

INTRODUCTION

That took longer than expected!

You hold in your hands the first new issue of *The Excellent Travelling Volume* in over a year — and there's a very good reason that.

When I decided to produce a *Tékumel* fanzine back in the 2014, I was adamant that I wouldn't commit to a release schedule of any kind. I already knew how easy it is for projects, even ones you love, to get sidetracked by any number of factors. That was, I think, a wise move on my part and it's saved me a lot of headaches and anxiety. No matter how large the gap between the release of new issues, I could never be "late," since I'd never established a firm date for a release. All I ever promised — and even that is a strong word — was that there would be a "next issue" and it would contain certain articles. Little did I realise that my "next issue" blurbs on the back cover would prove to be just as insidious to my productivity as a formal schedule of release dates...

What's kept this issue from appearing sooner is not a lack of interest in continuing the 'zine. I remain as committed as ever to promoting and supporting Professor Barker's world of *Tékumel* as ever. A big part of my enthusiasm comes from the *Empire of the Petal Throne* campaigns I've refereed over the last few years, one of which has been going more or less weekly since March 2015 with no end in sight.

No, what's kept this issue from appearing sooner was the "next issue" announcement of issue #7. In it, I promised a "complete 'campaign starter' set in Sokátis." That task proved a lot more difficult than I'd anticipated and for two very significant reasons. Firstly, my House of Worms campaign is far removed, both physically and thematically, from its early days, when the characters were low-level nobodies engaged in little adventures in and around the Roofed City. Though I have a wealth of material from the days when I first started my campaign there, very little of it fires my enthusiasm right now, at least not when compared to what the characters are currently doing.

Secondly — and more importantly — the only reason I had even promised a "campaign starter" is because a number of readers and *Tékumel* fans had asked me to produce such a thing. I'll be honest: I like giving people what they want. Moreover, I regularly hear would-be *Tékumel* gamers say that they're intrigued by the setting but have "no idea what to do with it." They want *guidance* and *examples* to point them in the right direction. I think that's a perfectly reasonable request and one that *Tékumel* probably needs. Unfortunately, I am not the man to create it, at least not at the present time. My creative energies are elsewhere engaged and it was a grave mistake on my part to promise something I simply wasn't interested in making.

While this is the most spectacular example of my taking my creative cues from others, it's not the first one. You may remember that, at the back of issue #5, I promised "random underworld generation," which is another request I'd gotten from a few readers. I wasn't able to come through with that either and, at least in part, for the same reason: my enthusiasm for it was insufficient to carry me through the hard work of writing the thing. I should have learned my lesson then.

continued on inside back cover >

So, what you will find in this issue is material stemming directly from my campaign, which is now located on a portion of the mysterious Southern Continent known as the Achgé Peninsula. I had no trouble writing this material, because it means a lot to me. What you see in this issue represents, to a large degree, the kinds of material that I'm actively creating for my weekly game sessions. Even if your own campaign is not set on the Southern Continent, I nevertheless hope that you'll not only find the content of issue #8 interesting and inspiring.

That's what *The Excellent Travelling Volume* is supposed to be about: *roleplaying in the world of Tékumel*. I want people to overcome their reticence to play in this remarkable setting. I want to show people that, for all its venomous, six-legged beasties, stratified social structures, and weird words with accents aplenty, Tékumel is really little different from most fantasy roleplaying settings in the kinds of fun to be had there. This issue is filled with examples of how I have used Tékumel and I would love the articles within to inspire others to use it as well.

To that end, I'd once again like to encourage readers to consider making submissions to future issues of this fanzine. Not only will it help me in filling their pages, but it will also ensure that, if there's a topic relating to gaming in Tékumel *you'd* like to see, you needn't wait on me to find the enthusiasm necessary to do it justice. As should now be obvious, I only write about those topics that interest *me*. You, on the other hand, may have different interests and I am more than happy to share them with the wider world of Tékumel fandom.

In general, a submission should be no longer than 3000 words, but I am willing to consider longer submissions (though no longer than 10,000 words). In all cases, I'm most interested in *gameable* material for use with *Empire of the Petal Throne*, such as new monsters, magic items, NPCs, locations, scenarios, and so on. I'm not interested in fiction or reviews at this time, but who knows what the future might hold? If you have something to submit, send it to jdmaliszewski@gmail.com and put "TETV Submission" in the subject line. That will make it easier for me to recognise it for what it is and get back to you quickly.

Finally, I'd like to close this issue's introduction with my thanks to everyone who reads and enjoys *The Excellent Travelling Volume*. While it may be true that creativity is its own reward, I nevertheless appreciate knowing that what I am doing is well received by fans of Tékumel across the world. I'd also like to thank the players of my *EPT* campaigns for keeping me on my toes and pushing me to come up exciting new material for their characters to encounter each week. I'd also like to extend my thanks to the Tékumel Foundation, both for its work in preserving the legacy of Professor Barker and for granting me kind permission to play in the sandbox he created.

To the everlasting glory of the Petal Throne!

James Maliszewski,
June 2018

The EXcellent Traveling Volume



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Linyaró, Outpost of the Petal Throne

Linyaró is the largest city in Tsolyánu's colony along the northeastern coast of the Southern Continent. Two centuries after its establishment, this colony remains small both in terms of its population and its territorial extent. Despite this, it stands as a symbol of Tsolyánu's ambition to live up to the glories of the Engsvanyáli First Imperium, which, at its height, sent explorers, traders, and missionaries far and wide across Tékumel.

HISTORY

Unlike most cities across the face of Tékumel, Linyaró (and, by extension, the colony of which it is the capital) has a comparatively short history, beginning late in the reign of the fifty-sixth Seal Emperor, Gyésmu Dálisan. Known as “the Magnificent and Ever-Living,” Gyésmu consolidated the conquests of his predecessor, in addition to seeking out conquests of his own. His advisors in Avanthár discovered evidence in the imperial archives that the Priestking Ssesmúga III had laid claim to a portion of the Southern Continent, but had never done more than establish border stelae marking his claim.

Needless to say, the thought of achieving something that even the Priestkings of Éngsvan hla Gánga had not appealed to the ego of Gyésmu, who had continually prolonged his life through magic and drugs to ensure that his reign would leave an indelible mark on Tsolyáni history. In 2151 A.S., an expedition headed by the temples of Ksáru and Vimúhla was dispatched on the six month long journey by boat to the Achgé Peninsula of the Southern Continent. This is where Engsvanyáli records had indicated that Ssesmúga III's claim lay and where, if sailors' tales were true, were huge tracts of rich but undeveloped land, ripe for development.

The expedition arrived at the mouth of a river along the coast, where they soon established a base that would eventually grow into the city now known as Linyaró. This location was a fortuitous one, as its climate was moderated by sea breezes off the Gulf of Teriyál and the surrounding soil was fertile. Furthermore, the closest settlement of the native Naqsái, known as Pichánmush, was many Tsán away. Though Pichánmush would later prove an invaluable ally of Linyaró, its disposition toward the colony and its people was not yet known.

Under the direction of the temples of Ksáru and Vimúhla (and, as the colony grew, that of Belkhánu), Linyaró prospered and its population increased. Positive trading relationships were forged with the neighbouring Naqsái city-states, Pichánmush and Mánmikel, and Tsolyáni explorers travelled as far as Chí Tè Kósu and Miktataín, though, because of their distance and the roughness of the terrain, trade was sporadic at best. The Livyáni were encouraged by the example of Linyaró and established their own colony of Nuróab in 2197 A.S., as did an egg-group of Shén originally from Shényu (much to the concern of the Livyáni).

Linyaró has proven, over the two centuries of its existence, to be a stable colony, but its distance from Tsolyánu has limited the attention it has received over the years. Emperor Gyésmu's hopes that its establishment would eventually lead to a growing Tsolyáni

presence on the Southern Continent have proven unfounded. In part, this is because few within the imperial bureaucracy have bothered to make the colony a priority. Most high and even mid-ranked clans, for example, are unwilling to establish clanhouses in Linyaró. The same attitude even prevails among most temples.

Recently, though, the situation has begun to change somewhat. Prince Mridóbu seems to have made Linyaró a “pet project” and dispatched a new governor to the colony, one with a reputation for taking bold – some might say foolhardy – action. The arrival of the new governor was, of course, met with the usual pomp and circumstance, but there are rumblings that the local powers (most notably the Temple of Ksárul) are not especially pleased by his appointment. While it would be presumptuous to assume the colony’s future will be a bright one, it is nevertheless safe to predict that the next few years are likely to be momentous ones, if the new governor’s reputation is deserved.

DESCRIPTION

Linyaró has a permanent population of approximately 10,000, with that number rising at certain times of the year, as colonists dwelling outside the city’s walls spend time here. In addition, Prince Mridóbu’s interest has attracted the attention of others within the Imperium, resulting in a small but steady influx of newcomers, determined to follow his lead. There are also a handful of small villages and minor settlements ringing the city, whose inhabitants are engaged in herding a local variant of the Hmá (see p. 10) and farming. The original Tsolyáni colonists imported many agricultural staples from their homeland, as well as adopted local plants and animals.

One side of Linyaró faces the sea. Multiple docks and wharves dot this stretch of the city. Another side of the city is bounded by a river that the Tsolyáni call the Tontíka. The remaining sides are bounded by a wall, the so-called “New” Wall, which was built beyond the “Old” Wall that marked the edges of the original settlement. To the extent that Linyaró can be said to have an aristocratic precinct, it is the area within the Old Wall. Located outside the walls is the City of the Dead, which is comparatively empty and devoid of monuments compared to most Tsolyáni cities – a testament to its newness.

