and the Aras Sea. Shortly before it enters the sea, the river divides into three branches, which form the Coil Delta. At the confluence of the central branch and the Aras lies the city of Urupa, Barsaive's foremost seaport. Situated under the steep cliffs that border the sea, Urupa was first settled by former kaer dwellers who arrived shortly after the Scourge ended. Despite its relative youth, Urupa has quickly grown into one of the province's richest cities. Its strategic location and the high volume of lucrative trade conducted along its docks have attracted the attention of most of Barsaive's major trading companies, as well as the Kingdom of Throal and even the Theran Empire.

HOUSE V'STRIMON

House V'strimon, the House of Reeds, is one of the Serpent's oldest t'skrang arpagoi. The members of the arpagoi describe the origins of their house and its magnificent Floating City with the following tale of the Old Man of the Nets:

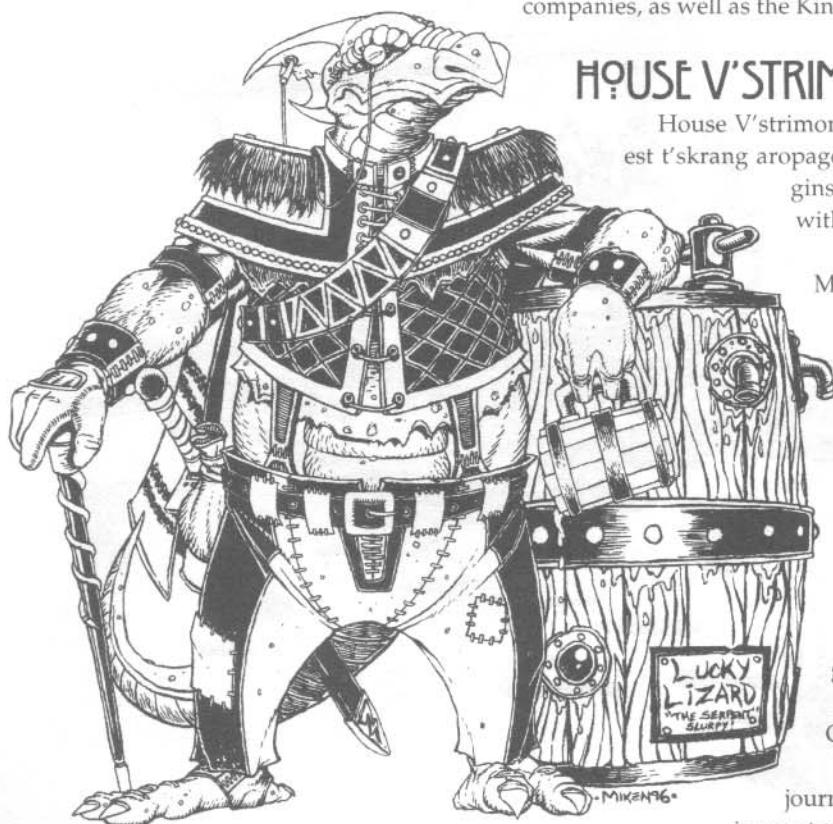
Now it was after the Parliament of Mermaids, after he had caught the Great Sea Bass wearing the Sign of the Wheel and set it as Bailiff over the prison he built to hold the Deep Ones, that the Old Man of the Nets sailed home to his house by Lake Ban. And when he pulled up his boat on the shore he saw his wife, V'ranna of the Many Baskets, sitting there weaving the reeds with a look on her face that could curdle an egg in its shell.

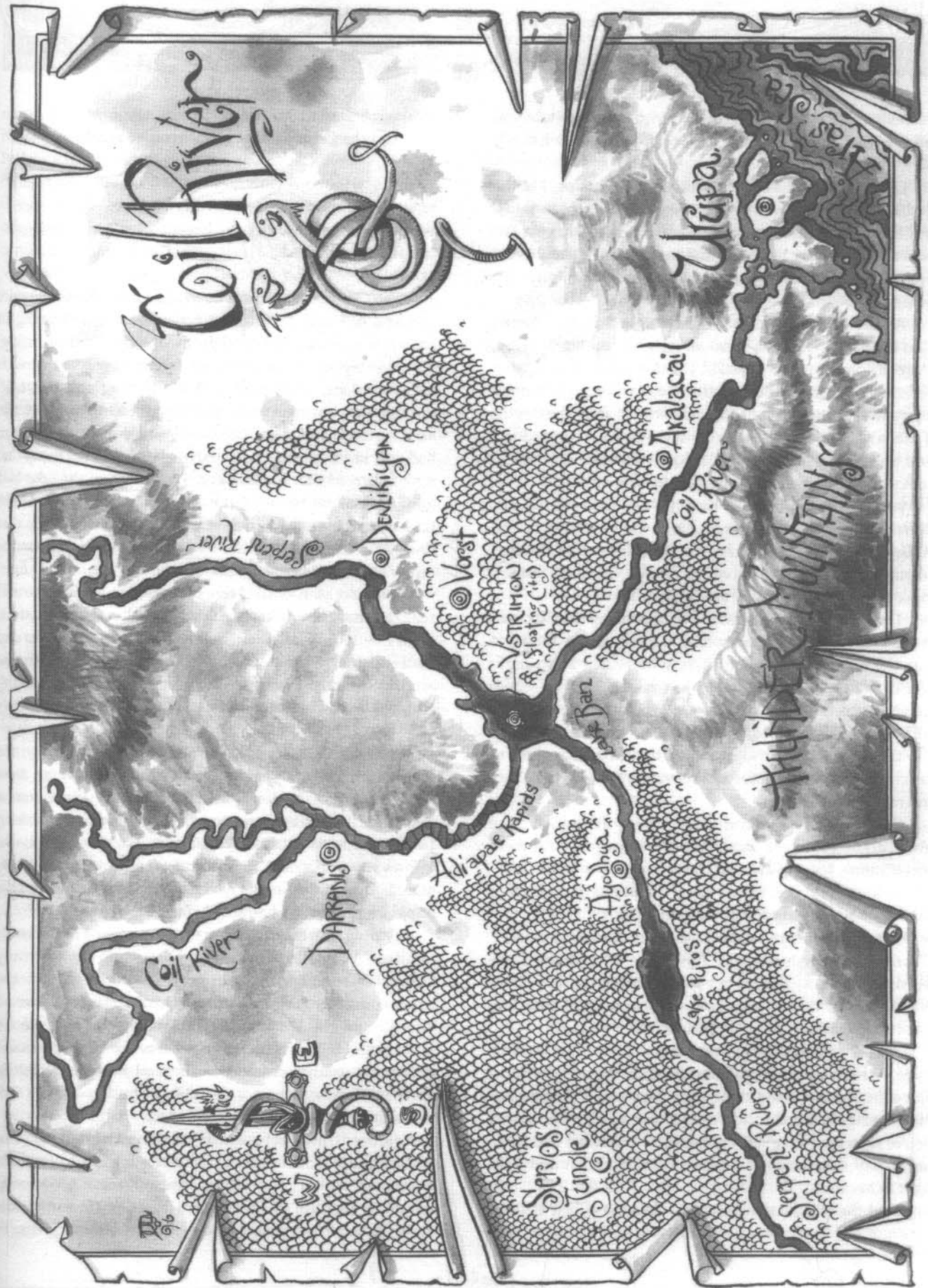
"I am home, good wife," called the Old Man of the Nets.

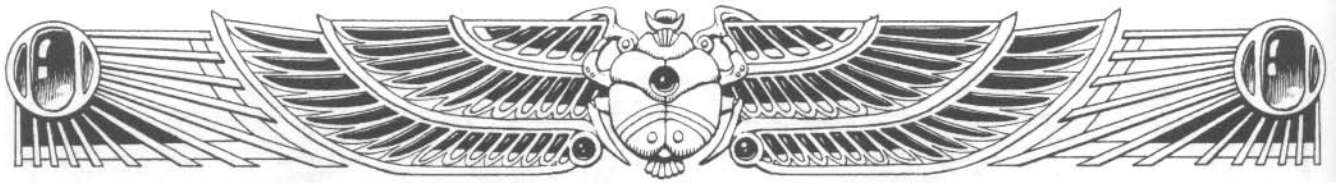
"It is well," said V'ranna, who did not rise to greet him.

"What ails thee, my V'ranna?" asked the Old Man with a sigh.

"For six turns of the moon, you have been journeying," said his wife, ever weaving. "The larder is empty, there is no wood for the fire, the garden needs







weeding and my bed has grown cold. And now here you come without fish, without firewood, and ask 'what ails thee, wife of mine?'"

Quickly, the Old Man produced from his pocket the seed he had been given by the Parliament of Mermaids. "All this is true, my dearest V'ranna, but here I have a gift from the folk under the river, and they tell me it shall grow a reed that will make you a basket greater than any you have made before."

At this V'ranna stopped weaving and took the seed from his hand. Then she fixed an icy glare on him, saying, "A reed tomorrow or a basket the day after shall neither feed me nor warm me by sundown today. Any gift from a mermaid is a foul gift indeed, and better it go to the depths of the lake before we let a weed like this into our garden." And she threw the seed out across the waters, where it sank straight to the deepest part of the lake.

And so the Old Man of the Nets resumed his old life, gathering fish for the larder, cutting wood for the fire and pulling weeds from the garden. On the days of the half moon, he rowed up the river to market to sell V'ranna's baskets and tell his story of the Great Sea Bass.

Thus, life went on as always until one day the Old Man of the Nets returned from a long journey down the river with the bottom of his boat full of wire eels he had caught near the jungle's edge. But when he came to the place where the river meets Lake Ban, he found his way blocked by a thicket of reeds. The reeds grew all across the river and deep into the lake, and they so muddled the old man's sense of direction that he was forced to leave his boat by the shore and reach home on foot.

When he came to the place where his house once stood, all he could see was covered with reeds. And there was V'ranna, lashing away at the green growth with a sickle, her looks and her words ragged and sharp enough to cut those same reeds with a withering glance.

"Our garden is ruined and our house is gone," V'ranna told her husband. "As fast as I cut them, these weeds grow back. They'll not stop growing till they cover the shore and the whole world. It is unnatural, and you must do something about it this instant!"

And so the Old Man shrugged and pulled out his bone flute, which he had fashioned from the toe bone of Shivoam. He sat on the shore and played, and the Spirit of the River gave heed to his call. V'ranna, who had never before seen the Great Serpent, for once in her life had nothing to say. She sat down next to the Old Man and held tight to his arm.

Said the Old Man to Shivoam, "We are afflicted, Great

Mother. Attend to our need."

And the Great Mother replied with a riddle:

"Throwing the seed without heed
Makes seed into weed.
Weave weed into reed
and fulfill your need."

The Old Man and his wife made a meal out of the wire eels and talked deep into the night about the meaning of Shivoam's words. When they awoke the next morning, V'ranna stepped to the shore and began to weave the reeds all around her. She started that morning and wove all through the day, then wove all through the night. She wove all that week and then three weeks more, until the moon had run its cycle and she could weave no more. Every last rush and reed that had choked the surface of the lake had gone to make a basket larger than V'ranna of the Many Baskets had ever made before, a basket of living reeds that floated upside down on the surface of Lake Ban, right in the center over the deepest waters.

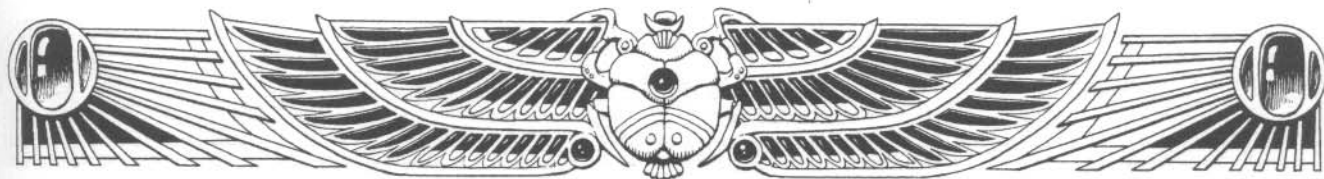
The Old Man of the Nets saw what she had done and realized that they no longer needed shelter. He packed his weary wife and all their belongings into his boat, and made their new home in the basket V'ranna had woven. And in time the ever-growing reeds formed the Floating City of House V'strimon.

Because t'skrang love stories more than history, the truth of such legends can never be verified. However, most scholars agree that House V'strimon likely evolved from a confederation of t'skrang river villages that existed long before the arrival of the Therans in Barsaive. If anyone knows the true extent of V'strimon's age, surely the shivalahala does, but she has never offered any answer on the subject (other than a haughty "Harrumph").

During the Days of Preparation, when Thera cast its shadow over all of Barsaive, V'strimon stood firmly opposed to Theran subjugation. Even today the aropagoinya of House V'strimon loathe slavery above all things, and the V'strimon Protocols prescribe death for enslaving a fellow Name-giver. Before the Scourge, House V'strimon controlled trade on the Coil River, and the city of Urupa grew from a V'strimonian trade covenant that settled there when the Scourge ended.

Some time before the Orichalcum Wars, the Shivalahala K'tenshin approached the Shivalahala V'strimon with a proposition. House K'tenshin wished to extend its control of the Serpent River northward across Lake Ban, at the probable expense of House Syrtis. In





return for permission to cross Lake Ban unmolested, House K'tenshin offered to pay House V'strimon a generous yearly fee. After some discussion, the Shivalahala V'strimon refused the offer on the grounds that House K'tenshin was deeply involved in the Theran slave trade. That refusal triggered a conflict between the two aropagoi that lasted until the sealing of the kaers.

Each year, bakshevas collected by K'tenshinian riverboats drained much of House V'strimon's wealth. According to legends, House K'tenshin, aided by the Theran navy, staged at least three full-scale sieges of House V'strimon's island citadel during this time. In retaliation, House V'strimon supported rebels of all kinds who sought to free the lands along the Serpent River from Theran control.

These years also saw the birth of the alliance between House V'strimon and Throal, which continues to this day. Throal often used its position as the Therans' administrators in Barsaive to intervene on behalf of its t'skrang allies along the Coil River, and House V'strimon would surely have faced larger Theran forces if not for Throal's intervention. In return, House V'strimon's riverboats provided Throal with a way to circumvent Thera's impossibly complicated tax levies and House K'tenshin's outrageous transportation rates.

When the king of Throal presented the Shivalahala V'strimon with a copy of the Book of Tomorrow in the years before the Scourge, she reportedly became intrigued with the way the dwarfs had captured so much of their culture's vital essence in written words. Inspired by the feat, she resolved to create a similar treatise for the t'skrang even as her people sealed the Floating City against the Scourge. Combining her ancestral memories with the work of scribes and scholars from her library, she undertook the transfer of t'skrang oral traditions to written words. The fruits of her labor survive today as the V'strimon Protocols, a collection of writings to which the aropagoi of House V'strimon add a new volume every year.

After the Scourge, the riverboats of House V'strimon were among the first to venture out from the safety of their kaer. Indeed, the airship *Earthdawn's* first encounter on its momentous journey out of Throal was a meeting with the V'strimonian riverboat *Shikasta* on the upper reaches of the Coil River. V'strimon crews were the first t'skrang to establish regular trade with Throal, the first to establish trade with the fledgling city of Urupa, and the first to cross the Aras Sea to lands beyond Barsaive. Today, these trading relationships form the foundation of House V'strimon's prosperous economic empire.

When the Therans returned to Barsaive, House V'strimon left no room for doubt about its contempt for the

invaders. The aropagoi's riverboats regularly went out of their way to raid Theran river outposts, harass Theran troops on the march and rescue entire river towns from the clutches of Theran slavers. More important, gallant V'strimonian riverboat crews and captains such as the famed Westhrall regularly ran a gauntlet of Theran airships and infantry to transport desperately needed food and raw materials up the Coil River to the besieged dwarfs. The heroic actions of the t'skrang enabled Throal to withstand a Theran blockade designed to starve the dwarf kingdom into submission. In 1456 TH, House V'strimon's continued support for Throal prompted Overgovernor Fallan Pavelis to deploy a fleet of twenty vedettes and a kila to destroy the riverboats docked in the harbor of the Floating City. Omoo of Urupa, an obsidiman troubadour visiting the court of V'strimon, recounts the story, which stands today as House V'strimon's finest hour.

It was a late summer evening during the dark of the moon when word arrived from the Tower of Air that the Theran fleet was flying toward V'strimon. The Shivalahala V'strimon had just sat down to dinner, and everyone in the hall fell silent at the news. All eyes turned to the leader of the House, but the shivalahala continued to help herself from the plates of food on the table without saying a word. The messenger stood uneasily, shifting from foot to foot, his tail twitching. The crowd remained speechless as the shivalahala calmly picked up her fork and began to eat. The messenger repeated himself in his strongest voice, sounding all the louder in the surrounding stillness. "The Theran fleet has set course for our city and will reach here before daybreak tomorrow!"

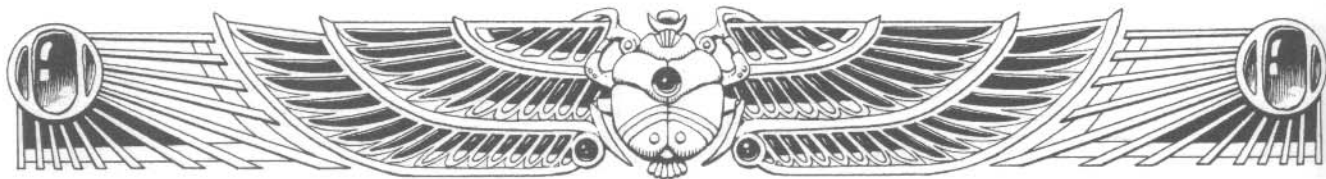
After several mouthfuls of food, the shivalahala looked at the messenger and said, "Youngling, I'm not deaf. I heard you the first time." Then she returned her attention to her plate.

The young messenger, put out by this display of apparent indifference, said, "But Great Mother, what do you intend to do?"

The shivalahala put down her fork, wiped her lips with her napkin and replied, "I intend to finish my supper. Worrying is bad for the digestion." And she took her fork in hand again and helped herself to more fish.

All that night, the shivalahala remained serene. When the castellan asked for instructions on deploying his regiments along the city's perimeter, the shivalahala said, "There's no cause for alarm. Let the young men sleep." When the harbormaster requested permission to evacuate the docks and send the riverboats south to Urupa, the shivalahala gently refused, reminding him that shipments were due in Throal that week. When the leader of the council of





trade covenants suggested the shivalahala assemble the people of the city inside the Great Hall for their own safety, she replied that there was no need for such action. Instead, she held a brief audience with the chief steward of the city's College of the Vine and retired earlier than usual.

An hour before sunrise, the Shivalahala V'strimon awoke and came to see me before any of her greatly astonished servants could catch up to her. She appeared at the door to my room at the palace, dressed in a simple patterned robe like those worn by the novitiates of magical orders. She grinned the crooked grin peculiar to t'skrang and said, "I have need of an obsidiman who can sing."

I dressed swiftly—most unusual for one of my race—and followed her as she bustled to the foot of the city's Tower of Earth. There she found the entire College of the Vine waiting for her. I remember the chief steward was carrying a long length of rope coiled across his shoulder. Together, we all marched to the top of the tower like a squad of warriors deploying to repel the invader.

We spoke a general blessing in the Name of Garlen, preserver of hearth and home; then an unusually long and detailed prayer to Jaspree, Caretaker of Barsaive. Everyone stood in a circle around the shivalahala. The chief steward took the rope, handed one end to the t'skrang on his left, wrapped the rope around the shivalahala's waist, then went back to the edge of the circle to the next t'skrang on the left. When he had repeated this for each individual in the circle—ten times in all—the rope connected the shivalahala to her servants in a pattern of loops, like the petals of a flower. We waited there in the darkness before the dawn, alert and yet strangely relaxed, until the first light in the east caught the hulls of the advancing Theran vedettes.

Not until then did I realize that the rope was made of braided reeds. The t'skrang on the outside of the circle

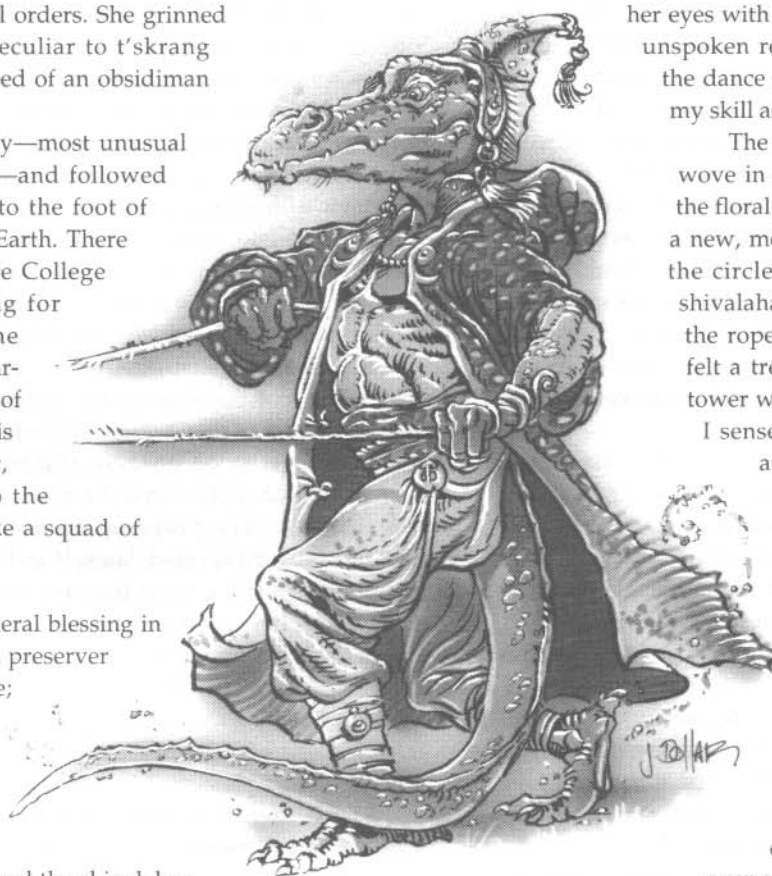
pulled their loops taut and began to walk slowly around the shivalahala, who pivoted in her bonds. As they walked, the t'skrang slapped their tails against the ground with whiplike force. The beating became a rhythm, and the walk became a slow, sedate dance. Then I knew what song I had been brought there to sing. It was the song of the Dreaming, the song my people share when anticipating the merging with the Liferock. At first my voice faltered, for the song is not for energy-wasters. But each time the circle completed a revolution, the shivalahala locked her eyes with mine, and I could not refuse her unspoken request. Gradually the tempo of the dance quickened, forcing me to use all my skill as an adept to keep up.

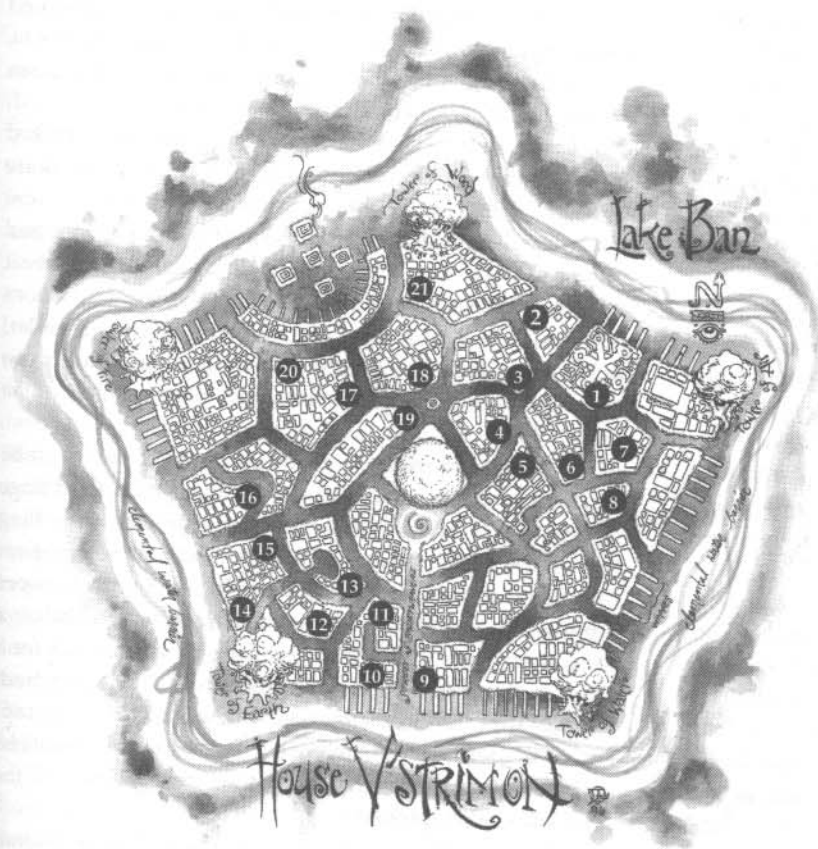
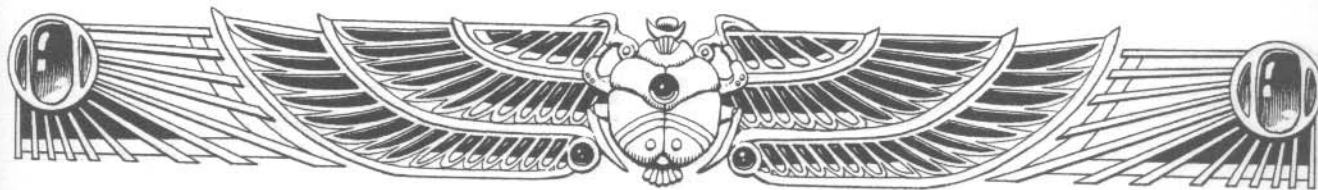
The dancers on the edge of the circle wove in and out among each other, and the floral pattern of the rope began to take a new, more complex form. The radius of the circle began to collapse toward the shivalahala as her bonds tightened, and the rope patterns grew more intricate. I felt a tremor underfoot, as if the whole tower were responding to the ritual, and I sensed the impending Oneness that an obsidiman normally feels only near a Liferock.

Electrified, I felt the energy of the dance take astral form and launch itself toward the Theran fleet. Suddenly the two vedettes in the vanguard dropped like stones from the sky. Within moments the other Theran vessels followed, as though the airships were ordinary boats that had tumbled over a waterfall. But they did not float

when they struck the water. Instead, they vanished beneath Lake Ban with barely a ripple. Not one vessel survived the awesome might of that spell, not even the vast kila. The shivalahala's magic had sunk the Theran fleet.

After later research, I came to understand that the elementalists of the College of the Vine had cast a spell they call Earth and Air against the Theran airships. The spell transformed all the kernels of elemental air inside the Theran fleet into elemental earth. With nothing to hold them in the sky, the ships fell to the ground far faster than ever they had left it. It truly was an awe-inspiring experience, and I doubt that I shall ever see its like again.





MAP KEY	
1	V'strimon- central foundation
2	Upandal's Pride
3	Vranna's Basket
4	The Mermaid's Gift
5	Erendis
6	Dragonclaw
7	P'skarrot
8	Golden Crescent
9	Red Crest
10	Serpent's Coil
11	Watched by Chorrolis
12	T'schlone
13	Laughter in the Water
14	Swift Runner
15	Shivoam's Daughter
16	Whispering Wheel
17	Old Man of the Nets
18	Astendar's Dart
19	Riversong
20	D'zur's Longing
21	Lady of the Lake

THE FLOATING CITY OF HOUSE V'STRIMON

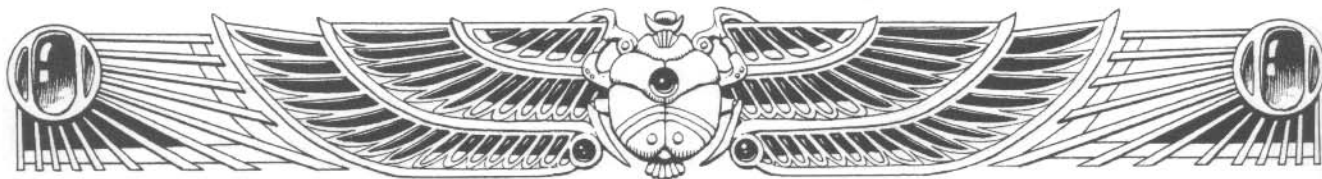
At the center of Lake Ban lies the Floating City of House V'strimon. Five towers, arranged in the shape of a perfect pentagon around a sixth tower, form the foundation of the city. Hanging on and growing between these towers is a floating island of densely woven reeds more than three hundred yards across at the widest point. A hexagonal weave is used in the platform, which is composed solely from live specimens of the lake's unique reed species. Tradition holds that the island is a single, living organism growing from a central root that extends all the way to the deepest part of Lake Ban. The reed island supports the weight of the city's remaining structures, which include riverboat piers and buildings more than three stories tall.

Each year, just after the first crocus blooms, the entire island blossoms with lustrous, purple flowers. The aropagoinya mark the occasion with the Festival of Flowers, a three-day holiday. At the end of the festival the city's residents pick all the remaining flowers and throw them onto the surface of the lake, where the current of the Serpent carries them down the river to the sea.

Were it possible to cram any more people into such a confined space, the Floating City might rival Travar and Bartertown for the title of Barsaive's most populous city. As it is, the city's relatively small size and its network of interlaced canals limit the amount of living space available. Despite these limitations, an impressive number of t'skrang make their homes in the Floating City, and the city's canals are choked with boats ferrying passengers and goods from place to place.

Though its appearance suggests otherwise, the Floating City is actually a citadel covered by a dome of densely woven elemental air. Beneath the surface of the lake, the city is protected by an equally impenetrable system of massive refselenika. The refs provided excellent protection against Horrors during the Scourge, and even today few non-V'strimon riverboat captains are capable of navigating the refs without endangering their ships and crews. As a result, most outsiders prefer to dock at one of the landings along the lake shore and hire a V'strimon guide to take their ship into the Floating City. No one has successfully entered the city from the air since the end of the Scourge.





Once within the refs, a riverboat must cross more than three hundred yards of open water before reaching the docks on the city's perimeter. This extra space may seem excessive, but vessels must frequently circle the city to find an open dock, as all are operated on a first come, first served basis. Travelers should keep this in mind when boarding a ferry to the city, because the arrangement prevents a ferryboat captain from knowing precisely where in the city he will land his vessel.

The docks are a patchwork of independently owned and operated facilities. Most ref guides know of an open berth somewhere in the city, but the traveler should be warned that the open dock will invariably belong to the guide's cousin, who pays a commission to his relative from the docking charge. Expect to haggle over the docking fee, which may be quite high. However, a well-paid V'strimonian dockmaster will watch over a ship in his care as if it were his own child.

The only vessels with assigned berths are V'strimon's war vessels, which dock at an isolated wharf reserved for their use on the northeast side of the city. The V'strimon fleet contains five warships. Two are based in Urupa, another at Kaer Eidolon near the Blood Wood, and a fourth patrols for pirates along the Serpent River between Lake Ban and Lake Pyros. The fifth warship is stationed at the Floating City, but even this vessel regularly sets out on various missions.

On almost any day, three to six V'strimon *shimorams* are docked at the fleet's wharf. These ships are about half the size of a typical t'skrang trading vessel. Unlike most riverboats, which have flat bottoms, *shimorams* have keels. This feature makes the *shimoram* faster and more maneuverable than any other type of fire-driven river ship. The *shimorams* are built in nearby villages, close to the raw materials used in their construction.

The city's armory and the V'strimon Foundation House are located near the war fleet's wharf. The armory is a long, low warehouse that holds caches of elemental air and fire kernels for use in fire cannons and fire engines, as well as enough armor and weapons to outfit a thousand soldiers. The V'strimon Foundation House is actually a maze of interconnected houses and courtyards where sailors on leave from the war fleet can bivouac for a nominal fee.

The Marketplaces

The Floating City contains four main markets. The largest is located in the Plaza of the Scarves in the southeast corner of the city. This market serves as the central exchange for the trade routes of the Coil and Serpent Rivers, and contains auction houses, trading pits, ware-

houses and specialty shops that offer every trade good imaginable. Many of the city's best inns and taverns lie along the edges of this market, catering to the often wealthy merchants who frequent the Plaza.

The busiest part of the Plaza of the Scarves is marked by a huge slate chalkboard labeled "Covenant Share Market." Here, individuals can meet with agents from t'skrang villages all along the Serpent River network and purchase associate shares in each village's annual riverboat journeys. Scribes of the share market record all transactions and provide documentation to both buyer and seller. When the riverboat completes its trip, shareholders can claim their cut of the profits from the village's agent at the share market.

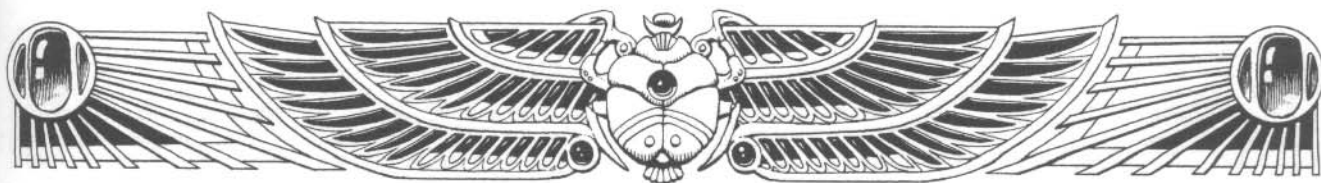
When purchasing covenant shares, travelers must be wary of fraud. Mere months ago an agent from the village of Astoras appeared in the share market one day, extolling the virtues of owning a share of the riverboat *Serpentreach*. The agent said Astoras had been blessed with bumper crops of kiratai and ustendar, and expected to realize a handsome profit. Investors lined up by the hundreds for a share in the rich prize. Every three weeks the agent from Astoras appeared in the market with a letter from the captain of the *Serpentreach*, describing the incredible profits he was making as he traveled along the river. The price of the associate shares spiraled.

Then one day a traveler from the village of Sherah entered the market, saw the price on shares of the *Serpentreach* and begged to know the reason for the extraordinary cost. "You see," she said, "Sherah has a shipyard, and we have been laboring all summer to repair the *Serpentreach* of Astoras."

Within minutes an angry mob of investors had surrounded the so-called agent from Astoras. The "agent" turned out to be a Sherahan thief who had manufactured the entire ruse. The rogue was brought before the Shivalahala V'strimon, who had agents of her own seize the thief's tidy nest egg. His possessions were auctioned and all the money returned to the investors, though none recovered their full losses. The shivalahala then had the thief's tail cut off and the perpetrator thrown into the lake just outside the city's refs.

A visitor who asks a city native for directions to the "main market" will eventually find himself at the Solarus, a huge checkerboard of stalls and shops located at the base of the Tower of Fire on the city's west side. At the Solarus, city dwellers buy their food and household items. Customers can choose from hundreds of varieties of rice, fish, fruits, beans, pots, pans, baskets—virtually anything imaginable. Finding a particular item, however, can be a





challenge. The Solarus is a maze with very few landmarks, and vendors in search of the perfect location constantly exchange stalls with each other. The visitor who asks for directions to a particular merchant's stall is likely to be laughed at, misled or sold something that is "not quite what you were looking for, but much cheaper." The Solarus remains open late into the night, doing business long after sunset by the light of the flame at the top of the Tower of Fire.

The Floating City's other main markets specialize in baskets and preserved fish. The Street of Basketweavers is a single canal that runs straight from the edge of the island to the center of the city. The canal is wide enough to accommodate the large skiffs that collect reeds from the South Marsh. These skiffs stop at each of the long row houses along the canal, where they sell their wares to the seven *k'rohyin*, or trade covenants, that specialize in the art of basketweaving for House V'strimon. Each *k'rohyin* has as many as two hundred skilled craftsmen who turn the reeds into watertight baskets, baskets that preserve food against spoilage, decorative mats, and a myriad of other unusual basket designs. Although other basketmakers sell their wares in the Floating City, the trade covenants on the Street of the Basketweavers are renowned as the best in Barsaive.

The fish sellers conduct their business in the Plaza of Spices, located near the city's northwest wharves. The pungent aromas of fresh fish, pickled fish, and fresh spices—which most *aropagoinya* of House V'strimon think of as the good smells of home—engulf this market. The marketplace is built on six small islands inside a small harbor. Each island contains a large building, some as high as five stories, that house the so-called cooking covenants of House V'strimon. The facilities of these *k'rohyin* resemble armed encampments, so jealously do the fish cookers guard their secret techniques. To gain entry to a covenant kitchen, a visitor must produce the token of the covenant and know the password, which changes each day.

Every morning and evening, fishing boats crowd the market's eastern wharf, unloading the day's catch under the watchful eyes of the *k'rohyin* agents. The agents purchase fish by the boatload, then send for boats from their kitchens to pick up the fish. The laden kitchen boats enter their covenant houses by fortified gateways. Other *k'rohyin* agents buy spices and other ingredients from other markets and carefully transport their purchases to their covenant houses under the same tight security. Generally, *k'rohyin* agents are suspicious of outsiders as well as agents from rival covenant houses, for the fish trade is so lucrative that competitors often resort to espionage and other extreme measures in their quests for ever larger profits.

The Baths

Another feature of this distinctly *t'skrang* city are the numerous bathing sites along the city's north, south and west shorelines. Typically, bathing sites consist of wooden boardwalks that lead down to the water and buoy lines that extend fifty feet out from the water's edge to protect swimmers from encroaching boats. Boats that violate the bathing zones are subject to fines up to a hundred silver pieces. Most of the bathing sites also feature small shelters and buildings. Some are changing rooms, where bathers can leave their clothes and towels. Others are drying rooms with fire pits, in deference to the *t'skrang* sensitivity to temperature shifts.

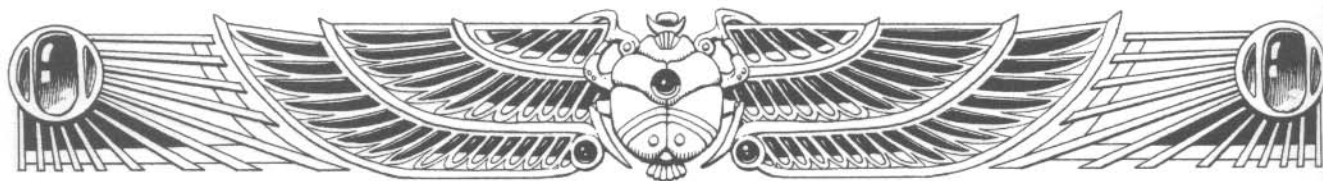
During the early morning hours, when the bathing sites are most crowded, food vendors pull their carts to the boardwalks to offer bathers a little breakfast after their morning dips. Other vendors sell scented water, soap and perfume. Non-*t'skrang* are advised to bring their own combs and brushes—*t'skrang* have no hair, and so no vendor sells such items.

The Floating City also boasts several private bathing sites for those put off by the spectacle of public bathing. The most famous is the Baths of the Nine Passions in the southwest part of town. For a fee of forty silver pieces, a customer can receive nine ritual baths, each named for one of the Passions. Each bath features a unique combination of temperature, scent and atmosphere. For example, the Bath of Upandal is a steamy sauna with the sulfurous aroma of coal, while the Bath of Jasprey features cool water scented with rose and sweet jasmine. Wine is served in the Bath of Floranuus, while a magnificent banquet is provided in the Bath of Chorrolis. The Bath of Astendar has gained a lascivious reputation, the sole basis for which is a troubadour song made popular during the Theran War, the refrain of which is, I'll be hoping and dreaming to meet you alone by the Bath of Astendar in V'strimon.

THE FOUNDATION HOUSES

The central foundation of House V'strimon includes approximately one thousand *t'skrang* from villages along the Coil and Serpent Rivers and Lake Ban. Advancement to the central foundation is a great honor, and those who are chosen are proud to show the bracelet of reeds that betokens their membership. The central foundation serves as a pool of manpower and leadership for the *aropagoi's* war fleet, but the *niall* is not a tightly bound organization in the manner of *ork* scorcher bands or trollmoots. Rather, the members of the central foundation enjoy certain privileges, such as the opportunity to join the crew of their choice, captain a warship or even to go home to their village a





hero. Chief among the perquisites of central foundation membership is a room in the V'strimon Foundation House, located near the armory.

The V'strimon Foundation House is considered the finest place to live anywhere on the river (at least among t'skrang). The foundation house is a maze of courtyards, gardens and fountains in which every turn greets the stranger with new surprises. The house, with room for a thousand or more t'skrang, is run like a cross between a luxury inn and a genuine village dome. A sailor returning from duty with the fleet will find a private room waiting for him, with clean bedding and many other amenities. He or she may stay as long as desired, with room, board and a whole host of services provided for nominal fees. The foundation house also maintains an egg hatchery and an exemplary school system for hatchlings born of the foundation members.

Twice a year, during the meetings of the arapagoi's Council of Crew Covenants, the V'strimon Foundation House becomes a madhouse as crews from every V'strimon riverboat converge for a week of revelry and renewed acquaintances. But for much of the rest of the year, the foundation house is a quiet place with relatively few inhabitants. The housekeepers are a friendly but motley crew, made up of retired arapagoinya, grown children who never ventured out on the river, and a small staff of retirees from the inns around the Plaza of the Scarves.

Shortly after the founding of the Floating City, many of the best craftsmen in V'strimon's sphere of influence began to leave their home villages to join the trade covenants of the city. To satisfy the desire of these t'skrang for membership in a foundation, the Shivalahala V'strimon established a new kind of foundation called the *niall dynasthai*, or "powerful foundation." Each of these fraternal orders is dedicated to supporting one of the twenty "motherships" in the V'strimon fleet.

The motherships serve as reminders of House V'strimon's proud history. Six of these vessels provide ferry service around Lake Ban. Four more are showboats that travel the Serpent, providing entertainment. The remaining ten conduct regular trading voyages. None of the motherships are part of the arapagoi's war fleet; the t'skrang of V'strimon recognize that arming riverboats for war produces little profit.

Members of the central foundation and niall dynasthais pay regular dues to support and supply their motherships, in much the same way as traditional crew covenants. The crews of many of these ships, however, are drawn from outside the foundation or niall. Niall members also share in the profits realized by their mothership crews.

Each niall also maintains a foundation house where niall

members may live. The typical foundation house includes interconnected living quarters, usually with one central dining area and kitchen. Some of the foundation houses even have their own lahals. Most maintain rooms for egg tending and distribute hatchlings to menfolk who wish to sample the joys of parenting. Most important, the nialls operate schools where students may learn the particular craft of the niall. For example, the school of *V'ranna's Basket* is located near the Street of the Basketmakers and teaches the nuances of basket weaving. Troubadors run the school of *Riversong*, and the school of *Upandal's Pride* produces exemplary boatmen. Any Name-giver can join a niall by paying the required dues, but each niall may discharge any member it finds too disruptive by refunding his or her dues.

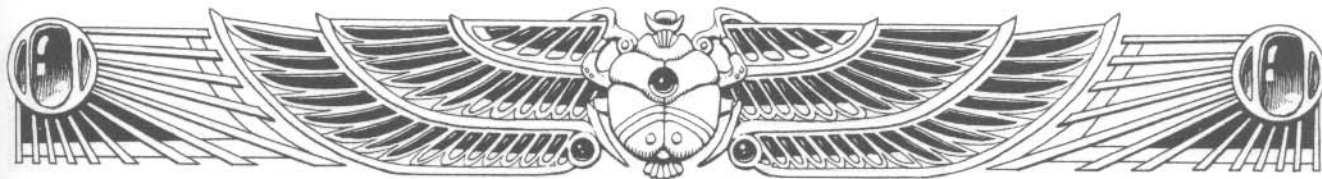
Each year after the spring meeting of the V'strimon crew council, the nialls decorate their motherships for the Council Review festival. During this festival, the twenty motherships, along with any V'strimon warships in port, parade around the shores of Lake Ban, then enter the refs and circumnavigate the Floating City. At the southwest wharf, near the Plaza of Scarves, the Shivalahala V'strimon reviews the vessels and awards a special flag, called the Golden Scarf, to the most beautiful ship. The event is grand spectacle as only the t'skrang can appreciate, and the nialls plan their decorating schemes weeks in advance.

THE SIX TOWERS

The five outlying towers of the Floating City are named after the five elements: wood, fire, air, earth and water. The Tower of Wood is actually an enormous tree that draws sustenance from the island's reeds. The reeds and vines are so closely intertwined with the tree's trunk and branches that distinguishing where the tree ends and reeds begin is quite difficult. Some say that the Tower of Wood sprang from a seed from the Wurm Wood, which Queen Dallia sent to the Shivalahala V'strimon as a gesture of peace and good will between the elven and t'skrang races. The truth of this tale cannot be confirmed, but elves from all over Barsaive continue to make pilgrimages to see this tree, for it is said that the memory and magic of the ancient, pre-Scourge Elven Court live within its branches and leaves.

Suspended with vines from the Tower of Wood are the basketlike quarters of the College of the Vine, the arapagoi's school of elemental magic. The college's staff and students are responsible for tending the island's reeds and ensuring their health by performing the required rituals. Traditionally, the Shivalahala V'strimon holds the title of master of the college, but in practice the Steward of the Vine oversees the operation of the school. Visitors to the island city should realize that the steward holds magisterial





powers that he may wield against anyone found desecrating or destroying the reeds of the Floating City. Although it has not happened in recent memory, the steward may banish perpetrators of such crimes from the Floating City and sentence to death any exiles that return.

To the east of the Tower of Wood, a collection of smaller trees called the Long Grove extends along the lake's edge. The Long Grove is home to a large community of windlings called the Almarra.

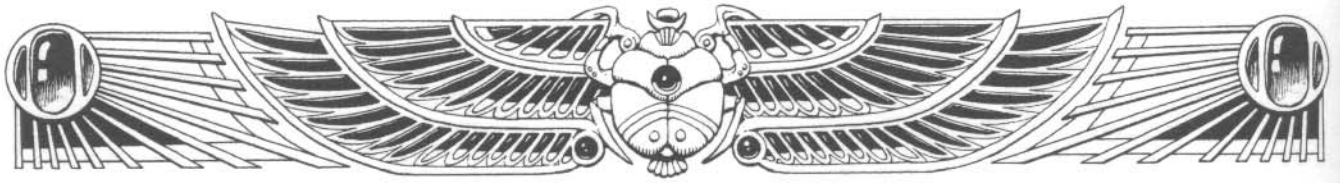
Originally, the Almarra lived in a kaer in the lake's South Marsh. When a Horror breached the kaer's defenses shortly after the Scourge began, an Almarran wind dancer Named Shirala flew to the Floating City to request refuge for the windling community. The effort of dancing through the citadel's extensive defenses so exhausted her that she collapsed and fell into the waters, and a fisherwoman Named Kreesta rescued her. Not knowing quite what to make of the windling, Kreesta brought Shirala to her niall's lahala, who brought both of them before the Shivalahala V'strimon. Shirala begged the shivalahala to send a riverboat to rescue the windlings of Almarra. But the shivalahala refused the call for aid, claiming that House V'strimon could not risk the breach of its own citadel by sending a riverboat. The shivalahala said she could offer Shirala sanctuary within the Floating City, but no more. Then Kreesta the fisherwoman stepped forward and said, "I shall go."

The jik'harra of the simple fisherwoman so impressed the shivalahala that she granted Kreesta a boon.

"If I were to have a boon, shivalahala, it would be that you should come with us," Kreesta replied.

The shivalahala suddenly looked very sad and answered, "Ready your boat to sail at dawn." So Kreesta and Shirala prepared all that night for their journey. Just before dawn, the shivalahala announced herself with a knock on Kreesta's door and the three of them quietly left the Floating City. The shivalahala guided Kreesta's fishing boat through the reeds, and Shirala showed them the way to her people's kaer. They found the windlings, as well as the Horror, which the





shivalahala engaged in a long, bitter battle. During the skirmish, the Horror destroyed Kreesta's boat and killed the shivalahala, but not before the V'strimon leader dealt it a mortal blow. And so Kreesta built a raft to carry the Almarra away from their ruined kaer, then pulled the raft across the lake with the strength of her own swimming. When the fisherwoman reached the Floating City's refselenika, the voice of the old shivalahala spoke to her and guided her through the magical protections. When the group arrived at the Floating City, Kreesta the fisherwoman was no more, and a new Shivalahala V'strimon stood in her place.

Ever since that time, the windlings of Almarra have been utterly devoted to the Shivalahala V'strimon. In fact, a small, all-female corps of Almarrans known as the Shiralaki comprise the shivalahala's only bodyguard. In addition, the Almarra operate the most prestigious (if not always the most dependable) messenger service in Barsaive. Apparently the Almarra have absorbed some of the renowned t'skrang bravado over the years of their residence in the Floating City; the windlings have developed a reputation for fearlessness in the execution of their duties.

The Tower of Fire contains an elemental spirit that the shivalahala rescued from a Horror-marked adept several centuries ago. In gratitude the spirit, which takes the form of an ever-burning flame, has vowed to guard House V'strimon until the shivalahala passes her Name to her successor. Elementalists from across the province come to the tower to converse with this spirit, partly to practice the art of speaking the elemental tongue without fear of reprisal and partly to gain knowledge of changes in the elemental planes since the coming of the Horrors.

The city's Tower of Air is by far the tallest of the six towers, and it too has an unusual property. A boatman adept who stands atop the Tower of Air can, with proper meditation, view any section of the Serpent River from the Servos Jungle to the Lalai Gorge or any part of the Coil River from its source in the Throal Mountains to the Aras Sea. The view resembles that from the crow's nest of a large riverboat, approximately thirty feet above the water. The observer can move his field of vision along the water at the same speed as a riverboat.

The Dome of House V'strimon

The central tower of the V'strimonian complex is a dome made of the indigenous island reeds. The largest free-standing dome in all of Barsaive, the structure can accommodate the island's entire population in times of crisis. The dome also serves as a meeting hall, where the Shivalahala V'strimon gives her public audiences and the aropagoi's covenant council conducts meetings on the first day of each

new moon. The dome also contains the shivalahala's private chambers, which are renowned for the elegant craftsmanship of their extravagant design and furnishings.

Along the southern face of the dome lies the Well of Shivoam, which leads to a sunken pool forty feet beneath the lake's surface. The walls of the well are made of tightly woven reeds, and three wooden staircases along the well's inner walls lead down to the pool. Three canals that feed the well pass through a series of baffles that prevent boats from tumbling over the edge of the well. Legend has it that after the Old Man of the Nets moved his family to live in V'ranna's Basket, the Spirit of Shivoam would come to visit him in the well. In memory of the Old Man, pilgrims who journey to V'strimon often stop to bathe in the well's sacred waters.

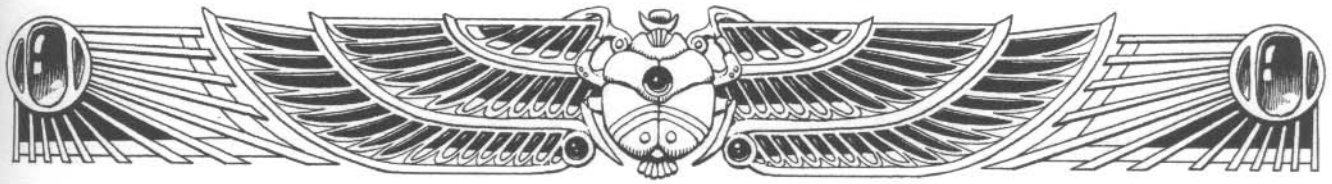
The Floating City's five canals converge just north of the dome. Where they meet lies a small island, on which stands the Westhrall Memorial—an elemental water sculpture surrounded by fountains and cascades. The memorial commemorates the captain of the riverboat *Astendar's Dart*, a man known only as Westhrall and a much-loved hero of the Theran War. Its origins can be traced back to shortly after the Theran War, when the hero returned to the Floating City to settle down and raise his daughter, Jedaiyen. At that time, Westhrall demanded that the shivalahala erect a monument to his achievements in the war. Finding the shivalahala cool to the idea, Westhrall commissioned the sculpture and surrounding fountains with his own money. When the shivalahala discovered Westhrall's plans, she agreed to provide a place of honor for the statue near the dome.

Upon completion, the Westhrall Memorial was unveiled amid great pomp and ceremony in the Plaza of the Five Canals. But when the architects set the fountains going at the climax of the ceremony, Westhrall saw that the dazzling, dancing waters virtually obscured his statue. He turned angrily toward the shivalahala as if to strike her, but she said, "Look carefully, captain. You will see that there is one fountain for each and every crewman who died in the service of the glorious Westhrall."

It is said that the great captain began to weep inconsolably at the shivalahala's words.

Since the construction of House V'strimon's sixth and central tower, philosophers have speculated about its symbolic meaning. Many believe that the tower may hint at the existence of a sixth element, because the Floating City's other five towers represent the five known elements. Nicolez Trund, the founder of the Lightbearers, visited the tower and shortly afterward wrote to a fellow Lightbearer, "If the reeds of V'strimon are simply one vast plant, then





the whole of the island is woven of a continuous thread. Truly then, might not an image of the Great Pattern of Barsaive be seen in the woven reeds of the dome of the Great Hall of V'strimon?"

THE SHIVALAHALA V'STRIMON

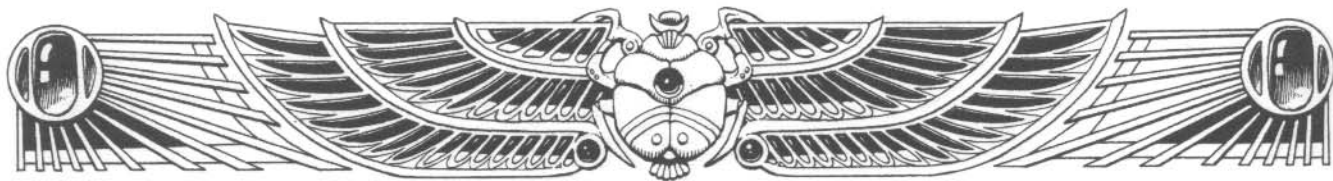
Widely acknowledged as the grand dame of the river, the Shivalahala V'strimon is a dignified figure who inspires loyalty in her humblest servants and obedience in even her proudest ship captains. She has transformed the t'skrang obsession with personal adornment into a public statement of the wealth of her people and her own excellent taste in clothing and jewelry. Indeed, it is said that when House K'tenshin captured her eldest daughter, the shivalahala supplied the full measure of the ransom with the gems and jewelry on her person. Her coterie of advisers and counselors has been compared to that retained by Queen Alachia of the Blood Wood, and it is said the shivalahala has a particular weakness for news and gossip from the Elven Court.

This mask of shallow urbanity, however, is a disguise. The Shivalahala V'strimon has no rivals in the language of trade and politics, profit and risk. Her ambition—which she is wise enough never to reveal publicly, yet cunning enough to keep alive in Barsaive's rumor mills—is to unite House V'strimon, Throal and the Blood Wood in a sphere of prosperity that will rival the economic power of Thera. She has propped up the waning fortunes of House Syrtis by lending the aropagoi riverboats and access to trade routes, so that it might better resist the growing strength of House K'tenshin, a common enemy of Houses Syrtis and V'strimon. She has also supported certain factions within House Ishkarat to counter what she calls "the corrupting influence of the Denairastas of Iopos" on that aropagoi.

The shivalahala's strengths are not confined to trade and politics. Barsaivian elementalists universally recognize the Shivalahala V'strimon as perhaps the greatest living authority on elemental magic. She does not practice her magic often, however, leading some to speculate that the bulk of the shivalahala's knowledge of elementalism resides in the memories of a particularly unpleasant V'strimonian ancestor. Others, however, contend that the shivalahala is simply growing old and chooses to concentrate her dwindling energies on the business fortunes of House V'strimon. On the other hand, the shivalahala is undoubtedly a questor of Jaspre, for she makes no attempt to conceal her public devotions to the strange plant growth that forms the island of V'strimon.

Most observers believe that the shivalahala is nearing the end of her life, for she has served in the position since the opening of the kaers approximately one hundred years ago.





SHIVALAHALA V'STRIMON

Twelfth Circle T'skrang Elementalist

"Yes, yes, that's all very interesting, but it's old news now, isn't it? If you've come that near the Blood Wood during your travels, then surely you have heard news about those ambitious Denairastas, hmm? And how many riverboats of Ishkarat did you pass on the river? Oh, and if you by chance can remember, what was the asking price of a barrel of fish in Lalai? Captain Rh'gullian is taking the *Whirlpool* north next week, and we can change his manifest if the market looks good."

