

CHILDR-EN OF THE OB-AN + WAKAR



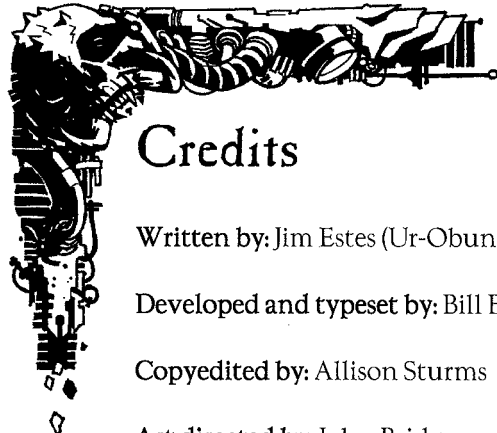
FADING SUNS™

CHILDREN OF THE GOOS

ORVN + WKAR

by
James Estes and Rustin Quaide





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Emblems:

The emblems on the front cover represent: The Champions of Vhem (Obun warriors), Bintaru (an Obun religion), Kraxi (Ukari warrior-monks) and Banjak (Ukari religion).

Pilgrims:

Seek ye the wisdom of the Ur children? Be wary then. They have wisdom, but see it as folly. They have folly, but see it as wisdom. Their very gestures mirror those of their forefathers, the Emyrean powers who wrought the very gates to the stars. Fallen they are, abandoned by heaven. But who now is not so alone? As our sins darken the skies, we may yet remember what has been lost. Stand beside those long in memory, whose words may yet echo the voices of heaven.



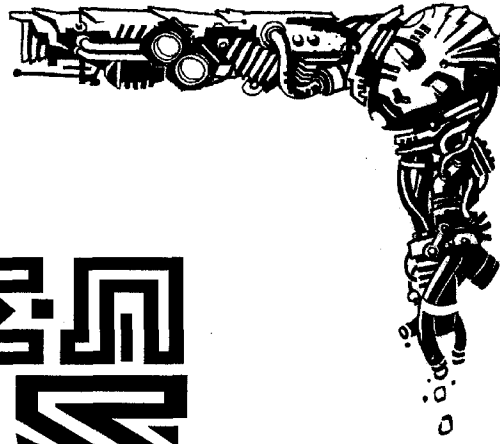
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CHILDREN OF THE GODS OBUN + UKAR

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Alustro's Journal: An Open Mind

January 21st, 4998 (Holy Terra calendar)

Noon

I look at Sanjuk oj Kaval and wonder at the ferocity and tragedy from which her life is built. They are marked on her very skin, these stories of loss and ruin, surrounding the few tales of triumph and transcendence. Her *baa'mon*, her body carvings, tell all about her. I wish I could fully read them.

I know only a little written Ukari, enough to tell a clan marking here and there, and sometimes a coming-of-age mark, but little beyond that. They fascinate me, though, and I wonder if it would be impertinent to ask her to teach me the marks.

But my pondering is interrupted by the entrance of the bailiff, come to take Sanjuk back to her cell where she will await trial. I must put aside my journal for the moment...

Evening

Erian has been successful in convincing the court to hear her argument; her station does bring its privileges, even here on Leagueheim. Julia, as a Charioteer, has already been called upon as a character witness. Although Sanjuk is a low-ranking Scraver, she is still a member of the guild, and thus allowed representation.

I fear, however, that her guild is prepared to throw her to the void on this case. It is too high-profile, one even they shun. I had best describe the charges for the record.

Sanjuk oj Kaval has been accused of murdering Paano HanJoirii, a high-ranking Ur-Obun diplomat in the service of the emperor. Indeed, HanJoirii was a confidant of Bran Botan voKarm, the emperor's Left-Hand Council. Serious charges.

Sanjuk is an old friend of Erian from her days on Midian. While she is native to Ukar — she calls the world

Kordeth — she spent her early years in the Scravers guild on Midian, scrounging ancient ruins under the patronage of Erian's uncle, a man obsessed with Second Republic art. She is, of course, an Ur-Ukar.

She claims innocence in this affair, and tells Erian that she was set up by rivals in her guild to take the fall — what better suspect for the murder of an Obun than his hateful cousin, an Ukar? She has too little pull to even find out who was behind this high-level murder, and has thus swallowed her pride and asked Erian to intervene on her behalf. It was mere coincidence that we were on Leagueheim at this time.

I am unaware of the full details of the investigation, but from what Erian has disclosed, there is scant evidence for Sanjuk's involvement. For one, it is unlikely that she would have ever been allowed access to the ambassadorial grounds, although she was seen outside them soon after the murder. However, she was on duty at a Scraver-run pawnshop on the nearby corner at the time.

This shop is located just outside the grounds and is merely a front, a place to arrange various clandestine activities for any adventuresome ambassador who seeks diversions from his duties. It is not the sort of work Sanjuk is normally involved in — Ukari are generally considered untrustworthy for such secret affairs — but since the claim on her recent reclamation operation had not yet come through, she signed up for any duty available. She claims that someone in her guild purposefully positioned her there to become the main suspect in a planned assassination.

Her guild, of course, does not appreciate being accused so.

Julia has done her best to find out who would have set Sanjuk up, but has gained few leads. She suspects that

little word will be heard, for anyone involved in murdering an imperial ambassador would surely cover his tracks well.

Erian has arranged for good advocacy: Derrick LeFamon, a Reeve known to her uncle, has agreed to represent Sanjuk, although he believes her chances are slim. While there is little but circumstantial evidence against Sanjuk, the prejudice against the Ukari will work against her — especially that from the prosecution witness, Lorim HanPavak, the murdered Obun's brother. It is LeFamon's hope that enough doubt can be raised that the case will be dropped.

The trial is tomorrow. I will pray for our friend tonight.

January 22nd, 1998 (Holy Terra calendar)

Morning

We all gathered at the courthouse, a former Second Republic court that still serves its original function. Its huge, vaulting ceilings are higher than those of many cathedrals I know. It does seem that worship of the law eclipsed that of the Pancreator in those times.

Lorim HanPavak sits across the hall from us, watching Sanjuk. I cannot read his expression; he is well trained in stoicism. Sanjuk stares back at him, her face also a mask of calm. I wonder what she is thinking?

I wish I could say this was to be a lengthy trial, but it just is not so. The odds are against Sanjuk.

LeFamon makes his opening arguments most eloquently. He is a fine Reeve, well-versed in rhetoric. But the prosecutor is even more so, a greatly experienced consul, one in imperial employ.

LeFamon tells the court somewhat of Sanjuk's life and the hardships she has had, the struggles she has made, emphasizing the sheer folly of imagining that she would throw it all away in a fit of anger against an ambassador she never met. As he tells us about her, he points to her carvings as proof of his story, showing that her life is written for all to see.

He calls upon Erian to describe her friendship with Sanjuk, and she tells of an incident in her youth where Sanjuk and she discovered a valuable sculpture from the Second Republic, marveling over it together, revealing that each was more versed in art than the other had

thought. LeFamon then asks how anyone capable of such cultural appreciation could be a murderer.

Julia is called upon next, and explains her work with Sanjuk on Midian. She occasionally flew finds from Sanjuk's digs back to the Li Halan palace, and had multiple opportunities to discuss League matters with Sanjuk. She makes the point that Sanjuk would never betray the guild which provided her an escape from the clan wars on Ukar.

Our advocate then details the lack of evidence against the accused, and how her proximity to the scene of the crime is the only reason she is here in the court today. He has done a very good job of raising doubt.

And then his rival stands to speak and brings forth a list of reprimands Sanjuk has received throughout her career from her Scraver chiefs. This list is long and full of petty crimes, such as assault and theft, none enough to warrant expulsion, but all enough to paint her as a criminal.

It is clear that both Erian and Julia were unaware of these reprimands and look... disappointed. Sanjuk does not look at them as they are read; she only looks at the Obun across the hall from her, who stares back, unmoved.

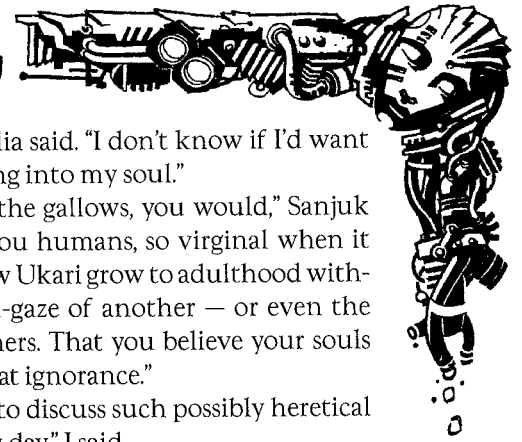
And then the prosecutor calls upon Lorim HanPavak to explain why the Ukar hate the Obun and why Sanjuk would have done murder upon one.

The Obun rises and then closes his eyes for a moment. I notice Sanjuk sit back and close her's also, as if she was very tired. The Obun then speaks:

"It is true that the Ukari hate our people. But it is also true that some of our people despise the Ukari. Nonetheless, I came here to see justice done. To see that my brother's killer was tried and punished. That killer is not in this room."

A gasp of shock traveled across the chambers, and even the judge stared at the Obun in surprise. The prosecutor's jaw even dropped.

"The accused, Sanjuk of Kaval, has graciously allowed me to read her mind, hiding none of its contents. While I must say that I find much of her past repugnant, I find her character... strong. If I had to suffer as she had, I wonder if I could carry myself as well. There is much my people



have yet to learn from our long-sundered cousins."

"This is ridiculous!" the prosecutor yelled. "You cannot simply walk into the court and make such claims!"

"I have been asked to come and bear witness against the accused. I know for a fact that she is not the murderer. There are some who can hide memories from others, and even those who can weave false ones, but she is not one of these adepts. Indeed, she is nearly mind-blind.

"She is innocent and I must ask that the case against her be dismissed. I then ask that the real murderer be found. My brother's close friend, Bran Botan voKarm, desires true justice in this matter, and will not be content until it has been received. Let the innocent go free, and find the true culprit."

He then sat down, his face as expressionless as always. But those around him were far from expressionless. The prosecutor seemed not to know what to do. But the judge decided the matter for him.

"There is scant evidence against the accused. Unless you can bring forth convincing evidence, I see no reason to waste the court's time further."

"I have no more to say," the prosecutor said as he sat down, exasperated.

"Then let Sanjuk oj Kaval go free," the judge said. "And let it be known that all charges brought against her for the murder of Paano HanJoirii are dismissed." He stood and began the long walk down from his high perch.

Once he left the room, we all stood, looking dumbfoundedly at each other. We all knew that, if this was not a League-run court, such witchery as psychic mind-reading would never be allowed. Indeed, had it been a Church court, I fear that Lorim HanPavak would have been censured and removed as a witness, his comment stricken from the record.

Sanjuk seemed not the least surprised. She smiled, looking at the Obun, who nodded to her and rose to leave.

LeFamon was perhaps the most surprised of us all, confiding that he had fully expected to lose the case. This was now a feather in his cap, one he planned on spreading news of quickly. As he gathered his notes and portable think machine, he thanked us all for an exciting case and turned to leave, heading for the closest town crier.

"It's all so creepy," Julia said. "I don't know if I'd want someone like that peering into my soul."

"If you were facing the gallows, you would," Sanjuk said. "I still wonder at you humans, so virginal when it comes to mind-sight. Few Ukari grow to adulthood without suffering the mind-gaze of another — or even the mind-commands of others. That you believe your souls are your own is your great ignorance."

"I would prefer not to discuss such possibly heretical matters on such a happy day," I said.

Sanjuk looked at me and smiled. "You I could like. The rest of your order... no."

As I make this entry, the others are readying to go to a celebratory feast at a local restaurant. Erian has offered to pay (as she has the court costs), although she has not revealed to Sanjuk just how little money she has at present.

I suspect she will learn soon enough. From what Julia told me, Sanjuk may be joining our entourage when next we depart.

"She doesn't know it yet," Julia said. "Whoever set her up won't be happy. It's probably a Scraver crime family, one that won't want her hanging around. If she doesn't leave on her own soon, she may wind up dead in a sewer drain."

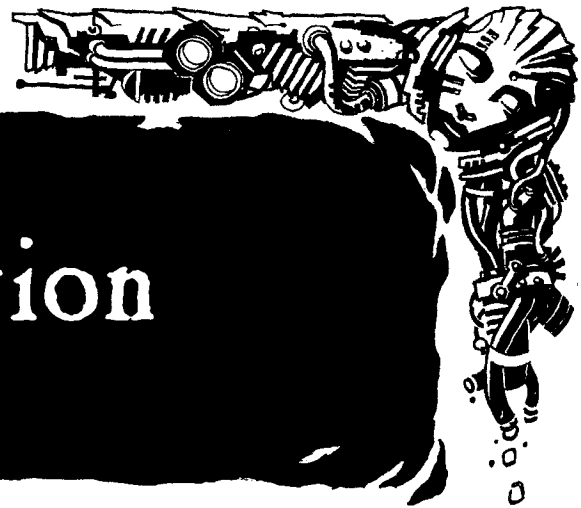
"But she's a Scraver!" I said in disbelief. "How could they do that to one of their own?"

"Wise up. It's not the guild as a whole that'll do it. It's whoever murdered that Obun. They may not even be Scravers. Could be Slayers. But they've got some sort of connection to the guild, one which ain't healthy for Sanjuk to be around. I figure she'll be okay if she gets off world. A few months away and everybody'll forget about her."

"Have you told Sanjuk or Erian this?"

"Not yet. Like you said earlier: Why spoil the celebration? I'm just telling you so you can help figure out where to fit another bunk on the Resurgent."

It seems that I will soon be able to broach the topic of Ukari writing with Sanjuk. There will be little else for her to do on the long journey to the jumpgate.



Introduction

It has been said that humanity will be judged by how humans have treated others. If so, who is the judge? And if found guilty, what is the punishment? Indeed, to witness the treatment of the Ur races, the Obun & Ukari, one would think that no such judge exists, for no retribution has yet been forthcoming. Where, then, are the gods who once nurtured them?

Gone. Gone far away.

And what is to become of a people abandoned by their gods?

Or ponder this: What is to become of the race which has reaped the most from this dereliction? What is to become of humanity once it inherits the legacy of the gods?

— Senator Arthur Iamblichus, What Hath We Wrought?

The Children of the Ur are the most familiar of the sentients humanity has yet encountered, not only in visage and physique, but in behavior and thought. While they are radically different on many levels, they are yet more “human” than the ungulate Shantor, the avian Etyri or the carapaced Ascorbites. Many philosophers and poets have projected human metaphors onto these two races, seeing in them either the greatest ideals of humanity or the worst sins. This humanocentrism has gravely affected the two races’ histories and present states.

Breeds Apart

It was one of the many pop sciences of the day during the later Second Republic to ponder on the seemingly close relationship between humans and the Ur children, the reason for their incredibly similar (yet still different) physiology. No evidence exists whatsoever of a common origin, but this did not stop many “scholars” from writing huge treatises on a common genetic origin for the three races. Some posited that the Ur children were removed by the Anunnaki from earth at some prediluvian date, and

that they developed on their own evolutionary path since then. Others reversed this argument, saying that humans were taken from Velisamil (the Obun homeworld) by the Anunnaki and placed on earth, there to blossom. (Some said this was done to punish them or to make them strong — the same reason for which the Ukari were supposedly removed from Velisamil).

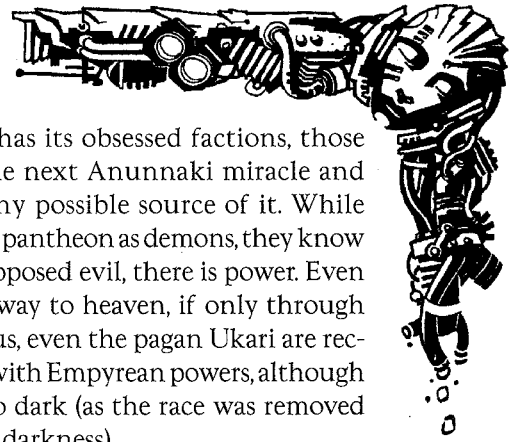
Too many significant differences exist between the races, however, to posit a common origin. Their psychic powers are only the most obvious. If it was not for these formidable abilities, humans and the Ur children would surely have had a less fractious relationship. Yet, humans distrust what they do not possess themselves — or what they fear to possess.

The Sacred and the Profane

The polarization between the Obun and Ukari lends itself to simple, black and white viewpoints and idiotic homilies. Humans have long adopted stereotypes about the races: the Obun are the sacred ones while the Ukari are criminals.

Such opinions set up a wall, preventing true understanding of the races. It denies the subtle arrogance possessed by many Obun and the fierce faith certain Ukari evince to their gods or even their people’s culture. It blinds humans to the many shades of these aliens’ personalities, how an Obun is capable of betrayal or an Ukari more than capable of undying loyalty.

Until such stereotypes are rewritten, however, the options open to members of either race are limited. Few priests will give an Ukari the benefit of the doubt in religious matters, and few Obun will be allowed a chance to display a military genius.



Secrets of the Anunnaki

The most fascinating aspects of these races for humans (and other sentients) are their pasts: their time among the “gods.” The standard theory is that these gods were the Anunnaki jumpgate makers. But many Obun and Ukari find themselves insulted by this conjecture, now so often accepted as fact by even the majority of their own kinds.

Certainly, the Obun see little problem in recognizing this possible historical viewpoint of their gods — if the gods did exist in flesh, yet still built the jumpgates, then what better word for them than gods? Many Ukari, however, are uncomfortable with the analogy, if for no other reason than that it has traditionally led many humans to scour their mythologies, manufacturing whatever “facts” from them they prefer, with little regard for actual traditions. Indeed, this sort of cultural appropriation is the heart of the anger most reservation Ukari feel toward their oppressors. It is one thing to inhibit one’s flesh, another to steal one’s gods.

But this link to super-technology has also been a boon to both, allowing them to defend some cultural treasures from removal or destruction on the grounds that they may one day reveal vital secrets of Ur tech. Even the remote chance of such a key to immense power is enough to keep even the most greedy noble house from moving in for exploitation. Best to wait, to sit on the egg and see what hatches. Never mind that the egg has been sat upon in such a way for nigh a millennia now — it may yet bear new things unheard of.

The Church, of course, is wary of such excuses for pro-

tectionism, but it, too, has its obsessed factions, those breathlessly awaiting the next Anunnaki miracle and thus loath to disturb any possible source of it. While priests may cast the Ukari pantheon as demons, they know that, even amid such supposed evil, there is power. Even demons may point the way to heaven, if only through their resistance to it. Thus, even the pagan Ukari are recognized as having truck with Empyrean powers, although ones fallen from light to dark (as the race was removed from light and placed in darkness).

In a time of dimming stars, any hope, any clue with which to escape the dying universe is desperately clung to. Even if it means suffering one’s enemies to live (Ukari), or allowing their heresies to pass unremarked (Obun).

Using This Book

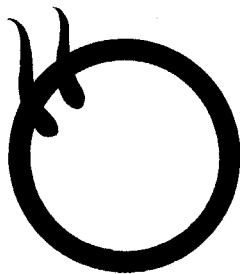
This book is a springboard for introducing the Obun and Ukari into **Fading Suns** dramas with greater depth than before possible. However, it is impossible to fully portray an alien culture — let alone two entire species — in the confines of a single book. Just as no present earth culture can be simply summed up in a book — not the Chinese, not the Native Americans, and certainly not modern Americans — no alien sentient can be delivered forth in full.

It is the duty (and, hopefully, pleasure) of the gamemaster and the players to take what is here and build upon it, to make these races come alive in word and gesture, in their own plots and prose. Here are mere windows onto the lives of other peoples; gamemasters and players can now build a door by which they may enter...

Ur-Obun Emblems:



Champions of Vhem



Bintaru

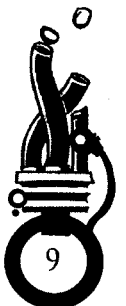
Ur-Ukar Emblems:



Kraxi



Banjak







In a Sacred Manner: Ur-Obun

by James Estes

I have yet to understand these enigmatic aliens, whose ways are ever-inscrutable to me.

For one full year I have traveled among them — shared their adventures, learned their ways, made their causes my own. And yet still I am surprised by their propensity to hasty reaction or ill-considered words. Even now, on the bridge of the Icarus, I watch my noble sponsor and his pilot arguing about a safe course of action for the angry brigands who are pursuing our ship.

Sir Marcus Hawkwood — his veins bulging in his forehead in that oh-so-human way — angrily speaks of “fighting the good fight,” and of turning on our pursuers with all his noble righteous rage; while his Charioteer ally sputters about weakened shields and low fuel and “getting the hell outta here.”

“Logirren!”

I am roused from my reverie by Marcus’ voice.

“Yes, my lord?”

“What are the odds that we’ll be able to defeat the pirates before we lose our shields?”

“My lord, I must remind you: I am a counselor, not a calculator.” I pause a moment. “But if you seek advice, I could offer this: Your rage will not fuel a ship, and clearly the individual most conversant with this vessel’s capabilities urges retreat. It would seem reasonable that we should seek safe haven and have this vessel repaired before you attempt another pleasure cruise through Kurgan space.”

The Hawkwood fumed. “You’re suggesting cowardice!” His face turned that shade of pink I so often see when he loses his temper.

“Might I remind you then of the ancient Terran adage that discretion is the better part of valor? Or perhaps that it is less honorable to die in battle in quiet space, your valor unwitnessed by allies, than to return leading a host of ships united under your banner?”

I saw on his face the dawning of awareness.

“Let us leave this forsaken space and not risk our lives to unenlightened barbarians,” I concluded softly. Let me not sacrifice my life to human vanity, I added silently.

Marcus Hawkwood turned abruptly toward his pilot, whose smirk was barely contained. “Continue your course, Mr. Ford. Let us away to safety!”

And once more I wondered how humans could be so plainly intelligent and yet so equally lacking in common wisdom....

These are the Ur-Obun — the Children of the Gods.

They were not the first race that humanity encountered in space, but they were the closest to humanity. For years, men and women had dreamed of encountering a sentient humanoid race, and that race was the people of Velisamil — pacifist philosophers, whose civilization was founded and guided by the ancient Anunnaki who made the great jumpgates.

Human-Obun history has been difficult to categorize; in its earlier years, each race was enamored of the accomplishments and achievements of the other. But this mutual admiration soon faded, as humans came to mistrust the psychic abilities of the Obun, and the Obun began to mistrust what they perceived as humanity’s capricious paranoia. In time, humans became the overlords, and the Obun suffered the oppression of suspicious Church and power-hungry human nobles. Some people point to the Obun as the example of what human society could have been like — a global society with a representative meritocracy, interstellar “wise men” seeking the stars; but then, others point to Obun cultural stagnation and crippling pacifism. Some say that humanity overran the Obun; others say that Obun society simply could not keep up with the drive of humankind.

Still, in an empire where most “alien” races no longer have sovereignty, where their homeworlds have been taken and the native inhabitants forced to live on reservations, the Velisamilun have managed to maintain a tenuous self-rule. The Obun have placed great stock on the Ordeal, a test of an individual’s mental, physical and spiritual capacities, and some have begun to say that Obun civilization is facing its own Ordeal on an interstellar scale.



If so, this test could break the race or give it a guiding role in a new millennium, as it follows its ancient mandate: to join the Ancients among the stars.

Creation Myths

The earliest written extant Obun texts can be traced back to the period known as the Savage Age — the period before Obun unification under philosophical ideals, in the days when different sects and cults vied for spiritual and political dominance. The ancient texts that Obun read today have survived the millennia of religious growth and change, but there are no written records of their origin before the Savage Age. These same myths are still recounted with each generation, their teachings interpreted anew for the faithful — be they neopolytheists, Bintaru priests, or members of the Ven Lohji sect of the Universal Church.

One item many humans found fascinating within these myths was the clear reference to other inhabited worlds, and even spaceflight. Although the Obun had a metaphysical interpretation of the cosmos, their understanding of the vastness of space and the presence of life elsewhere was strikingly unique when compared to alien myths: The Obun saw themselves as the spiritual center of the universe, but not the physical center nor the only sentient people.

The Vekallanali (excerpts)

Roughly translated as *The Litany of the Lightbearers*, the Obun creation myth details the genesis of the cosmos through the gods voicing different sacred principles. One of the most ancient and widespread mythological treatises, the Litany differed widely among the early Obun. The variant now used — recorded on the Bhozat-Lumen manuscript — is regarded as both the most popular variant and the oldest representative of the creation myths.

...In the first times there was Chaos — a sprawling, dark void like a limitless black ocean, ever churning and boiling, filled with potential, but rife with disorder. Thus it had been before time, and thus it was when time itself began.

*From the darkness came a voice, and a light, and Oluré spoke:
With his words came order, and reason, and the principle of cognition,*

And the dark Chaos was dispelled.

He spoke the first words, and his words carried Power.

The boiling sea of disorder stilled, and placid order held sway.

But Oluré-of-the-Two-Faces spoke not alone:

He came with his brothers and sisters,

The Lightbearers, the Parliament of Heaven.

Theirs was the duty and the power to usher in a cosmos.

As each god spoke — and gods they were, united in holy blood — a sacred principle was formed;

For always it is that the things of heaven preordain the things of earth,

Created in a sacred and everlasting pattern.

For the Principalities are the holy foundations of creation

— the essences that stand behind and above all things.

And as the gods are united, so are their Principalities, for all things are united in the world of the spirit.

*Oluré having established the sacred tongue of creation,
The Principalities could thus now speak, each of their own principle essence.*

The next to speak was Yhetenni, of the ways of nature and matter and energy:

Under his purview are the sciences and laws of nature.

After Yhetenni was beautiful Sizha, she who spoke of the senses

By which the material world is perceived.

After Sizha spoke, mighty Vhem strode forward, the winged brother of Oluré:

He spoke of the body, the vessel of the spirit, capable of great feats of prowess.

Then spoke Dhiyana, the sacred bonded of Oluré:

She spoke of holy harmony and unity, which causes all things to rise to greatness.

Next spoke Dhoneki, of the essence of communication,

Who gave the sacred language of the gods a mundane form, that the gods might not speak alone.

Lastly spoke Qilof, the Quiet, He of endings and transitions: for it is in the nature of all things to grow and change.

When Qilof had finished, Oluré spoke again: from wisdom to wisdom, all the sacred principles are united. For these are the greatest things, and the most profound and sacred.

And when the Greater Principalities were finished, other Lightbearers spoke that their Principles might be given form; and though they are subservient to the Greater Principles, they are still the things of heaven.

Many are the Lesser Principles: from Ishtel and her healing balms to Lhoravos and his principles of artistry, from the music of Jolarssen to the sacred journeys and secret pathways of Dzore — there is no mortal endeavor or act of nature that does not find root in heaven.

Likewise are there many Principles that lie in secret, awaiting discovery that the Obun might ascend the heavenly ladder themselves. Thus was the universe ordered: by the deeds and words of the Principalities, the greatest of the great, nothing might exist without reason and without heavenly purpose.

The Sacred Intelligences

...With all the Principalities in place, and heaven so ordered, the natural world was ready to be born.

Not all Lightbearers became Principalities, for not all of the gods created and oversaw principles: Only the greatest of the great were entrusted with this task. But still, others had sacred tasks and roles in heaven, and after the Principalities came the Intelligences, in whose province was the creation of worlds.

Chief among them spoke Velisamil, the proud and ancient, and with her word was the first world created; but Velisamil was not to be alone in the cosmos, for other Intelligences spoke, each in their turn creating other worlds, and soon space was filled with a panoply of worlds, some barren and lifeless, others inherent with the possibility of creation.

And together all the Principalities spoke, and together they

created the first sun, which hung in heaven shining as an ever-present reminder of the light of heaven. Thus was Velisamil illumined with the sacred fire.

Seeing what good it was, they spoke again, and again. Soon space was filled with a vast array of suns, each a visible reminder of the glory of heaven.

With the worlds in place, all the Principalities spoke again, and their words became reality, and their principles became actualities. And the first world was covered with plants, and beasts that crawled, and beasts that flew and swam and strode. And finally, Velisamil spoke again, and her children, the Velisamilun were born to this perfect world, the sons and daughters of heaven. Where all things created share some measure of the Principalities, each to a different extent, only the Velisamilun were created with the ability to understand and grasp these Principalities, and thus become sovereigns and stewards of their world, those who speak for heaven.

Seeing how wonderful it was, again the Principalities and Intelligences issued their words, and more worlds teemed with life, of many different varieties than were found on Velisamilun. But none matched in visage the Parliament of Heaven as did the Velisamilun, and this physical likeness was ever a reminder of our holy beginnings. We are the first, and the most ancient, and the closest to heaven.

And thus it was that the Velisamilun grew, guided by the hands and eyes of the Sunlit Court. The Velisamilun founded the first great cities: Taklannen, Halsa, Gerdana, Sormen, Kera,

Tharafalen, and Llungwollo — where they lived according to the precepts of the gods, in unity with the Parliament of Heaven. There they began learning the ways of heaven, taught by the gods themselves.

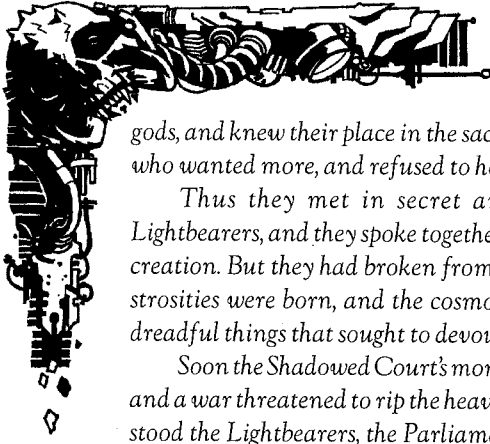
The Manual of War (excerpts)

More fully called *The Manual of War Between the Bearers of Light and the Bearers of Darkness*, this text recounts the strife among the Lightbearers, or the Sunlit Court, and the aggressive chaotic deities and spirits who would become the core of the Ukari pantheon, called the Shadowed Court. The Manual details how the Lightbearers finally banished their enemies and cursed the mortals who turned from them; the Manual's various ancient manuscripts demonstrate a surprising homogeneity.

...Thus it existed for time untold, with the Lightbearers overseeing the activities of the created races. Each Intelligence watched its own children with intensity and love, guiding their development, while the Principalities oversaw all the created: But always the Velisamilun were the most loved and admired, for they were the first children of heaven.

Not all Lightbearers were Principalities or Intelligences, though. Some existed whose task was to serve their betters, while others knew that their time to Speak had not yet come. And though many were content with their task — for they were still





gods, and knew their place in the sacred order — there were some who wanted more, and refused to honor the sacred pattern.

Thus they met in secret and conspired against the Lightbearers, and they spoke together, issuing their own words of creation. But they had broken from the sacred order, and monstrosities were born, and the cosmos was now filled with dark, dreadful things that sought to devour the things of heaven.

Soon the Shadowed Court's monstrous deeds became known, and a war threatened to rip the heavens asunder. On the one side stood the Lightbearers, the Parliament of Heaven, the gods who remained steadfast in their sacred avocation; against them stood the Shadowed Court, the children of the Dark, who sought to usurp the Principalities and depose the Intelligences, unwilling to abide by the sacred pattern.

It was a dreadful time. Sage Oluré spoke as the counsel of the gods, and his wisdom unified the Sunlit Court. Vhem stood at his side, the greatest champion of the hosts of heaven; united together, the pinnacle and supernal essences of spiritual and physical greatness, few could oppose them.

But still many stood against them. Chief among the Shadowed Court was Anakrein, the one-eyed voice of Judgment — ever incensed that his stern judgment should be tempered by the wisdom of Oluré. At his side stood brooding and uncontrollable Rylós, and together they led the rebellious gods in battle. Thus did the marshaled Parliament of Heaven weigh against the assembled Shadowed Court and their abhorrent spawn.

Their warfare touched all things. Some worlds were lost, entire peoples destroyed as their patron Intelligence was slain by the monstrous children of the Shadowed Court or even by the darkling gods themselves. Many a world died this way, their vital energies swallowed by the ravenous maw of the dark. Gods can die, surrendering their vital force to the power of powers whence they came, and many a god died in this war.

The Obun and the Ukar

...In time the Lightbearers came to their Firstborn, the children created in their own image, and warned them of the treacheries of the Shadowed Court. "They will tempt you," warned the messengers of the gods, "first with power, and then with the promise of a false freedom. But be warned: Freedom from the sacred order of things is not true freedom, but servitude to chaos."

And their children vowed to stand by their gods, faithful to the sacred order. But even so, the servitors of the Shadowed Court made themselves known, and tempt the children they did indeed, as prophesied — first with power, then with the illusion of freedom from the gods.

The people stood steadfast. "We honor the Oba, our Sacred Vow," they said, "thus we are Obun."

But even so, some stood in the shadows, lured by what the Shadowy Gods had to offer. And they broke away, an angry and violent lot, demanding the things of heaven. "You have broken your word and are possessed of unreasoning violence," said the Faithful. "You are Ukar."

As the Lightbearers fought mightily against the gods of the Shadowed Court, so did the Obun struggle against the Ukar. Though the war in heaven was a brief tempest — for all time is relative to the gods — war raged across the surface of Velisamil

for decades. And the Children of Light armed their progeny, as did the Children of Darkness. With great magics and wondrous weapons did the Obun defend themselves from the Ukar, and fierce was the battle that pitted and scarred the face of Velisamil, as fire reigned down from heaven.

The First Ordeal

...It came to pass that the Khellahestomia, the four sacred stones, were lost during the war, and the Lightbearers feared that should the Traitors find them, the war would be lost. And four young godlings, worthy combatants in the sacred war, stepped forward, and accepted the challenge of finding the Khellahestomia. They met with Dzore, he who knows the hidden byways of heaven and Velisamil, but even Dzore knew not where these mighty stones could be found.

But then came Masked Uisaddein, and the sly one knew of the stones' resting places; he spoke in riddles, that the godlings might prove themselves worthy of finding the stones. Each stone was hidden in a separate place, and for each stone was a series of tasks to be done — tasks either spiritual or mental or physical in nature. And though Dzore did not accompany them, he offered them guidance and wisdom that they might succeed in their endeavors.

Anabein found the Stone of Strength guarded by the many-armed Demon-Whose-Blood-Was-Fire, while Neminni learned that the Stone of Wisdom lay hidden in the dark waters of the Hoary Sea. Bhoquel discovered the Stone of Immortality in the Forest of Solitude, and Pom'el found the Stone of Destruction buried beneath the Hills of Despair. Pom'el's was the fiercest battle, and his companions carried his dying body to Oluré and the Parliament of Heaven, Pom'el's weakening fingers barely grasping the Stone of Destruction. With his sacrifice, the gods did prevail; as his qhaatai (his sacred blood) drained from his body, he surrendered his life to return to the sacred pattern.

Victory

...Finally it happened that the Lightbearers overcame their villainous brethren; for the sacred pattern shall always reassert itself and weigh victorious over chaos. The rebellious gods of the Shadowed Court fled the presence of the Lightbearers, retreating to the dark corners of creation to brood and sulk.

The Lightbearers approached their children, the Obun, and showered them with blessings.

To the Ukar, they offered penance and retribution. But the Ukar were a stubborn lot, and they refused to join the Obun. The Parliament of Heaven saw what a hindrance the Ukar would be, so the gods removed them from Velisamil so the Obun would prosper and grow in the spirit and the Ukar might learn humility.

The Hero Legends (excerpts)

The Hero Legends retell the terrestrial element of the War between Light and Darkness: As the Lightbearers strove against the Shadowy Gods in heaven, their followers on Velisamil mirrored their battle. A vast amount of literature falls into this corpus, as different communities and families raised local champions to almost godlike statues.

...As war was waged by the gods, so was it fought on Velisamil, by our own peoples. These are the tales of the first philosopher-knights, the great warriors who championed the Parliament of Heaven and earned their own place among the gods.

Paa Han Venel

...Many decades of war had taken their toll on our people, and no end to the battle was in sight. For still the Ukari trumpeted the cause of their dark and demanding gods, slighting the Order of Heaven. It was in the latter days of the holy war that Paa Han Venel, a man of peace, came forth from the Obun and extended an open palm of friendship to the Ukari.

In his youth, Paa Han Venel had been a great warrior, distinguishing himself in battle against the Oathbreakers. Not even an old man yet, he was a hero among the Obun. But as he advanced in years, he saw the folly of war, and turned to peace. It was he who first taught the Obun how to subsume our warrior urges for a greater cause, to turn to meditation and self-mastery. He had retired away from his people for many years so that he might greater contemplate the mysteries of heaven. It was in his own meditations he saw a vision of peace, and finally he spoke:

"We are more alike than unlike," Paa offered. "Let us rejoin our families into a joyous union, as we once were in the past."

Many were swayed by his words, but the Keepers of the Sacred Vow feared the Ukari, who had forgotten both honor and peace. Still the sage Paa spoke of peace and unity, treading bravely onto battlefields and holding congress with Ukari chieftains and warlords — who, even overcome with battlelust, saw his inner peace and listened to his words.

At long last, the Obun and the Ukari had attained peace. The Ukari offered Shinistraku, a daughter of one of their greatest clans, in holy union with Paa — so their own union might represent in small what the unified Obun-Ukari nations might achieve in greatness.

Together they lived in harmony, on lands sacred to both peoples, and they produced a single daughter, Shurstrat. The Obun saw in Paa and his family the living hopes for peace with the Ukar. But many Ukar were resentful, for in their hearts they still swore allegiance to their dark gods, and it was in their nature to rebel against harmony. And these Ukari conspired, as did their dark masters in the stars, and struck against the home of Paa and Shinistraku. Too late came the warning, and when the Obun Vhem-saahen (philosopher-knights) rode for rescue, they found nothing but a charred homestead and a smoking field and the smoldering corpses of Paa and Shinistraku — a bleak sacrifice to the vile gods of the Shadowed Court; young Shurstrat, the future of the two races, was gone; she was taken as a living offering to the darkling gods.

The Obun wept and cried out for justice. And the treacherous Ukari, themselves responsible for the black deeds, turned accusations against the Obun.

The peace was short-lived. Thus did the Obun Vhem-saahen redouble their efforts against the Ukari warmongers and hate-priests, whose nature is to destroy and rebel against the sacred pattern.

Obun Calendar

The Obun Calendar dates back to the founding of the Federation, when the provinces abandoned their disparate calendar schemes (most of which contrasted wildly) and adopted a new unified calendar to commemorate their new political unity. Year One of the Unified Calendar (UC 1) begins with the formation of the Obun Federation; all time before that is dated retroactively as Before Unification (BU).

Timeline

Obun	Terran	Event
2911 BU?	900 BC?	Founding of Zhri'aalloi *
1911 BU?	AD 100?	The Dereliction *
1711 BU?	300?	Zhri'aalloi falls; the Savage Age starts *
1500 BU?	511?	Great Desolation *
145 BU?	1866?	Founding of Bintaru *
140 BU	1871	Tri-Nation Confederacy
137 BU	1873	Chronicles of Olannon written
10 BU	2001	Trial of Vahn ma Noleni
UC 1	2011	Founding of Obun Federation; end of Savage Age
UC 12	2023	Obun Federation globalizes
UC 623	2634	Obun achieve spaceflight
UC 723	2734	Obun colonize solar system
UC 786	2797	First Contact with humans
UC 844	2803	Ven Lohji converts
UC 945	2955	Ukar War
UC 1248	4203	The Pogrom: Obun subjugated
UC 1928	4883	Virta HanLoaaj's call for interstellar unity

* conjectured dates

The Ancient Days

Attend to my words, O Children of Obun. I speak now of the ancient times, of the holy ancient times, when our forefathers and mothers walked with the gods, and our civilization was the pinnacle of achievement. And I speak now of the ancient times, when Obun fought Obun, and our grand heritage was lost. I speak of these times, that we might not forget our origins, and whence we came, and in so remembering, we may guide where we go in the future.

