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A fanzine of M.A.R. Barker's World of Tékumel

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first issue of *The Excellent Travelling Volume* – the first of many, I hope! *TETV* is a fanzine devoted to supporting referees and players involved in fantasy roleplaying campaigns using the *Empire of the Petal Throne* (1975) rules.

A couple of preemptive answers to questions I am sure to get. Firstly, I will not be publishing “generic” *Tékumel* material herein. Everything that appears in this and future issues is for use with *Empire of the Petal Throne*. I do this not because I disdain other rules sets – I borrow ideas from several of them! – but because *EPT* is the rules set that I use when refereeing adventures and campaigns on the alien planet of *Tékumel*. Furthermore, the purpose of *The Excellent Travelling Volume* is to provide practical support for roleplaying campaigns, which is far simpler by referencing only one set of rules rather than several. That said, much of the content of *TETV* should be easily adaptable to other *Tékumel* RPGs.

Secondly, *The Excellent Travelling Volume* is and will always be available only in print. I decided to produce this fanzine not only to promote *Empire of the Petal Throne* and *Tékumel*, but also as an exercise in the grand old tradition of gaming ‘zines going back to the earliest days of the hobby. These publications were labours of love – hand-assembled, and sent in envelopes through the mail. I very much want *TETV* to be like those fanzines of yore and, as such, there will never be an electronic version of it. I want this volume to be a physical artifact that readers can hold in their hands and peruse with their fingers. From my perspective, their being able to do this is part of the point in producing a ‘zine in the first place.

It goes without saying that nothing found in these pages should be construed as “official” *Tékumel* material, which is to say, the content herein represents only my own idiosyncratic approach to Professor Barker’s setting and nothing more. Admittedly, my approach is based heavily on Professor Barker’s writings, but there will almost certainly be material presented that deviates in some way from his vision of *Tékumel*. It is my hope that this material is nevertheless considered good and useful to players of *Empire of the Petal Throne*, as well as providing one example of how to make the setting one’s own.

Though it is my great desire to produce issues of *The Excellent Travelling Volume* at regular intervals, I know only too well how easily a project like this can be delayed or sidetracked. Consequently, I shall not commit to a schedule. My only promise is that each new issue, whenever it appears, will continue to offer a wide variety of useful material in support of ongoing *Empire of the Petal Throne* campaigns.

In conclusion, I would like to thank several individuals without whom this fanzine would not have been possible. First and foremost is M.A.R. Barker. I had the good fortune to have corresponded with “Phil,” as he asked me to address him, over the course of several years. That correspondence not only filled me with an abiding love for *Tékumel* but also with respect and affection for its creator, one of the “founding fathers” of the hobby of roleplaying. Additionally, I would like to thank Victor Raymond and the *Tékumel* Foundation for the work they are doing in helping to preserve the legacy of Professor Barker. Jason Sholtis and Luigi Castellani also deserve effusive praise for the artwork that graces these pages, as do Simon Forster (for the map on p. 25) and Matt Hildebrand (for the ‘zine’s layout). Finally, I would like to thank my many friends who have aided and encouraged me in ways too numerous to mention over the last few years. I owe a great deal to you all.

James Maliszewski
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The EXcellent Travelling Volume



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Alignment (Changes)

Section 310 of the *Empire of the Petal Throne* rulebook establishes that “for convenience’s sake ... all characters are divided into two basic types: those serving the Good Gods and their Cohorts, and those serving their Evil counterparts.” In later works describing Tékumel, such as *Swords & Glory, Volume 1: Tékumel Source Book*, Professor Barker presents a different and more nuanced alignment system. Instead of “Good” and “Evil,” there are “Stability” and “Change” respectively. Throughout this and subsequent issues, it is this more nuanced alignment system that will be used.

Profession (Additions and Changes)

In my own campaign, I allow the original three character professions presented in Section 330 of *Empire of the Petal Throne*. However, I call magic users “lay priests,” because that name better represents their place of Tsolyáni society. Lay priests are devotees of a temple who perform their skills for pay to nobles and high clans. Though associated with a particular temple, they operate independently and outside its hierarchy. Throughout this and subsequent issues, both terms will be used.

I also allow two additional classes, the first of which is the shaman, an early version of which originally appeared

in issue #7 (Fall 2009) of *Fight On!* The version presented on pages 3–9 is somewhat different, having been modified as a result of play in the adventures and campaigns I have refereed in the years since it first appeared.

Basic Talents (Changes)

As described in Section 410, the player rolls percentile dice to determine his character’s basic talents. Some players may find this method unsatisfactory, due to the wide variability of possible scores. To ameliorate this somewhat, the referee might allow use of the following table, which grants bonuses to the die rolls for basic talents.

<i>If the Die Roll Is:</i>	<i>Add This Bonus:</i>
01–25	+25
26–50	+15
51–70	+10
71–90	+5
91–00	+0

For example, a player rolls 53 for his character’s Intelligence. Consulting the table above, this earns a +10 bonus, resulting in a final Intelligence score of 63. Using this table is entirely optional, of course, as it tends to result in slightly better than average characters — or at least ensures that few characters are totally unsuitable.

The Shaman (Addition)

Empire of the Petal Throne assumes that all beginning player characters are foreigners who have arrived at the great Tsolyáni port city of Jakállá, seeking adventure and the chance to acquire Imperial citizenship and the rights thereto. As a framing device for players unfamiliar with the intricacies of Tsolyáni society and culture, it is absolutely brilliant. The characters, along with their players, can thus be slowly initiated into the mysteries of Tékumel by degrees rather than thrown headfirst into one of the most detailed roleplaying settings ever created.

Though foreigners, not every starting player character will necessarily be a “barbarian.” Some might well come from cultures that are older even than Tsolyánu! Some will be, of course, not least because the opportunity to portray a Tekumeláni-style Conan, aghast at the byzantine complexity of Tsolyáni society, is too rich an opportunity for roleplaying to pass up. The warrior class can be used as written for such characters, but what if the player wishes to play a magic-using barbarian? *Empire of the Petal Throne*’s two spell-casting classes — the priest and the magic-user — are clearly products of highly civilized societies, such as those of the Five Empires, and make less sense in unsophisticated ones.

Enter the shaman. This new class is an “uncivilized” spellcaster, with its own spells and skills, many of them unique.

What follows is a description of the shaman class, its abilities, and some suggestions for how to include the class into a new or ongoing campaign set on Tékumel. Because the shaman is a new class whose rules modify those in the *Empire of the Petal Throne* rulebook, the information below is organized according to the section numbers of the rulebook. If a section number does not appear here, assume that the rules presented in the rulebook have not changed in any way.

310. ALIGNMENT

Depending on the remoteness of the shaman’s native culture from the Five Empire, he or she may not serve one of the Tlomitlanyal or Tlokiriqáluyal but rather a different deity (or deities) — or no god whatsoever (taking “spirits” of some sort or another as patrons instead). Consequently, the choice of alignment is not as straightforward for a shaman as it is for other characters. The player of a shaman character must therefore choose the alignment that he or she feels most closely approaches that of whatever beliefs the shaman holds.

320. CHOICE OF SEX

Shamans can be either male or female, depending on the nature of their native society. Some foreign cultures are strongly patriarchal, allowing no role for women as shamans, while a few are matriarchal, allowing no role for males. Of course, other societies may consider shamans “outside” the normal social strictures for the sexes, whatever those

may be. In the end, the choice of sex for the character is entirely up to the player, subject to referee approval.