Attributes

Dexterity (11): 5/D8
Strength (10): 5/D8
Toughness (13): 6/D10
Perception (17): 7/D12
Willpower (17): 7/D12
Charisma (17): 7/D12

Initiative

Dice: 5/D8

Talents

Air Speaking (11): 18/D20 + D12
2 x Armored Matrix (11)
Bargain with Summoned Creature (10): 17/D20 +
Cold Purify (12): 19/D20 + 2D6
Durability (12)
Elemental Tongues (11): 18/D20 + D12
2 x Enhanced Matrix (11)
Elementalism (Thread Weaving) (11): 18/D20 + D12
Fire Heal (10): 18/D20 + D12
Karma Ritual (11)
Plant Shelter (11): 28/D20 + 2D10 + D8
Read/Write Language (11): 18/D20 + D1
Read/Write Magic (11): 18/D20 + D12
3 x Spell Matrix (11)
Spellcasting (11): 18/D20 + D12
Summon (10): 17/D20 + D10
Unshakable Earth (11): 21/D20 + D10 + D6
Water Dancing (10): 17/D20 + D10
Willforce (12): 19/D20 + 2D6

Skills

Conversation (8): 15/D20 + D6
Etiquette (6): 13/D12 + D10
Trade (7): 14/D20 + D4
Artisan/Robe Embroidery (5): 12/2D10
Artisan/Tailor (6): 11/D10 + D8
Knowledge/Barsaive Politics (4): 11/D10 + D6
Knowledge/Serpent River (5): 12/2D10

Karma

Dice: D6
Points: 25

Movement

Full: 54
Combat: 27

Damage

Death Rating: 83
Wound Threshold: 9
Unconsciousness Rating: 63
Recovery Tests per Day: 2
Recovery Dice: D10

Combat

Physical Defense: 9 [14]
Spell Defense: 12 [17]
Social Defense: 10
Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 3 [8]

Special Ability: Fire and Ice (p. 12, *ED Companion*)

Karma Notes

The Shivalahla V'strimon can spend Karma on Perception, Charisma, Willpower, Willforce and Recovery Tests.

Thread Weaving Notes

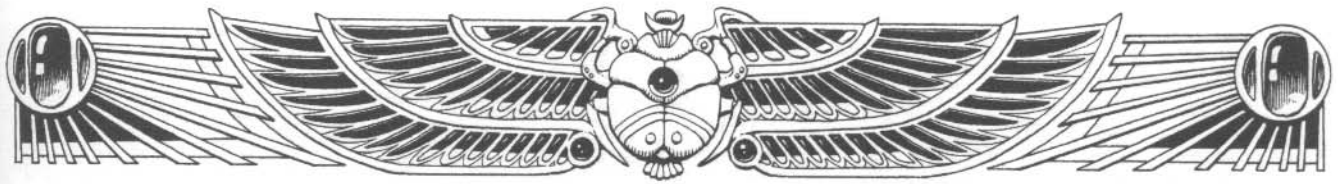
The shivalahala has used thread magic to boost several of her characteristics. These bonuses come from Rank 5 threads woven to the pattern items of House V'strimon. One thread is woven to her Physical Defense Rating, one to her Spell Defense Rating and one to her Mystic Armor ratings. These bonuses are based on pattern items, so the increases apply only when the shivalahala is in House V'strimon.

HIERARCHY

The Shivalahala V'strimon, the Council of Crew Covenants (*Tikka T'slahyin*) and the Council of Trade Covenants (*Tikka K'rohyin*) share decision-making power in House V'strimon. The trade council consists of representatives from each of the nialls that owe allegiance to House V'strimon arapagoi and representatives from each of the Floating City's foundation houses. Officially, the trade council meets each month in the Great Hall at the new moon. However, administering the arapagoi's fortunes requires such constant attention that the council remains continuously in session for all but a few days at the end of each month.

The trade council is responsible for ensuring that goods move through the arapagoi's shipping system and that covenant shares are returned to their nialls. Many t'skrang think of the trade council as a wishy-washy clique of paper-pushing bureaucrats, but in truth the council is a sophisticated institution. It must ensure that all the nialls of House V'strimon share in the arapagoi's prosperity, while simultaneously distributing the arapagoi's losses among the nialls—all without arousing the quarrelsome individualism of captains, crews and foundations. When one considers the





natural bluff and bluster of the t'skrang as a race, it is a wonder that House V'strimon's centralized planning system has lasted for so long. Much of the credit for this longevity can be attributed to the Shivalahala V'strimon's judicious use of her veto powers as president of the trade council.

The trade council effects its decisions primarily through its power to determine the trade routes and contracts included in House V'strimon's annual Protocol List, one of the oddest economic tools in all of Barsaive. Every captain of the arpagoi's fleet receives a certified copy of the Protocol List in the spring of the year. Any customer whose name appears on the list can approach a captain of House V'strimon, demand the services of his riverboat, and expect to receive a set price and immediate attention. The Protocol List rarely contains more than twenty names in any given year, and merchant companies have been known to go to great lengths to secure a place on it.

House V'strimon's crew council is made up of all the captains of the arpagoi's riverboats. It meets only twice a year, on the first full moons following the spring and autumn equinoxes. The crew council meetings are meticulously choreographed, formalized, grand and glitzy affairs, full of pomp and circumstance. The key duties of the crew council are ratifying the decisions of the trade council; recognizing new members of the arpagoi's central foundation; and conducting a complete review of the condition, location and captain of each of House V'strimon's riverboats. Technically, the crew council may recommend legislation in the same way as the trade council, but traditionally the crew council simply ratifies all trade council policies with a single voice vote. Most of a crew council meeting is devoted to the review of the riverboats. The riverboat review is a dynamic oration that may take up to three days, as the council's Reader of the Lists goes through the roster of vessels one by one and the captain of each riverboat boasts of his crew's exploits. When a riverboat cannot return to the Floating City in time to participate in a crew council meeting, the riverboat captain customarily sends a written report, which a representative recites before the assembly.

During the fall meeting of the Council of Crew Covenants, each riverboat captain submits the name of one of his crewmen for membership in the arpagoi's central foundation. The selection process varies from vessel to vessel, but most captains allow the crews themselves to select a candidate by a show of hands. Records of these nominations are kept by the V'strimon central council, which traditionally grants membership in the central foundation to any candidate who is nominated three times. Typically, no more than thirty individuals receive membership in a given year. The shivalahala presides over the initiation ceremony, plac-

ing the bracelet of living reeds around the initiate's wrist. In addition to living space at the Foundation House, central foundation members receive the right to captain one of the foundation's motherships or warships.

The extent of House V'strimon's influence on the Serpent River is difficult to gauge, because the arpagoi does not exert direct control over the daily activities of its member villages. To qualify for a seat on the trade council, a village must send a special share of its profits to House V'strimon's trade council for three consecutive years. In return, member villages receive the protection of V'strimon's war fleet, access to business as defined by the Protocol List, and the competitive advantage that trade allies can exert against an isolated rival.

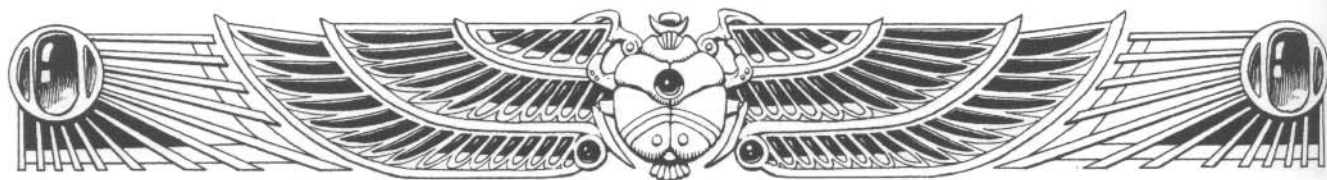
By and large, House V'strimon remains stable and united. The arpagoi continues to grow steadily more prosperous, and almost all V'strimonian arpagoinya view their shivalahala as a benevolent and competent overseer. Rancor within the trade council is rare, and when it does occur the shivalahala is quick to reconcile quarreling parties. Recently, some council members have suggested that House V'strimon withdraw from the Free Trade Compact in response to House K'tenshin's efforts to change the agreement in order to open up trade on the lower reach of the Coil River. So far, however, such proposals have garnered little support.

GOALS

During the Theran War, approximately seventy member villages held seats in House V'strimon's trade council. Since the end of that war, however, many villages have let their memberships lapse in the absence of direct threats from the Therans or House K'tenshin. As a result, House V'strimon currently enjoys the allegiance of only forty member villages. Despite this drop, the lucrative Coil River trade and the arpagoi's close relationship with the Kingdom of Throal have enabled House V'strimon to remain one of the richest and most influential arpagois of the Serpent River.

House V'strimon's primary goal is protecting its sphere of influence and maintaining its prosperity. In practical terms, that means checking the expansionist plans of its long-time rival, House K'tenshin. For centuries the two arpagoi have kept up a fierce feud, further fueled when the two houses fought against one another during the Theran War. Despite the Free Trade Compact that cemented the peace after that war, the feud continues and the riverboats of both arpagoi still engage in combat when they encounter one another on their respective house's tributary rivers.





In recent years, House V'strimon has taken over six large river villages between Lake Ban and Lake Pyros previously under House K'tenshin's control. That development, along with the favorable terms House V'strimon enjoys under the Free Trade Compact, seems to have reinforced House K'tenshin's determination to regain its economic influence at the expense of House V'strimon. As a result, House V'strimon has repeatedly had to block House K'tenshin's attempts to persuade the compact signatories to renegotiate the portion of the pact that grants House V'strimon sole control over the Coil River trade. In particular, House K'tenshin wants the south Coil opened, so that it, too, may profit from the trade flowing through Urupa. So far House V'strimon, with the aid of House Syrtis, has been able to stymie House K'tenshin's efforts. However, the K'tenshinian proposal has the support of the Theran Empire and even Throal, which fears a V'strimonian monopoly over the Coil River trade. House K'tenshin may yet succeed in its scheme unless House V'strimon can find some way to definitively stall the proposed changes.

House V'strimon has also sought to check K'tenshinian expansion by supporting anti-K'tenshin rebels, most notably the villages of the newly revived House T'kambras. House V'strimon regularly provides fire cannon, elemental substances and other supplies to the T'kambrian rebels, who have wrested control of more than half of the Tylon River trade from House K'tenshin in recent years and emboldened other settlements to resist K'tenshinian control.

SETTLEMENTS ON THE COIL RIVER

The Coil River is more densely populated than any comparable length of the Serpent, primarily because the steep banks and deep channel keep the river from flooding even during the wet season. Because flooding is so rare, numerous frontier towns populated mainly by dwarfs from Throal have sprung up all along the Coil's northern banks.

Tradition has it that before the Scourge, the Coil's farthest navigable point north was at Adipae Ford, about fifty miles upstream of Lake Ban. Even today, the rapids at Adipae look intimidating, so it is not surprising that the first explorers from House V'strimon assumed the Adipae rapids were impassable. Early in the Theran War, however, the Shivalahala V'strimon ordered Captain Westhral to find a river passage to Throal. After exploring all the tributaries that enter the Serpent from the Throal Mountains, Westhral faced the unpleasant prospect of crossing the rapids at Adipae. According to the legend, Westhral had anchored *Astendar's Dart* just south of the rapids and sent a

scouting party up along the banks to gauge the condition of the river upstream when a K'tenshin warship suddenly came surging up from behind. Realizing that his crew, split between the land and the water, was grossly outnumbered by the approaching K'tenshinians, Westhral reportedly said, "Damn the rocks! Full speed ahead!" The K'tenshin captain watched aghast as his enemy entered the torrid waters of Adipae, and suddenly lost his nerve for pursuit. Westhral, meanwhile, discovered that the turbulent water of the rapids actually covered the rocks to a considerable depth. He passed upstream without incident and went on to discover five different underground rivers leading to the Kingdom of Throal.

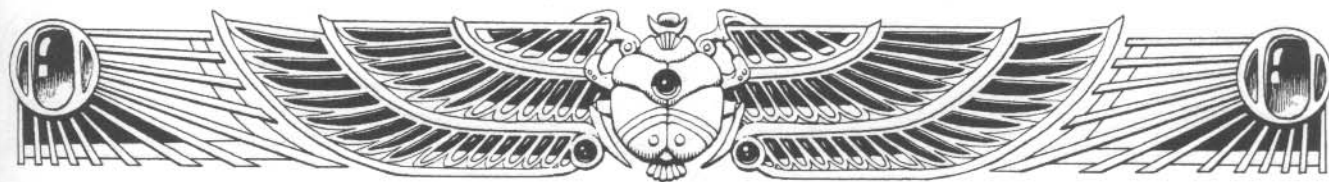
Once underground, Westhral discovered a world utterly different from the one to which he was accustomed. The underground rivers proved to be a labyrinthine puzzle enshrouded in darkness, which concealed their peculiar dangers. After several successive journeys through the maze, Westhral discovered that the rivers changed course over time, and found himself doubly lost. Eventually, the dwarfs of Throal had to maintain a series of stations along the underground rivers to guide the riverboats to the cities of Throal. These underground rivers are all but impassable now and used only by those rare riverboats given express permission to do so by King Varulus III.

Today, the rapids at Adipae are so well-mapped that few riverboat captains fear them. Upstream of the rapids, the river is wide open for another 250 miles, with no appreciable hazard before it reaches the town Darranis. At Darranis, a major caravan route winds down from the highlands out of Bartertown. In the years since the Theran War, the Darranis road has become a vital link between Throal and the Serpent River system, and the town has grown exlosively.

The opening of the river north of Adipae led to the construction of new t'skrang river villages for the first time in more than a millenium. Even today, new village towers are going up along the stretch of river now called Westhral's Passage. Apparently, so much time has passed since the t'skrang constructed a village that the engineers and elementalists on the project are working from ancient texts and the ancestral memories of the Lahala Desti Denvis. The lahala's involvement in the project is quite controversial, for she has abandoned her village to participate in this task.

The Coil's southern course between Lake Ban and Urupa is lined with farming villages, nestled behind stockades for protection against ork scorchers from the surrounding plains. This part of the river contains only one remarkable town, the so-called Swinging City of Axalalail,





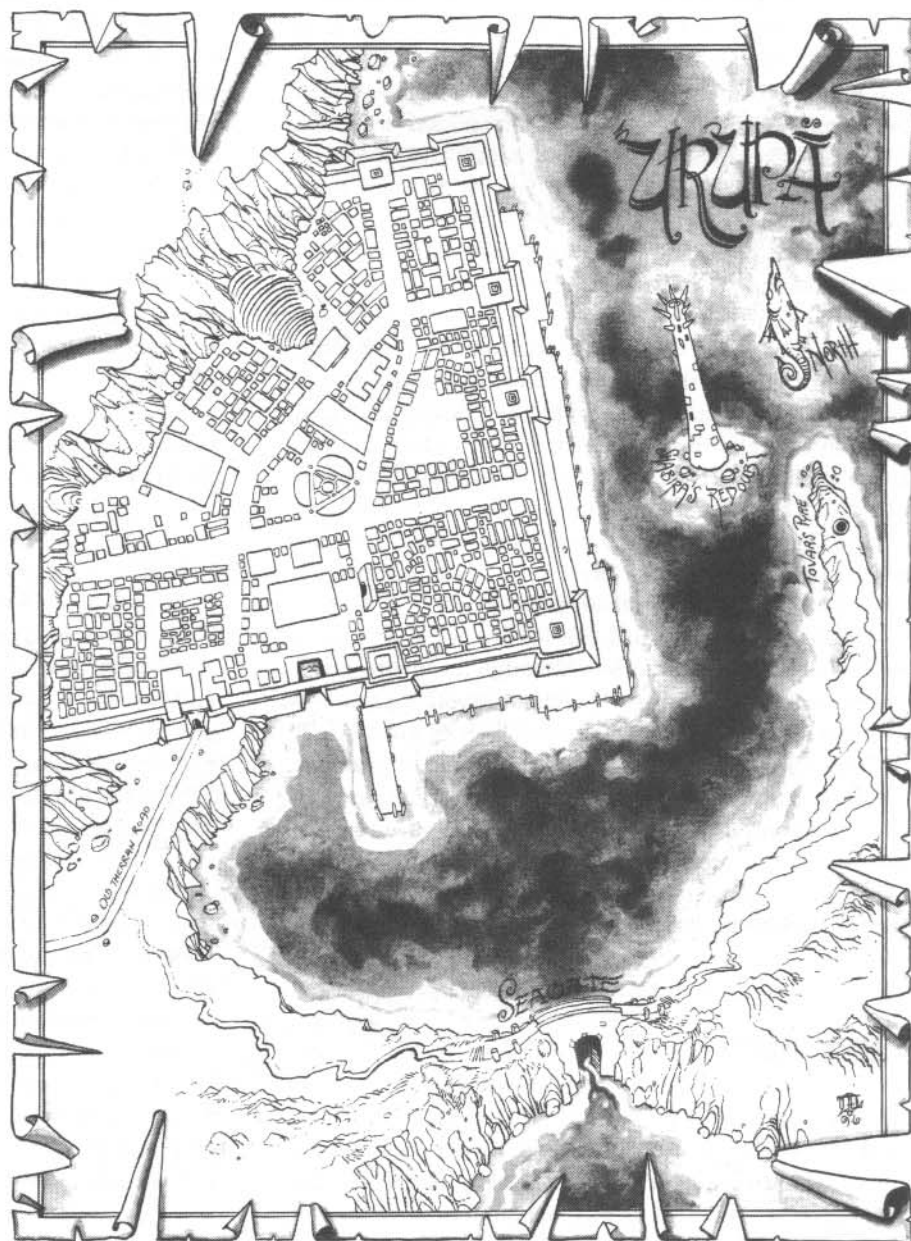
which translates from the t'skrang as "New Lalai." The town is built entirely on platforms suspended in a grove of massive trees that grow at the site. The town's t'skrang residents, who built the town with the aid of a winding clan, use rope swings to move from platform to platform.

House V'strimon, the kingdom of Throal, and the Fenestral chamber of House Syrtis have recently begun an unusual joint venture to build five open-air amphitheaters along the west bank of the Serpent's Mid Reach, near well-settled areas along the Serpent and the Coil River. They intend to offer these facilities to passing showboats in return for a share in the gate receipts. The only amphitheater completed so far, about a mile north of Tenshi Landing on Lake Ban, resembles the Aulcroft Amphitheatre in Urupa (see p. 58), and seats five thousand. Many observers have voiced doubts about the profitability of this ambitious project, pointing out that fewer than five thousand people live near enough to the finished theater to attend performances, even if they wished to spend the time and money. Confidence in the project has steadily declined over the past few months, and work on a second site near the town of Axalalail has been suspended.

URUPA

Founded less than a hundred years ago by residents of seven nearby kaers and citadels along the shores of the Aras Sea, the port city of Urupa lies at the confluence of the Coil River and the Aras Sea. Although considerably smaller than the great cities of Barsaive such as Travar, Iopos and Bartertown, Urupa is the province's fastest growing metropolis.

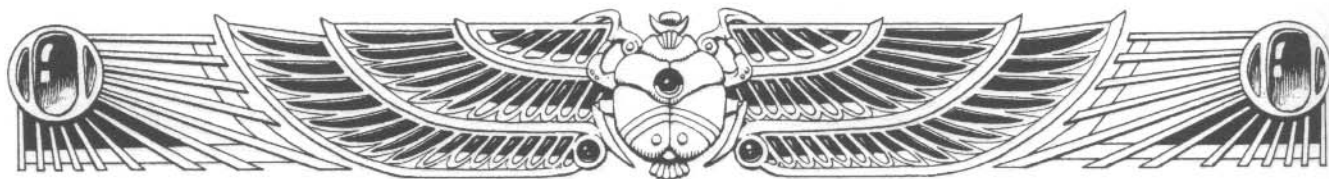
Located on a peninsula that shelters one of the finest harbors on the Aras Sea, Urupa is separated from the mainland by 1,500-foot cliffs. Additionally, the city is surrounded by a twenty-foot wall that contains five seventy-foot watch towers. In the mouth of the city's harbor lies a compact but imposing fortress called Shabira's Redoubt,



which bristles with steel spikes and fire cannons. The city's military numbers more than two thousand soldiers, and citizens who wish to vote in local elections must pay for the privilege by contributing enough money to arm and supply one soldier or sailor in times of war. Urupa's fleet contains eight airships and five naval vessels, including two V'strimon warships that each boast forty fire cannons.

Despite its impressive military forces, Urupa's main business is trade, not conquest, and the city's location serves its commercial ambitions well. The city's harbor





provides ideal shelter against the severe storms common to the Aras Sea, and the Urupan peninsula juts into the Aras about a half mile north of the mouth of the Coil River's main branch. Urupa therefore lies at a natural crossroads. Goods from all across Barsaive are transported down the Serpent and Coil Rivers, then pass through Urupa and on to distant ports all around the Aras Sea. At the same time, exotic goods from foreign Aras ports are transported to Urupa and up the Coil and Serpent Rivers to Throal, the Blood Wood and other Barsaivian cities.

Urupa's burgeoning power as Barsaive's dominant Aras Sea port and its strategic location has drawn the attention of groups from all over Barsaive and beyond. Thera and Throal, Iopos and Travar, the t'skrang arapagoi, the Elven Court of the Blood Wood and countless others have all made a place for themselves in the crowded streets of Urupa. The city is home to every Name-giver race in Barsaive, from windlings to obsidimen. In turn, Urupa's diverse population lends the city a cosmopolitan air matched by few other Barsaivian settlements.

Crowded as it is, Urupa can hardly be called one of Barsaive's more beautiful cities. Although it contains much to please the eye and ear, such as the Aulcroft Theater and the Three Temples to the Passions, the city's architecture and layout are less than inspired. Built to last of available materials with little thought to the aesthetic pleasure of future generations, Urupa's square, solid buildings are constructed of unadorned blocks of stone cut from the drab gray cliffs that loom over the city. Even new buildings display few architectural flourishes, because the city's inhabitants rarely choose to fund ambitious architectural projects with money they can spend on business enterprises.

ENTERING URUPA

Visitors may enter Urupa by water, land or air. Travelers who arrive by sea are greeted by the sight of Tovar's Pyre, a tower of flame that rises from the tip of the cape surrounding Urupa's harbor. Legend has it that the pyre was created by a fire elemental bound to serve the elemental Tovar. After performing the agreed-on services, the elemental returned to collect its due, only to discover that Tovar was unable to pay. The angry fire elemental responded by engulfing Tovar in a pyre of everlasting flames. Those who journey out to look closely at the beacon swear that one can see the silhouette of a man, writhing in agony, in the center of the fire. Whatever its origins, Tovar's Pyre can be seen from many miles out and provides a welcome beacon for ships caught in the Aras Sea's vicious gales.

At the mouth of Urupa's harbor the sea traveler passes by Shabira's Redoubt, a massive fortress that rises seventy feet from the surface of the water. One of Barsaive's most intimidating fortifications, the Redoubt is approximately 150 feet in diameter and surrounded by walls twenty feet thick. Atop the walls are mounted three tiers of fire cannons that can be aimed in any direction. The top tier of cannons consists of four of the largest cannons in all of Barsaive, as well as eight additional cannons mounted in ingenious mechanical chairs that enable gunners to track moving airships. Finally, refs of elemental water provide the Redoubt with additional protection against approaching ships.

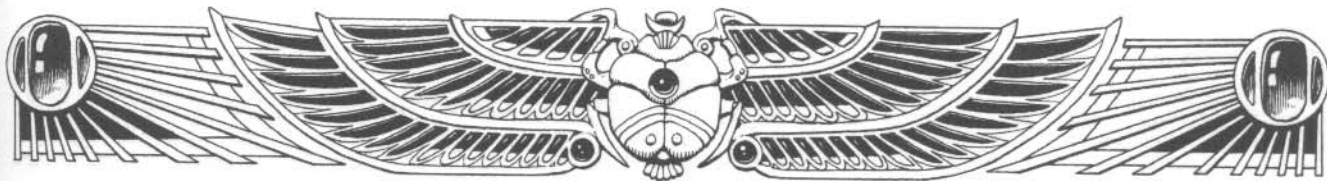
Seaborne travelers who approach from the south, either from the open sea or the south branch of the Coil River, may cross the harbor's narrow cape through a watery tunnel that passes under the cape and directly into the harbor. The tunnel is tall and broad enough to allow two large ships to pass side by side. At the harbor side of the tunnel hangs a huge metal portcullis called the Seagate, which can be lowered during attacks.

The Grand Levee surrounds the city along its north and east sides. This hundred-foot wall of earth protects the city from the storms and swells of the Aras Sea. Along the city's south side, which faces the protected waters of the harbor, the levee walls are only thirty feet high.

Urupa's wharf runs from Zenicce in the city's northeast corner, where it extends about 50 feet from the levee, all the way around the city to the Visitor's Quarter, where it extends more than 150 feet out over the harbor. The levee walls that face the harbor contain forty-two gates that open on to the city's North and South Docks. The North Docks can accommodate smaller vessels, such as fishing boats and private floats. The South Docks, which can accommodate larger commercial and military vessels, start in the P'shestis sector and extend to the Tower of the Harbormaster. Just past the tower lies the Long Pier, which extends two hundred yards out into the harbor.

The captain of any vessel that docks at Urupa must notify the city's harbormaster within twenty-four hours of docking. During Urupa's early days the only docking facilities were located along the city's south walls, and foreigners were required to enter the city at the Foreigners Gate—one of the primary reasons for the construction of the Long Pier. Shortly after the Thera War, however, Urupa relaxed its restrictions on foreign visitors and opened docking facilities along the city's east side. Today daily docking fees stand at one silver piece per ten feet of draft. Small fishing boats pay less than a silver piece, t'skrang riverboats around ten. The office of the harbormaster is exceptionally





vigilant about patrolling the city's docks, and the main wharf around P'shestis is reasonably safe from violent crime even on the darkest nights.

Travelers who arrive by land generally use the Old Theran Road, which passes through Urupa's two land gates. The road begins in Parlainth, traces the east bank of the Serpent River to Lake Ban, then traces the northern bank of the Coil River to the Aras Sea. The road then follows the shoreline to Urupa and enters the city via the South Gate. The road runs through the city, where it forms one of Urupa's four main thoroughfares, then exits through the city's North Gate. From there the road continues along the shoreline for some twenty-five miles and ends a few miles south of the northernmost branch of the Coil River. Apparently the arrival of the Scourge prevented the Therans from extending the road further. During storms the road immediately north of Urupa often floods, but otherwise remains passable in nearly any weather.

For air travelers, Urupa maintains airship docking facilities on special jetties built alongside the city's water docks. Airships must register with the harbormaster and pay the same docking fee as their aquatic counterparts. The trolls of Otsok use the airship jetties to unload trade goods but typically dock their drakkars in the caverns of the nearby cliffs.

THE SECTORS OF URUPA

Urupa's four main roads divide the city into nine sectors. Seven of these sectors are named for the founding communities of the city. Each of these retains a distinct cultural identity that dates from the Scourge, when every founding community lived in a separate kaer and citadel. The central sector is simply called Urupa, while the ninth sector is known as the Visitor's Quarter.

Biharj

The dwarfs of Urupa's Biharj sector live in homes cut from the high cliffs that border the city's northwest side,

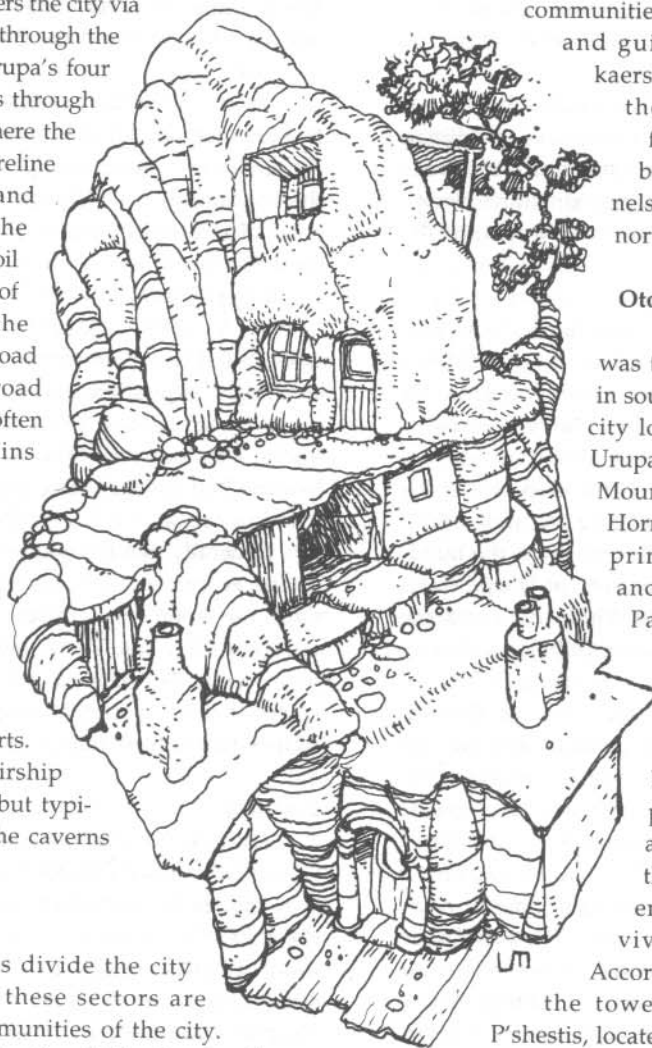
some as high as 150 feet from the ground. One of the city's oldest sectors, Biharj was actually settled prior to the Scourge by a small enclave of Throalic dwarfs who served the Theran Empire as administrators for the province. In the years before the Scourge descended on the land, the dwarfs of Biharj made the decision to stay in their adopted home. They supervised the implementation of the Rites of Protection and Passage for many nearby communities along the shore of the Aras Sea and guided the construction of many kaers and citadels in the area. During the ninety years since Urupa's founding, Biharj's dwarfs have built a significant network of tunnels, mines and dwellings in the cliffs north of the city.

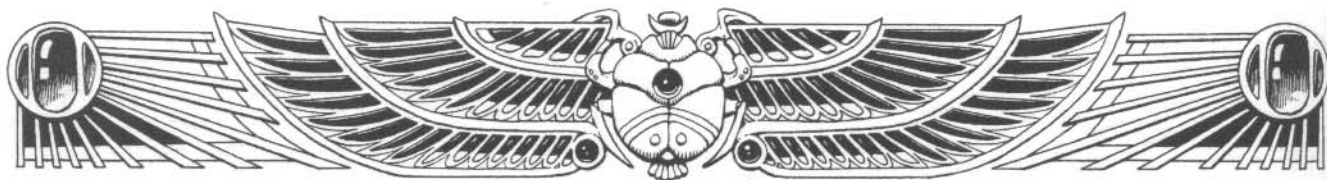
Otsok

In pre-Scourge times, Otsok was the Name of the largest troll kaer in southern Barsaive, a rambling cavern city located southwest of present-day Urupa in the highlands of the Thunder Mountains. For protection against the Horrors, the trolls of the doomed kaer primarily depended on a triad of ancient temples built to honor the Passions Erendis, Rashomon and Vestrial. Legend has it that when the Passions fell into madness—when Erendis became Dis and Rashomon became Raggok—they broke the pattern of protections for the kaer and so betrayed Otsok's trolls to the ravages of the Horrors. At the end of the Scourge, the few survivors fled in their drakkars.

According to tradition, their arrival at the towers of the t'skrang village of P'shestis, located at the mouth of the Coil River, marked the birth of Urupa.

Today the descendants of those refugees reside in enormous caverns they have carved out of the cliffs of Urupa's Otsok sector. Much of the rock they tore out of the cliffs went into building the temples of Thystonius, Mynbruje and Chorrolis that grace Urupa's central square. Additionally, the trolls of Otsok maintain five drakkars in the Urupan fleet. In fact, most of the sector's residents work in the Otsok airship yard.





Nehem

The obsidiman sector of Nehem was founded by refugees from the Nehem Liferock, which was located in Kaer Otsk. Though normally the desecration of an obsidiman Liferock destroys all the Brothers of that Liferock, by some miracle more than fifty obsidimen fled Kaer Otsk when their Liferock fell and arrived at the site of present-day Urupa, where they founded the Nehem sector of the city. How these obsidimen remain alive and sane without their Liferock is a mystery other obsidimen refuse to discuss with the energy-waters.

The Nehem sector contains a single building, Omeyras's House, named after the prominent obsidiman trader who makes his home there. Omeyras's House is built on an obsidiman scale, with cyclopean stone blocks, huge windows and doors, and many rooms open to the sky. The house abuts the adjacent cliffs, which contain additional rooms and passages. The structure contains libraries, magician's studies, a gigantic forge, fountains, courtyards, ballrooms and walled gardens, all laid out in a seemingly haphazard fashion. The extensive grounds appear wild and unkempt (a fact that Omeyras's dwarf neighbors continually point out), but observant visitors will notice obsidimen moving ponderously amid the weeds and clutter, continually rearranging the landscape.

Most Urupans assume that Omeyras owns the building, but the entire obsidiman community of Urupa treats the house as communal property. The house and the grounds are open to the non-obsidiman public two days a month, during the new moon and the full moon. On all other days the house's obsidiman residents unceremoniously escort uninvited guests off the grounds and into the street. Visitors may notice that the house contains enormous stone doors that seem to lead to places deep inside the cliff. So heavy are these doors that only an obsidiman can open them. According to rumors, the obsidimen of Nehem found a curious thief attempting to pass through one of these doors several months ago. The obsidimen allegedly delivered the thief's dead body to the magistrate in the center of town shortly afterward, explaining that he had fallen down a long flight of stairs and broken his neck.

P'shestis

Urupa's P'shestis sector is populated by descendants of t'skrang who lived in the nearby river village of P'shestis. The original towers of P'shestis village still rise from the Coil River near where it joins the Aras Sea, and they remain visible from the walls of Urupa.

During pre-Scourge times, the residents of the V'strimon-affiliated village often manned a trading post

located on the Urupan peninsula. In the years preceding the Scourge, House K'tenshin employed an elemental mage Named Shabira to build a fortress in the harbor's mouth—Shabira's Redoubt—in an attempt to take control of the lucrative trade route. Although the K'tenshinians proved unable to drive the V'strimonians and their allies from the area, they were able to force the V'strimonians to pay tolls in exchange for safe passage into and out of the harbor. The Scourge, however, forced House K'tenshin to abandon Shabira's Redoubt and the P'shestis to abandon their trading post.

Shortly after the Scourge ended, all the t'skrang from P'shestis left the village towers and moved to dry land at the site of the present-day P'shestis sector of Urupa. Now the t'skrang of the P'shestis sector live in tightly packed rows of two-story houses. Each house is connected with the adjacent houses, an arrangement that keeps alive the t'skrang tradition of communal living. The sector is also home to Urupa's dock yards and main marketplace, which is second only to Bartertown's market in diversity and riches. Freight moves into and out of the market with extraordinary speed because the market plaza runs right up to the docks. The dock yards also boast special facilities to aid the loading and unloading of airships. The bazaar lies in the P'shestis sector.

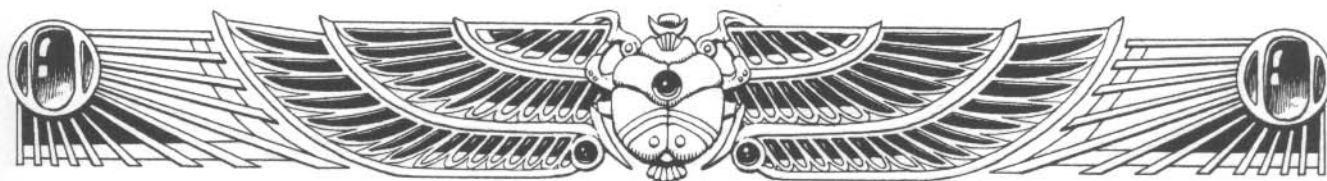
Generally, the t'skrang of P'shestis live contentedly in Urupa. A few years ago, however, one of P'shestis's foundations, the Kalima niall, relocated back to the site of the river village of P'shestis. There, the niall rehabilitated the abandoned village's t'slashina and began to cultivate the special spices that form such an important part of t'skrang fish recipes. So far, their enterprise has been a huge success.

Ironclaws

The orks of Urupa's Ironclaws sector are descended from the Ironclaws raider tribe. Although the city's orks now pledge their primary allegiance to Urupa rather than the tribe, they have maintained the martial traditions of their raider ancestors; five hundred of them ride in the city's militia cavalry under the Ironclaws banner. Most Urupan orks, however, have set aside the raider tradition to pursue animal husbandry.

Orks in the nearby highlands raise mounts and cattle, then bring them to their clan brothers in the city. The best animals are sold at the livestock market in the Ironclaws sector, which is rivaled only by Vivane's famed Beastmarket. The remaining animals are taken to the slaughterhouses outside the city walls, where the orks butcher them and sell the meat to their fellow Urupans, ship crews and passing trade caravans.





Liandrill and Zenicce

The elven sector of Liandrill and the human sector of Zenicce are so thoroughly integrated that most Urupans view them as a single sector. In both sectors elves and humans live side by side in courtyard apartment buildings, called *insula*, that may rise five to six stories above the ground. Each *insula* is built around a central, communal courtyard that contains a small garden and a well for drawing water. With as many as forty families living inside a typical six-story *insula*, it seems natural that *insula* residents end up spending most of their time visiting with their neighbors in their courtyards.

Although the city's elven community is more prosperous than its large human community, both groups practice the tradition of *kommulos*—a tradition that obligates all members of a community to share their wealth so that no one goes without life's necessities. As a result, Liandrill and Zenicce are the most peaceful sectors of Urupa, even though they are also the most crowded. Most of the sectors' residents work in the small, independent craft shops located in the area, performing the many specialized tasks needed to keep Urupa running smoothly.

The sectors are also known for the School of Adepts, located in a newly erected collection of buildings at the common border of Liandrill and Zenicce. The school's chancellor, a human magician Named Malvari, founded the institution to establish a curriculum for each of Barsaive's recognized Disciplines. Malvari, who claims to have mastered all four of the magician Disciplines, has attracted several experienced adepts to join his enterprise, but troubles have plagued the school since its inception three years ago.

On the first day of classes, a man appeared on the school's doorstep and began shouting at the top of his lungs. He claimed that Malvari was in league with Horrors, which had supplied the mage with his unusual skills in magic as well as the money to build the school. Although the man produced no evidence to support his accusations, the rumors persisted until Malvari allowed himself to be examined publicly for signs of Horror marks. Later that year a mysterious fire destroyed part of the school's library, and recently two of the school's best instructors, elves from Liandrill, were found murdered in their homes. Now, in the school's third year, Malvari's creditors have begun to question the validity of his account books.

The Visitor's Quarter

The Visitor's Quarter of Urupa abounds with hostelryes, inns, taverns and imposing embassies. The city established the sector a year after Urupa's founding, when visitors from foreign lands were forbidden to enter the city proper. At

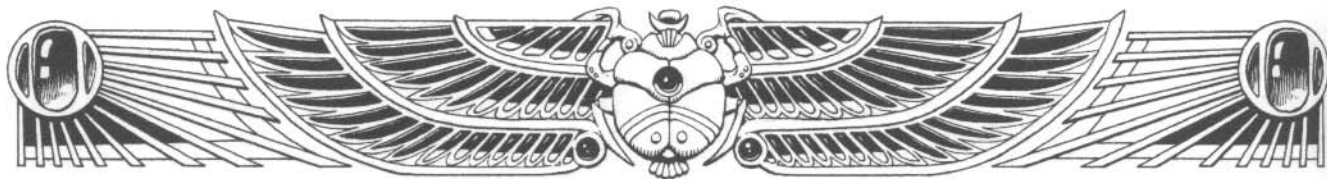
that time, Urupa's city council feared that visitors might exert unwholesome influences on the citizenry, although exactly what influences they feared have been lost to time. The arrangement forced visitors to conduct trade through resident intermediaries in the main marketplace. In those days, a wall separated the visitors' sector from the rest of the city, with only one small gate leading into the market. The walls have since been torn down and visitors are free to wander the city and do business without restrictions. The Visitor's Gate and its two flanking towers, however, still stand on the east side of the main marketplace.

The Visitor's Quarter contains four impressive embassies. The Theran Empire and the Kingdom of Throal maintain embassies on opposite sides of the sector's central square. The two buildings have been improved and expanded several times during the years since the Theran War, as if both powers were competing for the attention of Urupa's citizenry. The Throalic embassy has grown slowly in size, but the decoration on the outside of the building has become ever more ornate. The Therans, on the other hand, swiftly expanded their compound as far as their neighbors would allow, then began to build upward. Now the fifteen-story embassy towers more than two hundred feet into the air, prompting the city council to politely request that the Theran ambassador restrain his architects for a few years "lest the embassy block the afternoon sun from much of Urupa." So far, the Therans have respected the council's wishes in this matter.

House V'strimon's embassy is located near the water's edge. The building is styled after the *insula* of Zenicce and Liandrill, but it features a flooded central courtyard that opens directly into the harbor. Usually, the embassy keeps a contingent of two warships docked in the courtyard. When the vessels are in the city, the crews of the riverboats stay inside the embassy building. The embassy staff is small, consisting of little more than the designated representative from the Floating City and twenty or so clerks and attendants.

The fourth embassy, which belongs to the People from Across the Aras Sea, resembles a fortress more than an ambassadorial residence. The massive building is a huge, square block of stone, fifty feet on each side and fifty feet tall, with one door, six windows, and a tower on each of its four corners. Like House V'strimon's embassy, the building stands by the water's edge, but its door faces toward the Aras Sea rather than toward the city. Two black-armored soldiers wearing helmets that obscure their faces guard the entrance. A long stone pier projects out from the embassy for perhaps a hundred yards. Here the foreigners dock their dark, wooden, lateen-rigged ships. Only a handful of the





dark, wooden, lateen-rigged ships. Only a handful of the city's wealthier citizens have ever been invited inside the embassy, and most of them report that the opulence of its interior exceeds the grimness of its exterior.

The Visitor's Quarter also contains the headquarters of the Guild of Free Traders, which is located in the city tower between the Visitor's Quarter and the P'shestis sector. In the days when the city restricted the movement of non-citizens, Urupa's harbormaster occupied the tower, which provided an excellent vantage point from which to observe all foreign vessels at the city docks. Now the guild maintains its headquarters in the tower because it provides easy access to the main market in P'shestis, the inns and taverns of the Visitor's Quarter, and the nearby docks. In recent years the guild's president, a t'skrang Named Minaeus Denestal, has lobbied the city council to create an eighth seat on the council for a representative from the Visitor's Quarter. The council has repeatedly denied his request, however.

Central Urupa

As if by unspoken agreement, Urupa's citizens have chosen to express their civic pride in the city's central square. Here, the city's troll, obsidiman, dwarf, t'skrang, elf and human communities have combined their unique sensibilities and skills to create Urupa's only architecturally noteworthy structures: the Three Temples to the Passions, which form the heart of the square. The Temple of Chorrolis can be seen from almost anywhere in the marketplace of P'shestis. Although the temple's towering pillars and long rows of steps are constructed of stone mined from the plain gray cliffs behind the city, dwarf and obsidiman craftsmen have polished the material so that anyone who gazes into the stone can see a dim reflection. Two matching temples dedicated to Mynbruje and Garlen flank the Temple of Chorrolis. Although each of the three temples is dedicated chiefly to a single Passion, each contains separate wings for related Passions. Thus, the Temple of Chorrolis contains separate shrines dedicated to Astendar and Floranuus; the Temple of Mynbruje contains shrines to Upandal and Lochost; and the Temple of Garlen contains shrines to Thystonius and Jaspre. Every day, resident and

itinerant questors gather around the temples' steps and debate the nature of the Passions.

Inside the triangle formed by the three temples lies a magnificent garden tended chiefly by the elves of Liandrill. The Temple Garden's centerpiece is the so-called Blue Rose, a winding braid of thick thorns and vibrant rose blossoms grown from a cutting salvaged from Kaer Liandrill's legendary Blue Rose. The rose bush produces an indescribable fragrance and inspires anyone who approaches it with a sudden feeling of sweeping clarity,

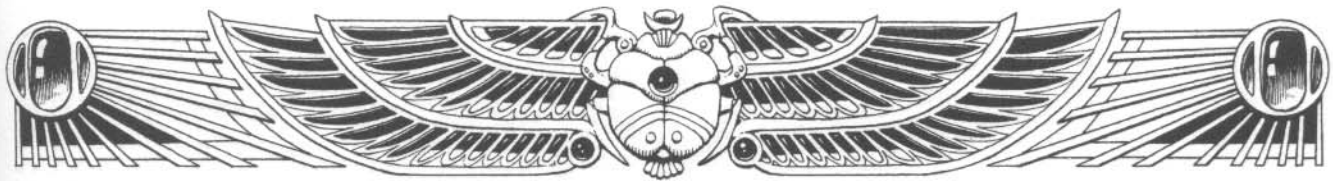
as if the book of the universe had opened to reveal a new page full of secrets. The Blue Rose also offers a convenient method of testing for Horror marks; its flowers burn with a cold, blue light whenever a Horror-marked individual approaches it.

Not far from the Three Temples, city workers are busily constructing a new complex of administrative buildings to accommodate the needs of the city government. Urupa's rapidly growing fortunes have multiplied the amount of work required to organize and oversee the city in the past few years, and the original seven-member council now includes a staff of more than two hundred clerks, magistrates and officials. The complex provides offices for those workers, as well as a new council hall that can accommodate up to a thousand citizens.

The complex also contains offices for Urupa's trade council, which was created in response to the need for some type of body to regulate the burgeoning trade conducted in the city, as well as a new seven-room courthouse and an expanded prison to keep up with the mounting thievery and other crimes spawned by the city's growth. Finally, the complex contains parade grounds that have already hosted two reviews of the city's military force. The architects promise that it will be quite impressive when it is finished—but three years have already passed since the project's estimated completion date.

The Aulcroft Amphitheater is Urupa's final building of note. Although not strictly within the boundary of the central sector, the Aulcroft is considered part of the heart of Urupa. Named after the legendary troubadour and play-





wright of the early post-Scourge period, the theater was cut from a sloping promontory located between the Nehem and Biharj sectors. Tier upon tier of plain stone steps rise up and away from the central stage, providing enough seating to accommodate Urupa's entire population, as well as visitors. The Aulcroft's most remarkable characteristic, however, is its acoustics. An invisible net of elemental air that arches over the stage and out over the seats enables spectators in even the highest reaches of the amphitheater to hear any stage sound louder than a hoarse whisper. No one is quite sure what anchors the net to this spot, but legends say that Aulcroft himself charmed an elemental air spirit to watch over and tend his theater. So far, however, no elementalist has succeeded in contacting the alleged spirit.

The Aulcroft theater is best known as the site of Barsaive's most renowned performing-arts festival, the annual Lernean Contest. The contest starts each year on the first full moon of autumn and lasts until the following new moon. Troubadours and acting troupes come from every corner of Barsaive to participate in the contest and compete for the Lernean Prize, a wondrous potion prepared by elven alchemists from Urupa's Liandrill sector. The potion, which is distilled from the fallen petals of the Temple Garden's Blue Rose, is said to heighten the perception and insight of those who drink it and alleviate any deterioration of the imbibers' mind caused by advancing age. Contrary to popular belief, the distillate does not confer immortality on the imbibers. Several winners of the Lernean Prize have died peacefully of old age, not the least of which was Aulcroft himself.

PELLIDRA JER, CHIEF COUNCILOR OF URUPA

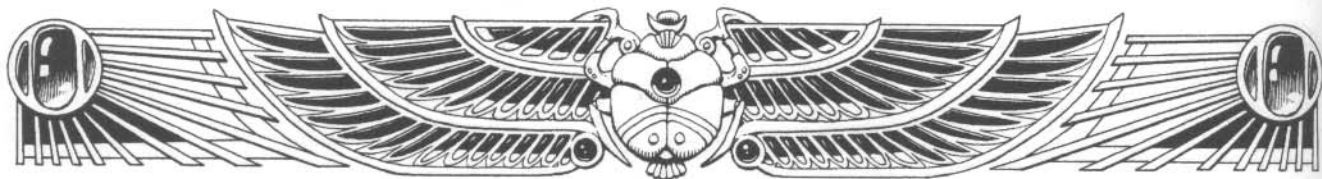
Fellidra Jer is a human troubadour adept and representative from the Zenicce sector to the the Urupan city council. For the past eight years, Jer has served as the city's chief councilor. Although her hair has turned steely gray and her face grown wizened with age, she retains all the beauty and charm that once made her the most acclaimed actress ever to walk the stage of the Aulcroft Amphitheatre. As a child, she apprenticed with Aulcroft himself during the last years of the great playwright's life. The two became inseparable, in a way that raised a few eyebrows, and Aulcroft wrote the last two of his plays, *The Adepts* and *The Three Temptations of Lanindil*, as vehicles for his protegee. Many believe that *The Three Temptations*, which won the Lernean Prize the year after Aulcroft died, was actually written by Jer, based on an outline in the master's notebooks. Fellidra has repeatedly denied writing the play, even though it has become one of the most-performed works in Barsaive.

When Aulcroft died in 1466 TH, Jer withdrew from public life for more than a decade. Various rumors claim she journeyed across the Aras Sea to travel in foreign lands or joined the adventuring group Named the Silver Band, that entered the ruins of Aras Nehem in 1472 TH. Whatever the truth of the matter, she returned to the stage in 1479 TH and over the next fifteen years starred in eight winners of the Lernean Prize, earning her the nickname "Aulcroft's amulet." During this time she began to take an interest in politics, aligning herself with the Free Trade Party, which called for the abolition of Urupa's strict edicts against foreigners. She won election to the council in 1492 TH, and four years later formally retired from the stage to devote her full time to politics. Shortly afterward she was elected chief councilor, a post she has held up to the present day.

The key to Jer's continuing popularity is her ability to balance the abiding anti-foreigner concerns of Urupa's citizenry with the recent explosive growth of trade and foreign influence. Jer wants to keep Urupa prospering, but she also wants control of Urupa to reside in its democratic institutions, thereby freeing it from the conflicts brewing between Houses K'tenshin and V'strimon, Thera and Throal. A charter member of the Guild of Free Traders, Jer has been forced to reconsider her earlier ideals in light of recent developments. The city's economic boom has eroded the traditional neighborhood welfare system that kept poverty in Urupa from becoming a seed bed of crime and revolution. The Ironclaws sector and even the generally peaceful Zenicce sector both contain neighborhoods full of decaying apartment buildings, and it seems that no matter how wealthy the city becomes, poverty walks close in its shadow. To hold back that shadow, Jer's administration has resurrected a select few of Urupa's "visitor tolls," much to the consternation of foreigners and native Free Traders alike. Jer has been careful to channel these funds into the construction of the new courthouse and jail, as well as incentives to encourage new businesses to set up shop on the borders of Urupa's poorer areas.

The so-called People from Across the Aras Sea represent the second major issue on the chief councilor's mind. The representatives of this mysterious nation have long isolated themselves from the Urupan citizenry, a practice that encourages wild rumors and speculation about their nature and origins. To make matters worse, the People from Across the Aras Sea have assiduously refused to reveal the locations of their own cities, even while Urupa has opened its gates to foreigners. According to rumors, these cities have come under attack by an army from the east, but so far the representatives have neither confirmed nor denied these reports. In response to their silence, Jer





reportedly has hired an adventuring group to seek the location of these cities and the truth of these reports.

Fellidra Jer

Eighth Circle Human Troubadour

DEX: 7 STR: 4 TOU: 6

PER: 6 WIL: 6 CHA: 8

THE ARAS COAST

Aside from Urupa, a few scattered fishing and trading settlements, and the recently re-settled t'skrang village of P'shestis, the rugged Aras coast of Barsaive is largely uninhabited. The village of P'shestis is located near the confluence of the Coil River and the Aras Sea. The village's original inhabitants abandoned the site at the time of Urupa's founding, but in recent years a small community of t'skrang, which calls itself the Loyal Order of the Shining Crescent, has reopened the village's towers. Taking its name from a P'shestis riverboat lost in a storm on the Aras Sea in 1498 TH, the Loyal Order is actually a monastic community dedicated to the Passion Upandal, rather than a true t'skrang crew covenant or foundation. Reportedly, each member of the order shares a vision received in a dream of the lost riverboat returning to P'shestis from out of the deep sea. Although such beliefs may seem strange to outsiders, the t'skrang of the order are friendly and welcome visitors at all times.

The order's founders, who emigrated from Urupa's P'shestis sector, cleared the abandoned village's t'slashina and began to cultivate t'skrang spices. The sale of spices now serves as the order's sole source of income and has proved lucrative enough to enable the t'skrang of P'shestis to begin refurbishing the abandoned village's shipyard. Apparently, the community seeks to establish a facility for building and repairing fire engines that will rival the shipyards at Denlikiyan and Tremeer.

The ruins of Kaer Otsok, the second major landmark of the Aras coast, lie about 300 miles southwest of Urupa at Aras Nehem, in an area of jagged cliffs and deep caverns filled with an unusual variety of enchanted and elemental life forms. The surrounding coastline makes navigation extremely treacherous for air and water ships alike, and black storm clouds seem to perpetually fill the skies above the long-abandoned kaer. A row of five cavernous openings that emerge from the cliff some 500 feet above the surging waters mark the entrance to Kaer Otsok.

Those who have survived the approach to the cliffs report that one can feel and hear an enormous rush of wind sucking into the five caverns. Others have reported visions

of the Mad Passions Dis, Raggok and Vestrial. According to legend, the cliffside kaer contains the Abyss of Aras Nehem (pp. 52–53, **Horror**s), a massive rift in the Earth that exposes a limitless void in which the Horror Ristul resides.

South of Aras Nehem, the coast contains a few small towns and villages that have sprung up since the Scourge. Most of these are concentrated near the delta of the Dragon Mountain River, which flows from the mountain range of the same name. Most of these settlements maintain fishing fleets, which harvest fish from the Aras. A few of these towns have begun to trade with the People from Across the Aras Sea. Twice a year, vessels from these towns make trade expeditions to Urupa and the scattered fishing settlements along the Aras coast.

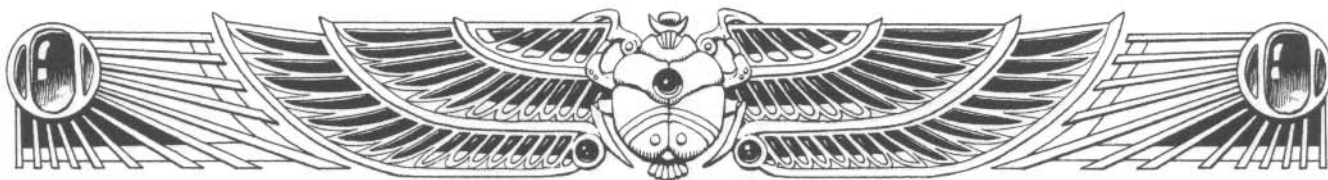
These coastal fishing villages, most located at the confluences of the hundreds of small rivers that flow into the Aras, are the most fascinating of all the coastal settlements. Centuries of isolation have left these communities untouched by much of the outside world. Throal and Thera are no more than vague rumors to these fisherfolk, who provide a fascinating window into Barsaive's distant past. Although the customs of these people may seem rustic and their dialects barely comprehensible, a patient traveler who makes the effort to seek them out may be rewarded with strange and rare gifts or trade items. In fact, the Aras coast is the location of the fabled River of Gold. It is said that gold can be scooped from the river like fish and that the precious metal is so plentiful that the local people trade with it as if it were common iron.

MASAE SEORACH AND THE MALLORNICA

The *Mallornica*, which sails the Aras Sea, is believed to be the only elven sailing ship still in existence. The sole surviving example of the legendary elven vessels described in t'skrang and elven lore, the *Mallornica* features a sail woven with elemental air, which catches the slightest breath of wind, and a keel carved from a single tree and coated with thin layers of elemental wood. The *Mallornica* is a remarkable sight, with a hull made of wood as white as the clouds, a high curving prow that actually bears leaves in the summer months, and three masts that each tower more than fifty feet above the ship's deck. The front mast is lateen rigged, and the two rear masts bear square-rigged sails and an enormous spinnaker sail that serves as a second rudder.

The *Mallornica* also boasts fire cannons and two ballistae that propel enormous harpoons. The ballistae are used to hunt leviathan in the deepest parts of the Aras Sea. In addition, the entire crew of the *Mallornica* is trained in the use of the elven warbow.