Linyaró has no Foreigners’ Quarter proper, but neither does the city boast a sizable population of non-Tsolyáni. Naqsái traders from Pichánmush and Mánmikel can be found throughout the city, as can Livyáni engaged in similar pursuits. Shén are present in very small numbers, typically as mercenaries and bodyguards, but they tend to be viewed with wariness, thereby limiting their numbers. Some Tsolyáni complain about this state of affairs and have petitioned the governors to restrict the movements of outsiders according to “proper custom.” So far, these petitions have gone unheeded, for lack of space and resources if nothing else. Any attempt to re-order the occasionally haphazard way that Linyaró is structured would surely run afoul of other vested interests in the city.

Since the Southern Continent was never governed by the Priestkings, there are no Sákbe roads to be found anywhere. Instead, rough dirt roads are the norm (though there are rumours of more sophisticated highways among the more southerly Naqsái city-states). There are three main roads leading out of Linyaró: one to Nuróab to the southeast, one toward Pichánmush to the northwest, and one southwest toward Mánmikel. None of these roads are regularly patrolled and both roads toward the Naqsái city-states disappear into the wilderness, making travel quite rough at times.

CLANS

Because of its distance from Tsolyánu, Linyaró boasts relatively few clans, even given its small population. The majority of the prominent clans in the city would be considered low or mid-ranked in Tsolyánu, but exercise greater influence here. What follows are descriptions of the most significant ones, including a unique local one.

Black Stone

This medium-ranked clan is devoted to the Lords of Change, in particular Hrú'ú, Ksárul, and Sárku, with the faith of the Doomed Prince of the Blue Room predominating. By profession, most members of the clan work as bureaucrats in the colony. Its clanmaster is Trujékku hiVársha, a middle-aged man who had a good relationship with the previous governor. He is considered witty and urbane and is at the centre of much of what passes for “high society” in the colony. His son, Vinchán, works in the palace of the governor and Trujékku places great hope in the young man's future.

Blazoned Sail

This clan is medium-ranked and ecumenical in its religious affiliations. Most of its members are involved in trading and shipping, especially between Linyaró and Nuróab, as well as to mainland Livyánu, which is the closest truly “civilised” land to the Southern Continent. The clanmaster is Mikúsa hiTengúna, a former legionnaire who hails from Jakálla. He is an adherent of Lord Vimúhla's temple but is not especially fervent about it.

Blue Blossom

This clan is unique in that it is local to Linyaró and consists of Naqsái who have adopted Tsolyáni ways under the patronage of the Temple of Ksárul. Owing to its foreign origins, the clan is low-ranked but nevertheless influential, often acting as mediators between the Tsolyáni and Naqsái. Unsurprisingly, its members worship Ksárul and Grugánu. Its clanmaster is a small, wiry old man named Srúnqa hiKhanél. He is very knowledgeable about “the old ways” of his clan, including the history and legends of the Naqsái.

House of Worms

This medium-ranked clan originally hails from Sokátis (see issue #2 of *The Excellent Travelling Volume*) and is only recently established in Linyaró. The colony's new governor is a member of this clan and its clanmaster is his uncle, Grujúng hiZnáyu, a no-nonsense military man. As its name suggests, House of Worms is dedicated to Lord Sárku, though worshippers of all the Lords of Change can be found among its members.

Iron Helm

This clan scarcely exists in Linyaró, being that of the previous governor and, following his death, they have left the colony, with the exception of Srúna hiVázhu, his daughter (see p. 9). The clan is originally from Méku, where they are counted among the aristocracy; they worship Ksárul and Grugánu. Iron Helm is noteworthy

ADVENTURER



This figure wears the characteristic body-paint of the Naqsái people, done in large geometrical panels of black and turquoise. This body-paint is made from a substance harvested from a small domesticated anemone (called a *Jál Hrám* or “little helper”). He carries a single-handed *Ngá Háyu* weapon, constructed of hard *Múrgan*-wood and with sharpened, black *Rúshqa*-ceramic blades. The blades, although incredibly sharp, are prone to breaking and are easily replaced in the wooden case. He wears a patterned kilt, and is carrying a stiff woven basket. He is also wearing elbow and knee pads made of toughened ceramic woven around a wooden frame. He has large plugs inserted into his ear lobes, and his ears are made to stick out by means of plates inserted under the skin, which is considered quite attractive among the Naqsái.

for having taken possession of a large, octagonal clanhouse not far from the City of the Dead. The clanhouse is presently entirely unoccupied and it is rumoured that the House of Worms clan is in negotiations to acquire it to house their growing membership.

Red Moon

This very low clan consists primarily of labourers and other menial workers dedicated to Vimúhla and his cohort, Chiténg. In terms of population, Red Moon is one of the most numerous clans in Linyaró, with a sprawling collection of connected buildings serving as its clanhouse. Its clanmistress is Ngáya hiSavál, a lay priestess of Vimúhla. Reputedly, she came to Linyaró to get away from her husband and children, whose company she does not enjoy.

Red Sky

Another clan devoted to Vimúhla and Chiténg, Red Sky is medium-ranked and consists of farmers, herders, soldiers, and dock workers. Like Red Moon, they are quite numerous in Linyaró. Its members are spread throughout the colony in a variety of low prestige but nevertheless important positions (such as the Harbormaster of Linyaró, for example). Garúda hiMránu is clanmaster; he is a devotee of Chiténg, as the many scars on his body attest quite clearly.

Sinking Land

Devoted to Belkhánu and Qón, this clan is a very low-ranked one in Tsolyánu. In Linyaró, however, it has risen to some prominence, both because of its connections to the influential Temple of Belkhánu and because it is one of the most populous Stability-aligned clans. Its clanmaster is a big, jolly fellow named Orúsu hiKángmodu, who is very family-oriented in his interests.

TEMPLES

As noted previously, the temples of Ksárul, Vimúhla, and Belkhánu (and their cohorts) are most prominent in Linyaró and currently are the only ones with large temple complexes. Shrines to other deities can of course be found, but none of them are as magnificent (or exert as much political influence) – though this situation is beginning to change with the appointment of the new governor.

The temple of **Vimúhla** occupies the largest religious structure in the colony, which is located within the Old Walls. Its devotees are mostly stolid, upright folk, lacking the zeal commonly associated with the Flame Lord's followers. There is, however, a small but vocal cell of the Incandescent Blaze Society, which has cultivated a close relationship with its opposite number in Nuróab's Temple of Ru'ungkáno. Together, they advocate for a strong military stance toward the Naqsái, with some of the most fanatical arguing in favour of wars of conquest – despite the small population of the colonists compared to the natives.

The Temple of **Chiténg** is found across from the Red Sky and Red Moon clanhouses. The temple itself is not especially influential, though several of its devotees occupy prominent positions within the colony, most notably among its soldiery and guards.

Previous governors also turned to the temple for judicial torturers, a practice that has fallen into disuse in recent years, much to its disappointment.

Meanwhile, the temple of **Ksárul** has long held the reins of power within the colony. The last two governors were both worshippers of the Doomed Prince and the new governor, though a member of a Sárku-aligned clan, is also devoted to Lord Ksárul. The temple proper is located outside the Old Walls, but is nevertheless the largest in Linyaró. More importantly, it's situated very close to the governor's palace and there are, it is rumoured, several subterranean tunnels connecting the buildings. The temple's hierarchy has taken a great interest in the Naqsái and in the ruins that litter the Achgé Peninsula, such as Pashkirigo. Naturally, the temple is rife with secret societies, most notably the Refulgent Blue Curtain Society.

The Temple of **Belkhánu** possesses a large building outside the Old Walls, which has stood for a little over a century. Its worshippers are numerous among the Stability-oriented clans of the colony, but are hampered in their influence, owing to their generally low social rank. Even so, the governor and other officials have called upon the temple for its expertise in esoteric matters. In this respect, they act as a counterweight to the Temple of Ksárul, which is often perceived – probably rightly! – of having too much power in Linyaró already.

Until recently, the Temple of **Sárku** was of minor significance and, truth be told, still is. However, with the arrival of a new governor and his Sárku-aligned clan, servants of the Worm Lord are ascendant. Prior to the change in administration, the temple was housed in a small structure not far from the City of the Dead. Now, plans are afoot to take over and expand the gatehouse leading to the necropolis as the location of a new temple. This plan is opposed by the followers of Belkhánu, however; only time will tell whether it will come to pass.

Conversely, plans to build a Temple of **Hrú'ú** in a currently vacant area along the southwestern wall of the city are proceeding without any notable problems. Currently, there is no large shrine devoted to the Master of Negation, so there is a need in this area. Likewise, the hierarchy of the temple has offered much aid to the new governor and been rewarded for their efforts.

Though small in both size and membership, the Temple of **Hnálla** is noteworthy in Linyaró for its efforts to understand the religion of the Naqsái in relation to the pantheon of Pavár. Though largely unsuccessful in convincing the Naqsái of any commonality between their own beliefs and those of the Tsolyáni, the temple has nonetheless accumulated a sizable collection of Naqsái religious texts. Scholars from the other temples, as well as the colonial government, often visit the temple of Hnálla's library to study them.