— Chronicles of Olannon

Though Obun scholars and historians have discovered much written about their earlier days, few pieces date from these periods. Sadly, war destroyed many of the earliest monuments and texts, and Obun's known history during the Savage Age is revealed mostly in reflections written in the age's latter days. Some texts — such as the Vho'ten Hymns and the Leandhor manuscripts — may be reminiscent of ancient texts, but most narratives that recount the ancient days come from later periods and are sometimes subject to deconstructionism and historical



criticism.

The most notable of these texts is the *Chronicles of Olannon*, a massive treatise by the wandering philosopher-historian (circa 137 BU) Olannon Lho Zennali. Olannon claimed to have merely recorded the oral lores that he heard as a child, and that he acted only as a faithful translator of ancient tales. His text was delivered in the early days of Obun reunification movements, though, so it is possible that pro-Confederacy prejudices guided his transcription of tales — tales that speak tellingly of the glories and merits of communal harmony during Obun's legendary Golden Age. But as it is, the *Chronicles* are among the oldest documents that the Obun have and tell them of their ancient past. (Indeed, whether Olannon truly even existed is a subject of some debate, much like the 20th-century Terran arguments over the true authorship of the Greek Homeric hymns.)

Zhri'aalloi

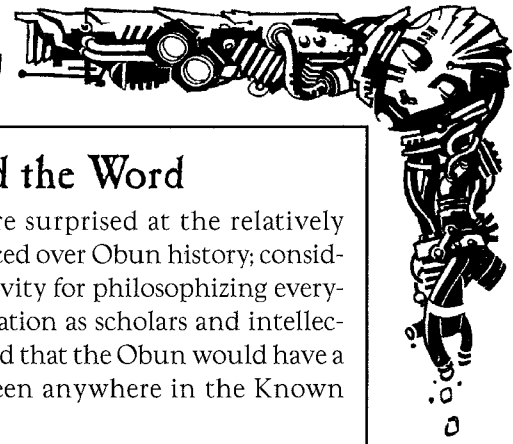
In ancient days, the Lightbearers walked as one with the Obun — as stern and loving parents. In these days, Velisamil was truly Zhri'aalloi, and we were the favored of heaven.

— *Chronicles of Olannon*

Little is known of Obun mythical history from the time immediately following the banishment of the Ukari to the beginnings of Zhri'aalloi, the first Obun civilization. Obun myths state that “seven generations” — a typical Obun narrative device for measuring — after the banishment of the Ukari, the great civilization of Zhri'aalloi was founded. It was a time of great peace; the Lightbearers hid the powerful weapons that they had given the Obun, concealing them and teaching the Obun that though this was an era of peace, there might come again a day in the future where the Obun must fight for heaven, and these wondrous artifacts shall again be found.

Narratives describe Zhri'aalloi as a network of seven unified city-states, typically identified with the seven cities founded by the gods. At the heart of each city was a massive star-tabernacle — a combined meditation/astronomy center where the Obun could meditate and learn more about the heavens. Although early legends treat the first cities as immense cosmopolitan centers, Obun archeomythologists have determined that they were more than likely ceremonial centers, built in a symmetrical pattern around a central temple/observatory, while most of the Obun lived in less opulent villages surrounding the cities. In addition, the Lightbearers built many structures of their own across Velisamil, stone structures and sanctuaries that remain enigmas to the Obun.

Zhri'aalloi was more than just a nation or place: It was a state of being, a Golden Age when the Obun lived under the auspices of the Lightbearers. The Obun did more than simply build statues invoking their Principalities: They studied under them and learned from them. Who better to instruct in artistic exercise or philosophical contemplation than the Lightbearers, those celestial beings whose very words were the *sine qua non* for such notions



as Good, Beautiful, or True? The Lightbearers taught their children much, especially the sciences. They also guided their spiritual development through *saatari* — meditations and guided-dreaming that directed a contemplative one to greater psychic awareness.

Thus was born Zhri'aalloi, the pinnacle of contemplative and aesthetic endeavors. A single, unified nation-state that spanned Velisamil and was responsible for the creation of art, literature, technology, and intellectual enterprise the likes of which have never been seen again. For centuries, the Lightbearers guided the Obun peoples, and under the Lightbearers' aegis, the Obun lived largely free of war, famine and disease.

Zhri'aalloi was all that was good in civilization; it was a time of unprecedented peace. It was a time that could not last.

The Dereliction

And so the Lightbearers spoke to their Chosen: As we did once, so do we expect you to do so now. You are your own masters. Guide your people well, that they might come to the Light of their own accord. Look to the stars: There you will find your destiny, as you, too, become Bearers of the Light.

— *Chronicles of Olannon*

Then one day the Lightbearers departed, leaving the Obun to their own devices. No one can really say why this happened: variant texts and legends give differing reasons for this act. Some say that the Obun had failed in some regard and were no longer worthy of the Lightbearers; others say that the Lightbearers had long planned to leave their children, so that they might force adulthood on them. And some even say that a crisis elsewhere averted the attention of the Lightbearers and forced them to suddenly abandon their children.

On their last day, the gods came to the people at the star-sanctuary of Tharafala and addressed them. There they passed on their legacy and told the Obun to look to the stars, for one day the Lightbearers would return, but not before the Obun had learned to ascend to heaven on their own ability and become Lightbearers themselves. The stars, the Obun were assured, were their destiny.

The gods then chose different Obun and entrusted them with the safekeeping of their people. The seven appointed leaders were Obun already known and revered, commanding great respect and honor among their own. "Remember *saatari*," they concluded, "for it is in *saatari* that we may speak with one another, and with it you shall grow."

And then the gods finally left Velisamil, some in their golden flying chariots, others ascending in beams of brilliant light, and others simply floating skyward, leaving a weeping population behind.

The Venlinni

At first, the Venlinni, or Appointed, acted admirably; they had been chosen for their wisdom and their close-

The Pen and the Word

Many humans are surprised at the relatively sparse writings produced over Obun history; considering the Obun proclivity for philosophizing everything and their reputation as scholars and intellectuals, humans expected that the Obun would have a library unlike that seen anywhere in the Known Worlds.

In fact, the Obun were highly literary, but they did not record much of their composition onto permanent record. Instead, they stored it in their minds and relied upon immense abilities of recall to narrate or relate whatever tale was necessary, much like human bards or the poets of ancient Greece, who recited the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* from memory. A form of writing was created, utilizing pictograms and glyphs, but this writing was used for scientific texts alone.

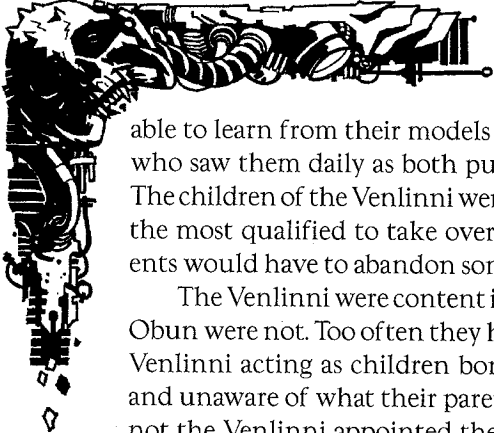
Glyph-writing was eventually used to record military victories, and most of the earliest written records from the Savage Age are nothing other than commemorative stones. But as war between the nations escalated and the unifying traditions of Zhri'aalloi started to crumble, the need to preserve the oral literature of Obun's Golden Age became apparent; the ancient glyph-writing slowly evolved into pictograms, and numerous tomes were created for the purpose of recording Obun literature.

When the Obun nations reunited under the Umo'rin, scholars set out to translate the forgotten alphabets of their ancestors. A number of breakthroughs allowed them to translate portions of some recovered texts, thus allowing the scientific advances that led to spaceflight. It is not an easy task to translate an unknown writing that details a forgotten science.

ness to the gods, and they acted in their stead as well as could any mortal — easing conflicts, overseeing the development of Obun science and philosophy, and guiding their peoples ever onward. The Venlinni knew that, though they had important roles, they were only a part of the whole; thus no individual Appointed had any more power over the Obun peoples or over each other. They were to work together, and in harmony they led their people.

But the Venlinni were not ageless, in spite of the advanced Obun science that ensured longevity, and in time they saw the end of their tenure approaching. For years, the Venlinni debated how best to pass on leadership to a new generation of Obun, to provide continuity in greatness. They agreed to pass the mantle of leadership to their heirs. While the Venlinni were the parents of the entire Obun community, in a broad sense, they were also parents of their own close family units: Who else were best





able to learn from their models of leadership than those who saw them daily as both public and private figures? The children of the Venlinni were leaders-in-training and the most qualified to take over the roles that their parents would have to abandon some day.

The Venlinni were content in their decisions, but the Obun were not. Too often they had seen the scions of the Venlinni acting as children born into privilege, spoiled and unaware of what their parents had earned. And had not the Venlinni appointed their own ministers to rule over various issues at times? Surely these men and women were more capable of leadership.

Still, they accepted the decisions of their leaders. Who the gods had chosen could not be easily ignored, and they were no doubt wiser and better capable of such decisions. They watched as the Venlinni, one by one, pass on their roles as stewards of Obun culture and civilization to their children.

Thus were the seeds sown for the dynastic reigns that would ultimately tear Zhri'aalloi apart, causing so magnificent an achievement to crumble to dirt and ash.

New World Order

Sadly, wisdom is not a characteristic passed in blood, though many would wish so. Or, if so, then it is thinned exceedingly through passing generations. For the children of the Venlinni acted rashly, but not as much as their children did, or their children's children, who were exceedingly rash.

— *Chronicles of Olannon*

Within generations, the wisdom and leadership of the Venlinni had been replaced with selfishness, elitism, and narrow-minded isolationism. A hundred years after the Dereliction, the original seven Venlinni families had fractured into twelve families, as brothers and sisters argued over petty concerns; another century later, there were more than 50 self-proclaimed noble families, each tracing their own lineage to the Venlinni.

Some nobles deemed the common Obun far beneath them, more of a nuisance than anything else. These nobles removed themselves from society and built cloistered retreats and manses high atop the mountains of Velisamil, where they could immerse themselves in saatari, only occasionally sending word down to the Obun communities that they governed. They had made themselves the new Lightbearers, appointing other Obun as seneschals, to govern in their stead the peoples of their world while they become more and more isolated from their own people. Many of these stewards took the power for themselves.

Other noble families took different paths: Instead of isolating themselves and taking more distant roles in governance, they increased their might and political power by becoming autocrats and despots. The common Obun, they reasoned, were utterly incapable of decision-making, so their leaders claimed supremacy over their peoples.

The face of Velisamil was a completely foreign politi-

cal structure. The once unified nation-state had fractured into a number of smaller provinces. As nobles died, they further fractured their territories among their squabbling children, and Velisamil was soon covered by a host of petty city-states, each clamoring for power and territory and eyeing their neighbors with suspicion and hostility.

The Fall of Zhri'aalloi

Noble cities, burning brightly, their dreams but ashes. Its treasures had become the spoils of petty warlords; the noble populace was now a vagabond army who sought weapons before wisdom, who spread terror not truth. Thus did Zhri'aalloi, the Golden Land of the Gods, crumble.

— *Chronicles of Olannon*

The people had forgotten their very foundations. They had abandoned unity and contemplation, and no longer looked to the stars for the return of their gods. Warlords dominated the political arena, as they led their armies against each other.

Of the seven fabled cities of Zhri'aalloi, only Tharafalen remained as the inheritor of its gods-given traditions. Its library was the last repository of the scientific writings bequeathed by the Lightbearers, its scholars the inheritors of ancient wisdom. The other cities were abandoned or destroyed as other cities rose to supplant them. The ancient structures of the Lightbearers were lost or overrun. Ever striving to protect the traditions of the Lightbearers and the ancient Velisamilun, Tharafalen was constantly under siege by warlords.

Finally, after a decade-long assault, the city fell; its doors burst inward under the might of ancient weapons from the Great War. R'stam vo Hollan, the city's champion, fought bravely until his blade shattered in the conflict; he was captured and tortured for weeks before he died. His desiccated body was displayed for all to see. The Great Library was torched, the city's academe staked out and left as carrion-food.

The path of war had triumphed over the path of contemplation.

When Gods Weep

Mighty Zhri'aalloi was no more; the magnificent unified civilization of the gods was gone.

The Golden Age was replaced by a Savage Age, a time of loss and ruin. National borders changed, noble families rose and fell, political ideologies warred, sects and cults clashed. The unity of Zhri'aalloi was a thing forgotten, and petty rivalries intensified. Finally, war consumed all of Velisamil.

The ancient weapons of the past were found. The magnificent technologies left by the Lightbearers were used against other Obun, destroying cities and forests. Many places were turned into wastelands, and the Great Desolation covered the globe.

The science of the Lightbearers was forgotten, buried in destroyed laboratories, hidden in ancient tomes now

indecipherable. The longevity of the ancients had been replaced with the shortened life span of a violent age. The secrets of the stars, revealed by the Lightbearers, was forgotten as the Obun plunged into the dark ages of ignorance. If the Lightbearers saw their children, then surely they wept.

And thus it was for millennia.

The Rebirth of Civilization

The world was in a state of chaos.

While some enclaves of learning could be found, the Obun had tumbled into barbarism. The magnificent cities of Zhri'aalloi were destroyed, rebuilt, and destroyed again. The Obun spread out across Velisamil, forging new nations and building new cities. The Fabled Kingdoms of Ibola, the Twin Cities of Vuitak, the Makkasen Union, and the Republic of S'artta each played a role in the rebirth of civilization that would occupy thousands of years of Obun history. Some city-states were minor autocracies, others theocracies ruled by priest-kings.

Bintaru

A new religion appeared, one that would forever change the face of Velisamil and begin the restoration of its ancient glory. The religion was Bintaru, and it preached unity — unity of the gods and unity of the people. Based upon the teachings of the itinerant metaphysician Milannsa, Bintaru posited a spiritual, ecological, cosmological and psychological union of the Obun peoples. Instead of vindicating one god or vilifying another, Bintaru stressed the role of all Lightbearers in the Parliament of Heaven, preaching that such harmony is the divine model to be followed on Velisamil. Milannsa's teachings, collected in the *Kalebintaru — The Book of the Way of Harmony* — offered the beginning of a new era. In this and subsequent works, Bintaru offered a new way of life drawn upon the ancient teachings of the Lightbearers: It was the old ways interpreted anew.

But Bintaru taught more than mere ecumenical communitarianism. Its metaphysics were based on panpsychism, the belief that a sacred intelligence permeated all of Creation. The Lightbearers themselves, in this cosmogony, were not absolute powers but manifestations of the "power of powers." To Bintaru priest-philosophers, this sacred sentience could be found in all things. It was united by qhaatai, the sacred blood of the gods, and in qhaatai, all things were holy. Furthermore, Bintaru taught people to look to the stars again as the great destiny of the Obun peoples, to become as the Lightbearers. Each Obun was a microcosm of the universe, and the contemplative path was to observe within and observe without and bring both microcosm and macrocosm into utter harmony.

A Growing Unity

It was in this spreading egalitarianism that three nation-states of Bohrhaj, Rennil, and Zhollano forged a treaty, recognizing in each other a similar desire for peace. The

process was not instant: it took nearly a century for the Tri-Nation Confederacy to become a stable political unit. Other nations across Velisamil looked to their efforts for inspiration — and always Bintaru could be found therein.

But Bintaru threatened the sects and cults that had ruled Velisamil for centuries, and they unified briefly in attempts to persecute Bintaru's followers. Ironically, Bintaru almost drew together the disparate faiths and created unity in action among them, but their sectarian differences still stood in their way, and they fell to infighting and backbiting.

All the while, Bintaru spread, its popularity rising among a population desperately seeking empowerment and purpose. Across Velisamil, Obun looked both inward and starward, in pursuit of a new contemplative peace.

One World, One People

For another two centuries, Bintaru migrated across Velisamil, and along with it spread a new egalitarianism. Entire libraries have been written about this period in Obun history. It was a time of extreme religious, philosophical and political change, and at the end of it, Obun was a world transformed.

The Obun Federation

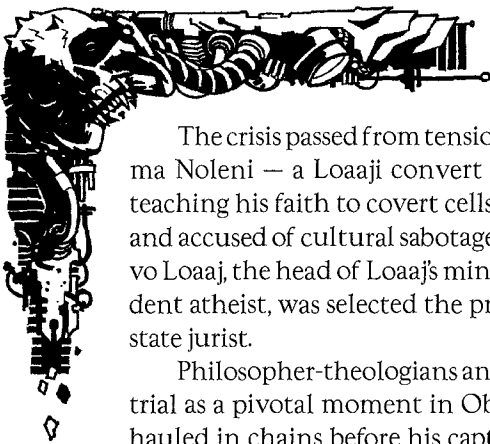
The Confederacy developed a powerful opponent in the Dominion of Loaj, which was an ancient kingdom ruled by one of the oldest Obun lineages. Its capitol city, Loajen, was allegedly built over the ruins of Tharafalen and archeological discoveries verify that — including the discovery of ancient artifacts and tech that Loaj's scientists were trying to understand.

Loaj was unique among the Obun in its strict atheism and anticlericalism. For decades, religious education was outlawed, and proselytizing was punishable by imprisonment or exile. Although the Loaj family tended toward religious suspicion, this alone would not have resulted in the national stance. It was a reaction to a decades-old event, when a radical sect attempted (and failed) a violent coup that would have resulted in the Theocracy of Loaj.

It was a classic case of irresistible force meets immovable object. Religious fervor does not observe political boundaries, and Bintaru inevitably became an underground movement in Loaj. Tensions heightened as Loaj's nobles insinuated that the Confederacy was actively behind this religious movement and was guilty of cultural sabotage.

Matters were confounded by the spread of *ghos'ra*, the Wasting Death — an illness that Obun science had proven incapable of treating, but which Bintaru healers were able to cure with prayer. Ghos'ra had recently entered Loaj, and even that nation's advanced science was ineffectual. This gave the common citizen of Loaj a more than passing reason to hear the words of Bintaru preachers, who would heal sufferers regardless of their ideological affiliations.





The crisis passed from tension to hostility when Vahn ma Noleni — a Loaaji convert to Bintaru — was found teaching his faith to covert cells. He was quickly arrested and accused of cultural sabotage and spying. Duke Menlo vo Loaaj, the head of Loaaj's ministry of science and an ardent atheist, was selected the prime investigator and the state jurist.

Philosopher-theologians and scholars point to Vahn's trial as a pivotal moment in Obun history. As Vahn was hauled in chains before his captors, he spoke eloquently in his and Bintaru's defense. "Although a religion," he had said, "Bintaru is a movement away from sheer sectarian superstition." He also spoke of the health crisis facing Loaaj and how ghos'ra was not simply a physical ailment: It was a disease born of spiritual discord. The trial's transcripts say that Vahn addressed the duke, saying, "I know of your secret pain. Accept the Way and you will be healed. For your nation's sake, for your sake, and for the sake of your family, be one with the Way."

Hagiographies of Vahn believe this to be a clear reference to the Duke's ailing wife, who had days earlier been diagnosed with ghos'ra; upon the duke's return home, he found his wife healthy and free from any trace of disease. There was power in Vahn's words to touch the spirit of his captors — and moreso, to heal the infirm. The trial ended (to the protests of many) the next day as the duke dismissed the case.

Within weeks, the ruling family of Loaaj abandoned its irreligion and openly embraced Bintaru. It seemed at first that the Dominion of Loaaj accepted Bintaru, but not the associated federationism that typically accompanied it. But as Bintaru converts flooded the streets of Loaaj calling for political reform, it became clear that the ruling family would either have to change things — and ensure room for themselves — or be swept aside in the process. It also became obvious that Bintaru priests seemed quietly unwilling to support the notion of a ruling family, and they were openly apprehensive to becoming clerics for a family of despots. The political push for a Loaaj federation grew stronger.

Within a year, the family promised a radical restructuring of the Loaaj government, which would become a meritocracy, ruled by a council of elected elders. The practice of the Ordeal — once merely a ritual re-enactment of the labors of the gods during the sacred war — would now be used to select worthy leaders of a new nation.

Such change did not come easily, of course. Many within the Dominion of Loaaj had grown accustomed to their power and privilege, and would not lose this. Accusations abounded that the Confederacy was less interested in the spiritual salvation of Loaaj than in its archeological discoveries; that the Confederacy threatened to withhold the cure of ghos'ra; that Bintaru priests wanted a federation because they could then govern the nation. But such hard-hearted despots found themselves overwhelmed by a new government backed equally by Loaaj's

ancient rulers and the nation's own population. Their opposition was crushed, and the new Federation of Loaaj became a powerful nation.

Ironically, among the first elders on the council were the one-time-duke Menlo va Loaaj and the one-time-prisoner Vahn ma Noleni.

A decade later, the Federation of Loaaj and the Tri-Nation Confederacy joined together and formed the Umo'rin, the Obun Federation; at its heart was Bintaru. Loaaj and the various nations that together made up the Confederacy became Toa ("provinces" or "colonies"), and each To was independent and autonomously ruled by a council of seven elders. In addition, an Umo, or Federate, from each To served on the Federation's Ruling Council, which mediated inter-provincial issues and also represented the larger unified body. The grand city Loaajen was selected as the administrative seat of the new Federation, and the old palace of the Loaaji family was converted into the Ruling Council's new chambers.

The migration of Bintaru and federationism continued unabated. A century later, the Obun Federation had embraced Velisamil, and all Obun held themselves to the ideal of a global community. To many, the Federation was the fulfillment of Milannsa's promise and dream, and the beginning of a new Zhri'aalloi.

The Noble Problem

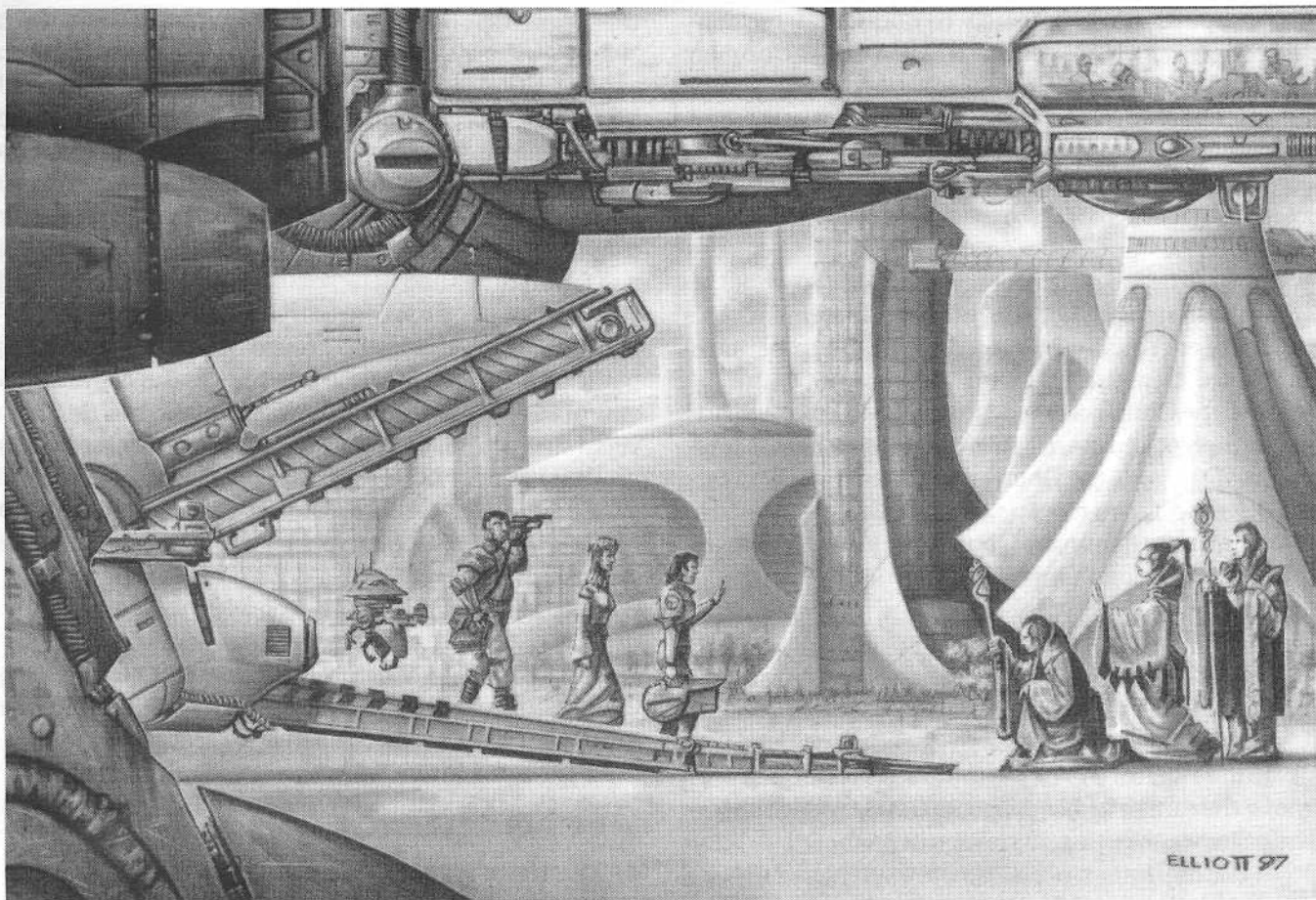
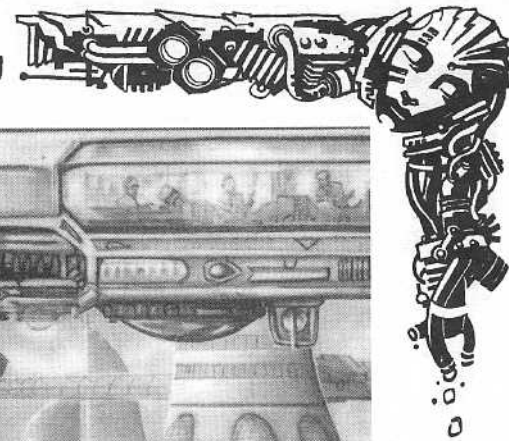
The Obun faced one significant cultural dilemma, though — what to do with the remnants of the few remaining noble families.

The noble families were, it is true, a greatly reduced lot — far fewer than the plethora of noble claimants during the height of the barbaric years. This attrition was due to many reasons.

Many nobles had begun programs of systematic inbreeding due to disdain for the "common" Obun — a program that led to increasingly fewer nobles each generation. Furthermore, some families were eradicated in internecine warfare, and still others deposed. By the time the Obun Federation was founded, fewer than a dozen noble families remained, isolated in their mountaintop fortresses. They futilely resisted the tide of federationism, but they finally realized that their fate lay in the hands of the Obun peoples, and not the opposite.

The Federation contemplated the lot of the nobles and opted for a peaceful resolution. The families were revered as descendants of the Venlinni but they would have no political power. The more wealthy families could afford to support themselves and their dependents; the less wealthy nobles had to rely on limited state assistance.

Each generation, there were fewer nobles. By the time of first contact with the humans, six centuries after the globalization of the Obun Federation, there were no more nobles. Duke Olan vo Nollehn left Velisamil aboard an experimental spacecraft, leading a small faction of pro-aristocratic Obun in search of a new world; the Menlo and



Zolleni families voluntarily abdicated their sterile positions and joined their communities as equals. The Pohjoli family was left as Obun's remaining aristocrats, and the last noble, Duke Aniki vo Pohjoli, flung himself to his death mere hours before first contact.

The Final Frontier and First Contact

The Obun peoples had turned inward and had once more looked to the stars. Bintaru reminded people of the sacred mandate to reach heaven, and Obun science turned to this task. The many technologies and sciences that had been used for warfare and destruction were diverted to greater ends.

The first successful spacecraft rocketed from Velisamil in UC 600, and the stars were at last opened to the Obun peoples. Less than a century later, the Obun had colonized their moon, Vena, and the two nearest planets, Olondiel and Niiteh, thus constructing biospheres capable of supporting hundreds of Obun colonists. The new worlds were resource rich; more importantly, their surfaces were dotted with Lightbearer ruins waiting to be explored and understood. Many volunteered to travel to these new frontiers.

In the distance, through the powerful optics of their farthest traveling satellite, they finally saw the jumpgate

— a massive monument left, no doubt, by the Lightbearers for their discovery.

Many are surprised that the Obun did not achieve spaceflight before humans — indeed, the Obun's first successful spacecraft occurred after the human's Diaspora had begun. Given their Anunnaki scientific ancestry, the Obun should have achieved spaceflight many centuries earlier. Regardless of their tardiness, their later advances came more quickly. The Obun colonized their system exactly 100 years after their first spacecraft, when it took humanity well over a century to even begin the same process.

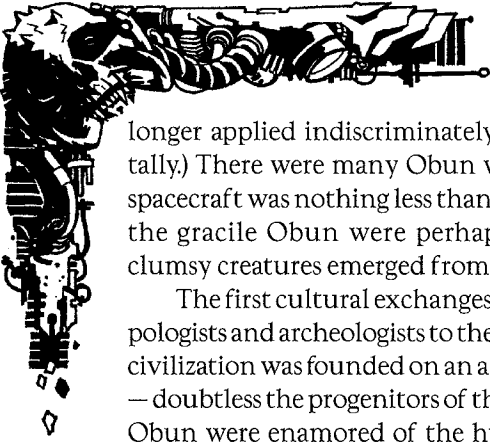
Needless to say, had the Obun traversed the jumpgates before humans, the Known Worlds might have been a very different place. But humanity moved first, and in UC 786 (AD 2797 to the Terrans), a human spaceship passed through a jumpgate into Obun space.

The Coming of the Starchildren

When humans first stepped foot on Velisamil, they did so guardedly. They expected a militant population paranoid and ready to take arms against their visitors. (In short, they expected other humans.) Instead they found the Obun, pacifist philosophers eagerly awaiting their first encounter with the "Children of the Stars."

It was clear to the Obun that humans were scientifically progressive — and for the Obun, technological advancement meant spiritual advancement. (A maxim no





longer applied indiscriminately to non-Obun, incidentally.) There were many Obun who felt that the human spacecraft was nothing less than a chariot of the gods, and the gracile Obun were perhaps a bit surprised when clumsy creatures emerged from within.

The first cultural exchanges brought human anthropologists and archeologists to the awareness that the Obun civilization was founded on an ancient star-faring culture — doubtless the progenitors of the jumpgates. So while the Obun were enamored of the human achievements, the humans were equally enamored of the Obun heritage, and named them the “Ur-Obun,” the ancient Obun.

Still, the Obun accorded immense respect to the human explorers, and even if they did not see them as messengers of the gods, the Obun treated humans with a certain deference for many years. Unfortunately, it paved the way for inequity in human-Obun relations, with humans slowly rising to dominance in the partnership.

Ven Lohji

I met the Prophet, and then I understood.

— Ven Lohji, *The Gleanings*

In UC 844 (2803, Holy Terran calendar), while traveling human space, the Bintaru priestess Ven Lohji was among the earliest of her people to travel among the humans. She was the first to travel unaccompanied; prior Obun visiting human worlds were always elders and were treated as diplomats — thus they were given official tours of what humans wanted the Obun to see. Ven Lohji departed Velisamil as a diplomat, meeting with human nobles. She, like others before her, realized that they were being given guided tours and that there was much of humanity yet to learn. Unlike other diplomats, though, Ven Lohji abandoned her escorts.

Her experiences among Leminkainen's peasants and outlaws horrified her. Here, she was convinced, was a living example of what the Savage Age was like — a period long ago left behind by the Obun. She vowed to return to Velisamil and warn her people to safeguard themselves against the barbarian humans.

Then she encountered the Prophet. It was a chance meeting, but one that would undeniably change her life forever and affect all her people. There the Prophet sat, meditating — the branches of a tree moved overhead to shield him, and a sparrow plucked hairs from his beard in order to nest. They met, and each learned that the other had something significant to offer: Zebulon, the Prophet, had his fiery vision and a keen understanding of human nature; Lohji had her teachings on the natural world and her knowledge of the Lightbearers.

Ven Lohji traveled with Zebulon for years, observing and learning from him. Her own faith in Bintaru never wavered. It was a philosophical system and means of viewing the world, and she meshed the Prophet's teachings with her own beliefs. She, in turn, taught Zebulon, instructing him in ancient theurgic rites and teaching him

the lore of Lightbearers and her ancient ancestors who “walked with the gods.”

After the Prophet's death in 2849, she returned to Velisamil and began teaching others her revelations about the Prophet. It was not the Obun's first encounter with Zebulon or his faith — some of his less charismatic, more dogmatic followers had come to Velisamil attempting to convert the Obun “away from their heathen animism” and had found little success.

But Ven Lohji spoke as both a disciple of the Prophet and as an Obun — one who understood the heart of both traditions. The Prophet, she taught, was the fulfillment of Bintaru: He was the one living man who was the universal microcosm, who was himself at the center of the universal web of life. He was the sacred pattern given voice.

She did not call out for a widespread reform of Bintaru, she simply spoke from her heart. But such reform did happen. Scores of Obun accepted the teachings of the Prophet and became members of what would be called the “Ven Lohji” sect (or *Voavenlohjun*, “Followers of the Speakings of Ven Lohji”) by humans. Just as Bintaru spread like wildfire in days past, supplanting the native polytheism of the Obun, so did the Ven Lohji sect grow and subsume the core Bintaru faith.

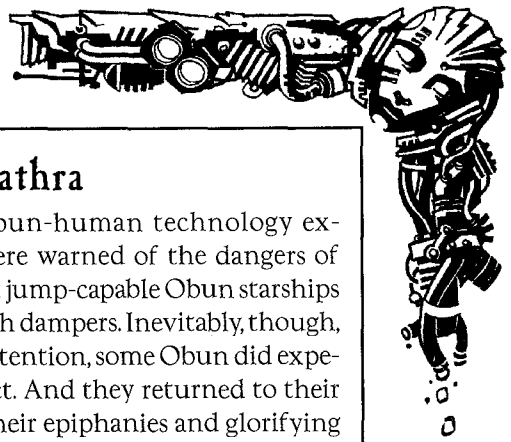
The Diaspora

It did not take long for humanity to recognize the philosophical bent of the Obun, and many human scholars and intellectuals traveled to Velisamil (which humans simply called “Obun”) in order to begin study of Obun philosophical systems.

Even more impressive to humans were the strong psychic powers that the Obun naturally possess and consider a part of daily existence. (In fact, when the Obun realized that many humans were mind-blind, their opinions of humanity dropped.) Humanity was just beginning its love-hate relationship with psionics, and budding psychics traveled to Obun to study under Obun masters; the Phavian Institute even opened a satellite campus on Velisamil.

But not all traffic was directed toward Velisamil. The stars were now open to the Obun, who could explore the worlds alongside their newfound human companions. Some Obun chose to travel beyond Obun space in search of what the stars had to offer. Individuals, families, and even small communities left Velisamil on new starships, built with a combination of human and Obun technologies. Their reception varied greatly from place to place, and the Obun were treated variously as honored guests, wise diplomats, or frightening nonhuman entities. This blatant speciesism was unsettling.

Inevitably, human expansionism asserted itself on Velisamil. Humanity found a lush planet, filled with incredible biological diversity and in short, they wanted it. The Obun graciously allowed many humans to live on their world, feeling that as long as their communities



could support people — who were willing to work for their communities as well — then there would be no difficulty. Unfortunately, many of the later human tenants simply tried to buy land and even started to claim squatter's rights on certain valued properties. And the Obun were disturbed, if not horrified, at the way humans treated their world, oblivious to the innate connection of all things, living and otherwise. The humans were utterly blind to harmony, individual or universal in scope.

Tensions grew as the Obun felt humanity's encroaching hegemony on Velisamil's people, lands, and customs. Because of Obun's insistence on peace, harmony, and communitarianism, the Ruling Council avoided harsh militant actions, and instead waged peace on humans. But their protests were too subtle, and humanity continued to assault Velisamil's hard-earned tranquillity. It was a tension that slowly thickened and could have led to war.

The Ukar War

In 2955 (UC 945), the Ukar attacked Criticorum. Humans noticed the physiological similarities between the Obun and the Ukari; the Obun instantly recognized their distant cousins.

Obun mythologies had described the Ukari — a race otherwise forgotten — as bloodthirsty and territorial. Their attack on Criticorum and subsequent aggressions only proved this for the Obun. Obun diplomats spoke against the Ukari and pledged their people to aid humanity against them. Of course, the Obun did not consider their attitudes toward the Ukari as biased, or even approaching racist; their perspective was supported by ancient history and sacred literature, not prejudice. At least, such was the justification many Obun used in allying themselves with their new-found space companions against their ancient kin.

Human and Obun warriors fought alongside each other. Velisamil did not have much of a military — and certainly not a very experienced one — but the Obun still distinguished themselves in the Ukar War. Perhaps their greatest contribution was their psionic abilities, which were used to diffuse the danger of Ukari psionics — a threat that humans were ill-prepared to face.

The slow-growing human-Obun tensions finally lessened. Human and Obun leaders met in Loajen, and the humans pledged a peaceful and respectful relationship with the Obun. Princess Augusta Hawkwood pledged on behalf of all of House Hawkwood to protect and preserve the interests of the Obun; in return, they only asked for preferential treatment in human-Obun dealings, particularly when the issue of Ur artifacts was involved.

But the Church was now aware of just how powerful psionics could be, particularly Obun and Ukar psychic abilities, and had turned a wary eye on these gracile philosophers. It was only the widespread Ven Lohji sect, and its acceptance of the revelations of the Prophet, that kept the Church at bay.

Obun and Sathra

In the earliest Obun-human technology exchanges, the Obun were warned of the dangers of Sathraism, and the first jump-capable Obun starships were also equipped with dampers. Inevitably, though, through accident or intention, some Obun did experience the Sathra Effect. And they returned to their peoples proclaiming their epiphanies and glorifying Sathra — which they now linked to saatari.

The Obun were perplexed. Their human allies had warned them about some dread mind-altering astrophysical effect, but their own experiences were that of mystical illumination — not unlike the feeling of harmony that Obun mystics had spoken of for ages. This led to one of the first great ideological disagreements between humans and the Obun. The Obun desired freedom for individuals to pursue the Sathra Effect if they so desired; the humans threatened an economic and military blockade of Sathraist vessels.

The Umo'rin acquiesced, citing that humanity had far more experience with the Sathra Effect, and their words should be heeded. And though the majority of the Velisamilun followed the words of the Ruling Council, some rogue Obun pilots chose to ignore them. Thus a few Obun entered the leagues of the Sathraists. Rumors persist to this day of a hidden cult of Obun Sathraists.

Even though the Umo'rin and the Obun peoples had officially distanced themselves from Sathraism, their initial disagreement lingered in the minds of many, particularly the Church, which slowly began to question the allegiances of these alien mystics.

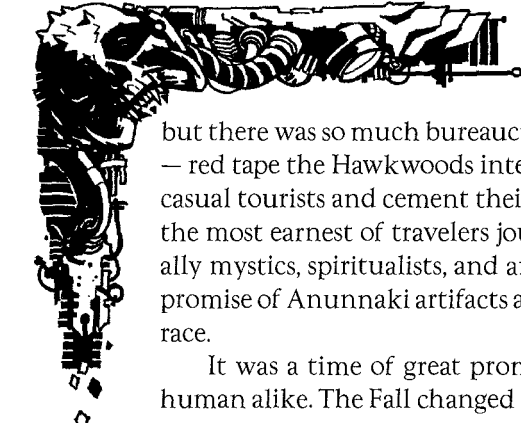
The Second Republic

With the rise of the Second Republic, the Obun became somewhat of a novelty among humans. It was quite fashionable to have an Obun counselor, while Obun crafts, clothing, music and cuisine became all the rage.