MASAE SEORACH

DEX: 7 STR: 5 TOU: 6

PER: 6 WIL: 6 CHA: 7

The Mallornica

Speed: 4 + wind speed (see Sailing Speed Table, p. 107)

Maneuverability: 4 + wind speed

Firepower: 13 / 13

Hull

Armor: 16

Ramming: 20

Cargo: 130

Damage

Critical: 17

Derelict: 54

Destroyed: 61

Crew

Captain: 10 (22)

Crew Size: 50

Crew Skill: 2

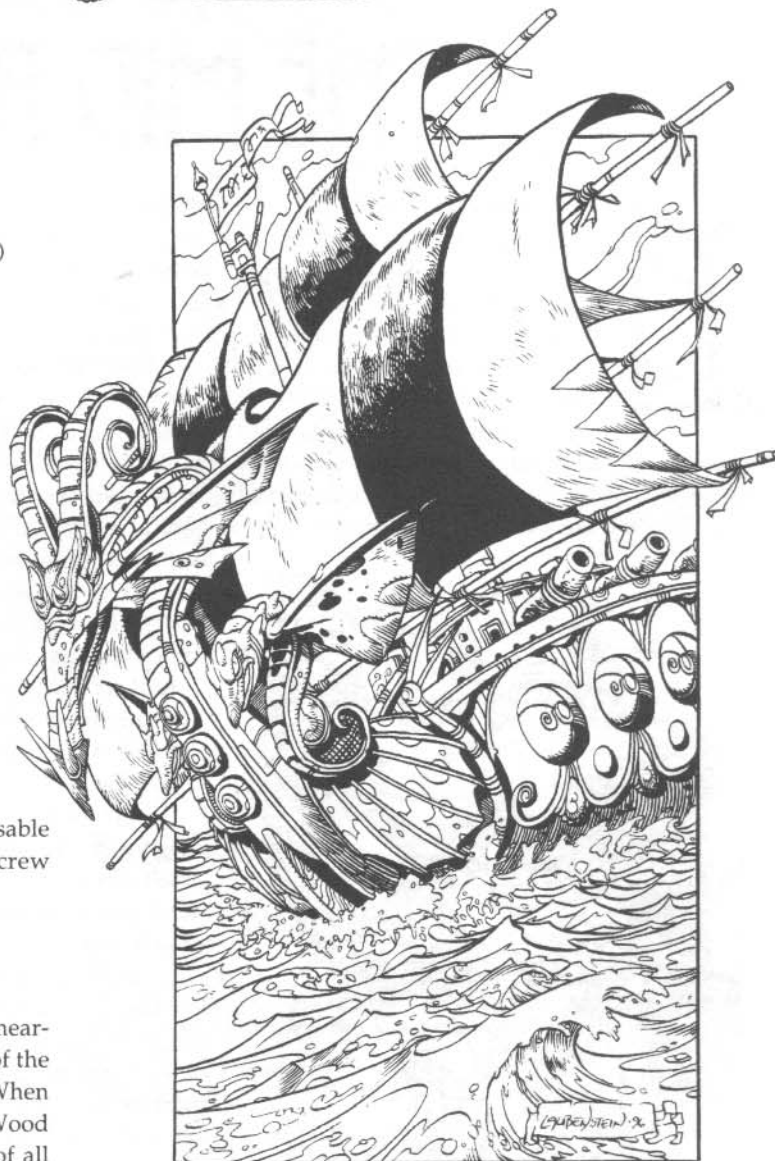
Crew Rating: 15

Morale: 60

Special

Elven Archers, separate 15/15 firepower attack usable only against enemy crew (note that only 20 crew members may fire bows at any one time)

2 Ballistae, separate 12/15 firepower attacks



As magnificent as it is, the vessel was only one of nearly a hundred elven sailing ships that plied the waters of the Serpent River and the Aras Sea in pre-Scourge times. When the Elven Queen Alachia began to isolate the Wyrn Wood from the outside world, she ordered the destruction of all elven ships and shipyards. According to the story, the *Mallornica's* captain, Masae Seorach, and his crew so loved their ship that they could not allow its destruction. Their defiance made them outcasts, banished from the Wyrn Wood for eternity.

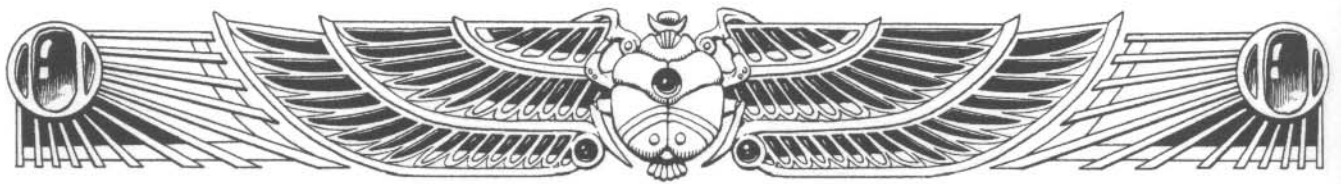
The *Mallornica* continues to sail the Aras. To date, Masae Seorach has not taken the vessel up the Coil River into Barsaive proper, apparently out of concern that the Elven Queen may attempt to destroy the ship.

Masae Seorach's name translates as "birth seed of the sundering," apparently an assumed name. According to rumor, no one save the Elven Queen knows his true identity. Seorach is free of the thorns that mark the elves of the Blood Wood, but no one knows where he might have

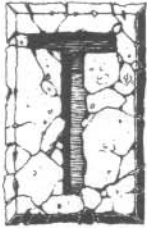
sought shelter during the Scourge. At every port on the Aras Sea he has left a standing offer of an orichalcum coin as a reward for any information that might lead to the discovery of a way to reverse the Ritual of the Thorns. However, Seorach denies any association with the Seekers of the Heart. The captain does not appear to follow the path of any particular Discipline, leading some to speculate that he is one of the few Barsaivian elves who have set foot on the Path of Lords.

The *Mallornica* moves two ranks faster than the standard sailing ship at every wind speed (see *Sailing Ships of the Aras Sea*, p. 107). In addition, the ship may move even faster when Seorach is at its helm.





THE MID REACH



The Mid Reach of the Serpent River, the so-called Silver Crescent, describes a wide arc that stretches from the wild lands of north central Barsaive down to the lowland settlements near Lake Ban. Traditionally, the confluence of the Mothingale and Serpent Rivers, just south of the Blood Wood, marks the northern boundary of the Mid Reach. Here sits the fortress known as Kaer Eidolon, where Syrtisian riverboats and troops from the Blood Wood stand watch against the warships of House Ishkarat.

From the plains south of the Blood Wood, the river passes between the Scythia, Caucavic and Throal mountain ranges, drawing strength from numerous alpine tributaries. Here the river passes through wooded hills dotted with river towns and villages fortified against the fierce raiders who live in the surrounding highlands. In pre-Scourge times these hills were among the most scenic in Barsaive. Their green expanses and the snow-capped mountain peaks that rise behind them like pale shadows inspired the famed Theran poet, Iagen of Parlainth, to write that "the land has been sculpted by a supernatural genius whose first intent was to arouse in the observer a true

appreciation of the power of nature and its supremacy over mortal concerns." Attracted by the beauty of the land and the abundant game animals in the woods and waters, many wealthy Therans who came to Parlainth during the Theran annexation of Barsaive built private retreats in the region's hidden valleys and woodland dales. Dozens of towns and villages arose along the Serpent's banks as the region's native inhabitants grew the food and made the goods that kept life comfortable for the Theran colonists.

As the Scourge approached, the Therans abandoned their sprawling villas, which now lie in ruins. The wooded hills have begun to regain their green mantles, but much of the area's wildlife remains warped and feral and many of the tributaries flowing out of the Caucavics remain choked and filthy. Even on the river, where the t'skrang hibernated through the long years of the Scourge, many a village tower stands empty—a silent memorial to the victims of those terrible times.

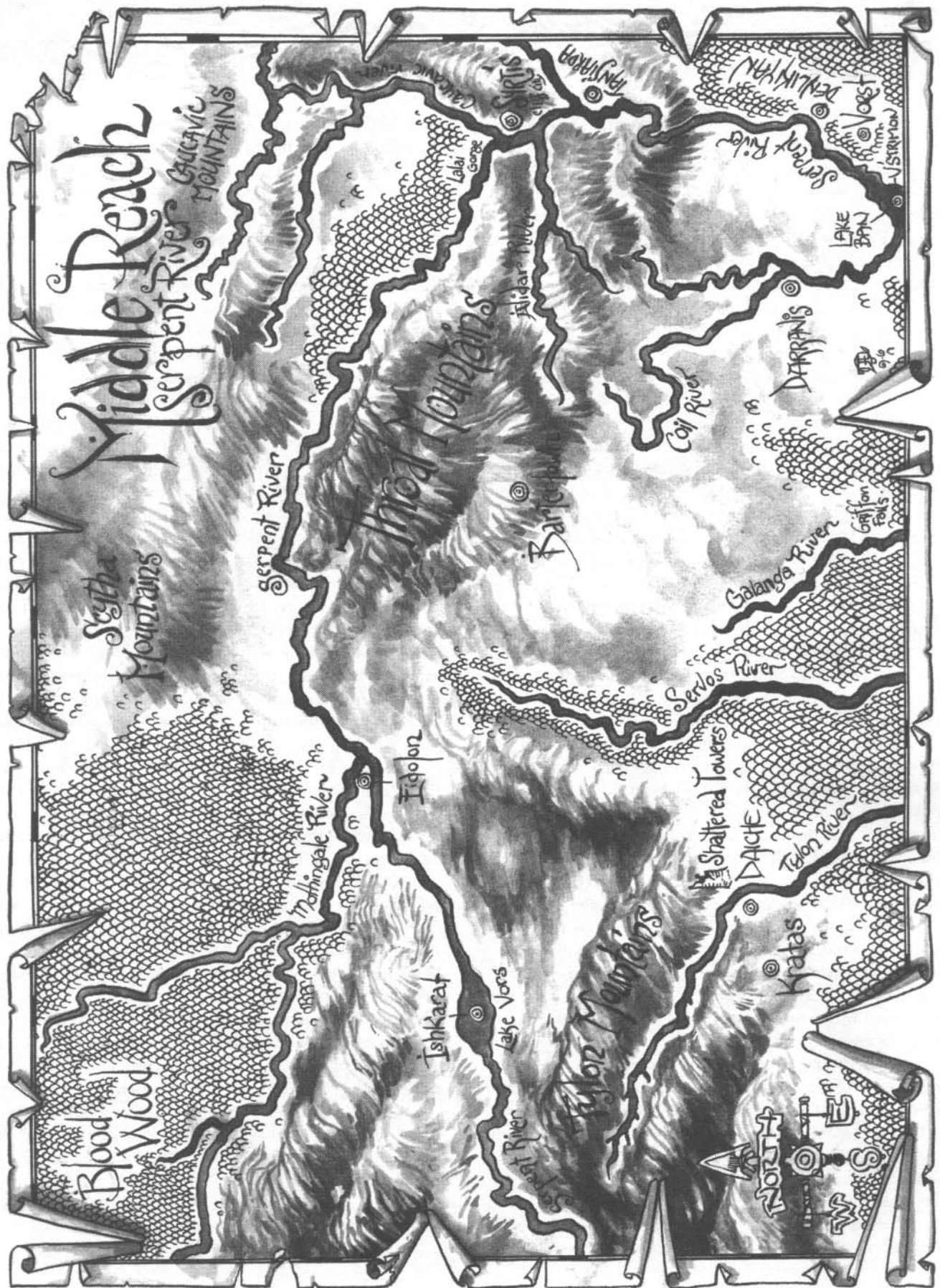
A bit of Barsaive's pre-Scourge splendor survives in the Cliff City of Lalai Gorge, which is universally recognized as one of the province's architectural marvels. Located just south of the Caucavic Mountains, the Cliff City is home to House Syrtis, the House of the Dragon Moon. The Serpent's oldest aropagoi, House Syrtis has controlled the Mid Reach for millennia and continues to dominate that stretch of river.

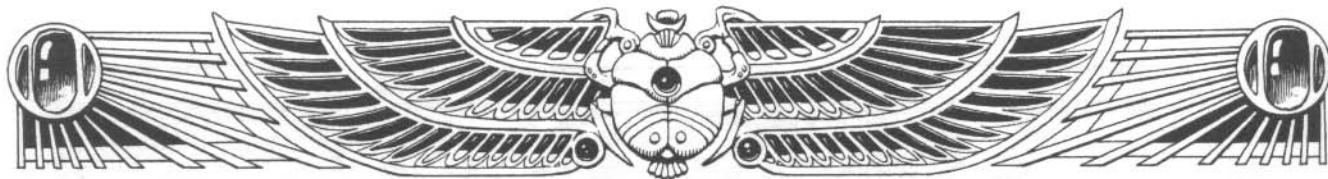
South of the Cliff City, the Serpent passes into the foothills of the Throal Mountains. Here, small independent colonies of elves, dwarfs, humans and t'skrang raise livestock, grow tea and cultivate vineyards that produce some of Barsaive's finest wines. The area is also home to the dwarf settlement of Tansiarda and the t'skrang village of Denlikiyan, which is renowned for its boatyards.

HOUSE SYRTIS

The Syrtisian aropagoi ranks just behind the Elven Court of the Blood Wood among Barsaive's most ancient institutions. Most scholars believe that the aropagoi was born when a number of the t'skrang villages in the vicinity of the Lalai Gorge banded together against their common enemies.







However, the only existing account of the origins of House Syrtis and its Cliff City at Lalai is the legend of the Courtship of Synopae:

Long, long ago, Syrtis, the Dragon of the Moon, was flying across the night sky when he spied a young maiden named Synopae of Kralipur collecting the white blooms of the night lotus in a mountain pool. Filled with the longing of a man for a woman, Syrtis watched Synopae as she sat on the pool's bank, letting the cool air dry her as she strung her flowers into a glowing necklace. As Synopae sat, she beheld the reflection of the moon in the still waters of the pond. After a moment she went back to her work and then returned her gaze to the pool. Where the image of the moon had glimmered, she now saw a man swimming toward her across the water. As he rose from the water, Synopae saw that he was more beautiful than any man living; surely he was a god or a Passion. But Synopae had wisdom to match her beauty, and though she felt the sting of Astendar's dart she did not fly headlong into the arms of this handsome young stranger. Instead, she resolved to test her suitor.

When Syrtis approached his beloved, whispering words of love, she replied, "Gladly would I be your love and your life, but I am pledged to tend my dear, sick father. He lingers with fever, well nigh on the shores of the river of death, and the only balm that can save him is a prick from a thorn of the roses that grow in the garden of the Elven Queen."

Hearing her words, Syrtis bowed his head and said, "I will bring you the thorn, that your father may live to see his daughter wed." That very night he took himself away to the court of the Elven Queen. Taking the form of a silver beam of moonlight, he passed through the wall of flame and ice that protects the Queen's rose garden and plucked a single thorn from a rose vine. But a warden from the Queen's court chose that very night to enter the rose garden to meditate on eternal truth, and Syrtis was forced to delay his escape. By the time he returned to Synopae waiting by the mountain pool, the rosy-fingered dawn had touched the horizon. The maiden told her suitor, "You must come with me to be my husband and enter the foundation of my ancestors."

But Syrtis knew that with the dawn would come the jealous gaze of his consort, T'schlome the Sun. Shuddering with fear, he replied, "I must go, but I shall return for you on the night of the next full moon."

And so Synopae the Wise watched as he disappeared under the lake, and perhaps she understood a little more about her lover.

When the moon had turned its cycle, and the lamp of night once again burned in full glory, she walked to the

pool in the mountains where the night lotus grew. Soon enough, she spied her beautiful stranger, returning to her from the water. Again he approached her, whispering the honeyed seeds Astendar had sown in his heart, but Synopae drew away from him, saying, "Gladly I would give myself wholly to you, but my heart bears the burden of a cold, cruel curse. A witch has come from the Elven Court and surrounded my heart with an everburning flame that will destroy anyone foolish enough to love me. The only salve that will quench her wicked spell is a wedding garland made from the Glitterfrost Orchid that grows in the garden of Icewing the Dragon."

Hearing her words, Syrtis was moved. "I shall go at once to my old friend Icewing. Surely he can spare one bloom." That night, he took a dragon's form and entered the lair of Icewing, who made a great welcome for his brother. They walked through Icewing's garden and talked of the Glitterfrost Orchid and many other things besides, which is the way of dragons. The night wore on, and by the time Syrtis returned to his beloved waiting by the mountain pool, the rosy-fingered dawn had touched the horizon. The maiden told her suitor, "Now you shall become my husband and enter the foundation of my ancestors."

And so the Dragon of the Moon took the maiden in his arms and delivered a kiss, but with the dawn came the jealous gaze of his consort, T'schlome. Trembling with haste, he left her with the words, "I must go, but I shall return for you on the night of the next full moon."

Another month went by before Synopae returned a third time to the pool. This time she was careful to keep Syrtis waiting, and did not arrive until the last hours before dawn. Again Syrtis spoke of his love for her, but again she would not surrender to his desire, instead saying, "Gladly I would have you as my love and my life, but how can you enter the foundation of my ancestors if you can only stay for one night of the month? If you will not make your home in my village, then you must prepare a home for us someplace else, a place so beautiful that I shall not want for my family."

The Dragon of the Moon sighed, for he had been bested a third time by the cunning Synopae. He said, "I will show you a place where I will build you a home a hundred times more splendid than any village on the river." And taking her hand, Syrtis flew both of them to the Gorge of Lalai. There, he entered the Liferock at Zirabul, and the elders of that place bent respectfully to their lord. He said to the obsidimen of Zirabul, "You must prepare this place to become a home for my wife and my family, and they shall abide with you through the ages."





Artwork by Jeff Laubenstein

A HENGHYOKIAN MARAUDER LOCKED IN COMBAT WITH A TRADE GALLEY



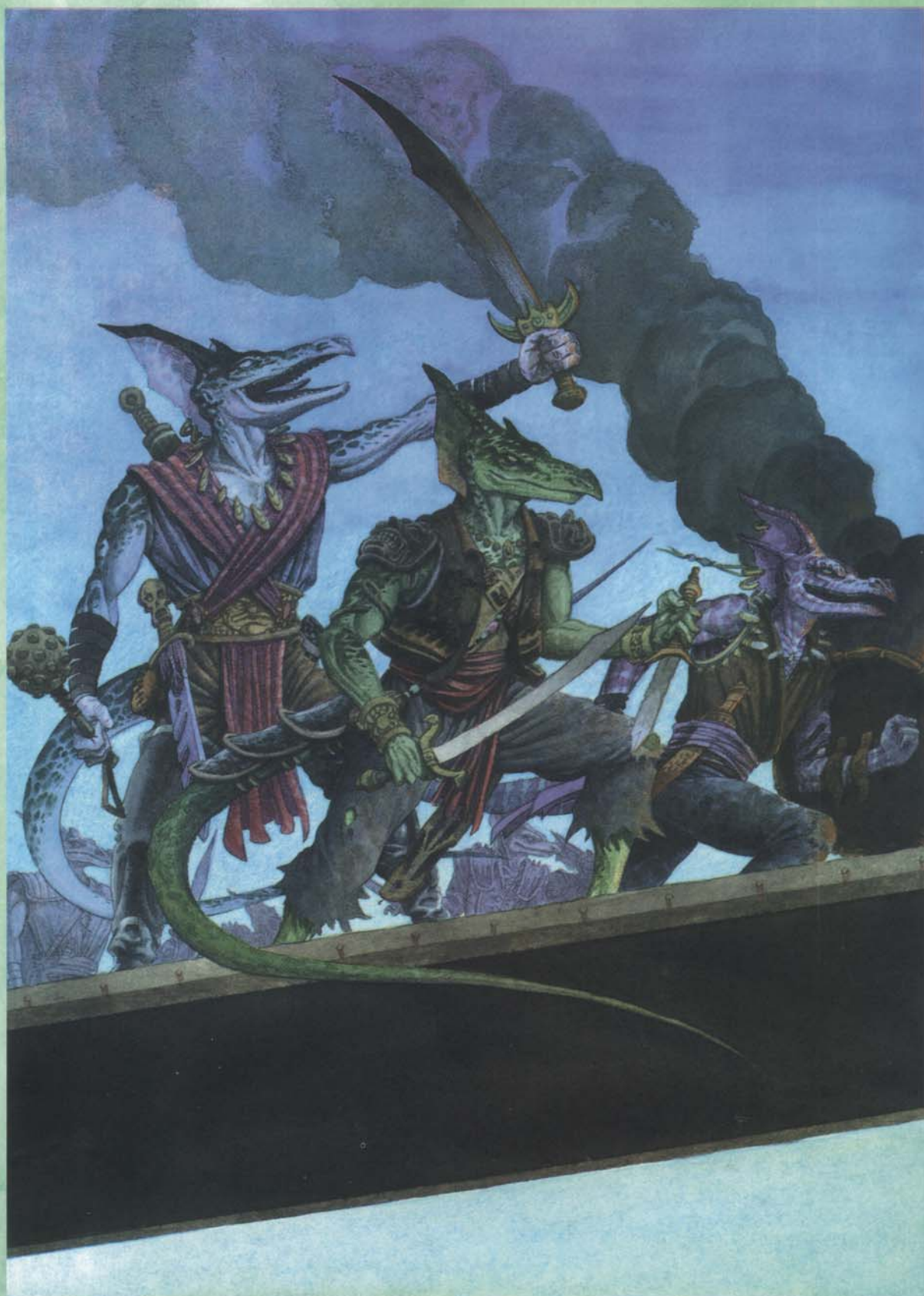
Artwork by Jim Nelson

AN ELEMENTALIST CONVERSES WITH THE FIRE SPIRIT OF THE TOWER OF FIRE



Artwork by Jim Nelson

THE ABANOS TOWER OF HOUSE K'TENSHIN



Artwork by Jim Nelson

ISHKARATAN WARRIORS STORM ACROSS A CORVUSS ONTO AN ENEMY VESSEL.



Artwork by Jim Nelson

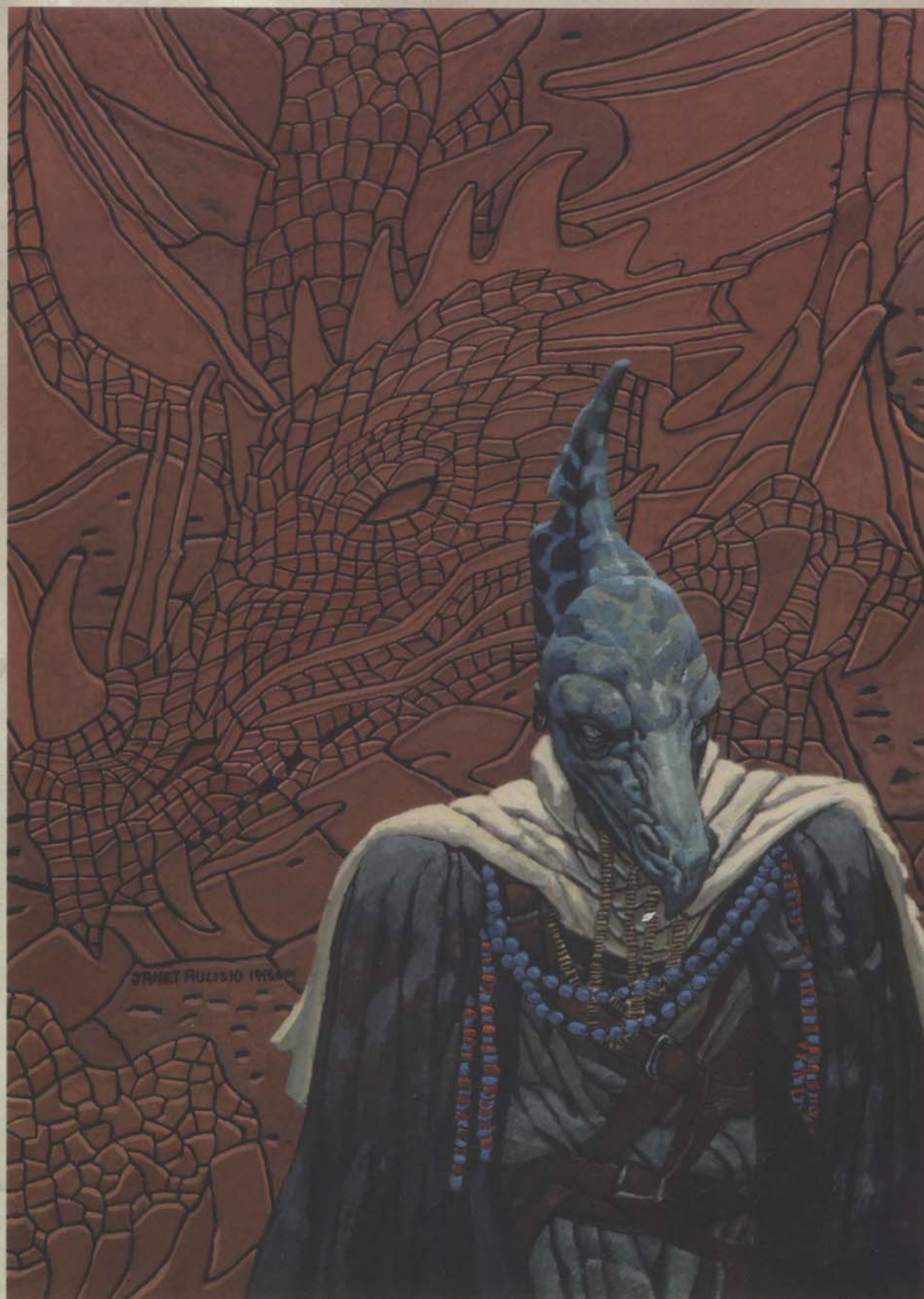
THE CLIFF CITY OF LALAI GORGE



JANET AULISIO 1996

Artwork by Janet Aulisio

AN EXPLORER CATCHES A RARE GLIMPSE OF THE CASTLE OF ASSASSINS



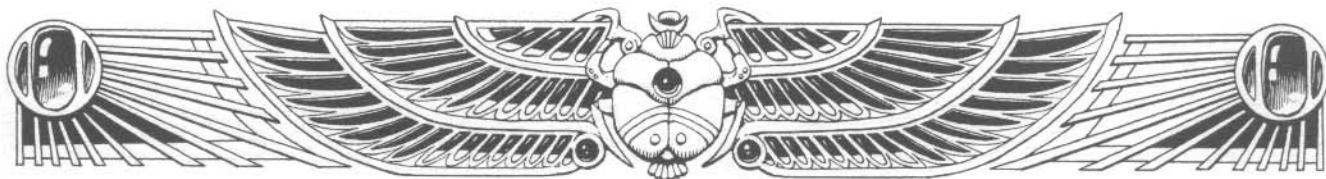
Artwork by Janet Aulisio

A WANDERER STANDS IN FRONT OF SHIVOAM IN THE CAVE OF THE FOUR FOUNDERS



Artwork by David Martin

GRIFFIN FALLS



Then Syrtis returned them both to the pool, where they spent what remained of that night together. When the shadow of the sun appeared on the horizon, the young man looked to the east, where T'schlome arose and he told Synopae, "When next I come, we shall go to the Halls of Zirabul." Synopae, a maiden no longer, tried hard to cling to him, but he vanished into the air without a trace.

And so Synopae understood a little more about her lover, but perhaps not enough. On the day before the moon had turned its cycle, the orb of the sun dipped low to the village of Kralipur, and T'schlome appeared to her husband's lover. "It would be better for you if you stayed close at home this night," T'schlome said to Synopae. "Should you ever again see my husband, I shall destroy you and all you hold dear."

When Synopae felt the furious heat of the jealous sun, she became afraid and said, "I shall do as you ask, Mother of Day. Will you not accept this garland as a token of my devotion and a balm to soothe your wrath?" With these words, she lay the garland she had made from the blooms of night lotus and the Glitterfrost Orchid about the neck of the Dragon of the Sun. T'schlome was so pleased with the young girl's gift that she did not notice when the touch of the Glitterfrost Orchid loosened one of the scales on her breast. Synopae, however, was looking for just that, and without a moment's thought she used the thorn of the elven rose to pry that scale from the Dragon of the Sun. When Synopae had the dragon scale in her hands, she wove a thread to it and said to T'schlome, "My time with your husband will be but a short time in the life of the immortals, but for that time, this thread shall protect both me and my family."

That said, she used the power of her magic to send the jealous sun back to the skies. That night, Lord Syrtis arrived at Kralipur village in the boat that carries the lamp-light of the night, and he carried Synopae and her foundation to their new home in the Gorge of Lalai. In time Synopae gave Syrtis four sons and four daughters, who each fed at the breast of the Moon himself, so that ever afterward the descendants of Synopae called themselves House Syrtis, the House of the Dragon Moon.

When T'schlome learned of Synopae's trickery, the Dragon of the Sun became enraged and vowed to exact revenge on Synopae and her children. And so after pondering her predicament, T'schlome took the Glitterfrost Orchid that Synopae had given to her to Upandal the Builder. Using guileful words to prick his pride, she challenged the Passion to match in beauty and desirability what Icewing and Jaspreet had fashioned so well. Accepting the Sun Dragon's challenge, Upandal returned

to his work room, determined to show T'schlome that he was every bit the match of Jaspreet the Lifegiver. After many years of work, during which time the children of Synopae grew to adulthood, Upandal appeared with his masterpiece, a duplicate of the Orchid wrought in gossamer, gold and glass. Then to prove to T'schlome how trivial he thought the challenge, he gave it to her freely as if it were a trinket.

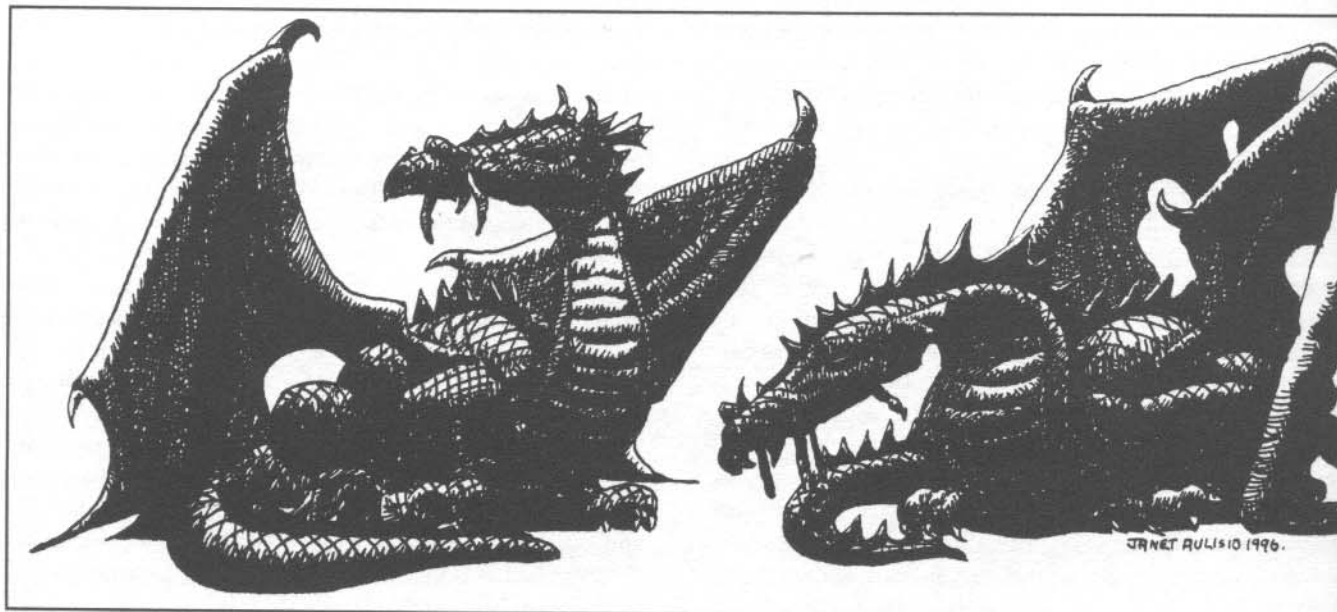
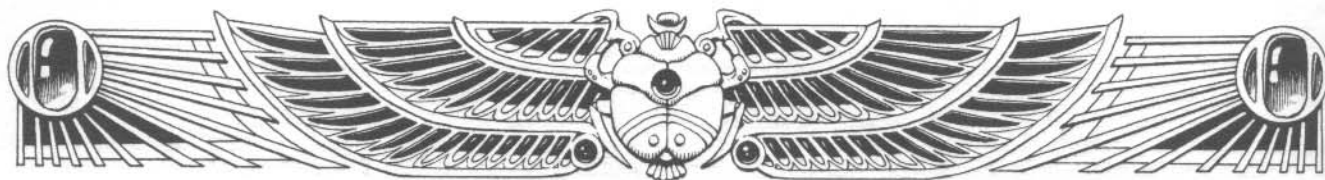
T'schlome took Upandal's gift and placed it in a box on which she inscribed these words: "For the most beautiful." Then she flew at once to the heart of the Wyrms Wood, where the Passions had been invited to bless the wedding vows of Princess Aenea and Prince Gamelan of Sereatha. When the wedding feast was begun, T'schlome persuaded Vestrial the Trickster to deliver the box to the banquet table. Sure as night follows day, the Passions found the box and opened it. All who beheld the Golden Orchid that Upandal had wrought were beside themselves with desire to hold it in their hands.

Soon Aenea, Astendar, Erendis and Jaspreet fell to arguing over whom the prize was intended for. Aenea argued that the Golden Orchid must be a wedding gift from her prince. Jaspreet argued that the gift was surely a token of appreciation from Icewing, for it was clearly modeled after the Glitterfrost Orchid. Astendar and Erendis, of course, simply believed that they were each the fairest, and therefore the gift's intended recipient. Garlen had a foreboding of trouble and wisely chose to keep silent. Upandal, who along with Chorrolis had drunk much wine at the feast, found the whole business so amusing that he kept the truth secret: that he, himself, had originally given the Golden Orchid to the Dragon of the Sun!

Now in the court of the Elven Queen at that time was a councilor named Elidar, whom many considered the wisest of the Queen's courtiers. And so Prince Gamelan suggested to the rivals that they lay their contest at the feet of Elidar the Wise. After considerable bickering, the rivals concurred. After some contemplation, Elidar said to Aenea, "Against all mortal beauty, thine own is unmatched. But you cannot not think to compare your beauty with that of the immortal Passions." To Astendar and Erendis, he said, "Although each of you has beauty far and above the mortal sphere, in truth your beauty is derivative, for the truest beauty resides in the everchanging renewal of life itself." And turning to Jaspreet, he said, "Life in all its forms finds both rest and inspiration in your bosom, O Gardener of the World, and so you are unarguably the most beautiful."

At Elidar's judgment, generosity filled Jaspreet's heart, and the Passion favored the elves with the magical fern-weave and wood that made their ships invincible. When





these gifts threatened the livelihood of Synopae's children, Upandal felt remorse for the way T'schlome had tricked him and so sought to redress the imbalance by granting the t'skrang the vision of the fire engine. The t'skrang, in turn, used the fire engine to great effect against the elves, prompting the other Passions to take sides in the growing conflict. Chorrolis and Upandal sided with the children of Synopae, and Jaspre and most of the other Passions supported Aenea and her elven children. After ten years, ten months and ten days of war, Upandal sought to end the feud that had cost Synopae's children so dearly. As evidence of his desire for peace, Upandal pledged to prevent all other Name-givers from learning the secret of the fire engine, a pledge he has kept to the present day.

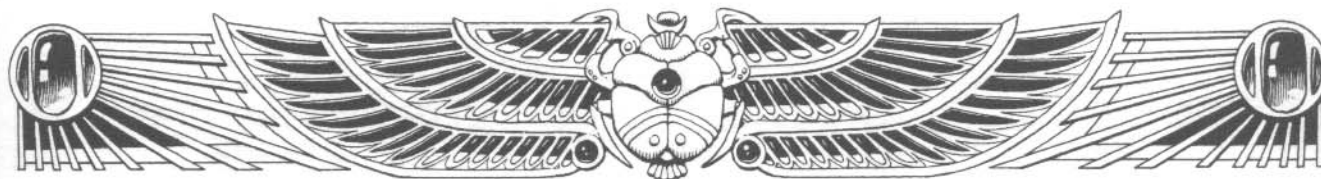
RECORDED HISTORY OF HOUSE SYRTIS

Despite the central role House Syrtis plays in the mythic memory of the t'skrang, its role in recorded history is far less illustrious. Even before the Scourge, when the Therans first claimed Barsaive as part of their empire, House Syrtis was weak and divided. Many of the Syrtisian t'skrang willingly collaborated with the Therans on issues of trade, and most of the aropagoi's nials arranged separate deals with their Theran conquerors in attempts to gain advantage over their fellow aropagoinya. Two of the aropagoi's eight nials, Fenestral and Brabant, even joined in punitive Theran slaving operations on the fringes of the Wyrn Wood and pirate raids against the mining settlements of the Scol Mountains.

Though House Syrtis's collaboration with the Therans still mars the aropagoi's reputation among many Barsaivians, most Serpent River t'skrang communities remain grateful for the leading role the Shivalahala Syrtis took in helping t'skrang communities prepare for the Scourge. The Shivalahala Syrtis assembled the council of lahalas that devised the t'skrang protections in the years preceding the Scourge. Drawing on their ancestral memories, the lahalas presented Barsaive's dragons with twelve riddles, each designed to trick the t'skrang's fire-brothers into sharing valuable information about surviving the Scourge. Using the dragons' answers, along with their ancestral memories, the lahala council published a special addendum to the Rites of Protection and Passage that taught the t'skrang how to safely induce hibernation. This sleeping state eased the claustrophobic strain of long imprisonment under the river, enabling the free-wheeling lizard-folk to survive the Scourge without going mad.

When the Scourge arrived, most of the Cliff City's population abandoned the citadel in favor of their home villages. At one point, the chamberlain of House Syrtis, a member of the Brabant niall, attempted to abduct the shivalahala away from the Cliff City and back to his own village, apparently intending to establish some kind of permanent influence over the shivalahala. The t'skrang remaining in the Cliff City discovered the chamberlain's plan, however, and apprehended him before he could board his ship and escape. The mob escorted the chamberlain and his entourage to Nithagi's Door and forced them all to walk off the edge of the cliff to their deaths.





Unfortunately, the Horrors took a special interest in the Cliff City. Despite the vigilance of the city's residents, Horrors breached the city's defenses on six separate occasions during the Scourge. The Shivalahala Syrtis personally fought each invading Horror that slipped through during each breach. The shivalahala's dedication invariably killed her, forcing her to pass her ancestral memories to a new shivalahala and creating lasting psychological scars that continue to afflict the Shivalahala Syrtis.

The legendary airship *Earthdawn* arrived at the Cliff City in the year 1418 TH to herald the end of the Scourge, and within weeks the leaders of House Syrtis's nialls convened the post-Scourge meeting of the Syrtisian High Chamber. More than a third of the villages aligned with the Syrtisian aropagoi had fallen to Horrors, which had nearly destroyed three of the aropagoi's eight nialls as well, and the once fertile lands of the Mid Reach lay ravaged.

Understandably, House Syrtis was slow to recover from the depredations of the Scourge. The arrival of a copy of the Council Compact from Throal prompted months of acrimonious, unproductive debate in the High Chamber. After a particularly garrulous session, the niall leaders decided to allow every Syrtisian t'skrang to fend for himself. Within days, the tensions between the nialls erupted into petty squabbles and vendettas.

Unfortunately, the Shivalahala Syrtis proved unable to offer her people much help during this dark time. For months she had been showing signs of the psychological scars left by her struggle against the Horrors, exhibiting decidedly odd behavior. Her attendants, who feared for her status in the eyes of her subjects, began to isolate her from all other members of the aropagoi. That decision nearly destroyed House Syrtis, for the shivalahala was probably the only individual capable of checking the growing divisions among the members of the High Chamber.

Fortunately, the centuries of history shared by the Syrtisian nialls provided enough of a bond to keep the factions from severing their ties altogether. Still, the High Chamber met only seven times during the first seventy years after the Scourge. The Syrtisian council met three times during the Theran War to consider and ultimately reject Varulus III's requests for aid in the war against the Therans. House Syrtis's neutrality created significant friction between Throal and the aropagoi, and at one point Throal accused the Syrtisian nialls of Fenestral and Brabant of secretly conspiring with Theran agents to find a river passage to the Kingdom of Throal somewhere along the Serpent.

Although the High Chamber ratified the Free Trade Compact, the body did not resume regular meetings until House Ishkarat seized the Maratha niall's fortified island of

Filen on Lake Vors in 1488 TH. The Scourge had reduced the Maratha niall's holding to the island fortress, and only two riverboats of refugees escaped the Ishkarat seizure of the island. In an unprecedented resolution, the High Chamber voted to dissolve the Maratha niall, ban its descendants from entering House Syrtis's central foundation, and eliminate its seats in the chamber on the grounds that its disgraceful defeat had stained the sacred honor of the aropagoi.

However, the High Chamber members soon realized that House Ishkarat's growing power threatened all of their nialls, and they began to exhibit a sense of their common destiny. During the next few years, the chamber members restored the power of the chamberlain of Syrtis to exact levies from their nialls to fund defensive measures. The chamber commissioned new warships and created the office of the Admiralty to provide the Syrtisian fleet with a single commander. The chamber's diplomatic initiatives resulted in the construction of the Syrtisian-elven fortress of Kaer Eidolon in 1497 TH and the leasing of five shi-moram from House V'strimon.

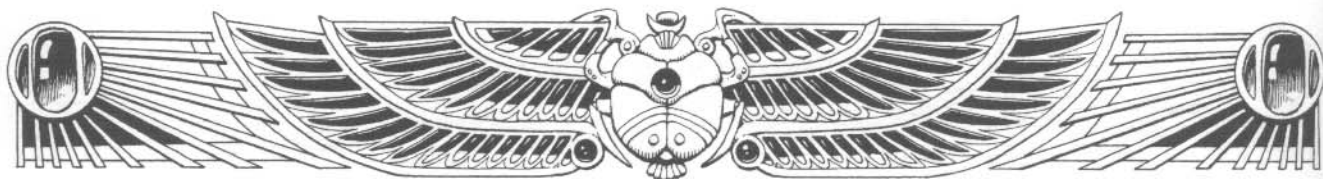
The chamber's efforts paid off in the spring of 1502 TH, when five warships under Admiral Shaido of the Wavram niall clashed with three Ishkarat riverboats just west of Kaer Eidolon in the Battle of Sejanus. The Syrtisian force sank one of the Ishkaratan vessels, captured another and forced the third to retreat. House Ishkarat later claimed that the riverboats were merchant vessels protected by the provisions of the Free Trade Compact—and therefore victims of Syrtisian piracy—but since the battle House Ishkarat has apparently restricted its expansionist designs to Lake Vors and the Serpent River west of the lake.

THE CLIFF CITY OF HOUSE SYRTIS

A few miles south of the confluence of the Caucavic and Serpent Rivers, the Throal Mountains collide with the Caucavic Mountains to form the Lalai Gorge, one of Barsaive's unique natural wonders. Each of the two mountain spurs comes to an abrupt halt at the gorge, terminating in sheer cliff faces that rise nearly 3,000 feet on each side of the river. The gorge runs for about twenty miles, narrowing to about a half mile at a spot called the Dragon's Gullet, where the river makes a sharp turn south. Here the river flows with such force that during the rainy months a riverboat is hard pressed to make the journey upstream through the canyon in the hours between sunrise and sunset.

The Cliff City of Lalai Gorge is set in the cliffs on the south side of the Serpent River, about five hundred yards upstream from the Dragon's Gullet. The aropagoinya of House Syrtis have made their homes in the Cliff City since





before the Scourge, when the site was pressed into service as a citadel against the Horrors. Throughout history the city's residents have employed various building methods and architectural styles to expand their metropolis, giving the ancient city the appearance of a haphazard patchwork of parapets, carvings, towers, windows and balconies when viewed from the river. Sections of the city alternate between the natural caverns typical of obsidimen, huge halls like dragon lairs, ornate dwarf-style decorative work, and the simple rough-cut stonework associated with t'skrang villages. In some places the various architectural styles produce astounding effects; in others they simply jar the senses.

The Cliff City is arranged in several vertical levels along the cliff face, an arrangement that often disconcerts first-time visitors. The inhabited parts of the city seem to be perched precariously on the cliff face, and nearly every road and path seems to slope up or down at an extreme incline. The city's t'skrang residents employ a wide variety of mechanisms to move from one level of the city to the next. To drag heavy loads up the inclines, the residents use winches and levitating platforms powered by elemental magic, similar to the Theran elemental elevators at Sky Point. Swing ropes are used to cross gaps and skip quickly up and down levels. Narrow staircases take the place of the alleys that one might find in a more conventional city, and strangers find it difficult to adjust to the idea that one must look not only left or right at an intersection, but also above and below.

Many first-time visitors also remark on the city's oppressive, haunted atmosphere. The Cliff City could probably hold sixty thousand Name-givers, but barely six thousand reside within its boundaries. As one walks up through the city's byways, one cannot help but notice the emptiness. Some towers carved in the cliff side are inhabited only by flocks of birds, while other places are claimed by hermits. The eerie atmosphere created by the vacant spaces is strengthened by the sound-conducting properties of the stone, which often transmits faraway conversations. Passersby can often hear the murmur of voices even in sections of the city that have not been inhabited since pre-Scourge times.

The Great Cavern

The main entrances to the city, known as the Doors of Shivos, are located at the base of the cliff at the water's edge. Each opening is more than one hundred feet high and four hundred feet wide. Both can be sealed by a combination of refselenika below the water and huge stone disks above. Neither door has been closed since the end of the Scourge, however. Behind the Doors of Shivos lies the

largest known open cavern outside of Throal. The entire cave is flooded to a depth of eighty feet and lit by light quartz embedded in the cavern ceiling and the riverbed. Towering stalagmites of pink and blue-tinged crystalline granite support the roof of the cavern, and wooden piers that can accommodate up to forty riverboats at a time extend from the edges of the cavern across its waters. Next to the piers stand several wooden buildings used by trading companies and trade covenants. Many of these buildings have fallen into disrepair in the past few years; the High Chamber has considered removing them, as they create an undignified first impression for visitors arriving by river to the Cliff City.

Because of the city's proximity to the Dragon's Gullet, the rapid river current and submerged rocks near the Doors of Shivos make the approach to the Cliff City quite treacherous. (Maneuvering a riverboat through the Doors of Shivos and docking it in the cavern requires a successful Pilot Boat Test against a Difficulty Number of 7.) The aquatic entrance to the Cliff City is further protected by the fire cannons of the massive Syrtisian *Dreadnought*, which is permanently anchored just outside the Doors of Shivos (see *Syrtisian Dreadnought*, p. 82, for details).

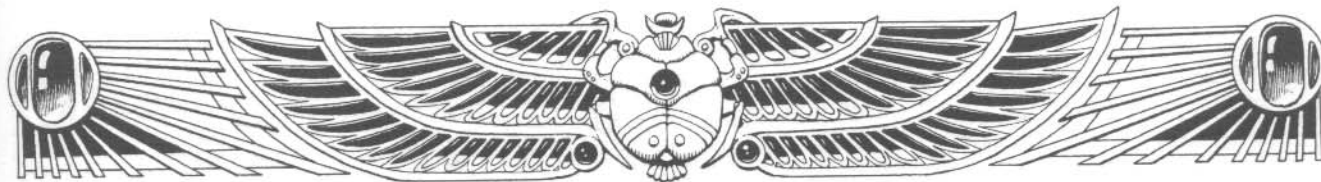
Below the surface of the river, the Great Cavern opens into a system of submerged caves that are many times larger than the portion of the cavern above the water line. These submerged caves extend deep under the cliff into a bizarre subterranean world. Light quartz mounted in the cliff walls of these aquatic back areas provide nourishment to a host of crops cultivated along the cave floors. Additionally, several chambers in this underwater cave system contain pockets of fresh air, which enable a t'skrang to remain in the submerged caves for several hours without the need to return to the surface. Some say the submerged cave system reaches all the way to the Kingdom of Throal, where it joins the waterways of Shuss Halima, the domain of the t'skrang Pale Ones. However, no one has yet blazed an aquatic trail from the Cliff City to Throal.

The Hives

The second level of the Cliff City, located directly above the Great Cavern, consists primarily of residential apartments. The city's inhabitants call these structures "The Hives," because the constant buzz of their residents and the intricate pathways that connect the apartments make the level resemble a huge honeycomb.

The Hives are inhabited exclusively by the servants and workers of the city, in keeping with the city's traditional segregation patterns. Throughout its history, Syrtisian society has remained highly stratified, and strict laws dictate where





an aropagoinya may live. The city's lower classes are restricted to residences in the lower levels of the Cliff City, while residences in the city's higher levels are reserved for the aropagoi's upper classes. Each of the first level's apartment complexes, or "hives," is inhabited by a specific group of servants or workers. For example, members of the Piscean Planters, the group that tends the underwater crops in the Great Cavern, live in one complex. Members of the August Order of Ropes and Pulleys, who maintain the swing lines and winches throughout the city, live in another complex. Members of the group called the Couriers, who run messages up and down the city's levels, live in another. Other complexes contain groups named after work that no longer exists. For example, one complex belongs to the Guild of the Diligent Oarsmen, whose members would take a nobleman's place at the galleys of ships in ancient times. The t'skrang have not run oar-driven galleys anywhere on the Serpent since the creation of the fire engine millennia ago, yet the name persists. Present-day members of the Oarsmen's guild are sailors and dock workers.

The Hollow

The Cliff City's main marketplace, known as the Hollow, is located on the city's third level. The market sits on a ledge under an overhang about five hundred feet above the river. The ledge is about a hundred yards wide and contains three tiers of narrow buildings. The buildings are crudely constructed of stone blocks cut from the back wall of the Hollow, and each building is divided into stalls. The eight nialls of House Syrtis own most of the stalls and rent them out to visiting traders who wish to sell their goods.

Trade Covenant Quarters

House Syrtis's few remaining trade covenants occupy buildings on the city's fourth level, directly above the Hollow. The only Syrtisian trade covenant that retains any fame outside of the city is the Right Honorable Commission of Toymakers. The covenant preserves the secrets of manufacturing some of the best-loved toys on the river, including extraordinary spinning tops that create kaleidoscopic patterns as they spin and animated, elemental-water toy soldiers that engage one another in sword fights if brought close together. At one point, the aropagoi's High Chamber attempted to relocate the toymakers to a village under its sway, as it had done with many other lucrative covenants. However, when a seven-year-old child was chosen as the next Shivalahala Syrtis, the High Chamber decided it would be in the aropagoi's best interests to keep the toymakers within the city.

Crew Covenant Quarters

The fifth level of the Cliff City is devoted to residences for House Syrtis's navy and crew covenants. Today, much of the level remains vacant, as the competing factions of the aropagoi's High Chamber have seized control of nearly all of House Syrtis's warships. However, about 100 sailors from the *Dreadnought's* skeleton crew reside permanently in barracks on the fifth level. Because the *Dreadnought* never leaves port, the crew is employed as the city's police force under the nominal command of the High Chamberlain of Syrtis.

Upper Levels

The upper levels of the Cliff City contain lavish quarters for House Syrtis's shivalahala, High Chamber representatives, and members of the shivalahala's court. Each of the aropagoi's eight nialls maintain resplendent residences for their representatives, many as large as typical niall domes, with dozens of rooms furnished with priceless tapestries and finely crafted furniture.

The chamber members, most of whom descend from the aropagoi's noble families, also maintain a spacious theater, a splendid solarium, a library and many meeting rooms. The solarium, known as the Eye of Syrtis, features a massive window of metal-rimmed crystal and glass that looks out across the canyon. The library contains a large collection of ancient manuscripts and monographs written by past members of the High Chamber. Because these texts are written almost entirely in the ambiguous, pictographic language of the t'skrang, scholars have never regarded the library's collection as particularly useful or noteworthy.

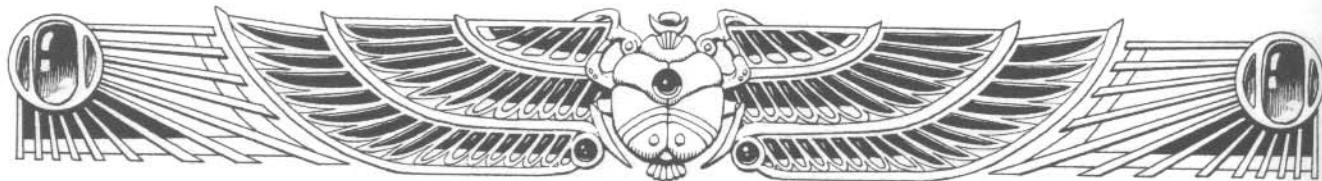
These features, along with ranks of bathing attendants, tailors, scribes, footmen and assorted servants employed by the residents of the upper levels, produce an atmosphere of opulence that contrasts sharply with the poverty spreading throughout the lower levels of the Cliff City.

Upper Entrance

At the top of the Cliff City lies Nithagi's Door, a magnificent stone arch created by the ancient sculptor Nithagi as a memorial to the ancient victory of the t'skrang over the elves. The seventy-foot arch is decorated with forty separate carvings that depict scenes from the legendary war between the two races. Although the arch is more than two thousand years old, the passage of time has caused little wear to the carvings, which are protected by elemental magic. Despite the arch's Name, it leads nowhere, as it is built on the brink of the cliff.

The actual upper entrance to House Syrtis is located two hundred yards away from Nithagi's Door, in a squat,





architecturally unremarkable edifice called the Pinnacle Gate. The Pinnacle Gate contains the only entrance to Syrtis from the highlands above the Cliff City. A squad of ten to fifteen soldiers stationed at the gate watch for bandits from the Throal highlands, who occasionally loiter around the approach to the Pinnacle Gate and harass arriving pilgrims.

Near the Pinnacle Gate, several mountain streams feed a small mountain lake called Synopae's Pool. The lake empties into a stone aqueduct that carries water down to a series of beautiful artificial falls and fountains that cascade through the Cliff City like pearl beads on a necklace. During the Scourge, the city's residents rerouted the aqueduct through Nithagi's Door, creating a vast waterfall that obscured the city from the river.

The Obsidimen of Zirabul

The Cliff City is also home to the mysterious obsidimen of Zirabul. No one knows just how many live in the city, because no one has ever spotted more than two at a time. Most often, pairs of the obsidimen clad in their blue and silver horklas can be seen shaping or repairing the city's rocks, sitting quietly in abandoned sections of the city, or walking along the docks of the submerged Great Cavern.

Some residents of the city claim that all the sightings can be attributed to only two obsidimen—the elders who tend to the Liferock of Zirabul, which lies deep within the cliffs behind the city. Although this explanation sounds plausible enough, no obsidiman has ever claimed descent from the Liferock, and the rock men of the Cliff City are notably laconic even for obsidimen. As a result, the local obsidimen remain a constant subject of speculation. Adding to the mystery, adventurers who stop at the Cliff City often find that their obsidiman companions disappear for a day or two and reappear without explaining their absences.

SHIVALAHALA SYRTIS

The Shivalahala Syrtis, also known as the Prophetess, is revered by every race in Barsaive for her exceptionally long memory and her incredible insight into the future. Her legendary status, like that of King Varulus III of Throal and Queen Alachia of the Blood Wood, is a critical thread in the true pattern of Barsaive.

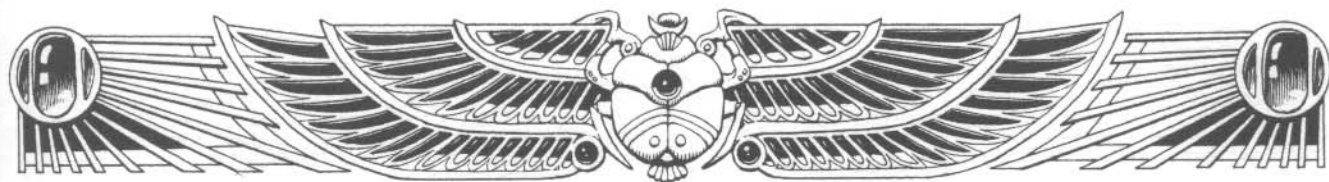
Much like Alachia, this small part of the pattern is beginning to unravel—the Shivalahala of the Dragon Moon is slowly losing her mind. The shivalahala has always been more concerned with astral matters than with politics and trade, which comes as no surprise to those familiar with House Syrtis. Tradition holds that a tenuous link to the physical world is the price the shivalahala must pay for the prophetic vision that lets her walk the corridors of time, visiting with spirits long dead and those yet to come and fixing her gaze on the darkest part of the Barsaive's pattern.

The beginning of the shivalahala's descent into madness, however, can be traced back to the Scourge, when six Horrors slipped through the Syrtisian citadel's magical defenses. The shivalahala confronted each Horror, each time surviving the confrontation just long enough to pass her ancestral memories to a new shivalahala. During the last of the six battles to save House Syrtis, a Horror corrupted the shivalahala's Warp Astral Space spell (p. 86, *Earthdawn Companion*) so that its effect remained permanent. Since that time, the results of magic have become unpredictable within fifty yards of the Shivalahala Syrtis, except for her own.

That corruption also affected the shivalahala's traditional resistance to the aging process, usually bestowed during a shivalahala's initiation into ancestral memories. Since that time, this resistance has been gradually eroding. The last Shivalahala Syrtis lived only ten years after receiving the gift of the Prophetess.

The transmission of memories from one shivalahala to the next has become less reliable, resulting in the increasingly bizarre behavior exhibited by the aropagoi's shivalahala.





halas. The first shivalahala after the Scourge displayed an obsession with music and spent most of her waking hours singing or playing musical instruments. Her successor often slept for days on end. The shivalahala after that exhibited an inexplicable terror of insects.

Just six years ago, the most recent incarnation of the shivalahala passed on her memories to a seven-year-old successor. The shivalahala's selection mortified the High Chamber. "The House of the Moon presided over by a sexless child? Preposterous!" exclaimed then-Chamberlain Gammalon Toolika. However, the representatives' fears were quickly dispelled when the child demonstrated a down-to-earth wisdom the shivalahala had lacked for generations. What at first seemed folly proved an act of genius.

As the child approaches kaissa, a t'skrang's time of change, the old shivalahala's choice is once again in grave doubt. The royal servants are up in arms trying to pick up after an increasingly moody and contrary adolescent. The shivalahala is sleepwalking, talking to voices inside her head and throwing rages and temper tantrums with all the strength of an experienced wizard. Even worse, the leaders of House Syrtis are beginning to wonder what might happen if the shivalahala turns out to be male.

