

ABOUT THIS GAME

This box contains much of what you need to play a rôle-playing game based on the world of Tékumel. If you have not played a fantasy "rôle-playing game" before, please ask a friend, a game-store proprietor, or some other source for instructions. The game you now hold is meant for experienced players whose ages range from late teenage through the geriatric set! All that is required is some sophistication and a flamboyant imagination.

One of the reasons for the imagined difficulty in playing on Tékumel is the unfamiliarity of the world: its inhabitants, cultures, and histories are quite different from the usual mediaeval-Western-European mythos so often used as background in this genre of games. Instead of knights, dragons, castles, trolls, and the like, Tékumel has mighty empires, powerful priesthoods, complex societies, and alien denizens unlike others in fantasy literature. Tékumel contains elements from the ancient Mayas, the Egyptians, and mediaeval India, bits of classical Rome and Greece, and smidgens from half a dozen other cultures. These have all been stirred together until most of the separate components are unrecognisable. Tékumel is now very much a world of its own. Over the past fifty years its author, Professor M. A. R. Barker, has added complete languages, scripts, histories, literature, social customs, and much more on all sorts of Tekumeláni topics. What has emerged is perhaps the most complete, complex, intriguing, and most "alien" fantasy world ever produced. If you have a bent for such things, you will enjoy.

This game includes most of what is needed to play: rules for movement combat, and magic, an extensive spell-list, a list of creatures, methods for producing non-player characters, lists of magic items, books, scrolls, and a set of archetypes (pre-constructed characters) so that players do not have to begin with tedious "character roll-ups." A map of a large area of northern Tékumel is added. Any gamer worth the salt can take these materials and set up a scenario immediately. As more is learned about the world, the scenario will become more and more elaborate, non-player characters take on lives of their own, the world develops colour and substance, and enjoyment is enhanced.

What is NOT included? Percentile dice (01-100), for one; these can be bought from any gaming store or mail-order house. Character references sheets must be xeroxed so that each player has one. The game-master (referee, or whatever one calls this august functionary) must also add city maps, non-player characters, local terrain maps, and other useful game-aids.

It is important to note that two subsidiary books are NOT included in this box: (1) "Adventures on Tékumel, Part One: Growing Up on Tékumel"), and (2) The "Tékumel Bestiary." The former gives players the materials to "roll up" their own human characters "from scratch." The second book offers full descriptions of the fauna of Tékumel. Both of these volumes are available from "Theatre of the Mind, Inc." (the Byrne Building, Second Floor, Lincoln & Morgan Streets, Phoenixville, Pennsylvania 19460) or from local game shops. One can play without these books, of course, using just the information provided in this game (with additions from other sources mentioned here), but they do give a more complete picture of the world.

More background material is offered in three "solitaire adventure" books, also published by Theatre of the Mind, Inc. These take the reader on unique adventures and create the special ambience that characterises Tékumel and makes it both different and fun. These can be integrated into the rôle-playing game, or just read for knowledge and enjoyment.

For those who want still more detail, two volumes of the Tékumel Sourcebook are also available from Theatre of the Mind, Inc. The complete Sourcebook was issued years ago by another publisher and was meant to be "volume 3" in the set; it has not yet been republished by Theatre of the Mind, Inc. Most of the information needed by players is contained in volumes 1 and 2, however.

ABOUT TÉKUMEL

The "future history" of our planet Earth differs greatly from those proposed by other science-fiction writers. Sadly, our present civilisation comes to an inglorious end in 2012-13: atomic weapons should not be left in the hands of those who do not have the knowledge to use, control, and dispose of them properly! Much of our world is thus rendered uninhabitable. "Western Civilisation, as we know it, is thus almost entirely obliterated. A few people survive in parts of the Middle East and Central America, however,

where the prevailing winds do not carry the radioactive dust of death. These remnants, mostly Arabs and the peoples of Honduras, Yucatan, and Guatemala, climb slowly back up the ladder to technology over the next 60,000 years. Humankind reoccupies the blighted and radioactive regions once again. Eventually, space exploration resumes, and the artefacts left by our Twentieth Century visits are found on the moon exactly where they were abandoned millennia before.. Interplanetary travel becomes commonplace, and Earth returns to prosperity. It is at this time that humankind is contacted by the nonhuman Pé Chói, a chitin-skinned species from a system near Procyon. This race provides humankind with the Three Light Drive, a means of "folding" space and traversing vast intergalactic distances quickly. Terra is also introduced to many other life-forms, such as the reptilian-like Shén from Antares, the ugly four-armed and four-legged Ahoggyá from Achernar, the Pygmy Folk from Mirach, the little Tinaliya from Algol, and several others. All of these coexist in interstellar space, trading, travelling, sometimes warring, and managing to survive together. There are stories of still other races, some very dangerous, still farther away, but these can be ignored for now.