The Obun wise-man, the placid observer whose silence is punctuated only by wise utterances, became a stereotype. Books purporting to reveal the ancient secrets of the Obun became widespread, filling any number of literary niches from archeology to occult to self-help, including the *Obun Home Health Remedies*, *The Ur-Ancients Revealed*, and the immensely popular *Obun Path to Psychic Powers and Self-Defense*. This last work was later revealed to have been written by a human who'd never even met an Obun.

House Hawkwood was a firm litigator and staunch protector of Obun rights, and thanks to their not entirely altruistic help, the planet was not deeded out to strip miners or resort developers. Humans did still visit Velisamil,





but there was so much bureaucratic paperwork involved — red tape the Hawkwoods intentionally set up to deter casual tourists and cement their own power — that only the most earnest of travelers journeyed to Obun — usually mystics, spiritualists, and archeologists lured by the promise of Anunnaki artifacts and the culture of the Ur-race.

It was a time of great promise, for both Obun and human alike. The Fall changed things for everyone.

The Dark Ages

With the rise of the Church and the fall of secular scientific imperialism, the Obun faced an uncertain future. It had become increasingly clear that the Church did not fully trust the “alien philosophers.”

The Divestiture had little effect on the Obun homeworld, which was always self-governing and self-sufficient, even under the aegis of House Hawkwood. True, humans on Velisamil panicked, and House Hawkwood scurried to marshal its resources in face of the growing crisis — but the Obun peoples themselves felt little impact. The Divestiture was only the beginning of a much larger picture that had yet to be painted.

As the suns began to fade, people were quick to find easy scapegoats: Technology was one and the Universal Church preached against the evils of technology and humanity's hubris. Alien technology was especially suspect — its origins were never fully revealed, and the more paranoid elements of society were willing to blame the fading suns on some alien technology gone awry.

The Velisamilun had their own concerns, physical and metaphysical, as the suns began to fade — the suns were a vital part of the sacred pattern of creation. Was this pattern now becoming undone? The Obun set their own metaphysicians to work on the problem, hoping that they could come to an understanding of both the origin and a possible solution to the growing cosmic crisis.

Even so, it soon became clear that many mistrusted the Ur-Obun. They were no longer in vogue as counselors, and the speciesism that flared briefly during the Second Republic now erupted full-force. Many Obun colonists returned to Velisamil, fearing for their safety. But some still remained. On the worlds Ransom, Sherkaven, and Triloka, Obun colonies stayed strong.

A cell of pro-Republic terrorists was discovered on Velisamil, and House Hawkwood stepped in with force to root out the rebels. For the Obun's own sake and for the sake of the Known Worlds, House Hawkwood accepted the onerous responsibility of stewarding the Obun.

The Obun Pogrom

Relations between the Obun and humans reached their all-time low in 4203, when tensions between humans and Obun entered the theological arena and moved to a genocidal scale.

Eokésmen ma Dohlenni was a Ven Lohji priest with far-ranging interests, drawing on pre-contact Bintaru phi-

losophers and even on ancient pagan texts. Born off-world, he was raised on the dwindling Obun colony on Criticorum; there he experienced firsthand the inequity between humans and Obun, experiences that deeply affected him.

Few Obun priests proselytize. It is rare for them to preach in the manner of humans, which is precisely what Eokésmen did: He literally stood atop a soapbox in Criticorum's Obun district — or ghetto — and began preaching that the Obun had fallen. The Velisamilun were the first race and the favored of heaven, yet they allowed themselves to be led like livestock by a weak species and corralled with their ancient enemy, the Ukari. The Obun, he instructed, were to remember their ancient roots as gods-taught philosophers and champions — they were to throw off the mantle of servitude and liberate themselves from their oppressors.

Immediately after speaking, he began disseminating his manifesto, *The Way of Liberation*. Both his speech and his tract (filled with the dialogue of oppressed peoples and 43rd-century liberation theology) created a ripple effect among the Obun of Criticorum and beyond, who used points that he raised as issues of contemplation and dialectic, but otherwise, there was no visible significant impact.

Many humans, however, were alarmed that an alien priest seemed on the verge of inciting a riot. His words went to the ears of Alonzo Hector Quiñones de Guyman, the Archbishop of Criticorum — an intractable man with no tolerance for heresy. Alonzo had long been looking for some excuse to crack down on the Obun under his eye, and the current scenario was precisely what he needed.

The Archbishop brought a case to the Inquisitorial Synod; there he pointed to various passages in the tract and quotations from ancient Obun hymns, which glorified the gods and elevated the Obun as the first and greatest created race (aha! heresy!); called for the recovery of ancient weapons long-hidden — the notorious, oft-rumored Anunnaki weapons cache — and the use of these weapons against the oppressors (aha! alien technology! the destruction of society!); called upon the “reclamation of the Obun birthright and the gods-given powers of the enlightened and disciplined mind” against the tyrannical human Church. Under Orthodox law, Eokésmen ma Dohlenni was rightly guilty of schismatic behavior, of outright heresy, of being a dark sentient and a Preceptor.

The Archbishop had his opportunity to crack down on alien malfeasants, and within days of the Synod's preliminary announcement, Inquisition troops were searching the Obun ghetto for the now-missing Eokésmen. They were ruthless in their search, and the Obun of Criticorum found themselves the subjects of what the 20th century would have called “police brutality.” This was too much for the Obun to bear, and the normally placid Obun of Criticorum fought back. A brief riot ensued.

The fight soon moved to Velisamil, where Eokésmen



was discovered in hiding. The Church approached Ven Lohji elders, demanding his extradition and a formal rejection of his writings. On the former, the elders deferred, citing the Church's recklessness in dealing with the Criticorum situation as evidence of an inability to deal maturely with disagreement or criticism. On the latter issue, the elders reminded the Church that everyone must come to the truth of their own accord, and Eokésmen's writings were simply his own examination of the world: Nothing more than the rantings of a profoundly distressed young Obun. There was no true harm done, other than what the Church itself had initiated. The Church persisted, and the Obun took this as an opportunity to debate not Eokésmen's arguments but whether anyone has the right to censure another. It was clear the Obun were not going to violate their ethical and philosophical principles on this, even though concerned Hawkwood and Juandaastas nobles counseled them otherwise.

Public perception of the Obun as anti-human technologists grew, and the Church's own ire multiplied in the face of Obun obstinacy. The resistance on Criticorum continued, unabated, as some Obun turned their psychic powers against humans. The Church deemed Velisamil and her colonies on the verge of heresy. Some Ven Lohji elders accused the Orthodoxy and the entire Universal Church of acting in a manner contrary to the Prophet's instructions.

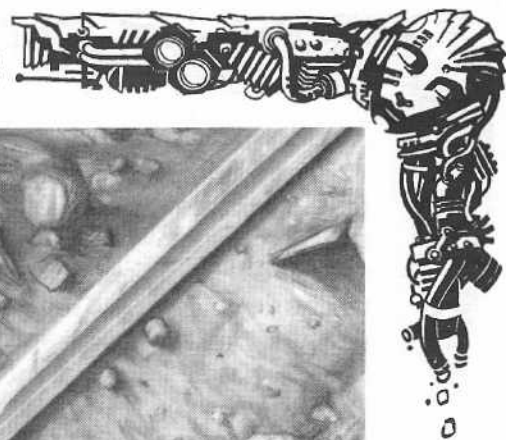
Both sides had had enough. Violence flared: Orthodox forces moved in, and Obun took up arms in defense of their homeland. Eokésmen ma Dohlenni died in the ancient ritual armor of generations past, the philosopher-knight of ancient days. "My blade is broken: but my spirit resolute," were his last words as he lay on the ruined steps of Uuvihen Cathedral, his lifeblood seeping into the ground.

The Obun ghetto on Criticorum was destroyed; colonists beyond Obun space were forcibly moved back to Velisamil, their property confiscated. Air raids bombarded Velisamil. A delegation of Hawkwood and Juandaastas nobles converged at Holy Terra to meet with the patriarch and end the violence.

From beginning to end, from Eokésmen ma Dohlenni's sermon on Criticorum to the Hawkwood delegation, three months had passed. In these three months, over half a million Obun were slain.

A Conquered People

The Obun were now a conquered people. If they had any pretensions of equity, they were smashed now. The Obun were either not trusted or highly mistrusted. They were no longer in vogue, the ancient exotic aliens. The Obun homeworld became seen once again merely as real estate — highly desirable real estate. The Obun couldn't travel the stars freely any longer: the jumpdrives on the majority of their ships were disabled, and passage into and out of Obun space was carefully monitored. The Hawkwoods say they did it to protect the Obun, but no



doubt, their own interests were better protected.

Thankfully, House Hawkwood demonstrated a history of respect toward the Obun. Indeed, ancestors of the current ruling family of the house had long kept a pledge to defend the honor of a certain family of Obun; that family's descendants had since spread throughout many provinces, and the Hawkwoods considered it a point of honor to defend nearly the entire world. But it was not just Hawkwood pride and honor that allowed the Obun relief from oppression. The house would have been completely within its rights to step in and run Velisamil like any other Hawkwood holding, but the Hawkwood nobles generally recognized what a cultural treasure was under their protection — a treasure that the Hawkwoods wanted, and wanted it intact. Violence would only result in the destruction of the Ur artifacts, and House Hawkwood saw that the Obun would be of more value as allies than as serfs.

In return, the Umo'rin recognized that their hopes lay in attempting some form of compromise. Better to lose some form of autonomy than all freedom.

The Emperor Wars

Centuries had passed since the Church's pogrom. The Barbarian Invasions wracked the Known Worlds, an emperor was crowned and died, and the Symbiot War erupted. And the Obun were a people apart; never denied the stars, but not fully free to join them either.

With the advent of the Emperor Wars, the Obun were roused out of their contemplative hermitage and became more aware of external events. Perhaps they realized that the outcome of the wars, especially considering House Hawkwood's role, could determine their own future. Velisamil became a frequent stopping point for Hawkwoods in transit, and Obun soldiers fought alongside House Hawkwood.

Things seemed on the upswing when a Hawkwood took the throne. At least, they reckoned, their situation was not likely to worsen. The fact that Alexius's close friend, the Obun Bran Botan vo Karm, was appointed to a position of prestige within the Emperor's regime gave credence to this belief.

Slowly Obun opened up: The Umo'rin and House Hawkwood together eased travel restrictions and invited the Known Worlds to visit Obun. A new generation of humans — and now, other races — traveled to Velisamil to experience this ancient civilization reborn for the stars. And likewise, a new exodus of young Obun journeyed to the stars in pursuit of adventure and wisdom.

The Obun Today

The Obun once more see the stars as their destiny. Through House Hawkwood and the Emperor's own favor, they are protected from the excesses of the Church, and Obun ships again set forth from Velisamil. Some go as

counselors or scholars or even warriors, independently or under a human noble's sponsorship; others have joined the Merchant League, acting as pilots or scientists.

But Velisamil's unity, so easily defined under years of isolation and then oppression, is on unsteady ground as differing social philosophies clash on how the Obun are to achieve liberation and reach their destiny as the first among the stars — a no-longer trumpeted but never forgotten mandate.

Tradition vs. Assimilation

Over the centuries, a polarity developed in Obun culture. On the one hand there were the mainstream Obun — those Velisamilun raised among their home culture, respectful of their traditions and eager to ensure the preservation of their cultural heritage. Clearly this is the majority development among the Obun, who believe that the Obun shall rise to pre-eminence among the Known Worlds and set a model for other peoples to follow.

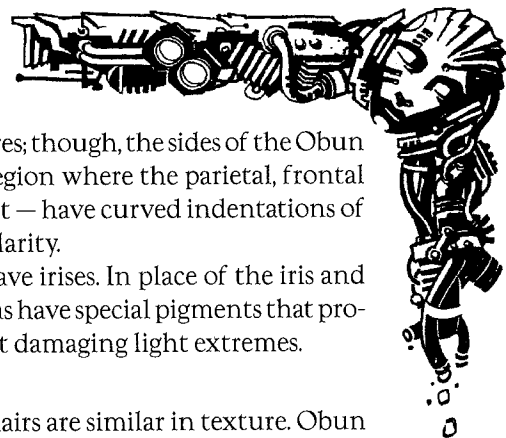
During the Dark Ages, however, some young Obun grew envious of the seeming perks that came with being human and the obvious disadvantages to being "alien." They gradually abandoned their own roots in order to live like humans, in the hopes that they would be able to live among humans and share their privileges. Some even politicized this assimilation by accusing mainstream Obun of being backwards — mocking the very stereotypes of the "wise Obun" that had been perpetuated during the Second Republic.

In time, generations of Obun were born who spoke Obunish and were aware of Velisamilun custom but held no claim to them. Some assimilationists abandoned their homeworld; most remained, though, convinced that the future of their race — and any chances of true autonomy — were in promoting assimilationism among more Obun.

Obun Independence Movement

A new trend has slowly gained strength, an alternate to the Obun mainstreamers and the assimilationists, one of defiance and rejection. There are growing numbers of Obun who would have Velisamil liberated from the human empire and close the jumpgate, thus ensuring Obun sovereignty and privacy; they secretly work toward these goals. These separatists have united into the Obun Independence Movement, a growing force that traces its origins back to the death of Eokésmen ma Dohlenni.

Not all the Obun separatists are united in their voice. While everyone would see their homeworld liberated, some believe that first human cultural trappings must be shorn — including the faith of Ven Lohji, who some ultra-radicals decry as a cultural traitor. Likewise, there are those who would go back further and abandon Bintaru, which they accuse of emasculating and hobbling the Obun. It is one thing to put down the sword and rifle and negotiate peace; it is another to entirely forget how to fight — and this is what happened to the Obun, who have no strength



or fire to free themselves from their human overlords. And some even propose the re-establishment of a noble class, seeing the success it has brought the humans.

Ukari Relations

The Obun have had a mixed relationship with the Ukari ever since the Ukar War. Though they then sided with aliens against their own kin, now they are forced by politics to become allies, both subjects of a human empire. Perhaps this joint subservience and forced alliance has produced a peace that might not otherwise have been; though Obun of today still view the Ukari with suspicion, this is now mixed with sympathy. Many feel that perhaps the Ukari will abandon their savage ways and follow the Obun example. Some more radical Obun see things differently — if the Obun had allied with the Ukari and guided them during the Ukar War, the face of the Known Worlds would have been utterly different.

Physiology

The Obun are humanoid in appearance and physiology, but a few dissimilarities are worth noticing. Furthermore, in spite of their similarities to humans, Obun and humans cannot interbreed; their genetic structures are too dissimilar. Second Republic technologies allowed for crossbreeding but this technology is now lost. Nobles of House Juandaastas sponsor research that would revive human-Obun crossbreeding, but success does not appear in sight.

During the Second Republic, some wealthy humans underwent special cosmetic surgery to give themselves vaguely Obun features, and thus appear “exotic and alien.” Even when the Obun-vogue rage dissipated in the Dark Ages, there was still a cosmetic appeal for the alien and exotic among some humans, such as Lady Biancha Decados, the male Decados who underwent surgeries in order to resemble a female Obun. The faux-Obun, Lady Biancha was quite the hit at many human social events, thanks to her exotic appearance and eccentric garb, not to mention the opulent gem-studded diadem permanently grafted to her skull — a diadem said to be worth the cost of a small world. (It too was faux.)

Height & Weight

In general, Obun tend to be taller and slimmer than human beings, though some can become bulky. But Velisamilun are not simply “tall and thin” — their very demeanor is different than humans, and they carry themselves with an obvious ease and grace. Off-world Obun families who have spent generations away from Velisamil have noticeably different gaits, thus lacking the graceful fluidity with which most Obun carry themselves. One can often tell the difference between off-world Obun and native Velisamilun by their carriage.

Features

Obun facial features bear the most striking differences from human physiology. In general their faces tend to

have thin, aquiline features; though, the sides of the Obun head — roughly in the region where the parietal, frontal and sphenoid bones meet — have curved indentations of varying depth and angularity.

Obun eyes do not have irises. In place of the iris and its function, Obun retinas have special pigments that protect the eye and filter out damaging light extremes.

Hair

Obun and human hairs are similar in texture. Obun hair is typically dark-brown to black and whitens as the Obun ages until it becomes a stark white. The Obun hairline varies somewhat from humans: the “widow’s peak,” a natural v-shaped formation in the front of the foreline is the norm among Obun; yet, some Obun have multiple, symmetrical peaks, with the central peak prominent.

Obun possess hair only on their skull; their faces and bodies are hairless, although Obun with mixed human-Obun ancestry have demonstrated facial or body hair.

Racial Divisions

A fact not commonly understood by humans is that the Obun have various racial subdivisions, much like humans; these divisions are typically noticeable in terms of skin color. These subraces are named according to the early geographic regions they once inhabited.

The primary Obun subraces are the honej-loar branch (“the bronzes”), with the bronzed skin that most people expect among the Obun. Secondary subraces include the noll-rheki branch (“the browns”), whose skin runs to a deep, dark brown; the tukevi-sanat branch (“the reds”), whose skin shifts to a more reddish bronze, almost crimson; and the zholla-ren branch (“the yellows”), whose skin tends to have a more yellow complexion.

There are no subraces as pale as the Ukari, however; most xenologists believe that the Ukari constituted the “white” division of the Velisamilun peoples, and this supposition has led some to suspect that early Obun-Ukar conflicts were not simply religious, but even racial in origin.

Hermaphroditism

Hermaphroditism is as unusual among the Obun as it is among humans, but with profound differences. Among humans, hermaphroditism is often incomplete; one of the two sets of sexual organs is immature or undeveloped. This situation is not so with the Obun, for whom hermaphroditism develops as two sets of equally mature sexual organs. The Obun have a single neuter third-person pronoun unlike the “he” and “she” pronouns of humans and not as cold as the “it” pronoun: *enn* (subject) or *eunn* (object).

Obun mythologies point to the Lightbearer Dhiyana, the patron of unity, identified as a hermaphrodite and thus leading the Obun to associate hermaphroditism with sacred unity. To be a hermaphrodite is to be touched by heaven, for it is the living embodiment of male and female.



Culture

One of the most striking features of Obun culture is its relative homogeneity. When humans first encountered the Obun, they were surprised at the uniformity of cultural traditions across Velisamil; while different regions may have given birth to unique customs, there was still the predominant global tradition. Conversely, the Obun were fascinated (and frequently disturbed) by the wild variety of human ways that they encountered.

The Obun are not a monolithic culture. They consider themselves to be a diverse people but protected by an overarching cultural ancestry and a shared heritage. Humanity, on the other hand, seemed to be the possessor of wild, disparate leanings.

The cause of this homogeneity is clear to the Obun: They are all descended from a single civilization, the Golden Age of Zhri'aalloi, which was established by the gods. Their culture is not based on random arbitrary social evolution but on a mandate from the Lightbearers. And through the ritual traditions of Qhattellinn, Bintaru further cemented a uniformity of behavior.

Education and Development

We tend to think of the Obun — and other species — as living in “extended” family units. But the opposite is equally true — the Obun believe that most humans live in greatly contracted families.

— Sir Rustyn Juandaastas, Advisor to the Hawkwood Consulate

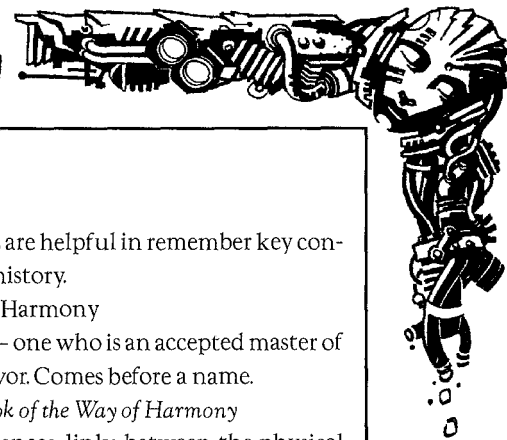
Family: *Family* is a significant notion to the Obun. It is more than just a collection of blood-relatives, it is the social unit that raises and shelters one and expects reciprocal behavior.

The Obun think themselves part of an enormous family, with all members of the community sharing responsibilities. Should a child's parents die, the child is immediately cared for; there will always be a family willing to take in the orphaned Obun, and these new parents become, in the eyes of the Obun, true parents no different from the birth-parents. Likewise, a family that loses its only child is typically given a young child by a family with many children. (This is done with children at a very early age, before an emotional bond can develop with the natural parents). Childless unions can expect the dual gift and responsibility of parenthood.

To call an Obun a bastard means nothing — issues of parental legitimacy are irrelevant to them. But to call an Obun an orphan is a grave insult, implying their rejection by their own society.

Education: As Obun children grow, they are tutored from an early age within their own family, where they learn the basics of speech and fundamental notions of Obun culture: respect for elders, that cooperation is better than competition, and the importance of the community's needs over the individual's desires.





At age seven, an Obun goes to join a local community *klatihin*, or “mentoring circle,” where they are taught by *klatii*, “mentors.” Here they begin studying the rudiments of the Obun educational program called *voi'intalle arrin*, a system handed down from Zhri'aalloi. *Voi'intalle arrin*, loosely translatable as “the ways of seeing, knowing, doing all that exists,” is a comprehensive educational system that teaches most Obun the rudiments of philosophical contemplation, psychic refinement, and the Obun liberal arts of metaphysics, mathematics, astronomy, aesthetics, history, literature and writing. The reading and recital of Obun epics, particularly the Hero Legends, is a popular endeavor among young Obun. In addition, *klati*-mentors guide the development of psychic abilities in Obun youth, who first experience these powers with the onset of puberty.

At age 20, the Obun has the option of entering an Academy — a form of higher education, typically located near the larger, more cosmopolitan centers — or of entering a trade profession. In the Academy, the student continues learning *voi'intalle arrin*, but is now expected to concentrate in one or more of its preceptories, or sub-disciplines. The Obun do not have any form of caste system that discriminates in favor of higher education: They realize that for all society to function, all Obun play a significant role.

Obun educational theory is predicated on a simple pattern — philosophy and theory precede application. This is true for almost anything, be it architecture or farming. Once the basic notions are mastered, the Obun student then turns to practical applications. Experts in a field are those Obun who, after years of practice, turn to philosophy once more and begin to reintegrate their experiences into new philosophical insights. Hence, the masters of any field have the vocative title *Bran* before their name: Philosopher. Likewise, they are referred to not simply as pilots or engineers, but pilot-philosophers or engineer-philosophers.

Relationships: The Obun believe that community harmony starts in smaller units, with the harmony between bonded individuals. When two or three Obun choose to bond together, the entire Obun community celebrates the sacred commitment ceremony and the birth of a new micro-community, which is simultaneously the renewal and reinvigoration of the macro-community.

Languages

The Obun believe that they were created speaking seven different languages — one for each of the cities of Zhri'aalloi, and each one a cipher to the secrets of the stars. After the Dereliction, these seven languages multiplied, until finally over the course of Obun history, over a thousand different languages, variants, and dialects covered the face of the planet.

But one language in particular, *Lojmaa*, became im-

Glossary

The following words are helpful in remember key concepts or events in Obun history.

Bintaru: The Way of Harmony

Bran: “Philosopher” — one who is an accepted master of some discipline or endeavor. Comes before a name.

Kalebintaru: *The Book of the Way of Harmony*

Kelanti: Correspondences; links between the physical and the supernatural worlds

Klati: Mentor (plural, *klatii*)

Looajen: Capital city of Velisamil

Lojmaa: Predominant Obun language, called “Obunish” by offworlders

Lyovaa'ken: Pancreator, “he who creates all things”

Ma: “Revered speaker” — a prefix before a surname, often used by priests (personal choice)

Oba: Sacred Vow, hence Obun.

Obun: Keepers of the Sacred Vow

Omillvenlohjoille: *The Gleanings of Ven Lohji*

Qhaatai: The sacred blood of the gods; the vital energy of creation; Wyrđ

Qhattellinn: Ritualistic system that ensures flow of *qhaatai*

Saatari: Guided meditations

Sitrillinn: Obun typology science

Talokelanti: Law of Correspondences

To: Province or colony of the Federation (plural, *Toa*)

Tri'lua: Obun body type (based on varying *kelanti* within individuals)

Ukar: Violence

Umo: Federate, ruling Elder of a Council (plural, *Umoa*)

Umo'rin: The “Conclave of Federates” — Obun Federation's Ruling Council

Vekallaa: Lightbearers

Vekallanali: Litany of the Lightbearers (creation myth)

Velisamil: The original name for the Obun homeworld, hence, *Velisamilun*; also the name of the Intelligence, or god, which is the ruling spirit of the planet.

Venlinni: Appointed of Heaven; first Obun rulers, appointed by the Lightbearers

Velisamilun: Inhabitants of Velisamil; the Obun

Ven: “Blessed,” similar to the human designation “saint.” Comes before a name.

Vhem-saahen: Knights (or Champions) of Vhem; ancient order of philosopher-knights

Vhemtaar'ullan: ancient martial art

Vo: A prefix before a surname, roughly translated as “noble scion”; rarely found and typically irrelevant, this prefix indicates that the bearer is a descendant of one of the Obun noble families that trace themselves to the *Venlinni*.

Voi'intalle arrin: Obun educational system

Zhri'aalloi: Obun's Golden Age and proto-civilization



The Litany of Lightbearers

The following is only a list of the more popular Lightbearers, listed with their areas of concern. A true catalog would go on for pages, and many catalogs disagree on multiple issues. The following list is partial and representative.

Major Principalities

Oluré

Purview: Wisdom, contemplation

Appearance: Double-faced male; one of the two faces is bearded

Yhetenni

Purview: The sciences; natural laws

Appearance: Stern-looking young woman with a strange device in one hand

Sízha

Purview: The senses; sensuality

Appearance: A dark-skinned beautiful androgynous

Vhem

Purview: Physical endeavors; war; strength, virility, and dexterity.

Appearance: Winged muscular male

Dhiyana

Purview: Harmony, unity, bonding, marriage

Appearance: Gentle looking hermaphrodite

Dhoneki

Purview: Words, writing, communication, language

Appearance: A golden-skinned, winged female with a stylus and tablet

Qilof

Purview: Endings, transitions; death

Appearance: Dark-robed older male (sometimes female), holding a lantern

Minor Principalities

Ishtel: Healing and remedies

Lhoravos: The fine arts; crafts

Jolarssen: Music

Dzore: Travel; growth; pilgrimage; the Ordeal

Intelligences

Maan: Temper; passion

Oaakaven: Light; sight and vision

Olondiel: Discipline and commitment

Velisamil: Memory

Vena: Lost wisdom

Niiteh: Peacemaking

Thoavomil: Hearing and comprehension

Varzen: Subtlety, things hidden

Terra: Caprice

portant in Obun history; it was the shared tongue of the Bintaru priests who unified the Obun, and it supplanted variant local languages as the "universal language" of the Obun. By the time of the first contact with humanity, most people could understand at least some Lojmaa, and it became "Obunish" to the humans.

Lojmaa is still the most common tongue on Obun, but it is not alone. A few hundred languages still exist as local tongues, and a number of them are now extinct from neglect, and scholars (Obun and alien alike) try desperately to catalogue and preserve these languages.

Religion

There are two major religions on Velisamil: Bintaru, the long-standing Obun animistic philosophical tradition, and Voavenlohjun, the sect of the Universal Church founded by the Bintaru priestess Ven Lohji. The nuances in the relationship between the two — and whether Voavenlohjun is merely another form of Bintaru — is for historians and philosophers to discern. In addition, there is a growing — if still somewhat hidden — strain of neopolytheism, a revived polytheistic devotion to the Lightbearers that abandons much of the philosophical notions of Bintaru and Voavenlohjun alike.

Bintaru

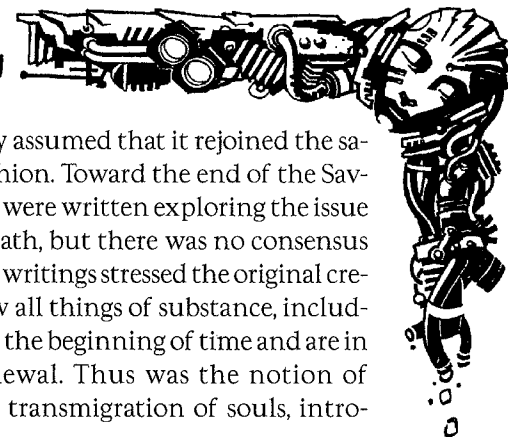
Bintaru's founder, Milannsa, was an enigmatic figure, about whom history says little. Some modern critical historians suspect she-he may not truly have existed and just represents a composite character. Others accept him-her as a historical fact and repudiate such accusations as being too like human historico-criticism, which seeks to refute everything.

The literatures depict Milannsa as a wandering hermit, a sacred hermaphrodite dissatisfied with the state cults of the day. She-he sought contemplation in the wilderness for seven years, during which time she-he meditated and prayed. Milannsa returned to civilization, leaving copies of his-her written reflections with bystanders. She-he was rumored to have been seen in 12 cities in one day before leaving to "become one with the gods."

This is all that is known of Milannsa: his-her life before enlightenment is a mystery, the seven years in retreat are only marginally known, and his-her fate are all open to debate.

Regardless, in roughly 145 Before Unification (AD 1866), a movement calling itself Bintaru was identified among the nations of the Tri-Nation Confederacy. At the heart of their teachings was Milannsa's reflections, the *Kalebintaru, The Way of the Book of Harmony*. But, in addition to this was a vast corpus of other literatures that were culled together from ancient texts and given new meaning: the *Talokelanti*, or the *Law of Correspondences* — written by Milannsa's first students and converts.

The *Kalebintaru*, translated into Urthish and printed in a standard Terran tome, is roughly 50 pages long. The



Talokelanti, translated and printed likewise, comprise over 4,000 pages. These texts together shaped the course of a planet with their teachings — ancient in their origin but new in their application.

Key Features:

Harmony: Bintaru is the Way of Harmony; but Harmony is not simply cooperation or placid calm. It is a keen understanding of one's place in the universe — an understanding which must take into account the sacred pattern and the law of correspondences. True Harmony, according to Bintaru, relies upon the unity of body, mind and soul. It is the realization of what Correspondences rule an individual's constitution, it is hearing the sacred sentience within, it is finding the sacred pattern and one's place in it. Harmony is the realization that we are all One — the same sacred correspondences exist within us all, and the sentience of creation is within us all. Divisions are transitory and illusory. It is this recognition of the universality of the cosmic sentience and the connection between all things living and unliving that broke the ground for the egalitarianism that reshaped Obun society.

Panpsychism: The sacred pattern is not just an inanimate construct, however. One of Bintaru's innovations was the doctrine of panpsychism — the universal sentience of creation. Bintaru hearkened back to the ancient Creation legends and the notion of Intelligences and Principalities: all things exist through an act of sentient creation by the gods, and all things likewise contain a measure of that sacred sentience. Thus the rocks, the wind, the water — all things contain the essence of heaven. The enlightened soul lets the sacred sentience of creation speak through him, and likewise, he knows how to listen to it in. Behind this sacred pan-sentience was the very power of powers — a concept so abstract, so enormous, and so distant that it could only be understood through its multiple manifestations in creation.

This principle did not do away with the notion of the Lightbearers. They are still seen as operative agents of the prime mover and still exist (in the supernal realm) where they subtly influence the course of history. Thus the followers of Bintaru do not believe that the Lightbearers abandoned Velisamil; they transcended to a different plane and guide the Obun in less obvious forms.

Saatari: Milannsa reintroduced the practice of saatari, the guided meditations first taught by the gods. Saatari devotees contemplated various things — riddling puzzles, pictograms, word — with the intention of opening their spiritual awareness. The practice of observing saatari had all but been forgotten my Milannsa's time, and the *Way of Harmony* called for the rebirth of this ancient practice. Saatari is both an action (meditation) and a state of being, and Milannsa's teachings state that all may enter saatari, either through contemplation or within dreams.

Metempsychosis: Prior to Bintaru, there was no concrete notion of the afterlife or the disposition of the soul

after death; it was merely assumed that it rejoined the sacred pattern in some fashion. Toward the end of the Savage Age, various treatises were written exploring the issue of the soul's fate after death, but there was no consensus until Bintaru. Milannsa's writings stressed the original creation of all things — how all things of substance, including souls, were created in the beginning of time and are in a constant state of renewal. Thus was the notion of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls, introduced to the Obun.

Qhattellinn: All things contain qhaatai — in earlier mythology it was considered simply the blood of gods, but it became the very stuff of the divine in Bintaru. Qhaatai is the primal essence of the cosmos, and Bintaru's theurgies relied heavily on the manipulation of the qhaatai.

Qhattellinn is an enormous ritualistic system that ensures the right-flow of qhaatai in the world: it is, in essence, the tool of creating and maintaining harmony. These personal rituals govern all aspects of life and provide unity among the Obun. Bintaru's priests claimed that the rituals of qhattellinn are ancient and point to references in mythologies and legends — qhattellinn is merely the codification of these ancient practices. Rituals and observances from the purely social (e.g., respect for parents) to the lifestyle-oriented (e.g., bathing and dietary habits) to body movement rituals that cleanse and renew the flow of qhaatai within the body.

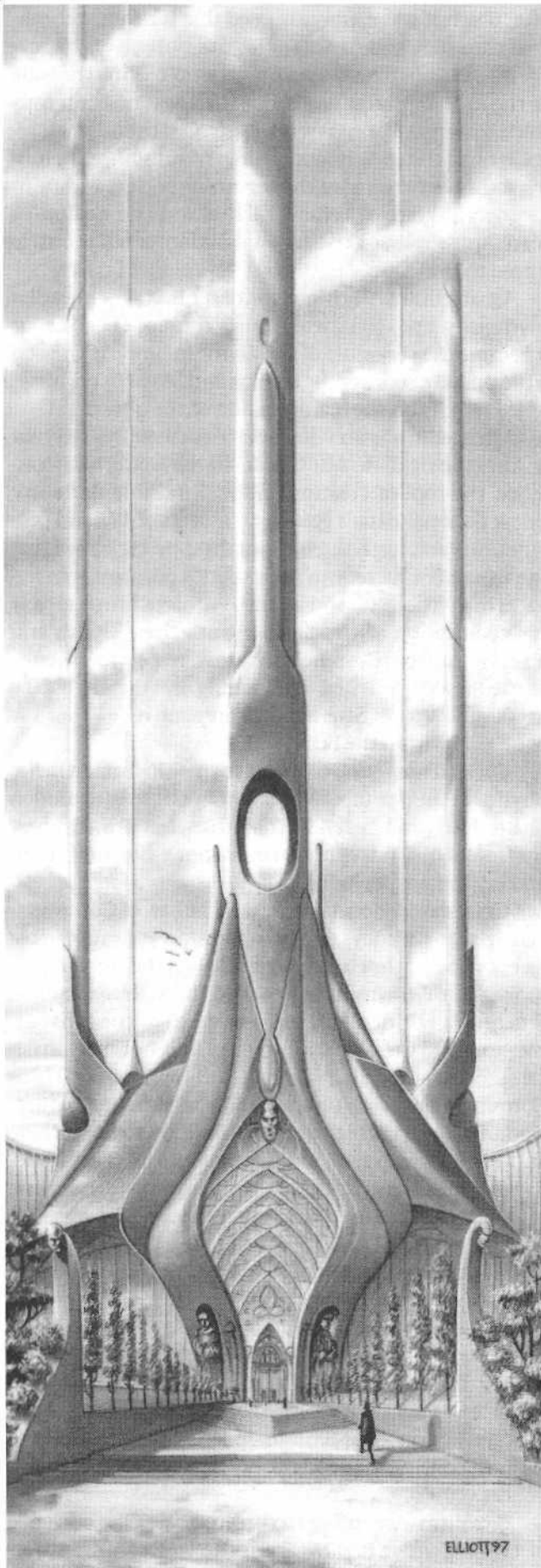
Qhaatai was found to have a cognate in human metaphysics, in the notion of Wyrđ. Some texts refer to hidden qhattellinn practices and rituals that cleanse and renew the flow of qhaatai within an individual, sometimes even making it more powerful.

Correspondences: It is through the Law of Correspondences that we come to know the almost innumerable components of the sacred pattern. When the Lightbearers spoke their Principles, they echoed through the cosmos, touching all things. And the very deeds of the gods further touched Creation, thus creating a set of metaphysical associations, called *kelanti*, Correspondences. These Correspondences are physical links to the supernatural world. For every divine principle or action in heaven, there are a series of correspondent items in the physical world. By recognizing and utilizing these Correspondences, one can better understand, and even control, the physical world.

Kelanti take numerous forms: a plant, a color, a sound, a word, a gesture, an animal. The greatest of all kelanti are the sacred glyphs left behind by the Lightbearers. Every Lightbearer is identified by a unique glyph, and each glyph is a key to occult mastery. Even Principles that are lost or forgotten or not yet discovered have kelanti. This is a significant notion — for Bintaru, spiritual growth and evolution is contingent upon the discovery of all Correspondences.

Sitrillinn: According to sitrillinn, the Obun science of typology that derived from the Law of Correspondences.





dences, every living Obun is born under an intricate set of kelanti. At each soul's creation, different sacred Principles were dominant and/or passive to differing degrees. Each of these Principles has spiritual, mental, and physical Correspondences in the Obun body, thus creating differing tri'lu, or types. All the Lightbearers play a role in this: the seven primary Principalities, the hosts of lesser Principalities, and the Intelligences themselves (particularly the Intelligences within the Obun solar system).

An Obun's tri'lu is thus a succinct catalog of which Correspondences are at play in his system. Stress, the environment, hostile theurgies — any number of factors can contribute to a further imbalancing of an Obun, thus leading to disease or malaise. When the precarious balance of dominant/passive kelanti is disturbed, any number of conditions can set in, and this balance must be restored. For each potential tri'lu imbalance, there is a corresponding food, movement, and herbal remedy, all of which have prescribed effects on tri'lu-imbalance. Attempts to apply sitrillinn to humans and other aliens are met with marginal success. Philosophers suspect that the ruling Intelligences of their homeworlds are too unknown a variable to properly calculate an alien's tri'lu.

Voavenlohjun

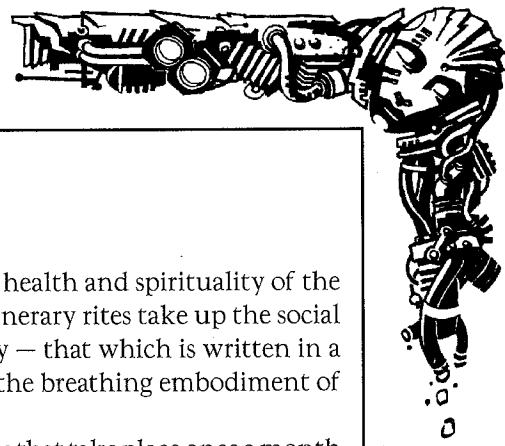
*The Pancreator is within
and without;
and without the Pancreator
is emptiness.*

— Ven Lohji, *The Gleanings*

Lohji returned to Obun and brought not a replacement of Bintaru, but a profound revisioning of it within the context of the Prophet's words. Those words that would one day bring fire to an entire human empire had their own subtle effect on the Obun: within centuries, Ven Lohji's teachings had touched the entire planet, growing from community to community, until finally over four-fifths of the world's population belonged to this new faith.

Although Ven Lohji was careful to defer all authority to the words of the Prophet, her own teachings and beliefs were still collected by her earliest followers; her epistles, sermons, and written reflections were gathered together after her death and published in the *Omillvenlohjoille*, or *The Gleanings of Ven Lohji*. Although they do not supplant the Omega Gospels among the followers of Ven Lohji, they are the lens through which the Obun read and interpret the Gospels. (In fact, the Obun do read the Omega Gospels, as translated and annotated by Ven Lohji herself.)

The Doctrine of the Prime Mover: With Ven Lohji's teachings came the embrace of monotheism. The Obun had come close to an abstract monotheism with their doctrine of a sacred sentience and the power of powers; with Ven Lohji, it shifted away from universal abstraction to individual personality: namely, the Pancreator, whom the Obun call Lyovaa'ken (literally, "He who creates all things").