Two recent events may indicate that the current shivalahala has not escaped the madness that plagued her predecessors. The first occurred in 1507 TH, when King Varulus III traveled to the Cliff City to question the Prophetess about the future of his kingdom. The two conducted their audience in the strictest confidentiality, so no one but the Prophetess and Varulus himself knows the king's question or the shivalahala's reply. However, those close to the king and the shivalahala say that upon receiving the Prophetess's answer, Varulus flew into an uncharacteristic rage and left in great haste.

The second, more recent event occurred shortly after the Prophetess granted an audience to a group of travelers from the Pilgrimage Route. As the Prophetess sat in meditation after meeting with the last of the travelers, she suddenly cried out in anguish, shouting about impending doom. The shivalahala refused to speak clearly of the matter, but afterward she immediately sent a message to the obsidian merchant Omasu. The contents of the message remain unknown to all but Omasu and the shivalahala.

No game statistics are provided for the Shivalahala Syrtis because her immaturity, nascent madness, innate clairvoyant abilities and incomplete development make her virtually impossible to describe in game terms. However, if any character attempts to cast a spell in her immediate vicinity, reduce the character's Spellcasting step by 8. The shivalahala has a Spell Defense of 18.

HIERARCHY

House Syrtis is nominally ruled by its Triumvirate, which consists of the Shivalahala Syrtis, the chamberlain and the admiral. The latter two individuals are elected by the aropagoi's High Chamber, a legislative body composed of representatives from the house's seven noble nialls. The chamberlain holds the real power in the aropagoi, however, because he retains the power to levy taxes on each of the aropagoi's affiliated villages and nialls. He also prepares the budget for House Syrtis's communal concerns, which enables him to embezzle a portion of the annual taxes into his private coffers. The chamberlain also has the sole power to call for resolution votes in the High Chamber, which effectively means the chamber cannot act without his approval.

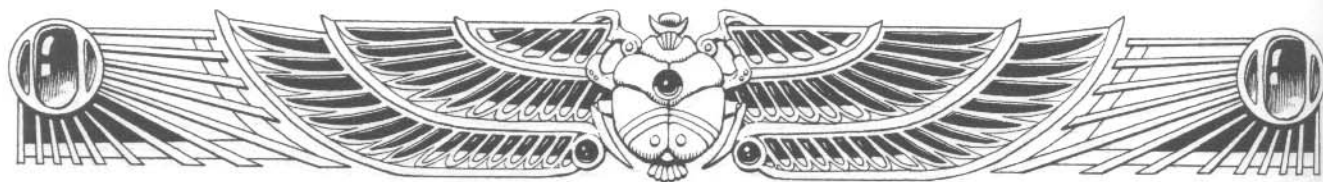
The admiral is charged with the difficult task of commanding the aropagoi's patchwork fleet of warships and maintaining peace among the ships' captains. The admiral cannot vote in the High Chamber, but the chamber cannot censure the admiral's conduct short of dismissing him and appointing a new one.

The shivalahala remains the spiritual leader of the aropagoi, but her governing powers are limited. She can advise the chamber and the other members of the Triumvirate and may cast votes in the chamber, but otherwise she has no special governing powers. Traditionally, the Shivalahala Syrtis does not bother to exercise her right to vote, preferring to exert her power through her influence among the common aropagoinya of House Syrtis. In any case, the High Chamber has made it clear that it judges the current shivalahala too young to exercise her voting rights. In truth, this judgment seems solely based on political considerations, as a Shivalahala Syrtis of any age possesses ancestral memories that make her far better qualified to guide the aropagoi than any chamber member.

The High Chamber consists of three representatives from each niall of the aropagoi. Unlike the nialls of most other aropagoi, the Syrtisian nialls are noble dynasties that trace their lineage back to the sons and daughters of Synopae and Syrtis. For most of its history, House Syrtis contained eight nialls: Wavram, Fenestral, Brabant, Dharm, Satya, Maratha, Sanessa and Toolika. A few years ago, however, the High Chamber stripped the Maratha niall of its status as a noble house and eliminated its chamber seats.

The leader of each noble Syrtisian niall bears the title of scion and retains the power to appoint his niall's chamber representatives from among the noble-born of his family. Although scions may appoint themselves to the High Chamber, most prefer to use their power of appointment as





a way to curry favor and build power within their own communities. Indeed, in some noble nialls a seat on the High Chamber is considered a sentence of exile, because local concerns are often more important to the Syrtis nobility than the issues confronting the aropagoi as a whole.

The Syrtisian Nobility

Because noble birth is a prerequisite for all government and military leadership positions in House Syrtis, a Syrtisian t'skrang's genealogy is a matter of grave importance. The t'skrang of House Syrtis recognize five ranks of nobility. The lowest, or fifth rank, consists of individuals of common birth who have married into the noble class. The fourth rank consists of the offspring of parents who have married into the noble class. The third rank consists of individuals who can trace their noble ancestry back two, three, four or five generations. The second rank of nobility can trace their noble ancestry back six to fifteen generations, and the first rank can trace their noble ancestry back sixteen to fifty generations. A nobleman or lady who marries a t'skrang of common blood immediately reduces his or her children's social standing to the fourth rank.

Traditionally, social rank is the sole qualification for leadership positions in House Syrtis. Niall scions are selected from niall members of the first noble rank. High Chamber representatives are selected from individuals possessing the second rank. Riverboat captains must be of at least the third rank, and riverboat officers must be of fifth rank or higher.

The importance of noble rank has led to several unique customs among House Syrtis's aristocracy. For example, Syrtisian noblewomen commonly maintain private hatcheries, because the use of common hatcheries prohibits one from confirming the lineage of one's offspring. Additionally, noble Syrtisian couples still arrange marriages for their offspring. (This custom once prevailed among t'skrang communities all over the Serpent River, until the corruption of the Scourge severely reduced the field of desirable mates.) In House Syrtis the practice continues, however, for one low-born mate can ruin a thousand years of careful breeding. The stakes are so high, in fact, that high-ranking Syrtisian nobles commonly seek out prospective mates for their children before the eggs have even been laid. Despite such precautions, the fickle nature of t'skrang fertility has left many a noble family devoid of heirs, leading to a burgeoning black market for t'skrang eggs of good pedigree—and a new class of “scholars” who specialize in confirming the genealogies of suspect eggs. (For the right price, one can purchase a genealogical chart for any occasion, whether it be to allay the suspicions of one's in-laws or effect the ruin of one's rival.)

Although the Syrtisian preoccupation with lineage has greatly enhanced the profits of the aropagoi's genealogists, many observers identify this preoccupation as the main cause of the aropagoi's declining fortunes. These t'skrang warn that centuries of inbreeding often produce feeble-minded individuals, and point to numerous examples among the upper levels of Syrtisian society to support their claims. For example, these observers often claim that the Maratha niall's disastrous defeat at Filen resulted directly from the leadership of the Maratha scion, a fine-looking thirty-year-old t'skrang with the mind and habits of a two-year-old hatchling.

The warnings of these t'skrang are not far from the truth. While several outstanding Syrtisian captains serve at Kaer Eidolon, in truth the glory of the captaincy is often reserved for braggarts and fools. Despite the lack of fertility that haunts every level of Syrtisian society, there always seems to be more than enough bluebloods around to wreck even the most promising situation.

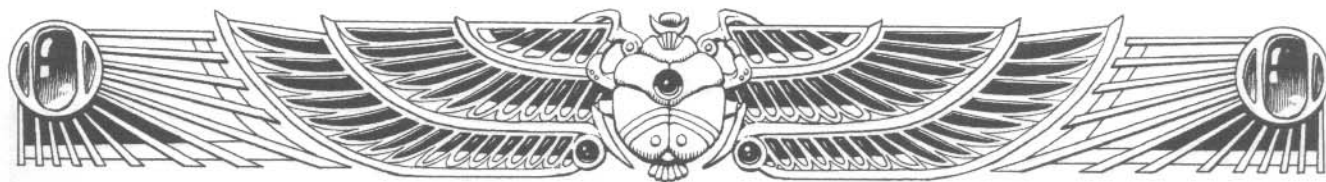
Apparently, the shivalahala of House Syrtis recognized such dangers long ago. In response, she instituted a custom designed to strengthen the aropagoi's pool of leaders by providing opportunities for common aropagoinya to “jump” the normal social order. She established the Order of the Dragon, a central foundation for House Syrtis. To gain membership in the order, an individual must earn the recommendations of three sponsors of the third noble rank or higher. Noble-born t'skrang can usually gain membership by soliciting recommendations from three near relatives. Common t'skrang can win recommendations by saving the lives or reputations of potential sponsors. New members immediately receive fourth-rank status and become eligible for all appropriate leadership positions. Additionally, they pass their noble status on to their offspring.

Once in the Order of the Dragon, common-born t'skrang can earn third-rank nobility for themselves and their descendants by winning an appointment to the Honor Guard of House Syrtis. The Honor Guard was established by Chamberlain T'kradio Dharm when he realized that the Ishkaratans could easily destroy the Syrtisian fleet unless he expanded House Syrtis's pool of talented captains. To this day, the chamberlain hand-picks every member of the Honor Guard.

Although these measures have noticeably improved the quality of Syrtisian leadership, the rise of common-born aropagoinya has fostered resentment among House Syrtis's noble nialls in recent years. As a result, fewer and fewer nobles are willing to sponsor candidates for membership in the Order of the Dragon.

House Syrtis's fortunes have also been crippled by





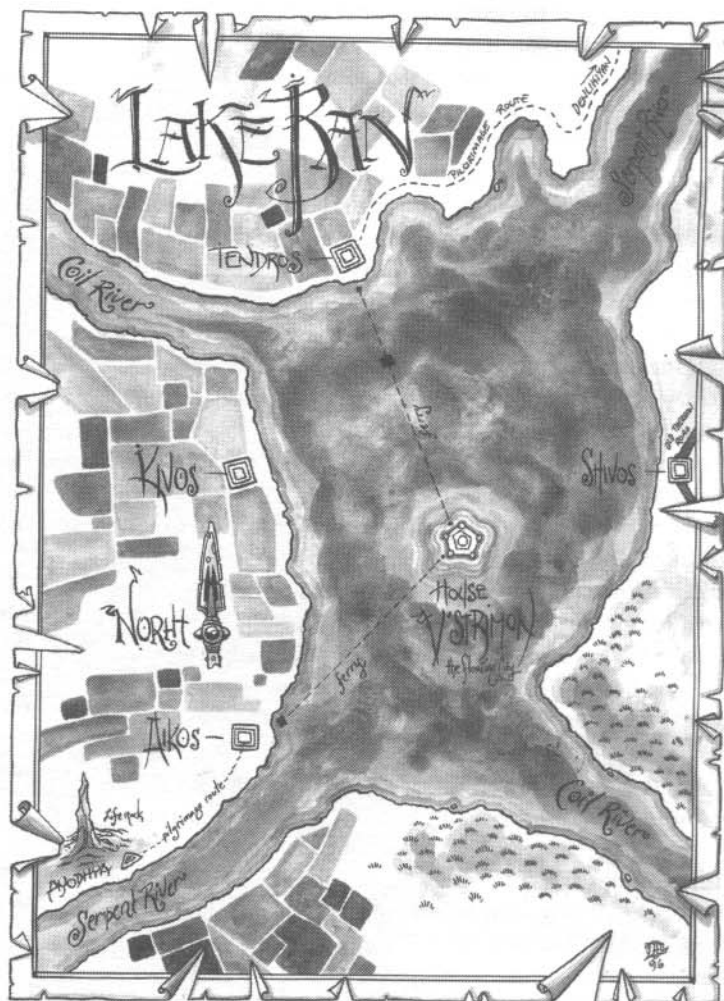
the fierce rivalries within and between the aropagoi's seven nialls. Typically, each niall controls a central village and several vassal villages. The niall exerts control over its vassal villages via councilors, who are appointed by the scion of the niall. Depending on the inclinations of the niall, its councilors may perform the duties of ambassadors, advisors or spies. The nialls of Fenestral and Brabant are infamous for their ruthless councilors, who often engage openly in bribery and blackmail. The Sanassa niall, by contrast, appoints no councilors at all. Instead, it invites its vassal villages to send representatives to advise its scion. Meanwhile, each vassal village may contain several nobles seeking to propel themselves into positions of power—usually at the expense of their niall brothers and sisters.

Rivalries between the nialls may go back generations. The niall scions constantly scheme to expand their spheres of influence by wresting control of a rival niall's villages. And every time a village changes hands, it must pay taxes to its new rulers. Of course, if a vassal village finds itself back under the control of a former ruler, it can expect to pay punitive penalties in cash and kind. Niall riverboats also exact bakshevas from riverboats of rival nialls, even though they honor the Free Trade Compact when dealing with other vessels. This practice often enables a niall to pay its annual tribute to the aropagoi's central foundation with money and goods exacted from its rivals.

GOALS

Since the end of the Scourge, House Ishkarat, the aropagoi that rules the North Reach of the Serpent River, has steadily expanded its sphere of control east along the river toward the Blood Wood. The Ishkaratans apparently aim to seize control of the junction of the Mothingale River and the Serpent and with it, control of the lucrative Blood Wood trade. In the process of conquest, the Ishkaratans have taken control of numerous river settlements previously beholden to House Syrtis. Therefore, it is not surprising that in recent years the primary goal of House Syrtis has been to check House Ishkarat's expanding power.

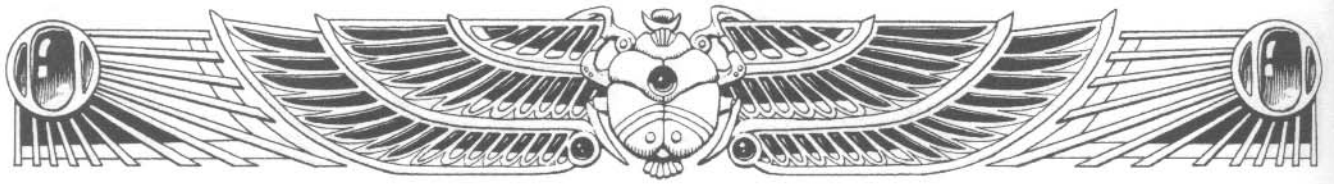
The best means of achieving that end, however, has been the subject of fierce debate among the contentious political factions of House Syrtis. So far, the aropagoi has adopted the strategies of the so-called Blue faction, named for the blue ribbons worn by its supporters. The Blues long argued for Syrtisian unity in face of the Ishkaratan threat and counseled alliances with the Elven Court and House



V'strimon to bolster House Syrtis's weak war fleet. Those alliances resulted in the construction of a joint elven-Syrtisian fortress at Kaer Eidolon at the confluence of the Mothingale and Serpent Rivers and the loan of a squadron of V'strimon riverboats—both of which proved instrumental in the Syrtisian victory over the Ishkaratans at the Battle of Sejanus in 1502 TH.

At present, the Syrtisian forces at Eidolon are augmented by a full regiment of the Queen's Guard—approximately 150 elven soldiers, who are replaced with fresh troops every three months. The fortress also serves as a base for joint elven/Syrtisian river patrols. Typical patrols consist of two riverboats, each manned by a crew of twenty. Although tensions run a bit high between the elven and t'skrang troops involved in the joint defensive arrangement, no serious incidents have occurred so far. Additionally, elven and Syrtisian leaders have taken a





number of steps to promote cooperation between their troops, and Syrtisian leaders are currently contemplating the Elven Queen's suggestion that command of the fortress alternate every six months between a representative of House Syrtis and a warder from the Elven Court.

While Eidolon is by no means impregnable and has not stopped disguised Ishkarat riverboats from slipping downriver, the joint elven/Syrtisian enterprise has effectively prevented the Ishkaratans and their allies, the Denairastas of Iopos, from expanding their spheres of influence east of the Mothingale. Perhaps equally important, the success of the forces at Eidolon and the Syrtisian victory at the Battle of Sejanus have greatly strengthened the Blues' status in internal Syrtisian politics. Shaído of the Wavram niall, the Blues supporter who led the victorious forces in the battle, later was selected chamberlain of House Syrtis largely on popularity gained from his victory. Additionally, the Blues have garnered support for their policies from the aropagoi's Green faction, which advocates closer ties with House V'strimon and Throal and seeks to reform House Syrtis's rigid caste system.

The nascent Blue/Green alliance, however, has triggered opposition from the so-called Silver faction. The Silvers, led by members of the Fenestral and Brabant nialls, advocate alignment with the Theran Empire as a means of regaining the aropagoi's lost influence. Although most Syrtisian aropagoinya do not dispute the success of the Blue faction's policies, some are attracted to the Silvers' proposals simply as a means of showing contempt for Throal, which has remained aloof to the plight of House Syrtis. In view of House Syrtis's neutrality during the Theran War, King Varulus III apparently sees little reason to aid House Syrtis during its hour of need.

Although House Syrtis currently seems to enjoy a fruitful alliance with the Elven Court and has received help from House V'strimon in its battle against the Ishkaratans, most foreign powers remain understandably cautious about allying themselves with House Syrtis. The contentious nialls of the aropagoi have been known to produce abrupt shifts in House Syrtis's policies in the past, and few foreign leaders are eager to stake the security of their people or their own political futures on alliances with the Syrtisians.

Furthermore, fears of Syrtisian instability have been generously fueled in recent months by the appearance of a fourth faction in the Cliff City, the so-called Golds. Traditionally, the representatives of House Syrtis's High Chamber have employed hundreds of servants from the aropagoi's lower classes. As Syrtisian politics have grown increasingly adversarial, however, many chamber represen-

tatives have begun to replace their native servants with t'skrang from their own villages. As a result, the number of unemployed residents in the Cliff City's lower levels has grown rapidly. Coincidentally, the city's lower levels are also home to the disenfranchised refugees from the former Maratha niall. The Marathans recognized the similarities between their plight and that of the newly unemployed very quickly, and formed the Gold faction as a means of exploiting the growing discontent of these citizens and regaining some of their own power. Currently, the leaders of the Golds are demanding seats in the High Chamber so that they might "represent the interests of the city's disenfranchised and unaffiliated residents." According to rumors, some faction members have even begun attempts to arm their constituents, leading to talk of rebellion and revolution.

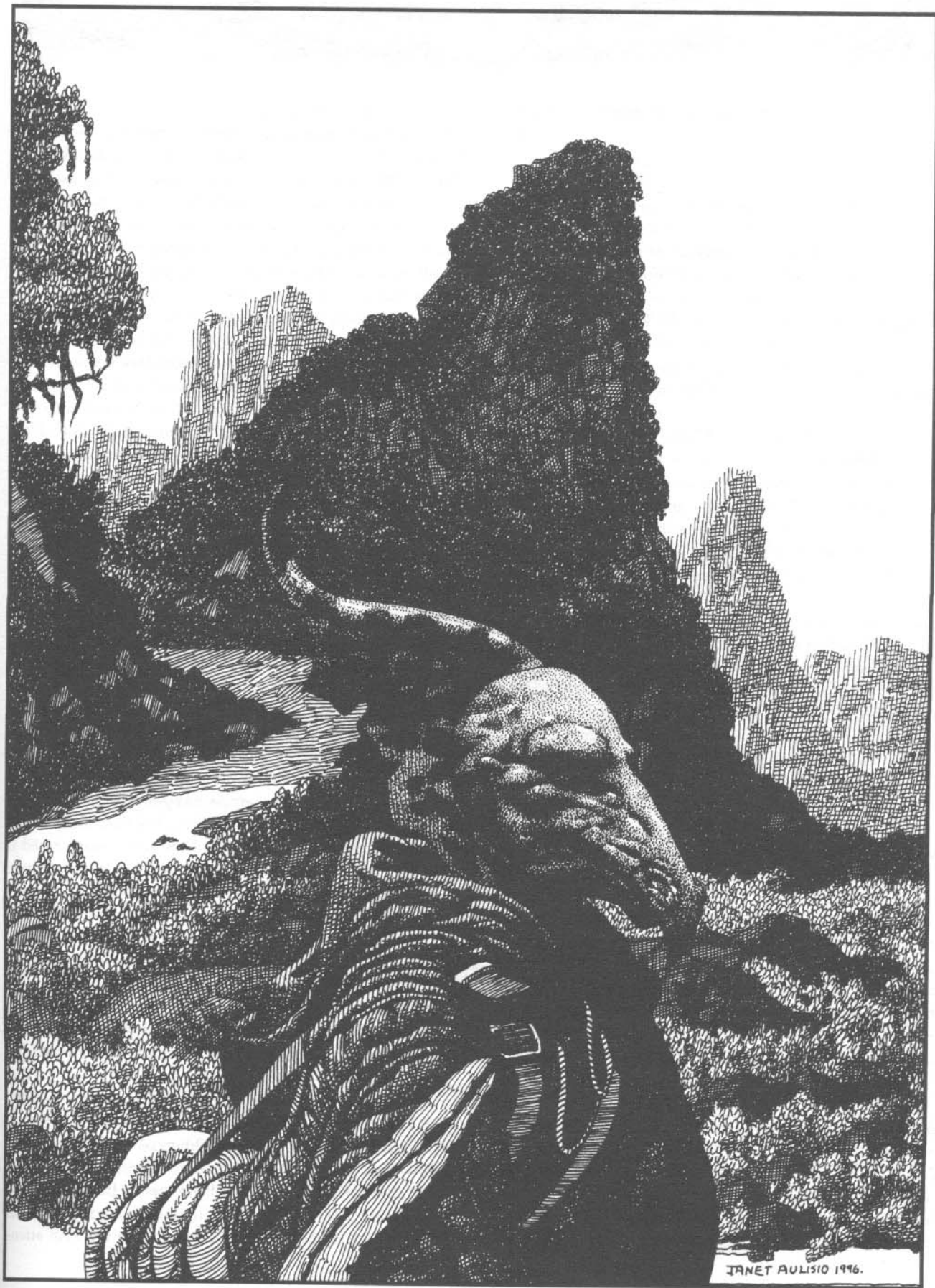
THE PILGRIMAGE ROUTE

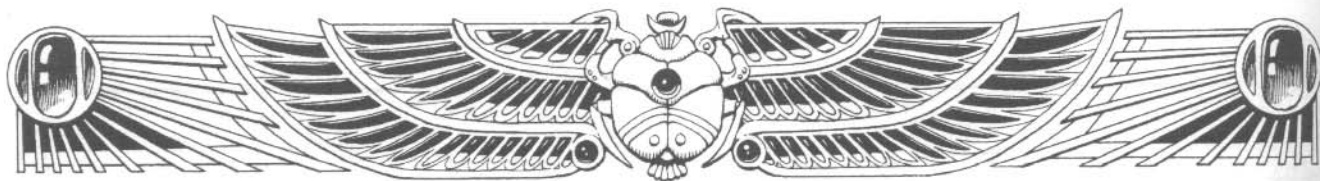
For millennia t'skrang from all over Barsaive have traveled to the Mid Reach to walk the Pilgrimage Route, which stretches from Ayodhya to the Cliff City of House Syrtis. The ancient footpath runs close by the Serpent River for fifteen days' journey and passes through some of the most revered t'skrang sacred sites. On nights of the full moon, it is said that the path's smooth white paving stones glow with a soft light.

T'skrang say that those who tread the white stones walk a path of purity and communion with the Passions, and observations of magicians who have visited the path seem to support that contention. The route passes several places that were warped or corrupted by Horrors, but even in such areas the path itself remains safe ground where magicians can cast raw magic without risking the usual dangers.

The pilgrimage begins at the hill of Ayodhya, which rises more than 500 feet from the plains southwest of Lake Ban and dominates the surrounding landscape for miles. According to t'skrang legend, the Old Man of the Nets ordered his children to carry his chair to Ayodhya and build his funeral pyre atop the hill when he knew his time had come to die. (*Ayodhya* literally translates as *spirit chair*.) When they had finished doing as their father had asked, the Old Man's children turned to him for guidance, but found he had died while they worked. They placed his body and chair in the middle of the pyre and set the wood ablaze. Although the Old Man's body burned to ash in the flames, his wooden chair resisted the fire. The children then carried the chair back to the Island of Reeds in Lake Ban and set it at the foot of the table in their niall's dining hall. On certain days of the year, the Old Man's spirit appears in the chair during the evening meal, dispensing wisdom and retelling the tales of his many adventures. To this day many t'skrang







nials set aside a chair for the niall's ancestral spirits, should they decide to visit.

Interestingly, obsidimen also revere Ayodhya. Obsidiman pilgrims often climb the spiraling path up the hill to a Liferock located at its top. The Liferock is home to a brotherhood whose members include the merchant Omasu (see p. 30, **Barsaive Gamemaster Book**). Why the obsidimen venerate the hill remains unknown.

A small shrine to the spirit of the Earth, Shivos, marks the beginning of the t'skrang Pilgrimage Route at the base of the Liferock. The path then winds down the hill's steep slopes to the river's edge and follows the Serpent's contour to a shrine to the Old Man of the Nets on the south shore of Lake Ban. From there, pilgrims board a small, oar-driven ferry that carries them to the Floating City of House V'strimon. Typically, pilgrims spend a day visiting each of the towers of the city, then board another ferry that takes them to the mouth of the Coil River on the northwest shore of the lake. There, on the sandy white shoreline, lies a massive flat black rock that contains a fossilized impression resembling a grossly oversized t'skrang footprint. According to t'skrang legend, the footprint was made by Shivoam, the dragon-spirit of the Serpent River, when she came to her husband's marriage bed for the very first time.

From Shivoam's Footprint, the path heads north along the lake shore, then closely follows the contours of the Serpent River. Along this stretch, pilgrims commonly pass travelers on a dwarf caravan road that runs parallel to the pilgrims' path. In several places, only a few yards separate the two routes. The two routes never intersect, however, for the dwarfs took great care not to cross the sacred t'skrang path when they built their caravan road (even when doing so required impressive feats of engineering).

On the fifth day of the journey, the path enters a stand of trees called the Grove of Memory. Those who pass through the grove receive visions of the past. Adepts have discovered that by carrying a magical item through the grove, one can occasionally receive insights into one of the item's key knowledges. Several years ago a wizard Named Talmagore attempted to turn this little-known fact to his own gain. He set up a stall just outside the Grove of Memory and promised customers that he could penetrate the deepest mystery of any magic item by carrying it into the trees. He enjoyed considerable success for his first two years in business, realizing enough profit to replace his ramshackle stall with a beautiful house. Then one day he walked into the grove and never returned. Talmagore's house is now tended by his faithful servant, Grimaud. Grimaud offers bed and board to all pilgrims but refuses to set foot inside the grove for any reason.

A few days north of the Grove of Memory lies the river village of Kralipur. Kralipur is home to the Sacred Flame, which has been vigilantly guarded by the independent Unnao niall and its lahala for centuries. The source of the ever-burning flame is said to be a scale from the carapace of the Dragon of the Sun, T'schlome. Pilgrims write prayers on reed paper, then toss them in the flame. The resulting ashes reputedly act as charms powerful enough to ward off the undead and lesser Horrors.

As the path enters the Throal Mountains, it passes through a cave where an ancient sculptor has carved the images of the Four Founders, the legendary great dragons that created heaven and earth. The images of Shivoam, T'schlome, Shivos and Syrtis, each as large as life, are carved in bas relief into the walls of the cavern. Legend has it that the eyes of these carvings were immense opals, each the size of dinner plate, but thieves stole them long ago. The legends go on to say that when a worthy pilgrim passes under the gaze of the Four Founders, the spirits of the first dragons will bestow a special gift of strength on him or her. Since the opening of the kaers, however, no pilgrim has ever reported receiving such a gift.

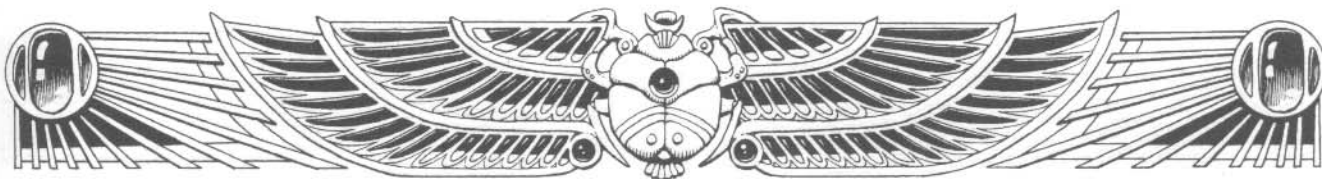
Deep in the mountains, the path reaches the Pool of Floranuus. The waters of this spring collect in a deep pool, and the bright red sand at the bottom of it gives the water the appearance of freshly spilled blood. Pilgrims dive into the pool to grab a handful of this sand, for it is said a pouch of this sand placed under one's pillow protects against nightmares of all kinds.

Farther north, the path enters the Canyon of a Thousand Voices. This narrow canyon acts as a natural amplification and echo chamber. A single shout may bounce between the canyon's sheer stone walls until it becomes nearly a thousand times louder. Occasionally, a pilgrim who cries out a question will hear a second voice giving him an answer amid the echoes of his own voice.

As the path nears Lalai Gorge, it crosses over the Alidar River on a natural stone bridge. The rock formation, which arches several hundred feet above the river, is wide enough for only one person to cross at a time. Tradition states that while crossing this bridge, a pilgrim will confront a vision of his greatest fear, which he must overcome to get to the other side.

The Pilgrimage Route ends at the Pinnacle Gate of the Cliff City. From the Pinnacle Gate, the pilgrim can take in a breathtaking view of the wide ribbon of the Serpent River below him, the Caucavic Mountains across the gorge and the highest peaks of the Throal Mountains behind him. At the Pinnacle Gate, House Syrtis maintains a large shrine to Shivoam, the dragon-spirit of the Serpent River. An atten-





dant at the shrine greets every pilgrim with gifts of food and an offer of shelter. Additionally, any pilgrim who can show he has visited each of the sacred places on the path receives a silver medallion bearing the sign of the Dragon of the Moon.

The attendant then arranges private audiences with the Shivalahala Syrtis for all pilgrims who have completed the path. Those individuals are escorted to a special audience chamber deep inside the Cliff City. The high ceiling of the chamber contains numerous openings that channel cascades of water from the Serpent, which collects in basins on the chamber's floor. Within this web of waterfalls, the shivalahala awaits the traveler. She speaks the pilgrim's name and blesses his journey. The pilgrim may then ask one question of the shivalahala, which she must answer if she can divine a true reply. Very few questions have ever gone unanswered, and no answers have ever been false—although quite often the shivalahala's replies are maddeningly obscure.

This practice inspired the popular troubadour's tale of Loloish of Framling. According to the tale, Loloish was a common-born t'skrang who fell desperately in love with the Shivalahala Syrtis. In an effort to prove himself worthy of the shivalahala's love, Loloish worked his way through the ranks of the aropagoi until he became captain of a riverboat. He dedicated his life and his crew to the service of the shivalahala, and eventually his name became known to her. He revealed his heart to the shivalahala on many occasions, but she would make no answer one way or another. After much introspection, he disguised himself as a pilgrim and set out on the Pilgrimage Route. When he completed the journey, he asked his one question of the shivalahala: "Shivalahala of the Moon, dost thou love me as I love thee?" Forced to reveal the truth, the shivalahala revealed her love for Loloish, and the two lived ever after in the trust of one another's souls.

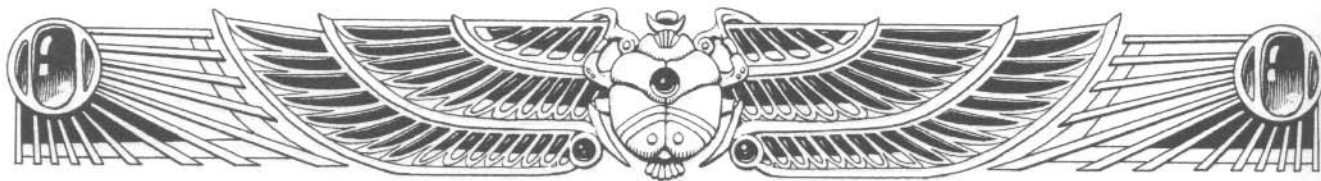
SETTLEMENTS OF THE MID REACH

South of the Cliff City and north of Lake Ban, the Serpent enters the foothills of the Throal Mountains. The isolated pastures of this region are ideal for raising sheep and goats, and fields of green tea and some of Barsaive's most renowned vineyards flourish in the deep, rich topsoil. The region's natural bounty has attracted elven, dwarf, human and t'skrang settlers, who live in small villages and terraced farms perched along the Serpent's steep banks and the surrounding hills. These Name-givers live side by side in mutual tolerance and abide by the laws and customs of Throal, but they pledge allegiance to none of Barsaive's major powers.

The village of Denlikiyan, one of the wealthiest river settlements in Barsaive, lies along this stretch of the Serpent. The hero Shen Denlikiyan, chief engineer and advisor to the Syrtisian nials during the War Against the Elves, claims a prominent place in t'skrang legends and his descendants take great pride in their heritage. The shipyards of Denlikiyan are among Barsaive's finest, and the village's engineers are responsible for the innovations that led to the creation of the renowned shi-moram riverboat design. Indeed, Denlikiyan's yards represent most of the handful of yards that can build a fire engine—and thus, a complete riverboat—from scratch. Rumor has it that after nearly a century of shipbuilding, Denlikiyan now sits on top of one of the largest stashes of gold coin in all of Barsaive.

During the past ten years, the village's expert shipwrights and rumored wealth have attracted numerous well-organized raids, including two staged by Henghyokian pirate vessels, one staged by an Ishkaratan raider masquerading as a crippled V'strimonian riverboat, and four times by adventuring bands of adepts—one of which claimed to have been in the pay of King Varulus III. So far, however, the village has successfully resisted all attempts to wrest away its secrets and gold.





Just south of the confluence of the Onman and the Serpent Rivers lies the town of Tansiarda, home of a consortium of dwarf engineers and magicians embarked on one of the most ambitious endeavors in Barsaive's history—to bridge the Serpent River. The Old Theran Road to Parlainth runs through the town, and a well-traveled dwarf caravan route passes near the river bank opposite Tansiarda. Additionally, the town lies close to a set of abandoned t'skrang village towers, which the dwarfs plan to use as piers to support their bridge. Although the plan seems technically feasible, it has aroused the ire of House Syrtis's Wavram niall, which is based in the area. Tensions have been running high between Tansiarda's dwarfs and the t'skrang of nearby villages.

As the river flows northwest of the Lalai Gorge, settlements grow increasingly sparse and better fortified. Although many maintain docks, most are set hundreds of yards back from the river's banks. Here, pioneer farms give way to communal settlements, whose inhabitants tend common fields by day and retreat to homes protected by thick walls as night falls. Most of these settlers are survivors from kaers in the Caucavic foothills who have come to the water's edge to escape the highland raiders; they live mainly by trade with passing riverboats. The southern banks of the river are also home to dwarf mining camps, full of prospectors who pan the river's water for the precious minerals that wash down from the nearby mountains.

In these parts, danger may come from any direction—the hills, the woods, the river, even from neighboring towns. The highland raiders of the nearby Throal and Caucavic Mountains, some of the most savage and desperate folk in all of Barsaive, are particularly feared. These primitive bands of humans, dwarfs and orks strike with weapons of stone and bone, but the ferocity of their attacks more than compensates for their unsophisticated arsenals. Typically, a highland raiding band tries to kill every able-bodied defender, then carries off a village's food supplies and remaining inhabitants before torching the settlement's huts. Most settlers believe that the raiders use their unfortunate captives as slaves, but some suspect that the raiders worship the Horrors and sacrifice their prisoners to these evil entities.

After a riverboat of human raiders struck at several villages in the past few months, settlers have also begun to watch the river with increased vigilance. No one has been able to identify the riverboat by name, however, and none of the crew covenants of the Mid Reach have reported any of their boats missing. The dwarfs of the region have expressed surprise at the lack of response by the Syrtisian t'skrang, but the t'skrang seem to believe that they are the

only Name-givers capable of maintaining a fire engine for more than a few months. They contend that the human raiders will eventually run out of fire or run aground and have to abandon their riverboat.

Given these dangers, it should come as no surprise that the inhabitants of the region view all strangers as potential threats.

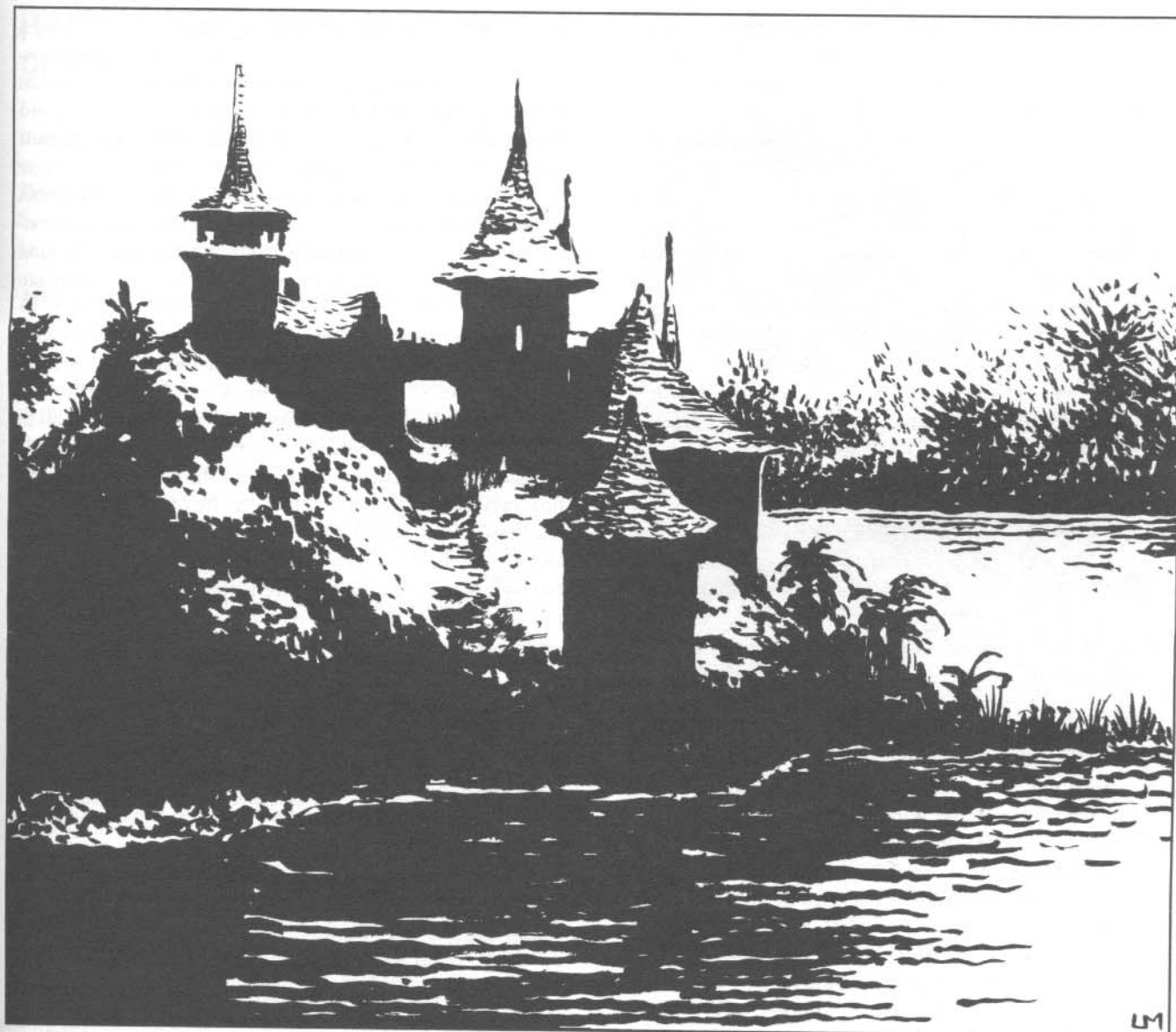
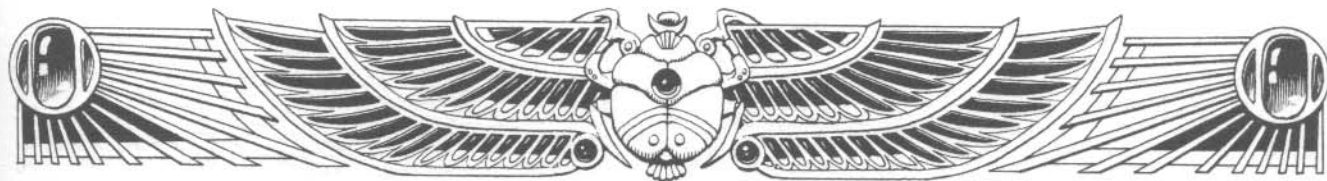
THE RIVER MOTHINGALE

The River Mothingale and its tributary, the Lesser Mothingale, have connected the elven civilization of the Blood Wood with the Serpent River system since the dawn of Name-giver history. In ancient times, elven trading ships plied the Mothingale and Serpent Rivers and even ventured out into the Aras Sea. As t'skrang power grew along the Serpent, tensions between the elves and the t'skrang inevitably increased, culminating in open warfare between the two Name-giver races, as commemorated in the t'skrang legends of the War Against the Elves (see *House Syrtis*, p. 62, for more information). As elven power waned, the elven fleet slowly shrank. However, elven vessels remained a common sight along Barsaive's rivers until the Elven Queen Alachia's decision to isolate her kingdom from the rest of Barsaive. At that time, the Queen ordered her subjects to destroy all remaining elven ships. Now, Masae Seorach and his *Mallornica* (*The Coil River*, p. 60), and the ruined shipyard at the southern edge of the Blood Wood remain the only traces of the elven kingdom's once proud fleet.

The ruins, located along the Mothingale, are all that remain of an ancient shipyard unlike any other in Barsaive. The elves abandoned the yard and destroyed all of its magical devices when their Queen ordered the destruction of the elven fleet. Explorers who have visited the ruins say an atmosphere of loss and sorrow hangs over them, as if something vital to the elven race was destroyed along with the docks and equipment.

As the Mothingale exits the Blood Wood and flows toward the Serpent River, it passes through rough steppes and withered highlands. The Mothingale runs swift here, but remains navigable. Its banks are desolate and uninhabited, and the stretch of river contains little of interest to travelers save for an ancient obelisk that rises some eighty feet from the middle of the river about seventy miles north of the confluence of the Mothingale and Serpent Rivers. The downstream face of the obelisk is covered with carved t'skrang pictographs, and its upstream side bears an inscription in archaic Sperethiel. Scholars who have translated the elven script say it describes a peace treaty





between the Queen of the Wurm Wood and the Shivalahala Syrtis, and identifies the obelisk as a marker that indicates the boundary beyond which no t'skrang riverboat may trespass. Many t'skrang who have journeyed to the site believe the obelisk is historical evidence of the legendary War Against the Elves.

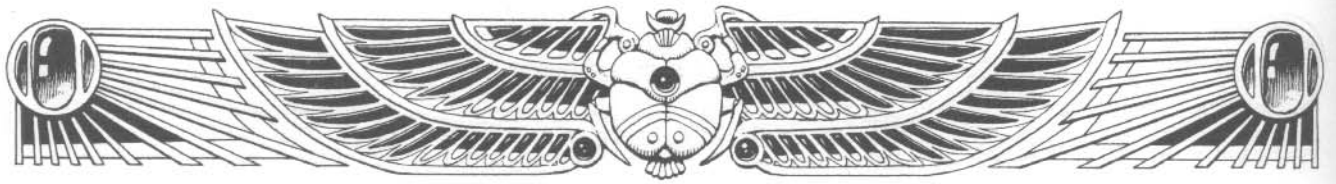
KAER EIDOLON

At the confluence of the Mothingale and Serpent Rivers lies Kaer Eidolon, a site of great historical and strategic importance in northern Barsaive. Originally, the site was occupied by a small group of elven exiles who fled the

Wurm Wood shortly before Queen Alachia instituted the Ritual of the Thorns. The Elven Court kept no record of these mysterious individuals, but their story is truly remarkable. Judging by the archaeological evidence, the group traveled nearly four days from the Wurm Wood to reach the site, transporting all the supplies they would need to erect a kaer, and then somehow completed two-thirds of their kaer before finally succumbing to Horrors. Appropriately enough, the first explorers of the Blood Wood region named the site *eidolon*, the elven word for phantom.

Nearly a century later, Kaer Eidolon became the site of the first elven military installation constructed outside the





Blood Wood in modern times. Some observers even claim that the fort at Eidolon, the result of an elven-Syrtisian alliance, may herald the end of the Elven Court's long, self-imposed isolation.

The origins of the fort can be traced back approximately ten years, when emissaries from House Syrtis arrived at the Elven Court bearing a proposal from the Syrtisian High Chamber. In that proposal, the Syrtisian leaders suggested that the elves and t'skrang of House Syrtis set aside their historical animosities and join in a defensive pact to check the expansion of House Ishkarat. At that time, the Ishkaratans had recently seized the headquarters of a Syrtisian niall based at Lake Vors and had begun taking control of Serpent River villages east of the lake, causing great concern in the Syrtisian High Chamber. Certain Syrtisian leaders concluded that the Ishkaratans intended to seize control of the Mothingale and Serpent confluence, and they correctly judged that the elves of the Blood Wood would be greatly disturbed by such a prospect.

The Elven Queen, fearing that the River Mothingale would provide an ideal springboard for an Ishkaratan invasion of the Blood Wood, quickly sent a reply expressing her interest in the proposal. Within weeks, elven and Syrtisian military engineers had begun to lay the foundations of a new fortress on the walls of the abandoned kaer.

The unique fortifications at Kaer Eidolon reflect a marriage of t'skrang and elven architecture. The fort's stone and earthen ramparts are reinforced with wood and vine, and the fort was outfitted with such marvels of engineering as a system of retractable piers that can be pulled out of the water in the event of an amphibious assault and special fire cannons that can strike at enemies up to seven hundred yards away.

The troops stationed at the fort, an unprecedented mix of Syrtisian and elven soldiers, also reflect the unique nature of this joint venture. Kaer Eidolon's elven troops primarily consist of elves born outside the Blood Wood, who journeyed to the Elven Court to see for themselves the corruption of the Ritual of the Thorns and to draw their own conclusions about the Elven Schism. Apparently, Queen Alachia chose to station such cultural pilgrims at the kaer to minimize the chance that their influence might disrupt the status quo in the Blood Wood.

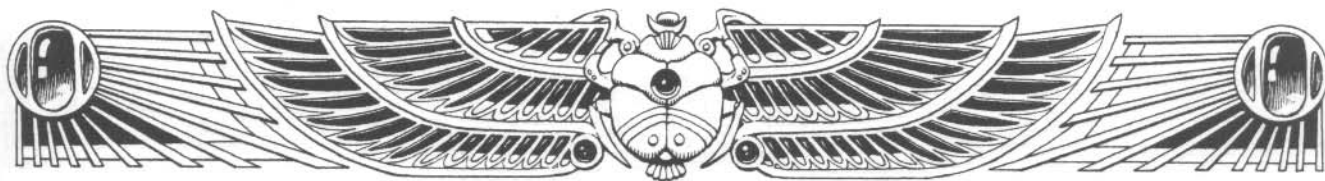
The joint venture proved its worth in 1502 TH when a Syrtisian fleet, backed by Kaer Eidolon's impressive fortifications and river patrols, soundly defeated an Ishkaratan force at the Battle of Sejanus. Since that time, House Ishkarat's warships have restricted their activities to Lake Vors and the Serpent River west of the lake.

Additionally, the project has provided unforeseen benefits to both the elves and Syrtisians. A genuine camaraderie has developed between the t'skrang and elven troops, particularly the elves from outside the Blood Wood, which has done much to break down the distrust and animosity that has separated the two Name-giver races for centuries. The fort has also provided the Syrtisian military with an excellent place to train the new common-born officers it so desperately needs to bolster its command ranks, which still contain many feeble-minded Syrtisian noblemen.

In recent years, however, the rose that blooms in Kaer Eidolon has begun to show thorns as well. The rivalries between the Syrtisian nialls burn brightly within the t'skrang ranks, and the rivalries lead to serious incidents at times. Mock battles between the riverboats of rival nialls occasionally produce casualties, and the constant competition between officers from rival nialls often hampers the readiness of the t'skrang forces. Understandably, several of Queen Alachia's officers have grown disenchanted with the Syrtisian command of the fortress and have begun pushing for a rotation that would put Kaer Eidolon under elven command for part of each year. Additionally, many of the fort's elven troops choose not to renew their commissions. As a result, replacement troops arrive almost daily, severely reducing the effectiveness of those troops. Finally, all of these various tensions have been exacerbated by the lack of Ishkaratan attacks in recent years, a phenomenon that has made the elves' and t'skrang's common enemy seem increasingly remote.

Kaer Eidolon has also become the center of a black market that shuttles goods between the Blood Wood and House Syrtis. Although Queen Alachia's long-standing edicts expressly prohibit all nonessential contact between her elves and outsiders, the t'skrang have always associated the word "forbidden" with "profitable." The fraternization of elven and t'skrang troops, combined with the elven regiment's rotating roster, have provided an irresistible opportunity for black marketeers. The t'skrang have even found the perfect cover for their secret operations—the t'skrang tradition of *tessesta*, exchanging gifts with departing comrades-in-arms. Typically, the fort's t'skrang troops begin planning their *tessesta* months before their elven colleagues depart for the Blood Wood, so that they can realize the most profit from their chance to trade t'skrang goods for elven ones. Such trade has become so lucrative that many t'skrang officers engage in the practice themselves or accept bribes from their troops in exchange for their silence on the matter.





NOTABLE SHIPS AND CAPTAINS OF THE MID REACH

The Mid Reach is home to several ships and captains that deserve special attention. These include the *Breeton II*, captained by Aemilius Vellunium; the Syrtisian *Dreadnought*; and the *Mistral*, captained by Belit Shustal Syrtis. For explanations of the ship statistics used in the ship profiles, see *Ship Statistics*, p. 90.

AEMIILIUS VELLUNIUM, CAPTAIN OF THE *BREETON II*

With scales of silver and a heart of gold, Aemilius of the independent village of Vellunium has a reputation all along the Serpent as the friend of the needy and the bane of injustice. Son of the renowned Captain Patrochian, Aemilius carries on his mother's tradition of accepting missions on the behalf of those whom fate and fortune have abandoned. He is a swordmaster and boatman adept, which makes him a dangerous enemy on land or water. Wherever he goes, people know him by name and reputation as a fair and honest man. His crew consists of the sailors who served with his mother, along with their now-grown offspring.

Aemilius is the epitome of the classic t'skrang adventurer hero—he can bring home a profit through trade, fight off a pirate attack, mop the floor with a Horror construct, and cut a dashing figure at the same time. He is an approachable hero to whom ordinary people bring their problems, and his fierce brand of t'skrang bravado revels in glory. He has achieved Circle 8 as a boatman and Circle 6 as a swordmaster.

The original *Breeton* was lost in an unusual crew mutiny shortly before the start of the Theran War. Captain Patrochian was famous for her support of free trade, opposition to slavery and sympathy for the Throalic cause. At the time, the village of Vellunium was a vassal to the powerful pro-Theran Brabant niall, however, and the niall leaders conspired to fill the *Breeton's* crew with pro-Theran agents. On the way to a rendezvous with Throalic emissaries, the crew mutinied. Rather than allow the crew to use the *Breeton's* guns to sink the ship containing the dwarf ambassadors, Patrochian blew a hole in the *Breeton's* hull and sent it to the bottom of the Serpent River.

When Patrochian returned to Vellunium, she persuaded her village to declare its independence from the Brabant niall and the Syrtisian aropagoi. When King Varulus III heard the story of the *Breeton*, he immediately compensated Vellunium for its loss. The villagers went back to the site of the sinking, but could only salvage the *Breeton's* fire engine. With King



Varulus's money, however, the villagers built the *Breeton II*. Patrochian herself did not survive to captain the new ship; she was killed by a Brabantian assassin.

The *Breeton II* is a standard t'skrang merchantman armed with 17/17 firepower, which reduces its cargo allowance to 216. The crew consists of forty or so seasoned sailors and ten adepts from various Disciplines, ranging in Circle from 3 to 6.

AEMIILIUS VELLUNIUM

DEX: 7 STR: 6 TOU: 6
PER: 6 WIL: 6 CHA: 7

BREETON II

Speed: 7
Maneuverability: 7
Firepower: 17/17
Hull

Armor: 15
Ramming: 25
Cargo: 216

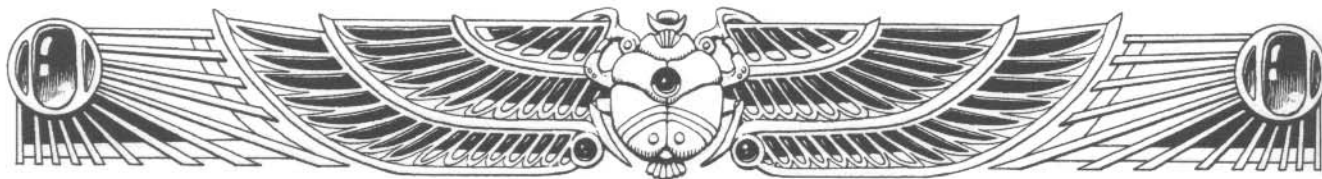
Damage

Critical: 18
Derelict: 63
Destroyed: 70

Crew

Captain: 8 (14) Crew Skill: 3
Crew Size: 50 Crew Rating: 16
Morale: 65





SYRTISIAN DREADNOUGHT

The origins of the Syrtisian *Dreadnought* can be traced back to House Syrtis's Prince Kalieston, the questor of Upandal who first dreamed of building the largest riverboat ever constructed, one the size of a kila. Most Name-givers recognized the folly of the proposal immediately but expressed little surprise, as many questors of Upandal seem to be "a few bricks shy of a load" (as the saying goes). Few people, however, expected the Syrtisian High Chamber to seriously consider the prince's idea, let alone commission the vessel's construction. Apparently, several influential chamber members decided that a giant riverboat would be just the thing to restore House Syrtis's waning prestige among Barsaive's political powers, and so they persuaded their colleagues to provide money to build the ship.

In later years, the project seemed to take on a life of its own. Several chamber members tried to stop it at different times, but in each instance a majority of the chamber members overruled them. Apparently, many prominent aropagoinya had grown wealthy after being awarded contracts to work on the project. Many chamber members also feared that stopping the project meant implicitly admitting that they had been wasting the aropagoi's money all along. And so work continued.

Finally, after twenty years and several cost overruns, Prince Kalieston unveiled the finished *Dreadnought*. The massive vessel proved an immediate success. Six hundred feet long, two hundred and fifty feet wide, with eight decks, three paddle wheels and four separate fire engines, the ship's size alone left most onlookers awestruck. When the *Dreadnought* reached unprecedented speeds of more than thirty-five miles an hour during its maiden voyage, the experts declared Prince Kalieston a genius. The prince, however, was entirely dissatisfied with the *Dreadnought's* performance. Vowing that the vessel could move even faster, he set to work retuning the fire engines. The next day, one of the fire engines exploded as Kalieston worked on it, and the prince died.

The engineers of Syrtis replaced the engine and repaired the damage, but they have never been able to duplicate Prince Kalieston's precise tuning of the *Dreadnought's* three paddlewheels. Some say that only a questor of Upandal in the rapturous throes of the Passion could perform this task, but even other questors have failed to duplicate Kalieston's feat. As a result, the *Dreadnought* is no faster than a war galley and even less maneuverable. Furthermore, the rebuilt *Dreadnought* consumes an enormous quantity of elemental fire. The vessel's elemental fire consumption is so high, in fact, that it prevents the Syrtisians from moving the vessel more than a few miles, much less

the hundreds of miles to Kaer Eidolon and the Ishkarat enemy. The *Dreadnought* remains an impressive gun platform, thanks to its powerful fire cannons, but the massive riverboat seems destined to languish at anchor just outside the Doors of Shivos until Syrtisian engineers can solve its fire engine problems.

THE DREADNOUGHT

Speed: 5

Maneuverability: 5

Firepower: 20/25

Hull

Armor: 20

Ramming: 30

Cargo: 100

Damage

Critical: 22

Derelict: 85

Destroyed: 92

Crew

Captain: 4

Crew Size: 400

Crew Skill: 1

Crew Rating: 19

Morale: 75

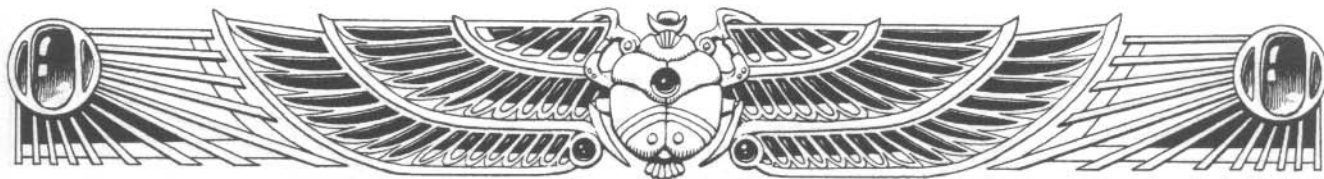
BELIT SHUSTAL SYRTIS, CAPTAIN OF THE MISTRAL

Belit Shustal Syrtis is one of the wizened old river rats of the Serpent, a veteran of the Theran War with the scars to prove it. A controversial supporter of House Syrtis's Green faction, Belit Shustal held the office of admiral and had been preparing to assume command of Kaer Eidolon when members of the Blue faction took control of the High Chamber. The Blues ousted Belit Shustal from her official position, effectively canceling her plans to take command at Eidolon.