It is during Humankind's sudden burgeoning into space that Tékumel is discovered: the third of five planets orbiting around a small star (Sinistra in Nu Ophiuchi). Tékumel is a large planet (20,838 km. in diameter) with very little iron in its core. It is very hot, and it is inhabited by inimical, intelligent species: the Hlüss and the Ssú. Its location is convenient to trade, and it is therefore swiftly conquered. It is terraformed: its orbit is altered, gravitic engines and atmosphere converters are installed, and its original inhabitants are settled in "reservations." (Shades of the injustices done to "native" peoples long ago on Earth! The Dynasty of the Veritable Autocrator, the human government that seizes Tékumel, is no kinder than many invaders that have passed before.) Even the vegetation, the poisonous, purple "Food of the Ssú," is almost entirely replaced by species more pleasing to human tastes brought from a score of worlds. Tékumel thus becomes a place where merchants and wealthy travellers can retire, build estates, and pursue their pleasures. The landscapes of Tékumel are filled with palaces, domes, villas, parks, and graceful pavilions, eclipsing the haunted, gloomy ruins of the slaughtered Ssú and Hlüss. This period of slumberous peace lasts, it is said, for almost 50,000 years.

The catastrophe named "The Time of Darkness" comes without warning. Tékumel, its two moons, its sun, and the four planets of its solar system are suddenly engulfed by a dimensional nexus point of gigantic size and carried off into one of the "pocket dimensions" that fill the interstices of interdimensional space. Humankind had just begun to explore the complexities of "The Planes Beyond," when this occurs, and there are no weapons, no instruments, and no methods of dealing with it. The blow is total and terrible: the planet is completely cut off from the rest of Humanspace! There are no stars, no more interstellar ships, no communication. It is even unknown whether this is a natural occurrence or the work of one of an unknown foe. The lines of gravitic force that lie between the stars are severed, and the balance created by the great terraforming engines is ruptured. Tékumel shudders, continents break apart, the palaces and pleasure domes crumble, tidal waves pour in, and communication and transport effectively cease. Within a few hundred agonised years, the planet returns to anarchy. The exultant Ssú and the Hlüss take back whatever they can. The nonhumans form defensive enclaves, and tiny pockets of hostile species planted on Tékumel as spies go into hiding to survive. Beasts, insects, and other creatures from the conservatories and zoological gardens are set free and either perish or adapt. Humanity struggles to maintain its technology, but without iron or other extra-planetary materials, the factories soon fall silent. A few cities and scientific centres manage to continue, at least for a time. Gloom prevails, as humanity realises its lonely plight, and all methods of rejoining the outside universe fail. Decline, decay, and a reckless sense of helplessness set in; power grids fail; transportation dwindles; and local hoarders and warlords seize what resources they can. These are "The Latter Times." They last for uncounted millennia.

Present written records go back only about 25,000 years. The Empire of Llyán of Tsámra is now farther back in history than the Neolithic is to us; the Bednálljans and the Dragon Warriors and the aesthetes of Éngsvan hlá Gánga have come and gone. The splendid cities and high technology of the Great Ancients is now dust, although buried caches of tools and supplies are still occasionally found. The mighty temples of today's empires still possess stores of secret weapons and treasures from the past. Tékumel's modern population exists at levels approximating mediaeval India or Japan: grain grown on large estates operated by specialised clans, mighty cities surrounded by rings of fortified walls, temples filled with chanting priests, and armies that wield swords, pikes, and bows. The northern continent is divided into five great empires: Tsolyánu (where the action of the game begins); Mu'ugalavyá to the west, a land of strict militaristic disci-

pline; Yán Kór to the north, where small city-states have been welded together into a rough national identity by an enterprising soldier, the Baron Áld; Salarvyá to the Southeast, a vast nation so fragmented that it hardly qualifies as a single state at all; and Livyánu in the distant Southwest, a land of exquisitely unpleasant customs and strange magic.

Several factors deserve mention: without iron, the warriors of Téकुmel employ the hide of the Chlén-beast, a substance peeled from these rhinoceros-like monsters and hardened into swords, shields, helmets, etc. by special tanner clans. Chlén-hide is rather like modern aircraft plastic. Iron and steel are better but incredibly expensive, since they come from either sparse, poor-quality iron mines or are found in archaeological excavations in the ruins of the cities of the Great Ancients or the Latter Times. Obtaining steel weapons is thus a major goal for a Tekumeláni warrior.