Those Who Pray: Obun Priests

Meditating on the Light: Ven Lohji

Voavenlohjun priests perform a variety of ritual functions that are vital to the health and spirituality of the community: birth consecrations, bonding ceremonies, counseling, blessings, and funerary rites take up the social life of the Obun priest. In addition, they must themselves strive for inner harmony — that which is written in a book is different from that which is lived — and an Obun priest is supposed to be the breathing embodiment of Obun metaphysics.

These priests have two means of leading the faithful: through celebratory liturgies that take place once a month (commemorating significant events in Obun history or the life of the Prophet), and through weekly study groups. It is in these study groups (patterned after klatihin mentoring circles) that most Obun develop their personal spirituality, as the Obun priest posits a set of queries based upon sacred literatures and the group's participants reflect and discuss the queries.

Ven Lohji's sect adapted the Universal Church's hierarchy. Each province is administered by a bishop — a priest nominated by a majority of the province's clerics, who has successfully undergone an Ordeal to prove his or her merit, and who has been approved by the Obun archbishop. At the top of the hierarchy is the Obun archbishop, who acts as the First Speaker in matters of faith; the archbishop recognizes the authority of his own superior, the Patriarch. The archbishop's work is frequently taken up with representing and defending his people's faith to Orthodox critics.

Voavenlohjun priests can be identified by their green robes — similar to Bintaru vestments, but adorned with a stylized jumpgate symbol.

The Faithful Remnant: Bintaru

Almost one-fifth of Velisamil still holds to the beliefs of Pure Bintaru — Bintaru as it existed before the mass conversion to Ven Lohji's sect. The Obun do not discriminate against these followers, but their presence occasionally causes the Orthodox to deliver harsh invective against the Obun pagans. Bintaru priests must be particularly careful if they should choose to travel beyond Obun space into the fearful worlds that the Church surveys.

Bintaru thrives predominantly in more rural communities. Its priests must receive their teachings from other priests, with instruction passed on from mentor to pupil. The Bintaru priesthood does not have a detailed hierarchy: Its members are guided by the consensus of the Plenary of the Faith, the council of elder priests.

The Ancient Ways: Obun Paganism

There can be found in the most remote regions of Velisamil some followers of Obun pantheism. (The most notable example are the Xho-velisamilun, an isolated mountain-dwelling tribe of Obun.) These Obun share the same original sacred scriptures of all Obun — the Litany of the Lightbearers, the Manual of War, and the Hero Legends — but they never adopted the teachings of Bintaru or the subsequent Ven Lohji faith. They believe the stars are their destiny, but they reject much of the metaphysical and philosophical notions that later overwhelmed Obun culture. As with Bintaru, priests of these ancient traditions pass on their teachings to their pupils. These priests are often identified by their ritual masks engraved with the visages of the gods.

Some within the Universal Church point to this transition and see in it a miracle — the actions of a God-within-history versus transcendent concept. The Obun see it more as a natural evolution of belief.

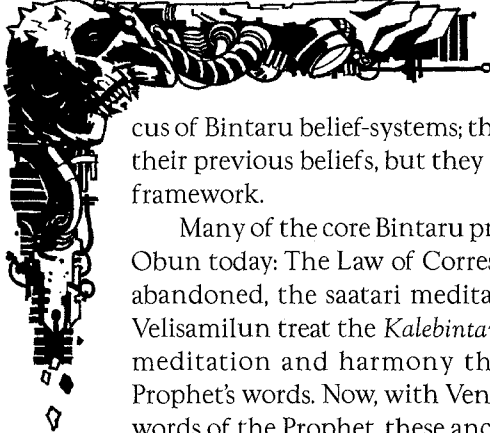
The Doctrine of the Principalities: The Principalities were not abandoned with the advent of Obun monotheism. In Ven Lohji's scheme, it was through the Principalities that the Pancreator spoke and acted in the creation of the Universe, and it was through them that the ancient Obun came to know their God.

The Doctrine of the Celestial Heralds: The Obun followers of Ven Lohji revisited their world's mythological past and saw it in a new light. The Lightbearers who were instrumental in founding the Obun's first, greatest civilization were clearly Celestial Heralds, servants to the Principalities, paving the way for the Obun — who shall them-

selves be Celestial Heralds in a new age, and help a new civilization make its way to the stars.

The Doctrine of Universal Grace: To the Obun, grace and harmony are synonymous. To live the proper life — in accordance with the sacred pattern — was to inculcate harmony. This, for Ven Lohji, was no different than the Prophet's sermons on grace and Luminous Return. Although some Obun theologians use the metaphorical notion of the soul as a "reflective mirror," thus reflecting the Light of heaven back to God and to other humans, many Obun prefer to see the soul as Conduit. The Obun who does not live in Harmony with the Way will not fully receive the Light of heaven, while the Enlightened are "open" — and thus the Light of heaven flows through them into others, and ultimately back to the divine.

The New Synthesis: These doctrines entered the lo-



cus of Bintaru belief-systems; the Obun did not abandon their previous beliefs, but they adapted them into a new framework.

Many of the core Bintaru principles are still active on Obun today: The Law of Correspondences has not been abandoned, the saatari meditations continue, and the Velisamilun treat the *Kalebintaru* as a significant text on meditation and harmony that set the stage for the Prophet's words. Now, with Ven Lohji's teachings and the words of the Prophet, these ancient traditions have vital new meanings.

The Cult of the Ordeal

The Ordeal plays a significant part in Obun culture as it revived during the movement toward Federationism, the Ordeal itself is an ancient tradition dating back to the sacred war and the labors of the Lightbearers in struggling against the Shadowed Court.

At first, the Obun depicted the Ordeal as a sacred drama, re-enacted during the days of Zhri'aalloi as retellings of the great war between the gods. During the Savage Age, the Ordeal became associated with a sect devoted to Dzure, and many of its traditions went underground, becoming a mystery religion who offered its teachings only to the elect few; in these days, though, the testing was far more severe, and casualties were not uncommon. The sect was at its strongest in Loaaj before religion was made illegal in the "Godless Dominion." When Loaaj accepted Bintaru, it also appropriated some of the traditions of the mystery religion, using them to select worthy candidates for Loaaj's Ruling Council. As Loaaj became the center of the new Federation, the Ordeal continued to be used as a tool in determining leaders.

The Ordeal of today is certainly far more tame than its predecessor, with casualties almost unheard of (exceptions are notable, such as the would-be councilor who drowned while attempting to swim the Riskillana Channel).

In the past few years, a new movement has appeared on Obun. Many young Obun have begun to voluntarily undertake Ordeals of their own, as a means of proving their adulthood. Instead of programmed tests, these Obun set out for parts unknown, convinced that the universe will choose an appropriate series of tasks for them, a "spontaneous Ordeal." And some apocalyptic philosophers have begun to look at the course of Velisamilun history and now wonder whether the Obun peoples are themselves undergoing a monumental Ordeal, one that will ultimately decide the leaders in this new-found empire.

The Umo'rin

The Obun solar system is governed much as it has been for millennia, by the Umo'rin — the "Conclave of Federates," the Ruling Council of elected Obun, called Federates, each representing a Velisamilun province or colony.

These individual provinces or colonies (called To) are also led by their own councils, who have regional jurisdiction, with the power and authority to act on behalf of their region's citizens. By far, the majority of these To were nations of one form or another in Obun history. Again, within each region are smaller jurisdictions — usually cities or city-states that each have their own elected council.

The Ruling Council of the Obun Federation acts only when one province threatens the autonomy or well-being of another, or on behalf of Velisamil in interstellar politics. It does not otherwise hold rulings on the microcosmic level and leaves local politics to handle this. Ever since human dominion on Obun, though, the Ruling Council has stepped into regional decision-making whenever the issue could have a potentially global impact — particularly if humans are somehow involved.

Holding a seat on any of these administrative councils is contingent upon popular election. Holding a seat on the Ruling Council requires an election by the represented people first, and then the candidate must successfully complete the Ordeal, which tests the candidate's physical, mental, and spiritual capacities.

In addition to the regional representative seats on the Ruling Council, the Obun Federation has a number of diplomatic posts that may be held by an Obun from any territory.

For more information on Obun councilors and the Federation, see **Lords of the Known Worlds**.

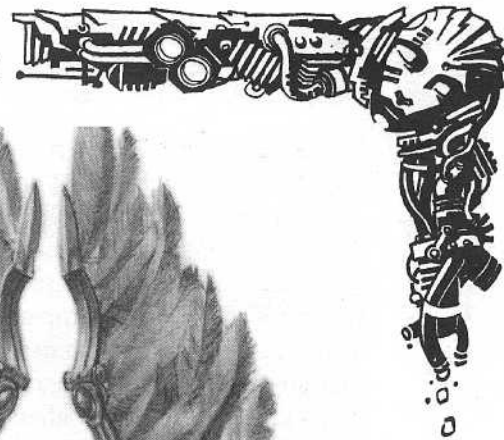
The Hawkwood Consulate

Although the Umo'rin claim sovereign authority on Velisamil and the Obun colonies, they must still recognize another power: House Hawkwood. Although the Umo'rin is infrequently challenged, it must consult with Hawkwood advisors on any major political issues. There is little misconception — the Obun realize that the Hawkwoods could simply abolish the Umo'rin, and after a lengthy and bloody civil war, subjugate the Velisamilun. But both parties wish to avoid that, and so the Obun have acquiesced to Hawkwood decision making at times.

The Hawkwood Consulate to the Obun is an appointed position. The Consulate oversees the operations of consular officers who work with the Umo'rin, with Obun immigration ministers, and in other areas with an impact on human relations.

Military

In spite of a modern tendency toward pacifism, the Obun do have a military to quell any internal dissent that



may erupt (a rarity) and to help protect Velisamil.

Most Obun To have some form of militia — a national guard of citizens who have agreed to take up arms if necessary in protecting their rights against aggressors; very few of these are career soldiers, however, and most are simply volunteers or weekend warriors. In truth, ever since the establishment of the Ruling Council, there has been little need for a provincial military, but the tradition remains.

In addition to provincial militia, the Ruling Council maintains its own armed forces, the Federative Guard, whose members serve seven-year terms of enlistment. The Federative Guard's duties are manifold: to act as peacekeepers in inter-provincial conflict, to enforce the Federation's rulings if necessary, and to act as a unifying Velisamilun defense force. The Guard sent Obun soldiers to fight in the Ukar War, and during the Pogrom, the various provincial militias united under the Guard's banner.

The Federative Guard's officers are Academy graduates whose studies have focused on the conflict negotiation, jurisprudence and the arts of war. Since the Pogrom, however, when Obun units fought against humans, Obun fighting units are commanded by Hawkwood officers. (A few notable Obun have given commanding roles, though.)

The Guard maintains Obun's only military space vessels and acts in concert with Hawkwood forces in patrolling Obun space. Due to treaties — or declarative statements — from the Dark Ages, while Obun military ships are allowed Obun command officers, there must always be at least one Hawkwood military consultant on board.

Those Who War: The Vhem-saahen

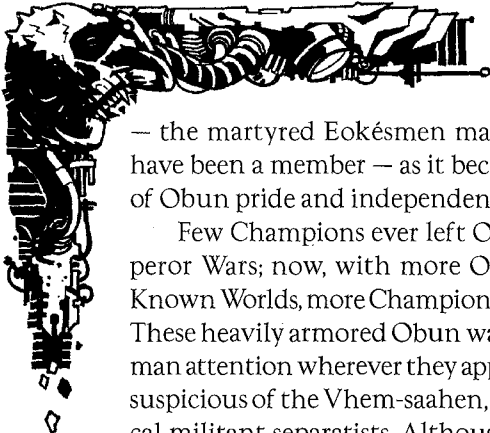
The Vhem-saahen are an ancient order founded by the Lightbearers themselves, venerating Vhem — the Principality of war and physical endeavors; as such, they are a rarity among an otherwise peaceful people. Trained in Vhemtaar'ullan, the ancient Obun martial art, as well as other forms of warfare, they are more than just warriors — they embody the marriage of physical action and cognition. They are the closest thing Obun have to Church-knights, although they are not under the command of any priest. The Champions consider their work a sacred calling.

The Obun originally translated Vhem-saahen as the "Knights of Vhem," looking back to the ancient warriors who saw themselves filling sacred roles, but human nobles objected to such a designation. The Obun no longer had any noble families to speak of, the human nobles argued. (Many Obun, conversely, feel that humanity may have noble families but lacks true nobility.) Thus, the more acceptable "Champions of Vhem" designation was chosen.

With origins in Zhri'aalloi, the Vhem-saahen almost disappeared through attrition with the rise of Bintaru and the spread of pacifism, but they survived through the efforts of some martial-philosophers and advocates. The Champions experienced a resurgence during the Pogrom



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— the martyred Eokésmen ma Dohlenni is believed to have been a member — as it became seen as a declaration of Obun pride and independence.

Few Champions ever left Obun space until the Emperor Wars; now, with more Obun venturing into the Known Worlds, more Champions are seen among humans. These heavily armored Obun warriors tend to attract human attention wherever they appear. The Church is highly suspicious of the Vhem-saahen, fearing that they are radical militant separatists. Although some are, in truth the Church has little to fear from the Champions, who are too small to have significant impact. But the Champions are steadily growing in popularity and have almost developed a cult of supporters; the Church is keeping these charismatic philosopher-knights under a skeptical watch.

The Arts and Sciences

The Obun do not compartmentalize art and science into two distinct entities — in most Obun dialects, the words for *art* and *science* share the same linguistic root. In fact, there is little that the Obun do without an equal measure of calculation and aesthetic.

Archeomythology: This field is the study of Obun sacred history and civilization, particularly before the Great Desolation. For the Obun, archeology and mythology are an intertwined science; unlike most human civilizations, in which mythology and archeology provided two often contrasting views of history, among the Obun the two disciplines merged together. And surprisingly — at least to human scholars — the fusion worked.

The greatest center of archeomythological studies is the Academy of Sacred History in Loaj. The Academy sponsors archeological expeditions and studies to confirm elements within Obun myth and legend — such as the probable whereabouts of three of the seven sacred cities of Zhri'aalloi, or the recovery of the relics of the body of Paa Han Venel. Obun archeomythologists believe that the scarred Velisamilun wastelands, reminders of the Great Desolation, hold many secrets from the ancient days, but they have also begun to look beyond Obun space for Anunnaki ruins.

Architecture: Obun architecture is one of the crowning achievements of Obun design. The Obun call this science *paedell'n*, a combination of architecture and urban landscaping, mixed in with an esoteric process that determines how buildings and cities can best align with the Law of Correspondences, thus ensuring that each building has a vital visual and philosophical role in the cityscape. (Many believe that the famous Second Republic terraformer, Doramos of Tyre, studied *paedell'n*.)

Most Obun cities are built on a circular plan, with the central buildings being the tallest and successively smaller buildings radiating outwards. The tall central buildings, slender pinnacles visible for miles around, house each city's cathedral — “star-sanctuaries” rededicated to the Pancreator, both observatories and meditation centers.

Thanks to Velisamil's slightly lessened gravity and more stable plate tectonics, Obun spires can reach to the clouds, as tall buildings are built in hexagonal units, with clusters of other, lower buildings acting as passive buttresses for the taller towers.

Humans from across space traveled to Obun to witness Velisamilun architecture. Thom Scotte, the acclaimed Second Republic architect and urban landscaper, once said that the Obun cities with their graceful spires stretching toward the skies are “perhaps the only construction to ever truly rival nature.”

Medicine: Through the Savage Age, the Obun had the sciences and technologies of the Lightbearers to keep them alive — an advantage lost during the Great Desolation. They had to start anew thereafter.

Obun medicine is roughly equal to human medicine in terms of development and achievement, but the two function on different principles. Human medicine is predominantly allopathic, designed to treat the symptoms of a disease, while Obun medicine is more naturopathic, designed to stimulate healing within the body through natural substances. Many Obun physicians are also priests, and thus combine their medical knowledge with their healing theurgies into a comprehensive whole.

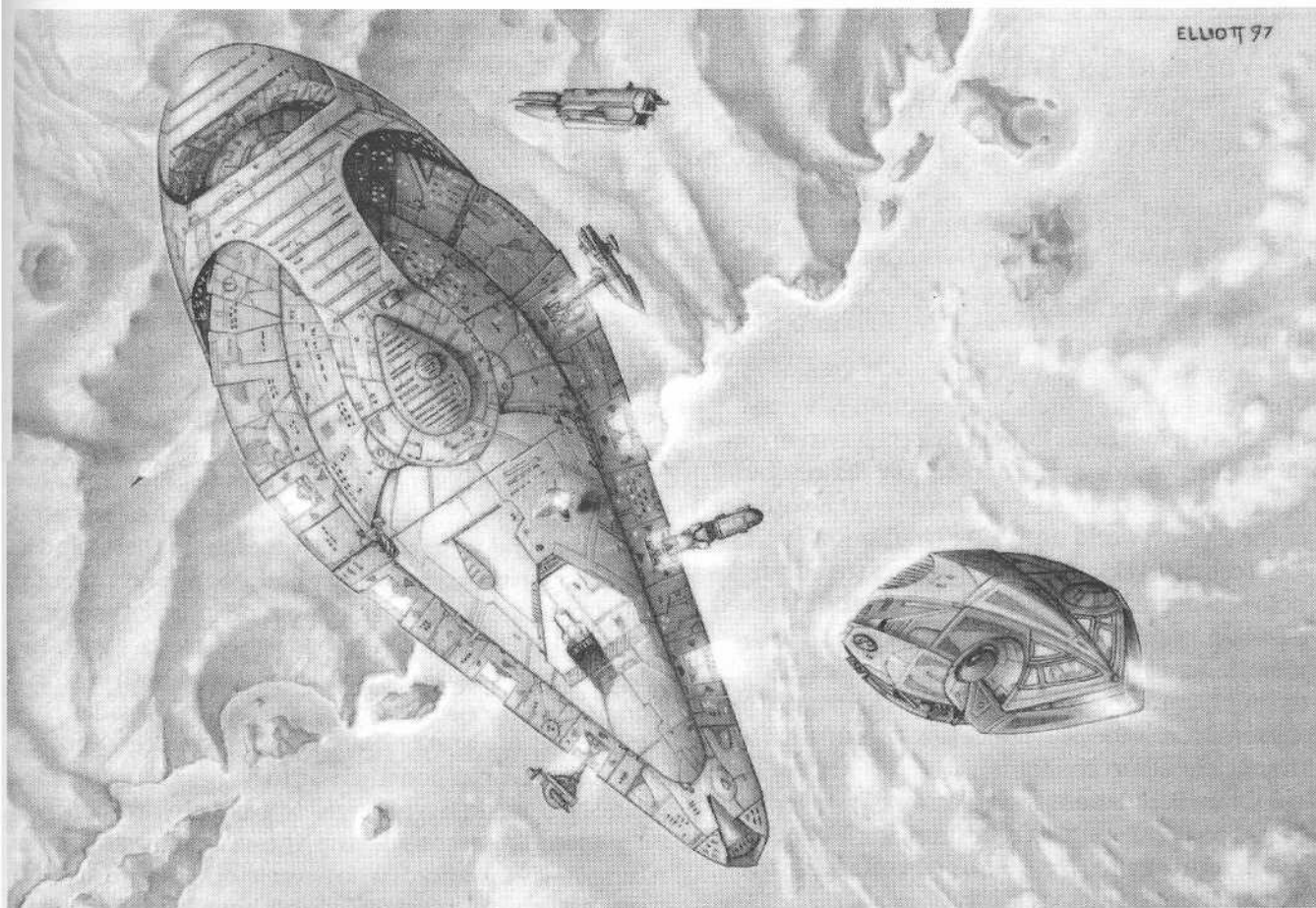
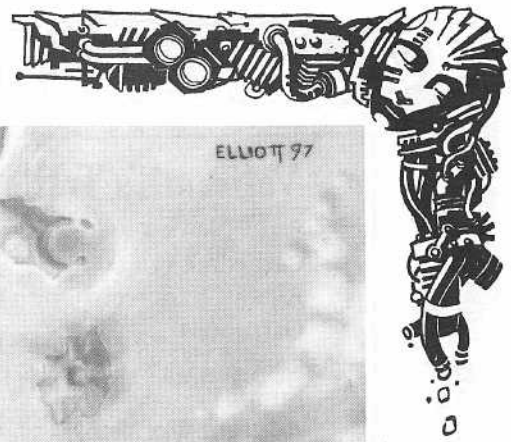
Because of the relative pacifism in Obun history (since the redevelopment of its medical knowledge), Obun medicine is less competent in shock trauma cases. The superiority of human medical science, with its thousands of years of battle-tested shock trauma medicine, is evident and accepted by human and Obun alike. The two can easily work together though, as human medicine repairs bone and flesh while Obun medicine improves healing and immunity.

Metaphysics: Metaphysics are to the Obun the natural combination of religion and philosophy; in fact, the Obun do not even have separate words for religion and philosophy. Metaphysical studies embrace the notions of contemplative thought and meditation, and the rudimentary elements of living in harmony with the sacred pattern. Although priests are typically the greatest expositors of metaphysical thought, the Obun realize that an instinctual understanding may come to anyone, and most Obun learn rudimentary metaphysics as part of their primary education. (Hence, the misconception that so many humans have that all Obun are philosophers by trade.)

Contrary to popular opinion, the Obun have immense respect for ancient Terran philosophies, many of which found their way into the teachings of the Prophet. It is the humans' disregard for their own philosophical heritage that the Obun dislike.

Performing and Visual Arts: The Obun have a vast artistic tradition, one that thankfully helps keep Velisamil rich as humans regularly try to buy or sponsor Obun artistry. A few significant notions for understanding Obun artistic traditions include:

- Dance — Much of Obun dance derives from ancient



sacred dramas which re-enacted the deeds of the Lightbearers. In an interesting case of role-reversal, during the Obun-vogue of the Second Republic, the Obun became quite fascinated with human ballet, and imported it to Velisamil. The Dhuyillin Ballet has quite a reputation for merging human and Obun traditions into an eclectic performance art.

- **Design** — The Obun are particularly fond of geometric designs, which aestheticians claim are metaphors for the sacred pattern. Meditating upon these intricate interlocking images helps bring the viewer's soul into personal and celestial harmony

- **Crafts** — Obun textiles are among the finest in the empire and command a high price.

- **Music** — Obun music is ethereal and jarring to human ears at times. Obun operas tend to run over 12 hours long and are often metaphors or allegories depicting various philosophical principles.

Space Sciences: Obun astrosciences are based predominantly on technologies and concepts developed under the aegis of the Anunnaki. This science was lost but rediscovered in AD 2633; a year later, the Obun achieved space-flight.

One of the first joint ventures in human-Obun relations was the exchange of technology and information related to space travel. Human and Obun starship engines worked on different principles, and many scientists attempted to fuse the two into a new, unique technology.

Although the attempt at a hybrid technology failed, joint spacecraft were still developed, with different technologies employed in different processes and hybrid interfaces connecting them. Obun astroscience technology is dependent on Iê (the Obun think-machine language unpopular among humans) and Obun glyph-interface designs that require some linguistic mastery in Obunish. For these reasons, a widespread use of Obun space-tech never occurred beyond the Obun system itself.

In spite of that, the Obun do still produce and maintain a small fleet of craft that operate entirely on Obun astroscience principles. Obun spacecraft design is also a combination of aesthetics and technique, and their ships are unmistakable — ornate, elaborate, vanned craft that glide through space as though on stellar currents.

Territory Velisamil (Obun)

Velisamil is the homeworld to the Obun peoples and occupies the center of their spiritual cosmology, just as it has for millennia. This Velisamilocentric cosmology never applied to the Obun's understanding of the physical universe, however; they realized that Velisamil was simply one world of many. So advanced (and equally basic) an astronomical notion probably derived from Anunnaki influence.



Velisamil's Traits

Ruler: Hawkwood/sovereign Obun alliance

Cathedral: Ven Lohji

Agora: Charioteers/Obun alliance

Garrison: 4

Capital: Loajen

Jumps: 1

Adjacent Worlds: Byzantium Secundus (dayside), Ravenna (nightside)

Solar System: Maan 1, Oaakaven 2, Olondiel 3, Velisamil 4 (Vena), Niiteh 5, Thoavoimil 6, Varzen 7. The Obun have always known that their system contains seven worlds, even though they did not build optical devices strong enough to register the existence of the seventh world until after Unification.

Tech: 5/9. Velisamil escaped some of the anti-technological depredations of the Dark Ages, and managed to retain much of its native technologies. Furthermore, lesser Urtech (often destroyed, indecipherable, or simply unusable by a majority of the populace) is scattered across the planet in artifacts and ruins from the ancient Obun civilizations.

Obun Population: Two billion

Alien Population: 100,000 (human), 500 (other)

Resources: Ores, crops and foodstuffs, Ur artifacts, native Obun technology

Exports: Urtech, Obun technology and arts/crafts (especially textiles), exotic spices

Landscape: Obun's landscape is similar to Urth's, with a full range of diverse biosystems. Obun's gravity is somewhat lower than Urth's, so features (mountains, trees, etc.) tend toward height. Some regions are still scarred by the Great Desolation — harsh desert terrains that hold little life.

Loajen

The capital city, Loajen, is a bustling metropolis and Obun's political and social center. The Umo'rin is housed here, and Obun's finest Academy, the Lo'tuhanon, is located in an ancient building whose foundation dates back to the pre-Loajen city of Therafalen.

If there could be a seamy underside to Velisamil, it could be found here, where radical philosophers congregate and sip haille — a spiced crimson tea — while arguing underdog philosophies. And that is about the worst of it, unfortunately for those desperate to find what skeletons are in the Velisamilun closet. (The colonies are quite another story.)

The city's agora is an international/interstellar hub, run by the Charioteers, specifically the Chartash hong. The Chartash import all non-Obun goods to Velisamil and export Obun goods beyond Obun space; the Obun, however, manage their own business and trade affairs, including the distribution of goods within Obun space.

The Hawkwood family watches Velisamil from their "consulate" in Loajen — a large sprawling complex near the city center, housing both the Hawkwood administrative officers, a Hawkwood barracks, and an Orthodox chapel.

The Xho'allafanen Mountains

This formidable mountain range, located in the Kohaa Province, is the home to what most scholars recognize as a vestigial, pre-Bintaru Obun called the Xho-velisamilun. These Obun have maintained a tribal society whose chieftain must pass the Ordeal (in its ancient, most brutal form) and who acts with considerable more authority than any local "councilor" might.

The Xho-velisamilun never adopted Bintaru or the later Ven Lohji sect and remain loyal to their ancestral paganism and venerate the Lightbearers as their sole deities; though they do not decry philosophy or contemplation, they are considerably more pragmatic than most Obun. This tribe of Obun has signed treaties with the Ruling Council and the Council of Kohaa, both of which grant the Xho'allafanen their sovereignty provided they forego acts of aggression. Tensions between the Xho and the Kohaa peoples nonetheless run high every few decades, but the Umo'rin has managed to avoid physical conflict.

Many Obun consider the Xho-velisamilun to be barbaric, atavistic warlords who never left the Savage Age, and any Xho encountered outside his homelands is likely to be treated with disdain and suspicion.

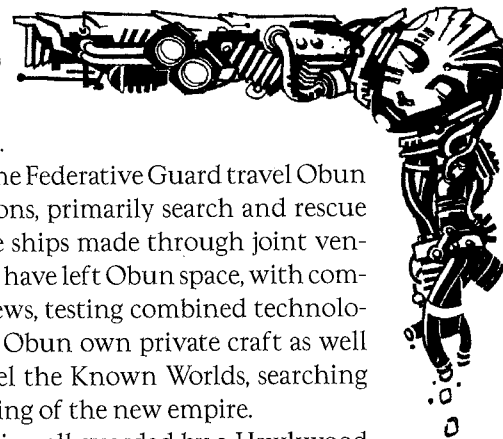
Dyan Monastery

The ancient Dyan Monastery is the seat of the Ven Lohji faith. Built high atop Mount Dyan, in the Voor range, the Dyan Monastery occupies the sprawling manor that was once the home of the vo Pohjoli noble family; its observatory, where the last duke watched the skies for the arrival of the gods, still stands.

The monastery of Dyan is open to all who would visit — as a pilgrimage sight or a place of meditation — but they must do so of their own accord, hiking the grueling two-day-long steep path from the village of Dy-shellin. (There are provisions for the infirm or for other exceptional guests.) Those pilgrims that the monastery cannot house can be found in tents or caves dotting the mountainside. Some come for a day or two and never leave, and Mount Dyan is believed to be the home of hundreds of Obun mystics, each privately contemplating the sacred pattern of creation.

Farhallanen Station

In orbit above Velisamil, Farhallanen became operational in UC 636 (AD 2650), soon after the Obun achieved spaceflight. Constructed using recently discovered Anunnaki technologies, it was the Obun gateway to the stars for centuries — hence its name, "Heaven's Gate" — where Velisamilun ships docked carrying passengers between the homeworld and the colonies or deep space ex-



peditions. The station was radically remodeled during the Second Republic, allowing it to remain operational to this day. The Church attempted to close Farhallanen during the Pogrom, but humans and Obun alike argued its necessity — as the only station capable of supporting non-landers, and as a working representative of ancient technologies (which are to this day under study).

It still serves as an operations center and docking station for ships that cannot land on Velisamil, and it tends to the needs of the Obun and Hawkwood fleets in Obun space. Commander Elannal Illeqi commands the station; a respected Obun soldier with experience in the Emperor Wars, Elannal dislikes the frequent compromises she must make with the humans to keep them happy.

Farhallanen is built of multiple technologies — Anunnaki, Obun, Second Republic human, and current tech have all left their mark on the station. It is an enormous station, built after the design of Obun cities, with the tallest spires in the center of a series of concentric circles. Although aging, with multiple areas closed due to disrepair, it is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful space stations in the Known Worlds. With the recent renewal in Obun star-faring expeditions, Farhallanen is slowly receiving more attention, and it may once more truly become the gate to the heavens.

Colonies

Where once the Obun had colonies across the Known Worlds, they are now limited to a few worlds.

The earliest Obun-sponsored colonies on Velisamil's neighbors, Olondiel and Niiteh, were built within biodomes in the years before human contact. During the Second Republic, Second Republic interests terraformed these worlds; as a result, Velisamil's colonies were inhabitable, although their stark landscapes were hardly lush gardens. The terraformers were only adequate in their task. cursory examinations of the remaining planets in Velisamil's system proved uninteresting, but some theorize that the secrets of the Ur are well-hidden and can still be found: absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

During the Dark Ages, some colonies were lost behind closed jumpgates; ultimately, all colonies outside Obun space closed. Lhuqennen and Thoavoimil were also taken under the Hawkwood aegis. The Hawkwoods exert more control on these mining colonies than they do on Velisamil, but the colonies still retain relative sovereignty within the Obun Federation.

The only new Obun colony is the small community on Pentateuch, building the city of Aztlan in the Megiddo Desert. They are a strange and reclusive bunch of Obun.

Fleet

The Obun fleet was never large, and it became smaller after the Pogrom. The Umo'rin owns a fleet of diplomatic and military vessels and maintains a shipyard in the Plains of U'el, but there are rarely more than a few dozen work-

ing craft at any one time.

Vessels manned by the Federative Guard travel Obun space on multiple missions, primarily search and rescue or security patrols. Some ships made through joint ventures with the Engineers have left Obun space, with combined human/Obun crews, testing combined technologies. A small number of Obun own private craft as well and have begun to travel the Known Worlds, searching for a greater understanding of the new empire.

The jumpgate itself is well guarded by a Hawkwood fleet, ever vigilant in protecting the Obun from hostile forces (and ensuring the safety of the gate from Obun separatists).

Obun of Note

Prominent Obun

Soleel HanSeer, First Speaker

Soleel is an aging Obun, nearing a century in his lifetime. He has served over half of these years on the Ruling Council, and in these years he has seen many changes take place on his homeworld, some for the better, some for the worse. Even though he is confident in the hopes that the Obun shall rise to greatness among the stars, he still fears greatly for what the immediate future holds for his people: "The night before the dawn may still hold many storms unseen."

Soleel HanSeer is a sympathetic listener, yet he remains firm in his commitment to high standards of leadership. His greatest distress lies in the opposition of the assimilationists and in the growing generation of Obun who have abandoned their own traditions. Seeing his grandchildren one day, Obun wearing human garb and acting human and unrestrained, he remarked with sadness, "There are no more Obun."

Virta HanLoaaj

During the Terran 4880s, Virta HanLoaaj — an elder claiming descent from the famous duke Menlo vo Loaaj — began speaking of the need for interstellar unity. He had traveled the Known Worlds and met with delegates of many alien races, each time offering an information exchange. From Dyn'dran Oed Nata, the Ukar warrior-turned-peacemaker, he learned Jox Kai Von; in return, he taught the Ukar secret qhattellinn meditative techniques. Finally, Virta returned to his homeworld and traveled across Velisamil calling for unity with all the peoples of the stars — a unity not based simply on political merits, but on metaphysical principle.

"We are all the Children of the Stars," he began one speech, "Obun and Ukar and human alike; Vorox and Etyri and all the children of the worlds. The gods created us all as part of a sacred pattern. And as they spoke in harmony, so should we. Let the Parliament of Heaven be reborn among the worldbound, that we might rise to heaven in a glorious surge of unity. Let our differences not drive



us apart, but be accepted. We are all one."

But Virta saw that the Obun people were not ready for such interstellar egalitarianism, and he left Velisamil, searching for the Children of Shurstrat — the legendary unified Obun-Ukar community. He disappeared soon after.

Loaana vo Harn

Loaana is the head of one of the wealthiest and most prestigious merchant houses on Obun. Introduced to the trade as a young girl by her uncle, she has learned how to be a crafty businesswoman, and she is a formidable opponent in business negotiations. Her financial success has led to some mistrust from her own people, who dislike seeing one Obun profit off another. Still, she has gained enormous respect from the Merchant League. It was Loaana who coordinated much of the negotiations with the Charioteer Chartash hong, and she is known throughout the Known Worlds as the Obun to consult on trade issues.

Loaana has been accused of maintaining private trade agreements with the Chartash, but these have never been proven. She is rather unscrupulous in many of her dealings, but she absolutely refuses to take part in the smuggling of Ur artifacts from Obun; Loaana takes pride in the global treasure of her peoples and will not let this be squandered for money.

Roleplaying Playing an Obun

The stereotype of the Obun counselor is common, but Obun characters can fill multiple roles in **Fading Suns** epics.

Archeomythologist: a member of the Academy of Sacred History, studying Ur ruins abroad.

Xho warlord: a warrior of the Xho-velisamilun, learning about the culture of the human overlords.

Ven Lohji crusader: a priest traveling the Known Worlds in search of the Children of Shurstrat.

Orthodox acolyte: a priest who feels the Orthodox are closer to the truth; this Obun is mistrusted by humans and scorned by Obun.

Merchant Marine: an Obun Charioteer who finds conflicting loyalties between desires to serve his guild and his own people.

Gamemastering an Obun

• **Buried Heritage:** New Ur ruins are uncovered deep beneath the surface of Olondiel, and already rumors are spreading of intact Ur weaponry. The characters are sent as: a) an excavation team from the Academy of Ur-sciences; b) agents of a Charioteer hong eager to cash in on Ur artifacts; c) Obun separatists trying to locate weapons for their cause; or d) freelance operatives. Whichever party the characters belong to, they must contend with representatives from all the other factions mentioned, plus possibly more.

• **Anarchy!** The characters uncover a plot to wipe out

the Umo'rin and the Hawkwood consulate together. They try to track down who would attempt such a deed (finding many parties with a motive); and they must determine the true culprit and stop the deed from plunging Velisamil into chaos.

• **To the Stars:** An Obun-Hawkwood-Charioteer charter sends out a starship of joint Obun/human technologies, to participate in the Emperor's push for deep space exploration and the rediscovery of Lost Worlds. The characters are members of the combined Obun-human crew.

Traits

Suggested Obun Traits

Characteristics: Dexterity (base 4; cost: 1 pt), Strength and Endurance (max 9; +2 pts), Psi (base 1; cost: 3 pts) or Theurgy

Natural Skills: Charm

Learned Skills: Academia, Empathy, Etiquette, Focus, Speak Urthish (base 2; cost: 2 pts) and Obunish (3), Stoic Mind, Read Obunish

Blessings/Curses: Just (2 pts: +2 Passion when righting a wrong)/Condescending (+2 pts: -2 Extrovert among the unenlightened)

Total Cost: 4 pts

Blessings

Hermaphrodite (1 pt: +1 Charm among Obun)

Oral Memory (1 pt: +1 Introvert when remembering things)

Serene (2 pts: +2 Calm in debate or discussion)

Benefices

Bintaru Priest (3-7 pts): The character is an initiated priest of the Bintaru tradition, proponent of the sacred pattern and the Way of Harmony. Although Bintaru is no longer the widespread faith of the day, Bintaru priests are still treated with great respect.

3 = Initiate

5 = Priest

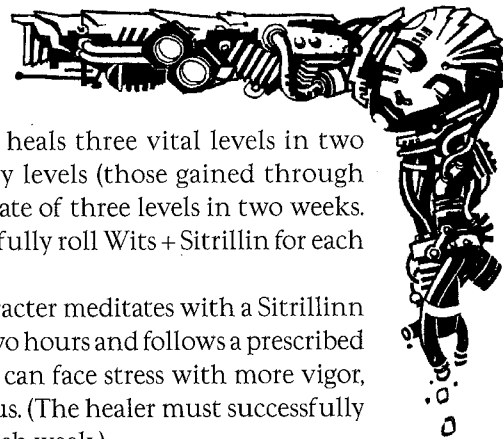
7 = Sage; member of the Plenary

Councilor (2 pts): Although not a member of the Umo'rin, the character is a regional councilor — respected and admired in his community but generally not known abroad. Ven Lohji and Bintaru priests can both become regional councilors.

Noble Patronage (1 pt): The character is in the employ of a noble house, as an advisor or counselor. This sponsorship offers some measure of personal security to the Obun, providing noble help in run-ins with other houses or with the Church.

Afflictions

Assimilationist (+1 pt): The character is both personally assimilationist (taking up human mannerisms) and politically assimilationist (arguing against the adherence to outmoded traditions); this is not a very popular stance.



Covert Separatist (+2 pts): The character secretly works against the established order in the hopes of attaining Obun liberation — and this means going against both the Umo'rin (dupes of the overlords) and the human overlords themselves.

Orphan (+3 pts): Because of some wrongdoing, the character has been ostracized and abandoned by his own community. Any Obun learning this will look askance at the character and even disassociate from the orphan.

Outsider (+1-3 pts): The character comes from a non-traditional Obun background, or his upbringing was different in some way. Although the character will not be discriminated against, he will feel uncomfortable in typical Obun society.

1 = Slight (Colonist, or raised abroad)

3 = Heavy (Xho-velisamilun or other isolated community)

Learned Skills

Most of the following skills are available for all Obun characters; skills marked "Specialized" will require some background explanation in how the character picked it up. In addition, most of the skills listed in the core **Fading Suns** book can be chosen for Obun, just remember to think of them from the perspective of a Velisamilun: Obun Biology, Obun Etiquette, etc.

Archeomythology (Lore)

Roll: Wits + Archeomythology

This skill combines the study of Obun mythology with Obun archeological work, placing artifacts within the context of Velisamilun sacred history. Through this skill, an Obun is more likely to identify the provenance of an artifact or ruins that date back to the earliest civilization on Velisamil.

Metaphysics (Lore)

Roll: Wits + Metaphysics

This is basic instruction in Obun metaphysics — notions of harmony, the sacred pattern, the Law of Correspondences, the basic practices of qhattellinn, and other key features. This is an academic skill and not an occult ability of any sort: It merely provides an understanding of what the Obun believe and not secret insights into the working of reality.