430. SPECIFIC PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

Use the following list for shaman characters:

Control of Self

The Assiduous Pursuer

Detect Traps

Perception of the Energies

Ignition

Adroitness of the Chri-Fly

Zoic Comprehension

Nature Control

Healing

Spiritism

Alleviation

Commune

Control of Self: This skill is identical to the magic-user skill described in section 433 of the *EPT* rulebook.

The Assiduous Pursuer: The shaman can locate edible plants, animals, and potable water within 300 feet. Duration: 10 turns. Usable twice per day.

Detect Traps: The shaman is able to locate any traps, whether natural, magical, or mechanical, within a radius of 30 feet. Duration: 2 turns. Usable three times per day.

Perception of the Energies: The shaman is able to detect any magical energy,

whether placed on a person, place, or object within 60 feet. Duration: 2 turns. Usable twice per day.

Ignition: The shaman can create a small flame in the palm of his hand. The flame is roughly the same heat and brightness as a lantern or torch. The flame so created does no harm to the shaman, but it burns flammable materials with which it comes into contact. The shaman can hurl the flame up to 30 feet, after which it will go out. The shaman can extinguish the flame at will and has a maximum duration of 2 turns times the level of the shaman.

Adroitness of the Chri-Fly: The shaman gains the ability to climb walls and ceilings at half his usual movement rate. The spell lasts for 1 turn.

Zoic Comprehension: The shaman is able to speak with any type of animal, gaining complete understanding of what it says. "Animal" refers to any created described in section 1128 of the *Empire of the Petal Throne* rulebook. Animals are not necessarily cooperative and may conceal information or outright lie if doing so suits their purposes. Usable twice per day. Range: 30 feet. Duration: 6 turns.

Nature Control: This skill is identical to the magic-user skill "Nature Control" described in section 433 of the *EPT* rulebook.

Healing: This skill is identical to the priestly skill "Cure Light Wounds" described in section 432 of the *EPT* rulebook.

Spiritism: This skill identical to the magic-user skill “Medium” described in section 433 of the *EPT* rulebook.

Alleviation: The shaman is able to eliminate the deleterious effects of poison, disease, or drugs (but not Zu’ur) in one individual. Usable twice per day.

Commune: Through the use of this skill, the shaman is able to commune with immaterial spirits and ask the answers to up to three questions. The spirits do not lie, so the shaman can be certain of their veracity, although they may, at the referee’s discretion, conceal the truth. Likewise, the spirits are not omniscient and may either lack knowledge or be mistaken. Usable once per day.

500. BONUS SPELLS

GROUP I:

1. *Acclimatization:* This spell protects the caster from the adverse effects of weather, such as extreme heat, cold, rain, snow, etc. for up to 6 hours.
2. *Ampliation:* The shaman can double the size of any living thing on which he casts the spell. While under its effects, the target doubles its hit points and damage, but attackers gain a +4 bonus to hit it. The spell lasts for 1 turn.
3. *Ascertainment:* The shaman can read the thoughts of other beings at a distance of up to 60 feet. This spell cannot penetrate either stone or metal. Duration: 12 turns.
4. *Breath of the Goddess:* The shaman can breathe underwater for up to 12 turns.
5. *Clairvoyance:* This spell enables the shaman to see through up to 2 inches of any solid matter within 60 feet.
6. *Clairaudience:* This spell enables the shaman to hear through up to 2 inches of any solid matter within 60 feet.
7. *Comprehension:* The shaman gains the ability to speak and understand any language for 5 turns. This excludes languages from the Latter Times, as well as the language of the Mihállí. The shaman also gains the ability to tell whether a scroll or other written item is cursed before he reads it.
8. *Derangement:* This spell drives the target permanently insane, but the target does receive a saving throw. If the target fails, the referee determines how he or she behaves. The spell has a range of 30 feet and is ineffective against a target using the Control of Self spell. The insanity can be cured only through the use of a *Remove Curse* spell.
9. *Favouring:* This blessing grants its target two 6-sided dice worth of “phantom” hit points, which last for 2 turns. These hit points are the first to be removed if the target takes damage and will dissipate regardless at the conclusion of the spell’s duration.
10. *Harmonisation with the Powers:* The shaman can jump up to 30 feet horizontally or 15 feet straight up or behind himself. He can also fall up to 20 feet without taking any damage. Duration: 10 turns.
11. *Light and Darkness:* At the choice of the shaman, this spell creates either a

powerful light that illuminates a 30-foot area for 5 turns or an impenetrable darkness that encompasses the same area for the same length of time. Each magical effect can be dispelled by the casting of its opposite on the same area.

12. Minor Fetish: The shaman can create a disposable fetish that stores the magical energy of a single Group I spell. The spell can then be used later, after which the fetish is used up in the process. The fetish is usable only by the shaman who created it or another shaman capable of casting the spell stored in the fetish.

13. Nutrification: This spell creates sufficient food and water to feed up to 24 human beings (or their equivalents) for 1 day.

14. Phantasms: The shaman can create illusions that have a 70% chance of being believed by unintelligent creatures and a 50% chance of being believed by intelligent and semi-intelligent ones. Artificial beings, such as automatons, androids, and robots, are never fooled by these illusions. Damage taken from illusions believed by their targets is treated as real damage. This spell has a duration of four turns.

15. Terrorisation: This spell is identical to the bonus spell "Fear" described in section 510 of the *EPT* rulebook.

16. Reincarnation: The shaman returns a dead character's soul back from the dead, but the soul inhabits a new body, as noted on the table below. This spell

must be used within one month of the character's death. Usable once per day.

Dice Roll Reincarnated as ...

1	Páchi Léi
2	Pé Chói
3	Swamp Folk
4	Pygmy Folk
5	Hláka
6	Tinaliya
7	Hlutrgú
8	Shunned One
9	Ssú
10	Shén
11	Human
12	Ahoggyá
13	Hlýss
14	Chnéilh
15	Dzór
16	Rényu
17	Sérudla
18	Feshénga
19	Thúnru'u
20	Qól

GROUP II:

1. *The Blessing of the Planes*: The shaman creates a 10-foot diameter sphere of positive magical energy around himself. Anyone within the sphere gains a bonus of +2 to attacks, damage, and saving throws. The blessing lasts for 2 turns.

2. *Desiccation*: This spell dries up the bodily fluids of its target, causing internal damage that incapacitates the target if he or she fails a saving throw. The target is incapacitated for a number of days equal to two six-sided dice, but a *Cure Serious Wounds* spell will restore mobility if applied.

3. *Domination*: This is identical to the Group II Bonus Spell “Charm creature” described in section 510 of the *EPT* rulebook.

4. *Elicitation*: By casting this spell on an object, the shaman gains the ability to see and hear people and events associated with it. The stronger the connection to a particular person or event, the clearer the knowledge the shaman gains. Thus, the bone of a deceased person will give greater knowledge about that person’s life than shreds of clothing he or she once wore. The spell lasts 1 turn.

5. *Emulation*: The shaman can change the appearance of one living creature (including himself or herself) into that of any other living creature, provided they are roughly the same size and general shape. The spell lasts for 1 turn.

6. *Execration*: This spell enables the shaman to bestow a permanent curse upon an object. Any member of a particular group chosen by the shaman, such as “followers of Sárku” or “Ahoggvá” who touch the object immediately suffer three 6-sided dice of damage.

7. *Far-Seeing*: The shaman gains the ability to see objects up to 300 feet away as if they were only 3 feet away. This spell lasts for 1 turn.

8. *Fetish*: Like *Minor Fetish*, except that it works for either two Group I spells or a single Group II spell.

9. *Invisibility*: This is identical to the Group II Bonus Spell described in section 510 of the *EPT* rulebook.

