

Wanted: Questions

If you have a question concerning Tékumel, forward them to us at the following address:

The Imperium Publishing Company
P.O. Box 9854
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55440

Questions not accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope can only be answered in the question-and-answer column which will appear in some subsequent journal. Questions accompanied by such an envelope may appear in this column and may also be answered personally, if possible.

Each correspondent whose question is used in this column will receive a free copy of the journal in which it appears by way of payment.

Wanted: Dispatches

Send us an account of one of your adventures, as it might be reported to an Imperial official. If we can use it, it will be edited and presented as one of the dispatches forwarded by the Omnipotent Azure Legion to the Petal Throne.

Each account should be typed (double-spaced), about one or two pages in length, and must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

The author of each adventure report used in the Dispatches will receive two free copies of the journal in which his contribution appears by way of payment.

Note: News of the slaying of high Imperial officials, the starting of wars, the destruction of major cities, etc. sorely distresses the tranquility of the Emperor's repose. Send such reports only at the risk of His Majesty ordering the High Princeps at Avanthár to ferret out the truth!

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Journal Notes

Journal Notes #1 explained the purpose of the Journal in "an attempt to explore systematically and to fill in the details of the Tékumel fantasy which will otherwise be missed in the games, the scattered articles, and the question-and-answer articles of Prof. Barker."

To this end, the second Journal expands our series on Tsolyáni temples with an article on Lord Thúmis' dark counterpart, the Doomed Prince Ksáru. The series on the nonhuman races continues with "The Chýrstalli." Last issue's columns "On Customs" and "Selected Biographies" have rotated with "Dispatches within the Imperium." There is also an increase in artwork over last issue.

Due to space considerations, the article on "The Foreigner's Quarters of Jakálla" was moved at the last minute back to issue #3. We hope this will not cause undue inconvenience to our readers.

Likely other articles in issue #3 include one of the three pieces Prof. Barker has written for us on other Tekumeláni scripts and languages; another article on nonhumans; more "Dispatches"; and another installment of either "Selected Biographies" or "On Customs."

In other Tékumel related events:

Prof. Barker's novel passed twenty chapters at the end of summer, but, with the start of the academic year, he has set it aside until next summer.

Mr. William Murray of Old Guard has left the Tékumel figure producing business. Henceforth, Ral Partha will produce the line, including the original Old Guard castings. Mr. Murray will continue to carve some figures, however, in addition to those carved by the Ral Partha staff.

The basic rules for MISSÚM!, our miniature rules for Tekumeláni warfare, are ready for publication. TSR declined to publish them, feeling they are directed to a somewhat different audience of gamers than they wished to reach; but have kindly given us permission to put them out on our own. The advanced-optional rules will be published in a separate book this summer.

Until next time, may each of your several deities bless you and keep you!



Gary R. Rudolph

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Bazháq and Tané

Dispatches in the Imperium

David Cheeney

Gary Rudolph

M. A. R. Barker

From Rúqu hiViriséka, Commandant of the Omnipotent Azure Legion in Thri'il, to the Most Noble Lord Qorúma hiRi'inyússa, Princeps of the Legion, at Avanthár:

Know ye, Mighty One, that Didóm 14, 2354 A.S. a party of lowly foreigners were commissioned in Khírgar as "eyes of the Empire" ("Spies." Translator).

Sent to the Desert of Sighs to report on and harass the movements of Yán Koryáni troops, they vanished, and were presumed lost.

Now, however, they have reappeared here escorting curious animals they identify as the fabled Bazháq; riding beasts of the ancients. Know also, Lord, the foreigners returned not from the Desert of Sighs, but traveled by means of subterranean transportation vehicle from a distant place they call the "Land of the Tané." Their story is confirmed by high level mind-probes and the presence of these animals.

Relevant portions of the interrogations of the foreigners are appended.

A complete physical description of the beasts, sketches of them, and such information the foreigners can furnish concerning their diets, mating habits, etc. is appended.

The animals have been domesticated by these people the foreigners call the Tané. And know also, Lord, that the Tané are reported to use the great Sró as beasts of war, as well as the Bazháq! The foreigners were intensively interrogated on these matters. The transcripts of their sessions are appended in full.

Priests were summoned from Lord Thúmis' Hall of Many Tongues in the greatest secrecy to hear the foreigners speak the "language of the Tané." They attest it is not mere meaningless sounds. Two have been assigned to learn what the foreigners can teach. Their initial report is appended.

A low-cartographic map has been prepared based on the foreigners' travels and astronomical observations in the lands of the Tané. It indicates this place may lie to the west of the Plain of Towers, beyond Mu'ugalavýá. The initial map, with explanatory notes, is appended. A high-cartographic map is being prepared for your sublime edification.

What is your further instruction in this matter, Great One?

* * *

Appended Report: Excerpts from the interrogations of the Foreigners

"... We were captured by a band of hostile desert tribesmen about two hundred tsáns to the west of Pelesár. Before they could take us to their camp and

present us to their elders we were caught in the onslaught of a desert storm. In the confusion we overpowered our guards and stumbled off into the maelstrom.

Seeking shelter, we entered an ancient tower that jutted from the sand at a twisted angle. After subsequent explorations we came to realize this tower in the middle of the desert was actually the prow of a ship of the old ages!

We moved into the deeper compartments, our flickering torches revealing all forms of odd devices and accoutrements. In the deepest chamber, near the stern, we found an old man resplendent in jeweled robes and cloak, laid on a great slab of crystal.

Before we could speak of our amazement to one another the old man sat upright and smiled! The youngest of our party gasped and scrambled for the door of the chamber. Before we could react and follow his lead the old man spoke! In an old, strange form of Tsolyáni he asked us if the typhoon had passed us and why we had left our posts!

This remark was as strange as the surroundings. I (Tsárnu hiPrádes. Translator), being a fisherman from the southlands, realized that "typhoons" were only possible over vast bodies of water. The nearest water to which he could be referring was a thousand tsans to the northwest.

We explained the situation to the old man as clearly as possible. At first Turshánmy, as he called himself, thought us to be mad. But the angle of the tilted ship and a taste of the sand outside convinced him of our honesty. He was considerably distressed.

After several hours the howling winds abated and we went to open the outer portal. It opened only the width of two fingers with all of us prying together. The sand that poured in through the crack made us realize the same winds that had revealed this ship to us had again buried it.

Turshánmy assured us that he could get us out. He pulled from his robes a small blue orb with a red knob. He explained that this device could transport us to a predetermined point. In this case the destination was to be the magician's home city; a seaport he called "Tané."

Not knowing of this city we were at first reluctant to go, but the sand filtering through the crack by the portal made our options clear to us.

Gathering into a tight circle around the orb the old man bent and put his hand to the knob. When he stood we were in the midst of a small village of wood huts in the clearing of a great conifer forest! Either the orb had erred or the geography had changed here also, for this place was no more a port city than was Khírgar! Turshánmy was considerably distressed.

Then, a tall shape swiftly approached us down one of the narrow lanes. As it burst into the light of our torches we saw that it was a man--sitting astride the back of a six-legged beast!!..."

Appended Report: The description of the Bazháq, and its habits

A bazháq stands about six to seven feet tall at the shoulder. It has three pairs of legs, with the front pair being about one foot lower than the rear pair. Each foot ends in a configuration of three "toes"; small, round, and hard, flat on the bottom and sides. On some bazháq there is a spur. The corrugated pattern which develops on the bottom of the foot gives additional traction.

The neck of the bazháq is rather short, and is about the same length as the head, which appears rather long, flat and triangular, ending in a parrot-like beak of a gray horny substance similar to the toes. There are no visible ears. This area of the head is covered by two flaps of skin which are folded flat back against the head. The bazháq has two forward-facing eyes, white, with black pupils, and black or gray irises. The brow ridges are not prominent.

The tail is short, a foot or two in length, and is sometimes cropped, following a fashion of the Tané.

The skin resembles leather for texture and strength. It has a pebbled feel, as if many small, round objects lay just below the surface of the skin. The only hair is a spine of very short, very dark fibers. The skin varies from a muddy brown in color to black. The bazháq is always of one color, never displaying spots, stripes, or patterns of any kind.

The bazháq is bisexual. The young are born in a leathery sac which splits soon after leaving the mother. The young bazháq is soon moving under its own power.

The colt reaches nearly adult size after one year, but does not fully mature until three or more years of age. Life expectancy is then about ten to twelve years.

The bazháq is semi-intelligent, and can be trained to simple tasks. It will shy from carnivores, and can distinguish friends and enemies as if by instinct. The beast makes a hissing, mumbling sound when feeding or pleased. This becomes a shrieking hiss when it is angry or in pain.

The bazháq is an herbivore, and can go ten to twelve days without food if forced, but cannot do without water for any length of time. Bazháq sleep squatting.

The Tané ride in saddles between the first two pairs of legs. A second saddle is sometimes added, but only for short periods; the animal cannot carry two men with any ease. The bazháq is known more for endurance than speed.

Appended Report: The Language of the Tané

(The body of the linguistic report is far too technical to be of general interest. Thus, only the summary is given. Translator.)

"The language of the Tané approximates the sounds of Livyáni, yet the grammar and lexicon are different in every detail: Combinations of vowels abound; there are glottalized consonants (like those of N'lyss); and words are rather short. Grammatically, the language distinguishes nouns, verbs, and several minor classes. Nouns are grammatically simple, but verbs inflect for person, number, several tenses, and aspects, etc. Various special irregularities in the verbal system have been noted. Research continues."

Appended Report: The Military Uses of the Bazháq and the Sró

(The transcripts themselves are not quoted in full. Instead, a summary incorporating quotations is furnished. Translator.)

The Sró are raised in captivity from birth. The

means of domesticating the Sró remain secret, but it is known that their wings are clipped while still young.

The Bazháq riders fight in poorly organized masses which swirl to and fro uttering cries and challenges. "First one, then another rider will advance into the open area between the armies, challenging an opponent to single combat. After a time one side will pluck up courage and charge. If the enemy stand firm, the charge is likely to halt, and another round of personal challenges ensues. Finally, one army will charge, and the other will not stand for long, but will flee after a brief melee." "In the great wars of the fiefs, the lord will muster out his ten to twenty war-Sró, and inter-spense these along his line. Poorly armed peasant footmen bring up a second line. In the great battles, melees are likely to be longer and harder fought, but the end still comes quickly when one side loses morale, often for no apparent reason, and flees."

"The Bazháq is often protected by a skirt of leather. The riders, too, use leather for their armor, usually sewing strips of hardened leather on suits of soft leather. Rarely, one will see a bronze helmet or breast piece. The riders use a long, slender spear and chopping ax for the most part, although javelins are often used also."

"The Sró carries a tower upon its back, and from this four to ten men will fight. They are armed as the Bazháq riders, but also often use a powerful bow which seems to be available only in their lands."