Sitrillinn

Specialized

Roll: Wits + Sitrillinn

An in-depth understanding of Obun typology and its applications in psychology and medicine. Knowledge of this skill includes both academic knowledge of Sitrillinn, the identification of various tri'llin in subjects, analysis of imbalances in a subject's tri'llin, and methods of regaining kelanti-balance through a variety of treatments (herbal, visual, aural, and so forth).

Healing: An injured character under the care of a

skilled Sitrillinn healer heals three vital levels in two months; further Vitality levels (those gained through Endurance) heal at the rate of three levels in two weeks. (The healer must successfully roll Wits + Sitrillinn for each week.)

Counseling: If a character meditates with a Sitrillinn healer once weekly for two hours and follows a prescribed course of treatments, he can face stress with more vigor, receiving a +1 Calm bonus. (The healer must successfully roll Wits + Sitrillinn for each week.)

Voavenlohjun Theurgy

There is no magic; only the working of God's will.

— Ven Lohji, *The Gleanings*

Obun theurgy is ancient, dating back to the primeval war in heaven. It was one of the many weapons used against the Ukari as they fought the will of the Lightbearers. It has undergone a number of philosophical transformations through the ensuing millennia, especially during the growth of Bintaru. The theurgy introduced by Ven Lohji is merely a grafting of the Prophet's teachings onto Bintaru theurgic rites; the two are thus similar enough that many Ven Lohji theurges study old Bintaru theurgic texts.

The central theme of Obun theurgy is harmony: physical (health), psychological, spiritual, environmental and social. Ven Lohji's theurgy is comprehensive, and all her priests study a variety of theurgies; they wonder at the compartmentalization of the human Church's theurgy into disparate concerns. One subsect does not study healing magics while another studies warrior rites — individual priests may have their fortés, but the entire priesthood is a holistic theurgic body.

Ven Lohji taught the Prophet much about theurgy, and these teachings have in fact affected the entire Church. The various hand gestures of human priests is a pale shadow of the ancient Bintaru belief that various intricate hand gestures each have a kelantic association to a sacred Principle, aiding in the theurgic process.

(Note: It is possible for an Obun to practice theurgy and have psychic powers, but it is rare; usually, only one such ability is awakened.)

Clear Mind

(Level 1, Introvert + Stoic Mind, GP, touch, prolonged 1W)

This ritual (which can be cast on another or oneself) usually precedes an hour of meditation on an issue or dilemma. Afterwards, the recipient has a bonus of +2 to Introvert and Calm for the course of a span.

The Pattern Speaks

(Level 2, Wits + Focus, GP, 1W)

This rite is similar to the Divine Revelation ritual of the Eskatonics; through meditation, the priest is able to discern the workings of the Sacred Pattern, and thus receive potential clues to a current problem.



Obun and Urge

The Obun are not immune to the perils of Urge, but Urge develops differently for them. The following charts replace the Urge charts given in the core rules.

Gaining Urge

Taboo	Roll	Levels
Missing guided meditations for more than one year	Ego + Focus	1
Suffering Inquisitorial torture	Calm + Stoic Mind	1-2
Exposure to another psychic's Urge	Psi + Stoic Mind	1
Fumbling a psychic power roll	Psi + Stoic Mind or Focus	1
Exposure to malevolent occult powers	Alien + Stoic Mind	1
Exposure to evil artifact	Alien + Stoic Mind	1
Murder	Passion + Focus	1-3
Rape	Passion + Focus	1-3
Stealing	Wits + Focus	1-2
Acting against community	Wits + Focus	1-2
Acting against other Obun	Wits + Focus	1

Losing Urge

Deed	Roll	Levels
One season (3 mo.) of extreme meditation (8 hrs daily)	Faith + Focus	1
Ordeal	Introvert + Stoic Body	1-2
Pilgrimage	Faith + Vigor	1
Community service	Passion + Empathy	1
Church mission	Faith + Focus	1-2
Exposure to Soul Shard	Psi + Stoic Mind or Focus	2-3
Exposure to Philosophers Stone	Psi + Stoic Mind or Focus	1
Exposure to Sathra Effect	Introvert + Focus	1-3
Selfless sacrifice	Passion + Empathy	1-2

Calming

(Level 3, Calm + Focus, G, sight, prolonged, 1W)

This rite works the same as the Amalthean Calming rite. It may be used on Obun, aliens, or animals alike.

Qhaatai-Sight

(Level 4, Wits + Observe, GP, sight, prolonged, 1W)

With this rite, the theurge can witness qhaatic activity in his vicinity, thus creating in the eyes of the theurge a vast web of interconnectedness (the Sacred Pattern), which can be seen more strongly around the bodies of those with stronger qhaatai. Many multiple strands between people indicate a deep connection that the individuals themselves may not realize (resonating kelanti, past-life associations, etc.) A flickering flame running along strands between people indicates some theurgic connection, while a steady glow indicates psychic activity. Wyrd-tabernacles and other powerful relics — if openly visible — will also register in this fashion.

Thoroklati

(Level 5, Introvert + Charm, GP, 1W)

This ritual is similar to the Gjarti Mentor rite, except that the theurge meditates to contact the guide instead of dreaming. In such meditation, the character can summon a Thoroklati, or Dream-Mentor — a minor

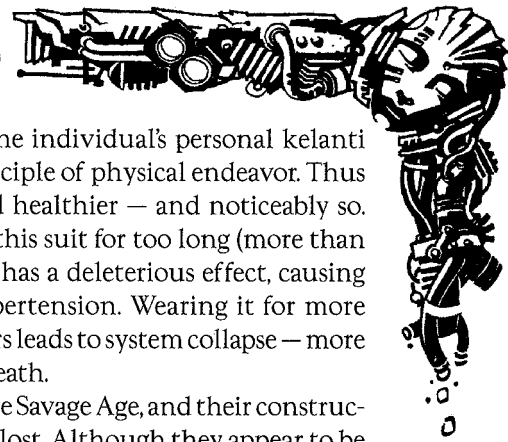
Lightbearer whose duty is to aid mortals in the understanding of dreams, and whether they have sacred import. Dreams are vessels of sacred knowledge, clothed in symbolic language that is sometimes indecipherable, and thus it is often necessary to seek aid in their interpretation.

The Thoroklati appears in unique forms for each dreamer but is usually an elderly person of authority. This mentor helps the interpretation process by asking questions of the dreamer: "How did you feel when your child committed a crime?" and "Does the Brute in the dream remind you of anyone?" The gamemasters should roleplay this exchange between meditator and mentor, or she can simply have the character roll Wits + Inquiry; if successful, tell the player some of the real meaning of his character's dream.

Dream-Speech

(Level 6, Extrovert + Empathy, LP, 1W)

This ritual allows the theurge to transmit a dream-message to others; the maximum number of recipients equals the ritecaster's victory points. Unfortunately, these messages are not detailed telegrams, but symbolic metaphors that must first be interpreted by the dreamer. The dreamer will realize upon waking that a dream was significant, but without a successful Wits + Inquiry roll, the meaning will be elusive.



Ishtel's Boon

(Level 7, Calm + Physick, LGP, touch, instant, 1W)

This rite is similar to the Healing Hand of Saint Amalthea. When cast upon an individual, it strengthens their personal kelanti with Ishtel, the Principality of Medicine: it can strengthen the body's defense against illnesses or disease (healing back one Vitality point per victory point). This can also heal diseases that are otherwise resistant to theurgy or science.

Beast Kelanti

(Level 8, Introvert + Vigor, GLP, prolonged, 1W)

This ritual works like the Gjarti Strength of the Animal Powers. A holdover from the ancient days of Obun paganism, this ritual strengthens the kelanti between the recipient and the animal of choice.

The Obun imagines and meditates on the correspondences of a specific creature (including non-sentient aliens) gains one of its physical attributes, such as claws, horns, speed, etc. While such power only lasts for one span, it is available to the character anytime within that span. However, the character will also take upon the animal's attitude (in the form of a temporary Curse), which may be distinctly anti-social. Use the following chart for guidelines:

Power	Animal	Effects	Curse
Claws	Cat, bear	3 DMG	Surly (-2 Calm)
Fangs	Cat, wolf	-1 Init, 3 DMG	Wary (-2 Extrovert)
Horns	Ram, stag	+2 DMG charge	Outgoing (-2 Intro)
Speed	Cheetah, stag	+10 m run/turn	Nervous (-2 Calm)

Petition to the Principalities

(Level 9, Faith + Impress, LGP, 1W)

By use of this rare and highly protected ritual, the theurge can contact the transcendent Principalities and beseech their aid or counsel. The Principality contacted will vary based upon the situation at hand, but Oluré, the Principality of Wisdom, is most often contacted. No matter what Lightbearer is contacted, he or she appears in his classical iconic form and will engage the theurge in saatari, a series of questions and answers that will help the theurge understand the problem at hand.

Obun Tech

Gyllevhem ("Skin of Vhem")

Defense: 4 + 4d

TL7

Firebird Cost: 10,000

Benefice Cost: 5

This ancient body suit acts equally to protect and strengthen the wearer. These suits vary in appearance, but they are typically a few select armored components (e.g., a breastplate, or shoulder-guards and bracers), often designed to resemble Obun musculature. Each Gyllevhem is uniquely constructed and cannot simply be broken apart to create multiple suits.

Through its construction techniques and materials,

the Gyllevhem boosts the individual's personal kelanti with Vhem and the Principle of physical endeavor. Thus he is stronger, faster and healthier — and noticeably so. Unfortunately, wearing this suit for too long (more than seven hours in one day) has a deleterious effect, causing muscle cramps and hypertension. Wearing it for more than 12 consecutive hours leads to system collapse — more than 24 hours leads to death.

These suits date to the Savage Age, and their construction methods have been lost. Although they appear to be made of some form of bone, old texts refer to "growing" these suits — but grown from what is not discerned. There are only a dozen known Skins of Vhem in existence, and they are prized artifacts. They have no effect on non-Obun/Ukari species.

Wearing a Gyllevhem has the following effects:

- Under seven hours — Superior health; the suit gives a character a +3 bonus each turn to split (in any combination) among Strength, Vigor, Endurance and/or Vitality.
- Over seven hours — The wearer begins to lose control; while he is capable of achieving more, he is less likely to achieve it. He loses all non-vital Vitality levels (while he continues to wear the suit; once the suit is removed, these heal back at a rate of one per hour), and actions become more difficult (-2 penalty for all physical endeavors).

• 12 consecutive hours — System collapse. The wearer loses all but one level of Vitality and must roll Endurance + Stoic Mind to remain conscious.

• 24 consecutive hours — Painful death.

Zaalen Stinger (Stunner)

Roll	Goal	DMG	RNG	Shots	Rate	SIZ	Cost
Dx + Shoot	+2	5(S)	10/20	15	1	M	6

Ammunition: Fusion cell

Tech Level: 6

Firebird Cost: 3000

The Zaalen Stinger, created by a Second Republic Obun scientist-aesthetician, is the epitome of Obun weaponry: Fully functional and completely aesthetic, it appears more as ritual jewelry than a weapon.

The Stinger is a metallic pod that rests on the back of an Obun's hand. From one end of the pod snakes an ornate tendril that wraps up and around the Obun's arm. The other end of the pod is an exquisitely designed stem and oculus — the barrel for this weapon. Thinner tendrils then wrap from the pod between the fingers to meet at a palm keypad: The weapon is controlled by tapping various keys on the palm (there is a safety mechanism to avoid unwanted fire.) Many humans consider this a rather effete weapon, but regardless, they don't like to be on the receiving end of its energy beam.

The construction of these weapons is an art held by few, and repair can be costly. These are highly personal weapons; most are uniquely designed according to their bearer's desires.







Raised in Darkness: Ur-Ukar

by Rustin Quaide

Taywin na Nont, second durga of Clan Nont wi Wallaon, peered through the great night desert and saw movement far across the drysands, in the direction of Sunval. Small clouds rose from the sand dunes, along with the humming of motorized vehicles. He nudged his grandson, Tlokam, and handed him the Radir .98 sniper rifle while he drew his ceremonial krax, the killing knife of his family. "Is it he?" Taywin asked, sensing that it was.

"Yes, apada," Tlokam said. "He has two Ukari with him, each bearing weapons in his land cruiser. It is a shame, eh apada?"

Taywin nodded. They could see the land cruiser halt where the black, weather-beaten hills began. It was the fifth year of the great Aylon Ukari rising. The al-Malik forces, backed with their loyalist Ukari, had won a brilliant victory in the Mwethuid hills, and the great clans of Vordwed and Tontha were shattered. Taywin's small Traditionalist clan pledged themselves to the Tontha, and he had seen action in the great battles of Banit and Sunval. Now he awaited supplies from the Decados agent, Count Rurik Dmitri Decados — called Rurik Ukarinto, adopted son of Baroth Tontha and pledged sada to the rebellion, blood-brother and leader of clan armies in the rebellion's cause.

Taywin spat. The Decados stirred up the rebellion to trouble the al-Malik while the humans decided who would rule the Known Worlds: Alexius, the Hazat or House Decados.

Taywin knew that the Ukari were pawns but that the romantic fool, Rurik, actually embraced their cause out of concern for the Ukari. "Fool," he whispered. "You fell in love with your pawns." Rurik's army tactics led the greatest of Clan Vordwed to their deaths at Sunval. He had a good tactical sense for humans, maybe, but not the hit-and-run tactics of Ukari. It was sick seeing a hardened Jakovian agent become a romantic idiot for the "primitive" ways of the Ukari.

"Ankwo tadaveda rolvoktha," came the cry below, as one of the newly-arrived Ukari moved a tarp, revealing boxes of assault rifles. Taywin counted 40 boxes, enough to re-arm his small clan — enough to break the semicircle of enemies and make a retreat into the warm earth.

"Tolmek norwega kadain," he answered. Already Rurik Decados, dressed in traditional Ukari attire, was climbing toward them.

"Taywin, you old patan, give my greetings to Veda. How's the situation?"

Taywin looked Rurik over, noticing the raised tattoos on the human's arms and chest describing the battles he had participated in. Gone Ukar. Some humans did, adopting Ukari ways. Then the old Ukar recalled Rurik's question.

"Ah, not good, Ukarinto, not good. Bada brought his Ukari up from the south, with al-Malik soldiers. Bada's a traitor but no fool, he wants to flush us out into his net. I figure we have a day to move north to the safety of the labyrinths."

"The Aylon contingent of the al-Malik army is pretty hardened, and they have dervishes among them," Rurik said. "Tontha says to move this night — there will be a gathering of clans on the Rillokita."

Taywin suppressed a sneer. What clans? he thought. You led the rebellion into slaughter at Sunval.

His grandson was talking to Rurik's scouts, hardened warriors, and he saw them exchange some small rations. Then they began moving armament caches to higher ground. Rurik and Taywin, meanwhile, had distanced themselves from their companions.

Once Taywin would have gladly accepted Rurik's company. Now Rurik was too trusting. He had not always been so. Rurik's deceit was once as natural as the red sunsets that stretched out to meet the night. And Rurik understood his change no more than the clouds understood the flushed colors of the setting sun they reflected. Once Rurik knew he could not lie to the Ukari, he loved them and could deceive no more with the gilded ease of the Decados. A spy supplying armaments for his own purposes could be trusted; you knew what he was and it was understood that you were using each other. But a prophet, a lover, is dangerous. His passion endangers the beloved, and his reckless desire to become one with the beloved ruins everything.

Rurik must die, Taywin na Nont thought, before he calls death on us all.

The old *durga* called upon his power. Instantly he turned toward Rurik, seized him gently behind the left ear and plunged his *krax* into the human's neck. The hero gasped for air and then slid gracefully down to the desert floor, his blood mingling with the sand.

Taywin cried loud into the hills. He felt the *Ialtach*, the dark power, breaking from him like a sudden desert downpour, crashing with fury against the piled rocks of the upper hills, shaking them free of their moorings. Rurik's two companions looked up and saw the rock avalanche descending toward them. Boulders and dust fell, covering Rurik's guides in choking white clouds. Taywin lifted the body of Rurik like a broken doll and tossed it into the landslide's path. He could see *Tlokam*, above, scrambling into the upper paths, taking the route they had agreed on.

For a few minutes they watched the rock and earth and dust fall down, burying the bodies, knocking the land cruiser to the hill's foot, damaging some of the crates. They counted some 33 good ones, and then went down to get them.

"We will speak of this to no one," Taywin said. "You did well there, grandson. But let this be a lesson. Never trust a human who loves Ukari over much. And never love any one thing too much. The path to success for a warrior is to love only death."

The clouds moved and the moon blossomed forth in brilliant yellow, casting shadows across the desert. But this did not disturb the grave of Rurik, or the smile on the face of Taywin na Nont, second *durga* of Clan Nont wi Wallaon.

Ukari (single, *Ukar*, plural *Ukari*) written history begins with the composition of the *Noddavitya* (roughly 730 BC) from collections of oral tales recounted by the shaman-bards of Hakar on Kordeth (Urthish: *Ukar*), yet their origins go back far further, to the homeworld where they originated. Second Republic xenologists, Obun and Ukari scientists, along with cultural anthropologists, have traced the Ukari origins to the planet *Velisamil* (Urthish: *Obun*). The Ukari were native to Obun. Their origins are lost in time, although hints are found in the paleontological records and mythologies of both races. Chromosome samples alone unite the two races of Obun and Ukari, as well as careful studies in linguistic and cultural histories; indeed, the two races are capable of uniting to produce genetic offspring, despite strong cultural taboos against the practice.

Mainstream Ukari society was formed by bands of hunting young males (*bannu*), who created secret hunting societies away from their tribes in which to celebrate their exploits in hunting and warfare. These secret societies dominated Ukari culture, centered around mystery temples (*sata*), which were taboo to all except the members of these societies. Ukari children, women and old men were prohibited with threats of death from entering these sacred houses. "The *Noddavitya* speaks of the great Ukari heroes debating in the *sata* before battle," wrote the Second Republic historian K. Ramakrishna. "These societies survived the transfer to their new world and became the

cultural center around which the Ukari formed their clan-nations. Its structure was already present on Obun."

At some point, these societies formed the various clan-nations of the Ukari. After their battle against the Obun gods failed, they were removed by their heavenly allies to the harsh world of Kordeth. Although the Anunnaki allied with the Ukari supposedly out of kindness, to save their followers, the Ukari believe they were sent to Kordeth to be hardened. And hardened they became. A violent history of clan struggles led to a brief period of unification wherein the Ukari, then strong in technological knowledge, attacked human worlds for mastery of the stars. Worlds fell before the conquering clans until Palamedes, the First Patriarch of the Universal Church, led humanity to victory over the warlike race. Since then, the Ukari have been troublesome, refusing to submit to the teachings of the Church and often breaking out in violent rebellions. Although conquered, their beliefs, allied with their fierce reputation as warriors and practitioners of dark rituals, still cause the Known Worlds great unease.

Creation Myths

From the *Noddavitya*:

In the holy *Medatida*, in the mountains of the *Dwontha*
The *T'linto* gathered in council, before the shining *Jotta*
The gods came to high council, and smote the bell of *Jalun*
Until the vibrations shook the nine universes, and all was still.
Anikrunta of the Red Eye rose to the assembled *rivga*,
Guardian of the pulsating blood of *Kadan*, the capillaries of pain,

Devourer of the enemies of truth, judge of *noddavitya*,
He tore out his eye before the throng, and held it before him
Then smote his spear before the feet of *Daya-Orlogvin*
And spoke while his blood smoldered on the floor,
Spurting from his socket, burning the deceptions of the *rivga*.
"You create beings and withhold knowledge. The *Obkarn*
You hold as slaves, begging for wisdom from bored lips.
Yet knowledge is the gift of all. Let us create
Equals! Raise the younger races from pampered childhood to
the tests of harsh destiny, producing hardened swords
from the forges of experience! Release the guarded
Knowledge, long hoarded by the elder gods, mourning
Through lips of debauched lethargy while time falls in upon
us!

We are proven, we are ready, let us help the younger races.
Release the *Navriggami*, the water Grail of truth,
Gathered from the trees of *Dwya* the Endless
In far *Tlaasta's* hidden shores, beyond *Urgontimente!*"
Behind him *Saddereaper* smote her hammer, shaking the hall
And *Dwonta-Amog* raised the weights of Death
And the sons of *Rillos* and *Kalakal*, guardians of the
Path of War and Courage applauded with clenched fists.
Sly Daya-Orlogvin looked about, two faces alarmed at the
commotion,
then spoke with seven soothing tongues the words that follow:
"Anikrunta, already your eye heals. Look! A new one

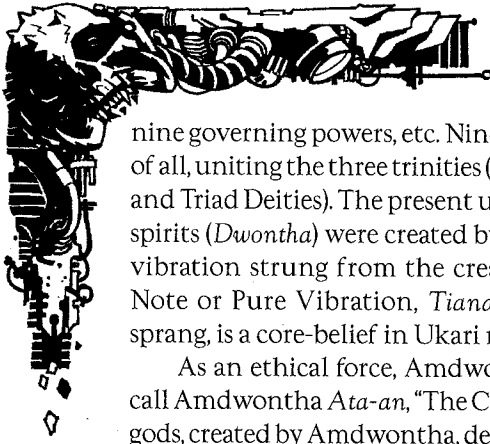
Bursts to seed within your socket, and the smell
of your blood leaves a pungent odor! Patience
I urge you, the child-races are not ready.
Would you destroy our nourishment? For we feast
Upon their worship and inexperienced spirits.
Oft a child will show promise; we can favor a bright
Pupil here or there, but for the majority
Only slowly must our teachings be grasped
So that they will serve us! Seven philosophies
I gave them, to ponder in their work."
Duppyannyira came to him, ever at his ear.
"Bright are our days and work, which you
Would hasten!" Her eyes smote into Anikrunta,
but Anikrunta's baleful eye absorbed her
Deceitful power. Uysadda then snuck,
as the masked god will, between the feet of
the debaters and blew out the holy flame of Dwontha Gunta.
All went dark, and the only light
was the red eye of Anikrunta, and his voice rolled,
an earthquake smashing mountains,
And he said, "The way of the Dwontha is hard.
Have we forgotten, so soon, sly Daya-Orlogvin,
that children must grow into the deeds
with courage, not honeyed mimicking
of our sayings, for wisdom without
Price breeds insolence — an affront to the
Living universe! Only through
Independence will they find their way to our door

as Dwontha themselves. You hoard knowledge
While claiming you are its giver.
Give! I say, and let the slaves be free
And breathe the air of Danik Kolo
In Danakalapana, in Sidikanidoor."
And with his followers, Anikrunta left the hall
Leaving sly Daya-Orlogvin to his ill-omened council.

Ukari written mythology begins with the breaking
of the Council of Gods, while Obun mythology begins
with a Council of Gods creating the philosophical con-
cepts they would take on as attributes. Some xenologists
believe the difference between the two cousin races be-
gins here, with the reflective, sagacious beliefs shaping the
Obun, and the clannish warfare and strife shaping the
Ukari. Ukari mythology, as set out in the *Noddavitya*, hints
at a peaceful universal creation. The Ukari possessed the
concept of a supreme being, who was variously called
Todarivgorna (*toda* = west, *riyg* = spirit, *orna* = held in hand),
or more often, Amdwontha (One or First God) or
Nadanukar (Great Person). This supreme being was a
largely unexplored concept to which few positive at-
tributes were attached, a sort of prime-mover or panthe-
istic spirit-of-all.

Amdwontha created the Nine Universes in successive
motions, and each universe grew and collapsed only to be
resurrected again. The number nine possesses holy signifi-
cance for the Ukari in much the way the number seven
does for the Obun: There are nine universes, nine laws,





nine governing powers, etc. Nine is the ultimate attribute of all, uniting the three trinities (Triad Law, Triad Universes and Triad Deities). The present universe and the guardian spirits (*Dwontha*) were created by a single note of musical vibration strung from the creator's thought. The Pure Note or Pure Vibration, *Tiana*, from which all things sprang, is a core-belief in Ukari religion.

As an ethical force, Amdwontha figures little. Some call Amdwontha *Ata-an*, "The Changeless Changing." The gods, created by Amdwontha, decided to contemplate and dream on things to fill the unformed universe, and the present universe sprang forth from their dreams. Conceptions gave way to patterns, which in turn produced laws.

The patterns were at first good, but some gods loved the laws they produced and multiplied these laws, which soon began to strangle creation, stagnating spiritual growth and creating a prison universe out of the primal note of love. Anikrunta, himself a law-giver and judge, decided that too many laws began to retard the younger races, and moved to grant the young sentients the freedom to accelerate their spirituality. Tired of subservience to an increasingly corrupt pattern, other gods and powers joined him.

When the Ur-children arose, they were greeted by the *Amrivga* (Great Spirit) of Velisamil (Obun), who gave them the water of life, awakening the divine power of speech. Some historians and xenologists believe the legends of drinking the waters are an explanation for the awakening of their psychic gifts by an elder star-faring race. Strong evidence exists for early contact by the Anunnaki, witnessed in the many ruins in the world and the Ur-children's similar technological aesthetic. The new race, uplifted by the contact, named its benefactors gods.

The Obun hold that the Ukari embraced the dark paths of the Shadow Court and desired unrestrained conquest. The Ukari maintain that it was a war of independence, that their survival as a people was at stake against their enslavement by certain gods and Obun. Some, like the Church historian Capaneus, believe that the Ukari were struggling against cultural hegemony introduced by Obun and Anunnaki philosophies that threatened to break up the Ukari clan-nations into "more civilized" and easier controlled populations, ready for economic and cultural exploitation by the privileged Obun and their star-masters. The Ukari fought back to preserve a more ancient way of life against their "benign" guardians. Jyrr Tolhardy, the linguist who uncovered the Oro'ym language, disagreed, but stated, "Capaneus was right in that certain Anunnaki were able to stir up some grievance in the Ukari. But what that was remains unknown."

Anikrunta, the Father-Judge of the Ukari pantheon, accused the Obun gods of desiring slaves whose actions (worship and mimicking) nourished the gods in some unspecified way. Anikrunta wanted to build up and toughen his people against this "feeding" by accelerating their cultural growth while retaining their independence.

The Ukari maintain that the war was one of independence and have never wavered in this belief. There was a notion among the Ukari that the Obun gods fed off the souls of their worshipers by subtle means, feasting on vibrational pitches in Obun meditation techniques. The Obun were a harvested race.

In their first appearance, in both Obun and Ukari mythological records, the race now known as Ukari were already assuming the social and political characteristics that were to remain theirs for the rest of their history, especially their fierceness in battle, the uneasy alliance of the great clans with one another and their belief in a pantheistic power inherent within all phenomena (*rivga* or *rivganito*).

One clan already claimed predominance over all others, by descent from Anikrunta through Tlinkali the Moon Goddess. This clan hosted the high leader of the Ukari, the Nadakira. The first Nadakira was the legendary Thollo. During the scope of the *Noddavitya*, which encompasses centuries, the Nadakiras were Takun, Tumol, Majir, Makorun and the sons of Makorun. Interestingly, while the Ukari are known as a subterranean race, there is no reference to their dwelling beneath the earth on Obun in their earliest myths. Their cities of Taklan, Llengwollo and moon-glistening Tharafala are mentioned as places of beauty and sunlight in the *Noddavitya*.

Legends from the Noddavitya

After the Council of Gods broke-up, the T'linto (Obun gods) stole the Four Grails of Morta-Mera, which possessed the powers of strength, everlasting life, ultimate knowledge and prophecy. Uysadda, the Masked God, recovered the Grail of Strength. The Ukari-Obun forebears divided when whispering representatives of the False Gods led many astray with promises of wisdom. Anikrunta offered the hard road of freedom; the more vigorous of the people took it and united their clans before Anikrunta and Rillos with a blood oath: "We are the People of the Blood Oath. We are *Ukari*." Then, regarding their kinsmen who had fallen under the servitude of the sly gods, they said, "They are slaves. They are *Obun*." Anikrunta ambushed the god Vhem and led the Ukari to victory over the Obun. The war began with an Ukari victory, the sack of the city of Murspul.

The Obun nations, pressed out of the fertile plains, called upon their gods, and Vhem and Dzure armed them with terrible weapons. Yet again the Masked God, Uysadda, aided the Ukari, and gave the Grail of Strength to Takun, the First Clan leader. Takun drank and routed the enemy when he slew Tada, the great Obun hero, with his spear named Toramunda. Anikrunta then rained fire down on the Obun lands, and the Ukari celebrated victory. But it was not to be. Clan divisions sprang up from the spoils of war. Clan Sikphah, angered over the deeds and favor



shown to clan Bothki, went over to the Gods of Deceit. They were the first traitors. The Obun, saved from defeat, cemented their victory by driving the remnants of the Eight Loyal Clans back into the hills. For 100 years, an uneasy peace followed, broken occasionally by raiding parties.

The Slaying of Shinistraku

The greatest hero of the Ukari was Invincible Shinris, leader of Clan Tekkidwaka and a descendent of the dream goddess, Delarynya. He performed deeds even the gods feared and saved the Sons of Rillos from the fallen goddess Dh'yanna. The Rillos are the most mentioned gods in the *Noddavitya* and seem to be the clan or family of gods most accessible to the Ukari. Their similarity to the Sons of Krillos in Oro'ym mythology was noted by Jyrr Tolhardy. Some xenologists feel that the Rillos were the actual Anunnaki race with whom the Ukari allied. They favored Invincible Shinris with great secrets. His clan was the strongest and he possessed wide lands. His daughter, Princess Shinistraku, was the most beautiful of women and an accomplished warrior and singer. It is said that Shinris loved her so much that he allowed her the choice of marrying whomever she chose. When the princess refused Nadakira Majir's hand, some prophesied that ill would befall the Ukari peoples.

In this time, an Obun came among the Ukari speaking words of peace and unity, and some hearkened to him. His name was Paa Han Venel, and even his enemies did not touch him, for all recognized a strange fate about him. "He came to divide us," the *Noddavitya* claimed, "but his doom he embraced fully, and he spoke strange words, both holy and blasphemous, so even the priests feared him. The Ukari allowed him to speak unmolested. He went to Shinris's court to plead his bridge of peace, stating that the people should unite and not be the pawns of the warring and unstable gods. Paa soon fell under the enchantment of Shinistraku Sasanemt, most beautiful of all living, and she listened to his strange words and declared her love for him. When she told her father that she desired to wed him, he did not refuse, and their union halted the wars.

Paa Han Venel and Shinistraku removed to the holy hills of Oспиr and built a house. Shurstrat was their daughter, and they gained a following from both peoples. An uneasy peace between the warring parties ensued while Paa lived and taught. But the gods of sly wisdom, the T'linto, urged the Obun princes to slay the peacemaker, and some hearkened to the evil words placed in their hearts.

One day, Shinris, growing old, desired to see his daughter. Traveling with his retainers to Oспиr, he found the house of Paa and Shinistraku burned to the ground. They were slain, with no sign of the fate of their daughter. Shinris dreamed and in his dreams, he was visited by the goddess Delarynya, who declared that his daughter and son-in-law were slain by Paa's jealous kinsmen, who feared his holy message. Shinris began the war again in a rage,

with more savagery than before. After many victories, Shinris grew old, and when he died, the fear left the Obun. Now armed with strange fire from the gods, they attacked in force, and the Ukari were pushed back.

The legend of Paa Han Venel and Shinistraku exerted a powerful hold on both Obun and Ukari imagination. The most optimistic among both races interpret it as a sign that the two races can eventually coexist, or even unite to produce a higher culture. Both blame the other for the deaths of the two lovers. Ramakrishna wrote, "It is not impossible that one of the Anunnaki factions slew them to stir up the war again, as Paa preached Obun-Ukari unity without the council of, or aid of, the gods, and was attracting war-weary followers from both sides."

There are some who claim descent from their daughter, Shurstrat, including the great Ukari holy shaman Dyn'dran Oed Nata. The rumored Ukari-Obun freedom fighting group, the Children of Shurstrat, claims her as the mother of the pure Ukari culture. In the New Dark Ages, playwrights and poets have tackled the theme of Paa and Shinistraku with great success. The noble poet Melissina Hawkwood translated their tale from the *Noddavitya* (Book 15, lines 151-154):

*Shinistraku's eyes shone with the pale moon's light
And Paa Han Venel beheld the daughter of the land of snow
And white as snow shone her hair in the blessed night
Where the Obun's heart beat, but for himself no more.*

This is a far removed from the original, which, properly translated, is as follows:

*Her eyes beheld the beating heart of her father's foe
A thousand corpses she saw hung by their traitorous kin
A river of entrails — then she looked again, and no more
Did she behold corpses, as her desire smote for him.*

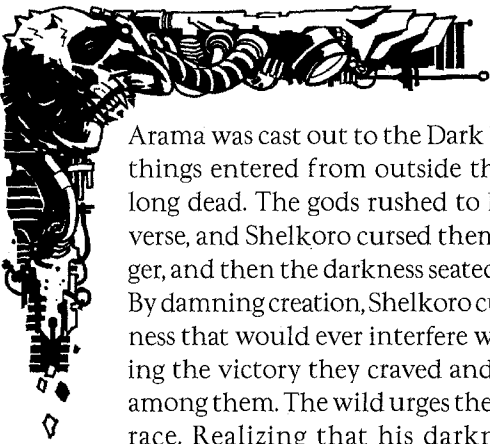
The Curse of Shelkoro

From the oral legend of Maktu the Elder in the *Noddavitya*:

Shelkoro was the son of Boddir, head of Clan Tadar (from mixed Obun-Ukari union), and the goddess of the forge, Saddereaper. So beloved was Shelkoro by his mother that she taught him the secrets of craft, and he created the *Valukedyir*, the Crown of Dreams, which cast dancing fires throughout the Nine Universes. Its power was in softening the fabric of space-time, and Shelkoro, placing it on, became a god, and the beloved of the goddess Teku Arama, who held Time. And she bent Time at the urging of Shelkoro and caused many things to be, and not be, or half-form. And a small shadow, part of himself, ever urged him on to greater things. Soon the shadow became a councilor and sat next to Shelkoro, attired in rich clothes. Many wondered at this. The wise say Shelkoro's wisdom was not prepared for godhood. This shadow was the first manifestation of the Ialtach, or psychic-urge, among the Ukari. Teku Arama vied with the Shadow for his attention, and pushed her power beyond its bounds.

Shelkoro sought to create the world anew, but the ripples in the stream of time caused commotion. Teku





Arama was cast out to the Dark by the Further Gods, and things entered from outside the universe, from worlds long dead. The gods rushed to heal the tear in the Universe, and Shelkoro cursed them and the universe in anger, and then the darkness seated next to him, the Ialtach. By damning creation, Shelkoro cursed his race with a darkness that would ever interfere with their desires, destroying the victory they craved and ruining the most noble among them. The wild urges then fell like a disease on the race. Realizing that his darkness had mastered him, Shelkoro shattered the Valukedyir, causing cleansing fires to lay waste the region of Mada. He, along with Clan Tadar, went up in the strange fire, and the smoke was seen for three years afterward.

Removal

From the Book of Kordeth in the *Noddavitya*:

Nadakira Makorun led the Ukari in retreat into the Hills of Desolation. The Obun pressed them hard, and the wrath of the deceiving gods was upon them. There, before him in the hills, was a lone Obun with a gift in an unopened box. "We do not accept gifts from the cursed gods," Makorun said and took his iron staff and smashed at the box. Yet the box would not open. Uysadda, the Masked God, appeared to him as an old woman of his people.

"It is strong gift from the deceiving gods," he said. "Let me destroy it, as it contains drink sweeter than *nula*, and is designed to make you even as they, your deceitful cousins, the pets of liars." Then he took the box, and cast it into a ravine, but there was a rumbling in the earth, and the air was hard to breathe for three days after. Then a strange mood befell the people, and they started attacking each other, breaking ceremony and bond-law. When they came to their senses, they laughed. A piece of the shattered box contained a piece of Shelkoro's Shadow.

"If the gift was to make us like Obun, it has failed," they said. "Already we are more warlike than before, and their sweet tongues would find a hard time taming us."

Anikrunta and the gods, healing the breach in reality created by Shelkoro, were treacherously attacked by the T'linto. Anikrunta took the last essence of escaped time and wove it about his allies, creating a dark web for their escape, so that they could grow in power again and one day liberate the younger races. Then he thought about the Ukari, his children, and decided to harden them further, away from their lying kinsmen and false gods. The Sons of Rillos came down in their fire-ships to the Hills of Desolation and beheld the remnant of the Ukari, the clans that had survived the great treacheries of the Obun and the deceitful gods. "You have proved yourselves worthy," they said. "We shall remove you to a place that will test you further, and harden you, until you return and retake what is yours. In time, when you reach the further stars, we shall return to you." Then the Ukari clan-leaders conferred among themselves and agreed that this must be done, since the Curse of Shelkoro damned them on the

world, when he broke faith with the earth and cursed his people in his Ultimate Despair. The Obun were closing in, with terrible weapons of fire, and the fires swept into the sky as high as mountains. They accepted death, but the gods urged otherwise.

They boarded the god-ships and were taken in secret to a new world, harsh and dry, where few waters flowed and vapors strangled the air. But the Sons of Rillos planted deep in the earth their ever renewable treasures, which created air in lightless tunnels and gave breath to the harsh world. "Here you will become even stronger," the Sons of Rillos told the Ukari, "for life is a hard test. But you will meet it to grow strong again, and then your old world will fall before you. This world is Kordeth, the Place of Trials." Then the Ukari went out into their harsh new home and began to wail, but the sons of Makorun said, "No, the first strength is hiding our sorrows." In silence, they began to construct shelters in the many caves of that region since called Korgotha.

Recorded History

Ukari history begins with the settlement of Ukar, called Kordeth (The Place of Trials) by the race. The harsh environment of the planet's surface caused the Ukari to build in the far north, near the polar cap, and explore the labyrinthine limestone caves that lined the planet's interior. Anunnaki ruins on the Lowdur Plateau support the Forced Relocation theory of the Ukari. Daunting symbols, akin to the pictographic written language of the Ukari, are carved with great precision into alien metals. Ukari priests and xenologists believe that the Anunnaki placed terraforming engines deep in the planet, creating breathable oxygen. This rumor persists, explaining the free flow of breathable air far under Kordeth's surface, although certain areas remain poisonous. Others state that the oxygen cycle already existed, as plants and animals native to Kordeth lived far underground. Domesticated animals from Obun (herds of grazing patas) and plants (fruit-bearing *tida* trees and *kono*, a wheat-like plant) took to their new world well, developing swift resistance — as did the Ukari — to indigenous diseases.

On Mount Shadderik, the palace of Makavodo, grandson of the Nadakira Makorun, was constructed. This begins Year 1 in the Ukari Calendar (conjectured 830 BC). The far north, near the polar caps, remained their home, for south of the encircling Mwerid Mulpa range, poisonous vapors spread by harsh winds strangled life. Ukari mythology states that the Sons of Rillos placed Anikrunta's Nine Law Stones (still intact) about the fertile valley before the Nadakira's palace. While the Removal occurred around 900-830 BC, the Ukari records state that the Anunnaki did not completely abandon them until around AD 100, although after 400 BC their appearances became more rare. After conferring the Solar Sword of Divine Judgment to Nadakira Molpya, they bid the Ukari farewell (AD 97).

For generation upon generation, the Nadakira ruled

from this central location. A high culture developed. Second Republic and contemporary archeological digs have revealed advanced tools, art, body armor and a town (Hekashaso). The political and cultural unity forged by the Nadakira expressed itself in the codification of Ukari legends, histories and laws into the *Noddavitya*. Banjak, the Ukari religion, solidified. Originating on Obun, the pantheistic religion, with its pagan gods and beliefs, readily adapted to Kordeth's soil. Among the Ukari, no separation between science, religion, and philosophy existed. Banjak was all three — a primal belief system that remained intact even after the human conquest, a testimony to its adaptability and power.