Another problem is transport. There are horses on Téकुmel, but they exist somewhere on the other side of the planet in one small enclave. The Five Empires thus have no riding beasts, except for the great, plodding Chlén, which are used to haul carts. Other regions do have useful beasts, but these, too, exist far beyond the frontiers of the mighty empires. The Five Empires have solved the problem of transport with Chlén-carts and slaves, using a network of mighty three-tiered stone roadways (called Sákbe: fortified walls larger than the Great Wall of China).

There is also the matter of sorcery. Téकुmel has largely replaced machine technology with "magic." The "walls" of its pocket dimension are thinner than those of Earth's, and it is easier to suck energy in from the Planes Beyond. Mental training and native psychic ability are used to create "spells" that import this power, mould it into energy or substance, and produce spectacular effects. These "spells" are the jealously guarded secrets of the priesthoods. The Tsolyáni worship the Twenty Gods of the Engsvanyáli priest Pavár: these are not theological "gods" at all but rather great interdimensional beings that have "godlike" powers (in comparison to humanity) and have interests and goals all their own. Three of the other four empires have their own versions of these same deities, but Livyánu has a pantheon all its own: the mysterious Shadow Gods.

Forms of government vary from the priestly councils of Livyánu, to the monarchy of the demented king of Salarvyá, to the autocracy of Baron Áld in his northern stronghold of Ke'ér, to the regimented military rule of the oligarchs of Mu'ugalavyá, to the grandiose divine rule of the God-King of Tsolyánu, who rules from his impregnable golden tower in Avanthár. The Tsolyáni Emperor never emerges from this fortress and is as much a prisoner as any of the poor wretches in the dungeons below his Hall of the Petal Throne. All is done through networks of state bureaucracy that make old Byzantium look efficient! There are dozens of smaller nations, tribal territories and principalities as well. The alien races, too, occupy their own territories: the Shén south of Livyánu, the Pé Chói in the forests of Dó Cháka between Tsolyánu and Mu'ugalavyá, etc. There are complexities without end!

Indeed, there is much to do on Téकुmel: much to see and much to enjoy. The mighty empires provide scope for politics and intrigue; the vast jungles offer adventure and reward. There are alien cities and buried ruins, temples and treasures, beauty and danger and excitement: all that makes life worth living, as my own player-character used to say...

THE AUTHORS

M. A. R. Barker was born in Spokane, Washington, received a B.A. in Anthropology from the University of Washington, studied in India on a Fulbright Fellowship, got his Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of California at Berkeley, obtained a position in the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University in Montréal, Québec, Canada, worked in Pakistan at Oriental College in Lahore under the auspices of the British Council and the Ford Foundation, returned to McGill, then joined the University of Minnesota as Chair of the Department of South Asian Studies. His academic publications include linguistic works on Klamath, Urdu, Baluchi, etc. He is now retired from academic life.

Professor Barker first began to develop Téकुmel almost fifty years ago. He has since created two previous versions of a Téकुmel-based rôle-playing game, written two Téकुmel novels (published by DAW Books), and has written over a score of works dealing with various aspects of Téकुmel.

This latest attempt at rules-writing has benefited greatly by the co-authorship of Mr. Neil R. Cauley, a long-time gamer and the owner of a game store in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Mr. Cauley has added much to the completeness and evenness of these rules and has made Tékumel more accessible to those familiar with the mechanics of rôle-playing games.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE SYMBOLS around the borders of the two large terrain maps: Starting from top left and going around the map clockwise.

WESTERN MAP

Avánthe	Chiténg
Thúmis	Wurú
Karakán	Drá
Hnálla	Keténgku
Vimúhla	Chegárra
Sárku	Dilinála
Ksárul	Qón
Dlamélish	Belkhánu
Hrü'ü'	
Grugánu	
Hriháyal	
Durritlámish	

EASTERN MAP

Golden Bough Clan	Clan of the Red Mountain
Great Stone Clan	Jade Diadem Clan
Clan of the Emerald Diadem	Golden Sunburst Clan
Tlakotáni Clan	Dark Fear Clan
Black Stone Clan	Sea Blue Clan
Golden Triangle Clan	Staff of Beneficence Clan
Amber Cloak Clan	
Cloak of Azure Gems Clan	
Vríddi Clan	
Ensorcelled Goblet Clan	
Red Sun Clan	