Though not officially recognised as temples, there are also scattered shrines throughout the city to foreign deities, for the benefit of resident aliens and travellers. The most significant is undoubtedly the Livyáni deity Ru'ungkáno, whose worship is tacitly supported by a faction within the Temple of Vimúhla. The Naqsái god Hánmu (see p. 29) likewise has a shrine, located in the north end of the city, not far from the road to Pichánmush.

PRIESTESS



This priestess of Naháq wears an ornate crown — symbol of her god's role as progenitor of the Naqsái people — constructed from multi-coloured coral, with a large gold plaque in the center. Her boldly patterned shawl is woven of dense but light silk, and treated with strongly contrasting light-resistant dyes. She walks in an elaborate and elegant way that resembles a dance to outsiders. This walk serves a dual purpose: a ritual devotion to Naháq and circulating the air to create a cooling draft around her. Her wrists, ankles, and neck are adorned with the shell and coral jewelry much admired by the Naqsái.

NOTABLE NPCS

Here are brief descriptions of a number of the most significant non-player characters in Linyaró. Referees are encouraged to develop them as they wish, according to the needs of their own campaigns:

Aíthfo hiZnáyu

Aíthfo is the newly-appointed governor of Linyaró, originally hailing from Sokátis. A member of the House of Worms clan and a worshipper of Ksárul, he sees the governorship as an opportunity both to enrich himself and his clan and to explore the largely unknown Southern Continent. Aíthfo is often seized by a powerful wanderlust, much to the dismay of the colonial administration, which would prefer that he stay put rather than charge off into the jungle in search of ancient ruins.

Dásun hiChúnmiyel

Linyaró's harbormaster, a position he inherited from his father. Middle-aged but still good-looking, he is obsequious to those in authority. He has used his position to advance the interests of his Red Sky clan, many of whose members now hold jobs in the docks.

Nebússa hiTéshku

One of the governor's most important advisers, Nebússa is also the local head of the Omnipotent Azure Legion. The Legion is poorly staffed and has limited resources in the colony, much to the consternation of its head, who works tirelessly to improve its spy network.

Rétku hiCháika

Big, bluff, and jovial, he is a sponsor of gladiators in the Hirilákte arena. Rétku takes a particular interest in exotic warriors and has been attempting to find Naqsái interested in testing their skills – and that of their ceramic blades! – against Tsolyáni gladiators.

Srúna hiVázhu

Daughter of the previous governor of Linyaró, Srúna is a lay priestess of Ksárul. After her father's death, she has chosen to remain in Linyaró rather than return to Tsolyánu for reasons unknown. Some suggest that she seeks to advance the aims of her temple, while others feel she would rather be a big fish in the colony's small pond than a much smaller one in the Empire.



Bestiary

(Addition)

Empire of the Petal Throne describes a large selection of flora, fauna, and intelligent non-human beings in its pages, but, for the most part, these all dwell on the same continent as Tsolyánu and the other Five Empires. The mysterious Southern Continent, it stands to reason, has its own unique forms of life. What follows are descriptions of a few of those that have appeared in my own campaign. It is hoped that they will provide inspiration and examples to referees looking to expand their own campaigns beyond the information provided in the *EPT* rulebook.



CHESHCHÁ “THE WOOLY ONES”

Number Appearing: 1–20

Hit Dice: 1+1

Armour Class: 7

Treasure: Nil

Movement: 9”

Lair: 30: 3–60

The Cheshchá is a domesticated creature of the Naqsái of the Southern Continent, kept for its wool and meat. To Tsolyáni eyes, it looks somewhat like the more familiar Hmá and is, in fact, sometimes called such by them, despite a number of anatomical differences. Like the Hmá, the Cheshchá is a grazing herd animal. However, its temperament would best be described as “ornery,” making the job of the shepherds overseeing them quite difficult at times. Its meat is exceptionally tasty and its wool can be spun into very strong and lustrous material.

HÍKKUTU “THE VERMIN”

Number Appearing: 6–24

Hit Dice: 1-4 hit points

Armour Class: 8

Treasure: Nil

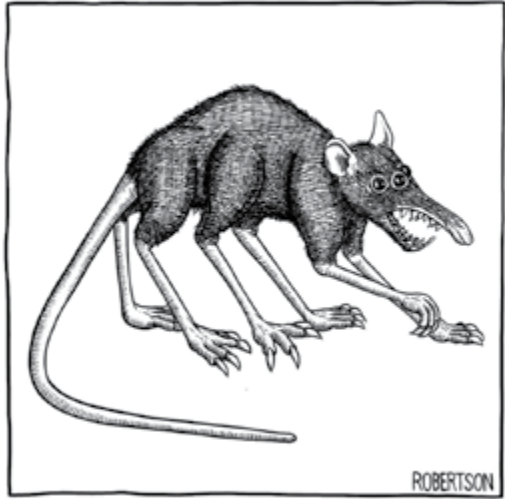
Movement: 15”

Lair: 20: 12–48

Treasure in Lair: A: 20

The Híkkutu is a small (about 6 to 9 inch-long) furry animal with six legs, three eyes, a long tail, and a toothy mouth. A scavenger by nature, the Híkkutu is believed to have originated on Llürúra Isle (where they are well known) and been brought to the Southern Continent aboard Tsoléini trading vessels

to the colony cities of Linyaró and Nuróab. In the decades since their introduction, the Híkkutu have thrived and, along with the Hlingá (see below), they have become regular irritants. The Temple of Durritámish considers these animals sacred to the deity’s third Aspect, Bázh Akhár, who is said to command creatures very similar to the Híkkutu.



HLINGÁ “THE NUISANCE”

Number Appearing: 1–12

Hit Dice: 9

Armour Class: 1-1

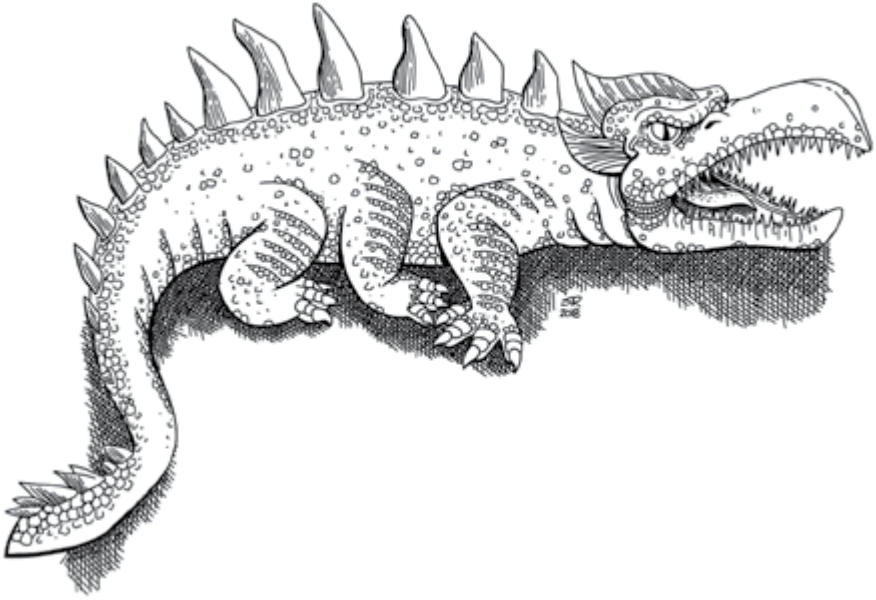
Treasure: Nil

Movement: 15”

Lair: 40: 10–100



The Hlingá is a tiny, six-legged, nocturnal lizard that is commonplace in the northern coastal regions of the Southern Continent. Because of its small size, it is easy prey for larger creatures and thus seeks out places in which to hide. In areas of human habitation, this means Hlingá can be found almost anywhere — inside boxes and other containers, in the rafters of buildings, even in sleeping mats. Needless to say, this behaviour has not endeared them to humans, especially when coupled with the reptile’s other defence mechanism: poisonous secretions. When frightened, the Hlingá oozes a thin slime that induces paralysis in animals weighing less than about 50 pounds who touch it. Larger animals (or adult humans), suffer only painful but not deadly numbness. However, in large quantities, the slime can be used as the basis for a paralysing poison (which can be purchased, albeit illicitly, from those with the know-how).



RUKÉTRA “THE RIVER LIZARD”

Number Appearing: 1–6

Hit Dice: 5

Armour Class: 4

Treasure: Nil

Movement: 12” (in water), 6” (on land)

Lair: 30: 2–12

The Rukétra is a large river-dwelling reptile of the Southern Continent, whose length varies between 10 and 20 feet. The beast possesses six thick legs that enable it to swim surprisingly quickly through water, but which do not function nearly as effectively on land. Its mouth is filled with many needle-like teeth and septic saliva. Anyone bitten by a Rukétra must make a saving throw versus poison or become infected with a disease that drains ten Constitution percentiles per day for 1–6 days. A target whose Constitution drops to zero or less dies. Both *neutralise poison* and *cure disease* counteract the effects of the bite. Lost Constitution percentiles return naturally at a rate of five per day.

Through the Nexus

by Jeff Grubb

This article started with an episode of *The Hall of Blue Illumination* podcast, in which Victor Raymond was talking about meta-knowledge among the players. As an example, he spoke of characters encountering a nexus point, a doorway between locations on Tékumel and other dimensions, and how to keep the players from understanding immediately what that meant. And I thought, “What would characters see with a nexus point, and where could it lead?”

The silver disk is a permanent nexus point. It is silver and mirror-like on one side, matte black on the other. The black side is cold to the touch. From the edge, the disk looks infinitely thin. The nexus point cannot be moved by known magic or technology.