The Ukari gradually spread southward, where the planet's surface became uninhabitable. Volcanic sulfur clouds made the air unbreathable, and the wind patterns scattered these poisonous clouds across Kordeth's surface. Beneath the planet, subterranean rivers carved intricate caverns and cave networks. The surface of Kordeth had once been hospitable, but extreme volcanic activity produced a heavy cloud cover that heated the world, forcing much of the terrestrial life underground. Only in the extreme north and south of the world did the clouds break, where mountain ranges formed barriers against the clouds and winds.

A new world awaited the invading Ukari beneath Kordeth's surface. Here were fish-like *valpas*, mammalian *votun* (resembling great blind earth beavers) and strange plant and fungus life, suitably adapted for a lightless existence. Most Ukari descended into the caves, and soon the greater portion of the race explored the world's interior, while the Nadakira ruled from his palace on the surface. The geographic dispersal of the five large clans weakened political unity, although cultural unity, with the idea of the clans owing allegiance to the First Shaman-Emperor, remained. The burrowing Ukari next encountered the *Katari*, the subterranean indigenous people of Kordeth.

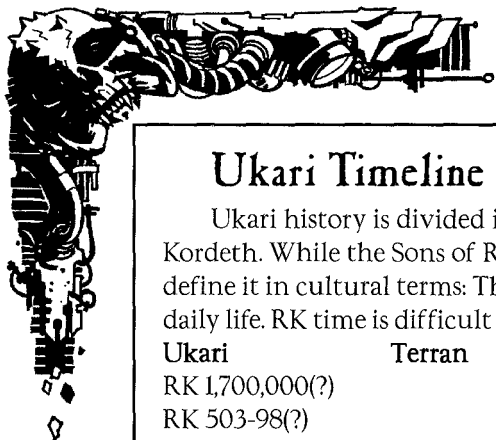
The Katari were a bipedal, blind, two fingered race. They made war on the invading Ukari, who named them *rivamog*, or "the ghost people."

A clannish race, possessing only primitive weapons, the Katari were few in number. These savage underground wars pushed the Ukari back into barbarism, and they retaliated with complete annihilation of the planet's indigenous population. Taking earlier Katari settlements, they built upon them, producing the mixed architecture called *urkat* — noted for its oval shapes and connecting passages. Some peaceful contacts were also made, for the Katari taught the Ukari the shaping of *galisp* to create organic cities (see below).

City-States and Empires

Some clans pushed ever southward and founded the city-states of Vis and Corpollo on the planet's surface near the southern pole (AD 100). Vis and Corpollo were founded by the hermaphroditic twins, Dwata and Stwata,





Ukari Timeline

Ukari history is divided into *Rov Kadani* (RK), the "God Era," and *Dar Kadani*, the time after the Removal to Kordeth. While the Sons of Rillos remained connected with the Ukari for almost 900 years after DK 1, the Ukari define it in cultural terms: The great war was over and the gods were gradually removing themselves from Ukari daily life. RK time is difficult to date and remains conjecture.

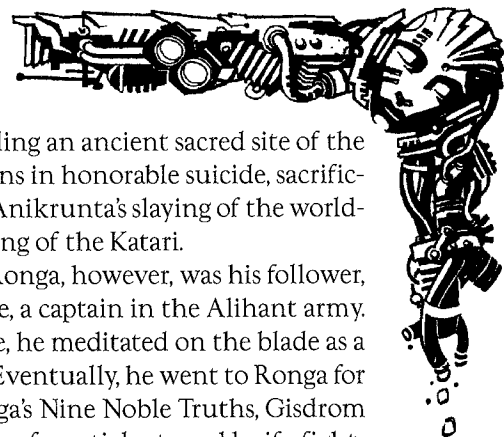
Ukari	Terran	Event
RK 1,700,000(?)		The Obun-Ukari race drink the waters of life
RK 503-98(?)		Mythological War with Obun
RK 98-92		Removal of Ukari to Kordeth
DK 1	840-830 BC	Palace of the Nadakira completed on Mount Shadderik
DK 100	730 BC	The <i>Noddavitya</i> compiled by the shaman-bards of Hakar. This work was meant to preserve Ukari origins and wars on Obun before the knowledge grew old and helped define aspects of the Banjak religion.
DK 600-1000	230 BC-AD 330	Katari Wars; Ukari spread from north into Kordeth's interior
DK 868	AD 98	Ukari state that this was the last visit by the Sons of Rillos
DK 870	AD 100	City-states of Vis and Corpello founded near South Pole
DK 1270-1300	AD 500-30	Rise of Ostiri Empire in the south and the Antazac Alliance in north
DK 1373	AD 603	Omactin Empire conquers Antazac Alliance in north; first verified date in Ukari history
DK 1870-1970	AD 1100-1200	Fall of Ostiri Empire to barbarian clans; independent kingdoms carved out
DK 1970-2500	AD 1200-1700	Time of the petty aristocrats; around 2440-80 both Ronga and Gisdrum teach, reforming aspects of Banjak into Fidwontha and martial studies, respectively.
DK 2558-2578	AD 1788-1808	Rebellion against petty kings creates Usturak, the United Clan Nation, and allies in south. Aristocracy slain, clans reassert rights
DK 2656-2662	AD 1886-1892	Tuval, the dictator of Omactin, attacks the south. Great War wherein the clan-nations of the south, utilizing higher technology, defeat Omactin, slay the aristocracy and create a world under Usturak's hegemony
DK 2562	AD 2258	Successful moon colony on Dyand completed
DK 2920	AD 2360	Aylon colonized
DK 2930	AD 2370	Ustar colonized
DK 3054-3083	AD 2477-2506	Usturak Civil War; many colonists forced to return home
DK 3765-3815	AD 2995-3045	Ukar-Human War; in 3772, the human fleet surrounds Kordeth, but fighting continues on Aylon and Istakhr
DK 4951	4081	Ustar closes jumpgate
DK 5252	AD 4481	Merchant League assumes majority control over Kordeth; al-Malik retain some fiefs
DK 5653-5681	AD 4883-4911	Dyn'dran teaches, creating the Parliament of Speakers, but is ultimately slain
DK 5758-5763	AD 4988-4992	Aylon Uprising during the Emperor Wars

respectively. Yet the legends state that the people were not altogether happy with the twins' genders. After consulting the priests, the twins decided to choose their sexes. Dwata chose to become male, while Stwata female, and they produced a daughter, Nidunn, who briefly united the cities. Although the tale is cloaked in legend, the xenologist Gilapslee believes that this represented a cultural shift away from the Obun homeworld acceptance of hermaphrodites and a many-faceted sexual nature to more strictly defined male and female roles.

The cities of Vis and Corpello are interesting because they represented the last hint of Obun influence in Ukari history — the love of philosophy for its own sake. Here astrology expanded and technology grew. Ur-based science created the foundation for the high culture. However,

both cities fell to the rising Ostiri Empire, a confederation of powerful southern subterranean clans. In the northern hemisphere, the small clans fell to the Antazac Alliance (c. AD 500). Nadakira Kodo called upon the northern subterranean clans, the Omactin, to ally with his own clan to defeat the Antazac. In a series of wars, the Omactin captured the Antazac capitol of Mwern and then placed a guard about the Nadakira, in effect making him a prisoner. Kodo wed into Clan Omactin, and the Nadakiras were henceforth the captured pawns of Clan Omactin chiefs for the next thousand years.

The most important contributions both empires gave to Ukari culture were universal education in the pictogramic language and the legal codes instituting proper representation before courts despite clan status.



The Ostiri Empire produced the An-Tolmek, or First Speakers, elected by the clans as the heads of the empire. Both empires were largely autonomous of each other, although the Ostiri recognized the primacy of the Nadakira in religious rites. After 500 years, however, the Ostiri Empire fell into factions, and the wild clans beyond the borders made their move. Ostiri fell to the barbarian clans after a series of wars lasting a century. The new warlords carved out aristocratic kingdoms.

A remnant of the old empire, the city-states of Nlin and Vis, held on longer than the new kingdoms in the southern polar region. From Vis and Nlin, commerce developed, along with the beginnings of proto-capitalism, advanced mining and a general revival in technology. However, the rest of the world fell into a dark age.

Aristocracy and Religion

Numerous states dotted the southern hemisphere. Petty kings ruled and noble armies battled each other over dynastic and economic issues. The majority of the population, stripped of weapons and their former clan status, fell into an age of pessimism. Clans could no longer tattoo themselves, a right reserved for the new aristocracy, nor could they bear weapons. When the aristocrats fell into decadence, social power fell to the priests and bureaucrats. While advanced exploration and exploitation of the planet's interior continued, the wealth was soon spent by bankrupt nobles. The pessimism of the clans, forced to endure the aristocratic yoke, shaped cultural life. Religious trends attempted to meet the people's needs by simplifying Banjak rites and making the spirits more accessible to the population. Into this age was born Tathdun Maj Tandir, known as the great religious reformer Ronga (1622-1702).

Ronga was born into a clan that retained minor status as legal interpreters under the Dwestrondt monarchy. As a youth he entered the priesthood in the service of Dzwornga, goddess of wisdom. Believing that a path existed beyond the deities, Tathdun went into a deep cave to meditate. For three months, he contemplated the void, and then beheld the *Kadantan*, "the Bridge to Darkness."

It seemed to Tathdun that the darkness of the cave was not complete — and that dim shadows mocked him. In the recesses of the cavern, a path led to True Darkness. Following it, he beheld Light in the midst of Darkness and discovered the *Fidwontha*, "The Path Beyond the Gods." This path led beyond the changing energies that compose the gods to the source of all things beyond the Nine Universes of continual suffering, rebirth and law. Tathdun finally emerged from the ultimate darkness as Ronga, "The Overcome," and began preaching his vision. Followers gradually developed, and he taught them techniques to discover the path. The straightforwardness of his dialogues and unencumbered theology appealed to a people weary of pessimism. Ronga, in his old age, claimed he heard the dying whispers of the Katari urging the planet to destroy

the invading Ukari. Finding an ancient sacred site of the Katari, he opened his veins in honorable suicide, sacrificing himself to atone for Anikrunta's slaying of the world-spirit and the Ukari slaying of the Katari.

More famous than Ronga, however, was his follower, Gisdrom of the Jewel Eye, a captain in the Alihant army. Not content with his life, he meditated on the blade as a source of divine might. Eventually, he went to Ronga for guidance. Learning Ronga's Nine Noble Truths, Gisdrom applied these to the fields of martial arts and knife-fighting. When someone asked him what he had paid his master for the knowledge he received, Gisdrom plucked his right eye out. He founded *Kraxi*, the Path of the Blade, and *Jox Kai Von*, a weaponless martial art. Jox Kai Von had its origins in the polar tribes, and Gisdrom combined several fighting techniques into one. Originally meant to train the body, soul and mind, it largely degenerated into a blood sport.

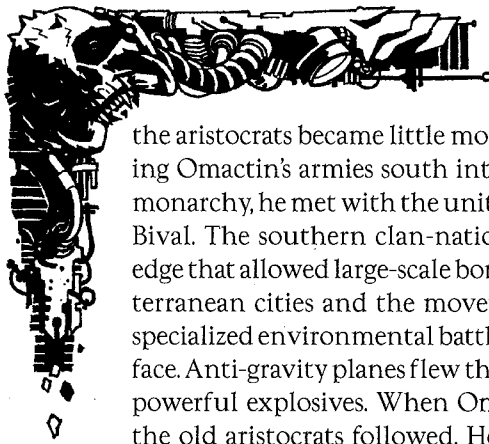
Gisdrom replaced his right eye with a red jewel, some say of Anunnaki craft, which possessed miraculous powers. Due to Gisdrom's militant approach and interpretation of Ronga's sayings, his teachings were accepted by far more of the Ukari, although Gisdrom ever called Ronga his Master. *Kraxi* was a focused art encompassing in one aspect the many-faceted meanings of *Fidwontha*. Gisdrom established temples for his teachings, where his priests were permitted by the aristocrats to practice with knives. Both Ronga's *Fidwontha* and Gisdrom's *Kraxi* were refinements in Banjak thought, not a complete break with the ancient Ukari religion.

Rebellion and Unification

In AD1788, the bureaucracy rebelled when King Solta of Dwestdront issued his new laws stripping the old clans of the right to legal redress for wrongs. The aristocratic servants (many from the clan class), hardened by the multitude of tasks enforced on them, rose up. The king called on his knights, while the rebellion called on the clans to reassert themselves. Pouring forth from the *Kraxi* monasteries came hardened sword warriors and martial artists. The rebels, united with Gisdrom's followers, won, slaying the king and calling forth an assembly of clans. In neighboring kingdoms, the clans rose, and within 20 years, the southern aristocrats were overthrown and slain. From the debris of the old kingdoms rose the mighty clan-nations of Usturak and Bikal. An expansionist age of commerce began, and thought and invention developed. Already the cities of Vis and Nlin had developed steam- and gasoline-powered engines, and when they voluntarily entered the Usturak clan-nation, the materials were ready for a technical age.

Ironically, the aristocrats of Omactin to the north were saved for a time by a political party arising from the people, called *Bont*, or duty, which looked to overthrow the decadence of the courts by virtuous living and hardened discipline. When the Bont leader, Tival, took power,





the aristocrats became little more than his puppets. Moving Omactin's armies south into Bikal to reestablish the monarchy, he met with the united armies of Usturak and Bival. The southern clan-nations possessed a technical edge that allowed large-scale bombing, the mining of subterranean cities and the movement of armies (wearing specialized environmental battle gear) on the planet's surface. Anti-gravity planes flew through the skies, dropping powerful explosives. When Omactin fell, a slaughter of the old aristocrats followed. Here, too, the old clans regained power in client-nations. Only the Nadakira remained, the high priest-emperor of tradition; below him, all clans were now equal to rise and fall as they may.

Space

Darmak oj Malak united the smaller clan-nations under Usturak's banner and became the first "Great Warlord" of the race. Under Usturak's economic and military might, the other clan-nations fell into secondary status, and space exploration began. Two Ukari, Talverion na Linok and Wisira va Kaldek, unlocked the secrets of space-travel, both claiming that they were aided by their dreams. Anunnaki technology, uncovered or revealed in mythical code language, unlocked the secret of fusion-powered flight — although fossil fuel and solar-powered spaceships were also constructed.

By 2258, manned ships colonized the moon of Dyand. The smaller clans, muscled out of political power, encouraged space exploration as a means of expansion and off-world opportunity. This was actively promoted by the centralized leadership, and early colonization was largely an effort of the smaller clans. Colonies were swiftly set up on Aylon (2360) and Ustar (2376); the later world became the major colony of Ukari. Explorers probed further, and a small colony even set up on Istakhr (2405-2480). In 2477, the colonization halted as Usturak fell into a savage civil war.

In need of troops (and worried that the off-world clans would rebel), the clan-chiefs called their people home. The small colonies on Istakhr and Aylon were mostly evacuated, leaving only a few minor clan remnants who refused the call to return home. These colonists burrowed deep into their worlds, emerging later during the Ukari Reconquest. Although the civil war ground to an eventual halt, further colonization and deep space exploration subsided. The winning clan leaders feared that off-world expansion would lead to another disintegration of central power and a weakening of clan ties. In addition, Banjak priests warned against the new worlds, uttering fearful omens and claiming that these planets' world-spirits had yet to be tamed.

All this changed under the leadership of Thodun Sharakta oj Malak (2910-2989). Thodun was the most powerful Ukari ruler yet and managed the other clans with subtle diplomatic skill. Beginning huge public works, he was confident of his power. He revived the space program

and sent ships on exploratory missions. When his scouts returned from Aylon and Istakhr, they reported that their old worlds had been colonized by a new but seemingly underpopulated race called "thumin" or "thumini." A few human captives gave Thodun their jump routes. Lesser clans, claiming Aylon and Istakhr were their rightful territories, urged war. And finally, seven Istakhr Ukari, emerging from their deep labyrinths, stole a human ship and made for Kordeth, to warn their brethren that a militant race was colonizing Ukari Worlds. Treated as heroes, the Istakhr Seven shared their knowledge of humanity with the ruling clans.

After long deliberation, it was decided that peaceful contact was out of the question. Already, human probes had fired on Ukari scout ships. The Ukari fired back, taking captives. The humans started the war! War fever, drummed by Thodun's propagandists, seized the race. Their duty, given them by the gods, was to conquer. Thodun used the threat of the humans to cement his leadership among the clans. Tales of a warrior race on the fringes of known space filtered back to the human colonized worlds, but were dismissed as rumors designed to hide economic riches on new frontier worlds. Thodun prepared his starfleets for war, yet he died before war came; his son, Rajan oj Malak, succeeded him.

The Ukar-Human War

Taking the ancient title of *oj Rillos*, "Great Warlord," Rajan struck at an unprepared humanity, capturing Istakhr and Criticorum in a surprise strike. Two months later, the thin human defenses of Aylon fell when subterranean Ukari, supporting their space brethren, sabotaged human installations. Ukari ships expanded their raids to Pyre and New Istanbul (Byzantium Secundus) and Ukari guerrillas used their psychic abilities to cause an uprising of the Shantor on Shaprut.

Their initial fortune was great. The riches of Criticorum, Istakhr and Aylon added to their united clan fleet. Ukari troops defeated the humans in every major land battle and Ukari governors ruled over human populations. Aylon and Istakhr Ukari, long in hiding, emerged in power before a startled humanity. These lesser clans found themselves overlords of captive populations. Among such population on Criticorum were some Obun, and the Ukari believed that the long-awaited liberation of their homeworld was at hand. They were surprised at the change in their cousins and believed they had grown decadent and introspective, following their lying, whispering gods.

The Ukari built the Temple of Anikrunta on Criticorum, where trespassers against the martial law perished in grueling sacrifices. This factor fueled the Universal Church's warnings that the Ukari were a race of demon-worshipping sentients, and Patriarch Palamedes stated that they were far removed from the Pancreator's Light (The Doctrine of the Unethical Alien). Reports came back



to the Ukari of a human figure named Zebulon, whose church was offering resistance. At first, the Ukari supposed Zebulon to be the human Nadakira, or priest-emperor; only later did they discover that his church leadership had passed to Palamedes.

Palamedes Alecto, first Patriarch of the Universal Church of the Celestial Sun, became the beacon around which a fragmented and frightened humanity rallied. With the aid of several noble houses, corporate fleets and self-styled democratic militias, he launched the counter-attack on Criticorum. The conflict was costly and it bogged down into a vicious stalemate at the siege of Acheon. Then, from an undisclosed source, Palamedes discovered the coordinates to the Ukari homeworld's jumpgate. A huge human armada soon swept through the gate. Malak hastily assembled an Ukari clan-fleet, forming a phalanx about the besieged planet, but panic set in. The secondary clans, seeing their chance, began a war of independence, each clan-chief naming himself Warlord, and their clan-fleets followed the revolting clans, some going over to the human side.

For two years, Malak held on, suppressing the rebellion until heavy bombardments of his surface capital persuaded him to surrender. He did so in the hope that the humans would soon leave. The subterranean rebellious Ukari would then assume power and continue the war. They did not. Rajan's loyal clans were overthrown, replaced by rebel clans allied with the humans. Nadakira

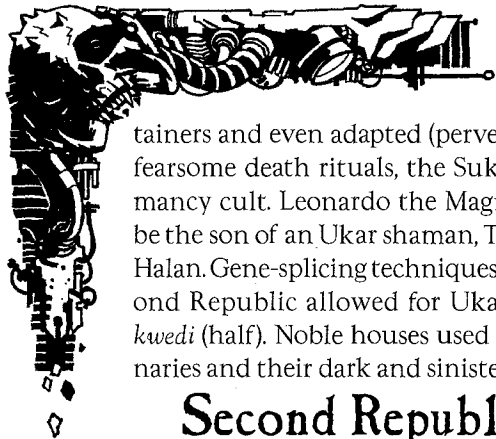
Tavo, Rajan's cousin, saw his clan fall to secondary importance, and he used his influence to save the closely allied Clan Morwek from being outlawed.

The human fleet continued the siege for decades while the Ukari set up a clan-council to the liking of a Church-led humanity. Rajan was taken captive by the humans, but finally released, thus stripped of power (2996). Four years later, he was slain in an unsuccessful rebellion. The humans did not leave, but were there to stay.

It is said that Rajan's Ialtach, his shadow come to life, continued the rebellion long after Rajan died (3000-3031). It finally withdrew into the Cave of Sorrows. Supposedly, Rajan's shade remains there to this day, a distant whisper, answering questions of prophecy.

The other worlds continued to resist; the human fear of the Ukari comes largely from the bloody 50-year battle to retake Aylon, which gave the Ukari some negotiation power in their eventual surrender. Ustar remained Ukari, although like Kordeth, it was controlled by humans. Reservations were set up on Aylon; many came from Kordeth in a forced relocation, mainly from clans allied with Darmak. The poorer clan-nations thought that they would now rule, but the rebelling clans, (mainly from Usturak), sent many of them to Aylon.

An age of pessimism followed on the Ukari worlds. Many believed that the Banjak priests' earlier dire omens about space travel had come true. Some Ukari dispersed into human space. The Li Halan hired some as armed re-



tainers and even adapted (perverted, say the Ukari) their fearsome death rituals, the Sukara Manja, into a necromancy cult. Leonardo the Magnificent was rumored to be the son of an Ukar shaman, Thontis, and Cassandra Li Halan. Gene-splicing techniques invented during the Second Republic allowed for Ukar-human offspring, the *kwedi* (half). Noble houses used Ukari warriors as mercenaries and their dark and sinister reputation spread.

Second Republic

When the Second Republic dawned, no Ukar representative sat in the senate on Byzantium Secundus. Human governors ruled Kordeth and Ustar and corporate representatives sat on the Governor's Council. The Allied Clans (the rebels who sided with the humans) had members on the council to represent Ukari affairs.

The council dictated corporate legal claims on Ukari land and subterranean mineral rights. When the holy Mount Tenikiklun was "leased" for mineral rights, the Ukari revolted (3550). Under the leadership of Sadra-Syn of Clan Morwek, the Ukari seized the mountain by holding corporate airstrips and taking the governor hostage. Republican troops and Allied Clans fought a war with the rebels, which continued until the capture of Sadra-Syn. Her message reached some sympathetic ears in the corridors of power, with the result that sections of the mountain were declared off-limits as a "cultural resource," and mining was confined to the foothills. The Republic created the Ukar Department (UD) to represent Ukari affairs.

In 3601, the Second Republic, through UD, extended a whole program of benefits and economic aid to clans willing to submit to human-style incorporation under government sponsored "clan-councils." These councils, hand-picked by UD, did not democratically represent the voice of the Ukari; they were quislings for the few rich Ukari clans and corporate interests. Large amounts of surface land and certain subterranean portions of Ukar became forcibly leased at low costs to the corporations. In 3664, terraforming of Ukar began on a large scale; in a century, open-air cities dotted the planet. The technology that upheld the terraforming did not deteriorate until 4400, when the surface cities were converted to domed citadels to protect against the elements.

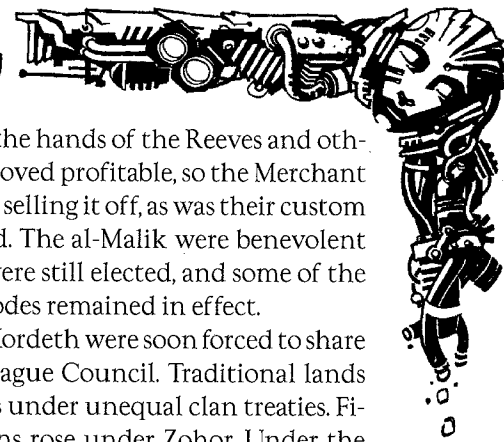
The Ukari eventually petitioned the Republic for greater representation in internal matters. This was gradually implemented; in 3698, the Ukari were able to elect one of their own as governor. Schooling, religion, education and "open-worship areas" fell back into Ukari hands. With the election of the Ukar governor Jez te-Zas, Ukari culture, enduring 700 years of cultural pessimism, suddenly underwent a renaissance. In particular, the figure of Aedwir na Nolent stands out. Being a cultivated member of one of the human-picked ruling clans, he lived on Byzantium Secundus where he wrote *Apada* (3716), a fictional account of an off-world Ukar returning for the burial of his grandfather on an Aylon reservation. The book became a sensa-

tion in cultivated Republican circles. His next work, *Thumon*, was nothing less than the poetic and religious history of the Ukari since the exile to Kordeth. Written in the ancient language of the *Noddavitya*, it is considered by the Ukari to be a second holy book.

During the later years of the Second Republic, the intelligentsia and entertainment industry "discovered" the Ukari (and their cousins, the Obun). Ukari traditional *wovgla*, or "wov," music began seeping into mass culture as Tepe Shen-Vho and Emperor Dax made a transitional form of *wovgla* famous in Ukari ghettos throughout Republic space (3820-60). Rau Ramiriz's holobook *Talks With an Ukar Taudwon on Wisdom: The Proverbs of Vaun J'vun*, proposed to be an account of a young anthropologist's spiritual journey with the wise Ukar shaman, Vaun J'vun; although no one but Ramiriz could find this Aylon Ukar priest, whose mystical teachings stretched out through six sequels, enriching the author. A generation of disenchanted youth devoured the works, despite the warnings of professional xenologists. Wisdom seekers trekked to remote Aylon reservations, where many ended up robbed or taken in by obvious charlatans. Yet the society of the 3870's was ready for the Ukari, as a combination of wov music and watered-down Ukari spiritualism mingled with the tough stance taken by Ukari separatists, creating a ready-made alternative for the disenchantment many felt with the high-tech, corruptive political universe the Republic was becoming.

The fast-paced entertainment corporations, ever on the outlook for changing consumer demand, suddenly sought out the Ukari. From the dignified Nobungunda play, *The Tragedy of Shinistraku*, which incorporated elements of human theater mixed with traditional Ukari ceremonial performance, the trend descended intellectually downward to the "buddy-cop" holovision shows. These plots usually revolved around a human law enforcement officer and his younger, street-smart and urban-savvy Ukar sidekick who knew just enough ancient mysticism to keep the wise proverbs flowing. *Bosco & Shrike* was the most popular of these vehicles, and it set the formula for all that followed. In none of the shows was the Ukar the leading role; apparently, the public was uncomfortable with a strong Ukar lead.

What effect all this attention had on Ukar culture can be gleaned by economic studies of Ukar and Ukari-dwelling zones. Tourism went up in these areas, with sales of native weapons, artifacts and jewelry in demand. "The Primitive Aesthetic" (3870-87) swept architectural design, psychology, historical studies, poetry and mass-culture, and wov music gave birth to Ursynth, which incorporated Ukari music but moved to a faster rhythm, becoming the dominant popular music for the next century. More important to the Ukari during this period was the progressive social legislation, which saw the gradual winning of hard-won rights for the Ukari in self-government and limited representation in the senate (the Ukar Repatriation Act of 3910).



The social legislation and protests urged by Fightin' Fao-dwa Ostigwa and other Ukari union leaders produced mass strikes that threatened to cripple whole sections of the interlocking Republican economy. Sympathy for the Ukari caused government negotiators to give the strikers more representation. Ukari political victories rose on the twin fears of economic boycotts and a consciousness-raising of the public. By the late Republican era, the Ukari were represented at the highest levels of the government and had entered the armed forces in segregated units under their own commanders.

This representation produced a great (if latent) loyalty to the Republic just as decline set in. When the Republic waned, its leaders relied more on Ukari troops and capital, cementing the alliance. Republican enemies in the reemerging noble houses accused the government of using Ukari "mercenaries" to enforce its will, and the Church publicly grumbled about "demon-worship in the armed forces, encouraged by the highest levels of government" (Archbishop Pao of Vera Cruz). Yet when the rebel worlds struck, it was the Ukari units that proved to be the best fighters against them. When the 10 noble families attacked Byzantium Secundus, thus toppling the seat of Republican power, the "Fighting 24th," an elite Ukari unit, resisted after the Presidential Guard was decimated, and almost turned the day for the battered Republican forces. There is a legend on Kordeth that the son of the last president was spirited away by an Ukar soldier to a hidden world, where one day his descendent will return and establish the Third Republic.

New Dark Ages

The planet of Ustar, led by an Ukari governor, feared a return of human rule with the fall of the Republic. He initiated an Ukari uprising that slew the small al-Malik garrison and closed the jumpgate to that world (4081), isolating half of the total Ukari population.

The Ukari and Republican units of the Known Worlds fell back to Kordeth, Aylon and Criticorum. For years, they tried to carry on the tradition of the Second Republic — even under the noses of al-Malik nobles — declaring Criticorum the new capitol world. The corporations that owned land on Kordeth underwent a slow, rocky disintegration. When the al-Malik later fell into a period of decline, the myth of the Republic died. Kordeth remained under al-Malik protection, but from the pyre of the Second Republic corporate powers, the Merchant League emerged. No combination of noble-priestly power could destroy the guilds, the only keepers of the fading ways of the Second Republic amid the darkening stars.

During the period of al-Malik decline (4100-4460), the family ran into a major problem paying their debts to the League. To divest themselves of this debt, they eventually reached a deal and signed most of Kordeth to the Merchant League (4414). The al-Malik maintained numerous fiefs on Kordeth, but most money-making operations

(mining, etc.) went into the hands of the Reeves and others. The planet's riches proved profitable, so the Merchant League kept it instead of selling it off, as was their custom with most acquired land. The al-Malik were benevolent rulers, Ukar governors were still elected, and some of the Second Republic legal codes remained in effect.

Ukari governors of Kordeth were soon forced to share their power with the League Council. Traditional lands were taken by the guilds under unequal clan treaties. Finally, many landless clans rose under Zohor. Under the banner of "Ancestral Lands," his armies defeated the mercenary League armies and Allied Clans during the Seven Battles (4468-4474).

Zohor did not want power, only the implementation of the promises the Allied Clan leaders had made. When the Ukar governor Torbaz did not carry out the promised reforms, Zohor insulted his clan in strong terms. Torbaz could not let a challenge to his clan pass unavenged. Setting a trap for Zohor, his troops ambushed the great Ukari freedom fighter. The slaying of Zohor did not help Torbaz, as the League abolished the office of Ukar governor (4481), placing only hand-picked Ukari chiefs to represent the people.

Ukari on Aylon became mercenaries after the al-Malik seized the world, forming large contingents in their armies. Tahir Majnun al-Malik the Doomed (4530-4593) surrounded himself with Ukari soldiery. Despite a large Ukari army, he lost his throne, but his successors continued to recruit Ukari divisions from Aylon, Istakhr and Kordeth. The duke's bodyguard in Samarkand are hand-picked Ukari, and the reputation of the Fifth Dark Legion, the Ukari al-Malik army, is legendary.

Some resisted human control. The outlawed clans, dwelling far below the surface of Kordeth, formed the Ukari Traditionalists, who did works of sabotage against the Allied Clans and their guild allies. Banjak priests, performing religious-warrior services, became a political faction that the human-allied Ukari didn't control. The third form of resistance came from educated, off-world Ukari, who often lived in alien slums on human worlds and who created the terrorist organization *Bava!* or "Brotherhood!"

Rarely did these factions cooperate, despite their common interests. The Traditionalists believed *Bava!* lacked any clan-identity, being composed mainly of off-world Ukari, whose philosophy was overly influenced by human culture. *Bava!* believed the Traditionalists were against progress of any kind — being superstitious, untrusting "deeper" who needed revolutionary guidance.

"Although it has been said that there are no Obun anymore," wrote the Ukari poet Bewo, "there are still Ukari. If you go deep, like going through layers of our history, you will find them far under the earth." After Dyn'dran Oed Nata's death at the hands of regency agents (see below), the Traditionalists, *Bava!* and some remote Kraxi monasteries united into the Ukari Freedom Movement (4912).



Recent History

In 4883, the great Aylon Ukari warrior Dyn'dran Oed Nata beheld a vision and forsook the ways of war, leaving the al-Malik army. By seeking and meditating on war unceasing, he was overcome with peace, a holy path (*Tauntlasta*) known to only six Ukari in the race's entire history. The metamorphoses of their greatest killers to the Path of Peace is a process little understood by the Ukari themselves; some believe it is the final defeat of the psychic Urge. Standing before the Allied Clan Council on Ukar in 4886, Dyn'dran spoke the Prophecies of Dyn'dran, which foretold that the universe would begin to rebel against humanity's ceaseless rape of the worlds (the Symbiot War) and that an Emperor would soon rule the Known Worlds. He then left Kordeth for other worlds, preaching unity among all sentient creatures.

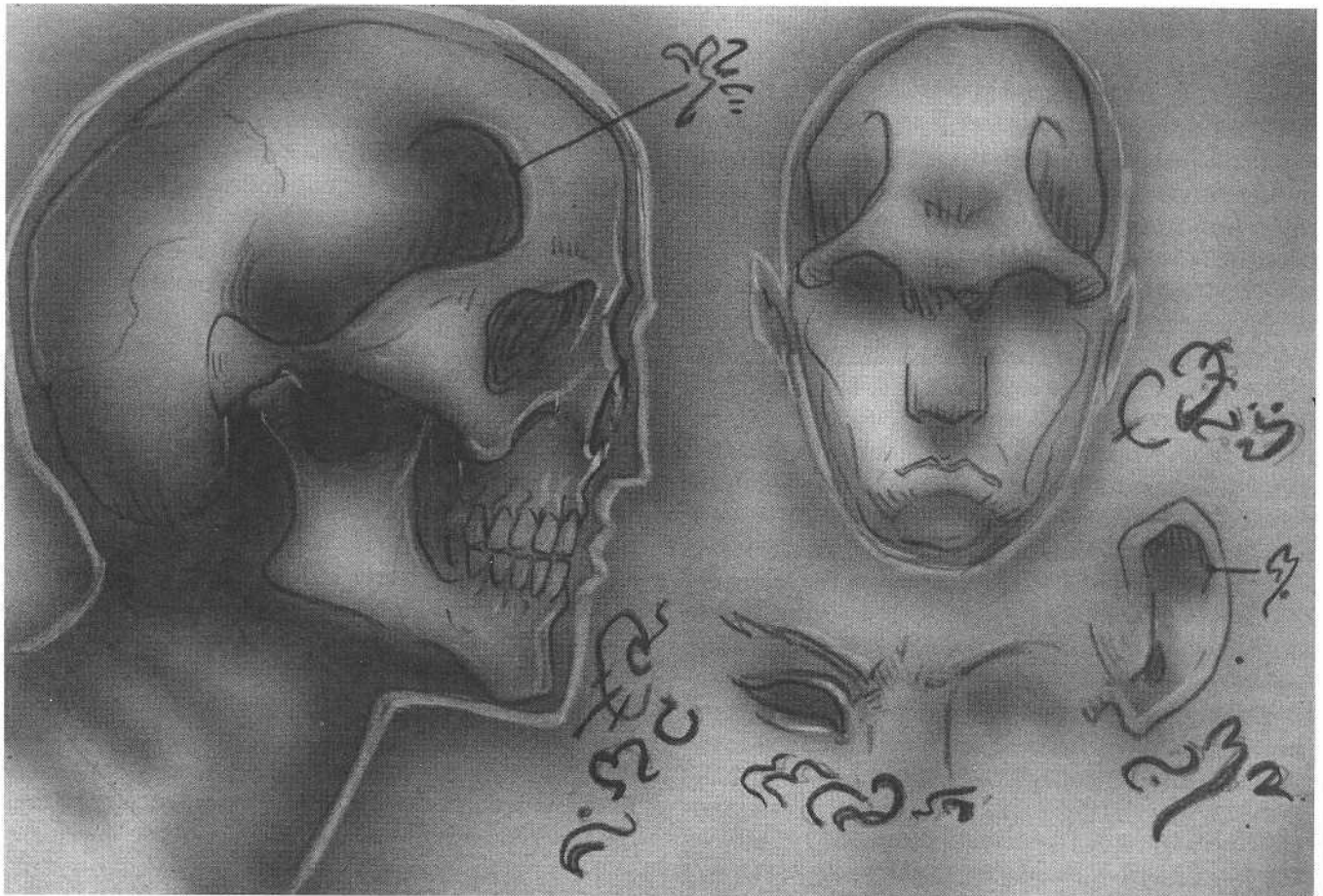
Befriended by the Obun Virta Han Loaj (who taught him Obun philosophy), he encountered the Children of Shurstrat, an Obun-Ukari revolutionary group who desired to lift both races to a primal unity. These meetings became the material for folklore. The seeds for this group began with some Obuns' desire to return to the "pure" paganism of their ancestors, before the gods divided the race. Dyn'dran listened intently to them.

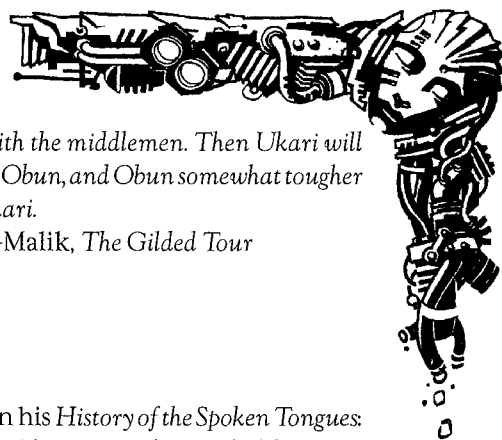
Dyn'dran next created the Parliament of Speakers on Criticorum, consisting of representatives of the Obun,

Ukari, Oro'ym, Vorox, Shantor, Gannok, Hironem, Etyri and humanity (represented by Father Bendoc, a Hesychast monk). This parliament, revolutionary in scope, sought to redress ancient wrongs and begin the process of universal cooperation. Dyn'dran's message of universal peace went so far beyond his Ukari brethren that they could only listen in disbelief, trying to grasp his holy words. The local al-Malik nominally supported the parliament, although the local ruling branch, under regency-Church pressure, eventually shut it down.

The regent authorities, fearing that the strange Ukar was in league with the Symbiots, placed a price on the peacemaker's head. In truth, the holy Ukar never encountered the Symbiots, but he did resurrect the ancient Ukari idea of a universal tree connecting all things, and he spread this in his teachings. He was finally slain by regency agents (4911). So ended the life of the most holy peacemaker the Ukari had ever known. His name is revered by all Ukari.

During the Emperor Wars, the al-Malik and League relied on Ukari armies. When Carmetha Decados took the Stigmata Garrison to attack the al-Malik worlds, it was the Fifth Dark Legion that defeated them on Criticorum. The al-Malik later covered this up, saying that the Ukari merely aided Duke Hakim's own Second Army. Decados intelligence, seeing how much Alexis's allies relied on Ukari manpower, sent spies to stir up rebellions on Kordeth and Aylon. Arming the Ukari Freedom Movement (UFM) on





Kordeth, they caused some damage to League operations, although by 4990, the major areas of League activity were under the control of Allied Clan (AC) units.

They met with greater success on Aylon by stirring up the ancient clans against the al-Malik's allies on the Reservation Council. Seizing the council, the Old Traditionalists marched their armies off the reservations, defeating pro-al-Malik and al-Malik forces. At their height, the armies of the OT controlled a third of Aylon.

A Decados agent, Count Rurik Dmitri Decados, rose in the rebellion's ranks. Starting the war as the head of Jakovian Operations on Aylon, the young count soon grew to love the Ukari people, and pledged his life for their freedom. Maintaining unity among the quarrelsome clans, he led them to seven victories before losing at Sunval (4991). Within a year, returning Ukari space legions and al-Malik broke the power of the rebels, and Rurik was believed slain by pro-al-Malik Ukari (4992). The al-Malik were generous in victory and surprisingly did not seek the brutal retaliation that the rebels feared. A few of their demands were met, but reservation control was returned to the pro-al-Malik factions.

Since the Wars, two strange rumors persist. The UFM and AC claim that there is an Ukari-Obun rebel alliance, operating out of a hidden base or world, seeking to unite the races to their ancient unity and drive off the humans. Tantalizing proof of the Children of Shurstrat remains evasive. The second rumor involves the Nadakira; rumors claim that Emperor Alexius has consulted with the Nadakira on more than a few occasions, and Traditionalists hope that the Emperor will return the Nadakira's power.