10. *Necromantic Domination*: 1–20 undead beings can be controlled for up to 6 turns, although a saving throw is permitted for any undead creature with more than 3 hit dice. This spell has a range of 30 feet.

11. *Pestilence*: This is identical to the Group III Bonus Spell “*Sending of Evil*” described in section 510 of the *EPT* rulebook.

12. *Seeing Other Planes*: This is identical to the Group I Bonus Spell described in section 510 of the *EPT* rulebook.

13. *Stealth*: This spell enables the shaman or another living being on whom he or she casts the spell to move in complete silence for 3 turns.

GROUP III:

1. *Demonology*: This is identical to the Group III Bonus Spell “The Demon” described in section 510 of the *EPT* rulebook.

2. *The Eater of Souls*: The shaman conjures up a twisted mannikin that seeks out a single target (shaman’s choice) until it finds it, after which it attacks until either it or its quarry is destroyed. Use the statistics for a Yéleth (Sec. 1221:69 in the *EPT* rulebook) to represent the Eater of Souls.

3. *Enchanted Armour and Weapons*: This is identical to the Group III spell described in section 510 of the *EPT* rulebook.

4. *Etherealisation*: The shaman can enter a trance and send his spirit forth to observe — but not interact with — the world within 3 miles of his current location. The spell lasts 2 turns, during which time the shaman’s body is very vulnerable to attack, as it is utterly insensate. If the body is destroyed before the shaman chooses to return his spirit to it, he is irrevocably dead and cannot be restored to life by any means.

5. *Hebetation of the Intellect*: If the target fails a saving throw, their Intelligence is reduced to 20 and, if he is a member of a spell-casting class, he loses the ability to cast spells. The spell has a range of 120 feet and lasts until *Dispel Magic* is cast upon the unfortunate victim.

6. *Insubstantiality*: The shaman can turn his body or that of one living creature insubstantial, allowing them to pass through solid objects without any difficulty. While insubstantial, the creature cannot interact with any solid objects or creatures but can interact with — and attack — other insubstantial objects or creatures. The spell lasts 2 turns, after which the shaman returns to corporeality wherever he happens to be at that time—even if inside a solid object, such as a wall!

7. *The Silver Halo of Soul Stealing*: This is identical to the Group III Bonus Spell described in section 510 of the *EPT* rulebook.

8. *Viscosity*: This is identical to the Group II Bonus Spell “*Transmutation*” described in section 510 of the *EPT* rulebook, except that it only enables the transmutation of stone into mud.

9. *Visitations of Other Planes*: The shaman can detect planar nexus points within 30 feet, as well as open a new one. The new nexus point remains open for 2 turns and its destination is unknown to the shaman until someone steps through it.

10. *Weather Control*: This is identical to the Group III Bonus Spell described in section 510 of the *EPT* rulebook.

11. *Zoomorphy*: This is identical to the Group II Bonus Spell described in section 510 of the *EPT* rulebook.

610. EXPERIENCE POINT BONUSES

Any shaman with a psychic ability of 81-95 adds 5 percent and a shaman with 96-100 adds 10 percent.

630. LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE

Shamans use the same experience table as magic-users.

700. HIT DICE

Use the following table to determine the hit dice for shamans:

<i>Level</i>	<i>Hit Dice</i>
I	1
II	2+1
III	3
IV	3+2
V	4
VI	5+1
VII	6
VIII	7
IX	8+1
X	9



Patrons

Section 1110 of *Empire of the Petal Throne* provides two random tables for generating potential patrons to the player characters. These tables are excellent resources for providing the referee with the bare bones of an adventure, but some, especially neophytes, might wish for a little more “meat” to aid them in the task of constructing a scenario. What follows are a five fleshed-out patrons to be used in conjunction with the tables in *Empire of the Petal Throne*. Each includes not only game statistics for the patron but four different ways to use them. Future issues of *The Excellent Travelling Volume* will provide additional patrons, all of which the referee can use as non-player characters in other contexts, if he so desires.



Iluné hiShánmirel

Level IV Priest of Change; STR 43, INT 77, CON 50, PSY 70, DEX 92, COM 78; To Hit +1; Damage +1; AC 7; HP 9; Original Skills: Perfumer,

Scholar, Scribe-Accountant, Weaver; Professional Skills: Cure Light Wounds, Detect Good/Evil, ESP, Produce Light, Protection from Good/Evil, Telepathy; Bonus Spells: Fear, Withering; Languages: Ancient Salarvyáni, Classical Tsolyáni, Engsvanyáli, Pecháni, Salarvyáni, Tsolyáni

Iluné is a priestess of Durritlámish and a member of the Open Sepulchre clan. She is tall and middle-aged. That she was quite pretty in her youth is still visible, despite her wearied expression and greying hair, which she wears in a utilitarian fashion. Iluné is a commanding presence; she speaks very precisely and casually demonstrates her scholarly knowledge in conversation through references to history. She travels with six guards (all Level I), whose leader (Level III) is her eldest son, Sangár.

Iluné wishes to investigate a recent spate of grave robberies in the local city of the dead. At first, the robberies appeared to be random, but closer examination revealed that the robbed graves all belonged to members of low clans. Being of low clan herself, Iluné has taken a personal interest in this mystery. She seeks the services of those unafraid to poke around the necropolis in search of more leads, since neither the tomb police nor her own temple cares much about these crimes. Consequently, Iluné has come to suspect that the malefactors responsible may have ties to either her own temple or that of Lord Sárku,

though she has no proof of it, only suspicions.

1. The robberies are being committed by clan-less foreigners hoping that, by sticking to low clan graves, they will not attract much notice.

2. As 1, except that the robbers have bribed the Tomb Police, whose watch commander thus has a vested interest in ensuring that the truth never comes out. He and his underlings will do everything possible to dissuade Iluné and the characters from pursuing the investigation of these crimes.

3. As 1, except that the robbers are looking for a specific tomb in which was hidden a copy of *Hénganikh hiZhálmigan* (see sec. 1700:10) long ago and that they know to be sought by a priest in the local temple of Sárku. They hope to obtain it and sell it to him for a considerable sum.

4. As 3, except that the robbers are employed by the priest of Sárku, who has used his influence to ensure they are unmolested by the Tomb Police as they engage in their illicit activities.

Máyu hiChaishyáni

Level III Priest of Stability; STR 53, INT 89, CON 48, PSY 79, DEX 40, COM 81; To Hit +0; Damage +1; AC 7; HP 6; Original Skills: Hunter, Paper-Ink Maker, Scribe-Accountant, Scholar, Tailor; Professional Skills: Cure Light Wounds, Detect Good/Evil, ESP, Produce Light, Protection from Good/Evil; Bonus Spells: Seeing Other Planes; Languages:

Engsvanyáli, Livyáni, N'lüssa, Salarvyáni, Tsáqw, Tsolyáni



Máyu is a priest of Thúmis and a member of the Emerald Girdle clan. He is young and bookish, but nevertheless handsome. He dresses more extravagantly than is typical of devotees of the Sage of the Gods. Máyu is a schemer; he believes his intelligence and knowledge cannot fail him, if only he puts his mind to something. Therefore, he can come across as abrasive and arrogant in dealing with others, particularly foreigners and Tsolyáni of lower station than himself. He travels with two guards (both Level I), one of whom is an Aridáni named Dijáya hiSánga, who harbours romantic feelings for Máyu, though he takes no notice of her, due to her being a member of the unremarkable Victorious Globe clan.