As her last official act, however, Belit Shustal assigned herself command of one the aropagoi's sleek new V'strimonian shimorams and handpicked a crew. Belit Shustal met her successor, Admiral T'kraidon, on the docks at Kaer Eidolon only long enough to relinquish her command, then immediately boarded the *Mistral* and set about doing what she does best—making derelicts out of enemy ships.

The last time Belit Shustal brought the *Mistral* in for repairs, the new admiral surprised her by replacing half of her carefully chosen crew with a squadron of elves from Queen Alachia's army, "to promote better relations between the races." In recent months, however, T'kraidon's thinly veiled attempt to hamstring his rival's ability to destroy enemy vessels and win further glory has proved a failure. Initially Belit Shustal believed that the traditional animosity between the Syrtisian t'skrang and the elves, combined with the close quarters in which a shimoram crew must live, would result in disaster. But





after seeing a phalanx of elven archers with warbows launch a volley of arrows across a hundred yards for the first time, she realized that her mixed crew could present a deadly threat to any opponent. She immediately began running the *Mistral's* crew through training drills aimed at promoting unity among them, and within weeks the elves and t'skrang were working as one. Subsequent military successes further helped cement unity among the crew, which is quickly earning a reputation as one of the Mid Reach's finest.

The *Mistral* is a V'strimon shimoram (*Ships of the Serpent River*, p. 102) and Belit has improved its speed and armor attributes. The t'skrang crewmen are crack troops, as are the elves from the Queen's army. The *Mistral's* second firepower rating is based on the ship's elven archers and damages only the crews of opposing ships.

Belit is a Seventh Circle boatman.

BELIT SHUSTAL SYRTIS

DEX: 6 STR: 6 TOU: 7
PER: 7 WIL: 6 CHA: 7

The Mistral

Speed: 8

Maneuverability: 8

Firepower: 17/17 (12/12)

Hull

Armor: 18

Ramming: 28

Cargo: 80

Damage

Critical: 17

Derelict: 54

Destroyed: 61

Crew

Captain: 10 (16)

Crew Size: 75

Crew Skill: 3

Crew Rating: 17

Morale: 59

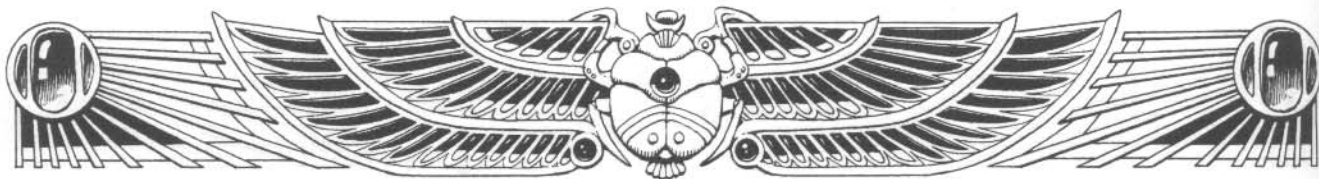
Special

Elven archers' separate 12/12 firepower attack affects only enemy crews.

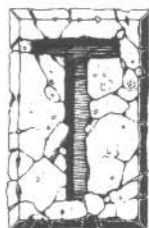


JANET RULISIO 1996.





THE NORTH REACH



The North Reach is one of the most dangerous stretches of the Serpent River. For much of the river's length, isolated settlements are the only signs of Name-giver civilization. As the Serpent flows north toward the edge of the province, it passes through rugged canyons, then into uncharted lands.

The confluence of the Mothingale and Serpent Rivers marks the southern boundary of the North Reach. West of that point, the river enters Lake Vors, home of House Ishkarat. This aropagoi conducts trade like the other aropagoi of the Serpent, but it has also closely allied itself with the Denairastas clan of the city of Iopos. As a result, Ishkarat riverboats often ferry spies, informants and others working for the Denairastas while ostensibly making trading runs. These services enable Denairastan spies to move along the entire length of the Serpent River with ease, which, in turn, keeps the clan's leaders well-informed about aropagoian politics. The alliance has proved profitable for the Ishkaratans as well; Denairastan advice has greatly aided House Ishkarat in its campaign to expand its influence by taking control of nearby t'skrang river villages.

Two hundred miles west of Lake Vors, the Serpent curves south around the wooded hills of Glenwood Deep.

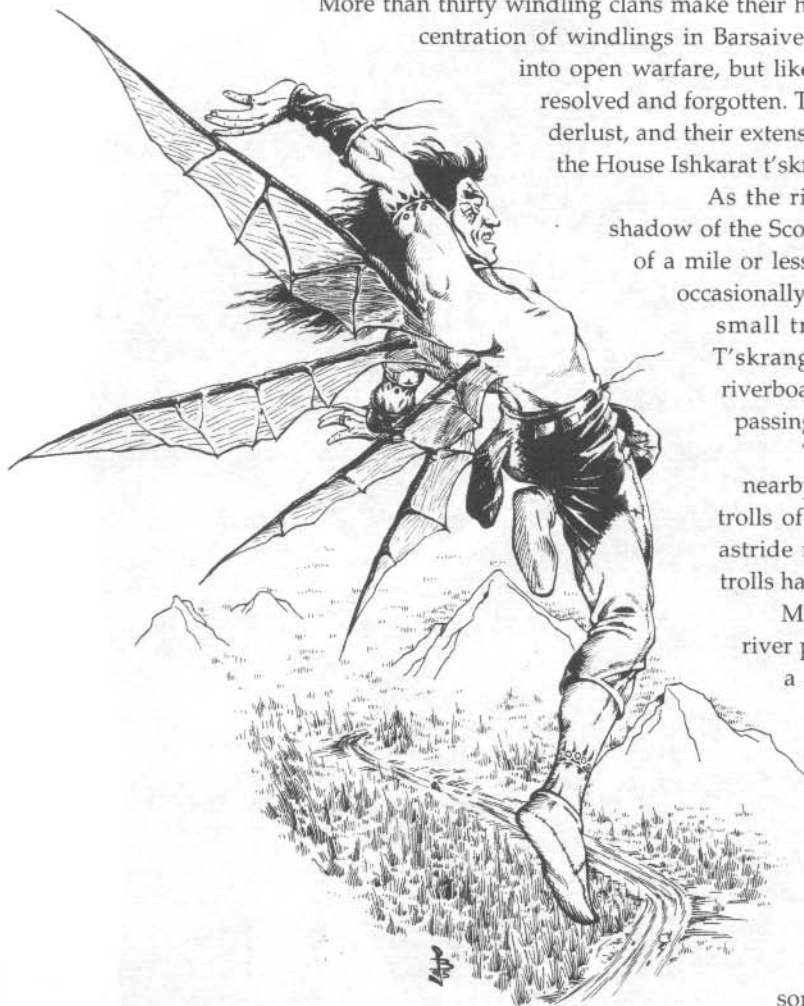
More than thirty windling clans make their homes in the trees of the Deep, forming the largest concentration of windlings in Barsaive. Fierce rivalries among these clans occasionally erupt into open warfare, but like most windling endeavors, these disputes are quickly resolved and forgotten. The windlings of the Deep are also known for their wanderlust, and their extensive travels allow them to spread their intense dislike of the House Ishkarat t'skrang across Barsaive.

As the river winds north from Glenwood Deep, it enters the shadow of the Scol Mountains. Here, the river narrows—often to a width of a mile or less—and deepens. Its banks become steep walls of rock, occasionally broken by waterfalls and terraced cataracts created by small tributaries that flow out of the nearby mountains. T'skrang river villages grow increasingly isolated here, and riverboats commonly travel two or more days at a time before passing a settlement.

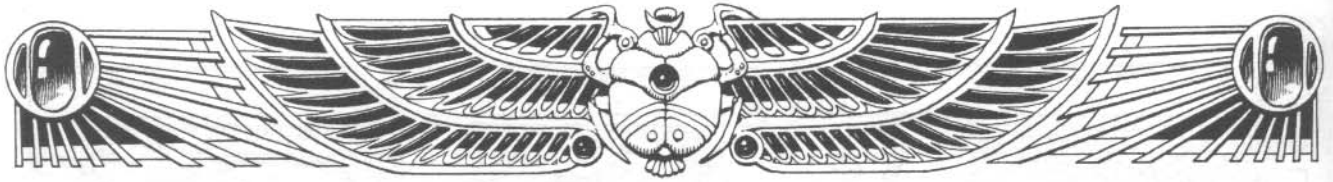
The surrounding lands are largely uninhabited, but the nearby Scol Mountains are home to isolated trollmoots. The trolls of the region do not possess airships, but conduct raids astride massive thundra beasts. All attempts to contact these trolls have so far ended in angry threats and violence.

More than a thousand miles northwest of Lake Vors, the river passes near the city of Iopos, whose population exhibits a fanatical loyalty to the city's rulers—the dynastic clan of Denairastas. Recently, thousands of men and women have begun digging a massive canal designed to link Iopos to the Serpent River.

A few hundred miles north of Iopos, the river passes through the Grand Cataracts, a towering cascade of water more than a hundred feet high and half a mile wide. Beyond the cataracts, the river continues up into the mountains and quickly becomes unnavigable. The source of the Serpent lies somewhere in this region, but has not yet been found.







HOUSE ISHKARAT

The origins of House Ishkarat, the House of the Wheel, are shrouded in mystery. Most scholars believe the aropagoi was founded by Serpent River villages in the far northwest corner of Barsaive, but even today the river villages of that area are spread so thin that any political union among them is difficult to maintain. Some scholars at the Library of Throal, however, believe the origins of the Ishkaratan aropagoi are related to an ancient North Reach river village called Elekso, whose crew covenants carried obsidian daggers that resemble those wielded by modern Ishkaratan crews. The exact location of Elekso remains unknown, and the evidence of an Elekso/Ishkaratan connection remains far from conclusive.

The first recorded sightings of Ishkaratan vessels date back to the years shortly after the end of the Scourge, when the first riverboats to explore the North Reach encountered Ishkaratan warships near the intersection of the Scol and Serpent Rivers. Those Ishkaratan crews fired on the explorers and shunned all contact with outsiders. Less than twenty years later, another wave of explorers encountered Ishkaratan vessels at the eastern end of Glenwood Deep and received a similar reception.

In the following years, Ishkaratan trading vessels began venturing into the Mid Reach of the Serpent to trade with river villages there. Despite these activities, the Ishkaratans still refused to reveal the location of their central village to outsiders and prohibited all non-Ishkaratan vessels from passing east of Glenwood Deep. At the same time, House Ishkarat continued to expand its influence by subjugating river villages west of Lake Vors.

Soon, Ishkaratan vessels began to appear on the lake itself. In defiance of House Syrtis's Maratha niall, which had traditionally controlled all trade on Lake Vors, the Ishkaratans traded openly with the lake villages and refused to pay bakshevas to the Marathans. The number of Ishkaratan vessels on the lake—and Ishkaratan hostility toward the Marathans—grew steadily, and within months the Ishkaratans began wresting control of villages from the Maratha niall. At the same time, small squads of Iopan agents—primarily members of the Holders of Trust and spies and soldiers employed by the Denairastas clan—began to infiltrate the villages around Lake Vors. Apparently acting in league with House Ishkarat, the Iopans sabotaged Marathan supply lines and undermined Throalic influence in these settlements.

Despite the Maratha niall's repeated pleas for help, House Syrtis's High Chamber took no action to check House Ishkarat's growing power, even when the

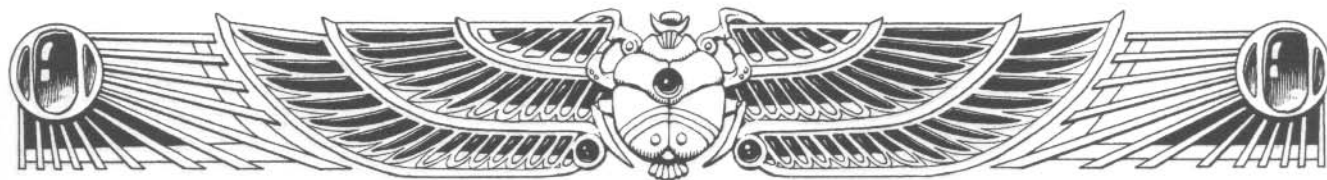
Ishkaratans began annexing Marathan villages east of Lake Vors. Apparently, the Syrtisian leaders hoped to reason with the Ishkaratans during the negotiations sponsored by King Varulus III after the Theran War. Those hopes were dashed, however, when the Ishkaratan delegation—which consisted of two Ishkaratan aropagoinya and two Holders of Trust—took such contradictory positions and engaged in such outrageous intrigue that Varulus himself ordered them ejected from the negotiations. In retrospect, it seems that the Ishkaratans had no desire to enter into the Free Trade Compact or any other agreement that would limit their ability to annex river villages or exact bakshevas from any passing riverboat. (To this day, the t'skrang of House Ishkarat ignore the principles of the Free Trade Compact. Ishkaratan captains insist that their right to unfettered "free trade" entitles them to trade freely with any settlement on the Serpent River system and to exact bakshevas wherever, whenever and from whomever they please.)

Despite the Ishkaratan rejection of the Free Trade Compact, Marathan leaders believed that House Ishkarat was ready to negotiate a peaceful trade treaty in 1488 TH when the Ishkaratans agreed to attend talks to determine the future of trade on Lake Vors. The Marathan leaders agreed to host the summit at the niall's Fortress Isle, located in the middle of Lake Vors. Feeling secure in the confines of their stronghold, the Marathans were rudely surprised when the Ishkaratan delegation's "honor guard"—actually a full crew of swordmasters—seized the niall's leaders as captives and held the fortress against a larger force of Marathan troops until a fleet of Ishkaratan warships arrived. In the end, only two riverboats of Marathans escaped.

Ironically, the Ishkaratan capture of the Maratha niall's fortress led to a decline in House Ishkarat's military fortunes. Although the capture is considered one of the most impressive military achievements in post-Scourge times, it jolted both the Elven Court and the Syrtisian High Chamber into action. Previously, both groups believed House Ishkarat to be no more than a minor power and certainly no threat to the Blood Wood or the settlements of the Mid Reach. After the capture of Fortress Isle, however, both groups took notice of House Ishkarat and immediately began making plans to check the growing power of the aropagoi.

Fortunately for both the elves and the Syrtisians, the Ishkaratan leaders uncharacteristically squandered an important opportunity when they failed to consolidate their control over villages east of Lake Vors. Instead, the Ishkaratans wasted several months gloating over their newfound prestige; consolidating their hold over river villages west of Lake Vors; and installing themselves at the





Island Fortress, which they re-christened the Citadel of House Ishkarat. That decision provided the elves and Syrtisians with enough time to construct a fort at Kaer Eidolon at the meeting of the Mothingale and Serpent Rivers and muster a small fleet of riverboats to oppose the Ishkaratans. When the Ishkaratans finally reached the confluence in 1502 TH, the joint Syrtisian-elfen force soundly defeated them at the Battle of Sejanus. (For more information on the Battle of Sejanus, see **Recorded History of House Syrtis**, p. 67).

That defeat effectively denied the Ishkaratans access to the River Mothingale and thus, easy passage to the Blood Wood. Furthermore, the defeat seemed to check Ishkaratan aspirations to expand their influence east of the Mothingale, as no Ishkaratan warships have been spotted east of Kaer Eidolon since the battle.

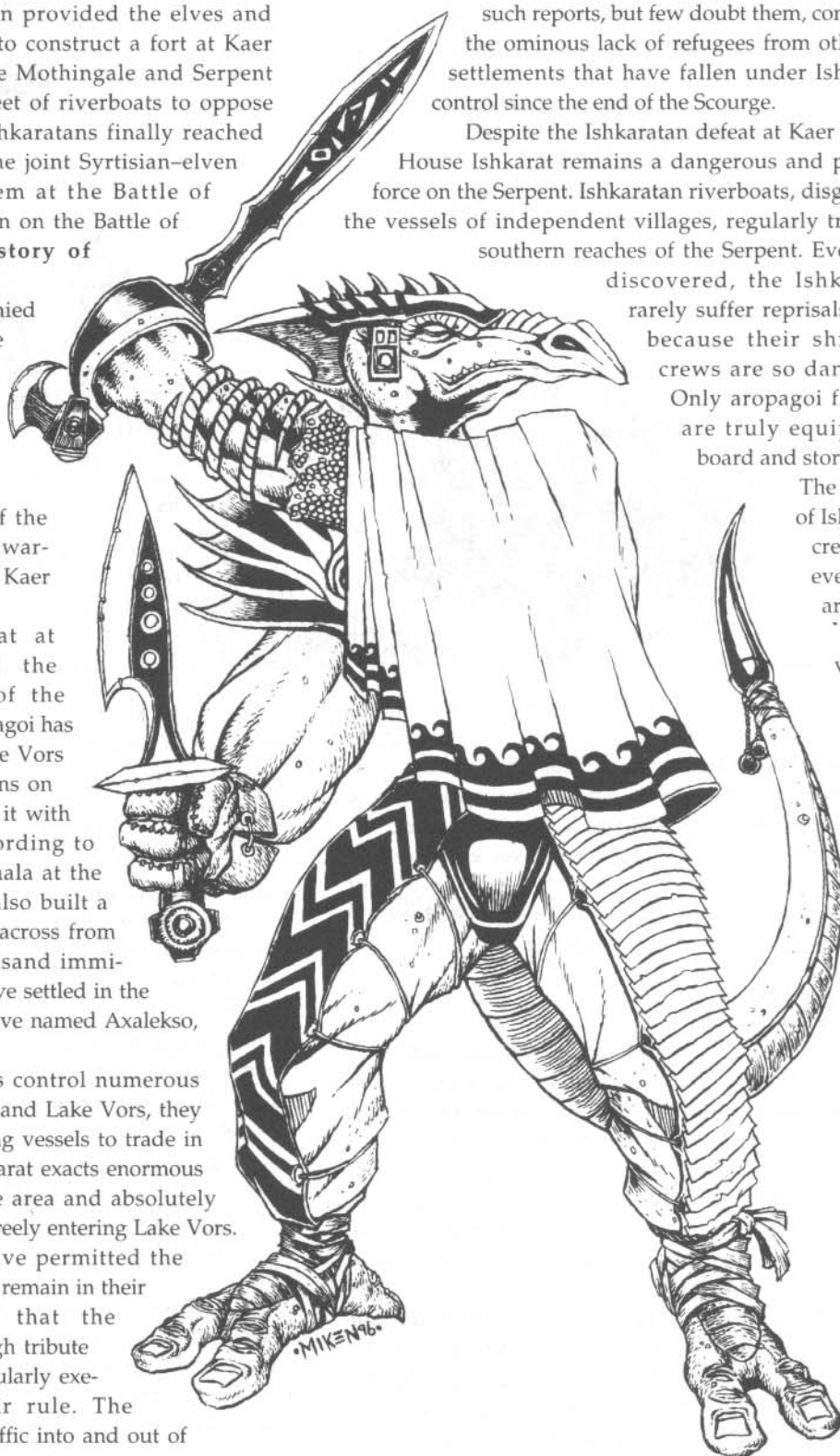
House Ishkarat's defeat at Eidolon has not affected the arpagoi's strength west of the Mothingale, however. The arpagoi has firmly entrenched itself at Lake Vors by refurbishing the fortifications on the island fortress, reinforcing it with numerous troops, and—according to rumor—installing its shivalahala at the Citadel. House Ishkarat has also built a new town on the north bluffs across from the island. More than a thousand immigrants from upriver villages have settled in the town, which the Ishkaratans have named Axalekso, or "New Elekso."

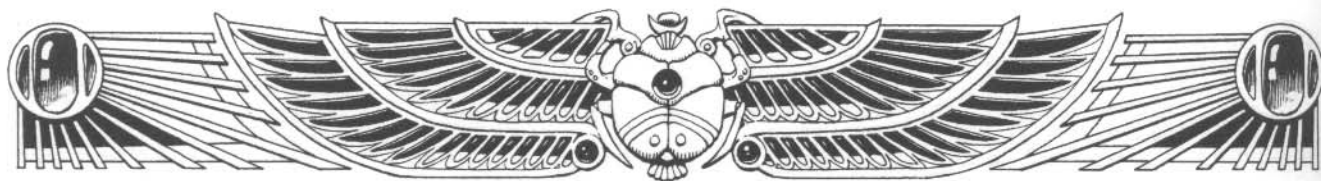
Although the Ishkaratans control numerous villages between Kaer Eidolon and Lake Vors, they generally permit outside trading vessels to trade in the area. However, House Ishkarat exacts enormous bakshevas from vessels in the area and absolutely prohibits foreign vessels from freely entering Lake Vors. Although the Ishkaratans have permitted the original settlers of Lake Vors to remain in their villages, reports indicate that the Ishkaratans exact extremely high tribute from these settlements and regularly execute any who oppose their rule. The Ishkaratans' tight control of traffic into and out of

the lake prevents anyone from verifying such reports, but few doubt them, considering the ominous lack of refugees from other river settlements that have fallen under Ishkaratan control since the end of the Scourge.

Despite the Ishkaratan defeat at Kaer Eidolon, House Ishkarat remains a dangerous and powerful force on the Serpent. Ishkaratan riverboats, disguised as the vessels of independent villages, regularly travel the southern reaches of the Serpent. Even when discovered, the Ishkaratans rarely suffer reprisals simply because their ships and crews are so dangerous. Only arpagoi flagships are truly equipped to board and storm them.

The majority of Ishkaratan crewmen—even on the arpagoi's trading vessels—





are swordmaster adepts rather than boatmen, which makes Ishkarat vessels more than a match for most opposition. Furthermore, the Ishkaratans remain allied with the treacherous Denairastas clan of Iopos, and they display none of the worshipful fanaticism native Iopans show toward the clan. The Ishkaratans consider themselves equals of the Denairastas, and their actions bear this out. Throughout their brief history, the Ishkaratans have proved they are second to none when it comes to cunning and cruelty.

LAKE VORS

Lake Vors takes its name from the t'skrang word *vors*, which translates as "deep." The lake is twenty miles wide at its widest point and more than a thousand feet deep at its center. The cold depths of the lake foster some unusual species of fish and freshwater mollusks, including an edible snail that grows as large as a troll's fist. The snails are considered a delicacy at the Elven Court. A perceptible current, which runs from west to east along the lake's sixty-mile length, circulates the water.

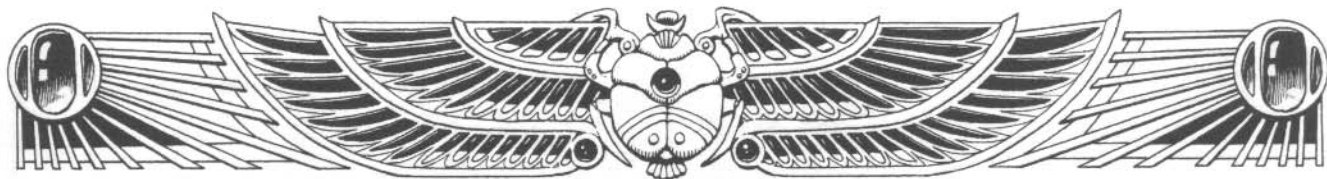
The north bank of the lake consists of high bluffs that rise two to three hundred feet above the water's edge. For centuries the area remained largely uninhabited, until the Ishkaratans constructed the town Axalekso atop the bluffs. The hills to the north of these bluffs hold rich deposits of

rare metals. At one time these hills contained considerable deposits of orichalcum as well, but these were depleted before the Scourge. The lake's south bank forms the bottom of a vast basin that curves gradually up to the Tylon Plateau. During the annual rainy season, the lake overflows the south bank and deposits several feet of fertile mud along the bottom of the basin.

Near the western shore end of the lake, a rock outcropping juts up from the depths of the lake like a massive, roughly hewn pillar. Atop this outcropping lies the Citadel of House Ishkarat, formerly the Fortress Isle of Maratha. The t'skrang of House Syrtis built the fortress many centuries ago, selecting the site for its commanding view of the lake. The Syrtisian leaders then deeded the fort to the Maratha niall, in exchange for a vow to protect the lake from pirates and other enemies of House Syrtis. The fortress remained in Marathan hands until a few years ago, when House Ishkarat captured it.

Along the shores of Lake Vors lie several small villages inhabited by t'skrang, dwarfs, elves and humans. These village residents are a mix of Throalic settlers, elven refugees disenchanting with the corruption of the Blood Wood, t'skrang from the lower castes of House Syrtis seeking a better life for their hatchlings and former residents of kaers located in the surrounding hills. An uneasy peace





prevailed among the villagers when the lake was under the dominion of the Maratha niall, although disputes between miners occasionally led to some bloodshed on the north bluffs. Generally, the Marathans focused their energies toward rebuilding the Scourge-ravaged river villages between Lake Vors and the River Mothingale, leaving the lake villages relatively free to conduct their own affairs. The niall occasionally exacted tribute from the lake villages or enlisted their help to fight off pirates, but otherwise interfered little with village life. Life under Ishkaratan rule has proved quite different, however. Shortly after assuming control of the lake, the Ishkaratans began rounding up all able-bodied adult villagers. These unfortunate Name-givers were then forced to work as laborers in the construction of Axalekso, during which many of them died. Additionally, the Ishkaratans exact exorbitantly high taxes from the villages and regularly execute dissenters.

In addition to the lakeshore settlements, several isolated villages lie along the small rivers and streams that branch out from Lake Vors and the nearby sections of the Serpent River. None of these rivers are navigable by riverboat, so visitors must use barges, canoes, or footpaths to reach these hinterland settlements.

ACHARUSS, CAPTAIN OF THE GORRUUS

The bane of the North Reach, Acharuss is a merciless raider who strikes fear into the hearts of townsfolk and sailors alike. He attacks without warning and seldom leaves survivors. Acharuss plays no favorites—the dwarfs of Throal, the elves of the Blood Wood, and the t'skrang of Syrtis and Ishkarat have all suffered at the hands of this raider and his men.

The pirate captain commands a crew of devoted cutthroats who would gladly lay down their lives for him. Acharuss ensures the loyalty of his crewmen by sharing all booty with them, treating them with even-handed—if somewhat ruthless—discipline, and looking after the families of crewmen who die in his service. The location of Acharuss's headquarters remains unknown, but most believe the pirate and his men hole up in a river village on a minor tributary of the Serpent somewhere between Kaer Eidolon and Lake Vors.

Acharuss's long and lucrative career has spawned numerous rumors about the source of his success. According to one rumor, Acharuss is a tool of the Denairastas clan of Iopos and has received some kind of tainted magic from Uhl Denairastas that infuses his crew with fanatical devotion. In return, Acharuss harasses the enemies of the Denairastas, pays the clan tribute and preys upon their Ishkaratan allies, to keep Ishkarat's leaders from challenging Denairastan power.



Acharuss is a Ninth Circle swordmaster, with Pilot Boat as a skill at Rank 7. His chief engineer is Griskoll, a Seventh Circle boatman with Pilot Boat as a talent at Rank 8. Acharuss' ship, the *Gorruus*, is the same size as an aropagoian warship. The ship is manned by a crew of 125 fanatical, battle-hardened sailors. About a year ago, Acharuss also managed to win movable gun platforms and a corvus (see *Ishkarat Warship*, p. 103) from an Ishkarat warship and install them on board the *Gorruus*. Unfortunately, the crew can seldomly supply ample elemental fire for the *Gorruus*'s fire cannon and typically cannot afford to fire more than three volleys before exhausting its ammunition. Having recently witnessed the effectiveness of the ramming heads on V'strimon shimorams, Acharuss intends to add one to the *Gorruus*.

ACHARUSS

DEX: 8 STR: 7 TOU: 7
PER: 6 WIL: 7 CHA: 6

GORRUUS

Speed: 7
Maneuverability: 7
Firepower: 15/20
Hull

Armor: 18
Ramming: 25
Cargo: 125

Crew

Captain: 7 (14)
Crew Size: 125
Crew Skill: 3
Crew Rating: 19
Morale: 65

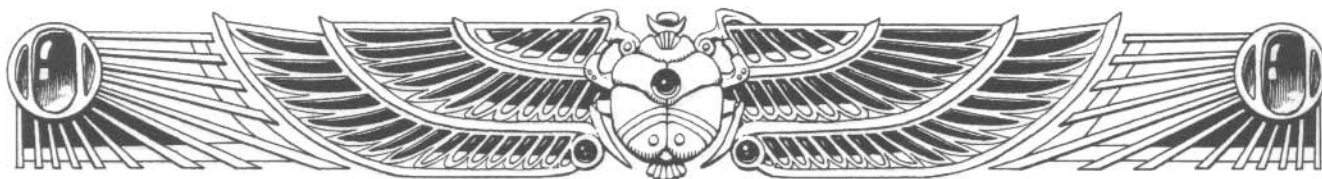
Damage

Critical: 18
Derelict: 63
Destroyed: 70

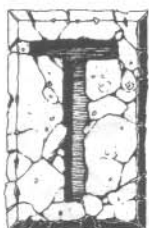
Special

Ship engineer with Pilot Boat talent at Step 14.
Corvus adds 3 to opponent's Difficulty Number when opponent attempts to break off from a boarding action, and also adds 3 to the *Gorruus*'s Crew Step on the first turn of any boarding action.





SHIPS OF THE SERPENT RIVER



he standard ships of the Serpent River fall into two broad groups: the paddle-wheeled riverboats of the t'skrang and the galleys of the merchant cities. These two classifications contain a number of distinct ship types, such as warships, trading ships, pirate vessels, sailing ships, barges and canoes. This section provides rules for ship travel, a brief overview of ship combat, rules for repairing and maintaining these various vessels, and descriptions and game statistics for the various ship types.

Readers may notice that some of the ship rules presented in this section closely resemble the general ship rules presented in the **Earthdawn Companion**. Such rules have been expanded and in some cases redesigned to better reflect the unique nature of waterborne ships. In all cases, the statistics and rules presented here supersede similar rules contained in the **Earthdawn Companion**.

SHIP STATISTICS

All waterborne ships have six Attributes: Speed, Maneuverability, Firepower, Hull, Damage, and Crew. Most of these Attributes are defined as step numbers and used in the same way as a character's step numbers. Other ship Attributes, however, are values that represent the amount of damage the ship can sustain before becoming derelict, the strength of the ship's armor, or other characteristics. Each of the six Attributes are described in the following entries. Specific uses of each Attribute are fully explained in the applicable rules given in the **Ship Travel**, **Speed and Hazards** and **Ship-to-Ship Combat** sections.

SPEED

A ship's Speed Attribute reflects its cruising speed. Most ships can run faster for short bursts when necessary—a boat's engineer can stoke the fire engine to create a surge or the drummer on a galley can beat out a double time to the oarsmen. A ship's Speed Attribute is used as a step number for making certain tests when the ship is traveling or engaged in combat. It

also determines the number of yards the ship can move in a single turn, as listed on the Ship Speed Table (p. 93). Ships gain 1 point to their Speed step when traveling with the current of the Serpent River and lose 1 point when traveling against the current. The Ship Speed Table shows a ship's actual speed (in yards per combat turn and miles per hour) based on its Speed step, as well as how far a ship can travel in an 8-hour and 16-hour period.

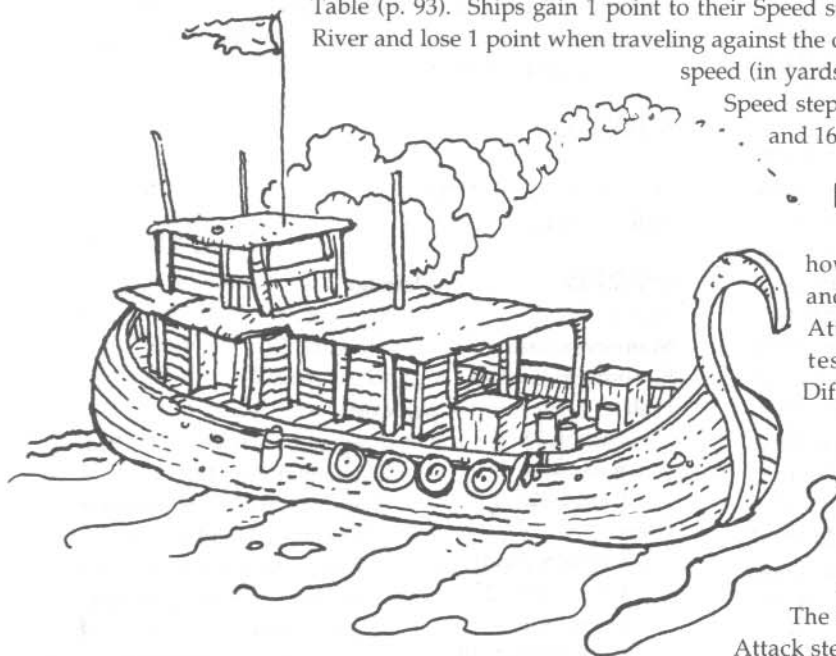
MANEUVERABILITY

A ship's Maneuverability Attribute reflects how quickly it can change course, flank opponents and break off from an attack. The Maneuverability Attribute is used as a step number when making tests for various maneuvers (p. 94) and as the Difficulty Number for tests made *against* the ship.

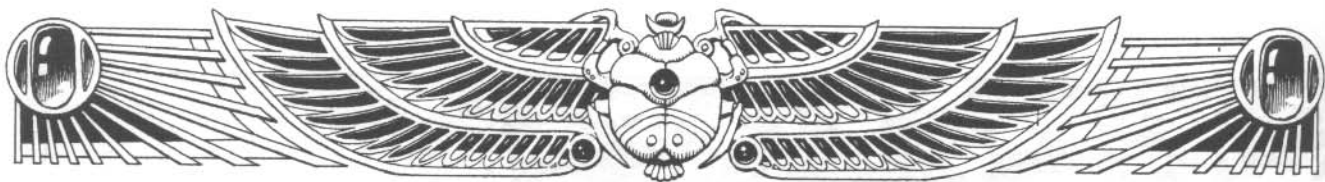
FIREPOWER

A ship's Firepower Attribute represents how effective the ship's fire cannons are when used in combat. This rating reflects the number of guns a ship has, their placement and range.

The first number of the Attribute is used as the ship's Attack step when it makes attacks. The number to the right of the slash is the ship's Damage step.







Whenever a ship attacks with its fire cannons, its controlling player can divide its Attack and Damage steps and make a number of separate attacks. See the **Firing** maneuver, p. 95, for more information on splitting a ship's Firepower Attribute.

HULL

A ship's Hull Attribute represents the durability of the ship—it reflects the thickness of the ship's walls, how effectively the ship's design protects its vital areas, and so on. A ship's Hull Attribute includes an Armor Rating, Ramming Rating and Cargo Rating. The Armor Rating reduces the damage of all attacks made against the ship. The Ramming Rating represents the ship's Damage step when it makes ramming attacks against opposing vessels.

The ship's Cargo Rating represents the amount of freight the ship can carry and still go full speed. The Cargo Rating is expressed as a number of *duari*, the barrels that serve as the standard of measure on the Serpent River. A ship's Speed step is reduced by 1 for every 20 *duari* above its Cargo Rating that the ship carries. If the Speed step of a ship drops to 0 (extra *duari* and combat damage may reduce the Speed step), the ship becomes a derelict.

DAMAGE

The Damage Attribute of all waterborne ships consists of three separate damage ratings, which correspond to the damage ratings of player characters. A ship's Critical Threshold Rating is the amount of damage the ship can take before it takes a Wound. Each Wound reduces each of the ship's Attribute steps by 1. When a ship accumulates damage equal to its Derelict Rating, it may no longer move or fire. When a ship accumulates damage equal to its Destroyed Rating, it sinks.

CREW

A ship's Crew Attribute represents the overall abilities of its captain and crew. The Crew Attribute consists of five separate ratings: Captain Rating, Crew Size, Crew Skill, Crew Rating and Morale Rating.

A ship's Captain Rating represents the minimum talent or skill rank a captain must possess to operate that type of ship. Gamemasters can use the Captain Rating when making tests for a ship whose captain has not been fully fleshed out with complete abilities and statistics. The Crew Size represents the number of crewmen needed to operate the ship so that it performs at its full capacity. The Crew Skill represents the average talent or skill ranks of the ship's crew members. A ship's Crew Rating is used in Boarding maneuvers (see **Boarding**, p. 94). Lastly, a crew's Morale Rating measures the amount of damage the ship

can take before the crew considers surrendering. (Of course, a ship's controlling player always decides whether his ship's crew continues to fight or surrenders. The Morale Rating applies only to any gamemaster character crewmen on a ship.)

SHIP TRAVEL, SPEED AND HAZARDS

The following rules describe game mechanics for two of the most important aspects of river travel—speed and hazards.

SHIP SPEED ON THE RIVER

The Speed step listed in a ship's Speed Attribute represents the ship's normal cruising speed along the river. Most riverboats on the Serpent have a Speed Step 7, but Speed steps may vary among different types of vessels. The current of the river also affects a ship's Speed step. If a ship is traveling *against* the current, reduce its Speed step by 1. If a ship is traveling *with* the current, add 1 to its Speed step.

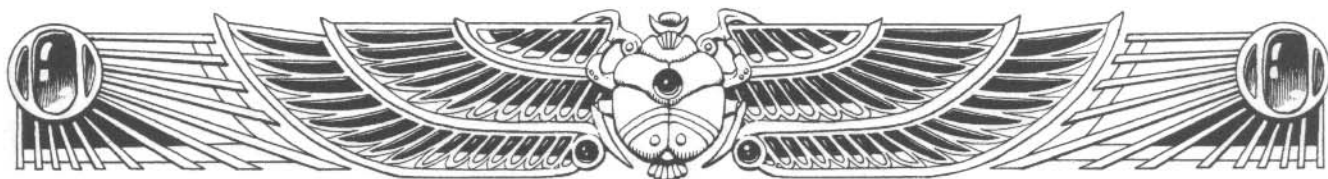
The captain and ship's engineer of a vessel can use their Pilot Boat talents (or skills) to increase their ship's Speed step as well. To do so, each character makes a Pilot Boat Test against a Difficulty Number equal to the ship's basic Speed step. An Average success adds 1 to the ship's Speed step. A Good success adds 2, an Excellent success adds 3, and an Extraordinary success adds 4. If a character increases his ship's Speed step in this manner during combat, the increase lasts only for a number of combat turns equal to the character's Pilot Boat rank.

Regardless of increases, a ship's Speed step may never exceed 15.

The Ship Speed Table on p. 93 shows the speeds of ships of various Speed steps. For example, a ship with a Speed Step 10 travels at 16 miles per hour and can cover 80 yards per combat turn, 128 miles in 8 hours, and 256 miles in 16 hours. Typically, riverboats travel for 16 hours each day.

Jedaiyen Westhrall needs to get her riverboat 16 miles downstream to rescue a Scavian barge from the clutches of a K'tenshin warship. Her boat, Astendar's Desire, has a Speed Step 8. She makes a Pilot Boat Test against a Difficulty Number of 8 and gets a 9, an Average success. That increases her riverboat's Speed Step to 9. The riverboat will be traveling with the river's current to reach its destination, which increases its Speed Step to 10. That means Astendar's Desire will travel at 16 miles per hour, so it will reach the Scavian barge in one hour.





SHIP SPEED TABLE

Speed Step	Yards per Turn	Miles per Hour	Miles Traveled in 8/16 Hours
0	8	1	8/16
1	11	2	18/36
2	14	3	24/48
3	18	4	32/64
4	22	5	40/80
5	27	6	48/96
6	33	7	56/112
7	40	8	64/128
8	50	10	80/160
9	65	13	104/208
10	80	16	128/256
11	100	20	160/320
12	130	27	216/432
13	165	34	272/544
14	220	45	360/720
15	265	54	432/864

NAVIGATIONAL HAZARDS

The Serpent and its tributaries contain numerous hazards that a captain must safely navigate. Hidden sand bars, submerged logs and harsh weather conditions can all damage or sink a ship if its captain is not careful. To reflect the challenge of safely navigating such hazards, a ship's captain must make a Read River Test at the start of every 8-hour period in which his ship is moving. The Difficulty Number for the test is the Hazard Level of the section of river the vessel is on. Hazard Levels are listed on the Hazard Table. If the ship will be traveling through river sections with two different Hazard Levels during the 8-hour period, the captain must make the Read River Test against the higher Hazard Level. Traveling in darkness or hazardous weather conditions also increases the Hazard Level by the amounts shown on the table.

If the Read River Test yields an Average success, the ship safely navigates all hazards and runs at its normal speed but neither the captain nor the ship's engineer can use their Pilot Boat talents (or skills) to increase the ship's Speed step. If the test yields a Good or better success, the ship safely navigates all hazards and the captain and ship's engineer may increase its Speed step as described in **Ship Speed on the River**.

If the captain fails the test, the gamemaster makes a Hazard Test using a step number equal to the Hazard

Level. This test's Difficulty Number is equal to the riverboat's Maneuverability Attribute. An Average success reduces the ship's Speed step by 1, and a Good success reduces the ship's Speed step by 2. On an Excellent or better success, the ship is damaged by a hazard and receives a Wound. Each Wound reduces each of the ship's Attribute steps by 1.

The various Hazard Levels of the Serpent River system are shown on the Hazard Table. The Hazard Level for most of the river and its major tributaries is 7. However, several sections of the river present increased navigational hazards. These sections include the upper reaches of the Serpent in the Scol Mountains; the section of river that passes through the fenlands of the Servos Jungle west of Lake Pyros; the stretch of the river near the Mist Swamps; and the upper reaches of the Servos, Galanga and Coil rivers. The Hazard Level of each of the Serpent Lakes is 5.

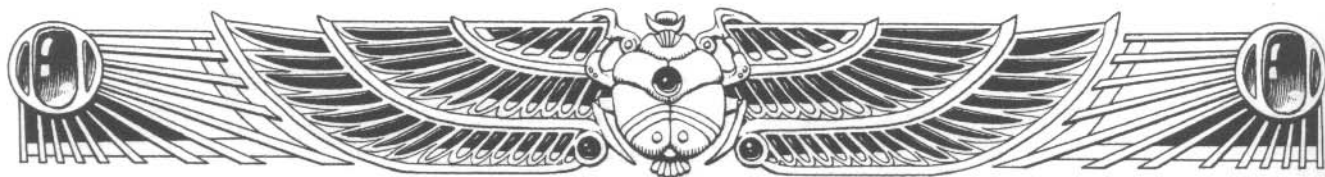
HAZARD TABLE

River Section	Hazard Level
Serpent Lakes	5
South and Mid Reaches, Coil River, Aras Sea and tributaries	7
North Reach and tributaries	8
Servos Jungle west of Lake Pyros	8
Mist Swamps and nearby river	9
Darkness	+1
Rain	+1
Storm on the river	+2
Severe storm on the Aras Sea	+3
Gale on the Aras Sea	+4

SHIP-TO-SHIP COMBAT

Ship combat is a fact of life on the Serpent River. Ships from the various aropagoi must be prepared to do battle with independent pirates, marauders from House Henghyoke, the warships of House Ishkarat, and even rival vessels from within their own aropagoi on rare occasions. Independent riverboats face the same potential opponents. Therefore, any time two or more ships meet on the river, they may engage in battle. Whether they do or not depends on several factors, such as the current political climate, the loyalties of each ship's captain and crew, and—most importantly—the needs of the gamemaster.





The following rules are based on the ship combat rules presented in the **Earthdawn Companion**, modified to reflect the unique nature of combat between waterborne vessels. Any applicable rules from the **Earthdawn Companion** may also be used to resolve combat.

PURSUIT

If a ship attempts to flee from an aggressor, the aggressor must begin pursuit to engage the fleeing vessel. The pursuit consists of a series of Speed Tests made by each vessel in the battle. At the beginning of each turn, the fleeing vessel makes a Speed Test against a Difficulty Number equal to the Speed step of the pursuing vessel. Then the pursuing vessel makes a Speed Test against a Difficulty Number equal to the Speed step of the fleeing vessel. If multiple fleeing ships are involved, each makes a separate Speed Test against the Speed step of the fastest pursuer. If multiple pursuers are involved, each makes a separate Speed Test against the slowest fleeing vessel.

The first side that makes 3 successful Speed Tests prevails. If the fleeing side prevails, they successfully avoid combat. If the pursuers prevail, they may initiate combat. If both sides reach 3 successes during the same turn, the tests continue until one side achieves more successes than its opposition.

If a fleeing ship successfully evades a pursuer, the pursuer can attempt to renew the chase by making a Speed Test after an hour has passed. If the test result exceeds the fleeing vessel's Speed step, the pursuer can again initiate pursuit using the standard procedure. If the pursuer fails this test, he must successfully track his quarry before initiating a second pursuit. To do so, the pursuer must make a successful Read River Test against a Difficulty Number equal to the Pilot Boat step of the fleeing ship's captain.

SHIP COMBAT MANEUVERS

Combat between waterborne vessels is resolved using the three-step procedure described on pages 131 and 132 of the **Earthdawn Companion**. Waterborne ships can use five different maneuvers during combat: boarding, breaking off, firing, ground assault and ramming.

The following entries describe the combat effects of each maneuver, the specific type of test required to execute each one, and the Failure Modifier of each. The test required to execute a maneuver is called an Execution Test. Depending on the specific maneuver, the ship may use its Maneuverability, Speed, or Firepower Attribute for this test. The Failure Modifier is a step number. If a ship fails its declared maneuver, all opposing ships add the maneuver's Failure Modifier to their own Execution Tests when they perform maneuvers against the ship during the turn.

Boarding

When performing a boarding maneuver, a ship pulls alongside an opposing vessel and catches the vessel with grapple lines so that its crew can storm the vessel and attack the opposing crew. To execute a Boarding maneuver, a ship must make a successful Maneuverability Test against a Difficulty Number equal to its target's Maneuverability Attribute. If the maneuver succeeds, the ship's crew can attack the enemy crew in the next turn.

In a boarding battle, each side makes an Attack Test, using its Crew Rating, against a Difficulty Number equal to the opposing crew's Crew Rating. If the attacking crew prevails, it makes a Damage Test, using its Crew Rating, against the opposing crew's Crew Rating. All crews may use their ship's Armor Rating when withstanding an attack. If the damage from a single attack exceeds a ship's Critical Threshold Rating, its crew takes a Wound and all the ratings of its Crew Attribute are reduced by 1 step. Additionally, 5 percent of the crew members sustain serious injuries and will not survive without medical assistance. If a crew takes damage equal to or higher than its Morale Rating, the crew may surrender to the enemy.

A crew can fully recover its Morale Rating after 3 turns, providing it does not take any additional damage in those 3 minutes and does not surrender. A crew can only recover from Wounds by recruiting more crew members or allowing injured crew members to heal completely. Most often, recruiting new members and healing injured members takes at least 1 week.

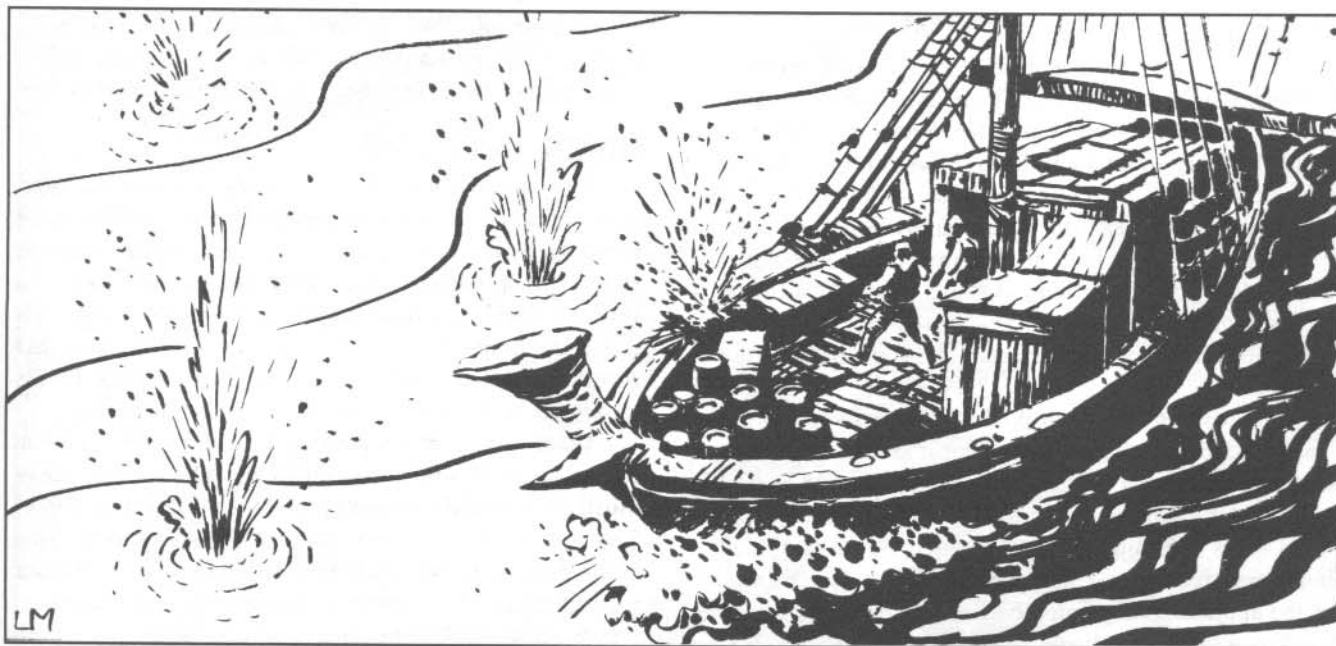
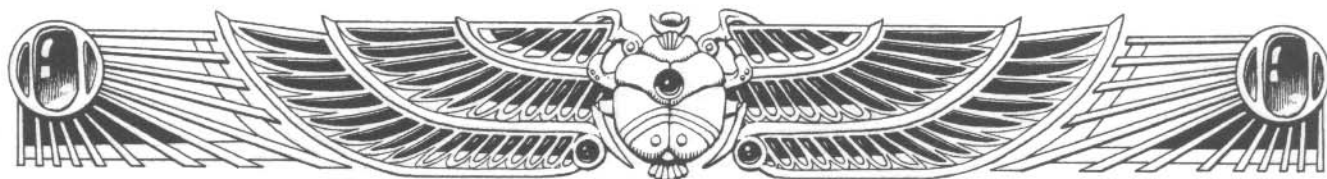
If individual player characters fight in boarding actions, begin the ship combat sequence using the previously described rules. After the first turn of ship combat, run 5 standard **Earthdawn** Combat Rounds. Use the sample **Riverboat Crew** statistics (p. 110) for the opposing crew. Every time a player character incapacitates or kills an enemy crew member, reduce the enemy crew's Morale Rating by 1 and add 1 to the Morale Rating of the player character's crew. After 5 rounds of standard combat, conduct another ship-combat turn. Repeat this sequence until the battle has ended. Warn player characters when their own crew's morale is about to break, because their side's surrender may suddenly leave a small group of player characters facing considerable odds.

Failure Modifier: +4

Breaking Off

A ship that wishes to break off combat can do so by making successful Speed Tests in 3 consecutive turns. The Difficulty Number for these tests is equal to the highest Maneuverability Attribute among the ships in the oppos-





ing fleet. Opposing vessels may continue to attack the fleeing vessel during these turns. If the fleeing vessel's Speed Tests are successful, its opponents must initiate pursuit to catch the ship before they can engage it in combat.

If a ship has been successfully boarded by an opponent, the ship must achieve an Excellent or better success on one of its Speed Tests to break off.

Failure Modifier: +2

Firing

During a firing maneuver, a ship uses its fire cannons to attack an enemy ship. To do so, the ship makes an Attack Test, using the Attack step from its Firepower Attribute. The Difficulty Number for the test equals the target vessel's Maneuverability Attribute. The Damage step from a ship's Firepower Attribute determines the damage caused by a ship's firing attacks.

A ship may also fire on several enemy vessels in a single turn. To do so, the attacking ship makes separate Attack Tests against each targeted vessel. However, the attacker must split its Attack step among these tests. An attacker can make only 1 attack against any one target per turn. Additionally, the attacker suffers a Failure Modifier of +1 for each attack that fails to hit its target. To calculate the damage caused by successful multiple firing attacks, reduce the attacker's Damage step by 1 for each target after the first.

For example, a ship with a Firepower Attribute of 15/18 can attack 3 opponents, using an Attack step of 5 for each attack. Each successful attack would cause Step 16 damage.

Crew members may also fire cannons at characters or creatures and use ranged attacks to strike at enemy characters. For rules governing these actions, see **Using Talents in Ship-to-Ship Combat**, p. 96.

Failure Modifier: +0 if attacking only 1 ship/+1 for each additional ship attacked

Ground Assault

During a ground assault maneuver, a ship swoops in toward shore, fires at targets on the shore as it passes, then sharply veers away from shore to avoid return fire. To execute this maneuver, a ship must make a Maneuverability Test against a Difficulty Number of 8. If the test succeeds, the ship can fire its cannons at targets on shore. If desired, the ship can divide its fire among multiple targets, as described in the preceding **Firing** entry.

If the Maneuverability Test fails, the ship fails to achieve the correct angle of attack and cannot fire effectively.

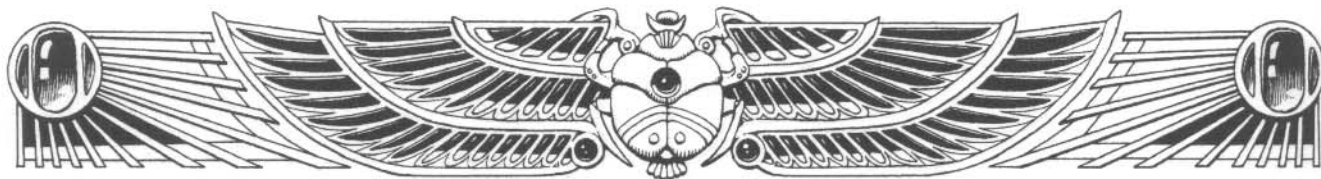
Failure Modifier: +4

Ramming

A ship that wishes to ram its opponent must make a successful Speed Test against a Difficulty Number equal to the target ship's Maneuverability Attribute. To determine the damage caused by a ramming attack, the attacking ship makes a Damage Test against its target, using the Ramming Rating from its Hull Attribute. The target's Armor Rating reduces such damage per standard rules.

Failure Modifier: +6





USING TALENTS IN SHIP-TO-SHIP COMBAT

Captains and ship's engineers can make Pilot Boat Tests to boost the capabilities of their ships during combat. A captain can increase his ship's Maneuverability Attribute in this manner, while a ship's engineer can increase his ship's Speed step. The Difficulty Number for such a test equals the Attribute step the character wishes to enhance. An Average success adds 1 to the Attribute. A Good success adds 2, an Excellent success adds 3, and an Extraordinary success adds 4. The Attribute increase lasts for a number of combat turns equal to the character's Pilot Boat rank.

Any character on a ship can use magic or missile weapons to make ranged attacks against targets. Unless the target vessel has just conducted a Ram maneuver against the character's ship, however, such attacks are considered Called Shots at a range of approximately 50 yards. Called Shot attacks receive a -2 step penalty to their Attack Tests. For the applicable range modifiers of missile weapons, see page 196 in the **ED** rulebook.

Characters may also use their Missile Weapons talents or skills to fire their ship's cannons at enemy characters, creatures, and other targets. Aiming a ship's fire cannons takes considerable time and effort, so unless the target is as big as a riverboat, any such attack is considered a Called Shot and takes a -3 step penalty on the Attack Test. Because fire cannons must be reloaded after each firing, they can only be fired once per ship-combat turn, or once every 5 standard Combat Rounds—so characters should attempt to make that first shot count! An attack that hits its target does Step 18 damage.

DAMAGE IN SHIP-TO-SHIP COMBAT

Damage to ships is resolved in much the same manner as damage to characters. First, the Armor Rating from the ship's Hull Attribute reduces damage when appropriate. When the ship takes damage that exceeds its Critical Threshold Rating, the ship takes a Wound. Each Wound the ship takes reduces each of its Attribute steps by 1. Additionally, 5 percent of the ship's crew members are killed. Reduce the Pilot Boat step of a captain by 1 for every Wound his vessel takes.

When a ship accumulates damage equal to its Derelict Rating, it may no longer move or perform combat maneuvers. If a ship's accumulated damage equals or exceeds its Destroyed Rating, the ship sinks. Crew members can survive the attack by swimming away; any crew members trapped on board are considered dead.

Vessels and crews engaged in contests of bakshevas attack to stun (p. 200, **ED**). Stun damage cannot destroy a ves-

sel, but it can inflict Wounds and cause it to become a derelict. When a ship takes a Wound in bakshevas combat, only 1 crew member dies, rather than 5 percent of the total crew.

REPAIRING DAMAGED SHIPS

Two types of repairs can be made to damaged ships: crew repairs and shipyard repairs. Crew repairs can be performed while at anchor or on the fly. To use crew repairs to fix ship damage that has not resulted in a Wound, the controlling player makes a Recovery Test using the ship's Crew Rating as the step number. The result of the test equals the number of Damage Points recovered. A ship can only make one such test per day.