Physiology

Generally thinner and taller than humans, at first glance, Ukari resemble their Obun cousins. But the closer we look, the more we see certain marked differences; all Ukari possess black or brown eyes; and those from the subterranean depths of Kordeth and Aylon are extremely pale, while those who live beneath the suns are lightly tanned; and Ukari hair is usually white or blonde — very few possess black hair. Despite the differences between “upper” and “lower” Ukari (tlinukar and kadukar), and “reservation” and Kordeth Ukari, their basic similarities draw them together.

The Obun possess far more racial diversity than the Ukari. The Ukari tactile sense, however, is better than that of humans and Obun, which is a fact they are proud of; they find their way in the dark with ease. Their natural skills produce excellent thieves, technicians, assassins, builders, miners, navigators, guides, crypt-keepers and spies.

They boast that they have become the shadows of the humans, much as the humans cast the Obun as their lighter spirit-guides; while certain humans wish to be Obun, they are Ukari in their hearts, and worse. Thus they hire the Ukari to do the things they would keep in the dark from their Obun conceptions of themselves. One day, an old taudwon told me, the Ukari and Obun

will wise up and do away with the middlemen. Then Ukari will become somewhat wiser, like Obun, and Obun somewhat tougher and more grounded, like Ukari.

— Asim Abbin'yat al-Malik, *The Gilded Tour*

Culture

Language

Jyrr Tolhardy wrote, in his *History of the Spoken Tongues*: “Uryari (Ukarish), the Ukari language, descended from an ancestral Ur-Uryari spoken on Obun, becoming Old Uryari when the Forced Relocation placed the Ukari on Kordeth. The sounds of Old Uryari retain aspects of the easily translatable, phonetic Obun alphabet, as is seen in the *Noddavitya*, a mutable work, evolving from Ur-Uryari to Old Uryari.” If Old Uryari was enriched by Obun and (some believe) Anunnaki tongues, Middle Uryari was forced to fall back on the limited resources of the splintering clans. This was the last tongue spoken by a united Ukari. Gradually (AD 600 on), the regions where the Ukari settled produced their own dialects and eventually, languages, but the Uryari of the Nadakira's Court and the remote city-states of the south pole could communicate and thus understand each other without too much trial.

Ostiri replaced Middle Uryari in the south, inheriting some revived adjectives, nouns and verbs from the polar region. Anzari in the north was a more conservative tongue. Within the remotest depths of the planet, Middle Uryari changed to Kari, with a consonant shift (l, r to d, b) and a heavily inflected syntax. Some call this the pure language, because it resisted change longer. Gradually, Ostiri united the many dialects of Uryari, and when Usturak united Kordeth, they renamed the (dominant) language Uryari, to promote cultural unity. Anzari fell out of use. When the Ukari lost to the humans, elements of Urthish and Obun languages returned to their dominant language, which became New Uryari. Consonants grew softer again, vowels longer, and new philosophical and technical words entered the language. Aylon Uryari, with its influx from many poorer clans, produced many Kari terms, and the Kari tongue survived there, far under the earth, changing slowly. Kordeth Uryari, after 4400, reverted to a slower tongue (Modern Uryari). Only in the remotest areas is Kari still spoken.

The written language, Bhakti, is composed of pictograms and ideograms. New concepts entered the written language from new metaphors, combining previous symbols to create new ones. Logograms were also created, which led to the beginnings of a written phonetic alphabet. This evolution accelerated after human conquest. Ukari phonetic language started with the efforts of the Ukari scholar Ceh-Owryd; Aedwir na Nolent later perfected it. The similarities between Bhakti symbols and Anunnaki inscriptions on Ukar and Obun are noticeable, but remain largely untranslated.



Ur-Uryari/Modern Uryari

Scholars and xenologists noted some common root words in both Obun and Ukari languages. Listed below are words taken from the *Noddavitya* and Modern Uryari.

Urthish	Ur-Uryari	Modern Uryari
Fire	gund	gunta
Sky	dwya	dwyen
Water	ba'ka	bathka
Spirit	ringa	rivga
Body	nor	noro
Army	morimk	norwegka
Bridge	taun	tana
Priest	taudwyan	taudwon
Universe	tlinta	tlasta
Gods	Dwyan	Dwontha
Star	t'lin	tlinto
Star people	T'linti	T'linto (Obun gods)
Dead	amnor	amog
Blood Oath	Ukar	Ukar
Family	relakeva	rolvoktha
Love	rela	ringa
War	nordatida	noddavitya
light	tlinto	tlin
dark	kada	kadan (Kadani, the gods)
Friend	sadaroun	sada
Leader	tli'ming	tolmek

Phrases

Some phrase translations of Modern Uryari (MU) to Urthish:

Gund dashedi myr tant = Fire rains on our enemies.

Bont tavi kormig rivga Sukara = Let our swords send their broken spirits to the judgment of Sukara.

Adim hemeni vodk-bathka, nomo dwi = I'll buy the human a drink if he will shut up.

Ti rolvoktha ia mwer? = What clan are you from?

Diya kadan ona tlin, tlin caddan kadan ekko = Those in the dark do not need the light, the light-workers ignore the dark to their sorrow.

Rivga moro gund, myr toda bahio = This place is full of burning spirits, we must pray for guidance here.

Ukari Kilo Bonta! = Ukari, slay with your swords! (Battle-cry)

A nami sylar Obun enri — tada nos swerppa rivga norivga pharan tabbir? Narivga bahktoi, ursa norivga sylari po, ban noro sylar sodun tapa-obuni or tlintana. Akolo bahktoim sylar emya, poro taka kadsylar. = The intricacies of Obun poetry are slightly ironic — please tell me how the spirit of the tree can give birth to the non-spirit of the reader? This cancels my existence and the poet's as well, meaning I did not read his meaningless poem full of rich ironies and clever philosophical meanings. My child wrote a poem like that once and I had to teach him true poetry. (A joke among Ukari when encountering Obun.)

Behavior

The clan is everything in Ukari culture: Individual identity stems from clan identity. Younger clan members show deference to the wisdom of their elders. Despite a written language, Ukari culture is largely oral, wherein the old are the holders of wisdom and proverbs. Young Ukari gain prestige through daring deeds that reflect well on clan values. Symbols of these deeds are carved on their bodies and arms in tattoo ceremonies, raising the skin so that the deeds can be read with a touch in the darkness.

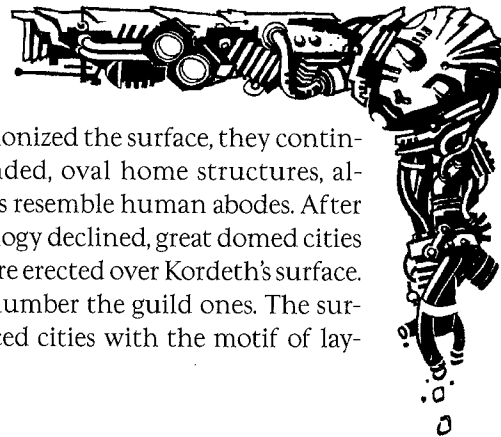
Poor clans remain proud and even outlawed clans possess status in Ukari eyes. It is only the *narolvoktha*, or clanless, who lose all respect in Ukari culture. A clanless Ukar can be adopted by a clan (as with the Obun, Ukari families are huge, sprawling unions) or become taudwon (a priest), the one social path open to them. If enough clanless hold together, they can petition the other clans to form their own clan, as the outcast Nvgi successfully did. The clans are constantly clashing: Beneath the earth pitched battles between AC (Allied Clan) and Traditionalists are fought, and clan grudges aren't easily forgotten. Even temporary allies can become enemies; the term Allied Clans is something of a misnomer.

Bravery and cleverness in battle are the highest virtues. Both sexes become warriors, although female Ukari

often retire to raise children. Oral recitation, memory and negotiation skills are highly praised. The need to keep their psychic Urges (Ialtach) in check produces close friendships, for friends are the first to warn an individual when the Urge is ripening. Friendship is powerful in Ukari culture, and comrades often adopt one another into each other's clans in blood ceremonies.

Generally, Ukari are allowed a youth lover and, later, a life-mate. Sexual preferences among them are not rigid. Often in youth, close comrades are of the same sex, but when youth ends, the time to accept responsibility comes, which means choosing a life-mate of the opposite sex and raising a family. Essentially, the terms for a comrade-in-arms and a lover of the same sex (*rinsada*) are the same. In this, they are close to the Obun; human attitudes toward sex confuse them. Ukari mate for life, but some show little problem in taking non-Ukari lovers.

Women and men rise to the same status. Traditionally, males were the cultural warrior heroes while many taudwon were women who interpreted cultural law, but there is an acceptance of both sexes' necessary and equal role in society. Human hegemony somewhat displaced this, but it is resisted by the Traditionalists. Ukari couples begin transmitting their culture to their newborns with the ceremonial, first birth-carvings. Certain clan carvings and raised tattoos, relating clan history, are given as the



youth enters maturity; after maturity, the tattoos boast of the Ukar's individual deeds.

Ukari society is necessarily rigid and parents are harsh on their young. Traditional clan life is now found only in remote areas, as most underground cities are now lit by generators, and Known World culture infringes on Ukari life. While it was once a fact that young Ukari spent their first five or six years in darkness before going to the surface in a ceremonial ritual, this is now only true among traditional Kordeth Ukari.

Most Ukari are concerned with status and can recite their clan history. Some off-world Ukari have adapted so well to human culture that their kin barely recognize them, which produces sadness on both sides.

Architecture

The oldest Ukari structure, the Red Palace of the Nadakira (*Yol Ylatira*), stands carved of advanced, intricate, interlocking mason work, reaching 400-feet high, topped by thousands of red pinnacles, and is surrounded by the stone-constructed homes and monasteries of Darurgin, the Sacred City. The majority of the Ukari moved under the earth, where their architecture evolved. Many of their cavernous cities, constructed of baked clay and minerals, were built as circular, layered buildings, accessible by ladders and easily defensible. Large clan homes (*rovoglin*) connect the smaller, oval living quarters to the central clan quarters. The circle and oval-shaped homes are a common motif of Ukari architecture. The most ingenious element of Ukari architecture, however, is their garden cities, where they tame the native galisp life-forms to shape themselves into great structures.

Galisp are neither animals or plants, but resemble protists or fungi. Like protists, they are mobile, and, like fungi, they cannot manufacture their own food or chlorophyll, so they absorb nutrients from their surroundings. Beginning life as mobile lichenlike matter, they absorb nutrients from the soil and grow to fantastic sizes and colors. They tend to settle and entrench themselves in the earth near a water source, growing roots to absorb the water and forming colonies that stretch over many kilometers. The Ukari early on discovered that galisp could be shaped and hardened, and so they molded entire cities out of the organic material.

Galisp cities are some of the most beautiful in the Known Worlds. The Ukari bring the galisp water and soil in exchange for shelter. In times of war or danger, the tenders of the garden cities can coax the galisp to close passageways. A galisp city resembles a combination of great tree roots and lichen molded in layered oval homes, yet hued in many bright colors. Galispeat Ukari waste, which provides an ecological benefit to the cities. Ukari herd young, mobile galisp, which produce passages while devouring nutrients, and the guilds use them to search for mineral wealth. Galisp can tear apart and rejoin in large colonies.

Once the Ukari recolonized the surface, they continued to build their rounded, oval home structures, although the richer palaces resemble human abodes. After the terraforming technology declined, great domed cities of humans and Ukari were erected over Kordeth's surface. The Ukari cities far outnumber the guild ones. The surface Allied Clans produced cities with the motif of layered, oval homes.

Art

Ukari art began with symbolic representations of spiritual matters, and was not considered separate from ceremonial-shamanistic functions. Colored rocks and sand produced prayer shields, used to call the gods — but these were left for the elements to destroy, as a sign of the impermanence of place (an echo of their exile). Painting was used as an expressive force to depict the gods, although high chieftains were eventually depicted and later, annals of Ukari history. Sculpture began in a highly realistic mode (suggesting Anunnaki influence), but it fell once the clans spread on Kordeth and centralized culture fragmented. Art was the tool of the priests; only in the open-air cities was it used as an aesthetic outside ceremonial-religious control. During the aristocratic, decadent stage, painting evolved to depict the ruling classes, their pursuits and their propaganda. When the clans reestablished power, art became a communal tool that exemplified Ukari life and clan values.

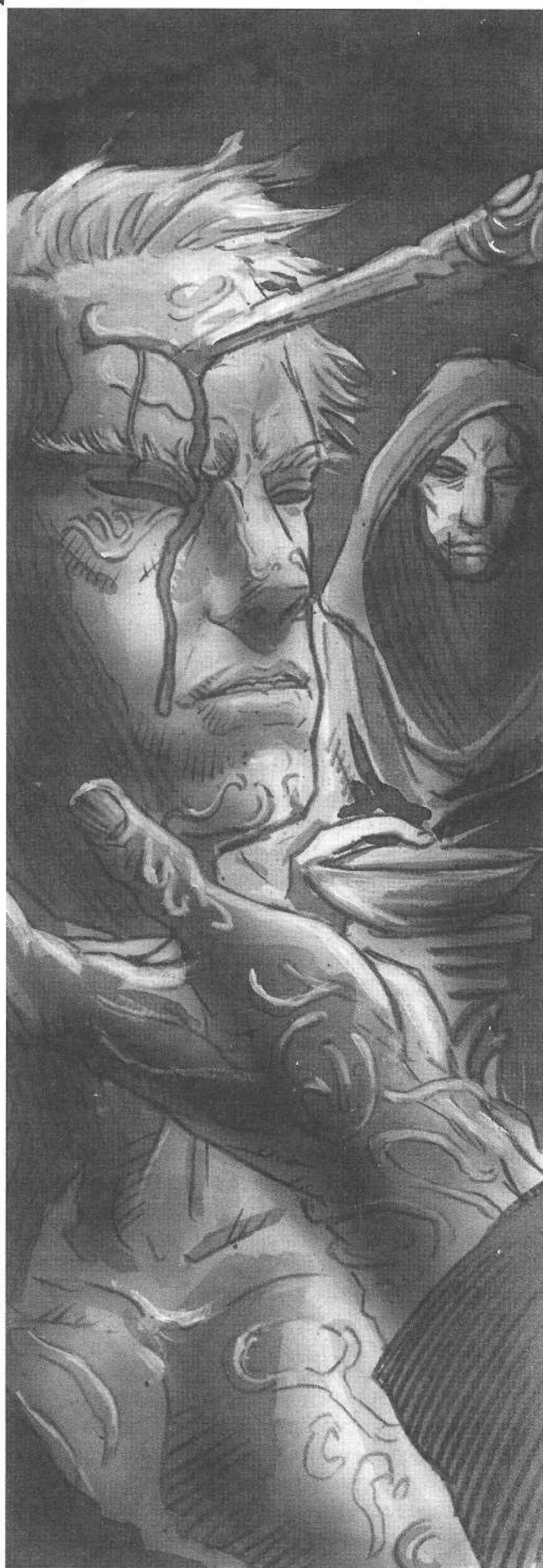
After human contact, the arts went into decline. Some humans were inspired by Ukari art, and Obun-human aesthetics influenced Ukari art. Ukari cultural trends in music and architecture influenced these media in the Second Republic, while in the New Dark Ages, traditional religious art reemerged. Ukari shaman-artists, called the Pre-Humanists, sought to refocus on the sacredness of art.

Most artists in Ukari society possess shamanic training; it is a title of honor below bard. Poets, and to a lesser extent writers, are considered divinely inspired, which has led to some interesting misunderstandings: When the Ukari conquered Criticorum, they placed the minor human poet, Jorge Sandego in the position of Uluk Thumin, or "High Human" of the conquered community. Ukari poets and writers are known for their verbal beauty. Their traditional music, wovgla (two drummers and a player of the *rupsha*, a two-stringed lute), remains a ritualized affair. Ukari theater consists mainly of ceremonial performances of religious rites, depicting the heroic cycles from the *Noddavitya*.

Baa'mon (Body Carvings)

The Ukar carve their bodies with raised tattoos or carvings, spelling out their names on their faces and their deeds on their chests, arms and legs. On the body and forehead are the clan identifiers, while the faces and limbs host the individual identifiers. Among the poorer clans, clan identifiers tattoo the body, legs and upper arms; among the allied and ruling clans, the clan symbol covers the





heart and the forehead. Excessive clan tattooing is considered brash and a sign of lowly status. Nonetheless, some of the marginal and poorest clans turned raised tattoos (*baa'mon*) into an intricate, multilayered art, making their excessively tattooed bodies exotic works of beauty.

Baa'mon artists are highly prized in Ukari culture. Baa'mon are meant to be read with the fingers, Braille pictograms of sorts depicting the bearer's clan and life history. Bodies become more tattooed with age, marking the bearer's achievements. In old times, only the great clans possessed excessive tattoos, but as the Allied Clans adopted human ways, the Traditionalists took over the baa'mon art as a sign of cultural defiance to humanity. The Nadakira possesses one tattoo on his forehead, representing the First Clan. The Eye of Anikrunta is tattooed into his right palm, where he bears the Blood Jewel. The Blood Jewel (*Corbo-vitla*) is rumored to be of Anunnaki make and grants the Nadakira knowledge of far events.

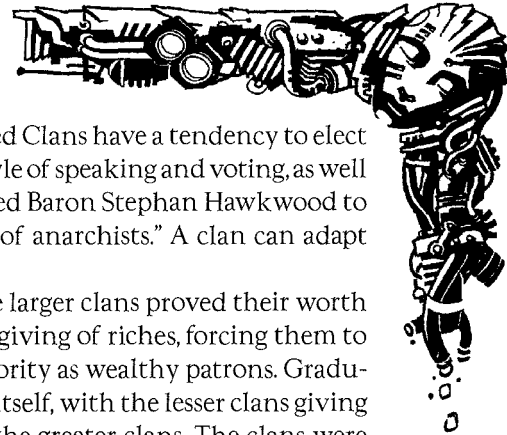
Only on Aylon do the tattoos match those of Kordeth, although the baa'mon are of a more ancient design. On other reservations, Ukari possess fewer tattoos (sometimes mandated by human law). In some human cities, Ukari possess only one body or head tattoo, not always raised.

Dress

The Allied Clan leaders dress in fashions befitting human nobility, although most wear the traditional headband (*naglono*) that distinguishes their status. The common Ukari wear brightly tanned shirts, decorated with spirit mosaics (*rivgupa*), and comfortable but durable pants and boots, often made from *pada* leather. All Ukari carry knives and swords, but only the Allied Clan members may openly bear guns. The head of the Allied Clans is bedecked in a blood-red armored vest displaying the Eye of Anikrunta. The Nadakira is garbed in red and white robes covered with the Nine Laws. On his headband he bears the image of Eight Eyes set in a circle with One Eye in the center — the symbol of the Ukari race.

Outlawed and deep clans wear open leather vests, studded-leather armor and clothing made from galisp, which proves amazingly flexible. Galisp clothing is alive, feeding off the Ukar wearer's sweat and dirt. It resembles brightly colored lichen and leaf patterns and offers the same protection as leather. It usually cost about five firebirds for a full suit, although such clothing is considered vulgar except on those cosmopolitan worlds where Ukari art and fashion is considered exotic (and where the price is jacked up to 15 firebirds).

Aylon Ukari dress more comfortably, in cottons, lighter leather and robes. Off-world Ukari dress in human style while retaining the Ukari preference for displaying clan identity, although such tokens have been outlawed in some places. Many wear traditional Ukari nose rings, studded jewelry and headbands, even in the midst of human cities. Shaman dress in robes or flowing ceremonial shirts. Most guild Ukari dress in appropriate human-style



clothes while retaining odd individual Ukari identifiers. Some boldly tattoo their clan identifiers on their faces, or symbols of the Second Republic, in gestures of defiance. Their tattoos say more than their clothing can, and many wear clothes that reveal these intricate symbols.

Cuisine

Ukari ritually prepare their food, for eating is considered ceremonial to them. They can eat many native Kordeth life-forms, such as the protist-fungilike galisp, which proves indigestible to humans and even Obun (leading xenologists to debate theories of evolution versus Anunnaki genetic engineering). Traditional diets consist largely of the sunless fungilike *mahi*, which they heat into *mahitwex*, a soup, or ferment into alcohol. Underground, they raise herds of *torbun*, blind six-legged reptiles resembling spiked tortoises, and small mammals. Above ground, and on Aylon, they herd animals and have taken to human and Obun dishes. They prefer human alcohol to their own but do not seem prone to alcoholism. Mealtimes are four times a day, with the largest meal being *boha*, the mid-meal.

Humans mistrust Ukari cuisine due to the race's rumored expertise with poisons.

Calendar

The Ukari calendar is based on the lunar months of Kordeth. It follows a 90-year cycle, each assigned to one of the nine elements of ancient Ukari metaphysics: iron, gold, silver, earth, air, light, fire, water and darkness. Underground, the (slight) seasonal changes of the polar regions were meaningless, and time became marked by ceremonial occasions. The New Year begins on *Noddpa* (mid-autumn). This remains the calendar for the Nadakira and underground-dwelling Ukari. Most open communities and Ukari settlements on Aylon, Istakhr, Criticorum and other off-world communities adopted the human calendars, while retaining their holy days. The Ukari date history in nine ages, and each age into nine segments. Thus, their mythological history spans billions of years, while their recorded history begins with the construction of the Nadakira's Palace on Mount Shadderik (830 BC), which took place in the year DK 1 (*Dar Kadani*, "After the Gods").

Politics

Fractious clan struggles dominate Ukari political life. Diverse clans and regional loyalties broke down the early political hegemony of the Nadakira, but unity seemed possible because of the role the Nadakira symbolized. The Merchant League now controls the Allied Clans on Ukar, and the al-Malik exercise control through loyal clans in their territories.

Lesser clans owe loyalty to larger clans. Surprisingly, there is a very democratic element to this extended community, as all members are allowed to speak at the meetings (*moda*). Clans vote on their leaders and can depose

them, although the Allied Clans have a tendency to elect hereditary chiefs. This style of speaking and voting, as well as individual pride, caused Baron Stephan Hawkwood to call the Ukari a "nation of anarchists." A clan can adapt outsiders, even aliens.

In ancient times, the larger clans proved their worth to the lesser ones by the giving of riches, forcing them to acknowledge their authority as wealthy patrons. Gradually, the system reversed itself, with the lesser clans giving warriors and tribute to the greater clans. The clans were originally patriarchal, descended from the bannu hunting societies. After arriving on Kordeth, both matriarchs and patriarchs led clans. The clan itself, not the current leader's sex, assumed primary cultural concern.

A caste system of clans followed from greater to lesser. Clans hold "areas" in common; private property was not an important concept. Social services were provided by the extended clan network, and the State was a union of clans. This fact changed after the human conquest. Greater social disparity followed in the wake of human rule, with alienation marking Ukari life.

The Allied Clans

These are the clans that united with the humans in the Ukar War and still sit on the Ruling Council. Much jockeying for position occurs here. Four of the clans remain "puppets" in the population's esteem. Only Clan Morwec and the Nadakira's clan, Malak, retain the people's trust as defenders of their ancient rights. They are not given leadership positions, but they do what they can to aid the Ukari. The Allied Clans form the Ukari police and armed defense force of Kordeth. The League allows them space frigates and a few larger ships; these are held by Allied Clans and closely integrated with the League command structure. Allied Clan leaders live like human royalty on the surface of Ukar. They speak Urthish and educate their children with human tutors. They typically believe that the great mass of Ukari remain ignorant and superstitious and must be slowly brought to civilization.

The Merchant League

The real ruler of Kordeth is the Merchant League. It possesses the power to make and break whole clans, but some good has come of the League-Ukari alliance. Positions of social advancement are closed to Ukari in the Universal Church and noble houses but remain open in the guilds. Within the Scravers, in particular, Ukari often rise to high positions (Clan Nolent is rumored to be a Scraver underworld family). Thus, their rulers offer Ukari their only chance of rising in status in the Known Worlds power structure.

The Nadakira

The Nadakira is the spiritual and political leader of all the Ukari. Although in ancient times, he possessed the power of a priest-emperor, rival clans and then human conquerors stripped his actual power to a largely symbolic



The Clans

Listed below are the greater Ukari clans, divided by loyalties.

Kordeth Clans

Allied Clans

Borduk: The ruling clan, dukes of the Ukari for three generations.

Suderik: The earliest human supporters.

Va T'laka: Former ruling clan until the League-Borduk alliance.

Nolent: Half the clan supported humans, half removed to Aylon and lesser status. Rumored to now be a Scraver crime family.

Malak: The Nadakira's Clan, the oldest in Ukari history.

Morwec: Closely allied with the Malak. The Morwec and Malak speak for the Ukari people and are mistrusted by the other Allied Clans.

Outlawed Clans

Siddir: Largest outlaw clan, some bands have a truce with the AC.

Thlowyn: This clan traces their ancestry back to mythological times.

Gotek: Devotees of Anikrunta.

Feldak: Once the second greatest clan, now reduced to fending for survival.

Tontha: They fought longest against the AC and humans.

Miharshun: A clan with a reputation for violence and blood vengeance.

Aylon Clans

Al-Malik Allied Governing Clans

Siddir: Originally Malak loyalists removed to Aylon, now allied with al-Malik.

Dwan: An up-and-coming clan that proudly serves in the al-Malik military.

Traditional Clans

Tontha: Most dwell under the earth; originally Malak loyalists.

Vordwed: Holding many small clans in allegiance, they are the largest Aylon clan.

Istakhr Clans

Draka: A violent, independent clan, not allied with any faction.

Torun: Descendants of the first Ukari colonists, traditional.

Sijgayek: Arriving on Istakhr during the Ukar War, half the clan is pro-al-Malik.

Criticorum

Dwelthmid: The only clan of power on the world, it is considered the most civilized (foes say "human") of all the clans.

role. Still, the lineal descendent of the First Clan possesses great symbolic power, and it is often the only succor for the Ukari people. The Nadakira's palace is considered holy; many find sanctuary there, including Ukari rebels. All Ukari believe the Nadakira is untouchable because he is their representative to the gods and responsible for the moral conduct of the race. The position of Nadakira passes from parent to eldest and is the only true primogeniture royalty the Ukari possess.

United Freedom Movement

The alliance of the Traditionalists, Baval, and some remote Kraxi monasteries produced the UFM. On Kordeth, it operates deep within the planet, led by the disinherited clans, while on Aylon, it is in the hands of the Traditionalists. Although the Aylon clans are descendants of those who supported Rajan oj Malak, some later supported the al-Malik. It is led by various cells in the human cities.

The current leader is Votha Vordwed, an Aylon Ukari in hiding. The UFM controls the deep subterranean areas of Kordeth. Theoretically, this is under the control of the AC, but aside from two small garrisons in the Endless Caverns (*Natar Worgiln*), the area is a largely lawless region. The inhabitants don't always take Known Worlds currency, which forces the soldiers to barter for goods, and the soldier patrols are often waylaid by bandits. The small clans of the region recognize the authority of the outlawed clans, which rule from *Akta Natlin*, the Sunless Labyrinths beneath the Endless Caverns.

Off-World

Leadership among off-world Ukari throughout the Known Worlds is usually in the form of a powerful clan leader or priest, called a *goquan* by the community. The term has different connotations among the off-world Ukari. On Kordeth, it is a first warrior or baronet, but it means "head man" or "boss" in the alien ghettos in human cities. This figure is usually the contact person, responsible to the human authorities for the conduct of the Ukari community.

Religion: Banjak

The Ukari religion, known as Banjak (from *bathka*, water), postulates a pantheon of gods who rule over the universe. The religion has changed little over the centuries, although attempts to codify it in times of extreme upheaval (the Forced Relocation to Ukar, the defeat in the Human-Ukar War) produced modifications.

Basically, all matter derives from spirit, and spirits guide the universe under the great laws set by Amdwontha the Creator. Each planet is ruled by a great spirit (Amrivga). When the Ukari settled on Kordeth, Anikrunta slew the Amrivga of that world, Sariel, and claimed it as his own. In both Obun and Ukar mythology this had disastrous results. The Ukari recognize the results: The planet's dying soul tried harder to kill them, as it

would an invading disease. They say that Ukar is a harsh world and does not love them, although Ronga made peace with the planet by sacrificing his life to it.

It is important to note that while the gods have left the Ukari, they can still be contacted by long spiritual journeys (*Bentu Bagwa*, "The Dark River"). When an Ukar shaman performs a ceremony she does not represent the god, she *becomes* the god. The Ukari recognize all things in the Nine Universes as connected by the great spirit tree *Rymatil*, whose limbs and branches are everywhere (some see it more as an extended galisp). Still, the Ukari pledged themselves to the task given by Anikrunta of ordering the Third — or physical — Universe for the elder gods. They are destined to become hardened and conquer it before the universal judgment by the Ancient Seekers (*Bahoth Dathiri*).

Some figures from Obun and human belief systems have entered Banjak. Zebulon, the Prophet, has been incorporated (marginally) as a great human taudwon and the collective spirit of humanity. His Church, however, grew evil when the influence of Obun deities found the Prophet's ear through Ven Lohji. Twice, Banjak influenced human belief systems; once, when the Li Halan altered the Sukara Manja (funerary rites), and again when Aylon al-Malik and their human retainers had direct exposure to the teachings of Banjak martial arts.

To Ukari, religion, philosophy and science are the same, a cultural fact of life. Banjak, decried by some as primitive, laid down the concepts that their sciences were built upon. Their scientists have been shaman, retrieving (like traditional shaman) information by soul journeying to the beyond-worlds in dream, thought or vision, or being possessed by a vision or spirit. Their greatest scientific discoveries came through dreams believed to be messages from the gods.

The greatest intricacy of Ukari religious thought remains the recognition that everything changes, even the gods, and that matter (*nodo*) was derived from energy (*rivtaun*) — itself created from a spiritual source beyond the universe. Even the nature of the gods changes over time, so that Liwong, the hermaphroditic god of the household, is gradually becoming more female.

Banjak is a flexible, largely oral religion; the passing of wisdom without the inscribed word allowed for discussion, pondering and speculation about the great matters. Ukari religion is remarkably fluid, perhaps because the Ukari could not afford to cling to outmoded beliefs on their harsh, adopted planet.

History and Philosophy

There are many sects of Banjak. The three most common are *Hiddur*, a post-human contact sect; *Anikri*, a conservative, dogmatic sect; and *Bodo*, a largely Traditionalist, oral sect. Although the sects vary on emphasis, a common belief system unites them. Banjak teaches that the soul becomes hardened to perfection, undergoing many trials. Reincarnation and soul evolution are central concepts of

Banjak. Banjak history is divided into five eras:

1. Ur-Banjak (prior to Anunnaki contact)
2. The Epic Age (? -800 BC, when the *Noddavitya* was compiled)
3. Kordethian (800 BC-AD 1200)
4. Heterodox (AD 1200-3000, which saw the reforms of Ronga and Gisdrom)
5. Pan-Galactic (AD 3000-Present, which saw the infusion of human and Obun concepts)

Banjak seeks to liberate its followers from the entropic feeding of the T'linto. A series of carefully administered shocks and trials allow the individual to spiritually grow. These trials unite the energies of the personality, soul and physical body into a warrior. This process makes the warrior capable of withstanding the feeding of the lying gods, thus awakening the possibility of further development. By consciously gaining control of spiritual evolution, the path to the gods is shortened. The path is hard, but most traditional Ukari attempt it.

Spirits

Below the gods of Banjak are spirits, and these are not favorably inclined to Ukari. There are many, such as the protectors of location (the *gippun*, the protectors of the soil and the *bajur*, defenders of the soil's riches), who are angry at the human guilds for trespassing. Although minor in comparison to the gods, these spirits cause much misfortune and must be appeased by amulets, sacrifices and border-banners that are blessed by shamans to keep a designated area from harm. Some malevolent spirits are the descendants of evil Ukari, for the soul after death can be reborn, join the gods, or linger, trapped in its own small thoughts.

Festivals

Four times a year, the community celebrates the holy days, *Auasta* (mid-April, Urth Calendar), *Lono* (July 15 UC), *Mava* (October 15 UC) and *Loza* (February 15). These celebrations begin with oral recitations of Ukari and clan history by the taudwon and elders. Later there is the prayer for the Ukari and Nadakira, followed by the priests' invocations of the gods and ceremonial dancing, in which a priest, in a frenzied trance, becomes a god and spirits infuse the dancing throng. With this energy, the collective psychic Urge of the community is cast out onto a scapegoat (a sacrificial object, totem, animal or captive/transgressor). The infusion of the collected communal Urge, channeled by the taudwon, destroys the object or drives the captive to madness and suicide. The Allied Clans, under the watchful eye of humanity, sacrifice totems. Only in the remotest subterranean communities are enemy captives sacrificed.

During this ceremony, the Ukari, participating in their collective Urges, cannot be reasoned with, and they react violently to interruptions. Remote communities, after a living sacrifice, find it easier to control their Urges for that season (+1 Stoic Mind or Focus for the next three months).

The Ukari Pantheon

Banjak postulates a great pantheon of gods, the most important of which are listed below:

Anikrunta the Law-Giver: The leader of the gods, Anikrunta of the One-Eye sees and judges all things. He is portrayed as a giant holding his eye above his head, plucked from his socket, which bleeds the blood of retribution. Anikrunta led the Kadani against the treacherous T'linto. Throughout this matter, he tested the Ukari, giving them the *Madapo*, the Code of Laws. He was the father of the first Nadakira, after union with Tlinkali, the Moon Goddess. Anikrunta is often seen as a harsh god, although his affection for the Ukari is well-known. Anikrunta's temples, where trespassers of the law found death, frightened humanity. Constructed on Criticorum during the Ukar War, these images of the one-eyed god became identified with demon worship in the Universal Church's eyes. Anikrunta rules on the Shadow Sun in the Ninth Universe, Biheda.

Rillos and the Sons of Rillos: War gods. The Sons of Rillos are the most frequently mentioned gods in the *Noddavitya*, which caused xenologists to speculate that this was a memory of the Anunnaki race that aided the Ukari in their mythical wars against the Obun. The Sons of Rillos are too numerous to mention by name, but Kaapa, whose attribute was lightning, and Solos, the god of courage, are important figures in Ukari religion.

Sapa: Goddess of destiny. She has one head but three faces, which traditionally face north, south and east. The eastern face is a young maiden, the southern a matron and the northern an old crone. She is incapable of lying and sows the fate of all things in her star garden. Once, she allowed the great warrior, Invincible Shinris, to take his fate-seed and escape destiny's laws for a season. Some xenologists thought that Sapa was evidence of ancient matriarchal worship among the Ukari (and Obun) until male pantheon figures usurped her place. Some think she is also the Astroarche of the Fourth Qliploth mentioned in the *Draco Codex*.

Sukara: The Crypt-Keeper, god of ancestral rites. Sukara is a skeletal figure with burning hair who wears the Cloak of Eyes, sewn from the sockets of the dead. These eyes look into the hearts of the judged. Guardian to the Caverns of the Dead, Sukara demands proper ritual while the soul of the deceased is judged. Originally a servant of Kilos, God of Death, Sukara gradually usurped Kilos's place, taking a greater hold over Ukari imagination. Judging the soul, he releases it to its appointed path. Some souls reincarnate, some seek "the upper passages," and a few walk the road of *Domrivga*, Soul Annihilation. Sukara Manja is a funerary rite meant to keep the dead away, in the vaults of Sukara. A corruption of this rite, beginning with the Li Halan, led to the human necromantic religion of ancestor worship called "Manja."

Liwong Dhyan: Hermaphroditic god of the household and hearth, as well as sacred areas. Liwong is usually portrayed with a burning sword, defending the home from enemies. Akin to the Obun deities, she-he has two heads and is a winged, angelic being. Liwong, many believe, is a holdover from the Ukari origins on Obun and seems to be the most peaceful of Ukari deities. The Ukari say Liwong has become more feminine over time as a result of the harsher differentiation between the sexes that the Ukari experienced on Kordeth.

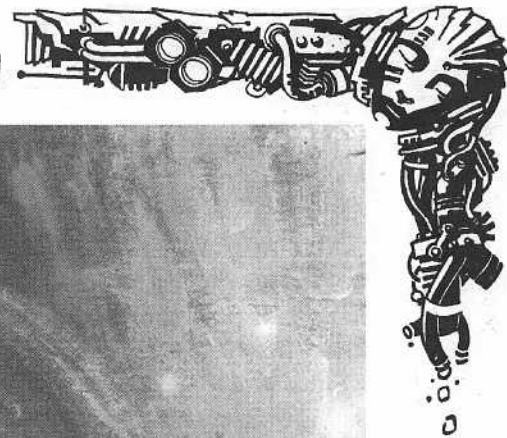
Dzwornaga: Goddess of wisdom and a daughter of the T'linto god Dzore, she joined with the Kadani when she saw wisdom becoming corrupted. She is usually portrayed as opening the well of Broken Chains, while holding the skull of her father before her. She is two-headed, but her wings are as black as the void where she dwells. Stayelon is her companion, a T'linto who left his brethren, often identified by humans as Samayelos, a demon who abides in the Sixth Qliploth.

Glanglun-Untya: The God of Pain. Glanglun-Untya is portrayed nailed to the Fire Rock by the T'linto but laughs at them. He is the god of endurance and creator of baa'mon, "the path of pain," which are the carvings placed across every Ukar body in the course of a lifetime. His priests often endure great trials, including ritual skin-tearing.

Mortos the Devourer: The most frightening deity of Ukari mythology, Mortos is portrayed as a great behemoth swallowing a sun. It is said that the suns were placed to fence Mortos in, but that she mated with the primal chaos, spawning children who attack the lights. Shelkoro released her when he corrupted the stream of time. Mortos is in constant pain, for the suns burn her, and she wants to envelope the universe into darkness and cease all suffering in the Womb of Time (*Rorha Ruhn*). The Ukari say she is a composite of many older deities from vanished universes. She is a terrible force best represented as Devouring Entropy. Pangaren of the Echoing Whispers is her son.

Saddereaper: Goddess of smiths, weapon-building, technology and protection-in-battle, she crafted the armor of Shinris the Invincible. Her secrets, sought by Ukari inventors in dreams and vision-quests, brought back important scientific discoveries to the Ukari. She invented the jumpgates and was the deity closest to Anikrunta. Saddereaper resembles a winged woman holding two heads in her left hand and a burning hammer in her right. The sixth Universe of J'hunn is her abode.

Uysadda the Masked God: Trickster god of Ukari mythology, who helped them in their wars. That he also helped the Obun during the same time has left many baffled, but one of the themes of Uysadda is balance. His priests often use *depan*, "sideways magic," dressing as animals, other spirits or members of rival clans or of the opposite sex, to invoke Uysadda. Uysadda allowed for the breaking of social taboos and even laughter at the gods,



for which reason he is called the Great Leveler. He taught language to the Ukari and helped them when they settled Ukar. Lullaat, Mistress of the Nighted Depths, is his daughter/mate. She serves as a primal sexual force among the Ukari.

The T'linto: The gods of the Obun enter Ukari mythology, but they are tyrannical dictators who speak with honeyed tongues (similar to human colonists, who Ukari consider servants of these lying deities). While the Ukari gods can be malicious, this is mainly because they recognize the truth: that life is suffering and must be won through cruel means. While certain Ukari gods are nurturers, most are war gods. Hence, Ukari feel that they have fewer illusions about life, especially morality — often a hypocritical guise for colonization.

Daya-Orlogvin is the Speaker of Lies and Master of the Wayward Path. Sizha, the god of decadent pleasures and ruination, is a cannibal and devours the beloved. Dzure is the god of deadly wisdom, and he is the father of dogmatic priests and those who hoard knowledge. His own daughter rebelled against him. Vhem' Garonta is a god of strength; he was seduced by promises of leading a warlike people, but he was bound by the words of Daya-Orlogvin. The T'linto later chained this noble god to Mount Rivgamog.