Máyu says he is deep in debt, owing to his failed efforts to woo Chu'ésa hiSharvóya, a member of the aristocratic clan of Sea Blue with whom

he has fallen madly in love. Not only have his efforts to impress Chu'ésa failed — *thus far*, Máyu is quick to point out! — but his creditors are threatening legal action (or worse) if he does not pay up soon. His latest scheme is to make enough money to repay his debts by backing a “sure winner” at the Hirilákte arena, namely one of the player characters. Dijáya has offered to act as Máyu's champion, but he has refused to accept her help, much to her disappointment and frustration.

1. Everything is exactly as Máyu says it is. He will select the highest level player character to act as his champion, regardless of class. If there are several characters of equal level, he will choose a warrior over any other class. He will then use his limited contacts among the Charukél to try (60% chance of success) and arrange a match in which the player character has a slight advantage (e.g. opponent has 10% fewer hit points).

2. As 1, except Máyu will choose the character he thinks has the least chance to win and will use his contacts to have them paired off with an opponent against whom they have a disadvantage. He will use other agents of his to wager *against* the player character in hopes of winning enough money offset some of his debts.

3. As 2, except that Dijáya has discovered Máyu's plan and informs the player characters of it, hoping that they will then flee his service and leave an opening for her to step in as champion. However, she does not

want any harm to come to Máyu or his reputation. If the player characters give any evidence of wishing to expose the priest's duplicity, she will do anything she can to prevent it, up to attempting to kill them.

4. As 1, except that Dijáya secretly approaches the chosen champion and begs that he allow her to fight in his place. She offers a sum of 10 Káitars the champion's level as an inducement to acquiesce to her request.

Khariháya hiAyánmu



Level IV Warrior; STR 92, INT 41, CON 58, PSY 43, DEX 50, COM 26; To Hit +1; Damage +0; AC 2; HP 18; Original Skills: Geologist, Mason, Miner, Mountaineer, Smith-Armourer; Professional Skills: Axeman, Bola-Slinger, Mace/Flail User, Slinger, Spearman, Swordsman; Languages: Tsolyáni

Khariháya is a kási of the Legion of the Mace Raised High (23rd Imperial

Heavy Infantry) and a member of the High Pinnacle clan. He looks every bit the soldier, his body covered in battle scars. Khariháya is thus not a handsome man, but he radiates nobility and loyalty. He currently commands fifteen (Level I) troops and is assisted by a Level II subaltern named Ka'á hiChanúsa.

Khariháya says that he is on leave from his legion, but, in reality, he is on "detached duty," tasked by his superior to perform a mission outside the normal chain of command. He is looking for individuals skilled in the arts of combat to accompany him as he launches a punitive strike against bandits operating in the wilderness outside the city. These bandits are a ragtag bunch of foreigners with Tsolyáni commanders who are employed by a political rival of the city's current governor. Their raids against caravans make the governor look ineffectual, thereby advancing the cause of the rival. This unofficial mission is being undertaken because Khariháya's *molkár* owes his life to the governor and wishes to repay that debt.

1. Khariháya is telling the whole truth. The bandits consist of 50 foreigners (all Level I warriors) led by a Tsolyáni *dritlán* (Level V) and assisted by four other Tsolyáni leaders (all Level III). The bandits have a fortified camp a few *tsán* away. They are well paid and have good morale and so will put up a good fight, fleeing only if they encounter superior numbers.

2. As 1, except that neither the bandits

nor their commanders are particularly devoted to their employer. If they encounter a serious threat or superior numbers, they will attempt to parley, offering information about the governor's rival in exchange for their lives and freedom.

3. As 1, except that the bandits are in fact foreign mercenaries hired by the governor, whom he has cheated out of their contractual payment. They seek not only the money they are owed for having fought on the governor's behalf, but also vengeance against him.

4. The "bandits" are in fact a band of 50 Shunned Ones (led by a Level V lay priest) who have been terrorising settlements in the countryside by taking prisoners for unknown purposes. The governor has been denying the existence of the Shunned Ones, but the situation has become bad enough that he now has no choice but to do something. Khariháya does not know this and will be as surprised as the characters when he discovers the truth.

Shekkéra hiChanúsa

Level VI Lay Priest of Change; STR 51, INT 80, CON 68, PSY 64, DEX 67, COM 29; To Hit +2; Damage +0; AC 9; HP 14; Original Skills: Baker, Bird-Trainer, Dyer, Scholar, Scribe-Accountant, Swimmer-Diver, Weaver; Professional Skills: Astrologer, Clairaudience, Clairvoyance, Control of Self, Illusionist, Medium, Nature Control,

Telekinesis; Bonus Spells: Door Control, Levitate, The Vapour of Death; Languages: Llyáni, Tsolyáni



Shekkéra is a lay priestess of Hrū'ū and a member of the Iron Helm clan. She is a cadaverous old woman whose head is nearly bald. Her purple robes hang loosely on her thin frame. Shekkéra moves slowly and speaks with a hoarse, whispery voice. Though frail, her mind (and spell-casting ability) is potent. She is protected by two Level III warriors, a brother and sister named Telék and Tenúka hiBosúga respectively. The pair have been in her service since they were children and are quite devoted to the old lay priestess.

Shekkéra is preparing to travel several tsán to a remote – and abandoned – shrine to the Master of Negation. The shrine, she says, once possessed a library consisting of many rare and esoteric volumes, including some written in ancient Llyáni. Due to her advanced age and the dangers of this

locale, Shekkéra has need of additional bodyguards to accompany her on the journey, since Telék and Tenúka are insufficient. The siblings recognise the truth of this, but will nevertheless be resentful toward the player characters, seeing them as “interlopers” (especially if they are not devotees of Hrū'ū).

1. Everything is exactly as Shekkéra says it is. The shrine is located in a subterranean cave whose entrance is sealed by a metal door. Through the use of her *door control* spell, she can open it, revealing a series of rooms containing a variety of artifacts, including the volumes she seeks. Shekkéra is only interested in a handful of the books, leaving the rest to be looted by the characters, if they so desire. The remaining books (which weigh about 15,000 káitars) will fetch percentile dice times 100 káitars if sold in a large city.

2. As 1, except that the shrine has already been looted when Shekkéra arrives. She will be furious at this but will nevertheless pay the characters as agreed upon. Several weeks later, if they are still in the same city as Shekkéra, she will approach them with another mission, this time to raid the current whereabouts of the looters (suggested identities: rivals within the temple of Hrū'ū, low clan treasure hunters, Ssú explorers, or agents of the Omnipotent Azure Legion).

3. As 1, except that Shekkéra wishes all the tomes for herself. She will order Telék and Tenúka to slay the characters

so that they cannot reveal the location of the shrine to anyone. Shekkéra herself will assist the warriors through the use of her spells.

4. As 3, except that the shrine is actually devoted to the Goddess of the Pale Bone, of which Shekkéra is secretly a devotee.

Krigesélha Voroggá

Level III Warrior; STR 48, INT 95, CON 69, PSY 36, DEX 48, COM 33; To Hit +2; Damage +1; AC 5; HP 11; Original Skills: Carpenter, Hunter, Interpreter, Merchant, Slaver; Professional Skills: Axeman, Mace/Flair User, Spearman, Swordsman; Languages: Salarvyáni, Tsolyáni



Krigesélha is a Salarvyáni slave trader and a member of the Carpet of Gold clan. He is native to the city of Khúm (hex 2827), but regularly travels between his native land and Tsolyánu. He is middle-aged and slightly overweight. Unlike most Salarvyáni, he

does not have a beard and he wears his hair in Tsolyáni fashion. His command of Tsolyáni is good, though he speaks with an unmistakable accent. Nine mercenaries of various nationalities (all Level II) travel with him at all times.