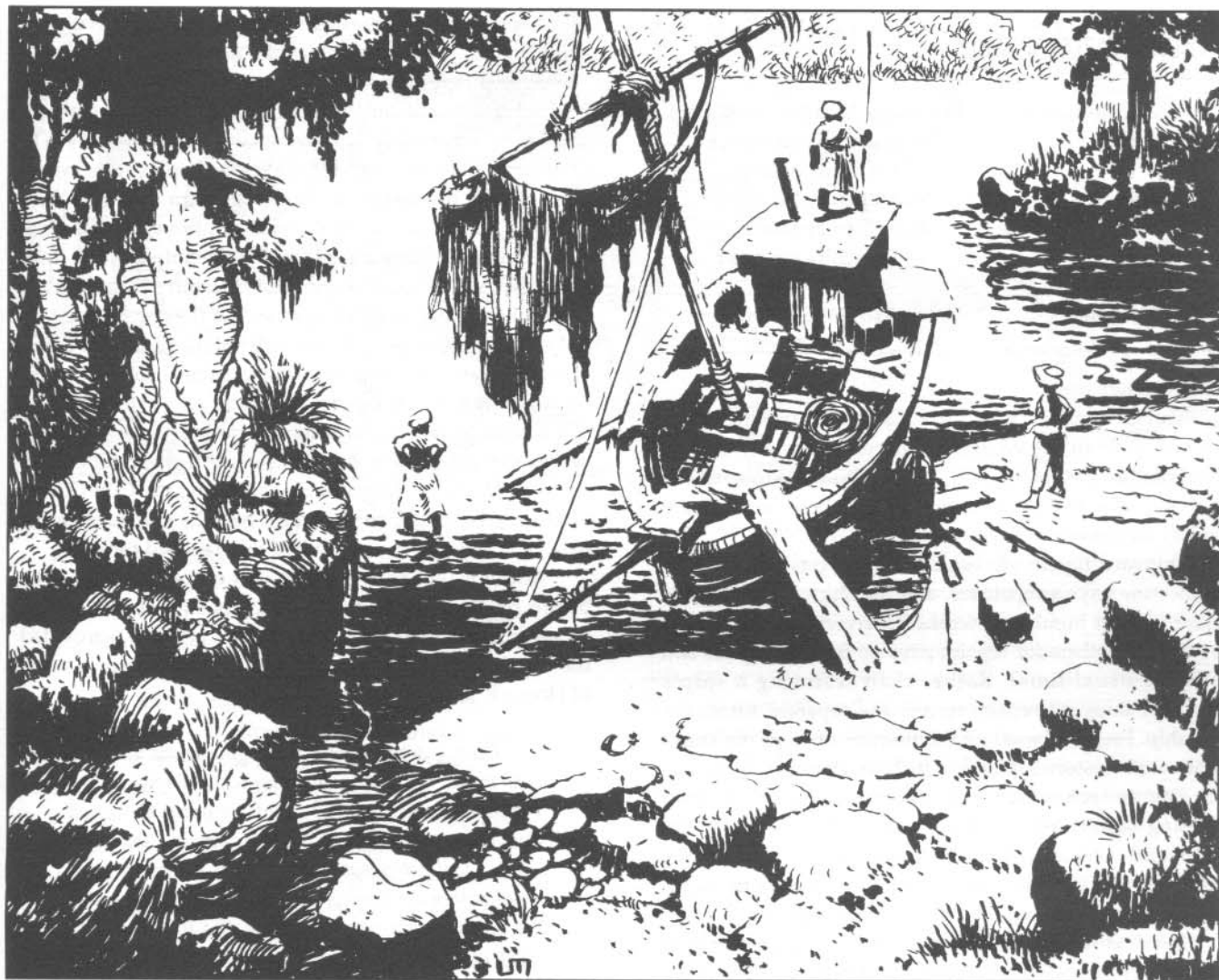
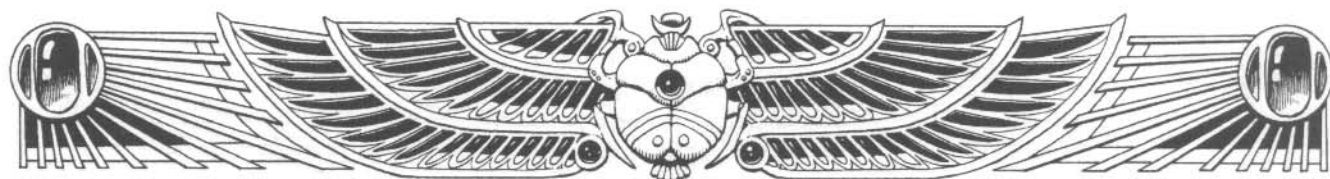
When using crew repairs to fix a ship that has taken one or more Wounds, the controlling player must make multiple tests: a Crew Repair Test and a number of Recovery Tests. The ship's Crew Rating serves as the step number for the Crew Repair Test. The Difficulty Number for the test equals the number of Wounds the ship has taken plus 8. Additionally, the ship must drop anchor for 1 full day for each Wound to be repaired. The Crew Repair Test result determines how many Wounds the crew successfully repairs. An Average success level repairs 1 Wound. A Good success repairs 2 Wounds; an Excellent success, 3 Wounds; and an Extraordinary success, 4 Wounds.

Additionally, the Crew Repair Test success level indicates how many Recovery Tests the crew can make to recover Damage Points. On an Average success, the crew can make 1 Recovery Test. On a Good success, it can make 2 Recovery Tests, and so on. These Recovery Tests use the ship's Armor Rating as the step number. The result indicates how many Damage Points have been recovered.

A ship's controlling player may repeat Crew Repair Tests as often as desired but can make only one Crew Repair Test at a time. If a Crew Repair Test fails, the crew can make no further repairs and any damage must be repaired in a shipyard. In addition, a Poor success means the ship suffers an additional Wound.

Each Wound repaired restores 1 step to all of a ship's Attributes, except for its Crew Attribute ratings. A ship can recover Crew Attribute steps only by recruiting new members. This can lead to an interesting problem, because most riverboats are run as "family enterprises." New crew members from outside the covenant are seldom trusted and difficult to recompense. If the crew gives the recruit the same share in the profits as the original sailor, part of the profits end up leaving the covenant entirely. Furthermore, t'skrang crews typically view freelance sailors with suspicion. Ironically, inter-t'skrang rivalries often lead t'skrang crews to recruit replacements from other Name-giver





races, particularly humans, orks and even the occasional elf. Typically, t'skrang covenants recruit young folk in small river villages with enticing stories of the adventurous life that awaits them on the river. Then they pay these *khamorro*, or "deck scrubbers," a few coppers a day. In large ports, crews in need of recruits often hold open houses on board their ships and use generous amounts of food and drink to entice prospective crew members. A seasoned sailor, however, will always hold out for a crew share in the ship's profits—and a wise one will demand to see the captain's books before he accepts a job on a riverboat.

Crew Repairs on the Fly

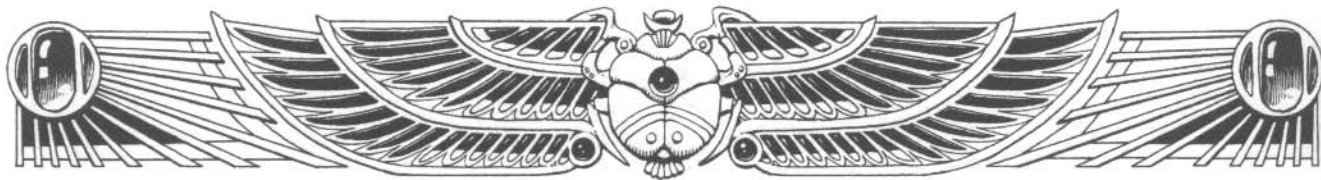
Sometimes a crew needs to get underway more quickly than the usual repair methods will allow. In such cases, a crew can attempt to make repairs while its ship is still

moving—"on the fly," so to speak. When attempting such repairs, the Difficulty Number for the Crew Repair Test takes a +2 on-the-fly modifier and a modifier based on the time spent making the repair. These modifiers are shown on the Crew Repair Test Table, p. 98.

A crew can also concentrate on repairing a single Attribute of its ship, such as its Speed Attribute. In this case, the crew gains a +3 bonus to its Crew Rating for the Crew Repair Test. However, Wounds recovered in this manner raise the selected Attribute only. Such repairs have no affect on other Attributes.

The elementalist Repair spell (p. 161, ED rulebook) offers another method of effecting quick repairs. When using this spell, the Effect Test replaces the standard Crew Repair Test, but add a +6 modifier to the test's Difficulty Number.





CREW REPAIR TEST TABLE

Repair Conditions	Difficulty Number/Modifier
At Anchor	Number of Wounds + 8
On the Fly	+2 Difficulty Modifier
5 hours	+2 Difficulty Modifier
1 hour	+3 Difficulty Modifier
10 minutes	+4 Difficulty Modifier
Repair single Attribute only	+3 to Crew Rating

Shipyard Repairs

Most t'skrang river villages maintain shipyards stocked with all the equipment necessary to fully repair riverboats and other types of vessels. Non-t'skrang towns and cities also maintain shipyards, but these facilities are usually far inferior to t'skrang yards.

Shipyard repairs do not entail any tests. Instead, the ship's crew pays a repair fee, and the shipyard makes the repair in a set number of weeks. (A riverboat that returns to its home village for repairs pays no fee, but repairs still take the usual time). Rather than restoring a ship's Wounds, shipyard repairs restore the separate Attributes of a ship. Fees are based on the number of steps the ship's crew wants restored in each Attribute. Because elemental-fire engine technology is a unique, jealously guarded t'skrang secret, only t'skrang shipyards can repair the Speed and Maneuverability Attributes of ships powered by fire engines. The Shipyard Repair Table shows the standard costs and time required for shipyard repairs.

Most shipyard operators request a 20-percent deposit before they begin repairs and expect ship owners to haggle over the fee.

SHIPYARD REPAIR TABLE

Attribute	Repair Cost	Repair Time
Speed	200 sp per step	1 week per step
Maneuverability	300 sp per step	1 week per step
Firepower	300 sp per step	1 day per step
Hull		
Less than 25 percent of Destroyed Rating		
	200 sp per step	2 weeks per step
25-75 percent of Destroyed Rating		
	800 sp per step	4 weeks per step
More than 75 percent of Destroyed Rating		
	x 2/3 original cost	6 months

The minimum cost to repair a damaged ship is 200 silver pieces, even if the ship has not taken a Wound. Such repairs restore all Damage Points.

Several towns and cities along the river have superior shipyards, where ships can be repaired more quickly. The shipyards at Tremeer and Denlikiyan, for example, repair ships in half the standard time at no extra cost. The shipyards in Urupa can also perform repairs in half the standard time, but these yards can repair only sailing ships and galleys. The yards at House K'tenshin's headquarters can make repairs in half the time, but these yards service only K'tenshin vessels. Reportedly, House Ishkarat maintains a remarkably advanced shipyard near Iopos, but the facility only services Ishkaratan boats.

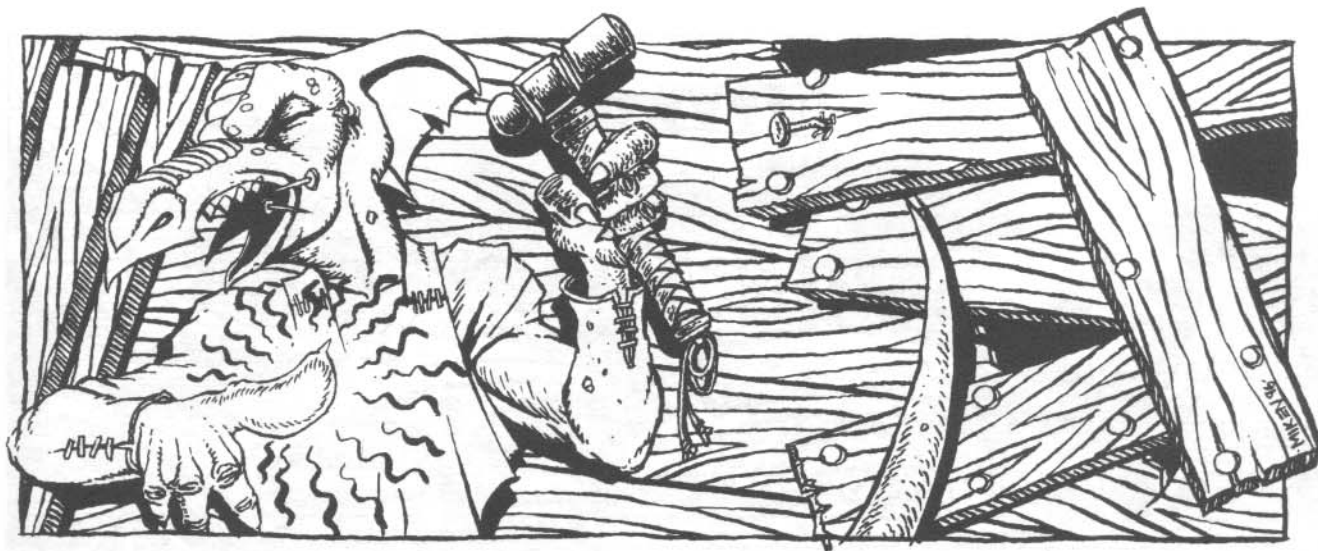
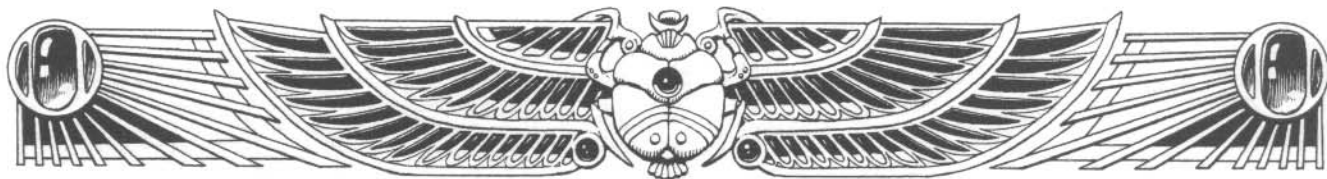
Crews willing to perform shipyard repair work themselves can rent space and equipment from independent yards in House V'strimon's Floating City, the Cliff City of House Syrtis, and Urupa. Crews pay the standard repair fees, but can finish repairs in half the standard time.

Additionally, any riverboat that encounters a Scavian barge on the South Reach can have its fire cannons repaired for as little as 50 silver pieces per step—provided the riverboat does not bear the red and gold color scheme of House K'tenshin, of course.

During a battle with a Henghyoke marauder in Lake Pyros, the V'strimon patrol boat Allegro takes 3 Wounds and 52 Damage Points before it breaks off from its opponent. The Allegro's captain knows that his ship will not escape pursuit unless he can get more speed within the hour, so he orders his crew to repair the shimoram's Speed step on the fly. The base Difficulty Number for the Crew Repair Test is 11 (Number of Wounds + 8). The test receives a Difficulty Modifier of 5 (+2 for an on-the-fly repair and +3 for performing the repair in 1 hour). That produces a final Difficulty Number of 16. The Allegro has a Crew Rating 16, but that rating receives a +3 modifier because the crew is repairing a single Attribute. That means the controlling player uses Step Number 19 for the test.

The Crew Repair Test yields a 24, a Good success! This means that the ship recovers 2 Wounds, which pushes the ship's Speed step from 5 up to 7. With the boost in speed, the patrol boat is able to evade the marauder during the subsequent pursuit. The Crew Repair Test result also provides the Allegro's controlling player with 2 Recovery Tests to recover Damage Points. The ship still has 1 Wound, so the Armor Rating for the tests is 17. The Recovery





Tests yield results of 15 and 11, so the *Allegro* recovers 26 Damage Points. That leaves the ship with 26 Damage Points.

Some time later, the *Allegro* limps into a dwarf town on the eastern shore of the lake. The shipyard owner there tells the captain that the yard can refit the damaged fire cannon and fill in the holes in the hull (Firepower and Hull Attributes), but repairing the damage to the fire engine and paddle wheel (Speed and Maneuverability Attributes) are beyond his engineer's abilities. The captain asks for an estimate on the work, and the dwarf tells him that repairing the fire cannon, which still has 3 Wounds, will cost 900 silver pieces and take 3 days to complete. The hull damage is down to 16 points, slightly more than 25 percent of the ship's Destroyed Rating. Three Wounds remain, so repairing the hull will cost 2,400 silver pieces and take 12 weeks.

The captain and the shipyard owner sit down to haggle over the 3,300-silver piece price tag. Of course, the captain still needs to find some good sailors to replace his casualties (Crew Attribute), and dwarfs are not exactly what he had in mind!

RIVERBOAT MAINTENANCE

Riverboats require frequent maintenance to remain in full working order. Fire engines must be tuned and stocked with kernels of elemental fire; paddlewheels must be balanced on their crankshafts; hulls must be scraped clean of barnacles; and a large number of appurtenances, from rope to oars to doorknobs, must be refurbished or replaced. To reflect these maintenance needs, each month a ship's captain or engineer must make a Maintenance Test, using his Pilot Boat talent (or skill), against a Difficulty Number

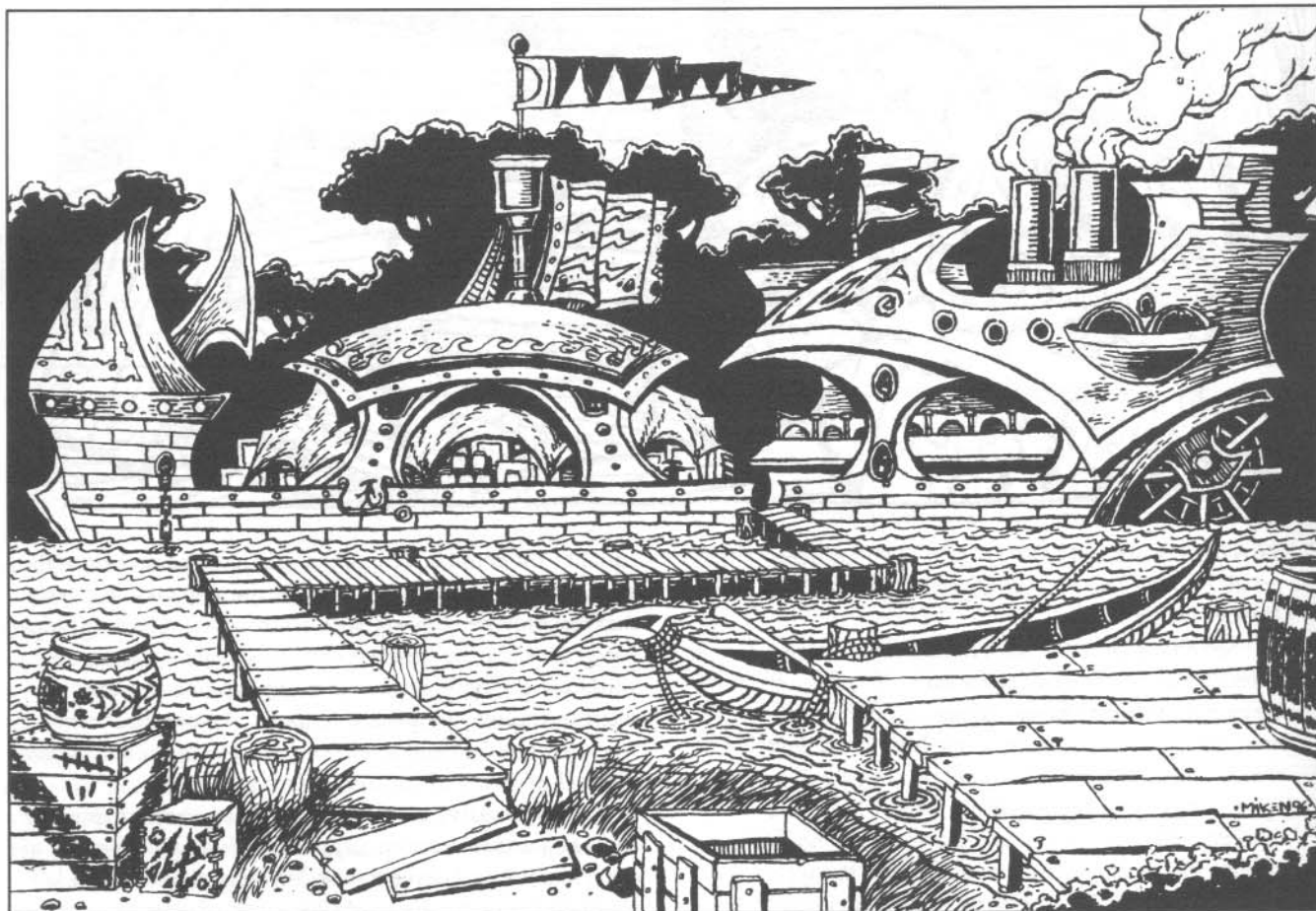
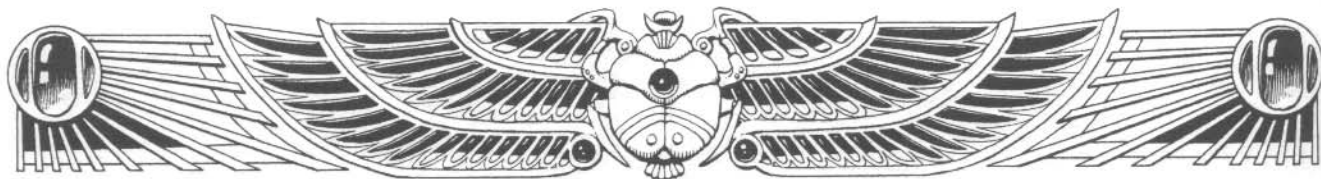
equal to the number of months that have passed since the ship's last overhaul. If the test fails, the ship takes a Wound that can only be repaired with an overhaul. T'skrang shipyards provide the best overhauls—in fact, t'skrang shipyards are the only places where fire-engine powered vessels can receive complete overhauls. An overhaul takes 1 week to complete and costs 10 silver pieces for each point of the ship's Critical Threshold Rating.

Additionally, crews need to keep their ship's fire engines and fire cannons supplied with ample amounts of elemental fire and elemental air. Fire engines consume 1 kernel of elemental fire for every 200 hours of operation (about 1,000 miles of travel under normal speeds). Each time a captain or ship's engineer increases a ship's Speed step beyond its regular rating, whether in combat or in the course of travel, the kernel loses 10 hours of life (50 miles of travel). Fire kernels are packaged by skilled craftsmen in boxes reinforced with orichalcum and elemental earth. Typically, a box contains 5 kernels and costs about 500 silver pieces on the South Reach, 600 silver pieces on the Coil River and Mid Reach, and 650 silver pieces on the river's North Reach.

Standard fire cannons hold 5 kernels of elemental fire and 5 kernels of elemental air. The cannons work by mixing kernels of each substance, which creates a fireball. Elemental air can be purchased in boxes of 5 kernels. Because elemental air can be found throughout the skies of Barsaive, boxes of it can be purchased for approximately 400 silver pieces throughout the province.

A single volley from a ship's fire cannons consumes 1 kernel of each element for each point of firepower above 12. For example, an aropagoi warship with a Firepower Attribute of 17/17 would use 5 kernels of fire and 5 kernels of air (17 - 12) each turn it fires its cannons.





SHIP PROFILES

The following profiles provide descriptions and game statistics for the most common types of vessels that travel the Serpent River system and the Aras Sea.

T'SKRANG RIVERBOAT (MERCHANT)

The riverboats of the Serpent River are used almost exclusively by t'skrang traders. The average merchant vessel is 150 to 200 feet long and 120 feet wide and can carry approximately 20 tons of goods, equipment and passengers. T'skrang riverboats are nearly always armed with fire cannons for defensive purposes, although the cannons may not always be in the best condition. Typically, riverboats are built with flat bottoms so that they can more easily navigate sand bars and other submerged hazards.

Crew sizes can vary widely, though 20 crew members can adequately operate most riverboats. During the Theran War, however, when privateering was rife on the river, riverboats seldom left port with less than 75 crew members

(the Crew Size number in parentheses represents this larger crew). In the past, strict regulations ensured that riverboat captains possessed considerable experience, but these standards have eroded in recent years.

The typical riverboat has enough cargo space to hold up to 300 duari of trade goods. Every crew member aboard, however, reduces the available space by 1 duari, and every point of firepower further reduces it by 2 duari. For example, a riverboat with 75 crewmen and 12 points of firepower can carry a maximum of 201 duari.

Speed: 7

Maneuverability: 7

Firepower: 13/13

Hull

Armor: 15

Ramming: 25

Cargo: 224 (200)

Damage

Critical: 18 Derelict: 63

Destroyed: 70

Crew

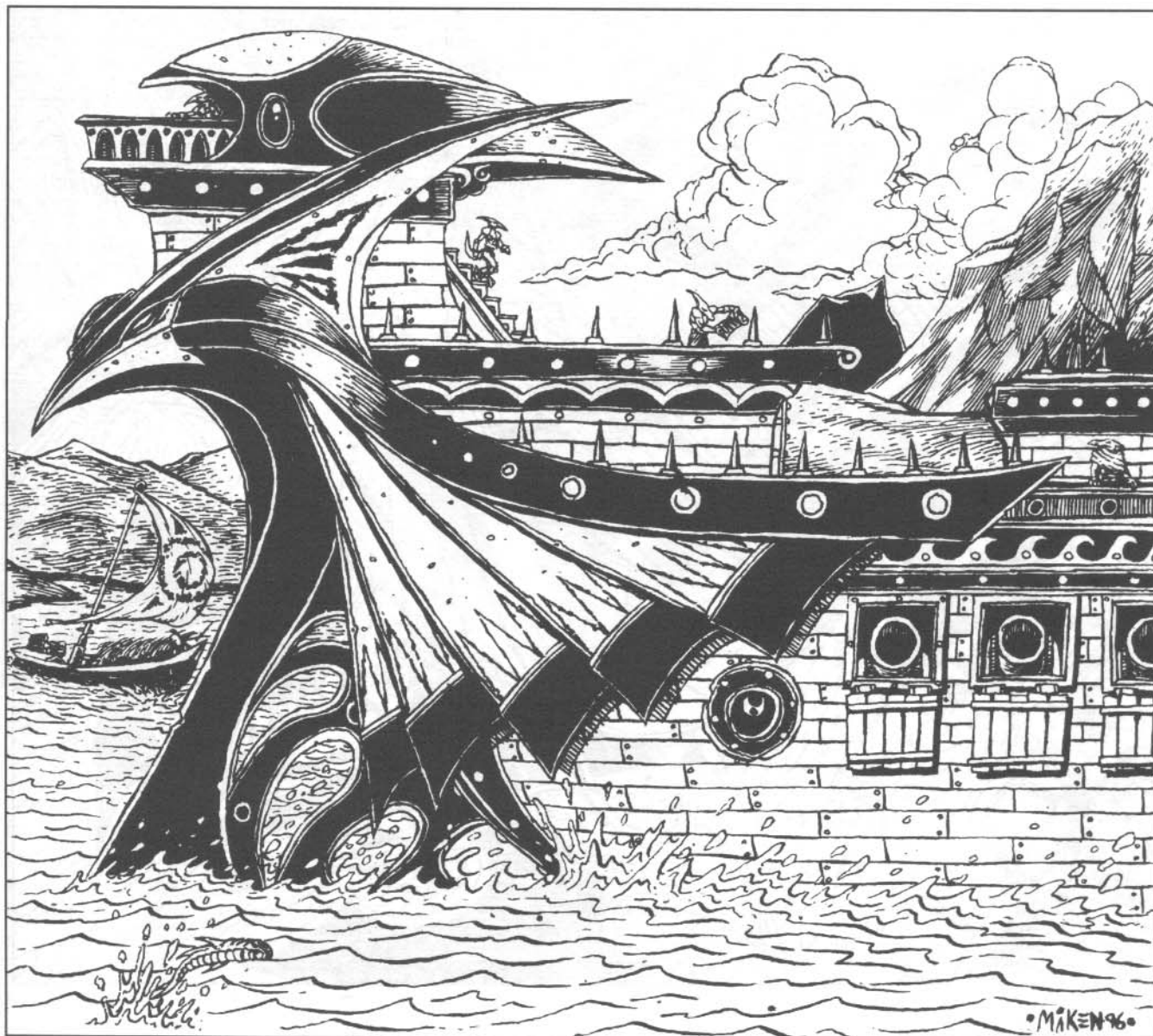
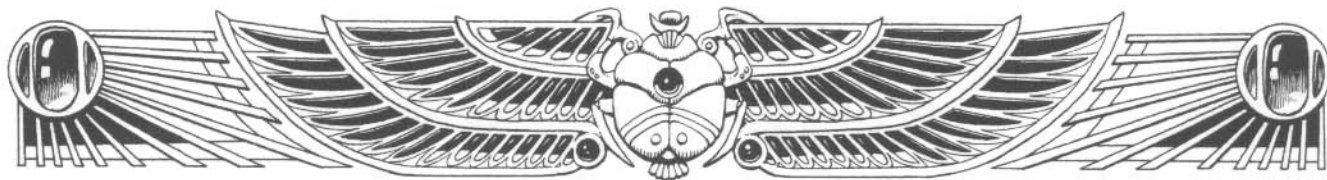
Captain: 4 Crew Skill: 1

Crew Size: 40 (74)

Crew Rating: 14 (15)

Morale: 46





ARAPAGOIAN WARSHIP

The warships of the arapagoi are the undisputed masters of Barsaive's waterways. The basic design of a warship differs little from a merchant riverboat, but warships tend to be considerably larger than merchant vessels—some, in fact, are as long as 300 feet. Warships also carry more fire cannons, armor and crew members than merchant vessels, which leaves them with less cargo space than trading boats. Captains of arapagoi warships are among the craftiest fighters and tacticians anywhere on the river, and their crews are seasoned and fierce.

Speed: 7

Maneuverability: 7

Firepower: 17/17

Hull

Armor: 16

Ramming: 25

Cargo: 100

Damage

Critical: 18

Derelict: 63

Destroyed: 70

Crew

Captain: 7

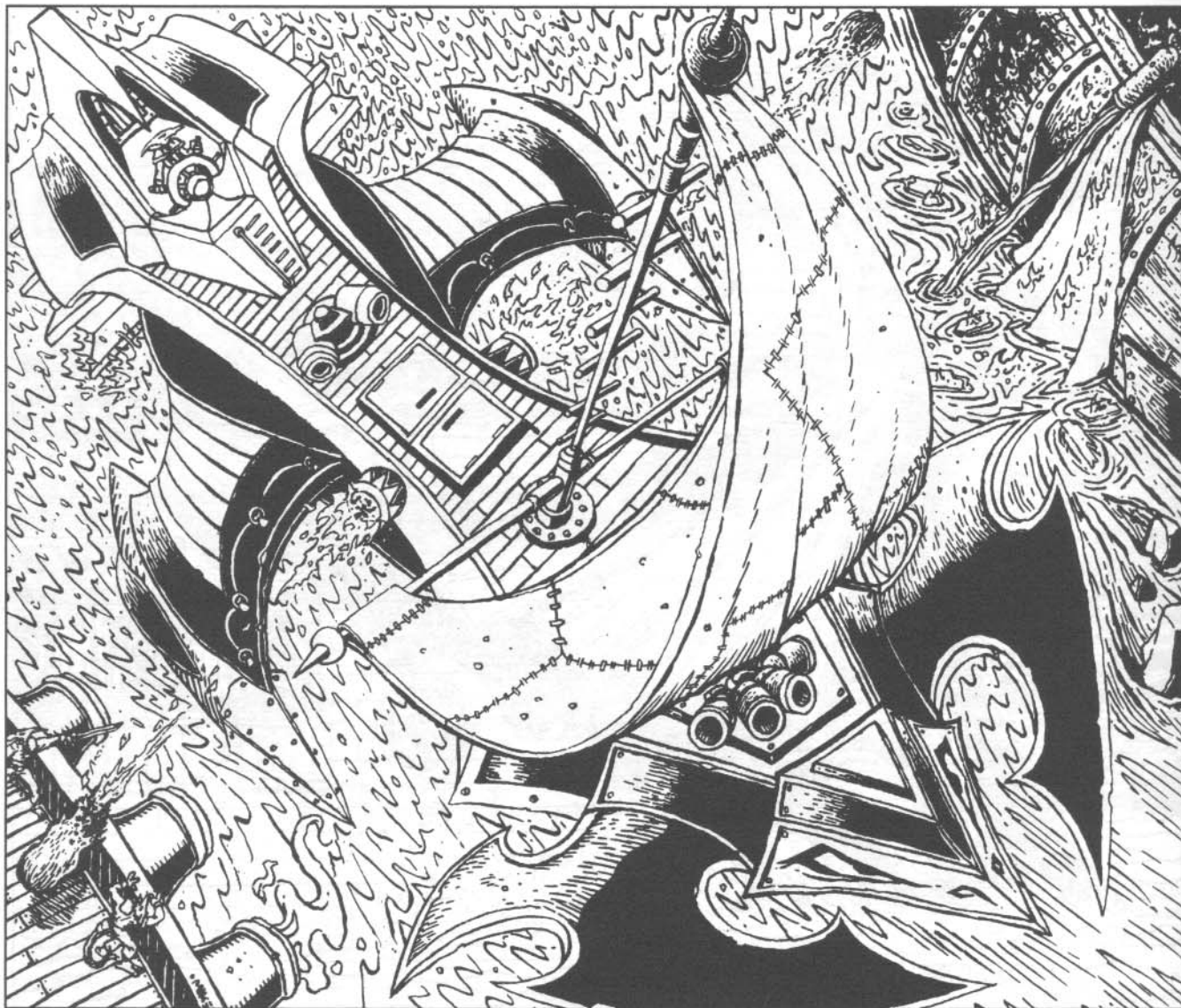
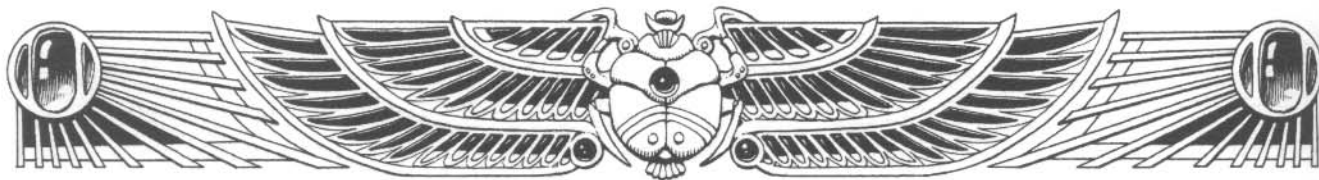
Crew Size: 150

Crew Skill: 2

Crew Rating: 18

Morale: 70





V'STRIMONIAN SHIMORAM

The shimoram is a small V'strimonian attack ship built for speed and maneuverability. The word *shimoram*, in fact, means "eye blink," a reference to the quickness of these nimble vessels. Although the typical shimoram is less than 100 feet long, the ship packs a powerful punch. The shimoram's keel, a unique feature among river vessels, and its light weight enable it to run and maneuver more quickly than virtually any other type of ship on the Serpent. And when fitted with its special, detachable ramming head, the swift shimoram is actually more dangerous than many larger vessels in ramming contests. The shimoram's relatively small size limits the size of its crew, so most shi-

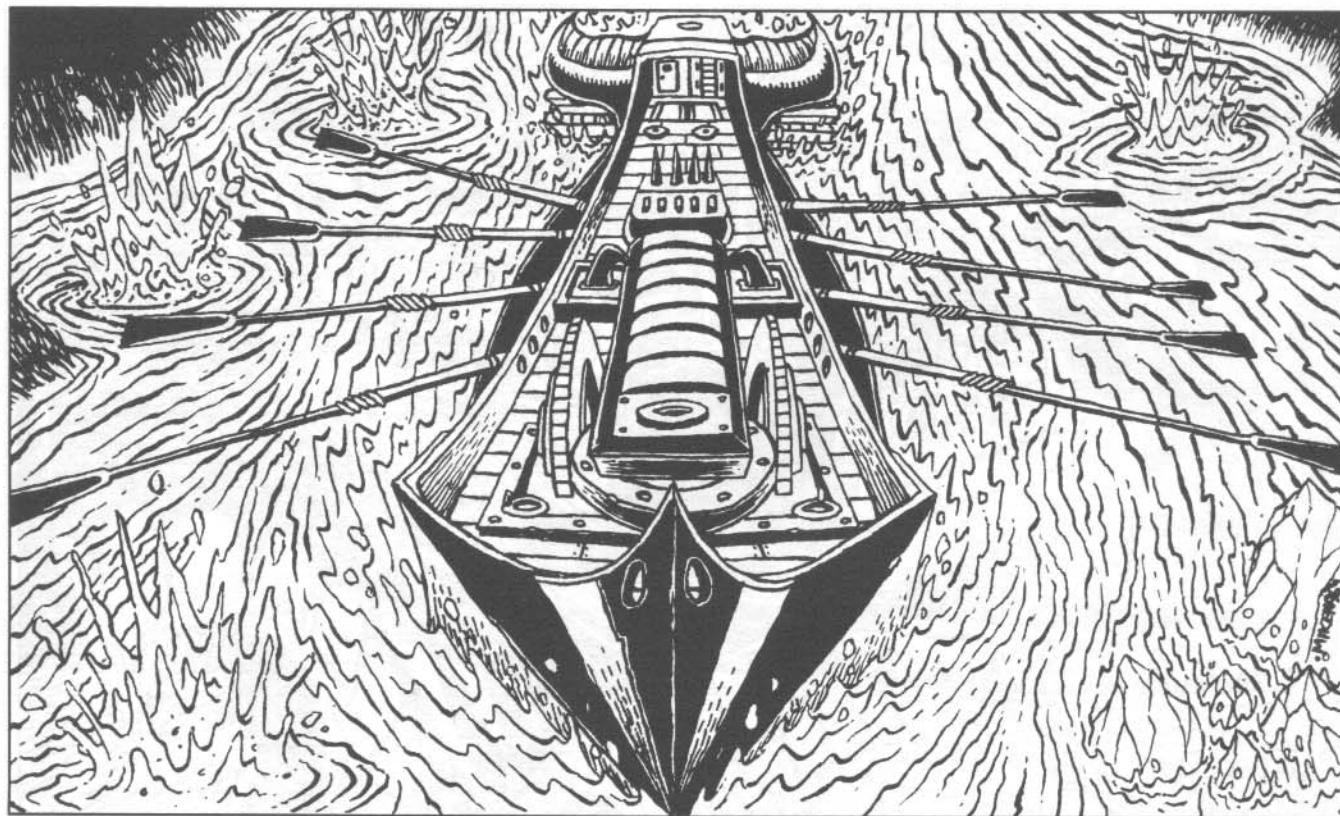
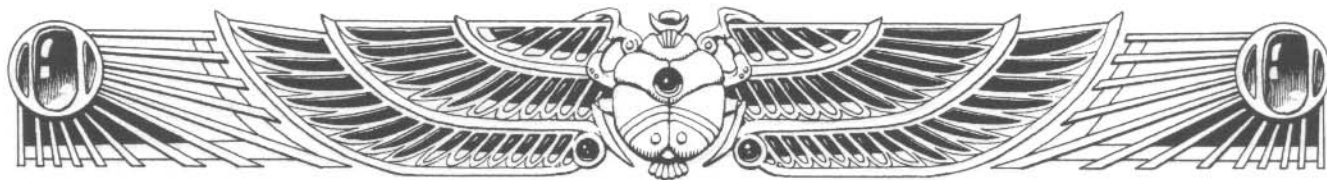
moram captains employ the so-called Westhral principle when engaging in combat—never let 'em board your ship.

Speed: 8
Maneuverability: 8
Firepower: 17/17
Hull
 Armor: 18
 Ramming: 28
 Cargo: 50

Damage
 Critical: 19
 Derelict: 63
 Destroyed: 75

Crew
 Captain: 6
 Crew Size: 150
 Crew Skill: 3
 Crew Rating: 19
 Morale: 75





ISHKARAT WARSHIP

The warships of House Ishkarat contain a number of features that reflect the Ishkaratans' unique battle tactics. First, Ishkaratan vessels feature narrow, sleek hulls that enable them to close on unsuspecting opponents quickly and withdraw just as rapidly if the tide of battle turns. The sleek hull design also results in narrow decks, which make boarding an Ishkaratan vessel more difficult for opponents. And the low profiles of Ishkaratan ships provide smaller targets for enemy gunners.

The Ishkaratans consider their crews, largely composed of trained swordmasters, the main weapons of their warships. To increase the effectiveness of boarding actions and allow their crews opportunities to fight, every Ishkaratan warship is fitted with a large, permanently attached gang-plank called a *corvus*. The typical *corvus* is 15 feet wide and 30 feet long. Massive hinges and winch-operated swing lines connect the *corvus* to its warship. When the warship closes with an enemy, the Ishkaratan crew drops the *corvus* onto their opponents' deck. Iron spikes mounted on the underside of the *corvus*'s far end ensure that the plank attaches firmly to the enemy vessel. Then the warship's swordmasters swarm across the *corvus* and onto the opponent's ship.

The Ishkaratans consider fire cannons a secondary weapon, and so the cannons on most Ishkaratan warships are slightly smaller than those used by other aropagoi. As a result, the range and firepower of Ishkaratan fire cannons are slightly inferior.

Speed: 8

Maneuverability: 7

Firepower: 15/20

Hull

Armor: 18

Ramming: 25

Cargo: 100

Damage

Critical: 17

Derelict: 54

Destroyed: 61

Special

The *corvus* adds 3 to an Ishkaratan warship's Crew Rating during the first turn of any boarding action. Additionally, the device adds a +3 Difficulty Modifier to tests made by an opponent attempting to break off from an Ishkaratan boarding action.

Crew

Captain: 6

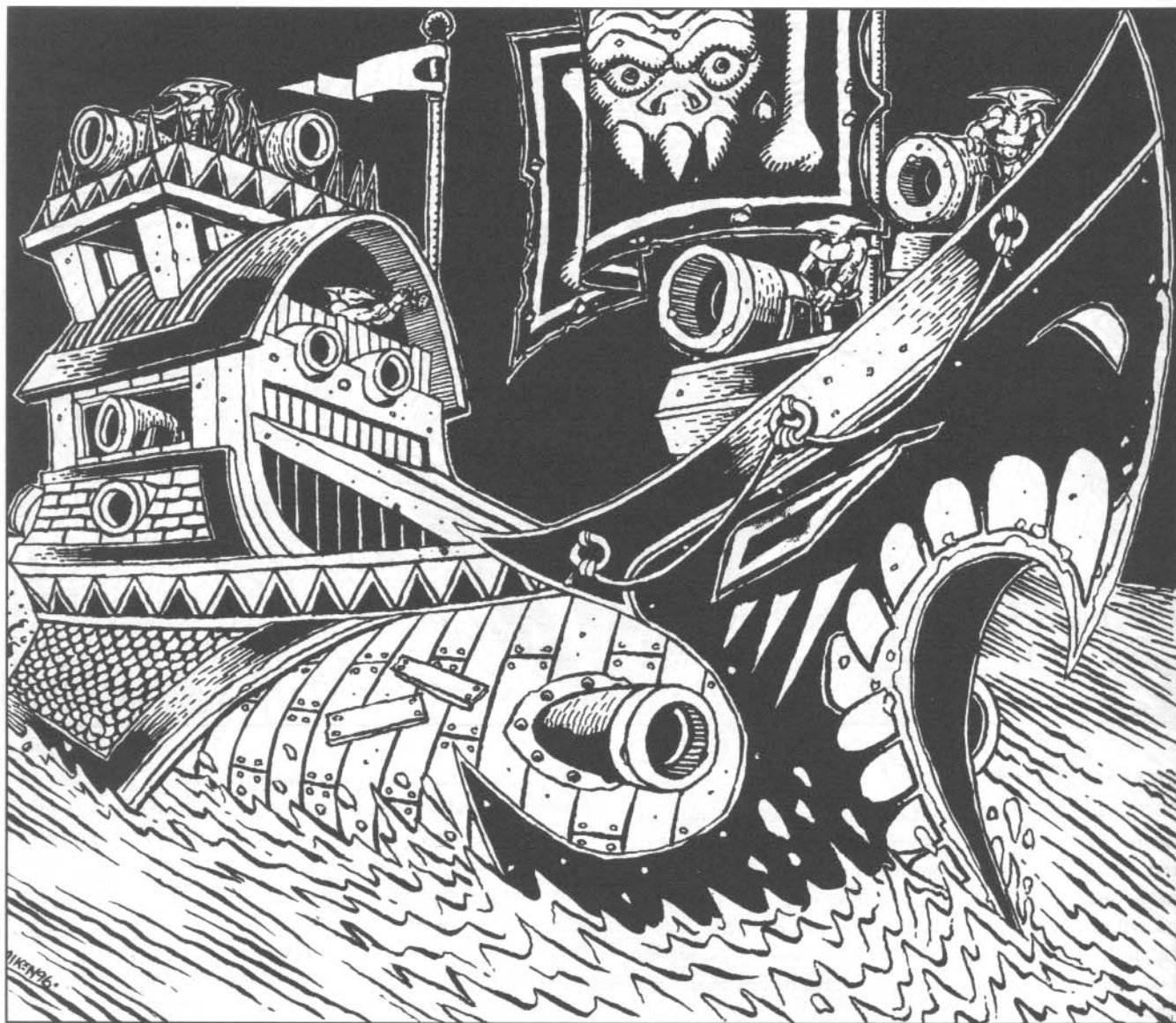
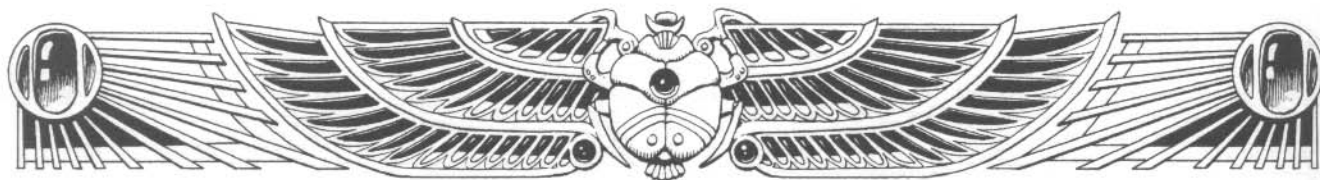
Crew Size: 75

Crew Skill: 2

Crew Rating: 16

Morale: 56





FREELANCE PIRATE

The typical pirate vessel carries less armor than an aropagoi warship, but pirate captains usually try to outfit their ships with every fire cannon they can get their hands on. Most pirate crews have problems keeping a steady supply of ammunition for their cannons, however, and so cannot afford to fire them all at the same time. Keeping an adequate supply of fuel for their fire engines is also a problem for pirate crews. Most pirates have few opportunities to overhaul their vessels' fire engines, which adversely affects their ships' maneuverability. As a result of these drawbacks, most pirate captains rely on board and storm tactics rather than firepower when engaging opponents.

Speed: 7

Maneuverability: 7 (6)

Firepower: 17 (13)/17

Hull

Armor: 15

Ramming: 25

Cargo: 150

Crew

Captain: 5

Crew Size: 30

Crew Skill: 1

Crew Rating: 18

Morale: 70

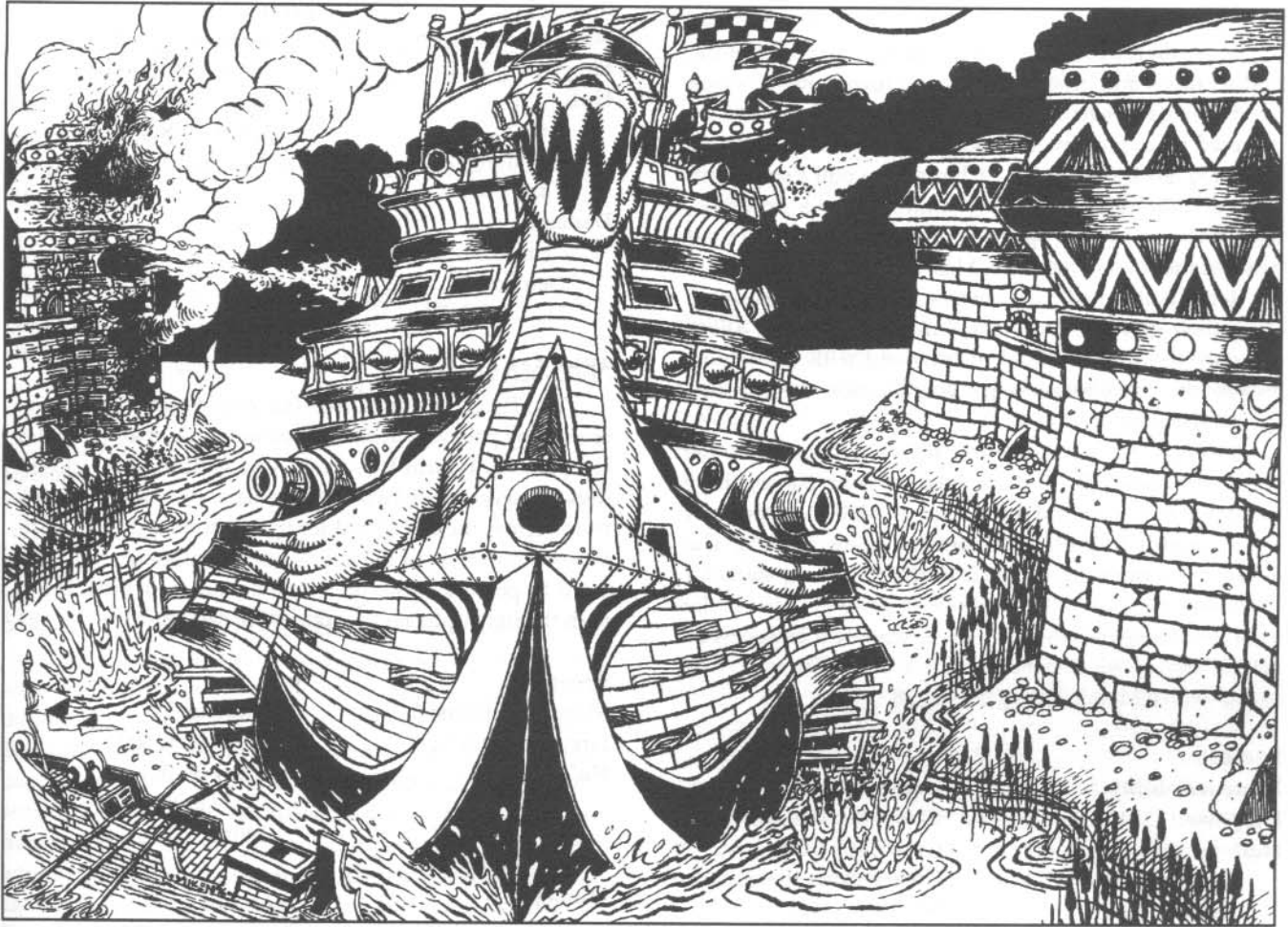
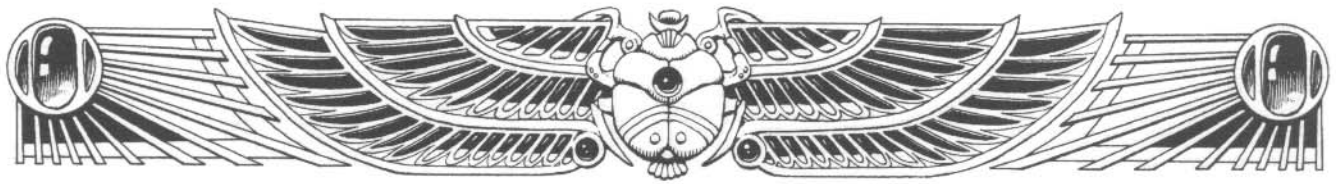
Damage

Critical: 20

Derelict: 71

Destroyed: 76





HENGHYOKIAN MARAUDER

Henghyokian marauders are the most dangerous boats on the river. Fortunately, House Henghyoke appears to have only three or four of these remarkable ships. These marauders outclass their opponents on nearly every level. They exhibit superior speed, maneuverability, firepower and crews, and they seem to possess an inexplicable ramming advantage. Some observers believe the Henghyokians use magic to augment their ramming attacks, because opponents who have experienced such attacks typically report seeing blue flashes just prior to impact. Additionally, Henghyokian captains regularly augment their crews with large river otters trained for battle (see *Henghyoke Otter*, p. 117).

Henghyokian marauders also seem to possess the ability to vanish without a trace when pursued. In game terms, add 5 steps to a Henghyokian marauder's Speed step for Speed Tests made to avoid pursuit. If a marauder

evades pursuit, add 5 steps to the Henghyokian captain's Pilot Boat Talent when determining the Difficulty Number of any Read River Test the pursuer makes to track the marauder (see *Pursuit*, p. 94).

Speed: 8

Maneuverability: 9

Firepower: 21/21

Hull

Armor: 18

Ramming: 32

Cargo: 75

Damage

Critical: 18

Derelict: 63

Destroyed: 70

Special

Henghyoke marauders add 5 steps to Speed Tests and the captain's Pilot Boat step when evading pursuit.

Crew

Captain: 7

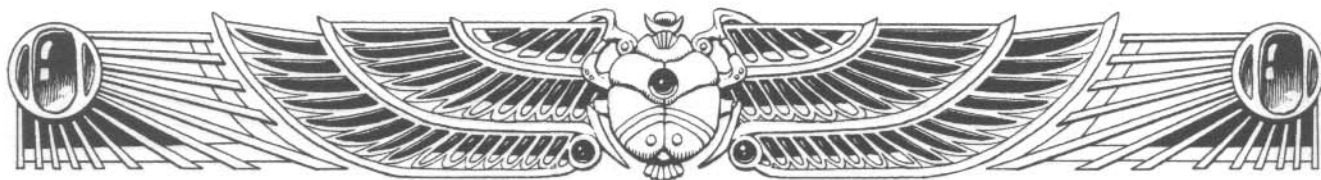
Crew Size: 200

Crew Skill: 4

Crew Rating: 20

Morale: 70





TRADING GALLEY

Most merchants from the trading cities of Urupa, Travar, Iopos and other non-t'skrang towns must rely on oar-driven galleys to transport their wares. These ships are powered by approximately 100 oarsmen, arranged in two staggered levels that enable each rower to pull a single oar. Typically, the galley's speed is controlled by a drummer, who sets the rowers' pace by beating on a drum set between the rows of oarsmen. Most modern galleys feature top decks that shield their rowers, fire cannons mounted along their gunwales, and small masts and sails. Galleys can only use their sails when traveling with tail winds, because they have no keels that would enable them to tack against the wind.

Free galleys, which use free men as oarsmen, are the norm throughout Throal-dominated Barsaive. Slave galleys use slaves as rowers and must employ small contingents of armed guards to keep their oarsmen under control. The numbers in parentheses listed in the following statistics represent the statistics for crews of slave galleys. If the oarsmen of a slave galley manage to liberate themselves en masse, they attack opponents with a Crew Rating step of 14, but with a Morale Rating of only 38.

Speed: 5	Crew
Maneuverability: 5	Captain: 3
Firepower: 12/15	Crew Size: 100 (20)
Hull	Crew Skill: 0 (2)
Armor: 12	Crew Rating: 15 (13)
Ramming: 16	Morale: 51 (42)
Cargo: 80	
Damage	
Critical: 16	
Derelict: 49	
Destroyed: 56	

WAR GALLEY

The typical Barsaivian war galley is a closed-deck ship with two banks of oars. Two rowers man each oar in the top bank. War galleys are about the same size as t'skrang riverboats, but they possess slightly more armor and firepower. Although war galleys are slower and less maneuverable than aropagoian warships, the size and morale of their crews match those of aropagoian battle crews. As a result, a competently commanded war galley can fairly match nearly any aropagoian warship. The war galleys of Urupa and the V'strimonian warship based in the city often stage mock battles to hone their skills—and the galleys emerge victorious as often as the warship.

Speed: 5
Maneuverability: 6
Firepower: 20/20
Hull
Armor: 20
Ramming: 20
Cargo: 60
Damage
Critical: 18
Derelict: 63
Destroyed: 70

Crew
Captain: 5
Crew Size: 150
Crew Skill: 2
Crew Rating: 18
Morale: 65

ARAS SEA GALLEY

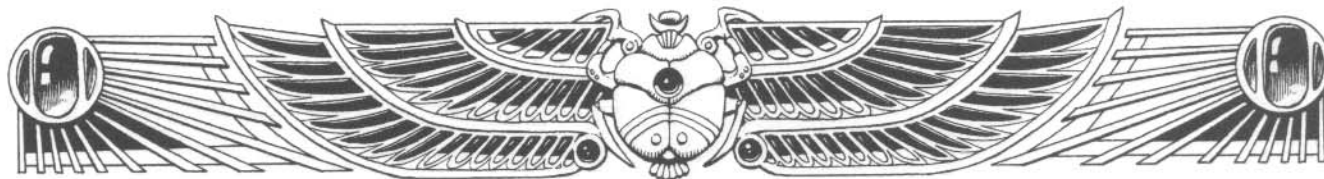
The People from Across the Aras Sea build massive seaworthy galleys, which are a common sight at the port of Urupa. Like typical Barsaivian war galleys, these closed-deck vessels feature two banks of oars. Because the People from Across the Sea forbid foreigners to board their ships, little is known about the interior design of these craft. Most seem to possess crews of 300 men, and their hulls bristle with the ugly upturned snouts of fire cannons.