The silver side of the disk is opaque and porous, like the surface of a lake. On a touch it ripples, like a vertical pool of mercury. Pressing a hand through it doesn't activate it — only when the center of mass of an object passes through does it transfer the user fully and completely to the other side. One cannot see through a nexus point until one has passed through it. Nexus points can have a variety of limitations and restrictions — this particular one only passes solids, not liquids or gases, has a weight limitation of about 300 lbs, and does not transfer temperature. Others may vary.

You emerge into a large, darkened cavern. A silver disk, about eight feet across, hangs in the middle of the air, its lower edge about six inches from the cave floor. Your foot crunches on something uneven.

Where this particular nexus points goes is up to the referee and is determined in part by the nature of the object the character crunches underfoot. Here are three options.

Option 1:

The object is a humanoid jawbone, and the nexus leads to a demon plane. The room is littered with bones, a veritable ossuary. All the bones are old and many are unrecognizable as to origin. The nexus was used as a midden by demons and then forgotten. There may be treasure among the debris, but it would be items accidentally tossed aside.

Passing through the nexus, the adventurers find themselves in the basement of an abandoned castle. Outside, they discover a sky of boiling blood and a land dominated by the skeletons of leviathans. The adventurers' presence may be eventually discovered by the natives and the intruders dragged before the lord of the land, an insectoid being named G'jóqem. The demon's servitors are a race of Mihállí whom he has bred for devotion and diminutive height — they are only three feet tall and resemble corgis. G'jóqem understands modern languages, but to speak must drive his proboscis into the back of the neck of one of his slaves and use its voice to converse. This kills the slave.

G'jóqem will seek to enslave any captured intruders and determine how they reached his home. Should the demon discover the nexus point, there will be a rise in demonic activity in the area, as well as diminutive Mihállí raiding parties looking for more slaves.

Option 2: The object is an arrowhead. The nexus leads to a defensive redoubt deep in the past. The arrowheads are Llyáni in style, but are in remarkably good condition for something so ancient. The chamber is littered with the arrowheads and bones, the bones being of both humans and underworld creatures.

The gate leads to a citadel in the Llyáni period, about -25,000 AS. The natives of this era have a clearer knowledge of the technology of their ancestors and, while they can no longer repair the various mechanisms that serve them, they know how they function. The primary deity of these people is the (now Pariah) Goddess of the Pale Bone, though there is a rising faction of Vimúhla worship that is destabilizing the nation. In addition, raiders from the north in air cars are pressing hard on the borders. Within fifty years, the Empire of Llyán and its wonders will be dust.

Still, the rewards from this era are invaluable to any modern scholar. There are not only instructions on manipulating various types of technology, but still-functioning examples of those wonders. However,

the inhabitants of the citadel know of the gate and also know that monsters (and debased but powerful savages) frequently come out of there. They have set up two huge arrow-throwers capable of firing volleys of hundreds of arrows each, decimating anything in their path, including individuals standing in front of the gate on the other side. The troops assigned to these batteries have orders to fire first and loot the bodies afterward. Survivors will be sacrificed to their goddess. Currently, they have no idea that these monsters come from their own far future.

Option 3: The object is a prayer container and the nexus point leads to an underground city long lost to contact. The language on the prayer within the container is debased Engsványali, but the ink is still wet. There are other such containers on the ground. Anyone reading the note's language identifies the prayers as praises and pleas to a variant of Avánthe. Most are mere praises to the deity, similar to the catechism of the current faith, but others speak of praying for a bountiful mushroom harvest or salvation from the "grey raiders".

Passing through the nexus, the explorers will find themselves in a great underground temple-city, among a wide-eyed, pale people who are susceptible to bright lights. The natives of this great cavern have been sealed off from the surface for untold generations, and genetic drift has rendered their skin almost translucent. Having appeared in the main square of the Temple of A'avánt (their name for the goddess), they are treated as messengers of the goddess. Female explorers in particular are treated as the favored emissaries of the goddess, or even incarnations of Avánthe herself.

However, with such great power comes expectations. The newcomers are expected to work miracles, render judgments, express the true message of Avánthe, and in

particular protect the temple city from incursions of Grey Ssú that have already overrun the border outposts of the community and now threaten the mushroom farms that provide sustenance for the people. Failure to live up to the expectations of these people will turn them from worshiping followers to angry mobs desperate to sacrifice them to gain forgiveness from their goddess.

In the longer term, as the Ssú close in on them, the people of the temple city will use the nexus portal as an escape route, flooding this particular region of the underground with refugees, who will be followed closely by the Enemies of Man.

Each of these options has the potential to expand a campaign into new horizons and to change the nature of adventures on Tékumel itself. Indeed, the ultimate solution may be to demolish the approaches to the nexus point, and hope that any future generation that discovers them may show the wisdom of avoidance.

Spells Of Interplanar Travel

Listed below are three new spells that pertain to nexus points and their use. The spells are additions to the Group II and Group III lists detailed in Sec. 510 of the *Empire of the Petal Throne* rulebook. Unlike other spells in those groups, these spells are restricted to members of certain temples, as indicated in their descriptions.

GROUP II

Visitations of Other Planes

By means of this spell (which is available to members of the temples of Belkhánu, Hnálla, Hrűú, Ksáru, Sárku, and Thúmis), the caster can open a nexus point and take 1–6 other people through, one person at a time. The destination is not known in advance, however. Consequently, the caster is advised to be the last one through since the nexus point closes behind him.

GROUP III

The Periplus of the Planes

This spell is available only to members of the temple of Qón who already know the Group II spell *visitations of other planes*. The caster is infallibly guided to the nearest nexus point within 3". This guidance also includes a vague knowledge of its destination (e.g. "the Demon Planes" or "the Isles of the Excellent Dead"). The caster can then choose to enter it or not.

Transmogrification

This spell is available only to members of the temple of Belkhánu who already know the Group II spell *visitations of other planes*. It opens a nexus point to a specific plane already known to the caster (whether through his studies or a mentor). The nexus point is the size of a human being and remains open for 1 turn. The caster may leave and enter by this nexus point as long as the spell remains in force. It can also be recast from the other side in order to return, but one must then stand in precisely the same spot and face the same direction.





Patrons

Previous issues of *The Excellent Travelling Volume* have provided examples of patrons, individuals who might act as employers to the player characters. What follows are five such individuals, each written with the assumption that the characters are currently based in the Tsolyáni colony of Linyaró, but described broadly enough that it should require relatively little effort to use them in other locales, should a referee's campaign not be set on the Southern Continent. As in previous issues, the entries below include not only game statistics for the patrons but four different ways to use them. Even if not used as patrons, these entries can provide the referee with non-player characters for other purposes.



NKÉK-SSÁ

Level IV Warrior; STR 78, INT 62, CON 55, PSY 28, DEX 47, COM 31; To Hit +2; Damage +0; AC 2; HP 30; Original Skills: Geologist, Mason, Miner, Smith-Armourer; Professional Skills: Axeman, Bola-Slinger, Bowman, Crossbowman, Mace/Flail User, Spearman, Slinger, Swordsman; Languages: Livyáni, Shén dialect.

Nkék-Ssá is a Shén mercenary commander from the Shén colony of Shúggar, along the eastern coast of the Achgé Peninsula of the Southern Continent. He formed

the company he currently commands (consisting of 100 soldiers: two Chá-Ss of forty-nine Shén, each commanded by an officer known as a Ká-Chà, of which he is one) after a dispute between the colony's ruling egg-groups resulted in civil strife. Rather than become embroiled in the interminable jockeying for power that would inevitably follow, Nkék-Ssá elected to leave Shúggar to seek employment elsewhere, along with a small but loyal group of companions. He initially sought to offer his services to the Livyáni colony of Nuróab, but its governor was suspicious of him and his motives, a not unreasonable feeling given the occasional skirmishes between the Livyáni and the Shén in the past. Nkék-Ssá then marched his company to Linyaró, where it met with a somewhat warmer welcome. It is near the Tsolyáni colony that he and the Shén under his command are currently encamped.

Recently, four Shén disappeared after entering Linyaró on an expedition to obtain food they might find more palatable than the bland fare they have been eating thus far. Nkék-Ssá has made enquiries with the Tsolyáni colonial government but finding four missing Shén is a low priority for them at the moment, distracted as they are by other more pressing matters. Fearing foul play, Nkék-Ssá has let it be known that he is looking for humans willing to act as investigators into this matter.

He is willing to pay the equivalent of 2000 Káitars for any useful information in this matter – double that if the investigators are able to return the Shén to him unharmed.

1. The missing Shén caused a disturbance in the marketplace and were captured. Fearing Nkék-Ssá's displeasure, they have not sought contact with him to have them released from custody. Doing so requires the expenditure of 250 Káitars for fines and bribes.
2. As 1, except that two of the Shén were slain by the market police.
3. The Shén were waylaid by Tsolyáni slavers, who sold them to Naqsái visiting from the city-state of Mánmikel.
4. The Shén quickly gravitated toward the Hirilákte arena, where they gambled away the funds they were given to purchase food. Now, they are paying off their debts by fighting in the arena themselves – with great success.



AKÁRSH hiVORÚGGA

Level III Priest; STR 33, INT 72, CON 36, PSY 69, DEX 54, COM 48; To Hit -1; Damage +0; AC 9; HP 7; Original Skills: Cook, Paper-Ink Maker, Scholar, Scribe-Accountant; Professional Skills: Cure Light Wounds, Detect Good/Evil, ESP, Produce Light; Bonus Spells: Locate Objects; Languages: Engsvanyáli, Gé Ngáq, Livyáni, Llyáni, Tsolyáni.