From the Most Noble Lord Qorúma hiRi'inyússa, High Princeps of the Omnipotent Azure Legion, at Avanthár, to the Lord Rúqu hiViriséka, Commandant of the Legion of Thri'il:

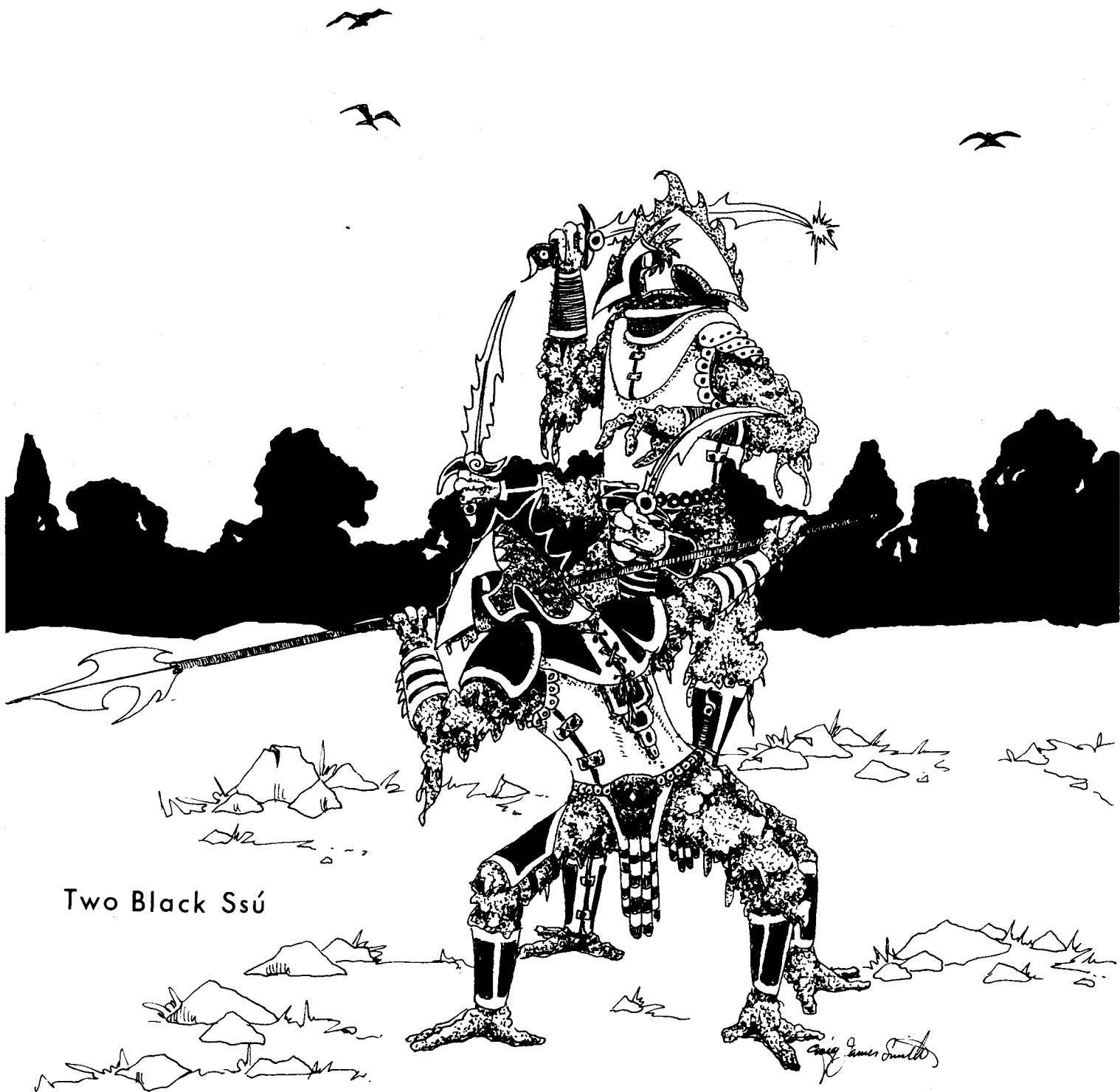
Know that your report has been received concerning the bazháq. It has been submitted unto the Imperial Presence, and we await the inspiration of the Glorious Will. Until that time, continue to study this matter and report. What can be learned of these subterranean transportation devices? Organize an expedition at once to investigate this matter."

* * * * *

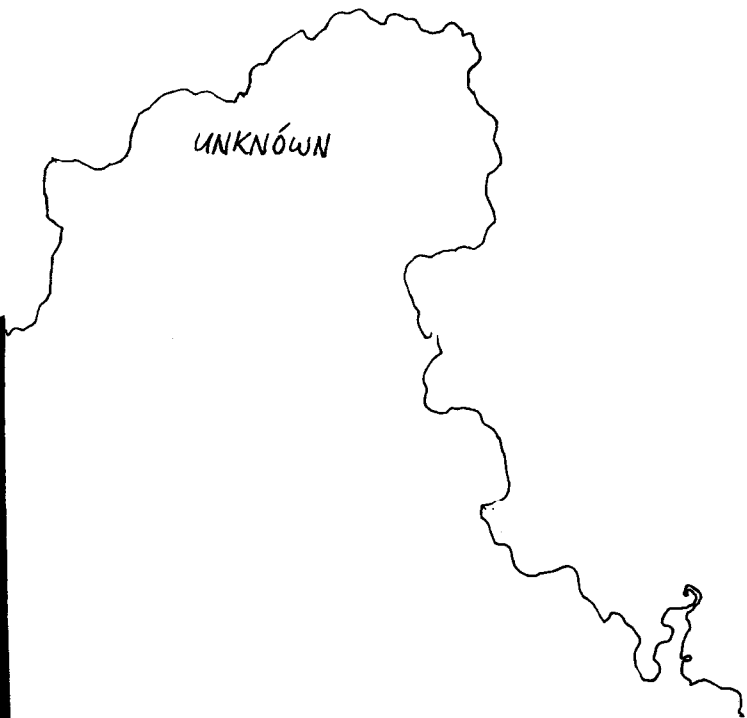
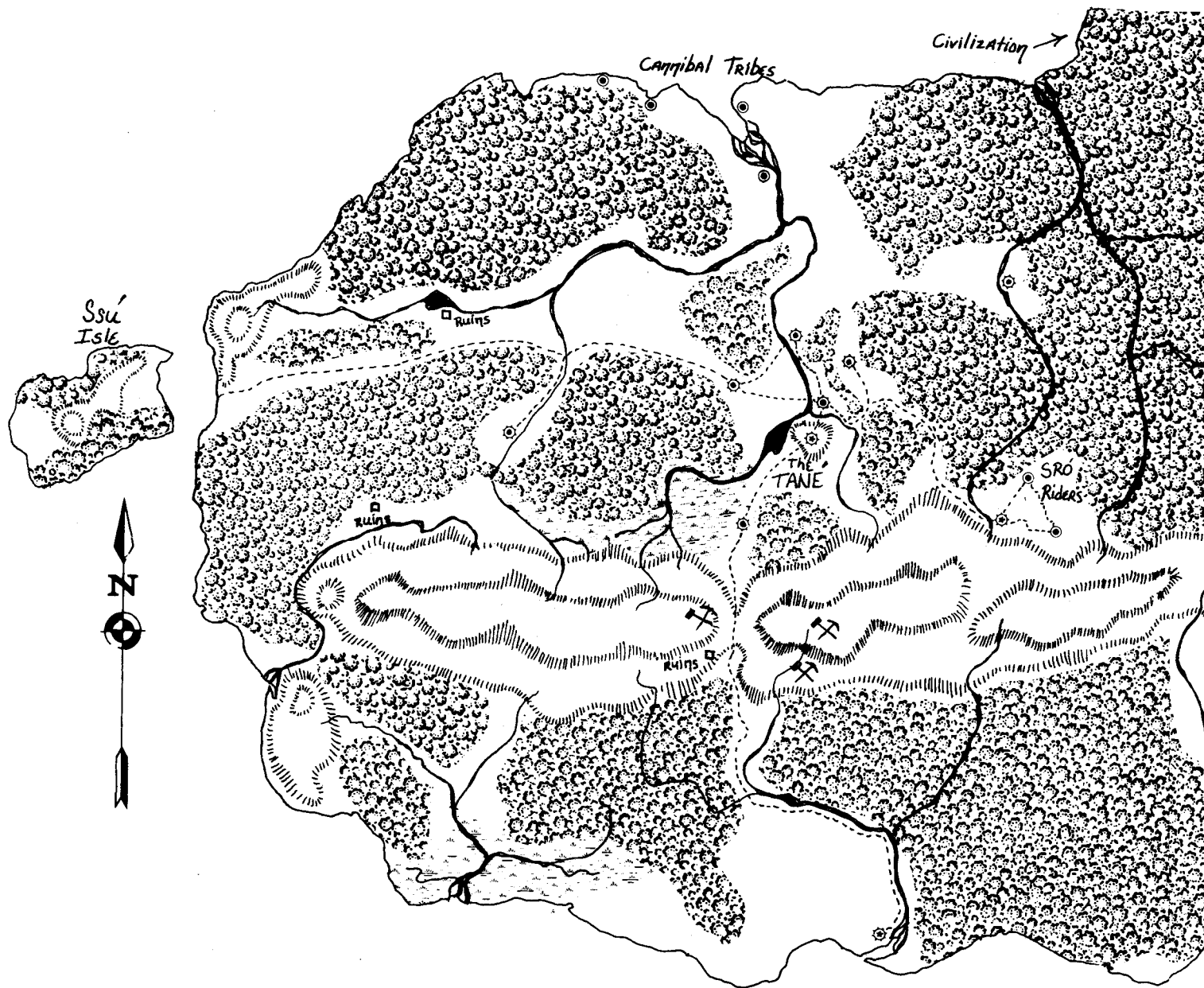
A Dispatch from Kiriktákte hiKhánme, the humble servant of the Omnipotent Azure Legion in Khírgar, to the Mighty One, Master of the Far-Flung Domains of the Great Seal, the Lord of the Palace of Avanthár:

It is reported that a cohort of the Legion of Sérqu, Sword of the Empire, fought a Qadárni battle some seventy tsán to the northwest of Khírgar against the forces of the inimitable Baron Áld. A victory from the forces of the omnipotent Seal is gloriously reported. The cohort commander has been recalled to Khírgar and awaits the Imperial pleasure and the reward for a combat well fought. The most glorious Legion has once again placed the standards of victory in the legion halls of Khírgar.

Unto the servant Kiriktákte hiKhánme, master of the Omnipotent Azure Legion in Khírgar: It is recorded by the High Provost of Avanthár, Lord Cháymira hiSsánmirin, that the Imperial Prescence has been informed of the victory of the Legion of Sérqu, Sword of the Empire, and that the Most Exalted, the Scion of the Sun, is pleased by this information. The glory of the legions of the might of the Seal must forever be recorded, and must forever be glorified, and must forever increase.