Krigesélha recently acquired a slave (a boy about twelve years-old) who bore a strange tattoo on his chest. The tattoo consists of a circle and a dot — the well-known symbol of the forbidden deity known only as the One Other. The boy has shown himself to be quite intelligent and to possess a remarkable facility with magic for one so young. Krigesélha believes the boy will fetch a high price, but worries about his origins, as well as the reaction in Tsolyánu to a slave with such a mark. He wishes to hire the player characters to accompany him on an expedition to the wilderness area where the boy was found to see if he can learn more about him (and if there are others like him).

1. There is nothing in the area near where the boy was found. The boy says that he has been on his own for as long as he can remember, living by his wits and his magic. He has no idea who his parents were or why he bears the tattoo.
2. The wilderness area contains a cave complex where the boy says he lived with his parents. It was his parents who taught him to use his magical abilities and gave him his tattoo. They disappeared a few months ago and he left the caves to search for them, which is when he was captured by Krigesélha's slavers. The caves are decorated with many other weird

symbols, not all of which are associated with the One Other. There is nothing else of interest there.

3. The area contains a small village (around 100 inhabitants) whose inhabitants speak a strange language unlike any other spoken in the area. They are unaffected by ESP and similar spells. Though many villagers bear tattoos similar to that of the boy, he does not remember ever having lived among them. For their part, the villagers act strangely around the boy, as if they were avoiding him. They do their best to indicate (non-verbally, of course) to the characters that they wish them to leave their settlement immediately.

4. As 3, except that the villagers attempt to slay the characters and seize the boy for themselves. Most of the villagers are Level I warriors, but there is a Level IV priest among them, acting as their leader.



Bestiary (Addition)

Though *Empire of the Petal Throne* includes descriptions of a wide range of the alien planet's fauna, not to mention intelligent non-human species, Tékumel is vast and new creatures are always being discovered. What follows are details of a handful of these, most of which originally appeared in later Tékumel source material but that do not have *Empire of the Petal Throne* game statistics.

A'áb

Number Appearing: 6–120

Hit Dice: 1 hit point each

Armour Class: 9

Treasure: nil

Movement: 3"/18"

Lair: nil

Found primarily in the forests of southern Livyánu near the forbidden city of Dlášh, the a'áb is a palm-sized, disc-shaped animal that, from a distance, looks like leaf fluttering on the breeze. Coloured red, yellow, or orange, the a'áb move about on the wind, seeking out heat sources for nourishment. Once it lands on a living being, it injects a poison into its bloodstream, which induces sleep for 1 turn on a failed saving throw. Its victim asleep, the a'áb then covers the victim's mouth and nose. The victim suffocates in a number of rounds equal to his Constitution score divided by 5. Once the victim has died, the a'áb (and others nearby) slowly feast on its body.

Bazháq

Number Appearing: 2–40

Hit Dice: 2

Armour Class: 6

Treasure: nil

Movement: 6"

Lair: 50: 4–80

A bazháq is a six-legged beast native to the Tané Peninsula, located far to the west of Mu'ugalavyá. Standing six to seven feet tall, it possesses a bird-like beak and a short spiny bristle; it is brown to black in colour. A bazháq is herbivorous and semi-intelligent. The people of the Peninsula (also known as the Tané) train it for use as a riding beast, even taking it into battle. This last fact makes the creature of some interest to the peoples of the Five Empires, where no riding animals of any sort exist.

Chürstalli "Guardians of the Peak"

Number Appearing: 2–5

Hit Dice: 6/10/14

Armour Class: 5

Treasure: nil

Movement: 9"

Lair: 50: 2–20

Treasure in Lair: A: 15

The Chürstalli take their name from Chüru Peak, located to the west of Mu'ugalavyá, though they can be found throughout the Great Desert of Galái. They have six legs, the front pair of which they use for grasping and digging beneath the sand. Their bodies are covered by a shell that secretes a sticky substance that causes rocks and sand to adhere to it. This provides camouflage

and increases the likelihood that they will surprise opponents to 1–4. Chürstállí have long, leathery necks, ending in a head with two eyes and a sharp beak-like mouth. Its bite delivers a paralysing poison. The paralysis lasts until cured by either *cure light wounds* or the Ineluctable Eye of Healing. Chürstállí can withdraw their heads into their shells for protection. They also possess a tail with a poisoned stinger that causes death in those who fail a saving throw. However, the tail can only attack opponents in its rear area; it cannot be used against opponents in the front. Like the Hlüss, to whom some scholars suggest they are related, the Chürstállí may attack twice each round, once with its mouth and once with its tail. The creatures come in many sizes, the largest of which are over 60 feet in length.

Dlikkén “the One Who Is Many”

Number Appearing: 1

Hit Dice: 4

Armour Class: 4

Treasure: nil

Movement: 12”

Lair: 10: 2–5

This segmented, worm-like creature dwells in forests and mountainous uplands. Bluish-black in colour, it can grow to a length of 8 or 9 feet. Each of its segments has a set of eight legs that, if cut, can survive independently, regrowing into a whole new creature. Only the front segment has a mouth and is thus capable of attacking. Sa’á Allaqiyáni peasants consider the

dlikkén sacred to Ksárul and so do not harm it unless attacked first.

Gacháya “the Lizard-Dragon”

Number Appearing: 1

Hit Dice: 9

Armour Class: 3

Treasure: A:30

Movement: 6”

Lair: 50: 1–10

Treasure in Lair: E: 30

Found on the southern continent, Kushi’il Isle, the Isles of Ill Wind, and Ónmú Tlé Hléktis, the gacháya is a large, purplish-blue lizard. The beast has non-functional wings and six clawed legs; it grows to 30 feet in length. The gacháya is considered mythological in Tsolyánu and the other of the Five Empires. A larger variety is found in Shényu, where it is hunted for its meat and scales. The gacháya attacks with its teeth and two fore-legs against front-facing opponents. Against rear-facing opponents, the creature uses its heavy tail.

Hlu’ún “the Lost Child”

Number Appearing: 1

Hit Dice: 1+1

Armour Class: 4

Treasure: nil

Movement: 6”/12”

Lair: 50: 2–5

Inhabiting the swamps, bogs, and lowlands of Tsolyánu, Salarvyá, and Shényu, the hlu’ún is a humanoid insect about the size of a prepubescent boy. The creature has four long limbs,

gauzy wings, and a round head with huge eyes but no visible nose or mouth. Its entire body is covered in a gauzy slime, which entraps any single man-sized or smaller creature it successfully strikes in combat. If the entrapped creature possesses a Strength score of 96 or greater, he can easily break free of the slime; if the score is 81–95, doing so takes 1 round; if the score is 61–80, it takes 2 rounds. Those with scores below 61 have no chance to break free on their own. The hlu'ún extrudes a proboscis into the head of its entrapped prey, feeding on its blood and other bodily liquids. Each round afterwards, it deals damage without the need for an attack roll until either it or its prey is dead.

Jájgi “the Exalted Undead”

Number Appearing: 1

Hit Dice: 10

Armour Class: Varies

Treasure: B: 40

Movement: 9”

Lair: 10: 2–5

Treasure in Lair: C: 80

Created primarily by the temples of Sárku and Durritlámish (though the process is also known to the temples of Ksáruul and Hrü'ü), a jájgi is a reanimated being that almost perfectly mimics the semblance of life. A jájgi can feign any bodily function except reproduction. Because of the difficulty involved in manufacturing these beings, jájgi are rare. A jájgi can be equipped with any armour, weapons, or magical devices it needs to complete its

current mission for its creator. There are rumours of jájgi capable of casting spells, but whether there is any truth to them is known only to the temples of the Worm Lord and his cohort.