Akársh is a fifth circle scholar priest of the Temple of Hnálla and a member of the White Stone clan, one of only a handful of his kin here in Linyaró. Middle-aged and bookish, his primary interest is in lofty theological matters, particularly the relationship between the Pantheon of Pavár and the gods of the native Naqsái peoples. He has thus devoted considerable time to learning the Gé Ngáq language, in order to read the religious texts produced in Pichánmush and Mánmikel. He hopes to be able to master other Naqsái tongues and in this endeavour he has the support of his temple superiors. Despite his scholarly bent, Akársh is well versed in social niceties and is unfailingly polite, even toward those of lower clan status than himself. He is humble and self-effacing in all his dealings.

Akársh has heard that there is a ruined temple located not far from the banks of the Tontika River, several Tsán southwest of Linyaró. This ruin, he claims, shows evidence of ancient Engsvanyáli iconography and decoration, which, if true, suggests that the First Imperium's presence on the Southern Continent might have been more extensive than previously believed. He would like to hire the characters to accompany him on his journey, providing him with protection against the local wildlife, as well as to aid him in the collection of any historical artifacts he might

find in the ruins. Akársh offers 1000 Káitars to each character who accompanies him, regardless of the success of the expedition, in addition to a share of anything valuable they uncover.

1. The ruins exist, just as Akársh believes, but they yield no evidence of an Engsvanyáli presence or anything valuable.
2. As 1, except that buried in the ruins is a small chest containing ancient Naqsái coins (called Tné) worth 5000 Káitars to collectors or scholars.
3. The ruins exist and they include iconography that suggests it was once a temple dedicated to Vaomáhl, the Engsvanyáli version of Vimúhla.
4. As 3, except that the ruins are currently being investigated by agents of the Temple of Ksárul, who are none too keen that anyone else should learn anything from them...



KÁNKOLU

Level I Warrior; STR 32, INT 63, CON 38, PSY 72, DEX 83, COM 47; To Hit +0; Damage +0; AC 7; HP 3; Original Skills: Farmer; Professional Skills: Axeman, Mace/Flail User, Spearman; Languages: Tsolyáni.

Kánkolu is a young Nakomé who lives on the streets of Linyaró, where he begs, cajoles, and steals in order to survive. When he can get away with it, he dwells in the warehouses in the northeast section the city. Being clanless, he has no one to look after him or protect him, so he frequently

finds himself in the employ of various people engaged in less than savoury activities, such as smugglers and others attempting to circumvent colonial law. Consequently, Kánkolu has amassed a lot of information about the nefarious goings-on in Linyaró and would make a valuable informant. Of course, he is very suspicious of anyone he does not know, especially those with obvious official connections.

Nevertheless, he eventually approaches the characters, looking for help. He explains that several of his comrades – other Nakomé whom he has befriended over the last few months – have been turning up dead. Kánkolu cannot approach the authorities for help, feeling that, even if he were not guilty of many petty crimes in Linyaró, they would pay no heed to a clanless waif like himself. Moreover, he is worried that whoever has killed his friends might eventually kill him as well. He has little to offer materially in reward, except the knowledge and experience he has gained living on the streets of Linyaró, which may be valuable to the characters.

1. Kánkolu is simply paranoid. The deaths, while genuinely occurring, are in no way connected and are simply the result of accidents, criminal activities gone wrong, etc.

2. The deaths are the result of an overzealous member of the market police, who has decided to “clean up the streets” of Linyaró by eliminating riffraff like Kánkolu’s comrades. The guard is acting alone in this endeavour and is not supported by anyone within the colonial administration.

3. The deaths are being carried out under orders of a member of a prominent clan who fears that the Nakomé have evidence of his involvement in a smuggling operation on the city’s docks. His agents are actively searching for Kánkolu in order to finish the job.

4. Unbeknownst to Kánkolu, he is the scion of a noble clan who was kidnapped shortly after birth as part of a failed plot. His survival was only recently uncovered and the deaths of his friends are the result of an attempt by the noble clan to locate and return him to its fold.



RÉSHMEL hiSAVÁL

Level II Warrior; STR 66, INT 46, CON 97, PSY 24, DEX 42, COM 52; To Hit +2; Damage +1; AC 7; HP 13; Original Skills: Butcher, Hunter, Slaver, Tanner; Professional Skills: Axeman, Mace/Flail User, Slinger, Spearman, Swordsman; Languages: Tsolyáni.

Réshmel is a popular and well-regarded member of the medium-ranked Red Moon clan, one of several clans devoted to Lord Vimúhla in Linyaró. He has a reputation for being something of a playboy and ladies’ man and is rarely seen without the

company of one or more attractive young – and often not-so-young! – women. He is captain of the governor’s palace guard and, secretly, a member of the Incandescent Blaze Society. His public image as a Lothario is carefully cultivated so that no one takes him too seriously and thus looks too closely into his clandestine meetings late at night.

Despite his secret affiliation, Réshmel takes his job very seriously. After several items of value have gone missing, he has become concerned that there are thieves sneaking into the governor’s palace. However, he wants to avoid arousing suspicion (of either the thieves or the governor’s staff) by posting more guards to the palace. Instead, he would like to hire the characters to undertake surveillance of the palace walls to see if there are in fact any thieves breaking in. If there are, Réshmel instructs the characters to follow them in and then, if possible, alert the guards so that they might be able to catch them in the act.

1. Everything is as Réshmel explained. He will arrange to have the guards “capture” the characters and throw them in the same cell as the thieves, hoping that they might be able to learn who hired them.

2. The “thieves” are actually Livyáni spies, who will fight ferociously to the death, if discovered. Follow-up to this may involve tracking the spies back to their lair and possible employer back in Nuróab; the exact details are left to the referee to determine.

3. Réshmel is actually attempting to discover how a different secret society within the Temples of Vimúhla and Chiténg is planning on disrupting the current governor’s rule of the city, which involves breaking and entering and further nefarious activities whilst inside. Exact details are left to the referee to determine.

4. Réshmel is actually looking for new sacrifices to the Flame Lord, and what better way to do this than discovering “thieves” in the palace? This may involve transporting the characters to a secret shrine hidden in Linyaró or even in the surrounding wilderness. Exact details are left to the referee to determine.



DZENÚRA hiCHARIGÉNA

Level III Lay Priestess; STR 52, INT 93, CON 44, PSY 68, DEX 87, COM 69; To Hit +2; Damage +1; AC 9; HP 9; Original Skills: Assassin-Spy-Tracker, Glass-Blower, Scribe-Accountant, Tailor; Professional Skills: Clairaudience, Clairvoyance, Control of Self, Illusionist; Bonus Spells: Shadows; Languages: Tsolyáni.

Dzenúra is a member of the Blazoned Sail clan, probably the largest shipping clan in Linyaró. Like her kinsmen, she is heavily involved in the moving of mercantile and other goods back and forth between the

Tsolyáni colony and other locales, both on the Southern Continent and across the sea. However, she is young and from a low lineage within the clan and, as such, has regularly been overlooked by the clan’s elders when it comes to lucrative ventures. Consequently, she has grown embittered and resentful, which has led her to look for other means by which she might be able to make money.

Dzenúra found an *extremely* profitable way to make money: acting as a spy and informant for the Livyáni Vrú’oneb, reporting ultimately to an officer within that dread agency known only as “the Second of Three.” As part of her spying, Dzenúra regularly sends caravans to Nuróab, most of them completely legitimate in their activities, but with a few acting as covers for espionage activities, often without those accompanying them aware of it. She approaches the characters to act as guards of a shipment of wine to Nuróab by two drivers, a dozen bearer slaves, and an overseer for the slaves. She will pay double normal wages if the shipment arrives successfully in Nuróab.

1. The shipment is wine and nothing more. The journey to the Livyáni colony will be dull and uneventful, aside from the usual hazards.

2. As 1, except that a band of Naqsái robbers will attempt to waylay the caravan.
3. There are stolen Tsolyáni government records being smuggled in one of the wine casks. Along the way, this cask accidentally falls and bursts open, revealing its contents. If the characters find this worrisome in any way, the two drivers and slave overseer, all of whom are aware of the operation, will attack the characters, attempting to kill them before they can escape and reveal the plot.
4. As 3, except that, before the cask falls and bursts open, the caravan is stopped by a small detachment of Tsolyáni soldiers tipped off about the smuggling operation. They will search the casks and, upon finding evidence of official documents being taken illicitly, will arrest the characters on charges of espionage. The drivers and overseer will claim they are employed by the characters and deny any knowledge of Dzenúra, in an attempt to fix the blame squarely on their soldiers.

Initial Encounters in Linyaró

The tables below are intended as replacements for those presented in Sec. 1110 of the *Empire of the Petal Throne* rulebook when the characters are dwelling in Linyaró.

Roll	Identity of Visitor(s)
1–10	Change Priest(ess): 70% male; + 1–12 guards.
11–20	Stability Priest(ess): 70% male; + 1–12 guards.
21–30	Military Officer: 80% male; + 2–24 soldiers.
31–40	Lay Priest: 60% male; level II-V; + 1–6 guards.
41–50	Merchant: 70% Tsolyáni, 20% Livyáni, 10% Naqsái; 1–12 + 2–24 guards.
51–60	Clan Leader: 50% male; + 2–24 guards.
61–70	Nonhuman: 70% Shén, 30% some other species; 1–12.
71–80	Foreigner: 70% Livyáni, 20% Naqsái, 10% Tsoléini or Mu'ugalavyáni; 50% male; 60% alone, otherwise 1–12 guards.
81–90	Scholar: alone
91–100	Agent of the Governor; + 2–24 guards, 1–6 companions of levels II–V.