Speed: 5	Crew
Maneuverability: 6	Captain: 5
Firepower: 22/22	Crew Size: 300
Hull	Crew Skill: 1
Armor: 25	Crew Rating: 18
Ramming: 25	Morale: 70
Cargo: 100	
Damage	
Critical: 20	
Derelict: 71	
Destroyed: 76	

SCAVIAN BARGE

Scavian barges range from 100 to 200 feet in length and 70 to 130 feet in width. The decks of these barges typically ride close to the surface of the water and are covered with patchworks of lean-tos and shacks. Although Scavian barges may appear flimsy and haphazardly constructed, they contain numerous advanced features that illustrate the Scavians' ship-building expertise. The Scavians construct the bases of their barges with stone, rather than wood, and so Scavian barges are much more durable than they appear. The Scavians power their vessels by a mysterious means that makes no use of oars or fire engines and enables a Scavian barge to travel at a steady speed, regardless of the river's current. Finally, the Scavians' long tradition of elemental fire work is reflected in the impressive power of their barges' fire cannons.





The Crew Size in the following statistics reflects the crew size of the largest known Scavian barges. The actual population of a barge is usually twice its crew size, because Scavian women are forbidden to perform crew duties or make war. Smaller barges are typically populated by up to 30 residents and have correspondingly lower Crew Size ratings.

Speed: 5
Maneuverability: 6
Firepower: 18/23
Hull

Armor: 20
 Ramming: 20
 Cargo: 30

Damage
 Critical: 18
 Derelict: 63
 Destroyed: 70

Crew
 Captain: 5
 Crew Size: 50
 Crew Skill: 3
 Crew Rating: 16
 Morale: 56

SAILING SHIPS OF THE ARAS SEA

The keeled sailing ships of the Aras Sea depend on the wind to push them along the water. Reportedly, some of these vessels mount fire cannons, but few such ships have ever been seen in Barsaive's Aras ports. The following statistics represent a ship that is 70 feet long and 35 feet wide, with 15 feet of draft. A sailing ship's Speed step varies, depending on the strength of the prevailing wind and whether the ship is running with the wind or tacking against it. Appropriate Speed steps are listed in the Sailing Speed Table below. A sailing ship's Maneuverability Attribute is always the same as its Speed step.

SAILING SPEED TABLE

Wind Speed	Same Direction	Tacking Against
Less than 5 mph	Speed Step 5	Speed Step 4
5-10 mph	Speed Step 7	Speed Step 6
11-20 mph	Speed Step 9	Speed Step 8
21-30 mph	Speed Step 11	Speed Step 10
Greater than 30 mph	Speed Step 13	Speed Step 11

Any time a sailing ship is sailing in a wind that exceeds 30 miles per hour, the gamemaster makes a Hazard Test for the ship against a Difficulty Number equal to the ship's Speed step. Use Step Number 4 for the test, and repeat the test every 8 hours if the ship remains in such conditions. See **Navigational Hazards**, page 93, for the consequences of Hazard Tests.

Speed: See Sailing
 Speed Table
Maneuverability:
 Same as Speed step
Firepower: (12/12)
Hull
 Armor: 12
 Ramming: 16
 Cargo: 50

Damage
 Critical: 15
 Derelict: 44
 Destroyed: 51
Crew
 Captain: 3
 Crew Size: 30
 Crew Skill: 1
 Crew Rating: 13
 Morale: 46

DWARF BARGE

Dwarfs do not take easily to water, but in Barsaive a river is always the fastest route to market. "Thus trade makes sailors of us all," as the old dwarf adage says. As with so many other things, dwarf ship design exhibits a plodding utilitarian aesthetic, which makes all dwarf barges appear nearly identical.

Typically, these flat-bottomed boats run close to the river's banks. When traveling downstream, a dwarf barge is propelled by the river's current, and its crew uses poles to steer it. When a dwarf barge travels upstream, it is pulled by a team of pack animals that trudges along one of the ubiquitous tow paths that line the banks of the Serpent and its tributaries. Alternatively, a barge traveling upstream can usually purchase towing services from passing t'skrang ships. The usual fee for a riverboat tow is 30 silver pieces per day. In the area around Throal, riverboats towing 2 or 3 barges are a common sight. Towing a barge in this manner reduces a riverboat's Speed step by 2.

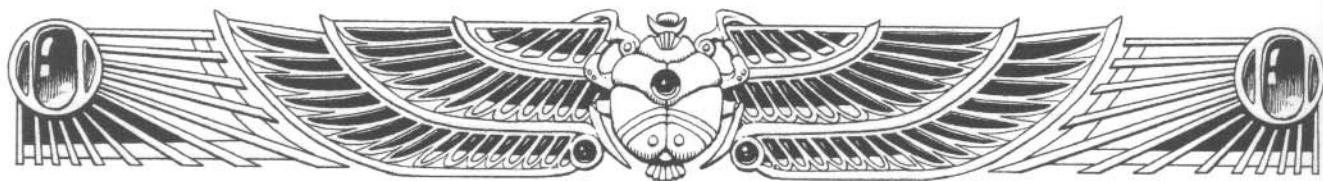
Dwarf barges are commonly used on the underground rivers of Throal to transport ore. These barges are nearly always accompanied by their own teams of pack animals to ensure that they do not become stranded without an effective means of locomotion.

Most dwarf barges contain very few dwarf crew members, because most barge owners can hire human or t'skrang sailors for a fraction of the price needed to persuade the typical dwarf to venture onto the water.

Speed: 3
Maneuverability: 3
Firepower: None
Hull
 Armor: 13
 Ramming: 16
 Cargo: 30
Damage
 Critical: 13
 Derelict: 36
 Destroyed: 44

Crew
 Captain: 0
 Crew Size: 10
 Crew Skill: 1
 Crew Rating: 11
 Morale: 35





CANAL BOAT

The square-shaped, flat-decked canal boats of the Lake Ban region are usually 30 to 50 feet long and 20 to 30 feet wide. The crews of these boats use long poles to propel and steer them, so they seldom venture far from shore when traveling on the lake. Traditionally, the crews of these vessels paint their boats in garish colors.

Speed: 4	Crew
Maneuverability: 4	Captain: 3
Firepower: None	Crew Size: 7
Hull	Crew Skill: 1
Armor: 8	Crew Rating: 10
Ramming: 12	Morale: 38
Cargo: 30	
Damage	
Critical: 13	
Derelict: 36	
Destroyed: 44	

RIVER FERRY

Most of the Serpent River's ferry boats are small, older riverboats no longer reliable enough to make journeys of any considerable distance. These vessels have fire engines, but are usually stripped of their fire cannons before entering ferry service. Most often these ships ferry passengers across the river or to nearby towns and villages. On occasion, however, river ferries are used to transport trade goods short distances.

Speed: 5	Crew
Maneuverability: 5	Captain: 2
Firepower: None	Crew Size: 7
Hull	Crew Skill: 1
Armor: 10	Crew Rating: 10
Ramming: 12	Morale: 30
Cargo: 30 (can carry up to 100 passengers)	
Damage	
Critical: 13	
Derelict: 46	
Destroyed: 54	

DREVEKI (FISHING BOAT)

Examples of the *dreveki*, the small, sail-driven t'skrang fishing boat, can be seen along nearly all the waterways of Barsaive. Refer to the Sailing Speed Table, p. 107, when determining the Speed step and Maneuverability Attribute of a particular dreveki. One can often guess the relative prosperity of a dreveki's owner by his vessel's appearance.

Speed: Based on wind speed (see Sailing Speed Table, p. 107)

Maneuverability: Same as Speed step

Firepower: None

Hull
Armor: 6
Ramming: 10
Cargo: 10

Damage

Critical: 11
Derelict: 31
Destroyed: 39

Crew

Captain: 1
Crew Size: 7
Crew Skill: 0
Crew Rating: 9
Morale: 35

ROWBOAT

Rowboats can carry up to five human-sized Name-givers without undue strain. The Speed step of a rowboat is equal to the Strength step of its rower, divided by 3 and rounded down (use a Speed Step 1 if this calculation produces a result lower than 1). Most Name-giver rowers can generate a Speed step between 1 and 2 (2–3 mph). Stronger characters, such as trolls or obsidimen, might be able to generate a Speed Step 3—provided they can get inside the rowboat without sinking it in the first place! Also, a rower can use the Pilot Boat skill or talent to increase a rowboat's Speed step (see **Ship Speed on the River**, p. 92).

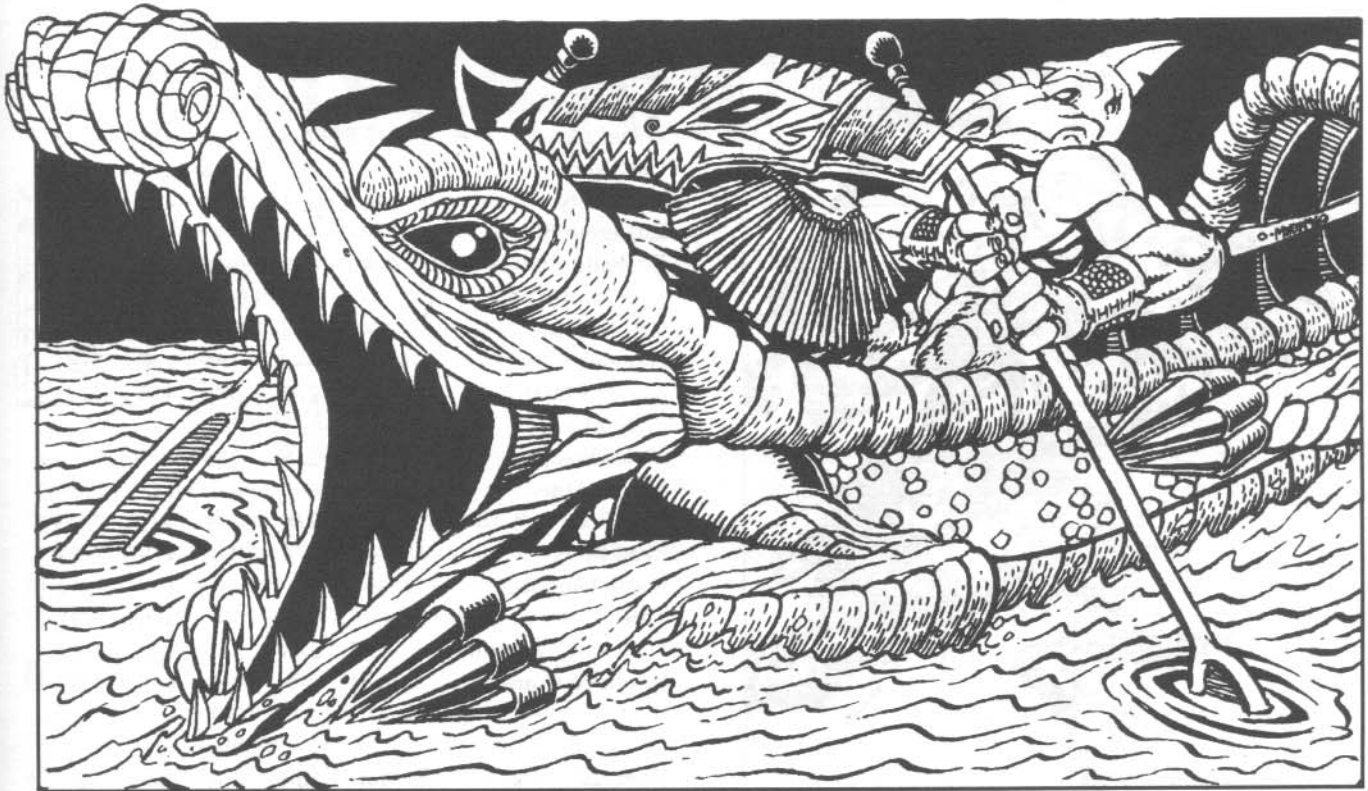
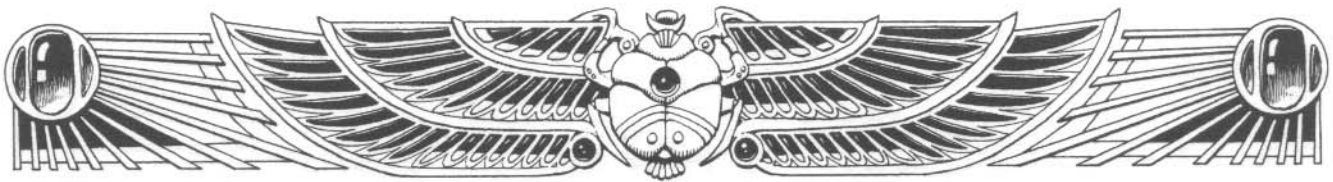
Speed: Rower's Strength step divided by 3	Damage
Maneuverability: 5	Critical: 6
Firepower: None	Derelict: 18
Hull	Destroyed: 27
Armor: 4	Crew
Ramming: 6	Captain: 0
Cargo: 3+	Crew Size: 1
	Crew Skill: 0
	Crew Rating: 5
	Morale: 24

CANOE

Canoes are the preferred mode of transportation in the Servos Jungle. They come in a variety of sizes. The largest can accommodate up to 8 human-sized passengers.

Speed: 3	Damage
Maneuverability: 4	Critical: 6
Firepower: None	Derelict: 18
Hull	Destroyed: 22
Armor: 2	Crew
Ramming: 6	Captain: 0
Cargo: 5	Crew Size: 3
	Crew Skill: 0
	Crew Rating: 7
	Morale: 20





JUNGLE T'SKRANG WAR CANOE

These large canoes, typically used by the fierce jungle t'skrang, are so durable that they can withstand the average damage caused by a fire cannon. When they attack in a group, they pose a serious threat despite the attackers' primitive weapons and equipment. The war canoes race toward the target riverboat, ducking under the fire-cannon barrage, then draw alongside the enemy vessel so that the crew can climb up the sides and storm the deck.

Speed: 3

Maneuverability: 4

Firepower: None

Hull

Armor: 5

Ramming: 8

Cargo: None

Damage

Critical: 3

Derelict: 21

Destroyed: 27

Crew

Captain: 1

Crew Size: 10

Crew Skill: 2

Crew Rating: 12

Morale: 42

RAFT OF THE PALE ONES

The rafts built by the t'skrang known as the Pale Ones are remarkably tough and buoyant. Typically, a t'skrang armed with a long pole stands on each corner of the 20-by-12-foot craft to push it along the water. The fifth crew member watches the water ahead and rests until one of his comrades requires relief. The raft can carry far more weight than seems possible. As the opponents in conflicts over territory, dwarfs have reported seeing as many as 30 warriors on a single raft. The numbers in parentheses represent the crew ratings of rafts fully loaded with passengers.

For more information about the Pale Ones, see p. 65, *Denizens of Earthdown, Volume I*.

Speed: 4

Maneuverability: 4

Firepower: None

Hull

Armor: 10

Ramming: 14

Cargo: 25 (0)

Damage

Critical: 12

Derelict: 34

Destroyed: 41

Crew

Captain: 3

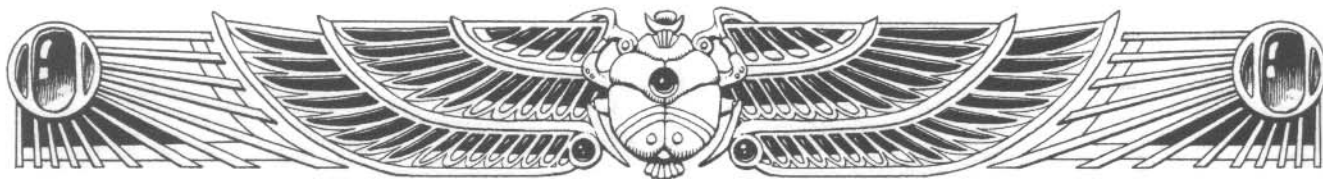
Crew Size: 5 (30)

Crew Skill: 1

Crew Rating: 9 (13)

Morale: 29 (42)





RIVERBOAT CREW

The following statistics reflect a typical riverboat crew member. The values listed after each talent represent the average talent rank and talent step at a particular Circle. The first number is the talent rank, the second number is the talent step. Damage Ratings and Karma Points are also listed according to Circle.

The average Circle of crew members aboard a riverboat equals the Crew Skill Rating listed in the ship's game statistics. Additionally, most riverboats have four officers—first mate, boatswain, quartermaster and engineer—of at least Fourth Circle. The typical t'skrang captain is at least Seventh Circle. Boatmen prefer the broadsword and parrying net for melee combat and the javelin for missile combat.

All riverboat crewmen are considered boatman adepts (see p. 106, *Denizens of Earthdawn, Volume I*, for complete statistics).

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10	Perception (12): 5/D8
Strength (14): 6/D10	Willpower (13): 6/D10
Toughness (14): 6/D10	Charisma (12): 5/D8

	Circle				
Talents	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	7th
Acrobatic Strike	—	1/7	2/8	2/8	3/9
Avoid Blow	1/7	2/8	3/9	4/10	7/13
Cast Net	—	—	2/8	4/10	7/13
Durability	—	1/1	2/2	4/4	5/5
Engaging Banter	—	—	—	—	2/7
Evaluate	—	—	—	—	7/12
First Impression	—	—	—	—	2/7
Great Leap	—	—	—	—	2/8
Haggle	—	—	1/6	2/7	3/8
Karma Ritual	1/1	2/2	3/3	4/4	7/7
Lizard Leap	—	—	—	—	3/9
Melee Weapon	2/7	2/8	3/9	4/10	7/13
Mystic Aim	—	—	—	1/7	2/8
Pilot Boat	2/7	2/8	3/9	4/10	7/13
Read River	—	1/6	3/8	4/9	7/12
Speak Language	—	—	—	—	7/12
Thread Weaving	—	—	—	1/6	7/12
Throwing Weapon	1/7	2/8	3/9	4/10	7/13
Unarmed Combat	1/7	2/8	3/9	4/10	7/13

	Circle				
Damage	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	7th
Death Rating	36	42	48	54	60
Wound Threshold	10	10	10	10	10
Unconsciousness Rating	28	33	38	43	48
Recovery Tests: 3*					
Recovery Dice: 6/D10					

	Circle				
Karma	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	7th
Karma Points	5	7	10	12	15
Karma Dice: D6					

Combat
Physical Defense: 8*
Spell Defense: 7
Social Defense: 7
Armor: 3
Mystic Armor: 1

Weapons
Broadsword (Damage: 11/D10 + D8)
Javelin (Damage: 9/D6 + D8)
Parrying Net (see Cast Net, p. 113, <i>Denizens of Earthdawn, Volume I</i>)
Tail Attack (Damage: 9/D6 + D8)

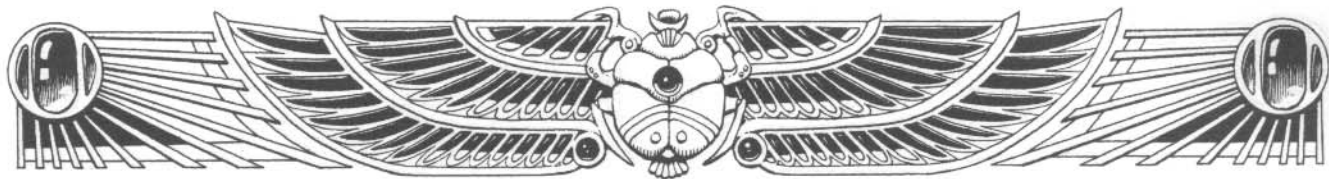
Notes

All riverboat officers (Fourth Circle and above) may use Karma when making Dexterity Tests.

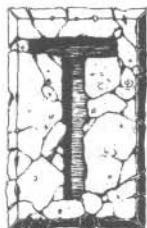
Captains may use Karma on Damage Tests made with melee weapons.

*Captains also receive +1 to their Physical Defense Rating and 1 additional Recovery Test per day.





FLORA AND FAUNA



The Serpent River system is home to a wide variety of unique plant and animal species. This section describes a number of plants and animals commonly encountered in the waters and along the shores of the Serpent River (many mentioned in earlier sections of this book), and includes game statistics and other information for these different species.

For explanations of the statistics used in this section, see page 286 of the **ED** rulebook. Many of the species described in this section are poisonous or make use of poisons; for poison rules, see pp. 207–209, **ED**.

PLANT LIFE

The following plants grow in various regions up and down the length of the Serpent River. For game purposes, many of these plants work best treated as creatures, while some work best treated as traps. For an explanation of trap statistics, refer to the **Traps** section on pages 209–210 of the **ED** rulebook.

Characters with the Wilderness Survival skill or knowledge skills in areas such as Botany or Natural Sciences can identify these plants by using an appropriate skill to make a successful test against a Difficulty Number of 8 or 9. Where appropriate, the specific Difficulty Number for identifying a plant appears in the plant's description.

BLOOD ALGAE

Thin layers of green to blue-green algae cover the surface of countless stagnant lagoons along the length of the Serpent. Generally, such algae is harmless. Certain lagoons in the upper reaches of the Serpent, however, contain layers of blood algae, a type of Horror construct. When floating on the surface of water, blood algae resembles harmless dark green algae. If brushed aside, however, blood algae leaves a thin, oily, rust-colored sheen that glistens briefly and then fades. Any Name-giver or creature that drinks from or bathes in a pool covered with blood algae becomes infected with blood algae spore. Additionally, any water drawn from such a pool contains blood algae spore that remains potent for one day after being removed from its source.

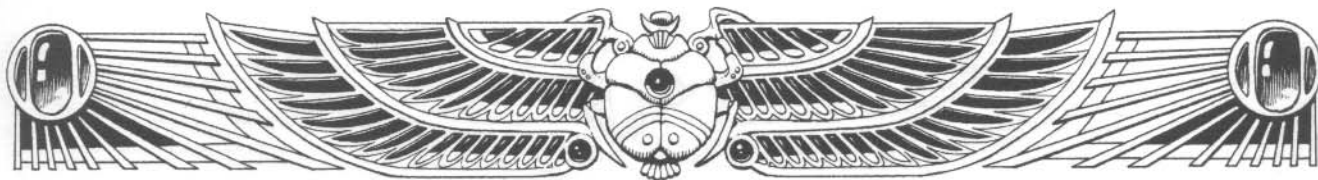
The first sign of infection from blood algae is an unquenchable thirst. An infected character will drink water by the gallon, yet still complain of thirst. Next, the infected character's skin takes on a ruddy cast that resembles a mild sunburn. As the infection causes the character's blood to thin, any cuts or bruises the character has suddenly become much more severe. Later, blood begins to leak steadily from the character's ears, nose and mouth. The character loses his power to speak and reason, and begins to experience convulsions. In its final stages, the infection liquefies every bone and organ in the character's body. The character's skin breaks into countless small wounds that leak green-tinged blood. This bleeding may last up to ten minutes, during which the character's entire body deflates like a balloon with a hole in it.

In game terms, blood algae acts as a Debilitating poison with a Spell Defense of 10 and a base Effect Step of 7. If a character ingests or is exposed to blood algae, make a daily Effect Test for the algae. The result of the Effect Test equals the damage the character takes from the algae. Additionally, the algae's Effect step increases by 1 each day. Magical healing may be used to halt the algae's Effect step increases, but it does not reduce the algae's Effect step, negate any previous increases or prevent the character from taking daily damage.

Any damage caused by blood algae can be healed only by a questor of Garlen or with healing salve brewed from the freshly picked petals of the mahogany trinrose (see **Mahogany Trinrose**, p. 112). All other forms of healing—magical or otherwise—are completely ineffective.

Questors of Raggok are said to harvest blood algae during the lunar eclipse and distill its essence into a poison. The resulting poison is a special kind of Damage Poison with a Spell Defense of 10 and an Effect Step of 8. Any target wounded by a weapon coated with this poison suffers Step 2 damage per round until he or she can staunch the bleeding with a healing aid or bandages.





Commentary

Eddypads resemble large lily pads. Ranging in size from 1 to 20 meters across, eddypads float just below the surface of the river or any of its numerous tributaries or adjacent pools. Even the slightest change in current may cause an eddypad to close like a flower around a passing creature. Within minutes, the eddypad constricts and forms a skin-tight cocoon around its prey. Although the inner surface of an eddypad is delicate, the outer layer is a tough, fibrous membrane through which victims must cut to escape. (In the statistics, the numbers in parentheses represent the outer layer of the eddypad.) Swimmers are the most common victims of eddypads, but even small boats often fall victim to larger pads.

Any time an eddypad successfully envelops a target, reduce all of the target's steps by 2. After enveloping a target, an eddypad uses its Spellcasting ability to suffocate its victim. Make a Spellcasting Test for the eddypad against the victim's Spell Defense each round. If the test

succeeds, the victim takes damage. Determine the damage by making an Effect Test for the pad.

An entrapped character may free himself—or another character may free him—by inflicting a Wound on the eddypad with an attack. However, any outside attack that inflicts an armor-defeating hit on an eddypad also damages any character trapped inside the pad (the victim's own armor protects him per standard rules).

MAHOGANY TRINROSE

Tea brewed from the mahogany trinrose is one of the most common herbal remedies used by Serpent River inhabitants. The rose blooms from climbing vines that cling to the steep bluffs and cliff faces of the Mid Reach and its tributaries. The rich rust-colored petals of the mahogany trinrose are easily identified by their strong aroma of cinnamon and musk. Any character who drinks tea brewed from the rose petals receives a +3 step modifier for a single Recovery Test per day. Additionally, trinrose petals are used to create a special salve capable of healing damage caused by blood algae.

EDDYPAD

DEX: 3 STR: 8 TOU: 8
PER: 4 WIL: 3 CHA: 4

Initiative: 4
Number of Attacks: 1
Attack: 12
Damage: 0 (see below)
Number of Spells: (1)
Spellcasting: 8
Effect: 10

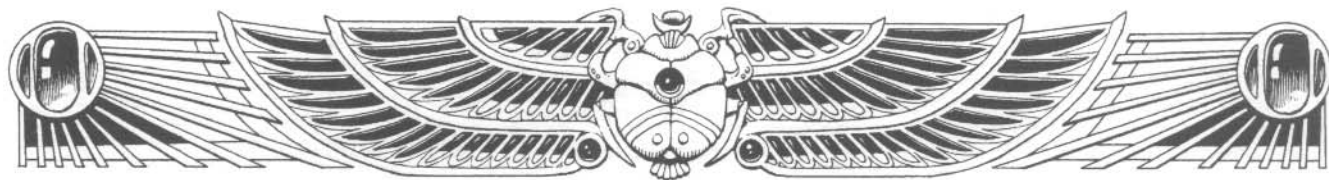
Death Rating: 55
Wound Threshold: 10 (15)
Unconsciousness Rating: 45

Legend Points: 190
Equipment: None
Loot: None

Physical Defense: 8
Spell Defense: 4
Social Defense: Immune
Armor: 10 (13)
Mystic Armor: 2
Knockdown: 20
Recovery Tests: 0

Combat Movement: 0
Full Movement: 0





MANGROVE EELS

DEX: 8 STR: 6 TOU: 8
PER: 4 WIL: 2 CHA: 2

Initiative: 8
Number of Attacks: 1
Attack: 8
Damage: 10
Number of Spells: NA
Spellcasting: NA
Effect: NA

Physical Defense: 8
Spell Defense: 5
Social Defense: 4
Armor: 4
Mystic Armor: 0
Knockdown: 12
Recovery Tests: 2

Death Rating: 40
Wound Threshold: 10
Unconsciousness Rating: 33

Combat Movement: 20
Full Movement: 20

Legend Points: 65
Equipment: None
Loot: Occasional loot from previous victims

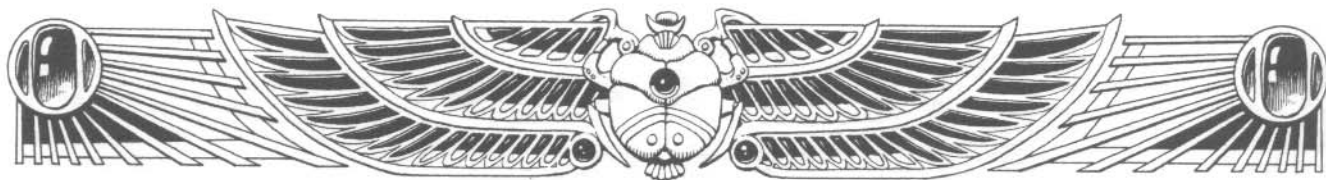
Commentary

So-called mangrove eels are actually roots of certain mangrove trees that grow in the Servos Jungle. These highly evolved roots possess heat-sensing organs that enable them to sense creatures (or Name-givers) passing nearby. Once a group of roots senses prey, the roots use their powerful pinion jaws and sawblade teeth to pull their victim under the surface of the water and into the center of the tree's underwater root system. There, the victim's decaying body provides nutrients to the growing tree. The t'skrang tribes of the Servos believe that mangrove eels are guardian spirits of elemental wood and regularly make offerings of fruit and fish to the roots to share in the spirits' protection. The movement of a group of mangrove eels is limited to a 10-yard radius surrounding the group's parent tree.

RAZORGRASS

Razorgrass grows in clumps in the lowland marshes that line the banks of the Serpent. Like many of the tall marshland grasses, razorgrass is normally indistinguishable from other grass species to all but experienced basket-makers and skilled botanists. In fact, many Name-givers pass through razorgrass colonies without ever realizing their danger, because the grass exposes its razor-edged inner leaf only when strong winds cross its surface. However, characters caught in razorgrass seldom survive the experience unscathed. The scholar Shev Allondargha has deduced that a razorgrass colony develops the species'





characteristic red plume only after blood has fallen on its roots. River folk prize such plumes for the bright red dye that can be extracted from them. Red razorglass plumes are worth 80 silver pieces per pound. The Difficulty Number for identifying razorglass is 11.

Detection Difficulty: 10

Trigger Condition: Strong wind plus close contact.

Trap Initiative: 10

Trap Effect: The leaves cut into the target, inflicting Step 20 damage.

SKY LOTUS

The sky lotus is a rare water-lily species that grows only in the calm eddies near the banks of the Tylon River north of Kratas. The sky lotus bears a beautiful blue flower sometime after midsummer. Soon after the flower opens, the lily begins to float *above* the surface of the water, with only a thin, threadlike stem connecting the bloom to its roots. By late summer, the flower typically hovers thirty feet above the water. This phenomenon is caused by the small pockets of elemental air that sky lotuses trap within their bulbs. As summer progresses, the sky lotus bulbs expand, absorbing yet more of the precious elemental substance and causing the lotuses to float ever higher. Astellan of Kratas has observed that when fall comes and the lotuses wither, their bulbs simply drift away on the wind. Alchemists and magicians all across Barsaive will pay up to 12 silver pieces for a sky lotus bulb.

TANGLEWEED

Numerous varieties of tangleweed grow both above and below the surface of the Serpent's waters. The most common variety grows in ten-foot clumps in the river's shallows. The vines of tangleweed plants entangle anything—including Name-givers—that comes into contact with them. The vines' grip may seem quite gentle to a character caught in a tangleweed, but any struggling simply causes the vines to tighten their grip until they literally tear their victim to pieces. And if a victim's struggles break a tangleweed vine, two vines take its place. As a result, escaping from a tangleweed's embrace is difficult even for a victim with the strength of a troll.

The safest method of escaping tangleweed is to remain perfectly still and wait for night to fall. At night, tangleweeds slowly release any victims they hold and retreat under the surface of the river.

Any character who becomes entangled by tangleweeds is automatically grappled. Make a Strength Test for

the vines, using Step 7. Whenever additional vines grapple the victim, make a new Strength Test and apply a +1 modifier to the step number for each additional vine. To cut through tangleweed vines, a character must make a successful Strength or Attack Test against the plant's Physical Defense of 6. Each vine has an Armor Rating/Mystic Armor of 0 and a Death Rating of 10. When a tangleweed vine takes 10 points of damage, it is cut or torn in half and the Strength step of the entire plant is reduced by 1. A single character can never be grappled by more than 6 vines at one time.

Detection Difficulty: 8

Trigger Condition: Encountered randomly on river.

Trap Initiative: 10

Trap Effect: Grapples the victim with a Strength Step of 7. Each additional vine adds +1 to the Strength step. Each vine cut or removed reduces the plant's Strength step by 1.

TENTACULAR KELP

Tentacular kelp grows from the river bottom, usually in the deeper parts of the river. Typically, tentacular kelp grows alongside harmless kelp plants in large groves near the center of the river. One side of tentacular kelp leaves are covered with adhesive suction cups. Whenever a creature brushes against a leaf, these suction cups grab the creature and a tiny spine in the center of each cup injects the victim with a paralyzing venom. T'skrang villages that cultivate harmless kelp species are very careful to weed the tentacular variety out of their kelp groves, but the river is dotted with the t'slashina of villages abandoned during the Scourge. Those t'slashina often contain groves of exceptionally large and hungry tentacular kelp plants.

In game terms, tentacular kelp acts more like a trap than a creature. Tentacular kelp cannot be disarmed, and so no disarm difficulty is listed in the following game statistics. Characters may remove tentacular kelp leaves or cut leaves without making tests.

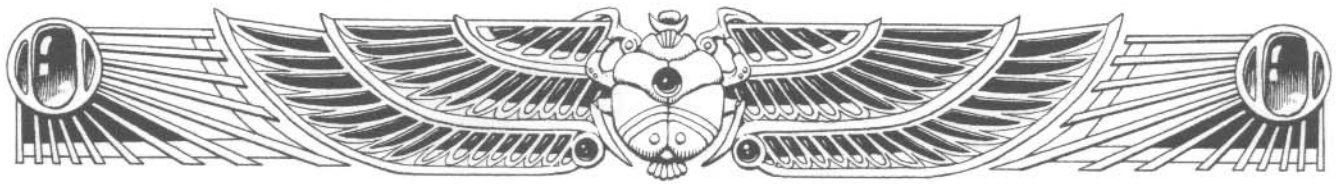
Detection Difficulty: 8

Trigger Condition: Touch

Trap Initiative: 10

Trap Effect: Target is struck by kelp leaf, which injects the victim with a Paralysis poison. The poison has a Spell Defense of 8 and an Effect Step of 10.





CREATURES

The following creatures inhabit various parts of the Serpent River and surrounding areas. Like several Serpent River plant species, some of these creatures are treated as poisons or traps for game purposes.

BRAIN MILLIPEDES

DEX: 4 STR: 3 TOU: 6
PER: 6 WIL: 8 CHA: 4

Initiative: 6
Number of Attacks: (1)
Attack: 4
Damage: 8
Number of Spells: 1
Spellcasting: 7
Effect: 13 (100 yards)

Physical Defense: 6
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 8
Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 4
Knockdown: 8
Recovery Tests: 1

Death Rating: 35
Wound Threshold: 6
Unconsciousness Rating: 27

Legend Points: 85
Equipment: None
Loot: Occasional coins and objects from previous victims

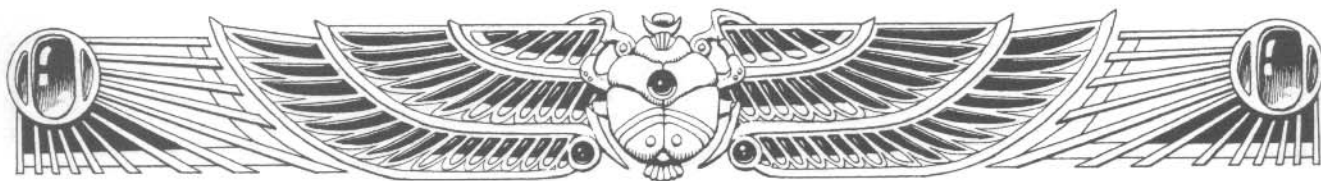
Commentary

Brain millipedes are an aquatic species that cannot live out of the water. Typically, specimens congregate in large masses that vaguely resemble exposed brains. When congregated in this manner, a brain millipede colony possesses a limited intelligence. Congregated colonies use an effect similar to the wizard spell *Crushing Will* to attack Name-givers who wander too close. This natural attack, however, is not a spell and does not require a millipede colony to weave any threads. A millipede colony continues to attack any target within its range until the target leaves the colony's range or is rendered unconscious.

If a target loses consciousness, the colony members disperse and reassemble on the victim's body. Then they begin to consume the victim slowly until they have contracted into the same clump they occupied before they dispersed. A victim takes Step 8 damage each round he is covered by the millipedes. One minute after lapsing into unconsciousness, a victim may awaken by making a successful Recovery Test. Once awake, the victim may remove the millipedes without any further tests. However, the millipede colony will re-form itself in 3 combat rounds and attack the victim again with its spell-like power if the victim remains within range.

According to river tales, brain millipede colonies consume the brains of their victims last and retain the intellects of those victims. However, these tales are probably no more than the musings of garrulous boatmen.





GIANT SPIDER

DEX: 5 STR: 5 TOU: 7
PER: 5 WIL: 5 CHA: 4

Initiative: 5
Number of Attacks: 1
Attack: 7
Damage: 8
Number of Spells: 1
Spellcasting: 9
Effect: Poison (see text)

Physical Defense: 6
Spell Defense: 5
Social Defense: 4
Armor: 2
Mystic Armor: 0
Knockdown: 8
Recovery Tests: 1

Death Rating: 39
Wound Threshold: 11
Unconsciousness Rating: 31

Combat Movement: 30
Full Movement: 60

Legend Points: 70
Equipment: None
Loot: None

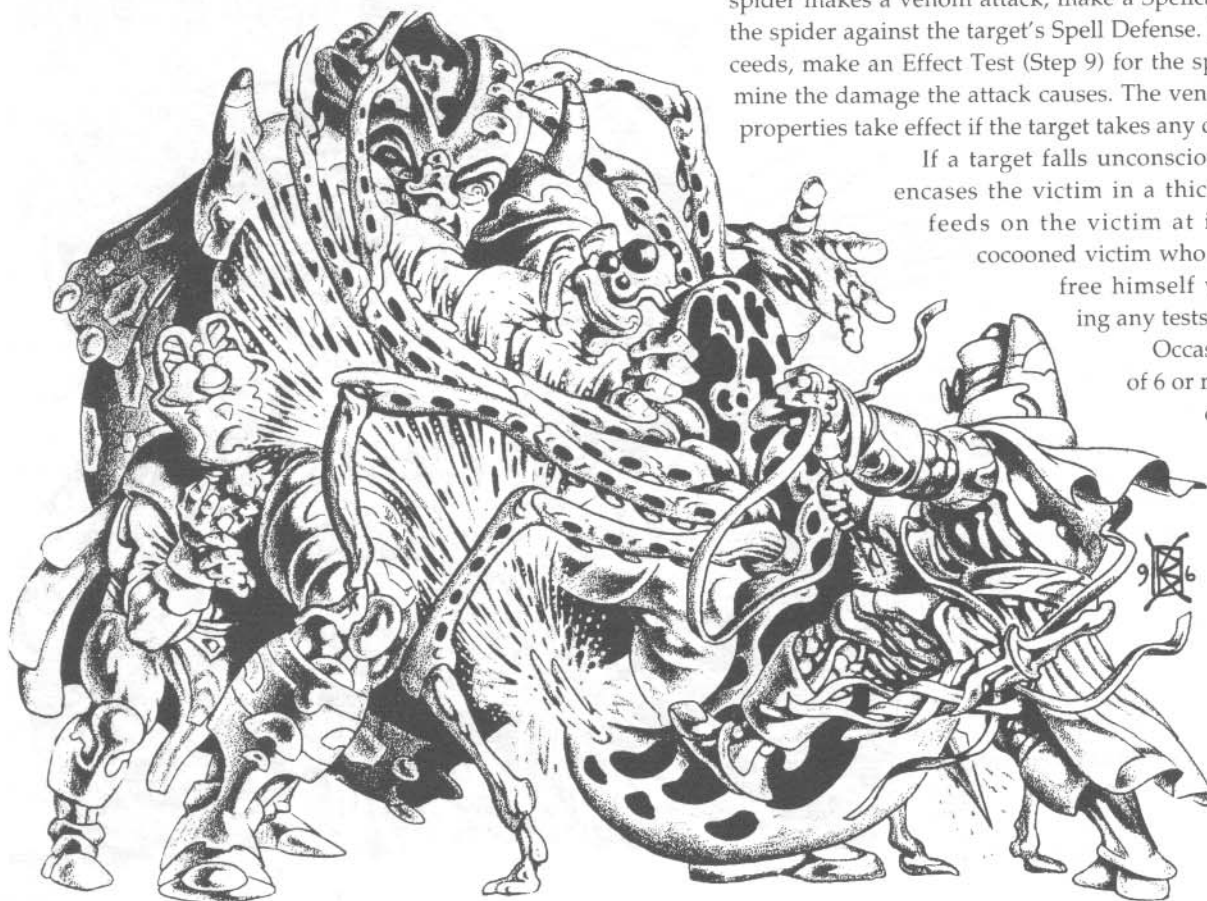
Commentary

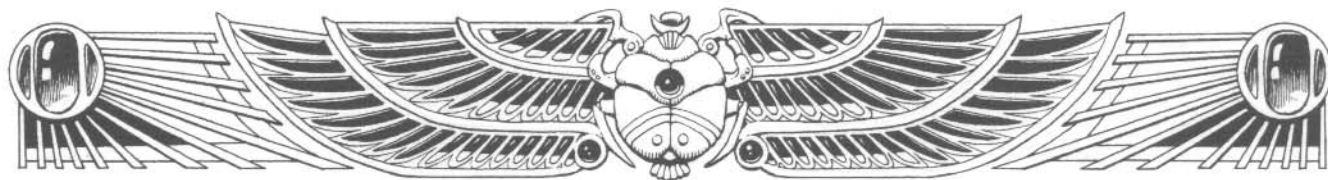
The giant spiders of the Servos Jungle are approximately the size of jehuthra but have none of the special powers that make jehuthra such terrifying opponents. Giant spiders are still plenty dangerous, however. To detect a giant spider's web, which is strong enough to entangle even Name-giver-sized victims, characters must make successful Perception Tests against a Difficulty Number of 9. Whenever a character stumbles into a giant spider web, make a Strength Test for the web using Step 8. To free himself or avoid becoming entangled in the web, the character must achieve an equal or better result than the web on his own Strength Test. Giant spider webs are often large enough to ensnare up to 3 human-sized targets.

Giant spiders can also spit venom at targets. The spiders' venom acts as a paralytic poison with a Spell Defense of 7 and an Effect Step of 9. The venom is caustic to the touch and creates an irritating burn if it contacts a victim's skin. Most often the spiders spit their venom at targets trapped in their webs, but may also spit at non-trapped targets, such as adventurers who pass by. Whenever a giant spider makes a venom attack, make a Spellcasting Test for the spider against the target's Spell Defense. If the test succeeds, make an Effect Test (Step 9) for the spider to determine the damage the attack causes. The venom's paralytic properties take effect if the target takes any damage at all.

If a target falls unconscious, the spider encases the victim in a thick cocoon and feeds on the victim at its leisure. A cocooned victim who awakens may free himself without making any tests.

Occasionally, packs of 6 or more giant spiders spin large communal webs to ensnare prey.





HENGHYOKE OTTER

DEX: 12 STR: 6 TOU: 6
PER: 9 WIL: 7 CHA: 8

Initiative: 12
Number of Attacks: 1
Attack: 12
Damage: 9
Number of Spells: 2
Spellcasting: See Powers
Effect: See text

Physical Defense: 12
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 8
Armor: 2
Mystic Armor: 2
Knockdown: 10
Recovery Tests: 1

Death Rating: 36
Wound Threshold: 10
Unconsciousness Rating: 28
Combat Movement: 40
(land and water)
Full Movement: 80

Powers: Silent Walk 13, Tracking 12

Legend Points: 175
Equipment: None
Loot: None

Commentary

The Henghyoke otter is a species of river otter bred by the t'skrang of House Henghyoke. Specimens may grow up to 6 feet long and 2 feet tall at the shoulder. The creatures are amazingly dexterous and have been trained to fight under the direction of their masters. In fact, some boatmen claim that Henghyoke otters are more fearsome than their t'skrang masters.

In addition to their natural abilities, Henghyoke otters possess powers that mimic the effects of the Silent Walk and Tracking talents (see pp. 115 and 119 of the ED rulebook). The otters can use each of these powers once per combat round.

HUNGERFISH

Traveling in schools of a hundred or more, the creatures known as hungerfish are a well-known danger in t'skrang kitchens. On the outside, hungerfish resemble plain silver fish with small fins. On the inside, they have no organs. Harmless enough to swimmers and fishermen, hungerfish are only a threat to those who eat them. Within an hour of eating a hungerfish, a victim's appetite comes back. He will then start eating as much as he can, whenever he can. In advanced stages of this unnatural hunger, a victim may turn to cannibalism to satisfy his appetite or, in the absence of normal food, may eat leaves, grass, or even dirt. The effect lasts approximately one day per fish con-

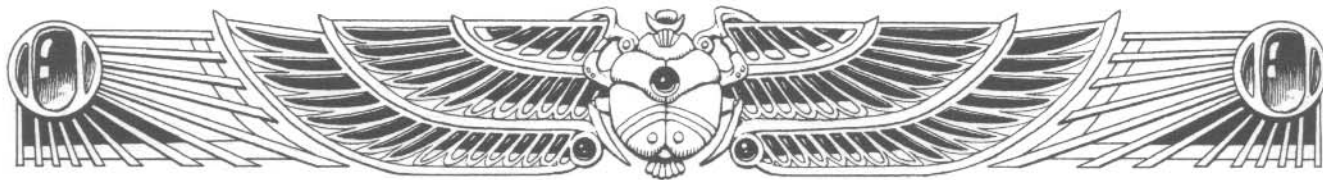


sumed. Once a victim recovers, he can return to his daily routine none the worse for the experience (provided, of course, that he did not consume a neighbor or a loved one in the meantime).

According to rumors, certain *trishnari*, or restaurants, along the river add minuscule portions of hungerfish to their entrées to inspire their customers to eat more (and thus pay more) than they otherwise might.

In game terms, the hungerfish's effect acts as a Poison with a Spell Defense of 7 and an Effect Step of 8. Make an Effect Test once per day for each fish a character has eaten. The test result represents the degree of gluttony and bloating the effect creates in the character.





INSHALATA

DEX: 9 STR: 9 TOU: 9
PER: 8 WIL: 4 CHA: 4

Initiative: 9 (13 from surprise) Physical Defense: 10
Number of Attacks: 4 Spell Defense: 7
Attack: 12 Social Defense: 4
Damage: 13 Armor: 8
Number of Spells: NA Mystic Armor: 1
Spellcasting: NA Knockdown: 11
Effect: NA Recovery Tests: 2

Death Rating: 42
Wound Threshold: 12
Unconsciousness Rating: 32

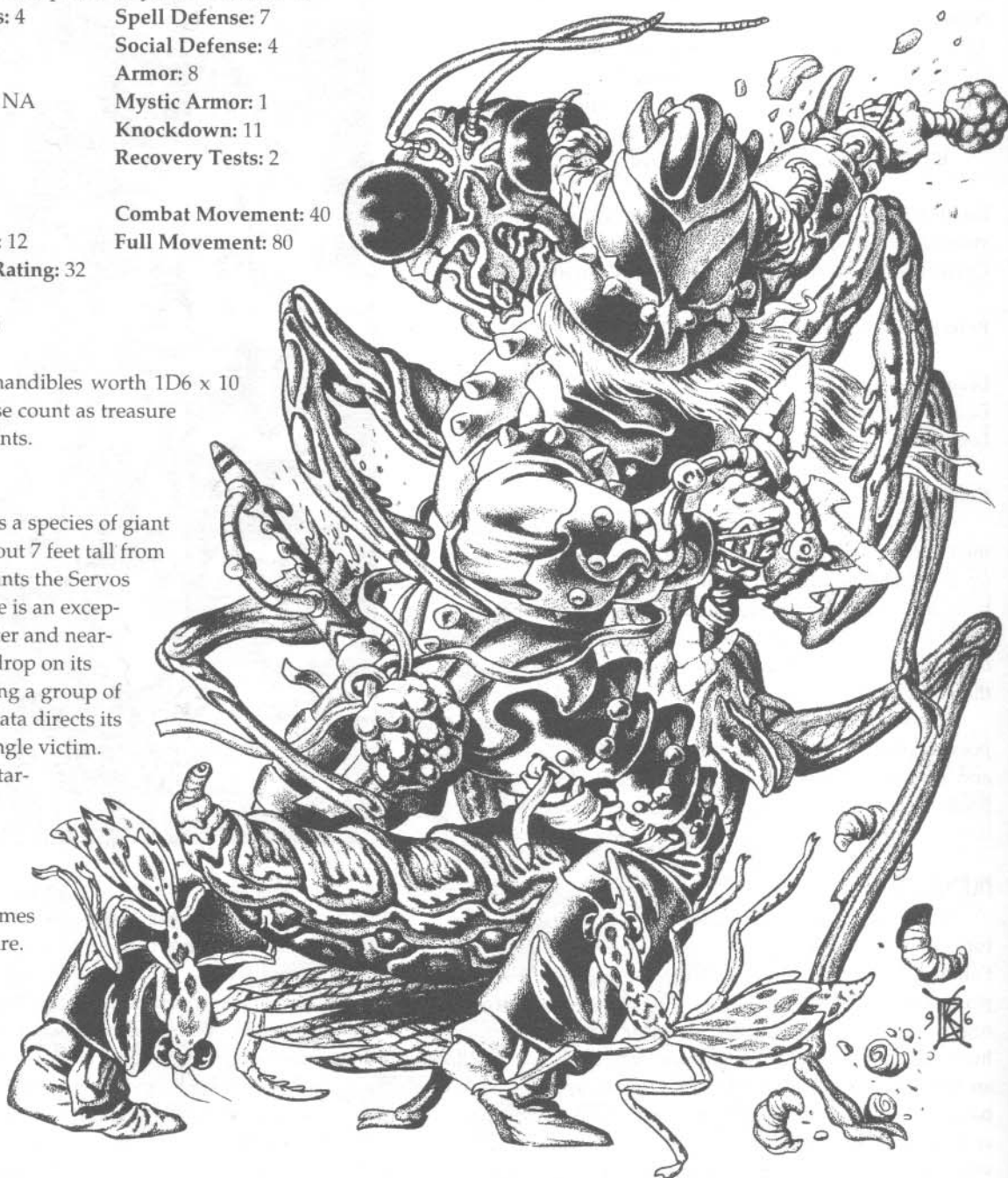
Legend Points: 200

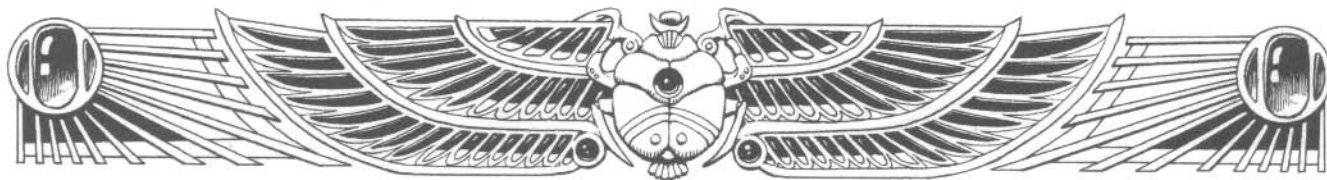
Equipment: None

Loot: Claws and mandibles worth 1D6 x 10 silver pieces. These count as treasure worth Legend Points.

Commentary

The inshalata is a species of giant praying mantis, about 7 feet tall from tail to head, that hunts the Servos Jungle. The creature is an exceptionally gifted hunter and nearly always gets the drop on its prey. When attacking a group of creatures, an inshalata directs its attacks against a single victim. If it can defeat this target, it picks up the unconscious body and attempts to carry it away to its lair, where it consumes the body at its leisure. Servos tribesmen use the claws and mandibles of inshalata as weapons.





JUB JUB

DEX: 7 STR: 8 TOU: 7
PER: 6 WIL: 5 CHA: 6

Initiative: 11
Number of Attacks: 1
Attack: 7
Damage: 14
Number of Spells: (1)
Spellcasting: 7
Effect: 10 (poison)

Death Rating: 51
Wound Threshold: 10
Unconsciousness Rating: 42

Legend Points: 125
Equipment: None
Loot: None

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 6
Social Defense: 6
Armor: 2
Mystic Armor: 0
Knockdown: 8
Recovery Tests: 1

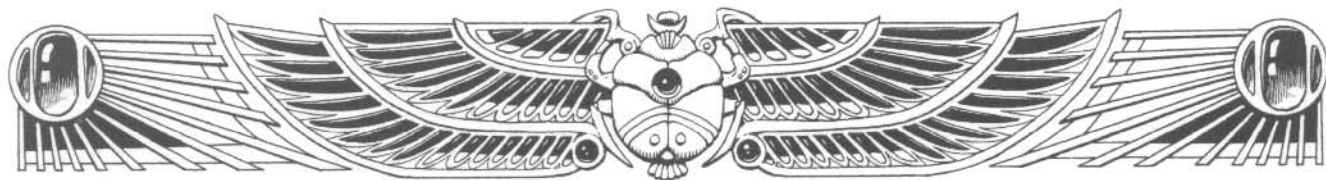
Combat Movement: 25
Full Movement: 50

Commentary

Jub jubs are "giant frogs with fangs," as many riverboat captains describe them. The jub jub's name comes from its shockingly loud, rumbling call, which will jolt a Name-giver's bones. A large jub jub can swallow a windling in one gulp. Jub jubs hunt along the banks of the river and prefer to prey on lone individuals. They attack by leaping from long distances (10 yards is not uncommon) and attempting to sink their fangs, which can grow up to a foot long, into their targets' torsos. To sink its fangs into its victim, a jub jub must inflict enough damage on its target to create a Wound. If successful, the jub jub then hangs on and waits until its poison paralyzes its victim. After paralyzing a victim, the jub jub attempts to swallow its prey whole.

The poison of the jub jub has Spell Defense 6 and a paralytic Effect Step of 10. The poison takes effect 3 rounds after the initial attack.





K'SATHRA

DEX: 10 STR: 4 TOU: 9
PER: 6 WIL: 4 CHA: 4

Initiative: 10
Number of Attacks: 1-3
Attack: 10
Damage: 15/12/9
Number of Spells: NA
Spellcasting: NA
Effect: NA

Death Rating: NA
Wound Threshold: 8
Unconsciousness Rating: 35

Legend Points: 100
Equipment: None
Loot: None

Commentary

A school of k'sathra can strip a full-sized herd animal down to the bone in a matter of minutes. K'sathra are one of the worst menaces of the Mist Swamps, and their numbers have exploded during the past twenty years. The game statistics above represent a school of 30 or so k'sathra, which would occupy an area of roughly 15 cubic feet in the water. A single school makes 1, 2 or 3 attacks per round, depending on the number of victims within its range. Each victim within the school's range receives the same number of attacks. As shown in the statistics, a 30-fish school's first attack causes Step 15 damage, its second attack causes Step 12 damage, and its third attack causes Step 9 damage.

If a character attacks a k'sathra school, do not attempt to resolve damage to each fish. A k'sathra school automatically disperses when it takes damage equal to its Unconsciousness Rating.

SAND LOBSTERS

DEX: 8 STR: 11 TOU: 11
PER: 6 WIL: 6 CHA: 5

Initiative: 9 (14 from sand)
Number of Attacks: 1
Attack: 9
Damage: 15

Physical Defense: 10
Spell Defense: 6
Social Defense: 6
Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 0
Knockdown: 13
Recovery Tests: 1

Combat Movement: 45
(in water only)
Full Movement: 90

Physical Defense: 8
Spell Defense: 6
Social Defense: 5
Armor: 8

Number of Spells: NA
Spellcasting: NA
Effect: NA

Death Rating: 61
Wound Threshold: 11
Unconsciousness Rating: 53

Legend Points: 150
Equipment: None
Loot: None

Commentary

Sand lobsters like to bury themselves in the sandy banks of the lower Coil River and wait for approaching prey. When a creature or Name-giver walks above a sand lobster, the lobster springs out of the ground and grabs its victim with its claws. Most varieties of sand lobster are small, and their claws inflict no more than painful pinches. In fact, the meat of these smaller specimens is a prized delicacy in Urupa and increasingly elsewhere along the river. Those seeking to cash in on this growing food craze, however, should keep in mind that certain sand lobster varieties may grow to the size of a horse and possess enough strength to crush a troll. The statistics above represent a moderate-sized sand lobster, roughly 2 to 3 feet long.