Daya-Orlogvin invented beautiful ideas and philoso-

phies to hide the ugliness of his vision, which called for the reevaluation of the warrior code — changing the noble warrior culture and degrading it to a slave religion. This is the tragedy of the Obun ("slaves"); they became children mimicking the honeyed lies of the gods. Yet the two races are destined to reunite, according to Ukari belief.

Ronga

Reforming tendencies swept Banjak from time to time, and the rise of a spiritual path outside traditional Banjak rituals and temple worship developed after the fall of the Ostiri Empire. Ronga, originally a priest of Dzwornga, retreated into the furthest depths of the planet upon some inner urging. There, meditating for three years, he saw the darkness open and beheld Fidwontha, the light beyond all.

Returning to the upper labyrinths, he taught his vision. Discipline was needed, but virtue and righteous effort would cause the practitioner to escape the bonds of Sapa and be released from the ceaseless cycles of creation. Although Ronga's beliefs were adapted and made more popular by the sword-master Gisdrom — who eventually forged a new path — there are still followers of Ronga; although they encompass probably only 5% of the Ukari population. Fidwontha is considered a subset of Banjak, not a separate religion.



Path of Tauntlasta (The Path of Peace)

Tauntlasta is a rare, mysterious path, understood by few. Called the "Path of Peace" or "Holy Redemption," it cannot be taught, only experienced. Only six Ukari are known to have entered this path. Basically, a renowned warrior undergoes a complete conversion, perfecting the path of violence so that it transforms the warrior onto a path of peace. This renews the spirit and creates a holy being who listens to every sound in the nine universes. The first follower of Tauntlasta was Shivra (AD 121-200), the daughter of Korun, who wiped out the entire clan of her father's murderers until she said, "I am killing myself," and entered a strange trance that lasted two years. Emerging, she urged peace between all things and performed rites of atonement for the clans, urging them to drop their blood-hunts and oaths of vengeance. The most recent holy Tauntlasta was Dyn'dran Oed Nata (4860-4911).

The Church of the Celestial Sun

Few of the Ukari adopted the Universal Church's religion. Many of the Ukari ruling clans who do daily business with humans and Ukari communities on human worlds pay it lip service, while retaining their own customs and beliefs. Inevitably, some of the Universal Church's message filtered into Ukari religious belief. Thus, Zebulon is seen as the great priest of humanity (Taudwon Himona). Prayers to him and Anikrunta are given before entering upon dealings with humans, especially on Aylon. Patriarch Palamedes, however, darkened everything he said, finally killing him to take over his Church and armies, and Zebulon weeps before Anikrunta, praying for his misguided people.

The resistance to Church teachings came from the Church's total disregard for Ukari religion, its branding them "unreflective demon-worshippers," and its systematic attempts to forcibly wipe out Ukari culture and belief. This included the destruction of Ukari holy and cultural spots: the ruins on Mt. Tenikiklun and the massacre of Ukari on southern Aylon (4312-19). The existence of the Obun Voavenlohjun sect grates on the Ukari, who call it a prisoner religion.

The Church, in belated recognition that most Ukari would not convert, issued the Bull of Pan-Reflective Grace (4390), which recognized that the Ukari possessed souls, but that in dealing with humanity, they must hold to Zebulon's teachings by reciting the Fifteen Blessitudes. This matter became the law by which Ukari traders and merchants, flying their own ships, had to learn or forfeit their legal status to their ships.

Church martyrs slain while preaching to the Ukari (a favorite theme in Church art) include Sabrinus (3041), St. Ostrein (3440), St. Fatima (4101) and Glam (4603), the only Ukar ever recognized by the Church as a near-saint. The Orthodoxy eventually took the attitude that the major-

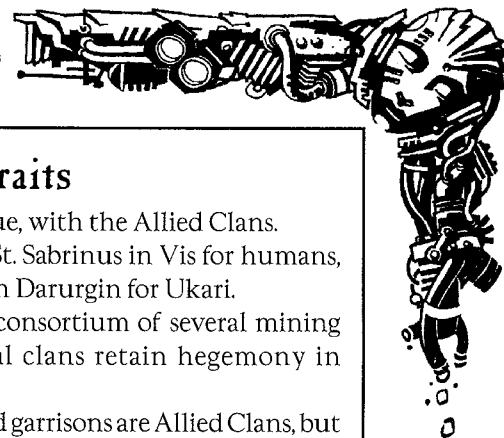
ity of the Ukari were beholden to darkness and the ways of their ancestors, but that a filtered message, capable of saving some misguided souls, occasionally breaks through.

Territory Ukar (Kordeth)

Kordeth is a harsh world. In the distant past, the surface was covered with life. At some point, volcanic activity caused great clouds to cover most of the planet, trapping heat in a greenhouse effect. Droplets of sulfuric acid are found in the clouds, which whip about the planet's surface in 120 mph winds. The southern hemisphere possesses many areas of solidified volcanic lava, while valleys, dead seas and mountain ranges are found in the north. Both polar caps, surrounded by encircling mountain ranges, escaped the cloud cover and winds, and here the Ukari live openly beneath the sky. The Nadakira's Palace is on Mount Shadderik in the north, and he controls the holy city of Darurgin. The southern city of Vis is under AC/League control and hosts the main space port for the planet. Domed League and AC cities dot the planet's surface, and internal environments are maintained by great terraforming generators. Yet the human population remains small compared with the huge number of Ukari. Most humans dwell in the domed cities of Porol and Lanka.

Sopeth Naga: Directly beneath the surface, the Allied Clans control the interlocking caves (*Sopeth Naga*). Here league mines and Ukari power generators are well-guarded, and the reinforced tunnels and Ukari cities possess artificial lighting. These are the most secure parts of Kordeth's interior: well-patrolled with a high-tech communications system intact. Below Sopeth Naga, however, the AC possess little control. The *Natar Worglin* (Endless Caverns) is a largely lawless region. Two AC outposts guard the main passages to the upper world, but the small, nomadic clans and outlaw bands here profess more loyalty to the outlawed traditional clans even further below. The two greatest galisp cities, Norgalant and Verpevyn, are found here. Large beasts also roam these endless corridors, from the blind carnivorous *saurian* reptile-birds to packs of huge, bear-like *muntas*. Rumors of Anunnaki ruins persist.

Akta Natlin: Below the Endless Caverns lie the *Akta Natlin*, the Sunless Labyrinths. Here the outlawed traditional clans dwell, hunting the reptilian *corgun* — huge, vicious serpentine monsters. Subterranean lakes abound with fish, and phosphorescent fungi produce spectral-lit regions. Simple plants, devolved from the need for photosynthesis, resembling giant club mosses and ferns, eat nutrients from the soil. Vicious creatures, called *solka* by the Ukari, resemble albino apes and feed off blood. Their fingers possess suckers that grasp their prey and hold it. Worse still are the *mworgun*, which are beings who mimic the sounds of other life forms (including Ukari and humans),



luring them to their dooms off sharp cavern drops and feeding off their carcasses. The Ukari say they resemble gaunt, leathery bipeds with mere slits for eyes and nostrils, the product of Second Republic genetic experimentation. Below this region lies the planet's mantle of mostly solid silicate material and then the molten core. Rumors persist of Ur terraforming engines deep in the planet, which explains the breathable, livable environment far below. Some think Doramos discovered this, and this lore made him the Master Terraformer.

Dyand: Kordeth possesses one irregular shaped moon, Dyand, believed to be an asteroid captured by the planet's gravity long ago. League mining operations exist here, and there is one domed city, Madark, composed of human overseers and Ukari workers. The League also possesses several landing areas on the moon, which house part of the Merchant Fleet.

Other planets: A number of the other planets in the Kordeth system are also used for mining. Topan is the richest, although much of the wealth of its two moons was used up during the Second Republic. A small spacestation (Benito) near the asteroid belt (between Sortollo and Topan) is home to an extended family of Prospectors.

Aylon

Aylon was settled by the Ukari in 2360 but largely abandoned during the Usturak Civil War in 2478. Some lesser clans, far beneath the earth, remained. Humanity colonized Aylon later. During the Ukar War, the Ukari returned in force, reconquering the world and settling in huge numbers. The deep Ukari emerged, aiding their race, and were rewarded with extended clan territories engulfing human occupied areas. Even after Kordeth surrendered, a 50-year war to retake Aylon was fought, in which the humans were finally victorious. Many Ukari loyalists and poorer clans removed to Aylon, to the great northern reservation of Mwerriid Mokta. Aylon was the sight of the recent Ukari Rebellion (4988-92) of the Emperor Wars.

Aylon Ukari consider themselves more "pure" than Kordeth dwellers, because many of the ancient oral and shamanistic rituals, forgotten on Kordeth, remain ingrained in Aylon community life. They claim they are dwelling under the stars, as the original Ukari on Obun did, and returning to the life of the original race before it was forced to live underground. Only one-fifth of the Ukari live under the earth on Aylon. Mining interests and reservation farming for the al-Malik are their main sources of livelihood. Recently, some of the Aylon al-Malik have begun to seek out Aylon Ukari, to receive training in warfare, Jox Boxing and Kraxi.

Istakhr

First landing in 2405, the Ukari discovered a desert planet and settled near the northern pole. The small colony left in 2480 during the Usturak Civil War, leaving only a small remnant behind. When their scout ships returned (2870), the Ukari discovered a human colony en-

Kordeth's Traits

Ruler: Merchant League, with the Allied Clans.

Cathedral: Basilica of St. Sabrinus in Vis for humans, the Nadakira's Palace in Darurgin for Ukari.

Agora: Scravers and a consortium of several mining guilds, although local clans retain hegemony in Darurgin.

Garrison: 6 (most armed garrisons are Allied Clans, but League forces retain higher-tech weapons).

Capitol: Vis (administrative) and Darurgin (cultural-religious).

Jumps: 2

Adjacent Worlds: Criticorum (dayside), Aylon and Shaprut (nightside).

Solar System: Vodor 1 (Kastru), Kordeth 2 (Dyand), Sortollo 3, Topan 4 (Bix, Dlimto), Rwilane 5, Nagera 6

Tech: 5 (rumors of lesser Urtech abound). Most tech is reserved for League and ruling AC members.

Ukari Population: 88,000,000 (AC estimate)

Human Population: 377,000

Resources: Mineral wealth, fossilized fuel, various crops grown in polar regions and domed cities, pata, native biological resources, rich volcanic soil, galisp.

Exports: Gold, silver, diamonds, uranium, fossilized fuels, galisp, Ukari jewelry, crafts, clothing, weapons, mass-produced mining and scientific products, deep water (bottled and titled "Obun Springs").

Landscape: Aside from the polar regions, Kordeth is largely rocky and lifeless. Great mountain ranges and active volcanoes divide the planet's surface. Poisonous clouds cover most of the exterior, except where blocked by the large mountain ranges of the extreme north and south. Domed environmental League and AC cities dot the world. There are small seas, but most water is found below the surface, along with the interlocking caves most Ukari call home. The terraforming engines placed during the Second Republic have declined. Vis and Darurgin, located in the extreme south and north respectively, remain the only open-air cities.

croaching on their space. Striking in force, the Ukari seized the world, placing the humans under occupation. The hidden Ukari emerged, aiding the conquerors. Istakhr was retaken by humans with heavy fighting about Lake Harat. Afterwards, the human colonists provoked two wars with the remaining Ukari (3019-22), in which Ukari villages were annihilated.

Within two centuries, the Istakhr Ukari almost became extinct, but during the New Dark Ages, the population rose again. By 4440, there was a sizable community of Ukari, and more came to increase the military power of the al-Malik. The Istakhr Ukari possess two communities, one an alien "city" in the Istakhr Market, and the other the northern reservation of Mwerriid Usdid.





Ustar

Ustar was the most colonized Ukari world, one rich in mineral wealth. Possessing temperate climates and green continents, it differed remarkably from Kordeth. Few humans, beyond a ruling body and a handful of support, ever lived there. In 4081, the Ukari populace, fearing noble control of Ustar, slew the small human colony and sealed the jumpgate. Ustar has yet to be rediscovered.

Criticorum

Ukari rulers built the Anikrunta Temple, where criminals were publicly sacrificed. The Church-led forces eventually freed the planet. Most of the Ukari were forcibly removed to Aylon, but some remained, either as indentured servants of the Bashshar Corporation or as indentured labor for the Church. They have remained an urban force, and other Ukari later settled among them.

Ukari of Note

Past Heroes

The great among the mythical Ukari number the following: Thollo, the First Nadakira and son of Anikrunta; Invincible Shinris, the greatest warrior in battle against the Obun in mythical times; and Shelkoro who doomed the race. In Ukari history, the First Speaker of Omactin, Teddeth vi Wahind; Ronga and Gisdrom of the Jewel Eye, founders of new religious paths; and the great Warlord, Rajan oj Malak stand apart. After humanity defeated the Ukari, the freedom fighters Sadra-Syn and Zotos command respect. Aedwir na Nolent's literature created a revival of Ukari pride. Finally, the holy words and vision of Dyn'dran Oed Nata left new paths for the Ukari to ponder.

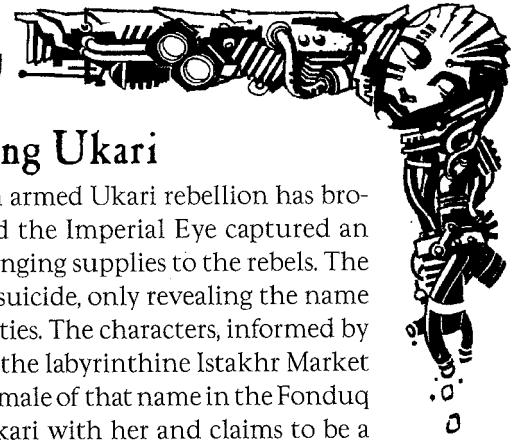
Contemporary Ukari

Nadakira Surtam oj Malak Sojo

The current Nadakira is Surtam oj Malak Sojo, head of the First Clan, Defender of the Ukari, Son of the Moon, Giver of Darkness and Servant and Judge of the Servants of Anikrunta. Sojo is beloved by his people. He recently increased his authority by preventing the League from mining Mount Tenikiklun, a holy area for the Ukari. There is a rumor that Sojo may be restored to full status as Ukari ruler by Alexius, although the Allied Council opposes this (and there is little basis for the rumor). Legends persist that the Nadakira possesses Anunnaki technology that controls Ukari Urges. He is well-informed on distant events.

Torquil oj Borduk

Grand Chieftain of the Allied Clans, Torquil walks a fine line between the guild and noble overlords and Ukari concerns. A strong leader, he fears that imperial forces are negotiating with the Nadakira. Clan Javordin, under Sakrap, desires his position. Placating the Merchant League, rival clans and the Ukari people has taken a toll, and Torquil fears his Urge will snap one day.



Abril na Nont

New clan leader of the na Nont, an unrepentant Traditionalist clan on Aylon, she co-rules with the wisdom of her great-uncle Taywin. After the Aylon uprising was crushed, she removed her people far into the planet's interior. She has found unexpected allies among young al-Malik aristocrats on Aylon, who wish to install one of their own as the head of the Royal House. They offer her clemency and more Ukari freedom in exchange for allowing them to learn Ukari sword-fighting techniques.

Shavik ra Veldiryn

A UFM leader, Shavik never forgot the Allied Clans role in wiping out her father's village beneath Kordeth. Leading a small band of rebels, she operates out of Decados space (the only Royal House to secretly supply the rebels). Shavik believes that Anunnaki technology may be used to open the gateway to Ustar, a pure Ukari world.

Varkellin na Nilite

A captain in the al-Malik armies, Varkellin turned mercenary after the Emperor Wars ended. An excellent spy, thief and assassin, Varkellin's reputation for thoroughness keeps the contracts coming. His only weakness is a love of Obun women and a tendency to bring on his Urges in crowded bars.

Taudwon Mipar va Tushan

A traditional Banjak priest from Aylon, Mipar received strange dreams telling him to learn from the Obun. Mipar is old, mistrustful, but a good companion if won over. He seeks Obun out, but loves the search more than the completion. Never before off Aylon, the traditional Banjak priest is enjoying himself, and he finds noble patrons fêting him everywhere he goes.

Roleplaying

Playing an Ukari

Some Ukari stereotypes:

A spy for the Allied Clans

An outlawed clan chief from the depths of Kordeth

A rich merchant, preferring human companions to Ukari

An actor/thief

A mercenary soldier

A trusted councilor of the Nadakira

A traditional wov musician

A priest of Anikrunta, judging all she sees

A follower of Ronga, spreading his word

A believer in the Children of Shurstrat

A UFM member, disguised as a guildsman

A Scraver

A reservation Ukar sick of the old ways, looking for adventure

A son/daughter of one of the AC chiefs, exploring the universe

An assassin living in Ukari sections of human cities

Gamemastering Ukari

• **The Ur Couple:** An armed Ukari rebellion has broken out on Istakhr, and the Imperial Eye captured an Obun involved with bringing supplies to the rebels. The Obun rebel committed suicide, only revealing the name "Mapuur" to the authorities. The characters, informed by the Imperial Eye, search the labyrinthine Istakhr Market and discover an Obun female of that name in the Fondue Zone. She has several Ukari with her and claims to be a bar owner. She is really delivering supplies to the rebellion and is a member of the Children of Shurstrat. Several Obun and Ukar martial artists and psychics are in her following. If the characters try to arrest her in the bar, fighting will break out. If they follow her, they find a dumping zone that arms the rebellion. Mapuur, if captured, will try to kill herself. If any character goes undercover, they will learn that her aims are to free the Obun-Ukari peoples and form a confederation against the humans, who spoiled the ancient purity of both races. Obun agents and Allied Clan Ukari help the players in tracking her. The AC want her dead; the Imperial Eye wants her alive for questioning.

• **Gimme Shelter:** On the run from Church, noble or imperial law, the characters make for Kordeth and the Sacred City of Darurgin, where the Nadakira rules from the great palace of Yol Ylatira. Here human and clan law cannot touch them, since the city is wholly administered by the Nadakira. Few outsiders come to Darurgin, and the characters are secretly brought to an audience with the Nadakira. The Nadakira wants a message delivered to Emperor Alexius, but Allied Clan and League spies closely watch his movements. Trusting that outsiders may be able to deliver it, he grants the characters temporary ambassador status and sends them on their way. Getting wind of the mysterious message, the Allied Clans, the League and rival houses send their agents after the characters; they must fight their way off Kordeth to Byzantium Secundus. The message holds information on illegal League and AC activities and begs the Emperor to exercise his power and curb the abuses.

• **The Tax Man Cometh:** Every year, the League sends an unfortunate tax gatherer deep into the recesses of Kordeth to gather taxes from minor and outlawed clans. Most don't return, and it is a sign of disfavor to be "promoted" to Tax Gatherer (the AC refuse the odious task). The new Tax Gatherer hires the characters as guards while they plunge deep into Kordeth's violent interior. Unfortunately, they reach Clan Siddir territory during religious festivals, when the clan is looking for a scapegoat to project their Urges upon. Worse, the Tax Gatherer or one of the party is captured and becomes the sacrificial victim. There is no dealing with the Ukari during this frenzied state of festival, and they will fight if asked to negotiate. The characters must rescue the captured member and somehow escape with their lives during the blood sacrifice ceremony.



Traits

Suggested Ukari Traits

Characteristics: Dexterity (base 4; cost: 1 pt), Strength and Endurance (max 9; +2 pts), Tech (base 4; cost: 1 pt), Psi (base 1; cost: 3 pts) and Urge (base 1; +3 pts)

Natural Skills: Dodge, Fight, Sneak

Learned Skills: Knavery, Martial Arts Actions, Lore (poisons), Speak Urthish (base 2; cost: 2 pts) and Ukarish (3), Survival

Blessings/ Curses: Sensitive Touch (2 pts: +2 Perception to discern touched objects)/ Bitter (+2 pts: -2 Calm when dealing with humans)

Afflictions: Ostracized (Mild: +1 pt)

Total cost: 1 pt

Benefice

Sleeping Urge (3 pts): Due to unusual circumstances, the character grew up somehow avoiding the bitterness of his brethren. Perhaps she was raised by aliens or in a remote area far from the eternal clan struggles; wherever it was, she grew up reasonably content. The character begins with her Urge asleep (rather than with the one level that most Ukar suffer).

Jox Kai Von (Jox Boxing)

A violent martial art designed for combat in close quarters (underground passages), Jox Boxing was created from several existing schools by Gisdrom of the Jewel Eye. While it incorporates many styles, it has a few unique actions.

Engage (Level 1): The Jox Boxer moves into close quarters combat with his target. He must spend part of his turn moving into his target's space and keep moving to prevent the target from escaping such tight contact. This does not require a separate action, but it does occupy some of the character's time, putting a limit onto how many actions the character can perform that turn. Once a character has entered close quarters combat, he may only perform a maximum of one action per turn (although he may still abort to a Dodge).

The character must be able to get within one meter of his target; once this occurs, the target is engaged. Engaged Jox Boxers receive a +1 bonus to any offensive rolls, but a -1 penalty to any defensive rolls (including dodging). At any time, the attacker or defender may spend his action to move away and disengage, but he cannot perform the normal one meter of free movement per action. If the defender can move away before the attacker can act (if the defender has the higher initiative), the attacker must spend his action moving to re-engage the target, rather than performing whatever other action he had intended.

Extra large melee weapons (two-handed swords, spears, whips) cannot be used in close quarters.

Engaged Actions

All of the following actions require the Jox Boxer to first Engage his opponent. The goal modifiers already include the +1 bonus to offensive actions that Engaged boxers gain.

Sticky Hands (Level 3): The Jox Boxer, by staying extremely close to his opponent and continuously touching him, can ignore any penalties due to darkness or blindness — his sense of touch and martial training takes over. If his opponent ever disengages from him (see Engage, above), the penalties will once more apply.

Gisdrom's Lesson (Level 5): The Jox Boxer knocks the target's weapon from her hand and sends it flying through the air or skittering across the floor a distance of one meter per victory point.

The Jox Boxer rolls Dexterity + Fight (the target can dodge this roll). If successful, he rolls Dexterity + Fight again but adds the victory points from the previous roll. These successes are then contested by the opponent's Strength + Melee roll (or Vigor in the case of guns, whichever is higher). Optionally, the Boxer can choose to substitute Strength (rather than Dexterity) for this second roll.

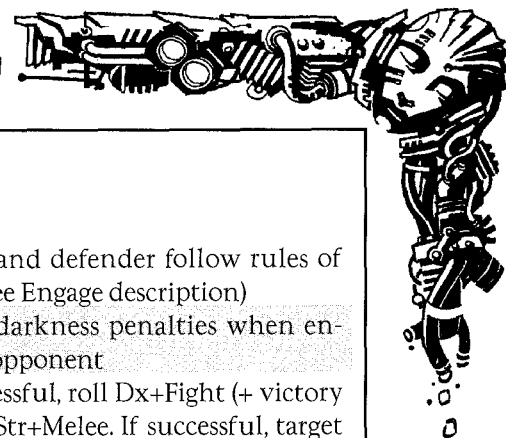
Kordo's Law (Level 7): The Jox Boxer punches his opponent in the windpipe, possibly stunning or unbalancing him. The victim rolls Endurance + Vigor; if successful, there is no further effect than the damage normally delivered by Kordo's Law. If the roll fails, the victim is stunned for that turn and the next (losing any actions during this time). If the roll is a critical failure, the character blacks out — is knocked unconscious — for one turn per point of damage he takes (one turn minimum).

Anikrunta's Judgment (Level 8): The Boxer strikes her opponent's eyes with her fingers. If the victim takes more damage than his Endurance rating, he is blinded for one turn per point over his Endurance. If the victim's takes damage equal to or greater than three times his Endurance, then his eye has been torn from its socket, permanently blinding him (unless a successful Physick or a theurgic healing roll is made that turn or the next).

Paint the Face (Level 9): The Boxer makes two swift punches to the opponent's face in rapid fire motion. He does not suffer the multiple action penalty and gets a +2 bonus to each attacks' successes to resist his opponent's dodge only. However, if the first punch misses, the second also misses.

Kraxi (Knife Fencing)

Gisdrom developed this fighting style from the techniques he observed from the Henjuk, a nomadic, polar Ukari clan. Ukari often fight with their krax, their clan knives (treat as dirks). Ukari assassins often dip their blades in poison (see below). The handle and steel of a krax are usually engraved with a clan's history and symbols of good fortune. A clan's best warriors are allowed to carry two of these knives, and they are formed into units called *Kraxkar*, Knife-Masters of the Blood Oath.



Jox Kai Von Actions

Martial Action	LVL	Roll	Init	Goal	DMG	Effect
Engage	1	Dx+Fight	-1	NA	NA	Both attacker and defender follow rules of close combat (see Engage description)
Sticky Hands*	3	NA	NA	NA	NA	Boxer ignores darkness penalties when engaged with an opponent
Gisdrom's Lesson*	5	Dx+Fight	-1		NA	Disarm. If successful, roll Dx+Fight (+ victory pts) vs. target's Str+Melee. If successful, target drops weapon, which can be thrown 1m/victory point.
Kordo's Law*	7	Dx+Fight	-2	-1	3	Strike to windpipe: victim rolls End+Vigor or is stunned; a critical failure means unconsciousness
Anikrunta's Judgment*	8	Dx+Fight	-2	-1	4	Eye gouge: if victim suffers more DMG than his END, he is blinded for 1 turn/pt above END; if 3x END, blinding is permanent
Paint the Face*	9	Dx+Fight	-1	-1		Character makes two Fist (or Martial Fist) actions without suffering the multiple action penalty and gains +2 successes against opponent's dodge only; if first Fist misses, second Fist also misses.

* These actions require the Boxer to first Engage with his target.

Kraxi (Knife Fencing) Actions

Martial Action	LVL	Roll	Init	Goal	DMG	Effect
Ukmo's Grasp	8	Dx+Melee	-2/0	0/-1	2/knife	Attacker grapples opponent and then delivers a knife strike; no multiple action penalty
Sukara's Sweep	9	Dx+Melee	-1		knife	Two strikes against one or two opponents; no multiple action penalty
Batha	10	Dx+Melee	-3	-2	knife	Roll complementary Per+Physick; add victory dice to DMG

Kraxi teaches that Ronga's vision finds accomplishment in split-second awareness combined with immediate action. Contentions of honor are often solved in Kraxi battles to the death, usually judged by a master in the presence of members from both clans.

Like fencing, those who follow in the path learn: Parry (Level 1), Thrust (Level 2), Slash (Level 3), Disarm (Level 5), Off Hand (Level 6), Pierce (Level 9) and Double-Strike (Level 10). However, those who fight with knives must learn these actions separately from the fencing actions. Characters who already know the fencing equivalents may learn the Kraxi actions at half the cost (minimum 1 pt), and vice versa. Kraxi actions can be performed with any blade the size of a dirk or smaller.

Kraxi fighting takes into account the closed quarters of subterranean passages. The Jox Boxing Engage action is often learned by Kraxi fighters who wish to get even more close and personal in their vendettas.

Ukmo's Grasp (Level 8): The Kraxi fighter combines a grapple (or Martial Hold, if she knows that action) with a basic knife strike (no Thrust or Slash), but he suffers no multiple action penalty. The grapple must come first; if it

does not succeed, the knife strike cannot be made.

Sukara's Sweep (Level 9): Using one krax in either hand, the fighter performs sweeping, circular cuts against one or two opponents (one to either side). He does not suffer a multiple action penalty. The fighter must first learn the Off-Hand action (Level 6).

Batha (Level 10): Similar to the Martial Arts Vital Strike action, Batha is a blow to a sensitive organ and implies some knowledge of anatomy on the Kraxi fighter's part. The Kraxi fighter can make a complementary Perception + Physick roll (this does not require a separate action), but the victory points add to the Batha damage dice instead of the goal roll. This, combined with the Batha roll's own victory dice and 4d of knife damage, can produce a truly lethal blow.

Psychic Powers

Ukari, like their Obun cousins, are born psychics, first exhibiting their power at puberty. The nation of Usturak possessed powerful psychic spies who caused the Shantor to rebel during the Ukari War. Here are some unique abilities, although the human and Obun psychic paths are also open to Ukari (and vice versa, with training).



FarHand

Seize the Heart

(Level 9, Passion + Focus, sight, instant, 1W)

The Ukar reaches for the heart of a visible target and stops it from beating. If successful, the target loses all actions for that turn and the next and suffers damage equal to the Ukar's Strength + victory dice. Armor and energy shields cannot stop this damage, but certain theurgic defenses can (Shield of Faith, etc.).

Sixth Sense

Rivga-Ialtach (Urge Guardian)

(Level 4, Introvert + Observe, sight, temporary, 1W)

The Ukar gains an "Urge Guardian" to help warn her when her Urge next awakens. The Urge Guardian is a portion of the Ukar's own psychic energy, which assumes a faint light shape and communicates telepathically. Whenever her Urge stirs, the Guardian first warns the Ukar, who can then choose to resist its awakening. She rolls Calm + Stoic Mind or Focus, while the Urge (using the psychic's traits) rolls Passion + Impress. If the Ukar wins, the Urge is put back to sleep; if the Urge wins, it is awake as normal (the Ukar can still attempt to resist its action as per the rules on page 140 of the rulebook).

Anunnaki Aura

(Level 9, Introvert + Observe, distance, prolonged, 1W)

The psychic can "see" Anunnaki energy patterns from a distance, which become brighter as the psychic approaches its source (ruins, artifact, etc.). The difficulty or ease of such perception depends on the object's condition or placement:

Standard — The object is in the Ukar's dwelling or worship place.

Hard (-2) — The object is in a place the Ukar knows or has been to before.

Demanding (-4) — The object is in unfamiliar territory.

Tough (-6) — The object is in a well-hidden or buried site.

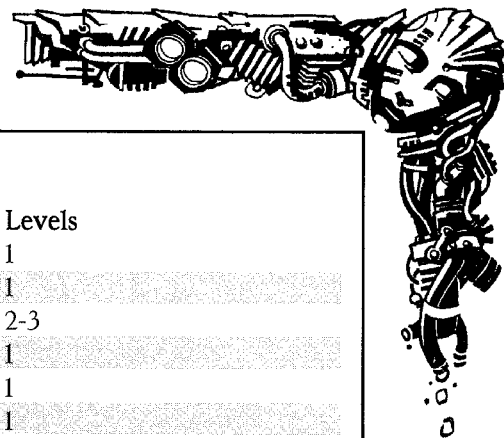
Severe (-8) — The object is in a site untouched since the Anunnaki left it.

This power provides no knowledge about the device's workings or purpose — it simply reveals it to be of Anunnaki manufacture. Conceivably, after long study in other sciences or endeavors, the Ukar may be able to glean some understanding of Ur tech by comparing its energy signatures with its function.

Urge Powers

Ukari Urges result from their cultural hardships. Their warlike and darker natures tend to rise in them due





Gaining Urge

Taboo	Roll	Levels
Dishonoring Banjak tradition	Ego + Stoic Mind	1
Associating with clan foes	Wits + Focus	1
Banished from clan	Faith + Stoic Mind	2-3
Exposure to another's Urge	Psi + Stoic Mind	1
Fumbling a psychic power roll	Psi + Stoic Mind or Focus	1
Exposure to alien occult powers	Alien + Stoic Mind	1
Forced conversion to alien belief	Faith or Wits + Stoic Mind	1-3
Unwarranted murder	Passion + Focus	1-2
Rebellion against clan leader or Nadakira	Wits + Focus	1

Losing Urge

Deed	Roll	Levels
Pilgrimage to Nadakira	Faith + Vigor	1
Recovery of Ur artifact	Faith + Focus	1-2
Performing mission for Banjak priest	Faith + Focus	1
Engaging in Obun meditation	Introvert + Stoic Mind or Focus	1
Exposure to Soul Shard	Psi + Stoic Mind or Focus	2-3
Exposure to Philosophers Stone	Psi + Stoic Mind or Focus	1
Exposure to Second Republic Psi Clinic	Introvert + Stoic Mind or Focus	1-2
Guarding the defenseless	Passion + Empathy	1
Aiding those in need	Passion + Empathy	1
Fulfilling vow	Faith + Focus	1-2
Selfless Sacrifice	Passion + Empathy	1-2
Participating in a living scapegoat ceremony	Faith + Empathy	1-2

to their pride and upbringing, which can be repressive. Usually by puberty, or as a young adult, the Ialtach emerges. Ironically, it is the most tradition-bound Ukari who deal most with their Urges; the more remote one is from Ukari culture, the less the Ialtach tends to grow.

Following are some Urge Powers unique to the Ukari, although Ukari can suffer from the usual Urge Powers as well.

Like other Urges, the Level 9 power creates a living Doppelganger, most often a cannibalistic, crazed Ukari called an *Ormpraki*, which feeds off blood. The Ukar who gave birth to such a monster must hunt it; he is responsible for slaying his shadow and is given little succor by his society until he does so. In addition, the Dementia that comes with Level 7 most often shows itself in cannibalism.

Bestir

(Level 5, Extrovert + Focus)

The Dark Twin stirs in the physical environs rather than the psyche, causing one of a number of poltergeistlike effects: horrendous wind, the ground turns to mud, an avalanche crumbles an underground passage, etc. These can be potentially dangerous for subterranean-dwelling Ukari.

Awaken Brethren

(Level 6, Wits + Empathy)

The Ukar's Dark Twin attempts to activate another's

Urge. The target must role Calm + Stoic Mind or Focus to resist; if he fails, his Urge awakens for that span. This ability is almost subliminal; nothing overt is done. In small, subtle ways, the Urge power is awakened in those near the individual. Eventually, others may realize the source of their troubles.

Banjak Theurgy

Banjak theurgy most closely resembles the Orthodox rites, except that darkness is shaped instead of light. Below are some unique theurgic rites practiced by followers of Banjak.

(Note: Ukari can practise theurgy and possess psychic powers, but it is rare to find both abilities in one Ukar.)

Anikrunta's Blindness

(Level 2, Calm + Focus, G, prolonged, 1W)

This rite creates a dark sphere in the summoner's hands that can be tossed in the direction of enemies, blinding any in its area of effect (five meter radius). An Orthodox Light ritual will cancel the effect but be likewise extinguished (and vice versa).

Kadan's Gift

(Level 3, Introvert + Observe, P, sensory, prolonged, 1W)

This ritual allows the theurge to know his way perfectly in darkness. He can remember directions and "see" (sort of like radar or sonar) as well as in daylight, which



allows him to avoid pitfalls and dangers in unfamiliar territory.

Suffer the Ialtach

(Level 6, Extrovert + Empathy, LGP, touch, instant, IW)

By meditating on the justice of Anikrunta, the theurge may take on another's Urge and act it out, sparing the individual the loss of control and respect. The theurge suffers the target's Urge as if it were his own (although the Urge still uses the target's traits). If performed on an already-awakened Urge (or one that has just awakened), the theurge can attempt to put the Urge back to sleep (using the normal rules for such an action). If performed on an unawakened Urge, the Urge is then awakened and affects the caster, but the Urge's owner gains a +2 bonus to his Stoic Mind or Focus to resist the Urge for the next month.

Sora's Blood

(Level 7, Calm + Physick, LGP, touch, instant, IW)

Like the Sanctuary Aeon ritual, Healing Hand of St. Amalthea, the taudwon can create a blood-drink from water by reciting Sora's mercies (a minor Ukari goddess of healing). Those who drink it heal one vitality point per victory point on the casting roll. All other effects match the Amalthean rite.

Hubris Powers

The following Hubris powers can affect Banjak priests. Use the normal levels given in the rulebook except where a new one is given below.

Dim Lights

(Level 1)

The underground lanterns (*tlakpa*) and all other lights dim when the priest makes his rounds, a visible reminder that she is *narovga*, or "unconnected." This gives the priest time to recognize what is happening and atone for it by a proper ritual to the gods, community and clan.

Blemished Baa'mon

(Level 3)

The Ukar's scars begin to malform, taking on different shapes, spelling different deeds, sometimes blasphemous and sometimes ridiculous. Priests who suffer such lying marks often hide them under robes, which may in itself cause suspicion.

Equipment

Kadak Armor

Defense: 3 + 3d

Tech Level: 3

Cost: 1 Benefice/ 30 firebirds

Produced from galisp and metal, Kadak is an amazingly flexible armor but with strong protection. However, as with galisp clothing, it is considered crude by non-Ukari, who do not like its smell.

Poisons

Kordeth has an abundance of toxic materials that the Ukari have learned to turn into weapons. While clans used to wage biochemical war against one another, most use of chemical toxins today occurs in individual poisons, from paralytic or deadly blade venoms to slow-acting, subtle food poisons.

Blade Venom

There are a number of substances Ukari sometimes coat their krax with:

Plox: This sticky, clear paste (made from ground *boca'ti* seeds and oils) causes paralysis when exposed to the blood. Whenever a blade coated with plox inflicts damage on a target (after armor or energy shields are considered), he must roll Endurance + Vigor for three turns to resist its effects. If any roll fails, the victim succumbs to mild paralysis, falls to the ground and is able to make only minute movements for the next 10 turns. After 10 turns have passed, the victim can move again, but he suffers a penalty of -4 to all actions for the rest of the span.

Plox requires either the skill Alchemy or Lore (poisons) to manufacture (in addition to raw *boca'ti* seeds, found only in certain subterranean tunnels on Kordeth and Aylon). One dose (enough to coat a krax) costs 25 firebirds and will remain on the blade for three strikes (after which it has dissipated enough to be inert). The blade must then be cleaned with a strong solvent; otherwise, it may stick to its sheath (two actions to draw).

It costs 1 Benefice for 10 doses of plox.

Grixi: A more deadly poison, grixi is made from distilled solka blood (odd, albino apelike creatures) mixed with various Kordeth herbs. It is a greenish, slick paste that causes excessive bleeding in wounds. Whenever a blade coated with grixi inflicts damage on a target (after armor or energy shields are considered), it adds one to the dam-

age and continues to inflict one point of blood loss damage every turn thereafter until the flow is staunch, or until five turns have passed (whichever comes first).

The problem is that traditional means cannot stop the blood flow — the clotting process is impaired. High level theurgy (Healing Hand of Amalthea) will seal the wound, as will Elixir (the Second Republic wonder drug).

This poison is hated especially by nobles if for no other reason than that it soils finery with excessive bleeding.

One dose (enough to coat a krax) costs 50 firebirds and remains on the blade for two strikes (after which it has dissipated enough to be inert). It costs 1 Benefice for 5 doses of grixi.

Vorox Killer

This rare but highly valued (by certain parties) poison is one of the few known to bypass the legendary Vorox immune system. It will nigh-instantly kill almost any other sentient and most often kill a Vorox (although some can survive it). The problem is that it must be injected into the bloodstream; the tough part is getting close enough to a Vorox with a needle. For this reason, needler slugs (see below) are the preferred form of delivery.

Once in the bloodstream, the Vorox victim must make an Endurance + Vigor roll every turn for 10 turns. If he succeeds, he takes only one point of damage per turn. If he fails, he takes three points per turn. A critical success will completely wipe the poison from his system; that Vorox will be immune to the poison thereafter. An antidote exists, drawn from immune Vorox. Once administered, the poison will cease causing further damage.

A human or other sentient exposed to Vorox Killer suffers the same as above, except that she takes three points per turn if she succeeds in her roll, and five points if she fails.

Vorox Killer comes in liquid form and is made by a complicated process (requiring some high tech medical equipment) from many Kordeth toxins. It costs 200 firebirds (2 Benefice) per dose. It costs 300 firebirds per dose of the antidote.

Needler slug: This special bullet (of any rifle caliber) is designed to deliver its contents into a target's bloodstream. Once it impacts, a tiny needle is pneumatically engaged to inject a liquid drug or poison. Only if the slug inflicts damage (once armor or energy shield is considered) does the drug take effect. The cost is 25 firebirds for the bullet, plus whatever one dose of the drug costs. It requires a TL7 level of manufacturing to make such a bullet.



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