Two Black Ssú



LEGEND of TANE'

- Towns or wood hillforts
- ⊙ Stone walled Towns
- ⊛ Citadels
- Ruins
- ⌵ Copper mines
- Roads

TSAI 0 100 400



Appended Report: The Land of the Tané (see Map, also)

"... The land of the Tané lies in the center of a great peninsula, or perhaps island, to the west of the Plain of Towers. It is cooler than the Empire, and the inhabitants are kept to a meager existence by the shortage of agricultural lands. The place is thickly forested by conifers, and the soil is not fertile, even where it is available to farm. Copper is mined in the mountains to the south, but otherwise there is no quantity of metals available.

As just mentioned, mountains form the southern border of Tané. They are unexplored for the most part, except for the region around the copper mines. Copper is also mined by the inhabitants of the southern port city, and there is a small amount of trade conducted where the areas of influence overlap.

To the west lies an island inhabited by black ssú. This connects to the mainland when the sea is at low tide, exposing a causeway of natural stone. There are occasional raids, but the ssú are quiescent for the most part.

To the north lie cannibal tribes living in greater poverty than the Tané. Their political organization is primitive, and thus, they pose no real threat.

To the east of the Tané are the fiefs of the Sró riders, who are both politically organized and rich enough to support an infrequent war with the Tané. To the east of the Sró riders live other similar peoples, but these peoples we did not visit. To the east of these peoples, according to rumor, lies the Plain of Towers.

The Tané, and the Sró-riding Tané both are organized along fuedal lines:

The largest landowner in a fief is the lord; he can support the most Bazháq, and thus, is the most able to defend the fief (and/or bully his fellow landowners). A fief essentially consists of one of the large clearings that have developed over generations of hacking farms out of the wilderness. They are, thus, easily distinguishable from each other. This has lead to a weak or nonexistent central authority; and while normal lip service is paid to one or another larger lord as "king," each fief is independent for all practical purposes."

* * *

Give unto this young cohort commander a reward fitting unto his status and unto his prowess. It is here-with commanded that he shall receive promotion to Mólkar in the Legion of Sérqu, Sword of the Empire when a vacancy arises. In the meantime, he is no longer to engage in Qadárni battles, but instead is to be posted on permanent basis to the legion headquarters in Khírgar. All that is known is known unto the Majesty of the Emperor.

A Dispatch from Kiriktákte hiKhánme, the Commandant of the Omnipotent Azure Legion in Khírgar, to the Majesty of the Seal, the Lord of Power, the Resplendent and Ever-Rising Sun of the Empire:

It is intimated unto the Majesty of the Throne that a cohort of the Legion of the Battalions of the Seal of the Worm fought a Qadárni battle some fifty tsán to the northwest of Khírgar against the Gurék of the Red and Green Banner of the Yán Koryáni. The cohort commander in this case was a young foreigner who has only recently been given military command. He erred in judgment and allowed his bravery to overcome his sense of military propriety. He advanced personally to do championship battle, and although he slew the opposing commander and others, he was, himself, in turn slain in the end. The battle was then carried forth by his second-in-command, the officer Hijéka, who succeeded in reducing the Yán Koryáni and surrounding them. Unfortunately, the Yán Koryáni were determined to fight to the death. And so, yet surrounded, managed to defeat most of Hijéka's remaining force. For all intents and purposes the battle was a draw, for both sides ended up withdrawing from the field, bearing their wounded and dead. Neither side was defeated, yet neither could claim great glory.

The cohort commander was taken to the city of Khírgar, where, through the grace and skills of the temple of Sárku, Lord of Worms, he was returned to this plane of existence. Illumine the ways of your will, O Radiant One!

Unto the Lord Kiriktákte hiKhánme, master of the Omnipotent Azure Legion in Khírgar: It is recorded by the High Provost of Avanthár, Lord Chaymira hiSsánmirin, that the dispatch relating to the Qadárni of the first cohort of the Legion of the Battalions of the Seal of the Worm was submitted unto the Imperial Presence and the following response is made known:

The cohort is to be returned to strength once more, drawing on the recruits available in training in the city of Sárku. When the cohort is again of suitable strength, it is commanded to go forth and again meet the enemy, perhaps in Yán Kór itself. The young cohort commander is to be given the Order of the Glory of Victory (a minor reward. Translator) which should encourage him to renewed zeal in Our service. He is advised, however, to seek council from those more senior to himself in the legion, and so add skill to devotion. The officer Hijéka is herewith transferred to serve as military legate in the temple of Sárku in Thráya. He is no longer to serve as an active officer in the Legion. He is to receive no further punishment, however, for his loyalty and courage are undoubted. These things shall be done in the name of the Emperor, the Ever-Living, the Select of Hnálla.

* * * * *

The following were submitted to the "Book of Mighty Imperial Deeds of the Great and Glorious Petal Throne":

" . . . Know ye, O Living Icon of the Gods Made Manifest, that the High Princes of the Temple of Thúmis, the Lord Gámalu hiBéshyene, has designed a new type of Zírúnel, and commanded it to be built in the city of Penóm. As you know, Omniscient Eye of Sagacity, the High Princeps once was a pilot, before receiving his call from Lord Thúmis. Thus, the ship draws upon his own experience and knowledge, and is not merely a project he funds.

Piloting this Zírúnel on its maiden voyage, the Princeps was discomfited by the unseemly arrival of two ships of the spawn of the old ones, the hated Hlýss. The Princeps, fighting in the presence of his family, who had accompanied him, and the General Túkolen (for whom the ship was named) skillfully bested the Hlýss, setting fire to both their vessels, and escaping without serious injury to himself, his crew, or his ship. How much this is due to the worthiness of the craft, and how much to the skill of the pilot is known only to the Immortal Gods!" The response in the public Book records simply "Let prayers of Thanksgiving be offered for the safety of the servant of the glorious Petal Throne." In the secret book the following instruction is added: "The Princeps at Avanthár is ordered to determine if the appearance of the Hlýss ships was due to chance or design. If by design, then the means and sources of communications with the Hlýss must be discovered, so that it can be turned to our advantage at the proper time."

" . . . Know ye, O Illimitable Iridescence of Supernal Wisdom, that a riot has occurred in Béy Sý. By some reports, it began as a brawl over the use of a public latrine; by other reports, a madman ran berserk through a marketplace, killing men with a bloody mace, and in the ensuing confusion looting began; by other reports, there was no problem until the guards on duty in the market panicked at some boisterousness they could not clearly see, and called in the reserve cohort from the City Prefecture; by yet other accounts, a ghost, famous from past times, made his periodic appearance, causing a panic near a marketplace; and by some accounts, ne'er-do-well students of some priestly academy or other were pulling some practical joke, or by another account, fleecing some unsuspecting peasant by means of magic of simple sleight-of-hand, provoking a disturbance. Inspire your slaves, O Beneficent Pilot of our Destinies!" In the public Book, the glyph commands "Continue to investigate, and report." In the secret Book, the glyphs are somewhat modified, to "It is unknowable. Close such investigation as might have existed. Punish those who were caught in the commission of crimes as prescribed by law."

* * *



Mu'ugalavyáni

Two Chýrstalli



The Chýrstalli

Craig Smith

This report was submitted to the temple of Ksáru in Béy Sý on the 17th of Dohállu 2354 A.S. by one Siitlénish, the Mu'ugalavyáni military attache in the city. His birthplace and home is Gáshchne, the westernmost city in the territories of the fourth palace, in fact, in all of Mu'ugalavyá. The report was solicited by one Invar, a priest of Ksáru whose interests in natural history has begun to spread beyond Béy Sý.

"To the north and east of my childhood home, the city of Gáshchne, lies Chýrstalli; home of the ancient race, the Chýrstalli. Little is known of this wasteland and its inhabitants. What information I do have is based on a few personal experiences and a confused and clouded oral tradition.

According to local legend, the present Great Waste of Galaí was once a fertile and habitable region. The reason for the change in climate is to be found either in the great cataclism of equally legendary past times, or in the wrath of the god Hfsh. It is said that the Chýru Peak, a great, monolithic igneous outcropping in the center of the desert was once the dwelling place of mighty sorcerers and/or the "Winged Ones." Whether they were the same or two different life forms, and whether or not they existed at the same time is not known, but the legends agree that at one time their power rivaled that of Lord Hfsh. They committed some unforgivable offense against the Lord. As a result, Hfsh arose in wrath, and coming forth from his sacred places on the Island of Mu'ugállu, laid waste the lands and destroyed the race of his foes. Thus to all who trespass the boundaries of Hfsh! But I digress. . . .

As a child I was told that the "dwellers of the peak" created a race to serve them as guardians and slaves: the Chýrstalli. This, to me, gave credence to the legends, for I knew the Chýrstalli existed.

Often travelers would supper at the home of my father, and it was there I would hear first-hand accounts of these voracious, clever creatures, and how they would sometimes attack even great merchant caravans, or of how the traveler had seen one devour a man.

At the age of thirteen I was told by a Dune Leaper¹ of the anatomical similarities of the Chýrstalli and the Hlýss. They are cousins in their hatred of us, if not also in blood! Such a relation would explain the unusual intelligence of the Chýrstalli. My father believed them to have been as intelligent as the Hlýss at one time, and that they have been slowly degenerating since the time of the climate change. I would easily compare their mental powers with those of the Sérudla or Sró, and this is based on many personal observations of them.

They are difficult to physically describe.

When they hatch they are approximately twice the size of a man's fist, but as far as I know, there is no knowledge of their growth rate or when they mature. They can reach great size; the largest one on record was nine or ten man-heights in length. Like the Hlýss they appear somewhat crustacean or insectoid. They have six legs of which the front two have claws for grasping. The major portion of the body is covered by a shell or carapace. The shell provides protection and camouflage, for it secretes a sticky substance to which sand and bits of rock cling. The head can be retracted inside the shell for defense. The neck is long and leathery, and the attached head is similar, and quite narrow. It has two large eyes, and a hard sharp beak

with a pronounced overbite. Inside the beak are mandibles that inject a paralyzing poison, which I will mention again later. The Chýrstalli also possess a tail like that of the Hlýss, with which it protects its flanks and rear. However, it cannot strike forward! The poison is deadly and fast-acting.

The Chýrstalli's main source of food is a land fish native to the Galaí desert. The long, thin fin and rib bones of this animal are sometimes grasped in the front claws of the Chýrstalli and used like swords or daggers.

Essentially a nocturnal creature, the Chýrstalli buries its head and legs to escape the heat of the sun. It also buries itself for protection from enemies, and is a swift and powerful digger. I have heard tales of groups of travelers who stop to camp between two boulders, which in turn rise up after dark and attack.

During the height of the summer they return to the lairs of their egg mothers with prey they have paralyzed but not eaten. In these bodies the egg mother lays her eggs. When they hatch, the young feed on their host, whose bodily fluids have been preserved for this time. When small the Chýrstalli feed mainly on insects, small lizards, and carrion left by the larger of their kind.

As they mature, they feed mainly on the land-fish mentioned above. However, they will eat almost any higher form of life, including humans and sometimes each other.

The small ones "skirmish" as it were, for their elders. It is not uncommon for packs of ten to twenty individuals of different sizes to move together.