Kókh “the Blood Lizard”

Number Appearing: 1

Hit Dice: 1–1

Armour Class: 7

Treasure: nil

Movement: 6”

Lair: 10: 2–5

Inhabiting the deep grass of fields and some wooded areas, the kókh is a foot-long six-legged lizard that preys on those who sleep in the open. The creature moves silently before lunging at its target with its fangs. On a successful hit, it injects a numbing poison that enables it to drink the victim's blood without waking it (on a failed saving throw). Because of their bright green colour, some sects of Dlamélish's temple consider the kókh a sacred animal.

Sikún “the Little Men”

Number Appearing: 4–40

Hit Dice: 1+1

Armour Class: 6

Treasure: nil

Movement: 9”

Lair: 15: 20–200

Treasure in Lair: D: 70

Small, human-descended mutants, the sikún stand only two feet tall. They have two arms, two legs, and long snouts. Their bodies are covered in tan

fur. No more intelligent than tlékku (see below), the sikún use no tools or weapons and cannot be trained. Instead, they collect shiny objects (including devices of the Ancients), which they hide in their subterranean lairs in the forests of the northeast (especially Chayákku).

Srámuthu “the Jolly Strangers”

Number Appearing: 3–8

Hit Dice: 2

Armour Class: 4

Treasure: A: 20

Movement: 9”

Lair: 35: 2–20

Treasure in Lair: C: 40

The Srámuthu are one of Tékumel’s “Under-people” – an intelligent species without a recognised homeland. Instead, they live in the upper levels of the underworlds, city slums, ruins, and other out-of-the-way settlements. In its natural form, a Srámuthu is a black, bipedal insect with a mass of upper tentacles that it can twine into imitations of human arms. It can exude a secretion that hardens into a shell it can shape into the appearance of a human, right down to its clothing. This disguise is most believable in low light or semi-darkness; in full light, a Srámuthu’s false “skin” looks waxy and inhuman. Likewise, the calves and ankles of one of these beings are always unnaturally thick to human eyes, owing to its inability to mask its own lower extremities convincingly. Srámuthu feed on human beings, but generally prey on those who will be “unmissed,”

such as vagrants, lost children, and recluses, so as to not draw attention to themselves.

Tlékku “the Dog”

Number Appearing: 4–16

Hit Dice: 1+1

Armour Class: 7

Treasure: nil

Movement: 12”

Lair: nil

The tlékku is the dog of old Earth. The species is less common on Tékumel than on its original homeworld, but can still be found in many areas. A trained tlékku can be purchased for 100 Káitars.

Yazái “the Hunched Ones”

Number Appearing: 2–20

Hit Dice: 3

Armour Class: 6

Treasure: nil

Movement: 9”

Lair: 40: 5–50

Treasure in Lair: C: 40

Found primarily near the Spouting Mountains near Livyánu and Shényu, the yazái are tall, grey-furred, hunch-backed humanoids. They move on all fours, but stand on their hind legs to fight. Their oval heads sit squarely on their shoulders, as if they had no necks. Their eyes and mouths are long, vertical slits. The yazái travel in packs and occasionally attack humans, though they, in turn, are often hunted by the Shén for sport. Their approach is usually heralded by a shrill squeal.

Magical Devices

(Addition)

Section 1500 describes twenty-four miscellaneous magical items. Unlike other magical devices, such as eyes or amulets, these items are “usually unique, although duplicates do indeed exist for a few of them.” The section suggests that, once found, “the item should be removed from the list (unless a duplicate is indicated), and the referee should then develop other at items at his own discretion.” For this reason, referees of any long-lasting *Empire of the Petal Throne* campaign should be in regular need of new miscellaneous magical items to use as treasures. This issue presents a half-dozen such magical items and future issues will present more.

The Aeonian Donjon of Nrashkème

This palm-sized translucent cube glows faintly when touched. If three or more sides are touched at once, any being within a 30-foot radius not in direct contact with the cube is transported to another plane where they are trapped for a length of time dependent on their Psychic Ability score, as follows:

Score Time Trapped in Other Plane

1–20 2–8 days

21–40 1–4 days

41–60 5–20 hours

61–80 4–16 turns

81–95 2–8 rounds

96–100 1–4 rounds

There is only one of this item and, when found, it has 1–20 charges, but it is rechargeable with the *Thoroughly Useful Eye*. There is an indicator on one side of the cube in Llyáni.

The Bezoar of Réshma Ga’annúmu

Réshma Ga’annúmu was an ambitious – and paranoid – Salarvyáni priestess of Shiringgáyi. Fearing that others might poison her and usurp her position within the temple, she sought out the greatest alchemists of Tsatsayágga, one of whom provided her with this small golden disk. When placed in the mouth (or in a cup), it neutralizes the effects of any ingested poison. Only one bezoar exists and it requires no charges to function. However, it is useless against injected or topical poisons. Therefore, it does not protect the user from the bite or weapons of the Qól, for example.

The Bones of the Ebon King

This box made of black lacquered tiú-wood contains bone fragments and dust reputed to belong to one of later rulers of the dynasty of the Fishermen Kings. If opened and the inscription on its lid (written in Bednálljan Salarvyáni) is read aloud, the fragments and dust swirl into a man-shaped wraith that answers a single question once per day. The wraith’s knowledge is extremely limited about contemporary places and events, owing to its antiquity, but it has extensive knowledge about fighting the Ssú, with whom it warred

during its mortal existence. If asked about such matters, this knowledge grants a temporary bonus of +2 to hit and damage to all who listen for a period of 24 hours. There is only one of this item and it has 1–100 uses when found. When used up, the wraith can no longer be summoned.

The Mace of Vanquishing the Less-Than-Men

Despite its common name, this weapon looks more like a short metal rod with a knob on one end. When it strikes bipedal nonhumans, there is a percentile chance that it will disintegrate them, leaving nothing behind. The chance depends on the nonhuman struck, as follows: Hlāka (80%), Hlutrgú (80%), Pé Chói (90%), Pygmy Folk (90%), Shén (70%), and Shunned Ones (80%). No other races are affected by the mace. When found, the mace has 1–100 charges and each strike with it, whether or not it disintegrates its target, expends a number of charges equal to the hit dice of the target. The mace *cannot* be recharged.

The Panglottal Apparatus

Looking like a silver skullcap adorned with angular runes, the apparatus grants the ability to read, understand, and speak any *human* language. When found, roll percentile dice to determine the number of charges still available. It may be recharged by the Thoroughly Useful Eye. Each charge lasts for 6 hours, so long as

it continues to be worn by the same person. If removed, the charge dissipates and a new one must be expended to power the apparatus once more. There are reputed to be at least a dozen of these items, at least half of which are currently in the possession of the temples of Ksárul and Thúmis.

The Remarkable Parchment of the Sharper of Purdánim

This large hmá-skin parchment is one of perhaps ten created by the legendary sorcerer known only “the Sharper of Purdánim,” who turned his arts to the creation of numerous items of a larcenous nature. At the command of its possessor, the parchment transforms into a convincing non-magical, single sheet document of his choice. Thus, it could appear to be citizenship papers, a warrant of arrest, or a bill of sale; the only limit is length. Anyone possessing an Intelligence of 81 or higher is granted a saving throw versus spells. Otherwise, they trust the authenticity of the parchment, just like everyone else. When found, a parchment has 1–12 uses before it fades to dust.