Roll	Nature of Mission
1–10	Join trading party to: Nuróab (40%), Pichánmush (30%), Mánmikel (20%), elsewhere (10%).
11–20	Seek out a specific object or person.
21–30	Help in a quarrel, join in political intrigue, assassinate visitor's enemy, fight as champion in a duel.
31–40	Join visitor as bodyguard.
41–50	Join raiding party against Naqsái (60%), Shén (20%), Livyáni (10%), other (10%).
51–60	Join in an expedition to Naqsái ruins.
61–70	Become the visitor's champion in the Hirilákte arena.
71–80	Journey to visitor's home (purpose decided by referee).
81–90	Join sea voyage aboard exploratory or trading vessel.
91–95	Join a hunting expedition.
96–100	Go on a secret mission for the Governor.

The Achgé Peninsula

My longest running campaign began its existence in and around the Tsolyáni city of Sokátis (described in issue #2 of *The Excellent Travelling Volume*). After a little more than two years of weekly play, the characters, nearly all of them members of the Sárku-worshipping House of Worms clan, had achieved some level of power and influence. In fact, they came to the attention of Prince Mridóbu, one of the possible successors to the current emperor, whose agents approached the characters with an unusual offer: journey across the sea to the far-off Tsolyáni colony on the Southern Continent and take up its reins. Not only would they be serving the Petal Throne in this lonely outpost, they would bring wealth and honour to their clan. The characters accepted and, after a very long journey, they reached the shores of the Achgé Peninsula, a large promontory of the mysterious Southern Continent.

Over the last year, the characters have begun to explore the Peninsula and interact with the local Naqsái. This has given me the opportunity to develop this largely unknown land as I wish, some of the fruits of which are detailed in the following article. I should note, as I typically do, that almost nothing in this article is “official” or “canonical,” which is to say, a formal addition to the corpus of Tékumel lore produced by Professor Barker. I have, of course, tried very hard to hew as closely as possible to the scant information Professor Barker did provide us about the Southern Continent and its inhabitants, but, when such information was lacking, as it was in most cases, I have instead used my own imagination, guided by my sense of what “felt right” for Tékumel. Naturally, some may disagree with the choices I have made. If you are among them, I encourage you to change, alter, or otherwise embellish the following as you see fit. It was, after all, Professor Barker’s express wish that we make Tékumel *our own* and this article, like everything else I have published in the pages of this fanzine, is offered in that same spirit. Enjoy!

HISTORY

The history of the Achgé Peninsula is largely a mystery to the peoples of the Five Empires. The earliest references to it occur during the reign of the Engsvanyáli Priestking Ménkoru I, who is said to have established trade with the Naqsái, though specifics are vague. Later, the Priestking Ssesmúga III sent exploratory expeditions to the Southern Continent, including the Achgé Peninsula, where his agents laid claim to certain tracts of land in the name of Gánga. Unfortunately, these claims were never backed up with force and they lay dormant until the Second Imperium. The Southern Continent also figures into legends about the last Bednallján emperor, who, it’s said, after escaping execution at the hands of the newly-powerful priests of Pavár’s gods, travelled Tékumel and suffered many vicissitudes. Among these was a sojourn among the Naqsái. These tales mention several locations, such as Uníngmo, Ruqúmak, and Ketláno, that are unknown today and might well be imaginary. It is also said that the Engsvanyáli Archon of Blue, Tirisánte Melél, following her defeat during the Flower Wars, was exiled to the Southern Continent, where she was recognised by the locals as a great queen.

SOUTHERN CONTINENT

In writings about Tékumel, the term “the Southern Continent” crops up from time to time, without any real explanation of its meaning. That’s because, to the Tsolyáni, “the Southern Continent” is a phrase akin to *terra incognita*. The Tsolyáni know that there is a large landmass to the south of their own empire and that it is inhabited by a number of different (from their perspective) barbarous cultures, none of whom benefited from the benevolent rule of Éngsvan hla Gánga. Beyond that, most know little and care less. It is thus commonplace to attribute anything weird, strange, or exotic as being “from the Southern Continent,” even when this is not strictly speaking true.

Furthermore, even those who know more about the continent across the sea have reached no consensus on where the Southern Continent is to be found. Is Háida Pakála located on the Southern Continent? What about Ónmu Tlé Hléktis and Arghá on the far side of the Straits of Shéngelu? Or does “the Southern Continent” refer only to the so-called “Unknown Land” on which Tsolyánu and Livyánu have established their colonies? Is there a single Southern Continent or are there many? There is no definitive answer to this question, in large part because the peoples of the Five Empires have thus far shown no strong desire to explore these regions and thereby learn enough to come to a conclusion. That the Engsvanyáli (seemingly) did not travel there is good enough reason not to be curious about them.

For the purposes of this issue of *The Excellent Travelling Volume*, “the Southern Continent” is used interchangeably with the somewhat more precise term “the Achgé Peninsula.” The Peninsula is a sizable promontory located southwest of Livyánu and Shényu and is the home of the cultures collectively known as the Naqsái. Future issues might explore other southerly regions and, if so, more precise terms for those lands will also be introduced.

Naqsái histories, at least those written in the Gé Ngáq and Chetén languages of which Tsolyáni scholars have had access, are frustratingly scattered, even fragmentary, in their treatment of the past. To some extent, this is likely due to the Naqsái’s lack of a unifying empire after the semi-mythical reign of the god-king Naháq. Most histories are thus localised or treat very specific subjects, which, while useful, make it harder for outsiders to get a good sense of the overall scope of events on the Peninsula.

What has been ascertained suggests that the Naqsái people themselves have long lived on the Achgé Peninsula. Before the coming of Naháq, who is said to have come from “beyond the Land of the Crystalline Hmá,” they believe their ancestors lived in scattered, primitive tribal groupings. Naháq taught them the arts of writing and the creation of *Rushqá*-ceramic, as well as the worship of the Great Lord Hánmu. Naháq is credited with founding numerous cities on the Peninsula, most notably Té Fázh, which served as his seat of power until he left the mortal plane after successfully defeating the minions of the goddess Kiríg. After his ascension, the history of the Naqsái is one of almost constant warfare between the cities Naháq founded, as they each laid claim to his legacy. Over time, as new religions and philosophies emerged, this warfare subsided to some extent but never completely ceased. To this day, rivalries between city-states is a prime driver of events, as the Tsolyáni and Livyáni have discovered since establishing colonies on the Southern Continent.

ENVIRONMENTAL NOTES

The Achgé Peninsula is hot and humid, even by Tsoiyáni standards. The northern portion of the Peninsula, especially along the coast, is more tolerable than the regions farther to the south, which are close to the equator. The temperature varies between 35° and 45° C, with summer extremes reaching well above 50° C. These temperatures are even worse as one heads southward and, in both regions, humidity is often intolerable. Most settlements of any size are built with basements and sub-levels, so that the inhabitants can escape from the oppressive heat during the day. Rainfall is quite significant in the northern portion of the Peninsula – over 500 cm annually – but less so in the south, except along the coasts. This suggests that the farther south one gets, the less likely it is to be inhabited by human beings.

The Naqsái have developed several means to avoid the dangers posed by the intensity of the sun in the Achgé Peninsula. The most commonplace are ointments rubbed on the skin that leave no trace other than an oily residue. Some of these ointments leave solid blocks of colour, placed on parts of the body where sun-burn typically happens – forehead, nose, tops of shoulders, etc. – and have developed, cultured, formal shapes rather than rough finger-painting (as found among children and during festival times). Some ointments also contain metallic elements that help reflect the rays of Tuléng, but these are of course quite expensive. Bright turquoise is most popular as it is easily obtained from a common variety of sea anemone that the Naqsái look upon with great fondness, called the *Jál Hrá́m* (or “little helper”). Children often keep these creatures as pets in large, shallow ceramic bowls in their homes.

The Naqsái have also adopted the use of sun-shades, both individual parasols and larger canopies. The poles are adorned with mythological figures, images of their gods and lineage symbols. The tightly woven silk fabrics are dyed in extraordinary brightly-coloured patterns. As with the skin ointments, yellow, black, and turquoise dominate, but other coral-like colours are known. The dyes contain minerals that increase the fabrics’ ultraviolet protection and the whole has a lustrous shine and iridescent quality. The Naqsái use the same material to make full length cloaks with hoods and ankle-length, loose flowing robes that the wearers waft to make drafts around their bodies. A simple walk down the street thus looks like an exotic ritual dance to outsiders. Because of their expense, such extravagances are the preserve of the higher lineages.

In terms of terrain, the Peninsula is quite varied. The coastal regions are mostly grasslands or plains, while much of the interior is forested. Forests come in several varieties, though the most common are dense jungles of lianas, cycads, and large flowers. In the midst of these jungles is found the Múrgan-tree, which provides a hard, dark wood used by the Naqsái in building. Palmetto forests are also prevalent, particularly around the many rivers that crisscross the Peninsula. There are mountains in the region, though they tend not to be as high as those found in the lands of the Five Empires. The primary exception is the Ketlák Árchav range toward the centre of the Peninsula. These mountains are not only taller than those elsewhere on the continent but the source of much mining, particularly the Aón-gems used in the making of Rushqá-ceramic.