The Chýrstalli communicate by means of crackling and hissing sounds, often combined with movement of their front claws. Their vocabulary is small but through it they appear to be able to inform others of their kind of danger, food, help, etc. No human has yet mastered any of their speech, however.

Rarely do the Chýrstalli venture more than two to three hundred tsán from their nesting areas in the Chýru Peak. North and west is too cold for them, while to the east and south they lose the advantage of their camouflage, due to the abrupt change in soil and vegetation.

I would like to add one last note. Legends concerning the Chýru Peak make occasional references to a treasure lost somewhere in the heights. Some say it was left behind by the "dwellers of the peak." It is also said there is something there the Chýrstalli feed upon, although the legend hints that they are more often fed upon. . . ."

¹The Dune Leapers is the name of the Fourth Palace's Ninth Legion, comprising some four thousand tribesmen from the borders of the Galaí desert. They are semi-nomadic and semi-agricultural. They wear tight garments of striped wool, with an overcloak of the same material, plus mask-like headgear to protect them from the sun and retain body moisture. They are armed with large leather shields, peculiar repeating crossbows of no great range or penetration--but with poisoned quarrels of reed, and also carry slender rapier swords of chlen-hide. They fight as fanatic light infantry.

They and other Mu'ugalavyáni legions clash frequently with the Chýrstalli. Whenever possible, the following plan of attack is used: One Chýrstalli is attacked by a large number of men. Some attack with spears to the front of the creature to hold its attention, while others attempt to vault onto the carapace. Once there, the attacker attempts to drive spikes into gaps in the Chýrstalli's shell. A heavy lead mallet is used. The success rate is low, but it is the most effective means of killing a Chýrstalli.

KSÁRUL, "Doomed Prince of the Blue Room"

M. A. R. Barker

The theology of the Temple of Ksáru, Ancient Lord of Secrets, Doomed Prince of the Blue Room, Master of Magic, Knower of the Inner Names of All the Worlds, He Who Confronts the Inner Being of Reality, is particularly difficult to describe since the very keynote of this Temple is "Mystery." Most of his true doctrine is concealed from outsiders; his greatest shrines lie either in the labyrinths beneath the oldest cities or else in remote and inaccessible jungles and mountains; his true priests go masked; and his most important tenets are couched in the secret language invented by his worshippers long ago, the arcane and complex "Tongue of the Priests of Ksáru."

Outwardly, his Temple closely resembles the structures and patterns of those of the other deities of Tsolyánu: certain clans support his worship; vast tracts of lands are operated in his name by fiefholders, tenant farmers, or slaves; and there is the usual progression of ranks within his priesthood from acolytes up through ritualists, scholars, military priests, administrators, etc., etc. Yet the power structure of his "Inner Sphere" is actually quite different. Certain priests and priestesses of very minor rank are in reality the masters of the Inner Sphere, the tightly organized, secret society within the Temple which maintains his secret doctrines and implements Lord Ksáru's true plans and goals. A complex cell-like structure assures secrecy, and these "Inner Doctrines" are communicated to those in the Outer Sphere (and thence to outsiders) only indirectly and with great circumspection. Funds are diverted from the income of the Temple for these private objectives, and often those in the Outer Sphere are unaware of their true purposes.

Under these circumstances, it is understandable that the doctrines of the Lord of Secrets should make little logical sense to those not privy to the Mysteries. The Outer Doctrines are only a shell meant to satisfy the uninformed, while the priests of the Inner Sphere pursue their own goals.

The Outer Doctrines were first formulated by the priest, Pavár, who was the founder of the pantheon which now pervades Tsolyáni life. Yet there are hints that Lord Ksáru was known and worshipped long before Pavár: there are references to a mysterious "Blue Lord" in the fragmentary records of the Empire of Llyán of Tsámra, and it is thought that at least one of the Shadow Gods of Livyánu has a strong resemblance to the Doomed Prince. The origins of Lord Ksáru may thus date back far beyond Pavár's time, perhaps even to the Time of Darkness when mankind still had access to some of the old sciences and technology. Legend has it that in earlier ages the priests of Ksáru were able to construct mutated creatures from the bodies of both the living and the dead: e.g., the Hrá, the Qól, the Mrúr, and certain others. The power of spell-writing, the

construction and repair of "Eyes" and other devices, the art of writing "Books of Power," and other skills were also theirs, and some say that certain of these attainments are still known, hidden away from jealous eyes in the remote temples and monasteries of Lord Ksáru's Inner Sphere.

The Outer Doctrines can be summarized here. The following is taken largely from the majestic Lament to the Wheel of Black and the Song of the Reaper of Sighs.

In the "Time of the Gods," before Téku, it is said that Lord Ksáru was the youngest of the gods, a brilliant and ambitious deity of great cunning and power. Through his arrogance and impatience, he came to strive for mastery against his fellows, particularly the Lords of Stability. His allies included the Demons of the Dark, the Dwellers in Shadow, the Spirits of the mythical aerial realm of Tu'unké, and later, after Téku's creation, even certain humans and non-humans (e.g., the Miháli). At first his foes were only the Lords of Stability: Hnálla, Avánthe, Thúmis, Karakán, and Belkhánu, together with their Cohorts. This struggle drew on from age to age and dimension to dimension, with Téku's universe always at the center of the conflict, a sort of hub around which many inter-dimensional battles were fought. At first the other Lords of Change (Hry'y, Vimúhla, Sárku, and Dlamélish, plus their Cohorts) sided with Lord Ksáru, but as time passed they too perceived that his ultimate objective was not only the Rule of Change but rather his own personal mastery over all of the continua. Vimúhla and Dlamélish withdrew and became neutral, while the other two continued to support Ksáru. In the end, however, these deities also saw that a victory for Ksáru meant their extinction or expulsion from these planes. A compact was then made with the Lords of Stability, but it was agreed only that Ksáru would be contained and weakened, not destroyed.

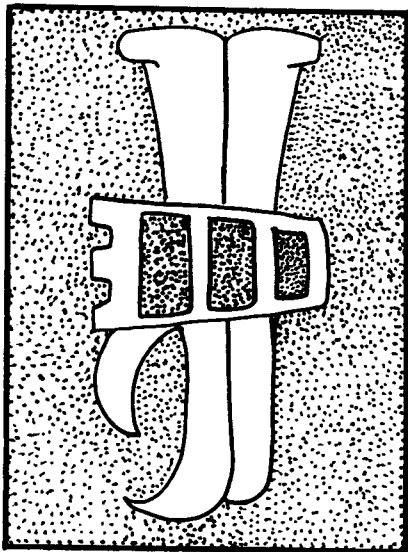
The legends then speak of the Armageddon of the Gods, the great Battle of Dórmoron Plain (not the present Dórmoron Plain in Mu'ugalavýá, no matter what local folk say). Lord Ksáru's minions were defeated at this battle and were driven forth from this universe, while the Doomed Prince himself was brought low and captured. (One epic has it that there are planes upon which these battles still rage, endlessly, and that occasional unlucky inhabitants of Téku who are drawn through into these dimensions find themselves used as warriors, killing and being killed, then being revived again and again to fight on against the demonic foe until the final dissolution of the universe at the end of time.)

Lord Ksáru, the epics say, was imprisoned in a secret place, a "pocket dimension" between the larger dimensional matrices. A few humans who have achieved spiritual rapport with Lord Ksáru report that

this "place" appears as a sort of chamber hung in flickering blue velvet and lit by sconces of azure flame. In these visions, Lord Ksáru himself appears as a human youth sunk in stasis-sleep upon a couch draped in indigo-purple. He is robed in black velvet, and upon his breast lies an ebon staff tipped with a glittering blue gem in the shape of a great beetle. His lips are curved in a perpetual smile, soft, dreaming, moonlike, yet somehow impersonal and emotionless. All of this is perhaps only a "seeming," an illusion which makes the vision comprehensible to human eyes and not necessarily "reality" (if indeed there be a single "reality" for all beings alike?).

The nine gods then erected walls around the Blue Room to prevent Lord Ksáru from escaping or his followers from rescuing him. It is said that there are ten such walls, but the builder of the tenth is never named and is referred to only as "the One Other." Again, these are not material walls but rather barriers incomprehensible otherwise to our limited human perceptions. In order, from innermost to outermost, these walls were erected by Hnálla, Hry'ý, Karakán, Vimúhla, Thúmis, Sáрку, Avánthe, Dlamélish, Belkhánu, and "the One Other." The Cohorts of the gods either play no part in this part of the legend or are named only as "assisting" their masters in the forming of these walls.

The Outer Doctrines hold that although the Doomed Prince lies sleeping, yet his intellect continues to control great powers and is operative in this universe. His abilities are weakened and diffused by his imprisonment, yet so great are his faculties that even in bondage he is mighty. Were he to be freed, he would again challenge the authority of the gods, and this time he would be victorious. His allies await him on many planes and could be called back to join again in the conflict.



The Outer Doctrines go on to say that each of the ten walls has a "key" and that it was a condition agreed to by all of the gods that these keys should be concealed somewhere in Téकुmel's universe. The reasons for this condition are not known--or known only to the gods--and it was further stipulated that these "keys" must have physical form and must be accessible to humans and lesser beings. Three of these keys are known now: one is in the High Temple of Ksáru in Béý Sí, another is in the possession of a certain young priest of Ksáru, and the third is kept in a crystal cave in the Hall of Dripping Doom in the House of Tenebrous Sighs in the Palace of Bássa, King of the Black Ssú, on the other side of Téकुmel. The locations of the others are not known.

The Inner Doctrines of the Temple of Ksáru cannot be ascertained with any certainty, due to the secrecy in which they are maintained. There is a speculation to the effect that Lord Ksáru is not really imprisoned at all but has gone upon a sort of voluntary "retreat" in order to strengthen his powers, and that one day he will return to conquer all of the worlds. Another hypothesis holds that the legend of the Blue Room is but a fabrication put forward by Lord Ksáru's minions themselves, and that in reality he continues to operate in this world under a variety of names and guises. Still another theory states that he has abandoned this series of dimensions entirely and has nothing more to do with Téकुmel, and that only his allies and his worshippers continue to hold his order together for greedy motives of their own (this is perhaps a rumor favored by his foes). None of these statements are anything more than conjecture, however, since the priests of the Inner Sphere are totally close-mouthed and secretive, their lips and minds sealed even from the highest agents of the Imperium by magical wards and by the convoluted labyrinth of the Inner Sphere structure. All that can be discovered at this time, thus, is that the Inner Sphere has very real goals both inside and outside of Tsolyánu, that there is some form of cooperation between the Inner Sphere and certain secret societies within the Temples of Sáрку and Hry'ý, and that there is rivalry with the other gods.