The Hidden Shrine

What follows is a small keyed locale intended to serve as the basis for a short adventure for low-level (I–III) *Empire of the Petal Throne* characters. The locale can be placed in any mountainous or hilly region of Tsolyánu that is not far from a large city. Otherwise, specific details are kept to a minimum in order to make it more easily adaptable to an ongoing campaign.

OVERVIEW

Located atop large hill or small mountain, the Hidden Shrine is, ostensibly, a rural temple dedicated to the Doomed Prince of the Blue Room, Lord Ksárul. In point of fact, it is actually dedicated to the mysterious Pariah Deity known as The One Other, whose worship is officially suppressed in Tsolyánu — or, rather, was. A few months ago, the shrine was discovered and its priests slain by a raiding party of Ssú, who saw its location as potentially use to them and their plans.

Working through Hláka intermediaries, these Ssú wished to introduce the deadly drug *zu'úr* into the nearby city. Highly addictive and ultimately deadly, *zu'úr* is the scourge of many a Tsolyáni city, which is why its sale and use is proscribed in the Imperium. Because of its isolation — almost no one, not even devotees of Ksárul, are aware of its existence — the Ssú found the Hidden Shrine an ideal

meeting place between them and the Hláka, to whom they provide *zu'úr* that is then sent to human dealers in the nearby city.

Until recently, this arrangement has worked very well for the Ssú, the Hláka, and their human pawns. Unfortunately for the Ssú, a lay priestess of Ksárul named *Tlása hiVrëshcha* (Black Stone clan), learned of the existence of the Hidden Shrine and intended to visit it as an act of piety. She hoped its priests might possess esoteric wisdom that might enable her to better serve the Ancient Lord of Secrets. *Tlása* never made it into the Shrine, however; on her trek to the place, she was startled by the sight of a group of Ssú and fled back to the city.

On her return, she attempted to interest the local Temple of Ksárul in what she saw, but found its hierarchy disinterested, saying the Hidden Shrine held no secrets and that sightings of Ssú were commonplace. *Tlása* fared no better when she approached other authorities in the city, which is why she has now sought out others to aid her. These others are, of course, the player characters, whom she has agreed to pay 100 Káitars each, plus a share of any spoils they might gain from doing battle with the Ssú — though she is quick to point out that the Shrine itself must not be despoiled.

***Tlása hiVrëshcha* (Level III Lay Priest of Ksárul); STR 48, INT 62, CON 75, PSY 88, DEX 78, COM 34;**

To Hit +2; Damage +0; AC 7; HP 14;
Original Skills: Cook, Mountaineer,
Potter, Scholar, Scribe-accountant;
Professional Skills: Astrologer,
Clairaudience, Clairvoyance, Control
of Self, Illusionist, Telekinesis;
Bonus Spells: Heal Minor Wounds,
Paralysis; Languages: Llyáni, Tsolyáni

Tlása will accompany the player characters and aid them as best she can. However, she is by nature a self-interested coward. She will use her spells, but will not engage in melee combat. Likewise, she will flee from any situation in which it looks like she might be injured or in which she feels the characters are not doing their best to keep her safe. That said, Tlása will not actively betray the characters and she will hold up her end of the bargain. If they succeed in their endeavour, she will recommend them to the temple of Ksárul as trustworthy and reliable, possibly paving the way for further patronage.

SHRINE EXTERIOR

The Hidden Shrine is atop a rocky landform. A small river flows down its slope and into its caverns, while a smaller stream flows away from it. The path to the Shrine is a winding one, terminating in a set of carved stone stairs and paths that go in two directions, one leading to Area 1 and another to Area 2. Only Room 1 is visible from the outside, since all the other rooms are either wholly underground or obscured by the surrounding terrain.

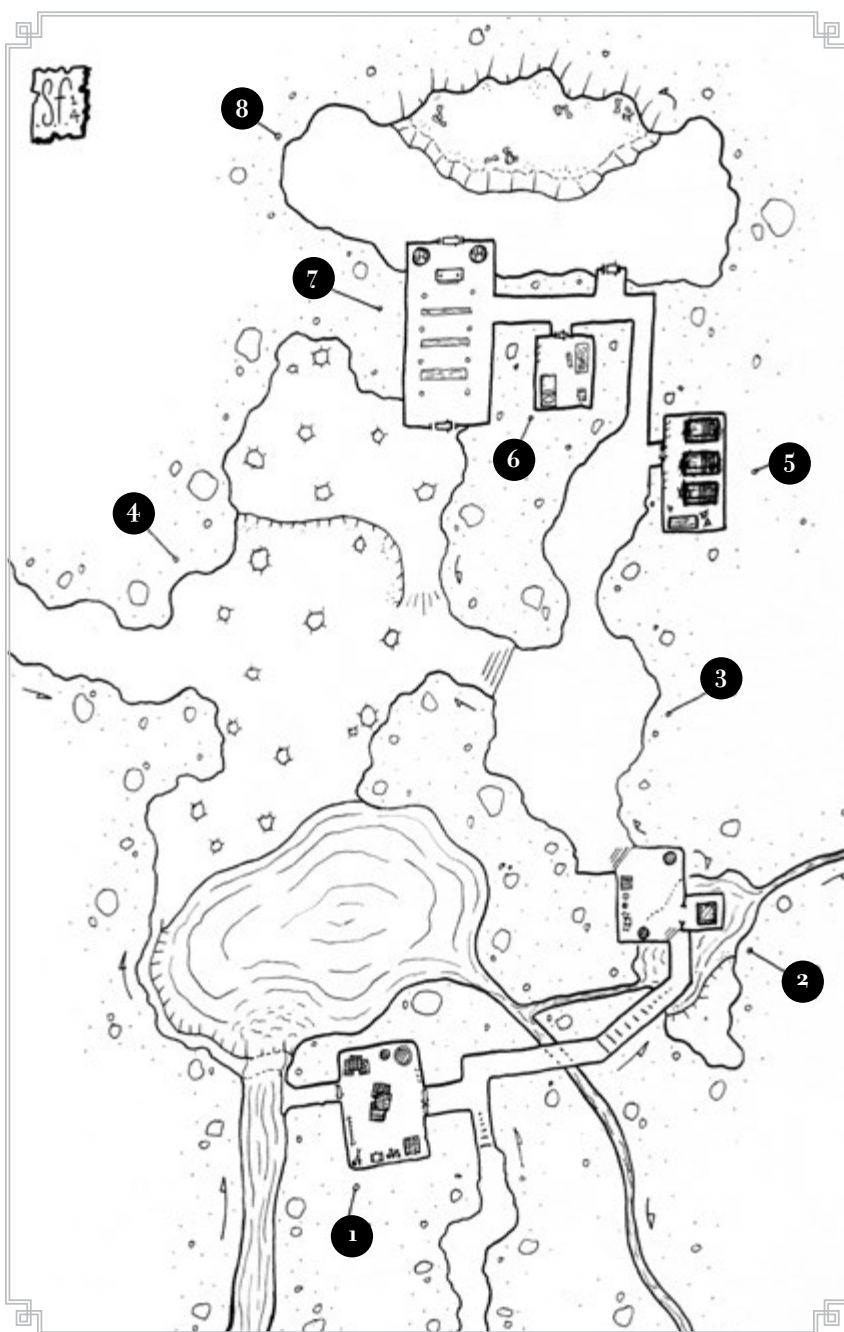
SHRINE INTERIOR

All the interior rooms of the Shrine are carved from rock and have ceilings approximately eight feet high. Those rooms that have doors have wooden ones. Because of the presence of the subterranean pool, the river, and stream, the whole area is somewhat damp and cold. In many places, a blackish mould grows, which, though it appears sinister, is, in fact, quite harmless.