SHILAGRUE

DEX: 7 STR: 6 TOU: 6
PER: 5 WIL: 5 CHA: 5

Initiative: 8
Number of Attacks: 1
Attack: 8
Damage: 6 (See text)
Number of Spells: NA
Spellcasting: NA
Effect: NA

Death Rating: 27
Wound Threshold: 6
Unconsciousness Rating: 23

Legend Points: 90
Equipment: None
Loot: None

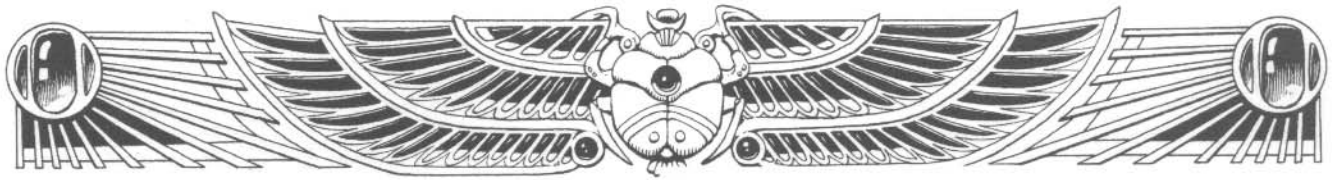
Mystic Armor: 2
Knockdown: 13
Recovery Tests: 3

Combat Movement: 30
Full Movement: 60

Physical Defense: 8
Spell Defense: 6
Social Defense: 5
Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 1
Knockdown: 6
Recovery Tests: 1

Combat Movement: 30
Full Movement: 60





Commentary

Shilagru is the t'skrang word for "the wandering shawl," which aptly describes these strange creatures. Flat and thin as a piece of cloth, shilagru vary in size from 4 to 20 square feet. Shilagru possess no means of locomotion. Instead, they billow and float underwater, drifting along with the current. A shilagru's shape and translucent coloring make it difficult to see, and swimmers often fail to spot a shilagru until it is almost upon them. Once any part of a shilagru touches a victim, the creature reflexively attempts to envelop him. If possible, the shilagru seals its edges, sinks to the bottom of the river and suffocates its victim (even creatures and characters that can breathe underwater may be killed in this manner).

A character enveloped by a shilagru immediately begins to take damage from drowning each round he remains trapped in the creature (see p. 123, **Denizens of Earthdawn, Volume I**, for drowning rules). The step number for this damage equals the number of rounds the character has been enveloped plus 4. Apply a -2 step penalty to all tests a victim makes while enveloped.

A shilagru that has killed prey remains on the river bottom as it digests its meal, then ejects any skeletal remains and begins to drift once more with the current.

SHILAGRUE HORROR

DEX: 11 STR: 13 TOU: 13
PER: 10 WIL: 10 CHA: 10

Initiative: 10
Number of Attacks: 1
Attack: 11
Damage: 13
Number of Spells: 2
Spellcasting: 10
Effect: See Powers

Physical Defense: 11
Spell Defense: 10
Social Defense: 10
Armor: 8
Mystic Armor: 6
Knockdown: 15
Recovery Tests: 4

Karma Points: 15

Karma Step: 7

Powers: Animate Dead 15, Terror 10

Death Rating: 47
Wound Threshold: 13
Unconsciousness Rating: 40

Combat Movement: 50
Full Movement: 100

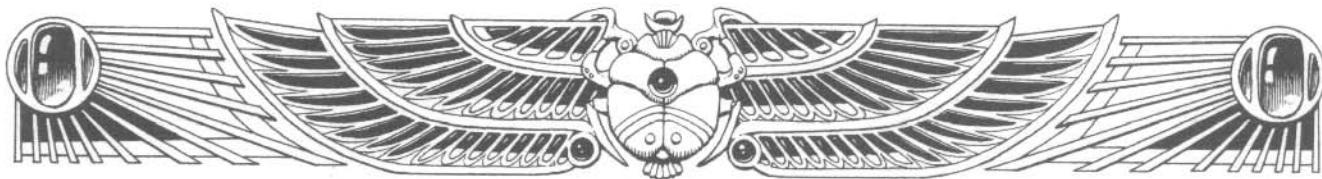
Legend Points: 410
Equipment: Per victim
Loot: None



Commentary

The shilagru Horror is a rare type of Horror construct that closely resembles common shilagru. When a shilagru Horror envelops a victim, however, it forms itself around its prey like a second skin and takes control of the victim's thoughts and actions. Then the shilagru Horror opens small vents in its body to provide air to its victim to keep the prey alive. The skin of characters possessed by shilagru Horrors exhibits a wet pallor and unnatural smoothness, and the victim's eyes are covered with a milky glaze. After possessing a victim, a shilagru Horror often preys on the victim's closest companions. The statistics above represent an unattached shilagru Horror. Once a shilagru Horror possesses a victim, it uses the victim's statistics while retaining its own Karma and Horror powers.





RIVER STEEDS

DEX: 7 STR: 9 TOU: 8
PER: 6 WIL: 6 CHA: 5

Initiative: 7
Number of Attacks: 1
Attack: 8
Damage: 12
Number of Spells: NA
Spellcasting: NA
Effect: NA

Death Rating: 48
Wound Threshold: 14
Unconsciousness Rating: 40

Physical Defense: 8
Spell Defense: 6
Social Defense: 6
Armor: 2
Mystic Armor: 2
Knockdown: 9
Recovery Tests: 2

Combat
Movement: 60
Full
Movement: 120

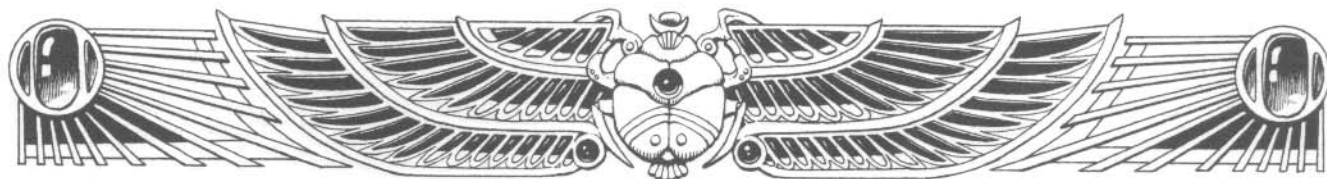
Legend Points: 80
Equipment: Saddle, if trained
Loot: None

Commentary

The river steed is an unusual creature that resembles a large sea snake with fins. The t'skrang of House Ishkarat are said to breed the creatures and train them to swim along the water's surface and respond to a bridle and bit. Allegedly, the Ishkaratans race these river steeds for sport and use them as mounts for messengers. Some tales even claim that a member of the Denairastas clan has formed an entire regiment of "river cavalry" composed of riders on river steeds.

Wild river steeds typically shy away from swimmers and riverboats and pose little danger to travelers.





VELOS

DEX: 9 STR: 12 TOU: 12
PER: 7 WIL: 6 CHA: 6

Initiative: 3
Number of Attacks: 1
Attack: 12
Damage: 16
Number of Spells: NA
Spellcasting: NA
Effect: NA

Physical Defense: 11
Spell Defense: 7
Social Defense: 7
Armor: 3
Mystic Armor: 2
Knockdown: 14
Recovery Tests: 3

Death Rating: 68
Wound Threshold: 12
Unconsciousness Rating: 59

Combat
Movement: 35
Full
Movement: 70

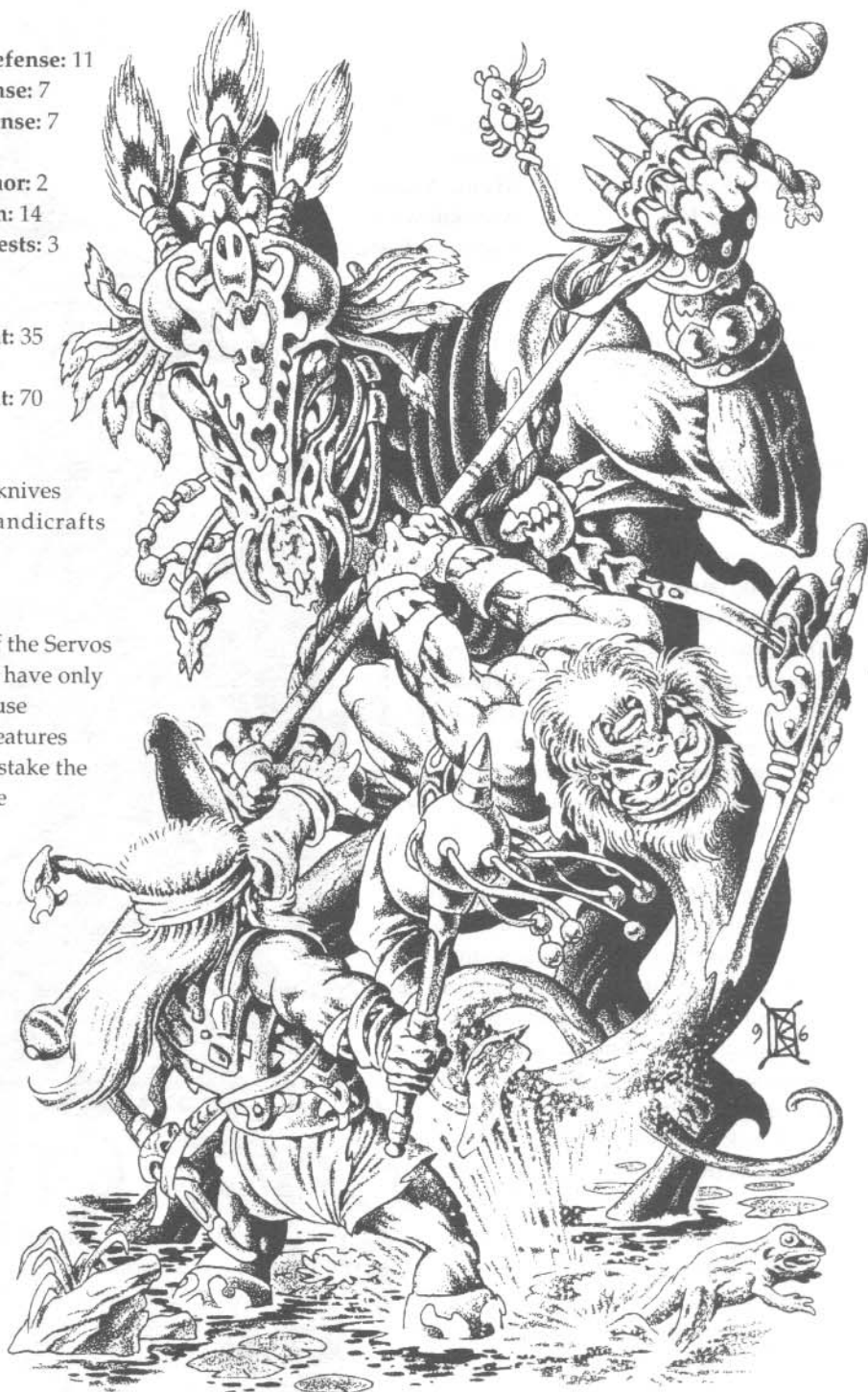
Legend Points: 320

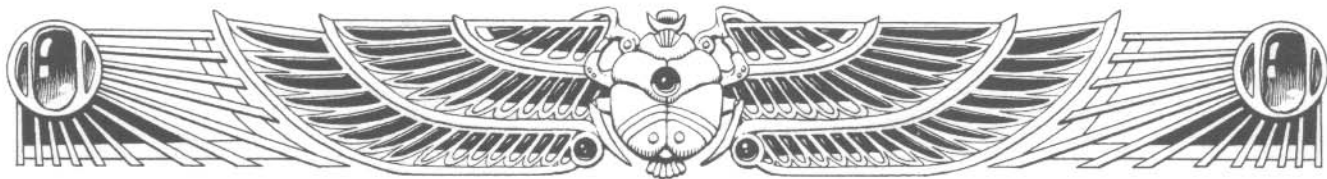
Equipment: Spears (STR +4), shields, bone knives

Loot: Villages contain feathers, furs, handicrafts worth 200 sp

Commentary

The velos inhabit the darkest interior of the Servos Jungle. Long considered mythical, the velos have only recently been rediscovered by agents of House K'tenshin. At first sight, a velos's reptilian features and long tail can easily lead observers to mistake the creature for a tall t'skrang. In truth, velos are taller than the average obsidiman and possess long, sharp teeth and razor-like claws on their feet. First reports made the velos out as savage beasts, because they hunted down and ate many of the early K'tenshin explorers. However, more recent evidence indicates that the velos may be Name-givers closely related to the primitive t'skrang of the Servos Jungle. According to all accounts, the velos live in four or five isolated villages located deep in the Mist Swamps.





WATER STRIDERS

DEX: 6 STR: 6 TOU: 5
PER: 6 WIL: 6 CHA: 7

Initiative: 7
Number of Attacks: 1
Attack: 8
Damage: 8
Number of Spells: NA
Spellcasting: NA
Effect: NA

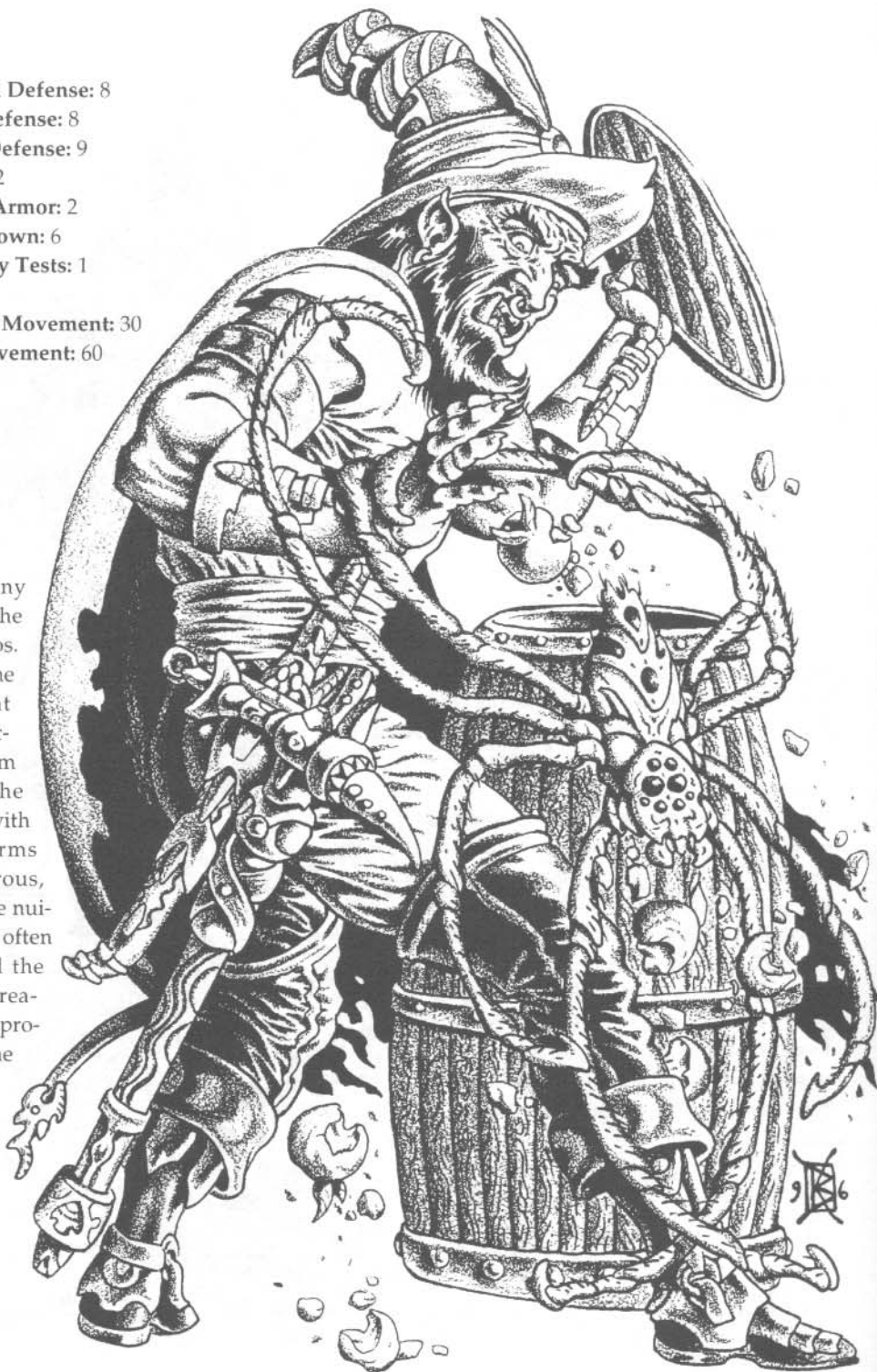
Physical Defense: 8
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 9
Armor: 2
Mystic Armor: 2
Knockdown: 6
Recovery Tests: 1

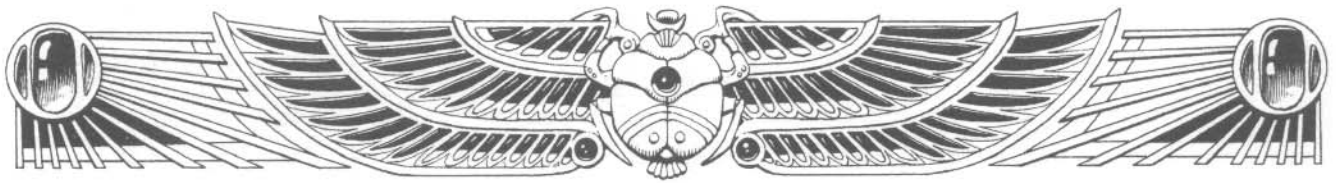
Death Rating: 34
Wound Threshold: 9
Unconsciousness Rating: 26

Legend Points: 100
Equipment: None
Loot: None

Commentary

Water striders are one of the many varieties of giant insects that live on the upper reaches of the Serpent near Iopos. These large spiders have bodies about the size of a human's head and legs that extend three to five feet in every direction. The creatures' long legs enable them to actually walk on the surface of the water. Water striders avoid all contact with swimmers and other aquatic life forms whenever possible. While not dangerous, water striders can present a considerable nuisance to riverboat crews, because they often climb the sides of riverboats and raid the ship's stores for food. The ravenous creatures can consume a month's worth of provisions in a few short hours, leaving the crew to go hungry. Boatmen consider it bad luck for a water strider to cross the path of their vessels.





MAGICAL AND TREASURE ITEMS



The following section describes a number of new magical and treasure items that characters might encounter while adventuring on or near the Serpent River and its tributaries. Some of these items are common magical items, similar to blood charms or potions, while others are thread items, such as those described in the *Earthdawn Companion*. Still others are general treasure items, such as counterspell staves and frost pouches, and a few are unique treasures similar to items such as the Blades of Cara Fahd, Lorm's Axe and Kegel's Sword.

COMMON MAGICAL ITEMS

The following common magical items perform specific functions. No special abilities or thread magic are required to use them.



ASHES FROM KRALIPUR

Ashes from Kralipur are commonly found among the t'skrang of House Syrtis. These ashes function as blood-charm talismans against Horrors. To produce the sovereign charm, a traveler must walk the Pilgrimage Route from Ayodhya up to Kralipur (see *The Pilgrimage Route*, p. 74). At Kralipur, the pilgrim must purchase a small scroll of paper made from the reeds of the Floating City and write a prayer on that scroll dedicated to the Dragon of the Sun. The pilgrim must then hold the paper in the Sacred Flame until it has completely turned to ash. (Doing so causes the character 1 point of permanent damage.) The character must then keep the ashes in some sort of container until he uses them.

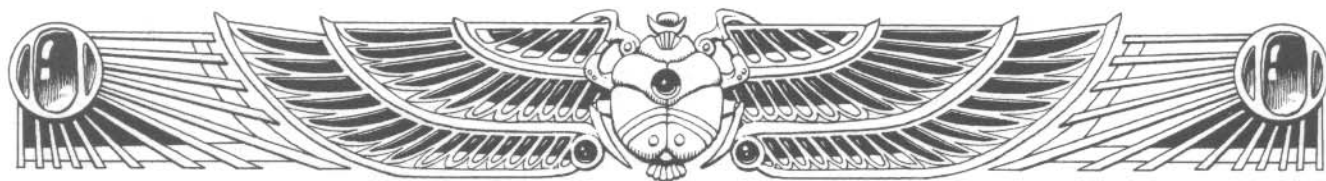
When a character wishes to use the ashes, he smears them on his forehead. The ashes then provide a +2 bonus to the character's Physical, Spell and Social Defense ratings and a +2 step bonus on all tests made specifically against Horrors. Appropriate tests include Talent, Spellcasting and Effect Tests, and any tests made when using abilities such as Restrain Horror, Confront Horror, Life Circle of One and Lightbearer abilities. If the character survives his Horror encounter, the ashes' effects return during any subsequent confrontations with that particular Horror or Horror construct (assuming the Horror itself survived, which is usually a safe bet), within the next year and a day.

The ashes work only for the character who made the pilgrimage, and characters can only benefit from one dose of ashes at a time. Once a character has used a dose of ashes while fighting a Horror or Horror construct, the dose becomes powerless against different Horrors and constructs.

SWIMMING CHARMS

Swimming charms are common magical tools in t'skrang villages. When placed inside a character's mouth, one of these blue-crystal charms provides a +3 step bonus to the character's Swimming Skill step or to the character's Strength Attribute for default Strength Tests made while swimming (see p. 123, *Denizens of Earthdawn, Volume I*, for swimming rules). Additionally, a swimming charm greatly increases the length of time a character can spend underwater. Normally, a character can remain underwater for a number of combat rounds equal to his Toughness step before he starts to drown. A swimming charm enables a character to stay underwater for a number of minutes equal to his Swimming step (or Strength step) + 3. After that time, the character can avoid drowning damage by taking 1 Strain Point for each minute he remains underwater.





Strain damage taken in this manner can be recovered per standard rules.

By embedding a swimming charm under his skin, a character can receive the benefits of the charm at all times. Embedding a charm causes 2 points of permanent damage to the character, however.

T'skrang often use swimming charms when they tend the underwater crops grown in their t'slashinas. In fact, many villages routinely implant swimming charms in their hatchlings.

PLATINUM TORCS OF HOUSE HENGHYOKE

The platinum torcs worn by the aropagoinya of House Henghyoke are exceptionally powerful charms that rob their wearers of the ability to speak. Additionally, any character wearing a torc becomes vulnerable to all beast-master talents as if he were a beast himself. Removing a torc from a character inflicts Step 18 damage on the character, permanently reducing the character's Death and Unconsciousness ratings by the amount of damage. The character's Mystic Armor reduces the damage, however. Removing a torc also permanently reduces a character's Perception and Willpower Attribute Values by 3 (1 step).

SIGIL OF THE HAND OF CORRUPTION

Somewhere deep within the Mist Swamps sits the Castle of Assassins, the supposed training ground and meeting place for the Hand of Corruption. Adventurers traveling in this area might encounter characters bearing a unique sigil, known as the sigil of the Hand of Corruption.

The sigil is an intricate black pattern on a red background. Typically, cult members display the sigil on signet rings, pendants, articles of clothing and book covers. Any member who bears the sigil can immediately recognize another member. The bearer can also manipulate the sigil to lend this power to another who does not belong to the Hand of Corruption. Unless the proper methods are employed, however, any non-member who wears the sigil is subject to a curse. In this event, make a Step 10 Curse Test against the Spell Defense of the character. If the Curse Test succeeds, the victim suffers Step 8 damage (reduced by Mystic Armor) every time he makes a Recovery Test. (The character suffers the curse damage immediately after recovering the damage healed by the Recovery Test).

Occasionally, the Hand of Corruption uses sigils as assassins' weapons, but only under the most desperate circumstances. The effects, purposes and very existence of these items are not common knowledge to non-members.

For more information about the Hand of Corruption, see pages 41 and 42 of the **Barsaive Gamemaster Book**.

GENERAL TREASURE AND THREAD ITEMS

For an explanation of thread items, see pages 56 and 57 of the **Earthdawn Companion**. Rules for general treasures and unique treasure items appear on pages 273–278 and 278–283, respectively, of the **ED rulebook**.

ARMOR OF ELEMENTAL WATER

Maximum Threads: 2

Spell Defense: 15

Armor of elemental water is constructed of overlapping scales of sculpted elemental water. The water carries a blue tint, and the scales constantly surge downward from the neck like waves on the sea. The knowledge needed to create elemental-water armor was lost before the Scourge, and only a handful of elemental-water armor suits exist.

Rank 1 **Cost:** 300

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Name of the armor.

Effect: The armor provides the wearer with an Armor Rating of 6 and an Initiative Penalty of 2.

Rank 2 **Cost:** 500

Effect: The Initiative Penalty drops to 0, and the wearer floats if immersed in water.

Rank 3 **Cost:** 800

Key Knowledge: The suits were created by elementalists from a long-dead kingdom near the Aras Sea. The wearer must discover the Name of the armorer who made his or her suit.

Effect: The armor absorbs the force of most physical attacks. At this rank the armor has an Armor Rating of 8, and only an Extraordinary success produces an Armor-Defeating Hit against it.

Rank 4 **Cost:** 1,300

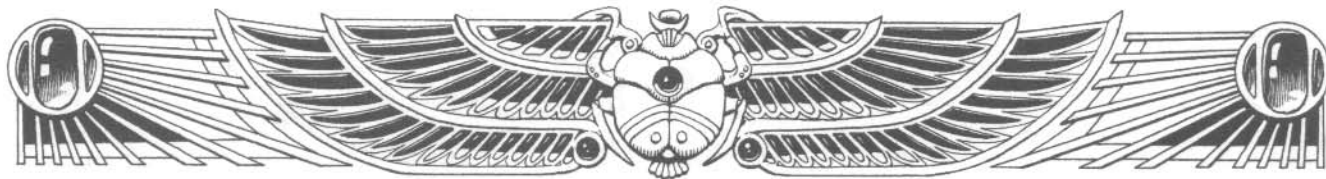
Effect: The Armor Rating increases to 9.

Rank 5 **Cost:** 2,100

Key Knowledge: The elementalists who created elemental-water armor enchanted it by trapping minor water spirits from the Aras Sea inside the armor. The wearer must discover the Name of the water elemental in his or her suit.

Effect: The armor grants the wearer a +2 Mystic Armor bonus.





Rank 6 **Cost:** 3,400

Key Knowledge: The wearer must discover the exact location where the elemental spirit in his or her suit was captured.

Effect: The armor grants the wearer a +2 Step bonus to his or her Initiative.

Deed: The wearer must journey to the location where the elemental spirit was captured and release it from its bondage. The spirit then confers on the wearer all of the armor's thread rank abilities, except the Armor Rating. (The wearer receives a permanent Armor Rating 4 and takes 2 permanent Damage Points.) The Deed is worth 12,200 Legend Points.

DAGGER OF ISHKARAT

Maximum Threads: 1

Spell Defense: 9

The members of House Ishkarat wield powerful talismanic daggers as tokens of their aropagoi. The keen edges of these black obsidian knives are as sharp as most crystal weapons from the Twilight Peaks. Because each Ishkaratan aropagoi names his own dagger, a character may learn the Rank 1 Key Knowledge by simply spending Legend Points. Without a thread attached to it, an Ishkaratan dagger has a Damage step of STR + 2.

Rank 1 **Cost:** 200

Key Knowledge: The wielder must choose his g'doinya as the Name of his blade.

Effect: The Damage step of the dagger is STR + 4.

The dagger enables the wielder to use the Avoid Blow talent twice per combat round. However, the wielder may only use the talent once against a single attacker in the same round. If the character does not have the Avoid Blow talent, the dagger allows him to add the thread rank to his Dexterity step when using the Attribute to make default Avoid Blow Tests.

Deed: The wielder must enter the Ishkarat aropagoi and swear the oath of fealty to the Shivalahala Ishkarat.

Rank 2 **Cost:** 300

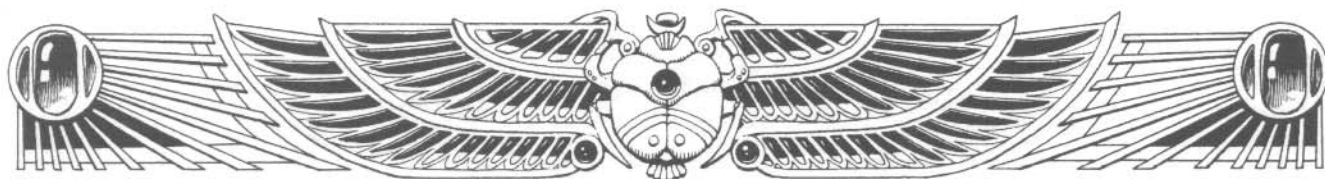
Effect: The dagger does STR + 5 damage.

Rank 3 **Cost:** 500

Key Knowledge: The daggers are made by a small group of weaponsmiths loyal to House Ishkarat. The wielder must discover the name of the individual weaponsmith who made his or her dagger.

Effect: The wielder receives a +2 step bonus to his Riposte talent. If the character does not have Riposte as a talent, the dagger allows the character to use the talent at a step number equal to his Dexterity step + 3 + the thread rank.





Rank 4 **Cost:** 800

Effect: The dagger adds +1 to the wielder's Physical Defense rating.

Rank 5 **Cost:** 1,300

Key Knowledge: The wielder must discover the location of the original Ishkaratan home village of Elekso. However, Elekso's location is a secret. Those who know its location will not divulge the information to others, because each aropagoi must learn it for himself.

Effect: The dagger grants the wielder a special ability called Retributive Strike. By spending 1 Karma Point, the wielder can ensure that his next attack, if directed against an enemy of the aropagoi, scores an Armor-Defeating Hit. Additionally, the strike does STR + WIL + 8 damage. The wielder, however, takes the same amount of damage himself. The dagger takes on a dark green glow when the ability is used, and breaks during the strike.

Deed: If the wielder kills his enemy in single combat with the Retributive Strike ability, he must bring his enemy's weapon to the place where the dagger was created. There, the weaponsmiths forge the enemy weapon into a remarkable thread weapon. To date, however, no such weapon has been seen anywhere on the river.

NET OF DEFENSE

Maximum Threads: 1

Spell Defense: 8

Nets of defense are specifically designed as weapons for t'skrang boatmen and are used in conjunction with the Cast Net talent (p. 113, *Denizens of Earthdawn*, Volume I). These nets are often decorated with ribbons and embedded crystals. A single character can combine the effects of a net of defense with those of a net of barbs (see below).

Rank 1 **Cost:** 100

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the net.
Effect: The wielder receives a +1 step bonus to his Cast Net talent. If the wielder does not have this talent, the net grants him the equivalent of the talent at Rank 1.

Rank 2 **Cost:** 200

Effect: The net adds +1 to the wielder's Armor Rating.

Rank 3 **Cost:** 300

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the net's original weaver.

Effect: The wielder receives a +2 step bonus to his Cast Net talent. If the wielder does not have this talent, the net grants him the equivalent of the talent at Rank 2.

Rank 4 **Cost:** 500

Effect: The net adds +2 to the wielder's Armor Rating.

Rank 5 **Cost:** 800

Key Knowledge: The wielder must discover the Name of the riverboat on which the net's weaver served.

Effect: Any time the wielder successfully entangles his opponent's weapon, the wielder may make an immediate Disarm Test using his Cast Net step number (see the Cast Net talent description, p. 113, *Denizens of Earthdawn*, Volume I).

NET OF BARBS

Maximum Threads: 1

Spell Defense: 8

A net of barbs is made from razorgrass reeds that can cut an opponent to ribbons. Like the net of defense, these are made for use with the Cast Net talent. A single character can combine the effects of a net of barbs with those of a net of defense (see above).

Rank 1 **Cost:** 100

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the net.
Effect: The net adds a +1 step bonus to the wielder's Cast Net talent. If the wielder does not have this talent, the net grants him the equivalent of the talent at Rank 1.

Rank 2 **Cost:** 200

Effect: Any time the wielder successfully entangles an opponent, the wielder can make an immediate Damage Test to damage his opponent. The step number for this test is the wielder's STR + 3.

Rank 3 **Cost:** 300

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the net's original weaver.

Effect: The net adds a +2 step bonus to the wielder's Cast Net talent. If the wielder does not have this talent, the net grants him the equivalent of the talent at Rank 2.

Rank 4 **Cost:** 500

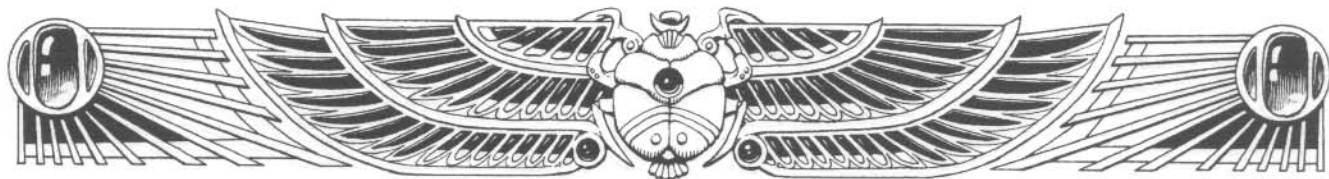
Effect: The Damage step number of the barbs increases to STR + 6.

Rank 5 **Cost:** 800

Key Knowledge: The wielder must discover the Name of the riverboat on which the net's weaver served.

Effect: By expending 2 Strain Points, the wielder can make any damage caused by the net bypass a target's armor completely.





UNIQUE TREASURE ITEMS

The two following items are unique magical treasures spoken of in the legends and tales of the people of the Serpent River.

HORN OF THE SEVEN WINDS

Maximum Threads: 2

Spell Defense: 14

The Horn of the Seven Winds is made from the shell of a chambered nautilus about 2 feet in diameter. The mouthpiece is made of brass, and the spiral is decorated with gold inlays. To invoke the odd-numbered thread abilities of the Horn, the user must blow the appropriate pitch on the instrument.

Rank 1 **Cost:** 300

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the First of the Seven Winds.

Effect: The bearer of the Horn may use the item like a Crystal Spell Box (p. 274, ED rulebook) to capture 1 elemental spell. To capture a spell, the wielder makes a Spellcasting Test against a Difficulty Number equal to the result of the Spellcasting Test made to cast the spell. If the wielder's test succeeds, the Horn "captures" the spell, which immediately nullifies all of the spell's effects. To release and use a spell stored in the Horn, the wielder must use his own Spellcasting and Willforce abilities to determine the spell's effect, but need not weave any threads.

Rank 2 **Cost:** 500

Effect: The wielder receives a +1 step bonus to his Spellcasting, Elementalism and Willforce talents. If the wielder is not an elemental, he receives no benefits at this thread rank.

Rank 3 **Cost:** 800

Effect: The wielder may capture and store a second elemental spell with the Horn.

Rank 4 **Cost:** 1,300

Key Knowledge: The bearer must discover the Name of the elemental who created the Horn.

Effect: The wielder receives an additional +3 step bonus to his Spellcasting, Elementalism and Willforce talents when casting any spell in the sphere of air—Resist Cold, Path Home, Sky Lattice, Throne of Air, and so on. If the wielder is not an elemental, he receives no benefits at this rank.



Rank 5 **Cost:** 2,100

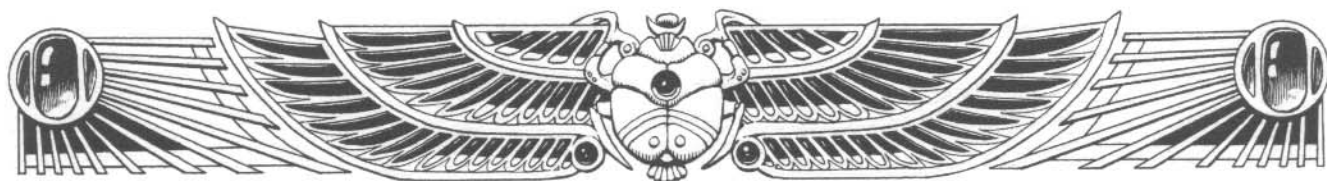
Key Knowledge: Each of the notes blown on the Horn has a name in the ancient language of the kingdom where it was made. The wearer must learn the name of each note.

Effect: The Horn enables the wielder to perform a Battle Bellow (p. 98, ED rulebook) at a step number equal to the user's Charisma step + 5.

Rank 6 **Cost:** 3,400

Effect: The Horn mimics the effects of the Hold Thread talent (p. 108, ED rulebook) for 1 elemental spell. The step number of this talent is the user's Perception step plus the thread rank.





Rank 7 **Cost:** 5,500

Key Knowledge: The bearer must learn the Name of the last person to bear the Horn.

Effect: The wielder can use the Horn to summon a pack of 16 storm wolves (p. 309, ED rulebook). The wolves escort the caster for 24 hours and then disappear as suddenly as they arrived. If attacked, the wolves attempt to summon a storm. The pack responds to only one such call per year.

Deed: The wolf pack leads the wielder to a place of evil, which the wielder must defeat. This Deed is worth 8,900 Legend Points.

NET OF DREAMS

Maximum Threads: 5

Spell Defense: 19

The Net of Dreams is an intrinsic part of the myth of the Old Man of the Nets. Although the Net of Dreams looks like a ratty old fishing net with frayed edges and tangled webbing, the Old Man used it to gather the dreams of his family and his race, as well as fish.

Rank 1 **Cost:** 300

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the Net.

Effect: The Net adds a +1 bonus to the wielder's Mystic Armor and Spell Defense ratings.

Rank 2 **Cost:** 500

Effect: The wielder receives a +4 step bonus to his Willpower when disbelieving illusions (see p. 166, ED rulebook).

Rank 3 **Cost:** 800

Effect: The Nets adds a +2 bonus to the wielder's Mystic Armor and Spell Defense ratings.

Rank 4 **Cost:** 1,300

Key Knowledge: The Old Man of the Nets cut up the original Net so that he could divide it among his thirteen children. The wielder must learn the name of the child who carried his part of the Net.

Effect: The Net enhances the effects of natural healing on all those who sleep near it. All characters who sleep within a 10-foot radius of the wielder may add their Willpower step number to their next Recovery Test. This ability can only be used on one Recovery Test per day.

Rank 5 **Cost:** 2,100

Effect: The Net adds a +3 bonus to the wielder's Mystic Armor and Spell Defense ratings.

Rank 6 **Cost:** 3,400

Key Knowledge: The user must learn the tale of the Old Man of the Nets and his visit to the illusionist D'rzaia on her island in the Sea of Reeds. The tale says that D'rzaia lured the Old Man away from his wife V'ranna by taking V'ranna's form. The Old Man remained under D'rzaia's spell for a year and a day before he saw through the illusion. When he came home V'ranna was furious, of course, and refused to believe the Old Man's story until she heard it from the illusionist's own mouth. So the Old Man had to return to the island and lay a trap for the old sorceress.

Effect: The wielder receives a +8 step bonus to his Willpower on attempts to disbelieve illusions. Also, his first attempt to disbelieve does not cost the Strain Point normally required.

Deed: The wielder must find another part of the original Net of Dreams and weave his own Net to it. The Deed is worth 5,500 Legend Points.

Rank 7 **Cost:** 5,500

Effect: The wielder can communicate, via his dreams, with any other character who has woven a thread to the Net. Distance is not a factor, but both parties must be dreaming at the same time.

Rank 8 **Cost:** 8,900

Effect: The wielder may use his own Thread Weaving talent to bind another character's pattern to the Net. The wielder pays the Legend Point cost and makes the necessary Thread Weaving Test. The other character need not possess the Thread Weaving talent to participate in this procedure, but still gains the benefits of the thread ranks.

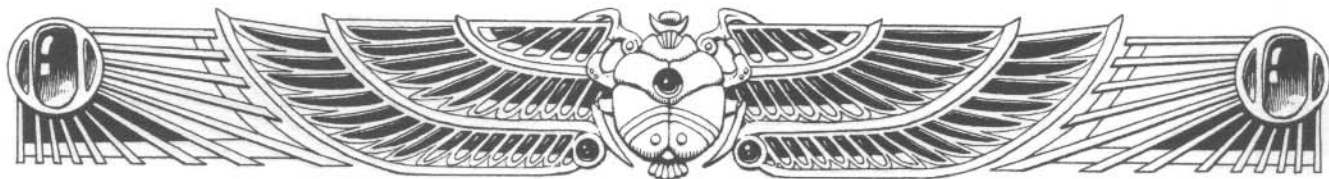
Rank 9 **Cost:** 14,400

Key Knowledge: The Old Man learned how to weave the Net of Dreams from one of the great dragons. The wielder must learn the true Name of that great dragon.

Effect: The wielder gains a power similar to the Disrupt Fate dragon power (p. 291, ED rulebook). The step number of this power is equal to the wielder's Willpower step plus the thread rank (9). The wielder must spend a Karma Point to use the power.

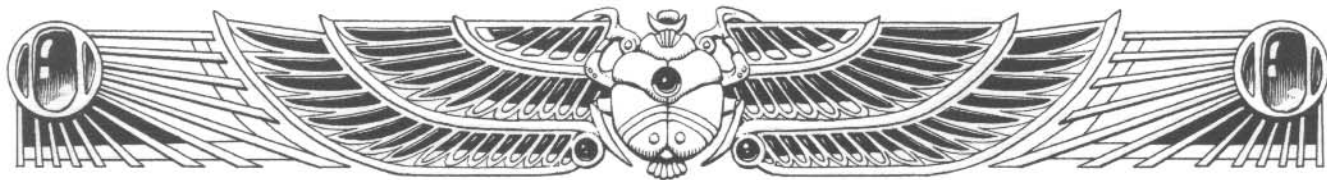
Deed: The wielder must bring his Net to a great dragon (not necessarily the one who taught the Old Man how to weave). The dragon demands a service of the wielder, and if the wielder performs the service the dragon grants him the knowledge needed to weave his own Net of Dreams. This Deed is worth 23,300 Legend Points.





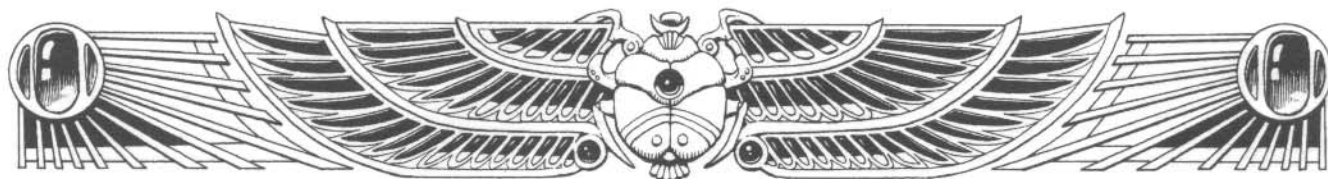
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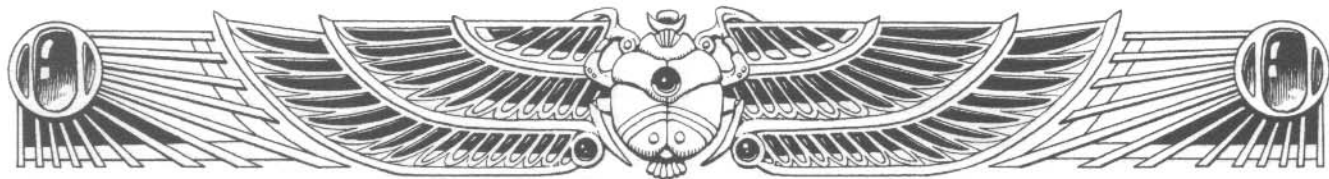
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GLOSSARY

amotla shivoam ga'nai Literally, *down the river to the sea*; the t'skrang euphemism for death. The phrase also refers to the custom of sending the ashes of t'skrang dead down the Serpent River to Death's Sea.

aropagoi *n.* The five t'skrang trading foundations that control the bulk of trade on the Serpent River.

aropagoinya *n.* A member of the central foundation of an aropagoi.

Atlosh T'zdram *n.* Literally, *the Great Game*; the t'skrang version of chess, played on a brightly colored mandalic board. Also, a popular epithet for the game of politics.

castellan *n.* An official responsible for the military defenses of a t'skrang city.

chaida *n.* A hatchling's egg-parent.

choth edo k'tan var Literally, *up tail, out of the mud*; an admonishment similar in meaning to chin up, and stiff upper lip.

chreostomas *n.* Literally, *tree-herders*; the name used by the t'skrang tribes of the Servos Jungle when referring to themselves.

clingor *n.* A type of sticky rope.

corvus *n.* A heavy, spiked gangplank commonly attached to an Ishkaratan warship; used during boarding actions against enemy vessels.

d'janduin *n.* A potent spice that gives food "hotness."

diktos *n.* An administrator charged with supervising the activities of an aropagoi's associated foundations.

dreveki *n.* A type of small, sail-driven t'skrang fishing boat common along the waterways of the Serpent River system.

duari *n.* A type of barrel used as a standard unit of measure by Serpent River traders.

eidolon *n.* Literally, *phantom*.

Eidolon *n.* The elven name for the site of an ancient elf kaer at the confluence of the Mothingale and Serpent rivers.

g'doinya *n.* The secret foundation name of an aropagoinya.

Hai Jik'hai Acknowledgment of an extreme act of bravery.

Haropakilea *n.* Literally, *Flower of Haropas*; an enclosed underwater garden that lies at the intersection of the Inner Tower domes of House K'tenshin's Sixteen Towers.

haropas *n.* Communion with the Passions; enlightenment.

Houros *n.* Literally, *the serpent that eats its own tail*; the t'skrang symbol for the universe.

insula *n.* A type of courtyard apartment building found in the Liandrill and Zenicce sectors of Urupa.

ixtixtaaqitl *n.* Literally, *long sleep*; Cathan term used to describe the Time of Hiding, more commonly known as the Scourge.

iyoshkira *n.* Subterranean creature from which the Pale Ones craft their boats.

jik'harra *n.* Fearlessness; literally, *brave passion*.

k'harro *n.* Passion; heart.

k'soto ensherenk *n.* The Name-passing ritual, used to pass ancestral memories between foundation leaders.

k'stulaa *n.* A flap of skin that extends from a t'skrang's wrist to hip. A rare physical trait among this race.

k'stulaami *n.* Name for the winged t'skrang.

kaissa *n.* The phase in a t'skrang's life in which it changes from neuter to either male or female.

khamorro *n.* Literally, *deck scrubber*; an adolescent t'skrang apprentice aboard a riverboat.

kiatsu *n.* Preparation; one of the four pillars of *haropas*.

kommulos *n.* The traditional obligation to share one's wealth with other community members; practiced by the human and elven communities of Urupa.

krohyin *also k'rohyin* *n.* Trade covenant; aropagoi organization for producing and gaining specific trade goods.

kuratai *n.* A popular t'skrang spice.

kyaapas *also kya'apas* *n.* Balance, especially referring to the balance between personal *jik'harra* and familial obligations or between niall and aropagoi loyalties.

lahala *n.* Honored One; usually the eldest female in a foundation.

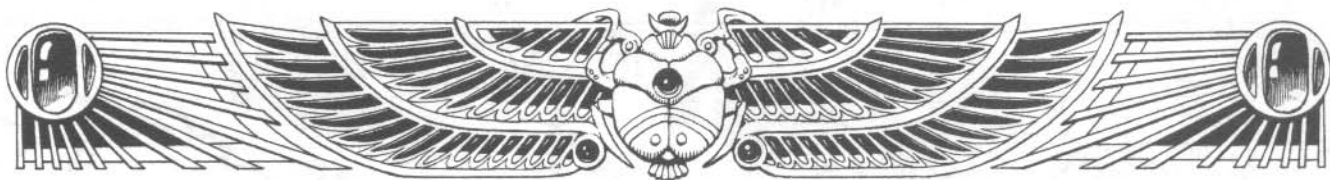
niall *n.* Foundation; an extended family of 40 to 60 t'skrang.

niall dynasthai *n.* Literally, *powerful foundation*. A type of V'strimonian fraternal order dedicated to supporting one of the twenty motherships in House V'strimon's fleet.

p'skarrot *n.* Measure; destiny.

refselenika *n.* (Abbr. as refs) Barriers constructed of elemental water that protect a t'skrang village.





shimoram *n.* Literally, *eye blink*. A type of small, highly maneuverable, keeled V'strimonian warship.

Shivalahala *n.* The lahala of an aropagoi central foundation.

shivarro *n.* Literally, *river passion*; a t'skrang's fundamental attraction to life on the river.

Shivoam *n.* T'skrang goddess of elemental water; also, the Serpent River.

Shivoam v'nokamai daureis Literally, *the spirit of the river requests a gift*; the traditional greeting used by a riverboat captain attempting to extract bakshevas from another vessel.

Shivos *n.* T'skrang god of elemental earth.

shustal Exclamation meaning "No more need be said."

Syrtis *n.* T'skrang god of elemental air; also, the moon.

t'chai kondos *n.* Egg-bonding. A magical ritual that binds a male egg tender to a hatchling for life.

T'schlome *n.* T'skrang goddess of elemental fire; also, the sun.

t'slahyin *n.* Crew covenant.

t'slashina *n.* The village diamond, that part of the village enclosed by the refs and the towers.

t'sleetha-t'sleethi Slowly and more slowly; take it easy.

tessesta The t'skrang tradition of exchanging gifts with departing comrades-in-arms.

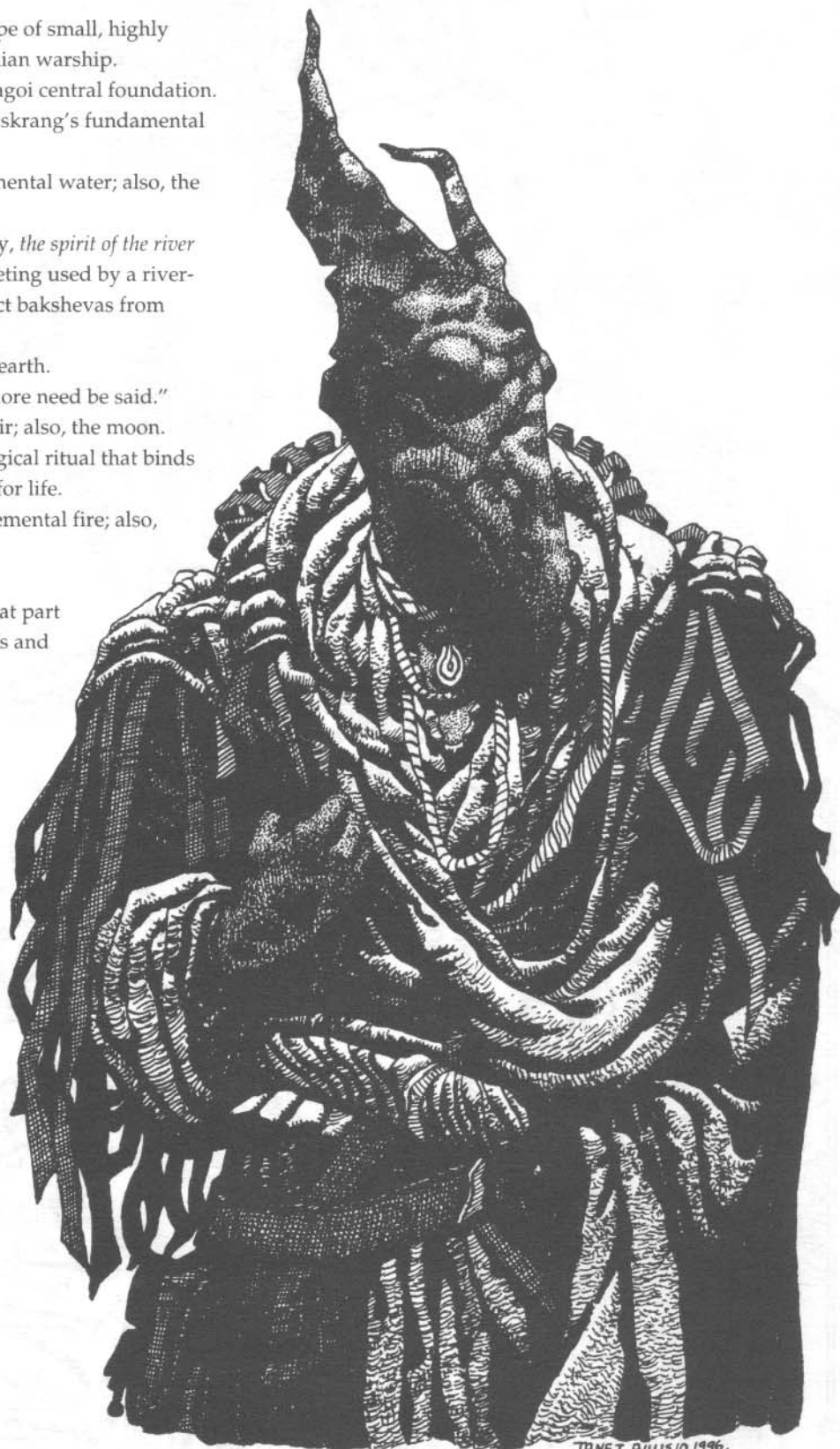
Tikka K'rohyin *n.* House V'strimon's Council of Trade Covenants.

Tikka T'slahyin *n.* House V'strimon's Council of Crew Covenants.

trismari *n.* An inn that serves food but does not provide lodging; a restaurant.

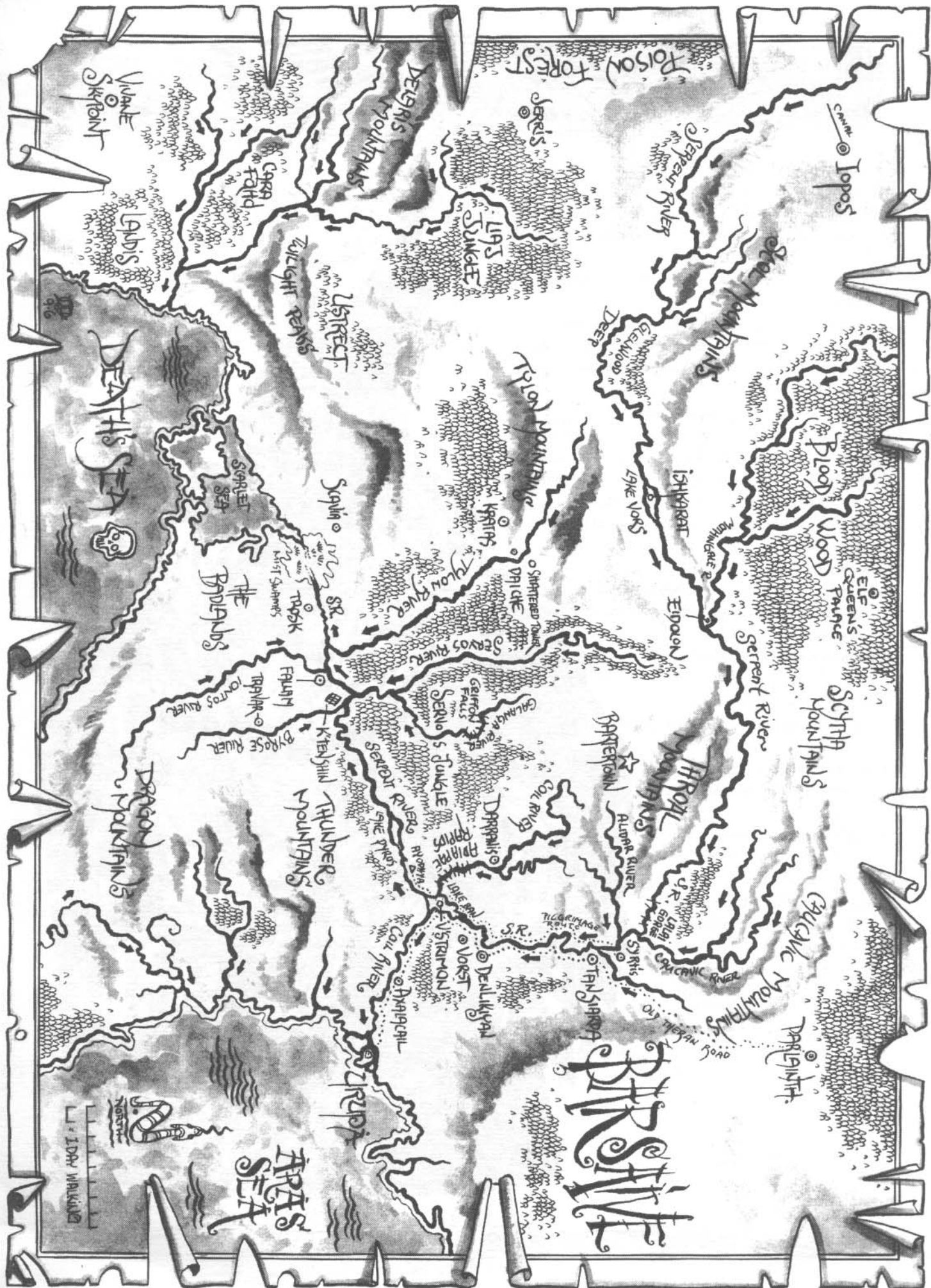
velos *n.* A cannibalistic, t'skrang-like Name-giver race native to the Servos Jungle.

vors *adj.* Deep.



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"My people call the Serpent River Shivoam, the River Dragon. On the Dragon's broad back we can ride anywhere—from the gates of Throal to the depths of the Servos Jungle, to the treacherous edges of the Mist Swamps or even into the dark heart of the Blood Wood. The Serpent reaches everywhere, tying us all together."

—Jedaiyen Westhrall,
t'skrang riverboat captain

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