Outwardly, as said above, the organization of the Temple of Ksáru is very similar to those of the other temples. Lord Ksáru is particularly popular in the cities of Mrelú and Púrdimal, and he also has power at Úrmish and Butrí's in Pán Cháka. His adherents are scattered throughout the other great cities of the south, and he is weakest in the north and in the east. Much of his support comes from just a few ancient clans, again based in the cities of Mrelú and Púrdimal, although with branches in other places as well. Some of these are: the Clan of the Black Hand, the Dark Moon Clan, the Great Stone Clan, the Dark Flame Clan, etc. These clans trace their ancestry back to the Period of the Fisherman Kings or even farther, and they are by nature a proud and secretive lot. Their income is derived from the rich lands around Mrelú, Púrdimal and Úrmish, and the clan chiefs have never been slow to lavish donations upon their temple and those who serve it.

Militarily, the worshippers of Lord Ksáru have never been particularly strong; the very nature of his faith seems to demand this. Even so, however, certain Legions are devoted to him: e.g., the Legion of Héketh of Púrdimal, 17th Imperial Heavy Infantry, the Legion of the Prince of the Blue Room, 35th Imperial Medium Infantry, and the Legion of the Night Shadows, 15th Imperial Medium Infantry. There is also a Legion devoted to Lord Ksáru's Cohort, Grugánu, the Knower of Spells: the Regiment of the Knower of Spells, 5th Imperial Crossbowmen, based at Mekú.

The Outer Doctrines of Ksáru also command that knowledge and science shall be acquired wherever

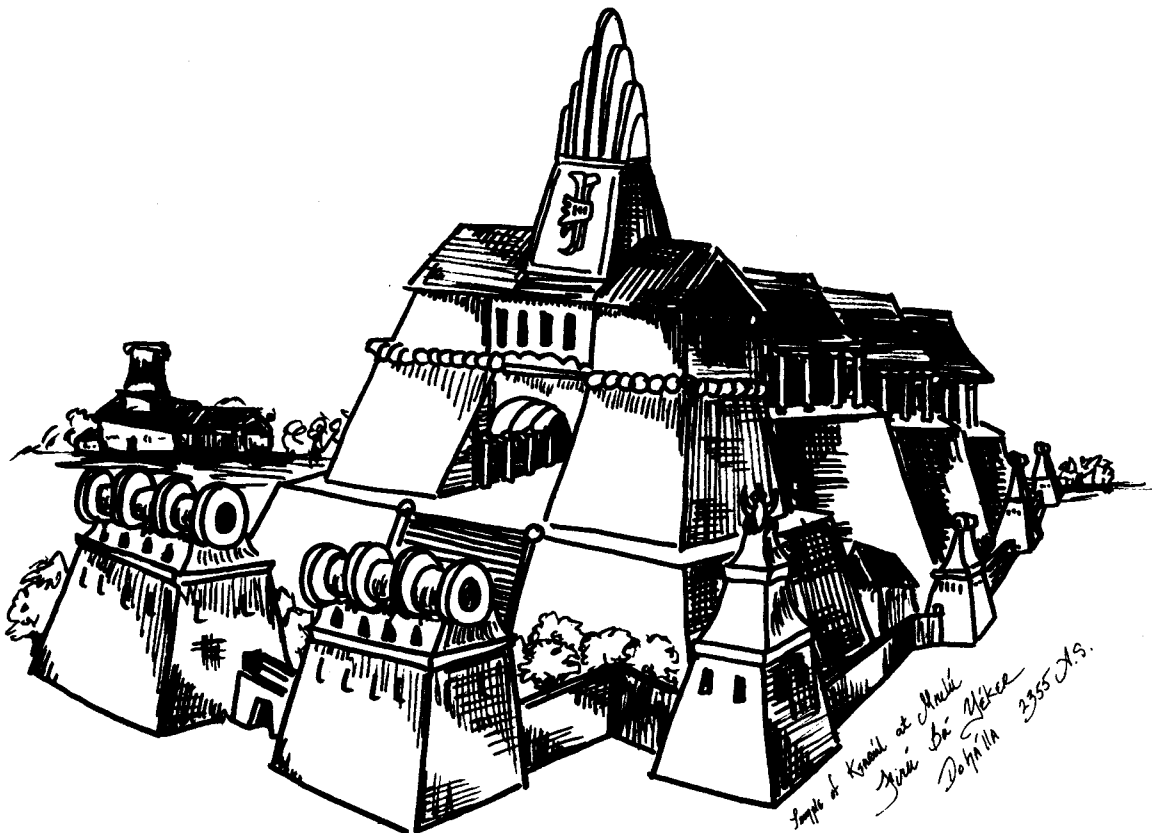
The Emblem of Ksáru

possible, and thus much of the schooling of the Temples of the Lords of Change is done through the great educational complexes of this Temple. The greatest of these is the Hall of Sapphire Glory at Mrelú, in which the outer learning of the Temple is made available to the scions of the nobility and wealthy clansmen from all over the Empire. There are smaller schools at Mekú, at Púrdimal, at Báy Sý, and other major centers throughout the land. Literacy, foreign tongues, mathematics, philosophy, astronomy and astrology, history, ancient learning, and other subjects are taught, and there are specialized courses in theology (not open to those who are not worshippers of the Doomed Prince), music, the recitation of epics and praises to the Emperor, poetry, and other arts. If the student be a worshipper of Ksárul, he or she may then go on into the Inner Hall, where various forms of magic, the Tongue of the Priests of Ksárul, necromancy, geomancy, divine interpretations, and other less-savory topics are available. Students belonging to the sects of the Lords of Stability are rare in these schools, preferring instead to attend their own institutions in the Temples of Thúmis or Keténgku, and devotees of the other Lords of Change attend only the "outer" classes and then return to their own temples for specialized instruction.

The Inner Doctrines are never taught in these public places, of course, but are instead imparted in the hidden fastnesses of Lord Ksárul's many monasteries and shrines. The exact locations of these places are never revealed (although they are known to the Imperium). A steady stream of "pilgrims" to the haunted ruins of the

city of Hmakuyál seems to indicate that one center is located there, however, and another frequently travelled route leads off eastwards from the city of Thri'íl into the crags of the Kayál Peaks. Routes to these places are hedged about with traps, snares, illusions, and guards (both human and otherwise). Once a student has been accepted into the Inner Sphere, he may disappear for years at a time--and may never emerge again, at least not in the guise in which his friends and clanspeople had known him! Membership in the Inner Sphere thus calls for great personal sacrifice and a willingness to submit to the dictates of the Doomed Prince. Relatively few students are willing to undergo the rigors of this training, followed by the complete submission then demanded by Ksárul's priests. For this reason, perhaps, Lord Ksárul's sect attracts a great many itinerant scholars, students who seek learning within the Outer Sphere but who are unwilling to undergo the dangerous and demanding instruction which would bring them into the Inner Sphere.

The Temple of Ksárul is careful to maintain excellent relations with the Imperium. Taxes and tithes are scrupulously reported and paid, lands are surveyed and kept up, records are meticulously made, and whenever the Imperium has called upon the Temple for aid, this has been given unstintingly. Only this way, perhaps, can the Temple continue to exist, for the temporal power of the Empire is very great, and an alliance between the other temples and the Imperium would soon see the end of Lord Ksárul's worship in Tsolyánu. At the very least, a breach between the Temple and the Imperium would result in the confiscation of the vast lands and wealth of the Temple and drive it underground. The



A Temple of Ksárul

Imperium thus winks at the existence of the Inner Sphere and does not muddy the already muddy ground of Imperial politics. (But cf. below.)

There is currently a danger of a confrontation of sorts, however. The Emperor's third son, Prince Mridóbu, is said--and this is only a rumor--to favor the Temple of Ksáru and perhaps even be a member of the Inner Sphere. The Prince is a close-mouthed, overly clever young man, and he has successfully played off one group against another in Avanthár. His real sympathies are thus unknown. In order to counter a possible coalition between the Imperial Party (in which Prince Mridóbu is clearly a leading figure) and the Temple of Ksáru, the priests of Karakán have pushed their candidate, the Emperor's second son, Prince Eselné, into prominence, and they have also been seeking an alliance with the Temples of Vimúhla and Chiténg. This is not as strange as it may seem: the war-god, Karakán, has as a central point of his doctrine the promulgation of violence--but for the sake of stability: war for the good of society, heroism, loyalty, and military might. Vimúhla, on the other hand, represents violence for the sake of violence, destruction, and change. These two deities thus share a predilection for bloodshed and war, differing only in their eventual objectives, and they may thus be able to accept a temporary truce in order to combat the darker trinity of Ksáru, Sáru, and Hry'y.

Both the Temples of Karakán and Vimúhla have thus made overtures to the supporters of the Military Party, the descendants of those noble clans which trace their ancestry back to the warrior kings of the Bednálljan Age. Rural clan lords, particularly those in the West, have gathered at Katalál, Butri's, and Tumíssa for conferences.

Hostile both to Mridóbu and to Eselné, on the other hand, is Prince Dhich'uné, the Emperor's fourth and youngest son, who has become an adept in the inner hierarchy of the Temple of Sáru. While opposing those priests in the Temple of Ksáru who are in favor of his brother, Mridóbu, he has made allies of others who seek the ascendancy of the "Dark Trinity." Dhich'uné thus has both allies and enemies in the Temple of Ksáru and has split its hierarchy into factions. The Emperor's only daughter, Princess Ma'in Krythái, also appears to be building up a power block of her own in the Temple of Dlamélish to which she belongs, and also in the Temples of Avánthe and Hnálla.

The situation is further complicated by the existence of secret societies within the Temples. These appear to pull in different directions. There are at least three known societies in the Temple of Ksáru itself: the dreaded Ndálu Clan, which represents the Inner Sphere and which seeks political power; the Society of the Blue Light, which seeks knowledge for knowledge' sake and wants no political involvements; and the Refulgent Blue Curtain Society, which also searches after knowledge but which holds that such knowledge must never be revealed and must remain shrouded in secrecy.

The Ndálu Clan is the most dangerous to the Imperium. Its members are in communication with the Cusp of Night Society of the Temple of Hry'y and the Copper Tomb Society of the Temple of Sáru. This coalition supports the overthrow of those who serve the Lords of Stability--and also those who desire the purification of the universe by Vimúhla's flames. It is their belief that the universe must be readied for Lord Ksáru's return: the worship of the Lords of Stability must be expunged, the forces of both the Light and the Flame must be dispersed, and the Temple of Ksáru must be expanded into a monolithic theocratic state. This is the essence of their doctrine: "the Land



Mrúr

Repurified." They urge strong political activity, the removal of opposition by any means feasible, the support of missionaries, etc. Rumor has it that the Ndálu Clan receives aid (particularly in the form of magical devices) from the Lords of Livyánu, whose Shadow Gods resemble some of the Greater Aspects of Lord Ksáru. The Ndálu Clan is allied, as said above, to groups within the other temples of the Dark Trinity. The Cusp of Night Society of the Temple of Hry'y is politically active and seeks to replace the worship of the Lords of Stability by the Rule of Change, by force if need be. The Copper Tomb Society of the Temple of Sáru holds similar views, although it is devoted to the accession of Prince Dhich'uné to the Petal Throne. Although Prince Mridóbu is a rival of Prince Dhich'uné for the Imperial throne, the Ndálu Clan is content to work with the Copper Tomb Society for the present, since the first goal of both must be the end of the Vimúhla-Karakán coalition and also the fall of the Temples of the Lords of Stability. Were these unlikely allies to succeed in defeating their foes, there would then be a struggle between the supporters of the two Princes over the spoils. Moreover, if Eselné could be removed, the Temple of Dlamélish might not then be willing to support the claims of Princess Ma'in Krythái--indeed, legend has it that the goddess Dlamélish has a soft spot for Lord Ksáru anyway, and there are epics which describe a rather lusty love affair between these two deities back in the Time of the Gods. It is thus possible that the Temple of Dlamélish would force their Princess to abandon her claims once Prince Eselné were removed, possibly even coercing her to marry her brother, Prince Mridóbu, in order to cement an alliance against Prince Dhich'uné. (Brother-sister marriages are not uncommon amongst royal heirs in Tsolyánu.)