GUARDSMAN



This Naqsái guardsman of the city-state of Mánmikel carries a large double-ended *Ngá Háyu* weapon. He wears heavy armor: a shawl constructed of toughened *Rúshqa* plates and hard wood, along with elbow and knee pads of the same wood and wicker. His carved helmet is a visual reference to the god Eyenál but the beak-visor also serves a practical purpose in shading the eyes from the ever present glare of Tuléng.

CULTURAL NOTES

The people of the Achgé Peninsula are known collectively as the Naqsái, which means “sons of Nahág” in the ancient Ajaján language. However, there is a fair degree of linguistic diversity among the Naqsái, with at least three major languages identified among the inhabitants of the northeast portion of the Peninsula alone. Owing to a shared logographic script, these languages are largely mutually intelligible to one another, but, in spoken form, there is some difficulty. Too little is known about the tongues of the south and west to comment.

The social structures of the Naqsái are quite different than those of the Five Empires. Being outside the Engsvanyáli cultural sphere, clans are unknown. Instead, lineages (descended through the male) form the basis of kinship. A Naqsái might introduce himself as “Naímin Garvár, son of Hárukat” or, more formally, “Naímin, son of Hárukat, of the lineage of Garvár.” Owing to the more overtly patriarchal bent of Naqsái society, even women identify themselves in relation to their fathers, substituting “daughter of” for “son of.” The main exception are priestesses, who simply do not identify their fathers, and the *Jayáma*, or “changed.” This peculiar group consists of women who have formally vowed to renounce their birth sex and to live as men. In doing so, they gain all the privileges of men, such as the ability to carry weapons and fight, bring legal cases to court, and participate in political life. They may even take a wife. However, the *Jayáma* cannot bear children; doing so violates their vows and is punishable by death. Of course, the wife of a *Jayáma* is under no such restrictions and, provided she is discreet about it, the affair that brings it about will not be cause for comment and her children will be treated as the offspring of her *Jayáma* husband. To Tsolyáni eyes, this institution is strange and ignoble, but it seems to work for the few Naqsái women who take it up.

Another noteworthy social institution among the Naqsái is the *Varúsht* or “lodge.” A lodge is a bit like a professional guild, its members coming from many different (thought often related) lineages who share a craft, occupation, or interest. There are thus *Varúsht* dedicated to carpentry, mining, and smithing, but also to trade, soldiering, and administration. Some lodges are exceptionally powerful and influential, like the Illustrious Lodge of Weapon Sharpeners in the city-state of Mánmikel, which holds a monopoly on the sharpening of *Rushqá*-ceramic that is used to make the finest blades on the Achgé Peninsula. Furthermore, religiously-oriented lodges, consisting of priests, acolytes, and the devout, function as political factions in many city-states.

Some words about the Naqsái philosophical/theological system are in order. The Naqsái divide the cosmos into three great forces. They see the Totality of Existence, that is, everything that ever was, is, or shall be, as a single thing that they call *Avúk*. This encompasses both life *and* death, in addition to other opposites, such as change and stability – much to the dismay of the Tsolyáni. Opposed to this is void, nothingness, and non-being, which they call *Znál*. All the gods, goddesses, and spirits of the Naqsái are associated with one or the other of these concepts, with most being aligned with *Avúk*. There is also a third concept, one based on self-interested detachment from the other two. Called by a variety of names, including *Heshán* and *Hrashár*, it plays little role in Naqsái life and is, in fact, generally viewed as slightly sinister, even moreso than *Znál*.

The highest god of *Avúk* is called Hánmu and is a remote deity who simply observes the turning of the cycles of existence. Beneath Hánmu are innumerable lesser deities, some of whom are mortals who have ascended to godhood through various means. The previously mentioned Nahák is a prime example of such a deity, as is Eyenál, who was Nahák's companion. The highest deity of *Znál* is Kiríg, an actively malevolent goddess who seeks to consume *Avúk* and thereby give birth to a new cycle of Existence. In many respects, she resembles the Goddess of the Pale Bone, though the Naqsái do not treat her with equivalent abhorrence, despite her frightening nature. Indeed, there were once entire city-states dedicated to her worship, such as ruined Pashkírigo. All of the Naqsái deities, with the exception of Hánmu, have been known to inhabit mortal vessels (called *Suyála* or *Shulá*) for a time, in order to involve themselves directly in mortal affairs. Kiríg seems to be especially prone to this, her last such vessel being a mighty ruler called *Srúvar Gét*, or “the Azure Queen in Glory.”

Priests and priestesses enjoy considerable influence among the Naqsái and, in many city-states, hold political power. This is especially true in city-states like Mánmikel or Pichánmush, whose founding is attributed to a deity. In such cases, the god is held as its ruler, with a priest or council of priests ruling as his “regent.” A good example of this is the *Sunímash* (or “successor”), who governs Mánmikel on behalf of Eyenál. Relations between the city-states is complex, determined by history, trade, and religious factors. Warfare between the city-states is sporadic but far from unknown, often initiated by auguries and omens as interpreted by the powerful priesthoods. Presently, there is friction between Mánmikel and Pichánmush, much to the dismay of Linyaró, which has attempted to maintain positive relations with both city-states.

Chlén are unknown in the Achgé Peninsula, which means weapons, armour, and other implements are not made of their hides. Instead, a ceramic known as *Rushqá* is used. The process of creating *Rushqá* is complex and its full details are closely guarded secrets of several *Varúshto*. It begins by harvesting shellfish called *Jájnekursh*. These creatures dwell in the waters along the northern coasts and their shells are ground to produce the raw materials for the ceramic. Once fired, the ceramic itself is exceptionally hard and difficult to work, owing to its incredible hardness. Doing so requires the use of a metal (called *Aón* by the Naqsái), which is mined in the Ketlák Árchav mountains to the south. Weapons made of *Rushqá* are very hard but somewhat brittle unless carefully – and expensively – made.

PLACES OF NOTE

What follows is a very brief gazetteer of the settlements and points of interest encountered by the characters in my campaign, as they have explored the Achgé Peninsula. As the map insert accompanying this issue shows, this gazetteer is far from extensive and, in fact, represents only a tiny portion of what the Peninsula holds. Referees are, therefore, encouraged to use this material as a starting point in creating their own version of the Southern Continent.

Chí Tè Kósu

This Naqsái city-state boasts a population of 200,000 and derives its importance

SWORDSELLER



The Naqsái swordseller is offering a large *Rúshqa*-ceramic blade for sale. The sword is constructed as one piece, with the textured handle seamlessly blending into the extremely sharp single-sided blade. Such an item is of great value and of relative scarcity, the manufacture being a secret known only to certain *Varúshto*, or “lodges” devoted to their creation. Her wealth is further evidenced by the coral and shell jewelry woven into her hair and the use of gold body-paint. The various tusks and shells and the sticking out of her ears are particular marks of beauty for the Naqsái.

from the mines it controls in the nearby mountains. Both Aón and iron are among its trade goods, with the latter being found in fairly small quantities. Chí Tè Kósu is ruled by a council of priests ostensibly dedicated to the goddess Kiríg, but their devotion is lax.

Hritlá

A tiny settlement formerly devoted to smuggling and piracy. Since the arrival of the new governor of Linyaró, Hritlá has been brought upon Tsolyáni jurisdiction and its previous illicit activities stopped.

Isle of Sweet Gentility

Also known as the Island of Kaktapái, there are extensive ruins under it. Unsubstantiated rumours suggest that it was once the dwelling place of one of the Lords of the Latter Times and is, therefore, filled with ancient wonders.

Land of Crystalline Hmá

This possibly imaginary place is known by many names, but this is the most common. It gets its name from the reputedly weird beasts that dwell there, which are said to be “made of crystal and glass.”

Linyaró

More information can be found on pp. 2-9.

Mánmikel

With a population of 90,000, this Naqsái city-state is an important trading partner of Linyaró. Its leader is a high priest who rules in the stead of the god Eyenál. Mánmikel’s primary trade is the processing of Aón-metal, which it acquires from Chí Tè Kósu.

Miktataín

A powerful Naqsái city-state with a population of 300,000, Miktataín is a naval and mercantile power. Its influence is wide and Miktataíni merchants maintain connections across the Achgé Peninsula.

Nuróab

This Livyáni colony has a population of 7000. Its governor, Míuz Galáku, is a political non-entity and it is widely believed that he is a puppet of either mercantile interests or the Vrú’unek (depending on which rumours one accepts).

Pashkírigo

This is a ruined Naqsái city, which was supposedly ruled by the Azure Queen in Glory (see p. 29) during her last manifestation upon Tékumel several millennia ago. The ruins are extensive and, it is said, descend beneath the surface of the earth.

Pichánmush

A Naqsái city-state on the coast of the Achgé Peninsula with a population of 100,000. Its primary export is the raw materials needed to produce *Rushqá*-ceramic. Its leader is a high priest who is never seen by the populace and who guides the city according to the ways of the god Hánmu. Soldiers from Pichánmush guard the ruins of Pashkírigo and allow no one to enter.

Shúggar

A Shén colony made up of several egg-groups originally from Shényu, its population currently numbers about 5000. Shúggar is regularly convulsed with civil strife, as egg-groups contend for dominance. The Shén lay claim to large swaths of the

surrounding territory and have occasionally clashed with the Livyáni or Nuróab.