AREA 1

This is a storeroom filled with a number of barrels, crates, and other containers. Before the Ssú arrived, these containers held supplies for the priests of the Shrine. A few still do (mostly dried meat), but most are now empty. There are two doors to this room. The first are a double set that lead into the room, while the second is a single, barred door that leads to a short path, ending in a ledge. The ledge overlooks the river, which flows underground and terminates in the pool in Room 4. It is possible (though potentially dangerous) to leap from the ledge into the river and to pass into Room 4, along with the water. The drop from the ledge is only about 6 feet.

Currently, the storeroom is being used as a lookout by three human warriors who have been hypnotised the Ssú magic-using leader (see Area 7). If intruders enter the room, two will attack immediately, while the third attempts to flee the scene to warn his



masters. He prefers to flee via the double doors, but, if this is impossible, he will escape through the other door, diving off the ledge and into the water. The warriors will fight to the death; they can only be freed from the Ssú hypnotism by slaying the leader noted above. They wear chainmail and carry swords.

Hypnotised Human Warriors (AC 5, MV 9" HD 1 HP 6, 4, 3)

AREA 2

This room contains barrels used to hold water, as well as a windlass to raise and lower a bucket through a hole that leads into a freshwater pool below. The hole is large enough for a human-sized creature to crawl through, but there is nothing of interest below.

Waiting in this room are two Ssú warriors, armed with swords. Their odour is noticeable well before anyone gets close to the room, since it has no door. If outnumbered or if combat goes against them, the Ssú will beat a retreat to Area 3, where more of their kind are lurking.

Ssú (AC 2 MV 12" HD 2+3 HP 10, 9)

AREA 3

In this open area, there are three Ssú, as well as a single Hláka. The Ssú are armed with swords and axes, while the Hláka has a bow. However, the Hláka is extremely skittish and averse to combat. Please refer to the morale rules on p. 50 of *EPT* to determine the Hláka's behaviour in combat.

Two of the Ssú are carrying a small crates (each weighing about 20 pounds) that contain small leather bags filled with greenish powder. This powder is the drug zu'úr that the Ssú, through their Hláka allies, have been supplying to the humans of the nearby city. Possession of zu'úr is a capital crime in all of the Five Empires, but its sale is extremely lucrative. The amount carried by the Ssú is easily worth in excess of 50,000 Káitars, if sold on the streets. Zu'úr causes satyriasis or nymphomania, and after a month or two of prodigious feats of eroticism, the user falls into a coma that only additional doses of the drug can end. Death invariably results within five or six months. There is no known remedy, though there are rumours that the temple of Thúmis has discovered a magical means of ending zu'úr addiction.

Ssú (AC 2 MV 12" HD 2+3 HP 14, 12, 9)

Hláka (AC 5 MV 15"/30" HD 2 HP 5)

AREA 4

Five Ssú linger in this underground cavern near the passageway that leads westward. This passage is the means by which the Enemies of Man travel between their subterranean enclave and the Hidden Shrine. At any given time, there is a 50% chance that they are close enough to Area 3 that will hear the sounds of combat coming from it and intervene. Otherwise, they are too far away and simply guard the passageway. No matter what, there is an anti-personnel device located near

the passageway that the Ssú leader will activate to cover his escape, if it becomes necessary. Information about it is provided in the description of Area 7.

The large pool in the room is filled with cold freshwater. It is surprisingly deep — about 10 feet near its centre. Nothing lives within the pool, but, close to its lowest point, there is a small purplish gem that is actually an *amulet of peace amongst the servers of Ksárul*.

Ssú (AC 2 MV 12" HD 2+3 HP 13, 12, 11, 10 (x2))

AREA 5

Three wooden beds and a small chest indicate that this was once the dormitory for the junior priests of the Shrine. The dead remains of the three priests now occupy this place, piled into a corner. Examining the bodies reveals both that they have been dead for several weeks (at least) and that they died of stab wounds. The chest contains only clothing and a few small codices containing prayers to Ksárul.

AREA 6

The chief priest of the Shrine lived here. His room contains a bed, a desk with chair, and a small chest. The desk contains a large number of scrolls and codices (none of them magical), most of which are ostensibly concerned with the doctrines and worship of Lord Ksárul. However, in the hands of someone both knowledgeable about the

Doomed Prince and with the assassin-spy-tracker skill, it is clear that many of these are in fact written using a cipher that masks their true purpose — devotion to the One Other! Taken together, the books are worth about 2,000 Káitars to scholars of the Pariah Deities, but the temple of Ksárul would offer 3,000, since they wish to hide evidence that any members of their temple, even ones as removed from the hierarchy as the priests of the Hidden Shrine, were involved with the worship of forbidden gods.

AREA 7

An altar, several stone benches, and two statues of Ksárul mark this chamber as the Shrine's actual temple. Priests of Ksárul or those with the scholar skill will notice something "off" about the temple's decorations and symbolism. That is because, surreptitiously worked into the typical imagery associated with the Ancient Lord of Secrets is the familiar circle and dot sigil of the One Other.

Present in the room is the Ssú leader, his four guards, and a Hlaka who has been acting as the go-between in distributing the zu'úr in human lands. The leader is a magic-user, who possesses an *eye of departing in safety*, with an indicator written in Llyáni that shows it has 28 charges remaining. If the battle goes against him, he will use the eye to transport himself and any other surviving members of his party (including the Hlaka) to Area 4, so that they might flee underground.

To cover their escape, he will activate an anti-personnel device that looks like a knee-high tripod, on top of which balances a forearm-long object shaped like two cones, set base to base. The cones look to be made of iridescent glass, with smaller glass discs space irregularly over the cones. When activated, the cones rotate, emitting beams of coherent light from the discs on their surface. These beams criss-cross the area within 60 feet of the tripod, dealing 2–12 damage to any who pass through them. After 10 rounds, the tripod explodes, dealing 3–18 damage to any within 20 feet of it.

Ssú Leader (Level IV Magic-User; AC 2 MV 12" HD 3+3 HP 15 Spells: Madness, Cold)

Ssú (AC 2 MV 12" HD 2+3 HP 12, 10(x2), 7)

Hláka (AC 5 MV 15"/30" HD 2 HP 6)

AREA 8

This open area is empty, except for the decaying body of the chief priest, which can be found sprawled here. Other than a metal necklace bearing the symbol of the One Other beneath his robes, he has nothing of interest. The necklace is worth 50 Káitars solely for its materials, but a collector of religious antiquities or a scholar of the Pariah Deities might pay five times that amount, if one can be found.

AFTERMATH

If the characters survive, they will have uncovered – and possibly disrupted – a zu'úr smuggling operation as well as a hidden temple of the One Other. Either one alone would earn them accolades from the Palace of the Realm in the nearby city but both, together, will grant them reputations as working in the best interests of the Petal Throne – that is, *if they tell anyone what they have done*. The priesthood of Ksárul, as noted above, will be keen to keep at least part of what the characters have done quiet, both to protect their own reputations and to hoard knowledge for their own use. Furthermore, the characters might decide they wish to avoid letting it be known they were involved in stopping the zu'úr smugglers, since doing so might invite retribution from their allies in the city. And, of course, anything involving the Ssú and zu'úr is of interest to the Omnipotent Azure Legion, another group the characters might wish to avoid dealing with.

Regardless, this little adventure is only the beginning. However the player characters choose to act, many more possibilities await on the world of Tékmel.

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