As a side note here, it may be mentioned that the Emperor's oldest son, Prince Rereshqála, will probably

not take any part in the coming struggle for the throne. He is now too old for some of the more strenuous tests of the Kólumejálím, "the Choosing of Emperors," and he is currently too sunk in his pleasures in his villa in Jakálla to care. He will thus most probably renounce any claim to the Petal Throne.

Another ally of the Ndálu Clan is the Black Y Society, a clan of professional assassins. (The "Y" in this name is actually the Tsolyáni word / onél /, which denotes a road divided into three; these three "roads" are the paths of the Dark Trinity, the Temples of Hry'ý, Ksáru, and Sáru.) As professionals, the Black Y Society will work with anyone who can pay for its services, but its leaders seem to have a natural affinity for the objectives of the Ndálu Clan.

On the other hand, the Society of the Blue Light seeks no political involvement. It holds that Lord Ksáru can best be served by the acquisition of knowledge, and that it is their duty to rebuild Lord Ksáru's ancient powers. This, they claim, cannot be done through political intrigue and assassination but rather through the slow gathering of science and technological knowledge. When Lord Ksáru returns, they argue, he alone will know how his powers must be used, and it is not for mankind to attempt to alter the current state of things and thus inadvertently frustrate his goals. Moreover, no harm can be done by allowing mankind to possess this knowledge in the interim, since all temporal matters are but ephemeral and transitory, and when Lord Ksáru comes he will sweep away all worldly things and reorder the very fabric of the universe to suit his needs. The knowledge which mankind had before the Time of Darkness must thus be restored in expectation of his return. This doctrine is called "the Land Restored." The Society of the Blue Light has never refused Imperial demands for knowledge and is considered politically harmless.

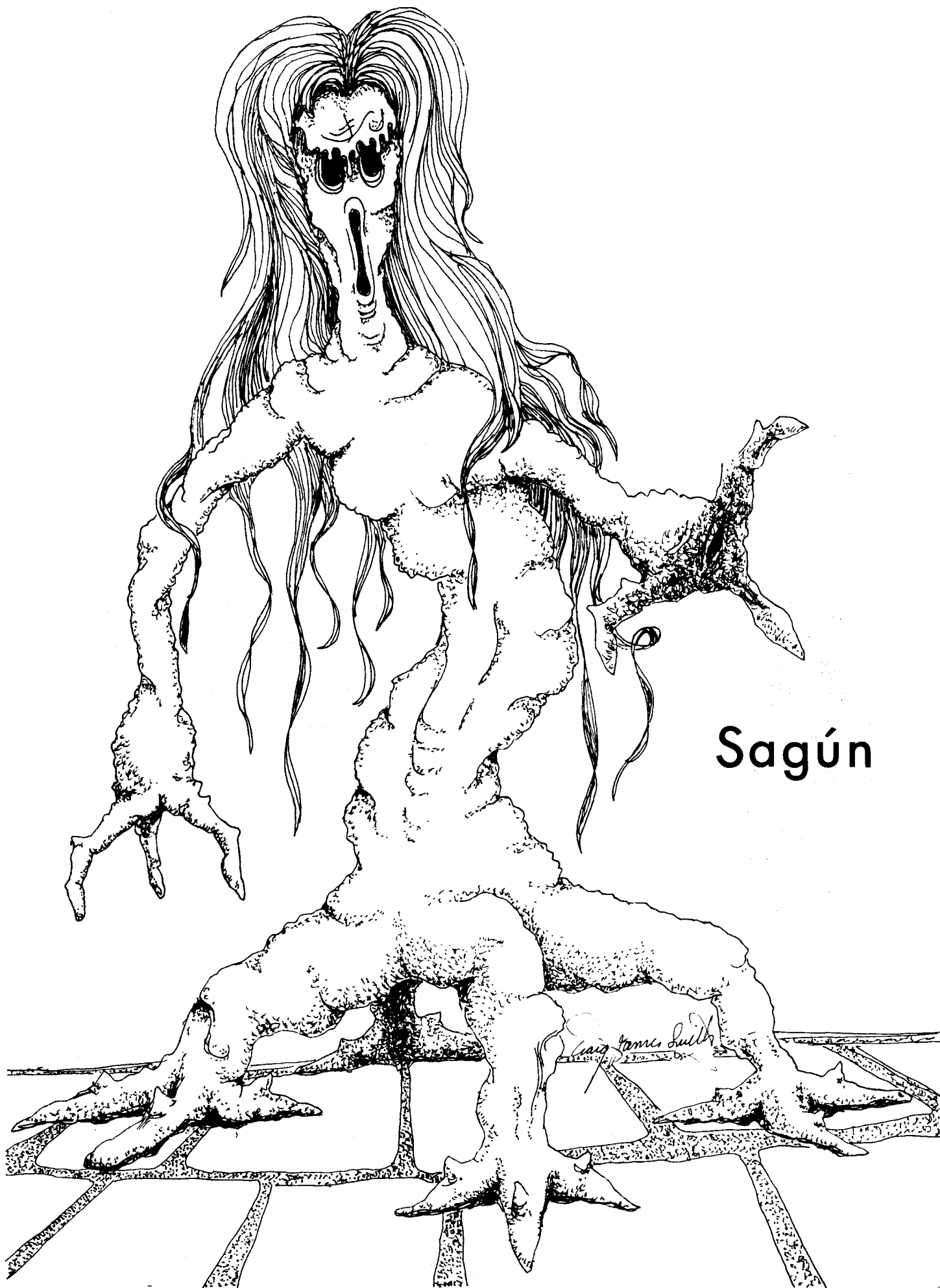
The third of these groups, the Refulgent Blue Curtain Society, agrees with their colleagues upon the necessity to acquire learning. They differ in their view of the interim period before Lord Ksáru's return, however. Knowledge and technology are to be gathered but are NOT to be shared with those who do not serve the Lord since this is in effect aiding his enemies. Taking the epics of the Battle of Dórmoron Plain quite literally, they state that he will need all of his powers in order to defeat his opponents, and thus all knowledge must be kept secret for him and him alone. They carry out their research in remote refuges sealed away even from others within the Temple of Ksáru. One of these places lies somewhere beneath the crags near Thénu Thendráya Peak, while it is said that another is hidden in the Chaigari Protectorate. They reject any cooperation with other sects, and for this reason their doctrine is called "the Land Refused." They have been known to steal books and devices, or to destroy them if need be, in order to keep them from their opponents, and they have thus created almost a separate temple within a temple.

The Temple of Ksáru thus has many facets. Outwardly, it is a staid and loyal servant of the Imperium. Within, there are currents and cross-currents. A newcomer to the priesthood may be left alone to pursue his way up the slow ladder of the Outer Sphere, or, if he is seen to be useful, he may be approached by members of one or another of the secret societies (or by members of one pretending to be members of another!), and even those who would remain aloof may find themselves thrust willy-nilly into the maelstrom of temple intrigue and Imperial politics. It is almost impossible to ascertain who is a member of one of these societies and who is not, and even is a person wished to contact the Ndálu Clan, for example, he might not be able to

find such a person--unless that person wished to be found. If one is asked to join the Inner Sphere, it is wise to consider whether one really has the stamina and the willingness to sacrifice personal goals for the total submission and the arcane objectives of the Lord of the Blue Room.

A word may be added regarding the physical appearance of a temple of Ksáru. Like most other Tsolyáni religious edifices, this consists of an outer walled court, with a Tunkul tower in one corner. On both sides of a central plaza within these walls there are administrative chambers for taxes, tithes, records, etc., the schools, storehouses, guesthouses for visiting priests and clan chiefs who follow Lord Ksáru, and other such areas. To the rear of the main temple are its dormitories, cookhouses, and other secular buildings. The temple itself stands upon a flat-topped pyramid, with stairs leading up the south side to the north (this is done for some obscure doctrinal reason). Unlike certain other temples which are built quite high and which have swooping peaked and gabled roofs which add further to their awesome height. The outer gates of this upper temple open into a series of pillared halls, which in turn open upon small courts, porticoes, and arcades, and then into further pillared chambers, further courts and galleries, and at last into a rather small, dark shrine at the very back of the temple. This shrine is a replica of the Blue Room, draped in blue velvet and set with scintillating diamonds and crystals. Lord Ksáru is there represented in human form, as previously described, asleep upon a couch. Worshipers are not permitted to enter this chamber but remain without in an antechamber, where priests and priestesses perform rites and receive offerings. If one follows other routes through the maze of interlocking halls and courts, one comes to the smaller shrines devoted to the Greater Aspects of the Doomed Prince. There are sixty-two of these: e.g., the serpent-headed Chópruna, "the Dweller in Shadow," the strangely misshapen hunchbacked form of Te'ekúna, "the Wanderer Below," the thin and skeletal Ey'ún, "the Knower of Skills," the black and amorphous Gorrúgu, "the Master of Black," and a host of others. Each of these represents an aspect of Lord Ksáru's being, a specialized and focused facet of him. Here one finds the deified forms of Tékel's four sister planets and her two moons as well, for the dark sides of these bodies are also considered to be aspects of Lord Ksáru, and he is said to have authority over their astrological influences. (Lord Thúmis has the domination of the light, bright sides of the planets and moons, and it is said that the natures of these two deities war with one another, sometimes one getting the upper hand and sometimes the other; this explains eclipses, the new moon, etc. to the Tsolyáni.)

Hidden within some alcove there is always a secret stairway down into the pyramid itself, for it is in the darkness below that further rites are performed. Lord Ksáru demands human sacrifices only in order to enhance the magical interrelationships of the dimensional nexus points, and this is thus not a common practice of his Temple. The farther one goes down into the labyrinth, the more secret and esoteric his rituals become. The Demons of the Dark are propitiated here, the Dwellers in Shadow receive the minds and wills of hapless victims as nourishment, and the Nine Inner Aspects are worshipped in ways which cannot be described. Below these lower shrines, there is always another replica of the Blue Room, reached only through a series of secret passageways and guarded by every creature known to the ancient sages. Here the intricate Acts of the Velvet Dark are performed by priests and priestesses who dwell all their lives in total darkness



Sagún

and never emerge into the light. Below this, still farther into the labyrinths, the devotees of the Inner Sphere commemorate the doctrines of the Doomed Prince with ceremonies which have never been witnessed by any outsider since the days of the First Imperium. Any who violate this secrecy must be slain, even if it takes a thousand, thousand years, according to the Inner Doctrines, and none has ever escaped vengeance.