Srún

Srún is a possibly mythical human-ruled land to the far south, whose inhabitants are said to dwell beneath the surface of the land. Little else is known about it.

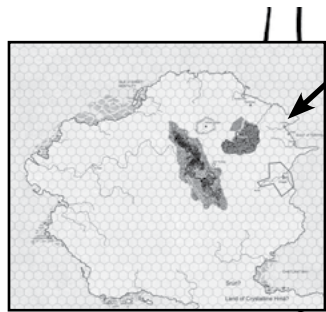
Té Fázh

This city is the legendary capital of Naháq's ancient empire and reportedly still stands far to the west. Little is known about its current disposition.

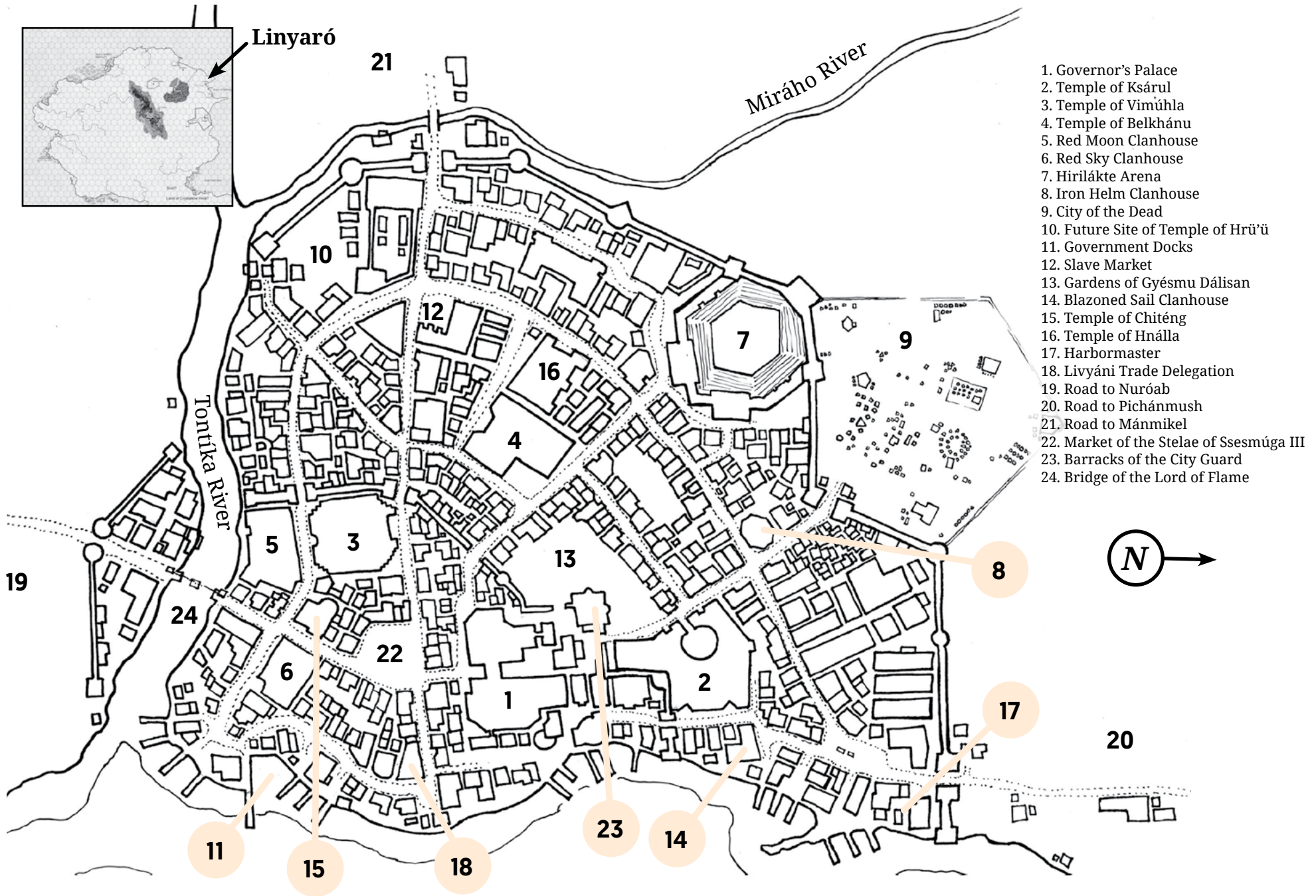
Temple of Ages

Located at the bottom of a large crater, the Temple of Ages is said to exist only partially on Téकुmel's plane. True or not, there can be no doubt of both its antiquity and the weirdness that surrounds it. Unusual beings and beasts are sometimes seen near it. The Naqsái avoid the place and encourage others to do so as well.

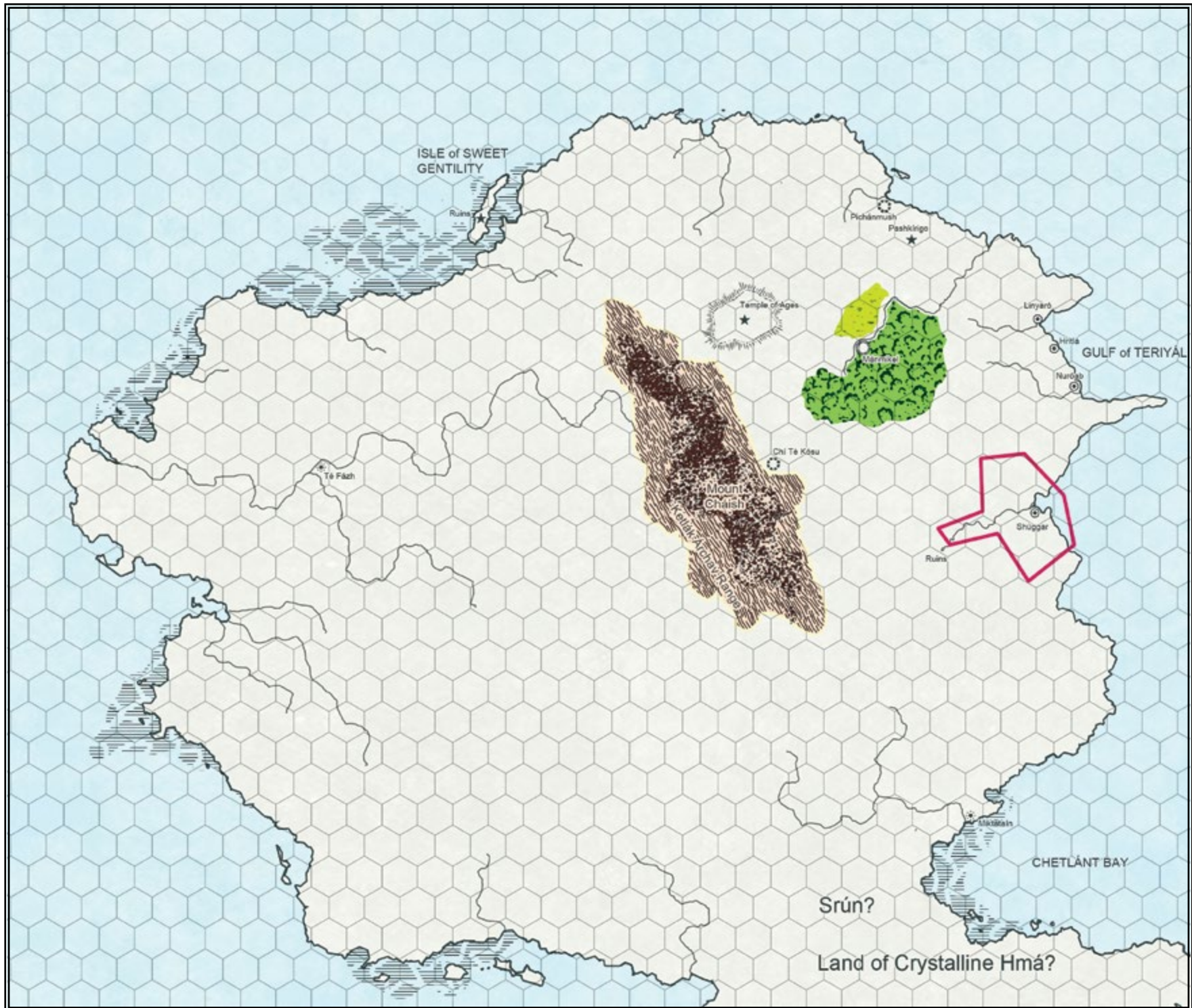




Linyaró



1. Governor's Palace
2. Temple of Ksárul
3. Temple of Vimúhla
4. Temple of Belkhánu
5. Red Moon Clanhouse
6. Red Sky Clanhouse
7. Hirilákte Arena
8. Iron Helm Clanhouse
9. City of the Dead
10. Future Site of Temple of Hrü'ü
11. Government Docks
12. Slave Market
13. Gardens of Gyésmu Dálsan
14. Blazoned Sail Clanhouse
15. Temple of Chiténg
16. Temple of Hnálla
17. Harbormaster
18. Livyáni Trade Delegation
19. Road to Nuróab
20. Road to Pichánmush
21. Road to Mánmikel
22. Market of the Stelae of Ssesmúga III
23. Barracks of the City Guard
24. Bridge of the Lord of Flame



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Four New Creatures

Through the Nexus

by Jeff Grubb

Five New Patrons

The Achgé Peninsula

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