The outer worship of Lord Ksárul is by no means so mysterious--or so deadly. Many of the great clans of the Imperium participate in his daily and annual celebrations. Each day the Tunkul gongs at dawn signal the end of his Rule of Night and the retreat before his enemy, the sun. There are no daytime rituals. At sunset there is the Ceremony of the Opening of the Dark, followed by the Awakening in Azure, and at midnight there is the Victory of the Master of the Planets. Among his yearly festivals, one may cite the great secret rituals performed in Púrdimal on the first of the five days there is the Drawing Aside of the Veil, celebrated at Butrís. On the tenth day of Shápru, in the city of Mekú, the Temple holds the splendid Visitations of the Dormant Lord. Smaller ceremonies are found elsewhere throughout the year.

Everything about this Temple and its priesthood has symbolic significance. The black robes of his hierarchy denote the approach of the dark, the descent into the lightless and soundless void. The squarish, mortar-board-shaped headdress signifies the four quadrants of the universe. The smiling silver mask worn by his priests is both an imitation of Lord Ksárul's patient, emotionless, and totally inscrutable being, and also a concealment of his identity from the intrusion of others. The metal silver symbolizes the slumbrous gleam of the hidden intellect. Priestesses of this deity wear masks



Yéleth

of black wood, since it is thought that the thoughts and minds of females are concealed best by a softer yet intricately intertwined fiber, rather than by the harsh solidity of metal. Each priestly vestment has embroidered within it--black thread upon black cloth--the verses of the Ritual of Obeisance to the Unknowable Dark. Priests and priestesses may also wear robes, stoles, and pendants which further denote their precise offices within the Temple, but these are too complex to be gone into here.

A few biographical notices of prominent persons in the Temple of Ksárul may be appended.

Lord Tsútel hiVoruséka, of the XIXth Circle, is the Administrative High Priest of Lord Ksárul in Bey Sí. He was born in Bey Sí and is about sixty-five years of age. His clan is the important Great Stone Clan. His political abilities are great, and he is thus entrusted by the Temple with its complex relationships with the Imperium. He is a slender, balding man, needle-sharp of eye, and with the beaked nose of the central Empire. His duties are many, and he thus tends to be hard to approach, impatient and snappish of temperament, and probably suffers from an ulcer. He leans somewhat towards the Society of the Blue Light but is not a member, so far as is known. He is almost certainly not a member of the Inner Sphere, or at least not an active one.

Lord Qurén hiKétkolel, also of the Great Stone Clan, is the High Ritual Priest at Bey Sí. He specializes in astrology and the magical arts, and is always invited to preside over the major ceremonies of the Temple. He is about seventy years of age, frail, and currently in poor health. He is a demanding and meticulous teacher, however, and has innumerable students of the magical arts. It is thus extremely difficult to find a place in his classes and tutorials. It is said that he favors the Refulgent Blue Curtain Society and is a member of the Inner Sphere, although this cannot be known for certain, of course. His exact Circle cannot be ascertained but must be somewhere around XXIIInd.

A clan-relation, Lord Ssurúsa hiKétkolel, also of the Great Stone Clan, is the High Priest of Ksárul at Avanthár. He is clearly a supporter of the Imperium, is outgoing and jolly, and loves good wine and good food. He is also involved in innumerable intrigues at the behest of his master, Prince Mridóbu. He is about fifty years of age, quite rotund, and maintains a large harem of several dozen wives and concubines. Although he is of the XVIIIth Circle, it is clear that he is not a member of the Inner Sphere, does not care much for any of the secret societies, and serves best as a liaison with the Imperial Party at Avanthár.

At Mrelú the new Administrative High Priest is Lord Keléno, a foreigner whose services to the Temple have resulted in his advancement to this post. He is a young man, still in his twenties, reasonably handsome and affable, and independently wealthy. He has made no marriages as yet and continues to buy slavegirls and concubines. He is a member of the Outer Sphere, although he has been approached by the Ndálu Clan and seems to have leanings in that direction. He is of relatively low Circle, and it is too early in his career to say just what role he will play in the Temple of Ksárul. He is still clanless, since he is of foreign birth, but his rank and his wealth would almost certainly buy him a marriage into one of the better clans of his sect.

The previous Administrative High Priest at Mrelú was Lord Keréktu hiKhánmu, a member of the

prestigious Dark Flame Clan, about thirty-five years of age, and ostensibly a member of the IXth Circle. He has now been transferred to BÉY SÝ, where he is head of the Archives of the Indigo Tower, one of the greatest libraries of the Empire. He is married to a clan-relation, keeps only one concubine, has four children, and is outwardly a pleasant, soft-spoken, rather laconic individual of great smoothness and tact. It is said, however, that he is in fact a member of the Inner Sphere and serves the Ndálu Clan. It was he, rumor has it, who was behind the attempted kidnapping of a daughter of a prominent priest of Vimúhla at Tumíssa, the attempted assassination of Prince Eselné (a crime of high treason, if it could be proved), and certain other activities. He was the one who recommended the priest Keléno for his replacement at Mrelú. His agents are said to have infiltrated both the service of Prince Dhich'uné and also the Incandescent Blaze Society of the Temple of Vimúhla. His Circle is unknown but must be very high indeed.

Lord Mríktoken hiSsanyúsa, of the Standing Stone Clan, about sixty-seven years of age, and hereditary guardian of the Azure Robe in the city of Hmakuyál, is now Senior Ritual Priest at Mrelú. He is a stick-thin, grim-visaged, grey-haired oldster, totally devoted to the Lord of the Blue Room, and probably a member of the Inner Sphere and of the Ndálu Clan. His present functions do not otherwise explain the constant stream of highly placed visitors to his shrines at Mrelú, nor his friendship with Lord Sikuoz nSúriz, the High Legate of Livyánu to the Tsolyáni Imperium at BÉY SÝ. He is most likely a member of the XVIth Circle, although in reality he may be much higher.

Hóru hiFershéna, a member of the Black Hand Clan, about twenty-nine years old, is ostensibly a priest of only the VIth Circle, but his influence within the Temple of Ksáruł at Jakállá argues for a much greater role in the Inner Sphere. He is of pasty-grey complexion, tall, with hard black eyes ringed by dark circles, bony and yet very strong physically. He serves as a ritual priest but is to be found often around the port and in the foreigners' quarter, where he employs innocent foreigners for the nefarious purposes of the Ndálu Clan. He is unmarried and seems to have no interest in sexual matters, preferring instead to devote his time to the acquisition of the Inner Doctrines of his temple. He is also said to have been upon a "pilgrimage" to one of the secret northern shrines.

Túlkesh hiDaishúna, of the Dark Moon Clan, is a priest of the Vth Circle in BÉY SÝ, but he also may be of much greater rank than he appears. He is probably of the Inner Sphere, and his membership in the Society of the Blue Light is almost a certainty. He is young, about thirty years of age, rather weak and undersized, but yet possessed of much charm and vitality. His knowledge is not said to be great, but he possesses much information on the whereabouts of books, magical devices, and other sources. Although hard to approach, he is usually quite outgoing to his friends and cronies. He is unmarried.

Lord Fereshmá'a hiKúrodu, the High Ritual Priest in Jakállá, is of the XVIIth Circle, of the Dark Flame Clan, and is now also General of the Legion of the Night of Shadows, 15th Imperial Medium Infantry, based at Jakállá. Although this unit is as yet quite weak, Lord Fereshmá'a's energy and devotion will shortly bring it up to strength. (As yet it consists only of two Cohorts and has one in training, but other men are being recruited at Butríis and Mrelú.) Lord Fereshmá'a is

married to a woman of the ancient Endless Circle Clan of Púrdimal, said to be related to the Old Ones who dwell beneath that blighted city, and he is almost certainly a high officer of the Ndálu Clan. He has close connections both with Keréktu hiKhánmu and with Hóru hiFershéna, described above. Physically, Lord Fereshmá'a is a tall, heavy-set man, about thirty-eight years of age, with a scarred and ugly face, which he keeps hidden behind his silver mask even when other priests of Ksáruł would normally remove theirs.

Lord Chiringgá hiTishkólun is a devotee of Lord Ksáruł from another clan, that of the Golden Bough, not a clan from which the Doomed Prince has drawn many worshippers. He is forty-seven years of age, rather fat and thick-set, and much given to pleasures. For a time he served as Governor of Jakállá, but after certain difficulties there he was removed and given command of the Legion of Mighty Jakállá, 27th Imperial Heavy Infantry, and sent to Khírgar, where he now sulks in what he considers disgrace. The Legion is an old one which had gone extinct, and he has been given the unpleasant job of revitalizing it--largely, it is expected, from his personal fortunes amassed while he was Governor of Jakállá. He is of noble stock, however, and may be able to draw aid from his clan. He is of about the XIXth Circle, although he is not a priest.

Lord Héketi hiBurusá of Púrdimal is of the Clan of the Black Hood, an old and noble clan of that city. He is of the XIXth Circle, a warrior, and general of the Legion named after him, the 17th Imperial Heavy Infantry. It now has some sixteen Cohorts and one or two in training in Jakállá. Héketi is a tough, seasoned warrior, about thirty-eight years of age, dark of visage and nearly bald (which may bespeak inbreeding with the Old Ones of Púrdimal). He is difficult to approach, given to bitter rages, and drinks more than is good for him. His generalship is considered quite good, however. He may be a secret member of the Inner Sphere of the Temple of Ksáruł, but outwardly he gives no sign of much religious devotion.

Another general devoted to the Doomed Prince is Saku'ú hiFershéna, of the XIVth Circle, a military priest of the Temple and head of the Legion of the Prince of the Blue Room, 35th Imperial Medium Infantry, based at Púrdimal. This Legion has eight Cohorts and one in training. It is supported by the Ndálu Clan, and General Saku'ú is almost certainly a member of this group. He is forty-three years old, married to an Aridáni woman who serves as one of the Captains (Kási) of his Legion, and has one son, about ten years old. He is of the Dark Flame Clan. Physically, he is rather squat, hairy, and voluble, with beetling black eyebrows--all a sign of ancient Salarvyáni blood. General Saku'ú is working hard to develop both military skill and also the fanatic zeal which he feels necessary for a Temple Legion of this kind.

Sherésa hiDuruntláno is the High Ritual Priestess of the Temple of Ksáruł in Butríis. She is of the Dark Moon Clan, about twenty-seven years of age, and considered quite beautiful. She has the lighter complexion, high cheekbones, and grey-violet eyes of the Chákas, and indeed she was born in a village in Pán Cháka. She is an Aridáni, has never married, but keeps several male concubines. Her Circle is somewhere near XIVth, but this is not certain. She is a member of the Inner Sphere and acts as external liaison for the Refulgent Blue Curtain Society. She is a skillful user of magic, knows many ancient languages, and enjoys the

company of the nonhuman Páchi Léi, some of whom serve her as personal bodyguards. She is said a little of their gobbling alien tongue. Lady Sherésa has little use for the Ndálu Clan and has attempted to root its agents out of her temple at Butrí's through judicious transfers and promotions to other cities.

It may be useful to mention Lord Ksáru's Cohort, Lord Grugánu, the Knower of Spells, Black Sword of Doom, Reader of the Incantations of Evil. The precise relationships between the "Gods" and their "Cohorts" are not clear, and one can only surmise from the epics that Lord Grugánu is one of the allies of the Doomed Prince. In the Lament to the Wheel of Black, Lord Grugánu is pictured as Lord Ksáru's charioteer, as the rememberer of spells to whom Ksáru turned at the Place of Reviving, and as his aid and comfort at the Battle of Dórmoron Plain. It is said that he now keeps watch just outside of the ten walls which hold Lord Ksáru prisoner in the Blue Room, and he always seeks the keys which will free his master from that place which is not a place.

In form, Grugánu is only partially human: his body is of unknown shape, always concealed beneath heavy black robes, and he has a head like that of some evil carrion-eating bird. His powers include a knowledge of spells which surpasses even that of his master, the ability to move freely between dimensions, and overlordship over many of the creatures and beings which dwell in the Underworlds beneath the older cities. His temples are always square (never oval or oblong in shape), and his shrines are kept in shadow. His ceremonies are recited in a tongue known only to his highest ritual priests, and he is not averse to human sacrifice. The darker rituals of his order, such as the Speaking of the Names, the Unveiling of the Way, and the Confrontation With Those Beneath, are said to take on some of the horror inherent in the rituals of Lord Sáru and his Cohort, Durrítámish. On the fourth intercalary day of the end of the year there is an especially unpleasant ceremony held in the city of Úrmish: the Opening of the Gates of Night, at which it is said that many of Lord Ksáru's ancient demon allies are invited and--fed. . . .

The High Adept of Lord Grugánu is presently one Lord Runmáru hiSsanyúsa, of the Dark Moon Clan. He is about sixty years of age, gaunt and small, and very secretive. He rarely emerges from his temple at Úrmish, except to attend those functions which are required by the Imperium. He was married but now is widowed, and he has five grown sons and three daughters, all of whom are members of his temple hierarchy. He is rumored to be a member of the Refulgent Blue Curtain Society. (The secret societies of the Temples of the gods are often shared with their respective Cohorts' Temples.) Lord Runmáru is of about the XVIIth Circle, very skilled both at magic and the use of technological devices, and very learned. He has no known interests beyond his Temple.

Another worshipper of Lord Grugánu is Lord Srýqu hiTáukoel of the Great Stone Clan. This man is about fifty years old, rather jovial, and a close friend of Prince Mridóbu. He was Governor of Púrdimal until recently but has now been replaced by Lord Su'un Tsél hiRayástqa, a worshipper of Hry'y. Lord Srýqu serves now as Legate of the Palace of the Realm at Béy Sý, a reward from Prince Mridóbu for services rendered. He is not a priest but must be of approximately the XXIInd Circle. He is married to three women, keeps a stable of pretty slavegirls, and enjoys a good feast (or a good sadistic orgy). His administrative abilities are of great service to the Prince and his party.

Militarily, the sect of Grugánu has never been strong. Only one general of this faith is currently found in the Empire: Lord Mriggadáshu hiTekku'úne, of the Clan of the Dark Moon, about fifty-six years of age. He has command of the Regiment of the Knower of Spells, 5th Imperial Crossbowmen, of the city of Mekú. This is not a particularly good Legion, being composed of city guards and temple soldiery, but Prince Mridóbu is encouraging it and providing it with funds. It now consists only of some five Cohorts, plus one in training. Lord Mriggadáshu is slender, wiry, and long-faced--not much of a field general but a good administrator. He is married to an Aridáni woman of his clan, who also has two other husbands. He has three sons, all in their twenties, one of whom is a priest in the Temple of Ksáru, another a soldier in his father's Legion, and the third is at present without employment. It is assumed that Lord Mriggadáshu is of the Ndálu Clan, or at least has its strong backing, as well as a personal following in his native city of Mekú. He is approximately of the XIVth Circle, though no priest.

A list of the important personalities of the Temple of Grugánu cannot end without mention of Lady Biyún hiTetengkáino, the "Seeress of Úrmish." She is the daughter of the master of the Ripened Sheaf Clan, an ancient agricultural clan of Úrmish. She is about sixty-five years of age, of undetermined Circle (perhaps as high as XVIIIth or as low as XIIth?), and she is respected throughout the Empire for her predictions of the future. These are actually enigmatic verses in the Zhurulén genre of ancient Engsvanyáli poetry, and their ambiguity leaves them open to many interpretations. One need only cite the following example:

Grey clouds in the north, drowned in a sea of
blood--

The leaf falls from the tree and is trampled by the
autumn.

This is widely interpreted to mean that war will rise in the north, and that the forces of Yán Kór (the leaf, which is green) will be defeated. The red of the blood mentioned in the first hemistich is taken by some to denote Mu'ugalavyáni intervention, and the "grey" of the clouds is currently thought to indicate the growing power of the Temple of Thúmis at Payá Gupá in the west and further north in Chéne Hó. Other meanings can be read into the verse, of course.

Lady Biyún remains cloistered within the temple of Grugánu at Úrmish. She sees only the Imperial Governor, occasional officials of the Omnipotent Azure Legion, and a few priests of her sect. She has never married and has no known interests other than her devotions and rituals.

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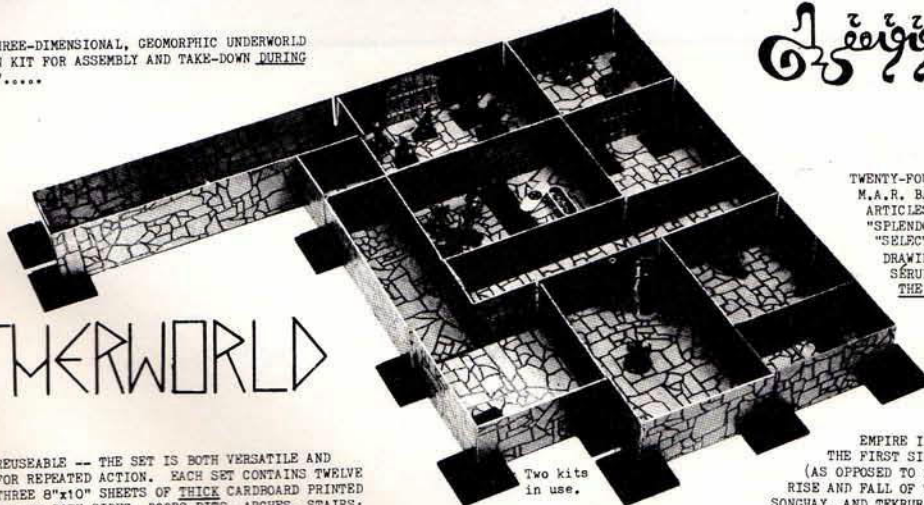
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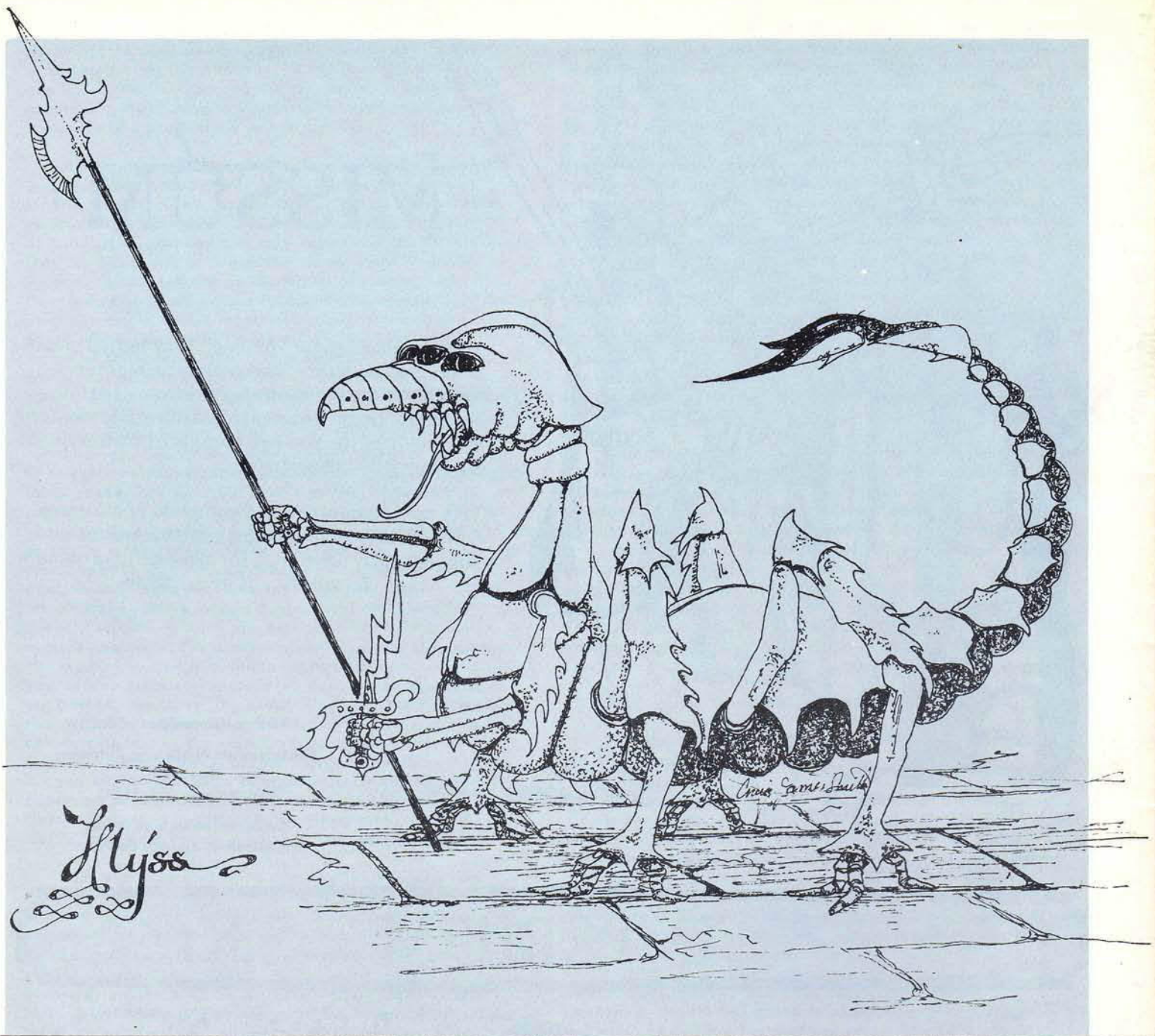


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